



THE DEMIJOHNS' CLUB: 50 YEARS NOT OUT



FOR 50 YEARS THE DEMIJOHNS HAVE NEVER BEEN STUMPED FOR A MATCH OR CAUGHT WITHOUT A FIXTURE. HERE FOUNDING MEMBER AND PRESIDENT KARLE SIMPSON AND CAPTAIN STUART BACHELOR EXPLAIN WHY THEY PREFER BOWLING MAIDEN OVERS TO MAIDENS OVER AND AN ARTFUL GOOGLY TO A STRAIGHTFORWARD GOOGLE, AND WHY CRICKET IS NEVER SQUARE, EVEN ON THE LEG SIDE.



It was back in 1957 that the idea of the Demijohns' Cricket Club was born. Superb weather and a strong College side combined to produce some marvellous cricket that year, and as the season drew to a close Karle Simpson (Law, 1955) and Keith Harris-Watson (Agriculture, 1954) were lamenting the fact that they would not play cricket together again. 'I'll organize a game next year', said Keith, which, true to his word, he did. The first game, in August 1958, was against Captain Hawkings XI, the team of a wealthy Northamptonshire landowner, and half a century later the Demijohns are still going strong.

A nomadic club, with no home ground, the 'demi' in the name gives it licence to co-opt players

unfortunate enough not to be graduates of St John's. Yet, although not exclusively a St John's team, the Demijohns have always made a point of staying close to the College and St John's alumni have comprised at least half of every team it has fielded. Since 1963 it has played an annual fixture against the current College First XI, combining this with an annual black-tie dinner in the SCR or Hall. At the first dinner Paul Grice, as keen a cricketer as he was a distinguished philosophy fellow (1938-1968), and at that time President of the Demijohns, was prevailed upon to break a life-long resolution and give an after-dinner talk. It was such a sparkling and witty *tour de force* that everyone felt it could never be topped and from then on all speeches have been banned.

Over the years the Demijohns have thrived, as new generations of College cricketers have joined their ranks. The current captain, Stuart Bachelor (Philosophy and Theology, 1992), is pleased to report that the 2007 team boasts a number of recent alumni, including Mark Dyson (Chemistry), Adam Darling (Modern History), and James Heaton (Modern Languages), a trio of friends who came up to St John's in 1997 and who wanted, like the founders, to continue playing cricket together

after they graduated. The Demijohns also encourage members of the current First XI to play the odd match, having noticed that the fielding improves greatly when younger players are patrolling the boundary. The team makes sure that students and recent graduates do not go without a few pints of beer and a curry after the matches, recalling how they appreciated being similarly 'subbed' in the days when they were just out of College and had no money.

It is this connection with the College, and the assimilation of other 'jolly nice chaps', that has been the highlight of 50 years of the Demijohns for Karle Simpson. The Club has provided him with the opportunity to play cricket in which both sides enjoy themselves, for, while the team always play to win, it is never at all costs. It has also given him and others the opportunity to play cricket together in unusual and even exotic locations. In the 1980s and 1990s the club visited Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, and Zimbabwe, and even beat an All-Italy side at the Milan Cricket Club ground on Lake Como. Another highlight for Karle was the match organized by Keith Harris-Watson for the Demijohns' 20th anniversary in 1977, an all Demijohns occasion in which the under-thirties, or 'early vintage premier cru', were defeated by the over-thirties, 'the late vintage crusted ports'.

Thirty years on and the club celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. The occasion was marked with a special dinner in Hall on 12 May, at which Karle (fresh from the John Radcliffe hospital and sporting a nasty injury to his finger), Keith, and Stuart were joined by current and past members of the team and their partners. The College First XI, triumphant from this year's annual clash that afternoon, were the Demijohns' guests and all were happily entertained to a pre-dinner champagne reception in the President's Lodgings. As Patron of the Demijohns, the President joins a long line of SCR and Presidential supporters of the club, including Paul Grice, Edwin Slade, Sir Sidney Ridley, Mark Freedland and Jack Langton. The President has firmly assured Stuart that he has 'retired' (apparently he is more worried about chicken than ducks these days). But perhaps some of our younger fellows would like to put in an appearance – beer and curry provided, of course – and we hope to see our Fellow in Philosophy, Alison Hills, a former Cambridge cricket blue and a very handy bowler, once more turning her arm over as a deathly hush falls on the close.

THIS YEAR'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY MATCH TURNED OUT TO BE A DAY WHEN YOUTH TRIUMPHED OVER EXPERIENCE. HERE, IN HIS MATCH REPORT, CHRIS TURNBULL, THE CURRENT FIRST XI CAPTAIN, SUMS UP THE ACTION.

The weather evidently did not appreciate the half-century importance of this year's fixture. It was a cold, wet day but, despite showers, play started soon after 11 a.m. College won the toss, and seeing the overcast conditions elected to field first.

The St. John's opening bowlers made the most of the new ball, Imran Zahid bowling tidily while Peter Brooks removed three top order batsmen with some excellent swing deliveries. After a short break for rain St John's struck again, Alex Bowditch getting a ball to climb to take the glove on its way through to the keeper. Ian Davies batted well for 48 runs and was stoutly supported by the middle and lower orders, but this spirited rear-guard action was finally brought to an end by a cunning combination of Nick King's off-spin and the captain's gentle out-swing. Amid these scenes of derring-do the Demijohns' President had to be taken off to hospital to have a finger checked after being struck on the glove. Gallantly, he insisted on returning for the evening's celebrations.

By the time St John's came out to bat the pitch had settled down and the openers got off to a flying start with 30 runs coming from the first two overs. Jeremy Briggs eventually went for 66, and, despite a couple of quick dismissals, Imran Zahid saw St John's home to win by six wickets. After the match the new Standard Cup was presented to the victorious side at the College pavilion.

The Demijohns provided an excellent lunch and tea for both sides, along with a profusion of refreshments throughout the afternoon. To round off the day's sport both sides joined the President and the Club for a champagne reception and a black-tie dinner in Hall.

