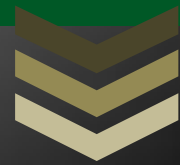




# Derby Fever



Andrew Burman

The Bob Ashton Memorial Cup 1990-2011

## *The glory and the legacy*

The Bob Ashton Memorial Cup dominates the history of both Gentlemen of West London and West XI cricket clubs. This is its story. Founded in memory of a man who played for both teams in his tragically brief career, the cup was contested for 22 seasons from 1990, the year after his death aged 24. At its peak players would plan holidays around the games and squads of 16 or 17 were not unusual.

In 2011 at 11-11<sup>1</sup> the clubs shook hands and went their separate ways, leaving the memory of some fine matches often spiced with controversy and a legacy of friendship, in some cases very close. Many lives were enhanced by the competition. A few were tainted by it. It is to all participants and Bob's memory that this brief record is dedicated.

What follows is a summary of these cup matches, assembled from contemporary match reports in house magazines *The Gent* and *Yes..No..Sorry!*, the compendia *Decade*, *GWLCC/20*, *Ten Years of West XI* and *Beggars in White*, and the clubs' websites. The friendlies played in 1988, 1989 and 1997 are out of scope, but veterans will not forget the deeds in those matches of the Ashton brothers Bob and Mark, Charles Arthur, Steve Bignell and Nick Hubbucks, whose 1988 hat-trick was never repeated in matches between the clubs and whose surname was misspelt in club newsletters and reports for 25 years.

The pendulum swung back and forth as it should in sport. West XI were more experienced and talented in the early years, dominating from 1990 to 1992. Mark Ashton's Gents improved and held their rivals at bay from 1993 to 1997. Things were more even from 1998 to 2002 under Ashton and Stuart Snelling before six successive West XI wins from 2003 to 2008, all against Sanjay Patel's teams. Showing an ability to rebuild that is characteristic of great leaders, Patel's resurgent Gents won in 2009 before the baton was passed to Richard Gilkes and deputy Hemin Patel, whose sides were victorious in 2010 and 2011 (Hemin had also captained a winning side in 2009). Ignoring the three drawn series, the results were almost a mirror image reflected around the millennium.

Large squads led to difficulty in selection. The principle adopted by the various captains of both clubs, although rarely admitted, was to field the strongest available side irrespective of technicalities like club membership, in order to hammer the other lot. The weaker player would sometimes offer to stand down in order to spare his captain a tough decision but if he did not and had nothing on him, the axe would fall. Such self-diagnoses of ability did not always reflect the captain's, for good or ill, a situation not unique to this competition, nor indeed to these two clubs. This ruthless stance was at least a clear position to adopt. Ringers were sometimes installed, seldom to any effect. The Gents were no innocents, fielding an ex-Middlesex first XI county player in 2011 who was withdrawn from the attack after two wild overs.

This selection policy led to misunderstandings during the summer and sundry AGM rants from unselected players. Skippers who in the summer had been as hard as nails then adopted an autumnal posture of humble piety and promised to be more democratic in future.

There was usually a spirit of competitive friendliness or gruff, peaceable co-existence between the rivals, but sometimes things got out of hand, with entertaining results. Telephone calls and letters of complaint encompassing a spectrum of such subjects as inadequate teas to short-pitched bowling winged back and forth in the early years to be replaced by pompous emails and petulant message board postings in the digital era. *The Gent's* intemperate match reporter described his club's opponents, perhaps unfairly, as a mixture of public school loonies, drug addicts and representatives of social classes Y minus to Z. West XI responded vigorously.

A slim volume could be written on the tea wars alone, a matter in which the author must declare an interest. In July 1999, the wife of a Gents player was persuaded by West XI to drive from Gunnersbury Park to pick up the tea from the Lord Nelson pub in Brentford. The tea order had not been put in, but the pub cobbled something together. The food therefore arrived at the ground later than planned. Play had resumed. After 10 overs, West XI's openers and umpires marched off for a scran up while Ashton kept his men on the field to indulge in a spot of catching practice. Battle lines were truly drawn that day.

Other clashes were blessed with a pitch invasion by a disgruntled player, verbal abuse (known as healthy, rib-tickling banter to the insensitive), allegations of cheating, partial umpiring, the smuggling of an illicit new ball into a second innings, a fist-fight, an attack by a wild dog that may have been in the pay of one club, death threats and, most heinously, a unilateral amendment to a start time. Two Gents, Gary Moore and Jason Irvin, were expelled from the club for threatening behaviour.

Yet these clouds of animosity sometimes dispersed. This writer will never forget the kindness shown to the shattered Gents by Paul Carter after the close third 2003 match. Other Australians who adorned the series were often first to offer a kind word to the vanquished. The man after whom the competition was named played his cricket like that, although he wasn't on the winning side often with the early Gents.

Aaron Allerton, Bignell, Buck, Burman, Jolin and Naish played for both clubs and other spare players were loaned, although regrettably not in July 1993. In that Surbiton game, the teams came close to a brawl the result, the ensuing Public Inquiry concluded, of the refusal by the Gents' captain to loan his twelfth man Alderman to West XI, who instead signed up a talented itinerant who had some influence on proceedings. Fighting was disappointingly restricted to a spat between two West XI players.

The pages below feature many notable performances. No witnesses will ever forget the innings of the Australians Cameron Vine in 1998 and Steve Jones in 2002, or the bowling spells of Stuart Snelling in 1999 and Dave Laing in 2002. These shine more brightly for being enacted during a period of equality between the clubs. The stalwart who helped steer his team home with a sensible not out, or took a vital wicket or catch will be no less charitably disposed to the memory of the 60 games than the 27 players who scored fifties and the 19 who took four wickets. Some interesting facts came to light during research into the matches. Neither Dhruv nor Sanjay Patel scored a fifty, no Gents side ever beat a West XI team containing the peerless Cameron Vine and despite his excellent personal contribution the Gents won none of the campaigns in which the talented Nabil Husain participated.

Both clubs won the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup 11 times so it was statistically appropriate that the competition ended when it did. Why did it end? A fortnight after the last game between the clubs, West XI played Octopus at the Paulin Ground, Winchmore Hill, fielding four Gents guests. Struggling for numbers, they would not play as West XI again, forming an Anschluss with Walthamstow Horizontals that winter called Judd Street Tigers. Their current metamorph is Winchmore Hill Tigers. They could only offer one fixture in the 2012 season. The competition was usually best of three, sometimes two<sup>2</sup>, with the games spread out to determine the better side over the season, but never one. The competition was therefore suspended. Though it was not always so, the clubs ended the competition favourably disposed to each other.

To play Steve Bignell's first and second XIs selected below we have chosen two Gents sides to do battle at the refurbished Boston Manor Park and Victoria Recreation Grounds. Firsts (both teams in batting order): Steve Jones, Jim Wright, Suman Rudru, Mark Ashton (captain), Sanjay Patel, Gregg Cloete, Ian Maughan (wicket-keeper), Nabil Husain, Ramanjit Lall, Ahsan Iqbal and Stuart Snelling. Seconds: Richard Gilkes (captain), Mike Hughes, Dhruv Patel, Sachin Desai, Nilesh Dubey, Ravi Inkollu, Himanshu Desai (wicket-keeper), Naveed Khan, Rich Wilman, Mark Sciberras and Hemin Patel. It is difficult to see too many batting collapses by the four teams selected. Indeed, run gluts seem to be guaranteed.

Was it all worth it? Yes. There was much good cricket played with incident and argument galore, many good people met and some lasting friendships forged. That is the legacy of this wonderful competition. Was it too serious at times? Probably, but that is sport. The wonder is that with so many powerful personalities around things were not worse than they were.

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> like the Ashes, the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup had to be won outright to change hands though no memorandum of agreement between the clubs addressing this point seems to exist. Drawn series therefore saw the Gents retain it in 1996, and West XI in 2006 and 2007.

<sup>2</sup> only two games were scheduled in 1996, 1997, 1998 and 2011. Three were scheduled in 2006 but one was rained off. West XI could not raise a team for the third 2010 game.

## *A West XI perspective*

From West XI's point of view, **writes Steve Bignell**, the best two performances in the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup were probably the game at Victoria RG, Surbiton on 24 May 1992, where the Beggars won by 144 runs after hitting a record 263-6, and a match from a very different era, where West XI successfully defended a total of only 127, defeating a very strong Gents side by 2 runs at Old Tenisonians in 2008.

The Gents had talked up a big game before the Surbiton clash, and must have been even more confident after Bignell and Irvine were dismissed cheaply, only for stylish left-handers Clyde Seale (92) and Charles Arthur (91\*) to take them apart with a stand of 135 in 21 overs as the Gents' bowling and outcricket fell apart, the final total including 27 wides.

