

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

NEWSLETTER No. 383 – OCTOBER 2019 (2)

MEETINGS

Wednesday 23 October 2019 – Meeting

This evening's speaker is **JOHN MAY**, whom many members will remember fondly for his coverage of Hampshire cricket and Southampton Football Club in the Southampton Evening Echo during the 1990's. Hampshire born and bred, he spent his early life in the Civil Service before starting his journalism career on the Bexhill Observer. After his career locally, he joined BBC Sport in 2000. He then worked for the BBC Sport website and in production for Radio Five and television, including Match of the Day. He has covered three Olympic Games, three World Cups and a host of other major football tournaments and athletic championships. He is now Course leader and senior lecturer in Sports Journalism at Solent University. This is his second visit to the Society, his previous one being in January 1995.

Wednesday 2 October 2019 – Report

Before a large audience, Tim Arlott gave a memorable address on his father's life, which was enjoyed by all. Almost forty years after his last commentary, John Arlott is still in the public eye in the wake of the two new books by Stephen Fay and David Kynaston "Arlott, Swanton and The Soul of English Cricket" and Duncan Hamilton's "The Great Romantic", an autobiography of Sir Neville Cardus. The latter influenced John greatly at the start of his journalism career. John was an only son, who, besides being highly intelligent – he gained a Scholarship to Queen Mary's Grammar School by virtue of learning the whole of The Book of Common Prayer – was also cussedly independent. He chose to leave school after being banned from playing football, and failed his School Certificate because he left the exam early to watch Reading play. His first careers were clerical, in the local planning department and Park Prewett in Basingstoke, a mental health hospital. He met Tim's mother when he was in the Southampton Police Force; she was a nurse at Southampton General Hospital. During the war, the windows of his flat were blown out and such was the intensity of German bombing, the City was within a night of being evacuated.

He graduated from being PC94 to the best broadcaster in the country. He read avidly and banged on so many doors that he felt it was only a matter of time before he was able to follow a new career. He was once seen reading a book on traffic control duty! He became a good friend of John Betjeman, who introduced him to the BBC. His first published poem was Cricket at Worcester (written in 1946). He became a Literary Producer and befriended Dylan Thomas. He also knew Richard Burton. His first commentary assignment was to cover the Indian tour on the BBC Home Service. The MCC tour to South Africa in 1948/49 left him with a profound abhorrence of Apartheid, which reached its apotheosis in the D'Oliveira Affair. His views on that issue were not universally shared by the cricket Establishment, and, indeed, he received a particularly "nasty" letter from a former England captain. Ever independent of thought, he had previously raised the ire of the British Establishment

with his views on the BBC's Any Questions programme. Tim also mentioned that the royalties he received from his two hymns exceeded anything else he wrote. He also covered a number of aspects of John's family life. He was a terrific, family oriented, father. The early death of his son, James, in a road accident, caused him to wear a black tie for the rest of his life. He felt that, though he made good friends, it was a mistake to move to Alderney because of the adverse effect on his bronchitis. He also spoke with much affection on John's great friendship with Ian Botham.

REPORT OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's AGM was momentous in many ways. After twenty years at the helm, Susanne Marlow stood down as Chairman. Susanne worked tirelessly for the Society in arranging speakers, venues, the Annual Dinner, our Days at the Cricket, attending meetings of the Cricket Societies Association and ensuring the smooth passage of each of our meetings. Susanne expressed her thanks to the Committee and all the members of the Society for their support and kindness over the years. As a token of the Society's appreciation, Susanne was presented with an engraved crystal bowl. She was also made a Life Member. Susanne will continue to serve the Society as a Committee member.

Garry Lane was unanimously elected as Susanne's successor. He has already made his presence felt by arranging the Society's attractive programme of speakers for this winter.

