

Conventional and Unconventional Cricketers

A Social History of Kennington Cricket Club



By

Peter Grant

With a Foreword by

Lord Cowdrey of Tonbridge



Arial view of Ulley road 2003. Kennington CC ground to left.

"Life is an elaborate metaphor for cricket."

Marvin Cohen

"Personally, I have always looked upon cricket as organised loafing."

William Temple, later Archbishop of Canterbury

"Kent has always stood proudly pre-eminent; Kent is emphatically the field of the cricketer's glory."

John Mitford, review of Nyren, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1833

"A man who is engaged in heavy brainwork, such as writing a book about cricket... cannot be expected to be at his best on the cricket field."

K.S.Ranjitsinhji, in *The Jubilee Book of Cricket*, 1897

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NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Grant was born in Ashford in 1955. His parents' home is next to Kennington Cricket Club for whom his father, C.J. 'Twiz' Grant played from 1950 to 1977. Peter made his debut for the club in 1967 and has made over 700 appearances for the club.

From 1987 to 1994 Peter was Director of the London Community Cricket Association, promoting the game in inner London's most deprived areas. During this time he was also Development Director of the London Cricket College that produced a number of first class players such as Keith Piper and Adrian Rollins.

In 1995 he joined Sport England's Lottery unit and latterly became Head of Public Affairs and Development. He supervised many cricket-related projects including the Radcliffe Road development at Trent Bridge.

In 1999 Peter became Director of Operations for the New Opportunities Fund. Among the £4.5 billion programmes he managed were the People's Network (connecting all UK libraries to the Internet), Healthy Living Centres, Out of School Hours activities, Veterans Reunited and the £750 million investment in school sports facilities.

In 2004 Peter was appointed Senior Visiting Fellow at the Cass Business School of City University London running the world's first post-graduate courses in grant making and he also acts as consultant to the government and Lottery distributors on improvements to the use of the money for Lottery good causes.

Peter's interest in general knowledge quizzes has led to appearances on University Challenge, Brain of Britain and Fifteen-to-One.



The author with Paul Johnson (captain Nottinghamshire CCC) at Trent Bridge for the Lottery Sports Fund v Notts game, 4 August 1998, to celebrate the opening of the opening of the Radcliffe Road stand.

**FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION
BY LORD COWDREY OF TONBRIDGE**



Cricket club histories can be rather dull affairs. That this is emphatically **not** one of them owes everything to the dedication of the author.

Peter Grant, a true Man of Kent, has cricket in his blood. Both in his professional capacity, with the London Community Cricket Association and London Cricket College and in his 'spare' time for Kennington CC, Peter is a real cricket lover. Though a player of only moderate ability, Peter is one of those whose contribution to cricket is far greater off the field. His professional achievements have been matched at Kennington where the club now boasts some of the most spacious changing rooms anywhere in Kent – far less crowded than on many county or even Test match grounds.

Conventional and Unconventional Cricketers tells the story of a typical village team. Colourful characters, unusual and humorous incidents are there, but not, mercifully, of the kind that only other club members will find amusing! However, the book goes well beyond this limited scope. It is also a serious, meticulously researched and entertaining account of the rise of village cricket in the last century. Peter doesn't just *say* that cricket is the best and most interesting of all games, he tells *why* it is. Consequently the book is an enjoyable and informative read even if you have never set foot in the Ashford district.

Kent has a long and unique cricketing history and has produced a number of distinguished cricket historians. With *Conventional and Unconventional Cricketers* Peter Grant's name can be added to this list.

COLIN COWDREY
Angmering Park,
May 1995

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With its plethora of written records – most notably score books – cricket lends itself readily to the compilation of histories. Yet a remarkably large number of clubs, including even some first class counties, have failed to preserve these documents. That Kennington, largely, *has* done so is due, in no small part, to the late Harry Martin. Kennington's longest serving player, Harry provided much of the material that was included in the first history of the club compiled by Alec Robinson and Twiz Grant in 1962-63. It is on their excellent researches that the present work is based.

In addition I would like to thank the following who have been of great assistance:

Stephen Green, Curator MCC Cricket Library Lord's
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Tunbridge Wells Library
British Newspaper Library, Colindale
Deal Library
Folkestone Library
The British Library
City of Westminster Library
Kent County Archives
The Buff's Museum, Canterbury

And all current and former players and supporters of Kennington
Cricket Club.

CHAPTER ONE

A SOCIAL GAME

"Village cricket, just like life, is not what it used to be, but what is? ... We view village cricket through a sepia tint, deluding ourselves that the rustic farm labourer still hits the wily parson's leg-breaks into the next parish, that foaming tankards of ale are quaffed with the opposition, as they graciously acknowledge in the idyllic pub on the green that you were better on the day. Village cricket still retains its chocolate-box appeal because we need its escapist quality as we grapple during the week with profit margins, rapacious middle men, the obtuse procrastinations at head office or the bureaucrats intent on making our lives less fulfilling. We need our fix from the needle of fantasy, otherwise the utilitarian side of life holds sway. Despite all reservations, village green cricket remains the real version of our summer game, a rich seam of rural culture, a solid bulwark against a world that is moving too frenetically and in a country which is shrinking alarmingly."

Patrick Murphy, *The Rothmans Book of Village Cricket*, p 25.

"Cricket is a game full of forlorn hopes and sudden dramatic changes of fortune, and its rules are so ill-defined that their interpretation is partly an ethical business. Some cricket takes up a lot of time and is rather an expensive game to play, it is predominantly an upper class game and nearly all modern-minded people dislike it. The Nazis, for instance, were at pains to discourage cricket."

George Orwell, *Raffles and Miss Blandish*, in *Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters Vol 3*

George Orwell's ambivalent comments express both his dislike for what he saw as the reactionary side of cricket and, at the same time, thinly disguise a deeply felt love for the sport. A game that can last nearly a week and not produce a definite result seems anachronistic yet cricket can be fascinating because of its very anachronism. A cricket match can be enjoyed without any knowledge of the game's past or traditions but cricket has a literature and inspires nostalgia unique among sports. Why is this? Obviously cricket has a longer history than virtually any other sport but the reasons go deeper.

Games, as John Arlott has pointed out, "are as truly part of the history of a nation as its work, wars and art. They are a reflection of the social life of the people, changing with it and conditioned by changes in economy, religion and politics." [1]

This social dimension is probably at its strongest in the history of cricket. The era of the Regency 'buck' is mirrored in the heyday of the wager match. The Industrial Revolution affected cricket both technically, as in the introduction of

machinery to produce better pitches leading to true over-arm bowling becoming possible, and organisationally with, for example, the development of the County Championship and the Northern leagues. The Edwardian 'Golden Age' reflected the carefree complacency of pre-First World War Britain.

The broader view of cricket history is gaining wider acceptance. Writers with such diverse outlooks as Arlott, Rowland Bowen, Derek Birley, Christopher Brookes, Michael Down, John Ford, David Frith, C.L.R. James and J.R. Mangan have all commented on the social influences in the development of the sport. They have, however, concentrated almost exclusively on the professional, first class game. Some have mentioned village cricket but have often misunderstood it. In his otherwise excellent book 'Is It Cricket?' Michael Down writes:

"Since the mid-eighteenth century there have always been two distinct types of cricket – the professional or first class game which attracts paying spectators, and the club, village or schoolboy game played in spare time purely for fun. While the

organisation and conduct of the former has typically been influenced by outside social forces, the latter has been a more constant and intrinsic part of the nation's everyday life." [2]

This is, at best, a severe over-simplification. Village cricket is considerably influenced by wider social changes; it is just that its developments have been less obvious than those in the vastly more publicised first class sector.

A considerable portion of this book describes the period when external forces exerted their greatest influence on the village game. The years of the mid- to late-nineteenth century (approximately 1865 to 1890) were the most crucial in the history of village cricket. It underwent a virtual revolution with an explosion in the formation of clubs and a change from haphazard to constitutional organisation. In this era, changes in society as a whole and first class cricket in particular filtered down to village level.

Among the upper and middle classes cricket achieved unique status as a moral and physical character-building mechanism. This philosophy was expounded to those sectors of the working class whose greater involvement in British political life was being sought, particularly following the 1867 extension of voting rights. Political leaders, most notably Disraeli, saw the wisdom of giving a broader section of society a say in the government of the nation. At the same time they were careful to be selective in those to whom these rights were extended. They argued that those who had some stake in society would scarcely be likely to want to undermine it; in much the same way as the Thatcher government sought to extend property and share ownership whilst curtailing the power of the old-style trade unions. In the latter half of the last century it was skilled, upper-working class men who were being groomed for greater social and political responsibilities. In towns and villages throughout Britain cricket was seized upon as an ideal aid to this process. Cricket provided an opportunity for men of all classes to mix together whilst maintaining such essentials as qualities of leadership and discipline and the subordination of personal glory to the general good of the team. The cult of cricket was particularly prevalent among those sections of the middle class charged with the task of guiding working class opinion – clergymen, schoolmasters, squires, doctors and the like.

They had assimilated this ideology at the public schools and universities where, by the end of the century, cricket had come to be regarded with almost religious fervour.

It is no accident that these local opinion leaders were particularly prominent among the founders of most of the village cricket clubs of the period. I am not arguing that all these individuals consciously had broader political considerations in mind, merely that the dramatic increase in the formation of organised cricket clubs with middle class patrons, elected officials, written rules and constitutions must be seen as a consequence of wider changes in British society.

Kennington is, in respect of the remarks above, a typical village cricket club. Its first rules were drawn up, and officials elected, in 1882 under the patronage of the local vicar and squire. The leading light of the club in its early years was a public schoolmaster, whose family was instrumental in the promulgation of cricket as the epitome of the late Victorian ideal of 'manliness'. Also, the majority of the club's players during this period were drawn from the skilled working class (see Chapter 8).

For village cricket the period from 1865 to the end of the century is so important and, I hope, interesting that I make no apologies for dwelling upon it at some length. The subsequent Edwardian era is equally fascinating. This 'Golden Age' marked the high-point of public school and country house cricket and was epitomised by the dashing amateur batsmen of the day. Again, Kennington followed national trends in that the colourful author and journalist, Albert Kinross, who very much represented the spirit of the times, led the side.

Since the First World War other social changes have affected the game. In recent years leisure itself has become an industry with sports such as golf and squash and, more recently, leisure and fitness centres, blossoming. Village cricket, in common with other team games, has come under threat and has had to adapt to survive.

Village cricket is a social game. What happens on the field is often less important than what goes on off it. Whereas other games end with the final point or the referee's whistle a village cricket match is prolonged in clubroom or pub for hours and, in averages and statistics, almost indefinitely. The history of a local cricket club reflects changes that have taken

place within the game, within its own community and throughout society. The reason for writing this book is that I believe that the more one understands about the past, the richer is one's experience of the present. Knowing about the history of Kennington Cricket Club may not improve one's enjoyment or performance but I hope that it adds a further dimension to what is already the most fascinating of games.

CHAPTER TWO

LOUSY KENNINGTON

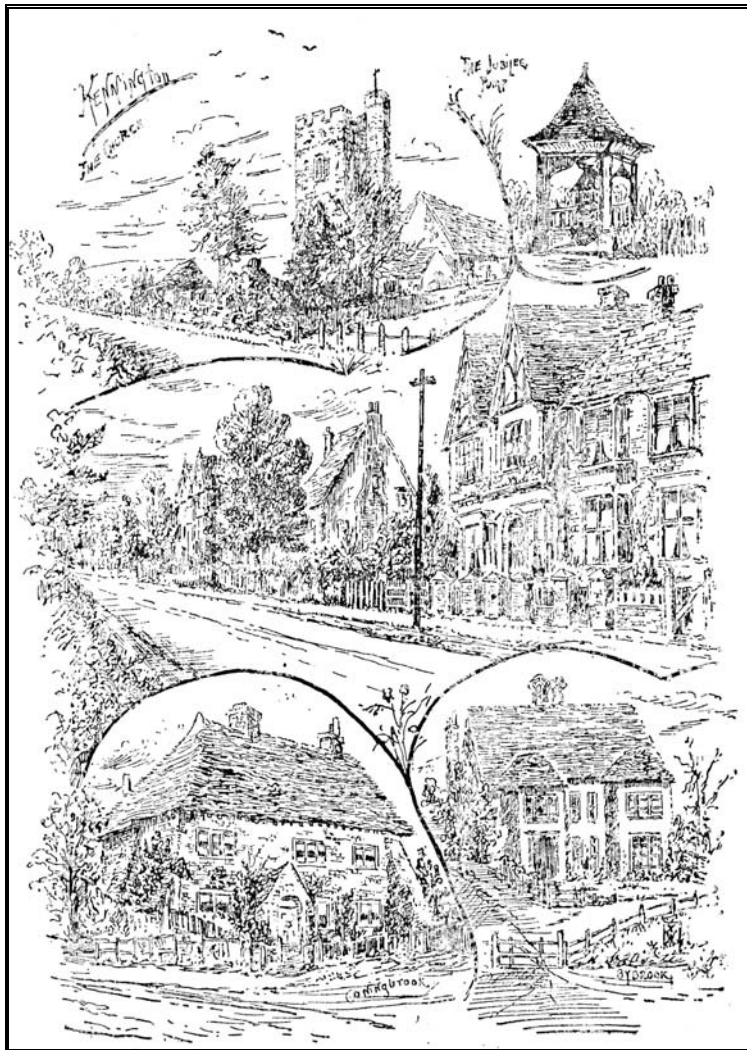
"Surlly Ashford, proud Wye and lousy Kennington hard by."

"Naughty Ashford, surlly Wye, poor Kennington hard by."

Two versions of an old Kentish proverb.

"Kennington is without doubt one of the most pleasant and picturesque parishes in South-East Kent."

Sir Charles Igglesden, *'A Saunter Through Kent With Pen and Pencil'*, 1899.



Xavier Willis's Drawings of Kennington.

From Volume 1 of Sir Charles Igglesden's 'A Saunter Through Kent with Pen and Paper' (1899)

Lousy, poor, picturesque? The quotations seem to indicate that there has, in the past, been some disagreement about Kennington's local and historical stature. The origins of the proverbs are 'lost in the mists of time' and, with the far-reaching changes that have turned Kennington from

a village into a suburb, few would reiterate Sir Charles Igglesden's assessment today. Superficially Kennington has had an unremarkable history. In his guide to Kennington church the Rev E.B.Lewis was perfectly correct in stating that the village "has had comparatively little history of an

exciting nature. Wars and turmoils which have swept the nation over the centuries seem to have left little mark." Nevertheless, all parts of our country have a rich and varied past and, though perhaps not dramatic or exciting, Kennington's is no exception.

The story of Kennington, and with it the Ulley Field, on which the cricket ground is sited, stretches back through a thousand years of recorded history. At the time of the Norman invasion the village was known as 'Chenetone', deriving from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Cyning' meaning a king. It is therefore safe to assume that the original meaning of the name Kennington was 'the king's town', indicating that the area was, at least, owned by a Saxon monarch – possibly a Kentish king. The first actual mention of the manor of Chenetone comes in 1045 when the king, Edward the Confessor, granted it to the abbey of St Augustine, Canterbury. It is recorded as being in the lath (administrative district) of Wivarlet (Wye) and belonging to the abbey in the Domesday Book. The Domesday survey reveals that the parish had arable land sufficient for ten teams of oxen and that there were 30 villeins (bondsmen or serfs) living there.



St Mary's Church Kennington today

The building of Kennington church was begun some time in the 1100s and at this time the Abbot of St Augustine's owned 62 acres of land in the parish which was valued, in 1385, at £29 12s 6d. Local produce in the fourteenth century included lambs, milk, wool, calves, pigs, chickens,

ducks, pigeons, geese, flax, hemp, apples and pears and a mill was in existence at least as early as 1332.

The rectory and manor of Kennington remained in the Abbey's possession until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538. Henry VIII then granted the lordship to Sir Anthony St Leger of Ulcombe. Sir Anthony, who was Lord Deputy of Ireland, only held the manor and church lands for twelve years when he surrendered them into the hands of Henry's son, Edward VI, in exchange for Leeds Priory, near Maidstone. They soon passed from Edward to John Dudley, Earl of Warwick, afterwards created Duke of Northumberland, who was one of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the realm. On the king's death he attempted to secure the crown for his daughter-in-law, Lady Jane Grey, but failed. On the accession of Queen Mary he was declared a rebel, arrested and executed. The manor and estate thus again came into the possession of the crown.



Kennington Church from an 18th century watercolour

The population of Kennington was still very small. In the late sixteenth century the number of church communicants (which would exclude young children) was 125, rising to 156 by the mid-1600s. This period was also a time of great superstition and belief in witchcraft and Kennington did not escape a share of this hysteria. In 1564 John Braynforth became vicar of the parish and during his incumbency an account is given of one Mildred Norrington of Westwell, aged 17, by Reginald Scott, of Scots Hall, Smeeth, in his work *The Discovery of Witchcraft*. Norrington was servant to William Spooner and was charged with witchcraft. Mr Braynforth and Roger Newman, vicar of Westwell, investigated the charges. Apparently she was so violent during the examination that at times four men were required to hold her down. Some of the persons supposed to have been bewitched by her 'languished and died' and she was also reported as being able to go into miraculous trances. Her defence

was that her apparently supernatural powers were the result of simple ventriloquism. The documents relate that she received 'condign' i.e. fitting, punishment and, as no record of her trial is to be found in the assize records, this may mean she was put to death locally.

The village also had connections with the traditional Kentish occupation of smuggling, as Sir Charles Igglesden has related:

"An old smugglers' haunt a short time disappeared by the demolition of the familiar straggling building on Goat Lees, close to Eastwell Towers. This structure, which was, until dilapidation recently made it uninhabitable, originally the abode of a well-known smuggler of the name of Ford. A man of gigantic stature, it was not an uncommon thing for him to journey on foot from Hythe by way of secluded bye lanes, known to accomplices as 'The Smugglers' Track', with three 'tubs' of spirits slung across his back. The capacity of each 'tub' was sixteen quarts, and, contrary to what one might expect, the disposal of the contents was not done wholly surreptitiously. Inhabitants of the neighbourhood were wont to go to the old house to purchase spirits, which were obtainable at the amazingly low price of tenpence a quart, gin being the favourite beverage of the time. Ford generally 'worked' with a single partner, and, following the frequent custom of those days, was evidently in league with the local excise officers. In the neighbourhood of this old building – a red brick house, by-the-bye – is one of the tracks of the famous Hawkhurst smuggling gang, and mid-way between Ford's house and Boughton Aluph is a field known as 'Burnt House Field', a name derived from the destruction by fire of a house which stood in the meadow, and in which one of the outlawed members of this gang hid for years from the officers of the law. A reward of fifty pounds was offered for his capture, dead or alive, and when his wife accidentally set alight to the structure whilst heating her oven with bean straw he managed to make good his escape." [1]

The manor and estate of Kennington remained in the possession of the crown until the reign of Charles I when he granted it to Sir Thomas Finch, second son of Sir Moyle Finch, of Eastwell. They remained the property of the Finch family, who were later created Earls of Winchelsea, until the end of the nineteenth century when their estates, with the exception of Eastwell, were split up and sold. The impressive memorials of the

family, which used to reside in Eastwell Church, can now be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Ninth Earl was one of the leading cricket patrons of the eighteenth century whilst the Tenth became notorious, in 1829, for fighting a duel with the Duke of Wellington.

Adjoining the Manor of Kennington, whose manor house was Conningbrook off Willesborough Lane, was the lesser manor of Ulley. The word 'ulley' is derived from the Old English words 'ule leah' meaning 'owl clearing' – a clearing in a wood frequented by owls, from which the Cricket Club badge (in the colours of the manor of Ulley, gold, silver and crimson) is derived. Robert Furley, a local solicitor, related its history in his *Annals of Kennington*, published in 1877:

"The family of Criole appear to have been its earliest possessors. They had considerable property in Kent, and Bertram and Bartholomew were both sheriffs of Kent between AD 1232 and 1238. Bertram held the hundred of Folkestone of the Crown jointly with John de Sandwich. He also held in grand serjeantry the manor of Seaton in the adjoining manor of Boughton Aluph of the honour of Boulogne, by the extraordinary service of providing a vautrer to lead three greyhounds when the king should go into Gascony, 'so long as a pair of shoes of 4d price should last.' He also held the manor of Eastwell and Criole's Court in Shadoxhurst. Nicolas de Criole was one of the insurgents during the Baron's war. Simon de Criole was one of the fifty leading men of Kent who accompanied Edward I at the siege of Caerlaverock, AD 1300, and was knighted on the field. On the failure of the male issue this manor, with other large possessions, passed to Joane, the wife of Sir Richard Roakesle, and thence by marriage to the Poynings, both distinguished families. In the reign of Henry VI it again passed by marriage to Henry, Lord Percy, afterwards Earl of Northumberland, and his descendant sold it in the reign of Henry VIII to Sir Christopher Hales, the Attorney General. His three daughters sold it to Sir Thomas Moyle, of Eastwell, and his daughter carried it in marriage to Sir Thomas Finch, whose descendants, Earls of Winchelsea and Nottingham, have inherited it to the present time."

Thus, the ownership of the two manors was united. The actual site of the manor house of Ulley is uncertain. If there was one it was probably very near the present cricket ground. Until late in the nineteenth century

the two main landmarks of the ground were the post-mill, some fifty yards to the west, and an ancient pollarded oak which stood at the top of Ball Lane. It was beneath this tree that the local hundred court was held. In the Middle Ages each hundred was responsible for its own civil justice. This was maintained by the 'Borsholder' - literally a term describing the special wand belonging to the hundred that was carried by a responsible man as a symbol of justice. The Borsholder gathered together all culprits and witnesses under the shade of the tree.

Thus, in 1294, we find William Buckin of Kennington charged with harbouring an outlaw and William the Baker of Kennington who had been wounded and robbed, but whose assailant escaped, called before the court. In 1679 some parishioners were fined for defying the statute that all persons should be buried in woollen shrouds, an early attempt at protectionism passed to give an impulse to the English wool trade. Fines were the usual punishment at the hundred court but in the higher courts punishments were rather more severe. For this purpose stocks stood near the church and the gallows at Spearpoint Corner and in the late seventeenth century three of the sons of the family then living at Burton Farm (now the Burton Estate) were hanged there for sheep stealing.

But Kennington has also had its heroes as well as its villains. Henry Horn was born in Kennington in 1830. The son of John and Sarah Horne (sic) Henry was originally a labourer. It was possibly his humble occupation that led to his enlistment in the army on 23 March 1853, seven months before the outbreak of war with Russia. A private in the 4th Light Dragoons, Horn was despatched with the British expeditionary force to the Crimea where he took part in the first battle of the war at the Alma River.

On 25th October 1854 Horn's regiment, commanded by Lord George Paget, formed the second line of the Earl of Cardigan's Light Cavalry Brigade drawn up near the small port of Balaklava. The commander of the British forces, Lord Raglan, wanted Cardigan to prevent a small force of Russians carrying away some British field guns in the next valley. He wrote an order to that effect and despatched a headstrong and ambitious young Captain, Edward Nolan, to deliver it to Cardigan and Lord Lucan, commander of the cavalry and Cardigan's hated brother-in-law.

A mixture of unclear orders (Cardigan could not see the next valley from his position); Nolan's reckless comments - "There is your enemy! There are your guns!" - and Lucan and Cardigan's conceit and stubbornness combined to make the Charge of the Light Brigade the most pointlessly heroic incident in British military history. Instead of attacking a minor skirmishing band, 673 men charged straight into the face of the main Russian army, supported on three sides by sizeable artillery batteries. Fewer than 200 returned, one of them was Henry Horn.

Horn went on to fight again at the Battle of Inkerman before, as with so many of his comrades in the Crimea, falling ill. He was sent to the notorious military hospital at Scutari in January 1855 where even the ministrations of Florence Nightingale were to no avail and he died the following month. Recently Private Horn's Crimea Medal has come up for sale for the not inconsiderable sum of £3,750.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Kennington was still a very small village, its population no more than doubled since the Domesday survey. In 1811 there were 61 houses and a population of 373. By mid century (1861) this had risen to 567. The village had only two streets in addition to the turnpike to Faversham (whose toll cottage still stands by the Towers School) and the main road from Ashford to Canterbury. These were Queen Street, the present Street, running from the church to Canterbury Road, and King Street, the present Ball Lane, joining the church and the 'Golden Ball' Inn. Ulley Road was originally known as Windmill Road after the post-mill that stood next to the present cricket ground. This was the oldest mill in Ashford, having been built around 1769. It was finally pulled down in about 1878.



Kennington's unique triple-powered mill in the early twentieth century



The 'Golden Ball' around 1900

Despite its small size the village maintained three pubs. The 'Rose' and 'Golden Ball', both still in existence, plus the 'Laurel Tree' Inn in Queen Street. This last was described by Sir Charles Igglesden as "a disreputable beerhouse" and was converted into almshouses (which still stand) in the latter part of the century. Besides the Ulley post-mill there were two other mills in the village. A second post-mill in what is now Church Road and that near the 'Golden Ball', which is the only surviving building. This mill had the unique distinction of having no fewer than three modes of power: wind, water and steam.



Upper Vicarage Road Kennington around 1900



Faversham Road Kennington around 1900

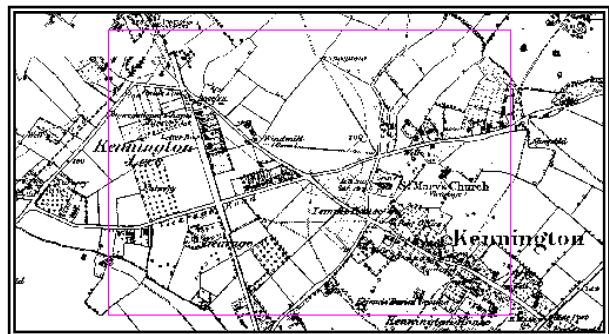
The last hundred years have witnessed dramatic changes. Even in the early 1930s Sir Charles Igglesden wrote that, "few villages have so radically changed in appearance during the last half century as Kennington." Kennington's growth as a suburb has been reflected in its population figures:

Year	Population	% increase on Previous Census
1871	642	13.2
1881	740	15.3
1891	890	20.3
1901	896	0.7
1911	1,087	21.3
1921	1,527	40.5
1931	1,660	8.7
1951	1,894	14.1
1961	2,441	28.9
1971	4,035	65.3
1981 [2]	8,060	99.8
1991	8,739	8.4
2001 [3]	9,543	9.2

In 1972 the Rev E.B.Lewis wrote:

"It has been very difficult to create a community spirit within the village because such development as has taken place has been on parallel lines creating no centre for shopping or social life within the village. The development of a large new housing complex on the west side of the Faversham Road has further divided the parish and created new and almost insoluble problems for a Church situated as it is now on the extreme north east side of a large conurbation." [4]

The problems for the church, in that little development has taken place nearby, is a blessing for the cricket club as the ground has, so far, escaped the builder's attentions. One fervently hopes that any new pressures for housing will not result in the loss of an amenity which has been used for well over one hundred years and a club that has, as I hope to show in the following chapters, contributed a great deal to its community.



Kennington 1876

CHAPTER THREE

EARLY CRICKET IN THE ASHFORD DISTRICT 1743 to 1800

"Cricket is, to be sure, a manly game and not bad in itself, but it is the ill-use made of it, by betting above £10 upon it, that is bad and against the laws."

Judge's comment during a lawsuit over a betting debt, 1748.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century cricket underwent its first revolution. From being a working class folk-game with no codified laws it began to be adopted by a section of the aristocracy both as a recreation and, much more importantly, for its potential as a medium for betting. After the turmoils of Civil War and Restoration the aristocracy were becoming more of a leisured class, less enamoured with directly warlike pursuits. Previous statutes prohibiting any sports that might interfere with archery practice were being either repealed or ignored and the upper classes were beginning to patronise those that might indulge their passions for a wager. Horseracing and pugilism were two, cricket another. The attractions of cricket must have included its team nature and the fact that, unlike flat racing and boxing, 'gentlemen' could take part without significantly demeaning themselves. If betting was to take place rules were necessary. In 1727 the first known Articles of Agreement were drawn up and in 1744 a group of gentlemen met at the 'Star and Garter' in Pall Mall and drafted the first "laws of the manly and noble game of cricket."

Kent, along with Sussex and Surrey, was one of the cradles of the game. One of the first definite references to cricket occurs in the Ashford area. In 1629 the curate of Ruckinge, Henry Cuffen, was brought before the Archdeacon's Court for playing "at Cricketts" with "boys and other very mean and base persons of the parish" on Sundays. He admitted he played cricket with some of his parishioners but claimed that these individuals were, on the contrary, "persons of repute and fashion." [1]

A year before the 1744 laws came into existence the first recorded match took place in the district. It was announced in the *Kentish Weekly Post* of 9 July, 1743, that a match of cricket between the Gentlemen of Ashford and the Gentlemen of Wye would take place at Wye on the 19th of that

month. The result of this first game was not reported, few were at this early date, but we know a good deal about how the game was played in those days. The ball was bowled underarm, along the ground, usually as fast as possible. The bat was slightly curved and considerably heavier than today – more like a heavy hockey stick. The batsman defended two stumps each 22 inches high and six inches apart topped by a single bail. With the exception of LBW, he could be dismissed in much the same fashion as in the modern game.

With the ball bowled along the ground and no preparation of pitches (the pitch was selected by the leading bowler of the team winning the toss immediately prior to the game) making runs was not easy. Forty was considered a good total and the first known century wasn't made until 1769. Runs or more correctly 'notches' as they were recorded by the cutting of notches in a stick, were scored at what today would be considered an extremely slow rate. Ten runs an hour was not uncommon and, in a six-a-side match between Kent and Hampshire in 1788, only 78 runs were scored in six days! Much of the excitement for the spectators, who, at important matches, could number several thousand, came from betting on the result or on individual performances through early versions of spread betting.

Eastwell Park was one of the earliest venues for cricket in the Ashford area and a match there in 1747 proved of considerable importance in the history of the game, as it was the first at which lunch was provided! A contemporary advertisement stated that:

"On July 16 will be played a game of cricket in Eastwell Park, between Milton [near Sittingbourne] and New Romney, for half a guinea a man, no dogs will be allowed in the Park. NB There will be a good ordinary [lunch] provided at Robert Cheeseman's at the 'Flying Horse', at Boughton Lees, to be on the table at twelve o'clock." [2]

Mr Cheeseman also supplied an ordinary for the match between Milton and Bethersden played in the Park in 1752.

The nearby green at Boughton Lees was also a venue for cricket from the earliest date and H.T.Waghorn's *The Dawn of Cricket* quotes a newspaper report of 27 June, 1752:

"From Boughton Lees we have news that a cricket match is to be played there on Friday next, July 2nd, for 11 pairs of gloves, by any gentleman who like to play: wickets to be pitched at 1 o'clock."



The 'Flying Horse' Boughton Lees

No doubt the players repaired to the 'Flying Horse' after the game as cricketers continue to do to this day.

Inns have played an extremely important role throughout the history of cricket. Meetings took place there, sides were selected and notices posted. Landlords sponsored many of these early matches and several notable cricketers of the period were themselves publicans. As we shall see, a later landlord of the 'Flying Horse' had an important role in the formation of the first Kennington cricket team.

Another early venue for cricket in the Ashford area was Hamstreet Green. It was here on Monday 31 July, 1749, that "the neighbouring parishes of that side of the county played the parish of Brenchley." [3] - a considerable travelling distance for the visitors given the transport of the period.

Two matches are recorded as having been played on Boughton Green in 1761. Eleven pairs of gloves were again on offer to the winners of Wye v Great Chart and, on Monday 28 September, Dover played Ashford, Wye and District for 2/6d a man, "wickets to be pitched at 2: to play one

hand [innings] apiece and go to dinner." [4]

Food was obviously an important attraction at these early games at Boughton, probably more so than in other areas. Robert Quested was now the landlord of the 'Flying Horse' and for both 1761 games he provided a 6d ordinary at one o'clock.

During the 1760s several matches by both Wye and Ashford were announced in the 'Kentish Weekly Post'. Sometimes the two joined forces, as in the match Ashford and Wye v Charing, in 1766. The geographical designation of sides at this time was fairly arbitrary. As these games were not played by properly organised clubs it is reasonable to assume that any cricket loving 'gentleman' of the area would be able to play. Even quite widely dispersed villages combined. In a game on Tuesday 28 June, 1768, at Bourne Park (the residence of one of the eighteenth century's greatest cricket patrons, Sir Horace Mann), the Bourne Club beat Charing, Leeds, Bearstead, Woodchurch and Harrietsham "by an innings except 7 runs." [5] These last notices are unusual in that they give the result of the match rather than advertise it in advance. The designation of no fewer than five villages may well indicate the origins of the players involved.

A more comprehensive report of a match is given in a particularly evocative account from 1771:

"The return match of cricket between the gentlemen of Bethersden and those of Ashford was played before a numerous company of spectators on Bull Green, Bethersden which was determined in favour of Bethersden:-

		Notches
Ashford	first hands in	59½
Bethersden	" " "	43½
Ashford ahead		16½
Ashford	second hands in	39½

"In all, 55 notches for Bethersden to get to win. Bethersden had only three men in the second hand, and got the match. Bets run 2 to 1 on Ashford, the first innings. It was remarkable that a youth, not seventeen years of age, who played on the side of Bethersden, struck the last ball and got 7 notches before it was returned." [6]

This match was obviously an important local event as it took place over two days, 7 and 8 August, and the newspaper found it necessary to record the attendance. It is

also remarkable for the fact that half-notches were scored. I can find no other reference to this and, therefore, how you scored a 'half-notch'; perhaps they were when a run out occurred and only one batsman made his ground?

The 1770s also saw the emergence of Ashford's first 'county' cricketer, Edward Hussey, who played six times for Kent between 1773 and 1796. Born in 1748 he was educated at Westminster School and lived both at Ashford and Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst. Lord Harris' *History of Kent County Cricket* records that "he was very active and athletic in his youth, a winner of several of the prizes of the Kentish bowmen, and a bold and excellent rider, as well as a good cricketer." He died at Lamberhurst on 4 July 1816. Though his record as a county player is extremely modest – 12 innings, 31 runs, highest score 9 – he found immortality in the poetry of the game. In *Surrey Triumphant or the Kentishmen's Defeat* he is referred to as "Hussey of Ashford Town" whilst in *The Kentish Cricketers* the following lines appear:

*"Hussey is active, catches well
And as a Field's man will excell.
Fortune won't ever smile on all.
The Best may miss the flatt'ring
Ball."*

Sir Horace Mann's passion for cricket ensured that Bourne Park, Bishopsbourne was, at this time, the most important venue for the sport in the county and major games attracted vast crowds. 15 to 20,000 attended on the first day of the All England v Hampshire game in 1772, a staggering figure in such a sparsely populated area. In 1778 Ashford cricketers again had the privilege of appearing there:

"On Monday August 16 will be played in Bourn Paddock, a match of cricket, by the gentlemen of Warhorn [Warehorne], Ashford, Wye etc against the gentlemen of Bridge, Bourn etc, with a picked man on each side, for 1 guinea a man, wickets pitched at 9 o'clock, and match to be played out." [7]

The early start (by no means unusual in the eighteenth century) and the determination to finish the game was certainly in order to best accommodate betting. The practice of including 'given' or 'picked' men was widespread as a form of handicapping (as was the playing against odds) and these players were usually professionals employed by wealthy patrons as grooms, footmen and the like. The two here may have been two of those known to have been in Sir

Horace's employ. The usual bet per man in matches of this calibre appears to have been half or one guinea. Matches were often on a 'home' and 'away' basis. This was the case here for, as Waghorn records, "The return match of cricket between the gentlemen of Bridge and Bourn, with one man given, against the gentlemen of Ashford, Wareham [sic] and that part of Kent" was advertised as taking place at Ashford on Tuesday, 31 August. The report stated that "The former match being in favour of Bourn and Bridge, they give the liberty of choosing a man or two to make the match equal. Wickets to be pitched at 9 o'clock." Bridge and Bourn's generous gesture probably indicates that the Ashford side was fairly comprehensively beaten first time around.

Though cricket matches were not divided into 'first class' etc the prevalence of betting created divisions of its own. At the top of the scale came the 'great matches' with aristocratic patrons and including the top professionals, with bets of anything up to 1,000 guineas. Matches such as those above fell into the second rank. Bets ranged from a few guineas down to as little as sixpence or, as we have seen, items of clothing etc. The higher the bet the more wealthy the participants would have to be and so the more exclusive would be the game. Even at the lower end of this scale only a small percentage of the population could afford to take part (wages for a farm labourer would have been about eight or nine shillings a week for example). The only way that an ordinary working man would be able to participate would be if he was of exceptional skill and became employed on a professional basis. Another factor mitigating against the participation of the working class in these matches was that they were generally played during the week and, for religious reasons, almost never on Sundays, the only day on which most people were free to enjoy themselves.

Below the level of the 'wager match' much cricket certainly was played (how else would working men be able to become expert at it?), the matches usually being scratch affairs between workmen or boys. These games were never considered newsworthy by the papers of the time. Indeed, working class pastimes were only reported when riots or other disturbances accompanied them. Nevertheless by the end of the century matches of a more recognisably 'village' character were beginning to be reported in the Ashford district; though the majority of the players

would still have been from the 'leisured' classes. The first match involving Boughton Aluph as a separate team is recorded in 1798 with a match against Aldington. The obligatory ordinary was provided at the 'Flying Horse'. It is reasonable to assume that the Boughton team was drawn from further afield than the single village, the side being known by the venue that hosted the game.

The last few years of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth were the highpoint of the wager match, though the number of games began to decline as Britain became preoccupied with fighting Napoleon. In Kent, where the threat of French invasion was at its greatest, the effect was particularly marked.

Nevertheless, even at this time, cricket demonstrated its hold on the leisure pursuits of the men of Kent. In 1800 Boughton met Chartham (or, in some accounts, Chatham) at Boughton Lees for 5/- a man. In the *Kentish Gazette* of the following year it was announced that "there will be a Shole Match of Cricket at Boughton Aluph on June 24." I can, as yet, find no explanation of what a 'shole' or 'shoaling' match was. Possibly it was a scratch affair in which anyone who turned up could participate, but this is no more than a guess.

When, after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, cricket again began to be regularly played in Kent the nature of the game had altered significantly.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRICKET BEGINS IN KENNINGTON 1845

*With his tall and stately presence, with his nobly moulded form,
His broad hand was ever open, his brave heart was ever warm,
All were proud of him, all loved him.... as the changing seasons pass,
As our champion lies a-sleeping underneath the Kentish grass,
Proudly, sadly, we will name him - to forget him were a sin -
Lightly lie the turf upon thee, kind and manly Alfred Mynn.*

William Jeffrey Prowse
In memoriam, Alfred Mynn

Cricket in the 1840s had changed considerably from that of a hundred years previously. In the second half of the eighteenth century there had been dramatic advances in technique. Length bowling, with the ball tossed in the air, often with spin, necessitated changes in batting style. Straight bats were introduced and the batsmen started coming forward to the ball to drive or going back to cut, rather than waiting for it at the crease.

In 1787 the Marylebone Cricket Club was founded and quickly became the game's leading club, pronouncing on the laws and their interpretation. The laws themselves introduced a third stump in 1777 and in 1828 round-arm bowling was finally legalised after many years of experimentation and controversy.

In 1818 William Lambert, the game's leading professional, was banned from playing at Lord's for accepting bribes and, in the same year, bookmakers were turned out of the ground. Though this was very much the 'unacceptable face' of betting it was indicative of a change of attitude to gambling on cricket. From the 1820s betting declined, though reference to it in the laws remained until the 1880s.

By the 'forties the leading power in cricket was Kent. Just as the Hambledon club had dominated the scene in the second half of the previous century so, now, Kent were the undisputed champions.

Led by Alfred Mynn, the 'lion of Kent', one of the greatest ever all-rounders and Fuller Pilch, the period's leading batsman, Kent played England 28 times between 1839 and 1849 winning on no fewer than 16 occasions. Mynn's fame may not now be as

considerable as that of W.G.Grace but his exploits were of similar stature. In 1998 John Woodcock (former editor of *Wisden* and cricket correspondent of *The Times*) selected Mynn as the fourth greatest cricketer of all time, behind only Grace, Don Bradman and Garry Sobers.