The team that day was: Clyde Seale, Steve Bignell, Jim Irvine, Charles Arthur (captain), Paul Christensen, Sean Bell-Briggs, Jim Arthur, Milton Jolin (wicket-keeper), Phil Hill, Kevin Allerton and John Williams – perhaps not the greatest eleven players in the club's history, but in terms of its batting, bowling and fielding attributes, arguably the most talented all-round team.

In the low-scoring 2008 fixture the West XI side featured: Stewart Taylor, Prabhu Bapu, Chris Wright (captain), Cameron Vine, Dave Rawlings (wicket-keeper), Rowan Allerton, Neepam Bhatt, Steve Rennie, Justin Norcott, Steve Bignell and Phil Hill. This was perhaps one of the strongest teams ever put in the field by West XI, against one of the Gents' best – a titanic clash which went to the last ball.

Had they all played at the same time, the best West XI side ever would in my opinion have been: John Waddell, Bhavesh Vyas, Cameron Vine, Chris Wright (captain), Chris Dane, Jim Irvine, Mark Barling (wicket-keeper), Neepam Bhatt, Stewart Taylor, Paul Christensen and John Williams. A formidable B team would have been: Steve Bignell, Ian Harper-Dallas, Charles Arthur (captain), Clyde Seale, Prabhu Bapu (wicket-keeper), Phil Mattimoe, Rowan Allerton, Chris Folley, Dave Rawlings, Vinayagan Sangaralingam and Phil Hill.

Mark Ashton would of course have made the A team but he never played against the Gents in a BAMC fixture.



Steve Bignell presents the cup to Richard Gilkes at Brentham CC, 3.8.10.

### 1990 Gents 1 West XI 2

After Bob Ashton's death in September 1989, West XI's Milton Jolin commissioned a cup to be contested annually by the two clubs. Twenty-two seasons of cricket history then began on a warm May Sunday in Acton. Openers Bignell and Arthur were dismissed lbw within a few minutes of each other. The Gents had a well-balanced attack (Ashton and Hubbucks right and left-arm medium-fast, Dolan and Alderman right-arm slow-medium and Boddington slow left-arm) and dismissed the hosts for 107. A 65-run stand for the second wicket between Boddington and Maughan then set up the win, despite three late wickets falling to Jolin's off-spin. The Gents would have to make this win last for they would not get another one until July 1992 and then only after a generous concession. *Decade* noted: 'It was a useful experience for the club to see how even experienced opponents could fall apart when things went against them and the display was the Gents' best to date.' These words look harsh now. West XI had not fallen apart but they had been outplayed on the day.

They played good cricket to square the series at Boston Manor, John Waddell being almost as hot to handle as the weather, at 99.8°F the warmest in London last century. His 90 was a supreme effort, one of the best ever played against the club. It was the year that batting records tumbled all over England, Lancashire scoring 863-9 (Fairbrother 366) in reply to Surrey's 707 (I. Greig 291). Gooch scored England's last triple century, 333 against India. Had he not moved to Portugal, even dear Mick Stratford might have managed a career run. West XI's score of 212 was considerably beyond the visitors' capabilities.

It had been a hot, dry summer but the weather broke during the following week. It poured in Southall in the hours leading up to the decider at Warren Farm. Several Gents didn't want to play, but the tea had been prepared, conditions were the same for both sides, went the argument, so the game went ahead. In swirling winds and driving rain, the Gents' batsmen could not handle Hill and Arthur. Nor could they trust their own calling. Boddington, run out by Ashton, soon took his captain with him by a revenge lbw. Although John Townley was defiant, the Gents tumbled to a low total and despite some tight bowling from Ashton, Dolan and Boddington, West XI were not troubled. *Decade's* emotional chronicler wrote: 'Not one of the idle bastards in the Gents team could be arsed to help clear up the tea.' Captain Hemin Patel would administer just such a wiggling in July 2011, summarily dropping one malingerer. The baton gets handed on.

### 1991 Gents 0 West XI 3

West XI achieved a resounding 3-0 victory, although Ashton (somewhat animated one recalls) was minuted at the autumn AGM stating that two of the games should have been won. Whether he had a straight face when he said this is not recorded. Arthur's leg-cutters and resilient 21 on a poor wicket were too much at Gunnersbury Park despite a good effort from the borrowed Jolin (14 runs and two catches to supplement his haul of wickets), John Black and Ashton. The Gents were at one stage 4-4. Groundhoppers will be interested to know that this was not the wicket used 1999-2007, but one cut to the south west of the pavilion where the rugby pitches now stand.

West XI's first century opening stand of 105 at Boston Manor between Arthur, whose performances were beginning to spook the Gents and Bignell was enough to secure a second cup win. All 11 players bowled for West XI as they pranced to a simple victory. The editor of *The Gent* remembers a sublime conversation with the enigmatic Bignell after his innings: 'Did you enjoy that? Not really.'

'Gents batsmen restore pride,' reported *Yes..No..Sorry!* after the third game. So they did, with Ian Maughan's second fifty against West XI, but only after some appalling sportsmanship and bad temper had disrupted their innings. The cause was a new Gent, Gary Moore, a volatile character if one capable of warmth and kindness. He had bowled well against London Owls in an unchanged spell with Ashton in an early season game, but struggled thereafter. His mood worsened when West XI's late order went berserk and his reaction to being called Wide did not adhere in all respects to the Spirit of Cricket. He was not asked to play again, the first of only two players to be expelled in 25 seasons.

### 1992 Gents 0 West XI 2

The Gents won their first three games of 1992 but the third against Old Cubbonians contained warning signs to which they should have paid attention. Towards the end of the Cubbonians' innings, the hosts' bowling and outcricket went completely to pot. If such an ordinary side could induce such fission, what would happen when good batsmen met the Gents' patchy attack on those wonderful Surbiton wickets? Such a conjunction happened on 24 May when Gents were hammered out of sight. There were agonisingly two early successes (Bignell and the mighty Jim Irvine) but once Clyde Seale and Charles Arthur got in, it was mayhem, 135 runs of it. West XI's 263-6 would remain their highest score in the series and the 144 runs the largest margin of victory for either side. Ashton led from the front and opened but the tactic did not work and the Gents did not get close. He could not do it all on his own. Tauntings that night were long.

West XI clinched their third series win with another resounding victory at Boston Manor, Paul Christensen's and Charles Arthur's 107 for the second wicket the differentiator. They also opened the bowling, Christensen (a complex character much admired by the Gents, not least for his success with the ladies) with his off-breaks and Arthur with his leg-cutters. Boddington batted assertively for 37. Arthur, Bignell and Hill each took two wickets. Richard Sambrook Smith bowled seven overs, opened the batting and kept wicket, a full day for him.

In the dead third rubber, West XI reversed their batting order, but still piled up a fair score despite sound Gent catching, Seale notching his second fifty of the summer. Robin Hunt's 62, ably assisted by Wilman and Sambrook Smith, saw a brave response under Ian Maughan's captaincy, chairman Steve Haywood levelling the scores off the last ball before being run out. West XI sportingly conceded as the Gents had lost fewer wickets but the result is recorded in both clubs' annals as a tie. 'This result spices up a series that was becoming disappointingly one-sided. We haven't seen the last of Hunt by any means,' predicted *Yes..No..Sorry!* but they had. He never played again due to politics within the refrigeration industry, in which he and Gents regulars Ashton and Roger Farr were then embroiled.

### 1993 Gents 2 West XI 1

This was a wonderful season for the Gents. Steve Bignell, upset at the lack of use of his talents by West XI's captain Charles Arthur, a scruffy but steel-hard, highly intelligent Old Etonian, joined the Gents as opening batsman, scored 285 runs and took 25 wickets, including Christensen, Folley and Kanthan at Surbiton on 23 May. At 66-4 off 26 overs, needing 69 off nine, the Gents were on the ropes, but Todd's assault on Kanthan's leg-spin (20 coming in one over) proved decisive and Bignell (35\*) steered the Gents home with 14 balls left.

The Gents defied riots to win the cup for the first time, Boddington's glorious 78 the highlight. A man short, West XI signed up a local youth called Robert, who had been angling for a game. A Berkshire U.15 player, he and Arthur led a valiant fightback but four wickets from Wilman and faultless catching saw the Gents home in a febrile atmosphere. *Beggars in White* reported: 'The Bignell situation was becoming so acrimonious that he was subject to a barrage of beamers from Arthur and much barracking in the field, which was friendly enough banter if one discounted the death threats.'

