

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.

Recognised Clubs offered their opposition and games against Queens, B.A.C., Raylton, Stragglers and Old Miltonians became regular features of Milton's cricket.

During the war years (1939 – 45) Milton's cricket again suffered a lean period as a result of many boys leaving school earlier than they would have done in normal times. It had been necessary to put boys of U.15 and U.14 in the 1st XI, so that the junior teams had also to suffer from the weakness of the 1st.

Yet in 1944, the cricket season saw Milton's U.13 team, captained by W. Harris, and (her) U.14 team, captained by W. Sprague, come through without having lost a game. Her U.15 team in that year lost all its games.

This lean period in Milton's senior cricket was somewhat compensated by the arrival of "Scratch" Batchelor, who for years devoted himself wholeheartedly to the betterment of Milton School cricket.

The Milton/Plumtree game in March, 1948, which ended in a very exciting and fair draw, saw W. Sprague perform the rare feat of taking four wickets in four balls. His final figures for the first innings read 8.5 – 2 – 28 – 7.

The November game of the same year (the 71st), was also drawn, but more important, it witnessed a presentation to Mr. Mac. W. Ingram, who was umpiring his 50th Milton/Plumtree match; a truly magnificent record to have achieved.

Walshe and Ault followed in the footsteps of Sprague and those many others who represented Rhodesia at the Nuffield tournament in South Africa. Walshe, who played for the S.A. schools as wicket-keeper, gained special praise from that famous South African cricketer, Dudley Nourse.

Ault distinguished himself as a batsman at school after scoring two fine centuries, one of which was against Plumtree.

It was at this time that Plumtree, Milton's greatest cricket rival, was such a tower of strength in schoolboy cricket. In 1951, November's game witnessed A. Pithey score 125 and Dave Napier take nine wickets in the match. The following March, A. Pithey made 108 runs in two innings and Napier captured 11 wickets. Despite these performances, Milton fell short by a mere two runs.

In November, 1952, the Pithey brothers amassed 196 runs between them and Plumtree declared its innings closed at 270/6. Milton replied, more than admirably, with 332/7, Wilson scoring 116 and Thompson 93; 602 runs had been scored for the loss of only 13 wickets!

What a difference in scores to the Guinea Fowl game of the same year when Guinea Fowl could only muster 98 in both innings (Ferendinos 11/24), and Milton could only reply with 115 in both knocks!

The year prior to this saw Percy Mansell gain selection for the Springboks to tour Australia. He scored 90 in his first Test and in subsequent years, distinguished himself as the finest slip fielder in the world.

1955 produced very little cricket in the first term, due to a polio epidemic on the one hand, and incessant rainfall on the other. However, the one inter-school game played was a memorable one for Milton. Two records were established — the first; the highest individual score by a Rhodesian schoolboy in a first team inter-school fixture, namely 210 by Bland against Guinea Fowl. The second was the school's score of 337/6 wickets declared, the highest score made by a Milton XI in an inter-school fixture.

Colin Bland went on to greater heights, for in his last year at school, he represented the Rhodesian provincial team that played Peter May's M.C.C. team. He performed magnificently and achieved top score in both Rhodesia's innings!

Bland and E. Parker both represented S.A. Schools at Nuffield week in 1956, and Parker distinguished himself by being selected for the Rhodesia Nuffield XI for four consecutive years. In the years that followed, both played regularly for Rhodesia and Bland went on to gain his Springbok colours, tour Australia and England, and eventually earn his place in the World XI.

In the history of Milton's cricket, there have been three tours, all of which took place in the north. Two tours, one in 1958 and the other in 1961, were staged in what was then Northern Rhodesia. All in all, 10 games were played, against both schools and clubs. Six of these were won, two lost, one drawn and one tied. The Broken Hill game in 1961 witnessed a "slashing" century by M. London which contributed very considerably to a Milton win by an innings and 99 runs.

The third tour took place in "Nyasaland" in 1959, where Milton won two of the four games, lost one, and the final game was drawn. "Tinker" Beets and P. Kelley were the stars of this year's team, and both gained Nuffield selection.

