

# **A Brief History of Ashford Cricket Club December 2000**

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## **1 The Origins**

To compile a complete history of Ashford Cricket Club from its origins in 1855 to the present day is beyond the power of any living member and even if it were not, the space available here would be totally inadequate for the task. The following screed is therefore, of necessity, rather sketchy. There has been no formal record of statistics kept by the Club over the years so information contained in this booklet has been collated from a number of sources and may be incomplete. The first record of Ashford Cricket Club is contained in the balance sheet of the Ashford and Littleton Cricket Club for Season 1855, found in "Ashford Charities Accounts" for 1856 published by the Vicar and Churchwardens. The fact that there is no "balance brought forward from 1855" indicates the first season of a new club.

The next traces of the club, to the best of knowledge, were found in old score books of the Shepperton Cricket Club, which record matches played between the two clubs on the 19th August, 1884, and 4th August, 1885. Some Ashford players in these matches were:- Horsley Woods (later editor of the "West Middlesex Times"), E. H. Bennet (Clerk of the Parish Council), Cornelius Lockington (Schoolmaster) and his son, Stacey, and Harry ("Granfer") Holland, all well-known members of the community.

Although the date is unknown, it is understood that Ashford Cricket Club beat an "All England XI" during its early years in a match played at Iver.

## **2 Pre 1914**

About the turn of the century the Club's ground was in a lane (now Parkland Road) off Clock House Lane, where Clifford Grove has since been constructed

and, presumably, it was about this time that the Club attracted the interest of Sir Charles Hawtrey, the famous actor, who lived at the Clock House. He subsequently loaned the Club the meadow opposite his house (then known as "The Rookery" and now the present recreation ground) and this ground was used in association with the Ashford Ramblers Cricket Club, a team formed by youngsters from Ashford schools, until 1907. Sir Charles himself played occasionally, as also did Stephen Phillips, the poet-actor-playwright, also an Ashford resident. In an article on the life of Stephen Phillips in a weekly magazine in July, 1950, Clifford Bax wrote "Cricket was the only game for which he much cared and for some seasons he went in first (with Charles Hawtrey) for Ashford, Middlesex."

Other Ashford residents about this time were F M M Carlisle (Oxford University) and C J Burnup (Kent).

For several years the Club was captained by A H ("Ben") Marriott, for 13 years captain of Kingston Rugby Club, and among his contemporaries were: J L Bell, H M Snowdon, J F Pott, Harry Webb, Harry Wood (still a member in 1955), A Trewin, W Norman, W J P Dodgson, W Allingham, C Neave, W H Avis, C E Ewer and the Club's professional - Alexander. Allingham was the Club's first life member and had kept wicket for Middlesex 2nd XI. Other notable players from this era were F Kendall, the son of 'Sammy', Alexander the professional, Bob Benn, Raymond Cook (a fine slow bowler) and John Pott who continued playing until he was over 70 years old.

Season 1907 saw the Club on another new ground - Farmer Cook's field between the Royal Hart Hotel and the Railway, where Knapp Road, the Post Office and the old Echelford School (now Clarendon Road School) now are.

Alexander had gone and the new groundsman, introduced by Ben Marriott, was Sammy Kendall, who proved to be a worker and quite a club character and was later elected a Life Member.

The wicket here was generally acknowledged to be one of the best in these parts and the table was fenced in after every match. The outfield was still used for cattle grazing and the generous sprinkling of "cowpads" was occasionally rather inconvenient!

It was at "Cooksfield" that Ashford gained one of their greatest victories, when they defeated a strong M.C.C. side which included such cricketing stars as Hearne, Mussell, Mignar (Middlesex C.C.C.), Wainwright (Yorkshire), Abel (Surrey) and J R Mason (Kent).

During the Club's ten-year tenancy of the ground, personalities on the playing strength, in addition to Trewin, Pott and Webb mentioned above, were: Raymond Cook, Harold Lintott, the brothers Bill and Bob Benn, the inimitable Harry Hurrell, F Wootton and Claud Hanbury. Alfred Trewin was in his heyday as a bowler and his out-swingers breaking back earned him plenty of wickets. A visitor to the ground about 1908 in a Cricket Week match, playing for Marriott's XI was Tom Richardson, the one-time Surrey and England fast bowler, although he had retired from serious cricket then.

Many stirring games were played against Hounslow, Vampires, Egham & Thorpe and War Office among others. On several occasions Egham and Thorpe included P R May (Cambridge University and Surrey fast bowler) in their side and sticking plaster was in great demand among the Ashford batsmen!

Other grand Cricketers that spring to mind in those early days were, C.N. Dodgson, H.G. Lee, Jerry Austin (a great bowler), Alf Trewin, Billy Ewer and a trio of sportsmen who continued playing for some years, C. Hanbury, Harry Hurrell

(specialist in big hits) and Arthur Johnson.

