

THE COCKPIT

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The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Common, has been the traditional meeting place for Chislehurst people on all great occasions, from time immemorial



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In this edition of *The Cockpit*: Chislehurst Heights, by Andrew Belsey

- *Chislehurst Heights*
- *Memories of Scouting*
- *Hawkwood and its Trees*
- *Raggleswood*
- *200 years of West Kent Cricket*

What is the highest point above sea-level in Chislehurst? I suspect that many Chislehurst residents, if asked this question, would say that it is close to the summit of Red Hill and White Horse Hill, the road summit itself having been twice lowered in the nineteenth century to make it easier for traffic.

But they would not be correct. The 90-metre contour crosses Red Hill from the west before the summit, and moves east towards Green Lane before looping back to cross White Horse Hill again just below the summit. So the summit and surrounding area is over 90 metres above sea level, but does not reach 100 metres.

But there are two 'islands' in Chislehurst that are above the 100-metre contour. They are, respectively, east and west of Manor Park, so the top (north) part of this road is in a slight dip between these two higher areas. The area to the east is by far the smallest, measuring on average about 0.15km west to east and 0.55km north to south. The 100-metre contour travels (anti-clockwise) from the southern part of Holbrook Lane and into Poyntell Crescent, before moving south to cross the A208 to take in the backs of the



A print (by G.B.Wollaston) of the long-gone pond by the Tigers Head – Chislehurst's highest point?

houses on the east side of Manor Park, continuing south into St Paul's Cray Common, looping north to cross the A208 again and to take in a small part of the common on this side of the road, and then back to Holbrook Lane.

The larger and irregular area to the west of Manor Park is over 1km west to east and varies between 0.1 and 0.5km north to south. The 100-metre contour travels (anti-clockwise) from the Bull Hotel across the back of the west side of Royal Parade to cross Church Row and School Road, includes St Nicholas School, Camden Close, the Prince Imperial Monument, and Camden Place, loops south to include the Cricket Ground and the site of the windmill, moves up to Watts Lane before looping south again to take in St Mary's Church and Coopers School, then turning north through the backs of the houses on the west side of Manor Park, up the A208 and back to the Bull. This larger area is almost cut into two unequal parts where the contour is squeezed from north to south at the back of Camden Close, the smaller part being centred approximately on Hangman's Corner and the larger part on the green between St Nicholas Church and the Tiger's Head.

The highest spot marked on the map within the 100-metre contour is 103 metres on Manor Park Road by the Tiger's Head. So if you stand there you are higher than the summit of Red Hill and White Horse Hill. From this spot it is downhill all the way to the bottom of Red Hill. The War Memorial is at 96 metres, the top of the High Street at the junction with Prince Imperial road is at 88 metres, and the other end of the High Street at the junction with Albany Road is approximately at 75 metres above sea level.

During my time as librarian at Chislehurst, one very occasional enquiry was about how high above sea level we are here. The usual reason for asking was the acquisition of a new barometer, which of course needed to be set to the local height. Inspection of the local large-scale Ordnance Survey map was usually sufficient and the answer, depending upon where precisely the enquirer was living, usually came out at about 300 feet above sea level. Andrew Belsey has provided this useful article, which is up to date with metric heights, and it may be of service to new owners of barometers. We acknowledge that modern methods of determining one's whereabouts, whether vertical or horizontal, no longer depend entirely upon being able to read an OS map, besides which it is virtually impossible to see contour lines clearly on densely packed modern urban 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps. As far as Chislehurst is concerned, the 90-metre contour line as described runs almost exactly in the same path as the former 300 feet line, and the 100 metre line is not much different. You cannot argue with Ordnance Survey established contour lines, but irrespective of what Andrew says, the ascent of White Horse Hill to the summit overlooking the High Street at the foot of Red Hill, with the Commons rising beyond into the distance, yields one of the best urban perspectives of Chislehurst and a real sense of height and contour. The view in the opposite direction towards Canary Wharf, is even more stunning. Ed.

