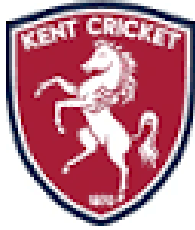




# INSIDE EDGE



Autumn 2025

Volume 9  
Number 2 (No 34)

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

After a fairly dreadful start by many of our teams this summer, despite the glorious weather, it was very heartening to see the way that the men demolished Essex in the final Vitality Blast group match, and then had to wait ten minutes or so until confirmation came through that Surrey had just beaten Sussex, to give us a place in the quarter finals. We are already doing better than last year!



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But for me the highlight of the summer so far was the double-header the week before, when both the men and the women played against Middlesex. The men won, the women came second, but that is not the point. I watched from the bottom of the Cowdrey with my wife, son and grandson, and by the end of the day we had a brand new committed young Kent fan (albeit one who actually lives in Scotland). The T20 format is by no means my favourite, but then I am definitely lurching towards classification as an old fogey, but nevertheless I am happy to concede that the whole day, the crowds, the atmosphere, the Thai curry stand, the women's cricket display, Barrie in the shop, the cricket and, not least, the cricketers who happily signed autographs and posed for selfies after the matches, made for an exceptional day out for all generations to enjoy.

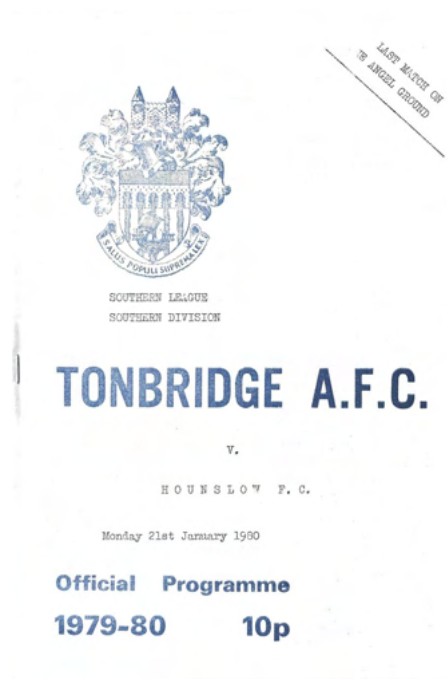
The Vitality Blast is as much a part of Kent cricket heritage as Lord Harris or Cecilia Robinson, and we would do well not to forget that.

*Jonathan Rice*



*What is now the Ames Stand, pictured in 1933.*

## *A Moment in Time, Monday January 21 1980*



Not too often do we drift away from cricket, but here is an example of while cricket was not immediately involved, it certainly had a huge part in the closing of an era.

For pictured left is the programme of last piece of sporting activity on the Angel Ground in Tonbridge. By 1980 cricket had long gone and the ground had become the home of Tonbridge AFC who, with future development planned for the location, had been given their marching orders.

Prior to Tonbridge AFC taking up residence at the start of the 1948/49 season, it had been a home of the Kent County Cricket Club. It been formed on the back of the Angel Inn and used as a county ground from 1869 to the outbreak of World War II. It was a major centre famed for its Tonbridge Nursery via which generations of Kent cricketers passed on their way to the senior side. The Golden Age immediately prior to World War I was achieved on the back of this famous academy.

It had been in increasing decline after its ill use by the military in World War I. This was hastened when the Nursery moved to Canterbury in 1927.

World War II proved a fatal blow to cricket at the Angel, when occupation by the Army and their heavy vehicles led to fatal deterioration to the ground for cricket. Thus, in 1944 the Tonbridge Cricket Club, heavily in debt, put the area up for sale.

Ther first attempted venture in 1945 was the establishment of a dog stadium, but the licence was refused by Tonbridge Urban District Council. Three hundred flats were the next plan, but finally it was purchased by the council for £8,500, and the ground leased to the football club.