As the number of boys increased through the years, it became very necessary to have more land available for cricket grounds. In the late fifties, Milton acquired the "Thompson Fields" to the north of Selborne Avenue, and these fields accommodated all the junior sides.

With more facilities for cricket, and with "a cricketing staff", Milton's standard of cricket throughout the school rose to great heights. The school was fortunate in having Harry Birrell, a Rhodesian Currie Cup player, Mike Clarence, an Old Prunitian who represented Matabeleland in the Logan Cup, Gordon Todd, who scored many runs for Chaplin as a schoolboy, and N. Robertson, an Old Boy of the school who played excep-

tionally well for Milton in the early 40's.

Milton's 1st XI in 1961 and 1962 enjoyed two successful years. The terrible spinning twins, namely G. N. S. Ridley and H. Capon, dominated the attack while S. Barbour and P. Wilson were a force in the batting. All four players represented the Nuffield XI and Ridley, Barbour and Capon toured England with Mr. Well's Rhodesian Fawns.

P. Wilson captained the Nuffield team in 1962 and made history by scoring 163, the highest individual score at Nuffield week at that stage. He went on to play for the South African Schools' team that year and was made vice-captain.

G. N. S. Ridley, the following year, 1963, gained selection in the South African Schools' team to tour England, his second cricket tour to England in two years! He captained the Rhodesia Nuffield XI at the end of 1963 and in that team was included another Milton player, E. Laughlin, who has since played in the Rhodesian Currie Cup team.

D Townsend, H. Gardner, P. Jones, B. Bitter and B. Barbour have also played Nuffield cricket, and with the news that Jones is to take a degree at Oxford this year, it is hoped that he will follow in the footsteps of G. Ridley and P. Wilson, who have recently played for Oxford University, the former having captained the side three years ago.

Having dwelt on the past achievements of our most glamorous Milton cricketers, I cannot fail to mention those of Brian Barbour, who is fortunately still with us in this famous year for Milton School. Barbour gained Nuffield selection last year (1969) and is at present, Milton School cricket captain. In his last sixteen innings for the school, he has amassed 859 runs, with an average of 71.6 — a magnificent achievement which must place him at the forefront of Rhodesian schoolboy cricket. His example and quiet modesty is a tonic to all our cricketers and we hope that they will endeavour to model themselves on their school captain.

Before concluding, I would like to make special mention of the services offered to Milton by the late G. W. Ledeboer. The school is indebted to him for his long service in coaching the various XI's and his inspiring keenness. He inculcated in the members of the teams which he coached, the keenness and enthusiasm which he himself had for the game.

In 1912, one of the school's masters, Mr. Shepherd, left the school, and on his departure, he told the boys of the school an amusing tale of his boyhood which had the following moral attached to it. In 1912, he hoped that all the Miltonians would remember, and to this day, we hope that they will. The moral was this:—

*"He lost his game; no matter for that.
He kept his temper, and swung his bat,
To cheer the winners; a better way
Than to lose his temper, and win the day."*

C.J.B.R.

Milton Cricketers who have Represented Rhodesia in the Currie Cup

S. Adamson	M. Harris	H. Moll
"Tinker" Beets	C. J. Hayward	E. F. Parker
C. Bland	E. Hore	V. L. Robinson
J. Charsley	E. Laughlin	J. de L. Thompson
K. Curran	P. N. F. Mansell	D. Townsend
I. D. Grimmer	R. R. Mitchell	J. W. Willing
C. Harris	P. Marshall	D. Woods

