



Decade 1



Andrew Burman

Gentlemen of West London CC 1988-1997

Results, individual aggregates and debuts

Much research was needed to ascertain when players made their debuts. They are presented in one document for the first time. Individual returns are shown for each match according to club tradition – 100 or more runs, 10 or more wickets and five or more catches and stumpings. League and Cup matches are designated as follows (all others were friendlies):

BA	Bob Ashton Memorial Cup	1990-2011
PC	President's Cup T20	1992-2001
PL	Pals League	2002-2007

1988 Played 3 Lost 3

Debuts M. Ashton, R. Ashton, Burman, Dolan, Gallagher, Haywood, Hubbucks, Richmond, Stratford, Townley

Notes First century by an opponent: 112* A.N. Other (East Harrow Cheetahs)
First five-wicket haul by a Gent: 5-16 Hubbucks *v.* West XI (also first hat-trick)

22/5	Boston Manor Park	West XI 150 (Bignell 53, Culpin 31, Seale 22, Dolan 3-17, Townley 3-40) Gents 115 (M. Ashton 42, R. Ashton 22, Hunter 4-13)	Lost 35 runs
19/6	Marble Hill Park	East Harrow Cheetahs 163 (A.N. Other 112*) Gents 100	Lost 63 runs
13/8	Windsor GS	West XI 102 (Bignell 27, Scott 22, Hubbucks 5-16, Dolan 3-9) Gents 95 (R. Ashton 36, Townley 20, Jepson 4-26)	Lost 7 runs

The club was founded during a game of golf between the Ashtons and East Harrow Cheetahs footballers Des Dolan and Denis Harvey. Upset at their creative carding, Mark Ashton bragged that he could put together a side to beat them at cricket. So the idea was birthed, although Ashton would have to wait until 1992 for his first and only win against Harvey's side, curiously with Dolan the hero.

In 1988 Mark Ashton persuaded his younger brother Bob, another fine cricketer, though one disappointed at lack of involvement in his matches for Windsor Victoria, and some friends to join him in forming a cricket team. Some had played before. Few had played more than the odd match. The 1988 Gents may not have been very experienced, but they were keen and well prepared, and against able opponents performed competently enough in two of the three matches. Whatever problems the Gents suffered from, lack of enthusiasm was not among them. Indeed, 1988 saw mid-season nets and most undignified they were too, taking place after illicit break-ins at Windsor Boys' School, the alma mater of the Ashtons, Burman and 1990 debutant Boddington, and Boston Manor Park, home of West XI, a venue and club Ashton had got to know via friend and West XI chairman Steve Haywood. There was much shuffling of feet and pointing of fingers when, having caught the culprits red-handed, the groundsman at Boston Manor demanded to know who was in charge.

The first Gents side included the Ashtons, Burman, Dolan, Gallagher, and Townley, together with Steve Haywood and Gallagher's pal Mick Stratford, who would never score a run in his Gents career but who uncomplainingly did his best every time. The XI was completed by West XI's Milton Jolin and two guests who did not realise that their own team's game with West XI had been cancelled and kindly filled in. Ian Richmond and Steve Haywood's nephew Nick Hubbucks joined for the final game. Ashton, Burman, Dolan, Gallagher, Richmond, Townley were friends from the University of York. Three other York alumni, Farr, Moor and Renvoize, would join in 1989. The club's not particularly original name was quickly agreed on.

Why was the first game against West XI, a side of two years' experience? The original Beggar opposition had scratched and the Gents filled in. The game was lost (Bignell the difference with 53) but the scratch XI was not outclassed and all deemed it fun. The tenth-wicket stand of 38 between M. Ashton and Jolin remained a record until 2002. I was decided to play two more games. Batting second both times, the team played as well as expected. Gents nearly won the game at Windsor after a long stand between R. Ashton (36) and Townley (20). Hubbucks had previously done the hat-trick.

It would have been too much for the club not to express its disappointment and Haywood tried to murder the bewildered Dolan for giving him out lbw because "The ball hit the pad and they appealed." Some things never change. Such a narrow margin would famously be repeated in 2002 and 2008.

The second game was an unpleasant mismatch against the cricket commando of the East Harrow Cheetahs FC, whose opening batsman flogged a ton. The Gents, in the first of many administrative faux pas within the club, failed to copy the since-lost scorebook so this man has been recorded as A.N. Other. This game provided the first of many flounces by the Gents who left straight after the game.

1989 Played 7 Won 2 Abandoned 1 Lost 4

Debuts	Alderman, Farr, Hill, Maughan, Renvoize
Runs	M. Ashton 159
Wickets	M. Ashton 13
Notes	First five-wicket haul by an opponent: 6-25 C. Arthur (West XI) First victory by Gents

13/5	Wimbledon Park	Gents 129 (M. Ashton 76, R. Ashton 20, Tait 4-9, Brookes 3-29) Enterprise 130-6 (Hutchinson 59*, Tomlinson 27)	Lost 4 wickets
27/5	Cranford Park	East Harrow Cheetahs 101 (Phillips 37, Tonkiss 24, M. Ashton 6-15) Gents 54 (Hunter 24, Dolan 3-5)	Lost 47 runs
3/6	Cranford Park	Gents 100 (C. Arthur 3-3) West XI 101-2 (Dhillon 35, Seale 22)	Lost 8 wickets
11/6	Boston Manor Park	Gents 71 (C. Arthur 6-25) West XI 74-4 (Harrington 32*)	Lost 8 wickets
11/6	Boston Manor Park	Gents 85-4 (Moor 36*, M. Ashton 26) West XI 77-4 (Jolin 48*)	Won 8 runs
24/6	Marble Hill Park	East Harrow Cheetahs 191-5 Gents 125-3 (R. Ashton 54*, Maughan 23, Townley 21*)	Abandoned
30/7	Lampton Park	Gents 141-7 (Maughan 66*, M. Ashton 46) Enterprise 136 (Marsh 47, Gupta 28, Hill 21, M. Ashton 3-13, R. Ashton 3-24)	Won 5 runs

A season that began on a beautiful spring day at Wimbledon Park ended in scenes of desolation at Bob Ashton's funeral service, held at St Peter's Church in Windsor Great Park on 11 September. The visible signs of Bob's illness began after the Gents had shaded Enterprise in a fine match. As his health declined over the next week or so, he was admitted to Heatherwood Hospital in Ascot. When it became clear that his illness was serious, he was transferred to Brompton Hospital in Kensington. Many of the team visited him often and some, like Frank Gallagher, nightly, to keep his brother company in his vigil. Bob's condition slowly deteriorated and he died on Monday 4 September. These are the material facts of the end of a life cut short after 24 years. The effect on Bob's friends of his passing was profound; on his family beyond computation. Everyone who knew him, and Bob had many friends, regards themselves as privileged.

Those who never saw him play might be interested in what sort of player Bob was. He was a genuine quick bowler, perhaps a little below the pace of Stuart Snelling at his peak but more orthodox in the delivery stride. He was also a hard-hitting batsman with large, powerful shoulders. Clearly one of the best two players in the team, he provided constant support to the less talented. He was therefore quickly forgiven the cheap dismissals in his career due to rash strokeplay at the start of the innings, a phenomenon unknown elsewhere in the Ashton family.

The cricket played in 1989 is secondary, but as a matter of record a fair display against Enterprise (a contest that would endure till 2010), including the first club fifty (M. Ashton 76) was followed by three defeats in which the Gents were little more than a shambles. The second West XI game was a 13-a-side pantomime in which a succession of Gents batsmen gave catching practice to 11 fielders. Floppy-haired Old Etonian Arthur took 6-25, the first of a series of match-winning performances.

