

Christmas 2015

Volume 2

Issue 1

INSIDE EDGE



The Kent Cricket Heritage Trust A Message from the Chairman, Jo Rice

In the winter months we may not host any cricket matches at the Spitfire St. Lawrence ground, but for the KCHT there is always a great deal going on. Under David Robertson's leadership we have begun the daunting task of sorting out much of the collection, especially weeding out those parts which are not central to Kent's Heritage (five copies of Dickie Bird's autobiography, anybody?).

There has also been a second meeting, at Trent Bridge, of the County Cricket Heritage Forum, at which many of the county clubs' heritage teams exchange views, information and ideas on how to manage our collection. We have had a very generous donation of a bat and cricketing memorabilia from the grandson of James Seymour, which we plan to turn into a display dedicated to that great professional of roughly a century ago. We also have more cabinets and plans for further enhancing our displays around Canterbury and at Beckenham. It will be a busy winter for us all.



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Which brings me on to the subject of volunteers. If anybody can spare a little time over the winter months to lend a hand in any of these and other tasks, please get in touch with David Robertson at the Spitfire St. Lawrence ground. All and any help will be gratefully received.

Jonathan Rice



Not Christmas, but Canterbury in festive mode

A Moment in Time Wednesday 9 August 1933



A small group of supporters relax over lunch. It is the first day of the second match of Canterbury Week 1933. Kent have won the toss and batted first against Derbyshire and lunch had been taken on the fall of the third wicket with the score on 126. Woolley had scored most of those runs. Little do they know what mayhem was to follow. No fewer than a further nineteen wickets were to fall that day that, looking back, was a model of so many Kent days of the period.

On the resumption of play, Kent were soon reduced to 137-7. Yet Woolley continued to flourish hitting 72 and with a late partnership with CH Knott taking the final total to 209. Then "Tich" Freeman got to work taking 6-30 as after tea Derbyshire lost eight wickets for 27 to be dismissed for just 84, 125 adrift. So that by the close Kent and indeed Woolley were batting again, 31-2, Woolley 21 not out.

Should our group have returned the next day they would have seen Woolley in full flight scoring 161 (five 6s, fourteen 4s) in just three hours, making 70% of the Kent total of 229. Derbyshire went in at 3.15 pm needing 355 to win. But Freeman, again, 6-82 (12-112 in the match) ensured that was not to be with Derbyshire 194 all out beaten by 160 runs before the close of the second day's play.

Then and Now



Pluckley 1991 and 2015. The new pavilion at the top of the ground opened in 2012.

John Websper

The Australians at Canterbury Week

We mounted two exhibitions at the Spitfire St Lawrence ground during the season. As reported in the last issue, the first was to mark the visit of the Australians led by Michael Clarke, playing their first pre-Ashes game against Kent.

The eagerly anticipated Women's Ashes Test was a wonderful finale to Canterbury Week, albeit that the weather could at best be described as unsettled.

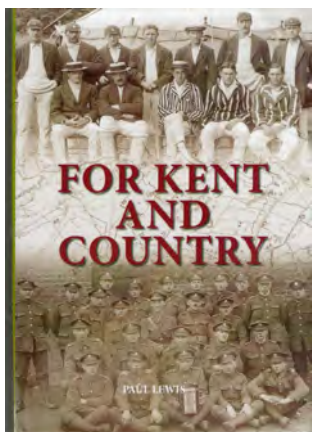
The exhibition, situated in the Cowdrey meeting room, attracted enormous interest and we were especially pleased to welcome international players from past eras, all of whom expressed delight at the trouble taken. The display included a collection of items from the late Jean Clark who played for Kent from 1955-1968. She toured Australia and New Zealand 1968/69, playing in one test at Adelaide, and Jamaica 1969/70. There were also

items, including a hat trick ball, from Megan Lowe of Canterbury, who was a Middlesex player and toured Australia and New Zealand on two occasions immediately before and after WW2. The display included a number of delightful scrapbooks put together by Molly Hide which attracted much interest. We also compiled a display of photos and career details of Kent and England players together with photos and reports of the game between Kent and the Australians in 1937.

David Robertson



Ex Libris—A Favourite Kent Cricket Book remembered



The book by Paul Lewis titled *For Kent and Country: Kent Cricketers in the Great War 1914-1918* is an excellent survey of all those Kent cricketers, both first and second team who represented Kent before the war and/or after the war. Nearly 100 men's lives and military service are covered in this labour of love.

