

MITCHAM AT WAR

Mitcham Cricket and the Cricket Green

Material prepared for Open House Day, Mitcham Cricket Pavilion, Saturday 20 September, 2014

MITCHAM GOES TO WAR

FRIDAY AUGUST 7, 1914
WALLINGTON & CARSHALTON ADVERTISER

We in Mitcham are nothing if not patriotic, and the outbreak of the terrible European war gives us an opportunity, which we would gladly dispense with, of proving our patriotism. Not only are many Mitchamites to be found in the regular forces of the Crown, naval and military, but the Territorial Army takes many, while not a few, I understand, have volunteered. That is the true British spirit, and there is no doubt that the real character of a nation is tested at times of crisis such as this. That England will prove its worth nobody doubts, and we in Mitcham are proud to send some of the gallant men to take part in upholding the nation's integrity.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 7 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

CRICKET NOTES

With the nation engaged in a life and death struggle it is evident that recreations of all sorts must give way to the sterner necessities of life, and it would be idle to assume that anybody is interested in cricket or football at the present time. We all have something much more serious to occupy our thoughts, and hence my reference to last week's games will be of the briefest nature.

CRICKET IS SUSPENDED AT LORDS

AUGUST 21, 1914
WALLINGTON & CARSHALTON ADVERTISER

NO CRICKET AT LORD'S - The following notice was issued by the M.C.C. on Friday afternoon - "Owing to the war, and inasmuch as every sound man of England will be engaged in some service for his country in her hour of need, no cricket will be played at Lord's in September next. - F.L.Lacey, secretary. M.C.C.

CRICKET CONTINUES ON THE GREEN

AUGUST 22, 1914

On 22 August 1914, Mitcham played Merion, a visiting team from Philadelphia, on the Green.

The Mitcham team comprised: H Lacy, P Palmer, T Potter, W Beardsmore, W.B.Bullock , A Green, R Upton, G Brett, W Lunt, A E Foster, D Sullivan

Mitcham made 235 for 9 declared, off 73 overs. Beardsmore top scored with 71, Green made 60 and Palmer 37.

Merion made the target fairly easily, making 237 for 4 off 47 overs.



The D Sullivan playing for Mitcham was Dennis Sullivan, who played first-class cricket for Surrey and Glamorgan. Born in Mitcham in 1883, Dennis didn't make his first-class debut until 1914, when he was aged 31. For many years he was Herbert Strudwick's understudy at Surrey. Then, after the War, having played only 8 times, he moved to Glamorgan, for whom he kept wicket from 1922 to 1928. His profile on *Cricket Archive* says - despite being in his forties - he proved to be a capable gloveman, and a dour lower order batsman.

AUGUST 27, 1914

LETTER FROM W.G.GRACE IN "THE SPORTSMAN"

"I think the time has arrived when the county cricket season should be closed, for it is not fitting at a time like this that able-bodied men should be playing cricket by day and pleasure-seekers look on. I should like to see all first-class cricketers of suitable age set a good example and come to the help of their country without delay in its hour of need."

REPORT OF THE GAME vs MERION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

A VISIT FROM PHILADELPHIANS - The Mitcham Cricket Club entertained the Merion C.C. of Philadelphia, on Saturday in an all-day match, and a most enjoyable game resulted in a victory for the visitors. Some really good cricket was seen and the cricket was played in a fine sporting spirit, the Mitcham men keeping the field during a heavy shower towards the end of the afternoon, this enabling the visitors to win. The game was watched by a large crowd, and amongst those present were Mr G.Farewell Jones, President of the Mitcham Club; Dr.Love, Mr G.J.Poston; Mr Rupert Upton, and Mrs Beardmore. The teams sat down to lunch and short, complimentary speeches were made. Mitcham scored 235 for nine wickets and declared, and the Merion Club passed this total with only four wickets down.

MITCHAM TO HAVE A TOWN GUARD AND AN ASTUTE MOVE BY THE RIFLE CLUB

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 1914
WALLINGTON & CARSHALTON ADVERTISER

After all we are to have our village guard, and Dr Cato Worsfold will be in it. But it is not to be called a village guard; instead it is "Town Guard" and the move has been made by our excellent rifle club on the invitation of the High Sherriff of the County. Just exactly what the duties of the local guard will be I do not know, but musketry plays an important part In order to join the guard it is necessary to become a member of the rifle club - an astute move on which the organisers are to be congratulated.

