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INSIDE EDGE

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



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Another season is about to begin, and as ever hopes are high that Kent's men can win another trophy, making it three in a row. We are beginning to collect a certain amount of unique silverware, which I hope will be on display for much of this season. Last year we won the last ever Royal London One Day Cup, so there is nobody to hand that cup on to. It will just have to stay with us. In 2021 we won the Championship Third Division title, which we hope will be the only time that particular title will be up for grabs, so there's another trophy we can keep for ever.



However, the KCHT team's job is not just about the silverware. As one other example of the range of our activities, we are re-introducing our ground tours this summer, which inevitably came to a halt during Covid times, so we hope that many of you will take the chance to tour the ground, to some places which are not always open to the public. The tours will be much more extensive than was the practice in the past, complete with expert commentary from our guides. Tours for up to 20 people will be available on over 30 days during the summer, so please book yourself a place through the club's website.

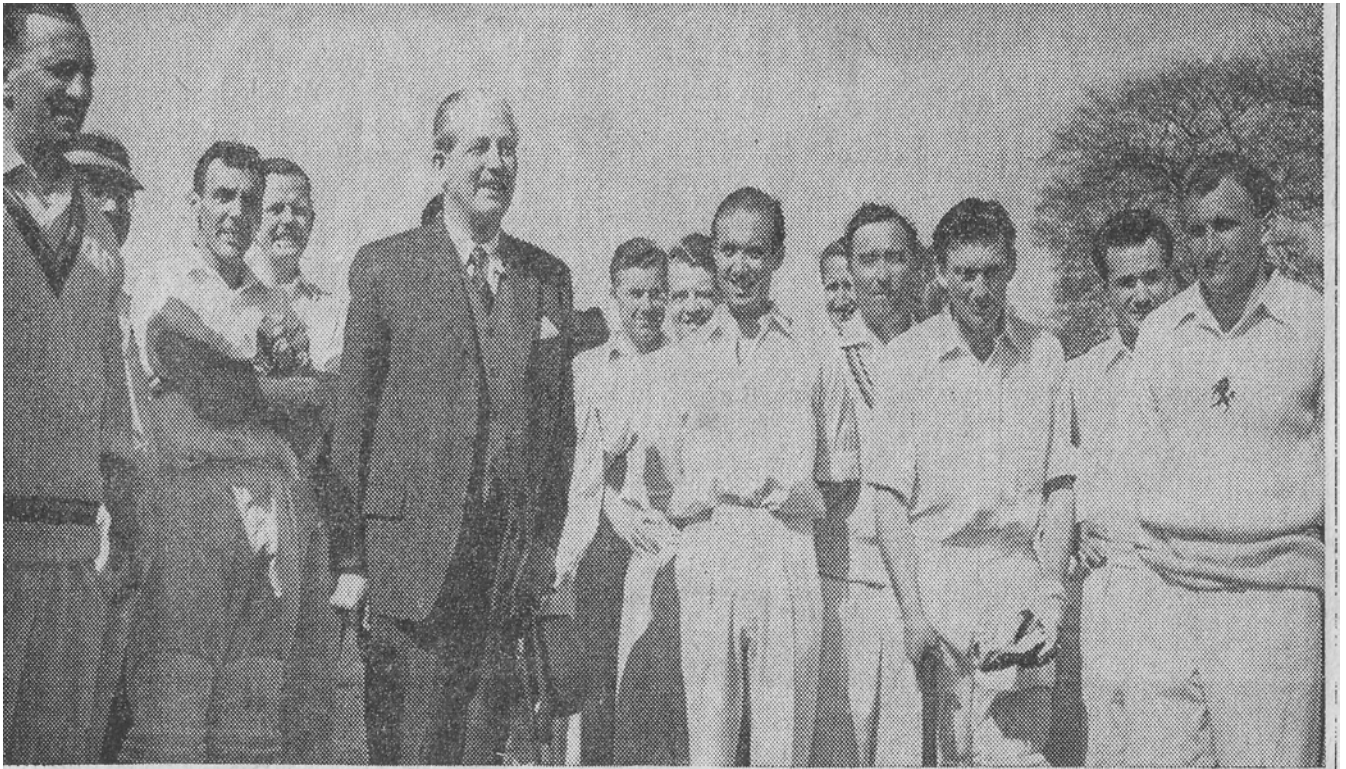
Whatever you plan to do this season, I hope it is an enjoyable and successful one for you and all the teams you support (unless you are reading this in Surrey!).

