

WIZARDS OF AUS!!



The Ancient Britons HC Tour of “The Antipodes”

14th May – 6th June 1999



Inset Left: John Peirce

Inset Right: Angela Peirce

Left to Right:

Back Row: Rita Oakley, Arthur Barber, Brenda Wallond, John Oakley, Paul Bloomfield, Nick Houchin, Clive Richardson, Mike Greenhough, Chris Bradbury, Lynn Matthews, Tony Hall, Allan Matthews, Gaynor Bradbury, Trevor Davies, Angela Davies

Front Row: Steve Hattersley, Julia Greenhough, Betty Bloomfield, Mukesh Phakey, Peter Band, Greta Band, John Polley, Gary Butt and Anthony (Coach!)

Friday 14 May

Secure transport from all parts of England converged on Heathrow – delivering ABs for the noon flight of Singapore Airlines. Steve Hattersley, as ever, packing ‘in transit’ – or perhaps just checking that he had all the kit orders stashed in his voluminous kit bag. Anyhow, Terminal 3 was duly reached whereupon final adjustments to travel gear were made – appropriate to a journey to Aus! (Leg irons, handcuffs etc.) and with the anonymous but piercing rally cry of “I never sleep on planes” (could it have been Steve?) the party clambered aboard for the long haul to Singapore.

A combination of champers, good grub, absorbing films – but most of all – a 100kph tail wind meant that feet were on tarmac at Changi Airport after 10½ hours.

Saturday 15 May

Trevor and Angela had gone on some days before to sojourn in Bali and Singapore and appeared irritatingly bright-eyed and bushy tailed to meet up with the rest of the ABs who were still in travel

stupor mode. Gaynor, Betty and Arthur were, however, showing some greater sign of life as a result of a recent nicotine infusion.

After a further wait, the now complete party re-embarked and continued onwards for a further 4½ hours until finally Perth was reached and the ABs meekly submitted themselves into the custody of John Halley to be led away and transported in minibuses to the penitentiary in the guise of the self-catering All Seasons Hotel, Observation Rise, Scarborough.

Drinks on Steve's balcony led to the offering of the first olive branch – an ABs' shirt to John Halley, organiser of the Perth fixtures.

A freshen-up in the indoor pool and then dinner at a local Italian restaurant (Bianchi's) within walking distance was followed by lights-out at around 11.00 pm for most!!

Sunday 16 May

Some ABs woke early to the sight of strange life-forms in the pool (Angela and Trevor!) but most "came round" slowly and either "self-catered" breakfast or – in the case of certain "posho's" – had breakfast delivered to the apartment. The Skipper's firmly instructed "9.30 am meet" proved to be slightly "en retard", and a challenge he was not able to meet. The advance guard left by taxi for Hales School Astro – closely followed by a minibus lacking direction! The party duly arrived in pristine condition.

1st match v Perth Veteeroos at Hales School Astro

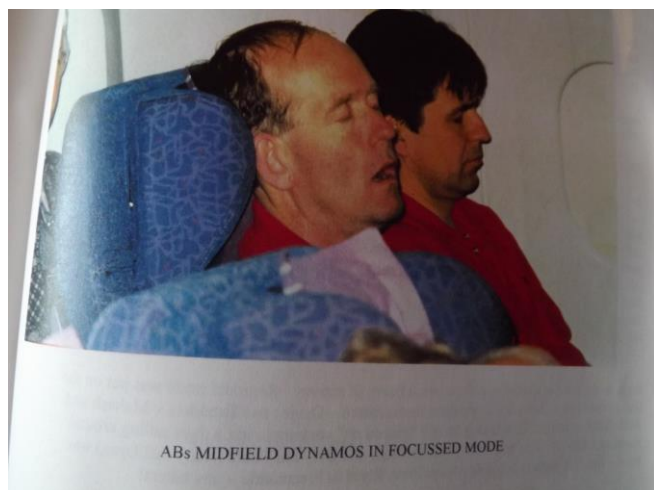
A never-before-seen ritual preceded this match. Under the firm direction of new AB, Greta Band, the ABs struck Kama Sutra-esque poses under the guise of "pre-game warm-up routines". Although this proved more stimulating than the traditional "painting-on" of Woad, it was potentially more strength sapping!!

Anyhow the Veteeroos started the game brightly and Allan Matthews was quickly into action, making several good saves. After eleven minutes, inevitably the Veteeroos scored and added a second goal after only several more minutes. ABs then began to fire on all cylinders with Mukesh going close and then, after 23 minutes, a goal from Steve Hattersley. ABs had broken their duck and this remained the score at half-time - during which the Captain addressed a few spirited words to the team.

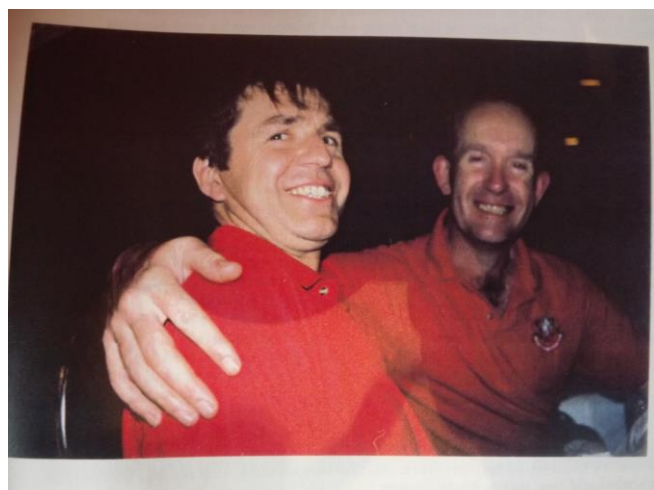
Revitalised ABs resumed the contest but shortly after a stern Umpire reprimand to the impetuous John Peirce, the ABs fell behind to a well taken goal. Not to be outdone, ABs immediately twice struck back through Clive Richardson – the second goal being a deflection from a Mike Greenhough strike. Score 3-3 and looking better. However, the rigours of the last two days then began to take their toll of the ABs as the Veteeroos added a fourth and then a fifth goal.

John Oakley, with no sense of occasion, blew his whistle to bring the match to an end just as ABs were about to score from a short corner. With friends like that!!

Result: ABs 3 Veteeroos 5



AB MIDFIELD DYNAMOS IN FOCUSSED MODE



"GOTTLE OF GEER"

In glorious winter sunshine ABs enjoyed excellent post-match hospitality in the form of a do-it-yourself BBQ. Veteroo wives had also assembled and ABs took advantage of local knowledge to plan out the remainder of the stay in Perth; this included the offer of a day's sailing from Veteroo Peter. During brief post-match formalities John Halley spoke generously of ABs' spirited performance and made presentations to Maestro Arthur Barber (shirt), to Steve (stubby holder) and to Mukesh (bottle of port) as the Veteroo's Mongrel of the Match. Mike Greenhough duly responded, remarking on Allan Matthews' excellent game but declaring Clive Richardson as ABs' Man of the Match. Pins were then presented to each of the opposition.

