**The Captains’ Log Cabin**

Please enter and enjoy a selection of our Captains’ reports from the last few seasons….

Bill Latey, an early visitor to the Cabin, confidently reports that *“somewhere in here, there’s a Log for everyone…”*

 **Bobby Ancil (2011 and 2012)**

**2012**

2012 was an odd year. It started dry and sunny and we were in a drought. Then April came along and for most of the rest of the summer it was wet. It was very wet. Indeed, according to my estimations it was so wet that The Bushmen had ten games cancelled or abandoned throughout the course of the season. As I said, it was wet.

However, when it wasn’t raining and it was a Sunday, we were playing some respectable cricket.

The season opened, three weeks late on May 13th, with a game that ten of the eleven victims who represented the club would sooner forget. It began with us surrendering 182 runs before taking a wicket and spending more time searching for balls in the trees than bothering the batsmen or umpires. Then, Pianki Assegai with his new surgically-lasered vision came on to bowl and blasted his way through the Headley top order with 5-24. The only other notable moment coming from the captain who gathered a steepling catch with one hand. We responded to a total of 217-7 by collapsing for a desperate 57 all out with a top score of 9, including five ducks. I blame the rain for not putting in an appearance.

The next encounter of 2012 was our debut match against the Authors, a club which is a revival of the Authors cricket team, and originally featured players including P G Wodehouse, Arthur Conan Doyle and J M Barrie and last played over a century ago. We batted first and Nick Norman-Butler impressed with a finely struck 58. Once again much of the top ordered floundered and it was left to the hard-hitting of Pianki Assegai and Michael Cockerell at the end to drag us up to a respectable total of 157-6. Pianki’s innings was in marked contrast to previous efforts in previous seasons and was the first of many explosive and impulsive assaults on opposition bowlers throughout the season. Our efforts in the field almost dragged the game back in our direction, with vice-captain Chris Ancil consistently beating the bat and Cockerell snatching three wickets in the gloom. But with only a few balls to spare the Authors sneaked across the line leaving us: played two, lost two. You can read more on this game in the Author’s book which is due to be published in 2013.

Fernhurst found us still in the middle of a heat wave and once again runs came easily for Bobby (79\*) and Nick Norman-Butler (58) who helped pile on 186 for the loss of just 5 wickets. In reply Pianki and Michael Cockerell stole Ferhurst’s first four wickets for 38 runs and bowled miserly spells of 2-30 and 2-22 respectively. Lyndon Jones, Andy Popperwell and Chris Ancil all bowled impressively and wicket keeper Dave Morley took a stunning catch but it was not enough to force our first win of the season. Fernhurst completed their innings on 100 for 8 and not for the first or last time this season the Bushmen were left frustrated.

Our annual trip to Dorset coincided with the Queen’s 60th Jubilee and for those of us who sought refuge from the drizzle and flags in London, there was lighter drizzle but cricket in Thornford. We batted first and thanks to solid innings by Nick, David Morley and Lyndon and a frenetic cameo from the long lost Rifat Jawaid we racked up a respectable 156 in our 40 overs. After tea Pianki and Lyndon picked up early wickets before Howard Owens came on to mop up almost all the remaining wickets either side of a drizzle break. Howard’s spell of 6-0-19-6 was one of the best Bushmen performances of the season and persistent rain surely stopped us winning our first game of the season.

For the second year running we stole a game from the weather gods above Hooke and Powerstock. As London and the Queen were drowning in an autumnal drizzle we were coming second best on a cow field. Batting first again we cobbled together 145 for 7 with Nick and David Morley revealing classy drives and pulls and Pianki and Rifat once again firing the ball around the ground and running improbable twos to the wicket keeper. Although we took regular wickets and Howard bowled an outstanding 7 overs for 12 runs, we were unable to prize out their opener Billy Wallbridge, who played a chanceless innings that saw his team home. We retired to the Marques of Lorne for a drink and a jubilee party, which left your captain and Nick Norman- Butler sleeping in the spare room of the opposition’s wily seam bowler.

Back in the South East we trundled down to Kirdford, only to be thwarted by the rain. We did manage to get 37 overs in which saw Bobby (78\*) and Howard (50\*) force the score to 211-4. After tea we managed 4 overs before we called it a day and found refuge by a log fire in the pub. Can I confirm that cricket is a summer sport?

This year’s trip up to Ashwell came earlier in the calendar than in most recent seasons. The change in date didn’t seem to have affected the make up of their side which continued to be dominated by super keen teenagers. Ashwell won the toss and batted. We bowled loosely for the most part although Rifat took a wicket and then had an LBW decision overturned by the wicketkeeper, slips and deep backward square leg. What the batsmen had done to offend the umpire so badly I can only imagine. The game then swung Ashwell’s way and after a flurry of boundary hitting we found ourselves chasing 224. A fine opening stand of 119 from Simon Marcus and Nick gave us hope, but with their departure our middle order imploded and it was left to Pianki (24\*) and Rifat to take the stage again with some powerful hitting as we came up short on 183-7.

Outwood at the start of July found us tossing up in an ethereal woodland mist in the wake Upon arriving at the ground the heavens opened and it appeared cricket was least likely thing we would be doing that day. However the sky cleared, the mist rose from the grass, we won the toss and unsurprisingly chose to bowl.

With the sun now out runs came quickly and Outwood powered to 68 before we made a breakthrough which proved to be the tipping point in this match and from here on our bowlers took control leaving the opposition with an under par 176-8. Jeavons 3-25, Cockerell 2-28 and Chris Ancil 1-38 bowled with control and cunning. In reply Bernie Spratt and Chris (40) dug in and put on 65 for the first wicket. With 108 required in the last 20 overs with 8 wickets in-hand we were in a strong position to put one over a team that we had never beaten. Having thrown away strong positions in the past this time we batted sensibly and Bobby (46\*), Lyndon (19) and Pianki (29\*) took us home with some clean hitting and a surprisingly comfortable 12 balls to spare.

We played two games in July in 2012. The rain and the double booking of fixtures did for matches against Newdigate, the Suffolk Tour against Queen’s Head and Culford was cancelled, but we managed to pick up a last minute match against a strong and youthful new team, Ballinger. The weather almost put pay to this game too with long delays and rain breaks, resulting eventually in a 23 overs a side match in which we never really stood a chance. The game was most notable for wickets for Simon Marcus, fine cameos from Will Jones and Pianki and Clyde Jeavons taking a beamer on his chest. It was also our fixture and wicket keeping master Peter Hermann’s last match of the season as he headed off to hospital to get some much needed attention to his long suffering body. Much like Bond, we look forward to his return in 2013.

A victory at Waldron was a nice surprise. Even more enjoyable was watching Mowbray Jackson fire exocet missiles over the sight screen as he drove and pulled his way to an imperious 70 from 53 balls. It was, in my opinion, the most impressive innings by a Bushmen for a long time and was against a strong bowling attack. Earlier in the day Clyde and Steven Crossley had bowled fine spells taking three and two wickets respectively. Michael Kaye also put in a fine performance in the field and picked up his first wicket of the season.

Chrishall was a minor disaster from the start as we could only muster nine men, one of whom, Pianki, had driven his daughter from Essex to Heathrow, before heading north to Hertfordshire and the match. One of our nine was the evergreen Lawrence Gretton who made his first appearance since about 2009 in Milan. With eight men at the ground at it was a relief to win the toss and put ourselves in to bat. Bobby and Clyde opened up and put on 92 for the first wicket, Bobby going on to make 110 (his ninth Bushmen century) before being bowled in the last over of the innings. The middle order fell away but Pianki did as he had done on so many other occasions this season and blasted his way to 22, taking us to 181-6 at the close. We thought we had given ourselves a chance, but it didn’t take long for us to realise that Chrishall‘s batting was strong and we were going to have to bowl them out quickly to stay in the game. In the end although Clyde in particular bowled well for his three wicktets, our total was too small and our opponents swept past us with ten overs to play.

The sun came out again for our trip down to Nuthurst and while England were being slowly suffocated by South Africa at Lords, the Bushmen were putting in their all-round performance of the season. Batting first there were runs for Bobby (76), Mowbray (66) and debutant James Poole (39) and we declared on 227-5. With the sun less rampant after tea we went into the field knowing we needed early wickets or runs to keep the game alive and to stop Nuthurst grinding out a bore draw. Andy Popperwell opened the bowling with Clyde and the tactic of encouraging the batsmen to force the pace paid off when Clyde picked up both openers clean bowled and caught at short fine leg by Andy. Nuthurst responded with a dangerous partnership that took them to 123 before Michael Cockerell (3-41) strangled both batsmen and kept us in the game with 15 overs to play. Will Jones (1-39) bowled a fast and fiery spell that went mostly unrewarded in spite of a field including four slips and a gully. With six overs to go, 40 runs to get and five wickets still to take, the draw was now a firm favourite. Then after a couple of quick wickets, Clyde returned to the attack with 18 balls remaining. Five balls and three wickets later we were hauling him back to his feet having just witnessed a Clyde Jeavons diving caught and bowled that gave the him a five wicket haul and the Bushmen the match. A mighty performance.

From the highs of a rare win at Nuthurst to the depths of defeat at former whipping boys Pinkey’s Green. Our total of 108 in 20 overs was never going to be enough and in spite of some excellent bowling from Chris, Will, Howard, Michael and Clyde and a steepling catch by Andy we were beaten by four wickets with 3 overs remaining. Our performance in the last game in England the following week at Hartley Wintney was even worse and we lost by 7 wickets. It is not worth reporting except for Howard batting quite well.

The annual overseas tour took us to Menorca. Chris Ancil organised the matches and local expert Richard Heller was the consummate host. The ground is built on land that neighbour’s Richard’s mother’s old house. Even though we had travelled hundreds of miles southward to an island that spends most Septembers in a state of drought, we somehow managed to bring the rain with us. This was exacerbated by an over keen irrigation system which created a minor mud bath and turned many of our whites the colour of a chicken tikka massala.

Our first match against Menorca CC found us in the field and spending much of the innings picking the ball out of hedges and adjacent fields. Chris and Michael bowled good spells and Bobby and Clyde held their own, Bobby bowling his only overs of the season. Chasing 244 our innings got off to a terrible start and with our top three batsmen recording scores of 1,0,0. Chris and Lyndon did their best to repair the damage but could do nothing about a required run rate that had started at 6 and soon reached double figures. As the innings drew to a close there was at least one bright spot. Andy played a pull shot, but was so late on hitting the ball that he ended up middling the ball to first slip, who narrowly avoided decapitation.

After an evening of high and strong spirits, in the form of Menorcan gin, we returned for our rematch with Menorca. Stiffer, drunker, weaker, muddier and with a new player in form of Kate Vandy we were invited to bowl again on a very damp outfield which had taken heavy rain though the night and drizzle for much of the morning. If the previous day’s batsmen had taken a liking to our bowling then their Sunday side wasted no time tucking in to any ball that was short or wide. They were a team that clearly knew their pitch and ground and made use of the short square boundaries. Our bowlers toiled but had little luck or success as our opponents swiped their way to 249 in their 32 allotted overs. Interestingly, Chris managed to get a bouncer called as a wide for height.

