

INSIDE EDGE

Volume 8

Number 1 (No 29)

Christmas 2023



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

Things are beginning to move. The big news is that the club, with the full and enthusiastic backing of the KCCC Board, have given us the go-ahead to plan a new building on the Spitfire Ground, which for the time being we are calling our Heritage Hub.



There are many hurdles to overcome before we have our new home, but the principle has been established and we have held the first meeting of the working party which will come up with the plans. There are conditions, of course, the most important of which is that the planning and construction of our Hub must not involve any financial commitment by the club, a condition the Heritage Trust accepts happily.

We are thinking of a building with around 120 sq m of floor space, given over to storage, archive and display/education areas. Any building that will house the bulk of our collection needs to be temperature, light and humidity controlled, and this means bricks and mortar rather than a prefab container-like construction. We are working on the theory that a building of this size, built to the required specification, will cost around £450,000, which is a large sum of money. However, we hope and expect that provided we can raise a decent initial chunk of that money, there are many outside sources of funding that we can apply for, both local and national.

There is also the question of where on the ground it would best be sited, which will no doubt create a lot of debate over the next few months. We have set ourselves the target of having a plan approved by KCHT and by the club by the end of next year, which may sound a long way away, but there is much to be done in that time.

However, we will have a smile on our faces as we press on, knowing that the end result will be something we can all be proud of.

If anybody has expertise, ideas or contacts that they think will help, please get in touch. We need your full support..

Jonathan Rice

A Moment in Time, Monday August 21 1899

DUKE'S CRICKET BALLS are the Most Durable Balls made.

KENT v. YORKSHIRE, Angel Ground, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, August 21, 22 & 23, 1899.

YORKSHIRE.

1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
1 F. S. Jackson, Esq., b Mason	1	c Huish, b Hearne	33
2 Tunncliffe, c Hearne, b Mason	0	c Hearne, b Bradley	5
3 Denton, c Huish, b Mason	0	c Huish, b Bradley	2
4 F. Mitchell, Esq., b Blythe	55	b Hearne	15
5 Wainwright, c Weigall, b Bradley	19	c Stewart, b Mason	100
6 Hirst, c Burnup, b Bradley	60	1b w, b Hearne	15
7 E. Smith, Esq., c Mason, b Bradley	4	c Stewart, b Hearne	21
8 Haigh, not out	15	c Huish, b Bradley	18
9 Lord Hawke, b Bradley	0	b Hearne	81
10 Rhodes, b Bradley	0	not out	10
11 Hunter, b Bradley	8	b Blythe	5
L-bye 1, no ball 1	2	Byes 11, l-byes 8, n-ball 1	20

Total.....164

Total.....325

1st Inn. 1 for 1, 2-1, 3-16, 4-56, 5-86, 6-105, 7-144, 8-144, 9-144

2nd Inn. 1 for 12, 2-16, 3-56, 4-57, 5-87, 6-103, 7-166, 8-304, 9-310

Umpires: Titchmarsh and W. A. Wood

BOWLING ANALYSIS.

	O.	M.	R.	W.		O.	M.	R.	W.
Bradley	24	6	84	5	Bradley	40	10	125	3
Mason	22	11	34	3	Mason	27	9	43	1
Hearne	11	4	19	0	Hearne	34	8	66	5
Blythe	4	0	25	1	Burnup	9	2	24	0
Burnup	1	1	0	0	Blythe	14	2	41	1
Mason 1 no-ball					Mason 1 no-ball				

KENT.

