

SWANNING AROUND THE CAPE

The Forty Club's third tour of South Africa, February 7-28, 2002

The Forty Club's 72th major overseas tour was another huge success for organiser Ron C.A Hart. It needed an almost military organisational ability to take fifty-eight members and their wives, partners and friends. No one dropped out, no one was lost and there were no serious injuries. No insurance claims were filed. The outstanding memories were watching Knynsa U18s, average age 15, outplay an XL side, averaging over sixty only to retire their best batsmen to allow XL to gain a precious and rare win and the sight of the smiling youngsters who danced and sang at airports to welcome us. "We've never had such wonderful hospitality" said Ron. The fixture list of 79 matches, including three double headers, was described by MCC Head Coach Clive Radley as "mod." But every match was completed as arranged and the weather was exceptional. A dismal record of 75 losses, two draws and only two wins, the Knynsa "fix" and the 92 run win over the only genuine elderly social side, Groot Drakenstein, has to be digested, and lessons have to be learned. There are two alternatives - convince that the opposition in future tours must be over fifty to allow us to take them on fair terms, or sign up more younger, fitter members. The second course is almost impossible to achieve. Most of the games were uncompetitive with the home captains retiring their best batsmen and usually employing most of their bowlers.

Two of our heroes were Barry Hunter, the outstanding bowler, and Andy Meads, the prolifically scoring batsman.

February 7 - Not a spare seat in the SAA flight but five members were upgraded, one under protest.

February 8 - The "new" President Hotel turned out to be beautifully designed to ensure every room had sea views at Sea Point.

February 9 - A moral victory in the opener against the hospitable Scorpions CC of Stellenbosch - 237-7 against XL's 178. After taking a poll over the toss (the temperature nudged 94 degrees) the vote was 4-4 and Ron opted to bowl. Good decision. The home side had several young, fit quick bowlers, including the brother of Test batsman Gerhardus Liedenberg (Afrikaans for mountain). Andy Meads spilled a sitter - he blamed it on his arthritic toe - and redeemed himself by scoring a brisk 57 before exhaustion beat him. Your editor proved popular, running the Manager out for nought.

February 10 - Victory in front of a fantastic backdrop of mountains on either side. Drakenstein played fair and XL were able to pile up 267 on a flat pitch with Steve Coltman top scoring with 60 (dropped four times). Barry Hunter took 5-26 as the home side were out for 769. In the ensuing braai the 77 stone bowling hero crashed to the ground as a chair leg snapped. Within minutes Dirk Coster (76 stone) and Meg Robinson (8 stone) also succumbed to the breaking chair phenomenon. No one was injured.

February 11 - The Edgemoed CC ground was less appealing, flat and boring and lined by cable towers. A 35 mph wind whipped across the ground and the locals won painlessly by 88 runs. Jim Daley of Durham came in late to score 22 not out, thankfully. Meads followed his 3-38 with 43 and Keith Crabtree's 46 came off 92 balls.

February 12 - A mismatch at Claremont CC featured ex-SA Test left arm spinner Graham Chevallier who played in a Test against Australia in 1969. The home side were under the impression that the XL had similar ex-Test players. They cruised to 235-4 with the father and son Van Nierops both starring and XL limped to 779-6. Nice curry.

February 13 - A double header at Avendale CC, Bob Woolmer's club. And here's a name to note - Liam Finnan, the 79-year-old left-handed batsman. He smashed an unbeaten 124 in 13 overs as XL. 151-6, lost by ten wickets. He has trained at Warwickshire and fancies being a county player. Avendale is a township and smoke sweeps over the ground from a nearby refuse works. The second game was almost as embarrassing, losing by 181 runs to an Over40 side. Veteran Johnny Kleinveld hit 100 off 39 balls before retiring in the Vets' 325 in 45 overs. Johnny would be a star in the 20 overs romp here in 2003!



XI's losing side in the first game in 94° heat at Stellenbosch with organiser, Ron Hart (holding the flag) run out by the brochure editor



Too many warm ups for David Dandridge!

