

Belhus

Cricket Club

50th Anniversary



Part B

Belhus CC

1960 - 2010

Foreword

"I am very honoured to be asked to provide a short foreword to this 50th anniversary commemorative booklet. The recreational game in the county is the lifeblood of the game, and from a county perspective it provides us with the platform to produce our next generation of Essex and England cricketers.

There is no doubt that much of our development work would be impossible without our close links with those working at the grass roots level.

Running a club in these challenging times is no mean feat, and to have reached an admirable 'half century' is a testimony to the commitment and dedication of Belhus Cricket Club members and committees.

You should all be congratulated on this achievement and I wish you the very best of luck for the future".

David East

Chief Executive, Essex County Cricket Club



Best Bowling

| | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
| Albert Braybrook | 10 for 18 2nd XI v Heathcotians | 24th September 1961 |
| Bert Freeman | 9 for 23 1st XI v Marshalls | 25th May 1969 |
| Don Pegler | 9 for 34 2nd XI v Swanley | 16th May 1971 |
| David Medlock | 9 for 32 1st XI v South Ockendon | 5th June 1971 |
| Bill Taylor | 9 for 15 2nd XI v Great Burstead | 13th May 1973 |
| Robert Waters | 9 for 31 2nd XI v Rettendon | 3rd September 1977 |
| Paul Dowsett | 9 for 45 2nd XI v Hutton | 20th September 1980 |
| Cliff Cansdale | 9 for 34 2nd XI v Snaresbrook | 19th May 1991 |
| Chris Weaving | 8 for 15 2nd XI v Fondu | 15th June 1960 |
| Bob Prickett | 8 for 32 1st XI v Chadwell St Mary | 22nd May 1960 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 18 1st XI v Stork | 11th June 1960 |
| Bob Prickett | 8 for 39 1st XI v Thames Board Mills | 21st June 1960 |
| George Dow | 8 for 19 1st XI v Stork | 30th July 1960 |
| Vic Rampling | 8 for 26 1st XI v Romford Brewery | 1st July 1961 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 37 1st XI v Robbialac | 3rd June 1963 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 23 1st XI v Old Westhamians | 25th August 1963 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 34 1st XI v Fairfield | 9th May 1964 |
| Ron Sage | 8 for 20 2nd XI v Grays Post Office | 11th July 1965 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 19 1st XI v Romford Avenues | 22nd August 1965 |
| Don Pegler | 8 for 41 1st XI v Pauters | 21st May 1966 |
| Bert Freeman | 8 for 19 1st XI v St Saviours | 28th July 1968 |

| | | |
|------------------|---|---------------------|
| Bob Garner | 8 for 29 2nd XI v Great Burstead | 3rd May 1970 |
| Keith Davis | 8 for 61 2nd XI v Barking | 21st July 1973 |
| Paul Appaloosa | 8 for 12 2nd XI v St Johns | 10th May 1975 |
| Bob Garner | 8 for 24 2nd XI v 4th Essex OCA | 13th June 1976 |
| Bob Clarke | 8 for 15 2nd XI v Royal College of Music | 30th August 1976 |
| Bob Garner | 8 for 53 2nd XI v Hockley | 12th September 1976 |
| Robert Waters | 8 for 31 2nd XI v Berwick | 22nd May 1977 |
| Brian Adams | 8 for 29 2nd XI v Little Thurrock | 9th July 1977 |
| Bob Clarke | 8 for 39 1st XI v Windward Islands | 21st May 1978 |
| Bob Clarke | 8 for 58 1st XI v Old Westcliffians | 19th May 1979 |
| Vic Davies | 8 for 36 2nd XI v Ongar | 15th August 1981 |
| Colin Pennycook | 8 for 33 Midweek XI v Walmer | 3rd August 1983 |
| John Forrest | 8 for 31 1st XI v Spartan | 21st August 1983 |
| John Forrest | 8 for 60 Tour XI v North Molton | 6th September 1983 |
| Mathew Lewis Snr | 8 for 22 2nd XI v Downshall | 3rd June 1984 |
| Mandrake Khan | 8 for 29 2nd XI v Becontree | 20th July 1985 |
| Colin Adams | 8 for 37 3rd XI v Rainham | 27th July 1985 |
| Richard Wakely | 8 for 40 2nd XI v Noak Hill | 9th August 1987 |
| Steve Liddiard | 8 for 28 2nd XI v Upminster | 23rd August 1997 |
| Jim Robertson | 8 for 41 1st XI v Dagenham | 22nd August 1999 |
| Billy Winter | 8 for 22 3rd XI v Havering-atte-Bower | 16th June 2007 |

Our Batsmen

It wasn't just the poor quality of the pitches that failed to produce high team scores in the early days. Coaching had its part to play too as the narrow-minded attitude of coaches demanded that batsmen occupy the crease and defend, defend, defend. Scoring shots "should only be attempted at very bad deliveries" they would say. This approach resulted in batsmen spending lengthy periods of time at the crease, often without scoring. It was for "the bowler to get us out" batsmen would argue. And a draw, however dull or boring, was an acceptable and honourable result. And remember too - the professional one-day game had not yet gathered momentum.

'...spending lengthy periods of time at the crease...'

Of 65 matches played by the First and Second XIs in 1960, team scores in excess of 100 were achieved on only eleven occasions. The First XI's highest team score was 133. Patrick Pooler-Williams was the top run-scorer with 567 runs at an average of 15.80 and just five half-centuries were scored, the highest being 64 by Mick Miller. During the entire 1960s, our teams exceeded an innings total of 200 on only eight occasions and our opponents could manage just four. How times have changed.

'...highest team score of the season was 133'

We had to wait until 1962 before the first century was scored. Stan Matthews was a fine all-round cricketer, but played just the occasional game when he was home on leave from the RAF. His 107 not out for the Second XI against Kennedy on 2nd September remained the only century for the Second XI for 16 years - until Norman Beaney scored 101 not out against South Woodford on 24th September 1978.

And then we had to wait until June 1968 before the first century was scored for the First XI - by Denis Reed, and another ton followed two weeks later by Vic Davies. So only three individual centuries were scored throughout the entire 1960s - and this during a period when two elevens were regularly fielded on Saturday and Sunday (apart from 1963 and 1964 when there was just one eleven).

'...only three centuries were scored throughout the entire 1960s...'

The most successful season in the club's history was in 1968 when the First XI lost only one, the penultimate, match. Keith Clayton was one of our best left-handers who was gifted with the ability to 'change gear' when the situation demanded. Other batters who were coming of age around about this time included, among others, Terry Rampling, Steve Solari, John Rowell and Geoff Marrant, injecting a confidence never previously displayed by Belhus batsmen.

