

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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“There can be no summer in this land without cricket”

Sir Neville Cardus

“April: This is the time of the year when the sentimental cricketer withdraws his bat tenderly from its winter bed and croons over it, as if it were a Stradivarius or a shoulder of mutton” RC Robertson-Glasgow

After Hampshire won that unforgettable match against Somerset at the Ageas Bowl last summer, supporters were looking forward to the start of the 2020 season with much excitement. It could not come soon enough. And then the Coronavirus called. Whilst the ECB have postponed all matches until at least 28 May, recent Government statements make it unlikely that any cricket will be played for some weeks beyond that date. It is rumoured that The Hundred will be deferred until 2021. Whilst the ECB and ICC are investigating ways of staging this summer's tests behind closed doors, the notion seems fanciful. Wimbledon and the British Open (both scheduled for July) have been cancelled and all the world's major sports events have been postponed until the Autumn at the earliest and, in the case of the Olympic Games in Japan, 2021. Whether the 2019/20 football season can be concluded is still highly conjectural.

If the lockdown is relieved in, say, August, it may be possible to play some cricket, perhaps the t20 Blast, though there have been rumblings about a very truncated County Championship being staged. The ECB have stated they are pursuing a number of options.

It is heartening that the ECB has pledged £40m to support the counties and that £20m in interest free loans is being made available to grass-roots clubs. Tim Harrison, the ECB Chief Executive, has also taken a pay cut: he can well afford to. At the time of writing, backroom staff at Yorkshire, Sussex and Somerset have been furloughed. In the last few days, Yorkshire have taken similar action regarding their players. It seems inevitable that other Counties will follow suit.

In order to keep HCS members “connected”, the Editor hopes to produce a Newsletter for each month during the season in which cricket is not being played. This month's edition continues with the long-neglected series on Hampshire's away matches, featuring Kent. Coincidentally, the originally scheduled opening fixture of the Championship season was against that County at the Ageas Bowl.

As can be seen from the above table, Hampshire have played Kent away on no fewer than thirteen different grounds. On eight of those, they failed to win a match.

The first match was at Gravesend in 1867, which they lost by nine wickets. During the period from 1867–1885, when Hampshire lost their first-class status, they played Kent on eight occasions, winning only once, at Faversham in 1876 (see below). They were defeated in all the other seven matches.

Although Hampshire's first-class status was re-instated in 1895, they did not play Kent again until 1900. In the period from 1900–1914, Kent possessed arguably the strongest side ever seen in the County Championship, apart from Yorkshire in the 1930s and Surrey in the 1950s. Kent won the Championship four times (1906, 1909, 1910 and 1913). Their success was founded on a judicious mixture of amateur batsmen and professionals, the latter being tutored at the renowned Tonbridge nursery. Conversely, Hampshire were very weak; their strength in the early part of that era was determined by the availability of army batsmen. They became more competitive leading up to the First World War when Phil Mead, George Brown, Alec Kennedy and Jack Newman became established.

Kent therefore continued to rule the roost overwhelmingly. There were a series of catastrophic performances mainly at Tonbridge, as Kent recorded a number of two-day innings victories. Their tormentors were Colin Blythe (left arm spin), Arthur Fielder (right arm fast), Frank Woolley, who was a formidable all-rounder in those days, and a phalanx of stroke making batsmen.

Hampshire gained only their second win in Kent in 1908 at Canterbury, thirty-two years after their first. It was a close run affair as the County squeezed home by one wicket with five minutes to spare, Jimmy Stone and Newman adding an unbeaten 53 for the last wicket. They were warmly applauded by the Kent crowd. Earlier, Charles Llewellyn had taken five for 68 and five for 74.

The first ever draw between the two sides in Kent was in 1911, at Canterbury, Charles Fry scoring a century in each innings (123 and 112). The game generated some controversy when Blythe bowled a number of high full tosses into the sun to Fry. The latter complained that the action was deliberate and bad sportsmanship as it caused him to lose sight of the ball. The County recorded another win at Tonbridge in 1914, their hoodoo ground, thanks to Phil Mead's 117 in the first innings. It was Blythe's last match against Hampshire. In all matches against the County he had taken 166 wickets (avge 16.62), with the best of 9 for 30 at Tonbridge in 1904, a record bowling analysis for matches between the two sides. Within the cricket fraternity, there were few more lamented fatalities in WW1 than his at Passchendale on 8 November 1917.

