

THE PHILANDERERS CRICKET CLUB

Holland Tour Report

28 June - 2 July 1995

by

Tim Simmons

**(or, a Novella by
The Entertainments Officer,
Amsterdam Red Light District South)**

Tourists: P Harvey (Captain), J Burnett (Tour Manager), G Hegarty, J Howard, A Lorimer, G Meakin, S Olley, R Osborn, N Redmayne, P Sadler, T Simmons, R Stoop

Tour Base : Bastion Hotel, Amsterdam Noord, Rode Druisstraat 28, 1025 KN
Amsterdam

Results:

Thursday 29 June

V R A, Amsterdam, 139 for 9 wkts declared (Richard Stoop 4-7 and Nick Redmayne 3 - 50) v The **Philanderers** 132 for 9 wkts (Tim Simmons 55 & Alastair Lorimer 37).
Match Drawn

Friday 30 June

The Philanderers 194 (Nick Redmayne 43) v **Kampong**, Nr Utrecht, 140 for 9 wkts.
The Philanderers won by 54 runs.

Saturday 1 July

The Philanderers 149 (Nick Redmayne 32) v **S.C.H.C.**, Bilthoven, 133 for 9 wkts
(Nick Redmayne 5 - 22 and Alastair Lorimer 3 - 35) The Philanderers won by 16 runs.

Spurred on by the Laeonic efforts of our skipper to do justice to the 1995 Dutch tour in Phil's latest newsletter, I have once again taken up the gauntlet first accepted on last year's Yorkshire tour - that of chronicler of events and misdeeds that do not appear in the scorebook. The trouble with being "official" chronicler is that (a) it's not half as much fun as being unofficial, because you feel obliged to tell something half approaching the truth and (b) you also feel obliged to remain sober and awake at all times in order to faithfully record items of note, and who was involved in them. Hearsay has therefore been ruthlessly expunged from this account (although hallucinations have been admitted under the Misuse of Drugs/Alcohol Abuse section of the Criminal Evidence Act 1971).

A merry yet subdued party gathered at the Post House Hotel in the late afternoon of Wednesday 28 June, efficiently shepherded by a tearful collection of loyal wives, one of whom was shortly to wish she hadn't been there. Anne Lorimer was looking forward to three days peace and quiet when she was forced into the passenger seat of her car to accompany one of the team members who remembered two minutes before departure he'd left his passport in his office in central Cambridge. Apparently she is still too shocked to talk about the journey, which ended in a 100 mph dash along the A45 to catch up with the team minibus on its way to Harwich. I seem to have omitted a piece of relevant information about this embarrassing episode, but I'm sure it'll come back to me

Luckily the attention of most of the team had been distracted at the critical point by the bizarre sight of Nick Redmayne and John Howard lapping the Post House car park in the said minibus, acquainting themselves for the first time with the controls and performance of the vehicle which was to convey our party of eight current players and four vice-presidents around foreign soil. No item of safety or security overlooked in preparation for this epic 10th anniversary journey, you may think, but arrival dockside at Harwich was duly achieved on time and without further incident, if you exclude Phil's opprobrium at not being able to chain smoke his cheroots throughout the journey. The complaints started sotto voce as we left Newmarket, had reached a crescendo by the time we'd by-passed Bury St Edmunds, and were to be repeated every time we boarded the bus ... and he calls me a nightmare!

Arrangements on board Stena Sealink's giant Koningin Beatrix ferry were simple and effective - a block booking at the nearest table to the gargantuan smorgasbord, from the moment it opened until three hours after it was due to close, followed by retirement to our sumptuous reclining seats. Led authoritatively by our intrepid skipper, we ignored all supplications, polite or otherwise from the restaurant manager, to vacate our table.

Once again I was reminded of the perils of attempting sleep in the company of one's team mates on tour, as after ten minutes of blissful slumber, I woke to a sensation akin to being caught in the downwash of Concorde. I was much reassured to find it was merely the slipstream of Graham Hegarty's snoring from the seat in front of me.

Disembarkation at Hook Van Holland on a bright, clear early morning augured well, and we proceeded purposefully towards our north Amsterdam destination. Had we been staying in Utrecht as originally planned (thwarted apparently by an overbooking problem created by Holland's largest annual religious Festival), the Messiah and his cricketing disciples would have reached their hotel in even time. As it was, John "Dutchie" Burnett's computer-aided interpretation of our instructions left a little to be desired, and his attempts at manual navigation were no better. By the time we reached the Bastion Hotel, we'd used one driver (me) and eight navigators, all of whom were perfectly content to voice their opinions on a loud and regular basis, but none of whom were able or willing to see the job through. The only members to emerge with any credit from this early breakdown in team discipline were Graham Hegarty (too asleep), Peter Sadler (too polite) and Garry Meakin (still to board Suckling Airways flight 101 from Cambridge to Amsterdam).

