

HAMPPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

NEWSLETTER No 384 – NOVEMBER 2019

MEETINGS

ANNUAL DINNER with VIC MARKS- WEDNESDAY 4 DECEMBER

Spaces are still available for the annual dinner. If members wish to attend, would they please complete the Application Form on the Society's website which contains all the details of the event, including menu, details of payment and the address to which the application form should be returned. If any queries, please email the Society's secretary, John Hooper, on secretary@hantscricsoc.org.uk Our speaker is VIC MARKS, formerly of Somerset, England and Western Australia. He has been a long term contributor to The Guardian and, of course, Test Match Special. The editor heard him speak at the Salisbury Festival in June of this year. His talk covered his early life on his father's farm, university days in the era of Imran Khan, his time with that almost fabled Somerset team of the 70s/80s, an interesting international career, journalism and TMS. It ended with some erudite and critical views on The Hundred. Coupled with the dinner, a splendidly entertaining evening is assured. His second volume of autobiography, *Original Spin*, is well worth reading.

Wednesday 13 November 2019 – Meeting

This afternoon's speaker is **GRAHAME LLOYD**, who is the authority on that famous over when Gary Sobers struck six sixes off Malcolm Nash's bowling at Swansea in 1968. He has written and spoken extensively about the ball, and subsequent auctions at which the alleged object was sold. This will be his third visit to the Society, having previously spoken in February 2010, and September 2014. This afternoon, he will be reminiscing about the event, with film footage, and updating members on subsequent developments. He will also be reciting poetry and playing his guitar. It promises to be a most entertaining afternoon. Grahame Lloyd's biographical details can be found on the Society's website in the Newsletters for his previous visits.

Wednesday 23 October 2019 – Report

Members enjoyed a most stimulating, informative and, by the end, a somewhat sobering evening with John May as he gave an account of how sports journalism coverage has changed, and continues to develop. Whilst working for the Southampton Echo, he had been paid for the privilege of watching, among others, Barry Richards, Gordon Greenidge, Andy Roberts, Richard Gilliat, Peter Sainsbury, Robin Smith, Mark Nicholas and Malcolm Marshall. Among his press box colleagues at Northlands Road were John Arlott, Richie Benaud, Jim Laker and Peter West, Dickie Rutnagur, the incorrigible David Green, Martin Johnson and Chris Martin-Jenkins. There were stories aplenty.

He had begun with the sobering statement that some 90% of his annual intake of 60-70 students were interested only in Premier League football. Most received their education in state schools, where little cricket is now being played. There were several other reasons influencing the lack of interest in the game. Since 2006 there has been no coverage on terrestrial television, which has resulted in the sport being lost in the national consciousness and psyche. The ECB's response to this situation has been live BBC coverage of The Hundred from 2020, which for the broadcaster is paying £220m. Sky are currently paying £75m for their cricket coverage.

Whilst he was growing up, county cricket was extensively reported in the national newspapers. It has now almost disappeared. The same is the case in local publications. His previous employer now only majors on Southampton FC, Eastleigh FC, and Hampshire. Club cricket and football were formerly reported comprehensively.

The print media, both nationally and locally, has diminished considerably because of increasing use of the internet, eg BBC Sports website, Cricinfo. The ECB now contract out to the Press Association and Reuters to provide syndicated coverage. There is therefore a uniformity of coverage which tends to be reportage which can be gleaned from the scorecard; the individuality of sports writers, and a flavour of the game, eg condition of the wicket, the character and technical traits of the players, are being lost.

Also, because of society changes, fewer people are playing the game. Evening league, and Sunday, cricket are struggling.

The future of cricket reporting will be via mobile phone technology, which will provide current, contemporaneous and up-to-date coverage. Youtube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat will provide little scope for the reflective elements of print and text media. TV coverage will be streamed via the likes of Netflix, and Amazon Prime.

By the end of a most enlightening evening, members were aware that all those interested in cricket are living in a fast-changing environment. Perhaps the most startling piece of information imparted by John May was the feasibility of Artificial Intelligence (AI), ie robots, being investigated to cover sports. If there is thunder and lightning after members read this report, it is probably Cardus, Arlott, et al being disturbed from their repose.