February 14 – Back to a beautiful setting, and another defeat. XL's 189-7, with Robbie Barker 36, was easily passed by Somerset West by three wickets with 9.1 overs left.

February 15 - And so it goes on... although it was very close, with Fish Hoek CC winning by one wicket although their top batter retired at 82. Mike Wicks was taken off with 3-31 and appeared to show discreet dissension. No report was filed. What a beautiful town and what wonderful restaurants!

February 16 - At last, a rest day. Most members went to Robben Island, SA's number one tourist attraction. It is a stupendous story. The Waterfront is the best in the world. It's named V & A. which reflects well on Great Britain, but why not a local name?

February 17 - Another double-header on a scorching day at Durbanville CC neither distinguished. The XL B side mustered 175, losing by seven wickets and the A side crawled to 132-8 facing 239-6. Barry Hunter performed heroically in the nineties to bowl 14 overs.

February 18 - A much more rewarding day at the Boon Wallace Oval and the Wombat CC players, average age 46, all batted and bowled and won by two wickets. Andy Meads came close to his 142nd 100 in XL's 204-7. He was 96 almost equal to the temperature- when Chris Hutton called for a run to extra cover and he was run out. Your correspondent was given out lbw to Julian Wilson, the former BBC racing correspondent who spends the winter in SA February 19 – Day off and the players were too tired to do anything.

February 20 - Another stunning ground, at Vineyard CC and another familiar result. Western Province ran up 258-8 against XL's 173-8.

February 21 - On to Hermanus, the lovely town which attracts whales in November. In a time game, Robbie Barker, 53, and Alan Luff, 58, helped the total to 189-4 and that wasn't enough. Steve Snell, a MCC ground staff boy from Ventnor, Isle of Wight, scored 57 and was one of three batsmen who retired.

February 22 – The coach broke down to Knynsa, voted SA's nicest town, and members surprised the passing car drivers by staging an impromptu fielding session on the roadside.

February 23 – The last double header. Knynsa CC was bowled out on a "Bunsen" as Andy Meads steered the XL to a win before retiring hurt. The second match, against Keith Critchley's cricket school, was lost on the last ball.

February 24 -A mauling from George CC. XL 181-7 against 182-6 with 7.5 overs left.

February 25 - A win over the Knynsa U18s, including two 12 year olds, by nine runs - XL 164 against 155. Two of the boys bowled so quick on a dodgy pitch that the umpires ordered them to slow down after Barry Hunter was hit twice in the body (no chestpad).

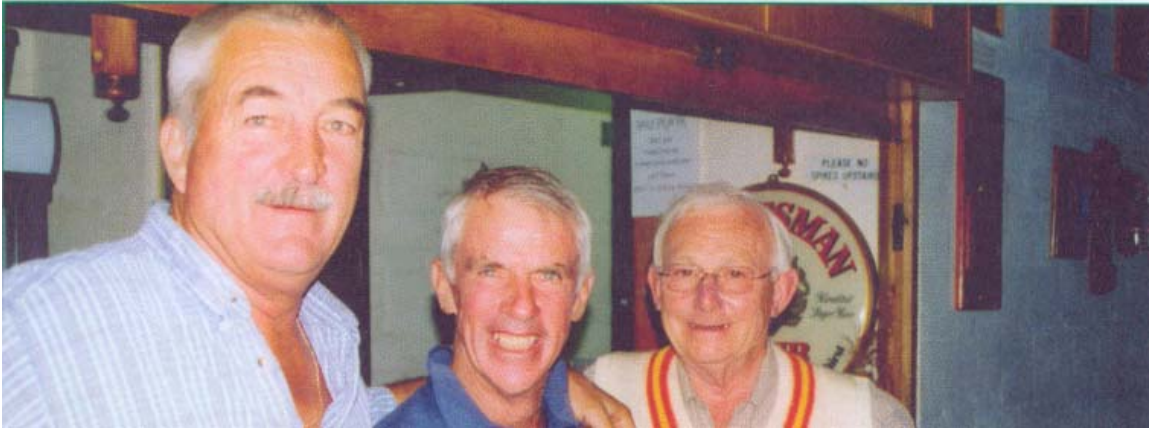
February 26 - Nine hour coach ride over the mountains to Port Alfred, 100 miles east of Michael Henderson's favourite place, Port Elizabeth.