What I like about the Town Guard is the opportunity it gives to those who regard themselves as "old crocks". I am not given to scepticism but I have felt inclined to doubt the words of some of my public friends lately. Many of them - not in Mitcham, of course - have been almost falling over each other in their enthusiasm to tell the young men what their duty is in the present crisis. And most of them have said they wished they were younger so that they could go and fight. Well although they cannot join the colours they can join the Town Guard, and it is up to the "over thirties" to give a lead to the younger men who have not already responded to the call of King and country.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

FOOTBALL TO CONTINUE - The Football League have decided that the game should be continued, and they confidently appeal for support as the War Office opinion is favourably inclined to the continuation of sport. The league decided upon this course at a special meeting of their Management Committee held in London on Monday. They justified their action by saying that scores of thousands had gone to the war and that thousands must follow, yet millions would be left behind, and for them to sit and mourn would aggravate the nation's sorrow.

"Any national sport" (the statement continues) "which could minimise the grief, help the nation to bear it's sorrow, relieve the oppression of continuous strain, and save the people from panic and undue depression is a great national asset".

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

SURREY MATCHES ABANDONED - At the special meeting of the S.C.C.C. held on Monday to consider the propriety of continuing to play cricket during the present national crisis, it was unanimously decided to abandon all the remaining Surrey fixtures after the conclusion of the Surrey v Gloucester match.

SURREY'S CHAMPIONSHIP

Cricket had continued for a while after the outbreak of war, but when Surrey called a halt this left 2 fixtures unplayed - against Leicestershire and Sussex.

Surrey had a clear, though not unbridgeable, lead in the table over their nearest rival, Middlesex. In November, at a meeting of the MCC Committee, it was agreed that the title was theirs. Pelham Warner, representing Middlesex, stated that his county had no objection.

Surrey had won 15 of 26 matches played, with only 2 defeats and 9 draws.

Jack Hobbs was at the peak of his form, scoring an aggregate 2499 runs at an average 62.47. Bill Hitch and Tom Rushby both took over 100 wickets. Percy Fender, later injured in the War, took 82 wickets and contributed 740.

FRIDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER, 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

WAR INCIDENTS IN MITCHAM

On Tuesday night the Gas Works Military Band gave a concert on the Fair Green Concerts are to be given next week on the Cricket Green

The Mitcham C.C. should have held its "week" this week, but it was decided to abandon the games and the remaining fixtures of the season. The first match of the week was played, as it was not possible to postpone it in time. The visitors were the young amateurs of a Surrey, and the game ended in a draw. The decision to close down for the season was due to expressions of opinion from influential supporters of the club. On Saturday R. Abel was to have brought a team, and the match was set aside for Groundsman Lovell's benefit, so the decision will be an unfortunate one for him unless the wealthy supporters of the club see to it that he does not lose what he has earned. We hope they will.

FRIDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

RECRUITING CONCERT - The second concert arranged by the Gas Works Military Band took place on Wednesday night in the Vestry Hall. It should have been held on the Cricket Green, but owing to the heavy downpour of rain, it had to be abandoned. There was a capital attendance

FRIDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1914
MITCHAM ADVERTISER

TOWN GUARD - Quite a large number of people turned out on Saturday to witness a parade of the Town Guard on the Cricket Green, but the real function of the evening had to be postponed. It had been arranged that Mrs G.J. Poston should distribute the badges - the only uniform of the corps - but they were not delivered in time; hence the disappointment of all.



**MITCHAM TOWN GUARD
INSPECTED BY THE HIGH SHERIFF
INTERESTING PRESENTATION**

The historic Cricket Green has been the scene of many gatherings, but never before has it formed the background of such a night as was seen on Saturday. A large crowd had gathered to witness the inspection of the Town Guard by the High Sheriff of Surrey (Mr J. St Loe Strachey) and it may be said at once that the function was a great success headed by the band from the Holborn Schools, the Guard marched to the Cricket Green, on which a platform had been erected and gaily decorated with flags - those of our allies being prominent in the scheme of decoration.

