HAMPSHIRE CRICKET SOCIETY

Patrons: Shaun Udal James Tomlinson Kevan James

NEWSLETTER No. 420 – MARCH 2023

MEETINGS

Wednesday 15 March 2023 – Meeting

The Society is delighted to welcome **MARK CHURCH** to this afternoon's meeting. He became a familiar voice to many Hampshire followers in his review of Pitch Publishing books when Covid was at its peak, and with our patron, Kevan James, in Surrey/Hampshire matches. The pair have a fine rapport, and are always entertaining, as well as shrewd and knowledgeable.

Educated at Tonbridge School, alma mater to the Cowdrey family, and Durham University, where he began his career in radio, he is now the distinctive voice of BBC Radio London's coverage of Surrey's matches. His love of the county's cricket and players is evident from his work. He has been commentating on Surrey's matches since 2001, and since 2007, has worked on Surrey TV.

This afternoon, he will be talking on how radio commentary has changed during his career.

Wednesday 15 February 2023 – Report

An audience of 80 members enjoyed a rollicking afternoon in the company of Bill Athey. He began by describing his pride in his home town of Middlesbrough. He was offered terms with The Boro when Jack Charlton was manager, but felt he was better at cricket. However, later in his address, he mentioned that when he taught at Dulwich College at the end of his career in cricket, he turned out for Brentford Reserves.

He made his debut for Yorkshire at Northampton, in place of an absent Geoffrey Boycott. Against a formidable bowling attack of Sarfraz Nawaz, Bob Cottam, John Dye, Bishen Bedi, and Mushtaq Mohammed (four of whom played test cricket), he made 10 and 37. He played in two ODIs before making his test debut against Australia in the Centenary Test at Lord's. His Yorkshire career was notable for the constant changing of captains, (he played under Boycott, John Hampshire, Chris Old, David Bairstow and Ray Illingworth), civil war, countless meetings and demonstrations. He sought quieter pastures at Gloucestershire where he enjoyed playing with, among others, Zaheer Abbas, Courtney Walsh, Terry Alderman and Jack Russell.

He talked about the strength of West Indies cricket during his test career, and regarded them as the best team of all time. They possessed, of course, five fast bowlers. He regarded Malcolm Marshall as the finest of them all. The top order batting was just as formidable: Desmond Haynes, Gordon Greenidge and Viv Richards

The peak of his career was the tour to Australia in 1986/87. After some errant displays at the start of the tour, the late Martin Johnson famously wrote that England "can't bat, can't bowl and can't field". They went on to win all three competitions on offer: the Ashes, the Benson and Hedges Cup and the Perth Challenge. At one time or other during he course of that tour, they defeated not only Australia, but also the West Indies and Pakistan. They were away from home from 9 October to 11 February. It was a happy tour; the social committee of Allan Lamb, David Gower and Ian Botham, with Elton John in and around the scene, ensured it could hardly be otherwise.

He recalled the 1987 World Cup Final before a crowd of 94,000 at Calcutta, which was memorable, for the wrong reasons for the England team, when Mike Gatting was dismissed reverse sweeping off Allan Border's left-arm spin, in what was the Australian captain's last throw of the dice. Australia, of course, went on to win.

England then travelled to Pakistan. The tour became infamous for the Shakoor Rana incident. Our speaker had a ringside view; he was fielding at short leg, whilst Gatting, accused of cheating, and Rana traded insults at square leg. The outcome was neutral umpires, and the award of a £1000 hardship payment to each of the England players. He felt some of the incidents throughout the tour were totally unacceptable.

In the ensuing Q and A session, he was asked about his appearance as wicket-keeper in the test against New Zealand at Lord's in 1986. After Bruce French sustained an injury at the hand of his county colleague, Richard Hadlee, he filled in whilst Bob Taylor was recruited from one of the entertainment boxes for the rest of the day. Bob Parks then travelled up from Hampshire to keep next morning.

