Cricket clubs in East Hendred date back to before 1837. The earliest record we have of a cricket match involving East Hendred comes from ‘Jackson’s Oxford Journal’ for 12 August 1837. The Hendred Ridgway club played many of its matches on or near the Berkshire Downs above the village, probably the Deer Park at Downs House which was then the home of the Allin family. Possibly the team was made up of men from villages in the area. The report of the 1837 match appeared in the Oxford Journal probably because, firstly, it was played on land belonging to the MP for Abingdon, who would see benefit in the publicity, and secondly it was sufficiently close to Oxford to be of interest to its readership. Thomas Duffield’s fine Georgian Building in Marcham Park is now the residential Denman College belonging to the National Federation of Women’s Institutes. The Match report (unamended) is as follows:

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*On Thursday the 3d inst (1837), the return match at cricket, between the Marcham and Hendred Ridgway Clubs, took place in Marcham Park (by the kind permission of Thos. Duffield, Esq. M.P.) which terminated as follows:-*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Marcham – 1st Innings* | *Marcham 2nd Innings* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Wm. Stone* | *b. by Webb* | *5* |  | *b. by Edinburgh* | *0* |
| *Wm. Trinder* | *c. by J. Hunt* | *1* |  | *st. by ditto* | *16* |
| *James Tame* | *b. by Webb* | *0* |  | *c. by D. Dandridge* | *1* |
| *Wm. Ware* | *b. by ditto* | *8* |  | *b. by Webb* | *5* |
| *G. Goldby* | *b. by ditto* | *0* |  | *b. by D. Dandridge* | *0* |
| *John Stone* | *c. by J. Hunt* | *7* |  | *st. by Webb* | *6* |
| *John Couldrey* | *b. by Webb* | *7* |  | *b. by Edinburgh* | *2* |
| *E. Bradfield* | *b. by Dandridge* | *0* |  | *c. by Hayward* | *11* |
| *Wm. Couldrey* | *b. by ditto* | *0* |  | *b. by Webb* | *0* |
| *James Legg* | *not out* | *1* |  | *not out* | *0* |
| *Wm. Edney* | *c. by J. Hunt* | *10* |  | *c. by F. Dandridge* | *0* |
|  | *Bye* | *1* |  | *Byes* | *2* |
|  | *TOTAL* | *40* |  | *TOTAL* | *43* |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | *Hendred Ridgeway – 1st Innings* | *Hendred Ridgeway 2nd Innings* |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *John Hunt* | *b. by Ware* | *3* |  | *b. by Bradfield* | *0* |
| *Dennis Dandridge* | *b. by Bradfield* | *0* |  | *b. by ditto* | *5* |
| *---------Edinburgh* | *b. by ditto* | *7* |  | *b. by ditto* | *0* |
| *Daniel Dandridge* | *st. by Legg* | *0* |  | *b. by Ware* | *4* |
| *---------Collins* | *b. by Bradfield* | *0* |  | *leg before wicket* | *7* |
| *Joseph Hunt* | *b. by Ware* | *0* |  | *leg before wicket* | *13* |
| *John Hayward* | *b. by Bradfield* | *5* |  | *c. by Ware* | *0* |
| *---------Coleman* | *leg before wicket* | *2* |  | *c. by ditto* | *9* |
| *F. Dandridge* | *c. by Trinder* | *0* |  | *c. by Trinder* | *3* |
| *R. Webb* | *b. by Bradfield* | *0* |  | *b. by Ware* | *8* |
| *G. Shepperd* | *not out* | *0* |  | *not out* | *2* |
|  | *Bye* | *3* |  | *Byes* | *6* |
|  | *TOTAL* | *20* |  | *TOTAL* | *57* |

*The Marcham winning (sic) with five runs to spare.*

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There are some points to note about this match and the report:

First, the scores are low compared with those of modern times, because the quality of the cricket pitch was poor. The lawnmower had been invented only in 1830 and took several years to perfect. The game developed widely in the second half of the eighteenth century, generally on fairly flat land with grazing fallow deer (as at Downs House) or sheep to maintain short-cropped turf.

Second, round-arm bowling (hand below the arm) was legalised in 1835. Previously, only under-arm was allowed; over-arm bowling had to wait until 1864. The six, instead of four, ball over was introduced in the late 1870s.

Third, the reporting is idiosyncratic. A match played in the same year between The Gentlemen and The Players at Lord’s (with similarly low scores) was reported in a way we would recognise today. The scorecard for the local match, however, does not make it clear, for example, who made a catch and who was bowling. There is some internal evidence that all the credit went to the bowler. Also the two ‘leg before wicket’ were not credited to the bowler and the two ‘stumpings’ were credited only to the bowler; not the wicket-keeper.

Fourth, only G. Shepperd is immediately identifiable as a ‘Hendred’ name. Hannah and Ann Shepherd lived in Cat Street at the time of the 1841 census.

