

## Wentworth Wombats conquer the Old Dart (almost)



The Wentworth Wombats, a selection of the New South Wales Bar's finest, if not necessarily fittest, recently completed their second cricket tour of England. The 2009 Wombats arrived in England with the modest ambition of bettering the record of the 2005 'Vincibles', who won many friends but no matches on the inaugural tour.

The tour began at Trinity College Oxford with a match against the academics and postgraduate students of the Oxford Law Faculty, who came together to form the Oxford Emeriti XI. The Wombats took to the field and the sporting tone of the tour was set on the very first ball, when skipper Sullivan QC recalled Professor Andy Burrows after he had been run out without facing a delivery (a species of restitution not previously identified by the well-known legal academic). After restricting the Emeriti to 7/121, the Wombats recorded a historic first victory on foreign soil, reeling in the total in some comfort. Griffiths SC was the pick of the bowlers with a miserly 2/7 while honours were shared amongst the batsmen.

The Wombats moved on to the Cotswolds village of Ascott-under-Wychwood looking to continue their unprecedented winning

streak against a village team captained by local squire and High Court Judge Sir Peter Gross. The teams played out an epic encounter in the quintessentially English setting. The Wombats, fielding first, were uncharacteristically spry and the local top order was sent packing as sharp chances were held by Bell SC, Climpson and Hodgson (yes, Hodgson). However, after a thunderous century from the local blacksmith and some vigorous tail wagging, the locals compiled 200 before declaring. The run chase began in slapstick fashion with Ian Pike run out, having relied on a misleading and deceptive representation from his partner, Bell, responding to the first but not the second of his calls. Anxious to delay his reunion with Pike in the sheds, Bell remained in the middle and scored an entertaining 62, ably assisted by young ringer Oliver Maxwell (son of ABC commentator and Wombat supporter,

Jim Maxwell) who made 31. But the Wombats' middle order squandered the good start and with a handful of overs and fewer wickets in hand the 'bats looked in trouble. Captain for the day Holmes QC found the right time to find the middle of his bat and chalked up a quick fire 18, including one memorable six over long on. It fell to Free (48 no) and the versatile Hodgson (4 no) to play out the last over. A boundary from the final ball secured the Wombats' victory.

The team returned to Oxford to take on a Rhodes Scholars XI at the Keble College ground. The match marked the first Wombat encounter with a female cricketer and Olympian in the form of Christchurch New Zealand's mountain biker and D. Phil (Public Law) candidate, Rosara Joseph. Equally novel was the inclusion of a Tennessee Rhodes Scholar, who showed the benefits of a baseball upbringing by striking a fierce 24. But under heavy skies

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the Wombat tweekers – Bilinsky 1/24, Collins QC 3/14, Climpson 3/18 and the luckless Emmett J (0/26 off seven overs straight) – kept the Scholars to the modest total of 125. After a shaky start from the top order and the first signs of trouble from the English weather, the Wombats set about reeling in the total. Bell, Free and the artful Bilinsky each reached the retirement score of 35 and victory was secured at 7/128 in the 28th over of their stint.

Gyles SC (24) made vital middle order contributions. Hodgson played an equally decisive role, showing up so late as to justify his dropping in favour of local Kiwi medievalist Tom Rutledge, who scored a sparkling 70 not out. The Wombats finished with 8/174 off 44 overs. Once again the Wombats saved their best for the field. Free snared five wickets with his beguiling medium pacers, including one memorable caught behind taken by the spritely Ireland QC. Even the elegant

restored, the Old Emma lower order could not hold firm and the locals were all out for 80 off 32 overs. Four in a row for the rampant Wombats.

The winning streak came to an end at Pembroke College Ground two days later at the hands of The Refreshers, representing the London Bar. The Wombats started well, fielding in testing conditions as the wind whipped in from the Fens. Gyles (2/48) and Durack SC (2/43) were the pick of the bowlers. But the Refreshers gained a decisive advantage over the luncheon adjournment, having arranged for the Wombats to be plied with the ales and chilli con carne of the local publican. The Refreshers, exploiting their local knowledge, were suspiciously abstemious. In the hazy ten over spell after lunch the Wombat bowlers gave up the better part of a hundred, leaving the batsmen to chase a formidable target of 241 in 45 overs. Durack knocked a glorious century, but could not find a steady partner after Gyles SC (44) fell to a smart catch at square leg. Matthew White fell in the final over, leaving the Wombats just 15 runs short of the target.

The touring caravan moved on to the nearby village of Longstowe to confront

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The tour headed east for a match against 'Old Emma', the old boys of Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Former Emma don, Griffiths SC, led the Wombats in their determined charge to avenge the heavy defeat which Old Emma inflicted on the wounded Wombats in the dying days of the 2005 tour in which Poulos QC, this time official Wombat artist, had been the sole wicket-taker. Griffiths (16) and

batting of ageless former Derbyshire County batsman, Mr Hanson, could not stem the tide. In what is believed to be a cricketing first, play was interrupted as an Old Emma batsman was forced to make a polite request for the square leg umpire, Emmett J, to cut down on the chatter so that he could concentrate. Even with peaceful enjoyment of the square



the best of the local talent and the challenge of backing up for a second game in as many days. The Wombats batted first in the Constable-like setting. Bell laid the foundation with a commanding knock of 56, following an

not enough to secure victory. Aussie expat Tom Slater hit a glorious 131 not out, steering Longstowe to a well deserved victory of 5 for 241 with four overs to spare.

saving his best for last, smacked a rapid 33 (retired), featuring 5 fours and 1 six. This set up the Wombats' innings, and they cruised home, albeit in the final over of the match. With onfield duties complete, the Wombats moved on to a royal reception at Australia House, where the Ashes touring party was also good enough to turn up to recognise the remarkable achievement of the Wombats winning 5 from 7 matches. Sadly, it seems that none of the magic rubbed off on Ponting and co.

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excellent bottle of rosé at lunch. Geoff 'Sick Note' Pike, representing the other branch of the profession, looked in fine touch and remarkably free of injury before departing for 14. Ian Pike and Matthew White came and went without troubling the scorers, but the wisdom of their hasty departure was revealed when Gyles SC strode to the crease. Gyles revelled in the conditions, slaying the bowling all over the ground. Ably supported by Tim Durack (30 not out), Gyles became only the second Wombat in history to reach triple figures in an innings of 105 which included 13 fours and 3 sixes. However, the Wombats record total of 6/235 was

The last encounter of the tour saw the Wombats taking on Greenwich Society Timothy Barnes QC Invitation XI at Eltham College ground, London. The opposition captain, Timothy Barnes QC, arrived at the ground flushed with that day's success of securing not guilty verdicts on all charges in a murder trial at the Old Bailey. The locals made 7/116 in their allotted 20 overs. Notable wickets included the director of the National Maritime Museum and Royal Observatory, Aussie K Fewster, falling to the only bowling of the entire tour by skipper Richard Bunting. The Wombats opened with the novel pairing of Sullivan QC and Hodgson. Sullivan,

**By WG Grace**