

# HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

**Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson**

**NEWSLETTER No. 386 – JANUARY 2020**

## MEETINGS

### Wednesday 15 January 2020 - Meeting

The Society is delighted to welcome **CLAIRE TAYLOR** and **KEITH WALMSLEY** to this evening's meeting.

Claire Taylor was a formidable presence in women's international cricket in the first decade of the current century. She gained a permanent place in the game's history when she became the first woman to be nominated as one of *Wisden's* Five Cricketers of the Year in 2009. She was in very distinguished company. The other four were James Anderson, Dale Benkenstein, Mark Boucher and Neil McKenzie. She gained recognition for her splendid feats in international cricket in 2008. In February, she scored 79 and 64 not out as England Women beat Australia Women in a one-off Test at Bowral, only their fourth Test victory in Australia. In the ensuing summer, she played a key role as England Women won all nine of their one-day internationals. The editor of *Wisden*, Scyld Berry, wrote: "...there is no element of political correctness or publicity-seeking about her selection. The best cricketers in the country should be recognised, irrespective of gender. Taylor has been chosen on merit, for being pre-eminent in her form of the game". She emphasised her standing when England were victorious in both the World Cup in Australia in the Spring of 2009, and the inaugural World Twenty 20 tournament in the following summer. Already the world's number one batsman in the rankings, she was the leading run scorer and Player of the Tournament in both competitions. Unsurprisingly, she was named the ICC Women's Cricketer of the Year in October of that year. She went on to be awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List in 2010.

Upon our speaker's retirement in 2011, Clare Connor, ECB head of women's cricket, paid testament to her virtues. She referred to Claire Taylor's "incomparable hunger to improve, hard work and mental toughness" and commented on the respect with which she was held. Her long-term coach, Mark Lane also reported on her "doggedness and determination", adding "it's her ability to think several overs ahead and work the field around which makes her the world's No 1". She was an Oxford Maths graduate and a chess player; she felt that these gave her "a 3D awareness of the shape of the field and where the spaces are....and more control and confidence when I'm calculating the runs per over we have to score". She clearly possessed a multi-faceted portfolio of attributes and skills.

**SAMANTHA CLAIRE TAYLOR** was born in Amersham on 25 September 1975, to sporting parents. She was first spotted at the age of 13 in a summer camp, but her main sport in her teens was hockey. She was in the England Under-17 and Under-19 squads as a centre forward and won three hockey Blues whilst at Oxford. However, she had begun to play as a wicket-keeper for Thames Valley Women at the age of 16, and played men's cricket for the Queen's College First XI at Oxford, where she won three half Blues; in a 50-over match against Cambridge Women, she hit 158.

Our speaker first gained international recognition in an ODI against Australia at Southampton's County Ground in July 1998. She played her first Test against India a year later and went on to play much of her career at international level until her retirement in 2011, appearing in 15 Tests, 126 ODIs and 27 Twenty20 matches. She is one of only five England women to score over 1000 runs in tests (1030 at the excellent average of 43.16), including four centuries; her highest score was 177 against South Africa at Shenley in 2003. She also averaged over 40 in ODIs, in which she scored 4101 runs. Her highest score was 156 not out against India at Lord's in 2006 - ***this remains the highest individual score in any ODI, men and women, on the ground.*** In her long career, she travelled extensively, playing in New Zealand (where she spent three seasons in domestic provincial cricket), Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and India. That she scored so prolifically in all forms of cricket in all types of climate and conditions speaks volumes for her ability. The Society is very proud to welcome such a distinguished cricketer this evening.

Claire Taylor's presence this evening is due to our fellow guest, **KEITH WALMSLEY**. The pair are both members of the Reading Symphony Orchestra. Keith has been a long-standing member of the Society who has supported our Annual Dinners for many years. He is now Chairman of The Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians and will be explaining the work of the organisation, which is an integral part not only of English cricket, but the world game. He is a retired town planner, born in Middlesex but resident for over 40 years in Reading. He still wonders how in 1981 he failed to attend the one and only first-class match (Minor Counties v Sri Lankans - see page 4) ever played in the town. The editor, and other historians in Hampshire, have been very grateful to Keith in the past for his always willing response to queries. He is an exhaustive researcher, who has written several books, including one on the Australian Clem Hill, and others on some of the more esoteric, but always interesting, aspects of cricket's history, eg men who played in one first-class match and clubs who played two matches (and even three) simultaneously.