Nostalgic Memories of Scouting in Chislehurst, by *Peter Munns*



Scouting in Chislehurst began in April 1908 when some boys from Prickend School banded together to form the Hound Patrol. Early in 1909, boys from St Nicholas School formed two patrols. The three patrols amalgamated and formed the 1st Chislehurst Scout Group, meeting at a hall in Park Road. It closed down in 1917 due to the First World War and in 1919 re-opened as Chislehurst Invicta. In 1916 Baden-Powell started a special section called Wolf Cubs, but this did not arrive in Chislehurst until well into the 1920s. Scouting in Chislehurst began to flourish with the introduction of this new section, and even more so with the building of new homes in the 1930s.

I joined the Scout Movement in the spring of 1937. A few months later I was invested into the then 5th Chislehurst in a very elaborate ceremony held in the Lady Chapel of St Nicholas Parish Church. I became the proud owner of a black scarf with a red border and three gold balls on the point. It was as a second star cub that I cooked my first egg over an open fire, unbroken.

When the 5th Chislehurst closed late 1938 [or] early 1939 and became the 6th Chislehurst (Hawkwood), wearing plain green scarves, I was transferred to the Chislehurst Invicta pack wearing plain dark brown scarves. I remember most of the time was spent out of doors, using ropes, climbing approved trees, and playing leapfrog

and many tracking type games. In 1940 I became a scout.

During the war, in addition to the usual scout programme, we were involved in the cleaning of rifles, although I was too young to take part, the collection of waste paper in competition with the Salvage Corps, and helping with the erection of Anderson and Morrison air raid shelters. Older boys acted as messengers for the Local Defence Volunteers, later the Home Guard, until the official Messenger Service started. I remember going with the troop to Petts Wood at the end of the war to bury the remains of a Flying Bomb in its own crater.

Being now at work and attending evening school, Scouting took a back seat. This break ended on the completion of my obligatory period of National Service in 1949.

St George's Day parades have always been a high point in Scouting. A marching competition was a feature of the parade and in 1950 I was invited to rejoin Invicta as a Rover Scout, providing I wore my army boots and marched with the troop down Chislehurst High Street. We won. Another parade we attended was that of the May Queen, providing a guard of honour and four boys to sit at the foot of the May Pole to help support it and hold the ribbons during the ceremony.

Scouting continued to flourish with the Annunciation Church sponsoring a Scout Group, the 7th Chislehurst. Following the sale of Hawkwood [in 1958] the 6th Chislehurst reformed at Holbrook House (now the Red Cross Centre) as the 8th Chislehurst, and later, because of their success, split to form a new 5th Chislehurst.



The two photographs here are taken from a collection given to me by Mrs Hunt, whose husband, Michael John Hunt, had kept them from his time in the 7th Chislehurst Scout Group, 1944-48. Ed

Hawkwood and its trees, by Sir William Ryrie

My wife Christine and I have lived for most of our working lives in various parts of South London. After a spell in the United States, we were looking for a quiet, comfortable place to retire to, and in 1995 our search led us to Chislehurst. The appeal of Chislehurst for us is that although it is part of Greater London, it is a village, more genuinely so, I think, than any other place in Greater London of comparable size.

Of course, most of Greater London consists of places which not very long ago were country villages or small towns and which were gradually absorbed into the great metropolis of London as it expanded in all directions over the last 200 years or so. The record of this fascinating process can be inspected simply by driving through the endless suburbia that is London, and keeping your eyes open.

It is interesting to compare Greater London with New York, a mega-city of similar size, with a population of about 10 million, a little bigger than Greater London now. New York has five boroughs - Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Staten Island - compared with London's thirty-two. But unlike London, New York as it grew did not absorb a network of pre-existing small towns and villages in the surrounding area: they were not there to be absorbed. The areas that London invaded, as it grew, were already populated with small towns and villages, some of which had been there for hundreds of years, and with them London absorbed a lot of history too. The thirty-two boroughs of Greater London are all old names, but there is much more than this. Look at a map of Greater London and you also see dozens of other names of places, many of which have no precise boundaries nowadays - Sydenham and Sidcup, Dulwich and Woolwich, Eltham and Peckham, Bickley and Bexley, St Mary Cray and St Paul's Cray, Mottingham, Catford, Hayes, Norwood and so on and on. New York has nothing like this.

