

OLD BUFFERS CRICKET CLUB

SOUTH SCRAPES LUCKY VICTORY

North v South Cricket Match at Wilcot on 30th June 2013



The day dawned bright and sunny on the Sunday morn, which was a small miracle. The bigger miracle was that everyone who was expected to turn up at the Wilcot cricket ground, i.e. players and officials, actually did so. This despite a rather good Barbeque courtesy of Naylor and Bampfyldes the night before involving much food, superabundance of wine, unrepeatable non-stop banter and a carousing G.Widdows on ukelele (book now to avoid disappointment) plus additional singing from C.May who was subsequently rescued from forgetting the words to The Blaydon Races by S.Mayall. Many had travelled from the outer reaches of the Kingdom. A good start.

Spectators, some rather distinguished, including many WAGS and dogs started to arrive early. Several had not been seen in public for some time. Picnics being the order of the day, rather elaborate affairs in many cases, were duly set up. Antonio Barne, and helpers (not least David 'Ginge' Lewis who contributed 8 gallons of the finest 'Buccy Bach' Wye Valley ale from his esteemed emporium, The Fox Inn, Monkton Green, Worcestershire.....drop in if you're passing) set up the Pimms/wine/beer bar. Simon Akroyd, scorer, and his youthful team of girls took position. The Officer i/c medical assistance and resuscitation unit, Dermot Cusack, was present and languidly standing by, as was the Official Photographer, Charlie Hopkinson (ex-9/12L), plus the War Artist, Lynne Moore (recently back from Afghanistan). Last, but not least, our charming 'Enforcer', Tim Villiers (aka Sid Vicious) was stalking the the boundaries to ambush the unwary, and even the wary, with his bucket and pleasantly delivered threats to collect funds for the Colonel's Appeal. Apparently he received much food, drink and 'lemon drizzle cake', whatever that is, as diversionary tactics.

Once a few stragglers had been recovered from the Golden Swan, the scene was set. Official team photographs were taken and all was ready for start of play at 2.30pm. Umpires Jim Knox and Charlie May led the skippers, G.Widdows (North) and M.Forsyth (South) out to the wicket for the toss. It must be noted at this point that sartorial 'individualism' was rampant. We should have employed a fashion editor. Umpire Knox was elegantly kitted out in what bits the moths had generously left of a Free Foresters' jacket, MCC bow-tie and I Zingari hat. A man of many loyalties. Or none. Umpire May was wearing a pair of lurid electric blue trousers and, unaccountably, a Wiltshire Queries cap. He professes to be a member of the MCC, but of that there was no sign. The toss, with the aid of a two headed £5 Winston Churchill Memorial coin, was won by G.Widdows who elected to bat. The coin was recovered with some difficulty. The pitch was in superb condition (fast) and with a very long boundary. The well mown field was bordered at one end by the Kennet & Avon canal and at the other by a field of sheep.

Opening bats for the North were D.Lewis and J.Wilton, the latter resplendent in a strange confection of white spandex and nylon, plus England cap and dark glasses. Wilton, due to a war wound to the knee acquired in a post-prandial outing to Hamburg if I remember correctly, required a runner. M.Browell (12th Man) fulfilled this duty. The bowling was opened by Checketts at the Canal end. The first three overs produced a mere two runs. An over-cautious approach for a Twenty20 match it was felt. Lewis nudged away and eventually Wilton got into his stride. There was a problem here. Lewis had lost much of his innate speed since leaving the army, Wilton was supposed not to run, and Browell, the runner, was often unsure of when to. It involved three batsmen at various ends of the pitch, sometimes together and charging, or hobbling, collectively and in loose formation towards a vacant crease reminiscent of the Russian Troika described in 'England their England'. For some reason, the fielders were equally confused and failed to stump anyone even though a crease was for some time entirely unoccupied. Checketts (star ex-Army and Combined Services) having opened the bowling delivered two maidens but, surprisingly, took no wickets.

Wilton was dispatched with a fine catch by Naylor and his successor, Tabor, was also caught (by Portman who had dropped a sitter previously), both balls bowled with surprising effect by Barne. Hotham and Blount followed. Hotham fell victim to a catch by Brook-Fox off a cunning bouncer, in that it bounced three times, from Hyde-Smith for a mere 5 runs. He was one of the North's 'big hopes'. Lewis nudged away. He kept the crowd rapt with his agonisingly slow pace between wickets. It seemed touch and go on occasions as to whether he would reach the other end at all. With his head stuck forward like an eager tortoise and trailing his bat he resembled the mime artist, Marcel Marceau, doing his impression of a man fighting his way into a gale-force wind. On one occasion when partnering Blount (incidently the only ex-13/18H player; the others away on more important duties) who despite the years still managed a bit of pace, he was lapped and Blount had run 3 to Lewis's 1. Never did work that one out, even though they ended up at the correct ends! Blount was eventually stumped for a gallant 14 after being lured away from his wicket by one of Brook-Fox's remarkable 'astro-drops' landing ten yards short of the crease. A brave innings for someone who professed only to be a 'wet bob' at Harrow.