We struck back in our innings and for the first time in weeks made a decent fist of batting with Bobby and Lyndon putting on 97 for the second wicket. Lyndon was finally dismissed by a ridiculous one handed full stretch catch pulled off by Menorca’s centurion from earlier in the afternoon. Once Bobby and Lyndon were gone the game was up but Michael and guest wicket keeper Gerry Tucker took our total over 150 and into the realms of respectability.

So, four defeats on the run rounded off a season that had started equally poorly. In between times we played some excellent cricket and but for a wicket or two more we’d have been close to winning as many games as we lost.

The big cricketing success story of 2012 was the emergence of a Pianki as a genuine, albeit unorthodox, all-rounder. Clyde and Michael have both bowled with skill and understanding of the game and picked up the most wickets once again. Chris who was absent for much of the season due to work commitments bowled with some venom and increasing accuracy and picked up a third Bushmen century.

Finally, a big thank you to the irrepressible Bernard Jacobs, who has sat and shivered his way across the south east of England, skillfully charting the ups and downs of a typical Bushmen season.

**Chris Ancil (2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016)**

**2013**

Writing this, on a cool Remembrance Sunday evening, the 2013 season already seems some time ago. This is, in spite of the fact that we returned from our end of season tour to Brittany only 7 weeks ago. As I seem to almost constantly be checking the online cricket shops for discounted kit bargains and with an almost worrying frequency catch myself practising the kind of shots in front of the mirror that, if I am honest, I could never actually play in a game – I think it’s fair to say that the 2014 season- or at least winter nets- cannot arrive too soon.

Through the eyes of the captain, this his first season at ‘the controls’, 2013 was a season of freakish performances; good, bad and incredible.

Indeed the season started off in April with an almost professional feel to it with Pianki Assegai sending down a maiden over, first up, with the impressive Farleigh House as a backdrop at Farleigh Wallop.

It was a surprise and pleasure to lead/drag The Bushmen through this sun-filled season. In short, what became clear was that when we play well, we are a team with genuine talent capable of winning well against strong opposition. We have the skills to score runs on hostile pitches against decent bowling. We can play with astute cricket knowledge and experience. We can field out of our skins, with players doing the almost unthinkable. We can bowl tightly and take regular wickets to maintain pressure on opposition batsmen. We can work hard as team and genuinely celebrate and congratulate one another when successful. There were many moments demonstrating all of this throughout the 2013 season.

There were of course moments of ‘underperformance’, which left some players confused and created scorecards that, despite the detail and accuracy put in them by our first-rate scorer Bernard Jacobs, are best left ignored.

With that said, The Bushmen continued to try their very best to play in the way that I have been told the club’s founders wanted the game to be played. The way cricket is played is of course not without change and whilst we do play some very competitive games with league-orientated teams, we do make every effort to compete and I think this is crucial, but ultimately we are always there for the game and not for the victory (note to self- whilst it was an exciting finale in the first game in Brittany, we should never have lost from that position. Close is exciting, but….Nothing further to add here.) I do think that the key to us being a team that people want to play for and against time and again, which oddly they do, is our effort to try to give everyone a go. I did try to achieve this as best I could. Apologies to anyone who feels they didn’t get a fair go this year.

I am proud that The Bushmen continue to be welcomed to both our new and longstanding fixtures. Even after an appalling defeat you will always laughter at the bar. The season saw sadly far too few appearances from some stalwarts of recent times. Howard Owens missed much of the season with the eventual breakdown of a knee that has plagued him for the last few seasons. It was a real pleasure to have him with us for much of the year, however, as an excellent umpire. Having at least one person on the field who has both read the laws of the game and understands them is a real bonus and we are grateful to him for this. In one of his few playing performances Howard also played a remarkable innings of 63 not out at Forest Green in a twenty over match. Flicking sixes on a lethal track with a turn of the wrist more powerful than many players full armed drives he helped secure a victory for the Bushmen.

Other players who we saw too little of this year were Pianki Assegai, whose bowling saw him top the averages. Formerly a rough diamond, ‘P’ showed himself to be nearly a finished product, bowling at times with genuine pace and with a stare and a smile to be up there with the best of them. Former captain David Morley was missed for much of the season with work and family responsibilities, but we did see him score some of his trademark brisk runs along with a couple of stumpings.

At the top of the order Nick Norman-Butler’s class was missed for much of the year after starting incredibly well scoring 265 runs, averaging 44 in 7 innings, and opening the season with a majestic 84. Next year I also hope that Mowbray Jackson will enjoy the good fortune that sees him in the UK for long enough to be with us for more fixtures. Edward Faulks’ all-round abilities saw him keep wicket, bat and bowl, but sadly in far too few a game. Simon Marcus performed well when available with a top score of 66 and travelled with us to sunny Suffolk where we were all pleased to see him re-acquainted with his favourite weeping willow tree.

I am very pleased to report that new players have been drafted in. Wicketkeeper-batsman John Whitehead joined the club and got several good starts under his belt, with a solid technique and a top score of 26. John also made the trip to Central Brittany for the end of year tour- which was expertly organised by vice-captain Lyndon Jones.

John’s is the first exceptional piece of cricket about which I shall tell you. On one of France’s only grass tracks, albeit positioned diagonally across a football pitch, which caused confusion for some due to a kind of optical allusion, John was fielding at backward point. John took a catch that got us on the way to winning our final game of the season, defending a small total in a twenty over match. Leaping with outstretched arm high above his head, he pulled a fiercely slashed cut from the sky. That moment seemed to inspire the rest of team to pull off a flawless fielding performance and ensure we ended the season on a high.

Simon Israel played his first full season with The Bushmen scoring nearly 200 runs with his intelligent defence and hard hitting. With the ball Simon also managed to deliver swing with exceptional control at times. At one stage in the season, in consecutive games Simon took an aggregate of 10 for 46. Simon’s dry wit is a joy to hear on the field and I hope he enjoyed the year as much as I did with him in the side.

Another new recruit was Ted Walters, who like John Whitehead has been in the nets with us over the winter. Ted is an experienced player with a correct batting technique and a clear vision of the game, coming from his coach’s eye. He also delivers truly incredible stories, whether they are 100% true matters not. A tale told in the pub before the game at Great Missenden to the skipper and Will Jones is not for repeating, but it may have changed the atmosphere somewhat for those enjoying lunch in a rather irritatingly twee white table-clothed gastropub. Ted took a catch that was the first wicket of the year but sadly took three matches to get his first Bushmen run. He had developed a habit for being out to absurd catches. Fortunately that passed and he ended his season strongly, with a top score of 36. There are more runs to come I am sure.

Performances from both George Dabby and Matt Foot also showed great promise, if they could be captured to play for the club more. Matt was unlucky to get out at Waldron when looking composed and George got into the twenties in each of his three innings. His confidence and belief along with his ability to hit hard and bowl will be an asset to the team in years to come.

The season got off to an extraordinary start at Farleigh Wallop. Defending 167, the opposition were 85-2 before the skipper snipped out 5 wickets for 13. With 96 on the board and only one wicket standing, we nearly gave it away as the last pair put on 50. Fortunately we took the last wicket and could celebrate an opening victory.

The game at Cobham showed the first glimpse of the season of the abilities of Will Jones. Throughout the season Will has bowled longer spells than many people bowl in a whole season. He bowled 39 more over’s than anyone else; 155.5 taking 21 wickets. Running in with a fluid sprint, Will bowls at pace with a real hunger for wickets. He tries harder than maybe even he imagines and is one of the unluckiest of bowlers. Balls fly over slip, gully and point. On a hard track at Cobham he beat a decent batting line outside the off stump repeatedly and gave the skipper a bruised hand, that lasted the season, when he took a catch off him at gully. Will’s statistics do him little justice at all. He does take wickets and causes endless problems and is the bowler few batsmen want to face. He struck two opponents on the head this year, once at Kirdford he caused one man’s eye to swell up faster than you can say ‘where exactly did that hit you?’ In the team’s professional victory on the second day of the Suffolk tour, normally a day of bleary eyes, Will and his father Lyndon bowled in tandem for the first 20 overs. Against Milden on the gorgeous Culford School track, both regularly beat the bat and both had catches put down in the slips. Together, they gave away only 46 runs in those twenty overs, setting up the opportunity for the other bowlers to snaffle the wickets they had earned. Will can also bat, hitting clean and straight. At Billericay, Will scored a rapid 28 as we chased down 155 in 29 overs, to win with one ball to spare. His running between the wickets is so fast that he and the skipper, who made 84, were able to add 59 runs together in 29 minutes. He also has a flick over mid-wicket that causes the skipper to flinch each time he plays it. Fortunately he knows what he is doing. Will scored the second most runs this year, 404 at 21.26, amazingly without scoring a fifty. The consistency of scoring is there, the bigger scores will definitely come and they will come in abundance. Will also had the safest hands in the outfield, taking the most catches of the year.

Will’s father Lyndon had an incredible start to the season. At Fernhurst he turned a lost cause on its head to create an exceptional victory for the team. Defending 139, we saw Fernhurst race to 103-2 in just over 10 overs. In the next 4.1 overs the Bushmen had secured a shock victory over a young and talented team.

The catalyst for what happened was wicketkeeper Peter Herrmann. The stumping he took from Lyndon, which saw him take the ball high and then briefly wait for the batsman to lean forward out of his crease, before removing the bails, was first class. The stumping, I mentioned, was the start of 8 wickets falling in 25 balls, with Lyndon taking 5-9 including 4 in four balls – all of which were clean bowled with identical late swinging yorkers.

Not until the following day did we realise that Lyndon had in fact taken 4 in a row which was quite possibly a Bushmen first, as one wicket had been from the last ball of the previous over and we were too busy going berserk following his hat trick to realise quite what had happened.

Lyndon also played valuable innings with the bat, most memorably 20 in the fantastic run chase at Billericay, helping the skipper to slap 80-odd and 36 as a solid stabiliser in the first match of the France tour.

Lyndon also skippered several fixtures this year, including on the Dorset tour – where at breakfast a waitress asked his son if his ‘brother would like more coffee’ (a win for Lyndon there!) and he was exceptional when it came to organising the overseas tour after our initial opponents had to pull out. He arranged a wonderful weekend at Central Brittany Cricket Club, in Silfiac. Staying in two remote locations, one farmhouse- with just about enough mobile phone signal for Michael Cockerell to join the Today Programme on the Saturday morning- and the other a top of the range b and b, it was perfect a conclusion to a fine season. Games of round the table showed that Mr Cockerell was not just competitive on the cricket field and a trampoline provided Jones the Younger with nearly enough rope to kill himself on! We had great fun eating, drinking, swimming and playing wiff-waff together.

The trip to Brittany saw the completion of arguably the cricketer’s comeback of the year, by Steven Crossley. Steven had been struggling for runs ever since he scored 90 a few seasons back. In Brittany he struck his first six for what he said was ‘years’. With a top score of 23\*, it was great to see Steven looking confident at the crease again and putting the stray leg side balls away once more. I hope that continues. It was with the ball that Steven’s comeback was most pleasing, with the stutter in his run up removed and control of the swinging ball returned enabling some miserly wickets to come his way.