In the process of absorption into London, many former villages lost their rural character almost entirely, becoming just nondescript bits of suburbia. There's nothing very rural or village-like today about Sydenham or Lewisham or Norwood or even Bromley. But Chislehurst is a real village, with its village green like many to be found in the depths of Kent or Sussex with attractive old pubs on two sides of it, and the shapely spire of St Nicholas' Church on another. It has the atmosphere of a village. It's small enough for it to be possible to walk from any part of the village to another, and all around there are good walks - on the Common, in Petts Woods, and down the Kyd Brook and through Scadbury. The railway line does not run through the village.

And it has history, lots of it, from the Walsinghams of Elizabethan times to Napoleon

III and his wife and son, and William Willett, the inventor of Summer Time, not to mention the famous Caves with their memories of the Blitz. Chislehurst is not just another nondescript bit of London suburbia.



*Hawkwood from
the west, date
unknown*

Hawkwood, where we're privileged to live, is part of this history. Forty years ago, at the bottom of Hawkwood Lane, where it turns into Botany Bay Lane, familiar to many Sunday walkers from various parts of Chislehurst, there stood a rambling house attached to 250 acres of farmland. It had begun as a farmhouse, originally known as Goodlands, gradually expanding in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1784 it came into the ownership of Robert Jenner, who enlarged the estate, adding a number of fields in the area around the Kyd Brook, and built the farmhouse, which still stands there. His son, Sir Herbert Jenner-Fust, was the owner from 1821 to 1852. He enlarged the house and 'gentrified' the garden, planting an avenue of limes, probably in about 1830, a Cedar of Lebanon and a number of other fine trees, which still stand in the grounds. Photographs, taken in the 1890s, and some watercolour paintings, show that the house and grounds were a splendid combination.

In 1852, when Sir Herbert died, the estate, consisting of the house and garden and farmlands, were purchased by Frederick Edlmann, who gave it the name Hawkwood, after a local wood now known as Pond Wood. It remained in his family for a century, passing eventually to his grandson, Colonel F J F Edlmann. The Edlmanns were keen to preserve the rural character of the area. In the 1860s they bought part of the neighbouring Coopers estate and in 1929 a part of Petts Wood, which was added to the

Hawkwood estate with the aim of preventing building on this land. The remainder of Petts Wood was bought by public subscription at about the same time, and donated to the National Trust.

After Colonel Edlmann died in 1950, the whole of the Hawkwood estate was put up for sale. Francesca Hall, who lived with her husband Robert in Riverside House in Manor Park, conceived the idea of acquiring it and donating it to the National Trust so as to preserve its beauty and forestall plans to develop it. The story of how this happened is to be found in a remarkable letter written by Mrs Hall in which she describes how, sitting one beautiful spring morning in 1955 in the Bluebell Wood, then part of the Hawkwood estate, she heard the voice of her husband's dead father urging that she and her husband should buy Hawkwood and give it to the National Trust. The Halls did not then have the means to make such a purchase, but Francesca believed that they would be given the means to carry out the plan about which the voice had spoken to her in the Bluebell Wood, and indeed a year later Robert Hall did come into a large capital sum. In 1958 the purchase and donation to the Trust were completed.

Except for one thing. The National Trust accepted the farmland and woods but would not accept the old house because, they said, it was in such a dreadful condition that the Trust could not afford the cost of repairing and maintaining it. Meanwhile, Francesca's husband, Robert, was killed in a car accident on Old Hill and it was left to her to decide what to do about the house. She knew it was in a terrible state. She wrote later, in a letter: *'The empty mansion of cellars and four floors was handed to me in 1960, complete with dry rot, woodworm, no drains, no electricity, candle light in all but two rooms, no water except in one bathroom, and rusty tin hip baths in bedrooms, no heating and a roof of many shapes leaking in every section.'* In fact, according to Mrs Hall, some of the building fell down without the help of demolition, and her builders, like the National Trust's advisers, concluded that the structure could not stand the repairs and alterations that would be necessary to make it habitable, and advised that the house would have to be demolished. And so it was, in 1960.

