



## Report - Sri Lanka Tour 24th March – 10th April 2016

OH well, it had to end some time. The Devon Seniors are back in their houses, offices and care homes after a simply marvellous and literally breath-taking tour of sunshine island Sri Lanka.

Once you got over the flights - why do they insist on serving rice in mid-air as it gets everywhere - the start of the two weeks or so was fantastic and it just got better as the tour went on and the weather got hotter and hotter and hotter.....

First port of call was the Jetwing Beach Hotel in Negombo. First thing to do - order a Lion Beer. It was a theme many of us were to follow on a regular basis. After all it was bloody hot.

The hotel boasted two pools, one across the road and at the very edge of the ocean, the other a massively long 100 metre one inside the complex which would have taken the average swimmer a day to swim length-wise. Jackie 'Sharron Davies' Theedom was doing 30 lengths before breakfast but whether or not that had anything to do with getting away from her husband was anybody's guess.

Service here was polite but a little slow especially by the pool side. If anybody gets to hear anything about my cheese and onion toastie order can they please drop me a line.

Another unusual twist to this lovely location and hotel were the rooms themselves which included something of, let's say, an open-plan nature. Stood in the living room you could see straight through to the bathroom, bath and shower. Naturally, I didn't look once.

We had our first encounter with nature's creatures here with a frog wanting to jump in through our front door and a mongoose causing havoc in the Overthrows (or was it Underarms) room in the middle of the night.

We also experienced an unusual river cruise and BBQ - at least that is how it was billed -during our stay here.

The 'cruise' boat was in fact a handful of single diesel engine-powered small boats which proved to be a challenge for many tourists when trying to get on board.

The BBQ was a feast in the 'jungle' with no knives and forks! The music came courtesy of two local chaps, one playing what was believed to be an Accordion nearly as old as the loveable Dave 'helmet what helmet' Vallance. Another highlight was another tourist who almost set light to her hair as she lit a candle.

It was soon time for our first game. Yep, we were here to play cricket.

Skipper and Commander Theedom was looking to play 40 overs or so. I think he was also planning mass genocide. 30 proved ample. We were doing ok against the Wesley College veterans until they fetched out the under-35 ringers and we wilted in the heat. It was again something of a theme that was to follow us throughout the tour. As soon as we looked like coming out on top an under-age player would appear from nowhere and all we had in return was Paul Berman!

Phil Thorne, who for some reason had a new spring to his step, bagged 3-44 but it was all 'rounder' Dave Amery who took the man-of-the-match award with 3-65 which included a hat-trick.

We got through 300 bottles of water during the first encounter. Mine was an extra Lion beer or two.

Our next challenge was off the pitch and in the coach where we were faced with the long, long and winding journey up into the tea plantations.

By this time, though, we had something to occupy our minds – tour guide Priya's daily Sri Lanka history lesson (I won't go into the details of how they make sure marriages are consummated over there), his new word for the day and a song he made us sing on a regular basis which I still have ringing in my ears courtesy of choirmaster and am dram king Mike Canning.

We stopped off to see the elephants at the Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage before arriving at the Araliya Green Hills Hotel at Nuwara Eliya in 'Little England' thus named I assume because it was peeing down!

A visit to a tea plantation and spice gardens were included in this part of the trip and it was amazing how many players (Mr Ashplant) suddenly developed injuries when an attractive young lady offered to massage some complimentary oil into weary bodies.

And so on to match two and encounter with Planters CC who were founded in 1856 and were the oldest and highest Club in Sri Lanka.

One of the highlights of the game was return and appearance of the lesser-spotted Bob Eames who had spent the first few days of the tour bedridden with a bad cough and man flu which he duly tried to pass on to the rest of us.

He got among the wickets and runs and Devon were on course for a famous victory...until a 21-year-old quickie was brought into the attack and proceeded to try to knock our heads off.

Defeat number two and time for a Lion Beer.

Safari time next up as we travelled down to the Uda Walawe Safari Park and hotel for an overnight stop.

It was remarkable how our safari jeep drivers knew exactly where to be when the elephants were about to pop their heads out from the undergrowth...

The coast beckoned and after more temples and legend stories from Mr Priya we arrived at the Ceysands Centara Hotel at Bentota which sat between sea and ocean and was only reachable by boat. A fantastic hotel once all the rooms were sorted out and the place where Mr Theedom got his only runs of the tour.....