Following an operation on his back in the winter, Peter Herrmann’s wicket keeping was rejuvenated. His stumping off Lyndon at Fernhurst was a prime example. In the whole season Peter took 4 stumpings and only one catch- I am not sure what that statistic tells us, but he had a very good year with the gloves and organised our fixture list expertly as he does every year, for which we should all show our gratitude.

Another fine stumping to draw your attention to came from Bobby Ancil. Now playing Lancashire league cricket following him leaving London, the batsman with 4 times as many 100s as any other Bushmen was obviously going to be sorely missed this year. Bobby was able to join the Bushmen for the tours of Dorset, Suffolk and France. His ‘keeping was part of the excellent all round fielding display in the final game in France. He took 4 catches and 2 stumpings in the game. The exceptional speed of one of the stumping’s was clear evidence of him playing high level league cricket once more.

Clyde Jeavons was another player to go behind the sticks this year. Rolling back the years, Clyde kept well and at Nuthurst he took an exceptional catch low down. In the slips he also bagged a flier against Milden in Suffolk, showing those dropping balls either side of him how to do it. At one stage in the year Clyde said he couldn’t buy a wicket, but that just shows the standards he sets himself. He still picked up 15 in the season. With the bat Clyde achieved some feats. He was part of a stand of 33 in France without troubling the scorers. That said, he does know how to bat in a partnership, rotating the strike if he knows a batter at the other end is more likely to club it. Opening the innings in a twenty over game at Forest Green Clyde may have surprised many. With young, quick bowlers on a wet and deadly track Clyde was one part of 60 for the first wicket partnership in 10 overs, with the skipper who eventually made 70. Clyde’s subtle direction of the ball enabled a stand that set up Howard Owen’s exceptional innings that put the total beyond reach. Clyde always holds an end up and loves to play an end game, fighting for survival- he is good at it, even if it didn’t work at Waldron, where he, Richard Heller and Michael Kaye fought bravely. That said, to be honest we were poor there and deserved to lose. Clyde is now representing Surrey over 70s, a standard of cricket that he describes as like playing and watching the game in slow motion! I am always grateful to hear his lucid thoughts on how the game should go.

Another Septuagenarian in the side, Michael Kaye appeared a couple of times this year, but alas, not often enough. Still galloping in to bowl Michael picked up 2 wickets but it was his catch in the close finish at Groombridge that is the best memory. Having yet again scored reasonably well batting first, with Nick Norman Butler getting 76, we had 168 to defend. On a glorious day on a great Groombridge track, it was probably not enough. Our flying start in the field was enabled by two outstanding catches. Michael saw the ball travelling past him at speed but he casually took it one handed to woops from his teammates. Minutes later Andy Popperwell ran and caught low down with outstretched arms for another astonishing moment in the season. Sadly, these two magical moments weren’t quite enough to push us over the line, losing by 2 wickets .

On a weekly basis, Andy Popperwell continued to run the side with aplomb, in his role as match secretary- which I believe he may now have been doing for 25 years. Each week he has the unenviable task of gathering together a side to take the field every Sunday. He never complains, except to occasionally offer his resignation. Without Andy there would be no team and no game. On the field, Pops continued his pursuit of the next hundred landmark in his wicket tally, sadly falling still one short come the end of the season. Andy also sustained a nasty blow to the shin early in the year fielding tirelessly as he does on the boundary and took, as I said, a truly memorable catch in one of several games we really ought to have won.

Another of these was at Hartley Witney where Michael Cockerell returned his best figures of the year. With the opening bowlers having been punished by the club’s professional, who would come back and haunt us later, Michael returned the game to our favour, picking up 6-38. Michael took wickets steadily throughout the season claiming 28 victims, one behind the skipper. He put the ball just on the right length that seems to be innately programmed into his right arm, as he has done for his whole cricket career, no doubt. With the bat Michael scored a rapid 16\* in the twenty 20 game in France against Central Brittany that helped push us to respectability.

The opening batsman in that game was Richard Heller, who played a positive role in opening the innings with Bobby Ancil. Richard ran with the enthusiasm that makes him one of the most loved cricketers I have ever played with. He also showed, in being dismissed only twice all season, that he deserves more chances up the order. In the field no man spends more time rolling around that Mr Heller. Off the field Richard brought the piano skills we first experienced in an off-season party at his home to a crêperie overlooking a lake. Bowling wise it was great to see in his spell at Billericay that his yips may be long gone- and long may that continue!

The tours this year to Dorset, Suffolk and Central Brittany where we also played Nantes were, as always, enormous fun and we were joined on them by Will Scott Masson who took a salmon-like like leaping caught and bowled at Thornford in Dorset. John Hamer joined us in France, where he batted only weeks after a serious car accident. Also, Gary Kennedy turned out in Suffolk with his great enthusiasm. Indeed he also played at Ballinger Waggoners where we lost in dubious circumstances as the ball was tossed up into the sun by our opponents. One day, the Kennedy Swish will connect and he will make runs for the Bushmen and I look forward to that happening. Bernie Spratt was in Dorset and was part of a Bushmen contingent that enjoyed some amusing post-match banter with some locals after the game at Hooke and Powerstock I hear- this I was truly sorry to have missed if the condition of my brother the next day was anything to go by.

In conclusion we won a fair few games, lost some we deserved to, others we didn’t, but I hope that you, like I, enjoyed the sunny summer of 2013 with The Bushmen. My favourite statistic of the year is that collectively we made 34 ducks and 10 fifties.

**2015**

And so it is, that I find myself writing this, the 2015 Bushmen cricket team’s Captain’s Log, with much of the season already a worryingly distant memory. Just five weeks ago we were playing our last match of the season, beneath an impressive mountain range on a pitch surrounded by unpicked corn in the Austrian town of Velden. The final game was a classic two innings encounter that we lost by only 2 runs. We had been joined as a guest player by a charming Afghan cricketer named Haroon. Like so many people Haroon had made his way to Europe by sea and overland to escape the craziness of his home country. He hit the ball hard and far and very nearly got us home on the Saturday. High praise and thanks to Andy Popperwell for organising the tour.

As I said, much of the season seems a distant memory. Like many cricket addicts I find myself feeling this way as the evenings begin to darken, lightly depressing us, soon after the season closes. I am sad to have missed more of the season than a skipper really ought, but it was as ever enjoyable. I thank you all for being a part of it. There were a few remarkable performances interspersed with some serious underachievement! But these things that go hand in hand with Bushmen life. Most importantly we enjoyed ourselves, some players improved but sadly, if my stats are right, we won only three games.

The season started with one of those victories in early May at Farleigh Wallop. If you have never been, it’s well worth the trip to the ground at Farleigh House. It’s tough to see the ball at times, but it’s a pleasure to use the house as a sightscreen! Posting a decent 214-9, we won convincingly by 120 runs. Nick Norman Butler scored 74, the oft-missed Pianki Assegai caught one of several corkers in a season that reminded us once again what an invention laser eye surgery has been and others in the team picked the wild garlic which grows there (apparently!).

After such a win we moved on to Frieth, where I assume I lost the toss as, certainly towards the end of the season, always seemed to happen. By the end of the 5th over we were 7 for 3. Devastating pace and swing from their opening bowler saw us all out for 84. Bowling 11.5 overs his return of 7-28 was very impressive, but many felt rather unnecessary. A small pleasure was the skipper hitting him for a lofted straight four on a hat trick ball, as he scraped 28, five of the team failed to trouble the scorers.

Next came Cobham, who are always far too strong for us and it is like batting on a road there. Nick Norman Butler took an early wicket at 0-1 but they went on to amass 240-2. Remarkably we drew with Nick adding runs to his wicket and newcomer Jake Zelcowicz and Rob Fanner defending solidly as we crawled to 79 in 40 overs. I loved watching it, but then I will watch any cricket anywhere! It was a great effort from those two.

At Fernhurst, we lost disappointingly falling 17 short in pursuit of their 172. Clyde Jeavons, who again was the top wicket taker of the year with 22, picked up three here, but again despite 44 from Nick Norman Butler and decent scores in the 20s from Simon Israel and Ted Walters – we crumbled. There was a decent beer on offer in the pavilion, which sadly didn’t cheer too many up. Poor old Ted with his LBW, he might well now rival Mowbray Jackson as the team’s unluckiest batsman.

The Dorset Tour saw Peter Herrmann arrange a single wicket tournament on the Saturday as the opposition had pulled out. Sadly I wasn’t there and cannot recall who won – probably Howard. But without Peter’s efforts with this and also arranging the fixtures all year, the tour and the season would both have struggled. On the Sunday of the tour we arguably, cricket wise, reached a new low – losing at Hooke and Powerstock. We amassed 55-7 chasing 172. Hooke were much, much stronger than normal, I understand.

Another disappointment for a variety of reasons came at Ballinger Waggoners. They scored 264-3 with only Pianki Assegai making breakthroughs with the ball. We struggled to 84-8 in 41 overs. They were far too strong and grossly competitive. The skipper took much pleasure in Michael Cockerell and Clyde Jeavons seeing off some very swift left-arm round the wicket bowling with aplomb. I love the dogged nature of these two, their cricket brains and determination as strong as ever. Not that they are contemplating it, but it would be a very sad day if two of our elder statesmen ever stopped playing for the Bushmen. This ground, with its dipping sunlight, and team have irritated several among us and it is one of the fixtures we might need to ponder.

May I remind you at this juncture that the season was enjoyable! There were poor results but we don’t care that much! At Ashwell, who we have a decent record against, we only managed 123-9 batting first, on a wet track. Michael Cockerell demonstrated that he still has power in his wrists with the bat and slapped a fine 22. Ashwell were deserved winners, reaching the target in quick time.

Great Missenden, who are always a very strong team, set us 258 to win. We fell 154 short. Shining lights were Steven Crossley who made 36 and Javed Soomro 23, as they added 36 for the ninth wicket. Whilst wanting to avoid sounding like a school report, both these players are very capable of runs, the skipper must try to give greater opportunities offering more time at the crease!

Now, another strong side are Outwood, who play at a lovely little ground that is surrounded by white fencing and woodland. We always seem to perform well here despite their comparative strength. Fielding first, we bowled them out for a chasable 154, although it could have been fewer were it not for their number 9 getting 30 odd. Howard Owens took three wickets at the top of the order, the skipper snared two in quick succession in the middle – whilst also catching a rocket - and Clyde Jeavons snaffled himself 3 wickets at the end. A fine all round display. In our response we fell just 27 short, despite one of several gutsy innings this year by Lyndon Jones who made 38. We sat in front of the pavilion afterwards drinking and chatting to their supporters, who are always very friendly and keen to catch up on Michael Cockerell’s latest film and offer up the gossip they have heard about BBC staff.

Kirdford were up next. For a second year running Nick Norman Butler fell early and had to sit through a large second wicket partnership. Simon Marcus, back from standing in the general election made 64 and John Whitehead- who had suffered awful arm injuries following a bike accident in the winter - was unbeaten also on 64 as we made 165-4. The game ended in a draw with Kirdford 8 wickets down. A corker of a finish saw Steven Crossley concede only 3 runs in the final over leaving them 4 runs short. This was another understated display from Steven who seems to have rediscovered his form with the ball, breaking partnerships and sneaking wickets with his tight wobblers. Earlier, Howard Owens had taken 4-19. A lovely place to play and a lovely group of men.