### **Wednesday 13 November 2019 - Report**

On his third visit to the Society, Grahame Lloyd provided members with a most joyous afternoon. In a combination of film, poetry, and song, he brought the saga of the "Sobers ball" – the one with which Garry Sobers hit Malcolm Nash for six sixes in an over at St. Helen's, Swansea in 1968 - to a conclusion. Not that the matter will ever be finalised. It is indisputable that the ball bowled by the former (who died of a heart attack last summer and addressed the Society in November 2018) is not the one auctioned by Christie's in London in 2006, and sold for £26,400. Their Catalogue claimed the ball was a Duke's. However, Glamorgan had an exclusive contract with a sports shop in Swansea for the provision of SurrIDGE balls that summer. The whereabouts of the actual ball has been unknown for many years and it will never be found. Christie's Catalogue also alleged that three balls had been used in the over, but film footage shows that only one was used, a fact confirmed by the Glamorgan fielders, Sobers and Nash. The ball was bought by an Indian, who couldn't afford the statutory import duty. It therefore languished in Delhi Airport for 18 months before being sold on in that country. However, the new owner then arranged for the alleged ball to be auctioned at Bonham's in Chester in 2012. On the evidence provided by Grahame Lloyd, it was withdrawn. And that is where the story currently ends. Our speaker's search for the truth was no longer related to the ball itself; he concluded that it had disappeared years ago. His issue was that Christie's would not confirm

they were wrong. Christie's have always claimed, rightly, that they have a Certificate of Provenance on the ball's authenticity signed by Sobers. However, the great West Indian was clearly mistaken. Most cricketers carry a variety of balls in their bags and Grahame Lloyd's conclusion was that he just identified the wrong one when he returned to Trent Bridge after the match. Strangely, the one man who could have confirmed the authenticity of the ball – Malcolm Nash – was never asked. At the end of the afternoon, our speaker asked his audience to join him in song by singing the chorus "Pure collectable gold but the truth must be told/The ball that was sold was not the ball bowled". It is small wonder that after such a riveting story and splendidly entertaining afternoon, there was much demand for our speaker's definitive book on the matter *Howzat-The Six Sixes Ball Mystery*.

The afternoon also demonstrated that the Wednesday afternoon meetings at Test Valley Golf Club are very popular with members. There was a good audience, compatible with many at the Ageas Bowl. Many members partake of a meal beforehand, which inevitably enhances to the sociability of the occasion.

### **Wednesday 4 December 2019 - Report**

The evening began in sombre mood with the news that Bob Willis had died earlier in the day. Members stood in a minute's silence. Our speaker, Vic Marks, somehow found time to post his obituary for *The Guardian* prior to the meeting. In his inimitable manner, laced with whimsical humour, he lightened the mood with his own recollections of the great fast bowler. Willis had been his captain when our speaker made his test debut. He described how Willis' physique didn't match the template for a fast bowler; it was Heath Robinson-like. He possessed sparrows' legs, a pigeon chest inhabited by very few hairs and was seemingly devoid of any biceps. He didn't really have much time for the press, but joined the Sky team soon after his retirement and became renowned as a trenchant critic, at least on screen. There were stories aplenty of the cricketers of his era in the ensuing time. Inevitably, Brian Close, Ian Botham, Viv Richards and Joel Garner figured prominently. The former was one of the game's great characters. All four were imposing. He described how he enjoyed writing *Original Spin* after initially approaching the task with some apprehension. One of the differences between commentating and writing was that the latter needed to be more exact. He found that on checking scorecards etc, that he had been telling some stories in his speeches inaccurately over the years. Venues, dates, participants proved to be different than he remembered! He thought that he would be one of the last ex first-class cricketers to earn a living in the print media. He ended with comments on The Hundred. His big fear was that if young players were able to earn such large sums in the shorter game, they would have no incentive to become more rounded batsmen by working on their techniques for four-day or Test cricket.

Vic Marks' thoroughly entertaining speech set the scene for a most convivial meal, provided by the conscientious Ageas Bowl staff. Our speaker was only too pleased to speak to diners throughout the evening. It was a memorable occasion.

### **SIR GORDON GREENIDGE**

The Society offers its sincere congratulations to Gordon Greenidge who was awarded a Knighthood in the New Year's Honours List for his services to cricket and the development of sport in Barbados.

The assiduous David Allen has found that 19 previous Hampshire players have been knighted since the club became a first-class County in 1864, but only two (Sir Francis Lacey and Andy Roberts) were specifically for cricket.