However, the said Hotel Bastion eventually loomed into view (six times) and we eventually pulled up outside it. Our timing was not good. What they were expecting (as we learnt later) was a group of professional businessmen on a weekend convention, the only pretence under which our hosts could find us a suitable hotel in Amsterdam at short notice. What they got was a barmy army of geriatric cricketers dressed in beachwear (come back Simon Yorke in Le Touquet shorts, all is forgiven) short on sleep and many other forms of deprivation, demanding instant services of varying forms, as all their correctly-attired business guests were trying to check out. Led by Richard Stoop (another sotto voce specialist), our merry band of intrepid travellers crashed into their small reception/bar area demanding rooms, breakfast, drinks, saunas, how far to the red light district? and "Can I ring my wife?", not necessarily in that order.

Richard produced his Gold Amex card in an attempt to speed up the response of the shell-shocked staff, which promptly got banged with the whole team's accommodation for all three nights. Bastion Hotel 1 - Philanderers 0, a game that continued for most of our stay, but which by the end of it probably ended up an honourable draw. It must also be said that John Burnett's tour manager status suffered another knock at this point. Having autocratically (but reasonably) informed us on the ferry the night before that he would organise the room pairings, to avoid tour clique and the like, his big moment had arrived - they were finally ready to give us our rooms. Polite requests from team and hotel reception alike for the rooming list were met by stumbling psycho-babble about team spirit worthy of the boy on the burning bridge, and ended up with, I quote "I don't f___ing care where you sleep, you lot can sort yourselves out!" Which we duly did, in about 10 seconds flat. The best laid plans of mice and men.

Order of some sort restored, we had a couple of hours to recuperate before girding our loins for the first match, and setting off for the immaculate VRA Amsterdam ground, venue of the Dutch national team, in time for the lunch which Dutchie had assured us had been prepared by our hosts prior to the game. So confident was he of the gastronomic arrangements that he recovered his authority to the extent of advising those of us comfortably ensconced on the hotel terrace to cancel our toasted sandwiches and get in the minibus. For those of us (most) who had foregone breakfast, this was a tricky moment, but we dutifully obeyed. On arrival at the impressive VRA ground and pavilion (sponsored by AGN Ambro) there were several

facts immediately apparent. (1) It was very hot, like 90 and climbing (2) the ground was huge, and batting first was imperative in the heat (3) we were fielding first (4) there was no lunch. Apart from that, our hosts' reception was exceptionally warm and friendly, repeated at the next two matches, with varying degrees of gamesmanship attached.

Given the less than ideal preparation for our first game on foreign soil, a very tight and disciplined performance followed from Den Limpenbonken, led by Richard Stoop (4-7, and a superb run out of their top batsman with a direct hit from 40 yards), and Reliable Redmayne (3-50). VRA accumulated very slowly and eventually declared at 139 - 9, though the pace of the game was no doubt partly dictated by the dehydration, malnutrition and hallucination of their visitors. The occasional lapse was inevitable, and it was unfortunate they all fell to Stuart Olley, who proceeded to unpouch three catches of varying undifficulty, but it's happened to all of us. Although not much consolation to him, the tour kitty was 30 guilders richer, and on this occasion it did not undermine his otherwise genial bonhomie. Far more expensive was your correspondent's two overs, which although occupying the crease for a considerable period of time, yielded approximately 15% of the opposition's total score. I thought I was good for one more over but a quick referendum of the team deprived me of the opportunity.

I cannot accurately recall the details of the Philanderers early response, because I was asleep at the time under a tree, but it included a grafted 37 from Alastair Lorimer and, when rudely awakened from my slumber 55 from Tim Simmons. We found scoring no easier than our hosts, part of which was due to some fairly quick bowling on an artificial track, off which the ball lifted rather more rapidly than that to which we are accustomed. Being half asleep is quite useful when the ball is rapping you on non-existent thigh pads and whistling past your non-existent helmet. I did think of calling for a Dutch cap but apparently none were available.

