

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: John Woodcock Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

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CORONAVIRUS TESTS

Members will be aware that the Society's final meeting has been cancelled because of the Coronavirus (Cv). The editor is aware that at least two other organisations affiliated to the Cricket Societies Association have taken similar action.

What impact will the Cv have on the cricket season? There are several factors at play. First, and foremost (or it should be), is that the players themselves remain virus free. This factor was the prime reason that the football programme was suspended for three weeks (at least initially). There is a pending Government announcement on the permitted size of crowds – "mass gatherings". As for spectators, many cricket followers will be affected by the birth certificate lottery, when it comes into force.

The portents are not good. Cv was originally anticipated to peak in mid-June. Implicit in that timetable is that it will be around for longer. If crowds are limited to 500, which at the time of writing is thought to be the case, at least in the short/medium term, then it already appears that the early Championship matches will be cancelled. What will then be the point of having the competition in 2020? The t20 Blast will also not be played in accordance with the published schedule, though it could conceivably be played in September, if it is decided to abandon the Championship and there is a relaxation on the size of crowds.

It is rumoured that the tests against the West Indies will be played behind closed doors. However, why would overseas players come to the UK if their health cannot be guaranteed? The same, of course, applies to the Pakistanis later in the summer and those recruited for The Hundred. Will their respective governments allow them to fly to the UK? The squads for the latter have already been denuded for the latter part of the tournament because of those Australians selected for a series in Zimbabwe.

What will the impact on finances of the ECB and the Counties? Cricket's governors are going to be tested as never before. Because of the huge sums of money invested in The Hundred, the ECB's finances are not as healthy as they should be. At the conclusion of the Cv pandemic, whenever that will be, the sports landscape, and the world as a whole, is likely to be very different. However, it is already obvious that sport really matters for people. Let us hope the game will not be damaged irreparably in the weeks and months ahead.

The Society will keep members informed of any developments regarding its own affairs during the summer.

MEETINGS

Wednesday 4 March 2020 – Report

When a speaker begins his address by exclaiming “Streakers!”, it tends to attract the undivided attention of his the audience. This skilful introduction by David Millnes certainly did so and he went on to describe his family background, aspects of his playing and umpiring career and imparting a few insightful vignettes on the cricketers he has met. He demonstrated that he was a born raconteur.

After his description of the draconian measures introduced to deter streakers in Australia and South Africa, he gave an account of his only experience of one, in a t20 match at Hove. The interloper was hoping that the stewards would chase him, but they merely looked on. He therefore decided to dive and take the stumps out of the ground, but only succeeded in impaling himself on one of the stumps, with an unfortunate and painful outcome to one of the more sensitive parts of his person.

David Millns came from a service background. One of his grandfathers survived WW1; the other was evacuated from Dunkirk and fought in the D-Day Landings. His father went into the RAF, where, in the days of National Service, he was the only amateur player, a fast bowler, in a team of cricketers with first-class experience. He received notice of a posting to Korea; however, his Commanding Officer, on learning of this fact, saw to it that he remained in this country. The former did not want to lose his opening bowler.

Our speaker trained to become a surveyor in the Nottinghamshire Coalfield, part of which necessitated working in the pit. He remained anonymous as a cricketer until he appeared in a benefit match for a Celebrity XI against the Notts side. So fast did he bowl, that the two batsmen, expecting a relaxed spell, called for helmets after he bowled four overs. He bowled one more before being taken off. Ken Taylor, the Notts Manager, was watching and promptly signed him. His entry to the first-class game was therefore on the basis of bowling just five overs.

There was stiff competition for opening bowler places on the Notts staff and his opportunities were limited. After a discussion with Taylor, he joined Leicestershire. They were one of four suitors but he joined the Foxes as Ken Higgs was the bowling coach, and because their captain, Nigel Briers, took the trouble to visit him.

He was full of admiration for the captaincy of James Whitaker, who inherited a very competitive and high-class side from Briers in 1996. The County won the Championship that year and Whitaker let his bowlers ring the changes during the course of each match.

He also described the bravery of James Whitticase, who after being hit in the mouth on a gloomy evening at Chelmsford, lost 7/8 teeth and his jaw was required to be wired. The team thought that he wouldn't be able to play again that season but he insisted on batting the next day.