The 1970s saw a huge increase in the number of runs being scored, but we had to wait until 1975 for the first player to score 1,000 runs in a season - Jim Donovan, with an average of 29.40 including one century. Around this time, a more attacking attitude to run-scoring was being adopted and 200+ totals became more common. Ken Lewis specialised in casual 6s and Mark ('Bill') Winter (who made his senior debut on 26th May 1976) scored 879 runs in 1978 at an average of 25.40, and who arguably holds the club record for most runs in a Belhus career.

'...a more attacking attitude was being adopted...'

John Lewis Jnr (who has represented the MCC) brought a degree of elegance to the crease, and David ('Tiger') Webb was beginning to conduct savage assaults on opposition bowlers after his customary, early innings 'sighting'. Like the left-handed Bill Taylor and right-handed Danny Evans, Tiger used the Stuart Surridge 'Jumbo' bat, the first ultra heavyweight bat to appear on the market.

In 1980, the stylish Danny Evans made the, then, record highest score of 133 (for the Second XI against South Loughton). That was surpassed when Mat Lewis Snr smashed 139 against Norwood in June 1984, making him, then, the youngest player, at 15 years 142 days, to score a century in senior cricket.

But that record individual score lasted only a couple of months when Wayne ('Bunny') Read, playing for the Third XI on 4th August 1984 against Rainham (having been dropped after his First team debut the previous week), produced a remarkable 181 not out - still the club's highest individual score. This sparked a new batting era for the club, as a crop of talented young batsmen emerged from our youth academy.

'...a crop of talented young batsmen...'

Wayne, who also holds the club record for most centuries, was developing into a swashbuckler; Andy Cayless was a stylish left hander; Terry ('Ted') Lambert Jnr was blossoming into a flamboyant opener. And along with the solid Steve Huckstepp; the sweet timing of John ('Grace') Forrest; the six-hitting ability of Mat Lewis Snr and Chris Dreher, and the technical correctness of Richard ('Tricky') Waters, the club witnessed the emergence of a pack of exciting batsmen.

With the stubborn determination of Tony Lincoln, the welcome acquisition of Richard ('Caper') Day (1,639 runs in 1989 at an average of 51.21) and Jim Banner (the oldest batsman to score 1,000 runs in a season), these guys constituted the backbone of our batting throughout the nineties and into the noughties.

In the mid - late 1990s, talented Roy Heffernan burst through the junior ranks, and the spirited Scott Bayford started to produce match-winning knocks. Martin Guilbert and the dapper Nick Marns joined this band of run-scorers with Nick featuring in two of the club's record wicket partnerships - including the record opening partnership of 249 with Martin Guilbert against Eastside in 2004. The other batsmen to have featured in two record wicket partnerships are Steve Huckstepp and Richard Waters.

Today's generation of heavy run-makers includes Gavin Jefferies (who in 2009 scored 1,987 runs and surpassed the club record for most runs in a season) and Billy Winter (who, in 2009, became the youngest batsman to score 1,000 runs in a season in senior cricket). The serene Tom Thompson produced three league centuries in 2009 and might just prove his career turning point. Two Michaels - Cansdale and Fogg - have batting talent that is yet to be fully displayed.

No less than nine players scored 100s in 2009 and another six made scores in the 90s. Now if you couple that with the record total of 125 fifties during the season, there is evidence of the club's batting ability. We're on track for a successful future.



Andrew Cayless (1985)

Graham Gooch presenting the 'Young Batsman of the Year' Award



Wayne Read (1990s)

Most Centuries



Mark Winter (1979)

Most Runs



Terry Lambert Jr (1990s)

Among the club's talented batsmen

Highest Individual Scores

| | | | |
|-------------------|------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Wayne Read | 181* | 3rd XI v Rainham | 4th August 1984 |
| Wayne Read | 178 | Midweek XI v Goresbrook | 19th July 1990 |
| Aaron Tan | 173* | 2nd XI v Eton Manor | 23rd June 2001 |
| Richard Waters | 159 | 2nd XI v Little Thurrock | 9th July 1989 |
| Wayne Read | 158 | A' XI v Harold Wood | 6th September 1997 |
| Wayne Read | 158 | 1st XI v Basildon & Pitsea | 27th September 1997 |
| Dave Aldridge | 155* | 1st XI v Rainham | 8th August 1998 |
| Terry Lambert Jnr | 153* | 1st XI v Fords | 12th July 1997 |
| Wayne Read | 151 | 1st XI v Midland Bank | 27th August 1988 |
| Mark Winter | 149 | 2nd XI v Broomfield | 10th August 1991 |
| Martin Guilbert | 146* | 1st XI v Eastside | 16th May 2004 |
| Gary Benson | 142* | 3rd XI v Wickford | 16th August 1997 |
| Mathew Lewis Snr | 139 | 2nd XI v Norwood | 24th June 1984 |
| Wayne Read | 136* | Tour XI v Chelston | 11th July 2000 |
| Danny Evans | 133* | 2nd XI v South Loughton | 24th August 1980 |
| Terry Lambert Jnr | 132* | 1st XI v Eversley Park | 4th May 1997 |
| Mathew Lewis Snr | 132 | 1st XI v Brittanic Lodge | 27th May 1992 |
| Tom Thompson | 131* | 2nd XI v Epping | 25th July 2009 |
| Wayne Read | 130* | 1st XI v Bow Rovers | 14th May 1995 |
| Chris Dreher | 129* | 2nd XI v Thameside | 6th August 1988 |
| Martin Guilbert | 128 | 1st XI v Fords | 12th July 2003 |
| Kirsten Davenhill | 127 | 3rd XI v Barking | 19th May 2007 |
| Andy Cayless | 121 | 1st XI v May & Baker | 10th August 1996 |
| Chris Baker | 125* | 2nd XI v Noak Hill Taverners | 15th May 2005 |
| Mark Winter | 125 | 1st XI v Harwich & Dovercourt | 2nd July 1995 |
| Danny Hyndman | 125 | 1st XI v Barking | 25th July 2006 |
| Martin Guilbert | 124* | 1st XI v Noak Hill | 18th August 2001 |
| Jim Donovan | 123 | 1st XI v Parkinhill | 8th August 1975 |

| | | | |
|------------------|------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Scott Bayford | 123 | 2nd XI v Kingfisher | 27th April 2003 |
| Billy Winter | 122* | 1st XI v Roydon | 19th July 2009 |
| Michael Cansdale | 122 | 2nd XI v Havering-atte-Bower | 17th June 2007 |
| Tom Thompson | 122 | 2nd XI v Ongar | 4th July 2009 |
| Tony Udell | 121* | 3rd XI v Roding Valley | 27th July 2002 |
| Richard Harvey | 121 | 2nd XI v Norwood | 18th May 1980 |
| Andy Cayless | 121 | 1st XI v Barking | 30th June 1985 |
| Martin Guilbert | 121 | 1st XI v Herongate | 21st April 2007 |
| Tony Lincoln | 120 | 2nd XI v South Ockendon | 2nd August 1986 |
| Michael Cansdale | 120* | 2nd XI v South Loughton | 9th September 2006 |
| Mark Sansom | 120* | 1st XI v Bentley | 12th August 2007 |