Alfred Mynn, towards the end of his career

Boughton Aluph continued to play regularly and by the 1830s had become one of the county's top sides possessing, in the words of the *Kentish Gazette*, several "good underhand bowlers." They were certainly the equal of the powerful Beverley side as a report from the same journal indicates:

"On Friday a match was played at Boughton Aluph between the Beverley and Boughton Clubs. In the first innings Boughton got 60 and Beverley 41; in the second Boughton 78. Beverley had scored 53, with 5 wickets down, when the darkness of the evening stopped the play. The play was very excellent on both sides. The return match will come off at St Stephen's, near the City, on Friday 22nd July." [1]

Three years later, in June 1839, Boughton comprehensively defeated Beverley, and not surprisingly, for they had the services of the great Alfred Mynn himself.

By 1844 Boughton were certainly organised constitutionally for in that year William Hobday, landlord of the *Flying Horse*, is recorded as being the club secretary. William's son Tom was, later, to play a decisive role in the formation of the first regular Kennington side. The following extract suggests that there may well have been two clubs in existence in Boughton at this time:

"A match was also played on Friday week, on Boughton Leeze, between eleven gentlemen of Ashford and eleven gentlemen of the Boughton Aluph (Pickwick) Club. The score was as follows:- Boughton Aluph first innings 7; second innings 8. Ashford first innings 47 – thus beating the Pickwicks in gallant style by 32 runs, and one innings to spare. The Pickwicks have not long taken to the game." [2]

The Pickwick Club could only have come into existence after 1836 – the first publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in serial

form. As Boughton Aluph Cricket Club had been playing for over forty years and given the Pickwicks poor showing, it seems unlikely that they were one and the same. Certainly nothing further is heard of the Pickwick Club and so any link between the two Boughtons remains unclear. It is conceivable that the Boughton Pickwicks became, in the following year, the first Kennington XI though the evidence is slim, relying only on a coincidence of dates.

In his *Cricketers Companion* for 1846 W.Denison wrote that:

"The season.... 1845, was probably the most unfavourable for the practice and illustration of this noble and manly pastime and science that can be remembered. Constant visitations of rain [were] most liberally interspersed, especially in the month of August, with thunder storms. But whilst there was a falling off in the better class, or gentlemen's matches [due to their interest in speculating on the rapid growth in railway building, Denison suggests], there was an astonishing increase in the number of matches got up and played by the respectable tradesmen and labourers."

Kennington's first match was clearly of this nature and, despite the inclement weather, it was on Tuesday 26 August 1845, that the *Kentish Gazette* carried the following report:

"A match was played on Wednesday se'n-night [sic], between the parishes of Challock and Kennington, in which the former came off victorious by one run. The following is the score of this closely contested match:

KENNINGTON				
	1 st INNINGS		2 nd INNINGS	
Sharpe	c Soal	5	b Burton	0
Leese	b Partis	0	b Burton	10
Walter	c Soal	0	not out	1
Weaver	b Burton	5	c Thomsett	3
Capeling	c Chapman	4	st Partis	16
Godden	b Burton	0	b Burton	3
Cramp	c Lion	0	c White	0
Thomas	st Burton	0	c White	9
W.Burton	b Burton	4	c Peach	1
E.Whard	st Partis	6	b Burton	0
Harmer	not out	0	b Partis	0
		24		43

CHALLOCK					
1 ST INNINGS			2 ND INNINGS		
P.Burton	b W.Burton	13	b W.Burton		2
Soal	b Weaver	2	not out		11
Peach	b Weaver	0	not out		2
Lion	c Thomas	0	run out		1
J.Thomsett	c Capeling	2	b Burton		1
Partis	b Weaver	2			
Chapman	b Burton	3	b Sharp		4
Sammer	b Weaver	5			
G.Thomsett	b Weaver	3			
White	not out	9			
Swan	c Cramp	3			
Byes		5			
		47			22

We would now describe this match as a win by six wickets rather than by one run. It is also interesting to note that had Kennington played their first game any earlier than 1845 it would have been technically illegal! For it wasn't until that date that the statute passed during the reign of Henry VIII forbidding all sports other than archery was finally repealed.



Cricket at Wittersham, Kent, 1845

The scorecard reveals one or two differences between the game of the 1840s and that of today. When a batsman was out caught only the name of the catcher was recorded. The bowler's name was considered irrelevant until the advent of 'averages', which didn't come in, to any great extent, until the formation of the County Championship in the 1880s. One can also see that the stumpings, also without the bowler recorded, were achieved by bowlers. This was due to the fact that the bowler would, at the completion of his own over, usually keep wicket to the next. The lack of gloves and pads for this occupation meant the position of long stop, who attempted to save the single, was the specialist and considered the most important in the team.

Of those who featured in this game at least one, William Burton, had played for Boughton. A blacksmith from Brook his name appears in the Boughton side from 1841. Remarkably all but one of six generations of the Burton family have played for Kennington and William's great-great-great-grandson, Nick Ames, was, until recently, a regular member of the team. Of the others, Thomas Walter was a baker with a shop in New Rents, Ashford; James Capeling a boot and shoemaker whose premises were in the High Street and Stephen Sharpe was the Kennington miller also owning a beershop - probably the 'disreputable' *Laurel Tree Inn!*

This match appears to have been a one-off affair and no record of another Kennington game is to be found for a further 19 years. Cricket, however, continued to gain ground in the Ashford area and the town featured in two major games during the 1848 season when Fuller Pilch's nephew, William, was one of two 'given men' playing for Ashford against the South of London Club. The first game was played at the Oval over three days (12 to 14 June). Ashford also received the services of the Kent and Surrey all-rounder William Martingell while South London were strengthened by the presence of Kent left-arm fast bowler Edmund Hinkly and the Surrey slow left-artermer, George Brockwell. The scores were: Ashford 87 (Martingell 25, Brockwell 7 wickets, Hinkly 2) and 123 (H.Buss 28, Pilch 51, Brockwell 4 wickets, Hinkly 6). South London 148 and 63 for 4. South London's six wicket victory was clearly based on the superior bowling abilities of their two professionals. Ashford's batsmen were probably disconcerted by Brockwell's very curious delivery. Just before he bowled he would strike himself on the chest! In wet weather this would leave a large round mark in the centre of his shirt. He was employed at the Oval from its opening in

1845 and on leaving, in 1862, became one of the first cricketers to receive a pension, retiring on half pay [3].

A return game was played at Ashford with the visitors, again with Brockwell, victorious by 35 runs. South London scored 120 and 61 and Ashford, receiving the services of W.Pilch and Hollands, replied with 54 and 92. Batting at number 11 for Ashford and, in the first game, scoring 0 not out and 3, was J.Tappenden, who may well have been the same player who appeared for Kennington some years later.

The above matches may have been the most distinguished in which Ashford cricketers participated but the decade that followed saw a proliferation in the number of matches reported in the press.

There were several reasons for this. Firstly, after a decline in the early years of the century, more matches were being played. Secondly, the new railways enabled the better off clubs to travel much further afield, hence Ashford's trip to London. Thirdly, and most importantly, the period between about 1850 and 1890 saw cricket's second 'revolution' – the establishment of organised club and village teams complete with committees and under the influence of, mainly, middle class patrons.

The fourth reason was the increased number of newspapers published following the lifting of prohibitive duties in the 1850s. In our area this led to the establishment of Ashford's first regular paper when, in 1855, Henry Igglesden founded the *Ashford and Alfred [Newtown] News*. The paper, which became the *Kentish Express* in 1858, was obviously keen to report local matters and one of these was cricket. Later, under the editorship of Sir Charles Igglesden himself a notable cricketer, the *Kentish Express* became one of the best local papers for coverage of the game with Sir Charles contributing a regular column under the pseudonym 'LBW'. The final reason for greater newspaper interest was that educational standards were beginning to rise. With this and, after the 1867 reform of parliament, the increase in the political power of the lower-middle and upper-working classes, newspapers had to begin to cater for a widening readership. Village cricket was, as will be seen in Chapter 8, mainly played by these very classes and so was an ideal topic for assisting a paper in its attempts to reach these new readers.

CHAPTER FIVE

FAIRS AND BENEFIT SOCIETIES 1846 to 1863

"To some people cricket is a circus show upon which they may or may not find it worthwhile to spend sixpence; to others it is a pleasant means of livelihood; to others a physical fine art full of plot, interest and enlivened by difficulties; to others in some sort it is a cult and a philosophy."

C.B.Fry

Foreword to D.L.A.Jephson's 'A Few Overs', 1913

By 1860 many villages in the Ashford area were playing regular matches though few were, as yet, in constitutional existence as organised clubs. Besides those already mentioned Charing, Hothfield House, Evington, Sellindge, Smarden, Sheldwich, Molash, Mersham, Aldington, Lenham, Ashford Amateurs and Alfred (Newtown) all had games reported in the *Ashford and Alfred News* during the next four years. Fixtures were relatively infrequent with games being arranged on an ad hoc basis or in response to a specific challenge, as the following extract from Mary Russell Mitford's *Our Village*, published in 1823, demonstrates. The village referred to is Three Mile Cross near Reading, but, as John Ford has rightly stated, "her sensibility and wit gave the sketches a universality which makes them unique.":

"For the last three weeks our village has been in a state of great excitement, occasioned by a challenge from our north-western neighbours, the men of B-, to contend with us at cricket. Now we have not been much in the habit of playing matches. Three or four years ago, indeed, we encountered the men of S-, our neighbours south-by-east, with a sort of doubtful success, beating them on our own ground, whilst they in the second match returned the compliment on theirs." [1]

Matches tended to be played on specific special occasions. The two most important of these being the village fair or fete and the Benefit Society 'club day'. These were often the only days in the year, other than Sundays when no reputable games could be played, when ordinary people were not working. Even half day holidays on Saturdays didn't come in to any great

extent until after 1871, the year that Bank Holidays were introduced.

One of the biggest local fairs was held every June on the Green at Boughton that, as we have already seen, was the venue for a number of early cricket matches. The fair was probably going as early as 1400 and in later years cricket was included in the festivities. Looking back nostalgically to its heyday Sir Charles Igglesden wrote in 1931:

"From very early days, extending even to many centuries ago – Boughton Lees – for that is the name of the actual village with the Green as its centre – was famous for its wondrous fair held on mid-summers day. It dated from the time of the Plantagenets, and here gathered peddlers and others with booths full of toys. By degrees it developed into something more pretentious, and from miles around swarmed thousands of people to join in the revelry, with a cricket match by day and dancing at night on the Green. On every side were booths where fat women and lean men disported themselves, in which prize fighters challenged the villagers and fought with bare fists; where acrobats and strong men threw out their chests; where gypsies told fortunes; where waxworks delighted and conjuring tricks staggered the young and old; and dancing girls enticed the lads' affections from their country sweethearts. There were shooting galleries and coconut shies, and above the din of a thousand chatterers came the high tones of the cornet, the flute and the drum – not one, but many of them. It was reckless pleasure let loose and, methinks, the barrels and casks in the cellars of the *Flying Horse* were emptied that night. Alas! These old-time revelries are dying out, as the villager

becomes blasé. And I think it's a pity. Not so many years ago the number of booths and the attendance decreased, but I can remember the time when the date of Boughton Fair was a red-letter day and the Green was thronged by people from Ashford and neighbouring villages. Colonel C.S.Hardy, of Chilham, a lover of old-world customs, would bring eleven cricketers from Chilham Castle to play eleven chosen from the village. Bright and enjoyable was the play. No batsman played for 'keeps'. His ambition was to hit the ball out of the Green and, if possible, break a window in one of the houses. He succeeded many a time. It cost him money in more ways than one. But it was worth it. No longer is Boughton Fair held." [2]

In recent years tastes have, one is pleased to report, changed again and Boughton Fair has been successfully revived (in a rather different format!), assisted by the Cricket Club itself.

In the 1850s it was going strong. On 28 June 1856, the *Ashford and Alfred News* carried the following report:

"BOUGHTON ALUPH – the annual fair was held on Tuesday last, and was largely attended by the usual exhibitions, stalls etc. The principle attraction during the day was a match of cricket between the gentlemen of the Faversham Club and the gentlemen of the Boughton Aluph Club. The game throughout the day was played with much spirit, and considering that the Faversham Club had two paid players and the opportunity of selecting their eleven from a larger district, the result as might have been expected was in favour of Faversham."

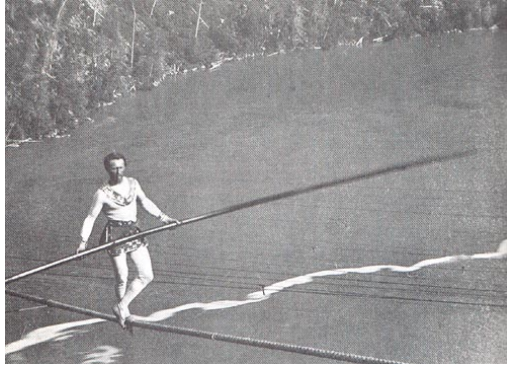
Faversham scored 70 and 81, Boughton replying with 24 and 60. One of the Faversham 'professionals' did most of the damage taking 14 wickets, nine in the second innings. He went under the pseudonym of 'Antelope' and, though little is known of him, his real name was Smith and he played regularly for the Beverley club in the 1850s and 60s. In each of the next two years Boughton's opponent at the fair were Selling.

Kennington too had its annual fair. Writing in 1798 Edward Hasted noted that, "there is a fair held here for peddlery, toys etc on the 5th July yearly." [3] It obviously wasn't such a grand affair as that at Boughton and cricket does not appear to have formed part of the entertainment until 1865. However, it may well be that cricket was

played but not reported. In 1863 the Kennington fair was held on Monday 6 July in a field near the *Golden Ball*. The main attraction was a running match against Wye. The then popular sport of Goal Running was a serious rival to cricket in Kennington and it remained so for the following three decades. A full description of this peculiarly East Kentish pastime can be found in the Appendix.

Fairs were, as we have seen in the case of Boughton's, extremely ancient festivals. A much more recent phenomenon also had an important role to play in the development of village cricket in this period. The nineteenth century saw the establishment in almost every village of Tradesmen's Benefit Societies. These were basically friendly societies into which the members paid a small sum each week to insure themselves against times of hardship. They acted as precursors for trades unions, without having such overt political motives, but they also played a substantial part in the community's social life. The members "met regularly in the village alehouse" and "could play a part in improving amenities and gave villagers some sense of managing their own lives." [4] The 'club day' or anniversary was a major event, looked forward to with relish, as is evident from the recollections of one elderly Kenningtonian, which suggest that the club day and fair were closely linked and that Kennington fair could be quite impressive:

"Jack Larkin... was able to remember the celebration at Kennington, near Ashford, during his youth when a 'good booze up' seemed perfectly compatible with religious thanksgiving. "The day they had their club dinner, all the men used to meet at the pub and march to church, have half an hour's service and then sit down in the marquee and have a jolly good hot dinner. The vicar [probably the Rev G.L.Thorpe] used to go with them like and they'd have some ale! After the entertainment they'd go down the fairground and see what they wanted to see. Used to be all the old-fashioned fair carts come round, runrounds, switch-backs, boxing booths, and when I was a nipper, that famous Blondin, doing a high wire act. They used to go round with a hat for coppers to pay his wages. You used to see some marvellous old caravans, all gilt and gold paint. And there'd be coconut shies... oh... everything and something. Oh, bless me, yes, wonderful!" [5]



Charles Blondin crossing Niagara Falls 1859

Cricket was often played on these occasions. It was, for instance, part of the festivities at Wye at least as early as 1855. The 1857 Wye anniversary seems to have been particularly enjoyable, as the *Ashford and Alfred News* on 13 June reported. It is also clear that the cricket matches were often 'spur of the moment' affairs between the members rather than against opponents from other villages:

"The anniversary of the Wye Tradesmen's Benefit Society was held on Monday, June 8th, 1857, at the *New Flying Horse* Inn. The members, after partaking of a capital dinner, provided in first-rate style by Messers Kennett, adjourned to the cricket ground where two elevens were chosen, and a well-contested match took place... After the game was over, two crippled members of the Society – one with a wooden leg, the other with an iron foot – played a match, to the great amusement of the persons assembled: Mr Lion, the wooden-legged hero, making five runs in his first innings and one in the second; and Mr Gable, who laboured under the disadvantage of an iron foot, obtaining in his first innings three and in his second two runs. Mr Lion thus winning by a run. The party then returned to the *Flying Horse*, where a most pleasant evening was spent."

Perhaps the reason for Mr Lion's victory was that he was the more experienced cricketer if he is the same man who took part in the Kennington v Challock game in 1845 (in which case did he have a wooden leg then?). The extract tells us not only about the social habits of mid-Victorian times but also about their sense of humour, which may not be so readily appreciated today!

During the early years of the Kennington club, matches at fairs and on the anniversary of the Benefit Society, founded in 1867, dominated the sparse list of fixtures. Between 1864 and 1872 at least six of the seventeen matches known to have been

played were on these occasions. One was on 10 June 1869 and the newspaper report of it includes reference to the two men who later laid out Kennington's new cricket ground:

"On Thursday last the members of the Benefit Society met at their club room to celebrate their 2nd anniversary. Mine host at the *Rose* Inn got up a capital spread, and after ample justice had been done to the viands, the guests adjourned to a field near the mill, kindly lent by Mr Wm Young, where the following games took place:- The first 'event' was the picking up of forty three stones, each placed one yard apart; the first prize of eight gallons of flour was won by R.Head; the second of four gallons, by John Head. Then there was driving wheelbarrows blindfolded, jumping in sacks, jingling match, high pole jumps, cricketing etc." [6]

Obviously our correspondent here was the same as for the earlier Wye report!

CHAPTER SIX

**A PUBLICAN AND A REGULAR TEAM
1864 to 1871**

How those brawn-faced fellows of farmers would drink to our success! And then what stuff they had to drink! Punch! Not your new Ponche a la Romaine or Ponche a la Groseille, or your modern cat-lap milk punch – punch – punch be-deviled. But good, unsophisticated John Bull stuff – stark! – that would stand on end – punch that would make a cat speak!

John Nyren, recalling cricket at Hambledon in the 1780s

Very much like today, 1864 was a year of conflict abroad. The Civil War in America had entered its crucial fourth year; in Schleswig-Holstein, Bismark was seeking to extend the boundaries of the Prussian Empire with a war against Denmark and Garibaldi, champion of Italy's struggle for independence from Austria, was given asylum in Gibraltar. Closer to home there was an earthquake in Sussex and further agitation for the vote to be extended beyond the 9% of adults who, until 1867, were enfranchised.

1864 was also an important year in the history of cricket. In an exceptionally hot and dry summer, over-arm bowling was legalised, the first edition of *Wisden* was published, W.G.Grace played in his first important match and a regular Kennington XI took the field for the first time. Initially the side was called 'Westwell Street' and how this team came into existence and developed into Kennington Cricket Club requires explanation.

In the mid-1850s Thomas Henry Hobday succeeded his father as proprietor of the *Flying Horse* on Boughton Green. As befitted the landlord of a pub whose cricket connections already stretched back more than a century Tom was both a keen player and provider of 'ordinaries' as the notice below shows [1]:

BOUGHTON FAIR

**A MATCH OF CRICKET
WILL be played at
BOUGHTON LEES,
MONDAY, JUNE 24th, 1867,
between the Gentlemen of the
ASHFORD CLUB
and the gentlemen of the
BOUGHTON ALUPH CLUB**

**Wickets to be pitched at Ten o'clock.
A good Ordinary at the Flying Horse, by
T.H.Hobday, at Two o'clock**

He is first recorded as a player for Boughton against Mersham in 1848 at the age of 13 when he, appropriately, scored 13, and 0. A regular member of the Boughton team Tom Hobday was, by the 1860s, clearly recognised as one of the 'stars' of the side, as this extract from the *Kentish Express* demonstrates:

"A very pleasant and agreeable afternoon's cricket match was played at Boughton Lees between the gentlemen of Boughton v the gentlemen of Eastwell and through the fine batting of Mr T.Hobday and the bowling of Mr R.Burton, the victory was gained for the old Boughtonians, time only allowing for one innings each; the evening being brought to a close with a jolly supper at the Old Flying Horse. The Eastwell eleven scored 103; and the Boughton eleven 140." [2]

The above match probably saw Tom's highest score. Unfortunately the report doesn't say how many he made, though it seems certain it was over 50. R.Burton, the outstanding bowler and son of William, also became a member of the Kennington side.

Single wicket matches were very much a feature of the cricket of the period and continued to be popular until the end of the century. Tom Hobday was a participant in them, one of which took place at the Boughton Fair in 1865. Partnered by the enigmatic 'G the Sawyer', Tom steered his team to victory as follows [3]:

G.Hickson	ct	1
J.Burton	b G the Sawyer	11
		12
'G the Sawyer'	b J.Burton	0
T.H.Hobday	b J.Burton	25
		25

Tom's batting was clearly on the aggressive side. Even when he didn't make a big score he must have been entertaining to watch. The *Kentish Express* had this to say about a game between Boughton and Wye:

"Hobday, as usual, was very busy during his stay at the wicket, and we do not think we should exaggerate if we were to say that he threw away his bat [presumably in an attempt to hit the ball!] at least a dozen times whilst obtaining his 10." [4]

His aggression was perfectly justified as Boughton ran out clear winners by 50 runs. Whatever his prowess as a player there is no doubt about his keenness for the game. During the 1860s he appeared not only for Boughton and Kennington but for Ashford, Willesborough, Eastwell and Westwell often for several in the same season. It was his connection with the last named side that most concerns us here.

Hobday played for Westwell as early as 1859, appearing for them against Little Chart. It is not known if he played in the away match when Westwell were dismissed for just 3 and 13, losing by 77 runs, but he

most certainly played in the return fixture, at Westwell, when the home side improved sufficiently to win by 7 runs. Because at this time each team played so few matches, opportunities to participate were severely limited with many potential players probably unable to get a game. It was almost certainly an attempt to provide more people with a chance to play that led, in 1864, to a split of the Westwell side. Two matches were played that year between 'Westwell Leacon', comprising mainly residents of the village proper, and 'Westwell Street' who were made up from those living in Lenacre Street, Sandyhurst Lane and Kennington but including, and possibly skippered by, Tom Hobday. The result of the first encounter is not known but the report of the second, a twelve-a-side game, has survived: [5]

"WESTWELL STREET v WESTWELL LEACON This return match of cricket was played at Westwell, on Monday last; but time not allowing it to be played out, was decided by the 1st innings. The batting of Messrs F.Cheeseman and Hobday and the bowling of Messrs H.Ross and Hobday were greatly admired." This is the full score:

WESTWELL STREET				
	1 st Innings		2 nd Innings	
Packman	b Tanner	2	b Igglesden	6
Turner Esq	b Igglesden	2	b Igglesden	3
T.H.Hobday	b Igglesden	5	not out	21
R.Burton	b Igglesden	3	b Igglesden	7
Ross Esq	run out	3	b Igglesden	0
Cheeseman Esq	c & b Igglesden	28	b Tanner	1
W.Head	st Humphrey b Igglesden	1	st Igglesden b Tanner	0
Epps	c & b Igglesden	5	c Stanford b Humphrey	0
T.Head	c Giles b Igglesden	1	b Igglesden	0
Jenkins	b Tanner	5	lbw b Tanner	2
Ike	not out	2	c Cackett b Tanner	1
Moore	c & b Igglesden	0	b Igglesden	0
	Wides etc	16	Wides etc	25
		80		78
WESTWELL LEACON				
	1 st Innings		2 nd Innings	
Tanner	b Hobday	1	lbw b Ross	0
Humphrey	lbw b Hobday	12	not out	7
Igglesden	b Ross	5	not out	2
Giles	b Hobday	1		
Stanford	b Ross	0		
Down	b Hobday	0		
Burton	c Packman b Ross	3		
Candler	b Hobday	0		
Freed	run out	0		
Cackett	not out	8		
Tree	st Turner b Hobday	1		
Small	c Ross b Hobday	2		
	Wides etc	10	Wides etc	6
		43		15

It is reasonable to consider these matches as being the first, since 1845, played by a recognisable Kennington side. Besides the, unsurprising, outstanding contribution of Tom Hobday the most striking feature of the match is the high number of extras, 27% of the total. This was not uncommon at this time with games played on pitches that, with the possible exception of a quick mow using scythes, were totally unprepared and with a great deal of the bowling done in the 'round arm' style.

During its first few years the Kennington side did not have any ground of its own. Like the game at the fair mentioned in the previous chapter most matches were played in a field near the mill lent by Mr William Young. Young was a farmer, the tenant of Ulley Farm, and the field was that which lies across the mill lane from the 'Golden Ball', adjoining the Canterbury Road. In 1864 a match was played there against Chilham and for the return game, at Chilham Castle, the visitors were described as a combined Westwell Street and Kennington team.



Site of Kennington's first ground

The following year saw Kennington's first encounter with Boughton. Since that date there have been more than 200 fixtures between these local rivals. As the score for

this match does not survive it is not possible to say for which side Tom Hobday played. It may come as a surprise to today's players to know that the man most responsible for the formation of the first regular Kennington XI was not only the licensee of the 'Flying Horse' but also Boughton's leading player! The two teams now contest annually for the 'Hobday Trophy' which was inaugurated in 1987.

With no permanent ground and, as yet, no formally constituted club, matches over the next six years were few and no full scores exist. Games were played against Boughton and Chilham (against the latter, in 1868, W.Bull took seven wickets), as well as those already mentioned at the rural fetes and, from 1868, on the anniversary of the Benefit Society. From the 1867 season we have no recorded Kennington fixtures but that year saw one of the most important occasions in Ashford cricketing history, in which several Kennington players took part.

The middle of the last century was the great era of the professional touring elevens which, before the County Championship and Test cricket began, provided the biggest attraction in the game. The first of these was the All England XI, created by the Nottingham pro and founder of Trent Bridge, William Clarke. Due to dissatisfaction with Clarke's organisation, particularly the fees received by the players, a rival XI, the United All England, split off from Clarke's team. This in turn divided, along regional lines, into the United North and the United South of England XIs. In 1867 it was the United South of England who came to play twenty of Ashford and District. Included in their side were several of the game's top stars. The match was announced in the '*Kentish Express*' of June 15:

ASHFORD GRAND CRICKET WEEK

THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY

JUNE 20, 21, 22, 1867

UNITED SOUTH OF ENGLAND XI

V

TWENTY OF ASHFORD AND DISTRICT

U.S. ENGLAND XI

T.Humphrey
H.Jupp
E.Pooley
E.Willsher
G.Bennett
C.Payne
H.Stephenson
F.Silcock
G.Griffith
Jas. Lillywhite
C.Charlwood

ASHFORD & DISTRICT

Mr G.Austin
H.Biron, Esq.
H.Churchward Esq.
R.Delasaux Esq.
A.Gillow Esq.
T.Grace Esq.
Mr C.Hilyer
W.H.Jenkins Esq.
Mr Owen
J.C.Proctor Esq.
Mr G.Stevens
Mr A.Swaffer
Mr D.Swaffer
Mr D.G.Swaffer
Mr G.Tanton
F.Terry Esq.
W.Wells Esq.
Mr A.E.Williams
Mr H.Woodland

Wickets to be pitched at Eleven o'clock
Refreshments on the Ground. An Ordinary at half-past
Two o'clock.

Subscribers' tickets 2s 6d each for the three days
(transferable) to be obtained at Mr Elliott's Library, and at
Mr Miller, Bookseller. Mr Williams has kindly consented
to allow holders of these tickets to pass through his
Premises into the Cricket Ground. Day Tickets 6d each,
to be obtained at the Entrance Gates.

The Committee of the above Match respectfully invite the
public to assist them by using the footpath which will be
slightly turned during the three days of the match.

CHEAP TRAINS from all Stations.

In the event Payne, Silcock and Charlwood were replaced by W.Mortlock, T.Sewell and John Lillywhite. Few of these players will be known to the present day reader and so their 'pen pictures' may be of interest.

EDWARD POOLEY of Surrey was a hard-hitting opening bat and one of the most brilliant wicket keepers of the Victorian era. His 12 dismissals in a match, v Sussex at the Oval in 1868, is still a record in English first class cricket. Tragically he ended his days, in 1907, in the workhouse.

JAMES and JOHN LILLYWHITE, both of Sussex, were cousins. James made several overseas tours and captained England in the first ever Test Match, at Melbourne in 1877.

HEATHFIELD HARMAN STEPHENSON played for Surrey. In 1864 he came second in the national batting averages. He too captained England in Australia, in 1861-62. WILLIAM MORTLOCK was another Surrey player. He was the side's long stop, still an important position in the 1860s when 'keepers invariably stood up to the wicket. He also toured Australia with Stephenson's side.

HENRY JUPP (Surrey) was one of the most prolific batsmen of his day whose great defensive powers earned him the nickname 'Young Stonewall'.

THOMAS HUMPHREY (Surrey) was regarded as one of the leading batsmen of the mid-nineteenth century. Known as the 'Pocket Hercules' he was also an excellent deep field.

GEORGE GRIFFITH, the only amateur in the side, was a brilliant left-handed hitter who also played for Surrey.

GEORGE 'Farmer' BENNETT, of Kent, was one of the best all-rounders of the day. His bowling was very slow, flighted high in the air, and most deceptive. He once bowled out four Surrey batsmen (including Stephenson and Griffith) in one four-ball over. However, in another game, Griffith had his revenge when he despatched 'Farmer' for four consecutive sixes.

EDGAR WILLISHER, from Rolvenden, was one of the finest cricketers Kent has ever produced. Richard Daft, the top batsman in England after W.G.Grace, rated Willsher the best left-arm bowler he had ever seen. His bowling was described as "fast and ripping ... with a twist from leg to the off." It was partly due to Willsher that over-arm bowling was legalised after John Lillywhite had no-balled him six times in succession in the England v Surrey match at the Oval in 1862 for raising his hand above the shoulder. In this match Lillywhite was replaced as umpire in order for the game to continue but clearly, as the two had become team mates, no lasting animosity was caused.

TOM SEWELL, at this time a Surrey player though he had previously appeared for Kent, was the other opening bowler. Fast right-arm he had also toured Australia with Stephenson's side.

Even the umpire was a former star player. JULIUS CAESAR was also a Surrey man and one of the best bats of his day, excelling in the on-drive. He was also very

temperamental and is said to have given up playing seriously following a shooting tragedy when his gun went off accidentally and killed a gamekeeper. [6]

Three of the Ashford side, H. and T.Owen and D.G.Swaffer, were Kennington players and the 'Kentish Express' of June 22 carried a full report:

ASHFORD "GRAND CRICKET WEEK"

The match of cricket which has been so long anticipated with pleasure by the lovers of cricket in Ashford and its neighbourhood, between the South of England XI and twenty of Ashford and District, commenced on Thursday on the Ashford ground. Every attention had been paid to the ground, and on Thursday it looked as smooth as a carpet. The attendance of visitors is large, and numbers of tents are erected and seats provided for their accommodation; the 29th K.R.V. band plays selections of music; James Nichols's "k'rect card" is printed on the ground; and the whole proceedings are most satisfactory. The weather on Thursday and Friday was delightful. We regret that a very heavy pressure of news at a late hour prevents us from giving a more extended notice. Play commenced about one o'clock by the eleven taking the bat. James Lillywhite first appeared at the wickets to the bowling of Delaseaux and Hillyer, and after making two 2's in the first over Lillywhite was clean bowled by Hillyer with the first ball of his second over. Stephenson followed, and was quickly caught by H.Owen off Delaseaux for one. Mortlock scored 16, when a trimming ball from A.Williams lowered his bales [sic]. Jupp made only two singles and was

caught by D.G.Swaffer off A.Williams. Pooley was still increasing his score, and was joined by Humphrey, when he was unfortunately bowled off his pads by A.Williams. He played exceedingly well, his score amounting to 47, made by six 3's, eight 2's and singles. Griffiths followed Pooley, but soon retired with 6, caught by A.Williams off D.G.Swaffer. Humphrey and Bennett made a stand, and although runs were not made very fast the bowlers were several times changed, and it was not until Humphrey had scored 34 that they were parted by a slow from T.Biron which brought the ball into the hands of A.Williams. Bennett was playing very carefully, but had received several teasers from D.G.Swaffer, and at last he succeeded in drawing him off his ground, and the ball passed him into the hands of the wicket keeper, D.Swaffer, who stumped him. His partner, Willsher, was then joined by Sewell, who was well caught by Woodland off A.Swaffer for 4. The last man was John Lillywhite, and a few more runs were made, Willsher, who scored 18, being at last caught by A.Williams off A.Swaffer. The bowlers during the day were R.Delaseaux, Hillyer, A.Gillow, D.G.Swaffer, A.Williams, H.Jenkins, T.Biron and A.Swaffer. Play was resumed on Friday, and the twenty of Ashford and District were out before the dinner hour for 78 runs. About 4 o'clock they followed with their second innings, which was finished by six o'clock with a total of 73 runs. Subjoined is the complete score:

SOUTH OF ENGLAND

E.Pooley b A.Williams	47	
James Lillywhite b Hillyer		4
H.H.Stephenson c H.Owen b Delaseaux		1
W.Mortlock b A.Williams		16
H.Jupp c D.G.Swaffer b Williams		2
T.Humphrey c Williams b Biron	34	
G.Griffiths c Williams b D.G.Swaffer		6
G.Bennett st D.Swaffer b D.G.Swaffer		31
E.Willsher c Williams b A.Swaffer	18	
T.Sewell c Woodland b A.Swaffer		4
John Lillywhite not out	8	
b 5, lb 1, w 2	8	
	179	

ASHFORD AND DISTRICT

1 st Innings			2 nd Innings
D.Fitch b Lillywhite	1	b Stephenson	1
W.H.Jenkins c Willsher b Lillywhite	5	c Willsher b Stephenson	0
W.Needham c Bennett b Willsher	8	c Willsher b Bennett	4
T.Biron b Lillywhite	5	b Stephenson	1
A.Gillow b Willsher	3	c & b Stephenson	1
G.Stevens run out	0	c Jupp b Stephenson	0
A.E.Williams b Mortlock	8	b Bennett	3
R.Delasaux b Sewell	21	b Bennett	3
H.Woodland c Willsher b Mortlock	1	st Pooley b Stephenson	1
W.Wells b Sewell	6	lbw b Bennett	0
J.C.Proctor b Willsher	6	c Mortlock b Bennett	2
F.Terry c Willsher b Sewell	0	c Stephenson b Bennett	6
A.Swaffer b Sewell	0	c Bennett b Sewell	1
H.Owen b Willsher	0	b Stephenson	6
T.Owen jun c Bennett b Willsher	0	lbw b Stephenson	0
D.Swaffer c & b Willsher	5	run out	3
G.Austen st Pooley b Willsher	0	not out	0
C.Hillyer c Jupp b Sewell	6	c Bennett b Stephenson	22
D.G.Swaffer b Willsher	0	c Stephenson b Bennett	6
G.Tanton not out	0	c & b Bennett	4
Byes 1, leg byes 2	3	Byes 5, leg byes 4	9
	78		73

Umpires – Julius Caesar and J.Durnall

We are pleased to announce that a match will be played this day (Saturday) between two elevens made up by six players on each side, and the fives selected from Ashford and District.



The United South of England XI, 1864.

*Rear: Bodle; George Bennett; Henry Jupp; Edgar Willsher; Alexander Rowley; George Griffith; H.H.Stephenson; Daniel Day
Front: William Mortlock; Tom Sewell; Tom Humphrey; George Kelson; Charles Prest*



The England Team that toured the USA in 1868

*Rear: Joseph Rowbotham (Yorkshire); Alfred Shaw (Notts); George Freeman (Yorks); Edgar Willshire (Kent)
Captain: George Tarrant (Cambridgeshire); Thomas Humphrey (Surrey); Edward Pooley (Surrey)
Front: Henry Charlwood (Sussex); George Griffith (Surrey); John Smith (? Cambs); James Lillywhite Jr (Sussex);
Henry Jupp (Surrey)*

While this excitement was going on Kennington cricketers continued to suffer from the problems of having no home ground. The first step toward rectifying this came in 1871 when the club played for the first time on the recreation ground of Kennington School, which opened in the following year. Until the 1860s the majority of Kennington consisted of rough open land known as the Lees (a word derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'leswe' meaning a pasture) and the school and recreation ground had been created from land set aside following its enclosure. Sir Charles Igglesden wrote in 1899 that:

"Many of the present inhabitants of the village can recollect the time when the principle part of the parish consisted of common land, teeming with gravel pits which were a great source of danger to the public, for it was not until 1864 that the common was enclosed and fenced off." [7]

The bill for the enclosure of the Lees received the Royal Assent in May 1860 and on Monday August 13 of that year a meeting was held at the 'Golden Ball' at which a motion was passed to set aside a portion of the Lees for "the endowment of a parochial school." The existing school, opposite the present Ashford cricket and hockey ground in Ball Lane, had become far too small. The motion was moved by Mr H.W.Carter, of Kennington Hall, whose family's concern for the village was later extended to the cricket club. Between the passing of this resolution and the construction of the school Forster's Education Act (1870) came into force establishing full-time, free education under the supervision of an elected board. It was therefore a Board School that opened its doors in 1872.



Kennington School Recreation Ground today

The attached recreation ground served a multitude of functions, only one of which was as a venue for Kennington's cricket matches. This was a period of dramatic improvement in the general standard of pitches, with mechanical mowers and heavy rollers beginning to be used and so the Kennington team rightly expected an improvement in their own ground. They didn't get it. The condition of the recreation ground was appalling and so, over the next ten years, the search for a home continued.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TWO BENEFACTORS AND A STAR 1872 to 1881

"Cricket has done more to consolidate the Empire than any other influence."

Lord Harris, 'A Few Short Runs', 1921

The use of the school recreation ground saw an increase in the number of matches played by Kennington. On 2 August 1872 another full score of a Kennington match was published, probably due to the fact that the opponents were the 'Kentish Express' team. Kennington made 36 and 57, of which that useful tail-ender 'Extras' contributed 15 and 18, top score in each case. This slackness cost the newspaper side the game as they scored 39 and 43, with W.Bull taking ten wickets and E.Chambers nine.

Wye were played for the first time in the same season (the one hundredth meeting took place in 1985) and the following year Willesborough (against whom the 100th fixture occurred in 1994) were added to the fixture list.

The captain of the side was William Grice Peters. Born in 1838, he was the son of William Peters who had moved to Kennington from Worthing and established himself as a carpenter, by 1861 employing two men. W.G. (very appropriate initials for a Victorian cricketer) turned the concern into a thriving building business, fathered eleven children and, in later years, built and resided at 'The Laurels', a large house that still stands in Faversham Road.

Other members of the side were Tom Hobday and T.Woodford from Boughton; J.Tappenden, who may have been the same player who featured in the 1848 game at the Oval; J.Lee, who also played for Ashford; and the brothers Henry, Charles, William and John Martin, all sons of the village wheelwright Henry Martin. Henry Jr was the eldest and his sons, Harry and Alf, were to become leading players for both Kennington and Boughton.

William Martin was one of three Kennington players who appeared for XX of Ashford against a Kent XI in 1874. Played at

Ashford on 26 and 27 August, the home side acquitted themselves well in their first innings, making 155. Two Kennington men made significant contributions. W.W.Reeve, batting at number four, scored 17 and Martin (number ten) made 22. The third, D.G.Swaffer, batted at 17 and was out for 1. Kent, in their first knock, were dismissed for 103. So, with a lead of 52, hopes must have been high for a noteworthy victory. Unfortunately, in their second innings, the bowling of Edgar Willsher proved too much for the Ashfordians and they capitulated for a mere 27. Reeve was the only player in double figures with 10, Martin got a duck and Swaffer 1. Time did not permit a result and, with Kent 27 for 4 at the close, honours were about even. Ashford's performance seems admirable but, other than Willsher, the so-called Kent side was far from representative. Haygarth's comment on it was that "the match was, it is believed, 'got up' all of a sudden, and Kent had several inferior and worn out men in its ranks." [1] Even given the weakness of the Kent side the match certainly demonstrates that the gap between club and county cricket at this time was infinitely wider than it is today. I don't think Kent would particularly fancy their chances against XX of Ashford and District today!