None of the above should detract from a hard-fought game honourably drawn, with everyone playing a full part and Den Limpenbonken 8 runs short of victory at the end, but with only 1 wicket remaining.

A thoroughly genial evening followed in VRA's pavilion, and a relaxed if weary bunch of Den Limpenbonken re-boarded their minibus for the journey back to the hotel, to enjoy a steak supper and prepare for an 0030 hrs departure to our next fixture - Amsterdam Centre, for a few lemonades. Having changed into our nightwear, we were ready for the town. Taxis were commandeered (Dutchie back in full control) and the convoy duly departed. I wish I could accurately report on the night that followed, but as Phil and I got left behind at the hotel by the headlong flight into town, I must invoke the no-hearsay rule. What I am told is that when various members straggled back to the hotel, skipper and I were still seated where they left us, two-thirds of the way down an excellent bottle of port, so they couldn't have been gone long Such are life's disappointments.

Another hot day, another match. The unlikely named Kampong C.C., complete with Australian professional, welcomed us in typically friendly if guarded fashion, somewhere near Utrecht, confused by the slow plod of their opposition from minibus

to bar. An excellent lunch had been prepared this time (which Dutchie hadn't told us about) and our hosts were poised over the tea urns. Looks of bemusement followed as the first Philanderers to the bar asked for beers, lots of them. The opposition's guard visibly dropped. You could see this young, keen, athletic side on mineral water and fruit juice eyeing this decrepit bunch of Englishman with (pitying) if (eager) relish. They paid the price. Giving us first knock, they responded to an uncertain Philanderers start by letting their guard drop even further. Little did they reckon on some modest but important contributions from Burnett J, Howard J, et al (I wish I could report more but I was asleep under a tree at the time), capped by Redmayne N, clubbing them for 43 in 27 balls, including a huge six into the next province. 194 off 39.3 overs was reached, not a bad score, but well within reach of their alleged batting strength.

A small cameo (which did wake me up, because Richard Stoop insisted on giving me a running commentary) involved Olley S (of unpouched catch fame). Opposition were one short, and we were up to full tour strength of 12, having collected Gazza Meakin that morning from Schipol Airport, en route to the ground. Do we lend Kampong a player? Yes! Who? Olley S - democratically deputed. First 10 overs, two skyed catches. Who is under them? Olley S. Does he catch them? No. Consistency personified. Next thing, on comes Stuart to bowl for the opposition. Result - first ball, wicket (J Burnett, clean bowled, heaving); sixth ball, wicket, twenty first ball, wicket. Result (following a brisk and vigorous knock when batting) - Olley S Man of the Match award for Kampong versus The Philanderers. Brilliant! But I'm jumping ahead.

Chasing 195 for victory, confident Kampong (including four first team/national team standard) were reduced to 140 for 9 off their 40 overs. Catches stuck, subtle field placings and bowling changes worked, a little constant mini-sledging, and Den Limpenbonken were easily home - aided by keeping in their turgid opening batsman for the whole innings, n.o. 30 after 40 overs.

A very convivial evening ensued at Kampong, including a barbecue which was enjoyed by all, especially John Burnett, who received a bucket of water as a fine for talking business on tour. We bade a sad farewell around 10.00 pm, only because certain team members wished to resume their acquaintance with olde Amsterdam (and she was old, Rupert, you have to admit - oops, hearsay!) and a buoyant, if even more weary Philanderers, headed back to Amsterdam. We needed something to pep us up, and it was duly provided by the driver of the night carefully avoiding a granny on a bicycle from his right but overlooking a manic bus driver on his left. All part of life's rich pattern.

But we reached the hotel, changed our underwear, and a full complement of Den Limpenbonken departed for the student quarter, where a convivial team beer was taken in non-cricket surroundings, and the warm, soft evening air started to lull us into the relaxed mode which typifies that fair city. Groups duly drifted off in different directions, confident that their team mates would/would not be watching if and when they lapsed from their normal strict code of professional and sporting behaviour, and of course I would report without risk of fear or favour anything remotely unsavoury, if it had occurred. Unfortunately I was asleep under a tree at the time. However, I do

know that at least some of our party must have been tucked up in bed nice and early because I heard them talking about a Horlicks.