The Parish Notes of a successor of Rev Wapshare (Rector of St Augustine’s from 1806-1858) refer to a ‘flourishing cricket club’(1). After the renovation of that church in 1860, a photograph was taken showing spectators at a cricket match sitting on oak pews that had been declared surplus(2). Throughout the century there was a growth in inter-village cricket in the area. In 1858, the Reverend Albert Barff, newly appointed vicar of North Moreton, wrote in his diary: ‘I have formed a cricket club. The farmers took this up warmly and, with myself, bore the expense of bats, stumps and balls. On the whole it has worked well’(3). By 1844 Brunel’s railway from Paddington to the west passed just south of the North Moreton village boundary. In 1872, the North Moreton team travelled by train from Didcot to Wantage to play King Alfred’s Grammar School there. No doubt the Hendred team also made use of the greater mobility the railway afforded. From the 1890s there is a photograph of Mr John Joseph Eyston’s XI, which was presumably distinct from the village team.

As will be seen later, the ‘East Hendred Cricket Club’ was formed in 1862 – its centenary was celebrated in 1962 – and the name was changed to ‘East and West Hendred Cricket Club’ at the AGM of October 1961 (Proposed by K. Mulford and seconded by P. Heading).

There have been at least three cricket grounds in East Hendred: Eyston Park, Downs House and Hill Field off Mill Lane. For about ten years, from about 1967 to 1977, there was no cricket club in the village, possibly because of the unsustainable effort required to create a cricket square each year from the middle of a football pitch (an East Hendred Football Club was formed in 1912 – see later), on a ground with no running water. Prior to that time, Farmer Smith’s seven-ton roller was occasionally pressed into service at the beginning of the season. During that period, records of the then defunct club disappeared, having reportedly been ‘stolen from the back of a car’, so any account of the previous history of the club has to be fragmentary until, and if, those records reappear.

**Hendreds Cricket between the Wars 1918 – 1939**

Hendreds cricket, together with football and tennis, is a beneficiary of the great generosity of the Coates family. Mrs Coates was an American-born opera singer who lived at ‘Southernwood’ in Cat Street. Mrs Coates’ stage (and maiden) name was Eleanor Kessler and she was a soprano soloist of international stature, appearing as, for example, Pamina in a German production of Mozart’s ‘The Magic Flute’. Mr Walter Coates was a rich Yorkshireman who originally visited East Hendred for holidays. He was an agent for the American ‘Fels Naptha’ soap company, and has been described as ‘virtually an adopted son’ of Joe Fels of Philadelphia, who was a philanthropist supporting many worthy causes such as young musicians and the Independent Labour Party. Fels and his wife were frequent visitors to ‘Southernwood’ The sense of social responsibility felt by Mr Fels was certainly shared by the Coates family; Walter’s sister, Marion Coates Hansen, was an active suffragette and the election agent for George Lansbury in the 1906 election, prompting him to include ‘votes for women’ in his election manifesto. Lansbury preceded Clement Attlee as leader of the Labour Party. For his part, Mr Fels bankrolled Lansbury’s Edwardian farm colonies for the unemployed. Remarkably, in May 1907 Fels financially assisted the exiled Lenin and his Bolsheviks, short of travel expenses in London after the Fifth Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in Islington. Lenin repaid Fels’ widow in 1922, five years after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 – but that is another story(4). Thirteen years later there was another, more distant, connection between Bolshevism and Hendreds cricket(5).

Walter Coates constructed the central hall of the house to provide a music salon for his wife. He died in 1931 aged 64. The Coates family rented the Mill Lane field (known as ‘Hill Field’) to the East Hendred Sports Club in 1923 for halfpenny a year, having granted a 999-year lease. Even at that time, it must have seemed an act of great generosity; now it seems even more so. At that time, the Coates owned the land between Southernwood and the Sports Field.

Figure 1 shows a notice, undated but probably of 1923 or shortly after, which announces the formation of the East and West Hendred Sports Club. The tennis club mentioned in it had its court by the East Hendred Brook, west of Hill Field. The committee of the Sports Club had Henry Shapland Colt (1869-1951) as its chairman. He lived at St Amand’s House, which he went on to donate to St Augustine’s Church (where he had been a churchwarden for 28 years) as a rectory. Harry Colt was the most distinguished international golf course architect of his or any other time. He and his able lieutenants, Hugh Alison, J.S.F. Morrison and Dr Alastair Mackenzie, designed, constructed and remodelled some 375 Golf Courses around the world, including Augusta in America, Cypress Point in California, Royal Lytham and St Annes, Muirfield and Wentworth New course. The vice-chairman was Walter Coates of ‘Southernwood’ who, as we’ve seen, had supplied the land for the Sports Field and who was a close contemporary of Mr Colt. The Hon. Secretary was Mr A E Croft, who ran the shop that is still operating, and the Hon. Treasurer was Mr Newman, the master of the Anglican School.