But it was a precarious existence from the start for a club always in financial difficulties and the deterioration there continued. It drifted onto 1976 when the Official Receiver was called and a year later plans were drawn up with Sainsbury's and Bentall's for a large shopping complex. In anticipation it was followed in 1979 by the football club's lease being called. in

The Angel Centre emerged and was opened in 1982. In 2014 plans for the redevelopment of that in turn appeared, and remained in the air until now, (2025) when that longed for continuation of the Angel story seems to be progressing.

Meanwhile the football club was reborn as the Tonbridge Angels playing on a green field site in the north of the town at the Longmead Stadium.





## *Henry Crosoer*

### *A "Lost" Kent Cricketer*

Henry Crosoer first came to my notice over 40 years ago. Like him, I lived in Bridge and often played cricket at Bourne Park, Bishopsbourne. Though he was born two centuries before me, I wanted to know a little more about his life.

A number of cricket histories make reference to his appearances as an effective batsman/wicketkeeper for Kent in the late 1780s and his playing record is relatively easy to find. Other journals refer to occasional club matches in East Kent during the following decade. That aside, all I knew was that not much else is known about him! With access to several online resources and Bridge Village Parish Records, I set to work.

Henry was born at Bridge in 1764, the seventh child of Francis Crosoer and Mary nee Simmons<sup>1</sup>. The couple kept gentlemen's lodging rooms at the prestigious Bridge Hill House, conveniently situated on the main route between Dover, Canterbury and London (what we now know as the A2). It was also ideally situated for supporters of two of our greatest traditional sports - cricket and horse racing.

A few hundred yards to the south-west of Bridge Hill House was Bourne Park, Bishopsbourne. In the 1780s, under the patronage of Sir Horatio Mann, many notable games between Kent, Hampshire, and All England were played here. Several thousand spectators were often in attendance, with grand balls being held during the evenings. Henry's father, an astute businessman, made the best of his proximity to the ground by offering accommodation and occasionally secured a concession to supply food and drink from a nearby booth.

Situated just 100 yards south-east of Bridge Hill House was the Barham Downs racecourse, renowned for hosting the widely attended Canterbury Races, which drew substantial crowds during multi-day events. Francis Crosoer again capitalised by advertising stabling and paddocks available for horses to graze. As a distinguished trainer with multiple winners to his credit, he offered his training services at a rate of Two Guineas per mare, per season.

In May 1781, young Henry commenced his apprenticeship as a Linen Weaver under the tutelage of his uncle, Henry Simmons, who operated a thriving business in Bridge. Known for his generosity, Henry (later a Sheriff of Canterbury) transferred the business to his nephew in order to focus on his interests in hop cultivation in Canterbury. On June 30th, 1789, Crosoer married farmers daughter Sarah Lushington by license at nearby Elmstead and the couple raised six children<sup>2</sup>. Henry's early business endeavours were promising for; in 1791, he advertised for "three or four" journeymen weavers as well as a Hemp and Flax dresser.

Henry's social standing was also on the rise and, by 1796, he was appointed to the prestigious position of Clerk of the Course at Barham Downs, overseeing all aspects of the Canterbury Races. In addition to his management duties, he also trained and ran his own horses, the grey gelding 'Providence' and 4-y-o 'Miss Brooksend' being highly fancied by punters.



*Bourne Park showing the mansion and centre the last cricket ground site in 2025*

However, by August 1802, Henry faced severe financial difficulties as creditors closed in. We can only speculate about the cause of his downfall - a failure to adapt his business to meet the competition of more affordable cotton products, or persisting with manual looms instead of steam-powered devices to enhance productivity. Additionally, did the expenditure associated with maintaining racehorses, and making arrangements for a large race meeting – with the occasional misguided betting stake? - prove too much of a distraction from his financial situation.

Within a month and in order to settle his debts, Henry and Sarah's entire possessions—furniture, land, outbuildings, carts, looms, horses, and even their bedding—were sold by public auction, which was held at their home just to add to their humiliation. At least the proceeds enabled creditors to receive 15 shillings for every pound owed which was enough to save them from bankruptcy.

