

The Victorian origins of Pinkneys Green Cricket Club

Thirty five years ago, Pinkneys Green Cricket Club was preparing to celebrate its centenary. President's Day would be given over to a pro-celebrity match. There would be a celebratory cricket week of fixtures, and the year closed with the National Trust planting ten trees along the northern boundary to mark the occasion.

1885 was accepted as the date of formation following the publication in the mid 1970s of a pamphlet about the history of the club. This was written by Roland "Johnny" Walker, the former landlord of the Stag and Hounds pub (now known as the Pinkneys Arms) and President of Pinkneys Green Cricket Club.

I have long since wanted to write a fuller history of the club and the opening up of digital archives has made this a more realistic pursuit, particularly as the Maidenhead Advertiser put all its available editions online last year. Coupled with the fantastic British Newspaper Archive, I have already begun to amass a varied range of reports about cricket on the Green, focusing particularly on the late nineteenth century.

As often happens research has rather undermined what was accepted as commonly true, and although evidence of Pinkneys Green cricket can be found in the 1880s, the club as we know it today was formed in 1893.



Pinkneys Green itself was established as a hamlet in the parish of Cookham in 1650, with its name adopted by the early 1700s. The name derives from Ghilo de Pinkney a Norman knight. He was granted land as a reward for his support for William the Conqueror. The Pinkney family's main estate was in Northamptonshire, but they owned the original manor of Pinkneys Court near the present day Green until the 15th century. By the late 19th century the manor had passed into the hands of the Hussey family.

When the Maidenhead Advertiser was first published in 1869, cricket had been well established in the area at least as early as the 18th century, with evidence of a Maidenhead club playing the MCC at Lords in 1793. The recreational game was very different at this time, largely based in Country Houses such as Heywood (White Waltham) or Melmoth (Cookham) where gentlemen would raise elevens of staff and the odd professional to play each other, often for a sizeable wager.

There was one proper cricket ground in the town which remains in York Road as Maidenhead United Football Club, and explains why the current town Heritage centre base was known until relatively recently as The Cricketers pub. Maidenhead played there to a good standard with MCC and Berkshire amongst the visitors. In the late 19th century the other prominent local clubs were Burnham, Taplow, Marlow and High Wycombe.

On the outskirts of Maidenhead cricket was played amongst the various villages, with the scorecards illustrating the quality of the pitches as a total of 50 would have won most matches, indeed 30 was a competitive total. The side batting second would continue if they reached their opponents score, carrying on

NT gift marks cricket club's 100 years

Pinkneys Green Cricket Club's century of playing on Maidenhead and Cookham Commons land off Pinkneys Drive has been commemorated with the presentation of 10 trees and a cup by the National Trust.

The National Trust have owned the commons for 50 years and the local commons committee felt it would be a suitable gesture to present a tree for each decade of the club's life.

Two beech trees were planted with the help of National Trust Warden Curley Carver last week and a further eight, including beech, oak and horse chestnut, will be planted at a later date.

President of the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons Preservation Committee Mr. Anthony Butterwick told the Advertiser: "We are very pleased to make the presentation. The National Trust and Pinkneys Green Cricket Club have always got on very well together. It is part of village life and we very much encourage the playing of cricket here."

Club chairman Gareth Chick said: "Obviously we are delighted to receive the trees and the cup from the Trust and are appreciative of their continued support over the years. The club could not do without them. I hope we are worthy of playing on National Trust ground."

He thought the new cup would probably be awarded to the player of the year. The club's beginnings are recorded in the minutes of Cookham Parish Council in 1885 when permission was given "for the lads of Pinkneys Green to be allowed to cut certain bushes and level the grounds on the common for a cricket pitch."

Most of the ground was ploughed up for potato and corn crops during the second world war but the area was re-cultivated and grass seed sown for play to resume after the war. Apart from the rain nothing has stopped play since.



Mr. Anthony Butterwick, president of the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons preservation committee, and Mr. Gareth Chick, chairman of Pinkneys Green Cricket Club, plant one of the 10 centenary trees.