It is said that cricket was played both at Hill Field and Eyston Park, behind the village shop. The Hill Field cricket was generally restricted to adult matches and cricket at Eyston Park ceased during World War 2, when a mast was installed in the middle of it for guidance of aircraft associated with the airfield that previously occupied the AERE site. However, the Captain of the East Hendred Fire Brigade reported on a test of the Engine, made on 3 July, 1933, in which water was pumped up a steep incline onto the cricket pitch at the Sports Ground. The Engine, with between 350 and 400 ft of hose, worked ‘exceedingly well’ and ‘threw a strong jet of water’. The Parish Council was asked for a grant of £1 for the efforts of the pumpers. Presumably, the water source was the East Hendred Brook as it flows below Hill Field. Percy Prater, who lived at Mount Pleasant, near the Anglican Church, was captain from about that time.

Mr Ken Biles has a certificate dated 7 August 1939 that was awarded to him as a member of the East Hendred team that was runner-up in the North Berkshire Cup competition of that year. John Parker, who used to live in ‘Wells Head’ on the Newbury Road, was captain at that time. Four weeks later, on 3 September, war was declared.

**Post-War Cricket at Mill Lane 1945 – about 1967**

There is a lack of information about cricket in the village during the war. It would be surprising if cricket had stopped completely; team sports were seen as good for morale and providing entertainment for war-workers, answering the call for ‘holidays at home’. However, it has been suggested that Hill Field was used, for at least part of the time, for growing corn. After the war there was an ambitious plan to have Sutton’s level the field, but this was shelved, possibly for the same reason that a similar plan was shelved in 1978; it was too expensive and would have created a steep bank at the North-West corner of the field.

For ‘home’ matches, teas between innings were taken at the old village hall, now the site of the cemetery extension off Cat Street, with teas prepared by Thursa Smith, the caretaker of the hall. One reason for this was that there was no running water in the pavilion. Following Thursa Smith, teas were prepared by Nurse Parker and Mrs Prater among others.

There are a few accounts of individual matches at this time, with the Hendred team occasionally augmented by AERE players:

1. Hendred played Steventon twice in 1947. The record for the first game is incomplete, but when Steventon visited us, batting first, they were all out for 54 (A Billyeald 7-21, K Biles 2-19, P Gates 1-10) and Hendred were all out for 53 (and ‘all out’ appeared to mean the entire 11 batsmen were dismissed!). The Hendred team consisted of Ernie Haines, Peter Gates (AERE), P D Moore, Bert Reeley, A Billyeald (from Kings Manor), John Parker, George (Snowy) Roberts, E Chasney, R Francis, Ken Biles and E Hastings. In a later match that year, against unknown opposition, the names M Young, S Hutt, H Sessions, J Hatto and S Francis replace some of those in the earlier one.

In a match at Moreton, probably in 1947, Hendred were all out for 103, with John Prater (son of Percy) top scorer with 18. The match ended in a draw, with Moreton on 77 for 8, K Biles having taken all eight wickets. Hendred names in that match, additional to and replacing some of those already given are M Moore, A Harrison, ? Goodwin and J Prater.

1. Of unknown date but at about this time, Major Goldsmith’s XI played John Daubeny’s XI at North Moreton, with a £50 stake (a considerable sum, for that time). The result is unknown to the writer. Major Goldsmith was a horse trainer at Hagbourne and John Daubeny lived at ‘Barn End’ (now ‘Vine House’) in East Hendred. The John Daubeny trophy is still awarded annually for ‘The Players’ Player of the Year’.
2. In 1950, East Hendred faced Sandford at Marcham, on a poor wicket, in the final of the West Berkshire Cup. Hendred scored about 180 and Marcham replied with 69 for 9, when their last pair of batsmen appealed against the light and the umpires upheld the appeal. The Hendred bowlers included Ken Biles and Cyril Harrison. The match was not rescheduled!
3. A newspaper cutting for August 1955 has results for two matches at East Hendred. In the first, East Hendred versus Milton Depot, the visitors being all out for 83 (Prater 5 wickets, Castle 4 and West 1) East Hendred lost only one wicket in scoring 84, with Peter Gates not out on 33, Ernie Haines scoring 29 and David Burfitt not out on 17.

In the second match, versus Kennington with 12 aside, East Hendred scored 169 (top scorers D Burfitt (26) and J Parker (25)) with other batsmen H Prater, N Edwards, Michael Crossman, David Pickles (brother of the Rev Hugh Pickles, the cricketing rector of Blewbury), D Kimber, John Castle, R West, Richard Carter, S Allen and Ron Goodwin. Kennington were bowled out for 92 (Prater 4 for 23, the other wickets being taken by Castle, Allen (2), Pickles (3) and Crossman). On the same cutting, there is a report on Newbury Newtown versus Ardington and Lockinge in which a P Baring, age 16, scored 28 out of a total of 62 for the ‘Away’ team and took twowickets. Fifty years on, Peter now plays regularly for East Hendred, leading the Second XI in 2006 to win the OCA Centenary Cup and the Division 9 championship.