1st Innings.		2nd Innings.	
1 C. J. Burnup, Esq., c and b Smith	171	not out	65
2 Hearne, A., b Smith	9	b Hirst	22
3 S. H. Day, Esq., c Hunter, b Smith	12	st Hunter, b Rhodes	15
4 T. N. Perkins, Esq., c Hunter, b Smith	47	not out	17
5 J. R. Mason, Esq., b Smith	7		
6 Rev. W. Rashleigh, run out	44		
7 H. C. Stewart, Esq., b Rhodes	21		
8 G. J. V. Weigall, Esq., c Wainwright, b Smith	22		
9 Huish, b Rhodes	7		
10 W. M. Bradley, Esq., not out	9		
11 Blythe, c Tunncliffe, b Rhodes	0		
Byes 9, l-byes 8, wides 2, no ball 1	20	Byes 5	5

Total.....369

Total.....124

1st Inn. 1 for 30, 2-48, 3-166, 4-180, 5-297, 6-321, 7-337, 8-359, 9-365

2nd Inn. 1 for 42, 2-87, 3-100, 4-100, 5-100, 6-100, 7-100, 8-100, 9-100

Scores: W. Hearne and Haydn

BOWLING ANALYSIS.

	O.	M.	R.	W.		O.	M.	R.	W.
Rhodes	46	19	90	3	Rhodes	17	4	27	1
Smith	50	11	120	6	Smith	17	2	4	52
Wainwright	10	3	27	0	Hirst	13	8	23	1
Hirst	17	4	35	0	Wainwright	6	3	17	0
Jackob	14	3	45	0					
Haigh	11	1	31	0					
Smith 1 no-ball, Wainwright & Haigh 1 wide each.									

Go to **Webber's** for SEEDS, PLANTS, FLOWERS, BULBS
Everything for the Garden. Send for CATALOGUE.
Wreaths, Crosses, &c., tastefully made to order. Gardens kept in order.

Go to **Webber's** for FRUIT and VEGETABLES
(Hamp-Grown) all at lowest prices consistent with best quality.
Greengrocery Stores: St. Stephen's Post Office.

QUARRY HILL NURSERIES, TONBRIDGE.

T. A. FLEMONS, Photographer, Print Seller, Carver, Silder and Frame Maker.
141, HIGH STREET, TONBRIDGE.

The story of Colin Blythe is much told. Brought up bowling on Blackheath from the age of eleven, he caught the eye of the Kent coach, William McCanlis, bowling to Walter Wright before the match at the Rectory Field against Somerset in 1897. As a result he had a trial at the Tonbridge Nursery with the result an invitation to sign for 1898.

Blythe's first-class debut followed late on the 1899 season in the fixture above. Yorkshire were the visitors, aiming to become the County Champions. Kent flourished in the lower reaches of the Championship table.

So it was with some surprise that the would-be champions succumbed to 18 for 3 before the fast-medium bowling of Jack Mason. The arrival of Frank Mitchell with a robust fifty saw Yorkshire to 86 for 4 when Mason handed the ball to Blythe. His first ball pitched marginally outside the leg stump. Mitchell played forward defensively, failed to middle it, and played on. Thus the first of 2,503 first-class wickets fell to one who became possibly the greatest of all leg-spinners.

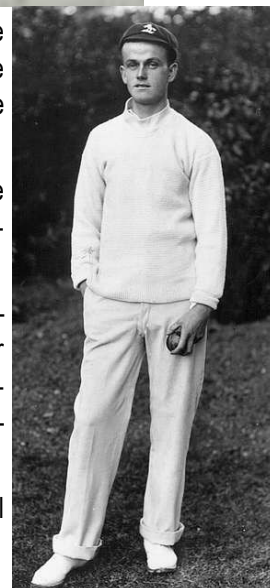
Blythe bowled only four overs in that innings. He bowled more in the second innings taking the final wicket, clean bowling the Yorkshire wicketkeeper, David Hunter.

The actual bowling performance of the match was by Bill Bradley who, bowling very fast, ended the Yorkshire innings with a hat-trick.

Kent proceeded to score an unexpected victory and Surrey won the County Championship. Blythe played in the last three matches with no particular success taking 14 wickets, at least one in every innings. He came into his own the following season taking 114 wickets @ 18.47.

Only three players have taken a wicket with the first ball for Kent. Blythe followed George McCanlis in 1873 with the later Kent Secretary, Gerald de Lisle Hough doing so in 1919. That was the only wicket he took in first-class cricket. Even looking to players performing the feat having played previously elsewhere produces no more names, not the least amongst the many overseas bowlers.

