

Yes, you have guessed it! Another memorable season for Blunham Cricket Club. Whilst the 2012 season will be remembered primarily for the appalling weather, there were again numerous highlights as well as a few disappointments. Significantly the playing strength of the club continues to improve both in terms of quality and quantity and along with Flitwick and Ampthill, both town clubs, we are putting out more teams than any other club in the county and managing two grounds. We continue to be the envy of many of our neighbours but it has to be remembered that success has only been achieved through a lot so hard work and dedication by club members. We are perhaps nearing capacity in terms of how many teams we can field but there remain the aspirations of promotion for all our Saturday and Sunday sides.

Last season's playing achievements were accompanied by more ground improvements, especially at Roxton, and the usual variety of fundraising activities which are on-going. The new three-lane nets proved a wonderful resource and were in constant use throughout the summer despite the wet conditions.

Turning now to the playing side and last season's performances there were several highlights:

- The Hospital midweek cup was won with a convincing 9-wicket win over Bedford Pakistanis. Our club captain bowled us to victory and was rightly named ma-of-the-match.
- We reached the final of the Heritage Cup with a couple of notable victories. Weather disruptions led to the final being rearranged for mid-September at Potton and a sizeable crowd turned up to enjoy an excellent afternoon's cricket. We held our own for much of the game against County Champions Flitwick but in the end didn't score quite enough runs to put them under real pressure and lost by 7 wickets. A notable performance by the Blunham team nonetheless.
- The youth development programme continues to blossom 'though last season all the year-group teams had to endure many cancellations because of the weather. All achieved at least mid-table respectability though, in fairness, the bad weather distorted the results. It was humbling to attend the Presentation evening in September and see so many youngsters enjoying themselves and revelling in their achievements. The list of coaches continues to grow, both players and parents and all are to be commended for their endeavours and commitment. A number of U15s, notably, Michael Winfield who bowled well all season, James Sheath, Ben McGrath, Alex Hoxey-Smith, Adam White, Alex Walkmann and Ben Jiggins all made their mark in senior cricket. Special mention of Chris Bruce who continues to oversee the youth section with great success.
- As for the senior sides we had a good season in the Hunts League with the 1st team ending up as runners-up and , but for a couple of disappointing batting displays against teams they would have expected to beat, would surely have run Eaton Socon close for the title. The 2nds put right last season's disappointments and convincingly won their division with a record score of 378 in the final game. The 3rd and 4th teams found themselves in the 2nd and 3rd divisions of the new Bedfordshire Invitation league (formerly the Millman) and both produced some good results to

end up third. The 4th team did finally win! In fact they had 5 victories only two of which were conceded. The 3rd team did beat the league champions on one occasion. Sundays were a mixed story with the 1st team just missing out on promotion. The 2nd XI just managed to avoid relegation for the second year running but pride of place must go to the young 3rd XI which achieved promotion in their first season in division 5.

- Another major development was the recruitment of our first overseas player and we were very lucky to find Darryl Hendricks from South Africa. Initially, I don't think he knew what had hit him as sodden wicket throughout May and June did not suit his batting technique, but as things dried out later in the season he began to make his mark and scored runs prolifically from then on. In all over the season, he scored over 1300 runs and took 41 dismissals, mostly as a wicket-keeper. He fitted in extremely well and more than held his own with the Blunham banter. He seems to have enjoyed his time with us and we must thank Neil for looking after him so well.
- There were more outstanding individual performances to report this season than last and it was our very young players who caught the eye in particular. Numerous club records were broken 'though it is probably true that the club plays more cricket now than ever before. Connor looked a class act, every time he went to the crease. His innings in the final of the Heritage was right out of the top drawer. In all competitions he scored almost 1200 runs and took an amazing 83 wickets. Michael Pickard also made his mark at first team level and scored over 700 runs and Ross Adams, Michael Clinton and George Hutson all improved significantly and made their mark in the higher teams.
- In terms of league statistics, Connor had the highest individual score in Hunts League division 1 with 113 v Burghley Park and the Firsts scored 4 out of the 6 hundreds scored in that division. Simon Ackroyd's 161 against Yaxley 2nds was the highest individual score across all the Hunts divisions and the Saturday 2nds had the highest number of wins in the Hunts league with 14. Paul Barden and George Hutson both scored their maiden tons and Shabz Hussain also deserves a mention for a number of notable contributions especially his ton against Dunstable. Dom Aloia, Ben Spendlove, Ed Davis and Dean Barrow also had memorable performances at various levels. Matt Benson and Geoffrey F. both had excellent seasons until injury cut short their seasons. What is it about Ufford Park's ground?
- At representative level, Michael Pickard represented the club at U17 county level, Cameron Smith at U13-level and Adam White at U-12 level this year. James Winfield represented Blunham for North Beds U11.
- Dale Armitage was one of a handful of new 'mature' players who joined the club this year and helped bring a better balance across our playing strength as well as new ideas from outside, which is always welcome.
- Individual thanks must again go to Neil Wildon who has worn many hats over the past year and who worked very hard in the demanding role of club captain. He did a brilliant job coordinating the week-by-week team selection, especially given the number of teams we are now putting out, managing the fixtures and maintaining a watching brief over the club's playing strength. Neil is intending to start

delegating some of his many roles next season and this is perfectly understandable. Hopefully we can find the right people.