Stephen Saunders, Hampshire's foremost early 19<sup>th</sup> century historian, has found a further five men who were knighted and appeared for the County prior to 1864.

### **THAT FIRST-CLASS MATCH IN READING**

The Minor Counties side included Richard Lewis, who had the misfortune to spend all his career in the gigantic shadows cast by Barry Richards and Gordon Greenidge. In a drawn match, in which the final day's play was washed out, he distinguished himself by making 47 and 53 not out.

### **OBITUARY - MALCOLM HEATH**

Malcolm Heath, who played for Hampshire in their first Championship winning year in 1961, passed away on 17<sup>th</sup> December, aged 85, after a long illness.

He left an indelible impression upon the Editor's memory when he first started watching Hampshire during that wonderfully nostalgic and unforgettable summer of 1961. It seems a world away now. The first match he watched was against Oxford University at Portsmouth in July. On a beautiful sunlit Saturday, Malcolm Heath, opening the bowling with Denis Baldry, helped reduce the undergraduates to 32 for four. The Light Blues possessed a very strong top order, comprising David Pithey (South Africa), Duncan Worsley (Lancashire), Abbas Ali Baig (India) and David Green (Lancashire and Gloucestershire). Fred Neate (Berkshire) and Green then effected a recovery. Heath returned to dismiss them both and later took the penultimate wicket. There then followed a breezy, last wicket stand before Heath took a fine running catch on the boundary at long off to give Alan Castell his first wicket in first-class cricket. It proved to be the last ball of the day. The University were 313 all out, Malcolm Heath having taken five for 78.

Late in the season, at the end of August, the Editor was taken to see the Australians at Southampton. Neil Harvey was one of his heroes at the time and was not out 70 on Saturday night. To mixed emotions, Heath castled the great Australian early on Monday morning. He batted, left-handed, later in the day. His tall frame, he was six feet five inches tall, had the effect of making his bat look impossibly small.

He claimed 63 wickets (avge. 26.73) in that golden summer. He formed part of a three-pronged pace attack with Derek Shackleton and "Butch" White, giving way to Mervyn Burden and, towards the end of the season, Alan Wassell, if the wicket was receptive to spin.

It was a sad moment in post-war Hampshire cricket, when he was forced to retire from the game, owing to a hip injury, at the end of the following season when still only 28 years of age. Malcolm Brewster Heath was born in Ferndown on 9 March 1934. He made his Hampshire debut in 1954 and in his fifth match dismissed Sir Leonard Hutton in both innings, at Bournemouth. He made quiet, but steady, progress in the next two years before finally making his mark with 76 wickets (avge 27.06) in 1957, gaining his County Cap in the process.

The following year was, at that stage, the most successful in Hampshire's history. They headed the Championship for most of the summer and eventually finished runners-up. Taking over from Vic Cannings with the new ball, Malcolm Heath excelled with 126 wickets (avge 16.42). He produced career best figures of 8 – 43 (13 – 86 match) against Sussex at Portsmouth. He also bowled unchanged (taking 13 – 87) with Derek Shackleton (7 – 88) in that remarkable match against Derbyshire at Burton-on-Trent, when 39 wickets fell on the second day. Heath and Shackleton were trumped by Cliff Gladwin, Les Jackson, and Derek Morgan. Hampshire were bowled out for 23 and 55 and were defeated by 103 runs. Their Championship challenge ended as a result. 1958 proved to be his best season. He continued to take wickets consistently but the advent of White and the injury which eventually ended his career, stopped him from repeating his high attainments of that summer. He was a wholehearted bowler with fine control of pace as his final career haul of 527 wickets (avge 25.12) will testify.

He was something of a totemic figure in Hampshire's post-war history. He was the first bowler of genuine pace to emerge since the 1930s. In Heath's first match, Neville Rogers, fielding at forward short-leg, rubbed his hands on seeing a ball rear at a Leicestershire batsman. It was the first time he had stood in the field and seen an opposing batsman duck away from a Hampshire bowler. It was sometimes said that he lacked the killer instinct of the genuine fast bowler. However, perhaps aware of his body's frailties, he always bowled conservatively. He also felt that cricket was a game to be enjoyed and always claimed that he played in a golden age, of which he was very proud.

With his contemporary, Mervyn Burden, he was one of cricket's most natural number elevens. His run aggregate (571– avge 5.08) only just exceeded his wicket tally. He also held 42 catches. Following his retirement, he played club cricket for Scarborough and worked for Guinness.