Bob's friend Ian Maughan stepped up. Described as "a mate of mine who can keep wicket and bat a bit," he made an immediate impression and would go on to become one of the club's greats. He kept wicket for the first time on 24 June. One wondered if he knew what he had let himself in for, as the usual hefty total followed. R. Ashton and Townley then put on 76 before both were badly injured by lifting deliveries and retired hurt. The match was abandoned due to the dangerous pitch, Ashton having moved to a magnificent 54* off 27 balls. Both batsmen were proud of their war wounds (Townley's incurring a significant dental bill) and the evening's celebrations were long.

There followed the much dreamed-of first victory in a full game as Mark Ashton and Maughan posted a then-record 111 fourth wicket stand against Enterprise in Hounslow after the usual early innings trauma. A long stand between the friendly, long-haired Aussie Dave Marsh and Tony Hill then saw Enterprise well on their way before Moor bowled them both. For the first, but certainly not the last time, Ashton came back to capture the last three wickets, including the dangerous Gupta for 28, with Enterprise in sight of victory.

After the funeral, the remaining fixtures were cancelled. As a postscript, in the close season the club decided after much thought to continue in 1990. It was the captain's call really; if he could do it, so could everybody else. West XI's Milton Jolin bought a cup, the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup, which was contested till 2011.

Other debutants included Simon Alderman (introduced by John Townley), Roger Farr and the late Ian Renvoize (University of York alumni), and Phil Hill, who would prove an important contributor. Mark Ashton became the first player to score 100 runs and take 10 wickets in a season, feats he would never tire of repeating. The Gents were beginning to look like a cricket team.

1990 Played 9 Won 4 Lost 5

Debuts Bignell, Black, Boddington, Sambrook Smith, Wilman
Runs Maughan 230, M. Ashton 155, Boddington 110, Townley 107
Wickets Alderman 13, M. Ashton 13

29/4	Victoria RG	Enterprise 185-6 (Tait 76, Radmall 48, Burville 21, M. Ashton 3-37) Gents 186-3 (M. Ashton 72*, Maughan 57)	Won 7 wickets
27/5	North Acton PF	West XI 107 (Christensen 24, Dolan 3-18) Gents 110-5 (Maughan 51, Boddington 20, Jolin 3-6) BA	Won 5 wickets
3/6	Cranford Park	Enterprise 75 (Hughes 26, Alderman 5-21) Gents 79-6 (Boddington 20)	Won 4 wickets
17/6	Warren Farm	East Harrow Cheetahs 163 (Hutchinson 29, Davies 23, Alderman 4-39, Maughan 4-47) Gents 131-8 (Maughan 47, Townley 30, Phillips 3-34)	Lost 32 runs
15/7	Dukes Meadows	East Harrow Cheetahs 181-3 (A. Murray 56, Montgomery 46, Naylor 30) Gents 97 (Renvoize 22, Straw 3-16)	Lost 84 runs
29/7	Bishop's Park	Old Cubbonians 128 (Woodhead 57, Ashby 25, Boddington 3-29) Gents 129-6 (Maughan 56, Boddington 39*)	Won 4 wickets
12/8	Boston Manor Park	West XI 212-7 (Waddell 90, Irvine 35, Dolan 4-27) Gents 106 (Townley 28, C. Arthur 4-24, Irvine 3-23) BA	Lost 106 runs
19/8	Warren Farm	Gents 88-9 (Townley 35*, M. Ashton 21, Hill 3-18) West XI 89-1 (Christensen 33*, C. Arthur 28, Bignell 22*) BA	Lost 9 wickets
2/9	Victoria RG	Gents 119 (Litton 31, Waddell 24, T. Hill 3-18) Enterprise 121-7 (Hughes 28, Hill 25, Saltman 22)	Lost 3 wickets

This was a losing season, but a cherished one. The club through necessity expanded its squad. Five players who would improve the club's fortunes played their first game; Mark Ashton's friend from Windsor Grammar School Nick Boddington (who introduced the enigmatic John Black), wicket-keeper Richard Sambrook Smith (introduced by Alderman), Steve Bignell from West XI and Rich Wilman (a colleague of Burman's). All would contribute soundly. The Gents were still itinerant and badly needed a good home venue, as well as a strike bowler and a couple of batsmen. What they did have was oodles of team spirit and an experienced captain. In those early days, playing cricket was still a novelty and the inevitable politics of amateur sports clubs had not yet surfaced.

The season was topped and tailed with two splendid games at Victoria RG, Surbiton, the best venue the Gents had yet played at. It was another losing season after results but was enjoyable with a good, hard series for the inaugural Bob Ashton Memorial Cup, won 2-1 by West XI. That was as close as it was going to get for a while. The early part of the season, dominated by the bat of Maughan (three fifties) and the deceptive outswing of Alderman (13 wickets) saw three victories. The second saw five losses out of six games.

1990 began with a sun-kissed win against Enterprise on a blistering April Sunday. Both innings featured a century partnership (Tait/Radmall 117, Maughan/Ashton 115). Four weeks later it was off to North Acton to meet West XI, a 65-run stand for the second wicket between Boddington and Maughan setting up the first win against this opposition. The Gents would have to make it last, for they would not get another one in this series until July 1992. It was a useful experience for the club to see how even experienced opponents could fall apart when things went against them. On a damp day a week later, on the barren moonscape of Cranford Park, a sensational 5-21 by Alderman helped by two stumpings on debut from Sambrook Smith set up another win against Enterprise.

When the strong Cheetahs came to town, the lack of support bowling became apparent. Maughan was interestingly tried as a bowler for the first time and got a four-wicket haul with his idiosyncratic round-arm style, but was savaged for 47 runs in seven overs. His six overs against the same team four weeks later cost 49 runs, eleven of them wides in one unforgettable over. This loss was followed by a sound win in Fulham against Old Cubbonians, a game marred by a river of toxic waste in human form flooding the ground, whose game of football frequently overlapped with the cricket. A savage Maughan 56, well supported by Boddington (39*), saw a good away win against a side who would never beat the Gents, though they came close once or twice.

West XI played well to win at Boston Manor on the hottest day in London last century. It was the year that batting records tumbled all over England, Lancashire's 863 against Surrey being the highest in England since 1938. It had been a hot, dry summer but all good things come to an end. It rained and rained a week later in Warren Farm, Southall in the hours leading up to the West XI decider. Several Gents didn't want to play, but the tea had been prepared, conditions were the same for both sides, went the argument, so let's go ahead. West XI won easily. Enterprise shaded a close final game and the season was over.

All of these goings on were reported in editions 1 to 3 of *The Gent* while West XI's *Yes...No...Sorry!* appeared twice during the season. Reaction from the circuit was positive which was kind given their rather scruffy pre-Windows appearance. Let it be acknowledged here that West XI's mouthpiece was the first out of the traps.