At this point Lewis, having scored 10 in limpet-like fashion, was retired on compassionate grounds. Widdows, the skipper, came in sporting, along with his evening shirt, Shrewsbury sweater and compulsory odd socks, headgear which might in some circumstances be described as 'controversial'. He also wore a prized device which he had shown off to great admiration previously; a somewhat stained thigh-pad groin protector combo. He remained at the wicket for the rest of the innings and smote balls as one might expect a gallant captain to smite. Not out at 19. Bravo.

A succession of Samples followed, plus Riddell and Ahern. M.Sample, never known to have scored more than 5 runs in any innings, remained true to form and hit a fine cow-shot from a slow 'gangly' by Brook-Fox hard to square-leg straight into the hands of Milne who, frankly, should have had the good manners to drop it. Out for 3.

C.Sample, who scored 2, was stumped and given out by Umpire Knox under what were regarded as somewhat controversial circumstances off a Webb-Bowen 'grubber'. Riddell was doing well with a few confident doubles stroked away in gentle stylish manner when for some reason he went berserk and 'played on' with a spectacular, indeed manic, 'helicopter' 360° swipe, the 'whirling dervish', to a ball which had descended vertically, courtesy of a serious donkey dropper. Another flukey wicket credited to Webb-Bowen, although he insisted afterwards that it was a well-flighted leg break. Ahern, considered a 'banker' for the North, fell to the third of gloveman Forsyth's stumpings for a mere 4 runs. Forsyth, by the way, was crouching indecently, indeed invasively in my opinion, close to the wicket. It was satisfying on one occasion to see him topple over flat on his back after a slow missed shot by M.Sample . This was also the third wicket attributed to the wily skills, or sheer good luck, of Webb-Bowen. E.Sample, optimistically wearing an England shirt and bringing up the rear, having scored 3, and looking promising, was impressively caught and bowled with delicate finger-tip touch by that man Milne (OE and MCC, a dangerous mix). North, having recalled Lewis (not out, again), ran out of overs with a total of 90.

South's bowling, while not noticeably fierce or indeed accurate, contained only seven wides and two no-balls in total and a selection of chinamen, dutchmen, daisy cutters, donkey drops, dabbly dabbles and other uncategorised, indeed previously unseen, varieties of delivery. I doubt if any ball reached 20mph, which may account for the fact there were no byes, leg or otherwise. It was curious to note that, against all expectation, Webb-Bowen was South's top bowler managing to take three wickets for ten runs, all either stumped or played on. Any suggestions of dodgy or unsportsmanlike play were partially ruled out.

Tea followed, and what an excellent tea it was, courtesy of Mrs Linda Keepence, a stalwart behind many Wilton Cricket Club teas. It would, perhaps, slow down the South in the batting department. Back out on the field at 4.30pm.

G.Widdows positioned his troops in a fairly attacking field. Or was it defensive. Who knows. Brook-Fox and Prestwich opened the batting for South. Prestwich was the first to be dismissed, bowled by E.Sample (extraordinary, as he said he'd never bowled a ball before) for 4. Bampfyld, next in, having professed never to have played cricket before in his life, started to pile on the runs. He continued until compulsorily retired on reaching 20. One suspects he was bluffing as well as were several others. Brook-Fox was out lbw to Lewis who had produced an uncharacteristic burst of speed and energy to launch a rather accurate yorker. At this point it was noted that most of the bowling on both sides depended on the 'bracketing' technique. You remember; 'add 800, drop 400, add 200 etc., fire for effect and hope for the best'. C. Sample bowled Milne, he of Eton, MCC and impolite catching notoriety, another potential high scorer, for 9. M.Sample, bowling what could only be described as the 'fire and forget' technique, launched one missile which travelled at almost 60° to the wicket and was fielded by cover point; a marginal wide. One of only 4 recorded for the North bowlers. Checketts, the real dangerman of the South, came in and set about the bowling with, dare I say it, gay abandon. Portman, resplendent in immaculate flannels and MCC jersey took his guard, looked about him and eyed the fielders in what might be described as a rather studied and arrogant manner. Blount to deliver. Portman clean bowled and out for a duck. Hyde-Smith next in proceeded to rack up the score. One suspects he and Blount, both rather naffly tanned having got back the previous day from a sailing trip around Turkey, had been secretly practicing at the nets on board their Gulet in the Aegean, or whatever/wherever.

