

Pinkneys Green in the Golden Age of Cricket

The long shadow that was cast over the twentieth century by the first world war, led to the years immediately prior to the start of hostilities becoming known as the golden age of cricket. This was due to a fondness for a period which saw the sport formally established on a global scale, and also the youthful memories of those cricketers who tragically lost their lives in the armed conflict that followed.

This description aptly fits the second chapter of the club's history which spans 1900-19. The first decade saw the Green firmly establish itself as one of the leading village clubs in the Maidenhead area only for some of its best players to be killed in action in the north of France following the suspension of organised sport in the autumn of 1914.

The story of Arthur Barnes perfectly captures this time of innocence and loss. His brother George, speaking to the Maidenhead Advertiser on the occasion of his golden wedding anniversary in March 1981, recalled that he and Arthur won the club's annual batting and bowling awards respectively for the 1914 season. Arthur was unable to receive his bowling award as he voluntarily enlisted in the Royal Berkshire Regiment at the outbreak of war. He was reported missing in action a year later on the first day of the Battle of Loos and has no known grave. George served in the Royal National Air Service and having collected Arthur's award when he returned to Pinkneys Green in 1919, treasured it for the rest of his life.

When the century began the Musselwhite brothers contested the annual bowling award. Tommy and Sam would take the new ball together and more often than not would polish off the opposition by themselves with an equal share of the ten wickets. Tommy was described as "erratic but quick" whilst Sam was "full of guile".

Their effectiveness was captured perfectly in the report of a win over Taplow Station at the Green in May 1904. Batting first Pinkneys made only 59.

"This certainly does not appear to be chalk to wipe out but with the brothers Musselwhite behind the ball Taplow knew they had something to do. No risks could be taken with the bowling of the brothers Musselwhite."

The final analyses were Tommy 5-17, Sam 5-24, seeing their team home by thirteen runs.

The pair reserved their best performance for the 1904 derby at Cookham Dean. Conceding 1 extra Sam (7-6) and Tommy (3-4) cleaned up their rivals for only eleven runs, barely allowing the Dean's pursuit of 133 to begin.

The club base remained the Waggon & Horses pub run by father Jack Musselwhite, with Tommy settling down in Briar Cottages in Bakers Lane with his wife Edith, around the corner from the Barnes family in Furzedale Cottages, Bix Lane. He was club captain throughout this period and also took a leading role in the local community, sitting on the Maidenhead & District Building Trades Council.

Speaking to Johnny Walker seventy years later Freddie Jacobs recalled the importance of the team's fielding in supporting the brothers to win tight matches describing Musselwhite's rallying call when defending a low total as "we've got 'em, they've got to get 'em".

The Green showed equal grit when chasing. In 1902 seven Sam Musselwhite wickets saw White Waltham dismissed for 46. In reply Pinkneys fell to 5-5, but a careful 19 from A.J. Swallow helped to see them home. Likewise a year later in Kidwells Park Pinkneys found them 8-10 in reply to Spencer XI's score of 41 only for 27 not out from J. Plaistowe to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Although the volume of match reports varied from season to season, with interruptions for deaths and subsequent coronations of monarchs, Pinkneys had a consistent win ratio of 60% throughout this period. The fixture list would extend to about 15 matches played from May to September, with matches starting in mid-afternoon and finishing in time for the evening church service at half past six.

A steady increase in run scoring meant matches were in the main restricted now to only one innings with teams still prone to collapse as happened to Hurley in 1900 when in the club's first meeting they were fourteen all out in response to Pinkney's 109. The peak of the first decade of the new century came in 1906 when the Maidenhead Advertiser excitedly reported every week on an ever growing run of consecutive wins by the Green. This stretched to thirteen following a victory over Hurley in September only to end the following week. They were vanquished by Wasps, a pick up eleven mostly made up of players from the strong Cooper's brickworks team. All looked well for Pinkneys as "a splendid fielding performance featuring two fine catches by Sam Musselwhite and one in the long field by Stevens" to support six Tommy Musselwhite wickets saw the Wasps bowled out for 33. "Things certainly looked rosy for the homesters with the score at 19-1" only for former Greenite Allaway to come on to bowl and wipe out the middle order, taking 4-7 as Pinkneys collapsed to 27 all out, giving rise to the inevitable headline "Stung by Wasps".

Sam Musselwhite stopped playing at the end of the 1907 season, his best performance coming in 1905 at Taplow Station when he took nine wickets then scored thirteen out of the Green's total of 32 as they fell to defeat against the Men of Rails.

Tommy would go on to pair up with a succession of effective opening partners, notably H. Sadler, F. Brown, R. Booker and W. Bailey. There was also the addition of strong batsmen such as C. Ayres and E. Rackstraw who both recorded rare half centuries.

In 1909 Pinkneys joined the Holyport Cricket Challenge league. This had started as a cup competition, with the Green entering once in 1902, losing their first round tie at Waltham St. Lawrence. The first season saw a third place finish out of the six entrants, which was improved upon in 1910 when Pinkneys finished runners up to Parkwood, a team based on the Cockpole Green estate of Charles Henry. The Green won ten of their fourteen

matches. This included a victory over eventual champions Parkwood in June when Booker took nine wickets.

The league provided a core set of home and away fixtures against local village rivals but waned by 1912 when only four clubs entered, the last completed season. Pinkneys withdrew the following year, leaving Holyport and Littlewick to contest a one off match for the honour of holding the cup. Along with Cox Green and Cookham Dean, Pinkneys rejoined in 1914 but they were well out of the running for the title by the time the war curtailed the campaign.

