



A BRIEF HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE GENEVA CRICKET CLUB

The origins of the Club in the 19th Century

Cricket in Switzerland is not a new game. Since the beginning of the 19th century, Geneva has played a central role in spreading the love of the game throughout the country. The earliest record of people playing cricket in Switzerland is a famous watercolour made by Giovanni Salucci, a Florentine architect. It is named “Vue de la Ville de Genève et de Plain-Palais”. The engraving depicts a match, doubtless between expatriates, in Plainpalais and is dated 1817. Indeed, many British settled in Geneva after the end of the Napoleonic wars, in particular after the French garrison left the then independent city-state on 30 December 1813.

Various English language newspapers published in Geneva in the last three decades of the 19th century, and which were distributed in the major continental cities where British and American residents chose to live, reveal that the English expatriate community played occasional games in Geneva in the 1870s and 1880s. Matches took place in Plainpalais, usually against sides from Lausanne, for there was, in the 19th century, a much larger English community at the Lausanne end of the lake than in Geneva.

It was then one of those English language newspapers, the Swiss Times, which reported that the Geneva Cricket Club was formally established on 16 April 1872 in the famous Brasserie Landolt. The Brasserie, located at rue De-Candolle near Plainpalais, was renowned throughout the 19th and 20th century for hosting political refugees and dissidents from all around Europe, amongst them the famous Lenin. The Brasserie is now defunct and has changed hands many times since its demise in 1999.

Three decisions were recorded at that first meeting of the Club:

1. The annual subscription was set at 10 Swiss francs
2. The first officers were: Mr JB Heath as Captain, Mr P Hutchinson as Treasurer and Mr J Beresford-Pierse as Secretary
3. Practices were set for Wednesday and Saturday afternoons in Plainpalais

It appears that Geneva Cricket Club continued to use the vast grassy area of Plainpalais for home matches until 1890 when a fine ground was placed at the Club's disposition. The ground was located at a substantial property called La Garance, in the commune of Chêne-Bougeries, just outside the city limits. This was made possible through the generosity of Mr DFP Barton, the British Consul in Geneva during the years 1886-1897. Barton was a wealthy man who had married the granddaughter of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel (he who had given his name to the British policeman or Bobby). The domain included a cricket ground, three grass tennis courts and had facilities for archery and quoits. It was something of a meeting place in the summer for members of local resident British and American societies towards the end of the century. At weekends, afternoon teas were served for the ladies in the pavilion. Children's athletics matches and other fetes were organized from time to time, in addition to regular games of cricket and, in winter, football.

Quaint anecdote of the Club's early activities

In the 1890s, the Geneva Cricket Club had a series of full-time resident English cricket professionals, paid for, one can only surmise, by Mr Barton. Today the domain of La Garance, though considerably encroached upon by the construction of villas, can still be recognised together with certain of its now magnificent mature fir-trees, on the north side of the route de Malagnou, about two hundred metres after chemin de la Chevillarde, when heading in the direction of Mont-Blanc. The entrances to Nos. 125 and 145A, route de Malagnou, provide the best views. It is not difficult, even in looking at the grounds of the property today, to imagine cricket being played there, amidst the grandeur of another age.

Going back to Mr Barton, he built, at his own expense, Geneva's Victoria Hall, which was completed in 1894 as an auditorium for concerts. He donated it to the city some years later. The Consul sometimes entertained his fellow cricket club members and visiting teams in some style. For instance, on Wednesday 14 July 1886, a 13-a-side match was played between a joint Geneva and Lausanne team and a combined Lyon and Grenoble side. A report on the match appeared in the Swiss Herald. The Mayor of Plainpalais, Mr Charles Page "had given every facility with hearty good will"

and the Département Militaire furnished a marquee. The match was spoiled by rain and resulted in a draw, but not before Mr C Capel from Grenoble had scored 138 (run out) for the visitors; an innings in which he is described as giving "one chance only and that after completing his century". This is the first recorded century in the history of cricket in Switzerland. In the evening, Mr Barton presided at a dinner that he gave for both teams at the Hôtel National (now the renowned Palais Wilson). The Swiss Herald reported on the occasion as follows:

"The dinner itself had been ordered with Epicurean taste and in princely style as will be seen from the appended menu. Little surprises were in store as the courses were served; as, for example, the Glaces Vénitiennes, which were served on sugar transparencies with a light inside, the entry of the waiters being rendered more effective by the gas being turned down. During the dinner a handsome basket of flowers and bouquets was handed to Mr Barton, and the flower girls who brought them, appropriately attired in the Harmonie Nautique costume (NB: the Geneva Yacht Club band which Mr Barton financed and of which he was President), proceeded to decorate the button hole of every gentleman's coat with a gardénia. During the evening the splendid band, the Harmonie Nautique, played in another part of the dining hall.