In 1912 a group of far-sighted sportsmen prominent among whom was A H Marriott, formed the Ashford Athletic Association (the AAA was the forerunner of Ashford Sports Club, Ltd.) and acquired the freehold of the Woodthorpe Road ground and how grateful present-day members should feel towards these men! The pavilion, previously used by Dulwich Hamlets F.C. was erected in the same year and the ground was first used by Ashford Swifts F.C. - A H Marriott's particular "baby" - in 1912/13 and 13/14.

### **3 1914 - 1918**

The Club was kept going through the dark years of 1914-18 by a few stalwarts who were not on service, foremost amongst whom were Harry Webb, John Pott and Alfred Trewin, so that when 1919 came round all the facilities were available to resume cricket on the pre-war scale.

In 1916, the Cricket Club received notice that their tenancy of Cooksfield must cease at the end of the season. Mr Cook required the meadow for his own use and therefore the Cricket Club were a club without a playing pitch. A special meeting was called to discuss the matter and to decide what steps should be taken to obtain an alternative ground. It was agreed that an approach should be made to the Ashford Athletic Association and subsequently an offer was made to rent their Woodthorpe Road ground for the 1917 season. Eventually, after several meetings with the AAA, a rent of £20 was agreed and matches were first played there during the 1917 season. The old pavilion at Cooksfield was sold to Mr Lapworth in 1916 while the Tea Tent and surrounding wooden fence were sold to Mr Laycock. The pavilion was re-erected on the towpath at Shepperton opposite the lock and used by Mr Lapworth and his family as a weekend retreat. The Folly, as it was named, remained virtually intact until 1968/69 when the current owner, Mr Eustace grandson of Mr Lapworth, rebuilt the house but the pavilion floor remains intact, the floorboards having been reversed when relaid originally so that they presented a smooth surface, not the rough surface created by the passage of generations of studded cricket boots. In addition, there are some areas of the original studded outer walls hiding behind the new plasterboard decorations. Mr Eustace used to accompany his uncle, Leslie Beeching (umpire and direct descendant of Beeching Bros, of Great Yarmouth, builders of the first self-righting lifeboat) and cousin Ernest (scorer) to Ashford Cricket Club for Sunday matches in the Thirties.

About this time three members of the Club took part in a cricket match "Somewhere in France", all appearing for Other Ranks v Officers and the ball used in the match was supplied by A.C.C.

After the 1914-18 War the Club gave a wonderful "Welcome Home" to its ex-Service members by entertaining them to lunch and a cricket match on each of the two Bank Holidays and during the August Monday match every ex-Service member was presented with a bat by the President, Mr Leonard Mossop (later His Honour Judge Mossop).

### **4 Between the Wars**

At the close of the First World War the Club joined the London and Southern Counties Club Cricket Conference and have been in membership ever since (now the Club Cricket Conference). With a big influx of new members, it was found

possible to run two Saturday teams and a regular Wednesday side, as well as to resume the Annual Cricket Week.

On the subject of fixtures mention must be made of the following clubs who figured in our fixture list for 1920: Slough, Southall, Malden Wanderers, Boston Park, Kew, Teddington, Old Citizens, Hounslow, Hampton Wick and Richmond - a formidable list from any viewpoint.

The period between the wars, 1919-39, was so packed with incidents and personalities that it is impossible to cover it adequately. The Club were fortunate in having such an enthusiast as Harry Webb to lead them for the first few years after the War, until 1921. He continued to play until 1931 (scoring 92 not out against Twickenham as his swansong). H.E.Judd succeeded him as Captain and with his extensive knowledge and dignified personality, maintained the high reputation gained until he retired in 1934. His son, A.K.Judd, formerly a junior member of the Club, scored a century for Cambridge in the Centenary University match and afterwards played for Hampshire under Lord Tennyson. Wilfred Neave, who had understudied Judd for many years then took over the reins until 1937, when he had to relinquish the office owing to business reasons and R.H.

Thornhill was appointed skipper.

There were many excellent players in the Club during these years. The opening pair were R H "Twink" Thornhill and Jimmy G Geale who shared many an opening century partnership in the early days. Wally G Brocksom was at No. 3 followed by one of the Club's great all-rounders David E Bacon. Then came the Neave brothers Wilfred and Stanley, both good bats. Colin B Dixon, Billy H Weller later Bob T Chadwick and so many more. The bowling attack for years was opened by Jack W Bush and Arther Johnson, with David Bacon and Reg S Garland as variation change and of course A Jimmy Holland a good left armer; he was worth his place in the team as a cover point alone, the brilliance of his catches and number of run-outs from his swift returns were expected.