A centenary commemoration cup is presented to Pinkneys Green Cricket Club secretary Dudley Juman (right) by the president of the Maidenhead and Cookham Commons preservation committee.

until they were all out. There was usually time for a third innings and it was not uncommon for a two innings test match style contest to be played out in an afternoon.

Due to the influence of religion, weekend matches were only played on Saturdays. Any midweek matches were usually played on a Thursday as this was early closing, whilst all day matches were held on Whit Monday, a Christian festival to celebrate Pentecost forty days after Easter. This is the origin of the late Spring Bank Holiday which is now fixed as the final Monday in May.

The earliest report I have found of a Pinkneys Green match was in the Maidenhead Advertiser dated 18th June 1880. The Greenites as they were then referred to, won at Boyn Hill by thirteen runs, having overturned a first innings deficit of four to triumph with a final innings score of 49. Boyn Hill had scored 29 & 32 in their two innings. The report states this was a return fixture with Boyn Hill having won "somewhat easily" earlier in the season.

Two years later Pinkneys played against the Laggan Club which was located on Cookham Road. Presumably the match would have taken place somewhere on North Town Moor. The Green batted first and were all out for 28, with R. Swallow somewhat let down by his team mates as he scored 20 not out. The Laggans replied with 41, Swallow taking five wickets as did his team mate Musselwhite, a name that would become legendary for the family's playing feats in the years that followed. Pinkneys fared a little better in the second innings scoring 31, and although Swallow took another six wickets, Laggan went onto score 49 to clearly win by a reported margin of 28 runs.

Later that season the Green reached three figures at home to comfortably beat J. Fowler's XI by forty runs. This is not surprising considering the scratch team arrived four players short (although substitutes were found) and their bowling and fielding was described as "indifferent". Swallow again led the way with a top score of 22.

In 1884 Pinkneys were humbled by local rivals Cookham Dean at the Green. The Dean scored 121 thanks in no small part by 33 extras, with Wilfried Hodges taking six wickets. Extras again top scored in Pinkneys innings with eleven, the only double figures in the scorecard as the Green crumbled to 30 all out in the face of the "trundling" of Dean bowlers Duffil and Barney. Pinkneys were invited to have another bat, but fared little better making just 17-5 before the close.

Pinkneys Green did not feature in the cricket columns for another nine years, although it seems fair to assume matches would have continued to take place on an ad hoc basis between groups of lads from the surrounding areas.

The formal club which exists today was set up in 1893. The South Bucks Standard dated 23rd June reporting that "the newly formed club" had beaten Maidenhead Thicket by 35 runs the previous Saturday 17th. George Barnes, a labourer living in Camley House, took five wickets for Pinkneys with James Treadwell, a kiln worker from Furze Platt, top scoring with 44 runs.

On 24th June, the Reading Mercury reported that the match took place "opposite the Coach & Horses Inn", which today is known as the Shire Horse on the Bath Road.

The Maidenhead Advertiser had already published a scorecard on 21st June with its sports correspondent Trifler asking readers to oblige the new club's Honorary Secretary Mr Edward Piercey, a terracotta worker, in arranging more matches.

PINKNEY'S GREEN v. MAIDENHEAD THICKET.	
Played on Saturday last at Pinkney's Green, and resulted in a win for Pinkney's Green by 35 runs.	
Score:—	
MAIDENHEAD THICKET.	
E. Stops, b. Barnes	13
H. B. Harding, l.b.w., b. Barnes	8
E. Harris, b. Wheeler	5
G. Lowe, b. Barnes	2
W. Struck, b. Barnes	0
W. Dodge, b. Barnes	4
T. Butcher, b. W. Musselwhite	2
H. Crookford, b. W. Musselwhite	2
K. Crookford, not out	13
G. Butcher, b. Wakeling	2
W. Wiggins, b. W. Musselwhite	1
Extras	21
	73
In their second innings Maidenhead Thicket put on 32 runs for the loss of 6 wickets.	
PINKNEY'S GREEN.	
J. Musselwhite, c. Lowe, b. Stops	18
T. Musselwhite, c. Crookford, b. Lowe	12
W. Musselwhite, b. Lowe	0
J. Treadwell, b. H. Crookford	44
J. Curtis, b. Lowe	0
G. Wakeling, b. Lowe	0
G. Barnes, b. Lowe	1
G. Lambourn, not out	8
A. Wheeler, b. H. Crookford	4
A. Brown, b. Lowe	2
T. Spratley, c. Crookford, b. Lowe	0
Extras	19
	108

