

**Gentlemen and players of Essex: the
amateur and professional cricketers of
Essex County Cricket Club, 1876-1979**

by David Pracy

Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians website

First published edition, January 2023

Contents

Preface	5
Part I: Background	6
Chapter 1: Gentlemen and Players – cricket as a microcosm of society	6
The amateur ideal and the rise of professional sport	6
The evolution of cricket	8
The amateur elite.....	11
The professional’s lot.....	12
The middle-class cricketer	16
Edward Humphrey Dalrymple Sewell (1872-1947)	18
‘Abolition’ and one-day cricket	20
Chapter 2: Essex on the move.....	21
Brentwood, 1876-1885	21
The coming of CE Green	24
The move to Leyton	26
‘A most populous district’	27
Developing the ground.....	29
Second-class county.....	31
A gloomy year.....	33
Towards first-class status.....	34
Essex’s first Silver Age, 1895-1899	37
Years of struggle 1900-1932.....	40
The ‘Essex Circus’ 1933-1967.....	47
Chelmsford 1967-	50
Part II: Amateurs.....	51
Chapter 3: Early days.....	51
‘A country gentleman of the old type’: James Round (1842-1916)	51
‘County’ in both senses of the word	54
Chapter 4: The Uppingham connection	55
‘The great mainstay of Essex’: Charles Ernest Green (1846-1916)	55
A family of shipbuilders	56
Uppingham School.....	57
First-class cricket	59
Heathfield Harman Stephenson (1833-1896)	60
Uppingham Rovers	62
‘A keen cricketer and supporter of the game’: Green comes to Essex	63
‘Essex advance so quickly’	64
‘Bitterly disappointed and heartily sick of the whole thing’	67
‘The best of all my boys’: Alfred Perry ‘Bunny’ Lucas (1857-1923)	68
Chapter 5: Captains of the ‘Golden Age’	69
Cyril Digby Buxton (1865-1892).....	69
Hugh Glendwr Palmer Owen (1859-1912).....	71
The committee in 1901	74
Charles Jesse Kortright (1871-1952)	76
Frederick Luther Fane (1875-1960).....	85
Chapter 6: ‘Cheerful Charlie’ – Charles Percy McGahey (1871-1935)	86
Charlie’s ‘Twin’: Percival Albert (‘Peter’) Perrin (1876-1945)	87
The Three Blackbirds.....	90

Frederick George Bull (1875-1910).....	91
Charlie as Assistant Secretary.....	94
The captaincy and after.....	97
Indian summer.....	99
CP McGahey and Buckenham, CP.....	100
‘A great encourager’: Charlie as coach.....	102
The missing run: Charlie as scorer.....	104
Chapter 7 ‘A professional amateur’: JWHT Douglas (1882-1930).....	108
‘A young Hannibal’.....	108
Captain courageous.....	110
Interlude: Essex in the First World War.....	113
Essex cricketers killed in the First World War.....	117
Douglas Part II: the gladiator.....	128
‘Pro’ Douglas and the professionals.....	130
Australian nemesis.....	132
Decline and fall.....	133
Chapter 8: the captaincy problem and an unorthodox solution.....	137
Harold Marsh ‘Whiz’ Morris (1898-1984).....	137
Denys Robert Wilcox (1910-1953).....	141
Thomas Neill Pearce (1905-1994).....	143
Chapter 9: The secretaries.....	145
Oswell Robert Borradaile (1860-1935).....	148
The 1920s.....	149
Brian Kenneth Castor (1889-1979).....	151
Chapter 10: ‘All too little was seen of Mr...’ – availability of amateurs.....	152
The Turner brothers.....	153
Canon Frank Hay Gillingham (1875-1953).....	154
The wicket-keepers.....	156
George Marshall Loudon (1885-1972).....	160
The Ashton brothers.....	161
Leonard George Crawley (1903-1981).....	164
Holcombe Douglas ‘Hopper’ Read (1910-2000).....	167
Kenneth Farnes (1911-1941).....	169
Chapter 11: After the Second World War.....	174
Harold Alker Faragher (1917- 2006).....	175
Trevor Edward Bailey (1923-2011).....	178
Chapter 12: ‘A giant among men’: Douglas John Insole (1926-2017).....	184
Hero worship.....	185
Captain of Essex.....	186
Amateurs and professionals.....	191
‘Cricket is a business but the business is cricket’.....	194
Part III: Professionals.....	195
Chapter 13: From match-fees to contracts, 1876-1920.....	195
Match and win money.....	195
Working on the ground.....	196
Winter pay.....	199
Talent money.....	199
How much could an Essex professional earn before 1914?.....	200
‘Universally respected throughout Essex’: Frank Silcock (1838-1897).....	201
‘An excellent judge of the game’: Harry Pickett (1862-1907).....	204

Lancashire imports: James Burns and the Littlewoods.....	207
Colonial imports.....	212
Harding Isaac ‘Sailor’ Young (1876-1964).....	213
Chapter 14: ‘Cricket, like other diseases, runs in the blood’ – the professional dynasties.....	214
The Freemans.....	214
Edward Charles Freeman (1860-1940).....	215
Edward John Freeman (1880-1964).....	216
Bill Reeves.....	217
Abraham George Freeman and sons.....	219
The Brewers.....	222
The Russells.....	225
The Carpenters and O’Connors.....	231
Chapter 15: ‘Handier with the bat than the pen’ – disputes and discipline.....	235
Early days.....	235
‘Servants do not come and go through the front door’.....	237
Herbert Arthur ‘Bob’ Carpenter (1869-1933).....	240
Walter Mead (1868-1954).....	243
Pre-war problems.....	247
‘Entirely ruined by bullying’: Augustus Bernard ‘Joe’ Hipkin (1900-1956)....	250
James Albert Cutmore (1898-1985).....	252
Lawrence Charles Eastman (1897-1941).....	254
Chapter 16: Away from Leyton, 1928-1945.....	256
‘Drastic economies’.....	256
‘Making room for amateurs’.....	259
Morris Stanley Nichols (1900-1961).....	262
Dudley Fairbridge Pope (1906-1934).....	263
The Smith cousins, Peter (1908-1967) and Ray (1914-1996).....	265
Frank Henry Rist (1914-2001).....	267
Chapter 17: After the Second World War.....	269
Frank Henry Vigar (1917-2004).....	276
Thomas Carter ‘Dickie’ Dodds (1919-2001).....	278
Paul Antony Gibb (1913-1977).....	279
Discipline.....	281
The search for spinners.....	283
Part IV: Epilogue.....	284
Chapter 18: From bankruptcy to the Championship, 1963-79.....	284
‘Reducing the staff for economic reasons’.....	284
Annus horribilis - 1967.....	288
Turning the corner.....	291
From promise to fulfilment: the 1970s.....	292
Conclusion.....	292
Appendix 1: Sources.....	294
Essex County Cricket Club administrative records.....	294
Other key sources.....	294
Appendix 2: Benefits.....	296
Appendix 3: Gentlemen v Players of Essex - fantasy elevens.....	300

Preface

In 1876 the newly-formed county cricket clubs of Essex and Hertfordshire played one another twice, and Hertfordshire comfortably won both matches. Exactly a century later, in the premier knock-out competition then known as the Gillette Cup, Hertfordshire again defeated Essex, but then it was one of the great cricketing shocks of its time. Essex had become a fully professional first-class club whereas Hertfordshire remained a mostly amateur minor county. The intention of this piece is to show the gradual evolution of the relationship between the amateurs who ran the Essex club and the professionals they employed, and of the composition of the team from an amateur side with a minority of professionals into a professional side with a minority of amateurs. In 1962 the cricket authorities abolished the distinction between amateurs and professionals, and all were designated as cricketers, but I take this history down to 1979, when the club won its first trophies and appointed a genuinely professional secretary-manager.

David Lemmon and Mike Marshall wrote an excellent narrative history of the club, published in 1986, but I am trying to do something rather different. I could not improve on the late Sir Derek Birley's award-winning *A Social History of English Cricket*, so this is a case study attempting to illustrate some of his themes. It shares the philosophy set out in the introduction to his book *The Willow Wand*: 'It has been written in deep affection for and appreciation of a great game that has survived despite the efforts of its leaders...there is room for a serious – though not solemn – comparison of the game's mythology with its reality.'

I have chosen Essex for four reasons:

- As an academically qualified historian who is also a keen supporter, I would hope to bring an enthusiastic but not uncritical approach to a topic where my own recollections and those of my parents are occasionally relevant.
- Its administrative records, though not without irritating gaps, are good enough to make a study like this feasible.
- It is – if there is such a thing – a fairly typical county club. Though having a strong amateur influence typical of the south, its East End working-class connections were reminiscent of the professionally-based northern teams: in most other sides amateurs or professionals predominated, but at Essex the balance between in the team was about equal¹.
- In 1999, the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop recorded fascinating recollections of Essex's last years with the County Ground at Leyton as its headquarters, and of the period from 1957 to 1977 when it was used as one of the festival grounds². I have used the reminiscences of the three Essex cricketers interviewed – Harold

¹ As late as the 1920s, the northern sides usually played nine or ten professionals, whereas some of the southern ones sometimes fielded only two or three.

² The interviews were commissioned by Waltham Forest Council's Planning Department as part of a lottery application for funding to restore the pavilion at the County Ground at Leyton. Tapes of the originals can be heard by appointment at Vestry House Museum in Walthamstow, where there are also typed transcripts of most of them.

Faragher, Doug Insole and Frank Rist – and relevant parts of the spectators’ memories at appropriate points in the book.

The main themes are geographic, economic and above all social. I attempt where possible to compare and contrast the experience of Essex with that of other clubs.

- **Geographically**, Essex has been well described as ‘North of the Thames, east of the Lea, south of the Stour, west of the sea’. It is a large and populous county that drew on urban and rural elements for its support and for its playing strength, as well as neighbouring counties such as Suffolk and Cambridgeshire which are not first-class.
- The club achieved first-class status in 1894 but was for many years in the shadow of its longer-established and wealthier neighbours Surrey and Middlesex. This compounded the **economic** problems associated with trying to graft a professional business approach on to an essentially amateur club structure.
- I want to test the truth of Trevor Bailey’s assertion that Essex was ‘a democratic and easy-going club’³ by examining the **social** relationship between the amateur and professional cricketers, and in particular between the committee and its employees.

This is primarily a social history, but its subject matter is cricket which is not everybody’s cup of tea. There is a fair amount of original research so I think that even the most diehard aficionado of the game should learn something new, but I also hope that readers who do not share our enthusiasm will be able to understand most of it, and skip the unavoidably technical bits without losing the thread. I know of no game richer in humour and anecdote than cricket, so I have tried to ensure that they are well-represented.

Part I: Background

Chapter 1: Gentlemen and Players – cricket as a microcosm of society

The amateur ideal and the rise of professional sport

For centuries sport in England was largely a matter of the common people making their own amusements, with occasional contributions from the aristocracy and gentry. Then after 1850 advocates of muscular Christianity and the cult of athleticism spread belief in the value of team games, so for example nearly one-third of Victorian Oxbridge cricket blues were ordained⁴. Meanwhile the economic benefits of industrialisation were filtering down to the mass of the population, so sports entrepreneurs could rely on a large and regular clientele. Sport therefore had to resolve the conflict between the amateur ethos and growing professionalism⁵. By the 1880s the shorter working week and the growth of real wages had made cricket and football into spectator sports. Like

³ BAILEY, p50. As a typical public school/ Cambridge University amateur and an Essex loyalist, his assertion may not be entirely unbiased! - other writers, though, have expressed similar views.

⁴ WILLIAMS, p5.

⁵ MANGAN, passim.

the popular press, the music hall and the seaside holiday, they had potential for development as capitalist industries.

Cricket and football were the great summer and winter games and I will at various points compare and contrast their fortunes, so a brief summary of football's evolution is appropriate here. Early forms of the game had often been little more than an excuse for mob violence between neighbouring villages, but in the eighteenth century such activities gave way to more organised forms of football. It was also played in the public schools but they all had slightly different rules, which meant that they seldom played one another. With the coming of the railways, school teams could travel greater distances so it was obviously desirable to agree a common set of rules. In 1863 a series of meetings was held to that end, but the clubs could not agree on the question of handling the ball so the game gradually divided into the Association and Rugby codes⁶.

The FA Cup was started in 1871-2 by and for amateur soccer clubs mostly made up of old boys from the public schools, but the game soon spread. Railways, the Saturday half-holiday and rising real working-class wages enabled it to become in the 1880s a commercialised gate-money sport. Southern amateur clubs were appalled to learn that the semi-professional side Blackburn Olympic had trained for three weeks before beating Old Etonians in the 1883 final, and no genuinely amateur club ever won the FA Cup again. Professionalism was legalised in 1885, and the Football League established in 1888-9 consisted entirely of professional sides from the north and the midlands. After the institution of the FA Amateur Cup in 1892 a rigid distinction came into being between the two fraternities, aggravated in 1907 when some diehard southern county organisations established a separate Amateur Football Association.

The divide in Rugby was even greater, with Union and League developing as completely different codes after 1895, when twenty-one northern clubs separated because the cast iron rules framed by the Rugby Union for an ideal amateurism were unworkable in the north, where they had to rely on working-class players. The governing body had repeatedly refused permission for them to compensate players who lost money by taking time off work. Over the years various changes, most conspicuously reduction of the number of players from fifteen to thirteen, were designed to make the game more free-flowing and thus attractive to spectators. Ironically, in the 1990s Rugby Union, which had in theory remained amateur for over a century, suddenly became the last major sport to embrace professionalism and rapidly made up for lost time. It overtook an upstart younger rival that never really succeeded in breaking out of its northern fastness, and did not make as many converts overseas.

Much good work has been done on the social history of football⁷, but in one important respect cricket is an even more interesting topic. Whereas football fragmented into three codes and four class-based organisations, cricket by contrast managed to keep amateurs and professionals within a single structure and thereby provided a marvellous microcosm of wider society.

⁶ MONEY, Tony. Manly and muscular diversions: public schools and the 19th century sporting revival. London, Duckworth., 1997, p113.

⁷ Eg WALVIN, James. The people's game: a social history of British football. Harmondsworth, Allen Lane, 1974. MASON, Tony. Association football and English society 1863-1915. Brighton, Harvester P., 1980. Dr Mason's argument that "the leisure experience of social groups is as worthy of investigation as their political or industrial experience" was the trigger for my original OU research. OPEN UNIVERSITY. A401. Great Britain: sources and historiography 1750-1950, radio programme 10.

The evolution of cricket⁸

Cricket probably originated during the sixteenth century in the Weald of Sussex, Kent and Surrey, which was at that time more heavily industrialised than many other parts of England⁹. It soon developed class elements as gentry began to patronise and play it, although as late as 1720 it was said to be played by ‘the more common sort’¹⁰. The gentry turned to it because it was not outlawed in the Gaming Acts of 1701 and 1710, so they could legitimately gamble on it. They also perhaps used it to assist the ‘calming down’ process much needed by a nation which had endured 150 years of almost continuous religious, social and political upheaval that often resulted in bloodshed, most notably in the Civil War. Reflecting the aristocratic life-style divided between town and country, matches were played in London and in the various counties, which foreshadowed the way in which the game is still organised today. In 1744 a group of gentlemen met at the Star & Garter pub in London to codify the laws of cricket, giving it a unity never achieved by football. They were the fore-runners of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), a private club which ran the game in England well into the twentieth century. Cricket has continued to evolve ever since and some changes – such as the move from under-arm to round-arm and then over-arm bowling – have been quite radical, but they have always been agreed by all involved.

‘If the French *noblesse* had been capable of playing cricket with their peasants, their châteaux would never have been burned,’ wrote GM Trevelyan¹¹, but Birley rather unromantically suggests that for the most part the involvement of the gentry was ‘a by-product of their penchant for gambling’. With purses of up to a thousand guineas at stake, it was an excellent investment for aristocratic patrons to pay leading professionals a few pounds, and in 1806 the first Gentlemen v. Players game formalized this class divide. Cricket became the national game, used by reforming public school headmasters to channel youthful energies, and as late as 1908 *The Times* suggested that ‘Cricket is unquestionably the best antidote to Hooliganism’¹². The phrase ‘It’s not cricket’ – first recorded by the Reverend James Pycroft in 1851¹³ – condemned unsocial behaviour, although the game has a long history of cheating and sharp practice. Cricket was a metaphor for life itself: the Reverend Thomas Waugh wrote a book entitled *The cricket field of a Christian life*¹⁴, although in real life high-minded proponents of spiritual service through selfless sporting endeavour were in a minority compared to those who saw cricket as one of life’s pleasures.

When the growing middle class attacked gambling by the ‘idle rich and the idle poor’¹⁵, cricket became financially unprofitable. Travelling teams – the first and best-known of

⁸ This section, a whistle-stop tour of 200 years of cricket’s social history, is based mainly on three books. WYNNE-THOMAS, ARMITAGE and BRAILSFORD. Thanks also to Bob Harrigan for his comments on this paragraph.

⁹ WYNNE-THOMAS has re-examined primary sources - in a manner similar to the work of Everitt and Heys on the same area - to make this suggestion, which I find convincing. EVERITT, Alan. Landscape and community in England. London, Hambledon P., 1985, ch.3 HEY, David. The local history of family names. In *The local historian*, vol 27 no. 4, November 1997 - supplement.

¹⁰ Suggested in JARVIE, Grant and MAGUIRE, Joseph. Sport and leisure in social thought. London, Routledge, 1994, p141. Revision of Stow’s London, quoted by BIRLEY, p15.

¹¹ TREVELYAN, G.M. English social history. London, 1939, p412; Social history, p29.

¹² MONEY, p50, 55. Times, 4 Sept 1908. Cited BIRLEY, p193.

¹³ BIRLEY, p86.

¹⁴ Cited, SANDFORD, Keith A.P. Cricket and the Victorian society. IN *Journal of social history*, XVII, 1983, p304.

¹⁵ VAMPLEW, p36.

which was William Clarke's northern-based All-England XI – took advantage of the new railways and filled the void, giving working-class cricketers 'regular employment and a wage standard which they could not better elsewhere'¹⁶. In the 1850s and 1860s professionals dominated cricket and the game could easily have split into amateur and professional organisations. If the pros had maintained their independence and targeted working-class spectators with radical innovations like one-day cricket, which saved the game a century later, it might have been impossible for the amateurs to regain control¹⁷.

Instead, around 1870 the balance shifted back, and cricket evolved a structure which remained true to its origins and changed little for a century. Cricket was one of many traditional activities that were re-invented in Victorian times as a means of social control¹⁸, although the laws and customs of cricket were recognizably those of 1744, whereas football and other games changed much more in order to accommodate growing commercialism. Football compressed itself into ninety minutes that could be watched by working men on their Saturday half-day, but first-class cricket spread itself over three days that often only the more comfortably off had time to watch, although Lancashire and other semi-professional league cricket was played on Saturday afternoons. Football clubs were based on the developing cities and towns, whereas cricket clubs continued to be county in the social as well as the administrative sense of the word, although in practice they too were mostly based in towns.

The authorities reasserted their control through a strengthened MCC¹⁹. The masterstroke of MCC's secretary, RA Fitzgerald, was to capture the so-called amateur WG Grace, who had made his name with the travelling teams, by offering him huge expenses to play at Lord's.

Exploiting the preference of paying spectators to identify with local teams, the amateur authorities encouraged matches between revived county clubs. This achieved the desired effect of undermining the travelling teams²⁰, but the counties still needed the professionals. The disadvantage of relying on local loyalties is always that spectators are less likely to pay for the pleasure of seeing their side beaten. Poor performances on the pitch and on the balance sheet therefore often went together, and teams were strengthened with contracted professionals. The cricket authorities would have preferred to maintain the amateur ethos and finance the clubs by wealthy patronage and members' subscriptions²¹, but increasingly they had to rely on professionalism and gate-money. Cricket grounds were enclosed and a charge was made for admittance. Cricket remained a game controlled by an educated elite, but it also attracted a working-class following.

Spectators, like cricketers, were to an extent divided by class, according to whether they sat in the pavilion, the grandstand or the terraces²². Yet a larger middle-class following has meant that cricket has remained a less partisan sport. When my Lancastrian friend Andy and I watch Essex play Lancashire, we can sit together and each appreciates the skills of the other's players. If we wanted to see Leyton Orient against Oldham Athletic,

¹⁶ ARLOTT, p46.

¹⁷ Cf RAE, p45, 49.

¹⁸ HOBSBAWM, Eric J. *The invention of tradition*, CUP, 1984, p298-307.

¹⁹ BROOKES, p2. VAMPLEW, p59.

²⁰ "...Turned entrepreneurial nomads into resident gladiators and made profits essential to survival", in BIRLEY's graphic phrase. *Land of sport and glory*. p19.

²¹ In response to a wet and financially disastrous 1910 season, the editor of Wisden, Sydney Pardon, could only suggest that members double their subscriptions from one guinea to two.

²² WILLIAMS, p186.

he would might to be segregated with the supporters of the away side, just in case he forgot himself and cheered when they scored a goal. One of the highlights of my cricket-watching life was at The Oval in 2000 when an unsegregated, largely white crowd gave standing ovations for the final appearances in England of the great West Indian bowlers Curtly Ambrose and Courtenay Walsh, although it should be said that by then it was obvious England were going to win the match and the series.

During the 1870s and 1880s, the press used various unofficial methods to determine which was the champion county, but from 1890 MCC and the counties took responsibility for determining the method used. In 1895 the admission of Derbyshire, Essex, Hampshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire to the championship increased the number of first-class clubs from nine to fourteen²³. Cricket became increasingly a full-time occupation, and some argued that the amateur/professional system was breaking down²⁴. Amateurs constituted almost half of county teams in 1894 but less than a third by 1912²⁵. In 1910 CB Fry, an extraordinarily talented all-round athlete and fine batsman deplored 'The humbug of County Cricket' as having become too professional as a result of some counties importing colonials. Arguably Fry himself was a humbug, for he made good money out of sport as a journalist.

After the spirit of Public School cricket expressed in Newbolt's *Vitai Lampada* found its awful fulfilment in World War One, professionals dominated even more²⁶. Amateurs still controlled administration although it seems unlikely that they could have continued to do so unless there had been a broad social and cultural harmony in society at large. Cricket fell behind football as a spectator sport, so that the best supported county cricket clubs had attracted fewer spectators than the worst supported First Division football clubs²⁷. In 1937 the Findlay Commission was appointed to investigate whether the game should be reformed in order to boost ailing finances, but it produced no radical proposals.

Only in 1962, with the introduction of one-day cricket and the abolition of the distinction between amateur and professional status, did cricket finally make the major changes that were to prove its salvation. It is arguable that one-day cricket could not have thrived without abolition, although the Gloucestershire captain Beverley Lyon and the Worcestershire professional Fred Root – both radical thinkers about the game – had in the 1930s advocated cricket limited by overs rather than by time.

The decline of the industrial north was accompanied by a shift of the balance of power in cricket to the south-east: Surrey won seven successive championships in the 1950s, and Kent were the best team in the 1970s. For the period from 1972, when a structure with three one-day competitions was established, the Cricket Society devised a complicated table with weightings for matters such as test appearances and bad weather as well as performances on the field: in 1999 it showed Essex in first place, with Middlesex a close second and the field some way behind.

²³ Gloucestershire, Kent, Lancashire, Middlesex, Nottinghamshire, Surrey, Sussex, Yorkshire. Derbyshire had dropped out after the 1887 season, and Somerset were admitted in 1891.

²⁴ eg the amateur RH Lytton in 1903 and the professional AE Knight in 1906. Cited, BIRLEY, *Land of sport and glory*, p260.

²⁵ VAMPLEW, p210.

²⁶ Professional-dominated northern counties won the championship every year from 1922-39.

²⁷ WILLIAMS, p191, 61.

The amateur elite

County cricket clubs were private organisations with committees largely drawn from the ranks of the gentry and company directors²⁸. Some, though by no means all, enjoyed the privilege of an education at public school and Oxbridge. They were elected by members who themselves belonged to the wealthier classes in society. Membership of the club was often deemed a social obligation for gentlemen, and appeals for new members were usually aimed specifically at them.

A great sporting myth is exemplified in the title of David Frith's attractive book *The golden age of cricket 1890-1914*. The blurb suggests that

Amateur cricketers in their plumage and from their elite backgrounds disported themselves with carefree, high-minded abandon, honour high among their motivations.

Like all the best myths, this one contains elements of truth but is not the whole truth. It is true that few amateurs went to state elementary schools, but many attended little-known private schools and did not go on to university. They also dominated batting, but it was not the First World War that ended their dominance: until 1908 there were usually at least ten amateurs among the top 20 in the English batting averages, but never afterwards²⁹.

Even before 1914 the carefree amateur living on his own means was almost extinct. Most of them had to support their cricket, and there were two ways of doing it. One was to earn a legitimate living which often took precedence over cricket: four Essex captains, for example, had to resign for business reasons. Alternatively, they could claim exorbitant expenses, contrary to the MCC's curiously negative declaration in 1878 that:

No gentleman ought to make a profit by his services on the cricket field, and that for the future no cricketer who takes more than his expenses in any match shall be qualified to play for the Gentlemen against the Players at Lord's, but if any gentleman feel difficulty in going to the match without pecuniary assistance he shall not be debarred from playing as a gentleman by having his expenses defrayed³⁰.

MCC asserted that they had stuck to this rule but John Lilywhite's *Companion* commented:

...this statement is hardly consistent with the facts. One well-known cricketer in particular has not been an absentee from the GENTLEMEN'S eleven at LORD'S for many years past, and that he has made larger profits by playing cricket than any Professional is an acknowledged fact...

This was referring to the prodigious so-called amateur WG Grace. He often won matches almost single-handed, and the authorities connived at his receiving far more in expenses than the professionals in wages: 'In 1873-4 he demanded, and got, £1500 to tour Australia as an amateur when the professionals received only £170 each.'³¹ He earned £400 to £500 a year and two testimonials organised by MCC raised thousands of pounds³².

²⁸ This paragraph based on WILLIAMS, pp25-27.

²⁹ ROBERTS, E.L. *Cricket in England 1894-1939*. London, E. Arnold, 1946, p98.

³⁰ Quoted, RAE, p229.

³¹ MIDWINTER, Eric. *W.G. Grace*. London, 1981. VAMPLEW, p11.

³² RAE, p104.

Grace was the most notorious and extravagant example, but by no means the only one. The touring Australians were treated as amateurs because they did not play cricket full-time for a living, but in terms of social class were closer to the professionals and therefore had some sympathy for them. The highly regarded captain in 1899, 1902 and 1905, Joe Darling, declared that ‘Very few of the amateurs in England were amateurs. They were highly paid professionals.’ He cited Grace, AE Stoddart, Gilbert Jessop and AO Jones as amateurs who were paid twice as much as professionals. Expenses could include: hotel and travelling costs; compensation for business losses, sometimes more than was entailed; sinecures such as being an assistant secretary who did more work on the field than off it. Such transactions were seldom recorded and are therefore information about them is almost irrecoverable, but the wealthier clubs were the main culprits. Committees also contrived to pay amateurs by giving them such gifts as wedding presents, presentations for outstanding performances, and retirement testimonials. Nottinghamshire’s outspoken amateur captain, Arthur Carr, asserted in the 1930s that some amateurs were paid over £500 a year – as much as the top professionals³³. The difference between amateurs and professionals was essentially social not economic, a matter of caste not money.

This meant that amateurs were perceived as the only men capable of leading cricket teams. The England captain and outstanding all-rounder AG Steel declared: ‘Amateurs have always made, and always will make, the best captains, and this is only natural. An educated mind, with the logical power of reasoning, will always treat every subject better than one comparatively untaught.’³⁴ An outsider commented: ‘County sides are best led by a man socially superior to the professionals.’³⁵ This may have been a Victorian public school concept, for at the Artillery Ground in 1744 Lord John Sackville was a member of a victorious Kent team captained by Valentine Rumsey, a noted professional cricketer who was also his head gardener at Knole. It should be said, though, that Lord John generally led his sides and that they often played for huge purses. Professionals sometimes feared amateur captains as bullies or despised them as incompetent, but could have great respect for one who was genuinely gifted as a leader and a cricketer.

The professional’s lot

There were by 1910 over 200 first-class and hundreds of other professional cricketers, usually self-employed or from the skilled working class³⁶. A top professional earned around £275 a year³⁷; by comparison, a railway foreman at Swindon would earn £182 for a 54-hour week or an unskilled labourer less than £100. Ranjitsinji in 1897 gave an amateur perspective on the professional’s role: ‘A modern professional playing for a club is partly a servant of the club, partly a servant of the public and partly a skilled labourer selling his skills in the best market’³⁸. This, however, applied only to a minority, and even the best feared injury or displacement by a better player.

Above all the professional’s insecurity arose from his semi-feudal relationship with the predominantly upper-middle-class committee, which decided whether or not to renew

³³ WILLIAMS, p168.

³⁴ A.G. STEEL. Cited, LOWERSON, p171. TREVELYAN, G.M. *English social history*. London, 1939, p412.

³⁵ “A JOURNALIST”, c1900. Cited, BROOKES, p140.

³⁶ VAMPLEW, p54. SISSONS, p80.

³⁷ MASON, p101. ARLOTT, p67.

³⁸ Cited, BROOKES, p140.

his annual contract. He was constantly reminded of his subservient position in trivial ways that reflected wider society. When playing away games, he would stay in separate accommodation and catering arrangements – if made at all – were inferior. He was required to address an amateur as ‘Sir’ even if he was much older and the amateur was still a schoolboy. Amateurs had their initials in front of their names on scorecards and elsewhere, but professionals had theirs afterwards or not at all. Behaviour seemed more important than playing ability, and professionals were treated like recalcitrant children.

Professionals were, however, more likely to complain about their pay than about their social status. Vamplew asserts on the evidence of the Lancashire and Leicestershire minutes that the clubs consulted one another to operate an unofficial cartel with a standard set of wages, but the Essex minutes suggest that the consultations were unsuccessful. In 1902 Kent wrote ‘with regard to a uniform charge being made to professionals for their services’, with which Essex were ‘in accord’, in 1906 there was a meeting at Lancashire to discuss summer and winter pay of pros, and in 1908 Essex themselves put a proposal to the Secretaries’ Conference for uniform payment of professionals. Their minutes, however, imply that nothing came of these initiatives, perhaps because of the great disparities in wealth between the counties. Thus the evidence is conflicting as to whether or not the richer clubs paid professionals more, but they certainly had bigger staffs and so paid more professionals³⁹. The clubs never became a fully operative employers’ cartel.

Professionals could supplement low basic pay in a number of ways, none of which carried any degree of certainty. **Working on the ground** mainly involved maintaining the playing area and bowling to members, often late into summer evenings. Batting being the more pleasurable part of the game, clubs did not employ batsmen to give members bowling practice⁴⁰. In addition to their official pay from their clubs, they sometimes received tips from members, especially when on the MCC ground staff at Lords⁴¹. **Winter pay** was introduced by Yorkshire on the initiative of Lord Hawke in 1895, because professional cricketers found seasonal work hard to come by and often suffered hardship. The decision ‘excited a feeling of anxiety, not to say alarm’ because ‘only clubs with a large amount of money ... [would] be able to act with such liberality’⁴². It mostly involved working on the ground and there was not always enough for everyone, so even experienced professionals could be refused and had to try elsewhere. **Match money** was paid for each game played. Sometimes inadequate amateurs were selected primarily to save money and the professionals bitterly resented them, although in August there was an influx of amateur schoolmasters and undergraduates who often strengthened the side so those pros who were not displaced positively welcomed them⁴³. **Bonuses** for wins, and sometimes for draws and first-innings lead, were dependent on the performance of the team as a whole and on imponderables like weather. **Talent money** was based on marks awarded by the captain who was judge, jury and treasurer, a system that emphasised the professionals’ dependence on their amateur employers⁴⁴. **Outstanding performances** could be rewarded with occasional ground collections from the crowd, or with a standard tariff paid by a benefactor such as Essex’s CE Green. After ten or more years’ good conduct

³⁹ VAMPLEW, p116, 122.

⁴⁰ As BIRLEY points out (p64)

⁴¹ VAMPLEW, p219.

⁴² Sydney Pardon, editor of Wisden.

⁴³ ARLOTT, p66, and my interview with Frank Vigar.

⁴⁴ Willow wand, p128.

(and play) the professional could request a **benefit**: if it was granted, he received the proceeds from various special events, including the profit after expenses for one match – a risky business reliant on weather, the form of the team and other imponderables. Benefits were solely at the grace and favour of the committee, so could be used as a subtle form of discipline. At least two players are said to have refused the offer of a second benefit because ‘I can’t afford it’ – Somerset’s Bertie Buse, and an unnamed colleague of Worcestershire’s outspoken interwar professional Fred Root⁴⁵. The best professionals when picked for **representative games**, most notably for England in test matches and for the Players against the Gentlemen, could earn a higher match fee – initially £10 and from 1899 £20. The few selected for **overseas tours** could earn several hundred pounds a trip.

The professionals’ belief that a reputation built on the field would get them a job afterwards was often mistaken, and all too many of them failed to use their winter jobs to develop a career. Walter Hammond – a highly successful pro who turned amateur in order to become England captain – wrote in 1952 that ‘a good many cannot put their cricket past to any use at all’, noting that they were offered such jobs as nightwatchman, caretaker and window-cleaner⁴⁶. Even while still playing, their income tended to decline as their powers waned. After retiring many fell into poverty, and some took their own lives.

A strict qualification rule requiring two years’ residence limited the professional’s chances of changing clubs⁴⁷. Until 1873 cricketers were allowed to play for more than one county in a season, but the clubs then agreed that they must choose between their counties of birth and residence. Initially professionals had to live in a county for three years to qualify by residence but amateurs only two. Although the period for professionals was reduced to two a year later, the rule still discriminated against them because amateurs often had more than one home. In 1887 there was a proposal to help pros, especially those born in counties without a first-class cricket team, by reducing the qualification period to one year; it was thrown out because, as the Middlesex delegate put it, ‘the county with the largest purse would win the honour of the first position’⁴⁸. Professionals found their mobility of labour restricted, their earning potential limited and their bargaining position reduced, since they could not leave their counties without a potentially disastrous break of two years in a relatively short career. By contrast football, which initially had similar qualification rules, soon abolished them and professionals could transfer at any time, provided the League and the two clubs agreed⁴⁹.

When agricultural labourers in over-populated villages went on strike for higher wages, they were simply told: ‘If you don’t want to work, there’s others as will.’ The same sentiment applied to professional cricketers, and the threat often became a reality. In 1866 five Yorkshire professionals, including their captain Roger Iddison, struck and were suspended for refusing to play Surrey. In 1878 Surrey organised a representative match against the Australians and the English professionals – angered by the fact that the tourists were earning good money though treated as amateurs – demanded to be paid £20, the same as their opponents. Their demands were ignored and the match went ahead with inferior players, who were initially willing to accept £10 but, perhaps to

⁴⁵ BARCLAY’S, p362. BROOKE, p152.

⁴⁶ Cited, *Willow wand*, p135.

⁴⁷ SISSONS, p86.

⁴⁸ VAMPLEW, p116.

⁴⁹ VAMPLEW, p126.

emphasise who was in charge, were later given £20 after all. Seven of the nine rebels played for Nottinghamshire and in 1880 they successfully petitioned for a fee of £20 to play the Australians, although again the committee exercised their authority by giving £21 to those professionals who had not signed the petition⁵⁰. In the following year the six and William Scotton went on strike for greater financial security. All were unceremoniously dropped until one by one they gave in; meanwhile such was the strength of Nottinghamshire that what amounted to a Second XI was fairly successful⁵¹.

In 1896 five professionals selected for the Oval Test realised that they would receive far less than WG Grace and demanded £20 rather than the £10 they had received for the previous two tests. They threatened to strike and feeling among the spectators was on their side, but again the rebellion was overcome by the threat to draft in others. Abel, Richardson and Hayward backed down straight away and played in the game. Lohmann apologised afterwards and was forgiven. Gunn of Nottinghamshire, the only non-Surrey player of the five, stood firm and played only one more test match – selected by his own committee on his home ground, Trent Bridge, in 1899.

When the northern Rugby professionals separated from the amateurs, their cricketing counterparts lacked the strength and confidence to follow suit. They were in the unique position of plying their trade alongside their employers, and often felt more loyalty to the amateurs of their own team than to the professionals of another⁵². Professional footballers were less constrained by such loyalties and took advantage of the 1906 Trade Disputes Act to attempt unionisation, but in 1912 lost a legal challenge to the retain-and-transfer system and their union collapsed⁵³. Cricketers did not even try.

The treatment of one outstanding professional compounded class bias with racism.⁵⁴ Around 1900 William Thomas Burton was regarded as the best fast bowler in the West Indies, accurate and with a most effective yorker. When West Indies toured England in 1900, he took 78 wickets at 21.55 apiece and at Lords against an MCC side including WG Grace he added 162 for the eighth wicket with LS Constantine, father of Learie. Though the tourists acquitted themselves well and some excellent cricket was played, MCC denied the matches first-class status. In 1902 and 1905 Burton played nine first-class matches for West Indies and British Guiana against English touring teams, taking 54 wickets. In 1906 he again toured England and the matches were first-class, but after two games he was sent home for ‘gross insubordination’. As a black professional, he refused to carry out menial tasks such as cleaning boots and carrying bags for white amateurs. He was forced to leave the West Indies and eventually found work as a sanitary inspector in Panama.

The Australian captain Joe Darling heard some captains speak to their professionals like dogs and noted that: ‘The poor old “pro” got his money as wages whereas the supposed amateur got his as expenses’.⁵⁵ He was appalled by the discrimination that

⁵⁰ VAMPLEW, p245.

⁵¹ WYNNE-THOMAS, p92.

⁵² LOWERSON, John. Sport and the English middle classes 1870-1914. Manchester U.P., 1993, p174. As Eric HOBBSBAWM put it, in a slightly different context: “There is no more effective way of bonding together disparate sections of restless peoples than to unite them than against outsiders.” Nations and nationalism, 2nd ed. CUP, 1990, p91.

⁵³ VAMPLEW, p244-9.

⁵⁴ This paragraph based on SANDIFORD, Keith AP. Those whom the goats bite are doomed? – the unluckiest of West Indian cricketers. IN Journal of the Cricket Society, vol 21 no.3 Autumn 2003 p49.

⁵⁵ BIRLEY, Derek. Land of sport and glory, p18.

forced professionals to use separate and inferior dining-tables and dressing-rooms. It even found its way on to the field of play:

It was a very common thing for an amateur and a professional to open the innings. The professional had to be waiting at his gate, but dare not go on to the members' pavilion and enter the playing ground first. The amateur and the professional then walked to the wickets from different gates, about 50 yards apart, so did not actually meet until they got to the wicket.

Amateurs 'assisted the county' when it suited them, but professionals always had to be there on demand. Sydney Barnes, generally regarded as the greatest bowler of his age, was the exception. He played three games for Warwickshire who invited him to play a fourth but then sent a telegram saying: 'Do not come. An amateur is playing.' He never came for them again, although in their defence it should be said that he probably honed his skills later and his record of taking only three wickets for 199 runs gave little indication of what was to follow. On the strength of a net practice and one game for Lancashire, their captain, Archie MacLaren, selected Barnes for the 1901-2 tour of Australia but soon came to regret his choice of the talented but cantankerous professional. Warned that their ship was in danger of sinking in a storm, he observed: 'There's one comfort. If we go down that bugger Barnes will go down with us.' Barnes appeared regularly for Lancashire in 1902-3 but refused to sign a new contract because he worked out that it was financially more rewarding to play league cricket⁵⁶. He played no more first-class cricket for four years but was then selected for the 1907-8 tour of South Africa and appeared fairly regular in representative, though not county, cricket until 1914. Disputes over money and terms meant that Barnes played only 27 test matches, but he took 189 wickets. Never one to tug his forelock to the gentry who ran the clubs, he knew his own worth and sold his services to those who recognised it.

After the First World War the lot of professional cricketers gradually improved. Then in 1939, provisions for Special Registration of players were put in place under Rule 10 of the Rules of County Cricket. This particularly covered players not wanted by counties for whom they were qualified by birth or residence. It had little effect in 1939, but much more immediately after the war⁵⁷.

The Second World War accelerated the changes that were already in progress. For example, England's Len Hutton and Warwickshire's Tom Dollery were two professionals who became successful captains, although Dollery was a public schoolboy who played representative schools' cricket with well-known amateurs.

The middle-class cricketer

Throughout this piece I have accepted the contemporary division into upper, middle and lower classes, although each had subtle gradations; in particular, I have treated the sons of the newly rich who attended public school and Oxbridge as upper class, because education above all determined an individual's place in the structure.⁵⁸

In one important respect, though, cricket was not an exact microcosm of society, for whereas society was divided broadly into three classes, cricket had only two. The place of an aspiring upper- or lower-class cricketer was clear: no working-class man ever played first-class cricket as an amateur, and no University blue turned professional until

⁵⁶ *Willow wand*, p139-142.

⁵⁷ Thanks to David Jeater for pointing this out.

⁵⁸ BRAILSFORD, Dennis, p97.

after the Second World War, when things were beginning to change rapidly. Middle-class cricketers, however, had to decide whether to be amateur or professional.

This can be illustrated by PG Wodehouse's cricket-playing character Mike Jackson, whose dilemma was realistic enough, although the solution proved less so. In *Psmith in the City* (1910), Mr Jackson's financial problems meant that Mike had to miss Cambridge and work in a bank. He just about survived the winter, but 'as the City grew hotter and stuffier' he pined for the cricket field. When his brother, captain of their unnamed county, asked him to play in an emergency, he rushed to Lord's even though he would lose his job. He determined that

He would have to become a professional. Could he get taken on? That was the question. He could not play as a professional in the same team in which his brothers were playing as amateurs. He must stake all on his birth qualification for Surrey.

Having made his decision, Mike was saved from having to implement it by his friend Psmith. He persuaded his father to offer Mike a post as a land agent, which would leave him plenty of time to continue playing cricket as an amateur.

There was no such fairy godfather for two pairs of brothers whose real-life experience exemplified the dilemma. All played for Essex in the first forty years of the twentieth century, and their fathers both had respectable middle-class jobs. On the 1901 census Manzilla Meston, a British subject born in Portugal, was described as an export clerk while Arthur Daer senior was shown as a licensed victualler's manager. Samuel Paul Meston and Arthur George Daer played as amateurs, whereas their younger brothers became professionals.

Sam Meston (1882-1960) was educated at St John's College Loughton and Salway College Leyton, minor private schools in west Essex. In 1901, aged 18, he was a traveller in the tobacco trade. In 1906 he was working in the West Country and appeared three times for Gloucestershire without setting the Severn on fire. The following year he was back in Essex and played fourteen games for them as an amateur. His 130 against Lancashire, the county's highest individual score of the season, helped Essex to an innings victory. In 1908 business limited him to three undistinguished appearances in July, the last of his first-class career, although in 1910 he scored 228 for Essex Club & Ground against West Ham & District. In 1911 he was a gas company clerk and part-time student, living in Southwark.

Sam's brother Alexander (1898-1980) attended Kirkdale Road Council School in Leytonstone, perhaps suggesting a decline in the family's fortunes. In 1921 he was an audit clerk working for the GPO. An all-rounder, he chose to play for Essex as a professional. He appeared twice in August 1926 and was given a chance to prove himself with ten games early in 1927. A batting average of 11 and a bowling average of 88 were not enough and he did not play again.

Arthur George Daer (1905-1980) was a fast-medium bowler and hard-hitting lower-order batsman who played 100 games as an amateur. He appeared twice in August 1925, when he rather strangely batted 11 and 10 and did not bowl, even though Essex tried six bowlers in each match. He returned in 1929 and for the next three years became a fairly regular member of the side without ever threatening to become the destructive opening bowler they needed. Following a knee operation in 1931 Daer could not bowl as fast and he developed a 'liberal physique'⁵⁹. It began to limit his

⁵⁹ The *News Chronicle*'s phrase, quoted by LEMMON, *Cricketers*.

effectiveness, although early in 1933 he twice took nine wickets in a match, including career-best innings figures of 6 for 38 against Gloucestershire. By 1935 Essex had a formidable pace attack and his last two appearances came in that season. Before the Second World War Daer and his father ran the Golden Lion pub in Romford High Street. After the war he opened a cricket school behind the pub, and also ran a sports shop with the Essex professional AV ‘Sonny’ Avery⁶⁰.

Like the amateur Kenneth Farnes, a key member of that pre-war attack, Arthur Daer’s younger brother Harry (1918-1980) was educated at Royal Liberty School Romford. Unlike his brother and Farnes, Harry chose to play as a professional and for the 1938 season was appointed as a ground bowler at the then usual rate of £3 a week. A medium-paced seamer, he made a promising debut in June 1938 aged only 19, finishing with match figures of 6 for 46 against Worcestershire. He played seven times in the next two months but took only five more wickets. He appeared once more, against Yorkshire in August 1939, but the more experienced bowlers twice dismissed the champions cheaply and he did not bowl. The Essex attack was much weaker after the Second World War but Daer did not play for the county again, although he did turn out in an Essex Past v Present match at Brentwood in 1955.

Edward Humphrey Dalrymple Sewell (1872-1947)⁶¹

EHD Sewell, who played for Essex early in the 20th century, was a cricketer who had a foot in both camps. He was born in India, the son of an Army officer. He attended Bedford Grammar School, where he captained the cricket and rugby teams. In 1892 he returned to India as a civil servant and his powerful hitting made him a phenomenally successful cricketer. He was the first in India to score three consecutive hundreds, and also made two double centuries. TS Sidney, an Old Harrovian MCC member and author of a book called *WG up to date*, played much cricket with Sewell at the hill station of Ootacamund. He recommended Sewell to the Essex secretary, OR Borradaile, so the committee wrote to Sewell offering to pay £30 towards his passage home and asking whether he would accept a contract. ‘Would a duck swim?’ he later asked⁶².

In April 1900 Sewell reported to Leyton on the first day of the coaching fortnight. Wanting to put Sewell at ease, Green walked back to the pavilion with him. Sewell recalled a remark of Green’s⁶³:

‘Let me see now, you were born in Essex, weren’t you?’ he knowing jolly well I was not, and so would not be available, if chosen, v. Surrey in a fortnight’s time. But that remark gave me great encouragement. It was so eloquent, as I felt he intended it to be. There are different ways of telling a chap he has passed an examination.

Essex rather cheekily did include him in their first Second XI match against Surrey anyway, but their objection ‘did me out of several match fees for the Second XI for my two qualifying years.’

⁶⁰ ECCC yearbook 1951, p54.

<http://216.239.59.104/search?q=cache:Uw9ahi2DH5EJ:groups.yahoo.com/group/RomfordHistory/mesage/3606+%22arthur+daer%22&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7> accessed 9 Jul 2008.

⁶¹ <https://www.cricketcountry.com/articles/edward-sewell-cricketer-columnist-and-part-of-the-first-all-india-team-774643> is an interesting article about him

⁶² Most quotes in this chapter from *An outdoor wallah*, ch 10.

⁶³ *Well hit! Sir*, p105.

In order to start his qualifying period as soon as possible, Sewell stayed for a few weeks with CP Buckenham, like him a professional from a more educated background. He then took a small house at 26 Brewster Road, overlooking the ground. On the 1901 census he was described as a professional cricketer, living with his wife, son and a live-in servant. He earned £2 a week as a member of the ground staff and played in all the Club & Ground matches, for which he and the other professionals got no fee but had to pay their own fares. He ‘made representations to Borrie about this, and... the committee stumped up travelling and tea expenses.’

Sewell ‘punished moderate bowling in matches of minor class with merciless severity’ and occasionally enjoyed similar success at first-class level. Against Warwickshire at Edgbaston in 1904 he hit 107 out of 142 officially timed as 80 minutes, although he always claimed it was only 65. Too often, though, he failed against the best bowling, and an average of only 21 for someone playing regularly on the Leyton feather-beds was not good enough. Towards the end of the 1904 season he was dropped and in February 1905 he wrote to resign, although Essex might not have renewed his contract anyway.

Sewell’s background might have suggested that he would play as an amateur and he was often invited to play country house cricket. He and CB Fry ‘... shot together in India, battled against each other in Sussex v. Essex, and argued like the dickens in pavilions all over the country.’⁶⁴ In a piece about cricket for the *Victoria County History*, Sir Home Gordon – always a stickler for differentiating between amateurs and professionals - used Sewell’s initials, as did the Essex minutes in January 1904, even though he was at the time a pro. In 1905 he reverted to amateur status and wrote to ask ‘whether there was any objection to his playing for Middlesex in 1907’ but nothing came of it, although he did do some coaching at The Oval. He became secretary of Buckinghamshire, for whom he also played as an amateur. He played occasional first-class games for various sides until 1922 when he was almost 50.

When Sewell was qualifying for Essex, his wage of less than six shillings a day ‘did not leave much for amusements and clothes for three of us... I began to think of pen and ink for the production of grist.’ He sent off an article about cricket to the *Athletic News* and almost by return post the editor asked him to contribute weekly. For Sewell it was the start of a new and successful career as a journalist and writer about cricket and rugby. It was to stand him in good stead when his time with Essex ended, and Fry in 1905 introduced him to Fleet Street. On the 1911 and 1921 censuses he described himself as a journalist.

Not all of his yarns were reliable, and some were recycled again and again. His style could be painfully dated and sentimental, but at its best his writing was lively and informative. He is a valuable inside source about Essex cricket, particularly in the period he played, and I have quoted him when appropriate.

Sewell is believed to have been the author of *A Searchlight on English Cricket*, a book which was so outspoken that it was published under the pseudonym of An English County Cricketer. If the author was Sewell, the statement that ‘Professionals themselves preferred to be captained by an amateur’ would be particularly interesting, for he was essentially an amateur who played a few years for Essex as a pro.

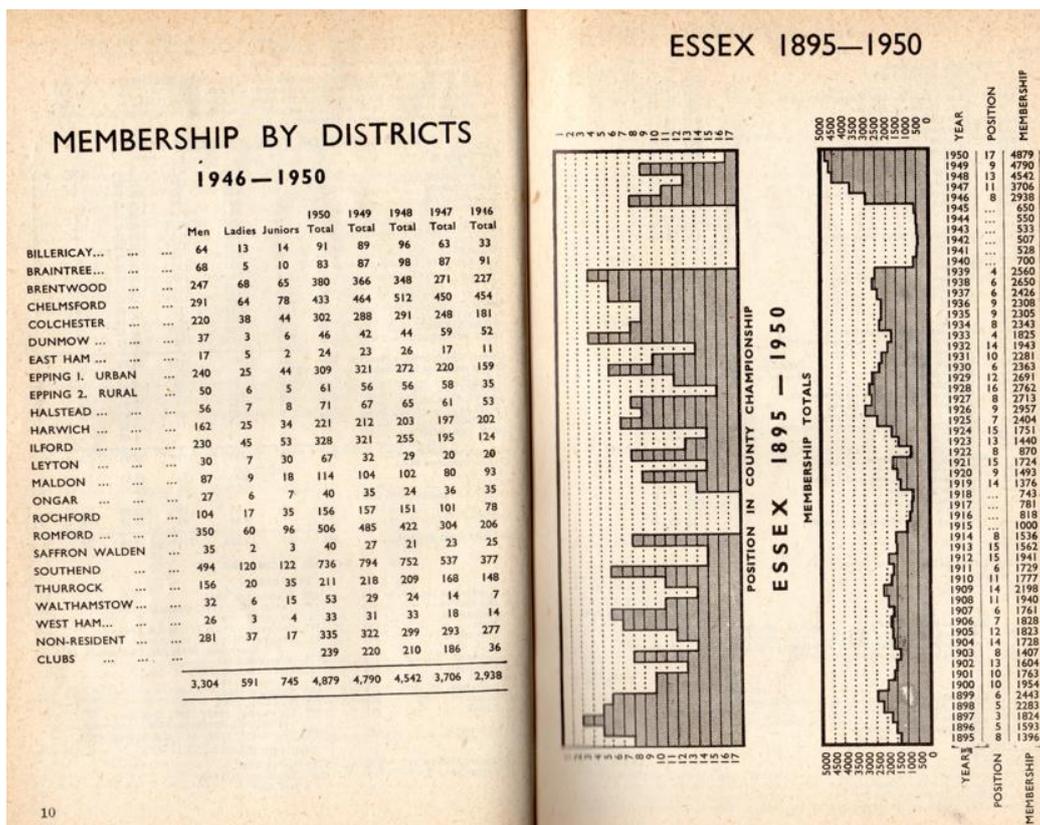
⁶⁴ Well hit! Sir, p96.

'Abolition' and one-day cricket

The year 1963 saw the two greatest changes for a century in the structure of first-class cricket in England. After a prolonged search for an alternative fudge, the Advisory Cricket Council decided to put an end to the historic categories of Gentleman and Player; henceforth there would only be cricketers. It was a long overdue reform that could be postponed no longer. The England captain Ted Dexter admitted to making more money from cricket than from business and even the *Daily Telegraph* conceded that amateurism was 'a form of legalised deceit'. Several attempts to introduce a knock-out cup to county cricket had foundered on the problem of what to do about draws, but in 1963 the problem was solved with a radical form of the game new to the first-class counties, one-day cricket. Fears that it would make the game more negative proved far from groundless, but were outweighed by plus-points such as exciting finishes and greatly improved fielding. Increased attendances and sponsorship, initially with £6500 from Gillette, brought new money into the game. The new competition was announced on 16 November 1962, the day the distinction between amateurs and professionals was finally abolished.

Chapter 2: Essex on the move

The club's choice of ground was strongly influenced by its social and economic circumstances, and in particular the basis of its support. Essex calculated in 1893 that they needed 1500 mostly middle-class members, in 1910, 2500 and by 1920, 4000. They usually fell well short of the desired figure and therefore constantly flirted with bankruptcy and extinction. Before 1914, nevertheless, there were few real concessions to working-class spectators, who seem to have been tolerated rather than encouraged. Leicestershire, one of the poorest and worst-supported clubs, pioneered half-price admittance after 4.30 (1898), and starting games on Saturdays rather than Monday (1908)⁶⁵. In 1906 Essex and Lancashire began taking cricket to the seaside, at Southend and Blackpool, to catch the holiday crowds⁶⁶.



Membership statistics from Essex County Cricket Club annual, 1951.

There were four distinct periods.

Brentwood, 1876-1885

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* for 7 January, 1876 announced that:

A public meeting will be held at the Shire Hall, Chelmsford, on Friday, 14th January 1876, at three o'clock, to consider the desirability of forming a county cricket club with a ground at Brentwood.

J.W. Perry Watlington
James Round

⁶⁵ VAMPLEW, p90. In 1913 Essex tried Saturday starts and reported that they were a financial success.

⁶⁶ In 1908 and 1912 Essex published membership lists, but unfortunately ERO does not have copies and I have not located them elsewhere.

ESSEX COUNTY CRICKET CLUB.

GENTLEMEN desirous of becoming MEMBERS of the ESSEX COUNTY CRICKET CLUB are requested to send their names to the Hon. Sec., J. F. Lescher, Esq., Boyles Court, Brentwood.

JAMES ROUND,
Chairman of the Committee.

Donations and Subscriptions already promised.

	Donations			Annual Subscriptions.				
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.		
The Right Hon. Lord Carlingford	10	10	0	...	2	2	0	
The Right Hon. Lord Petre	...	10	10	0	...	—	—	
The Countess Tasker	...	21	0	0	...	2	2	0
The Hon. and Rev. Mr. Petre	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
Loftus Arkwright, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	1	1	0
T. C. Baring, Esq., M.P.	...	10	10	0	...	1	1	0
Capt. Bannister	...	5	5	0	...	2	2	0
Andrew Caldecott, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
Edwin Caldecott, Esq.	...	21	0	0	...	2	2	0
A. L. Chetwode, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
O. E. Coope, Esq., M.P.	...	21	0	0	...	—	—	
Edward Courage, Esq.	...	21	0	0	...	2	2	0
R. C. Hanam, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
Collinson Hall, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
S. L. Howard, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	1	1	0
J. H. Horton, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
Andrew Johnston, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	—	—	
Edward Ind, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	2	2	0
J. F. Lescher, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	1	1	0
J. Oxley Parker, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
Arthur Pryor, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	2	2	0
T. D. Ridley, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	2	2	0
C. E. Ridley, Esq.	...	21	0	0	...	2	2	0
J. H. Ridley, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
James Round, Esq., M.P.	...	5	5	0	...	2	2	0
J. A. C. Tabor, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	2	2	0
Thomas Usborne, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
J. R. Vaizey, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	—	—	
R. J. Walmesley, Esq.	...	5	5	0	...	1	1	0
J. W. Perry Watlington, Esq.	...	10	10	0	...	2	2	0
H. C. Wells, Esq.	...	21	0	0	...	2	0	0

N.B.—Donations and Subscriptions may be paid to the account of the "Essex County Cricket Club" at Messrs. Sparrow, Tufnell, and Co.'s Bank, Chelmsford; or any of their Branches; or to J. F. Lescher, Esq., Hon. Sec., Boyles Court, near Brentwood.

Two weeks later the *Chronicle* reported that

On Friday afternoon a small but influential meeting of gentlemen who take an interest in cricket was held at the Shire Hall, to consider the desirability of establishing a County Cricket Club for Essex...Mr JAMES ROUND MP was called to the chair...

The chairman had received letters of support from Mr Buxton, Major Du Cane etc. 'There are not perhaps so many cricketers in Essex as there are in some of the Home Counties, but I think that the establishment of a county club would do much to establish cricketing in the county (hear hear)...'⁶⁷

Joseph Francis Lescher (1842-1923) of Boyles Court Brentwood was listed on the 1871 census as owning 330 acres and employing 20 men, and he also had eight indoor servants. He described a ground in his home town, owned by the Countess Tasker⁶⁸, that was 'better than any other site for its excellent hotel accommodation, its being so near the barracks, the ground offered being a very pretty one and close to the Railway Station'⁶⁹. The ground was also 'pleasantly situated and well fenced in', and at a rent of only £4 an acre with the option of sub-letting seemed to offer good prospects.

Lescher's advocacy was successful and he became the club's first Honorary Secretary, but he was perhaps guilty of special pleading. The ground was in fact some way from the station and attendances were never good, although expenditure was moderate so the club paid its way. Essex moved from Brentwood to Leyton in 1885 and - apart from a friendly game against Dublin University in 1922 - did not return until 1934, when the ground became one of the nine used for festival matches. If the club had stayed at Brentwood, it would probably have remained a minor county like Norfolk or Hertfordshire, which it played there.

Records and newspaper reports of Essex's first season reveal a leisurely, gentlemanly organisation that was to change immensely over the next twenty years. None of the mostly amateur cricketers who turned out in 1876 played for Essex after the county attained first-class status in 1894. The inaugural game at Brentwood was on 5 and 6 May 1876, a trial match between Gentlemen of Essex and Players of Essex in which the amateurs demonstrated their superiority, winning by an innings and five runs.

The next match that has been traced was on 2 and 3 June against Knickerbockers CC, one of the wandering teams of 'gaily coloured beribboned good-time Charlies'⁷⁰ that had mushroomed in the 1860s. Essex too fielded an all-amateur side and the captain was James Round, who scored 30. When Essex bowled, he 'left his place behind the wicket and went on slow bowling and soon brought the innings to a close for 210, leaving the County Club in a majority of 72'. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* continued:

Owing to the rain the attendance on Friday was very small, but on Saturday there was a good attendance, several carriages driving on to the ground and many ladies gracing the scene. The ground was in the most perfect order.

⁶⁷ *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 20 Jan 1876.

⁶⁸ In 1862, the Catholic mission in Southend was founded. Its main benefactor was Helen Tasker (1823–1888). She resided at Middleton Hall, Brentwood in Essex and was made a countess by Pope Pius IX in 1870. She was the daughter and inheritor of businessman Joseph Tasker, of the United Mexican Mining Association. Wikipedia, sourced 16 Dec 2022.

⁶⁹ *Essex weekly news*, 21 Jan 1876.

⁷⁰ BIRLEY, p98.

On 13 and 14 June at Ipswich Essex played their first county game, against a Suffolk side that had also been revived in 1876. Essex trailed by ten runs on first innings but then the professionals William Marten and Seth Smart bowled Suffolk out for 57 and Essex went on to win by eight wickets. A month later they met Hertfordshire at Bishops Stortford, but only three of the side that beat Suffolk played and Essex lost by an innings. The first home county match was the return fixture against Suffolk, in which Essex got the better of a draw. In a game against the Colchester Garrison, 'time did not allow the Sons of Mars to play their second innings, but the result must be inferred in their favour'.

If the somewhat flowery *Chelmsford Chronicle* reports are to be believed, the musical aspects of the games at Brentwood were at least as important as the cricketing ones. Against Hertfordshire

...There was a considerable attendance of the fair sex on the second day, and the attractions of the contest were greatly enhanced by the splendid playing of the band of the West Essex Militia which performed a very choice selection of music.

Despite the presence of Round and the professional Frank Silcock, the match resulted in 'an easy victory for the Knights of the Willow on T'other side of the Lea'.⁷¹ At the drawn game against Norfolk

The splendid playing of the Scotch Fusiliers played a refined and excellent selection of music, which inducement no doubt secured the largest company which has appeared on the ground since its opening.

A century later the nature of the music may have changed, but its use to attract new spectators to one-day matches was no different. Even though the playing of the bands was often more splendid than that of the Essex team, it was a satisfactory first season. A narrow defeat by MCC at Lord's was more than offset by an eight-wicket win at Brentwood, and fixtures against the neighbouring minor counties became a regular feature. A fine summer meant little or no disruption by weather and the club attracted enough support to survive.

The success of the first season encouraged the club in 1877 to plan an ambitious list of eighteen two-day games and several one-day ones. That was perhaps over-optimistic, for in the next few years Essex played only home and away games against Suffolk, Hertfordshire and MCC & Ground. *Bell's Life in London* reported the 1879 game at Lord's was attended by 'a select but not numerous company', which probably applied to all of Essex's games in this era. In 1881 and 1882 they also played at home to Bedfordshire, but it was not until 1883 that they really began to expand their list.

The coming of CE Green

In 1883 Charles Ernest Green took over from Round as chairman and captain. The significance of the change was recognised at the time, for the 1885 annual report noted that it was 'the third season of the County Club under its present administration'. A notable amateur cricketer and wealthy shipowner, this irascible but whole-hearted man *was* Essex cricket for the next thirty years and his contribution is described at greater length in Chapter 4. He more than anyone was responsible for Essex's rapid advance, which meant that within twelve years of his election they had achieved first-class status and entered the county championship.

⁷¹ Report of the Hertfordshire match, *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 22 July 1876.

I have used various sources to describe the county's progress on the field in more detail than I give for the period after 1894, because it is less well covered elsewhere and because I consider it vital to an understanding of the club's subsequent social and economic history. The scorebook for 1876-8 is missing, as is the one for the important year of 1885, when Essex moved from Brentwood to Leyton. The Essex Record Office now considers the one for 1879-81 too fragile to be produced, although I was fortunate enough to see it when I started my research in the 1980s. Some matches were not reported in either of the local newspapers, the *Walthamstow Guardian* and the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*. Wisden's coverage of Essex, at least until the appointment of Charles Pardon as editor in 1888, was very sketchy. However, John Lillywhite's *Cricketers' Companion* (Green Lillywhite, 1865-85) and James Lillywhite's *Cricketers' Annual* (Red Lillywhite, 1872-1900), give useful season by season summaries of Essex's progress. The best source for individual match scores is *Bell's Life in London*.

Another useful source, covering the period to 1905, is a remarkable essay on cricket in Essex, written for volume II of the *Victoria County History of Essex*, published in 1907. As a piece of historical analysis it falls far short of the magisterial standards the *VCH* sets itself: its account of early cricket in the county is laughably sketchy and inaccurate, and it is hard to understand how it could have been approved by the great if combative historian John Horace Round, joint-editor of the volume. Horace Round was a third cousin and good friend of the club's founder, and he perhaps unwisely entrusted the revision of the sports section to James and James's brother, Francis. Yet as a contemporary account of Essex's first thirty years – then of course within living memory – it is invaluable, for it includes nuggets of information that I have found nowhere else. The main author was Sir Home Gordon, an Old Etonian baronet who became a journalist, author and publisher. He was no great cricketer himself, but 'spent his life on the fringe of first-class cricket, eager to get closer'. He had an almost unparalleled ability to curry favour with those who were, and he was often to write about cricket in Essex and elsewhere. He was assisted by OR Borradaile, Essex Secretary from 1890, and by the Reverend Ralph Courtenay Guy, headmaster of Forest, a proprietary school in Walthamstow which provided Essex with many fine cricketers. At Hertford College Oxford in 1888 Guy was 'by far the best bat in the team and a fine field anywhere', but a serious knee injury and the need to take over the school when he was only 27 meant that he never played first-class cricket

Even before the coming of CE Green, Essex were beginning to make an impression. In 1882 they won five of their eight games and 'Red Lilly' commented 'Essex, Hertfordshire and Suffolk have all in their own way helped largely to develop county cricket'. An unofficial county championship had somewhat haphazardly evolved with nine first-class counties⁷², and it seems that after the 1882 season they took the initiative in enlarging their fixture lists. For example, in 1879 Nottinghamshire had refused to play Surrey who in turn had 'not entertained' requests for matches from minor county Northamptonshire and even first-class Derbyshire, but at a meeting on 21 November 1882 the Surrey committee resolved to take on five extra fixtures in 1883, with minor counties including 'Essex or Norfolk'. At a conference of club secretaries on 11 December Surrey agreed four of them but neither Essex nor Norfolk.

In 1883, the season after Green took over, Essex played Norfolk for the first time since 1877 and Northamptonshire for the first time ever. 'Green Lilly' reported on 'consistent

⁷² Eight in 1888-90, after Derbyshire dropped out for a few years and before Somerset came in.

batting, and good bowling by the professionals Pickett and Silcock'. Essex won five county games comfortably, and two defeats by Northamptonshire – by two wickets and two runs – ‘were by no means decisive’⁷³. It was probably only a coincidence that Green came to Essex exactly when Surrey and other first-class counties were beginning to expand their lists, but certainly he was the right man to take advantage of the development.

After the 1883 season *Red Lilly* noted that ‘Essex and Norfolk rank high among the minor counties’. Previewing the 1884 season, *Bell’s Life* commented: Essex and Norfolk have shown good form during the past two or three years, and both have some first-class counties on the list’. Green Lilly reported that ‘following the example of other minor counties, Essex arranged a match with Surrey’, although at that stage the key question seems to have been whether Surrey as the first-class county were willing to play minor county opposition. Surrey in 1884 played both counties for the first time but only at home, presumably because facilities at Brentwood and Lakenham were inadequate. Surrey eventually beat Essex by five wickets, but *Cricket* was enthusiastic about the Essex performance:

Mr CE Green, who has worked hard of late years to develop cricket in Essex, is to be congratulated on the excellent show made by the Eleven of the County at the Oval ... Some excellent all-round cricket was shown, and the batting of the team was throughout much above the average...

Much remained to be done, for a few weeks later Essex conceded a massive 530 to Hertfordshire and were very lucky to escape with a draw, ‘due chiefly to the good play of the professionals Silcock and Jones’⁷⁴.

The move to Leyton

Previewing the 1885 season, *Bell’s Life* noted that ‘the executive has not been idle’ and had ‘a capital list including Surrey, Lancashire and Derbyshire’. Already, after the 1884 season, Lillywhite had commented that Essex was ‘under the energetic guidance of Mr CE Green’ and ‘favoured by its position on the skirts of the metropolis’. Green was entertaining hopes of doing in the East End what Middlesex and Surrey had done in the West End and south of the river, and the search for a home closer to London began. Many places were suggested, but eventually Essex settled on a ground at Leyton owned by Charles George, 5th Lord Lyttelton, himself a former first-class cricketer and keen supporter. There had been plans to use it as an East London location where MCC ground staff could play and practise⁷⁵, but these came to nothing and Essex stepped in. Their first match there, on 15 and 16 June 1885, was moved at fairly short notice, for *Bell’s Life* reported on 6 June that ‘Essex v Surrey will be played on the new ground of the former at Leyton, and not at Brentwood as previously announced’. It was not an auspicious debut: Essex were bowled out twice in less than four hours and Surrey won by an innings. Essex’s next game, against Norfolk, was played at Brentwood, but after that they settled at Leyton. In August Essex played Lancashire there and, although Essex again lost by an innings and over a hundred runs, Surrey and Lancashire both had first-class status and the matches each brought in crowds of some 4000. By contrast an innings victory over Northamptonshire was only ‘fairly well attended’, suggesting that

⁷³ [Lillywhite’s cricketer’s companion](#), 1884.

⁷⁴ *Bell’s Life*, 20 Aug 1884, p4.

⁷⁵ [Walthamstow Guardian](#), 4 Aug 1883.

spectators were attracted by big names in the opposition rather than by the prospect of seeing the home side win.

In July Essex embarked for the first time on a brief northern tour. After reducing Lancashire to 84 for 7, Essex allowed the last three wickets to add over a hundred and eventually lost by nine wickets. According to *Bell's Life*, 'not much interest was taken in the first meeting of these two counties', because Essex were not a first-class county and Lancashire were fielding a weakened team. Essex also achieved their best result to date by defeating Derbyshire, then a first-class county, and easily beat Hertfordshire and Norfolk - clear signs that they were pulling away from some of their fellow minor counties towards first-class status. In the first year at Leyton, 400 new members were elected and paid a subscription of guinea each, bringing the total to 660. Lillywhite was impressed: 'Essex made a distinct advance last year and its victory over Derbyshire at Derby shows that it has a good case to be placed among the leading counties. The purchase of a new ground at Leyton, at a very convenient distance to London, will be of immense advantage in the development of the club.' Altogether the omens were promising.

In December 1885 the club announced in the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*:

The marked and rapid advance in Cricket made by Essex during the last few Seasons, and the increasing interest which is now being taken in the doings of the County Eleven, have made it highly desirable that the County Ground should be removed from Brentwood to a neighbourhood more accessible to London and the Cricketing World in general. The Committee have therefore much pleasure in announcing that they have purchased from Lord Lyttelton the splendid Ground at Leyton, for the County Club. This Ground is situated in a most populous district of the County, and from the recent experiences of the past season, it is likely to be largely patronised by the public...

At first the ground was held on a 21-year lease with an option to buy; that had been taken up by 1892 when the freehold of the new County Ground cost £10,000, which was advanced by CE Green and another on mortgage⁷⁶.

'A most populous district'

Leyton was indeed 'a most populous district'. While rural Essex changed relatively little in the late nineteenth century, the south-west of the county was transformed out of all recognition. In 1851 Leyton had been 'a large and handsome village with many neat houses embowered in trees' and only 3900 inhabitants, but by 1885 the old houses were beginning to give way to rows of suburban terraces and the population had increased tenfold. With West Ham to the south, Hackney to the east and Walthamstow to the north all developing as rapidly, Leyton seemed the ideal location.

The next few years were to see further growth. In 1881 the population was 27,068, in 1891 63,106 and in 1901 98,912. In 1886 Kelly's recognised the rapid change by publishing a new suburban directory that included Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone. In 1894 came official recognition with the creation of the Leyton Urban District Council, which had considerably greater powers than the old Local Board. The Ordnance Survey map for that year shows a surprisingly piecemeal patchwork of development, and as late as 1898 one visiting writer declared: 'Though the Leyton

⁷⁶ Report in *Leytonstone Express & Independent* of AGM April 1886; newspaper report of 1892 crisis meeting from AP Wire cutting collection at Vestry House Museum Walthamstow, which gives the figure for the freehold as £10,000. Lemmon quotes a figure of £12,000 but does not say where he got it from. Perhaps £2,000 was paid off between 1886 and 1892.

ground has acquired importance attaching to fame and ability, there is still something rustic in the environment'⁷⁷. But by 1914 the gaps had been filled and the County Ground was one of the few open spaces in the district.

The *Walthamstow Guardian* asserted that most of those attending the inaugural match in 1886 lived in Leyton and Walthamstow. Even though by 1931 the combined population of both boroughs had exceeded 260,000, Essex County Cricket Club remained for half a century the most significant professional sporting venture in the two districts⁷⁸. The three leading local football clubs – Leyton, Leytonstone and Walthamstow Avenue – were, officially at least, amateur⁷⁹. The nearest professional clubs were Tottenham Hotspur, West Ham United and Clapton Orient. Only four years after Essex left Leyton did Clapton Orient move to Brisbane Road, Leyton. As Leyton Orient, they became the leading professional sporting organisation in the London Borough of Waltham Forest, which was created in 1965 from Walthamstow, Leyton, and Chingford.

Eric Midwinter has argued persuasively that first-class cricket followed the railway⁸⁰. Essex were greatly indebted to Surrey who were the first first-class county to give them regular home and away fixtures, but they did not visit Essex until the club moved to Leyton. The London & North-East Railway's line (later the Central Line) had already been built and special cricket trains were run from Liverpool Street for big matches. The ground was almost a mile away and only became easily accessible in 1889, when a tramway was built from Leyton station past the ground to Walthamstow and Lea Bridge.

In 1890 a new Tottenham & Forest Gate Railway was proposed and James Round MP wrote to the club seeking its support. It was gladly given because they saw the venture as a means of improving links with parts of London that had previously found access to Leyton difficult. Indeed, Round may have played some part in ensuring that the route went within a couple of hundred yards of the ground. On 9 July 1894 the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway opened a line from South Tottenham to Barking via Leyton Midland Road station at the High Road. The development of Leyton was well under way and at several places, including the Midland Road station, the railway was carried across existing developments on viaducts.

The LTSR had to share facilities with the much larger Great Eastern Railway Company, which regularly showed appreciation of the increased custom with an annual donation to Essex of £25⁸¹. The club in turn benefited from increased crowds brought in by the railways, so the committee regularly gave 'Xmas boxes to the Station masters at Liverpool Street, Leyton and Fenchurch Street'⁸². In 1897 the GER promised the club that it 'would lay on a special express on non-Saturday match days'⁸³, and in 1909 it granted the Essex secretary a pass for which the cash-strapped club returned 'hearty thanks'.

⁷⁷ Cited, MEREDITH, p86.

⁷⁸ From 1894 both were administered by urban district councils. Leyton was incorporated as a borough in 1926 and Walthamstow in 1929.

⁷⁹ Leyton FC was openly professional from 1904-12 but had financial problems and re-formed as an amateur club in 1919.

⁸⁰ *Illustrated history of county cricket*. Kingswood, 1992, ch2.

⁸¹ ECCC minutes, passim.

⁸² ECCC minutes, 10 Jan 1893.

⁸³ ECCC minutes, 9 Mar 1897.

Joe Powell recalled that after the First World War people came from all over Essex via the LNER and Midland Road stations. Crowds were larger when playing the more attractive teams such as Middlesex and Surrey, whose supporters often made the short journey to Leyton. HG Russon walked to the ground from West Ham and thought that most support was local although ‘you would have people come from Chelmsford, Braintree and places like that – I think once an Essex supporter, always an Essex supporter’.

Developing the ground

The *Leytonstone Independent* announcement of December 1885 also appealed for ‘about £3000’ for ‘the erection of a Pavilion and suitable buildings, and for general alterations and improvements’. Lyttelton subscribed £200, Green and Edward North Buxton £100 apiece, and almost half of the money was raised within a few weeks. On 13 February the *Independent* reported that ‘the new pavilion is rapidly progressing, and the building commences to assume an appearance of importance’. On 3 April:

Punctual to time the contractors for the pavilion in the Lyttelton Ground have succeeded in placing the building in the last stage of completion, and by next week will have vacated the place altogether. There are three buildings, the centre one containing seven rooms, *i.e.* a refreshment bar, dining-room, committee and dressing-rooms, for the home and visiting elevens...From a distance the pavilion has a very pretty and antique appearance, the whole structure being surmounted by a small bell-tower...

And on 1 May, after the inaugural game:

The new pavilion was greatly admired, and deserved the admiration and praise that was lavished upon it...Messrs Ashby and Horner, the builders, have done their work extremely well, and may with justice be proud of it, as may Mr Creed, the architect, of his design, and of the masterly way in which he has superintended the whole work...

The AGM on 20 April 1886 heard that all but £650 had been raised, but the costs had been underestimated and a year later the Building Fund was £1600 in the red. For all the financial problems, it was a remarkable achievement to erect in three months a pavilion that has stood the test of time for well over a century, and is now a Grade II listed building.

Membership for gentlemen was one guinea, but as an incentive the committee decided that the first 400 to join should not have to pay the additional guinea charged as an entry fee for new members; by 13 March more than 360 had taken advantage of this offer and overall membership doubled. Ladies, who represented about ten per cent of the membership, paid only half a guinea, but ‘were not allowed any voice in the working of the club’⁸⁴. They and those other second-class citizens, the professionals, were segregated in matching small pavilions to the left and right of the main building. The ladies were later admitted to the main pavilion, and their room used for gate money and printing scorecards.

On 1 May a lyrical leader in the *Express and Independent* commented that

Last Easter Monday the cricket season of 1886 commenced, and those who saw the...large assemblage at Lyttelton to witness not only the opening of the Essex County season but the inauguration of the new county ground, were well rewarded for their pains, and must have been convinced how cricket still maintains its proud position of being far away the first of our English games.

⁸⁴ VCH II, p600. Ed JH Round etc.

The article did well to recognise that ‘our far-distant colonies’ might ‘challenge our claim to supremacy in this pastime’, although its attribution of the French failure to adopt the game to ‘the cigarette, the lounge and the café’ was perhaps less perceptive.

The pavilion became quite a social centre for the members, for whom monthly dinners were organised. In the summer months there were garden parties and the pavilion, hung with Chinese lanterns, must have been a wonderful sight.

In their first season at Leyton Essex played and lost three-day home and away fixtures against first-class counties Surrey, Lancashire and Derbyshire, although they twice led on first innings. They also played seven two-day games - home and away against Hertfordshire and Norfolk, and at home to Staffordshire, the touring Parsees and MCC & Ground; they drew with Hertfordshire at Bishops Stortford but won the other six easily. The games against Hertfordshire and MCC & Ground produced small profits, as did the inaugural match between CE Green’s XI and Pickett’s XI, but the others all made losses. The Australians, however, had become a major attraction and the committee did well to persuade them to visit Leyton for the first first-class match on the ground, against Cambridge University Past and Present on 23-25 August, 1886. The balance sheet shows that it was by far the biggest match of the year, and a considerable gamble: expenditure was £435 17s 11d but income was £700 9s 10s, a result that enabled the club to make a small profit on the season. Lillywhite commented that ‘the batting figures of the eleven will not bear examination’, but added that ‘the captain, Mr CE Green, is deserving of every praise for his plucky efforts to bring his county to the fore’.

It was an encouraging inaugural season, but in 1887 there were no touring Australians to boost income and ‘wet weather experienced during the best matches’ reduced gate-money from £340 to a pitiful £192 - fewer than 200 spectators a day⁸⁵. By way of comparison, membership subscriptions brought in £661, football £339, and a special arrangement with the Insurance Cricket and Athletic Clubs £300. The financial problems that dogged the county for almost a century were already in evidence: £1600 was still owed on the Building Fund and an appeal to help clear it was not well supported. Essex won six matches and lost two against minor opposition but were again outclassed in five against first-class counties; even Derbyshire, who lost all six of their first-class games and dropped out of the Championship at the end of the season, twice won easily.

In 1888 Essex won three, drew four and lost six. Lillywhite commented: ‘Though Essex was able to put into the field a stronger team than in any previous year, it was not in luck.’ At the AGM the committee reported a loss of £850 and a total deficit of £1240, so as an incentive to new members suspended the one guinea entrance fee. The Cambridge Past and Present v the Australians fixture was repeated and thousands of spectators paid for admission on the first two days, but rain washed out the last, when the Australians were in a strong position to win. Wisden reported rather ungraciously that ‘despite the attractive character of the match, there was not a large gate on the Essex County Ground, people having by this time got rather tired of cricket in rain and mud’.

After the 1888 season a committee member, George Alfred Sedgwick, put forward detailed proposals for a scheme to solve the club’s financial problems by forming it into a limited company. Sedgwick was a solicitor who lived at Ivy House, Church Street, West Ham. The committee formed a sub-committee to develop the plan and were

⁸⁵ This paragraph based on LEMMON and annual reports.

sufficiently enthusiastic to propose to the AGM the forming of a limited company with a capital of £15,000 in £5 shares. At first the plan seemed to meet with the approval of the members but in the autumn of 1889 Sedgwick died suddenly. Nobody else was keen enough to carry the scheme forward, but no other county is known even to have considered such a radical move⁸⁶.

By 1889 the deficit was over £2000 but the committee cancelled the lucrative arrangement with the Insurance Cricket and Athletic Clubs so that members would have more opportunity to practise and play cricket and lawn tennis. In order to encourage tennis, a limited number of lady members were allowed to join at a special half-guinea subscription. Good attendances for football and 'the visit of our American baseball friends' suggested that the ground was becoming better known.

The committee was forced to reduce the number of county matches from thirteen to nine and cut the ground staff. Essex enjoyed a fine win over a strong Surrey side, but with only one other win, three defeats and four draws attendances were not good. The club tried to increase its income with two athletics meetings and a fire brigade fete. CE Green sought to encourage attendance at the fete by donating 'a handsome pony' as the prize in a draw for those who bought their tickets in advance, although one wonders what some of the working-class visitors would have done with it if they had won. As it turned out, bad weather at all three events resulted not in a profit but in a loss of well over £100. On Saturday 31 August, Ernest Renshaw beat HS Barlow in an open tennis tournament, which obviously carried considerable prestige: two months earlier both had lost at Wimbledon to Ernest's brother William - Barlow in the Final, and Ernest in the Challenge Round which in those days was played between the winner of the Final and the previous year's champion.

At the end of the season Edward North Buxton told a Special General Meeting that the club would be an estimated £3851 in debt by the following March and it might have to be wound up. In Green's absence through illness Buxton took the opportunity to acknowledge his generosity but added that 'they could not reasonably expect him to do everything', and a special subscription fund was opened. Green and Buxton headed the list with £100 each and there were 'handsome contributions' from MCC, Lancashire, Middlesex and Surrey, and from the Corporation of London and several of its livery companies, but only 242 of some 1250 members responded. At an Extraordinary Special Meeting in January, Green 'complained bitterly that whilst other clubs had come to their rescue, the members alluded to had not helped them at all'. This evidently had an effect and the AGM in May 1890 heard that these efforts had raised £3771 and enabled the club to come close to breaking even. Membership had gone up by 105 to 1175 but the committee urged a further increase to 1500.

Second-class county

The late 1880s saw radical developments in the way cricket and football were organised. Not for the first time, cricket was initially ahead of the winter game but soon fell behind. In 1887, at the suggestion of the influential Kent captain Lord Harris, a County Cricket Council was established with the intention of improving the county game, but did not achieve a great deal. The Football League, initially constituting twelve northern and midland professional clubs, came a year later but was far more effective. The counties themselves still made no formal arrangements for deciding the champion county which was therefore acclaimed by the sporting press, not always

⁸⁶ Cricket: a weekly record of the game, 2 May 1889 p85. VAMPLEW, p95.

unanimously. Finally in 1889, after a three-way tie in the Championship, a meeting of county secretaries voted to introduce a simple system whereby the points total was calculated by deducting losses from wins.

In 1888 the newly-appointed editor of *Wisden*, Charles Pardon, published the county results as two leagues constituting first- and second-class counties, the latter consisting of Cheshire, Derbyshire, Essex, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Somerset, Staffordshire and Warwickshire. Evidently his ideas gained currency quickly, for as early as June 1888 the *Walthamstow Guardian* referred to 'a match between 'these second-class counties' (Essex and Leicestershire). After Essex beat Surrey in 1889 the *Leytonstone Express and Independent* pointed out that 'Essex being a second-class county their win does not affect Surrey as regards the championship'. Matches could only be considered first-class if they were played over three days, and the second-class counties were moving towards that status by regularly playing three-day games against one another and the first-class counties. Yorkshire, Lancashire and Surrey were the most willing to play second-class opposition because they were genuinely keen to encourage them, but they also saw it as a way of bringing on their fringe and younger players. It is probably no coincidence that during the 1890s, as this policy began to bear fruit, they were the three most successful counties while Nottinghamshire, the top side for most of the 1880s, fell into decline. Clubs like Hertfordshire, who in 1884 had totally outplayed Essex, did not keep up: in the otherwise disappointing 1888 season Essex twice easily beat them in two-day matches.

Pardon also called for the County Cricket Council to establish a league with two or three divisions, and in August 1890 Harris set up a sub-committee to examine the possibility. It proposed formalising the two divisions suggested by Pardon and adding a third with Devon, Durham, Glamorgan, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Northumberland. But by the time it reported Harris had been appointed Governor of Bombay and, without his autocratic guiding hand, the meeting that discussed the report fell into chaos. There were two main concerns.

First, some counties refused to play more matches than they wanted, or against counties they preferred not to play at all. Fixtures had always been arranged in a rather haphazard way: counties did not have to play the same number of matches and county chairmen and secretaries decided at a December meeting at Lord's who they would play the following season. Derbyshire dropped out after 1887 because they had only arranged six first-class games in that season, not because they lost them all. In 1888-90 all the counties played one another with the strange exception of the two weakest, Middlesex and Sussex.

The most serious problem, though, was with promotion and relegation. To be fair to the counties, these could be more difficult in cricket than in football because of the influence of weather. That was, however, scarcely the case in 1890, when the issues were so clear-cut that it would have been the perfect time to introduce such a system. For the first time a second-class counties championship was organised and Somerset, who won all eight of their games, were granted first-class status for the following season, but Sussex who lost eleven out of twelve did not change places with them. CE Green advocated a play-off match between the top second-class county and the bottom first-class one⁸⁷, but recognised that 'the only difficulty would be to get the first-class

⁸⁷ BETTESWORTH, p183.

county to do it, and it would probably be insurmountable'. He was right, and it did not happen for over a century.

A meeting of second-class counties in October expressed reservations about the proposals, and these were carried over into a meeting of the full Council on 8 December. Amid fierce argument, no agreement could be reached. On the casting vote of the chairman, MJ Ellison of Yorkshire, the Council voted not on the question of classification but on its own existence and was suspended, never to meet again. Whereas the Football League was organised from the outset on a professional, compulsory basis, cricket retained its amateur, laissez-faire ethos.

Cricket considered it was in 1890 that Essex 'commenced to set their house in order with a view to a higher place on county cricket'⁸⁸. They organised their most attractive programme to date, with home and away three-day fixtures against Surrey, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire, the latter three like them recognised as second-class counties. With only one win and five defeats Essex might have seemed over-ambitious, but several of the games were close-run and they had made their intentions clear. Traditional minor county opponents Hertfordshire were relegated to two-day games against the Club & Ground XI. At last the weather for the athletics event behaved itself and the gate was between 6000 and 8000, but the club was still left £951 in debt

In 1891 Essex fared much better on the field. Lillywhite commented that Essex 'can put a strong eleven in the field, and with its full strength is a formidable combination'. They finished runners-up in the second-class counties championship and but for a second-innings collapse against Hampshire, who won only one other game, would have won it. Poor weather, however, affected every game, so attendances remained disappointing and the financial crisis deepened. There was a profit of £195 on football but a loss of £572 on cricket. Membership fell from 1082 gentlemen and 120 ladies to 825 gentlemen and 81 ladies – not because of any loss of interest, but because the committee took the sensible decision to strike off all those who failed to pay their subscriptions and thus gave a false impression of the strength of the membership.

A gloomy year

The year 1892 was one of the gloomiest in an often gloomy tale. On May 10 Cyril Digby Buxton, club captain and son of EN Buxton, committed suicide while severely depressed, and the tragedy cast a pall over the whole season. By coincidence, the edition of *The Cricket Field* that reported on Buxton's death also ran a leader entitled *The Affairs of Essex*. It was incredibly long-winded but the gist of it was that results in 1891 had been good so 'if the means can be procured, the rise of Essex in the cricket hierarchy promises to be both rapid and steady'. Membership was good value for money and more people should take it up: to practise on good wickets against professional opposition was in itself worth more than a guinea, while non-players could see the cricket and have 'the satisfaction of doing a really philanthropic and sportsmanlike action'.

The *Leytonstone Express & Independent* reported that 'Essex badly wants to be set upon a more promising financial basis,' because the deficit was nearly £1500, and urged the club to launch an appeal throughout the county. 'Cover Point' noted in the paper that they had never beaten a first-class county and therefore suggested that Essex should

⁸⁸ Interview with Herbert Carpenter, 9 Apr 1896.

content herself playing good second-class counties and by doing give the players a little encouragement. Undoubtedly the frequent losses have a depressing effect on the players and a few more wins would...make each and all strive for the position in the first-class batch of counties.

Essex had in fact beaten Derbyshire in 1885 and Surrey in 1889, but it was a fair point which applied as much to the spectators as to the players. Essex won only three matches, so attendances were very poor and although football had made a profit of £200 the loss on cricket was £600⁸⁹.

In November 1892 an Extraordinary General Meeting was held at the Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool Street. CE Green presided, and outlined 'the very serious position in which the club was placed'. They owed £1300 to their bankers, £500 to the newly elected Hon. Treasurer CM Tebbut, and £200 for the last half-year's rent, making a total of £2500. (Presumably Green and the newspaper reporter could add up, and the remaining £500 comprised various minor debts.) The secretary's brother, Herbert Borradaile, 'ascertained by query that indebtedness on the working expenses was £2500 and on the capital account £10,000'. He suggested that £13,000 be raised by small debentures offering 5%, but Rev. Alfred Armitage, the young curate of St Paul's Stratford, asked how the club could pay 5% on £13,000 when it could not pay 4% on its mortgage. Another member suggested that money could be made in other ways such as a cycle track. Green replied that a very cheap track would cost £500, and without the money 'they could make no track nor, indeed, could they make their fixtures at Lord's in December'. The former Hon. Treasurer JJ Read proposed that £3000 be guaranteed by 60 gentlemen at £50 for three years, which 'would be accepted by the Bank and enable them to find their legs'. EN Buxton thought that 'there was nothing to be done but to dissolve the club', but then Green's motion that '...steps be forthwith taken to wind up the Essex County Cricket Club' found no seconder and 'fell to the ground'. On the proposal of Herbert Borradaile, the meeting was adjourned for a fortnight to enable the 60 guarantors suggested by Read to be found.

The meeting duly reconvened and afterwards the secretary published an open letter. He announced that the club was only £760 short of its target and appealed 'most earnestly to all sportsmen and more particularly to those interested in Essex affairs to assist in finding the additional amount of guarantee required...' The additional money was raised from various sources, but above all through Green and Charles Mansfield Tebbut.

Tebbut was, like Green, a shipowner⁹⁰. A better footballer than cricketer, he took part in the negotiations that set up the Football Association in 1863, and in 1866 played for a representative London side in a match against Sheffield. In the late 1860s he played cricket for Middlesex with conspicuous lack of success, but was a great patron of the game. A committee member of both Middlesex and Essex, he was Essex's Hon. Treasurer for six crucial years during which the club would almost certainly have folded without his generosity. Green told the 1893 AGM that Tebbut had donated £100 and lent £1800 which 'had enabled them to start another season'.

