

TOUR REPORT — 2004 SEASON

29th – 30th May 2004



The 2004 Isis tour party rose from their beds early on Saturday 29th May, ready for three days of cricket, fun and frolic in the West Country. The two vice-captains, Olly Walter and Nicky Wyatt, together with mentor Joe Walter, got a head-start in one car and these three will surely have been discussing nervously every tour captain's nightmare that not everybody would arrive at the same place at the same time. With Damien Todd and Graham Godby already in the West Country area though, and assuming that they themselves could keep to schedule, they only needed six more people down there for a 2.30 start. Keith Whiter was on a mini-tour of Oxford to pick up his contingent of Keith Ponsford, Ritchie Ramcreepaul, Trevor Williams, Paul Jacobs and Rob Randall and with John Cripps and Pete Wiblin on the road and riding solo there could be no worries, could there?

Well, a tour is not a tour if everything goes to plan, and the itinerary failed at the first hurdle because shortly after joining the M4 at Swindon it became a virtual car park due to the volume of traffic moving into Wales for the Division 1 play-off between West Ham and Crystal Palace. Vodaphone clapped their hands in glee as frantic calls were exchanged between the Isismen to monitor progress, and a splinter group took a wise decision to head out to Salisbury and the A303 towards Exeter. The beer had started flowing in Whiter's car though, and those six stayed put until Rob Randall's and Ritchie Ramcreepaul's bladders necessitated a detour through Bristol and in a convoluted way they emerged on the M5 some two hours behind schedule. So it was that they were last to arrive at the meeting place, the fabulous Devon Dumpling p.h., shortly before 14:00 where they were relieved to find the rest of the tour party in situ eating and drinking in the Devonshire sunshine. Damien Todd looked on smugly as the only member of the tour to escape a lateness fine, ruthlessly imposed by Fines Chairman Keith Ponsford, who then turned an uncharacteristic blind eye to flagrant transgression of the left-handed drinking rule as Isis got themselves into the zone for the first game of tour. And so it was that at 14:10 the party decamped and made their way up the hill to Torquay Grammar School ready to pit their wits against fellow tourists Camberwell Casuals.

Now, we weren't exactly promised Eton, but with an asking price of £120 for the pitch (with no tea) and having referenced the rather stuffy TBGS website which boasts that "For 100 years, Torquay Boys' Grammar School has been a centre of excellence for pupils in Torbay and South Devon and has been a leader nationally and internationally in both education and sport" led at least one of us to believe we were going to be playing somewhere very special. Imagine the horror then, when having introduced ourselves to the touring opposition the reality was a field adjacent to the school tennis courts, with no other facilities than an artificial track (which it was claimed was laid by Derek Underwood) and one set of spring-back stumps. No boundary, no holes for the stumps that we had had the forethought to bring with us and no groundsman, who bugged off to watch the football with £50 in his pocket. After much debate and a few unhelpful suggestions (anyone for rounders?) the two teams agreed that all overs would be bowled from the same end, two stumps were put in at the side of the mat at the non-strike end, to enable run-outs to be taken at either end, and the boundary was agreed and marked out with

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anything found lying around about. The sun shone more brilliantly than we could have imagined. Whites were donned and play commenced with Isis in bat and, as it turned out, a bloody good game ensued with Isis facing the atypical situation of a selection decision on tour, and lending two men (Godby and Randall) to the opposition. You can check the stats and report out on the web-site, but save is to say that despite the usual Joe Walter-inspired run-out (John Cripps the victim this time around) and a typical Pete Wiblin failure, Isis did pretty well with a blinding one-shot attack from Ritchie Ramcreepaul, a majestic unbeaten knock from Trevor Williams and the staggering addition of 38 extras to bring about a score of 165. After some injudicious running, and batting that was more Isis-like than Isis's this time around, Camberwell failed to reach the required total in the allotted time so that Isis prevailed to nail their first win in several games, and after much shaking of hands (despite the invective that a rather frustrated Whiter had earlier hurled upon the hapless umpire for daring to give a wide against him) both teams made a mad dash to The Devon Dumpling for another couple of celebratory ales, to the bemusement of the many locals who were out for a quiet bank holiday meal in the sunshine. Keith Ponsford finally started doing the job he was appointed to, penalising the Isis miscreants with gay abandon, and poor old Pete Wiblin as principle victim, (and looking not altogether accepting of and happy at the situation) lost rather quickly a good deal of the riches with which he is accustomed to.

And so, the Isis tour moved on happily to the Rainbow International Hotel which they found was slightly less well-appointed than the hotel web-site suggested, but which was opposite the legendary Albert's bar (see 2003 tour report on the archive pages) and had rooms that were spacious, well-furnished and comfortable enough given the lack of use that they were expected to get. With a choice of bars to meet in it was inevitable that Isis would fail to meet together at the right place at the right time, and Ponsford again caned the pockets of the late miscreants before the tour party moved on for some sustenance in the form of Indian food at the only restaurant we frequent, already hosting the Camberwell tourists, and where a blinding meal (not at all salty Joe) was had by all at a very reasonable cost. Leaving the restaurant as the pubs were closing the die-hards moved on to the front and the bright lights of Torquay where in true tour tradition they fell into Café Mojós, the first bar found to be open and serving alcohol, and as the sprightly Wiblin and Olly Walter danced the night away, the remainder quaffed further beer in the warm spring air and reflected on a bloody good start to the tour. Things got better back at the hotel where, after a bit of friendly coercing, the night manager opened the bar for a late night drink for those still having the energy and it was well into the early hours of the morning before Ponsford lost anybody else to fine and the last men hit the sack.