Scores at this time were generally low. The first time Kennington, or their opponents, passed 100 was in 1873 when Kennington made 103 against Willesborough. The runs-per-wicket average remained below six until 1890. However, in 1877, Kennington's scores showed a sudden improvement. This was due, almost entirely, to one man, J.T.Welldon. Welldon and his father, who became vicar of Kennington in 1875, are two of the most influential figures in the history of the club and before going on to examine the contribution of the son on the field we should look at that of his father off it.

Kennington, if it was to consolidate its identity as a cricket team, was in dire need of the support of a person or persons of local influence. Throughout Southern England the patronage of the middle class, particularly that of vicars and squires, revolutionised club and village cricket in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Kennington's case vicar and squire joined forces in establishing the club in a fully constitutional manner and, just as importantly, secured it a permanent headquarters.

The vicar was the Rev James Ind Welldon. He was born in 1811, his unusual middle name being inherited from his mother's side of the family, the well-known brewers Ind Coope. Like many clergymen Welldon, on leaving Cambridge, became a schoolmaster. Indeed, the Welldons became a family of public schoolmasters and had a very significant impact on their history and development, particularly as regards the adoption of sports. Besides J.I. himself his son J.T. taught at Felsted; his brother E.I. was an assistant at Tonbridge; his son-in-law D.S.Ingram was the head of Felsted and, most prominent of all, E.I.'s son J.E.C. was a master at Dulwich before becoming head of Harrow from 1885 to 1894. [2]



James Ind Welldon

James Welldon was second master at Shrewsbury between 1836 and 1843 when, at the comparatively early age of 32, he was appointed headmaster of Tonbridge. It is no exaggeration to say that Dr Welldon was responsible for transforming Tonbridge from an outdated educational institution on the verge of extinction into a modern, thriving, Victorian public school. When he arrived the school had a mere 43 pupils.

Welldon set to work immediately and, in the following year, the numbers had risen to 107. By 1858 163 were enrolled and, when he left in 1875, there were 235 boys at the school.

Following the examples of such pioneers as Arnold at Rugby and Thring at Uppingham Welldon introduced several modern ideas. He began a prefect system and, in 1858, started the first ever school magazine. He was responsible for two lasting memorials - the planting of the magnificent chestnut avenue and the construction of the school chapel. In 1869 he was one of the founders of the Headmaster's Conference. T.W.Bamford characterised these pioneering heads as being "proud of their independence, jealous of their freedom and hankering after undisputed recognition." [3] There is little doubt that Welldon achieved this last ambition but, from our point of view, perhaps his most important innovation was his establishment of a school cricket eleven. It soon became one of the strongest in the country, supplying numerous county and international players - a distinction it retains to this day.

It would, however, be incorrect to characterise Welldon as a dynamic intellectual. He was, rather, a solid traditionalist who saw the wisdom of many modern ideas and the advantages of the Arnoldian public school system - particularly as regards attracting the sons of the rich and influential. Septimus Rivington described Welldon as "simple and straightforward 'straight as a line', always advocating esprit de corps, and aiming at the formation of manly character." [4] Welldon's transformation of the school was, in some quarters, criticised for turning it into an elitist institution which excluded those less fortunate pupils for whom Tonbridge had originally been established. Looking back this may seem a reasonable point but there is little doubt that in his actions Welldon was merely moving with the times and, if he had not, the school would probably not have survived. Tonbridge as it is today is largely the creation of J.I.Welldon.

What kind of man was he? We are fortunate that on his death, on Christmas Day 1896, the Tonbridge School magazine published a number of reminiscences of their old head. A former junior master wrote that "he was not, like Arnold or Thring, a man of intellectual eminence, but he had in full measure that Evangelical fervour,

that Roman gravitas, which was in those days, and is perhaps always, a more important element in successful head-mastership than any merely intellectual gifts." That he was no scholar is confirmed by another correspondent who remembered that "his habits of exercise and hydropathic treatment (he was a worshipper of cold water in every form) allowed him little time for reading." In some ways he was the epitome of the Dickensian schoolmaster, "He was a very strict master of the old school," remembered an old pupil. "It was Dr Welldon's custom to take every form in the school once a month. The cane was always within reach on these occasions." No doubt his abhorance of smoking and drinking (despite his brewing connections) sometimes led to the employment of that implement. Yet he was certainly no sadist, 'firm but fair' would probably be a reasonable assessment. Indeed, his concern for his pupils was clearly genuine and deeply felt. "His sermons were pithy and pointed," recalled another old boy, "diversified with a few favourite aphorisms. They held the attention of his audience, and were always addressed to 'my lads' or 'my friends'". He was clearly held in affection by many of his pupils one of whom wrote, "he was a very just man and a very charitably minded man, who put the best construction upon men. He spoke ill of no one." I can think of no greater praise for anyone in a position of authority. [5]

At the age of 64, and after a considerable period of uncertainty and debate over the future government of the school, Dr Welldon felt that the time was right for retirement. It is probable that he inquired into the possibility of an appointment to a relatively undemanding rural parish. To the great good fortune of church, village and cricket club, it was to Kennington that he came, in succession to the Rev Robert Wilmot.



Rev Welldon's Grave in Kennington Churchyard

Welldon had seen at first hand the contribution that organised games could make to a boy's development and, like many of his class, wanted to see these advantages enjoyed by a wider section of the community. It was almost certainly this belief in the ability of team sports, particularly cricket, to inculcate the Victorian ethic of 'manliness' that led Welldon to assist in the development of a properly constituted cricket club in his new parish. In this task he had the enthusiastic support of the local squire, George Wyndham Carter.

The Carter family lived at Kennington Hall which was built by George Wyndham's great uncle, George Carter, in the 1790s. His father, Dr Harry Wyndham Carter, moved there in 1837 and considerably enlarged the house. Both Dr Harry, who died in 1863, and his son appear to have been in the classic late-Victorian mould. We have already noted H.W.'s efforts towards the establishment of Kennington School and G.W. was equally vociferous in his pressure for the granting of a ground for the cricket club. Three of his sons began playing for Kennington in 1873, which must have helped to raise it's status, and he joined in the chorus of criticism levelled at the condition of the recreation ground. Like so many Victorian gentlemen Carter clearly considered that his social position also brought its responsibilities. The paternalism of the Carter family is clearly demonstrated in the following report:

"On Thursday a concert was given by members of the Kennington Amateur

Singing Class, at the residence of H.W.Carter Esq. Nearly two hundred and fifty of the inhabitants were invited, and as the concert was looked forward to with much interest, nearly the whole of the parishioners were seen in their best attire, wending their way to Kennington Hall, at the appointed time. A spacious tent had been erected for the occasion, and on entering it a most pleasing and striking effect presented itself, the whole having been decorated with flowers, evergreens, flags, festoons, devices, banners etc, in endless profusion; a portion of which being the contributions of the parishioners. The performers are instructed by Miss Carter, and on this occasion they numbered upwards of forty; they were divided into three classes, each class singing in turn several pieces and solos, all of which were very well executed, and many encored. The evening's entertainment terminated with an appropriate address by Mr Thos. Young, conveying the thanks of the company to Miss Carter and the members of her class for the very excellent entertainment they had given, which was followed by three hearty cheers. After a brief reply from Dr Carter on behalf of Miss Carter, the company separated." [6]

That this paternalistic attitude was benevolent is clearly shown in the case of the Hills family. They were gardeners to the Carter's and their two sons, both regular Kennington players, were christened George and Wyndham, which demonstrates a certain regard for their employer.

The cricket playing ability of Carter's sons was never more than modest whereas the contribution made by the Rev Welldon's son was dramatic. James Turner, the Welldon's eldest son, was born on 3 August 1847 and he remains the only regular Kennington player to have been a first class cricketer.

Jimmy Welldon was educated at his father's school, which he attended for a record 11 years from 1855 to '66. Ably tutored by 'Farmer' Bennett, who was engaged as a professional by the school,

he first made the cricket eleven in 1863, playing mainly as a bowler. Welldon made considerable progress in 1864 scoring his first 50 (79 not out, with one 6 and six 4s) against the Old Tonbridgians and taking five wickets in an innings on three occasions. In 1865 he was elected secretary and proved the side's second best player. He was eclipsed only by his friend Henry Adair Richardson with whom Welldon played for school, university and county and who was one of the most forceful bats of his day. Together Welldon and Richardson won the school's double fives title and on the cricket field added 217 for the fourth wicket against the Rev D.S.Ingram's XI. Welldon scored 95, and Richardson's 157 was followed with 150 in the very next match, against East Surrey. Welldon added scores of 63 v Blackheath and 69 v Civil Service to finish second in the batting averages to Richardson, whose 1,354 runs at 56 was an outstanding achievement.

In 1866, Richardson having gone up to Cambridge, Welldon became captain of the eleven and led his side to an excellent victory over their traditional rivals, Brighton College. Jimmy's contribution with the bat was 73 which was, as usual, made in very quick time. The cricket editor of the 'Tonbridgian' described these runs as "somewhat luckily obtained" - an epithet attached to earlier Welldon innings - which perhaps undervalues his batting record for the school as he was a well above average player with a consistent record. In the latter part of his final season it was again as a bowler that Welldon shone. He took 32 wickets in six bowling spells: 5-59 and 5-42 v Old Tonbridgians; 6-35 and 4-23 v Guy's Hospital; 5-57 v Blue Mantles and 7-20 v Civil Service. His final averages for the school were:

BATTING

I	NO	Runs	HS	50s	Av
55	6	1317	95	8	26.88

BOWLING

Runs	Wkts	Best	5WI	10WM	Av
1341	153	8-31	13	2	8.76



Tonbridge School XI 1865

*Rear: S.Rimington; J.G.House; E.B.Lindsell; H.A.Richardson; J.G.Low; L.Flower
Front: W.Parker; E.Hills; J.T.Weldon; J.W.Dale; L.E.Reade*



Tonbridge School XI 1866

*Rear: J.W.Dale; E.P.Roberts; R.W.Curteis; E.F.Saxton; R.Webber; J.T.Weldon
Front: N.Morris; B.Howell; A.Tucker; J.J.Curteis*



Tonbridge School Old Boys' XI 1867

*Rear: J.Howell; W.Flower; Rev H.B.Stevens; W.Flower Sr; A.Knox; H.A.Oliver; Rev H. St.J. Reade
Front: Rev J.Boyd; H.A.Richardson; J.T.Welldon; L.E.Reade*

With his excellent school record, and no doubt with the recommendation of Henry Richardson, Welldon was considered to be county material; particularly as, in contrast to the all-conquering '40s, Kent were going through a lean period.

Welldon's county debut came the year after he left school, in July 1867, on Mr B.M.Close's ground at Southborough. Hampshire were the visitors and, batting first, they collapsed for 41 to the right-arm fast bowling of Robert Lipscomb (5-21) and the slows of 'Farmer' Bennett (3-21). Jimmy Welldon went in at number four, on what must have been an awkward pitch, and immediately looked at home. His score mounted steadily and a maiden 50, at least, appeared a certainty when he was unfortunately run out for 37. Kent amassed 231 and Hampshire, with the pitch easing, improved in their second knock to make 212 (Bennett 4-84). This left Kent with the simple task of scoring 23 to win which they achieved for the loss of only one wicket, Jimmy's services not being required.

During Canterbury Week of the same year Welldon made his second appearance for Kent, in a 12-a-side game against the MCC. The opposition on this occasion was of a different calibre and the county came in for a hiding, losing by an innings and 49 runs. Chief executioner was W.G.Grace's elder brother E.M., 'the coroner', who made 31 and took 7 for 75 in Kent's second innings. One of his victims was Jimmy Welldon, caught for 6, which followed a score of 1 in the first innings. Though reasonable, this performance wasn't up to E.M.'s usual standard at Canterbury. In 1862 for the MCC against the Gentlemen of Kent he scored 192 not out (carrying his bat in a total of 344) and, in the second Kent innings, took all ten for 69.

The 'Kentish Gazette' reported on the 1867 game and found space to mention Jimmy Welldon's modest performance:

"The county being 154 in arrear, had to follow their innings. At 5.55 Messers H.A.Richardson and Weldon [sic] began the batting to the bowling of Mr Rose and Mr E.M.Grace, the latter with slows. The first hit above a unit was a three off Mr Rose by Mr Richardson, a forward drive. Mr Weldon also got him for a like figure to the on-side. Ten runs were soon posted, and then Mr Richardson cut Dr Grace well for three. Off the second ball of Mr Rose's next over, Mr Richardson made the longest hit of the week, a slashing four to leg [there were no

boundaries at this time]. After this, Mr Weldon had to retire, being caught at slip hitting a ball of Dr Grace's to leg." [7] Sounds like playing across the line I'm afraid!

Welldon made one more appearance that season in the county side, playing in an exciting game against Sussex at Eastbourne. Batting first, Kent compiled 162 with James Lillywhite taking six wickets for 60, including Jimmy's - bowled for a duck. This was despite a sound start from openers Richardson (76) and William South Norton (38). In their second knock Kent made 134, with Welldon contributing an undefeated 12 before he ran out of partners. Sussex, in their first innings, had been dismissed for 83 and so needed 214 for victory. This seemed a tall order, particularly when the third wicket fell at 47. Then James Lillywhite and H.R.J.Charlwood added over a hundred for the fourth wicket. So, with seven wickets in hand, only 66 were required. It was then that Robert Lipscomb produced one of his most destructive spells. Following his 4-35 in the first innings he dismissed both Lillywhite (for 57) and Charlwood (for 81). The last seven wickets went down for only 34 and, with Lipscomb taking 6-68, Kent won by 31 runs.

Jimmy Welldon was to play only once more for the county. On coming down from Cambridge he appeared in a match against Sussex, at Crystal Palace, in July 1869. Kent won a low scoring game by six wickets. Sussex made 121, 'Farmer' Bennett taking 7-75, and 96. Kent scored 115 (Welldon 0) and were 30 for 3 when Jimmy was dismissed for 4. Then B.B.Cooper (39 not out) and William Yardley (29 not out) saw them to victory. Yardley was one of the finest batsmen of the period; "at his best he had no superior except Mr W.G.Grace", claimed the cricket historian F.S.Ashley-Cooper. He was a contemporary of Welldon's at Cambridge where he was captain of cricket, making two hundreds in the 'varsity match, and being described later (1907) as "the most brilliant batsman the university has ever had." [8]

Welldon's record at county level is unspectacular and yet Kent managed to win three of the four games in which he played. At a time when the county was not at its strongest Jimmy Welldon was certainly an asset. Besides his batting he would probably have been worth his place for his fielding alone. Standing 5ft 8ins and weighing 10st 6lbs he was an agile mover

in the field being described by Haygarth as "a very good and effective batsman and excellent in the field either as a long-stop [as we have seen a key position at this time], long-leg or cover-point." [9]

Besides his county games Welldon made a number of appearances for the Gentlemen of Kent who, before the introduction of the county championship in 1873, provided an opportunity for county players to take part in more good quality cricket. He played for the Gentlemen three times in 1867. In two of these H.A.Richardson scored centuries and, in the game against the Gentlemen of Sussex at Gravesend, Kent amassed 530 and bowled the visitors out for 127 and 29 (though, in the second innings, two men were absent). There were also no fewer than 102 extras in Kent's innings, including 68 byes and 22 wides! Welldon, batting last, made 26.

The following year Welldon played twice for the Gentlemen of Kent: against the Gentlemen of Bedfordshire at Woburn and against the crack wandering side, I Zingari. In the latter game, on the concluding day of Canterbury Week, Welldon delighted the crowd with a sparkling innings of 51. In his final match, against the Gentlemen of Buckinghamshire at Gravesend in July 1869, Welldon again made a half-century. In Kent's second innings he scored 52 out of a total of 119, the next highest score being 19.



C.I.Thornton

One of Welldon's team mates in several of these games was the legendary C.I. 'Buns' Thornton. Even when writing during the heyday of Gilbert Jessop, Ashley-Cooper had no hesitation in declaring Thornton "the greatest hitter the world has ever seen". He never wore pads, he considered that they interfered with his running, and wore gloves only rarely. It is worth recalling a few of his incredible feats. Aged only 18, and making his debut at Lord's in the Eton v Harrow encounter, he hit a ball over the (old) pavilion. For Kent against MCC at Canterbury in the following year, 1869, he hit each ball of a four-ball over, from V.E.Walker, out of the ground. His longest measured hit (without pitching) was 168 yards 2 feet so it is hardly surprising that, in 1871 at Canterbury, he was on his **third** run when a fielder caught one of his miss-hits! Often he didn't need to run. In a match at Twickenham in 1881 he scored 146 with only one single. In 1873 at Oakham School he was asked to make up a side, with the players unaware – at the time – of his identity. He scored 188 out of 216 in under two hours (the next highest score was 10), hitting the ball out of the ground 13 times. He often saved his best for the Scarborough Festival and, in 1886, scored 107 out of 133 in 70 minutes with only 29 scoring strokes. He often proved an expensive man to have in the side as he lost so many balls! Again at Scarborough, in 1886, no fewer than four balls were used in one five-ball over, the other three being lost and, in 1888 for the Orleans club, and while making a little matter of 193 out of 300 in two hours, he lost seven!

Thornton and Richardson were also team mates when Welldon went up to Cambridge. He entered his father's old college, St John's, in March 1866. However, despite his county experience, he wasn't able to win a place in the University XI until 1869. Even then he only played twice, though he did captain the college XI that year as well as steering the college boat. On May 13th to 15th at Fenner's, Welldon appeared for XVI of the University against the All England XI. Cambridge lost by an innings and 44 runs and, as W.J.Ford remarked, "the bowling of [G.F.] Tarrant (9-44 and 6-53) and J.C.Shaw (5-38 and 7-48) was far too good for the Cantabs." Nevertheless, despite going in at number eleven, Welldon top scored in the first innings, with 15, before being run out for 0 in the second.

His other appearance came later in the same month (again at Fenner's) when he

helped Cambridge to a seven wicket win over the MCC. William Yardley was man-of-the-match with a first innings score of 65. [10]

After gaining his BA in 1870, Jimmy Welldon took up the family profession by becoming a schoolmaster. With cricket becoming a major feature of public school life Welldon, with his university and county credentials and his father a headmaster, had distinct advantages. He obtained a position as assistant master at Felsted School, Essex, in 1871. Four years later he may have had a hand in the the appointment of the Rev Delaval Shafto Ingram as headmaster. Ingram had taught Welldon at Tonbridge (it was against his cricket team that Jimmy had made his 95) and he had recently married Welldon's sister, Elinor.

Cricket flourished at Felsted where Welldon, naturally enough, managed the game. The school had a strong side with several other capable players among the staff. The Rev A.W.Rowe, one of the housemasters, was an Uppingham man, where he was in the eleven, and he had also appeared for Cambridge. His sons, E.F. and F.E., played regularly for Essex and Ingram too was a reasonable player, described as a "hard hitter". The School had a regular fixture against both the county and the MCC. In 1876 Welldon scored a century in the Felsted v Essex match, but it was his school colleagues who were on the receiving end as he was playing for the county. [11]

Welldon appeared several times for Essex, at a time when they were not considered among the first class counties. In 1876 he made 14 and 4 against Hertfordshire at Bishops Stortford but two years later, against the same opposition, scored a century. On 16th and 17th of July, 1878, Essex played Herts at Brentwood. Essex scored 154 and 311 with Herts making 128 and 59 for 6, just hanging on for a draw. In Essex's second knock Jimmy played an historic and, probably his finest, innings. In two-and-a-half hours he made 136 with two 5s, six 4s and fifteen 3s. Not only was this Welldon's highest known score, it was the first century ever scored by an Essex batsman against another county.

In 1879 Welldon decided upon a change of career, leaving teaching to study for the law. One can only speculate on his reason for doing so, and two possibilities occur. It may have been that his father's influence lessened and so Jimmy was able to pursue

a career in which he had a greater interest or, perhaps more likely, it may have been connected with his forthcoming marriage. This took place in 1883, his bride being Ethel Porter third daughter of the Hythe architect F.W.Porter.

The Welldon's had one child, a daughter. She later married Captain C.G.Barton who was awarded a posthumous M.C. during World War I.

Whatever Welldon's reasons for changing career it was in 1882 that he was admitted as a solicitor. He joined the Ashford firm of Hallett, Creery, Furley and Co, against whose cricket team Kennington had a regular fixture, and he went on to become the firm's senior partner. He continued his interest in sport, especially cricket, being a member of the Incogniti, one of the top wandering teams of the day. He was no mean footballer, playing for both London and the Wanderers (the country's top amateur club and winners of the FA Cup five times in the first seven years of the competition). One of his best footballing performances came in a match against Sheffield in 1878, the year of Wanderers' final Cup triumph. He also played rugby, tennis and golf, being the first captain of Hythe Golf Club. Off the games field his interests included training with the local volunteers, a popular pastime for gentlemen of the period. He became a Captain of the 1st Volunteer Battalion of the Buffs, commanding the Ashford Company, and in 1888 he paid for the construction of their Drill Hall in Tufton Street. He was also a keen archaeologist with a wide knowledge of the Ashford area. With his all-round interests and sporting abilities Welldon could be said to have been the epitome of the Victorian manly ideal.

It was not surprising that when a player of Welldon's undoubted class came to play at village level his impact was immediate. He made his debut for Kennington in 1877 and in that year made the first recorded 50 in the club's history, 60 not out against Ashford. In the same match he also took part with Munns in the first century partnership. Two years later he scored the club's first century, though the team on the receiving end is not recorded. In 1880 he was the first to achieve the double feat of a 50 and five wickets in the same game when he scored 68 and took 6 for 40 against Ashford. In the same season he became the first bowler to take eight wickets in an innings, eight for 90, in an

extraordinary match against Willesborough, which is described below. He continued to play until 1891, aged 44, but his appearances were no doubt limited by his other sporting interests. His Kennington bowling average was an excellent 7.04 and his batting average of 29.67, remarkable considering the state of the pitches in those days, wasn't bettered until the 1970s.

Jack Head remembered that Jimmy Welldon was known as "a bit of a ladies man" but this may well have been before his marriage and I can find no supporting evidence! He continued living at his Ashford home, 'The Garth' (now Associate House) in Queen's Road, until his death, at the age of 80, on 6 February 1927. At his funeral the vicar of Ashford, the Rev H.W.Blackburne, paid tribute to Welldon's many qualities, as the 'Kentish Express', rather clumsily, reported:

"Mr Welldon was one of the most beloved and respected citizens...[the people of Ashford] had lost a real leader in the life of the town. He personally felt he had lost one of his best and dearest friends. It was a great thing when an old man could enter heart and soul into the ideas of a younger man, and that was what Mr Welldon did from the moment the speaker came to the

town - and even before he came. He thanked God for the example of his life and the happiness his friendship gave him." [12]

Of the matches that can be traced in the period Jimmy Welldon was playing for Kennington they won 11 out of 16. They contained the first drawn game in the club's history, and a remarkable match it was. In 1880 Kennington played Willesborough away. Winning the toss on an obviously 'plumb' pitch the home side naturally chose to bat. After losing two early wickets their leading players, Blaxland and Hamilton, took command. Both completed hundreds and together they added 197 for the third wicket. The final total was 287 but, as the '*Kentish Express*' remarked, "time did not permit Kennington to bat it being only an afternoon match." Willesborough's action may seem selfish until one realises that the laws of the time didn't allow declarations. As scores were generally low the authorities did not think them necessary. But as pitches improved and scores mounted a number of bizarre incidents in the 1880s, with sides deliberately trying to throw wickets away and their opponents not trying to get them out, eventually led to a change in the law in 1889.

CHAPTER EIGHT

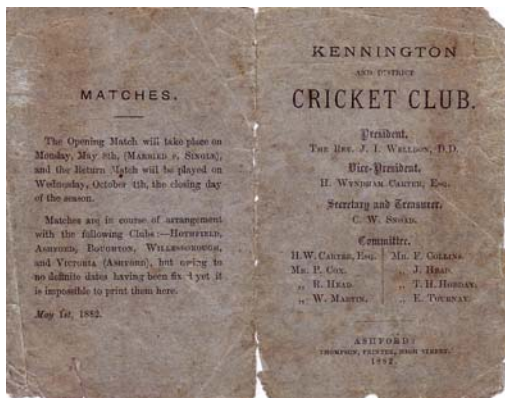
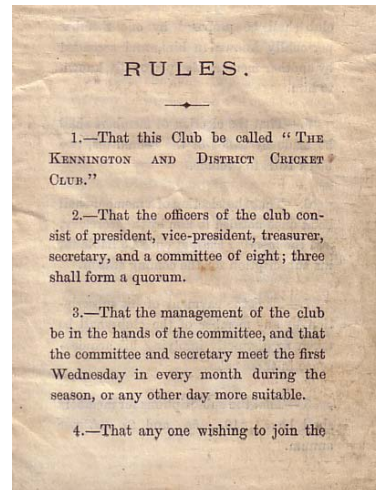
**A RATIONAL RECREATION
1882 to 1892**

“By the dawn of the twentieth century cricket was a major social activity in England at all social levels. The poet and noted academic Edmund Blunden enthused about his village eleven, glorifying in its mix of characters – the butler, the railway clerk, the vicar’s gardener, the village schoolmaster and mine host at the ‘Swan’ pub. Blunden called it ‘a happy republic and one that had the chief intention of playing cricket’”

Patrick Murphy, *‘The Rothmans Book of Village Cricket’*

With the support of the vicar and squire and, by now, a sizeable playing strength, the time was ripe for organising Kennington cricket on a more formal basis. Consequently it was in April 1882 that a meeting was held to elect a committee and adopt rules for the formation of the ‘Kennington and District Cricket Club’. The prime movers in this action are revealed by the composition of that first committee. The involvement of the Rev Weldon and Mr Wyndham Carter have already been noted and they became, respectively, President and Vice-President. Secretary and Treasurer was 72-year-old Charlie Snoad, who continued to play an active role in the club’s affairs for the next decade. Charlie was the son of Ephraim Snoad, a former headmaster of Ashford Grammar School, and his own sons, C.W. and G.W. both played for the club. C.W.Snoad was the Kennington parish constable. The rest of the committee contained some old and some new names: Tom Hobday; Edward Tournay, a local builder; William Martin, one of the Martin wheelwright family; Robert Head, the sexton, and his brother Jack, a gardener who was employed by Mr Carter at the Hall; Frederick Collins and P.Cox.

Kennington was one of a host of clubs which were re-organised on a proper basis at this time and was typical in that it was headed by men who had been to public school and wanted to share the benefits of organised team games with those from the lower echelons of society. Thus the formation of cricket clubs was seen as a social service and a duty which would bring necessary educational benefits to the lower-middle and upper-working classes at a time when they were also being given a greater say in the country as a whole by an extension of the franchise.



The main provisions of the first constitution were that members had to be proposed by two existing members. Subscriptions were set at between 2s 6d and £1 and:

“In the case of misconduct of any member, by impropriety of language or otherwise, shall appear to the committee to justify expulsion, he shall thereupon cease to be a member of the club.”

Unless a player gave 24 hours notice of withdrawal from a match he was liable to provide a substitute or pay a fine of 2s 6d.

It is clear from these rules what the intentions of the club's founders were. Subscriptions were, in comparison to today, extremely high. The average yearly income per head was about £32 with men's weekly wages of around £1 to 30s. Such a subscription level must have been prohibitive for many working men. This meant that members would be predominantly drawn from the upper-working and middle classes. John Head

indicated that if a poorer man, like himself or his father, had sufficient skill at the game his 'sub' would be paid for him by a wealthier member - in his case the then captain H.F.Abell. The other rules - requiring prospective members to be 'sponsored' by existing members, imposing heavy fines and penalising undesirable behaviour were all designed to ensure that the club was composed of men who were either gentlemen or, at least, behaved like gentlemen. One can see the success of this policy by examining the membership of the club according to their occupations:

CLASSIFICATION OF KENNINGTON PLAYERS 1882 - 1914 BY KNOWN OCCUPATION

(Players in brackets are classified by their father's occupation)

UPPER MIDDLE CLASS

Landowners: H.F.Abell (J.Carter) (W.Carter)

Businessman: (L.T.Burra) W.A.J.Valon

MIDDLE CLASS

'Of Independent Means': H.G.Bailey F.Farrance C.B.Cockburn-Hood C.St.J.Rowlandson (T.Strouts)

Builders: W.G.Peters W.Raven

Farmers: E.C.Akhurst W.J.Cripps F.Dixon F.Miles (M.S.Kingsnorth) (T.Kingsnorth) J.Tabrett (F.Young)

Clergymen: W.C.Battiscombe H.E.Betts H.P.Brewer C.A.Greenland G.L.Thorpe

Solicitors: F.C.Creery R.S.Furley J.T.Welldon

Registrar: (J.Pullen) (W.D.Pullen)

Schoolmasters: J.C.Banfield G.Carter J.W.Hemmings

Doctor: S.Davis

Author: A.Kinross

LOWER MIDDLE CLASS

Publicans: F.T.H.Hobday J.M.Smith G.W.Snod (F.W.Tyrrell) (S.Tyrrell)

Others: G.Mallion *Land steward*

G.Page *Brewer's agent*

E.W.Watts *Brewer's agent*

A.J.Ward *Insurance agent*

F.Philpott *Policeman*

C.W.Snod *Policeman*

Shopkeepers

F.W.H.J.Crux *Grocer* J.Padgham *Grocer* T.S.Dennett *Florist* C.S.Wood

Butcher

UPPER WORKING CLASS

A.E.Allchin *Cabinet maker* J.Hobday *Blacksmith* H.Martin *Wheelwright* (H.F.Martin *Wheelwright*)

(A.G.Martin *Wheelwright*) H.Tournay *Carpenter*

WORKING CLASS

Gardeners: F.A.Clifford (J.J.Green) (G.Green) J.Head Sr (J.Head Jr) (G.Hills) (W.Hills) (E.R.Perry) (T.Spice)

Others: T.Head *Agricultural labourer*

R.Head *Sexton* G.Heniker *Bricklayer*

(F.G.Holtum *Dairyman*) (F.Knowles *Painter*)

(H.Knowles *Painter*) T.Packman *Basket maker*

CLASS COMPOSITION OF KENNINGTON C.C. 1882 - 1914 (n=72)		
Upper Middle Class	7%	
Middle Class	43%	=50%
Lower Middle Class	19%	
Upper (skilled) Working Class	7%	
Semi-Skilled & Unskilled Working Class	24%	

CLASS COMPOSITION OF KENNINGTON C.C. OFFICE HOLDERS 1882 – 1914		
Upper Middle Class	10%	
Middle Class	46%	=56%
Lower Middle Class	10%	
Upper (skilled) Working Class	12%	
Semi-Skilled & Unskilled Working Class	22%	

CLASS COMPOSITION OF GENERAL POPULATION (1867)	
Upper Middle Class/Middle Class	5%
Lower Middle Class	18%
Upper (skilled) Working Class	10%
Semi-Skilled & Unskilled Working Class	67%

There are several points of interest in these tables. Cricket club members from the lower middle and skilled working classes were represented roughly in proportion to their numbers in the population as a whole. The middle classes were considerably over represented (by a factor of ten) and the working classes very poorly represented. Indeed only one player, an agricultural labourer, could be described as an unskilled worker - a group who, in 1867, formed 30% of the population. Five out of the 72 (7%) were clergymen, a high percentage, but no higher than many similar teams and demonstrating the influence of the church on the leisure pursuits of the time. Farmers form a large proportion (11%), not unusual in a basically rural village, though their employees are noticeable by their absence. Schoolmasters (4%) and Publicans (7%) also contributed significant numbers of the early playing members. The number of gardeners (13%) is remarkably high and in addition to those mentioned Fred Philpott's father was also a gardener. The reason is that most were employed by men closely connected with the club: the Heads and Hills at Kennington Hall and Spice and Clifford by James Salkind Burra, whose son was a regular member of the side. Even the odd one out, George Green, was a jobbing gardener who may well have

worked for Burra and the Carter family on a casual basis. These employers encouraged their workers' interest in cricket and, in many cases, paid their subscriptions.

When one examines the occupations of those who held club office (captain, vice-captain, president, vice-president or other committee member) it can be seen that they are approximately in line with the overall class composition of the team, 2:1 in favour of the middle class in each case. There is, however, a tendency for the office holders to be drawn from the upper echelons of their respective classes.

In the case of the middle classes it was the top positions, of president and vice-presidents, that were held by those of highest status, obviously to secure as much prestige as possible for the club. The skilled working class members were also more likely to hold office (as also were those employed at Kennington Hall). They were probably regarded as the 'natural' leaders of their class and, in accordance with the Victorian principle of encouraging industriousness, they would be the men most likely to be supported by the club's middle class members.

There was a very important task to be undertaken by the first committee - the securing of a permanent ground. Since

1871 the school recreation ground had been the venue for home matches. It was certainly not in a suitable state for cricket. "It is cut up by a right of road rendering it impossible to play cricket on", wrote George Wyndham Carter to the 'Kentish Express'. "It is used as a drying ground for the school. It is turned into a children's playground... also for feeding sheep, the turnips the sheep feed on being considered eminently in place on a recreation ground." Consequently most matches were played away!

With no other suitable cricket field available several attempts had been made to find a new ground. In July 1878, Charles Snoad wrote a letter to the 'Kentish Express' deploring the state of the recreation ground, "is it always to remain the wilderness it is at present?" he enquired. In March 1880 the cricketers themselves wrote to the chairman and vestry of the parish asking for a piece of ground (which they controlled) to be fenced off. This request was, despite the good offices of the vicar, snubbed. Finally, on 17 April 1882, Wyndham Carter wrote the letter already quoted. He outlined the history of the club's attempts to obtain a ground: "When Kennington Lees was taken in (16 or 18 years ago) this piece of ground was enclosed for a parish recreation ground. Surely sufficient time has elapsed for it to be brought into such a state as to make a game of cricket on it an enjoyable pastime?" He urged support for the newly formed club, "Now that Kennington is starting her cricket club afresh and with some fifty or sixty members, I hope those who have a stake in the parish will think of the Club and send us a guinea."

In the end it was the Vice-President himself who supplied the solution to the problem. He provided the club with a well-sited three acre field of his own to be used by the club "in perpetuity", the only problem being that the ground and pitch had to be constructed from scratch. Again G. Wyndham Carter assisted in allowing his own gardener, Jack Head, to do the work on the new cricket field. Seventy-five years later George Homewood Head wrote: "As I was born at Kennington in 1873, my recollections of events in the village in the early '70s are somewhat vague. But one thing I do remember, quite clearly... I remember as a youngster going up to the 'Alley', or is it 'Ulley'?, and watching uncle Jack Head and father Robert Head laying turves on the new cricket pitch, that was the time the ground was made, and what a fine job it was." [1]



Rev. H. P. Brewer, M.A.

Brewer.—REV. HERBERT PERRY BREWER, M.A., The Vicarage, Sturry; son of the late Rev. William John Brewer, M.A., Vicar of Farningham; born at Farningham, March 21st, 1867; educated at Sutton Valence School, and Queen's College, Cambridge; B.A., 1889; M.A., 1893. Ordained Deacon by the late Archbishop Benson, 1890, and Priest, 1891; Curate of Ashford, Kent, 1890-98; Vicar of Sturry, 1893 to the present time; during his Incumbency the Church has been supplied with gas, the bells have been re-hung, the organ has been renovated, and the living augmented; playing member of the Sturry Cricket Club. Married Edith Mary Mason, daughter of the late Dr. Atkinson, of Ashford.



Rev. W. C. Battiscombe.

Battiscombe.—REV. WILLIAM CRICKMERE BATTISCOMBE, The Rectory, Warehorne; son of the late Rev. Henry Battiscombe, of Blackheath; born at Lowestoft, in 1850; educated at Blackheath School. Ordained at Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.; Curate of North Denver, Col., U.S.A.; Curate of Pluckley, Kent, 1882-85; of All Saints', Blackheath, 1885-86; of Selsey, Chichester, 1886-94; of Kennington, Kent, 1894-97; Curate-in-Charge of Warehorne, 1897-98; Rector of Warehorne, 1898. Married, March 19th, 1874, Mary Elizabeth, second daughter of John Wilkinson, of Lee, and has issue three sons.

Two of Kennington's cricketing clergymen, from W.T.Pike's 'Contemporary Biographies', 1904



The first known photograph of Kennington cricket ground, Ulley Road, 1898

Jack and Robert came from a very old Kennington family. As early as 1675 the Head family is mentioned as living in the village. In that year Edward Head was one of the petitioners at the Archdeacon's Court at Canterbury complaining that a certain William Randolph had erected a gallery on the south wall of Kennington Church without permission. In 1864 T. and W. Head were both members of Kennington's first regular cricket team. Jack's son, John, became captain of Kennington as did his son, George. The family retained their links with the club until George's death in 1969 – an unbroken connection of over a hundred years.

The first elected captain took office at that initial 1882 meeting with the accolade falling to schoolmaster John Banfield. A steady batsman and bowler of 'underarm googlies' (sic) he was most successful at producing a stream of very useful cricketers from the Kennington School team. John Head, Tom Dennett, Ernie Allchin, Fred Philpott, George and Wyndham Hills all benefited from Banfield's coaching.

Ten matches were played in the 1882 season, with four won and six lost, but, with Jimmy Welldon unavailable, there were no particularly outstanding individual performances. Few games have been traced during the next four seasons, probably due to the expense (1s 6d per insertion) of putting results in the '*Kentish Express*' – a charge no doubt introduced on account of the very large increase in the amount of cricket being played. The 1883 season was most notable because it marked the debut of Harry Martin, at the tender age of nine. Harry was one of the sons of the local wheelwright and as the family lived at Eastwell he and his brother Alf played for both Kennington and Boughton. Harry continued playing for another 58 seasons, the longest career of any Kennington player. It is also to him that a great deal of thanks are due as he collected and preserved most of the score books, fixture cards and photographs from which the early history and records of the club have been compiled.

From 1887, with a very few exceptions, we have recorded, in one form or another, details of every match Kennington have played. This is a rarity, particularly among village clubs, where even the scorebook for the previous season often disappears without trace around the first of October!

The outstanding match of the 1887 season saw Kennington dismissed for what is still their lowest total. On 23 July playing the Industrial School, at Kingsnorth, Kennington, in their second innings, were all out for 5! The '*Kentish Express*' was somewhat understating the case when it reported that the match "was productive of some remarkable batting and bowling. In Kennington's first innings J. Harding took 7 wickets for the cost of 16 runs and in the second innings his 8 wickets cost 2 runs, he took three wickets with three successive balls and the whole of the 8 wickets in three overs." A match analysis of 15 for 18! At the end of the season the club held its first annual dinner, at the 'Rose' Inn, with refreshments provided by the landlord, James Smith.

The following season also saw several low scores. Kennington were dismissed on no fewer than three separate occasions for 14, twice by Ashford Grammar School. The two matches against Boughton were also low scoring but were certainly packed with interest. In the home game both sides scored 43 and so it was decided to play a second innings in which Boughton were bowled out for 9 with J.J. Green taking 6 for 2. This remains the lowest total in more than 170 games between the two teams. The away game was also close, with 40 wickets falling for only 112 and Kennington winning by four runs.

Individually the performance of the season was certainly by young Tom Dennett. At the age of only 15 he took 7 for 7 against the Industrial School in a game in which Kennington got their revenge for the previous season's humiliation – winning by an innings and 57 runs. In 1887, aged 14, Tom had taken 5 for 10 – the youngest Kennington player to have taken five wickets in an innings until beaten by 11-year-old Liam Tegg in 2002. Over the next 15 years he took 223 wickets at an average of 5.52.

The only bowler with a lower career average was a team-mate, John Symes, who was vice-captain of the side. Symes, who bowled in the old round-arm style, had his finest season in 1889. He became the first bowler to take 50 wickets in a season, took five in an innings on seven occasions (which wasn't bettered until 1910) and his average – 55 wickets at 3.18 – remains the lowest in a season. Symes' bowling was certainly the main reason for Kennington having their best season so far with eight of the eleven games being won.

The annual supper was again held at the 'Rose' but despite the successes on the field all was not well with the club as the chairman, Mr H.F.Brenchley, reported. He stated that members were few and hoped that more would come forward for the following year. As has been previously mentioned Goal Running was a strong rival to cricket and the chairman admonished certain players for leaving cricket matches early in order to take part in this competing sport (see Appendix).

The Chairman's rallying cry unfortunately went unheeded and in the next three seasons few matches were played. In 1892 things reached rock bottom. So few matches were arranged that several Kennington players turned out for Eastwell in order to get a regular game. Kennington Cricket Club was on the verge of extinction unless it could find a new driving force to get it back on the rails.



