



## Bob Darke (ON 1943) Past Staff

My son Adam (whose handicap was 4 when he played Senior Pennants for Concord Golf Club) and I were at the Bowral Golf Club last Thursday to enquire about becoming Playing Members. In an unexpected and bizarre turn of events, I had made a mental note the night before to ask about our old Wyvern House master Bob Darke, whom I clearly remembered to have been an excellent golfer. I spoke to Rocky the Club Secretary after lunch. Rocky hesitated and then told that us that Bob had died only last Monday !

Bob married Colleen Bembrick, the Wyvern House Matron, sixty four (64) years ago when you and I, my old friend, were both only twelve (12) years old. Bob and Colleen kindly drove up to Sydney from Moss Vale in 2000 for my late mother Betty's funeral at Killara, which was the last time I saw them. I will call round to visit Colleen after the caravan has wound its way off into the distance and the overwhelming tide of sincere condolences which now in full flow on the internet and elsewhere throughout the Southern Highlands has gradually subsided.

When once upon a time and in some other long gone place, I was for some unknown reason appointed as the captain of the Wyvern House 2<sup>nd</sup> XI by Bob, who was my first experienced cricket coach. Bob would bowl at us on Wednesday afternoons off a very short run in the Johnson Oval nets – he carefully taught me how to set a field, make up a batting order and also the then mysterious art of off break bowling. Bob even directed me to always carry in my shirt pocket a diary containing diagrams of field placements for our formidable array of bowlers. The brunt of bowling duties was usually undertaken by Leupepa Malietoa, Niel Burling and Neddy Masters, who was our vice- captain and also a formidable red headed & freckled close to the wicket fieldsman. The team was undefeated, not as a result of my role as its nominal leader but certainly because of Bob's diligence and constant encouragement. Bob was also particularly insistent on good sportsmanship from the entire team. I can still clearly recall that after our bowlers had unbelievably dismissed the Barker 2<sup>ND</sup> XI for 3 runs (including one bye conceded by our wicket keeper John Chick ) and we had reached a score in reply of one wicket for 45 runs Bob directed me to declare our innings closed at once instead of allowing me to follow the extremely poor example of one Australian cricket captain who had just recently set his opponents an unachievable target of several hundred runs in their second innings on a badly worn pitch.

One evening in the Spring of 1952, Bob accompanied the 2<sup>nd</sup> XI when we all travelled by steam train from Central Station after dinner to the Moss Vale Railway Station and then in darkness by an old bus to Tudor House. We played and narrowly defeated the home team the following afternoon on a fine turf pitch on a large green field surrounded by very high old gum trees. To the best of my recollection it was Malietoa and Burling who won the match for us with their well- directed fast medium bowling and later some hard hitting during our innings. Arthur Mailey, the legendary Australian spin bowler, once said that you must outthink the batsmen to take wickets. In Malietoa's case, his strong demeanour, towering presence and the sheer pace of his deliveries may well have had some slight influence on the thoughts of the home side's batsmen.



The late Robert Bowring Darke (13-09-1926 to 22-08-16) was always as you know a close friend of both of our late fathers. Bob was also a very fine golfer and the long-time President of the Moss Vale Golf Club. Rocky told me last Thursday that she knew Bob very well as he had frequently played at the Bowral Golf Club over many years, sometimes as the Captain of the visiting Moss Vale Pennant Team. Bob, of course, so long ago and shortly after he took the Wyvern House 2<sup>nd</sup> XI that distant Spring time to play cricket against Tudor House and had married Colleen, left Newington and the Big Smoke forever and became the well-respected Head Master of Tudor House School Moss Vale, where his funeral service will take place next Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016 at 11am.

89 runs not out when stumps were finally drawn – a magnificent innings.

Kind regards  
Peter Bruce Richardson (ON 1958)

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