

Pinkneys Green Cricket Club Between the Wars



The twenty years between the two world wars saw Pinkneys Green develop into a cricket club recognisable by today's standards. In the 1920s the focus was on the pitch in overwhelmingly winning performances, accompanied by the introduction of a second eleven and a junior team. The 1930s saw the club move to the fore in Maidenhead society by building a pavilion thanks to the generosity of local patrons, and attract supporters numbering four figures to watch their annual run in the evening cricket cup.

Cricket resumed in the summer following the 1918 armistice which ended World War One, five years after the club had closed for the duration. Speaking in the early 1970s to then President "Johnny" Walker, George Barnes recalled, on his return from wartime service, how the members worked to restore cricket to the Green. Firstly grazing cattle were moved away, then the Lord of the Manor was approached to grant permission to instal posts in sockets which could be connected with wire to protect the square. The cattle, belonging to Mr Randall who owned the Rosemary Dairy in Bix Lane, would regularly return, meaning the players often had a pre match duty to clear the pitch of their deposits.

ESTABLISHED AND AUCION VENDOR, MARYOW.
Pinkneys Green Cricket Club.
A MEETING will be held at the WAGGON and HORSES on TUESDAY NEXT, APRIL 1st, at 7.30, for the purpose of re-starting the above Club. All interested in Cricket are invited to attend.
BERT NEEVE.

The club base remained the Waggon & Horses with landlord Bert Neeve advertising the intention for play to resume in the Maidenhead Advertiser. He was soon replaced as licensee by Walter Piercey, the son of the club's founding secretary Edward.

The season started on May 17th in front of "a fair sprinkling of spectators" with a heavy defeat at Littlewick Green who fielded a very strong team including the Care brothers from the Maidenhead club. Two weeks later cricket returned to Pinkneys Green with a match against a team of discharged soldiers from Bray Court Hospital. In "delightful weather" and fortified by "an enjoyable tea provided by Walter Piercey", Pinkneys won by sixteen runs.

As the 1920s began there was a generational shift in personnel. Initially Tommy Musselwhite remained the club captain, and George Barnes developed into the team's leading all rounder hitting a record score of 97 in 1925 against Colonel Watson's XI. Musselwhite was supported in the bowling attack by the prolific Jim Crook whilst the club's batting was greatly improved by the influence of Reverend Outram, the Vicar of Stubbings, who brightened up many an afternoon with his attacking stroke play.



Off the field Edgar Mosenthal, a South African merchant who lived at Walnuts opposite the Stag & Hounds, became the club's leading patron and president. Whit Monday & August Bank Holiday remained the big occasions of the summer with matches occasionally extending to 12 a side.

A second eleven, sometimes referred to as the A or B team was introduced in 1920, a season which saw the Marlow Working Men's Club bowled out for just 3 runs at the Green. The following season, Henry Young, having already scored 33 with the bat, became the first bowler to take all ten wickets in an innings in a match against Taplow.

New players continued to come to the fore throughout the decade, including Harry Distin, future chairman Brad Dann, Mac Greig, Harry Plummer and Harry Farr. The latter came to prominence when a Junior team was launched in 1925. The playing strength in this period is reflected by the high percentage of recorded matches won, reaching 76% in 1927 and 84% in 1922. Hurley were particular whipping boys, being dismissed for 8 in 1923 and 9 in 1930 despite fielding 12 men, 8 of whom fell to the bowling of the towering Dann.



Pinkneys Green leaving by Mr. W. F. Carter's pair-horse brake for a match at Littlewick, 1928.

The following decade saw playing fortunes decline overall in spite of great strides being made off the pitch. This improvement was led by an influx of the middle classes from as far afield as London, who moved to reside in the attractive new housing in the vicinity of the Green. They included accountant Alf Belcham, and retired school teacher George Stevens who both moved to properties in Pinkneys Road and served a spell as club secretary. This societal shift was reflected in 1930 by Waggon & Horses landlord (and cricket club treasurer) Walter Piercey successfully applying for a licence to serve wine.

With Mosenthal often abroad on business the role of club President was also fulfilled by local sports patron Ernest Dunkels and Royal Silversmith Charles Newbegin whilst the Palmer family of Huntley & Palmer biscuit fame, were regular spectators having moved to Fernhurst in Lee Lane. Their presence led to the appearance of future England captain Freddie Brown on the Green. Born in Peru, Brown was educated at St. Piran's school and after making his first class debut for Cambridge University, played for Surrey. He received the first of 22 England caps in 1931 and was a 1933 Wisden Cricketer of the Year for doing the first class double of scoring 1,000 runs and taking 100 wickets. In 1937 he was engaged to Marjorie Palmer and in 1938 he scored 68 not out for the Gentlemen's XI against Pinkneys Green on August Bank Holiday, an innings which included 14 fours. The engagement was broken off the following year.



