

Wentworth Wombats tour England

By Andrew Bell



At least they looked good – Wentworth Wombats at Keble College, Oxford

In early July 2005, a team of NSW barristers (with the occasional solicitor ring-in) embarked on an ambitious cricketing tour of England, determined to leave all in their wake and set a precedent for the national team in its then forthcoming Ashes defence. Unfortunately, it did.

The touring team, known only as the 'Wentworth Wombats', was led by Holmes QC, international arbitrator, Olympic judge and henceforth styled (affectionately) 'Captain Wombat'. The team ranged in age from 25 to 75. It was subsequently described by a member of the Australian Cricket Board as 'possibly the worst touring side ever to leave these shores'. Such criticism was harsh, especially given that the ACB member (Collins QC) was himself a Wombat. During the course of the tour, other descriptions were proffered, including the equally hurtful 'a team of arthritic garden gnomes'. Injuries of one kind or another were sustained by most Wombats on tour. As with the dramatic Ashes series, most of the matches were close. It is not inaccurate to say that the Wombats were undefeated until the final ball of the first match. Thereafter followed a series of close losses in Oxford and the Cotswolds, with a fortuitous draw at Hambledon, and a one-sided affair (trouncing) in Cambridge under the leadership of Griffiths QC at the college where he was once a don. *The Don* was required in all the circumstances. A declaration by the home side at 1 for 310 after 35 overs was sporting. By that stage of the tour, however, half of the team was injured and the other half had returned home or gone to Dublin.

The tour started brightly enough, however, with a match against a team of London barristers styled 'The Refreshers', under the leadership of London family law silk, Philip Cayford QC. With the score board showing 0-30 after three overs, confidence was high and the Wombats looked set for a flashing start to the tour. Unfortunately, the scoring rate slowed alarmingly. The ever Christian Poulos QC observed that 'Hodgson held up the middle order'. A total of 6-154 with 28 apiece from Bova and Bonnell (solicitor) assisted by a late burst from McLeod (36) looked competitive. By the time The Refreshers came into bat, however, the pitch had dried out and

our opening bowler (Geoff Pike of Sparke Helmore with 260 first grade wickets to his name) was injured taking a short single before bowling a ball on tour, with the result that our total was overhauled in sufficient time to enjoy pre-dinner drinks for a good hour and a half. At the bowling crease, Sullivan (lacking any support from either of his dodgy knees) secured 2-9. These figures do not reflect the quality of his bowling.

The closest match on tour was against the Rhodes Scholars XI at Magdalen College Oval. By a stroke of good fortune, this match clashed with the 'Varsity Match', meaning that three of their team were unable to play. As one of those scored 263 in that match, this was probably a good thing. The Rhodes Scholars, sent into bat on a wicket that appeared to have been 'dropped in' from the subcontinent, scored 9-206 from their 35 overs. The Wombats came desperately close to this total, scoring 8-198 (Bova and Bunting (solicitor) 42 apiece, Bell 24, Sullivan 16, Bonnell 32). Hodgson did not play and thus cannot be blamed for the run rate. Mater's failing eyesight was the only explanation for an outrageous and possibly significant umpiring decision. Poulos was 'run out' for four but the description of his mode of dismissal should not be understood literally. P. Greenwood failed to contribute significantly with either bat or ball. On a brilliantly sunny day, however, the opposition bowler requested a sight screen *behind* the batsman and wore dark glasses when bowling to him.

The third tour match was against 'The Emeriti', a team of Oxford dons. This match, played at Christ Church ground, was played to a 20/20 format commencing at 6.00pm. The short form of the game did not suit the more traditional Wombats. Hodgson again held up the middle order. Mater grabbed two wickets and Holmes secured an unlikely LBW. Contributions at the crease were from Bell 26, McLeod 25 and Poulos 10 (again 'run out').