In the early 1900's many single and double wicket challenge matches were played. This one was against Boughton in 1902 and the Kennington players (on the left) are John Head (standing) and Tom Dennett (seated).

KENNINGTON C.C. IS 99 NOT OUT

— and planning centenary

FROM a beginning midst the distractions of playing on a public right-of-way among the remains of turnips fed to the sheep, whose peaceful grazing went uninterrupted on the remaining six days of the week, Kennington Cricket Club has battled on through triumphs and disappointments.

Now, with the new season only three months away, they are preparing to celebrate a remarkably eventful century.

Ninety-nine years of age this season, the club is already focusing attention on 1964, their centenary year.

In its long and colourful history, Kennington has produced many fine players, but perhaps their most outstanding success has been in contributing entertainment to generations of cricket lovers and offering the opportunity for local residents to play the game in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry.

Kennington Cricket Club, 1963, enjoys many of the advantages gained by the club's pioneer members through the years. They have their own beautiful

ground, a legacy of many years support from the owners of the land—and the good name that has been won and fostered over years of ups and downs.

In the coming season Kennington aim to maintain their high position of respect in local circles. The immediate future will be devoted to team building by encouraging local youngsters to join in.

The general plan for the future though is another long-term policy aimed at putting Kennington on the road to yet another century.

Two of the men most involved in the Kennington story of today are secretary Alec Robinson

secretary after five years' "retirement," and Cyril Grant, who have spent many long hours browsing through the records in the "Kensid" Express' file room piecing together the history of their club.

The facts and figures, fitting together like a giant jigsaw covering almost 100 years, tell a story of which Kennington can be proud to recall.

The first hand recollections of club activities over the last 75 years by seven-year-old Mr. Harry Martin, of Upper Vicarage-road, Kennington, have proved to be invaluable.

A player for the club when he was only nine, Mr. Martin has been a club stalwart ever since his first appearance in the late 20s.

Like Mr. J. Pullen, club secretary in 1904, Mr. Martin is now a vice-president.



Mr. C. J. Grant, Mr. H. Martin and Mr. A. W. Robinson look at pictures of yesteryear

Twiz Grant (left), Harry Martin (centre) and Alec Robinson (right) during the compilation of Kennington's first history as reported in the 'Tuesday Express' 1963

CHAPTER NINE

KENNINGTON IN THE GOLDEN AGE 1893 to 1910

"Country house cricket became highly desirable, played against the backdrop of the Big House, a timeless world unsullied by those who did not know their place."

Patrick Murphy, *'The Rothmans Book of Village Cricket'*

Another decisive meeting in the development of the cricket club came in March 1893 at Kennington School. It was clear that a patron of the stature of G.W.Carter was needed if the club's fortunes were to revive. They were again lucky in the person who came forward to fulfil the role and it was under his influence that, over the next fifteen years, Kennington cricket entered the modern age. Henry Francis Abell had recently bought Kennington Hall and he was elected captain at the above meeting. He continued in this post for the next twelve years then, in 1910, took on the mantle of President. A successful businessman in his mid-forties Abell was also a noted historian. He published three books on the history of Kent including an excellent volume for children. Under Abell the club thrived during a period when cricket enjoyed its 'Golden Age'. Following the transformation in the organisation of the game over the previous thirty to forty years cricket was now the most popular and prestigious sport in the country. Indeed, its stature was such that England could accurately be described as being in the grip of a cricket cult in the twenty or so years prior to World War One.

At the first class level this was the age of the amateur batsman. Players such as Ranjitsinhji, Reggie Spooner, Charles Fry, Lionel Palairet and Gilbert Jessop built on the example of W.G.Grace, improving technique to the verge of art. Batting was the glamorous aspect of the game and the gentlemen batsmen were the stars. The majority of bowlers were professionals: Sidney Barnes, Tom Richardson, George Hirst, Wilfred Rhodes and others had to discover new ploys to stem the flow of runs which the considerable improvement in pitches did nothing to reduce. The county championship was firmly established, the annual Varsity and Eton v Harrow matches

at Lord's became major social occasions and Test Matches increased in number.

In many ways the developments at first class level were reflected in the lower stratas of the game. Kennington's leading batsmen of the period – most notably Jim Dyson and Albert Kinross – were the 'gentlemen' members of the side, whereas the leading bowlers, such as Ernie Allchin, John Head and J.W.Fagg, were all working class 'players'.

Proper mowing machines and a roller were purchased and this led to a general improvement in scoring. Runs-per-wicket went above eight for the first time in 1891 and, in the years immediately prior to the war, this had risen to just below twelve where it largely remained until the 1980s. The number of matches played leapt dramatically. In their first thirty years of existence as a regular side Kennington played 98 games; in the next twenty they played 366, an increase per season of over 500%. Despite an undoubted improvement in standards Kennington's results were not, overall, as good as in the previous period. This was mainly because the standard of opposition was considerably higher. Roughly the same proportion of village sides were played but there was a decline in the number of work-place based sides on the fixture list with a corresponding increase in both town clubs and country house opponents, reflecting the popularity of country house cricket in the Golden Age.



Kenneth Hutchings

Probably the best indication of the increased status of Kennington cricket came in a series of matches that Harry Abell arranged with Mr Patry's and Mr Swanzy's XIs. Starting in 1898 the opposition in these games consisted entirely of ex-public school players and included several well-known names. Kenneth Hutchings, the brilliant Kent batsman tragically killed in action in 1916, played in 1905; J.F.C.Jackson of Worcestershire played in 1898 and the then captain of England, A.O.Jones, was an opponent on several occasions.



A.O.Jones

Arthur Owen Jones played for Cambridge University and then for Nottinghamshire, whom he captained from 1900 to 1914. Usually an opening bat he scored 1,000 runs in a season on nine occasions, made 30 centuries and four double-centuries with a top score of 296 against Gloucestershire at Trent Bridge, which set a new county record. He was a brilliant close field and is credited with having invented the gully position where he brought off many of his 577 catches. He played in twelve Tests, captaining the MCC on the 1907-08 tour of Australia.



Arthur Jones' MCC team to Australia 1907/08

Unfortunately, he was only able to lead the side in two Tests due to illness and, on his return to England, he never fully recovered. He died in 1914, at the age of 42, from tuberculosis. For a player of his class his record against Kennington is not what one might expect. In his three recorded innings he scored 4, 2 and 0! Kennington appear to have raised their game on these

occasions and they lost to the public school men only once, and then in a close game by a mere 19 runs.

The initial fixture with Mr Patry's XI could not have been better timed from Kennington's point of view. It came in the middle of a run of twelve successive wins between 3 September 1898 and 22 July 1899, which is still a club record.

Writing in the *'Kentish Express'* on 29 July 1899, LBW (Sir Charles Igglesden's cricketing pen-name) commented:

"I congratulate the Kennington Club on its success up to the present, it has remained unvanquished winning the whole of the ten matches played. Yet I remember the day not many years ago when it was the weakest village team in the Ashford district. In the match against Godmersham on Sunday T.Dennett's bowling analysis read as follows: 9 overs, 7 maidens, 3 runs, 6 wickets, and F.Philpott in the same match took 4 wickets for 10 runs."



Kennington's first known team photograph 1899
Rear: C.Huckins; H.E.Bailey; F.Philpott; F.Farrance; J.Head; A.Ward
Seated: J.W.Hemmings; J.Banfield; H.F.Abell; T.Dennett; F.Blunden
Front: D.Pullen; E.Watts

Dennett and Philpott's bowling was certainly the foundation for Kennington's success in 1899. Their respective averages at the end of the season read:

	O	M	Runs	Wkts	Av
Dennett	186	53	238	52	4.57
Philpott	105	20	171	30	5.74

As notable as the low averages was the economy of their bowling. Dennett's average of 1.54 runs per six balls (this was the last season of five-ball overs) is still the lowest achieved by a Kennington bowler. Another feature of the 1899 season was the tremendous batting of Fred Blunden. Over seven innings he averaged 37.16, easily the highest to that date and not surpassed until

the 1930s. He scored two half-centuries, 79 against Wye and 62 not out against Ashford Church House, as Kennington ran up some impressive totals: 192 for 4 and 150 for 4 respectively. In contrast our opponents failed to reach three figures for over two years! On 12 July 1897 Wye scored 125 but it wasn't until 12 August 1899, when the same side scored 104, that the next 100-plus total was posted.

The 1899 season saw Kennington defeat probably their strongest adversaries twice each: Ashford Grammar School, in successive weeks, and Ashford Church House, on the second occasion by the overwhelming margin of an innings and 64 runs. The match against the School was a regular fixture, with their team being considerably strengthened, as was the custom until 1939, by the inclusion of several masters. One of these, S.J.Holley, made 146 in the away game of 1897. This match produced the highest run aggregate for a one-day, one innings game until 1994. The school, batting first, totalled 229 but Kennington still very nearly won, making 219 for 6 by the close. The high scoring in this game is largely explained in a letter that Harry Abell wrote to the *'Kentish Express'*. Boundaries had only been officially introduced in 1884 and, in village games, were still not in universal vogue. On this occasion the boundaries had been marked, in Abell's contention, far too close to the pitch and strokes which would normally have been worth only two were going for four. In this way Holley hit a record twenty-six boundaries. However, it is worth pointing out that as, in those days, six runs were only scored if the ball was hit out of the ground none of the twenty-six counted more than four. Abell argued for the re-introduction of the law requiring all hits to be run out, a plea which, probably fortunately, fell on deaf ears.

The game with the Grammar School the following year, 1898, was significant for quite opposite reasons. Kennington were bowled out for 16 and J.Cornes had the remarkable analysis of 10 for 4, including a hat-trick, with nine of his victims clean bowled. Hardly surprisingly this remains the finest bowling feat for or against Kennington; indeed only one other bowler has ever taken all ten wickets in an innings.

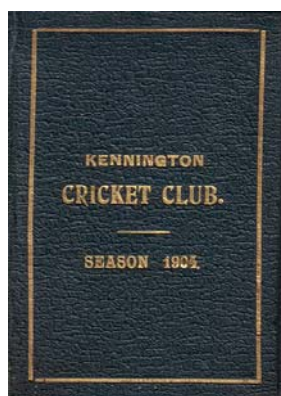
1899 was certainly the best season Kennington was to enjoy for some considerable time. Perhaps it had something to do with the exceptional

weather that year. At the end of September *'The Times'* commented that:

"With the exception of the summers of 1864 and 1868, the summer of 1899 has established its claim to be remembered as the hottest and driest of the last 60 years." [1]

Results over the next few years were, at best, inconsistent. In only five seasons in the next fifteen were more wins than defeats recorded. 1905 was the poorest of the lot, the worst in the club's history. Out of 23 matches Kennington won only four and lost no fewer than sixteen. The minute book for that year records that:

"In all no less than 78 ducks eggs were made during the season, a fact which seems to explain partially the 16 defeats we suffered as resulting from poor batting."



**Kennington
Fixture Card
1904**

A major reason for the poorer showing of the club was certainly that, as mentioned above, they were now playing in a rather higher class of cricket. Some of their opponents in the early part of the century were quite formidable. Great Chart were probably the strongest village side in the area with a bowling attack led, between 1901 and 1908, by W.Bingham. Bingham took 62 wickets against Kennington in this eight year period - achieving five or more in an innings nine times - at the sensationally low average of 3.06. Batting-wise Ashford were in the highest class and this is reflected in their scores against Kennington as can be seen from the table below.

Ashford Scores v Kennington 1904 – 1914

Year	Venue	Ashford Score
1904	Ashford	338 - 3
1905	Kennington	79
	Ashford	178
1906	Ashford	360 - 6
	Kennington	103
1907	Ashford	111


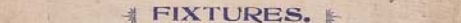
	Kennington	97
1908	Ashford	290
	Kennington	133
1909	Kennington	42
	Ashford	95
1910	Kennington	72
	Ashford	243 - 3
1911	Kennington	154
	Ashford	190 - 6
1912	Kennington	141
	Ashford	85
1913	Kennington	68
	Ashford	222 - 7
1914	Kennington	115
	Ashford	110 - 5

Runs Per Wicket

Overall	17.92
At Kennington	10.04
At Ashford	27.78

Ashford's outstanding player in the earlier part of this period was Alfred Richardson. A Cambridge Blue who had appeared for both Somerset and Gloucestershire, Richardson batted seven times against Kennington between 1903 and 1906, only once failing to pass 50 and averaging 111! His highest score of 212 not out was made in the total of 338 for 3 in 1904 and is still the only double century to have been scored in Kennington matches.

Richardson was a team mate of the great W.G. in the Gloucestershire side from 1897 to 1901 and opened the batting with the great man on a number of occasions. In July 1897 against Nottinghamshire at Trent Bridge Richardson (who made 46) added 127 for the seventh wicket with Grace (whose own score was 126). Batting lower in the order Alfred rescued the county on a number of occasions. In the second innings of the aforementioned game he joined C.L.Townsend to add 86 for the seventh wicket ensuring a three wicket win for his side and in August 1897 against Kent in the Cheltenham Cricket Week coming in at number eight with the score on 89 he made 51

<div style="text-align: center;">  FIXTURES.  </div>				
DATE.	CLUB.	GROUND.	TIME.	RESULT.
Saturday, May 6th.	Boughton and Eastwell	Home	2.30	
Saturday, May 13th	Ashford School	Home	2.30	
Saturday, May 20th	Church House	Away	2.30	
Saturday, May 27th	Ashford	Home	2.30	
Saturday, June 3rd	Hengherst Park	Away	2.30	
Saturday, June 10th	Willesborough	Away	2.30	
Whit Mon., June 12th	Smeeth	Home	11.0	
Wed'sday, June 14th	Wye College	Away	2.30	
Saturday, June 17th	Great Chart	Away	2.30	
Saturday, June 24th	Wye	Home	2.30	
Saturday, July 1st.	Hengherst Park	Home	2.30	
Wed'sday, July 5th.	Wye College	Home	11.0	
Saturday, July 8th	Sandling Park	Away	2.30	
Saturday, July 15th	Ashford School	Away	2.30	
Saturday, July 22nd	Great Chart	Home	2.30	
Saturday, July 29th	Wye	Home	2.30	
Saturday, Aug. 5th.	Boughton and Eastwell	Away	2.30	
Saturday, Aug. 12th	Mr. Swanzy's II.	Home	11.0	
Saturday, Aug. 19th	Ashford	Away	2.30	
Saturday, Aug. 26th	Willesborough	Home	2.30	
Saturday, Sept. 2nd	Church House	Home	2.30	
Saturday, Sept. 9th	Sandling Park	Home	2.30	

The 1905 Fixture Card

In the winter of 1906 Richardson emigrated to South Africa where he played regularly for Orange Free State. His final first class game was against the 1913/14 MCC touring side under J.W.H.T.Douglas. Richardson made only 5 and 2 which was not surprising considering the opponents attack included Frank Woolley, Sidney Barnes and Wilfred Rhodes. Overall Richardson's first class average of 14.85 is modest but he seemed to have the knack of only getting out to the very best bowlers. Besides Barnes (who had him caught by Woolley in his last innings) he was dismissed by several of the great bowlers of his era. In 1897 in a game against the touring Philadelphians his wicket was claimed by the great American swing-bowler John Barton King who finished top of the first-class averages in that year. Against Yorkshire in 1900 he made 2 and 37, falling victim to Wilfred Rhodes in both innings. During his time in South Africa each of South Africa's three great googly bowlers, Aubrey Faulkner, G.O.Schwarz and A.E.E.Vogler, claimed his scalp. Orange Free State were not the strongest provincial side and when he was LBW to Schwarz, against Transvaal in Johannesburg in 1907, Richardson's team found themselves 7 for 6! In the following game v Eastern Province Alfred was one of Vogler's eight second innings victims for only 24 runs.

Another member of the victorious Ashford side was Percival Ernest Morfee. A right-arm fast bowler and hard-hitting batsman,

Morfee scored 75 in the record total of 360 for 6 in 1906 and took 5 for 28 in the same game. Later turning professional he once bowled Plum Warner for nought at Lord's. But it was in 1931 that Morfee achieved his greatest claim to fame. In that year Don Bradman, after his record-breaking exploits in the 1930 Tests, was cricket's hottest property. There were rumours that several English League Clubs were making him substantial offers to play for them. Irving Rosenwater, in his biography of Bradman, takes up the story:

"Accrington's 1931 pro had been the 44-year-old P.E.Morfee, a little-known bowler who had played a few first-class matches for Kent in 1910-12 and had been a professional in Scotland and in the Lancashire and Central Lancashire Leagues. He gained some small renown by being photographed holding, with no apparent difficulty, as many as six cricket balls in one hand. He had only one year with Nelson and two with Todmorden, but his best days were behind him and his single summer with Accrington was to be his last there. He was an honest toiler. Bradman was the biggest catch on the horizon. Accrington, who could boast C.B.Llewellyn and the pre-Yorkshire Hedley Verity among their former pros, were looking for success: they had last won the league title in 1916 (when sides were considerably weakened) and ironically were not to win it again until 1961, when Wesley Hall carried all before him." [2]

Accrington tried without success to replace Morfee with Bradman. The latter never did play for an English side and the former retired from the game, dying in 1954.

Another fine batsman to play against Kennington was Dr J.Sharpley. A GP in Wye he played mainly for Boughton, scoring centuries against Kennington in 1912 and 1913, one of only five players to have made two hundreds against us.

He was remembered by long-serving Wye player, Frank Lusted, as a superb batsman, good enough for first class cricket, who taught him and other local lads the basics of the game, demonstrating the square cut using a broom handle!

With opponents in the class of Sharpley, Richardson, Morfee and Bingham it is not surprising that Kennington's results were somewhat below par. However, to redress the balance, they did have a number of outstanding players themselves.

Tom Dennett and Fred Philpott who, in 1901, became the second player to score a century for Kennington with 101 not out against Little Chart, have already been mentioned. Tod Strouts was a fine all-rounder who, between 1903 and 1914, scored 1,304 runs and took 146 wickets. The brothers George and Wyndham Hills played nearly 300 games between them. Dividing the spoils virtually equally they scored close to 2,000 runs and captured nearly 200 wickets. Jim Dyson was an elegant opening bat who topped the averages in four successive seasons from 1904 to 1907 before moving on to play for Ashford Church House. Club Secretary Jesse Pullen retained his connection with the club for over 60 years as player, official and Vice-President. He scored just under 1,000 runs and took 161 wickets, including 8 for 9 against Smeeth in 1904.

There were, however, four players who stood out above the rest. One of them, Albert Kinross, merits a chapter of his own. Of the others Ernie Allchin was the kind of player every club must possess in order to succeed, a loyal and dedicated club man. A furniture maker by trade Ernie played a total of 385 games spanning 35 years from 1890 to 1925. For twenty of those seasons he was club captain and at times he was the mainstay of both batting (he topped the averages twice) and bowling (achieving the premier position in the averages on no fewer than six occasions). His 3,066 runs and 416 wickets still place him in the top twenty of all-time in each list.

For a period of 50 years the backbone of the Kennington bowling attack was a Head! In the twenty-odd seasons prior to World War One John Head, son of Jack who laid out Kennington's ground, bore this burden before, after 1919, passing it on to his son, George. John was never a truly destructive bowler – though on one occasion, in 1909, he took 9 for 27 against Great Chart, figures which weren't bettered for well over 60 years - but he could always be relied upon to pick up wickets steadily with his slow off-breaks. In a career spanning 35 years he sent down nearly 2,000 overs and collected 512 wickets at 9.31. Never a batsman – he has the lowest average, 5.64, of anyone to have scored over 1,000 runs - he did at least have one moment of glory. Going in at number ten at Henghurst Park (near Woodchurch) in 1907 he made his top score of 37, adding 60 for the last wicket with J.Hobday, still a Kennington record.

The outstanding all-round player of the period was J.W.Fagg. A powerfully built man, standing well over six feet, Fagg seemed to have that characteristic of the best cricketers - the better the opposition the better he played. Though a more than useful batsman - he scored 1,395 runs at an average of 10.49 - it is as a bowler that he especially deserves to be remembered. He took 431 wickets at an average of 7.68, capturing five or more 29 times - roughly once in every five games. 1910 was his finest year when he became the first Kennington bowler to take 100 wickets in a season. What is more remarkable is that these were captured in a mere 177 overs, a rate of one wicket every 10.5 balls. He twice took eight wickets in an innings against Mr Swanzy's XI, including Arthur Jones on both occasions. Fagg's bowling, off an economical run, was both fast and accurate and his batting was in the belligerent mould. On several occasions the two combined to devastating effect. In 1911 he scored 53 and took 8 for 44 against Henghurst Park, Kennington winning by 82 runs. Five years earlier, against the strong Grammar School team, he had produced an even more remarkable performance, probably the finest all-round feat in Kennington's history. Batting first Kennington were 29 for 3 when Fagg went in. He proceeded to score 102 not out, the next highest score being 18, and Kennington declared at 184 for 9. He then took 5 for 22 as the School were bowled out for 68 - which included one run out. A gentle and charming man, Fagg was surprised and pleased when Twiz Grant interviewed him over fifty years later when compiling the first history of the club.

Off the field Kennington's affairs in the first years of the century are particularly well documented as the minute book for this period still survives. The improved status of the club is reflected in its pages. In 1905 a forerunner of today's Colts XIs was formed with the establishment of a Juniors Cricket Club. Rather short-sightedly the members of the senior side were not in favour of the youngsters using the ground but a compromise was reached when Alfred Miles, of Ulley Farm, offered the Juniors the use of the field adjoining the cricket ground. In 1909 the playing strength of the club was sufficient for an 'A' Team to be started and this continued until 1914. In 1905 the number of Vice-Presidents was increased, rising from four to sixteen over eight years. In 1909 a groundsman was employed though, as this extract from the

minutes demonstrates, this was not a clear-cut decision:

“Proposed Mr Rowlandson, seconded T.W.Pullen that a Ground Man be elected. That he should put in 2 hours every night to get the cricket material out on the ground for the members to practice with and that he should make up his time on the ground until he put the tackle away again in the Pavilion. That he should be paid 5/- per week for the season. The proposition was put to the meeting and was even for and against the casting vote fell to the chairman (Mr Abell) who was in favour of the ground man.”



Kennington 1906

*Rear: C.Dixon; R.Head; H.Knowles; P.Sherlock; J.W.Fagg; A.J.Dyson; S.Pullen; A.Ward
Seated: H.F.Abell; C.S.Wood (Vice-Captain); A.E.Allchin (Captain); F.Miles; W.Hills
Front: H.F.Martin; A.G.Martin*

From the above extract it is unclear if those who opposed the appointment did so because they felt that all members should participate in ground preparation or whether it was due to financial considerations. It was probably the former, as the finances appear to have been in excellent shape. In 1902 a permanent pavilion was constructed which arrived in kit form and had wheels to allow it to be moved to different parts of the field. Though later extended and extensively repaired this structure was in use until the early 1990s and its demise was a rather sad occasion given its over 90 years service. In 1904 a mower (horse drawn, of course) was purchased and the annual balance in hand generally stood at around £4. It is also known what kit the club possessed at the time. In 1908 the contents of the pavilion were listed as:

- 4 Good Balls (1 New)
- 2 Pairs Wicket Keeping Gloves (1 Inner Glove)
- 5 1/2 Pairs Good Pads
- 1 Set New Wickets,
- 1 Set Old Wickets
- 8 Rubber Bails, 10 Wooden Bails
- 2 Mallets
- 2 Pairs Batting Gloves
- Measuring Tape
- 2 Pairs New Canvas Leg Guards
- 2 Umpire Coats
- 1 Lantern

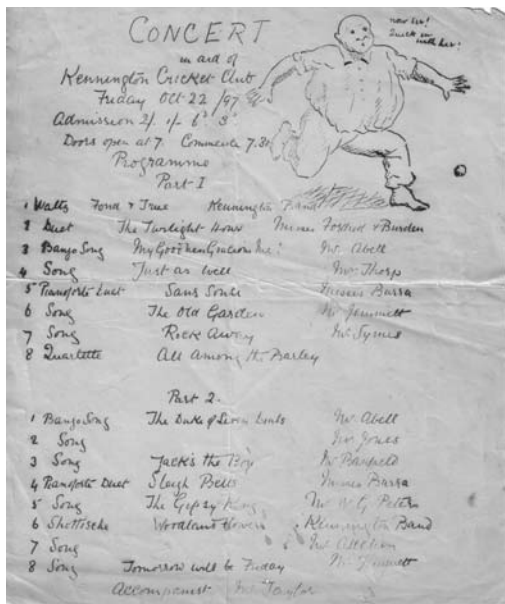
- 1 Wall Lamp
- 1 Kit Bag
- 1 Set of Horse Shoes
- Telegraph Board and Box of Figures
- 2 Mowing Machines
- Pail and 2 Buckets

- Ground Marker

- 2 Folding Screens
- Cricket Net and pegs
- 4 Forms

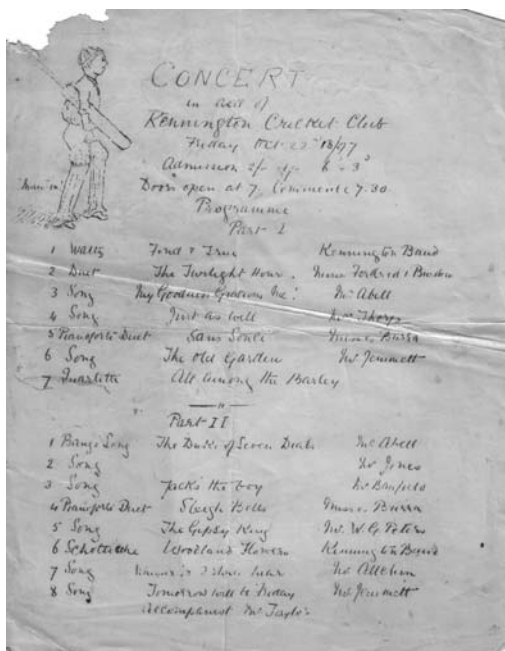
In the hands of Mr Allchin
2 New Bats and 12 Folding Chairs

It appears that players were generally expected to provide their own bat. The horse shoes referred to would have been leather over-shoes to protect the pitch during mowing and rolling. The telegraph numbers are those still in use by the club today.



Concert programme 1897

One regular means of raising funds was the annual concert at which each club member performed a 'turn'. These events were a common feature of the late Victorian and Edwardian period – particularly in country districts – in an age before the cinema and other mass entertainments had come onto the scene.



Concert programme 1897

The 'Golden Age' was also a time when competitiveness and the individual performances of players began to take greater prominence. Topping batting or bowling averages, making most runs or taking most wickets was rewarded with a prize of a bat, gloves or a ball provided by the more affluent members of the club. At the other end of the scale a 'Missed Catch

Box' was instituted in 1905 - each player missing a catch paid 1d, with the one taking most catches in the season pocketing the proceeds. There was also a 'Duck's Egg Box' into which those making 0 had to pay a penny. The maker of the most ducks in the season received a 'Duck's Egg Cake'.

On 23 October 1905 a particularly crucial Special General Meeting took place. Three proposals were on the table:

1. That Kennington Cricket Club do not approach Kennington Football Club with a view to amalgamation.
2. That Kennington Cricket Club do not amalgamate with Boughton and Eastwell Cricket Club.
3. That Kennington Cricket Club do not join the proposed Ashford and District Cricket League.

All three motions were carried. We don't know the details behind these proposals, possibly the second was suggested by those players who were members of both clubs. It can be seen that if passed these resolutions would have had dramatic consequences. The proposed league did not materialise and it took exactly 80 more years before league cricket finally arrived at Kennington. Despite the non-amalgamation with Boughton relations with our near neighbours were always cordial. The same obviously wasn't true of some other teams, as an ominous extract from the 1910 minutes suggests. Perhaps fortunately we again do not know the details behind this proposal:

"Proposed C.S.Wood, seconded J.Fagg that we shall not play Kingsnorth this season - carried."

Draft of letter

Madam :

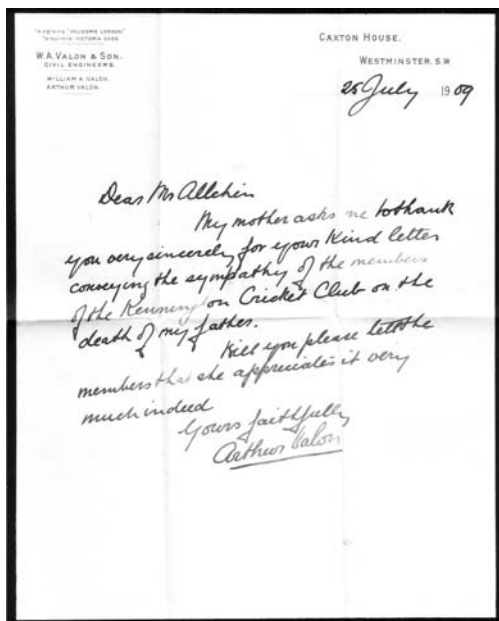
I am requested by the members of the Kennington Cricket Club to express their very sincere sympathy with you for the loss you have sustained by the death of Mr. Valon, the late President of the Club, and to assure you that his name will always be remembered as that of a generous and constant supporter of local cricket.

I am, Madam,

Yours faithfully

(Signed) E. A. (Captain)

In 1909 Kennington's President, W.A. Valon died. This is the draft of club captain Ernie Allchin's letter expressing the club's regret to his widow. Below is his son's reply.



CHAPTER TEN

AN UNCONVENTIONAL CRICKETER 1911 to 1914

He was one of the last of his kind – and certainly the finest specimen of it – the amateurs, the smiling gentlemen of games, intensely devoted to the skill and the struggle but always with a certain gaiety, romantic at heart but classical in style."

J.B.Priestley, 'The English', 1973 (about C.B.Fry)

The years immediately prior to the First World War were considerably enlivened, both on and off the field, by the arrival, in 1911, of a new captain – Albert Kinross. Kinross is probably the most colourful character to have played for Kennington as well as being one of the finest players in the club's history.

Born in Hampstead on 4 July 1870, Kinross's family had just returned from the West Indies where his father had acted as agent for Ross's Belfast Ginger Ale and sold hats, undervests and the aforementioned beverage to the builders of the Panama Canal. His mother was Danish and Albert spent the holidays of his early years staying with his eccentric maternal grandfather, a retired army officer, on the island of Funen. No doubt having a foreign mother gave Albert a facility for languages which was to serve him well in his later career. Most of this was spent as a journalist and novelist though, in his late teens and early twenties, he tried his hand at a number of somewhat unusual professions. Between 1888 and 1892 he lived in Switzerland and Bavaria, selling glass eyes and writing verses in German, Italian and English for Christmas Cards!

On his return to England he began to pursue his writing more assiduously and was soon appointed cricket correspondent for the London daily the 'Tribune'. At the age of 26 he was made London correspondent of the 'Boston Transcript'. Between 1898 and 1900 he was associate editor of 'Outlook' before moving on to become dramatic critic for the 'Morning Post' and art critic of 'Academy' magazine. He also contributed regularly to the 'Daily Mail', 'Daily Mirror' and 'Daily Express'. It was the 'Express' who, in 1905, sent Kinross to Russia to report on that country's war with the Japanese and so he was in Moscow at the time of the abortive revolution. His Russian experiences were later to provide the

background for his most successful novel 'Joan of Garioch'.

Though aged 44 on the outbreak of war in 1914 Kinross joined up and his knowledge of languages and wide travels made him ideally suited to intelligence work. Later in the war he was based in the Middle East and, as a senior intelligence officer, became involved in the Arab uprisings against the Turks and so almost certainly came into contact with fellow intelligence officer T.E.Lawrence. He also saw service in Greece and France and was able to continue his journalistic activities as editor of the 'Balkan News' (1916) and deputy military editor of the 'Palestine News' in 1918.

Kinross' experience of the Middle East made him an astute commentator on the clash between Islam and the West. In November, 1920 he described his impressions of Islam and his thoughts on the present and future prospects for Western-style government in the Middle East. In cynical tones, Kinross criticised Islamic and Christian cultures alike. Of Islam he wrote,

"A religion that ignores the personal existence of an entire sex; that forbids the lending of money, and therefore places its followers outside that whole system of loans and credit upon which, for good or for evil, our modern civilization is based; a religion that is so full of exclusions as to make the murder or robbery of an Unbeliever a matter of little or no account, can hardly hope to survive outside the dark places of the earth. "

But he also reminded readers that Christianity itself did not necessarily have a better track record as a civilising influence:

"We are very far from being immaculate, and it is only of recent years, as history goes, that

the Highland clansman has ceased to murder and rob his neighbor, the French serf to lie and accept forced labor, the Virginian to own slaves, and the English Catholic or Protestant to burn his fellow Christian at the stake. I really dare not say that Islam is much worse than we have been." [1]

At the time of Kinross's writing, the mighty Ottoman Empire had succumbed to Western conquest, and much of the Muslim world was now subject to the rule of Britain and France. Britain's goal in the region, Kinross argued, should not be to rule it indefinitely, but to "fit [the Islamic people] for self-government" and then leave them alone to run their own countries.

But the Muslim world, he warned, was as yet unready to accept Western theories of government. Far from admiring their Western rulers, he explained, the Islamic people were only grudgingly submitting to the infidel regime, biding their time until Allah would inevitably arrange for the Westerners' overthrow. And because Islam's imperial British rulers had not yet seen fit to grant the Islamic people the same kind of freedoms available to Britain's own citizens, Kinross warned that it would be dangerous to try to win the Islamic people over to Western theories of government prematurely. Preaching the glories of liberty and equality, without yet being ready to demonstrate them in practice, could lead only to further frustration and distrust.

These seem perceptive comments even today, yet alone for 1920. Perhaps Messrs Blair and Bush could have done with Albert Kinross' advice in shaping their Middle Eastern policies!

Retiring with the rank of captain after the war he devoted himself full time to writing novels. During the next ten years over a dozen were published. 'Joan of Garioch' sold over 70,000 copies and all achieved very respectable sales. Among his best works were 'The Truth About Vignolles', 'The Torch' and 'God and Tony Hewitt'. 'The Truth About Vignolles' (1922) is, like most of his earlier books, a war story based on Kinross's personal experiences. It provides an account of the varied career of the head of a mercantile shipping family and is set in Egypt, Palestine and Salonika. The publication of 'The Torch - A Novel of the Nineties' in 1923, marked a change of direction in Kinross's writing. It is the story of

the fortunes of a weekly journal, successful until falling into the hands of unscrupulous financiers. The 'Dictionary of Authors' says of it:

"The interest of the book lay in the strongly accentuated and varied types of journalist, rather Dickensian in features, who thronged the office of the 'Torch', and these Kinross depicted with knowledge and sympathy."

Kinross's development as a novelist was confirmed in 1925 with the publication of 'God and Tony Hewitt'. It is a picture of a young English squire, a 'capital type' of British officer. The readers' sympathy is held by Tony's belief in God's continual influence on his personal life but the religious element is, at the same time, presented with an underlying irony.

It is surprising that in such an action-packed career Kinross found any time at all for cricket. But, like so many men of his period and class, find time he certainly did. So much time that, on occasion, the game tended to dominate his life. In one hectic month in the 1890s he played in no fewer than 37 matches!

During the '90s Kinross lived in Cambridge and though never a University man he turned out for several of the colleges as well as for the better local clubs. He played with and against many of the greatest cricketers of the day. W.G. Grace's son and A.E. Stoddart (whom he once caught) were among his opponents. The Australian 'demon' bowler, Fred Spofforth, accounted for his wicket on one occasion, though not before Albert had hit him for six. Kinross's left arm round-the-wicket bowling, never of as high a standard as his batting, failed to make an impression on the great Ranjitsinhji, who made 180 against Kinross's side.

He became a personal friend of Gilbert Jessop - probably the fastest scoring batsman the game has seen and whose 75-minute century beat the 1902 Australians at the Oval. Jessop presented Kinross with one of his bats bearing the inscription "From a slogger to one". Another close friend in later years was Percy Chapman, captain of Hythe, Kent and England, who wrote a most affectionate foreword to Kinross's autobiography.

After moving to London Kinross played many games for the Authors' XI, led by no

less a person than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and including such luminaries as E.W.Hornung (writer of the 'Raffles' books), J.M.Barrie and P.G.Wodehouse. Several of the Authors' matches were played at Lord's including their annual encounters with the Artists and Actors' XI. The latter numbered among their ranks the period's finest Shakespearian actor, Gerald du Maurier, and were skippered by Sir C.Aubery Smith.

Smith is an interesting enough person to warrant a brief digression. Best remembered now for his distinguished career in Hollywood in such classics as 'The Prisoner of Zenda' (as Colonel Zapt), 'Sixty Glorious Years' (as the Duke of Wellington), 'The Four Feathers', 'Rebecca' (written by du Maurier's daughter, Daphne) and the Spencer Tracy version of 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', Smith also enjoyed an exceptional career as a cricketer. Known as 'Round-

the-Corner' Smith, because of his unusual bowling action, he captained Sussex and, in South Africa in 1889 on his only appearance in Test Cricket, England. There are many anecdotes about him – often concerning his efforts on behalf of the English cricket team in Hollywood. He was once asked to suggest a supporting actor to appear with him in a prestigious film. He mentioned the name of a young Englishman to the director. "But he's an appalling actor", replied the director, "I know" said Smith, "but you should see his leg-breaks!". On a visit to England more than 30 years after his last first class match and at the height of his Hollywood fame, Smith attended the Lord's Test. Two elderly MCC members looked at him attentively, obviously trying to place him. Eventually the penny dropped and one said to the other, "I know who that is. Chap called Smith. Used to play for Sussex."



Authors v Artists, May 1903

*Rear: E.W.Hornung; E.V.Lucas; P.G.Wodehouse; J.C.Snaith; G.Chowne; Sir A.Conan Doyle; Hesketh Prichard; L.D.Luard; C.M.O.Orchardson; L.C.Nightingale; A.Kinross
Seated: C.Gascoyne; Shaun F.Bullock; G.Hillyard Swinstead; Reginald Bloomfield; Hon W.J.Mason; E.A.Abbey; A.Chevallier Taylor; J.M.Barrie; G.C.Ives; G.Spencer Watson
Front: A.E.W.Mason*



Kennington 1912. Albert Kinross centre holding bat.

From 1906 Albert Kinross lived mostly in Kent and played on and off over many seasons for Hythe. As age crept up on him he increasingly turned to the less demanding village game, playing for such local sides as Sandling Park, Sibton Park and Saltwood. He appeared many times for Plaxtol (near Sevenoaks) where he lived from 1907 to 1910, at which point he

moved to Kennington, where he was soon appointed captain. Over the next three years he played some 65 matches, scoring over 1100 runs at the excellent average of 18.95. He made Kennington's third century and took 111 wickets at 10.72.

Being a former journalist it is no surprise to find Kinross's cricketing exploits reported in

the pages of the 'Kentish Express'. Writing on the match at Great Chart on 4 May 1912, 'LBW' said:

"Great Chart opened their fixtures on Saturday when they met Kennington. Many an exciting game has been witnessed on this little ground and, with such short boundaries, it was quite on the cards that when the eleventh Chart man came in he would make the three runs required for victory, but the Kennington skipper (Kinross) bowled him first ball."

On the 20th of the same month Kinross scored 106 not out against Faversham. He had said previously that if he made a century he would give his cricket bag to the club, which he did, and, until the 1970s (when it finally fell apart), it remained in the club's possession. The most remarkable fact about this innings was that Kinross had come in at number seven. The report on it from the 'Kentish Express' is particularly evocative:

"When Mr A.Kinross appeared on the scene, with some luck and taking full advantage of a flagging attack, he hit up 106 not out without doing any damage to the spectators. He might have been caught on one occasion in the long field had not the fieldsman been obstructed by a cow."