He addressed the Society with his great friend, Somerset and Durham's Ken Biddulph, on 27 September 1989 at The Polygon Hotel, Southampton (see below). The pair brought to life the great characters during their playing career. They talked for two hours without a break and the Newsletter report concluded that nobody would have minded had they carried on until midnight.

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In the early years of the Society, the famous cricket writer, E M Wellings, lived in Basingstoke and was a regular contributor to the Newsletter. In the edition for the above meeting, he wrote about Malcolm Heath's early days in the game:-

In 1948....it was primarily the blight of English bowling that persuaded *The Evening News* in London to take up Alf Gover's suggestion by financing a coaching scheme. It was open to all youngsters of school age within reach of Gover's indoor school at Wandsworth, who would not otherwise have professional coaching. Some 1,200, recommended by their school masters or youth club leaders, came for a trial. From those, 150 were chosen for coaching once a week throughout the winter months.

Among the early boys in the scheme were Malcolm Heath and Ken Biddulph. Heath was indeed the first to join a County. Sometime in the New Year, the best of the boys showed their skills one Sunday under the eyes of representatives of the

southern counties. Desmond Eagar quickly signed on Heath. His mother was not sure about cricket as a profession for Malcolm. I remember her phoning me to ask about it. She had a beautiful speaking voice, better than many on the BBC today. And I remember her concluding that he might just as well have a crack at it, saying “I don’t know what else he could try, except plumber’s mate”.

### **KEN BIDDULPH AND STEPHEN CHALKE**

Ken Biddulph went on to gain an unwitting place in cricket’s social history, for it was he whom Stephen Chalke approached for coaching to improve his game in September 1993, four years after the former’s appearance at the Society’s meeting. Their conversations after each half hour coaching session provided the catalyst for Fairfield Books’ (Chalke’s own company) prolific output of 42 books, of which Chalke wrote 19, in 23 years. It had proved, as per the title of one of his books, *A Long Half Hour*. He revolutionised cricket writing, his subjects’ reminiscences providing a social history of the game in the last 130 years. Each book was of the highest quality, in terms of presentation and content. No summer was complete without one of their newly published books. Through Stephen Chalke’s unstinting efforts, Fairfield Books developed a very loyal following. Every reader will have their favourite. His final work, an autobiographical *Through The Remembered Gate*, would be on any shortlist for the best cricket book of 2019.

### **A ONE AND ONLY by Sticky Wicket**

I have a recurring cricket dream. I am playing before a full house at Lords, the tea interval is over and my teammates are back on the field of play. The first ball after tea is bowled and the batsman hits the ball high in the sky towards square leg. I should be fielding at square leg but am still in the changing room and either cannot find my boots, they are split and unwearable, or more likely, I have not finished my plate of cake and sandwiches.

I could only dream of playing a first class game of cricket, at Lords or anywhere else, due to a lack of cricketing ability, but an erstwhile school friend, Neil Thomas Moffatt, has achieved that dream. We were pupils at school in Oxford where Tom excelled at rugby, basketball and cricket. It was probably his sporting ability rather than his academic prowess that earned him a place at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge to study geography, where he played cricket alongside Christopher Martin Jenkins.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> 1969, the captain of the University cricket team, Tony Jordan, who later played for Essex CCC and gained seven caps at rugby for England, knocked on Tom’s door early in the morning and asked if he could play for the University against Warwickshire. A late withdrawal due to injury, and examinations on the horizon, Tom was the only person available to play. The invitation was immediately accepted.

He knew he had been handed a golden opportunity, and made his way to Fenners where he had spent many happy hours as a spectator. Now, cricket bag in hand, Tom was entitled to walk through the ‘players’ gate and climb the steps into the pavilion. Looking around, it was difficult not to be overawed by the lists of the university sides down the years, with the names of legendary players, Ranjitsinhji, Sheppard, May, and Bailey amongst them. He entered the home dressing room, sheepishly placed his bag in a vacant space and was somewhat relieved to see

several familiar faces, including two players who later made their name in the first class game, RDV Knight and Dudley Owen-Thomas. He was made welcome and the usual changing room banter was exchanged.

Warwickshire won the toss and put the university in to bat, which was somewhat unusual as the county XI's liked to have as much batting practice as possible against the universities. At 11.25am, Tom sighted the opposition for the first time; he realised that they were fielding their first team and he might possibly be out of his league. It contained five England players, Denis Amiss, John Jameson, AC Smith, Tom Cartwright and David Brown in addition to Billy Ibadulla, Jim Stewart, Bill Blenkinsop, Neil Abberley, Graham Warner and Norman McVicker, all good solid county players. As the university side was reputedly packed with batting, Tom looked forward to sitting on the players' balcony, taking in his surroundings before enjoying a good lunch. However, the regular procession of batsmen making their way to and from the pavilion meant that not long after lunch with the score at 80 for 6, he was walking out to bat.

