

HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

PATRONS: SHAUN UDAL JAMES TOMLINSON KEVAN JAMES

NEWSLETTER 437 – MARCH 2025

MEETINGS

Wednesday 12th March 2025 - Meeting

The Society extends a warm welcome to Lawrence Booth, editor of *Wisden*, this afternoon. His visit is timely as the world's most famous sports book, first published in 1864, will be published in the next few weeks. He was the youngest editor in 72 years when he was appointed in 2012, since when he has transformed the book. Formerly regarded as an establishment mouthpiece, his Notes of the Editor, have continuously challenged those managing the game whether it be the ICC, the ECB or the BCCI. He has been the editor over a period of unprecedented change, brought about by the increasing commercialism to a level that could not possibly have been foreseen at the start of the millennium. *Wisden* has recorded all the changes, critically and with an independent voice. For over a century since its inception, *Wisden* resembled an accountant's ledger as it concentrated on the statistics of the game. In recent years, first initiated by the Society's own John Woodcock, and then by Matthew Engel, Scyld Berry, and now Lawrence Booth, the quality of the writing is arguably the best in any sports publication. The first 300 pages, or thereabouts, in each edition have become indispensable reading, a book within a book, and an enjoyable and stimulating one at that. The Almanack now runs to 1500 pages; its size has been swollen by the coverage of Franchise Cricket all over the world, and Women's Cricket. It has stayed relevant.

LAWRENCE BOOTH was born in Oxford on 2 April 1975. He was educated at Magdalen College School in that city, before progressing to Sidney Sussex, College, where he read Modern Languages. He has written for *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Sunday Times*, *The Daily Mail*, and *Wisden Cricket Monthly*. The latter has an informative blog commenting on the game's current news, and developments. He has edited or co-written 19 books, including *Bazball*, which was shortlisted for the MCC/Cricket Society Book of the Year award in 2024. He supports Northamptonshire.

His is the most authoritative voice in the game. The most interesting of meetings is assured.

Wednesday 19 February 2025 – Report

The editor thanks John Hooper for his comprehensive report on **TIM TREMLETT's** address at our last meeting. Tim began by saying that he was the weakest link in the family, as his father, Maurice, and son, Chris, played for England but he did not. He then described Maurice's career (see previous Newsletter). Tim's mother was an excellent swimmer, missing out on a place at the Olympics because of the war. She took Tim to cricket coaching lessons on Southampton Common in the mid - 1960's. He wanted to bat like Greg Chappell and bowl like John Snow, but his father thought that both were unlikely.

Aged 16, he made his 2nd XI debut against a Somerset side including Ian Botham and Viv Richards. He landed his first playing contract on 1 July 1975 and was somewhat surprised that he had to report to the County Ground at 8 am to spend the next two hours picking up litter from underneath the stands, before bowling to first team players in the nets. He made his debut in 1976 in a side containing players nearing the ends of their careers. In 1978, Hampshire won the John Player League but Barry Richards and Andy Roberts left before the end of the season and the team entered a period of transition.

Tim played under four captains: Richard Gilliat, Bob Stephenson, Nick Pocock and Mark Nicholas. He played his first championship match under Gilliat against Surrey at The Oval and remembered him giving his Captain's expenses to his vice-captain at the end of play in order to buy drinks for the players. He enjoyed playing under all four captains, thinking that Gilliat was the most successful and Nicholas the most professional.

He talked about some of the cricketers he had played with and against. Barry Richards was the best batsman that he had seen; he used to practice with a small, half sized bat. Richards talked to Tim and some of the other young batsmen - Nicholas, Paul Terry and Bob Parks and asked them what they looked at when the bowler delivered the ball. The youngsters muttered about looking at the ball, but Barry said that he only looked at half the ball, the side that was shiny, so that he could gauge its likely movement.

In 1981, Tim opened the batting with Gordon Greenidge and on crossing the boundary, the latter always said "play well" and not "good luck". Gordon would concentrate in the first few overs and then tell Tim whether to go forward, or go back. They shared an opening partnership of 95 runs against Gloucestershire when Tim was dismissed for eight. Gordon went on to 150!

Malcolm Marshall joined in 1979 and Tim thought he was the best bowler of his time, taking 132 wickets in 1982. He used to obtain videos of future opponents and analyse them to see how he could dismiss them. He was normally calm, but got upset when batsmen didn't walk after nicking one. Peter Roebuck didn't, and his hand was broken in the next over. He was immaculately dressed for cricket but got noticeably fraught when he could not find his Afro comb before a match at Canterbury. It was eventually found and he promptly took a wicket in his first over.

David Gower concentrated on his hands when batting and only took a small stride at the crease. Tim only saw him upset on one occasion; David had been out of form but was 70 not out at Old Trafford at lunchtime. He sat on his own in the dressing room at lunchtime, reading the newspaper. On his way out to bat, Mark Nicholas wished him "good luck" which sent him into a tantrum for breaking his concentration. He was out in the second over after lunch.

