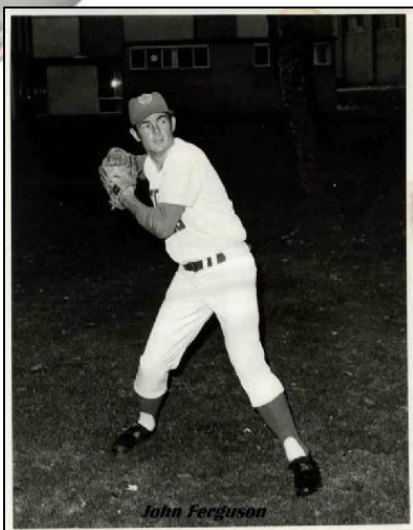




# *Rustlers* INTERVIEWS



## Interview with John “Ferg” Ferguson, long-time Rustler Legend Part 2

This is a cracking interview; in it, Ferg gives us some gems about his time in baseball, including where the Rustlers name originated!

Because Ferg is a treasure trove of information, memories and stories, too much for one interview in fact, this interview is in 2 parts.

Here's **Part 2**.

**Chelt website:** *Who are some of the best players you've seen come through?*

**Ferg:** I have been around so long this is a hard one to answer. There are many very good players who come to mind but I will focus on those players who I think made a major contribution to our First team.

1960s - Col Hyland (RF) and Bill Anderson (3B) were excellent all round ball players and still playing when I joined the team. Peter Finney was a real threat at the plate Al Tanner was a terrific pitcher and high average, line drive hitter. Al beat NSW in a deciding game to win the Claxton Shield for Victoria and managed to pick up a couple of hits along the way. Ted Wale was the best lead-off batter I played with or against.

1970s - **Paul Ferguson** (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) was the Australian second baseman who excelled on defence and scoring runs, **Ross Upfill** (2<sup>nd</sup> from left) could run, hit, and play shortstop with the best of them and was also a better than useful pitcher.



No one hit the ball better than Dav Whatmore in the few seasons he played for us before going on to become a test cricketer. Charlie Siddel provided great service over a period of 20 years. He hit a Div 1 home run in his first game as an 18 year old and his last as a pinch hitter at 40. Charlie always hit better late in games and was simply a great guy to have on your team. Lance Purton only played one season in Division 1 after the amalgamation, but he was clearly an excellent all round player and would have been a walk up start in any Div 1 club.

1980s – No one has played centre field better or stole more bases than Laurie Hall from the time he joined the team in the mid 1970s. He could run everything down and threw many plays out at home plate in crucial situations. Kevin Williams was one of the hardest working ballplayers I have known and with sheer persistence and effort made himself into one of our most consistent hitters,

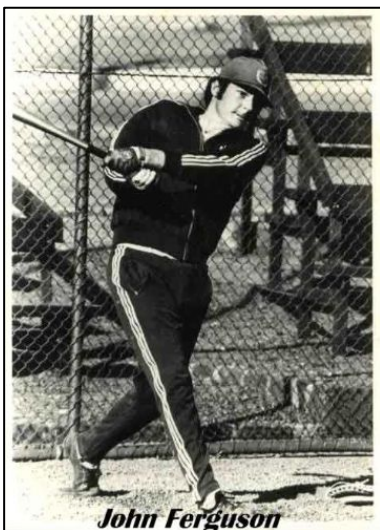


# *Rustlers*

## INTERVIEWS

1990s - Greg Brown as pitcher held the team together for many years, a unique combination of workhorse and powerhouse. Darren Smith was one of the outstanding power hitters in Victoria, Terry Reid as playing manager was also a class act at the plate

2000s - Matthew Gourlay has gone on from being our first signed professional to our most consistent and productive hitter. Travis Blackley, as our first major leaguer, was a fabulous achievement but his professional career has limited his appearances with the Club. The pitching performances of Tom Ellis and Kable Hogben in recent finals were also outstanding and the main reason why we are playing in Div 1 again today.



*John Ferguson*

***Chelt website: How do you see yourself as being involved at Chelt now? What are some of your thoughts on coaching?***

**Ferg:** One of the few advantages of having been around for a while is the balance and perspective experience brings. Baseball continually reinvents itself and the same fundamentals and principles are often recycled using new words. It often takes weeks, months, sometimes years for the light to go on for some players. The coach can only teach, advise, guide and the best results are attained when the player is receptive to the advice. The best time to get through to some players is when they are struggling and then it is important to communicate in terms that they can understand and apply the advice to themselves.

