

CRICKETERS' CLUB of NEW SOUTH WALES
REMINISCENCES OF TOURS GONE BY
“A la recherche du temps perdu”

FIJI:- “The Journeys Begin” - Dennis Cameron (*Every journey begins with a single drink-misquoted Chinese proverb! -Ed.*)

Prior to the 1988-89 season, the Cricketers' Club had a tradition of talking about tours but they just never seemed to happen. The Captain for that season Phil Scarlett was determined that we should have an 'end of season' tour. Over drinks at the annual Blues night, options were discussed and a decision was taken to accept an invitation to compete in the Compton Cup in Fiji at Easter 1989. I took on the role of organizer and the tour was underway. Political unrest occurred in Fiji within a short while and the tour was on and off several times but we eventually got there.

Our performances on the field were steady and we honorably bowed out at the quarter final stage. I can still remember hitting the first ball of the tour to fine leg, calling 3 and struggling to complete 1! My other memory is of our opening bowler halving his run up in the first over (it was HOT!!!).

Off the field the socialising was sensational and during drinks by the pool a commitment was made that we would all go the Asia in 1991.

The recurring theme here is that decisions were taken during or over drinks- a tradition that has been maintained to this day by all involved with the Club.

TOURS VARIOUS 1989-2004- Adrian Hawkes

Over the years I have been on more cricket tours than I care to remember and as time goes by what strikes me is that the memory of the actual games tends to fade but the friendships and atmosphere remain. Here are some snippets.

Being mistaken for an Australian! Canada 1993

In Canada, we played at a silent country ground near Vancouver at Cowichan in the middle of a pine forest, far from any main road, where you could hear every drip of the steady drizzle which was starting to fall and every whispered comment could be heard clearly through the mist. I was bowling at a batsman whom I did not consider that highly but the ball started slipping and he started scoring easy runs. As consecutive full tosses were helped down the leg side, I came out with the odd expression of annoyance that might have caused even Shane Warne to start. The formidable aged Canadian matron who was sitting on the boundary turned to my wife (not that she knew it) and sniffed “Typically Australian”!

A barbecue in Oxford. England 1997

At the start of our English tour we found ourselves playing in 35 degree heat with high humidity and staying in slightly basic accommodation in Oxford. The touring party had not yet gelled. Warren Timms scoured every liquor shop in Oxford for chilled beer and came up with some XXXX. We bought some wine (Rosemount) and meat, and found ourselves under a Eucalyptus tree in the old College Lawns with the night still humid and warm but no mossies! Gee, I thought; this is what we've travelled over 12,000 miles for- drinking XXXX under a gum tree, and eating BBQ snags and steaks in high humidity on a balmy night. They should think of something like this in Australia!

The tour party gelled and we never looked back.

The wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars- Lord Howe 1998

Gordon Salier then aged in his 60s had come out of retirement to help make up the numbers, and by the time he went in at No11, the match was still in the balance. The opening bowler was brought back on; the field set with deliberation- 4 slips, two short legs and the bowler accelerated off his long run and bowled- a fast good length ball... and the keeper was tossing it to the slips as Gordon started to lift his bat. Next ball same speed and length but Gordon must have remembered his youth as a not inconsiderable opening bat who had opened with the former Test player, Billy Watson; he hit through the line and under the ball which disappeared into a tree at wide mid on for six. It was hard to say whether the bowler or Gordon was more surprised!

The whole tour party celebrated long into the evening with Mike Birchall playing the bagpipes on an upside down chair and Brian Fallon's encyclopaedic memory of songs. The BBQ blazed; the food and wine were perfect; the lagoon whispering a few yards away, and overhead with no street lighting, the Milky Way blazed in a way never seen in Sydney and Gordon was a star - or to misquote Banjo:-

*"For the bush have friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars"*

Tea with the Governor- Norfolk Island 1998

It is alleged the first holiday John Howard ever spent outside the Australian mainland was with the Governor of Norfolk Island. True or not one could see why it might appeal to him. A reincarnation of English civilised values- Earl Grey tea, cucumber sandwiches with the crusts cut off, all the staff wearing Immaculate black "David Jones " outfits in an exquisite restored Georgian house, and the Governor and his immaculate wife hosting us.