Back to the All Seasons where there was a flurry of activity. Regional pride was put on the line in the form of a hurriedly arranged tennis match – Davies and Bradders v Mukesh and Nick (North v South). The Bands (et al) “played on” contemplating a day sailing around Rottnest (Rats' Nest) island with Veteroo Peter, and Belynda Tours (Betty and Lynn) was born – the first venture being down the Swan River to Freemantle – any takers!!

A “Bottle” party (minus the swimming Bloomfields) later determined the venues for the evening as being a pint in the Stamford Arms followed by (for most) an excellent meal in the Chinese restaurant at the Rendezvous Hotel during which Bradders was his usual disarming self – complaining that Greta was improperly dressed in her “sleeping attire!!”

Monday 17 May – FREE DAY

The Belynda Tours party (14 in number) was up and about at a reasonable hour, picked up by minibus and taken to Perth harbour to join up with the Captain Cook line river cruiser, the James Stirling. Meanwhile Peter, Greta, Mike, Julia, John, Angela (P), Arthur, Brenda and Nick were off to join up with the sailors, Peter and Melva. Steve, as ever, was looking for a golf opponent and latched onto the unsuspecting Mukesh.

The Belynda Tours party thoroughly enjoyed the trip down the Swan River (no black swans in sight!!) past mega-million dollar properties to “time-warp” Freemantle. A tram-ride round the docks and to the prison followed (obviously word of Bradders' presence had gone on ahead!). The prison had been built by the convicts themselves around the 1840s and was in use as the gaol right up to 1991. Last point of visit was the “hanging chamber” – (where the Guide was asked to “keep her trap shut!”) - Bradders wasn't given any rope at all!! Back to the Esplanade Hotel for a luxurious “smorgasbord” – what a contrast – then a wander around the shops of the old town. Uppermost in Clive's mind were shin pads and a jock strap – still, we all have our simple pleasures!!

Back to the tram once more – joined at last by the late “Mr Bloomfield” – and then back to the boat and a return trip up the river. Yet another tram to see Perth by night (Kings Park view - wonderful!!) and back to the All Seasons.



SILENCE IS GOLDEN



UMPIRE IN TRAINING MODE

The sailors had, by now, come ashore after a wonderful day where John and Peter did most of the crewing and Nick demonstrated his driving prowess. To the strains of the Woad Song, Peter and Melva were pronounced “Honorary ABs”.

Zut alors!! – le golf – ma fois !! The word became a buzz of excitement which quickly grew to a crescendo of disbelief – Mukesh had beaten Steve by one hole!! The first publicly declared defeat of SJH by an AB.

A quick swim for some, a “tidy-up”, and off to Bianchi’s for an evening meal – except for Bradders and Clive who had got the better of a “seafood-burger” and finally, after debates about snoring techniques, Angela D and Bradders were left to embark on an early-hour assignation at the local BP garage (breakfast items) since Bradders was hyper-active and Angela was endeavouring to phone her daughter.

Tuesday 18 May

Fitness fanatics unite!! – for an early morning swim. Paul, Betty, Allan, and Lynn discovered a “Big Brekky” at the Pizza Restaurant whilst Angela and Trevor took a bus to Innaloo and a wonderful “English” breakfast. All at different times, groups of ABs conquered the connected bus/rail service into Perth and spent time browsing, visiting Kings Park once again and finally returning in time for the 4.30pm game at Perth University. Meanwhile, Skipper Mike, Julia, Bradders and Gaynor had lazed locally around the beach area planning the game strategy!! (Wot Bradders – ‘e cor spell “strategy” let alone plan it!!)

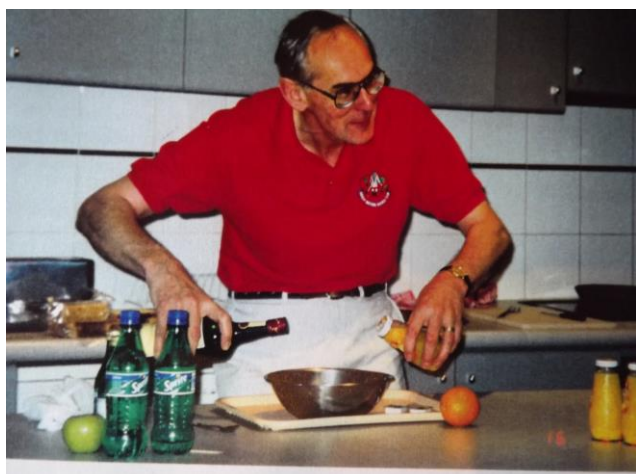
2nd match v Perth Veterans at Perth Hockey Stadium

Another Greta inspired warm up and this time a much more positive start by ABs characterised by a determined Peirce run down the left wing. After early sustained pressure ABs were successful – the goal coming once again from the stick of Clive Richardson (reversed). Perth immediately retaliated strongly and drew level within five minutes.

Half-time: honours even.

Perth started the second half as they ended the first and despite a wonderful goal-line stop by Arthur, the threatened goal came after fifteen minutes. ABs passion and concentration had wavered but now; not to be outdone, good work by Steve and Mukesh led to a Peirce goal after 20 minutes. All to play for! And within five minutes, Gary Butt had put ABs ahead. A fierce rear-guard action for the final few minutes and the victory was secured with the noisy vocal support of the Ladies – particularly Greta and Angela Peirce.

Result: ABs 3 Perth Veterans 2



TEAM TACTICAL TALK ON A LOT OF BOTTLE!
BY BOTTLE “AINSLEY” GREENHOUGH



PRE-MATCH RITUAL DANCE

Post-match hospitality again excellent. This time an initial convivial drink at the Stadium Bar during which Mike pronounced ABs Man of the Match as Nick and John Halley (that man again!) named Greta as Mongrel of the Match. The opposition then provided transport for a meal at the Boat Shed – first stopping-off at a Bottle-shop for refreshment. Fortunately the mini-bus driver remembered to pick the

ABs up and a happy and vociferous crowd wended its way back to the All Seasons accompanied by the mellifluous strains of “old English” songs.

Wednesday 19 May

An early morning swim for some! Trevor and Angela – this time with Clive and Bradders – back on the Innaloo trail to collect photos and have another English breakfast. Afterwards Trev, hell-bent to visit the WACA (Western Australia Cricket Association) found the grounds and then invested in polo shirts for himself and Allan Matthews (another pub poser). A most enjoyable mid-morning drink was had in the Members Bar – surrounded by Western Australian “greats”. Hell!! The match!! Bradders negotiated an excellent taxi rate and so back to the All Seasons in style.

