

EUMCC: A HISTORY (November 2015 version)

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Dedication

Perhaps even a modest work like this one can be allowed a dedication. The Club has had many fine teams and players over the years but I dedicate this history to the 2014 1st XI who gave so much to the Club, to the University and to good cricket. It was a privilege to be with them.

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Introduction

The 2014-15 Club captain, James Rimmer, asked me to try to put together a history of the Club - that is, of what was once Exeter University Cricket Club but is now known as Exeter University Men's Cricket Club. Perhaps his thinking was that I am still an academic historian of sorts and that I have in my possession some recent records and statistics or perhaps simply that I have become, somehow, the village's 'oldest living inhabitant' and so have a longer memory than anybody else. If the last, any historian feels queasy about over-reliance on personal memory, so I have tried to search out records. They are, though, disappointingly sparse. BUCS doesn't seem to have kept good records of its predecessors, UAU and BUSA, Cricket Archive provides patchy help only back to 1980 and our own Athletic Union, geared to the cycle of academic years, hasn't done much about the University's sporting history beyond maintain lists of colours and awards back to the late-1940s. Simon Tyson of the Sports Office has, though, collected an invaluable cache of Guild and AU Handbooks and other reports dating back to the 1970s and I am grateful for the opportunity to see them. I have scorebooks for the 1st XI back to 2002, though none for other teams, and I have made use of contacts with some alumni. They have my thanks for their help, but I still hope that source may produce further insights and information in time. My coverage is far more of the 1st XI than of the Club's other teams and that is a weakness. I know how distinguished a record the 2nds have, even though mostly playing the 1st XIs of other universities, but so far the lack of records is insurmountable. For the Club as a whole I am well aware how many names in its history deserve at least a mention or two, so many that this work could easily have become over-long and unwieldy. The dividing line between a mention and no mention is bound to be somewhat arbitrary, so I offer apologies to those past and present members of the Club who feel I have neglected their own, perhaps notable, contributions to its story. Least the advantage of a work on the web is that it can easily be modified as new material appears. I hope to go on extending and updating it, so the initial offering dated January 2015 is not the last word. No history is ever The History and that is surely so of one of the University's great

sporting clubs, one dating back over a century and with a vigorous future beckoning ahead.

Chapter 1: Towards the 1970s

When I came to Exeter as a lecturer in the History Department in 1969, I didn't expect to play much serious cricket, but Deryck Fairclough (of whom more later) persuaded me to join his club, Exeter, and to take an interest in the University team. It was evident that the Cricket Club was well established as one of the University's oldest and most popular sports clubs. It seems to have come into existence in the first few years after 1900, the year that the Royal Albert Memorial College (colloquially known as University College, Exeter) was officially designated. (The College's original building is still there in Gandy Street.) The Edwardian years were, nationally, something of a golden age for sport in general and cricket in particular. In 1902 the new County Ground was opened off Pennsylvania Road to give Exeter its first (and perhaps only) top-grade outdoor cricket facility. One knock-on effect was that Gras Lawn, previously occupied by Exeter CC, became available; the University College took on the lease in 1903 and bought the ground outright in 1912. Gras Lawn, situated in Barrack Road on the far side of the City centre, would remain the College's only cricket ground until Top Field was laid out in the 1950s. By 1903 the College had set up a Central Sports Fund to raise money for student sport and in 1906 the Athletic Union was established with a student subscription of 10 shillings (50 pence to us). The College was small; in 1912 it still had only 230 full-time students, about half of them women, so the men's clubs had only a modest pool of talent to draw upon. They still seem to have established themselves pretty well in just a few years, helped by the College's teacher training course which attracted many students from Wales, a feature of Exeter that persisted for decades. The most distinguished sportsman of these years was one Willie Davies, a Welsh rugby international three-quarter who also topped the College cricket club's averages for both batting and bowling (41 wickets for 222 runs) in 1912. The University College did not play in any inter-university competitions (they didn't exist as yet) and all games seem to have been against local sides, though particular significance lay in regular fixtures

against the much older St. Luke's College, the Church of England teacher training college. The University College seems to have got the better of the encounters. According to Brian Clapp's *The University of Exeter: A History* (1982), the students had a reputation for staging initiations for freshers, a mock medical examination being one of them. One can't believe the Cricket Club was involved!

What happened to sport during the Great War is unclear, but in 1922 the institution's name was changed to University College of the South-West, a title it retained until 1955, and it started to receive some direct public funding via the University Grants Committee. The 1920s saw growing interest nationally in creating a structure for inter-university sport and the UAU (Universities Athletic Union) was established in 1930. Exeter, not as yet a full university, was not affected. Cricket was continuing here, though possibly not flourishing. When the University College made a public appeal in Devon in 1930 to raise funds for development on the newly-acquired Streatham estate, one fundraiser complained that 'Many of the families ... are keen cricketers and the name of our team is mud here owing to its unsporting way of scratching at the eleventh hour for no reason'. The early 1930s saw the creation of a staff cricket club, the Erratics, and soon an annual match between staff and students was being played. In 1936 and 1938 the Erratics beat UCSW. (The Erratics have kept their scorebooks from 1938 onwards – a source which EUMCC can only envy – and two volumes have been published on their history.) The 1930s saw grandiose plans (largely unachieved) for the development of the Streatham estate, but none of them seems to have included any sports facilities.