In its place Francesca Hall built a new Hawkwood, smaller than the old mansion, but spacious by modern standards, and moved in to make this her home during the last years of her life. Adjoining the new Hawkwood she also built a smaller house, Hawk's Wing, for her sister. In due course the National Trust accepted the donation of the new houses and the garden, adding them to the farmland and woods, which had already passed to the Trust. In the 1990s the Trust offered both Hawkwood House,

with its substantial garden, and Hawk's Wing, for lease on a long-term basis (99 years.) Christine and I bought the lease of Hawkwood in 1995 and soon afterwards another local family acquired the lease of Hawk's Wing.

So, as you will easily understand, we moved into Hawkwood with a feeling that there were a lot of ghosts around us, but friendly ghosts. Francesca Hall, who was well known to many people still living in Chislehurst, was obviously a remarkable woman and in some ways she is still with us in the house. The house includes one or two things from the old mansion, for example two curved doors and a wrought-iron balcony fence. Besides, there is one small room in the house, which Francesca preserved as a 'quiet room' and which was labelled 'The Chapel' in the original plans of the house drawn in 1960.

But for me, it's above all the garden, with its old trees that make one aware of the past. The garden we have now is only a part of the garden, which was attached to the old mansion in Victorian times. For more than half a century it was neglected. We have some splendid trees, but many are now showing their age. During a stormy night in November 2000, the 170-year-old cedar of Lebanon, planted by Herbert Jenner-Fust, lost one of its four massive trunks, and the same night a big field maple of similar age was blown over too. Both did a lot of damage to smaller trees and bushes as they came down. Earlier storms, including the hurricane of 1987, have left a number of trees (some huge oaks, for example, and several yews and robinias) lying on their sides, and in most cases we have decided to leave them as they are for the enjoyment of some of the small creatures that live in the woods of southern England. There is a very old holm oak - precise age unknown - and a swamp cypress, which we know from photographs was a mature tree in the 1890s. The avenue of limes containing eighty-nine trees, some big and healthy, others beginning to die back, is still a remarkable feature, despite the gaps in the lines. And down at the bottom of the garden is the oldest tree of all, an English oak, which emerged from its acorn more than 300 hundred years ago, probably in the days of King Charles II.

For more than fifty years not much new planting of trees has been done at Hawkwood and we have been trying to make up for lost time. We have had to take out some old trees, including many dead elms - what a loss the elms have been to this part of England! - and, wherever possible we've planted replacements to take over the running from those that must die within the next fifty years - although we shall not be here ourselves to see that baton exchange. Fortunately some forward-looking person (was it someone in the National Trust?) did have the foresight about fifteen

years ago to plant a successor to the cedar of Lebanon, which is now coming on fine. If all goes well, the garden of Hawkwood house in about the year 2050 will include a large number of splendid trees, ranging from the very large (the Wellingtonia, for example, one of the largest trees in the world, although they do not grow as large in this country as in California) to many smaller ornamental trees and bushes, including rhododendrons, and lots of others of intermediate size also. There will be exotic trees, like the Wellingtonia, but also a strong emphasis on native British species - various beeches (two weeping beeches, for example), birches, acers, chestnuts, hawthorns and of course the limes, yews and holm-oaks that are characteristic of this garden.

Trees live longer than people. They not only remind us of the past - they also offer us a way of extending our influence on the world around us, farther into the future, although that does depend on how they are treated by people in the future. It is an extraordinary privilege to have the opportunity to influence what this little bit of England may look like half a century and more from now - an opportunity, and a responsibility, too. (*These notes by Sir William Ryrie were written in 2001.*)



Avenue of lime trees at Hawkwood, c.1983

Raggleswood by Joanna Friel

I have just acquired a beautiful original edition of *The History of Chislehurst* by E A Webb, G W Millar and J Beckwith. Naturally I looked up the road where I live, Lubbock Road. According to Webb, page 238 '*Before 1875 the road only gave access to five villa residences built in what had been a small wood known as Raggles Wood*'. One of these villas took the name Raggleswood and I have researched the families that lived there from 1860 to 1937 and have found associations with St Nicholas Church, a shopping centre and even a baronetcy! The house is long gone but the site remains, directly opposite my study window.

