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HORTON KIRBY CRICKET CLUB

The only sports club to have been in existence for the whole of the 100 years is the Horton Kirby Cricket Club which was founded in 1882. Amongst the founder members were the Vicar, the Rev H B Rashleigh and the Rev C Rashleigh.

In those days the Club played in the Westminster Field, which was somewhat unsuitable as the outfield was left uncut and used for grazing cows. Fielding on the boundary must have been hazardous! Consequently, in 1897 the Club decided to move to its present ground in Franks Lane. Conditions of tenure from Franks Hall were generous: £3 3s 0d per year, returned to the Club as a subscription. The only onerous condition was that the pitch should not be in view from the windows of the Hall.

Mr Apted, the groundsmen at Kennington Oval, was asked to quote for laying the pitch but he was too expensive. It was, therefore, laid by Mr Foxley, groundsmen at Bickley Park. Several loads of soil were obtained from Franks Farm and turf from Sir William Hart Dyke of Lullingstone Park. In 1901 a pavilion was erected, a portion of which was “for the use of any ladies who may feel disposed to provide tea”! The weatherboarded building was built by apprentice carpenters from the Homes.

Names of well-known players in the early years of the Club were: Alfred (“Punch”) West - an excellent wicket-keeper and Captain; Alfred and Thomas Hall, who lived at The Forge, Horton Kirby; W (“Till”) Smith - a good bat, who later became an umpire; Jack Dolden - a remarkable bowler, who bowled underarm medium paced “grubs” or “sneaks”; Austin B Keith (Captain for many years after Alfred West) and his brother M W Keith.



Horton Kirby Cricket Team 1901

Originally the Club's headquarters and meeting place was in The Bull public house but, on a change of landlord, it was switched to The Fighting Cocks where the landlord, Jack Lewis, proved to be an amiable host.



The married men's team at the annual cricket match against the single men 1923 (l-r) standing: J Hayward, G Taylor, W Smith, T Stanley, R Jarvis, J Skinner, F Harbour, F Smith. Seated: A Hedges, F Barlow, A Matthews, W Solly, S Wells, T Sewell Photograph courtesy of Lally Broad

In August 1898 M W Keith scored the first century for the Club in an opening partnership of 217 - 0 declared. Another notable performance was by bowler Charles Palmer in 1901. Playing against the London, Chatham and Dover Railway, he had two hat-tricks in the same innings. Less illustriously we read in an old copy of the Kentish Times of how David Fenner, the Horton Kirby shopkeeper, was opening bat for Horton Kirby in 1905 when the whole side was out for 13 runs.

Since those early days the Club has gone from strength to strength. The Presidents of the Club name amongst their numbers Courtenay Fooks, Morris Wheeler, Spencer Gentry and Eric Ovenden. Mr

Fooks used to bring a side down from Gresham's in London, where he worked, for an annual cricket match with refreshments being served in Reynolds Place afterwards.

Whilst President, Spencer Gentry arranged on two consecutive years for the outfield to be rolled by a steam roller hired from Mr Harber, who owned the gravel pits from 1938 until the 1950s.

Leonard Allen Shuter of Kirby Hall, also an early president of the Club, was a Surrey County cricketer.

Dick Scott regularly played for the Club and, in more recent years, six of his eight sons have followed him: Malcolm, Alastair, Ian, Charles and Andrew, all left-handed batsmen, plus right-handed James. At one time there were so many Scotts playing that, in the early 1970s, they raised a team to play against the Club.



The Single men's Team (l-r) standing: A Barlow, C Dorrell, R Lindsay, J Mace, E Waterland, B Starr, B Sims, seated: T Fooks, H Simmons, R Bean, T Relph, W Johnson, front: A Elliott, E Liffer(?) Photograph courtesy of Cricket Club

According to Len Morris, a veteran of the Club, one of their best years was 1977 when the Colts team won the Kent Championship, followed by the South of England Championship. In the National Championship the team was placed fourth. In that year also, 26 youngsters represented Kent Schools.

