



# SUSSEX CRICKET SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

FOUNDED: 1965

CHAIR: DAVID BOWDEN MBE

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www.sussexcricketsociety.org

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Currently vacant

(While vacant the role will be split between committee members)

**Newsletter, Membership**

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**Hon. Treasurer**

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**Dates for 2023 /24**

Thur 19 October  
AGM 2.15pm  
followed by talk from Jon  
Filby

Wed 15 November  
Afternoon Tea, 2.15pm  
speaker Mark  
Ramprakash MBE

**Thurs 14 December  
Lunch, Speakers Patrick  
Ferriday & James  
Mettyear**

Wed 10 January 2024  
Lunch, Speaker David  
Gower OBE

Wed 14 February  
Lunch,  
Speaker Geoff Miller

Wed 20 March 2.15pm  
Afternoon Tea Paul  
Farbrace, Head coach,  
Sussex Cricket.

*Any views expressed in the newsletter are those of the writer, not those of the Committee of the Society.*

Three pages this month, plus the booking form for the January lunch with David Gower. Ivor Evans's comprehensive account of the successful Mark Ramprakash tea event starts on this page and continues on page two. The third page includes a tribute to the late Ken Hopkins thanks to Richard Barrow for this.

## **Upcoming Society Events**

The next Society event comes on December 14, a lunch, the speakers Patrick Ferriday and James Mettyear, joint authors of "Field of Dreams", the story of the County Ground going back to 1872. At the time of writing some places may still be available - to book (£25) contact Barbara Eagles before 5<sup>th</sup> December.

In the new year on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> January David Gower will be the speaker at the January Lunch. Little introduction needed other than that he is arguably one of England's finest batters in recent times, the most elegant English batter I have seen. Bookings for what promises to be an excellent and popular event are essential, see the supplied booking form. Price £34 which has been set by the caterers. (The cost of the December Christmas lunch was a one-off special price.) Bookings to Barbara by 3<sup>rd</sup> January please. Early booking recommended.

The usual reminders for events. Firstly, any cancellation of a booking advised to Barbara less than 7 days before an event, will not normally see a payment refunded. (The Society needs to provide the caterers with firm numbers seven days before an event and are charged for that number.) Secondly, parking for Society\_events - parking in the County Ground may be limited, if you do park in the ground, please call in at Reception / Club Shop to collect a parking permit.

**November Tea.** Thanks to Ivor Evans for the following review:

What a start to the winter programme of Society meetings. 1) the weather was fine with the sun out, 2) a fine tea was enjoyed by those present, and 3) most importantly, the speaker Mark Ramprakash. It was one of the largest gatherings with over one hundred people having booked for the event. It would have been more but unfortunately there wasn't room. As it was the Pavilion was bursting at its seams. (We will aim to use the larger Cow Corner facility in future when at all possible).



With only a microphone in hand and no notes, for forty-five minutes, Mark entertained members; talking about his heritage, as a player, as a coach and of course, not forgetting Strictly. In your correspondent's view, one of the best speakers he has heard either in Cow Corner or the Pavilion. Mark's delivery was superb. It was articulate and informative along with generous dollops of humour laced with self-deprecation. In fact, as far as the humour was concerned, I doubt whether the pavilion

has heard louder laughter.

Mark's mother is English and his father from British Guiana (now Guyana) of Indian heritage. As a youngster, he was bought a plastic cricket set and progressed via the front drive of the house to the local cricket club where he was spotted by a Middlesex coach. He was invited to a trial with the under elevens.

It was not the most auspicious of starts, Mark being bowled third ball and bowled two overs for twenty-four. Nonetheless Mark was invited back and was coached by Jack Robertson, the former Middlesex and England opener who taught him to bat in the 'vee' a lesson he took with him throughout his career.

Mark spoke of entering the Middlesex dressing room as a teenager and the transition from watching them to being part of the team. In the late 1980's early 1990's, Middlesex were a very successful side with a galaxy of international players and winning multiple honours led by Mike Gatting, who Mark described as a fantastic skipper and leader. All players were expected to express views in what Mark described as 'healthy conflict'; something started by Mike Brearley and carried on by Gatting. Everyone was encouraged to challenge each other and set themselves targets. Some thrived on this but others, himself included he said, felt the pressure could affect their game.

Mark enjoyed success at Middlesex but eventually felt that he needed a new challenge and in 2001 moved to Surrey which rejuvenated and refreshed his career. As an added bonus it was only a few stops further on the underground. Once again, he enjoyed success winning the County Championship, National League (45 overs), Benson and Hedges Cup and the inaugural Twenty20 Cup in 2003.

Mark had a successful career at Surrey but anno-domini marched on. Older cricketers said he'd know when it was time to retire. He wasn't so sure but in 2012, it came about following a conversation with Chris Adams, then Director of Cricket at Surrey who told him that he was unlikely to start regularly for the first eleven that season, or alternatively there was the possibility of being loaned out to another county. Uncertainty prevailed but what finally sealed the decision was a conversation with Justin Langer who told him it was time. His final first-class innings was in July, at Horsham where he scored 37 before being trapped LBW by Monty Panesar.

Coaching was not initially at the forefront of Mark's mind, but soon after retirement he was invited to coach young England players, which in turn led to the English Lions and the England team. In more recent times Mark has coached both Middlesex and at Harrow School. Mark talked here about the need to engage with players and find hooks to have a conversation to develop a relationship. How do you begin to talk to great batsman like Alastair Cook? The answer here was farming which Mark knew absolutely nothing about! He thought that Joe Root was the best player that he had ever worked with, invariably the first one in practice and the last one to leave.