MENU

*Potage à la Tortue - Bouchées aux Huîtres
Saumon du Rhin, braisé à la Brillat-Savarin
Selle de Pré-Salé de Bretagne, à la Providence
Ris de Veau à la Maréchale
Aspic de Homard en Belle-Vue, Sauce Indienne
Sorbets au Champagne
Croûtes de Champignons à la Windsor
Petits Pois au sucre - Poulardes du Mans rôties, flanquées de Cailles à la Vigneron
Pouding Prince-Albert, Sauce Rhum St James
Glaces à la Vénitienne - Gâteau Mille-feuilles - Fruits assortis - Dessert riche
VINS: Xérès - Mont d'Or - Médoc Supérieur - Corton - Chambertin - Mumm extra dry*

Mr Barton (NB: who had just been appointed as HBM's Consul) in a well-worded speech, paid a tribute in a well-worded speech to the memory of the late Mr Auldjo whom he has succeeded, and proposed the health of "Our most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria" which was hailed with loud cheers, the band striking up the National Anthem."

At that time the music of the British and Swiss National Anthems was the same, which may have been convenient on such occasions.

Post-war revival and the Swiss Cricket Association

Thereafter, it is presumed that the club ceased its activities during the First World War. There is anecdotal evidence of cricket being played between the wars by the expatriate community, many of whom in those days were associated with the

League of Nations, though it is unclear whether any club at that time formally existed and whether, if so, it bore the name Geneva Cricket Club.

It took thus more than 30 years for the Geneva Cricket Club to resuscitate from its ashes. Although many doubted that it would ever exist again, the Club was reactivated in 1952. After such troubled times, the GCC took again a central role in promoting cricket in Switzerland.

Indeed, the first cricket association of Switzerland, the Swiss Cricket Association (SCA), was established on 9 March 1980 at the Australian embassy in Bern. Four clubs were represented at that inaugural meeting: Bern CC, CERN CC, Geneva Asians CC and, of course, the Geneva Cricket Club. The SCA was then granted affiliate status by the International Cricket Council (ICC) in 1985. It is noteworthy to mention that the very first President of the SCA was the late Dr David Barmes (remembered today by an [annual memorial trophy](#)) and the first Secretary was Mr Roger Johnson. Both were members of the Geneva Cricket Club and key actors in supporting the game throughout the Helvetic nation. Until Dr Barmes passed away in 2001, he was President of the Club for more than 30 years.

Putting Geneva cricket on the map in the 90s and 00s

After playing for many years at the Stade de Richemont, the Club has had its own ground since 1991 at the Bout-du-Monde in Champel, Geneva. The ground, kindly placed at the Club's disposal by the authorities of the Ville de Genève, was entirely re-laid with new grass and with a synthetic pitch in the middle. Up until this day, the Club is most grateful to the Geneva authorities for thus recognising the long lineage of the Geneva CC. Currently our ground is one of the very few in Switzerland with such a first-class playing surface.

Since then, the Club has enjoyed the most successful period of its history. It toured extensively over the last 40 years and travelled around the world to play tournaments in countries such as France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Luxembourg, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, but also farther places like Barbados and Kenya. The Club also often plays against French or other sides. The Club used to play an annual weekend home fixture against The Law Society CC and continues today to regularly compete friendlies against clubs such as the Lyon-based Rhône CC.

Regarding its records, the Club won the 40-over Swiss championship for two consecutive years in 2004 and 2005 – in both occasions against the Nomads CC from Zurich. It also triumphed in the T20 Swiss competition in 2004 and 2009 against Geneva SL CC and Power CC respectively, as well as in the SCA T20 Cup in 2014 against Basel CC. Moreover, Geneva CC was a runner-up on various occasions: in 1999, it reached the final against Bern CC and in a nail-biting finish, the decision went to the last ball of the match. Bern were batting and needed 2 runs to avoid defeat. The last ball was then despatched for six! The Club was also the finalist in 2002 and 2006.

In 2009, a second cricket association was formed in Switzerland, thus since 2010, two cricket associations exist in the country. Despite concerted efforts made throughout 2010, the two groups did not find a common solution to the problem and remained separated, which ultimately lead to the removal of Switzerland's affiliate status within the ICC. During that period, the Geneva Cricket Club remained a party to the SCA while the other group rebranded itself as Cricket Switzerland in 2014. Since then, Cricket Switzerland has been the leading cricket association in the country, hosting two major limited overs tournaments (a 40-over league and a T20 league).

Looking towards a bright future

Given the will of Geneva CC players and administrators to ensure that the Club's vibrant heritage carries on and given that the Club wishes to reintegrate and reconnect with the highest level of competition in the country, the Geneva Cricket Club has obtained affiliate status within Cricket Switzerland in 2016.

The Club has been presided by Mr Hascal Gollop since 2001. Debuting in Geneva CC in 1973, he is the most senior member of the club and has witnessed all of its great successes as well as its meanest defeats.

The Club, like most things in Geneva, is extremely cosmopolitan and has had members originating from Afghanistan, Australia, Barbados, India, Jamaica, Pakistan, Poland, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the UK and Zimbabwe.

As history shows, the Club went through ups and downs but as history proves too, the Club has always managed to live on and represent the game with style, gusto and pride. There is no doubt that with such heritage, the Geneva Cricket Club will continue to be a major player in the game of Swiss cricket for years to come.

Long live Geneva Cricket Club!