It was announced that **NICHOLAS TWINE** and **JOHN YOUNG** had resigned from the Committee. Nick was one of the original members of the Committee when the Society was formed in 1976, and always brought clear thought and offered sage advice on a number of issues over that period. John was also a long standing member and, moreover, served as Chairman for nine years before being succeeded by Susanne. John was always a proud and enthusiastic supporter of the Society. The Editor would like to express his own appreciative thanks for the whole-hearted support given to him by Susanne, Nicholas and John.

John Hooper was unanimously confirmed as Hon. Secretary. John assumed responsibility towards the end of last winter and has brought a new perspective to some of the Society's proceedings, and eased the transition in Susanne's final year in office.

John Grapes was nominated to continue as Hon. Treasurer, also unanimously. John gave a comprehensively survey of the Society's Accounts and recommended that there be no increase in subscriptions. However, John flagged up that, in common with all other Societies, speakers' fees are increasing, and the Society will also incur increased venue costs. Whilst the Society currently carries a healthy bank balance, its finances will need to be kept under active review, particularly from 2021/22.

The Society's webmaster, Andy Ray, will continue to serve on the Committee. The value of both his contribution, and that of his wife, Sue, in maintaining the Society's website, database of members, and sending the Newsletter to members by email, is immense.

IN PRAISE OF COUNTY CRICKET (2)

Dave Allen writes with his impressions on **Hampshire's return to the ISLE OF WIGHT in May 2019.**

I have lived my life within walking distance of Southsea seafront, with its views across one of the busiest coastal waterways in Britain towards the Isle of Wight. It has been for me a frequent island of delights, ranging from childhood day trips on paddle steamers, to an adolescent weekend in a field listening to Bob Dylan and other leading musicians of those far-off days. A few years later I spent a rather delightful summer term teaching art as a student in Cowes High School, and playing a few evening games around the island, against the staff of other schools.

But although I was watching Hampshire play cricket from 1959, and knew of their matches there from 1956-1962 - including the vital victory over Essex in 1961 - I never saw them play Championship cricket on the island. Almost 40 years later, at Ventnor's charming Steephill ground, I saw Kevan James lead a side including 10-year-old Danny Briggs in a Cricket Max contest, an embryonic version of T20. Then a few years ago, I visited Newclose for the first time for a T20 warm-up between Hampshire and the PCA Masters. We had an enjoyable lunch in a large marquee but the rain poured down all day and we saw no play.

So it was that in late May 2019, I boarded the Fishbourne car ferry around the corner from my home, with a mixture of anticipation and concern at early morning grey skies, hoping not to repeat that experience on Brian Gardner's delightful ground. Brian was not there of course to see his dreams realised, although his family attended on day one, while Hugh Griffiths, his wife and many volunteers ensured that all was ready.

I spent much of the next four days sharing the radio tent with BBC's Kevan James, and Dave Bracegirdle from Nottingham, plus occasional visitors, including the Isle of Wight's own pace-man David Griffiths, and 91-year-old Alan Rayment who had played for Hampshire at Cowes in 1956 & 1957. In the latter match, he scored 80 in a victory over Nottinghamshire, but now he was able to enjoy in particular the batting of Sam Northeast and Ajinkya Rahane. When not on air, I wandered the ground with a clear view of play from every position - not something possible these days in many modern stadia - meeting Hampshire friends who had made the trip, as well as cricket-loving islanders, happy to share recollections of Hampshire's last Championship visit, 57 years ago.

On the first morning, with the pitch an unknown quantity, it was no surprise that Nottinghamshire waived the toss, and Hampshire's youngsters Joe Weatherley and Ollie Soames took strike against a formidable pace attack of Stuart Broad, Jake Ball and Luke Fletcher. Neither batsman will look back on the 2019 season with great fondness, but on this overcast morning they posted Hampshire's only first innings century opening partnership of the season, before Weatherley went for 66. Soames (44) batted on for more than four hours, joined initially by Hampshire's first overseas professional from India, Rahane, but Hampshire rather fell away to 245-6 with the dismissal of Liam Dawson, who was then whisked away from the island as a late (non-playing!) addition to England's World Cup Squad.