Of other overseas players, Tim recalled Matthew Hayden who practised consistently, but considered Shane Warne to be the best of all of them. He was a great motivator who always had time for people, signing every autograph at the end of play. He said that Robin Smith was a great finisher of a cricket match. He was, though somewhat gullible. On one occasion, his brother Chris asked him if he had brought his passport

as he made his way to Cardiff. He hadn't, of course, and the outcome was that Robin agreed to be hidden in the boot of his car as they crossed the Severn Bridge into Wales.

Tim mentioned that his son, Chris, had occasionally caused them problems as a youth. Their neighbours tired of cricket balls in their garden and stopped returning them. One evening, their neighbours had a fleet of taxis coming to their house, and next evening, several pizza vans. Eventually, the Police called, having traced the telephone number that ordered the taxis and the pizzas, and Chris and his friends were suitably rebuked for their mischievous actions of revenge.

After retiring, Tim became Coach in 1991, when Hampshire won the Nat West Trophy and the B & H Cup in the following year. He became Director of Cricket in the late 1990's and subsequently became Cricket Operations Manager. He was instrumental in making applications for lottery funding, for the indoor cricket school and the practice nets regarding the move to the Rose Bowl. Tim talked about the latest advances behind the scenes: multiple coaches, physios, psychotherapists, and most important of all, the analysts. Every ball of every match is recorded for analysis. The women's team is run similarly. A future issue is finding an additional ground for the Academy and 2nd XI matches. He thinks the GMR Group will not make immediate changes, but will formulate plans for the future development of the club.

In the Q & A session, Tim revealed that his favourite dismissal was that of Viv Richards for a 3rd ball duck; he took his wicket six times in Championship cricket and three times in white ball matches. He also mentioned the match against Somerset in which he scored his only century (see previous Newsletter). He explained how the Hampshire Pathway now had 2000 children attending coaching sessions and that it was not just for finding the right players for the county but also finding the right club for youngsters. As for opening batsmen, he felt the odds were stacked against them, particularly in April and September.

Tim ended by recalling some of his winter jobs as he only had a six month playing contract. He worked as a labourer to try to build up his physique, for Owen and Owen (an old Departmental store in Southampton) selling toys and furniture, as a furrier for his father in law, and for IBM.

It was another thoroughly enjoyable afternoon in the company of 103 members and guests.

HAMPSHIRE NEWS

The fact that **MOHAMMED ABBAS** will not be returning to Hampshire this summer was not a surprise, but was still received with the some sadness. In 47 matches from 2021, he took 180 wickets at the miserly average of 19.26. His nagging accuracy, a product of control of pace, according to the conditions, line and length, were a byword. In match after match, he imposed a stranglehold on opposition batsmen as they sought to make headway. With Kyle Abbott and Keith Barker, he formed an onfield bowling brains trust as they plotted the downfall of batting line-ups. Statistically, only he, Andy Roberts, Derek Shackleton, Malcolm Marshall and Abbott, have taken their wickets at an average of below 20 for the County.

He enjoyed an astonishing home debut for Hampshire against Middlesex at the Ageas Bowl in 2021. He bewitched their batsmen at the start of the second day. He took the first six wickets to fall, which included a spell of five wickets in 13 balls, incorporating a hat-trick. At one stage, Middlesex were 31 for six. His final figures were a symmetrical 11-6-11-6.

Hampshire rarely required his batting, with the result that his run aggregate (97) was lower than his wicket tally. As far as the editor is aware, he is the only Hampshire player to appear in the same number of matches to possess such an idiosyncratic record.

He will be returning to the UK to play in five matches for Nottinghamshire at the end of next season.

BEN BROWN has been appointed as Hampshire captain for Championship matches next season. JAMES VINCE will captain the side in t20 matches and NICK GUBBINS will again be skipper in the One Day Cup.

Hampshire's previous wicketkeeper captains have been few and far between. His predecessors have been Charles Robson (1900-1902) and Bob Stephenson in 1979. Brown previously captained Sussex from 2017 to 2020, before his move to Hampshire in 2022. In a time of change, on and off the field, we must wish him well.

Hampshire's second overseas player next season is the Australian **JACK RICHARD EDWARDS**. He is not a like-for-like replacement for Abbas, being a genuine all-rounder. Right-handed, he has three centuries to his name (HS: 138 for New South Wales v South Australia at the Karen Rolton Oval, Adelaide in 2023/24) and has taken five wickets in an innings on three occasions. In the past winter, he took five for 41 in each innings for NSW versus Western Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG). He formed a highly effective opening bowler partnership with Jackson Bird, who played for Hampshire in 2015. He previously bowled first-change behind Bird, and Surrey's Sean Abbott. It will therefore be interesting to see in what position he bats (it is normally at seven in the order), and whether he opens the bowling. His best performance with the ball is six for 36 for NSW against Queensland in 2023/24 at Cricket Central, Sydney – which is part of the Olympic Park complex.