Again it isn't clear how sport fared during the Second World War, but it was under way very soon afterwards. The Erratics recorded that their very first game after the war was against the students' XI which won a low-scoring game. Until 1958 most male students would do their National Service between school and university and so arrive at the University College rather older than modern students. One significant arrival in the early years of peace was Deryck Fairclough, a legendary cricketer for Devon, who later combined his post in the Department of Education with the first Directorship of the Sports Hall. He became the President of the students' club soon after arriving

on the College's staff. He had ambitions for UCSW sport. One was for the infilling of the Hoopern Valley to provide additional playing fields and another for collaboration with Exeter CC in sharing use of the County Ground. Neither came to fruition. What was achieved in the '50s was the development of Top Field, the laying out there of the 1st XI cricket pitch (which it remained for some thirty years) and the building of a sports pavilion, the Taylor Pavilion (opened 1954), to serve it and adjacent rugby and hockey pitches. This was the first sports development on the Streatham estate. Fairclough himself helped to inaugurate the new facilities by taking 8-76 in the traditional match against the students in 1955. Ambition of another kind bore fruit too and in 1955 UCSW was granted full university status by royal charter and became the University of Exeter. This upgrading helped student recruitment but also qualified the new University to play in UAU competition for the first time, though the renamed Exeter University Cricket Club was a continuation of one already half-a-century old. Clearly it had or soon achieved some standing, as the 1st XI played the touring Pakistan Eaglets team in 1958 and 1959. How Exeter fared in UAU competition in these early years is unknown, though the impression is that it had a reasonable record. The first UAU title would, though, not be won until 1979-80.

A glimpse of the Club in the 1960s has been provided by a group of alumni who came up to the University in 1964 and, having kept in contact, recently celebrated fifty years on with a reunion in Exeter. Their recollections suggest a closely-knit and enjoyable Club. Chris Wilshere, who played mainly for the 2nds, has provided various mementoes. (That he kept them is revealing in itself.) The Club's fixture list for 1965 shows the 1st XI with 24 games, 18 of them in June. The opposition include a number of Devon (mainly local) clubs as well as St Luke's College and a collection of touring teams, but only two games (against Southampton and Sussex) seem to be UAU matches. The 2nds had fourteen matches, ten in June, and only one (v. Sussex) that was obviously UAU. It is possible some away games were omitted from the list, but, even so, it shows how much the Club's standard fare was friendly games rather than inter-university competition. Chris Wilshere also provides the names of Club Captains: Tony Parker in 1965, Alan Williams (who first introduced the Club cap) in 1966 and Gerry Elias in 1967. The last is now, after a distinguished legal career, Sir Gerrard Elias, QC, chairman of the ECB's disciplinary committee. The

fixture list shows the 1st XI playing on Top Field and the 2nds at Gras Lawn, but Chris's notes state that a number of 1st XI matches were played on the County Ground, probably as a result of Fairclough's influence. Among the mementoes were photographs of the crest on the Club shirt. It was not the University crest and at first I suspected that the Club had retained the badge of the old University College, but in fact it was an entirely independent design. Obviously EUCC had some creative spirits.

In 1969, when I came to Exeter, the University had some 3800 students, barely a quarter of its present number, and about half were women. By today's standards it was a fairly small and face-to-face institution and I soon got to know many of those involved with University cricket, among them three talented 1st XI players: Mike Wagstaffe, Peter Thackeray and Ian Murray. Thackeray and Murray played for Exeter CC, my club, and Wagstaffe and Thackeray went on to do PGCEs at Oxford, gain blues and so play first-class cricket. The University's cricket set-up was much more modest than current students would expect. There was no Cricket Centre or Director of Cricket (though Fairclough kept a caring eye on it as he did all University sport) or other coaches and the Club was run almost entirely by the students themselves, though the Athletic Union and its Permanent Secretary provided administrative back-up. There had been one recent gain: in 1967 the Sports Hall was built on the back of the Taylor Pavilion, which it dwarfed. Such facilities were novel - they started to appear with the new universities of the '60s - and Exeter had moved with the times to acquire a major facility, though its only direct contribution to cricket was that it could be used for indoor nets. The surface in the main hall gave a poor bounce, but at least for decades to come EUCC could run winter nets on Saturday mornings and, later on, even contemplate some indoor matches. The Club entered two XIs in UAU competition, but a long list of fixtures through the summer term, then ten weeks long, was probably little different from in the '60s with games against local and touring clubs predominant. Competitive matches in UAU (which embraced all universities except Cambridge, Oxford and London) were relatively few. The grounds were Top Field (now covered by the hockey water-based astro and the Cricket, Tennis and Fitness Centres) for the 1sts and Gras Lawn (since sold off for housing development) in Barrack Road. There was no Topsham ground and St Luke's College was still an entirely separate institution

from the University. In a corner of Top Field (about where the corridor to the Cricket Centre is now) there were a couple of outdoor hard-surface nets, but they were best avoided for serious practice. The 1975-76 AU Handbook carries a photograph of the Taylor Pavilion, which stood about where the Tennis Centre office and coffee spot are now. It has long been submerged beyond recognition in the extended Sports Centre. One thing, though, would be easily recognizable today; green was already Exeter's sporting colour. The 1960s alumni confirm that it was so then and, so far as they knew, had long been so.