In their report on the match, *Wisden* made no mention of either Blythe or Bradley's feats.



Bradman's Invincibles at Canterbury

We recently received an email from an Australian researcher asking for details of the 1948 match between Kent and the Australians. I remembered numerous meetings I'd had in the late '90's with Kent fast-bowler Fred Ridgway who shared his memories of this match. I thought they'd make an interesting article for 'Inside Edge'.

Q. You played against the Australians in 1948. What memories do you have of that game?

"It was the biggest match I'd played in - took ages to get into the ground. All the roads around Canterbury were blocked. The Australians made a fuss about the size of the crowd - some said 15,000? I'm not sure if they refused to play but Bradman insisted on police escorts so nobody got in their way. The crowd on Monday was even bigger and they complained about spectators sitting on the grass around the boundary!"

Q. And your memories of seeing Bradman for the first time?

"I was in awe of him, like many of my age. But he was cold - didn't speak to anyone apart from the skipper Bryan Valentine - probably because he had to, Godfrey and Les. I'm not sure he was that popular even among his own team - when Bill Brown got to his hundred on the first day, Bradman went down the pitch to shake his hand but Bill just turned his back on him."

Q. Bradman won the toss so you were soon in action...

"They had the better of the morning. Bradman came in at three and we thought we had him early on, little nick to Godfrey but no-one was sure. When we went off for lunch, Bradman walked past Godfrey and said "Why didn't you appeal? I hit it....!" Most of us lost a lot of respect for him after that."

"Before we went back out, the team set me up for a joke. Godfrey said Bradman looked shaky against the short ball so the skipper told me to give him a couple early on. So... Nackington end... third ball, short... quick... he pulled it through mid-wicket to one of the marquees. An old man in a smart suit got up and tossed the ball back. Someone said "He didn't like that!... Off the splice!... give him another!" So I did, next ball, shorter... quicker... same result, same man, same marquee, threw it back. Bradman shouted over to Les "You'd better get that old fella some whites. He's going to be busy if this bloke keeps bowling there at me." As I looked around, they were all trying not to laugh!"

Q. At one of our first meetings, you mentioned that Ray Lindwall was one of your heroes. Did you get chance to meet him during the match?

"Ray was the best I saw. He just knew where to bowl, how fast, could move it both ways, and always kept a bit in reserve. After play on Saturday, we invited some of the Aussies to the Bat and Ball. Godfrey introduced me to Ray and bought drinks to our table so we could have a chat. Ray told me how he bowled outswingers (which I'd struggled with), spoke about changes of pace, and using the width of the crease to mix things up. I learned more in that hour than I ever did from old Punter Humphreys who'd just say "Look at the MCC Manual and work it out!". Ray and I left together. As we got to the door, the Landlord called over about paying for our drinks. Typical bloody Godfrey... "Let me get you a drink"... then you'd find out he hadn't actually paid for it!"

The scorecard (see over) will show that Kent were bowled out twice on the second day, Monday, and lost by an innings. If space permits, (and if anyone is interested!) I'll continue with some of Fred's recollections of this match in the next edition of 'Inside Edge'.

Ian Phipps



The 1948 Match Scorecard

PROGRAMME THREEPENCE.

GRAND CRICKET MATCH

SATURDAY, MONDAY AND TUESDAY, AUGUST 21st, 22nd and 23rd, 1948.

AUSTRALIA 1st Innings		2nd Innings	
1	W A Brown c Evans b Ridgway	106	
2	A R Morris c Evans b Dovey	49	
3	D G Bradman c Valentine b Crush	65	
4	B W Harvey b Ridgway	60	
5	R A Hamence c Evans b Ridgway	38	
6	G McCool b Crush	0	
7	S J Loxton c Valentine b Dovey	16	
8	R A Suggers c Ridgway b Dovey	8	
9	I W Johnston lbw b Tadd	15	
10	B R Lindwall c Evans b Dovey	5	
11	W A Johnston not out	3	