Jonathan Rice



Photo taken at Dover in 1926— S G Hearn, A C Wright, A P Freeman, A L Hilder, G P Beslee

A Moment in Time, Sunday 4 May 1958



The 1950s and early 1960s were a golden period for Sunday afternoon charity cricket. The popularity of these matches were the precursor of the International Cavaliers contests which in turn led to the Sunday League and the rest, as they say, is history.

Here is one of the more successful of these contests. The local press reported ten thousand turned up at Bickley Park for this game between the Prime Minister's XI and Kent. The man himself, Harold Macmillan, was the local Member of Parliament, and although he missed the planned opening of bowling the first ball, within the hour he did appear, as photographed above with the pretty distinguished company of players who contested the match.

It was pre-season, so Kent put out a pretty reasonable eleven of recent past and current players:- Bob Wilson, Geoff Smith, John Pretlove, Colin Cowdrey, Stuart Leary, Doug Wright, Godfrey Evans, Fred Ridgway, Dave Halfyard, Derek Ufton and John Martin.

The Prime Minister's XI was gathering of stars from a number of arenas:- Sir Len Hutton, Peter Richardson, Peter May, Denis Compton, David Tomlinson, Peter West, Chris Chataway, Eric Sykes, Harry Secombe, Peter Waterman and Sonny Ramadhin.

Kent made 282 for 9 dec (Wilson 56, Cowdrey 59, Wright 57, Evans 46, Ramadhin 3-65) and, batting on, the Prime Minister's XI made 295 for 9 (Richardson 45, May 54, Compton 35, West 47, Secombe 40*)

The final total of money raised waited a longer period of calculation, but guaranteed by Stuart Chiesman, who organised the match, was the sum of £1,200. This equates to about £35,000 in modern values. It was shared between the Kent Playing Fields Association and Marchington House Broadstairs, a rest and holiday home for "aged folk".

Mystery Solved?

The Beverley Ground 1840-1846

Some months ago, a close friend asked me to help research their family tree. In the process, a John Sneller appeared on my radar – nothing exceptional about that, you might think? Searching through old copies of the *'Kentish Gazette'* a few weeks later, I found a reference to the Beverley Cricket Club renting a field from "Sneller" in 1842 for £25 per annum. With this discovery, I wondered if it might be possible to identify the site of this field and thereby establish where the Beverley Ground – and the birthplace of the Canterbury Cricket Week – was.

Most cricket reference books state that the ground was "near to", "adjacent", "adjoining", and/or "close to" the old Cavalry Barracks site to the east of the City. Several Canterbury history books further note that the ground was on the "old turnpike road", now the A28/Sturry Road. Vague though these descriptions are, they at least narrowed down the potential search area. A coloured lithograph (below) by William Burgess of the match between Kent and All-England in August 1845, currently hanging in the Pavilion at Canterbury, gave further clues – the possible width/depth of the ground, its position relative to buildings that feature, and its setting within the wider landscape.



The public library in Canterbury has copies of the Tithe Maps for the city for 1851, just four years after the Beverley Club relocated to the St. Lawrence Ground. One map for the St. Mary Northgate Parish shows several sites in that area, all to the north of the turnpike road, which were either owned by or leased to John Sneller. These were quickly discounted for being too small to host an important cricket match, let alone provide adequate facilities for thousands of spectators. Whilst the map clearly shows the location of the Infantry and Cavalry Barracks, no details of land holdings are recorded to the east of those sites.

Turning back to local newspaper sources, the *'Kentish Gazette'* for 9th August, 1842 featured an advertisement for the renewal of a lease of 18 acres of marsh land at Northgate with the sitting tenant being John Sneller. This would certainly have been of sufficient size to host an important cricket match. Wondering if this site could be on the southern side of the turnpike road, I examined the Tithe Maps for the neighbouring St. Martin's Parish - but found no record of any landholding there in the name of Sneller.