MITCHAM CRICKET CLUB 1914-18

It was difficult to sustain much organised cricket on the Green during the War years. The Club survived thanks to the efforts of a few stalwart supporters. Robert Chart had retired as Secretary and was succeeded by Burn Bullock Snr; Jack Pillinger, nearing the end of a distinguished playing career, became involved in administration; Howard Lacy who became Club Captain; plus Dr Love and A E Cubison.

The services of a groundsman were dispensed with.

Few subscriptions were paid, and at one time in 1916 the Club's bank account stood at only £3.10s. 2d. The landlords of the pavilion, the brewers Nalder and Collyer, were persuaded to excuse the payment of 1 year's rent.

A number of matches were arranged as Howard Lacy's XI, but most of the games that were played were between military units stationed in the area, local munitions workers and the Special Police.

Source: 300 years of Mitcham cricket, Tom Higgs, 1985

AFTER THE WAR - CRICKET RESUMES ON THE GREEN

When cricket re-started in 1919 it got off to a flying start with a visit from the touring Australian Imperial Forces XI, which included future Test stars in H L Collins, Jack Gregory and J M Taylor.

The game was played on 13 September. The Mitcham team comprised 16 players: Burn Bullock, H Parkes, F Boxall, W S Stirling, H Smith, J Cafferty, Dennis Sullivan, W H Davis, W Lunt, A E Foster, A R Weyer, J Pullinger, Ernie Bale, P S Williams, H Lacey, E Cameron.

Mitcham were all out for exactly 200. Lacey top scored with 39. For the Australian team, Collins took 7 for 57.

The visitors made the target for the loss of only 5 wickets, with Gregory making 85, and Collins not out on 33.



The Mitcham team against Australian Imperial Forces. Howard Lacy is seated centre, with cap; Burn Bullock, seated, right; Ernie Bale, standing, far right; Dennis Sullivan, on ground, middle.

THE PLAYERS

WALLACE JAMES HOWSE

(from the Mitcham Advertiser, 16 October 1914)

MITCHAM HEROES

The latest case reported is Sergt. J.H.Howse, of the 2nd Battalion Worcester Regiment, a young and highly efficient officer, who was killed in the battle of the Aisne on 2nd October. Sergt. Howse was only 22, and he will no doubt be remembered by many Mitchamites. He was a son of the late Mr Alfred Howse, and was a telegraph boy at Mitcham Post Office, leaving that to join the Army. He was also a member of the Mitcham C.C. and was a very promising cricketer. His success in the Army was rapid, and he would shortly have become Colour Sergeant but for his untimely death. He was hit by shrapnel in the spine, and he was buried in the cemetery at Lemans by the Army Chaplain. Howse was offered a position at the Army base, but preferred to be in the fighting line. The sympathy of all will be extended to the relatives of the gallant young soldier who died a hero's death.

Note - Howse is commemorated on the Mitcham war memorial, though there is some confusion over his name. In the newspaper article it appears as J.H. Howse; on the war memorial he is recorded as J.W. Hoswe.

BURN BULLOCK - 3 years in France with the Royal Flying Corps



Burn Bullock scored his first century on the Green for Mitcham at the age of 15 in 1912. Within 2 years he was a regular for the 1st XI. The War interrupted his cricketing career, but he returned to Mitcham in 1918. He joined Surrey as a professional in 1921, but turned out mainly for the 2nds.

Towards the end of the 1920s he returned to Mitcham and in due course took over as licensee of the Kings Head - the pub next to the pavilion and which is now named after him, *The Burn Bullock*.

Aside from playing for the Club, Burn served as Hon, Secretary and Match Secretary. He brought the County side to the Green for an annual charity match in aid of the Wilson hospital, and worked tirelessly for the Club.

HERBERT STRUDWICK - worked in a South London munitions plant

Born in Mitcham, Strudwick learnt his cricket on a Mitcham Cricket Green. He went on to play 674 first-class matches, mainly for Surrey, represent England in 28 Tests, and make 1493 dismissals over his career. He is renowned as a brilliant wicket-keeper, and for his fair play and modesty.

After retiring as a player, he became a coach and later Surrey scorer. He retained an affection for Mitcham Green and was a Vice-President and Life Member of the Mitcham Club.

