

## XL Tour to Singapore & Australia - 2006

A cosmopolitan group gathered at Heathrow on February 6 for the Forty Club's tour to Singapore and Australia and it included a large contingent from Holland and one member from Scotland.

**Feb 8** - Barely twenty hours after our arrival in Singapore the tour started against Singapore CC at the Ceylon Sports Club, as the Singapore ground was being renovated. A welcome breeze helped to combat the heat and humidity and batting first, the Club reached the giddy heights of 115 in forty overs. A very useful new "member" name of Sundries was our top scorer. Indeed, in five of the matches he finished top scorer. Ian Waiters probably set a Club record by bowling the first over, a maiden. Were we in for a shock? No! Seventeen overs later the match ended with Singapore winning by six wickets. The hosts entertained us royally in the evening some 150 yards from the Parliament Building where General Percival surrendered to the Japanese on February 15, 1942. On the same steps, Lord Mountbatten received the Japanese surrender three and a half years later.

**Feb 9** - The first incident of the tour occurred at Perth Airport as we went through the customs. Our leader, Ron Hart, had warned us about the strict Australian regulations on bringing in any fruit, wood or meat products. With the burdens of the job bearing on him, he forgot that he had two apples in his case. He had eluded the sniffer dogs but fell at the last hurdle as a zealous customs official fined him £100. The news that a "criminal" had landed in Australia spread so quickly that the coach transporting us was more like a wagon, perhaps it had been used to transport convicts in the past. Shane Wilson, the driver, proved to be a great friend during our stay in Perth.

**Feb 11** - Roasted at Giddeganup. The Perth leg started on a very hot day with a match against Parkerville CC in bush country, some 25 miles out of the City. It was a 12 a side game and XL, batting first, found it hard going. Barry Peay battled for his 24 and the Normans, Gray and Jones, put on 30 for the ninth wicket in 149-11 off 45 overs. Parkerville cruised home to 151-3 (three retired) in 32 overs. Soon, a mob of kangaroos came out of the surrounding woodland too late, unfortunately, to help us in the field. In the evening, the first of many barbecues was enjoyed.

**Feb 12** - The only double header of the tour was against Green Range CC. The A XI was slaughtered by a side of 20 to 30 year olds who ran up 315-6 (one retired) in 45 overs. Mr. Sundries was the top scorer in our total of 99 all out. The B side had their hopes raised against steady bowling by Barry Aitken and the wiles of Roger Jarvis (2-35) and Mike Wicks (2-50) before the home side knocked up 212-8, far too many for our 114-7.

**Feb 13** - A welcome rest day with a wineries cruise up the beautiful Swan River. We were taken past the house where Rolf Harris was brought up. Living by the river, he became a top class swimmer and almost made the Australian Olympics team in 1956.

**Feb 14** - The only declaration game of the tour against Christchurch Grammar School, whose most famous cricketing old boy is Stuart MacGill. It was the hottest day of the tour with a temperature of 38.7C (102F) but it is not unusual for Perth. Andy Shanks kept going 14 overs for his 3-60 and the School skipper generously declared on 213-5 in 39 overs. Barry Peay hit 30 off two overs but after he was out for 72 the innings faded into a draw, with the XL ending on 160-9 from 48 overs. There was a champagne moment when Ron Hart thought the ball was dead and went on a walk about. In fact it went to the keeper and he was run out. But the home skipper graciously withdrew the appeal.

**Feb 15** - Where is my sweater? A tremendous drop in temperature saw a frantic search for sweaters before we took the field against the WA branch of the Incogniti at the delightful Melville CC ground. Dennis Lillee and Rod Marsh played there and more recently, Paul Terry, the Hampshire coach, Justin Langer, Mike Hussey and Simon Katich. Derek Aslett, the former Kent player, made 47 and steady bowling by Gordon Watts (3-35) and a brilliant catch by Alan Newman kept the Incogs to 208-7 (45 overs). Under brighter skies, we were able to appreciate the most impressive setting for any game on the tour with views across the estuary to the city of Perth. Andy Meads struck a classy 75 before being run out and Roly Walton fought hard for an unbeaten 27 and a total of 156-8 was 54 runs short of the target. It was a good performance against a strong side. Sixty people sat down to an excellent dinner, hosted by the home side.

**Feb 16** - Mild excitement as the leader endeavoured to leave run machine Meads and Jaap Vogelar behind. But everyone arrived at Sydney in a thunderstorm.