Total		Total	
1-64	2-158 3-272 4-283 5-291 6-297 7-328 8-335 9-353 10-361	1-1	2- 3-12 4-14 5-16 6-48 7-49 8-50 9-50 10-51
ANALYSIS OF BOWLING—1st Innings		2nd Innings	
NAME	O M R W WD N-B	NAME	O M R W WD N-B
Ridgway	41 10 19 3 — —	Lindwall	7 1 10 2 — —
Crush	15 1 32 2 — —	Johnston	9 2 10 3 — —
Todd	17 3 51 1 — —	McCool	5 0 2 3 — —
Dovey	50.1 13 90 4 — —	Loxton	3 1 13 1 — —
Davies	10 5 16 0 — —	Johnson	— — — — 9.5 1 12 2

Hours of Play—1st day	Commence 11.30; Lunch 1.30;	Draw 6.30
2nd day	Commence 10.30; Lunch 1.30;	Draw 5.30
3rd day	Commence 11.15; Lunch 1.30;	Draw 5.0

FIRE!!
OUR SOLVENIA SCORE CARD
Owing to the fire at our Printing Shed on the Ground we regret we have been unable to print our annual Solvenia Score Cards, but final cards of the match will be available printed with this special design.

QUINCENTENARY OF THE MAYORALTY OF CANTERBURY.
This illustrated booklet published by the Canterbury City Council as 2d may be obtained at the Score Card Office under the Terrace Stand.
At the end of each match completed Solvenia Score Cards will be on sale. It will be posted to any address for 6d. (incl. postage).

MOTOR CARS.
By special request of the Players and to avoid frequent stoppages of the game, all players are asked kindly to cover their windscreen when the sun gets into position, to avoid dazzle.

K.C.C.C. YEAR BOOK.
The Year Book for 1948 is on sale on the ground. It contains a summary of all past Kent v. Australia matches and is good value at 2/6.

Printed on the ground by J. A. Jennings, Todd, City Printing Works, Canterbury.

Completed Cards at close of each day's play.

KENT V. AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA WON THE TOSSE

KENT—1st Innings		2nd Innings	
1	Todd I. J. b Lindwall	0	did not bat
2	Fagg R. E. b Johnson	8	Law b Lindwall
3	Evans L. E. c Suggers b Johnston	11	c Suggers b Lindwall
4	R A Pearson b Lindwall	1	c Loxton b Lindwall
5	J. C. W. Davies not out	31	c McCool b Loxton
6	J. B. Valentine c McCool b Johnston	0	b Lindwall
7	Evans T. B. b Loxton	1	run out
8	McCool P. b McCool	15	b Johnston
9	E. Crush b Loxton	3	c Suggers b Johnston
10	Dovey R. b McCool	0	c Suggers b Johnston
11	Ridgway F. b Loxton	0	not out

Total		Total	
1-1	2- 3-12 4-14 5-16 6-48 7-49 8-50 9-50 10-51	1-1	2- 3-12 4-14 5-16 6-48 7-49 8-50 9-50 10-51
ANALYSIS OF BOWLING—1st Innings		2nd Innings	
NAME	O M R W WD N-B	NAME	O M R W WD N-B
Lindwall	7 1 10 2 — —	Crush	8 1 25 1 — —
Johnston	9 2 10 3 — —	McCool	3 0 12 0 — —
McCool	5 0 2 3 — —	Loxton	6 0 12 1 — —
Loxton	3 1 13 1 — —	Johnson	— — — — 9.5 1 12 2

*These figures correspond with those on sides of scoring board. Captain. Twicken Keeper

Test Interval is usually at 4.30
Umpires—Coleman and Lockett
Scorers—E. Huxton and W. Ferguson

The Last Letter

Kent supporters will be pleased that Zak Crawley is an established Test player. His name, however, raises one of those questions that is welcomed for research by cricket lovers. How many other Kent cricketers have forenames that begin with the letter "Z"?

One has to look no further than the present squad with Harry Zachariah Finch.