The following outstanding names also appeared in the Club's list of playing members during this time. J W Paget, E F Sharp, H (Tubby) Hall, M G Blundell, S J Dye, S C Shattock, H Roll, C T W Caffyn and R H Baker.

Memorable features of this period were the running between the wickets of the Neave brothers, the fielding at cover of Jimmy Holland, the exuberant batting of Colin Dixon, the all-round play of David Bacon, the all-out "never-give-up" bowling of Jack Bush, the batting of Wally Brocksom, the bowling of Reg. Garland and the keeping of Cecil Shattock?

Wally Brocksom was probably the best batsman the Club had during this time (ie. since 1908). He played during seasons 1927-8 and 9, and in 1928 he totalled 2011 runs, including five centuries, 98 and 80. On the 5th September in that year he scored 180 against R.A.F. Uxbridge and this is believed to be the highest individual score made on our ground. Mr Brocksom unfortunately left the club when he moved away from the area in 1930 to live in Shrewsbury.

To place the best bowler during the same period is rather difficult with names like Bush, Bacon and Blundell coming to mind, but Reg. Garland would probably be most people's choice. He could bowl leg breaks just fast enough through the air to prevent any undue liberties being taken. His retirement from the game through ill-health was a great loss to the Club.

Upon the subject of old opponents, Ashford Cricket Club have played Southall since 1919, although not with great regularity during more recent years. West Drayton have been regular opponents since 1925, except for the war years 1940-45, when they were out of circulation.

One match in particular deserves mention here and that was against the team brought to Ashford in 1925 by P F Warner and played for the benefit of Windsor Hospital. Warner's side included three England captains in himself, F T Mann and A W Carr, in addition to H L Dales, J Durston and F Price (Middlesex). Durston's bowling was too much for us and we were all out for just under 50. During lunch and most of the afternoon heavy rain fell, but Warner refused to give up hope. Eventually water was mopped up from the pitch with sacks and on a mud heap the visitors scored 80 for 7, Warner himself getting 28, and H Birch for Ashford taking 5 wickets for 25.

Another Charity match was arranged on September 30 1933 again in aid of Windsor Hospital. Mr Dudley Pope (Essex County Cricket Club) had offered to bring an eleven to Ashford when he attended the annual dinner earlier in the year. The match was to be against an Ashford District XVIII. The Ashford players selected to play in the match were: H Judd (capt), S Musk, J Bush, A Johnson, S Shattock, J Roll, J Geale, C Caffyn, N Neller, M Blundell and A Holland.

The Club's outfield was traditionally cut with a mower towed by a horse and driven by the groundsman. The club eventually purchased a motor mower in April 1935 at a cost of £18-0-0. This made a significant difference to the state of the ground and in particular the outfield. The motor mower proved to be a very valuable asset indeed.

The Sunday XI were formally incorporated into the Club at the AGM on 31 January 1936 and Mr C F W Caffyn was elected as captain. The meeting agreed to an increase in annual subscriptions to enable playing members to participate in Sunday cricket.

There were many others in the Club in those days who gave but got little in return. President George Hatcher ensured strict discipline within the Cricket Club and then there were the Directors of the Sports Club, one of whom was on duty in the Clubhouse each night; Charlie Wade, Harry Webb, Charles Butler, Col Rose and Kath Poulter the stewardess who by her very presence maintained order.

## **5 After 1945**

The Club's progress during post-war years is familiar history and with three elevens playing every Saturday and Sunday, a Devon tour, a Home Cricket Week and occasional matches for a Colts XI, there could be no possible doubt that conditions are flourishing at Woodthorpe Road. Among many notable names during immediate post-war years were: Skipper R H Thornhill (who joined the Club as a junior member in December, 1920), M G Blundell, L Beaumont, W F Hart and J D Ritchie.

At this great milestone in the history of the Club, it is fitting that we should remember those who have done so much in the past. During the previous 36 years only three men have held the office of President: His Honour Judge Mossop (7 years), Dr Sutherland (5 years) and the late George Hatcher (24 years).

Nothing that I can say here can improve upon what has already been said and written about our last President, whose recent death came as a tremendous blow to us all. He was indeed a President of whom the Club could rightly be proud and he, I know, was equally proud of his beloved Club.

During the same period it is notable that only four men have had the honour to Captain the Club: H Webb (3 years), H E Judd (13 years), W C Neave (6 years) and R H Thornhill (15 years). Among 2nd XI Captains S E Musk acted for 8 years. Honorary Secretaries during this period included Tom Thomas (5 years), Cecil

Caffyn (2 spells totalling 11 years) and Doug. Hudson (11 years). Reg. Miller was Hon. Treasurer for 4 years, Harry Webb (7 years), Arthur Musk (4 years), George Hatcher (5 years), Jimmy Holland (7 years) and Roland Hatcher who served for an incredible 32 years. Harold Lowe was 2nd XI Captain 3 years, Hon. Secretary 5 years, Auditor 8 years and has been a Life Member since 1939.