- 2011 also saw the ninth Blunham CC tour, this time to Norfolk, Nick's second home. The weather was amazingly good and there were five excellent games with some really close results. Again many thanks to Neil and Nick for all their hard work with the organisation.
- It was an awful summer weather-wise with more cancellations than usual and a lot of pressure on the square. We are indebted to Daniel C and Jamie Hay in particular for coming to the rescue in terms of looking after the Blunham square and doing the bulk of the work. Dean and others kept the square looking good at Roxton. Others helped as well but we do need new volunteers for next season for what is a very demanding but one of the most critical roles in the club. Whoever takes on the grounds maintenance cloak will still need a lot of support on a regular basis from team members. We also need to work hard to change other teams' impressions of the pitch at Roxton, which in my humble opinion played perfectly well. First impressions can often be misleading!
- President's day was cancelled in favour of the Heritage final and the Captain Scott's XI game was a victim of the weather.
- We entered no less than three teams in the winter indoor leagues and managed three midweek teams throughout the summer. All did well and had notable performances.
- Our backroom team again did us proud throughout the year, especially the ladies. Carole, Mel and Jodie again performed wonders with the week-to-week scoring and Presentation evening which was a super evening with a delicious meal. Neil, Daniel, Nick and others have been beavering away with organising a range of social, fundraising events. The wheelchair event was certainly something different and Daniel's funky quizzes create plenty of merriment.
- The website continues to attract a great deal of interest and is a very worthwhile publicity mechanism for the club. Many thanks to Steve for his continued work in managing the site. The gallery of photographs is most impressive. We wish him well health-wise.
- Memberships and registrations were by and large completed and paid on time. Just the usual few defaulters, which you find in any club. Match subs were again regularly paid for the most part but there was still some chasing of captains!
- The Roxton playing field has proved a very worthwhile addition to the club's playing strength. The revamped square produced plenty of runs and the pavilion is small but adequate. Visiting Sunday teams do seem to see the ground very much in "village" terms and there is certainly more work to be done on the outfield and surrounds.
- Both Nick Harding and Peter Thompson have now completed 30 years as members of Blunham Cricket Club. An amazing achievement. Needless to say Carole's length of service to the club matches that of Nick.
- The new Saturday invitation league certainly gave the 3rd and 4th teams more fixtures 'though it was frustrating when others teams conceded fixtures.

- Another small grant from of £5K from Sport England is being sought for covers for the Blunham square. Hopefully these will be in place for the start of next season.

Overall, as with previous seasons we can again feel really pleased and satisfied on many counts, but there is still plenty to think about for next season and beyond. The following would seem to be the most important;

- Pressures on the ground and the square are rising. We need new volunteers for next year and more help from club members on a regular basis. There is an option of paying for a groundsman but that would be very costly.
- Higher playing status. Promotion for both the Saturday and Sunday 1sts has to be on the cards for next season with further successes for the lower sides.
- Running FOUR teams on a Saturday is a real challenge. However, there seems to be an ever on-going supply of enthusiastic youngsters making their mark in the 3rds and 4ths.
- Keeping the new pavilion looking great week by week. The same goes at Roxton.
- New covers in place.
- Maintenance tasks such as umpiring and scoring. Much better than in the past but there is still a tendency amongst some young players to expect the 'oldies' to do all the chores. We need more individuals to do the training courses.
- Anther club tour.
- A really good summer to make up for this year

Overall 2012 was undoubtedly another hugely successful year for the club. Many neighbouring clubs in the area are experiencing hard times and we are certainly the envy of most in terms of the playing strength of our young players and it has been very pleasing to note the improvements in terms of commitment and attitude in so many quarters. Neil has done a phenomenal amount over recent years and many others have given good support. All the captains deserve a positive mention, as do Daniel and Jamie for their work on the square, Carole and Jodie for a wide range of contributions and Mel, who has done a really good job with memberships. Team spirit is currently good but not without the occasional blip. The ball-tampering controversy and the Sharnbrook fiasco caused a lot of unpleasantness at the time. Young players need to be fully conscious of the fact that Blunham CC has offered and continues to offer them opportunities to develop as players which other clubs and schools would not have been able to provide. Let's hope we can all pull together to make the 2013 EVEN BETTER than 2012 and for all the right reasons.