Other players of this time include Brian Mulford (wicketkeeper), Wally Stow, Arthur Nicholls (AERE), Brigadier Lindsey, Snowy and Tod Roberts (brothers and both big-hitters). One Hendred bowler, not anyone already listed, achieved the distinction of bowling a ball which went for six byes, a feat requiring great strength and enthusiasm. Nowadays it would probably be recorded as a ‘no ball’.

Ken Mulford has kindly supplied the following first-hand account of the period 1952-1964:

“Cricket started for me while waiting for my friend Cyril Harrison and finding that East Hendred CC were short of an eleventh man and being pressed to don Cyril Harrison’s sweater, pads, gloves and have a go. I do recall exactly what happened but it is not worth wasting ink on it. It was the last match of the season, thus allowing myself the winter months to become interested in the ‘great game’.

My involvement started with me giving Mr John Parker a helping hand in preparing the wicket. At that time I lived at 12 Mill Lane, so it was quite convenient to spend a few hours ‘over the rec’. The season was 1952, after which I took on the preparation of the wicket. The cricket season for home games ran from April 1st to the end of September. It was, of course, not possible to play cricket at home until the wicket square and outfield had been prepared. My first task would be a visit to Mr Percy Prater to ask if he could arrange for the whole of the recreation ground to be rolled. At that time Mr Prater was employed by Mr Smith at Aldfield Farm. Mr Prater was entrusted by Mr Smith to take his 7 ½ ton smooth faced roller down into East Hendred. The exercise took a complete day to remove the roller from the farm to the ‘Rec’ and roll the surface in a criss-cross way to ensure a reasonably flat surface. The area of the ‘square’ required a lot more attention, using the Dennis Motor Mower with concrete blocks carried in the grass box. One could never get sufficient water onto the square to soften the surface enough.

About this time Mr French, who lived in Ball Haye cottage, offered to fund the laying of a ‘Sutton Square’, provided that there was agreement for the football pitch to be moved over towards the village and off the square; unfortunately that agreement was not forthcoming.

In addition to the preparation of the wicket, I also became match secretary, at about the same time that Mr Malcolm Christer became Secretary. We served on the committee from 1952 to 1964, when I left the village.

Our biggest problem was fund raising. Having arranged the fixture list, fixture cards had to be printed which included the names of the President and as many Vice-Presidents as possible. It was my task to deliver the fixture cards to each of them and hope for a financial contribution ranging at that time from £1 to £5. Match fees were one shilling, home and away. At home matches the wooden collection box would be taken around the ground. At least once a year a Jumble Sale would be organised and held in the Oak Room (at The Plough). Mr ‘Bumpy’ Chasney and Mr Ted Chasney not making a charge for the room hire. A Christmas Raffle would also be arranged. During the period 1952-1964 we managed to purchase a very old Fordson tractor and gang-mower. (The minutes for the AGM of April 1956, supplied by Ken Mulford, contains ‘Mr Daubeny (Chairman) further revealed that Mrs Borwick had offered the club a set of gang-mowers at a nominal fee. The meeting decided to accept the offer and hope was expressed that the Football Club would also avail itself of the use of this most useful machinery’). Mr Malcolm Christer and myself would visit Smith’s Sports Shop in Reading and spend approximately £100 on cricket equipment consisting of balls, bats, gloves, the season’s score book and maybe a pair of pads. East Hendred CC had an enviable reputation for honesty going back to before the 1939/45 War. Mr Christer and myself would leave Mr Smith’s shop with a promise to pay before the end of the year. Cricket Match teas also brought in revenue. During my time teas were arranged by Nurse Parker and Mrs Prater and later by Mrs Hardy, sometimes assisted by Mrs Judith Mulford (my wife). Teas were taken in the pavilion.

The Club’s normal fixture list would generally consist of the following home and away fixtures:

Ardington and Lockinge Wantage 2nd XI Harwell Village AERE

West Ilsley Chieveley Oxford Post Office Steventon

Malden Wanderers 4th XI Abingdon 2nd XI East Hanney Kennington

Home fixtures:

Mr Ted Chasney’s XI Mr Michael Young’s XI Didcot Wanderers

Away fixtures:

Fairmile Hospital Littlemore Hospital

There were also (very friendly) evening matches against:

Wantage RDC RAF Grove AERE

The match against Malden Wanderers would involve the hire of a coach to go to Malden where the opposition would generally be their 4th or 5th XI. Their 1st team would be at the level of Surrey 3rd or 4th team. Other highlights of the season would be all day matches against Mr Ted Chasney’s XI and Mr Michael Young’s XI. Mr Chasney’s team would consist of various local cricketing dignitaries including such as the Rev Hugh Pickles and Mr Pat Carslow, a solicitor from Abingdon, and Mr Hurd, who at the time played for Worcester 2nd XI. Lunch would be taken in the Oak Room with alcohol flowing like tap water and food seldom seen for cricket club refreshments. Mr Michael Young’s XI would consist of his cricketing friends, along with their girl friends, who all came to East Hendred for the weekend, staying at his mother’s house, Cowdrays, in Cat Street. Refreshments, supplied by Fortnum and Masons, were taken in the grounds of Cowdrays.