The social highlight of the season from 1909 onwards was the annual match against the staff of Clarefield House, residence of Mr and Mrs V. E. Litkie. Head Gardener and cricket club committee member Mr W. Hulbert would organise the teams which would often stretch to as many as sixteen a side. The Green always ended up on the losing side thanks in part to their star all rounder George Hunt being obliged to play for his employers.

Up to 200 guests would come along to watch, including some who travelled from London. As well as the cricket, entertainment was provided by the Maidenhead Military band, an egg and spoon race and a tug of war. A splendid tea would be followed by a stroll around the beautiful gardens. The evening would then feature a smoking concert at which the Litkie household would sing and dance. The occasion would end with captain Tommy Musselwhite proposing a vote of thanks before leading his team in three cheers for the hosts.

At the 1913 match, founding club secretary E.J. Piercy was presented with a clock for his twenty years of service, in itself an acknowledgement of the way the club was now firmly established.

The club's year of majority in 1914 saw it assert its role in the community by petitioning the local parish council to protect and preserve the cricket common under the Village Green Act. This would prohibit vehicles from driving across the pitch and damaging it.

Although league form was poor the Green notched up some notable friendly victories, including a home win over Tooting and a triumphant trip to Gorrington Park in South London to beat Brixton St. Pauls.

Following Britain's declaration of war on August 4th, there was one final match report in the Maidenhead Advertiser. Appropriately Pinkneys travelled to parish rivals Cookham Dean on Saturday August 8th for a Holyport Cricket League match. With only seven players able to make the short trip, the Green collapsed to thirteen all out in response to the Dean's total of 82.

However the stand out performance of the match was by George Hunt who took nine wickets. He then volunteered for the Wiltshire Regiment as part of Kitchener's New army and was killed in action on the Somme Battlefield on 20th November 1916. He is commemorated on the Thiepval memorial, and also alongside Arthur Barnes, his team mate in that final match at Cookham Dean, on the War Memorial at the church of St. James the Less in Stubbings.



Statistical Appendix

Opponents 1900-14	Knowl Hill	North Town Working Men
Boyne Hill	Lane End	Parkwood
Brixton St. Pauls	Little Marlow	Spencer's XI
Burnham	Littlewick Green	Stubbings
Cookham Dean	Maidenhead Post Office	Taplow
Cooper's XI	Maidenhead PSA	Taplow Station
Cox Green	Marlow Institute	Tooting C.I.
Crazies Hill	Marlow Working Men	Waltham St. Lawrence
Holypport	Mr. Litkie's XI	Wasps
Hurley	Mr. Tyser's XI	White Waltham

Summary of known results

Season	P	W	D	T	L	% Win
1900	6	4	0	0	2	67%
1901	6	3	0	0	3	50%
1902	8	4	1	0	3	50%
1903	11	8	0	0	3	73%
1904	13	9	0	0	4	69%
1905	8	5	0	0	3	63%
1906	14	9	0	1	4	64%
1907	10	5	0	0	5	50%
1908	7	5	0	0	2	71%
1909	17	10	1	6	0	59%
1910	14	11	1	0	2	79%
1911	14	8	1	0	5	57%
1912	15	8	0	0	7	53%
1913	6	1	0	0	5	17%
1914	9	5	0	0	4	56%
Summary	158	95	4	7	52	60%

Statistical Highlights

	For	V
Highest	198 v Spencers 23/6/1904	177-7 by Boyne Hill 8/5/1909
Lowest	13 v Cookham Dean 8/8/1914 (Batted 4 men short)	10 by Littlewick Green 11/5/1908
	14 v Boyne Hill 8/5/1909 & v Cooper's XI 12/6/1909	11 by Cookham Dean 11/6/1904
Highest Innings	61* E. Rackstraw v Cookham Dean 9/7/1910, 59 C. Ayres v Cookham Dean 27/6/1908, 53 C. Rackstraw v Marlow Working Men 29/6/1908	

Best Bowling	9 wkts S. Musselwhite v Taplow Station 15/7/1905, R. Booker v Parkwood 18/6/1910, G. Hunt v Cookham Dean 8/8/1914	
Biggest Win	141 runs v Spencers 23/6/1904, Innings & 29 runs v Cox Green 27/5/1905	
Biggest Defeat	163 runs by Boyne Hill 8/5/1909, Innings & 48 runs by Waltham St. Lawrence 11/6/1902	
Notable	H. Sadler 52 & 5 wkts v Hurley 20/8/1910	
Performances:	T. Musselwhite 4 wickets in 4 balls v Parkwood 19/6/1909	

Holyport Cricket League Final Tables

	1909	Pts			1910	Pts			1911	Pts			1911	Pts
1	Knowl Hill	19		1	Parkwood	24		1	Parkwood	23		1	Holyport	12
2	Coopers	15		2	Pinkneys Green	21		2	Holyport	20		2	Littlewick Green	8
3	Holyport	14		3	Wargrave	20		3	Pinkneys Green	16		3	Pinkneys Green	4
3	Pinkneys Green	14		4	Knowl Hill	14		4	Littlewick Green	10		4	Hurley	0
5	Parkwood	12		5	Holyport	12		5	Hurley	7				
6	Littlewick Green	9		6	Littlewick Green	11		6	Cookham Dean	6				
7	Cookham Dean	1		7	Cookham Dean	6		7	Knowl Hill	2				
				8	Holyport	2								

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