What ninety nine percent of the room wouldn't have known is what a great mimic Mark was describing the likes of Allan Lamb, Robin Smith and Devon Malcolm. What really made the room shake was his confrontation with Merv Hughes at The Oval in a Test match. For any members not at the lunch, find someone who was, and ask them to recount the story, it would fall flat in print.

Mark talked about Strictly Come Dancing. Initially not being the most outgoing of people he was reluctant to enter. He decided to give it a go after talking it over with his family and also Darren Gough who had won the competition the previous year. He really got into it and we know that he won the competition. For Mark it was a great life experience. In 2013, Mark was awarded the MBE for services to cricket and was presented with it by the late Queen. What the room learnt was that she was a fan of Strictly and asked Mark whether he still danced. These days he no longer does as the hips aren't what they were.

At week five he invited Surrey colleagues to a recording. Recounting the bringing together cricket with dancing and in particular Bruno Tonioli produced even greater laughter. Again, for anyone not at the tea, if you want to know the story, ask someone who was there.

Mark took questions from the floor. He was very surprised at England's performance at the World Cup in India. Like most people he didn't see it coming. He was not surprised that Jos Butler and Matthew Mott were staying in their roles. He also thought that the squad chosen for the West Indies was the right one with focus moving to younger upcoming players. The inevitable question about The Hundred was asked, Mark was not a fan of the men's game but that it had been superb for the women. He would have preferred either an enhanced T20 or a second competition. The chairman gave Mark a vote of thanks. It will be an afternoon, that those present will remember for a long time. The bar has been set very high!

Thanks to Richard Barrow for the following tribute to Ken Hopkins:

Ken Hopkins JP sadly passed away on November 1<sup>st</sup> just five weeks after his 90th birthday. Ken was a father, grandfather, and great grandfather. He was a well-known and widely respected member of the Sussex Cricket Society for many years and a Sussex CCC stalwart, held in great affection by the members of both organisations.

Ken did his National Service in the RAF and served in the final year of the Korean war in 1953. He spent most of his working career at Southern Electric, infamously turning down an offer from Alan Sugar to stock Amstrad computers in their stores, much to Sugar's disgust!

Along with Eric Osborne and Peter Cotter in the 1970's, Ken was one of the founders of the Sussex Cricket Supporters Club and first Chairman, which became the major fundraising arm of the old Sussex CCC. Ken was responsible for introducing the Seeboard Trophy to the Club in 1989 which ran for five seasons; the sponsorship was worth £30,000 per annum, a very decent sum back then.

Whilst he was a man with a positive attitude in most situations, Ken was not afraid of challenging the Sussex CCC management on behalf of the membership. Having been a Life Member since the early 1970's he was elected to the Committee in 1983 where he served until 19<sup>th</sup> March 1997, becoming Club chairman when Alan Caffyn threw in the towel on 8<sup>th</sup> March, less than two weeks before the crucial 1997 Annual General Meeting.

During the stormy meeting, the remaining committee resigned en bloc. Ken offered to defer his resignation until the end of the meeting enabling the 'new' committee of three to remain quorate and complete the essential business of the AGM. His tenure lasted a mere eleven days making him the shortest serving County Chairman ever. However, this was a very magnanimous gesture by Ken under very stressful and personal circumstances; a gesture not overlooked by the new chairman Robin Marlar who made him a Sussex Vice President at the earliest opportunity. Ken was always welcomed thereafter into the committee room and never uttered a dissenting word and indeed was nothing but supportive of the Club. He later became a Club Trustee. He also had a soft spot for Somerset where he owned a holiday house. Ken was adored by the Somerset committee and grandes and was always welcomed at Taunton with open arms.

As a keen golfer and a director of West Hove Golf Club right up to 2022. In 1991 Ken was involved in overseeing the club's move from the original site - now a Sainsbury's supermarket - to its current picturesque location at Badgers Way, Hangleton. Ken was also on the management committee of the Hove Deep Sea Anglers Social club on Hove seafront for many years.

On a personal note, Ken was a great friend, a tremendous character, fantastic company and ardent supporter of Sussex cricket. I will miss his wicked sense of humour and cricket insight greatly. In recent times as his health became an issue, Ken was fortunate to have his wife Joan caring for him at their home near the Hove seafront, before moving to the Pines Nursing Home, where he spent his final few weeks. The Sussex Cricket Society sends his wife Joan and their extended family our deepest condolences.

**ODI World Cup**- Congratulations go to Australia on winning the ODI World Cup, this despite losing their first two games. For India after winning their first ten games and looking at that point the best team in the tournament there was disappointment at losing in the final. Travis Head was player of the match in both the semi-final and final, and this after a similar award for an innings of 163 when Australia won the World Test Championship back in June. It seems a shame that Sussex supporters did not see the best of Head in his stint with the County in 2021.

**New Members** Welcome to Matthew Willetts, Ray Phillips, Chris Watt, Nick May, Alan Lockie, Julian Jeffrey, Imelda Wilkinson, Philip Rawlings, Chris Andrews, Simon Winnard, Terry Burton, Wendy & Julian Taylor, Martyn Levitt, Nigel Dooner and Helen Madden. Many of these joined after Andrew Filby arranged to post an item on the Sussex Cricket website promoting the Society and advertising membership.