HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

NEWSLETTER No. 419 – FEBRUARY 2023

MEETINGS

Wednesday 15 February 2023 – Meeting

The Society extends a very warm welcome to Bill Athey this afternoon. For over 20 years, from 1976 until almost the turn of the last century, he was an integral part of the County scene, first with Yorkshire, and then Gloucestershire and Sussex. Of medium height, he was a right-handed, top-order, batsman, who, whether defending or attacking, was always pleasing on the eye. He was also one of the few men to play in an Ashes winning side in Australia.

CHARLES WILLIAM JEFFERY ATHEY was born in Middlesbrough on 27 September 1957. He made his Yorkshire debut in 1976. His breakthrough year was in 1980; he first played for England (in the infamous Centenary test at Lord's), scored a thousand runs in a season for the first time and was nominated as the Cricket Writers Club Young Cricketer of the Year. He seemed set for a long career with Yorkshire. However, after a poor year in 1983, he asked to be released from his contract.

He subsequently moved to Gloucestershire, where, in his first year, he scored most runs and topped the averages. He was to become the mainstay of their batting for nine seasons. It was whilst he was playing in the West Country that he enjoyed his longest run in England's test team. 20 of his 23 test appearances were whilst he was with Gloucestershire.

He will be best remembered perhaps for his batting in Australia in 1986/87, when he opened the innings with Chris Broad throughout. He normally batted at three for much of his career. In the first test at Brisbane, he batted throughout the rain affected first day to score 76. After the early loss of Broad, which happened rarely on the tour, he added 101 for the second wicket with his captain, Mike Gatting. In *Wisden Cricket Monthly,* Matthew Engel described our speaker's knock as being "almost Boycottian in its intensity". After Ian Botham had clubbed a typically fearless 138, England went on to record a seven wicket victory.

In the second test at Perth, he and Broad opened with a partnership of 223. He was dismissed for 96 in 286 minutes, bowled by an inswinging yorker from Bruce Reid. Broad went on to 168 – a maiden test century; David Gower (136) and wicketkeeper Jack Richards (133), later added 207 for the sixth wicket as England ran up 592 for eight. The match was eventually drawn.

In the third test, at Adelaide, Australia opened the match with 514 for five. Despite this daunting total, the opening pair responded with another century opening partnership (112). Bill Athey's contribution was 55. Broad scored 116, Gatting made 100; and the match was drawn.

England duly clinched the series in the next test at Melbourne, winning by an innings and 14 runs. Broad recorded yet another century (112); on this occasion their opening partnership was restricted to 58. Gladstone Small and Botham cleaned up Australia's first innings with five wicket hauls each, before Phil Edmonds and John Emburey administered the *coup de grace.* Australia won the final match by 55 runs.

Our speaker ended the series with 303 runs (avge. 33.67). He went on to register his only test century in the following summer's series against Pakistan. Reverting to three in the order, he scored a delightful 123 at Lord's, driving Abdul Qadir to distraction as he left the crease to drive, or waited to sweep. It was an innings of the highest quality.

In the next winter, he was in the England side that reached the World Cup Final, and top scored with 58 in the ill-fated final. In the period 1986/87, he scored two ODI centuries: 142 not out against New Zealand at Old Trafford in July 1986 and 111 against Australia at Brisbane in the following January.

He eventually left Gloucestershire in 1992, refusing a new contract, but was quickly snapped up by Sussex. Again enjoying a change in scenery, he averaged 68.19 – a season's best in the Championship – in 1993, whilst scoring 1432 runs. He left Sussex at the end of the 1997 season. Two years later, he re-emerged in county cricket in one match in the National League (45 overs) for Worcestershire, in which he was at the wicket as he guided his side to a six-wicket victory against Lancashire at Old Trafford.

He left the County game with an impressive tally of 25453 runs (avge. 35.69), which included 55 centuries. He also made a further 13240 runs and 12 centuries in List A matches. His highest score in first-class cricket was 184 for an England B side, captained by Mark Nicholas, against Sri Lanka at Galle in 1985-86. Interestingly, his best innings in List A matches – 121 not out for Gloucestershire versus Worcestershire, was made at the unlikely venue of Moreton-in-Marsh, in 1985. He was a useful right-arm off-break bowler who claimed 95 wickets in all formats during his career. Interestingly his best figures in first-class cricket were three for 3, against Hampshire at Bristol in 1985. His victims were notable ones: Robin Smith, Jon Hardy and Malcolm Marshall.

Wednesday 11 January 2023 – Report

The Society was fortunate to enjoy a marvellous afternoon in the company of David Woodhouse who kindly filled in at very short notice when Daryl Mitchell was indisposed.

The former talked on his multi-award winning book *Who Only Cricket Know – Hutton's Men in the West Indies 1953-54.* The tour has often been described as being the most controversial after *Bodyline* and though held almost 70 years ago, David Woodhouse brought a freshness to the event through his exhaustive research and his interviews with the few participants who were still alive whilst it was being written over a seven year period. One of the interviewees was Everton Weekes, whom he contacted by telephone.

