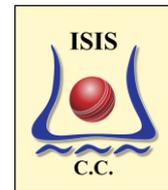


TOUR REPORT — 2003 SEASON

24th – 25th May 2003



Rising at an unearthly hour of the day, the Isis touring faithful dragged themselves from their beds on Saturday 24th May, cleared the sleep from their eyes and started the long haul to the West Country for the 2003 tour. Given the heavy cloud and rain of the week before Isis had prayed for respite from the elements, so that when the daybreak bought the promise of at least some sunshine for the weekend ahead there was huge relief.

The journey was fairly uneventful, and despite the anticipated slow traffic at Bristol the party made good progress in line with the pre-tour schedule, converging at the Church Tower Inn, Harberton on or around the midday deadline. Keith Ponsford, Dave Lawrence, Keith Whiter, Trevor Williams and Chris Williams impatiently awaited the opening of the pub, and as the village seemed asleep Chris decided to wake them up by setting off Whiter's car alarm which duly brought about a ringing of the church bells and had the desired effect on the Inn's barman.

Oliver Walter, Nick Wyatt and ringer Paul Hunt arrived moments later, with John Cripps and Joe Walter close behind. With postman Pete Wiblin a known late arrival (he'll do anything to avoid buying a beer) Isis were therefore in situ and the ale started to flow. Olly Walter failed at the first hurdle in his mission to out-drink the seasoned Isis old-boys, and regressed to orange juice inside of an hour. When 2 o'clock came, sustained by a good choice of ales and a hearty meal of local pork sausages, Isis began to think about the job ahead and made their way up the hill to Harberton Cricket Club for the first game of tour. Changing in the wooden shed that served as changing room, kitchen and tea room, Whiter promptly declared that he had brought two left shoes, and only one of them spiked and sensing the opportunity of a snooze declared that he could not play unless he was allowed to wear sandals. Paul Hunt saved the day though producing a spare pair of boots (which he is now unlikely to ever see again!). Duped into batting by the wily home-team captain, Isis went in first and did not make many runs although captain Walter, on the way to his personal 50, did take the opportunity of running-out a suitably impressed Wiblin, who arrived midway through the innings and immediately started being mad, talking incessantly about some village called Cockington near Torquay that we would all be stupid not to visit while in the area. Also notable at this time was the failure of tour ringer Hunt to trouble the scorers for more than 7 runs.

A very good tea followed the Isis innings which sat nicely on the beer and sausages of lunchtime to set them up for a non-athletic-like performance in the field. Sure enough they were sluggish and sloth-like and allowed Harberton to win, which left little other course of action for Isis than to return to the Church Tower Inn to pick up where they left off earlier. Three jugs and a couple of crafty pints later and itinerary-man Wyatt declared an end to the Harberton-experience and the tourists left for Torquay. With expedition scout and tour-photographer Trevor Williams doing a good job in the shotgun seat of the lead-vehicle, the tourists found their way to their hotels with little incident, though they were fully 90 minutes behind schedule.

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With the prospect of the svelte, available, sun-tanned beauties of Torquay awaiting them, the showering, preening and pampering of the Adonis-like Isis tourists at the Newburgh hotel took record time and by ten o'clock they were prowling the streets looking for trouble. The young studs of hotel #2 however took a little more time with their hair and make-up than the seasoned men, and to save time later (one supposes) adorned their pyjamas for the night ahead. Converging at Albert's bar (nearest bar found, open, serving alcohol) the tone for the evening was set when in fact it seemed that Torquay was not quite as Ibiza-like as hoped. Still failing miserably to keep up with the drinking of the die-hards, the studs scowled into their beer until they were promised a visit to Mojo's or the Rainbow club after the traditional tour curry. Before long we had found an appropriate curry-house, but as they were not quite ready to take us on, Isis hit the Bull and Bush public house for pre-dinner drinks. Ringer Paul Hunt became a veritable magnet for the local heifers (a more aptly named pub you could not wish to find!!) while the rest of the party took on as much liquid as time would allow in preparation for the sweat and exertion of the day to come. At the allotted time Isis converged on the Indian again and took to their seats amidst choruses of wolf-whistles from the beauties (?) in the eating area above. Pete Wiblin made several unsuccessful forays into the midst of said-beauties, his tendency to prattle on about Cockington not quite the aphrodisiac he'd hoped. Of course, by the time the said-curries were eaten and the uninspiring lager drunk it was one o'clock and the studs, still eager to try out their dancing shoes, were left disappointed and had no other choice than to skulk to their beds.

Dawn broke to the promise of a delicious and nutritious breakfast and a day of sporting heroics from the athletes of Isis. Breakfast conversation was centred around: -

- how salty Joe Walter found things (not sure whether he was referring to the curry of the previous evening, or a night spent in the bed-company of messieurs Cripps and Wiblin),
- the ancient Egyptian god Isis (whose image was mysteriously all around us, the landlady of the hotel being of all things a sand reader!)
- the disappointment that the state of world events meant that Great Britain were left without a point in the Eurovision Song Contest, and
- whether Isis should or shouldn't visit the nearby village of Cockington on their way to golf.

And so with bellies refilled with fats and caffeine, at 10:15 (45 minutes later than scheduled) the Isis boys said a sad farewell to chairman Keith Ponsford and headed for Sparkwell golf club **via Cockington**. After spending two minutes in said village (very nice Pete) and taking a long drive across country, losing each other on the way, we converged on the golf club. The spark went out for Cripps and Wiblin who cried off to the coffee shop and so, armed with bags of all colours of the rainbow and clubs of questionable quality, eight Isis faithful took to the fairway, albeit with no hope of getting nine holes in as scheduled. After the head fell off of one of Trevor Williams' clubs, and when Joe Walter was heard to claim a bogey on the par-three second after driving into a ditch, dropping nearer the hole, air-shotting, pitching and then putting in two, any thought of serious competition went out of the window, and after hacking around a few holes and allowing Chris Williams to take the honours in the lead round, the boys set off for Tavistock one

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hour behind schedule.

Pete Wiblin bought in one Adrian Boughton, an Isisman of old, who kindly covered for the missing Ponsford as today's ringer. However, Tavistock showed Isis little mercy, and after the bowlers were pounded into submission, and the batsmen waited in vain for a bad ball from Tavistock's soon-to-be South African international all-rounder, Isis trudged off with a slightly contrived draw to leave some sense of achievement from the weekend. Still, another excellent tea was provided and ringer Boughton had hit double-figures to out-score ringer #1 (though 12 runs was not going to cut the mustard against the 215 declared that Isis were chasing). And so it was that after the boys had rallied together for a couple of closing beers, Isis left Devon at the mercy of the laggard Wiblin, the remaining 9 weary travellers setting off for home, for once on schedule with the itinerary.

While we didn't make the papers for our cricketing prowess, and we didn't exactly paint Torquay red on the Saturday night, a bloody good time was had by all, and we are once again indebted to Nick Wyatt for organising games and accommodation and putting together the itinerary (that boy needs a time management course though). Thanks also to Pete Wiblin, tour accountant, for making it all work to budget.

Keith Whiter