

Bledlow Ridge v Hetairoi

Sunday 28th July 2019 – Home

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RidgeBears are Given a Strong Lesson in Wandering

Unnamed Ridge Player Sleeps Through Entire match

Hetairoi Ringers Include a Couple of Goels and a Real Lord

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BRCC– 156 ao

Hetairoi – 159-4

Result: Lost by 6 wickets (timed match)

We have one remaining Sunday fixture. It's against a Wandering team. A team which wanders, which means the only play away games. Can you imagine that? Some of them come from afar so it's like travelling to Brackley or Shipton every week. And they do it without complaining as far as one knows. This particular fixture had only been played once in three years, due to rain.

Hetairoi means "drinking companion" or "travelling friend" depending on who you ask but like all successful wandering clubs they have a remarkable ability to recruit and regenerate. This one was formed in the 1980s by a few ex-Oriel College Students. Quite remarkably they sustain a fixture list with almost 30 matches and prove both that friendly cricket is alive and that timed cricket is still popular.

Talking of timing, I walked out to the square to find Brian the captain, in order to toss up. A full team of X1 players advanced towards me. Remember, they were the away team. This was impressive and rather better than our crew, one of which was still in bed unable to decide if he was hungover, whether his hip hurt or whether it was yesterday (having sent an email at 12.11pm to say he would not be able to play tomorrow because his "hip was hurrying" – yes really!). He wandered out of the team.

We replaced him with Tommy Lovebite who is off games for five weeks with a broken finger and who cannot bowl either, due to a side strain, or whatever he has injured this week. Tom was keen to play and knew what day it was. Irony is dying.

Brian and I exchanged the normal nonsense about not being particularly strong although Brian did admit to having 10 bowlers, none of whom were in bed asleep.

He said that they had two girls playing. I didn't remember Brian having a West Country accent but I replied that this was good news as we had a portacabin in place especially for this purpose and that we had had a girl playing against us for Leighton Buzzard the previous day. "No" said "Brian both the girls are playing". Perhaps I had mistaken West Country for Northern Irish but I was glad we could accommodate them. When Brian explained that in his team were both the Goel Brothers I began to suspect this had nothing to do with accents so we did not unlock the portacabin.

Our innings followed the usual pattern v Hetairai. They got into us early and dismissed some of our bankers; then they opened it up slightly, RolfeDog and Dales put on a partnership, the tail wagged a bit then they finished us off.

Brooksie got 13 and he, like Jovan who was lbw'd for 4 by Umpire David Saint in some act of 2nd X1 revenge, fell victim to opening bowler Will Fryer who was eventually put out to grass with figures of 8-2-10-2, Richard Slade having ended with 7-1-15-0 at the other end.

Hugo who had opened was still in and in a delicious moment our resident Farrier found himself facing Jeremy Steed. Irony is still alive. Hugo was never quite at the races though and made 11 without ever getting out of the stable door. By this time one of the Goel Girls was on and accounted for Hugo while Des fell victim to the wiles of 97-year-old parent Ollie Fryer. This was beginning to look like a bit of a fry up.

Will Saint survived a few balls against the left-arm orthodox wizardry of Vidur Goel and Ollie Fryer was replaced with the right-arm leg-break wizardry of Varun (Goel if you had not guessed).. Stephen Matthews replaced Vidur who was bowling far too well. Will Saint was replaced by another Real Saint aka David who was soon bowled by Matthews.

Did you follow all that? Amidst the confusion of all this coming-and-going, Dales wandered out to join RolfeDog and set about a 126 year-old partnership. This is some kind of record for The Ridge, at least in modern times. The last time two over 60-year-olds played for The Ridge was at Horspath at least five years ago when James Langdon-Down (all three of him) took the field with Andrew Needham but I don't think they batted together. I do remember that vultures were circling overhead. There were no vultures circling overhead today, there being insufficient meat on the bone in this particular partnership.

Dales logged on before Varun had properly booted up, and took him for a few boundaries before handing over that end to RolfeDog who had been struggling with Matthews' pies. These pies are made from flour milled by family business FWP Matthews Ltd of Shipton-under-Wychwood (you may have seen the banner while wandering around the Shipton ground) and while RolfeDog can usually sight them on the way up, the powerful sweet-smelling aroma is often too strong for him when they are on the way down. They need a bit more meat in them too.