There was a Stewards' Enquiry into two Wilman boundary catches as West XI collapsed from 104-3 to 136 all out, the volatile Christensen invading the playing area to protest. *Yes..No..Sorry!* described West XI as an 'undisciplined rabble' while *The Gent* proclaimed the day as 'the greatest and most controversial in the history of the club' which was meaningless since no criteria had been adduced for such superlatives. West XI's Jolin and Rayner traded blows in the pavilion to round things off nicely.

West XI's fierce commitment and accomplished bowling saw them home in the dead third game, five wickets here for left-armer John Williams and two for Sean Bell-Briggs. The Gents declined absurdly from 89-3 to 96 all out, the final four wickets adding no runs. Phil Hill, a fine all-rounder, then smote 34\* and with the support of Garrison Rayner (18\*) saw West XI home from 56-5.

### 1994 Gents 2 West XI 1

Jim Wright and Dhruv Patel made their debuts in 1994 and would have plenty to say in future series. Ashton was injured for the 15 May match at the jinxed Boston Manor. The Gents collapsed against Folley and Williams to 15-6 before Todd and Burman added 42, Todd's 33 mostly coming off Drake's slow spinners. 'I thought those days were behind us,' mused the absent captain.

The game on 3 July stretched the bounds of imagination. On a hot day, the Gents had to win to keep alive their hopes of retaining the cup, but key players like Bignell (a non-combatant this series), Thornicroft and Boddington were missing. A brisk Hubbucks 40 (he scored 514 this season in 15 innings, becoming the first Gent to crack 500) compensated for a rare Ashton duck and Hughes shepherded the tail from 90-6.

Drake took 29 overs for his 43, application that was lacking in the tail as West XI faded from 152-4 to 170 all out. This game was a watershed. Renvoize, who died in 2006, would not play again and Sambrook Smith would return only for the 1998 anniversary match. Both played their part in a memorable win, Sambrook Smith bowling Arthur with a full-toss, one of only two career wickets.

West XI's own form had slumped and they arrived at a damp, cold Wimbledon Park looking weary. Wright caught Arthur off his own bowling for 1 and the innings dived, the last six wickets falling for ten runs. Boddington then steered the Gents home, the batsmen showing what they had learned from Ashton, injured again for this game. This strange game, the superlative fielder Wilman's penultimate, led to much soul-searching by West XI. *Beggars in White* thought the team 'in total disarray, with constant whingeing and sniping at a captain (Hill) who appeared to have lost all interest in proceedings.'

### 1995 Gents 2 West XI 1

The 1995 competition did not proceed placidly. West XI had not won in six games before 21 May but deservedly beat the Gents, who dropped Arthur five times, mostly off the bowling of new pace sensation Stuart Snelling. Arthur and Bignell (24) put up 73 in 20 overs for the first wicket, weathering the Snelling storm, Hill pasting Dhruv Patel for 18 off the innings' final four balls. Dhruv Patel and Mike Hughes raced to 55-0 off 9 overs but once they fell the Gents lost momentum, were pegged back and fell 11 short.

The Battle of Brentford was played out on a glorious summer's day. Ambassadors were withdrawn when Mark Ashton and Dave Thornicroft unleashed a succession of short-pitches, Snelling contenting himself with his usual full length. Arthur gloved an Ashton throat ball to wicket-keeper Hughes, nicknamed the Headmaster because of his magisterial countenance. West XI ground out 154-3 in 35 overs, the innings being enlivened by some cruel barracking from beyond the boundary. Hughes lost his temper and unleashed his famous and very loud 'Totally unacceptable' rebuke at West XI captain Hill, innocent on this occasion.

'Finish them off with this,' said Jolin, handing an illicit second new ball to Hill. It nearly worked. The Gents collapsed to 27-4, but a chanceless partnership of 127 in 20.3 overs between Ashton (71) and Wright (50\*) saw the Gents home. Ashton's fifty was his first against West XI (the monkey was off his back and three more would follow in the next four seasons) and Wright's his first for the club. Even in the subsequent controversy over both captains' tactics this stand was rightly the centre of attention. Letters of recrimination, one of which accused the Gents' captain of attempted murder, were duly sent.

Nick Boddington's 54 at Wimbledon Park, his second fifty against West XI, was the foundation of the Gents' highest score in the series to date. Ian Maughan batted attractively for 32. Wright missed this game. *Beggars in White* chronicled: 'West XI never remotely looked like challenging this total, the first five wickets going down in the space of nine runs. There was little socialising and relations between the sides sank to an all-time low.' *Gent 36* confirms that only four Gents (Burman, Burville, Hughes and Snelling) attended the Pig and Whistle for the after match slander session.

### ***1996 Gents 1 West XI 1***

The 1996 series was more muted. The teams were evenly matched but because no third game was arranged the Gents retained the cup. The great West London rivals squared up in gale and sleet at Beverley Park. After some grim defence Arthur's spiralling edge off the shoulder of his bat was safely snaffled by second slip Burman and when Monk brilliantly caught Bignell high above his head off a full-blooded hook at square-leg, thus avenging his expensive miss off Arthur one year before, one sensed it was going to be the Gents' day. And so it was, helped greatly by Wright's 5-26 and an eye-catching 37 from Bill Murphy, who was unsuccessfully tapped up by West XI in the pub after the game. It was the Gents' sixth successive win straddling two seasons.

West XI deservedly avenged that defeat in a far better-tempered game than in 1995. Bignell and Hill shared seven wickets before their left-handers, the Arthur brothers Charles and Jim and Stewart Taylor (a friend of Phil Hill and fellow Chelsea FC fan who would become one of West XI's best players), confused Ashton's bowlers, not that they needed much confusing. A crowd-pleasing juggle and subsequent drop was a rare lapse by Ashton. It may have been the first catch he ever dropped.

### ***1997 Gents 2 West XI 0***

The Gents won 2-0 after two victories batting first. Mark Ashton was beginning to incur injuries, some the result of wear and tear on a 40-year-old body, others caused by pure misfortune. A collision while batting with Wright resulted in a serious finger injury that that required surgery and caused him to miss six games. His last game before this unscheduled break was on 18 May at Surbiton. Beset by late arrivals, to the consternation of new captain Bignell, West XI did well to reduce the Gents from 109-3 to 152-9, Dhruv Patel and Hughes batting sensibly. Snelling and Sanjay Patel stifled the West XI batsmen with accurate spells, each carding 3-14. This was the Gents' first convincing performance of the season.

Ashton returned against Enterprise on 13 July. He and his talented middle order trio of Wright and the Patels scored a combined 170 runs, a total they would beat by four seven days later. In perfect, sunny conditions, the Gents squared up to West XI at the hoodoo Boston Manor ground. At the halfway point of 20 overs, the inserted Gents were 62-2.

The final 20 saw 147. Ashton led the way with 56 off 37 balls, Wright and the Patels again scoring heavily. West XI fought bravely with the bat but were undone by excellent slow left-arm bowling from Boddington, floating the ball up, and tight off-spin from Dhruv Patel. It was the Gents' fifth successive cup win but things were about to change with the introduction into the West XI team of Cameron Vine, the greatest cricketer ever to grace these games.

### ***1998 Gents 0 West XI 2***

West XI were worthy winners this year. The Gents fell away at Surbiton from 100-2 to 142 all out, Dhruv Patel being run out after a misunderstanding with captain Ashton the ball before drinks. The anger shown by the pint-sized twirler, audible for perhaps a mile away and certainly through the thin dressing room wall did plenty to encourage West XI. Ashton withdrew after tearing his medial knee ligaments in the fifth over of the reply and Phil Mattimoe's 56 saw a deserved away win.

The pleasant Boston Manor Park had become infested with gypsies days before the return leg. A fierce dog attacked Snelling, an omen for the day's events. Boddington and Hughes put on a first-wicket stand of 77 but brilliant bowling by Vine and Wright, who for good measure ran out Hughes, saw a painful collapse. Harper-Dallas was caught behind by Hughes off Snelling first ball of the reply, but Vine was in complete command and with Taylor's help saw his team to a convincing win with an unforgettable 84\*.

An early pull close to Bill Murphy at square-leg might have seen the back of him, much as Steve Jones might have perished early four years later. And Boycott was dropped early in the slips during his comeback hundred at Trent Bridge in 1977.



### 1999 Gents 3 West XI 0

Vine returned to Australia having scored 641 runs at an incredible average of 91.57. Ashton, in his last full season, scored heavily in this series with 123 while Snelling carded an aggregate 11-38 to take full advantage of a West XI side captained once more by Phil Hill, who had replaced Steve Bignell at a prorogued AGM. West XI lost a wicket first ball again, Mattimoe drilling a Snelling long-hop to the adhesive Sanjay Patel in the covers. Bignell (30) and Taylor (20) dug in with 54 for the fifth wicket. Todd (18\*) and Buck (17\*) saw the Gents home with 6.4 overs unused.

