

# HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

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

**NEWSLETTER No. 423 – OCTOBER 2023**

## MEETINGS

### **Wednesday 25 October 2023 – Meeting**

The Society is delighted to welcome **PATRICK MURPHY** to this afternoon's meeting. For some 30 years, as the BBC's Midlands Sports Correspondent, he was one of the most distinctive and authoritative voices on the radio. On Saturday afternoons, whether the editor was in the car on the way home from Fratton Park or listening to the radio elsewhere, he never felt the afternoon was quite complete without listening to our guest's reports from Villa Park, the County Ground at Nottingham, St. Andrew's or other grounds in the Midlands. He was blessed with the great gift of empathising with the Midland clubs and players, but without sounding biased. In the summer, he was the voice of the county cricket teams within his purview. Fond days and memories indeed. Last year, he wrote *BBC Sports Report: A Celebration of the World's Longest-Running Sports Radio Programme*. He will be bringing copies of the book to this afternoon's meeting.

A law graduate, he once worked on the production team of TMS. He is the author of some 40 books. Among those with whom he collaborated were Graham Gooch, Imran Khan, Graeme Hick, Bob Willis, David Gower, Allan Donald, Brian Clough, Wasim Akram and Viv Richards. He also wrote *The Centurions*, a compendium of extended essays on all the men who have recorded 100 centuries, and which ran to three editions, and *The Greatest Season*, written in collaboration with Dermot Reeve, which is about Warwickshire's remarkable season in 1994, when the County won three of the four domestic competitions and just missed out on a clean sweep. Both books were published by Stephen Chalke's Fairfield Books. He has been a devoted Sunday cricketer for much of his life.

### **Wednesday 4 October 2023**

A large audience (78) enjoyed an entertaining afternoon in the company of Robbie James, the announcer at the Ageas Bowl. He described how he was the original cricket-tragic. The first match he watched was Hampshire's semi-final against Yorkshire in the C & G in 2005 when he was a six-year-old. From then on, he played club cricket for Bishops Waltham and for Hampshire age groups; among his occasional team-mates were Mason Crane and Joe Weatherley. However, by the age of 18, he was saturated and turned his attentions elsewhere. He attended Edinburgh University for a year with a view to studying economics but tired of it during his second year. He then sought and obtained posts in local radio, including Express FM, for whom he commentated occasionally on cricket, as well as Portsmouth Football Club and Gosport RFC. He never intended to return to cricket but began to fall in love with the game again.

The impact of Shane Warne's death was profound. He felt compelled to contact his father, with whom he had not been in touch for six years. He formulated the idea of a

podcast on the great leg-spin bowler focusing on Warne and how he transformed Hampshire, and how his death had affected his own life. He sent a blurb to Adam Blackmore at Radio Solent, who agreed the proposal.

He uncovered quite a story, beginning with Warne being approached by the then Hampshire Chairman at a reception at Buckingham Palace. Despite being signed for a record sum, Hampshire were relegated from Division One in his first season. Warne was concerned about getting on with the Hampshire squad but those fears were allayed following a car journey with Dimi Mascarenhas. The pair got on well. The County were then promoted in the following season (2001) but then returned to Division Two immediately.

Rod Bransgrove, Tim Tremlett and Giles White then proposed that Warne be offered the captaincy. The trio met him in Dubai and he agreed. It was also proposed that Paul Terry, who was living in Australia, join as coach. But the plan unravelled, at least in part, when Warne was banned for a year in 2003 for taking a diuretic.

The rest, as they say, is history. Warne's influence on the ethos of the club and the way they play the game is still prevalent. He also spoke about his generosity with his time. As mentioned in a previous Newsletter, the Podcast ***Shane Warne: A Hampshire Love Story*** is an excellent production. It is available on the BBC Website.

At the start of the meeting, members stood in silence in memory of our former Chairman, John Young, and Mike Arnold, who wrote for the Newsletter from Australia for some 30 years, both of whom passed away in the summer.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS IN 2023**

The next two meetings will be held on:

**Wednesday 15 November, when the speaker will be Andrew Murtagh.** He has enjoyed three distinct careers. He was a member of Hampshire's Championship winning side in 1973 and the County's John Player League team in 1975. He then taught at Malvern College for 30 years. Since leaving the teaching profession, he has become a notable and, moreover, one of the most entertaining of cricket biographers. He writes in a bright, breezy and always interesting manner. He will be speaking on the subject of one of his books, **Tony Greig**.

**Wednesday 13 December, which coincides with the Society's ever popular Annual Lunch. Details of the event, including menu choices, were circulated by email (except to those few members who still receive their Newsletters by post) last week. THE MEETING WILL START AT 12.30. The lunch will be followed by Stephen Chalke interviewing the former England, Worcestershire, Somerset and Derbyshire fast bowler, FRED RUMSEY.** Besides the latter being almost certainly the fastest left-arm bowler to play for England, he was the instigator of the Professional Cricketers Association, and was the equivalent of the game's first Commercial Director, whilst at Derbyshire. The editor has heard the Chalke/Rumsey double act before, and can promise members a highly entertaining afternoon.