Raggles Wood is one of the Chislehurst woods that has now vanished. Dorothea Gibson, an amateur historian herself and resident of Camden Hill, Lubbock Road wrote in Webb's *History* in 1899 that the derivation of the name Raggles Wood may be from the Anglo Saxon word raggie meaning rough, shaggy. The location is shown on a 1863 map of the slopes of Camden Park, off what we now know as Old Hill.

From an original indenture, I understand the first resident of the house named after that wood was Samuel Solly Esq, who is listed in an 1862 Kelly's Directory at this address. Dr Samuel Solly was a distinguished surgeon at St Thomas' Hospital. He was the son of a wealthy merchant and grew up at 5 Jeffrey's Square, St Mary Axe – a site now underneath 'The Gherkin'. Dr Solly lectured on anatomy and physiology having completed his medical studies in Paris. According to his obituary he was a skilful operator, a florid lecturer and a good clinical teacher; his opinion was specially sought in cases of injuries to the head and diseases of the joints and he was the first doctor to use the name 'scriveners palsy' – writer's cramp. He was an accomplished amateur artist, many of his lectures were personally illustrated and his watercolours were displayed at the Royal Academy.

Solly had 11 children – the 15 roomed house of Raggleswood would certainly have accommodated them. He is variously listed as living in St Helen's Place, Bishopsgate and Savile Row; Raggleswood was the country residence of the family. Webb's *History* refers to a brass plate beneath a S E window in St Nicholas' Church dedicated in memory of Lieutenant William Herbert Solly 1859, Francis D Solly 1862 and Charles Edmund Solly 1860. These are three of Samuel and Jane Solly's sons. Charles in fact died in 1840 at only four months old of influenza, William was their second son, dying aged 24 in Cawnpore, India, and Francis Drake Solly was their fourth son, who died in Shanghai in 1862. He was a silk inspector. It is possible, though unproven, that he was working for the Courtauld family; his older brother Lewis married Susan Courtauld in

1864. If, as I imagine, the family suffered these cumulative tragedies on their arrival to live in Chislehurst, they could very well have wanted a permanent memorial in their place of worship.

Mrs Jane Solly maintained an interest in Chislehurst even as a widow, being one of the subscribers to the fund for the memorial to the Prince Imperial. Samuel who died in 1871 aged 66 and his wife are both buried in the churchyard. There is a marble bust to Samuel in the central hall at St Thomas', and the Solly prize and medal in the medical school was established with the proceeds of public subscriptions to his memory.

Two other sons went on to establish themselves with great repute in science. Samuel Edwin established a sanatorium in Colorado Springs for tuberculosis sufferers, being a sufferer himself. His obituary makes edifying reading concluding with the words 'we all loved Solly'! Richard Harrison Solly, sixth son, was a recognised mineralogist and crystallographer working at the British Museum and the University of Cambridge, where, incidentally, he lodged next door to Marie Stopes! The youngest son, Henry Ernest, remained in Chislehurst, living at Sunnyways, now a dental practice on Prince



Raggleswood from a 1935 aerial photograph

Imperial Road. He too is buried in the churchyard of St Nicholas.

Dr Solly moved to Folkstone in 1871, and died suddenly on 24th September, aged 66, at his London Savile Row residence. His wife moved back to Chislehurst, and died at Church Row in June 1889.

For a short period, I can see from Kelly's Directory, Raggleswood was occupied by a Lady Johnson but she remains an enigma to me.

The next residents of Raggleswood also have significant connections to a memorial at St Nicholas. The Janson family were in residence at the time of the 1871 census; Eliza Janson was widowed in 1868 but brought at least five of her eleven children to Chislehurst. The Jansons were originally a Quaker family from North London. William Janson had been an underwriter with Lloyds as well as a property developer in Tottenham. Jansons Road was constructed there in 1863 and he also built a terrace of houses named after Harriett Beecher Stowe as he admired her work, Stowe Place still exists in Haringey.