Other who have done good work for the Club, include those old 2nd XI stalwarts: Maurice Caffyn, Arthur and Albert Rudd, Doug Hudson and Dick Gray and one-time 1st XI umpire "Guv" Holland, all of whom have never failed to answer the call when the best interests of the Club were involved.

Mention should also be made of Bill Jarvis for his great help with the grounds, etc.

The first issue of the Club's history was produced by Mr Arthur Johnson in 1955. Like the true sportsman that he was, he neglected to mention his part in the Club's history. During 47 years membership he has been a very good bowler, a captain, a match secretary and a committee man for many years. No one was better suited to write the club's history, no one could have written it better. As a footballer, a cricketer and clubman his sporting life was a model for any young man of his day.

Dick Gray was a regular member of the Second and Wednesday XIs during the pre war years but shortly after his return from service, an injury restricted his appearances. At that time, the Club was having great difficulty with the catering and so, with the help of player's wives and girl friends, Dick undertook the catering task, a job which he continued to do for 12 - 13 years until finally the call of the Bowls Green was so loud, he could no longer resist the move to the other side of the car park. During these years, the Club would regularly have 200-300 spectators for Saturday matches and Dick and his team would regularly provide tea for players and spectators alike. His catering was renowned throughout the Club's cricket circuit.

## **6 The Centenary**

The Club celebrated 100 years of cricket in Ashford during the Centenary season in 1955. It could be argued that for a club founded in 1855, then 1954 was actually the 100th year but history cannot now be changed.

As part of the centenary celebrations, Ashford played a match against a very strong CCC President's XI at Ashford on 26th June 1955.

## **7 The 1950s**

In September 1958, the Club received a letter from the organisers of the Frank Tyson Testimonial Fund. They offered to show Tyson's film of the winter's MCC Tour of Australia. This offer was accepted and the showing took place at the Woodthorpe Road Primary School on May 1st 1959. In addition to this film show, a match was arranged between Ashford and Northamptonshire CCC also as part of Frank Tyson Testimonial celebrations. The date for the match was set for May 3rd 1959 and all arrangements were made including the hire of seats and a marquee. Admission to the ground would be charged and scorecard were to be printed all in an effort to raise cash for both the Club and Frank Tyson. The Club would also be providing lunches and teas for Northamptonshire CCC and their officials.

At the eleventh hour, a phone call from Tyson cancelled the match owing to a

double booking by the County side and a new date was set for August 16th 1959. Frank Tyson donated a bat to the Club to raffle on the day and all the arrangements were discussed with Tyson on May 1st.

The match was played in fine weather and a large crowd gathered at Woodthorpe Road to welcome Frank (Typhoon) Tyson and Co. In an innings lasting only 150 minutes, the crowd were entertained by some very big hitting as Northants fielded eight of their side who were playing in the 3 day game against Kent at Dover. Northants declared at 336 for 6 despite valiant bowling from Walter and Cornwell and Ashford could only muster a poor 128 all out in reply, Tyson taking 2 for 17. The final receipts from the game resulted in a profit of £53-17s-2d of which £43-15s-0 was sent to Frank Tyson and the remainder added to Club funds.

In 1959 The Ashford Sports Club Ltd. embarked upon a project to extend the Clubhouse facilities. A programme of improvements was proposed in view of the increasing demands of the tenant clubs and due to the state of repair of the existing premises. The timing of the project was brought forward when money became available from the Ministry of Local Housing and Land Development as compensation for loss of development rights. This compensation was made possible because of the foresight of the late President Mr Hatcher who had registered the original claim. This donation, plus past profits, and money donated by the Cricket and Hockey Clubs was being utilised to develop the facilities in four stages:

- The Kitchen
- The Ladies Room and their Shower Baths
- The Men's Room and their Shower Baths
- The Bar
- The Lounge
- Reroofing of the Main Hall

The position of the "comfortably furnished hall" was to be on the site nearest to Woodthorpe Road and adjoining the old pavilion and former Club room. The complete project was to be completed as funds permitted.

The new pavilion was eventually opened on Wednesday November 2nd, 1960 by Mr F. S. Sexton, surviving member of the original board of directors. Many people were present at the opening including representatives of the various affiliated clubs. Mr Ray Gilbert, the then chairman of directors, thanked the seven "civic-minded" residents who 40 years earlier had formed the private company (Ashford Sports Club Ltd.) and without them, the club would not have been in existence.

## **8 The 1960s**

Ashford CC versus Northamptonshire CCC 14th May 1961

## **9 Third XI Ground**

Following the formation of an Extra XI (3rd XI) in 1948, it soon became necessary to consider home facilities for the additional team. In 1951 the West London School (WLS) offered to allow ACC to use a piece of their land in Woodthorpe Road (now a recreation ground opposite the District Arms Public House) as a ground. This offer was accepted and a sub-committee was elected to inspect the facilities while the WLS offered to keep the outfield cut.