In 1964 I left the village to take up an engineering appointment in London.”

Jack Mulford had been the groundsman before his son, Ken, and Ken’s nephew, Ivan, has been responsible for the ground since 1977.

Ken Mulford has kindly supplied copies of the club committee’s minutes for 1962 and 1963, together with other relevant documents of that period. The minutes for Monday 2 July 1962 contain ‘The secretary stated that as it was the Centenary Year of the Cricket Club and also the Golden Jubilee of the Football Club, the double celebration should be marked in some way’. At a stroke, then, it is now known that the East Hendred Cricket Club was formally initiated in 1862 and the Football Club in 1912.

Increasing car ownership in the post-war period probably made it possible to travel further distances to ‘away’ venues, but evidence to support the idea that the team travelled further afield is not yet forthcoming. It is clear, however, that ownership of a car materially improved chances of selection to the team!

A Fixture List for 1960 has 15 Saturday, 21 Sunday, one Monday and one Wednesday matches. Among the fixtures listed are Steventon, Uffington, Buscot Park, Ardington and Abingdon, all of whom are on the current list. We won 15 and lost 10. Against Ardington, there was an ‘away’ tie and a remarkable ‘home’ win. In the latter match, East Hendred scored 172 and Ardington were all out for 84. A newspaper cutting of the time tells us that, of the Hendred total, Richard Carter scored 110, in an era when centuries were rare – the average score for an entire innings in that season was 76. More recently average scores at Hill Field have more than doubled, which is probably due to improved methods of wicket preparation.

There are two team photographs for 1961. Between them they show twenty one players: John Parker, Gerald Kimber, Brigadier Lindsey, Ernie Haines, Brian Mulford, Ken Gingell, Mervyn Tomlin, Gerald Lineham, Bill Watson, Reg Ballard, Derik Ricketts, Michael Butler, Herbert Prater, Richard Carter, Michael Crossman, Roley Francis, John Castle, Ken Mulford, Ron Goodwin, Les Goodwin (umpire), Jimmy Francis and Gordon Goddard. Other players of about this time include Harry Marriott (a fast bowler and big hitter), Philip Heading (Head Master of East Hendred C of E School), David Shappell, Bert Hussey, Brian Bell and Leslie Hewitt.

In the 1960s Mrs Coates’ generosity went one step further when she terminated the peppercorn rental arrangement and donated Hill Field to the village. The Parish Council is Trustee and holds the ground in order to make it available to the Sports Club or any successor or associated organisation for sports use. At this time, Mrs Coates (who died in November 1961) could be seen walking around the village in a long black cloak. (The minutes for the committee meeting held on Friday 8 February 1963 contain ‘The Secretary reported that negotiations for the purchase (presumably ‘purchase’ should be interpreted as ‘acquisition’ – author’s note) of the ground by the Trustees for the Sports Club were now complete’).

**The Dark Ages (about 1967 to 1977).**

From about 1967 to 1977, there was no cricket club in the village. One has the impression that the club just faded away, possibly lacking anyone energetic enough to keep it going in the face of the difficulties mentioned in the introduction. Also, the elderly gang-mower had a catastrophic collapse. The manner of the demise of the Ardington and Wantage clubs over more recent years (although the Wantage club is reviving in partnership with Grove) and that of the Harwell AERE club in 2004, is worth study in our efforts to avoid the same fate. During the dark ages, football continued at some level.

**The Renaissance 1977 –**

A ‘one-off’ cricket match was arranged between East and West Hendred in 1977 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the accession to the throne of the Queen. Information on the result and the teams would be welcome. It is known, however, that there was at least one dubious lbw decision against us. The following year, Peter Cross, then resident in Newbury Road, convened a Village Meeting in Snells Hall to discuss the re-formation of the Cricket Club.

This was held on 8 February 1978. At the same time, John Gold, David Caruth, Mac MacKinnon and others were attempting to re-energise the Sports Club, with many plans including construction of a new Pavilion. There was also a plan to re-orientate the football pitch and the cricket square. As already mentioned, the football pitch overlapped with the cricket square, requiring a great effort to prepare the square at the beginning of the cricket season. Previously, the village fire engine (now in a splendid display case at the back of Snells Hall) was used to drench the square before attempting to roll it flat. By switching the orientations of both the cricket square and the football pitch from east-west to north-south the overlap was eliminated. The Football Club generously consented to play on the somewhat smaller pitch this entailed.

This was the era of the lamentable misunderstanding between the committee and Father Ffrench-Mullen, of St Mary's Church, who ‘temporarily loaned’ his church hall piano to the Sports Club, when it was erroneously thought to have been ‘donated’ for a fund-raising piano-smashing competition.

**1978** was the first season of the new club. Twenty-one matches were arranged by Peter Cross, all played ‘away’ while arrangements were made for the new square to be laid by Fosters Gardening Contractors of Marcham. The first match of the season was played at Benson on 28 May. The team included Cyril Tonge, headmaster at St Amand’s School and an accomplished batsman with the Abingdon Club.