Meanwhile, senior professionals had decided on a more leisurely beach stroll and a date with a sandwich bar. Having rescued a literary damsel in distress (Gaynor), Paul and Allan then discovered Wheat grass – a smelly vitamin-packed slimy green substance.

Mike and Julia returned from Perth in time to assemble the troops for a 3.00pm departure once again for the Hales School Astro.

3rd match v John Halley's X1 at the Hales School Astro

On the back of the previous victory, ABs played with absolute self-belief but nevertheless after fifteen minutes went 1-0 down. Undaunted ABs pressed on and after a further five minutes Steve scored from a short corner but then “owned up” that the ball had deflected off Clive’s boot.

Honesty paid off.

In the second half ‘lightning legs’ Davies saved a goal bound shot and shortly afterwards Mukesh levelled the scores with a brilliant individual effort. Keeper, Allan, then kept ABs in the game and was rewarded when, after a short corner shot hit the post, John Polley was on hand to put the ball into the net for the winner.

Result: ABs 2 John Halley's X1 1

Usual post-match drinks and bonhomie followed at the Club during which Allan Matthews was pronounced both Man and Mongrel of the Match by Mike and John Halley (that man yet again!) respectively.

Both teams retired to the Brighton Beach Restaurant for a wonderful evening of food and entertainment – the latter provided by the Spanish proprietor, his guitar and his wife. Mukesh was prominent among the movers and shakers! Special guests of the Bloomfields were Alison, Michael and baby Reilly – Alison being the daughter of the Townsville billet on the previous tour – showing that billeting can produce lasting friendships.

Expressions of gratitude were made to the Western Australian hosts – particularly to John Halley. Back to the All Seasons and packing for an early departure next morning to Perth airport. ABs leaving Western Australia 2-1 ahead in the rubber.

Thursday 20 May

The Bands-wagon rolls on! Up around 5.30am, out of the apartment by 7.30am, loaded the minibuses and off to the airport at 7.45am for an Ansett flight to Cairns via Sydney and Brisbane (not via Alice Springs as we had all hoped).

The long “dog-leg” across Oz was not anticipated with relish but off we took at 10.00am and a ton of marble cake and Satay chicken later we arrived in Sydney at 4.00pm (including a two hour time difference). Short break then off again, more Satay chicken and Brisbane loomed large at 6.15pm; left for Cairns at 7.00pm – final meal of Satay chicken and landed at Cairns at 9.00pm to be met by immaculate Tony “The Colonel” Hall in full AB dress uniform.

So this is tropical Oz – so different from Western Australia. Steamy and sweaty (and that’s just Bradders!) but air conditioned minibuses arrive to whisk us off to the Colonial Club – a magnificent

pseudo-Edwardian set-up! A quick “swim” and into the poolside bar for a “snifter” and a discussion over planned excursions – Great Barrier Reef, Kuranda, etcera. Shut-eye at 11.00pm.

Friday 21 May

Bloomfield Excursions on the ball again! Their room phone rang at 7.00am – it was Quicksilver Reef Tours phoning to secure a booking for Saturday. The retired Bank Manager was quick to secure a good rate and arrangements were confirmed. The business of the day done, Paul, Betty, Lynn, Allan and Bradders became “pool lizards” for the day.

Meanwhile the bold and energetic had other plans. Mike, Julia, Peter, Greta, Angela, Trevor, Nick and Gary were off to Freshwater to await the train to Kuranda. This was an old mining railway which, itself, was a feat of real engineering and climbed to a rain-forest village (now much commercialised!). Trevor had an enjoyable journey “chatting-up” some Masonic wives from Sydney who invited us to “Look ‘em up!” A wander around the village, a visit to the Noctarium (where a lesser spotted Houchin was unknowingly bumped into by another AB) and back down on the Skyrail which gave magnificent views of the surrounding terrain. A couple of stops on the way down and a quick diversion into the rain-forest saw Nick in his natural habitat but it was Gary who spotted the white (tight?) lipped frog well camouflaged on a leaf. On again to the terminus at Tjapukai (an Aboriginal Culture Centre) where there were demonstrations of dancing, didgeridoo playing, spear and boomerang throwing. Having successfully had a go at the latter, Mike is encouraged to develop new AB tactics. Finally a “Devon Cream Tea” in the tea rooms prompted reciprocal thoughts of a commercial venture involving a Widgetty-grub restaurant in Devon!!

Back at the Colonial Club to find, almost inevitably, that Steve along with Mukesh and the Colonel had spent the day on the golf course.

The Skipper had organised a formal dinner (casual AB attire as a concession to the tropical climate) at Jardines Restaurant at which an official welcome was given to the Colonel as well as other Oz ABs – Colin and Colleen Bramsgrove of Canadian tour fame. Sadly Clive had not been well during the day (water infection!) and was conspicuous by his absence. Who would have thought that one week ago we were in the air somewhere over the Middle East!!

Saturday 22 May

Everyone up early to prepare for the ABs invasion of the Great Barrier Reef. Greeted at breakfast by the smiling countenance of a species of local fauna – “Strapper” Jim, he got impatient with waiting around for us in Townsville so had hit the road to find us!

John and Angela Peirce have defected to stay with Colin and Colleen whilst Steve (you’ve guessed it!) had found another golf course.

In brilliant sunshine the “Reefers” boarded the Quicksilver bus for Port Douglas and then the jet boat to the Reef mooring pontoon off which snorkelling, scuba diving and an observation submersible were available. Each to his own! Nick, Bradders, Betty – snorkelling. Gary the “scuba-tuba”, Angela and Trevor stick to the submersible. Bliss! An open bar, scorching sun and a wonderful mid-day buffet – the Bands were in their element.

More afternoon activity – exotic marine life (some examples looked remarkably like ABs), colourful corals – absolutely the stuff of Bond films and this encouraged Trevor to go aloft in a helicopter trip over the Reef – terrific!

Time to depart with more drinks and good humour on the return trip – Clive and Greta re-enacting scenes from “Titanic”. However the “patricians” amongst us (Paul and Betty) decided at the last minute to “helicopter” back to Cairns airport (an Anniversary treat) and so in the company of a German couple they donned ear muffs, hung onto the handsome young pilot (Betty!) and eventually landed on the back of a farm trailer and then by courtesy car to the Colonial Club.

Meanwhile the “Proles” had disembarked and bussed it back from Port Douglas against the backdrop of a wonderful evening sky.

A quick nap and then a meal at the pool-side bar. Strapper, however, had already been brought into action on his return from the Reef with the Mukesh knee needing attention. ABs went to bed hoping to watch the Newcastle United v Manchester United FA Cup Final. However, too tired – particularly as tomorrow's game has a very early start – the Skipper's instructions to get some shut-eye were heeded.

Sunday 23 May

Shock! Horror! Minibuses were leaving at 07.15 hours for the game which was due to start at 07.45 hours. Hardy supporters were there in force – showing absolute dedication and commitment to the cause. Greta had the bananas and water at the ready – but what about brekker? We shall have to play this by ear! Surprised to find on arrival at Cairns Hockey Club that our game is not the first one on the Astro; others had started as early as 06.00 hours. Phew!!