1991 Played 13 Won 7 Lost 6

Debuts	Moore, Todd
Runs	M. Ashton 357, Maughan 152, Boddington 120
Wickets	M. Ashton 23, Dolan 14, Boddington 11
Ct./St.	Sambrook Smith 6/3
Notes	Lowest score by Gents: 51 <i>v.</i> London Owls Lowest score by opponents: 17 (Enterprise)

28/4	Gunnorsbury Park	Enterprise 212-6 (Hughes 88, R. Stefan 62, M. Stefan 22) Gents 124 (M. Ashton 57, M. Stefan 4-3, Jeyadevan 4-27)	Lost 88 runs
5/5	Gunnorsbury Park	Gents 51 London Owls 42 (M. Ashton 5-16)	Won 9 runs
26/5	Gunnorsbury Park	West XI 108 (C. Arthur 21, Jolin 4-22, Black 3-19) Gents 87 (M. Ashton 32, C. Arthur 4-14) BA	Lost 21 runs
2/6	Grange Park	Old Cubbonians 81 (Pugh 42, M. Ashton 3-16) Gents 82-5 (Hubbuck 37)	Won 5 wickets
9/6	Victoria RG	Gents 132 (Boddington 32, M. Ashton 28, Burman 23, Crotty 4-25) Enterprise 84 (High 30, Hughes 20, M. Ashton 3-11, Litton 3-33)	Won 48 runs
30/6	Gunnorsbury Park	East Harrow Cheetahs 89 (Harvey 33, Murray 22, Dolan 4-22, Wilman 3-17, Alderman 3-3) Gents 69 (Straw 4-20, Naylor 3-11)	Lost 20 runs
7/7	Gunnorsbury Park	NB Weasels 93 (Patrick 27, Best 22, W. Flack 21, Boddington 4-12, Dolan 3-11, Toomey 3-19) Gents 95-3 (Boddington 46*)	Won 7 wickets
14/7	Dukes Meadows	Gents 79 (Dolan 23) East Harrow Cheetahs 80-2 (J. Murray 42*)	Lost 8 wickets
21/7	Gunnorsbury Park	Gents 122 (M. Ashton 61*, Boddington 23, Stanton 4-8) Old Cubbonians 89 (Hugh 27, Hill 3-16, Alderman 3-25)	Won 33 runs
11/8	Boston Manor Park	West XI 162-2 (C. Arthur 66, Bignell 58*, Christensen 24*) Gents 101-9 BA	Lost 61 runs
18/8	Gunnorsbury Park	West XI 201-7 (Waddell 41, Folley 39*, Irvine 26, Christensen 25*, Dolan 3-25) Gents 149-7 (Maughan 62*, M. Ashton 30, Hill 3-7) BA	Lost 52 runs
1/9	Peel Centre	Gents 254-5 (M. Ashton 93*, Wilman 54, Sambrook Smith 33) New Barbarian Weasels 198-8 (Best 103*, W. Flack 30, Owen 20*, M. Ashton 3-29)	Won 56 runs
8/9	Gunnorsbury Park	Gents 99 (M. Ashton 27, High 6-10) Enterprise 17 (M. Ashton 5-4)	Won 82 runs

Though the first winning season, 1991 was less satisfying than 1990, mainly because the pitches were poor for batting, Gunnorsbury Park's pitches notably so. There were two tables there and eight years later Gents would return to play one more fitted to batting, to the north. The Enterprise and West XI batsmen got to grips but no other side did. Nor were away venues much better. A series of shoot-outs resulted, exciting maybe but demoralising for those who favoured an even contest between bat and ball. These facts should be adduced when a claim is made that council pitches were better in the old days.

West XI beat Gents 3-0 and nobody made the great leap forward, Boddington being most surprised to cop both All-rounder and Most Improved awards at the AGM. Ashton carried the batting, scoring three fifties, although the bowling, helped by the awful pitches, and catching improved. Sambrook Smith rightly won Fielder of the year with some dazzling displays behind the timbers and everyone's fielding went up a notch or two. The Gents bumped along stormily, keeping the tabloids happy with performances that were like the little girl in H.W. Longfellow's poem, either very good indeed or horrid. Teams take their lead from the captain and though Ashton's body language may have left a lot to be desired during the defeats, he led well on the pitch but could not do it all on his own, particularly against a side as good as West XI were this term.

In April Enterprise's openers Mike Hughes and Ron Stefan leathered an overconfident Gents with no pre-season practice, the winning margin of 88 runs being in no way deceptive. A tight win against London Owls was then gained in a bizarre, rainy conflict. Only two Gents bowlers, Ashton and Moore, were used and a record six lbws were given. Charles Arthur's bowling on a poor Gunnorsbury Park wicket was too much three weeks later before two more solid displays saw a five-wicket defeat of Old Cubbonians and a typical piece of Ashton rabbit-shooting against Enterprise. Two terrible performances against the Cheetahs sandwiched a win against Weasels in a sun-kissed inaugural fixture in which the tall left-hander Boddington took 4-12, following up with 46*, a virtuoso performance. An exciting return against Old Cubbonians then followed. On an evil wicket, Ashton's 61* was of the highest quality, while Boddington gave him staunch support. Phil Hill was at this time a bowler of some pace and he extracted menacing lift from the pitch.

The last two matches saw Daniel Todd's first games. He would have much success in the ensuing years before leaving to concentrate on his duties as a Conservative councillor. Fed up with West XI's ragging, he opted to join the Gents. On debut, placed at fine leg against New Barbarian Weasels his attention span was threatened after five minutes of inactivity, so he marched up to slip where he took a sharp catch within seconds. This match was the highlight of the season against opponents who in this era set the standard on and the pitch. A sun-kissed afternoon saw Gents run riot (Wilman's only fifty and 93* from Ashton off just 54 balls) on an artificial strip at the Metropolitan Police ground only for the hosts to fight back bravely with a century of their own from Best. After that, Gents were never going to lose to a seven-man Enterprise side and Ashton's hat-trick off the first three balls, including Hughes bowled first ball, ended the summer on a high.

1992 Played 16 Won 10 Tied 1 Lost 5

Debuts	Hughes, Hunt, Monk
Runs	M. Ashton 440, Hubbucks 167, Boddington 158, Maughan 149, Wilman 135, Townley 131, Hunt 121
Wickets	M. Ashton 27, Todd 17, Dolan 12, Wilman 10
Ct./St.	Sambrook Smith 7/1, Maughan 6/1, M. Ashton 5, Hunt 5
Notes	First century by a Gent: 137* M. Ashton <i>v.</i> Enterprise

3/5	Alexandra RG	London Owls 84 (M. Ashton 3-22)	Gents 87-4 (Maughan 40*, Boddington 25)	Won 6 wickets
10/5	Victoria RG	Gents 246-3 (M. Ashton 137*, Hubbucks 67)	Enterprise 223-7 (High 66, Hughes 60, Edye 34, M. Ashton 4-34)	Won 23 runs
17/5	Victoria RG	Old Cubbonians 146-6 (Welsford 38, MacDonald 26*)	Gents 148-5 (M. Ashton 62, Townley 34*, MacDonald 4-11)	Won 5 wickets
24/5	Victoria RG	West XI 263-6 (Seale 92, C. Arthur 91*, Bell-Briggs 20)	Gents 119 (Sambrook Smith 25, Dolan 20, Hill 3-12) BA	Lost 144 runs
31/5	Wandsworth Common	Gents 110 (Maughan 28, Hubbucks 23, Pigott 3-7)	London Owls 112-5 (Bertie 52, Murphy 26, M. Ashton 4-39)	Lost 5 wickets
14/6	Boston Manor Park	West XI 181-5 (Christensen 71, C. Arthur 45)	Gents 90 (Boddington 37) BA	Lost 91 runs
21/6	Victoria RG	Gents 151-6 (M. Ashton 45, Maughan 20)	Enterprise 143 (Broad 54, Tait 30, Alderman 3-30)	Won 8 runs
28/6	Peel Centre	Gents 148 (M. Ashton 55, Hubbucks 37, W. Flack 5-12)	New Barbarian Weasels 93 (Kirkwood 26, Owen 25, Wilman 4-11, Todd 3-17)	Won 55 runs
5/7	Addington Park	Gents 118-7 (Hunt 42, Townley 28)	Old Cubbonians 108 (Welsford 46, J. Stanton 20*, Todd 3-17)	Won 10 runs
12/7	KGF Richmond	West XI 147-9 (Seale 68, Todd 4-30)	Gents 147-7 (Hunt 62, Boddington 21) BA	Tied
19/7	Victoria RG	Gents 121 (Wilman 42, M. Ashton 28, Owen 4-4, R. Flack 3-42)	New Barbarian Weasels 122-5 (Jarrett 57*, W. Flack 22)	Lost 5 wickets
2/8	Dukes Meadows	East Harrow Cheetahs 110 (A. Murray 44, Brodie 23, Dolan 3-12)	Gents 111-7 (Wilman 34, Boddington 29, A. Murray 4-11)	Won 2 wickets
16/8	Victoria RG	Gents 97 (Maughan 26, Thomas 4-13)	London Saints 96-8 (Thomas 22*)	Won 1 run
30/8	King's College	Gents 124-2 (Seale 51*, Townley 39*)	NB Weasels 95-5 (W. Flack 38*, Kirkwood 31, Dolan 3-11) PC	Won 29 runs
30/8	King's College	Gents 114-7 (Boddington 32, M. Ashton 29)	FC Chad 86-9 (Naish 24*, Dolan 3-11) PC	Won 28 runs
6/9	Alexandra RG	Gents 82 (M. Ashton 52)	East Harrow Cheetahs 83-3 (Farnsworth 35*)	Lost 7 wickets