These days the Club fields no less than five teams: a 1st and 2nd Saturday eleven, a 1st and 2nd Sunday eleven and a Colts' Team. The pavilion has been extended several times, the latest in early 1993 when the bar area was extended - a very necessary facility for a Cricket Club!

It must not be forgotten that there was a South Darenth Cricket Club whose pitch was on land by the river before they had to make way for gravel extraction and fishing lakes. Ray Knowler reminded us that Bill and Ted Dimond and Albert Harter were well-known players for that team as well as the three Mitchell brothers, sons of the butcher in South Darenth.

DARENTH VALE WORKING MEN'S CLUB

On 12th October 1912 the Darenth Vale Working Men's Club was formed by the Directors of the Horton Kirby Paper Mill and was housed in a hall on the site of the present British Legion Hall in Devon Road, South Darenth. The purpose of the Club, as stated by Mr Albert Reed, was to "provide a place for social intercourse and indoor recreation, where games may be played without money stakes". Everything had to be orderly, with no improper language or gambling.

The Club was open to all male mill workers but also to a number of outsiders - 44 in the first year. The idea of extending the Club facilities to other than mill workers was that "by rubbing shoulders with men moving in other spheres, a broadening of intellect and mutual improvement and good feeling might be maintained in the immediate neighbourhood". Among the outsiders in the first year were the stationmaster, two railway clerks, the village postmaster, the curate of Horton Kirby and several tradesmen and artisans of good character.

The Club's meeting place was burned down in the 1950s but by then it had been superseded by the Horton Kirby Paper Mills Sports Club.

HORTON KIRBY PAPER MILLS SPORTS CLUB

This was formed in 1926 and enjoyed an extensive sports ground on the other side of the Viaduct, where Darenth Heathside play today. The ground contained an excellent bowling green, grass and hard tennis courts, football and cricket grounds and spacious pavilions.



*The Paper Mill's Sports Club ground c 1930
Postcard courtesy of Malcolm Scott*

The first annual sports meeting of the Club was held in 1928 and a report thereon is shown over the page. Of interest are the 100 yard races for boys under 20 and girls under 20!

James D Salmon, who came to the district in 1947 and succeeded his father and grandfather as Managing Director of the Mill, recalled that the years after the Second World War were the most successful for the Club. He used to arrange for teams consisting of himself and his friends to play both bowls and tennis against the Mill teams. He also arranged for Murray Wood, the Kent Cricket Captain, to bring a cricket team to play the Mill. On one memorable occasion, a local player by the name of Ludlow hit a cricket ball onto the railway embankment - a considerable strike.

The bowls team was particularly strong, regularly beating the opposition, including representative teams from other mills. The mainstay of the team was George Haskins, who was picked to play for England in 1959. His partner for many years in the Mill team

Horton Kirby Paper Mills Sports Club.

SUCCESSFUL MEETING.

The first annual sports meeting of the Horton Kirby Paper Mills Sports Club took place on Saturday, and, notwithstanding occasional heavy showers, proved a great success. The various events were keenly contested, and the enthusiasm displayed by both competitors and visitors must be regarded as a strong incentive for even greater efforts in the future.

The employees of Horton Kirby Paper Mills enjoy an extensive sports ground in close proximity to the mills. There is an excellent bowling green and grass and hard tennis courts, with spacious pavilions, and facilities for cricket, football, etc. The president of the club is Mr. Wm. Harrison, who, with Mrs. Harrison, attended the sports meeting, being supported by Mr. J. Salmon and Mr. W. C. Nisbett, who are numbered among the vice-presidents. Among the visitors were Mr. Harry Smart, works manager of the Aylesford Mills, and a keen bowler (whose early papermaking experience was associated with Horton Kirby), Mr. Salmon, junr., Mr. Fredk. Gillis, Mr. Stanley J. Gillis, etc.