HAMPSHIRE'S LIST A HIGHLIGHTS IN 2023

YORK

Hampshire will play at York for the first time this summer, on 17 August, in the One Day Cup. The first occasion Yorkshire played on the ground, Clifton Park, was a Championship match in 2019, when they were defeated by Warwickshire by three wickets. It remains the only Championship match to be played there. The ground has been plagued by ill-fortune in the six List A matches which have been scheduled. The first two, in 2020, were cancelled because of the Coronavirus outbreak. In the following year, rain limited play to only 33 overs and the match (v Nottinghamshire) was a no result. In the three games which have been concluded, Yorkshire have won two, and lost one.

Clifton Park is the second ground on which Yorkshire have played in the ancient city. The first to be used was at Wigginton Road, in 1890, when Yorkshire beat Kent by eight wickets.

THE JOHN FRETWELL SPORTING COMPLEX, NETTLEWORTH

Hampshire make a return visit to the above ground in the One-Day Cup on 11 August. Their only previous visit was in a Championship match in 2019. The venue was utilised because Trent Bridge was one of the host venues for the World Cup in the same year. After an interesting first day, rain washed out the remaining three and the match was consigned to a draw. Fortunately, however, the game was featured by Duncan Hamilton in his elegiac One Long and Beautiful Summer. He alleges that

no small place had ever staged a County Championship match …….”framed within a landscape so very pastoral and so very English at the root” …… there were white tents, the most sumptuous cake stall imaginable tucked into one of them”. Hamilton also provided splendid vignettes capturing the essence of Kyle Abbott and Mason Crane, who was playing his first match for nine months. In the coming summer, it is possible that Hampshire’s whole-hearted South African (who took six for 37 in fourteen constantly menacing overs) will be playing in the match, but Crane will be away in more noisy urban surroundings with London Spirit in The Hundred.

GUILDFORD
Hampshire play Surrey in the One-Day Cup at Woodbridge Road, Guildford on 20 August. It will be their third trip to the ground for a List A match. The previous occasions were in 1971 and 1997, both of which were won by Surrey. In the latter year, Ali Brown tonked a little matter of 203 off 119 balls; the innings included 11 sixes and 19 fours. It remains the highest individual score in a List A match against Hampshire.

KENT will be this year’s visitors to **NEWCLOSE,** Isle of Wight, on 22 August.

SOUTHPORT MEMORIES

Hampshire travel to Southport for their Championship match against Lancashire on 11 June. 2023 marks, of course, the 50th Anniversary of Hampshire’s second and last County Championship title. Their match in that year against Lancashire was also played at Southport. After dismissing the Red Rose County for 214, Hampshire’s response was built around an imperious opening partnership of 200 by Barry Richards (128) and Gordon Greenidge (153). They were able to declare at 388 for nine (Jack Simmons 7 – 64). Liverpool born Tom Mottram (3 – 38) and Trevor Jesty (5 – 24) were then mainly instrumental in bowling out Lancashire for 100, to take the side to victory by an innings and 74 runs.

Hampshire’s only other appearance at the ground was in 2013. Despite James Vince’s 106 in the first innings and Adam Wheater’s 140 in the second, Lancashire won with some ease, by 122 runs. The venue is generally regarded as a batting paradise; last season Keaton Jennings made 318 in seven hours against Somerset, as Lancashire amassed a gargantuan 624 for nine declared. However, the former County batted out the final day to secure a draw.

The cricket writer Paul Edwards (no relation), who lives in Southport, provides an evocative account of his affinity with the ground in his Summer Days Promise, published Fairfield Books 1922. It is the home of Southport and Birkdale CC for whom he played for 20 years. The venue is his first port of call when he returns from away trips and in the winter “walks several circuits of the boundary almost every day (to) try to understand the place afresh”. It is a sentiment which will echo with all those who have been associated with, and love, a ground on which they have played and/or watched their club play.

