

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

NEWSLETTER No. 424 – NOVEMBER 2023

MEETINGS

Wednesday 15 November 2023 – Meeting

The Society is delighted to welcome Andrew Murtagh to this afternoon's meeting. Many members will remember him fondly as one of the most enthusiastic of cricketers. Whether batting, bowling or fielding, he always conveyed a sense of enjoyment. His long hair and Zapata moustache enhanced his distinctiveness on the field. In the recent past, he has become one of the best modern authors of cricket biography. His writing, always bright, breezy, yet sensitive and shrewd, further reflects his personality. He is a man who has enjoyed three careers: first as a professional cricketer, then working in Academia at Malvern College, and finally as a published writer.

ANDREW JOHN MURTAGH was born in Dublin on 6 May 1949, but received his education at St. Josephs College in Beulah Hill, South East London. Whilst cricket was not in the blood of his ancestors, his nephews, Tim, the evergreen Middlesex and Ireland opening bowler, and Chris (Surrey) will be familiar names to those who follow county cricket.

Andy Murtagh first attracted the attention of Surrey, but when he went to Southampton University to read English, he played for Hampshire Second XI before formally signing for the County in 1970. He served a fairly long apprenticeship, partly because of his studies, and did not make his first-team debut until that unforgettable summer of 1973. In winning the Championship, only 13 men appeared for the County that summer. Our speaker was, effectively, the reserve batsman. His best performance was in his second match, on a bowler-friendly pitch against Sussex at Hove, when he top-scored with 47 in the first innings, before making an unbeaten 37 in the second; in the latter innings, he and Peter Sainsbury battled successfully to save the game for the last 90 minutes. The pair gave a reprise when they played out the last 35 overs against Glamorgan at Portsmouth. He played in six matches (five in the Championship) that season. He did not make any appearances in 1974 and played 20 more matches from 1975 until 1977, and whilst making useful scores, he was unable to cement his place. His highest score was 65 against Gloucestershire at Bournemouth in 1976.

He was also a member of Hampshire's John Player League winning side in 1975 - their inaugural one day (now called List A) Trophy. He played in half of the matches (eight). By now he had added medium-pace bowling to his repertoire. His most prized wicket was undoubtedly that of David Gower. He was a regular member of the County's one-day side for the ensuing two years. He played in 48 matches in all, making his best score of 65 not out against Derbyshire at Bournemouth in 1976. On that occasion, he and David Turner (62 not out) added a match winning unbeaten fourth wicket partnership of 106.

In 1980, he embarked on his second career when he joined Malvern College to teach English and manage the cricket, remaining in those posts for the following thirty years. He was housemaster for eighteen of those years.

His first book was on George Chesterton, the former Worcestershire captain with whom he worked at Malvern College. He has also written books on Tom Graveney, Barry Richards, John Holder, Colin Cowdrey and a revisionist work on Tony Greig. He will be talking about the latter this afternoon. The editor was fortunate to hear Andy Murtagh's address on Greig a couple of years ago at Dorset Cricket Society. Members are sure to find it stimulating, interesting as well as amusing.

Wednesday 25 October 2023 - Report

Patrick Murphy provided an afternoon rich in anecdote, humour and nostalgia, as he recalled the sportsmen he had met in his long career in journalism and broadcasting. He commenced his address by mischievously correcting two statistics in his biography on *Wikipedia*. He had covered 16 (not 12) England tours and written 44 (not 40) books. He conveyed this information with a twinkle in his eye, which set the tone for the afternoon.

After more humour on commentating gaffes, of which all broadcasters were guilty, he set out his XI of those cricketers with whom he had collaborated on their biographies. In batting order, they were Graham Gooch, Alec Stewart, Viv Richards, David Gower, Basil D'Oliveira, Imran Khan, Ian Botham, Mike Procter, Wasim Akram, Allan Donald and Bob Willis. He acknowledged the team were short in spin bowling and that Richards would have to turn his arm over. He told a story about each of those subjects. Among the most memorable were Gladstone Small claiming his best moment was bowling a maiden to Viv Richards when the latter was passed 200; when Mike Procter was asked about his memory on scoring a century in each innings and taking a hat-trick of lbws, he couldn't remember anything! And a teetotal Allan Donald being introduced to alcohol by Andy Moles. Among his other subjects were Bob Taylor, David Constant, Chris Broad, Graeme Hick, Graham Dilley, Phil Neale, and England football manager Graham Taylor. He fondly remembered the former Warwickshire wicketkeeper, EJ "Tiger" Smith, who played in his County's Championship winning team in 1911, and was then Coach when they recorded their next title in 1951. Smith was born in 1886, and played with WG Grace. Our speaker's interviewees therefore spanned more than a century of the game.

He then set his audience a poser. Who has played more than anyone else at Wembley? Answer – The Band of the Grenadier Guards.

He spoke warmly of the "broadcasting genius" of John Arlott. One of his most treasured possessions was a letter from JA, simply addressed "The Vines". He also recalled his introduction to ***Sports Report*** under the guidance of Cliff Morgan (see below).

The Q & A session produced a real trip down Memory Lane. There were recollections of the unique motivational skills of Brian Clough, comments on Sir Bobby Charlton, who had passed away on the previous weekend ("he never scored a scruffy goal and brought the game into repute") and Bishan Bedi, who had died a day or so earlier. He mentioned Bedi's renowned encounter with Barry Richards in

1973; although personifying all that was best in the game, Bedi was a journalist's dream with his outspoken and forthright views off it. He appealed to the senses in the same way as Zaheer Abbas, Majid Khan, and David Gower.

