

WILLOUGHBY CRICKET CLUB

FOUNDED 1901 - Even this opening statement has an air of mystery surrounding it - as it is almost certain that there was a Club in being long before 1901.

Some knowledgeable elder statesmen of the village have assured me that during the 1880's and 1890's there were a number of Vicars who ran their own teams to play games of Cricket against local village opposition.

The evidence is however, somewhat sketchy although it has always been understood by the present Club Chairman, Sidney Ivens, that from conversations with his father and uncle that the games were played in a field to the southeast of the present vicarage grounds and to the experienced eye there is definitely a strip of shorter grass some 25 yds. by 2 yds. still in evidence 'today.

Perhaps I might suggest that the official Society photographer accompanies Mr. Ivens and myself to the appointed spot and we record this fact at least in the Society annals, just in case documentary evidence comes to light to support this in the future.

'The evidence to support "Founded 1901" however is very certain the Club's original Minute Book in "Which the HONORARY SECRETARY wrote:-

- (1). It was unanimously agreed that a Club be formed and that a subscription of One Shilling and sixpence be the charge per year.
- (2). The appointed Secretary (A. J. Lowke) to arrange matches with neighbouring villages at his discretion so as to fit in at times when a team could be called together.

Gentlemen present on this illustrious occasion in the Reading Room on Lady Day, 25th March, 1901, were -

Messrs. A. Hall, W. Ivens, G. Malin, F. Ivens, J. Malin and A. J. Lowke.

HISTORY

The Club functioned quite well until 1906 and possibly to 1910, but there are no recorded minutes or records for this period.

The one thing that is certain is that 'The Green' (the present Club ground.) was used from 1901 to 1910 for Cricket, but early in 1911 the whole ground. was taken over for village allotments. Evidence of this is still present today as the Ground is riddled with old land drains where individual allotment holders laid their own drains - this would be fine if the drains had continued to run, but alas when 'The Green' reverted agricultural purposes sometime in the 1920's, the drains fell into disuse.

In 1919 there was a big revival of interest mainly under the leadership of Bobby Holt, an agricultural student who unfortunately lived in the village for only a short time.

Socials were organised for the first time in 1924 when the entertainment was provided by the members who also contributed 2 pence per week throughout the year toward the overhead costs.

In 1928 a new innovation - League Cricket - it only lasted 5 years but during this period Willoughby acquitted themselves well and proved to be one of the best teams in Rugby and District.

Foot and Mouth Disease has caused the Club to change grounds on no fewer than three occasions - 1924 - 1932 - 1952 - all the 11 removals being from the Big Ground" (the present field used by the Football Club).

The first Pavilion was purchased in 1936 at the cost of £18.00 when the Club used Brick Hill field - this wooden structure was sold in 1947 and is still in use in the village to this day.

In 1942 the Club again lapsed due to the Second World War until 1947 when the Club again reformed and returned to Big Ground where it continued until 1952.

In 1953 the Club moved back to its present home - "The Green" - Pye Court for the second time in it's history.

Also in 1953 under the auspices of Mr. Tom Bates, President, of the Club and owner of Willoughby House - a new Pavilion was built at a cost of £90.00 to the Club (just about the total material cost). The playing square measuring some 600 square yards, was completely levelled and re-turfed on a base of red shale - an action which in itself is probably the reason why 25 years later the Willoughby Club is renowned for its playing area.

By 1960 the Club Committee under the Chairmanship of Sidney Ivens had become very concerned at the worsening financial position. The Club was not improving as had been hoped, annual expenditure was running at £100.00 per annum, but total receipts fell far short of this figure"

It was then suggested by two Committee members, FRANK HALLAM and ERIC PALMER, that they would be prepared to try and organise a Weekly Tote; the success of this has been staggering and all credit must go to these two members and the other collectors who have continued the Tote to the present day.

The ensuing wealth has enabled many improvements to be carried out, the Club is said to be one of the finest in the area.

