



Devon County Seniors Cricket Club Canada Trip 2014



"The cocoa should have been drunk and those of that age should have been a'bed but at 01:35 am on a Thursday morning in July 2014 an intrepid group of the Devon County Seniors CC met at Exeter Services for the mammoth 24 hour trip to British Columbia and Alberta, Canada. Travelling 5,000 miles direct to Vancouver, to arrive at 11:15 ... that same morning!

Our first stop was beautiful Victoria on Vancouver Island, an idyllic spot where all tourists were heard to say "Oh, I could live here!" No time to rest though, and so despite much sleep deprivation, the following day saw our first match: versus The Beacon Hill Pavilion Society XI. In spite of being plied with a sumptuous two course meal and copious amounts of alcohol between innings, the Devon XI - captained by Mike Canning (Sandford) - won by 5 wickets with six overs to spare. The Tourists were warned that, on these artificial pitches, future home side batters would not be afraid to hit hard to the leg side. We really should have taken that tip on board!

One of many highlights of this lovely ground was meeting a 95-year old 'ex pat' from Yorkshire who sat on the boundary at midwicket with a sign on the bench stating: "The rules of cricket explained here – For Free!". He was kept busy with a steady stream of Canadian and European visitors.

A longed for day off followed and all tourists were free to take a seaplane ride, or go whale watching in survival suits on fast RIB boats. Humpback whales were seen - apparently a rarity in this area - and Dave Gambie and brother-in-law "Ronald Stanley" Cruse, witnessed an angry encounter between a humpback and an orca (killer whale)!

The second match was against a Vagabond XI, where it was noticed that there had been an injection of several youthful players from the sub-continent to bolster the home side. Obviously they had taken note from the first match. We lost the match by 3 wickets, partly as we'd forgotten the warning about leg side hitting from the home side. At the group photo, with our playing team in white on one side and our ladies and followers wearing their red tour T-shirts, we thought we saw a tear in Danny Daniels eye ... our Welsh umpire thought he was at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff!



Our third match was 'up country' at Cowichan CC, where the home side was skippered by Howard Martin (an old Exmouth stalwart). He did a great deal to ensure that the Victorian part of tour went exceedingly well. On a lightning fast Cowichan outfield, Devon had the better of a high scoring game, triumphing by 50 runs.

It was then a reversal of our route, via the ferry, back to Vancouver City for several nights. Our two matches in Vancouver resulted in a victory and a defeat. Against a strong West Vancouver XI our batting collapsed and the impressive hosts managed to overtake the low total after a great comeback by our bowlers. But faced with a Sri Lankan Under-21 cap at the end, Devon lost by 3 wickets. Finally, facing a Vancouver International XI on a very hot day at the famous Brockton Oval, Devon managed to prevail by a dozen runs after a close, hard fought match. As far as the cricket went and despite injuries to key players, Devon managed 3 wins and 2 losses (to the strongest and youngest of our opponents). The scenery at the Oval was quite breathtaking with cruise liners departing, sea planes flying overhead and horse drawn carriages all within our view. A wedding party even moved the boundary markers in order to take wedding photographs with our match as a backdrop!

One cannot thank the home team's organisers enough for all the hospitality and generosity bestowed upon us on this superb tour. Other highlights of Vancouver included Rod Stewart performing in Vancouver's Olympic stadium ... and trust our 2 Chudleigh players to meet him whilst strolling in 'Gastown' and to get him to buy them a pint, whilst being watched closely by his eagle-eyed, fidgety security man! And our visit also coincided with a 'diversity parade' through the City. It was the only time the RCMP Mounties in full uniform were seen. It also made for an hilarious account by "Ronald Stanley" Cruse and Dave Gambie of they managed to get "lost" in the gay area of the town, apparently returning from a "meal"! ;)

The cricket gear was then put away as the next part of the tour was a tremendous 2-day trip following the Rocky Mountaineer rail route to Banff. We were introduced to our coach driver "Will" who would point out notable sights and places (including his painstakingly well recalled honeymoon route in the 50s!) It was a spectacular drive. Huge mountains, wide rivers and temperatures reaching 100 degrees. We saw trans-Continental trains, some over 2 kilometres long, slowly making their way eastwards and westwards. Our overnight stop was at the new Sandman Hotel in Kamloops, where it appeared that to work there you had to be young, female, tall and able to wear tight tops and very short skirts. There were several bleary 'Trout'-like eyes that following morning!

At Banff, sightseeing was the order of the day. This included a rapids raft trip, a gondola trip to the top of (little!) Sulphur Mountain (a mere 8,000ft), which some of the fittest members of our party scaled on foot! A day trip to walk on the Colombia ice fields and the famous 'Athabasca Glacier', a visit to Lake Louise and the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise Hotel. The only disappointment was the non-appearance of much of the promised 4-legged wild life. Apart from a fuzzy glimpse of a distant grizzly bear and a lone elk in Banff, no other scary wild life was seen.

A farewell dinner took place on our final night in Banff, with speeches and gifts to Chris and Jacky Theedom for their excellent organisation. An excellent evening was had starting with the waiting staff actually believing that Phil Thorn and Liz Fulner were in fact Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip! Their suspicion was deepened when our group stood as one and sang the National Anthem.

Then on to Calgary, leaving the Rocky Mountains behind us and on to cowboy country. This included a stop at the 1988 Winter Olympic site made famous by Eddie the Eagle's "flight", and the Jamaican bobsleighers' "Cool Runnings". A bonus was then a delightfully generous barbecue at the home of Andy and Steff Wakefield. Andy was a former Bovey Tracey cricketer who had emigrated some years ago. Superb cheese straws, Steff!

And so to Calgary airport for the direct flight back to Blighty and another great tour organised superbly by Chris Theedom, with much help from his fabulous wife Jacky, came to an end. And so to the next tour ... join us again for fun in the sun when we tour the beautiful island of Sri Lanka in the Spring of 2016."

Stuart Lott