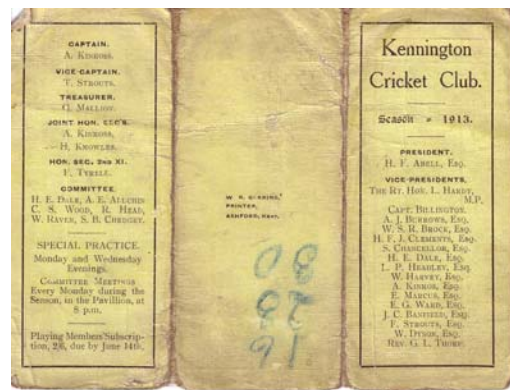
LIST OF FIXTURES. SEASON 1913.											
1st XI.						2nd XI.					
Date	Club	Where Played	Time	Result	Infield Score	Date	Club	Where Played	Time	Result	Infield Score
April 26	Capt. vs V. Capt.	Home	2.30			May 3	New Town	Away	2.30		
May 3	Boughton & Eastwell	Away	2.30			" 10	New Town	Away	2.30		
" 10	Ash'd Cl'ch	Home	2.30			" 17	Inverness	Home	2.30		
" 12	Four Thorns (Hook)	Away	1 a.m.			" 24					
" 17	Wye	Away	2.30			" 31					
" 24	Ashford	Home	2.30			June 7	Beaver	Away	2.30		
" 31	Moulton	Away	2.30			" 14	New Town	Home	2.30		
June 7	Great Chart	Home	2.30			" 21					
" 14	Rackings	Home	2.30			" 28					
" 21	Ashford	Away	2.30			July 5	Beaver	Home	2.30		
" 28	Boughton & Eastwell	Home	2.30			" 12					
July 5	Great Chart	Away	2.30			" 19	Willesborough	Home	2.30		
" 12						" 26	Industrial School	Away	2.30		
" 19	Ash'd Cl'ch	Home	2.30			Aug. 2					
" 26	Wye	Home	2.30			" 9	Willesborough	Away	2.30		
Aug. 2						" 16					
" 9	Willesborough	Home	2.30			" 23	Industrial School	Home	2.30		
" 16	Flackley	Away	2.30			" 30					
" 23	Rackings	Away	2.30			Sept. 6	Willesborough	Away	2.30		
" 30	Flackley	Home	2.30			" 13	Merham	Home	2.30		

Fixture Card 1913

Apparently the Kinross's stay in Kennington was somewhat soured when his wife published a novel, 'The Old Farmhouse', which featured thinly disguised, and somewhat unflattering, portraits of many of the village's most eminent persons!

After the war Kinross settled in Edenbridge, immediately joining the cricket club and becoming a Vice-President. In 1927 he began writing his autobiography, 'An Unconventional Cricketer', but was regrettably unable to complete it before he died a year later at the age of 58. The book therefore doesn't cover Kinross's stay in Kennington, a great pity as it is both a stylish and witty volume.

Kinross himself must have been a great character. His nickname was 'The Bart' and his friends called him, in jest, 'Lord Kinross'. This led, on one occasion, to an amusing confusion. A Hythe publican, who was in charge of the organisation of the local cricket week, heard him called by his 'title' and gave him place of honour, ahead of the Lord Mayor, at the opening dinner. Kinross enjoyed himself hugely!



Fixture Card 1913

CHAPTER ELEVEN

BETWEEN THE WARS 1919 to 1939

"High and low, rich and poor, greet one another practically on an equality, and sad will be the day for England if Socialism ever succeeds in putting class v class and thus ending sports which have made England."

Lord Hawke, 'Recollections and Reminiscences', 1924

"Bolshevism is rampant, and seeks to abolish all laws and rules, and this year cricket has not escaped its attack."

Lord Harris in 'The Cricketer', Walter Hammond had been allowed to play for Gloucestershire rather than Kent.

The trauma of the First World War sent shock waves through the entire structure of British Society. No sector, least of all cricket, remained immune. The 'Golden Age' of the dashing amateur was over, being replaced by a tougher, more professional, approach – epitomised by the crushing of England in 1921 by Warwick Armstrong's Australians.

The first and most obvious effect of the war was the loss of thousands of young men who played the game. At the highest level Kent's Colin Blythe, perhaps the greatest slow left-arm bowler of all time, and Kenneth Hutchings, the dashing batsman who had played at Kennington for Mr Swanzy's XI, were killed. Kennington cricket suffered its casualties too. Immediately prior to the War the team's most promising batsman was undoubtedly Fred Tyrrell, son of the landlord of 'The Rose'. Topping the averages in both 1911, at the age of 19, and 1913 Tyrrell seemed likely to become the best batsman the club had yet produced. When war broke out Fred joined the 5th Battalion of the Buffs. Taking part in the Mesopotamian campaign he was killed on 7 January 1916, one month short of his 24th birthday. He is buried in Amara cemetery now, of course, in Iraq.



F.W.Tyrrell



Fred Tyrrell's memorial plaque in Kennington Church



Another Kennington player to die in World War One was P.A.Vidler.

A Private in the East Kent Yeomanry he died on 8 December 1915 at Gallipoli and is buried at Twelve Tree Copse.

Virtually no cricket was played during the war and, for a period, the Kennington ground was used as a camp by Canadian soldiers.

The first two seasons after the war were disappointing ones on the field. The batting lacked solidity – in 1920 Sid Chedgy, essentially a specialist bowler, topped the batting with the lowest winning average ever, a mere 8.44. The bowling was over-dependent on Elvy Stickle, who was never able to play on a regular basis.



Kennington 1919

*Rear: A.J.Ward; John Head; Harry Martin; Sid Wood; Elvy Stickles; Harry Knowles; P.Sherlock; Sid Ward
Front: Ernie Allchin; George Head; Billy Raven; Sid Chedghey*

Kennington's deficiencies were cruelly exposed in their two 1920 games against the Grammar School. The School probably had their strongest ever side at this time and three of their best players, and best remembered masters, contributed to massive victories.

In the match at the Ulley the home side were bowled out for their second lowest total – 7. Frank

Pinch, who was later to become the first head of Ashford Technical College, took 8 for 2 with his right-arm medium pace deliveries. Pinch was an exceptionally talented cricketer who, in the following season, joined Glamorgan for whom he played 42 matches as an amateur capturing 39 wickets at an average of 32. Though mainly a bowler it is as a batsman that he is best remembered as he is one of the select few to have scored a century on his first class debut when he made 138 not out against Worcestershire at Swansea.

The week after Pinch's bowling had destroyed Kennington it was the turn of the School's batsmen to make the Ulley Roaders suffer. The School batted first and ran up a total of 285 for 2, the majority of the runs coming in a superb unbroken partnership of 201 – still the all-time record for any wicket against Kennington.

Harry Jenkins, who captained the England amateur soccer side and was later to become headmaster, scored 138 and Peter Woodworth 108. Kennington, who lost the latter match by 215 runs, were clearly in need of both several reliable batsmen and some more penetrative bowlers. Both were, fortunately, soon to come their way.

On the bowling front 1920 saw the Kennington debut of possibly our most destructive bowler, Ernie Tolman. In a career cut short by injury Ernie took 173 wickets in only 413 overs, a wicket every 14 balls, with his fastish off-breaks. Tolman's 'annus mirabilis' was 1922 when he took 62 wickets at an average of 3.9 in 105 overs, a wicket every ten balls. In later years, when arthritis had forced him to cease playing, Ernie became Kennington's scorer, fulfilling this role into the 1970s.



Unveiling Kennington war memorial

The brunt of the bowling between the wars, however, fell to another. George Head made his debut in 1919 but it wasn't until 1924 that he really made his mark, topping the averages with 44 wickets at slightly over five apiece. His career ended just after World War Two when George had taken 759 wickets, enough to place him fourth in the all-time list of wicket takers.

Both Ernie Tolman and George Head turned in some fine individual performances with the ball. George's best was 8 for 18 at Mersham in 1924 whilst Ernie's came at home against the same side four years later when he took 8 for 8. But perhaps the most remarkable bowling performance of the period came in the match at Wye in 1923. Kennington had already won the game on first innings (scoring 61 to Wye's 51) but Wye were fairing much better in their second knock at 53 for 3. Behind the stumps for Kennington that day was one of our longest serving players, Billy Raven, and at this point he took off his pads to bowl. Billy was only a very occasional bowler, in a career lasting 32 years he only sent down 150 overs, but that day he proceeded to take 5 wickets for 1 run!

The side's batting was considerably strengthened in the late '20s and early '30s when George Clarabut turned out regularly for Kennington. Though he played the majority of his cricket for Wye and, after 1945, formed his own wandering team 'George Clarabut's Circus', he did appear over 70 times for Kennington; scoring just under 1500 runs at the excellent

average of 20.36 with five fifties and a top score of 73 not out. One of the great characters of the local game George never travelled anywhere without his cricket bag and lost more than one job for playing cricket instead of working. A, possibly apocryphal, story tells that once, when employed by a local feed merchant, he was passing a ground where a match was about to begin. Stopping to watch he was asked if he would play, the home side being one short. Hurriedly changing George took the field and was soon brought on to bowl. He immediately took a wicket and who should come out to bat but his employer. As he passed George he growled "Clarabut, you can collect your cards tomorrow.", George bowled him first ball. Still playing regularly when in his 70s, George must have played more cricket than any other man in the district.

Though George Head captained the side for two seasons in the mid-'30s, for the majority of the inter-war years (1923-34) Kennington had its longest serving captain until the 1990s, and one of its finest all-rounders, in Jack Gilham. Gilham moved to Kennington in 1923 to become farm bailiff to William Jennings, who had purchased Kennington Hall from Harry Abell in 1914. The Jennings family continued an association with the club from the end of the First World War, when William Jennings became its fourth President. He was succeeded on his death by his widow, and his daughter, Miss Hope Jennings, was Honorary Life President until her death in 1987.



Kennington 1926

*Rear: A.J.Ward; C.Ackroyd; F.Rummens; G.Head; A.Willis; J.Head
Seated: H.Martin; D.Pullen; J.Gilham; E.Ruff; E.Tolman
Front: W.Raven; R.Wheatley*

After the Welldons and Harry Abell, Jack Gilham stands as the most influential character in Kennington cricket history. He was responsible for rebuilding the side in the inter-war years, much in the same way as Abell did in the pre-1914 era. He oversaw improvements to the ground, introduced fresh players (such as George Clarabut and the Holbrook brothers from Wye) to strengthen the side and obtained a number of new, more prestigious fixtures. Most notable among these were regular games with both Dover and

Canterbury Beverley. Kennington's record against these two top club sides was, inevitably, less impressive than against their usual village adversaries but the games must have helped to raise playing standards in the club. The full record of known results in the period is:

	Played	Won	Drawn/Ab.	Lost
BEVERLEY	24	5	6	13
DOVER	19	3	6	10

Occasionally the opposition batting proved too strong. In 1933 Beverley scored a massive 314 for 6, the highest total ever made at Ulley Road, and two years later Dover accumulated 254 for 4 of which F.Lawson made 156 not out, the highest individual score by an opponent on Kennington's ground. The Beverley side contained a number of outstanding all-rounders. In the 1933 match it was N.Else with 98 and 5 for 38 who dominated the

game. A year earlier E.Tomalin had made 96 and taken 5 for 26 and, in 1936, 20-year-old Frank 'Rusty' Hayes chipped in with 72 and 9 for 19, three performances in contention for the best ever all-round display, and all from the same team within four years of each other. But Kennington players too had their day, most especially Sid Ward in the second fixture against Beverley in 1933. In reply to the visitors' 140 Kennington seemed certain to lose when the eighth wicket fell with only 34 on the board. At this point Ward was joined by Tom Saffrey and the pair added 68 without being separated to draw the game with Saffrey's share of the stand being just 2. Ward scored 88 not out – more than 86% of his side's runs – hitting nine fours and two sixes.

In 1929 the 'Tuesday Express' carried the following 'pen portrait' of the then captain:

"Mr John Ernest Gilham is an old Simon Langton School boy. He played for the school eleven and won the ball for the top of the bowling averages. As a right hand medium bowler he subsequently played for Ash, near Canterbury, and has been captain (of Kennington) for six seasons. He has been fairly consistent both as batsman and bowler. Since being with Kennington he has knocked up a century whilst he has made other scores of eighty and several 50s. He has proved himself a capable leader and a useful change bowler and has captured an average of 30 wickets a

season. With the help of the Committee he has been mainly responsible for the improvement in the status of the club during latter years, and also better ground facilities, the pavilion has been enlarged, while the whole of the outfield is now kept mown." [1]

In the ten years between 1924 and 1933 Gilham topped the batting averages six times and the bowling three times and he eventually scored 4,386 runs and took 453 wickets. It was in 1928 that he scored his only hundred, in one of two quite remarkable end-of-season games. On 23 September Kennington scored 223 for 9 against Mr Holbrook's XI – 100 of the runs coming in a record ninth wicket stand between Fred Rummens (34 not out) and J.Buss (64, the most by a number ten batsman for Kennington). Their total was also considerably boosted by no fewer than 48 extras, all but one of them byes.

The game was won by 90 runs. It was the following week that Jack Gilham hit a superb 102 in a total of 210 for 6 against Mr Sutton's XI. But this time Kennington lost, Sutton's team getting home in an exciting finish by just two wickets. Strangely, in Sutton's innings Kennington conceded no extras at all.

The following year Jack Gilham finished the season in even better form. Between 23 August and 21 September he played five consecutive innings of over 50 – a feat which has never been bettered. His scores were: 83 against Stanhays; 53 v Beverley; 56 v Brook; 51 not out against Boughton and rounding off the sequence with an innings against Chilham in which he finished just three short of his century. Gilham's aggregate for the year was easily a record, his 596 runs being the first time a Kennington player had scored over 500 runs in a season.



Kennington 1929

F.Rummens; H.Stuart; G.Head; R.Wheatley; H.Holbrook; G.Clarabut; H.Martin; J.Gilham; E.Stickles; E.Ruff; F.Overton; Kneeling: W.Raven

Jack Gilham's contribution to Kennington cricket was immense and is commemorated to this day by the award of the 'Gilham Trophy'. Donated by his widow and Kennington Hall Farms after his death in 1963 and awarded each year to the person who has done most for the club during the previous twelve months, it usually goes to someone whose work has been off the field of play.

Gilham's record aggregate was to stand for just five years. It was beaten by a man who, if anything, was an even finer all-round cricketer. Jim Stanford played his first game for Kennington in 1921 at the age of 11. By the early '30s he was a formidable opponent with both bat and ball. An accurate bowler who could turn his off-breaks on the most placid of pitches and a most reliable batsman who could also, when the situation demanded, be a

devastating hitter. In 1933 Jim topped the batting averages. The following season he repeated the feat scoring 608 runs at an average of 46.7, beating Fred Blunden's 35-year-old record and itself remaining the best for another 40 years. The main ingredient of Jim's success that year, and indeed throughout his career, was consistency. Nevertheless one or two performances stand out.

Against Pluckley he scored 63 and then took 5 for 33 and against Dover he scored Kennington's fastest ever 50. Having hit the winning runs to record a rare and satisfying victory over the strong Dover side, the game continued with Jim reaching his half-century from just 21 balls. He failed to score off only three of these and 90% of his runs (nine fours and a six) came in boundaries. Jim remained a very fine player right up to his retirement in 1969 having scored 5,562 runs at an average of 17.94 and taken 732 wickets. Scoring 21 fifties he topped the batting averages six times and took five wickets in an innings on 47 occasions helping him top the bowling four times. Only Ernie Allchin, Bert Saffrey and Ollie Austen have done so more often.

The last year he recorded the lowest bowling average was 1961, 28 years after his first success and the longest period between such achievements by any player. Between 1927 and 1965 he was the only Kennington player to take five wickets and score a fifty in the same match and is one of only five players to have done this twice. In his career he did the hat-trick four times, more than any other bowler and, finally and uniquely, he scored a fifty and did the hat-trick in the same match, making 58 not out and clean bowling three Egenen batsmen in successive balls in 1957. Jim was still active in local cricket in the 1990s, standing as umpire for Sheldwich. He died at the ripe old age of 93 whilst the second edition of this book was in preparation.

1934 proved to be a very successful season, particularly considering the quality of Kennington's opponents, with 11 wins and only seven defeats. In addition to the superb batting of Jim Stanford, George Head produced some of his best bowling, taking 76 wickets (actually five fewer than in the previous season) and nine times capturing five in an innings, a record not equalled for 25 years and bettered only once.

The late 1930s saw the advent of two more players who were to be a major part of Kennington cricket until well after the Second World War. Henry Ames joined the club in 1935 and during his playing career was one of Kennington's soundest batsmen scoring just under 2,500 runs at an average of slightly over 16. He captained the side between 1937 and 1939 and again in his last season as a player, 1953. From 1957 until his death, in 1962, he was a most able and assiduous Chairman.

Bert Saffrey began playing for Kennington as a schoolboy in 1928 and by the late '30s had developed into the natural successor to George Head as the side's leading bowler. Often obtaining considerable pace and lift from a relatively short run Bert topped the bowling averages six times, ending his career with 681 wickets at an average of 10.17.



Kennington 1938 (v Great Chart)

Rear: Tom Jeffrey; Frank Austin; R.C.Long; George Head; Ernie Tolman; James Stuart; Bert Saffrey; Ernest Ruff

Seated: Jim Stanford; Frank Hollands; Henry Ames (Captain); Aston Willis; R.Hinds

The first of these occasions was in 1938, a season somewhat more notable for its batting feats. Best of these, and one of the finest displays ever, was by R.Knights of Dover. He scored an undefeated 125, out of his side's 160 for 4, at Dover on 2 July. Chasing a useful Kennington total of 158 for 9, Knights came in at the fall of the first wicket with only 1 on the board. After completing a hard-hit fifty he produced a scintillating attack on the Kennington bowling. He scored his second fifty off just 17 balls, making 75 of the last 78 runs, to win the match virtually single-handed. No

fewer than 100 of his runs came in boundaries with 19 fours

and four sixes. The suffering bowlers were Bert Saffrey, George Head, Jim Stanford, James Stuart and Frank Hollands, who was hit for 24 in one over. Stuart and Saffrey redressed the balance somewhat in the game against Great Chart when they added 74 for the ninth wicket in just seven overs. Bert was always a big hitter but Stuart was, if anything, even more destructive. In 1938 he scored 301 runs of which no fewer than 81% came in boundaries – 43 fours and 12 sixes. Over 80% of one's runs in boundaries would be exceptional in a single innings, let alone sustained throughout an entire season. Kennington, at this time, had a number of quite successful 'sloggers' and another was Tom Jeffrey, a motor engineer who kept the garage opposite 'The Rose'. In the same season he took 24 off an over by Buckman in the match against Queen Victoria's Rifles having previously done even better in the game v Otterden Park

by thrashing 26 off the unfortunate C.Peasgood – 4,0,6,6,4,6.

The following year was notable for the experimental introduction in domestic cricket of 8-ball overs. This innovation, which was supposed to speed up play, was abandoned immediately after the War. On Saturday 26 August 1939 Kennington's opponents at Ulley Road were again Otterden. The visitors arrived with only seven men – the rest probably had weightier matters on their mind - and so two Kennington veterans, Harry Martin and Ernie Tolman, turned out for them. It was, in fact, Tom Jeffrey who finished the game by bowling Tolman for a duck. Kennington won the match by 74 runs. The next weekend Britain was again at war with Germany.

CHAPTER TWELVE

KENNINGTON IN THE MODERN ERA 1940 to 1979

"Shall we put our heads down and make runs, or get out quickly and make history?"

Don Shepherd joining Peter Walker with Glamorgan 11 for 8 against Leicestershire, 1971

The Forties and the Fifties

The Second World War had both similarities and differences to the First in its effects on cricket. Sadly, one of the similarities was the loss of outstanding players at both national and local level. Again, England lost her leading left-arm spinner of the period, Yorkshire's Hedley Verity, who died of wounds in Italy. And again war deprived Kennington of a talented cricketer. Frank Hollands was an all-rounder who was improving season by season. He had scored over 500 runs (at an average of 13) with four fifties and taken 36 wickets at 11 apiece. In August 1939 Frank hit a superb 72 against the powerful Dover bowling. It was to be the last innings he ever played, for he became one of the many thousands who died in Japanese POW camps, during construction of the notorious Burma railway. His grave is at Chungkai cemetery in Thailand.

More happily, cricket did not come to a complete stop as it had between 1914 and 1918. Many games were played at Kennington both by the village and by local forces' sides. Several of the latter were between RAF personnel based at the many airfields in the district. Both air and ground crews used the games as a welcome diversion during and after the Battle of Britain. Looking at the score books for matches such as 'A and R Flights' versus 'B and C Flights' or '220 Field Company Royal Engineers' versus 'RAOC' one cannot help wondering how many of these young men did not live to play cricket during peace-time.

In its wartime matches Kennington were obviously weakened, with most of their best players in the forces. 1942 saw the greatest number of games played, two of which are of particular interest. The first, against Queen Victoria's Rifles on 3 August, saw 20 wickets fall in only 27.2 8-ball overs. The army side batted first and made 73

from 17 overs having, at one stage, been 1 for 4. With Last taking 8 for 29 for the visitors Kennington lost by seven runs despite a whirlwind 32 off 19 balls by Bert Saffrey. Two games were played against the Royal Artillery. Kennington won the first comfortably but in the return, on 20 August, the Artillery's opener, Bombardier Shackleton (who was out for 4 in the first match) carried his bat for 101 out of a total of 164 – the only time a batsman has scored a century in achieving this feat.

Kennington's immediate post-war form was considerably better than it had been after World War One for, unlike 1919, most of the best pre-war cricketers were still playing. Jack Gilham was, perhaps, past his best but Henry Ames and Jim Stanford were in prime form and these three led the side in the first four post-war seasons. Bert Saffrey opened the bowling attack and topped the averages in 1946, a season which can be seen as one of consolidation. In a wet year, with eight games cancelled, six were won and six lost with a runs-per-wicket average of 10.50. The following season this shot up to over 19.50 (the highest until 1983) and the powerful batting, which four times topped 200, was mainly responsible for the club winning 13 of its 21 games, suffering only four defeats. Two new players, R.B.Jones and the Rev C.S.Marcon (who had become Kennington's vicar during the war) bolstered the batting but the main improvement came from the all-round abilities of Fred Flawn.

Fred had played for Kennington occasionally since 1931 but it was after the war that he really made his mark. As a middle-order or opening right-hand batsman he was to score more runs than any previous player – 6,740, at an average just over 15. His top score of 106, against Mersham-le-Hatch in 1952, was backed up with 20 further scores of 50 and over. Often,

though, it was as a bowler that he proved to be a match winner. He topped the bowling in 1947 and '48 as well as in 1959 and again, at the age of 55, in 1971. His 559 career wickets at 10.9 probably underestimates his usefulness for he would often come on for short spells of right-arm medium pace to take two or three quick wickets or break a stubborn partnership. Fred's last playing season was in 1977 and in those 46 years he appeared for Kennington 508 times.

1948 and '49, though not as successful as '47, were still better than average. In 1948 the batting was again very sound and Jim Stanford ended the season with an average of 41.66. Considering his top score was only 57 not out this again demonstrates a consistency remarkable in the village game.

One of Kennington's strongest opponents at this time were Davington Priory from Faversham. Davington were a side who played the game hard, at times perhaps too hard. In 1951 Henry Ames, having made 60, retired his innings due to their unsporting behaviour. Henry, who was always a perfect gentleman, had become thoroughly disgusted with his opponents 'sledging' something which, he felt, had no place in a friendly village cricket match. Despite this rather unfortunate aspect of their play Davington were certainly a useful side and in W.Vidler and F.Packman possessed a formidable pair of opening bowlers. In 1949 Vidler, 5 for 15, and Packman, 5 for 18, bowled Kennington out for 35 in the match at Ulley Road. In the return game Kennington were dismissed for just five more. Again Vidler and Packman bowled unchanged and their respective figures were an exact repetition of those in the first match!

Another unusual incident occurred in a game against Ashford, at Barrow Hill, in May 1947. Ashford batted first, declaring at tea with 207 for 6. Kennington must still have been confident of drawing the match, particularly as the well-grassed pitch was playing perfectly. Imagine their surprise when, on emerging from the pavilion after the interval, they saw the groundsman mowing it! The umpires pointed out the illegality of this but there was little choice, if the game was to continue, than for Kennington to bat on the now closely shaved surface. They were dismissed for their third lowest total of the season, 116, with only R.B.Jones (35) and Henry Ames (28) being able to cope with

the sharp turn they now encountered. Perhaps Kennington would have lost the game even without the unscheduled mowing but, if they had avoided defeat, the 1947 season would have been the best in the club's history, better even than the exceptional performance of 1899.

Every cricket club has its ups and downs and, until the 1980s, Kennington's winning and losing cycles since the war seem to have lasted between three and eight years. Judging 'good' seasons as those where more matches are won than lost and the reverse as being 'poor' the following pattern emerges:

1946-49	Good
1950-52	Poor
1953-59	Good
1960-66	Poor
1967-74	Good
1975-77	Poor

The early '50s were a period of slight decline as the splendid batting form of the immediate post-war years was not maintained whilst the bowling attack remained the same. It is said, with much truth, that bowlers win more games than batsmen. Strong batting can usually insure a side against defeat but you can only win regularly if you can bowl out the opposition. It is thus not surprising that one of Kennington's best ever periods, 1953-59, coincided with their possessing their strongest ever bowling attack. Three players who joined the club in the early '50s greatly contributed to this strength.

Cecil Burdett moved to Kennington from Tenterden, for whom he had played club cricket for many years. Though he only stayed for six seasons, before his job entailed a further move, he left a profound mark on Kennington cricket. A far from negligible bat he scored 1,100 runs at an average of 16 with five 50s. He was strong all round the wicket and was difficult to tie down as he had the ability to lift the ball over the in-field without undue risk. He was, however, an even better – and very quick – right-arm bowler who could move the ball either way off the seam. He took 112 wickets at a cost of only 8.08 each, one of the lowest averages of the modern era. He was somewhat under-used both because the side contained so many good bowlers and because as skipper, from 1954 to '56, he probably under-bowled himself. As a captain Burdett had even greater success. He led the side on 47 occasions, winning 25 and losing only 12.

John Huckstepp would not have been out of place as an opening bowler in a much higher class of cricket. With the ability to swing the ball either way he was, on occasion, virtually unplayable by village batsmen. Making his debut in 1955 John's bowling improved season by season:

Year	Wickets	Average	Position
1955	19	8.3	4th
1956	13	5.5	1st
1957	42	8.5	5th
1958	76	6.3	1st
1959	108	10.2	4th

His 108 wickets in 1959 remains a record and in all he claimed 285 victims for Kennington at 8.5. In 1960, whilst still in his prime, he gave up the game to concentrate more fully on his charity work for the Spastics Society. Among many outstanding performances with the ball his feat against Great Chart at Ulley Road in 1958 is worthwhile recalling. Chasing a Kennington total of only 78 the visitors, who possessed a strong batting side, must have been confident of success. But with the second ball of the innings Huckstepp had Marsh caught by Fred Flawn at mid-on. With his fourth delivery John Heddle was caught by wicket-keeper Mickey Owen and with the final ball Owen's opposite number, Lee, was trapped LBW. Three for nought after one over. A more dramatic start to an innings would be difficult to find. A Kennington win now seemed a strong possibility but Chart's number seven, P.Mercer, had other ideas. Deciding that attack was the only answer he launched a desperate assault. Hitting four sixes in his 33 not out, three of them off John who, nevertheless, gave away only two further runs to finish with 3 for 20, the visitors got home by three wickets. Huckstepp could himself be a destructive hitter. For Kennington he is the holder of the record score for both a number eight and a number eleven. Against High Halden in 1959 John came in with nothing to lose as, chasing 156, the home team were 89 for 9. John hit 31 in a stand of 38 with 13-year-old Michael Epps. A year later, against Wye, Kennington were in even worse trouble, having been reduced to 18 for 6 when Huckstepp came in. At this point the Wye bowling figures read:

A.Mountford	10 - 7 - 9 - 3
T.Williams	10 - 7 - 4 - 3

John first steadied the innings with Richard Brightling, who was out with the total at 67, when he was again joined by young Mick Epps. This time the pair added 54, of which

Epps made 8. John scored 74 having hit nine fours and four sixes. His innings had lasted only 35 minutes and it culminated in his smashing 28 in an over off Colin Croft - 4, 4, 2, 6, 6, 6.

John Huckstepp and Cecil Burdett both made fine additions to the side but, by the 1960's both had left. The third player who joined the club at this time made an even greater contribution which lasted for the next 40 years. We have seen how, in each period of the club's history, certain individuals have done more than others. Before the First World War it was Harry Abell. In the inter-war years Jack Gilham was the mainstay. In the post-war period many people have done a great deal either on the field or off, sometimes both, but Twiz Grant's dedication to the club remains unique. He is the only man to have held the club's three most prestigious offices - Captain (1959-60), Chairman (1973-76) and, from 1983 to his death in 1995, President. Unlike some of his predecessors Twiz fulfilled his non-playing roles quietly and unobtrusively. Possibly his most important role was played in the many hundreds of hours he put in maintaining the ground itself. After his retirement from local builders Earl & Co., in 1986, he did more work than a full-time groundsman! If Twiz had never set foot on the cricket field as a player his place in Kennington history would have been assured but in addition to his many behind-the-scenes activities he was also one of the club's finest bowlers - arguably the finest.

Twiz learnt his cricket whilst a pupil at Willesborough Primary School where he also obtained his nickname, he was christened Cecil James. His sportsmaster, Mr Semple, taught him the rudiments of the game and Twiz rates him as good a coach as a young player could have had. When Twiz moved on to the North Central School he soon established himself as an all-rounder in the First XI. Before the war Twiz played for Willesborough but it was during the war itself that he reached his peak as a bowler.

Whereas for first-class cricketers the war meant a serious curtailment of their cricket, for many better club and village players it offered new opportunities and Twiz was one of these. He joined the RAF and was posted to South Africa, then India and Ceylon. At this time Twiz was a fast (right-arm) bowler and he was selected for his squadron and other representative sides. In Ceylon he took 178 wickets in a season but

the highlight of his wartime cricket came in the RAF Ceylon tour of India. The team was captained by Fred Stocks who, after the war, played nearly 300 times for Nottinghamshire, scoring over 11,000 runs. Other first class cricketers in the side included New Zealander Tom Sharp, who toured England with the New Zealand Services team in 1945, and John Thompson. Thompson's first class record is quite impressive. A right-handed bat he scored over 3,400 runs at an average over 31 with six centuries for Cambridge University and Warwickshire.



Twiz Grant in the RAF

Twiz's side played on the Test Match grounds in Bombay, Madras, Bangalore and Calcutta before crowds into the tens of thousands. Many international cricketers, including on one occasion the great Denis Compton, were among Twiz's opponents and, at one time or another, he bowled to all the top Indian players of the period. He particularly remembered one match before a vast crowd in the Brabourne Stadium, Bombay. When Bombay batted Twiz captured the wicket of Vijay Merchant for nought. This was no mean feat as Merchant's first class average of 71.33 is the second highest of all time, only Don Bradman's being superior. Only the previous week Merchant had made 201 not out against the All India Services XI whose side contained, among many other Test players, both Compton and Joe Hardstaff. Unfortunately, Twiz wasn't able to repeat his success against R.S.Modi (career average 53) who proceeded to score a double century against the Air Force men.



The Brabourne Stadium, Bombay

It was in India that long spells of fast bowling on rock-hard pitches took its toll and injury forced Twiz to adopt the slow-medium style that was to stand him in good stead for the next 30 years. His stock ball was the off-cutter, with the odd leg-cutter or one that went straight on. Twiz's most dangerous weapon was his superbly disguised change of pace. Time after time batsmen were bowled or trapped LBW by balls which were on to them before they expected or were deceived into offering catches from ones which were fractionally held back.



Twiz's RAF Colleagues

Twiz's squadron, 160, flew American Liberators and broke the long-distance non-stop flying record in supplying our troops in Burma

Immediately after the war Twiz played his cricket with George Clarabut's Circus but in 1949 he built his bungalow next to the Ulley Road ground - where he lived until his death in 1995 - and so it was inevitable that he should come to play for Kennington. His first outstanding season with the ball was 1955 when he took 32 wickets at just 5.47 each. He topped the bowling again the following year and did so twice more before his retirement from the game in 1977. On the second of these occasions, in 1974, he was in his 54th year. Possibly his best season was 1967 when he took 91 wickets (including a record ten five-wicket hauls) and, but for a bout of fibrositis which kept him out of the side for a number of weeks, would probably have

broken John Huckstepp's record of 108 wickets in a season.

His best analysis was 9 for 45 against Caxton House in 1964 but one of his 1967 feats was undoubtedly an even better performance. Indeed, taking such factors as the strength of the opposition and the situation in the game into account, it would be difficult to find a better bowling spell by any Kennington player. During Kennington's first Devon tour they played Plymstock who included four Plymouth players in their line-up, including the East African international and Glamorgan all-rounder, John Solanky. Chasing a modest Kennington total of 125 Twiz came on first change with the score 16 for no wicket. Solanky looked in ominous form and he hit left-arm spinner Roy Gore for three successive fours. But faced by Twiz he was at first tied down and then bowled by a quicker delivery. Bowling unchanged for over two hours Twiz saw Kennington to victory by 30 runs, his final analysis being: 24.3 overs, 14 maidens, 8 for 22; a performance described by Kennington captain Mike Dorman as the finest he had seen outside the first class game.

By the end of his career Twiz had taken more wickets than any other Kennington bowler and scored nearly 3,000 runs as well. He took five wickets in an innings a record 69 times and his career bowling figures read as follows:

	Overs	Mdns	Runs	Wkts	Av
For Kennington	4299	1172	10236	1049	9.76
Full Career	14221	3289	37171	3289	11.30

His record for Kennington appears even more impressive when one realises that he didn't begin playing for us until he was 31. Twiz was always held in the highest esteem by colleagues and foes alike. One of the best batsmen who faced him in the village game was Tom Goatman, of Elham, who, in a letter to club Secretary Alec Robinson in 1972, wrote:

"I note your tribute to Twiz Grant. I would like to add mine. As a player and a sportsman I hold him in the highest regard. He certainly is a wily old bowler and I remember with pleasure the many battles I have had with him over the years. I think we probably ended with honours even. Sometimes I got runs, sometimes he soon got me. That's how it should be. I remember well a long time ago, how he bowled me (before I scored I think, or at

least I'd only one or two) with one that pitched on or just outside the leg stump on a perfect length and then moved back to hit the off bail. This is still the most difficult ball in cricket to combat. Please give him my warmest regards."

Few cricketers can inspire such a genuine testimonial from an opponent.

In the mid '50s, with a bowling attack comprising Grant, Stanford, Saffrey, Flawn, Dick Knowler (a medium-pacer good enough to take over 400 wickets for Kennington), Mike Dorman, Godfrey Brightling, Huckstepp and Burdett it is not surprising that the side met with so much success. Between them these eight bowlers took over 4,300 wickets for Kennington – and often six or seven of them played in the same team. In both 1955 and 1957 seven Kennington bowlers finished with averages in single figures and no match was given up however few runs the batsmen had made. The three ties that occurred between 1953 and 1958 are good cases in point. Each time Kennington batted first: making 36 against Ashford North Modern Old Boys (now Old Stacians); 64 against Great Chart and 36 again versus Ashford Young Farmers. Each time it was the bowlers, backed up by excellent fielding, who saved the day. The respective heroes were Knowler (6 for 14), Saffrey (5 for 13) and Stanford (5 for 11). Seemingly certain defeats were sometimes turned into improbable victories, as in the game against the Old Favershamians in 1957 when Kennington scored 38 and then bowled out their opponents for 36. Twiz Grant took 5 for 10 and John Huckstepp 4 for 4. Occasionally the opposition were totally destroyed, the outstanding example being Woodchurch who, at Kennington in 1954, were bowled out for 10 (the lowest score against the club since before the First World War) and 27. In the first innings Grant took 6 for 2, including a hat-trick, and Bert Saffrey 4 for 8. In the second two different bowlers were used, Dick Knowler taking 5 for 12 and Jim Stanford 5 for 15.

Despite such excellent results, however, everything wasn't plain sailing for the club. With such a strong side, and with few Sunday games, Kennington fielded a second eleven. This sometimes proved a mixed blessing as the following minute from a special committee meeting of 26 July 1952 indicates:

"The following were present: Mr Ruff (Chairman), Messers Burdett, Knowler,

Gilham, Jenner, Grant and the Hon. Secretary Mr A. Robinson. The meeting was called to select two teams, a first and second eleven, for the following Saturday. Owing to holidays only four men of the regular first team were available. It was proposed by the Chairman that the second team game be cancelled and those members selected for the first team. The Secretary informed the committee that a very high feeling had crept in between the two teams and it was expressed that the second eleven players did not want to play in the first team as they were not required when other members were available. The Chairman said that it was a very serious state of affairs and he felt that under no circumstances could we tolerate such things. Mr Gilham said that he agreed with Mr Ruff and that it was a sorry thing when players dictated to the committee what they should do. At this point the Secretary said that he agreed with the second eleven and that the boys did not get a chance, they were wanted only as a stop gap. Some members, he said, although they turned up regularly were not even given consideration despite the fact that many first team members put in an appearance only on the actual day of play. A very heated discussion took place before Mr Gilham proposed that if no first team could be selected then the game should be cancelled and as the second team did not represent Kennington Cricket Club, then that game too should be cancelled. The Secretary said that it was not fair nor right that the second team game should be cancelled just because they did not want to play for the firsts. These boys, who all season were not considered good enough to play for the first team, are now suddenly good enough for seven of them to play. Mr Burdett said he seconded Mr Gilham's proposition as it was impossible for a second team to play while we were unable to raise a first team. After lengthy discussion the Chairman put the proposition to the meeting: that both games be cancelled in view of the serious threat to the management of the club. This was carried by five votes to one."

I'm sure that every club can recall similar problems, even if elements of this argument sound more like the deliberations of some county committees!

Happily these differences of opinion were eventually resolved. At the next AGM the matter was discussed at length and it was decided that at least two younger members, regardless of merit, should be

included in the first team each week. When Sunday cricket became a regular feature it was possible to give everyone a game and, after the 1954 season, a second eleven was no longer a necessity.

1954 was the best of a series of good seasons. Only one game was lost and even that proved to be a struggle for our old adversaries, Boughton and Eastwell. Batting first, on their own ground, Boughton made 87. In reply Kennington had a disastrous start, losing their first four wickets for just 14 runs. But opener, Barry Smith, fought a determined rearguard action eventually carrying his bat for 32 out of a final total of 54.

This was also the season in which Kennington's longest serving wicket-keeper, Mickey Owen, made his debut. Mickey took 156 catches and made a record 50 stumpings in his career, which ended in 1971. He scored over 2,500 runs (average 11.57) with a top score of 84 not out against Great Chart in 1955. He also established a record for the sixth wicket with a partnership of 102 made with Dennis Webb against the same opponents in 1962. A small man, Mickey was also a fine boxer and it was a great loss to the club when he died in 1974 aged only 52.

1957 proved to be an innovatory year for a number of reasons. It was the first in which Sunday cricket was a regular feature and it also marked the introduction of the highest accolade the club bestows, Honorary Life Membership. The latter came about following a close election for Chairman in which Henry Ames beat Ernest Ruff by a single vote. Ames pointed out that Mr Ruff had served the club as player, umpire, and committee member for some 30 years and suggested that his services to the club be recognised by the granting of Honorary Life Membership, a proposal which was enthusiastically adopted by the meeting. Since that date 16 further Honorary Life Members have been created including George Head, Ernie Tolman, Twiz Grant, Fred Flawn and Jim Stanford. 1957 also saw the debuts of two more fine players, John Brierley and Mike Dorman, and some excellent individual performances from Godfrey Brightling.



Kennington 1957

Rear: Peter Gilham; Mrs Brenda Owen; John Barber; Godfrey Brightling; Mike Dorman; Dennis Webb; Richard Brightling;

John Brierley; John Huckstepp; Henry Ames (Chairman); Micky Owen

Seated: Alec Robinson; Fred Flawn; Jim Stanford (Captain); Twiz Grant; Cobbie Harris

Brierley played for the club for only three seasons and holds the unique distinction of having topped the batting averages in each of those years. A school teacher by profession he was an outstanding slip fielder, probably the best Kennington has ever had. An aggressive right-handed opening bat who, though sometimes a scratchy starter, was, when set, a tremendous driver of the ball. He reached 1,000 runs in just 42 innings at an average of 28.53, scoring seven fifties. His top score came in a high scoring match in 1959 which had a nail-biting climax. Against Great Chart at Ulley Road Kennington ran up a total of 209 for 6, with Brierley making a splendid 94 before being run out. After losing their first wicket at 20 a stand of 118 for the second between D.Tabrett (48) and C.Mercer put the visitors in with a chance. The score reached 195 for 5 and, with Mercer still going well, Chart looked odds-on winners. Two wickets then fell quickly before another nine runs were added to bring Chart to just seven short of victory with three wickets in hand. At this point skipper Twiz Grant brought back his opening bowlers. Mercer took a single off John Huckstepp to complete his century but, with the last ball of the over, Mercer's

brother was bowled for 0. Two balls later the game was over. Godfrey Brightling deceived the centurion with his left-arm spin and off the next ball McClintock was brilliantly run out and Kennington had won by just five runs in the last possible over.

