

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

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MEETINGS

Wednesday 2 October 2019 – Meeting

The Society is privileged to welcome **TIM ARLOTT**, son of John, to this evening's meeting. Long-standing members will recall that his father was one of the Society's three original Patrons, alongside Desmond Eagar and John Woodcock when it was founded 43 years ago in 1976.

Tim started work as a reporter on the Southern Evening Echo, Southampton, in the 1960s. He worked for other daily provincial newspapers as well as the national newspaper "The Observer" before joining the international News Agency Visnews, later Reuters Television. He worked for them as Bureau Chief in Australia, Iran, Japan, the United States and France.

It was in France that he wrote his controversial best-selling memoir of his father, published in 1994. John, of course, enjoyed many careers, rising from being a clerk in a Basingstoke mental health Hospital, and police constable on the beat in Southampton, to being the best known radio broadcaster in the country. Besides his cricket commentating, he wrote for The Guardian on both cricket and wine, and was author of several books. He also stood as a candidate for the Liberal Party in the General Election of 1955.

John also brought Basil D'Oliveira to England to play in the Lancashire League; the latter, of course, was to progress to Worcestershire and England. In bringing D'Oliveira to England, he bizarrely played a significant part in bringing down the South African white apartheid regime he had always so hated.

Tim's address this evening is entitled John Arlott, Radical.

Wednesday 27 March 2019 – Report

Chris Lewis described his life as one of highs and lows, good and bad decisions, in a spellbinding talk to one of the Society's largest audiences of recent years.

Chris was born in Guyana, a country that aspired to British values and hero-worshipped its cricketers. His father was a Baptist minister who moved to England in 1969, his mother was a nurse who moved here eight years later.

He spent much of his childhood playing cricket in the road, using oil drums for wickets, making bats from his Grandmother's fence and balls from a fruit stone wrapped in paper and discarded bicycle tyres.

Chris arrived in England on a wet day in March 1978, dressed in a suit made by his Uncle Wilfred, a tailor. He attended Willesden High School following in the footsteps of Philip de Freitas and attended a trial for the school cricket team, despite having never learnt to bowl. Everybody in Guyana wanted to bat. He practised in front of the mirror and was selected for the team.

His first game was the first time that he used a proper bat, wore proper kit and played on a grass pitch. He was made team captain and the whole occasion increased his passion for cricket, which was further encouraged by having two cricket-mad teachers at the school.

At the age of sixteen, his mother paid for coaching sessions at Lord's. Unbeknown to Chris, he was observed by Ken Higgs who asked Phil de Freitas to telephone Chris on his behalf and invite him to attend a trial with Leicestershire. He refused, he wanted to stay with Middlesex who had an under-25 team and had offered him a game, ironically against Leicestershire. He took four wickets in that game and another two in a second game against the same team two weeks later. His achievement prompted Ken Higgs to offer him a two year contract on a salary of £3,000 per annum. He quickly accepted the offer.

On his first morning at Leicestershire, the first two people he encountered were David Gower and Peter Willey.

In his first game, Chris changed batting positions with Paddy Cliff, made 60 runs batting at number seven and took four wickets. Despite having stage fright, he realised that he could be good enough for a career in cricket.

Chris said that it was Ken Higgs who made him a 'cricketer'. Ken bowled to him in the nets and taught him how to bowl. He gave two good pieces of advice, which Chris admitted he did not always follow, to take care of his money and his legs. He made a bet with Ken that he would play for England and when he did, he would give 50% of his match fee to him. Ken returned the money to him and told him to put it towards his future. Chris described his international debut on his 21st birthday in an ODI in Port of Spain, Trinidad. His first ball was to Gordon Greenidge, Desmond Haynes was his opening partner and Viv Richards batted at number three. He had Haynes caught behind, giving him his first international wicket. He made his test debut against New Zealand later that year and represented England in the World Cup Final in Melbourne where he was bowled first ball by Wasim Akram.

