

# The Forty Club in South Africa - February 1998

by Richard Merricks

The XL Club undertook their third tour of the Cape, and their first for five years, when almost fifty people boarded the South African Airways flight on the evening on February 12th. Net practice took place on the day we landed, and the following day, Valentine's Day, saw the first of our twelve matches.

Although our playing record of only two victories in twelve games, the last two, does not appear that heartening or encouraging, this was a most happy and enjoyable trip where everybody mixed in very well, gave generous support to the team and all members played their part on or off the field. On several occasions the XL Club were beaten embarrassingly easily. The inability to score our runs at a fast enough rate was a crucial factor in this - but some of the matches ended in nail-biting finishes, notably our first game at Elgin, which ended in either a tie or level-score draw, depending on your point of view. The match against Bishops Masters was another exciting spectacle, with defeat occurring off the last ball, and the two victories at the end of the tour sent everyone home in high spirits. Those of us fortunate enough to have toured South Africa before are well aware of the delightful climate, sometimes too hot, but never too cold, and the high standards of hospitality tendered by our hosts.

Barbecues, or 'brails' are the order of the day, or rather evening. The welcome one receives can almost be embarrassingly generous. The Holiday Inn at Woodstock was a comfortable and salubrious base, once one had mastered the knack of inserting the plastic keys into the slots. It seemed at times to have been built on the most windswept spot in Cape Town. Pleasant scenic trips were arranged around the city, the winelands and down to Cape Point, but the highlight of the tour from a non-cricketing viewpoint must have been our day at Kenilworth Racecourse, where we were royally entertained in the Members Suite and provided with sumptuous refreshment. Not all of us returned richer in pocket, but all came back richer in experience and enjoyment.

A most memorable gathering was at the end-of-tour luncheon where over £130 was raised by Ken Medlock and assistants in humorously levied tour fines, which we donated to the Rondebosch High School tour of the UK last summer. Hardly a worthwhile restaurant in the Cape was left unvisited by some of the more intrepid members of the party!

A more detailed account of the individual matches played can be gleaned from Richard Merricks's booklet "The Forty Club in South Africa 1998", obtainable from the author or Gordon Potter, where due acknowledgement has been made to players, umpires, scorers and supporters, but most of all to Tour Manager Bob Munn, without whom the trip would never have taken place, and whose forethought, planning, efficiency and execution of tasks ensured one of the most successful trips for all concerned.

## Results

XL Club v Western Province	XL 161-5 Western Province 161-9	Tie/level score draw
XL Club v Groot Drakenstein	XL 209-4 Groot Drakenstein 210-6	Lost
XL Club v Langa Under 16	XL 142-6 Langa 143-3	Lost
XL Club v Stellenbosch Farmers	XL 151-6 S Farmers 152-3	Lost
XL Club v Olsons Brewery	XL 182-5 Olsons Brewery 184-4	Lost
XL Club v Fishhoek	XL 139-7 Fishhoek 140-6	Lost
XL Club v Bishops School Masters	XL 208-7 Bishops 210-8	Lost
XL Club v Rondebosch High School	Rondebosch 165-4 XL 86-8	Lost
XL Club v Cape Town Wombats	XL 165-8 Wombats 163-7	Draw
XL Club v Durbanville	XL 172-8 Durbanville 176-5	Lost
XL Club v Hermanus	XL 172-3 Hermanus 115-9	Won
XL Club v Somerset West	XL 208-5 Somerset West 153	Won



Winning smiles at Hermanus



Dramatic backdrop at Groot Drakenstein