## NEW MEMBERS

The Society is pleased to welcome the following new members, and hope they enjoy their time with us this winter:-

Derek Allen  
Paul Maidment  
Chris Finch  
Adrian Van Klaven  
Colin Whitlock  
Chris Derbyshire  
Eric Purkess  
Steve Denney  
Peter McKenzie  
Graham Jackson

Andrew Fry  
Bob Byles  
Ian Bagshaw  
Mr and Mrs Steve Clark  
David Llewellyn  
David Russell  
Chris Wilton  
Peter Ford  
Alan Clark

## THE HAMPSHIRE LIBRARY

One of the most important books in Hampshire's entire history, if not *the* most important, was published towards the end of the season. The book's title and subject matter *Back From The Brink - How Rod Bransgrove Saved Hampshire From Extinction* by Society member Ivo Tennant (Moyhill Publishing) is self explanatory.

Time pressures arising from moving house have prevented the editor from reviewing the book. Reviews of the book are readily available on the web, including the Hampshire website, and in the October edition of The Cricketer magazine. If any Society member has purchased the book and would wish to review it for the Newsletter, please contact the Newsletter editor at the email address indicated on the Society's Programme Card.

## DORSET CRICKET SOCIETY

Prior to our last meeting, Mike Vimpany gave a brief preview of the above's programme until Christmas. HCS members are always welcome. Dorset CS meet at Hurn, on the same site as Christchurch Football Club on Thursdays, starting at 1.45pm. Their programme of speakers can be found on their website.

## FAREWELL TO ANEURIN DONALD

Many Hampshire members will be saddened by the departure of Aneurin Donald (to Derbyshire), next season. For no Hampshire batsman in the modern era has held the same threat of creating anarchy. He gave a reminder that the bat was an offensive weapon and, James Fuller apart, conveyed such a sense of enjoyment. He nearly always scored his runs at a pace that most batsmen could only dream about. It is an old cliché that certain batsmen had the ability to change the course of a match in a few overs. In Donald's case, the claim was never exaggerated. And, apart

from in t20 cricket, in which his record was strangely muted, he could do so, in both first-class and List A cricket. When The Force was with him, he was simply irresistible.

He certainly never made the volume of runs expected of him, and his shot selection was sometimes ill-judged. However, he was aware of his shortcomings and there was clear evidence last season that he was beginning to temper his approach. He was desperately unlucky with injuries, which must have hampered his development, and, in 2023, was unable to force his way into the side. He is a genuine middle-order batter, whereas Hampshire's evident weakness is still clearly at the top of the order.

Welsh-born, right-handed and six feet two inches tall, he joined Hampshire in 2019 after his career with Glamorgan had seemingly run into the sand. In his fourth match for the County, in early July, Hampshire supporters were treated to a display of exhilarating strokeplay as he raced to 173 in only 144 balls against Warwickshire at the Ageas Bowl, whilst adding a then Hampshire record of 252 for the fifth wicket with Ian Holland (143)+. It was his first century for three years and was to remain his only hundred for the County. He batted consistently, without touching the same heights, for the remainder of the season.

However, he sustained a knee injury whilst playing football in the following winter, and was unable to play in the following (Covid) summer. He then incurred the same injury, which put him out of the 2021 season.

Therefore, by the time he returned to the side, against Gloucestershire at the Ageas Bowl, in May 2022, he had not played any first-class cricket for two years. His impact was immediate. Hampshire began the third morning on 28 for four in their second innings. Two of those wickets to fall were night watchmen (Kyle Abbott and Mohammed Abbas). Despite a lead of 163, James Vince had decided not to enforce the follow-on. There was still no need to panic, but when the ninth wicket fell at 103 before lunch, the game was in the balance. The last pair were Donald, who had scored only a single in his comeback first innings, and Fuller. It almost goes without saying that they were not the normal numbers ten and eleven. With the latter willing to play a secondary role, Donald tore into the Gloucestershire bowling, at one stage striking three consecutive sixes over mid-wicket. In the previous over, he had cover driven three successive fours. The pair eventually added 101, before Donald was caught off a rather injudicious shot for 89. As he demonstrated time and again, he was never prepared to play more circumspectly as he approached three figures. Hampshire eventually won by 87 runs on the final day.

Later on in the season, against Northamptonshire, once more at The Ageas Bowl, he struck an unorthodox 94 to put Hampshire firmly in the driving seat. With Ben Brown having injured his finger, he then kept wicket impressively when Northants batted, and continued in that capacity for the remainder of the season. Famously, Hampshire secured an innings victory just before monsoon-like rains engulfed the ground, on the day that the Queen died.

In between, he demonstrated he could adapt his game, by guiding the tail to what proved to be a match-winning total at Taunton, after a mid-order collapse.

He reinforced his remarkable hitting prowess in the Royal London Cup against Yorkshire at Scarborough with a blistering 76 off 31 balls. In the semi-final versus Kent he batted more soberly. He was clearly bent on a big score but after scoring 54 at a run a ball, he was dismissed reverse sweeping. He wasn't the only man who lost his wicket in that manner on the day.

