

Ashburton Willows, Stumping Up since 1876

By Tim Murphy

The iconic sounds of leather on willow have echoed around Ashburton Park since 1935, but it was in 1876 when a band of young local cricketers first proudly donned the green Ashburton Cricket Club cap and embarked on what today stands as one of the most amazing innings in Victorian sport.

Since then, the club has grown into what it is today. Following a dynamic amalgamation between Eastern Willows and Ashburton Cricket clubs in 2007, the Ashburton Willows (AWCC) have gone on to win 5 Eastern Cricket Association (ECA) premierships, including the coveted premier grade Dunstan Shield in both 2007/08 and last year 2010/11.

With headquarters at Ashburton Park (High St, Ashburton) and Ferndale Park (Glen Iris Rd, Glen Iris), and fielding 3 senior turf sides, 2 senior One Day synthetic sides, 10 junior teams and Milo Have-a-go cricket clinics at both venues each Saturday morning, the Ashburton Willows are currently enjoying a buoyant era which shows no signs of slowing.

This year the club has focused on its acute one-on-one Junior Development program as well as greater training and coaching practices for the young senior playing list. With one of the youngest and most talented playing squads competing in the Turf grades of the ECA, the future looks bright for AWCC.

In recent years, AWCC has been home to some well-known names in Victorian Cricket. Peter Roach, who represented Victoria between 1995 and 2005, was an integral part of the 2007/08 Dunstan Shield premiership, scoring an inspiring 127 not out in the Grand Final against long time rivals Bulleen.

Grant Swift, who played 142 1st XI District games, was named in the ECA Team of the Decade last year, following an era he dominated with both bat and ball since his AWCC debut in 2006. Grant was also a fantastic club captain until last season when fellow former District player Matthew Cox took over the reins. Despite being a young skipper, Matthew proved his worth and maturity, scoring 106 in last year's Grand Final, against Bulleen.

With such a rich history, there are hundreds of wonderful performances and people who have helped

make AWCC the club it is. From Greg Horsey's 246 not out on debut vs Surrey Hills, to Greg Arvidsson's heroic match figures of 14/68 including a 9/27 haul vs Tooronga and to Cam Carey and Ross William's blizzing opening bowling spells during the 1990s...opposition batsmen still wake up in sweats.

Favourite sons and families like the Skermers,

Raymonds, Sheehans, Careys, Sharps, Gormans, Salkowskis and Foleys all continue to add to the family environment and renowned culture of tradition and mateship.

Currently there are several young Ashburton Willows players plying their trade in the Victorian Cricket Association's District competition, including Rob Cooper, a 100 game player and 1st XI Premiership hero of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Tyson Yeo is an up and coming fast bowler at Richmond CC and Will Woodgate a terrific opening batsman at Prahran CC. Amongst others, these boys played all of their junior cricket at AWCC and the club continues to watch their performances with great pride.

The widespread and dynamic evolution of Twenty20 cricket has also brought about some wonderful opportunities for players and supporters alike to enjoy the shorter version of the game midweek and under lights. AWCC have a resounding record in T20, only losing 3 games in the last 3 seasons. Unfortunately, they have all been finals! In 2009, the club won through to the final of the statewide VB Cup played at the MCG. This season, AWCC will once again compete in this statewide 'champions' tournament and are looking forward to the local support at Ashburton Park.

The club enjoys strong support from local businesses, including The Real Estate Helpers, Bendigo Community Bank Ashburton Branch and Back In Motion Camberwell. It is with the ongoing interest of these and other loyal supporters that we were able to maintain premium playing and social facilities, develop junior training programs and cater for over 300 local members, every single summer since 1876!



'Have-a-Go' cricketer in uniform.



Peter Roach representing AWCC at the MCG in the VB Cup T20 grand final.

If you are interested in learning more about the Ashburton Willows, don't hesitate to contact Tim Murphy, Phone 0402 038 514 or visit ashburtonwillows.com.