The game at Newdigate saw us lose by 70 as we chased a challenging 202 to win. They are a generous outfit, but often far too strong for us. A plus saw the ‘veteran’ Will Cockerell appear for the first time this year. He made an unbeaten 23 in the chase, only Howard Owens scored more, with 28.

Moving onto Groombridge we saw one of the best displays of the year. Another, beautiful ground, with a pub on the side, a good track and fast outfield. Against a consistently strong team we made a very impressive 270-4. Will Jones stroked his second Bushmen century and the only one in the team this season. He made 108 and shared a partnership of 171 with Simon Marcus who made 73. I’m sorry I missed this game as it would have been a sight. On his day Will hits the ball as cleanly as anyone I have seen and then often opens the bowling- often without the reward he deserves. He bowled much tighter this year and quicker and was rewarded with decent stats. Crowd favourite Howard Owens made 36 in 17 minutes at the crease at the end. The game ended in a closely fought draw with Groombridge ending on 225-8, so near and yet so far. Will Jones added 4-50 in 13 overs to his ton – quite an all-round effort.

Prepare yourselves for a win! We moved on to Suffolk for the second of our three weekend tours. We played The Queen’s Head at Chadacre on the Saturday and sadly were rained off on the Sunday. Chadacre is stunning, with the pitch at the end of a long drive in the grounds of a big house. The pavilion is a modern thatched building with superb facilities. Even with the late arrival of the skipper we still lost the toss but in a 40 over game, that required retirement at 50, we made a strong 233-3. Nick Norman Butler made 52\*. In a partnership that lasted only 9 overs the skipper hit 51\* and Will Jones 54\* as they added 95 for the “5th wicket”. Another excellent all round performance saw Will Jones take 4-24 to see the team home by 37 runs. Remarkably, we must have bowled straight as all ten wickets were bowled.

Will’s father, Lyndon Jones had a day in the sun the following week at Waldron. Having conceded 239 in 40 overs, the chase was always set to be a tough one. But deputising as skipper, Lyndon made 96 against a strong, youthful attack on an erratic wicket. With a fifty there last year and now falling just 4 short of a well-deserved debut Bushmen ton, Lyndon loves a challenge, and deserved the extra 4. He’s one those guys you’d have bat for your life. With Mowbray Jackson playing in his “home fixture” scoring 34, there must have been hopes of a remarkable victory at times. But, it was a well-deserved draw.

For a third game in a row the Bushmen performed well. At Chrishall, we won convincingly and clinically some might say! Despite a big hitting ton by one of their men they were restricted to 169 all out. The skipper took 3-22, clean bowling the top three batters with some big dippers, the Jones family picked up a combined Michelle Pfeiffer, Lyndon 3-34 and Will 2-42 and Steven Crossley snuck 2-3. With 4 overs to spare we made the target, with Mowbray Jackson getting an unbeaten 64, Martin Levy kindly guesting from their team hit 21\* and the Jones family made a combined 55 (Will 35 and Lyndon 20). Sadly this was the last win of the year.

At Nuthurst, we again often face a very competitive side on a poor track. They bowled aggressively and short and feuds from years gone by were reignited, I understand. Almost singlehandedly, the stylish and powerful Nick Norman Butler (68) helped us reach 129-9 but it was not enough and they reached the target easily, with 7 wickets in hand.

Pinkney’s Green are a side that have improved no end since we first played them a few years back. With one of the most mature innings you could see at our level of cricket, they had a young man hit 95\* without the ball leaving the turf. We had set them a sporting 177 to win. The skipper flew to 42 before his opening partner had scored, with his beloved bat snapping in half on the way. Much was said of the loss of this bat by many who had loved her. A memorial service is planned for later in the year. Lyndon Jones picked up the reins and hit an impressive, unbeaten 78, assisted by the ever improving Rob Fanner who was solid in his unbeaten 23. They added 72 for the sixth wicket. It seemed as though we would stop them reaching the target as we took regular wickets. But the youngster was too mature and, let’s be honest, too good as they reached the target with 7 balls to spare.

Hopes were high after last year’s win at Hartley Wintney. A ground encircled by the finest of properties and with a fine pub on the corner, many a Bushmen has mentally moved here to play for this club. This goes for so many of the places we are lucky enough to play our games at. We are still saving for the Waldron pied-à-terre. Anyway, Michael Cockerell made another decent 21 lower down the order as we limped to 114. In reply, we took 6 of their wickets with Clyde Jeavoins and Howard Owens picking up 3 and 2 wickets respectively but it was sadly not enough.

And so we are back where I began. In Velden, Austria. A lakeside town in the shadow of the mountains. We were treated to a wine festival by the lake with modern day oompah music and disco dancing. Will Jones got through 5 kebabs in 4 days and we were also hosted for a delicious meal at the club restaurant after Saturday’s game. They were wonderful hosts, charming, friendly and fun. Most of the team were expats. They were keen and happy to play in the spirit that the Bushmen is built upon and as a result, a return there sooner than this one is recommended. We lost on the Saturday chasing the 194 they made, with Michael Cockerell picking up 3 wickets. As an aside, during the tour the story broke alleging a connection between PM Cameron and a pig, Michael politely declined offers from various media outlets to discuss this. In his first game of the year, former skipper, Bobby Ancil took two stumpings and a catch. In reply we made 111 for 8, our guest Haroon hitting a ‘Cheap Prosecco Moment’ winning score of 52 as he tried to drag us home. The Sunday saw us play another two innings, 40 over match, with retirement at 50. They batted first and were all out for 133 off the first twenty. Wicketkeeper Bobby Ancil picked up 4 stumpings, 3 catches and a run out. In these two days alone he eclipsed the stats of everyone else who kept wicket all year, combined. Andy Popperwell came good with an excellent 4-19 and Michael Kaye – who as the ‘father of the team’ – as it were - continues to be the most fun person to be around on the pitch -picked up a wicket. Bobby added 52\* and Will Jones 41 in our first innings after we had been 4-3. A tight bowling display restricted them to 126-4 in their second innings, with Popperwell picking up two more wickets. Again, as an aside, earlier in the year Andy had gone 5 innings – 2 not out- without troubling the scorers, there will be runs for you next year pops! Anyway, the cheap fizzy wine went to Rob Fanner for breaking his two-season duck without a catch, he took not one, but two in a few minutes– there will be many more! In the final chase of the year we fell 2 runs short. Bobby made 48 and Howard Owens 20 as we got off to a quick start. The skipper slapped 29 and Haroon made 26 but we fell just short with Bobby being caught off the last ball. Their celebrations made the defeat almost worthwhile. I saw a child who had been stumped for a duck earlier in the day celebrate with a cartwheel on the boundary when the wicket fell on the last ball and he celebrated like a world champion. Several of their players even said they were hoping for a tie. What a way to finish the year.

Soon after our return, chairman Richard Heller was dominating the headlines for a few days after as words he had had written were used in Jeremy Corbyn’s leader’s speech. Speaking, from his temporary home in Pakistan, Richard wrote articles and joined broadcasts with the dignity and intelligence that I, along with many others, admire in him.

My apologies if this has been a rushed read. I have hammered it out off the top of my head in 2 hours– with the scorebook - after another day here at Broadcasting House. Believe it or not, it is a pleasure to captain the team and all I ever want is for people to have a good time on the field and off it. Thanks to everyone for all your advice, keep it coming! Sorry to not be at the meetings but I look forward to the nets in January and seeing many of you in the off season.

**Clyde Jeavons (2009 and 2010)**

# 2009

“Happiness and team spirit come from winning.” (*Sir Donald Bradman*)

“But what care I? It’s the game that calls me –

 Simply to be on the field of play:

 How can it matter what fate befalls me,

 With ten good fellows and one good day!”

(*A.A. Milne*)

This report is a brief summary of the Bushmen’s 2009 season – brief because a) detailed reports on all the games exist already and should be accessible on the Bushmen website created by Pianki Assegai, and b) you are probably still reading last year’s Tolstoyan account of the 2008 season (like *War and Peace*, though, worth the effort).

For all that, 2009 was quite a summer for the Bushmen cricket team – a season, to borrow another sport’s cliché, of two halves. Under their new captain, Clyde Jeavons, and Vice-Captain, Bobby Ancil, the Bushmen hit the ground running in late April by fairly walloping Farleigh Wallop (pun courtesy of A. Popperwell) by 84 runs, Bobby announcing his intentions for the season with the first of a record-breaking trio of Bushmen centuries, 101 retired out, and the team notching up the first of eight totals of over 200 in their first 16 matches. Howard Owens did the main damage in this match with 4 for 22.

Pinkneys Green was one of three extra games arranged by Peter Herrmann through the invaluable Club Cricket Conference – unlike the other two (see later), a little one-sided in the Bushmen’s favour, but on a pleasant village green against friendly opposition. The result, another big win, by 130 runs, Chris Ancil 69, Dave Marks 67. The only thing the Bushmen were losing at this stage was the toss.

Tough opponents Cobham (in Kent) came next, and though outgunned, the Bushmen fought to a stubborn draw, thanks not least to rearguard batting by two guests, Stephen “Luigi” Gardiner and Des Clarke. A strong team spirit, present throughout the season even when under stress, was beginning to be apparent. Headley, played on muesli, was abandoned as the rain fell (astonishingly, the only game lost to weather), and then another draw against old foes Fernhurst – not the team they were, but neither, as is their custom, one to give in easily, grinding it out with only four wickets down. Mowbray Jackson (64) and Bobby (48) shone with the bat.

Newdigate don’t like to succumb, either, and chased down the Bushmen’s meagre 40-over total of 159 for 7 (a crucial 40 from Michael Cockerell here) amidst frantically scrambled runs and tumbling wickets, until a final spell of heroic bowling by Steven Crossley, on his last leg (*sic*), and Owens, skittling out the last man, produced a one-run victory. The traditional, charity-supporting fines in the bar afterwards were somewhat more punitive than usual.

In June, came the tour to Dorset and two favourite annual fixtures against Thornford and Hooke & Powerstock, the former in recent years a relative pushover, the latter a tougher prospect. How things can change in a twelve-month: Thornford’s moppets from a year before, easy wickets for needful old bowlers, were now strapping teenagers, knocking on the county door and taking the Bushmen apart for 229 runs in 40 overs, Legg 118. The reply was a feeble 143. The barbecue and carousal which followed were all the jollier for a home-team win, Mr. Herrmann lubricating the spirits with samples of his very own vintage. H&P, on the other hand, normally masters of their preferred 35-over format, came unstuck for the second year running, failing to get close to the Bushmen’s 182 for 4, thanks to Owens’s thrilling 95 not out and Cockerell’s incisive accuracy (4 for 18).

A new tradition was founded at brand-new fixture Herstmonceux, where Chairman Anne Theroux and her consort, Prince Michael Kaye, served a splendid pre-match lunch at their handsome country estate nearby, the latter defying his retirement years by turning out for the opposition and cleverly persuading them to field a team of colts; good, promising colts, by all appearances, but up against a well-oiled (you know what I mean) and unusually strong Bushmen team who won by a commanding 112 runs, guest Stadlen 56, Jackson 40 and Cockerell 5 for 21. A welcome addition to the fixture-list in all respects.