Before him the only example is Herbert Zouch Baker played for Kent some 120 years earlier. He was born in Beckenham in 1880 and for many years played for the Beckenham club. He was an all-rounder having a brief first class career. By profession he was a stockbroker and so played as an amateur. He uniquely started his first class career for Kent when they toured America, leaving in September 1903. He played then in 1904 and in a total of 11 matches he scored 211 runs at an average of 12.41, top score 82 and took three wickets.

Casting an eye across English-speaking test cricketers across the world there is one example the comes to mind—the Harris family in New Zealand.; in particular, Parke Gerald Zinzan who played 9 tests and his son Chris Zinzan who played 22.

Ian Lambert

More Cricket on Ice

Some Nineteenth Century References

This article follows on from Ian Lambert's fascinating *Cricket on Ice* in these columns a year ago.

"An interesting and amusing match between Staplehurst and Headcorn was played on Monday, on the lake in Iden Park, by permission of Mr Wm Hoare (a scion of the banking dynasty). The ice was in splendid condition, and a large number of spectators from Staplehurst and other villages were attracted by the novelty ..." Thus ran a report in the *Kentish Express* on 22 January 1887. And the report included full scores of the encounter as well, with E Shoobridge and Bearsby performing well for Staplehurst, and G Oyler and Rev E Thatcher likewise for the victorious Headcorn team. (Iden Park was located on the southern side of Staplehurst, adjacent to the present-day A229).

Eight years prior, during the particularly harsh winter of 1878-9 mentioned by Ian last year, "A cricket match took place upon the ice at Eridge Park, Tunbridge Wells, on Saturday [1 February 1879]". "There was a large gathering" and "The Marquess of Abergavenny and a large party from the Castle were present". "Lord George Pratt and Lords George and William Nevill taking the lead, runs were rapidly scored." Nobility was therefore in full support: the Marquess of Abergavenny would have been Lt-Col Henry Gilbert Ralph Nevill, the 3rd Marquess. Nevill was of course the family name of the Abergavenny marquessate.

As mentioned in the fascinating and somewhat timeless book entitled *Cricket Highways and Byways*, by F S Ashley-Cooper (published 1927), cricket on the ice at Eridge Park took place relatively often whenever winter conditions allowed. Tunbridge Wells CC members "frequently played". "In one of the games at Eridge Park, Lord Henry Nevill [assumed to be the later 3rd Marquess] carried out his bat for seventy."

And it would have been Lord Henry as the 3rd Marquess who negotiated with members of the sporting fraternity in Tunbridge Wells in the 1890s for a part of the Eridge Park estate, which led to the formation of the Tunbridge Wells Cricket Football and Athletic Club, its ground being known then and since as the Nevill Ground.

A planned cricket match on ice was to take place at Ibornden in January 1891 between Biddenden and Smarden. "Unfortunately the heavy fall of snow prevented the Smarden team turning up", though enough people who did arrive formed themselves into two teams, of skaters and non-skaters, "and a very exciting match was played". "Through the kind permission of Captain [William Hodges] Tylden-Pattenson ... who recently had the pond considerably enlarged, the skaters had ample scope." The skaters made 38 runs, the non-skaters 56. Even the umpires' names were noted in the report in the *Maidstone Journal*! This took place a month earlier than the match at Tenterden highlighted by Ian a year ago.

But staying with Tenterden though moving fifty years back in time, and as referred to in the current *Cranbrook Journal*, in late December 1840, "a novel game of cricket was played on Tenterden mill-pond, an extensive piece of water of about thirty acres, by two elevens, one company being on skates and the other without. It is thought that about 1,000 persons assembled to witness the 'ups and downs' of the competitors, which were both numerous and highly amusing". As at Ibornden, fifty years later, the non-skaters triumphed.

There are known to be present-day annual ice cricket tournaments at St Moritz (where Kent-born David Gower was certainly once a spectator, and which staged a multi-national event in 2016) and in Estonia. But would/could this sort of event take place in Kent today? Would health and safety permit? Are our winters cold enough? Climate change, anyone?

(I acknowledge, with grateful thanks, significant help on this feature from Tony Singleton, Editor of the *Cranbrook Journal*).