Brightling had made his debut in 1954 and over the next 18 seasons proved a highly talented all-rounder. His bowling has already been remarked upon and in his career he took 340 wickets at a fraction over 11 each. But it was his right-handed batting that singled Godfrey out from the majority of village cricketers. It is rare to find as stylish and technically correct player in the village game. If he had put his mind to it there is no doubt that Godfrey could have scored many more than the 4,523 runs he did. Averaging 15.65 he hit 15 fifties with a top score of 103 not out, against Erogen in the 1957 season.



Henry Ames presents Godfrey Brightling with his award for scoring 103 not out against Ebergen 1957



Mike Dorman, Dawlish 1967
Consuming the fatal 'scrumpy' that later caused him to fall down a bank whilst fielding!

The second debutant in 1957 was Mike Dorman. Another all-rounder, Mike was one of the slowest bowlers imaginable. On numerous occasions opposition batsmen would consider his deliveries to be totally innocuous, go for a mighty heave, find themselves playing too soon and end up caught, stumped or bowled. Taking 229 wickets at just under 11 and scoring 3,048 runs at 12, Mike was also one of the best captains Kennington has had and skippered the side between 1965 and 1967 and again in 1971. He obtained a greater degree of co-operation for groundwork and other essential non-playing activities than any other recent official. On the field he was able, with a judicious mixture of praise and censure, to get the best out of every player and raised the general standard of the side, particularly assisting its less talented members. Mike's best performance with bat and ball came in the same match, in 1976, and was all the more satisfying as it came against the old 'enemy' Boughton. Kennington won the toss and batted, making 166 for 8 almost entirely due to a 99-run third wicket stand (then the highest partnership for any wicket against Boughton) between Mike, who made 45, and Alec Driscoll (68). The visitors looked to be cruising to victory, with the score at 82 for no wicket, when Mike came on to bowl. In a sensational spell of 10 overs he took 9 for 34 - the best analysis recorded in Kennington/Boughton clashes - and Kennington won by 31 runs. What made this performance even more remarkable was that in the previous two seasons Mike had only played three games!

The Sixties

After the successes of the fifties, the early to mid-sixties saw a slight decline. The batting wasn't greatly weaker, even with the loss of John Brierley, as a number of young batsmen came to the fore. Cobbie Harris and John Stanford (son of Jim) were both hard-hitting right handers. When they came off they could wreck an opposing attack; as, in 1968, when Cobbie scored 73 not out at Eastry or, in 1970, when John hit a whirlwind 81 at Sheldwich.

Michael Epps proved that his performances as a 13 and 14-year-old were no flashes in the pan. In 1963, aged 17, he averaged 40.78 showing remarkable consistency and maturity. He was also a fine quick bowler and topped the averages in 1965 with 40 wickets at 6.53. In 1966 he again finished top of the batting but thereafter played very little cricket for Kennington as he went on to pursue a successful career in the Police Force. Had Michael continued to play regularly he might well have proved Kennington's most formidable all-rounder.

Kennington's bowling, despite Epps's contribution was, however, seriously weakened by the loss of Cecil Burdett and then John Huckstepp. At the same time a number of our opponents possessed players who would have stood out in any era. Elham Valley, who Kennington have played regularly since 1953, possessed a naggingly accurate bowler in Bill Morgan whose haul of 72 wickets is second only to Roy Sinden's. The Elham side also contained perhaps the finest batsman ever to play against Kennington on a regular basis. Tom Goatman scored more runs against us than any other player to that date at an average second only to the prodigious Alfred Richardson, but sustained over more than three times the number of games. His record against Kennington reads:

Inns	NO	HS	Runs	50s	Av
25	13	103*	746	6	62.17

Figures which amply demonstrate just how difficult it was to get him out. In no fewer than 14 of these innings Tom was top scorer for his side and at the age of 60 he was still making 1,000 runs a season. Tom was certainly good enough for the county game had he wanted to play it. Instead he remained loyal to his local side and in his

letter to Kennington Secretary, Alec Robinson, he summed up his career on his retirement:

"You may be interested to know how I finished up. I'm not attempting to be immodest. I merely felt you might be interested in the record between old friends. It's not been published anywhere, and I insisted that no presentation be made by my club on my retirement. What I have done has been because I enjoyed doing it, and that is the best reward. I'm not sorry that I declined a county offer before the war. I'm sure I've enjoyed my cricket much better against chaps like your club members than I would have done in county circles. True I have played with some notable cricketers but I can claim that I have remained a true amateur, and loved every minute of it. I finished up with 43,891 runs, 1,361 innings, 412 not outs, the highest score 198 not out, average 46.25. I managed a few wickets with my 'diddlers', although I must confess that most of the wickets I got were probably due to the fact that the batsmen thought there was a lot more guile in the deliveries than there actually was ... it was really all in the batsman's mind. However, overs 4,890, maidens 1,052, runs 12,920, wickets 1,338, average 9.66 (one all ten for 20 but the batsmen must have been half-squiffy at the time or it couldn't have happened). Catches 824."

Very few village cricketers can have scored as many as 43,000 runs and none with the same cheerfulness and sportsmanship as Tom. One can only regret that he was not able to fully enjoy his well-earned retirement, as he died only a couple of years after writing the above letter. Tom's son Jeff also played regularly for, and skippered, Elham whilst his daughter, Sue, reached the peak of the women's game, captaining England in the World Cup.

Tom Goatman's performances came over a period of more than ten years but one exceptional individual feat took place in 1961. On Sunday 4 July Kennington were at home to Ashford Young Farmers. Making a respectable 168 (Jim Stanford 63, Cobbie Harris 35) Kennington won by 30 runs. Not, on the face of it, an exceptional game. What was exceptional was that in Kennington's innings G.White bowled

unchanged, taking all ten wickets for 67 runs. This was, and remains, only the second instance of a bowler taking all ten and is even more remarkable for coming in a relatively high scoring innings. White's first two wickets were LBW and the last (Stanford) was caught, the rest being bowled. His final figures were 19.3 overs, 3 maidens 10 for 67.

The early sixties sadly saw the deaths of two former stalwarts, Henry Ames and Jack Gilham. The trophy donated in the latter's memory was first awarded in 1963 when it went to the club's long-serving Secretary Alec Robinson. 'Robbie' was as good a Secretary as any club could wish for, as well as being one of the best umpires the local game has seen. He was made an Honorary Life Member in 1974 and his death, in 1986, was a great loss.



Kennington 1964

*Rear: Dave Atkins; Godfrey Brightling; Henry Carter; John Stanford; Twiz Grant; George Young
Seated: Fred Flawn; Dick Knowler; Mike Dorman (Captain); Alf Ames; Don Lane*

The 1964 season was a special one for Kennington as it marked the centenary of the village's first regular team (the existence of the single 1845 match was not known until these researches were undertaken and, in any case, 1945 would not have been an easy year in which to hold a cricket centenary). A centenary dinner was held at the end of the season to mark the occasion and in June a celebratory cricket week, complete with beer tent, organised. The latter was to be preceded, on Friday 19th, with a game against the bat manufacturers Gray-Nicholls but torrential rain not only caused the cancellation of this game but threatened to ruin the whole week. It was a case of all hands to the pumps as every

player, wife, girlfriend and child (including the author) spent the weekend endeavouring to dry out the ground using all sorts of devices, including blankets and an aged mangle! Fortunately their efforts were rewarded and all seven games: against the Chairman's XI, the Lyddites, the Association of Kent Cricket Clubs, Primrose and Len Dairies, Tenterden, Ash and Boughton were completed. Kennington only won two of these and Boughton chalked up their highest ever win by 158 runs receiving considerable assistance from a record breaking ninth wicket partnership of 106 between R.Ades (52 not out) and Roy Sinden (53) and a superb spell of bowling by Chris Wise whose 8 for 19 equalled Boughton's best against us.

A great deal of the organisation of the centenary was undertaken by Dennis Webb and the great success of the celebrations was largely due to his efforts for which he was awarded the Gilham Trophy. Dennis was also in his second year as captain and Kennington have probably never had a better tactical leader. In 1969 he was made an Honorary Life Member. He continued to take an active interest in the club as a Vice-President until his death in 2002.



Autographed menu card from the 1964 'Centenary' Dinner

Another highlight of the centenary season was the achievement of Kennington's three-a-side team. Represented by Michael Epps, Mike Dorman and John Stanford, the semi-finals of both the area and county competitions were reached.

The following season saw the construction of Kennington's tea-room, now also a bar, which was built not only with the labour of the members but with the assistance of several non-members, most especially Pat Huckstepp and Bert Ambrose, to whom we owe a continuing debt of thanks.



Action from the 1963 3-a-Side competition. Mike Dorman batting.

1966 was more notable for performances on the field. Rod Holbrook, a quick right-arm bowler, ended the year with 34 wickets at just 4.56 apiece - the lowest

average since 'Ernie Tolman's Year' of 1922. Unfortunately Rod was another Kennington loss to the police force and played few further games. This was very much a watershed year for Kennington and it saw the emergence of a number of new players.

Though he first made his mark as a batsman, topping the averages in 1965, Roy Gore was a left-arm spinner who, for a number of seasons, proved the perfect foil to Twiz Grant. He eventually took 264 wickets at 10.87 and scored just over 1,000 runs, average 12.83. His finest bowling performance was a remarkable 8 overs, 7 maidens, 7 wickets for 1 run against London side Wellington at Ulley Road in 1971 when the visitors batted one man short.

Alec Driscoll made his debut a couple of years later, in 1968. During the '70s he was to do more bowling and take more wickets than any other. His final haul of 798 (at an average of 11.86) was, at the time, second only to Twiz Grant. He was the kind of bowler every side wants to possess, a steady right-arm medium pacer able to bowl all afternoon and always 'do something' with the ball - moving it either way off the seam and never allowing the batsman to feel secure.

He took 8 wickets in an innings on four occasions and 9 for 26 at home against Hythe in 1976 - the best match analysis by a Kennington bowler. He took three hat-tricks and holds the distinction of having bowled the most balls in succession without conceding a run - 57 at home to Eastry in 1976. When he put his mind to it Alec could be a very useful batsman as his 3,818 runs at an average of 12.16 testify. When he made his highest score, 90 at home to Peasmarsh in 1976, he also took 8 for 24 and '76 was certainly his finest season. In it he became the only Kennington player to score 500 runs and take 100 wickets in the same year. His total run aggregate was 511 at an average of 18.2 (second only to Dave Britton) and he became only the third bowler to take 100 wickets in a season, finishing with 102 at 10.1, top of the averages.

Two others who made their mark in 1966 were Pete Bowman and Mick Austin. Pete moved to Kennington that year and over the next 25 seasons his off-spin accounted for 444 victims at just over 12 apiece. A tenacious batsman, in 1980 he batted for more than 100 overs without being dismissed, making scores of 19, 20, 16 (all

not out) and 32. In 1981 Pete topped the bowling averages which was a considerable achievement as it is the only time between 1977 and 1992 that Ollie Austen was deprived of this honour.

Mick Austin became one of our longest serving players. Having first joined the side in 1963 he made his final appearance in 1993 having, in 1991, moved to Surrey to begin a new career as a publican. A feared opponent with both bat and ball Mick was also one of the finest fielders Kennington have possessed. He began as a wicket-keeper and, in 1967, established the enviable record of allowing only 40 byes in 29 matches and claiming a record 35 victims (34 caught and one stumped). Later, usually at cover, Mick also established a record for catches by a fielder in a season, 22 in 1978.

His total of 341 catches is the current career record and, in addition, he ran out numerous victims with his superb ground fielding. A steady medium-pace bowler, mainly employing off-cutters, Mick took 439 wickets at 14. His accuracy often stifled opposing batsman, no more so than in a league match against Old Stacians at Kingsnorth in 1989 when his 10 overs cost a mere 3 runs with 2 wickets – a SE Kent League record. As a batsman Mick was not what one would call technically correct but the determined aggression that epitomised his cricket, together with a natural eye for the ball, more than compensated for any text-book deficiencies. He is currently Kennington's sixth highest scorer of all time with 8,253 runs at an average of 18.71. His single regret was that he never made a century for Kennington having been out twice in the nineties, for scores of 97 and 98, without knowing how close he was on either occasion. Mick's batting style could often bewilder opponents for, unlike most attacking batsman, his preference was for the off side. In 1985, for example, he hit a brilliant 75 at Boughton smashing their quickest bowlers over extra cover for a series of fours and sixes. In his last full season, 1991, Mick topped the batting with an average of 54.67, which included a 28-ball fifty at Cliftonville – Kennington's fastest league half-century.

Back in 1966 Mick was one of the batsmen responsible for a memorable victory. Playing for the first time on the historic Rolvenden ground, where cricket has been played since the eighteenth century, the home side made a very useful 176 for 8

(Pete Bowman taking 6 for 37). Godfrey Brightling and Fred Flawn gave Kennington a sound start with an opening stand of 41 before Fred was bowled for 24. Godfrey and Pete Bowman then took the score to 64 when Pete was out for 15.

It was then that Mick came onto the scene. Before the game the home skipper had pointed out a row of cottages on the other side of the road commenting that in the club's recent celebratory match West Indian test cricketer Rohan Kanhai had sent the ball onto their roofs no fewer than three times. In 31 balls Mick hit 54 with six fours and four tile-shattering sixes! He was certainly in form at this time as in his previous innings, against Kildown, he had reached 50 off four fewer balls. With Mick caught off ball number 32 Rolvenden heaved a sigh of relief, but they had reckoned without Cobbie Harris. He took up where Mick had left off scoring 40 not out in 15 minutes off just 18 balls, with five fours and two more sixes onto the roofs of the unfortunate cottages, before Godfrey stroked the winning boundary, finishing with an invaluable 41 not out. Altogether Kennington had made their 177 runs in 89 minutes, 117 in 14 overs and the last 51 from just 30 balls.

Another fine performance in 1966, this time by the bowlers, came at Tunbridge Wells against the very strong club side, Linden Park. The home side included two county players in Paddy Phelan, of Essex, and Colin Page, for many years Kent's Second XI captain and then team manager, but the batting was completely at sea to the bowling of Twiz Grant (6 for 22) and Mike Dorman (4 for 20). Phelan was the only player in double figures (caught Dorman, bowled Grant for 12) as Linden Park were all out for 52. Unfortunately soon after it was the ground that appeared to be at sea when a thunderstorm caused the abandonment of the match. Perhaps Kennington wouldn't have won but they certainly gave their illustrious opponents a nasty shock.

In 1967 Kennington embarked on their first ever cricket tour. Superbly organised by the Chairman, John Stevenson, the club spent a week in Devon and remained unbeaten in their six games, of which five were won. The victory over Plymstock has already been referred to but there were several other excellent performances. Bert Saffrey proved he could still be a dangerous bowler with a devastating spell of 6 for 7 against Dawlish, including a hat-

trick, and Roy Gore, with fine variations of flight, bowled out Teignmouth, taking 6 for 22. A number of players guested for Kennington and also did well. Peasmarsh's John Mann settled the rain-reduced game against Exeter St Thomas by hitting two

huge sixes right out of the large county ground. As well as a powerful hitter John was also a very quick bowler who took five wickets in an innings five times against Kennington in just four seasons.



Setting off for the Devon Tour 1967

P.Mugridge; Brian Kennett; Roy Gore; Dennis Webb; Mick Dorman; John Stanford; Miss Prim George (later Mrs Stanford); Ted Austin; Tony Post; Mrs E.Harris; Cobbie Harris; Mrs A.Carter; John Mann (hidden); Bert Saffrey; Cecil Cole; Reg Cole; Mrs G.Mann; Henry Carter; Bill Saffrey; Tom Saffrey; Godfrey Brightling; John Stevenson; Alec Robinson; Twiz Grant

Peasmarsh were a very strong side at this time. Besides Mann they had an excellent bowler in Robin Dixon, who took 55 wickets in matches against Kennington, and a prolific batsman in Derek Brann, who scored 675 runs at an average of 33.75. Peasmarsh's ground was one of the most idyllic in village cricket. Situated on a large private estate at Pelsham, just outside the village, the cricket field itself was set in a man-made bowl and was not unlike Arundel. On its excellent pitch the Australian tourists used to play before the First World War. Alas, cricket is no longer played at Pelsham and the ground has been turned into a bowling green.

The most prolific batsman on tour, with 246 runs at an average of 41, was Lenham's Cecil Cole. In the match at Teignmouth Cecil hit a six which went over the grandstand and through a conservatory roof! Cecil was a high class and consistent right-handed opening batsman and a wicket keeper who, in his prime, was

certainly good enough for the first class game. Indeed, had he not come from Kent, he may well have made his mark at county level. But Kent have always been blessed with world class wicket keeper/batsmen and with the likes of Les Ames and Godfrey Evans around Cecil never received the opportunity he perhaps deserved. After a long and successful career with Lenham, for whom his record career against Kennington was second only to Tom Goatman's - 702 runs, average 33.43 Cecil came to play for us. Though already well into his forties he scored 2,903 runs in just 93 innings at an average of 35.84, still the fifth best career average of any Kennington batsman. He made 20 fifties and three hundreds with a top score of 118 not out against Peasmarsh at Ulley Road in 1973 - all three totals (number of fifties, hundreds and individual score) then being club records. He also set new figures for both the most runs in a season, 741 in 1974, and best average, 47.18, in 1973.



Kennington Chairman John Stevenson

On returning from their highly successful tour there was even more to cheer when Kennington achieved their biggest ever margin of victory over any opponents – 229 runs – making their then highest total in the process. What was even more satisfying was that the game was against Boughton! Kennington scored 263 for 8: Pete Bowman 65, Cobbie Harris a rapid 63 and Godfrey Brightling 44. Facing such a formidable total Boughton, despite fielding their strongest side, folded for one of their lowest totals, 34. Quick bowler Barry Long, another of Kennington's cricketing policemen, took 4 for 13 and Brightling 3 for 1. Making his debut in Kennington/Boughton clashes that day was the latter's Paul Sinden.

With a current total of 1,037 runs Paul is now the leading run scorer in the series and, in 1987, passed Tom Goatman's record aggregate by an opposition batsman. Paul also holds the record for the highest individual score in the series, 117 made at Kennington in 1984. Like many other Kennington and Boughton players Paul has also appeared a number of times for the other team and, in a match against Dungeness in 1978, he produced a superb all-round display for Kennington. He was very unlucky to be out just one run short of his hundred but somewhat compensated for this by taking five wickets for three runs with his very slow off-breaks.

Another, though wetter and somewhat less successful, Devon tour was undertaken in 1968 but the decade ended on a note of celebration when our President, Miss Hope Jennings, was awarded the MBE in the 1969 New Year's Honours for her work over 40 years with the War Pensions Committee.

The Seventies – The Years of Struggle

The 1967 season was the highpoint of the '60s with more than twice as many wins as losses. It was to be ten years before Kennington were to do anything like as well, though in four out of the first five seasons of the '70s more games were won than lost. A number of new young players began their careers during these years but the batsman that dominated the 1970 season remained with the club for only one more year.

Brian Melliard was a right-hander with an extraordinary crab-like stance (which he has since modified) who scored 548 runs at an average-topping 27.4. Three innings in particular were outstanding.



President Miss Hope Jennings presents Brian Melliard with the batting award 1970

Others pictured are: Roy Gore; Alec Driscoll; John Stevenson; John Stanford; John Stringer; David Flawn and Mick Austin

Against Wellington Brian, 43 not out, and Cecil Cole, 49 not out, scored 98 together to beat the visitors by ten wickets – at the time the highest total reached by an opening pair in recording such a win.

At Chartham, who were a very strong side in the '60s and '70s with Kennington only winning three times in 17 meetings, Brian hit 102 not out and with Fred Flawn (52 not out) added a then record 167 for the second wicket. Kennington's only man out, Terry Johnson, made a duck. Chartham could only manage 146 in reply, losing by 27 runs.

An even higher scoring game, with a much more dramatic finish, came at Saltwood on 11 July. This match certainly rates as one of the best half-dozen Kennington have ever played, possibly the best. The home side batted first and found run-scoring on their

smallish ground no problem. They ran up an impressive 220 for 7 even though no player reached 50. Roy Gore bowled 19 overs for 106, the most ever conceded by a Kennington bowler in an innings. Fred Flawn then helped John Stringer make a sound start before he was out for 10 with the Kennington total at 44. John was joined by Brian Melliard and over-by-over they began to get on top of the Saltwood bowling. Gaining in confidence and aggression both passed their half-centuries and an unlikely win began to seem possible. With five overs remaining Kennington still required 50 runs but, with nine wickets in hand, could obviously go all out for victory. Twelve came in an over from Geoff Cooke and the same off the next by Ken Lewsey. Then Cooke struck a potentially decisive blow having Stringer caught in the deep for 82, the partnership having been worth 154. In addition, only two runs came from the over so, with 12 balls left, 23 were still needed. Next in was Mick Austin who took a single from the first ball of the penultimate over. Melliard did likewise from the second with the fielders now all on the boundary. But Austin was equal to the challenge. He scored nine from the four remaining deliveries, including an unlikely three off the last ball with both men running like hares. It was Cooke who was given the responsibility of bowling the final over. Twelve runs to win, Austin facing. Two were taken from the first ball, even though it was hit straight to a fielder, but the second had to be blocked. Launching himself into a massive straight drive Mick sent the third clean out of the ground, clearing the poplar trees lining the road. Following a hiatus while the ball was recovered the fourth ball was also smashed to the long-on boundary and Kennington had won, having made the highest score then achieved by a side batting second and with the match aggregate of 441 being the largest for over 70 years. Kennington's victory was all the more pleasing as not that long before Saltwood had bowled out the Folkestone works side, Martin Walters, for nought and a copy of that score card was (and still is) prominently displayed in the Saltwood pavilion. Saltwood are now very cautious about declaring against us particularly as, in 1982 at Saltwood, the home side again scored over 200 (207 for 8) and lost; Kennington getting home by six wickets.

The hero on this occasion was Neil Tegg with 85 not out.

Brian Melliard, and his son, were later regular opponents, playing for the Whitstable club side, Chestfield. John Stringer, who featured so prominently in the Saltwood game, was a strong hitter and off-spinner who also played just a couple of seasons. He was even more dominating in another match in 1970. If the Saltwood game was Kennington's most exciting then that at home to Kilndown has to be the most statistically extraordinary. It is not perhaps that unusual for a player to score over 85% of his side's runs but it must be virtually unique for both teams in the same match to have a batsman who so totally monopolises the scoring. In their innings all but one of the Kilndown batsmen found Alec Driscoll, with 6 for 17, too much to handle and they were all out for just 49. A. Chambers however was made of sterner stuff for of those he made 42 not out, 85.7% of the total. He went in at number four with the score 2 for 2, so actually made his runs out of 47, of which two more were no balls. With only 50 required no one was surprised when Kennington won by seven wickets but what **was** surprising is that in doing so one of their batsmen was able to reach his own half-century! John Stringer opened with Don Lane, who took a single off the first ball. When Don was out, without addition to his score and with the total on 10, John was joined by Terry Johnson. He too scored a single from his first delivery. From that point on all the runs were made by Stringer. Two more wickets fell in taking the score to 42 (Stringer 40 not out). John then hit a four and so, if he was to reach an unlikely half-century, he needed to hit a six. This he promptly did, his 50 out of 52 representing 96.2% of the total. Incidentally, all three Kennington wickets to fall were taken by Chambers who must have counted himself unlucky in not receiving better support from his colleagues.

In the seventies Kennington elected their youngest ever captains, 19-year-old Stephen Merwood, in 1972, and 19-year-old David Flawn in 1975, and, as the decade progressed, they relied more and more on youth. Many of these players, including Merwood and Flawn, were products of Ashford Grammar School (now the Norton Knatchbull School) and, from the early '70s onwards, Kennington could field an entire eleven of current and old Ashfordians.



Kennington's 1972 skipper Stephen Merwood and below the team he led



David Flawn, son of Fred, was certainly the outstanding batsman of this group and he currently holds several of the club's batting records. A pugnacious left-hander David has a superb defence and the unerring knack of despatching the bad ball. He has often been in a class above any other batsman on the field and his only possible weakness has been an occasional tendency to lift his powerful drive. In the later '70s and '80s David was the regular opener in Ashford's Kent League side which restricted his appearances for Kennington to Sundays and, more recently, he served as Ashford captain further limiting the games he has played for us. He was also quite superb in the field, his ground work being particularly outstanding and his scurrying to save every possible run has led to his nickname of 'the Rat'. David's talent became obvious soon after his debut in 1967 as a eleven-year-old. Between 1973 and '75 he carried his bat a record three times, each time passing 50 and each time scoring over 45% of the side's runs. But after returning to play more regularly for Kennington in 1982 his form was truly outstanding. Over the next six seasons David played 104 innings scoring over 4,000 runs at an average of 46.13. In 1984 he set new highs for both runs in a season (1,197) and average (63). His highest score, 124 at Saltwood in 1986, was a devastating innings as the fielding side seemed powerless to stem his scoring and yet he seemed to take no risks. He was only

dismissed by a stunning one-handed catch in the gully. In the Ashford area David Flawn was one of the players most respected by opposing bowlers.



Another classic shot from David Flawn
Batting against Dave Britton's XI 1984, Dave Britton behind stumps.

Almost certainly the bowler most feared by batsmen was Andrew, 'Ollie', Austen. Another product of Kennington Primary and Ashford Grammar Schools Ollie began playing village cricket for his 'native' Boughton and Eastwell. However, as they had a surfeit of quicker bowlers in the early '70s his opportunities were few and he soon moved to Kennington.

In his early days his left-arm deliveries were always fast but often inaccurate. Like Flawn it was after playing Kent League cricket that his talent was properly harnessed. After Kennington first played at Gore Court the home side invited him to join their ranks. Ollie had hospitalised their opening batsman and when he returned to bat (with several stitches) Austen again whistled the ball past his chin. In another match, this time at Kilndown, he was bowling so fast that wicket-keeper Paul 'Chunky' Melhuish took refuge behind Pete Burden at first slip! Later Ollie shifted his allegiance to Ashford, whose attack he opened until 1987.

In the village game in the mid-eighties Ollie rarely produced his full pace but, when he did, he was arguably the fastest bowler in Kent outside the first class game. Indeed Alan Ealham says that when he retired from county cricket to return to Ashford Ollie was amongst the fastest bowlers in the country. Ollie took a club record of 1,243 wickets at an average of 9.39 apiece and topped the bowling averages no fewer than 20 times. In 1977 he was just three wickets short of 100 and in 1982 took four wickets in four balls at Sellindge, one of four hat-tricks he has achieved. Over the years Ollie's bowling was responsible for many

unlikely Kennington victories. In 1983, bowling in harness with Mick Austin, Ollie engineered an amazing win at Wye. Kennington batted first and seemed to be going well at 53 for 1. But Chris Patridge with 6 for 11 then initiated a collapse which saw the visitors dismissed after adding only another 35. Wye appeared to be cruising home at 73 for 3 with just 16 runs needed for victory. However, in another 4.4 overs, they were all out with the addition of only two leg byes! In their second spells Ollie took 5 for nought and Mick two for nought.

For a number of reasons Ollie probably took fewer wickets for Kennington than might have been expected. Firstly he saved his best for the most important games – in 1985 Ollie and Dave Flawn were leading members of Ashford's Kent League winning side and the following year helped them lift the Willshire Cup. Secondly his usual line of attack, on or just outside off-stump, whilst reaping many wickets at top-class club level, generally doesn't produce as many in the village game where fewer batsmen are good enough to get a touch and fewer slips and wicket-keepers are good enough to catch them if they do. Thirdly, his reputation was such that many players were happy just to stay in to him and, with fewer attacking shots played, fewer wickets resulted. His economy was greater than any other Kennington bowler of modern times (two runs an over) and he produced a number of remarkable spells. In the 1985 South East Kent League match against Mersham-le-Hatch he bowled 10 overs, 6 maidens, 3 for 6 and in the 1986 Chairman's XI game 11 overs, 8 maidens, no wicket for four. What was most remarkable about the latter performance was that it came in a Chairman's XI total of 240 for 5, the highest score against Kennington since 1935!

Though sometimes a 'stodgy' starter Ollie is also an accomplished left-handed batsman who uses his height well. When set there was no better straight driver of the ball in the club and he is also an effective player of spin having the ability, rare in club and village batsmen, to sweep. In 1979 he became the second player, after Alec Driscoll, to score 500 runs (505 at 31.56) and take 50 wickets (63 at 6.76) in the same season and by topping both sets of averages he emulated the feats of J.W.Fagg (1908) and J.Thompson (1962). Ten years later Ollie became the first to score 1,000 runs (1,225) and take 50 wickets (74) in a season, a feat he repeated in 1990 and 1992. In 1993 Ollie passed Mick Austin's

record number of appearances for the club and his batting and bowling achievements would be sufficient to ensure his place in the club's history. But he also contributed greatly to Kennington cricket both as a captain and off the field, where he filled the vital role of Fixture Secretary for some 10 seasons. He led Kennington's Sunday XI for 17 years. His captaincy policy of always involved giving younger players every opportunity to bat or bowl and he often had the knack of following inspired hunches – particularly with regard to bowling changes.



An early indication of Ollie Austen's all round ability. Winning the Single Wicket competition in 1972

Rear: Twiz Grant; Alec Robinson; Alec Driscoll; Dave Sim; Ollie Austen; Peter Burden; Peter Grant; Fred Flawn

Front: Mrs Verna Grant; Mike Dorman; Andy Burden; Mrs Pat Flawn; David Leithes

Two more reliable bats, and again Grammar School products, were Pete Burden and Tony Major. In the mid-seventies, with both Dave Flawn and Ollie Austen playing full-time club cricket, Tony often held the Kennington batting together. In one game, at Saltwood in 1980 and with Kennington a man short, Tony carried his bat for 63 out of 74. This was over 85% of the total and is easily the highest percentage achieved by a player carrying his bat. Tony would probably have been even better had he put his mind to it but nevertheless he still made over 1500 runs at an average of 22.74.

Pete Burden's approach to the game has always been carefree. If the ball is there he'll try and hit it and, more often than not, he succeeds. This ability was never more apparent than in the 1986 season. In the 1980s and '90's Pete's appearances were severely restricted as he and his brother Andy (a useful and unorthodox left-arm bowler and excellent fielder) run a European holiday business. In 1986, having hardly touched a bat for six years, Pete hit

293 runs at an average of 41.86 which included 79 v Boughton (the highest individual score against them at Ulley Road) and a match-winning 60 not out at Cobham where he also brought off a brilliant run out from deep point, hitting the stumps whilst sitting on the ground! Undoubtedly Pete's finest hour, though, came at Teston in 1978. The home side had made 135 for 9 and when Kennington began their reply they quickly lost Neil Tegg for nought with the total on six. Pete Bowman then joined Burden and 50 minutes later the match was won without further loss and with Bowman's contribution being just six singles! Burden's hundred, off 55 balls, is the third fastest for Kennington and his total of 11 sixes, to which he added 7 fours, is still to be bettered. From the last five balls of the game he struck R.Irvine for 22 – 2, 6, 6, 2, 6 – and if victory had not terminated his innings goodness knows how many he might have made. To date he has scored 5,393 runs for the club at an average slightly below 19 and taken the occasional useful wicket with his medium paced cutters. In 2001 Pete took over the Chairmanship and has proved a huge success in the role with a particular brand of infectious humour in both his written and verbal communications.

The mid-seventies were difficult years for Kennington. Changing leisure patterns were leading to a serious decline in the number of people playing village cricket. At the same time cricket in schools had become a less usual part of the curriculum and fewer younger players were coming through. Several local sides, including some old adversaries, were forced into extinction and more than once it appeared that Kennington might join them. On numerous occasions the club fielded 10, 9 or even 8 men and, in 1973, all Saturday games to the end of June were cancelled due to the shortage of players. If it hadn't been for a hard-core of dedicated members the club might not have survived. The scenario is a familiar one and like many other clubs the solution to Kennington's problems was found when they started a colts team.

The colts began in 1975, mainly due to the efforts of club Secretary Ray Page, and, in a pattern that has been repeated throughout the country, our Colts side largely replaced the school as the means whereby youngsters learn their cricket.

At first Kennington Colts were by no means world-beaters but, in the early eighties, under the guidance of Dave Miller and Neil

Tegg, enormous strides were made. In 1985 the Under-13s reached the semi-final of the county knockout and the following year the Under-15s emphatically won the Ashford and District League. Kennington's need for younger players in the late-seventies was all the greater as a number of the older generation were hanging up their boots. In 1977 Cecil Cole moved to Egerton and Mike Dorman, Twiz Grant and Fred Flawn all played their last games. Fred's contribution to the club was recognised in 1981 when he was made an Honorary Life Member and, also in that year, the same honour was bestowed on another long-serving member, Terry Johnson. Terry, another cricketing policeman, had played since the mid-sixties. Always reliable he scored a total of 1,851 runs at an average of 12.42. He was one of the stalwarts of the side during the difficult years of the mid-seventies and played his last game in 1979. Another who helped Kennington through this awkward patch was Dave Britton. A sound opening bat, who had occasional flashes of brilliance, Dave made 1,870 runs, average 14.17. He was also a more than useful wicket-keeper and excellent catcher and holds the records for most dismissals in an innings by a wicket-keeper – three caught, four stumped v Elham in 1982 – and for the number of catches by a fielder – five v Hythe in 1976 (a figure equalled by Stewart Tegg against Bethersden in 1985).



Kennington's League Winning Under 15 team 1988

Rear: Danny Heyburn; Adam Piper; Andrew Urquhart; Stuart Lancaster; Nick Croxford; Martyn Payne

Front: David Stevens; Russell Garnham; Nathan Last; Russell Lancaster (Captain); Danny Fineman

The 1977 season was also notable for the visit of VOC Rotterdam. In this game Dutch international Renee Shoonheim scored a magnificent 150, the fifth highest individual score against Kennington and the best since 1935. In the 1986 ICC Trophy, as Holland's wicket-keeper, Shoonheim was

one of those responsible for steering his country to the final where they were narrowly, and somewhat unluckily, beaten by Zimbabwe.



Kennington 1977

Rear: Ollie Austen; Paul Sinden; Dave Britton; Alec Driscoll

*Front: Mick Austin; Mike Dorman; Peter Burden
(The other four were probably still in the pub!)*

Many of Kennington's leading players from the late '70s onwards have been products of the colts programme. Dave Smith was a prolific wicket-taker in his somewhat short career. Utilising his considerable height Dave could extract life from the most placid of pitches and was rewarded with a total of 358 wickets at 12.79 apiece. In 1979, when he claimed 92 victims, he was supported by Ollie Austen with 63 wickets (at 6.76) and Pete Bowman with 52 (average 9.09) and Kennington's bowling was at its strongest for many years. This well balanced attack, supplemented by Chris Wise (who had moved from Boughton) and Stuart Gray, totally overwhelmed a number of our opponents. On four occasions sides were bowled out for very low scores:

- Charing (Home) 21
(Wise 5 for 6; Smith 3 for 8; Mick Austin 1 for 4)
- Pluckley (Away) 16
(Smith 3 for 5; Gray 5 for 5)
- Pluckley (Home) 13
(Gray 7 for 4; Smith 3 for 6)
- Mersham (Home) 14
(Smith 6 for 6; Austen 4 for 7)

Not even on the rough pitches of the last century were Kennington able to dismiss opponents for under 20 three times in a season. With such a strong bowling attack it was not surprising that 1979 proved a highly successful year. Fifty matches, of all types, were played of which 29 were won and only eight lost, our best season since 1967 and arguably the best ever. The club were certainly to be reckoned with in the 20-over Midweek Cup competition in

which they reached the final before going down (by 14 runs) to the Intelligence Centre.

Partnering Dave Smith in Kennington's opening attack was often Nick Ames. Nick provides a unique link with the past as he is the great-great-great-grandson of William Burton, the captain in Kennington's first ever game in 1845. Nick's right-arm bowling is, to say the least, unusual as he releases the ball off the 'wrong' foot (a characteristic he shares with Andy Burden). He could swing the ball prodigiously and sometimes produced the perfect, unplayable, delivery. Unfortunately and, due to his action, probably irrevocably, he was also prone to be erratic. Nevertheless he took 314 wickets for Kennington (average 19.32). As a batsman though he could make runs (as his 35 not out v Headleys in 1984 showed) he was not amongst the finest wielders of the willow and, in 1986, had the distinction of playing in 28 matches and making only five runs! Nick's quirky sense of humour is always likely to cheer up the gloomiest match and a typical example occurred at Gore Court. The Kennington team had not had the best of the day's closer calls and when the home umpire bought a 'jug' Nick commented "What's that for then ump? Five bad decisions!"

Neil Tegg has already been mentioned and he has developed into one of the leading batsmen in the district. He has a batting style all of his own with the hands wide apart, leading to a dominant bottom hand, and a shuffle in the crease that begins wide of leg stump. Playing predominantly off the front foot he is able to place the ball with last minute adjustments of the bottom hand often sending the ball close to, but just out of reach of, the fielders. Perhaps because of his unorthodox methods Neil was overlooked for the Grammar School side and so played most of his youth cricket for Kennington Colts. After a period of steadily increasing run scoring he really shot to prominence in 1982. In that season Neil set the then record partnership for any wicket when, against Old Stacians, he and Dave Flawn added 177 for the second wicket (Neil 59, Dave 114 not out).

In the same year Neil had a remarkable run of form during July, scoring 402 runs and only being out twice. His scores were: 85 not out at Saltwood; 88 not out v Harrietsham; 47 not out at Elham; 40 at Rolvenden; 34 not out v Biddenden; 62 not

out v Little Chart and 46 at Mersham. This also set a new record (260) for the most runs scored by a Kennington player without being dismissed. His front-foot play is usually seen at its best on harder pitches, which makes his performances in 1987 all the more remarkable. In a very wet season he scored a total of 1,051 runs at an average of 52.55 and he topped the overall South East Kent League batting figures with an even better 60.40 per innings. As the season progressed he got better and better culminating in a series of scores at the end of the season of 86 not out v Littlebourne; 90 not out v Headcorn; 10; 7; 101 not out v the Chairman's XI; 103 not out at Elliots and 1 - demonstrating that unless he made an early mistake he was impossible to shift. Neil's greatest assets are his unflappable temperament and concentration, he has only ever been out twice in the 90s, and he comfortably holds the record for the most centuries for the club, 30. In 1991 he became the first Kennington player, in 126 years of trying, to score a ton against Boughton making 114 on the Green at the Lees.

The year before he scored 110 at Willesborough, at that time Kennington's highest league score, and the previous week had made his (and, at that time, Kennington's) highest score to date, 133 not out at Goodnestone Park where he shared in a partnership of 196 with Graham Poole for the second wicket. On occasion Neil has had success with bat and ball, being the first player since Jim Stanford to do the match double, of a 50 and five wickets, twice. He is also the only person other than J.W.Fagg and Ian Ruck to have scored a hundred and taken five wickets in the same game. In 1980, against Newington, Neil scored 103 and then took 5 for 74 with his 'donkey-drop' leg-breaks and against the London Commodity Market in 1984 took 6 for 40 and made 60.

Neil captained the Saturday side for 15 seasons before taking it on for both days in 1998. Overall he has skippered the side in over 400 games, winning nearly half and losing fewer than 20%. He certainly has claim to be Kennington's best tactical leader with an infallible memory for opposing batsmen's weaknesses and the judgement to make psychologically crucial declarations. He has also served the club as Secretary and Treasurer, a particularly appropriate role as he is a bank manager by profession.