The excellent cricket continued in June and July, with a close and frustrating defeat at the hands of Great Missenden – so difficult to beat – and draws of one shade or the other against slightly competitive Outwood; far-flung but attractive new fixture, Rogate, set up by alumnus Piers Burton-Page, who held out for the home team in an unbreakable last-wicket stand (another useful guest, Garforth-Bles, scoring 55 for the Bushmen, Morley 47); and Groombridge, where once again the Bushmen were dominant with 223 for 5 declared (Ancil 106, his second ton, Edward Faulks 41), but could not remove their obstinate, and largely uninterested, opponents.

Off to Suffolk next, and perhaps the season’s triumphant climax. First – and following a convivial pub lunch – a tougher-than-expected contest against recently re-constituted Saturday opponents, the Queen’s Head, who whittled away at the Bushmen’s seemingly impregnable 40-over total of 222 for 8 (highlights, another batting demonstration by Bobby, 68, and an uninhibited maiden half-century by Assegai) to get within 20 runs. Herrmann’s well-honed catering arrangements ensured that the Bushmen dined out on the close victory in style. And then, on the superb, smooth oval ground at Culford School, the annual needle match against Cockfield, led by the formidable (and aptly-named) Ade Bullett, our downfall for many Suffolk years. For once, CJ got it right, calling correctly and putting Cockfield into bat. The result, Cockfield 160 all out (Ade not many) and the Bushmen…161 for 2, Bobby, 47, Owens, 37\*, Morley and Justin Reynolds (after a horrid season thus far) making it look easy. I don’t often want to kiss other Bushmen, but was ready to make an exception. Cockfield were generous in defeat, but Bullett had a hard glint in his eye that said watch out next year.

A team which has struggled in recent years is Ashwell, lovely opponents but suffering from an age-gap problem: older players retiring, younger ones still too immature for grown-up cricket without them. This was no contest, but it was ripe for record-breaking: Bobby’s third century, and, at 140 (retired), the highest-ever individual Bushman score, putting him on the road to the highest seasonal Bushman aggregate (677 runs in only 15 innings). The Bushmen came close to their best-ever innings total with 254 for 4; Ashwell 110 all out.

There the euphoria ends for a while and reality returns to Bushmen cricket. At Chrishall, normally not an arduous confrontation, the Bushmen crash to 69 all out and lose by eight wickets. At Nuthurst, where the result can go either way, it goes their way – close, by two wickets, but you can’t expect to win with only 119 runs (Nick Norman-Butler a battling 48). At Waldron we fare better, chasing 184, but falling short with 151 for 7 – a draw, but only thanks mainly to borrowed Waldronian Muschialli (95 until horribly run out). At Hartley Wintney, a very attractive CCC fixture on a picturesque old village green, the slump continues: great bowling by Cockerell, Reynolds et al, to restrict HW to 135 all out, but the reply is a dismal 59. The team rallies – just! – by beating Kirdford in a nail-biter where the skipper has a brainstorm and tries to throw the game, but we scrape home by one wicket with ten men at 122 for 8. [This is, however, the Bushmen’s record-breaking ninth victory of the season, so hallelujah to that!] And then, in another CCC pick-up fixture on an ice-rink outfield at Welwyn Garden City, the home team’s virtual 1st XI league side helps itself to 321 for 7 in 40 overs. Only Brondesbury guest Bernie Spratt seems unawed by this level of cricket and scores 43 of the Bushmen’s 155 all out.

And so, back to the past tense for the end-of-season tour to Milan. There, Peter Herrmann sent us to the industrial suburbs (not his fault – Milan CC had lost their lovely lakeside location), but it was not at all unpleasant. The hotel, modern and efficient, was excellent, the ground quite decent compared with some we have endured abroad, and the opposition friendly and sociable, offering one of the best restaurant repasts many of us could recall on tour. We even had a full side, albeit topped up with super-nice guests, Dave Hornsey and Richard Keigwin. That is, on the Saturday. By Sunday, injuries had put paid to Dave (over-exertion of unfamiliar muscles) and Francis Gretton (years of wear and tear). Fortunately, Milan had deep reserves of Indians and Sri Lankans, enough to make up the numbers. But there was also the rub: these guys could play cricket, and whilst the Bushmen almost kept Milan in check on the first day, just failing by two wickets with only 111 to bowl at, on the Sunday, exhilarating South Asian cricket took over: Milan 281 for 5 in 40 overs – Bushmen 70 all out. Would it have made any difference if Milan’s century-maker, then on nought, had not survived a ball from Cockerell which passed between leg and middle stumps, missing both by a millimeter and leaving the bails undisturbed? We shall never know…

All in all, then, a fairly extraordinary and very satisfying season, one in which it was a privilege and a pleasure to be captain. Other highlights include Richard Heller’s progress to the finals of Mastermind; Laurence Gretton’s 800th career wicket at Ashwell; and Andy’s bowling figures of 2 overs, 2 maidens, 3 wickets for 0 runs (and then taken off) at Rogate. Thanks to all our guest players; to dedicated scorer Bernard Jacobs; to Peter Herrmann for a full and marvellously varied fixture-list; and to Andy Popperwell for being able to add up to eleven most weeks. Very special thanks to Peter and Rosemary Hill for playing host to the Bushmen once again with a splendid Sunday lunch on the Dorset tour; and to Peter for not only keeping the records and producing the averages before they go cold, but this year for devotedly updating *The Quest*, the Bushmen’s own peculiar history.

Before I sign off, can I share with you a literary tidbit which I think beautifully, concisely and righteously sums up the spirit of cricket as enjoyed and aspired to by the Bushmen and their ilk? It is a defence, by film historian, teacher, author and accomplished club cricketer, Dr Charles Barr, of Harold Pinter’s poetic eulogy to his idol, Len Hutton, which was famously ridiculed by the late Simon Gray. This is the poem and Charles’s comment:

**I saw Len Hutton in his prime.**

**Another time, another time.**

*It’s easy, with the late Simon Gray, to make a joke of Pinter’s brief poem; but to do so is to miss something truly ‘Pinteresque’ in the way it packs in subtleties beneath the bland surface.*

*Obvious meaning: that was a different era, when cricket was less hectic, less commercialised, and Len Hutton embodied its classic skills and beauties. As he did.*

*But we can hear it as dialogue too. In pub or pavilion, the old cricketer starts to reminisce, and his audience, who may have heard it all before, tells him dismissively to save it for later: ‘another time, another time’.*

*Read a third way, it gives us the rhythm of cricket – traditional cricket, not the short versions. The grooved repetition of the batting strokes, as indeed of the bowler’s delivery. One more time, one more time, the pattern, with variations, out of which the batsman’s innings, and the game, gradually develops. Len Hutton’s forward defensive, or his cover drive. A rhythm unknown to the batter in baseball – or in Twenty20 – but at the heart of cricket, at least as Hutton played it.*

*All these meanings are present together and interact. The beauty of the classic form of the game may seem boringly slow and repetitive, many are impatient with those who celebrate it, and indeed it may belong irrecoverably in the past, like its dead heroes.*

But of course, trying to spell it out like this can only produce a prosaic, ponderous substitute for the thing itself, the poem, which does it so perfectly in eleven words.

Beautifully put, in both poetry and prose.

**Michael Kaye (2008)**

**Bill has searched the Cabin in vain but has been unable to find a copy of Michael’s report. Can anyone help? Hope springs eternal…..**

**John Whitehead (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)**

**2017**

Welcome to my first Captain’s Log. I’ve enjoyed the experience of this first season as skipper and drawn on the support of the senior players and ex-captains in the team (of the latter, there are many). I’d like to thank in particular, Clyde Jeavons, who continues to be a great mentor. Overall this season the weather was consistent and kind, but the results were much more variable. Having completed an early draft of this log, I re-read a couple of those penned by my predecessor, Chris Ancil. I realised very quickly that it was going to be a different kind report. Chris is a man of words, he works in the media, he writes about people and their experiences. Your current skipper is an engineer by training, a man of numbers, I write about stats and performances in a chronological order. So, what you’ve ended up with is more of a diary, than a report that brings together the main themes of the season. Also, I cannot rely on my memory and I have drawn heavily on Andy Popperwell’s scorecards (available online www.thebushmen.co.uk), Andy’s Facebook page (for photos and comments) and the Bushmen Twitter feed, *@BBCBushmen*, to remind myself of what happened. If you’re not a current player then I hope that the following gives you some insight into our 2017 season. If you are a current player then I hope that I’ve called out what you regard as the significant moments.

Pre-season nets started in January and finished in early April. They were well attended (in fact at times we had to impose a ‘quota system’), expertly organised by Andy Popperwell and very enjoyable. However, as is well known, the Lords Cricket Academy is not the same as a 22 yard grass wicket in late April…

The first fixture of the season was unusual in that we were playing Newdigate. The opposition used the match not only to blood their young bowlers in their first senior fixture, but also to give 5 first team batters a run out – more about that later. I won my first coin toss and we had a bat. A couple of early wickets brought George Dabby to the crease. I had managed to avoid the ignominy of last season’s first fixture at Farleigh Wallop, when out for a golden duck, but I didn’t last much longer. George supported by Michael Cockerell established a good platform and the acceleration came when first Javed Soomro and then Tom Roles joined him at the crease. George was out for 48 and Tom went on to score 24 n.o. Their two performance were the stand-out contributions as Tom also completed a fine debut with the gloves, which included a strangle down the leg-side off Michael’s bowling. But Newdigate’s batting was way too strong and their first teamers saw off the total with overs to spare.

Next up was a new fixture against the V&A, played under overcast conditions at the picturesque Stonor Cricket Club. The match gave us a chance to field recent Bushmen dinner speaker Edward Faulks, who contributed with both bat and ball. The V&A fielded a strong side in a limited overs game and batted first. I had expressed preference for a time game and to the V&A’s credit after our crushing defeat they appreciated that this might be a better format for us next season. The V&A top order all made runs and the total of 208 off 35 could have been more if it hadn’t been for a miserly spell from Clyde (7-1-20-0) and 3-35 from ‘new dad’ Nick Norman-Butler. Nick also top scored with 27 on a day when the Bushmen batting did not cover itself with glory. Unfortunately for us, but understandably, this was one of Nick’s rare appearances this season.

On to Sonning and one of the most remarkable matches of the season. The fixture was played at their fine ground in East Berkshire and turned out to be memorable for both the result and two individual performances. It was good to see the Chairman, Richard Heller, there in a non-playing capacity and putting his skills to work on the scoring. It also gave us a chance to welcome back David Morley. David’s fine glove-work on the day, confirmed for me that in the wicket-keeping department the Bushmen (with David, Tom & Mowbray) were going to be well served this season won another toss and chose to bat. Again, George Dabby batted superbly, circumspect at first but accelerating towards the tea-time declaration to accumulate 103 n.o., in a total of 204-3. After tea Clyde and Pianki opened the bowling and the former produced another miserly spell (7-2-21-0) but again, couldn’t buy a wicket. That all changed when Zohaib Butt came on to bowl; 6 wickets, all bowled, in 8 overs, for 42 runs. In reply Sonning reached the final over with one wicket remaining, all 3 results possible and survived a suicidal run off the final ball. Match drawn, scores level, very enjoyable afternoon.