A LOOK FORWARD TO 2020

WEDNESDAY 15 JANUARY-7.30pm at The Ageas Bowl – CLAIRE TAYLOR (England Women and Chairman of MCC's Cricket Committee) and KEITH WALMSLEY (Chairman of Association of Cricket Statisticians and a long-standing Hampshire Cricket Society member).

WEDNESDAY 5 FEBRUARY 2020 – 2.00pm at TEST VALLEY GOLF CLUB - ALAN FORDHAM (Northamptonshire and ECB Head of Cricket Operations)

**WEDNESDAY 4 MARCH 2020 – 7.30pm at TEST VALLEY GOLF CLUB –
DAVID MILLNS (Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire)**

**WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2020 - 7.30pm at The Ageas Bowl – TONY COTTEY
(Glamorgan and Sussex)**

HAMPSHIRE NEWS

Members will be aware by now that the County have signed the Australian off-spin bowler, **NATHAN LYON**, for next season. He will be playing in Championship matches only. He was, of course, involved in some titanic duels with Ben Stokes in last summer's Ashes series, none more so that at Headingley, when the England all-rounder famously took his side to victory against all the odds. If Lyon had not used the last Australia DRS review a short time before the end, he would have bowled Australia to victory after he struck Stokes plumb in front of his stumps with England one run short. The umpire refused his impassioned plea for lbw.

Aged 31 (born in Young, New South Wales on 20 November 1987), he has played virtually all his career at the top level. He made his debut for South Australia in February 2011. Three matches later, he was in the Australian side for a test in Galle, Sri Lanka, in August of that year. He took the wicket of Kumar Sangakarra with his first ball and finished with five for 34. Since that time, his place has only been challenged briefly by Ashton Agar. He has now played in 91 Tests and taken 363 wickets (avge. 32.30), the most by any off-spin bowler for Australia.

He has had previous experience of county cricket, for Worcestershire, for whom he played four matches in 2017. He suffered some cavalier treatment from county batsmen, taking only six wickets (avge. 67.16). Indeed, his record in England is distinctly underwhelming. In 24 matches, he has taken 68 wickets at a cost of over 40 runs per dismissal. However, he was a force to be reckoned with last summer, and if he can produce form similar to that of Essex's Simon Harmer, then Hampshire and their supporters will be very happy.

GARETH BERG

Gareth Berg's departure to Northamptonshire towards the end of the season, on loan prior to a permanent move, went almost unnoticed. It was a pity, as Hampshire supporters will remember him fondly. He was a genuine all-rounder: a right-arm fast medium bowler, who was particularly dangerous with the new ball in particular. Indeed, such was his skill, he sometimes opened the bowling, though there were faster bowlers in the side. He batted right-handed. He always looked to attack the bowling, but was able to defend if the situation demanded it.

He joined the County in 2015, after having missed virtually the whole of the previous season with his former County, Middlesex, through injury. He made an immediate impression. He took a wicket with his first ball, bowling Sussex's Chris Nash. When he batted later in the match he was bowled first ball by Steve Magoffin. It had been a remarkable start.

A few weeks later, against the same County at Hove, he demonstrated his batting abilities by scoring a rapid, hard-hitting 99, during which he added 165 for the eighth wicket with the mercurial Adam Wheeler (111). It was a match-turning partnership; Hampshire had been 54 runs behind Sussex's total of 251 when they came together. Berg was deprived of his century when he was run out by a direct hit from the late, and much lamented, Matthew Hobden. The county eventually went on to win by six wickets. He ended the season with 42 wickets in championship matches; only Fidel Edwards (45) took more. He also scored 672 runs. For these all round accomplishments, HCS members voted him as Player of the Year.

Prior to the following season, he incurred an injury pre-season in Barbados, did not return to the side until June, and never quite reclaimed his form of the previous season. However, he did return his career best bowling figures of six for 56 against Yorkshire at the Ageas Bowl.