We went for a stroll along the beach and into 'town'. It almost killed us..

Any way, on to our next game and third defeat against Pandura SC at Surrey Village CC.

We tried to defend 180 but one of their players - he must have been under-age - hit an unbeaten 72 to put pay to that.

Roger Wensley, Thorne and Canning got a mention in dispatches for runs and wickets.

I particularly liked Mr T's report on the game which read: "Cold and white cricketers who left Devon days ago, are now brown and bloated from vast quantities of sun and food offered morning noon and night. Smiley people, pristine beaches, and cold lion lager is the order of the day, and a win at cricket, would make the tour for everyone."

So, after a quick Lion Beer, off we went looking for that win and our last port of call, the Mount Lavinia Hotel in Colombo.

The hotel, once the abode of the former Governor when we ruled the world (as Priya kept mentioning), stands in a magnificent setting, literally a stone's throw from the Indian Ocean. A suitably-uniformed Commissionaire complete with pith helmet was there to welcome us just as he was when some of us visited for the first time 8 or 9 years ago

Don't get me wrong, the hotel is magnificent but is probably a little tired and in need of some attention and TLC (just like some of us male tourists).

Game four was against the Old Thomians, on the edge of Colombo. Again it was blooming hot. Where's that Lion Beer?

Richard Pyle was among the runs - mostly straight drives it had to be said but that's fine - and Wensley and Eames also chipped in.

But it was deja vu time again. As soon as a win appeared slightly on the cards, out was wheeled a promising 19-year-old who hit a quick and undefeated 50 to beat us into submission once again.

Back to the hotel and pool we went. Lion Beer time.

The food was exceptional wherever we stayed and the Mount Lavinia was no exception although the open-air cooking of a stir fry did almost see yours truly choke to death one night.

Could we cook up a victory in our last game on the old Test ground against Sri Lanka Cavaliers?

Yours truly and Wensley put on more than 50 for second wicket (although I never got a mention in dispatches. I think it's a Barton thing). In fact, Wensley went on to notch his half century and with a little bit of inside/out heave-hoing from Mr Canning we set a decent tally of 180.

Bowlers Thorne, Canning and Heather got to work and time this time there wasn't an under-age player in sight. We won...!

Some true characters had emerged over the tour, Mike 'he is having a fag' Trout and Danny The Finger Daniels come to mind. Not forgetting all the wonderful ladies and supporters, led by Mike 'let's try a bit of this' Medway.

So it was time to gather on the balcony of the Lotts' mansion - really cannot thank them enough for organising such a memorable trip - and some sad good-byes before preparing for the flights home and some more rice down your pants moments.

Can we all go back soon, please. There's a Lion Beer waiting for me.....

*Jim Parker*

## **Devon Seniors v Sri Lanka Cavaliers...our last game and a win!**

Published on Apr 9, 2016

On the 'Old Test' ground, Devon batted first and the good news was that we were playing, at long last, an O'50's side. Could Devon get past the 175 runs which had proved too inadequate in previous matches. After 10 overs Devon were 56 & Wensley (50) going well, however after 20 overs, the same mistakes were creeping in & the run rate had reduced significantly. Thanks to the late & middle order batting 80 runs were scored off the last 10 overs, Canning (29 n.o.) in a total of 180 for 9. The bowlers then restricted the Cavaliers to 163 all out with Thorne, Canning & Heather claiming 2 wkts apiece. Even in the heat, if we had played teams of our own age we would have been able to compete, but hard lessons are always learnt, as you have to score more quickly in the first 10 overs, before exhaustion takes over.

A wonderful experience for all the tourists and thanks to Katie & Stuart Lott for organising a most wonderful trip. We all look forward greatly to returning home to play in temperatures of around 12 degrees.....not!

*Chris Theedom*

## **Devon Seniors put to the sword by outstanding 19yr old opening bat**

Published on Apr 9, 2016

Devon Seniors v Old Thomonians.

Devon again won the toss and elected to bat on another clear & humid day. Pyle played an excellent innings, hitting any over pitched delivery to the boundary. After 12 overs Devon were 80 for 2. Useful knocks from Wensley & Eames took the final score to 176, which was a good 25 runs short. Berman scored his first boundary of the tour, and provided the spectators with some relief, with a constant breeze from his flailing bat. However all the team batted, which is what touring is all about.

