Hello and welcome back to Episode 21 of the Counties of England podcast. In this week’s episode, we will be talking about the county home to one of the most famous cricket commentators ever, the county with a rather exclusive club given exclusive fishing rights to the most famous trout stream in the world and where the first spitfire aircraft was created.

Hampshire is a county located in the South East of England. It is bordered by 5 counties: Dorset to the West, Wiltshire to the North West, Berkshire to the North, Surrey to the North East, West Sussex to the East and it does not share a land border with the Isle of Wight, but it is certainly very close to it, and the only ferries that go to the Isle of Wight go from Hampshire I believe. The population of Hampshire is 1,844,245 which puts it as the 6th largest county when ranked in terms of population. In terms of area, Hampshire is the 9th largest county, so in terms of population density, Hampshire houses 1,268 people per square mile, which puts it as the 17th largest county in terms of population density. Hampshire is split into 13 districts: Test Valley, Basingstoke and Deane, Hart, Rushmoor, Winchester, East Hampshire, New Forest, Southampton, Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Portsmouth and Havant. The county town is Winchester, but the largest town is actually Southampton.

The median salary in Hampshire is £32,607 putting it above the UK average of £31,500. The unemployment rate is 3.83% putting it below the UK average of 4.8%. The average house price according to Zoopla estimates is £362,035 putting it above the estimated national average of around £330,000.

Hampshire is divided up into 18 different parliamentary constituencies, and 16 of them are

represented by Conservative MP’s and 2 of them are represented by Labour MP’s. The most famous MP of the bunch would be Penny Mordaunt, and she was previously defence secretary from May 2019 to July 2019.

Hampshire’s most notable sports are sailing and cricket. The Solent, which is a strait river between Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It has a very unique tidal pattern which means that the conditions are very prone to change. Hampshire has the highest concentration of yacht clubs in the world. 66 to be precise.

Hampshire is no longer the centre of world cricket. As mentioned in the Greater London episode, that is now Lord’s. Hampshire does still however host occasional test matches to its inaccessible ground on the edge of Southampton, the Rose Bowl, known as the Ageas Bowl for sponsorship reasons. From the post-war resumption of cricket in 1946, until his retirement in 1980, the very idea of England was embodies in the voice of a Hampshire man, John Arlott. This clip will explain more about John Arlott’s life. [Play first John Arlott clip]

Former editor of the Wisden Cricket almanack, and author of Engel’s England, the book from which I am getting all of this information. Matthew Engel writes that John Arlott’s cricket commentaries had both a poetic quality and a relevant discursiveness, that on their own would have made him one of the most outstanding Radio Broadcasters of all time. But the crowning glories were his voice and his accent, always described as a Hampshire burr. His accent became throatier and more pronounced as the decades went on. It would be difficult, nigh on impossible to find anyone with his accent now. This clip of his commentary will give you a good sense of what he sounded like. [Play John Arlott commentary clip]. John Arlott wasn’t wrong about Geoffrey Boycott either, he went on to get 22 test match centuries for England.

The county town of Hampshire as mentioned previously in Winchester. Winchester has the longest cathedral in all of Europe, but is not very tall. The most fascinating part of this cathedral however is the memorials. Jane Austen’s memorial gets the most attention.

There is another sport in Hampshire. At the Houghton Club in Stockbridge, there are only 25 members allowed. And members of this club have exclusive fishing rights to thirteen miles of the River Test. The River Test is the most famous trout stream in the world.

Registered with the Flag institute on 12th March 2019. The flag of Hampshire, conceived by Jason Saber and further refined by Brady Ells, retains the rose and crown pattern used in the county for several centuries in various guises. In 1992 the local county council received a formal grant of arms that included a gold royal crown on a red field, over a red rose on a gold field. Wishing to avoid using the restricted royal symbol of the crown on the council flag, Jason Saber replaced the "royal crown" with a specifically Saxon crown. This is also a reference to the county's association with the era of Alfred the Great and his capital of Winchester. Such a crown also appears in the full achievement of arms used by the council, symbolising exactly the same Alfredian legacy as intended in this flag. The red and white double Tudor rose is inspired by the double rose on the “Arthurian” table in the Great Hall in Winchester. Notably, the bottom sepal of the rose on the Hampshire flag points down, the same way round as the Yorkshire Rose. This represents it being Southampton's shire, in contrast to the rose on the flag of Northamptonshire which points up, the same way as the Lancashire Rose does. However, the Council flags' rose point upwards.

Fun facts about Hampshire include:

Highclere Castle set in the Hampshire countryside is one of the main filming locations for "Downton Abbey"! It also played host to the filming of “Jeeves and Wooster

The Spitfire aircraft is a part of Hampshire history. Invented by R. J. Mitchell it was first flown from Eastleigh, Hampshire on the 5th March 1936. After it had completed its official trials, the RAF ordered 310 aircrafts! This changed the game for Supermarine (British aircraft manufacturer), as prior to this, their biggest order stood at just 12 machines.

Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle wrote the original Sherlock Holmes story (“A Study in Scarlet”) in Southsea, Hampshire. The character Dr. Watson, was based on a real doctor who was president of Portsmouth’s literary and scientific society and was actually a friend of the author.

A fun fact for any football fan, Portsmouth became the longest holding FA cup champions after their win in 1939. This was due to an interruption caused by World War II. The trophy was not presented again until the competition was resumed in 1946 – meaning they held the title for 7 years!

Hampshire is famous for its watercress, having been commercially growing the crop since the 19th century. The county is responsible for the majority of watercress production across the nation. This is pretty impressive considering a bag of watercress is sold every second.

the most interesting fact about Hampshire… Southampton was the first town to sample fish fingers after they were made in Great Yarmouth!

That just about wraps it up for this week’s episode and as ever I really hope you enjoyed it. Next week’s episode will be on Herefordshire so stay tuned For that on the 29th of may I hope you have a good week in the meantime, and I will talk to you again next Saturday.