In 2017, he formed an excellent opening bowling partnership with Kyle Abbott whilst Fidel Edwards was absent through injury. The pair complemented one another perfectly. Bowling straight and accurately, he was a willing foil to his fellow South African. They bowled most overs and took 97 wickets between them; (Abbott 60, Berg 37). It was noticeable that they spent much of their time on the field in conversation, plotting against their opponents. He also equalled his highest score for the county when he made 99 not out against Yorkshire at home. The White Rose County always seemed to bring out the best in him. Unfortunately, a century was to elude him.

His bowling tailed off in championship matches in his last two seasons, but he compensated in the Royal London Cup. In 2018 he took 13 wickets, behind only Mason Crane (15), and was in the winning side in the Final at Lord's. Last summer, his five wickets were an important factor in Hampshire's eventual victory against Lancashire in the semi-final at the Ageas Bowl. His late intervention resulted in Lancashire losing their last four wickets for nine runs, a performance which earned him the Man of the Match award. He then played in the Final against Somerset.

After leaving Hampshire, he played in Northamptonshire's final three matches, taking eight wickets, as they clinched promotion to Division 1. He had returned to the County in which he first played club cricket in this country when he arrived from his native South Africa fifteen years previously. With his new County, he will be forming a new ball bowling partnership with Ben Sanderson and Brett Hutton, which will demand respect from first division batsmen.

In 57 first-class matches for Hampshire, he scored 1959 runs (avge 27.59), which included a creditable ten half-centuries, and took 125 wickets (avge 31.34). He also totalled 620 runs and 77 wickets in List A in t20 matches.

JAMES VINCE IN NEW ZEALAND

James Vince's international career has continued to meet with mixed fortunes. He was selected for four of England's five t20 international matches in New Zealand, in which he top scored with 59 at Christchurch's picturesque Hagley Park, and made

49 at Nelson. He scored a single in each of his other two matches. He also held a total of five catches, but dropped three (as well as catching two) in Wellington.

Unfortunately, he was omitted from the match at Napier when England made hay on a rugby ground with short boundaries. Dawid Malan, who was effectively selected instead of the Hampshire captain, made 103 not out (six 6s), reaching his century off 48 balls, England's fastest ever t20 century. Eoin Morgan struck 91 off 41 balls (7 sixes). His half century came off 21 balls, another England record.

THE ARRIVAL OF FELIX ORGAN

The normal route for a new player's introduction into the first-class game these days is via white ball cricket. It is increasingly rare for a youngster to make their debut in Championship cricket.

Felix Organ first played for Hampshire in an ill-starred fixture against Middlesex at Uxbridge in September 2017. Rain on each of the 14 days prior to the match put the start in doubt beforehand. The problem was magnified when it was discovered that water had seeped under one of the covers. Heaters and additional covering were brought in. Several players, and Middlesex's Director of Cricket Angus Fraser - memorably armed with a pitchfork - tried in vain to help the ground staff. The first day's play was inevitably abandoned. Rain then returned on the second and third days, allowing only 59 overs to be bowled. On a lively pitch, Middlesex eventually reached 204 on the fourth; in shades of 2019, Kyle Abbott and Fidel Edwards took eight wickets between them. Hampshire were then bowled out for 146 in the 37th over. However, Organ, aged 18, and batting at five, displayed an equable temperament in making 16 off 36 balls. Only Joe Weatherley (33) batted longer. It had been a testing baptism.

He then played for Hampshire in four matches in the Regional Super50 tournament in the West Indies in February of the following year. In two visits to the crease, he failed to get off the mark. Though he scored three centuries for Hampshire 2nd XI in the ensuing summer, he was not selected for the first team, which often struggled for runs in the four-day game.