Chris recounted his rollercoaster events of his cricket career. On a tour to the West Indies, he shaved his head for charity and was laid low with sunstroke. There was a photoshoot in his underwear, which appeared in a magazine on the eve of a test match at Lord's, when he managed to 'bag a pair'. Skipping the team hotel in an Oval test match to sleep in his own bed, waking up late, missing the team warm-up and subsequently being dropped from the test team. The highs were winning the John Player League with Surrey and the County Championship with Leicestershire. However, he admitted in the post talk Q&A session that the lowest point, worse even than prison, occurred after he met some Indian businessmen who, ostensibly wanted

him to endorse products but actually wanted him to fix matches with other players. He was offered a total of £250,000 for the operation.

Chris informed his manager and the EWCB of the facts. However, the News of the World chose to print an article saying that he had given the EWCB the names of England players who fixed matches. Although he claimed his innocence, for the rest of that season he was booed whenever he entered a playing arena. By the end of the summer, even though he had three and a half years left on his contract with Leicestershire, it was mutually agreed that he should leave the county. He walked away, angry.

Afterwards, he worked with young people, played cricket in Derbyshire, founded a cricket academy in Slough and played for the PCA.

In 2008, he was approached by Mark Butcher to play T20 cricket for Surrey. His first two balls to Mark Pettini were hit for six, his two overs cost more than thirty runs and he damaged his hip when he fell whilst fielding. He was on a 'pay as you play' contract, but could not play.

Chris does not shy away from his responsibility for what happened after he left Surrey. Flat broke, he fell into the wrong company and went to St. Lucia after being offered £50,000 to smuggle cocaine into England. At Heathrow Airport, he was stopped, his luggage searched and the cocaine found. It was a reality check and he could not believe the stupidity of his actions. He received a thirteen years sentence but was released after six and a half years. He admitted that it was not a pleasant experience but was unsure whether he would have thought as much about his life if it had not happened. He realised that it was his fault and his alone. He left prison realising that he would need to act differently in future to lead a better life.

He has written a book, given an explanation and an apology. He has spoken to county cricketers about planning for life after cricket; he has collaborated in a play to express his thoughts. He is proud of his career, even if unfulfilled, but as a ten year old, he could not have asked for more.

Sticky Wicket

IN PRAISE OF COUNTY CRICKET

The future of county cricket has never been so precarious. Despite the rhetoric of the ECB, The Hundred, poses more than an existential threat to its future. During the winter, the Editor will be writing his own personal account of the Championship matches he viewed in 2019. Because of the weather, declining interest in the game, and family holidays, he watched comparatively little cricket; not all of his spectating was at the Ageas Bowl. However, the days' play that he saw throughout the summer reminded him that the county game was very special, and one to be cherished. He saw very little of the World Cup, or indeed the Ashes Series, though he struck gold when the only extended television coverage he saw incorporated Ben Stokes' epic at Headingley. Was it the greatest innings in English cricket history?

The Editor begins his account with that unforgettable match between **Hampshire and Somerset at The Ageas Bowl on 16-18 September.**

As this piece is being written, some 48 hours after the completion of the match, it is still difficult to assemble one's thoughts and emotions on all the events that unravelled over the previous three days. The three most uniform comments were that Hampshire supporters had never seen a match quite like it, that it was impossible to recall a game in which each innings included a single performance of such towering proportions and that it was truly one of those "I was there" moments. Followers of first-class cricket are used to the twists and turns of a match – far more than those who watch only the shorter versions of the game – can ever imagine. But this match was something different as the ebbs and flows contained so many extreme highs and lows that were almost fictional in character. And it culminated in a performance which had not been seen in England for some 62 years. Indeed, there were elements of Kyle Abbott's achievement that were unique, never been seen before. What the crowd had witnessed was, without exaggeration, a once in a lifetime event.

