

120 Not Out! History of the Pineapple Cricket Tournament

Compiled by Sue Gordon from a talk by Ross Purdon

Ross Purdon, a former player and President of the Pineapple Cricket Tournament, had our full attention on his arrival in a shocking pink shirt adorned with golden pineapples. He went on to address a capacity turnout in the Don Powis Hall on 21 March and regaled us with cricketing reminiscences covering 120 years.



Ross Purdon with LAHS Chair, Gwynn Crothall
Photo: Sue Gordon

Cricket clubs had existed 'at Buchner's on the Bushman's River, Kaba (Bedford) and the Fish River as far back as 1845' (Tournament booklet 2024), but until Luke Alfred, sports writer, with support from Justin Stirk, produced the well-documented history **"Pineapple": An Astonishing Cricketing Story (2024)** the history had not been shared. Ross regretted that the book hadn't been published 20 years sooner to mark the centenary; sadly, since 2004 much institutional knowledge has been lost.



‘Pineapple Week’ began in 1904 at the Bathurst Agricultural Fair Showgrounds where four teams, (Bathurst, Martindale, Cuylerville and Southwell) competed over one-and-a-half days in the ‘Port Alfred and Bathurst Districts Tournament’. In 1908 the Tournament moved to Port Alfred’s Hospital Grounds where families would camp around the field’s perimeter. Team photos from then feature a veritable Who’s Who of second and later generations of 1820 settlers and pineapple farmers: Stirks, Keetons, Gradwells, Claytons, Dells, Bradfields, Wilmots, Emslies, Purdons, Yendalls, Amms...

Yet an 1881 team photograph (see previous page) in Doris Stirk’s *Southwell Settlers* shows that cricket had been flourishing in that area earlier. Three Lishers, two Keetons and two Dells are in that photo, including young Christopher Dell (extreme left, bottom), just 14 years old, who became the “patriarch of Southwell cricket,” reorganising the tournament which has since become ‘The Pineapple Tournament’.

PAST WINNERS OF THE PINEAPPLE CRICKET TOURNAMENT	
1921	SOUTHWELL
1922	PORT ALFRED
1923	SOUTHWELL
1924	PORT ALFRED
1925	SOUTHWELL
1926	PORT ALFRED
1927	CUYLERVILLE
1928	CUYLERVILLE
1929	SALEM
1930	SALEM
1931	SALEM
1932	CUYLERVILLE
1933	SALEM
1934	PORT ALFRED
1935	PORT ALFRED
1936	SALEM
1937	SALEM
1938	PORT ALFRED
1939	CUYLERVILLE
1940	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1941	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1942	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1943	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1944	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1945	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO WAR
1946	PORT ALFRED
1947	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1948	PORT ALFRED
1949	SEVEN FOUNTAINS & PORT ALFRED
1950	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1951	PORT ALFRED
1952	PORT ALFRED
1953	PORT ALFRED
1954	PORT ALFRED
1955	PORT ALFRED
1956	PORT ALFRED
1957	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1958	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1959	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1960	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1961	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1962	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1963	SALEM
1964	SALEM
1965	SEVEN
1966	SALEM
1967	BATHURST
1968	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1969	SIDBURY & CUYLERVILLE
1970	MANLEYS FLAT
1971	PORT ALFRED
1972	SEVEN FOUNTAINS & PORT ALFRED
1973	PORT ALFRED
1974	CUYLERVILLE
1975	SALEM
1976	SALEM
1977	SALEM & PORT ALFRED
1978	CUYLERVILLE
1979	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1980	SALEM
1981	SALEM
1982	MANLEYS FLAT
1983	SEVEN FOUNTAINS
1984	SALEM
1985	MANLEYS FLAT
1986	SALEM
1987	SALEM
1988	CUYLERVILLE
1989	MANLEYS FLAT
1990	SIDBURY
1991	SIDBURY
1992	SOUTHWELL
1993	CUYLERVILLE
1994	SALEM & CUYLERVILLE
1995	MANLEYS FLAT
1996	CUYLERVILLE
1997	CUYLERVILLE
1998	MANLEYS FLAT
1999	CUYLERVILLE
2000	CUYLERVILLE
2001	SOUTHWELL
2002	CUYLERVILLE
2003	MANLEYS FLAT
2004	CUYLERVILLE
2005	CUYLERVILLE
2006	MANLEYS FLAT
2007	SALEM
2008	SALEM & PORT ALFRED
2009	PORT ALFRED
2010	SOUTHWELL
2011	SIDBURY
2012	MANLEYS FLAT
2013	MANLEYS FLAT
2014	CUYLERVILLE
2015	SIDBURY
2016	CUYLERVILLE
2017	CUYLERVILLE
2018	SALEM
2019	SALEM & SOUTHWELL
2020	SOUTHWELL
2021	NO TOURNAMENT - DUE TO COVID
2022	SALEM
2023	CUYLERVILLE

There was no play during WWI (later, the Tournament was also suspended during WWII and Covid, 2021). By 1921 a trophy had been bought in England for £ 50 and there were 24 teams participating in three divisions, but unfortunately no record of winners have been found before that date.

The most dominant teams were Salem (23 wins), Cuylerville (23 wins) and Port Alfred (21) wins – but Port Alfred (1951-1956) and Seven Fountains (1957-1962) - in quick succession -shared the record for most consecutive wins (six

each). The other side of the coin – the longest ‘drought’ between wins (1925-1992) – is still held by Southwell at 67 years!

In the late 1990s a process of ‘unification’ came ahead of change in SA cricket as a whole. The Rainbows team played in their first Pineapple Tournament in this time and won the B section in 2004. The late Advocate M Ngumbela did much to promote the game in the E Cape and in 2015, with Ross Purdon, Greg Hayes, Walter Biggs and Eddie Khoza the Pineapple Tournament combined with Ngumbela Week – a unifying contest.

Another special moment was at Tournament’s Centenary in 2004 where Graeme Pollock was guest of honour.

Ross’s presentation to LAHS was replete with anecdotes, quirks and quips among cricketers of the past. He ended his entertaining presentation by giving credit to all those ‘off the field’ volunteers who had made this famous tournament what it is today: the women scorers, caterers and cheer-leaders like Beth Amm, Heather Bradfield, Sheila Long, Margaret Pittaway, Kay Bradfield – and groundsmen like Granville Bradfield, Ralph Norton, Gordon Arnold and ‘Paw Paw’ of Port Alfred.

This year Peter Amm took over from Dave Duncan as new President.

Nearly 180 years ago, when men of all ages gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the 1820 settlers, *‘wagons arrived and a goodly company were soon assembled, shaking hands and greeting each other with true neighbourly fellowship...soon...a game of cricket was in full-swing.’* (Wilmore and Lanham).

‘The Pineapple’ legacy, its camaraderie and competition on and off the field, the stories and friendships, all constitute an unbroken tradition. The Pineapple Cricket Tournament is assured of many future innings.

References:

120th Pineapple Cricket Tournament Fixture List 2024 (brochure)

Alfred, L. *‘Pineapple’ An astonishing Cricketing Story* (2024)

Pineapple Cricket history recorded article in Talk of the Town 7 March 2024.

Wilmore E R and Lanham, W B *In the Land of the Settlers*