Three Boddington pulls for four got the Gents off to a perfect start in the first over at Gunnersbury Park as Wright pitched too short. Reeves (on debut in the series) (3-30) and Taylor (2-25) pegged them back to 84-5 but Ashton was defiant in his 54, batting wisely with the tail. He had now settled into a role as batsman/wicket-keeper, his knees no longer allowing him to bowl. Snelling was held back as Harper-Dallas and Mattimoe put up 60-0 off 14 overs but his introduction after a delayed tea instigated a collapse. Seale batted well but tight bowling and fielding won the day. *Yes..No..Sorry!* complained that there was too little urgency in the reply and castigated several players for taking the field in shorts and silly hats.

Snelling was at his peak this season, as a bruised Ashton confirmed after keeping wicket at Raynes Park. As well as sparkling performances from Boddington, Ashton and Snelling the day had its bizarre aspects. No boundary had been marked, so a bootful of yellow baseball caps earmarked for FC Chad was supplied as markers by the ever-resourceful Naish. The world of communications was changing. Burman guided Ashton, Buck and Naish to the ground using his brick-sized mobile phone, while captain Hill wrote a brief match report on West XI's new website that did not threaten the livelihood of established journalists.

### 2000 Gents 2 West XI 1

Jim Wright carried all before him in 2000 with 756 runs, 21 wickets and 7 catches. West XI were beaten at Surbiton by his 61 (and 3 wickets), a super spell of spin by Dhruv Patel (4-22) and excellent catching, including a match-turning pouch (not his last) from long-off Mark Sciberras to dismiss the dangerous Chris Taipari. At 58-2 off 20 overs in a 40 over game West XI had built the foundations of a commanding total but it was not to be. There were accusations of Slow Bowlers' Union after it was alleged that umpire Bignell, himself a leg-spinner, had coached the Gents' tweeker. *Gent 64* commented with foresight that Dane, who only scored 6, was 'clearly a class act who will doubtless return to haunt the Gents.'

The cup was then regained at Gunnersbury Park after excellent bowling in helpful conditions for seamers, the ball swinging on a sepulchral, humid afternoon. Yorkshireman Eddie Fitch, who had joined after the London Owls game in June, was a difficult character but on his day a formidable player and was the pick of the bowlers with 8-3-11-2, Ian Harper-Dallas carrying his bat. The Patels then survived Taylor's blitzkrieg to win the game.

New captain Snelling, the non-playing Ashton and Wright had attended the England v. Zimbabwe ODI the day before and discussed tactics at length, tactics that were sensibly abandoned once the game started. The Gents were forced to fetch the tea from the Lord Nelson pub by their dysfunctional hosts and watch West XI's veteran twelfth man devour the tastiest morsels before the rest of the players could tuck in.

In the dead rubber Chris Dane (73) scored his first of a remarkable seven fifties against the Gents. He and Phil Walton (53) put up 100 in 14 overs for the sixth wicket, an all-opponents' record, West XI recovering from 27-4. Wight fell cheaply off a catch deflected off Robinson's gloves to short fine-leg and despite a marathon 62\* from Max Minhas the Gents fell short. Many Gents regulars missed this game, an early sign, perhaps, of the complacency that would haunt them in 2001. They had just about deserved the 2-1 win against a West XI side now captained by Chris Wright, who after a diffident start would lead his team into a golden era.

## **2001 Gents 1 West XI 2**

Chris Wright assumed the West XI captaincy in 2000 and would win the cup in seven of the following eight years. 'I don't think West XI have their strongest side out today,' murmured captain Snelling on 3 June but West XI, having come into the match on the back of a tiring Saturday game in Winchester, deservedly won by 10 runs. The Gents fell to 13-3, recovered but fell just short, Robinson taking three catches.

Snelling's tea was ruined by ants, an unfortunate occurrence which caused unfathomable joy to several opponents, as did the availability of an internet connection in their tour hotel, used to post libellous abuse on the Gents' chat site (postings 386-391 refer). Yet it has to be conceded that the Gents were not a particularly lovable side this season and probably deserved most of the flak that came their way.

The 21 July game saw the Gents level the series with a solid batting display, Jason Irvin's 41, supported by Tony Buck and Sanjay Patel ensuring safe passage. Irvin's mannerisms did not endear himself to opponents but captain and senior players kept a lid on his boisterous behaviour, at least until 2003. The pitch looked completely unprepared but played well.

The Gents would once again underestimate West XI at Berkhamsted. After a minute's silence in memory of those killed in the 9/11 atrocity five days before, a late blast by Ashton helped Gents to 194-8. It was not enough as West XI chased the target for the loss of only five wickets. Snelling was outmanoeuvred tactically by Wright but had received little support from some of his senior players in the two defeats. West XI won only six games all year but were at their best when playing their old rivals.

## **2002 Gents 2 West XI 1**

As in 1990, 1994 and 1995, the winners of the first game lost 1-2. This was the first season of a four-team competition, the Pals League, also including New Barbarian Weasels and Urban Associates. The first two West XI games were also league matches and to ensure umpiring consistency, all balls down the leg side were, for this season only, to be called wide. This gave rise to some big extras totals, the Gents conceding 44 (no batsman made more), including 26 wides on 2 June. Boddington went for 57 in six overs as West XI made hay. The Gents recovered from a scratchy start but were shot down by Laing's remarkable spell of slow left-arm spin on a deteriorating wicket.

On 14 July, 12 Angry Men's Damon Wilson scored 102 at Gunnersbury Park. A week later, another Australian, New South Welshman Steve Jones, followed in the wiry drummer's footsteps with 158\*, the highest by a Gent and the highest ever against West XI. He might have been caught early and indeed scratched around for the first eight overs but once he had got his eye in with a six into the tennis courts off Stewart Taylor there was little the hosts could do. He took 108 in boundaries alone with ten sixes and twelve fours. Tony Poor Buck missed the latter half of the innings, as West XI's catastrophic tea arrangements meant that a member of the side batting first had to drive to Brentford to fetch the hand-sliced pork pies and Stilton and broccoli quiche. West XI fell 99 runs short despite a century partnership between Stewart Taylor and Phil Walton.

The memorable Berkhamsted game capped a series of high quality. The result swung on the last ball of the season, bowled by Jim Wright to Sangaralingam, four needed to win. West XI got two and victory was the Gents' thanks to a superb diving one-handed catch by Sciberras at deep third-man four balls before to dismiss Bignell. The Gents' hard-earned, steady 155 (Wright 33, Sanjay Patel 32, Fitch 31) looked enough for long periods of the West XI reply but veterans Rennie, Sangaralingam and Bignell nearly won the game with some powerful counter-punching against a strong Gents' attack.

This game was Ashton's last, his final act in a Gents' shirt being to demolish the stumps from Sanjay Patel's throw off the last ball. Snelling's reward for this exciting win was to lose the captaincy at the autumn AGM after a coup. His ability, dedication and good manners set a standard equalled but never exceeded by the club's subsequent captains.

### 2003 Gents 0 West XI 3

'Ingratitude towards their great men is the mark of strong peoples,' wrote Greek biographer and moralist Plutarch (46AD-120AD) in a prescient comment anticipating the 2002 Gents AGM when Sanjay Patel took over the captaincy from Stuart Snelling after an evening of plotting and intrigue that would not have disgraced a Tudor court. Change was afoot. The Gents were weakened by the retirement of Mark Ashton, the absence of Jim Wright, who had briefly moved to New Zealand, and the return to Sydney of Steve Jones. Dhruv Patel, a man of influence, introduced a shy Saudi called Nabil Husain. This was a difficult time for the new captain. He rose to the challenges manfully, but the tipping point had been reached in local rivalry.

The cup was lost 0-3 to a fine West XI side galvanised by new signings Bhavesh Vyas and Neepam Bhatt, who also represented the Gents to some effect. In the first leg, Bignell and Taylor fell to Surbiton grubbers for ducks but Dane batted exceptionally well on an underprepared pitch for 79. Brisk hitting from Wright, Sangaralingam and Rennie saw West XI to 188-9. The Gents replied bravely but fell away to give West XI their first win in seven games, Vyas cleaning up the tail.