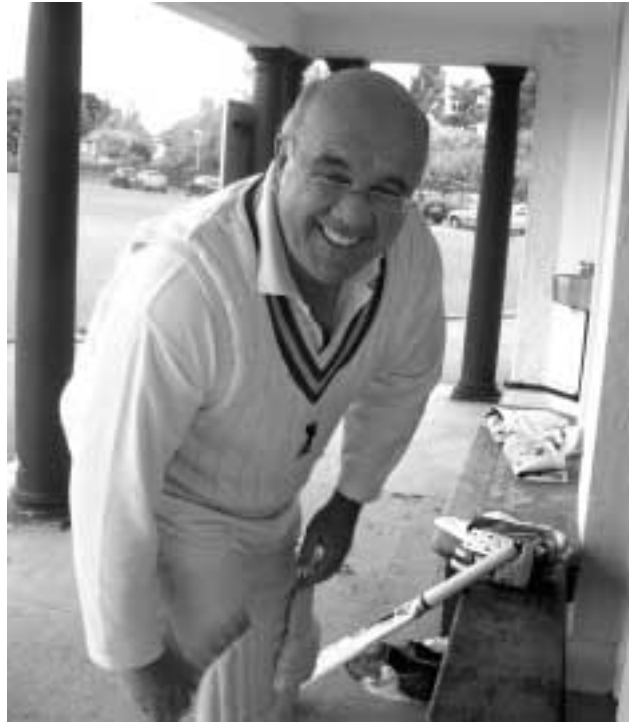
The town of Hambledon in Hampshire is widely regarded as the 'cradle of cricket'. Here, the Wombats took on a team of



Holmes QC and Hodgson

fellow tragics, known as the Broad Halfpenny Down Brigands XI. The Wombats won the toss and batted, reaching 9-182 with contributions from Collins 47 not out, Hodgson 31, Bonnell 22, Bell 18 and Poulos 9 (run out). In retrospect, the excellent lunch provided by our hosts was plainly designed to slow the Wombats down in the field. Their efforts were probably unnecessary. The injury list had grown and, although the match may have been won, a halt to play by rain with the Brigands at 3-130 permitted an early and welcome adjournment to the historic Bat and Ball Hotel.

Sir Peter Gross is an English High Court judge. He is also a cricket tragic and friend of Captain Wombat. Thus it was that the Wombats found themselves, in their penultimate match, playing on a 'flattish' paddock, freshly mown, in the village of Nether Westcote in the Cotswolds. The field was conspicuous for its clump of trees located at short fly slip and in relation to which a set of complex local rules had been developed. With a score of 158 off 35 overs (McLeod 33, Bell 23, Bova 18), the Wombats were competitive but, again, the tactic of an excellent afternoon tea with a barrel of beer from the local brewery ensured a tense finish. With 9 wickets down (with 5 for Bova) and an over to spare, the village scraped over the line. Magnanimity in defeat was required yet again! For most Wombats, however, results were a secondary consideration. It is not expected that many changes will be made for the next tour.



Collins QC at Hambledon

Barristers' hockey 2005

By Ed Muston



The run on team (back row) Larkin, Anonymous Victorian (ring in), Anonymous Victorian (ring in), McManamey, Gunasan Narianasamy (ring in), Scotting, Pritchard (front row) Jordan, Son of anonymous Victorian (ring in), Rohan Geddes (ring in), Muston, Tim Pritchard, Mim Pritchard.

NSW Barristers v Victorian Bench and Bar

Five years have now passed since the recommencement of the annual NSW Barristers v Victorian Bench and Bar hockey match. While the score in the now legendry revival game of 2000 has long since been forgotten (by everyone in NSW anyway), time has done little to erode the NSW Barristers' bittersweet memory of the reporting of that match in the subsequent edition of *Victorian Bar News*. And so it was that on the evening of Friday 21 October 2005, members of the NSW Bar hockey team found themselves touching down at Tullamarine, troubled by the absence of several experienced members of the 2000 team (stalwarts like Bellanto QC, Ireland QC, Callaghan SC and Katzmann SC) and with the words 'too old, too fat and too slow' (used by the Victorians to describe the team) still burning in their ears.

In the previous four encounters, the closest NSW had come to defeating the Victorians was a 2:2 draw at the Homebush Olympic Pitch in 2001. At noon on Saturday 22 October 2005, a quick headcount revealed that a total of only six NSW