My most vivid memories of the 1970s relate to the long-established and celebrated annual game between the University 1sts and the Staff. For this big match the Erratics put out a very different team from the regular one that played village teams at weekends and it pulled in staff who played for senior clubs in Devon (the Devon League had been established in 1972), names like Bill Jordan, Tony Wragg, Jeff Stanyer and me, as well as the now elderly Fairclough. It would be hard now to imagine a staff team that could take on the University 1sts, but in fact the staff beat the students several times during those halcyon years. The Top Field wicket was a slowish turner which suited a staff spin attack of considerable quality. The games were sometimes low-scoring, though some saw good totals. Forgive the boast: the present writer scored the only century made for the Staff against the University (100* in 1975) and was given out lbw on 99 (a dreadful decision!) on another occasion. The 1975-76 AU Handbook has a photo of play during the University v. Erratics match on Top Field. Within a few years and partly thanks to the merger with St Luke's, the University team became much too strong for the Staff, whose stars were ageing and not being readily replaced, and the great annual game lapsed sometime in the early 1980s. Another match, one which I had overlooked until Simon Tyson unearthed the Stratton Trophy recently, was an annual game between EUCC and a team drawn from Convocation, a body that supposedly represented Exeter's graduates – in other words a sort of Old Boys match. The engravings on the weighty trophy indicate that the game was played from 1954 to 1980. Perhaps EUMCC should decide whether it wishes to revive such a game formally.

My associations with the students' Club were not just adversarial. I played one game for it – versus Devon in 1972 – and when Fairclough retired in 1977 I

was invited to succeed him as President of the Club. (Many student clubs had Presidents drawn from the staff then, but the institution seems to have atrophied in years since.) With the 1st XI playing on Top Field I became a fairly regular supporter and spectator, wandering up the hill from Queen's Building when I had an hour or two spare on match days. Over the next few years I would see some remarkably good cricket.

Through the 1970s, though, UAU games left little mark on my memory. AU Handbooks of these years confirm that the Club was still largely focussed on local cricket rather than inter-university competition and that it retained a strong social dimension. The 1974-75 Handbook entry for the Club noted that it now had three teams and that in early July 'the club's long-subsidised tour of Sussex takes place – the ideal culmination to a two-month cricketing idyll'. In the next year's Handbook the idyll was fleshed out: 'we play two and a half months of continuous cricket and never travel more than few miles'. 'When the exams are over in early June, it is possible to play almost a month of cricket, seven days a week, more than even the county pros manage.' At least it added that 'the real spice and edge is given to the season by the UAU championships' in which Exeter regularly reached at least the quarter-finals, adding, to re-assure prospective members, that the Club's match fee (tea included) was only 15p. The 1978-79 Handbook entry justifiably celebrated Paul Downton's selection for England's winter tour – a remarkable recognition for an undergraduate. It assured readers that UAU competition was 'the most important part of the season', but went on to boast that the 1st XI had 35 fixtures each year and 'is now one of the strongest sides in Devon'! The Club had a 'reputation as one of the most social clubs in the University' and, welcoming the willingness of touring teams to treat hard-up students to drinks, the entry concluded 'A game doesn't end when stumps are drawn, but when the bar shuts, or the curry-house closes'. The end-of-year tour to Sussex was still going.

Chapter 2: The Golden Years

There seems to be no record of the University's fortunes in UAU competition before the end of the 1970s. One suspects, as the Handbooks claim, that

Exeter fared well in the SW division of the competition, where Bristol, Bath, Southampton and Reading provided regular opposition and where success would lead on to the knock-out stages of the quarter-finals and beyond. In 1978 the University reached the UAU final, perhaps for the first time – ‘a game which we really should have won’, the AU Handbook recorded mournfully. By then, though, something was changing. The merger with St Luke’s College in 1978 brought a powerful sporting tradition and some very useful individual players into the University. In fact sport at St Luke’s in the post-war period had been sometimes stronger than at the University, notably so for rugby. Soon AU Handbooks noted that competition for places in the cricket teams had intensified and that standards had risen with rugby, cricket and basketball being the main beneficiaries of the merger. One student in the new School of Education (which incorporated the former College) was Richard Ellison, a fine fast-medium bowler and hard-hitting batsman, who played for Kent and later England in eleven Tests and 14 ODIs. All told he took 475 first-class wickets at 28.99 and scored 5046 runs at 23.8. Now, after serving a few years as part-time coach to the University, he is a housemaster at Millfield. A little earlier Paul Downton, also of Kent and later Middlesex, a wicketkeeper-batsman, had arrived on the Streatham site. Picked for an England tour while still an undergraduate, he played in 30 Tests and 28 ODIs. His first-class career accumulated 8270 runs at 25.3 and 779 victims behind the stumps. After a career in the City, he recently experienced a difficult year as the Managing Director of England Cricket. I watched some of the Ashes Test at Edgbaston in 1985 in which both Exeter graduates were playing. That match won the Ashes for England and Ellison took ten wickets. In 1980 the University also benefited from the services of Brad Green, a formidable all-rounder who had captained Young Australia and was doing a Masters in Child Care here. He won the Man of the Match award in a one-dayer for Devon against Warwickshire. Though some had tipped him to go on to captain Australia, he decided to quit cricket for a career in child care. With such players and others of note, Exeter had become almost unstoppable. In 1980 we reached the UAU final against Liverpool, having disposed of Durham and Loughborough on the way, and won: Liverpool 174-7, Exeter 178-2 (Green 63*, Ellison 54*). Brian Clapp’s history of the University, published two years later, includes a photograph of a proud-looking 1st XI captioned ‘UAU Champions 1979-80’. In 1982 we reached the