He started last summer in prolific form, scoring another three centuries for the 2nd XI in their first four Championship matches. An injury to Joe Weatherley, the unavailability of James Vince and the implosion of Ollie Soames finally gave him his opportunity and he was brought in for the match against Warwickshire at the Ageas Bowl in early July. Opening with Ian Holland (who went on to score his maiden first-class century), he made 1 and 18, and impressed with his part-time, little regarded, off-spin bowling on the final day as Warwickshire escaped with a draw. In the final two sessions, on a flat, slow, pitch, he looked more likely to take a wicket than any other bowler. He was retained for the match against Kent in the following week. Sam Northeast was also now absent, having been selected for the England Lions. In only his first-class third match, and fourth innings, he hit a round 100. His first fifty was a staccato affair. Grim defence was married with some thrilling shots. He was also hit on the head. He eventually reached his half century off 158 balls (three sixes and two fours). Having reached the landmark, and with the appearance of Rilee Rossouw, never one to hold back, his confidence and fluency increased. He was

eventually dismissed immediately after reaching his century, having batted for almost five and a half hours and faced 234 balls. He was greeted with the warmest applause from his attentive and appreciative audience.

He played in the remaining four-day matches for the rest of the summer, going on to score 77 and 54 against Surrey, at The Oval and the Ageas Bowl respectively. Moreover, he made a further mark with his bowling in the latter game. Bad light looked to be bringing play to an early end on the fourth day. However, captain James Vince, imaginatively turned to Organ, who ran through the middle and lower order, to take five for 25 off only eight overs and bring about a Hampshire victory by 272 runs.

The Sydney born, Canford (Dorset) educated right-handed batsman, had made quite a mark in the final half of the season. And he did it all in the County Championship. Hampshire must take much credit for his careful development hitherto.

THE HUNDRED

As this season has drawn to a close the thoughts of cricket followers will already be thinking of 2020. The most controversial issue before fixtures have been released is the much publicised The Hundred. This article describes what is already known, with a commentary on the proposals.

WHAT IS IT?

This is a franchise-like tournament comprising eight teams. Each innings will be 100 balls-hence the name. This competition is a fourth format being incorporated into an already crowded playing programme. The teams will be owned by the national board and the competition is planned to run from July 17 to August 15. There will be 32 group matches, before four play-off games. It is a made-for TV competition. In its first year, the timing coincides to a degree with football's Euro finals and the Tokyo Olympics which will both be live on BBC television with no doubt extensive highlight programmes (Bad planning or bad luck? The Olympics involves a different time zone; nevertheless it will undoubtedly prove popular in terms of viewing numbers with the general public.) Test match grounds only are being used to stage the games. All the matches will be on Sky with ten men's games on BBC TV. This formed an integral part of the £1.1bn 2020-2024 TV contract announced in June 2017. The ECB assumed that the BBC was looking for a package that could be slotted into a three hour time span probably from 6pm to 9pm. All the indications suggest that the BBC wanted something different to t20 and from this The Hundred crystallised. The ECB claim that The Hundred is easier to understand. Why and how has not been explained. Then there is the planned 10 ball over. Apparently, the number of bowlers that can bowl the 10 balls is still under discussion.

The English Cricket Board (ECB) is staking the future of cricket in this country with a format that is played nowhere else in the world. The anticipated cost is £180m over five years (including £6m a year on marketing). Setting up The Hundred has led to the ECB's cash reserves plummeting from £75m to £8m over the last two years which begs the question as to the competence of the ECB in running the game and whether they have its best interests at heart when there is profligacy to such an

extent. These are huge amounts of money. I guess it all comes down to the bottom line with the ECB but whether this equates favourably with the overall future of the game is questionable. The game at club level is shrinking year by year which is a grave concern. In state schools the game does not exist in any meaningful way. Once the traditional pastime of summer, cricket is now ranked as the eighth most popular sport in schools, behind the likes of netball and basketball. It is to be hoped that some of the money from the new broadcast deal will find its way towards trying to develop the game wisely instead of focussing on flashy gimmicks. Every county is being given £1.3m a year for five years for agreeing to The Hundred. The counties have been seduced with short term riches. For many of the ten counties not involved in staging games, this is likely to be the only way to keep some in business. It is to be hoped that all the counties have seriously thought through the possible consequences of their actions. If there are doubts on this score I encourage people to take a close look at the current financial position of all the counties and the amount of debt that is being carried overall. How long will it be before county mergers take place? Or some Counties disappear from the first-class scene? Fears that the eight teams will lead to a reduction in the number of first-class counties have not gone away and nor will they. It is impossible to underestimate the issue of identity. Some counties have been playing cricket for between 100-150 years. People have grown up with that fact as a part of their psyche. Is there a hidden ECB agenda to extend the franchise concept to other competitions? It appears that beyond focus groups and some polling data, the extent of which has never been quantified, a solid case for a fourth format of the game has yet to be coherently made.