Day three, match three. Still hot. Where's Bilthoven? Who cares? Do we have to go via Utrecht? Certainly, why change a winning formula? We eventually arrive at the homely and hospitable facilities (once again) of S.C.H.C. (Stitschke Cricket and Hockey Club). Two facts are immediately apparent (1) we need to sit down for a very long time (2) we need to stand up for a very short time, viz, can we make this say, 10 overs a side? Opposition, including (allegedly) the-most-dangerous-batsman-we're-going-to-face-on-tour-driving-immaculate-dark-blue-TR6, compromise on 30 overs but cheerfully make us walk the half mile from the sports club to the woodland setting of the pitch. It's a pleasant contrast to the end of the - Schipol - runway position of VRA's pitch, and the hum of the A2 motorway next to Kampong's ground, and most of us would have happily settled for a little nature rambling, but they want to play cricket. Philanderers win toss. So far, so good. Bat first (still hot). Who's going to open the batting? Not many volunteers. Hegarty and Simmons slow to resist, so open. Have great difficulty making ball move off bat. Grass suddenly seems three feet long. You put your best foot forward, you connect solidly, and ball rockets away to come to rest ten feet from square. Ten overs of this and team are getting bored/agitated, but we're still occupying the crease. As G Boycott says "you've got t' occupy crease in a fahve day Test Match". Frantic signals from pavilion cum/toilet-less potting shed, 800 m - from nearest WC. Get out or get scoring. We get out, but the foundation is laid. How much do we need to defend 30 overs? Say 150. Den Limpenbonken 149 all out, courtesy of some brave hitting from Burnett, good running from Osborn and Meakin, and (once again) the dark horse, Nick Roodmanen (32 and the tour six record).

Philanderers stagger out to defend their total, on a ground long end to end (like very long) and short side to side. Slowly, the very slow Philanderers prepare their strategy. Burnett (man of experience) bottom end. Good start. Second over, top end, bring on Roodmanen. Paces out run up, prepares to deliver first ball of second over, and runs in. Whoa! Harvey, waving his arms, takes him off, before he's bowled a ball! Employ some psychology. Bring on a slow bowler. Result - Lorimer A, wheeled in, in place of Redders. First ball, opening batsman, out! Magic start. Next over, another wicket. Two overs later, it's Lorimer to Dangerman, who loses patience, goes down wicket, heaves - and misses! Where's the wicket keeper, guardian of all we hold dear? Ball passes wicket, wicket keeper fumbling in pocket for light for his cigar, but leaps forward and takes ball cleanly. Dangerman still out of his ground. Take off the bails, Phil! Harvey's reaction seemed like slow motion, but he leans athletically forward and delicately disturbs the stumps, clearly visible from 200 m away. Batsman out! But bail takes a long time to be dislodged, and finally topples just as Dangerman regains his ground. Huge appeal! He's out! Not happy, but just enough was done, in just the right way. Economy of effort, combined with lumbago, can produce some dramatic moments.

At this point, we think we're home and dry, and Dutchie informs us not much batting left to worry about. We fall into the trap, the SCHC have a couple of obdurate batsman who survive and prosper, and start to clout us into the trees. The score mounts and they put on 60 plus; from 62 for 5, they pass 100. On comes Redmayne the Reliable, but it's getting a bit tense and he's a bit off line. They pass 130, and team

discipline is starting to wilt, a la navigation from The Hook to Amsterdam. Peter Sadler gets told to move four times, by four different non-executive fielders in one over, and ends up back where he was!

Finally, a chance comes our way, as a big clout heads towards Graham Hegarty, who, like most of us at that stage, is knackered, except he's knackered and asleep. The catch is grasped at but goes down. Groans, and the tension mounts. It only goes to show that the difference between win or lose in a tight situation comes down to fielding. Another catch is hit (very) firmly into the deep, and Hegggers, now awake, comes in and takes the crucial pouch to dismiss one of the two said batsmen. Next over, Garry Meakin hurls himself sideways at midwicket for the catch of the tour (the "Flying Rat") and both "dangermen" are gone. Redders cleans up the tail with two wickets (5-22 for the match) in consecutive balls and we're home and wet, and limp. Played 3, won 2, drawn 1. Undefeated on tour.

I have hazy recollections of another carnival evening at the hotel, none whatever of the journey back to Hook the following morning, but a revival of sorts over lunch on the ferry. This continued with the afternoon cabaret on board, (in which the singer unwisely invited Richard Stoop on stage for a few moments and then had great difficulty recovering his microphone) but plummeted with the long journey home. Never mind, the important memories will linger long - good cricket, good companionship and a lot of laughter. Roll on the 20th anniversary.



The boys of Holland '95 with opposition players