There were numerous teething troubles with this ground. There was no water supply initially while tea and changing facilities had to be provided by the District

Arms. The facilities could not be significantly improved until a lease was arranged with the WLS. Initially a 2 years lease was agreed which was later extended to 1957 and various work was done on the ground. Following the closure of the WLS, ACC negotiated the continued use of the ground and improvements of the facilities, to be shared between Ashford CC, Arpex CC and any Club formed by the new Borstal Institution. A new 5 year lease for this ground was offered in 1960 with Arpex CC sub-leasing from Ashford CC but this failed to materialise and ACC continued to use the ground on a year by year basis. Finally the AGM decided that if negotiations with Staines Urban District Council did not produce a satisfactory arrangement by March 1963, then the committee were to consider alternative arrangements. The main problems being over access to the ground, security of the facilities and the overall state of the pavilion, accommodation and toilets.

A sub-committee was formed in 1963 to look at alternative venues for 3rd XI cricket and initially the Ashford Recreation Ground in Clockhouse Lane and the Laleham Park were inspected as possibilities. The situation with regard to the WLS ground did not improve and between 1964 and 1976 the 3rd XI played all their matches at away venues or on local recreation grounds when available. In August 1966 the committee considered the possibility of having a 3rd XI ground on the site of the hockey pitch at the Ashford Tennis Club site (Pitch 3 as it was later known). In principle, the Ashford Sports Club Ltd., the Tennis Club and the Hockey club were agreeable to this possibility but the land in question was currently part leased to the Tennis Club and part leased the Hockey Club. The Tennis Club finally refused formal permission to use any of the land leased to them which meant that it would not be possible to provide a cricket ground at the Hockey Club site.

In association with the ASC Board of Directors, the Cricket Club approached Staines Urban District Council with a view to using the "New Farm" site which was to be developed as a Sports Ground and also the Divisional Education office regarding the Woodthorpe Road Primary School playing field (the land recently procured by ASC Ltd. and now being used as the 3rd & 4th XI ground). The Woodthorpe Road School site had originally been compulsorily purchased from ASC Ltd. some years before. The School and the Education Authority indicated that the ground was too small and that other sports would have to continue across the proposed cricket square during winter and summer.

Following a 3rd XI match against Laleham Village CC it was ascertained that their ground was not used on approximately 15 dates during the season and an unofficial approach was made to this Club to gauge the possibility of sharing the facilities.

The Ashford County School ground was also pursued as a possible venue for 3rd XI cricket but proved to be financially out of the question.

In view of the formation of a 3rd XI League of the Surrey Championship in 1977, the search for a permanent home for the 3rd XI was accelerated and the sub-committee agreed to inspect the Groveley Park and Cedars Recreation Grounds in Sunbury. Duncan Ritchie, the Chairman, reported that Cedars was the better ground but that only Groveley Park was available in 1976 and it was therefore subsequently booked for 12 matches.

Initially the square at Groveley Park proved to be very good and it was agreed to try to obtain a block booking for the 1977 league season. The wicket, however, deteriorated very quickly during the season as there were no watering or rolling facilities. The search for a permanent home for the 3rd XI therefore continued.

A plot of land was identified in Short Lane, Stanwell, which the Hockey Club and Ashford Town Football Club were negotiating a lease for and discussions commenced with regard to the possibility of incorporating a cricket square. These discussions were long and drawn out with various different proposals being made and refused. In the meantime, the Club continued to use rented grounds for their 3rd XI matches, notably at the fine Stewart Wrightson ground in Molesey and the less suitable Coronation Recreation ground in Hersham.

The Cricket Club Chairman, Duncan Ritchie, was instrumental in the Short Lane discussions and it was thanks to his considerable efforts and those of Arthur Bradbury and Ron Cooksey that a lease (in association with the Football Club and the Hockey Club) was eventually secured by the newly formed Echelford Sports Association in 1985. The cricket club's finances were such that the laying of a proper square was out of the question so a square was cut by the club and the surface was enhanced by the addition of 1 ton of loam. Cricket was first played at the Short Lane ground in 1986 and the 3rd and 4th XIs continued to use these facilities up until the 1993 season when in 1994 the 1st and 2nd XI were forced to move to Short Lane as a temporary measure owing to the relocation of the Ashford Sports Club Ltd. away from the main Woodthorpe Road site. How grateful the current club is to the considerable efforts extended by its members in negotiating the Echelford lease, without which the Club would be down to one ground again for the 1994 season.