The second match was a hateful affair. It exploded with the systematic targeting by West XI of the volatile Irvin, who was conned out of his wicket, given caught behind not having touched the ball, after an orchestrated appeal by wicket-keeper Robinson and bowler Bhatt, who apologised to Irvin during the tea interval. The burly Gent, a powerful but vulnerable man, exploded. He would not play again. West XI were 82-4 off 25 overs but Wright and Bignell struck out, the final total being beyond the visitors.

It was a poor year for West London relations, Sangaralingam, who had recently turned hostile towards the Gents, accusing them at Berkhamsted of cheating. Better entertainment was to be had there watching James Lewis and fiancée Helen study curtain brochures in the Hertfordshire sunshine, to the consternation of both James's brother Chris and Snelling. Carter's 56 ensured a 3-0 scoreline, the highlight for the Gents being a last-wicket stand of 43 between James Lewis and Faraz Sherwani. The Gents won only six games all season.

### 2004 Gents 0 West XI 3

Three similar Gents' totals of 151, 150 and 151 were inadequate and West XI, enjoying a 17-6 campaign, triumphed 3-0 for a whitewash to follow that of 2003. Eight different Gents were run out in the series, a remarkable statistic. The Surbiton match ebbed and flowed all day and it took an imperious 82\* from Bhatt (11 fours) to swing the game in West XI's favour. This was the youngster's best innings against the Gents and one he could rarely have outdone elsewhere. Chasing 151 to win, Bhatt was joined by Pryor at 87-4 and the pair knocked off the 64 needed in just 10 overs.

West XI retained the cup in a thrilling encounter at Gunnersbury Park, edging the contest by 13 runs and taking a 2-0 lead in the series, thanks to three direct hit run outs and safe catching. *Beggars in White* noted: 'Both sides batted and bowled with fine discipline, but ultimately it was the late assault by the Beggars' batsman in their last six overs, when 60 priceless runs were added, that made the difference.' Openers Richard Gilkes and Justin Norcott became bogged down in scoring 28 in 14 overs before Husain's lively 42 took the Gents close to their target.

Gilkes was back to his best at Berkhamsted but West XI again found the acceleration to win with 13 balls to spare. Sciberras scored a patient 27 but was involved in four run outs. There was bad blood between Husain and Sangaralingam, who asked what happened to respect for elders, perhaps forgetting that the likes of Hitler and Dr Shipman did much of their best work after 50.

Andy Robinson (whom a cabal of Gents planned to have assassinated this season) chirped: 'Given the Gents have lost 3-0 in consecutive seasons, wouldn't it be kinder to give them a season off so they can regroup?' There was plenty more where that came from. West XI were now in the ascendancy and would remain so for four more years.

## 2005 Gents 1 West XI 2

Much good cricket was played in the 2005 series as a powerful West XI were taken to a decider. Reinforced by Bapu, Barling and the returning Vine, their record of 18-5 (Laing 31 wickets) contrasted with the Gents' 7-12. They fought back at Surbiton after West XI were 89-2 but batted stodgily in reply, *Gent 99* saying after Denton's dismissal with leaden sarcasm: 'That was 9-3 in 9 overs, the top order having nurtured a required run rate of 4.7 up to 6.0 in 30 glorious minutes.' The Aussie great white shark Vine fed frenziedly on the tail. Tony Buck sourced a white sheet from the pavilion, possibly intended for the creepy groundsman's latest murder victim, and waved it in surrender. What a talented West XI side this was.

Just as Mark Taylor once declared an Australian innings closed in Peshawar (home of the naan) when he was 334\* in order not to beat Sir Donald Bradman's then record, Sanjay Patel declared, as it were, on seven derby defeats, level with Mark Ashton's run from 1990 to 1992. Husain, with 586 runs in the season, was the mainstay of a fighting performance in a 12-a-side game at Gunnersbury Park with 51. In a game of attrition, the returning Snelling took 4-24 (four victims of quality in Vyas, Bapu, Wright and Bignell), the second four-wicket return of the day after Chris Wright's, as the Gents overcame stout resistance, Taylor batting 28 overs for his 38.

Only Wright and Denton, whose opening stand of 43 had entitled the Gents to dream of better things, resisted West XI at damp, misty Berkhamsted, Dane and Wright exerting mastery with the ball as Flintoff was doing against Australia at the Oval. *Gent 103* refused to write a harsh report, observing: 'Atrocious conditions obtained, but they were the same for both sides and this was a grand occasion, greatly enlivened by the warm hospitality of the host club and the humour of Laing, who in the absence of Bender put his hands up, manfully supplying quips and wisecracks.' Taylor and Wright did the needful with the bat, rarely looking troubled as they won with eight wickets in hand.

The perspective granted after seven years permits the observation that the Gents did very well to restore brief parity this year, for West XI's team was more talented and would remain so for four years. The Gents pinned their hopes on a few players whereas success was distributed more evenly within West XI, who in the 2003-2005 period won 47 out of 67 games including 18 out of 23 in 2005. Bhavesh Vyas scored 735 runs.

## 2006 Gents 1 West XI 1

The introduction of three talented players in Lloyd Wahed, Sean Carroll and Rob Babar promised much for the Gents, but the promise remained unfulfilled, although a drawn series was an improvement on the previous three campaigns. The May game was scheduled for North Acton PF, where the Gents won in 1990, but heavy rain caused the match to be cancelled on the Friday. Cue much kerfuffle. That evening a deal appeared to have been done by Dhruv Patel to move the game to a private ground in New Malden but persistent rain on Saturday put paid to that.

Old Tenisonians hosted its first fixture between the sides in July. 'Stormy weather for Gents,' keened *Gent 108* for Mark Sciberras had left the club for a brief period and West XI had fashioned a convincing win with six wickets and 6.9 overs in hand, the Australian pair Cameron Vine and Mark Barling adding 73 for the fourth wicket. Gilkes defied Vine's forecast that he wouldn't bat for long, sticking it out for 22 overs. West XI, used to the palatial if remote wonders of Berkhamsted, were not impressed by the Gents' new home but savoured the win.

With the pressure off at the fine Berkhamsted ground, the Gents produced their most convincing display in the rubber for four years, winning at a canter with seven wickets and 14 overs in hand. Husain, with four wickets and 59 with the bat, produced one of the best all-round performances in this series. Gilkes struck his second fifty as 110 were put up for the second wicket in only 14 overs, while the athletic Paul Turpin, usually a wicket-keeper, took three spectacular outfield catches. West XI were powerless to stop the onslaught and took their defeat in good spirit. The cup was theirs again.

### ***2007 Gents 1 West XI 1 (one match abandoned)***

In Greek mythology, Tantalus is punished by the Gods for stealing their secrets. His fate was to spend eternity with a rock hanging precariously over his head, to be always hungry and thirsty with food and drink in sight, but always, tantalisingly, out of reach. Thus, Sanjay Patel nearly inspired the Gents' first series win in five years, but it was not to be. He would come even closer in 2008. West XI suffered ill-luck and self-inflicted wounds to perform well below their usual standards in the first leg (the last game at a Gunnersbury Park venue in accelerating decline) won by the away side yet again. From a parlous 11-2, the Gents middle order scored quickly and heavily, Husain (76) leading the way with sparkling support from Dhruv Patel (39) and Wahed (27). After a stodgy start, West XI were beginning to fight back but collapsed from 77-4 to 79 all out, with Husain and Sanjay Patel producing alarming analyses of 4-3-1-2 and 2-2-0-3. Wahed took three catches in the deep.

The July leg was abandoned after a spectacular thunderstorm, a few miles from where New Barbarian Weasels and Pak played an uninterrupted game at Imber Court. The game was likely to have been close, with Norcott and Dane steady under fire, a taste of things to come for them at Berkhamsted when their 81 stand was a deserved match-winner. Hemin Patel, by now an important contributor in these games, had three lbws (Barling, Wright and Bhatt) upheld in his favour by umpire Vine, earlier the victim of the catch of the season by square-leg Carroll off Sanjay Patel. Such a trio of affirmative decisions would have taken years to be enacted by umpires in the mid-1990s, when mutual suspicions of bias were rife. Speculation on the possible result remains to this day.

West XI were worthy winners at Berkhamsted because they played more as a team, all their batsmen apart from Taylor getting into double figures, while their bowling was more consistent. Indeed, the Gents' innings never really recovered from hostile, accurate opening spells from Taylor and Dane, stuttering to 43-3 off 14 overs. Husain brought up his 2,000 runs in only 51 innings with a splendid 66, but received little help. Justin Norcott, a Gents player until 1996, played Snelling competently and a late blast by Chris Wright and Rowan Allerton won the game. The score of 1-1 was just.