February 27 – Outclassed by a young Cuylerville side, all pineapple farmers. The Pineapple XI scored 316 with XL 176, Meads and Barker both scoring half centuries. They laid on a lively band and it was a riotous night.

February 28 - The 15th and last defeat was against Stanley CC, a wandering side. XL crept to 169 in 58 overs and the hosts won by three wickets (a few surrenders) off only 26 overs. The end of tour dinner was a brilliant success with the 58 tourists contributing £475 to pay for a scoreboard at the Knynsa Sports Club, owned and built by Keith Critchley and his wonderful family. Most of the boys are black and they are coached for nothing. They couldn't afford a proper scoreboard and Richard Merricks had to use small logs to indicate the score. The money came from the fines and the fines master had to point out that the 32 members who went on the Malaysia tour the previous October raised £570! Several anonymous philanthropists helped to boost the total in SA. It had been a great tour and we felt it was a very small way of repaying the generosity of our hosts, particularly the Critchleys. Especially as the rand was worth 17 to the £1



Inveterate XL tourman Richard Merricks mans the primitive score 'box' at Knynsa CC.



Chevalliar (centre) who played a test for SA in 1969, took plenty of wickets against the Forty Club.
On the left is a local bodyguard and right is an MCC Member.



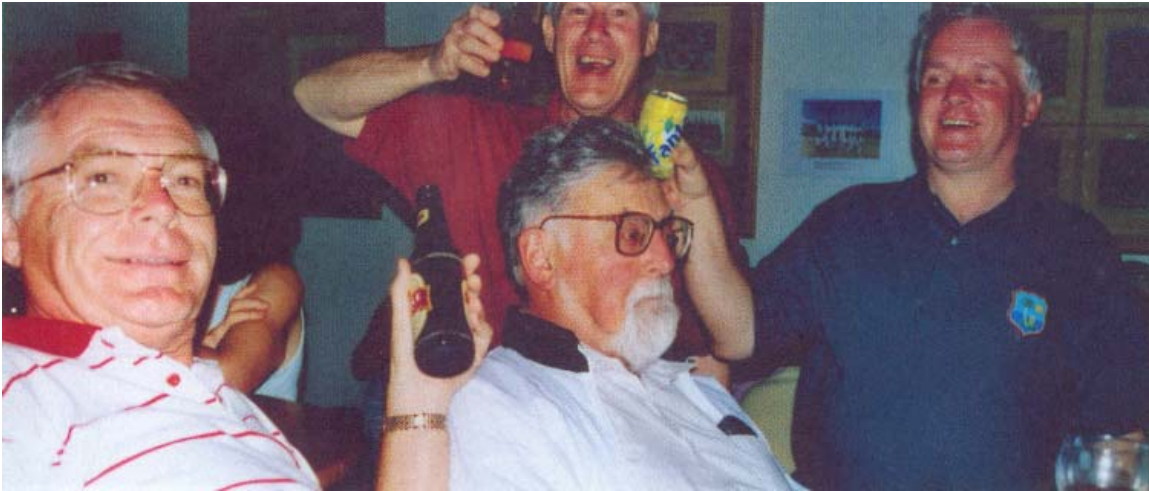
Two extra fielders take the field at Groot Draktenstein CC



The home side was much younger!



XL openers Andy Meads and Steve Coltman somewhat overshadowed at Fish Hoek CC



Professor Keith Crabtree contemplates his run out as Ron Helyar (left). Denham Earl and Dirk Coster (right) celebrate



Ron Hart poses alongside Ron Helyar at his shop in the mountains.



Another defeat ...but still smiling.