

THE HISTORY OF MILTON SCHOOL CRICKET, 1910-1970

"Learn to play with a straight bat. This is the ABC of cricket. A good eye and quick feet may accomplish a good deal, but until you play with a straight bat, you will never achieve very much." This extract, taken from "Hints on Cricket" in the 1921 edition of *The Miltonian*, may be adequately used as sound advice for any Milton cricketer, but if we are to survey the extract objectively, it may also prove sound advice to all Milton sportsmen whose duty it is to play their respective games in the true spirit that they require. Milton, now in its sixtieth year, can feel proud that its cricketers have in the past, and still do, uphold "that (which) is cricket".

A very short while after Milton School had been established in 1910, the Great War broke out; this outbreak demanded an influx of young men, many of whom left their desks at an early age to fulfil their duties to their country. Milton's senior cricket XI's suffered as a consequence and her cricket records over this period are not as flattering as they might have been. At the same time, Milton could find little school opposition, as Plumtree and St. George's were the only senior schools with which Milton could arrange its fixtures. Additional games were, therefore, arranged with sides such as Mr. Linnell's XI, Capt. Gilbert's XI, Mr. Blackenberg's team, V. L. Robinson's XI, Rhodesia Regiment's Club, and B.S.A.P., and in these games Milton met with a certain measure of success.

During this period, the 1917 *Miltonian* produced the following advertisement:—

"Cricketing for season 1917-18. Just recently to hand. Bats by Gunn and Moore, and Gradidge — 21/- to 42/6. Balls from 2/6 to 10/6.

J. Tod Suttie —
Sports depot. "

This advertisement makes quite interesting reading today when we bear in mind the fact that owing to the political situation, such as it is at present, the school cannot readily purchase cricket equipment of such quality, and even when it can, the prices demanded are, comparatively speaking, outrageous.

In 1918 the school was divided into three cricket sets. Division I accommodated the 1st and 2nd XI's; Division II from Standard IV upwards, and Division III, Standards I, II and III; but eventually these divisions fell away and the boys were grouped separately according to their ages.

Two of the finest players Milton produced in the 1920's were C. J. R. Hayward and V. Hepker. The latter had a particularly good 1925 season, scoring 94 against Plumtree and 155 against St. George's. He proved himself as a very fine all-

rounder in the same game by taking 10 wickets in the match. C. J. R. Hayward made such an impression on Milton School cricket that, in later years, one of the boys wrote the following sonnet about him:

"Hayward"

"Hayward! thou should'st be playing at this hour;
The school hath need for thee. Her cleverest men
Fiddle and fumble in the field, and when
'Leg Theory' bowled, from which thy dower
Of nerve had forced a boundary, they cower
And jump back scared. We are less skilful men.
When on her glorious playing fields again
Shall Milton School find a player of thy power?
You flogged the leather sphere from noon till tea.
The ball flew past the fence and landed far
Beyond the fielder's reach, outside the ground.
Come back and teach thy one time friends to be
As Hammond, Wyatt, Ames and Bradman are;
Quick on the ball and every player sound."

Hayward, J. de L. Thompson, and H. Moll, played for Rhodesia against the M.C.C. in 1931, the former scoring 95, and later he went on to captain the Rhodesian team in 1939. J. Charsley and P. Mansell, both Milton Old Boys, gained Rhodesian selection during this period, and Mansell won the bat presented by the M.C.C. for the best innings played against them.

1930 saw the return of V. Hepker to the Matabeleland arena when he played for Transvaal against Rhodesia. Another Old Boy, V. L. Robinson, represented Rhodesia in the same year. Hepker visited his old school, and with him came H. W. Taylor, "South Africa's master batsman", to illustrate how the fundamental cricket shots should be played. "The ease and grace with which he executed the strokes was the envy of every cricketer in the hall."

Another cricket "master" who visited the school was K. James, the English County cricketer. He came in 1938, and said that he hoped that after his instructions, most of the "bush-cricketing" inclinations would soon vanish.

The Milton/Plumtree November encounter in 1939 proved a most memorable one for Milton. Milton, following on 201 runs behind, recovered considerably well, largely due to A. Charles, who carried his bat for a fine century. Plumtree, only needing 62 runs for victory, were shot out by M. Harris (6-16) for only 50 runs.

In 1939, C. Harris made the Nuffield side, and the following year, M. Harris and D. Wood accompanied him in the Nuffield team down to Cape Town. In his cricket instruction, Mr. James had succeeded, and his hopes had been realised.

In the 40's, Milton found more school opposition in Prince Edward, Chaplin and Tech., but the school still continued to play outside teams.