

# HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

**Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James**

**NEWSLETTER No 422 – SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2023**

## MEETINGS

### Wednesday 4 October 2023 – Meeting

The Society is pleased to welcome **ROBBIE JAMES** to open our 23/24 season. As the announcer at The Ageas Bowl, his voice will be familiar to members. He will be talking this afternoon about Shane Warne, on whom he produced an acclaimed podcast at the start of last summer. He has worked for various national and local BBC Radio Stations.

### Reports of Meetings – Wednesday 15 March 2023 and Wednesday 5 July 2023

One of the great benefits of our meetings is that members receive an informed account of contemporary developments in the cricket world. The last two meetings were no exception.

**MARK CHURCH** and **BARRY RICHARDS** foresaw the day, not too far in the future, when the world's leading players would be contracted to world-wide franchises in the IPL, South Africa, the West Indies and North America. The tournaments in The Emirates are funded by billionaires who were unsuccessful with IPL bids. Richards went a step further when he thought that the players concerned would have to forsake all their existing contracts. The implications were evident for the future of Test Cricket. Such were the huge sums of money involved, which players would be unable to refuse, there would have to be an accommodation between the ICC and the franchisees to allow a window during the year for Test Cricket to be played.

Mark Church was concerned about player burn-out with the majority of the 2023 season condensed within the period between April – July, he wondered whether players would be exhausted by the time The Hundred was played in August. Barry Richards was rather dismissive of The Hundred. He felt that as the format had not been adopted elsewhere in the world, it would never attract the sums of money comparable to those of the major world-wide franchises, where all the money was being directed to T20 cricket.

Mark Church felt that 2023 would be a crucial summer for the future of cricket. He remained devoted to county cricket. The various media now being used to cover the format continued to attract an audience from all over the world. He mused that county cricketers were increasingly seeing commentating as a future career.

Barry Richards talked about his introduction to Hampshire cricket. He was originally destined for Sussex. Clive Lloyd was initially coming to Hampshire but when Lancashire signed him instead, Richards moved along the coast as the county had offered him slightly more money. In his first net "Butch" White greeted him with three successive bouncers. Before the season started, he publicly set himself a target of

scoring 2,000 runs. After being bowled by John Snow without scoring in his first innings, batting at four, one of his opponents reminded him that he had a long way to go! He made an unbeaten 53 in the second innings. He felt his best ever innings for Hampshire was in his next match against Yorkshire at Harrogate. On a rain-affected pitch, he came to the wicket after Fred Trueman had dismissed Roy Marshall and Barry Reed with only five runs on the board. He went on to make 70 as Hampshire were dismissed for 122. The Hampshire Handbook reminds us that he batted for three and a half hours and hit the only four boundaries of the innings, which was often interrupted by rain. Peter Sainsbury (18) was the only other batsman to attain double figures. The Yorkshire bowlers were Trueman, Tony Nicholson, Brian Close, Ray Illingworth and Don Wilson, with Geoffrey Boycott bowling a single over.

He talked about batting with Gordon Greenidge. They first opened together against Warwickshire at Edgbaston in 1970. Richards was asked to keep a watchful eye on him. He duly played out a maiden over from David Brown. At the end of the next over Greenidge had scored 14! He told his opening partner he felt that if the ball was there to be hit, he would do so. (Editor's Note: on his debut as an opener in that match, Greenidge announced his arrival with 51 and 62 not out, Richards scored 19 and 57. In the second innings, they put on 88 for the first wicket. The world had been forewarned. In the next match, they plundered 201 – Richards 124; Greenidge 73 - against Leicestershire at Southampton).

In the audience was former Hampshire all-rounder Mike Taylor. The pair humorously interacted on their time together. They were clearly happy days. Our speaker admitted that he began to lose motivation when hearing Greenidge and Andy Roberts recalling their winters away with the West Indian Test side. It made him realise what he had been missing in the cricket world. He went on to play in Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket; it was obvious that he was an influential personality off the field, and on, in those two years.

His address was also very topical. Shortly before his visit there was the Bairstow/Carey incident in the Lord's Test. He stated that when Australian youngsters were introduced to the game, they were taught two golden rules. One was not to pick up the ball with the hand; the other was not to leave the crease until the umpire had called "over". No further comment needed. It was an enthralling and memorable afternoon in the company of one of The Greats.