This was the year of the move to Surbiton and the flat, true wickets of Victoria Recreation Ground, to become the club's home until 2006. This season saw plenty of high-scoring games, including the first Gents' century and its first piece of silverware, the inaugural President's Cup. From the middle of June the Gents were consistent, although by then the Bob Ashton Memorial Cup was again West XI's after two early season defeats.

The profile of the team was changing. Todd had a successful first full season, winning Bowler and Most Improved awards. The diffident but talented Wilman played more regularly and won All-rounder. With Sambrook Smith again keeping wicket well and Ashton (440 runs), Boddington and Hubbucks (playing more and blossoming as a result) also having solid seasons, the results improved. On a cool, damp May day, Hubbucks (67) and Ashton (137*, the club's maiden century with 14 fours and five sixes) put on 156 against Enterprise, a stand not bettered until 2007. Undaunted, Enterprise fought brilliantly and fell only just short. The team was on a roll but the Old Cubbonians contained warning signs which the Gents ignored. Towards the end of the Cubbonians' innings, the hosts' cricket fell apart. What would happen when good batsmen met a patchy attack on a true Surbiton wicket? A week later, they would find out.

There was dark sorrow in the run up to the West XI game when the news came through of the death of Stefan Meininger in a car crash in Germany. Stefan had guested in 1991. The Gents were then shaken to their very foundations by West XI. Once Clyde Seale and Charles Arthur got in, it was mayhem, 135 runs of it, all the way. The bowlers went for 263 and Gents were never close. Results then plummeted, a narrow loss on Wandsworth Common against London Owls (whose batting heroes included Bill Murphy, who would join in 1994), followed by another resounding West XI victory at Boston Manor. That made it 3-3 for the season.

The recovery was impressive. Three successive games were then won and a fourth tied down by the Thames at Richmond a week later as a relaxed West XI reversed their batting order. The Owen-inspired Weasels beat the Gents for the first time before the good form came back, Cheetahs being beaten for the only time in a petulant game. A fortnight later came that wonderful first battle with London Saints, who needed two to win off the last possible ball, bowler Todd keeping his nerve. A club that had bounced back well deserved some silverware and duly got it. The first President's Cup was won in rain and gales and won well, guest Clyde Seale, who could do nothing wrong all year, thrashing 51 in the first game to complement Townley's composed 39*. This was the inaugural President's Cup innings and nobody really knew what a par score was. In the event, 124 was too much for a Weasels side who would learn their lesson and would record hat-tricks of victories in this competition from 1993-1995 and 1997-1999. FC Chad reduced the Gents to 9-3 off eight overs in the second game but then had to expose their support bowlers to Boddington, Ashton, guest Tony Hill and Dolan. Few minded the anti-climax of a convincing defeat by a mellower Cheetahs outfit in the September rain.

1993 Played 20 Won 14 Lost 6

Debuts	Burville, Thornicroft
Runs	M. Ashton 490, Hughes 311, Bignell 285, Hubbucks 232, Maughan 183, Boddington 159, Todd 114
Wickets	M. Ashton 38, Bignell 25, Todd 20, Dolan 15, Thornicroft 14, Wilman 14
Ct./St.	Maughan 14, Wilman 9, Bignell 8, M. Ashton 5
Notes	Record first-wicket stand by Gents: 121 Bignell (34) and Hubbucks (78) <i>v.</i> Enterprise Record fifth-wicket stand by Gents: 152 M. Ashton (102) and Hughes (57) <i>v.</i> London Saints Record first-wicket stand and record stand for any wicket by opponents: 239* Bulmer (140*) and Maddock (87*) (London Owls) Longest game: 91 overs Gents 129-7dec. (50 overs) lost to London Saints 130-8 (41 overs). Also longest innings by Gents

25/4	Victoria RG	Gents 98 (Renvoize 23) Lager Louts 99-8 (Todd 34, Jolin 26*, Bignell 3-24, Wilman 3-25)	Lost 1 wicket
2/5	Victoria RG	Gents 223-6 (Hubbucks 78, M. Ashton 54, Bignell 34, Wilman 24, Jayadevan 3-51) Enterprise 110 (Hughes 41*, Dolan 3-1)	Won 113 runs
9/5	Wandsworth Park	Gents 111 (Pugh 4-20) Old Cubbonians 29 (M. Ashton 5-10)	Won 82 runs
23/5	Victoria RG	West XI 134 (Scott 36, Bignell 3-11) Gents 135-6 (Todd 39, Bignell 35*, C. Arthur 3-18, Folley 3-38) BA	Won 4 wickets
5/6	Town Park	Gents 129-7 dec. (Bignell 38*, Maughan 28, Burrell 3-23) London Saints 130-8 (Wathan 49, T. Mayhew 21, M. Ashton 4-38)	Lost 2 wickets
13/6	Victoria RG	Gents 160-8 (M. Ashton 55, Renvoize 30, Hubbucks 21) NELPS 140 (Brian 49, Cameron 32, Thornicroft 26, Wilman 4-28, Dolan 3-25)	Won 20 runs
19/6	King's College	Gents 135-7 dec. (M. Ashton 37, Folley 27, Bignell 20, Tinker 3-22) New Barbarian Weasels 48 (Folley 3-10, Hill 3-23)	Won 87 runs
27/6	Victoria Park	NELPS 81 (Brian 33*, Black 4-14) Gents 82-8 (M. Ashton 28, Thornicroft 3-11)	Won 2 wickets
4/7	Victoria RG	Gents 165-5 (Boddington 78, Bignell 21, Christensen 3-37) West XI 136 (Robert 39, C. Arthur 31, Wilman 4-40) BA	Won 29 runs
11/7	Victoria RG	Gents 93 (Hughes 26, J. Chatterjee 5-17) Urban Associates 94-7 (Matthews 21, Dolan 3-24)	Lost 3 wickets
18/7	Wandsworth Common	London Owls 84 (Burns 30, M. Ashton 5-17, Bignell 3-9) Gents 85-1 (Boddington 33, Hughes 31*)	Won 9 wickets
25/7	Victoria RG	New Barbarian Weasels 160-8 (R. Flack 50*, W. Flack 28, M. Ashton 3-21, Thornicroft 3-37) Gents 162-9 (M. Ashton 53, Hughes 35, W. Flack 3-14, Kirkwood 3-20)	Won 1 wicket
1/8	Victoria RG	Gents 165-7 (Maughan 48, Hubbucks 26, Todd 25, Bignell 22) Old Cubbonians 55 (Todd 5-7)	Won 110 runs
8/8	Boston Manor Park	Gents 96 (Maughan 24, M. Ashton 23, Williams 5-18) West XI 97-5 (Hill 34*) BA	Lost 5 wickets
15/8	Victoria RG	Gents 214-6 (M. Ashton 102, Hughes 57*) London Saints 104 (Rogers 21, Webster 20, Todd 3-16, Thornicroft 3-21)	Won 110 runs
22/8	Victoria RG	Gents 72 (Bignell 21, T. Hill 5-10) Enterprise 45 (Todd 3-10, Boddington 3-18)	Won 27 runs
29/8	King's College	FC Chad 102-8 (B. Russell 27*, Davis 21) Gents 103-2 (Hughes 50*, Hubbucks 30) PC	Won 8 wickets
29/8	King's College	New Barbarian Weasels 130-8 (W. Flack 52*) Gents 112 (Hughes 52, M. Ashton 23, Lloyd 3-9) PC	Lost 18 runs
5/9	Victoria RG	Gents 235-9 dec. (Hubbucks 45, M. Ashton 40, Burville 39, Boddington 29, Richmond 22, Burman 21, Heathcote 4-53) London Owls 239-0 (Bulmer 140*, Maddocks 87*)	Lost 10 wickets
19/9	Wimbledon Park	Urban Associates 128 (Clift 31, Kirk 25, Allright 21, Thornicroft 4-30) Gents 132-4 (Maughan 34*, Thornicroft 30*, Bignell 21)	Won 4 wickets