David Kelly

Captain PF Warner's XI v Royal West Kent Regiment In Aid of The Wounded and Prisoners of War

During and after the First World War, towns and villages throughout the country had voluntary organisations to help the war effort. Bearsted and Thurnham was involved with the Maidstone and District War Work Association, making house to house collections and providing clothes, food etc. In addition there was a fund for sending parcels to the wounded and prisoners of war from the two parishes for which Captain Pelham Warner, a local resident and former Middlesex and England captain who was knighted for his services to cricket in 1937, arranged a match between his XI and the Royal West Kent Regiment in September 1918 on Bearsted Green.

In promoting the fixture, the local press quoted a message from Captain Warner as follows " Today when the existence of our Country and Empire so largely depends upon our magnificent sailors, soldiers and airmen he confidently relies on the sympathy and help of the public. It is for these men, their grit and their courage, their hardships and their battles, and their heroic lives that he appeals. Several prominent cricketers have promised to play including CHB Marsham and FH Huish (Kent), PH Fender (Surrey) and J Douglas and JW Hearne (Middx) and the Regimental band will play during the afternoon. The game will begin at 11.45 and stumps will be drawn at 6.00."

The luncheon interval was held before the start of play, which had to be delayed due to rain, during which Captain Warner thanked the players for taking part and recalled the names of some notable cricketers who in bygone years had played on Bearsted Green.

Due to the weather there was a disappointing attendance. The cricket however was described as interesting despite the heavy ground and residents and visitors were entertained by the band of the Wiltshires from Sittingbourne in the unavoidable absence of the Royal West Kent band. The scores were as follows:-

Captain Warners XI		RWKR XI	
Lieut Col J Douglas not out.....	61	Capt Leatham b Fender.....	1
Capt Fox b Humphreys.....	.8	Corpl P Mead c Warner b Fender..	7
JW Hearne c Mead b White.....	2	H White not out ...	28
PH Fender b Humphreys.....	21	J Joy b Fender.....	0
Sec Lieut JAB Barnett b White.....	2	E Humphreys	
Sec Lieut SR Gresham b White.....	3	c Monckton b Douglas.....	16
Capt L Monckton c Leatham b Mead...	6	EE Hoadley not out.....	5
FH Huish run out.....	9	Extras.....	5
Capt PF Warner c and b White.....	16	TOTAL (for 4 wkts).....	62
F Vaughan not out.....	4		
Extras.....	9		
TOTAL (for 8 wkts dec).....	141		

Ian Lambert

New Plaques on the Spitfire Ground



Appearing on the ground at Canterbury at the very end of the season are two new plaques commemorating two aspects of Kent's cricket. They are to be found adjacent to:-

The Colin Blythe Memorial, behind the Ames Stand, which records the names of the great Kent bowler and other Kent cricketers who paid the ultimate price in the two World Wars.

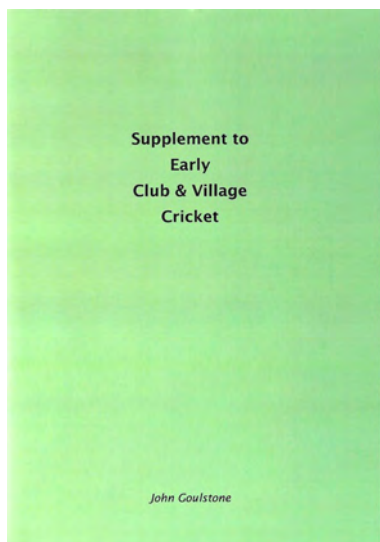


The site of the famous lime tree which was almost certainly there when the ground was opened in 1847. But a storm in January 2004 delivered a fatal blow. A new tree, ready planted in anticipation, has taken its place, and after a difficult start, now flourishes. The plaque (left) records the history.

Photographs by Peter Francis

The plaques were designed by the Bearsted artist Suzanne Norfolk whose previous artwork on the ground is seen in the Kent County Cricket Supporters Club's plaque celebrating Kent county grounds and the portrait of Frank Woolley in the Chiesman Pavilion. The work was supported by the Kent Cricket Heritage Trust from surplus funds received from the sales of the recently published book on Kent County Cricket Grounds. The authors of that publication are really grateful for the tremendous support given to their efforts to enable this project being concluded.