When asked for his single most memorable moment, he briefly mentioned Hillsborough, before plumping for the moment when umpire Billy Bowden lifted the bails at The Oval in 2005, which meant that England had regained the Ashes. As for the most signal moments of Midland sport, he, almost inevitably, alighted on the Clough era between 1977 and 1980 when Nottingham Forest were promoted to Division One, before winning the Championship and then two European Cups.

At the end of the meeting, many members purchased a copy of Patrick Murphy's book *BBC Sports Report: A Celebration of the World's Longest-Running Sports Radio Programme*. It is a marvellous read, which will resonate with those who listened to the radio for much of their lifetime at 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoons. Among the many snippets which may not be familiar is the revelation that John Arlott was the summariser of the very first football match covered on the programme, on Saturday 3 January 1948: that between Portsmouth and Huddersfield Town at Fratton Park. (In case anyone is wondering, Pompey won 3-2).

MORE ON CLIFF MORGAN

Cliff Morgan spoke to the Society in April 1997. Members may be interested in the report of that meeting as it seems the sentiments expressed are even more valid in today's world than they were then.

"The evening in the company of Cliff Morgan was a celebration of sport. Rugby featured prominently of course, but his talk embraced a number of themes: the values of sport and how they are being eroded by financial considerations; the power of stories and the use of language; the beauty of movement in sport; the great sportsmen exemplified by Jesse Owens and Tony O'Reilly; and the voices on radio and television personified by John Arlott and EW Swanton.

Since the meeting, Cliff Morgan has announced his intention to retire from Sport on 4 by Christmas. Paul Donovan, writing in "The Sunday Times", expressed the following sentiments which will be echoed by all those who attended the meeting: "For all those who love and look forward to the music of his voice, the warmth of his welcome and the rare nobility and benevolence of his vision, his decision is immensely sad.....he is one of the people to listen to if you want to hear sentences rather than soundbites, English and not jargon, people celebrated and not denigrated.....he has done much to keep alive some of the classical virtues, joy in victory, grace in defeat, pleasure in physical competition, respect, courage, forbearance, honesty and determination".

Cliff Morgan died in Bembridge, on the Isle of Wight, on 29 August 2013, aged 83. His body was laid to rest in Holy Trinity Church in that quiet small town on the island.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

The Southern Vipers enjoyed another successful summer. They won the Charlotte Edwards Cup (20 overs), defeating the Loughborough-based Blaze in the Final at Worcester by seven wickets. Their opponents won all seven of their group matches; the Vipers won five, but finished second to qualify for finals day. Opener Dani Wyatt was the leading run scorer in the competition with 273 runs (avge. 45.50); her captain, Georgia Adams, struck 249 runs (avge. 49.80). Anya Shrubsole and Linsey Smith, both with 13 wickets, took the most wickets for the Vipers.

They completed the double when they won the Rachael Heyhoe-Flint Trophy (50-overs), again beating The Blaze in the final, this time by five wickets, at Northampton. The Competition straddled the whole summer. It started in April, and finished in the final week of September. The Vipers won the 14-match group stage on Net Run Rate; the Blaze were runners-up. The two teams were nip and tuck with the South East Stars throughout. For much of the summer, it seemed as if the Vipers would not reach the final. They lost four of their first eight matches; another was tied and a further game was abandoned without a ball being bowled, and the ninth game produced a no result. They then scraped a 3-run victory against Northern Diamonds at Gosforth. Buoyed by this victory, they then went through the rest of September with increasing confidence and never lost another match. Georgia Adams vied with Lauren Winfield-Hill (Northern Diamonds) as the star of the tournament. Though the former was the most prolific batter (663 runs-avge. 51.00), and claimed 15 victims behind the stumps, Adams was the second leading run scorer with 546 runs (avge. 49.63), took 20 wickets with her latently developed leg-spin bowling (only two bowlers took more) and held 11 catches. She was rewarded with a contract for the Adelaide Strikers in Australia's Women's Big Bash League this winter. Emily Windsor, who spoke to the Society pre Covid, enjoyed a fine tournament with the bat, making 408 runs (avge. 45.33), including a rapid 57 not out off 53 balls as the Vipers closed in on victory in the final. Her improvement was striking.

The Ageas Bowl based Southern Brave also carried off the Women's Hundred final at Lord's. The editor watched their home match against the Welsh Fire in early August. It was evident that they have a loyal following. The ground was filled to near capacity at the start of the afternoon, long before the evening's men's match. The mercurial Dani Wyatt made an inventive 67 off 37 balls and looked so secure that her dismissal was a major surprise. Though the Indian, Smriti Mandhana, the world's top-ranking batter, struck an imaginative, unbeaten 70 off 42 balls, the Brave finished four runs short. It must be said that better running between the wickets would have produced a different result. Wyatt (295 runs), Tammy Beaumont (290 runs) and the Brave's Maia Bouchier (268 runs) were the competition's leading run scorers.

It is worth mentioning that the family (all under 12) followed the game intently, became fully involved in the proceedings, and asked if they could go again. If one of the objectives of The Hundred was to introduce a new audience, then it succeeded quite spectacularly. The editor's thoughts were that if the same level of investment had been made in the domestic t20 Bash, then the same objective would have been achieved and obviated the need for such a damaging calendar.

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