Mark Hodges was a fine fielder as well as an accurate off-spinner and aggressive middle-order batsman. After playing for Kennington Colts Mark made his debut for the senior side in 1977 and scored over 4,800 runs (average 17.47) and took 586 wickets (at under 15 each). When he harnessed his natural impetuosity Mark could be a match-winning batsman – as a mature 52 against Sellindge in 1986 demonstrated. He always did rather more thinking about his off-break bowling, taking more wickets with changes of pace and flight than by turn. He was never afraid to give the ball air and wasn't over-worried by batsmen who got after him. In his early years they quite often did as when Cas Cumberbatch, of Old Stacians, hit him

for 28 in an over in 1978. The sequence went: 6, 6, 4, 6, 6, 0 and Mark claims that the last ball was the fastest and flattest he has ever bowled! He too has sometimes combined his batting and bowling talents in the same game as he did in 1988 against Canterbury Choughs when he scored 60 not out and took 5 for 39.

With several useful players, a flourishing colts side and with a superb 1979 season behind them the club looked forward to the 1980s with far more optimism than at one time seemed possible.



Kennington 1979

*Rear: Alf Ames; Colin Hughes; Kevin Beaumont; Dave Smith; Neil Tegg; Dave Britton; ?
Front: Dave Flawn; Alec Driscoll; Mick Austin; Tony Major; Peter Bowman*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

KENNINGTON 1980 – 1994 BOUND FOR GLORY?

"From an early hour on Sunday morning the Organiser's telephone starts ringing. Each time he picks it up he does so with a prayer on his lips – a prayer that the caller has nothing to do with the cricket, or if he has that he is not ringing to say that he cannot play after all, but that he wants to know how to get there or can somebody give him a lift as his car has broken down."

"It is one of the irrefutable axioms of Coarse Cricket that the bad balls take more wickets than the good ones, and it is for this reason that the Captain can and must regard every member of his side as a bowling asset."

Spike Hughes, The Art of Coarse Cricket, pp 41 and 53

With the single exception of 1986 the seasons from 1981 to 1994 were years of unparalleled success for the club. The number of losses declined to fewer than one quarter of games played whereas the percentage of wins increased slightly to the high 40s. During these years Kennington perhaps did not have their strongest bowling attack but it always had plenty of variation, a bowler for every occasion and condition. It was really in their batting line-up that matters improved. Until the early '80s the runs-per-wicket average had been remarkably constant over the previous 40 seasons and was actually slightly below that of the late 1930s, but in 1982 it shot up to just under 20 and has not dropped below 20 since 1987. Thus many games which may previously have been lost were saved, increasing the number of drawn games to around one third of the total. Pitches too considerably improved and, with a stronger side, Kennington's fixture list grew stronger too bringing the benefits of better prepared pitches with it. The onset of the last decade of the century saw even greater success with Kennington winning their first ever trophies, both on and off the field.



Kennington 1981

*Rear: Peter Stanton; Martin Hogbin; Ollie Austen; John McAdams Sr; Mick Austin; Paul Oliver
Front: Nick Ames; Dave Bowman; Dave Smith;
Neil Tegg; Andy Fraser*

Note the same telegraph numbers in use as in 1912 photograph!

Several of the players responsible for this success have already been mentioned: Mick Austin, Dave Flawn, Ollie Austen, Pete Burden, Neil Tegg, Nick Ames and Mark Hodges. Others were the product of the colts team or moved, or moved back, to the area.

Ray Lancaster has been a tenacious left-handed batsman and a leg-spin bowler who almost exclusively employs the googly. This unusual bowling style can prove really devastating, never better demonstrated than at Woodchurch in 1984 when he took 9 for 32, the third best figures ever by a Kennington bowler, and a feat which secured for him the Captain's Cup for the best individual performance of the season. Ray's three sons, Jon and the twins Stuart and Russell, all came through the Kennington colts system. Jon scored just

improved, a distinctive light blue cap from which he became inseparable but, for a season or two, a rather dodgy bowling action that earned him the nickname 'Chukka'. Ian's attachment to his South Perth 'floppy' was confirmed when it went missing for a couple of weeks. Search and ask after its whereabouts as he might Ian could find no trace of the missing headgear. Then the mystery was revealed. Mark Hodges returned from his trip to the Caribbean with a set of photos and the cap. There was Ian's cap enjoying itself on the beaches of Barbados sunning itself amongst a selection of gorgeous females and strutting its stuff on the dance floors of the island's chicest night clubs!

Ian's current run tally stands at just under 11,000 (at an average of 26.53) and 572 wickets (at 18.11). He picked up the Most Improved Young Player award of 1987 and has also won the Captain's Cup more times than any other player, eight. The 1988 prize was for a match-winning spell of 5 for 5 against Chelsfield coming on when the visitors required just 20 for victory with 6 wickets in hand. Later in the season he put in another match-winning performance at Hawkinge, in the league, scoring 25 not out in under six overs off their fastest bowlers whilst batting at number 9. The 1995 award was for an innings against Brook at Ulley Road. Joining Peter Grant with the total a modest 81 for five Ian hit an unbeaten century from just 53 balls in an unbroken stand of 146, a record for the sixth wicket. His winning innings in 2002 was even better. Opening the innings at New Romney Ian scored an unbeaten 146 (the third highest individual score by a Kennington player). I would probably rate this the best innings by a Kennington player I've seen. It was made on an awkward pitch (the bounce was generally high and unpredictable), in a league game against reasonable bowlers. Ian gave only one half-chance – at deep extra cover after he'd made over 130 in the penultimate over – and his timing, both of the ball and the pacing of the innings was immaculate. At the other end Stuart Lancaster, no mean performer himself, confessed that he struggled to find any sort of form.

Ian's timing was at its best in that New Romney innings but he lost it completely in 2003. Firstly he organised his stag weekend to coincide with the league game against Boughton. Severely depleted, Kennington were stuffed by our fierce rivals. Then the wedding itself, to Deborah, was held on the weekend of the league 'double-

header' against New Romney and Willesborough!

Among the new players Kennington recruited was Dave Miller, a schoolteacher whose contribution to the Colts has already been noted. An opening batsman/wicket-keeper Dave, despite certain technical and physical deficiencies (he was as blind as a bat but refused to wear spectacles or lenses), scored nearly 3,000 runs for us at 23 in just five full seasons. In 1984 he made 887 runs with nine fifties and, with Dave Flawn, established a record First XI opening partnership of 152 at Wye in the following year. In his wicket keeping role Dave stumped a record 14 victims in 1985 and against Etchinghill in the same year removed his pads and took 4 for 19 with off-breaks.

Whereas in the sixties Kennington seemed to attract a number of policemen to the side the eighties saw the introduction of several schoolteachers. Besides Dave Miller, Jim Garrett, Graham Poole and Chris Philpott are all of that profession and, in the nineties, they were joined by Ian Ruck and Jes Field. Jim, an ex-professional footballer, is an enthusiastic all-rounder with tremendous athletic ability. Even in his mid-fifties he is an outstanding ground fielder. He has run out nearly as many batsmen as he has caught. It is not surprising that he has won the Best Fielder award no fewer than three times. His fielding shows that he has an incredible eye for a ball and he is currently ranked in the top three nationally for his age group at badminton. His no-nonsense hitting has brought him just over 3,000 runs at just over 19 with a top score of 84 and his naggingly accurate right-arm medium pace 365 wickets at 18.43.

Graham Poole came to the club in 1989 and for a time was the Kennington batsman with the highest career average, 37.91. A former Sandwich and Beverley player he probably had the soundest defence of any batsman of any era and rarely failed. He reached his 1,000 runs for Kennington in exactly the same number of innings as Cecil Cole, 32, and had a top score of 126 not out against Ash. Since moving from Kennington Graham has become a regular opponent in the Elham Valley side.

Chris Philpott joined Kennington in 1990 and immediately made his mark as an attacking bowler. His right-arm medium fast deliveries usually move away from the right-hander and he is a dream bowler for

a captain, always willing to bowl another over and always trying 100%. Though as a batsman he is a slow starter once set he can be a match winner as 65 not out at Wye in 1993 proved. In recent years Chris has taken an increasing role in the development of the club's young players both in his work in managing junior teams and as captain of the second eleven from 1999.

Two players who returned to Kennington in the '80s were Pete Speight and Peter Grant. Pete Speight is also often abroad advising third-world governments on how to improve their economies and infrastructure but, when he returns to the fold, is a far better cricketer than he likes to admit. A more-than-useful medium pace bowler he pretends not to be able to bat but has an uncanny knack of producing runs at the most critical moments, revealing that his application is far deeper than his casual air suggests! He is also (but extremely proud of the fact) a complete physical wreck! Pete has probably retired more times than Frank Sinatra and has done invaluable service both as an umpire (where even a pitched battle on the field would not perturb him) and as a vice-president.

Peter Grant, son of Twiz, made his debut as long ago as 1967 but it is only since 1985, when he moved back to the district, that he began to make a lasting impression at the club. Not a naturally talented cricketer he has steadily improved from a purely defensive batsman to a useful contributor either as an opener or lower in the order. His first achievement of note came in 1985 in a disastrous match against Boughton in which Kennington were bowled out for just 60 but Peter carried his bat for 17 not out. Often at his best against quicker bowling he has now scored over 8,500 runs at just over 20 as well as having taken 179 wickets. Peter is also probably the first Kennington player to be professionally involved in cricket. He was Director of the London Community Cricket Association

and London Cricket College and, as such, was able to bring a number of former and current first class players to play for and against Kennington. At the LCCA Peter played in many charity matches with prominent cricketers and celebrities. His one and only hat-trick consisted of the wickets of Mike Denness, newsreader Richard Kershaw and Chris Tarrant, the last two caught by Henry Kelly. In another, played in February on Hampstead CC's ground, he bowled out Middlesex's John Carr and Pink Floyd's David Gilmour and he also batted at number three in a match against the blind and partially-sighted Metro club following the esteemed opening pair of Denis Amiss and Patrick Moore!

He then moved to work for Sport England's Lottery Unit and was involved with a number of major cricket projects. One of these was the Radcliffe Road End development at Trent Bridge and to celebrate the opening Peter captained a team drawn from the many projects funded by the Lottery. The side included Robin Smith of Hampshire and England and legendary women's test player Enid Bakewell (the first player, male or female, to score a century and take ten wickets in the same test). Also playing was Neil Tegg as the Lottery had contributed funds to the erection of Kennington's practice facilities. Somewhat inevitably Smith made a rapid century (as did Nottinghamshire's Usman Afzaal) but Neil was easily the best of the non-first class players making an unbeaten 81 against a full Notts attack.

A born organiser, in 1987 Peter became Chairman and, in 2000 he succeeded his mother as club President. He has also served as 2nd XI Captain and 1st XI Vice-Captain. If he has an asset in this role then it is probably luck, always the first requisite of a successful skipper.



Peter Grant's Lottery Sports Fund team v Nottinghamshire, Trent Bridge 1998 with dedication from Robin Smith!

Neil Tegg (back row 3rd left); Robin Smith (back row far right); Peter Grant (front, centre); Enid Bakewell (front far right)

The early eighties, with a strengthened batting line up, were quite successful but change was in the air. The later years of the decade saw a number of innovations. Perhaps the most important of these came in 1985 when Kennington joined the South East Kent League.

Kent, as a county, had come to adopt leagues somewhat late and grudgingly. Kennington's participation in league cricket was debated long and hard though, as we have seen, the idea of an Ashford and District League had been mooted as early as 1905. Kennington gained promotion to the Premier Division of the league in their first season by finishing runners up to Nonington but there was growing dissatisfaction with the South East Kent League as the years went by. When Kennington originally joined, the majority of clubs in the league were from the Ashford area but, by the early '90s, the league was dominated by teams from the eastern side of the county. Many of these clubs played on council-owned grounds whose pitches were not of as good a standard as those closer to home and, with the travelling distances to away league matches increasing from 100 miles a year to nearer 400, a number of clubs decided to form a new competition. Thus, in 1992, the Ashford and District League was born, 87 years

after the idea had first been conceived. Along with Kennington the other founder members of the league were Nonington, Mersham, Willesborough, Hawkinge, Elham, New Romney and Boughton and Eastwell - who were the last important village team in the area to be attracted to league cricket. All these clubs are ones that Kennington have played for some years and all were also played in friendly fixtures. The main criteria for other teams wanting to enter the league are that their ground must be no more than 20 miles from Ashford and that all the other teams must vote in favour of their election. The first season of the new league was a great success with a series of excellent games played in an atmosphere of friendly, but intense, rivalry and Willesborough emerged as worthy first winners of the trophy.

In 1986 Kennington achieved their greatest success since the sixties in the local three-a-side knock-out. The team of Jim Garrett, Dave Flawn and Mark Hodges reached the semi-final where they were narrowly beaten by the Intelligence Centre - who have been a perennial thorn-in-the-side to Kennington's ambitions in limited over competitions. The season itself was not one of great success - the only one in the previous twelve in which more games were lost than won. This had a lot to do with

playing in the Premier Division of the league for the first time and to the bowlers not being able to turn hopeful positions into wins; there were a then record number of 16 drawn games. The season did, however, end on a positive, and highly dramatic, note with a tremendous game against Mersham.

They were our usual end-of-season visitors due to their unfailing capacity to exhaust whatever remaining supplies of beer the club might have! Batting first the Kennington top order totally failed. Seven wickets (including Dave Flawn, Neil Tegg and Ollie Austen) were down for 49 when Jim Garrett was joined by Peter Grant. Peter held up one end while Jim went for the runs. When Jim was out (for 27 with the score on 88) 14-year-old Stuart Lancaster came in. Roles were reversed with Peter hitting out and Kennington's eventual total of 125 for 9 (Grant 38 not out) was far more than appeared likely at one stage. Mersham, in their turn, got into serious difficulties. After reaching 82 for 5 Simon Bissmire (a massive right-arm medium pacer) produced his best spell of the season taking four wickets for no runs. At this point a home win seemed certain but the Mersham number 11, Fred Ambler (who is usually to be found further up the order), had other ideas.

Ably supported by Jim Hodges the score mounted steadily until it reached 117. With

the visitors just nine runs short of victory skipper Austen decided on a last, desperate, bowling change. He brought back Nick Ames who might produce the unplayable ball; alternatively he might also produce the disastrous long-hop! His third ball was one of the latter and Fred smashed it out of the ground for six. Three to win. The next delivery was another short one outside leg stump but Ambler mistimed his shot and the batsmen could only run two. The fifth delivery was again short of a length but this time, crucially, on off stump. Fred went for the winning hit but only succeeded in getting a top-edge. Dave Flawn calmly took a high, swirling catch and the game was tied. A perfect game of cricket played in the finest spirit, against old adversaries in glorious weather. The end-of-season celebrations went on late into the night!

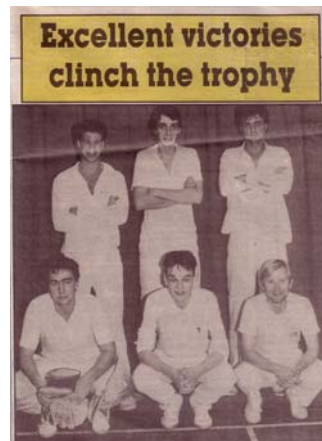
The most notable achievement of 1987 came in the match against Boughton. Roy Sinden had made his debut for our old adversaries in 1959 and, over the next 25 years, he captured a record total of 99 wickets against Kennington. But he had finally decided to call it a day in the early '80s. However, when I undertook these researches and it was discovered that he only needed one more wicket for his century he was persuaded out of retirement. He captured the wicket of Ray Lancaster, caught by Ian Avery, and achieved a unique record.



Kennington 1987 (first match v Boughton for the Hobday Trophy)

*Rear: Stuart Lancaster; Jon Lancaster; Terry Deary; Jim Garrett; Ray Lancaster; Chris Glover; Mark Hodges
Seated: Dave Jahnz; Neil Teggl Ollie Austen; Peter Grant*

At the close of the 1987 season Kennington embarked upon another new enterprise - indoor cricket. Since the winter of '87/'88 we have played in the 6-a-side competition and have proved to be one of the best exponents of this form of the game in the area. The crucial members of the team at this time were Neil Tegg and Ollie Austen. Neil and Ollie's placement of the ball have put them among the top batsmen in the league and Ollie's pace, even off a restricted run, was too much for most opponents. Kennington were runners up to Tenterden in 1989 but the following year got their revenge by winning the title and going on to the County finals where they were beaten by Rodmersham. This was Kennington's first cricket trophy of any sort and it had only taken 145 years to achieve! In 1991 we were again runners up (this time to Boughton) and the only factor inhibiting further success was probably that our fielding, with most members of the side well into their thirties, was not as agile as that of some of the other sides. In more recent years the indoor team, still captained by Neil in his forties, has pursued a more youth-orientated policy. Successes have been fewer but the policy has helped bring on the cricket abilities of a number of youngsters.



Kennington's Indoor League Winning Team 1990

*Rear: Ian Hughes; Neil Tegg; Ollie Austen
Front: Chris Glover; Stuart Lancaster; Peter Grant*

1988 was notable primarily for the revival, on a permanent basis, of a Kennington 2nd XI. This too has allowed the introduction into senior cricket of many of the players from our junior sides. Though they may not always be the finest cricketers Kennington have seen, the 2nd XI players make a vital contribution to the club. Captained for the first three seasons by Peter Grant then by David 'Jagger' Finch and, over the past four seasons, by Chris Philpott the 2nd XI's

results have not been world-shattering though they have had their moments. In that first season the outstanding result came at Sheldwich. The home side chalked up an impressive 198 for 3 and, from their talk at tea, clearly considered this a safe total. This rather annoyed the Kennington players and inspired Ollie Austen (who was playing, as a batsman, due to the lack of a first team fixture). He and fellow opener Jim Garrett savaged the Sheldwich attack for 172 runs and after Garrett's dismissal (for 77) Austen and Grant comfortably knocked off the remaining runs with Ollie finishing unbeaten on 112.

A similarly high scoring second eleven match, though with a rather different result, occurred in 1991. Kennington were playing Tonbridge YMCA and Jagger Finch - a hard-hitting batsman at the best of times - went berserk. He hit 93 with nine fours and eight sixes. The percentage of runs in boundaries (90.3) being a record for any innings over 50. He also shared in a last wicket partnership of 57 with Simon Bissmire who, despite being a very rapid scorer himself, only contributed 14. Sadly Kennington's bowling was not of the same quality. Needing 201 to win the visitors got home by no fewer than eight wickets and with some time to spare.

Jagger was in particularly belligerent form at about this time for a few weeks later in the 1st XI match at home to Hunton he transformed the game in just six balls making the highest number of runs from an over in any Kennington match to that point. Kennington's batting had struggled on a sluggish pitch reaching just 84 for 4 in 27 overs. Young left-arm spinner D.Leppard had been introduced into the attack and from the first ball of his third over Jagger struck him for a straight six. The next ball was played defensively but the next four all followed the first, out of the ground between straight mid-wicket and mid-on! Kennington's total of 133 was just enough, the visitors reaching 120 for 9.

Jagger had made his debut for the club in 1985 and he was, at first, something of a late order 'slogger' and occasional bowler. Over the next ten years however he steadily matured into one of Kennington's finest all rounders. His defensive technique has improved, without inhibiting his clean striking of the ball especially off spin bowling, and he has now scored nearly 8,000 runs at an average of just under 23. Perhaps his finest innings came in 2000 in

the game at Stowting where he made an unbeaten century and, together with Ian Hughes who scored 89, added a record 190 for the fifth wicket. If anything, though, it has been Jagger's bowling that has improved more. Employing mainly off-breaks he has a well-disguised quicker ball added to the odd slower delivery that turns appreciably. His bowling is often the mainstay of Kennington's league attack and he has taken over 600 career wickets at an average of 17.75. Between 1996 and 2003 Jagger performed the season 'double' of 500 runs and 50 wickets no fewer than six times.

Probably the best game of the 1988 1st XI season came at Woodchurch. Kennington have an impressive record against these opponents having lost only once in 23 meetings and being unbeaten away. As usual Kennington were able to chalk up a useful score, 200 for 5, but after losing a couple of early wickets the home side began to look dangerous. C.Powley, who made 43, was joined by T.Wilson and the latter in particular seemed to take a liking to the Kennington bowling eventually reaching a hard-hit 111. The score mounted impressively and eventually the partnership was worth 173 when Ollie Austen returned for a second spell. In 3.5 overs he took 6 for 5 and, with Jim Garrett chipping in with two victims, the last eight Woodchurch wickets went down for 17, Kennington winning by 4 runs.

Of the innovations of the following season one was generally considered to have been a failure but the other proved a considerable success. The former was Kennington's first ever two-day game, against Islington. The North Londoners batted first and scored a mammoth 292 for 6, the highest score against Kennington since 1933. Kennington replied in like measure making their then highest total, 278 for 9 (with Ollie Austen scoring a century). The game was scheduled as a two-innings match but it was clear at this point (after 3pm on the second day) that no result was possible and so the match was abandoned as a draw and a limited overs thrash substituted. This too was soon abandoned as the heavens opened and though the game had produced a record aggregate of 570 runs it was really rather boring.

Later in the season, following the August Bank Holiday, Kennington played their second ever cricket week and it's success led to this becoming a regular feature of

the fixture list for the next seven years. A number of interesting new teams were played. South Londoners Tulse Hill were beaten and draws ensued against both London County and the Gentlemen of Hampstead. London County were led by 80-year-old cricketing legend Bertie Joel and included 70-year-old Jack Hyams, the world record runs scorer having made over 100,000 in his career including at least one century every season since the 1930s! The other two games were lost in contrasting circumstances. On the Wednesday the visitors were Delhi Blues, one of the strongest club sides from the sub-continent, who included a number of first class players and two international cricketers (Gurscharan Singh and captain Tilak Raj) in their line-up. They had expressed a wish to taste traditional village cricket but Kennington found their bowling attack, with every type of spin bowled at a pace far above that to which they were accustomed, anything but traditional and were skittled for just 64. Raj's left-armers were particularly devastating and Kennington's players were mystified as to how he had become only the second bowler in first class history to be hit for six sixes in an over, by Ravi Shastri. When asked how Shastri had done it Tilak simply replied 'he used his feet', which confirms the gulf that still exists between the two levels of the game. Earlier the visitors cracked 223 for 5 in just 34 overs with S.Kohli reaching a century off only 69 balls. However, the week ended on another high note with the visit of the wandering team the Jesters whose motto is "to play cricket in the spirit suggested by the club's name". Their powerful batting ran up a total of 232 for 5, with Graham Berridge scoring a fine, chanceless, hundred. In reply Kennington appeared hopelessly out of the game at 148 for 8 but a great rear-guard action by Pete Speight, who scored 47 going in at number 10, assisted by Dave Smith and Peter Grant brought Kennington within 19 runs of victory.

Another run feast came at Elham. Kennington made 222 for 6 which we thought would be out of the home side's reach. But Ernie Marden, a quality right-hander, was in a rich vein of form and decided he was going to go for the runs from the outset. He and fellow opener Des Lewis took 27 from Ian Hughes' opening two overs and so right from the start the fielders were on their toes with an exciting two hours cricket in prospect. The opening stand was worth 124 when Lewis was out for 38 but, before Marden was third out for

117 with the score on 187, Elham appeared on their way to victory. They continued to press for the win, however, but eventually fell five runs short with two wickets intact.

Two more high-scoring affairs occurred over the weekend of 12 and 13 of August. On the Saturday Kennington made their highest league score to date plundering a strong Betteshanger attack for 228 for 6. Though no player reached 50 all the batsmen got runs with the top score, of 42, coming from another colts product, Nick Croxford. The following day Kennington got off to a bad start against the Virgin XI but a rapid 65 from Mark Hodges, who shared a century stand for the fifth wicket with another free-scoring left-hander John Leahy (39), saw Kennington to an all out total of 200. After a century opening stand, and a classy 112 from their captain Jeremy Lascelles, son of the Earl of Harewood the Queen's cousin, Virgin seemed poised for the win. Though towards the end Ollie Austen skilfully kept Lascelles off the strike the last over began with just two needed and five wickets intact. But six consecutive fast yorkers from Ollie masterfully secured a double wicket maiden, both victims being clean bowled.

In the same year another nail-biting finish occurred against Mersham but this time on their ground at Stone Green. Chasing 140 for victory Kennington won by one wicket, in the last over, a crucial 19 having been scored for Kennington by Mersham's Dick Fagg who had been 'loaned' for the day.

Even better perhaps was the following season's game at Gore Court. Set 114 to win Kennington lost their ninth wicket with the score on 74. Last man in, joining Ian Hughes, was Pete Speight. Ian batted with great common sense taking few risks against Russell Meyrick's pace but going for the runs when facing the left-arm spinner, Martin. Together the two scored the runs required for victory with Pete ending 10 not out and Ian on 54, a performance which deservedly won the Captain's Cup for the year.

In complete contrast was the match at Chestfield where both teams scored 202 for 6. Chestfield, with Brian Melliard doing his best to win the game, were again thwarted in the last over by Ollie Austen who conceded just six runs.

In 1990 Kennington had a rather better league season, consolidating their place in mid-table and chalking up a couple of

useful wins. One of these was at Hawkinge where, chasing a Kennington score of 193, the home side were well in the hunt at 92 for 3 after 25 of their 45-over allocation. However in the next 12 overs they collapsed to 98 all out, young off-spinner Mark Leahy (yet another former Kennington colt) doing most of the damage with 5 for 8. Mark too is a footballer but at a rather higher level than Kennington FC. He began his career at Gillingham before moving on to spells at semi-professional level with Stevenage Borough and Gravesend and Northfleet amongst others. A highly talented all-round sportsman Mark is also an exceptional golfer as well as a prodigious eater of 'good plain cooking'. Though lean and of average height he seems able to consume two meals at a time and once earned his party a free meal when he consumed the 36 ounce rump steak dinner at a Texas diner. He is also an exceptional fielder (winning the best fielder award in 1990) and a clean-hitting batsman. His top score of 138 not out is the fourth highest by a Kennington player coming in a second eleven match against Saltwood in 1999. He hit 13 fours and eight sixes (the second highest number in one innings) and would have made more had Chris Philpott not declared to spare the opposition further punishment!

Cricket week was, like that of the previous year, played in quite glorious weather and, with a slightly less taxing list of fixtures, proved a complete success, Kennington winning all five games. Tulse Hill were defeated, mainly due to the efforts of Mick Austin who scored 60 and took 5 for 11. Tuesday's opponents, Julien Cahn's XI, were led by the grandson of Sir Julien Cahn who took powerful touring sides all over the cricket-playing world in the 1930s. They were beaten by five wickets. A strong line up of local players under the soubriquet 'Ollie's All Stars' were captained to defeat by the great man when his pedigree batsman failed to fathom Colin Harris's ultra-slow leg-breaks, and he took 4 for 30. Mersham lost to us by 17 runs and we had our revenge on the Jesters bowling them out for 106 when in pursuit of only 115 for victory.

The 1991 Cricket Week was played, probably inevitably, in somewhat less pleasant weather, though the results were nearly as good with just one loss, to Tulse Hill. There was a six wicket win over the Jesters and Mersham were beaten thanks to a fine 91 not out by Ollie Austen. His own

'All Stars', however, failed to win again. In a virtual carbon-copy of his previous year's bowling Colin Harris once again bamboozled the visitors going one better with 5 for 62. But all else during the season paled into insignificance in comparison to Kennington's success in the South East Kent League.

The league season didn't get off to a particularly auspicious start with defeats against Herne Bay (in the last over, by four wickets) and at Cliftonville where, despite Mick Austin's 28-ball 50, Kennington lost by 21 runs (Cliftonville 180, Kennington 159). Low scoring wins over Nonington (by six wickets but after recovering from 4 for 3) and New Romney (a more comfortable eight wickets) were followed by a tense 'winning' draw at home to Willesborough. Kennington made 139 for 9, after being 6 for 2, Willesborough replying with 125 for 9.

Defeat in the next match against Old Stacians (by five wickets, but again in the last over) appeared to have put us out of the title chase. However Kennington bounced straight back, beating Hawkinge by four wickets.

The current leaders, and league champions, were Betteshanger but they too had not had quite such a good year and, with the match against them to be played at Kennington, there was still an opportunity for us to cause an upset. This crucial encounter was played on August 10 and the visitors were bowled out for 110. All the bowlers contributed but Chris Philpott's 3 for 23 was, perhaps, the crucial spell. In reply Kennington made no mistake and, with 41 not out from Graham Poole and 30 by Neil Tegg, got home by seven wickets.



Kennington 1991 (v Old Stacians)

*Rear: Ian Hughes; Ollie Austen; Neil Tegg; Steve Galvin; Chris Philpott
Seated: Nick Croxford; Keith Dunkerley; Jim Garrett; Andrew Johnson; Russell Lancaster; Peter Grant*

The win over Betteshanger suddenly meant that Kennington had an outside chance of snatching the title. We would still need to beat our final opponents, Littlebourne, and take maximum points, and Betteshanger would have to slip up in their last game against Old Stacians. For the Littlebourne match, perhaps the most important in our history, Kennington were without the services of Neil Tegg and so the side was led by Peter Grant. The first task was accomplished when the visiting skipper called incorrectly allowing Kennington to bat first. We needed to score 200-plus to secure the required batting points and a magnificent team performance enabled us to do so as Kennington made 204 for 4. Graham Poole led the way with 60 before he was run out. Chris Philpott contributed 34 and Peter himself made an unusually rapid unbeaten half-century. Declaring after the 43rd over, as soon as the 200 was posted, potentially gave us two extra overs with which to bowl out the opposition. Initial breakthroughs by Ollie Austen and Ian Hughes were followed by another magnificent spell from Chris Philpott who took 4 for 20 and was supported by great fielding. The extra overs were clearly never going to be needed and Littlebourne succumbed for 89 in the 38th over.

There followed a nail-biting week before the Betteshanger/Stacians encounter but our Ashford neighbours did us their biggest favour when they held the champions to a low scoring draw, delivering the title to Ulley Road. During the league season Kennington had no one that averaged more than 28 but we always had useful batsmen right through the order who were capable of making a significant contribution. The fielding was good and keen and the quiet efficiency of Andrew Johnson (son of Terry) or James Callow behind the stumps was also a crucial factor. But the key to Kennington's success was certainly the bowling, most especially that of Ollie Austen and Chris Philpott (in his first full season with us) but ably supported by Ian Hughes, left-armed John Leahy, Jim Garrett, Mick Austin and visiting Aussie Steve Galvin. Steve, though he didn't take many league wickets, provided vital variation and his cheerful presence was another great asset in a memorable year.



The local press celebrates Kennington's first League title

Alongside, a triumph for Kent's Trevor Ward who, in 1984 for Sibton Park Colts scored 139 against Kennington.

After the league success of 1991 Kennington were not able to repeat their triumph the following year, played in the newly established Ashford and District League, though against many of the same sides. Indeed we had a dismal league season chalking up only one win (at Elham) and narrowly avoiding the wooden spoon. Despite our poor league form the rest of 1992 was reasonably successful with 17 wins compared to 9 losses (Kennington had lost between 9 and 11 games in each of the previous six seasons). Probably the best win came in our first ever fixture at Hollingbourne. On a good pitch and with reasonably short boundaries the home side had scored a sound 222 for 6. Kennington's openers, Peter Grant and Chris Glover, found no terrors in the bowling and had 30 on the board in 7 overs before Glover was dismissed for 16. Pete Burden contributed a rapid 30 and when Grant was third out, for 59, the score had reached 141. Eventually three wickets were still in hand with 23 needed off the last two overs. Pete Speight hit a vital boundary six before being run out. With three balls remaining seven were needed when Ollie Austen smashed a six and then the winning four, taking his own score to a match-winning 75.

The highlight of Cricket Week in '92 came in a thrilling finish against London County. The visitors eighth wicket fell with them still 33 short of victory but giant Jamaican Mikey Thompson crashed 25 not out in their one-wicket win – being dropped on the boundary by skipper Peter Grant with the ball going for six. The week was, however, somewhat spoiled by the weather, the game against Ollie's All Stars being abandoned and that against Tulse Hill cancelled. The Chairman's XI match, at the end of the season, was remarkable for its abrupt finish. Kennington lost their last five wickets, two of them to run-outs by

Derbyshire's Frank Griffith, in Craig Smith's 3.2 overs, which cost no runs.

1993 got off to a great start with wins over old 'enemies' Wye and Boughton. The latter game produced the slowest scoring of any Kennington match but was far from dull. On a typically slow early season Ulley Road pitch Kennington toiled to 66 for 9 at tea from 48 overs. Only Neil Tegg (with 23) reached double figures and in the first over after the interval Kennington lost their last wicket with no addition to the score. But Boughton found the conditions no more to their liking and they struggled in turn. Two wickets each fell to Ian Hughes and Ollie Austen before Simon Chandler and Graham Hall staged a slight recovery. But Chandler 'holed out' to Tegg at cover off Hughes and, following a brief flurry from Hall, who was caught behind by Ron Callow off Austen, Boughton subsided to 50 all out in 28.5 overs.

Though Kennington got the better of their neighbours on this occasion the boot has often been on the other foot. In 1987 a new prize – the Hobday Trophy named after Tom – was introduced to be played for between the two clubs. Played season-by-season on the same basis as the Ashes Kennington did not wrest it from Boughton's grasp until 1994. In both 1984 and 1987 Kennington suffered 10-wicket defeats and these were only somewhat compensated for in the first league meeting between the sides in 1992. Kennington turned a disastrous 67 for 7 into a potentially match-winning 148 for 7 thanks to Jeremy Grove, a hard-hitting all-rounder in his first season, who cracked 52 not out (the highest ever score by a number 9) and Nick Croxford with 36 not out.

Jes was also an excellent quicker-than-average bowler who regularly opened the league attack. In ten seasons he took 144 wickets at 18.53 and scored just over 2,000 runs. His finest hour with the bat was a 51 ball century against Bishopsbourne in 1996 which is still the quickest for Kennington. Nowadays Jes mainly confines his sporting talents to the golf course and he was the latest winner of the club's Golf Society competition amassing a superb 42 points off a 14 handicap (which will be below 10 next time out).

Off the field Kennington arguably achieved greater success than on it with their strong General Knowledge Quiz Team. The team, usually comprising Peter Grant,

Alf Ames, Dave Miller and John McAdams, won many local competitions and, in 1987, the Radio Kent Community Quiz. Sponsored by the Kent Reliance Building Society, this show attained some of the best listening figures the station had seen, and the £250 first prize was a handy bonus. The team overcame a shaky first round and a tense semi-final to overwhelm the Snodland Stagers in the final. They followed this up with a win over a Radio Kent celebrity team who boasted a former winner of the 'Krypton Factor' among their ranks. An even better achievement came in 1993 when the quiz team steered Kennington to a Lord's final! This was in the national Trivia Test Match competition in aid of the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow charity. Assisted in the final by celebrity captain Bill Franklin, and 'umpired' by Brian Johnston, Kennington were well beaten, for the first time, by an excellent team from Blackpool Cricket Club. Individually team members have appeared on 15-to-One (Peter, John and Dave) and University Challenge and Brain of Britain (Peter). In the 1998 series of 15-to-One both Peter and John reached the Christmas Grand Final where Peter narrowly failed to win the title, finishing runner-up.



The 'Radio Times' announces Kennington's appearance in the final of the Radio Kent Quiz 1987



And Kennington win!

Mick Austin, Alf Ames, John McAdams and Dave Miller with bats, Peter Grant with cheque.



The 24-Hour Match about to start



Part of the proceeds from the match were donated to the William Harvey hospital.

Chairman Peter and President Twiz Grant are handing over the cheque



The team concentrating during the 'Trivia Test Match' Final

Celebrity captain William Franklin in background

By the late eighties it was obvious to the committee that if Kennington wanted to ensure its survival into the next century the club needed to offer its members better playing facilities. Back in 1965 the new tea room was constructed utilising the building skills of the members but the current team didn't contain too many brickies, carpenters or plumbers! What the members were able to offer, however, were skills in raising money. Fund-raising began in 1987 when events included a 24-hour cricket match at Ulley Road, under temporary floodlights during the hours of darkness, and a sponsored walk from the 'cradle of cricket', Hambledon in Hampshire, to Kennington by Chairman Peter Grant.

In 1990, mainly under the auspices of Peter and Ollie Austen but with the help and support of many others, more substantial sums began to be obtained for the complete rebuilding of the club's pavilion. Significant contributions came from the AKCC, the Ashford Lottery Fund and the Sports Council before the crucial £15,000 grant was obtained from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Thus it was in March 1993 that the old wooden Edwardian pavilion, obtained in kit form in 1902, was finally demolished and new highly spacious changing rooms, showers, toilets and ground equipment storage facilities have now taken its place. The new facilities were officially opened by the former Kent and England star, Derek Underwood on Wednesday 25 August, followed by a match against former West Indies Test player Reg Scarlett's XI.



Opening the new pavilion 1993.
Peter Grant speaking (no cheque this time) with the Mayor of Ashford and Derek Underwood (in blue sweater).



The two teams Kennington v Reg Scarlett's XI 1993. Reg Scarlett back row 2nd from right



Kennington 1994 (v Lenham).
*Rear: Stuart Lancaster; Jagger Finch; Mark Hodges; Martyn Payne; Ian Hughes; James Callow; Chris Philpott
 Seated: Neil Tegg;; Ollie Austen; Peter Grant
 The suave attire was a response to skipper Austen's comments that the team always arrived sloppily dressed!*



Kennington 1993 (v Reg Scarlett's XI)
*Rear: Jagger Finch; James Callow; Ollie Austen; Neil Tegg; Ian Hughes; Joe Washington; Kevin Hayden
 Front: Martyn Payne; Peter Grant; Russell Lancaster; Jim Garrett; Chris Philpott*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A NEW CENTURY, A NEW DAWN

"A game is exactly what is made of it by the character of the men playing it. New laws, new ways of preparing wickets, new schemes of reckoning championships – these external things do not matter."

Sir Neville Cardus

"In the end it is only the camaraderie of the team, the lifelong friendships which you forge, and the opportunity for interesting sorties outside the grind of the cricket grounds which make the experience worthwhile."

Bill O'Reilly

A watery sun filtered through the poplar trees and there was an autumnal chill in the air. A slight mist was beginning to rise over the Romney Marsh and drift across the Royal Military Canal. Eleven assorted cricketers (and a few supporters) entered the dark, somewhat gloomy and antique interior of the 'Ferry' Inn. Yes, it was the end of another season, the 159th in Kennington history.

We settled down with our pints, and cokes, and began to discuss the remarkable game that had just taken place against Stone-in-Oxney. The match seemed a perfect end to the season. As so often in recent times Kennington's team contained five players under the age of twenty (two of them thirteen) and four over forty. After a season of exceptional weather (uniquely no game was cancelled due to weather) the pitch was hard underneath but recent heavy showers had made it soft on top. Batting was clearly going to be tricky. Kennington batted first and were soon in trouble. The ball was seaming dramatically and the bounce was variable. Having agreed to the home team's suggestion of a 40-over game we were doubting its wisdom as no one seemed capable of scoring quickly. Wickets fell at regular interval and the scoreboard crept along until it read 80 for 9 with just six overs remaining. Peter Grant was batting at number ten (having too often been hogging the opening slot) and he was joined by Phil Gore. Phil had a season average of over 100 – unfortunately this was for his medium-pace bowling! As a batsman Phil has few opportunities and his season's total stood at 15 runs in six innings.

At least the main bowlers had finished their stints. Phil seemed to take a liking to the exaggerated movement of the remaining bowlers, working a large number of deliveries round to the leg side. Peter employed his usual nudge and deflection policy combined with the odd square cut. Quick running between the wickets also helped to raise the score to a final total of 121 for 9; not great but much better than might have been hoped.

Stone were clearly pretty confident. They promoted a tail ender to open and dropped the reliable Duncan Gray down to number 11. Kennington had a fairly limited attack. There were only two seamers Phil, and John Cunningham. John had recently had some success with his rather round-arm cutters but it was not a particularly formidable opening pair. Our main weapons were our two contrasting off-spinners. Jagger Finch, the wily veteran, and Liam Tegg, son of Neil and the leading all-rounder of Kent's Under 13 side. But would the pitch suit off-spin?

It was soon obvious that John was having one of his better days – long-hops were at a minimum! First he took one, then two, then three wickets. Phil's luck continued to be abysmal as a slip catch went down but then he too took a wicket. At the other end two more Stone batsmen perished to give John a 'Michelle' (Pfiffer), five for 33.