The tour was full of as much incident off the field as it was on. After the West Indies inaugural series victory in England in 1950, and then England's regaining the Ashes in 1953 after a 20 year hiatus, the tour was billed beforehand as being for the World Championship of Cricket. It turned out to be as eventful, indeed notorious, for as many off the field events, as those on the pitch. There were diplomatic incidents aplenty, many prompted by racial issues, generated by nationalism on both sides, as well as riots, bouncer wars, bowlers called for throwing, threats to umpires and even the West Indian captain. The series marked the great George Headley's final test in the first match, and Garfield Sober's debut in the last game. Other West Indians to feature were the three W's and Jeffrey Stollmeyer. In the England team were Len Hutton, Peter May, Denis Compton, Godfrey Evans, Trevor Bailey, Fred Trueman, Brian Statham and Tony Lock.

There was an outpouring of English nationalism in 1953, in the wake of the Coronation of the Queen, the conquering of Everest, Stanley Matthews winning his only FA Cup winners medal in spectacular fashion, Sir Gordon Richards winning his only Derby and, as already mentioned, the regaining of the Ashes. In the West Indies, many of the islands were seeking to gain their own independence resulting in a plethora of sensitive situations all over the Caribbean. Once the tour commenced in earnest, the atmosphere was often combustible.

The captaincy issue for both sides contained their own sensitivities. Len Hutton, a professional, was appointed captain for the tour. Though he had captained England against Australia in 1953, MCC, who selected the side, and including three Middlesex men, Sir Pelham Warner, Gubby Allen and RWV Robins,
felt that only an amateur was suitable to lead overseas tours, which were regarded as more diplomatic ventures than sporting occasions. However, with Warner's preferred choice, David Sheppard, wanting to concentrate on his career in the church, there were no other captains of sufficient standing in the County game. Hutton became Hobson's Choice. The MCC, however, appointed Leicestershire's Charles Palmer as "Player Manager ", to keep an eye on Hutton, and arranged for Sir Walter Monkton, a member of the Government with experience of foreign affairs, to address the touring party before they sailed. In the event, Palmer became a valuable ally to Hutton as many of the experienced players seemed more intent on enjoying themselves rather than observing diplomatic "protocols". Fred Trueman, thought that given the high ambassadorial profile of the team, players should be suitably recompensed, which was of course, a pipedream.

As for the West Indies, a black captain was still off the agenda. Stollmeyer, was a Trinidadian of mixed nationality. It wasn't until 1960 that Frank Worrell became the first black captain of the West Indies.

The West Indies won the first two Tests. The first against Jamaica involved umpiring disputes. The second, in Barbados, earned notoriety for very slow scoring – England mustered 128 runs in 114 overs on the third day – and diplomatic incidents involving the white population, who were upset about the loss. The third, at Georgetown was surrounded by controversy before it had even begun. England objected to the umpires. One of the new umpires was the local groundsman. The match subsequently included a riot. Hutton's 169 stemmed the tide as England recorded a nine wicket victory.

The fourth Test at Port of Spain, was played on a matting wicket. The ensuing draw was largely due to fine hundreds by Peter May and Denis Compton. England won the last after a canny display of swing bowling by Trevor Bailey – he took seven for 34 as the West Indies were dismissed for 139 – and an eight hour 205 by Hutton. Hutton's herculean effort was soured by a perceived sleight to the Chief Minister at the end of the match.

On returning home, Hutton was criticised for the incident and a conspiracy was launched to replace him as Captain for the following winter tour to Australia. It was the vote cast in his favour by Hampshire's Harry Altham that saved him. Hutton subsequently sent his sons to Altham's old school, Repton. Trueman was deprived of his tour bonus and did not tour again until the visit to Australia five years later. Bailey was stripped of the Vice-Captaincy after a newspaper article he wrote. The experiment of appointing a Player/Manager was not repeated.

David Woodhouse's account of the tour produced a spellbinding afternoon, which members fully appreciated and enjoyed.

SOCIETY NEWS

The Society's last meeting of the scheduled programme will be on **Wednesday 15 March,** when the speaker will be **MARK CHURCH.** He has covered Surrey's matches on BBC Radio London since 2001. Surrey were, of course, last year's County Champions. In the period when Covid was its most lethal, his voice, humour and obvious love of the game were a reassuring and authoritative presence. He was also a regular reviewer of the many excellent cricket books produced by Pitch Publishing during that period. Pitch have continued to publish many interesting sports books and the editor would recommend their website to members.

Mark Church will be talking about how the role of commentating has changed over the years.

AN ADDITIONAL DIARY DATE – BARRY RICHARDS

When members were asked at our last meeting whether they would wish to listen to Barry Richards, there was a <u>unanimous</u> show of hands in the affirmative. Even nearly fifty years after making his final appearance for Hampshire, the memories of his regal strokeplay clearly still resonate.