Mr. F. R. Brown, the Surrey bowler, who has played for England against All India and New Zealand, with his fiancée, Miss Marjorie Elizabeth Palmer, at her home at Pinkneys Green, Berks.

In 1933 the club formally opened its first pavilion. It was built in sections at the home of Vice-President Mr Theodosius at nearby Moorlands, and although necessary to provide a permanent base to store equipment rather than rely on the continued benevolence of the landlord of the Waggon & Horses, its proposed move to the ground provoked the ire of the Commons Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society. With the season fast approaching, the society wrote a letter to Cookham Parish Council in April stating that the erection of the pavilion would be unlawful without the express permission of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Council voted to write to the Lord of the Manor (Odney Estates) saying that they wished to withdraw their consent to the new pavilion. Major-General Price-Davies replied saying he would do so. Fortunately at the next meeting Colonel Ashwanden moved:

“That this council is in entire sympathy with the Pinkneys Green Cricket club in their desire to erect a pavilion on the ground used by them, and resolve that this council raise no objection to the erection of this temporary structure, conditionally on a written understanding being given by the Cricket Club to the Parish Council that should the necessity arise the building will be removed on demand.”

Mr Pigott seconded the motion which was then unanimously approved. Thus the pavilion was officially opened on 6th May by Edgar Mosenthal who called it a “red letter day in the annals of the club”, with the only blot on the occasion being an easy win for opponents Holyport.

This proved to be the end of the influence of the Parish Council on the club’s affairs as the following year, Pinkneys Green was incorporated into the borough of Maidenhead. This event was commemorated with a match against the Maidenhead corporation at the club



Photo]

[Smith & Wheeley, Maidenhead.

Pinkneys Green Cricket Team, with Mr. C. E. Theodosius (a vice-president), Mr. Geo. Stevens who presented the bat to H. Farr, the Rev. Dr. J. A. Nairn (Vicar of Stubbings), and Mr. G. A. Harrison.

The match was watched by “a large and representative gathering of villagers, members of the town council and supporters of both teams”. These included town patron Lord Desborough who declined to speak as he “wanted to see the match”.

Speaking in the absence of President Mosenthal, Mr Theodosius said to loud applause “they in Pinkneys Green did not suffer from any inferiority complex; he did not think he need stress the fact that they were the beauty

spot of the neighbourhood, and therefore they had great pride to be associated with Maidenhead and they were proud for Maidenhead to be associated with them. They were proud of themselves and proud of their team. They meant not only to be the best of the beauty spots around Maidenhead, but they meant to have the best cricket team of the whole lot”.

The corporation batted first and closed their innings on 115 at tea. Further speeches ensued with Chairman Brad Dann thanking the ladies for providing tea, and Secretary George Stevens presenting Harry Farr with a bat for leading the club averages for three seasons in a row. Finally Lord Desborough revealed he was heading up to Trent Bridge to see Australia play next week and would “draw the attention of the English selection committee that they need not go very far to get a representative team to play the Australians”. Pinkneys Green began their reply at 5:30 and “strained every nerve” in their run chase only to fall short by 4 runs.

The 1934 season also saw the club play occasional Sunday matches for the first time. The subject of Sunday play had provoked much debate on the pages of the Maidenhead Advertiser since oddly Thames Valley (now Maidenhead) Rugby Club took the plunge by hosting a cricket match on the sabbath. With many pointing out the hypocrisy that a Sunday regatta was socially acceptable but cricket was not, most local clubs began to play across the weekend in the 1930s. Sunday matches at the Green often had something of a festival air, with many teams travelling out from London for the day, the most notable being Mocatra, a team of taxi drivers.

Cricket of a more competitive nature was provided by the Maidenhead Cricket Cup which was created in 1924 by Maidenhead County Boys School Headteacher Eric Brooks. It became known as the Julian Cup after the son of Lord Desborough who had been killed in World War One. Keen to popularise the sport, Brooks designed it as a midweek competition which would make use of the long summer evenings in June and enable works teams and scratch elevens to take part as well as established clubs. Its key innovation was the Julian rule which forced batsmen to retire after twelve overs to ensure as many of the team had an innings as possible and made the most of their time at the crease. This rule provoked much controversy amongst some traditional elements of the cricketing establishment, and indeed the entire concept of cup cricket was anathema to some. Nevertheless the competition soon became an established part of the local sporting calendar with Pinkneys Green one of its leading competitors in the 1930s.