The book is very well served by tables, which show when each player played for Kent and at what level. The earlier chapters deal with the way men were mobilized, the process of volunteering, then conscription, who the men served with and the different Theatres of War. Over 200 pages are devoted to all of the men followed by a Roll of Honour for the fifteen men of the Kent Elevens who gave their lives for the service of their country.

What strikes one upon reading this book is the very young age at which so many of these men died. A considerable number came from the public schools and those that survived often died in their sixties. War had taken its toll.

This is a very well researched book and Paul Lewis has done the Kent cricketers a service. They will be remembered.

Derek Barnard

For availability of this book please contact Paul Lewis at paul.lewis2007@btinternet.com

If you have favourite book on an aspect of Kent cricket history, club or county, particularly published away from the recent past, please let me have a few paragraphs so I include it in a future issue—Ed.

Who's Who at KCHT

President : Hon. Christopher Cowdrey
Trustees : Jamie Clifford - Kent Cricket CEO
David Robertson - Kent Cricket Honorary Curator
Howard Milton - Kent Cricket Honorary Statistician
Jonathan Rice - Kent Cricket Main Committee Member
Tony Kilbee - Kent Cricket Heritage Trust Treasurer

KCHT Committee

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The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence
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Inside Edge Contact

Feedback on this newsletter is always welcome as are suggestions for future contributions. The Kent Cricket Heritage Trust's committed interest is to all aspects of Kent cricket history, not just to the county club.

If you have something to say and/or contribute please contact Howard Milton at the e-mail address on this page or at 46 Elmfield Close, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0LP

New Book



Just published and to hand is the long awaited history of the Old Stagers. As long as there has been a Canterbury Cricket Week the Old Stagers have been there providing an evening's entertainment to support the cricket. So dating from 1842 the company is oldest amateur dramatic society in the world.

The vagaries of the cricket fixtures, in particular the lateness now of their publication, has somewhat stretched the relationship between the two traditions, but sometime in August the Old Stagers are there offer the widest variation of yearly productions be it Shaw, Chekov, Shakespeare or Alan Bennett.

The book, like so many of the society's recent productions, owe much to current Manager, Richard Ritchie, who has put together this comprehensive history. At 400 pages, £20 is tremendous value for a hardback book, which while largely theatrical, nevertheless given its close cricket association, should be in any serious Kent cricket collector's library. *The Old Stagers: Canterbury, cricket and theatricals* is published by OS publishing and further information can be found at www.oldstagers.com.

Future Events

The Kent Cricket Heritage Trust is planning future events for 2016, hopefully with exhibitions using the recently acquired display cabinets. Suggestions are welcome (please contact David Robertson at the e-mail address above or via the County Club). Prompted by the decision hidden deep in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Statement to tax benefit funds, thoughts have turned to an exhibition on Kent cricket benefits, not the least as the county played a major part in getting them exempt from tax in the first place. Indeed as mentioned in the Chairman's message, we do have to hand memorabilia from James Seymour who was the key figure in the famous case that secured that exemption.

We would still like to hold meetings after close of play during the season featuring key cricket personalities.

So, please continue to support the Trust not least by encouraging others to join us. We cannot progress with initiatives such as a publications programme without getting those membership numbers up.

Geoffrey Bevington Legge (1903-1940): Kent County Captain and Kent Test Record Holder

When Rob Key scored his 221 against the West Indies at Lord's in 2004, it was somewhat strange to record that he was the first Kent cricketer to record a double century for England. In a county that had produced such notable run makers as Woolley, Cowdrey, Ames, Luckhurst and Dennes, not one of them in their many test innings could muster a score of 200, nor indeed were any of them the record holder whose feat Key surpassed. It was the subject of many a quiz question that for 74 years the distinction fell to the amateur Geoffrey Legge who scored 196 against New Zealand at Eden Park, Auckland in March 1930.

Geoffrey Bevington Legge was born the eldest son of three children of Henry Bevington Legge and Edith Blethyne Legge (née Greenway) on 26 January 1903 at 119 Widmore Road, Bromley. His second forename came from the maiden name of his paternal grandmother. A fifth generation still maintains that family tradition. His father's occupation was given as "paper agent". More specifically he was working for the family firm of H B Legge and Sons Ltd who were shipping agents for paper and pulp and which included in its imports into the UK the first brown packing (kraft) paper to reach these shores and that from the Munksjoe Mill in Sweden.