Treadwell and Piercey both worked at the local Cooper's Brick and Tile Works which was located off Winter Hill Road at the Pinkneys Green end, near the Golden Ball pub, with the cottages in Golden Ball Lane providing housing for the workforce. Lying on a bed of Reading clay the site had been the source of building materials and pottery for many hundreds of years with the works being set up by John Cooper in the early 19th century. By 1893, business was booming due to the expansion of nearby Maidenhead with the fruits of the labour of over a hundred employees still to be seen in the local buildings of this vintage which survive to this day.

The scorecard from an inter company match played between Coopers Building Department and The Kiln in mid September 1893 illustrates the extent to which the firm was a big source of players for the new team. The local St James Church supplied the bowling of the vicar's son Wilfried Hodges, with his neighbour from Stubbings House, stockbroker Douglas Skrine also appearing. Clarefield (formerly Pinkneys) House is also likely to have had a number of its gardeners play cricket, however it was the Waggon & Horses pub (now the Boundary Arms) which was the heart of the club.

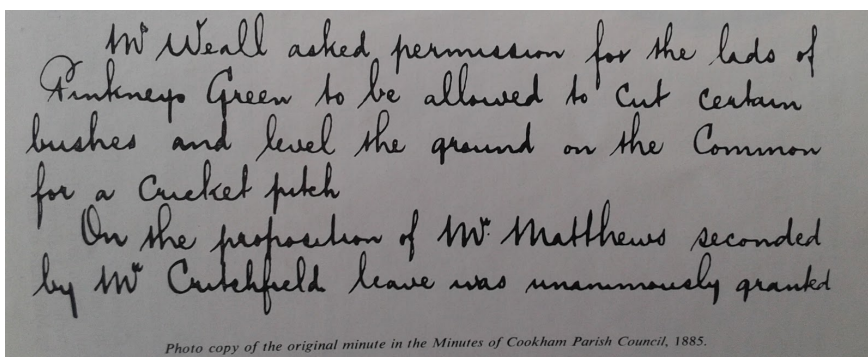
Landlord John Musselwhite hosted winter meetings and his wife Ann was to give birth to five sons who all played for the Green in the 1890s. They were in order of age: William, John, Richard, Thomas and Samuel. The ubiquitous presence of their surname on the weekly scorecards makes it difficult to credit individuals consistently but it is clear that between them they took the lion's share of the wickets to fall.

Tommy, a bricklayer born in 1872, was the leading cricketer in the family returning many five wicket hauls, including at least one hat trick, and also once scored "eleven in three hits" with the bat. John, the Coopers company gardener, and Sam, a glass designer, were also praised for their excellent bowling.

A further five matches are reported to have taken place in 1893, two more against Maidenhead Thicket who won both, the latter by an innings as Pinkneys crumbled to thirteen all out second time around, and two matches against Littlewick Green with honours even.