## **10 The 1970s**

In 1966 a plan was devised to start a club cricket league in Middlesex from the 1968 season onwards. The AGM in 1966 showed considerable interest in this prospect and the Club's Committee were instructed to pursue the possibility further. Ashford Cricket Club attended a meeting of Middlesex Clubs and supported the formation of a committee to consider the implications of forming such a league however, this whole idea was shelved in early 1967.

Ashford CC set up a sub-committee to deal with knock-out matches and to look at the possibility of league cricket.

In 1968 the Surrey Championship was formed consisting of 18 prominent clubs in the County; Addiscombe, Banstead, Beddington, Cheam, Dulwich, East Molesey, Epsom, Guildford, Malden Wanderers, Mitcham, Old Emanuel, Old Whitgiftians, Purley, Spencer, Streatham Hollingtonians, Sunbury & Sutton. Ashford informed the Championship in 1969 that they would be interested in joining this league from the start of the 1971 season.

In early 1970 a proposal for a two-division Middlesex League was considered and Ashford CC were invited to join Division 2. At around the same time, Horsell and Woking CC enquired if Ashford CC was interested in helping to promote a new Thames Valley League.

The proposed Middlesex League set-up was not going to incorporate promotion and relegation and there was doubt within the Ashford CC Committee if the 2nd Division would every be formed.

In April 1970, Ashford CC was informed that the Surrey Championship were considering extending their league by 2 Clubs from the 1972 season. The Ashford CC committee confirmed their interest in the Surrey League but also agreed to maintain interest in the proposed Thames Valley League.

In July 1970 the Championship confirmed our election to the Surrey Cricket Club Championship Association with effect from 1972 and the Club were faced with

three alternatives:

- to continue "friendly" cricket only.
- to join the Surrey League
- to join the Thames Valley League.

The committee decided to propose that Ashford CC joined the Surrey League and to discuss the matter at a meeting of players on Monday 10 August 1970. The Surrey League was chosen on it's strength and the fact that an established League from one county had more chance of survival than a League composed of Clubs from four different counties. The players agreed to this proposal and so Ashford CC and Honor Oak CC were elected as members of the Surrey Championship.

The Club's performances in the Championship are detailed at the end of this History but in 1974 and 1982, the first XI gained a commendable 4th place in the Surrey Championship division 1. The subsequent relegation to division 2 has resulted in a period of rebuilding. This is now complete and the Club is striving to regain its position in the top flight of league cricket in Surrey.

The Club regularly took place in the Oatlands Park 6-a-side tournament in the 70s and 80s. This tournament involved all the local sides and although Ashford did not feature regularly in the latter stages of the competition, the trophy was won in 1977. The side was: J R Tombleson, P Curson, S P Gregson, K P Warner, D G Beckett and W K Pettifer.

## **11 The 1980s**

In 1980 Jeremy Tombleson a long time playing member of the Club decided to visit Australia for the winter. By good fortune he made contact with a Club, Merewether, in Newcastle, New South Wales and so began an association with this Club which has seen a stream of players visiting Ashford to both play cricket and support the Club (see separate list). Jerry visited in 1980 and again in 1982 and finally emigrated in 1994 after a false start in 1989 which ended in deportation in 1993.

In 1982, a season when there were no overseas "stars", there was general concern at the start of the season that league wins would be hard to come by. As it turned out, the season was one of the most successful in the Club's Championship history. The 1st XI finished fourth in the Surrey Championship a feat which had only previously been achieved once, in 1974, and it is still the highest position achieved by the 1st XI in the Championship.

During the 1988 season, availability was such that the Club fielded a 4th XI on a number of occasions. This availability continued for two years and in 1990, friendly fixtures were arranged for the fourth XI in advance of the start of the season and included in the fixture card. The standard of play was good and the availability of regular fixtures improved the standard further and provided some solid experience for players trying to break into the 3rd XI and league cricket.

In 1989, following several season struggling at the foot of the 1st division, the 1st XI were finally relegated to division two. This was a major eye opener for the Club a period of rebuilding was undertaken. In the end, promotion back to division 1 took a further five season a period which, in hindsight, was probably of benefit to the Club if not to the players involved.

The Club ran three sides Saturday and three sides on Sundays regularly throughout the 70s. During the late 1980s, the availability for Sunday cricket, in general and not just at Ashford, fell significantly. Availability reached such levels

that by 1990, there were no longer any prearranged third XI matches on Sundays and very few could be arranged during the season. At around the same time, numbers available on Saturdays rose significantly and from 1991 onwards, five elevens were fielded regularly on Saturdays. The reason for the demise of Sunday cricket are unknown but contributory factors are the attraction of league cricket and the gradually increasing cost making two matches over a weekend financially out of the reach of many members, especially the youngsters.