Barry Ruck (2009)
Oldest player to score a century



Gavin Jefferies (2009)
Most runs (1,987) in a season



Jim Banner (2009)
Oldest batsman to score
1,000 runs in a season



Billy Winter (2009)
Youngest batsman to score
1,000 runs in a season

Our Fielders

'Everyman has his day' - an old adage that applies as much to fielding as it does to batting or bowling. Even the least gifted of our players has taken a stunning catch in the outfield when all of his colleagues were fully expecting him to ground it. For sure, we can all improve our fielding skills with a bit more practice, but our better fielders have an instinct for anticipation, concentration and hand/eye co-ordination.

We've all dropped chances, but some fielders tend to hold on to chances more often than others. We don't have a master record of catches taken over the years, and scorebooks don't highlight the better fielders. And although we knew that it would be a subjective exercise, we asked members for names of those who were/are considered the best in plucking cricket balls from the Essex air whilst wearing a Belhus shirt. Sadly, popular opinion revealed surprisingly few names, so perhaps catching is an aspect of the game on which our fielders should devote more practice!

'...plucking cricket balls from the Essex air...'

In the early years, Patrick Pooler-Williams had particularly good reflexes in the slips and George Dow was known to grasp sharp chances. Geoff Marrant was nonchalant in his technique at any close-in position, and Mark Winter has spilled few chances over the years. Tony Lincoln was consistently reliable, as too was Neil Carter, and Shanti Popat received praise as a slip fielder. Terry Lambert Jnr, Wayne Read and Brian Edwards have their plaudits as adept gully men.

Three catches in an innings have been taken by various Belhus fielders on a few occasions, and four catches have been held a couple of times. But to hold on to five catches is quite exceptional (it is the highest number of catches in a test innings) and only Dean Bettles (for the First XI against Downshall in August 1983) and Scott Bayford (for the Third XI against Upminster in May 1998) have this claim to fame.

'...five catches is quite exceptional...'

But competence as a fielder is not just about taking catches. Patrolling the outfield is an art too. John Rowell's 'arm' had wicketkeepers wringing their hands and few boundaries were too long for brothers John Lewis Jnr and Mat Lewis Snr. Jim Donovan could cover distance although not at speed. Mark Baker, an Aussie who played in the mid 2000s and trained as a baseball pitcher, might get the award for the best arm of all. In the 1960s, Tony Price covered the ground like a whippet and today, Dale Kenyon is worthy of mention for his speed and agility in the outfield that provides inspiration to fellow fielders when the chips are down.

We've always had a good number of wicketkeepers in our ranks. Keith Clayton shone in the 1960s and brother Colin's unfussy approach ensured that he missed few chances. Geoff Marrant was nonchalant as a 'keeper and a close-in fielder. The late 1970s/early 1980s saw Mark Winter and David Webb share the 'keeping role and their early order batting ability made them extra valuable members of the team.

The mid - late 1980s and 1990s saw the tidiness of Andrew Cayless and the bravado of Wayne Read in standing up to the quickest of our bowlers. But it is Colin Adams who is considered to be the 'keeper of all 'keepers who possessed outstanding skills in every department, topping wicketkeepers' league tables in a number of seasons.

Although Paul Huckstepp might not be the most athletic of them all, his unique style brought him 5 (yes, five) stumpings in an innings in 2001 - a phenomenal effort that equalled the Test record! More recently the emergence of the First XI wicketkeeper Michael Fogg has continued our long line of highly talented glove men.

More Wickets than Runs

Taking five wickets or more for less than five runs is a rare feat and only a handful of Belhus bowlers have achieved it. Don Pegler returned many impressive bowling analyses in his time, but in the memorable match against Tennyson in 1965 he finished with 8 overs, 7 maidens, 5 wickets for 1 run. He also took more wickets than runs conceded with his 7 for 6 in eight overs against Tilbury in 1960. Patrick Pooler-Williams got in on the act too when he returned 6 for 4 in the local derby against Aveyly, also in 1960, when our First XI dismissed them for 23.

Mat Lewis Snr took 6 for 5, including a hat trick, against Britannic Lodge in 1994 and Robert Waters mirrored Mat's effort when he too took 6 for 5 (off five overs) against Hainault & Chigwell on 14th May 1988. Against Midland Bank in 1981, Richard Harvey finished with 8 overs, 6 maidens, 7 wickets for 3 runs.

Robert Waters had played only a handful of matches before his memorable bowling stint for the Colts (as the youth team was known in the early days) against Grays on 6th July 1976. His pace was too quick for the opposition and he finished with an analysis of 5 overs, 5 maidens, 5 wickets, 0 runs. Owen Jefferies produced 3 overs, 2 maidens, 6 wickets for 1 run for the under 13s against Stanford-le-Hope in May 2008 (the one run came when the wicketkeeper took the ball in front of the stumps!).

Mason Wren, for the under 15s against Pegasus & Corringham on 25th May 2004, took seven wickets for 0 runs in 4 overs including a hat trick. And Warren Keeble took six wickets for 4 runs in 3 overs including a hat trick against Pegasus in 1997.

So Close to a Full House

Having taken hundreds of wickets during his 35-year career with the club, paceman Robert ('Jacko') Waters (who made his senior debut against Leigh-Belfairs on 26th July 1975) has fond memories of many great matches. But he particularly remembers the First XI league match against Rettendon on 3rd September 1977. Our batters managed 107 all out, of which 'Mr Extras' contributed 26.

After tea, Jacko showed his talent when he skilfully dismissed the first nine Rettendon batsmen for 31 from 19 consecutive overs. Bowling at the other end was John Lewis Snr, and the final ball of his tenth over saw the batsman float a chance to Jacko at square leg. Now Jacko claims that he didn't deliberately drop the dolly chance, but he instinctively threw the ball to the bowler's end for 'Mr Lew' to run out the last batsman - thereby denying Jacko of all ten wickets! What can you say?