final again and beat Loughborough convincingly: Exeter 151-7 (Richardson 66), Loughborough 70 all out. Ellison took 3-35 off 20 overs straight – no over limits for bowlers then – and Wheeler 3-16. We reached the final again in 1983 – v. Leeds at Bath – and won again, though Cricket Archive, which has the 1982 scorecard, provides no details. Three UAU titles in four years was a remarkable achievement and there were also regular successes for Exeter's 2nds, winners of their 'Junior UAU' in 1979, 1984 and 1985 and losing finalists in 1978, 1980 and 1983. Clearly Exeter cricket then, as so often, had considerable depth. The Guild Handbook of 1984-85 asserted confidently that Exeter had 'without dispute the best cricket and tennis teams in UAU'. By 1987-88, after the 1sts had lost to Durham in semi-finals in 1985 and 1986 and in the final in 1987, the Handbook had modified the boast to being 'the second strongest side of all Universities', but clearly the early '80s were already coming to seem, in retrospect, a golden age for Exeter's cricket. Some advances could be noted. The University now employed an off-season coach in Tony Greaves, a member of the School of Education staff, it now had three regular teams and also, for a couple of years, ran a Freshers' XI. In 1986 it was ambitious enough to stage a two-day game against Cambridge University 'complete with beer tent' and was hoping to organize a full Cricket Week for the following year. The Club was now focussing more on inter-university competition rather than local or touring teams and in 1987-88 there was a first mention of entering a team in the UAU indoor six-a-side competition during the winter months. The 1981-82 Handbook had also mentioned the first appearance of a Ladies' Cricket Club, though, 'concentrating on enjoyment rather than competitiveness', it did not play in UAU. It was a flourishing scene, yet by the second half of the '80s, the golden age was probably already ending.

Chapter 3: The Long Pause

Exeter reached UAU (or BUSA) finals in 1987, 1990 and 1995 but lost all of them to Durham. The frequency of appearances at late stages of the competition suggests that Exeter probably ranked as the third cricketing university behind Durham and Loughborough, a good showing but never the dominance of a few years earlier. AU and University Handbooks went on giving prominence to the names of Downton and Ellison until the late 1990s; the

implication was that Exeter's glory years had come and gone. Even during these relatively barren years, though, we notched up another Test player. Mike Smith, a fine left-arm seamer, went on to a long first-class career with Gloucestershire. Though he played only one Test for England, in the Ashes series of 1997, he was rated for some years as the country's best one-day bowler. In first-class cricket he took 533 wickets at 24.68, with ten in a match five times, and stands as Exeter's leading wicket-taker at that level. Co-inciding with Smith in the years around 1990 was Marcus Wight, off-spinner and batsman (also a fine hockey-player), who collected a blue in a postgraduate year at Cambridge before playing some games for Gloucestershire. There were other fine players too. We could still attract good cricketers and over these years there were mentions in the Handbooks of Exeter players representing English Universities, though only in the University's 2002 Sports Report were names given (Chris Coulson, Nick Pont and David Fury). It is hard, though, not to feel that Exeter had lost some momentum and even stagnated, at least relative to other leading cricket universities. The hammering received from Durham in the 1995 BUSA final raised questions about how competitive Exeter remained at the highest level.

Exeter had problems, both internal and external. During difficult years for University finance, there was almost no significant investment in sports development and facilities. The facilities we had were even deteriorating. Top Field, long the 1st XI ground, was now suffering from drainage problems and became unsuitable for top-level cricket. The 1sts moved to Gras Lawn where, despite the devoted work of a distinguished groundsman, Dennis Lane, the wickets remained slow and hardly encouraging to either bowlers or batsmen. Gras Lawn had some character and many recall it with affection, but as a ground for an aspiring university it was of modest quality and its pavilion and catering facilities were simply inadequate. Meanwhile the ageing Sports Hall saw no investment in either cricket facilities or those for fitness and conditioning at a time when some other universities were improving or extending theirs. External competition was intensifying. In 1992 the polytechnics had been given university status and that more than doubled the number of the country's universities. The upgraded institutions merged into UAU which changed itself to BUSA (British Universities Sports Association). The old universities now faced more competition and some of the new ones,

perhaps despairing of much academic distinction, invested heavily in sports facilities and sports scholarships (the latter a phenomenon previously confined to the USA) to make a name for themselves and to enhance recruitment from the schools. The growth of student numbers in such institutions attracted many good sports players who perhaps would not have considered university before. At a time when Exeter was standing still in itself, it was facing increased competition in BUSA, though the damage to its sports standing was much less than that suffered by the oldest universities, Oxford and Cambridge. By the late 1990s, though, change was on the way for Exeter.

Chapter 4: The UCCE Era

Change, when it came, was both internal and external. By the end of the 1990s, a relatively disappointing decade for Exeter cricket, the University, now in better financial shape and with a sport-friendly Registrar in Ian Powell, was girding itself to invest in sports facilities and make itself more competitive. The decision was made to sell Gras Lawn for housing and to plough the proceeds into new developments, including a replacement ground out on the Topsham Road. In 1999 a Sports Office was created and the first Director of Sport, Philip Attwell, was appointed. The University established a system of Sports Scholarships, well-funded by most standards, and, though the Cricket Club obtained only a few of them, by 2001-2 the Guild Handbook was noting that they had 'enabled the club to portray a degree of professionalism'. While the new Topsham pitches were under development, the 1sts played on a variety of other grounds – Exmouth, the Exeter County Ground and even at Millfield School. Top Field now succumbed to other uses – a water-based astro for hockey and then a Tennis Centre, not to mention car-parking. The old Taylor Pavilion was swallowed up by these developments.