Henry continued in his role as Clerk of the Course at Barham Downs and retained ownership of several horses, achieving a measure of success with 'Trusty,' who won the Easter Plate in 1805. Unfortunately, the lessons from his previous financial difficulties were not heeded, as another public auction was necessary in September 1806 to liquidate more of the family's possessions to satisfy creditors.

The Crosoers appear to have relocated to London thereafter. On December 5th, 1806, Sarah Crosoer passed away, less than three months after their second financial setback. Little is known about Henry until a brief report in the '*Kentish Gazette*' on July 11th, 1809, noted: "Last week in London, Mr. Henry Crosoer, late clerk of the course on Barham Downs" had died. His interment had taken place on July 6th at Christ Church, Newgate Street.

<sup>1</sup> One of Mary's brothers was Richard Simmons who represented Kent, Surrey and England during the 1770s.

<sup>2</sup> The first born, William Henry, did not survive infancy. Francis, (born 1791), was an auctioneer in Sandwich and lived into his 80s. Elizabeth, their first daughter, worked for Henry Collard at Little Barton Farm, Canterbury, but passed away in 1811 at the age of 17. Henry (born 1794), was a butcher in Dover for many years before joining the police force, eventually becoming an Inspector. William (born 1795), was a Brewers Clerk in Faversham. Their youngest son, Richard Lushington (born 1797), served with the Dover Police from 1836, later working as a butcher and Market Inspector in Dover.

Ian Phipps

## *Women's Cricket Display*

The Trust organised a further display of Kent Women's Cricket at the double T20, held on 13 July. Items from the archive on display included Audrey Disbury's Kent cap, photographs and other items from the collection of Cecilia Robinson and the bat, over 90 years old, used by Barbara Blaker who, together with her sister, played for Kent and England from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Members of the Trust were on hand to discuss the display with visitors who came to see the exhibits. One visitor was a previous Kent player, Elaine Campbell, who was pleased to reminisce about her playing days at Kent.

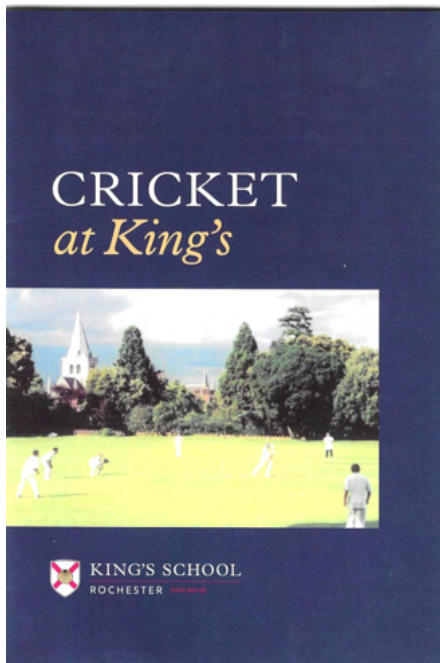
Thanks go to Barrie Dyer for his help in hosting the display in the club shop. The photograph opposite shows Sam Billings taking the opportunity to view the display and to compare Barbara Blaker's 90-year-old bat with the one he plays with today.

John Piddock



*Sam Billings*

## Book Reviews



**Cricket at King's:** by Mark Chaloner. King's School, Rochester. 28pp.

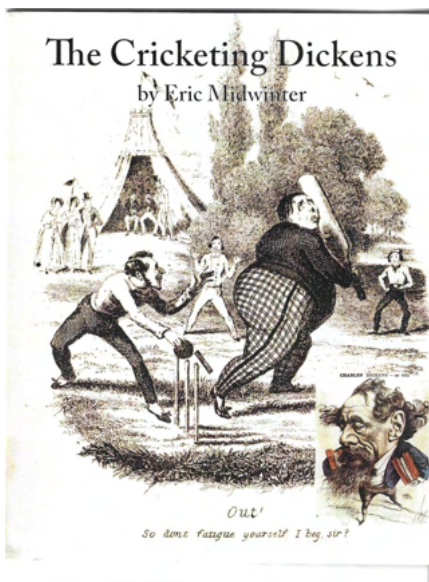
Available from Mark Snoswell at [msnoswell@kings-rochester.co.uk](mailto:msnoswell@kings-rochester.co.uk)