Mr. James Salmon, the managing director of the mills, takes a keen interest in the social life of the workers. In conversation with a representative of the *Review*, he said they were indebted to Messrs. A. E. Reed and Co., Ltd., and particularly to the personal interest of Mr. Ralph Reed and Mr. Percy Reed, in securing the ground for the recreation of the workers of Horton Kirby Mills.

Successful Competitors.

The proceedings opened by the unfurling of a new flag by Mr. James Salmon. The programme was then carried through well up to time, the successful competitors in the finals being as under:—

100 Yards Scratch (Boys under 20).—1, S. H. C. Acton; 2, W. J. Wills; 3, S. D. Bridgeman.
80 Yards Scratch (Girls under 20).—1, M. Wharton; 2, D. E. Bennett.

100 Yards Scratch.—1, B. Lamb; 2, A. O. Elliott, Jun.; 3, E. F. Boulter.
100 Yards Scratch (Ladies).—1, I. M. Wharton; 2, D. E. Bennett; 3, E. E. Wharton.

220 Yards Scratch.—1, B. Lamb; 2, C. E. Saunders; 3, A. G. Salmon.

50 Yards Potato Race (Ladies).—1, I. M. Wharton; 2, A. E. Barlow; 3, E. E. Wharton.

100 Yards Veterans (40 to 49).—1, A. H. Hutton; 2, S. J. A. Skey; 3, H. R. Burberry.

440 Yards Handicap.—1, B. Lamb; 2, A. G. Salmon; 3, C. E. Saunders.

80 Yards Handicap.—1, B. Lamb; 2, L. K. Hollands.

Throwing the Cricket Ball.—1, A. O. Elliott, Jun.; 2, B. Lamb; 3, T. Relph.

30 Yards Veterans (50 and over).—1, W. Hutton; 2, G. H. Mattock; 3, E. Barlow.

Egg and Spoon Race (Ladies).—1, I. M. Wharton; 2, M. E. Etheridge; 3, I. Wykes.

One Mile Handicap.—1, L. K. Hollands; 2, E. F. Boulter.

Threading the Needle Race (Ladies).—1, I. M. Wharton; 2, A. E. Barlow; 3, B. W. Hammond.

80 Yards Skipping Race (Ladies).—1, D. E. Bennett; 2, I. M. Wharton; 3, B. W. Hammond.

Football Place Kick.—1, T. Relph; 2, S. J. A. Skey; 3, A. O. Elliott, Jun.

Bowls (Singles).—1, F. Taylor; runner-up, J. Haskins.

Lawo Tennis (Singles).—Ladies: A. E. Barlow; runner-up, I. M. Wharton. Men: H. Henry; runner-up, J. S. Copsman.

Three-Legged Race (Ladies).—1, A. E. Barlow and I. M. Wharton; 2, B. W. Hammond and B. Bravery.

Obstacle Race.—1, B. H. Child; 2, G. Lee; 3, G. T. Caller.

High Jump.—1, T. Relph; 2, L. K. Hollands.

Sack Race.—1, T. G. Caller; 2, L. Young; 3, H. M. Ovenden.

Three Miles Handicap.—1, G. Turner; 2, L. K. Hollands; 3, S. J. Turner.

Tug of War.—1, Stoke Hole; runners up, Fitters' Shop.

The donors of the prizes were Messrs. Wm. Harrison, G. A. Pike, H. Lynch-Watson, W. C. Nisbett, J. Salmon, E. W. Allen, W. J.

was Percy Palmer. Harry Simmons and George Palmer were also fine bowlers who played for the County. Janet Carpenter said that as a result of her former father-in-law, Harry Simmons' successes in several All England Championships, she has a good number of presentation cutlery sets - all the same!

According to Ray Knowler, Jack Whitmore, the Paper Mill Club's excellent groundsman, arranged many boxing tournaments which were always popular with local residents.

With the number of employees at the Mill being drastically reduced in recent years, the Sports Club was discontinued in 1968. The tennis courts were turned into a car park, the football pitch is now let to Darenth Heathside in the Kent Winstonlead league and the Horton Kirby Bowls Club now thrives on the old bowling green.