Major changes had arrived beyond Exeter too. The new England & Wales Cricket Board (ECB), under pressure after regularly dismal performances against a rampant Australia, put its mind to improving the nation's cricket and decided to finance six UCCEs (University Centres of Cricket Excellence) to provide pathways into the first-class game now that Oxford and Cambridge were failing to do so. Former England batsman, Graeme Fowler (now running cricket at Durham) acted as the ECB's consultant and he recommended his six centres: Durham, Exeter and Loughborough, all sole institutions, and Oxford,

Cambridge and Leeds/Bradford, all multi-university conglomerates. The the political in-fighting began. Wales demanded its own centre and when the Welsh Office and even the Welsh Labour Party weighed in, the Labour government leant on the ECB to change its plans. Over Fowler's protests (he tried to persuade the ECB to have seven centres with Exeter still one) the Exeter place was re-awarded to Cardiff, another conglomerate. Perhaps oddly, BUSA agreed to let all the UCCEs, even though four were not sole universities, play at the top level of inter-university competition, so increasing the competition for Durham, Loughborough and Exeter. Only cricket was landed with such an anomalous structure at its top level. In fact those three universities still dominated the early years of the new BUSA competition, partly because the conglomerates took time to get themselves sorted and because the BUCS Premier was still divided into North and South divisions. In the South division Exeter faced the Cardiff, Oxford and Cambridge UCCEs and sundry other universities, with only Oxford UCCE being a major threat. For the first four years (2001-4) Exeter finished in the top two and so qualified for the knock-out semi-final where we would meet either Durham or Loughborough from the North division. By a nice co-incidence Exeter's very first game against a UCCE was against Cardiff in May 2001 and it was a satisfying victory: Exeter 238-8, Cardiff 182-9.

The arrival of the UCCE era saw Exeter adapting to the new challenge. A professional coach was employed part-time. For several years Richard Ellison filled the role, though Millfield duties meant he missed most actual matches, and later David Ottley and Julian Wyatt. Now it had to counter UCCEs with professional coaches and management, sizeable budgets and fixture lists including the counties, Exeter could hardly leave its Cricket Club to be run by students in the old way. Some unsatisfactory episodes over fixtures, money and captaincies had shown the weaknesses of that. A Cricket Committee was formed, with the present author as its chairman and Nick Beasant of the Sports Office (a former AU Chair) as cricket manager. One of its decision was to separate the the 1st team captaincy from the Club captaincy; in future team captains would be appointed by the management while Club members would continue to elect their own Club Captain at their AGM. As the UCCEs employed professional scorers, it was decided to improve Exeter's standards and in 2003 a scorer for the 1st XI from outside the University was employed and paid.

Given the limited success of the experiment, from 2004, now semi-retired from teaching and other University duties, I took over as the 1st XI's regular and entirely amateur scorer.

A concentration of quality players was one factor in Exeter's renewed success in the first four years of the UCCE era. Even before the UCCEs a talented young Devon batsman, Matt Wood, had come to the University and he scored heavily in his first season in BUSA, though he then decided to turn professional with Somerset and played with success for some years for them and then for Nottinghamshire. A highly-fancied Yorkshire off-spinner, Richard Dawson, was also recruited for Exeter. Though injuries and other interruptions meant that he never dominated in BUSA competition, an otherwise meteoric career saw him fast-tracked into the England side and he played seven Tests in 2001-3 (so becoming Exeter's fourth England player) and went on as Ashes tour to Australia. Difficulties in modifying his action meant that his descent was equally meteoric and his whole first-class career produced only 199 wickets at 44.07. Two Exeter batsmen would go on to more solid first-class careers. The South African Steve Moore (Worcestershire and Lancashire) would make 17 first-class centuries, play for England Lions and total 8800 runs averaging 36.39, and the Malaysian Arul Suppiah went on to make eight first-class centuries for Somerset and over 5000 runs averaging 32.42, though his batting contributions in BUSA had been modest indeed. At BUSA level both also very useful bowlers. In fact Suppiah, an occasional slow left-arter, holds the world record T20 figures of 6-5 for Somerset v. Glamorgan in 2011. Moore hit 111 in a BUSA match v. Bristol in 2002, which for long remained the only century scored for Exeter in the UCCE era. Tom Stayt, 1st XI captain in 2007, played some games for Gloucestershire. He obtained the best bowling figures for Exeter in the modern era – 10-1-27-7 v. Cambridge UCCE at Fenner's in 2006 – and also had the distinction of fielding as 12th man for England in a Test match versus West Indies. Yet a county future and value in BUSA were not exactly one and the same thing. Players like Neil Turk, Jordache Rawson, Ben Thompson, David Court, Ian Haley (a hockey Olympian for South Africa), the Zimbabwean Duncan Micklem and Paul James were all distinguished BUSA performers. James, who went on to do a Master's and then a doctorate, managed to play for the 1sts in eight out of nine years in

2002-10, a record that may never be eclipsed. Many of Exeter's players in these years appeared for county 2nd XIs or for Minor counties.