The history of cricket in the county is very much intertwined with the development of cricket at its public schools: Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, King's Canterbury, Sutton Valence and others have provided many players for the Kent and England sides over the years. King's Rochester may not be one school that springs immediately to mind, but as Mark Chaloner (the author of the excellent history of Barham C.C.) points out, cricket has been played at the school since the late eighteenth century, and although the book may be of niche interest, it is a fine addition to the history of school cricket in the county.

For such a brief booklet, it is remarkably comprehensive, tracing the history of the game at KSR over the past two hundred years and more, giving pen pictures of the main characters who played or coached the game at the school, a chart showing the results of every first XI game in every season from 1900 – a total of 1551 matches – and even the full lyrics of the school's Cricket Song, written by Canon William Parker, headmaster of the school in the 1930s. There is a photograph of the 1912 eleven, six of whom died in the Great War, a brief mention of opening bowler Pete Tong (later a successful DJ), and an affectionate appreciation of cricket at the school by its most illustrious cricketing alumnus, Matt Walker.

A valuable contribution to the history of Kent cricket.

Jo Rice



**The Cricketing Dickens:** by Eric Midwinter. Max Books, 19 Bromley Drive, Holmes Chapel, Cheshire CW4 7AX, 45pp. £10.

This publication is about the last written by highly noted social historian, Eric Midwinter, who died recently aged 93, still putting pen to paper on a book on Christianity and cricket. The format is A4 and is well illustrated with pictures, and many Dickensian cartoons.

Within its 45 pages there is a mass of detail about Dickens not the least his place amidst the social conditions of the time. The author was a very notable commentator on nineteenth century English social history.

It also successfully debunks the assumptions that cricket only appears in *Pickwick Papers*. All the other references are listed and described, emphasising Dickens' love of the game. Who else would have a cricket pitch laid out in his garden?

Anyone interested in both these aspects will probably find this money well spent.



## Women Umpires! Howzat!

Researching women's cricket in Kent results in many interesting facts coming to light. One interesting aspect is that some women players became umpires when their cricket playing careers finished. Kent women players who became umpires include Doris Coysh, Kathleen Doman (who proposed the formation of the Women's Cricket Association), Olive Forshaw, Sheila Hill and Jean Ifield. This article looks at two of these pioneering women, Sheila Hill and Doris Coysh.

**Sheila Hill** (figure 1) was a Kent player but her main influence on cricket in general, and women's cricket in particular, was as an umpire and scorer. She umpired women's games from as early as 1953, when she was 25 years old, until her last match in 2000. During that time, she umpired in three women's Test matches, nine ODI's and many women's matches.

The peak of her umpiring career was officiating in the first Women's World Cup Final, at Edgbaston in 1973, which England won by 92 runs. As an umpire she was highly regarded and deeply respected by the players, as much for her calmness and dry wit as for the unerring accuracy of her decisions.

She was an active member of the Association of Cricket Umpires and Scorers, and after 14 years on its council, in 1989 became the first woman to be elected as its chairman. According to the *Hull Daily Mail*, published on 23 March 1989, she was elected 'by a substantial majority making her the first woman ever to head any major international cricket body.'