Geoffrey Legge was highly rated as a batsman during his two years in the XI at Malvern (1921-1922) where he was a contemporary of Errol Holmes, later Surrey captain and England test cricketer, and who became a very close friend. Like most batsmen who learned the game at Malvern, he was particularly strong in the off-drive and cut and *Wisden* was much impressed with his captaincy in his final school season. Despite excellent credentials however, progress to the next level proved slow. In August 1922 he played two matches for Kent Second XI with a top score of only ten. At Brasenose College, Oxford in 1923 he failed to progress beyond the Freshman's Match. He achieved nothing of note in three appearances for Kent Second XI that year but in club cricket he was more successful, notably in an innings of 93 for West Kent against a strong I Zingari side at Chislehurst. At Oxford in 1924 it was virtually a repeat of 1923, selection for the Senior's Match but nothing more. He did however take a small step into first-class cricket with two matches for Kent but totalled only twelve in four innings.

Legge's 1925 Oxford season began with a double failure in the Senior's Match but given a chance against Worcestershire he, in the words of *Wisden*, 'carried off the honours' with 120 in 130 minutes and he fairly earned his Blue, heading the averages with 498 runs (avg. 35.57). Only his fellow Malvernian Errol Holmes scored more. Legge was appointed captain of Oxford in 1926, a season shortened by the General Strike, during which he drove buses in the city. His team won only one match but lost by a mere 34 runs to an immensely superior Cambridge XI. Despite missing three matches due to a hand injury following a car accident, described enigmatically by *Wisden* as an 'unfortunate affair' in which his deputy Errol Holmes was also hurt, Legge headed the averages with 441 runs (avg. 40.09). A personal highlight was 113 at Eastbourne against a Leveson-Gower XI containing four Test cricketers including 'Gubby' Allen and Greville Stevens. The aforementioned car accident resulted from Legge's penchant for fast cars. He was competing as a member of the Oxford University motor racing hill-climbing team in his open tourer Vauxhall 30-98.



In 1927, with no university obligations, Legge was able to indulge in a full season of county cricket. At that stage he had played nine innings for Kent without once reaching double figures but in his opening match, against Derbyshire at Chatham, he scored 80 and, despite a pair against Essex at Gravesend and five other ducks, his final record was a respectable 951 runs (avg.29.71) and that in a strong Kent batting line-up often coming in as low as seven. Against Lancashire at Maidstone he played the innings of his life, albeit overshadowed by the pyrotechnics of Percy Chapman (260) at the other end. Joining Chapman at 70-5 and facing a rampant Ted McDonald, then the best fast bowler in the world, Legge hit 101 in a sixth wicket (then the Kent record) partnership of 284 in 150 minutes. Seven matches later, he shared another sixth wicket partnership with Chapman, 144 v Surrey at Blackheath, Legge (104), Chapman (113).

In the 1927/1928 winter, Legge toured South Africa with a very unrepresentative MCC side with a number of leading names notably Hobbs, Hendren, Tate and Chapman absent. The press of the time accused the MCC of underestimating, not for the first time, the strength of the South Africans. Apart from a century against Orange Free State and 50* against Natal, he was a disappointment, emphasised by a duck in his only Test match. But he did play in only half the first-class matches. He captained the side against a South African XI at Benoni.

On his return to England Legge succeeded John Evans as Kent captain. Although his batting declined – 890 runs (avg.21.70) with a top score of 90 – in terms of results, few captains have started better. With fifteen Championship wins against five defeats, Kent finished second, their highest position since they were second in 1919. They would not rise as high again until 1967. Although hardly able to match the charisma of his successor Percy Chapman, among inter-war years Kent skippers, only Bryan Valentine and Lionel Troughton have bettered Legge's overall wins to matches ratio of 40.94%. Writing of Chapman's captaincy of Kent in his *Cricket Prints*, that most perceptive of writers on cricket Raymond Robertson-



The 196 ball

Glasgow wrote that he (Chapman) 'brought breadth and humour to what was in danger of becoming narrow and parochial' but this is not necessarily a reflection on Legge. There are doubtless other sides to the story.