That concentration of talent and the then structure of BUSA explained the successes enjoyed by Exeter in the first four UCCE years. The University reached the semi-finals in all those years (2001-4), though the final only in 2003. The victory against Loughborough that year, by eight wickets at Dean Park, Bournemouth, would remain our last semi-final win until 2014. The 2003 final, against Durham at Hampshire's new Rose Bowl ground, saw two strokes of ill-fortune for Exeter: Haley, who had scored a fifty in the semi-final, was away on hockey duty for South Africa, and then Russell Jones, the senior opening bowler, broke down after five overs. Even so, the final was a disappointment rather than a disaster. James took four wickets for us and Moore and Turk scored fifties and at one point looked capable of winning the game. 2004 brought another semi-final and the University won the BUSA six-a-side indoor tournament, which we had entered only sporadically, for the first time. Perhaps Exeter could claim again to be one of the top three cricket universities. From 2005, though, matters were becoming more difficult. That year BUSA created a single Premier 'A' division in place of the old North/South division and Exeter found itself one of only two 'ordinary' universities in a pool of eight dominated by the six UCCEs (later renamed MCCUs – MCC Universities – when the ECB relinquished responsibility to the Marylebone club). For many years – until 2016 – Exeter would remain the only non-MCCU to have stayed without break in Premier 'A'. (Several other 'sole' universities have fared badly at the top level, though in recent years Southampton Solent have emerged as a contender.) In 2005 we fared badly for the first time and needed to win the two final matches to avoid automatic relegation. Two fine performances – one away against Leeds/Bradford who ended up relegated themselves and one at Milfiend against Loughborough – saw us safe. In the latter, reduced by rain to 24 overs a side, Micklem hit 85 off 59 balls in what remains one of the outstanding innings played for Exeter. The opposing bowlers included Panesar and Wainwright; each conceded 35 runs off five overs. The detail of these matches is preserved. We have not only a good coverage of MCCU matches in Cricket Archive but also our 1st XI scorebooks from 2002 onwards. One hopes that match details will be kept, whether in scorebooks or on the web, for all

competitive matches in future. The distinguished history of EUMCC is worth recording properly.

From the turn of the millennium when the University was investing heavily in enhanced sports facilities, the outcomes for cricket were mixed. Gras Lawn was sold off and the completely new ground developed out on the Topsham Road. Unfortunately the noise from the adjacent motorway was distracting, the proper cricket pavilion once promised was never built and the wickets on the designated 1st XI square were not up to BUSA standard. Many games played there were low-scoring. Though the other teams played at Topsham, the 1st XI soon preferred to play on local club grounds, particularly the County Ground (the Exeter CC ground adjacent to the Streatham campus. A long relationship at personal level between the University club and the City one has strengthened as University 1st XI players have come to view the County Ground as their home venue. Another change, one of huge benefit, had to wait until 2009 when, after some delays, the University's own Cricket Centre, costing over £2.1m, was finally opened at the Sports Centre, appropriately on the former Top Field. The main benefactor was the businessman/philanthropist and cricket lover, Sir Christopher Onaadtje, after whom the Centre was named. It provided a fine year-round facility in a way the older facilities could never do and the benefit to a new generation of University teams, both in performance and in commitment, has been immense. At the same time the post of University Director of Cricket was established and Julian Wyatt (Somerset and Devon) was appointed. Julian has doubled as 1st XI coach. Having a professional with his focus and commitment has transformed the culture of cricket. New students may take all this for granted, but a longer perspective shows that the set-up the Club now enjoys are not just recent in origin but also better than in most comparable universities. Across the university system cricket has been struggling; some institutions see it as unfeasible to compete with MCCUs, some are reluctant to spend money on an expensive sport that has only a short season, particularly now that many universities have shortened their summer term. (Until recently Exeter and nearly all universities had a ten-week summer term.) Exeter is one of relatively few universities where cricket remains a major sporting priority and, after running a 4th XI for several years just for 'friendlies', we now have all four teams in BUCS.

Other developments include the entry of the Ladies Club into BUCS competition. It now reaches BUCS finals or semi-finals regularly, both indoor and outdoor, but has hardly challenged Loughborough's dominance. The University have taken up the indoor game seriously and successfully, winning the BUSA title for a second time in 2007, and the new Cricket Centre has allowed that commitment to intensify. The Men's 1sts reached the final stage of BUCS competition (in 2008 BUSA had become BUCS – British Universities & Colleges Sport) in all five years 2011-15, losing the 2011 final at Lord's and winning (remarkably easily) the one at Edgbaston in 2014, a prelude to a run to the outdoor final by a talented squad. Lately BUCS has expanded the competition so that we can enter a 2nd team too. At one stage the 1sts had won 50 out of 53 games in the competition. Another development is the annual Varsity Match, an idea pioneered by the University's RFC in the 1990s but cricket followed suit soon after 2000. Several games have been spoilt by the weather, but most (now played on the County Ground) have been notable successes, not least socially – the attendance was some 11-1200 in 2015. Several times the Varsity Match has been used for BUSA/BUCS games. One such saw a notable victory over Loughborough in 2009; Exeter 223-8, Loughborough MCCU 166 all out, with all-rounder Archie Fellowes returning 4.2-0-8-5 with his left-arm spin. Lately non-BUCS opponents have been preferred and the late May Bank Holiday has become the regular date. In 2014 the Club Captain Andrew Curtis scored a fine century against an out-gunned Bristol. There have been sartorial developments too. In 2005 the Club Captain, George Vaughan, designed and introduced the first Club tie. The original version (I have one) carries the original initials EUCC. Further designs, not all an improvement in my view, have changed that to EUMCC. 2013 even saw the 'creation' of a Club blazer! As BUCS in 2011 introduced coloured clothing for Premier 'A' (and a pink ball), university cricket has become more colourful and Exeter's 'greens' a familiar sight.