A meeting of the Committee was held on 26 February,1979 in the Wheatsheaf pub. Those present were T Bacon, R Ballard, M Bradley, P Cross, J Gold, C Smith and M Yeoman. At this meeting, it was decided that the club be called ‘East and West Hendred CC’ replacing ‘Hendreds CC’ and the ‘East Hendred CC’ of earlier times. It was reported that the Parish Council had favourably received a proposal to provide a grant for purchase of Cricket Practice Nets. Also the draft of the first set of rules, drawn up by John Gold, was distributed. (These rules were extensively revised only in 2005, as a result of requirements of the ECB in order to receive possible financial support from it). The club owes a tremendous amount to John Gold, who set up the administration of the club and who arranged assistance in ground maintenance from people such as Don Pert of Challow Cricket Club. Another season of ‘away’ fixtures was arranged for 1979 and as of September 1979, Mr Carter of FGC was still working on the square.

One of the most decisive moments in the club’s history has reference in the minutes of 22 October, 1979, when it was resolved that Ivan Mulford be co-opted to the committee. John Gold and Ivan had been busily working together before that time and Ivan, of course, went on to become the guiding light of the club. Another individual who did a tremendous amount of work for the club at that time (and several times since) is Ed Denly, the club president, who kindly operated his earth-moving equipment around the ground on various projects. Mac MacKinnon’s doughty Massey-Ferguson tractor was frequently pressed into service; Mary MacKinnon provided regular and much appreciated support to the club, including all the diesel fuel, until she left the village in 2006.

**1980 -** On the 17 January Mr Carter sent the bill for the square, which was judged to be up to standard. Twenty-three friendly fixtures were arranged, fifteen of them at ‘home’. Teas were generally served in Mr Caruth’s barn at ‘Cowdray’s’ in Cat Street. The first ‘home’ match was against Harwell Village on Sunday, 8 June. East Hendred scored 133 (Keith Pepperdine 45) and Harwell were all out for 43 (Pepperdine 4-18 and Dick Pateman was top scorer with 17). Keith, an athletic all-rounder, lived near the ‘Wheatsheaf’ and, unfortunately, moved away from the village shortly afterwards. Dick played for EWHCC after the Harwell Village cricket club disbanded and still does much-appreciated work on the cricket pitch. Don Langford also made the same switch at that time and contributed to the club through his expertise with the internal combustion engine. There were fixtures against three London ‘newspaper’ sides; NOW! Magazine, ‘The Times’ and ‘The Observer’. Over the years this has led to a few amusing feature articles in the national press on how ‘country-folk’ interact with ‘effete Londoners’ at cricket(6).

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Mrs Olga Ashthorpe, who lived at ‘Bowling Over’ in Horn Lane, was a teacher at the Hendreds School and Clerk to the Parish Council, gave great support to the new club and opened the new pavilion in January 1981.

**1984 -** EWHCC joined the Downs League in which clubs played on Wednesday evenings in matches of 20 overs per innings. At that stage, there were eight Downs league matches and 44 weekend ‘friendlies’ on the fixture list. Membership of the Downs League continued until 2001, when we withdrew because of the difficulty of raising a team at that time. Between 1987 and 1990, we played in the Wantage Sunday League, which consisted only of Wantage, Letcombe, Challow and EWHCC. In 2010, we again participated in the Downs League, partly to provide cricket for junior members who are now too old for the Under 15 matches.

Over the whole of this period, ladies have contributed greatly to the running of the club, through preparing teas, for example. From 1982 to 1996 the Hon Treasurer was Debbie Morton and since then it has been Helen Francis.

In 1988 and 1989, we arranged fixtures against 'The Amphibians' with Christopher Bullard (son of Sir Giles Bullard - see reference 4), an officer in the naval establishment in Bristol. The Amphibians consisted largely of serving officers, many of whom had been in the Falklands war of 1982, including Rear -Admiral Sandy Woodward, who had been the fleet commander there. After the matches all of the players and their ladies went to West Hendred Manor House as the supper guests of Sir Giles and Lady Bullard.

**OCA League Cricket comes to Hendred 1990 –**

After much discussion, the club decided to apply for membership of the Oxfordshire Cricket Association (OCA), an organisation that has operated a league system since 1905 and the Airey Cup competition since 1880. The Association currently consists of about 60 member clubs fielding about 90 teams arranged in nine divisions. The decision to join a ‘Saturday’ league was made because the membership wanted to play in matches that were more competitive. Another reason was that the number of teams in the area that playing only ‘friendlies’ was shrinking, making it more difficult to arrange fixtures. The OCA at that time divided the league into ‘Premier’ and ‘Senior’ sections. Entry to the ‘Premier’ section required certain standards of facilities. This provided some stimulus to extend the Pavilion changing rooms and the bar area, projects that were completed in 1994.