'...float a chance to Jacko at square leg'

Paul Dowsett also got close to a clean sweep. Playing for the Second XI against Hutton on 20th September 1980, he disposed of the first nine batsmen and was on the verge of equalling Albert Braybrook's record when the Hutton captain declared at tea on 144 for 9. We drew the match, but Paul was left wondering what might have been. Still, 9 for 45 from 18 overs is not a bad afternoon's work. Hard luck Paul.

Beside the Seaside

Coming out of the 1960s, more members began to buy cars, enabling us to travel to clubs further afield and Kent was identified as an area for new fixtures. A trip through the Dartford tunnel would guarantee matches against clubs who enjoyed better pitches and facilities than the council grounds on which we mostly played.

From 1971 we ventured into pastures new and arranged fixtures against clubs such as Westgate, Dover, Broadstairs, Margate, Hythe, Sandwich Town, Walmer and we threw in Clacton and Felixstowe a bit closer to home. A trip to the seaside for a day's cricket had a popular appeal, and fun days were had despite the extra miles of travel. The highlight was the club's first weekend away in August, with a fixture against Dover at the County Ground and an overnight stay at the White Cliffs Hotel. Next day, we drove 60 miles down the coast for a match against Bexhill-on-Sea.

But we hadn't reckoned on the standard of cricket being so much higher and, consequently, we suffered a number of defeats, save for the historic match against Dover when we won off the last ball. After our pioneering adventures, we decided to stay closer to home although Clacton became a regular and enjoyable annual trip.

A No Ball to Win the Match

The match against Dover on 7th August 1971 was one of our most memorable. On the, then, County Ground, Dover batted first and crept to 120 for 9 at tea off 39 overs. In reply, we struggled against the leg spin of Tyrell and slumped to 88 for 9.

But Don Pegler and Bob Young were always difficult batsmen to dislodge and, in semi-cautious mode and seeking to hold out for a draw, they skilfully nudged and glanced their way to 120 for 9. So with the scores level and with the last ball to be bowled, cheers rang out from the pavilion when Buttifunt bowled a no-ball! It was a gift of a win perhaps, but one of our great tenth wicket partnerships to secure victory.

A No Ball to Lose the Match

In the Second XI match against Fives & Heronians on 27th June 1980, scores were level on 179 when the last ball of the match was called “no ball”. Peter Clark, the bowler, and the twin of Ray, was not the most popular chap in *‘The Archer’* that night.

Just One to Go

Since his senior debut on 29th May 1976, Mark Winter has batted at every position in the order. And he has scored a fifty in every position except number eleven.

13 Consecutive 4s

In the First XI match against Gragas on 17th July 1966, John (‘Orgy’) Rowell whacked 19 boundaries in his quick-fire 83, which included 13 consecutive fours.

Highest Innings Total Batting First

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| 341 for 6 | 2nd XI v Downshall | 22nd July 1989 |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|

Highest Innings Total Batting Second

| | | |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|
| 308 for 8 | 1st XI v Barking | 22nd July 2006 |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|

Highest Winning Total Batting First

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|
| 341 for 6 | 2nd XI v Downshall | 22nd July 1989 |
|-----------|--------------------|----------------|

Highest Winning Total Batting Second

| | | |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 279 for 8 | 1st XI v Southend-on-Sea | 20th June 2009 |
|-----------|--------------------------|----------------|

Took All Ten Belhus Wickets

One bowler has taken all ten Belhus wickets in an innings. Jim French of Ardleigh Green took 10 for 53 from 20.4 overs to bowl out our 2nd XI on 3rd September 1978. He also scored 20 not out to secure victory for his team. Well done Jim.

Just One Defeat in the Season

The First XI of 1968 enjoyed the most successful season in the club's history. Of 33 matches played, only one was lost - the penultimate match of the season on 22nd September. It was East African Wanderers (against whom the initial First XI century was scored earlier in the season) who prevented us achieving a clean-sweep for the season - but only because of Indian Gymkhana spinner, Rajni, took seven wickets.

Skipper Danny Carroll was fortunate to have led a confident young side who all contributed to the team's success. The batting line-up was particularly strong and it wasn't until the twenty-fifth match of the season that the team lost all ten wickets in an innings. Worthy of note also is the fact that bowling legend Don Pegler's tally for the season was just 52 wickets - his lowest season total of the entire decade.

Just One Win in the Season

The Saturday First XI of 1984 experienced one of the worst-ever seasons with a final record of Played 18, Won 1, Lost 13, Drew 3, Abandoned 1. Best say no more.

100 Wickets in a Season

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Don Pegler | 1960 1961 1965 1966 1970 1971 |
| Bob Garner | 1976 |
| Richard Harvey | 1981 |
| John Forrest | 1983 |

Three Wickets in an Over on Debut

In bowling two overs on his First XI debut against Parkinhill on 8th August 1975, Bob (Johnny') Clarke took 3 for 6 - all three wickets being taken in one, his second, over. Johnny subsequently sired a son, Rikki, who played Test and One-Day cricket.

No Hat Trick for Don

What is remarkable about the bowling record of founder member Don Pegler, (who took nearly 1,500 wickets during his career with the club including 100 in a season on six occasions and twice finishing on 99), was that he never took a hat trick. He often got close, bagging three or four wickets in an over on a number of occasions.

Season's Highest Individual Score of 64

Of the 65 matches played in 1960, the highest individual score was just 64 - by Les Perry, batting at No. 5 for the First XI against TBM on 7th August at Belhus Park.

'All Bowled' Hat Tricks

Jim Robertson had previously performed the hat trick (in 1983 as a 14 year old playing for the Fourth XI against Benfleet) but his performance for the First XI against Tillingham on 24th August 1997 was a bowler's dream. Batting first at 180 for 4, Tillingham looked set for a very big total, but Jim stood alone in bowling an impeccable line and length (his first spell of seven overs went for just 13 runs).

Upon his recall by skipper Mark Winter, Jim's third over was to be the most memorable of his playing career. We will forgive him for his third delivery (four wides), but he then proceeded to clean bowl Jimmy Chapman for 38 and again hit the stumps when he dismissed Robert Dennis for a golden duck. Then the number eight batsman, Brian Bowers, strolled to the crease to face a ring of close-in Belhus fielders who were hungry for a catch and a slice of history. But Jim required no assistance from his team-mates - he clean-bowled dear Brian to clinch his hat trick.

In chasing the Tillingham total of 198 for 7, Jim made a valuable contribution of 24 (batting at number nine) in our closing score of 184 for 9 to earn us a well-deserved draw. He was man-of-the-match for sure. Well done Jim.