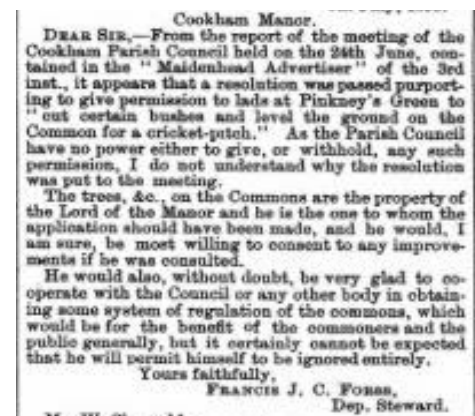
The 1894 season began early in mid April with defeat to Cookham Dean, which was avenged in early May, the Dean winning the decider at the end of the month in a "severe licking" for the Green. W. Dixon took 7-6 as Pinkneys laid six "duck eggs" on a scorecard which only totalled eighteen in response to Cookham's 104. Fortunes improved thanks to strong bowling performances from Musselwhites T and J to secure wins over North Town, Crazies Hill and Boyn Hill. The spell of the season though was bowled by George Barnes who took four Littlewick Green wickets in four balls in a "splendidly contested game" which Pinkneys won having scored 34 in reply to their opponents 30. The margin of victory was half this in the final match of the season at Burnham Priory, where despite the teams fielding twelve a side, the hosts were all out for 23, Pinkneys getting their noses in front with 25 before everyone "partook of an excellent tea".

The annual general meeting which took place at the Waggon & Horses in January 1895 heralded a season where the club sought to establish itself by developing a ground on its current site. The following minute from the June 24th meeting of Cookham Parish Council is cited by Walker as being from 1885 but the Maidenhead Advertiser reports this verbatim in its 3rd July edition of 1895.



Mr Weall asked permission for the lads of Pinkneys Green to be allowed to cut certain bushes and level the ground on the Common for a Cricket pitch
On the proposition of Mr Matthews seconded by Mr Cutchfield leave was unanimously granted

Photo copy of the original minute in the Minutes of Cookham Parish Council, 1885.



Cookham Manor.
DEAR SIR,—From the report of the meeting of the Cookham Parish Council held on the 24th June, contained in the "Maidenhead Advertiser" of the 3rd inst., it appears that a resolution was passed purporting to give permission to lads at Pinkney's Green to "cut certain bushes and level the ground on the Common for a cricket-pitch." As the Parish Council have no power either to give, or withhold, any such permission, I do not understand why the resolution was put to the meeting.
The trees, &c., on the Commons are the property of the Lord of the Manor and he is the one to whom the application should have been made, and he would, I am sure, be most willing to consent to any improvements if he was consulted.
He would also, without doubt, be very glad to co-operate with the Council or any other body in obtaining some system of regulation of the commons, which would be for the benefit of the commons and the public generally, but it certainly cannot be expected that he will permit himself to be ignored entirely.
Yours faithfully,
FRANCIS J. C. FORAS,
Dep. Steward.
Mr. W. Shasold

This decision was not without controversy, as its reproduction in the Maidenhead Advertiser prompted Francis Forse, Deputy Steward of Cookham Manor, to respond with a letter informing the Parish Council that they had no legal right to give such permission as the trees on the common belonged to the Lord of the Manor. However Forse conceded that he would “be most willing to consent to any improvements if he was consulted”. This was just as well as on the pitch were going from strength to strength, beating virtually every team they faced, apart from local rivals Cookham Dean and Littlewick Green, with a Tommy Musslewhite hat trick against the latter all for nothing. His efforts were rewarded two weeks later against Burnham Priory though, when he took six wickets as Burnham Priory were bowled out for twelve.

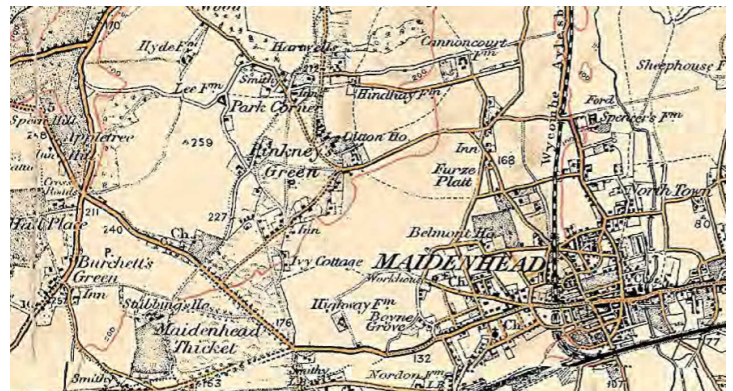
The 1896 season started with wins at last over Cookham Dean and Littlewick Green to herald the best summer of the decade. Brothers Tommy, John and Sam Musselwhite all took five wickets in a match at least once, with the bowling attack made even deadlier with the addition of Alfred Button, a gardener who took seven wickets in an innings victory at North Town in June. Button shared the honours with Sam, as they took five Booker wickets each "before a large number of persons" at the Green on Whit Monday to see Pinkneys triumph by an innings in an all day match.