Last season, in the same competition, he at last made three figures, twice in consecutive matches. He thrilled the crowd at Newclose on the Isle of Wight with a six-laden 106 off 73 balls in the final group match at Kent's expense. In another match-winning performance in the quarter-final, at the Ageas Bowl, he toyed with the Worcestershire bowling with an imaginative 115 off the same number of balls as in the previous match.

And that was virtually it. He never appeared in a single Championship match last summer. Despite those two hundreds, he was omitted from the next Championship game. In the final of the One Day Cup in the next week, he fell for only six against Leicestershire at Trent Bridge.

It therefore never really came as a surprise that he was leaving. The fact that he took the field against Surrey on the final day of the Championship match, and was invited to lead the side into the pavilion at the end of the game, was a strong hint of his imminent departure. Aneurin Donald's career with Hampshire was the ultimate roller-coaster, but he left a myriad of memories which exceeded many of those who played for the County for much longer periods, and will never be erased. Romantics will be noting the dates of Derbyshire's matches at Hove, Bristol, Northampton and Lord's next season.

In 19 first-class matches for Hampshire, he scored 968 runs (avge. 33.37). In 26 List A matches, his figures were 707 runs (avge.30.73) and in 19 t20 games: 242 runs (avge. 14.23).

+The editor omitted to mention in last month's Newsletter, that Liam Dawson holds another notable record. In 2022, he shared in Hampshire's fifth wicket record partnership of 273 with Ben Brown against Kent at Canterbury.

## **SIR ALASTAIR COOK**

Members will be aware that Sir Alastair Cook has announced his retirement from the game. He will be remembered as the most durable of opening batsman, as a remarkable 161 test appearances, 59 as captain, testify. His fierce concentration overcame his limited stroke range. He was strong off his legs, pulled, hooked and cut with certainty. The acid test of his form was his cover driving.

That stroke range, which is typical of the modern batter, and his career record against Hampshire, exemplifies developments in the modern game in startling fashion. Having made his debut in first-class cricket twenty-one seasons ago in 2003, he played only 10 matches against the County, scoring 565 runs (avge. 37.66). He recorded two centuries: 124 at Chelmsford in 2017, and 129 not out at

Arundel, during the Covid summer of 2020, when no matches were played at the Ageas Bowl. Remarkably, he never played first-class cricket against the County at the Ageas Bowl until 2018; he retired from test cricket at the end of that season.

He did, though, appear in test matches at the ground: in 2011 (v Sri Lanka), and 2014 (v India). In the latter, he made an emotional 95, his highest test score there. He had been struggling in test cricket immediately beforehand, and every run was cheered to the echo by a partisan crowd. His penultimate test was at the ground in 2014, also against India. He had appeared in his last County match at the Ageas Bowl earlier that season. It's a sobering thought that had not the Ageas Bowl been awarded test match status, Hampshire supporters would not have seen him bat at their home ground in a first-class match until 2018.

In ODIs and List A matches, he played in seven matches on the ground: three for Essex against Hampshire in 2004, 2006 and 2021, and four for England: v India in 2011 (when he made a fluent 102 in a day/night match), v West Indies and South Africa in 2012, and v New Zealand in 2013.

In eight List A matches, he scored 232 runs (avge. 29.00), including one century (104 at Chelmsford again in a day/night match in 2009). In 2021, he became John Turner's first wicket for Hampshire. For the sake of completeness, he played in three t20 matches against Hampshire, all at the Ageas Bowl.

## **BISHAN BEDI**

That most artistic and enchanting of Indian spin bowlers, Bishan Bedi, died a few days ago. For Hampshire supporters, he will always be remembered for the most riveting passage of play they ever saw. Even 50 years since, the memories of his bowling at Southampton's County Ground in mid-August 1973 retain a freshness, such was the quality. The County's match against Northamptonshire, for whom Bedi played, was, in effect, a Championship decider. On the first day, Saturday, Hampshire bowled out their opponents for just 108 shortly after lunch. Barry Richards and Gordon Greenidge made 76 untroubled runs in response, before Bishan Bedi intervened. Always a master of flight, he lured both men down the track, to be stumped by George Sharp. Hampshire subsided to 152 for eight by the close. On the Monday, Bedi (six for 69) and Bob Cottam (three for 49) took the last two wickets for the addition of 15 more runs. However, Tom Mottram (four for 27) and Hampshire's own left-arm spin bowler, New Zealander, David O'Sullivan (five for 50), aided by Mike Taylor, who took six wickets in the match, dismissed Northants for 148. Hampshire required only 90 runs to win. On a dusty wicket, Richards and Bedi embarked on the ultimate duel in the sun. Elegance v. elegance; artist v. artist; aesthete v. aesthete; master v. master. Each man knew the outcome of the match, and the Championship, was in their hands. In the end, Richards prevailed. But all those present knew that had seen something very special indeed. Cricket was the real winner.

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