Legge was chosen for a second MCC tour in 1929/1930, to Australia and New Zealand led by Harold Gilligan. It was the unique winter when two MCC sides, both under-represented with leading England players absent, played test matches. The other tour was to the West Indies. No tests were played in Australia but Legge scored 42 and 47* against New South Wales (with Bradman) and was picked for all four New Zealand Tests in which his scores were 36, 39, 9, 19*, 196 and 0. His career highest 196 at Eden Park was scored out of 356, included 23 fours and lasted 280 minutes. With next highest scorer Stan Nichols (75), 184 was added for the fifth wicket. It was the last of his five test matches.

In the remaining two years of his captaincy, Kent finished eighth in 1929 and fifth in 1930 when they registered eight wins, their most since 1923, but suffered eight defeats. His personal form improved in 1929 with over 900 runs including a chanceless 113 v Derbyshire at Dover but in 1930, possibly affected by the problems inevitable when attempting to combine a serious business career with county cricket, he failed to reach 500 runs, registered two pairs and averaged only fourteen. Fortunately there was no decline in his fielding, especially his slip catching where he reputedly held just about everything within reach. He held 30 catches in 1927, 32 in 1928. On at least one occasion his catching proved costly. At Edgbaston in 1927 after Bob Wyatt had scored a century, Legge, never averse to a flutter, had a bet at twenty to one with Ian Akers-Douglas that Wyatt would get another in the second innings. Legge lost ten pounds by catching the Warwickshire man at silly point for 98 off what both batsman and catcher were convinced was a bump ball.

Now a partner in the family business, Legge found it increasingly difficult to find time for cricket and after resigning the captaincy he played only one more game for Kent. In 1929 he had married Rosemary Katharine Frost. They had two sons and two daughters. He learned to fly and for business purposes acquired his own aircraft, first a Gipsy Moth then a Whitney Straight, after which he graduated to twin engine aircraft such as a De Havilland Dragonfly and finally a very much up-market twin-engine Percival Q6, a five seater with a range of 1000 miles. Furthermore he established his own airfield at St Merryn in Cornwall where the Legge family owned a house (Marigold) at Harlyn Bay.

Legge was fluent in German, a major asset as he flew his aircraft around Europe on business. The shipping agency of H B Legge and Company now had connections with Swedish, Finnish and German paper mills. As war approached, Legge was flying around Europe and Scandinavia in 1938 and 1939 on business and passing on valuable information to British intelligence on Luftwaffe activities at places such as Dusseldorf and Frankfurt. The Q6 being a five sweater aircraft he took the opportunity of bringing home to safety some Jewish contacts he had.

Geoffrey Legge was keen sportsman and was a syndicate member of Bill Bailey's shoot near Colchester in Essex where he spent many a wintry Saturday with his brother Phillip.

On the outbreak of war, Geoffrey Legge volunteered the Fleet Air Arm and his Q6 aircraft together with his airfield were requisitioned by the Navy, the latter was renamed by the Admiralty in 1940 as HMS Vulture. He was granted an immediate commission. Judged too old for operational flying, he was posted to 752 Squadron, a training unit at Lee-on-Solent. It was on 21 November 1940 on a flight back to HMS Vulture from Lee-on-Solent in a Fleet Air Arm Percival Proctor 1A (P6069) that he was killed together with his passenger Sub-Lieutenant A J Franklin when the plane crashed at Brampford Speke, four miles north of Exeter in Devon. The accident report noted the aircraft was "lost in bad weather". Both occupants were buried side by side in the parish churchyard of St Merryn. Geoffrey Legge is commemorated on the war memorial on Benenden Green close by where he lived and his widow and children continued to live. His name is also on the Band of Brothers plaque on the Chiesman Pavilion at the St Lawrence Ground, Canterbury. Just six days before his death he had been promoted to Lieutenant-Commander.

W.T.S.S. wrote in *The Times*:- "Though probably not technically good-looking, there was something about his presence which arrested attention – slim, debonair, invariably neat, and with a merry twinkle in his eye, he lent grace to any society in which he found himself. He was of equable temperament, but always knew his own mind and had the strength of character to act upon his own judgement. Quiet and undemonstrative, he never revealed so much of his inner self that you wanted to know more. He never wore his heart on his sleeve. He did not make friends easily or lightly, but I doubt whether he ever lost a friend once he had made one. Punctilious in keeping all his engagements, loyalty was keynote of his character."