*Horton Kirby Paper Mill's bowling team, August 1954. The chapel and homes can be seen in the background
Photograph courtesy of Fox Photos Ltd*



George Haskins being presented with the Salmon-Watson Challenge Cup by Mrs David Salmon 6th August 1952 Photograph courtesy of Fox Photos Ltd

Horton Kirby Football Team 1924-5 (l-r) standing: J Skinner, E Ward (Sec), D Carcary, T Bennett, R Wingate, J Etheridge, A Barber, W Boyes; kneeling: T Tyson, L Trimmer, P Cunningham, R W Bean, S Couchman, front: L Bean, A Brown



FOOTBALL

There have been a number of football teams in the area since the 1900s. In particular, Horton Kirby Football Club was formed in 1920 and lasted until 1990 when it disbanded for financial reasons. This was seen by many, including all those former players, as a great loss to the villages since the Club had been so successful. Mr P Sargant remembered that during the 1940s and 50s the Horton Kirby Football Club was “winning everything in sight”. Indeed, in June 1950 the Parish Council



Horton Kirby Football Club in its season of total triumph Photograph courtesy of J Parkinson, Dartford

resolved that “a congratulatory letter be sent to Horton Kirby Football Club on its magnificent achievement of playing 40 games without defeat and in winning 4 cups”.

Pete Flewin, a player at that time, remembered with affection Frank Cronk’s input into the Club. Frank joined as a player in 1924/25 and then was its treasurer from 1947 until 1981. He was presented with a radio cassette recorder in recognition of all his work over the years for the Club.

HORTON KIRBY FOOTBALL CLUB
 FOUNDED 1920 AFFILIATED TO K.C.F.A.

DARTFORD LEAGUE
 —DIVISION ~~TWO~~ ONE.

President: ~~A. MORRIS WHEELER, Esq.~~ Major. R. BROWN.

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...26th February.....196 4.

The amended letter heading from 1964, reproduced above shows that the Club had already progressed from Division 2 to Division 1 and shows the Club's officials at that time. R E Harris was the Secretary.

The Club continued to play well and it was particularly sad that it folded at the end of 1989/90 because the Club had that season achieved the double, winning the Dartford League and the Dartford League Cup.

Until 1990, Horton Kirby Football Club consisted of Senior and Junior teams. Horton Kirby Junior Football Club still exists. It is a flourishing club with several teams, the youngest being for 8 year olds.

There are other known teams. For example, Spencer Gentry remembered a team run by his uncle, Albert Neeves, during the 1920s. They used a field on the other side of the river to the Fighting Cocks. Players from those times included Alf Agent, Mr Booth, Dick (Darkie) Barber, Ron



*HKRFC
 1924-25
 taken at the
 back of The
 Fighting Cocks
 Frank Cronk
 is seated second
 right*

Barlow, George Taylor, Mr Haskins, Harry Simmons and Tim Relf.

Many people also remembered the teams from the Homes for Little Boys (although some players were in their late teens and early twenties!) which played in various leagues. Ray Knowler recalled there were six football pitches on the south side of Rabbits Road. Reference was also found in the Kentish Times of 1938 of Horton Kirby School Old Boys team playing in Division IV of the Dartford League.

In the 1960s there was a team called Horton Wanderers with Mr B Hemsley as Secretary. Today, the only senior teams are the Darenth Heathside, mentioned previously and Horton Kirby Sunday Football Club which plays at Westminster Field.

One local footballer well-known to anyone who has supported Charlton Athletic FC is Brian Kinsey who now lives in the parish in Devon Road. Brian, a former Captain of the team, played for Charlton from 1956 to 1971 notching up 418 games.

Today Brian is still totally involved with sports and recreation. As Sevenoaks District Council's Sports Development Officer he is interested in bringing sport and recreation to the youngsters of this and other parishes. He is very keen to help them get onto the first rungs of the sporting ladder.