### ***2008 Gents 1 West XI 2***

There was an eighth consecutive away win in the first game, the Gents winning easily thanks to a dogged 46 from Khan. Both sides scored 75 runs in their first 20 overs, but whereas the Gents scrapped their way to 162, West XI collapsed in a heap after their captain was out from 75-5, only 4 further runs accruing. This was a red letter day, for on the equivalent Sunday 20 years before, the Gents had played their inaugural fixture, against the same opposition. Steve Bignell and Andrew Burman from that treasured day were in attendance, the former kindly presenting the latter with a framed scorecard of the game.

Needing six runs off the last two overs with three wickets left at Old Tenisonians, Peter Denton's Gents (Patel was on holiday) had one hand on the trophy, but were unable to retain their grasp. West XI's loud celebrations testified to their relief, the Gents' silence to their disappointment, for led by Ahsan Iqbal's brilliant knock they had fought back hard only to be denied at the last. Chasing 128 to win, the Gents had slumped from 55-1 off 15 overs to 65-6 off 23. Iqbal and Tony Buck added 45, but the task proved too daunting and Hill's final over conceded only three when six were needed. West XI had held their nerve to lodge a famous win against their distraught rivals.

The decider was an administrative disaster for the Gents. After rain in the morning the game was eventually called on. Dane's 62\* against an attack of high quality was masterly and ensured a sixth consecutive triumph for his side. The Gents never looked like chasing down 153 and batted only 25.4 overs. The Gents would never beat a West XI side including the peerless all-rounder Vine, although he did not particularly influence proceedings here, scoring 19 and not bowling. Attrition of players in the days leading up to the match was and is fairly common but two no-shows on the day itself put the team at a considerable disadvantage. That the series swung on a close second match was vindication for fans of the best-of-three format as the superior side over the season won. Barn Elms seemed a long way away that melancholy September evening.

### **2009 Gents 3 West XI 0**

The ninth successive opening away win heralded a record-breaking season. The 2009 Gents' squad was the most talented in its 25 years and Sachin Desai and Suman Rudru were untroubled at the Civil Service SC in adding 119 in 17 overs after Naveed Khan's dismissal. Hemin Patel, deputizing for the absent captain, used nine bowlers, the two fastest, Snelling and Iqbal, being fourth and sixth change. West XI used eight. Boden fashioned a useful 40 for the hosts. Rudru, introduced by his friend Ravi Inkollu, promised that for as long as he played for the Gents they would win this competition. Whether he was being arrogant or mystical is a moot point, but he was proved right.

The Bob Ashton Memorial Cup was regained by the Gents on 19 July and they would not surrender it thereafter, Khan (60) and Gilkes (68) batting West XI out of the game with a series record first-wicket stand of 113 off only 18.5 overs. Gilkes's knock came after scores of 0, 7, 0 and 0. The middle order carried on the fast scoring and despite 42 from Chris Boden West XI never threatened the total, Khan putting the matter beyond doubt with a memorable running catch at deep mid-wicket to dismiss the dangerous Bhatt off Inkollu's bowling. Chris Dane missed this game. West XI's web-site described the Gents as 'off the radar by social cricket standards'.

A third Gents win was wrapped up in Kingston by solid batting throughout the order. Dane scored another fifty as West XI dug in for 144-8, H. Desai taking three catches behind the timbers. All the Gents batsmen contributed. Of the 15 Gents and 17 West XI players used in the three games, only eight did not bowl: Buck, H. Desai, Kalidindi, Gilkes and Toft for the Gents and Bapu, Delanian and Podla for West XI. Bignell observed: 'West XI look like a team in a terminal tailspin, with several players on the edge of mental and physical burnout, brought on by an over-ambitious fixture list and lack of commitment by fellow members.' This exciting match was a fitting climax to Sanjay Patel's seven years at the helm. He had thoroughly deserved his moment. West XI's captain Dane noted in the following days: 'The 3-0 score line is a hard one to take for a team that has gorged itself on parochial success over the last few years. Chapeau to the superb Gents team.'

### **2010 Gents 2 West XI 0**

This was a tight series. The Gents gained an early advantage with a narrow victory closed out in appalling conditions reminiscent of the 1990 decider at Warren Farm. The conditions did not, however, detract from a keenly-fought game with notable performances on both sides. The stand of 64 between Sumit Kumar (50\* with seven fours) and Hemin Patel (38 with six fours, a personal best in his 100th. game) turned the innings round from 60-5. Bapu and Wright batted well, the latter giving his side a sniff of victory with a furious assault on Kumar's only over. But the Gents, on a day for the slower bowlers led by the wily Sciberras, bowled accurately and held all but one of their catches as West XI batsmen, not helped by several rain breaks and a quagmire of a wicket, fell 19 runs short.

Captain Gilkes then gave a tactical masterclass to gain a second victory. This game was a mirror image of the classic in July 2008 when West XI won from a similarly disadvantageous position by just 2 runs. Sanjay Patel's fighting 35 was the best effort of a moderate Gents' total on a tricky pitch but in the reply Gilkes's tactics were brave and successful. After Iqbal's early blast of three wickets, Dane and Taylor took the hosts to 93-4 off 26 overs, 40 needed from nine.

Snelling was off the field injured and it looked grim for the Gents but the pitch was turning. Gilkes placed Greg Newcombe at short, straight mid-off and his diving catch to dismiss Taylor, the first of Hemin Patel's quintet, galvanised the Gents. Sanjay Patel bowled Wright with his final ball as West XI lost 7 wickets for 27 runs, their last four contributing just one. Newcombe, who would become captain two years later, described the game as the best he had ever played in.

West XI could not raise a side for the third game, the first and only such cancellation in the 22 years. Bignell, the epitome of the conscientious fixture secretary, had forewarned the Gents several weeks before that this was a possibility so another fixture was arranged.

## **2011 Gents 2 West XI 0**

The Gents' slow bowlers, Hemin Patel and Mark Sciberras, pulled West XI back from 65-1 at LMPF Greenford, Chris Boden and Chris Dane posting the day's highest partnership, 57. Middlesex bowler Jignesh Patel was crowbarred into the Gents XI but bowled only two overs, captain Hemin Patel judging that Ealing Hospital Accident and Emergency was likely to be understaffed on a Sunday. The Gents batted excitingly if jerkily to win with over 10 overs to spare and retain the cup in a two-match rubber. Nilesh Dubey hit a brilliant 54 (one six and seven fours), his colleagues showing panache in chasing down a tricky total after three wickets had fallen either side of an early tea. Lall, lbw Taylor first ball, would exact his revenge eight weeks later.

The Crown Taverners return was reduced to 30 overs a side by morning rain, whereupon the Gents made the highest score in the 60th. and final BAMC game. Match reporter Ken Toft noted that the off-on nature of the game affected West XI more, in contrast to 2008 at New Beckenham in similar conditions when it was the Gents who switched off when a cancelled game was resurrected, and lost by a similar margin. The Gents' 279-3 was the second-highest score against West XI (beaten only by Red Star Pandemonium's 320-6 from 40 overs in 2000) and the highest score in the competition. Dane's analysis of 6-0-67-0 was the most expensive analysis in West XI's history. Ramanjit Lall (two sixes and 17 fours) and Gregg Cloete (eight sixes and seven fours) hit 161 in just 15.1 overs after a vigorous 45 by outgoing captain Gilkes. At one stage, 40 runs came off two overs as the pair created the highest stand in the competition's history. The previous record by Seale and Arthur had stood for 19 years and 15 weeks. West XI did not give up and Dane scored 59, a record seventh cup fifty, in a dignified reply, the highest second innings in the final game between the clubs.

## **Postscript**

On 18 September 2011 West XI played their last ever game, their 545th spread over 26 seasons. Four Gents guests played; Caveney, Raghothamreddy, S. Patel and Rudru.

Raghothamreddy distinguished himself with 53 and 4-17, a rare all-rounder's double of a fifty and four wickets, and a feat achieved by only three players – Boddington, Husain and Vine – in the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup.

