

Wiltshire tour 2012

In the summer of 2012, a truly momentous sporting event occurred. Wadham College Cricket – Freebooters division - toured Wiltshire for a weekend, and played a cricket game in the lovely village of Burbage, barely an hour away from Oxford. In the manner of many a touring party (perhaps an appropriate turn of phrase) we lost the cricket but won friends, and have been invited back to have a proper 4 day tour some time.

The plan was to meet at Wadham with the minibus, and head down in time to set our tents pitchside. We arrived just in time for the start of a downpour the like of which hadn't been seen since Noah's wife, whose name the compilers of the holy book neglected to record, mentioned to him that perhaps it was time to get a boat. Our gracious hosts decided that given the extraordinary rain, we could all stay in the pavilion. This also served as the club bar, providing the students amongst us with a neat practical example of that hallowed economic concept – the perfectly vertically integrated business model.

Come the morning, a miracle - sunshine. Being only a miracle of the minor variety, there remained a terribly soggy pitch, with standing water. Undeterred, a few hardy souls played some muddy cricket on the all-weather strip as a freshener, before we all tidied up the pavilion and commenced the cultural tour. This was a hugely entertaining visit to the stone circle at Avebury - a true henge, unlike the misnamed Stonehenge which of course has stones but no henge. We followed this with a visit to one of Wiltshire's other attractions, the Barge Inn, an educational establishment that serves as the unofficial home to the study of crop circles and other somewhat less alien interests.

At this point our hosts called - Thank you for tidying up the pavilion. It hasn't been that clean for years. Seeing as you've come this far, the outfield is dry enough, would you still like to play cricket? 30 over game?

We scored a fantastic 200 runs, including some monstrous sixes which landed with a loud metallic thunk over the hedge where some parked cars lay. A drinks break was called and the outfield briefly cleared of fielders who decided they'd rather park elsewhere. Legoman (Michael Edwards, Engineering Science, 2007) and The Fonz (Paul Channon, Chemistry, 1986) both got 50s which is believed to be a Freebooters record. Then, despite the opposition's obvious cricketing superiority, we made them work hard to chase that down, which they succeeded in the last of the 30 overs, 6 wickets down. We could even have won it. It was a good tight game.

Everyone pitched in with a contribution, but Burbage were just too keen to win on the field – we had shown our competitive mettle the night before by defeating them in a boat race and then out-singing them. (Most sides take a sporting ringer - we took a musician). We'd had to do something to drive the rain away, and it had worked. It had gone from bucketing all evening, to glorious (if a little sodden). Both sides had a lot of fun.

We look forward to going back with our much toasted and missed President, Stephen Stow (Law, 1973), whose support was gracious and generous as ever. Thanks to Paul Foley (Experimental Psychology, 1987) for organising the tour, and Paul Channon (Chemistry, 1986) for arranging and driving the bus.

Your faithful and humble servant, Dorothy.

