



SUSSEX CRICKET SOCIETY.

NEWSLETTER

FOUNDED: 1965

CHAIR: DAVID BOWDEN MBE

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www.sussexcricketsociety.org

Hon. Secretary

Richard Lintott
48 Wanderdown Road,
Ovingdean, Brighton,
BN2 7BT
richardlintott@sky.com

Hon. Treasurer

Cliff Robinson
cliffrobinson@aol.com

Newsletter, Membership

Chris Scovell
2 Herons Rye Pulborough
RH20 2DL
Tel 01798 875597
chrisscovell@live.co.uk

Speaker Secretary

Martyn Levitt
martyn.levitt@hotmail.com
Tel 01903 495451

Future Dates 2024/25

November 20 speakers
"Sussex Legends" John
Barclay, John Snow &
Peter Graves

December 11 Christmas
lunch speaker Graham
Gooch OBE

January 15, speaker
Jonathan Agnew MBE

February 19, speaker
John Simpson, Sussex
captain

March 19 speaker to be
advised

Previous 2024/5 speakers

July 7th Barry Richards
Sept. 25th Jeff Thomson
Oct 23rd AGM plus Jon
Filby & Peter Fitzboyden

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

The **Society's Christmas lunch will take place on December 11th** in the Cow Corner hospitality units of the 1st Central County Ground Hove. We are fortunate to have **Graham Gooch OBE** as the speaker, so it promises to be an interesting and entertaining afternoon.

Gooch, arguably one of the finest batters in the last 50 years or so, played 118 Tests for England in a period from July 1975 to February 1995 with both his first and last Tests against the "old enemy" Australia. In his Test career he amassed 8,900 runs at 42.58 with a top score of 333 versus India at Lords in 1990. In addition, he featured in 125 one day internationals contributing a further 4,290 runs. Overall in a twenty four year first class career just shy of 45,000 runs in a time when international players played frequently for county sides, in his case loyally for Essex. So, a mammoth career and will be well known and remembered by us. His early Test matches for England were as a middle order bat (starting against Australia in 1975) but he really made his mark when promoted to open which he did for much of his Test career. While the innings of 333 stands out, possibly his finest came in 1991 at Leeds against West Indies (Ambrose Patterson Marshall and Walsh) with a second innings match winning century of 154, and that in a game where nobody else past 73.

Apart from being one of the Wisden Cricketers of the year in 1980 he was also named one of the five Indian Cricketers of the Year for 1988.

This is our only lunch event of the winter season and priced at £35 per person— see the enclosed booking form for more details. Bookings need to be sent to Ivor Evans, contact details on the form, to reach him by the 1st of December which allows time for the final numbers to be passed to the caterers. Payment details appear on the form, our preferred method is bank transfer, failing that cheque. Even if you pay by transfer, please let Ivor know you have paid and your menu options.

Car parking subject to availability will be free within the Ground for the Lunch with as usual parking warden being stood down. Members/guests must not leave their cars at the Ground post event, especially overnight. Finally, the normal cancellation comment - if a booking is cancelled after **1st December** any payment previously made will not be refunded

Prior to that, on **November 20** we have an afternoon tea event with John Barclay, Peter Graves and John Snow. Places (£22 per person) may still be available - please contact Ivor Evans (phone 07976 754411, email sussex.scs@btinternet.com, post Beauchamps, Littleworth Lane, Partridge Green, RH13 8JF, as soon as possible and no later than 10th November.

Society Player of the Year – at the Society's AGM John Simpson was announced as the Society's Sussex player of the year with Jack Carsen and James Coles also considered. Congratulations to John who is due to our speaker at the February event

New Members – welcome to Peter Longden, Chris Middleton, Chris Burns, Chris Ticehurst, Alan Kydd

Sussex News – After clinching promotion before the final game of the 2024 season, Sussex duly added the Second Division championship title when drawing earning sufficient bonus and draw points in the final game against Middlesex. Here the first two days were completely lost to rain. Sussex then bowled Middlesex out for 271 and rattled up 459 for four declared to clinch the title. Though Middlesex's bowling once they realised that they were not going to be promoted was fairly friendly, nonetheless full credit to Tom Haines, 105 his 3rd century of the season, in creating the platform which effectively blocked any promotion hopes Middlesex may have had. Then James Coles 132 somewhat surprisingly, his first century of the season, and the ever reliable John Simpson 87 not out. So, it is the First Division for Sussex next season with Yorkshire the other promoted county, and I suspect more challenging games. It was pleasing to learn that Sussex will be retaining all of the players from this year into next including the mix of overseas players.