A later report in the *'Kentish Gazette'* (21st October, 1856) provided a significant breakthrough. It stated that HM Government had purchased an acre of land from John Sneller, formerly "part of the old cricket field adjoining the Cavalry Barracks". This plot of land was said to "front the turnpike road" and would be used to house new stores for the East Kent militia. The final sentence adds "It is said that the whole of this field (about 12 acres) will shortly become Government property for military purposes." An Ordnance Survey (OS) map of this area from 1877 (surveyed in 1872/73) shows a site adjoining the eastern boundary of the Cavalry Barracks, marked "East Kent Militia Stores" with open ground running to the east and south noted as the "Riding School". This, it would seem, would have to be the location of the "old cricket field" used by the Beverley Club from 1840 until they left the site at the end of the 1846 season.

In order to test this presumption, I again looked at Burgess's lithograph from 1845 along with the Tithe and OS maps. To the left of the print, there is a large building which would appear to sit within the boundaries of the Cavalry Barracks. The OS map has two accommodation blocks and a forge in this part of the barracks – the building Burgess featured could easily be any one of these. To the distant background and on the left is the grand Hales Place, built by Sir Edward Hales in the late 1760's (largely demolished in the late 1920's). To the right and beyond would be lands that include Tyler Hill and the site of the current University of Kent. Both these latter locations would appear to "fit" into the landscape, as captured by Burgess from a position within the Ground.

Closer to the cricket field and just beyond the boundary - where fine leg might be placed - is a property which would fit the location of the old Vauxhall Tavern (now a warehouse for Majestic Wines). There are two properties to the right, one seemingly in front of the other. Perhaps this suggests they are located on opposite sides of the turnpike road? This presumption again appears to fit with sites marked on both the Tithe and Ordnance Survey map - the property closest to the ground (the smaller of the two) would therefore be the Toll Booth for the turnpike road. To the extreme right of the image would be land now occupied by a Lidl store which, in turn, is bordered to the east by Old Park Avenue.

I will leave it to others better qualified than me to judge whether uncertainty over the location of the Beverley Cricket Ground and birthplace of the Canterbury Cricket Week has now been resolved. In modern parlance, a lot of "boxes have been ticked" – the site is on the turnpike road, it adjoins the Cavalry Barracks, and closely matches the landscape and buildings as featured in contemporary maps.

Time for the jury to withdraw and consider the evidence!

Ian Phipps



The present Barracks site



The suggested ground site

The Curious Tale of Bob the Bell Man

While sorting through some photographs in the club's huge collection, we came across a picture inscribed "Bob The Bell Man, also called Bob Ridley." The photograph showed a man apparently in his fifties, dressed in late Victorian clothing and carrying a large bell. We were immediately intrigued. Who was "Bob the Bell Man" and what is his connection with Kent cricket? With a great deal of help from Ian Phipps, our newly-appointed Heritage Officer, and Derek Carlaw, the source of all things to do with Kent's cricketing history, the story of Bob the Bell Man has been pieced together, and proves bizarre and fascinating in equal doses.

The main source of our information about Bob comes from the Kentish Gazette for 26 January 1889, which reports the sad death of Bob the Bell Man. *"Poor old 'Bob' the Bellman is dead. He will be missed by local cricketers, by those who play matches with the St. Lawrence Club, and by thousands who visit the ground during the Canterbury Week. 'Bob' was perhaps the best known character on the ground.... he was so intimately connected with the Cricket Week, and considered his post so important".*

This sentiment is reinforced in F Milton Small's 'Canterbury Week', where he writes in 1889, *"this year the well known figure of Bob Ridley, the Bell Man was missing. To poor Bob, Cricket Week was a harvest. his familiar face and peculiar gait was known to thousands who patronized the ground with which he had been connected for about 20 years".*



Clearly he was an eccentric member of the cricketing fraternity at the St. Lawrence ground and obviously a keen supporter of the St Lawrence club. Wisden, incidentally, reports his death in the 1890 edition, but gets the date wrong, stating he died in February 1889.

The Kentish Gazette continues *"It was the St. Lawrence matches he took great interest in. Every playing member of the club knew 'Bob' and 'Bob' knew them. It was most amusing to hear him relate in a confidential sort of a way that 'him's no good.' Bob was an enthusiastic St. Lawrenceite. He always wanted them to win, and when members of visiting teams chaffed him he generally managed before hobbling away in disgust to let them know that from a cricket point of view, they were vastly inferior to the Canterbury men".*

And now poor "Bob" is gone, and everyone we have heard speak of his death laments it.... He had rung the bell during Cricket Week for over twenty years, (and) he was the owner of a good bell, and he was proud of his treasure. When on the ground, he clasps it tightly. When going away he places it in a bag which never leaves his sight. And at night he locks it up safely in a box. It is a wonderful bell and bears the following inscription – "Presented to William Hatton, alias Bob Ridley, by the members of St. Lawrence C.C. June 1886".