In reply, it soon became obvious that once again, we were not meant to win when the schools outstanding 19 yr old opening batsman scored a quickfire 50 in scorching heat & then retired, followed by a procession of batsman coming in then retiring, but the 'Old Boys' kept us in the field till the penultimate over. The usual presentations were made & the tourists quickly found themselves back at the Hotel & pool bar. Last game tomorrow, before we return home on Sunday.

A visit to Colombo City centre was eye catching for the new tourists, and also a visit to the Buddha Temple. Drinks now at 'Lotts' room and a general get together before dinner. For those who toured 9 yrs ago, the 'Mount Lavinia Hotel offers great food with many chioces.

## **More from the Sri Lanka Tour '16.....Devon v Pandura S.C.**

Published on Apr 7, 2016

Devon won the toss and decided to bat with temperatures in the high 30's, as Wensley (36) & Overthrow (15) put on 45 for the first wicket, before Overthrow was out caught. In a 30 overs game the score moved too slowly, after 18 overs the score was only 98 for 6. However Amery, Thorne (36) and Canning at long last, put bat to ball and Devon finished on 180 for 8.

In reply, Canning took early wickets & Heather bowled tightly. After 18 overs Pandura were 92 for 6, and a win was on the cards. However, as usual, they saved the best till last, and a fine 72 n.o. from Ginaratuna & some dropped catches, ensured a loss for Devon.

Cold & white cricketers who left Devon days ago, are now brown & bloated from vast quantities of sun & food offered morning noon & night. Smiley people, pristine beaches, and cold lion lager is the order of the day, and a win at cricket, would make the tour for everyone.

Next game v Old Thomians, to the edge of Colombo April 7th.

*Chris Theedom*

### **CLEARLY we are not allowed to WIN in Sri Lanka...**

Published on Apr 1, 2016

Set in the mountains & tea plantations, Planters C.C. was founded in 1856, the Oldest & Highest Club in Sri Lanka.

Devon lost the toss, and were asked to field in temperatures more akin to England, a 30 over game. For only the second time in Seniors touring history, the game was played on matting, and Devon found it to their liking, as 57 for 4, soon became 75 for 6, with the introduction of Bob Eames, at last feeling better, though this in time deteriorated, with poor bowling and fielding. Planters eventually 170 all out.....Bob Eames 4 for 14.

In reply Devon lost Wensley, and after 13 overs were 49 for 2. A good partnership ensued between Pyle & Eames (41) taking the score to 89, before Pyle was run out. A close finish was anticipated until the home side brought on their 21 yr old quickie, interesting if your not batting, but clearly we are not allowed to win over here. After 25 overs Devon were 109 for 4, but could only reach 131 for 6 at close.....M.O.M. Bob Eames.

Devon now move onto the Uda Walawe Safari Park and then onto the coast & heat of Bentota. Next game is on Monday against Surrey Village C.C.

*Chris Theedom*

### **SRI LANKA'S REVENGE...**

Published on Mar 30, 2016

Clearly Wesley College O.B. saw Devon County Seniors, as a quick way to gain revenge for their National teams defeat by England.

In temperatures of between 35/40 degrees and humidity of 80%, Devon were asked to field in a 30 over game.

WESLEYITES 235 for 7.....Thorne 3 for 44...Amery 3 for 65 (including hatrick)

DEVON 150 all out.....Pyle 41...Canning 34...Amery 31...M.O.M. Dave Amery.

Devon were soundly beaten by an under 35 yr old side & look forward to the next game today, up in the tea plantation, where the temperatures will be normal.

42 Tourists, are enjoying an incridble experience amongst the most hospitable people you could ever wish to meet. Five \*\*\*\*\* Hotel, 100 metre pool, and Inspector Lott as our Tour leader. HIGHLIGHTS after 4 days include... the Overthrows finding a 'mongoose' in their bathroom, lots of 'red' sunburnt tourists, Jack Theedom doing 16 lengers before breakfast, the 'Lott' followers trailing behind the Devon Flag held high, in case they get lost, Lizards monitored with incredible birds also, but most of all, sharing a holiday with such lovely people. Ashplants wickets castles by a scuttler, Parker is a reformed character, never leaving his wife, and Eames has 'man flu' & hasn't been seen for days.

*Chris Theedom*