Percy Chapman congratulates the happy couple

G B LEGGE — FIRST-CLASS CAREER FIGURES

	M	I	NO	Runs	HS	Aver	100	50	Ct
England	5	7	1	299	196	49.83	1	-	1
Kent	114	158	53	3282	113	21.45	3	11	98
All	147	210	11	4955	196	24.89	7	16	123



(Left) G B Legge's grave in St Merryn churchyard. (His father and mother are buried in the grave behind.) (Right) Oscar Henry Bevington Legge receives his great-grandfather's county cap from 2014 Kent President Graham Johnson with Colin (son) and Alex (grandson) in attendance. Looking on Kent Captain Rob Key, who took Legge's Kent test record in 2004.

Edited by Howard Milton from family contributions from Colin & Alex Legge and the cricket career from Derek Carlaw.

Have you got a cricket personality, a club, a ground or any other aspect of Kent cricket history you would like contribute a few pages (preferably with some photographs) on? If so, please let the Editor know at the contact point on page 4.

WG Grace Centenary Commemoration 1915-2015

William Gilbert Grace – “WG” died on 23 October 1915. Exactly 100 years to the day, the Centenary of his death was marked by a series of events in Beckenham.

He was born at Downend, a suburb of Bristol in South Gloucestershire, lived the later years of his life in north Kent, latterly in Mottingham and is buried in the Elmers End Cemetery in Beckenham.

To commemorate the Centenary a series of events took place in Beckenham on the afternoon and evening of 23 October. Organised by a small committee, led by Canon Derek Carpenter, one time Rector of Beckenham, it was centred at St George’s Church. A most impressive exhibition of Grace memorabilia, highlighting his career was staged during the afternoon and evening. It consisted of photographs, documents, books, cigarette cards and a great deal more. There was much interest, especially among members of the Grace family, in the County Club’s scorebook that records run by run his mammoth innings of 344 at our Canterbury home in 1876. This proved to be his highest first-class score, and the first ever triple hundred. It remains the highest individual score at the St. Lawrence ground.

Apart from that historic innings, Kent loomed large in the life of “WG” He moved to north Kent in 1900 as his first-class career drew to a close. He continued to play first class cricket for London County and in his final years down to 1914 club cricket for Eltham.

In 1877 he played a single match for Kent, scoring a fifty in each innings against the Rest of England during the Canterbury Week of 1877. Grace played against Kent in first-class cricket on 46 occasions, appearing for his home county and for various representative sides including MCC. He scored 3,495 runs against Kent at an average of 51.95 and ten of his 126 centuries were scored against the county. He also took 169 wickets at 17.53. Grace often appeared during Canterbury Week and also played at Blackheath, Gravesend and Maidstone.

The more formal proceedings of the day took the form of an Act of Remembrance at the family graveside during the afternoon followed by a service commemorating the Centenary of his Death in St George’s Parish Church in the evening.



The graveside ceremony



WG going out to bat for Eltham, Gravesend, 1913

Some 200 people, including MCC President Roger Knight, OBE, gathered at the impressive graveside (in marked contrast to the grey and dismal surrounding memorials) for a moving ceremony based on an “Order of Batting” and conducted by Canon Carpenter. It included prayers, readings and recollections, a haunting and moving song, “Walking in a Garden”, beautifully sung by Susannah Groome. A floral tribute was laid by Tim Woodcock, Chairman of the Forty Club who takes care of the grave.

The Service of Commemoration followed a reception during which invited guests were able to view the exhibits and ask questions on the many objects of interest on display. They also heard from Tim Woodcock who spoke about the Forty Club’s association with WG and the maintenance of the grave.

The large evening congregation was welcomed by Canon Carpenter. Roger Knight read the well known passage from Ecclesiasticus, *"Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us"* and there were readings by MCC Deputy Secretary Colin Maynard who presented A Reflection from Sir Neville Cardus, CBE. A third reading came from author and broadcaster Simon Rae, with an extract from his biography, *"WG Grace – A Life"*, which recounted the last days of Grace's life, his death and funeral at Elmers End Cemetery, and tributes paid to him. The congregation knelt for the final reading by The Reverend Canon Derek Carpenter of his moving poem, *"One Hundred Years"*.