Wait a moment – so Bob Ridley was an alias? His real name was William Hatton? What's wrong with William Hatton as a name? Bill the Bell Man would have worked as well? Why does a bell-ringer at the St. Lawrence club need an alias? Let's just say that we haven't found the answer yet.

What we do know is that William, alias Bob, was born in Butchery Lane, Canterbury, probably in 1832, which was the year of his baptism in St. Andrew's Church in the city. His parents were Hannah and George Hatton. George was a former Customs Officer, and later a rent and debt collector, who has no known connection with Kent cricket or the St Lawrence ground.

His son Will/Bob was, however, definitely a well-known and well-accepted member of the Kent cricket community. We have a report of the 1877 Old Stagers presentation during that year's cricket week:

Lord Harris: Hold I protest, for here I represent,

All - MCC, I Zingari and Kent,

Ne'er shall such trivial, childish schemes be found,

To desecrate our famed St Lawrence Ground.

There let Kent's White Horse banner be unfurled,

Against All England - aye, 'gainst all the world

(Enter Bob Ridley the Bellman)

Bob - Well said, my Lord; that's boldly spoke and well,

And I'll be always there to ring the bell.

To have a couplet written for you to proclaim in the 1877 Old Stagers revue meant you were very well-known in Kent cricket circles.

Another question is why he was given his new 'treasure' bell in 1886 after ringing a bell at the ground for the best part of twenty years already. Presumably the original cracked, and the club bought him another one, which one assumes he used to ring to announce start of play or resumptions after lunch and tea intervals. But sadly, Bob only lived for a couple more years to enjoy ringing it.

Or maybe somebody stole his old one. The Kentish Gazette goes on to say that *"the cricketers had many a bit of fun at Bob's expense. It is reported... that a well known Kentish bowler used, when the opportunity presented itself, to seize Bob's "treasure" and secretly run behind one of the large trees on the Cricket ground. Here Bob would be startled by the sound of his own bell, and being somewhat short-sighted he was unable to solve the mystery. Bob would go in the direction of the tree, and then the professional, eyeing him, would walk away concealing the bell, and commence the same thing in another portion of the field. At last "Bob" discovered the delinquent, and thereafter he evidently resolved to look after his treasure with the utmost care, and during the latter part of his life he stuck to it like glue. Poor "Bob" was liked in his lifetime, and he will be sadly missed by many now that he has departed this earth."*

The saddest detail I leave to last. We couldn't work out why William was living with his maternal grandparents in Littlebourne (where his mother Hannah lived before her marriage) according to the 1841 Census, and why he had no occupation listed in later returns. The answer was on the 1881 Census, where he is recorded as an "Imbecile". Fool, maybe, but clearly a loveable one, who was taken to the hearts of the Kent cricket community 140 years ago.

Jo Rice

Previously published as a KCHT blog with thanks to Jo for allowing this reprint.

The Argentinians in Kent 1928

I recently acquired, from a leading dealer in cricket literature and the like, an album with photographs and scores of matches played in Kent in 1928 by E W S Thomson's Argentine XI. Matches were played on 9 and 10 July v Beckenham; on 11 July v St Lawrence at Canterbury; on 12 and 13 July v East Kent Ramblers at Folkestone; and on 14 July v R L Kay's XI at Sutton Valence School.

A note in the album indicates that many of the players on this tour took part in two matches in Devon a few weeks later, and three played for an Anglo-Argentine XI v MCC at Lord's also in August.

Ernest 'Tommy' Thomson was a well-known cricketer in his early days and a highly-regarded cricket administrator for many years thereafter. A one-time tea merchant, he managed the South American XI Tour to Britain in 1932, during which 19 matches were played, with six accorded first-class status. The excellent book by Keith Walmsley (published by ACS, 2022) of that tour revealed that Thomson had organised a few club tours to Kent and Devon in the latter part of the 1920s.