Towards first-class status

In 1893 Essex experienced an inconsistent but encouraging season. They had the rather curious record of winning once and losing once against each of the five counties they played. They lost to Hampshire who won only one other game, yet they were the only

⁸⁹ Essex CCC official handbook, 1892.

⁹⁰ 1881 census.

second-class county to defeat the joint champions, Derbyshire. They were the only team to beat both Surrey and Yorkshire but the achievement of the year was against the Australians. When Cambridge University Past and Present were unable to raise a representative team for the match that had become a Leyton tradition, Essex took over the fixture at short notice and, amid some scepticism, emerged with rather the better of a rain-affected draw. Attendances are seldom given in newspapers of the time, but the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* estimated that on the first afternoon it 'must have reached 4000'. The report of the win against Derbyshire is the only other one that gives any detail, and shows how things could go on a good day: initially there were about 1500, but as word went round that Essex were doing well the crowd more than doubled; there was another large gate on the second day, but because Essex finished off the job that evening no third day was needed and there was a consequent loss of income. Despite all the success, membership remained stubbornly more than 500 below the 1500 needed to make the club financially secure, and Tebbut lent a further £2000 to pay off bank and other creditors.

Meanwhile the counties were getting nowhere in their attempts to sort out their affairs. In April 1894 there was a meeting of the first-class counties with Derbyshire, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Essex, who were represented by Green and Borrodaile. They agreed to ask MCC to arbitrate, but then a week later a meeting of the first-class captains resolved to ask MCC to regard three-day matches played by Derbyshire, Essex, Leicestershire and Warwickshire as first-class. MCC decided that second-class status should be abolished and counties were to be deemed first-class or otherwise. Officially, this was not on the basis of ability but because they could play an agreed number of home and away three-day matches against other first-class teams, including the universities and MCC. In practice, however, it was the four strongest in the glorious summer of 1893 that were promoted. Not a single match between second-class counties was drawn and overall the results were very similar to those of 1892, so their table was a good indication of their abilities. Derbyshire and Warwickshire headed it with seven wins and one loss each. Leicestershire won five and lost five, but lost nine tosses including some crucial ones. Essex won three and lost three, but their wins over Surrey and Yorkshire and the draw against the Australians showed that 'their all-round cricket was worthy of a first-class county' according to the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, which 'hoped the fact will not be lost sight of when the next readjustment is considered at Lord's'. It was too late for the four counties granted first-class status to arrange enough matches to qualify for the Championship so for them the result was a rather curious, almost phoney season. The short-lived second-class counties championship, though now almost forgotten, seems to have been fought out in quite a competitive way. Instead the counties had a series of matches which, though first-class, were relatively meaningless.

Even though Hampshire won only two games out of eight in 1893 there was criticism that they also were not promoted. In 1894 they confirmed the point by winning six out of 13 – including the double over Essex – and were added to the list in time for the 1895 season.

The expansion of the Championship was almost certainly the wrong decision. From 1892-4 the nine first-class counties all played one another home and away, so the system was simple and straightforward and could have been the basis for a first division. The second-class Championship was more haphazard, with Leicestershire playing ten games and Staffordshire only four. It might with better organisation have become a genuine second division of first-class counties with promotion and relegation, although

only two second-class sides, Cheshire and Staffordshire, were left and they never became first-class. The second-class championship was no longer sustainable and the status of second-class county was abolished. In 1895 at the instigation of Worcestershire a minor counties competition with less stringent admission criteria was established.

As it was, the extended championship was rather a shambles. There were too many teams for any but the richest to play all the others, so it was never an entirely fair competition. The friendly games played by Surrey, Lancashire and Yorkshire became part of their Championship programme and they regularly played more than anyone else. The new counties struggled on and off the field: in the first ten years of the expanded championship only Essex in 1897 finished in the top four, and most like them had constantly to be bailed out by rich patrons. Sports historians have argued that, although home supporters like to see their team win, for optimum attendances there has to be an element of uncertainty to attract away and neutral supporters⁹¹. That can only be achieved if a central cartel imposes fairly strict criteria to bring about a degree of equalization. In football the League achieved it through promotion and relegation to and from all-play-all divisions and through a flexible transfer market, but in cricket it was almost entirely lacking. Indeed, CB Fry condemned proposals to create a genuine cricket league as ‘mob rule’⁹². Laissez-faire attitudes meant that clubs only played the same number of games from 1929-32 and from 1963 onwards, while in the 1920s an attempt to introduce two divisions failed because nobody wanted to be stuck in the lower one. The regulations about eligibility and registration were only very slowly liberalised. A remarkable table of interwar championship placings produced by the cricket statistician Roy Webber showed that absolutely nothing had changed: the original nine counties filled the first nine places, the next five counties to be admitted came in the next five, and the last three were bottom⁹³. After the Second World War there was some levelling up, so when in 2000 promotion and relegation were finally introduced to the Championship, five of the original nine were in Division One but three filled the bottom three places in Division Two.

Essex’s extraordinary progress is shown by the contrast with their neighbours Hertfordshire, where the county club was formed just a week before Essex, on 7 January 1876. Anybody observing the two clubs’ progress over the first few years would surely have forecast that if either of them were to achieve first-class status it would be Hertfordshire, who won the first five matches between the sides until in July 1878 the return ‘was a draw much in favour of Essex’, who set the visitors 337 to win and reduced them to 59 for 6. In 1879 Hertfordshire again beat Essex and bowled out a first-class county, Sussex, for 49 to win by eight wickets. It was not until 1880 that Essex beat Hertfordshire, and even then the historian of Hertfordshire cricket recorded that in 1881 his county had ‘the customary two wins against Essex’⁹⁴. In 1882 and 1883 Essex won all four games against Hertfordshire, ‘formerly an acknowledged

⁹¹ VAMPLEW, p174. Only Scottish football of the major sports produced games that were more predictable. I remember my father telling me that after the Second World War the Walthamstow speedway team won their division year after year but there was no automatic promotion so in the end supporters got bored and the club closed down.

⁹² WILLIAMS, p167.

⁹³ The county cricket championship, Sportsman’s Book Club, London, 1958.

⁹⁴ SIMONS, RG. Cricket in Hertfordshire. Hertfordshire Cricket Association, 1996, p131.

superior'⁹⁵, yet as late as 1884 Essex were lucky to escape with a draw after Hertfordshire piled up their 530, still the second highest total in their history.

The balance then shifted rapidly and decisively towards Essex. After the 1884 season, just as CE Green became increasingly influential at Essex, Hertfordshire lost their popular and hardworking secretary, CE Keyser. Whereas in 1881 Essex were the only team that Hertfordshire defeated, in 1885 they were the only team they lost to. Later in the 1880s, as Essex increasingly played three-day cricket against first- and second-class counties, they regularly trounced Hertfordshire. In 1890 Essex started putting out a Club & Ground XI against Hertfordshire and still won. It was no surprise that in 1895 Essex were admitted to the County Championship, while Hertfordshire joined the newly-formed Minor Counties Championship.

Essex's first Silver Age, 1895-1899

Essex's Golden Age was unquestionably from 1979 to 1992, but two earlier periods carried the promise of similar success without quite fulfilling it - 1895-9 and 1933-9.

The club had felt for some years that it could only pay its way if it obtained first-class status, so that achievement in 1894 was the cause of great rejoicing and 403 new members were elected during the season. As Essex enjoyed five successive good seasons on the field, their membership increased and their finances improved. Membership tended to increase the year after a good season on the field, as people jumped on the bandwagon of a successful side.

Wisden described Essex's inaugural season of 1894 as 'disastrous' and certainly it carried no hint of the triumphs that were to come in the next few years. It was fortunate for Essex that they did not enter the championship, because they did not win a single county match and would have finished bottom. Lillywhite's comment was a masterpiece of understatement: 'Unfortunately for Essex the ill luck which has followed them with such singular pertinacity for the last three or four years did not desert them when good fortune would have been particularly useful.... The want of another reliable bowler was sorely felt at times and the out-cricket was susceptible of improvement without a doubt.'

The only reason they might have forfeited their new status in 1895 would have been if they had not arranged enough games, although their poor form may have contributed to their difficulty in obtaining fixtures. In December 1894 it was only 'the sportsmanlike behaviour of Middlesex and Somersetshire at the meeting of county secretaries which enabled Essex to secure the requisite number of matches [16] to qualify for inclusion in the front rank of counties'. The offers of the two counties may not have been entirely altruistic, for Leicestershire were in the same position and had somebody not played the two counties the whole thing would have unravelled: others would have dropped below the minimum and the rest would have fallen like dominoes. By one of those little ironies that characterise cricket, Essex demonstrated their gratitude to 'Somersetshire' by beating them twice, gaining their first-ever championship victory at Leyton and then in the return match at Taunton amassing 692, a total that they did not exceed until the ridiculously batsman-friendly season of 1990. It was not, however, the largest score at Taunton that week, for in the very next match Lancashire made a little matter of 801.

On 2 May 1895, four days before the start of Essex's first County Championship game, a committee meeting acknowledged that the increased number of matches following

⁹⁵ Lillywhite's cricketer's companion, 1884.

entry to the competition would ‘entail a large increase in expenses’. The team began with a creditable draw against Warwickshire, eliciting the comment that ‘everyone will be glad to see [Essex] doing well, for they have long struggled against adversity, and it is a fitting tribute to the labours of the few gentlemen who have fought so hard to keep their county’s head above water’⁹⁶. The contributions of the professional cricketers and the paying spectators seem to have been overlooked. With five wins and seven defeats Essex finished the season eighth out of fourteen and third of the five newcomers, a satisfactory if unspectacular championship debut.

In 1896 Essex finished fifth and the first day of the Australian match attracted 12,000 spectators, so finances continued to improve. They dropped the new Middlesex and Somerset fixtures but pleaded that the visit of the Australians made one extra first-class match and got away with playing four fewer championship games, although Middlesex and Lancashire would have played them if necessary. Worcestershire in 1899, Northamptonshire in 1905 and perhaps Glamorgan in 1921 gained admission in Australian years by similar back door means⁹⁷. Durham in 1992 were the only other county to be admitted – not primarily for cricketing reasons but because they had a good business plan.

In 1897 Essex came third, a position they did not surpass for over eighty years. They were transformed from a club few counties wanted to play into a side which the *Leytonstone Express and Independent* headlined, perhaps with some disbelief, as ‘At the Top at Last’. Playing in the first week of August before a last-day crowd of 15,000, the county defeated Lancashire at Leyton and went top of the table. Had Essex beaten Surrey the following week they would have taken the championship ahead of Lancashire and Surrey, although as both sides would have won 16 games to Essex’s eight they might have felt rather aggrieved. In the event, Essex lost by ten wickets inside two days. The local paper explained: ‘No doubt about it, man for man, they were opposing a stronger side.’

Anthony Meredith gives a wonderful description of the atmosphere at Leyton during those halcyon years:

Hardly a match there ended without a jubilant rush of spectators toward the pavilion. When Essex beat Yorkshire in 1897 ‘the crowd roared with delight, hats were thrown in the air and a vast crowd surged forward in front of the pavilion. There were repeated cries for Mr Kortright and, after a time, the hero of the match presented himself for a moment or two in front of the pavilion and acknowledged the enthusiastic cheers by raising his cap’. A big match at Leyton affected the whole neighbourhood. As Essex neared a famous victory over the Australians in 1899, ‘it was marvellous to see all the thoroughfares round about, how housewives stopped their Saturday afternoon cleaning, how butcher boys pulled up their fast trotting ponies, and middle-aged gentlemen, enjoying a quiet smoke at the garden gates, let their pipes go out, in order to learn the result and to listen to the details’. Inside the ground there was pandemonium: ‘the shouting in front of the pavilion. The speeches, the condolences, the explanations, the wild wonderings of the natives, and then their hysterical delights...Omdurman sank in the shade before the hysterical heroics of the Essex camp followers...’

A further indication of the popularity of cricket within Essex is illustrated by the fact that large crowds gathered at the ground when the team weren’t even playing there.

⁹⁶ Quoted by LEMMON, p 83, but not sourced.

⁹⁷ VAMPLEW [p336] instances Worcester and Northants, both of whom played only 12 matches in their first seasons, but his cut-off point was 1914. Glamorgan may well have been the same, for they were admitted in an Australian year and played fewer championship matches than anyone else.

Earlier in the season, Essex travelled to Yorkshire to play who were at the time second only to Surrey as the supreme team of the 1890s.⁹⁸ The match was a tense affair, with Essex winning by a solitary run.⁹⁹ Cricket cannot have a closer result, other than a tie. The Essex side had beaten the real powerhouse of county cricket and there were scenes of wild jubilation as a large crowd, who had anxiously been awaiting the result at Leyton, heard the news.¹⁰⁰ The fact that the people of Essex cared enough to travel to the ground to hear the result indicates how popular the game was and how success created interest in the game within the local area. This, in turn gave people incentive to attend the ground which resulted in large attendances like the ones seen at the Lancashire match.

The large home attendances greatly improved the club's financial position, and CE Green told the 'numerous company of members' at the Annual General Meeting in December that 'For the first season in the club's history revenue has exceeded expenditure'. It was, however, necessary to improve public accommodation: the grandstand was enlarged, seating for 10,000 was provided on the ground, and a new dining-hall was built.

Despite these improvements - or perhaps because of the expenditure they entailed - there was nevertheless scope for pessimism. Lord Harris, who had done much to encourage Indian cricket during his time as Governor-General, asked Essex to arrange a match against the visiting Parsees and 'guarantee them a certain sum of money'. The committee replied, with the kind of slightly world-weary comment that often appeared in the minutes, that 'we could not play the Parsees next season and that we were not in a position to guarantee anything'.

By the start of the 1898 season membership had increased by 567 to 1688, and the magic figure of 1500 that Green deemed essential had been exceeded. Essex arranged new home and away fixtures with Gloucestershire and Kent but lost all except the home game with Kent. They dropped from third to fifth place, which Wisden described as 'not as good as they had hoped' and 'not quite commensurate with the merits of the eleven.' They lost four more games than in 1897, but won three more and their cricket was always entertaining so crowds were good. The tennis courts at the opposite end of the ground from the pavilion made way for improved cricket coaching and practice facilities; it had been thought that this would cause many ladies to resign but, contrary to expectations, 'their numbers increased, an eloquent proof of the popularity to which cricket had attained with the fair sex'. Essex made a profit of £500 on the season and when on 27 September CM Tebbut died suddenly of an apoplexy, aged only 58, he knew that his immense generosity had helped save the club from extinction: the last £300 owed to him was paid off and the club had a balance of £628 in hand at the bank. During the winter extensive additions and improvements were made, including the making of a banked terrace at the south end.

In April 1899 the AGM was told that 'revenue had very materially exceeded expenditure', and there was over £1000 in hand. Membership peaked at 2443 and average attendances at 13,376 – figures that were not to be exceeded until well after the First World War. The club's success may have tempted it into a degree of overconfidence that almost proved fatal. Notice had already been given that from 1 January 1899 the one guinea entrance fee would be enforced, so the 775 new members

⁹⁸ Jan Kemp, *Cheerful Charlie* (Essex: J. Kemp, 1989), p. 33.

⁹⁹ *Chelmsford Chronicle* 20 August 1897.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

enrolled in 1898 were more than in subsequent years. A newly established Second XI unearthed several players for the first team and enjoyed good results including wins against Hertfordshire's first team, showing how rapidly the fortunes of the two clubs had diverged, but it proved expensive to run. After complaints about the rough quality of the outfield, the committee stopped all football on the ground – incontrovertibly the right decision in terms of cricket but financially risky because many members joined solely to play the winter game and, by contrast with the tennis-playing ladies, almost all of them left when it was withdrawn. Essex slipped from fifth to sixth but for the fourth year running were the only one of the newly elevated counties to achieve a top six place, and thus initially did more than any of the others to justify their promotion¹⁰¹.

* * * * *

Minute books list only names of new members, but for me one stood out¹⁰². Henry Charles Pracy was born in Shoreditch into a respectable family of skilled tradesmen, the grandson of a carman and youngest son of a watch-maker. Some of his brothers drifted down the social scale but he was shrewd enough to marry into a wealthy middle-class family and became a boot manufacturer. In 1881 he lived in a substantial Leyton villa, describing himself as a gentleman. In 1892 HC Pracy seconded two applications for membership and, at the 1903 AGM, he seconded adoption of the accounts¹⁰³. He was also an honorary member of the Leyton Cricket Club¹⁰⁴, which was at that time one of the strongest in Essex, and acted as something of a nursery to the county club. He was one of eight honorary members named in a report on a benefit match for the groundsmen of the Leyton club.

HC Pracy's elder son Henry Edward was a music publisher's manager who later became a highly respected figure in Walthamstow, a joint-founder of its Antiquarian Society and vice-chairman of its Building Society. He appeared regularly for Leyton and in 1887 played when they 'put their best 11 in the field' against Essex Club & Ground in a match at the County Ground. He might well have appeared in 1889 too, but there was a dispute about the 'illegibility' [sic] of one of the Leyton players and the match was abandoned¹⁰⁵.

HC Pracy's younger son Edward John, a financial clerk, was a capable wicket-keeper who also played for Leyton¹⁰⁶, alongside county players George Littlewood, Charles McGahey and George Higgins. After the death of Henry Charles in 1909 Edward became a member, so presumably he had previously accompanied his father to the cricket or got in on his ticket. No conclusive argument can be built on one family, but their social background probably typified membership in the Leyton era.

Years of struggle 1900-1932

The change in Essex's fortunes did not last into the new century. Essex's batting collapses were notorious: Saki's fantasy *When William Came* demonstrated the

¹⁰¹ Not my Essex chauvinism but VAMPLEW's statement (p119). Essex averaged fifth place and only Warwickshire, who averaged eighth, came close.

¹⁰² Family history research from parish registers, birth and marriage certificate and census returns. He was a distant cousin from a more prosperous branch of the family than mine!

¹⁰³ Newspaper clipping glued into the minute-book but with no indication of its source.

¹⁰⁴ LSE&I 21 Aug 1897. He was one of eight honorary members listed in a report on a benefit match for the groundsmen of the Leyton club.

¹⁰⁵ LSE&I 13 Jul 1889.

¹⁰⁶ LSE&I 13 Jun 1891 says he 'showed fine form behind the wicket'.

continuities of life after a fictional German conquest of Britain with a news poster 'Essex wickets fall rapidly'¹⁰⁷. Fielding was often poor and the slip-catching achieved the status of a music-hall joke: an apocryphal tale relates that on one exceptionally bad day the professional Walter Mead remarked, in suitably stage Cockney: 'There's a hepidemic goin' round this team but it ain't catchin'!' From the powerful bowling attack of the Silver Age only Mead remained, and groundsman Freeman was so successful in eliminating gremlins from the Leyton pitch that it became a batsman's paradise, so Essex found it difficult to bowl sides out.

The consequent high proportion of draws and slide down the table lessened interest. Average attendances in 1900 were half those of 1899. In the cold, wet conditions of 1902 Essex fell to thirteenth and Wisden described their performances as 'dreary', although the Second XI was 'unbeatable'. In 1903 they finished eighth but Wisden commented that the artificial wickets 'simply spoiled the cricket', and Essex's annual report complained that the 'impossible weather...had a cruel effect on the receipts at the gate'. All of this, together with the dropping of football and the enforcement of the entrance fee, meant that between 1899 and 1903 the club lost 800 members.

In the first fifteen years of the twentieth century cricket attendances in general fell away. Leyton was only one of the more notorious examples of a general malaise, with wickets becoming so easy for batting that too many games were boring draws. Several county secretaries blamed the rise of middle-class pursuits such as motoring and golf¹⁰⁸. The cricket and football seasons were rigidly separated so the two sports were not in direct competition, but many working people found a football game – completed in less than two hours of their Saturday half-day – more attractive than cricket, spread out over three days when they were usually at work. A perceptive contemporary commentator summarised the increasing pressures on cricket clubs:

The day has gone when a modest income from a few matches will maintain a modern county club, very often burdened with the maintenance of a large ground all the year round, with the salary of a staff of professionals, with the match expenses of amateurs, with responsibilities, liabilities, insurances, and growing taxation never dreamed of years ago¹⁰⁹.

For Essex this process began in 1900, coinciding with their decline in form.

It must have been with a sense of déjà vu that on 10 November 1903 CE Green addressed a special meeting at the Great Eastern Hotel attended by 250 members, when he spoke of a debt of £1500 and the possible winding up of the club. There was also in his speech a new element of disillusionment with the game at large:

County cricket unfortunately is not the healthy sport it once was. The money element is too prominent. Other counties are feeling the demands made by the professionals and others, and if this demand is not checked great harm will be done to the game...

Members subscribed £300 on the night, but the position remained precarious. The Second XI, which in five years had won 18 matches, drawn 14 and lost only two, was scrapped purely for financial reasons¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁷ OUP, 1997, p178.

¹⁰⁸ VAMPLEW, p90.

¹⁰⁹ CATTON, JAH. *Contemporary county cricket*. IN *Badminton magazine*, XXXIV, 1912, p539. Cited, VAMPLEW, p179.

¹¹⁰ PRACY, David. *Essex 2nd XI 1899-1914*. Peter Edwards Museum & Library Research Paper no.7, 2021.

On 28 January 1904 Green told another special meeting that the £1500 was ‘practically all raised’, and joked that ‘a few more hundreds would be desirable’. On the recommendation of a special committee, the entrance fee was cancelled and – perhaps also encouraged by seven wins and a rise to eighth place – 311 new members joined. In the early 1900s committee member Robert Cook provided the *Essex Review* with a lively series of reports on the club’s activities, and in 1906 he wrote:

At the annual meeting of the County Club in April affairs looked so gloomy that even the cheerful optimism of the Chairman (Mr C.E. Green) almost gave way, and he described the report as more like an obituary than anything else.

In 1905 the Derbyshire secretary noted that ‘the public will not keep up their attendance to see their team lose continually’¹¹¹, and not surprisingly Essex found the same.

From the outset Essex sought to maximise its income by allowing use of the ground for football in winter¹¹². Only The Oval and Bramall Lane Sheffield among first-class cricket grounds were similarly situated in working-class areas, and all three were used for football. Arsenal FC’s move from Plumstead to Highbury in 1913 was for similar reasons¹¹³. In 1886-7 Brentwood FC played all their home games at Leyton and the gate money was shared between the two clubs. In 1887-8 the ground hosted the semi-final of the London Charity Cup between Old Carthusians and Clapton, and a financially successful match between the leading amateur and professional teams Corinthians and Preston North End, for which a temporary stand was installed. Corinthians were still playing their home matches at Leyton in 1903-4, and Casuals, with whom they later merged, played there in 1919-20. Leyton FC had their own pavilion on the ground, where they played until they moved, first to Brisbane Road and then to their present venue at the Hare and Hounds. That football was still being played in the twentieth century seems inconsistent with the decision to drop it in 1898; I can only assume that the committee withdrew the facility for club members to have friendly kick-about, but continued to allow the top amateur sides to use the ground for matches that would bring in useful rent and good crowds.

A dispute over the use of the ground for football typified the unhappy period through which the club and the winter game were passing in the early 1900s. The original Football League comprised only northern and midland clubs, but in 1893 Woolwich Arsenal successfully sought election to the League because they could not find southern professional opposition, and in 1905 Clapton Orient joined them. In 1900 Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United, both fairly close to Leyton and the County Ground, helped establish a separate Southern League but it too became increasingly professional. This aroused tensions that proved irreconcilable, and in 1907 amateur football broke away from the Football Association to form the Amateur Football Association.

There was a similar split within the Essex Football Association, which regularly held its Cup Final at Leyton. Management of the final remained with the semi-professional EFA, which decided to move the 1908 final – and the accompanying income – away from Leyton, because some ECCC committee members supported the breakaway amateurs. One of the leading figures in the EFA was Robert Cook, author of the reports for the *Essex Review* and compiler of *The Official Handbook of the Clubs of Essex*

¹¹¹ Cited ADAIR.

¹¹² This paragraph based on annual reports, *Essex Review* v.13, 1904, p245, Corinthian-Casuals website 2003.

¹¹³ VAMPLEW, p11, 67.

which provided useful information about a wide range of sports in the county. The move would have infuriated a more even-tempered man than CE Green, who sided with the amateurs in the dispute.

On 10 November 1908 at a Special General Meeting, rather bizarrely described in a newspaper article as ‘of a very harmonious character’, Cook asked what the committee would have thought if a County Amateur Cricket Club had been formed. That was a slow full toss asking to be hit for six, and Green duly obliged. He replied that with the blessing of the committee such a club, called the Gentlemen of Essex, had been formed, a fact of which ‘Mr Cook would have been aware if he had attended more than thirteen meetings in sixteen years’. Green went on to express his feelings in his usual vigorous way:

I must say that the action of Mr Cook and his association in withdrawing this match seems to me very petty and unsportsmanlike. If that is an example of the coercive policies adopted by the Football Association, all I can say is God help professional football. I am very glad that there are so many gentleman who wish to play the game how they like, where they like and when they like, without having to sign on and be bound like slaves, and that they wish to dissociate themselves from an association where players are transferred from one club to another for money considerations and men are bought and sold like so much cattle under the guise of sport, which is repellent to every real and genuine sportsman.

There was no transfer system in cricket but Essex professionals such as Bob Carpenter and Walter Mead, who had to climb down after bitter disputes with the committee (see chapter 15), might have found the concept of ‘having to sign on and be bound like slaves’ all too familiar. As with much else in this period, there was no happy ending. Cook resigned from the cricket committee and died a few months later; the Cup Final never returned to the County Ground.

The main purpose of the 1908 SGM was to deal with yet another financial crisis, which Wisden again attributed to the heavy scoring at Leyton: ‘The public will not attend matches which, given three fine days, cannot be finished in that period owing to the superlative excellence of the pitch.’ Wisden described the 1909 season as ‘most unfortunate’ and the washing out of two of their twelve home games as financially ‘a matter of serious moment.’ In 1910 ‘Essex once more found themselves in financial trouble, the wet weather causing heavy losses.’ James Round therefore proposed a Shilling Fund which ‘met with a very gratifying response.’ In two years it raised £1054 and – aided by a good team performance in the fine summer of 1911 – almost cleared the arrears. Once again the committee tempted fate by proposing the reintroduction of an entrance fee of one guinea for gentlemen and half a guinea for ladies but, prophetically, Green warned the 1912 AGM that ‘another wet season and fewer victories gained by the team would leave the club in just as bad a position as before.’ Wisden duly described 1912 as ‘one of the most appalling summers ever known’ and Essex’s performances matched the weather, with only one win all season. ‘Essex in wet weather were hopeless,’ commented Wisden. ‘The Essex men are fine weather cricketers.’ The club tried 32 men in 21 games and Wisden commented: ‘Fully recognising the want of new blood, the executive gave trials to several young players but it cannot be said that the results were encouraging.’ The annual report simply said the season was ‘the worst ever experienced by the county.’ It was too much even for Green and finally he did resign, although characteristically he cleared all the club’s debts first.

Financial problems were not unique to Essex. Between 1895-1900 and 1907-13 the average cost of running a county club increased by 22%, while income remained static

or fell. Of the eight counties listed by Vamplew, only Surrey and Yorkshire made substantial profits while Kent – despite the boost of four championship wins in eight years – made on average only £48 a year. The rest were in deficit. Even Lancashire made heavy losses in the years before the First World War, but it was only at the fourth time of asking that their members grudgingly agreed a subscription increase from 21/- to 26/-¹¹⁴; Essex could not even wring that much out of their members. After the horribly wet summer of 1912 Leicestershire debated winding up the club and their chairman concluded that ‘first-class cricket cannot be made to pay except in the case of the more thickly populated counties’.

Despite the advantage of their East End catchment area, Essex too failed to make ends meet. From 1895 to 1913 their average annual income was £4739, but their average loss was £211. Their income comprised £1898 (40%) from members’ subscriptions, £1806 (38%) from gate-money and £1036 (22%) from other sources. They could reckon it an exceptionally good season if they finished in the top half of the championship table and broke even on the balance sheet.

From 1899 onwards, as the result of a proposal by CE Green¹¹⁵, all county clubs were given a share of the proceeds from home Test matches. In 1905 the windfall of £315 was the largest before the First World War, but Essex still lost £230¹¹⁶. Australian and/or South African touring teams visited in six of the sixteen seasons from 1899 to 1914 and the clubs received a total of £1115 each. Allowing for the seasons when no tourists came, however, the average annual income was only £70 a year – worth having, but nowhere near enough to knock off the deficits of poor clubs like Essex.

Ironically, most clubs did very well out of the First World War, because many members kept up their subs and with most professionals away fighting there was less to spend the money on. Only Essex and Northamptonshire did not end the war better off than they started it¹¹⁷. Because of poor performances in 1912-13, Essex membership dropped from 1941 to 1536. The 1914 season was much better and numbers would probably have gone up again, but instead as a result of the war they fell every year till in 1918 there were only 743 members. This represented a loss of some £700 a year but savings on wages would have been over £1000 so it is surprising that the financial position did not improve: in 1917 there was a deficit of £161, which the committee paid off, and a further £560 from earlier was still outstanding.

In 1918 the chairman expressed the hope that ‘when the war was over a great effort would be made to free the Club from debt as a memorial to the late Mr CE Green’, but it did not happen. At the AGM in May 1920 the committee reported a profit but it was swallowed up by repairs to the ground and members agreed unanimously to increase subscriptions from £1 1s to £1/11/6 – an essential step as inflation had eroded the value of money. The debit balance was £456/16/5 and committee member JH Douglas gave a surety for the overdraft, with other committee members guaranteeing £100 each to him.

It was not surprising that the committee had to plough profits back into the ground, for facilities were never exactly palatial. In 1914 the committee turned down a request for chairs in the press-box, although ‘the existing seating was to be made more comfortable

¹¹⁴ VAMPLEW, p94. He points out [p96] that they ‘literally flogged a dead horse’, though the income of 7/6 would not have done much to dent the overdraft.

¹¹⁵ WISDEN, 1899, pxcv.

¹¹⁶ VAMPLEW, p124.

¹¹⁷ BIRLEY, p211. I haven’t yet fathomed out why Essex did so badly in comparison with others.

for reporters'. In 1919 they appointed a clerk to assist the Secretary and provided him with a typewriter, but voted on grounds of cost against installing a telephone. Standard gate money was 1/-, with 6d after 4pm and 4d for Club & Ground games, all prices inclusive of Entertainment Tax. Admission to the Grand Stand – a structure which was only grand by comparison with the rest of the accommodation – cost 1/6. In 1928 seating accommodation on the ground was increased by bringing Leyton Football Club's stands into use.

Despite an improved and mathematically very neat summer on the field - nine wins, nine defeats and ninth place - the committee had at the end of the 1920 season to arrange a £1000 overdraft and launch yet another membership drive. That added 231 members, but in 1921 another dismal season saw membership fall to 870, the lowest ever recorded outside wartime.

Essex sold the ground to the Army Sports Council in 1922 and continued to play there as tenants for another decade, but even that proved an economic millstone. Rather strangely, the club lost its own minute-book for this period but kept the Army's¹¹⁸, so we know from the Board's point of view a little of what happened while they were Essex's landlords. The arrangement was that Essex should have five (later six) matches at Leyton, and that the two organisations should share any profits after deduction of expenses. In May 1923 the club wrote to say that they were still in dire financial straits and ask for a more favourable arrangement; the Board expressed its sympathy but was unable to help. The summer of 1924 was the third wettest of the twentieth century and Essex won only two matches. Wisden considered that their performance was 'doleful' and that because of the bad weather at Leyton again 'the future of the club became imperilled'. Then an effective membership drive that brought in 1200 new recruits restored a degree of financial equilibrium. Three successive years in the top half of the table would certainly have helped, but Wisden thought that membership also increased because the club was playing in different parts of the county – Chelmsford, Colchester and Southend.

In the 1927 edition of the Daily News Cricket Annual, the editor, Frank Thorogood, suggested why attendances at Leyton still weren't good:

The need for a larger membership, however, is a very urgent one, and in the comforting knowledge that the county ground at Leyton has now been permanently saved for cricket, it is hoped that a big rally will soon occur.

But let me emphasise here that the club must also do its own part to create a more agreeable environment at Leyton. The accommodation for the shilling patrons has long been inadequate, and I hope most devoutly that the old ammunition boxes, masquerading under the name of ring seats will be cleared out, bag and baggage, never to return.

In the past the charm of county cricket has served to counter many creature discomforts: today a public rocked to sleep in a luxurious cinema demand a reasonable return for open air investment. As a keen follower of Essex cricket, I feel certain that when the officials get into closer touch with the press during the actual playing season, and when an intelligent effort is made to give the shilling patron his quota of garden seats, we shall find the Leyton ground attracting a much larger number of people. Not even for the sake of county cricket are our womenfolk of today prepared to spoil new dresses on prehistoric benches and to keep a 'fair' balance on top of an old ammunition box. And bear in mind that it is the women as well as the men who are going to keep up county 'gates' in the future.

¹¹⁸ ERO Z82/1/38

In 1929 Essex took a seven-year lease on the ground with the option of buying it back, but the annual rent was £500 and midway through the season they put out an urgent appeal for £1500. At the 1930 AGM the new secretary, Brian Castor, justified higher subscriptions by saying that it was ‘impossible to pay post-war expenses on pre-war subscriptions’. The club lost 280 members, but overall income from subs rose by £700 and at the end of the 1930 season, for the first time since the 1890s, the club made a small profit without income from outside. Castor was in many ways a forward-looking secretary, but his only suggestion for achieving financial soundness was the traditional one of increased income from the membership.

In 1930 a small but useful source of income came under threat¹¹⁹. The justices found that when the club entered the championship in 1895 licences had been granted for bars in the pavilion, near the scoreboard and near the groundsman’s cottage at the other end of the ground. Unlicensed ones in the dining-room and under the grandstand had, however, also been in existence for many years. Committee member JCL Sharman, a solicitor by profession, revealed that on match days the bars were open all day, so the clerk pointed out that they should be closed from 3 to 5.30 and commented: ‘It appears to me that the question of this licence wants looking into.’ Sharman admitted an ‘unintentional irregularity’ and tried to jolly the Bench into overlooking it. They agreed to renew the licence but only for the three legitimate bars, and they insisted that in future the club should follow the rules on opening hours.

The successful 1930 season encouraged the club to launch a fund to raise £17,000 to buy back the County Ground, and William Mallinson of Walthamstow launched it with a gift of £1000, but 1931 proved a great disappointment. Results were not unduly bad by Essex standards, but the effects of a national financial crisis combined with poor weather to reduce attendances. The Ground Purchase Fund raised £466, but overall expenditure exceeded income by £982. After another wretched summer they abandoned the unequal struggle and gave up the lease early, so that at the end of the 1933 season they left the ugly but atmospheric old ground where they had played for almost half a century. The Essex and England bowler Kenneth Farnes, who played a few games there at the start of his career, expressed the feelings of many:

The old Leyton ground had associations with many great players, but no one would be able to call it a beautiful setting for the game. Nigel Haig summed it up when he told Ted Carris to go and field amongst the dirt and broken bottles on the far side of the ground. Still, I have one or two pleasant memories of the place...

Some of the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop’s interviewees had similar mixed memories of Essex’s last years at Leyton. **HG Russon** recalled that it was ‘a very poor ground, just sufficient and that was all... The stand was a very poor wooden shack and hard seats, [although] you could hire a cushion for sixpence or something’. **Thomas Lesser** by contrast thought that the seats were ‘pretty comfortable’. He had heard a story that the ball was hit out of ground on to the roof of a passing tram and carried all the way to the Bakers Arms a mile away, although he was not there on that day.

Edgar ‘Johnny’ Johnson remembered that ‘the Pavilion was quite ornate... like a palace – it was all those tiers’. Down one side of the ground was ‘this funny little stand... like... you’d see at a local football club, just about two or three rows of seats and felted sort of flat roof’. He went there only when it rained, and preferred ‘getting

¹¹⁹ LSE&I, 8 Mar 1930 p14.

sunburnt and burnt to cinders'. He and his friends sat on two very long concrete steps opposite the pavilion. Near to where the boys sat was

...this wonderful old printing machine that printed scorecards... Every time a wicket fell they would...print a new batch, and a chap would wander round the ground calling out the latest scorecard... It would clank and clank away in the background all the time you were watching the cricket...When you went in you bought the latest one you possibly could, it was all printed up for you, but you would go on filling up caught by so and so, bowled by so and so and any other details you were clever enough to put down...

Donald Faulkner recalled that 'after fourteen, you had to pay full fare on the buses... so you had to wear your cap to show you were a schoolboy [but] when you got into the ground you stuffed it in your pocket'¹²⁰. There were turnstiles where spectators paid the admission fee, which he thought for boys was probably 6d. During the lunch and tea intervals the boys enjoyed playing 'knock-a-ball' on the hallowed turf of the County Ground, a tradition which continues at Essex's grounds. Many of them kept the score in their own books. They queued up to get the autographs of the Essex and other players, most of whom 'were very good...don't forget it was us that were their paying customers..!' Mr Faulkner also had heard the story about the six being hit on to the tram roof and added that the batsman was the great Kent and England left-hander Frank Woolley, but he was not there either. Whereas several of the interviewees saw the famous and well-authenticated 555 partnership, none actually saw the incident with the ball landing on the roof of the tram, so it seems that this lovely story may alas be an urban myth.

* * * * *

Leyton never quite achieved all that CE Green had hoped for it. Its metropolitan rivals Middlesex and Surrey both played on Test match grounds, better equipped and capable of holding more spectators. The fourth of the Home Counties, Kent, could like Essex have moved to a place in the London suburbs such as the Crystal Palace ground at Sydenham where from 1900-4 WG Grace briefly established a side called London County, but the failure of that venture may suggest that they were wise not to do so. Instead Kent chose to stay at Canterbury which had been its headquarters since 1847, and also played festival matches at various grounds. The equivalent for Essex would have been if a short-lived club of 1865-6 based in Colchester had survived, for Colchester like Canterbury is a historic town in the north-east of the county.

After Essex left, the ground had a somewhat chequered history. The Army sold it to the Metropolitan Police who in turn sold it to the London Parochial Charities for use as a sports ground for young people. After the Second World War it was taken on by Essex County Council and later by Waltham Forest Council.

The 'Essex Circus' 1933-1967

In 1934 Essex began playing festivals, usually of two three-day matches, on club grounds around the county, and for over thirty years they had no headquarters ground. They had begun to take the game away from Leyton as early as 1906. The Secretary, OR Borradaile, was convinced that first-class cricket in a large county like Essex should not be concentrated exclusively in its far south-western corner and enthusiastically supported a proposal from the Southend Club that a championship game should be played there. Wisden reported that 'the boundaries were too short at either end and the

¹²⁰ In 1906 it was agreed to admit schoolboys for half price on Saturdays and after 4.30pm.

ground was rough, but the experiment proved a distinct success'. The *Daily Mirror* commented perceptively: 'The Essex committee has broken fresh ground by giving Southend a match. And now Colchester and Chelmsford will be wanting to know when their turns are coming.' Essex returned to Southend twice in 1907, once in 1914 and 1919, and then began a regular two-match festival in 1920.

A pattern evolved of trying a ground for a single game, and then if it was successful giving it a two-match festival. Colchester's turn came with one match at the Castle Park in 1914 and four festivals from 1920 to 1923. Matches were then played at the Garrison Ground until 1931, when it was dropped for two years through lack of support. One game was played at Valentine's Park Ilford in 1923 and two in 1924. Chelmsford took over in 1925 with one match at the present County Ground, and from 1926 a festival was usually played there. One match was played at Vista Road Clacton in 1931, and for the next two years it replaced Colchester. Borradaile devoted much of his life to ensuring that Essex could maintain their Leyton headquarters, and it was perhaps with mixed feelings that he saw them give up the ground in 1933, and take cricket to all parts of the county.

The immediate reason for that decision was abandonment of the financial struggle to keep Leyton, but it again reflected an important social change: the growth of car use and consequent ribbon development reversed the long-established trend for people to move into London. Leyton was perhaps less accessible to many, and local grounds more so. *The Cricketer* magazine claimed that this change helped revive village cricket in the Home Counties, and between 1933 and 1939 the number of Essex clubs affiliated to the Club Cricket Conference increased from 112 to 159. There was a degree of social segregation between clubs, some being based in workplaces while others with relatively high subscriptions of 30/- or more were clearly middle-class¹²¹. The decision was nevertheless a great risk, because there is no evidence in the minutes that the committee was aware of this trend and gate money receipts at Leyton had always been greater than at the festival grounds. However, membership, which had been in steady decline since 1926, immediately leapt by over 500 and spread more evenly across the county as many people found at least one festival closer to home. Addresses indicate that it remained mainly middle-class¹²²; boys who played for the Young Amateurs side were junior members or sons of members, and most of them attended public or grammar schools. Essex did not, however, disdain working-class gate-money: the Clacton and Southend weeks were usually in August to catch East End holiday-makers. In 1934-6 Essex was one of four counties where each pound of admission money represented sixteen or more spectators¹²³, although this probably indicates the primitive nature of festival facilities as much as continuing working-class support. Rain on Saturday or even half-closing day could seriously affect the gate¹²⁴.

In the 1930s several county clubs were on the verge of bankruptcy, initially because of the depression and then because when recovery came people found other leisure activities¹²⁵. Clubs received over £1600 from the 1938 Australian tour of England and £400 from the 1936-7 MCC tour of Australia, but India in 1936 generated only £147

¹²¹ WILLIAMS, p46, 114.

¹²² Comparison of membership lists at the end of the Essex CCC handbooks for 1931 – the earliest I have seen – and 1948.

¹²³ WILLIAMS, p63.

¹²⁴ *Essex annual*, 1938, p16.

¹²⁵ WILLIAMS, p65.

and New Zealand in 1937 just £90¹²⁶. For once Essex managed to avoid the worst of cricket's economic problems, partly perhaps because the depression was not as bad in the south-east but also because the team's second Silver Age coincided with the move to festival cricket so that attendances increased.

In 1934 Essex continued the festivals at Chelmsford, Clacton and Southend, returned to Castle Park Colchester and the Old County Ground Brentwood, and added a new venue at Chalkwell Park, Westcliff. This meant that for the only time between 1885 and 2002 they had no presence in the London suburbs, so they returned to Ilford in 1935 and the gates had to be closed 'in sharp contrast to the meagre patronage accorded by the public at Leyton'¹²⁷. Plans for an experimental Bank Holiday festival game at Leyton in 1940 were aborted because of the Second World War.

In 1945 the committee discussed 'the possibility of taking over the lease of Chelmsford CC as a permanent home for the club'. A sub-committee carried out detailed negotiations and recommended that Essex should 'take over the Chelmsford ground on a 21-year lease at £150 per annum plus rates'. In February 1946 the agreement had not been signed because 'PoW [Prisoner of War] labour was making improvements but was very expensive', and in September 1947 the terms were amended so that it was 'no longer acceptable'. Early in 1948 the committee reluctantly dropped the proposal, telling the AGM of its regret that 'Essex was the only club without a county ground'. The club would continue to have a festival at New Writtle Street, and use the ground for pre-season practice. In 1950 Essex added another venue at Gidea Park Sports Ground Romford, and in 1957 they did return to Leyton. Somewhat ironically, in view of subsequent developments, the ground that made way for Leyton was Chelmsford, where attendances had been poor and financial losses heavy. Reminiscences of the Leyton Festival by spectators and by the award-winning groundsman George Love are on the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop website at <http://www.wforalhistory.org.uk/>

Equipment, including a famous travelling scoreboard mounted on a lorry, was carted round from place to place. The cricket was usually enjoyable, the spectators became involved in the friendly atmosphere of their local ground, and the individual festivals often made a profit. On the other hand the arrangement, which became known as the Essex Circus, had several great disadvantages. For the cricketers, it in effect meant playing all their matches away, on unfamiliar grounds with minimal practice facilities; the Second XI report for 1959 commented that 'the lack of a centre made training difficult for young players'. For the admin staff, who had to work very hard to keep the show on the road, it was a major logistical exercise that required meticulous planning; they were geared to two-match festivals and if the fixture list required a third it presented further problems. For the treasurers, it meant the inevitable cost of moving from place to place and often the club had no permanent return on substantial expenditure: for example, in 1957 it contributed £50 to refurbishment of the pavilion at Colchester and in 1959 temporary toilets at Leyton cost over £100. After the 1962 season the wickets at Ilford, Romford and Westcliff all needed improving, which of course cost more than work on a single square at a headquarters ground.

By the end of the 1959 season Essex had reduced their deficit to £258 and had high hopes of clearing it completely, but the 1960s saw a spiral of decline. A Special General Meeting in November 1961 was told that the club had lost £12,000 in 1960 and £9000

¹²⁶ *Essex annual*, 1939, p14.

¹²⁷ *Essex annual*, 1936, p27.

in 1961¹²⁸, so it was agreed that subscriptions should be increased and a membership drive launched, but the initiatives may have cancelled one another out for they had little effect.

The Essex committee had divided 6-5 against abolition but then in 1962 agreed 8-2 to support the findings of MCC's Cricket Enquiry Committee. Peter Smith, a former professional on the predominantly amateur committee, voted for abolition.

'Abolition' and the coming of one-day cricket coincided with a further decline in Essex's fortunes, although there is no evidence that this was cause and effect. Having finished in the top half of the table in the six years from 1957, Essex spent the next six years in the bottom half. The financial situation deteriorated and the club was forced into a programme of drastic cuts. Rock bottom was reached in 1967 when Essex came close to becoming the only first-class county cricket club ever to go out of existence. The deficit climbed to £13,500, the England all-rounder Barry Knight left after a dispute with the club, and the playing staff was cut to twelve.

Chelmsford 1967-

With the coming of the Gillette knock-out cup, the club needed its own ground because it had to make firm arrangements in case it had a home tie in the second round or later. Remarkably, this eventuality did not arise until 1971: from 1963 to 1970 Essex only got past the first round three times, and all those matches were played away. By then they had their own headquarters, for in 1965 they took the opportunity to start buying the ground at Chelmsford and by 1971 its development was well under way.

Again a pragmatic decision coincided with social developments: railway electrification and increased car ownership made Chelmsford more accessible. Meanwhile paying spectators were becoming fastidious about primitive facilities at festival grounds. Doug Insole recalled that at Westcliff there was no toilet on the ground and even the players had to go out and literally 'spend a penny'. I still remember the pleasant surprise of turning up at Ilford one year to find Portaloos rather than a row of galvanized iron buckets in a canvas tent. Paul Bolton recalled that the buckets 'overflowed on a busy day and the stench was overpowering on a hot day'¹²⁹.

Gradually the festival grounds were dropped. The first to go was Clacton in 1966: the festival committee offered to guarantee the week against loss, but Tom Pearce as club chairman felt it needed to make a profit. Romford followed in 1968, Brentwood in 1969, Westcliff in 1976 and Leyton in 1977.

The corner was turned just in time: the deficit dwindled and the club acquired a headquarters ground for the first time since 1933. Chelmsford became the scene of some of Essex's greatest triumphs. Five of the young cricketers on the staff in 1968 formed the core of the side that in 1979 won the Championship for the first time. The appointment of Peter Edwards as Secretary/General Manager, also in 1979, ensured that professionalism on the pitch was matched off it. From then until 1992 Essex were to enjoy success unparalleled in their history, and matched by few other counties.

¹²⁸ I think these suspiciously round figures must have been designed to shock the membership into agreeing the increases. The losses recorded on the balance sheets were considerably lower, although it should be said that without magnificent contributions from the Essex Supporters' Club they would have been much nearer the figures quoted.

¹²⁹ Quoted *The Wisden Cricketer*, Aug 2008, p70.

In the 1980s, one-day cricket and success on the field increased membership to over 9000, still predominantly middle-class. The Championship match is the last bastion of the Essex bourgeoisie: polite ripples of applause for visitors' boundaries at four-day matches contrast with the silence that greets them in one-day matches, where West Ham scarves suggest that the old East End connection survives. Signs at the station of the newly privatised Great Eastern Railway echo the patronage of a century earlier, proclaiming Chelmsford as 'the home of Essex County Cricket Club'.

In 2002 the withdrawal of support by Redbridge council and the consequent abandonment of Ilford marked the end after 118 years of Essex's presence in the east London suburbs – a rather sad milestone that seems to have gone unnoticed by the club, though not by Essex supporters who live in that part of the world. Though first-class cricket is unlikely to return there, in 2019 Leyton became the first Urban Cricket Hub, supported by Essex Cricket. Colchester and Southend survived only through the enthusiastic hard work of local committees and the financial support of their respective councils. Remarkably, the fixture list from 2003 onwards was exactly the same as that of 1920-1, with a week at Southend, a week at Colchester and the remainder at the County Ground, the only difference being that headquarters had moved from Leyton to Chelmsford. Southchurch Park became increasingly difficult to organise and in 2005 there was a brief and unsuccessful move to Garons Park, known by many as Barren Park for its unappealing aspect. Essex's last festival match was played in 2016 at Castle Park Colchester, which became an indirect victim of national austerity when Castle Point council could no longer afford to support it.

Part II: Amateurs

Chapter 3: Early days

Several attempts to found a county club met with initial success but then foundered. Richard Cooper has argued that the very first effort anywhere to form a county-wide cricket organisation was in Essex in 1790, although it did not last¹³⁰.

In the early 1860s a Gentlemen of Essex side played several games against its counterparts from other counties and enjoyed some success¹³¹. A county club based at Colchester was formed in 1865 and in 1866 beat Surrey & Ground twice and MCC & Ground, only to be dissolved at the end of the season. In 1872 at Lord's Essex beat MCC & Ground by nine wickets, but it was a scratch side and nothing permanent emerged. One man involved with all three efforts was James Round, and it was his initiative in 1876 that led to the founding of the present Essex County Cricket Club.

'A country gentleman of the old type': James Round (1842-1916)

When James Round was born in 1842, the son of a clergyman, his family was among the leading Essex gentry. Their world wasn't too different from that of Jane Austen,

¹³⁰ >>>PEML Paper 3+5 add more

¹³¹ At the time of writing, Richard Cooper was carrying out thorough research on early Essex cricket, and in particular all of these abortive efforts and several earlier ones. The catalogue entry for a collection of Tuffnell family papers at the Essex Record Office suggests that the 1860s team may have been more of a formally organised than we previously realised, but we haven't yet had a chance to look at them.

with constant entertaining and matchmaking. They owned Colchester Castle, and dominated society in the town. On the death of his uncle Charles Gray Round in 1867, James became Lord of the Manor of Birch, where his merchant forebears had bought Birch Hall in 1726¹³². He owned some 8000 acres in Essex and Hertfordshire, including most of Birch, a village near Colchester. He ‘became a magistrate, acquainted himself with farming, and attained field officer’s rank in the West Essex Militia’¹³³.

James married his cousin Sibylla Joanna Freeland and they had seven daughters before finally producing a son and heir, Charles James Round. Reporting on their silver wedding celebrations on 13 September 1895, the *Essex County Standard* commented that ‘no evidence of good feeling between squire and farmers and labourers was lacking’.

Charles Round later became an army officer who, in the First World War, ‘led Essex troopers into the jaws of death and returned’¹³⁴. He was an Essex committee member from 1913 to 1924, and in 1914 captained the revived Second XI in four matches before going off to war. In 1921 at the Colchester festival he made his only two first-class appearances and showed why he did not play more, scoring nine runs in four innings and taking one wicket for 62.

In 1881 the family was living at The Holly Trees in Colchester, now a museum. In addition to James and Sibylla, their daughters, her niece and his sister, there were nine staff – a governess, a butler, a cook, two housemaids, a kitchen maid, a nursemaid, a nurse and a ladies maid. It would have been normal for such family to have a town house and later censuses show James, the family and their staff at 31 De Vere Gardens, South Kensington. He described himself as ‘MP living on own means’.

James was a third cousin of the distinguished medieval and Essex historian John Horace Round. Although they were very different in temperament and character, they were good friends who had a common interest in history and politics. James was honorary treasurer of the Essex Archaeological Society, and gave the society accommodation for its offices and library at Colchester Museum.

James seems rather to have lacked Horace’s intellectual qualities. At Christ Church Oxford after failing some exams he received a mock irate letter from his friend W. Hicks Beach: ‘Don’t despair, try again: but whatever you do don’t try for Hons, because I’m sure they’ll never suit your complexion’.

Round was nevertheless called to the bar in 1868, and in the same year ‘accepted more from a strong sense of duty than ardour for politics an invitation to stand for East Essex’ as Conservative MP. This was a new two-member constituency that included the area around Colchester, though not the town itself. It was created under Disraeli’s 1867 Reform Act, which extended the franchise to all town householders but excluded most farm labourers, so only one in 20 of the total population in the constituency could vote. It was the last election to be held on hustings with voting by show of hands, a method which Round preferred to the new-fangled secret ballot. Such elections were not cheap and had ruined more than one prospective MP, so he had grave doubts about the expense and his succession was not as automatic as we might think. In a letter rather splendidly headed ‘Round for ever!’ his ‘affe. Cousin’ Anthony W. Freeland wrote: ‘You need to raise money by a life assurance or a mortgage of your reversionary property. I suppose

¹³² KELLY’s directory, 1878, James Round papers [D/DR F55-6]. [*Who was Who* 1916-28].

¹³³ Obituary, *Essex Review*, vol 26, 1917.

¹³⁴ *Transactions of the Essex Archaeological Society*, 1918.

that if decent security were offered there are money-bags in the family that might be untied.’

Evidently money-bags were untied, for Round retained his seat through eight elections until 1906¹³⁵. He headed the poll in 1868 and 1880, and was not opposed in 1874. His partner was Samuel Brise Ruggles-Brise until 1883, and then Charles Hadley Strutt for two years. He spent most of his time on the back benches, although from 1878 to 1880 he was Assistant Private Secretary to Sir Michael Hicks Beach, Chief Secretary for Ireland and perhaps the brother of his Christ Church friend. After the 1880 election the triumphant Liberal government was dominated by its Radical wing rather than the old-fashioned Whigs, and Round was unhappy with the more strident atmosphere this produced in Parliament. One of the Radicals was the leading Baptist William Willis, who in Colchester defeated the leading Conservative by just one vote. The election of such a man in the neighbouring constituency greatly alarmed Round and his supporters. Willis was as much of a controversialist as James’s cousin Horace, who as a Conservative and a High Churchman took great delight in attacking him.

In 1885 further electoral reform extended the franchise to many of the rural population and abolished the old two-member constituencies, including East Essex. Round became MP for Harwich. In 1886 the Conservatives throughout the country won a landslide victory and Round was able to enjoy a quieter political life. He was elected as one of the first aldermen of Essex County Council when it was created in 1888. In 1892 the Liberals were returned to power and Round had a majority of just 304, the closest he came to defeat. In 1895 when the Conservatives came back he won comfortably, and in 1900 he was returned unopposed. Lord Salisbury appointed him a Privy Councillor in 1902¹³⁶. He won all six of his opposed elections, more than any other nineteenth-century Essex MP. The secret lay partly in an efficient party organisation but above all in his personal qualities. He was described as ‘the *beau ideal* of an MP [who] had been born and brought up among us and knows our needs and our wants’ and as ‘A man of incurable moderation, never betraying enthusiasm or panic... without being eloquent he always says the right thing; without any effort he never does the wrong thing.’¹³⁷ A presentation to mark his retirement was attended by over a thousand people including his political opponents, and the *Standard* commented that his service in the House was ‘quiet and free from any parade or self-seeking’. His obituary in the *Essex Review* declared him to be a ‘notable example of a country gentleman of the old type’¹³⁸.

James Round’s papers suggest that, in his younger days at least, cricketing contests were of more interest to him than political ones. An 1859 Eton College team list shows that he was house captain and a photographer’s bill includes a ‘cricket group’. At Christ Church Oxford Round developed into a fine wicket-keeper/batsman but surprisingly did not obtain his Blue, although he later exacted a measure of revenge on the university when he made his highest score, 142, playing for the Southgate Club against Oxford. A press cutting records his first appearance for the Gentlemen in 1864, when he stumped the fearsome Cambridgeshire fast bowler George Tarrant and scored 14 not out. He played three more times for them, his best performance coming in 1867 when he

¹³⁵ Most of the detail on Round’s political career from: POWELL, W Raymond. John Horace Round: historian and gentleman of Essex. Essex Record Office, 2001.

¹³⁶ Cited LEMMON, Essex, p129.

¹³⁷ *East Anglian Daily Times* 12 Nov 1889, Carruthers GOULD in Essex Review, vol 12, p223-4, 1903. Cited POWELL, pp80, 92.

¹³⁸ Obituary, Essex Review, vol 26, 1917.

claimed eight victims. According to Wisden, he was ‘one of the best wicket-keepers that ever asked “How’s that?”’. He was also a handy right-hand under-arm bowler, who in 1866 took seven wickets when Essex bowled Surrey out for 22. He was a trustee of that abortive Essex county club, and subscribed £1 to it.

‘County’ in both senses of the word

The present club was founded at a meeting called by Round on 14 January 1876 at the Shire Hall, Chelmsford. At first the administration of the new club reflected its social origins. Round was elected chairman, treasurer and vice-president. JW Perry Watlington (1823-1882), who signed the original notice with Round, told the inaugural meeting that ‘it seems to be the desire of a great many ardent cricketers that a County Club be established’. If Round represented the east of the county, Perry Watlington represented the west, and he also was also elected a vice-president. He was educated at Harrow and Trinity College Cambridge, and served as Conservative MP for South Essex from 1859-1865. His family owned Moor Hall near Harlow, and were generous in improving the amenities and social conditions of the area.

There were three other committee members. Arthur or Archibald Ruggles-Brise belonged to the long-established gentry family of Spains Hall in Finchingfield that is still providing MPs, Lords-Lieutenant and other influential Essex figures. The Reverend Frederick Adrian Scrope Fane was the vicar of Norton Mandeville; a distant relative of the Earls of Westmorland, he was a typical Victorian hunting and riding clergyman but also involved with many local philanthropic endeavours and a great benefactor to the parish of Kelvedon Hatch¹³⁹. His son Captain Frederick John Fane, an army officer, played for Essex in their inaugural year and was the father of Frederick Luther Fane who captained the county from 1904-6.

It would have been instructive to examine the committee debates on the subject, but the club’s first minute-book, covering the period 1876-86, is missing. This is particularly frustrating because it seems to have been extant as late as 1954, when its first page was reproduced in an article commemorating the club’s sixty years in the championship.

No membership lists for this period survive, but playing was as important as watching and early score-books reveal noted Essex gentry names such as Abdy, Buxton, Caple-Cure, Du Cane, Petre and Ruggles-Brise¹⁴⁰. Like other counties, Essex encouraged the development of cricket by organising matches for the Club & Ground (amateur members of the **Club** and professional **ground** staff), but as late as 1890 the committee decided to use amateurs only in a game against the Upper Clapton club.

There is no evidence that Essex gentry founded the club in response to the great agricultural depression, which was just beginning in 1876, but it perhaps weakened their resistance when in 1885 the club moved to Leyton: the *Daily Mirror* later commented that ‘Many of the old county families of Essex have never quite forgiven the Essex Cricket Club for making its permanent home in the London suburbs’¹⁴¹. In 1888 four county members retired from the committee, claiming officially that they

¹³⁹ Kelvedon Hatch Family and Local History website, 2003.

¹⁴⁰ As late as 1946 members had ‘the right of admission...and the right to play when selected.’ ECCC minutes, 26 April 1946.

¹⁴¹ Cited LEMMON, *Essex*, p129. Annual reports [ERO D/Z82/1/1-155] list the vice-presidents.

were 'unable to devote the necessary time to the management' of the club, although they may also have disapproved of the way things were going.¹⁴²

There is some evidence of a continuing Tory influence in the club. James Round was one of three vice-presidents who in 1906 – the year of the Liberal landslide – lost the letters MP after their name. Another vice-president was Ernest George Pretzman, MP for Ipswich and owner of 925 acres in Lincolnshire; he was the driving force behind the Land Union, which vigorously opposed Lloyd George's proposed tax on the improvement value of land. The campaign and then the First World War ensured that the tax was never implemented, and in 1922 Pretzman completed his victory over Lloyd George by proposing the Carlton Club motion which brought down his coalition government. In 1928 James Cassel, Tory MP for Leyton, was President. After the Second World War, the President, Sir Hubert Ashton, was also Conservative MP for Chelmsford. This would not have been unusual, for cricket could be seen as the Conservative Party at play: between the wars, all 20 MCC committee members who took an active part in politics were Tories¹⁴³.

James Round was also elected captain and retained the post until 1882, although his political commitments meant that he was able to play only in late July and August, after Parliament had risen. He more than anyone ensured that the club did not go the way of its short-lived predecessors, although it was managed much as many club teams are even today – 'one gentleman would undertake to look after one match and another the next'¹⁴⁴. All this changed in 1883 with the coming of CE Green, 'known to all Essex as Charlie'.

Chapter 4: The Uppingham connection

'The great mainstay of Essex': Charles Ernest Green (1846-1916)

Like James Round, Charles Green was born in 1840s Essex into the magic circle that was the Victorian upper middle class. Both were therefore educated, almost as a matter of course, at public school and Oxbridge. Both had large households that included members of their extended families and several servants including a butler and a cook¹⁴⁵. Both divided their time between the teeming city that was the hub of a great empire and the still rural county - Round as MP and country squire, Green as businessman and Master of the Essex Foxhounds.

Yet there were various subtle differences both of character and background. Whereas Round seems to have been a rather quiet man who undertook his public duties out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, Green was a forceful character with an urge to shape events. Whereas Round owned 8000 acres, Green owned a substantial house but no major estate¹⁴⁶, and so was one of the 'new comfortable...who combined continued

¹⁴² They were A Capel-Cure of Harlow, RS Spencer of Birchanger, W Grimston of Writtle and WH Rodwell, who gave his address as London but was elected for East Essex. On 25 March 1885 James Tabor recorded in his diary: 'Went to a Conservative meeting at Witham in the evening. Speakers Hunter Rodwell, James Round, Charles Strutt & Brice etc. Nothing very particular or convincing.' ERO D/DU 2223/2/2.

¹⁴³ WILLIAMS, p23.

¹⁴⁴ Recollection of the professional Henry Pickett, who made his Essex debut in 1881. Chats on the cricket field. In The Cricket field, 1895, p307.

¹⁴⁵ 1881 census

¹⁴⁶ c1877-1883 Turnours in Gravel Lane near Chigwell, then Theydon Grove at Epping.

professional activity...with a semi-gentry lifestyle'¹⁴⁷. Round, the country gentleman, founded the club at rural Brentwood; Green, the City businessman, moved it to suburban Leyton. Under Round the officers were all honorary; Green ensured the appointment of a professional secretary with a business background. Round's teams employed professionals on a match-fee basis but were predominantly amateur; Green's were equally divided between amateurs and professionals, most of whom had annual contracts. Round was content for the highlight of the Essex season to be regular fixtures against other minor counties such as Hertfordshire and Norfolk; Green was soon arranging matches against first-class opposition such as Surrey and Lancashire, with a view to joining them. Round – probably from necessity – was always careful with money whereas Green's pocket seemed bottomless: when in 1886 Essex opened a fund for the new pavilion at Leyton, Green subscribed £100 and Round five guineas.

A family of shipbuilders

Green was born on 26 August 1846 at Walthamstow, where as a boy he learned to love cricket and cherished the hope that one day Essex might have its own county side¹⁴⁸. The Green family owned a yard at Blackwall on the Thames, and for half a century had been a household name.

The Blackwall Yard was established in 1611, initially to build ships for the East India Company and later also for the Royal Navy¹⁴⁹. By 1784 it was described as 'the most capacious private dockyard in the Kingdom and probably in the world'. Charlie's grandfather, George Green, joined the firm as a 15-year-old apprentice. He often related with pride that, when George III came to see the ships being built for his navy, he had 'the honour of buckling on the king's spurs'. George proved such a keen worker that he soon caught the eye of the firm's head, John Perry of Moor Hall in Harlow. On 18 February 1796 at St Dunstan's Stepney, following the best romantic tradition, George married the boss's daughter, Sarah, and was taken into partnership. Two years later his sister Mary married the widowed Perry. When in 1810 Perry died George inherited his half-share of the yard. The remainder was sold to Sir Robert Wigram, and for over thirty years the Green and Wigram families ran the yard. John Perry was the forebear of JW Perry Watlington, who with James Round helped found the club, and so Perry Watlington and Charlie were distant cousins.

Sarah Green died in 1805 and her only child to survive to adulthood was Richard (1803-1863). In 1806 the widower George was remarried, to Elizabeth Unwin. Their sons were Henry (1808-1879), father of Charlie, and Frederick (1814-1876). In 1885 Charlie's brother Henry became Liberal MP for Poplar and in 1900 that Henry's son Richard Henry was the first mayor of Poplar, but the family continued to be best known as shipbuilders and owners.

A noted philanthropist in Blackwall and Poplar, where he donated over £10,000 to good causes, George founded George Green's and other schools. A Congregationalist with non-denominational sympathies, he financed the magnificent Trinity Independent Chapel in East India Dock Road but also helped pay for the beautiful church of All Saints Poplar. All Saints was built to serve a new parish carved out of Stepney and now gives its name to a station on the Dockland Light Rail. George's son Henry, Charlie's father, contributed most of the £7,000 for St Stephen's East India Dock Road, a new

¹⁴⁷ LOWERSON, p8.

¹⁴⁸ Speech at his presentation dinner, 1896.

¹⁴⁹ This paragraph based on LUBBOCK, Basil. The Blackwall frigates. James Brown & Sons, 1924.

Anglican church which, ironically, was always overshadowed by Trinity Independent. Both were destroyed during the Second World War¹⁵⁰.

The yard had always concentrated on building the ships for the East India Company, but when the Company's trading days ended in 1834 a new source of business was essential. The family decided to go into ship-owning, so Richard and Henry set up the company of **R & H Green**. Richard managed the ships while Henry, who had served an apprenticeship in the yard, supervised the shipyard, which built most of the ships. Frederick went into business with George Tucker and in 1836 took over the older firm, which became known as **F Green & Co** and dealt with passengers and cargo. The two businesses were so successful that in 1838 George Green retired, to concentrate on his charitable activities.

Increasingly, however, the Green and Wigram families were rivals rather than partners. In 1843 they separated, the Greens taking the western yard and the Wigrams the eastern, although it was in that year that Henry Green moved to then rural Walthamstow, where the appropriately named Money Wigram already had a home¹⁵¹. The Greens lived at The Chestnuts, a fine Queen Anne building now also known as 398 Hoe Street. By 1852 they had five daughters and three sons, including Charlie, and employed a governess, a dressmaker, a nurse, a nursemaid and a male house-servant.

The Greens aimed to preserve the best traditions of the East India service in a more commercial world¹⁵². The well-run and reliable ships of the Greens, Wigrams and others became known as 'Blackwall frigates'. Around 1860 R & H Green with some 30 ships were the largest of the companies. In 1877 Anderson, Anderson & Co, which had had for many years operated passenger sailing ships using the name 'Orient', approached R & H Green and jointly they established the **Orient Steam Navigation Company**.

Charlie was involved with the three firms, which from about 1881 were all situated at 13 Fenchurch Avenue, in the City. He was a partner in F Green & Co shipbrokers, a director of Richard & Henry Green shipowners, and managing director of the Orient Steam Navigation Company. The old shipowners were generous benefactors but 'ruled their firms like autocrats', and Charles Green was to run Essex County Cricket Club in much the same way.

Uppingham School

With his family background, it was natural that Charlie attended public school. Unlike James Round, however, he went not to the ultra-traditional Eton but to one of the relatively minor schools that were being established or reformed as the railway boom made them more accessible. Until 1853 Uppingham in the county of Rutland was a small local grammar school but then one of the great Victorian headmasters, Edward Thring, was appointed and it was transformed into one of the leading public schools. He developed the idea of an education for the full man, in which team games, classical learning and Anglicanism prepared his boys for their role in governing an empire. One of his less cheerful sermons was entitled *Death and death and death*.

¹⁵⁰ Wikipedia article on Trinity; *Cockney Ancestor* no. 114 p23.

¹⁵¹ The 1851 census shows that his 8-year-old son was born at Blackwall and the 7-year-old at Walthamstow.

¹⁵² Information in this and the next paragraph from P&O website

Thring was born in Somerset at Alford, where his father was squire and rector. His biographer, Donald P Leinster-Mackay, claimed in the *DNB* that Thring was ‘the greatest public school headmaster during the second half of the nineteenth century’. Two of his brothers were also the subjects of *DNB* articles – Henry was a parliamentary draftsman, and Godfrey a collector and writer of hymns.

Another brother, John C Thring, was a master at the school and had formulated *The Simplest Rules of Football* in which he emphasised fair play, equal numbers in each team, team spirit and discipline. Known also as the Uppingham Rules, they were influenced by the school’s extensive playing fields which contrasted, for example, with the narrow cloisters where football was played at Charterhouse. Thring’s rules played an important part in formulating the first rulebook of the Football Association, published in 1863, which distinguished it from the handling game of Rugby. He was one of the few public school representatives that accepted the invitation to join the new association¹⁵³.

Sixty Years of Uppingham Cricket is a book written by another former pupil, William Seeds Patterson.¹⁵⁴ He was himself no mean cricketer, who in 1876 shared a famous last-wicket partnership with WG Grace’s brother Fred, to give the Gentlemen a one-wicket victory over the Players. His book gives a remarkable inside view of the effortlessly superior schooling enjoyed by upper middle class Victorian Englishmen. Their fathers’ money bought them facilities in the classroom and on the playing-field that working-class children could scarcely imagine. From 1853 to 1872, £81,196 was invested in sporting facilities at Uppingham where the ‘playing fields were themselves significant symbols of security and élitism’¹⁵⁵. The book is all the more impressive because of its unquestioning assumption that such privileges were right and natural. Servants, shopkeepers, cricket coaches and other rude mechanicals pass like extras across Patterson’s stage, seldom referred to as ‘Mr.’ or given a forename unless perhaps they were ‘men of a higher class’. His account of Thring’s last days is extraordinarily powerful: after suffering a stroke in the school chapel, the headmaster walked slowly ‘down the aisle between the kneeling rows of his boys, and passed bravely and silently to his death.’

Patterson’s book is dedicated ‘to Charles Ernest Green, the “father” of Uppingham cricket, to whose wise generosity and sound judgment are mainly due whatever cricketering fame the school has attained’. Historians can be grateful that he recorded details of Green’s long and fruitful connection with Uppingham that would otherwise have been lost. The eleven-year-old Green first went there in 1858, claiming later that ‘his arrival completed the first 100 [pupils] in the growth of the school’ and was therefore the first of many centuries in his life. His early cricketering career was prodigious. Initially ‘a phenomenal boy bowler’, he developed into a ‘clean but not wild hitter...and dashing field’, who could also keep wicket. He played for the Uppingham first XI when aged only twelve and was regarded as its best cricketer by the time he was fifteen. Playing for Brooklands House against a team made up of boys from all the other houses, he made the first century to be scored at Uppingham and led his side to a convincing victory. While school cricket captain aged only eighteen, Green

¹⁵³ http://www.experiencefestival.com/a/The_establishment_of_modern_codes_of_football/id/602259. David WINNER (*Those feet: a sensual history of English football*. Bloomsbury, 2006, opening essay) makes the case that the Thring brothers encouraged sport as an alternative to masturbation, but it is rather beyond the scope of this work to pronounce on that thesis.

¹⁵⁴ Much of this section based on Patterson’s book.

¹⁵⁵ MANGAN, p100-1. This would be something like £10 million in 2023.

organised the building of a new pavilion at a cost of just under £400, to which his family contributed liberally. It was the first of many examples of Green's generosity, from which Uppingham and Essex were to benefit so much.

First-class cricket

Green's 'strong and athletic frame' made him a naturally gifted sportsman, who once won six events at a single athletics meeting. He gained a cricket Blue in each of his four years at Cambridge University and was captain in the last, becoming the first player to aggregate over 100 runs in a single Oxford v Cambridge match. Early in his first-class career, however, he played mostly as a bowler, and as a 19-year produced his best bowling performance – 8 for 66 for Cambridge University against RD Walker's XI.

The turning point in his cricket career perhaps came in June 1867. Batting at no.11 against MCC, he top-scored with an unbeaten 60 in a last-wicket partnership that took the university from 95 for 9 to 205 all out and helped them to an exciting 28-run win. Promoted to the dizzy heights of no. 10 in the next match, against Surrey, he made 17 not out. When Cambridge followed on, he carried on where he left off, opening the innings and hitting 53. Over the next two years he could have been considered a genuine all-rounder, for his batting maintained its improvement and he continued to take wickets, but he bowled little after 1869.

Henry Green owned a house at Brunswick Street Poplar, which was in Middlesex, and it may be on that somewhat tenuous basis that from 1868 to 1879 Charlie played for that county. The family also had a home at Chichester Terrace Brighton and in 1869, before the rules on qualification were tightened, he played once for Sussex.

In 1870, he played for MCC & Ground against Yorkshire on a Lord's wicket 'so rough as to be quite unfit for a first-class match'; he scored 51 and shared a partnership of 95 with WG Grace, after which both men were covered in bruises. More than thirty years later Henry Perkins, secretary of MCC from 1876 to 1897, recalled the batting as 'the pluckiest he ever saw'¹⁵⁶. In the year of his death Green showed Home Gordon a bluish stain on his chest where a ball from George Freeman hit him¹⁵⁷.

Two weeks later Green was again playing for MCC on a spiteful wicket at Lord's when the promising young Nottinghamshire professional George Summers was felled by a ball that reared up and hit him on the head¹⁵⁸. He was carried off the field and died four days later. The MCC did not admit liability but immediately started using a heavy roller to pacify the pitch and three years later relaid the entire square. The bowler, John Platts, another young professional, was so affected by the tragedy that he switched from bowling fast to slow. Others in the MCC side, doubtless influenced by the public school cult of virility, were less sensitive. When the Notts captain, Richard Daft, came in 'with a towel round his head covered with a scarf tied under his chin', they mocked him although he had the last laugh, hitting 53 that helped his side towards a two-wicket victory. Daft had begun as an amateur but turned professional for monetary reasons, so was acutely aware of the effect that serious injury would have on his career and finances.

Green had recently demonstrated his physical courage and had no such monetary worries. He told 'Old Ebor' (AW Pullin) that Daft was 'always dapper and rather full

¹⁵⁶ p319 + Wisden obituary of Green, 1917.

¹⁵⁷ Grace memorial biography, p69.

¹⁵⁸ This paragraph based on BIRLEY, p114-5.

of self-importance', and that he looked 'ludicrous'. Interviewed a few years later by WA Bettesworth he did not condemn Daft¹⁵⁹, but his earlier comments seem closer to his real thinking. His contempt for professionals of whose behaviour he disapproved was not his most attractive characteristic. Thirty years later it had a disastrous effect on Essex cricket when Bob Carpenter and Walter Mead came into dispute with Green and the committee over wages.

Even allowing for the poorer pitches of that period, a batting average of only 15 might suggest that Green did not quite fulfil his early promise, although Wisden considered that he was 'in quite the front rank of amateur cricketers and as his batting was always free and of attractive style, few if any batsmen were more popular with the public'.¹⁶⁰ In 1871 he was selected for the Gentlemen against the Players who set their opponents 144 to win in 105 minutes. The match appeared to be drifting towards a draw but Green made his last 27 runs in seven hits. Lillywhite reported that two drives for four 'won the grandest match of the season for the Gentlemen with only five minutes in hand. Mr Green's resolute hitting fairly decided the victory, and the Surrey gallery awarded him an ovation heartier even than it usually bestows on its favourites.' Despite his protestations he was carried in triumph round the ground by a large crowd. He recalled later that 'at the time I was pretty done up, for we had no boundaries and...we could not afford the time to stop much to get breath'¹⁶¹. Returning to Uppingham to play for the Old Boys against the school, he hit an unbeaten 114 out of 150 and enthusiasm broke out as 'boys, and masters, and ladies, and townsfolk too, crowded round the hero who...had brought such honour to the school'.

Heathfield Harman Stephenson (1833-1896)

Yet Green's most lasting contribution to Uppingham cricket was not made on the field. After his departure cricket at the school declined, and the batting in particular was 'decidedly below what might have been expected from a school of our standing'. By then it had become customary for the public schools to employ professional cricketers to coach the boys, and Uppingham was no exception. Their coaches included Roger Iddison of Yorkshire, Edgar Willsher of Kent and Frank Silcock, later of Essex. Green recalled that Silcock obtained the post on the recommendation of the usher and sub-warden Rev. William James Earle, whose father was rector of Chipping Ongar where Silcock's family lived. Silcock, perhaps overawed by his social superiors, was 'too much in the crowd', but even Iddison and Willsher – both forceful characters who were no strangers to conflict and controversy – 'remained too little a time to exercise much personal influence'¹⁶². Despite its lavish expenditure on facilities, the school only employed them in alternate years early in the season before they were needed for first-class cricket. Willsher was paid just £5 plus expenses for a week's work, whereas other schools employed retired professionals throughout the season.

Green, 'with characteristic enthusiasm, and with his charming powers of persuasion, set himself to remove what he saw were the hindrances to his old school...winning for themselves a reputation in the cricket world'. He saw coaching as the key, and was

¹⁵⁹ BETTESWORTH, p181.

¹⁶⁰ Cricket: a weekly record of the game. 14 Jul 1887.

¹⁶¹ BETTESWORTH, p180.

¹⁶² BIRLEY, p97-8, 100-1, 117, PATTERSON, p69. Willsher was one of the chief advocates of overarm bowling. When playing for England in 1862, he was no-balled so he and eight fellow-professionals walked off, leaving two amateur team-mates to wander off behind them. Two years later overarm bowling was legalised.

looking for a man who understood the game, shared his enthusiasm for it, and possessed 'the high character which would have weight with the boys'. The coach would teach them cricket 'by living among them permanently and establishing a correct and sound style which would percolate throughout the school'.

While playing for the Gentlemen against the Players and for Middlesex against Surrey, Green was greatly impressed by the professional Heathfield Harman Stephenson. He had in 1859 gone on the first overseas tour – George Parr's to North America – and in 1861-2 led the first English team to tour Australia. As batsman, bowler and wicket-keeper he 'was a good authority on the game, and had for half his life been in the front rank of cricketers. He came of good stock – his father was a doctor – and he had good manners, a high sense of honour and a generous heart'. Shortly after witnessing a characteristically inept batting performance by his old school, Green learnt that Stephenson, near the end of his playing career, was looking for 'a more secure employment and home'. On the 1861 census Stephenson had been listed as a professional cricketer but in 1871 he was shown as a huntsman in Worcestershire so, even though he went on to play a full season for Surrey, he evidently felt some uncertainty about his position. Green invited him to settle at Uppingham for the start of the 1872 season.

It nevertheless took all Green's powers of persuasion for Edward Thring to accept the new arrangement. Green made a characteristically generous offer to pay Stephenson's salary for an experimental first year, but Thring had reservations. He confided to his diary on 28 May 1872: 'I do not want cricket to get too powerful in the school here, and to be worshipped and to be made the end of life for a considerable section of the school'. Ironically, he was worried that the coaching was proving too successful: Uppingham thrashed Haileybury by an innings and 250 runs, and he was concerned that 'they are a very nice set of fellows, and it will so spoil their outing'. Within six months the headmaster declared himself satisfied with the arrangements, and had 'a constantly increasing confidence in, and regard for, the school professional'. Shortly before his death fifteen years later, Thring wrote: 'Mark me, cricket is the greatest bond of the English-speaking race, and no mere game'.

The influence of Stephenson was immediate and lasting. When he arrived, the exceptionally gifted CE Green had been the only Uppingham man to play first-class cricket, but within five years the Cambridge University team contained five of them - the highest number ever provided by a single school. They were WS Patterson, Henry Tansley Luddington, Sandford Spence Schultz, Douglas Quintin Steel and Alfred Perry Lucas. All went on to play other first-class cricket - Schultz for England, Luddington and Patterson for the Gentleman, and Patterson, Schultz and Steel for Lancashire. In 1888 Schultz, perhaps on the invitation of Green, played for the Gentlemen of Essex against the Parsees and scored 143¹⁶³. Lucas was regarded by Stephenson as 'the best of all my boys', and his immense contribution to Essex cricket is described in the next section.

Stephenson was a classic example of the Victorian doctrine of self-help as advocated by Samuel Smiles. By contrast with many of his fellow-professionals who died in neglect and poverty, he achieved a high degree of respectability. He bought a house in Uppingham where he became a church sidesman and an Overseer of the Poor. An advocate of straight and correct play at cricket and in life, 'dear old H.H.' won the respect of staff, parents and boys alike. When he died on the last night of his 25 years'

¹⁶³ Essex scorebook.

service at the school he was greatly mourned. The headmaster conducted the funeral service and in the town all occupations were suspended as a mark of respect. 'The fact is – and it may be ascribed to the principle of heredity – he had the instincts, not merely in the conventional, but in the true sense, of a gentleman,' wrote WS Patterson in an obituary that says as much about his attitudes as about Stephenson's.

Uppingham Rovers

CE Green's first appearance in an Essex match came in 1877 when he played in a twelve-a-side match *against* the county for Uppingham Rovers, a travelling team of past and present pupils that he founded along with William Orton Lucas and others. Green's friend Edward Rutter suspected that he was 'a good financial angel on their tours'¹⁶⁴. Their aim was 'To keep up a good standard of cricket, to foster esprit de corps and to form a firm tie between past and present'. Their first ever match was a close and exciting draw against Rugby which WS Patterson thought 'typical of the Rover spirit – keen to win if it can be done, but if defeat comes, chivalrous enough to accept it cheerfully'. They even had their own song, *The Same Old Game*, which may be more impressive if you know the tune:

The same old game,
The same old game,
To forget it or forgo it were a shame.
When we are past and gone
The young ones coming on
Will carry on the same old game.

They also inspired a splendid limerick that makes fun of the cricket-lover's obsession with obscure records:

There once was an Uppingham Rover
Who bowled 19 wides in an over,
Which had never been done
By a chocolate-maker's son
On a Friday in August at Dover¹⁶⁵.

For a while the Rovers were the best of all such travelling amateur sides and went eight years without defeat. WO Lucas died at the early age of 30, but his youngest brother Alfred Perry Lucas became a lifelong friend of Green. In the 1880 game against Essex the two men opened the batting for the Rovers, who had no need to exercise their cheerful chivalry - they won by an innings then, and again when the sides met two years later.

In 1871 Green married Jane Margaret Upton, a solicitor's daughter. By contrast with James and Sibylla Round, they had no children but needed just as large a staff to run their household. In 1881 they were living at Turnours in Gravel Lane Chigwell, where they had a butler, a cook, a footman, a coachman, a groom, two housemaids and a kitchen maid. Soon afterwards they moved to Theydon Grove at Epping, where the household no longer included a coachman or a groom but there was a gardener in a separate cottage. On censuses Green described himself as a 'Ship Owner for Naval Service'. In 1911 the house was said to have 24 rooms.

¹⁶⁴ RUTTER, Edward. *Cricket memories*. Williams & Norgate, 1925 p70.

¹⁶⁵ I cut this from a newspaper but inexcusably failed to note which one.

‘A keen cricketer and supporter of the game’: Green comes to Essex

Having a birth qualification for Essex, Green made his debut for them in 1882, when he played three matches. James Round, aged 40 and with other commitments, had stood down at the end of 1882. He was perhaps relieved to pass responsibility for the club on to such an enthusiastic and capable successor, who he probably knew fairly well. Both played for the Gentlemen of Essex teams in the early 1860s, and for MCC against Cambridge University in 1869. They were on opposite sides while Green was playing for Cambridge, against MCC in 1865 and against Southgate in 1867, when Round caught Green. Round was also a spectator at an athletics meeting where Green won the high jump¹⁶⁶.

Green was elected captain and chairman, posts which he held until 1888 and 1912 respectively. *Bell's Life* prophesied that ‘with such a man as Mr CE Green, the old Middlesex player who has undertaken the onerous post of captain, at the head of affairs, we shall be disappointed if the county team does not make progress during the season’. Lillywhite's *Cricket Companion* for 1885 commented: ‘Essex has found a keen cricketer and supporter of the game in Mr CE Green.’ In his early years he was still a useful batsman, and in 1884 his 80 against Suffolk was Essex's highest score of the season – ‘grand, without giving a single chance’¹⁶⁷. He was a popular captain who sometimes had his own idiosyncratic way of doing things. In a game at Tonbridge in 1887 no fewer than five Kent batsmen were run out while WH Patterson was at the crease, and Green is said to have told one of his bowlers: ‘Don't bowl Mr Patterson out or we shall never get them out’¹⁶⁸. He could also show his more cantankerous side on the field. In 1888 against Hertfordshire the Essex professional James Burns kicked the ball away and tried to run, so the Hertfordshire umpire, Tom Westell, gave him out. When Green protested, Westell produced a book of laws to prove the point¹⁶⁹.

As late as 1890 Green made a hard-hitting 31 against Surrey, but as younger cricketers emerged he appeared less often. His last game for the county was in 1891 at Derby, when he and the Secretary, OR Borradaile, replaced two Harrow and Cambridge men, CD Buxton and JC Bevington¹⁷⁰. Both had done well in the previous match against Lancashire, so it seems likely that they had business or pleasure elsewhere, and Green and Borradaile came in because they happened to be with the party on its northern tour. Green was a week short of his 45th birthday and scored only a single in each innings, so he will not have been sorry to retire.

Green was from the outset ambitious for his new club, as he had been for his old school. His crucial role in the move from Brentwood to Leyton has been described above (pp 23-25), and according to Hugh Owen he did not ‘recognise Essex as being a county club until we had the ground at Leyton’¹⁷¹. Green must have been disappointed that the new ground proved to be a financial liability. Over the next few years the club held a succession of crisis meetings which invariably urged members to dig deep into their pockets to help keep the club solvent. The value of Green's contribution was recognised, and at the AGM of 1888 ‘a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman for his

¹⁶⁶ James Round papers.

¹⁶⁷ *Lillywhite's cricketer's companion*, 1885.

¹⁶⁸ *VCH Essex* II. p605.

¹⁶⁹ SIMONS, p135.

¹⁷⁰ Bevington's father, Timothy, was described as a leather merchant [1871 census] or partner in a leather factory [<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/bean95/ft/frippuk/pafg23.htm>] John's occupation was not listed in 1891 but later he went on to the Stock Exchange.

¹⁷¹ Interview in *Cricket* no. 422, 11 Jun 1896.

presiding over the meeting and his generous support of the club was unanimously carried amidst applause and brought the meeting to a close'. When presenting the committee's report at the AGM of 1893 he declared himself 'hurt and upset' by various 'frivolous and uncalled for complaints', but the remarks 'brought forth sounds of disapprobation from several present' and the report was adopted by a large majority. One of the complaints was about 'a certain professional being sent down to Derby and being paid £5, though his services were not required'; Green replied that he had paid the £5 out of his own pocket and 'the member collapsed altogether'.

In 1889 Green, ever anxious to promote Essex cricket, persuaded his old friend and comrade-in-arms WG Grace to play in an MCC side that came down to Leyton¹⁷². He put him up at Theydon Grove and arranged for him to go out with the Essex Hunt. Having had a thoroughly good time, the country's best-known amateur cricketer wrote to thank his host and added that 'he would like to receive twenty guineas of the advertisement he had afforded the new ground'. Grace's presence undoubtedly boosted attendances and Green sent a cheque but did not seek to hide his indignation. Relations between the two forceful characters remained cool until 1895, when Grace attended Lord's in the rare capacity of spectator, watching his son play for Cambridge University. Green, generous as ever, invited the proud parent into his private box and then left to socialize with his fashionable friends. When he returned, Charlie could hardly squeeze into his own box because Grace had taken it upon himself to invite members of both teams to come in and enjoy Green's hospitality. Three years later their friendship was again tested to the full when Green objected to Grace's 'excessive keenness' and 'rather sharp practices' during a match between Essex and Gloucestershire, but 'eventually after mutual explanations and most handsome admissions on his part, we became greater and warmer friends than ever'¹⁷³. On 23 June 1914 Green was cheered to the echo when, all passion spent, he told a dinner celebrating the centenary of Thomas Lord's third cricket ground that 'Dr Grace is, as you all know, the greatest cricketer that ever lived or ever will live'. Sixteen months later Green was one of the most prominent mourners at Grace's funeral.

It may seem curious that this forceful businessman failed to apply more business-like principles to the financial plight of his beloved Essex, but his was an old-fashioned and romantic view of cricket. He recalled his own playing days when 'men played the game simply for the love of it, without feeling very much annoyed if their side lost...When we played county matches the spectators were remarkably few, and took little interest in the proceedings, except as far as the doings of individuals were concerned'¹⁷⁴. It was a view shared by most contemporary administrators of the game¹⁷⁵. They believed in the game's patriotic and moral benefits, and were willing to subsidise it from their own pockets. Only after the social and economic upheaval of two world wars did cricket even begin to dip its toe in the muddy waters of commercial sponsorship.

'Essex advance so quickly'

Green's enthusiasm nevertheless soon bore fruit, with the achievement of first-class status and admission to the Championship. Essex in 1896 finished a creditable fifth, but the balance-sheet did not improve as rapidly as the team. The committee was reluctant to launch yet another appeal but Colonel Mark Lockwood came up with the

¹⁷² This paragraph based on RAE, p328, 391.

¹⁷³ Memorial biography. Cited RAE, p422. For fuller details of the match see below p>>>>.

¹⁷⁴ BETTESWORTH, p182.

¹⁷⁵ See BIRLEY, p149.

brilliant idea of holding in Green's honour a complimentary dinner that would also serve as a fund-raising event for the club. The dinner took place at the King's Hall Holborn on 15 December 1896. The *Stratford Express's* account typified a florid style of journalism that is utterly alien to the 21st-century mind, yet we should be grateful to the writer for preserving a detailed record of a remarkable event. It was attended by a wide cross-section of Essex male society. (From the published guest-list it would appear that even Mrs Green, who ten years after Charlie's death became the club's patron, was not invited.) They included aristocrats, MPs, county club members and amateur and professional cricketers, the latter enjoying the rare privilege of having their names prefixed by 'Mr'. Tributes were paid to Green's immense contribution to Essex cricket and his many personal qualities, not least of them the 'gift of the blarney'. The Earl of Warwick then handed over a beautiful and valuable silver cup inscribed 'Presented to Charles Ernest Green by his Essex friends, and in recognition of his services to county cricket. December 1896'. Genuinely moved, Green replied that 'I would sooner stand up to a fast over from Mr Kortright than to attempt to say all that is in my heart now', and went on to thank all those whose financial and cricketing contributions had helped Essex advance so quickly. It will have warmed his heart that the dinner also fulfilled its fund-raising purpose, for in response to a speech by Lockwood over £800 was donated¹⁷⁶.

Green would scarcely have been human if he had not revelled in the acclaim for his contribution to Essex's success on the field. Sports historians have called such a response psychic income, which Daryl Adair defined as 'public adulation through participation in sport and, in particular, through winning'. Adair suggests that 'conspicuous financial support of clubs by...wealthy patrons can be considered as displays of their social status', and that 'they may simply have loved to support the game and its chivalrous traditions'. I have found no evidence that Green consciously set out to display his status through his contribution to Essex cricket. It seems that he was genuinely motivated by his love for his native county, and for the game and what he perceived as its traditions.