Now it was the spinners turn. Jagger was accurate but seemed to lack penetration. It was Liam that appeared more threatening and he took two more wickets. Tevis Knight, a sound player, was now at

the crease and 17-year-old Tim Branchett was called up to field at suicidally short leg to him. Tim is not a naturally gifted cricketer but through great determination has turned himself into an exceptionally sound fielder. That season he was leading catcher and had added short leg to his repertoire. Tegg bowled a slightly quicker ball, Knight pushed forward. The ball turned to touch the inside edge and then hit the pad. It didn't rise more than three or four inches off the ground and travelled no more than a couple of feet but Tim, miraculously, dived forward and held the ball in one hand to have Stone poised for defeat at 72 for nine. But all this time Stone's number four Chris Ninn had looked immovable and he was now joined by Gray so, still with two capable bats at the crease, all was not lost for the home side.

The score began to mount ominously. Could Kennington break through? What made things even more tense was that Jagger and Liam were locked in a battle for the year's bowling award. If no wicket fell or Jagger claimed it he would win it for the first time in his career. If Liam got the wicket he would become the youngest bowler ever to achieve the prize. With two overs remaining just four runs were wanted. Up to this point Gray had been content to play 'second fiddle' to Ninn so Liam tried one last ploy – to float up a tempting delivery on the left-handers leg stump and hope for the mistake. And he got it! The Kennington players whooped with delight. Stone, one of the most sporting sides we play, were hugely disappointed but magnanimous in defeat.

Phil's batting, Liam's award winning and Tim's catch were all high on the topics of conversation in the 'Ferry'. The older players also reflected on the last ten years and how things had moved on since I first compiled this history.



Kennington 2003 (at Stowting)

*Rear: Jamie Hutton; Ollie Finch; Liam Tegg; Alan Hart; Phil Gore; Julian Bird
Front: Tim Branchett; Peter Grant; Neil Tegg; Jagger Finch; Nathan Last*

In 1993 it was not obvious that Kennington was about to undergo some quite traumatic changes and enter a new era but within two years that is what happened.

In 1995, soon after the team returned from the first tour of South Yorkshire, Twiz Grant died. His funeral was attended by a host of current and former Kennington players as well as work mates and opponents. As I said in my tribute at the funeral it was impossible to find anyone with a bad word for Twiz. To everyone he was a true gentleman and a loyal friend and team mate. Funerals can be depressing affairs, that Twiz's was instead a celebration of his life says everything.

The following year was traumatic for different reasons. Relations between Ollie Austen and the other members of the committee first became strained then untenable. That it is difficult to remember exactly what the specific reasons for these differences were is probably emblematic that it was more a clash of personalities than of belief. It became clear that Ollie wasn't prepared to accept the committee's views (especially with regard to his captaincy) and so he pushed for the calling of an Extraordinary General Meeting of the club. This came down decisively in favour of the committee and though attempts were made to persuade Ollie to remain at the club he chose to leave. In retrospect this was probably in the best interests of both.

During the weeks leading up to the final split some of the matches were overshadowed by the tension between the two 'sides' and were not the happiest of occasions. Ollie went back to playing for

Boughton and also for Mersham and games with him as an opponent certainly have an extra touch of competitiveness. This was no more so than in 1997 when some exceptionally hostile bowling from Ollie swept Kennington aside for just 61 at Ulley Road and 108 in the return fixture at Boughton. Ollie has now had to give up bowling but is still a reliable compiler of runs for both teams.

With the loss of easily the finest all-rounder in the club it might have been expected that Kennington's results would suffer. Instead the opposite was the case. There were two main reasons for the team's remarkable form in the wake of Ollie Austen's departure.

The first was the cathartic release and galvanising effect of the change. Suddenly other players simply had to take more wickets or score more runs and several thrived on the extra responsibility. Chris Philpott, Mark Hodges and Jes Grove's bowling all showed greater penetration and these three topped the bowling averages between 1996 and '98. But the greatest improvement was shown in Neil Tegg's batting. Up to the 1996 season Neil had scored his runs at a highly respectable average of 32.89. Over the next five years he averaged more than double this, 77.94! In 185 innings he made more than 8,000 runs and scored at least 50 in 4 out of ten of them. As he was not out more than 40% of the time he clearly would have scored vastly more runs if he'd had time!

The second reason was an influx of new players and the maturing of existing talent. Ian Hughes, Mark Leahy and Jagger Finch were good examples of the latter. Prominent among the former were two former Loughborough University friends of Russell Lancaster.

Jes Field has proved a reliable all rounder who has been a particular asset to the league team. A sound middle order bat and medium pace bowler he has a sometime outrageous change of pace and rarely gets 'carted'. Jes has scored just over 1,500 runs at 21.74 and taken over 150 wickets at an average of 18.3.

My first meeting with Ian Ruck was when I, literally, fell over him in the hallway of our hotel on the 1995 cricket tour where his recumbent body lay fast asleep. On that same tour he, and fellow Loughborough graduate Andy Dix, acquired the sobriquet 'the hyena brothers' for their penchant of

devouring everyone else's left over dinners 'you have finished with that?' Ian would ask greedily eyeing an unappetising mess of left-over steak, chips and peas. Ian has brought an extra dimension to the club and its cricket. Kennington were always a happy side, not prone to moaning or sulking but Ian's infectious enthusiasm and unquenchable good humour never fails to lift the spirits of the team. Probably many teams have their joker but to this Ian adds his talent for inspiring his team mates by his example, especially in the field. He never gives less than 100%, even when defeat is inevitable, and can turn matches with feats of outrageous brilliance. He is not an orthodox cricketer.

His batting looks somewhat 'agricultural' but his amazing eye for a ball and dedication has produced some wonderful displays, none less so than his 112 against Bearstead in 2000 made without a chance and full of flourishing off-drives and ferocious pulls. He has twice made a 50 in fewer than 25 balls and hit 27 sixes in the 1996 season. His bowling adds weight to another nickname, 'Captain Caveman', as he charges in gripping the ball in his palm and sometimes working up quite a pace or the odd unplayable delivery. The two can combine to dominate games and Ian is one of only three players to have achieved the 'double' of a century and five wickets in the same match when he scored 101 and took 5 for 21 against Leeds and Broomfield in 1996.



Ian Ruck entertains!

But it is in the field that Ian is at his very best. One example will have to suffice to sum up his contribution. In 2003 Kennington

were playing a league match at Elham. The home side were caning the bowling to all parts and the score was past 250. Kennington's bowlers and fielders were wilting under the onslaught, but not Ian. He was keeping wicket (something else he does in unorthodox style with a 'crocodile' catching technique entirely his own) as knee trouble had curtailed his bowling for the season. The Elham batsman, Des Lewis who had made an excellent hundred, went to pull a short ball from Alan Hart but only succeeded in getting a top edge. The ball flew in the direction of deep fine leg, which was unguarded. In an instant Ian had thrown off the gloves and was haring after the ball. Only an exceptional fielder would have had any chance of reaching the ball before, after a couple of bounces, it reached the boundary. Only one fielder in a thousand would have made it into a chance, only Ian Ruck would launch himself when 10 yards short of the ball, slide another two or three and catch the ball one-handed an inch or two from the ground. It was a truly incredible feat and one, if it had taken place in a televised game, would be the subject of endless replays and 'best ofs' for years to come. Hardly surprisingly Ian holds the record for most catches by an outfielder in a season, 27 in 1998 and was voted 'best fielder' five years in succession from 1996 to 2000, regaining the award in 2003.

With the improved form of key players and new additions Kennington embarked upon an unprecedented and exceptional period of success. Between 1995 and 2001 the team never finished outside the top two in the Ashford and District League, becoming champions in 1997 and 1999 and the first side to retain the title in 2000. In all matches in this period the results were 153 wins and only 30 losses in 260 games.

Two more players to feature in the later success of this period were Dick Holtum and Danny Mobbs. Dick had been a formidable, and much liked opponent for many years being a stalwart in a strong British Rail team. Sadly his club's ground, Bath Meadow, was lost under the 'space age' development of the car park for Ashford's new international station and wasn't able to survive this devastating setback. Dick began playing for Kennington in 1997 and has since scored over 2,000 runs the outstanding average of 37.3. For such a good cricketer Dick is probably the least selfish player Kennington have had. He always adapts his batting to suit the team

circumstances and is the first to praise his teammates and help raise their game.

In 2000 Dick was joined as opening batsman by Danny Mobbs. A former British Universities and Lewes Priory player Dan is probably a class above all Kennington's other batsmen. In just 42 innings he has scored 1,765 runs at an average of 47.7, the record for a Kennington player. Dan's only fault is that he can become rather distracted at the ease of batting and he took the 2003 season off to recharge his batteries.

Together Kennington's openers, Dick, Dan and Ian Hughes were often good enough on their own to win league matches. In 2000 Boughton were restricted to 119 for 8 which Mobbs and Holtum knocked off without being separated. The following year against Selsted Dan, in partnership with Ian, successfully overhauled the opposition's 168 for 9 whilst the same pair compiled an opening stand of 184 (Dan 92, Ian 108) against Hawkinge in 2001.

Dan and Dick's biggest opening stand, and the highest for any wicket by Kennington, came in the game at Rainham in 1998. Batting first Kennington scored 251 without loss. The pair matched each other stroke for stroke and, at one time, discussed whether they should let somebody else bat. They were persuaded to continue (it was much more fun watching them than having to bat oneself) and ended up 122 and 121 not out respectively. Rainham discontinued the fixture the following year as they thought we were rather too strong for them as this was the second successive time Kennington hadn't lost a wicket at Rainham. In 1998 the visitors had chased 181, Stuart Lancaster scoring a superb 119.

Not surprisingly many, if not most, of Kennington's batting records were shattered in the post-1996 period. In 1996 Neil Tegg and Peter Grant became the first Kennington pair to compile a partnership of over 200 when they scored 207 for the third wicket without being separated to beat Bearstead on their historic ground where the great Alfred Mynn had often played. Neil reached 132 whereas the author didn't quite reach 50! I think I only scored three of last 50 runs made but did hit the Bearstead off-spinner (who Neil found the most awkward of their bowlers) out of the attack.

Of Kennington's 14 team totals over 250, ten have been made since 1995, including the entire top six. The highest two both came in league games. The 2001 match against Hawkinge has already been mentioned and Mobbs and Hughes' opening stand led to a total of 327 for six. The highest of all had come a year earlier at home to Elham Valley. Dick Holtum's 120 was the backbone of the innings and he first put on 96 with Danny Mobbs (43) for the first wicket. Dick picked up the pace considerably in a third wicket stand of 145 with Ollie Finch (son of Jagger) who made 72. After Dick fell for 120 a rapid 46 by Jagger meant that Kennington's 45-over innings closed on 337 for seven.

Inevitably not everything always went Kennington's way and our opponents too had their days. Hollingbourne's tight, ground with its hard, fast-paced pitch, has produced several high-scoring encounters. Replying to Kennington's 305 for one (when James Callow scored 153) Hollingbourne themselves reached 255 for seven. A year later there were even more runs. Hollingbourne batted first and scored 316 for two with two century-makers, T.Scrivens (105) and D.Hinks (103 not out). In reply Kennington got within 36 runs of victory for the loss of six wickets. Neil Tegg was out for 128 when a sensational victory was still just possible. In 1994 the home team had made 329 for four with S.Wall contributing no fewer than 176 without being dismissed. This was a savage innings and no one was keen to bowl (Andy Burden's 5 overs cost 64) but it was only possible on a small ground and true pitch.

Far classier have been the innings of Tenterden's Indian 'pro' Tim Chanda who is the only player to have made successive centuries against Kennington. A chanceless 156 at Tenterden in 2000 (admittedly against a weak attack) was followed by 107 the following year at Kennington. It was somewhat surprising that Chanda wasn't more successful for his side in the Kent League; perhaps a too-casual approach was to blame.

A unique feat was achieved in the friendly fixture against East Langdon in 1998. Langdon have nearly as good a record in the Ashford League as Kennington and their leading all-rounder is Wayne Smith, a savage hitter and, when he is in the mood, extremely quick bowler. Kennington had made a respectable, but not formidable, 187 for six, Jes Field making his top score of 85. When they batted Langdon always looked likely winners but one over turned

this likelihood to certainty. The bowler was Kevin Hayden.

Kevin had joined the club in 1992 and cricket is not his main sport. He is the manager of the Kennington Football Club's first team and virtually unbeatable by anyone in the club at squash. Kevin's main contributions to Kennington have been off the field. He has done an enormous amount of work on the clubhouse and, together with his wife Glenda, put in countless hours behind the bar.

On the field Kevin is a tenacious fielder, usually tail end batsman and an often useful slow bowler. Capable of breaking stubborn partnerships or sometimes causing panic in run-chases Kevin has taken nearly 200 wickets at just under 19 apiece.

On this day Wayne Smith had well and truly got his eye in when Kevin began his sixth over. The first five balls were all pitched on a reasonable or full-ish length and around off-to-middle stump. Wayne drove every one clean over not only the long-off boundary but over the eight to ten metre high perimeter fencing. Could he make it an unprecedented six-out-of-six? Kevin, always a generous person, decided to give him a chance but try a different line, leg-stump. Wayne swung and connected perhaps even harder. The ball comfortably cleared the midwicket boundary and the feat found its way into several newspapers.

Some of Jagger Finch's exploits have already been recorded. But he too has made a tremendous contribution to the club off the field. For the past eight years Jagger has acted as head-groundsman and put in hours of work on the square. That Kennington now produces not only the best pitches it has ever had but also ones that are among the best in the district is due to his tireless exertions.

In 1995 Jagger made an even greater contribution when he brilliantly organised Kennington's second week-long cricket tour. His partner, Sue Last's father, the gloriously named Emerson Bainbridge Muschamp, had been a long-standing player with South Yorkshire team Hampole and Skelbrooke. Jagger made contact with Hampole and several nearby clubs to organise a group of fixtures for the last week of July. Accommodation in the district was checked out and the team's headquarters fixed for the Nite Owl motel on Brierley Common.

The Nite Owl was a great find. Owned by ex-builder Jack Saul and his wife Flo the amenities include a pub, restaurant, leisure facilities, a huge nightclub and separate bedroom complex. In addition Jack owns a number of racehorses and these are trained at the attached stables. During the day you can see horses being galloped or swum in the pool, go for a swim yourself (in a separate pool I'm pleased to say) or enjoy a game of squash or snooker. At night there's the late bar or, a couple of times a week, an extremely 'lively' disco! To these excellent facilities have now been added a conference centre making the Nite Owl a perfect centre for a cricket tour.

Cricket teams from the South East have not often thought of South Yorkshire as a potential destination and when Kennington's players were told that the nearest village to their HQ was Grimethorpe many probably thought twice. Yet nowhere in England could match the hospitality and quality cricket of this area. Invariably Kennington received a true Yorkshire welcome with huge and exceptional teas, superbly organised post-match entertainment and cricket played both competitively and sportingly. Some villages are ex-mining communities and the ravages of pit-closures were still fresh but the invasion of a bunch of 'southern softies' never undermined the good humour of the locals and several grounds turned out to be in lovely rural surroundings.

Fittingly the first ever game, a 20-over-a-side match, took place on Hampole's postage-stamp of a ground surrounded on three sides by open fields and on the fourth by the dual carriageway of the A1. From the pavilion end the thundering lorries seemed reachable with a big hit. Opening the batting in reply to the home side's 123 for six, Ian Hughes determined to do just that. The roadway is, in reality, just a bit further away than it looks but Ian still managed to hit the first ball of the first tour for six. Kennington lost wickets steadily and the game fluctuated wildly. When the last batsman, Peter Grant, came to the crease there was one ball remaining and two runs needed to win. He adopted the 'percentage' approach of ensuring he got a bat on the ball and scored the single for the tie – perhaps others might have risked more!

The following day's match was in Doncaster against the works team Du Pont Bridon. The main feature of the game was the home side's quick bowlers (one a

Yorkshire second XI player) performing on a pitch that 'exploded' off a length. This made batting an 'interesting' experience! The home team had made 139 all out. Kennington got home eventually by three wickets Jagger hitting an unbeaten 39 but Mark Hodges was probably the hero. He took the brunt of the 'quicks' advancing down the pitch and allowing many balls to strike his body in an appropriately 'Brian Close-like' performance.

On Wednesday it was back to Hampole for a longer game – all other matches on the tours being 40 overs a side. Hampole's total of 226 looked well out of reach when Kennington were 92 for 5, then 157 for 7 with only seven overs remaining. The situation seemed even more critical as the tourists had only inexperienced batsmen left. Mark Leahy and young Mark Elliott, coming in at number nine, were at the crease. Leahy scored 38 from 35 balls before being run out. Elliott then produced one of the most remarkable innings in Kennington history. In just 26 balls Mark hit an unbeaten 58 (the highest score ever by a number nine) to win the match with nine balls to spare.

Thursday's game was at Dearne, a vast oval of a ground with no shade where every match Kennington played seemed to be in scorching conditions. Kennington were well beaten by 57 runs but it still had highlights. Russell Lancaster was inordinately proud of his new BMW and was keen to park it where it was in no danger of being hit by a flying ball. 'Don't worry' remarked Mark Leahy, 'no one's capable of hitting sixes here'. Whether this was his real assessment or not he has never revealed, needless to say when Mark came to bat he hit three sixes, two of them assaulting the bodywork of Russell's car!



Mark Leahy at Dearne pursued by the entire Dearne team after doing a striptease!

The final game was at the picturesque Hooton Pagnall ground, next to which

grazed a flock of rare breed sheep, where the home side emerged victorious by three wickets.

In 1996 a further fixture, against the powerful Houghton Main, was added to the itinerary. The highlight of the tour was probably the Du Pont game. Nothing had changed from the previous year, quick bowlers, crap pitch, and the home team's 206 for seven looked a winning score. Hero of the Kennington reply was Jim Garrett. He followed an excellent bowling spell (three for 36 from his eight overs) with a remarkable 51 not out, hooking and driving the best bowlers to distraction to snatch a one wicket win.

Jim often seemed to save his best form for the tour. In 1999 Kennington secured another remarkable win, this time at Hooton, due to Jim's 38 from just 23 balls supported by Peter Grant (one fewer run, three more balls) who added an unbeaten 64 in six overs in successfully chasing the home side's 238.



The tour party 1999

*Rear: James Hayden, Jagger Finch, Ian Hughes, Ian Ruck, Mark Leahy, Scott Lynch, Jim Garrett
Front: Russell Lancaster, Martin Payne, Kevin Hayden, Keith Phillipson, Peter Grant*

The previous year Kennington achieved their only 'clean sweep', winning all five games with Neil Tegg – a century and three further fifties - in dominant form.

'99 was also notable for a piece of outstanding wicket keeping. Nathan Last, grandson of Emerson Muschamp, was playing on his grandfathers' old home ground. Though he is now a regular 'keeper for Kennington he was keeping wicket for virtually the first time but brought off four stumpings in Hampole's innings when only six wickets fell. In the same year Kennington also played at the excellent Wath ground for the first time, in the latter's centenary cricket week. Wath are a strong Rotherham league side and had faced the MCC on the previous day. Without a great

deal of exertion they made 216 for three from their 40 overs. Kennington's reply was kick-started by Ian Hughes (47) and Ian Ruck (35) but both fell within an over of each other. Faced with the pace of Yorkshire under-17 bowler Mark Bray, Kennington seemed doomed to fail, despite Neil Tegg being well set. Three wickets fell but cometh the hour cometh the man, this time in the shape of James Hayden (son of Kevin) who smashed 19 in just 12 balls. Tegg remained on 68 (from 72 balls) as Kennington won with two balls to spare.



Wath-upon-Dearne

Cricket was never the only reason for touring. Food (and drink) were always high on the agenda and Kennington were also determined that the unsuspecting folk of South Yorkshire would never forget their visits. One example was the decision to make themed fancy dress a prominent feature of most days on tour. The spectre of a hoard of rampaging Vikings or Chicago gangsters emerging from the tour bus to threaten the peace of a quiet village will long remain in the memories of the people of Wath, Hooton or Dearne. Little children were either fascinated by the spectacle, "Mummy, why are the umpires dressed as red Indians?" or, in the case of the authors impersonation of Black Metal star Danny Filth, scared to the point of tears!



Al Capone and Friends!



The medical team (Jagger Finch and Ian Ruck)

Sometimes the dress code could be the source of further shenanigans. In 2000 policeman Scott Lynch was a notable tourist and enthusiastically adopted the 'Welshman' theme for the day. Unfortunately he had been sold a pup and the rest of the tourists took delight in greeting him in full police regalia!

Latterly organisation of the tour was taken over equally exceptionally by Mark Leahy and superb relations have been established with the tour teams that have lasted beyond the curtailment of the tour. Kennington players have appeared for Dearne in both friendlies and league matches and the Dearne team has made reciprocal visits to Kent on a number of occasions.



Tour Party 2000

*Back: Kevin Hayden; Ollie Finch; James Hayden; Jagger Finch; Ian Hughes; Neil Tegg; Phil Gore
Front: Peter Granr; Josh Last; Dick Holtum;
Nathan Last; Mark Leahy; Ian Ruck*

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Many tales of past tours were thus related to the younger members of the team in the 'Ferry' at the close of the 2003 season: "Son, in a few years you will be old enough to go on cricket tour and make a complete idiot of yourself just like your father". But the last couple of seasons have certainly seen the younger members of the club shoot to prominence.

Mainly, this has been due to the indefatigable efforts of Neil Tegg to boost junior cricket at the club. Despite having a highly responsible job Neil seems to spend every spare waking hour either at the ground or ferrying players to and from matches. Quite fittingly Neil has been awarded the Gilham Trophy in each of the last five years, though the rules may need to be changed for 2004! He has also been immensely assisted by a number of others who also give up significant amounts of their spare time to coaching of junior players or organising of teams. Ian Hughes, Danny Mobbs, Chris Philpott, John Cunningham, Jagger Finch, and Peter Burden are among those to whom the club owes huge thanks for ensuring the next generation of players' gains from their experience.

Partly the 'switch to youth' has been the result of the club having easily the most talented crop of young players in its history. First to prominence in the late '90s was Ollie Finch, son of Jagger who won the 'Most Improved Young Player' award three years running (from 1998 to 2000). A belligerent front-foot dominated, right-hander Ollie was the youngest player to reach 1,000 runs for the club in 2000 at the age of 15 years 8 months. Currently he made just over 2,000 runs at an average of just above 20. His top score of 72 perhaps betrays one weakness which is that he needs to concentrate a bit harder at times and adopt the 'killer instinct' when he has opposing bowlers on the run. Ollie is also probably Kennington's finest fielder, cutting off countless boundaries with dives and slides and keeping opposing batsmen highly wary of risking runs in his direction.



Josh Last with certificate for his 170 v Smarden

Josh Last, son of Sue and brother of Nathan, is another player of aggressive mould, though more back-foot dominated than Ollie. Before the 2003 season Josh's promise was probably higher than his achievements but his captaincy of the Dover College First XI clearly brought additional responsibility and maturity to his game. This was spectacularly demonstrated on 2nd of August when Kennington met Smarden. The visitors are usually one of the second eleven's more formidable opponents, as their recent success in the Kent Village League has shown, but on the occasion they were notably short of a number of key players. No doubt this assisted Josh in his innings but what resulted was both unexpected and dramatic. Opening with Peter Grant Josh began slowly but, as time wore on, began to totally dominate the attack, unleashing an array of shots all round the wicket. By the time Grant was out (for 40) the score had reached 178 and Josh was 120. He surged past James Callow's previous record of 153 and even looked likely to become the first Kennington player to reach 200 when tiredness caught up with him and he was out for 170. Nevertheless this was a remarkable and dramatic innings, especially considering Josh's previous highest score for the club was a modest 55.

Both Ollie and, to a lesser extent, Josh have featured in Kennington's junior teams who achieved reasonable success during the late '90s. However, in the past couple of

years, Kennington colts have gone on to emulate the achievements of the senior side and proved amongst the best outfits in the district. This has been down to the emergence of an even larger crop of talented players, moulded into a real team ethos by their managers. Utilising really good cricketers is an easy job but ensuring the consistent improvement of less naturally gifted players is not so easy. Kennington's team managers have been an exception and have always ensured that everyone has a chance to shine and that the 'stars' don't always dominate.

One reason for this is probably that it is Neil's own son Liam who is proving to be a contender for Kennington's best junior of all time. Ever since he was able to walk Liam never seems to have been without a bat or a ball in his hand. Kennington players spent countless hours bowling to him and it was no great surprise when he became Kennington's youngest ever player in 1997 a month short of his eighth birthday.

Since then Liam has developed into a key member of Kent's junior teams, currently with the under-14s, and has achieved notable success for the county with both bat and ball. Liam spearheaded Kennington's under-12 team to second place in the district league in 2002 and then the under-14s to the runners-up spot in 2003. In the latter year for the under-14s Liam's batting read: 11 innings; 6 not outs; 484 runs; top score 105 not out; average 96.8. His century came in the match at Kennington against Great Chart and together with Jack Owen (who made 53) Liam put on 166 for the first wicket before both batsmen retired. Kennington were still not finished as Duncan McKay (23) and Will Spain (24) added a further 49 runs without being parted for Kennington to finish on 215 for no wicket in their 20 overs.

Liam has appeared regularly for the club first eleven, including in the league team, and, to date, has made more of a mark with his off-spin than with the bat, though his first 50 (68) came in the match against Mersham in August 2003. He already has over 100 wickets (being the youngest to achieve that milestone aged 13 years 10 months) with a best of 6 for 27 against Walmer. Clearly a player of Liam's talent will be difficult for Kennington to hang on to and only his somewhat ponderous fielding might hold him back from playing at the highest level.

But Kennington junior cricket is certainly not entirely dominated by Liam. In 2003 the most successful of the junior teams was the under 16s who won the league title. The mainstays of the side, and two more who have found a regular slot in the senior team, were Chris Watts and Alan Hart. Chris is as technically correct a batsman as Kennington have produced whose main current weakness is a tendency to get frustrated when he is not scoring quickly enough. Nevertheless he has already produced a number of fine innings for the club, and a couple against us when the opposition have been short (such as a stubborn 41 for Mersham-le-Hatch). He currently has over 1,000 runs for the club with an average above 22 and a top score of 80 not out.

Alan Hart is an all rounder whose bowling, from a classical action of great economy, is getting quicker and quicker. On the right day and on the right pitch he can produce significant pace and bounce and unsettle the best players. His huge improvement with the ball was recognised in 2003 when he was selected for the Kent under-16 side. His batting too is increasing in maturity and he should reach the 'double' of 1,000 runs and 100 wickets early in the 2004 season, and become the youngest player to achieve this goal. Alan is also an IT 'wizard' and was responsible for the birth, in 2003, of the club's website - KenningtonCC.com. Alan, together with Ollie Finch and Adam Carter, has also begun coaching the younger members of the club giving Kennington a distinctly youthful aspect to its coaching as well as its playing personnel.

With such outstanding young players Kennington embarked on a policy of giving them as much opportunity as possible at senior level. Hence the 2003 league side often contained two 13-year-olds, three 16-year-olds and a couple more under 20. Though this inevitably led to a decline in league position for the present the experience these players are building up should pay dividends for the future.

The final confirmation of Kennington's youth policy came in the close season when Tim Branchett, at 17, was elected club vice-captain, the youngest (by two years) to hold such a position.



Another innovation in 2003 was a 6-a-side Competition for which there was a good turnout



6-a-Side Competition Winners
Rear: Gary Hoad; James Flavell; Jagger Finch
Front: Josh Last; Nathan Last; Robert Hoad

AFTERWORD

"Village cricket, just like life, is not what it used to be, but what is? ... We view village cricket through a sepia tint, deluding ourselves that the rustic farm labourer still hits the wily parson's leg-breaks into the next parish, that foaming tankards of ale are quaffed with the opposition, as they graciously acknowledge in the idyllic pub on the green that you were better on the day. Village cricket still retains its chocolate-box appeal because we need its escapist quality as we grapple during the week with profit margins, rapacious middle men, the obtuse procrastinations at head office or the bureaucrats intent on making our lives less fulfilling. We need our fix from the needle of fantasy, otherwise the utilitarian side of life holds sway. Despite all reservations, village green cricket remains the real version of our summer game, a rich seam of rural culture, a solid bulwark against a world that is moving too frenetically and in a country which is shrinking alarmingly."

Patrick Murphy, *The Rothmans Book of Village Cricket*, p 25.

"A cricket team is one the heirs of the primitive hunting band, and the pleasures of mutual help, of a campaign that results in the climax of a kill, of planning that comes right and of supreme effort from all, are deep, almost instinctual sources of human satisfaction."

Mike Brearley, *Phoenix From the Ashes*, p 155.

Over the years the social composition of Kennington Cricket Club has inevitably changed. We saw that back in the nineteenth century the team was drawn mainly from the upper-working and middle classes and though this is broadly the case today the actual professions of the players reflect the social changes that have taken place in the interim. In the twenty-first century those working in the service sector predominate. Several current players commute daily to the City of London (or even commute from London to Kennington to play), another group are schoolteachers there are sales managers, a research chemist, company directors, a graphic designer and a number of school and university students.

Compared to when the club was first founded proportionally far fewer of Kennington's inhabitants are connected with the cricket club but it still has a vital role to play in village life. Local schools use the ground free and its changing and social facilities shared by the Football club, especially its junior section.

In a rapidly expanding town that is the gateway to Europe, open space is at a premium and Kennington's ground is a vital amenity. But does cricket itself still retain any social significance or is it, as some people would have us believe, outdated and irrelevant?

My belief is that team games in general and cricket in particular can be of tremendous benefit, especially today. Many people are growing up outside traditional family structures and yet there is a basic human need to feel part of a group.

With the family in decline there is an increasing temptation for youngsters to turn to gangs or other socially destructive behaviour to satisfy their need to feel solidarity and acceptance. The sports team can provide just that solidarity and group identification without anti-social side effects. Indeed being part of a team teaches a number of positive social skills: co-operation and organisation, leadership without dictatorship, competitiveness on the field and camaraderie off it. And no team sport is more effective in this than cricket. Unlike many games you do not

have to be physically strong or tall to be a useful player. Every physical type, from Sunil Gavaskar to Joel Garner, can become a great cricketer. It can be played equally well by boys and girls, together up to a certain age, and Kennington have encouraged this trend by playing women in the team and having them as opponents. Cricket is also the only major sport that is an important part of the culture of Britain's major ethnic minorities and, as such, can also play a vital role in improving racial and cultural relations.

In these ways cricket, it could be argued, will be even more important in the 21st century than it was when William Burton, Tom Hobday, Jimmy Welldon and Albert Kinross played the game.

Yes, it is certainly not the same. I'm sure that even the players of forty years ago would have difficulty recognising today's helmeted batsmen and players sporting coloured, numbered shirts diving and sliding in the field as representing the team they played for. But is cricket, as many would have us believe, worse or more ill mannered?

Just look back in cricket history and you'll find copious references to bad behaviour. The riots at matches in the eighteenth century; the ludicrous gamesmanship of Lord Frederick Beauclerk; the rather more 'acceptable' stretching of the laws indulged in by W.G.Grace. Even the most 'gentlemanly' cricketer in its (supposedly) most noble period, C.B.Fry, was not averse to smashing the stumps out of the ground when on the receiving end of a poor umpiring decision!

So poor behaviour on the cricket field has probably been there the whole time. The Victorian belief in cricket as an almost

divine incarnation was always a romantic exaggeration.

Does this mean my remarks on the values of cricket are also no more than the exaggerations of an enthusiast? I don't think so. What is clear is that cricket's many positive aspects can only work within the wider context of the society in which the game is being played. After all, cricket is very different in Kennington from, say, Mumbai, Kingston or, even, Sydney.

If you look at cricket from this perspective what you see is not a game that is worse (or better) today than it was 20, 30 or 100 years ago you see one that is, simply, different. To pretend that a sport can continue unchanged, in a vacuum, whilst the world outside changes dramatically is a dangerous delusion and one that, if taken to extremes, would quickly spell the complete demise of the game.

I prefer to be optimistic, to believe that cricket can continue to change and adapt, without relinquishing its positive aspects. And watching Kennington's young players of 2003 I am clear in my mind that William, Tom, Jimmy, Albert, Jack Gilham, Twiz Grant and the rest, both conventional and unconventional, would be proud and content that they represent the very best traditions of the club they loved.

Peter Grant
Upper Norwood, April 2004

APPENDIX

GOAL RUNNING

This, now defunct, sport was extremely popular in the Ashford area certainly from the mid-nineteenth century (and probably much earlier) until the 1920s when, no doubt under pressure from more universal pastimes, it went into decline and appears not to have survived World War 2. It was unique to East Kent, never penetrating into Sussex or even west of the Medway. The matches were generally played on Saturday evenings in the summer and attracted large, and sometimes drunken, crowds. It was, apparently their duty to encourage, deride or taunt the participants who themselves took every opportunity to mock and make insolent gestures at their opponents. Often spectators were 'roped in' to make up the numbers, as Harvey Darton observed:

"The conscripted drunken spectator – and that he could do it at all was one of the wonders – leapt like a March hare, and twisted himself, and danced, and mocked, and made noises unceasingly. And he did it like the rest, for something nearer ninety minutes than sixty. To see old Pickey Martin (then sixty) in his shirt sleeves, with bare feet and a bowler hat..... lifting his knees high, and cocking snooks, and saying things (which cannot be printed) to men he had known through most of the six decades, was an education in the meaning of the word 'game'." [1]

It seems that there were no written rules but that the method of playing was taught by one generation to the next and so it was not surprising that there were slight variations from one district to another. There was not even a fixed number of players per team, it was only essential that each side had the same number. Basically goal running was a more sophisticated version of the children's game of 'tag' or 'touch' but though it was, in essence, quite simple the best exponents required:

"Not only fleetness of foot, but also an alert mind to employ strategy in the chase, and a strong pair of lungs to stand the strain of twenty minutes' continuous running." [2]

The following description is taken from the version of goal running as it was played on the Romney Marsh (one of its strongholds).

The playing area is rectangular and marked with either lines or corner flags. On each goal line are two more flags – the point flag and the goal flag. A referee controls the game with a whistle. The two teams start by standing behind their respective goal lines. When everyone is in position the referee starts the game by a blast on the whistle and waves his arm to one goal or the other. The leading man in the team indicated runs out in the direction of his opponents' goal line. As soon as he leaves his position the first man on the opposing team can leave his position in order to intercept him.

The object of each man is to make either a Point or a Stroke. To make a Point (or goal) the man must pass between his opponents' goal flag and point flag and return to his own goal uncaught. Two umpires who stand on the half way line record the points. To make a stroke a runner has to catch the opposing player who has started just ahead of himself. When a stroke is caught the referee stops the game and all players return to their goals before the game recommences. Players cannot be caught if they cross the boundary (the side lines or outside the goal/point flags) but if they do they have to return to their goal, unable to score a point.

As runners turn their opponents point flags and reach home, they take their places to go out again. The running is kept up continuously for 20 minutes, when the referee blows for an interval. The teams change ends and there is another period of 20 minutes running.

Possibly the closest existing equivalent to the game would be the Indian sport of Kabbadi though this involves having to lift an opponent off the ground and doesn't seem so closely identified with drinking!

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NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

- [1] Quoted in Michael Down, *Is It Cricket?*, p 20.
- [2] Ibid p 11.

CHAPTER TWO

- [1] Charles Igglesden, *A Saunter Through Kent With Pen and Pencil, Volume 1*, p 11-12.
- [2] Boundary redefined. Now includes the wards of Kennington Lees, Spearpoint, Bockhanger and Bybrook. Without Bybrook the figures for 1981 and 1991 would be 6,087 and 6,975 respectively.
- [3] Boundary redefined. Now includes the wards of Kennington (2,321); Little Burton Farm (2,125); Bybrook (2,629) and Bockhanger (2,468). The redefinitions reflect the growth of new housing estates first at Bybrook in the 1960s, then Bockhanger in the 1970s and, most recently, at Little Burton Farm.
- [4] Rev E.B.Lewis, *St Mary's Church Kennington*.

CHAPTER THREE

- [1] J.Goulstone, *Early Club and Village Cricket*.
- [2] H.T.Waghorn, *The Dawn of Cricket*.
- [3] G.B.Buckley, *Fresh Light on Eighteenth Century Cricket*.
- [4] & [5] Ibid.
- [6] H.T.Waghorn, *Cricket Scores, Notes Etc From 1730-1773*.
- [7] Waghorn, *The Dawn of Cricket*.

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- [1] *Kentish Gazette*, 5 July, 1836.
- [2] *Kentish Gazette*, 19 August, 1844.
- [3] A.Haygarth, *Lillywhite's Scores and Biographies*, Volume III.

CHAPTER FIVE

- [1] Quoted in John Ford, *Cricket: A Social History 1700-1835*, pp 27-28.
- [2] Charles Igglesden, *A Saunter through Kent with Pen and Pencil*, Volume XXV, p 54.
- [3] E.Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, Volume VII, p 546.
- [4] G.E.Mingay, *Rural Life in Victorian England*, p 97.

[5] Quoted by Michael Winstanley, *Nineteenth Century Friendly Societies in Bygone Kent*, Volume III, p 218.

[6] *Kentish Gazette*, 15 June, 1869.

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[1] *Kentish Express*, 15 June, 1867.

[2] *Kentish Express*, 8 August, 1868.

[3] *Kentish Express*, 26 June, 1865.

[4] *Kentish Express*, 5 June, 1869.

[5] *Kentish Express*, 3 September, 1864.

[6] These notes have been compiled from Bailey, Thorne and Wynne-Thomas, *Who's Who of Cricketers* and Lord Harris, *The History of Kent County Cricket*.

[7] *A Saunter through Kent with Pen and Pencil*, Volume I.

CHAPTER SEVEN

[1] Haygarth, Volume XIII, p 345.

[2] J.E.C.Weldon was a most interesting character. A fellow of King's College, Cambridge, he followed his academic career by becoming Bishop of Calcutta and, but for certain doctrinal idiosyncrasies, may well have become Archbishop of Canterbury. Instead he was, in the words of J.A.Mangan, "shunted into an ecclesiastical siding" as Dean of Manchester. Mangan's two excellent books, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* and *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, devote quite considerable space to J.E.C. Mangan calls him "a romancer infatuated with the nobility of games and the related glory of the Empire" and "the public school headmasters' most eloquent, persistent and opinionated spokesman on the schools and imperialism." He was a keen supporter of cricket and travelled with 'Plum' Warner's team to Australia in 1903-04. He wrote the introduction to Warner's book, *How We Recovered the Ashes*, regarding the trip almost as a religious crusade, remarking of the voyage that:

"We played our games with patience and fairness.... We did not wholly forget that we were Englishmen and Englishwomen representative of the greatest Empire under heaven. And Sunday by Sunday we met on the quarter-deck or in the saloon for divine service as a consecration of our voyage in the sight of the Most High."

And they say that it is only today that we treat sport too seriously!
Quoted in *The Games Ethic and Imperialism*, p 39.

[3] T.W.Bamford, *The Rise of the Public Schools*, p 184.

[4] Septimus Rivington, *The History of Tonbridge School*.

[5] Extracts from D.C.Somervell, *A History of Tonbridge School*.

[6] *Kentish Express*, 18 May, 1861.

[7] *Kentish Gazette*, 13 August, 1867.

[8] Lord Harris, *The History of Kent Cricket*.

[9] Haygarth, Volume X, p 165.

- [10] W.J.Ford, *A History of the Cambridge University Cricket Club*.
- [11] Michael Craze, *A History of Felsted School*.
- [12] *Kentish Express*, 12 February, 1927.

CHAPTER EIGHT

- [1] Letter to Alec Robinson, 5 February, 1957.

CHAPTER NINE

- [1] *The Times*, 26 September, 1899.
- [2] Irving Rosenwater, *Sir Donald Bradman – A Biography*, p 151.

CHAPTER TEN

- [1] From, *The Atlantic Monthly*, November 1920.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

- [1] *Kentish Express*, 23 July, 1939.

APPENDIX

- [1] Harvey Darton, *A Parcel of Kent*, 1924; quoted in Robert H. Goodsall, *A Kentish Patchwork*, p 103.
- [2] *Kent Messenger*, 14 July, 1923.



The sun sets over Ulley Road

"And that, gentlemen, concludes the entertainment for the day."

Alex Skelding, umpire, catchphrase