A hat trick of all-bowled dismissals is an extremely rare feat, but it had also been performed by Mandrake Kahn (for the Second XI against Becontree in 1985) and subsequently by Mason Wren (for the Under 15s against Pegasus & Corringham on 10th July 2003). More recently, Chris Baker joined this elite band when playing for the Second XI against Ongar on 22nd August 2009 at North Stifford.

Not a Good Year

The Second XI's season in 1970 - Played 42, Lost 32, Won 4, Drew 4, Abandoned 2.

The Record Lowest Score

It was a brave decision to enter a new Fourth XI into the strong Readers South Thames League in 2007, and the match against Bexley proved memorable for all the wrong reasons. Bexley declared at 237 for 4 - too tough a target for our young side. And although we were dismissed for 5 (yes, five), with six of our batsmen being bowled for ducks, it still took Bexley 16 overs to budge us.

But fate had the final say. That brave decision to reintroduce a Fourth XI paid dividends when, just two years later, and in our very first season in the Shepherd Neame Essex League, the 4th XI finished runners-up in their division under the captaincy of Paul Whitlock (who twice dismissed England's Ravi Bopara in youth matches). A great achievement - and confirmation that fortune favours the brave.

Four Wickets in Four Balls - Twice

It's one thing to take two hat tricks in a career, but it's another to take two in the space of four weeks. But that's exactly what Bob Garner did for the Second XI in 1977. The first was against Conway on 8th May (in his 6 for 22) and his second against Panalpina on 6th June (in his 7 for 11). More remarkable about Bob's two hat tricks was that on each occasion he took four wickets in four balls - only once has this ever been achieved in first class cricket - by Bob Crisp for Western Province. Bob holds the club record for most wickets in a season (139 in 1976).



Bob Garner (1975)

Record wickets (139) in a season and two hat tricks



Bert Freeman (1979)

9 for 23
Best bowling for the 1st XI

Equalled the Test Record

On 9th August 2001 in the Eastwood cricket week, one of the club's outstanding record-breaking performances was achieved by wicketkeeper Paul Huckstepp in making 5 stumpings. After stumping his brother, Steve, Paul's final stumping gave spinner Jim Banner his hat trick. In the history of Test cricket, only one wicketkeeper has equalled Paul's effort - Kiran More for India v the West Indies in 1988. Brilliant.

7 for 7 Collapse - But We Still Won

On 10th May 1969, the First XI pulled off a great win against Stanford-le-Hope. With only ten men, we took first knock and were cruising along at 50 for 2. But then came the 'Belhus Collapse' as we lost seven wickets for the same number of runs and were all out for 57. Holmes took 5 for 5 as four Belhus batsmen were adjudged lbw.

Our opponents must have felt confident and no doubt enjoyed their cakes at tea, but Don Pegler and Terry Rampling bowled unchanged for fifteen overs each to skittle out Stanford for just 37. Terry took 7 for 15 with his off spin - a magnificent return and one of the best analyses by a Belhus spin bowler in a senior match. The overall match statistics read: 55 overs, 94 runs, 19 wickets, 6 lbws, 8 ducks. Fantastic.

Hat Tricks

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Graham Cunliffe | 2nd XI v Cranham | 3rd June 1962 |
| Keith Davis | 1st XI v Becontree | 31st August 1969 |
| Mark Davies | Under 15s v Essex Taverners | 16th July 1975 |
| Bob Clarke | 2nd XI v Royal College of Music | 30th August 1976 |
| Bob Garner | 2nd XI v Conway | 8th May 1977 |
| Bob Garner | 2nd XI v Panalpina | 6th June 1977 |
| Richard Harvey | 2nd XI v Little Thurrock | 12th September 1981 |
| John Lewis Snr | 2nd XI v Tilbury | 6th June 1982 |
| Jim Robertson | 4th XI v Benfleet | 16th July 1983 |
| Andy Armit | 2nd XI v Fords | 30th July 1983 |
| Mandrake Khan | 2nd XI v Becontree | 29th July 1985 |
| Gary Plane | 2nd XI v Bow Rovers | 22nd June 1986 |
| Richie Loveridge | Under 13s v Eastwood | 13th July 1986 |
| Jim Banner | Midweek XI v Eastwood | 9th August 2001 |
| Cliff Cansdale | 2nd XI v Pitsea | 7th August 1993 |
| Mathew Lewis Snr | 2nd XI v Britannic Lodge | 18th June 1994 |
| Kevin Horsey | 2nd XI v South Ockendon Hospital | 21st August 1994 |
| John Forrest | 2nd XI v Clacton | 11th June 1995 |
| Jagjit Johal | Under 13s v Wickford | 26th June 1996 |
| Simon Lighten | Under 13B v Hornchurch Athletic | 11th August 1996 |
| Tony Cobb | Under 13s v Chelmsford | 10th May 1997 |
| Warren Keeble | Under 13A v Pegasus | 21st August 1997 |
| Jim Robertson | 1st XI v Tillingham | 24th August 1997 |
| Mason Wren | Under 15s v Pegasus & Corringham | 10th July 2003 |
| Mason Wren | Under 15s v Pegasus & Corringham | 24th May 2004 |
| Owen Jefferies | Under 13s v Stanford-le-Hope | 20th May 2008 |
| Chris Baker | 2nd XI v Ongar CC | 22nd August 2009 |

The Visit of West Ham United FC

West Ham visited Belhus Park on 12th August 1969 having played Newcastle the previous day (winning 1-0). Attendance records for a Belhus match were broken as 2,000 spectators turned up. Bobby Moore (bowled by Keith Davis for 11) opened the batting with Frank Lampard Snr (bowled by Don Pegler for a duck), and Geoff Hurst (who played one first class match for Essex CCC and 23 for the Second XI) came in at number three but was bowled for two. Trevor Brooking scored 25 and Harry Redknapp was dismissed without scoring. At 94 for 9 the football stars were in trouble, but a last wicket stand of 71 between Stuart Morgan and Roger Cross enabled The Hammers to close at 165.



West Ham United CC (1969)

Back (L to R): Alan Stephenson Trevor Brooking Geoff Hurst Frank Lampard Snr
Roger Cross Harry Redknapp
Front (L to R): Bobby Moore John Sissons John Charles Brian Dear Ron Boyce Stuart Morgan

Redknapp opened the bowling but was taken off after his two-over spell had cost nine runs. Our batters progressed steadily to 94 for 2, but then Bobby Moore was brought on to bowl his off spin. He quickly dismissed Keith Clayton for 58 and lured us in to a 'Belhus Collapse' as we proceeded to lose eight wickets for 31 runs. We were all out for 123. Sir Bobby took 5 for 16 from seven overs.

The victory against us was a great boost to West Ham's confidence as they visited Chelsea FC the following day and secured a 2-0 win. It was a truly memorable fixture and interesting to note that three of the West Ham players were subsequently knighted - an honour that is yet to be bestowed on a Belhus player.