In 2004, the club decided to field a Second XI and to reduce the number of friendlies by about half to avoid regularly having to field three sides at a weekend. A gratifying consequence of this has been that the playing strength of the club has increased and there is a demand for more matches at the weekend; a demand that we will be delighted to try to meet.

In 1990, the club was placed in Division 5. It rose to Division 3 by 1997 and has been in Divisions 2 or 3 for the past seven seasons. The Second XI started in Division 9 and is currently in Division 8.

The club has hosted five OCA Cup Finals:

1. Telegraph Cup (Third and Fourth Divisions.) Brill vs Nettlebed and Swyncombe.
2. Osberton Radiators Cup (Second Teams.) Cropredy II vs Kidlington II.
3. Airey Cup (First and Second Divisions.) Garsington vs Hanborough

2007 Airey Cup Tetsworth vs Oxford Caribbean

2012 Airey Cup Garsington vs Chadlington

The Airey Cup final in 2001 produced one of the tightest finishes in OCA League history. Chasing Hanborough’s 252-9 from their 45 overs, Garsington made 253-9, with a single off the last ball of the game. That of 2007 was at least as dramatic. Tetsworth amassed 278-7, one of the openers scoring 196 not out. Caribbean narrowly lost, scoring 273-7, including 95 from the skipper before he was controversially run out. The high scores indicate what has been recognised for years: the club square is the finest for many miles around, thanks to the inspired and unremitting efforts of Ivan Mulford and his co-workers.

In 2003 there was a very enjoyable three-match weekend tour of North Yorkshire, organised by John Walker. This included a match against Yorkshire Gentlemen’s CC in the magnificent grounds of Queen Margaret’s School at Heslington near York.

In 2006, the club won its first trophy, the Centenary Cup (for Second Elevens), introduced in that year to celebrate the centenary of the OCA. Shortly afterwards, the same team won a second trophy as champions of Division 9. Also the First Team, at second place in Division 3, was promoted to Division 2. (Although the First Team has been promoted several times before, it has never been top of the division – and has thus not been awarded a trophy). Another trophy was, however, awarded to a member of the First Team. Jonathan Francis achieved a batting average of 86, the highest in the entire OCA. Given that about a thousand players turn out each weekend, this is a very considerable achievement.

The club now hosts cricket at county level. On 18 May 2008 and again on 4 May 2009 Oxfordshire Under 16s and Under 17s trial matches were staged at Hill Field. The first adult county match was played there on 9 August 2009 when Oxfordshire Women played Gloucestershire Women with some splendid displays of spin bowling.

**Youth League Cricket at Hendred 2005 –**

Since 1995, the Club Committee has appointed a Youth Team Sub-Committee or Youth Co-ordinators. In recent years, the activities have included well-attended Wednesday evening training sessions for children aged between seven and thirteen. The attendance is about 50 and this gratifyingly large number has been maintained throughout summer. There are two qualified youth instructors in the club (Ivan Mulford and Peter Beckley). They are assisted by others who have been cleared to work with children by the Criminal Records Bureau through the agency of the OCA operating under the direction of the England and Wales Cricket Board. Apart from providing a much-appreciated service to the community, the sessions have fed some older children into the adult teams. There have been some Junior Section Fixtures in previous years, but these fixtures have become more formal and the 2005 Club Fixture List contains, for the first time, those for the Juniors. The ‘Under 11’ team won all of its six fixtures and the ‘11-14’ side had a similar record. By 2009, there were over 33 Junior Fixtures, spread between league fixtures for Under 11s, Under 13s and Under 15s and friendly fixtures for Under 11s. Also there are now two practice nights.

**The Future**

Generally, the operation of village teams has become more problematic in recent years. This is a consequence of several factors, including the belief of misguided and influential politicians that competitive sports should not be encouraged. One consequence of this has been that the area of land associated with sports activities at schools and in the community has, through sales to raise general funds, almost halved over recent years. The National Playing Fields Association has discovered that the number of school and community sports pitches is now 44,000 across 21,000 sites in England. In 1992 there were 77,949 pitches on 25,940 sites. Fortunately, the stupidity of this has become manifest and policies are emerging to support competitive sports, but the correction will take years. Also, the still growing number of private cars and the opening of shopping malls on Sundays have taken their toll of healthier activities. The closure of several local clubs (from which EWHCC has taken benefit in the short term) is a consequence. Challow Cricket Club is a shining exception to the general trend, but they have had substantial financial support from Oxford Instruments.

Cricket Clubs that thrive generally do so through the activities of an enthusiastic core. Ideally, this core should expand and the numerous duties spread widely through the club so that retirement of individuals from the game, for whatever reason, does not entail collapse of the club. At present, the EWHCC looks to be in an expansive state and it should thrive for several years – but we have to make plans now to keep it so.

Our benefactors, the Coates family, have an outstanding record of social responsibility. I think they would be delighted to see the way the Sports Club has developed and to see the intensive use of the Sports Field, particularly by children. For our part, we should be grateful to them and try to maintain their values in the running of the Club.