This was a wonderful season, thanks to the quality of players Mark Ashton had at his disposal. Steve Bignell, frustrated by the lack of use of his talents by West XI's captain Arthur, joined as an opening batsman but would also take 25 wickets. Mike Hughes joined to great effect and with Ashton put up a record club fifth-wicket stand of 152 against London Saints. Bignell and Hubbucks set a first-wicket record stand against Enterprise. David Thornicroft and Mark Burville joined in the second half of the summer. The late Ian Renvoize played in almost every game and produced the best cricket of his short life. Daniel Todd began to shine as a genuine all-rounder. Ashton himself was in superb form, doubling his wickets total and scoring 490 runs. The result was 14 wins, a club record until 2000.

After a crucial and brilliant assault by Todd on Kanthan's leg-spin (20 coming in one over) in the first West XI match, Bignell ground out 38* in 50 overs in searing heat against London Saints. It was not enough, for a classic game was lost to a scrambled two off the last possible ball following a maiden declaration. The second declaration had a happier outcome. A marathon Bignell/Ashton stand of 60 at King's College was the precursor to a Weasels' total of 48 all out, guest Phil Hill sniffily refusing to contemplate their addition to West XI's card because "they are not up to our standard." The ensuing controversy, during which a UN Peace Envoy was summoned, was most amusing, the game a freak. The Bob Ashton Memorial Cup was won for the first time with an accomplished Gents' display in riot-torn circumstances on 4 July.

On a warm President's Cup Sunday, FC Chad's 102 was overturned by a Hughes/Hubbucks thrash, but a brilliant 52* by Bill Flack in the final beat the Gents, despite another whirlwind Hughes fifty. The game with London Owls on 5 September is a strong candidate for the most remarkable in the club's history. The visitors never looked like losing a wicket as Bulmer and Maddocks smashed every batting record in the annals of the club: highest stand, highest second innings total and the first of only two Gents defeats by 10 wickets. It had, however, been a glorious season. It had also been a long one, and only nine were available for the final game, but on a warm, sunny late-September Sunday, despite rain all week, eight catches were taken as Urban Associates were overpowered, Maughan and Thornicroft bludgeoning the Gents to victory as the autumn twilight set in.

1994 Played 20 Won 12 Drawn 2 Abandoned 1 Lost 5

Debuts	Murphy, D. Patel, J. Wright
Runs	Hubbucks 514, M. Ashton 281, Bignell 241, Hughes 218, Maughan 211, Thornicroft 190, Todd 151, Boddington 125, D. Patel 125, J. Wright 115
Wickets	M. Ashton 37, Todd 23, Thornicroft 15, Boddington 11, Bignell 10, J. Wright 10
Ct./St.	Maughan 11/2, M. Ashton 7, Thornicroft 7, Hughes 5, Jolin 5
Notes	First hat-trick by an opponent: 4-5 Jeyadevan (Enterprise)

24/4	Victoria RG	Lager Louts 68 (Boddington 3-5) Gents 72-3 (Hughes 39)	Won 7 wickets
8/5	Wimbledon Park	Gents 133 (Maughan 37, Todd 32*, M. Ashton 24, I. Johnson 4-12) Urban Associates 88 (Philpott 22, Glover 20, M. Ashton 4-20, Todd 3-23)	Won 45 runs
15/5	Boston Manor Park	Gents 69 (Todd 33, Folley 4-5, C. Arthur 3-12) West XI 71-4 (Folley 29*) BA	Lost 6 wickets
22/5	Victoria RG	Enterprise 32 (Todd 4-12) Gents 109-6 dec. (Bignell 28, M. Ashton 26, Hubbucks 24, High 3-22)	Abandoned
29/5	Victoria RG	12 Angry Men 196-5 dec. (Hadfield 102, Davies 33, M. Ashton 3-42) Gents 50-5 (Shannon 3-7)	Drawn
5/6	Beverley Park	Wandham 184 (N. Wilson 107, Penny 41, Daly 20, Thornicroft 3-41) Gents 185-5 (Hubbucks 96, J. Wright 28, Tupling 3-61)	Won 5 wickets
12/6	Alexandra RG	Gents 196 (Hubbucks 63, Maughan 59) NELPS 71 (Hinde 27*, Wilman 3-24, Burman 3-17)	Won 125 runs
18/6	King's College	New Barbarian Weasels 171-9 dec. (Best 75, Raderecht 30, Patrick 27, M. Ashton 7-55) Gents 172-6 (D. Patel 56, Hubbucks 51, Tinker 4-37)	Won 4 wickets
25/6	Town Park	Gents 147-6 dec. (M. Ashton 62, Bignell 59) London Saints 66-9 (Hill 5-22)	Drawn
3/7	Victoria RG	Gents 181-9 (Hughes 43, Hubbucks 40, Maughan 20, C. Arthur 3-20) West XI 170 (Drake 43, Seale 28, Harrington 25, Kanthan 20) BA	Won 11 runs
10/7	Victoria RG	Gents 150-5 dec. (Maughan 38, Hubbucks 36, Bignell 31, Glover 4-54) Urban Associates 152-7 (S. Chatterjee 51, Glover 25*, Young 20, M. Ashton 4-56)	Lost 3 wickets
24/7	Victoria RG	Gents 124 (Boddington 24, Hubbucks 23, M. Ashton 22, Maughan 22, Kirkwood 5-9) New Barbarian Weasels 125-4 (W. Flack 67*, Kirkwood 35*, M. Ashton 3-30)	Lost 6 wickets
31/7	Victoria RG	Gents 256-5 dec. (Hubbucks 68, Bignell 67*, Boddington 33, Burville 21, Pigott 4-80) London Owls 116 (Maddocks 46, Clayton 25, Todd 5-19, Thornicroft 5-33)	Won 140 runs
7/8	Overton Road	12 Angry Men 146 (Davies 53, Hadfield 35, M. Ashton 4-19, Murphy 3-21) Gents 147-6 (Hubbucks 56, Thornicroft 21, Davies 3-29)	Won 4 wickets
14/8	Victoria RG	Gents 88 (Boddington 22, Thomas 4-12) London Saints 90-6 (A. Mayhew 58*)	Lost 4 wickets
21/8	Victoria RG	Gents 179 (Hughes 42, Richmond 31, Bignell 30, Hubbucks 29, Jeyadevan 4-5) Enterprise 137 (Buckley 60, M. Ashton 4-16)	Won 42 runs
28/8	King's College	Gents 140-4 (Hughes 43, D. Patel 29*, J. Wright 23*, Bush 3-33) Urban Associates 126-4 (Glover 51*) PC	Won 14 runs
28/8	King's College	NB Weasels 115-9 (Tattersdill 31, Raderecht 27, High 3-19) Gents 111 (J. Wright 40, M. Ashton 26) PC	Lost 4 runs
4/9	Victoria RG	Gents 213-7 dec. (Thornicroft 96, D. Patel 29, Hughes 26, Richmond 25, Brooks 3-51, Walker 3-67) Rotherham SC 139 (Walker 83*, D. Patel 5-29)	Won 74 runs
18/9	Wimbledon Park	West XI 56 (Boddington 3-18) Gents 57-4 (Boddington 27*, Hill 3-24) BA	Won 5 wickets