4th match v Cairns Veteeros

The game was hard fought as always and particularly distinguished for the degree of endeavour shown by all ABs, both players and supporters in securing a 1-1 draw at such an unconsciously early hour. John Polley was on hand to force the ball home after a John Peirce short corner attempt.

Result: ABs 1 Cairns Veteeros 1

Cairns U13 squad provided an excellent “barbe-burger-brekker” accompanied by coffee; it was agreed that Kitty Mistress Angela should give them a donation towards funds for their forthcoming tour. One or two “poser” ABs bought Cairns shirts to wear down the pub. The usual après-match brief speeches with Mike again doing the honours.

Back to the Colonial Club for 1.00pm and a division of activities! Paul, Betty, Arthur, Brenda, Lynn, Allan and Bradders off to the Kuranda railway and Sky Train for a day of environmentally friendly activity – including the loos where the “long drop” ensured bacterial breakdown to a re-cyclable mulch! Very large rhubarb here! Trevor, Angela and Clive meanwhile had taken to bicycles for a tour of the Cairns seafront and harbour where after “door-step” size slices of raisin bread at the Boardwalk café they struggle back to base. A tennis challenge saw Clive absolutely steam-roller Trevor.

Steve had by this time collared Mike and off they went for a swift nine holes. John and Angela Peirce had “gone off on safari” with Colin and Colleen Bramsgrove and would join up again in Townsville. A quiet pool-side dining evening for everyone after first meeting for the “Happy Hour”.

Monday 24 May

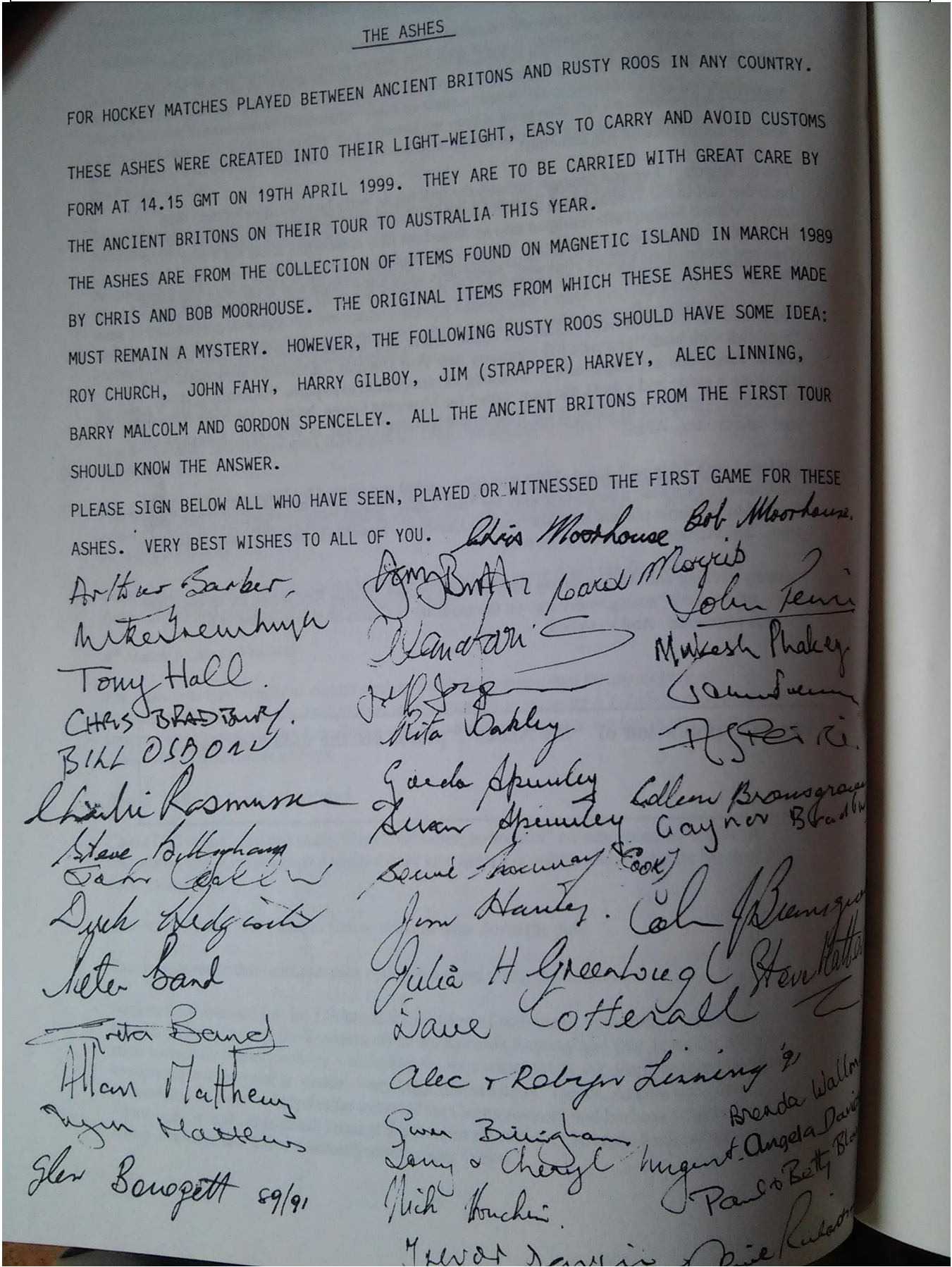
Another day of diverse activities.

Trevor, Angela, Clive and Strapper up with the lark for an early laundry appointment then breakfast and to the Tablelands in a hired car (Trevor driving – Bradders and Mike please note!) Visited Millaa Falls (bumped into an American film crew doing shots for a tour brochure – corrected their spelling!!), Tinaroo Lake and Dam, the Chimneys, the Cathedral Fig Tree and returned via Gillies Highway. Strapper's local knowledge was invaluable and made the day.

The Bradders, Paul and Betty, Lynn and Allan, Arthur and Brenda on the other hand went for “breakfast with birds” at a wild life sanctuary near Port Douglas – additional attractions were koalas, kangaroos and torpid crocs! Resisting the temptation to explore “Bloomfield River” (requiring a Guide and a 4x4), the party opted for the Mossman Gorge, home to the Kuki Yalanji Aborigines – relatives of those at the Bloomfield Mission! (What in Woking!). Congratulations on your safe driving Allan!

Burdened with “Skipper” duties, Mike and Julia – aided and abetted by Peter and Greta, went into Cairns to purchase a suitable trophy for “The Ashes” Series with Townsville! Then, duly fortified by an apple pie and pancake lunch at Daintree – onwards to the rain forest look-out Point – unfortunately only rain to be seen. Leisurely evening and while a strong party of ABs visited Fishlips Restaurant for an excellent meal – others were “smorgasbording” on the seafront in Cairns or else relaxing at the Poolside Restaurant. And so to bed!