FIRST DAY

It all started under grey skies on the Monday morning. The pitch was of an odd hue – green in the middle and bare at each end. The last time the editor had seen a similar pitch was at Edgbaston in 1995 when the West Indies fast bowlers decimated England in two days. Thankfully, this pitch was slower. It was a surprise to learn that James Vince had chosen to bat after winning the toss. The wisdom of the decision was soon put to the test, as Lewis Gregory, Josh Davey and Craig Overton reduced Hampshire to 24 for five at the end of the 11th over. A total of even three figures seemed a long way off. Liam Dawson had come to the wicket at the fall of the fourth wicket with the score at 18.

The probing Somerset bowlers had consistently passed or found the bat's edge. However, from the outset, Dawson seemed to be playing on a different pitch from that of his colleagues. He was never in any trouble. He middled virtually every ball – he played and missed very rarely. Throughout the innings he accumulated his runs at a good rate. He capitalised on any short ball, once lifting Gregory to mid-wicket for six, and drove authoritatively. He consistently looked for singles. He was handicapped by a wet outfield which meant that many potential boundaries were reduced to two or three runs. Also, throughout the innings, the Somerset fielding was outstanding. Two more wickets fell in the next hour but the score still stood at only 88 when he was joined by Keith Barker. He was now nearing his half-century. The former Warwickshire left-hander was immediately greeted by a fusillade of short-pitched deliveries by Overton, perhaps suggesting a "history" between the two men. However, he proceeded to bat with assurance until well into the afternoon. He was eventually undone by the introduction of spin, falling leg before to Dom Bess. He and Dawson had added 92 in even time. The events of early morning seem distant. With Kyle Abbott at the other end, Dawson eventually reached his century but then fell almost immediately, caught at the wicket for 103, to an indeterminate shot that was out of character to his previous play. It had been a splendidly resourceful innings of the highest quality. He had dominated proceedings scoring his runs out of

172 whilst he was at the wicket. The innings eventually closed at 196. Dawson had scored 52.55% of his side's total.

The pitch still looked green and there was every indication that Abbott and Edwards, who had both bowled marvellously well throughout the season, would be able to make inroads into the Somerset reply. Bowling from the pavilion end, Abbott quickly accounted for Murali Vijay, whom Somerset had drafted in for the Championship run-in, for a duck, and the left-handed Steven Davies. After an on-off period for bad light, the day closed with Somerset at 30 for two.

SECOND DAY

The day dawned brightly with not a cloud in the sky. With a 10.30 start in September, however, the conditions are generally in favour of the bowler for the first hour. The pitch still retained a green complexion, though lighter than on the previous day. There was therefore some hope that Hampshire's bowlers could make early inroads. The key wicket would be that of James Hildreth, who was not out overnight and who always seemed to enjoy batting against Hampshire. Kyle Abbot induced an edge to McManus almost immediately. The door was open. It was the start of an Abbott masterclass. He proceeded to probe the techniques of the Somerset batsmen relentlessly. They were simply at a loss on how to counter his swing and movement. On their arrival at the crease, he embarked on a brief reconnaissance before, very quickly, delivering the killer ball. Abell and Overton were bowled and Bartlett and Gregory fell leg before. Such was the South African's control, the aggressive and free scoring Gregory failed to get off the mark in his 38 minute stay. In the meantime, Fidel Edwards had given the youthful Tom Barton, allegedly being considered by England, a thorough working over. The latter's skittish innings was mercifully put to an early end in only seven balls. Somerset collapsed from 38 for two to 65 for eight in twelve overs. Hampshire's total began to look competitive indeed. Dom Bess, batting out of his crease and taking a full stride forward to counter Abbott's movement, in company with Roelof van der Merwe, then provided stout resistance.

At lunch, Abbott's figures were seven for 21; if he could take the final two wickets for less than four runs after the lunch interval, he would break Bob Cottam's Hampshire record bowling analysis in an innings. However, it was not to be. The pair continued to thwart Abbott. It would not be denied. Though visibly flagging, the lion-hearted fast-medium bowler eventually took the wickets of Bess and Davey to finish with figures of nine for 40.