Norman McVicker, making his first class debut for Warwickshire, bowled the first ball to him, one of full length, on off stump. Tom's reaction was instinctive, a cover drive striking the ball in the middle of his bat, passing the cover fielder and continuing its smooth journey to the boundary rope. Tom had played the perfect shot to the first ball he received in first-class cricket. Unfortunately, this proved to be the pinnacle of his first class career. Norman McVicker did not bowl another half volley and nor did the other bowlers. Tom managed to survive a few more overs before deciding that it was time to be more positive, a fatal mistake. McVicker's next ball was on a length on Tom's leg stump. An expansive leg drive failed to make contact with the ball, which clattered Tom's stumps. The innings ended shortly afterwards when the University were bowled out for 90. Given their reputations, it was surprising that David Brown only took one wicket and Tom Cartwright none at all, whilst Norman McVicker achieved his maiden five-wicket haul in first class matches.

As the Warwickshire innings progressed, the weather brightened and batting became easier for the professionals. When Billy Ibadulla was dismissed, Denis Amiss joined Jim Stewart and they began to enjoy themselves against the University bowling before Tom's next unforgettable experience. A somewhat erratic bowler, Mike Nevin, came in from the Hughes Hall End and bowled a good length ball to Amiss that he would probably have straight batted in a test match. Against these young amateurs however, he chose to play an off drive. The ball deviated off line, nicked the edge of his bat and flew to second slip where Tom caught it, so ending his day on a high.

At close of play, Warwickshire were 143 for the loss of 5 wickets, a lead of 53 runs. It was time for Tom to reflect on the day's play and look forward to the following one, beginning with the national newspapers. He could see his name in print regardless of the number of runs he had scored, but next day, there were no newspapers to be seen. The print unions had thwarted his innocent pleasure by calling a one-day strike!

The weather on the second day was similar to the first, damp and misty, as Warwickshire progressed to 231 all out shortly after lunch. As the University team

batted for the second time, Tom looked down the pitch from the players' balcony to appreciate at close quarters the quality bowling of Tom Cartwright, admittedly in bowler-friendly conditions. Tom's second innings was even shorter; he scored two runs by snicking a ball from David Brown past third slip, before being bowled middle stump by Bill Blenkiron, playing back to a ball to which he should have come forward. As he walked back into the pavilion, the groundsman, Cyril Coote, sympathised with his dismissal and advised him to play off the front foot on this pitch. The University were soon dismissed for 160 runs leaving Warwickshire to score the 25 runs necessary to win the match by 10 wickets. A victory in two days and a day off for the professionals, which they spent at the racecourse at nearby Newmarket, clearly the thinking behind inserting their opponents after winning the toss. Tom's dream was over, he had indeed been out of his depth but for that one moment in particular, when he scored the boundary, his dream was very much alive.

#### POSTSCRIPT

Twenty years later, Tom and his wife were invited to the fortieth birthday party of the wicketkeeper in that University side. At the time, Jamie McDowell was on the committee of Warwickshire CCC and had invited some of his fellow committee members to the party, including the aforesaid Denis Amiss. After a few drinks, Tom approached Amiss to remind him of the match and the fact that he had caught him at slip. After a meaningful pause, Amiss looked at Tom and retorted that whenever he met anyone who had played against him, they always told him they dismissed him, but never mentioned the number of runs that he scored against them.

Five years on, Tom answered a telephone call at home. The caller asked if he was 'the' Neil Moffatt who had played for Cambridge University versus Warwickshire in 1969? Tom replied in the affirmative whereupon the caller said that he was pleased to have traced him. He asked Tom to send a photograph of him and complete some personal details as he was compiling an archive of everyone who had played in a first class cricket match. When Tom demurred, stating that he had only played one such match, the caller told him that he was a 'rare one' and very difficult to track down, hence his pleasure in locating him. Tom fulfilled his request and now appears in a cricket archive.

I researched the match and saw some notes printed after the scorecard. Note one states that 'NT Moffatt made his debut in first class matches', note five that 'NT Moffatt made his last appearance in first class cricket', a rather unkind summation of Tom's one and only first class appearance.