For an explanation of the "Ashes", please see the following:



Tuesday 25 May

Up early to pack and collect the two minibuses and trailers from an "Oz" Arthur Daley. South African experience was invaluable in loading the luggage (cases!) and Pom engineering ingenuity was brought to

bear in securing the trailer doors (paper clips and string!!) “Conscripted Volunteers” Peter and Greta, and John Polley and Paul assumed the driving responsibilities and the wagons rolled – only to lose contact within a few yards of the Colonial Club! Native Guide (Strapper) was unfortunately in the lead vehicle.

Soon re-united and on the road to Townsville. Ran into a detour for some miles down the old single-track road – as a result of an overturned truck on the main highway. First stop – diesel for the buses, ice cream for most passengers but orange for Mukesh. Second halt at Cardwell for a fish and chip lunch at a Strapper-recommended four-star chippie. After 200 miles we arrived at Townsville around 4.00pm – with Strapper and the Colonel being met by respective daughters. Quick drink and change for the next match at 5.30pm (white shirts, red socks).

5th match v Rusty Roos

Roos fielded a very experienced side led by Aussie ex Olympian Barry Malcolm. ABs started positively and dominated the early exchanges with much of the game being played in the opposition's half. Play evened up and Allan made a clutch of excellent saves. Roos then went ahead with the help of a penalty stroke after the ball had deflected off Arthur's foot and this remained the score at half-time.

More good goalkeeping early in the second half kept ABs in the game but with ten minutes to go, Roos scored again from a short corner. This signalled a concentration lapse by ABs and Roos added two more “soft” goals before the final whistle.

Result: ABs 0 Rusty Roos 4

The “Roos Sheilas” produced an excellent steak sandwich and salad buffet accompanied by the usual quantity of stubbies! Post-match formalities saw Roos skipper Alec Linning (MD Tele Station 10) nominate Allan as “Man of the Match” and hand out baseball hats (Station 10) and videos of Townsville.

Skipper responded by endorsing Allan as ABs “Man of the Match” and announced Barry Malcolm as the Ladies choice of Roos “Man of the Match”. Part one of the Ashes Series not good for ABs but they expressed appropriate appreciation of the “tucker”. Back to the coach (going up-market!) and an early night after a tiring day.

Wednesday 26 May

Awoke to a cloudy, (yes cloudy) morning with a variety of activities in prospect.

Strapper, the Davies, the Peirces and Clive wandered into town after breakfast and then returned to take up Strapper's offer of a visit to the Billabong Sanctuary – transported in his 4x4 which daughter, Robyn, had brought across for him. Found an interesting variety of wild-life there – including a number of other ABs (Peter and Greta, Mike and Julia, John Polley and Gary – but no Nick-the-Vet!).

ABs variously cuddled koalas, stroked snakes, caressed crocs, refreshed ‘Roos, kissed kookaburras (but got no laughs!); the ABs version of David Bellamy (John Polley) struck up an intimate relationship with an emu (John promised to write!) and had a most intelligent conversation with a kookaburra (the most enlightened chat of the Tour, John said!!).



WHICH ONE IS THE AB



PETER! IF YOU PREFER HER – OK!

Strapper's party then left to be taken on a local tour of four previous Harvey mansions (Scottish sheep rustlers) and ended at his local beach-side watering-hole – a wonderful spot.

The remaining ABs left the billabong to perform more menial tasks of walking and shopping etc.

Meanwhile, “back at base” Paul and Betty had decided to postpone a trip to Magnetic Island in favour of the Flinders Shopping Mall and a visit to Len and Norma Dowd. After a Chinese take-away, everyone settled to watch one of the State of Origin rugby matches (a Tournament of three matches between Queensland and NSW with players coming back to play for their State of birth). Thank heavens Queensland won! Finished off at the Sheraton Casino.

But what of Steve, Nick and Bradders? Of all things, they had gone ten-pin bowling and go-karting – shame!!! Later Steve (yes! - You've guessed it) played golf with Mukesh against Barry Malcolm and Gordon.

An early evening wash and brush-up and then variously to Tim's Surf and Turf Restaurant or the Ancient Mariner. Seeing the extensive seafood buffet, Bradders assumed snake-like properties by wallowing enough food to last a year! However, shedding the skin was more of a problem due to its thickness!!

Thursday 27 May

An unblemished blue sky – Magnetic Island beckons. Trevor and Angela were first off – catching the 7.15am ferry for an al fresco breakfast at Picnic Bay. Then collected mountain bikes (“23 gears” the man said! What he didn't say was that only three worked) and cycled over to the Koala Sanctuary and then finally to Horseshoe Bay, where Allan and Lynn had just got off the bus!

Meanwhile Peter and Greta and Paul and Betty had also landed on the island and (shame on our fitness guru!) hired mini-mokes – reminiscent of Barbados. Angela and Trevor joined up with Paul and Betty at Arcadia Beach where, at an open-air charity fashion fête; they took tea in typical English fashion. Paul and Betty stayed on with Len and Norma – Betty swimming in the warm winter water that was too cold for the locals.

Meanwhile Angela and Trevor puffed their way back to the ferry (no help from moke-bound Bands!) and returned to the Hotel. John Polley and Gary had also surreptitiously reached the Island – but managed to get left behind on the return! Panic set in initially but then relief when it was agreed to put on an additional ferry.

Not content with reaching the sanctuary of the Hotel, Angela and Trevor strode out again purposefully to find some tucker at the famous “other” Tim's Surf and Turf Restaurant. In the blazing heat they walked the length of the Strand (three miles) – currently being refurbished after storms – only to find that Tim's restaurant didn't open in the afternoon but, thankfully, the take-away did! Bought the remaining Prawns and Moreton Bay Bugs and the Manager took pity and “rustled-up” some salad – excellent. Distaff dissent meant a taxi back! Elsewhere Strapper, Bradders and Clive visited the Oz shop, Mike and Julia stayed poolside writing cards and Steve buried his head in a paper. Due to depart at 5.00pm for the second Townsville match.

6th match v Townsville OBs (Old Bastards!)

Having experienced the quality of the opposition in the first Townsville game, ABs began in determined fashion and exerted good pressure during the first quarter – aided once again by the excellent keeping of Allan Matthews. Then, somewhat against the run of play, OBs scored from a short corner. Stung into retaliation, John Polley had a good attempt saved, and shortly afterwards Clive was upended by the OB's keeper – penalty stroke; Mukesh strode purposefully up to the spot but his flick was saved; the score stayed at 0-1 to half-time.

Seven minutes after the resumption, OBs scored from another short corner- Station 10 MD Alec Linning netting with the television camera, quite fortuitously, on hand to record the happening! Still not to be outdone ABs bounced back with an excellent solo run from Gary and two good attempts by John Peirce. After this period of AB pressure, the OBs broke away and scored; an unrepresentative 0-3. With less than three minutes to go and OBs added insult to ignominy by netting a fourth.

