



Howzat? 250 not out, in 2022...

Cricket fans will be bowled over by sporting history in Hampshire during 2022, a county widely known as “the cradle of cricket”, thanks to Hambledon Cricket Club.

Founded in the 1750s it became one of England’s most powerful clubs and helped to develop many of the game’s early rules.

Matches were played on Broadhalfpenny Down, still used today, while The Bat and Ball pub - which became Hambledon’s clubhouse - now draws cricket fans from across the world to see historic memorabilia adorning its walls.

And that historic, and picturesque, cricket ground will be notching-up an impressive score in 2022 with the 250th anniversary of the first recognised First-Class cricket match.

It was played as a two-day game on 24-25 June 1772 at Broadhalfpenny (pronounced (brawdhaypenny), and during the 2022 season there will be a series of events to commemorate this cricketing milestone.

The match was played between a Hambledon XI, consisting of the finest players in Hampshire, against an All England XI made up of the finest players from Surrey and Kent, for a prize of 500 Guineas - but the winners remain shrouded in the mists of time.

While the sport itself may have pre-dated the Hampshire club and ground by at least two centuries, Hambledon’s standing in the sport was such, that it could even influence, and change, the laws of the game.

In 1771, for example, noted English cricketer Shock White batted against Hambledon with a bat wider than the wicket. Within two days the club had legislated the maximum width of a bat and produced a metal gauge to help enforce the amendment.

The 1772 season was also notable in English cricket history because it is from this moment onwards that surviving scorecards become more common and three of these are from matches organised by the Hambledon Club. Those matches were all played between a Hampshire XI and an England XI at Broadhalfpenny Down.

The two leading online cricket archives begin their first-class coverage with these matches, numbered "first-class no. 1". And the rest, as they say, is history.

Today, the pretty village of Hambledon, in the South Downs National Park, still draws cricketing fans from across the globe to see memorabilia at the Bat and Ball pub (www.batandballclanfield.co.uk), while visitors to Broadhalfpenny Down can also find a stone monument to the famous Hambledon Club (www.broadhalfpennydown.com).

What better way to celebrate an anniversary than with a bottle of bubbly? Just a few miles away from the pub lies England’s oldest commercial vineyard, which not only produces the

finest English fizz, but also celebrates its links to the cradle of cricket with stumps, bat and ball incorporated into its logo. For 2022, it has its own big plans too. The only gravity-fed, state-of-the-art winery in the UK plans to open a new tasting room and visitor centre, in addition to its already popular vineyard tours (<https://hambledonvineyard.co.uk>).

And for anyone looking for a different spin on cricket, Hampshire is also home to one of the strangest games played anywhere in the world. The annual Bramble Bank cricket match takes place in the sea between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight on a stretch of sand that only becomes visible once a year. This quirkiest of cricket matches sees local yacht clubs from either side of the Solent play against each other until play is stopped, not by rain, but waves.

For the more traditional game, Hampshire is also set to once again be one of the venues hosting new cricket competition, The Hundred, which is scheduled to return in 2022. During its first season, it was staged at several UK venues, including The Ageas Bowl in Southampton (<https://www.thehundred.com>).

Offering cricketing fans the perfect base, the Hilton at the Ageas Bowl is a stunning, modern hotel located at the home of Hampshire Cricket. As well as offering sweeping views of the cricket ground, the hotel boasts Beefy's restaurant - inspired by the legendary cricketer Sir Ian Botham - along with a full-service spa, and 18-hole golf course (www.hilton.com/en/hotels/souaghi-hilton-at-the-ageas-bowl-southampton/).

For more about cricket short breaks, see www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/cricket

More general tourist information about Hampshire is at www.visit-hampshire.co.uk