## **Miscellaneous records (excluding non-competitive games between the clubs)**

### **Highest totals**

**279-3** <sup>30 overs</sup> (Gents, 2011)  
**263-6** <sup>40</sup> (West XI, 1992)  
**249-6** <sup>35</sup> (Gents, 2002)  
**237-5** <sup>35</sup> (Gents, 2009),  
**227-6** <sup>35</sup> (West XI, 2002)

### **Lowest totals**

**56** (West XI, 1994)  
**57** (Gents, 2008)  
**60** (Gents, 2005)  
**69** (Gents, 1994)  
**79** (West XI, 2007), **79** (West XI, 2008)

### **Highest individual scores**

**158\*** Jones (Gents, 2002), **102** Lall (Gents, 2011), **97\*** Cloete (Gents, 2011), **92** Seale (West XI, 1992),  
**91\*** C. Arthur (West XI, 1992), **90** Waddell (West XI, 1990), **82\*** Bhatt (West XI, 2004),  
**78** Boddington (Gents, 1993), **76** Husain (Gents, 2007), **73** Dane (West XI, 2000)

### **Best bowling**

**5-6** Laing (West XI, 2002), **5-13** Husain (Gents, 2008), **5-16** Vine (West XI, 1998),  
**5-17** H. Patel (Gents, 2010), **5-18** Williams (West XI, 1993), **5-26** J. Wright (Gents, 1996)

### **Longest winning run (Gents)**

7 games, 31 May 2009 to 4 September 2011

### **Longest winning run (West XI)**

7 games, 1 June 2003 to 29 May 2005

## The scorecards

### 1990 – Gents 1 West XI 2

27/5	North Acton RG	<b>West XI 107</b> (Dolan 3-18) <b>Gents 110-5</b> (Maughan 51, Boddington 20, Jolin 3-6)	<b>Won</b> 5 wickets
12/8	Boston Manor	<b>West XI 212-7</b> (Waddell 90, Irvine 35, Dolan 4-27) <b>Gents 106</b> (Townley 28, C. Arthur 4-24, Irvine 3-23)	<b>Lost</b> 106 runs
19/8	Warren Farm	<b>Gents 88-9</b> (Townley 35*, Hill 3-18) <b>West XI 89-1</b> (Christensen 33*, C. Arthur 28)	<b>Lost</b> 9 wickets

### 1991 – Gents 0 West XI 3

26/5	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 108</b> (C. Arthur 21, Jolin 4-22, Black 3-19) <b>Gents 87</b> (Ashton 32, C. Arthur 4-14)	<b>Lost</b> 21 runs
11/8	Boston Manor	<b>West XI 162-2</b> (C. Arthur 66, Bignell 58*) <b>Gents 101-9</b>	<b>Lost</b> 61 runs
18/8	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 201-7</b> (Waddell 41, Folley 39*, Irvine 26, Christensen 25*, Dolan 3-25) <b>Gents 149-7</b> (Maughan 62*, Ashton 30, Hill 3-7)	<b>Lost</b> 52 runs

### 1992 – Gents 0 West XI 2 (1 tied match conceded by West XI)

24/5	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 263-6</b> (Seale 92, C. Arthur 91*, Bell-Briggs 20) <b>Gents 119</b> (Sambrook Smith 25, Dolan 20, Hill 3-12)	<b>Lost</b> 144 runs
14/6	Boston Manor	<b>West XI 181-5</b> (Christensen 71, C. Arthur 45) <b>Gents 90</b> (Boddington 37)	<b>Lost</b> 91 runs
12/7	KGF Richmond	<b>West XI 147-9</b> (Seale 68, Todd 4-30) <b>Gents 147-7</b> (Hunt 62, Boddington 21)	<b>Tied</b>

### 1993 – Gents 2 West XI 1

23/5	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 134</b> (Scott 36, Bignell 3-11) <b>Gents 135-6</b> (Todd 39, Bignell 35*, C. Arthur 3-18, Folley 3-38)	<b>Won</b> 4 wickets
4/7	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 165-5</b> (Boddington 78, Bignell 21, Christensen 3-37) <b>West XI 136</b> (Robert 39, C. Arthur 31, Wilman 4-40)	<b>Won</b> 29 runs
8/8	Boston Manor	<b>Gents 96</b> (Maughan 24, Ashton 23, Williams 5-18) <b>West XI 97-5</b> (Hill 34*)	<b>Lost</b> 5 wickets

### 1994 – Gents 2 West XI 1

15/5	Boston Manor	<b>Gents 69</b> (Todd 33, Folley 4-5, C. Arthur 3-12) <b>West XI 71-4</b> (Folley 29*)	<b>Lost</b> 6 wickets
3/7	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 181-9</b> (Hughes 43, Hubbucks 40, C. Arthur 3-20) <b>West XI 170</b> (Drake 43, Seale 28, Harrington 25)	<b>Won</b> 11 runs
18/9	Wimbledon Park	<b>West XI 56</b> (Boddington 3-18) <b>Gents 57-4</b> (Boddington 27*, Hill 3-24)	<b>Won</b> 5 wickets

### 1995 – Gents 2 West XI 1

21/5	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 171-7</b> (C. Arthur 70, Drake 25, Bignell 24) <b>Gents 160</b> (Ashton 35, Hughes 29, Hill 3-18)	<b>Lost</b> 11 runs
23/7	Boston Manor	<b>West XI 154-3</b> (C. Arthur 39, Seale 34*, Bignell 30, Folley 25*) <b>Gents 155-5</b> (Ashton 71, J. Wright 50*)	<b>Won</b> 5 wickets
17/9	Wimbledon Park	<b>Gents 173</b> (Boddington 54, Maughan 32, Hughes 21, Bignell 4-32, Williams 3-34) <b>West XI 94</b> (Ashton 3-27)	<b>Won</b> 79 runs

### 1996 – Gents 1 West XI 1 (Gents retained cup)

19/5	Beverley Park	<b>West XI 114</b> (Hill 36*, J. Wright 5-26) <b>Gents 117-4</b> (Murphy 37, Ashton 23, J. Wright 23*)	<b>Won</b> 6 wickets
21/7	Boston Manor	<b>Gents 156</b> (Boddington 29, J. Wright 28, Richmond 28, Bignell 4-41, Hill 3-33) <b>West XI 159-5</b> (C. Arthur 39, J. Arthur 36, Taylor 32*)	<b>Lost</b> 5 wickets

### 1997 – Gents 2 West XI 0

18/5	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 152-9</b> (D. Patel 34, Hughes 30, Ashton 22, Lambert 3-18) <b>West XI 111</b> (Lambert 30, Taylor 28, S. Patel 3-14, Snelling 3-14)	<b>Won</b> 41 runs
20/7	Boston Manor	<b>Gents 209-7</b> (Ashton 56, J. Wright 42, S. Patel 40, D. Patel 36) <b>West XI 137</b> (Hill 34, Boddington 4-28)	<b>Won</b> 72 runs

### 1998 – Gents 0 West XI 2

17/5	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 142</b> (Ashton 52, Bignell 4-22) <b>West XI 146-7</b> (Mattimoe 56, Hassan 20*, Todd 3-30)	<b>Lost</b> 4 wickets
19/7	Boston Manor	<b>Gents 123</b> (Boddington 32, Hughes 27, Vine 5-16) <b>West XI 125-4</b> (Vine 84*)	<b>Lost</b> 6 wickets

### 1999 – Gents 3 West XI 0

6/6	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 101-7</b> (Bignell 30, Taylor 20, Snelling 3-7) <b>Gents 103-6</b> (Ashton 29, Mattimoe 3-28)	<b>Won</b> 4 wickets
18/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>Gents 166</b> (Ashton 54, Boddington 35, S. Patel 22, Reeves 3-30) <b>West XI 150-7</b> (Seale 44*, Mattimoe 42, Snelling 4-16)	<b>Won</b> 16 runs
12/9	Raynes Park PF	<b>West XI 133</b> (Hill 30, Harper-Dallas 23, Snelling 4-15, Boddington 4-35) <b>Gents 134-5</b> (Boddington 45, Ashton 40*)	<b>Won</b> 5 wickets

### 2000 – Gents 2 West XI 1

4/6	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 139</b> (J. Wright 61, C. Wright 4-23) <b>West XI 109</b> (Charlton 26, D. Patel 4-22, J. Wright 3-20)	<b>Won</b> 30 runs
23/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 96</b> (Harper-Dallas 38*) <b>Gents 97-5</b> (D. Patel 25, S. Patel 22*, Taylor 3-20)	<b>Won</b> 5 wickets
10/9	KGF Morden	<b>West XI 178-7</b> (Dane 73, Walton 53, S. Patel 4-21) <b>Gents 162-8</b> (Minhas 62*, Buck 27, Sciberras 26, Sangaralingam 3-23)	<b>Lost</b> 16 runs



**2001 – Gents 1 West XI 2**

3/6	Fairfield RG	<b>West XI 152</b> (C. Wright 45, Walton 29, Taylor 26, Snelling 4-12) <b>Gents 142</b> (D. Patel 49, Minhas 30, Dane 3-24, Folley 3-35)	<b>Lost</b> 10 runs
21/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 125-8</b> (C. Wright 27, S. Patel 4-7) <b>Gents 126-6</b> (Irvin 41, Buck 24, S. Patel 22*)	<b>Won</b> 4 wickets
16/9	Berkhamsted	<b>Gents 194-8</b> (J. Wright 47, Ashton 38*, Buck 27) <b>West XI 196-5</b> (Dane 51, Taylor 39, Walton 32*, Rawlings 24)	<b>Lost</b> 5 wickets