Clearly underwriting stays in the blood as the Janson family produced an extra expense of them; Lloyds were very helpful in my research producing information on five generations of Janson underwriters, sons, brothers and uncles. The £80,000 left in William's will would have gone a long way towards the purchase price of Raggleswood; looking at David Chattell's archives, the estate agent at the time, the house was for sale for a mere 4000 guineas.

The connection with St Nicholas is the granite drinking fountain (*shown right*) on the corner of the churchyard, dedicated to Rev Charles Janson. He was the youngest of William and Eliza's children, dying aged 32 in 1884 as a missionary at Lake Nyassa, Malawi, his mother predeceased him by one year aged 74. The Universities' Mission to Central Africa was founded in 1857 in response to a plea by the inspirational missionary and explorer



David Livingstone. Charles Janson went to Oxford University and was part of the mission originated by Bishop Charles Mackenzie to set up an Anglican base at Lake Nyassa. The History of the Universities Mission describes how Charles's last journals show him appreciating glowing hills, wooded vales and a hippopotamus taking an early bath. On Feb 9th Bishop Edward Steere, accompanied by Charles, reached a beach on the edge of the lake, seemingly the desired goal of the mission for many years. They said it reminded them of the Sea of Galilee. Unfortunately the rainy season had made their journey a very trying one and Charles, towards its close, had been suffering from dysentery. *'Our brother fell asleep on Shrove Tuesday at Noon, if we had chosen one of our number' said Bishop Steere four months later 'of whom we should have said was fit for the kingdom of heaven, we should have chosen no one more clearly than Charles Janson'*. He is buried by the lake under a cairn of stones. A steamer was named in his honour and launched on September 6th 1885 by Bishop Smithies, and it arrived safely in Likoma (an island on the lake on which a large Anglican Cathedral was finally built in 1911) on 22nd January 1886, apparently fulfilling a much desired dream of Bishop Mackenzie for a 'university boat'.

Charles's older sister Ellen is often mentioned in the Bromley Record and obviously ran the Raggleswood household, hiring servants and providing references for tutors. According to Webb's *History* she gifted the cross on the St Nicholas altar, it having been originally fixed to the altar book of her late brother. It was taken from the ruins of a fire at Matope and brought back to Chislehurst.

The family were not unused to tragedy, having lost a second son at sea off Alexandria in 1863 aged 21. There is a tribute to him on the family grave. Another son, Dearman Janson, named with his mother's maiden surname moved to a house, Northfield, now the site of Northfield Close at the top of Logs Hill, but at that time known as part of Elmstead Lane. He died in 1907 in a 'sanatorium for the insane' in Holloway and is buried with his mother at St Nicholas.

By 1891 the family of John Rogers who were wholesale grocers, were in residence at Raggleswood, the trend for large families abating somewhat. There were only five children at home towards the end of the century.

By 1909 Kelly's Directory is showing another change of ownership, this time to farmers, William and Mary Vinson. They only had two children but the 1911 census clearly states a house of 15 rooms. The Vinsons were a local farming family; William was born on his father Edward's farm in Halfway Street, Sidcup. In 1901 William and Mary were living in Orpington in a house called The Walnuts, could this be

on the site of the current shopping centre? Think also of Vinson Court off Hurst Road in Sidcup and Vinson Close in Orpington. The Vinson fruit farming business still thrives in Kent.

Finally, and possibly lastly, this next resident took the title of his baronetcy from the house. Sir Joseph William Isherwood took up residence in 1913 and was created Baron Raggleswood in the 1921 Birthday Honours list. (The title became extinct on the death of his son without issue). He was a naval architect and invented the longitudinal construction of ships known as the Isherwood system.



He decided it was better to build a ship on its backbone rather than on its ribs and his system became so successful that more than 1000 vessels had been built that way by the time of his death. During World War One Isherwood gave his designs for torpedo proof cargo vessels to the government free of charge. Described in his obituary as modest and retiring, a man of many friends and a great host; Raggleswood would have seen a good few gatherings. He was also captain of the West Kent Golf Club in 1935.