WILLIAM HITCH - joined the Sportsman's Battalion

John William "Bill" Hitch was born in Radcliffe, Lancashire in 1886. He was playing for a club in Cambridgeshire when he was spotted by the Surrey batsman Tom Hayward and recommended to the Oval. He made his debut for Surrey in 1907 and soon established himself as one of the fastest bowlers in the first-class game. He was also an aggressive lower order batsman who became a great favourite of the crowd.



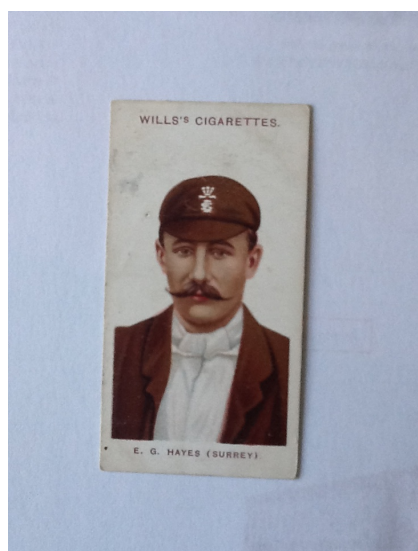
Hitch played 7 Tests for England. He toured Australia in 1911-12.

In 1913 Hitch took 174 wickets, including seven hauls of 10 in a match, and was named a Wisden Cricketer of the Year for 1914. He maintained his form in 1914, his wickets helping Surrey to the top of the Championship table before the War brought the season to an end.

Following the War, he had a good season in 1919, but thereafter he lost something of his speed, though he compensated in 1921 somewhat scoring over 1,000 runs at an average of over 30.

Hitch retired as a player in 1925, but played Lancashire League cricket for a while before becoming coach at Glamorgan. Later, he was coach for the Princess Wilhelmina C.C. of Holland, and as part of a tour in 1952, brought the side to a game on Mitcham Green.

E.G.HAYES - joined the Sportsman's Battalion



Ernest Hayes was born in Peckham, 1876. In his time he was probably every bit as famous as Hobbs and Hayward.

A right-handed batsman, Hayes generally batted No.3. He was a regular in the Surrey side for 15 years up to the War. He scored over 1,000 runs in every season from 1899 to 1914. He played 5 Tests for England, 4 against South Africa and 1 against Australia.

Aged 37 at the outbreak of war, Hayes joined the Sportsman's

Battalion immediately the cricket season closed. He is listed as No.347 in the roll of original members.

After training at Hornchurch, the Battalion was sent to France in November 1915. Hayes, having taken a commission on 24 August 1915, arrived as part of a reinforcement team on 20 May 1916. The regiment was then at Souchez; moved to Carency in a June; and was on the Somme in July.

Hayes was injured on more than one occasion. One time an exploding shell caused him to be buried under earth and debris for 45 minutes. Another, he was lucky to not be more badly hurt from shrapnel across the face.

In September 1916 Hayes was promoted to Second Lieutenant and transferred from the Royal Fusiliers to the General List for duty with a trench mortar battery. By June 1917 he was acting Lieutenant and second-in-command.

Early in 1918 he returned to the Royal Fusiliers. He was demobilised in March 1919.

He earned the Victory Medal and the British War Medal, was mentioned in dispatches twice, and was awarded the military version of the MBE.

Following the War, Hayes returned to Surrey, and played one more season before retiring. Years of slip fielding had damaged his hands and he now found the demands of fielding difficult. However, he still went to Leicestershire as a coach and even then was persuaded to play again at the age of 50.

In all cricket he scored 27,318 runs with 48 centuries and took 515 wickets.

Source - Ernest Hayes, Brass in a Golden Age, by Keith Booth, 2008

ANDY SANDHAM - joined the Sportsman's Battalion

Sandham served with the Regiment's 23rd Battalion in Northern France, winning the 1914-15 star, British War Medal and Allied Victory Medal.

While with the battalion, he continued to play some sport. Whilst training at Romford he represented the 1st Battalion in football against the 2nd Battalion. He represented the battalion, along with Hayes, at Lords in June 1915 against the Hon. Artillery Co.

Born in Streatham, Andy Sandham joined Mitcham C.C. At the age of 18 in 1908. He was a regular for the 1st XI for a couple of years, before being recommended to a Surrey and joining the professional ranks around 1910.