Somerset had been bowled out for 142, a Hampshire lead of 55. However, if there were any thoughts that Hampshire could build on the lead comfortably, they were quickly dispelled. Organ, Holland and Alsop struggled to put bat on ball. After a virtually strokeless period of just over half an hour, Hampshire subsided to 10 for three. Somerset were now in the ascendancy; even more so some forty-five minutes later when the score stood at 45 for six, a lead of 100.

James Vince had been watching events at the other end. He was rendered runless by the accuracy of the bowling but was clearly not going to give his wicket away. He

defended resolutely. Astoundingly, he took 23 balls to score his first run – a single. His first boundary shot was not unfurled until some nine balls later. He then defended again for a further period, without adding to his score until tea. He was batting ugly but it was appreciated by the crowd. It was evident that if Hampshire were to win the match he would need to make a big score.

After tea, he began to shake off his shackles. Even so, his approach was still tempered, until the arrival of the omnipresent Abbott with the score at 103 for eight. He then began to monopolise the strike and accelerate through the gears. Runs now came in torrents in the warm evening sunshine. Vince was now scoring at virtually a run a ball. In time, Abbott was entrusted to face the bowling and began to score the odd boundary himself. Abell, in an effort to deprive Vince of the strike spread the field far and wide. However, Vince still continued to deal in boundaries. His was batting on a plane on which only a few in the world were capable. The Somerset captain really could have done with another three or four fielders, such was his opposite number's command, placement and power. Abell had long since abandoned any hope of taking his wicket. Vince's celebration on reaching his century was uncharacteristically joyous. Normally phlegmatic, he jumped feet in the air as he waved his bat in celebration. It was good to see. It was indication that he was in love with batting again.

Play was brought to an end in incongruous fashion not long afterwards. Vince had been hitting boundaries at will but, without a cloud in the sky still, the umpires decided that the encroaching shadows from the Shane Warne stand constituted bad light. It was officialdom at its worse. It did the game no credit at all. The umpires seemed to be indicating that they were applying the rules. If this was indeed the case, then those laws need to be re-examined. It was the only discordant note in an enthralling, unforgettable day's play. Hampshire's total stood at 176 for eight, a lead of 230.

THIRD DAY

The first two days had already produced much excitement and emotionally charged cricket. Would the third day do the same?

It was sometime before that question was answered. In the morning, James Vince continued on his merry way. Somerset were simply unable to contain him. Kyle Abbott batted with little trouble also. Their ninth wicket partnership reached 100 and eventually realised 119 before Vince was caught behind off Overton for 142. He seemed as surprised as his onlooking admirers. Given the match situation and pitch conditions when he first came to the wicket, it was a magnificent innings, one that very few in the world were capable of playing, The Hampshire innings closed four runs later when Abbott fell to the admirable Davey. The former's efforts had been a selfless and noble one in support of his captain. Vince had scored 62.83% of his team's runs.

Somerset now required 281 runs to win. Vijay and Davies batted without any alarms in the hour before lunch. The pitch seemed to have become placid. The ball ceased moving about. A Somerset victory did not seem out of the question. The score

reached 86 before Vijay holed out off Abbott. It was an injudicious shot. His dismissal heralded a startling collapse. Abbott roared in. His run up was rhythmical; his length and direction impeccable. The ball started hooping around as he found reverse swing. Within the next forty minutes, six further wickets fell for only 14 runs in 10 overs, five to Abbott. Three were leg before. The other wicket was taken by Liam Dawson who flattened Hildreth's off-stump off a ball which kept low.

Abbott had now taken six wickets in the innings, fifteen in the match. Onlookers started to consult *Playfair*, their i-phones and ipads. Virtually all knew that Hampshire's best match figures were sixteen for 88 by Jack Newman in 1927 against Somerset at Weston-Super-Mare. Could he break the record? However, he now needed a rest and watched as Gregory, who, in contrast to his team-mates, had never looked in any difficulty, and Overton add 40. Abbott then returned to have the latter snaffled at second slip by Dawson. The favour was exchanged when Van der Merwe slashed Dawson to Abbott at point. It seemed impossible to keep either man out of the action. Finally, Abbott administered the coup de grace by ripping Davey's off-stump out of the ground with an inswinger. The crowd rose in unison to applaud Kyle Abbott's achievement. He was enveloped by his team mates. It was a very special, unforgettable moment.