The Club is a member of the Midland Club Cricket Conference which is a midlands based organisation whose main objects are:-

- (1). To foster and maintain Club Cricket in the midlands.
- (2). To set up and control an organised and efficient system of inter-communication between clubs affiliated to "The Conference" to mutual advantage.

We have used this service to full advantage since 1962.

In 1901 the Batting Averages were won by Thomas Hall Esq. and a special prize of 5/- was awarded, a concert was held in the School Room on 24th January, 1902 and £3.00 was raised for Club funds. the first groundsmen were appointed in 1902 - T. DODD and F. IVENS - at a cost of 1s 8d. per match.

By 1909 away matches had become quite commonplace and a brake was hired presumably for the season - at a fee of 2 guineas. The kit bill for the season amounted to £3. 7. 9. (compare that with this year £150.00).

In 1920 Bobby Holt was, by all accounts, quite a character, an example of his enthusiasm was that after the wicket had been prepared on a Friday evening for

the Saturday afternoon match, he personally arranged for someone to guard the wicket against straying cattle on the Saturday morning.

Even in these early times, catering was arranged by Mrs. J. Hancock, "Church View" and transported to 'Big Ground' together with the tea brewed in an urn made by the late Fred Hancock.

When all-day matches were held special arrangements were made and all catering was carried out in the Reading Room.

In 1923 two teams were operated, but although no reason appears, one can only assume that the difficulties normally experienced with operating two sides in a small village caused the idea to be dropped in 1924.

In 1924 a collection was made in the village for Club funds - anyone giving donations were made Honorary Members.

Fixture Cards and the purchase of table cloths also appear for the first time in 1924.

In 1925 it was decided to open the Club to anyone - subject to Committee approval - with minor adjustments, a practice still used today.

In 1930 the players presented their Scorer - :Mrs. Hilda Jarvis - with an engraved Silver teapot in commemoration of her services to the Club. The Teapot is still a treasured possession to this day.

In 1932 Mr. C. Jarvis began his long association with the Club as Groundsman having played for the Club since 1920.

After the 1932 Season a Sportsmans Service was organised by the Secretary F. W. Hancock - in St. Nicholas Church on 20th November - when the Preacher was the Canon J. H. Parsons, the Warwickshire Cricketer - the collection went to the Sportsman's Bed Fund.

OFFICISRS - We have a reputation long serving officials -

PRESIDENTS-	Chas. Hall'	1929 - 1944
	J. Bates	1951 - 1958
	E. Shears	1959 - 1969
	P. H. Sheaf	1970 - 1978
SECRETARYS	F. W. Hancock	1925 - 1946
	P. W. Green	1950 - 1959
	F. L. Mitchell	1960 - 1978
MATCH SECRETARY	P. W. Green	1948 - 1978
CAPTAINS	G. H. Hancock	1927 - 1932
	F. Hallam	1962 - 1966
		1969 - 1972
		1976 - 1978
TREASURERS	A. Hall	1910 - 1923

R. S. Martin	1924 - 1938
J. W. Hall	1939 - 1964
E. C. Palmer	1965 - 1978

PLAYING RECORD

In 78 years Willoughby have played 1440 matches - Won 649 - Lost 576 Drawn 203 - Tied 12 - and have scored 118,431 runs.

During the period of League Cricket 1928 - 1932 quite outstanding successes came Willoughby's way.

Apart from being relegated in 1928, along with the Adult School - 1929 the Club finished ,3rd in Section 'B'.

1930 -- Won Section 'B' and qualified to meet the leaders of Section 'A' for the John Baird Cup - we lost - but were presented with the runners-up Baird Shield by Canon J. H. Parsons - Warwickshire - who also presented Albert Hancock (Willoughby) with a "mounted" ball for his outstanding performances during that season - at a Social Evening that followed Messrs. J. F. and G. Hancock gave a Handbell recital.

1931 - One section only - Willoughby finished 4th.