Green's influence in the cricket world extended beyond Essex. In the early 1870s¹⁷⁷ the MCC secretary, RA Fitzgerald, persuaded Green and Edward Rutter of Rugby and Middlesex to join the lethargic and deeply conservative committee, with the intention of livening it up. Green was never the most patient of men and Rutter recalled his friend's reaction¹⁷⁸:

At first we were distinctly ignored and Charlie Green was so utterly disgusted with the supercilious manner in which he was received that he declared he would never sit on the committee again. Nor did he, but stuck to his resolve. Oddly enough, the next official appearance he made in the club was many years later (1905), when he was elected President.

Even as a younger man, Green was something of a traditionalist and it says a lot about the committee that they could produce such a response from him. He was also a trustee of the MCC Professional Cricketers' Fund for players who had 'conducted themselves to the entire satisfaction of the Committee of the MCC'¹⁷⁹, and a patron of the Cricketers' Fund Friendly Society, founded in 1857 by the players themselves for mutual aid.

¹⁷⁶ VCH Essex II, p602.

¹⁷⁷ *Cricket: a weekly record of the game*, 14 Jul 1887 says he was on the committee in 1874

¹⁷⁸ RUTTER, Edward. *Cricket memories*. Williams & Norgate, 1925 p70.

¹⁷⁹ SISSONS, p60

Green was from 1886 to 1892 a popular Master of the Essex Foxhounds, an office that had previously been held by his distant cousin Perry Watlington. On the 1891 census he described himself as 'M.F.H.' as well as a shipowner. In the 1880s he regularly played cricket for the Essex Hunt against the Essex Union Hunt and against the Puckeridge Hounds, and usually top-scored. The official history of the Essex Hunt explained his success¹⁸⁰. He was not

united with Essex by the tie of landed property in the county, but his remarkable tact and good fellowship, combined with his experience with his experience as a leader of men in the cricket field, his ardent love for foxhunting and lavish generosity, were high qualifications for his new office.

He gave up the Mastership in March 1892 'owing to the depressed state of the shipping trade', which may also explain why at the Essex AGM later in the year he could not be his usual generous self and so was in such low spirits. In 1900 he was persuaded to return as Field-master with the assistance of a committee, finally resigning in 1906 because of ill health. An episode from the latter period typifies the man. The traditionalist Green was no lover of that noisy modern invention the motor car. Riding near Harlow, he took a tumble and lay unconscious for several minutes, so it was suggested that he should be taken home in a car. He promptly opened his eyes and declared, 'I'll be damned if I will!'

The success of HH Stephenson at Uppingham confirmed Green's belief in the importance of coaching, and he soon introduced it to Essex. Initially it was on a fairly informal basis, for there is no mention of it in the minutes and we would know nothing of it had not the young amateur Charles McGahey mentioned it in an interview with *Cricket* magazine (see below p62). I think it must at first have taken place in nets rigged up on the outfield, but in 1899 the tennis courts were replaced with coaching and practice facilities. In the 1930s Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson recalled the practice nets where the players came to loosen up, so 'you were actually very proud to get quite close to some of the professional cricketers – quite something'.

Home Gordon's piece for the *Victoria County History* is seldom strong on historical perspective, but he suggests correctly that 'it may prove of historical interest to explain the organization for developing good cricketers within the shire'. He continues:

Mr. C.E. Green (who has always taken the keenest interest in the county) each year has three good 'coaches' for three weeks to coach the eleven and players that show any promise of county form. The good this does is great, as it ensures the men getting into form early. The practice is managed on business-like lines, and no waste of time is allowed. The ground is thrown open to the general public, who take great interest in watching the practice of their favourites, and day after day turn up in great numbers. In fact, as someone remarked last season, more people come to see the practice now than used to come to watch county matches...

Green perhaps saw coaching as equivalent to investing in a business. According to the minutes, he engaged Bobby Peel of Yorkshire and Alfred Shaw of Nottinghamshire in 1901. They were joined in 1902 by Albert Trott of Middlesex and in 1903 by Essex's own Walter Mead. The quality of the coaching is indicated by the fact that all of the professionals had played for England. In 1905 Peel and Bill Lockwood of Surrey were engaged but the Essex records make no mention of pre-season coaching after that and

¹⁸⁰ This paragraph based on BALL.

Gordon's piece ended in that year, so coaching may have been a victim of Essex's financial problems or of Green's growing disillusionment.

'Bitterly disappointed and heartily sick of the whole thing'

The 1896 dinner and the three seasons after it were the high point of Green's association with Essex. In the next ten years that most resilient of men was eventually worn down by the constant struggle, and in 1910 he manifested his increasing disillusionment. When interviewed in 1893 by WA Bettesworth for his *Chats on the Cricket Field* Green was cautiously optimistic, but when they were published in book form, he commented:

I have thought it better not to make any alterations in what I said some few years ago about the County Championship, but I am bound to say that my views on this have changed in the last two or three years. County cricket has become too much of a business, and too much of a money-making concern... There is, I am afraid, very little sport in it now as a game, and the feeling of *esprit de corps* which ought to exist in connection with real county cricket seems to me to be fast disappearing.

And he told *Cricket* magazine that

The great difference between amateurs of my time and those of the present day is that we bore our own expenses ourselves and that the modern players expect and have all theirs paid for them... Of course there are many more matches now than there were formerly but I maintain that if a gentleman cannot afford to pay his own expenses he should not play – at least as an amateur...

Not quite the traditional image of cricket's golden age, though perhaps not a surprise from an old amateur who was one of the few that could pay his own way.

After the wretched 1912 season, Green finally carried out his threat to resign. The county had won only one game and finished in their worst ever position of fifteenth in the championship, but in an open letter that was not the reason he gave to the press:

I am bitterly disappointed at the lack of interest and support of the club... even among the players, and I am heartily sick of the whole thing. As an old cricketer, I am entirely out of sympathy with the way county cricket is now played, and it has become so entirely a money-making business concern that the true interest of cricket as a sport and a game is fast disappearing¹⁸¹.

Characteristically, he offered to 'liquidate the year's deficit'. The AGM accepted his offer while 'regretting the circumstances which accompanied it', and passed

A hearty vote of thanks to Mr CE Green for his long and invaluable service to the Club, his name being one that was known and respected not only in Essex but throughout the cricket world and his loss would be irreparable to the Essex CCC.

James Round took the chair at the meeting, which showed its gratitude to Green – rightly described by Wisden as 'best friend to Essex cricket' – by unanimously electing him as President in succession to Round. Many of the committee including AP Lucas resigned at the same time. Green nevertheless kept up his interest almost to the end. In 1916 he took the chair at the AGM and made yet another 'handsome donation'.

The supreme irony is that it was above all Charlie Green who was responsible for bringing about that state of affairs in Essex. The concern that cricket was becoming 'a

¹⁸¹ I came across this comment when I first researched the topic in 1982, but have since seen it quoted by VAMPLEW and WYNNE-THOMAS, so clearly serious researchers into the social and economic history of cricket consider it to have a more than local significance.

mere money-making matter' had been expressed as early as 1884¹⁸², Essex's last full year at rural Brentwood, after which Green pushed through the purchase of the Leyton ground that made it essential to maximise income. He was quick to recognise that 'a vast amount could be made from gates'¹⁸³ when the Australians visited, so even before Essex became first class he arranged for the tourists to play Cambridge University Past and Present sides at Leyton. He advocated enlargement of the championship and introduced coaching to Essex; both necessitated greater use of the professionals who for Green were fine provided they kept their place, which they did not always do. It was Green's vision and drive that took Essex to first-class status, but for him the achievement was to end in bitterness. At the AGM of 1910 thanks were expressed to EN Buxton 'who had done much for the Club in its dark days.' 'They have always been dark,' the Chairman observed.

Green died in the far darker days of the First World War, refusing at the last to see even AP Lucas, although he did add a codicil to his will leaving £500 to 'my very dear old friend and associate in the cricket field'. If Green was the father of Essex cricket, James Round was the grandfather, and three weeks later, on Christmas Eve 1916, he too died. Chairman HD Swan 'had with the greatest regret to announce the irreparable loss the club had sustained since their last meeting in the death of two of their most invaluable Vice-Presidents'. The club sent wreaths to the funerals and condolences to the families, and in turn received letters of sympathy from MCC. It was to be over sixty years before Essex would see the success on and off the field that Green in particular longed for. Yet without Round and Green there would have been no club to enjoy that success, and no account of Essex cricket would be complete without full acknowledgment of their contribution.

'The best of all my boys': Alfred Perry 'Bunny' Lucas (1857-1923)¹⁸⁴

I have written a book about Lucas for the ACS *Lives in Cricket* series, so this is just a brief summary of his life and career. He was born on 22 February 1857 at Chesham Place in Westminster, the youngest son of a solicitor. He attended Uppingham where he was coached by HH Stephenson who described him as 'The best of all my boys'. 'Bunny' was quite a common nickname among public school boys and he acquired it at Uppingham, but I haven't discovered. Certainly it didn't refer to his qualities as a batsman, for he was described as 'one of the three most capable amateurs of his time in England'. He played for England, the Gentlemen, Cambridge University, Surrey, Middlesex and finally Essex, where his role in the achievement of first-class status was vital. He made his Essex debut in 1889 and was captain until 1894 except in 1891. His final appearance was in 1907 when he was 50. Altogether he made 98 first-class appearances for Essex, scoring 3554 runs at 26.92.

In 1880 Lucas went on to the Stock Exchange and he remained a stock jobber for the rest of his life. He married Bessie Arabella Luckraft, the daughter of a retired governor of a naval prison, but they had no children. His brother Percy, a solicitor, fled the country after defrauding some his clients, leaving behind a wife and nine children; it was Bunny and Bessie who took care of their welfare. In 1887 they moved to Westfield, Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, primarily so he could qualify for Essex by residence. In

¹⁸² The quote is from BIRLEY, p142. I developed a great interest in Lucas and wrote a book about him for the ACS Lives in Cricket series, so I have taken some of the detail out of this section.

¹⁸³ BETTESWORTH, p182.

¹⁸⁴ RAE's phrase, p248.

1901 they moved to the Old Rectory in the village of Fryerning, where Lucas became a much-loved churchwarden. He died on 12 October 1923 and was buried in the churchyard there, with a plaque in his memory on the wall in the church.

* * * * *

Essex retained its Uppingham cricketing connections for a while. Green was succeeded as chairman by HD Swan, who also learned his cricket there. He paid tribute to both Green and Stephenson: 'I should imagine that no other coach ever won and kept the hearts of the boys as H.H. did...I recognise the difficulty of following a man like Mr Charles Green, a man who has given time, money and labour without stint.' He shared his predecessor's love of the amateur ideal, but was mistakenly optimistic about its prospects: 'The more amateurs we can play the better I shall be pleased...the future is chiefly with the amateurs...'¹⁸⁵

Henry Dawes Swan, a great enthusiast and a capable organiser, was no unworthy successor to Green, and served as Chairman until 1925. He also managed various overseas tours including MCC to Australia and New Zealand in 1922-3. There he played his only first-class match, against Western Australia. Presumably an emergency replacement, he did not bowl or take a catch, and made a duck in his only innings¹⁸⁶. Thus Swan could not, alas, match Green's exploits on the field, once being described as 'the worst cricketer ever'.

Another old Uppinghamian, who played for Leicestershire and England, was appointed BBC cricket correspondent in 1991. One of Jonathan Agnew's first duties was to report on Essex's fifth championship victory in 13 years – a success that would have gladdened the hearts of Charlie Green and Bunny Lucas, who attended the school more than a century earlier.

Chapter 5: Captains of the 'Golden Age'

Essex's first three captains were Round, Green and Lucas. All were fine cricketers and the club was fortunate in finding a series of capable men to succeed them.

Cyril Digby Buxton (1865-1892)

Cyril was the son of Edward North Buxton, a director and eventually Chairman of the family brewing firm, Truman, Hanbury and Buxton¹⁸⁷. He became a JP in 1869, Liberal MP for Walthamstow in 1885-6, High Sheriff of Essex in 1888 and a Deputy Lieutenant for the county. He lived at Knighton House in Woodford, where the 1891 census shows him with twelve indoor servants, and a further three outdoor men and their families in cottages on the estate. He took a great interest in education, serving on the London School Board and later on the Essex County Council Education Committee, and chairing both bodies for a while. He played an important part in the preservation of Epping Forest and became one of four Verderers, who are elected by owners of land in the forest parishes to be responsible for its management. Later he campaigned to save Hainault Forest and Hatfield Forest.

¹⁸⁵ Cricket: a weekly record of the game, 10 May 1913.

¹⁸⁶ WARSOP, Keith and THORN, Philip. First-class on tour: a who's who of cricketers who appeared in first-class matches for British teams abroad but did not appear in first-class cricket in Britain. Association of Cricket Statisticians and Historians, 2005, p15.

¹⁸⁷ Information in this paragraph from Georgina Green nee Duffield, distinguished local historian, class-mate of mine at King's Road C of E Primary School, Chingford and no relation to Charlie.

EN Buxton supported the Colchester-based club of 1865-6. He opened the innings with James Round and hit 67 against Norfolk, and was a team-mate of Round when Essex beat MCC by one wicket¹⁸⁸. He was one of those who in 1876 sent a letter of support to the inaugural meeting of the new club, and in 1885 he subscribed £100 to the fund for the new pavilion at Leyton.

Cyril Buxton was a naturally gifted all-round sportsman, who in 1888 won the amateur racquets championship¹⁸⁹. A right-handed batsman and brilliant fielder who bowled medium-pace, he first made an impression in 1882 when, playing for North Essex Under-18s against South Essex, he hit 36 and took 7 for 45, all bowled. He played cricket for Cambridge University from 1885-8 and captained the team in the last year. Like CE Green, he produced his best bowling performance as a 19-year-old playing for the university – 10 for 106 against AJ Webbe's XI, his second first-class match – and bowled rather less as he got older. In the first first-class match at Leyton, Cambridge University Past and Present v the Australians in 1886, Buxton scored 57 and took one wicket for 32. He was one of only two contemporary Cambridge men in the side, and the sole Essex player.

Lillywhite's *Cricketer's Annual* described Buxton as 'a very fine batsman, playing a splendid, upright game; a magnificent and hard-working field anywhere; bowls slow round-arm with considerable success'. Green persuaded him to stay with Essex rather than defect to a first-class county. In 1886 he contributed 75 runs and 9 wickets for 36 to an innings win over Norfolk. In 1887 he scored 555 runs including a fine 79 against Surrey at the Oval. Lillywhite's verdict after the 1890 season was that 'Buxton was in excellent form with the bat and as brilliant as ever in the field'. He also 'captained the team with great success' when Lucas was absent. In 1891 business commitments meant that Lucas could not lead the side so Buxton took over as captain and Essex finished second in the second-class counties table. Buxton scored 91 out of 169 at Leicester in the penultimate second-class match and top-scored with 49 in the final innings of the season, a friendly against Lancashire.

I could not find Buxton on the 1891 census but Anthony Meredith suggests that he preferred the outdoor life to work, spending his happiest hours walking on the Knighton estate with his favourite dogs¹⁹⁰. Certainly the family could have afforded to maintain him as a gentleman of leisure if they so chose.

Tragically, on 10 May 1892 aged only 26 Buxton shot himself in a fit of severe depression. The coroner's inquest returned a verdict of temporary insanity, brought on by a liver complaint and aggravated by 'overstudy'. Buxton may also have been affected by a couple of severe falls in the hunting field. He had seemed in good health and spirits at the club's AGM only a few days earlier, and was eagerly looking forward to the first two games of the season, against Surrey and Yorkshire¹⁹¹. *The Cricket Field* commented:

By his death Essex loses an excellent captain, and one who could both encourage and show the rising young cricketers how to achieve success. Besides lending the County club his valuable assistance in the field he was most liberal in his subscriptions to its impoverished exchequer. His untimely death will be a great blow to Essex.

¹⁸⁸ *VCH Essex* II, p600.

¹⁸⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1911 ed, Racquets.

¹⁹⁰ *The Demon and the Lobster*, p45.

¹⁹¹ *The Cricket Field*, 14 May 1892.

Essex began the Surrey game only six days after his death and the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* commented: ‘...there can be little doubt that in taking the field for the first time his absence from their ranks will be forcibly brought home to the players’. Not surprisingly Surrey and Yorkshire defeated them heavily, although they then had a two-week break and their form improved against weaker opposition.

Hugh Glendwr Palmer Owen (1859-1912)

After Buxton’s suicide Bunny Lucas resumed the captaincy, but following the disappointing 1894 season he stood down for the second time, to be succeeded by Hugh Owen. He had often led the side when Lucas was absent, and was the obvious choice to take over.

Born at Bath in Somerset, Owen was for nine years a schoolmaster at Trent College in Derbyshire where his brother was headmaster, and could have played for either county. He chose rather to assist Essex, for whom he qualified through the family residence at Bradwell where his father was rector. It was probably a sensible decision, because in the three first-class games he played for teams other than Essex he only once reached double figures, although for them his contribution was invaluable. He made his debut for the county in 1880 when against MCC at Lord’s he made 67 with some free hitting. He and the professional Harry Pickett formed an important bridge from the amateur days at Brentwood through to first-class status. A heavily-built man with a moustache and a pipe-smoking habit to match, he often opened the batting. He scored many runs for Essex when they were a minor and then a second-class county. Against Leicestershire at Leyton in 1889 his unbeaten 153 was only 21 fewer than the visitors achieved in their two innings combined. Lillywhite commented in 1891 that he ‘again kept up his reputation as a sound and careful batsman; was of the greatest service to the county’.

In 1894, Owen was comfortably Essex’s best batsman. He hit their maiden first-class half-century in the first match, against Leicestershire. In their only win of the season, against Oxford University, he scored their first first-class century and ‘was almost in hopes of getting a hundred in each innings’ but Essex won with him on 86 not out.

Though an experienced cricketer, Owen did not think coaching beneath him. In 1896 he told *Cricketer*: ‘The most coaching I have ever had was at Leyton this year, from Maurice Read and Abel... They did not stand behind the nets to give advice, but bowled to you and explained what would have been the best way in which to treat the ball.’ Evidently he benefited from the experience when later in the season, against Yorkshire at Leyton, Essex collapsed to 88 for 6 chasing 133. Tom Russell then joined Owen and ‘by dint of careful, extremely careful play, these batsmen soon put the issue beyond doubt’¹⁹². Owen made the winning hit, an all-run five, and finished on 55 not out.

Essex owed much to Owen’s batting, but his chief contribution was as a loyal and inspirational captain. At the end of the 1895 season the committee passed ‘a hearty vote of thanks to Mr H.G. Owen for the able manner in which he had captained the County team throughout the season, and for his kindness in playing in all the county fixtures’. CE Green at his complimentary dinner in 1896 thanked Owen for

the loyal manner in which he has stuck to our side through thick and thin, and as I know, at very great inconvenience played for us on every occasion, and to his tact and management very much of the success of our last few years has been due...

¹⁹² LsE&I, 18 Jul 1896.

After the best season, 1897, the Essex annual report paid tribute to him as ‘an indefatigable captain with his whole heart in the wellbeing of the team’. The language was typical of its period but such tributes were far from automatic and the sentiments are genuine. His finest hour was probably the victory over the Australians in May 1899, although he perhaps found the experience rather too much. The crowd swarmed round the pavilion as usual, and Green gave a passionate speech from the balcony. He then dragged the captain to the front but ‘Mr Owen bowed, blushed and then, breaking away, dived through a doorway behind him like a rabbit into a hole’.¹⁹³

Owen told *Cricket*: ‘I don’t mind the duties of a captain much, for we have a fair side, who are keen and don’t play for their averages, and that sort of thing. I think that in the cricket field the great thing is to sink self as much as possible; the team ought to work as one man’¹⁹⁴. It was a philosophy that enabled him to get the best out of all the members of his team. The young amateur Percy Perrin liked him, and the experienced professional Harry Pickett testified: ‘Our present captain Mr. Owen is a rare good sportsman and if he has a fault it is that it is that he is a little too considerate when we make a mistake in the field’. EHD Sewell confirmed this view of ‘Old O’, as the players called him: ‘Of a charming disposition he might have been of too easygoing a disposition to be an ideal captain, but he could play the game all right, and I never heard a pro make any sort of grouse against him’¹⁹⁵. Owen was fortunate in having fine players to lead, so when some of them dropped out of the side, his laissez-faire approach began to seem less appropriate. In 1899 Owen passed his 40th birthday and Essex won only six championship matches rather than ten, as in the previous season. Questions about the captaincy were asked at the AGM but CE Green defended Owen who soldiered on even though results steadily declined.

Finally in 1902, aged 43 and increasingly slow in the field, Owen was able to play in only eight of the 21 games. He believed that a captain should play in all the matches and commented:

I don’t think myself good enough or sound enough to do this. I find that I cannot stand the strain of playing every day throughout the summer – my leg always goes after about three weeks.

Essex dropped to 13th in the table and at the end of the season his resignation was accepted with regret. Green recalled that they ‘had been friends from the old struggling Brentwood days’. The annual report for 1903 declared that ‘the team will never have a more popular and sportsmanlike captain than Mr Owen’. He retained his place on the committee and when he married in 1908 they gave him ten guineas as a wedding present. He became chairman of Bradwell Parish Council and represented Dengie on several committees in the Maldon district. He died in 1912 aged only 53 and the annual report declared it an ‘irreparable loss’.

Sources of income for the 31 Essex amateurs who played 50 matches or more

Name	No. app.	Essex career	Source of income, and comments
HGP Owen	133	1894-1902	Schoolmaster to 1895. Captain 1895-1902, no known source of income. 1903 testimonial 200 guineas
CJ Kortright	160	1894-1907	Own means - private income. Captain 1903

¹⁹³ MEREDITH, p89.

¹⁹⁴ Chats on the cricket field. IN *Cricket*, 11 June 1896.

¹⁹⁵ Outdoor wallah, p70.

AP Lucas	98	1894-1907	Stock jobber. Captain 1889-90, 1892-4
CP McGahey	400	1894-1921	Various to 1901. Asst sec 1901-14 - Testimonial £133. Captain 1907-10. Coach 1923-9. Scorer 1930-4.
FG Bull	88	1895-1900	Asst sec, later turned pro
FL Fane	292	1895-1922	Own means - private income. Captain 1904-6
PA Perrin	525	1896-1928	Own means - family pub chain + investments / property development. Acting captain 1926
AJ Turner	68	1897-1910	Army officer
JWHT Douglas	459	1901-28	Father's firm (JH Douglas & Co made wooden barrels for encasing cement). Captain 1911-28
CD McIver	59	1902-22	Wine merchant
FH Gillingham	181	1903-28	Clergyman. Arranged his paid holidays so that he could play for Essex
GM Louden	82	1912-27	Stockbroker
FWH Nicholas	63	1912-29	Army officer
JG Dixon	93	1914-22	Member of tanning and farming family firm.
FW Gilligan	79	1919-29	Schoolmaster
HM Morris	242	1919-32	Family firm (Protheroe & Morris nurserymen / land developers + estate agents). Captain 1929-32
LC Eastman	124	1920-6	Asst sec 1922-26 / turned pro 1927 and played 318 more games
CT Ashton	89	1921-38	Chartered accountant
HWF Franklin	73	1924-31	Schoolmaster
HJ Palmer	53	1924-32	Insurance Office Internal Auditor in 1939
AG Daer	100	1925-35	Joint owner of Red Lion pub, Romford
LG Crawley	56	1926-36	Schoolmaster / journalist
C Bray	95	1927-37	Journalist. Occasionally captained side in absence of Morris
DR Wilcox	118	1928-47	Schoolmaster. Captain 1933-9
TN Pearce	232	1929-50	Wine merchant. Cricket encouraged by employer, former Essex player TG Grinter. Captain 1933-50
K Farnes	79	1930-39	Schoolmaster
FS Unwin	52	1932-50	Own means - family firm. Joint captain, 1939
JWA Stephenson	61	1934-9	Army officer. Joint captain, 1939
TE Bailey	482	1946-67	Undergraduate + schoolmaster 1945-8. Asst sec + Secr 1949-66. Captain 1961-6. Testimonial 1968
DJ Insole	345	1947-63	Business - cricket encouraged by Wimpey and other building firms. Captain 1950-60
JA Bailey	71	1953-8	Schoolmaster / journalist

All of the amateurs who played regularly for Essex had clearly identifiable sources of income – either private means or paid employment. Owen was the only exception. He was a Cambridge graduate, so it was inconceivable that he could have gone on to play cricket as a professional. He left Trent College in 1895, the year he became captain of Essex, and after that he had no obvious means of support. In 1901 he was living with his father at the Bradwell rectory, and simply described himself as ‘Captain Essex Cricket Club’. When he retired a special subscription was opened and the amateur was presented with a scroll, a sporting gun, a gold watch and chain, and a cheque for 200 guineas – considerably more than the two professionals who had had benefits in the previous two years. The only other Essex amateurs to receive testimonials were OR Borradaile, Charles McGahey and Trevor Bailey, who were all Secretary and/or Assistant Secretary to the club. All this raises the question of what exactly he lived on.

Essex were seldom a wealthy club and it has always been thought that they could not have made under-the-counter payments to amateurs even if they had wanted to. Yet at the 1891 AGM CE Green was extremely tetchy when answering a member’s question

about amateurs' expenses. In the following decade the largest single expenditure on the club's balance sheet was shown as 'cricket expenses' without any further breakdown. In 1892-5 this figure hovered around the £1000 mark and from 1896-8 around £1500. From 1899-1902 it exceeded £2500 but then in 1903, after Owen's retirement, fell back below £2000. Essex's Silver Age in the late 1890s meant that for a few years their income exceeded expenditure. Undoubtedly their enlarged fixture list meant more expenses but there is no obvious reason why they should have increased so sharply in the last four years of Owen's captaincy, and then dropped again. Could it be that the club rewarded the earlier success of Owen, and perhaps one or two of the other amateurs, with something more tangible than plaudits at the AGM? Or perhaps he claimed more in legitimate expenses than his two immediate successors, who were both able to live comfortably off private means, and Green made up out of his own pocket the difference from Owen's Trent College salary. On the 1911 census he described himself as 'MA Private Means', living with his wife of two years, brother-in-law (also of private means) and two servants at Landwick, a ten-room house on the Dengie peninsula. When he died eighteen months later, he left £661 – not a fortune, but not indicating that he had fallen into gentile poverty.

Whether or not Essex financed Owen's cricket, there can be no doubt that his influence on the club was lasting and beneficial. When Bunny Lucas made his Essex debut in 1889, he and Owen shared an opening partnership of 185 against MCC & Ground, 'fairly collaring' the bowling of WG Grace and others. Owen became good friends with Lucas who, though a less boisterous character than CE Green, was not without a quiet sense of humour. Against Lancashire in 1898, Essex had gone in with only three front-line bowlers, and Owen had already tried three part-timers in an attempt to break a big partnership between Tyldesley and Sugg. 'I say, Bunny,' Owen asked, 'what shall we do?' 'Put on your worst bowler,' Lucas suggested. 'Right, you're on next over,' came the reply¹⁹⁶. Immediately Sugg was caught off a full toss and Lancashire collapsed from 206 for 2 to 254 all out, Essex going on to win the match. Although Lucas had bowled a lot in his youth it was the only first-class wicket he took for Essex, yet it was a vital one and afterwards he often asked Owen: 'How can you expect to get sides out when you don't put your best bowlers on?'¹⁹⁷ Hugh Owen took Essex closer to the championship than any captain before Keith Fletcher in 1979, and such banter helped to bring that sense of fun which characterised the best of Essex cricket in the twentieth century.

The committee in 1901

In a most interesting essay Daryl Adair discussed the make-up of county committees and the motivation of the committeemen¹⁹⁸. They were elected annually by the club members and often seem to have been in it as much for the social cachet as to see their team win. Adair bemoans the paucity of information about these men, but since he wrote his essay the publication of the 1901 census has made it easier to find out more about the Essex committeemen at this crucial period in the county's history. When from 1900 onwards the team's form slumped, the committee could aim no higher than

¹⁹⁶ Story told by Borradaile in his Chats on the Cricket Field interview with Bettesworth, 1910.

¹⁹⁷ SALE, p44.

¹⁹⁸ Psychic income and the administration of English county cricket 1870-1914 - essay for the Flinders University of South Australia. I found it on the internet and his bibliography was impeccable, but as so often happens with historians he did not date his own work.

‘playing the game in an accepted manner and surviving to enjoy the status of being a first-class club’.

The 1901 census and other sources show what kind of man served on the Essex committee. The current and former captains, Charlie Green, Hugh Owen and Bunny Lucas were the only ones who had played first-class cricket. The former Hon. Secretary and Treasurer, JJ Read, is discussed in chapter 9.

Charles Ralph Higgins, 60, took over as Hon. Treasurer on the death of CM Tebbut. In 1881 he had been commercial clerk to a tobacco broker, living at Mile End Old Town. By 1901 he was himself a tobacco broker, living at Mossborough House, Lemna Road, Leytonstone, a mile or so from the County Ground. He remained in office until 1925 when he resigned because of his age - he was by then 84 years old. In 1911 he was living in Ilford with son George Frederick, also a tobacco broker, and daughter Emily Beatrice; sadly, all three had been widowed.

Four were Essex gentry of the sort that had founded the club. WS Chisenhale Marsh of Gaynes Park, Theydon Garnon, was a product of Eton and Cambridge; he was a county councillor, Chairman of Epping Rural District Council, a Deputy Lieutenant of the County and a magistrate. Gerald Buxton of Birch Hall Theydon Bois, 38, was a member of the brewing family that had been influential in west Essex for over half a century. Charles Ridley of The Elms Chelmsford, 54, came from a similar family, describing himself as a miller and brewer. Arthur Edwards of Beech Hall Park Waltham Abbey, 47, was High Sheriff of Essex in 1894; he had been a barrister but was ‘living on own means’.

Robert Cook, 43, also was ‘living on own means’, although not quite in the same class. On the 1881 census he had been described as ‘farmer’s son’, his father William being a ‘Cattle Dealer Farmer Of 100 Acres Employing 6 Men 1 Boy’. In 1891 he was a bookkeeper living with his father, and they just had one housekeeper.

The strong links with Forest School that were to be so important in Essex’s history were already evident on the committee. The Reverend Ralph Courtenay Guy, 34, was born at the school, where his father was an energetic and successful headmaster from 1857 to 1886. Ralph’s brother ran the school for eight years and Ralph took over in 1894, staying in post until 1935. In 1906 he helped Home Gordon write the *Victoria County History* account of cricket in Essex. Ralph was a fine schoolboy cricketer and footballer, but a severe knee injury and his professional responsibilities meant that he could not pursue his sporting career as he might have wished. Frederick Pelly, 31, had in the 1880s played in the School football team captained by Guy, and in 1891 he appeared for England against Scotland. Pelly was the son of a Royal Navy captain, which is unlikely to have hindered a successful career in a firm of coal merchants that supplied the Navy and other major organisations. He was a local councillor and great benefactor in Buckhurst Hill where he founded the village fete and sports day, which was held at his home, Fernbank¹⁹⁹.

Five committee members were professional men or small businessmen. George Hunsdon Gadsdon of Ilford, 61, was a retired coach and saddle ironmonger. Roland Bevan of Mistley near Colchester, 52, was a retired banker. FW Holton of Canning Town, 43, was a surgeon. William Comerford of Forest Gate, 51, was a vet and a Guardian of the Poor for the West Ham Union.

¹⁹⁹ Obituary, LSE&I, 26 Oct 1940.

Dr Gustav Pagenstecher, 70, understandably known sometimes as ‘Pargy’, was born in Prussia, the son of a West Indian woman²⁰⁰. In 1867, when qualification rules were less strict, he played for Gentlemen of Norfolk against Gentlemen of Essex, and then in the reverse fixture six weeks later changed sides. He was on the Essex committee from 1890 to 1901 at least. In 1891 he was the Secretary of the West Ham Hospital, so in the previous summer when Essex were briefly between paid secretaries he was well equipped to act as Hon. Secretary. He was well known in West Ham, where he was living by 1871, and became a naturalised British citizen during the 1870s. He played an important part in ensuring that in 1874 West Ham Park was the first public open space to be purchased by the City of London. He edited and revised the standard *History of East and West Ham*, which was originally written by Katharine Fry, daughter of prison reformer Elizabeth. In 1914 he was in his mid-eighties, a naturalised British citizen and a well-respected public figure in West Ham. He was nevertheless among some 35,000 people of German origin forced by the government to register as enemy aliens under the Alien Restrictions Act of August 1914. When he died in 1916, said on his death certificate to be 88 years old, he was still required to report his movements to the police. His treatment is said to have broken his heart.

Charles Jesse Kortright (1871-1952)

For twenty years Bunny Lucas was a churchwarden at St. Mary’s church in his adopted village of Fryerning, and when he died he was buried in the pretty churchyard there. Exactly a cricket-pitch’s length away lies another great Essex amateur, Charles Jesse Kortright, known as Korty. He was the fastest bowler of his generation, and perhaps of all time. He was the subject of two fine biographies, by Charles Sale and Anthony Meredith, and I have drawn on both of them²⁰¹.

Charles was born into Fryerning’s leading family, which owned most of the village. His great-grandfather Cornelius, who was of Danish descent, bought the Hylands Estate and much of the surrounding area from the family that had owned it since the Norman Conquest, the Montfichets. Cornelius’s son William married the immensely wealthy Dutchwoman Sarah Coesvelt and further augmented the family’s already considerable fortune. Ornate memorials in Fryerning church commemorate some of Korty’s Coesvelt ancestors.

William’s son Augustus, Korty’s father, married Mary Jephson, whose family could trace their lineage back to Charlemagne, Alfred the Great and the Empress Matilda, daughter of Henry I. Since Matilda was also a forebear of the Montfichets, Charles was distantly related to the family from whom his great-grandfather had bought his estate. Korty’s distant cousin Digby Jephson, like him, was born in 1871 and captained his native county at cricket. Meredith’s biography, *the Demon and the Lobster*, compares and contrasts their lives.

The Jephsons were related by marriage to the Mounteney family, which gave its name to the Essex village of Mountnessing. It also gave a forename to three generations of

²⁰⁰ This section based on <http://www.e7-nowandthen.org/2017/04/the-most-interesting-personality-in.html> and www.newham.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/52364E5A-4560-4650-86AD-DA699BF7224E/0/NewhamStory.pdf

Unfortunately it isn’t easy to search him on the internet because there was, amazingly, another and better known Dr Gustav Pagenstecher (1855-1942), who is credited with a phrase that was translated into English as extra-sensory perception.

²⁰¹ See bibliography.

Kortright boys who, like many of their class, died in war. Charles's brother died in the South African War and is commemorated by two memorials in Fryerning church, a few yards from the plaque to Lucas. One nephew fell in the First World War and another in the Second. The Kortrights were also distantly related through the Jephsons to Sir Roger Casement who was hanged for running arms to Ireland during the First World War, although it was not a connection they were anxious to emphasise. Thus Kory was by birth firmly rooted in the ranks of the English gentry.

Kory's older brother William inherited the estate and its management, so Charles was able to enjoy the privileges of his inheritance without its responsibilities. He exemplifies the popular image of cricket's golden age and thus is wholly untypical, because the image is false.

Six feet tall, lean and athletic, Kory learnt the skills that he would need as a fast bowler as a boy on the family estate. He and his brothers attended Brentwood School but when diphtheria broke out his parents moved him to Tonbridge, where he first made his reputation at cricket. His housemaster was Arthur Lucas, a keen cricketer and cousin of Bunny, who thrilled the young man with tales of his Australian tour in 1878-9. The rectory into which Lucas moved around 1903 belonged not to the Kortrights but to the lords of the manor, the Warden and Fellows of Wadham College Oxford²⁰². Charles and his family therefore cannot, as Meredith implies, have found Bunny his home in Fryerning, though they may have pulled a few strings. Lucas was at first Kory's hero, then his team-mate, friend and neighbour, so it was appropriate that they should be buried together at Fryerning.

When he was aged only seventeen, the Essex committee invited Kory to appear at Leyton for Eleven of Public Schools v Parsees, and after that followed his progress with interest. His formidable bowling in the early 1890s played an important part in their achieving first-class status. In 1892 at Leyton Hampshire lost their last seven wickets without scoring a run; Kory bowled six of them and not surprisingly was cheered heartily when he returned to the pavilion. He went on to head the Essex averages with 53 wickets at 10 apiece. In 1893 he bowled all ten of his victims in the match against Derbyshire, and against Surrey took 8 for 29, bowling unchanged throughout the match with Walter Mead. He took 78 wickets in 13 matches, 60 bowled and 18 caught.

Kory boasted that he 'never had to do a day's work in his life' although, as AA Thomson commented, 'If being the fastest bowler in history isn't hard work I don't know what is'. His claim may be confirmed by the 1891 census, where he is shown as boarding with a brewer's clerk in Tonbridge, but without an occupation. Charles's father had arranged for him to work at the Mackeson family brewery in Hythe in which he had a stake, but Kory probably made more appearances in their pubs and at the local cricket ground, which was owned by the Mackesons. His name was therefore linked with Kent and the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* reported that '...poor old Essex is to lose the trundling services of Kortright who, it is rumoured, is qualifying for the hop County the next season'²⁰³. Perhaps dissuaded by his hero and friend Bunny Lucas, he stayed with the county of his birth. After the hot summer of 1893, which provided ideal conditions for him, Lillywhite commented on 'the marked advance of Mr CJ Kortright, who judging by his success in the most important matches was not far removed from the best bowler in the year'. In the following year they attributed Essex's

²⁰² Essex annual reports give his address as Chelmsford in 1902 and Fryerning in 1903.

²⁰³ Kortright's pace was not we would think of as trundling, but in the nineteenth century it was just a synonym for any kind of bowling.

disappointing performance to ‘the comparative failure of Mr Kortright’s bowling’ on wickets that ‘mostly were hardly in his favour’. It was in 1894 that he sold and invested his shares in the brewery and settled down to the privileged life of a country gentleman. In 1901 he was living ‘on own means’ and staying in Wallingford with Alfred C Arding, a well-off banker and brewer.

Typically florid Victorian sporting journalism called Korty ‘the human catapult’, ‘the flash of lightning’, ‘the Demon’ and – rather wittily referring to the number of his victims that were clean bowled – ‘the furniture remover’. No fewer than 280 of his 440 victims for Essex were bowled. His sheer speed gave rise to several unique or rare incidents, which he later described with relish:

Playing in a club match at Wallingford on a very small ground with a pitch best described as sporty, I bowled a ball which rose almost straight and went out of the ground without a second bounce. I suggest that this made me the first man to bowl a six in byes. The ball was pitched right up to the batsman and on the wicket, so it was undoubtedly within the striker’s reach. There was no question of wides being awarded.

The Wallingford wicket-keeper, like many club players, found Korty’s lightning flashes difficult to cope with: he took seven wickets and High Wycombe were bowled out for 64, but 20 extras were given away and Wallingford lost by just three runs.

The first time I hit the stumps in county cricket was with a ball in [the] Essex v Surrey match at The Oval in 1892. I bowled Billy Brockwell with a fast one which hit the base of the stumps and brought the bails forward, one breaking as it flew back over my head. Another of my Yorkers which remains in my memory rebounded from the base of the stumps and went back almost to the boundary.

His Essex colleague Charles McGahey thought that he had never bowled better or faster than against Surrey in 1895, when he bowled six of the top eight batsmen in 15 balls. EHD Sewell described a match in 1896, when Essex dismissed a strong MCC team for 41 (six of them bowled by Korty) and won by an innings:

Tom Russell was standing back the usual ten or a dozen paces when Korty caused Tom to duck to avoid the twirling stump which passed over his head and, pitching on its point, stuck in the ground.

Essex’s previous game, as recalled by the Australian Clem Hill, must have been quite a feast of fast bowling. His team-mate Ernie Jones

strongly impressed the great umpire Bob Thoms, by pitching a ball on the off stump, and sending the leg bail the best part of 100 feet. ‘Bring along a whole trainload of the best batsmen in this world, and this chap will bowl them all out with a ball like that.’ Thoms remarked impulsively...

[Kortright] took a 22 yards run and for three overs was easily the fastest bowler I have played against. He bounced here, there, and everywhere. One ball just tilted George Giffen’s bat on one side. George played the next almost from the square-leg umpire, and I think it was the only time in his long, honourable, and brilliant career that he was glad to get out.

Some English professionals also were terrified of Korty’s pace. Chided for backing away from him during the 1898 Gentlemen v Players match, the England and Surrey opener Bobby Abel retorted: ‘I am the father of 13 children and there are plenty of other bowlers I can make runs off besides Mr Kortright’. As Essex captain, the amiable Hugh Owen sometimes had to decide whether to risk Korty’s wrath by taking him off or injury to the batsman by keeping him on.

Curiously, Korty was never selected for England, nor invited to tour Australia where the hard wickets would surely have suited him. He did however make a great impact in three Gentlemen v Players matches, which in his day were regarded as being of equal if not greater significance. At Lord's in 1893 his express 40-minute spell on the first evening established his reputation, and he finished with 7 for 73. But for some bizarre captaincy by WG Grace and rain on the last day, the Gentlemen would probably have won.

Against Yorkshire at Leyton in 1897, Kortright took eight wickets and held three sharp slip catches off Bull. Then needing only 132 to win, Essex had collapsed to 74 for 6 when Kortright came in and hit 33 not out. Essex won by three wickets and 'the crowd roared with delight, hats were thrown in the air and a vast crowd surged forward in front of the pavilion. There were repeated cries for Mr Kortright and, after a time, the hero of the match presented himself for a moment or two in front of the pavilion and acknowledged the enthusiastic cheers by raising his cap.' In the return match at Huddersfield, Kortright took a further nine wickets but provoked the anger of the Yorkshire crowd when a short-pitched ball hit Robert Moorhouse, although most neutral observers considered it to be fair bowling on a fiery wicket. Again a large crowd gathered at Leyton, and rejoiced when CE Green announced that Essex had won by just one run.

* * * * *

In July 1898 Kortright and Grace were involved in two magnificent, if sometimes controversial, cricket matches. First they were opponents for Essex and Gloucestershire, then team-mates for the Gentlemen. Charles Sale's account ('Grace but no favours') is a splendid piece of cricket writing well worth reading in full. I have therefore not even attempted to summarise it, but rather selected and commented on a few incidents that will give a flavour of the whole.

Gloucestershire were one of the original nine counties and had not deigned to play the east London upstarts, but in the previous two years Essex had finished ahead of them in the Championship. They could postpone the confrontation no longer and a crowd of 7,000 was eager to see the match. Ill feeling between the two sides began on the first morning, when Grace successfully claimed to have caught Percy Perrin when he clearly took it on the half-volley; even Grace's team-mate Gilbert ('Croucher') Jessop, another great cricketer of the Golden Age, was convinced that it was not out.

On the second morning that most gentlemanly and principled of cricketers, Bunny Lucas, was given out caught from a ball that brushed his shirt, and as he returned to the pavilion cried out to the angry crowd: 'Cheats never prosper'. Near the end of the day Grace bullied umpire George Burton into reversing a decision to give him out caught and bowled by Walter Mead. The whole Essex team was furious, none more so than Kortright. He demanded the ball and produced an over of short-pitched bowling that was uniquely fierce even by his standards, leaving the Doctor black and blue. Some in the crowd laughed when the ball hit Grace in the chest but 'a cry of Order! Order! from all soon silenced all that'²⁰⁴. One ball produced a very sharp chance which Charlie McGahey missed, and as they walked off the field the ever combative Korty expressed

²⁰⁴ RAE, p448.

his displeasure. Overhearing the exchange, Grace did little to calm the atmosphere: 'Cheats never prosper', he commented.

On the last day they returned to the fray. Kortright was convinced that he had dismissed Grace, first lbw then caught at the wicket, but again the great man intimidated Burton into turning down the appeals. The by now even more angry bowler's third ball sent the middle stump flying out of the ground and knocked back the leg stump. 'Surely you're not going, Doc,' smiled Kortright, 'there's still one stump standing'²⁰⁵. It was a brave remark from a young man who was born in 1871, the year that saw some of Grace's greatest triumphs, and the Champion declared that he had never been so insulted in his life.

Jessop was still batting and wrote later: 'The sense of ill feeling brooding over the game made the idea of losing the match after all that had gone on before supremely distasteful'. More intense cricket included Korty breaking the Gloucestershire no. 10's toe with a ball that also had him lbw. Finally, Jessop drove Kortright for four to see his side home by one wicket. After the game, Essex's captain, the normally amiable Hugh Owen, commented publicly: 'We can take a beating in good spirit, when we are fairly beaten, but we have not been fairly beaten in this match.' Had Essex won the game, they rather than Gloucestershire would have finished third in the championship.

[This is interesting but peripheral so I could cut it.] The downside of Grace's great qualities as a competitor was that he was not averse to using such dubious methods. In the 1874 Gentlemen v Players match he obstructed the bowler's attempt to take a return catch from his brother Fred but was not penalised. The Gentlemen won by 60 runs and Wisden reported: 'Nearly every appeal by a gentleman was decided affirmatively, and the players' appeals were mainly met with NOT OUT!' Teresa McLean comments: 'In this case it is hard to know whether it was the social superiority of amateur status or the cricketing superiority of WG that had most intimidated the umpires.'²⁰⁶ It was probably both. The Australian captain Joe Darling recalled a game in which Bob Thoms, England's best and most experienced umpire, turned down a run-out appeal against him and Grace told Thoms it was a bad decision. Darling added: 'As Thoms was about the only umpire in England who was not afraid of Grace or anyone else, he told Grace to mind his own business as he (Thoms) was the umpire.'²⁰⁷

Umpires were mainly ex-professional cricketers who did not always find it easy to despatch men whom they had to address as Sir, particularly if they were team captains, for the elements of the old deferential master-servant relationship survived. Captains were in effect their employers, who had to report on their competence so that if they were not up to the mark they could be struck off the list. Unlike football referees, they did not have to enforce on-field discipline which was left in the hands of the amateur captains.

In the 1870s George Burton played club cricket in the north London area, but did not become a professional cricketer until 1881 when he made his first-class debut for Middlesex at the age of 30²⁰⁸. Described on the census of that year as a blacksmith and in his Wisden obituary as a coachsmith, he usually worked for several hours at his trade before appearing on the cricket field. Over the next ten years, he played regularly for Middlesex and occasionally for MCC, and he was on the Lord's ground staff from 1883

²⁰⁵ LEMMON, p104.

²⁰⁶ In her excellent book *Men in white coats*. Stanley Paul, 1987, p97.

²⁰⁷ *Willow wand*, p41-2.

²⁰⁸ Don Ambrose and CricketArchive, 2003.

to 1904. A slow round-arm bowler, he took a total of 608 wickets at 17.18. His best performances came in successive Middlesex matches in 1888, when he took all ten wickets in the first innings against Surrey and then sixteen in the match against Yorkshire. By 1891 he was 40 years old and he played only five more first-class matches. He was for many years the Middlesex scorer and until his death in 1930 was the Hon. Sec. of the Cricketers' Friendly Society.

Burton was an experienced cricketer, but he was not an experienced first-class umpire. He first stood for the Lancashire v Middlesex match in 1882, when counties still provided umpires for their own matches. It was a system that gave rise to charges of bias and from 1883 onwards counties nominated two umpires to Lord's, although there was no certainty that they would be accepted on to the list or allocated to games. Middlesex nominated Burton in 1898 and 1899. At the time of the Gloucestershire match he had stood in just four first-class matches and only ever added another six to his tally. He would have been lacking in confidence and quite unable to resist the bullying of the Champion.

Few matches can have done more to dispel the myth of the Golden Age amateur playing for the game and not the result, yet less than two weeks later Grace and Kortright shared a scene that no film-maker seeking to illustrate the myth would have dared to script. MCC had arranged for the opening day of the Gentlemen v Players match to coincide with celebrations of Grace's 50th birthday, but Korty was still so furious about the events at Leyton that initially he declined the invitation to play. Appropriately, the peacemaker was Bunny Lucas, who demonstrated his Christian faith in action by persuading his young friend to turn out. Nevertheless the feud continued on the field and at first the Champion and the Demon refused to speak to one another, even when Grace threw the ball to Kortright to bowl the first over. Korty's bowling was fast and furious in every sense of the phrase and eventually Grace made the first move, asking Korty whether he was fit to continue bowling in the exceptionally hot weather, and normal relations were resumed.

Set 296 to win on the final afternoon, the Gentlemen had collapsed to 80 for 9 when at 5.40 Korty joined Grace who encouraged him to play his usual game. They batted through to the official close at 6.30 but it had been agreed to play until 7.00 if there was the chance of a result. Korty had batted very responsibly and top-scored with 46, but when going for the four that would have given him his 50 was caught off Lockwood's cleverly disguised slower ball, the third of the last over. The Gentlemen had lost, but he and Grace linked arms to leave the ground to the cheers of the crowd, who would not disperse until their amateur heroes had appeared on the balcony to acknowledge the applause.

* * * * *

Those great matches marked the end of an era. In 1899 Grace played his last test match and his last game for Gloucestershire. Kortright strained his leg in an accident at home and missed the whole of that season. He returned in 1900 and took 65 wickets, but was not quite the force that he had been. He was handicapped not only by his injury but also by three new developments in the game at large. First, use of marl by groundsmen had begun to quieten down the previously fiery pitches, not least at Leyton which by 1902 had developed a reputation as a bowler's graveyard. Secondly, the number of balls in an over was increased from five to six and Korty claimed that for him 'the extra ball was always a bad one'.

The third development affecting Kortright was a controversy over bowling actions. It had long been enshrined in the laws of cricket that bowlers should deliver the ball with a straight arm, and in the 1880s there had been great concern that some bowlers were getting an unfair advantage by bending their arms and thus throwing it²⁰⁹. One such was Lancashire's professional fast bowler John Crossland whose employers supported their man in face of opposition from the other counties, some of whom refused to play Lancashire while he was in the team. An angry Lord Harris demanded of Robert Thoms: 'When are you umpires going to do something about this?' 'My Lord, we are going to do nothing,' Thoms replied. "It is you gentlemen who have got to do it." It was a shrewd reply that recognised the realities of power in the game, and the gentlemen did nothing: when in 1885 Crossland was eventually banned, it was not for his bowling action but because he failed to keep up his residential qualification.

In the same year Essex gave a debut to Francis Augustus Bishop, a young amateur fast bowler. His seven wickets in the second innings of the match at Derby were crucial in Essex's first win against a first-class county. He made his name in north London club cricket but having been born at Wanstead had a birth qualification for Essex. His widowed mother was listed on the 1881 census as of independent means, although he and two of his brothers worked at a trade slightly out of keeping with the image of the demon fast bowler, that of piano tuner. In 1886, 1887 and 1888 he was Essex's leading wicket-taker with a total of 224 wickets, and Lillywhite described him as 'quite the top of the list of Gentleman fast bowlers'. Yet his slinging action was dubious and controversial. In 1889 his selection for the Gentlemen against the Players caused a furore, and in 1890 the generally loyal *Leytonstone Express & Independent* regretted that 'Mr Bishop's style of delivering the ball shewed no improvement on his method in former years'. He did not play after 1891, which may have been because of the doubts over his action or because he had put too much strain on his body or because he took only twelve wickets and Kortright, who bowled even faster, established himself in the side.

The throwing controversy rumbled on until 1898 when the Australian umpire Jim Phillips came to England. By contrast with English umpires like George Burton, who as former professionals lacked the confidence to confront their employers, Phillips was no respecter of persons. He was equally willing to no-ball the Sussex amateur CB Fry and the Lancashire professional Arthur Mold, both of whose bowling actions had often been questioned. Phillips later, aged 45, took a degree in metallurgy, so perhaps he was not only less deferential but also a more rounded individual than most English umpires.

Kortright became embroiled with the affair, first as a self-appointed policeman and then as a potential culprit. At Old Trafford in Essex's 1897 game against Lancashire, as a protest against Mold, he 'perpetrated a bare-faced throw – to prove the umpire would take no notice of it'. Birley asserts that Korty, like Fry, 'thought umpires were for professionals' but I found no firm evidence to support this suggestion, although it may be significant that he did not throw in the match against Sussex when Fry was in the side. As the controversy reached its height, he too came under suspicion and in *Cricket* magazine one of the satirist Norman Gale's *Cricket Songs* was a parody of Shakespeare's *Who is Sylvia?*

Who is Kortright, what is he
That Lang doth so commend him?
Bowling fierce and fast is he,

²⁰⁹ This paragraph based on BIRLEY, p140-1, 175-7.

The heavens such pace did lend him,
That he admired be.
Fast is he but is he fair
For throwing is unkindness?
Those to label who dare
Do only prove their blindness
And being kicked retract it there.

After a careful analysis of the rather sparse evidence Sale concludes ‘there is no actual evidence that Kortright threw’, a conclusion supported by his never being called, even though he bowled in three matches which Phillips umpired. Meredith, however, points out that, though Kortright’s injury was undoubtedly genuine, he was in no hurry to return to action. He played for pleasure and considered himself to be the fairest of bowlers, so may have welcomed the excuse to avoid unwelcome controversy. Perhaps also he became disillusioned with the game in general and the Essex hierarchy in particular. He may have perceived the captaincy of Hugh Owen as too lethargic, so fancied a crack at the job himself.

Possibly encouraged by his friends Bunny Lucas and Frederick Fane, Kortright returned to the side in 1900. At first there was no sign that he had missed a season. EHD Sewell recalled that on his first day’s pre-season practice with Essex ‘Korty himself came galloping up to the crease’ and the first ball ‘hit the back net before I’d got halfway through any sort of stroke... By then the biggest noise of all, CE Green, had taken up his perch behind the net. What he didn’t know about standing up to fast stuff wasn’t worth knowing.’²¹⁰ Evidently the memory of Green’s exploits at Lord’s thirty years earlier had not faded.

Kortright’s first game happened to be against his old friends from Gloucestershire, and he must have taken great pleasure in getting ten wickets as Essex won by a massive 261 runs. By the end of June he had taken 48 wickets in ten matches, including a career-best 8 for 57 (five bowled) against Yorkshire. Meanwhile news was coming through from South Africa that Korty’s younger brother Mounteney had been seriously wounded in the fighting. Mounteney died on 21 June 1900, and Meredith suggests that Charles never bowled as fast again. After missing one game he returned for the second half of the season but took only 17 wickets in his remaining ten games, although against Middlesex in the last match he hit a career-best 131 in two hours.

In the very first innings of the 1901 season Korty took six Sussex wickets - all bowled, which indicates that he was bowling pretty fast. In the next ten games he took 19 wickets – disappointing by his standards, but he usually opened the bowling and eight of them were bowled, which suggests that he was still generating a fair amount of pace. But that was his last hurrah as a fast bowler. Essex did not play in the first two weeks of July, and in the second half of the season Korty bowled only 32 overs and failed to take a single wicket. CE Green and Hugh Owen strongly supported MCC’s stand against throwing, so perhaps during that fortnight they told Korty his action was unacceptable and he resorted to bowling innocuous medium-pace.

At the start of the 1902 season rumours about Kortright abounded. CE Green told members that he was going to bowl very fast. But Sir Home Gordon reported that he was practising ‘slow cock-a-doodle leg-breaks’. In the event he did neither. He took just two wickets in 45 overs but he did enjoy his best season with the bat, scoring 736

²¹⁰ An outdoor wallah, p67.

runs with four half-centuries which included a splendid 66 against the touring Australians.

After Owen's resignation Kortright was, apart from the 46-year-old Lucas, the senior amateur, and in 1903 he was invited to take on the captaincy. He was, by contrast with the lumbering Owen, still a fine athlete and had the authority to demand an improvement in the team's lamentable fielding. At first he had some success in the role. Edward Sewell described him as a tough, uncompromising captain yet a 'joy to play under'. Among the fine young cricketers Korty encouraged were Frank Gillingham and Johnny Douglas, Essex mainstays for the next quarter of a century. His advice was instrumental in Claude Buckenham's advance from promising to outstanding fast-medium bowler. By the end of July Essex had won six games and had the advantage in several rain-ruined draws, and they were challenging for the championship for the first time since 1897. Then Essex lost four consecutive matches and the captain dropped out through 'rheumatism of the arm'. Despite this they moved up from thirteenth place to eighth, but after just one season Kortright 'resigned the captaincy as he was resigning from first class cricket'. His own form with the bat had suffered but he headed the Essex averages with his occasional leg-breaks and his fielding was still superb. He continued to bowl at express pace in club cricket, where no umpire would have had the temerity to no-ball him for throwing, so clearly it was not a question of fitness. It seems therefore that Meredith's suggestion is correct, and Korty was disillusioned with what was in effect a ban on his fast bowling in first-class cricket.

Although Kortright was a clean hitter who often made useful runs in the lower order, a career average of only 17 shows that he was not quite consistent enough to play purely as a batsman. In 1904-6 he played six first-class games, and then in the first half of the 1907 season he appeared nine times for Essex but without great success.

Kortright continued to enjoy the life of a country gentleman. The 1911 census finds him living with his widowed mother and unmarried sister at The Tiles in Fryerning, all three living on 'private means'. He filled his ample leisure time by playing his beloved cricket for a variety of sides. For the Essex Second XI at the remarkable age of 40 he produced his best ever analysis – 8 for 27 against Forfarshire. He particularly appreciated the leisurely social atmosphere of country house cricket, which he played with I Zingari and other travelling teams. He did not mellow with age: playing for Gentleman of Essex against Colchester Garrison, he was affronted by a major who insisted on cocking his front foot towards the bowler; after warning the army man, Korty pitched a yorker straight on his toe and broke it. He turned out for local club sides Brentwood and Ingatestone, and in his sixties enjoyed a splendid Indian summer with Navestock, where he volunteered to help repair the pitch and then paid £80 to have it relaid, as well as earning his place in the team on merit.

In later life Kortright also took up golf and one of his partners was Douglas Jardine, architect of bodyline. Sale speculates whether Jardine might have picked Kortright's brains while planning the campaign, and argues that if he did the older man would not have approved because it would have been contrary to the spirit in which he played the game. That is probably correct, for Korty often advised another great Essex amateur fast bowler, Kenneth Farnes, to pitch the ball up because 'he wasted too much time on pointless short deliveries'. Korty usually took his own advice, believing himself to be scrupulously fair in following the Golden Age convention that the bowler should pitch the ball up for the batsman to drive. Yet he did occasionally bowl short, particularly

when up against an exceptionally fine batsman or when, as in the Gloucestershire game in 1898, he was angered by the opposition tactics.

Frederick Luther Fane (1875-1960)

On the proposal of AP Lucas, it was unanimously agreed to invite FL Fane to succeed his friend Charles Kortright as captain. Essex cricket was in Fane's blood. His grandfather and father were two of the five men who sat on the original Essex committee in 1876. His father played alongside James Round and 'C Green' (possibly Charlie) for the Gentlemen of Essex in 1862, and turned out for the county in the early Brentwood days. A stylish front-foot batsman, FL Fane was educated at Charterhouse and Oxford and made his Essex debut in 1895. Like Kortright, he was a bachelor of independent means and the two men often went shooting together.

Fane made his Essex debut in 1895 and played almost 300 games for the county. In his first four seasons he played fairly regularly and made some useful but not spectacular contributions. In May 1899 against the Australians he was twice bowled by Hugh Trumble without scoring, and appeared only once in the next two months. Then AJ Turner's military duties called him away to South Africa and Owen dropped himself down the order. Fane was given the opportunity to open the innings, which was always his preference, and made the most of it. Against Leicestershire he had the unusual feat of converting his maiden hundred into a double, which was also Essex's first ever double century. Having waited five years for his first hundred, Fane made his second within a fortnight and went on to head the Essex averages with 61.08.

In 1900 Fane lost form completely but over the next three years consistent scoring gave him an average of around 30, even though he made only two centuries. One of them was against Nottinghamshire at Leyton in 1901, when in the second innings he and Perrin added an unbroken 235 in 2¾ hours and were just 27 short of victory when stumps were drawn. In 1901-2 he was invited on a private tour of the West Indies and in the following winter Lord Hawke led a similar tour of New Zealand, where Fane finished with an average of 52.

Fane hated captaincy and at first declined. In April 1904, only two weeks before the start of the season, the committee asked him to reconsider. It was agreed that CE Green would meet him and once again the chairman's powers of persuasion proved irresistible: Fane took on the post for the next three years. His enthusiasm for the job cannot have been enhanced by the absence in 1904-5 of Essex's best bowler, Walter Mead, because of a dispute over winter wages. Perhaps his finest hour as captain came in Essex's 1905 match against the Australians, when he stationed himself at a somewhat unorthodox longstop position and clung on to a catch that gave his team a famous victory by 19 runs. With the return of Mead Essex rose from twelfth to seventh place, so Fane perhaps felt he had done his bit and resigned. He toured Australia in 1907-8 and South Africa in 1909-10. Ironically, the first-choice captains on both trips were indisposed for part of the time and so Fane had to captain England in five Tests.

After giving up the Essex captaincy, Fane appeared regularly for the county until 1914. Commissioned in the Leeds Rifles, he was awarded the Military Cross in 1917 for 'conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty'. After the First World War he played ten more first-class games, including eight for Essex. Altogether he played 292 matches for Essex and scored 12599 runs at 26.13.

Fane lived for many years at the family home, Priors, Kelvedon Hatch. Apparently a confirmed bachelor, he married Edna M Meads at the age of 63 and fathered two

daughters, the younger born when he was 77. Like Mark Twain, he was able to declare that reports of his death were greatly exaggerated, for in 1956 Wisden published his obituary, mistaking him for his cousin Francis L Fane. Courteously pointing out the error, Fane informed Wisden that, by a strange coincidence, his father had also read his own obituary.

Chapter 6: ‘Cheerful Charlie’ – Charles Percy McGahey (1871-1935)²¹¹

Fane’s successor was one of the most remarkable and endearing characters in Essex’s history, whose career illustrated many of the themes of this piece. Though born and brought up in predominantly working-class Bethnal Green, Charles McGahey was the son of a railway clerk and grandson of a solicitor, both sought-after middle-class jobs. The family later moved to the then more respectable suburb of Hackney and Charlie was probably educated at one of the many private schools there. By 1891 they were living at Forest Gate. On the census he and his brother were listed as clerks, and his widowed mother as a laundress. He was constantly in financial difficulties, but always preferred amateur status.

A highly-regarded full-back, McGahey could undoubtedly have played football as a professional. Although, unlike rugby, soccer never split into separate codes, the chasm between amateur and professional organisations widened in the time that Charlie was playing and he therefore changed clubs more than once. He at various times played for Millwall, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur²¹², but left all three when they turned professional. In the last few years of his football career, he played chiefly for Clapton, a strong club that in 1905 helped found the Isthmian League. Cricket was always his first love and he gave up football when he realised that his sometimes delicate health was not robust enough for him to play both sports, but he continued to take an interest in it and in his last years regularly took money on the turnstiles at Leyton FC.

Charlie was elected an Essex member in April 1892, two months after his 21st birthday. In the following month he made his debut for Leyton Cricket Club and immediately ‘showed batting ability far above the average’²¹³. CE Green, who believed passionately that there should always be a clear difference between amateurs and professionals, spotted him and declared that

A man from such a background would never be classed as a professional, and that his polish and joie de vivre would do much to recommend him to the respectability of the amateur classes.

He was tried in the Club & Ground XI in July and made his debut for the First XI in 1893 when he played three games but ‘failed altogether to come off and so was dropped for the rest of the season’²¹⁴. In 1894 he missed only two matches and hit his maiden century in the second innings against Hampshire, who nevertheless won by just nine runs. In 1895 he was ever-present and his top score was 147 of Essex’s huge 692 against Somerset, but his most significant contribution was in the second innings at Harrogate, when a gritty unbeaten 55 on a difficult wicket helped Essex beat Yorkshire by 16 runs.

²¹¹ This chapter is based chiefly on another excellent biography. KEMP, Jan. Cheerful Charlie: a biography of C.P.McGahey. Great Wakering, Jan Kemp, 1989.

²¹² One of the few to play for both Arsenal and Spurs, although their rivalry was not quite as great before Arsenal moved to north London in 1913.

²¹³ LSE&I 28 May 1892.

²¹⁴ His own words. Cricket, 25 Jun 1896, p234.

Scores and Biographies described the young McGahey as ‘a rough and ready hitter’, but in 1896 he had his first experience of professional coaching and began to develop a more solid defensive game. He told *Cricket*: ‘C.E. Green sent Abel and Maurice Read to coach us at Leyton. It seemed very funny at first to be told you mustn’t do this and you mustn’t do that.’ Charlie valued the advice but thought that ‘one has to learn by bitter experience that some strokes are bad’. Ironically, his worst stroke of the following season was probably against Abel, better known as a batsman than a bowler, when he jumped out in an attempt to hit the six that he needed for his century and was ignominiously bowled. He nevertheless passed a thousand runs for the first time, and was a key member of the team that came within one win of the championship.

In 1898 came what Charlie’s obituary described as ‘the best exhibition of batting he ever gave’. It was in the match when Hugh Owen’s ‘worst bowler’, Bunny Lucas, brought about a Lancashire collapse. Essex fared even worse, despite Charlie’s 48, and Lancashire eventually set them 336 to win. No side batting last in county cricket had ever scored more than 300 and won. Owen and Carpenter made a solid start and then McGahey and Percy Perrin put on 191 for the third wicket to put their team within sight of victory. McGahey was finally out for 145 with Essex still 23 short, but another telling little contribution from Lucas saw them home by four wickets to what Wisden called ‘an unprecedented achievement’.

Charlie’s ‘Twin’: Percival Albert (‘Peter’) Perrin (1876-1945)

Charlie was not the only young amateur who benefited from the coaching sessions run by Abel and Read. Percy Perrin - who came to be known as Peter because it somehow suited his character better - had already been coached at Margate College by John O’Connor, father of Jack who played with Perrin for Essex in the 1920s. He scored heavily for Tottenham CC and was recommended to CE Green who sent him to join in with the coaching, which ‘helped him on’. He told *Cricket*: ‘But for the good sportsmanship shown by Mr Green and Mr Tebbut I am sure Essex would not have done half so well in the County Championship.’ Perrin had a great affection for Green despite the older man’s irascible temperament. He recalled that on one occasion he was staying with Green and the box of worms he had taken along for his fishing somehow found its way on to the dinner table²¹⁵. Charlie McGahey had health problems and benefited from the generosity of CE Green in sending him to Australia to recuperate, but Perrin’s biographer, David Jeater, has found no evidence to support Lemmon’s statement that Perrin travelled for similar reasons on a P & O ship and had his cheque returned by Green.

Perrin was born at Stoke Newington in Middlesex, and despite extensive research David Jeater has not been able to unearth any Essex address for him. This strengthens suspicions that the residential qualification rules were sometimes enforced less strictly for amateurs than for professionals. On 14 September 1889, though, Percy’s brother Frederick Perrin applied for a licence for the Queen’s Hotel and Tavern, Green St, Upton Park, so it may be that he just about squeaked in through the family’s ownership of pubs in the county. Perrin went straight into the team for the first match of the 1896 season, against a Surrey side that included Bobby Abel. He showed that he had derived immediate benefit from the coaching, making a cautious but confident 52 against a powerful attack. Two months later he made the first of his 65 centuries for Essex and was selected for the Gentlemen against the Players. The *Leytonstone Express &*

²¹⁵ GORDON, Sir Home. *Background to cricket*. Barker, 1939, p139.

Independent considered him ‘without doubt the best recruit Essex have had in the batting department for many years’²¹⁶.

Perrin did not miss an Essex match for four years and in February 1900 the committee voted to make ‘a small presentation to Mr P. Perrin for his scoring six centuries in County Cricket last season’. In order to preserve the proprieties of amateur status, his bonus of ten guineas was ‘in kind not cash, to be decided by the Secretary’. The gift was presented at the AGM and the normally taciturn Perrin managed to give ‘a vote of thanks’. The committee also gave Perrin a wedding present; the amount is not recorded, but Hugh Owen in 1908, Frank Gillingham in 1910 and the Secretary’s daughter in 1945 all had ten guineas, which seems to have been the going rate. Johnny Douglas in 1916 was given a silver cigarette case. Professionals did not get wedding presents until after the Second World War.

Whether Perrin really needed the gifts is doubtful. He inherited a string of pubs from his father Samuel, a licensed victualler who died in 1892 leaving £20,000²¹⁷. In 1901 Percy married Ethel Webb, the daughter of a wine merchant, and she may have brought more money into the family. McGahey was a witness and probably best man. When Percy’s brother Fred died in 1909 he left £70,000, including a £500 annuity for Percy. The Perrins also owned some 250 houses in the area of Spencer Road north of Tottenham Hale, apparently developed by the family from the profits on the pubs. Although Charlie McGahey by contrast was constantly getting into financial scrapes, he complained that the two men travelled to matches together on the tram for 30 years and Perrin never once paid the fare. Whereas McGahey in his declining years had to scrape a living as Essex scorer and apply to the club for handouts, Perrin when he died in 1945 left £189,000 in his will – some £5 million in 2023 values.

McGahey helped and encouraged Perrin when he first came into the side, and he in turn benefited from the coming of the younger man. The two became firm friends and shared in many large partnerships. The Essex scorer Joe Armour dubbed them the Essex Twins, because both were burly men over six feet tall and when they were batting together he found it difficult to distinguish them, so he suggested that one of them should wear a sash round his waist. For some fifteen years Perrin usually batted at no. 3 and McGahey at 4, and they shared many large partnerships. Both were fine players of fast bowling, particularly on the drive. In 1898 both scored over a thousand runs in county matches, the first Essex cricketers to do so.

And yet, as their county colleague EHD Sewell put it: ‘Any two less like twins in character, temperament, looks and method you’d have a long march to find.’²¹⁸ They complemented rather than copied one another. If Charlie was champagne, Percy was dry white wine. McGahey was an extrovert character who was universally loved, whereas Perrin seemed a shy almost morose man, yet those who got to know him well found him charming and thoughtful. McGahey was always elegantly dressed with smart suits and good shoes, whereas Perrin’s friend Home Gordon declared him ‘indifferent to what he wore’. Perrin was the better batsman, but McGahey was the better fielder. Perrin had no pretensions to be a bowler but McGahey’s leg-breaks claimed 306 wickets at an average of 31, although opinions varied as to their quality: his old coach Bobby Abel deemed him ‘one of the deadliest leg-break bowlers in the business’,

²¹⁶ 18 Jul 1896, report of his part in a fine win against Yorkshire.

²¹⁷ 1881 census. Samuel Perrin died in 1892; Percy is listed as a publican and his mother Emma as a retired publican.

²¹⁸ Outdoor wallah, p71.

whereas Sewell thought that his ‘shameless pretence to bowl leg-breaks’ was “downright fraud’.

Both continued the Essex tradition of humour on and off the field, but in ways that typified their different characters. On one occasion Charles Kortright, blinded by the low sun, missed a catch and was felled by the ball; the other players rushed over to see how he was but McGahey turned to the batsman and enquired ‘Cigar or coconut, sir?’ Perrin’s humour was rather more subtle. Charles Bray, who played for Essex between the wars and wrote an excellent history of the club, recalled a beautiful day at Leyton. The whole Essex team except the two batsmen were entertaining their girl-friends in sleek splendour. ‘Look Charles,’ growled Perrin. “If we could only play cricket as well as we court, we’d win the blinking championship hands down.’ Perrin also enjoyed McGahey’s humour. He recalled the 1899 match at Leicester when Charlie called him through for the single that he needed for his hundred but missed and was bowled. ‘Lucky for you I wanted a drink!’ Charlie told the bowler, GHS Fowke, on his way back to the pavilion²¹⁹.

Perrin’s glorious unbeaten 343 out of 597 against Derbyshire in 1904 remains the only triple century made for Essex. Under later playing conditions it would have been even greater, since at least six and maybe as many as 14 of his 68 fours were hit over the boundary but not out of the ground, which was until 1910 the only way of scoring a six²²⁰. It must have contributed to his being chosen in 1905 as one of the Wisden cricketers of the year. Not for the first or last time, an Essex player’s fine performance was not matched by the rest of the team, which contrived to be bowled out in the second innings for 97 and lose by nine wickets. ‘We wanted to show ’em, you see, what we could do in each direction,’ commented Perrin philosophically²²¹. It remains the highest score ever made by an individual batsman in a losing cause²²².

Perrin was not the only batsmen to have been dubbed the finest never to play for England, but few have done more than Perrin to earn the accolade. The explanation for his omission was simple – ‘a remarkable incapacity for fielding’. Joe Powell who watched Essex in the 1920s recalled that ‘Percy Perrin of course was their leading

²¹⁹ Like many cricket anecdotes, this one may have improved slightly in the telling. It sounds authentic, but the scorecard suggests that unless something odd happened Perrin had already been dismissed for 132 and Charlie’s partner was FL Fane, whose 207 was the backbone of Essex’s massive 673.

The bowler, Gustavus Henry Spencer Fowke, was making his debut. He had just left Uppingham where he was captain, a correct and patient opening batsman whose play ‘would have delighted Stephenson’s heart’. (PATTERSON, p189.) His double of dismissing both Essex twins was an auspicious start to his career, but he never took more than two wickets in a first-class innings. He achieved a different and rather unfortunate double by being taken prisoner in the Boer War and the First World War. He played most of his county cricket between 1922 and 1927, when he was Leicestershire captain. (WHO’S WHO, p357.)

²²⁰ Perrin himself told *The Field* that he hit ‘six or so’. The cricket writer Gerald Brodribb and the Essex statistician John E Clay, possibly on the authority of the Essex scorer Joe Armour, asserted that the figure was 14.

²²¹ Quoted, KEMP, p45. That 597 was until 2002 the highest first-innings score made in England by a side that went on to lose. Essex then shed their unwanted record when they conceded 632 to Northamptonshire and went on to win by 4 wickets, but regained it two years later when they lost to Glamorgan by 4 wickets after making 642. Since they also in 1992 beat Sussex after conceding 591, they have involved in the four highest such scores in England (two wins, two losses) and four of the six highest anywhere.

²²² WALMSLEY, Keith IN *Cricket Society news bulletin*, July/Aug 2004, p6. Another Essex player holds the record for the highest score made by an individual in a side that lost by an innings – Paul Prichard’s 224 against Kent at Canterbury in 1997.

amateur as a batsman, the only trouble was when I saw him he'd got very big, very fat, so fielding was a bit of a problem for him.' Though he had a safe pair of hands and held 284 catches, mostly close to the wicket, he was, even when younger, cumbersome in the field. A man possessed of a drily self-deprecating sense of humour, he once claimed to have run to the furthest corner of The Oval to prevent Jack Hobbs scoring a boundary. 'Mind you,' he added, 'they ran eight.'

His career spanned a remarkable 33 years, from the first match of the 1896 season, two weeks before his 20th birthday, to the last of 1928. He played more championship matches as an amateur than any other player. At 49 years 39 days he was by over three years the oldest man to hit a century for Essex, and aged 52 years 127 days the oldest but one to appear for the county.

Perrin was a most perceptive judge of the game and discovered two fine bowlers for Essex. In 1924 Perrin was watching Stan Nichols bat in the nets and commented 'He'll make a better fast bowler than a batsman'. Perrin encouraged him to bowl as fast as possible, and the Essex coaches gradually moulded his rather crude action into something that was always ungainly but highly effective. In his first four matches for Essex Nichols scored four runs in four innings and did not take a wicket, but Perrin kept faith with the younger man and ensured that he played regular Club & Ground cricket. Gradually Nichols cemented his place in the side and in the late 1920s took over from Johnny Douglas as Essex's leading all-rounder²²³. Ken Farnes told how in 1929 as a raw 17-year-old playing for the Gidea Park club against the Essex Club & Ground XI he took a few wickets, but the easy off-driving of the 53-year-old Perrin 'seemed to me to show up the ineffectiveness of my attempts to get him out'. Perrin nevertheless recognised that Farnes had something special. He invited him to play for Essex Young Amateurs and Essex Club & Ground, and in 1930 Farnes made his first eleven debut²²⁴. These two magnificent bowlers led the Essex attack for most of the 1930s, and performed creditably for England and in Gentlemen v Players matches.

Later in his life Perrin was 'recognised as by far the finest judge of the game in England'²²⁵ and, ironically, although he was never selected for his country he helped select others in one of England's more successful periods. He was on the panel in 1926 when England regained the Ashes and then, after a complete clear-out, a selector from 1931 to 1939 and chairman in his last year. He took the responsibility seriously and was the first to travel the country watching potential England players, arguing that being a selector should be a full-time occupation. It was probably in the course of these travels in his much-loved Rolls-Royce that he spotted a young Devon batsman named George Emmett. He recommended him to Essex but 'Gloucestershire beat us to it' and Emmett signed for a county closer to home.

The Three Blackbirds

Almost opposite the ground at Leyton is a pub that has been there for at least 300 years. At the end of the nineteenth century it was run by Bill Golding, chairman of Leyton Cricket Club, Leyton Football Club and a well-known figure in the rapidly growing suburb. Not surprisingly, it became a favourite watering-hole for staff and supporters of the club.

²²³ BRAY, p68.

²²⁴ THURLOW, p32-3.

²²⁵ GORDON, p174

Charlie McGahey recalled that in 1892 he went from Upton Park to Leyton and joined the cricket club. It was probably around that time that Golding invited him to stay at the pub. Charlie helped out behind the bar and with the paperwork, thus augmenting his always precarious finances. Even as a young man he loved talking about cricket and people loved listening to him, so when he held court he brought in many customers and 'Bill Golding must have been grateful to his young friend for the increased trade'. Later Charlie did public relations work for Golding in pubs throughout Essex. He enjoyed 'a "Bass" or two and, wound up in true fashion, would charm and entertain hosts and customers alike. There was no need for a comic in the house when this colourful character was present.'²²⁶

The Three Blackbirds featured in several of the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop interviews. Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson recalled that one of his aunts was a barmaid at the pub, 'commonly just called the Blackbirds'. She knew the players very well through the Blackbirds, and because she looked after their dining room in the Pavilion: 'she would have been a young woman...and probably the young cricketers would have been a bit lively with her'. He thought that she was more likely to have served the professionals than the amateurs, although he did not know the exact eating arrangements.

Joe Powell's father was a policeman who drank with many of the Essex players at the Blackbirds:

My father was very fond of his drink. On the day he was retiring from the police force, he was on duty in the ground, everybody knew that he was retiring so you can imagine what happened. When he got home he was due to go up to the police station to sign off and he couldn't get there. My mother went and signed off for him.

Harold Faragher was too young to patronise the Three Blackbirds when Essex were at Leyton. He thought it was 'rather like the Tavern at Lords – a place for people with cricket connections'. Cricketers used to travel by train a lot, and liked to get off home when they had finished. He 'never got the impression that both teams went over there for a chat'.

Sadly the Blackbirds has not maintained its high reputation. Writing in the *Waltham Forest Guardian*, the only good thing 'Captain Pubwatch' could find to say about another Leyton pub was that 'at least it's not as bad as the Three Blackbirds'.

Frederick George Bull (1875-1910)

A ploy used by some counties was to employ a talented amateur as assistant secretary, often a sinecure that involved relatively few administrative responsibilities. Charlie was appointed to the post in 1901, but he was not Essex's first assistant secretary.

Bull was appointed in 1895, the season in which he made his Essex debut aged only 20. He was born in Hackney, the son of a manufacturer's clerk who died when the boy was only a few weeks old. The family were still living there in 1881 but must have moved soon afterwards, for he was educated at Audley House School in Lee, Lewisham. The headmaster there was Rev CJM Godfrey, the Oxford U and Sussex cricketer, who played with Bull for Greville, a leading club based in Lewisham. One of his teammates was Arthur Sannox Johnston, a corn merchant who lived at Wanstead and was at that time one of Essex's leading amateur batsmen, described by Lillywhite as 'an

²²⁶ KEMP, p86, 91.

exceedingly good bat with strong defence and great hitting powers; a capital field'²²⁷. This may well explain how Bull came to play for Essex, even though Kent expressed a mild interest in him. Like Perrin, Bull seems to have had no obvious qualification, although if as a young unmarried man he lodged in the county it would be almost impossible to trace. With that sort of background, it is hardly surprising that Bull chose to play as an amateur.

According to the 1891 census Bull was an East India Company clerk, living at 14 Bromley Road Lee with his widowed mother, who seems to have been a woman of some resource. She was shown as an employer-dressmaker and two boarders were dressmakers, so she probably had her own small business. The only others listed were a female general servant and Frederick's elder brother Arthur, a wine merchant's clerk.

Bull's annual salary on appointment is not recorded, but was probably £100. In January 1897 he had to go to Australia for his health and it was paid to him in advance. It was increased to £120 in June 1897 and to £150 a year later.

A clever off-break bowler who spun the ball fiercely and occasionally slipped in a straight ball or a leg-break, Bull had a career that rose and fell like a sky-rocket. Although he took only 15 wickets in 1895, Lillywhite perceptively noted that 'in Mr FG Bull Essex have found a cricketer of considerable promise [who] allowed the cares of new elevation to first class county rank to sit lightly upon them.' He really announced himself in June 1896 with 8 for 44 against Yorkshire and 6 for 61 against Warwickshire, figures that led to his selection for the Gentlemen against the Players. He took 10 for 153 in a match that also featured four other Essex cricketers – Kortright, Perrin, Carpenter and Mead – and resulted in an exciting one-wicket win for the amateurs. Bull headed the Essex averages with 70 wickets at 15.62.

In 1897 Bull took 120 wickets, including a career-best 9 for 93 against Surrey and four seven-wicket hauls. Two of them inspired a home win against Lancashire that took Essex to the top of the championship table to the first time, but the game was best remembered for controversial bowling by Bull. At that time, a side leading by 120 runs was obliged to enforce the follow on, and Lancashire in reply to Essex's 290 were on 168 for 9. Neither side wanted to bat last on a deteriorating wicket, so Bull sent down a fast wide ball that should have provided the runs Essex needed to avoid that fate. The Lancashire no. 11 was Arthur Mold, whose dubious bowling had ensured his team's win at Old Trafford earlier in the season. He was wise to Bull's ruse and knocked his wicket over so Essex duly batted last, although an injury to Mold and fine batting by Carpenter contributed to a six-wicket victory for the home side.

The committee gave Bull leave of absence in September and October to tour America with a team led by PF Warner, who considered him the best slow bowler in England, and in the two first-class games he took 17 wickets. In 1898 he became the first Essex player chosen as one of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Year and again captured over 100 wickets. A young man plying a trade that often improves with experience, Bull appeared to have great prospects but, sadly, his career had already peaked.

In 1899 'Mr Bull was less deadly and more expensive'²²⁸, but his prospects must still have seemed excellent. After the cricket season he married Alice Flexman Madge whose widowed mother in 1891 was able to maintain two servants, so was perhaps of

²²⁷ Johnston also played for Hampstead CC with Andrew Stoddart who 'virtually commanded' him to play for Blackheath Rugby Club. Frith, *My dear victorious Stod.* p25.

²²⁸ Essex annual report, 1900. He took 65 wickets at an average of 27.

similar social status to Bull's widowed mother. The real blow to his career came in 1900 after umpire Jim Phillips no-balled Arthur Mold and brought the throwing controversy to the fore. Remarkably, Mold was filmed by the Blackburn firm of Mitchell & Kenyon, and the rediscovered footage was shown on BBC2 in January 2005. His grand-daughter was interviewed and quite rightly stood up for him, claiming that his arm was fairly straight and he should therefore not have been called. She added that he was deeply upset by the affair and never fully recovered from it, but David Frith suggested that it had been deliberately filmed on the evening after Phillips had no-balled Mold, so may have been staged. In December 1901 the MCC resolved that 'if the county captains decide 2:1 that any bowler has been guilty of illegal bowling they shall "name" him and recommend his suspension for at least a season'. Among those suspended was Mold, who Wisden thought lucky to get away with it for as long as he did.

For Bull the effects were even more tragic. Though he was never no-balled, it had been thought that there was a peculiarity about his method of delivery, one spectator describing it as 'a picture in which a gallant soldier has just received a bullet in the breast and is staggering back with upthrown arms'²²⁹. Meredith suggests that in one action photo his arm was nearly horizontal and his elbow discernibly bent. He tried to change his style but in May 1900 took only three wickets in four matches and was dropped. He reappeared three times in early August when the drier wickets should have assisted him, but added only two more wickets. He missed the last four matches of the season, after which his name appeared on a list of bowlers whose actions the county captains considered suspect.

A letter recorded in the committee meeting minutes for 25 October 1900 suggests that, strangely, Bull chose this inauspicious moment in his career to resign as assistant secretary, but then changed his mind:

Your letter to Mr Green of the 18th instant was laid before my committee at their meeting yesterday and was fully discussed. I am now instructed to inform you that the Committee accept your resignation and regret that they cannot accede to your request to be reinstated to the post of Assistant Secretary to the Essex County Cricket Club.

Yours faithfully,

O.R. Borradaile (Secretary)

For Bull it was the first stage in a tragedy that took ten years to unfold. Lemmon's suggestion that he might have played for Surrey and gone on to the Stock Exchange is supported by the 1901 census, which lists him as a Stock Exchange clerk living with Alice in shared accommodation in Croydon. For Bull it was the first stage in a tragedy that took ten years to unfold. David Lemmon's suggestion that he might have played for Surrey and gone on to the Stock Exchange is supported by the 1901 census, which lists him as a Stock Exchange clerk living with Alice in Croydon. He played club cricket for Norwood in 1901, and returned to Granville in 1902 and 1903, taking many wickets for both clubs. His only child Jeffrey Lawrence was born on 4 November 1903, rather strangely in Southend, where neither he nor Alice are known to have had any connections. In February 1904 newspapers reported that he had been living in Lancashire for some time and had been offered a post in Blackburn. He worked for a life insurance company and in 1904 played a full Lancashire League season as an amateur for Blackburn-based East Lancashire CC, taking 73 wickets at 13.42.

²²⁹ Quoted, MEREDITH, p122.

There was speculation that he might qualify by residence for Lancashire but then on 15 December 1904 the *Dundee Evening Post* announced that he had been appointed as the professional at Perthshire CC. His wife later revealed that he already had money worries, which probably explains the then rare decision to turn from amateur to professional²³⁰. His salary was about £100 a year.

In 1905 he took 127 wickets at an average of 9, and in 1906 80 wickets at 8.85. For Scotland against the 1905 Australians, he took 8 for 144 in the match, so it is perhaps surprising that it was his only first-class match after leaving Essex. During the winter he worked for the General Accident Assurance Company, and he made it clear that in 1906 he wanted to continue with this work, so the club hired a junior professional. Perthshire were on course to win the Championship but were badly affected by rain and lost a crucial match to Aberdeenshire.

A vacancy arose for a professional at Bull's old club, East Lancashire, probably at a higher salary. He returned there in 1907 and had three good seasons, the best of them the first when he took 102 wickets at 8.40 including 9 for 22 against Rawtenstall. In 1910 he moved to Rishton where he kept up his form with 88 wickets at 9.34.

But all was not well. Six days after his last match, he walked into the sea at St Anne's and drowned himself. He had separated from Alice and, although relations remained amicable, she had not seen him for two months. She told the inquest that 'he was not as temperate as he ought to be and in consequence had financial problems'. His was a sad end, but he should be remembered as a major contributor to Essex's success in the late 1890s, for his rise and fall in form coincided exactly with theirs.

Charlie as Assistant Secretary

The Assistant Secretary Sub-Committee that selected a replacement for Bull included as usual the chairman, CE Green, and the honorary treasurer, CR Higgins. Its third member was the club captain, Hugh Owen, suggesting that cricketing considerations were as important as administrative ones. For McGahey 1899 had been a relatively lean season, but in 1900 he was back to his best form and hit a record third-wicket partnership of 323 with Perrin. It was therefore no surprise that he was appointed Bull's replacement as Assistant Secretary. As Jan Kemp points out, the state education provided by the 1870 Act would have been unlikely to give him the level of literacy and numeracy needed for the post, so it is likely that he had a private education. On the 1901 census he described himself as a clerk, although whether that referred to his previous job or the Essex post is unclear²³¹.

From a cricketing point of view the appointment was a decided success, for in 1901 Charlie – perhaps relieved by the relative financial security – enjoyed his best ever season. With the bat he made his highest number of runs at the best average – 1838 at 48.36. With the ball he took his largest number of wickets – 52 – at 28.5. He particularly enjoyed the games against Gloucestershire: at Bristol he achieved a match double of 100 runs (66 and 91) and ten wickets (6 for 86 and 6 for 71), and at Leyton he became the first Essex cricketer to hit a century in each innings (114 and 145). His consistency

²³⁰ David Jeater has found only eight instances in the County Championship before the First World War.

https://acscricket.com/wp-content/uploads/amateurs_and_pros.pdf

²³¹ RG13/1590/151/38. He was living with his widowed mother, his brother Sydney and Sydney's wife at 28 Bignold Road Forest Gate.

was recognised with selection for the 1901-2 tour of Australia and as a Wisden player of the year in 1902.

From an administrative point of view Charlie's appointment was less successful, provoking a long and indignant letter from Arthur Janion Edwards, an influential committee member who had acted as Hon. Treasurer to the testimonial dinner got up for CE Green in 1896. He had a town house at Queens Gate in Westminster, and was a member of the Oxford & Cambridge Club²³². He was a JP and member of Waltham Holy Cross Urban District Council, better known as Waltham Abbey. He later became Chairman of the Bench, of the UDC, of the Waltham Abbey Hospital Board and of the Waltham Abbey District Sub-Committee of the Essex Education Committee.

Edwards lived at Beech Hill Park, an Elizabethan-style mansion set in 700 acres where he enjoyed that ultimate status symbol, a well-manicured cricket field in his grounds. He was captain of the High Beech Cricket Club and hosted an annual week of leisurely country-house cricket that 'was watched with interest by the visitors staying at the house as well as by the spectators admitted to the ground'²³³. Among the visiting teams was an Essex Hunt XI that sometimes included Green and Bunny Lucas, although in 1889 they were unable to play because the game clashed with a postponed county match.

In response to McGahey's touring Australia, Edwards wrote to the Secretary²³⁴:

Dear Borradaile

...McGahey was appointed under Secretary for 5 years at £200, the period of 5 years being his I may almost say stipulation and the agreement I may say was altogether favourable to him. I asked at the Committee Meeting at wh[ich] this agreement was signed whether McGahey was really going to do secretarial work and I was answered that he was, but during Essex matches, the time they were being played, he would not be able to do much.

During this season he has often played Cricket (I suppose leave of absence having been granted to him) in other than Essex County Cricket when in my opinion he ought to have been in the Secretary's room and leave should not have been granted. Now the season is over he has been granted leave to go to Australia...I maintain that if leave was granted his salary should have been stopped.

No man...can honestly enter into a contract to perform certain duties for a certain salary, and not do them. My answer to the fact that he could not go unless he had his salary, is, that he should have stopped at home. Many of us would like to do lots of things the expence [sic] of which prevents us doing with the Committee. If I am told that there is no work for him to do then we do not require an Under-Secretary, and if it is necessary to pay McGahey for playing, we should then drop the farce of Under-Secretary and call McGahey a 'paid gentleman.' I shall be told that MacLaren [tour captain] is an under secretary and in the same position as McGahey but that does not in my opinion make the matter any better.

Holding these views as I do very strongly I feel I must resign my position on the Committee...I am very sorry to sever my position with the Committee, but I shall not cease to take the same interest I always have in Essex Cricket. I must apologise for the length of this letter, but I cannot conclude without thanking you for your varied kindness and courtesy as Secretary during the long time I have been on the Committee.