And outside? The blue of the Pacific Ocean, the haunting ruins of the old prison and the swamp into which David Byrnes had recently deposited several sixes on his way to a century. "Regency Row" to the back., and the sharp volcanic lines of the pine covered hills. An extraordinary contrast and a marvellous start to a relaxed family cricket tour.

The Infinity Pool at the Kandalama Hotel, Dambulla, Sri Lanka 2003

Imagine a hotel over a kilometre long. Imagine a hotel hidden by the jungle vines overgrowing; the bats flying down the open corridors and the monkeys jumping onto the balconies and in the rooms, given a chance. Imagine this hotel set into the cliffs in a World Heritage reserve with an ancient artificial lake beneath, and the elephants wandering. Imagine sitting on your private ensuite lavatory with a solid glass wall enabling you to see this- and imagine lounging in an infinity pool with your eye-line level with the water and the horizon; and you may have some idea of what we enjoyed at the Kandalama Hotel, Dambulla

And oh yes- We played cricket at the International stadium and saw the Visitor's book signed by Hamish Solomons where he had proposed on Geoffrey Bawa's seat to the lady who is now his wife.

"The Pool Police" Vanuatu 2001

Our first game at the White Sands Country Club, desperate to make a good impression. Graham Anderson due to captain but stuck somewhere down the golf course. The game due to start in five minutes and "Buckets", David and Otto still lounging in the pool. "Quick!" I screamed. "Can you get out and get your pads on." They looked at me. "Ah!" said Paul. "The pool police have arrived." *And he never let me forget it.*

NORTH AMERICA 1993-Hamish Solomons

For a young bloke like myself, the prospect of playing cricket in the US and Canada seemed strangely attractive. At that stage I was not aware that cricket was even an option in those parts. So I decided to drink less, save more and join CCNSW on my first overseas tour.

It was a decision which helped sculpt my future life, such was the degree of enjoyment and education. The character and experience of the party provided for a successful tour. Could one so wet behind the ears have asked for a better group to debut with on such a well planned tour.

For starters you could say there were endless highlights which were captured on the tour video. This gave the tour an extra edge and certainly made the trip more entertaining. You could never let your guard down for a moment, for "Dougie" Walters would more often than not appear with that camera for an impromptu interview and immortalise any odd situation into snippets of pure

comedy. This video alone provided the tour group a night of fond reflection back at the Club months after the tour had ended.

The Tour itself? We started in Vancouver with some enterprising cricket and close results, followed by a few big nights of merrymaking. Actually merrymaking was another definite theme albeit a little alcohol fuelled at times! The clubhouse atmosphere stood out in Vancouver and Victoria and I realised there was still so much British in British Columbian cricket. Apparently it is not considered good form to chat up the wicket keeper's girlfriend while he's still on the field. I had a lot to learn.

One of the great highlights of our tour was to stay at the world famous spectacular Banff Springs Hotel, while we played in Calgary, visited the magnificent Chateau at Lake Louise and inspected the site of the then recent winter Olympics before flying to San Francisco

We lost our first game of the tour at Marin County by ten wickets courtesy of two high-class cricketers from the sub-continent who had just got off the boat, but the hospitality was magnificent. Even the statue of Ghandi at the ferry terminal seemed pleased with our presence as we were photographed in our cricket whites.

After watching a double header at Oakland, we flew south to Los Angeles. A daunting city to many but once we were surrounded by our childhood heroes such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, we relaxed! Our game against the world famous Hollywood Cricket Club provided our first game on grass, and we were surprised by the quality of the ground.