RESULTS OF MILTON/PLUMTREE GAMES

		Won by:	
Dec.	1911	Plumtree	38 runs
Dec.	1912	Plumtree	7 runs
March	1913	Milton	Innings and 62 runs
Nov.	1913	Milton	106 runs
March	1914	Milton	Innings and 29 runs
Dec.	1915	Milton	175 runs
March	1916	Plumtree	6 wickets
Nov.	1916	Milton	Innings and 36 runs
March	1917	Milton	23 runs
March	1918	Milton	Innings and 27 runs
March	1919	Plumtree	120 runs
Nov.	1919	Plumtree	42 runs
Feb.	1920	Plumtree	27 runs
April	1920	Plumtree	Innings and 33 runs
March	1921	Milton	10 wickets
Nov.	1921	Plumtree	8 wickets
March	1922	Plumtree	6 wickets
April	1922	Plumtree	37 runs
Nov.	1922	Plumtree	87 runs
March	1923	Plumtree	190 runs
Nov.	1923	Plumtree	138 runs
March	1924	Milton	154 runs
Nov.	1924	Milton	38 runs
March	1925	Milton	10 wickets
Nov.	1925	Drawn	
March	1926	Drawn	
Nov.	1926	Milton	6 wickets
March	1927	Milton	8 wickets
Nov.	1927	Milton	21 runs
April	1928	Drawn	
Nov.	1928	Drawn	
Dec.	1928	Plumtree	4 wickets
March	1929	Plumtree	70 runs
Nov.	1929	Milton	Innings and 6 runs
March	1930	Plumtree	43 runs
Feb.	1931	Plumtree	Innings and 2 runs
March	1931	Plumtree	3 wickets
Feb.	1932	Drawn	
March	1932	Plumtree	2 wickets
Nov.	1932	Milton	3 wickets
March	1933	Plumtree	9 wickets
Nov.	1933	Milton	65 runs
March	1934	Plumtree	Innings and 45 runs
Nov.	1934	Drawn	
March	1935	Plumtree	Innings and 3 runs
Nov.	1935	Milton	5 wickets
March	1936	Plumtree	Innings and 218 runs
Nov.	1936	Milton	3 wickets
March	1937	Plumtree	Innings and 120 runs
Nov.	1937	Plumtree	4 wickets
March	1938	Drawn	
Nov.	1938	Drawn	
March	1939	Plumtree	6 runs
Nov.	1939	Milton	12 runs
March	1940	Plumtree	5 wickets
Nov.	1940	Milton	2 wickets
March	1941	Milton	7 wickets
March	1942	Plumtree	4 wickets
Nov.	1942	Plumtree	Innings and 36 runs
March	1943	Plumtree	Innings and 25 runs
Nov.	1943	Milton	4 runs
March	1944	Plumtree	Innings and 11 runs
Nov.	1944	Plumtree	2 wickets

March 1945	Drawn	
Nov. 1945	Plumtree	1 wicket
March 1946	Plumtree	8 wickets
Nov. 1946	Plumtree	Innings and 28 runs
March 1947	Plumtree	Innings and 42 runs
Nov. 1947	Drawn	
March 1948	Drawn	
Nov. 1948	Drawn	
March 1949	Drawn	
March 1950	Plumtree	3 wickets
March 1951	Milton	297 runs
Nov. 1951	Plumtree	10 wickets
March 1952	Plumtree	2 runs
Oct. 1952	Drawn	
March 1953	Plumtree	Innings and 13 runs
Nov. 1953	Drawn	
March 1954	Plumtree	Innings and 43 runs
Nov. 1954	Drawn	
Nov. 1955	Milton	25 runs
March 1956	Drawn	
Nov. 1956	Milton	60 runs
March 1957	Plumtree	11 runs
Nov. 1957	Drawn	
March 1958	No Scores	
Nov. 1958	No Scores	
March 1959	Plumtree	1 wicket
Nov. 1959	No Scores	
March 1960	Plumtree	169 runs
Nov. 1960	No Scores	
Feb. 1961	Milton	36 runs
Nov. 1961	Drawn	
March 1962	Drawn	
Nov. 1962	Plumtree	5 wickets
March 1963	Plumtree	5 wickets
Nov. 1963	Milton	6 wickets
Nov. 1964	Plumtree	3 wickets
March 1965	Milton	3 wickets
Nov. 1965	Milton	6 wickets
March 1966	Milton	8 wickets
Nov. 1966	Match tied	
March 1967	Plumtree	Innings
Nov. 1967	Drawn	
March 1968	Drawn	
Nov. 1968	Plumtree	141 runs
March 1969	Drawn	
Nov. 1969	Drawn	
March 1970	Milton	17 runs