²³² Most of the information in this paragraph from Kelly's Waltham Abbey directory, 1890, 1902, 1914.

²³³ Cheshunt and Waltham Weekly Telegraph, 5 Jul 1889.

²³⁴ The letter was rendered even more breathless by the absence of paragraphs, which I have inserted in order to make it less indigestible. His spelling, underlinings and capitalisation throughout.

Yours very truly

Arthur J. Edwards

[PS] If the Club are going to pay Sewell for doing McGahey's work during his absence it only makes my point stronger.

The committee voted 7-1 to grant McGahey's leave of absence, and asked Edwards to withdraw his resignation which he did, declaring that it would be 'ungracious not to accede to the request'. Sewell was EHD Sewell (see above, p17-18).

McGahey's disappointing test career consisted solely of the last two matches of the 1901-2 tour, but he must have made some impression on Australia because he was invited back there the following winter. The committee granted him leave of absence until the first week of April. He wrote a letter of thanks and asked the committee to pay his mother an allowance of £5 a month from his salary, a request which was agreed.

The Essex annual report for 1902 showed how Charlie benefited from the coaching organised by CE Green and from his Australian trips, and gave an insight into the rapidly changing nature of cricket in the early twentieth century:

No one has benefited more from the professional coaching which has at the beginning of every season for several years past been placed through Mr C.E. Green's generosity at the command of the Essex players...Recovered from illness, [McGahey] is now strong and quite capable of bearing the fatigue of county matches – no light matter in these days of almost incessant play from the beginning of May to the end of August...

In return for granting leave of absence to Australia, the committee asked him not to play so many out matches unconnected with Essex, a partial response to the complaint of Arthur Edwards. This probably refers to his appearances for London County, the team founded by WG Grace to play at the Crystal Palace when he fell out with Gloucestershire. Charlie only turned out for them when Essex did not have a match, but these games filled some of the few breaks he had from playing for Essex. Edwards had argued with some justice that at these times Charlie 'ought to have been in the Secretary's room', and the club may also have been concerned that he needed the breaks in order to maintain the improvement in his health.

The issue of Charlie's role as Assistant Secretary was raised again at the special meeting called to deal with the financial crisis of 1903, when a member asked why the Secretary 'always had to go about the country with the team' even when Charlie was present. CE Green's testy but revealing reply was that McGahey was 'always playing'. It is significant that the only time the Secretary did not need to accompany the team to away matches was in 1900 when Bull had lost form and was not in the side, so presumably had time to carry out secretarial duties. Charlie's annual salary of £200 would have compared favourably with all but the highest earners among the Essex professionals, and he had considerably more security.

On the field, Charlie's form would certainly have earned him a contract if he had been a pro. In each of the next three seasons he averaged over 30 with the bat and continued to pick up useful wickets. Another vintage year was 1905, when he scored 1783 runs at 41.46. They included a career-best 277, still the third-highest individual score for Essex, described by Perrin as 'a joy to watch'. It helped his team turn the tables on Derbyshire, who at Leyton on the first day scored 367 and reduced Essex to 42 for 4. Charlie's knock enabled Essex to declare on 507 for 9 and then the last four Derbyshire wickets fell on 139 when they needed only one more run to avoid an innings defeat. It was appropriate revenge for the defeat at Chesterfield the previous year.

By 1906 McGahey was 35 years old and, although nobody knew it, his very best years were behind him. He scored 1217 runs but his average dropped below 30 and he took only eighteen wickets. Ten of them were against Nottinghamshire in his best game of the season when he did the match double for the second time, scoring 89 and 14 and taking a career-best 7 for 27, with a further 3 for 37 in the second innings. Against the champions, Kent, he and Perrin both scored 101 and added 205 for the sixth wicket, but it was Charlie's only century of the season. The five-year contract about which AJ Edwards complained ran out and initially Charlie was offered only a one-year extension. The committee turned down his request for a three-year contract, but then agreed to it provided he managed the first two outmatches to save expenses, an experiment that would be extended if successful. McGahey accepted the offer 'should the club continue', and promised to do his best with the outmatches. Despite the relative security of his £200 annual salary, Charlie was constantly short of money and borrowed from the committee which somewhat wearily agreed that 'the sum of £50 advanced to Mr C. McGahey some time ago should be written off'.

The captaincy and after

In 1907 Charles McGahey succeeded FL Fane as captain. He would have been asked in 1904 if Fane had continued to refuse but in 1907 seems to have emerged, much as Conservative Party leaders once did, after sounding out the great and the good – in this case, the senior amateurs in the team. Perrin had been tried when Fane was absent in July 1905 but Warwickshire 'got away' and won by eight wickets²³⁵. Later in that season and four times in 1906 when Fane was absent McGahey took over, but a record of one win, three draws and three losses was inconclusive. CE Green, who must also have influenced the decision, 'thought that the extra "devil" wanted in Essex cricket could be got out of the side by McGahey, whose seniority and experience suited him for the new post'.

The minute-book displays the diplomatic niceties of decisions about the captaincy, which were in line with the convention that amateurs assisted their club. In December 1906 the Secretary, OR Borradaile, crossed out a minute that Fane was appointed to the captaincy, substituting a note that he was 'invited to accept' it. In April 1907 Fane's resignation was 'accepted with much regret' and Charlie *was* appointed, perhaps because as assistant secretary he was a paid servant of the club and with the season about to start an urgent decision was needed. He continued to perform both roles for the next four years. In January 1908 the courtesies were resumed and McGahey was invited to accept the captaincy. Charlie in accepting expressed the rather pointed hope that the amateurs – some of whom were committee members – would be able to play regularly. In January 1909 Green proposed and Charles Kortright seconded a motion that 'Mr C McGahey be asked to accept the captaincy for 1909 and that a most hearty vote of thanks be given him for his services last year'.

EHD Sewell wrote that a captain should combine 'seeing that his team is cheerful and happy, while at the same time making it play the game seriously'. It might have been thought that McGahey would have been better at the former than the latter, but Sewell considered that 'Charlie captained Essex very well indeed'. He rated Kortright and McGahey easily the best of the five he played under for Essex, although McGahey captained him only twice. His view may have been coloured by his recollection of hitting 107 in just over an hour against Warwickshire, for Essex went on to lose to by

²³⁵ JEATER, p14.

an innings and 110 – not an ideal result for the captain. Nevertheless, in Charlie's first year the team won ten matches and maintained the improvement that in Fane's last year took them to seventh place. His own form was unaffected by the captaincy, his record being almost identical to that of the previous year. In 1908 he missed a few games, presumably through injury, but his average improved to 35, mainly thanks to a 230 against Northamptonshire. The team fared less well, winning only five games and slipping to eleventh place.

A hand injury at the start of 1909 meant that Charlie had the worst season of his career with both bat and ball. The team also struggled, with only two wins – both against Derbyshire - and a further drop to fourteenth, although a wretched week at Leyton in June when not a ball was bowled cannot have helped. Wisden commented that the poor results in 1909 were partly due to the 'depressed condition of the club's affairs'. Charlie must have been tempted to resign the captaincy, but was brave enough to soldier on and was rewarded with an improvement in his own form and that of the team, which went back to eleventh place. There were only five wins, but one was against the champions, Kent, and another by ten wickets in two days against Yorkshire. Perhaps content that he had done something to restore the team's fortunes and aware that he would soon be forty years old, he did resign after the 1910 season.

In November the committee decided that 'Mr C. McGahey was to be Cricket Instructor to the club instead of Assistant Secretary but at the same salary'. Whatever the thinking behind this decision it was short-lived, for in March 1911 he was reappointed Assistant Secretary. Against Derbyshire in the second game of 1912 he scored 150 and added 312 with Perrin, but it was to be his last major performance. In December the committee renewed his agreement for a further nine months, but in 1913 he completely lost form, averaging below 12 with only one 50 in eleven games. He returned to the side for six matches in August 1914 and immediately hit 71 against his favourite opponents, Derbyshire, but did little else.

Not surprisingly, the committee finally terminated McGahey's contract in 1914, but arranged a testimonial for him. Books and collecting cards were issued and there was an appeal to newspapers and sports clubs. A list of subscribers was opened and among the first, with £25, was CE Green, who was never recorded as making an individual donation to a professional. A letter requesting support was sent out with the annual report:

After 21 years Mr Charles McGahey has terminated his connection with the Club and your Committee feel that the time has come when his services, which are too well-known to need enumeration, should be recognised. A Testimonial Fund has therefore been initiated and the proceeds will be utilized by the Committee for his benefit. Mr McGahey is anxious to embark upon a business career...

The committee, who knew him all too well, were doubtless wise in choosing to manage the fund for him, as they never did for any of the professionals. The minutes reveal a surprising amount of detail on how they went about it. Whereas they invariably gave £25 for the professionals' benefits, they subscribed the rather more gentlemanly sum of 25 guineas to the testimonial. In September 1914 they used it to settle his lodging account of £26 and agreed to advance him £1 a week until 31 December. In January 1915 they gave him a further £5 and paid his rent of £7 10/-, but decided to pay no further rent after 31 January. In March he wrote to thank them for their support and in June wrote again to ask how much was left in the fund. They answered that the balance in the bank was £132/6/11 and that they would pay him 18/- a week for as long as he

was on Home Service. He replied that he was expecting go abroad on active service and asked to be given the whole proceeds of the fund. Even then his Micawberish optimism that something would turn up was justified, for the fund was closed and he was handed a cheque for £132/16/11 – ten shillings too much. Taking into account payment of his rent and other advances, the total amount raised must have been about £200. In the First World War he served as a private in the Second Sportsman's Battalion. At one point he found himself near Etaples looking after 'some very respectable matting wickets' used mainly by former public schoolboys²³⁶.

In 1907 in Islington Charlie married Mary Torrens who was born in Kilmoylan, County Limerick, in 1876. The 1911 census finds them living at 67a Grand Parade, Harringay, with Charlie having promoted himself to Secretary of Essex CCC! They had no children and sadly she died in 1917, in Wandsworth. It was a little-known aspect of his life which seems only have come to light when the 1911 census was released.

Indian summer

Several promising young Essex cricketers were lost to the slaughter of the First World War, so Charlie's career continued afterwards. The Advisory Committee, at the instigation of Lancashire, introduced the ill-advised experiment of playing matches consisting of two very long days. Essex, with their flat Leyton wickets and feeble bowling were 'not in the least suited to two-day matches' [Wisden] and drew two-thirds of their matches – more than any other county. Such conditions would have been tiring for men half the age of the 48-year-old McGahey, and again he just appeared six times in August.

After the 1920 season Wisden reported: 'Charles McGahey, for lack of younger men, played in a good many of the matches but was under no illusion as to his own powers, freely admitting that, especially as regards fielding, he was far too old for county cricket'. He nevertheless had a wonderful Indian summer in which he made some useful contributions, sometimes opening the innings. Against Northamptonshire, on a track where 30 wickets had fallen for only 375 runs, he and Jack Russell knocked off the 102 needed for victory in 80 minutes, Charlie contributing 44. Against Worcestershire he hit 66 not out and with Bill Reeves, only four years his junior, added 121 for the ninth wicket to help Essex to an innings victory. It was in that season that he made the best-known of his many jokes, one that has gone down in cricket history. Playing against Oxford University, he was dismissed by Raymond Robertson-Glasgow, a young freshman who went on to become a distinguished cricket writer. Asked how he was out, Charlie replied: 'Bowled by a bugger I thought had died 300 years ago – Robinson Crusoe!' Robertson-Glasgow was ever after known to the cricket world as Crusoe.

On the 1921 census, Charlie was staying with some of the other amateurs at the Red Lion Hotel in Colchester, where Essex were playing a Championship match. He said he was an insurance agent working for the Royal Exchange Insurance Company, based in Stratford. This may have been the business opportunity the committee mentioned when sending out the appeal for his testimonial. With his popularity and clerical training he would probably have made a decent fist of this work, but cricket was his first love and in 1923 he in effect became a professional. From then until 1928 he was coach at Repton School and from 1929 to 1934 Essex employed him, first as coach then as scorer.

²³⁶ BIRLEY, p210.

CP McGahey and Buckenham, CP

Like Charlie McGahey, Claude Buckenham was born into a respectable middle-class family. Like Charlie, he was a fine amateur football full-back, and he played in the Upton Park side that won gold for Great Britain at the first Olympic football tournament, in Paris in 1900²³⁷. But whereas McGahey retained his amateur status as a cricketer for as long as possible, Buckenham chose from the outset to play as a professional. Several aspects of their careers illustrate the differing treatment of amateurs and professionals.

Buckenham's father was a commercial traveller who managed to send him as a day boy to Alleyn's, which was founded in 1619 and re-established as an independent boys' school in 1882. At a time when many boys left school aged ten, Claude was still a scholar at the age of 15. In November 1896, 'an application from Buckingham [sic] to come on the ground was referred to the ground committee' and evidently found favour, for he joined the ground staff in 1897. Born at Herne Hill in Surrey, he qualified for Essex by residence and made his debut against the county of his birth in 1899. After the 1898 season he married Catherine Helen Lawson, and in 1901 they were living at 6 Denmark Villas Wilmot Road, a little further from the ground than some of the other professionals but still within easy walking distance. By 1911 they and their four sons were living at 34 Abbots Park Road, a substantial house with seven rooms.

He and EHD Sewell were the only two pros to have live-in servants and, though they as professionals were debarred from membership, Mrs Buckenham and Mrs Sewell both become members - the only Essex pros' wives known to have done so. These are significant indications of their rather higher social status.

Buckenham took a while to establish himself but he benefited from the advice of Charles Kortright and by 1903 he was a regular member of the side. Though primarily a bowler, against Nottinghamshire in 1904 he hit exactly 100 in 150 minutes and was rewarded with a ground collection of £11. After the 1906 season Wisden commented that he bowled with great pace and far more accuracy. From then until 1911 he took well over a hundred wickets a season and was one of the deadliest fast bowlers in the country. The editor of Wisden famously described his omission from the 1909 Oval Test against the Australians as 'touching the confines of lunacy' and 'so grave a blunder that it is difficult to find words in which to speak of it'. He did, though, play four tests on the 1910-11 tour of South Africa, taking 21 wickets (only two of them tailenders). He sometimes obtained better figures in representative matches than for Essex because slip catches were more likely to be held.

Buckenham's education set him apart among the professionals and he often wrote on their behalf to the committee. He seemed instinctively to understand the courtesies that the committee expected, and perhaps helped to heal the wounds that had been opened up over the disputes with Carpenter and Mead (see chapter 15). In 1908 he was granted ten days' sick leave and £5 towards his medical expenses. Later the same year his request to 'form a Staff Cricket Club with leave to play on the County Ground in September' was warmly approved. In May 1909 he wrote requesting leave to go to New Zealand during the English winter, thus giving them several months' notice of his intentions.

²³⁷ http://www.linguasport.com/futbol/internacional/olimpiadas/1900_PARIS.htm

The minutes suggest that OR Borradaile who wrote them, or the committee more generally, may in small ways have treated Buckenham a little more favourably than the other professionals. In 1911 the committee 'expressed its thanks to Mr. C.P. Buckenham for organising a Whist Drive on behalf of the Shilling Fund', thus using the honorific Mr that was reserved for amateurs. In 1912 they awarded him a benefit, with no record that he went through the usual formality of requesting it. Whether this was recognition of his special status or just a slip of the pen there is no way of knowing.

For his benefit match the committee offered Buckenham a choice of Middlesex at the end of May or Lancashire in late July. He chose the Lancashire match which happily in an exceptionally wet summer lost little or no time to rain. He certainly did not have an easy ride, bowling 50 overs and taking 7 for 223 in the match. The *Leytonstone Express & Independent* in its account of the match commented:

Buckenham is known to be a very unlucky bowler. It is much to be hoped that the financial result of the match now being played at Leyton for his benefit will not prove him to be also an unlucky man... Essex people must now concentrate on his subscription list if he is to be rewarded for many years of hard and rather discouraging work for the county.

The committee donated its usual £25 and also gave him 'the card money for the Lancashire match', but for some unknown reason the annual report did not record how much he received altogether.

Buckenham wrote to thank them for the benefit but in December 1913 he 'came before the committee and said that he did not consider he had been well-treated with regard to his Cricket, Talent Money and Winter Pay'. He was one of three pros not retained for the winter and his talent money was only £3. Talent money was a matter for the captain and would be discussed 'on Mr. J.W.H.T. Douglas's return from South Africa'; in 1913 Buckenham had only two five-wicket hauls and 62 wickets overall, so it was probably a fair decision. In view of his long service and as a special case the committee agreed to give him 25/- winter pay from 15 September 1914, but in the event war broke out and none of the pros was retained for the winter.

By 1913 Buckenham was past his best as a bowler so advised the committee that he 'wished to accept an appointment with Forfarshire CC and sever his connection with Essex'. His wife was born in Scotland and in 1911 Essex played a friendly match against Forfarshire, both of which may have contributed to his decision. In 1914 the committee accepted his resignation with regret, and placed on record 'their sincere appreciation of Buckenham's valuable services extending over 15 years'. They instructed the secretary to ask Forfarshire whether he could still assist Essex, and the Scottish county were 'happy to let him play when possible'. In 1914 they released him for five appearances which included two ten-wicket hauls. A month after the outbreak of the First World War, his final first-class analysis of 7 for 37 helped Essex beat Somerset by ten wickets.

The subsequent careers of Buckenham and McGahey suggest how arbitrary had been the distinction between them. During the war Buckenham was a sergeant in the North Scottish Royal Garrison Artillery, whereas McGahey was a private, appropriately in the 2nd Sportsman's Battalion. One of Buckenham's victims in that last game against Somerset was Len Braund, who after retiring in 1920 became coach at Repton School. Evidently the life did not suit Braund, for after a year he left and from 1923 to 1938 was a first-class umpire. Buckenham took over but he too lasted only one year, and in turn was succeeded by McGahey. Buckenham continued to use his professional skills in coaching young cricketers but had no further financial help from Essex.

Buckenham and family settled in Broughty Ferry, a residential seaside village four miles east of Dundee. He made a good start for Forfarshire, continuing to take wickets and also establishing himself as a stylish opening bat, but after war was declared, his contract was cancelled. On 8 December 1915 he joined the North Scottish Royal Garrison Artillery, which was formed as part of the coastal defence forces. He gave his profession as 'Cricketer (Munitions worker)', so evidently he first worked in one of several munitions factories in the area, then was conscripted as women took over war work. The RGA never saw home action during the war, although some units served on the Somme, including Buckenham's. He became a serjeant in 308 Company of the RGA and in October 1917 was admitted to the 2nd Field Hospital in Le Havre with lumbago. Buckenham was discharged from the RGA on 8 February 1919.

In 1920 he returned to Forfarshire as an amateur. He bowled less because of his lumbago but still helped them win the Championship. In 1921 he became Forfarshire's professional and in 1922 he spent a summer as coach at Repton School. He then concentrated on coaching in Forfarshire and newspapers reported that he gave unstintingly of his time in encouraging young people. In 1927 he was appointed professional at Kynoch's Works in Watton, Birmingham. He retired at the end of the 1936 season and returned to Dundee but died suddenly on 23 February 1937, aged 61.

'A great encourager': Charlie as coach

McGahey's spell at Repton was longer and more successful those of Braund and Buckenham. Perhaps he as a former amateur was more comfortable with the upper middle class atmosphere than were the professionals. Certainly he was grateful for the coaching that had in five years turned him from a 'rough and ready hitter' into an England cricketer, and his character and attitude meant that he in turn was an ideal coach. As his 'twin' Peter Perrin put it:

Charlie was one of the most popular and kindest hearted players ever seen in first-class cricket. Certainly he was most encouraging to any young player. I have known him on many occasions to go out of his way to give a youngster good advice.

All too many former cricketers sink into depression and even suicide, but that would not have been Charlie's way. In Jan Kemp's words:

He was not one to sulk because he could participate no longer in the game he loved. He had enjoyed a long and skilful career, and he wanted to pass on any advice he could to the younger generation. He remembered with fondness his past, but he did not dwell on it to a point where it would caused depression, and his ability to take life in its stride had its advantages.

Like nearby Uppingham, which it played annually, Repton rose to prominence in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. CB Fry, Lionel Palairet and JN Crawford were among the notable Old Reptonians against whom McGahey had played, and in his last three seasons for Essex he played alongside HM Morris who later captained the county. When Charlie arrived, however, cricket at the school was somewhat in the doldrums, doubtless not helped by the lack of continuity. He was employed only for the summer term and his role was to assist the master-in-charge, JL Crommelin-Brown, who did played sixteen first-class games for Derbyshire but was younger and far less experienced than Charlie. He also had to do some net bowling, a duty he shared with the old Sussex and England professional Fred Tate, father of Maurice. Charlie, who as a player had always managed to retain his amateur status, was now having to earn a

living as a professional. He was regarded as such by the boys but he seems, characteristically, to have accepted the situation without bitterness.

Results soon began to improve. In 1925 the opening partnership of BH Valentine and HW Austin between them made over a thousand runs, and also won the Doubles Public School Lawn Tennis Championship. Bryan Valentine went on to play seven Test Matches and over 300 games for Kent, who he captained in 1946-8. Bunny Austin twice reached the singles final at Wimbledon, and was probably second only to Fred Perry among British men tennis players in the 1930s. Jack Mendl, who hit 173 in his debut game for Repton and played first-class cricket after the war, commented: 'It is generally accepted that they would both have done equally well in each others' sports'. Austin recalled that McGahey insisted on the boys practising high catches and, although he chose tennis, it may be that Charlie's influence helped him become such a fine ball player.

It took a while for the boys to accustom themselves to Charlie's gentle character and dry humour, but by 1926 he had established himself and Jan Kemp has recorded wonderful memories of some who remembered him with great affection. One story told by Jack Mendl illustrates Charlie's character and his relationship with the school:

Charlie was given the job by our master-in-charge of sending telegrams to Repton giving details of the match as it progressed. This meant going to the nearest GPO via a toll-bridge and, I believe, a local hostelry. Charlie sent off the telegrams during each interval and had to pay the toll each time. Eventually he became fed-up with paying up. On the final occasion, as we headed back to Repton, we heard our professional shouting at the toll-keeper. "How much will I have to pay to buy your b..... bridge?" I seem to remember we had to assist our very popular pro back to the taxi and subsequently on to the train.

The official history of Repton cricket noted the marked improvement from 1925 but regrettably the author did not see fit to mention Charlie's contribution²³⁸.

There is evidence that Charlie helped out with coaching at Essex after Repton had broken up for the school holidays²³⁹. Alf Gover has told of 'a tall, burly man who watched my efforts' as an 18-year-old trialist in the nets at Leyton. The man was Charlie and Gover was taken on to the Essex ground staff, but the following season Surrey, short of first-team bowling, invited him to join them. Gover was lodging in the Leyton area to qualify by residence, but had been born in Surrey so could play for them straight away and accepted the invitation. His second match was at Leyton where Surrey declared on 506 for 4 and won by an innings and 149 runs, suggesting that Essex were even more short of first-team bowling. Gover commented: 'My recollection of Charles was as a very kindly man who gave me every encouragement when I was under him as a young professional with Essex, and who was most understanding when I left Essex to join Surrey'. He eventually founded his own successful coaching school where he offered similar help to many young cricketers.

After six years at Repton, Charlie received an offer he could scarcely have refused, to return to his beloved Essex as coach. He was only in the post for two years, but they marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. The 1928 season saw the final appearances of Peter Perrin and Canon Frank Gillingham, both 52, of the long-serving captain Johnny Douglas who was 46, and of the wicket-keeper/batsman Jack Freeman,

²³⁸ FR D'O MUNRO. Repton cricket. Rugby, George Over, 1953.

²³⁹ He may even have had an official part-time contract, but the minute-book for 1920-8 is missing so this possibility cannot be checked.

exactly one year younger. It was a disastrous year for the aging side and Essex were determined to improve matters by finding new talent.

Charlie played an important part in their plans. In February 1929 he took over from Stan Nichols as coach at the Loughton Indoor Cricket School, recently founded as the first in Essex²⁴⁰. In April he became the first coach of a new County Cricket Nursery founded at Leyton to encourage the development of young cricketers in the county. The venture was initiated by Alderman William Bulgin, mayor of Leyton and an ECCC committee member, and among the early subscribers was Perrin, with £10.

By the end of the season three of Charlie's protégés, all aged under 25, had begun to make their mark in the first team. Roy Sheffield, who remembered with affection 'the gentle old chap' who coached him, was the wicket-keeper in the 1930s. Tommy Wade was an off-spinner and later Sheffield's successor. Peter Smith was a leg-spinner whose Essex record of 1610 first-class wickets will never be broken. Charlie would also have coached Tom Pearce and Denys Wilcox, young amateurs who shared the captaincy in the 1930s²⁴¹. Sheffield suffered a serious football injury in 1936 and was not retained, but all the others played for Essex until after the Second World War. When Charlie left the nursery, it continued to prosper under the direction of WC 'Razor' Smith, the pre-war Surrey off-spinner.

The missing run: Charlie as scorer²⁴²

In March 1930 Charlie accepted an offer from Essex to become the official first-team scorer with a fee of £2 per home match and £3 10s away. The club's continuing concern for his welfare is exemplified in a rather cryptic minute for June 1930 which recorded that 'The captain [HM Morris] having reported that Mr McGahey had no teeth and in view of his present pay and position it was decided that action should be taken'. Scorers were usually former first-class cricketers, although he was the only one to have been a former county captain. Charlie's clerical skills would have made him particularly suitable for the post. He must have hoped that it would allow him a quiet swansong in the game that had been his life, but instead he became a central figure in one of the most controversial episodes in cricket history.

On 15 June 1932 Yorkshire came to Leyton. Enjoying a perfect batting strip and an under strength Essex attack that had spent the previous day being battered all round The Oval, their opening pair of Percy Holmes and Herbert Sutcliffe closed the first day unbeaten on 423. They went on to compile a then world record partnership for any wicket of 555, breaking the previous record of 554 scored by Yorkshire's Brown and Tunncliffe in 1898.

The occasion stayed in the minds of all who were there and many who weren't. Tom Cable recalled that half East London seemed to be there and the ground had never been more packed, even though Essex were on the wrong end of the situation. One of Ernie Coleman's school-mates at Leyton County High played truant to be there, and Ernie later wished that he had too. Charles Bent-Marshall was about twelve when he went to

²⁴⁰ *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, 19 Jan 1929, p8.

²⁴¹ Wilcox made an undistinguished debut in 1928, scoring 2 and 0 in his only game. All the others made their debuts in 1929.

²⁴² This section based on: KEMP, ch 12; Essex County Cricket Club minutes; Waltham Forest Oral History Society reminiscences, 1999; LEMMON, p181-3; CricketArchive; BRAY, Charles. Essex County Cricket; BRAY, Charles. The day the record went. IN The cricketer, 1978 p23; article by EW ("Jim") SWANTON in Daily Telegraph, c1982.

the game as for what was supposed to be a special treat, but after he got home he told his parents what had happened and ‘started to cry because it was such a terrible performance’ by Essex. Frank Rist had just come on to the ground staff and his job on the second day was to answer the phone in the Pavilion to all the people ringing to ask whether the record had been broken. Ken Hardwick first became aware of Leyton when as a Yorkshire schoolboy he was ‘wildly excited’ by news of the partnership, little expecting that he would move to the Leyton area and often visit the ground with his own boys.

There was great excitement as the scoreboard moved up to 555, and the very next ball Sutcliffe ‘took a wild, uncharacteristic swing’ and was bowled. In an age whose view of the relationship between sport and smoking was rather different from our own, State Express 555 cigarettes were distributed to the Yorkshire players, who generously shared them with their opponents. The heroes were photographed in front of the scoreboard but then consternation reigned as the board clicked back to show 554. The scorers always sat below the scoreboard, which was not the most modern piece of equipment in the world, and could not see what it said. It had registered an additional run in error and they were correcting it. News of the record had gone round the world and news of the apparent mistake followed it.

Memories of the episode vary and even now it is impossible to be certain exactly what happened. After careful checking of the scorebooks, the missing run was found in the form of a no ball bowled by Arthur Daer that had been allegedly been signalled by umpire EJ (‘Tiger’) Smith and not recorded by the scorers. One crucial difference is in the accounts of Charlie and his Yorkshire counterpart Bill Ringrose, an experienced scorer who held the post from 1923 to 1939. The other is in the memories of two key players in the drama – the Essex captain on the day, Charles Bray, and Tiger Smith. Indeed, Bray’s recollections in 1948 and 1950 differed from one another.

Born in the same year, McGahey and Ringrose had encountered one another in 1905 when playing for their respective counties: at Huddersfield Bill dismissed Charlie, who at Leyton a week later took a century off a Yorkshire attack that included him. Ringrose said that ‘the Essex scorer held out against the no ball that I had in my book’, but McGahey told Bray: ‘Bill and I agree the correct score is 554 not 555 and now they want us to find an extra run to beat the old record not equal it’. Both of Bray’s accounts make it clear that Charlie was very worried, and so he went to see him in the Essex dressing room. Bray wrote in 1948 that Charlie ‘said with a broad grin on his face they had discovered a “no-ball” that had not been recorded’, and simply added that he ‘was too tired to care’²⁴³. Two years later he asserted ‘there was no doubt in McGahey’s mind that a run was being “found” for the occasion’, and added: ‘I told Charles that I thought the two batsmen had put up a magnificent performance and that it would be cruel luck if they were deprived of the honour of breaking the record owing to a mistake on the part of our scoreboard’²⁴⁴.

A careful examination of Charlie’s scorebook²⁴⁵ suggests that he may have gone as far as he could in recording his protest. He always kept score in his firm, clear hand using a pencil. Sometimes scorers rewrote their sheets after the innings but Charlie apparently did not do so: he rubbed out the 4 in the innings total of 554 and substituted a 5 to make 555, and very obviously altered the extras total from 17 to 18 by just changing the 7 to

²⁴³ Essex yearbook 1948, p25.

²⁴⁴ BRAY. *Essex county cricket*. Convoy, 1950, p40.

²⁴⁵ Housed at ERO D/Z 82/2/

an 8. His method of recording a no ball in the bowler's analysis was to write a small N above the relevant ball. The only Essex man to bowl any no balls was Daer, so he was the obvious fall guy to be recorded as bowling another one. Two were hit for four and a third that was not scored off counted as an extra; Charlie obviously recorded them correctly, because there was a seventh ball in the over. The doubtful one was apparently bowled in Daer's twelfth over, a maiden. Charlie recorded a maiden by drawing a line through the dots representing each ball and in this case there seem to be only six dots, suggesting that no seventh ball was bowled. Under the rather illogical regulations that applied until 1985, no balls were not debited against the bowler, and so the over still stood as a maiden. As though to distance himself from the whole thing, Charlie did not write his N above the relevant ball, but simply tucked it in the corner of the box for that over.

A few days later the Surrey captain, PGH Fender, gave Bray 'a lift from Leyton to the City and the biggest dressing-down I've ever had in my life'. Bray had no right to find a run or allow the scorer to do so. He had connived with the umpires, who should not have allowed play to proceed until the scorers had acknowledged the no ball, nor agreed to the finding of the extra run. 'I was wrong and Percy Fender was right,' Bray concluded. 'I should not have allowed the total to be altered.'

On the other hand, Tiger Smith was adamant that 'no fiddling was involved': Daer agreed that Smith had no-balled him twice, so the scorebooks needed to be corrected. But if Smith is right in saying that both books were altered, then Ringrose must have been mistaken in claiming that he had the no ball in his book. In that case Smith was, as Fender argued, at fault in failing to ensure that the scorers acknowledged his no ball signal, and therefore it was not a legitimate run.

I therefore think it may well have been a fiddle, but the Laws of Cricket lay the responsibility on captains to 'satisfy themselves of the correctness of the scores on the conclusion of play, as errors cannot subsequently be corrected'. This provision normally refers to the result, but that was not much of an issue: Essex were bowled out for 78 and 164, losing by an innings and 313 – easily their heaviest ever defeat by a county and, in that they took only one wicket, one of the most comprehensive in the whole history of cricket. It is a tribute to McGahey's deep knowledge of the game that he refused to make the alteration until he had obtained Bray's permission, and that he then acted on it even though he disagreed. By acquiescing to the alteration on the day, Bray forfeited any rights in the matter and there can be no question of amending the record books.

It could be argued that another culprit was the hero of the hour, Herbert Sutcliffe. He had already hit Eastman for two fours in the over and could have made certain of the matter by adding a few more runs before that 'wild, uncharacteristic swing'. The potentially drastic consequences of not allowing some margin of error were never more graphically illustrated than in the 2003 World Cup, when South Africa's misunderstanding of the Duckworth-Lewis method for rain-affected one-day matches meant that Mark Boucher blocked a ball that he could have pushed for a single. The heavens opened, South Africa had only tied when they thought they had won, they were eliminated from the competition and Shaun Pollock lost the captaincy.

For McGahey, it was an unhappy experience. Ringrose had claimed that he was sometimes on his own in the scorebox, and Tom Pearce recalled:

Charlie was always getting the scoreboard boys to get him bottles of Bass. Of course there were always times when he needed to visit the lavatory, and it must have been one of those times that the run went missing. However, Charlie was most upset about it.

Sir Home Gordon claimed that at Horsham in 1933 Charlie asked him to cover for a few minutes and did not come back for an hour. For all his happy-go-lucky nature, he was a conscientious man and must have wondered whether a temporary absence or lapse of concentration on his part had contributed to the controversy. Furthermore, one of the reasons why Fender berated Bray was persistent bad feeling between northern and southern counties, and the unwarranted hostility of some northern 'supporters' towards Charlie for his part in the affair was very hurtful to that gentle soul.

Charlie in fact seems to have been a very capable scorer: he did the job for five years and there is no hint in the minutes of any shortcoming on his part. By contrast his successor, JR Carpenter, had done only three years when the committee decided that he was not to be retained because 'although his keenness and interest were admirable, certain inaccuracies existed due, in the main part, to his age'.

Another trial for Charlie was the move away from the old ground that had been his life for forty years. The last game at Leyton, on 2-5 September 1933, was against Sussex and to their credit Essex marked the occasion in style. Mead, Perrin and Kortright were invited and McGahey was there as scorer, but Owen, Lucas, Tom Russell, Bull, Pickett, Douglas and other old colleagues were gone. Charlie was nevertheless always one to take pleasure in the success of others, and must have been thrilled to spend the last season at Leyton recording the exploits of the new young side that he had helped to create. They won 13 of their 28 matches and finished fourth in the championship – Essex's best place since 1897, when Charlie himself was one of the youngest in another successful side.

In 1934 Charlie had to adjust to travelling around for home as well as away matches. He was 63 years old and it cannot have been easy, but he was as uncomplaining as ever. At the end of the season he wrote 'asking if the Committee would give him some consideration during the Winter Months', and it was agreed that for the present he be paid £1 a week. In November, with the cooperation of the Press, the committee opened 'a testimonial to C. McGahey in recognition of his services to cricket'.²⁴⁶ Sadly the plans came to nothing because on Christmas Day 1934 he slipped on a greasy pavement and damaged a finger, dying two weeks later from the resultant septic poisoning. He had always had a weak chest and his reduced circumstances had left him undernourished, but even younger men could not always fight off an infection that a few years later might have been overcome by drugs: the Nottinghamshire and England batsman WW ('Dodger') Whysall was only 43 and still an active county cricketer when in 1930 he died from septicaemia after slipping on a dance floor in Nottingham. The money already subscribed to Charlie's testimonial was returned to the donors. His brother Sydney wrote to 'express appreciation of the help afforded to Charles McGahey by the committee'. They in turn "expressed the sorrow of the club in losing such a lovable character".

Charles Bray often said 'journalism is my life, cricket is my passion', and his book *Essex County Cricket* enabled him to combine his life and his passion. It is often beautifully written and his touching personal recollection of Charlie has been quoted by several writers:

²⁴⁶ Minutes 17 Mar 1930, 21 Oct 1934.

McGahey became philosopher and friend to the Essex team, for during the years he was scorer his friendly counsel and encouragement were a joy to whoever captained the team. You saw little of the great burly figure unless the side had suffered a heavy defeat. Then he would appear in the dressing-room or the railway carriage and in his soft pleasant voice tell stories or recall experiences that made you forget the tragedy of the day...

He knew what it was to be poor in the autumn of his life. It may have been his own fault but never did I know him to be bitter or complaining. He was a most lovable person.

Jan Kemp called her biography *Cheerful Charlie*, which sums up a man whose problems were primarily a result of his carefree nature. When she told the 82-year-old Roy Sheffield that she was writing it he commented: 'Be kind to him, he deserves it. For the only person he ever hurt was himself.'

Chapter 7 'A professional amateur': JWHT Douglas (1882-1930) ²⁴⁷

When after the 1910 season Charles McGahey resigned the captaincy, he inadvertently provoked one of the great crises of Essex cricket.

'A young Hannibal'

Founder of JH Douglas & Company, a firm in Bishopsgate that imported timber used to make tubs for encasing cement, John Herbert Douglas was 'a brusque man of controlled passion who wanted his own way and got it'. Evidently that applied to his business dealings, for on his death he left £73,863. A keen participant in and administrator of sport, Douglas was a good club cricketer who played for Hertfordshire and won the Queensberry Amateur Middleweight Championship in 1875-7. Later he became Chairman of the Club Cricket Conference and President of the Amateur Boxing Association.

The family name of the Marquesses of Queensberry is Douglas, but I can find no firm evidence that this is any more than a coincidence. JH Douglas's father William was born in 1819 at Stonehouse near Plymouth, the son of James and Elizabeth, but I have found nothing else about James Douglas and it would be beyond the scope of this work to do more detailed family research.

When in the late 1890s the ground of Clapton CC was built on, Douglas moved to Wanstead and arranged for the pitch to be moved with him. Later he supervised and paid for the digging up and re-laying of the Wanstead pitch. A Wanstead colleague recalled a kind-hearted man who was always ready 'to assist an old cricketer and especially a groundsman who found the winter months so trying, before the days of doles or generous relief'²⁴⁸.

JH Douglas also fulfilled his sporting ambitions through his children. Two of his daughters were capable boxers, and Dolly was 'an overarm medium-pacer of no mean ability' who sometimes bowled in the nets at Leyton²⁴⁹. His younger son, Cecil Herbert, known as 'Pickles', played for Essex from 1912 to 1919 but was better known in the 1930s as the country's leading boxing referee.

²⁴⁷ This section based chiefly on LEMMON, David. *Johnny won't hit today: a cricketing biography of J.W.H.T. Douglas*. London, Allen & Unwin, 1983, and on ECCC minutes.

²⁴⁸ "F.G.B.", LSE&I, 10 January 1931.

²⁴⁹ LEMMON, *Johnny*, p11. Ken Brewer.

The best-known, however, was his elder son. John William Henry Tyler Douglas ('Johnny') was born at the family home in Clapton on 3 September 1882, and old Douglas in effect financed his sporting career. On the 1911 census the father described Johnny as a clerk in his timber firm, but it is unlikely that he did very much clerical work there.

Johnny attended Felsted School, which was established in 1564 as a free school for 80 Essex boys and refounded in the third quarter of the nineteenth century as a boarding school, partly financed by fees which in Douglas's time were £62 a year²⁵⁰. The school developed a fine academic and sporting reputation. Douglas's contemporaries included the brilliant mathematician CV Durrell, whose somewhat dry text-books daunted generations of less mathematically minded schoolchildren, and the distinguished historians Thomas Secombe and AF Pollard, whose prolific writings included hundreds of entries in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The headmaster, HA Dalton, was a gifted and energetic administrator and teacher who was 'interested in the outdoor amusements of the boys but at the same time alive to the danger of the modern athleticism'. In January 1898 the Headmasters' Conference debated a motion that 'the worship of athletics has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished'. The perceived dangers were not merely the threat to academic and moral standards: the following month the fine young all-round athlete JT Graham, who might have gone on to rival Douglas, died at Felsted from 'over-exertion of the heart'.

Sporting success came to Felsted boys chiefly in the spheres of athletics, boxing, football and cricket. Douglas, whose father 'swore him to sport like a young Hannibal'²⁵¹, excelled at all four. He was not a naturally gifted athlete, but achieved his aims by sheer determination and self-discipline. With a grudging mixture of admiration and envy, the other boys recognised his dedication by calling him 'Pro', although he only ever competed on an amateur basis. As an athlete at Felsted, he beat boys who later competed in the Olympics. As a footballer he won an England amateur international cap against Bohemia in 1908, shortly after the separation of the Amateur Football Association, and he captained the Old Felstedians in the Arthur Dunn Cup.

Douglas's earliest sporting triumphs were as a boxer. He won his weight in the Public Schools competition at Aldershot in 1899 and 1901, and the amateur middleweight championship of Great Britain in 1905. At the London Olympics of 1908 he gained a narrow points victory over the Australian Reginald 'Snowy' Baker to win the middleweight gold medal in 'one of the most brilliant exhibitions of skilful boxing allied to tremendous hitting ever seen'. Baker did not dispute the verdict at the time, but in a 1952 interview claimed that that because the ringside judges gave one vote to each man the decision went to the referee, who Baker said was Douglas's father. In fact the referee was Eugene Corri who did not have to give a casting vote because the judges agreed that Douglas was the winner. In those days referees officiated from outside the ring and old Douglas was there, but only in his capacity as president of the Amateur Boxing Association to present the prizes²⁵².

²⁵⁰ *The world of Fred Spalding: photographs of Essex 1860-1940*, introduced by Stan Jarvis. Essex Record Office, 1992, p73. Remaining detail about Felsted in this paragraph and the next two taken from CRAZE, Michael. *The story of Felsted School, 1564-1947*. Ipswich, Cowell, 1955.

²⁵¹ CRAZE, p59.

²⁵² ALLEN, Neil. *Righting old wrongs*. IN *Boxing world*, Feb 2004.

But above all Johnny Douglas became ‘as great a cricketer as a man can make himself without that spark that is beyond acquiring’²⁵³. Bob Carpenter, then Essex’s opening batsman, considered that he ‘was hopeless when he first visited Leyton for coaching’²⁵⁴. Gradually, by sheer determination and hard work, he improved. In 1901 he made two centuries for Felsted and two for the Essex Second XI and, three weeks before his nineteenth birthday, ‘stepped straight into the Essex side’. He still had much to learn. In his very first match Essex bowled Yorkshire out for 104, but were themselves dismissed on the usually blameless pitch at Leyton for 30 and 41. Douglas was bowled by George Hirst for 0 in both innings, and in the following match he scored 0 and 8. He next made a patient 61 not out against Derbyshire, sharing in a match-winning partnership of 169 with wicket-keeper Edward Russell who hit his only first-class century. Rather curiously, Douglas was then dropped and did not reappear for nearly two years.

In June 1903 Douglas played five matches for London County without achieving anything remarkable, but it was nevertheless valuable experience. He was recalled to the Essex side by Charles Kortright, who may have recognised in the 20-year-old a fiercely competitive spirit similar to his own. In 1904 Douglas played six games for London County and eighteen for Essex but did not fully establish himself in the Essex side until 1905, when he topped the county’s bowling averages and took its first recognised hat-trick²⁵⁵. Wisden’s judgment that he ‘was a useful member of the side but did nothing remarkable as either batsman or bowler’ would therefore seem rather harsh. In 1906 Douglas made his debut for the Gentlemen and fell just seven wickets short of doing the double so even Wisden conceded that he was ‘greatly improved’, while the Essex annual report enthused that he was ‘a wonderfully improved all round player’. Over the next few years he made further progress until the extraordinary year of 1911, when he took on the captaincies of both Essex and England in circumstances that the most perceptive onlooker could scarcely have foreseen.

Captain courageous

The obvious candidate to succeed McGahey as Essex captain was his ‘twin’, the senior amateur, Percy Perrin, who was still a fine batsman and a knowledgeable and thoughtful cricketer. In his book *Background to Cricket* Sir Home Gordon wrote that Perrin

...ought to have led Essex and would have done it admirably. But old Douglas – who succeeded me on my resignation of the first Chairmanship of the Club Cricket Conference – held the mortgage on the Leyton Ground and intimated he would foreclose if J.W.H.T. was not made captain.

Gordon was a biased and not entirely reliable witness, who dedicated the book to Perrin. He used it to attack the Douglasses, who when it was published had been dead eight years and were scarcely in a position to defend themselves.

The background to Gordon’s accusation was the Extraordinary General Meeting of 10 November 1908, when CE Green reported that membership had increased to 1761 but the club now needed 2500. There were two mortgages on the Leyton ground, one held by friends which was no problem but the second held by the bank which wanted an immediate reduction of the outstanding debt. One option would be to sell the ground,

²⁵³ BRAY, p64.

²⁵⁴ O’CONNOR, p24.

²⁵⁵ In fact Walter Mead had taken one in 1896 but it was spread over two innings, and only recognised in 2006 after examination of the Surrey and Essex score books.

which was now worth more than had been paid for it, and wind up the club. Green then announced that ‘a gentleman who was a sportsman in the best sense of the word had agreed to take up the second mortgage - Mr. J.H. Douglas, father of one of the club’s best cricketers’²⁵⁶.

Douglas was also invited to fill the committee vacancy created by the death of Robert Cook, who had caused great dissension with his part in the removal of the Essex Football Association final from Leyton. Douglas at first declined, but accepted at the second time of asking in May 1909. This obviously put him in a powerful position and the suspicion is that he exercised it in order to gain the captaincy for his son, but the matter may not have been as simple as that.

The committee’s first choice was not Johnny Douglas but Charles Kortright. He had resigned the captaincy eight years earlier because he felt he was no longer worth his place in the first team, for which he had not played since 1907. He rather surprisingly considered the invitation for a month but then declined and seconded a motion, proposed by Bunny Lucas, that Douglas be asked to act as captain. The minutes record nothing of the debate that led to the decision and the full truth may never be known, but it seems likely that a deal was fixed behind the scenes. Green’s old friend Lucas could well have put the motion on his behalf.

The committee in fact seem not even to have considered Perrin. They may have felt he lacked the necessary ‘devil’ that in 1907 Green had attributed to McGahey. Certainly he would not have been in a position to chastise the side for their continuing shortcomings in the field. Green still ruled the roost and perhaps recognised kindred spirits in both Douglasses, while Kortright as captain had shown real confidence in the young man before he had done much to justify it.

There may also have been subtle class influences at work. Public school men had recently lost control of football and set up the separate Amateur Football Association. As an indirect result of that split the Essex Football Association moved its Cup Final away from the County Ground, to Green’s great annoyance (see above pp 41-2). The committee may therefore have wanted to appoint a man from a pukka public school whose averages appeared in Wisden. Douglas had attended Felsted which fell into that category, unlike Perrin’s Margate College which was a private school but not in the same league.

When Trevor Bailey became Essex Secretary in the 1950s there were still men around who remembered the episode. They gave Bailey the impression that the committee invited Perrin to take up the second mortgage and took umbrage because he refused²⁵⁷. That is certainly plausible, for Perrin’s mother died in October 1908 leaving him the bulk of his father’s estate. On the other hand, he may not have had immediate access to the money and the committee may not have known how wealthy he was. Bailey was also told that old Douglas had made Johnny’s elevation a condition of his taking up the mortgage, although that would not square with the captaincy being offered initially to Kortright.

We can never know how the team would have fared under Perrin, but it certainly improved under Douglas. Essex made a good start but twice ‘let victory slip through their hands’ against Sussex, who won only two other games. Essex still finished sixth – their highest position of the new century. Green told the 1912 AGM, doubtless with

²⁵⁶ Minutes, 24 November 1908.

²⁵⁷ BAILEY, p71.

a considerable degree of satisfaction, that 'a very great deal of the success and improvement was due to the keenness, energy and ability shown by their new captain, Mr John Douglas'.

Thus the allegation that JH Douglas bought his son the captaincy is not as clear-cut as Gordon made out, but it does contain more than a grain of truth. Old Douglas's generosity had given him a powerful position in the club, and even the Douglas loyalist Charles Bray concedes that he 'no doubt pulled the strings'. Early in 1913 JH Douglas lent the club £300, but unlike Green charged it a canny 4% and kept it in his debt. After Green's resignation in 1912 the new captain joined his father on the committee and the county could easily have been called Douglas-shire. Few men ever captained a side for longer, and Johnny developed the autocratic tendencies that often accompany a long period of office.

Understandably disappointed at being passed over, Perrin missed the first two games of the 1911 season but was not one to bear a grudge and soon reappeared, supporting Douglas loyally for the next seventeen years. His dry humour was sometimes a counterbalance to the younger man's passionate commitment, as on the occasion when Douglas was being rather secretive about the make-up of the side and Perrin asked: 'Is Mrs Douglas not playing?' For all his earnestness, Douglas was not self-important and would have enjoyed the joke. Perrin led the side seven times in the early 1920s and then in 1926 was officially appointed acting captain until mid-July, when Douglas returned from an appendicitis operation. In 1927 and 1928 he played six games for Essex, four of them as captain in Douglas's absence.

Douglas was first selected for the Gentlemen in 1906 and over the next few years played for them regularly, with mixed success. In the 1911 match at The Oval, however, he scored 94 runs for once out and took seven wickets for 91. Some of the leading amateurs chosen for the subsequent tour of Australia were unable to make it, and Douglas was invited to join the party. His father's financial support meant that he never had any such problems and he accepted enthusiastically. The team sailed from Tilbury on a ship of the Orient Line, whose director CE Green hosted the send-off and made the main speech.

When the captain, Plum Warner, fell ill, Douglas and FR Foster of Warwickshire were the only remaining amateurs in the party. Foster had led his team to their first ever championship, but Essex under Douglas had moved up to sixth place and he was the older and more experienced man. Douglas therefore led the side in his debut test, and was nearly sacked after it. Choosing to open the bowling with Foster and himself, he relegated Sydney Barnes to first change so that great bowler asked in forceful terms what he was doing there if he wasn't going to open the bowling. England lost easily, Warner complained that Douglas 'did not have the side in hand' and the possibility of replacing him was seriously considered. Perhaps because there were so few amateurs, the already highly regarded professional Jack Hobbs was among those consulted. He argued that a change would cause friction and unpleasantness, so Douglas retained the captaincy.

Against Victoria in the second game of the tour, Douglas had produced one of his more obdurate batting performances. He made an unbeaten 33 out of 179 added while he was at the wicket, and a typical Aussie wag in the crowd called out 'Douglas, there's a policeman coming. He will pinch you for loitering.' Another dubbed him 'Johnny Won't Hit Today'. The name stuck, but England won the last four tests and the Ashes. Douglas returned to a hero's welcome and the Essex committee laid on a

complimentary dinner for him at the Liverpool Street Hotel. A newspaper guest-list indicates that only amateur cricketers and men from the upper echelons of Essex society were invited, no professionals or ladies. Douglas never boasted of his prowess and his speech to the dinner seems to have been genuinely modest, but he and his father were quietly proud of his achievement, so when among friends he allowed himself to modify his nickname to 'Johnny Won His Test'.

Despite his success in Australia, the next two years were disappointing for Douglas. Those amateurs who had not toured were available for the home tests and Douglas played in only one, at the Oval. He was cheered all the way to the wicket in appreciation of his captaincy - just like, ninety years later, another tough and uncompromising Essex and former England captain, Nasser Hussain. Douglas's beloved Essex dropped to bottom but one in the championship and remained there in 1913, when his personal form also fell away. Douglas was therefore not at first considered for the next overseas tour, to South Africa in 1913-4, but it was a sign of changing times that no fewer than five amateurs declared themselves unable or unwilling to lead the party. Assured of the financial and emotional support of his father, Johnny was as keen as ever and took on the job with enthusiasm. He led his side to a 4-0 series win, with one draw. He made runs and took wickets, so even Wisden conceded that 'Douglas had a capital tour both as batsman and bowler'.

Again Douglas returned in triumph but this time his success continued at home. His bowling was as formidable as ever but he also became more adventurous in his batting and his captaincy. Essex won nine matches and moved up to eighth place in the championship. For Essex he scored 1151 runs and took 118 wickets, thus becoming the first player to do the double for the county. From 28 May to 8 June he took 34 wickets in three matches, all won comfortably by Essex. In the third of them Essex beat the champions Surrey by 323 runs, their only defeat of the season, and Douglas bowled unchanged with Bert Tremlin. For the Gentlemen against the Players he took nine wickets in the first innings, one of only three amateurs ever to do so in that fixture; with a further four in the second, he played the leading role in a rare win for the Gentlemen. On the day Great Britain declared war on Germany, Douglas and Tremlin again bowled unchanged, dismissing Derbyshire for 31 and 94. Two weeks later against Lancashire, he and John Freeman put on 261 in a partnership that remains an Essex record for the seventh wicket. Wisden declared that his all-round form had 'perhaps never been approached by an Essex cricketer', and made him one of its five cricketers of the year. In his thirty-second year, he was at the height of his powers as a player. He was to lose four of the best years of his cricketing life, but others were to lose more than that.

Interlude: Essex in the First World War

The war was rather more than an interruption to the cricket career of Johnny Douglas, but this seems the best place to include my research on the subject. The casualty rate amongst junior officers in the trenches was extremely high, much higher than NCOs or other ranks - on average, a junior officer leading from the front survived six weeks before becoming a casualty (killed or injured).²⁵⁸ It is not surprising that eleven of the thirteen Essex players killed in the war were amateurs.

On 24 August 1914 against Northamptonshire at Leyton, the brilliant young Rossall and Cambridge all-rounder Geoffrey Boisselier Davies made his maiden first-class

²⁵⁸ [John Lewis-Stempel](#) *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War*: Orion, 2010

century. Promoted to no. 4 in Essex's search for quick runs, he took just 81 minutes and 'hit in brilliant style' with Colin McIver, the pair adding 108 in 50 minutes. That evening, the Essex committee met and proposed that 'Members of the Staff volunteering in the war should have their places kept open for them'. By the end of September 1914 'all available members of the team (amateur and professional) and of the ground staff had already joined the army'. A year later, Davies was Essex's first first-class cricketer to be killed in action.

In 1914 Essex tried 25 players in their revived Second XI, a few of them more experienced but mostly those on the fringes of the First XI and youngsters with potential. By the time of their last match, against Surrey at The Oval on 26 and 27 August, several of the older men had already enlisted, so Essex fielded a very young team and they were beaten by an innings. Soon it was their turn to go to war, and no fewer than five of them died, and two of the Surrey players. Responses to the enormity of the First World War can only be personal, but nothing brings the tragic loss of life home to me more forcibly than the picture in my mind's eye of those young men playing cricket at The Oval on a late summer's day.

On 21 April 1915 the committee wrote to King George V, whose secretary Lord Stamfordham replied on his behalf:

I have laid before the King your letter of yesterday, enclosing a list of Essex County Cricketers serving in HM Forces during the War, which the King has read with much interest and satisfaction.

This was not entirely a matter of doddering old buffers blithely sending young men to their deaths: three of the committee – John Douglas, Colin McIver and Charles Round – joined up and were commissioned in the Army.

Annual reports throughout the war included lengthy lists about what each player was doing for the war effort, which was perhaps a form of coercion. The annual report for 1919 noted that during the war 'no professionals were engaged and no one eligible for military service was employed on the ground'.

At first five members of the ground staff were retained with no alteration in wages, and the committee replied to queries from Sussex and Warwickshire to that effect. Soon afterwards the committee must have written to the other counties about 'paying professionals during the crisis caused by the war', for they received responses from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Surrey, Derbyshire and Sussex. As a result, on 14 December they 'agreed that notice be given to A.C. Russell, J. Freeman and B. Tremlin that the committee did not see their way to employ them after December 31st'. Only the head groundsman EC Freeman and his assistant Walter 'Bung' Brewer stayed on, both being beyond military age. There was no sinecure, for air-raids were a serious hazard in London and its suburbs. On 31 May 1915 three explosives landed on the nearby Leyton Midland station, killing four people, injuring 14 and damaging 53 houses²⁵⁹. On 17 August 1915 pieces of shell and shrapnel were picked up at the ground but there was no material damage.

The committee too kept Freeman and Brewer busy, for they sought to do their bit for the war effort and the ground was constantly in use. They agreed to send any old footballs they might have to internees in neutral Holland and 'dispatched to various Regiments at the Front large parcels of cricket materials which have been highly

²⁵⁹ http://londonist.com/2010/07/wwi_airship_attacks

appreciated'. They granted 'use of the ground for a Patriotic Demonstration on Saturday 10 July 1915', and the Vicar of Leyton held an intercessory service on 11 July. There were entertainments, to wounded soldiers on 19 June and to the Soldiers and Sailors Association on 3 July. In 1917 the Soldiers and Sailors Association and the South-West Essex Regiment of the National Volunteer Regiment both held sports days on the ground. Although the professionals were in the services, Essex played some thirty matches a season against local and military teams, and encouraged the use of the ground for other games intended to raise morale. Wisden commented: 'Essex and other teams played at Leyton. These games were not in themselves of much importance, but kept cricket going during the war.' In February 1919 'all county cricketers who had served in the war' were invited to the club's annual dinner as guests²⁶⁰.

The committee also did their best to keep the club going, often couching their requests in patriotic terms:

A list of members of the Committee, of the First and Second Elevens and the Ground Staff who are serving their Country in various capacities in connection with the war is sent herewith. The long list of names should inspire those who cannot engage in active service to continue their support of the old game when so many active supporters of it are risking their lives in defence of their King and Country.

They received 'many favourable responses' to an appeal for members to renew their subscriptions so that after the war 'Essex may be able to resume active operations on the cricket field again'. Captain Robert Edwards of the Essex Yeomanry, who was severely wounded in the conflict, suggested an entrance fee of two guineas 'for all those who had not supported the club during the war'. The committee thanked him for the idea but regretted that it was impracticable.

²⁶⁰ Presumably only their own, otherwise they would have been even more in debt.

CORRECTED LIST.

**LIST OF ESSEX COUNTY CRICKETERS
SERVING IN
HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES, 1917.**

<i>Name.</i>	<i>Rank.</i>	<i>Battalion.</i>	<i>Regiment.</i>
J. F. BAWTREE	Captain	2/5th Batt. ... ..	... Essex Regt.
O. C. BRISTOWE	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Royal Engineers
C. P. BUCKENHAM	Sergeant ... ..	... ..	2/8 Company, North Scottish Royal Garrison Artillery
P. CAMPBELL	Cadet ... ..	... ..	Officers' Cadet Batt., A. Company Essex Yeomanry
HORACE CLARK ... ..	... ..	... ..	... ..
R. D. CLARK	2nd Lieut. and Asst.-Adjt.	13th "	Royal Warwickshire Regt.
E. C. COLEMAN (<i>Killed in Action</i>)... ..	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	4th East Anglian Brigade R.F.A.
NORMAN COOPER (<i>Discharged, ill-health</i>)	Private	2nd "	Royal Fusiliers
G. B. DAVIES (<i>Killed in Action</i>)	Captain	11th " ... ..	... Essex
J. G. DIXON, <i>Military Cross</i>	Lieut.	7th "	Worcestershire
C. H. DOUGLAS	Lieut.	1st "	20th King's L'pool
J. W. H. T. DOUGLAS	Lt. Col.	2nd " ... ..	... Bedfordshire
H. S. DOWSETT (<i>Wounded</i>)	Private ... ..	... ..	24th Royal Fusiliers
GUY J. EDWARDS (<i>Wounded</i>), <i>Mil. Cross</i> , Lt. Col. Commanding	Lt. Col. Commanding	4th "	Coldstream Guards
ROBERT EDWARDS (<i>Severely Wounded</i>)... ..	Captain ... ..	... ..	Essex Yeomanry
H. D. E. ELLIOTT	Lieut.	9th "	King's Own Shropshire Light Infantry
F. L. FANE, <i>Military Cross</i>	Captain	7th "	West Yorkshire
W. F. O. FAVIELL (<i>Wounded</i>)	Lt. Col. ... ..	... ..	Indian Army
E. J. FREEMAN	Bombardier ... ..	... ..	Royal Garrison Artillery
W. T. GARRETT	Private ... ..	... ..	M.F., A.S.C.
KENNETH L. GIBSON	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	6th Dragoon Guards
A. L. GIBSON	2nd Lieut.	5th "	Rifle Brigade
Rev. F. H. GILLINGHAM, Chaplain to the Forces at the Front ... ..	... ..	... ..	... ..
Sir R. GREEN-PRICE, Bart.	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Montgomeryshire Yeomanry
T. G. GRINTER (<i>Severely Wounded</i>)	Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Border Regiment
J. KEBLE GUY	Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Royal Engineers
P. J. HILLARD (<i>reported killed in action, now reported prisoner in Germany</i>) ... ..	... ..	... ..	12th London (Rangers)
H. M. HILLS (<i>Wounded</i>)	Private ... ..	... ..	Grenadier Guards
H. D. KEIGWIN (<i>Killed in Action</i>)... ..	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	3rd Lancashire Fusiliers
R. P. KEIGWIN, <i>Chevalier de l'Ordre de Leopold.</i>	Lieut. R.N.V.R. ... ..	... ..	H.M.S. "Arrogant"
J. LEWIN	Private	5th "	West Kent
G. M. LOUDEN	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Royal Garrison Artillery
C. MCGAHEY	Private ... ..	... ..	2nd Sportsman's Batt.
C. D. McIVER (<i>Wounded</i>)	Captain ... ..	... ..	Queen's West Surrey
H. MEAD (<i>Wounded</i>)	Private	2nd "	Essex
J. L. MEADOWCROFT ... ..	... ..	... ..	7th Middlesex
H. C. MORTLOCK	Lieut.	2/25th Cyclist Batt.	London Regt.
F. W. H. NICHOLAS	Captain	5th Batt.	Bedfordshire
E. ROY PALLETT	2nd Lieut.	19th "	Public Schools' Corps
A. H. READ ... ..	... ..	2nd "	Artists' Rifles O.T.C.
W. REEVES (<i>Discharged, ill health</i>)	Corporal ... ..	... ..	A.S.C.
C. STEWART RICHARDSON	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	M.T., A.S.C.
R. H. ROBINSON (<i>Killed</i>) ... ..	... ..	... ..	... ..
C. J. ROUND	Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Essex Yeomanry
H. SMITH	Lance-Corporal ... ..	... ..	West Middlesex
F. STREET (<i>Killed in Action</i>)	Lieut. ... ..	... ..	Royal Fusiliers
B. STRUTTON (<i>Wounded</i>)	Lance-Corporal ... ..	... ..	West Middlesex
B. TABRUM (<i>Wounded</i>)	Major	26th "	Northumberland Fusiliers
C. V. THOMPSON (<i>Killed in Action</i>)	2nd Lieut. ... ..	... ..	8th East Lancashire Regt.
D. TOSETTI, <i>Military Cross</i>	Captain	8th "	Royal Berkshire
GILBERT TOSETTI ... ..	... ..	... ..	East African Mounted Rifles
S. A. TRICK ... ..	... ..	... ..	Army Service Corps
A. J. TURNER	Lt. Col. ... ..	... ..	General Headquarters Staff, France
W. M. TURNER	Major ... ..	... ..	Royal Artillery
A. C. WATSON	Major (7th Hussars) ... ..	... ..	Adjut. to the Staffordshire Yeomanry
A. J. WAUGH (<i>Killed in Action</i>)	Captain ... ..	... ..	R.A.M.C.
S. H. WAUGH ... ..	... ..	... ..	Essex Yeomanry
A. D. WOMERSLEY... ..	Captain	10th Batt.	Essex
L. D. WOMERSLEY (<i>Wounded</i>)	Captain	5th "	Essex
V. J. WOODWARD (<i>Wounded</i>)	Captain ... ..	... ..	1st Footballers' Batt.
H. YOUNG	Instructor	13th "	Hampshire
H. W. DE ZOETE	Captain ... ..	... ..	Essex Yeomanry

In addition to those serving in His Majesty's Forces the following are engaged in Government work.

J. FREEMAN ... Muniton Works, Beckton A. C. RUSSELL ... Motor Transport, A.S.C.

The Committee will be glad to receive any corrections to the above List.

In 1917 the committee produced this extensive list of Essex cricketers serving in the war

Essex cricketers killed in the First World War²⁶¹

Edwin Charles Kaye Clarke

Born 29 October 1890, Loughton, Essex.

Died 31 August 1918, France.

2nd XI 1910.

Edwin was the only child of Charles Sydney Clarke, a self-employed produce broker, and Elizabeth Kaye. On the 1901 census Edwin was listed as the youngest and sole male boarder at Buckhurst College, a school for older girls in Buckhurst Hill High Road.

Clarke attended Westminster School. His Wisden obituary says that he headed the school batting averages in 1909 and the bowling in 1910, and *The Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* for 16 June 1917 that he headed the bowling averages in both years, but whichever was correct he was certainly a talented all-round cricketer. He was also captain of the football 1st XI, for which he read the game well but was 'a trifle lacking in pace'. On 1 and 2 August 1910 he played for the Public Schools in an exciting match at Lord's, which MCC won by two wickets. He top-scored with 79 in the Schools' first innings and took two wickets.

Ten days later Clarke made his only appearance for Essex 2nd XI, at Hythe against Kent 2nd XI. His seven overs cost 51 runs but he had Kent's top scorer, Wally Hardinge, stumped by Edward Coleman. Clarke's 32 was the highest by any of the six Essex amateurs. Essex followed on but batted out time and he was not needed again. This is the last match *CrickArchive* records for him and he was not on the 1917 list of Essex cricketers serving in the Forces, so he presumably played no more cricket at a higher level. Coleman and Geoffrey Davies who played in this match also died in the war.

In 1911 Clarke was an insurance clerk, living with his parents and a servant in St John's Wood, and by 1914 he was a probationer of the Institute of Actuaries. He was also a Serjeant in the Inns of Court Officer Training Corps, promoted on 18 October 1914 to Second Lieutenant and in 1918 to Captain, attached to the 8th Battalion of the London Regiment, an unusual regiment that was not affiliated with the Territorial Force but instead was treated as a corps in its own right. Clarke was sent to the Western Front with the London Regiment in May 1918, and was killed in action while leading an attack on Massiere's Wood, for which he was awarded the Military Cross. He was commemorated on the Vis-en-Artois Memorial, Panel 10.

Edward Charles Coleman

Born 5 September 1891, Southend, Essex.

Died 2 April 1917, Salonika, Greece.

1st XI 1912, 2nd XI 1910, 1914.

Coleman attended Dulwich College from 1904-10, and went on to Pembroke College, Cambridge. He twice kept wicket for the 1st XI in 1912, and in nine of the 13 matches played by the 2nd XI in 1910 and 1914. In 1915 he married Dorothy Gwendolyn Petchell, but they had no children.

²⁶¹ This is the text of my [Essex County Cricketers who died in the Great War](#). Peter Edwards Museum & Library research paper no.9, January 2022. It also has illustrations.

Dulwich College's *Fallen of the Great War* website provided an excellent summary of his life:

*...Edward was the younger of two sons of Edward Herbert Coleman and his wife Rachel. He started at Dulwich at the same time as his elder brother Herbert, and towards the end of his College career became a boarder in Ivyholme. In his final year he was an editor of *The Alleynian*, a member of the 2nd XV, as well as Captain of Fives, he was also Captain, and wicketkeeper, for the 1st XI cricket, a team which he was in for the fourth year running; after leaving he went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge. Whilst there he continued with his cricket, going on to play in three first-class matches, one for a combined Oxford & Cambridge XI against a combined Army and Navy team in the Summer of 1911, and two County Championship matches for Essex the following summer; despite this however he never earned his Cambridge 'Blue' in the sport. During this period he also became an army reservist, being a member of the Royal Field Artillery's Reserve of Officers.*

Once war was declared he signed up for full time service, and in early 1915 was promoted to Lieutenant, and towards the end of that year was sent abroad for the first time, proceeding to Egypt. After serving in Egypt for some time, Edward was transferred to the Macedonian Front, and was in the trenches near Salonica when he was killed on April 2nd 1917; he was survived by his widow Dorothy. His elder brother Herbert, a fellow OA, had fallen on the Somme the previous year. He was buried at Doiran Military Cemetery, Plot VI, D 16.

Geoffrey Boisselier Davies

Born 26 October 1892, Bow, Middlesex.

Died 26 September 1915, Halluch, Pas-de-Calais, France.

1st XI 1912-14, 2nd XI 1910.

Davies was, in purely cricketing terms, undoubtedly Essex County Cricket Club's greatest loss in the Great War. Wisden considered 'there can be little doubt that, but for the War, he would have developed into an England player'.

Geoffrey's father, Hughes Reid Davies, was a physician and surgeon at 62 Bow Road and his mother, Edith Annie, was the daughter of Evan Llewellyn, a general practitioner at 24 Bow Road. Geoffrey's unusual middle name was his grandmother's maiden name. In 1904 Hughes Davies moved his practice and his family to Woodford Green, thereby giving his son a residential qualification to play cricket for Essex.

In 1906 Davies won a scholarship to Rossall in Lancashire, a public school then regarded as among the leading thirty in the country. He became a Colour Sergeant in the Officer Training Corps, learning tactics, map-reading and the use of ground. Davies was an outstanding all-round sportsman who in his final year was a school monitor and captain of cricket. He had played two games for Essex 2nd XI in 1910, but it was probably his performances for the school that in August 1912 led Essex to call up the 19-year-old for the 1st XI. To begin with he did little of note but Essex selected him whenever he was available, and it is greatly to their credit and his that they persisted with him until he came good.

Davies was gifted academically as well as at sport. In 1912 he won the school prize for classical literature and a Classical Exhibition to Selwyn College Cambridge. He went straight into the 1913 university team, mostly opening the batting, and bowling a few overs as third or fourth change. As the season went on, his batting fell away but his

slow-medium right-arm spin bowling improved, with a career best five for 25 against MCC and four wickets in a hard-fought Varsity win over Oxford.

In 1913 Davies joined Essex on 24 July for the rest of the campaign. The 45-year-old Walter Mead began his 332nd and last first-class match for Essex on 31 July against Kent, but bowled only one over. Davies, who had a similar style to the older man and doubtless learned much from him, bowled 19 overs and took five wickets in the match. The quick reflexes that made Davies a fine racquets and fives player meant that he was also a brilliant slip fielder. He took 29 wickets for Essex and was one of the few shining lights in a dismal season.

In 1914 Davies continued to develop his bowling with Cambridge, heading their averages with 45 wickets for only 670 runs at 14.90. He played three early season matches for Essex, the most significant of them the first ever festival match at the Castle Park, Colchester, against Worcestershire. Davies took 3 for 34 in the first innings and a career-best 6 for 51 in the second, helping Essex to a comfortable win by 193 runs. In July he returned to Essex and steadily picked up wickets but, coming in at no. 10, failed to pass 10 in eight consecutive innings. It is surprising to read in his Selwyn College obituary that he could be a nervous batsman, but he had good strokes on both sides of the wicket and it was with his maiden century against Northamptonshire at Leyton that he finally came into his own with the bat.

Essex's last match of the season, at Weston-Super-Mare, was played at a frenetic pace, as though the players were determined to make the most of their last game before getting down to the serious business of war: even though much of the first day was lost to rain, it was over in two. Somerset were bowled out for 141, with Davies taking four for 18. Promoted to no. 6 after his sparkling performance against Northamptonshire, he hit a magnificent 118 out of 155 while he was at the crease – half of Essex's 235 – and Essex won by ten wickets. He had taken 38 wickets in 16 matches for the county, and towards the end of the season blossomed as a batsman with those two centuries against Northamptonshire and Somerset.

Davies was commissioned as a temporary second lieutenant in the 11th Battalion of the Essex Regiment when it was formed in September 1914 at Warley. After training in Sussex, they landed at Boulogne on 30 August 1915 and prepared to go into the front line. Meanwhile, the British Cabinet, under pressure from the French, had reluctantly agreed to a new push near Loos, planned to begin on 25 September 1915. The plan of attack was entrusted to Field Marshal Douglas Haig. Troops had to advance across open ground towards heavily fortified German positions and hundreds of them were mown down by enemy machine guns. The distinguished historian Professor GR Searle, a staunch defender of Haig's tactics later in the war, wrote: 'For slight territorial gain, British troops were slaughtered, many of them raw recruits who had only arrived in France a fortnight earlier. The following day (26 September) Haig personally made the disastrous decision to renew the attack, needlessly sacrificing yet more lives.'

Among the lives sacrificed was that of Geoffrey Davies. He had rapidly risen to the rank of temporary captain but was shot dead leading his men into action at Hulluch. His last recorded action was to place his gas mask over the face of a wounded soldier, when a poison attack was imminent. For this and other actions he was mentioned in dispatches. He was a month short of his 23rd birthday. Initially he was reported wounded and missing but his body was never found and on 4 December his death was officially recorded on the daily casualty lists. He is commemorated on Panel 85 to 87 of the Loos Memorial, and in Eastbourne Cemetery on the tombstone of his sister Vera

who died aged 28, probably of influenza, on 11 October 1918. He was one of 297 Old Rossallians killed in the Great War, whose memorial was an extension to the school chapel with an altarpiece designed by Eric Gill.

Paul James ('Jake') Hilleard²⁶²

Born 20 February 1894, Newington, Southwark.

Died 24 April 1915, Formin, France.

2nd XI 1914.

Paul was the elder son of James Hilleard and Eva Emma Radcliffe. James was a law clerk who in 1898 stood for election to Southwark council. Eva Tanner married Alfred Henry Radcliffe in 1885 but he died three years later, leaving her with a two-year-old daughter whom James adopted. Eva was an independent-minded woman who in 1901, at a time when women's occupations were seldom shown on censuses, was bringing up a young family and running an employment agency from home at 84 Alvey Street, Newington. In 1911 she was a self-employed dressmaker and Paul was a clerk for a public company. The family moved initially to 11 Riviera Drive Southend-on-Sea, and later to 17 Winter Avenue. Paul attended Southchurch Hall School and then from September 1908 to December 1909 Southend Technical School (now High School for Boys).

Hilleard was a fine all-round athlete and played four games for the 2nd XI in 1914. He headed the batting averages, mostly opening the innings, and took two wickets as a change bowler. His 85 not out against Surrey at Leyton was 'a capital display'. He also played at The Oval in a 12-a-side one-day match for Essex Young Amateurs against Surrey Young Amateurs when he scored 52 and, the seventh bowler to be tried, took 4 for 52.

A Rifleman in the London Regiment (the Rangers), he was killed in the Second Battle of Ypres, when the Germans released poison gas into the Allied lines and the violence of the attack forced a withdrawal and a shortening of the line of defence. A courageous comrade wrote to give Paul's family a moving account which, in consideration of their feelings, may have understated the worst of what happened:

We had finished an eight-day spell in the trenches and had retired to our former field containing open dug-outs and rested one night. Next morning many French and Canadian troops having been forced by gas fumes to flee. The order came to stand to and after lunch our Battalion received orders to go up and support the Suffolks in a big attack. This we did in extended order, as it was daylight. A machine-gun played upon us apart from shrapnel and shell fire above and Paul fell saying 'Arthur I'm hit!' I was ordered to go with the rest but ran back to pull him into a less dangerous spot. To our delight we found that the bullets had merely grazed the skin, and got just through the edge of his right-hand trouser pocket! Consequently we both caught up our company (which by now had separated from the Battalion and had also passed the Suffolks, who were pack loaded) and taken possession of an empty trench, only to find the Germans creeping along it from our left. They got another wretched machine gun, enfilade fashion, upon us and poor Paul was shot through the eye. He died instantly without any pain whatsoever. We cleared out the enemy with the help of the Suffolks but had to relinquish the position at midnight, owing to insufficient

²⁶² This section includes information from ILES, Leslie and BAKER, John. *They rest from their labours*. Southend High School for Boys, 2008.

men (38 out of well over 100. There was just time however to see to burying and we laid you son to rest, together with many another a poor 'Ranger'.

The 1917 *List of Essex men serving in HM Forces* says that Hilleard was 'reported killed in action, now reported prisoner in Germany'. More than two years after his death, the International Red Cross produced a record card stating that he was being held at Cassel Prisoner of War Camp in Thuringia. This strange error must have raised his parents' hopes, but sadly they were dashed because the original report was correct.

In his obituary, the *Southend Standard* said:

He became very popular by his prowess on the football field and he would I know have further have further delighted us as a cricketer. Paul Hilleard was only 21 and had been at the front for about four months. His brilliant records as a cricketer are well-known to our readers. During the past two seasons he scored about 1,600 runs in each season with an average of over 50, and took many wickets.

He was one of ten members of Wickford Cricket Club who died in the war, and is commemorated on the war memorial in the Essex town. He is also commemorated on the Old Southendians Roll of Honour and on the Ypres Menin Gate Memorial, Panel 11-13 and 14.

Henry David Keigwin

Born 14 May 1881, Lexden, Essex.

Died 20 September 1916 near Thiepval, Somme, France.

1st XI 1906-7, 2nd XI 1900-3.

Henry was the third of five boys born in Colchester to Charles David Keigwin (1850-1937) and Louisa Stinton (1850-1946), the daughter of a corn merchant. Though only a bank clerk who later became an accountant, Charles managed to put all but the eldest through Cambridge and leave over £16,000 (an estimated £1.2 million in 2022). The eldest and the youngest played no significant cricket but Herbert Stanley (1878-1962), Henry David and Richard Prescott (1883-1972, known as RP) all appeared at first-class level and for Essex.

Henry Keigwin attended St Paul's School and Peterhouse Cambridge, where he was an organ scholar before becoming music director at the famous Glenalmond College in Scotland. Opening for Peterhouse in two matches nine days apart in 1904, Henry and RP put on unbroken opening partnerships of 318 and 244. In 1906 and 1907 Henry played four matches for the Essex 1st XI with little success, although he scored 77 for Gentlemen of England v. Surrey. He had the distinction of opening the batting with WG Grace in the great man's last ever first-class match, played in bitter cold for the Gentlemen of England v. Surrey in 1908.

Keigwin volunteered to come from Rhodesia in January 1916 to join up through Cambridge University with the Lancashire Fusiliers, and died during the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme. He is commemorated at the Bouzincourt Communal Cemetery Extension, I.H.7.

Harold Mead

Born 13 June 1895, Walthamstow, Essex.

Died 13 April 1921, Bell Common, Epping, Essex.

1st XI 1913-14, 2nd XI 1914.

Harold was the younger son of the great Essex slow-medium bowler Walter, and Ada Annie Hayden. A slow left-arm bowler and lower order right-hand bat, he played alongside his father twice in May 1913, although his performances never suggested that his achievements would rival Walter's: in seven matches for the 1st and 2nd XIs he took only five wickets for 266 runs, and scored 23 runs at an average of 2.55.

Harold Mead was severely wounded in 1915 while serving as a private with the Essex Regiment, and never fully recovered. He was buried in the Epping Cemetery, Bury Lane, Epping. Although the official date given for the end of the war was 31 August 1921, his death was not recorded by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Harold's early death was not the only tragedy in Walter's life. His one-year-old daughter Mildred died in 1901, his wife in 1902 and his daughter Ada Carpenter in 1924, both aged 32.

Edward Roy Pallett

Born 18 March 1895, Halstead, Essex.

Died 6th April 1918, Aveluy Wood, France.

2nd XI 1914.

Roy was the only son of Dr Thomas Edward Pallett and Mary Fowler of Earl's Colne, Essex. Educated at Bowden House preparatory school and Repton, he was a fine all-round sportsman. He was in the Repton football XI 1912-13 and the cricket XI 1912-14, and represented the school at the Aldershot boxing tournament in 1914. He played football for Corinthians, and for Ipswich Town when they were in the Southern Amateur League.

Pallett played cricket for Essex in three 2nd XI matches in August 1914. His best performance was against Kent, when he scored 79 and added 161 for the 9th wicket with Harry Hills. He also played with Paul Hilleard for Essex Young Amateurs against Surrey Young Amateurs, and scored 61 not out.

The school war register states:

Private, Public Schools Battalion, 19th Royal Fusiliers, August 1914; 2nd Lt. 18th Battalion, October 1914; Lieutenant, France, December 1915; temporary Captain, gymnastic staff, Scotland, July 1917; attached to 7th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers, France, January 1918; wounded and mentioned in dispatches; killed on 6th April 1918 at Aveluy Wood and buried in a temporary grave; in 1920 the body was exhumed and identified by a single boot. His body was re-interred at Aveluy Wood cemetery, III.D.4.

Ralf Hubert Robinson

Born 28 June 1885, Stratford, Essex.

Died 23 August 1917, Westhoek Ridge, Ypres, Belgium.

1st XI 1912.

Ralf was the youngest child of Matthew Robinson and Cecilia Hansford Herring. Matthew was a master carpenter and builder, and Ralf became a stock jobber's clerk.

Robinson was regarded as 'one of the best amateur wicket-keepers in the country'. He played for the Wanstead club, so was known to the Essex captain and Wanstead stalwart Johnny Douglas. He played four matches for Essex in June and July in the troubled

season of 1912, when they used six wicket-keepers and won only one match. He held six of his nine catches in the match against Kent, and made all of his four stumpings off the leg-breaks of Charles McGahey. His best innings was his last, when he made 11 not out against Sussex in a last wicket partnership of 43 with Walter Mead.

Early in 1915 Robinson married Daisy Gertrude Marian Bailey, daughter of a Wanstead stationer, and a year later their daughter Sybil was born at Wanstead. Soon afterwards they moved to the Rowlands in Benfleet, a comfortable oak-panelled house with five bedrooms and two reception rooms.

By then Robinson was serving on the Western Front as a private in the Royal Fusiliers. He was promoted to serjeant and won the Military Medal, and was transferred to the Rifle Brigade as a temporary second lieutenant. He died of wounds and is buried at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery. The 1917 *List of Essex men serving in HM Forces* states that he was 'killed' rather than 'killed in action', but we don't know if there's any significance in this distinction.

Ralf and Daisy Robinson are seen here with their daughter Sybil, two months before he was killed. His is one of 37 names listed on the Benfleet war memorial.

Four months later Daisy gave birth to a boy, Ralf Hubert Reginald Robinson. She asked the Essex committee whether she could have her husband's County Cap 'for the sake of their son' and they forwarded it with 'the greatest pleasure'. Tragically, her son was also a casualty of war, killed in action with the Eighth Army in Libya in 1942.

Frank Street

Born 31 May 1870, Kensington, Middlesex.

Died 7 July 1916. Ovillers-la-Boisselle, Somme, France.

1st XI 1898-9.

Frank was the son of barrister John Bamfield Street and Eliza Martha Wren. While a housemaster at Forest School, he played in 1898 and 1899 for Essex in his only nine first-class matches, scoring 246 runs in 11 innings. The photo and biography below are reproduced with permission from Westminster School, where in 1889 he was described as 'a good bat, with an extremely pretty style; steady bowler.'

Frank Street attended Westminster School as a Queen's Scholar from 1884-1889. Street was a talented sportsman at school and beyond. He played Association Football for Oxford, captaining the team in 1893. He also played cricket for Essex in 1898 and 1899. On leaving university he decided to be a teacher, working at Bury St. Edmunds School, Forest School and finally settling at Uppingham from 1900.

On 22 April 1911 he married, at the age of 40, Marian Greenhill. On the outbreak of war he was faced with a difficult decision. Should he remain as a teacher and stay at Uppingham with his wife, or join up? In spite of being four years over the enlistment age, he decided it was his duty to go to war. He joined the 18th (Service) Battalion Royal Fusiliers in September 1914.

He had risen to the rank of Lieutenant when he led the men of the 9th Battalion Royal Fusiliers over the top at Mash Valley near Ovillers on the Somme on 7 July 1916. They captured two German lines but as Street was clearing woodland and trenches between them, he was shot by a sniper.

The Uppingham School magazine included a moving epitaph:

The loss of Frank Street is one that cannot be repaired. Street was the best type of man we cannot afford to lose — the unselfish Englishman.

So fine an athlete might have been allowed some conscious pride in his prowess; but love of skill, keenness for a side, were the only instincts that inspired Street. In school...boys learnt to know and admire the same examples.

Never morose, never touchy, his humour ever ready, typical English, free from 'swank' of any kind. These were the reasons why he was so universally popular.

He achieved excellence from a high sense of duty; and the claims of his duty he had recognised long before the outbreak of war made them dawn upon the minds of present-day patriots. His failings, if such they can be called, were modesty and the lack of personal ambition...[but] for him we feel no regrets; his life was fine, and his death a brave Englishman's.

...Before the advance, he kept his men in hand under a heavy shell fire. We know the sort of encouragement he would have given, and almost seem to hear the words...

...Never a braver soldier fell, never was mourned a dearer friend...at the school from which he flew to arms his noble name will never die.

Street was killed in the first week of the Battle of the Somme, and his body was never found. His name is on memorials at Thiepval, at Westminster School and at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Uppingham.

Cecil Victor Thompson

Born 14 June 1897, Brixton, Surrey.

Died 6 February 1917, Basra, Iraq.

2nd XI 1914.

Cecil was the eldest child of Alexander Thompson and Annie Greenhill. Alexander was a commercial traveller in carbonic acid gas, working for a brewer. In 1911 Cecil's parents were living at 33 Seymour Gardens Ilford and he was boarding at Forest School, which in 1914 won nine cricket matches and drew three. A fine all-round sportsman, Thompson was one of the school's main bowlers and made the highest individual score of the season, 161 not out against King's Rochester.

In August 1914, aged barely 17, Thompson played four matches for the Essex 2nd XI. On debut against Surrey 2nd XI at Leyton, he took 3 for 30 then with last man Benjamin Stratton batted out the final 20 minutes to save the game for Essex. He also played for Essex Young Amateurs against Surrey Young Amateurs in 1913 and 1914 at The Oval, opening the innings in both matches.

Joining the East Lancashire Regiment, Thompson was wounded in France and promoted to Second Lieutenant. He was mentioned in dispatches but killed in action near Basra in Mesopotamia. He was commemorated in the Ilford War Memorial Gazette, the Ilford War Memorial Hall, the St Clements Church war memorial panels and on Panel 19, Basra Memorial Cemetery, Iraq. His father obtained administration of his effects which were £164 7s 6d.

Douglas Tosetti²⁶³

Born 6 July 1877, Bromley, Kent.

²⁶³ With acknowledgments to <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org>

Died 21 March 1918, St Quentin, France.
2nd XI 1899-1903.

Douglas was the son of Max Edward Tosetti and Julia Elizabeth Folks. Max was born in Germany around 1844 and first recorded in England when he married Julia in 1872, so the conflict between his birth and adopted country must have been painful for him. In 1901 Douglas was living with his parents, two sisters and two brothers at West Dene, Charteris Road, Woodford Green, Essex.

In November 1898 Max joined Edward Hallowes as a partner in the firm of Samuel Richards & Co which changed its name to Hallowes and Tosetti, Wine Merchants. They traded from 147 Fenchurch Street and their only interest was 'Dry Monopole' champagne. After many takeovers and mergers, they became part of Grand Metropolitan which in 1998 merged with Guinness to form a company now called DIAGEO²⁶⁴.

At the beginning the war Douglas Tosetti enlisted in the Honourable Artillery Company, and 'owing to his modesty it was not until 30 November 1914 he could be induced to take his commission as a lieutenant in the 8th Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment'²⁶⁵. He went to France on 8 August 1915 and fought at Loos where he was wounded but continued to lead his men, thus earning the Military Cross. He also fought at the Somme and at Passchendaele. He was second in command of the battalion when he was killed on the first day of the German Spring Offensive, which almost won the war for them. His body was never found and he is commemorated on the Pozières Memorial on the Somme.

This excellent account of his last actions and military life was from the *Reading Mercury*:

MAJOR D. TOSETTI, M.C. The deepest regret is felt in the Royal Berks Regiment at the death of Major Tosetti, M.C. His colonel (who has since been killed) wrote to Mr. Tosetti:

Douglas was killed on March 21st. He was with in the front line when the Boches' attack started, and did most gallant work in the reserve trench which we were occupying. When we were eventually forced to evacuate the trench he moved with others along communication trench. The enemy were close behind us, and had to stop and fire to hold him every few yards. Your son was hit as he was firing at the enemy over the parapet of the trench. He must have died immediately, as he was quite dead when I came along very soon afterwards. He was literally worshipped by all the men in the battalion, especially as he had been with them so long, and knew so many them personally. His first thoughts have always been for the men, and he was never happier than when he was with them.

One of the battalion runners wrote:

It was the morning of the 21st March when our battalion was attacked, and we were holding trench successfully for about three hours, when we found we were cut off and surrounded, and it was necessary to fight our way back to a reserve trench. So Major Tosetti took command of some men to fight their way through, while the C.O. took command the men that were holding them back from the front of us. All was going well until they got a machine-gun trained on us; then the major sacrificed his

²⁶⁴ <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/gkarmstrong/halgen02.htm> sourced 17 Mar 2008.

²⁶⁵ Part of the HLF funded project 'War Through Our Windows' at Swaffham Prior Primary School.

life to locate the gun and put the gunners out of action. He was shot through the head and chest, and was killed instantly. If it had not been for his bravery in locating that gun hardly any of us would have got away. It was a great loss to the battalion, undoubtedly he was one of the finest and bravest officers serving his country.

The Rev. Arthur Longden, who was with the battalion from September 1915 speaks of the deceased officer as being loved by everyone who knew him, both officers and men.

I really think that he was one of the bravest men I have ever met; he did not know what danger was. During a battle he was always seen at his best; he was always cool and collected, and set an example to officers, N.C.O.s and men which was invaluable. He was respected by all ranks, and I really think the men would have followed him anywhere. I don't think had an enemy in the world. He was a fine rifle and game shot, and played cricket for Essex, and was an international lacrosse player. At the memorial service at St. Olave's Church in the City the church was crowded with his friends assembled to pay last tribute to thorough good sportsman and soldier.

The Tosettis were a sporting family but Douglas's younger brother Gilbert was the better cricketer. From 1898 to 1905 he played 41 games for the Essex 1st XI. He scored 1054 runs at 18.49 with a best of 132 not out against Lancashire at Old Trafford in 1902. He took 16 wickets at 55.68 and held 15 catches.

Douglas played thirteen games for Essex 2nd XI, in the period before the Great War more than anyone else who did not play for the 1st. His best performances were both at Leyton in 1903 - 88 in a big partnership with Ted Russell against Norfolk, and a remarkable 5 for 11 after several other bowlers had been tried against Middlesex 2nd XI.

James Valiant²⁶⁶

Born 17 July 1884, Wavertree, Liverpool, Lancashire.

Died 28 October 1917, Gaza, Palestine.

1st XI 1912.

James was brought up at his father's butcher's shop at 101 High Street, Wavertree, South Liverpool. Reporting in 1916 on his war service, the *Ormskirk Advertiser* described him as 'formerly of the Morris Dancers, Scarisbrick', where he probably lived and worked. It was a famous hotel of which his father was the landlord c1905-7, and is still a well-regarded pub.

Valiant played one game for Lancashire 2nd XI v Lincolnshire in 1908. Batting at no.7, he scored 4 and 15 and didn't bowl in an exciting match which Lincolnshire won by 4 runs. But he was better known as the professional at Ormskirk CC, 13 miles north of Liverpool. In 1906-9 he played 46 games for them, scoring 535 runs at 20.57 with a highest score of 74 not out and taking 86 wickets at 13.39 with a best analysis of 8 for 21.