This was another great campaign. The sun shone, right, Dhruv Patel and Bill Murphy were first seen in Gents colours, Hubbucks with five fifties was the first to 500 runs in a season, five batsmen scored over 200 for the first time and the Bob Ashton Cup was retained 2-1 after the Boston Manor jinx (and an injury to Ashton) saw a loss in the first leg. The runs came in torrents, while Ashton, with good support from the best bowling attack yet fielded, was bowling sides out.

The Wandham game is a pivotal part of club history. Burman's colleagues Dhruv Patel and Jim Wright volunteered and opened with the new ball. Wright was successful with a caught Hughes at the wicket in his first over, but an impressive ton from Wilson set the Gents a tough challenge. Fortunately, Hubbucks (96) was in unstoppable form and with Wright broke the back of Wandham's bowling with a stand of 129. Both Wright and Patel liked what they saw and opted to become full members, which was interesting in the light of the undignified incidents at the winter 1993 AGM, when stalwarts Townley and Alderman had objected to the signing of new players, only to be shouted down by chairman Ashton.

What happened 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 Bob Ashton Memorial Cup, but key players were missing. This game was Renvoize's last, while Sambrook Smith, who had crucially bowled Arthur with a full-toss, would only return for the 1998 tenth anniversary game. Fine Urban Associates and New Barbarian Weasels sides gained victories of merit. After distinguishing themselves by conceding seven runs off one ball thanks to four Ashton overthrows, the Gents were never going to beat Urbans with only three main bowlers. Simon Alderman, not being asked to bowl, resigned soon after while heavyweight Weasels Flack and Kirkwood compiled a seismic fifth-wicket stand of 84 a fortnight later to smash their side to victory to defeat in under 21 overs.

Warm, late summer sun saw some splendid matches. West XI's own form had slumped. They arrived at a damp, cold Wimbledon Park where Wright induced a c&b off Gents nemesis Arthur for 1 and the innings slumped, the last six wickets falling for ten runs. Boddington (27*) then steered Gents to a deserved triumph, the club showing what they had learned from the captain, injured for this game.

1995 Played 19 Won 13 Abandoned 1 Lost 5

Debuts Fryer-Kelsey, K. Patel, S. Patel, Snelling
Runs M. Ashton 503, Todd 294, Hughes 198, J. Wright 189, D. Patel 145, Burville 141, Boddington 132, Hubbucks 118, Maughan 109
Wickets Snelling 31, M. Ashton 27, D. Patel 11
Ct./St. M. Ashton 7, Hughes 6

23/4	Victoria RG	Gents 199 (Thornicroft 73, M. Ashton 40, Todd 24, Taylor 3-30) Lager Louts 133 (Birch 50, Hill 45, M. Ashton 4-27)	Won 66 runs
30/4	Victoria RG	Urban Associates 112 (Howard 34, Kirk 26, M. Ashton 6-25) Gents 113-9 (Todd 28, J. Wright 26, M. Ashton 20, Gathercole 4-27, Young 3-28)	Won 1 wicket
7/5	Battersea Park	Rotherham SC 242-5 (Walker 150*, Mason 44) Gents 141 (Maughan 56, Todd 27, Clarke 3-28)	Lost 101 runs
14/5	Victoria RG	Gents 250-6 (Hughes 70, M. Ashton 65, Monk 31*, Burman 26, Boddington 20) Enterprise 47 (Boddington 3-13)	Won 203 runs
21/5	Victoria RG	West XI 171-7 (C. Arthur 70, Drake 25, Bignell 24) Gents 160 (M. Ashton 35, Hughes 29, Hill 3-18)	Lost 11 runs
28/5	British Gas	Gents 142-7 dec. (Hughes 30, J. Wright 23, Parkinson 4-34) 12 Angry Men 143-5 (Hadfield 57, Davies 32)	Lost 5 wickets
11/6	Victoria RG	Gents 45-3 (Todd 28) FC Chad did not bat	Abandoned
17/6	King's College	Gents 214-8 (Hubbucks 52, Todd 51, M. Ashton 46, Smalldon 3-37) New Barbarian Weasels 126 (W. Flack 35, J. Wright 3-21)	Won 88 runs
25/6	Battersea Park	Gents 159 (M. Ashton 47, Todd 27, D. Patel 25, Burville 22*, Burrell 4-50, Thomas 3-26) London Saints 72 (Rogers 26, Snelling 4-15, J. Wright 3-9, M. Ashton 3-13)	Won 87 runs
2/7	Victoria RG	Gents 164 (M. Ashton 51, Hubbucks 23, Burville 23*) Virgin Casuals 92 (Trott 28, Spratt 25, J. Wright 5-22, M. Ashton 3-22)	Won 72 runs
9/7	Battersea Park	Gents 179 (Boddington 52, Burville 38, Townley 23, Murphy 3-2, Quinn 3-75) London Owls 104 (Murphy 28, Snelling 4-13, Boddington 3-11)	Won 75 runs
23/7	Boston Manor Park	West XI 154-3 (C. Arthur 39, Seale 34*, Bignell 30, Folley 25*) Gents 155-5 (M. Ashton 71, J. Wright 50*)	Won 5 wickets
30/7	Alexandra RG	New Barbarian Weasels 94 (Best 33, Raderecht 21, Snelling 3-0, M. Ashton 3-36) Gents 98-8 (Bignell 29, Todd 26, Kirkwood 6-43)	Won 2 wickets
13/8	Wimbledon Park	Urban Associates 183 (Kirk 47, Naidoo 31, Gathercole 31, Bush 21, Glover 20, Snelling 6-35) Gents 131 (D. Patel 41, M. Ashton 31, Gathercole 6-28)	Lost 52 runs
20/8	Alexandra RG	London Saints 145-9 (T. Mayhew 29, A. Mayhew 27*, Webster 26, K. Patel 3-22) Gents 148-8 (S. Patel 41, M. Ashton 39*, Bignell 23, Thomas 3-25)	Won 1 wicket
27/8	King's College	Gents 151-8 (M. Ashton 34, Christensen 27) FC Chad 81-7 (Sergeant 33*, Snelling 3-7) PC	Won 70 runs
27/8	King's College	New Barbarian Weasels 159-3 (Groves-Loader 50*, Tattersdill 37, Best 31) Gents 138-7 (Christensen 52*, Folley 35*, Kirkwood 3-21, Sier 3-31) PC	Lost 21 runs
3/9	Beverly Park	Gents 122 (J. Wright 35, Dolan 22*, Madden 3-14) London Owls 118 (Bulmer 36, D. Patel 4-12, J. Wright 3-24)	Won 4 runs
17/9	Wimbledon Park	Gents 173 (Boddington 54, Maughan 32, Hughes 21, Bignell 4-32, Williams 3-34) West XI 94 (M. Ashton 3-27) BA	Won 79 runs

This was a year of great importance in the club's development when Stuart Snelling, 23, and Sanjay Patel, 22 were first seen in Gents' colours. It was a batsman's summer with Ashton scoring 503 runs and Rotherham SC's Mick Walker posting the highest score by an opponent until Elmes of Northfields beat it in 2015. The Gents' aggregate of runs (2,882) was the highest yet and for the first time the Gents averaged 150 per innings. Six consecutive wins were recorded in midsummer.