## **12 The Colts Section**

In 1986, Ken Smith and Roger Smart made contact with the Club to ask if their Cub pack could utilise the Club's facilities in preparation for a Cub cricket tournament later in the year. Permission was granted on the understanding that they would be known as Ashford Cricket Club Colts and so began the major rebuilding of the Colts section. From that date, the section has gone from strength to strength winning several trophies en route. In the early '90s the Club ran seven sides; U10, U11A, U11B, U13A, U13B, U15A, U15B & U17. These sides are grateful to the everpresent support, particularly from Ken Smith but also from the managers who have devoted much time to the cause: Roger Smart, Colin Chessman, Peter Davies, Martin Smith & Nick Coates. The Club has produced several players who have represented the Middlesex Club during the last 10 years. These are:

- Graham Smart
- Andy Barnes
- Paul Frost
- John Maunder
- Oliver Smith
- David Coates

## **13 The 1990s**

During the 1991 season, availability was such that the Club fielded a 5th XI on a number of occasions. This availability continued for two years and in 1993, the committee decided to follow the example set by both Honor Oak and Sunbury and they entered the 4th XI into the Surrey Slazenger league. The 4th XI's first season in the Slazenger League was 1994 and the side, led by Bill Lynskey, equitted themselves well to finish in 5th place. The standard of play was good and the availability of regular competitive fixtures improved the standard further and provided some excellent experience for players trying to break into the 3rd XI and Surrey Championship cricket.

Over a number of years playing membership for all sports had risen steadily while the facilities offered had been restricted by the amount of space available at the Woodthorpe Road ground. This problem was particularly prevalent for the Cricket and Hockey sections, where pitches had to be hired on a regular basis. In addition, external factors affecting these two clubs caused the Board of Directors of the ASC to look at the alternatives.

The main problems were:-

- a new housing development immediately adjoining the ground increased the already troublesome problem of balls landing in gardens and on the roofs of adjacent properties causing damage.
- the requirement for league and cup hockey matches to be played on synthetic

surfaces (Astroturf).

A Development Sub-committee was appointed to investigate the possibilities available to the ASC and to recommend which option the Sports Club should follow. The then current facilities were reviewed to see if expansion was an option. The main ground housed the Pavilion, the Bowls Green and a small Cricket Ground which doubled in the winter as two small hockey pitches. The second ground 200 yards away on the north side of Woodthorpe Road housed a Table Tennis centre, Tennis Courts, a hockey pitch and a small wooden tennis pavilion. The Development Committee recommended the disposal of the main ground and in 1989, the Ashford Sports Club, in association with the leasehold clubs, took the decision to search for a potential buyer for the Woodthorpe Road ground in an effort to move to a larger and ultimately better equipped facility.

The Sports Club's aim was to move to a site capable of housing 2 to 3 cricket squares, 5 grass hockey pitches and an Astroturf Hockey Pitch. It was also proposed that the remaining Woodthorpe Road North site would be redeveloped with 2 Bowls Greens and a modernised pavilion. In order to maintain the Club throughout the "move", work commenced on refurbishing the Tennis Pavilion in 1989. The redevelopment of the Tennis pavilion would also be required as there was the probability of International Table Tennis being played on a regular basis at Ashford.

After much discussion and debate, the Woodthorpe Road ground was sold to Banner Homes for development purposes with a 24 month delay until completion of the sale. This two year period being negotiated in an attempt to allow the Sports Club to find a new site.

Around this time, recessionary pressure on trading and interest payments on loans for the Tennis pavilion redevelopment left ASC with considerable debts. Negotiations for a new ground, especially with the local planners, took far longer than expected and eventually the sale completed without a new ground to move to. In April 1994, all outstanding debts were paid off and the redevelopment of the Woodthorpe Road North site commenced to provide facilities for the Bowls Club commenced.

In 1991 the Surrey Championship decided to form a "Super League" for the third XI clubs, there being such a vast difference in standard between third Xs. This league would be formed from the 10 clubs finishing highest at the end of the 1992 season. Having been relegated to division 2 of the 3rd XI league in 1990, and promoted back to division 1 in 1991, Ashford attained a very creditable eighth place thus obtaining a place in the "Super League".

The standard of play in this division was such, however, that the lack of depth within the Club was exploited by the superior strength of the other 3rd XIs and despite the considerable efforts of all concerned, especially captain Trevor Allen, Ashford slipped back to division 2.

The 1994 season was a very successful year for the Club's first XI. After relegation in 1989 and four very near misses at again returning to the higher division, promotion was finally secured. The season commenced with four matches washed out throughout the league and after seven matches although only one win had been secured, the side were only 15 points behind the leaders (13 points for a win). Two very successful runs beating Epsom, Oxted and Purley in succession and then after a mid season hiccup consecutive victories against Camberley, Worcester Park and Warlingham moved the side to the top of the division. With six matches left, the side led the field and a very competent and confident finale saw the team clinch victory against local rivals Avorians on Bank

Holiday Monday in front of an expectant crowd at Short Lane. Paul Roshier (63 wickets) was the hero of the season taking in excess of 60 wickets for the third year running. The side now had the chance to again prove that it is capable of playing at the highest level in Club Cricket in Surrey.