So where does this leave the remainder of the schedule for 2020 and beyond and the consequences for the game? The game is being dismantled. The County Championship is being further marginalised. The counties have managed to get the ECB to agree to keep to the current 14 game programme but 11 of those matches will be played in April, May and September, when pitches are bowler-friendly. It is this format of the game which will provide Test cricketers of the future. The ability of County Championship cricket to carry out this function will continue to be difficult. Test cricket outside of England, Australia and India is dying anyway. This coming winter there are likely to be more English people attending the Test matches than local New Zealanders or South Africans. The 50 over competition will become irrelevant and who will be prepared to sponsor it? This development is extremely odd with England having just won the World Cup after five years of meticulous planning to achieve this goal. Next year England are scheduled to play 50 over one day internationals but it would appear that this is the only time the team members will play this format during the season. The t20 competition is being relegated in prominence and, in the main, will take place in June. The Vitality Blast t20 in 2019 has without doubt continued to capture the imagination of the fans and a further increase in attendances has been in evidence across the board and increasingly attracts the younger element who often come with parents and grandparents. So is there a need for this additional format? Might it be a better strategy to put more marketing effort into the existing t20 Blast. It could be tweaked to fit a TV schedule. The fans will continue to identify themselves primarily with their county team with many fixtures continuing to be a sell-out.

Each of the new teams team will engage one contracted English player but only for the initial games, due to the scheduling of test matches. One objective of the ECB is to encourage our Asian population to become engaged with The Hundred. However no Indian players will be released by their Board to play with no participation of their players outside the IPL allowed. What about overseas players who come for our t20 cricket? They tend to underperform here even though they may be stars in the IPL or the Big Bash. It is unlikely that they will perform any better in The Hundred. It is arguable that any of the squads selected at the recent auction are any better than the best County teams. There has been an element of Emperor's New Clothes throughout the introduction of The Hundred and the auction has only reinforced that impression. The quality of all eight squads is extremely contentious and underwhelming. It certainly doesn't deserve all the hype.

Hampshire supporters will have the opportunity to come to The Hundred at The Ageas. Spare a thought for a supporter of Somerset and Gloucestershire at Taunton and Bristol respectively and whether they would be prepared to travel to Cardiff to watch a shorter game having in mind the additional time and cost involved. Will Sussex supporters living in the east of that County be prepared to travel to West End?

The tournament has been formulated with no consideration to the long-term or development of the game in this country in terms of improving the standard of county cricket the quality of existing or budding test cricketers. However, we are told that the game in this country is in good hands. We must all hope that this proves to be the case. Only time will tell.

Skerryvore

NEW BOOKS ON HAMPSHIRE CRICKET

Three books on Hampshire cricketers have been published in the past few months:-

The Judge by Robin Smith (pub. Yellow Jersey Press)

Keeping Up: The Story of a Specialist Wicketkeeper by Michael Bates and Tom Huelin

These two books are available on Amazon.

The third publication is **William Ward: A Forgotten Man** by Stephen Saunders. Stephen is Hampshire's premier authority on 19th century cricket. Ward was a giant in that epoch, one of the most country's most influential financial figures and an active MP. He saved Lord's from the developers when he purchased the lease from Thomas Lord. He scored a century for Hampshire, was the maker of the first hundred by a Gentleman in the Gents v Players series and his 278 for MCC v Norfolk in 1820 was the highest first-class score until WG Grace exceeded it in 1876. The book (276 pages) is available from the author at oastcottage@btinternet.com for £20 plus £4 postage.