## **SOCIETY NEWS**

### **OBITUARIES**

Members will have already been notified of the death of our former Chairman, **JOHN YOUNG** (see the Society's website).

Another long-standing member to pass away during the summer was **MIKE ARNOLD**. Mike died in New South Wales on 4 August. He was born in Southampton, and played cricket for Chandler's Ford, before sampling the game in such exotic locations as West Africa and Malaysia, where he captained the world famous Selangor Club in Kuala Lumpur. He was one of the Society's longest-standing members. He joined whilst living in Singapore and continued his

membership when he moved to Australia (he married an Australian), first living in Townsville, Queensland, and then Sydney. He spent most of his life in insurance. He followed Hampshire's fortunes from afar and, once when making a return visit to the County, he addressed the Society in October 1985. He contributed to the Newsletter on Australian affairs for some 30 years; the articles were always informed, sometimes trenchant and controversial, but always well founded and entertaining. He also wrote a revisionist history of the Bodyline Tour, based on interviews with Harold Larwood, whom he befriended whilst living in Sydney. Mike was therefore an important figure in the Society's history. He struck up a very strong friendship with John Young; it is ironic that they should pass away within a few weeks of each other.

### **HAMPSHIRE IN 2023**

In the context of their history, Hampshire enjoyed another successful season. They finished third in the County Championship, reached the final of the One Day Cup at Trent Bridge and spent another Finals day at Edgbaston in the T20 Blast.

The Holy Grail of another Championship title, which was last won 50 years ago now, eluded them. Whilst they won their last three matches, against Somerset at home, second placed Essex at Chelmsford –a rare occurrence at that venue - and Champions Surrey at the Ageas Bowl, the two early season defeats to Surrey at The Oval and Warwickshire at home, always meant they would struggle to win the ultimate prize.

The County's strength remained their bowling. Mohammad Abbas claimed 53 wickets. Kyle Abbott took 44, though his tally was down on the previous season, but still averaged just 21; James Fuller (24) and Keith Barker (20) completed a formidable pace quartet. However, the pitches were different from the 2022 season, illustrated by Liam Dawson, enjoying the season of his life, taking 49 wickets, easily a career best. Coupled with his 840 runs (avge. 40), including three centuries, he emulated Barker's feat of the previous season by winning the PCA Player of the Year Award.

In the match against Middlesex at the Ageas Bowl at the end of June, he cemented his place in Hampshire's history books, by scoring a watchful 141, before overwhelming their opponent's batting with figures of six for 40 and another six, for 90. It was a performance without parallel for the County. Only three other men - all in ancient times - Arthur Ridley 1876), Francis Lacey (in 1882) and Charles Llewellyn (in 1901) have scored a century and taken ten wickets in a match, but none of them dismissed twelve.

Dawson's bowling attributes have often been overlooked but in 2023, he demonstrated that if conditions were in his favour, he is a real force in the County game. His flight has always posed problems to all but the best of batsmen and he now added spin, and therefore turn, to his armoury. Groundsman Stephen Lee, who earned notoriety for his stewardship of spin friendly pitches at Taunton, has made matches far more interesting to watch at the Ageas Bowl. In that match against Middlesex, Josh de Caires, son of Michael Atherton, bowled a marathon spell of off spin, which was entrancing. Hampshire, though, received a suspended points penalty for the pitch against Essex this season when the match lasted 184 overs.

James Vince (1007 runs) and Nick Gubbins (969) were Hampshire's most productive batsmen. One has to envy Gubbins. He began the season in bowler-friendly conditions, then missed four weeks when not selected for the T20 Blast; batting in September, with a 1030 start and invariably poor light towards the end of the day presented further challenges. He had to adapt his game continually throughout the season. His three centuries were judiciously spaced throughout the season, reflecting each of the different phases of the fixture list.

Though he passed a hundred only once (186 at Northampton), Vince scored a thousand runs in a season for the first time in Division One. He has also had to change his technique over the years. Bowlers rarely give him the opportunity these days to roll out his princely cover drive. Their more leg side attack is countered by ferocious pulls and hooks; the power of those strokes is almost in the Robin Smith and Gordon Greenidge category.