If they don't completely understand what they are doing, a new coach or person comes along and the result is usually confusion and a return to their old comfortable ways and less than optimum performance. Players need to be helped to be responsible for their

own performances. I often get told "It doesn't feel right" when I suggest a change and I know immediately that the player is not receptive and unlikely to act on the advice.

Regarding the Selection Processes: early in my cricketing career the Chairman of Selectors at the St Kilda CC (John Edwards) came into the Pie Night preceding the opening match of the season and said; 'Well we have picked the teams and they are on the board outside. Before some of you get upset with where we have picked you, let me tell you that we know we have made a lot of mistakes and let me also tell you that we don't care. If you are in the wrong team your performances will quickly make it clear to us where we got it wrong. Batsmen in the wrong team make 100's and bowlers will take 5 wickets if playing below their rightful grade. Players are like water, they will always find their own level.'

Now I have retired from full time work, I have a window for a few more years to take on or follow through on several things - grounds management, preparation of grant submissions, establishing a sustainable structure for junior practices (U12, U14) where, if we get the fundamentals right - our players will find the transition to seniors much easier and much more fun.

***Chelt website: What are the positives of Chelt BC? What are we doing well?***

**Ferg:** Cheltenham Baseball Club really is a community club that caters for players of all levels of ability - in our ranks we have Major Leaguers, National, State, Division 1 through to the most humble social player. Baseball is a team game and the Team and the Club is always been bigger than the individual. When we forget this we tend to struggle

Over the past 10 years we have progressively strengthened our administration, some very good people have worked very hard on the Committee for long periods and we are very well placed at the moment. .



# *Rustlers* **INTERVIEWS**

As President, John Carlile has overseen our finances and taken the hard decisions to move us through to the next level.

Our Club Coach, Hayden Dingle, with the assistance of Matt Taylor, has turned around our offensive deficiencies and mental approach in just two seasons; an exceptional achievement. Their leadership on and off the field has reminded the Club what it takes to succeed in the top Division. The Club was a close contender for the Club Championship last season.

We have strong junior programs that focus on development and our approach is continuing to improve and I am sure we will produce some more exceptional ballplayers in the near future.

***Chelt website: What do we as a club need to get better at?***

**Ferg:** At the Kingston Heath Reserve we have the space to generate the economic mass needed to succeed into the future. Our facilities do need to be further developed and utilised fully and efficiently which means careful planning and close management.

The expectations of players and parents continue to rise. They want to see good organisation and access to the best instruction and management possible. This is a big challenge for any amateur Club and success depends on ongoing communication and the spreading of the load across our volunteers. The pay back is not only on the baseball side but in becoming a member of a diverse and interesting community. Club members learn and practice a lot of important life skills from their involvement in the Club regardless of the level they achieve as players.

At the top end - playing success this season will depend on finding enough pitching.

***Chelt website: What do you want to see happen from your perspective?***

**Ferg:** At the senior on field level, I would love to see the Club take a Division 1 flag. We last won in 1949, we have been close a few times, 1968, 1978, and last year 2010/11.

At the BV level I would like to see Promotion and Relegation replaced by a Competition Structure that promotes annual refresh where clubs start even each year. The more you win the higher and longer you play for top honours. I would also like to see more leagues - Saturday, Sunday, midweek leagues that are separate and players able to play as often as they like. Competition structure should minimise travel for the non elite levels.

I think it is ridiculous that an 18-36 year old who is not playing for our Firsts can only play 1 two-hour game a week. If you are under 18 or over 36 you can play twice a week it simply does not make sense.

Our top priority on the facilities side has to be to upgrade our training lights to allow training sessions to be extended and improved using the equipment and facilities around the main field.

***Chelt website: Anything else you want to add Ferg?***

**Ferg:** Baseball is a great game, a simple game that is extremely hard to play well for an extended period. Playing can be a real test of your emotional and social skills. You cannot pretend to be a competitor - your team mates can always tell. All players should remember it is a privilege to cross the lines to play for any team and if you are not going to give it 100%, you should not be there.

***Thanks Ferg, that is just a cracking interview that anyone would get something out of. Brilliant.***