Result: ABs 0 Rusty Roos 4

Strapper, of course, was in the invidious position of seeing his own Club succeed against his favourite Pom touring side. He maintained a statesman-like neutrality through it all – sucking pensively on his stubby! As our senior professional, Arthur, was yet again interviewed for TV and became an instant media star and also appeared in the local paper. After a swift beer or two at the Townsville Club, ABs donned their Station 10 baseball hats and were whisked away to the Carlton and United Breweries Social Club where there was a plethora of pizzas. Alec Linning duly offered a few words of comfort to ABs and Mike responded with thanks to our hosts and with stiff upper lip passed over the Ashes Trophy – “on loan” to Townsville.

A most convivial evening of ABs/OBs and partners – with our hosts insisting that when ABs came this way again, it would be their absolute pleasure to billet the touring party. We all felt that it was a heartfelt offer – despite mixed experiences on billeting on other occasions. Back to the Hotel and ultimately bed – but not before Peter, Greta, Betty and Paul had made one last visit to the Sheraton casino.



**GIMME THE MOONLIGHT, GIMME THE GIRL
AND LEAVE THE REST TO ME**



ABs IN SERIOUS TRAINING MODE

Friday 28 May

Another early morning to pack, breakfast and make the best of another glorious day before departing for the airport for a brief 1½ hour flight to Brisbane.

Trevor, Angela, Strapper and Clive wandered into town for shopping and then back to the Hotel for mid-morning aperitif with other ABs and post-card writing.

Paul and Betty breakfasted in Len and Norma’s backyard for the last time and swam in the pool and then the “au-revoirs”! What a joy to see such lovely people and the return visit to England is looked forward to with anticipation. As noted before – billeting does work sometimes!

Strapper accompanied ABs to the airport where he was presented with a Queensland Centenary Book (most of his beloved Library had been lost in the floods he suffered a year ago). Emotional “cheerios” and up, up and away once more.

Landed at 4.30pm and then by coach to the impressive Royal Pines Resort (a Hattersley heaven! – room on the ninth tee!). During the journey we watched the videoed OBs game – Alec being featured once more! After a wash and brush-up, a stroll around the magnificent grounds and cocktails, small groups disappeared into various restaurants.

(Mis!)-guided by Bradders, Trevor, Angela, Gaynor, Paul, Betty, Clive, Lynn and Allan underwent the “Tappenyaki experience” – a bit like eating off a hot stove with herbs. Joined by Walsall HC player “Cleggy” and Sharon who were “on secondment” to Australia.

Returned to the bar for medicinal brandies to recover from the Tappenyaki, soothed by a delightful Oz pianist/singer Angela!! Can she really only be 19 years old? Had a job restraining Bradders but we finally left him tied to the sofa and retired.

Saturday 29 May

The usual AB “larks” are around early and breakfasting on the poolside patio. Lazy pre-match morning either on the West Course (Steve, Greta, Peter and Mukesh) practising for tomorrow’s needle golf match (v Queenslanders) or else hacking around the 27 holes of the beautifully manicured pitch and putt course – a serious Midlands v Southern Counties match. The Peirces, Lynn, Gaynor and Angela went “on safari” around the Resort grounds but back in time for Lynn and Angela to be re-modelled in the beauty salon – a “blow job”, manicure and a facial – who had

The Colonel of course not to be outdone, had found a hire car for only A\$39/day and shot off to buy a new “lap-top”. He was muttering something about wanting to join in with the lap-dancing fraternity. Crossed wires perhaps!!

Finally at 3.00pm we meet for the drive to Murwillumbah (home of many possums) for the match. The driver was a hospitable and supportive New Zealander, Vern and his wife Irene, who took a shine to us – probably because he had never encountered a veteran hockey team before and knew nothing about the game (something we had in common, one might say!) Their support on the Gold Coast was invaluable.

7th match v Queensland +55s

Having been appropriately Greta-ed, the ABs staggered manfully onto the Astro to be announced formally to the mass of spectators as England +55s. This must have been the inspiration needed because ABs started apace and dominated the initial exchanges. “Job’s comforters” on the side-line muttered, “just like them to get a breakaway goal now” and sure enough, as if by way of answer, the Queenslanders scored first in exactly that manner (their first real attack!).

Stung by this injustice ABs hit back immediately through “the Colonel” and in the last ten minutes of the half, Steve struck twice more from short corners. Half-time 3-1

Five minutes into the second half saw another short corner and a goal from Mukesh. Another five minutes and one of many AB sorties into Queensland territory saw John Peirce finish positively to add the fifth goal – ABs were almost in uncharted waters!

The final 15 minutes saw ABs go “off the boil” a little and Queensland scored twice – both well struck shots. ABs felt enough was enough and put John Peirce through to score his score his second and the team’s sixth.

Result: ABs 6 Queensland +55s 3

Excellent post-match hospitality as ever – beers, burgers, sandwiches and cakes; many opposition wives joining in! Several good contacts including Ken and Marion who hope to visit England next year and who have relatives in Cambridge. A good “sing-song” on the way back – to the delight of Vern and Irene – and arrived at the Pines at 9.00pm.

Trevor, Angela, Bradders, Gaynor, Clive, Paul and Betty settled down for a few drinks in the cocktail bar whilst Mike, Peter, Greta, Angela and John got stuck into the bubbly! Julia was missing – out on the tiles with a long-time Oz friend. A calm end to a satisfying day.

Sunday 30 May

A section of the ABs awoke in a sweat – quivering with anticipation – it was the day of that golf match! Team poolside brekker to a cacophony of four green parrots – two residents driving off two interlopers!

Meanwhile Trevor, Angela and Clive had struck out for Surfers Paradise – walked along the Bay-Watchesque beach with “hunky” lifeguards. Hired a car and headed for Tamborine Mountain – or so we thought and Clive believed. Now Angela is no geographer – but does know right from left – and so quietly posed the question “if we are heading North, why is the sea on our left?!! That stopped us in our tracks but a smart hand-brake turn and twenty miles later saw us taking tea and sandwiches at the aptly-named Nut House (after the Macademia nuts) on the way up to Tamborine Mountain.

Back at camp, the golf oppos duly arrived – but one short. Steve roped in Jean. Further trouble because Ken was traffic-jammed after dropping his daughter at the airport and didn’t appear. Outcome: Steve and Greta lost to Graham and Sharon; Mukesh and Peter tied with Kevin and Jean; Paul and Mike beat

Stan! The result was declared a tie – the teams retired to the Clubhouse for beers and then to the Chinese Restaurant along with Betty, Julia, Ken and Marion.