Fernhurst saw the Bushmen relying heavily on the Faulks family and friends to field a team. Ed brought along both son Archie (a natural sportsman and astonishingly quick over 22 yards) and friend Jez Fawcett. Another toss won and batting first again in a time game on a sunny afternoon. Vice-Captain Will Jones made a fine half century and Archie Faulks a rapid 33 to get us to a respectable 181-8 declared at tea. After tea our bowling attack shone. Wickets for Will, Clyde, Howard Owens (5-1-17-3) and Jez, with 3 catches for Archie saw Fernhurst all-out for 107 and gave the Bushmen our first victory of the season – and it was only May!

Waldron in East Sussex is a chance for some family rivalry and Mowbray Jackson duly made his first appearance of 2017. A time game was played with the Bushmen for once having to field first. I used only 4 bowlers, the stand-out being debutant Hashim Khan’s 4-35 with Mowbray and David Morley, taking 2 good catches each. Chasing 172 after tea proved too much and the Bushmen settled for the draw, with David Morley missing out on a half century, stranded on 47 n.o. at the close.

And so to Navestock in Essex. Not a new venue for the Bushmen, but new opponents Eastonians CC. In a time game on an overcast day, Eastonians batted first and posted a challenging total at tea of 234-4 declared. Eight Bushmen had a bowl, including Steven Crossley, fresh back from the US, on season debut and Javed Soomro’s first wicket of the campaign, a fine caught & bowled. However, it was Michael Cockerell who returned the best figures of 2-25. Heavy rain during the tea interval found both captains resorting to Twitter *@BBCBushmen*, to provide the ‘world’ with live updates of the state of play. The rain relented, the home side deployed their super-soaker squeegee and very sportingly agreed a revised target of 175 off 30 overs. Against a strong and accurate bowling attack the Bushmen finished with a respectable draw and I had a most enjoyable partnership of 66 for the 5th wicket with Jake Zelkowicz (27).

June brought the traditional tour to Dorset, where we were joined by Peter Herrmann, fresh back from Oz. It’s a weekend that is meant to include two fixtures, but we were let down by the Fox Inn on the Saturday and had to twiddle our thumbs – or go for a walk on the with beach with Jen & Jess (the dog), in my case. Sunday brought the match against Hooke & Powerstock, played in a ‘charming’ field, against opposition with a ‘county junior’ opening the batting. We played a limited overs game, won the toss and batted first. With hindsight, this was probably a mistake, as although Richard Levien opened strongly with Michael Cockerell, they both fell and it was only thanks to the late arriving (direct from his Sunday morning Radio 3 programme) Lyndon Jones (25 n.o.) that we managed to post any sort of score (94-7). Needless to say, the aforementioned county junior scored a rapid half century, with only Pianki (3-0-8-0) managing to put some brakes on the run-rate.

Back to Berkshire for an overs match against Woodcote and the Bushmen continued a poor run of form. Choosing to field first, looking to chase down a total, the Bushmen bowling restricted Woodcote to 202-9. Two catches each for Will Jones and keeper Mowbray Jackson, first wicket of the season for Andy Popperwell (2-1-12-1) and the best figures of the day, Michael Cockerell (7-0-41-4). Our response after tea never got going. Mowbray top scored with 19 and we were 87 all-out. A quick look at the *@BBCBushmen* Twitter posts that day, reveals certain Bushmen watching our chase from either the pub, or on a bench whilst chatting to their friend Gerald Seymour.

Whilst I enjoyed a beautifully sunny weekend in Copenhagen, the Bushmen returned to Essex for a (hastily arranged match) against Epping. Knebworth had let us down, but Peter Herrmann (as he always does) came up with an alternative. Clyde Jeavons took the reins in my absence, but the change of leader did not get the Bushmen out of their batting slump. Batting first in a time game, Zohaib Butt (45) was by far and away the top contributor, although the final pairing of Andy Popperwell (13 n.o.) and Peter (1 n.o.) combined for an 18 run partnership that got us to 114-9 declared at tea. Epping took just 17 overs to reach their target with Bushmen debutant, Alfie Hinchcliffe (3-0-15-2) providing our only 2 successes. Shame we never saw Alfie again all season.

Outwood is one of my favourite fixtures and I was looking forward to getting back to winning ways. Winning the toss and choosing to bat first in a time game was a good start. This continued by putting our batting woes of recent weeks behind us and posting a competitive score of 193-5 declared at tea – Lyndon Jones (42 n.o.) and Howard (a quick fire 43 n.o.), combined for an undefeated partnership of 88. But Outwood is a small ground and their batting proved strong opposition on the day. Clyde’s was the stand-out bowling performance, getting reward for his accuracy (9-0-46-4).

The Ashwell match found the Bushmen (unusually for the 2017 season) short-handed. We arrived in Hertfordshire with only 10 men, but the opponents skipper, the marvellously named Ben’et Coldstream, provided one of their young ‘first team wannabees’ to be our 11th man. In a time game Ashwell batted first and dominated the Bushmen attack. Ashwell fielded a team that day with 3 (Saturday) first team regulars, including their Saturday skipper. An undefeated century and an eighty-odd, left us chasing 224 for victory after tea. With such a total the draw was always in the back of our minds and Rob Fanner (37 n.o.) put on 78 with Tom Roles (35) to give us a solid start. Mowbray and Zohaib followed with good contributions (28 & 25 respectively), but as the wickets fell and the required run rate rose the draw looked our best option. In the final over, with 2 balls remaining, 20 needed and one wicket remaining, Andy Popperwell was at the crease. Andy could block and we could get an honourable draw. But a suicidal run to get back on-strike taken by our ‘borrowed’ player resulted in Andy being run-out, game over, Ashwell win. Subsequently during the following week, Peter received an email and apology from Ben’et. He commended us on our valiant run chase and explained the lack of understanding of the time game concept amongst their youth. He graciously declared the game a draw and it is so recorded in the scorebook. We move on and will hopefully return to Ashwell in good spirits next season.

Kirdford is another of my favourite venues, probably in some part due to it being the site of my first match for the Bushmen. Looking again at the *@BBCBushmen* Twitter feed, I notice that Richard Heller had a late call up that weekend to replace Pianki. The Chairman’s presence no doubt contributed that day to the Bushmen returning to winning ways. There is no better sight than Richard athletically saving runs at short mid-on. But it was not Richard who shone most that day. Having seen Chris Ancil top score with 40 in a total of 159-5 declared at tea, on a sticky/tricky wicket, Clyde Jeavons proceeded to demolish the Kirdford batting (seven ducks!) 91 all-out. Clyde returning season-best figures of (10-3-17-6). A 3 ½ minute highlights reel is available for this match (ref Andy’s Popperwell’s Facebook page, 26th Sept) - courtesy of David Morley’s helmet-cam. Watch and enjoy Clyde’s unplayable bowling and a remarkable 2-handed catch in the gully by Rob Fanner.

Ewhurst was a batters day. In a 40 over game the opposition won the toss and chose to bat. This was a new fixture last season and in 2016 they fielded a more ‘typical’ Sunday 11. On this day they were predominately 20 somethings who do/could also play league. Ewhurst proceeded to accumulate the biggest total of the season that we faced 257-7. The two Ewhurst openers both retired to give others a bat. Eight Bushmen had a bowl, but only 3 got in the wickets, Chris Ancil (7-0-41-2), Andy Popperwell (4-0-24-2) & Michael Cockerell (5-0-40-1). After tea the Bushmen made a valiant effort at the chase. Lyndon Jones (82), Chris Ancil (47) and a swift 25 n.o. from Steven Crossley got us to 219-6 at the close. Hopefully next year they’ll field a few under 16s and over 50s! Or perhaps we’ll find more suitable alternative opposition.

Groombridge is the longest standing current Bushmen fixture. Unfortunately, this year it was one of only 2 that fell to the weather.

At the end of July we were off to Suffolk for the traditional 2nd tour of the season. The Queen’s Head are our Saturday opposition these days in a 30 over game with batters retiring on 25. Put in to bat the Bushmen top 3 all excelled and retired out; Bob Ancil (very rapid 26), Rob Fanner (26), Pianki Assegai (27). Taking us to a competitive 145 at tea. In reply the Queen’s Head were all out for 91 thanks to wickets from Clyde, Steven, Andy, Rob Fanner (2) and season best figures from Michael Cockerell (6-0-22-5). At Ickworth Park on the Sunday against Barrow, the Bushmen were again put into bat, this time in a 35 over game (batsmen retiring on 50). The Ancil brothers starred in our 178 total (Chris 53, Bobby 50, both retired). After tea thanks to all 7 bowlers providing accurate spells the Bushmen recorded a winning weekend when Barrow were all out for 96. Chris Ancil (7-1-11-3), Bobby Ancil (3-0-14-3) and remarkable figures from Howard Owens (7-3-5-3) took us to victory. Two out of two on the Suffolk tour!

It was now August and our next fixture was Chrishall, which saw the Bushmen make it three in a row. Chrishall are not a strong side these days, but on the traditional school playing field, they won the toss and decided to bat in a 35 over game. The Bushmen fielded for the first time ever three generations of Cockerells; Michael, Will and Seb. There was some internal family rivalry going on which motivated them all to contribute with the ball. ‘Granddad’ Michael showing the younger generations the way with 4 for 29 and young Seb taking his first Bushmen wicket at the age of 10 – there will be more to come. Ted Walters had been loaned to the opposition, but even he could not significantly affect their meagre total of 136. In reply three Bushmen had to be retired and called in (Ted’s son Duncan, Mani Khalique and Mowbray) as the Bushmen smashed our way to the target with 12 overs to spare.

Frieth, up in the Chilterns, is a much more pleasant venue in sunny August than previous visits in April/May. I won the toss and decided we had the batting line-up to chase down a 40 over total. Will Jones (8-0-40-3) and more of those miserly figures from Howard Owens (8-2-9-3) restricted the opponents to 187 all out. Fielding included 2 good catches each for Duncan Walters and Will. Unfortunately, it wasn’t our day with the bat, the top 5 all got starts, but no one got past 26 (Duncan & Mowbray) and we fell 42 runs short.

Steep in Hampshire was one of the few fixtures that had to be abandoned mid game due to weather. On a low scoring wicket the Bushmen reached 146-8 declared at tea. The Jones family making the main contributions (Lyndon, 34 and Will, 40). Steep’s reply was cut short by rain after 18 overs, in the meantime Clyde had added a couple of wickets to his total for the season.

Old Warden in Beds is a new fixture this season and as referenced in Andy’s Facebook pictures – “glorious day, glorious ground”, near the Old Warden Aerodrome and its Shuttleworth Collection of everything aeronautical. I won another toss and decided to bat first in a 40 over game. For the 2nd week running we relied on the Jones boys for the majority of our runs - a fine 62 from Will and 31 from Lyndon. But 146 was never going to be anywhere near enough and Steven Crossley was the only bowler in the wickets as Old Warden reached their target with 5 overs to spare.

