

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

NEWSLETTER No. 425 – DECEMBER 2023

MEETINGS

Wednesday 13 December 2023 – Meeting

The Society extends the warmest of welcomes to Fred Rumsey and Stephen Chalke on the occasion of the Society's Annual Lunch. The pair have collaborated on visits to Cricket Societies since he wrote his autobiography *Sense of Humour, Sense of Justice*, which was published by Stephen's Fairfield Books in 2019. Recent previous newsletters have given brief biographical notes of our guests. Given the nature of the meeting, which will take the form of an interview, this newsletter expands some of Fred Rumsey's cricket career. However, the interview will reveal his sporting life in more entertaining and interesting detail.

FREDERICK EDWARD RUMSEY was born in Stepney on 4 December 1935. His first employment was in the glovemaking business, as was that of William Shakespeare's father. However, of course, there was no cricket in the latter's day. Cricket was in Rumsey's blood and, despite receiving much less income, he accepted a contract with Worcestershire in 1960, at the age of 24. He was released after the end of the 1961 season, but was recalled for two matches in 1962. In the second of those, he took eleven wickets in the match against Derbyshire at Chesterfield. It proved to be his last match for the Pears.

He was still down the pecking order with uncertain prospects, and joined Somerset in 1963. The outcome was spectacular. He claimed 100 wickets in his first season and found himself in the England team a year later. He gained five test caps in all, and also went on to take 100 wickets in both 1965 and 1966. He left Somerset in 1968, after only six full seasons, with 520 wickets at the remarkably low average of 19.78.

That great West Country cricket writer, David Foot, described him thus: "he had a suitably fearsome appearance as he approached the wicket on a pounding run-up. He was heavily built around the trunk; later the tummy broadened a little and the arm dropped correspondingly. The expanse of the heart, though, seldom lessened.....Here was a real fast bowler, left-arm at that, who could make some batsmen quake".

He was certainly too much for the Hampshire batsmen at Bath 1965, when he took a career-best eight for 26 in 20.1 overs. Hampshire totalled 64 in 40.1 overs. No batsman therefore gave their wicket away, but only Roy Marshall (13), Mike Barnard (26 - he had a habit of top-scoring in low totals) and the imperturbable Henry Horton (10 not out, batting at three) attained double figures. Four batsmen were bowled; one was lbw, and three were caught at the wicket. Hampshire were bowled out for 77 in 52.2 overs second time round (three for 24), and lost by seven wickets.

The perceptive Foot wrote in *Sixty Summers; Somerset Cricket Since The War* “he needed to be used in shortish bursts, to be handled intelligently on and off the field, to be appreciated for the vision he often imparted to the conversation”. It was his vision, and indeed, independence, that enabled him to flourish in such diverse fields as the formation of the Professional Cricketers Association, public relations for Derbyshire, the modernisation of the Lord’s Taverners’ Charity, and expansion of both cricket and football in the West Indies.

Stephen Chalke is Patron of the Cricket Societies Association. He first spoke to the Society (at The Grange, Netley) in September 1999, and has since made more appearances at HCS meetings than any other speaker. He was born in Salisbury in 1948 and now lives in Bristol. He left full-time employment in adult education to become a writer and publisher of cricket books. He later extended his remit to include volumes by West Country writers in particular and has acted as a mentor to several authors seeking to write cricket books. Through interviews with ex-players over several generations, he has become one of the most authoritative and knowledgeable of cricket historians, placing the game in its historical context over the past 100 years and more. Thankfully, statistics play relatively little part in his books and those he has published; he is more interested in the personality and character of his subjects.

As owner of Fairfield Books for 22 years, he published 42 titles, 19 of which he wrote himself. The success of his approach is exemplified by the fact that eight of those publications won National Book of the Year awards, including five written by himself and another by the late David Foot.

His last publication is *Footsteps: David Foot’s Lifetime of Writing*. After an introduction to each chapter, Stephen Chalke includes David Foot’s own words on each of the subject matters from his own books, and magazine and newspaper articles. It is an exceptionally evocative work covering the period of Foot’s lifetime and even stretching back to the Victorian era (he was 92 years old when he died in 2021), capturing village life in Somerset, a study of everyday life in Bristol in particular, his work as a theatre critic in that City for his beloved *Guardian* newspaper, Somerset and Gloucestershire county cricket and the two Bristol football clubs. Among the many studies are those of Harold Gimblett, Wally Hammond, Zaheer Abbas, Peter O’Toole (who once child minded for him!), Harold Pinter, Siegfried Sassoon, Noel Coward and a surprisingly revealing piece on Viv Richards. It is a special work indeed. On the fly leaf, Stephen Chalke mentions that David Foot inspired him; it is shown in his own work time and again. For those who love descriptive writing, the book is highly recommended.

NEXT MEETING

A reminder that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 January 2024, when the speaker will be Huw Turbervill, editor of *The Cricketer* magazine.

