

**Isis Cricket Club – AGM 2014**  
**Chairman's Report**

They say that the older you get - the quicker time flies, and it seemed to be that cricket in 2014 was over in a blink. But whenever I stop to reflect on the 2014 season, it is usually with a smile on my face. In this report I look back on a season in which we enjoyed success both on and off the field, and it is a season of which I am very proud. And so the theme of my report is how we make that success sustainable.

While I am sure that much will be said about our success on the field tonight, I actually want to start by focussing on some of the other aspects of 2014 that I found pleasing. First and foremost, Isis enjoyed an unprecedented membership, with 31 people paying the £30 subscription to join the club this year. While it was never the case that all of those members were available at the same time, and in fact less than half of them played more than ten games each in the season, that's plenty enough people to suggest that the club has sustainability. The statistics will at least show that the top twenty appearances were made by full members, but perhaps one of the challenges for 2015 will be to encourage all members to get value from their subscription and to play even more frequently.

The depth of our membership and the strength of our fixture list also ensured that we maintained a solid financial footing in 2014. In actual fact, as a non-profit organisation our financial target each year is easily stated; we just need to ensure we make sufficient income to cover our costs. Those costs are made up primarily of ground hire, cricket teas, kit and ancillary expenditure for items such as web-hosting and scorebooks. Income comes from membership subscriptions and match fees. I won't bore you with the all of the maths, but the principles are simple: -

- We must collect membership subscriptions and then pay enough match fees to cover our fixed costs.
- Cancelled matches are the club's single biggest cost.
- We make a slightly better margin on away games than home games.

I do not want to steal the thunder from the treasurer's report, but on the basis that we only lost seven of the possible forty-three regular fixtures to cancellation, and 55% of games completed were away from home, I predict a healthy financial report for 2014. In an effort to retain members in 2015, I will therefore be proposing tonight that our membership fees for 2015 should be halved for any member in 2014 that played five or less games for the club.

As a club, we are extremely fortunate to enjoy the outstanding facilities offered to us at Queens College. The location and high standard of the pitch, the size and cleanliness of the changing rooms, the ambience of the pavilion and simple pleasures such as the availability

of a decent pint of beer after a game are easily taken for granted. But these are things that we are able to enjoy and offer to visiting opposition without effort, and while we pay a fair price for the hire of those facilities, it is at a fraction of the cost that we would incur were we to try and stand up such facilities independently. So I would encourage you all to stop and think about these things for a moment and then take the opportunity, when the chance arises, to thank our groundsman, Martin Cross, for the fantastic service he gives to the club. Queens College is very much part of the fabric of Isis Cricket Club, and the sanctity of our home ground has seemed a little threatened in recent times. You may not be aware that Brasenose College are in fact the landlords. Isis has hired Queens under a multi-year agreement for the past five years which came to an end in 2014. While the two colleges are in protracted discussions about their ongoing operating model, it has not been possible to renew such a multi-year agreement, but I can at least give our members assurance that hire of the ground is again secure for 2015. Only when those discussions reach conclusion will we know whether it is possible to sustain a longer term agreement, but in the meantime I would ask you to take neither the ground nor the services of our groundsman for granted, and continue to foster our good relationships with both.

So, what about our season on the field? Well, the statistics speak for themselves, and while I have not had the chance to check back through all of the records, I reckon 2014 has to be up there as one of the most successful playing records of all time. We missed the target of a 67% win ratio that I set for our captain in 2013, but in 2014 we simply smashed it. Ending up winning 26 out of 36 games, we finished on a win ratio of 72%, a fantastic achievement for all concerned. Considering that we would have expected to have won many of the ten games that we lost, it is staggering to think what we might have achieved. Inevitably, the success of the season is owed to some fantastic individual performances, and Rahul Venkat deserves special mention here, having scored 632 runs, taken 21 wickets and held 6 catches. Sadly, Rahul has now returned to India, so that we will not be able to avail ourselves of his services next year. He literally and metaphorically leaves big shoes to fill. Nevertheless, 2014 was not all about one man, and there are plenty of examples where others stood up to be counted with bat or ball, and our success was very much a team effort. It is a fact that some of the teams beaten by us in 2014 will come back at us hard next year, teams like Garsington and Neilson for example, so we are going to have to be on our mettle. But taking all these things into consideration, I will still set a new target for 2015, which is to equal or exceed this season's 72% win ratio. Getting near that will prove to me that 2014 was not a flash in the pan, and that the team has truly moved on in its desire and ability.