There were three rousing hymns, *"Angel Voices Ever Singing"*, *"O Worship The King"*, and William Blake's *"Jerusalem"*, whilst the musical theme was enhanced by three anthems sung by the St George's Parish Church Choir.

Malcolm Banham, a professional tenor singer from Bromley sang *"The Cricketers of Hambledon"*. The Order of Service tells us that song-writer and poet Peter Warlock collaborated *".....with journalist and wine merchant Bruce Blunt, at the instigation of the London Mercury, in writing a ballad in protest against the encroachment of football into the cricket season. On New Year's Day, 1929, a match between Hampshire Eskimos and Broadhalfpenny Brigands was arranged on the elevated windy Down. Later in the day, the local hunt cavorted across the pitch and dropped into the famous Bat and Ball Inn only to find that the cricketers had drunk it dry. Full of bibulous gusto and enjoyable bombast, the song was originally scored for brass band and heard in that form at the end of the game. Warlock, who had a predilection for riding naked on his motorbike, was apparently not present – it was too cold."*

Beckenham-born Rob Bonnet, the BBC sports reporter and correspondent, gave a most interesting Address under the title of *"Cricket and a Beckenham Boyhood"*.

The Sermon was preached by The Right Reverend Doctor Michael Turnbull, CBE, DL, formerly Bishop of Rochester and from 1994 until his retirement in 2003, Bishop of Durham. Michael has been a member of MCC for approaching thirty years, is a member of the Band of Brothers and a Vice President of Sandwich Town Cricket Club. He reminded the congregation that it was during the era of WG that the first class counties were established, that pitches were improved, that international cricket started and that overarm bowling was introduced.

He went on, *"Grace's name is as random and as appropriate as Colin Cowdrey's initials but it gives many clergy the excuse to idle away their time dreaming of cricket while pretending they are considering the finer points of theology. Perhaps one of the reasons why so many clergy are keen on cricket is the double entendre around the word grace. Some of us believe that the grace of God is conveyed through the best of cricket."*

Michael concluded with a reminder from AA Thomson's account of the response of Grace to the question put to him by Archibald Stuart Worsley, when Grace was sitting for his famous portrait that hangs at Lord's. The painting depicts Grace with an easy balanced stance. He is asked by the artist if he would adopt the same stance if the game was in a tight place. *"Certainly"*, said WG, *"because after all I should only be facing the next ball"*. Thomson comments, *"All his life he was facing the next ball"*.

And the concluding words of The Right Reverend Michael Turnbull were, *"What a brilliant epitaph. No fantasy nostalgia. No paralysing regret. No distracting analysis. Simply ready for the next ball. As it was true for WG Grace so be it for us – in life and in death."*

Those words were a fitting end to a moving and memorable day. A day when cricket lovers paid their tribute to the man who turned cricket into our much loved summer game.



Part of the exhibition

David Robertson

Grave and Exhibition photographs: Alisdair Bevan



Kent Cricket Heritage Trust

Registered Charity Number 1154556

Please reply to

The Spitfire Ground, St Lawrence, Canterbury CT1 3NZ

December 2015

Dear Trust Member,

The Kent Cricket Heritage Trust is now approaching its third year of operation, and has made a strong start in its ambitions to manage and display Kent cricket memorabilia, as well as to provide an archive for research into cricket in the county. We have put on several displays and purchased six new display cabinets, which show off the Kent collection to excellent effect. Our quarterly newsletter, which you will now be reading, has already covered some fascinating issues on the heritage of cricket in Kent.

To continue to grow and thrive, the Trust needs members. We already have over 100 people who have pledged a minimum donation of just £10 a year to the Trust, and we would very much like that number to grow significantly.

I am taking the liberty of attaching a membership application form, which I hope you will fill out and send back to us. Without the support of Kent cricket fans like you, the Trust will not be able to do all the exciting things we are planning for the future, so we very much hope you will decide to join us.

We look forward to welcoming you as a member of the Trust.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jonathan Rice'.

Jonathan Rice
Chairman
Kent Cricket Heritage Trust

Kent Cricket Heritage Trust

Registered Charity Number 1154556

St Lawrence Cricket Ground, Old Dover Road, Canterbury, Kent CT1 3NZ

Tel : 01227 456886

Annual Donation £

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