With all this the last few years have seen some notable successes as well as the occasional disappointment. The 1st XI had a very modest record in BUSA/BUCS from 2005 to 2011 and, with little prospect of semi-final places, often had to concentrate on avoiding relegation. The MCCUs had got their acts together and both Cardiff and Leeds/Bradford, initially the weakest of the institutions, enjoyed periods of significant success. Despite talented players

like Stayt, James, Sandy Allen, Scott Barlow and Ben Howgego (who played some games for Northants), Exeter was struggling by the standards of a few years earlier. We settled for underdog status and developed an inferiority complex about the UCCEs. The nadir came in 2011 when, with a team short of stars, we failed to win a single game in BUCS and avoided relegation only because it had, that year, ceased to be automatic and become subject to a play-off. A disastrous Varsity Match against Cambridge MCCU saw us bowled out for 47, our lowest total in the modern era, and the campaign ended with an abject capitulation up in Durham. It was not a season to dwell upon.

Since then the University's standards have improved, helped initially by a remarkable intake of talented players in September 2011, though the 2012 season was so wet that most fixtures could not be fulfilled and BUCS had to cancel its normal competitions. In 2013 the 1st XI reached the semi-finals for the first time since 2004 (when qualifying was rather easier), beating Cambridge and Loughborough MCCUs and Solent along the way. A side below full-strength lost disappointingly to Leeds/Bradford in the semi-final at Leeds. Remarkably that year the other EUMCC teams – the 2nds, the 3rds and the 4ths – all won their BUCS divisions, a probably unique achievement that showed the depth of cricket ability that Exeter attracts. Remember that the 2nds and even the 3rds spend much of their programme playing the 1st XIs of other universities. The arrival of Jack Bradbury to assist the Director at the Cricket Centre contributed to that success. All that provided a backdrop to the *annus mirabilis* of 2014 when the 1sts not only won the BUCS indoor title (could there be a more accomplished side than the one that won so easily at Edgbaston?) but, in a remarkable run, reached Exeter's first outdoor final since 2003. Though bedevilled by injuries, the 'class of 2011' had provided the core of the team for three years. Joe Barrs, who captained the side for three years (a record in itself), was a survivor of the 2010 intake and settled selection allowed players to know each other's games as well as develop their own. The 2012 intake had added Tom Abell who would go on to make his mark as a batsman for Somerset in the closing weeks of the 2014 season and, in 2015, to carry his bat twice for the county and to be chosen as county cricket's Young Player of the Year. In fact the 2014 squad began poorly in BUCS: short of match practice its batting came apart against Cambridge MCCU at Fenner's, then lost to Leeds/Bradford under Duckworth/Lewis and had the

Loughborough game rained off. With three games gone and only one point, the much-fancied Exeter team looked likely to miss out. To qualify for the semi-final, four straight wins in the remaining games were required – an unlikely target verging on the impossible and one Exeter had never achieved before in the ‘modern era’. But achieved it was. A tense and fluctuating game at Oxford produced a win by seven runs (only the second victory away against those MCCU opponents), Cardiff were beaten more comfortably in the wet at Newport (the first away win against them), and Durham and Solent were overcome in close games on the County Ground. Third in the Premier ‘A’ table, we had an away semi-final, but in the event the venue hardly mattered. The Cambridge that had beaten us in the first game was now crushed by eight wickets on the Clare College ground in surely the most impressive performance of recent years. The attack and fielding were always tight and disciplined, with Neal Prowse hastening out the opposition batting to finish with 5-40, and then Andrew Curtis, scoring 110 off 102 balls, made the first century for Exeter against an MCCU and the first in a competitive game since Moore’s in 2002. Just as meritorious as the eight-wicket margin was the fact that the side had come so far with several players out injured or playing half-fit. Perhaps the extent of parental support (a recent and welcome feature of Exeter cricket) was a factor. If BUCS had a competition for ‘parents’ teams’, we would surely win it.

The final, played against Loughborough MCCU at Kibworth in Leicestershire, was something of an anti-climax. This time injuries told – Abell and Zac Bess sat the game out and Bradley Lane was unfit to bowl – but it also pointed up an over-reliance on the batting of Curtis. Exeter’s score of 163-8 was 40 short of defensibility on an easing wicket, though it didn’t prevent Barrs and Tom Barton, one of the best opening attacks in BUCS in recent years, reducing the opposition to 16-3 at one point. The ultimate disappointment of defeat by six wickets still left Exeter, indoor title-holders and outdoor runners-up, as one of the top three teams in BUCS. That even such an achievement felt like not enough showed the extent of Exeter’s ambition. No underdog psychology now – in 2013-14 Exeter had beaten more MCCUs than had beaten us. Cricketers have tended to be under-rewarded by the Athletic Union, but the 2014 squad was recognized by a record number of Club Colours and Awards to add to its BUCS gold and silver medals. The Player of the Year Cup, introduced in 2013

when freshman Alex Morgan was the inaugural winner, was awarded to Joe Barrs as captain and leading wicket-taker, though Curtis was a strong contender. All that remained for the leavers was the now-traditional 'Last Breakfast' at the local Squash Club (on the County Ground) in Graduation Week. Those leaving included seven major figures from the 1sts squad – Barrs and Curtis, Prowse, Lane and Bess, Matt Laidman and Will Leith, the core of a fine side. They have helped to set higher standards for EUMCC, but it was always likely that, once departed, they would take a lot of replacing and that 2015 would be a difficult year of transition.