John Simpson was announced as the Sussex player of the year at the County's awards night at the Amex stadium in the week after the season ended. Simpson has been a fine acquisition this year captaining the side well. Throughout his career he has been a more than useful batter and seemed to exceed past performances this year in making five first class centuries to go with the 10 in previous years having started his first class career with Middlesex back in 2009. A deserved recognition.

James Coles and Henry Crocombe have been selected for an England A short tour to South Africa from mid-November to mid-December which includes both limited over matches and finally a four day first class game against South Africa A at Newlands. The Society wishes both well, and I suspect that a bright future even at possibly international level lies ahead in particular for Coles.

Clubs – Sussex League

A year ago Brighton and Hove's 1st XI were relegated to Division Three, their second relegation after a long spell in the top division. Now they have rebounded topping Division 3 East winning 15 of their eighteen games to earn promotion to Division 2. Crowhurst Park pushed Brighton all the way and also won 15 games but finished a mere 4 points short of automatic promotion and had to go through playoffs where they were beaten in the final playoff by Eastbourne who thus retained their Division 2 status. In the final playoff game Alistair Orr playing for Eastbourne made a quick fire 72. With such a season long record Crowhurst Park could feel a shade unlucky at missing out on promotion. (Playoffs are needed to determine promotion from division's 3 to 2 due to the league structure - Division 2 is a single county wide league but Division 3 is split East and West)

The Sussex Cricket League runs three T20 Cup competitions. The first for teams in the top divisions was won by Three Bridges who beat Preston Nomads by 7 wickets in the final. Nomads batted first made 143 in their 20 overs with Jonty Jenner top scoring with 53 from 28 balls, Bridges knocked off the target losing just 3 wickets with more than two overs to spare with steady contributions throughout, with the New Zealander Matt Boyle the pick of the batters – 43 from 27 balls. A deserved cup win for Three Bridges recognising their increasing performances in recent years. In 2024 a narrow 3rd place position in the league and now a cup win at Hove under the floodlights.

The Trophy (teams in the middling divisions) Hailsham's 2nd XI had a relatively comfortable win over St Matthias. Finally in the Plate (teams in the lower divisions) a victory for Goring's 2nd XI over Preston Nomads 4th XI. For all of the sides I'm sure that they would have gained pleasure in getting the opportunity to contest finals at the County Ground.

Jeff Thomson – 25th September 2024

Thanks to Ivor Evans for the following review



For the September review, let us start with a bit of whimsy-cum-fantasy-cum-pottiness. Imagine Sussex Cricket Society as a single entity; it is a poker player and in successive cards the dealer had dealt them the ace of hearts followed by the ace of clubs. For those of us who were at the Barry Richards event in July and for Jeff Thomson in September having had two world class cricketers and legends of the game coming to talk, is what it felt like for many of us sitting in the Pavilion.

What both Richards and Thomson talked about was fascinating and often riveting, however their deliveries were the polar opposites of each other. It is doubtful whether Society members will have heard a talk or at least the use of language quite like the September talk at any event inside the County Ground, some of which would not be found in any concise dictionary. For fear of scaring the horses, this review is most definitely not a verbatim account of the afternoon.

To start with the usual weather report, outside it was fair to middling and no rain. The location was a first (at least in the memory of your reviewer) for a Society lunch/tea – the players former dining room. A near record number of attendees, eighty-four (84) people sat down for afternoon tea.