1932 - Willoughby won the League at last. the Sir John Baird Cup was presented by R. B. S. Wyatt the Warwickshire and England Captain at a "Smoker" held at the Peacock Inn, Newbold Road, Rugby.

? Where is the Cup now ?

The highest score ever .made by a Willoughby team was 258 - 4. versus Rowington in the National Village Championship on Sunday, 28th May, 1978.

1970 was the best playing record ever when out of a total of 43 matches played, only 4 matches were lost.

OUTSTANDING PLAYERS

One can only go from the Club records on this subject.

Few members have in fact represented the district -

Albert and George Hancock played for "The Rest" v "The Champions" in a Rugby League final in 1930. The Rest won this match quite decisively - Albert Hancock scoring 24 runs and claiming .5 wickets for 10 runs.

Les Kemp played for Rugby Select XI v G.E.C., Rugby, on the occasion of G.E.C.'s centenary in the 1977 Season.

Alphabetically a number of players are worthy of mention -

J. H. (Jim) Hall- during 30 years association with the Club took over .500 wickets.

Albert Hancock - in 12 seasons scored 1200 runs and took 316 wickets - a quite remarkable record considering the number of matches played in the 1930' s.

Fred Hancock- although having scored over 1000 runs and taken 400 wickets this player will always be remembered for one outstanding achievement - that of taking all 10 wickets for 15 runs against Ashby-St.- Ledgers on 26th June, 1926 - and Willoughby lost the match.

Lea Kemp - a quite phenomenal record so far having scored 10434 runs in .535 innings and taken 609 wickets in 2700 Overs and just for good measure 211 catches.

Eric Palmer - in a 30 year association with the club Eric has scored 4117 from 299 innings and taken 1079 wickets in 3550 overs. Eric's considerable playing ability has been complemented by his services to the club as Treasurer - a position he has held continuously for the past 14 years.

Ken Rowland - The Club has always possessed good all-rounders in the side, in fact, it is considered essential in the majority of village teams.

Debatably Willoughby has one of the most consistent of all local cricketers in Ken Rowland. In his 21 year association with the club Ken has scored 12,349 runs in 603 innings and taken 1359 wickets from 4218 overs, couple with these figures his magnificent fielding and you can draw your own conclusions.

In 1962 the Club sponsored a Six-a.-6ide Tournament as part of the Coventry Cathedral Festival celebrations, it was a great sporting success.

In 1963 we decided to launch what has now become an institution not only in our own village but among all the clubs who are regularly invited to attend.

Our earliest Patron, Mr. T. J. Bates, presented a Rose Bowl for perpetual competition in this event which is heavily sponsored by friends of the Club which ensures a competitive edge to the days proceedings.

During ::September, 1963, a Club Single Wicket Championship was organised for the first time, this has proved a most popular event among Club members especially as the Club Chairman - S. G. Ivens - sponsored a Rose Bowl for perpetual competition.

In 1976 another idea was launched - an Inter-Club competition between clubs already established on the Willoughby Fixture list. The principle of this competition is that each fixture between the selected clubs is a '40 over' match the result of which counts on a points system to a Mini-League. A Silver Salver was presented for competition in this event by two former members Peter Bell and Richard Yates.

In 1977 the Club were instrumental in joining 4 other Rugby and District clubs and forming the Avon Youth League - the outcome of this fore-sight will be seen in the coming years. The League caters for boys under 18 and is based on a 20 over match and the points gained go toward winning the Annual Shield. Willoughby won the League in 1977.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Annual Social.- The first known Social event apart from fund-raising efforts was in 1924.

The idea of these Socials was a village get-together for entertainment provided by the members in the form of plays - charades - sketches and even monologues.

These events were continuous until 1964 when due to increasing difficulty in getting members to take part they had to be discontinued.

DANCES - Since the End-of-Season Dance held in 1964, two dances have been organised annually.