Up on the mountain, Trevor, Angela and Clive were released from the Nut House to find a most attractive village – including a Dolls House Shop called Oodles (bad news). Meandered back towards the Royal Pines, darkness fell and we relied on trusty Angela to get the gang back – recognising the Hotel from a distance – and it fell to Trevor (who didn't recognise it!) to buy the drinks. Encountered six intoxicated Aussie golfers in the Clubhouse who persuaded Trevor to join in and sing some Welsh arias. He needed little encouragement – but he did have to make up the words! They didn't twig – and swooned at the voice. He had to be dragged away before his new international fame overwhelmed him. A quiet dinner rounded off another enjoyable but tiring day.

Monday 31 May

Sad start to the day – the news is that England has been eliminated from the cricket World Cup. The Colonel is irritatingly smug – must have been some collusion between the other teams!!

Golfers out early to putt (!!) right the errors of yesterday. Nick and Steve off to Dreamworld – which was where they'd just come from – and Trevor, Angela and Clive off to Surfers once more to return the hire car. Tight for time but thought about a visit to Waterworld – not at A\$42 a throw! Returned to join other ABs on the pitch and putt course.

Greta had decided her "inner strength" needed renewing and with Julia went off for a yoga session. The rigours of motivating the ABs were beginning to tell. Suitably renewed and joined by the Skipper and Peter, off by taxi to Surfers – an inspirational beach stroll, a snack in Orkiddan on Orchard Street among the Ferrari people and back to base.

Off we went again with Vern and Irene to Murwillumbah for the second match in Brisbane.

8th match v Queensland Vets

Torpid start by ABs other than Mukesh who was away from the off like a startled rabbit and made several good runs. Some good interpassing by QVs resulted in several good saves by Allan. An undistinguished first half but just before the break an ABs short corner routine found Gary who slotted a fine goal.

Early in the second half, Bradders was prominent in making a fine stop when Allan had moved off his line and shortly after, a second ABs short corner was converted by Steve. More ABs pressure was rewarded with yet another short corner and Mukesh was lurking to net a rebound. Hardly time to draw breath when a defence splitting pass from Mike found John Peirce on hand to net goal number four. QVs finally got on the score sheet in the last quarter but almost immediately ABs countered with Steve's second goal – again from a short corner. A final flurry by QVs saw Allan in athletic action to shut them out.

Result: ABs 5 Queensland Vets 1

Another evening of Aussie post-match hospitality with formalities duly carried out by Mike.

A wonderful spontaneous sing-song in the bus on the way back (all the old favourites!!) and Vern decided on a slight diversion to Danger Point where ABs took some silly photos of an ABs foot on one side of a line in Queensland and the other foot in New South Wales – this to a backdrop of ocean and twinkling lights. Coach driver Vern was made an honorary AB and presented with a tie by Paul. Come back Nellie Dean! All is forgiven! Groups of ABs had dinner in the Hotel at the Parkside or at one of the various other "eating holes".

Tuesday 1 June

Tamborine Mountain and the O'Reillys seemed the choice for a large proportion of ABs so en-bus and away at 8.30am. The Davies, Peirces, Bands and Matthews filled one minibus with Greta (as ever!) at the helm. The Oakleys, Arthur, Brenda and John Polley filled another and the two minibuses met each other at a watering-hole which also doubled as an alpaca farm! (When they saw ABs arriving in strength the a-llama was raised!!) Mike and Julia together with friend formed another excursion party and tackled the area from a different direction.

A fourth contingent (Paul, Betty, Gary and Nick) in a more sophisticated people-carrier (difficult to match the Bloomfield standards) took to the road to Purlingbrook, Canyon Falls and Goomoolahara Lookout!

By diverse and various routes, most ABs arrived at O'Reillys Rainforest Retreat – famous inter-alia for its aerial rope walkways between the trees. O'Reilly was of course the famous bushman who found and rescued two survivors of a plane crash in the 1930s. Having ascended two vertical ladders to get a “tree top-eye view” of the surrounding terrain, the troops assembled for lunch at the café.

Off to Tamborine Mountain and the craft shops once again after lunch and then later back to the Hotel for around 5.00pm.

Those well-known posers, Paul, Gary and Nick, however, felt a Surfers' Paradise stop for tee-shirts and any other (cheap) street-cred gear was the order of the day before returning to base. Mike and Julia had similar thoughts (minus the street-cred gear!) and finished up seeking gifts along “the Strip!”

Under Skipper's instructions, dinner was to be a collective AB formal affair – blazers, tour ties etc. – at the RPR Roof-top restaurant. Cocktails at 6.45pm – everyone looking suitably scrubbed, we are eventually “closeted” at two tables. A typically rowdy ABs gathering – with lots of “shushing” from the Skipper who had learned of the adjacent couple's intention that night to seek a romantic idyll. Mike's efforts to little effect – c'est la guerre!! A good convivial evening of bonhomie with Skipper providing an “escort agency” for Ladies wanting to find a loo.

Final mystery – yet unsolved! Why was the maître d' seen leaving the restaurant with Steve's trousers over her arm? Why did Brenda end up with red wine in her lap? Anybody seen Steve since? And so to bed – assuming you're not already there!!

Wednesday 2 June

Up early to savour the last few hours on the Gold Coast. Gaynor's birthday and the mandatory ABs card was entrusted to the Skipper: big mistake!! By the time we got on Vern and Irene's coach it had “gone missing!” A substitute card was hastily arranged and after a chorus of happy birthday, was presented to celebrate Aussie-time birthday. Murphy's Law! The first card then turned up and, with typical ABs swiftness of foot, it was presented in celebration of the UK-time birthday. Thank goodness the next birthday is twelve months away!

Off to the airport where Julia arranged a kerb-side check-in which helped a lot. Flight at 10.50am, plenty of room and arrived in Sydney at 12.15pm. Shuttle bus to the “art deco” Grace Hotel in the centre of the city (former Grace Brothers Stores administration complex).

ABs variously lounged, strolled down to Darling Harbour or, in Paul and Betty's case, packed a small bag and took off to stay with Tom and Hazel at Jamberoo – the second lasting friendship they had made on the previous tour. Left the hotel at 4.00pm for Moorebank Liverpool – the venue of the penultimate game. Heavy traffic! Slow drive but passed a pub called “The Ancient Briton” – unable to stop.

9th match v Moorebank Liverpool

Initial confusion! Moorebank was expecting two AB teams and so had legions of players. Decided on a 3 x 25 minute game format. After another stimulating Greta-drill, ABs were fully primed and dominated the encounter all the way through. Despite continuous AB pressure the first one third was goalless. At this point Angela Peirce and Betty decided more vocals were needed and stepped their support up a decibel or two!

From their fourth short corner ABs had a Steve strike disallowed but, undaunted John Peirce collected the ball and slotted it into the net. Less than a minute later, a long well-directed Polley-pass found John Peirce who nonchalantly carried the ball into the circle and notched his second goal. A similar interval later, a Steve shot rebounded to John Peirce and a firm shot ensured both his own and the team's hat-trick. Shortly before the end of the second third (?) Moorebank won a short corner from which they scored.