Fletcha Middleton made one of the opening berths his own. He scored two fifties in the opening match against Nottinghamshire and scored three in all. His driving off the back foot to balls chest/shoulder high was particularly effective. The other opening slot was problematical. Felix Organ endured a wretched time early on. He was replaced by Joe Weatherley, who seems unable to recapture his form of the Covid year of 2020, and then Ian Holland, who scored 138 not out at Trent Bridge. By the end of the season, the role was entrusted to Toby Albert, who had earlier been loaned to Kent for one match at the end of July.

Tom Prest played in each of the three matches in September and stroked his maiden century (108) in first-class cricket at Chelmsford, much of it facing the bowling of the redoubtable Simon Harmer.

As in 2022, Hampshire's supporters continued to be enthralled by their team's performances in the **Metro Bank One-Day Cup**. The formula was the same; a mixture of young players and those who had been excluded by The Hundred. They had, though, lost the precocious John Turner from the previous year. He had been recruited by the Trent Rockets in The Hundred. Unfortunately, after clean bowling the Welsh Fire's Jonny Bairstow for a duck in his sole match, he incurred a side strain which curtailed his cricket for the rest of the season. It must be hoped that the injury is just a temporary setback.

Hampshire won seven of their eight group matches. The victories over Lancashire at Old Trafford and Yorkshire at York were especially meritorious. The latter were comprehensively outplayed by 177 runs, with Prest (105), 19-year old Joseph Eckland (72 in 55 balls) leading the way. Ed Jack and Dom Kelly, both 17 years of age, then took five wickets between them. The only defeat was against Leicestershire at the Ageas Bowl, when lapses in the field cost them dear.

They then won a hard-fought quarter-final against Worcestershire at home, thanks to two stellar efforts - by Aneurin Donald with the bat and Brad Wheal with the ball. Donald's innings of 115 off 73 balls was unforgettable as a combination of timing, placement and power saw the ball race to the boundary. On four occasions, he lifted

the ball some distance over the ropes. It was an innings of which Barry Richards, Gordon Greenidge and Robin Smith would have been proud. At the end of 79 minutes of mayhem, many of the Worcestershire players sportingly ran to shake his hand as he left the field. All of a good-sized crowd rose to their feet in appreciation. The end of the match was touch and go. Worcestershire needed 33 runs to win; Hampshire required five wickets. Wheal then took four wickets, the last three at no cost and Hampshire ran out winners by 10 runs.

A few days earlier, Donald had made a significant contribution to his side's three wicket victory at sun-bathed Newclose on the Isle of Wight, as he made 106, again off 73 balls, against Kent. Daniel Bell-Drummond had earlier scored 150 in Kent's innings of 325 for eight.

Hampshire thrashed Warwickshire sensationally in the semi-finals. Winning the toss and deciding to field, Hampshire bowled out their opponents in 25.5 overs for just 93. Liam Dawson again featured prominently with yet another Hampshire record by taking seven for 15 in 6.5 overs. It was the County's best individual bowling performance in a List A match, leaving behind Peter Sainsbury's 58-year old previous record of seven for 30 against Norfolk in 1965.

(Lest it be forgotten, Dawson is still Hampshire's youngest century maker in first-class cricket. He was 18 years old when registering 100 not out against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge in 2008).

Hampshire completed a nine wicket rout before two o'clock.

Unfortunately, Hampshire went on to lose the final against Leicestershire by a mere two runs. With Leicestershire at 89 for six, and all their top order batters in the pavilion, Hampshire looked odds-on favourites for victory. However, the talented Harry Swindells then plundered 117 not out, adding 151 runs for the seventh wicket with Sam Evans. Nevertheless, in their response to the eventual target of 268, Hampshire always looked to be in touch until Dawson was dismissed for 57 with two balls remaining and five runs required. Barker and Scott Currie were unable to make good the deficit.

Few would begrudge Leicestershire their victory. They have been in the doldrums for some time now and many neutrals felt that the match was a victory for cricket.

Middleton scored most runs (480), followed by Prest (425), Gubbins (404), Donald (349), and Ben Brown (282). Of the bowlers, Holland took 18 wickets, Currie 14, Barker 13 and Wheal 10.

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