Results tailed off as the decade drew to a close, in part due to playing stronger opposition such as Taplow Station and Lane End. Batting performances also improved, Fred Allaway hitting an unbeaten half century against the former in 1897, leading to the Green's highest team total in this period of 133, seven wickets from Berry skittling the railwaymen for just 36 to produce Pinkneys biggest win to date. A match in Kidwells Park in 1897 against Maidenhead United even produced a unique draw with only thirteen wickets falling all afternoon, Leaver reaching 50 for the Green.

Bowlers remained dominant though. In 1898 34 runs apiece with all wickets down meant a match against Burnham Priory was tied. In the same season six wickets for Tommy and seven for brother John Musselwhite saw Littlewick Green bowled out twice for a grand total of 49, Pinkneys squeezing home by the barest of margins. Towards the end of the season Tommy went on to record figures of 8-7 as Booker were bowled out for 27 to give victory to Pinkneys by only two runs.

Tommy's absence along with his brother Sam were cited as mitigating factors in a heavy defeat at Lane End in 1899. Pinkneys were welcomed by the village band who serenaded them with a selection of music as they toiled in the field whilst their hosts batted their way to a declaration on 174 for 5. The Green collapsed twice in reply to lose by an innings and 129 runs and fared little better in the return fixture. Likewise Taplow Station proved too strong home and away with Captain Fisher hitting unbeaten half centuries in both matches to go with five wickets in the first.

Despite the final season of the nineteenth century being a poor one, across the period under review, the Green won more often than not and were a club that had developed considerably, now boasting its own ground and a well established fixture list.



Summary of Known Results

Season	P	W	T	D	L	% W			
1880	2	1	0	0	1	50.00%		Opponents 1880-99	
1882	2	1	0	0	1	50.00%		Booker	Laggan Club
1884	1	0	0	0	1	0.00%		Boyne Hill	Lane End
1893	5	2	0	0	3	40.00%		Burnham Priory	Little Marlow
1894	12	8	0	0	4	66.67%		Cippenham	Littlewick Green
1895	11	7	0	0	4	63.64%		Cookham	Maidenhead Thicket
1896	10	8	0	0	2	80.00%		Cookham Dean	Maidenhead United
1897	5	2	0	1	2	40.00%		Crazies Hill	North Town
1898	9	5	1	0	3	55.56%		Holyport 2nd XI	Taplow Station
1899	8	2	0	0	6	25.00%			
Total	65	36	1	1	27	55.38%			

19th Century Statistical Highlights

	For	V
Highest	133 v Taplow Station 21/8/97	174-5 by Lane End 10/6/99
Lowest	13 v Maidenhead Thicket 18/8/93	12 by Burnham Priory 13/7/95
Highest Innings	53 F. Allaway v Taplow Station 21/8/97	65* Fisher for Taplow Station 19/8/99
Best Bowling	9-6 Berry v Maidenhead United 1/8/97	7-6 W. Dixon for Cookham Dean 26/5/94
Biggest Win	97 runs v Taplow Station 21/8/97	
Biggest Defeat	Innings & 129 runs by Lane End 10/6/99	
Notable Performances	G. Barnes 4 wickets in 4 balls v Littlewick Green 9/6/94	
	Swallow 11 wickets in the match v Laggan Club 24/6/82	
	T. Musslewhite 8-7 v Booker 10/9/98	

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