He formed a fantastic opening partnership with Jack Hobbs, though played less for England than he might have - kept out by Herbert Sutcliffe as opener. But in 1929-30, against the West Indies at Bridgetown, he made 325 - the first test triple century.

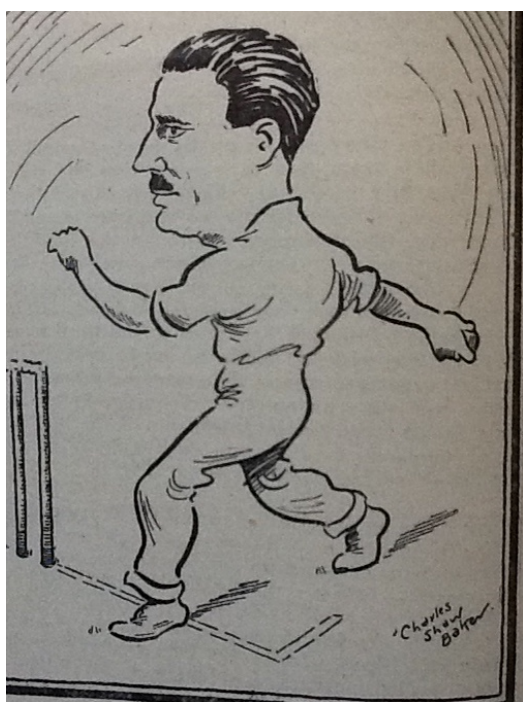
He made his hundredth first-class 100 in 1935.

He retained links with Mitcham throughout his life, and was a Vice President of the Club in his later years.

J. BOULDEN - MERTON CLUB PLAYER WHOSE BEST BOWLING CAME FOR MITCHAM WHILE CONVALSCING FROM WAR INJURIES

FROM "THE CRICKETER" AUGUST 1922

For some twelve seasons Mr.J.Boulden has performed deeds of valour for the well-known Merton Club, whose delightful ground, encircled by trees, stands in the oldest garden village in England.



Mr Boulden relies chiefly on his skill with the ball to disconcert his opponents, but his hard hitting at opportune moments often proves a thorn in the flesh of the opposition, as his 48 in ten minutes against Mitcham a year or two back testifies. Curiously enough, his best bowling feat amongst many was for Mitcham in 1917, when convalescent after injuries sustained in the war. He then captures seven for 26 and six for 19 against a strong Public School side, including G.T.S.Stevens and R.C.Robertson-Glasgow.

The subject of our sketch can be said to have a happy time with sport generally. He captains the Merton Football Club, who were winners of the Surrey A.F.A.Cup, and were finalists in 1921 of the A.F.A. Senior Cup. He also captains the local golf club. An accomplished musician by profession, Mr.Boulden leads a busy life indeed.

WHAT WERE THE SPORTSMEN'S BATTALIONS ?

These unique battalions aimed to recruit sportsmen into service, as it was thought that many of the qualities that made good sportsmen would also make good soldiers.

The battalions, which became the 23rd and 24th Battalion Royal Fusiliers, were formed at the Hotel Cecil on the Strand by a wealthy and influential woman, Mrs Cunliffe-Owen. Allegedly, when she criticised a male friend for not being in khaki he challenged her to raise a Battalion.

A special dispensation was given to enlist men up to the age of 45 - on the basis that the recruits would be of superior fitness. Of course, most who joined were not professional sportsmen, but there were some - aside from cricketers, footballers such as Higgins of QPR, and Jerry Delany, lightweight boxing champion of England.

The concept was popular - over 1500 written applications by September 2014. Initial expectations were for a battalion of 1100 men, and this strength was achieved within 3 weeks. Efforts then went on to raise a second battalion.

All the men who joined were presented with a small silver good luck medallion. It had the Royal Fusiliers and Cunliffe-Owen crests side by side on one face, and on the reverse, "From Cunliffe Owen, October 1914, God guard you."

After training, the battalions embarked to fight in France.

FREDERICK BERTRAM KEY - A CRICKETER'S LAST MESSAGE

Key was a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Prior to the war he had been a member of the Lichfield Cricket Club.

Based on a letter to be sent to his parents in the event of his death, the report of his death in *The Times*, was entitled -

A CRICKETER'S LAST MESSAGE

"If you receive this you will know that I have been bowled out, middle peg. You can be sure, however, that I batted well."