He also talked of Kevin Pietersen who joined Notts on a pre-season tour of South Africa. He didn't impress but was selected by Clive Rice for the first match of the summer, to the surprise of many in the team. With Notts in all sorts of trouble, having lost three cheap wickets, Pietersen proceeded to assuage his doubters by slamming a quick fire century. Our speaker added he always got on very well with him.

Among other players to receive a mention were Alan Mullally, who was persuaded to join Leicestershire by Paul Nixon, Dominic Sibley and Ryan Sidebottom. David Millnes was a hoodoo figure for Sibley at the start of his career. England's new opening batsman was injured on his debut, whilst our speaker was umpiring; when he returned, our speaker was again in attendance and had to give him out leg-before first ball! He was full of praise for Sibley's cricket and his personality. He described Sidebottom, with his long flowing hair and his enthusiastic appeals as being pure theatre. He once had to report the bowler for his antics, for which the latter received a two point penalty. Sidebottom was completely contrite on the matter and accepted the penalty without qualm. However, next morning, he told our speaker that his wife would take the fine!!

David Millns illuminated the evening with his stories, for which he received the warmest of applause from a very appreciative audience.

OBITUARY

JOHN MANNERS

John Manners passed away on 7 March, at the age of 105 years 176 days. He was the longest lived of all first-class cricketers in the history of the game, anywhere in the world. It is the supreme irony that he should have died in the month that *The Cricketer* celebrated his longevity. This Newsletter has celebrated various aspects of his life over the years, especially in the recent past, but they bear repetition. Lieutenant Commander John Errol Manners was a most extraordinary and inspirational man.

Born on 25 September 1914, he graduated from Dartmouth Royal Naval College, and was a career RN officer. He served with considerable distinction, and panache, in WW2. He first featured in the pages of this Newsletter in February 1994 in the late Mike Spurrier's series on Hampshire Cricketers Brave 1939-45. (Mike, a man with a planet-sized brain, was cricket's most foremost military historian). Mike recalled how John Manners had received the Distinguished Service Cross "for gallantry, determination and skill" when he engaged his ship *HMS Viceroy*, which was escorting a convoy, in a successful attack against a newly fitted out enemy submarine U1274 on the evening of 16 April 1945, some 25 miles west of the Farne Islands. The article in *The Cricketer* revealed that he had retrieved some brandy from the submarine, and ordered his crew to make a special oak box. He filled it with a dozen bottles and sent them to Winston Churchill.

An aggressive right-handed batsman, he made his Hampshire debut in 1936, whilst serving on the Royal Yacht, which was anchored off Cowes. He scored 81 against Gloucestershire at the United Services Ground, Portsmouth. He felt he was only deprived of his century because he received a signal to force the pace. He played four matches that season but did not play for the County again until 1947 - 10 years 336 days later. Astonishingly in his only appearance that summer, he made 121 out of 192 in 160 minutes against Kent at Canterbury. He played a total of 21 matches in first-class cricket (1936-1953), of which seven were for Hampshire between 1936 and 1948. John Arlott wrote: "*No player in Hampshire's history was more intriguing...not only was he potentially prolific, but his stroke play was brilliant*". Most of his other first-class cricket was for Combined Services, for whom he made three centuries:

147 v Gloucestershire	Gloucester	1948
123 v New Zealanders	Gillingham	1949
103 v Worcestershire	Worcester	1952

In the days of National Service, the Combined Services were a strong side, usually fielding a number of County and future England players. His final figures in all cricket were 1162 runs at the very respectable average of 31.40.

He became a legendary figure in his former years. He was still driving a car when he was 100 years of age, became the oldest of all first-class cricketers in his 104th year, and flew to Australia to see one of his two daughters at the age of 105! He also enjoyed the annual reunion of Hampshire players in the recent past, on which occasions he was a charming companion.

BOOK REVIEW

SIMPLY THE BEST? KYLE ABBOTT 17-86

by DAVE ALLEN

Dave has produced a splendidly informative and striking booklet on Kyle Abbott's record breaking feat for a Hampshire bowler in that unforgettable final home match against Somerset at The Ageas Bowl last summer. It contains a number of photographs, some in colour, introductions by Giles White and Kevan James, a description of the match, a biography of Abbott and comparisons with previous Hampshire bowlers to have recorded extraordinary bowling performances during the County's history. The first 50 copies sold will include a full scorecard. It is a 16-page publication which will be available for £5 at the March AGM, and direct from Dave at Championship matches. The cost in the shop will be £7.50.