Edwards was born at Allambie Heights, in the Northern Sydney suburbs on 19 April 2000). He made his debut for NSW in 2018/19. Interestingly, he captained his state in the Sheffield Shield last season. In 39 first-class matches, he has made 1752 runs (avge. 29.20), taken 68 wickets (avge. 26.38) and held 48 catches.

He plays for Sydney Sixers in the Australian KFC Big Bash, where one of his teammates is James Vince. It is assumed that the latter will have had a role in Edwards signing for Hampshire. He is contracted for April and May.

At the moment, Hampshire have a number of pace bowling options in Abbott, **SCOTT CURRIE** – who has returned to the County after a successful season's loan at Leicestershire in 2024 (when he scored a century and recorded five wickets in an innings for the first time), Edwards, Brad Wheal, James Turner, James Fuller, Keith

Barker, Sonny Baker, Eddie Jack (who toured South Africa with the England Under 19 side this winter) and Dominic Kelly. The last named claimed a hat-trick, en route to taking five for 19 against Derbyshire at the Utilita Bowl in the Metro Bank One Day Cup last summer.

SONNY BAKER has enjoyed an unusual and meteoric career to date. Born in Torbay on 13 March 2003, he attended Torquay Boys Grammar School and King's College, Taunton. He played for England Under-19s whilst with Somerset. Tom Prest and Jacob Bethell were in the same side. He has virtually by-passed the County system en route to his selection for the Southern Brave in 2022 (when he played at the Ageas Bowl against the Trent Rockets), and the England Lions and a central contract with England. His sole first-class appearance was for the Lions against Australia A at Sydney Cricket Central a few weeks ago when he took three for 60 in 18 overs. He seems to be the most notable example so far of a cricketer earning selection in representative cricket on the basis of potential rather than actual performance. He has clearly been picked out as someone special. His progress this season will be intriguing. He is a right-arm fast-medium in swing bowler. He played in all of Hampshire's five matches in the Global Super League in Guyana. His only other appearances for a County were for Somerset in the One Day Cup in 2021 and 2022, in which he took 19 wickets in 11 matches, including a List A best of six for 46 against Durham at Taunton in 2022.

Hampshire have signed the veteran opening batsman, **MARK STONEMAN**, on a year's contract. He has been a consistent performer in the County Championship since his first appearance in 2007. Left-handed, he has scored 31 centuries, the final one of which was for Middlesex at Hove in the penultimate match of last season. Hampshire will be his fifth county; he has previously played for Durham (2007-16), Surrey (2017-21), Middlesex (2021-24) and Yorkshire (in four T20 matches in 2021). He played in 11 tests between August 2017 and May 2018, seven of which were on the England tour of Australia and New Zealand. His highest score was 60 against New Zealand at the Hagley Oval, Christchurch; in that match he shared a second wicket partnership of 123 with James Vince (76). It was the latter's last test appearance; Stoneman, who made five test fifties, went on to play one more. Earlier on the tour, the pair added 125, also for the second wicket, at Brisbane (Stoneman 53; Vince 83). His final test tally was 526 runs (avge. 27.68).

Mark David Stoneman was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 26 June 1987. In his 250 first-class matches to date, he has scored 14448 runs (avge. 34.23). He has averaged in the 30's for all his Counties. His best season was in 2017 when he made 1481 runs (avge, 54.85). It was in that season that he made his highest score of 197 for Surrey against Essex at Guildford.

Given the presence of Fletcha Middleton, Toby Albert, and Ali Orr, all of whom have made centuries opening the innings, it will be interesting to see what his role will be in the Hampshire batting order in a few weeks time.

The exotically named **LHUAN-DRE GILBERT PRETORIUS** has been signed for the t20 Blast as a wicket-keeper left-handed batsman. He is obviously a prodigious and exciting talent. He has played in 33 t20 matches to date. Aged 18, he was the leading scorer for Paarl Rocks in the Winter's SA20 contest with 397 runs. His team

lost to Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the semi-final by eight wickets. The latter were coached by Adrian Birrell, and included Liam Dawson in their ranks. He has played only one first-class match, but it deserves mention, as he scored 120 (184 balls; 254 minutes; 14 fours and three sixes) for Northerns against Eastern Province at St. George's Park, Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth). The prospect of seeing him opening the innings with James Vince in the t20 Blast this summer is a mouth-watering prospect indeed.

PRE-SEASON TOUR OF SRI LANKA

Hampshire will open their season with a tour of Sri Lanka. The visit will take place from 4-13 March where they will play two two-day matches against local opposition.

© Copyright Alan Edwards 2025 (newslettereditor@hantscricsoc.org.uk)