As usual our Chair opened proceedings by welcoming Jeff and outlined his career. Jeff played 51 Tests between 1972 and 1985. He took 200 wickets at an average of 28 (precisely). In all he bowled 10,535 balls with a best of 6/46 and taking five or more wickets eight times. Wisden described Jeff's run to the wicket '...at the pace of man jogging around the block, but his action was one of cricket's most explosive; tilting back in the style of a javelin thrower, he catapulted the ball at speeds seldom, if ever, attained since.' Jeff's highest score in a Test with the bat was 49.

As with the Barry Richards event, which proved so successful, the talk took the form of

a Q & A session with Roger Dakin. Roger told the gathering that Jeff and himself had first met at the Bunbury Cricket Festival that had been established by David English who had done so much for schools' cricket. David was a wonderfully eccentric person, now sadly no longer with us who was greatly missed by both Jeff and Roger.

Jeff played at Hove for Australia a number of times. The end he bowled from was invariably the end that Dennis Lillee didn't fancy. At the County Ground it was probably uphill from the sea end. This wasn't just confined to Hove but across the World.

Jeff talked about his early life. He was born in Greenacre, New South Wales, He was from a family of nine which from where he came from was not large. Near neighbours had families of twelve and fourteen. He played not only cricket but also rugby league, football and athletics. He reflected that it was only when he became a parent just how much it cost to kit him out on clothing and equipment for the different sports.



Jeff revealed that he had been eligible to play for Scotland. His father was a sea captain and sailed back and forth between the UK and Australia on numerous occasions with the final crossing being a one way passage. He also revealed that Dennis Lillee's family hailed from Kent. He wondered what it would have been like to see Lillee and John Snow turning out together for England – (if only).

He left school at eighteen and started working on wharves shifting wool. Although it paid quite well, not much brain power was involved and he moved to a bank. Whilst working there he had the dubious honour of it being twice held up. Following on he was a rep. for a civil works company. There was an open ended hospitality budget, necessary to win business. This lasted about a year as he thought if he were not careful, he'd end up an alcoholic.

Bankstown was Jeff's cricket club, where his father played. In his first season he took 62 wickets at 12.5. He didn't get his action through coaching but it was the same as his father's which incidentally his own sons also have. His philosophy to bowling was to 'shuffle up and go wang.' Jeff had never had back issues. The key was not to mix up your action, the placement of your left leg and foot was all important. For those fortunate to be at close quarters he gave a demonstration of his action. He was less than impressed with Richie Benaud for saying that he didn't have a perfect action.

The figures in his first test in 1972 against Pakistan was expletive deleted or translated, not very good - about 0 for 90 as was his final one in 1985 against England at Edgbaston when not fully fit, he could not take a wicket for love nor money. In between he was not too bad. Returning home to Australia, in his final games he was back in the wickets again. He finally retired in 1986.

Jeff always regretted not winning the Cricket World Cup, and especially in 1975. It was a great semi-final against England, bowling them out for 93 in 36.2 overs with Gary Gilmour taking 6 for 14. Australia then knocked off the 94 required in 28.4 overs. The West Indies in the final was a different proposition altogether. It was the game people of a certain age will remember, finishing in the gloom at Lords. Seeing the ball was a big problem; back then the sight screens were much smaller than today's. He was last man out for 21. The fifth and final Australian run out.

Revenge wasn't long in coming with the 1975/76 West Indies tour of Australia. Australia won the series 5-1. Jeff had a very good third Test where in the first innings he took 5 for 62 and an even better 4th Test in Sydney with 6 for 50 in the second innings.

Beforehand, Selectors had been pondering his inclusion in the Test side and the media were being less than complementary. Jeff described his inclusion as very pleasing not least "to give it back to them and the Press" in particular.

Of the two, Jeff thought that Dennis Lillee was the fiercest. He had ego, drive and determination. He was also into fitness. On one occasion Lillee suggested that Jeff and he went for a run. The offer was declined with a 'no mate.' As Jeff pointed out to Lillee, he could run faster backwards than he could running forwards. Jeff felt that one of Lillee's biggest problems was that he didn't drink enough!



Jeff said that in the build up to going out to bat there were a few nerves but as soon as he was out in the middle, the adrenalin kicked in and the nerves disappeared.