In 1909 James Valiant was listed on the electoral register at Stocking Green Farm Radwinter, near Saffron Walden. His father Robert doesn't appear on electoral registers

²⁶⁶ This piece is based on <https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org>, sourced 24 October 2018. Information provided by Paul David Charlesworth, who has researched the Scarisbrick Roll of Honour, and Sellena Hardie, an Imperial War Museum volunteer.

1908-10, but in 1910 Kelly's directory showed him at Stocking Green Farm, so James may have moved first. On the 1911 census James was described as 'farmer's son working on farm', and on later electoral registers as the occupier of land at 'Homesteads', probably The Homestead, a Grade 2 listed building in Ashdon Road.

Club cricket in Essex was not of the same high standard as the Lancashire League, but Valiant nevertheless found himself a role. His obituary in the *Herts and Essex Observer* declared:

...he was a well-known and prominent local sportsman. For a number of years he was a valued member of the Saffron Walden Cricket and Football Clubs, and afterwards he made football and cricket his profession. For one season, 1913, he was professional to the Bishop's Stortford Cricket Club.

In 1912 Essex appointed Valiant as a professional ground bowler at 35s a week, 5s more than the other ground bowlers. This was probably because he had some kind of supervisory or administrative role, for which his previous work would have suited him. He played his sole first-class game against the runners-up Northamptonshire, when he bowled four wicketless overs for 20 and scored 3 and 0 not out.

Soon after the outbreak of war the appropriately named Valiant joined the Artists Rifles (28th London Regiment), which on 30 July 1915 gazetted him as a Second Lieutenant. He then trained at Bedford with the 2/7 Royal Welsh Fusiliers and on 26 October 1915 they commissioned him as a Second Lieutenant, shortly before going to the front.

Although he moved away from Ormskirk, he was not forgotten in the town, as shown by an article in the *Ormskirk Advertiser*, 18 November 1915:

Cricketers in Ormskirk and the district will be interested to learn that Jim Valiant, of Essex (formerly of the Morris Dancers, Scarisbrick), and a former professional of the Ormskirk Cricket Club is in khaki and will shortly leave for one of the Fronts—east or west. In a letter to "Longfield" of this journal) he states that he joined last winter and during his recruits' course he has been in camp at Richmond Park and Epping Forest... Lieut. Valiant goes on to say that since the war broke out he has done very little in the sporting line, but during his stay in Bedford he had had a few games of football and was just getting quite a decent battalion team together. He gathers that the Ormskirk Cricket Club members gave nearly all "done their share" for their country and is sorry to learn that Tommy Stretch has lost a foot. He winds up by saying that he has no complaints to make about military life.

Two years later the *Herts and Essex Observer* recorded

*A wide circle of friends will regret to learn the sad news of the death, on Sunday 28 October, from wounds received in action, of Second-Lieutenant James Valiant, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, son of Mr R. Valiant, farmer, of Radwinter... Only the previous day to that on which the news of his death arrived had an intimation come that his personal friend, Corporal C.W. Green, of Saffron Walden, had been killed in action in France. Lieutenant Valiant and Corporal Green were two of the most popular young men in the Walden District.*²⁶⁷

²⁶⁷ Quoted at

<http://www.recordingtuttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Radwinter/Recorders%20report%202014.html>

Valiant had been with General Allenby's forces, entrenched for several months in front of a strong Turkish defence on the Gaza to Beersheba road, and was buried in the Beersheba War Cemetery. He and Harold Mead were the only two of Essex County Cricket Club's Great War dead to play as professionals. Until recently he was just a footnote in the Club's history, but now the extraordinary resources available through the internet tell us much more about his life, and show him to have been a versatile and popular young man.

Arthur John Waugh

Born December 1887, Leytonstone, Essex.

Died 17 August 1916, Guillemont, Somme, France.

Arthur was the third of the nine children of Walter Charles Waugh, a chemical merchant, and Anne Maria Marshall. They lived successively in Hackney, Leyton, Wanstead and finally at Chigwell Hall, Chigwell, where they had 17 rooms and three servants.

Arthur and his brothers Stanley Herbert (1896-1987) and Hubert Percy (1898-1954, known as Percy) attended Forest School, where they were in the cricket and football 1st XIs. Arthur was possibly a better cricketer than either. Against Essex Club & Ground at Leyton, he scored 71 not out and took 8 for 52 for Forest School in 1905 and took 9 for 6 for Old Foresters in 1911. He never played for the 1st or 2nd XI, probably because he was getting a medical qualification at Barts, but he appeared on the 1917 *List of Essex men serving in HM Forces*. He was also a goal-scoring forward for Old Foresters and Casuals FC.

Waugh was registered as a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians on 10 February 1912. He became house physician at Bart's and then resident medical officer of the East London Hospital for Children in Shadwell. When war was declared he resigned and took up a commission in the Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to the 1st Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment. He was promoted to Captain in 1915, but a year later was killed by a shell that fell almost at his feet. He was buried at Carnoy Military Cemetery, and on the cross over his grave were inscribed the words *In Pectore Robur* [Heart of Oak or Strength in the Heart] from the school song which he was whistling when he was hit. The adjutant who reported this added that, had he lived, he would almost certainly have received the MC for which he had been recommended. He left £3248, although his will was not proved by his father until 1925.

Douglas Part II: the gladiator

Lt-Col Douglas returned from the war with his powers as a cricketer undiminished. He stood the long hours of two-day matches much better than many younger men. Others had not survived the war or were past their best, and only George Loudon gave him much support in the bowling department. The war and the lack of support seem to have accentuated the tougher aspects of his character. Before the war he made major contributions but was leading a team performance; afterwards he relied increasingly on his own efforts.

In 1920 in a wonderful match on a difficult Leyton wicket Middlesex were left with just 118 to win. Soon Douglas had taken the first six wickets with only 33 on the board, but even he had to take a break and gradually Middlesex crept towards their target. Plum Warner was dropped from an easy chance off the bowling of Douglas, who gestured at the culprit and swore violently. Warner then stood firm, farming Douglas's bowling, until his side needed only five to win with one wicket to fall. Douglas produced a beautiful break-back that bowled Warner and stuck in the mind of Essex statistician Arthur Wagg for more than half a century. Douglas danced for joy and his team surrounded him, caught up in his enthusiasm. Warner and Douglas walked off with their arms around one another's shoulders. Middlesex won their next nine matches and the Championship.

In the five matches that Essex won in 1921, Douglas made 562 runs in four completed innings and took 53 wickets at 9.76 apiece. Leyton saw Douglas's greatest all-round performance, with career-best batting and bowling in the same match. Derbyshire batted first and were bowled out for 114, Douglas taking 9 for 47. At first Essex did little better and were 145 for 8 when Douglas was joined by Striker Norman Hare, a young amateur from Ilford making his first-class debut. They added 251, still an Essex record for the ninth wicket. Hare was dismissed for 98 and Douglas finished unbeaten on 210, the only double century of his career. In Derbyshire's second innings Douglas gave himself a rest and his other bowlers a chance, but when the visitors proved obdurate he lost patience and brought himself on to tidy up the last two wickets in five balls. This was one of only three instances of a player scoring 200 runs and taking ten wickets in a Championship match. Remarkably, Hare, the son of a bank manager, played only two more first-class games, making just 19 runs in four innings; he went on to work for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and was awarded the CBE for his services to the industry.

For those who saw him play, Douglas was unforgettable. Even on the hottest day, he never wore a cap. Joe Powell, a frequent spectator at Leyton, recalled that 'Johnny Douglas was captain and he always had his hair parted in the middle and there was never one hair out of place'. When his finest bowling failed to reap what he would have considered its just reward, he would pound the air in frustration and curse his misfortune and berate the batsman. Herbert Sutcliffe remembered his first encounter with Douglas:

Time and again I played at the ball only to miss it. Each time J.W.H.T. flung his arms high to protest against the foulness of his luck, and finally...he came up to me and exploded: 'Why don't you get a bite?' I got a bite in the next over but...second slip kindly put it on the ground. Johnny's face was a picture...

'Crusoe', who played with and against Douglas, painted a wonderful word-portrait:

It was a battle and nothing but when he walked out, a gladiator, from the wicket gate, thick black hair plastered down, rubbing the ball on his thick forearm, frowning at some imaginary flaw in its make-up; or else went forth to bat, more grimly yet – for his batting was acquired and his bowling was natural – with strong slow gait, feet outwards, tugging on his batting gloves with his teeth, ready for a week, for a lifetime of that fight which was his cricket, and damn the bowler and blast the crowd.

Never less than competitive, Douglas was quick to take action if he disapproved of others. The crowd at Sheffield were notoriously partisan, so during a match in 1925 he and another Essex amateur refused to continue playing because of their attitude; he complained that 'there were unruly spirits who turned matches into bear gardens and that it was time to restore order'.

For all his formidable reputation, Douglas was a popular figure. ‘Cricketer’ in his *Manchester Guardian* obituary commented: ‘He had a pawky humour and the loveliest twinkle in his eye. Everybody loved him... For who could withhold affection from the man who described optimism as “backing up for a run when Johnny Douglas is batting”?’

‘Pro’ Douglas and the professionals

From the beginning of his career, Douglas earned the respect of professionals for playing the game in a tough but fair way that would not have disgraced the best of them. When he became captain of Essex and England, he also took on the traditional role of leading his men. In South Africa Douglas fought and won an important battle on their behalf. The costs of the tour were being borne by the South African Cricket Association which also provided the manager, Ivor Drifford. He tried to economise on professionals’ expenses but Tiger Smith recalled that ‘there was a hell of a rumpus’. Johnny Douglas argued with Drifford, and ‘made sure I got my £200 and all the other lads got their whack as well.’

The England professionals considered Douglas a fine leader. Barnes, one third of whose Test career was played under Douglas, admired him and thought he was ‘straight’. Tiger Smith had good cause to be grateful to Douglas who in Australia chose him as wicket-keeper ahead of Strudwick, but he also contrasted his style with Warner’s:

Where Warner always wanted the pros to look up to him and to let them realise he was the boss, Johnny was always as straight as a gunbarrel. There was none of this ‘Mr Douglas’ nonsense with him. He was one of us, more of a professional amateur than an amateur of the old school. We all respected him greatly for his strong qualities and for his honesty, and the success of that tour owed a lot to Johnny Douglas.

Herbert Sutcliffe wrote:

It was always a great joy to play against Mr Douglas, whose love for the game was as great as it could be. He was a fighter second to none, he was a great all-rounder, and he was as charming a gentleman as ever donned flannels.

Jack Hobbs thought he was ‘one of the best bowlers with a new ball I have ever batted against... one of the greatest triers and whole-hearted players I have ever met’. Fred Root, who expressed trenchant views about the amateur-professional divide in cricket, nevertheless admired those amateurs who played like professionals; he reported with approval that he once heard Douglas coaching the young left-arm spinner Joe Hipkin: ‘Joe, if you bowl that sort of tripe again I’ll punch your head.’

Jack O’Connor, Essex’s leading professional batsman between the wars, clearly had a high regard for Douglas²⁶⁸:

Johnnie Douglas, the Essex skipper during my early years with the county, was a great captain, a hard taskmaster maybe, but he was such a keen cricketer himself that he would not countenance the slightest slacking by any of his men. He was ready and willing to put everything he had into the game, and he expected every one of us to do the same. No one could blame him for that, for like all really great captains, he never shirked the responsibility for anything that happened on the field. Off the field he was just the same, for he was jealous of the reputation of cricket, and especially that of the County.

²⁶⁸ O’CONNOR, p112.

The comments are not mere sycophancy, for Douglas was long dead. O'Connor was sometimes mildly critical of others, and he did not need to write anything at all about Douglas.

Douglas's leadership skills were put to good use in the First World War, and he was immediately commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Bedfordshire Regiment. He rose in 1916 to the non-substantive rank of lieutenant-colonel and a year later to the substantive rank of major. After the war he was often known as Colonel Douglas, an appropriate if not entirely accurate designation which, as well as a military convention, was almost a nickname. Cecil Parkin toured Australia with Douglas in 1920-1 and echoed his predecessors' comments:

I could never wish to travel with a finer gentleman than our skipper...I am sure my opinion of him is shared by every member of the team on that tour. Mr Douglas was a charming fellow, and words fail me in expressing my appreciation of him. What a great skipper he was...

But already there was at least one dissentient voice, albeit not of a cricketer but of WH 'Fergie' Ferguson, who from 1905 to 1957 acted as scorer and baggage-master on no fewer than 43 tours. He wrote that

J.W.H.T. Douglas represented the 'old school' of English Test captains, and I am very thankful that cricket has graduated from that school. [He] ... had me chasing all over the Australian continent, and I am certain that he regarded me not as baggage-master-scorer, but as his personal batman.

The reference to 'his personal batman' is significant. Douglas was never less than forceful, but his war service seems to have accentuated that aspect of his character and almost all the anecdotes about his autocratic tendencies date from after the war.

During the war Douglas always ensured 'that his men were looked after and made comfortable before looking after himself'²⁶⁹. As Essex captain Douglas showed a similar solicitude, visiting the professionals' hotel to ensure that everything was in order. Bray recalled Douglas's 'kindliness and understanding of personal problems... He was most generous in helping any professional who got into difficulties financial or otherwise. He regarded them as part of his household.'²⁷⁰ On one occasion he bawled out two professionals who had been out on the town the previous evening, then as they slunk away called them back. 'Silly pair of buggers,' he said, and slipped them each a fiver. Yet when in 1919 the professionals wrote to the committee requesting £7 instead of £6 for away matches, Douglas unsuccessfully opposed the increase²⁷¹.

Other Essex pros may have been less enthusiastic. Lemmon recounts an episode described by Sir Home Gordon, when Eastman and Nichols were injured in a match at Hastings and were left behind to recuperate. One of them expressed the hope that they would soon be fit to return, whereupon Douglas replied: 'I don't care if you both suffer the pangs of hell while you are unfit to turn out for the county'. Lemmon suggests that 'those to whom this remark was addressed knew their skipper well and would have expected nothing less', but I would agree with Gordon rather than Lemmon. It must have happened in 1928²⁷², when Douglas's own powers were failing and Essex were

²⁶⁹ GIROUARD, p262.

²⁷⁰ BRAY, p66.

²⁷¹ Finance subcommittee minutes, 19 July 1919.

²⁷² Eastman's only game at Hastings under Douglas was on 14, 16, 17 July 1928, after which he was out for a fortnight. Nichols had in fact been injured a week earlier against Somerset, but could have travelled with the party. Both returned on 1 August.

going through a wretched spell of form, but it was nevertheless a harsh way to treat two dedicated and hard-working professionals. Gordon believed that Douglas abused his position as captain to bully pros such as Jack Russell and Joe Hipkin when he thought they failed to make the most of their abilities (see below pp 213, 235), although I can find no suggestion that Douglas ever felt that about Eastman or Nichols. Douglas liked to test people out and enjoyed it when they responded in kind, but professionals would surely have found it impossible to answer back to such a forceful personality who was in a position of authority over them, especially when he was some fifteen years older than them.

Although there is some truth in Gordon's allegation, it should be said that Douglas could also bully or be insensitive to amateurs. George Loudon was a magnificent fast-medium bowler who immediately after the war was the only one to give Douglas any real support, but he had a relatively frail physique and came to dread being over-bowled by Douglas.

In 1919 Johnny's brother 'Pickles' had some success for Essex and scored 78 against Lancashire batting at no. 5, but soon afterwards found himself at no. 10 against Somerset and complained. 'I decide the order,' replied John. The brothers shared a partnership of 96 that averted the follow-on, so before the next game Pickles asked where he would be batting. 'No. 10.' 'Bugger that', replied Pickles, and went home.

On the boat bound for the 1920-1 tour of Australia, Douglas told Percy Fender: 'You know, Fender, there is no man in England whose bowling I would rather bat against than yours, and there is no batsman in England I would rather bowl against either.' Doubtless Douglas was expecting him to reply in kind but Fender was more sensitive than his joyous way of playing cricket would have suggested, and it was a hurtful comment that alienated the young amateur for a decade. Fender became captain of Surrey and such was the bad blood between them that The Oval groundsman was said to have decided which strip to use after they had tossed up. Happily they had a long and conciliatory talk only two months before Douglas's death.

Australian nemesis

Had the South African series been his last, Douglas would have gone down as one of the great England captains, but after the First World War he led England to seven successive defeats against Australia, five on tour and then two at home.

Even before the touring party of 1920-1 left there were doubts. Several of the leading amateurs were unable to make the trip, and many feared that England and its cricketers had not recovered sufficiently from the war. *The Times* recognised the captain's qualities but also had reservations about him:

By sheer perseverance and grit – he even resorted to net practice in the garden - Colonel Douglas made himself into a first-class cricketer... [His] abilities as a captain – like his ability as a player – are self-made rather than brilliant. Perhaps his chief fault is lack of imagination, and an inability to realise that few men are possessed of his own inexhaustible stamina and keenness...

The Times was right. Nine years on, things had changed and Douglas failed to recognise it. He had grown in self-confidence and was less willing to take advice but probably needed it more, for without Barnes and Foster the attack was far weaker. Australia had developed into a very powerful side and won the series 5-0, the first time such a heavy defeat had been inflicted on any team.

Douglas was second only to Hobbs in the batting averages but, never the best player of slow bowling, struggled with the leg-spin of Arthur Mailey. They were tough competitors and respected one another greatly. Mailey recalled an episode that was typical of both:

One day in Sydney Johnny Douglas asked me to show him my hand. He held it for a while and then said, 'Arthur, you've been using resin. I'll report you to the umpire.'

I asked him to show me *his* right hand, and looking at the thumb-nail I noticed that it was worn to the flesh on the outside. 'You've been lifting the seam, Johnny,' I said. My co-rebel grinned and the matter was dropped.

The following summer Australia came to England and carried on where they had left off. The authorities recognised the strength of Australian cricket and did not blame Douglas for the debacle, so for the only time in his career he was England's first-choice captain. He was as determined as ever but he never had been the subtlest of captains and he was completely out-manoeuvred by his opposite number, Warwick Armstrong. In the First Test at Trent Bridge Armstrong decided that it would be a seamers' wicket so left out Mailey. The first three England wickets fell in one over and Douglas, leading from the front as ever, promoted himself to deal with the crisis. Mindful of Douglas's weakness against spin, Armstrong brought himself on to bowl his occasional leg-breaks and immediately had his opposite number caught from a ghastly stroke. England lost on the second afternoon and the selectors made six changes for the second test at Lords. 'What is this damnable side of picnickers they have sent me?' Douglas was moved to ask²⁷³.

Peter Wynne-Thomas argues that these disasters were because the structure of English cricket was less well adapted than Australia's to the disruption caused by war; there was a similar pattern of initial collapse and gradual recovery after the Second World War. Lemmon perfectly summarises Douglas's personal plight:

Douglas was in between two worlds. In the Golden Age before the First World War he had been a 'professional' amateur, lacking the panache, the flair, of the Jessops, the Frys, the Spooners and the rest. Yet that was the school in which he learned his cricket. Now, in the post-war years, he was a relic from the Golden Age, full of dedication and unquenchable spirit, but out of his depth against a tactician like Armstrong.

The selectors too were out of their depth, chopping and changing a record thirty players in the five-match series. Such considerations were not foremost in their minds, however, and after the Second Test they sacked Douglas as captain. Though hurt by his dismissal, he accepted it with great dignity and continued to play in the team under his successor, the Hon. Lionel Tennyson – even more a throwback to the Golden Age. Ironically, Douglas took back the captaincy during the third test when Tennyson was injured, but despite his 75 runs and three wickets the match and the Ashes were lost. Douglas and Woolley were the only two England players to play in all five matches and Douglas did better than most, but he was 39 at the end of the season and even he could not go on for ever.

Decline and fall

Though he never lost his legendary tenacity, the engine was beginning to wear out and the rest of Douglas's career was a slow and rather sad decline, albeit punctuated by glimpses of the younger man. In 1922 his batting fell away but in 1923 he was near his

²⁷³ WILLIAMSON, Martin. Chopping and changing. Cricinfo website, 23 July 2005.

best and did the double for the last time. In a fine win against Gloucestershire he and Jack O'Connor, three years old when Johnny made his debut, added 206 for the sixth wicket – still an Essex record. In 1924, despite a niggling leg injury, he took over 100 wickets for the seventh and last time and was recalled as emergency England captain when Arthur Gilligan was injured. Douglas was then surprisingly appointed as Gilligan's vice-captain on the 1924-5 tour of Australia, apparently as a source of advice and guidance for the younger players. That he achieved, giving invaluable help to Sutcliffe when he suffered a loss of confidence, but Douglas as a player did little. His batting was as solid as ever but his bowling had lost its legendary swing, and nip off the pitch.

Douglas started 1925 well, with 29 wickets in May, but took only a further 33 in the rest of the season. With some good young players coming through, Essex won nine matches and rose to seventh place so the captain's own decline in form was somewhat masked. He played through much of the season in considerable pain but typically refused to admit to something he perceived as weakness. During the winter it was diagnosed as appendicitis, and the operation that even Douglas could not avoid kept him out of the side until 21 July 1926. In the rest of the season he scored 528 runs at 35.2 but bowled very little and managed only five wickets at 50 apiece. Against Nottinghamshire he made 103 and 46, but they declared on 595 for 4 and Douglas only brought himself on for sixteen tidy but unpenetrative overs after trying seven other bowlers.

The committee could have used the opportunity created by Douglas's absence to assess candidates for the captaincy when the inevitable day of his retirement finally came. Instead they formally appointed the most experienced amateur available, the 50-year-old Percy Perrin, as deputy captain. The Essex annual report referred to 'the conspicuous success of Perrin's captaincy', but it was a short-sighted measure that was to have disastrous consequences.

In 1927 in all matches Douglas scored 1295 runs at 38.08, but he often seemed to occupy the crease for the sake of it. Nottinghamshire's AW Carr, a product of Eton and Sherborne, was a good friend who like him was a 'professional amateur' and England captain who did not always follow the more gentlemanly traditions of the game. Carr recalled the match at Southend:

Larwood with the sea-breeze behind him was bowling at a hell of a pace...when Johnnie came in. He said 'no one will frighten me'. And for a long time we could not shift him. But he could not get a run and was out for 0. But in the second innings he came in again, also determined that no one would frighten him – and again he was out for 0...

Douglas and Carr became England selectors and in 1928 JWHT was able to do his country one last service. With HD Leveson-Gower, Lord Harris and Plum Warner, he chose the touring party that defeated Australia 4-1.

Before the 1928 season the Essex secretary, Major GH Thompson, declared that a young, keen and well-balanced side gave the county excellent prospects. He could not have been more wrong, for it was to match 1892 and 1912 as one of the most miserable in Essex's entire history. A few days later their popular groundsman Walter 'Bung' Brewer took his own life, apparently because of worries about the club's future (see p69). As with Cyril Buxton in 1892, the tragedy cast a shadow over the entire season. The team won two games but lost seventeen, some of them very heavily, and finished bottom but one in the Championship. No fewer than 39 players were selected, some of them amateurs of questionable ability whose inclusion demoralised the professionals

that were omitted to make way for them. Douglas scored four half-centuries in the first half of the season but his batting had become introspective. In July on a rain-affected track at Leyton he showed one last flash of his skill as a bowler when he took eight Glamorgan wickets, but overall he took only 22 wickets in 306 overs, whereas in his heyday he had regularly taken over a hundred wickets and bowled nearly a thousand overs every season. Charles Bray recalled that Douglas, never the nimblest in the field, became 'difficult with a tendency to blame others' and in his very last game he 'twice missed Astill in the long field'.

Yet Bray also remembered Douglas's skill in spotting the potential of young cricketers and his undiminished joy in their success. Against Middlesex at Leyton Bray had batted no. 8 in the first innings, but at the start of the second

Waiting until the last possible moment, he suddenly told me to go in first with, 'I don't want to see you until tea-time'. I made a hundred – my first, and the first is always the biggest thrill. John didn't come near me for a while...He waited until I was alone in the dressing-room. Then he came in, put his hands on my shoulders, looked at me with those piercing eyes from under those shaggy eyebrows and said, 'You see, I still had faith in you when you had lost faith in yourself. Well played.'

No wonder Bray was a Douglas loyalist.

Such private moments had little effect on the results and there were mutterings of discontent during the season, so when it ended the committee suggested to Douglas that he should resign. He refused, not so much from his characteristic stubbornness but because he doubted whether their designated successor, HM Morris, had the necessary commitment and ability. Morris had played fairly regularly with some success since 1919 and in June 1927 made his highest score, a spectacular 166 against Hampshire. He may have been earmarked for the job then, but did not play after mid-July and in 1928 appeared only three times, so his appetite for the game was perhaps already fading. If Geoffrey Davies had survived the war and kept up his form, Douglas would surely have been content to hand the Essex captaincy to him, and much bitterness would have been avoided.

For Essex it was a new and difficult situation. In 53 years they had had nine official captains, seven of whom had been good enough cricketers to play for the Gentlemen. The exceptions were CD Buxton, who might well have done so had he not died prematurely by his own hand, and Hugh Owen, who led the team in its most successful period. It was a sign of changing times that Morris was the only eligible amateur in the team. Old hands like Percy Perrin and Frank Gillingham had finally retired, while promising young men such as Charles Bray and Leonard Crawley lacked experience and were too often unavailable because of work commitments. The only other possibility would have been to appoint a professional, but such a solution was too radical for the time.

In 1920 JH Douglas had given the bank a surety for the club's overdraft and the committee were still beholden to him, but in 1922 Essex sold the County Ground to the Army Sports Board and the debt that had burdened the club for nearly forty years finally rolled from their shoulders. Old Douglas was elected President in 1928 and was followed by JD Cassels, who was Conservative MP for Leyton West and also succeeded the great advocate Sir Edward Marshall Hall as Recorder for Guildford²⁷⁴. On his

²⁷⁴ In 1929 he lost by 2153 votes in 'a sportsmanlike fight' to Labour's Reg Sorensen, who enjoyed a distinguished parliamentary career 1929-31, 1935-64. After the 1964 election Sorensen was booted

election at the 1928 AGM Cassels appealed to the ‘many rich people in Essex’ to give their support to the club.

The committee continued to make suggestions about the running of the side, but Johnny had nevertheless remained the virtual dictator of Essex cricket. His father’s declining influence and the wretched 1928 season weakened his position, but for three months he ‘fought the Committee with the same tenacity that he had fought all his battles on the field’, while the cricket world looked on in dismay. A deputation to the Bishopsgate office was led by a solicitor whom Douglas disliked intensely and he refused to see them. He twice ‘regretted his inability to be present’ at meetings of the cricket sub-committee that discussed the captaincy. Eventually on 3 December the committee decided to offer it to Morris.

In an interview with the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, Douglas revealed his bitterness:

The committee in conveying their decision to me in a letter say that change is desirable. They express their profound admiration of my services to English cricket and to Essex cricket...At the same time they have kicked me out, and when a fellow is booted out he is in a difficult position...I really know of no reason for the change in the captaincy, except that it has been put about by some members of the committee that a change might be beneficial...

It is difficult to sever a relationship which began on the field in 1901, and I have been captain since 1911. I should feel a severance with such loyal fellows as Gillingham, Ashton, Crawley, Bray, Shorter and others. My position has not been easy, either on the field or off it. I have had several disgruntled professionals, and some others have been disgruntled, and seen everything with a tarnished eye.

Mr Morris has been playing for some time, and I wish him the best of luck with his none-too-easy task with some members of the side, and some people not in the side, and hope they will be more loyal to him than they have been to me. My position in regard to Essex is invidious. I have not been told that I am too old to play, or that I have not pulled my weight as a playing member of the side, but the Committee say that a change is desirable and hoof me out...

Much though one sympathises with Douglas, it is possible to see in his comments the seeds of his downfall. His singling out as one of the ‘loyal fellows’ with whom he would ‘feel a severance’ Richard Shorter, who in 22 matches under Douglas averaged 6 with the bat and 43.60 with the ball, suggests that his ability to spot a good young player had sometimes degenerated into favouritism. Likewise there were only eight regular professionals, and his dismissal of several of them as disgruntled indicates that his relationship with them had broken down, not least because he often bullied them. By mentioning his age, his contribution as a player, and the obvious discontent in the team, Douglas himself suggested possible failings on his own part.

It is therefore hard to see what else the committee could have done, but it has to be said that they handled the matter very badly. Had they come out with a forthright statement of the exact problems, the equally forthright Douglas might have stood down with good grace, as his dignified response to his dismissal from the England captaincy shows. Instead they offered woolly platitudes about change, failing utterly to recognise the strength of character which, for all his faults, enabled Douglas to make a far greater

upstairs to the Lords to make way for Patrick Gordon Walker who had been defeated in the unpleasant racist campaign at Smethwick. The electors of Leyton expressed their view of this carpet-bagging by voting in the Tory.

contribution to Essex cricket than any of them ever did. In a statement made on Christmas Day the Chairman, C Stuart Richardson, said Douglas's own statement that 'there had been disloyalty towards him by certain members of the team was weighed with the committee in reaching their decision', but by then it was far too late. Douglas declined to comment at the time, adding that later he might 'say something which will prove facts quite contrary to the statement of Mr Richardson', but if he did I have found no record of it.

The club invited him to join the selection committee and play under the new captain, but that was merely adding insult to injury and he refused. At the AGM in April there was a long discussion about the manner of Douglas's departure. One member asked whether 'it was not a fact that Mr Douglas's autocratic methods had bred revolution in the club' – perhaps a reference to the recent General Strike, which had aroused fears of a British Revolution similar to the Russian. A recently retired committee member replied that the decision had not been unanimous, and felt Douglas was right in claiming that he had been 'kicked out'. The committee sought to repair the damage by granting Douglas life membership, but in 1929 and 1930 he played just fourteen first-class matches for MCC and other invitation elevens, and none for Essex. It was a miserable episode that did Essex County Cricket Club no credit, and it may be no coincidence that the only missing minute-book other than the first contains the record of the affair.

By then Johnny had taken over the running of the family firm, but his father never felt that he fully understood the business and continued to be involved. In December 1930 they were returning from a purchasing trip to the Baltic when in dense fog their ship collided with another. Johnny could have saved himself but typically went below in an attempt to rescue his father and neither man was seen again. The club recognised that his passing marked the end of an era, and the flags at Leyton flew at half-mast. A memorial service was held at Leyton parish church and Canon Frank Gillingham, whose Essex career coincided with Douglas's, found the words to summarise the four chief qualities of his friend and team-mate – his modesty, his determination, his devotion to his father and his loyalty to his friends: 'I said when he was alive and I say again now he is dead, if I had my back to the wall and was in trouble, I would rather have John Douglas alongside me than any other man'. Even Sir Home Gordon conceded that 'his dogged enthusiasm for cricket was quite unsurpassable' and that he was 'gallant and unsparing as well as keen'.

Chapter 8: the captaincy problem and an unorthodox solution

Harold Marsh 'Whiz' Morris (1898-1984)

Morris was born on 16 April 1898 into the family firm of Protheroe & Morris, who in the 19th century had had extensive nurseries not far from the County Ground but later developed their land for building. In 1924 they claimed to have been associated 'with Leytonstone and the surrounding Districts extending back for 90 years, during which time they have dealt with most of the Estates which had been developed'²⁷⁵.

Morris had been an outstanding schoolboy batsman at Repton and at first Douglas's concerns about him seemed baseless. the First World War, In the First World War he served as a flight lieutenant in the Royal Naval Air Service. In May 1917 he had to

²⁷⁵ When the lease of their offices at 827 High Road Leytonstone ran out, they decided to concentrate business at 67-8 Cheapside and placed a notice in the Walthamstow Guardian on 4 Jan 1924. The firm is listed in WHITE's Essex directory for 1848.

ditch his plane in the sea, and he and an air mechanic drifted for six days before being rescued, utterly exhausted, by a warship. Later in the year he won the Distinguished Service Cross for services on patrol duties and submarine searches in home waters. There could therefore be little doubt about his ability and courage. Wisden in 1921 commented that ‘the pace and energy of HM Morris contrasted strikingly with the sedate methods of the veterans’. Douglas chose him for three friendly matches against West of Scotland CC in 1922-4, so can’t have had any reservations at that stage. In 1927 Morris scored a spectacular 166 against Hampshire at Southampton, adding 233 with Russell in under 2½ hours, but a career record of 6974 runs at only 19.70 suggests a lack of consistency.

On his first public appearance as captain, Morris opened a new cricket school behind the Crown pub at Loughton, where he was given a warm reception which ‘showed clearly there was no shadow of doubt as to his popularity’²⁷⁶. Not surprisingly, the school was inaugurated with Essex professionals bowling to their amateurs. The first ball sent down by Cutmore bowled Morris, although ‘in fairness, it must be added that flashlight photographs had just been taken and a somewhat thick fog prevailed in consequence’. Fog must be one of the more unusual excuses for an amateur being bested by a professional.

In 1929 none of the other amateurs played as regularly as Morris, who appeared 26 times. The team improved slightly, winning six games to move up to twelfth place. The *Leytonstone Express & Independent* praised his positive captaincy in the match against Hampshire, when he hit out in order to set up a declaration and Essex then reduced the visitors to 36 for 3; the crowd ‘afforded the team a hearty reception as they left the field...under a capable and popular captain’, although Hampshire lost only two wickets on the last day and saved the game easily.

Morris’s best season as captain was 1930 when he played in 19 of the 28 championship games and the team finished sixth – ironically, slightly better than anything Douglas achieved²⁷⁷. The new Essex secretary Brian Castor told a Romford CC supper that ‘there was no secret that Mr Morris took over a very discontented side, and he had made that side one of the happiest in England’. Wisden concurred:

The success has come about largely owing to the team spirit in the side under a committee generous in encouragement and under a captain with the facility of understanding his players and pulling together in the most refreshing manner.

In 1931 Morris played in 22 of the 28 games and the team won seven matches as in 1930, but lost eleven rather than five and dropped to tenth place.

Douglas’s doubts about Morris were eventually justified, but only in the fourth year of his captaincy. For business reasons he seldom played after early August, and in 1930 and 1931 his absence was covered by the Rugby schoolmaster Henry Franklin²⁷⁸. Sometimes Morris made himself unavailable and, even worse, withdrew at the last minute. Less than three months into his captaincy, the minutes recorded that ‘Mr F.W. Gilligan was willing to captain the side in the absence of Mr Morris’ and that ‘Mr C.T. Ashton was to be asked about his availability’. In 1930, Charles Bray was asked on the

²⁷⁶ *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, 19 Jan 1929, p8.

²⁷⁷ Essex also came 6th in 1911, his first season, but there were only 16 rather than 17 teams in the Championship - Glamorgan did not come in until 1921

²⁷⁸ The 1932 yearbook says that ‘Mr. H.W.F. Franklin took over from Mr. Morris in August’, and Kenneth Farnes who came into the side in 1930 got the impression that Franklin captained ‘the August side’.

morning of the match against the powerful Australian side to lead Essex even though he had little previous experience of captaincy²⁷⁹.

The cares of captaincy caused Morris's formerly hard-hitting batting form gradually to fall away. His highest and most significant score as captain was an unbeaten 89 against Warwickshire in 1929, when a partnership of 138 with Russell and some support from the tail turned the game and Essex won by ten wickets. Apart from that, he made only six scores over 50, some of no great importance. In 1932 Morris appeared only twice, scoring three runs in two innings, and Essex used no fewer than six stand-in captains. One of them was Bray, whose affection for Morris can scarcely have been enhanced after he led the team that conceded the record 555 partnership to Holmes and Sutcliffe.

Not surprisingly, Morris resigned at the end of the season and never played first-class cricket again. The committee's 'unanimous and warm vote of thanks' may have owed as much to relief that he jumped without being pushed as to gratitude for his contribution. Nobody could have argued with the annual report's comment that 'the lack of a regular captain prejudiced severely the prospects of the side', which lost half of its 28 games and fell to fourteenth place.

The unhappy period of Morris's captaincy shows that there was still a sharp divide between amateurs and professionals, who were never considered for the post. In 1928 Jack O'Connor had been playing regularly for seven years and appeared in two test trials, and in 1938 did captain the side in an emergency despite the presence of three inexperienced amateurs in the side²⁸⁰. Yet even though a professional like him would have given more continuity and experience, only amateurs however unsuitable were deemed to have the necessary leadership qualities.

Times were beginning to change, however: having under a succession of dismal amateur captains regularly finished in the bottom six, Leicestershire in 1935 scandalised the cricketing world by appointing their veteran professional all-rounder Ewart Astill as captain and immediately moved up to sixth place. His fellow-professionals got round the tricky question of nomenclature by calling him not Sir or Mr but Skipper, a title that was becoming acceptable for amateurs²⁸¹. At Leicester he changed with them but at some away matches he was forced to use the amateur dressing-room. Astill was perhaps a stopgap while the New Zealand amateur test player CS Dempster qualified for Leicestershire. Fine batsman though he was, however, Dempster could not prevent his adopted county plunging back into the bottom six for the next four years. Dempster had left cricket in 1932 to take up a business appointment with the millionaire furniture manufacture and cricket-lover Sir Julian Cahn, who during his period with Leicestershire employed him as the manager of a furniture store.

Essex, however, were not quite ready to appoint a professional, even as a stopgap. Despite the availability of experienced professionals such as O'Connor, the committee explored several fairly desperate expedients. They first approached Percy Perrin, who gravely replied that he 'did not think it advisable that he should accept the captaincy'. He had retired in 1928 and five years later would, at the age of 57, have been the oldest man ever to play first-class county cricket. Next the committee appointed the Secretary, Brian Castor, provided that other counties did not object to his qualifications. Some did, and the idea was dropped, although Castor did sometimes captain the Second XI

²⁷⁹ In *Essex County Cricket* he said he had none, but CricketArchive says he captained Essex against Kent in the last match of the previous season.

²⁸⁰ Against Somerset when Wilcox was temporarily unavailable.

²⁸¹ WILLIAMS, p117-9.

and in June 1932 ‘on the instructions of the Chairman’ led Essex against Cambridge University in his only first-class game. This seems to have been an issue even within the club, for it caused the Hon Treasurer, AJ Spelling, to resign, although he later withdrew his resignation. After giving up the idea of appointing Castor, the committee received an offer to take on the captaincy from Clement Noel Calnan, a 44-year old amateur who was a director of a family firm of builders’ merchants large enough to be listed on the Stock Exchange²⁸². He had in four appearances between 1919 and 1929 scored 49 runs at an average of 6.12 and bowled three wicketless overs for 25 runs. Desperate though they were, the committee declined the offer.

Finally, almost by accident, the committee hit on an unorthodox arrangement for sharing the captaincy that was to lead to one of the county’s two most successful periods before the 1980s. Until mid-July wine merchant Tom Pearce was released by his employer, and then headmaster Denys Wilcox took over during the school holidays. In their first season Essex won 13 games out of 28 and rose from fourteenth to fourth in the championship, the county’s best position since 1897. The committee recorded its ‘congratulations and warm thanks to Mr T.N. Pearce and Mr D.R. Wilcox for admirable results and to the team for their loyal and happy support’.

It is easy with the benefit of hindsight to underestimate how daring, or perhaps desperate, this experiment was. Counties had occasionally appointed two captains, but usually because one of them was incapacitated during the season. Furthermore, the achievements of the new captains were potential rather than actual. Pearce was already 27 years old and had in four seasons played just seventeen times for Essex, the two when he was captain resulting in heavy defeats. He had in 25 attempts only twice passed 50, although one of them was a fine 152 that helped Essex to a rare innings win, against Lancashire. Wilcox made 71 in his second game but did not better that score for Essex until 1933, although he twice hit centuries against the county for Cambridge University, which he captained in his last year there. He had been Essex captain for the last eleven matches in 1932, but as one of the makeshift replacements for Morris rather than in his own right, and none of those games was won. He doubtless benefited from the experience of captaining Cambridge, but for a 23-year-old being in charge of a hard-bitten bunch of professionals is a very different matter from leading undergraduates of his own age and class²⁸³. The personnel of the team that performed so well in 1933 were similar to that which did so badly in 1932. The difference was the stability that the new arrangement brought and the two captains’ outstanding leadership abilities, which were able to flourish when they had the security of knowing that they had been officially appointed.

According to Doug Insole, Pearce and Wilcox were ‘...two great chaps who simply wouldn’t have wanted any unpleasantness and divisiveness’²⁸⁴. By contrast, one of HM Morris’s first actions as captain had been to ask that ‘the amateurs’ dressing room should be for their exclusive use’, a request that was granted. After their first season as joint captains, Essex took the momentous step of moving away from the Leyton ground that had been their headquarters for almost half a century and playing their cricket on festival grounds around the county.

²⁸² JEATER, David. The business end of county cricket. IN Cricket statistician no.123, Autumn 2003. David told me that the firm was eventually taken over by Jewson’s; their chairman, Tiny Waterman, played for Essex 1937-8 and was treasurer 1965->>> and chairman 1978-84.

²⁸³ A point made by Trevor Bailey about Doug Insole. Wickets, p59.

²⁸⁴ Doug Insole’s comment [interview with me, 1982], though see also p>>>>.

The combination of new circumstances and more liberal-minded captains accelerated the pace of social change in the club. Insole claimed that the amateur-professional distinction 'went out of the window at Essex very early' although 'in other counties it lingered for a long time...well into my playing career'. Insole is a self-confessed and lifelong 'Essex nut' who is rightly proud of his county's achievements on and off the field, but I don't think this is special pleading.

Undoubtedly more liberal attitudes were gradually emerging, but vestiges of the old régime perhaps remained for rather longer than Insole suggests. At the start of the 1935 season, the second away from Leyton, a committee that included Pearce discussed the relationship between amateurs and professionals:

It was reported that custom of professionals using the Christian names of our own and visiting amateurs was on the increase. After a discussion it was agreed that a letter be sent to each professional signed by the Chairman, drawing attention to this breach of etiquette at the same time instructing them that this must cease.

This apparently owed more to the perceived need to show solidarity with other county committees than to any desire to put the Essex professionals in their place.

Denys Robert Wilcox (1910-1953)

Wilcox's father Theodore had founded Alleyn Court Preparatory School near Southend in 1904, and Denys became headmaster on his father's death, aged only 23. Denys was an enthusiastic, patient and technically correct coach who encouraged the pupils' love of cricket, and they were regularly taken to see Essex at the local festivals. Among them was a lad named Trevor Bailey whom he coached, and who followed in Wilcox's footsteps to Dulwich College, Cambridge University and the Essex captaincy. Between the wars Dulwich was equal third behind Eton and Harrow in providing committee members for MCC²⁸⁵, so an education there was no handicap to getting on in the world of cricket. Wilcox made an inauspicious Essex debut in 1928 while still a schoolboy at Dulwich, but the next year against Middlesex at Lords in his second game hit a confident 71 out of 152. He had come in with Essex in effect 25 for 5, having lost four wickets and Russell to a nasty blow that put him out of action for a week.

Each year from 1933 to 1937 Wilcox took over as captain from Tom Pearce in mid-July. The side, strengthened during the school holidays by the inclusion of other masters such as Kenneth Farnes, usually moved up the table. Wilcox's start could scarcely differ more from the disappointments of 1932. With a good blend of youth and experience, a settled side strengthened by the return of Leonard Crawley and Farnes won six of their first seven games under his command. His own best performance for Essex came in the match that broke the sequence, when his 87 not out and 47 were not quite enough in a low-scoring game against Lancashire who won by 17 runs. The highlight of the 1934 season for Wilcox and his team was an innings victory at Clacton over Yorkshire, in which he hit 109. In 1935 he played only eight innings including four ducks and then he had to miss the rest of the season with appendicitis. Crawley and Bray each captained in one game, but in the remaining six the side was led by Nigel Wykes, a housemaster at Eton who in a twelve-year career appeared just 30 times for Essex. His record suggests that if he had been able to play more often he too would have made a good captain: after a narrow away loss to Derbyshire who finished second in the championship, Wykes led Essex to two draws and three wins including one against the South Africans. Wilcox's batting in 1936 improved but Essex did not make

²⁸⁵ WILLIAMS, p23.

their usual surge up the table, winning only three of their ten games under his leadership. In 1937 he made 1390 runs with four centuries, including two in the match at Westcliff against Kent. Essex lost eleven matches but won thirteen – six of them under Wilcox in August - and moved up to sixth place. At the end of the season it was agreed that ‘the captaincy arrangement was satisfactory and should be continued’.

In 1938 there was talk that Wilcox might captain England against the touring Australians. He led the Rest of England against England in a test trial but scored only 20 and 0. The matter was settled when Walter Hammond, the greatest English batsman of his generation, ‘changed his label’ and turned amateur, thus qualifying himself to be appointed captain. A grammar school boy without the means to go to university, his strangely rootless origins and exceptional talent had already separated him from the ordinary professionals and inclined him towards the amateurs²⁸⁶. Fine county cricketer though Wilcox was, he did little in representative games and might have been out of his depth at the highest level. As with Essex ten years earlier, the possibility of appointing a professional was not even considered, and it was not until 1953 that Len Hutton became England’s first professional captain.

Pearce was not available until July 1938 and Wilcox somehow managed to take time off from the school for most of the season, so they reversed the usual arrangement. Wilcox was unwell and had a less good season with the bat, although he had one glorious moment: the second 50 of his only century, against Nottinghamshire, came in just 28 minutes. Seldom was the old cliché about a game of two halves more appropriate: Essex lost eight of their first nine championship matches and won nine of the last twelve. This confirms that Wilcox was not a better captain, and that it was rather the influx of schoolmasters that explained Essex’s regular improvement in the second half of the season. When, as in July and August 1938, the two men played in the same team, Pearce always led it. Essex finished with a record similar to that of 1937 and again came sixth, but one more win would have been enough to take them to third. After the season Wilcox married and was presented with two signed silver salvers, one from the committee and a smaller one from the professionals²⁸⁷. This suggests that the pros held him in some respect and affection, and that they were also sufficiently well paid to afford the gesture.

In the autumn of 1937 Essex had asked Harry Gordon Pickering, ‘an exceptionally good player’ with the Ilford club, whether he would be able to play for them in 1938. He replied by asking for terms as a professional, and was ‘seen’ by Secretary Brian Castor and committee member Bill Golding. Evidently they were sufficiently impressed to pursue the matter, but Pickering wrote to say that he was unable to get leave from his job as a civil servant to play as a professional. I can find no evidence that Essex in the 1930s employed pros on a match-fee basis, so Pickering was presumably asking for unpaid leave and when that was refused understandably preferred the security of the civil service. He said that he would be able to play for as an amateur while on leave for three weeks in June but, disappointingly, scored only 62 runs in six innings and Essex did not take up the option on the second half of his holiday. He did not appear for them again, although in 1947 he turned out five times for Leicestershire and did rather better.

In 1939 Wilcox reverted to his normal practice and captained Essex once the school had broken up, although again he was unwell and scored only 190 runs in ten innings. At the outbreak of war Wilcox enlisted in the Army and rose to the rank of lieutenant

²⁸⁶ BIRLEY, p255.

²⁸⁷ His son John loaned them for the opening of the Peter Edwards Museum and Library in 2006.

before being invalided out in 1941 because of continuing ill health. After the war Pearce was able to captain the side throughout the season and in August Wilcox played eight matches under him, topping the county batting averages. He played six games for Essex in 1947 but chose to retire because he felt that he was keeping younger men out of the side. After that his only first-class appearances were in the annual match between Free Foresters and Cambridge University. Tragically he died of leukaemia aged only 42.

Thomas Neill Pearce (1905-1994)

As batsman, captain, treasurer, chairman and president, Tom Pearce was one of the truly great figures of Essex cricket. Making his debut in the dark days of 1929, 'Burly T' saw the county through to the glory years of the 1980s.

Pearce was born on 3 November 1905 in Stoke Newington, the son of a London County Council school teacher. He attended Christ's Hospital School in Sussex, and qualified for Essex by residence through his parents' home at Walton-on-the-Naze.

His employer was Trayton Golding Grinter. Although his name sounds like that of a Dickensian villain, his generosity in enabling Pearce to captain Essex for so long made him one of the great benefactors of Essex cricket. He joined the wine merchants Cockburn & Co. (Leith) Ltd. in 1900 as a 14-year-old clerk, and by 1933 had risen to be chairman of the company. A fine club cricketer, he made his debut for Essex in July 1909 and in his first two matches scored 125 runs for twice out. Against Sussex in the third game he was twice caught at the wicket off AE Relf for 3 and 0, and in the next five years he appeared only once, when Sussex again dismissed him for a duck. In the First World War he was severely wounded in the left arm and it seemed that he would not be able to play cricket again, but he used a light bat specially made for him by Breeden's of Leyton²⁸⁸. His disability was a little too great for the demands of county cricket so in his four postwar appearances for Essex he met with little success, but he made many more runs in club cricket. In 1928, for example, he made 181 not out in his only innings for Wanstead and 213 not out for Frinton, and aged 57 in 1942 he scored his 200th century – one of a dozen or so players to achieve this. In 1930 Grinter played with Pearce in the Club Cricket Conference game against the Australians, and afterwards persuaded the younger man to join his firm so that he could give him the chance to play more first-class cricket.

Pearce's brother-in-law was well-known in his own right. Sir Frank Cyril Hawker (1900–1991), banker, was born on 21 July 1900 at Walthamstow, Essex, to Frank Charles Hawker, civil servant, and his wife, Bertha Mary Bastow, daughter of former Essex wicket-keeper John. Educated at the City of London School, Hawker was briefly at the stock exchange and at a firm of solicitors before joining the Bank of England in 1920. He remained there for forty-two years and left only to become chairman of Standard Bank. In 1931 he married Tom Pearce's sister, Marjorie Anne, and they had three daughters.

Despite his highly successful career Hawker's first love, arguably, was cricket; he was a talented batsman and captained several club sides. He was also a keen footballer and sportsman generally. In later life he became chairman of the Amateur Football Alliance and the Minor Counties Cricket Association; he was the finance committee chairman for the National Playing Fields Association, and then the association's honorary vice-

²⁸⁸ Neil Bhupsingh, who was a friend of the Breeden family in the 1980s, recalled that their bats were still very light. Perhaps they first learnt to make such bats for Grinter, who endorsed them in adverts.

president; and he was vice-chairman of the Football Association. The summit of his sporting career came in 1970–71, when he was made president of MCC, though his South African connection led to adverse press exposure in a year when the South African touring team visited England.

Home Gordon considered that Pearce, despite his lack of experience when he started, was one of the best captains on the county circuit. After two fairly lean years as a batsman in 1933-4, Pearce came into his own in 1935 when he made over a thousand runs. He was unfortunate in that he found the best form of his career in mid-July, when he hit 461 runs in five completed innings but then made way for Wilcox and could not re-appear until 1936, when he again scored over a thousand runs. In the same year Pearce was batting for MCC when Jahangir Khan of Cambridge bowled a ball that killed a sparrow, which was stuffed and is now in the Lord's Museum; as the guide there put it, 'the umpire declared the ball and the bird dead'.

In November 1938 Pearce warned the committee that because he was serving with the Territorial Army he would be unavailable in 1939, although he did take over from AJ Spelling as Hon. Treasurer. After considerable discussion which initially was kept strictly confidential, they decided to appoint three captains. The three were all well-respected and the arrangement had no ill effects on the team, which came fourth in the Championship. The veteran professionals O'Connor, Nichols and Eastman kept up their form while younger men such as Farnes and Peter Smith were reaching the peak of theirs. Junior pros such as Cray and Vigar were coming through, so some sound judges of the game considered that but for the Second World War Essex might well have won their first championship almost forty years earlier than they actually did.

Frederick St George Unwin indicated that he would be available from 17 June to 21 July, after which Wilcox could take over. Educated at Haileybury, he was born and lived at Baythorne Hall, Halstead, where his family has farmed since the 1870s. He and his father George Ernest were both described as 'Corn merchant and farmer'. The 1939 Register shows that, contrary to previous belief, they had no connection with the Unwin Seeds firm of Cambridgeshire. A hard-hitting batsman who was too impetuous for the demanding level of county cricket, he was never able to play regularly because of business commitments but nevertheless led the side with great ability and five of his ten matches were won.

The first part of the season and the last three matches were covered by another in the long line of military men who assisted Essex with great distinction but insufficient frequency. Captain, later Lt-Col, **John William Arthur Stephenson** qualified for Essex by residence at Colchester garrison. He was known as Stan because his hair looked like that of Stan Laurel²⁸⁹. His exuberant love of the game made him a true amateur in the original sense of the word. A fine fast-medium bowler, hard-hitting lower-order batsman and extraordinarily enthusiastic fielder, he was a genuinely all-round cricketer who enlivened every game he played in. In his first Gentlemen v Players match, at Lords in July 1936, he detected a spot where the bounce of the ball was unpredictable and kept hitting it. He took 9 for 46 in the first innings and his joy was unbounded. Pearce too was making his debut for the Gentlemen and hit the highest

²⁸⁹ THURLOW, p104. Curiously, the team-mates of Essex's latter-day John Stephenson also called him Stan after Laurel, because when he first arrived at the club he sometimes had Laurel's somewhat bewildered appearance [Cricket Society Bulletin, 2006]. Tom Pearce, who was president when Stephenson came into the side, may perhaps have remembered his old colleague and initiated the nickname. It is also nicely alliterative.

score in the match with 85. The loss of the first day to rain made the wicket more difficult but may also have deprived the Gentlemen of an improbable victory, for when stumps were drawn they had reduced the Players to 63 for 5 with another 69 still needed. Pearce wrote that he never met anyone quite like Stephenson: 'It was nothing to see him running down to third man after he had bowled a batsman out and return to his position via extra cover.' Those qualities made Stephenson an inspirational leader, who in the Second World War commanded a battalion of the Middlesex Regiment and in 1944 was awarded the DSO for service in Tunisia.

After the war Tom Pearce became sole captain until 1950, when Doug Insole took over. Trevor Bailey thought that Insole as captain had a tougher, more professional attitude than Pearce. On the famous occasion when Essex were the only side to bowl out the 1948 Australians in a single day but conceded 721 runs in 128 overs, Pearce sent in his bowlers like First World War cannon fodder with no thought of going on the defensive; Bailey went at more than six runs an over and it transformed the way he thought about the game. In 1949 at Clacton Pearce kept Bailey bowling so he could get all ten wickets, but allowed the last two wickets to add 63 runs and establish a lead large enough for Lancashire to enforce the follow-on and go on to win. Pearce had his moments though: against Lancashire in 1947 Bailey boasted that he had never conceded 100 runs in one innings, so Pearce promptly brought him on to bowl, and loudly counted down the runs till he reached his century²⁹⁰.

In 1952 Tom Pearce took over from Sir Hubert Ashton as Chairman of the club and in 1971 he again succeeded Ashton, this time as President. It was appropriate that a man whose wise and skilful captaincy contributed so much to the revival in the 1930s presided over an even more successful period in the 1980s. He remained considerate and gently self-deprecating to the end. When Ken Brewer wrote to ask whether he had any memories of his grandfather who was groundsman at Leyton in the 1920s, the 88-year-old Pearce replied that he did not but added that 'an elderly chap who cuts what remains of my hair used to have a shop in that area of the High Road and his father before him'. Pearce promised to ask whether the barber remembered Bung Brewer and, although he was already in poor health took the trouble to write and say that he did not, even though 'as a nipper he had jumped over a wall at Leyton to watch the cricket'. Tom Pearce died a few months later, greatly mourned by all in the sporting world who knew him.

Chapter 9: The secretaries

In the early years the club relied on honorary secretaries. There is no record that JF Lescher (see p22) ever played for Essex but his successor, John Jervis Read, was a capable cricketer. He and his brother, Ernest Arnold Read, both made their Essex debuts in 1882 and appeared occasionally over the next few years. Neither played first-class cricket, but in the Brentwood days they made useful runs for Essex and, judging by the number of catches they took, were good fielders. In Essex's last match at Brentwood, a 10-wicket win against Norfolk in 1885, Ernest Read made 66 not out. A stockbroker living at Palmerston Road Buckhurst Hill, he was the father of Arnold Holcombe Read, who assisted Essex from 1904 to 1910, and grandfather of Holcombe Douglas 'Hopper' Read, who had a brief but explosive career for Essex and England in the mid-1930s.

²⁹⁰ Bailey on Bailey, p23. He had in fact conceded 112 earlier in the season but that was for Cambridge and he did pick up three wickets.

John Read, also a stockbroker, was ‘a splendid free bat, but unfortunately was unable to give much time to... cricket’²⁹¹. In Essex’s first match against a first-class county – Surrey at the Oval in 1884 – he hit freely for 66 of an eighth wicket partnership of 81, with eleven fours. Later in the season he held out for the last ten minutes when Hertfordshire were on the brink of a massive victory. He lived in Brentwood, however, and once Essex moved to Leyton his appearances were rare. When he did play he was usually out bowled, which may suggest that his defence was not quite good enough for success at the highest level; had he been a little younger he would perhaps have benefited from the coaching enjoyed by the likes of McGahey and Perrin. John Read was also Hon. Treasurer from 1883 to 1892. Home Gordon suggested in 1907 that ‘The post of honorary treasurer to a county cricket club is not any easy one to fill [because] to perform its duties adequately one must have adequate time at one’s disposal’. Evidently this was the case with Read, for he resigned because ‘he could not give sufficient time to the working of the club’²⁹².

The background of the Read brothers was typical of the upper-middle-class elite that ran Essex County Cricket Club in its early days²⁹³. Their father, John Francis Holcombe Read, was born in Kingston Jamaica in 1823 but was only a clerk and his family are not on the splendid <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/> website which list slave owners compensated for the loss of their ‘property’. Thus he did not inherit money tainted by slavery but did marry an heiress named Mary Jervis with whom he had ten children. The family grew up in Walthamstow at The Elms, in what is now the High Street, and in the 1860s the Reads took over The Chestnuts in Hoe Street from the Green family. Although JJ Read was then only a boy, CE Green could have known him from that period and it may be no coincidence that they came into office with Essex at the same time. JFH Read stood six feet two and his sons were all said to have been as tall, so it is not surprising that they showed athletic prowess. In addition to Ernest and John, Read’s second son Charles Stokes was a Cambridge rowing Blue who later rowed for Leander, the oldest and one of the most prestigious rowing clubs in the world²⁹⁴.

According to his grandson, HV Jervis-Read, JFH Read won and lost three fortunes on the London Stock Exchange, of which his four surviving sons were all members. He was also a director of the Great Eastern Railway and of six other companies. He was a JP and a leading member of the small oligarchy that ran Walthamstow for many years. A fine musician whose compositions were published by Novello, he was director of the Stock Exchange Orchestra which often played before the Prince of Wales. In 1887 in Hoe Street he built at his own expense the Victoria Hall, a profitable musical venue where he performed his own works and those of better-known composers. A rather tenuous link with Essex cricket is that he wrote the stirring tune for the politically very incorrect school song of Sir George Monoux Grammar School, where Doug Insole and three other postwar Essex cricketers were educated, as was I. In the 1880s, as the first chairman of the Walthamstow School Board, he was instrumental in refounding Monoux, which was then in a rather decayed state, and in establishing the Walthamstow High School for Girls. In 1893 the Tottenham and Forest Gate Railway bought The

²⁹¹ Lillywhite’s *Cricketer’s annual*, 1889.

²⁹² *VCH Essex* II, p601-2.

²⁹³ This paragraph based on: MANDER, David. *Walthamstow past*. Historical Publications, 2000; Read biographical file at Vestry House Museum Walthamstow; censuses for 1881 and 1901.

²⁹⁴ In a class-conscious age, the Amateur Rowing Association was the most snobbish and elitist sporting body of all, debarring from amateur status “anyone who is or has been by trade or employment for wages a mechanic, artisan or labourer, or engaged in any menial duty”. VAMPLEW, p8. Cricket was never as bad as that.

Chestnuts and its land in preparation for building the railway that also passed close to the County Ground. They sold off the surplus land for development but the house remains, a Grade II listed building owned by Waltham Forest Council and used for training.

The move to Leyton made it essential that Essex County Cricket Club should be put on a more business-like footing. In December 1885 CE Green and John Read launched an appeal for £3000 for a new pavilion, to which John subscribed £25 and his brother Ernest five guineas. The 1886 AGM was told that

Owing to the increase of work and responsibility the new ground at Leyton involves, your Committee have found it necessary to avail themselves of the services of a [paid] secretary, who is prepared to devote himself to the necessary duties, and they have been fortunate in securing the services of Mr T. Ratliff, and from his large and lengthy experience in the formation and general management of cricket and very satisfactory results may with confidence be looked forward to.²⁹⁵

Thomas Ratliff described himself on the 1881 census as a merchant. He had worked for Middlesex and Warwickshire and played for both counties, and had served on the MCC committee. He had also had secretarial experience with the influential Liverpool club, which enjoyed high social standing at a time when the city was at its most prosperous. One of his first tasks was to raise funds for the new ground but he was not very successful, which may be why he resigned at the end of the 1887 season. Then ‘Messrs Green and Read were empowered to interview Betts’, to whom they ‘offered the post at a salary of £150 per annum’.

Morton Peto Betts attended Harrow School and was a civil engineer whose family had worked with the likes of Brunel and Stephenson in building the early railways²⁹⁶. Born in Bloomsbury, the son of EL Betts of Preston Hall Aylesford²⁹⁷, he was qualified for Middlesex by birth and Kent by residence. In August 1872, the last season before the rules on qualification were tightened up, he appeared for both counties in the same week. He played one further game for Kent in 1881, hitting a career-best 39 not out. He made his debut for Essex in 1884 but continued with his Kent connection, being their fixture secretary for the 1887 season.

Betts was, however, better known as a football player and administrator. He was a committee member of the Football Association when it passed a unanimous motion establishing the FA Cup competition in 1871-2²⁹⁸. Having played for Harrow Chequers in an earlier round, he turned out in the inaugural final under the rather unsubtle pseudonym of AH Chequer and scored the only goal, for Wanderers against the Royal Engineers. He played football for England in 1877 and later became a well-known referee. He was a member of the southern public school old boy network which at the FA’s 1886 AGM was voted out of office and replaced by a largely Lancastrian northern caucus²⁹⁹. Essex were keen to develop football as a money-spinner so Betts’s experience of the game can have done his application no harm, although in his first season the football lost even more than the cricket.

²⁹⁵ Cricket: a weekly record of the game, 22 Apr 1886, p76.

²⁹⁶ Family tree magazine, May 2004, p67.

²⁹⁷ Don Ambrose and CricketArchive, 2003.

²⁹⁸ BOOTH, Keith. The father of modern sport: the life and times of Charles W Alcock. Parris Wood Press, 2002, 6th page of illustrations.

²⁹⁹ BOOTH, p229.

Essex appointed Betts in 1887 and CE Green spoke highly of him at the 1888 AGM. He sometimes captained Essex Club & Ground sides, and in 1889-90 helped organise three athletics meeting at the County Ground. On the last of these the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* commented: 'With the county secretary (M.P. Betts) at the head of affairs, it is needless to say that everything was worked off in applepie order, and good time was kept throughout.'³⁰⁰ In 1890 he attended the Commons enquiry into the projected Tottenham and Forest Gate Railway and, on the club's behalf, supported the new project. Betts resigned later in the summer and a committee member, Dr Gustav Pagenstecher of West Ham, took over as temporary Hon. Sec (see above pp 74-5).

Oswell Robert Borradaile (1860-1935)

The committee then interviewed several candidates and on 25 September appointed OR Borradaile at an annual salary increased to £200. The son of the vicar of St Mary's Westminster, Borradaile was born in 1859 and educated at Westminster School. He went into banking but his early career was not without its problems, for on the 1881 census he was described as 'bank clerk out of employ'. A great influence in London club cricket, he helped found Stoics CC which was initially a club of former Westminster pupils. They later had strong links with Essex, for Lucas, Owen and Kortright all played for them. Borradaile captained the Stoics for ten years and was their Hon. Sec. until 1893, when he found that he could not combine the role with his paid duties for Essex. In 1891 he made his Essex debut and also played against them for MCC. His only first-class game was for Essex in 1894, when he held a catch but scored only 5 and 2 and did not bowl. When in 1899 the Second XI was inaugurated, he became its first captain and was succeeded by George Higgins. He later played for Wanstead, where he lived. On censuses he was listed with his wife, son, and two servants.

Borradaile's greatest contribution to the club, however, was as an administrator. WA Bettesworth considered that Essex's success in the 1890s was 'not a little owing to his energy'³⁰¹. Rather like Peter Edwards almost a century later, he combined great managerial and financial skills with a charming manner and a passionate commitment to Essex cricket. Solid and dependable in character, he proved the ideal foil to the mercurial CE Green, and the two men saw Essex through a succession of crises. Borradaile was a calming influence at the tempestuous 1892 meeting where the club was almost dissolved [see above p33]. By 1898 his salary had risen to £300 and he requested an increase to £400 which the committee could not afford, but they did give him a bonus of £100 for "past services". In 1900 he got his increase to £400 and another bonus of £100 as well. At a special general meeting on 10 November 1908, called in an attempt to deal with yet another financial crisis, Borradaile offered to take a salary cut to £300 – a gesture that was greeted with warm applause. A committee meeting two weeks later ratified that decision, adding that if the 1909 season were successful a bonus would be considered. As late as 1933 when money was worth less the secretary's salary was still only £312, which indicates the value that the club placed on Borradaile.

Borradaile had to cope with a time of rapid social and legislative change, some effects of which can be gleaned from the minutes. A rather nice malapropism in 1906 declared that: 'If anything very fragrantly wrong should appear in the press, the Secretary has

³⁰⁰ LSE&I, 18 May 1889.

³⁰¹ Chats on the Cricket Field, 1910, p68.

authority to give the actual facts of the case'. In 1907 he was instructed to obtain details of the new Workmen's Compensation Act from various insurance companies.

A pair of letters written by Borradaile, one to HS Keigwin and one to his brother RP Keigwin give an idea of his duties. The first, to HS, was a simple acknowledgment of his election as a member and an invitation to play in Club & Ground matches. In more recent times, the Club would simply have sent a standard letter perhaps personalised by name, and it's astonishing that Borradaile wrote so many routine letters by hand with little assistance from his cricket-playing assistant secretaries Bull and McGahey, and none from anyone else.

RP's letter was more personal and interesting. Borradaile was captain in a very close 2nd XI match against Norfolk when RP scored the winning runs, and would surely have been impressed by the young man's response in a tight finish. RP had made enough of an impact at Cambridge University in 1903 that he was invited to captain one of the teams in the Freshmen's match of 1904, and a few days before Borradaile wrote the letter scored 18 not out and 85 and took four wickets against Surrey. Borradaile knew that Cambridge were at Hove so sent the letter via the pavilion there and invited him to play in Essex's match at the same venue two weeks later. In the event, while Essex were playing Sussex, Keigwin was making his only first-class century, for Cambridge against Warwickshire. It isn't surprising that Cambridge was his priority, because he had played two full seasons for them and only a handful of matches for Essex.

After the First World War the cash-strapped county cricket clubs lobbied against entertainment tax, which was a major drain on their limited resources, and in 1920 Essex fought a test case against the levying of the tax on members' subscriptions. They could have argued that some of the cricket they played around that time was not entertainment in any normal sense of the word and they were, though probably not for that reason, partially successful. In 1923 the government conceded that only the part of subscription representing admission to matches should be liable to entertainment tax³⁰², and from then on the Essex accounts listed the tax under match expenses but not under members' subs.

In 1914 Borradaile thanked the committee for granting him a week's leave of absence but was unable to take advantage of it owing to pressure of work. After the war his hard work caught up with him and he became seriously ill. Early in 1920 the committee first sent him on holiday and then told him 'not to worry but to carry on with six months leave of absence', after which he returned on light duties. Quite how the club coped during the summer is unclear, for when Borradaile returned in October they also appointed HK Palmer as assistant secretary at £260 a year. He was the only assistant secretary not to play cricket for the county, and so must have been required purely to support Borradaile with his administrative skills. Borradaile always had the best interests of the club at heart, and so when it became obvious that he would not recover his full health he resigned after 31 years' loyal service. The Essex members demonstrated their appreciation with a generous testimonial, and the committee granted him life membership.

The 1920s

Essex in the 1920s did not enjoy the stability provided by Borradaile's long tenure as secretary. He was succeeded by Noel Read Ellershaw Wilkinson (1885-1953), who

³⁰² WILLIAMS, p166.

had attended Marlborough and played cricket and rugby for Northumberland. The 1911 census shows him as a solicitor living at his father's vicarage in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. During the war he was a captain in the Royal Army Service Corps and by 1919 he had been awarded the OBE, although I haven't found what for. In 1921 he was staying with the amateurs at the Red Lion in Colchester and stated that he was Essex secretary. Borradaile also stated that he was the secretary but was living at home in Buckhurst Hill and probably about to hand over the reins. It soon proved impossible for Wilkinson and the local secretary to the Army Sports Board, Major GH Thompson, to share an office. Wilkinson therefore worked from premises in Bishopsgate close to JH Douglas's timber-importing business, although the Army also found him a little office space in the pavilion for when he needed to be on the ground. The Army paid £875 for a house at 221 Fillebrook Road for Thompson to occupy, and deducted £45 rent from his salary.

In 1922 Essex appointed as assistant secretary Lawrence Charles Eastman, a young amateur all-rounder who had made his debut in 1920. He appeared only six times in 1920 and six in 1921, but once he had become assistant secretary he played much more frequently. The minute-book covering his period in office is missing so we do not know whether his role was controversial as McGahey's had been. For a few months at least it was no sinecure, because after Wilkinson's departure in 1925 he acted as secretary. At the end of the 1926 season Eastman turned professional and Essex managed without an assistant secretary until after the Second World War.

In 1926 Essex appointed GH Thompson of the Army Sports Board as secretary, suggesting that relations between the two organisations were reasonably harmonious. A major in the Territorial Army, he began working life as a telegraph boy and rose to the rank of assistant superintendent³⁰³. A few weeks after Thompson's appointment, Leyton was incorporated as a borough and on Charter Day he took great trouble over the organisation of a special children's event at the ground.

In December 1928 Thompson had the unhappy duty of reading the club's statement after the sacking of Johnny Douglas and it may be that the tension of that episode drove him to an early grave. Two days after the AGM in April 1929 he was admitted to hospital suffering from 'partial paralysis', and he died a month later. In June 1929 the club gave his widow an allowance 'to retain the tenancy of 221 Fillebrook Road for now'. This may suggest that he managed to combine the two secretaryships, particularly as the Army Sports Board's separate minute-book ceased when he took over at Essex.

Thompson's obituary declared that his 'organising ability and genial personality did much to place the club on a firmer basis, and it was in no small measure due to his personal efforts that the lease on the ground was secured'. He was responsible for the building of a new Press Box, and at the time of his death was working on plans for a new stand at the northern end of the ground. A neighbour in Fillebrook Road paid tribute 'a great sportsman who always "played the game"' and to his 'keen business efficiency', which was also an indirect tribute to the Post Office: he posted his subscription and 'was greatly surprised to find, on my return home in the evening, a membership card, receipt, and a courteous letter of thanks awaiting me'. Thompson was only 51 at the time of his death and his period in office lasted barely three years, but he seems to have been another in the line of capable Essex secretaries whose contribution should not be forgotten.

³⁰³ This paragraph based on *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, 25 May and 1 June 1929.

As soon as Major Thompson was taken ill, the committee appointed as acting secretary FW Milton, a retired civil servant. He had been an Essex member for many years and represented Leyton on the committee. He remained in office until February 1930, when the committee interviewed three candidates for the vacant post and appointed Major BK Castor.

Brian Kenneth Castor (1889-1979)

Castor was born in British Guiana and educated privately. A retired police officer, he served in Rhodesia where he had considerable experience of administrative work. He was a good army and club cricketer who often captained the Essex Second XI and the Club & Ground XI. He twice played for the First XI, although the match against Sir Julian Cahn's XI, in which his 62 saved the game for Essex, was not recognised as first-class. He proved to be as able and popular an administrator as Borradaile, and remained in office until 1946.

Charles Bray recalled that he and other amateurs took great delight in playing practical jokes on Castor. Sometimes he would leave the office with a letter half-finished in his typewriter and they would nip in and add some nonsense to it. Another favourite trick is best described in Bray's own words:

A curious feature of the Leyton ground was that the bell, which warned people that play was about to begin again after an interval, was in a sort of belfry, the rope hanging through the ceiling. It was H.M. Morris' favourite joke to climb on somebody's shoulders, tie the rope close up to the ceiling and then find the Secretary to remind him that it was time the bell was rung. Castor would come tearing up the stairs only to find the rope well out of his reach. He took this leg-pulling in good humour, but the language that sometimes flew around was certainly not suitable for a drawing-room. He quickly realised that the more angry he got the greater our delight.

Those were happy days at Leyton.

Such Wodehousean jolly japes were typical of public schools such as Repton which Morris attended, but it is hard to imagine that any of the professionals would have been allowed to get away with similar pranks. The amateur Nicholas Vere Hodge commented: 'The professionals were welcoming to the amateurs who did not always behave as well as the professionals, though having to earn your living with some of the luck that goes with cricket can be hard to bear'³⁰⁴.

Lionel Saddler told the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop that the pavilion bell was taken down after the Second World War because the tower was crumbling and could not take the weight any more. He added that the pavilion clock was hit and broken in 1932 during Yorkshire's record 555 partnership – a good story unfortunately not supported by any other source.

Harold Faragher recalled that Castor 'ruled the place with a rod of iron – even the committee were afraid to tick him off!' Castor was captain of the Club & Ground XI, and Trevor Bailey - who as a schoolboy footballer was sent off for a muttered 'damn' - recalled that when he first played for the team he had 'never heard language like it'.

Castor in his first season was paid £6 a week with a bonus of £25. In October 1933 his annual salary was increased to £400, in recognition of the increased workload arising from the club's move away from Leyton to the Festival grounds. He was also given a

³⁰⁴ THURLOW, p97.

first-class railway season ticket to Chelmsford, where the club had rented offices. In 1939 he had an ex gratia payment of £100 to buy a car, essential in view of his responsibility for organising the festivals.

At the outbreak of the Second World War Castor was called up and the committee agreed to make up the difference between his army pay and his salary of £400. In February 1942 Castor was caught up in the fall of Singapore and six months later the committee still had no news of him. According to Faragher, 'his fellow-POWs said he was a wonderful chap'. Throughout the war the Hon. Treasurer, AJ Spelling, also acted as Secretary at a salary of £200, but as soon as it ended the club advertised for a temporary secretary. They received fifty applications and appointed Wing-Commander Leslie Lingwood Bray, brother of Charles, who in 1927 played one first-class game for the RAF and in the late 1930s turned out for Essex Club & Ground³⁰⁵.

In October 1945 the committee welcomed the 'safe return to this country of Lt-Col. B.K. Castor after being a prisoner of war in Japan', and also gave his daughter a cheque for ten guineas as a wedding present. The committee allowed Castor time to recover from his ordeal and he resumed his duties on 1 January 1946. The plan was that he and LL Bray should be joint-secretaries, but in the event Bray left and Castor was appointed secretary of the larger and more prestigious Surrey club. The Essex committee offered their congratulations, declaring themselves 'sorry to lose one who had so much to do with the improvement in the club's fortunes'.

Robert Fraser Troutbeck Paterson was appointed as secretary from a short-list of five at a salary of £500 + expenses. He appeared regularly as an amateur in 1946 but played no more first-class cricket for Essex. During the summer he and his wife slept in a caravan that he towed round the county with an elderly Rolls Royce, which he also used to transport the younger players to Club & Ground matches. He was succeeded first by HG Clark as Hon. Sec. and then by Trevor Bailey, whose reign is described in chapter 11.

Chapter 10: 'All too little was seen of Mr...' – availability of amateurs

Perrin, Kortright, Fane and Douglas all had enough financial independence to be able to play whenever they wished, but they were the exceptions. Essex certainly paid amateurs' expenses, but the club's financial position was usually so precarious that they cannot have been exorbitant, though see the comments about HG Owen on p72³⁰⁶. When in 1931 the county needed major economies the finance committee reported that 'the amateurs' expenses are reasonable'. In 1949 MCC wrote to the counties about amateurs' expenses and Essex 'agreed with the contention that only out-of-pocket expenses were acceptable'. At Essex they had 'always been kept within reasonable bounds'.

One very rare mention of a specific expense came in 1930, when 'Capt. R.H. Sharp had been awarded his county cap. He was to obtain one from Lewin's and send the account to the Hon. Treas. for payment.' Sharp was a Regular Army officer who qualified for Essex by residence. He was a right-arm fast-medium bowler who enjoyed some success in 1925, his debut season, but after that played only four games in three years without

³⁰⁵ He was the right age to have been the elder brother of Charles Bray but I could not find either of them on the 1901 census and have traced no definite link.

³⁰⁶ See also comments on Bailey and Insole, pp21 and 23 below.

taking a wicket and never appeared again. Trevor Bailey explained that before the Second World War the custom was to award caps to amateurs 'when their services were no longer required', even though they 'had not merited them by their performances on the field'³⁰⁷. After the war Len Clark and George Pullinger were capped for contributions that were useful but not outstanding, and then the practice was discontinued. Such minor expenses were not the kind of thing that would have enabled an amateur to make any sort of career out of cricket.

Bunny Lucas's work on the Stock Exchange ended his test career prematurely, and limited his appearances for Essex. Other fine Essex amateurs had to earn a living and experienced similar problems, particularly after the First World War.

The Turner brothers

AJ and WMF Turner were born in India, the son of a cricket-loving army officer who was drowned in 1892 when returning to Hong Kong from a match against Shanghai.

Brigadier Arthur Jervoise 'Johnny' Turner (1878-1952) made his debut for Essex in 1897, the most successful of their first hundred years. A cadet at the Royal Military Academy Woolwich and still aged only 19, he topped their batting averages and came ninth in the country. Lillywhite described him as 'a young cricketer of great promise'. He turned out fairly regularly for Essex in his first three seasons but after that his appearances were all too infrequent. In 1898 he appeared for the Gentleman but the following season had to refuse an invitation to play in the fixture because of his military duties in the South African (Boer) War. Turner also missed Essex's last six games, of which they won only one, so Wisden commented that 'the absence of Turner weakened them'. He served with the Royal Artillery and destroyed a Boer night-gun at Ladysmith. Later he was wounded in the arm and in the heel – 'running away as usual I suppose Johnny,' teased CE Green.

It was a matter for comment in the annual report that 'Mr A.J. Turner who last season was serving with his regiment has now returned and will be able to play in 1901'. The only seasons that he missed completely were 1900, 1902 and 1907, but sometimes he could play only once or twice and never more than eight times in a season. Lemmon wrote that Turner 'had the wonderful capacity to be able to return to county cricket after a long absence and bat with skill and confidence against the strongest of opposition'. A careful examination of his record suggests that it usually took him a little while to get into his stride, although once he had done so he was most impressive and if he had played regularly would not have needed that warming up period. He scored at least one century in each of the seasons in which he played more than twice, although rather surprisingly he never exceeded the 124 he made against Warwickshire in 1899. In the First World War he served on the staff of GHQ in France, winning the DSO and the Croix de Guerre. He and Charles Kortright were elected vice-presidents of the club and remained in office until they died within a few weeks of one another in 1952.

Lt-Col Walter Martin Fitzherbert Turner (1881-1948), also a regular army officer, had a longer and even more spasmodic career. He made his debut in 1899 aged only 18 years 76 days and his last appearance was almost exactly 27 years later, yet he played just 48 games. Nineteen of them were in 1906, when he scored 924 runs at 33 and held 30 catches. Against Middlesex in 1919 a splendid 172 at better than a run a ball showed what Essex were missing by his inability to play more often.

³⁰⁷ *Wickets*, p53-4.

The Turner brothers were both fine batsmen and Essex annual reports summarised their contributions: ‘A.J. Turner returned after military service and had not lost his old skill’ (1906); ‘W.M. Turner was a valuable recruit who had not before been able to give himself a real chance in first-class cricket’ (1907).

Canon Frank Hay Gillingham (1875-1953)³⁰⁸

Frank Gillingham was one of the most endearing characters in Essex cricket history. He was perhaps the only first-class cricketer to have been born in Kobe, Japan, where his father was a tea merchant. He came to England aged eight and learnt his cricket at Dulwich College. He completed his education at St John’s Hall Highbury and Durham University, where he played cricket and rugby. A man of deep human understanding with a genuine vocation for the church, Gillingham was ordained in 1899. He became curate at St Mary the Virgin Leyton, a parish which epitomised the Victorian ideal of muscular Christianity: his predecessor captained Durham University at cricket and his successor was a Cambridge cox. Gillingham’s residence at Leyton enabled him to begin a qualification with Essex, for whom he made his debut in 1903. The following season he topped their batting averages, making his highest ever score of 201 on his first appearance at Lord’s.

Gillingham was ‘a humane, charming and hard-working parson who spent most of his clerical career in the poorer parts of London’³⁰⁹. He saw cricket as a means of sharing his faith³¹⁰:

Cricket brings one into closer touch with one’s parishioners, especially with the working classes, and if one has the least talent for games it was given to be used. Often when I have had to meet some working-man who has the reputation of being very shy with parsons, he has greeted me by saying: ‘Oh, I know you well enough. I have seen you play for Essex.’ And barriers are broken down.

It was never beneath his dignity to play knock-up cricket with the boys of Leyton who soon came to love him, especially when he demonstrated the value of a fervent spirit by releasing from the pulpit a fire balloon that ascended to the ceiling. He was a Guardian of the Poor at the West Ham Union workhouse, later Langthorne Hospital. One of the old paupers became convinced that he was the just the bowler Essex needed when he ‘sent down a clinker that took the cricketing parson’s wicket in the union garden’³¹¹.

Gillingham’s clerical duties meant that his appearances for Essex were less frequent than they would have liked. His team-mates teased him that he ‘picked his wickets’, but he preferred to play in difficult circumstances and often helped get them out of trouble. In 1904 he became a Chaplain to the Forces and moved to Tidmouth barracks on Salisbury Plain, where he enjoyed his duties and soon became popular with the rank and file³¹². He may have been rather lucky to continue playing for Essex, because new rules introduced in 1900 laid down that in order to maintain his qualification a cricketer had still to be resident in his chosen county. If he played for his county for five consecutive years he would qualify to play for it for the rest of his career, or until he

³⁰⁸ He is the subject of a splendid biography by Anthony Bradbury in the ACS Lives in Cricket series but I wrote this first!

³⁰⁹ NEWNHAM, p13.

³¹⁰ Cricket, 1904, p97. He too paid tribute to the value of the coaching arranged by CE Green.

³¹¹ MARCH, Russell. The cricketers of Vanity Fair [cartoons by Spy]. Webb & Bower, 1982, p88.

³¹² LSE&I, 4 Feb 1905.

played for another county. At the start of the 1905 season Gillingham was no longer living in Leyton and had played only two seasons for the Essex first team, although he had previously appeared for the Club & Ground XI. It would appear that he should strictly speaking have been disqualified, so perhaps the rules were still interpreted more generously for amateurs than for professionals. He played most regularly from 1908 to 1910, but could not normally manage more than a dozen games a season.

In 1911 he married the daughter of a Congregational minister and, in a pleasingly ecumenical gesture, had his parents-in-law to stay at his vicarage of Holy Trinity at Bordesley in Birmingham. Some of his parishioners complained that his cricket was taking him long distances from the parish and he mounted a robust written defence, declaring that instead of taking a six weeks' holiday at a time, as most vicars did, he would take three days at a time, which meant that all his Sundays would be at home. (In 1912 he played 14 three-day matches, exactly six weeks, although he did allow himself four consecutive games in early August, when he may have missed a Sunday or two in the parish.) He went on to claim that his cricket was 'a distinct asset', for he was 'generally advertised as the Essex cricketer'. He felt that many in his congregation 'have been attracted by the fact that he has a little gift which is unusual among the clergy'. He had collected £300 from cricket lovers, without which he would not have been able to carry on his parish work and he would give up the game if it became a hindrance rather than a help in his work. The next Sunday, realising that his spiritual labours must suffer if he did not have their entire confidence, the congregation signed a memorial dissociating themselves from the suggestion that his cricket was interfering with his work in the parish³¹³.

The newspaper article reporting these exchanges continued with a wonderful account of a typical Gillingham initiative:

His church needed spring cleaning, and the vicar, assisted by his curate, Mr Ure, a cousin of the Lord Advocate, formed a soap and water brigade to undertake the task. An artisan member of the congregation was chosen to command, and, acting under his orders, Mr Gillingham rid himself of his clerical coat, donned a charwoman's apron, and vigorously plied a scrubbing brush on the front of the gallery. His curate, similarly attired, seconded his efforts from a ladder. But, despite an excellent display of muscular christianity, a good deal of grime remained after a week's hard scrubbing, and the volunteer brigade have had to obtain a week's extension in which to complete the job.

During the First World War Gillingham served as a chaplain to the forces at the front, and was mentioned in dispatches. After the war he became rector and rural dean of Bermondsey and wrote to Essex requesting permission to play for Surrey 'as his parish was there and it would benefit the boys if he did so', but they indicated that they 'would have great difficulty in raising a representative side' and would prefer him to stay with them, which he did.

Though Gillingham did not make his debut until he was 27, he assisted Essex for a quarter of a century. Aged 52 years 287 days, he became the oldest man ever to play for Essex when in 1928 he kept a promise to play in the benefit match of Jack Russell with whom he had shared in seven century partnerships, including two in the same match against Surrey in 1922 when Russell scored two centuries. There was no fairy-tale ending: Gillingham held a catch but scored only 11 and 0; Surrey won by an innings and 149 runs.

³¹³ Walthamstow Guardian 31 May, 7 June 1912.

A well-known after-dinner speaker, he had the priceless asset of being able to deliver amusing anecdotes without the trace of a smile. In 1925 he ‘supplemented his good work on the field by Broadcasting an appeal to such an effect that the Club benefited to the extent of £144-3-9’. Two years later, on 14 May 1927, the BBC experimented with its first ever cricket broadcast, a game at Leyton in which Essex beat the New Zealanders. The natural choice as commentator was Gillingham, who had a superb vantage-point high in the pavilion, outside on a balcony so that some sound effects could be picked up. He broadcast from 2.10 to 2.20 and then for five minutes on each hour, with a summary at 6.45. Newspaper verdicts ranged from ‘deadly dull’ to ‘a partial success’, and the experiment was extended to other grounds including The Oval. During a rain break there, Gillingham was reduced to reading out the advertisements, which did not find favour with the Director-General, Sir John Reith, and his commentating career came to an abrupt end.

Gillingham remained true to his Christian principles and opposed the London County Council’s proposal to allow recreational cricket on Sundays because it might lead to the playing of county cricket and even the opening of cinemas on the Sabbath³¹⁴. In 1939 he was appointed Chaplain to King George VI.

The Essex annual report of 1953 reported ‘the death of F.H. Gillingham, a great and lovable character to whom it was the game and not the result that mattered’. After his memorial service, the wife of a famous cricketer uttered a malapropism that Gillingham would surely have enjoyed: ‘It was a wonderful service,’ she declared, ‘and we had that lovely chapter out of the Book of Wisden’³¹⁵.

The wicket-keepers

One of the figures essential to Essex’s success in the 1890s was their professional wicket-keeper, Tom Russell, but by 1903 his career was coming to an end. The intention was that his brother Edward should take over, but Edward proved rather a disappointment and for over twenty years Essex often turned to a succession of amateur wicket-keepers. No fewer than three of them went to the same public school, Forest in Walthamstow³¹⁶. Somewhat ironically, Edward Russell became professional coach and groundsman at Forest after its products helped end his Essex career. The school also produced useful batsmen in John Bonner, who played in the 1890s, Hubert Waugh (1920s), Brian Belle and Jack Dennis (1930s). After the Second World War Ian Thomson played for Essex Young Amateurs but later turned professional and had a successful career with Sussex and England. Quite remarkably, the wicket-keeping tradition was revived after a gap of more than half a century by Essex’s first-team professional keeper, James Foster.

The Rev. Charles Gough Littlehales (1871-1945) was a contemporary of the Russells. He was a fine schoolboy wicket-keeper at Forest, but did not get his blue at Oxford because he concentrated on rowing. By 1901 he had been appointed rector of Bradfield near Harwich, and his clerical duties limited him to six appearances for Essex, keeping wicket in two games when the Russell brothers were not available. In 1911 he was the incumbent of Blidworth near Mansfield in Nottinghamshire. Two of his three servants were from Essex, suggesting that he may well have taken them with him.

³¹⁴ WILLIAMS, p154.

³¹⁵ MARTINEAU. *They made cricket*. Cited LEMMON, p231.

³¹⁶ Most of the information about the school in this section taken from DEATON, Guy. *Schola Silvestris: a history of Forest School*. The Governors of Forest School, undated but c1976.

Kenneth Lloyd Gibson (1888-1967) was an Old Etonian from a military family who himself served in both world wars, although his father was a solicitor and he went on to the Stock Exchange.

He made his Essex debut late in 1909, and played in 14 of their 18 Championship matches in 1910. In 1911 he missed only one game for Essex, and twice played for the Gentlemen. Against Derbyshire he claimed nine victims in the game – a club record that has never been beaten, and only equalled in 1983 by David East. Essex's first game in 1912, however, was his last in first-class cricket, other than two for the Army in 1920. The loss to Essex is shown by their using another five wicket-keepers in the remaining 18 games of 1912 – doubtless one reason for their dismal showing. He was described by *Wisden* as a most capable wicket-keeper, but his batting had steadily improved and he might well have developed into an outstanding keeper/batsman.

In 1911 Gibson was living in the household of his widowed father at Brentwood, with a brother, sister and four servants. His father Herbert, a solicitor, was president of the Law Society in its centenary year, 1925. In 1926 Herbert was created first Baron Gibson of Great Warley in the County of Essex, a title to which Kenneth succeeded in 1932³¹⁷. Kenneth was listed as a stockbroker's clerk but never became a Member of the Stock Exchange in his own right, so his abrupt disappearance from first-class cricket is rather a mystery.

In the First World War Kenneth was mentioned in dispatches, and in the Second he was a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. In 1914 he married Mary Edith Elwes and they had two daughters. Between the wars he gave his profession as 'Handicapper to the Jockey Club' and was a successful amateur jockey. After the Second World War he was Clerk of the Course at Sandown Park.

KL Gibson's cousin Archibald Leslie Gibson was a fine schoolboy batsman at Winchester who in 1895-7 appeared five times for Essex with limited success. He became a tea planter in Ceylon and while on leave in 1910 played seventeen games for the county. His career-best 71 helped Essex to a 180-run victory against that season's champions, Kent.

Colin Donald McIver (1881-1954) was born in Hong Kong and in 1891 was living with his widowed father, who was then 'living on own means' but died soon afterwards. Colin was educated at Forest where in 1901, at the relatively advanced age of 20, he as captain hit 1003 in ten completed innings. He went up to Oxford where in 1903-4 he obtained his Blue and played regularly for the University. He played three times for Essex in 1902 and once in 1904, but his wine business claimed him for the next eight years.

McIver was a fine footballer who played for Oxford University, Essex County, Old Foresters and Casuals. On 1 November 1906 he made his only appearance for England amateurs, a 15-0 win against France at the Parc de Princes in Paris Old Foresters.

