

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson

NEWSLETTER No. 407 – DECEMBER 2021

This winter's speakers to date have had a Middlesex bias from that great side from the Mike Brearley era. We end 2021 by extending a very warm welcome to Mike Selvey for our Annual Christmas event, which for the first time in the Society's history is being held at lunch time. Our speaker was an integral member of the Middlesex side during the Brearley epoch. With his redoubtable opening new ball partner, Wayne Daniel, and the spin twins, John Emburey and Phil Edmonds, the County possessed a varied and magnificently dependable and penetrative bowling attack. When they were joined by Vincent van der Bijl in 1980, it can be argued that Middlesex possessed the most formidable bowling unit ever seen in the County Championship, though Edmonds missed much of the season because of a knee operation. Mike Selvey bowled first change in that summer but otherwise opened the bowling with the powerfully built, very fast, Bajan. Daniel always claimed first choice of ends with the result that Selvey spent much of his time bowling up hill or into the wind. In his seminal *Art of Captaincy*, Brearley remarked that his nose seemed to get flatter each season! With a mane of black hair, and a galloping, but fluid, run to the wicket, he was always slightly quicker than it appeared from the ring. He mastered the skills of seam and swing and possessed stamina in abundance. He was renowned for his long bowling spells. He took 101 wickets in 1978, and claimed more than fifty in a season on six more occasions. It is almost certain that he will be the last Middlesex pace bowler to achieve the first landmark.

Like his captain, he was a Cambridge Blue (in 1971, when the University fielded what is generally regarded as their strongest all-round side since the Second World War). Brearley respected his advice, and reading of pitches. One match where this was seen to full advantage was against Surrey at Lord's in August 1977. The first day was washed out and only five overs were possible on the second. When the covers were pulled back on the third morning, the pitch was green and damp, having been covered for so long. Selvey thought it was possible to bowl out their London opponents twice in the day. They were duly despatched for 49. At that time, it was still not possible for sides to forfeit their innings. Middlesex went in and declared after one ball (which was, incidentally, faced by Ian Gould, last month's speaker). Surrey made a better fist of their second innings as the pitch dried out but still acquired only 89. Daniel had taken nine wickets (for 39), Selvey (six for 60) and Mike Gatting (four for three!). John Emburey claimed the other. Middlesex romped home by nine wickets in the evening.

MICHAEL WALTER WILLIAM SELVEY was born in Chiswick on 25 April 1948. He attended Battersea Grammar School before going to Manchester Grammar School and Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Throughout that period he was on Surrey's books and played six matches for them between 1968-1971. A year later, he made

his Middlesex debut, was capped in 1973 and stayed there until 1982. He joined Glamorgan as captain in 1983 but shoulder and knee injuries enforced his retirement in the following season.

He will be remembered for his remarkable Test debut against the West Indies at Old Trafford in 1976. He dismissed Roy Fredericks at the end of his first over and then claimed the wickets of Viv Richards and Alvin Kallicharran shortly afterwards. After 20 balls, his figures were three for six. He later bowled Michael Holding and finished with four for 41 in 17 overs. The test contained many memorable moments, some of them infamous: Gordon Greenidge scored a century in each innings (134 and 101), Richards made an unbeaten 135, Andy Roberts (then still with Hampshire) took nine wickets, Holding seven, and Daniel four. The England second innings earned notoriety when John Edrich and Brian Close faced a fusillade of short pitched bowling from the West Indian fast bowlers. The two brave left-handers never played test cricket again. Mike Selvey, who had taken two further wickets (Greenidge and Clive Lloyd) in the West Indies second innings, batted pluckily for three-quarters of an hour against the bumper barrage. He played in that test three weeks after taking career best bowling figures of seven for 20 against Gloucestershire at Bristol. He gained selection after John Snow and Chris Old had picked up injuries. Despite his success at Old Trafford, he was omitted for the next test, but returned at The Oval. It was a mixed blessing. The Oval sward was straw coloured, because of a drought. The pitch was blameless, the outfield fast, and Viv Richards decided to break a few records. He scored 291. Our speaker was wicketless, though he was denied one when Alan Knott, of all people, dropped Fredericks early on. The pitch, of course, made no difference to Michael Holding, who, in one of the greatest of all fast bowling performances, claimed 14 wickets in the match. Mike Selvey was selected for the ensuing winter tour of India, but did not break into the side until the fifth test at Mumbai (then Bombay), as Bob Willis, John Lever and Old, as well as Derek Underwood, bowled superbly to bring England a 3-1 series victory.

In the one-day game, he gained two winners' medals in Lord's finals. On both occasions, his side owed much to his economical and penetrating bowling. In 1977, against Glamorgan, his figures were 12-4-22-2. He did even better in 1980 against Surrey, with 12-5-17-2. Middlesex had previously been defeated by Ray Illingworth's Leicestershire in 1975. He left the game having taken a princely total of 1105 wickets in all competitions. He is justifiably regarded as one of the best county cricketers of his generation.

Following his retirement from the playing field, he became a much respected cricket correspondent of *The Guardian*, a post he held for 31 years. He was also a member of the TMS team as a summariser for 25 years. Latterly, he has worked as a summariser and guest on *Talksport*. His career in the game has spanned over 50 years. Society members are assured of an excellent afternoon.

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