**Feb 17** - On the northern outskirts of Sydney, we discovered heavy overnight rain had left a 'sticky dog' for our bowlers but Kenthurst Masters still reached 265 (45 overs) in searing heat. The Eucalyptus trees were given a severe bombardment. No such luck for our batsmen as a sepulchral calm descended on the ground. Despite the

efforts of Mr. Sundries(30), several ibis (stork-like birds) perched on the outfield and soon fell asleep as XL staggered to 127-7, losing by 138 runs.

**Feb 22** - A contest at last! The cancelled game against Manly Masters was rearranged for a recreation ground near the hotel and it proved to be a turning point: it was the first really competitive match. Some expensive, late overs lifted the home side's total to 235-6 (three retired) in 40 overs. XL made a spirited reply with Barry Peay (41 rtd), Robbie Barker (32), Richard Bennett (40 rtd), Roly Walton (40 rtd) and Mr. Sundries (34) taking the score to within nine runs of the target.

**Feb 23** - A win! Allan Border lived close to this pleasant ground, named after him, and some fine bowling from Colin Croucher (2-25), Norman Gray (3-44) and Mike Wicks bowling his eight overs without conceding a boundary, pegged Mosman back to 191-7 (one retired) in 40 overs. A fine stand by Gordon "Flash" Watts (43 rtd) and Dutchman Derek Coster (21 not out) saw us home by three wickets.

**Feb 24** - A close one at Mandalong, a ground well out in the bush. We were greeted by a kangaroo, a fox and rain and conditions were a little basic. But the pitch was excellent and a marvellous match ensued. Tight bowling by Norman Jones and Jaap Vogelar (3-24) restricted Linfield Masters to 187-7 (one rtd) in 40 overs and a superb stand of 100 by Robbie Barker (50 rtd) and Roly Walton (38) put XL on the way, backed by Ron Hart (29) and Mr. Sundries and it led to a nail biting finale. With four runs needed, a rocket shot from Alan Newman struck umpire Fred Imms, denying XL (185-7) victory. The contest was played in a great spirit and a splendid evening ensued.

**Feb 26** - Back to earth with a bump. We had reached new heights in the previous three games but against the Cricketers of NSW the North Sydney Oval reality had returned, NSW winning by 8 wickets in 29 overs as we tottered to 132 (Peter Robinson 9).

**Feb 27** - The morning forecast had talked about a tropical cyclone moving into NQ ueensland. Little did we think it would reach Camden, some 30 miles SW of Sydney where we were playing the Sydney branch of I Zingari. Heavy overnight rain prevented any play at their attractive ground in dairy farming country and the venue was switched to a recreation ground. The home side had some top players and they smashed 21 sixes in their 251-9 (two rtd), causing great concern to scoreboard manager Mike Foster who feared that some of the local cows were in danger. But none were hit. Andy Meads replied with two sixes in his 53 not out and Barry Aitken was delighted to get into double figures as we went down by **114** runs.

In the next three days several Members went to the spectacular Blue Mountains, others went to the Olympic Village and many watched "The Magic Flute" in the Sydney Opera House. Some experts in the party had mild criticisms of the singing but it was a lively production, played to a full house and everyone felt it was a memorable occasion.

Stats wise Andy Meads, Barry Peay, Robbie Barker, Roly Walton and Ron Hart all passed 100 runs with Andy recording 317 from seven innings. Norman Gray and Gordon Watts took **11** wickets apiece and Theo Stratton was the outstanding fielder. Richard Ellis had 12 stumping victims.

Our grateful thanks are due to Ron and Edelgard Hart for all their efforts in organising the tour. There was an excellent spirit throughout the trip, which was enlivened by the exploits of the "Bad Boys" from Holland. The ladies gave great support at all the matches and we were indebted to Sue Jones, Lideke Ohm, Jill Bracken and Annie Lunzen who did all the scoring. Fred Imms, Duco Ohm, Joep Hesselings and your scribe did most of the umpiring. The Players kept going and the friendly and sporting atmosphere in which all the games were played were a delight. All good things have to come to an end as we found on our return to a freezing Heathrow!

**Hugh Thomas**

## XL tour to Singapore and Australia



Sydney Opera House



Sydney harbour



Australia's champion Sir Don Bradman pictured with XL's English champion, Andy Meads and tour manager, Ron Hart



Our boys take another pounding!



A pondering Roly Waton