On 4 June 1907 McIver married Ethel Agnes Lambert at St Margaret's Westminster (opposite the Houses of Parliament), followed by a reception at the Westminster Place Hotel. They settled at Ashted in Surrey and had Marjorie Jean in 1908 and Richard Colin in 1918. The 1921 census shows that McIver was away, presumably on business, but the family were at home with a cook, parlour maid, housemaid and nursemaid. As

³¹⁷ Debrett, 1932.

player, captain and later president, he was involved with Ashted CC for the rest of his life, and is still remembered there.

He played 134 first class cricket matches, mostly for Oxford University and Essex, but the pattern of his career was rather curious. In 1902 he played four matches for Essex 2nd XI. It took him a little while to find his feet but after 52 against Middlesex 2nd XI he made a sparkling 78 against Sussex 2nd which propelled him into the 1st XI ahead of his opening partner, one JWHT Douglas. After three low scores, against Leicestershire ‘the young Oxonian batted very pluckily at a time when runs were badly required’³¹⁸, top-scoring with 66. Essex must have had high hopes of him, but it would be more than ten years before he scored another run for the county. He did not play for Essex in 1903 because he went straight from Oxford to the Corinthians’ South African football tour, and in 1904 he made a duck in his only innings for the county.

In 1912 Essex fielded six wicket-keepers in eighteen matches and they must have been greatly relieved that in 1913 not only was he able to keep wicket but also ‘the batting was greatly strengthened by the presence of McIver who had never before been a regular member of the eleven.’ In his second match, against Lancashire, he was promoted to open the innings and responded by hitting his maiden first-class century. Later in the season he formed a most effective opening partnership with Jack Russell and against Hampshire the pair added 210, an Essex record that stood until they beat it by two the following year. He was also able to play regularly in 1914 and over the two seasons scored 1809 runs at an average of 32 with four centuries.

McIver joined the general committee when Green, Lucas and Kortright resigned, and the selection committee in 1914. At different times, McIver had at least two partners in his wine business and probably more, so perhaps a change of circumstances or partner meant that he had more free time. It would be intriguing to know whether he joined the committee with the intention of playing more cricket, or whether his colleagues persuaded him to do so, rather like the England selectors and Cyril Washbrook in 1956. By then he was playing less football so he may have concentrated more on cricket.

McIver was a fast-scoring right-hand batsman who must have been a joy to watch when he got going. It may be an indication of his approach that in 1913 his two centuries and his second innings 44 against Hampshire all ended in his being stumped. He had kept wicket at school and in one match for Oxford Authentics in 1902, and also perhaps at Ashted, but never in first-class cricket before 1913.

In the First World War, McIver served as a Captain in the Queen’s West Surrey Regiment and was wounded at Suvla Bay in the Gallipoli campaign. He contracted dysentery and was invalided out for a while but was passed fit on 14 June 1917, later transferring to the Royal Air Force.

McIver played only three games in 1919 but like Charlie McGahey appeared fairly regularly in 1920 and had something of an Indian summer. Against Middlesex on an difficult Leyton wicket, ‘the two Macs’ were in the first innings the only batsmen to reach double figures and added 81 for the sixth wicket – a vital contribution in a match that Essex won by just four runs. McIver played five games in May 1921 but was by then forty years old and appeared only once more for Essex. Remarkably, the team for that game against Somerset contained no fewer than four men who at various times kept

³¹⁸ [Sheffield Daily Telegraph](#), Friday 29 August 1902.

wicket for Essex, but it was McIver who had the gloves. He still played first-class cricket for the Free Foresters and for the teams put out by his friend HDG Leveson-Gower at the Eastbourne Festival, which he helped to organise. His last first-class match came at the age of 53, when he captained MCC against Ireland and claimed four second-innings victims as wicket-keeper.

McIver's qualification to play for Essex was, to say the least, dubious. He was born in Hong Kong, lived in Surrey and had his business in the City. He was a boarder at Forest School from 1896 to 1901, but was at Oxford when he played his matches for the 1st and 2nd XIs in 1902, and one in 1904. He may have acquired a residential qualification while at Forest School or afterwards, but there is no evidence for it. At least Frank Gillingham in the same era played two full seasons for the county before moving away from Leyton.

But there can be no doubt that he was an asset to the club, not only as a batsman/wicket-keeper but also for his character. The historian of Forest School, Guy Deaton, wrote that

Colin McIver was a delightful man, much loved by Foresters who saw him regularly at the School. He had so much humour and enjoyment of life and an infinite capacity for passing it on. No one was unimportant to him, he made good friends and kept them. If one wanted to pick out one Old Forester to represent the School at its best one might do a lot worse than pick Colin McIver.

And Sir Home Gordon in *The Cricketer* (1954, p 177) said: 'Widely popular, it was said of him ... that everybody who knew him called him by his Christian name. The hospitality he exercised was lavish. Always ready to help the man out of luck, he leaves most happy memories.'

McIver played for MCC, the Grasshoppers and his beloved local club team, Ashted in Surrey, until he was over 60. He died suddenly while visiting Worcester College, Oxford on 13 May 1954 aged 73, but surprisingly left no will.

Frank William Gilligan (1893-1960) was the eldest of three brothers who played first-class cricket, but the only one who did not captain England and Sussex. Their father described himself on the 1901 census as a produce broker, and was able to send all three of them to Dulwich College. In 1919 Frank won his Blue for Oxford and made his debut for Essex, having the pleasure of stumping his brother Arthur against Cambridge and catching him against Sussex. Captaining his university against his county in 1920, he kept wicket and hit his only first-class century. On coming down from Oxford he became a schoolmaster at Uppingham, and although he assisted Essex throughout the 1920s he was usually able to play only in August. According to Wisden he was 'an excellent wicket-keeper and a better batsman than his style suggested'. His career statistics reinforce this claim, for his overall batting average was better than McIver's and as a keeper he claimed 100 more victims in slightly fewer matches. In 1935 he became headmaster of Wanganui Grammar School in New Zealand, and later was awarded the OBE for services to education.

Captain Frederick William Herbert Nicholas (1893-1962) was born in the Federated Malay States. Like Colin McIver, he was educated at Forest and Oxford. Nicholas was Wisden's schoolboy cricketer of the year, although he did not win his blue. It seems likely that as both boys were born in outposts of empire and sent to Forest, their fathers had jobs related to imperial administration, although I have been unable to find anything to confirm that speculation. He was a remarkable all-round athlete, a fine sprinter and

hurdler. He represented Great Britain at football in the 1920 Olympics and played outside-right in the Corinthians side that knocked Blackburn Rovers out of the 1923-4 FA Cup. His versatility wasn't confined to the sports field, for when the school put on Shakespeare he variously played Polonius, the Princess of France and Mistress Quickly. He became a regular Army officer and won the MC.

Nicholas played four times for Essex in August 1912, but did not keep wicket and achieved little as a batsman. He reappeared for ten games in 1922, although he did not always keep wicket and failed to reach 30 with the bat. He played eleven games in 1923 and twelve in 1924, sharing the wicket-keeping duties with Gilligan and Jack Freeman, and often opening the innings. Wisden commented that 'Nicholas was more effective than his figures might suggest because he often knocked the bowlers off their length'. In 1925 he scored only 26 runs in five innings but in 1926 he enjoyed his best season, playing in 18 games and scoring 729 runs. They included his only first-class century, a spectacular 140 against Surrey which he followed with 52 in Essex's second attempt, but they still lost by an innings.

Nicholas moved up north on business and played only five more games for Essex, although he did keep for Sir Julian Cahn's teams that toured the West Indies and Argentina in 1929 and 1930. His grandson Mark captained Hampshire from 1984 to 1995 and later became a commentator on Channel 4 and TalkSport Radio.

George Marshall Louden (1885-1972)

Like Bunny Lucas and the Read brothers, Louden was a City stockbroker, but unlike them he seems have made his own way in the world without the benefit of inherited wealth. On the 1901 and 1911 censuses George was listed as a stockbroker's clerk and his father as a commercial traveller in stationery, a typically lower middle class job. Because of his business commitments, George Louden was able to play only 94 first-class matches, including 82 for Essex.

A tall man with a fine high action, Louden generated surprising nip off the pitch and was able to move the ball both ways. Opposing sides would enquire whether Mr Louden was playing, knowing that if he was not they were likely to have an easier time of it³¹⁹. In an era when the Essex bowling cupboard was as empty as at any time in their history, he was often the only man who could give Johnny Douglas the sort of support he was looking for. He was, however, less robust than he looked and even Charles Bray admitted that Douglas overbowed him.

Louden was a good club cricketer for Ilford who was almost 27 years old when in 1912 he first played for Essex, but he soon made an impression. In his second match, against Lancashire in May 1913, he took 6 for 48 but was able to play only four more times that season and seven in 1914. In his first match after the war he took 6 for 86 against Surrey and a month later made the first of his eight appearances for the Gentleman against the Players. In July 1921 he had a wonderful patch when he took 27 wickets in five innings including a hat-trick against Somerset and 7 for 144 against the Australians. Pelham Warner thought that Louden should have played in that year's Test matches; he could scarcely have done worse than some of the thirty who did. After the 1922 season, Wisden commented: 'Only when Louden was playing did the attack rise above a respectable mediocrity'. In August 1923 in a test trial he dismissed Woolley, Hendren, Kilner and Tate for only 45 runs but was injured and did not play again that season. In

³¹⁹ SWANTON, EW. *A history of cricket*, vol 2, p84. Allen & Unwin, 1962.

1925 he played only eight games for Essex and one for the Gentlemen, but took 54 wickets and Wisden commented that he ‘would have had a splendid season if he had been able to play more regularly’. He kept up his form and in the final match of his career, a week before his 42nd birthday, took 4 for 32 to help Essex to a ten-wicket win over Sussex.

The Ashton brothers

One of the most remarkable sporting families of the interwar period was the four Ashton brothers, Percy, Gilbert, Hubert and Claude Thesiger. They had much in common, but for almost every generalisation one of them is an exception. All were born in Calcutta except Gilbert who was born in Bromley, Kent. All attended Winchester but Percy did not get into the cricket XI. Remarkably, all won the MC in the First World War except Claude, who was killed flying in the Second. All went up to Cambridge and captained the University cricket XI except Percy who went straight into the Army from school. All played county cricket for Essex except Gilbert, who played for Worcestershire.

Their grandfather, Ralph Ashton, belonged to a family that owned Eccles Shorrock & Co., a major cotton manufacturing firm in Darwen, Lancashire³²⁰, where as employers and benefactors they were a leading influence for fifty years. Around 1870 the sports teams of the Ashton and Walsh mills amalgamated to form Darwen Football & Cricket Club. In 1877, however, a sudden slump had left the whole cotton industry in difficulties. Wages were cut by ten per cent and effigies of the Ashton family were burnt. The problems caused a rift between Ralph Ashton and his brother, Eccles Shorrock junior, who was the principal owner and deeply affected by the hardships that his workers were suffering. On 23 August 1880 Ralph declared in an affidavit that Eccles had ‘rendered it impossible for the partnership to continue. I have serious doubts as to his sanity.’ A month later Eccles was ‘taken to the station with his legs dangling out of a cab’ en route to Holloway Prison. Ralph took over the firm and the family house at Low Hill, where on the 1881 census he was described as a ‘Cotton Manufacturer Employing 1100 Work People’. Within a year the firm had gone into liquidation but by 1891 Ralph had been appointed a district auditor for the Local Government Board and was living in some comfort with three servants.

Ralph’s son Hubert Shorrock Ashton went to Calcutta, where he salvaged something from the crash of the family firm or was enterprising enough to make a fortune of his own, for he could afford to send the four boys to Winchester and three of them to Cambridge. The family moved back to England and settled in Essex³²¹. A great benefactor of East End youth, he obtained the lease of a 50-acre plot in Wanstead and developed it as the Ashton Playing Fields. From 1936 until his death in 1943 he was President of Essex County Cricket Club.

When war broke out in 1914, **Percy Ashton** went into the Army and rose to the rank of captain, becoming a professional soldier after the war. He was never quite as good a cricketer as his brothers and had the further handicap of losing an eye during the war. He nevertheless did not disgrace himself on his one appearance for Essex, against

³²⁰ This story is taken from a wonderful website, www.cottontown.org, where further details can be found. It would not be out of place in the pages of Josephine Cox, the doyenne of Lancashire historical novels, who would surely have been proud to dream up the name Eccles Shorrock for one of her mill-owners.

³²¹ Lemmon says that Claude qualified for Essex in 1921 by residence at the family home in Wanstead, but unfortunately the Kelly’s directory for Wanstead was not published between 1914 and 1922. By then they were living at Trueloves in Ingatestone. (1922 Kelly’s Essex directory.)

Middlesex in 1924. His 31 was the second highest score in the first innings and he also made 21 in the second, while his only first-class wicket was the prized one of Patsy Hendren.

Gilbert Ashton, after captaining the Winchester XI in the summer of 1915, went into the Royal Field Artillery, where he won his MC. He later lost his left thumb but ‘neither in his batting nor his fielding could one detect any trace of this handicap’. He went up to Cambridge in 1919 and obtained his blue in all three years, captaining the side in 1921. Soon after going down he became, in something of an emergency, Headmaster of Abberley Hall preparatory school in Worcestershire. The county immediately called on his services for the match against Essex but he was unavailable, so he called a junior member of staff from his lessons and sent him to New Road. Austin Carr protested his inadequacy but hit 82, the highest score of the match, and helped Worcestershire to a draw. In nine further innings for the county he made only 68 runs, so his view of his abilities may have been about right, but the Essex attack even more inept than him³²².

Gilbert Ashton did make his debut for Worcestershire in 1922. He hit 125 and 84 against Northamptonshire in his second match, but never recaptured such good form. Gilbert played a few games each August until 1927 and after that appeared just twice more, in 1934 and 1936. Worcestershire in this period seldom struggled out of the bottom four in the championship, so they can only have benefited if he could have played regularly and developed his natural talent. Essex usually visited New Road around the beginning of August. Whether by accident or design, therefore, five of Gilbert’s 27 appearances for Worcestershire were against sides that included one of his brothers – Claude four times and Hubert once. He remained at Abberley Hall School for forty years and under his leadership it developed a high reputation.

Hubert Ashton followed his brother Gilbert as cricket captain at Winchester and into the Royal Field Artillery, where as a Second Lieutenant he too won the MC. He was not discharged from the Army until August 1919 but then went straight up to Cambridge. In his second match for the University he made the highest score then recorded for it, 236 not out against Free Foresters. In 1921 he and Claude Ashton made their Essex debuts, playing alongside Percy Perrin and Frederick Fane who first appeared for the county before the brothers were born. Hubert Ashton’s finest hour on the cricket field came in August 1921, when he and Aubrey Faulkner shared a partnership of 154 that turned the match in favour of AC MacLaren’s all-amateur England XI, which achieved what the full England side could not and beat the Australians. His splendid 1921 season resulted in his selection as one of the five Wisden cricketers of the year but it proved to be the best of his career.

On coming down from Cambridge in 1922, Hubert played four representative games and three for Essex but then went to Burma to work for the Burmah Oil Company. He was lost to Essex until 1927 when, home on leave, he played nine matches for them without recapturing his form of 1921. In 1928 he, Rainy Brown and Malcolm Mackinnon, who all might have made useful contributions to Essex, returned to India on business³²³. In 1930 he came back to England as a senior executive for Burmah Oil

³²² PITTARD, Steve. XI last-minute call-ups. IN The Wisden cricketer, May 2006, p12. The article was inspired by England’s late call in India for Essex’s brilliant young batsman Alastair Cook, who hit 60 and 104 not out. Appropriately, four of the other stories also involved Essex – Harold Gimblett of Somerset and Jonathan Agnew of Leicestershire against them, and Peter Smith and Graham Gooch for them and England.

³²³ LSE&I, 7 Apr 1928, p10.

and in 1936 became a Lloyd's underwriter. He played a few first-class matches for Free Foresters and others, but for Essex only appeared once in 1934 and once in 1939, when he made what he described as 'a perfectly brilliant blob'³²⁴. His directorships included Ross Group Ltd (fishing, refrigeration) Siamese Tin Syndicate Ltd (tin mining), South Essex Waterworks Co Ltd (water).

Hubert Ashton was Conservative MP for Chelmsford from 1950 to 1964, and knighted in 1959 for services to politics. He was at various times Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Privy Seal, and the Home Secretary. His wife Dorothy must have felt something of a conflict of interests, for she was a sister of Hugh Gaitskell, Labour party leader 1955-63. Ashton was MCC president in 1960-61, when the Imperial Cricket Conference had to deal with the difficulties of South Africa's withdrawal from the Commonwealth and automatic expulsion from the Conference. He was also High Sheriff of Essex in 1943-4 and a Church Commissioner. From 1941 to 1955 he was Chairman of Essex and from 1955 to 1970 followed in his father's footsteps as President of the club.

Claude Thesiger Ashton was perhaps the most talented all-round sportsman of the brothers. He captained Winchester not only at cricket but also at soccer, racquets and fives, and at Cambridge got his blue for hockey and soccer. At soccer he played thirteen amateur internationals and one full one. In 1924 he and FWH Nicholas were in the amateur Corinthians side that defeated professional Blackburn Rovers 1-0, and in 1929 Ashton scored a hat-trick when Corinthians beat Norwich City 5-0 in the FA Cup. He could doubtless have achieved as much at cricket, but his work as a chartered accountant meant that he seldom had enough time to devote to the longer game. He was a hard-hitting middle-order batsman, useful medium-pace bowler and brilliant fielder.

In July and August of 1921-3 Claude Ashton assisted Essex regularly and with some success during his holidays from Cambridge. Against Middlesex at Leyton in 1922 an unbeaten 110 out of 130 made while he was at the crease contained one six and 24 fours, while Louden's contribution to a last-wicket stand of 96 that averted the follow-on was 3. I think this must also have been the match where Claude featured in a splendid story recounted by his brother Hubert³²⁵. Johnny Douglas was as usual captaining the side and bowling his heart out but Louden at the other end needed a break, so Johnny told Hubert that he would give Claude a few overs. Middlesex took a liking to Claude's bowling and Hubert assumed he would be taken off, but Johnny and Claude carried on for over after over. Eventually Hubert plucked up courage to ask whether his brother might be taken off. 'Christ,' blasphemed Douglas, 'is he still bowling?'

From 1924-8 Claude Ashton played six to nine times a season without quite fulfilling his early promise, and one appearance in 1929 seemed to signal the end of his career. Then in 1934 Essex returned to Brentwood and Ashton returned to Essex, playing a major part in the most remarkable of all the festival weeks held by the county down the years. The first visitors were Kent, who on a blameless wicket declared at 803 for 4. Ashdown hit 332, Ames 202 not out and Woolley 172, while Ashton's 2 for 185 was the least unimpressive Essex bowling analysis. Essex made a solid start and reached 231 for 1, but when the pitch began to give turn only Jack O'Connor could resist the wiles of his fellow leg-spinner Tich Freeman and Essex were all out for 408. A breezy

³²⁴ *Essex annual*, 1964, p106.

³²⁵ LEMMON, *JWHT*, p32.

unbeaten 71 from Ashton only delayed the inevitable and Essex were bowled out again, for 203.

Kent were followed at Brentwood by Surrey. It is said that when Frank Woolley met Jack Hobbs at Liverpool Street Station on the way to the match he told him to go and help himself to a nice easy hundred, but Essex had other ideas. Despite their mauling in the previous game, Tom Pearce took the bold decision to put Surrey in to bat and they were shot out for 115. Essex then capitalised on the wicket as Kent had. O'Connor and Claude Ashton both hit career-bests and in only 140 minutes shared in a fifth-wicket partnership of 287 that remained an Essex record until 1991. Essex declared on 570 for 8 and bowled Surrey out for 263 to win in two days, Ashton picking up four wickets for 47 in the match. In just five days 2,362 runs were scored and, amazingly, Essex were on both ends of an identical result, losing the first game by an innings and 192 runs and winning the second by exactly the same margin.

Ashton continued in excellent form, although his appearances remained infrequent. He played four more times in 1934, topping the county batting averages with 59.42, and the annual report noted sadly that 'Essex could have done with the help of Claude Ashton...much more often'. In 1935 he could manage only two matches but still scored 208 runs in four innings. Against Derbyshire, Ashton and Tom Wade more than doubled the Essex score from 55 for 9 to 116 all out, and Essex made the eventual runners-up fight all the way for a four-wicket victory. In 1936 he appeared fourteen times – more than in any season since his student days - but was not quite as consistent as before. A typically belligerent 100 against Gloucestershire was his last major contribution. He appeared twice in 1937 and 1938 and not at all in 1939. He did, however, return to the Leyton County Ground in June 1939, when it was opened as a sports centre for young people. He symbolically received the lease from the London Parochial Charities and an XI selected by him played a London Federation of Boys Clubs XI³²⁶.

In the Second World War Claude Ashton joined the RAF and rose to the rank of Acting Squadron Leader. On 31 October 1942 he was killed while on a training flight over Bangor in Wales. He was the navigator when a Beaufighter piloted by another Winchester and Cambridge cricketer, Roger de Winton Kelsall Winlaw, collided with a Wellington³²⁷. The Essex annual report of 1943 noted that 'Essex cricket will be the poorer by the death in a flying accident of that brilliant sportsman and gallant officer CT Ashton'. Like Bunny Lucas and Charles Kortright, he was buried in Fryerning churchyard. In the MCC's museum at Lords, the plinth on which the Ashes stand was donated in memory of Ashton and Winlaw.

Leonard George Crawley (1903-1981)

For Tom Pearce, Leonard Crawley was perhaps the greatest 'if only' in all Essex cricket. Under the leadership of Pearce and Denys Wilcox, the Essex bowling attack in the 1930s was among the most formidable in the country, but the team was one class batsman short of a combination that could have won the Championship. Pearce

³²⁶ LsE&I, 17 Jun 1939.

³²⁷ David Frith IN The Cricket statistician 126, Jun 2004, p14. While at Cambridge Winlaw also played 17 games for Surrey during the holidays, and in 1934 hit 1330 runs at 42.90. After that he became a master at Harrow and chose to play most of his cricket for Bedfordshire, although in 1935-7 he did play two festival games at Folkestone and two at Scarborough.

believed that if Crawley had been able to add to his meagre tally of 56 matches in eleven seasons, he would have provided the missing piece of the jigsaw.

Crawley was born into a family that enjoyed educational privilege and sporting talent. Three uncles and two cousins played first-class cricket and were, like him, educated at Harrow and Cambridge. Like Claude of the equally gifted Ashton clan, he was a prodigiously versatile sportsman. His golf partner Percy Belgrave ('Laddie') Lucas, a cousin of Essex's 'Bunny', rated him the greatest all-rounder of all, surpassing even CB Fry. Crawley excelled at racquets, tennis, ice skating, football and shooting, but his principal sport was golf. He only took up the game seriously several years after coming down from Cambridge, but studied and practised it assiduously and turned himself into a splendid golfer³²⁸. Cricket's loss was golf's gain, for he won the Amateur Championship, played in four Walker Cup sides and 97 internationals, and later became the golf correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*.

Crawley made his first-class debut for Worcestershire in 1922 while still at school. In his second match, two weeks after his nineteenth birthday, he captained the county against Glamorgan even though Gilbert Ashton, who had led Cambridge in 1921, was in the side. Crawley, who top-scored in both innings, headed their averages then, and again in 1923 when he hit 431 runs in five innings.

Then Lord Harris discovered that Crawley and the professional William Fox were not properly qualified for Worcestershire, and MCC declared them both ineligible for the county. Worcestershire in the 1920s never finished out of the bottom four and even with Crawley and Fox would hardly have walked off with the Championship. However, Harris - Hon. Treasurer of MCC from 1916 and often seen as the dominant figure in the game - was a great stickler for the correct administration of cricket and in particular for enforcement of the qualification rules. There followed in the Long Room at Lord's a confrontation between him and Lord Deerhurst, the Worcestershire president who commented sarcastically: 'May I congratulate your Lordship on having buggered the career of another young cricketer'³²⁹. Johnny Douglas, himself not averse to using such colourful language, was present in the background and displayed an impish sense of humour out of keeping with his dour image. Brother of England's leading boxing referee and himself an Olympic champion boxer, he mimicked the actions of a referee separating the contestants. For the professional Fox, who had in his debut season hit 981 runs at 32.70, it meant two years out of an all-too-short career as he established his residential qualification. For the amateur Crawley it meant the minor inconvenience of not being able to play county cricket in the holidays from Cambridge. There was talk of banning Worcestershire for knowingly fielding unqualified players but the club apologised and the matter was dropped³³⁰.

Crawley was born in Suffolk and lived most of his life there, so he and Essex benefited from a rule introduced in 1924 that cricketers not born in a first-class county could play

³²⁸ United States Golf Association Journal, August 1949. Article by Francis G Ouimet.

³²⁹ BIRLEY, p219. Birley suggests that this comment refers to Wally Hammond but I think that Hammond was the first to suffer Harris's interference and Fox 'another'. Hammond made his Championship debut for Gloucestershire in 1920 but there were doubts about his residential qualification because he had only been at school in the county and that did not count. In 1921 he played only in the two Australian games. Hammond was born in Kent, a circumstance which fuelled suspicions that Harris abused his position to favour his own county. Hammond was not then the force he later became, but the incident would have been fresh in the mind of Deerhurst who supported his own player accordingly.

³³⁰ WILLIAMS, p25.

for the one whose county town was closest to his place of birth or residence³³¹. It is possible also that Douglas encouraged him. Playing for Worcestershire and Cambridge against Essex in 1923, Crawley had hit 295 runs in five innings and must have impressed the Essex captain, who was always willing to back his judgment of a young player's abilities. Douglas, having overheard the altercation about Crawley's qualification, may have seen the opportunity to recruit some much-needed talent for his beloved county³³².

Crawley's appearances were all too infrequent. At the outset of his career he was a schoolmaster at Farnborough and from 1926 to 1930 played only a few games during the school holidays. For a while he was a journalist and there was no obvious pattern to his appearances. In 1931 he played only once but in 1932 managed nine games from May to early July, captaining the side for the last four of them. He then started his own preparatory school at Moffat in the Scottish borders, where he invited Jack Hobbs to coach the boys. He was a great advocate of good games teaching and an equally strong critic when standards were poor. In 1933 he appeared nine times for Essex during the school holidays but in 1934 not at all and in 1935 only twice. In 1936 aged 33 he played five holiday games and was at the height of his powers as a batsman but, apart from one match for MCC in 1939, he never played first-class cricket again.

Even though Crawley played so little, nobody who saw him at his best ever forgot him, not least because of his unmistakable ginger moustache. Interviewed some 70 years later, Donald Faulkner recalled the 'carefree attitude' of a man who 'used to hit sixes all round the ground'. In 1926 Crawley did little, making only 164 runs in eleven innings with a top score of 41 against his old county. His first significant contribution came in his first appearance of 1927, when Sussex set Essex 276 to win in 210 minutes. Crawley made 176 not out in 185 minutes and twice hit the great Maurice Tate on to the pavilion roof. Hubert Ashton, in his first season for five years, supported Crawley with an unbeaten 44 and the pair knocked off the last 114 runs in an hour. Essex won by seven wickets with 25 minutes to spare, and Crawley was carried from the field by an ecstatic Leyton crowd. Crawley's career-best 222 was one of the few bright spots of the miserable 1928 season, but Glamorgan scored almost as heavily as Essex and the match petered out in a tame draw. For Crawley 1929 and 1930 were relatively quiet seasons but in 1931 he hit 86 on his only appearance, against Somerset. In 1932 he averaged 51.87 and was asked whether he would be available to tour Australia, but had to decline. Against Somerset in 1933 he hit 66 in his first appearance for over a year, and he also made 108 against Northamptonshire, but he was often out cheaply and did little on his two appearances in 1935.

Before the 1936 season Crawley notified the committee that he wanted to play regularly. In the event he appeared only five times but he returned to his best form, both with the bat and as a throwback to the mildly eccentric amateurism of the golden age. For his first game, against Glamorgan at Pontypridd, he turned up at Paddington Station wearing his cricket flannels and carrying a brown paper parcel with his night requirements. He hit a typically belligerent 118 with five sixes and nine fours, but was left so stiff that he could take no further part in the match; in fact he did not play for a fortnight, although that may not all have been due to the stiffness. In his next game the

³³¹ BROOKE, p186.

³³² It is also conceivable that he was related to the Crawley family who gave their name to a road bordering the ground, but I have found no firm evidence of any connection. They were joint-owners of the Lyttelton Ground when Essex bought it in 1885, and R. Crawley Esq and Rev WP Crawley both gave £100 to the pavilion fund.

Worcestershire captain, the Hon. CJ Lyttelton, knowing that Crawley liked to drive the first ball of Essex's innings for four, instructed his bowler, Reg Perks, to send down a slower delivery. Crawley went through with his stroke and the ball went as far as he intended, but vertically rather than horizontally. The gully fielder, the amateur AP Singleton who himself captained Worcestershire after the war, put his hands in his pockets and declared 'I'm not taking that'. Lyttelton had time to look around desperately for someone else to catch it before telling Singleton 'Sandy, you'll have to take it'. Singleton removed his hands from his pockets and clung on to a fine catch. Against Kent in the next game Crawley advised Wilcox to win the toss because he would have to leave at 12.30 on the Saturday. Wilcox duly obliged and Crawley hit the first ball of the match so hard that it went out of shape and had to be replaced³³³. He made 63 out of 86 in an hour, got himself out, downed a pre-ordered pint of beer, disappeared, and returned on the Monday to hold a catch and help his team to an innings victory.

Such mishaps were not confined to cricket. In 1932 Crawley was playing in the Walker Cup at the Engineers' Country Club in Roslyn, N.Y. His overhit drive on the 18th green bounced on the road and hit the trophy 'like the dinner gong at 12 noon', denting it. Francis G Ouimet, sometimes Crawley's Walker Cup opponent and later the US captain, recounted that story and commented: 'He was extremely popular with the American boys and I am truly fond of him'³³⁴. Leonard's cousin Aidan Crawley – who batted in a similar style for Kent and went on to enjoy a distinguished career in politics and journalism – agreed, describing him as 'a truly lovable man'.

Holcombe Douglas 'Hopper' Read (1910-2000)

Like his father, HD Read attended Winchester College, where he acquired the nickname of Hopper. He had Essex cricket in his blood. His grandfather Ernest Arnold Read and great-uncle John Jervis Read both assisted Essex in the pre-first-class days, when John was also Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer (see above p129-130).

His father Arnold Holcombe Read was a stockbroker. He played for Essex as a slow-medium bowler and hard-hitting lower order batsman from 1904 to 1910. In 1904 and 1905 Arnold played only in the fixture at Edgbaston, where in the latter year he came in with Essex on 79 for 7 and hit 70 to help them to 239 all out, although they still lost. He nevertheless did not reappear until July 1908, but then he played for the rest of the season. His best performance was at Northampton where, after the home side had followed on, Essex struggled to break their opening partnership. Eventually McGahey tried Read and he did the trick, taking seven of the first eight wickets (the other being a run out) and finishing with 7 for 75. Read played six times in 1909 and twice in 1910, but achieved little and did not appear again.

In 1910 Hopper was born at Woodford Green and soon afterwards his father moved to Surrey, where he was able to indulge his love of golf at Sunningdale and other courses. Hopper was therefore qualified for Essex by birth and Surrey by residence. Early in 1933 he appeared for Surrey against both universities, but although he took six wickets the county did not object when Essex asked if he could play for them against Lancashire in July, thus enjoying the rare distinction of playing for two counties in the same season.

³³³ THURLOW, p111.

³³⁴ United States Golf Association Journal, August 1949.

He bowled with considerable speed but no success, and as the Essex attack was at full strength for the rest of the season he was not called on again in 1933.

In July 1933 Hopper Read wrote to Essex 'expressing his willingness to stand by for the 1934 season', and as soon as he was available the club took up his offer. He has related how in the hot May of 1934 he had been cooped up in London taking accountancy exams, and travelled to Brentwood to work off his pent-up energy by bowling as fast as possible off a very long run at his former Surrey colleagues. It was the match which Essex won by exactly the same margin that they had lost the previous game against Kent (see p147-8). Hopper started by knocking off Jack Hobbs's cap and finished with 7 for 35, six of them bowled. After only three more matches he was picked for Gentlemen of England against the Australians and took three wickets, although his team lost. He was able to play throughout June and July but only once in August, and in 16 matches took 55 wickets at 20.69. Selected for the Gentlemen against the Players, he took 9 for 171 and helped them to win by three wickets. Along with 'Mr F St G Unwin and Mr AG Powell', who had also made useful contributions to the team, he was awarded his county cap before the 1935 season.

In 1935 Read first played on 19 June but was then able to continue for the rest of the season. He picked up where he had left off, and for Essex took 74 wickets at 19.93. From 31 July to 6 August he took 19 wickets for 174 runs as Essex overwhelmed first Yorkshire, then Worcestershire. A week later he was called up to open the bowling for England against South Africa, even though he had not been good enough for his school First XI, and in his only test match took a creditable 6 for 200 in a high-scoring draw.

Hopper Read then toured Australasia with an MCC party intended to build bridges after the controversial Bodyline tour. He found New Zealand particularly to his liking, hitting his career best score of 25 not out and picking up two six-wicket hauls. On his return he was confronted by the senior partner of his firm who said simply: 'Well bowled, Mr. Read. Now you've got to make up your mind whether you're going to be a professional cricketer or a professional accountant.' Read was just 26 years old and never played first-class cricket again, although according to the minutes that may not have been his intention: the club complained to the Post Office because they never received a letter he wrote offering to play for fourteen days in 1937. He was later a director of Blandy Bros and Co Ltd, the Madeira shippers, and Island Hotel [Madeira] Ltd.

Although Read's career was even briefer than Leonard Crawley's, he too made a great impression on those who saw him. Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson thought that he was 'probably so called because he did a little hop before he delivered the ball ... he was a huge tall man with large feet and he used to pound down...' Read's colleague Ken Farnes remembered the first time he saw him. He took a long run and was very ungainly, 'thundering along, his knees scraping his chin'. At first Farnes could hardly see him for laughing but soon came to have a great respect for him as a bowler.

Not all senior managers of the period took the same attitude as Hopper Read's. Nicholas Vere Hodge recalled that when he was qualifying as an orthopaedic surgeon the Director of his Medical School told him that 'he could take his finals at any time, but he would only be able to play cricket once and that was at the age he was at'. Vere Hodge played four games in August 1936, totalling 146 runs at 36.50. He scored 77 on debut and might well have made a century had not Wilcox asked him to fling the bat in search of quick runs. He eventually did his finals in 1937, after hitting his maiden century at Lords in the presence of one of his examiners who 'much enjoyed my batting

and asked me what I would like to talk about'. Like David Steele on his test debut forty years later, Vere Hodge got lost between the dressing-room and the wicket and was nearly timed out. He came back to the side at the end of July and played for the rest of the season, making 81 against Derbyshire and a career-best 108 against Nottinghamshire. Once he had qualified he appeared five times in August 1938 and once in July 1939 but completely lost form, failing to reach double figures in any of his last nine first-class innings.

Kenneth Farnes (1911-1941)³³⁵

An Essex giant in every sense of the word, Farnes was a genuinely fast bowler who in the 1930s took 362 wickets for the county at an average of 19.11, and a career total of 685 at 21.97. He went on three gruelling overseas tours and played in six home tests against Australia, taking 60 Test wickets at an average of 28.63. Six foot five, dark and handsome, he was most attractive to women. He was one of the reasons why my mother changed her allegiance from Middlesex to Essex, although my father liked to think that he also had something to do with it. Farnes bowled off a surprisingly short run of eleven paces, and made full use of his great height to bring the ball down from eight feet, achieving tremendous lift. He had great stamina and prided himself on his physical fitness: he regularly did body-building exercises and, unusually for a cricketer of the time, he did not smoke. David Thurlow has recorded his life and career in a biography on which I have drawn considerably.

His *Tours and Tests*, a self-effacing, beautifully written autobiography published in 1940, is as far as it is possible to get from the bog-standard ghost-written sporting potboiler. His enthusiasm for cricket tours owed as much to his desire to visit other lands as to his love for the game, and he often described more of the countries than of the cricket. He saw them with the eye of a graduate and teacher of history and geography, and recorded them with the artistry of a poet and painter. *Tours and Tests* has a fairly standard collection of cricketing photographs but also includes several illustrations of landscapes and local features, and even some of cricket grounds show scenery as a backdrop. His artistic sensibilities and his sense of humour combined when he compared the colours of a team-mate's bruise to those of a Turner sunset.

Farnes's father was the company secretary and accountant of Truman's brewery in the east end of London, and a good club cricketer. Ken attended the Royal Liberty School Romford, where he was captain of cricket and his interest in the game was encouraged by the headmaster, SB Hartley. He was 'an extremely keen and able cricketer' who played for the Gidea Park club, which Farnes joined. Farnes was always a natural bowler and from the age of thirteen, when his brother took him to see Essex at Leyton, was determined to play county cricket. Like all boys from middle-class homes, he had to decide whether to play as an amateur or a professional. When a boy he thought he would be good enough to play for Essex but thought that 'county cricket seemed the province of the gods'. Later doubting his ability to make the grade as a professional, he first tried insurance then 'spent eighteen depressing months as a bank clerk' and hated every minute of it.

In May 1929 a fortnight's leave for Farnes coincided with Gidea Park's cricket week. He took a few wickets against the Essex Club & Ground side captained by Percy Perrin, who off drove him in his usual easy way but was sufficiently impressed to invite him to play for the county. He was a few weeks short of his eighteenth birthday and would

³³⁵ This section draws on relevant sections of David Thurlow's excellent biography of Farnes.

have been one of the youngest Englishmen ever to play first-class cricket, a particularly notable achievement in an era when careers tended to begin and end later than they do now. He was, however, refused the necessary three days' leave and, although his disappointment was tempered by the fear of failure, 'my love for the bank did not increase'. Like PG Wodehouse's Mike Jackson, Farnes found that the coming of the cricket season made the thought of continuing to work in the bank intolerable. In May 1930 he was due to work at a branch he loathed on the very day that the Australians were playing Essex and 'to my own considerable surprise' chose to go to Leyton, where he sat and watched his heroes for three bitter cold days. A month later he joined them on the field.

It was no fairy-tale debut, for in a close, low-scoring match Farnes bowled poorly and the runs he gave away may have gifted Gloucestershire the game. Afterwards he told his captain, Whiz Morris, 'I'm going to bowl and bowl till I can bowl a length'. Evidently he succeeded, for six weeks later he was invited to play against Kent and in the first innings took 5 for 36. His first victim was Leonard Crawley's cousin Aidan, but in the second innings Aidan made 175 and despite Leonard's efforts Kent won by 277 runs. Farnes, who had an 'ardent desire...to play first-class cricket', was 'shocked and incredulous' when Aidan Crawley told him that 'he was not going to play much more first-class cricket as he was going to be too busy and did not like the game anyway'. Although he played fairly regularly for Kent until July 1932 when he was still only 24 years old, Crawley never scored another first-class century and after that made only six further appearances in seventeen years. Farnes by contrast was 'not in the least satiated but now I had begun was keener than ever'. Cricket saved him 'from continuing to be the saddest of disgruntled bank clerks', and 'Peter Perrin [took] on the

Farnes did not return to the bank and spent an idyllic summer playing cricket for Essex First XI, for Essex Club & Ground and for Gidea Park. In September 1930 he went up to Pembroke College Cambridge, where for three years he was the university's main fast bowler, learning all the while. In the holidays he came back and played for Essex, strengthening their attack enormously. He was able to play only 79 matches for the county in nine seasons, yet his impact was immense and he gave invaluable support to the great-hearted professional fast-medium bowler Stan Nichols.

In 1933 Farnes aroused considerable controversy when he decided to bowl bodyline in the Varsity match at Lord's. The tactic involved hostile bowling directly at the batsman so that he would be more concerned with protecting himself than his wicket. It had enabled MCC to win their 1932-3 series in Australia, but aroused great controversy and almost caused a diplomatic incident between the British and Australian governments. Farnes admitted that he bowled to intimidate the batsmen but commented that he saw 'little reason not to use a method that had been successful on an MCC tour'. On the first day he took no wickets and *The Times* dismissed his bowling as 'an arrant waste of time'. Rain freshened up the wicket on the second day and Farnes picked up two wickets as a result of blows that struck tail-enders. In Oxford's second innings Farnes 'bowed like a lion' and soon took four top-order wickets with bodyline, but exhausted himself and was unable to finish the job. With much time lost to rain, Oxford hung on for a draw. In normal life, anybody projecting a hard object at almost 100mph towards someone 22 yards away could be prosecuted for assault, but on the cricket field the public school cult of virility often condoned such dangerous and violent behaviour. A tactic which many commentators deemed acceptable against Australians, however, was less so against varsity men. Most praised Farnes's skill but not his methods, and

bodyline more or less disappeared from the game³³⁶. Charles Kortright – possibly the only Essex man ever to bowl faster than Farnes - told Wisden in 1948: ‘I frequently used to advise the late Kenneth Farnes to pitch the ball farther up to the batsmen, because I considered that he wasted too much energy on pointless short deliveries, like many other modern pace bowlers.’

After completing a degree in history and geography, Farnes in 1933 took 67 wickets at 16.07 apiece in ten matches. Essex won six of those games and his contribution to their bowling sides out was instrumental in their rise to fourth place. His best return was 7 for 21 against Surrey who were shot out for 57 to lose by 345 runs. At the end of the season Farnes took up a post teaching history and geography at Worksop College in Nottinghamshire, and the pattern of his life for the next seven years was set. After just one term he was appointed as a housemaster. The boys remembered him as a tall, handsome, modest man with ‘a love of life and an enjoyment of fun’. He was a fine teacher and a good coach, encouraging them at cricket and other sports. He was fortunate to have a headmaster, Dr FJ Shirley, who was keen to build up a teaching staff of young sportsmen. Shirley realised that Farnes’s fame on the cricket field could enhance the school’s reputation, and was willing to give him extended leave of absence.

In Farnes, Read, Nichols and Stephenson Essex in 1934 boasted four fast bowlers who could have come close to rivalling the four-man West Indian pace attacks of the 1980s, but they never played in the same match. Joint captains Wilcox and Pearce reported the paradox that despite these riches the bowling had been less effective than in the previous season because ‘for one reason or another Essex could rarely field their best side’. Stephenson appeared four times, Farnes eight, Read fifteen and even the professional Nichols only 24 out of 30.

The quickest of them, Read and Farnes, played together in only one match, at Gloucester on 25-28 August. The England men Nichols and Farnes opened the bowling, relegating Read to what Wally Hammond described as ‘the fastest first change he had ever seen’. The game was affected by rain and, ironically, the spinner Lawrie Eastman took as many wickets as the three fast men between them. A cartilage operation caused Farnes to miss the 1935 season, after which Read was bullied into retiring, so Essex’s two fastest bowlers since Kortright never shared the new ball.

The Australians were the tourists in 1934 and Farnes was seen as the natural successor to Harold Larwood as England’s most hostile fast bowler. Dr Shirley released Farnes to play three early season matches and, although he did not immediately recapture his form of 1933, other candidates were unavailable so on the morning of the First Test at Trent Bridge ‘I was given preference over my club friend, Nichols’. He responded magnificently with 10 for 179 in the match but England batted poorly and lost by 238 runs. A heel injury kept him out of the final three Tests, although he played in Essex’s last six matches and twice at the Scarborough Festival.

Forty-seven wickets in those eight matches were enough to earn Farnes a place on the tour to the West Indies. He was absent from school for over three months and it cost him £100 in salary, but he thought an England tour well worth it for the cricket and for the joy of seeing new places. MCC compensated the amateur to some extent by paying him £25, presumably justified as a contribution to his expenses. Later when he went to South Africa an anonymous benefactor gave him a sports car. As the ship docked at Barbados a local man told Farnes ‘you won’t trouble us’, and he was right, although the

³³⁶ WILLIAMSON, Martin. Bodyline’s final fling. Cricinfo website, 8 Jan 2005.

prophet of doom can scarcely have known the reason why. Farnes had not played for several months so after the first day's play was very stiff and pulled a neck muscle. He should have thrived on the hard West Indian wickets but the injury affected him throughout the tour and he did not entirely do himself justice. On a very difficult wicket in the first Test, however, he took the first four West Indian wickets to fall. Then he opened the batting in the second innings because as the tallest man in the side his head was most likely to be out of reach if the ball reared up.

Shortly after getting back to England Farnes smashed a cartilage in his left knee in a freak accident while out walking with his father. He missed the whole of the 1935 season, but was desperate to go on the Australian tour in 1936-7 and spent the winter of 1935-6 practising his bowling and building up his strength. He fitted three early season appearances for Essex around his school duties, and was selected for the Gentlemen against the Players in a match regarded as a test trial. After JWA Stephenson's 9 for 46 in the Players' first innings, they were set 132 to win and Farnes seized the opportunity to bowl himself on to the tour. Wisden enthused that he 'sent the ball down at a pace unequalled at Headquarters since the days of CJ Kortright. When Farnes bowled Gimblett, Hammond and Hardstaff he sent a stump on each case catapulting head high to drop at the feet of Levett who stood back more than a dozen yards.' Then it was back to school for a fortnight and an August of cricket for Essex, with 46 wickets in eight games. By far Farnes' highest score in first-class cricket was against Somerset, when he and Tom Wade added 149 for the last wicket. When Wade was dismissed Farnes was stranded on 97 not out; typically, his response to missing out on a century was to laugh.

Farnes's best figures in this month, 6 for 69 in the second innings at Southend against Kent, gave rise to a controversy. Essex, with the assistance of 63 from Crawley and 77 from Vere Hodge (see above pp 152-3) rattled up 465 and then put Kent out twice in less than a day. A few days later Tich Freeman, Kent's master leg-spinner (see below pp 204-5), wrote an article for his local paper entitled 'Why the Essex game lasted only two days'. He claimed that 'the bowling of a certain amateur...was definitely unfair...More than one Essex player holds similar views...Five balls out of the usual six...pitched less than halfway down the pitch...A leading Essex amateur has been out of the side for two years because of his intensive dislike of this kind of bowling'. Cecil Parkin in the 1920s believed that he had been forced out of first-class cricket because a ghosted newspaper article in his name criticised the England captain, but the coyness of Freeman and his editor nevertheless seems a trifle pointless. The unnamed amateur bowler can hardly have been anyone other than Farnes, although no action was taken over the article so their caution was perhaps justified. The other Essex players are harder to identify: Thurlow dismisses 'the whinging Essex man as a ghost', and I can think of no obvious 'leading Essex amateur' who dropped out of the side in 1933-5.

The episode shows that the old amateur-professional divide was still much in evidence. Freeman attacked Farnes but had some sympathy with his fellow-professional Stan Nichols, whose benefit match was cut short by one potentially lucrative day, adding that 'the fault lay with his county'. The Charterhouse and Oxford amateur Raymond Robertson-Glasgow, however, blamed the batting, suggesting that 'some batsmen have no stomach for a fight while others lack the skill'. The only Kent batsman to put up much resistance was the 49-year-old professional Frank Woolley, who made a courageous 53. The 12-year-old Trevor Bailey 'had the good fortune' to be there and

recalled that he had ‘seldom seen anything more beautiful’ than Woolley’s innings³³⁷. Woolley later acknowledged that the Kent team did not like fast bowling but also claimed that ‘Farnes lost his temper...bowling very fast on a nasty fiery wicket’. The Essex minutes noted that ‘Freeman accused Mr Farnes of unfair bowling’ but ‘Kent dissociated itself from his remarks’ so the matter was closed. As Thurlow points out, we cannot now be certain of the rights and wrongs of the episode but it does have echoes of earlier cases involving potentially dangerous bowling by amateurs to professionals. Robertson-Glasgow’s attitude differed little from that of CE Green 65 years before, and Freeman’s comments recall those of Bobby Abel about Kortright.

Farnes duly went to Australia in 1936-7 but made a slow start and his omission from the first three Tests was no surprise. He only played in the fourth because of doubts about Voce’s fitness, but showed signs of a return to form with five wickets. In the final Test Farnes bowled with fire and stamina but little support, taking 6 for 96 in Australia’s massive 604 all out. England became the only side ever to lose a five-match series after winning the first two Tests. He kept a tour diary which was among the many items that his family generously donated to Peter Edwards Museum & Library which intends to publish it in some form.

Teaching duties meant that Farnes in 1937 had to miss the first two Test matches against New Zealand, and before the end of July could play only in three representative games. Then a side strain limited his effectiveness and kept him out of the last test, although he managed 35 wickets in eight games for Essex.

Farnes’s *annus mirabilis* was 1938, when he was the best bowler in the country. The Australians were back and for Farnes it was a question of taking breaks from cricket to teach rather than vice versa. The school was proud of his achievements and the boys hero-worshipped him. Early in the season for MCC, Essex and England he took twelve Australian wickets in four matches, but in the Second Test bowled too much down the leg side when England were pressing for victory. He was dropped for the third Test but it was washed out and immediately after its scheduled finish he took the opportunity to prove the decision a mistake. For the Gentlemen at Lord’s he first made a rare contribution with the bat, scoring 10 of a last-wicket partnership of 82 with Hugh Bartlett. Then, according to Bill Edrich, ‘Farnes bowled faster that evening than any bowler I have ever met’. Edrich was caught via his gloves and his head, and night-watchman Wilfred Price was caught first ball, leaving the Players 0 for 2 overnight. Farnes finished with 8 for 43 in the first innings and 3 for 60 in the second, helping the amateurs to only their second win in the fixture since 1914. He returned to the Test team for the last two matches and took five wickets in each. For Essex he took 56 wickets at 14.89, including a career-best 15 for 113 in the match against Glamorgan. Overall he took 107 at 18.84.

That was the nearest Farnes came to playing a full season, and it may be no coincidence that it was his best. Fast though he was, he seems to have been one of those bowlers who needed regular bowling to get into a groove. On the other hand, as Farnes himself put it: ‘cricket on six days a week throughout a long season is bound to sap enthusiasm and energy to a very considerable extent and lust for the game degenerates into a smooth, dull level of proficiency’. We can only speculate on what difference it might have made if he had been able to play as much every year.

³³⁷ BAILEY, p26-7.

In 1938-9 Farnes went on his third tour, this time to South Africa. It was a series that called into question what is meant by a good wicket, for the surfaces were often so perfect that they gave rise to boring cricket which left the bowlers bowling for mistakes. As Farnes put it, with typical modesty: 'If I could have a batting average of just on 20 the wickets must obviously have been much too good'. A good wicket should be one that gives the batsman a chance to make strokes, the bowler a chance to take wickets, and the spectator the chance to enjoy both. One that favours the batsman is just as bad as one that favours the bowler. Perhaps the nomenclature goes back to the semi-mythical days when the languid amateur would hit the toiling professional all round the field. On that tour the amateur Farnes suffered more than most, bowling nearly 400 eight-ball overs for 44 wickets, mostly in great heat on lifeless wickets. His most significant performance was in the Third Test when his match figures of 7 for 109 on the usual easy-paced wicket were crucial in the innings win that gave England the series.

The last match of the series was the most notorious timeless test of all. Farnes wrote: 'As day followed day and we trooped in and out of the pavilion the whole performance became somewhat ludicrous.' It was the longest cricket match ever, lasting from 4 to 14 March 1939 with two Sundays and one washed out day in between. England were set 696 to win and had reached 654 for 5 – still the highest total by a side batting last – when the rain returned and they had to begin the two-day train journey back to their ship at Cape Town.

Having been absent for so long, Farnes could not take any more time away from school. The tourists were the West Indians, then less formidable than they became after the Second World War, and so his only appearance in the first three months of the season was for the Gentlemen against the Players. On his return to Essex in August he took only two wickets in the first three innings in which he bowled but 31 in the next nine. Against Nottinghamshire in Essex's penultimate match he achieved his only first-class hat-trick and against Northamptonshire in the last game of the season he took 6 for 47. It was his final first-class appearance.

Farnes was already past the age of compulsory call-up and returned to school for the 1939-40 academic year. Once the phoney war ended, however, he and some of his colleagues decided that they could no longer stand by, and volunteered to join up. He went into the RAF Volunteer Reserve and trained in Canada, where he received his wings and came top of his group. Too big for the cockpit of a fighter and reluctant to drop bombs on innocent civilians, he volunteered as a night flier, of which there was a desperate shortage. With Aeron, his girl-friend of less than a year, waiting at the airfield, Pilot Officer Farnes undertook his first unsupervised night training flight but crash landed and was killed instantly. Aeron loved cricket for the rest of her long life and her young daughter Diana later married the film critic Barry Norman, who wrote a touching foreword to David Thurlow's biography. All wartime deaths are tragic and sometimes futile, but seldom more so than when brave men like Farnes and Claude Ashton are killed not by enemy action but while in training. The inscription on Kenneth Farnes's grave carried echoes of an earlier age: 'He died as he lived, playing the game'.

Chapter 11: After the Second World War

Superficially World War Two made little difference to cricket. Amateurs continued to run committees and captain teams, while professionals often changed separately and were still treated as a slightly lower caste. MCC appointed a Select Committee to deal

with the question of post-war cricket, and the Essex committee noted with satisfaction that 'no radical changes in the conduct of the game are called for'. Essex voted against the Advisory County Cricket Committee for a Knock-out Cup because they thought it 'against the best interests of cricket'. In 1946 Essex did take the daring step of abolishing nomenclature discrimination, but restored it at the request of MCC.

Following the convention of the time, Essex in 1950 reported that 'Mr. G.R. Pullinger admirably filled the gap left by the absence of K.C. Preston'³³⁸. In the winter of 1948-9 their promising young professional fast bowler Ken Preston had broken his leg playing football and had to miss the whole of the 1949 season. Short of money as ever, Essex turned to George Pullinger, an amateur who had done well for the 2nd XI in 1948. He was able to play in 16 of Essex's 26 championship matches and took a respectable 35 wickets at 33.20. Pullinger played twice more in 1950 but took only three wickets and left first-class cricket to concentrate on his work for Thames Board Mills. Preston by contrast returned to bowl with less speed but more guile, and was a mainstay of the side for the next fifteen years. Other amateurs who were drafted in to cover injuries and Test Match calls made useful contributions, but only Trevor Bailey and Doug Insole were able to play full-time.

Harold Alker Faragher (1917- 2006)

According to David Lemmon, one who 'could well have had a successful first-class career but for his commitments as a schoolteacher' was Harold Faragher. A batting average of almost 40 suggests that Lemmon was right. 'His contribution to Essex cricket has been immense,' Lemmon commented, 'for he was one of the founders of the Ilford Cricket School where he coached and helped many cricketers of all ages and varying abilities with his good humour, patience, charm and experience'. He was 'the prime motivator of the project', which produced John Lever, Graham Gooch, Alan Lilley, Chris Gladwin, David East and others who went on to play for Essex. In an interview with the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop, he explained his cricketing background and why he was never able to play the game full-time.

Faragher was always keen on cricket and enjoyed playing it when a boy at Ilford County High School. Before a game, the team had to cut and roll the pitch themselves, unlike today when it is all done for them. He was watching a game at the Goodmayes Club when their opponents were a man short and he volunteered to make up the numbers. He batted at no. 11 but did quite well and Goodmayes invited him to join them.

In 1930 his father made him a junior member of Essex. That gave him free admission to the ground and the pavilion, and enabled him 'to rub shoulders with the great players'. He 'didn't think professional cricketers were human beings – it was quite a thrill to get anywhere near them.' He remembered Jack O'Connor who was 'a great scorer in county cricket', Morris Nichols, Lawrie Eastman and the cousins Peter and Ray Smith. Jack Russell finished with Essex in the year Faragher joined. Younger players included Frank Rist, Sonny Avery, Boswell and Vic Evans. A wonderful memory was Patsy Hendren's 222 not out for Middlesex in 1933, a match that Essex eventually won. He later got to know Walter Mead, an 'old sweat professional' who had 'played all his life at Leyton'. Mead looked after the Club & Ground side when aged over 80, a 'lovely chap who told you how he spun the ball and the tricks he got up to'.

³³⁸ ECCC 1950 annual report.

Asked whether professionals were treated as servants bowling to members in the nets, he recalled that 'there were certain evenings when you could go along and a couple of young pros would bowl to you'. He had a birth qualification for Lancashire who invited him for a trial in 1935, when he bowled in the nets to the touring South Africans – 'a very nice bunch'. He enjoyed it and did quite well but 'there was no money in the game'. He had no thoughts of turning professional, because only capped players got winter pay and with high unemployment casual work was hard to find. He therefore went into local government – 'with three million unemployed, if you got a safe job you stuck to it'.

When in 1949 another player dropped out at the last minute, Faragher had the chance to play for Essex Seconds and scored a century against Surrey in his first game. In 1949 and 1950 he played six games for the first team as an amateur but was unable to get any more time off work. 'The ratepayers would ask what they were paying their rates for so that was the end of that, but "One crowded hour of glorious life / Is worth an age without a name"', he chuckled. 'Some people were kind enough to say that I could have done well as a pro but we will never know...'

When Faragher was ten years old, the family was on holiday in Bournemouth and his father took him to see Yorkshire play Hampshire at Dean Park. With an old Brownie box camera, he took a good picture of Herbert Sutcliffe coming out of the pavilion, and the following year when Sutcliffe was at Leyton asked him to sign it. In 1949 Faragher made his Essex debut at Dean Park and emerged from the very same pavilion. 'Little do you think when you press a photograph that you might be one of those being photographed,' he commented.

Faragher continued to play for the Ilford club and many parents asked where they could get coaching for their children, so there was obvious demand and he began to think about opening a Cricket School. Courage's Brewery offered him a piece of land behind their Beehive Hotel in Ilford, and in 1957 he founded a company and opened the School – 'I've put in some hours up there'. Graham Gooch's father brought him in for coaching, and John Lever and Nasser Hussain came with their schools. He was still coaching at the time of the interview, and among his pupils were Doug Insole's grandchildren. Just as he when a boy modelled himself on Dudley Pope, so his pupils copied their favourites. When he first opened the School they ran up to bowl like Trevor Bailey, but more recently they put zinc on their faces [like the Australian Shane Warne and others, as sun-blocker and 'war paint'].

Essex brought in a number of good amateurs. LG Crawley was 'a cavalier type of cricketer who once hit Maurice Tate back over his head into the pavilion for six – unheard of'. Amateurs could afford to take such an attitude but 'professionals' next meal depended on how they did'. Faragher thought that 'you could perhaps have told which was which by their style'. Most pros preferred to have an amateur captain who could be independent - if he made an overgenerous declaration in the interests of cricket he was not risking his job. Very few amateurs in his time had independent means but 'mostly got jobs with firms interested in cricket, for instance Tom Pearce in the wine trade which goes with cricket – some came down from university and looked for a firm that would let them play.'

There were 'rarely big crowds because people couldn't get time of work like you can now except at Bank Holidays'. There was no sponsorship and if the weather was bad there was no income at all. Essex were poorer than the clubs with test match grounds. After the war the Secretary, RFT Paterson, started the idea of firms, MPs etc acting as

hosts for luncheon and tea, when they sat with the players. It ‘worked out at about £10 or £15 – very different from now’.

Festivals gave a ‘a good solid cricket week, having carted all the equipment around’, with a one-day Sunday game in the middle of a three-day game and then a second three-day game. Faragher was the Secretary of Ilford week and had to organise hosts, which was ‘probably the start of sponsorship’. The festival gave ‘a nice local atmosphere, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, MPs, Plessey Company, even the Ilford Golf Club – all good PR’. A man called Cox was secretary at Leyton and organised ‘various stunts to get money’³³⁹. Essex were often in the forefront of innovation because ‘necessity was the mother of invention – we had to get some money somehow’. Faragher remembered watching a game against Somerset at Leyton with Frank Rist, who said ‘This young black chap is the one we’ve got to get out’: his name was Vivian Richards, and Essex did not get him out³⁴⁰. Graham Gooch who came to the Ilford Cricket School aged nine was a local Leytonstone boy and played some of his early Essex games at Leyton. As festival weeks gradually disappeared Essex got a bigger admin staff and Faragher thought that it was ‘better to organise centrally and standardise’.

Faragher explained that the rules for residential qualification disappeared in the 1960s when overseas players came in and the whole structure of the game became more like football. ‘If your county says you can go, it’s unfair to say you can’t go anywhere else – that’s really what brought about the change. Essex took on John Childs and Peter Such who both played for England after being discarded by other counties.’

Faragher was an ‘establishment man’, who in 1948 was asked to stand for the committee and stayed for 42 years. Then an upper age limit of 70 for committee members was introduced and he ‘didn’t think much of it’. The cricket commentator Brian Johnston agreed, writing to say that ‘some are old at 70 and some are young’. Soon afterwards Harold Faragher’s son John, who had played for the Second XI, put up for the committee and was elected at the first attempt. Harold thought that ‘your response to the 1982 rebel tour to South Africa depended on your personal view of the political side’ and Doug Insole was ‘quite upset’ when he heard about the tour. The Essex committee was concerned that Graham Gooch and others were going against the cricket authorities, although ‘fortunately for Graham he did well when he got back’.

After retiring, professionals often used to open sports shops but ‘a lot fell by the wayside’. They ‘acted on the assumption that if they put their name outside the shop people would come flooding in, but they don’t always do that – a lot of people went into business and failed’. Some Essex cricketers got jobs in the game coaching in public schools. Sonny Avery worked at the Ilford Cricket School and then became coach at Monmouth School. Ken Preston worked at Brentwood School, coaching and also running the school shop. Stuart Turner went to Forest School after Harold Faragher. John Lever was at Bancrofts and Brian Hardie at Brentwood. Others got jobs in the club itself.

Faragher said that

³³⁹ A rare Faragher error: Essex yearbooks show that LJ Cox was secretary of the Clacton festival, DJ Osborne of Leyton.

³⁴⁰ Probably a Sunday League match in 1975, when Viv’s 46 not out gave Somerset a 4-wicket win in a low-scoring game.

the Golden Age of cricket is when you were young, whether they were as great as you imagined or not. For me there was nobody to touch Wally Hammond and Jack Hobbs, but in days to come there will be no one to touch Graham Gooch and people like that. Having done a lot of coaching, I tend to analyse the players...Pope and Cutmore and Sutcliffe were just my idols - I didn't really know if they were batting properly or not but I assumed they were because they looked so good.

Cricketers in those days played for little money. If you wanted a fast bowler you'd shout down the mines of Yorkshire or Nottinghamshire - they'd do anything to get out of the mines. Essex had a reputation for producing fast bowlers - Farnes, Nichols, Read, Stephenson. There must have been a lot of good cricketers who missed out whereas today with more money the game can take in people who wouldn't have gone in under the old system. People like Derek Pringle can go into cricket as a career because there are other options open - reporting, broadcasting etc...University people like Nasser Hussain and Michael Atherton would have played as amateurs but now cricket is an attractive career...

Harold Faragher died in 2006, aged 88. The many tributes on the Essex County Cricket Club message board showed the respect and affection he inspired.

Trevor Edward Bailey (1923-2011)

Although by 1950 the day of the occasional amateur was almost past, two Essex men were able to play cricket full-time and were good enough to be selected for England. Doug Insole and Trevor Bailey further developed the changes initiated on and off the field under the joint captaincy of Tom Pearce and Denys Wilcox. They were the last in Essex's long line of great amateurs, for after the 1962 season amateur and professional status was abolished and they were in the first generation of cricketers to be called that without distinction.

Trevor Bailey was an outstanding all-rounder for Essex and England. The son of a comfortably-off middle-ranking civil servant, he learned his cricket from Wilcox at Alleyn Court and followed in his footsteps to Dulwich, where he became an outstanding schoolboy cricketer. Among his coaches were CS 'Father' Marriott and SC 'Billy' Griffith, who both played for England. He went straight from school into the Royal Marines and although his war record was - through no fault of his own - rather undistinguished, he lost several of his friends. He appeared in war-time friendly matches at Lords - on one occasion making about 13 of a century partnership with Wally Hammond - and made his first-class debut there in September 1945.

In the spring of 1945 Wilcox twice wrote to the committee about Bailey and they replied that 'the club was prepared to support the proposal for him to play for Essex'. His first game for Essex was against Derbyshire in May 1946 when he opened both the batting and the bowling, but he was planning to become a schoolmaster and had taken up a teaching post at Alleyn Court, so after that could play only in August. In 1947 and 1948 he continued to assist Essex in the holidays from Cambridge, where his war service counted as one year and he was allowed to complete his degree in two. Most of his contemporaries had also served in the war and were in their twenties, so the university was able to field a very strong side.

In May 1948 the minutes recorded that Bailey had

approached the chairman with a view to joining the Club in some capacity which would enable him to devote his full time to playing first-class cricket after he came down from Cambridge in July. He had also made certain proposals as to salary and expenses he hoped to earn. The war-time 'Inner Cabinet' had considered the proposals and thought it would be in the interests of Essex cricket if some post could be created for him.

Some of them felt he ‘had made a mistake in not becoming a [school] Master’, but a sub-committee was appointed to interview ‘Mr Bailey’. They were authorised to offer him a three-year agreement, with a salary rising from £475 to £525 plus £175 expenses but Bailey to buy his own car. Evidently there had been some discussion that he might have the captaincy in two or three years, but the sub-committee was not authorised to guarantee this.

They reported back to the Executive Committee, which discussed the matter at length. Some committee members were opposed to the idea of a paid captain, but most recognised that few people could still afford to play for nothing and that many counties had paid secretary-captains. Some thought that ‘the individual concerned was not an entirely suitable choice’ and rumours were rife, but the sub-committee had been ‘favourably impressed’. Of Bailey’s working relationship with the Secretary, RFT Paterson, Bailey himself declared: ‘During the disastrous Australian massacre [when they scored 721 in a day] I managed to have a chat with Paterson. We should get on well together.’ The question of ‘repercussions from the professionals’ was raised but apparently not addressed, or thought to be of little concern. Eventually a motion to offer Bailey terms was carried 14-6, and he accepted them. He recalled that the duties were ‘not too demanding’, so he ‘returned to Alleyn Court for two wonderful winters’³⁴¹.

In 1948 Paterson appointed ‘a certain W. Hollowell of Danbury’ as a part-time assistant at £300 a year. In 1949 the committee reported that

Mr T.E. Bailey has been appointed to the Administrative Staff. In the winter his duties will consist primarily in lecturing and coaching demonstrations, while in the summer he will be free to represent the committee in first-class cricket.

After the 1949 season Hollowell’s contract was terminated as an economy measure, and Bailey was appointed assistant secretary to take on some of his duties. The post was not the sinecure it may have been for Charlie McGahey: Bailey wrote the minutes and circularized committee members when the secretary was absent.

Bailey claimed to have had very few disagreements with the committee, but two came in the matter of fund-raising. In 1949 he went to Worcestershire to see how the club’s football pool worked and returned full of enthusiasm but the President, Sir Hubert Ashton, and the vice-chairman, Bill Golding, opposed supporting cricket by gambling and the committee overwhelmingly rejected the suggestion. In the mid-1960s when the club was in the doldrums it launched a major fund-raising appeal which Bailey said would be a waste of time and money, and he was proved correct.

Paterson resigned in 1951 because he felt he was doing most of the work while his glamorous assistant was paid for playing cricket. There were 97 applications for the post and the committee drew up a shortlist of six. In the end as an economy measure the Hon. Treasurer Horace Clark took over as Hon. Sec. as well. It was the first time that Essex had been without a paid secretary since 1885, when JJ Read also filled both honorary posts. Bailey was officially appointed Assistant Secretary.

Bailey was no longer supporting a paid officer, and considered that Clark was assisting him rather than the other way round³⁴². In 1953 Clark told the committee that his continuing as Hon. Sec. was ‘not in the best interests of the club’, but they persuaded him to carry on for another year. When he resigned after the 1954 season he was

³⁴¹ Bailey on Bailey, p26.

³⁴² Wickets, p60

presented with the most traditional of all farewell presents, a gold watch, and that ultimate symbol of post-war Britain, a television set.

Recognising the realities of the situation, the committee made Bailey secretary and he expressed his 'great pleasure' at his appointment. His salary was increased from £525 to £750, with £175 as car expenses. Bailey's England colleague Jim Laker exempted him from the charge of shamateurism because he earned his money and 'made no bones about being no true amateur'³⁴³.

Graham Llewellyn recalled this period:

When I was living in Hertfordshire I saw quite a few Essex matches. This was in the 50's and early 60's when Essex were travellers. As a result, TB had even more to do and supervise: all the paraphernalia had to be moved from ground to ground, and not just the seating. The scoreboard and ladies' loos were on an old double-decker bus; the gents' loos were bowlers in a vast tent. I visited it in Romford one hot and crowded Bank Holiday but made sure, the next time, that I didn't drink anything all day!

Like many other cricketers, when not on tour Bailey played soccer, for the leading amateur sides Leytonstone and Walthamstow Avenue. With Walthamstow he won an FA Amateur Cup winner's medal and took part in an FA Cup run in which they beat Stockport and Reading and drew 1-1 at Manchester United. Their ground only held about 12,000 so the replay was switched to Highbury where some 55,000 saw the 'amateurs' go down with appropriate gallantry. With such attendances big money was involved and Bailey took a realistic view of the consequent shamateurism: 'I enjoyed football so much that I would have played it for nothing, but certainly had no objection to receiving extra pocket money'³⁴⁴.

Bailey's friend Doug Insole, who saw more of him than most, reckoned that he ranked with the best of England's post-war all-rounders.

His bowling was controlled, dangerous when he got any help from the wicket and when he didn't he used to put it there or thereabouts and nigger away. He was always a great spotter of people's strengths and weaknesses – that was one of his great virtues to me as a captain...As a batsman he had a very good technique. He tended to be a one-pace player. There were numerous occasions with Essex when that was absolutely invaluable and he would score runs in the middle order when everybody else would be getting out. He was quite capable of banging the ball around but it seemed to need a change of mental attitude, a bit like Geoffrey Boycott. You seem to get into a frame of mind 'They shall not pass' and once you're in that it's very difficult to alter it. I used not to make him thrash around but tell him what was expected of him. He never used to enjoy it but he'd do it – he used to moan afterwards if he got out but he was a good team man in that respect...

Bailey was the heir of John Douglas as an Essex and England all-rounder, and inherited much of that great man's stubborn and bloody-minded spirit. Like him a magnificent fast-medium bowler and solid defensive batsman who could score quickly and attractively when required, Bailey's attitude was often more professional than the professionals'.

Bailey felt that the highlight of his career was 1953 when he played a major part in England's regaining the Ashes, and those qualities were never more apparent than in that series. At Lord's, he and Willie Watson batted through most of the last day to save a game that seemed lost. At Headingley, there was half a minute to go before lunch

³⁴³ Over to me, p248.

³⁴⁴ Wickets, p200.

when Bailey sauntered down the pitch and told Laker: 'I can't say I feel like another over before lunch.' Although it was a beautiful sunny day, he appealed against the light and by the time the umpires could meet the half-minute had elapsed and lunch was taken. He batted over four hours for 38 and eventually England were bowled out, leaving Australia 177 to win in 115 minutes. With 45 minutes to go they had scored at more than five runs an over, needing only 66 more. Then Bailey called aside Len Hutton, England's first professional captain, whose bold search for a win had looked like ending in defeat. England's only amateur bowler formulated a plan and bowled to it immaculately, taking his time in sending down six overs of leg theory for nine runs; 'the runs were turned off as by a tap'³⁴⁵, leaving Australia 30 short. The tactics were frowned upon and later legislated against, but Bailey had kept England in the series and they went on to win it.

It was after that Test Match that Insole and Bailey had their only major disagreement. Insole recalled an episode that contrasts enormously with the recent practice of protecting key players with central contracts and regular rests. Essex were due to play Somerset and Bailey rang Insole to say that, not surprisingly, he was

extremely tired and thought he could do with three days off.. He would mosey down and play on the Saturday. I didn't like that at all and I said so...I was feeling a bit tetchy and I said 'It's just not on, Boil. If you don't appear in the morning for my money you can forget the rest of the season.' Whether that would ever have come to anything I don't know but it was something I said on the spur of the moment.

Anyway, in the morning there he was and it was a bit tense and a bit taut and we didn't say too much to each other for a couple of days. But he got 70-odd in our innings and he got 4 for 30 in the first innings. In the second innings a lad came in called Baker and Trevor bowled him out for 0 for the second time. Having done that he came over to me and said, 'If you'd told me he was playing there'd have been no argument' and after that it was all forgotten and away we went...³⁴⁶

In recounting that story Insole said 'when we were captain...' which his interviewer, Ralph Dellor, described as an interesting slip of the tongue. He explained that their leadership was a team effort: 'I don't think there's any doubt in my mind or his who was to have the last word but we consulted a hell of a lot, we shared rooms and we were very close. It was a magnificent ten or twelve years...' Much like High Owen and Bunny Lucas sixty years earlier, they practised a collegiate form of captaincy. Insole would ask his friend and more experienced lieutenant 'What do you think, Boil?' and usually the advice would be taken.

Bailey was Len Hutton's vice-captain in the West Indies in 1953-4 and gave him good support in what turned out to be a fractious, unhappy tour. England lost the first two tests and Bailey wrote: 'We had been written off by...most of the so-called serious papers because we had failed to lose with the apologetic grace and false smile of a civil servant from a minor public school.'³⁴⁷ Since he attended a public school and was the son of a civil servant, his rather disdainful comparison is an interesting commentary on

³⁴⁵ WHITE, Crawford. England victory. News Chronicle, 1953

³⁴⁶ Insole's memory after more than thirty years was pretty good. The only slight error was that it was Peter Cousens, not Bailey, who bowled poor Baker for 0 in the first innings. In 1952-6 John Baker played 15 first-class matches with a batting average of 18.77, so the typically dismissive Bailey comment was not entirely unjustified.

³⁴⁷ Bailey on Bailey, p83.

his maverick character. In the final test, his inspired 7 for 34 in unpromising conditions enabled England to square the series.

Bailey might well have succeeded Hutton, but an indiscretion over a newspaper article was not well received at Lord's. He knew the rules on players writing about tours they had just been on, so he ensured that the chapter about West Indies cricket in his book *Playing to Win* was blameless. Then *The People* Sunday newspaper wanted to serialise the book and have it 'slightly hotted up', but when Bailey saw the first article it was 'entirely different'. He was very worried and phoned the editor who invited him to come and discuss it, but he was in the middle of a match and could not get away. The article was published unaltered and Bailey's knuckles were wrapped. Jack Bailey suggests that his combination of amateur independence and professional composure would not have gone down well with the authorities at Lord's, who might have welcomed an excuse to pass him over. He later claimed that he was not bitter about it, but at the time he was sufficiently hurt to miss Essex's next game and escape to Paris for a long weekend with his wife.

In the last test of the 1954-5 Australian tour Bailey had made a gesture that was more typical of the old image of an amateur. Ray Lindwall needed one more wicket for his hundred against England and it was thought that it would be his last match against them. Bailey knew that Hutton was about to declare, so he deliberately missed a straight one to gift Lindwall his wicket. Four years the Australian showed his gratitude by dismissing Bailey for a pair, but not before he had become only the second man after the professional Wilfred Rhodes to do the remarkable double of 2000 runs and 100 wickets for England.

This proved to be Bailey's last Test Match. England lost the series 4-0 and were looking for scapegoats. While on tour Bailey was handicapped by back trouble but he soon recovered from that. Ironically the following season, 1959, was statistically his best ever. In all matches he scored over 2000 runs for the only time and also took exactly 100 wickets, thus becoming the last man ever to do the double of 2000 runs and 100 wickets. He would not have passed that milestone if he had been playing five Test matches instead of eight or nine games for Essex, but the selectors could find no replacement as a genuine international all-rounder and such an outstanding season would normally have earned a recall. There may be some truth in the suggestion that his test career was brought to a premature end because he was out of favour with the establishment, but there were other reasons. The touring Indians were not the most formidable opposition and the selectors saw the opportunity to try out some younger players. A decline in attendances was leading to demands for brighter cricket of which Insole, by then a selector, was a leading advocate. A few years later, as chairman of selectors, Insole controversially dropped Geoff Boycott and Ken Barrington for scoring double centuries too slowly, and his friend and team-mate Bailey was perhaps the first casualty of this policy.

When Keith Fletcher joined the club in the early 1960s, Bailey 'appeared to run the entire show'. Not only was he captain, he had been appointed Essex secretary in 1955 – 'true all-rounder status,' as Ralph Dellor put it. Bailey paid tribute to 'a very good assistant and a very good girl who knew what was going on and when I forgot things reminded me', but carried a phenomenal workload himself. One of Bailey's finest hours came in 1957 against Hampshire on a tricky wicket at Romford. In the first innings he made 59, during which a knuckle was cracked, and took 6 for 32. Secretarial duties had to be forgotten when he returned to the fray with Essex three wickets down

and not a run on the board. He followed an unbeaten 71 with 8 for 49 and Essex won by 46 runs. A month later his eleven wickets bowled England to an innings victory against the visiting West Indians. In 1958 at the Castle Park in Colchester the Saturday was washed out and overnight the river rose and flooded the entire ground. With the agreement of the Army, Nottinghamshire and the TCCB, Bailey arranged for the game to be moved to the Garrison ground and the game started promptly on the Monday, although his initiative was not entirely rewarded, for further rain washed out the last day as well. Against Worcestershire at Romford Essex had batted first and he asked their permission to shorten the boundary in their innings because the crowd was so great that he wanted to get them all in. Occasionally he had to leave the field for a while to deal with some administrative matter but 'it was all great fun'. As if that wasn't enough, he was often to be found in a corner bashing out newspaper copy on an old typewriter.

In 1958 Bailey's contract was renewed for three years and he was given a pay rise of £175, which he asked to be paid into a pension fund. He had £450 per annum and '£200 to cover my tour of Australia'³⁴⁸. In 1962 his salary and his car allowance were both increased by £100.

In 1960 Insole, like Harold Wilson fifteen years later, resigned 'to make way for an older man'. It made sense, because Insole was devoting more time to his duties as a selector and in business, while Bailey's England career was clearly over and he was able to spend the whole summer with Essex. He had led the side five times in 1959 and seven in 1960 so was the only plausible candidate. By then the brash young man had mellowed and 'contrived to maintain the fine balance of levity and efficiency that was the legacy of his predecessor'³⁴⁹ but, still more impatient than Insole, he could not always understand the failings of cricketers less talented than he and sometimes failed to bring the best out of them. In his first year Essex came sixth but then they gradually slipped down the table. The club was lurching rapidly into financial crisis, so lacked the playing resources. When Bailey's own powers finally began to wane, he often had to play, even through injury, because there was nobody else. Nevertheless he had a wonderful eye for talent in a young player and sowed the seed that gradually came to fruition in the 1970s.

One of the hardest things about the job was telling a player at the end of the season that he would not be retained. It was bad enough explaining to a youngster why he would not make the grade, but even worse telling a capped player who was also a personal friend, particularly as the committee's decision was often on Bailey's recommendation.

A compensatory joy was spotting, usually at fifteen or sixteen, those who were obviously talented enough to go all the way to test level. After seeing Barry Knight practise for twenty minutes Bailey knew that he was going to be an England player. A perceptive careers officer recommended the 14-year-old Keith Fletcher to Essex so Bailey arranged for him to play in the under-18 Young Amateurs' side, where he immediately scored runs and displayed a shrewd cricket brain. While captaining a Cavaliers team in Barbados Bailey came across 'a spectacular natural athlete, a fast bowler, a hard hitter, marvellous field and a very nice person', so immediately recruited Keith Boyce for Essex.

³⁴⁸ *Wickets*, p230.

³⁴⁹ *Bailey on Bailey*, p144.

Bailey himself always claimed that his greatest contribution to Essex cricket came not on the field but at the 1965 dinner celebrating Worcestershire's second consecutive Championship victory. Some members of the Warwickshire Supporters' asked him how things were going and he said: 'Well, there's only one thing, we haven't any money, we're in the red.' They asked if there was anything they could do and he replied: 'Lend us £13,000 and we can buy a cricket ground.' At the end of the dinner they came up to him and said: 'You can have it.' Having taken up the offer on the spot, he got his action ratified by the committee and the Supporters' Association gave Essex an interest-free loan, which enabled them to buy the County Ground at Chelmsford.

Bailey realised that Chelmsford would be a big commitment and that he would no longer be able to combine the roles of captain, player and secretary. Essex offered him a generous package to stay on as secretary but he was 42, not particularly old for a cricketer then, and wanted to continue playing for another two years. He therefore resigned as secretary in 1965 and captain in 1966. He retired as a player in 1967, finishing his first-class career where he began it, at Lord's. Doug Insole was frank about the end of Bailey's career:

It was very unfortunate that, as I think he now admits, he went on a bit too long and it was a great shame that after all he'd done for Essex people should have started to say 'it's time he gave it away'. In the end I was the guy who had to say 'I'm afraid next season we don't need you', which ... ruptured things for a while but now we're good friends and see a lot of one another...

Bailey conceded in *Wickets, catches and the odd run* that he should have retired in 1965. Like an old-fashioned amateur - which in most respects he certainly was not - he went on because he was still enjoying the game, but rather overlooked the need to train and to forgo some of his business activities. When he did retire he developed his business interests, and his career in writing and broadcasting. He also felt that it would not be fair on his successor if he was on the committee so he decided to have a complete break from administration of the county for ten years. As it turned out he never went back, although Essex was still his county and he continued to follow their fortunes closely.

Tragically, Trevor Bailey died in a fire at his home in 2011. For his memorial service, Chelmsford cathedral was packed and loudspeakers broadcast to a crowd outside.

Chapter 12: 'A giant among men': Douglas John Insole (1926-2017)

As supporter, cricketer, captain, vice-chairman, chairman and president, Insole has been involved with Essex cricket for seventy years. According to Lemmon,

Doug Insole's record as a player put him among the very greatest of Essex cricketers. When one adds his contribution as captain and chairman of the county club he becomes a giant among men... His captaincy was inspiring, ever looking to win, never lacking enthusiasm... He was chairman of the county from 1976 to 1978 and again from 1984 to 1993... What Essex County Cricket Club has achieved since 1979 owes a tremendous amount to Doug Insole. In a life marked by personal tragedies, he has never failed to give his all to the club and to the game as a whole... He was an England selector for nine years, chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board for three, and an MCC committee member from 1956 to 1980. He also managed two England sides to Australia, and he has remained a powerful voice in English cricket. He was, rightly, appointed CBE for his services to the game.

Insole clearly takes a great pride in Essex's achievements on and off the field, while not boasting about his own significant role in them. My summary of his interview with the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop forms the basis of this section. It also includes excerpts from his autobiography and from his interview with Ralph Dellor, and my own memories of him.

Hero worship

A cricket-loving father named Douglas John Insole after his sporting hero, John Douglas. The young Insole was a self-confessed 'Essex nut': 'I still remember very vividly the day we bowled Yorkshire out for 31, cycling along Larkshall Road in Highams Park shouting to a bloke "We've bowled them out for 31!"' He had heard the news on the radio. As a seven-year-old he sat on the hard concrete seats in the last year at Leyton, where he recalled a brilliant piece of cricket involving Essex's Jack O'Connor and Patsy Hendren of Middlesex. Much later as an England selector he got to know Herbert Sutcliffe, who shared in the Yorkshire 555 partnership. Sutcliffe told him that it was a marvellous wicket, and he 'thought they could have batted for ever if they had wanted to because it was so good'.

Insole attended Sir George Monoux Grammar School in Walthamstow, and when he was thirteen he represented London Schoolboys and Essex Schoolboys. The school was then evacuated to Leominster in Herefordshire, which 'did not prove lastingly detrimental'. The headmaster, JF Elam, was a cricket enthusiastic who gave Insole every encouragement but he did not have any serious coaching. He was therefore more or less self-taught and developed his own bottom-handed, leg-side method that involved hitting across the line far more than would be orthodox. His friend Trevor Bailey, coached at preparatory and public school by first-class cricketers like Denys Wilcox and 'Father' Marriott, confessed that when he first saw Insole bat he did not think he would make the Cambridge team, much less the England one, but he had such a good eye that he usually got away with it.

The school is set in its own grounds and, though its playing fields scarcely rival those of Uppingham, they are by far the most spacious of any school in Walthamstow. Such discrimination in favour of grammar schools was not unusual³⁵⁰, and I think it no coincidence that four of the five postwar Walthamstow schoolboys who went on to play for Essex attended Monoux – Insole, Graham Saville, Mike Boyers and Stephen Dinsdale. The exception was Brian Edmeades, who went to Markhouse Road School.

Even as a schoolboy Insole showed outstanding leadership qualities, and in his last year he became school captain. Don Anderson asserted that 'any Monovian of my vintage (1944-52) will have no doubt that Doug Insole is the most famous Monovian of our generation'. Don recalled³⁵¹:

In 1947 the school were given the day off to attend the Oxford Cambridge match at Lords. Our headmaster, Mr Stirrup, was able to watch the match in the hallowed Lord's pavilion. The rest of us watched the match from the stands. All was peaceful, as befitted Lord's in those days, until our hero Doug Insole came out to bat. We went mad. Doug could do no wrong. Every stroke of the bat was greeted by wild cheers. In those days such behaviour at Lord's was unheard of.

The next day at school we received the severest of reprimands from our beloved headmaster. He was sorely embarrassed, sitting in the pavilion, by our behaviour. However, we had been

³⁵⁰ In 1944 only five of Bolton's elementary schools had their own playing fields. WILLIAMS, p 53.

³⁵¹ Old Monovians Newsletter, Aug 2006.

determined to demonstrate the pride we had for our hero, and his admonitions fell on deaf ears. We can justifiably claim to be the original 'Barmy Army'. Doug tells me that he was ribbed by his team mates at the time, but in fact he was proud to have received such a reception.

Insole scored 38 and 44, which helped his side to a draw.

My career at Monoux was exactly twenty years later after Insole's. As might be expected, the man whose first two initials I shared was my sporting hero. His name was on the honours board in the school hall and I often thought more about his exploits for Essex than about the pearls of wisdom Mr Stirrup was passing on. I was nevertheless surprised when many years later I told a classmate of his that I had hero-worshipped Insole. 'So did I,' was his unexpected and revealing reply. Had Insole and I been contemporaries, I could have been no more than Darbishire to his Jennings, for I could have told you the line-ups of all the first-class counties but was, to my great regret, pretty hopeless at playing the game.

When I was doing the Open University cricket project that was the origin of this book, Insole was the obvious person to ask for an interview and I was grateful that he gave it. Modest like almost all the cricketers I have encountered, he spoke little of his own achievements on the field but did recall an extraordinary shot in a match against Gloucestershire at Romford in 1956. Always a strong leg-side player, he plonked his foot down the wicket and pulled the fast bowler FP McHugh on the full toss from outside off stump over mid-wicket for six. His 159 in that game was the only big innings I saw him play and amazingly, although I was barely ten years old and had hardly ever seen a cricket match before, that stroke was the one thing I remember about it. The second and third days, which alas I missed, saw a remarkable record set by a great player. Bill Frindall's *Kaye Book of Cricket Records* (1968) cites twelve instances of batsmen scoring 50% of their side's total runs in each innings of a match. Of these twelve, the highest combined percentage for a match was by Tom Graveney whose 100 out of 153 and 67 out of 107 comprised 64.2% of Gloucestershire's runs in the match.

My other recollection of him came around the same time at a match that even ten years later would have been much less likely to happen. The then current England cricketer was playing on a Sunday in a friendly, probably a benefit match, at his local club, Chingford. He straight drove a huge six over the sightscreen and it hit a friend of mine whose attention was elsewhere. Fortunately the boy was not badly hurt but Insole, very concerned, came to see how he was and plied him with ice cream, a considerable consolation. I was quite envious, not about the ice cream but because I did not get the chance to talk to my hero.

Captain of Essex

In 1949 Insole became the first grammar school boy to captain Cambridge. He was never a conventional establishment man and has, for example, retained refreshing traces of his London accent despite many years of moving in the highest cricketing circles. He would not therefore have objected in principle to turning professional and would have been financially much better off if he had, but explained his reasons for staying amateur thus:

I should have had the worry of thinking about physical injury which could ruin my livelihood; I should have had to spend a lot more time away from my family; I should not have had the knowledge that even if I were a hopeless flop in the game there was complete security awaiting me outside it.

As it turned out, he need not have worried: he never suffered a serious injury, and scored over a thousand runs for Essex in each of his eleven full seasons.

Essex amateurs in the 1950s received only 'out-of-pocket expenses which could hardly have kept them in bootlaces', and he survived on pay from a sympathetic but not over-generous employer:

I was not employed in the first instance because I was a cricketer. After my appalling form in 1948³⁵², Essex would not have taken me as a gift at the time when I was interviewed for an appointment as assistant Public Relations Officer for George Wimpey....

Insole played much better in 1949 so Wimpey

asked me if I would like to play cricket for a few years, mainly because I'd done fairly well for Essex... And I said 'Are you going to pay me?' and they said yes so I said 'Well OK, yes.' A year or two turned into...eleven years... They were always the governor. If they wanted me in, I had to go in. It happened twice in eleven years...

I was more intent on getting a job than I was on going on playing cricket. If they'd said to me you don't play cricket then I wouldn't have played cricket except perhaps in the holidays and that's very difficult particularly when you're an unorthodox player because you need to keep playing to keep going. Looking back it seems ridiculous that I was an amateur...It's all right if you've got loads of money but I hadn't. It rankled a bit with a couple of the guys and I thought they're getting more for what they're doing than I'm getting for twelve months' work.

At a committee meeting in January 1950 Tom Pearce reported that Insole's employers were willing to release him 'fairly regularly, business permitting', and recommended that he should take over the captaincy from him. Insole was not the obvious choice, and ten years later he wrote:

I was appointed captain of Essex when Trevor [Bailey] had been playing fairly regularly for four seasons, was far more experience and knowledgeable than I, and was already an established England player. He probably had every reason to feel resentful of the fact that I had been pushed in over his head, but whatever his feelings he has never displayed the slightest sign of resentment.

It helped that they were good friends and shared interests other than cricket: while at Cambridge they read history and played football together, and discovered a mutual enthusiasm for western films.

Bailey himself recognised that the committee's decision was the right one because he was too intolerant and 'lacked discretion'³⁵³. Certainly Essex enjoyed better results under Insole in the 1950s than under Bailey in the 1960s, although other factors were involved: on the field Insole virtually retired and Bailey was past his best, while off it the club was running into financial difficulties.

In 1950 Pearce was 44 and the plan was that he would share the captaincy with Insole, but his duties as an England selector were taking much of his time and Insole became sole captain in June. There was some murmuring among senior professionals such as Peter Smith and Tom Wade, who had made their Essex debuts when Insole was three years old, but they soon recognised his leadership qualities and the transition was fairly smooth.

³⁵² On returning to the side in July 1948 he scored 46 runs in eight innings and was dropped for the rest of the season.

³⁵³ Bailey on Bailey, p47

Essex lost five games in a row and eventually finished bottom of the championship for the first time in their history. Even a character as resilient as Insole must have been dismayed by such a start, and in July Hubert Ashton wrote a letter which was an object lesson in understatement: 'It is not easy to get some of the people to put quite 100% into their efforts for the Side...I want you to realise that the Committee is fully behind you'. He copied the letter to Col. Maguire of Wimpeys to express the club's appreciation of their allowing Insole to play and captain the team.