MORE ON HAMPSHIRE PLAYERS ABROAD THIS WINTER (3)

As far as the Editor is aware, only two Hampshire players have played first-class cricket abroad this winter. MOHAMMAD ABBAS played six matches for Southern

Punjab in the Quaid-c-Azam Trophy in October and November. He took 18 wickets (avge 24.16). He and KYLE ABBOTT, who played no cricket at all in the winter, should be well rested when the season starts in three weeks time.

NICK GUBBINS played one match for Southern Rocks in Zimbabwe, scoring 32 against Rhinos in Harare in February. Rain washed out play on the last two days. He also appeared for the Rocks in four T20 matches.

TOM PREST made a promising start to his representative career when he played for the England Lions against Sri Lanka A (top score) in Colombo in February. In the three (List A) matches, he made 27, 67 (top score) and 12. Sri Lanka A won the series 2 – 1.

It was good to see **MASON CRANE** back in the wickets on the same Lions tour. In the two matches in which he played he took 3 for 55, and 2 for 41.

JAMES VINCE has travelled extensively during the winter. In the period from 17 November to date, his schedule has been thus: England>Australia (for three ODI matches)>Abu Dhabi (T10)>Australia (KFC Twenty20 Big Bash, where he spent Christmas and the New Year) >UAE (for International League Twenty 20)>Pakistan (Pakistan Super League)>Bangladesh (for three ODIs). He will, of course, have made several internal fights in Australia and Pakistan.

In the three ODIs in Bangladesh, he was undone early on by spin in the first two matches. In the final one, he batted sublimely until receiving an unplayable ball from Shakib Al Hasan. He never looked in any trouble. As is nearly always the case, it was a surprise when he was dismissed. He made 38, England's highest score as they succumbed to a 50-run loss. In six ODIs during the winter, he made a modest 136 runs (avge 22.66).

In the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Vince played one quite extraordinary innings for Karachi Kings against the Multan Sultans, his previous franchise, on 22 February. He reached 50 off only 20 balls before being run out for 75 off 34 balls, a scoring rate of 220.59. He is of course renowned for his elegant off-side driving and cutting, but on this occasion he hooked, pulled and on-drove with quite brutal power. He scarcely needed to run as he struck seven fours and six sixes. The Hampshire captain looked set for a repeat performance in the next match against the same side immediately afterwards. He raced to 27 off 12 balls (three fours and two sixes – scoring rate 225) but was then dismissed. One of the features of PSL was the noise level and sheer enthusiasm of the crowds which equals and even exceeds those in the Indian Premier League. It is shameful that politics prevent Pakistanis from appearing in the IPL. They would enhance that competition.

In 15 appearances in the Australian Big Bash and PSL, Vince scored 437 runs (avge 36.41). He also played in 19 matches in the UAE in matches not regarded as "official" for the reasons explained in the last newsletter. In 40 matches in all formats during the winter, he scored 1201 runs. He personifies the modern first-class cricketer, who has maximised his opportunities in franchise cricket. He captained the Gulf Giants in the International League in the UAE and led his side to victory in the final, in which he scored 12. Interestingly, the match winner was Queenslander Chris Lynn (75 not out) who played for Gosport Borough in the Southern Cricket League

as an 18 year old in 2008. He has been recruited by Northamptonshire for this summer's T20 matches.

LIAM DAWSON's winter schedule was cut short when he tore ankle ligaments whilst with the Lahore Qalanders in the Pakistan Super League in February. In an interview on Radio Solent, he said that it would be six to eight weeks before he could play again. With the first match of the season starting on 6 April, Hampshire will be holding their breath that he will be fit to play.

Mention must be made of an amazing innings by ANEURIN DONALD in a club match in South Africa. He struck an unbeaten 159 off only 47 balls (12 fours and 16 sixes) for Rondebasch in the Western Province Cricket Association premier league fixture against Kraaifontein at the Terry Eksteen Oval. Donald has recently signed a two year contract which will keep him at Hampshire for the next two seasons. Returning after an horrific knee injury-induced absence of two years, the amiable Welshman played a number of vivid knocks in both the Championship and List A matches last summer. It is surely only a matter of time before he brings his remarkable hitting prowess to the T20 format. If he does - or should it be a question of when? - he will light up grounds all over the world.