The Gents won at Boston Manor Park for the first time and went on to record a hat-trick of Bob Ashton Memorial Cup wins. The Gents also benefited from the increased availability of Burville, Wright and D. Patel. Off the field, the wooden Victoria RG pavilion was burned down minutes after the Casuals clash. Cricketing matters were put into perspective with the death from cancer just after the end of the season of New Barbarian Weasels bowler Simon Lloyd at the age of just 28.

Snelling, introduced by Todd (whose batting all summer was a revelation), enjoyed watching the win against Urban Associates and joined, only to be carted all over a postage stamp ground by Walker a week later. The Gents needed a stiffer test for the first West XI clash than a 203-run win against a weak Enterprise and so it proved, Arthur putting the game beyond reach having been dropped five times. One wondered, as one did with Mr Maughan in 1989, if the quick bowler knew what he had let himself in for. Sanjay Patel debuted with 41 against London Saints and caught three off namesake Ketan. After completing his studies he would take up membership in 1997.

Ashton (51) and Wright (5-22) dominated the sodden inaugural Virgin Casuals game but Richmond's influence was crucial. He stayed with Ashton for 15.3 overs as they slowly built a winning score, despite much sledging. A last over win resulted in a gentle declaration friendly away to London Owls, that included a Gents' total made in under 26 overs and Bulmer's middle-stump being knocked out of the ground by Snelling first ball. The chanceless match-winning stand by Ashton and Wright against West XI was the highlight of the season, Gents going on to take the rubber 2-1. New Barbarian Weasels deservedly retained the President's Cup as boundaries flowed all over Berrylands on a sunny afternoon.

1996 Played 19 Won 13 Lost 6

Debuts	Buck, C. Mitchell, Naish
Runs	M. Ashton 493, D. Patel 322, Boddington 135, Hughes 122, J. Wright 115, Todd 112, Murphy 110
Wickets	Snelling 35, M. Ashton 29, D. Patel 20, Todd 16, Boddington 11
Ct./St.	Burville 6/1, M. Ashton 6, Burman 5
Notes	Record fourth-wicket stand by opponents: 138 Jaques (107) and Torbe (65) (East Harrow Cheetahs) Longest innings by opponents: 48.2 overs FC Chad 173

21/4	Alexandra RG	Gents 106 (D. Patel 48*, M. Ashton 21, Folley 3-16, Birch 3-23, Russell 3-5) Lager Louts 71 (Snelling 3-3)	Won 35 runs
5/5	Victoria RG	Enterprise 91 (Sri 30, K. Dimond 21, M. Ashton 7-44) Gents 95-5 (Boddington 59*, K. Dimond 4-29)	Won 5 wickets
12/5	Beverley Park	Urban Associates 97 (Kirk 27, Hill 3-6) Gents 100-7 (M. Ashton 67*)	Won 3 wickets
19/5	Beverley Park	West XI 114 (Hill 36*, J. Wright 5-26) Gents 117-4 (Murphy 37, M. Ashton 23, J. Wright 23*) PC	Won 6 wickets
26/5	British Gas	12 Angry Men 159 (Davies 66, Russell 28, Hibbert 20, Dean 20, Snelling 5-33) Gents 144 (M. Ashton 42, D. Patel 21, C. Mitchell 21, Hibbert 5-35, Cook 4-28)	Lost 15 runs
2/6	KGF Tolworth	Wandham 102 (N. Wilson 35, Edwards 21, D. Patel 4-10) Gents 104-3 (D. Patel 43*, Hill 25)	Won 7 wickets
9/6	Alexandra RG	Gents 194 (Todd 58*, D. Patel 35, J. Wright 20, B. Russell 4-35) FC Chad 173 (Hendry 45, C. Russell 28, Gore 25*, D. Patel 4-44, Todd 3-37)	Won 21 runs
30/6	KGF Tolworth	Virgin Casuals 169-7 (Spratt 40, Levesley 32*, Hilton 31, Paul 21, D. Patel 3-42) Gents 170-9 (Hughes 54, D. Patel 39, Boddington 22, C. Mitchell 20, Gary 3-26, Levesley 3-35)	Won 1 wicket
7/7	Fire Brigade	Gents 98 (M. Ashton 41) Wandham 102-5 (Tupling 31*)	Lost 5 wickets
13/7	Town Park	Gents 159 (D. Patel 47, M. Ashton 43, Webster 4-41) London Saints 155 (T. Mayhew 85, M. Ashton 6-53, Snelling 3-43)	Won 4 runs
21/7	Boston Manor Park	Gents 156 (Boddington 29, J. Wright 28, Richmond 28, Bignell 4-41, Hill 3-33) West XI 159-5 (C. Arthur 39, J. Arthur 36, Taylor 32*) PC	Lost 5 wickets
28/7	Beverley Park	Gents 72 (Robinson 24, Todd 23, Kirkwood 5-21) New Barbarian Weasels 73-3 (Tattersdill 24*, Best 22*, Hill 3-29)	Lost 7 wickets
3/8	Arnos Park	Gents 90 (S. Patel 29, Hobson 4-13, Bradshaw 3-5) Sunderland SC 89 (Bradshaw 41*, Curry 20, M. Ashton 5-25, Bignell 3-30)	Won 1 run
4/8	Beverley Park	East Harrow Cheetahs 225 (Jaques 107, Torbe 65, Brodie 24*, Snelling 8-77) Gents 164 (M. Ashton 84*, Burville 25)	Lost 61 runs
11/8	Nursery Road RG	Gents 161 (J. Mitchell 37, M. Ashton 28, D. Patel 23, I. Johnson 3-23, Mantha 3-40, Bush 3-33) Urban Associates 164-9 (Young 48*, Glover 27, Bush 27, Mantha 22, Clift 21, Snelling 5-24)	Lost 1 wicket
17/8	Beverley Park	Gents 201 (Hill 46, M. Ashton 43, D. Patel 33, Webster 3-30) London Saints 183-8 (T. Mayhew 101)	Won 18 runs
25/8	King's College	FC Chad 48 (Hill 6-8, C. Mitchell 3-4) Gents 49-7 (Piper 4-10) PC	Won 3 wickets
25/8	King's College	NB Weasels 99-9 (Tattersdill 33, Raderecht 23) Gents 100-5 (Hill 26, J. Wright 20) PC	Won 5 wickets
1/9	Beverley Park	Rotherham SC 106 (Brierley 39*, Boddington 4-12) Gents 107-9 (M. Ashton 37*, Baister 3-24)	Won 1 wicket

The club faced problems in 1996 but had another winning season under captaincy from Ashton that Wright described at the autumn AGM as inspirational. A series of tight finishes made for excitement all the way, the squad deserving credit for bouncing back after a losing spell to win their last four games and regain the President's Cup. The Bob Ashton Cup was retained in a drawn series. Both Ashton and Patel had superb summers with the bat, Ashton scoring 493 runs and All-rounder of the Year Patel 322. These two and Snelling dominated the averages.

The clash with Urban Associates in a Merton storm was bad-tempered. In pitch black, Young and Adams were somehow allowed to add a then-record 41 for the tenth wicket to nick a win amid some of the most bizarre incidents ever seen in a Gents game. As lightning crashed, 'keeper Burville and silly mid-on Ashton collided going for the winning catch, Urbans thinking it was deliberate, to give them a chance. Eleven men tried to captain at the same time and an irate Mr Snelling inflicted serious damage on a changing room door.