**2002 – Gents 2 West XI 1**

2/6	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 227-6</b> (C. Wright 43, Dane 42, Taylor 33, Bignell 31) <b>Gents 145</b> (D. Patel 44, Ashton 27, S. Patel 23, Laing 5-6)	<b>Lost</b> 82 runs
21/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>Gents 249-6</b> (S. Jones 158*, D. Patel 20) <b>West XI 150-6</b> (Taylor 56, Walton 28)	<b>Won</b> 99 runs
15/9	Berkhamsted	<b>Gents 155-6</b> (J. Wright 33, S. Patel 32, Fitch 31, D. Patel 23) <b>West XI 154-8</b> (Rennie 27, Sangaralingam 24*, J. Wright 3-28)	<b>Won</b> 1 run

**2003 – Gents 0 West XI 3**

1/6	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 188-9</b> (Dane 79, C. Wright 21, S. Patel 3-39) <b>Gents 145</b> (Snelling 33, Sciberras 21, Husain 20, Vyas 4-20, C. Wright 3-21)	<b>Lost</b> 43 runs
20/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 171-6</b> (C. Wright 64, Vyas 42, Bignell 38) <b>Gents 131</b> (S. Patel 45*, Bhatt 3-16)	<b>Lost</b> 40 runs
14/9	Berkhamsted	<b>West XI 178-9</b> (Carter 56, C. Wright 29, Bignell 24, Snelling 3-25) <b>Gents 167</b> (D. Patel 32, Snelling 32, Vyas 3-18)	<b>Lost</b> 11 runs

**2004 – Gents 0 West XI 3**

30/5	Victoria RG	<b>Gents 151-8</b> (Thompson 38, J. Wright 32, Buck 25*) <b>West XI 155-4</b> (Bhatt 82*, Vyas 34)	<b>Lost</b> 6 wickets
18/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>West XI 163-5</b> (Dane 37, Taylor 35, Vyas 23, C. Wright 22*) <b>Gents 150-8</b> (Husain 42, Norcott 24)	<b>Lost</b> 13 runs
12/9	Berkhamsted	<b>Gents 157</b> (Gilkes 48, Sciberras 27, Snelling 20, Bhatt 3-24) <b>West XI 161-6</b> (C. Wright 57, Bhatt 32, Bignell 20)	<b>Lost</b> 3 wickets

**2005 – Gents 1 West XI 2**

29/5	Victoria RG	<b>West XI 165-9</b> (Vyas 38, Clarke 30) <b>Gents 60</b> (Husain 20, Vine 3-8)	<b>Lost</b> 105 runs
17/7	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>Gents 125-10</b> (Husain 51, C. Wright 4-17) <b>West XI 114</b> (Taylor 38, Barling 20, Snelling 4-24)	<b>Won</b> 11 runs
11/9	Berkhamsted	<b>Gents 116</b> (Wright 34, Dane 4-25, c. Wright 3-19) <b>West XI 117-2</b> (Taylor 41*, C. Wright 37, Vyas 20)	<b>Lost</b> 8 wickets

**2006 – Gents 1 West XI 1 (West XI retained cup)**

16/7	Old Tenisonians	<b>Gents 142</b> (Gilkes 33, S. Patel 30) <b>West XI 147-4</b> (Vine 47, Bhatt 44, Barling 28)	<b>Lost</b> 6 wickets
10/9	Berkhamsted	<b>West XI 146</b> (Wright 54, Husain 4-25) <b>Gents 147-3</b> (Husain 59, Gilkes 53, Wright 3-40)	<b>Won</b> 7 wickets

**2007 – Gents 1 West XI 1 (West XI retained cup)**

20/5	Gunnorsbury Park	<b>Gents 194-7</b> (Husain 76, D. Patel 39, Wahed 27, Bignell 3-47) <b>West XI 79</b> (Bhatt 26, S. Patel 3-0)	<b>Won</b> 115 runs
15/7	Old Tenisonians	<b>West XI 81-5</b> (Dane 37*, H. Patel 3-17) <b>Gents did not bat</b>	<b>Abandoned</b>
9/9	Berkhamsted	<b>Gents 147</b> (Husain 66, Taylor 3-19, R. Allerton 3-26) <b>West XI 149-5</b> (Dane 38, Norcott 32)	<b>Lost</b> 5 wickets

**2008 – Gents 1 West XI 2**

18/5	Barn Elms	<b>Gents 162-9</b> (Khan 46, Husain 32, Inkollu 28) <b>West XI 79</b> (C. Wright 44, Husain 5-13)	<b>Won</b> 83 runs
13/7	Old Tenisonians	<b>West XI 127</b> (Vine 25, Taylor 20, H. Patel 4-12) <b>Gents 125</b> (Iqbal 43*, Husain 23, Hill 3-22)	<b>Lost</b> 2 runs
7/9	HSBC	<b>West XI 153-5</b> (Dane 62*, Taylor 24) <b>Gents 57</b> (Taylor 3-13)	<b>Lost</b> 96 runs

**2009 – Gents 3 West XI 0**

31/5	CSSC Chiswick	<b>West XI 155-9</b> (Boden 40, C. Wright 29, Bhatt 24) <b>Gents 156-1</b> (Rudru 68*, S. Desai 53*)	<b>Won</b> 9 wickets
19/7	Old Tenisonians	<b>Gents 237-5</b> (Gilkes 68, Khan 60, Rudru 31, Taylor 3-33) <b>West XI 143-7</b> (Boden 42, Bhatt 27)	<b>Won</b> 94 runs
6/9	Fairfield RG	<b>West XI 144-8</b> (Dane 50, R. Allerton 28, S. Patel 4-25) <b>Gents 148-8</b> (Rudru 23, S. Patel 22)	<b>Won</b> 2 wickets

**2010 – Gents 2 West XI 0**

16/5	Boston Manor PF	<b>Gents 151-6</b> (Kumar 50*, H. Patel 38, Dane 3-14) <b>West XI 132-9</b> (C. Wright 46, Bapu 30, Sciberras 3-15)	<b>Won</b> 19 runs
11/7	LMPF Greenford	<b>Gents 132</b> (S. Patel 35, Rudru 26, C. Wright 4-22, Boden 3-18) <b>West XI 120</b> (Dane 54, Taylor 24, H. Patel 5-17, Iqbal 3-16)	<b>Won</b> 12 runs

**2011 – Gents 2 West XI 0**

10/7	LMPF Greenford	<b>West XI 141</b> (Dane 36, Boden 29, H. Patel 3-22, Sciberras 3-26) <b>Gents 142-7</b> (Dubey 54, Hibbert 22, S. Patel 20, Hill 3-24, Taylor 3-30)	<b>Won</b> 3 wickets
4/9	Crown Taverners	<b>Gents 279-3</b> (Lall 102, Cloete 97*, Gilkes 45) <b>West XI 199-7</b> (Dane 59, R. Allerton 37, C. Wright 34, Taylor 31, Lall 3-32)	<b>Won</b> 80 runs

**Cumulative results P60 Gents 29 West XI 29 Tied 1 Abandoned 1**



West XI celebrate their retention of the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup, 9.9.07, their fifth of six successive wins.  
 L. to R. (back): P. Walton, S. Taylor, R. Allerton, N. Bhatt, C. Dane, S. Bignell.  
 L. to R. (front): P. Hill, D. Laing, S. Rennie, J. Norcott, V. Sangaralingam, C. Wright, D. Bender



Gents celebrate after regaining the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup, 6.9.09. This was a rounded, experienced side, boasting 1,355 caps up to and including this game and 1,909 to the end of 2019, in which campaign four – H. Patel, S. Patel, Sciberras and Snelling – played.  
 L. to R. (back): M. Sciberras, A. Burman, A. Buck, H. Patel, S. Patel (capt.), S. Snelling, R. Inkollu, S. Desai.  
 L. to R. (front): M. Kalidindi, R. Gilkes, K. Toft, S. Rudru

*The Gents' best day 21.7.02*



New South Welshman Steve Jones enjoying a well-earned drink after scoring 158\*, the Gent's highest score and the highest by 56 in this competition. After a nervous start, he hit 10 sixes and 12 fours.



Jim Wright, Jason Irvin and Sanjay Patel review the situation earlier in the day. Patel captained the Gents for seven years 2003-2009.

**In memory of Bob Ashton, whose name this series bears, and John Black and Ian Renvoize who played their part in it**