The final third comprised of continuous AB pressure resolutely resisted by Moorebank. This was to be John Peirce's last game and his hat-trick meant that he had overtaken Steve as leading tour goal-scorer.

Result: ABs 3 Moorebank Liverpool 1

An excellent post-match spread and lots of good humour with the many Aussie wives there.

The formalities saw a miscellany of presentations – amongst which were a plaque and pennant to ABs from Moorebank and a shirt to Man of the Match, Gary. AB ties were presented to several of the opposition.

Swifter homeward drive with the Colonel acting as “Coach Courier” by giving a running commentary on milestones (or millstones??) in his youth when he lived in Sydney. The hockey-playing coach driver was presented with a pin and invited to have his kit with him for the next – and final – game at the Sydney Olympic Stadium, Homebush.

Arrived back at the Grace Hotel at 10.00pm. Some ABs booked a trip to the Blue Mountains for the morning.



**NO “BANNED SUBSTANCES” FOR JOHN
– THAT WOULD BE THE LAST STRAW!**



A “CHAP OFF THE OLD BLOCK”

Thursday 3 June

An AB divers activity day. Trevor, Angela and Clive picked up by Driver John at 8.30am and then off to Homebush (the Olympic Park), Featherdale Wildlife Park, to an aboriginal craft workshop run by a fascinating guy named Michael (played a didgeridoo – Trevor had to have one!), Wentworth Falls and the Blue Mountains, including the Jamieson Valley – home of the famous “Three Sisters” rock outcrop. Rode on the steepest funicular railway in the world (1.7 – 1.0 gradient) and then across the valley and back by “swinging” cable car! Back to the outskirts of Sydney to catch a river taxi for a trip back to Circular Quay via the Harbour Bridge etc. Fantastic evening views – a magical kaleidoscope of colour.

Disembarked for the recommended “Phillip’s Foot” DIY barbecue restaurant and tethered the didgeridoo to the bench (must be upright because of the spirit in there!) Time to go, but Angela had forgotten to tell Trevor the didgeridoo was tethered – so before he could be stopped, Trevor had the bench halfway down the street.

Meanwhile Paul and Betty were up at Tom and Hazel’s ranch – herding cattle and off to the livestock sale at Nowra. After a strategic stop at a suitable watering-hole (for the human not the bovine herd), it was back for a deliciously leisurely supper full of nostalgic reminiscence.

Mike and Julia were flagging a bit so down to breakfast late – with only John and Rita in evidence. Shopping discoveries included a sub-terranean puppet maker and the restored Queen Victoria Building (an arcade of shops on three levels). An excellent lunch at Doyle’s overlooking the Bridge and Opera House. Bradders et al had decided to take the Sunset Cruise which was an edifying experience. Everyone a little soporific so after a night-cap most ABs retired at a reasonable hour.

Friday 4 June

This morning saw the Peirces leave for Melbourne to visit their “in-laws to be”.

Trevor and Allan set off by taxi to find the SCG – back soon they said! Refused entrance at first as they had missed the official tour – the next one being too late – but persuasive Pom skills were brought to

bear and eventually they had a personally guided tour by – guess who? – a guy from Devon who was one of the coaching staff! (why do we export talent to help them thrash us?).

Meanwhile, Angela, Lynn and Clive looked around the fabulously restored Queen Victoria Building with its replica of the Crown Jewels and Chinese marriage carriage. Mike and Julia chose to walk to the Opera House and a lunch-time “Captain Cook” cruise.

Following Trevor and Allan’s triumphant return with souvenirs, Angela, Trevor and Clive decided that a quick trip to Manly was in order and after a hasty lunch there on the quayside, a chat to two lovely “bush Aussie” sisters and back for 2.30pm.

Meanwhile Paul and Betty our “up country” ABs had awoken to Austrian-esque scenery, eaten a hearty breakfast and then to Dapto Station for the trip back to Sydney on a double-decker train. Visited the Rocks and walked to the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – back in time for the meet.

ABs enbussed for the final match, but first a tour of the new main Olympic Stadium organised by the Colonel. After a photo-call in the Stadium, ABs made their way to the new adjacent Olympic Hockey Stadium – the game venue. An initial hitch involved “pulling rank” over a Ladies coaching party already on the pitch; Julia brought her skills to bear on the controls of the electronic scoreboard and then the last Great-sess and we were ready for the off.

10th match v Sydney

Inspired by their surroundings, ABs began strongly and within three minutes a second short corner saw a Nick cross picked up by John Polley – moved on – and finally flicked into goal by Mike. Just the start we had hoped for! The next fifteen minutes saw the ABs’ defence hard pressed but resolutely kept the oppos at bay. This proved crucial because, inside the final ten minutes of the first half, good team inter-passing saw a fine pass from Steve lifted into the goal by Mukesh. Immediately from the re-start, Sydney attacked strongly and pulled a goal back. Half-time 2-1.

A real ding-dong battle ensued in the second half and after ten minutes, Sydney scored a second goal to set up a nail-biting finale.

Bus driver Anthony came off the bench to add width and punch to the ABs attack and following a period of ABs pressure, a shot from John Polley resulted in a penalty stroke.

A hush came over the Stadium as Gary strode purposefully up and put the ball on the spot. A moment of tension and the ball was safely in the net! A really competitive last period of play saw Trevor clear off the line (it then transpired there had been a prior infringement) and a Sydney short corner in the last minute failed to be converted.

Result: ABs 3 Sydney 2



NEW MEMBER OF ABs DEFENCE

Brits were triumphant in the inaugural international in the new Homebush Olympic Hockey Stadium. Down the road in the bus to a Bowls Club where ABs joined with the locals and were well entertained. The usual formalities and this time Steve spoke and made a presentation to Merv. Shirts were presented to the AB lady supporters by Sydney. An excellent evening, thanks to driver Anthony and back to the Hotel at 10.15pm. Skipper had arranged an “eve of departure” party at a mysterious venue! So, a quick change into blazers, etc. and a short walk – to the Cricketers’ Club of New South Wales. What a wonderfully nostalgic venue – champers and canapés and final tour presentations.

Player of the Tour: Allan Matthews

Hotshot of the Tour: John Peirce

Final thanks to “Obersturmbahnfuhrer” Greta, to Kitty Mistress Angela, to Man of the Match co-ordinator Betty, to the vociferous supporters and finally to Steve, Mike and Julia for the first class organisation of what had been a memorable tour.

Saturday 5 June

Early breakfast and packing for the long haul back to Blighty – except, of course, for Trevor and Angela who were now on to New Zealand. Final goodbyes to Trevor and Angela and eventually the remainder of ABs en-bussed for the airport.

Signing off to the sound of lots of zzzzzzzzzzzzz!! Heathrow, here we come!!!!!!