Woolley continued to bamboozle Hampshire with the ball immediately after the War, but Blythe's mantle was eventually assumed by leg-spinner "Tich" Freeman. Kent continued to dominate. In 1926, at Canterbury, Percy Chapman (81 not out) and

Frank Woolley (62 not out) hammered the last 135 runs in only an hour to secure a nine wicket victory. In the following year, Phil Mead (128), after having batted stoutly for four hours, was caught at slip by Woolley off the final ball of the match, bowled by Freeman, thus handing Kent victory by an innings. Freeman took 14 wickets (6-38 and 8-91). It was not until 1935 that Hampshire won their fourth match in the County. On that occasion, Freeman was upstaged by Gerry Hill who took 14 wickets in the match (8-62 and 6-84). Hill's figures remain a record for a Hampshire bowler in Kent. It was Hampshire's last match on a ground that had given them so much grief in the early years of the Century.

Similar to the occurrence in 1914, Hampshire won their last match in Kent before WW2 in 1939. It was only their second win at Canterbury, their first there since 1908, and only their fifth overall. Their match winner was Giles Baring, who claimed ten wickets (5-67 and 5-43).

Hitherto, Hampshire had played at a number of different venues, but from 1946 – 1965, all the fixtures were played at Canterbury, often in the famous Festival when the ground was decked with decorative tents. In three of the four matches after the War, Kent continued to dominate by winning by an innings on each occasion. In 1949 Hampshire were bowled out twice on the second day with Doug Wright taking eleven wickets (5-81 and 6-89). However, from 1950 – 1954 there was parity with all the matches being drawn. Hampshire eventually broke the cycle by recording a 30-run victory in 1955. Even then, it was a close run thing with Vic Cannings trapping Doug Wright leg before off the last ball of the match.

The finish to the next match in 1956 was also nail-biting. Kent, again with their last pair at the wicket, needed six off the last ball. A near run out ensued as for some inexplicable reason, the batsmen decided to run. Canterbury seemed to have a knack of producing tight finishes in matches between the two sides. Hampshire won again in 1958 and 1959, the first and still the only time they have won two consecutive matches in Kent.

Those matches between 1958 -1965 were notable for some fine performances by players with whom most members will have first become familiar with by way of sweet cigarette cards, newspapers and the tv coverage by Southern Television of matches between Hampshire, Sussex and Kent. The three games between 1963 and 1965 were all drawn, but with all three results possible until the final stages. In that period, Colin Cowdrey scored three centuries, as well as 99, Peter Richardson, Bob Wilson and Roy Marshall made two apiece, as did Danny Livingstone with a hundred in each innings in 1964. In 1963, Hampshire dismissed their opponents for 77 in the first innings with "Butch" White (6-46) and Derek Shackleton (3-26) bowling unchanged. The latter had also bowled unchanged when taking 7 for 71 in 34 overs in 1958. Bob Cottam claimed ten wickets in the match (6-38 and 4-36) in 1965.

Derek Underwood had, hitherto, been fairly quiet since his debut in 1963 but when the two sides moved away from Canterbury in the second half of the 1960s to play at

grounds with unreliable wickets, he lived up to his nickname of “Deadly”. First, he claimed match figures of 12-50 (7-35 and 5-15) at Maidstone in the first match between the two counties there in 1967. In the following year he claimed 11 wickets (4-7 and 7-17) at Gillingham; Hampshire were shot out for 58 in the second innings.

In terms of percentage wins, Maidstone was Hampshire’s best ground. Barry Richards made a princely 179 in 1976; Malcolm Marshall claimed ten wickets (6-55 and 4-54) in 1982.