We wound down in Hawaii where our hosts took us out for a glorious day on the water. We played in the shadow of Diamond Head where being nine wickets down, Dennis Cameron hit a brutal 92* in nine overs.

Most importantly it was the people and the friendly atmosphere that made the tour a success. Not only our wonderful hosts but especially the CCNSW tourists- a great mixture of family, age and race but with a common interest in travel and cricket.

BARBADOS & TRINIDAD 1996-John McGruther

The most scenic fast food outlet in the world

Frank Crowe was always a believer in events off the field being far more important than any attempt at cricket on it. An experienced travel agent, his comment in Barbados was illuminating. Sitting on an outside bench, under a Jacaranda tree, on the west coast of Barbados at St James, looking directly across the Caribbean towards the wonderful spice island of Grenada, and with a dusky maiden dancing the Calypso as she delivered him (wait for it) a Pepsi, he proclaimed to me: '*You know, Mac ..*' (as he bit on another leg of roast KFC chicken) '*... this has to be the most scenic fast food outlet in the World!*'

A right cock-up!

At the Centenary speech at the Queens Park Club, Trinidad, I recalled my honeymoon (my wife being a Trinidadian). Injecting some local colour and well known Trinidadian slang into it, I told my Queens Park audience: *'Back in 1980, my wife Carol and I came here for our honeymoon without a stopover; we were exhausted. We immediately hit the deck at 8.00pm, silken sheets, taking over her parents' bedroom, lights out – and at last a chance for marital romance. Only to hear within a minute, the door creak open! All I could see at a level of 6 feet, was a small red glow, and then a booming voice: "Hey mon, have you got your cock set?" I was stunned, had just started an embrace, but was forced to sit bolt upright. The light came on. It was my father-in-law and with his quirky sense of humour, I could see he was holding a saucer with a mosquito coil on it. How was I to know that "Cockset" was the local brand name for a mosquito coil!'* Never trust a Trini!

Lobster thermidor on the beach

The then Club manager, Simon Adams, a true Anglo-Saxon with blond hair and fair complexion, tried his damndest to imitate the olive locals. He succeeded but with the wrong colour. After 2 days blissful exposure on the beaches of Barbados, he was taken to a seafood restaurant on the south coast by local fishermen who thought he was a lobster. Simon's fielding and cricket contributions after that were somewhat lethargic and spasmodic. Naturally, we back-slapped and congratulated him throughout the islands thereafter!

The honeymoon couple

No-one on the Tour has ever seen a couple look more 'honeymoon-like', than Joff and Susie Johnson, looking lovingly into each other's eyes, 50 metres off the Tobago shore at Pigeon Point, strategically waist-deep in those wonderful azure Caribbean waters near Buccoo Reef. [*Editor's note:- You should have seen Garry and Margaret in Canada in 1993!*]

Fielding for Joel Garner

The shock of local journalist, Joel Garner, when he proof read the copy, at 2.00am in the Barbados Gleaner office, of our first Tour result against the Barbados Workers Union (the strongest cricket club in Barbados!) which, somehow, we had managed to win by nine wickets. Garner was stunned. He happened to be the captain of our opposition that morning on the Test ground at Kensington Oval. He furiously rang some former West Indies players. His team, on paper, looked strong with such names as 'Greenidge', 'Garner' and a string of others batting and bowling down the list. We tried to pick our best team. Naturally, I was left out! But to my delight, when greeting my old mate Garner (rather sheepishly in the circumstances), Joel quickly pronounced *'Mon, I'm fine, but I'm short of players..'* and without pause got the immediate

response from me ‘.. *Joel, I’m with you*’. It was ironically delightful (in a sick sense) fielding at mid-off, tossing the ball regularly to Garner at the start of his run-up, watching the frowns on my own Club batsmen’s faces in those vital seconds. Craig Kitson still opens his shirt, at any bar that will let him do it, these 8 years later, to show off in repeated terms, ‘*look ..the bruise I got facing Joel Garner!*’ Ah, Kitso, your own VC! (By the way, it’s true; the bruise **is** still there!).