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1. ‘East Hendred. A Brief Guide’. Mahala Addenbrooke 1971 P 18
2. ‘A Descriptive Account of East Hendred’. E R Manley 1969 P35
3. ‘Village Cricket’. Gerald Howat. 1980 P89
4. The RSDLP and Joseph Fels: A Study in Intercultural Contact. Arthur P. Dudden; Theodore H. von Laue. *The American Historical Review,* Vol. 61, No. 1 (Oct., 1955), 21-47
5. ‘Inside Stalin’s Russia’ The Diaries of Reader Bullard. Ed. Julian and Margaret Bullard. 2000. (Sir Giles Bullard and Sir Julian Bullard, both diplomats, were sons of Sir Reader, who was the son of a London docker and went on to be British consul general in Moscow and Leningrad and ambassador in Teheran. Giles, who lived at West Hendred Manor House, was a vice-president of the cricket club and played at least one very stylish innings at Mill Lane in the 1980s. Reader was one of the best-informed diplomats in the Soviet Union in 1930 –4 and soon saw that the well-intentioned support of communism – such as that by Joe Fels – had been betrayed by Lenin and Stalin. Winston Churchill said that Reader was ‘a tough Briton, with no illusions’.)
6. As an example, a report of 1990 is included as an appendix.

**Appendix**

In pursuit of eleven good men and true. By Godfrey Barker. Daily Telegraph July 1990

My cricket team played a match recently against East Hendred in Oxfordshire. Lord Jenkins of Hillhead inhabits the Manor HouseA; a herd of cows grazes behind the bowler’s arm. The national game, as described in England, their England, was alive and well. There is a chapter, however, which A.G.MacDonnell forgot to write.

This was a fixture we were keen to win, not least because the men of East Hendred (who drink in the Wheatsheaf) treat our team (who drink in the Plough) as a bunch of effete Londoners whom they patronise on victory or avoid on defeat. But the real victory in village cricket belongs to the men who get the teams on the field in the first place.

Two weeks back, when the Old Talbotians wiped out some contemptible opposition in Battersea Park, 10 men in the side promised they would turn out against East Hendred. I had, on top, a half-promise from the awesome Mr William Cash of the Lords and Commons team, who that day, scoring 78 in 25 minutes, unleashed such carnage at the wicket as I had never seen, lofting sixes over the oak trees and pounding the ball through a field of statues with blinding speed.

Something of the diplomacy of the Congress of Vienna, however, was eventually involved in putting the Old Talbotians on to the Oxfordshire sward, a sleepless week and 90 phone calls being mere details. The first false dawn came six days before the game: no fewer than 13 men reported that they were keen as mustard to play. Three days before, excuses rolled in. Mr James Ramsden had a sick fiancée in Derbyshire. Mr Dominic Lawson sloped off (to interview Mr Nicholas Ridley, it emerged later)B. Mr William Cash the Indispensable was in Scotland.

Two days before the game, it became clear that help would not be found from non-selected Old Talbotians. Mr Gerald Slocock then offered the names of eight fast bowlers from other clubs. These titans proved to be drunk, abroad, in court and forever unreachable. We were just nine men at 11 pm on Thursday night: desperation. Where next? Christie’s, someone said, has a fine team. Charles Allsopp, chairman, assured me that I needed James Roundell, the eight-foot tall Impressionist expert, a fearsome thumper and a bowler so fast that batsmen backed away from the stumps as he roared up to the crease. Sixteen phone calls to Roundell’s house got no answer. Allsopp also pointed to Clarke of the Silver department (in another match), McEuen in Wine and Dickinson in English pictures (house-partying).

It was now 6 pm on Friday. Would we have to call off the match? George Bailey, heart of oak, managing director of Sotheby’s and one of the most likeable fellows in London, turned up trumps. Eight more calls, and by 7pm Bailey had found a lad, “a very handy bat”. Eleven at last. At 10 pm the phone rang with more disaster. We were down to 10 again. Saturday am: no Roundell, but a class Oxford lad who had opened for Christ Church was put up. He said he had a trapped nerve in his leg. He was offered a runner. OK, he would play. He never showed up.

At 12 pm hail descended. At 1 the sun shone brilliantly. At 2.30 the team emerged from the Wheatsheaf. At 7, our innings of 174-9 had proved good enough; 10 men had beaten 11C. If there is any higher joy than village cricket it is the knowledge that I will not have to lay on a match again for another 12 months.

Footnotes

1. Incorrect. Journalistic license?
2. BThe interview appeared in The Spectator of 14 July 1990 under the title “Saying the Unsayable about the Germans”. This proved prophetic in that Mr Ridley, the Secretary of State for Industry, had to resign from Mrs Thatcher’s Cabinet as a result of the furore caused by the article. It has been said that Mr Ridley was in convivial mood when Dominic Lawson interviewed him after a relaxed Sunday lunch.
3. An untypical result; since 1980 EWHCC have won 15 of their matches against Old Talbotians (now known as GTs) and lost 7, with one drawn.

Trevor Bacon 19 August 2012