The North's gloveman, S.Riddell, definitely looked the part in his Trinity College Cambridge jersey. His enthusiasm and deportment could not be faulted. However, his ability to catch cricket balls, sometimes gently lofted in his general direction, was perhaps his only major weak spot. I think three of the South, can't recall who, were generously shown mercy by his forgiving nature and limited hand-eye coordination. Some blamed this on 'nicotine starvation'. However, what a gentleman and scholar to grace the wicket for the North side. Hyde-Smith was retired, on religious grounds, to be replaced by James 'Spike' Naylor. Naylor, wearing another Wiltshire Queries cap (did he play with Umpire May?), is a powerful batsman. He wielded the willow to devastating effect and hit the only 6 of the match, fortunately not into the canal but narrowly missing a fine selection of summer puddings beyond the boundary. Much time was spent in relocating the ball. He was then clean bowled by D.Ahern, a previously decent left-arm medium pacer who admitted to not having bowled a ball in 28 years. Not sure who was more surprised, Naylor or Ahern. Ahern, brought on perhaps a tad too late, was about the only player capable of bowling a ball at more than 20mph and with something approaching a 'line and length'. At about this point, with 15 overs gone, South were rapidly approaching their target score. It was due to a supremely inspired, brave, decisive and perhaps idiosyncratic piece of umpiring by Umpire May that Checketts was, quite correctly in my opinion, given out lbw to a ball which hit his glove a yard outside leg stump; a ball bowled by the lame Wilton which, if left alone, might have constituted a wide. Shortly after this Umpire May left the field muttering the excuse that he had to get back to work in Newcastle! One suspects he did a runner fearing retribution from Checketts. Fortunately the admirable David Collingwood was present and sober and volunteered to stand in as umpire for the remainder of play. The South only needed a couple of runs to win. Their final batsmen at the crease being the skipper, the redoubtable and superbly coiffed M.Forsyth, and the dodgy bowler Webb-Bowen. Ahern was delivering from the Sheep end and Webb-Bowen facing. Another fairly speedy delivery which was wisely left by Webb-Bowen and then, courtesy of that supreme glovesmith Riddell, sped on towards the canal boundary. Even with efforts made to rugby tackle one or both of the batsmen, two byes were run and victory was assured. South had won by (about) 4 wickets in 17 overs.

Casualties appeared to be minimal, although I have heard subsequently of a few pulled muscles and minor contusions. The services of the medic, Cusack, were not required neither was the net on a pole provided to dredge balls out of the canal. Credit must be given to Mrs Jules Forsyth who refreshed the players at the 10th over points, accompanied by her small halitotic dog, Hottie, with some cheap champagne. I am sure this helped us all to keep going and greatly lifted morale. There was a surprising lack of 'sledging' and only a few well deserved cries of encouragement and/or criticism from the boundary i.e. "well left Brookie" as the ball sped over the boundary into someones 'lemon drizzle cake', or "well dropped Bender", or whatever. Lack of barracking was undoubtedly due to all spectators incessantly banging on to one another when not stuffing their faces and drinking copiously, or just falling asleep in the sunshine. Interesting fact; noone was run out. I can't think why not. Perhaps the concept of 'making a dash for it' was beyond consideration.

The prize giving followed. The runners up, North, were awarded the charred remains of a pair of underwear previously occupied by the nether regions of G.Widdows. This was kindly presented by the fragrant Mrs Jane Blount. The winners, South, were presented with 'The Cup', a 3" high engraved silver (plated) ornament

kindly donated by said G.Widdows, otherwise known as the Brian Medway Trophy (a long story there) , or 'The Clinkers', the northern colloquial word for 'Ashes'. The ashes, sealed inside, being those of part of the aforementioned Widdows' shreddies. This duty was admirably performed with great dignity by our highly talented and successful War Artist, Lynne Moore (stand still long enough and she might paint you). It was decided not to engage in any contemporary naffness of awarding such trivia as 'Man of the Match' prizes. Who could possibly be singled out? It might have been more prescient to have decided on a 'best turned out award'!