Lillee gave no quarter to batsmen whether they were batting at one or eleven – he wanted them out. Jeff however often chose not to be quite so threatening or frightening to the tailenders. The exception being he was hit when batting; then it was payback time.

Who were the best batsmen that Jeff came up against? His top three were Barry Richards, Viv Richards and Greg Chappell. You had to remember that those were in the days of uncovered wickets; before speed guns when he was sending down balls close to 100MPH; very little in the way of body protection. The everyday use of helmets only came along in the latter part of his career.

The audience were surprised to hear that Jeff rated Alan Knott above Rod Marsh. Whereas Marsh was halfway to the boundary when keeping Knott was much closer to the wicket and gave away very few byes.

By and large, Australian fielders, especially in the slips were pretty good with not too many catches going down off his bowling. The greats he classed as Greg Chappell, Doug Walters and Lenny Pascoe. A number of England's fast bowlers often fielded in the slips who could be classed as more than useful.

Jeff would have loved to have played 20/20 cricket. What fast bowler would not – four overs and job done. More seriously short over cricket gives cricketers more opportunities both to play and earn. However, the downside was he felt fewer skills were involved in playing the game. Jeff also reflected on World Series Cricket (WSC) and like Barry Richards at the July meeting reflected on it laying the foundations for today's game and how much Kerry Packer did for the game and players in the 1970's. Packer was a truly amazing person, he changed sports throughout Australia. However as other cricketers and commentators have commented, woe betide anyone who crossed him. Jeff was asked for memories of two of the games' greatest players:

Ian Botham – A great player who in Jeff's time had some very good performances against Australia with both bat and ball. He was also a very good party animal. He limited his recollections to one story. He and Botham had been partying hard one night and the following day they were due to play in a pro-am golf tournament. Although being the worse for wear not only did he make it to the course but won the competition.

Shane Warne – Jeff thought that they were pretty similar in character. Shane told him, that he would like to have played in Jeff's era. Jeff told him that he wouldn't have been able to bowl fast enough! He thought that it was unlikely that there would be another Shane Warne along anytime soon.

A player similar to Warne who gets overlooked and overshadowed by Warne is Stuart McGill. A great leg spin bowler who would have played many more tests (44) if he and Warne hadn't been around at the same time.

And now for the Society' standing speaker question – memories of Sussex players:

Tony Greig – Jeff and Greig were great friends. A fearless cricketer. The Chappell brothers were not his greatest fans.

Javid Miandad – a very short answer; a cheeky chap.

Imran Khan – a good bloke and who would want his present job?

Following retirement from playing, Jeff had a career in coaching. He thought that Indian players were the easiest to coach. They took onboard everything that was imparted to them. He thought that this attitude was a result of the very humble background that many of them came from and wanted to better both themselves and their families.

Jeff said that he also had a wonderful time coaching in Zimbabwe. It was during the Mugabe regime which was both interesting and challenging. They were a great bunch of blokes and in his time he coached Grant Flower, the Sussex batting coach.

Today Jeff watches very little cricket unless he is paid to do so. As far as watching sport is concerned he is a fan of athletics and rugby league. As a pastime Jeff likes to fish. He works on the retired cricketers talk circuit. Back in Australia he has a contract mowing business. He has made an approach to coach the current crop of West Indian fast bowlers. He thought that collectively they had something about them and thought that he could improve them further in a relatively short time – contact has been made with the Caribbean and is awaiting to hear back.

Towards the end of the day, members played the Heads and Tails quiz. £290 was raised for Society funds. The winner was the Society Chair's wife, Mrs. Bowden. Who would have guessed that Pauline knew so much about Luton Town FC and in particular the international career of Mick Harford – well done.

The Chair concluded proceedings by thanking both Jeff and Roger for a very entertaining and enlightening chat and discussion. He reminded members that the Society's AGM will take place on 23rd October. Then in November, the tea was badged as Sussex Legends, a worthy title as the legends were John Snow, Peter Graves and John Barclay. Early booking was advisable as this was bound to be very popular.

Members, friends and guests left the pavilion having had a thoroughly enjoyable time.

Until the next time.