R L Kay's XI was skippered by Kay himself: he gave long and sterling service to Sutton Valence School over almost a lifetime: he attended the school, attaining a near unprecedented string of sporting and academic successes; after Cambridge and WWI, he returned as a modern languages teacher but with a plethora of extramural activities, sporting and otherwise. Little wonder that there was a local bias to his team: one was a fellow teacher, at least five others were old boys of the School, and many were members of Kay's two clubs, The Mote and Little Chart.

The Argentinians defeated Beckenham in a two-innings match by nine wickets; lost to St Lawrence by 110 runs; drew over two innings with East Kent Ramblers; and easily beat Kay's XI on the first innings. The same eleven tourists played in all the games: four had played, or were to play, at first-class level; Thomson himself had played for the national team against Chile; and three others had appeared for Argentine Cricket Association XIs. Thus, a useful mix which gave the Kent sides a serious challenge.



The scene at Beckenham



and at Sutton Valence

David Kelly

Kent Day by Day



We are setting about compiling a "Kent Day By Day" history of cricket in the county, and we need your help in finding interesting events for every day of the year. We already know the dates of birth of all men cricketers who have represented the county and the date of their first appearance so don't bother with these, but there are thousands of other things which could go into this collection, which we hope eventually to publish. We need at least 5 items for each day (including February 29) so it's a big search.

Some examples of the sort of thing we are looking for:

11 May 1992 Carl Hooper hits a six over the Lime Tree at Canterbury, during his innings of 115* v Durham

8 August 1836 Fuller Pilch makes his debut for Kent, v Sussex at Town Malling
2002 Rob Key makes his debut for England, v India at Trent Bridge

9 August 1909 Frank Woolley and Douglas Carr make their Test debuts for England v Australia at the Oval
2021 Jordan Cox and Jack Leaning begin their unbeaten partnership of 423 for the 2nd wicket, v Sussex at Canterbury

21 August 1907 H E "Betty" Archdale born. She is cap number 4 among women players.

1914 Doug Wright born. He still holds the record for most first-class hat-tricks - 7.



A famous date

Also Woolley 172

Anything of interest will be included, at whatever level of organised cricket played by Kent players. So please send your contributions to me at jnhrice@googlemail.com.

Many thanks

Jo Rice

New Publication

GODMERSHAM

A CRICKETING HISTORY
1774-2022



IAN LAMBERT

Godmersham: a cricketing history 1774-2022; by Ian Lambert.

50pp.

Available from: Godmersham Park Heritage Centre, The Granary,
Godmersham, CT4 7DT.

£5 plus £2 p & p

Details from:- godmershamheritage@gmail.com

Godmersham Park has strong links in Kent cricket history with the Knight family who owned the estate from 1781 to 1874. They, of course in turn, had strong links with Jane Austen. Various Knights played county cricket for Kent. This publication gives a detailed account of the ownership of the estate, which remains in private hands to this day, and the cricket played there and in the village,

The house is on the edge of the North Downs between Ashford and Canterbury. and is depicted on the Bank of England £10 note issued in 2017,

The local cricket club has had a broken history with a records going back to 1774 The in and outs of that history are covered in detail.

There is no small amount of cricket history attached to Jane Austen, who one assumes never batted a ball in her life. A new study of that association will be presented by two distinguished cricket historians, John Goulstone and Roger Packham, in a book to be published by J W McKenzie in the coming months. It will be covered here.

KCHT Website

The KCHT now has its own website (www.kcht.co.uk) and social media platforms for members to keep up to date with latest Trust news, events, etc.

The Trust has started uploading archive copies of Inside Edge - the initial issues have been added to the dedicated webpage (www.kcht.co.uk/Inside-Edge.php) ... with all future copies to be added..

Any queries and suggestions would be welcomed by Colin Jarman secretary@kcht.co.uk

Who's Who at KCHT

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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 at some time in the future, please get in touch.

Jo Rice

jnhrice@googlemail.com

Inside Edge Distribution

Apologies are due for the unsatisfactory distribution of the Christmas edition of *Inside Edge*. An unexplained problem meant many members did not receive their copy before Christmas as intended. Without knowing who had or had not, with the problem resolved, a full distribution was sent out in January. So further apologies are due if you received two copies. A thorough revision of who is on that distribution has taken place and hopefully there will be no problems with this edition..

.Back issues of *Inside Edge* are starting to appear on our website. Others can be forwarded to fill gaps. Please contact

howardmilton@btinternet.com.