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| West Ham United | 165 (R. Cross 34*. S. Morgan 34. T. Brooking 25. D. Pegler 3 for 27. G. Marrant 3 for 10) |
| Belhus CC | 123 (K. Clayton 55. S. Solari 21. R. Moore 5 for 25) |

Thurrock and District Knock-Out Cup

The Thurrock and District Cricket Association was founded in 1946 after an inaugural meeting of local cricketers was held at Baird's café in Grays. Apart from an active umpires section that provided courses and examinations for member of local clubs, its main activity was to arrange a local, annual Knock-Out competition. This took the form of 16 x 8-ball overs with neutral umpires and matches commencing at 6.00pm.

Inexplicably, we never consistently displayed our talents in this format. We rarely got past the first round in the early years. We had to wait until 1978 before achieving some success with a talented and confident team. We won comfortably in the preliminary rounds, apart from a one-run victory over Horndon-on-the-Hill. In the Final at the Pegasus ground in Corringham, we came up against Thames Board Mills. Batting first, we posted a total of 138 for 3 after 56 not out from Bill Taylor. TBM never got going due to excellent fielding (Jeff O'Neill took three catches) and four wickets from man-of-the-match Bill Taylor. We therefore won our first trophy.

'...had to wait until 1978 before success...'

Horndon-on-the-Hill turned the tables on us in 1980 when they made 150 after taking first knock. In reply, 34 from Mark Winter and 61 from Denis Reed saw us to 149 and one run was required from the last ball. Sadly, Danny Evans failed to make contact and, without as much as a cheerio, an extremely despondent Danny walked all the way from Horndon Recreation Ground to his home in South Ockendon.

We were back in the final in 1981, and restricted the Orsett side to 101 after a magnificent bowling and fielding display. But our batters didn't do themselves justice and we fell disappointingly short of the required target. Another Orsett encounter was in the 1988 semi-final. Orsett batted first and posted a modest 124. With our strong batting line-up, the target was not a tall order. We timed the chase to perfection and, coasting home to victory with 3 wickets in hand, needed only 9 runs from the last over. But we could only scramble eight and blew it, losing by one run.

'...we timed our chase to perfection...'

In 1992, after emphatic victories in the early rounds under the captaincy of Richard Waters, we again met Orsett in the final but we were beaten after a poor display.

We met Horndon-on-the-Hill in the final in 1995, but it proved a one-sided affair. At Stanford-le-Hope Recreation Ground, Dave Stitson Jnr thrashed our bowlers to all quarters of the ground, and his 82 off 49 balls took them to a convincing victory.

Domestic Tours

Review by Peter Clark 2nd XI Saturday Captain 1995, 2006.

Domestic tours require planning and organisation. But unlike overseas jaunts, the domestic venture is not as corralled. It has the benefit of last minute attendees and members can become tourists for part of the week. Touring is about camaraderie, banter and bonhomie - and moments of madness often recounted many years later over a pint. Curiously, it brings fantastic tussles; some serious cricket against ex-pros and aspiring pros; overseas stars; teams at their peak in their own area; rural blacksmiths bowling quickish; vicars dropping dollies and the best cream teas.

Danny Evans and Norman Beaney organised the first domestic tour to Hampshire in 1981, and the Bristol Hotel in Southsea was the base. The highlight of the week arose before a ball had been bowled, when some unnamed members endured an unfruitful trip down to Bristol to try to check into the Hotel Southsea. After touring the city and being advised by a local bobby that the Hotel Southsea didn't exist, the members in question finally came to their senses and eventually arrived at the correct destination, the Bristol Hotel, at 3am.

Unfortunately, Havant cancelled their match. Using a bit of initiative, Robert Blezard and Cliff Cansdale asked the local radio station, Radio Victory, to put out an SOS for a replacement fixture. And it was HMS Mercury who responded with the offer of a game. Mid-way through our opponents' innings, the game was held up whilst their team was summoned back to base to attend an emergency meeting about Government defence cuts. We continued upon their return and the match finished in a draw. We failed to win a match in 1981, but we won the cricket quiz at Fareham.

Some good cricket was played on the 1982 tour to Devon. We opened on Monday with a sound beating by Victoria Park, but Cliff Cansdale skilfully steered us to an honourable draw against North Molton (202) the following day, as we finished on 115 for 9. On Wednesday, Cliff (58) and Peter Thompson (52) put on 123 for the first wicket against Filleigh to take us to 170, but we had to settle for a draw after taking eight of their wickets.

Beneath low-flying jets, the match with RAF Chivenor saw us stage a great recovery - from 53 for 8 to 167 - after Danny Evans made 67 and Richard Harvey smashed 63 not out at number ten including six 6s. The match fizzled out to a draw as the RAF closed on 102 for 5. We played Victoria Park again for the last match and made 157 thanks to 48 from Roy Stillwell (three sixes). Despite Richard Harvey taking 5 for 35 we failed to bowl out the opposition and finished with the fourth draw of the tour.

A return to Devon in 1983 brought a surprise celebrity into the spotlight. Whilst imbibing in the 'Goose & Gander' at South Molton, Ian Botham was spotted doing likewise in the close by King's Head. Sir Ian kindly signed a tour pennant and cricket bats, and spent time with John Forrest, for whom he signed "To the second best all-rounder in the world." Two games were lost to bad weather, but we secured our first tour victory since the last visit to Northern Ireland in 1967. This long awaited tour victory win came at North Molton where Belhus made 194 after a career best 93 from Cliff Cansdale. John Forrest bagged 8 for 60 and North Molton folded to 166 all out.

The game at Victoria Park ended in defeat as 85 years young Frank Twitchen took 3 for 27 and we could muster only 126. John Forrest took 5 for 33. Against Filleigh (174) in a game that was played at Lady Fortescue's Deer Park, we clung on well to close at 101 for 8 (Danny Evans 32*) and earn a well-deserved draw.



Lisa Cansdale, Ian Botham and Cliff Cansdale (1983)

1984 saw a return to Devon, often described as the most enjoyable of the Devon tours, even though we failed to win a match. Our closest result was at our return visit to Lady Fortescue's estate where we lost by 32 runs after John Forrest had made 66 and Cliff Cansdale 79. We were heavily defeated by Bideford, Littleham and Westward Ho by 7 wickets, but in typical touring tradition a good time was had by all.

1985 was the fourth successive trip to Devon but only three games were played. Against North Molton, Richard Ashton made 56 when we batted first, and although Richard Harvey bagged 5 for 40, we lost the first match of the tour.