Respect for the tourist

Greg Brooks and a few mates visited Sam Lord’s castle in Barbados, being ripped off by a local teenage Rasta entrepreneur who charged \$5 to ‘go the Beach’. Honest Brooksie and a few others duly forked out, to find the Beach was both inaccessible and locked off. On their return to the scene of the ‘rip-off’, the entrepreneur was ready with the simple repeated line, ‘*yeh, Mon, respect!*’.

Respect for the bowler

I have never seen a more delighted smile at his own dismissal than that of Joff Johnson, returning to the pavilion at Queens Park, Trinidad having just edged a snick off a then very young Mervyn Dillon (now West Indies opening speedster) with the remark from Joff, ‘*Christ, I’ve been trying to get that nick for the last 4 overs!*’

[Editor’s note:- As Joff tells it, he went out to open in a sun hat, aged in his fifties to face the bowling of the then fastest bowler in the Caribbean, without a helmet. The fielders looked on in awe. This man was either a genius or a fool.... and they may still be wondering!]

KENYA 2002-Leigh Yardy

Our tour to Kenya in 2002 was filled with amazing sights, some terrific cricketing moments, and a really fun group of fellow travellers. To top this all off, we also had a very personal brush with royalty whilst in Nairobi.

We were staying at the Nairobi Club, a venue with it’s own “unique” charm and atmosphere. Its long colonial history was evident and it was the obvious choice for a reception to be held for HRH Prince Edward, and his new bride Sophie (who, we have it on good authority prefers to be known as The Duchess of Wettex...check this fact with David Byrnes!). The royals were there as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and the entire elite of Kenya were there in force, politicians, celebrities, et al.

We had just returned from a very dusty game of cricket, and were quite hot and sweaty, spectators included! As we alighted the team bus, we noticed that the reception was already underway, so we all adjourned to Dennis

Cameron's room to watch, as he had a view of the oval where the marquee was set up. We had just started our drinks, and it only took a little prompting, something along the lines of Dennis saying to Ken and me, "Go on, I dare you to try and gate crash!" and we were off!

A quick visit to our room, for Ken to find his suit, and me to grab a cocktail dress, and we were off and racing down the corridors. We were literally getting dressed as we ran! I was trying desperately to tie my hair back, and put on lipstick, whilst Ken was fumbling with his buttons and tie. We made it, breathless, to the ground floor, and made a wrong turn through the kitchen. The staff were quick to steer us in the right direction, and before we knew it, we were at the "heavily guarded" entrance.

Without another thought, we pushed past the crowds, and walked in as if we owned the place. We could even hear in the background, some very Aussie sounding cheers, as we walked through the entrance. We were told later that the whole team had a perfect view of our entrance. The rest of the night passed by like a dream!! We were served the most amazing display of food, and were offered unlimited amounts of any alcohol we desired. We mixed with all of the visiting dignitaries, and it was only when we came face to face with David, our tour organiser and popular local identity, that we thought we'd been foiled. However, with amazing good grace, he howled with laughter, and made a point of introducing us to the entire organising committee.

And as for the young Royals, I can honestly say that Sophie dazzled. Edward looked just like he does in all his photos, and we held the flag high for Australia. When the time came for the official receiving line to have intimate little chats with the two royals, Ken was all set to step up (We were literally about 3 feet away from them), but we decided that we might spark some international incident, and after all, the other people being presented had apparently paid a lot of money to be offered that privilege. So, we simply watched, and took away with us some amazing memories.

This was a really great tour, and I'm sure others with us would dare to compare the sighting of native lions, elephants, giraffes, and so on as being comparable to what we saw. But hey, it's not every day that you get to rub shoulders with royalty!

Leigh Yardy-

Editor's Note-In private life, Leigh is a security consultant and uses this incident as an illustration of what not to do, when lecturing would be security guards!