Nine weeks before, a classic had been played out against FC Chad. Catches galore were dropped but a brutal Todd 58* set up a brave reply. Chad went for the win at all times and were only five balls from a draw when D. Patel bowled the last batsman in the 49th. over, the most ever bowled by the Gents. During the 1995 AGM, Wright had been elected vice-captain and shaped up well when he took the reins, as he did for this game. Virgin Casuals beaten off the last ball in a marvellous match as Burman and Snelling scrambled the winning run after some good work by Hughes, Boddington, Patel and guest Mitchell.

The President's Cup was won on a day of low scoring. Mr Hill rightly copped the Man of the Tournament award for his astonishing 6-8 against FC Chad and brutal 26 in the final against Weasels. These two games saw The Gents unrecognisable from the outfit who suffered five losses in July and early August. The side had held together in difficult, often turbulent, circumstances, winning two cups and 13 matches.

Tony Buck, his friend Colin Naish (both from FC Chad) and hard Geordie Chris Mitchell (a friend of Ashton's), who famously "felt nowt" when nutting the ground after stopping a boundary, were first seen in Gents colours. Buck would go on to play 219 times.

1997 Played 19 Won 12 Lost 7

Debuts Dimond, H. Vyas
Runs M. Ashton 336, D. Patel 330, S. Patel 250, J. Wright 218, C. Mitchell 209
Wickets Snelling 40, D. Patel 34, S. Patel 20
Ct./St. Hughes 6/2, Naish 7, D. Patel 6, Buck 5, Burville 5
Notes First all-rounder's double: 51* and 4-12 Tattersdill (New Barbarian Weasels)

27/4	Victoria RG	Gents 195-8 (D. Patel 55, J. Wright 50, Buck 22, Hill 3-33) Lager Louts 51 (Todd 21, Snelling 3-9, Murphy 3-11, Burman 3-20)	Won 144 runs
5/5	Ealing Central SG	Gents 120 (M. Ashton 36, Lambert 4-24, Mattimoe 3-18) West XI 123-5 (Waddell 32)	Lost 3 wickets
11/5	Victoria RG	Gents 92 (M. Ashton 28, Hughes 23, Kirk 4-20) Urban Associates 93-7 (Glover 27, Mantha 24, Snelling 5-28)	Lost 3 wickets
18/5	Victoria RG	Gents 152-9 (D. Patel 34, Hughes 30, M. Ashton 22, Lambert 3-18) West XI 111 (Lambert 30, Taylor 28, S. Patel 3-14, Snelling 3-14) BA	Won 41 runs
25/5	British Gas	Gents 130 (C. Mitchell 52, S. Patel 31, Bullock 3-15) 12 Angry Men 81 (Hibbert 24, D. Patel 4-29)	Won 49 runs
1/6	Victoria RG	Wandham 94 (D. Patel 5-20) Gents 95-6 (Bignell 24, Preddy 4-29)	Won 4 wickets
7/6	Town Park	London Saints 49 (C. Mitchell 3-5, D. Patel 3-8) Gents 50-3 (Bignell 25*)	Won 7 wickets
14/6	King's College	Gents 185-6 (Richmond 45*, Burville 44*, Boddington 38, Beckwith 3-17) New Barbarian Weasels 186-5 (Groves-Loader 48, Smalldon 38, Hurley 31)	Lost 5 wickets
5/7	Arnos Park	Sunderland SC 119 (McGirr 29*, Russell 3-16, Snelling 3-28) Gents 58 (C. Mitchell 28, Coad 5-32, Bradshaw 4-19)	Lost 61 runs
13/7	Long Ditton RG	Gents 208 (M. Ashton 51*, J. Wright 50*, D. Patel 43, S. Patel 26, West 3-12) Enterprise 37	Won 171 runs
20/7	Boston Manor Park	Gents 209-7 (M. Ashton 56, J. Wright 42, S. Patel 40, D. Patel 36) West XI 137 (Hill 34, Boddington 4-28) BA	Won 72 runs
27/7	Victoria RG	Gents 130 (M. Ashton 36) New Barbarian Weasels 122 (W. Flack 29, Snelling 3-26, S. Patel 3-26)	Won 8 runs
3/8	Victoria RG	Gents 122 (Buck 24, Phillips 6-13) Virgin Casuals 123-8 (Phillips 25*, Spratt 24, Levesley 22)	Lost 2 wickets
10/8	Nursery Road RG	Urban Associates 135 (Kirk 57, Glover 20, D. Patel 5-21) Gents 120 (D. Patel 47*, Boddington 26, Glover 4-25, Kirk 3-21)	Lost 15 runs
17/8	Alexandra RG	London Saints 84 (Snelling 5-14, J. Wright 3-1) Gents 88-7 (M. Ashton 25, D. Patel 24, Thomas 3-28)	Won 4 wickets
24/8	King's College	FC Chad 51 (D. Patel 3-9, J. Wright 3-9, S. Patel 3-22) Gents 52-2 (C. Mitchell 27*) PC	Won 8 wickets
24/8	King's College	New Barbarian Weasels 143-4 (Tattersdill 51*, Smalldon 50*) Gents 72-9 (Tattersdill 4-12) PC	Lost 71 runs
31/8	Victoria RG	Gents 193 (S. Patel 59, D. Patel 38, Todd 26, Heap 3-11, K. Dimond 3-52) Enterprise 83 (K. Dimond 37, Snelling 3-17)	Won 110 runs
7/9	Victoria RG	Gents 192 (M. Ashton 58*, C. Mitchell 51, Todd 24, Collings 5-27) FC Chad 64 (D. Patel 4-5, K. Patel 3-29)	Won 128 runs

Despite being beset by injuries and a spell of horrid, damp weather, Gents had another winning season, their seventh in succession, but it is to the table of appearances that the keen reader should be directed, for it is there that the clues reside for explaining just what a fine summer this was. The 1997 season vindicated the recruitment drive of the previous winter. Morale was high and guest appearances were reduced to in 19 matches. Responsibility was therefore shared around. The sequence of matches that Ashton missed was important in that it showed the club was no longer reliant on its main all-rounder and mentor. All season, D. Patel, new recruit S. Patel, Wright, Snelling and the rest shouldered the extra responsibility.

The five new members fitted like a glove, being friendly and reliable, the Bob Ashton Trophy was retained after a good May victory (and reinforced with a superb batting display in Brentford), and although the President's Cup was lost, there were enough positive memories to illuminate the darkest winter. It was generally a low-scoring season, no surprise after the heavy early summer rain, which caused the cancellation of two matches in June.

The first half of the season was notable for finger injuries to Ashton, Burman and Murphy. Ashton's had to be the most dramatic and as he typically deferred going to the hospital, immediate surgery and a six-match absence was the result. His last game before the enforced break saw victory against a West XI side beset by late arrivals, the Gents' first convincing performance of the season. Chris Mitchell's maiden fifty against 12 Angry Men was cheered to the rafters. S. Patel gave him elegant support and an excellent spell from D. Patel, in which Gents nemesis Neil Hadfield was caught Hughes in the slips for nought, provided the killer blow. A glut of runs in Brentford with heavy scoring by the top order saw the Bob Ashton Cup retained on 20 July.

After an easy President's Cup win against FC Chad, the Gents were put to the sword in the final. Bowlers, incapable of bowling to defensive fields, and batsmen, who simply panicked, all underperformed and Weasels took full advantage, thoroughly deserving their victory. The late Ernie Tattersdill became the first opponent to score a fifty and take four wickets. The season ended with two relaxed fixtures, Snelling moving on to a haul of 40 wickets and S. Patel scoring his first fifty.

This season was the climax of five successful years in which 64 of 97 games were won. But change was afoot. Ashton would miss most of the following season, Wright would move briefly to New Zealand and Mitchell would only play a few more games.