We played a Twenty20 match against Witheridge and our 97 for 6 nearly proved sufficient. In an exciting finish, Witheridge squeezed home with four balls to spare. At Failand, near Bristol, Optimists made 181. We lost Steve Huckstepp without a run on the board but Mark Winter made 52 and we closed at 135 for 9 for a draw.

In 1994, nine years after the last tour, Lancashire was chosen as a new destination. The Clubhouse Hotel, Southport was booked and Richard Wakely arranged fixtures. The cricket was hard, the hospitality excellent - a new golden age was beginning.

Prior to the first game, Cliff Cansdale had his car stolen by joy riders, but such was the level of banter and trick-playing, he thought it was a practical joke. It wasn't!

'...Cliff Cansdale had his car stolen...'

At St Helens, the Recs scored 298 (Rob Waters 6 for 66) with South African under-21 player Dross smashing 76. We lost, but managed 202 (David Stone 59). We suffered another defeat the following day at the County ground in Southport. Next day, Tony Lincoln rallied the troops during lunch at the smallest pub in Britain, and they responded by defeating Neston at the Cheshire County ground. **Tony** made 66.

We secured a fine 44 run win at Formby when Tony Lincoln (78) and Wayne Read (58) put on 134 for the second wicket. After-match drinking games saw fines and courts martial, and the shorts of Peter ('Putt') Clark were burnt while a statement was read that the teams would play for the ashes (where are they?) the following year.



Tour XI v St Helen's CC, Lancashire 1994

Back: Robert Waters Peter Clark Tony Lincoln Mark Winter Martin Dix David Stone Cliff Cansdale
Front: Wayne Read Richard Wakely Jim Banner Jim Robertson Kelvin Carter

Back to Lancashire in 1995, we continued the tradition of receiving a drubbing in the opening two fixtures. After a heavy defeat at St Helens, we retired to a Chinese restaurant where one unnamed tourist was the only person who didn't realise that the flirtatious lady sitting opposite wasn't a lady at all - but an ex policeman.

Against Southport & Birkdale, the match was played almost entirely in the rain. In an attempt to take a catch, Neil Carter staggered backwards and forwards until realising that he had badly misjudged it. In making a full length dive, he ended up in a puddle of mud - a scene more like the Keystone Cops than a cricket match.

Against Neston, Tony Lincoln again rallied the troops, and we planted 116 for the first wicket (Tony and Mark Winter) as we closed on 204 for 1. They got close, but no cigar (Rob Waters 5 for 86). At Formby we made 217; Kelvin Carter hit his maiden 50. Formby were too strong in reply. For the final fixture, it rained and rained and rained - all the more time for everyone, not surprisingly, to drink, drink, drink.

1996 saw a tour party of seventeen head up the M6 for another bash at the Lancastrians. We were defeated at St Helen's again even though Mark Winter hit 68. But success came at Southport & Birkdale after we made 204 (Wayne Read scored 91 after two successive ducks) and we skittled them for 180. We came down to earth with a bang the following day at Northern - a hard night partying caught up with us. We lost to nine men at Northern. Belhus 156 - Northern 158 for 3.

The finale at Formby was a classic. Despite some heavy drinking during the Belhus innings, we made 199 (Paul Stone 77). Robert Waters had sunk ten whiskies and was somewhat unsteady; Mark Winter likewise. Soon into the Formby innings it was clear that neither could take further part, so skipper Peter Clark called for substitutes. We chipped away at Formby's batting and with one ball remaining and two runs required, the last Formby batsman was run out by Richard Day. More drinking.

'...had sunk ten whiskies and was somewhat unsteady'

1997 saw another trip to Lancashire. A new fixture was secured against Merseyside Police and we won a lacklustre game as Terry Lambert Jnr (now a dutiful PC too) hit 44. The after-match entertainment at Police HQ in Bootle involved plates of curry and chilli, followed by some adventurous drinking of a variety of spirits.

The match against Northern was a nail-biter. Chasing a total of 186 (Jason Caparn 5 for 34), we lurched from one disaster to another and it was left to Richard Dopson to negotiate a tense final over, which he often does brilliantly, as we stalled at 98 for 8.

The final hurrah was at Formby. We won easily (Dave Aldridge 5 for 19). David Cayless, who had got wed earlier that year, was castigated heavily for non invitation of the great and the good. He was subjected to a mock wedding in the Formby clubhouse, resplendent with bride Belusena Club (Peter Clark), and a goat-masked minister (Neil Carter) and choir. Hymns were sung, oaths read and the groom wore a kilt and ball and chain. A great tour, but it was time to move to pastures new.

Scarborough was the base for our first tour to Yorkshire in 1998. Four fixtures were arranged but only two were played during the week of the Scarborough Festival.

Martin Guilbert made 51 and Dave Aldridge took 5 for 24 v Sheriff Hutton Bridge and we won by 34 runs. Tony Lincoln (95*) and Terry Lambert Jnr put on 110 for the first wicket against Driffield, but 190 proved easy for Driffield, winning by seven wickets.

The tour was plagued by poor weather and the cricket petered out to a bit of a damp squib. Socially, drinks were had with Darren Gough and the Yorkshire team, while Robin Smith was spotted judging the local 'talent'. Unfortunately, the term talent would have been somewhat misused on the attempts at dancing by county cricketers Silverwood and Stemp in the discothèque, 'Boleyn's'. Best stick to the cricket lads.

'The tour was plagued by poor weather...'

The tours that followed in 1999, 2000 and 2002 focused more on the social side than the cricketing front, as depleted tour parties (sometimes dropping as low in number as the basic eleven) visited Yorkshire, Devon and Lancashire respectively.

Following a gap year, Jim Robertson and Wayne Read grabbed the tour organisation reins and set about reigniting the members' passion for domestic touring, rekindling the embers from previous years. Norfolk was the chosen destination, with Lowestoft the base in 2003 and Norwich from 2004 onwards. Over the past seven years, Lowestoft, Norwich & Ingham, Kirkley, Horsford, Happisburgh, Vauxhall Mallards, South Walsham and Brooke have all provided good quality opposition.

'...rekindling the embers from previous years'

Despite a regular July date, the one downside has been the poor weather and 2007 was particularly badly hit. But among the rain clouds, there have been some particular highspots - the Nick Marns and Steve Huckstepp club record sixth wicket partnership v Norwich on the 2006 tour (Marns making 125). Jim Robertson took five wickets at Lowestoft in 2006 and, on the same tour, Nathan Turner made a pair of 90s (96 v Lowestoft and 97 v South Walsham three days later).