SHANE WARNE PODCAST

In case members are not aware, Shane Warne: A Hampshire Love Story, a podcast of the great man's time with Hampshire, has been produced recently. It is an hour-long exceptional work of award-winning quality and thoroughly recommended. It can be found on BBC Sounds and is currently available until 28 March. It is the perfect aperitif to the start of the new season.

HAMPSHIRE'S PROSPECTS FOR THE SUMMER

That the side did so well last year was due, of course, to their pace trio of Mohammad Abbas, Kyle Abbott and Keith Barker, who are all available again and should have no fitness concerns (see elsewhere in this Newsletter). The only question mark must be about their age. Though all three men were evidently very tired by the end of last season, the Hampshire backroom staff performed splendidly in nursing them and it must be hoped they can do so again. James Fuller was a revelation in 2022, bowling with genuine pace when asked to do so by his captain. The very young trio of Poole-born Scott Currie, Exeter University student John Turner, and Portsmouth-born Jack Campbell were outstanding in the One-Day Cup last season and will relish the opportunity to be promoted to the first team if required.

The main weakness of the side was the fragility of the top-order batting. The County have decided not to strengthen the side by importing from elsewhere, but will be looking to develop the capabilities of those younger batters already on the staff. It must be assumed therefore that Tom Prest will be given more opportunity. He has made only two Championship appearances to date, both in 2021. This contrasts with 37 matches in other formats. He has therefore served a good apprenticeship; his experience will have been broadened by the England Lions tour of Sri Lanka. Toby Albert displayed a fine temperament when he guided the side to two victories against the odds in the One Day Cup last summer.

James Vince (provided he is not exhausted by his winter endeavours), Nick Gubbins, Liam Dawson and Ben Brown provide the ballast. **Aneurin Donald** and James Fuller will bolster the late order. Both are refreshingly similar in outlook. They make the game fun to watch. They batted gloriously at times last season, given licence to thrill and scoring their runs at game-changing speed. They are not the normal eight and nine in the order. Both possess prodigious batting talent. Donald also proved to be a more than capable wicket-keeper when substituting for the injured Brown towards the end of last season, though fulfilling this role must be regarded as a gamble given the seriousness of his two knee injuries.

What of the other Counties? The most critical match is likely to be the second of the season, that against Champions Surrey at The Oval, starting on 13 April. Hampshire have been completely outplayed there with both bat and ball in the last two seasons, losing by an innings on both occasions. Surrey have such strength in depth and will remain the side to beat.

In the T20 format, there is every reason to suggest that the County will be a force again. The inventiveness and experience of prodigal son, Benny Howell, with both bat and ball, will provide a considerable bonus.

The main memory for many of last season, notwithstanding the Championship success, was the performance of a very young side which reached the semi-final of the One Day Cup. Some of that side may well be recruited to the Hundred, and it might be too much to expect a repetition. But one thing we learned from last year was never to write them off!

A BRIEF RESUME OF THE WINTER

What a winter in the cricket world! England's incredible exploits in Pakistan and a wonderful test in Wellington were riveting. Jonahs may claim that England should not have enforced the follow-on in that test, but cricket was the eventual winner. England will also have discovered that there are limits to Bazball. Much depends on Ben Stokes' fitness. Another highlight was Australia's defeat of India so unexpectedly on a prepared rogue pitch for the latter's spinners at Indore; by the time members read this Newsletter, the final test at Ahmedabad will have been completed. The pitch there is by far the best of the series to date. With one day remaining at the time of writing, a draw seems the most likely result, unless Australia collapse. What will the pitch inspector report on the pitch at Indore? The pitches in the first two tests of the series – at Nagpur and New Delhi – were also substandard and would certainly have incurred a fine in county cricket. Will the ICC bare their teeth? The progress made in the women's game the world over was significant. Franchise cricket has provided life-changing earning opportunities for women. The Women's World Cup, won by Australia, provided nail-biting finishes in the final three matches.

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