Trevor Bailey thought that Insole as captain had a tougher, more professional attitude than Pearce. Insole placed a similar emphasis on winning rather than just playing the game, but he always wanted the cricket to be entertaining as well. When Ralph Dellor tried to get him to admit that 'the Insole mould is still there', he deflected the attempted compliment by paying tribute to Pearce:

I was keener on fielding and a bit more of a disciplinarian than Tom Pearce because when I came into the side Tom was getting on but in terms of the sense of enjoying your cricket that was very much Tom's philosophy. He's been around as chairman and president since and he sets the tone pretty well and he has enormous respect from the guys. He can say things that no one else can say because they know damn well that one he's absolutely sincere and two they can't get at him because he's 83.

Insole relished the freedom of the captaincy but had not anticipated some of the accompanying chores:

I've enjoyed the atmosphere which allowed captains to get on with it. I did find to my surprise that I was lumbered with all sorts of jobs like paying the players, organising transport, paying hotel bills which I didn't mind but I was quite surprised that it wasn't being done by some administrative guy behind the scenes.

Insole always thought that records should take second place to the context of the match. Captaining his university against his county, he declared overnight when John Dewes and Hubert Doggart needed only 26 runs to establish a world record for the second wicket; the press – as at Leyton in 1932 – were much in evidence and greatly disappointed. In 1954 at Romford he scored 156 not out in the first innings and in the second declared when he was 92 not out, only to see Northamptonshire win the resultant run-chase by three wickets.

It was typical of Insole's approach to the game. Dellor suggested that 'with people like Ray Smith, Dickie Dodds and you in the side the cricket was never going to be dull watching Essex, was it?'

Well, we couldn't really afford it to be because we hadn't got a good enough side technically to hope to win very much. The *News Chronicle* started an entertaining batting competition and we won it three years running and they abandoned it. We were reckoning it was a game for spectators as well as us and if we didn't enjoy it they wouldn't. I wouldn't be too pious about it because we weren't in a position to slaughter people so if people were going to watch us they were going to watch us because we entertained them not because we beat other people. People come and watch winning sides. I always thought we were a much more entertaining side than some of those that were winning.

In Insole's first season Essex moved up to eighth, largely because they lost only two matches. Essex's batting won them the *News Chronicle*'s competition and attracted over 5000 members for the first time, but it could not lift them out of the bottom half of the championship table.

Despite six wins and Insole's own magnificent form in 1955, his county finished only fourteenth because they for the only time in their history lost more than half of their games – 15 out of 28 - although four of those defeats came after Insole declared in search of a positive result.

It may have been while captaining The Rest against Surrey at the end of 1955 that Insole famously asked the umpire whether he had been bowled or run out, after having his stumps smashed by left-arm spinner Tony Lock's quicker ball. It was widely accepted that Lock threw his faster ball, but it was only when Lock saw his action on film in 1959 that, flabbergasted, he went back to the drawing board at a time of life almost anyone else would have packed it in³⁵⁴. It was also in this match that Insole sent in Robin Marljar, already in his dinner jacket for an evening engagement, as a nightwatchman, only to see him hit the first ball for six and be stumped off the second.

Insole thought that Essex in his time were relatively unsuccessful because cricket was more developed in the counties that had big headquarters grounds with large staffs and big populations. And

Through the time that I was playing the championships were won by very good spin bowlers. The wickets weren't covered, the rain came down, the wickets got wet, then the spin bowlers made the ball talk... We had none, and couldn't find any, not from within Essex. Qualification for counties was very much from within county boundaries, and you found your own players and held on to them. If somebody was born in Essex and you offered them a contract, then they couldn't go anywhere else without qualifying for that other county and that meant they had to go and live there for two years...

Five fewer losses in the wet summer of 1956 took Essex up to eleventh, but the real breakthrough came in 1957 when they won eleven matches and finished fifth – their best position since the war. In a typically witty piece for the 1958 Annual, Insole wrote that better fielding was the reason for the improvement, which continued for the remainder of his time as captain: Essex finished sixth in three of the next four years.

Unfortunate to play in an era when England were strong in batting and not always available when they did want him, Insole appeared only nine times for his country. He was invited to captain the 1951-2 side in India and to go on other tours, but Wimpey said he should stay at home; he did not argue, and with a young family was happy not to go. In 1956-7 MCC were keen that he should tour South Africa as Peter May's vice-captain and Wimpey gave special permission so he went on his only overseas tour. He enjoyed it, playing in all the test matches and topping the averages.

Insole was, however, selected for only four home Test matches and dropped after each of them:

I don't want to be unduly modest but I always felt I was quite fortunate to be picked [except against South Africa in 1955 when] I was scoring loads of runs. I thought I was unfortunate to be dropped and I think it was stupid to drop me³⁵⁵...I came back [from South Africa] as an established player and started off in '57 playing desperately badly. One of my problems was always that because I was working I never practised so the first match I went to was almost my first net. I remember phoning Gubby Allen and saying if you're thinking of

³⁵⁴ Tony Lock: Aggressive Master of Spin: Why Lock was more than just a support act to Laker
Cricinfo review by Martin Williamson September 7, 2008

³⁵⁵ He scored 2427 runs, more than anyone else in the country, with nine centuries. He played in the Fourth Test, making 3 and 47, but England lost and made five changes for the last match.

picking me please don't but they did...I got 0 and made way for Peter May and Colin Cowdrey to make five million or whatever³⁵⁶...

His decision to give up playing cricket was entirely pressure of business, for after the 1960 season Wimpeys decided that they wanted to see more of him and he resigned the captaincy:

They just said that's enough, you're 34, we need you – which was flattering or not depending on how you look at it. I wasn't unhappy to give up in many ways, because I was getting to the point where I was missing quite a few matches because I was selecting and I was working at the start of the season – batting was becoming less easy, so it was probably the right time to give it away.

The committee presented him with a canteen of cutlery and he thanked them with 'a suitable and witty reply'. In 1961 he played eight games and averaged 31, but in 1962 and 1963 he played only nine with an average of 14, so he decided to retire.

Even after retiring Insole continued to devote one or two days a week to cricket, first as a selector and then as an administrator. Usually he was asked to do jobs rather than pushing for them, although on one occasion he decided to do it because he thought the alternative candidate would have been a disaster. As chairman of the selectors he took the controversial decision to drop Ken Barrington and Geoff Boycott for scoring double centuries too slowly: 'You become involved with your players and if you have to do something that's going to hurt them it's something you regret having to do but you don't necessarily feel it's wrong to do it'. Commentating over forty years later, Boycott may have forgiven but he certainly hadn't forgotten.

In 1968 Insole became involved with an even more contentious matter – Basil D'Oliviera's omission and subsequent selection for the South African tour. Excluded on racial grounds from Test cricket in his native South Africa, the brilliant Cape Coloured cricketer made his way to England and in 1966, the year after South Africa had toured, established himself in the England side. In 1968 against Australia he was dropped after top-scoring in the first test, but was recalled for the last and hit a brilliant 158. He was regarded as a certainty for the party to tour South Africa in the following winter and his omission provoked uproar in the press and among the cricketing public.

Peter Osborne has researched and written a splendid biography of D'Oliviera which covers the affair very well, and this can only be the briefest summary of Insole's part in it. Insole has often been accused of racism and betrayal, but Osborne acquits him of the charges almost entirely. He argues that the fault lay largely with other senior figures at MCC. At first they asked that the South African government should place no preconditions on their touring party but then, on the advice of shadow Foreign Secretary and former Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home, failed to press the point. That meant that by the time the party came to be chosen Insole was in an impossible position.

Osborne suggests that Insole was unusual among cricket administrators of his time in that he had a first-class brain, and that he went to grammar school. Shrewdly, Insole sought to defuse the racial issues by telling the selectors to pick the party as though it were going to Australia, where cricketing conditions would have been much the same but the politics very different. The case for D'Oliviera's inclusion was not as watertight as it might have appeared from the outside: he was fighting several fine contenders for the last batting slot on the tour, the conditions were unlikely to favour his style of

³⁵⁶ A reference to their record partnership, in fact a mere 411.

bowling and, on his own admission, he had let himself down by accepting too much of the generous hospitality on offer in the West Indies the previous year.

In the event Tom Cartwright - a bowler who could bat - dropped out through injury and D'Oliveira - a batsman who could bowl - was drafted in to replace him. His original omission was regarded by many as pandering to the South African government, while others considered his belated selection as a sop to the British press and public. The circumstances gave the South African government a good excuse to take offence and the tour was cancelled. Insole continues to insist that there were genuine cricket reasons for omitting D'Oliveira but nevertheless he once wept on recalling the affair, which he describes as the worst few months of his life³⁵⁷.

Insole changed employers in 1975 and they were happy that he should continue to spend time on cricket administration, but then the Packer affair blew up when he was Chairman of the Test and County Cricket Board and he had to spend many hours on it. The experience led him to feel that cricket needed an executive chairman who could be paid and more or less full-time to deal with similar crises. Afterwards he managed two tours of Australia that helped restore bridges and were 'great fun', although 'It's amazing how, if you're involved as a selector or manager you live every ball, and the minute that responsibility's gone off you, you become just an interested spectator again'. He was later a director of Trollope and Colls, and of Town and City Properties.

Amateurs and professionals

Though the old discrimination between amateurs and professionals was fading fast, Insole and Bailey valued the contribution made by those amateurs able to play less often than they:

Apart from anything else we played a lot of amateurs and I was most anxious as was Trevor to make sure nobody felt they were coming in for the sake of coming in. We were always anxious to play the best side and if we thought an amateur was better than a pro we put the amateur in. It was essential that he was there on equal terms with the pros and that's what everyone accepted.

While Insole was captain there were still five amateurs, who 'played for nothing except they stayed in hotels and that cost a few bob'. He and Bailey wrote a parody of the old amateur image:

We're a couple of swells
Who stay in the best hotels

³⁵⁷ In June 2004 BBC4 showed *Not Cricket: the Basil D'Oliveira Conspiracy*, a documentary in which Insole was interviewed. I found his responses woolly and unconvincing, although he usually comes over as much more incisive and I would, as an Insole loyalist, have to wonder whether that was partly down to selective editing. On the whole it was an excellent programme whose clear anti-establishment bias - obvious in the title - I would generally share, but I think it may have been a little one-sided in arguing its case. They claimed for example that Don Kenyon was the only selector to advocate D'Oliveira's inclusion in the party, without mentioning that he had been D'Oliveira's county captain at Worcestershire for three years.

The D'Oliveira affair had other Essex connections. England were heavily beaten in the first Test and he made way for the return of Barry Knight which undoubtedly strengthened the bowling attack, although it could be argued that D'Oliveira should not have been the batsman to be dropped. In the fourth test Keith Fletcher made his debut in front of a partisan Headingley crowd that thought the local favourite Phil Sharpe should have been recalled, so when he made a duck and dropped several difficult slip chances they had no difficulty in reviving the traditional Yorkshire contempt for effete southerners. D'Oliveira in the fifth test was recalled as a straight replacement for Fletcher.

We put it on expenses
And we don't give a damn who tells.

In fact Essex did not differentiate, and Bailey was surprised when the Lancashire captain Nigel Howard stayed in a different Southend hotel from his pros 'which though common practice before the war was hardly the ideal way to produce team spirit'³⁵⁸. Insole recognised unrest about amateurism, but argued that 'the professional cricketer has been moving steadily higher in the social order for some time now' and rejected the suggestion that there was class war in cricket³⁵⁹.

Class distinction between amateurs and professionals had become 'much less prevalent in Essex than anywhere else' once the club left Leyton with its separate dressing-rooms:

If you ever went to Brentwood, the pavilion's about ten by eight so everybody chucked everything into the same room, about three blokes could change at a time. There was no question of any distinction, you all mucked in and that was that. So from that point of view it went out of the window at Essex very early but in other counties it lingered...well into my playing career. The amateurs used to stay in a separate hotel and so forth...it just depended on the sort of hierarchical situation back home...

We had some very egalitarian blokes running the side. Tom Pearce who was my predecessor was a simply marvellous bloke that everybody liked very much, he often liked the pros much better than he liked the amateurs...

Insole did not always see eye to eye with the professionals, but had great respect for them:

It was also not easy to get some of the older guys, more staid in their ways, to enjoy and fall into things like fielding practice which I was keen on. When we got a younger side we became a very good fielding side. Apart from that from a personal point of view Essex has always been a great place to play cricket...I regarded the eleven blokes under my alleged command as a team, not as amateurs or pros, and many of them are still good personal friends.

After the 1953 season some committee members called for more amateurs to play and Bailey, then Assistant Secretary, told them that 'Insole would only want them if they were good enough'. In what turned out to be his last captain's report, Insole told the committee in 1960 that 'team spirit was excellent and I am sure there is no more likeable and presentable group of professionals in the country'.

Insole claimed that abolition in 1963 of the distinction between amateurs and professionals was another first for cricket and for Essex.

...It wasn't abolished in football for fifteen years after that and...in rugger until about three years ago. It became basically an untenable distinction. A lot of people regretted it because when you had an amateur captain he was totally independent of everybody, he wasn't being paid by the club, he could tell them to get stuffed if that's what he wanted, and there was a greater degree of independence about the place...It was abolished when the Essex Chairman, Sir Hubert Ashton, was also President of MCC who were then running the game...because there were a lot of people who were pseudo-amateurs...

He was on the committee that took the decision and was involved with the difficulties that were arising, although he felt that the old system had its advantages:

There were a lot of assistant secretaries who really were cricketers and it was causing a bit of friction and it was time it went. I'm not sure that the friction wasn't worth it. I think the

³⁵⁸ Wickets, p94.

³⁵⁹ Cricket from the middle, p47.

game's lost a lot by the loss of the amateur. There was a degree of independence. I was very keen to play for Essex but if they didn't like what I was doing I was quite happy to say forget it I'll go and play for Middlesex or I won't play for anybody. One was able to have some sort of influence in that way. In Essex certainly the captains have continued to have influence. That's because they've been the right sort of personalities and because people feel that's the way they want to go and if they don't perform right they can always take them off. There's a great deal of handcuffing around the place when people feel they're playing for their places and playing for their jobs which wasn't there when the amateur was there.

Insole paid tribute to the loyalty of supporters who reflected the diversity of the county:

Over the years Essex supporters have been enormously loyal. Even when we were playing pretty badly they stood by us very well and there's enormous enthusiasm through the county from East Ham to Frinton. It's a sprawling county from the East End of London to the slightly toffee-nosed areas but there's a great unity which I've always appreciated...

I've always felt it was a members' club. The members were always good to me when I was captain and because there weren't so many of them I knew most of them. The part I enjoy most about Essex is the congeniality of it and if you get congeniality with success that's superb...

Insole was heavily involved in the decision to return to Leyton in 1957:

We were seeing a big revival of interest in cricket around this part of the world...so we decided we'd try Leyton again. And we had to get the local authority to get the ground into shape. I had a lot of meetings with the Town Clerk [and] eventually it was agreed that they would spend the money to get the square right. We brought all the tack in, all the seats and the boundary boards and the scoreboard and everything, and we formed a Festival Committee here... We got all sorts of people, with quite well-known local names at the time...

One of my father's exercises was to collect Green Shield stamps from members. He'd put sacks up at the ground...and he did a deal with whoever ran the scheme that he'd get money rather than goods. And so you'd pay one player's wages for a year by sending in millions of Green Shield stamps...³⁶⁰

...The first game was a match against Middlesex which was the benefit match for our opening batsman...Dickie Dodds, who was a terrific entertainer...It was amazing, there were people lining up there at eight o'clock in the morning... It so happened that we won the match about an hour from the end of the scheduled time, and the gates were very good, Dickie Dodds giving all the proceeds to Moral Rearmament... Denis Compton... scored his last century in first-class cricket³⁶¹... [He] was a player that very few opposition players begrudged his runs to. He was a very popular man but he was a magnificently entertaining player... When he scored a century and we won the match, that was the ideal situation... It got off to a great start and for many years it went very well there.

The best match he played in at Leyton was 'a tie with Gloucestershire which finished...almost with the last scheduled ball of the match'.

One of the things about Leyton was you used to get very good third day gates. People tended...not [to] bother about the third day because it might be dull, it might be over. If you were taking time off work you'd take the first two days. But Leyton for some reason was an exception, there was a big crowd there and they all went bananas...

³⁶⁰ I think filial loyalty may have coloured Insole's view about the success of his father's activities. Hard though Insole senior worked, the minutes for 1970 recorded that the scheme raised £75, which was useful but scarcely enough for the annual wages of even the most junior pro.

³⁶¹ In fact he scored two more.

He omitted to mention that he scored 177 not out and 90 – almost half of Essex's runs in the game.

'Cricket is a business but the business is cricket'

Insole claimed that Essex was the pioneers in seeking commercial sponsorship:

We were the first county to really do anything commercial. It's amazing, looking back, to think how uncommercial it was. We, before the War, had sponsors...who paid for lunch...and tea for the team... And in exchange for that...the chairman of the company ...came along and the two captains sat with him at lunch... [The sponsors] were nearly always local... Shopkeepers, hoteliers or something used to stick up the money... When we were extremely badly off and on the verge of going under, about thirty years ago, we had a situation where a couple of the players' wages were paid by local sponsors.

Far from being a 'fuddy-duddy sort of game', cricket has introduced innovations such as Sunday play and commercial sponsorship of competitions. Essex were at the forefront of some of these changes. The first game broadcast on radio was Essex v New Zealand at Leyton in 1927, and

The first County match ever televised was at Ilford in 1950... We pushed very hard [and] were selected to do it...We had the first Sunday of a championship match at Ilford. You weren't allowed to pay to go in to see sport on the Sabbath so...we put buckets on the turnstile and it was just unbelievable how mean people are...We got...about fourpence per spectator for our trouble and so we thought that's no good, we can't do that again. So we...simply made everyone members and...charged two bob or something to become a member for the day.

Essex's fortunes hit rock-bottom in the mid-1960s. The policy of playing on eight different grounds had worked fairly well for thirty years but began to break down:

You never knew what you were going to find there by way of a wicket, never had any nets to practice in because these grounds didn't have any. In about '66, '67 we were in danger of going under because the performances weren't good, the crowds weren't turning up.

We got to a point in the mid-60s when we were pretty well bankrupt, when we lost £9000 on a turnover of £43000 and two years after that when we cut our staff down to twelve we had £33000...The costs were escalating because of the cost of setting up all these grounds so we cut our staff down to twelve which in modern terms is ridiculous... As late as 1970 the total budget was £33,000 but by 1990 it was over a million.

It was very difficult to reduce the Essex staff from 24 to twelve – that was horrible. When you've got a guy like Frank Rist who's an absolutely marvellous bloke who eventually worked for us for nothing practically – having to say to him we haven't got any money so we can't have a coach – if you're prepared to do it we'll pay your expenses and he did that for a couple of years.

Things began to turn round when Essex acquired their own headquarters ground at Chelmsford.

At that time by a great piece of good fortune we had the opportunity of buying the Chelmsford ground for a very small sum of money... Warwickshire lent us the money and then we had a headquarters and that really transformed the club's fortunes. Coincidentally we started to get some very good young players coming in and they suddenly gelled and six or seven of them turned out to be England players. We also had a couple of good overseas players, partly by luck, partly by judgment – mostly by judgment I hope.

We suddenly found ourselves building a very good side indeed, so in 1979 we managed to crack it and won our first Championship and at the same time one or two cup competitions. And from then on we've been the most successful county in the country...

Insole summarised his approach thus:

Cricket is a business but the business is cricket. Some people think we've gone a bit too far in Essex but I think we've managed to hold the balance fairly well... Cricket is obviously going more and more commercial... Coloured clothing to bring people in the grounds we've been trying to keep out for the last thirty years!

Doug Insole became club chairman in 1976-8 and took over again in 1984. He has contributed so much to the club that it was appropriate that he should be at the helm in some of their best years. Insole had succeeded Tom Pearce as captain and then as chairman, so it was no surprise that when Pearce died in 1994, Insole became President.

Insole's immense contribution to English cricket was recognised in 2006, when he was nominated President of MCC. He was very moved when the pavilion at Chelmsford was named in his honour. He died peacefully in his sleep on 6 August 2017 in the knowledge that his beloved county was on course to win the Championship for the first time since 1992. He was mourned by all who knew him and many who didn't.

Part III: Professionals

Chapter 13: From match-fees to contracts, 1876-1920

Although Essex County Cricket Club was founded by gentlemen for gentlemen, it increasingly needed the assistance of professionals. At first they were employed on a match-fee basis and there were seldom more than two of them in the side. In the early years at Leyton there were usually only three professionals in the first XI, but when Essex played the Australians in 1893 the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* reckoned that the team of six amateurs and five professionals was the best the county could put out. The balance remained much the same until after the First World War.

The formalisation of county cricket made it increasingly the norm for cricketers to be given contracts. When Essex were at Brentwood even their leading professional, Frank Silcock, was employed on a match-fee basis, but with the move to Leyton CE Green ensured that he and other professionals had annual contracts and thus a degree of security. Nowhere before the 1930s do the Essex records spell out exactly how much their pros earned, but it is possible to piece together a rough idea of overall annual incomes, which were made up of various elements.

Match and win money

A logical development of the old match-fee system, match money was one of the most significant elements of professional pay but one of the least recorded in the Essex minutes. They first mentioned it in 1898, when it was raised to what seems to have been a standard rate around the counties - £5 in home games and £6 away³⁶². At that time pros had then to pay their own meals and fares but by 1910 Second XI players were having them paid, so probably at some unrecorded point early in the 1900s the club started paying them for the First XI.

362 VAMPLEW, p219.

I found no mention of how much win money was, although if it was in proportion to Second XI match and win money it would have been at least £2. Second XI matches were scrapped after the crisis of 1903, but in 1910 they were reinstated and it was agreed that in addition to their normal wages pros should get £2 match money and £1 win bonus, with lunches and rail fares paid. Yet another crisis then forced Essex to sack several professionals and again scrap Second XI fixtures, even though 'they were beneficial for the training of young players for the County XI'³⁶³. The pros had two further small perks. When in 1911 three points for first innings lead in championship matches were introduced, it was agreed that if Essex gained those points the professionals should have the slightly curious amount of 13/- each. In 1914 their request to be given lunch at home matches was agreed for County matches but not Club & Ground games.

Working on the ground

The basic duties of ground staff were to help maintain the ground, and give members batting practice by bowling to them in the nets from 3pm till dusk. Professionals seldom did ground bowling once they had established themselves in the First XI, though whether this was the decision of the committee or of the players themselves is unclear. The most notable exception was the surprising one of Claude Buckenham, who was also a ground bowler at Lord's; with his rather more educated background, he might have been expected to think it beneath him.

In 1886 CE Green and the secretary, Thomas Ratliff, engaged four ground bowlers 'at a weekly stipend of 3£'. Their summer wage the same as the secretary's salary of £12 10s per month but it only applied for the four months of the cricket season, from May to August. In the remaining eight they helped maintain the ground on a much lower wage of 25s per week. At the 1887 AGM WJ Giller, who had himself played for Essex, asked 'if it were not possible to curtail the heavy expenses of professionals in county matches, and ground bowlers'. Green replied that 'there was a regular tariff for the professionals, and he did not think it was possible to reduce the expenses in this respect'.

Competition for places was fierce and most of the ground bowlers were good enough cricketers to play for the first XI. The standard procedure was that professionals wrote to ask for ground bowling work and the committee held trials and appointed as many as they needed. In February 1892 applications from several professionals were read and it was decided to try seven of them 'as soon as the coconut matting practice commenced'. In all six ground bowlers were appointed, but most of them had had contracts before and they included only one of the seven chosen for trial in February.

Sometimes wealthy individuals helped out. JW Hobbs was a Surrey committee member and mayor of Croydon who had his own cricket team, but also a vice-president of the Ilford club who bought them a new ground³⁶⁴. In the winter of 1890-1

A letter was sent to Mr JW Hobbs thanking for his kindness in giving employment to some of our young professionals during the winter, and to ask him to accept honorary membership of the club.

In June 1891 Carpenter was permitted to play for JW Hobbs's XI and 'it was arranged that he should have leave for that team when he could be spared from the ground'. This

³⁶³ Annual reports 1910, 1911.

³⁶⁴ Cricket, 1887 p447, Club history p9.

provoked a complaint from Walter Mead, who like Carpenter was paid £2 a week as a ground bowler, that he was not allowed to be away for local matches. The committee therefore decided that 'no leave of absence should be granted to the ground bowlers except under exceptional circumstances'. When in October 1892 Carpenter asked for winter employment, the club was in an even more parlous financial position than usual, and could not afford to pay him. CE Green wrote to Hobbs on Carpenter's behalf but he apparently could not help, for in December Green managed to obtain work on the Lord's ground staff for the professional.

In 1891 it was decided that 'the bowlers' benefit match on 7 & 8 September should be XI of the Club & Ground against 18 of the county'. There is no other record of a bowlers' benefit match and it is hard to imagine that it raised much money for them so it, like teams of more than eleven players, may have disappeared soon afterwards. This game was also used to try out new players: in response to WH Cooke's letter asking for a trial, the committee 'decided to let him play in the benefit match...and to pay him expenses from Sheffield', although like many trialists he did not make the grade.

At the AGM in 1893 one member complained that ground bowlers 'quite as good could be had two a penny from Victoria Park', but Green defended the committee's choice of bowlers and the majority of the meeting supported him. Edwin Jones of Leyton shared the committee's view of its professionals: he was so impressed with Essex's performance against the Australians that he gave two guineas to each of the five pros playing in the match and 'headed the list for the ground staff's gratuity with a similar sum'³⁶⁵.

The five professionals who played against the Australians were James Burns, Herbert 'Bob' Carpenter, Walter Mead, Henry Pickett and Tom Russell. When Essex achieved first-class status in 1894, Green arranged for all five to go on to the ground staff at Lord's. This gave them additional income from bowling and other work on the ground and from the occasional match fee, and eased the burden on Essex's still precarious finances. In 1895, Essex's first year in the County Championship, all were regular members of the side.

Although CE Green refused to join the committee of MCC, he seems to have had some influence there and arranged for the five regular pros to be on the Lord's ground staff. In January 1896, as part of Charles Booth's monumental study of *Life and Labour in London*, the assistant secretary of MCC, John A Murdoch, explained about the ground staff³⁶⁶. Altogether there were 54 of them. They came from all parts of the country but not usually from London. In winter they might be shoemakers or publicans but definitely not batmakers, although some had stores. When first engaged they were paid 30s a week, and after about six years their wages rose to £2. In a two or three-day game they were paid £4 for a win or £3 10s for 'a losing game' [no mention of a draw]. For an outmatch of two or three days they were paid £5 from which they had to find expenses. For 'extraordinary matches' against the Gentlemen or the Australians they got £10, win or lose. Umpires got £5 for 'extraordinary matches', which included Oxford v Cambridge and Eton v Harrow, and £2 for other matches, although for

365 LSE&I, 2 Sep 1893.

366 Original notebooks are held at the London School of Economics: Booth B156, pp45-50.

outmatches their expenses were paid. Ground bowlers, who could expect to earn 5s a day in tips, took jobs 'fairly well in their turns.'³⁶⁷

Essex also had their own ground staff who might be drafted into the First XI in emergencies, but more often the county would call upon an occasional amateur.

In 1902 the request of the seven ground bowlers for an increase to 35/- summer pay was granted. It was, as usual, to be deducted if they were earning the higher fee for playing in a county match, and directly the match was finished they were to return to their duties on the ground. In 1903 two additional ground bowlers were employed, but after the financial disasters of that season, Second XI matches were scrapped so 'the ground bowlers could have leave of absence without pay provided the Secretary could spare them'. Despite other economy measures, the committee surprisingly still employed nine ground bowlers in 1904, but in 1907 there were only four. Evidently this was insufficient, for in and after 1908 there were usually seven. By 1910 standard weekly pay had been cut back to 30/-.

There are various indications that the committee employed a head bowler but it is tantalisingly unclear whether this was a regular practice. The first to hold the post was the Essex-based professional John Jones in 1886. The veteran Silcock, who was nearing the end of his playing career, replaced him in 1887 and was reappointed in 1888. The minutes make no further reference to such a position but Home Gordon in the Victoria County History states that in 1900 'EHD Sewell was appointed head ground bowler in place of Ayres, late of Surrey'. The minutes show that in 1904-5 Jesse Littlewood of Lancashire was paid 35/- rather than the standard 30/-, probably because he was acting as head bowler.

The case of his fellow-Lancastrian James Valiant seemed to be the same, but there is an intriguing difference. The 1901 census shows his father, Robert, as a butcher at Wavertree in Liverpool where James was born, but in 1911 the family had moved to Stocking Green Farm at Radwinter near Saffron Walden. Robert was a farmer and James 'Farmer's Son Working on Farm'. His sister Edith Ann's occupation was listed as 'Farmer's Daughter Dairy Work' so perhaps Robert's career change was less radical than it seemed. In 1912 James was head bowler and played his sole first-class game, when he bowled four wicketless overs for 20 in an innings defeat by runners-up Northamptonshire. Robert was listed there on the 1910 Essex Kelly's, so by 1912 James was already qualified by residence.

Thus Ayres, Sewell and Littlewood were all beginning residential qualifications for Essex, so it is possible that the committee gave them the appointment of head bowler as a means of keeping them gainfully employed while they did so, although Valiant was apparently an exception. All bowled in first-class cricket for Essex but none made any discernible impact, so they are unlikely to have been appointed for their superior trundling skills. Their role may well have been that of foreman, ensuring that the bowlers were kept busy and the members satisfied.

After the miserable 1912 season, the new committee carried out a rigorous review of expenses. Wet weather, poor results and the resignation of CE Green made it a bad year even by Essex standards, but the procedure and the figures are probably not

³⁶⁷ Interview with Mr T. Hearne, secretary of the Cricketer's Fund Benevolent Society, Ealing, 21 January 1896. Interview with Mr Luff, secretary of Cricketers Fund and Mr Pooley, member of Surrey County Cricket Club and formerly wicketkeeper for Surrey, 1 April [1896]

untypical. The committee told the AGM in December that 'labour expenses' totalled about £1500, which included £700 for groundsmen and £160 for ground bowlers; the remaining £650 was presumably First XI wages. The minutes of that year give a good idea of how those expenses were made up, although a few questions remain. In February the ground bowlers were appointed for the summer. James Valiant was paid 35/- a week, perhaps because he was the head bowler; Harold Mead, Harry Smith, Percy Toone and Peter Winter had 30/-. Jack Freeman and Jack Russell had 27/6, probably because they were fairly regular members of the First XI, and not therefore always available for ground bowling. There was one vacancy that was later filled by H Davis, but his weekly wage was not recorded. The weekly wages of the ground staff were listed in September. The head groundsmen, EC Freeman, was paid 35/- and his assistant, Walter 'Bung' Brewer 30/-. Freeman and Russell were paid 27/6 and Smith 20/-. Experienced bowlers Claude Buckenham and Bert Tremlin had 25/-, as did Harold Mead, son of another old sweat, Walter. Parry had 21/- and Haynes 17/6. There was a note that 'some of their services would not be required after the end of October', and the unlucky ones were Buckenham, Mead and Parry. Tremlin was also on the Lord's ground staff and Essex stopped paying him once he went to Lord's. There was always some overlap between ground bowlers and ground staff, and in 1912 Harold Mead, Smith, Freeman and Russell carried out both roles, but it is not easy to detect the exact logic behind the make-up of the professional staff. An old pro with an exemplary disciplinary record, Bill Reeves, was refused winter work because 'there was no vacancy at present', but Davis, Parry and Haynes were all on the winter staff even though they never played first-class cricket.

Winter pay

This was first paid by Surrey and Yorkshire in the early 1890s, and later in the decade other counties felt obliged to copy them. Essex already paid their ground staff to work on ground maintenance during the off season, so it may have made little difference when in 1896 they started giving official winter pay, for no committee debate was recorded. The minutes often noted the arrangements; those for 1898-9 were exceptionally detailed but otherwise typical:

E. Russell was to receive 21/- and come on to the ground bowlers staff @ 30/- during the summer. T. Russell to have 25/- during the winter months. Reeves, Tremlin, Buckenham, Young and Ayres to have 25/- during the winter months, the latter not to work on the ground but to make himself generally useful when required. Carpenter to have 25/- during the winter months provided that he kept up his qualification but that he did not work on the ground.

In the early 1900s, when Essex's finances again lurched into the red, winter pay became a cause of bitter dispute (see below p>>>) and the outcome was a standard rate of 25/-

Talent money

Talent money was first introduced by Lord Hawke for the Yorkshire professionals in the 1890s. At first Essex did not follow suit, although CE Green paid out of his own pocket £1 for a 50 and 10/- for five wickets. In April 1903 the retiring captain, Hugh Owen, and his successor, Charles Kortright, proposed a talent money system whereby marks worth 5/- each would be awarded at the discretion of the captain. The idea of the scheme was that it 'might make the men play more for the side and less for individual merit', although as the idea was to reward individual merit it could well have

exactly the opposite effect. If, for example, Essex needed quick runs in order to set up a declaration and a professional was on 90 not out, he might be tempted to play cautiously for his century rather than risk his wicket for the team.

No detailed records of pre-war talent money payments survive, but overall figures for each season were given in annual reports:

1903 £57 15s	1906 £51 15s	1909 £25	1912 £11
1904 £51	1907 £53 15s	1910 £26 10s	1913 £26
1905 report missing	1908 £26 10s	1911 £53 15s	1914 £31 5s

Although Essex dropped from seventh to eleventh place in 1908, the halving of the amount paid was probably due to the financial crisis of that year. It is not stated anywhere, but I would guess that pros were paid only 2/6 rather than 5s per mark. The extent of the problem was not apparent until after the season's end, which is when talent money was paid out, so the professionals may only have learned then that their small but useful bonus was to be cut. The increase in 1911 was almost certainly due to the brief upturn in the club's fortunes on and off the field. The exceptionally low figure in 1912 may reflect the quantity of cricket lost to the dismal weather, for 1913 was just as bad on the field and almost as bad on the balance sheet, but the amount at least reverted to the level of 1908-10. In 1914 Essex played 24 games rather than 18 and rose from fifteenth place to eighth, so a modest increase is not surprising.

How much could an Essex professional earn before 1914?

Strangely, the Essex minute-books give much detail about the various ways in which professionals could build up their earnings, but never give a full summary. In the absence of any firm figures, it is impossible to be sure, but the best year was probably 1907. The club played 24 games and any pro appearing in all of them earned £131 (£5 for 13 at home, £6 for 11 away). Essex's ten wins - equalled only once before 1933 - earned him win bonuses, which if the figure of £2 is correct would have totalled £20. Winter pay of 25/- a week would, assuming it was paid for 34 weeks, have been £42 10s. Individual figures for pre-war talent money were not kept, but interwar figures suggest that pros seldom got more than a quarter of it so £12 10s would be about the maximum. By then the leading professionals - probably because of the enlarged fixture list - no longer did ground bowling, although it would have narrowed the differentials for those fringe players who did. Thus in an exceptionally good year Essex would have paid a leading professional just over £200. If he was selected for England or the Players he would have had an extra match fee of £20 per game. In the worst year, 1912, the top man could have earned £114 match money from 21 games, £42 10s winter pay, £2 from the solitary win and perhaps £2 10s as his slice of the tiny talent money cake, totalling about £160.

An ordinary member of the ground staff in 1907 would have had 30/- for no more than 20 weeks and 25/- for the remainder of the year, totalling £70; if he had had two home games, two away games, two wins and £1 talent money, he would have earned a further £27 making £97. His basic pay in 1912 would have been the same, but there were fewer games and little match or talent money so he would have had perhaps £15 extra, totalling just under £85.

All of this needs to be put into the wider context of the period. Seebohm Rowntree in 1911 declared that 'the advantage that a family with 30s a week has over one with £1 is greater than it ever was before'. So the leading professionals could be among the top

15% of wage-earners in the country. Even the journeyman ground staff member in a bad year earned enough for comfort. The problem came, of course, when injury, loss of form or advancing age forced them to retire.

‘Universally respected throughout Essex’: Frank Silcock (1838-1897)³⁶⁸

The Essex minutes and other sources give details about some of the county’s early professionals and their careers, which illustrate some of the points made in this chapter. The first of them was Frank Silcock.

One of the main reasons for establishing the club in 1876 was ‘an opportunity of obtaining a capital ground in [Brentwood] at very advantageous terms’. The *Chelmsford Chronicle* reported that at the inaugural meeting James Round read a letter

from Frank Silcock, that well-known professional, stating that, according to promise, he had been to Brentwood and inspected the ground which, he thought, was a very fine field for cricket.³⁶⁹

While the services of the professional were required, his presence apparently was not.

That was fairly typical of the somewhat feudal relationship between amateurs and professionals in the late nineteenth century. The power of amateurs was absolute. When James Round was at Cambridge, ‘Jesse Richards, Cricketer, Carlton, Notts’ wrote him a neat, literate letter. Richards outlined his credentials and asked for ‘a bowling engagement’. Censuses show that his main trade was as a framework knitter in Nottinghamshire, but he had also ‘been at Oxford for five years with plenty of bowling... and think I have improved a little’. Round passed the letter to a friend who scribbled a casual reply which presumably denied Richards his request:

Dear R,
I feel it is my duty to tell you that I think he is rather a ‘bloke’ nor are his reffs much³⁷⁰.
I really must ask you to my return my Plato as I am constantly wanting it.
FGI

The cricketing careers of James Round and Frank Silcock sometimes intertwined and illustrated that relationship.

Frank Silcock was a stylish right-handed middle order batsman, a right-arm fast-medium round-arm bowler and a good slip field³⁷¹. He was born on 2 October 1838 at Sawbridgeworth in Hertfordshire but when he was two his family moved the eleven miles to Chipping Ongar in Essex, where they became much-respected members of the community: at a time when the franchise was very limited, Frank, his father and three brothers all had the vote.

Silcock was not qualified by birth or residence for a first-class county and most of his 41 first-class matches were for representative sides. He made his first-class debut at Lord’s in 1864 for the United England XI, one of the by then rather disunited professional touring sides that dominated cricket in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1868 he and Willsher bowled unchanged for England in a 92-run win against MCC. He played eight matches for the Players of the South against the Gentlemen of the South and 23 for sides representing the South, mostly against the North.

³⁶⁸ I deal with him in much more detail in PEML Research paper no. 7, May 2021. ‘Universally respected throughout Essex’: Frank Silcock (1838-1897).

³⁶⁹ *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 20 January 1876.

³⁷⁰ James Round papers [ERO D/DR F55-6].

³⁷¹ This paragraph based on WHO’s who of cricketers.

Between 1868 and 1874 Silcock played seven times for the Players against the Gentlemen, although it was the period when the young WG Grace was in the ascendancy and he never found himself on the winning side. His first appearance in the fixture coincided with Round's last, and CE Green was in the opposition three times. In 1868 at the Oval Silcock took 7 for 132 but had little support and the Gentlemen won by an innings. In 1869 he took five wickets and hit 56 and 40, and at Lord's his 5 for 35 meant that 'the Gentlemen were very hard put to get the 98 runs required in their last innings'.

Silcock's career came when few people were able to make a living as professional cricketers. On the 1861 census he was, like his father, listed in Chipping Ongar as a saddler. CE Green recalled that Silcock obtained his coaching post at Uppingham on the recommendation of the usher and sub-warden Rev. William James Earle, whose father was rector of Ongar. From 1866 to 1869 he was nominally the landlord of the Chequers in Maldon, although in practice his wife Mary Ann probably ran the pub, while he earned money from cricket engagements. In 1871 he was back in Ongar High Street as a horse collar maker. In 1881 he was the only Essex cricketer to give the game as his occupation, but not as a player: he was running a warehouse at Ongar and was said to be a 'Cricket Outfitter', although he continued with a saddlery in the same premises³⁷².

Aged 22, Silcock became a member of the Ongar branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters, a friendly society founded in 1834³⁷³. From 1882 to 1891 'Brother Silcock' was honorary treasurer, a post which required accounting skills and trustworthiness. In the days before the welfare state, the organisation paid out almost £200 in sick pay (about £26,000 today) and another £100 on other benefits, probably funeral expenses.

As a player Silcock often earned match-fees such as the five guineas he was paid to appear for Staveley in Derbyshire against the All-England XI³⁷⁴. Five guineas or five pounds was a fairly standard fee for a professional whose services were in demand, and compares favourably with the twelve shillings or so that would have been the weekly wage of an Essex agricultural labourer. In 1866 Silcock played for the successful but short-lived Essex County Club that was based at Colchester. He and fellow-professional William Marten bowled out Surrey Club & Ground for 39 to set up a ten-wicket win, and in the return fixture his 114 was more than the two Surrey innings put together. For the scratch Essex team that in 1872 beat MCC Club & Ground by nine wickets, Silcock took 10 for 84 in the match and scored 56 in his one innings. The Essex wicket-keeper in that game was James Round.

On 5 and 6 May 1876 Frank and his cousin Joseph Silcock of Matching Green played in the first match on the ground that he had recommended, but the Gentlemen of Essex including Round beat the Players by an innings and five runs. On 18 and 19 July Round and Silcock played together in the Hertfordshire match that resulted in an easy victory for 'the Knights of the willow from t'other side of the Lea'. On 4 August the *Chelmsford Chronicle* had reported a county match in which 'Mr J. Round was as usual the "lead" for Essex. F. Silcock bowled unchanged (31 overs) in the first innings and

372 His cousin Joseph was a harness-maker, the Hertfordshire and Essex fast-medium bowler Seth Smart was a "Cabinet Maker & Upholsterer", and the young Henry Pickett was a clerk.

373 The society's local branches are termed 'courts', rather than 'lodges' as in other friendly societies. They were named after the law courts of the [royal forests](#), and performed the Ancient Ritual of the Society. [Wikipedia.]

374 SISSONS, p64.

almost in the second'. A week later, Essex lost by just five runs to MCC at Lord's, with Round making a fifty and Silcock doing much of the bowling.

On 11 August the *Chronicle* previewed

A cricket match and garden party at Braxted Park. The services of F. Silcock the well-known professional had been secured for the occasion, while Mr. Round, as a matter of course, was the Wicket-Keeper for the Braxted team.

Braxted Park near Maldon was the seat of the Du Cane family which had been to the fore in the 1865-6 club, and Charles Du Cane was one of several gentlemen who wrote to the 1876 meeting expressing support for the new venture. It was 'a matter of course' that the amateur played when he wished but the professional only if the amateur wanted him, although Silcock's services were in some demand and had to be 'secured'. One game, for example, was played by 'Gentlemen of Essex with F. Silcock'. There was also a tendency for the gentlemen to cream off the interesting bits such as batting and wicket-keeping, leaving the players to do the donkey-work of stock bowling.

In Essex's generally rather disappointing 1877 season, the 38-year-old Silcock contributed several fine performances. In Hertfordshire's innings win at Hitchin, he 'bowled very well for five wickets', and in the return at Brentwood he scored 63 not out, though Essex again lost heavily. At Lord's against MCC & Ground, 'Silcock played in something like his old form for 57, and it was solely through his free hitting that an innings defeat was averted'. His match return of 8 for 63 against Norfolk and his 39 not out against Suffolk were both in winning causes.

In 1878 a benefit was organised for 'one of the worthiest fellows and best all-round cricketers that ever won cheers from a cricketing audience'. A match on 12-14 September was planned for Brentwood but eventually played at Witham, between the United South of England XI and Eighteen Gentlemen of Essex with Two Professionals. Even though WG Grace played for the USEE and took no fewer than 26 wickets, the game ended as 'a draw greatly in favour of the Eighteen'. MCC headed the list of subscriptions received by the Hon. Sec. of Essex County Cricket Club, though I have found no record of how much was raised.

A month after his benefit, Silcock was 40 years old, but he continued to play an important part in the advance of Essex cricket. In a low-scoring win against Suffolk in 1879, he made 39 and 14, and in the second innings took 4 wickets for 3 runs. In 1880 he took 12 wickets in a then rare defeat of Hertfordshire and 13 in another narrow victory over Suffolk, and 8 for 46 in MCC's first innings at Lord's. He took 34 wickets in 1882 and 24 in 1883. In 1884, aged 46, he was the county's most successful bowler with 48 wickets at 15 apiece, and at the Oval in Essex's first match against first-class opposition he hit 56 in the first innings. In 1885 he once again enjoyed the Surrey match, although Essex lost by an innings: 'The veteran Silcock bowled with success for Essex. His last 17 [4-ball] overs realised six wickets at a cost of only 9 runs'. In the absence of the first minute-book we do not know the basis on which he was paid at that time, but for the 1888 season he had a contract at £3 per week. Because he was a cricket outfitter by trade, the committee also decided that he, rather than the head groundsman EC Freeman, should sell cricket materials on the ground.

In October 1888 Silcock was 50 years old and the committee decided not to renew his playing contract. Instead they nominated him at Lord's as a county umpire, and from 1889 to 1892 he stood in 36 first-class games. In June 1892 they voted to increase umpires' fees from five guineas to six but reversed their decision two months later, CE

Green seconding the motion. This disappointment may be partly why Silcock chose not to stand as an umpire in the following season although he continued to show his loyalty to Essex, scouting for likely men to play for the county.

In March 1894 Silcock opened new and improved premises, now 203-5 High Street, next to the Budworth Hall. He was listed on Kelly's as a harness-maker and the only cricket outfitter in Essex. The opening of his new shop must have been bitter-sweet for Frank, because his beloved wife Mary Ann had died on 19 December 1893 aged only 49, and some of his friends believed he never fully recovered from the blow. Having been exceptionally fit for a man in his mid-fifties, he was soon ailing and died on 26 May 1897, aged 58. Describing himself as a saddler and cricket outfitter, he left the remarkable figure of £1161, estimated to be worth £150,000 today.

Green at his testimonial dinner in 1896 paid tribute to his

dear old friend Frank Silcock who is one of the best all-round cricketers produced by Essex or any other county. (Applause.) Silcock and I have played together many scores of times; he was one of my earliest friends, and I wish we could put the clock back twenty-five years, and both be able to play as we did and help our county. If our present professionals will only follow the example set by Frank Silcock they will be the most obliging and best professionals in Essex, and we shall not run any danger of hearing of strikes and dissensions such as we hear of in other counties. (Applause).

Green undoubtedly had an autocratic attitude towards the professionals, but he was no snob. In Silcock's case he happily referred to a friendship that presumably began when they were schoolboy and coach at Uppingham. In November 1896 Green proposed to the committee that Silcock should have a benefit in 1898 but he died before this could happen. The flags at the County Ground flew at half-mast³⁷⁵ and the club's annual report recorded the 'death of Frank Silcock who for many years was associated with the county club...and who was most deservedly and universally respected throughout Essex'.

'An excellent judge of the game': Harry Pickett (1862-1907)

One of the first to benefit from the new system of contracts was Henry Pickett, usually known as Harry. Born at Stratford in Essex on 26 March 1862, he was described on the 1881 census as a clerk and worked at the Beckton Gas Works, whose cricket club was one of the strongest in the county. During that season, persuaded by a Mr Fenner who was a keen supporter of the club, he became the professional there. Playing for Beckton on the then county ground in 1881, he took 7 for 1 against Brentwood CC. He was immediately drafted into the Essex team and by the end of the season he had taken 48 wickets for Essex. In a match against Suffolk in 1883 he took 16 wickets for 80. In 1884 he was taken on to the MCC ground staff at Lord's and became the first Essex professional to appear in Lillywhite's Leading Cricketers section. Apart from a loss of form in 1888, he was a mainstay of the county's bowling for seventeen years. Against Leicestershire in July 1889 Pickett took 11 for 35, and a month later had 12 for 78 in a win by 135 runs against a strong Surrey team. He was rewarded with a collection on the ground that raised £26/8/- 'which was made up to £31 by Mr Buxton'³⁷⁶. In 1891 he was listed on the census as a professional cricketer, and *Cricket* commented: 'Strong in build and with great power – he weighs 13st. and stands 5 ft. 8 in. – Pickett is the

³⁷⁵ Times 28 May 1897 p13.

³⁷⁶ [Scores and biographies](#) says it was for the Leicestershire match, although Pickett's own recollection and the contemporary LSE&I report said that it was for the Surrey game.

type for a fast bowler.’ Lillywhite’s often carried over its comments on individual cricketers from year to year, and from 1889 to >>> it noted that Pickett ‘never bowled better than in the past season’.

Though it would have been unthinkable for Pickett as a professional to lead the full county side, he was greatly respected by the amateurs who ran the club and often captained scratch sides in friendly games. The match that marked the official opening of the Leyton Ground on the Easter Monday Bank Holiday in 1886 was Mr CE Green’s XI v H Pickett’s XI. In order to make the fixture more attractive, Green imported famous names such as the big hitters CI Thornton and George Bonnor, but Pickett took 6 for 29 in the first innings and his side won easily³⁷⁷. Pickett also captained teams in pre-season trial matches. In 1894 the opposition was led by the club captain, Bunny Lucas, and in 1895 by the Secretary, OR Borradaile.

In the early 1890s Pickett was joined by Walter Mead and Charles Kortright, and Essex had a powerful bowling attack that greatly advanced their bid for first-class status. One of the most amazing games in that period was against Hampshire in 1891 when, unusually, Pickett and Kortright starred with the bat, adding 244 in less than two hours, and Essex went on to win by an innings. In 1894 he took only eleven wickets and his career seemed near its end but in 1895, in the first innings of Essex’s second home Championship match ever, he took all 10 wickets for 32 – a performance that has never been bettered for the county. A record crowd of 7000 ‘accorded him quite an ovation, and what was more practical a collection of nearly £20 as a memento of the occasion’³⁷⁸. As so often with Essex record-holders, his efforts were to no avail and Essex lost by 75 runs.

Pickett’s county captain, Hugh Owen, described him as ‘An excellent judge of the game’. That thoughtful approach was revealed in his 1895 interview for *Cricket* magazine’s *Chats on the Cricket Field* series, which was prefaced by a somewhat patronising introduction:

Although the success which has been attained by Essex is chiefly due to a few enthusiastic gentlemen who have spent time and money in furthering the interests of their county, all their energy would have proved useless had it not been for the steady and consistent work of the cricketers who have been a mainstay of the team for years. Of these Pickett is one of the most prominent.

Doubtless inspired by his experience of bowling in harness first with Francis Bishop and then with Charles Kortright, Pickett explained a crucial difference between amateur and professional fast bowlers:

An amateur can take a long run without hurting himself but a professional who has to bowl day after day at the nets, as well as in matches, is likely to wear himself out soon if he takes a very long run.

In fact Bishop and Kortright did wear themselves out, for both had effective careers of only seven years whereas Pickett had seventeen. Kortright in the *Daily Chronicle* put a counter-argument: ‘Professional fast bowlers have an advantage over amateurs in that they are constantly in practice’³⁷⁹. It was certainly true that the pros bowled more, a continuation of their old position as servants to the gentlemen: by about 1910, they

³⁷⁷ The other four first innings wickets were taken by George Burton, who later had umpiring problems with WG Grace.

³⁷⁸ LsE&I 8 Jun 1895.

³⁷⁹ Cited, SALE, p80.

constituted two-thirds of the average county side but sent down four-fifths of the overs³⁸⁰.

Pickett thought that 'Essex came to the front after the high-scoring defeat by Surrey' in 1884 when 'Mr CE Green began to take a great interest in the county'. Professionals often felt more solidarity with their own amateurs than other clubs' professionals, and Pickett thought that Essex's success owed much to the generosity of Green and CM Tebbut, and the play of Lucas and Owen. The expression is somewhat *Boy's Own*, but the sentiment seems genuine:

Our present captain Mr. Owen is a rare good sportsman and if he has a fault it is that it is that he is a little too considerate when we make a mistake in the field...The county itself has never paid talent money, but for all that it is the best little club in the world to play for, and the professionals are as well off as they would be in the richest counties. Mr Green and Mr Tebbut pay £1 for a 50 and 10/- for five wickets. The crowd at Leyton is very good to us professionals and any good performance is sure to be recognised...

Even for a popular and successful player like Pickett, such windfalls were rare and cricket was not a secure occupation. In 1893 he was forced to ask Essex for a loan of £10 which was agreed, but in November 1894 his request for a benefit was turned down because 'the Committee decided after some discussion that they were not in a position financially to grant such a request'. Despite his 10 for 32 against Leicestershire he was again refused in 1895, but at the third time of asking in 1896 they agreed. According to Home Gordon, 'it had been arranged that Silcock should have a benefit, but he generously gave way to Pickett, who for many years did yeoman service for the county'³⁸¹. The annual report noted:

Pickett. During the summer a Benefit match for him has been decided upon at his request, and the Committee trust that his long and useful service to the County will be duly recognised as it should be.

He was to have the match against Hampshire on 23-25 August 1897, 'Pickett to pay all the expenses of the match and to take all the receipts'.

'Only amateurs were provided with a lunch on match-days,' commented John Arlott (p65). 'Professionals went to the bar where they were provided with more than was good for them.' Pickett was probably a victim of this practice, for by 1897 he had become overweight and lost much of his venom. In May he took 6 for 88 in the first innings against MCC but in the season overall took only 21 wickets at an average of over 30. Tragically, his mother collapsed and died at Liverpool Street Station on the night before the vital championship game against Lancashire at Leyton. He 'yielded to the pressure put on him to play' but took no wickets and the crowd called for Kortright to replace him in the attack. That was to be his last match for Essex. In their last two games, including his benefit match, he was replaced by Herman de Zoete, a member of a wealthy Essex banking family and later a son-in-law of James Round. The *Leytonstone Express & Independent* mentioned but did not give an explanation for the change. It was not a case of saving money by preferring a useless amateur to a seasoned professional, because De Zoete had taken 35 wickets in nine matches for Cambridge University and Pickett had taken only eight in his last nine for Essex. Furthermore, De Zoete bowled leg-spin rather than medium-fast so could have been an asset on dry end of season pitches, but took only three in two games for Essex. Wisden's view that he would not >>> for his subsequent first-class career was limited to seven rather less

380 VAMPLEW, p209.

381 VCH Essex II, p602.

successful appearances for Cambridge the following year, after which he was lost to business and golf.

Pickett's benefit was disrupted by rain. Only 50 minutes play was possible on the second day and on the third the wicket was moved, Wisden suggesting that but for the benefit the game would have been abandoned. Only £150 was collected, although he did have the consolation of being presented with

...a handsome timepiece, the result of a penny subscription by the schoolboys of Essex, and with a miniature set of stumps, bats and balls in gold and silver, purchased with the proceeds of a halfpenny subscription from the boys of Leyton, West Ham etc.

The gifts are an indication of the popularity that cricket had among boys, and perhaps that there was something of a divide between the old county and the new London suburbs.

After that, things for poor Henry Pickett only got worse. With new young players coming through, there was no thought of renewing his contract. From 1899 to 1901 he was a first-class umpire and for some years coached at Clifton College. By 1907 his money had gone, and he drowned himself in the sea off Aberavon. His wife died within six months and his three children were not provided for. Sadly, the 'best little club in the world' apparently did nothing for the man whose 'long and useful service' had ended only ten years earlier. There is no record in the Essex minutes that he or anyone else applied to the county for help, nor of his death.

The minutes give the impression that the committee were unfeeling towards their professionals, but sometimes it was just that their actions were not recorded there, as in the case of John Herbert Inns. He was born at Writtle in 1876, the son of a grocer and tea dealer whose wife took over the shop after his death. John was a good footballer and cricketer who joined the ground staff in 1896, and on the 1901 census was described as a professional cricketer. His 'bright nature and unassuming manner' made him popular with club members and professional colleagues alike. Although he did not fulfil his early promise as a batsman sufficiently to establish a regular place in the first team, he achieved a reputation as 'a remarkably safe man in the field'. On 3 June 1905 at Leyton, fielding for Surrey as a substitute, he held a brilliant catch to dismiss Gillingham and provoke a collapse that gave Surrey just enough time for an exciting win. Four days afterwards Inns was taken ill at a Club & Ground match in Ealing and his colleagues advised him to go straight home to Writtle, but his condition rapidly deteriorated and he died a week later of acute diabetes. On the news of his death the flags at the County Ground were lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect, evidence that such gestures were not limited to amateurs like Johnny Douglas. His funeral was a moving occasion attended by many local people and representatives of the clubs he was involved with, including eight Essex professionals and the Secretary, OR Borradaile. There were over thirty floral tributes including one from the Essex first team, one from his fellow-professionals, and one from the committee.

Lancashire imports: James Burns and the Littlewoods

CE Green played most of his first-class county cricket for Middlesex but, before the rules on qualification were tightened up, turned out once for Sussex where his parents had a holiday home. Always the traditionalist, he told the 1887 AGM that 'he was against the system of importing cricketers, but as others did it, they were bound to do so as well'. Several cricketers therefore embarked on their two-year period of qualification for the county. Among them were Green's old friend Bunny Lucas, who

moved to Chelmsford to qualify by residence but continued meanwhile to assist Middlesex - seldom a practicable option for a professional in similar circumstances. The first professional recruit was probably John Jones, who played for Essex from 1884 to 1889 and for Hertfordshire from 1892 onwards. He may have done two-year residential qualifications for both, but there is no way of confirming this. He was born in Birmingham in 1858, but when I checked the 1881 and 1891 censuses none of the John Joneses born in Birmingham around the right time was obviously him.

Two other professionals were James Burns and George Littlewood, who were both recruited from Lancashire³⁸².

James Burns was born in Liverpool on 20 June 1866³⁸³. He was said to have been the brother of the trade union leader and politician John Burns, but the 1871 census disproves this conclusively. John is listed in Battersea as the 12-year-old son of Alexander and Barbara Burns, along with brothers Alexander and David aged 10 and 7, all born in Battersea.

A right-hand bat and slow left-arm bowler, Burns played non-first-class cricket for Lancashire from 1884 to 1886. In Lancashire's crushing defeat of Essex at Old Trafford in 1886, he 'scored well' in making 32 with seven fours. Evidently the visitors were impressed, for at the end of the season they offered him a contract. Like George Littlewood, he was allowed to make his debut for Essex in 1887, before completing his residential qualification. I have found no explanation for this but Lancashire were the first northern first-class county to encourage the development of Essex cricket by granting them home and away fixtures, so it is possible that they gave special permission.

Burns and Littlewood were initially employed as ground bowlers at £3 a week, and in the pre-season trial match opened the batting for the Players of Essex against the Gentlemen. In the games against Derbyshire and Somerset in 1888 Burns was the only professional, indicating that the amateur influence was still strong. On 1 June 1889 the *Leytonstone Express & Independent* reported 'remarkable scoring by Burns' who for Essex Club & Ground against London Hospital carried out his bat for 261 runs, then the largest individual score made on the County Ground. In 1890 his aggregate of 329 runs was the county's highest, and it included their only century.

James Burns was quite a showman. Lillywhite's annual noted in 1889 and 1890 that 'if he will not play to the gallery he will make a really first-class batsman'. He became a friend of 'the Prime Minister of Mirth', George Robey, and EHD Sewell thought that he 'ought to have been a clown by profession'. According to Sewell, Essex in a match at Leyton in 1891 needed only a few runs to beat Derbyshire and Burns was sent in to knock them off. George Porter, a tall fast-medium bowler, was among the opposition and Burns, who was only 5ft 4in, walked to the wicket wearing Porter's tail-coat which trailed behind him along the ground. Burns was hauled up before the committee and Green began to reprimand him, but he put on such a solemn expression that the meeting could do nothing but dissolve in laughter and the matter went no further. It's a good story but, alas, almost certainly apocryphal: Sewell is not a reliable witness because he was in India at the time it was supposed to have happened, and it is not borne out by

382 Thanks to Don Ambrose for giving me much of my material about Burns and Littlewood.

383 Section on Burns drawn chiefly from: COLDHAM, James D. The other Burns. IN Cricket Society Journal, vol.7 no.4, Spring 1976, p34-8.

the written evidence, for according to the scorebook it was Bunny Lucas who knocked off the runs and there is no mention of the incident in the minutes.

In 1890 Essex found Burns a place on the Lord's ground staff and he undertook to retain his residential qualification for Essex. He was a good footballer as well as a cricketer, and the strictness of the rules is shown by the fact that in 1890-1 Essex 'agreed to play the rent of Burns's lodgings at Leyton whilst he was travelling backwards and forwards to the West Bromwich Albion'. The peril of following a career in both sports is shown by Lillywhite's report in 1890 that 'a football injury interfered with his fielding and bowling'. His football career between matches was not always that demanding, for it involved little more than gentle training - a brisk five-mile walk, complete with three-piece suit and watch-chain³⁸⁴. Lillywhite's for 1891 reported rumours that he was qualifying for Warwickshire, but that was probably because he was playing football in the county. In 1891-2 he appeared for a now defunct non-League club called London Caledonians much closer to Essex, but by 1894 his football had evidently fallen away completely, because he applied to the club for winter work although none was available.

Like all flannelled fools, James Burns experienced those twin impostors Triumph and Disaster. On 6 May 1895 against Warwickshire at Edgbaston he and the amateur George Higgins shared a partnership of 205 and made the first centuries scored for Essex in the Championship, but only a month later he suffered a fate that was all too common for professionals. After making only 1 and 3 in the return match against Warwickshire he was dropped in favour of Henry Preece, an amateur who played only one more game for the county. Restored to the side against Somerset at Taunton, Burns failed to contribute to Essex's mammoth 692, but still finished fourth in the county's championship averages.

By 1896 Essex were developing a powerful team. The young amateurs Fane, Perrin and Bull had all come into the side on merit and there was no place for Burns's rather inconsistent batting or his slow left-arm bowling. He appeared only once and at the end of the season the committee decided not to renew his contract. Burns continued to work at Lord's and played his last game for MCC in 1901, when he was living in St Marylebone and described on the census as a professional cricketer. In 1902 he became professional at Hampstead CC where he was described as 'an extraordinarily good coach'. Essex did not entirely forget about him, for in 1911 his one-year-old son died and the club donated £5 towards the funeral expenses. In 1911 he described himself as 'Professional Cricketer Lord's Cricket Ground' but was living with his family in two rooms at 49 Ravenshaw Street Hampstead, so perhaps he combined working for MCC and Hampstead. Between the wars they lived in four rooms along Ravenshaw Street at no.87, but he was working for the Post Office as a sorter and postman. He knocked five years off his age in 1921 and another four in 1939! When he died in 1957, his age correctly given as 91, his son proudly stated James's occupation as 'County Cricketer (Retired)'.

George William Littlewood was born in 1857 at Holmfirth in Yorkshire. On the 1881 census he was listed as a 'Woollen Shawl Weaver' living at Saddleworth, also in Yorkshire. He had summer contracts as a professional cricketer: in 1878-9 at Epworth in Lincolnshire, in 1880-2 at Friarmere in Yorkshire and in 1883-5 across the Pennines at Moorside near Oldham³⁸⁵. In 1885 he played three games as a wicket-keeper for Lancashire when Richard Pilling was unwell, claiming seven victims. Unlike batsmen

³⁸⁴ VAMPLEW, p 215.

³⁸⁵ Scores and biographies, XV, 236. .

and bowlers, wicket-keepers always have the problem that there is only room for one of them in a team and Littlewood could not displace the excellent Pilling. Littlewood therefore moved to Essex and joined the ground staff in 1887, when the committee also found him an engagement 'where he could be available for the county matches if required'.

The incumbent when Littlewood arrived was the professional John Bastow (1850-1927), a sound wicket-keeper and 'happy-go-lucky' batsman³⁸⁶. From 1874-7 Bastow played five matches for Middlesex but only as cover for the amateur Montague Turner, who in the 1870s was 'one of the best wicket-keepers in England'³⁸⁷. Possibly recruited by his Middlesex contemporary CE Green, Bastow made his Essex debut in 1886 and claimed seven victims in his first innings, although as the county team were playing 22 colts that was not quite the achievement it might appear. In 1881 he described himself as a boot manufacturer and there is no record of his having a contract with Essex, so he may have preferred to retain the security of his trade and play on a match-fee basis.

In the 1887 trial match Littlewood opened the bowling for the 22 and took a wicket with his first ball at Leyton, but later 'Mr Francis and Burns trundled and Littlewood kept wicket. The good policy of the appointment to the sticks was soon displayed, as almost immediately Freeman was run out cleverly by him.' Bastow retained his place as wicket-keeper while Littlewood played the occasional game as a batsman, but in June 1888 the *Walthamstow Guardian*, reporting on the match at Leyton against Leicestershire, commented: 'A word of praise is due to Littlewood, who kept wicket in the absence of Bastow and made three capital catches'.

In April 1889 Bastow wrote to the committee resigning as a professional cricketer and Littlewood took over as wicket-keeper. Bastow turned amateur and played three games purely as a batsman but scored only 34 runs in five innings and did not appear for the first team again, though at the age of 54 he turned out for the Club & Ground XI and top-scored with 64 in an easy win against the powerful Tottenham CC. In 1891 and 1901 he was listed as the licensee of a pub in Forest Gate, 'working on own account', and by 1911 he was doing a similar job in St. Pancras.

Lillywhite's annual described Littlewood as 'a very good bat, improved very much towards the end of the [1888] season', and at Leyton in August he hit 200 for Essex Club & Ground against Colchester & District. In 1889 he claimed on average 1.47 victims per innings, and was second only behind Pilling in a list published by *Cricket*. Ironically, Littlewood could perhaps have stayed with Lancashire, for Pilling contracted inflammation of the lungs after a football match in 1889-90 and never played for the county again. He died early in 1891.

Littlewood may at first have taken digs and not moved his family down until he had secured his place in the team, for he did not appear in Kelly's Leyton directory until 1889-90. He was then at 36 Grove (now Byron) Road and later moved to Addison Cottage next to Breeden's bat shop, all very close to the ground. The 1891 census shows him with his wife and baby son living in digs at his native Holmfirth, which may reflect his desire for the boy to be born in Yorkshire and thus qualified for them, although only one of the other six children was born in the county. Meanwhile his

386 LsE&I 4 Sep 1886

387 WISDEN obituary. Statistics suggest that this was a valid judgment, for his record of 79 catches and 64 stumpings in 53 matches would not disgrace a top-class professional. Educated at Cheltenham, Turner was a solicitor who served on the MCC and Middlesex committees.

widowed mother, described as ‘living on own means’, was at Addison Cottage looking after the children.

On 11 August 1891 there was a proposal that ‘Littlewood’s engagement during the summer months would not be renewed on the same grounds as last year’³⁸⁸. The reasons are not given but it may be no coincidence that having played regularly for three years he had just been dropped from the side. Lillywhite described him in the 1889 and 1890 seasons as ‘quite among the first flight of keepers’, whereas in 1891 they said that he only ‘kept wicket on a few occasions’. He in fact scored runs and made catches and stumpings in all the first six matches of the season, but on 16-18 July in a narrow defeat by Hampshire scored 0 and 3 and claimed no victims. The *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, which often named and shamed those who missed chances, did not mention any lapses and it would in any case have been harsh to drop him after one poor match, so his omission may have been for disciplinary reasons. Littlewood did not play again in 1891 but was nevertheless appointed as a ground bowler for 1892, and was one of three professionals to represent the ground staff at CD Buxton’s funeral. However, he played only five times in 1892, when he claimed a mere two victims and his batting fell away so completely that he scored only 16 runs in eight innings.

With early scorebooks it is often difficult to work out who kept wicket, but there clearly was no regular arrangement to replace Littlewood. Essex did not bring in a capable club player such as Edward Pracy, who kept wicket for Leyton even when Littlewood was in the side, but seem rather to have found a makeshift from within the team. In the two games after Littlewood was first dropped, AS Johnston, a hard-hitting amateur bat and good field who twice topped the Essex averages, appeared as ‘EN Annan’. This pseudonym was not much of a secret, for the Essex scorebook in their innings shows Johnston’s real name with EN Annan written above it in brackets. His son, Arthur Annan Johnston, was born around this time, so perhaps there was some sort of family in-joke. ‘Annan’ held two catches in each game, so it is possible that Johnston may have agreed to keep wicket but for some unknown reason preferred not to use his own name. The captain, Bunny Lucas, made one stumping against Derbyshire in 1891 and another against Warwickshire in 1892; in the Derbyshire game he also bowled so someone else must have taken over for a while. Later, in 1897, the regular wicket-keeper, Tom Russell, missed three matches through injury, and Lucas took over.

Littlewood left Essex after the 1892 season, for his last listing in Kelly’s was in 1892-3 and in 1893 Tom Russell established himself as first-choice wicket-keeper. There was, however, still a good living to be made in League cricket and Littlewood returned to the Moorside club. There he appeared alongside his sons Jesse and George Hubert who became slow-medium left-arm bowlers and joined the Lancashire staff. On the 1901 census all three men described themselves as professional cricketers, although they may well have had other occupations as well³⁸⁹. Certainly in 1911 the father was still living in Oldham, giving his trade as ‘iron plate moulder’.

388 The proposer was Mr J Conquest, possibly John Conquest who in 1891 was a mercantile clerk, living at Granville Lodge, Palmerston Road, Chigwell. The seconder was Charles Higgins who in 1891 was a tobacco broker, living at 5 Station Road Leyton. In 1898 he became Treasurer on the death of CM Tebbut. He was the father of George Frederick Higgins, who in 1895 shared Essex’s first championship double-century partnership century with Burns. Conquest and Higgins senior may have been protesting about some aspect of Littlewood’s work on the ground, but there is no way of being sure.

389 WILLIAMS, p176.

George Hubert Littlewood made a spectacular start to his first-class career. Called into the side for the last two matches of the 1902 season, when John Sharp was playing football for Everton, he took nine wickets against Leicestershire and 12 against the Australians. He appeared eleven times in 1903 and on 11 May 1904, the day before his 22nd birthday, took 2 for 7 against Leicestershire; there were, however, criticisms that 'he was too mechanical for a slow bowler' and he played no further first-class cricket. From 1906-9 George Hubert was professional with Accrington where he enjoyed much success with the ball but very little with the bat; 'Accrington were languishing in the lower reaches of the League [and] positive action was needed', so he was sacked.

There cannot have been room for two such similar bowlers in the Lancashire side, so **Jesse Littlewood** tried his luck with his father's old county. He joined the ground staff in 1903 and, while establishing his residential qualification, was employed as a ground bowler at 35/- a week. He modelled his style on that of Johnny Briggs and there were hopes that he might develop into an Essex Treasure to match Walter Mead, but he proved unable to bridge the gap between league and county cricket, which demanded more concentration, skill and fitness. He qualified in 1905 but, even though a dispute caused Mead to miss that season and Essex were desperately short of bowling, Littlewood played only one first team game and took no wickets in a rare win. At the end of the season his contract was not renewed and he too returned to Lancashire, where in 1908 he was recorded as being the professional at Royton.

Colonial imports

By the early twentieth century there was an increasing tendency for county clubs to import overseas players. CE Green believed passionately that this was harming the game, and in 1906 Essex proposed that residence qualification periods should be extended to five years for 'Colonial' players and to three years for English-qualified ones. MCC gave serious consideration to the suggestion but eventually it was rejected, to Green's great regret. The Essex committee were particularly opposed to the fact that the outstanding Australian all-rounder Frank Tarrant had since 1904 played for his adopted county of Middlesex as well as for his native state of Victoria. Ironically, Essex had pioneered the practice with the rather less successful importing of EHD Sewell from Indian domestic cricket (see above p>>>). Even in 1906 the New Zealander Daniel Reese, who went on to captain his country and become a leading cricket administrator there, played eight games for Essex; perhaps it was his being an amateur that explains their apparent double standards, or Tarrant's greater success that angered them so much.

In October 1907 Green proposed a motion to MCC on behalf of Essex that Tarrant should be prevented from playing in the county championship for Middlesex. AJ Webbe for MCC at their meeting undertook to cable Tarrant at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to stop playing for Victoria at once or lose his qualification for Middlesex. Three months later the rules were changed so that an Australian state was deemed to be a county and therefore no cricketer could play for both a county and a state. Some thought it harsh to disqualify Tarrant retrospectively but Green had no sympathy. He commented that the ruling would give Tarrant 'the chance to stop playing for Victoria' which he chose to do, because county cricket was more lucrative than state cricket. In 1914, after Green's resignation as chairman, the committee donated two guineas to Tarrant's benefit, and he by way of thanks hit his career-best score of 250 not out for Middlesex against Essex!

Harding Isaac ‘Sailor’ Young (1876-1964)

One of the most remarkable pre-war professionals was Harding Isaac Young, who was born a month after Essex County Cricket Club within sight of the ground that became its home. According to his unrelated namesake WJ Young, he was born at what a few years later became Breeden’s bat shop. This suggestion is borne out by the 1881 census, where his father was listed as an excavator and his mother as a general shopkeeper³⁹⁰. On the 1891 census he was listed as a printer but later he went into the Navy. In 1898 the gangling left-arm medium-pacer returned to Leyton to play for the Navy and was practising in the nets. He greatly impressed CE Green who at once bought him out of the service and put him on the professional staff. Pickett had just retired so, even though Mead, Kortright and Bull were in their prime, there was room for a fourth front-line bowler.

Although he was often nicknamed ‘Sailor’ Young, EHD Sewell said that he was known among his team-mates as ‘Doctor’, because he had been a doctor’s errand boy before going into the Navy. Sewell remembered him as ‘an amusing, cheery cove, everybody liked him. I can see him now with his pipe, which he always grasped by the bowl and pointed with the stem, prefacing any and every yarn he was about to spin with: “‘Ere.”’³⁹¹

Young soon established himself in the side but really made his name in 1899, when Kortright was out injured. At Leyton in May he and Mead, with a little help from Bull, bowled out a powerful Australian side for 144 and 73. Essex won by 126 runs and a collection on the ground raised over £46 for the two professionals. With 15 wickets against Warwickshire he bowled himself into the England team and in two Tests he took 12 Australian wickets. By the end of the season he had taken 139 wickets and a bright future for the 23-year-old seemed assured, but things were never as good again.

Young suffered from muscular rheumatism which limited his effectiveness, as did the shirt-front wickets that were a feature of Leyton from 1900 onwards. It was not an unusual affliction for cricketers obliged to play in the cold and damp conditions that can come at any time in an English so-called summer, and some died of it³⁹². (Long, glorious summers are another myth of the Edwardian golden age: 1903 and 1912 were among the wettest of the century.) From 1900 to 1903 Young played fairly regularly for Essex and each season took over 50 economical wickets. In winter he had the standard retainer of 25/-, working on the ground and sometimes carrying out special duties such as pavilion attendant. In 1904-5 he took only five wickets in four appearances and the annual report bemoaned ‘the entire loss of form by Young’, so for the winter of 1905 he was not re-engaged. In 15 matches in 1906-7 he took 33 wickets including a hat-trick against Leicestershire so the committee took him back on to the winter ground staff, but in 1908-10 he took just ten wickets in eight matches for Essex.

Early in 1911 Young toured the West Indies with MCC and took 25 wickets in nine games, which suggests that the climate benefited his rheumatism, without which he might have done much more for Essex. He listed himself on the census as a professional cricketer but, despite his overseas success, did not play for Essex in 1911. He wrote to ask for his keep during the winter and the committee granted him 10/- a week. His final appearance was against Surrey in the last match of 1912, when his one wicket was the

³⁹⁰ *Walthamstow Guardian*, 7 Apr 1961.

³⁹¹ *Overthrows*, p59.

³⁹² VAMPLEW, p229.

prized one of Jack Hobbs. When Green spotted him Young had been a battery instructor, and during the First World War he was an instructor in the 13th Hampshire Regiment.

In 1914 Young wrote to ask for a benefit and the committee granted it, despite his relatively short career, although it did not come until 1925. He chose the match against Somerset on 1-3 July and the annual report ‘hoped that it will be a great success and that members will do their utmost to help one who has achieved great things in the past’. Great though they were, most of them were 25 years in the past and it was a rather mystifying decision, which may have been explained in the missing minute-book. Several Essex professionals had their benefits in their final season but none had them more than ten years after retiring, although Frank Silcock would have done if he had not died. Unfortunately for Young, a resurgent Essex side proved far too strong for Somerset, and won in two days.

Young joined the Lord’s ground staff in 1899 and remained there for many years, playing 25 matches for MCC in England and 11 in the West Indies. From 1921 to 1931 he was a first-class umpire who stood in three Test matches and Sir Home Gordon commented that ‘his remarkable loquacity occasionally worried players, though he was regarded as sound’. In 1939 he was a cricket groundsman in Southend. His work in the services as an instructor indicates that he had considerable teaching skills, and he coached schoolboys almost until his death a few weeks short of his 89th birthday.

Chapter 14: ‘Cricket, like other diseases, runs in the blood’³⁹³ – the professional dynasties

Essex’s recruitment of contracted staff reinforced the trend, common with skilled working-class jobs in the nineteenth century, for professional cricket to develop hereditary tendencies. The staff included representatives of three families that had migrated from Lewisham, then administratively in Kent, now in south London. There they had already known one another for at least twenty-five years. Members of the Freeman, Brewer and Russell families were to play an immense part in Essex cricket for nearly half a century.

The Freemans

In the 1830s two brothers, William and John Thomas Freeman, moved from the Oxfordshire village of Great Haseley to Rushey Green, in the south of Lewisham. The London suburbs were growing and the brothers were probably in search of work. Lewisham remained fairly rural for a while and William worked all his life as a market gardener, but by 1841 John Thomas had become a bricklayer. In 1842 he married Mary Ann Sales, with whom he first had four girls and then five boys. In about 1857 the Freeman brothers moved with their families to Hanover Street in Lewisham village. Among their neighbours were a bricklayer named Joseph Brewer and his wife Margaret, who in 1868 had a son called Walter. According to the 1871 census, Mary Ann Freeman and Margaret Brewer were both born in Bromley, and so may have known one another even earlier. John Thomas and Mary Ann’s two youngest sons were Abraham George (1858-1936) and Edward Charles (1860-1939). Their third daughter was Mary Eliza, who in 1863 had a boy who was registered as Thomas Marychurch Freeman. The following year his parents married and he took the surname of his father,

³⁹³ Quote from an unidentified news cutting of 1902, describing the Littlewood family and provided by Don Ambrose.

a carpenter called Thomas Marychurch Russell. Young Tom became one of Essex's finest wicket-keepers.

By 1871 John Thomas and Mary Ann Freeman had moved to 8 Railway Terrace in the Ladywell area of Lewisham, but ten years they had died and their two youngest sons were married with young families of their own. Abraham married Louisa Mary Archer at St. Paul's Deptford on 14 July 1878, six weeks after the birth of their eldest son, George. Over the next five years they were to be found at several addresses in the Ladywell area, but by 1883 they had settled at 13 Railway Terrace. Edward married Emily Clark at Greenwich in 1878, and in 1881 was living at 18 Railway Terrace. Abraham followed his father's trade of bricklayer, while Edward became a stonemason. The Russells had moved into 8 Railway Terrace and the Brewers were nearby at 8 Mercy Terrace.

Just across a footbridge at Ladywell station, on the other side of the railway, the Lewisham Cricket Club had two very fine grounds, each with its own pavilion. There the Australian Aborigines played in 1868 and, according to Abraham's grandson Herbert, WG Grace also appeared there. The club's athletic meetings were 'numerously and fashionably attended, carriages extending halfway round the enclosure'. The club flourished from 1864 to the early 1880s, when the land was sold off for building. Strangely, I could find no reports of Lewisham CC's games in the local paper, the *Kentish Mercury*, and it would be beyond the scope of this work to research the club's history in any detail. But the future Essex stalwarts could well have learnt the game and worked as groundsmen there³⁹⁴.

Edward Charles Freeman (1860-1940)

The crucial change for the Freeman family came in 1885, when Essex County Cricket Club moved to Leyton. The new ground 'was not in a fit state for county cricket, and had to be relaid'³⁹⁵. The club needed a head groundsman, and the man appointed was Edward Charles Freeman, who sometimes reversed his forenames. It would be fascinating to know how a 24-year-old from Lewisham with no obvious qualifications persuaded Essex that he would be the right man for the job. When Surrey needed a new groundsman in 1878 they advertised in the sporting press, and Essex may well have done something similar. Freeman would probably have been interviewed by CE Green and the treasurer, JJ Read, but unfortunately the relevant minute-book is missing. Perhaps Edward learnt the necessary skills by helping his uncle William in his work as a market gardener. Within four years, his brother Abraham, his nephew Tom Russell and his friend Walter 'Bung' Brewer had joined him on the staff. It seems likely that, long before the days of equal opportunities employment legislation, Edward used his influence to help them obtain jobs.

Certainly in appointing EC Freeman Essex made the right decision, for mutual respect between employee and employer continued for over thirty years. On 19 November 1889 the committee gave him permission to undertake a contract for laying down a new ground at Denmark Hill, two miles west of his old home at Lewisham, provided that he employed as many of the cricket staff as possible. Winter employment was a major problem for cricketers, because many London workers were seasonally employed and

³⁹⁴ Lewisham and Deptford in Old Photographs p.76 (Alan Sutton, 1990). Around Lewisham and Deptford. p.69 (Sutton Publishing, 2005). Both by John Coulter, to whom thanks for pointing out these photos.

³⁹⁵ VCH Essex II, p600.

work was hard to come by. This stipulation by the committee suggests concern for the welfare of the players who, unlike the ground staff, were not employed all year round. Evidently Freeman's work was satisfactory, because the club captain Cyril Digby Buxton wrote to suggest that he should be employed to make the new ground at Hackney Wick for the Eton Mission. Leave was granted, with the same proviso that the cricket staff should also be used. On 19 August 1890 the committee generously agreed to give Freeman 'a gratuity of 2 guineas for his services in connexion with the Australian match', a first-class game between the tourists and Cambridge University Past & Present on 7-9 August. He began at 30s a week but when in 1897 he wrote to ask for a rise to 35s it was granted without further discussion – by no means an automatic response to such a request. When JH Douglas, father of Johnny, moved from Clapton to Wanstead in 1900, he employed Freeman to supervise the complete relaying of the club wicket³⁹⁶.

Most ground staff were also useful cricketers, and from 1887 to 1896 Freeman played for Essex as a middle order batsman and occasional bowler. He made several half-centuries, but as the Essex side improved he played less often. After the 1889 season Lillywhite observed of him: 'good bat and capital field; his ground duties prevented his playing much'. Being on the ground, he sometimes he came in as a late replacement, as in 1893 against Yorkshire when AS Johnston had to drop out at the last minute. In the second innings he scored 41 not out, an 'exceedingly good display' in which he was assisted by his nephew Tom Russell in averting an innings defeat. In 1894 he and Russell both played in Essex's inaugural first-class match. On the 1891 census he described himself as a professional cricketer but in 1901, having retired as a player, he was listed as 'Supervisor, County Cricket Ground'. Like Hugh Owen and OR Borradaile, who described themselves respectively as Captain and Secretary of Essex County Cricket Club, he seems to have been rather proud of his connection with Essex.

Even when he had been in post for more than a decade, Freeman was not above taking advice, although on one famous occasion his misunderstanding of it proved disastrous. Early in the generally dry 1899 season the committee complained because Essex lost several home matches on under-prepared pitches. Freeman consulted Sam Apted, the groundsman at the Oval where the pitches were excellent, and he advised him to apply a liquid mixture 'three days before the match'. The Essex man applied the mixture on each of the three days rather than just on the third day before, and the pitch was ruined. Essex were bowled out for 37, Surrey won by nine wickets in two days, and the committee were even more dissatisfied. Freeman learnt from his mistake and by 1901 had gone to the other extreme, Essex drawing seven of their eleven home games. Sydney Pardon suggested in Wisden that the Leyton pitch was 'so superlatively good that it was almost impossible to get through four innings in three days' and 'perhaps the ground keeper should be instructed to follow the old methods'. Edward Charles Freeman soon became such an institution that the minutes invariably used his surname only, even when there were others of the tribe on the staff.

Edward John Freeman (1880-1964)

One of the Freemans was EC's son Edward John, who in June 1900 came on to the ground staff at £1 a week. Each year his weekly wage increased by a shilling, until he reached what appears to have been a maximum of 25s a week. From 1902 to 1910 he was also a ground bowler. Between 1904 and 1912 he played 55 times for Essex as a

³⁹⁶ LEMMON, Douglas, p11.

middle-order batsman and occasional wicket-keeper and bowler, but he never became a fixture in the side. He appeared 23 times in 1907 and hit four fifties but even so scored only 569 runs at 16.26. October 1910 was not a good time for the family, because EJ Freeman, his brother-in-law Bill Reeves, and his cousin Edward Russell were three of the four members of the ground staff who were sacked in one of Essex's all-too-frequent economy drives. Although EJ was selected for Essex against Derbyshire at Leyton in 1912, the game was washed out and he did not get on to the field.

Early in 1911 EJ Freeman accepted a post at Sherborne School as cricket coach and head groundsman, describing himself on the census simply as 'professional cricketer'. The committee gave him a testimonial (reference) for which he wrote to thank them, stating that he was starting a residential qualification with 'Dorsetshire'. He played for them in the school holidays from 1913 to 1920, reappearing in 1928 to play two games at Sherborne School. He seems to have inspired the same kind of slightly patronising respect that his father had in Leyton: the Sherborne Pilgrims were a travelling Old Boys' team, and a report of their 1928 tour stated that 'we left Sherborne at 9am on Tuesday for a 50-mile run to Tiverton by car, our baggage going by lorry under the command of our umpire, the ever faithful E.J. Freeman'³⁹⁷.

EJ Freeman played his last two Dorset matches alongside his son, also Edward John. EJ junior (1905-1993) continued the family tradition, playing for Dorset with his brother Douglas Percy (1916-2003), who also had one match for Kent. Remarkably, both boys were awarded the MBE, Edward for his service as Town Clerk of Sherborne from 1936 to 1974³⁹⁸, and Douglas in recognition of ten years' service with the UK Warning & Monitoring Organisation as Chief Warning Officer for Bristol³⁹⁹.

In 1917 EJ Freeman was called up so his father was given leave to go to Sherborne and coach the boys until EJ was able to resume his duties. The committee gave EC Freeman a weekly retainer of 5/- but the school offered him a permanent position which he took. Essex accepted his resignation with regret and wished him success in his new appointment. On the 1921 census EC and EJ were both listed as cricket coaches at Sherborne School, living in separate cottages in the school grounds. In 1939 the whole family were living at the appropriately named Cricket Lodge in the nearby town of Westbury: EJ was an athletics outfitter and special constable, his daughter Alice worked in a sports shop and EC was a groundsman (retired). EC and his wife Emily had celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary the previous year.

Although Essex had in 1936 to turn down on financial grounds EC's request for a testimonial, they did not forget about him. In 1930 they consulted him about the preparation of the festival grounds at Chelmsford and Clacton. In the spring of 1939 the committee initially decided that a proposed festival match at Leyton in 1940 would be 'inadvisable' but consulted 78-year-old 'Mr Freeman', who advised them that his beloved old ground could be brought up to scratch. After his death later that year, the club sent a letter of sympathy and a wreath to the family.

Bill Reeves

EC Freeman lived next to the ground at 10 Richmond Terrace, an end-of-terrace house later known as 563 High Road. It was more or less a tied cottage, and Freeman was rather at the beck and call of the committee. After deciding to ban cycles from the

³⁹⁷ Report by BWB Clarke, found on Sherborne School website in 2003.

³⁹⁸ Information from Mrs V Holt, Town Clerk of Sherborne in 2003.

³⁹⁹ Derek Carlaw's *A to Z of Kent Cricketers* on the ACS website, May 2020.

ground, for example, they agreed that he would look after them at 'Freeman's cottage'. What he and his family thought of this arrangement is not recorded, although they may well have been allowed to charge for the service. Sometimes a young member of the ground staff lodged with them, perhaps so they could make a little money from rent or because the club billeted him on them. In 1891 their lodger was Charles H. Bull, a 21-year-old ground bowler from Derbyshire, and in 1901 it was William Reeves. Bull never made the grade at first-class level and left in 1894, which is when Reeves joined the ground staff. Reeves was born in Cambridge, the son of a railway carriage examiner. He therefore needed a residential qualification, which he may have begun in 1895 by replacing Bull as the Freemans' lodger. Certainly he was playing for the Club & Ground and Leyton teams, and he made his Essex debut in 1897.

The Freeman dynasty was further extended when EC Freeman's eldest daughter Emily Henrietta married Bill Reeves at Leyton parish church⁴⁰⁰. The wedding took place on Sunday 26 May 1901 between the home matches against Gloucestershire and Kent, in both of which Bill played. It was very much an Essex affair with most of the professionals present. Tom Russell, Bill's team-mate and Emily's cousin, was best man. The committee allowed a large marquee to be erected on the outfield for the wedding breakfast, at which some sixty people sat down; Reeves expressed his sincere thanks for their gesture, although they seem not to have graced the occasion with their presence. Gifts included a handsome one from GF Higgins, who had played for Essex a few years earlier and was son of the club treasurer; a suite of furniture from Emily's parents; a biscuit box from his cousin and team-mate Edward Russell; a set of knives and forks from Bob Carpenter; silver spoons from Walter Mead; carvers from Joe Armour, the Essex scorer; an eight-day clock from Sailor Young.

A journeyman all-rounder of the type that forms the backbone of English cricket, Reeves was a hard-hitting middle-order batsman, right-arm medium pace bowler and keen fielder. He was a genuine character, and 'Crusoe' recalled that 'if silence or dullness fell upon the game, there was Bill Reeves to put it right'⁴⁰¹. He never quite did the double but in 1904 took 106 wickets and in 1905 hit 1174 runs with two centuries. He was a ground bowler from 1896 to 1905 and remained on the ground staff until he was sacked in the economy drive of 1910. He continued to play for the county but despite several requests was never taken back on to the ground staff, although he was for a while on the staff at Lord's. In February 1914 Reeves's request for a benefit was deferred for financial reasons. After the war he wrote again and the committee replied that 'the club was not in a position to grant any benefits at present but Reeves should be the first to receive one'. In 1920 aged 45 he took 62 wickets in 17 matches and it was agreed that he would have his benefit. He served Essex loyally for 25 years so it was scarcely premature. He was offered 'the Saturday match v Gloucs or Leics or any Wednesday match'. Saturdays being the only day working men could attend were more lucrative, and the club felt that it could not afford to lose the revenue. Reeves chose the Middlesex match which was usually an attractive fixture, but Wisden reported that it was 'poorly attended and Reeves had a very moderate reward for 28 years' service'. The game, which started on Wednesday 15 June 1921, proved to be his last for Essex.

⁴⁰⁰ Report in Leytonstone Express & Independent, 1 June 1901.

⁴⁰¹ Essex Annual, 1948, p9.

Immediately after retiring, Reeves began a new career. He became known as ‘one of the best of the first-class umpires’, who officiated in six test matches including the last in England before the Second World War. He was one of several umpires to advise a batsman protesting against his dismissal to look in the paper the next morning and see whether or not he was out. At Cowbridge against Northamptonshire in 1931 Glamorgan were deemed, under the laws applicable at the time, to have made an illegal declaration: umpire Bill Reeves was hauled up by Lord’s and informed them solemnly: ‘The law does not apply. It was in a foreign country.’⁴⁰²

Reeves also worked as a coach and in 1931 turned down Essex’s invitation to do pre-season coaching for them but in 1936 they asked him again and he accepted the offer. From then until 1939 Essex paid him £5 a week to do three weeks’ work with the professionals, who were instructed ‘in every sense to avail themselves of the facilities offered’. In 1940 the Advisory County Cricket Benevolent Fund sent £25 for him to the club which duly passed it on. He continued coaching for Essex during the war and when in 1944 he died after an operation the club sent a wreath and a representative to the funeral.