2009 saw Paul Whitlock take five wickets in the defeat at Vauxhall Mallards and he followed that up with a fine 50 against South Walsham which, together with five wickets from Mark Sansom, ensured an impressive victory. The undefeated 86 by Richard Day had achieved the same result against Brooke the previous day.

So, in 2010, Norfolk beckons once again, with more of the same we hope.....

Peter Clark

Northern Ireland Tour 1966

Amateur cricket clubs had been undertaking annual tours since the nineteenth century: it was a tradition. Apart from the privately funded overseas tours organised by the likes of D. H. Robins and E. W. Swanton that contained county and test cricketers, such tours had been close-to-home affairs with the West Country and sunny Devon being the most popular. A long weekend or a four or five-day trip tended to be the norm for the boys to get away for some relaxation, fun cricket, a morning's golf or stroll along the promenade and, of course, yards and yards of ale.

So in 1966, at just six years of age, the club discarded tradition and announced that it was embarking upon a tour to Northern Ireland. Quite why Northern Ireland was chosen when many other locations would have been more convenient and easier to arrange is not known. And to this very day, Andrew Merton, who organised the trip so efficiently, can't recall either. The mystery lives on.

'...why Northern Ireland was chosen is not known...'

It was decided to travel to Belfast by air (Aer Lingus), but not just for a few days - a whole week. Now this really was breaking the mould. The meeting place on the day of departure (23rd July, when England's football team was to play Argentina in the World Cup quarter finals) was, not surprisingly, *'The Archer'*. Whilst a number of players crowded in to an old minibus, others made their own way to Heathrow.

Upon arrival at Belfast airport, we collected a hire minibus and a car to transport us to our lodgings (the party was split in two separate guest houses) as well as to the various matches over the course of the week. Upon arrival at one of the guest houses, we discovered that one of our cricket bags had fallen off the minibus roof-rack somewhere along the route. Fortunately for Vic Davies, his gear was picked up by the local police and he collected his bag from the police station the following day.

'...allowed us to bed down on her living room floor'

Whilst we were busy tracking down the missing bag, the appearance of some of our guys at one of the guest houses took the landlady by surprise - she wasn't expecting them until the following day. Unfortunately, she was unable to accommodate them until rooms were vacated the following morning. But after some skilful negotiation the landlady of the other guest house allowed a few of them to bed down on her living room floor, but others had to spend the night in the minibus.

Quite an eventful start to our first ever tour!

Our first match was against Queen's University. Although we dismissed the Irish international player Ivan Anderson for 22 (he had made his debut against Middlesex the previous week, top scoring in both innings) QU rattled up 220 which, despite a fine knock of 46 by Vic Davies, proved far too many for us. We lost by 104 runs.

The match the following day was against Downpatrick. Richard Hutton scored 113 to take them to 175, another target beyond our reach. We lost again. However, all was forgotten as we scoffed lots of cream cakes and then watched the television in a local hostelry to see England defeat Portugal in the semi-final of the World Cup.

‘...scoffed lots of cream cakes...’

On Wednesday 28th, at the premier ground in Northern Ireland, NICC in Ormeau, we suffered another defeat. Batting first, it took us 47 overs to score 91 runs. We performed better against Armagh when Eric Booth scored 64, and made a game of it against the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Both matches were lost. A complete whitewash for the week was avoided when we drew against North Down on 31st July - while England was thrashing Germany in the football World Cup Final.

Northern Ireland Tour 1967

In making the decision to tour Northern Ireland again the following year, it could only have been for financial reasons that train and boat was the preferred form of travel. So we set off from Euston Station to catch the ferry from Heysham to Belfast - a longish journey in those days. Like all tours, be they cricket, rugby or football, a game of cards is the most popular, traditional way to pass the time while travelling. And so it was on our train journey - brag and poker. But unlike cricket, there's not such a thing as a 'friendly' game of cards. Money was at stake and by the time we arrived at Heysham, young Chris Francis, poor lad, was almost penniless.

‘...two in each bunk and two on the floor’

The Irish Sea can be a little choppy at the best of times, and our night crossing turned out to be the roughest in ten years. We had booked only two cabins for our 18-strong party (one of which was occupied by opening bowler Keith Davis and his female partner. A couple of people opted to stretch out for the night on a wooden bench up on deck, whilst ten (yes, 10) others squeezed in to the other four-berth cabin, with two in each bunk and two on the floor. Needless to say, it was a sleepless night. But by reason of his early career as a purser in the merchant navy, Bill Line was able to negotiate himself a personal luxury cabin, and appeared on deck the following morning as sprightly as a lark in his bright red blazer and tie.

Despite our dismal performances the previous year, Andrew Merton was able to rearrange four of the same fixtures. This time, however, we opted for the luxury of the Marine Hotel that was situated on the seafront in Bangor. On our free day on Sunday, the round-the-harbour rowing boat race nearly resulted in the capsizing of the boat captained by Bill Line who had claimed to be an expert sailor.

Our opening match was again against Queen's University who had little difficulty in dismissing us for just 52. But on a damp track, we managed to remove seven of their batsmen and lost by just three wickets - a creditable show. Far too much Guinness after the match didn't help our effort against Downpatrick the following day where, apart from Vic Davies who scored 36, we batted poorly in making 92 and lost by six wickets. There was a similar story in the next match against the RUC. Clearly Belhus players are not at their best when on tour.

'...Bill Line claimed to be an expert sailor'

But at last our fortunes changed in the match against Armagh. John Rowell and Vic Davies batted well for 25 and 38 respectively, and we posted 129, giving our bowlers a little hope. Don Pegler finally found some form when he opened the bowling and took 5 for 45. With the light fading due to the late start, we run out the last batsman just before 9 o'clock to register our first tour win. We celebrated until the early hours at the Northern Bar in the city centre - and drank the cellar completely dry.

The final match of the tour was against Cliftonville who thrashed us by eight wickets. At that game, Bill Line befriended the club President who invited Bill for drinks/ lunch the following day - the day of our return ferry crossing. With all passengers embarked and the boat ready to depart, there was no sign of Bill or Graham Cunliffe or even the young, innocent Chris Francis who had also been taken along to the lunch. And just as the ship's captain was dismissing our request to delay the departure and signalling for the gangplank to be drawn, the threesome appeared on the quay in the nick of time, red-faced and inebriated after their lunchtime revelry.

'...and drank the cellar completely dry'

So we had experienced two highly enjoyable tours to Northern Ireland and there was much support for another visit. But after the increase in hostilities and a wave of bombings in and around the areas where we had played, it was decided to put a further visit 'on hold' until more stable times returned. That was more than 40 years ago and there is a very strong case for an overdue return. Attractive grounds, a passion for the game and fine hospitality that can hardly be bettered.