The club first entered in 1928 and in 1931 made the first of six semi-final appearances in eight seasons. Two low scoring wins over St. Marys and Nicholson’s Brewery with Brad Dann taking six and five wickets respectively set up a last four tie against Taplow at Maidenhead United’s York Road ground which ended in a convincing 69 run defeat. Twelve months later Pinkneys did a little better with the margin of defeat closed to 27 runs in a semi-final against St. Marys played at the County Boys School. In 1933, a spell of 6-26 by A. Gough in front of the new pavilion at the Green led to a win over Johnson & Johnson to set up a third successive semi-final, with Holyport providing the opposition. The match ended with the scores tied at 30 apiece, captain Harry Plummer taking 5 wickets. The importance of the Julian rule was reflected by Holyport’s top scorer W. Thorpe being forced to retire having scored 15. This led to a replay at Pinkneys a week later, Thorpe again top scoring on 25 with Holyport’s total of 80 this time being too many for the home team, R. Young taking 6-17 as the Green fell to 33 all out.

By the time of next semi-final appearance in 1935, husband and wife Dennis and Joyce Piercey had become chairman and secretary, the latter replacing Stubbings School teacher Harry Roberts, who along with brothers Sid and Jack, were club stalwarts in this era. The journey to the last four was completed thanks to six wickets from W. Tull in the first round to beat Cookham Dean, and five in the quarter-final from Dann to overcome St. Marys. The semi-final tie returned to a neutral venue, this time it was the Nicholson’s Brewery ground on Alwyn Road. Playing the Old Maidonians (former County Boys School pupils), a “splendid” innings of 28 by F.

Woodbridge set up a challenging Pinkneys Green total of 104 which was nevertheless comfortably reached for the loss of five wickets before dusk, despite the match not starting until 7 pm.

In 1937, Pinkneys had a chance to avenge this defeat, when at the fifth attempt they finally won a semi-final to go through and play Old Maidonians in the Cup final, once again at the Nicholson's Brewery ground.



The tie set a record, becoming the first final to take three evenings to complete. Starting on Thursday July 15th, Old Maidonians won the toss and elected to bat, but only four overs were completed before play was abandoned due to rain. When the match continued on Tuesday July 20th, "something like three thousand people" saw Old Maidonians reach a total of 144 in 2 hours. The Green's reply got off to a bad start in failing light as they fell to 17 for 3 when stumps were drawn at 9:15 pm. The following evening Pinkney's Green resumed their chase but were bowled out for 96 to give Old Maidonians a record third Cup Final win. Lord Desborough presented runners up bronze medals to captain Ernie Weller and his team, with organiser Eric Brooks complimenting Carter and Newbold on carrying their bat throughout their four innings in the competition that season.

The following year both sides returned to Nicholson's ground to meet for a third consecutive season, this time in the semi-final once more. Pinkneys had reached this stage following a win at Cookham Dean by the barest margin of a single run, which owed much to the performance of W. Hodges who scored 14 (retired) and was complemented for his steady bowling. It was not to be a case of third time lucky against Old Maidonians though who won by six wickets.

Old Maidonians.	
B. Baldwin, b Dann.....	8
G. Davis, st Weller, b Dann.....	22
E. H. Foster, b Cartland.....	17
W. H. Jennings, retired per rule.....	16
R. W. Heritage, retired per rule.....	22
D. O. White, c Plummer, b Dann....	4
A. R. Dunnings, b Plummer.....	0
H. W. Baldwin, not out.....	19
D. J. Veltom, c & b Cartland.....	8
E. H. Littleton, b Plummer.....	3
Extras	13
Total	144
Pinkneys Green.	
A. Smith, run out.....	5
R. Carter, retired per rule.....	7
F. Cartland, c Veltom, b Davis.....	3
A. E. Newbold, retired per rule.....	14
S. Perry, b Davis.....	0
H. Plummer, c & b Heritage.....	2
E. Weller, c Jennings, b Foster.....	12
L. Blick, not out.....	24
B. Dann, b Heritage.....	0
T. Wakeling, c Foster, b Davis.....	6
J. Bunyan, c Foster, b Davis.....	4
Extras	19
Total	96
Umpires: Messrs. A. Spooner (Cricket Club Conference) and A. Rockall.	

Despite a successful season in 1937, club treasurer George Stevens was moved to write to the Advertiser to make a public appeal to horse riders to “respect the ground and its environs” so as not to waste the “money, time and labour” spent by members to ensure the pitch was fit for play.

The decade closed with two notable individual performances. In 1938 Harry Plummer recorded the club’s first century when he hit 110 not out against Lendrums Ltd. To complete a tremendous all round performance, Plummer also took all five of the opposition wickets to fall. For this feat he was awarded Freddie Brown’s bat and a sash in club colours. The following year 16 year old Norman Gardner took a hat trick and returned a final analysis of 3-2-1-7 in an eleven run win over Hewen’s Garage. His feat was mentioned in the club’s annual summary:

“The season ended one week earlier than anticipated owing to the national emergency and most of the members are now serving their country, many in the armed forces, the others in civil defence. The earnest wish of the club is that they will be able to return and renew their associations with King Willow in the not far distant future, when the war is over for all time”

Bibliography

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