Hampshire’s sole victory at Tunbridge Wells was in 1974 when, of course, they were cruelly robbed of the County Championship by rain. David Turner, with 152, set up Hampshire’s victory on the first day. Kent were forced to follow on – a rare occurrence indeed. Both Andy Roberts and Bob Herman claimed six wickets in the match as Hampshire eased home by seven wickets.

Hampshire also enjoyed spells of success at Canterbury under Mark Nicholas’ captaincy by recording victories in 1988, 1990 and 1994. The middle of those matches produced yet another exciting finish. The County won by six runs with five balls to spare.

The two Counties have been in the same division in only ten of the twenty years since two divisions were introduced. With the exception of Tunbridge Wells in 2012, when Liam Dawson batted in the same innings on all four days of the match, all the games have been played at Canterbury. Kent won the first in 2000, Hampshire were successful in 2010 and 2014. The first of those matches produced, perhaps predictably, another tight finish. Both Counties needed to win to stay in division 1. Hampshire emerged as victors - just, Jimmy Adams memorably catching Simon Cook at short-leg off James Tomlinson’s bowling with five minutes remaining. It was one of the highlights of Tommo’s career. Kent were eventually relegated. In 2002, John Crawley, on his Hampshire debut, struck 272, the highest score by any batsman in matches between the two sides, and in 2005, Shane Warne hammered a thunderous maiden century- 107 not out off only 72 balls. In true Canterbury tradition, the final Kent pair were hanging on for a draw at the end of that game. Rob Key always enjoyed the Hampshire bowling; he scored four centuries, all at Canterbury, between 2002-2013.

The scores for the grounds on which Hampshire played only once are as follows:-

1867 Southborough

Hampshire 41 and 212

Kent 231 and 23 – 1

Kent won by nine wickets.

In the first innings, Hampshire batted one man short, Henry (Harry) Holmes being absent. Their top scorer in that innings and the only man to reach double figures, was John May (20). He remains an enigmatic figure in that, hitherto, it has not been possible to trace his date and place of death.

1876 Faversham

Hampshire 277 (A W Ridley 104)

Kent 129 (Ridley 5–52; H W Tate 5–67) and 142 (Ridley 5–61; Tate 4–54)

Hampshire won by an innings and six runs.

This was the only first-class match played at Faversham. It was memorable for a fine all-round performance by Arthur Ridley. His century was unique in that it did not include a single boundary. Ridley and Tate were a contrasting pair of bowlers. Though both right-arm, Ridley bowled lobbs and Tate fast round-arm. They bowled unchanged in the first innings; in the second they were relieved for 12 overs by Holmes. The only wicket that never fell to them was a run-out. Hampshire born and an Etonian, Ridley gained a Blue in all four of his years at Oxford. Due to business reasons, he moved to London and later played for Middlesex. He also turned out for Kent, as a given man, in 1877. He is one of only five men to score a century and take ten wickets in a match for Hampshire. He was described as being a stylish batsman. Henry Tate was born in Lyndhurst, and was clearly a very able performer. In 29 matches between 1869-1885, he took 96 wickets at only 18.16 runs apiece. Of all the men to have played in a comparable number of matches for the County, only Andy Roberts (16.70) has a better average.

1878 Tunbridge Wells, The Common

Kent 405 (W Foord-Kelcey 105; W C Wheeler 6–133)

Hampshire 108 (A Penn 5–58) and 116 (Penn 4–52)

Kent won by an innings and 181 runs

Kent made their runs between 12.20pm and 6.05pm on the first day. Hampshire lost all 20 wickets on the second.

1905 Blackheath

Hampshire 267 (Fielder 5–101) and 169

Kent 269 and 169–2.

Kent won by eight wickets.

BECKENHAM

Finally, Hampshire have played four t20 matches on the Kent County Cricket Ground at Beckenham. They were Kent's opponents in the inaugural t20 match there in 2003, and have since revisited in 2006, 2018 and 2019. Hampshire have still to win a match there! This year's t20 match was scheduled to be played at Canterbury.

PLAYFAIR CRICKET ANNUAL 2020

Whilst the editor was writing this Newsletter, he received this year's Playfair Cricket Annual through the post from Amazon. Will it become a collector's item?