In addition to our success in regular matches, Isis also did well in the two Friendly Cup competitions in 2014. Firstly, we finished runners-up in the Friendly Cup 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Six-a-Side tournament, narrowly losing out to a determined Blewbury and Upton. Those of us who played in those most unlikely conditions will remember more the persistent rain, and the devastation of Aldworth's wicket, than the cricket itself, but it was still a great

effort. Of course, in the main competition we went one better, winning the final and lifting the silverware against Aldworth on a glorious day in September. The earlier rounds, against Ipsden and Oxfordshire County Council were probably greater tests than the final itself, but take nothing away from the manner in which the cup was one. I am proud not only in the way we won, but in the way we hosted our visitors on the day. With the good grace of Tiddington Cricket Club, we played the final on a fantastic neutral ground (thank you Jon Ponsford), delivered a cracking tea (thank you Joe and Louise Walter), provided two very good umpires (thank you Keith Ponsford and Roy Blatchford) and generally presented ourselves well all around. But it was the business-like performance with which we won that perhaps pleased me most. Arriving early together, there was a buzz about us as we warmed up, and when we took the field we looked and felt like a team at the top of their game. Needless to say, with a very good bowling display, in which Abdullah Mohammad stole the show with a five-for, Aldworth were dismissed very cheaply, such that the result was never in doubt. Alright, so The Friendly Cup is not exactly prestigious, but winning the cup felt good, and was the icing on the cake for a memorable season on the field.

When I took up chairmanship of the club in 2012 the tradition and camaraderie of Isis Cricket Club was already deep set. Those traditions are, I think, incredibly important; they are what define us and give us identity, and they are what attracted me to the club in the first place, all those years ago. If anything worried me in the 2014 season, it is perhaps that I noticed support for our social activities seems to be in decline. I do not want to dwell on this now; it is right that people put family first, and some of our members had very specific reasons to do so this year. But as we welcome new members to the club, and there were quite a few in 2014, I hope that the sense of fraternity in Isis Cricket Club wears off on them through our social activities. To that end, I think it is very important that we have a good night out in the closed season, and tour again in 2015, and I hope that members old and new will support such events. We did have a good and keenly contested club day in late August though, and there was also good attendance for the annual Wyder Cup golf, this year won by the bandit Nick Hardy (who played out of his skin on the day).

It is always a pleasure to welcome new people to the club, and in 2014 we were joined by Brendan Shepherd, Mo Naqvi, Will Triner, Sanjay Mistry, Kevin Harris and John Rettallack. We also welcomed back old friend Julian Francis. I hope to see all of these making more appearances in 2015, pushing established members for their places. And we were again brilliantly supported by our friends from Infosys, who were always ready to step in when struggling for numbers. We are very lucky to have such resource on tap, and my thanks to Ravi and Rahul for coordinating the recruitment; we saw at least seven new Infosys faces play for Isis at various times in the season, and their contributions in some tight situations were a big factor in our end of season record.

Thank you to everybody who has given something else besides in 2014. It is important that jobs such as umpiring, scoring, updating the scoreboard, packing away the kit, dealing with the covers before and after the game and so on are shared around, and doing so well (and willingly) is something else that contributes to the overall wellbeing of the club. I would especially like to thank the outgoing committee for their contributions to this outstanding season. Compared to recent years, and apart from going about our respective jobs, 2014 proved to be quite quiet from a committee perspective, which is a sign that things went pretty well, and that our processes and procedures are working. Nevertheless, some of our roles require significant personal commitment, and on behalf of the members, thank you for stepping up and making a difference. Clubs like Isis do not run themselves, and my final challenge to the membership tonight is to consider how you can help behind the scenes and which committee roles you aspire to. Our handbook defines each of those roles at a relatively granular level, and it is not rocket science. It is important for our longevity that new people come forward regularly and that we have a succession plan for every role. Isis has a unique place in the local friendly cricket scene, and I for one wish to see it build on its success and continue long into the future.

I remain again to be proud of the history of our fantastic little club, the people in it and our contribution to local cricket. I am also proud and honoured to be your chairman, and while I would encourage competition for committee places, should the members wish me to do so I would be happy to take the chair for a further year in 2015.

Keith Whiter  
Honorary Chairman