ALISTAIR ORR

It has been obvious for some time that Hampshire's most pressing need is for a reliable opening batsman. Fletcha Middleton did well last season, but he had four partners, none of whom convinced: Felix Organ, Joe Weatherley, Ian Holland and Toby Albert. Despite having scored two centuries as an opener in 2022, Organ endured a wretched start to last season, limping to 60 runs in Hampshire's first nine innings. He was replaced by Weatherley. He began promisingly with 58 at Canterbury, but his next six innings produced only 63 runs. After making 0 and 1 at Taunton in mid-July, he never appeared in another Championship match. Part of the reason may have been the scheduling, given the The Vitality Blast, in which he played particularly well and The Hundred, in which he barely featured. When he returned to the Hampshire fold, Toby Albert was drinking from what appeared to be a poisoned chalice. He made two reasonable starts without reaching fifty, but was then overcome (for 4 and 3) by West Indian Kemar Roach and Australian Dan Worrall respectively, in the final match of the season against Surrey at the Ageas Bowl. Having said that, he was not alone. The Surrey pair were in devastating form all season, and were key figures in that County winning the Championship for the second successive season. Between Weatherley and Albert, Ian Holland occupied the opening berth. He made 138 not out at Trent Bridge, the only century scored by a Hampshire opener all season, but after a total of seven runs against Essex at Chelmsford, he was dropped down the order and played only one more match. He was, however, a vital partnership breaker in Hampshire's bowling attack all season.

Given that Hampshire's two overseas players were Mohammad Abbas and Kyle Abbott, Hampshire obviously decided to look at English born players to partner Middleton. They have alighted on Alistair (Ali) Orr, of Sussex.

ALISTAIR GRAHAM HAMILTON ORR was born in Eastbourne on 6 April 2001. He attended Bede's School, Upper Dicker, a hotbed of Sussex youth cricket. Of the current Sussex squad, Henry Crocombe, Daniel Ibrahim and Archie Lenham, all hail from the same school. Six foot, one inch tall, he is an opening left-handed batsman. *Playfair and Cricket Archive* mention he is a right-arm medium pace bowler, but in a career of 27 first-class matches, he has bowled only 18 balls. The Hampshire Press Release mentions he is a part-time wicket-keeper, but he has yet to start any match at a senior level behind the stumps.

He made his Sussex 2nd XI debut as a 17-year old in 2018, and his senior bow in 2001. He made a startling entry to the first-class game by scoring 67 (against Yorkshire at Headingley), 80 (v Glamorgan at Hove) and 119 (at Canterbury), 52 and 57 (at Worcester) in his first four matches. He finished the season having scored 548 runs (avge. 39.14) in seven matches.

Runs continued to flow from his bat in 2022. He passed the 1000 run landmark (1047, avge. 47.59), which included three centuries, all made at Hove. He achieved his career-best score of 328 in the second innings of the last match of the season against Glamorgan, when he and his captain Tom Haines put on 198 for the first wicket. *Wisden* described the stand as "thrilling". He was unlucky not to have recorded his double-century; a Haines drive was deflected on to the stumps at the non-striker's end.

A few weeks earlier, he had clubbed 206 off 161 balls against Somerset at Taunton in the Royal London Cup, to record Sussex's highest score in a List A match.

He was absent from some matches last summer due to an injury in an early Vitality Blast match, and there was some disappointment among the Sussex faithful that he did not kick on from his stellar start in the game. In his eight Championship matches, he scored 322 runs (avge. 26.83). However, he won't be the first, or last, player to suffer "second season syndrome". From comments made to the editor by contacts in Sussex, he seemed to be in a transition stage, caught between adopting a more aggressive approach, and building an innings. Given the more bowler-friendly wickets at the Ageas Bowl in the last couple of years, he will certainly be tested. Hove is a good batting wicket these days. He will also find that there is a difference between the quality of bowlers in the two Divisions. The Sussex batters have also benefitted from the experience of Cheteshwar Pujara in the last two seasons. So there will be challenges for him. However, his ability is undoubted, and he is still in the formative stages of what should be a bright career.

His moving to Hampshire was the cause of some controversy in the County where he had risen through the ranks since a schoolboy. Former captain Chris Adams and Ian Gould resigned from the Committee. Matt Prior also made a public statement criticising the decision to allow him to move. However, it seemed Orr had made up his mind to move whilst there was still a year to run on his contract. Coach Paul Fairbrace, probably rightly, felt there was no point in retaining a player who wanted to move elsewhere. He is joining Hampshire on a multi-year contract.

SCOTT CURRIE and JOHN TURNER

Hampshire have offered Scott Currie a multi-year contract. However, the tall (six feet 5 inch) 22 year old fast-medium bowler will be playing for Leicestershire on loan for the 2024 season. His opportunities in the past have inevitably been restricted by Mohammad Abbas, Kyle Abbott, and Keith Barker. He has, though, an enviable record for the County in white ball cricket, in which his absence will leave a sizeable hole in Hampshire's bowling resources. In 47 matches (four in f-c cricket), he has taken 78 wickets (12 in f-c cricket, 38 in List A and 28 in the Blast).

John Turner's progression has been dramatic. The South African-born fast bowler was born three weeks earlier than Currie, but since his debut in 2022, has created such an impression that he has been selected for a special Lions training camp, and now England's white ball squad in the West Indies for the three ODIs and five t20 matches during December. His accuracy and temperament for one so young is remarkable. He suffered a side injury during The Hundred last season. It must be hoped that was a temporary blip. Given he is on the international horizon, how often will we see him play for Hampshire in the future? To date, he has played in 30 matches (3 in first-class cricket), and taken 59 wickets (averaging 10.5 in f-c cricket, 19.59 in List A, and 12.22 in the Vitality Blast). No comment needed!

**THE COMMITTEE WISH ALL MEMBERS A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS
AND A HEALTHY NEW YEAR**

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