Unfortunately, in the same season, the 2nd XI had a disastrous year. Problems of unavailability and the general lack of consistency from the few regular players meant the side was propping up the rest of the division from very early on.

Despite an unexpected victory over local rivals Sunbury, no other victories were achieved and the resulting relegation was almost inevitable from July onwards.

## **14 Short Lane Site**

After a very long programme, Ashford Sports Club eventually completed the development of a site in Short Lane enabling the Club to, finally, have a "home". The project was possible thanks to the time and efforts of the Sport Club's Development Sub-Committee and the financial grant support from the Sport Council's Lottery Grant amounting to £790,620. The new site at Short Lane in Stanwell finally opened on September 18, 1998 and it was officially opened by the Mayor of Spelthorne on November 11, 1998. The site included an Astro Hockey pitch, two cricket squares, an all weather cricket strip, 4 cricket nets and a clubhouse with 6 dressing rooms. Although it had taken a long time, the wait was worth it.

## **15 Sunday Cricket**

During the 1990s, interest in Sunday Cricket began to wain significantly. It became more and more difficult to field two elevens, let alone three and finally in 1998, the Club went a full season playing only one XI on Sundays.

There was no single reason for this changing in emphasis. Cost, Sunday shopping hours and the increase in Saturday League cricket are three contributory causes which have been suggested.

In 1999 the Club has entered two XIs in the Thameside Sunday League in an effort to rejuvenate Sunday cricket. The results of this venture are awaited with interest.

## **16 Overseas Visitors**

Since 1981, there has been a steady stream of overseas players, mainly Antipodeans, visiting Ashford to play for a season. Most have made a significant contribution to the Club and several have returned for more!

- 1981 Garry Ball (Merewether)
- 1981 Mark Dunn (Cardiff Booleroo)
- 1983 Garry Ball (Merewether)
- 1983 Phil Marks (Manly)
- 1984 Graham Lewis
- 1984 Barry Nichols
- 1985 Tim Dansie
- 1985 Gary Slack
- 1986 Steve Trenordan
- 1987 Brett Petersen (Merewether)
- 1988 Ross Sadler (Merewether)

- 1989 Ross Sadler (Merewether)
- 1991 Phil Stanbridge (Merewether)
- 1992 Craig Gerrans (North Perth)
- 1993 Greg McNeil (Merewether) \*
- 1994 Steve MacDonald (North Perth)
- 1995 Chad White (Merewether)
- 1996 Chad White (Merewether)
- 1997 Sam Robinson (Bermuda) \*
- 1998 Duncan McIlveen (Merewether)
- 1999 Duncan McIlveen (Merewether)
- 2000 Terry Crittenden (Merewether) \*
- 2000 Michael Wilson ()
- 2001 Jeremy Bayer (Old Parktonians) \*
- 2002 Jagit Singh (India)
- 2003 Ajantha Weerappuli (Sri Lanka)
- 2004 Jed Kirk (Tallangatta)
- 2005 Jeremy Watson
- 2006 Riaz Khan
- 2007 none
- 2008 Asif Prasala
- 2009 Trent Nash (Merewether)
- 2010 Trent Nash (Merewether) \*
- 2011 Sam Gilmour (Merewether)

\* Did not complete a full season at Ashford

## **17 Club Umpires and Scorers**

The Club has always been very fortunate to have a willing band of helper who voluntarily offer their services on Saturdays and Sundays to officiate as either umpire or scorer.

The following list is not complete but is an indication of the large numbers involved:

### **17.1 Umpires**

John Bird, Yasdi Merchant, Bill Hopkins, George DeVilliers, Dennis Grey, Steve Smith, Tod Slaughter, Dennis Marriner, John Elliker, Ted Sutton, Mick Martin, A B Holland, T Lee, Leslie Beeching, Ken Guishard, Bill Pettifer, Peter Davies, Jasdev Rehncy, Safdar Butt

### **17.2 Scorers**

Mike Troake, Martin Davies, Bruce Cotton, Andy Taylor, Ted Boxall, Linda Barnes, Sue Cox, Val Kenrick, Angela Chessman, Graham Scott, Claude Rowles, Gillian Ash, Julia Wallace, John Gammon, Angela Jolliffe, Mrs C Jolliffe, Jane Evans, Ian Jenkins, Steve Nunn, Joanne Foster, Gordon Richardson, A W Hawley, Leanne Barnes, Sheila Cooksey, Regan Mullaney, Bethan Evans, Sue Cox, Sarah Frost, Trefor Evans, Helen Cook, Jack Frost,