Brian Kinsey at the Valley 1971

Another local lad who has achieved fame in the world of football is Andy

Roberts who lives in Mallys Place. Andy started his career at Millwall Football Club as a fifteen year-old during the 1989/90 season, playing for the youth team in the South East Counties League. In June 1991 he started a two-year apprenticeship during which he won a winner's medal in the FA Youth Cup, Millwall beating Sheffield Wednesday in the Final.



Andy signed as a full-time pro in September 1991, making his debut in the Millwall first team in April 1992. The 1992/93 season started with Andy making the No. 7 shirt his own. The highlights of that season were undoubtedly the goal he scored at Highbury in the 1-1 draw against Arsenal in the Coca-Cola Cup and winning the Young Player of the Year Award.



Andy Roberts at Millwall in 1993 Photograph courtesy of Tom Morris

His younger brother, Mike, is now also an apprentice at Millwall and even his youngest brother, David, is being hotly pursued by the Lions at the grand old age of 9.



Westminster Mill Grounds showing the tennis courts in the background. Roland Flewitt is "feeding" the topiary bird Photograph courtesy of Wally Millen

TENNIS

Apart from the Horton Kirby Paper Mills Tennis Club, which had a strong team in the 1950s and 60s, there was an even older tennis club at one time in Horton Kirby. This played on two courts in the southern part of Westminster Field between about 1925 and 1938. Names of members known to have played there are Peggy Ovenden, Grace Palmer, Eunice Scott, Rex Perry, Walter Millen and Ken and Myrtle Sims. Adjoining the tennis courts was a croquet lawn. There was also a tennis court in the grounds of Kirby Hall when it was owned by Dr Hilda Clark (daughter of the owner of Clark's shoes).

CROSS COUNTRY

At one time, before the Second World War Oxford University owned land in the district and frequently held their annual Cross Country Race with Cambridge University here. The Kentish Times of 1938 recorded that Tom Fooks, son of Courtenay Fooks, brought the Inter-Varsity Race to this parish.

FISHING

Since the lakes were formed by digging out the gravel, Horton Kirby and South Darenth have been famous for fishing. Fishing is often the only thing known about Horton Kirby by many "outsiders" particularly those from South London. The Dartford and District Angling Preservation Society presides over the lakes, ensuring that they remain well-stocked and not over-fished.

BADMINTON

A Tuesday evening Badminton Club was started by a small group of villagers during the 1970s in the North Downs gym and is still going strong. Members did at one time play in a league but now it is just for fun.

TABLE TENNIS

Possibly the latest arrival on the sports club scene is the Thursday evening table tennis club at the gym in Southdowns. This was started by Tony Marriott-Smith in 1993 and caters for all ages and all abilities. Nigel Archer, publican from the Fighting Cocks and Andy Nicholson, local GP, are both founder members.

BOWLING

As well as the Horton Kirby Bowls Club playing on the old Paper Mills ground, there is now the South Darent Short Mat Bowling Club playing indoors at the Village Hall throughout the year. Formed in

MORE PHOTOS FROM THE ALBUM



*1949-50 Horton Kirby football team with club officials. Morris Wheeler is standing behind the cup.
Photograph courtesy of Frank Tanner*



*Female supporters of the Horton Kirby football team c 1950
Photograph courtesy of Pete Flewin*

*In 1992 the Club inaugurated the Player of the Year Trophy which was won by founder Chairman Bill Griggs (back row, third from the right)
Photograph courtesy of Joan Reeve*

1989, the Club is now thriving with 30 members and has a waiting list. This comparatively new sport is played on a mat 45' x 6', with a block of wood 15" long across the mat at the half-way stage (to ensure bowling with bias, either forehand or backhand). Joan Reeve, the Club Secretary, said that they appreciate the new floor in the Village Hall as the old, uneven one did nothing to help their skills! This enthusiastic Club plays in the Kent League and enters many competitions.