So it proved. The 2014 intake was only average in quantity and quality, but initially hopes remained high for a 1st XI now captained by Ollie Mills. After an extended run in the indoor competition, which saw Exeter chalk-up 55 wins out of 58 games, we played poorly in the semi-final at Headingley and finished with only bronze medals. (Happily our Ladies team strolled impressively to their first BUCS title.) The outdoor campaign began inauspiciously with defeats by Durham and Leeds/Bradford on the 'Grand Northern Tour' but that journey has rarely been productive. The next two games, ones we might have expected to win, were more telling. We lost away to Southampton Solent, who had never beaten us before, and then at home to Cardiff MCCU. Abell made runs in both, but the bowling (newcomer Alex Hughes excepted) and fielding came apart under pressure each time and we found ourselves out of the semi-finals and fighting against the relegation play-off. We then beat Cambridge MCCU convincingly at home to raise our hopes (Mills collected a determined century for us), but then batted inadequately against Loughborough in a rain-reduced game at the County Ground. All hinged on the final game against Oxford MCCU at home. Exeter's 246-9 featured another century from Mills, his 117 being the highest score in competitive matches in the seasons covered by extant records; it was also the first time any Exeter batsman had scored two centuries in the same BUSA or BUCS campaign. (After waiting twelve years for a century, Exeter now had three within twelve months. London buses anyone?) Alas, the bowling and fielding struggled again and Oxford won with overs to spare. So it was the relegation play-off after all – against a confident and well-organized Bristol University side up for promotion for the third time in three years. This time most of our main batting failed, only a late flourish from Rimmer taking us to 183 all out, far short of par.

Bristol won for the loss of only two wickets with over ten overs spare. One could not argue with the outcome on the day, though perhaps Exeter were unlucky to be in the play-off at all, when Cambridge were generally regarded as the weakest side in Premier 'A'. Certainly it was not the weakest side Exeter put out in recent years and both Abell and Mills had impressive seasons with the bat, but in the field Exeter had rarely been the tight, disciplined combination of the season before. So the proud record of being the only non-MCCU university to have been always in the top division since 2001 fell at last. The task for 2016 must be to return to where we surely belong. Happily most of the 2015 side remain to face the challenge.

Conclusion

More could be written, but even this modest effort shows how much the Club offers to its members – not just a story but also a pedigree and a legacy. Cricket at Exeter has a history which few universities (and there are now many) can equal. In the sixty years since it became a full university and entered UAU competition, it has built up a claim to be one of the three leading cricket provincial universities alongside Durham and Loughborough – all that in an era when the once celebrated universities, Oxford and Cambridge, have seen their cricket fortunes and standing wane. (A few years ago Exeter 2nds met Oxford University 1sts in the final of their BUCS division!) Some achievements have left no record, but we know that the 1st XI reached UAU finals in 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1987 and 1990, BUSA finals in 1995 and a BUCS final in 2014. Three of those finals were won, though none since 1983. Semi-finals have been too numerous to list, while the frequent successes for the 2nds (the latest in 2015) are obscured only by the inadequacy of the records. The nature of university teams and the turnover of players means there have been lean years as well as ones of plenty, but the ability of Exeter to attract good players has not wavered, even in recent years when normal inter-university competition has been distorted by the UCCE/MCCUs. Though initially we resented losing our place as a UCCE to Cardiff, that outcome may have been a blessing in disguise. The UCCE system has not worked entirely well – players have complained of too much cricket during the pre-exam period and of being mere cannon-fodder for the counties – and now MCC, which took over when the ECB washed its hands of the business, has cut back funding to the MCCUs. Exeter

has responded to the challenge and maintained comparable standards without being an MCCU itself. As a single university it has benefitted from a clear identity and its own *esprit de corps*. Exeter's tally of four England players stands well against all but the ancient universities and, more recently, Durham and Loughborough. It has, in addition, a useful collection of county and first-class players and many at county 2nd XI and minor county levels. Two Exeter alumni, Elias and Downton, have stood high in the administration of English cricket. If the MCCU system ended (a possibility discussed periodically) Exeter would surely resume its former position among the top three provincial universities and better now than the two ancient ones. Our Athletic Union prides itself on finishing around 6th in the finals BUCS points table for all sports. Cricket aims rather higher. The University's record of cricket achievement is obvious; the challenge is to ensure much more is to come.

Appearing for Exeter – for any of its teams – is not something to be taken for granted. Players should see it as an honour and a privilege. Our teams stand in a great tradition, one that goes back more than a century through times of great change for cricket, for society and for the University itself. The names that appear in this history are only some of those who have contributed to Exeter's reputation and successes. Many more could have been added. Every academic year, every season, has had and will have its challenges. I hope this work whets appetites for those of 2016.

APPENDIX

Not all Club or 1st XI captains for the period discussed can be identified, but the following list gives more of those since 2002. I am always grateful for further information about the Club's past and I hope, in time, to be able to expand this Appendix.

	Club Captains	1st XI Captains
2001-2		Steve Moore
2002-3		Ben Thompson
2003-4	Paul James	Neil Turk
2004-5		Ian Haley

2005-6	Paul Short	Paul James
2006-7	Ed Loader	Tom Stayt
2007-8		Sandy Allen
2008-9	Tom Whiteside	Chris Travers
2009-10	Matt Williamson	David Cranfield-Thompson
2010-11	Tom Worthington	Jon Todd
2011-12	Rhys Jones	Joe Barrs
2012-13	Richard Croney	Joe Barrs
2013-14	Andrew Curtis	Joe Barrs
2014-15	James Rimmer	Ollie Mills
2015-16	Robbie Goddard	Ollie Mills

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR

2013 A.Morgan 2014 J.M.E.Barrs 2015 O.C.H.Mills