In her book *Fair Play the Story of Women's Cricket*, Rachael Heyhoe Flint wrote about the *Union of Umpires* and the part played by women umpires. Rachael also recorded that, according to Tom Smith the Secretary of the Association of Cricket Umpires (ACU) at that time,

*Fig 1 - Sheila Hill*

WCA

*Administratively, a number of women A.C.U. members are officers of umpiring organisations and perform these duties with an air of efficiency. In April 1975, Miss Sheila Hill, one of the W.C.A.'s respected umpires, and then the chairman of the Hillingdon and District Umpires Association, became the first woman to serve the A.C.U. as a member of its General Council.*

Rachael continued:

*Women umpires in England do not adhere to the men's 'uniform' displayed in first class matches and Tests – white shoes, navy trousers, white coat and shirt – but the Executive Committee of the W.C.A. do ask their officials to adhere to the ruling of wearing skirts rather than slacks, thus avoiding any look of masculinity.*

Sheila also served for 25 years on MCC's Laws sub-committee, despite not being a member of the club when she first joined the group. However, in 1999 she became one of the first ten women to be granted honorary membership of MCC, and she was one of the main authors of the revised Laws of Cricket, which were issued by MCC and adopted in 2000. She stayed on that sub-committee until 2015, when she was 87, four years after she was awarded an MBE for her services to cricket.



**Doris Coysh** (figure 2) became an umpire when her playing career finished. She umpired two Women's Test matches. Doris was required to obtain satisfactory results in tests set by the Examination Board and the submission of evidence of her practical experience. The standards were set very high.

Rachael Heyhoe Flint records that 'the earliest recorded 'joining' was Mrs. Doris Coysh of Worthing, Sussex, whose membership dates back to November, 1959, only six years after the Association [of Cricket Umpires] was founded.'

In 1965, Brian Cook a reporter for *The Worthing Herald*, wrote an article in 1965 about Doris that sums up her cricket playing and umpiring. He wrote:

*Over the past four years Ferring Cricket Club's bowlers have been shouting their appeals for catches and leg before wicket knowing that they will not be getting away with cheap wickets – for their umpire is a former Test player – and a woman.*

*Mrs Doris Coysh is one of only two women in the country qualified to umpire in any class of men's or women's cricket. ...*

*Fig 2 – Doris Coysh*

*WCA* During a long-playing career, Mrs Coysh, ... chairman of the women's Test selectors this year, played for England, Sussex, Kent and Middlesex, as well as various club sides. ... when she could no longer play, she decided to turn to umpiring rather than give it up all together.

*It took her only three years to pass the examination for the Association of Cricket Umpires first-class qualification, and since then she has become a well-known figure in international women's cricket.*

*Mrs Coysh umpired in Test matches between England and Australia, and next summer she might be asked to officiate again when New Zealand visit this country.*

*During her years umpiring at Ferring, which, she says, have been most enjoyable, there have been little comment about her position.*

*There have certainly been no complaints – there have actually been several compliments. 'After four years, the different sides that visit Ferring are beginning to know me quite well,' she said.*

Doris's career paints a picture of the social history of the time with regard to women and women's cricket. In 2020 KCCC awarded Doris a cap (Number 6) for her service to the club during the period 1949-1951.

The sight of a woman umpire on the pitch at a matches today does not raise a comment due to the foundations laid by the early women umpires especially those from Kent.

**Rosemary Piddock**

## *The Eagle Club*



In the fifties, surely the golden era of children's comics, supreme among the many, stood the *Eagle*,

The brainwave of a Lancastrian vicar Marcus Morris, it first appeared published by the Hulton Press in 1950 with immortal Dan Dare, pilot of the future, on the front cover, there from the start. Its success bore fruit in three titles in group aimed either at girls or an age group. These were *Girl*, *Swift* and *Robin*.

But it was *Eagle* that remains in the memory and the idealist views of its founder, Hence the Eagle Club was created for its readers. Members of the Club as it was laid down will:-

1. Enjoy life and help others enjoy life,
2. Make the best of themselves,
3. Work with others for the good of all concerned

All very idealist, but there were more practical reasons to join. It vaguely offered "opportunities to football enthusiasts to enjoy certain privileges in the sport" to improve their game. This was a bit vague. Holidays in association with the Youth Hostels Association and local get togethers were offered. But above all it was the cricket privilege that scored.