Pinkneys Green in Berkshire should have been our penultimate domestic fixture, but with light rain falling, a highly protective groundsman would not let Will Jones (skipper that day) and the team take to the field and the match was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

The final game of the season on home soil was at Hartley Wintney and saw a strong Bushmen team finish on an unexpected high. I won my umpteenth toss and against some advice, decided to field first in a 35 over game. After accurate opening spells from Chris Ancil and Lyndon Jones, both Zohaib and George chipped in with 2 wickets each to leave us with a competitive target of 167. Looking at our batting line-up I knew the target was achievable and even had the temerity to ask Mowbray to bat at 6. I was out for an early duck (not for the first time this season), but opening partner George Dabby batted solidly. At 78-4 Mowbray joined George at the crease and the fireworks started. They made a pair of highly complementary undefeated half centuries, with Mowbray’s aggression and George’s ability to keep the scoreboard ticking. A memorable and very satisfying way to finish the domestic season.

Coimbra, Central Portugal was chosen for the end of season overseas tour because of the promise of September sun and we were not disappointed. The Coimbra Knights Cricket Club is run by ex-pat Barrie Knowles, who met us in town on the Friday evening with partner Nina, who is also fundamental to the Knights’ existence. Unfortunately, Barrie had some sad news, their chairman David had passed away suddenly that week. Barrie would not let this affect the weekend and we really appreciated the hospitality that was shown to us under those difficult circumstances. The cricket was to be played on Saturday and Sunday at a new venue for the Knights in Antes, Mealhada. There we were welcomed by the local ‘president’ who ceremonially hit the first ball, before we paid our respects with a minute’s silence for the late chairman. The Campo das Ferrugens is a modern astroturf football pitch and hence with short boundaries a weekend of 6 hitting commenced. The Knights fielded a team comprised mainly of South Asian ex-pats and in the first fixture their young skipper smashed 116 in a total of 252-5 with no Bushmen bowler managing to keep them quiet for long. In our reply my meagre top scoring with 25 indicates how difficult we found the conditions. On the Sunday we gave them a taste of their own medicine, when Chris Ancil hit a fine century (only our 2nd of the season). Chris was out for 112 in our total of 253-7 and enjoyed an excellent 4th wicket partnership with Rob Fanner of 163, who unfortunately missed out on a deserved half century. But 253 was not enough and again the Knights prevailed with big hitting, winning with 10 balls to spare. I relied heavily on Chris that day, asking him to bowl 13.2 overs unchanged, a monumental effort on his part. The 2017 season finished with a losing weekend, but all agreed that it had been an enjoyable tour.

**2018**

Welcome to my 2018 Captain’s Log. The Committee kindly asked me to continue for a second year, so I can’t be doing everything wrong. Again, like the first, it was a year of mixed emotions. There was plenty of frustration on my part as we alternated between, not being able to bowl sides out and failing to score the expected runs considering the batting line-up ‘selected’. Selection is of course a bit of a moot point. Any review of the scorebook will reveal the significant number of ‘occasional’ players used during the season in order to not leave us short-handed.

I must give a shout out here to Rob Fanner, whose marketing campaign inside the BBC has yielded a number of new faces. A big thank you also, to all the senior players and past captains who supported me throughout the year. I sometimes even take their advice! Finally I’m only able to put together record of events with the help of Andy Popperwell’s scorecard records, his Facebook page, plus the spurious musings on the *@BBCBushmen* Twitter feed. Let’s hope there’s something in here for all.

Preseason nets feel like a distant memory. They included braving the ‘mini beast from the east’ on a Sunday morning in March to arrive at a snowy and picturesque Lords. The break between the last net and our first fixture felt shorter than normal and perhaps explains the team’s good start to the season with the bat. But before we get on to the matter of cricket I must mention the wedding of the year (down-under). Which saw Kate Vandy and Chris Ancil tie-the-knot in the Sydney Opera House, well supported by their fellow Bushmen.

The attractive fixture of V&A at Stonor would have been our first had it not been rained off, so it was Newdigate in early May (always a tough one) to kick off the season. The Bushmen batted first and a splendid century from George Dabby (100), going through the gears when the situation required, plus solid contributions for Zohaib Butt (35) and myself (45), meant I could declare at tea with a most satisfying 248-8. However, this year’s resident overseas player for Newdigate (an Aussie) proved to be an immovable object at the crease. I think we did let him off a few times on his way to 151 n.o. Pianki Assegai worked hard for his one wicket and Javed Soomro took another, but the sterling efforts of our bowling attack could not prevent an 8-wicket victory for our hosts.

Four days later (playing a different sport) much to the chagrin of a number of Bushmen, I sprained my ankle so badly that I was out for six weeks. During my absence George Dabby took the reins for a number of the matches and our overall record (during my absence) was played 6, won 3, drew 1 and lost 2. Anyone with a keen eye for the overall season records, might read something into these statistics. Let’s hope the committee misses that.

The drawn match was at Fernhurst, where they batted first and scored 188 all out, with four

wickets each for George Dabby, and one of those ‘occasionals’ T Weston. After tea the Bushmen fought hard for the draw, with Mowbray Jackson scoring 55, which he described as “an ugly innings but effective”. Fernhurst also saw our chairman, Richard Heller in the side and Michael Kaye making an even rarer appearance. A new fixture at Great Canfield followed, organised by the ever resourceful Peter Herrmann. I’ll hand over here to skipper, George Dabby for his report. *Oliver Riches opened up the bowling with Chris Ancil on a fine day in Essex. On a green seamer, they both displayed remarkable control with the swinging ball and produced one of the best opening spells I've seen as a Bushman. Oli and Chris picked up two each and that included three batsmen who all*

*looked like they'd spent some time with ECB coaches and a Saturday team. Great Canfield never quite recovered from this opening spell and some energetic Bushman fielding. They were strangled by Clyde Jeavons, who bowled eight miserly overs and picked up the wicket of their top-scoring batsman. Special mention also to Andy Popperwell, who took his first wicket of the season and to Mowbray, who kept superbly all game. Great Canfield were restricted to just 118 off 40 overs. We*

*got off to a flyer after tea. Our two ringers, Jack Nott-Bower and Peter Shipp, got us to 40 for no loss before Canfield's young quick bowler produced a fabulous spell that saw off our openers and Chris Ancil. But we soldiered on. Oliver Riches chipped in with the bat this time for a quick 20 while the Skipper dug in for an unattractive 30-odd. Had it not been for Howard Owen's heroics at the end, it may have been a tense finish.* Our first victory of the season.

The Dorset Tour was next up after an abandoned trip (due to weather) to the intriguingly named Crazies Hill. ‘Occasional’ Roger McCann made his appearances of the season and contributed significantly in both matches. Dorset also saw Gerry Tucker join us and take the gloves. Gerry is a great tourist and also joined us in Suffolk and at the end of the season in France. Thanks to Roger’s (75) and Howard’s (39) contributions, our 170-6 proved too many for Thornford to chase and the Bushmen had their second victory of the season. There were two wickets apiece for Roger, Clyde Jeavons and Andy Popperwell. At Hooke & Powerstock they batted first and put on a challenging 173-6 in their 35 overs, with Clyde returning a season best 12-4-24-4. Our top 3 all made runs, Roger (40), Mowbray (25) and Howard (32), but even the distinguished line-up of Heller & Herrmann down the order could not prevent a loss.

At Epping ‘paceman’ Pianki Assegai made one of his too few appearances of the season. His two late wickets helped to restrict the opponents to 194-6. Epping’s opening bowler then ripped through our top five batsmen, with only skipper George Dabby (24) providing resistance. 86 runs looks like a big defeat, but wait till we get to France!

Ashwell saw The Bushmen return to winning ways with a much less controversial fixture than in 2017. A seasons-best opening stand of 106 for the first wicket between skipper George Dabby (57) and Bill Coales saw the Bushmen off to a great start. I’ll hand over to George to recount what happened from there on:

*Two off-spinners that knew, as we did, it keeps slow and low, so best not to play with a cross bat. Against the conventional wisdom, we swiped and bludgeoned our way to*

*167. Howard did as Howard does, playing lovely shots off the back foot and ably supported by a young wicket keeper lent to us (very kindly given his ability) by Ashwell. Cricket is a cruel game though and they left for 18 and 19 respectively.* Clyde Jeavons and George opened the bowling, with the Clyde taking the first wicket thanks to a smart catch from Zohaib Butt at midwicket. George then removed Nos. 2 & 3 the latter scoring quickly before he took a bit of a liberty trying to hit a yorker into the car park. Back to George: *The game then hit limbo. We didn't bowl badly and they didn't bat well, but the game limped on with runs slowly scored and the game creeped to its climax with a few wickets left. In comes veteran Michael Cockerell, who bowled a tight line and*

*length in his six overs and took two important wickets from settled batsman. That left Ashwell, with just 20 to get, and one man left with plenty of time to see it out. A couple of runs an over would have done it. So I suppose it sums up Sunday cricket that their Skipper then thought it would be a good idea to dance down the wicket to Clyde with their own keeper eagerly waiting a false shot.* Our third victory of the season.

Outwood had suggested last season that their ‘Millermen’ Sunday side was more our ‘cup of tea’, so it was this XI we faced in late June. I had also decided that I was fit enough to return from my ankle injury. I fondly remember being warmly welcomed on arrival by our ‘youth policy’, Tom Roles, Rob Fanner and George Dabby. Tom took the gloves that day and was quickly in the action combining with George to remove one of their openers. George went on to return exceptional seasons-best figures of 5.2-1-8-4 and thus we restricted the ‘Millermen’ to 131. Man-of-the-match Geroge then went on to make an undefeated 51 (retired), before Tom (33 n.o.) and ‘occasional’ D. Andrews (24 n.o.) saw us home.

When we arrived at Ottershaw & Hamm Moor’s ground in Surrey we were informed there was no running water in the pavilion. This didn’t bode well for a new fixture, but in the end did not detract from a great day. O&HM rallied round and bought water from the local service station, meaning that we didn’t de-hydrate in the field and enjoyed a good tea. They also agreed to a timed game (our preferred format), so we’ll definitely be asking Peter to keep this one in the schedule. This fixture also saw two debutants, one second-timer and one rare-sighting. Anthony Fincham has only played two matches for the Bushmen, but having also come on the end of the season tour to France, he already feels like one of the family. Tim Lambert a few of us know from playing for the now defunct BBC Mishits, but this was his first outing for The Bushmen. Oliver Riches played earlier in the season and Will Cockerell is a long time Bushmen, who now falls into the ‘occasional’ category. I won the toss and Anthony opened with George. Our top order all got runs with Mowbray Jackson top scoring with a fine 42, to take as to 170 all out at tea. O&HM started well and

reached 101-2, George had removed their numbers 2 & 3, but momentum had definitely swung to them. I then put my faith in Will and Oliver and was rewarded with two fine spells. Will (8-1-25-1), Oli (11-2-37-4) and two more wickets from George’s second spell meant we had a sniff of victory. But we ran out of time and the match finished as a hard fought draw. Will later reported via email, “Take yesterday's vibe as your blueprint. Playing it hard, but light-hearted”. Hear, hear!