The Society will therefore be holding an additional meeting for its members during the summer, whilst Barry is in the country. Members have been informed by email that he will address the Society on **Wednesday 5 July, at Romsey Golf Club, starting at 2 pm.** Further details will follow once the Committee has finalised arrangements for the event.

THE GROWTH OF FRANCHISE CRICKET

The demise of County Cricket has been predicted for well over 100 years, and yet, despite never being profitable, it has remained an indispensable part of the English summer.

However, as this winter has progressed County Cricket's future has felt increasingly more parlous than ever before. The main factor is the exponential growth of franchise cricket. South Africa were the last of the historical major Test playing countries to stage franchise t20 cricket in January 2023. At the moment, the juggernaut that is the IPL, and the Caribbean Premier League, are the only contests to impinge on the County season. The IPL in particular recruits some of England's major players and often limits their availability until the start of the summer Test series.

But franchise cricket is not only confined to Test playing countries. The United Arab Emirates have proved a fertile recruitment ground for county cricketers in t10 and t20 tournaments. Though the performances of the participating players are not included in official records, as the host countries in the UAE do not play Test cricket, the current International League being played there has attracted at least ten current England players.

When the Editor first became responsible for the Society's Newsletter, over forty years ago, most County cricketers remained at home during the winter seeking a job to tie them over until the next season. There were a few, such as Trevor Jesty, who returned regularly to South Africa to play in the Currie Cup; others coached in that country. However, employment opportunities in the game for county cricketers during the close season, were few and far between. The environment is now far different.

The employment opportunities for County cricketers are to be increased by emerging developments in the USA. *The Economist* magazine revealed plans in the Christmas/New Year edition, for a six team Major League Cricket (MLC) tournament The venture is supported by several Indian millionaires, including the CEOs of Microsoft and Adobe. The teams will be based in Dallas, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington DC. The first season will run from 13 – 30 July of this year. Initial finances of $44m have been invested with a further $76m to start the league.

The States are also looking to the future. The MLC will incorporate a development league of 26 teams as well as cricket academies. An inaugural "minor" league competition was held last summer, in which the Seattle Thunderbolts (mostly Indian and a sprinkling of South Africans) defeated Atlanta Fire (Indians and West Indians) by ten runs.

Sceptics may claim that the USA's involvement in traditional English sports has been low key. However, it seems that baseball, which effectively replaced cricket after the end of the American Civil War in 1867, is now a declining sport. A recent survey showed that only 9% of Americans named baseball as their favourite sport. Cricket is likely to enjoy an unprecedented renaissance. Demographics also apply. In 2019, there were 4.6m (South Asian) Indians in America, and a further 1m of Caribbean

descent. Given the Indian based sources of finance, the growth of cricket in the USA is assured. The USA will co-host (with the West Indies) the Cricket World Cup next year and are pressing for cricket to be included in the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

The threat to the County Game is therefore very real. Given the plethora of t20 tournaments being played all over the world, Counties are already being denuded of their playing staffs near to the start of the English season, with its consequent impact on pre-season training and team bonding. Also, some have been playing almost continuously since October. To what extent will they suffer burn-out? It could be that the USA project will attract only the elite players, but this will still affect, potentially, recruitment in all formats of the English game. Implicit in the article, is that the game will be founded on t20 cricket. The Hundred is already being undermined.

Also, County cricketers will have been well rewarded in t20 (or t10) as a result of their winter endeavours. Their earning opportunities are of a scale that they could have only dreamt about in the past. Some may decide that their future lies in that format. This will pose immense contractural, staffing and financial challenges to the Counties.

In the final analysis, what is the future of Test Cricket? It seems that fundamental changes to the game as we know it are now inevitable. The pace of change has been swift. No rational individual will begrudge cricketers earning more in their careers. They will follow the money.

MORE ON HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS DURING THE WINTER

Since January's Newsletter, current Hampshire players have continued to be active in franchise cricket. **JAMES VINCE, LIAM DAWSON, JAMES FULLER, BENNY HOWELL and BRAD WHEAL** have played in the International T20 League in the Emirates; **FULLER and MASON CRANE** have appeared in the new SA20 in South Africa.

DOMINIC KELLY, who made both his first-class and List A debut in one match apiece for Hampshire last season, enjoyed marked success in the first, recent, under-19 Test against Australia at Allan Border Field, Brisbane. Batting at eight, he scored 36 and 32; he opened the bowling, taking one for 44 in the first innings, before becoming mainly responsible for England's 24-run victory by dismissing five batsmen for 69 in Australia's second.

Australia won the second Test by seven wickets, in which Kelly scored 0 and 19, and claimed three wickets in the match.

Kelly was born in Winchester on 1 October 2005 and is a left handed batter and right-arm medium pace bowler.

Also in the England side was **EDWARD JACK,** who played for Hampshire Academy last summer. He batted at eleven, and took a total of four wickets in the two matches. He was born in Barnet on 9 September 2005 and bats left-handed.

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