Rabbit would do and in due course, RolfeDog became Matthew's rabbit for the umpteenth time and departed for 29.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. Cooperman strolled to the wicket like the Wandering Minstrel he is and started cover-driving. Is there anything this man cannot do? He played a fine riff and almost caught up with Dales who was reduced to the part of backing group until both of them were bowled by one of the Goel Sisters for 26 and 33 respectively.

13-year-old Aidan Murrell then batted with 3 year-old Tommy Hickey aka Lovebite. Each hit a cover drive for four before Aidan was caught by a Steed off the Bowling of a Ball. I had forgotten to mention that a Ball Bowled too. Jolly confusing.

We wandered off for tea which was by Roz on loan from the Saturday 1s. She showed Stephen Matthews what a pie really looks like and RolfeDog took fright.

We opened up with The Real Saint and Cooperman. One of the opening batsmen was The Real Deal. A Real Lord. Where was Ben Keeping to witness this?

Clive Mackintosh is a real Lord, not with a Lordship purchased off the shelf at Tesco by our Jonny-come-lately Lord Keeping of Bledlow*, but the real thing. One who has worked, nay “served” (as he once corrected me) in the House of Lords. Imagine a house full of them (proper Lords that it, not Keepings as I have seen the latter and it is terrifying). Clive chose not to be known by his title and to mix with the masses instead (unlike Lord Keeping) and does not have to have a drive to his house a mile long. for keeping commoners out.

**A crowd of people stood and stared
They'd seen his face before
Nobody was really sure if he was from the House of Lords (A Day in the Life 1967)*

Anyway, less of the two Lords, Clive Mackintosh and Lord Fraud.

We leaked runs quite quickly, however in the seventh over an aerial drive off Cooperman from The Real Lord flew to Jovan, who used Lord Fraud's ‘let-it-smash-your-chest’ style of the previous day and managed to cling on. (Remember the ClingOns?) Cooperman was struggling and for the first time in ten days we had the answer to the question: “Is there nothing this man cannot do?” The answer was “bowl”. Shock-horror.

Yes, this young Steed (we have one too) had been overworked and had gone in the fetlock. At the sight of the advancing ferrier he limped off to chew hay in the long grass.

Dales and in particular Will Real Saint proved a better bowling combination, Will getting some genuine swing and unluckily conceding runs off edges.

Attempts were made to hide Tom Hickey and his damaged finger in the field but inevitably the ball followed him like a magnet. Finally we had proof that this broken finger-thing was all a hoax when he comfortably caught a catch offered by one of the Goel Brothers (Vidur) off Dales. Offered the chance to have a bowl, Tom invented a side strain and at the sight of the advancing ferrier wandered off to chew hay in the long grass. For his part Karim Pal hit

one of Dales' balls an enormous distance into a tree (at least that's what Dales said it felt like).

For a while there was an enticing contest between Will Saint and Will Ball involving a certain amount of Will Power (on both sides). Then two things happened: firstly Will had bowled his quota and in case Leighton Buzzard's scorer was looking he was replaced by Hugo. Secondly, at the other end, Brooksie had been wicketkeeping so badly that we replaced him with Aidan and there was an immediate and marked improvement.

Hugo's bowling was a thing of mystery. We had expected him to tear down the hill at full gallop but instead he wandered downhill as if bowling uphill, in measured dressage-style. If only we had tried this earlier. Karim had seemed unstoppable but with 57 on the board he was admiring Hugo's baroque trotting technique when he was clean bowled by the Farrier.

At the other end Brooksie replaced Dales and on the boundary Birdy and Mlids warned the opposition that Phil, off his 15 step run, was the 1st team's paceman who had been held back. Cue universal childish giggling when the first delivery floated high and wide of off stump like a balloon expelling air, for a wide. Later, Aidan who was getting the idea of all this, actually took position outside the wide markings and Phil bowled one straight at him.

Remarkably Phil bowled Varum Goel for 11 so that Brian Slade came into join Will Ball. We realised only too late that if Brian was in at No 6 there might not be much to come.

He gave us a chance by trying to run his partner out but where there's a Will there's a Way and Will said "No Way" and the chance was gone and Hetairoi passed our total for the loss of only four wickets.

Not for the first time we have been defeated by The Hetairoi by this margin, with Rolfe and Dales top-scoring and with Slade at the wicket at the end.

The world needs to realign. Next year we need to be stronger and more aggressive as there is no point in dying wondering – or wandering for that matter.

The House of Lords is currently at prayer