A Much Welcomed Supplement



Supplement to Early Club and Village Cricket; by John Goulstone. The Cricket Society . 28pp . Limited edition of 100. £40 + £3 p&p.

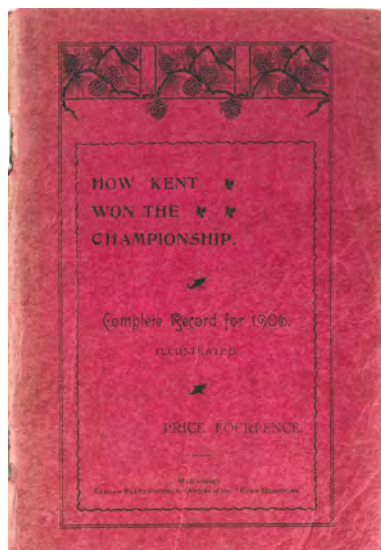
Down the years John Goulstone has been a prolific writer and historian on early cricket. Most items published by himself. Not the least valuable of his output is *Early Club and Village Cricket* 2nd edition (1973). Drawing together all the many references to pre-1800 cricket in a gazetteer manner, it forms a guide to the principal sources of information on parish and club cricket in England and Wales. Of the 126 pages, sixteen are devoted to Kent entries alone—164 of them from Addington to Yalding. For anyone contemplating a thorough history of their club, this is the starting point. It give dates of matches played and sundry information, where known, of the ground and the local public house providing the “ordinary”.

The fly in the ointment is this book is virtually unobtainable, and when on the rare occasion it is offered for sale it can be well into three figures..

After fifty years here comes a very much welcomed supplement to that original. The format is the same, and also the same is the preponderance of Kent entries.

Many locations, all the obvious ones, have additional information. But new ones do appear. Barham, Beckenham, Goudhurst, Lewisham, New Romney, Penshurst, Sheppey (Isle of), and Trottiscliffe. As before, anyone starting on a local history study, these two volumes are essential go-to publications.

A Very Rare Kent Cricket Publication



How Kent won the Championship: complete record for 1906. *Kent Messenger*, 1906. 58pp.

In the hierarchy of rare and valuable publications on Kent cricket, early “Blue Books” stand probably at the top with issues now priced sometimes in their thousands. But looking at single volumes this volume celebrating Kent’s first County Championship win would take some beating.

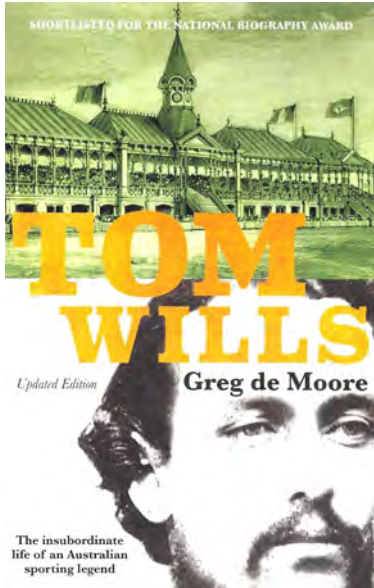
It appeared in Christopher Saunders’s latest catalogue where he stated he had not been aware of a copy coming to light since 2006. Keen collectors have been looking out for it. Even the County Club itself does not hold copy. Now one day they hopefully will have, now the Editor of this publication has dug deep into his pockets.

It is slim volume and begins with “A tribute to the Kent Team”, by contemporary notable. George Marsham. Various narratives and retrospects follow with the scorecards of the matches given in full. There is a statistical analysis and pen portraits of all who played.

The name of Frank Woolley appears constantly throughout as the discovery of the season and there is a team photograph. With a paper cover and an age behind it, it is a little fragile. But the bookseller is sure it will be another generation before a copy appears again, if there is a copy outside a library somewhere,

Tom Wills

An Australian Sporting Legend who Played for Kent



Tom Wills: the insubordinate life of an Australian sporting legend; by Greg De Moore. Updated edition. Allen & Unwin (Australia). 400pp. £20.99 (Amazon).