The 1935 aerial photograph taken of the grand houses of Lubbock Road, which is displayed in both Christchurch, Lubbock Road and in the Chislehurst Society office at the Methodist Church, marks the end of an era. It was taken just ahead of the demolition of Raggleswood following Sir Joseph's death in 1937 and coinciding with the end of the long lease on the land. The owner of the existing house on the site tells me it is indeed pre-war.

The name lives on in Raggleswood, a private road off Old Hill, part of which would have been within the grounds of the original house, and Sir Joseph's widow moved to a new home in Logs Hill Close which she named Raggleswood House.

When J Beckwith promoted *The History of Chislehurst* to a publisher in 1900 he wrote 'I was distressed myself at the bulk to which [the book] grew, but I feel it really seemed impossible to curtail it. This is one of the disadvantages of cooperation'. As you can tell I have found plenty of 'bulk', and I have unearthed many more stories but if anyone has any information of a historic nature in relation to Lubbock Road please e mail me Joanna.friel@yahoo.co.uk Who knows what more we have to discover ?

Chislehurst & West Kent Cricket Club Bicentenary by *Eddie Battarbee*

The Chislehurst & West Kent Cricket Club as its name implies is an amalgam of the former Chislehurst Club and the West Kent Club. The latter was originally the Prince's Plain Cricket Club founded in 1812 with its headquarters on Bromley Common. As a result of an Act of Parliament in 1821 enclosing Bromley Common, the Club was forced to move.



W.G. Grace never played for West Kent, but did appear on the ground, as in this photograph, part of the Cricket Club's archives

Viscount Sidney, Lord of the Manor of Chislehurst, was a member of the Prince's Plain Club and, when asked, agreed to give a piece of Chislehurst common to the Club for a new ground. Eight acres were 'grubbed, burnt, leveled and sowed with grass seed and a debt of £191 was incurred'.

The Club moved to this new ground in the summer of 1822 and changed its name to West Kent Cricket Club.

To celebrate the opening of the new ground, a match was played between Kent and the M.CC on 25 and 26 July 1822, which Kent won by 149 runs. Apparently 5,000 persons were present! Lord Frederick Beauclerk of the M.CC reputedly one of the best batsmen of his day, played and when asked how he liked the ground said 'it was very fair for a Goose Common'.

Throughout this period one or more local Chislehurst teams played cricket on the common but not on the exclusive West Kent ground except by invitation when West Kent played 'The Neighbours', chiefly local tradesmen, who were guests for the day.

In the 1870's West Kent was approached by local clubs for permission to use their ground. This was agreed provided these clubs amalgamated to form one club to be called Chislehurst Club. West Kent provided one of their own members, Mr. C. C. Parr, to be the first president. A committee was formed of three gentlemen and three tradesmen and Mr. Parr brokered the arrangements for ground sharing from April 1876. For more than a century this sharing arrangement continued until the two clubs amalgamated in 1980.

In 1885 a committee of local residents applied to the Land Commissioner's office to take the management and control of the commons out of the hands of the Lord of the Manor and substitute locally elected Conservators under the Commons Preservation Acts. Despite opposition at the public hearing to West Kent's exclusive use of the cricket ground the Commissioners were persuaded that the status quo should prevail.

West Kent drafted their own clause for approval, which became clause 18 of the 1886 Act expressly directing the Conservators to 'allow the West Kent cc sole and exclusive management and control of the ground so long as the said Club shall maintain the same in good order and condition'. In return for these privileges they had to agree 'to allow other local cricket clubs the like reasonable enjoyment of the said ground when it is not required for matches by the said Club'. In the Supplemental Act of 1888, when Chislehurst and St Paul's Cray commons were combined, this clause was retained.

The 'Old Tents' (*below*) for dressing and dining were replaced by a permanent wooden pavilion at a cost of £357 plus £59 for drainage and water services in time for the start of the 1899 season. A flat roofed changing room extension was added in 1956 and a double garage for machinery in 1983.



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