He followed Hampshire's captain James Vince who had passed that role to Northeast for the duration, while late on that first day, Aneurin Donald (46) and Ian Holland took Hampshire towards a third batting point, although the loss of their last four wickets in half-an-hour on the following morning was disappointing.

Nottinghamshire had arrived with their new batting recruits Ben Slater, Ben Duckett and Joe Clarke, despite which, the side had made a disappointing start to the season. There were runs in their opening draw with Yorkshire but then defeats against the eventual top two. Hampshire meanwhile had been up-and-down, beating Essex by an innings, losing to Yorkshire by the same margin, then defeating Warwickshire, who early season looked

candidates for the one relegation spot. It was hard to see Nottinghamshire in that predicament then, but when they batted Kyle Abbott and Keith Barker reduced them to 72-5, and only a battling century from skipper Steven Mullaney, with good support from Tom Moores, took them to within 71 of Hampshire's total.

Nottinghamshire restored the balance somewhat when in six awkward overs on day two, they dismissed Weatherley, and when Soames went first thing the next morning, the game looked more even at 9-2 – a Hampshire lead of 80. This was when in glorious weather, the game was changed, as for 60+ overs, Hampshire's captain emulated his opposite number with a fine century, while Rahane became the seventh man to score a century on first-class debut for the county – although all seven had played first-class previously elsewhere. Rahane had a somewhat disappointing spell with Hampshire, but on that day his sublime batting was of the highest quality against a Nottinghamshire pace attack which tended to pitch too short. The duo's partnership of 257 was our record for the third wicket against Nottinghamshire and it turned the match decisively, enabling Northeast to set a target of 439 with 15 awkward overs that evening, by which time both openers were lost.

I spent the week in a friend's flat in Seaview and drove across each morning, initially along the seafront to Ryde, where I bought papers and enjoyed a 'rock & roll' café breakfast, followed by a drive across the heart of the island with its marvellous rolling hills and fields. On that fourth morning I felt somewhat conflicted, hoping for a smooth Hampshire victory, but not wanting things to end too quickly. In the event, Chris Nash (60) and nightwatchman Matt Carter frustrated Hampshire sufficiently to ensure we could enjoy one more lunch, following the cricketers into the pavilion, but with three wickets each for Fidel Edwards, Abbott and Barker, Hampshire worked their way through what we now know was the doomed Nottinghamshire side, and in mid-afternoon and the 52nd over of the day, Dawson's playing substitute Mason Crane dismissed Ball to a skied catch, and the victory was Hampshire's, just as it had been against the same County on the island in 1957.

Back then of course county cricketers played competitively only over three-days; it would be six years before the introduction of a few knock-out cup matches, and not until 1969 on Sunday afternoons would they play regular one-day cricket. For four days in 2019, in fine weather on a beautiful 'outground' it was possible for those who remember those long-gone days, to imagine ourselves there again, with a stroll on the outfield at lunchtime, a solemn analysis of the pitch at close quarters, beer or ice cream from tents and vans around the outfield, parking on the adjacent field, deckchairs to lounge in and perhaps best of all, wherever we walked, grass under our feet.

That week was, if anything, more perfect than I could have hoped, and I wonder whether, if we are to return next year, it can be as good again? Why not? After all, I enjoyed Bob Dylan in 1969 under grey skies on a chilly Sunday evening, shortly after Hampshire's Sunday League victory over Somerset at Southampton, thanks principally to two local lads, Richard Lewis (66) and Peter Sainsbury (4-23). But in the following year, I moved up a notch from a flat field to a hillside, the sun shone, and there before us were Jimi Hendrix, Joni Mitchell, Miles Davis, Joan Baez, the Who and so many others to delight. Similarly, then, I shall anticipate that Newclose 2020 will happen, will at least equal the magic of 2019, and will record another victory on the Isle of Wight, which, as it did in 1961, takes Hampshire towards that long-awaited third County Championship title.