The First Ball is held in mid-April and the .End-of-Season dance in mid October both events are a sell-out and are social as well as financial successes •

.ANNUAL DINNER- in 1961 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Club, a Dinner was organised at the Fleur-de-Lys Woodford Hall for the gentlemen of the Club. This event has probably become one of the greatest of all institutions within the club because of all the mystique which surrounds this gentlemen only' preserve. It takes place on the last Friday evening in January each year when all the Club Trophies (now numbering 9) are presented with all due ceremony.

CLUB TOUR- yet another institution. commenced in 1965 a weekend tour with so many happy memories for the members ! who take part.

The first tours were to the Wallingford area of the Thames valley, but in 1975 - 1977 the tour area was switched to Long button, Lincolnshire. In 1978, however, we toured in the Forest of Dean which proved to be most popular attracting a considerable number of wives to the touring party of 31.

BOXING DAY MATCH

In 1971 another idea was formulated into reality that of a completely out-of-season match on Boxing Day.

This annual event now takes place each :festive Season 10.30 start 15 over match when many spectators attend to watch those "flannelled fools" perform the ritual of a winter cricket match whilst "taking-the-waters" in the comfort of the Pavilion.

CLUB ASSETS

The Club's assets as they stand today can be credited initially to the efforts of one man - Mr. T. J. Bates - who provided the funds to sponsor the Pavilion erected in 1953.

The Club has never looked back since that time; it has always been the policy of successive Committees to obtain maximum cricketing enjoyment - which always involves the purchase of new equipment - whilst maintaining a comparatively low subscription.

'The 1964 Club Committee pledged themselves to consolidating the financial position for the coming years - the outcome of this pledge was a very much improved financial stability which enabled the Club to make definite plans for the future. In 1968, after considerable investigation of the legal aspects, the Club opened a Bar - later christened The Tavern. This added facility was greatly appreciated by all members and opposition alike and also provided the Club with a great boost financially.

In the Autumn of 1973 the owner of The Green died Suddenly and the future of the Cricket Club was very much in the balance.

Our Chairman Mr. S. Ivens was instrumental in guiding the Club Secretary of the day in his quest to make contact with the new Executors of the Estate.

The need for secrecy can probably best be illustrated by the fact that 3 Club Committee meetings held during this period were convened in a private house outside the village. If the public at large and builders in particular had discovered that "The Green" was :for sale the Club would have found itself in a spiralling market in which they could not compete.

However, after quite brief negotiations the Club were able to make an offer to the Executors which was agreed by return of post - at last - "The Green" was owned by the Club and our worst fears were over. the loans and donations made by Club members were absolutely magnificent - 44 members turned up to the Extraordinary General Meeting called to announce the result of the secret negotiations which in itself showed the genuine interest in the Club's future.

In March, 1974, at the Ivy House Farm sale held on Mr. S. Ivens retirement the Club successfully acquired a Tractor and later the same year purchased a good set of Ransome Gang Mowers from Southam Council.

In December, 1974, a tree planting scheme was launched by the Secretary and within 3 months some 50 trees had been donated by Club members. At the last count 74 trees have been planted. at "The Green" in the past 4 years.

Following the successful Tree planting the friends of Willoughby Cricket Club" again rallied to the cause when new seating was discussed and within 6 months 6 new Burma Teak Seats had been donated most generously.

In 1976 the infilling of the front porch of the original Pavilion to make our new Long Room where spectators and players can view the proceedings behind glass - what luxury compared with 1901.

VILLAGE AND CLUB

The strongest possible association has always been maintained between the Club and the village, many times during the clubs history the village has come to the rescue when organised efforts and fund-raising schemes have been launched.

As already stated - even of recent times - Trees - Seats have all been achieved with the assistance of the villagers of Willoughby.

The Club for its part has always represented the village on and off the field of play and is most proud of its close links with the local people.

The village can always be assured that with the competitive successes of recent years no longer can un-educated outsiders question the whereabouts or indeed the existence Willoughby.

NOVEMBER 1978.