At the start of the match, Somerset stood a chance of winning the County Championship if Essex endured a poor game against Surrey at Chelmsford. However, Essex won by an innings to go 12 points clear into the final match of the season at Taunton, where the Counties were scheduled to play each other. Given the inclement weather forecast for the following week, it seemed that Somerset would once again finish as runners-up for the fifth time this century. So it proved.

Hampshire players commented that the result was revenge for the Royal London Cup Final defeat at Lord's. That event had clearly stung the team.

STATISTICAL COMPARISONS

Abbott's final figures were eight for 46, giving him match figures of 17 for 86. They were the best bowling figures in a match since Jim Laker took his fabled 19 for 90 against Australia at Old Trafford in 1956 and the best in a County match since Tom Goddard took 17 for 106 for Gloucestershire against Kent in 1939.

His figures have also been excelled on only three occasions in county cricket:-

Colin Blythe	17 – 48	Kent v Northamptonshire at Northampton 1907
Charlie Parker	17 – 56	Gloucestershire v Essex at Gloucester's Wagon Works Ground 1925
Tich Freeman	17 – 67	Kent v Sussex at Hove 1922

However, these men were all spin bowlers and took their wickets on rain affected, uncovered wickets. (Almost unbelievably, Blythe took all his seventeen wickets in a day! As did Goddard in the match referred to above).

Kyle Abbott's feat is therefore an historic one in that they are best ever figures by a pace bowler in county cricket, and a record on covered wickets. After the match, he said "Once I hit my length at my optimum speed it started to click – I had that every over in the game."

Thus ended a game which included two exceptional innings, during which both batsmen had scored over half their side's runs, and a historic record breaking bowling performance. It was an end to the Hampshire's season at home which their supporters will remember with a warm glow throughout the winter.

Scores:

Hampshire 196 (Dawson 103) and 226 (Vince 142)

Somerset 142 (Abbott 9-40) and 144 (Davies 51; Abbott 8-46)

Hampshire won by 136 runs.

SIMILAR INSTANCES - HAMPSHIRE v SUSSEX 1898 and 1901

As mentioned above, the match was unique in Hampshire's history. However, the editor has found two other matches which were similar in that they were dominated by few men in the four innings. Both matches were against Sussex at the turn of the last century. .

1898 – Hove - Sussex won by 134 runs

Sussex 203 (CB Fry 99; Harry Baldwin 7-68) and 206 (Fry 133; Baldwin 8-74)

Hampshire 113 (Fred Tate 7-48) and 162 (Bland 6-73).

1901 – Portsmouth - Sussex won by 52 runs

Sussex 159 (Fry 88; CB Llewellyn 6-89) and 212 (Fry 106; CB Llewellyn 6-119)

Hampshire 99 (Tate 7-52) and 220 (Tate 5-86).

Fry, of course, later joined Hampshire, in 1909. Fred Tate is more known as being the father of the immortal Maurice, but he was a considerable cricketer in his own right, taking 1306 wickets (avge. 21.48) for Sussex between 1887 and 1905. He is also unfairly remembered as the man whose dropped catch at Old Trafford cost England the Ashes in 1902. However, England's defeat, by 3 runs, in that match was due to errant selection and poor batting. It was Tate's only test. On being consoled by Len Braund at the end of the match (he was the last man to be dismissed), he was alleged to have commented that he had a son "who will make up for me". Prophetic words indeed.

WALLY HAMMOND AND TOM GODDARD

These two matches will almost certainly not be the only similar instances. When Tom Goddard claimed those seventeen wickets against Bristol in 1939, Wally Hammond had earlier scored 153 not out (out of 284 all out) in Gloucestershire's only innings.