

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.

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.

Figure 1: Ross Purdon with LAHS Chair, Gwynn Crothall Photo: Sue Gordon

'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 (Figure 2) 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'.

Figure 2: Three Lishers, two Keetons and two Dells are in the photo, including young Christopher Dell (extreme left, bottom), just 14 years old.



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!

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

Figure 3: Past Winners of the Pineapple Cricket Week

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*