The following week Kirdford couldn’t raise a team and the fixture was rearranged to a free date in September with the same outcome. It’s a shame because Kirdford is a favourite of mine and we hope that they continue their Sunday cricket. At this point of the season we had a winning record: played 9, won 4, drawn 2, lost 3, with 3 cancellations. Then came the run I’m not proud of. I might not be the first Bushmen skipper to lose 7 on the bounce, I don’t know, I haven’t looked at the records. But it didn’t feel at all good. Although it did mean that our victory at Hartley Wintney on 9th September was extra sweet.

The first of the seven was Waldron and saw both the debut of Naman Paropkari and a Welsh opening partnership of Lyndon Jones and his friend Robb Davies. We don’t see enough of Lyndon these days, which isn’t surprising as traveling from South Wales to friendly Sunday fixtures in the Home Counties of England shows a Bushmenesque level of commitment! Our total of 151 all-out was never going to be enough on Waldron’s fast outfield. Even with some accurate and miserly bowling from Howard Owens (5-3-2-1) and Naman (6-1-12-0), plus two good wickets from Lyndon, Waldron cruised to victory.

Groombridge was a low scorer. We batted first in a timed game and were all out for 105, with only Naman (27) and Mowbray (34) getting into double figures. Groombridge didn’t find it much easier and we fielded well with catches for George, Naman and Michael, plus two stumpings by Mowbray. Howard and Naman had three wickets apiece, but we just hadn’t set them a big enough target and lost by three wickets.

July brings the Suffolk Tour and the squad was bolstered but our ‘specialist’ tourists – Micahel Kaye, Chris Ancil and Gerry Tucker. This weekend has been weather affected in recent years and this time we arrived at the beautiful Chadacre Park on the Saturday to find both sight screens blown over. Righting one of them proved futile as it blew over again before the start of play. During the match the wind blew hard down the wicket making bowling difficult and even affecting the batters’ balance. As always, we were well supported in Suffolk, but for once could not deliver the required result against a Queen’s Head team that showed a lot of spirit. In a 40 over match they batted first and we bowled them out for a very gettable 154 inside 30 overs. Howard returned a seasons-best 4-39 and Pianki charged in with the wind to get three more. By agreement there is a retire at 50 (and return at the end of the innings) rule for both fixtures on this tour, which we failed to need,

with Rob Fanner from our top order the only one to reach 30. In the end Gerry Tucker and Peter Herrmann were left at the crease when the overs ran out and we lost by 17 runs. On the Sunday we play Barrow, usually in the grounds of Ickworth House, but this year the fixture was at Ousden Lidgate’s ground. The wind had given way to heavy rain overnight and we arrived expecting a cancellation. However, the ‘ground staff’ had worked hard and we commenced the match on a very sticky wicket in light drizzle. Again, I won a toss and decided to bat first and opened with Chairman Richard Heller in a game reduced to 32 overs. This time the “retire/return at 50 rule” did come into play for us as I made my top score of the season 57 n.o. in our 141. After tea we were always in the match. Barrow fell behind the required rate as we chipped away with wickets until their skipper came to the wicket. The wickets were shared around including one for Richard and three for the Chairman’s friend David White, who had stepped in at the last minute. There was also a fine runout

from Chris Ancil and two superb diving catches from Howard. Barrow reached the final over with the scores level, 8 wickets down, with their skipper Kevin on 47. I had used six bowlers, four of which had used their allocation of overs, so I decided to take the responsibility of the final over myself. Barrow skipper Kevin’s eyes lit up, but he only managed to edge a loopy one to Chris, who dived forward to take a fine catch. This brought number 11 Pete to the crease. Now I had seen a lot of Pete when batting. He had been fielding at point (on crutches!) and used a very effective falling over technique to restrict me to singles. Pete came out to bat with a runner and used one crutch to balance. The field came in. My first ball to him he blocked, for the second, to quote the Barrow match report “In Babe Ruth style, Pete smashed a one-handed single to 3rd man, [his runner] completed the run and completed the victory. A great day made possible by the will and determination to play in non-cricket conditions.” Oh well…

Chrishall had been the weakest team we faced in 2017. They weren’t going to let that happen again as they now have a policy of limiting their number of fixtures during the season to ensure they can get a team out. In 2017 we fielded the ‘3 generations of Cockerells’ in 2018 Chishall’s skipper was joined by 2 brothers and a son. One brother was an Aussie, who had played at a decent level! Tom Roles opened the batting and top scored on the day with 32, Naman made 26, but it was only thanks to a fine 9th wicket partnership between Michael Cockerell and Howard Owens of 54, that we made a competitive 194. The day saw three more debutants, two of whom had resulted from Rob’s aforementioned marketing campaign at the BBC, Paul Cooper and Kupesan Kulendiran. Hopefully we’ll be able to call on their services more next season. The third was Andy, brother of Tim Lambert, another ex-BBC Mishit. Andy had not bowled for a couple of seasons thanks to a frozen shoulder and showed his rustiness, but I hope we can tempt him back next season. Howard took three wickets, Naman bowled very tightly for his one, but we dropped too many catches and the Aussie brother saw Chrishall home for a 4-wicket victory.

Frieth was lost to the weather and the following week was Steep that had succumbed for the last two seasons, but 19th August this year was a hot one. Steep batted first and made 214 off their 35 overs. I used seven bowlers, but no one had much success. In reply George Dabby and Bill Coales put on their second significant opening partnership of the season (82) and we looked well set. George went on to make an excellent 89 before succumbing to the heat. From then on, Bushmen got in and then failed go on, with Naman making a fine 36 before being caught and bowled. When Mowbray was out for the 5th wicket we only need 16 to win off a couple of overs, but unfortunately Kupesan, Michael and myself didn’t have the firepower to get us over the line and we lost by 7 runs.

The following week, Old Warden was also rained off, one of four fixtures that suffered this fate during 2018. More than I can remember in 2017, a summer which didn’t boast the record-breaking sun we had this year. Stats can be deceiving.

Pinkneys Green is my local fixture, but historically not one of my favourites. The summer rain had relented and on the Friday I walked Jess (our dog) up to the ground for an early pitch inspection. I chatted to the groundman and complemented him on his greenish track that was drying out nicely.

This proved to be the case 48 hours later after no more rain, when I lost the toss and we were put in to bat. I opened with Lyndon and we both got a start but didn’t last long. Naman then came in and had an excellent knock (98), just missing out on his first Bushmen century in his debut season. This plus Howard’s quickfire 45 n.o. took us to a decent 220-8 off our 40 overs. We also saw one of David Morley’s rare appearances of the season and after a decent 20 runs with the bat he took the gloves. Pinkneys also saw another debutant from the Fanner marketing campaign. Nimesh Thaker bowled nicely for his two wickets and again I hope that we can call on him next season. There were also wickets for Naman (2), Clyde (2), Michael (1) and Howard (1), but we couldn’t dislodge their no 3, whose undefeated 76 saw them home with 10 balls to spare.

So, we’ve now lost seven on the trot and we’re off to Hartley Wintney for our last fixture of the season on these shores. Last year George and Mowbray helped us finish on a high, as they made a pair of highly complementary undefeated half centuries, with Mowbray’s aggression and George’s ability to keep the scoreboard ticking. A memorable and very satisfying way to finish the 2017 domestic season. Could this be repeated? Well with the help of some different actors it was. I won my umpteenth toss of the season (I’m very good at that) and decide to bat and opened with Lyndon. A bit of bounce did for Lyndon early and he was caught in the slips, which brought Naman to the crease. We put on 96 for the second wicket, during which I made singles and watched from the non-strikers end whilst Naman batted beautifully. A change of bowling and I was out, caught and bowled, but Naman went on the complete his first Bushmen century, an undefeated 126. Naman is no doubt the find of the season and we are delighted that he enjoys playing his Sunday cricket with The Bushmen. We finished our 35 overs with a creditable 251-5. Definitely something for our bowlers to get their teeth into. Pianki was back, so after tea I opened up with the right and left combination of him and Howard. They both bowled economically and were unlucky not to get a wicket. Zohaib and Nick Norman-Butler came on as first change and Zohaib removed one of their openers. Next, I turned to the spin-twins, Naman and Clyde. They both bowled their allotted 7 overs and put the squeeze on the opponents, taking three wickets between them. Howard returned to take a couple more and with some fine ‘bowling at the death’ The Bushmen held Hartley Wintney back to win by 12 runs. A memorable and very satisfying way to finish the 2018 domestic season.

After a few weeks break a 14-player party, plus 5 Wags headed off to the South of France. We were accommodated in 2 large houses that Chris Ancil and I had found close to our first fixture in Damazan. The party was made up of Bushmen regulars (including former skipper Bobby Ancil, who we now only get to see on overseas tours) plus new finds this season Naman and Anthony (accompanied by wife Louise) and touring specialist Gerry Tucker. We dined out on the Friday and Saturday evenings and ‘youngsters’ house (George, Tom, Rob, Chris et al) hosted us all to a BBQ on the Sunday. Shall I now talk about the cricket? Well we struggled. At Damazan on the Saturday we played a 12-a-side 35 over game. Their skipper Gagan was very gracious in agreeing to let us bat first. It was a family affair for him, with both his wife and son playing for the team. It was a fine day and the plastic pitch was as decent as one can be. However, our lack of familiarity with the surface may be one reason we didn’t score that well. Four Bushmen did manage to get in, George (26), Chris (20), Mowbray (23) and Rob Fanner for an undefeated 24 to get us to 136-9 at tea. After tea

we experienced the first (and not the only) big hitting of the weekend as their young South Asian opener (with a fabulous moustache) smashed a rapid 64, before being excellently caught in the deep by George off Naman. Naman went on to get two more wickets, but we couldn’t prevent defeat in the end by 4 wickets. This fixture was competitive and you felt we could have won it. After the game we drank a few beers and Damazan’s captain Gagan, presented George with his man-of-the-match trophy. Sunday against Eymet was a different matter. French cricket clubs are all run by ex-pat Brits, but depend on the local South Asian youngsters to field a team. So, it can depend how many of these free-flowing batters they have. On that day, Eymet had a lot of them. I lost the toss and Eymet batted first. They amassed a staggering 384-5 in their 35 overs. A total that included 25 6s and 32 4s. I think on Sunday 30th September 2018, I became a record-breaking Bushmen skipper for all the wrong reasons. It pretty didn’t matter who bowled, they knew their plastic pitch and they

hit through every ball. But I must give credit to Chris Ancil for his spell. He shortened his run up, bowled with great control and returned figures of 7-0-43-2, which under the circumstances was excellent bowling. Tea gave us a chance to relax a bit and then those not batting sat in the football stand to give vocal support to the Bushmen at the crease. We used all 12 of our batsmen and Naman top scored with 36. I was out at the crease when our score past the 100 mark, which at the time felt like a small victory. We were all out for 112. We enjoyed beers after the match and the Eymet ex-pats hoped we hadn’t been put off touring there again in the future. Overall it was an enjoyable tour and I’m already planning next year, but not to the South of France.

**-ENDS-**