It was great fun as far as all were concerned, I hope, and the sunny weather helped no end. Lots of old and bold (and some rather young) turned up to watch, support and perhaps offer useful advice and share a bite of each other's picnics. The WAGS had considerable influence on proceedings and the number of dogs present could have formed a decent sized hunting pack. I counted 15 couple and, as far as I am aware, there were no serious fights. Spectators present (for the benefit of readers who weren't there) included 'His Generalship' Simon Mayall, just back from brokering peace deals in the Middle East, Rupert and Annette McCarthy, Michael and Ashy Stokes (ex-Mrs Kit Inglis), Pam Greville (ex-Mrs Simon Murray), Louisa Coxwell-Rogers, Sarah Gouriet (who did much to rally the troops), Stuart and Lo Balmain (He was dressed to play and she with her foot in plaster), Alan and Marita Bulman who had travelled from Germany via a DWE in Bournemouth, all Jim Knox's family, Tim and Maureen Villiers, Willie Peto, Jeremy Selfe, Iain and Lulu Mackie, Penelope Worsely (buy her book! It's most interesting), John Gillman, Tim Robb (ex-LD), Randal Trethewyn (who had come all the way from Tasmania) and probably many others whom I have failed to mention.

Many thanks to all who have contributed so generously towards this event by whatever means and consequently to the Light Dragoons Colonel's Appeal. The Regimental Colonel, Maj-Gen David Rutherford-Jones, gave his support. Unfortunately he could not attend because he said he was detained at the Glastonbury Festival. I have seen him since so he must either have escaped or is perhaps out on bail.

Finally, before descending to the score-card, if anyone is interested in obtaining photographs, there are many on offer. Chiefly, but not exclusively, from Andy Mackie (pash.mackie@talk21.com) and David Collingwood (d.collingwood637@btinternet.com). I'm sure they would be happy to send them on to you by e-mail. It is also possible to look at, or even buy, a fantastic 'photo-book' compiled by Charlie Hopkinson, our photographer on the day. This does not contribute to either the Colonel's Appeal or even Hoppo's pocket if you buy one. It is supplied by a web-site; www.blurb.co.uk. Log onto that and put 'hoppo' in the search. Scroll down to the OBCC book and have a look. You will be impressed.

Lots of 'meremimurs' have been exchanged in a plethora of e-mail correspondence between several of us involved in planning this event and which kept us all amused. It has been suggested we put some of these together as an anthology. Maybe later. In fact the so called 'planning' was most enjoyable involving such events as the very lively Selector's Lunch and Committee Meeting at Lords Tavern back in April.

However, in view of the mature status of those present at Wilcot a new motto has been coined. "Merry Zimmer"!

We look forward to seeing you all again at the Old Buffers' **rugby** match fixture sometime in the autumn.

By the way, nearly forgot to mention it. The Grand Total (net) donated to the Colonel's Appeal, after expenses deducted for hire of pitch and eqpt, programme production, tea, bar licence, balls and scorebook, photographer is:

£3138.06

Many thanks to you all.

PS. If you want to check to see if your donation arrived safely, contact HHQ who hold all the details.

Incidentally, did anyone notice that some of us had put on a bit of weight recently? I think I must have been imagining it.

THE SCOREBOARD

NORTH

D.G.Lewis. not out (twice)	10
J.P.Wilton. c Naylor b Barne	11
A.J.Tabor. c Portman b Barne	4
E.D.Hotham c Brook-Fox b Hyde-Smith	5
C.Blount. stumped b Brook-Fox	14
G.Widdows. not out	19
M.Sample. c Milne b Brook-Fox	3
C.Sample. stumped b Webb-Bowen	2
S.Riddell. played on. b Webb-Bowen	6
D.Ahern. stumped b Webb-Bowen	4
E.Sample. c & b Milne	3
Extras:	9
Total (20 overs)	90

SOUTH

V.J.Brook-Fox. lbw b Lewis	13
C.T.S.Prestwich. played-on b E.Sample	4
R.I.D.Bampfylde. retired forcibly	20
N.A.Milne. b C.Sample	9
T.J.Checketts. lbw! b Wilton	13
M.B.Portman. b Blount	0
C.S.Hyde-Smith. retired	14
J.D.H.Naylor. b Ahern	15
C.M.Forsyth. not out	0
R.I.Webb-Bowen. not out	0
A.R.Barne. did not bat.	
Extras:	13
Total (17 overs)	91

SOME PHOTOS

Norf



Sarf



WAGS





Left:Umpire Knox Right: El Generalissimo



Umpire May



Bender

Tea



Fozzie on his arse



Skip of the Norf



Lewis, sheep, Checketts and Forsyth.

Lo Balmain's foot



Prize giving.

The Selectors (less Knox)



The pack



Preparing to toss



Knox, Ahern (bowling),
and Naylor.



South huddle (most
undignified)

More WAGS