By presenting your membership card (above) you had free entry at certain matches after 4.30pm and these always included Gravesend Cricket Week. In 1958 the entry price for juniors was one shilling (ten pence) after 4 pm, a fortune for someone had just 6d (2½p now) as weekly pocket money.

However, the Hulton Press folded in 1959 and although the comics passed to Odhams Press, the Eagle Club did not. The first year, the gateman was persuaded the arrangement still held, but it was chancing luck too much thereafter and other means were required and used.

## *Kent Cricket and Hollywood: a very tenuous link*

A small publishing company from the Manchester area, Red Rose books, are producing a number of books on Philadelphian cricket, home and away. None are directly of interest to Kent, yet, but one has a passing connection, linking the county to someone any avid film buff out there will know,



In the booklet on a father and son entitled *The A-One Bumper and the Beautiful Man*, the father, Eddie Cregar, famed for bowling bumpers, took 6 for 54 against Kent in the second first-class match of the 1903 tour to Philadelphia. He was a very large man, indeed his size ended his cricketing career. That feature came out with tragic consequences in the youngest of his six sons, Laird (left), the Hollywood actor, whose short distinguished career, through thirteen films, straddled the war years. He was menacingly large, 340 lb, and although only in his mid twenties played characters often many years older/ More often too, they were sinister and of ill repute, but virtually always he stole the film with invariably positive reviews But longing for a more attractive body he embarked on a ridiculous crash slimming diet—quantities of drugs and yogurt. He lost 100 lb during the making of his final film *Hangover Square*, but the strain on his body

killed him. He was 31.



## *Items for Sale*

We are continuing to sort through a large number of duplicate items in the collection at Canterbury to find space to accommodate new items that have arrived over the summer. We'd like to offer members the opportunity to acquire a few postcards of past players and teams, all of which are in good – or better - condition. The “price” quoted is a suggested minimum donation to the Heritage Trust (though feel free to donate a little more if you can!). 100% of the proceeds will be used to help us look after the many historically important items we have in the Kent Cricket collection.

Please let me know via [ian.phipps23@gmail.com](mailto:ian.phipps23@gmail.com) if you would like to acquire any of the following items



### **JACK HUBBLE**

Black and white, real photograph postcard (unused) of Hubble in full length batting pose. Image by Mockford of Tonbridge; 8.8cms x 13.8cms. Minor knocks to corners, otherwise very good. Kent CCC Photograph label to reverse.

Suggested minimum donation: £5.00



### **FRED HUISH**

Black and white, real photograph postcard (unused) of Huish in full length wicket-keeping pose. Image by Mockford of Tonbridge; 8.9cms x 13.8cms. Minor knocks to lower corners and tightly trimmed, otherwise good.

Suggested minimum donation: £5.00



### **EDWARD 'PUNTER' HUMPHREYS**

Black and white, real photograph postcard (unused) of Humphreys in full length batting pose. Image by Mockford of Tonbridge; 8.8cms x 13.8cms. Minor knocks to corners, otherwise very good.

Suggested minimum donation: £5.00

## Who's Who at KCHT

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Howard Milton     Simon Storey

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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](http://KCHT.co.uk) then click KCHT media

Read the KCHT blog at –

[kentcricketheritagetrust.wordpress.com](http://kentcricketheritagetrust.wordpress.com)



### KENT CRICKET TEAM 1906 – CHAMPIONS

Black and white, real photograph postcard (unused) of a team at Tonbridge with player names and title printed to the lower margin. Image by Mockford of Tonbridge; 13.7cm x 8.7cm. Very good condition. £8.

We will continue to update our scorecard and photograph/postcard collections during the winter. Please let me know if you would like to be advised of any other duplicate items we may wish to dispose of.