The name will not be familiar to most Kent supporters, even though you will find it in the list of the nine hundred plus individuals who have turned out for the county. Across the world though, it is a different matter and this substantial book, now in its third edition, taking in “new research and addressing the most troubling questions surrounding him”, bears witness to the place Tom Wills has in Australian sporting folklore.

He was the personification of a flawed genius, fearless leader and agitator, arguably Australia's first great cricketer, but whose decline fuelled by alcohol and drugs ended into the most brutal of suicides.

Tom Wills attended Rugby School during a stay in England in the 1850s. He holds one rather bizarre distinction of being the only player to appear in the University Match at Lord's without ever being in residence or studied at either Oxford or Cambridge University. He may have played in one match for Magdalene College and/or been a practice net bowler on the day when Cambridge found they were one short.

Tom Wills played two county matches for Kent, one each in 1855 and 1856. What qualification he had to play for the county is lost in the mists of history. His performance hardly foresaw the status he later achieved in his homeland. Back there, and forsaking cricket, in the Queensland outback, he experienced first-hand the racial tension of these times when his father was among many murdered in the biggest massacre of Europeans by the First Nations people. Yet within five years he was the coach of the first Aboriginal cricket team.

As a batsman, at a time when style was valued above all else, he was unorthodox. Using a three pound (1.36 kg.) bat – some accounts say four pound - according to *Scores & Biographies* he ‘scarcely moves his bat unless the ball is pitched up, when he hits hard’.

The fact that throughout his career doubts were expressed about Wills' round-arm action is in a sense surprising, given that his coach at Rugby was John Lillywhite who is best remembered for having no-balled Ned Willsher at The Oval in 1862. He was still playing when it became legal to raise the arm above the shoulder but the most frequent accusation in Wills's case seems to have been that on occasions he threw.

In the age just before the coming of we now called test cricket, Tom Wills was leading player for Victoria, showing the skills that gave him the place he holds in that sport. But it is another national sport that secured his immortality in Australian life. He was the prime mover in the creation of Australian Rules Football, a role not uninfluenced by his time at Rugby School.

Tom Wills remains a contentious figure 150 years on and continued research is strong enough to extend the life of Greg de Moore's award winning book on who some, in the reviews quoted, would call a “towering figure”.

As always, acknowledgements to Derek Carlaw's Who's Who of Kent Cricketers.

Who's Who at KCHT

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Kent Cricket Heritage Trust
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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.

KCHT Website

KCHT.co.uk

Read the KCHT blog at –

kentcricketheritagetrust.wordpress.com

Call for Volunteers

The Kent Cricket Heritage Trust is, like everybody, looking for volunteers. There are lots of jobs to be done, ranging from keeping our pots and trophies gleaming to archiving and cataloguing existing and new items, from working on new displays to helping with fund raising and many other things. It would be wrong of me to suggest that with a few willing pairs of hands we can create a museum or learning centre out of nowhere – we can't – but if we have enough people to allow us to get together as a group on say one or two days a month, at the St. Lawrence Ground, we can certainly make a difference. No great skills are needed, just enthusiasm. If you want to help, or even think you might want to think about possibly helping some time in the future, please get in touch at jnhrice@googlemail.com

Women's Cricket

The Editor is well aware there is glaring obvious gap in the contributions that feature in this publication. We have had very little that reflects the significant place in Kent's great cricket heritage that women's cricket has—Christina Willes and onwards. We are therefore looking with some urgency to someone who might be able to fill that gap. Please get in touch at

howardmilton@btinternet.com

Inside Edge Distribution

For the second time in three issues, we are having to apologise for distribution problems. For reasons beyond our control we did not have an up to date distribution list for the last issue. This may have resulted in some KCHT members not getting a copy and for some reason some members getting more than one. If anyone is lacking the Summer/Autumn edition (no 28), please contact : howardmilton@btinternet.com and a copy will be forwarded.