Now, there's nothing like a full English breakfast cooked by somebody else after a night on the ale, and the Rainbow did us proud. Ritchie Ramcreepaul's hair was particularly troublesome this morning it seemed, because roommate John Cripps reported that he had left him staring at himself in the mirror and rearranging any stray strands. This accounted for previous and subsequent lateness I guess, and once again the fickle hand of finesman Ponsford lay open to be crossed with another shiny Ramcreepaul nugget more than 30 minutes after the scheduled meeting time. Dispersing momentarily to take care of a few personal matters (I told you the previous evening's curry was good) the party met once

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again for the delayed 2003 prize-giving whereupon Cripps, Wyatt, Whiter and the two Walters received their silverware to the applause of the rest of the party. And so, with 90 minutes free time to enjoy, the party dispersed and while some took to their beds others braved the morning air to see Torquay by light for the first time. The bars were shut until midday though, so having circled the town and got at least some pre-match exercise the party said a sad farewell to John Cripps who had to return early, and met again in the hotel library room prior to the short journey to Barton cricket club.

Did I say short? Well it should have been, but some (ahem) unfortunately wayward directions turned what should have been a simple journey into a nightmare in which four cars explored Newton Abbott town centre, found the South Devon cricket club and drove around it twice, left it again, drove around B&Q car-park, found their way back to the A3088 and headed back towards Torquay. In a whirlwind of phone calls, appropriate directions were eventually gained from the fixture secretary's wife and relayed to the party which by now was spread out all over South Devon. Meanwhile, Julian Francis and family had found their way to the area and were as bemused as everybody else, and not having had the experience of driving up and down the same main road six times like the rest of the party, were finding an Isis tour does rather more than what it says on the tin and the whole matter became somewhat surreal. Eventually though, everybody arrived, and though the hour was late the Barton club were completely relaxed about the whole matter and made us welcome. So, with Trevor Williams joining the field as 12th man until the arrival of Julian Francis, Isis took to the field and simply played out of their skins to bowl out a very talented Barton side. That said, they were not up to the bowling attack and despite what looks to be a heavy loss, enjoyed a well-contested game and enjoyed surely the best tea up and down the country in the most idyllic of settings. Post-match jugs flowed freely, stories were exchanged and more fines were incurred, before the party left Barton, bizarrely taking fully four minutes to find their way back to their hotel!

With no time to change and pretty themselves up, the party met at the fabulous Albert's where Camberwell were already in fine form, before good nights were bid to them and the Francis and Godby families and the rest of the party set out for Torquay. Yet again, the party were lured into the first place beyond Mojoes selling alcohol, where jugs of JD & Coke and beer were purchased in copious quantities from the fines kitty and the drinking games began. Soon after the bar closed and an evening-meal of fresh fish and chips was consumed, the party allowed themselves to be lured into Café Mambo by the wily Wiblin, who was surely on a kick-back? Lo and behold, who should be there but the Camberwell tour party, who by now must surely have thought we were following them around! Needless to say, the beer flowed freely and at the one o'clock water-shed the party staggered back up the hill to the hotel where the rather severe night porter refused to sell alcohol and we saw the dark side of Olly Walter, who set about the bar shutters with venom before we all scampered off to bed like naughty little schoolboys.

Morning brought with it the threat of rain and a slightly jaded and dishevelled tour party met for another fine but altogether unhealthy breakfast. The threat turned to reality and as the wet conditions would not allow the planned assault of a local beach, the party took another trip to Torquay to buy seaside rock and to sit in a local coffee bar, from where we

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watched the world go by with gay abandon. Sadly, as the weather deteriorated in Plymouth, the Ivybridge fixture secretary confirmed the afternoon game was off and meeting together for the last time at the hotel, an end was reluctantly brought to proceedings with the decision to set off for home early. The Godby and Francis families were staying in the area for an additional night and with Wiblin heading off to his cousin's and Camberwell heading off for South Devon C.C., the rest of the party headed for the M5. Luckily none of the traffic problems of the opening day were repeated and The Whiter and Walter cars were able to make a scheduled rendezvous three hours later to consume the last of the fines kitty before final farewell's were said and a tired but happy tour party returned early to their homes to regain a few much-needed brownie-points.

At the end of the day, not everything went to plan, and it was a shame that Messrs Ponsford, Williams and Francis only had the opportunity for one game, but nevertheless I trust everybody enjoyed themselves as much as I did and will be looking forward to a repeat performance this time next year.

Keith Whiter,
June 3rd 2004