Abraham George Freeman and sons

In 1889 EC Freeman’s brother Abraham⁴⁰³ came on to the ground staff at 24s per week and moved to 6 Jasmine Cottages (now 625 High Road), Leyton⁴⁰⁴. In June 1892 his wages were increased to 30s but then on 11 October 1892 he ‘gave notice that he wished to leave the ground after next Saturday, 15 October’. Two weeks later he wrote asking to be reinstated but his timing could scarcely have been worse, for only a month later came the Extraordinary General Meeting where CE Green announced that the club needed some £3,500 and unsuccessfully proposed that it be wound up. Furthermore, the committee meeting that received Abraham’s resignation also considered a letter from the promising young bowler Walter Mead asking for employment on the ground. Abraham’s request was therefore ‘declined as the Committee had made other arrangements’. Essex did not employ Abraham again, although on the 1901 census he gave his occupation as professional cricketer and in 1915 he was still living close to the County Ground, at 2 Coopers Lane⁴⁰⁵. According to his grandson Herbert, he became groundsman at the Pendennis Ground in Streatham, and later at the Portland Cement Ground, Woodford, but in 1921 he was a general mechanical hand working for the London Omnibus Company at Tower Bridge garage.

Abraham and Louisa Freeman had fourteen children, eleven of whom survived to adulthood. Four of their sons earned their living from cricket, for a while at least. The 1901 census lists 22-year-old George as a professional cricketer and 15-year-old Arthur as a ‘cricket ground boy’, although neither ever played at first-class level. Herbert Freeman said that George later became groundsman at Streatham CC.

⁴⁰² Matthew Engel, 15 May 2019 The Guardian. Sourced 28 Dec 2022

⁴⁰³ On the 1861 and 1871 censuses and in the Essex County Cricket Club minutes he was called George or G, which may well have been how he was usually referred to, but in order to distinguish him from his son George I have stuck to Abraham.

⁴⁰⁴ Kelly’s Directory for Walthamstow, Leyton and Leytonstone, 1889. His son Alfred Percy (Tich) was born in Lewisham on 17 May 1888 and his next child, Florence, in Leyton on 11 March 1890.

⁴⁰⁵ Leyton electoral register. His daughter Edith was still there in 1930, when she was a seatholder at Leyton parish church. KENNEDY, John. History of Leyton. Augmented edition by Robert BREN, v6 p636. Held at Vestry House Museum, Walthamstow.

Abraham and Louisa's third surviving son, John Robert, was in 1901 aged 17. He was shown on the census as a baker's assistant, although he had already been taken on to the ground staff at Leyton. He started at 10s a week, rising by 2s 6d each year until 1903. When next recorded in 1910, he was a ground bowler as well at 27s 6d per week and his pay remained unchanged until December 1914. On the 1911 census he listed himself as 'Professional Cricketer Essex County Club' in exceptionally strong, clear handwriting.

John Freeman played for Essex from 1905 to 1928 as an unstylish but effective right-handed batsman who often opened the innings. He showed the versatility typical of professionals, bowling medium-pace if needed and turning himself into a competent wicket-keeper when Essex had problems in that department. He first kept wicket in the absence of his cousin Edward Russell against Kent at Leyton on 27-29 June 1907, holding three catches. In 1926 against Somerset, he initially kept wicket claiming five victims, and then when Joe Hipkin was injured handed the gloves to Captain Frederick Nicholas and had a bowl, taking a career-best 3 for 31.

Freeman's best years were after the First World War. In 1919 aged 35 he scored a thousand runs for the first time, and then passed that mark in each of his last six seasons, from 1921 to 1926. His 286 against Northamptonshire in 1921 remains the second-highest individual score for Essex. In 1926 the committee awarded the Middlesex match scheduled for 24, 26, 27 July as a benefit to 'one of the most consistent and hardworking players who has ever played for the county'. The first two days were washed out but 'insurance of the Gate again saved the situation. In addition to the gate the response on the Subscription list was very satisfactory, the total amount from all sources being £1070'. That was his last full season and his best; he kept wicket until Frank Gilligan became available in the school holidays and scored 1958 runs at an average of 41.65, with six centuries. He then retired to become coach at the Merchant Taylors' School, twice returning to help out Essex in an emergency. His last appearance may have been rather a sentimental one, for it was the benefit match of his cousin Jack Russell. The 45-year-old Freeman played with great skill before he suffered three nasty blows and then was brilliantly caught for 57. He was a well-known and popular figure in Leyton, becoming a sidesman at the parish church of St Mary the Virgin⁴⁰⁶.

The best known and most successful cricketer of the family was Jack Freeman's younger brother Alfred Percy, known as Tich. He joined the Essex ground staff in 1906 and played two games for the Club & Ground XI, but this was the time when Essex apparently dropped their pre-season coaching sessions and they failed to spot his potential. In 1909 he left to become under-groundsman at the Upper Tooting club, where he was spotted by Captain William McCanlis, Chairman of Kent's Young Players' committee, who invited him to join their staff at the nursery in Tonbridge. On the 1911 census, he was still living at home, and he and his father were both listed as 'Professional cricketer and groundsman cricket and football'. Being the last of Abraham Freeman's children to be born at Lewisham, he was already qualified for Kent and made his debut for them in 1914.

The First World War meant that Tich's career did not really get going until he was 31 years old, but like his brother John he enjoyed his best years in his 30s and 40s. A consistently accurate leg-break and googly bowler, he became the most successful county bowler in the country, although he did little in Test matches where the best

⁴⁰⁶ Kennedy/Bren, v2a p63. In 1930 Freeman donated £1 towards a memorial window for the Bishop Thornton-Duesbury Memorial Fund (Kennedy/Bren v3 p428).

batsmen could afford to be patient and see him off. He was in 1928 the only player ever to take 300 wickets in an English season, claimed over 200 victims in each of the next eight seasons, and was then sacked for ‘only’ taking 108 wickets. Many of his best performances came against the county that had discarded him twenty years earlier. They included his career best - all ten wickets for 53 in 1930 – and fourteen wickets or more in a match four times. In the remarkable Brentwood game of 1934, when Kent declared on 803 for 4 and won by an innings and 192 runs, he took 11 wickets for 176 at an average of 16, while the other bowlers in the match took 13 for 1238 at 95. It has often been said that Essex were remiss in letting Tich slip through their fingers, but Captain McCanlis ‘attached the first importance to accuracy’ and thought that ‘the slow lads sometimes turn out to be the best in the long run’⁴⁰⁷, so perhaps without his coaching Tich would not have become the bowler he did.

An Alfred Freeman did appear for Essex, but he was rather less successful than his cousin Tich. Alfred James Freeman played one game against Gloucestershire in 1920, scoring one run and taking 0 for 95 with 24 overs of innocuous left-arm medium pace. He was the son of Abraham and Edward Charles’s older brother William Henry, who in 1881 was following the family trade of bricklayer and living at 1 The Terrace Lewisham, three doors away from Abraham. By 1901 William had moved to 169 Beaumont Road Leyton, via Bowes Green and Tottenham. Like Frederick George Freeman, who was listed as the head of a separate household at the same address⁴⁰⁸, William was described as a ‘groundsman labourer’, although neither worked for Essex. Alfred James assisted and then succeeded his father as groundsman at Hampstead CC, where he worked for 47 years. From 1956 to 1964 he was groundsman at Ilford CC, following in the footsteps of his cousin Edward Russell.

It is commonplace for migrants to join older members of their families in a new location, but the case of the Freemans is curious in that they moved in reverse order of age. The pioneer in Leyton was the fourth and youngest surviving son, Edward Charles, in 1885. He was joined by the third son, Abraham George, in 1889 and by the second, William Henry, in 1900. Abraham left the Essex staff in 1892 and William was never on it, but both apparently found cricket-related work in the area. Only John, the eldest of the four brothers, stayed in Lewisham.

Tich Freeman was not the only young player rejected by Essex in the early 1900s. John Berry Hobbs’s boyhood hero was Surrey’s Tom Hayward, who in 1901 watched him bat on Parker’s Piece at Cambridge against Bill Reeves. Hayward was so impressed that he offered to get Hobbs a trial at the Oval, but a family friend thought that he should also try his luck with Essex. Perhaps Reeves was less impressed, for his county refused to even give Hobbs a trial, although it should be said that his ambition was always to play for the county of his hero and he might well have gone to Surrey anyway. Hobbs made his championship debut against Essex, opening with Hayward. Even then, ‘the

⁴⁰⁷ Article in 1907 Wisden after Kent’s first Championship victory, in 1906.

⁴⁰⁸ There is something rather odd about this. The 1881 census shows that William has a 4-year-old son called Frederick G, which more or less fits with Frederick George, who was said to be 23 in 1901. However, Frederick George’s birth place is recorded in 1901 as “not known”, which contrasts with the other Freemans who all knew exactly where they and their children were born. Furthermore, William was listed as having a 15-year-old son Frederick, a driver for the Great Eastern Railway. William was born on 19 November 1854 but his age was given as 29 in 1881 and 42 in 1901. It is therefore possible that these references are not the same person, but it seems unlikely that the neat fit of locations and trades is just a coincidence.

Essex captain [FL Fane] was slow to recognise the strong point of Hobbs' batting⁴⁰⁹ and the young man marked his arrival with a match-winning 155. If Essex had had Jack Hobbs with the bat and Tich Freeman with the ball their first championship success might have come earlier than 1979, although Kent with Freeman never won the Championship and Surrey with Hobbs won it only once, in 1914.

The Brewers

EC Freeman's assistant and successor, Walter 'Bung' Brewer⁴¹⁰, also came from Lewisham. His father and elder brother, like Abraham Freeman and his father, were bricklayers by trade. Brewer's nephew Leslie Allsop recalled that in the 1920s the Brewer family still spoke often of the Freemans. Bung Brewer had joined Essex by 1888, when he was paid £1 a week to look after the lawn tennis courts. He played for the Club & Ground XI, primarily as a bowler and was a ground bowler in 1892 at least. He seems, however, to have been employed chiefly for his curatorial rather than his cricketing skills, for on censuses he described himself as a cricket groundsman, and in 1900 he was appointed as EC Freeman's principal assistant.

James Thorpe, author of *A Cricket Bag*, considered Brewer 'one of the best umpires I have ever met'. He recalled one occasion when an excitable young bowler tried to frighten Brewer who responded with 'an even louder and most decided NOT OUT.'

In 1892 Bung Brewer married Alice Maud Allsop and their eldest son was born in lodgings at 5 Jasmine Cottages (later 617 High Road, Leyton). Most of the Essex professionals lived within a few minutes' walk of the ground and Jasmine Cottages seems at that time to have been colonised by Lewisham exiles, because for a while Tom Russell lived at no. 2 and Abraham Freeman at no. 6. After a brief sojourn at Capworth Street, a little further from the ground, the Brewers returned to Jasmine Cottages and set up their own household at no. 1 (625 High Road). In 1910 Alice Brewer died of tuberculosis and the following year Bung married Amelia Doull, who in 1913 moved with him to nearby 67 Coopers Lane. In 1911 he was living in a 3-room flat at Albert Road and his older son, Walter Charles, was also a groundsman.

In 1918, when EC Freeman moved to Sherborne, the Committee thought that Bung Brewer was the most experienced man for the job, although Freeman's nephew Tom Russell also applied for the post. When first appointed Brewer was assisted by two men and two boys, and his 'wages, emoluments and work' were 'left to the Hon. Treasurer'. Even after Essex sold the ground to the Army Sports Council, the club continued to employ Brewer who was responsible for preparing the festival grounds as well as Leyton.

Brewer duly moved into the head groundsman's house at 563 High Road. Leslie Allsop remembered sitting on a wall in the shade of a mulberry tree there, and watching the cricket. When in 1926 the house was sold along with thirty other local properties, the sale catalogue stated that it was 'let to the Essex Cricket Club on a Quarterly Tenancy at the low Rental of £19 10s. per annum, tenants paying rates and being responsible for Inside Repairs'⁴¹¹. This was indeed a low rental, being less than half that paid by neighbouring tenants, although they were not responsible for rates and repairs. Essex must have bought the house even though they no longer owned the ground, for in the

⁴⁰⁹ LSE&I, 12 May 1905.

⁴¹⁰ "Bung" is a fairly obvious nickname for anyone called Brewer, and his son Walter Charles was called Bung by his workmates at the Lea Bridge District Gas Company.

⁴¹¹ Vestry House Museum Walthamstow, Local Studies Collection 72.2 HIG.

1932 yearbook it is listed as one of the club's assets, a freehold property valued at £475 – presumably what they paid for it. In 1933 – as soon as Essex left Leyton – 'Brewer's Cottage' was sold for £450.

Leyton under Bung maintained its reputation as a batsman-friendly wicket which was 'eloquent testimony to the zealotry with which he did his job'. He refused to countenance mechanical methods and continued to cut the grass with a mower and a pony. Accompanied by his faithful old black dog, he was first out to the middle during the lunch and tea intervals, going over the pitch with a twig broom and then supervising its rolling. A journalist friend wrote of him with great affection: 'There had to be a very keen "nip" in the air before he sallied forth in his jacket; for his usual dress was shirt-sleeves rolled to the elbow, a straw hat if the sun was hot and an old panama if it was extra hot.'

The central square 'was his pride and delight, and woe to those whose actions might threaten its perfections, especially on the Leyton schools' sports day'. On one occasion a team of doctors was playing a team of clergymen, and one of the players retrieved the ball by jumping over a rope intended to fence off the pitch that Bung was preparing for a county game; he rushed out to the middle and reprimanded the culprit in language that is unlikely to have found favour with the clerical gentlemen⁴¹². 'Even members of the team were censured by him for inadvertently damaging the wicket,' commented Johnny Douglas, who thought him the best groundsman in the country.

Tragically, Bung Brewer's dedication proved his undoing. The *Essex Times* for Saturday 21 April 1928 reported that their tenancy of the ground remained 'in an unsatisfactory state of suspended animation'. On the following Monday, three days after his sixtieth birthday⁴¹³, Brewer went to the LMS station at Leyton and jumped in front of a train. He was taken to Whipps Cross infirmary where he died of shock and injuries. His younger son, William John 'Dick' Brewer, who was his foreman on the ground staff, told the inquest that 'for the last three months his father had worried about the ground because it would not be ready in time for the opening of the season'. Glowing newspaper tributes revealed the affection in which Bung Brewer was held and the shock at his death. The only chief mourners other than the immediate family and one close personal friend were Jack O'Connor and Joe Hipkin, representing the Essex professionals.

After the inquest, the Secretary, Major Thompson, denied rumours that Bung was under notice and that he had been poisoned by weed-killer. In view of his high reputation and the fact that the season was just starting it seems highly improbable that the club would have sacked him, but the matter of weed-killer is less clear-cut. The rumour seems to have originated with Bung's journalist friend, who reported that during the 1927 season Bung had told him 'he had been under hospital attention and was, as he put it, 'nearly full of arsenic', owing to his extensive use of weed-killers. On the other hand, the *Express & Independent* attributed 'the almost entire absence of weeds on the pitch' to 'a preparation devised by him and known to very few other people', and if he had relied heavily on weed-killers there would have been nothing special about his methods. Doug Insole, who admittedly was only a boy at the time, reckoned that one reason why the pitch was so good was that Brewer used a cow dung mix to quieten it down. There must have been some such ingredient to make Bung's methods so special, and on

⁴¹² Information from grandson Ken Brewer.

⁴¹³ The newspaper report of the incident said he was 61 and the family obituary card that he was 62, but his birth certificate gives his date of birth as 20 April 1868.

balance I think that weed-killer must remain innocent until proved guilty, although we can never be sure.

Bung was succeeded by Dick Brewer, although this was not mere nepotism for Essex did not officially appoint him until December 1928⁴¹⁴. Dick maintained the high standards set by his father and EC Freeman, and in May 1930 Essex sent him a letter of appreciation for the state of the ground⁴¹⁵. Frank Rist, who came on to the ground staff in 1932, recalled Brewer's dedication to his job: 'He was the sort of chap, if there's a drop of rain, about three o'clock in the morning, he'd get up and roll the pitch or do something, you know, he was a complete nutter...' ⁴¹⁶. Rist remembered using a motor-mower, so Dick must have been more open to new-fangled ideas than his father. Dick Brewer's annual pay for 1930-33 was recorded in the Essex wage-book and varied from £174/4/- to £187/11/-. This was roughly half the income of the capped professionals but twice what was paid to the young members of his ground staff, and he also had 'Brewer's Cottage' rent-free.

Harold Faragher's most vivid recollection of Leyton was a consequence of the pitch's immaculate quality. In 1932, just before the notorious Bodyline Tour of Australia, he was watching 'in the Pavilion looking right down the line of bowling' which was 'quite frightening'. AW Carr, captain of Nottinghamshire and formerly of England, was 'a supporter of leg theory and tried it out ready for the Australian trip as a way of curbing the Australian batsmen Bradman, Woodfull, Ponsford and others'. He wanted his England and Nottinghamshire fast bowlers Harold Larwood and Bill Voce to try out bodyline, the less mealy-mouthed but more accurate term for the method. They chose Leyton for the experiment because it was 'nearest to Australian wickets...and batsmen went there to get runs'. Faragher thought the secret was 'clay in the undersoil and heavy rolling to flatten it out'.

Larwood 'pitched the ball on the legs rearing up at the batsman, so if he kept it down he got caught by one of four [fielders] close in, if he hit it up he got caught by one of the three out, and if he didn't hit it, it hit him'. Jim Cutmore and Dudley Pope were the opening batsmen, and many years later Cutmore told Faragher that 'the Essex players were scared stiff to face it'. After Pope was out, Essex's young captain, Denys Wilcox, went in to bat and when he asked 'How do you deal with this stuff?' Cutmore replied 'Chance your arm – if you don't hit it, it'll hit you'. It was John Arlott's first visit to Leyton and his impression – not entirely borne out by Cutmore's recollection – was that 'Denys Wilcox and Jim Cutmore revelled in it'⁴¹⁷. Later in the innings 'Jack O'Connor backed away and it hit him in the midriff', so he could take no further part in the match⁴¹⁸. O'Connor's dislike of fast bowling was well-known and it is hardly surprising that he did not go out of his way to face more of it. Cutmore and Pope were dismissed

⁴¹⁴ *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, 8 Dec 1928 p16.

⁴¹⁵ The Essex minute-book for 1920-8 is missing, so we do not have the Club's perspective on its relationship with Bung and Dick Brewer or its reasons for appointing Dick.

⁴¹⁶ Interview with Waltham Forest Oral History Society, 1999. The then 85-year-old Frank Rist, who was recalling events that had occurred some 70 years earlier, may have got confused between Bung and Dick. He spoke about Bung's suicide as though he was on the ground staff at the time, although he did not in fact join until four years later. Ken Brewer, Bung's grandson and Dick's nephew, reckoned that Rist's affectionate 'nutter' comment could have applied equally well to either man, since both were exceptionally conscientious.

⁴¹⁷ ECCC annual 1949 p8.

⁴¹⁸ Faragher was 82 when the interview was done and his recollection of almost everything I could check was accurate. The only slight mistake I found was that he thought O'Connor was out for a fortnight, whereas he was back for the next match.

by Larwood, but not before they had scored 49 and 25 respectively, and Wilcox made 68. Essex did collapse, but to the off-breaks of Sam Staples who took 4 for 60. In the second innings Notts set Essex 298 to win, but even though Voce took three wickets they batted out time comfortably.

According to Ken Farnes, the assault was not particularly effective because the pitch was lifeless. Farnes recalled that the Essex slow bowler George Rainy Reynolds Brown nevertheless provoked Larwood and suffered the consequences⁴¹⁹:

He committed the blunder of strolling up the wicket...to tap down the pitch at a place that would have been a good length from the other end, thus exaggerating the shortness of Larwood's bowling. However fine a gesture this may have been, demonstrating George's toughness and the fearlessness of the consequences, it was not judicial – rather it was lunacy, suicide...But the next morning, when we were changing at Southampton to play Hampshire, we saw George's thigh. It would have made Turner sigh, for no sunset of his could have equalled in vividness of pigment such a range of hues...

Even after the Australian tour Nottinghamshire continued to use bodyline tactics so some counties threatened to refuse to play them. In 1935 the Nottinghamshire committee decided not to reappoint the pugnacious Carr as captain and bodyline ceased to be a major issue in English cricket.

When Essex left Leyton the committee gave Dick Brewer a gratuity of £10 'in view of his long and satisfactory service'. He continued to be employed by the Army Sports Council, and sometimes went to supervise local groundsmen preparing pitches such as Southend and Colchester for Essex festival matches. Before and after the Second World War, during which he was wounded at the D-Day landings, he was head groundsman at the Metropolitan Police ground in Chigwell. In the 1950s he moved to the Co-op sports ground in Walthamstow, where he stayed until his retirement.

After the war, the ground was taken over by Leyton Borough Council and its condition was sometimes less immaculate than in the days of EC Freeman and the Brewers. On one occasion Bung's grandson Ken Brewer overheard a spectator bemoaning the state of the ground and wondering what Bung would have thought of it. Ken has always regretted not taking the opportunity to introduce himself.

The Russells

Thomas Marychurch Russell junior, the eldest son of Thomas Marychurch Russell senior and Mary Eliza Russell nee Freeman, was born on 6 July 1864. His teenage parents married at St Mary Rotherhithe a few weeks after his birth, so his surname was registered as Freeman. Soon after his own appointment, EC Freeman invited his nephew – only four years his junior – to come on to the ground staff as an undergroundsman⁴²⁰. Though living in Lewisham, Tom had been listed on the 1881 census as a farm boy, so may have had some useful experience. He recalled that

One day after Mr Green and one or two other gentlemen, as well as Frank Silcock had been watching me at the nets, Mr Green asked me if I would like to have a trial, and as I said I didn't mind he gave me a chance⁴²¹.

⁴¹⁹ Quoted THURLOW, p59.

⁴²⁰ His Wisden obituary states that he played at Leyton as a boy. If he did, the Freeman and Russell families may have had links with Leyton even before Essex moved there, earlier than I have so far unearthed.

⁴²¹ This and other quotes from interview with WA Bettsworth, Cricket, 2 Sep 1897 p389-90.

He made his debut as a bowler for Essex Club & Ground in 1886 and apparently moved to Leyton in 1887, for his son was born there on October 6. He made his first team debut in 1888, when he also became a ground bowler at 30s a week. He recalled: 'At that time Essex had no fast bowler on the staff, so that as all the members were anxious to get some practice against fast bowling, because they were always meeting in matches, I was run off my legs, bowling as hard as I could for two or three hours at a time.' In 1889 he bowled very well 'at above medium pace' for the Club & Ground XI, but the first team had a good season and he could not break into it. In 1890 he went to the Broxbourne Club in exchange for Walter Mead, and later to Buckhurst Hill. There he was asked to take over from their injured wicket-keeper George McEwen, an amateur who from 1884-7 had played 17 games for Essex⁴²². 'When the Essex committee heard that I was doing fairly well, they gave me another trial, this time as a wicket-keeper.' In 1893 he established himself as their first-choice keeper and came second behind Bunny Lucas in the batting averages. The county's annual report for 1899 made special mention of 'the splendid services of T. Russell as wicket-keeper'. Although he hit three centuries and a 99, and made other useful contributions with the bat, a career batting average of only 15.01 suggests that he was not quite an authentic wicket-keeper/batsman.

Russell's hands took a constant battering and it is amazing that, with the flimsy-looking gloves he wore, he had very few injuries. Surprisingly he thought that 'Harry Pickett has knocked me up more than anybody else, because the ball does such queer things'. Perhaps that was because Kortright bowled so fast that sometimes the ball got through Russell's hands and 'I have had my chest bruised nearly all over'. He recalled that in 1897 'I stood out for two matches on account of a damaged finger, and the very first ball I took in the next match rapped against it'. It was the thrilling game where Essex beat Yorkshire by one run: Tom recalled that 'I was never in a finish like it, and hope I never will be again.' He dropped two crucial chances that could have cost Essex the game, but made no excuses about his damaged finger. EHD Sewell would have thought that was in character⁴²³:

Old Tom was a splendid character, never a grumble or a grouse, never the vestige of an attempt to bustle an umpire and no day too long or too hot for him – a model for all aspiring young wicket-watchers. He had served a very exacting novitiate, one that few of his contemporaries had experienced. I can think of no one but Tom who for year after year had to take such speed as C.J. Kortright from the one end and the late Harry Pickett from the other.

The professional Russell's attitude to umpires was in sharp contrast to that of the so-called amateur WG Grace (see above p>>>).

In 1901 Tom Russell was living at 33 Buckland Road with his family and his brother Edward, next door to Sailor Young and his parents. The Russell brothers and Young were described as professional cricketers. In that year Tom wrote to the committee asking for a benefit. They replied that they 'could not see their way clear to grant a benefit next year but that his name should be placed first on the list'. He again wrote in 1903 and it was granted for the 1904 season, provided that his conduct in the interim was satisfactory. He by his own request did not have his benefit in 1904, because the club had undergone one of its frequent financial crises and he asked for a postponement,

⁴²² McEwen was listed on the 1881 census as a cork merchant's assistant and in 1891 as a carman. His descendants have very kindly donated his county cap to the Peter Edwards Museum & Library.

⁴²³ SEWELL, EHD. Cricket up to date. John Murray, 1931.

a gesture that was appreciated and agreed. It may have been a kindness that the committee chose the Middlesex match of 6, 7 and 8 August 1905 for him, because at least he could not reproach himself for picking the wrong game.

Tom had by then, though, dropped out of the side. Wisden reported that in 1902 he 'had perforce to be left out towards the end of the season, time obviously having robbed him of his timing and skill'. He returned for most of 1903 but played only twice in 1904, when his brother Edward was unavailable. His last match was against Surrey at the Oval in May 1905, when he split the top of his left thumb. Essex did not re-engage him at the end of the season, although in 1911 the committee agreed that 'a sum not exceeding £2 be given to T. Russell as a gratuity'. When two of his children were married in 1909 and 1913 he described himself as a carpenter and then as a watchman, but on the 1911 census he said he was a professional cricketer. He remained on the Lord's ground staff and in November 1914 Essex nominated him as a first-class umpire. He stood in a few matches in 1919 but took up his duties regularly in 1920 and continued until 1925, when he retired through ill health. On the 1921 census he said he was a professional cricketer employed by MCC at Lord's. He died early in 1927 and the annual report paid tribute to 'an old and trusted colleague [who] rendered many years of valuable service to the County'.

The proviso about Tom Russell's behaviour was no idle threat, as his younger brother Alfred Edward - usually known by his second forename - was to find out. When the 1891 census was taken, Edward was staying with his uncle EC Freeman, perhaps with the intention of qualifying for Essex by residence. The following year aged only 16 he was appointed as a ground bowler, a position which he held with a few breaks until 1909. Edward made his first-class debut in 1898 but only played the occasional game when others were not available. At Bristol in 1900, for example, McGahey was taken suddenly ill on the morning of the match and Edward was telegraphed for, although he did not arrive in time to bat in the first innings and Gloucestershire eventually won by just two wickets.

Edward took over from Tom as wicket-keeper in four of the first five games in 1903, but in early June Tom returned to the side and Edward did not play for the rest of the season. He may have been dropped for disciplinary reasons, because in October the minutes recorded that 'E. Russell's conduct was not satisfactory and the committee decided to dispense with his services'. The nature of the misdemeanour is not revealed, but in January 1904 his case was referred to the Ground Committee and initially he was not re-engaged. He nevertheless kept wicket for eleven of the first thirteen games in the 1904 season but then dropped out - whether through indiscipline, injury or loss of form is unknown⁴²⁴. Edward became the main wicket-keeper when Tom retired but failed to achieve his brother's high standards, for the club's 1905 annual report bemoaned 'the lack of a really good wicket-keeper' and Wisden in 1908 made a similar comment. JH Inns had been unable to displace Tom Russell, but would perhaps have been the answer to Essex's problems had he not died prematurely.

Essex considered and rejected the idea of signing EJ ('Tiger') Smith from Warwickshire, but it was the appearance of Kenneth Lloyd Gibson and yet another financial crisis that ended Edward Russell's Essex career. In 1910 Russell only played three matches, when Gibson was unavailable in August. Like his cousin EJ Freeman, to whom he bore a considerable physical resemblance, Russell was sacked in the

⁴²⁴ His brother Tom, the amateurs AJ Turner and Rev. CG Littlehales, and the young professional JH Inns (who tragically died aged 29 the following year) all replaced him.

economy drive at the end of that season. Russell never played for Essex again, even though in the wretched season of 1912 the county used no fewer than six wicket-keepers in eighteen matches.

In 1911 Edward Russell was groundsman to a cricket club in Merton Park, south-west London, but soon afterwards he was appointed coach/groundsman at Forest School. The headmaster there was the Reverend Ralph Courtenay Guy, who had help Home Gordon write the cricket section of the *Victoria County History*. Eric Forge, who was at the school from 1917 to 1921, had vivid recollections of Russell⁴²⁵:

He never did any coaching but he kept the grounds in good order, and it is alleged that Ralph sacked him at the end of every term. He never left though, not while I was there!

A somewhat unscrupulous gentleman, our Russell. One afternoon a boy named Emile Fernand Dens, a Belgian, with more money than was good for him, had purchased a very large bag of sweets at the 'Grub'. Seeing Russell outside the pavilion he held out the open bag on his open palm, saying, 'Have a sweet, Russell'. 'Thanks very much', said Russell, 'I don't mind if I do', and a great hairy paw enveloped the whole bag, stuffed it into his pocket and walked away chuckling.

Russell later became groundsman at Valentine's Park Ilford, where he would have worked with Dick Brewer in preparing pitches for Essex festival matches. When he died in 1940, the club noted the fact in the minutes and sent a wreath to the funeral.

Before leaving the county Edward Russell played in the same team as the best of the Essex Russells, his nephew and Tom's son. Charles Albert George Russell called himself just Albert on the census and elsewhere, and appeared in contemporary records as AC Russell. He was known - with a lack of originality not untypical of cricketers - as Jack. His daughter has told how he used to bunk off school to watch his father and uncle play on the ground prepared by his great-uncle. In 1908 aged 20 he was taken on to the ground staff and made his first-class debut for the county, although he did not secure his place in the side until the second half of the 1911 season. In 1913 Russell 'jumped to the front' when he was given a chance to establish himself as Essex's regular opening batsman, establishing a productive partnership with Colin McIver. He scored over a thousand runs, a feat that he was to repeat in every season of his career bar the last but one, when a coaching engagement kept him out of several matches and he missed out by seven runs. In 1920 Russell was the first Essex batsman to score over 2000 runs in a season, passing that landmark twice more and falling fewer than 100 runs short three times. He was to become the only Essex batsman before the championship-winning era to achieve a career average of over 40. He also developed into a useful slow-medium change bowler who took 276 wickets at 27.10.

Russell's highest score of 273 was made in the same year, 1921, and in the reverse fixture against the same opponents, Northamptonshire, as Jack Freeman's 286. Joe Powell vividly remembered both men⁴²⁶:

On one side of [Buckland Road] was a factory and on the other side...ordinary small houses. Just opposite his house was a lamppost in the pavement and we used to play cricket there, hoping that Russell would come out and see us. And Freeman who was the wicket keeper and opening bat...lived about ten doors away from me in Sedgwick Road. I used to go to Freeman's house, father would take me there.

⁴²⁵ Forest School 1834-1984, published to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Forest School. The School, 1984, p70-71.

⁴²⁶ Interview for the Waltham Forest Oral History Society, 1999.

The cousins were at that time Essex's leading professional batsmen and in 1919 both were given £1 extra match money. They seem to an extent to have colluded in approaching the committee, for in November 1919 both wrote separately to thank them for the additional match money and ask for an extra 10/- winter pay, which was provisionally agreed but then refused for financial reasons. In March 1920 Freeman met the chairman and the treasurer to ask for himself and Russell £8 for home matches and £10 plus travelling for outmatches. The request was granted even though it represented £2 10s more for home games and £3 10s for away. It is not known whether the other pros knew of the differential, and if so what they thought of it. In July 1919 Russell was paid £16 for 'acting as reserve' in a Gentlemen v Players match, and rather cheekily wrote to ask for his ground bowler's wages; the committee understandably refused, because his fee was more than he would have got for actually playing two games for Essex.

Jack Russell was never the luckiest of cricketers. The First World War broke out when he was 27 and robbed him of four of his best years, although he and John Freeman were perhaps fortunate to work at the Beckton gasworks rather than be drafted into the Forces. The peak of his career came from May 1922 until February 1923 when he scored more runs than anyone else in England and rounded off a good tour of South Africa by becoming the first Englishman to score a century in each innings of a Test match. Wisden said that 'when he started his second innings he ought to have been in bed rather than on the cricket field'. Throughout the 1923 season he was, probably as a consequence, never fully fit. By the time he recovered, Jack Hobbs and Herbert Sutcliffe had established themselves as England's finest opening partnership ever, and despite a Test average of 56.83 Russell never played for England again. Even when selecting him as one of their five cricketers of the year, Wisden damned him with faint praise as 'rather too utilitarian to rank among the great ones'. The writer could not 'imagine people jumping into taxi-cabs and rushing off' to see him but, as David Lemmon points out, he played for a weak and unfashionable county whose largely working-class followers 'climbed on to the trams to Leyton to support "Jack" Russell'.

Russell had a somewhat ambivalent relationship with his England and Essex captain, Johnny Douglas. Douglas valued the experience of his senior professional and consulted him more than most, but believed that Russell frittered away his natural ability, that his achievements would have been even greater if he had practised more. Douglas, who always insisted that all amateurs and professionals should turn out for 45 minutes of pre-match training, spotted before the 1927 match at Leicester that Russell was absent. When Jack O'Connor explained that Russell was 'a little tired and stiff', Douglas let fly: 'Tired? Stiff? What nonsense! Go and tell him that I expect him to be out here within five minutes.' Russell appeared with time to spare. Charles Bray, who recounted the story, added that Russell had scored a century the previous day, but if he had it was not for Essex: their cricketers had had a day off after losing to Nottinghamshire in two days, Russell contributing 8 and 3 to Essex totals of 100 and 117. The rather cavalier attitude to practice might, paradoxically, suggest more of the amateur than 'Pro' Douglas's sternly puritan work ethic. However, Russell's dragging himself from a sick-bed to bat for his country shows that he too had true grit, even if it expressed itself in a slightly different way. The Gooch v Gower debate of the 1980s indicates that names and labels may change but attitudes do not.

The committee granted Jack Russell the Surrey match of 16, 18 and 19 June 1928 as a benefit, telling the members that 'This player deserves a record benefit and your committee feel that this will be obtained'. The *Leytonstone Express and Independent*

‘was certain that the accommodation on the ground will be taxed to the utmost on each of the three days’. Russell had in the otherwise miserable season of 1927 scored 2062 runs at an average of 66, but the optimism was not to be justified:

During the season Russell had his well-deserved benefit match, but your Committee regret that the inclement weather entirely spoilt the gate receipts. The net result of his benefit is £834, which is not a large sum for one whose long service to his county has been so invaluable.

There is something rather curious about this excerpt from the 1929 annual report, for less than an hour was lost to rain, although it could of course just have been cold. On the first day 5000 attended and raised a collection for Russell of £54 2s. It seems more likely that because Essex played so wretchedly on the first two days, hardly anybody bothered to turn up for the third. They had the worst of the conditions and were handicapped by the absence of Nichols and O’Connor at a Test trial, but even so theirs was a poor performance. It took them 127.3 overs to grind out 220, Johnny Douglas taking four hours over a typically obdurate 68 not out. Surrey need only 6.3 more overs to knock up 506 for 4 declared, assisted by fielding lapses such as when Sandham was, according to the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*, ‘madly missed at slip’. On the third day Essex were bowled out for 137 to lose by an innings and 149.

Whatever the reason for the disappointment, ‘Russell worried over a benefit that did not bring him any considerable reward’, so it was all the more important that he should ensure his financial security. In 1929 he resigned to take up a coaching post with the Red Circle Cement Company at Osterley Park, but he continued to play for Essex when his duties permitted and the committee agreed to pay him £10 rather than £8 for home matches.

In 1930 Russell resumed his place on the playing staff and at the start of the season Essex rewarded his ‘excellent service’ with a six-week coaching engagement. Though in his 43rd year, he contributed his usual thousand runs. The committee expressed their appreciation by making him an ex gratia payment of £5 when he had to miss a couple of matches, ignoring one petty-minded member who complained. They recommended that

When in the mutual opinions of the Committee and Russell he is no longer fit to play County Cricket, he be offered the position of coach, and employment on the ground. The Committee expresses the hope that Russell will remain a member of the County side for some years.

This hope too went unfulfilled. Russell, perhaps on the bird-in-the-hand principle, accepted the post of coach at Westminster School and retired from first-class cricket. His generally harmonious relationship with the committee ended on a sadly sour note: they immediately suspended his winter retainer of £2 10s, and only achieved the return of previously paid fees after sending a ‘stiff letter’. I have not established how long Russell’s coaching engagement at Westminster lasted, but in 1938 he stood for one season as a first-class umpire.

Lionel King, who grew up in Leyton during the Second World War, was told that a man employed as steward of the Leyton Liberal Club in Grange Park Road was Jack Russell⁴²⁷. It was a small social club where the pay cannot have been good, although the live-in accommodation would have been some compensation in an area where heavy bombing had caused a housing shortage. Mr King often saw the man rolling beer barrels off a delivery cart or stacking crates and remembered him as ‘tall, very erect and very

⁴²⁷ Letter to the author.

tanned but a rather morose and stern individual'. Mr King was at school with a boy said to be Russell's son and, when another boy told him that Russell senior had played cricket for England, he 'thought it rather unlikely that the unprepossessing man in late middle age at the Liberal Club could ever have been famous for anything'. Mr King's information may well have been correct, because unfortunately it would have been all too common a story for former professionals: if the man was Russell, he would surely have been aware of the comedown from his glory days and of his subsequent misfortunes, and could perhaps have been forgiven if he was not the most cheerful of men. He was nevertheless very moved to be one of the 26 professional cricketers who, in a ground-breaking move, were elected as members of MCC in 1949⁴²⁸.

Despite the unfortunate end to his Essex career, Russell did not entirely lose contact with the county that had been at the centre of his life for over thirty years. He umpired Essex's friendly against Cambridge University in 1939, and some of the one-day matches for Tom Wade's benefit in 1948. He was granted a pass for free admission to home matches and was often to be seen on the ground when his duties as groundsman for Loughton CC permitted⁴²⁹. In 1957 the committee learned that he was 'living in straitened circumstances' and wrote to his daughter, who replied that 'no Financial Assistance was required at present', but she would keep in touch. A year later he applied for assistance from the Hornsby Trust⁴³⁰; Tom Pearce was a member, and promised to ensure that Russell's application would get careful consideration.

Jack Russell died in 1961 after a long illness. Leyton resident WJ Young told the *Walthamstow Guardian* that Russell was 'always a joy to watch', and ranked him and Percy Perrin as the two finest Essex batsmen he ever saw.

The Carpenters and O'Connors

With the Lewisham mafia on the ground staff in 1888 was Herbert Arthur ('Bob') Carpenter, whose nephew Jack O'Connor was an Essex mainstay between the wars.

Carpenter's father Robert had around 1860 been regarded as the finest professional batsman in England. He was a member of George Parr's team in North America in 1859, played for the touring professional United All-England XI and appearing eighteen times for the Players against the Gentlemen. He was also a key member of the largely professional Cambridgeshire team that played 39 first-class matches between 1857 and 1871. Like the university it played at Fenner's, and for a while the two teams complemented one another⁴³¹. It may be no coincidence that the professional town side was eclipsed by the amateur gown side just as MCC was reasserting its control over cricket. Cambridgeshire may also have collapsed because some of its players were

⁴²⁸ 'Professional cricketers are not made members of MCC. The question is not one of class but of control,' wrote Sir Frederick Wall, former Secretary to the Football Association, in 1935. Evidently the authorities were confident that Russell and his 25 colleagues would not seize control and bring them down.

⁴²⁹ ECCC yearbook 1951, p6.

⁴³⁰ The Hornsby Professional Cricketers Charity is run along similar lines to the Professional Cricketers' Charity. The Charity was set up in 1955 by John Hornsby and has several well known cricketing names acting as Trustees including Roger Knight, Mickey Stewart and David Collier. It already looks after up to 12 people and helps in many ways, including holidays and healthcare. Its primary aim is to assist players, or past players, who may be struggling with issues that life can throw up. From the Trust's website, 2007.

⁴³¹ BIRLEY, p89.

rather intemperate in their habits and died prematurely⁴³². George Tarrant, for example, was from 1862 to 1867 one of the best fast bowlers in the country but in 1868 dropped out and in 1870 died of pleurisy aged only 31. Bob Carpenter - a man of 'patience, manliness, sobriety and self-respect' - was the exception⁴³³. He became a respected cricket umpire and described himself as such on the 1901 census, just three months before his death at the age of 70.

Herbert Carpenter was the youngest of nine children but the only one who followed in his father's footsteps as a professional cricketer. He modelled his style on his father's, and was even nicknamed Bob after him. Lillywhite regularly referred to him as 'a chip off the old block'. On the 1891 census father and son were living in Cambridge and listed as professional cricketers. Young Bob began as a ground bowler for Cambridge University and, on the suggestion of his father and the umpire Bob Thoms, 'Mr CE Green, ever anxious to do some good for Essex cricket, sent for the young Cambridge cricketer'⁴³⁴. He joined the Essex ground staff and his first game was in a trial match between CE Green's XIII and JJ Read's XIV. He played for Essex Club & Ground, and there were signs of things to come when he hit 135 for them against Colchester & District. He made his first team debut in 1889 and at first achieved little, but in 1891 Bunny Lucas had to miss the first few matches and Carpenter seized the opportunity to become a regular opening batsman.

Carpenter made an important contribution to Essex's achievement of first-class status. He was the only batsman to reach double figures in Essex's inaugural first-class innings, a feeble 57 against Leicestershire. In 1897 Essex won by six wickets in a splendid match on a difficult Leyton pitch against the eventual champions, Lancashire. Carpenter, who crafted a fine unbeaten 57 out of Essex's victory target of 130, was carried shoulder-high to the professionals' enclosure by jubilant supporters, and £44 9s 4d was collected for him. Wisden acknowledged this 'splendid display' but added the slightly churlish comment that 'Bull, however, by taking 14 wickets had a bigger share in the victory than any of the professionals'. Like his Essex contemporary Percy Perrin, Carpenter was regarded as one of the best batsmen never to play for England, although he did appear three times for the Players. The latter part of his career was blighted by poor health and a sometimes unhappy relationship with the committee (see Chapter 15).

Bob Carpenter's brother-in-law John O'Connor also played for Cambridgeshire - reconstituted as a minor county in 1891 - where he settled in the 1890s⁴³⁵. Around 1890 at Margate College O'Connor coached Percy Perrin, who said he was an excellent coach and taught him 'to play with a straight bat'. Early in 1900 he appeared nine times for his native Derbyshire. A right-arm slow-medium off-break bowler, he took 10 for 125 against Lancashire on debut but only a further 14 in his remaining eight matches. A noted coach, he was still a net bowler on the Fenner's ground staff in 1926 at the age of 60⁴³⁶.

Jack O'Connor was a mainstay of Essex's batting between the wars, and a useful off- and leg-break bowler. After retiring he wrote *The Young Cricketer's Manual*, an

⁴³² SUGG, Willie. Preparing the wicket: my first researches into Cambridge cricket 1700-1890. IN The cricket statistician, no.120, Winter 2002, p30-35.

⁴³³ BIRLEY (p116) suggests that his retirement and that of Tom Hayward hastened the club's demise. Hayward only played two more first-class matches, in 1872, and died in 1876. Carpenter, however, played 10 in 1872, 7 in 1873, 2 in 1874 and one in 1876.

⁴³⁴ The cricketer, 1899, p113.

⁴³⁵ Daughter Elsie, said on the 1901 census to be aged 6, was born in Cambridge.

⁴³⁶ The cricketer annual, 1926, p25.

engaging little book in which he often illustrated points with episodes from his own career. A genuinely modest man, he describes how against Worcestershire in 1925 he did the hat-trick with ‘three really bad balls, each of which should have been cracked for four’. He considered that he inherited his batting skills from his Carpenter grandfather and uncle, and his bowling from his father:

Living in such an atmosphere of cricket, I nursed one consuming ambition, which was to follow in the family’s footsteps. Cricket was in my blood. From my early schooldays I talked cricket, dreamed cricket, lived cricket.

He was brought up in Cambridge and ‘was privileged to play on Parker’s Piece...one of the finest stretches of natural turf in the world, where Jack Hobbs and Tom Hayward learnt their cricket’.

O’Connor had a week’s holiday at Leyton with his uncle Bob, then Essex’s chief coach. He doesn’t say when, but it was probably in 1919. He took every opportunity to watch cricket at the County Ground, and was invited to make up the numbers for a club team that was a man short. He hit up a quick 60-odd, and back in the pavilion Carpenter introduced him to one of the few spectators on the ground, who turned out to be the Essex secretary. Borradaile congratulated him on his innings and immediately offered him a trial.

Within a few weeks Jack had moved to Leyton and joined the ground staff. He was born in Cambridge, so perhaps stayed with his uncle to acquire a residential qualification for Essex, although I couldn’t find him on the 1921 census to confirm this. Playing for the Club & Ground XI, he hit several centuries and took some wickets, and in 1921 he made his Championship debut. Carpenter came into the dressing-room and advised him just to bat as long as he could and ‘get acclimatised to the atmosphere of the county game’.

O’Connor considered Johnny Douglas “a hard taskmaster [but] a great captain”, although any possible reservations might not have found their way into print. After scoring 13 in his debut innings, O’Connor ran himself out so later Douglas took him aside and advised him to ‘curb his impetuosity’. When the new recruit first bowled his leg-breaks for Essex, Douglas asked him what field he wanted and gave him most of it but refused him a deep square leg because he would only need one if he bowled badly: ‘They’ll only hit you out there off long hops and full tosses, but not good length stuff.’ O’Connor wrote that Douglas gave him his county cap in 1923, after he had scored 60 on a ‘sticky dog’ at Leyton. ‘Jack,’ he said, ‘You’ll never play a better innings. That sixty was worth a hundred on any ordinary wicket. Here’s your county cap – you’ve earned it.’ In fact O’Connor scored only 35, but it was out of a total only 64 and against Yorkshire, so it was a fine innings. Wisden considered that it was in this season that ‘O’Connor suddenly came into his own’.

There have been only eleven instances of Essex cricketers scoring over 2000 runs in a season, four of them by O’Connor. His career record of 71 centuries for Essex was surpassed only by the county’s greatest batsman, Graham Gooch. He twice scored nine centuries in a season; the only other Essex player to achieve this feat even once was Doug Insole. He was, however, ‘more liable to spells of failure than a top-class batsman should be and moreover had an unconcealed distaste for fast bowling’. That is probably why he played only four Test matches, in which he had little success. Three of them were in the West Indies in 1929-30, and the following winter the committee granted him permission to return to the Caribbean for a coaching engagement from 1 January to 15 April.

O'Connor established himself in the side in 1922, when Essex were still on their beam ends and the only other regular professionals were the cousins from the other dynasty, Jack Freeman and Jack Russell. The committee arranged for O'Connor to have winter work on the ground, which had just been taken over by the Army Sports Board. The board agreed to pay him 25/- a week, but told Essex that if they wanted him to have any more they must make up the difference. Similarly, young Dick Brewer had to apply to the board rather than to the club for a 5/- wage increase. It must have been difficult for the committee to negotiate such matters, over which they had previously had absolute control. O'Connor made steady but unspectacular progress until 1928 and 1929, when he twice hit well over 2000 runs and averaged in the mid-40s.

It was probably that form which emboldened him in 1930 to ask for a benefit only nine years after making his debut, whereas the gnarled old pros Jack Freeman and Jack Russell had only just had theirs, having had to wait twenty years. The committee agreed his request in principle, 'provided he was still a regular player when the club could manage it'. O'Connor applied again the next year and it was agreed that he should have it not in 1932 but in 1933. As it turned out, that delay was probably for his benefit in the broader sense of the word: in 1932 an injury put him out for five weeks, whereas in 1933 the great improvement in the team's performance led to increased attendances. Bravely, in view of what had happened the previous year, he selected the match against Yorkshire on 12-14 July. Even more bravely Charles Bray, who was again the captain, chose to put the visitors in to bat. Holmes and Sutcliffe added 520 fewer than they had in 1932, but powerful batting down the order and 17 wickets from Hedley Verity gave Yorkshire a victory almost as comprehensive – by an innings and 172 runs. A day was lost to rain but overall O'Connor's benefit was successful: he received £646/15/6 and, unusually, 'considerable sums paid direct'.

Though the attitudes of the committee were sometimes rather feudal, they do seem to have had the best interests of the pros at heart and in 1930 they supported O'Connor in a rather unpleasant episode. In a remarkable match at Bristol, he and the Gloucestershire captain Beverley Lyon both hit two centuries. In the first innings O'Connor took almost all day to score 138 and Essex were all out for a less than scintillating 286, made in an extraordinary 155.3 overs. Essex in their second innings batted on till tea-time on the third day with O'Connor was not out on 120. Charles Bray, Essex's acting captain, later reported that as O'Connor went off he was 'severely reprimanded' by a Gloucestershire committee member. No doubt the committeeman had seen more than enough of O'Connor in the previous three days, but if anyone was to blame it was Bray himself who delayed the declaration and set Gloucestershire an improbable 279 to win in two hours. He in turn could be excused, for he had led the side only once before and lacked the authority of an officially appointed county captain. Lyon by contrast was in his second season as Gloucestershire captain, an enterprising leader who the following year was the first to declare after one ball to try and force a result. Having made 115 in the first innings he promoted himself to open in the second and hit an unbeaten 101 as the home side scored 161 for 3 in just 26 overs. Brian Castor as Essex Secretary was instructed to request an explanation for the O'Connor incident, but after a letter from the Gloucester committeeman was read the Essex committee agreed to drop the matter.

In 1939 at the age of 41 O'Connor scored more runs than any other Essex player and 'showed his old power in hitting the ball picked for punishment'. The Second World War brought an end to his first-class career, but he loved cricket and went into coaching. In 1941 he was appointed groundsman at Magdalene College Cambridge and Essex took the precaution of asking 'if they might get the benefit of his assistance

occasionally'. Two years later he was appointed to the plum job of coach at Eton, and he also helped out at Essex during the holidays. In 1946 Buckinghamshire signed him on special registration and he played 17 matches in two seasons. The Essex committee sent him a letter 'expressing appreciation of his services and of his attitudes during the negotiations'. Even after his official retirement, he coached at Chigwell School and at the Ilford Indoor Cricket School. Jack O'Connor was an exemplary professional who in over half a century's association with Essex never had a hint of criticism from the committee. His death in 1977 brought to an end a continuous family involvement with first-class cricket of well over a hundred years.

Chapter 15: 'Handier with the bat than the pen' – disputes and discipline

On the whole, the Essex professionals seem to have had a good relationship with their amateur team-mates. EHD Sewell, who would have had more of an affinity with the amateurs than most, recalled: 'Never in my time did [Essex] amateurs and pros. habitually either travel in the same carriage or stay at the same hotel during 'away' matches. We were all a happier crowd for all that.'⁴³⁷ Amateurs were nominated and seconded to membership of the club whereas pros were the club's employees. Amateur cricketers playing alongside professionals respected their cricketing skills but the amateur committee managed them as employers, which sometimes created a tension in individuals who were fulfilling both roles. Percy Perrin 'preferred not to be on the committee as he was still playing for the county team'⁴³⁸ but others sought to reconcile the two roles. Several disputes between the professionals and their gentleman employers were recorded in the club minutes.

Early days

William Bryan (1856-1933), like many Nottinghamshire cricketers, was a coal miner⁴³⁹ who could not get into the very strong county side, even when seven of its members went on strike in a pay dispute. He was one of three players recruited in 1885 by CE Green and the secretary, Thomas Ratliff. In 1886 he played for Essex Club & Ground, which apparently qualified him to play in that year for the South against the North, his only first-class match. The following year he made his debut for the Essex first eleven and took 41 wickets in the season.

At the committee meeting of 13 October 1887 the new secretary, MP Betts, 'reported that he had suspended W. Bryan for insolence to himself and refusal to carry out instructions'. The committee voted to dismiss the professional but he requested reconsideration of his case. On 10 November, apparently considering that Betts might have been high-handed, they agreed that Bryan

should be employed on the ground at the weekly wage of 25/- so long as the secretary should consider that there was work sufficient for him, after which the Committee would reconsider the advisability of renewing his appointment.

Thus upper-class solidarity was not always absolute.

In April 1888

⁴³⁷ An outdoor wallah, p72.

⁴³⁸ ECCC minutes, 26 February 1920.

⁴³⁹ 1881 census.

The ground bowlers staff was appointed as follows: Frank Silcock, G. Littlewood, J. Burns, H. Carpenter and Bryan. The secretary was instructed to make a new agreement with the latter.

Bryan was dropped in the second half of the 1888 season, after which his contract was not renewed - probably on cricketing rather than disciplinary grounds, for Lillywhite's verdict was 'A medium left-handed bowler; keeps a good length but does not vary it sufficiently'. Bryan was appointed groundsman at Trinity College in Cambridge and was described as a professional cricketer on the census for 1891, when he made his debut for the revived Cambridgeshire minor county side. Son Frank was born in Leyton in 1888 and daughter Nellie in Cambridge in 1890, so he perhaps obtained the Trinity post after Essex released him. As with EC Freeman, when he entered his forties his priorities changed, for although he was still playing for Cambridgeshire he was described on the 1901 census as 'Custodian of Ground'. He remained in Cambridge, where he died in 1933.

George White Ayres (1871-1934), a steady right-handed batsman, occasional bowler and brilliant fielder, was born in Surrey. He was the son of a licensed victualler, and the 1891 census records George as assisting his father in that trade. Between 1892 and 1896 he made 25 unremarkable first-class appearances for Surrey. In 1892, however, he 'hit with great vigour' and top-scored in both innings of a narrowly won friendly game against Essex, which may be why they later signed him.

Ayres began a residential qualification and in 1899 played twelve matches for Essex. His most significant contribution was a crucial 18 in his very first game, when Wisden reported that AJ Turner 'played superb cricket under difficult circumstances and found a capital partner in Ayres'. In an hour they added 40, the largest partnership of Essex's second innings, when Essex beat Sussex by one wicket. Statistically his best game was against Leicestershire, when Hugh Owen brought him to bowl after Mead, Young and Bull had failed to break a stubborn opening partnership and Ayres immediately did the trick. His highest score of 83 in the same match was not made in the most testing of circumstances: when he came to the wicket, Essex were 497 for 4 with a first innings lead of 303⁴⁴⁰. They went on to make 673 and win by an innings and 223. He was otherwise unable to reproduce the form he showed against Essex and apart from that innings averaged below 11, although Wisden commented that he was 'a fine fielder whose contribution was not to be gauged by his batting average'⁴⁴¹.

In 1898 and 1899 Ayres was employed as the head ground bowler⁴⁴² and during the intervening winter was paid the standard weekly 25/-, although he was 'not to work on the ground but to make himself generally useful when required'. On 22 March 1900 CE Green told the committee that 'Ayres' behaviour had not been satisfactory and he had not been seen on the ground for some time'. Borradaile wrote to ask Ayres for an

⁴⁴⁰ 'Just the man for a crisis,' commented the Yorkshire wicket-keeper Arthur Wood as he went out to bat against Australia in 1938 with England on 770 for 6.

⁴⁴¹ It is not an unusual phenomenon. Paul Todd had a solid but unspectacular career with Nottinghamshire from 1972 to 1982, when he had to give up first-class cricket because of a family illness. From 1985 he appeared for Staffordshire and in May 1987 in a Benson and Hedges zonal game he hit a belligerent match-winning 107 for Minor Counties against Glamorgan who, needing cover for the injured Alan Butcher, immediately signed him. Apart from a match-saving 135 against Worcestershire, he was unable to produce for Glamorgan the form he had shown against them and after that season only played four one-day games. (Don Ambrose and CricketArchive.)

⁴⁴² Only VCH Essex II p604 says that he was the head bowler. It also says that he was succeeded in that role by EHD Sewell.

explanation of his conduct but none was forthcoming. The committee decided to ‘dispense with his services’ – not, apparently, because of his poor form but because his conduct was unsatisfactory and he had failed to keep up his qualification. The 1901 census shows Ayres back in Surrey but without a trade, and he never played first-class cricket again. From 1911 to 1921 he was the proprietor of the Hand and Spear Hotel, the Heath, Weybridge; his wife Annie was assisting with the business, and he had eight live-in staff.

‘Servants do not come and go through the front door’

The custom everywhere was that amateurs and professionals came on to the ground through separate gates, because ‘servants did not come and go through the front door and professionals were paid servants’⁴⁴³. An episode at Leyton in 1899 demonstrated how farcical these arrangements could be. The chief character in the drama was a remarkable cricketer who began as an amateur but turned pro, and thus had an understanding of both camps.

Edwin Diver was born in 1861 in Cambridge. On the 1861 and 1871 censuses his father was listed as a college porter but by 1881 he had risen to the position of butler. Edwin attended the Perse, an independent school near Cambridge, but did not go on to the university. He had begun his first-class career in 1883, playing as an amateur for Surrey. He qualified for them by residence while teaching at Wimbledon School, described as a very successful army crammer. He recalled that in 1883 ‘I could only get away at the end of the season on account of my school duties. In the next year Mr Burbridge [sic – Frederick Burbidge of Surrey] made arrangements where I could play regularly.’ In 1884 he appeared three times for the Gentlemen, sharing in a match-winning seventh wicket partnership in the match against the Australians. At the end of the 1884 season the Surrey committee resolved that ‘an additional sum of £30 be given to Mr Diver for his services during the season, and that he receive a sum of £2 during the winter as long as he remains in the County’. In 1883 the founding genius of the school, John Brackenbury, retired and handed over to his partner Charles Wynne, who presided over its rapid decline and, in 1885, bankruptcy. At the end of the season the committee agreed ‘a grant of £25 to Mr Diver on his retirement from official connection with the county’. Clearly the school’s troubles meant that Diver could no longer afford to play as a genuine amateur, and the status of these payments seems decidedly dubious⁴⁴⁴.

Like PG Wodehouse’s fictional Mike Jackson, Diver worked in an office but could not face the prospect of being stuck there during the cricket season. Unlike Mike, his qualification was not for a first-class county so he turned to the one for which he had played as an amateur. On 19 April 1886 he wrote a letter that was read and discussed at a committee meeting the following day:

Being heartily sick of office work and extremely fond of cricket but not having private means to allow me to continue as an amateur may I ask you to allow me to play in the eleven if you think me good enough to play as a professional. My interest in county cricket is very great and rather than stand aloof from the game I would be for entering the lists as a

⁴⁴³ The argument of NL Jackson in 1900 for *Pastime* magazine which he edited. Cited in MASON, p76-7.

⁴⁴⁴ Information about Wimbledon School from: MILWARD, Richard. *Historic Wimbledon*. Windrush, 1989. In 1892 the school buildings were taken over by the Jesuits and reopened as Wimbledon College, where Richard Milward was a distinguished history master for many years.

professional. I sincerely hope you will think over this and let me know at your earliest convenience.

The Surrey secretary, CW Alcock replied:

I am desired by the Committee to acknowledge receipt of your letter. They are glad to accept your services on the conditions specified therein. It must however be understood that in the interests of cricket in the county and of cricket generally the committee do not pledge to play you consistently should unfortunately your performances hereafter be considered of not sufficient importance. The Committee do acknowledge the value of your past support to the county.

Diver's father, doubtless conscious of his own considerable rise in status from porter to butler, strongly disapproved of Edwin's turning pro and wrote to the committee accordingly. They forwarded copies of Edwin's letter and their resolution to Diver senior 'with the intimation that no encouragement had been given to EJ Diver to become a professional'.

Alfred 'Ducky' Diver, possibly an 'honorary uncle' in an extended family⁴⁴⁵, had been a leading professional for a quarter of a century, from 1843 to 1866. He was a member of George Parr's team in North America in 1859, appeared for the Players five times, for the MCC, Cambridgeshire and other first-class teams, and on a match-fee basis for sides such as Sir Charles Du Cane's Braxted Park. In 1861 Alfred was living at Rugby and coaching at the school, with his Cambridgeshire team-mate Tom Hayward as a visitor. It was therefore not perhaps so difficult for Edwin to change his status, one of over a hundred county cricketers who did so before abolition in 1962.

By coincidence, when Diver played his first game as a professional the opposition included another cricketer making the same switch⁴⁴⁶. WR Gilbert, a cousin of WG Grace, had exhausted Gloucestershire's various contrivances to pay him under the counter and openly turned pro. It was a sign of changing times for two well-known amateurs to admit that they lacked the means to maintain their status. *Cricket* magazine saluted their moral courage, predicting that 'their prospects ought to be of the best'. In Gilbert's case, *Cricket* could not have been more wrong, for only a month later he was caught stealing money in the changing room of his club team. His illustrious cousin did his best to have the scandal covered up and Gilbert was packed off to Canada, where he was able to make a new and respectable life.

Diver did not fall in such a spectacular way, but he too failed to fulfil *Cricket's* expectations. Although he was, after Richard Daft, only the second cricketer to play for

⁴⁴⁵ It was generally accepted that Alfred and Edwin were uncle and nephew but census and other data don't bear this out:

1861 census

Edwin aged 3 weeks was son of James aged 25, a college porter, living in Cambridge.

Alfred was living in Rugby with Tom Hayward as a visitor.

1841 census

Alfred's age rounded to 15. Father was John, age rounded to 35. Living in Jesus Lane Cambridge.

Both working as cooks, presumably for one of the colleges. No James in household.

James was aged 6. Father James rounded to 30. Living at High St, Chesterton, Cambs.

FamilySearch

1881 census – James sr still at High St, Chesterton. Age given as 72, birthplace Isleham Cambs.

No signs of Alfred or either James on IGI, but umpteen Divers baptized in Isleham.

I think this is enough to suggest that Alfred and Edwin weren't uncle and nephew. The Cambs Divers mostly seem to have originated from Isleham, so it may be that Alfred was Edwin's first cousin once removed (if I've got my cousinly relationships right!) and honorary uncle in an extended family.

⁴⁴⁶ RAE, p302.

the Gentlemen and the Players, he proved not 'good enough to play as a professional'. His form fell away and he made only four 50s in 35 innings for Surrey, so left them at the end of the season. According to *Who's Who of Cricketers*, he assisted his native Cambridgeshire and was their joint secretary and treasurer in 1889, although they were dissolved as a first-class county in 1869 and not re-formed as a minor county until 1891, so this statement seems doubtful. However, he did have a wonderful 1890 season for the Cambridge Victoria Club and 'no one was surprised when it was found that the temptations of first-class cricket were found too much for him, and that he had begun to qualify for Warwickshire'. While qualifying he played football as a goal-keeper for Aston Villa and cricket for Birmingham in the Midland League. In 1893, by a quirk of the fixture list, he made his debut for his new county at the ground of his old. Strangely, all of the six first-class wickets he took came in one innings against Nottinghamshire in 1894, Warwickshire's first first-class match. He played regularly over the next few years, making 67 and 112 not out in a high-scoring draw with Essex in 1896.

Diver led his fellow-professionals in several minor acts of sedition. His very first home game was against the Australians in 1893, when he and the other professionals were granted the rare privilege of eating in the pavilion. However, they had to make do with meat pies from a side table while the amateurs dined on salmon, and Diver led them in a walk-out. Despite this and other insubordination, the Warwickshire committee entrusted him with the captaincy for three matches in August 1899. The regular captain, HW Bainbridge, formerly a team-mate of Diver's at Surrey, was absent, and the sole amateur, Thomas Forrester, had played only 25 first-class games⁴⁴⁷. At Leyton some of the professionals were allowed to join Forrester in the amateurs' dressing-room, but Diver was told that they must walk an extra thirty yards to come through the professionals' gate, which aroused great resentment. He arranged for one batsman to go through each gate and when it was Warwickshire's turn to field he marched them through the professionals' gate, along the boundary to the amateurs' gate and thence onto the field. These antics amused Essex's East End crowd but not their West End secretary, who made a formal complaint⁴⁴⁸. The Warwickshire committee were equally displeased and took the opportunity to dispense with his services after he was cited in a divorce case, although it should be said that his form in 1900 fell away badly and he scored fewer than half the runs he had in 1899⁴⁴⁹.

Of his decision to turn professional, Diver told *Cricket* in December 1899 that 'I have never found that, amongst gentlemen, it ever made any difference to me from a social point of view'. This seems a carefully worded reply, for there was no mention in the interview of the incident at Leyton only three months earlier and Diver's actions suggest that he was conscious of his ambiguous status. He was perhaps suggesting that anybody who discriminated against him was no true gentleman.

Diver was listed on the 1901 census as the manager of the Priory Hotel Walsall with his wife Alice, despite the divorce citation, as manageress⁴⁵⁰. He qualified for minor county Monmouthshire and played for them until 1914, when he was aged 53. In 1911 he described himself as 'Professional Cricketer and Ground Manager for Newport Athletic Club'. A life of high but not entirely fulfilled promise ended sadly when he

⁴⁴⁷ BOOTH, p195-6.

⁴⁴⁸ Account of the match on Cricinfo Archive website.

⁴⁴⁹ VAMPLEW, p241. He averaged only 16 - Cricinfo Archive.

⁴⁵⁰ His first name was given as Edward. I couldn't find him on the 1881 or 1891 censuses under Diver or even Edwin.

was found dead in his bed at Pontardawe near Swansea two days after Christmas in 1924.

Bunny Lucas, who captained Essex in that match, had twice played alongside Diver for the Gentlemen, and the episode may have stuck in his mind. In 1902 he and Hugh Owen apparently engineered a little coup on behalf of their professional colleagues. On 5 June, after the first day's play of a match which – coincidentally or otherwise – was against Warwickshire, there was a Special Committee Meeting. It was held in the pavilion rather than the usual venue, the offices of CE Green's shipping company. The only men present were Owen the club captain, Lucas the captain on the day, OR Borradaile the Secretary and GH Gadsdon, who chaired the meeting. Gadsdon, a retired coach and saddle ironmonger from Ilford, was on the committee from 1901 to 1906 but otherwise played no significant part in the administration of the club. The sole business was to pass a motion, proposed by Owen and seconded by Lucas, that 'the Centre Gate of the Pavilion be used by both Amateurs and Professionals'⁴⁵¹.

At the next committee meeting Green signed the minute but endorsed it 'not agreeing' - the only time he made such an addition. Although the minutes have no record that the decision was ever formally rescinded, Green evidently got his own way as usual, for several interviewees recalled that the separate gates were still being used when Essex left Leyton in 1933. Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson said that his great-uncle had the job of opening the gate for the amateurs to go out on to the ground, although 'I don't think that anyone opened a gate for [the professionals], no!'

Jim Hill worked as a dressing room attendant:

You can still see the two entrances down into the ground, the one on the left was the pros' – [they] used to come out there. The only time I come out the gentlemen's entrance was when there was nobody there... With the visitors, you see, the gents had adjoining changing rooms there and the players the other side the same. The pros [of the visiting team] would come out the same gate as the [Essex] pros when they was fielding and when they was coming out to bat. [The batting] usually opened up with two pros, the opening pair would be from the same [entrance], otherwise it was easy to walk down their own stairs and out their own gate. Once on the ground, I think they was all the same. Prejudice, that's all...

In this respect Essex were certainly not in the vanguard: in the 1920s England amateurs and professionals began to share a single dressing room, and Surrey's Percy Fender led his amateurs to the professional changing room so they could all take the field together⁴⁵².

Lucas helped Tom Russell whose son CAG ('Jack') learned much from his father and on retirement in 1930 became coach at Westminster School. Thus a thread of mutual respect between amateurs and professionals can be traced through sixty years. Yet Lucas and Owen were both committeemen when Bob Carpenter and Walter Mead came into separate disputes with the committee, and supported the decision to suspend them.

Herbert Arthur 'Bob' Carpenter (1869-1933)

Ironically, in view of what was to happen later, *Cricket* magazine wrote in 1896 that Carpenter's 'future will be watched with interest, if only for the reason that he has always been of irreproachable conduct as well as a keen and conscientious worker'. In November 1900 he wrote to ask for a benefit, and was instructed to attend the meeting

⁴⁵¹ Generous Use of Capitals as in the original

⁴⁵² WILLIAMS, p118.

where the matter was to be discussed. He may have had to argue his case and if so was successful, for the committee granted him his benefit and he chose the Lancashire game on 18-20 July 1901.

That season turned out to be his best with the bat, when he made 1852 runs at an average of 37. A few weeks earlier against Kent at Leyton he had become the first Essex professional to score two centuries in the same match. After the first of them 'the company – there were over 12,000 people at Leyton – were so pleased with his batting that the collection round the ground for him realized over £33'⁴⁵³. Remarkably, McGahey against Gloucestershire in the previous match was the first amateur. 'What an amateur could do so could a professional,' commented Carpenter. The weather for his benefit behaved itself and Carpenter hit 41 and 119, but gate receipts etc were only £225/9/2. The committee gave £25 and expenses were £65/13/7 so Carpenter received the residue of £180/15/3. Wisden commented that the high proportion of drawn games at Leyton had lessened interest so that 'the attendance for Carpenter's benefit was disappointing'. It is probably no coincidence that the following year this cricketer 'of irreproachable conduct' became embroiled with the committee in a bruising dispute over winter wages.

In the early 1900s the club's financial difficulties made winter pay an increasingly contentious issue. In October 1901 the committee agreed that Tom Russell should have 30/- winter wages and all the other first-team professionals 25/-, apparently regardless of seniority and number of games played. This must have been particularly galling to Carpenter and Mead, even though they were exempted from some of the more menial work on the ground. They were respectively the mainstays of the professional batting and bowling, and had given longer continuous service than Russell.

In April 1902 Carpenter requested a three-year winter contract and an increase to 30/-, and the committee not unreasonably voted to defer a decision to October. Borradaile's letter to Carpenter has not survived, but evidently his usual diplomatic skills deserted him or he chose not to exercise them when dealing with a dissident professional rather than with the members. On 25 April Carpenter replied:

Dear Sir,

I was surprised at the answer to my letter and in consideration of my past services I do not think your committee has given me a direct answer and I wish you to state to them that if I do not receive one at once I shall feel obliged to resign my position on the County Team.

Such forceful language might have given pause for thought even in a less deferential age, and a special committee meeting was held four days later. Carpenter was asked to withdraw his letter and apologise before Thursday 1 May. Doubtless very nervous, he came before the committee on 29 April and declined to withdraw the letter, declaring that he had nothing to withdraw and unless his terms were accepted he would resign at once.

The same evening Carpenter wrote another letter:

Dear Sir,

After the somewhat unpleasant interview this afternoon which no one regretted more than myself, perhaps a letter written in calmer moments may make my position a little clearer. To address an ultimatum to the committee in an insolent moment was of course farthest from my thoughts. I am at all times handier with the bat than the pen, a fact of which the

⁴⁵³ Times, 28 May 1901 p5.

Committee are doubtless aware. I felt and still felt that my request was a reasonable one. If anything I have written was not in good taste it was certainly unintentional...

Borradaile replied:

You were distinctly told that unless you unconditionally withdrew your letter of 25 April and apologised for the implied threat contained therein your resignation would be accepted...

Carpenter made a partial apology, but concluded:

At the same time I beg to state with all due deference that domestic affairs render it absolutely necessary for me to have the three years agreement and the small increase in my winter salary.

This was still not good enough. Green proposed that Carpenter should only be allowed to withdraw his resignation if he signed a letter drafted by the committee:

To the Committee of the Essex County Cricket Club,

Gentlemen,

I now wish to be allowed to unconditionally withdraw my letter to you and at the same time express my great regret for having behaved in a discourteous and ungrateful manner towards the Essex County Cricket Club from whom I have always received the greatest consideration, and should the committee be able to see their way to allow me to withdraw my resignation from the team, I undertake for the future to do my very best for the club and to work in every way harmoniously and loyally with the rest of the team.

Carpenter duly climbed down and signed the letter, but even then an amendment that his resignation still be accepted was only defeated 3-2.

This was a desperately unhappy episode from which neither side emerged with any great credit. It is unclear what 'domestic affairs' could have been serious enough to impel Carpenter into such a course of action, unless his father's death in July 1901 left him with obligations to his extended family. According to the 1901 census, he was a single man living in digs at Brewster Road, next to the ground. I have traced no marriage for him in the following year, so unlike Walter Mead who had a similar dispute over winter wages the following year, he apparently had no family of his own to support. Carpenter was a fine player at the peak of his powers, but scarcely indispensable: he was foolish to submit his letter just before the cricket season when he earned far more than in the winter, and the committee was right to consider it an ultimatum. They in turn failed to recognise the legitimate grievances of a loyal servant in a precarious profession, and forced him into a humiliating climb-down. It would have cost only £17/10/- to have increased the winter pay of both Carpenter and Mead to 30/-, but instead the committee chose to solve the problem of the differential with Russell by cutting his winter pay to 25/-.

Carpenter enjoyed mixed fortunes in the rest of his career. In 1902 he was often absent through illness and played only nine matches for Essex. He scored just 205 runs at an average of 13.66, and Wisden commented that he was 'a shadow of his former self, having for some reason quarrelled with the Committee'. He was not offered a winter contract and did not play for Essex in 1903, although he did appear twice for MCC. There is some debate as to whether this was due to the illness or the dispute⁴⁵⁴, but in a sense it is immaterial: Carpenter was never robust and the nervous tension could well have undermined his health. The minutes make no mention of the matter but it may be

⁴⁵⁴ LEMMON, Cricketers, p32.

that Charles Kortright – captain for that year and more of a disciplinarian than Owen or Lucas – chose not to pick him. Wisden described his return in 1904 as ‘a complete success.’ He hit his highest score of 199 against Surrey and shared in a partnership of 328 with McGahey. He played regularly over the next three years, and formed an effective opening partnership with his captain, FL Fane.

In April 1907 Carpenter wrote requesting a ‘retaining fee for the winter months’ but ‘the proposal could not be entertained’. In the second innings of the Gloucestershire match he was officially recorded as absent ill, and did not appear again that season. The minutes, however, state that ‘Carpenter’s behaviour on May 20, 21, 22 during the match with Gloucs was most unsatisfactory and he refused to obey the Captain’s orders’. The captain was the newly-appointed McGahey, and it may well be that Carpenter disagreed with the way in which he was used or with some matter of tactics. Once again the dread phrase appeared in the minutes: ‘Agreed that Carpenter’s services be dispensed with’, and apart from five games in 1909 he did not play under McGahey again.

In 1911 Carpenter was boarding fairly close to the ground at 27 Grove Green Road with Charles and Alice Spencer. They were both a few years older than him and born in Cambridge, so they may have been old acquaintances from his youth. In 1914 he married Florence K Collings and acquired three step-children.

As soon as Douglas became captain Carpenter returned to the side and played throughout 1911, averaging over 30. His form then fell away so in 1912 he played only five games and in 1913 none, the committee allowing him to assist his father’s old county of Cambridgeshire⁴⁵⁵. In 1914 he was offered 35/- a week as a ground bowler and coach, and also made a successful return to the first team, appearing seventeen times. Among those he coached were the cousins John Freeman and Jack Russell⁴⁵⁶, and it may be no coincidence that both men enjoyed their best seasons after the First World War. After the war, Carpenter wrote to ask for a written testimonial from the chairman and secretary, presumably to help him find coaching work. He last played for Essex aged 51 in the final two matches of 1920, when he replaced the 44-year-old Percy Perrin. In the following season he was appointed as coach to the younger Essex players and described himself as a professional cricketer working for OR Borradaile at the Essex Cricket Ground, Leyton. Later he became the coach at Felsted School.

Walter Mead (1868-1954)

Amazingly, the year after Carpenter’s first dispute saw an almost identical episode, with the leading bowler rather than the leading batsman at the centre of the controversy. Walter Mead, one of the finest bowlers ever to play for the county, was known by the affectionate but slightly patronising sobriquet of the ‘Essex Treasure’: it is hard to imagine it being given to, for example, Johnny Douglas.

Douglas claimed that in the late 1880s his father ‘came across Walter Mead who, as a boy, was engaged to make himself generally useful leading the horse in the roller etc⁴⁵⁷. Mead was born on 1 April 1868 at Clapton in Middlesex, the youngest son of a cordwainer (shoemaker). The experienced umpire Bob Thoms invited him to Lord’s for a trial but he declined the offer. His first recorded appearance at the County Ground

⁴⁵⁵ The rules about only playing for one county in a season also applied to the minor counties. Bill Reeves, who like Carpenter was born in Cambridge, was in the same year refused permission to assist his native county because he had already played for Essex.

⁴⁵⁶ WISDEN, 1914.

⁴⁵⁷ JWHT Douglas. *Cricket*, 1910, p177.

was playing for old Douglas's Clapton side against Essex Club & Ground, when he opened the bowling and took four wickets. It may have been as a result of this performance that⁴⁵⁸

Mr MP Betts [Essex Secretary 1888-1890] recommended me to Mr Green who had me up to Leyton to bowl to him...He also arranged for me to be put on the Lords ground staff. He is always very thoughtful for us.

At JH Douglas's recommendation, Mead became professional at Broxbourne CC and while he was there qualified for Essex by residence. Precisely how that worked is unclear because Broxbourne is in Hertfordshire, but it is on the county border and he could easily have walked there from lodgings in Essex. The 1891 census shows him living with his parents at 3 Middlesex Wharf Clapton, so his period of residence in Essex was not unbroken. Although as a sixteen-year-old he turned out for Middlesex colts, his ambition was always to play for Essex. That may well have been because the County Ground was just across the River Lea, much closer to his home than Lord's. Like many young professional cricketers, he could not make a living from the game all year round, and was working as a carman's labourer.

Unlike some of his fellow-professionals, Mead was a teetotaler and looked after himself. As a result, he continued playing for Essex until he was 44 and umpired Club & Ground matches until a few months before his death at the age of 85.

Mead contributed mightily to Essex's success in the 1890s. On his debut in 1890 he made an immediate impression taking 5 for 131 in the second innings of his first match, against Surrey, and then 6 for 27 as Derbyshire were shot out for 42. In the following season at Leyton Leicestershire's victory target was a mere 115 but Essex won by 47 runs with Mead taking 9 for 23, in recognition of which 'a collection was made among a small company, which raised £5 10s'⁴⁵⁹. Lillywhite described him 'a really first-class medium-pace bowler with great command over the ball'. In 1893 he hit 66 not out and took ten wickets in a fine seven-wicket victory over that season's champions, Yorkshire, who scored only 41 and 127; Lord Hawke declared that any county which could bowl his team out for under 50 should be playing in the first-class county championship. A fortnight later Mead took 17 wickets in the most creditable draw against the Australians and a collection raised £12, of which Pickett received £4. CE Green made a presentation on the pavilion amid the cheers of the crowd. Over the next few years Mead put in some magnificent performances including, against Hampshire in 1895, another 17-wicket haul – still the only one for Essex in first-class cricket. EHD Sewell wrote that 'to play alongside Walter was an education in itself...a Prince of Spinners whose pace off the pitch was simply phenomenal at times for a slow-medium right-hander. Inasmuch as he was a short man, his lower trajectory assisted the skid...'⁴⁶⁰ He had 'a shuffling, wobbling run-up, and surely the longest first finger in all cricket.... No wonder he could turn it to spin on a plumb 'un! Great, really great chap, Walter Mead, whether as bowler or man. Teetotaler, and medium-slow right-hander without peer.'⁴⁶¹

Mead told *Cricket* that 'I have received the greatest kindness both from Mr Green and Mr Tebbut', but sadly such harmonious relations were not to last. In 1899 the club was

⁴⁵⁸ *Cricket*, 1895, p425.

⁴⁵⁹ There often seems to be no agreement on how much these collections raised. The LSE&I stated at the time that it was £5 10s, but Mead himself told *Cricket* that it was £13.

⁴⁶⁰ *Cricket up to date*. John Murray, 1931, p281.

⁴⁶¹ *Overthrows*, p78.

still enjoying its brief prosperous spell so the committee immediately granted his request for a benefit, by contrast with Pickett who had to wait until they could afford it. He was to pay all the expenses except those of the amateurs and receive all the receipts. The Whit Monday, Yorkshire and Surrey games were potentially too lucrative and therefore excluded so he chose the final home game of the 1900 season, against Middlesex. The committee in its annual report expressed the hope that 'the invaluable services which this sterling cricketer has rendered to the county over the last ten years will meet with substantial and served recognition', but it was not to be. Most of the first day and much of the third was lost to rain and a thigh strain on the second afternoon meant that Mead could take no further part in the match. Gate receipts etc were only £177/15/0 and the committee donated its usual £25. Expenses were £65/13/7 and Mead received just £137/2/3⁴⁶². It was the lowest ever recorded for an Essex professional, and a bitter disappointment.

Mead nevertheless continued to perform well. Coming in as night-watchman against Leicestershire in the last match of the 1902 season, he hit his only first-class century, 119 in just 90 minutes. EHD Sewell claimed that, but for him, it might never have happened⁴⁶³. The secretary, OR Borradaile, called out to Sewell to tell Sailor Young to go in but Young 'hadn't spent valuable years in the Royal Navy for nothing... and so was conveniently not on deck'. Mead was, so Sewell said: 'Get 'em on, Walter, Borry says you've to go in if a wicket falls.' Mead was 12 not out overnight and then made 'almost every stroke in the good books, and several that, if he'd been bowling, he'd have liked t'other fellow to try.' Wisden records that 'although there were few people on the ground a collection raised £9/13/1', but even such bonuses were unable to allay his financial worries.

In 1901 Mead lost his infant daughter and in 1902 his wife, so he was left to bring up three young children, although he did have the assistance of his sister-in-law. It would then have been illegal for them to marry, although they could later have done so under the Deceased Wife's Sister Act 1907 but chose not to. By 1911 the widowed Walter had moved out to North Weald Bassett.

Unable to find winter work, Mead in October 1903 threatened to 'sever his connection with the club' unless it increased his winter pay from 25/- to £2⁴⁶⁴. Wisden described him as 'once more the mainstay' of bowling but also reported that the season had been 'financially very disappointing', so his timing could not have been more unfortunate. The committee decided that for financial reasons there would be no increase in winter wages for anyone, so his request was rejected. In November Green told a special meeting, called to discuss the club's debt of £1500 and its possible winding up, that the money element in cricket was too prominent and the professionals too demanding. 'If membership continues to fall off and the professionals continue to take this grasping and unpatriotic attitude, what point is there in carrying on?' he asked. He had been hurt by the threat of 'a player whose name he refrained from mentioning who had always been looked up to and who had done yeoman service for the county' to sever his connection unless he received a rise of winter pay.

Mead had never been afraid to stand up for himself. In October 1892 he stated that he could not accept a vacancy on the ground staff at 21/- and asked for 25/-. The committee initially declined but in January 1893, after a Special General Meeting had saved the

⁴⁶² Figures from 1901 report. Why he was given 10d too much is not revealed.

⁴⁶³ Well hit! Sir, p89.

⁴⁶⁴ The Cricketer, 1904, p1. ECCC minutes.

club from extinction, they reversed their decision. Perhaps that concession encouraged him to think he could repeat his success, but if so he was sadly mistaken.

On 1 March 1904 Mead sent a letter of resignation and was told that he had already resigned in October. It would not have helped his cause that Tom Russell had recently asked the committee to postpone his benefit because of the financial crisis.

On 10 May 1904 Mead wrote again:

Gentlemen,

I have been listening to the advice of a very old friend and in consequence of that advice I wish to make one more attempt to be on good terms with Essex and to play for them if wanted this season. If you Gentlemen will give me the sum viz. £2 I asked for during the last winter months I shall be delighted to play for Essex at any time in 1904.

By now the committee was getting used to this sort of thing and Borradaile replied in short order:

Mead,

...The Committee are unable to comply with your request, and if you wish to play for the County Eleven you must unconditionally withdraw your previous Letters and the demands made in them.

In the next two years Mead played one first-class game for the South of England, three for WG Grace's short-lived London County side and seven for MCC, for whom he also played in minor matches and was also a ground bowler. He was probably paid on a match-fee basis and perhaps obtained a professional post with a club side, but would undoubtedly have earned more by staying with Essex.

Eventually in May 1906 Mead gave in, writing:

I beg to withdraw my resignation and letters and I am willing to play for the County
Yours obediently

Borradaile replied, this time observing the courtesies of address:

Mr W. Mead

...As you have now withdrawn your letter of resignation and previous demands, [the committee] are willing that you should again take your place in the Essex side.

Mead did take his place in the side and duly picked up his annual haul of over 100 wickets.

Again there were faults on both sides. It is hard to understand why Mead stood by as Carpenter failed to obtain 30/-, when a joint approach might have had more effect, and then thought that the club would give him £2, particularly as its financial problems were well-known. Green's quoting of the £2 demand shows that Mead was the unnamed player 'who had done yeoman service', and his accusation of 'grasping and unpatriotic' attitudes can scarcely have inclined the professional towards compromise. Nor can it have enhanced his sense of fair treatment that in April 1903 the former captain and so-called amateur, Hugh Owen, received a cheque for 200 guineas and various other gifts, albeit by special subscription.

Wisden said that 'Essex had a truly disastrous 1904 season', and the county's own annual report gave the explanation: 'Owing to the disaffection of W Mead and his subsequent resignation, and the entire loss of form by Young, the bowling has been extremely weak'. Essex won just three matches each season Mead was away, whereas

in 1903 they won seven and in 1906 nine, so both sides lost out. Wisden reported that in 1906 there had been a 'most gratifying improvement' so that 'the Leyton public rallied round the eleven and the matches had all their old animation'. The editor, Sydney Pardon, commented: 'One cannot help thinking that with a little tact and diplomacy the whole thing might have been got over when it first presented itself'.

EHD Sewell in his usual pungent style gave a very fair summary⁴⁶⁵:

No county club committee ever equalled the blunder made by Essex when, in the off season of 1903-04, they 'severed relations' with Walter Mead over a piffling matter of a few shillings pay. This could have been avoided by a very little diplomacy and an absence of 'standing on dignity' on the part of the employers.

I know both sides of the facts of the case, and it may be that hipped at the committee's refusal Walter may have acted a little hastily and written a letter which had he slept on it a little longer would have been differently worded. But I shall always think the committee did not give a priceless bowler and a most faithful trier quite a fair do. With a very little more reflection it would have been so easy to have overlooked any literary error Walter in his haste may have committed. We were a very unhappy side without this cheery old warrior, anyway

Happily Mead had no further breach with the county. In 1909-10 he received a winter retainer of £5 a month but he was 42 years old and Borradaile wrote to advise him that 'it would probably be for the last time'. He played on until 1913, when his son Harold twice appeared with him.

In 1920 he finally married his sister-in-law, Mary Ann Hayden, but he was to know further tragedy. Harold was severely wounded in the First World War and never fully recovered, dying in 1921 aged 26. And his daughter Ada Carpenter died three years later aged 32.

Between the wars he stayed in cricket, coaching and umpiring. In 1921 he was the groundsman for Greene King brewers at Bury St Edmunds. In 1939 was back in Ongar describing himself as 'Cricket professional (retired), and he and Jack Russell umpired a match between Essex and Cambridge University. After the death in 1944 of Bill Reeves, seven years his junior, he took over umpiring Essex Club & Ground games and 'gave fatherly advice to all who sought it'.⁴⁶⁶ He was paid 25/- a match and enthusiastically carried on until he was 82, after which he had to retire through ill health. In 1949 Essex gave him a gratuity of £5 and investigated the possibility of further assistance from the Old Cricketers' Benefit Fund. The Essex annual report of 1954 noted the death of 'one of the great bowlers of the "Old School"'.

Pre-war problems

There were after 1905 no further open breaches but relationships between the committee and the professionals remained edgy. The committee asked MCC not to employ suspended professionals, apparently an attempt to close off for Carpenter a source of income that Mead had used. The professionals through Mead requested 30/- hotel expenses for the first game played at Southend but the committee refused because it was a home match. Bill Reeves had arranged to go to South Africa without permission, which was 'wanting in courtesy'. In 1907 the committee received a letter from the former committee member WS Chisenhale Marsh, who complained that the

⁴⁶⁵ An outdoor wallah, p70.

⁴⁶⁶ Annual, 1949, p133.

club was in an unsatisfactory state and cited in particular the ‘discontent of the Professionals’. They took the letter sufficiently seriously to call a special committee meeting and it seems to have had its effect, because from then on the minutes have fewer references to difficulties with the professionals.

Bert Tremlin (1876-1936) was one pro who did have problems. He was born on 18 September 1876 at Westerleigh, 10 miles north-east of Bristol⁴⁶⁷. He therefore had a birth qualification for Gloucestershire and, according to his obituary, was recommended to Essex by WG Grace. He made his debut in 1900 so must presumably have started his residential qualification in 1898, strangely the year the Doctor had his little difference with Charles Kortright (see above p>>>). Wisden in 1902 described him as the successful Second XI’s ‘crack bowler’ and added that he was tried for the First XI ‘but lacked the confidence to do himself justice’. Astonishingly, in 1902 he bowled 43% of the overs and took more wickets (73 at 10.34) than all of the others put together (65). His style was similar to that of Walter Mead and he really established himself in 1905, when Mead was still in dispute with the committee. Never the most fortunate of cricketers, Tremlin took 9 for 126 against Derbyshire and caught the tenth, finishing the season with 99 wickets. A month later he bowled unchanged and took eight wickets in Essex’s famous win against the Australians.

Mead returned at the start of the 1906 season and after two matches Tremlin was dropped. He wrote to resign unless the committee promise to play him in all matches, but Mead was still the better bowler so there was no way they could give in to his demand. They accepted his resignation unless he withdrew it within 48 hours, which he did, but he did not regain his place in the side. At the end of the season Gloucestershire enquired whether he could play for them on his birth qualification. Essex ‘advised them of the facts and left it up to them’, but they did not take up the option.

Unable to get back into the side or to agree terms, Tremlin left in 1907 and spent three successful years in the Lancashire League with Colne, for whom he took over 100 wickets a season at below 10 each. A newspaper article in 1941 recalled that

He used to follow up his deliveries almost regularly, and whilst he may have missed one or two when the ball went over his head, by his doing so he took many more than he otherwise would have done by taking very short hits, sometimes not much farther than the middle of the crease. He had a good spring into the air and he often caught batsmen napping in this way from very hard-hit returns. For Nelson, Constantine took some marvellous catches of this type.⁴⁶⁸

In 1908 he married Ida Amanda Heyworth, whose recently deceased father was a licensed victualler. Bert and Ida had sons James Heyworth and John Charles.

With Mead past 40 and beginning to fade, Essex contacted Tremlin and Colne at the end of the 1909 season to arrange for him to return to Essex in 1910. He enjoyed some of his best years, although he missed the 1912 season through ‘severe illness’ and the committee paid him 25/- a week, the same as his winter pay. In 1913 he took 54 wickets at 27 but Wisden thought that ‘he was not perhaps up to the strain after his illness’. His

⁴⁶⁷ Thanks to the genealogist Brenda Keer, who discovered in 2022 that his birth had been indexed as ‘Burt Trenlin’, so these details differ from what was previously believed. ‘Trenlin’ was a misreading of handwriting but ‘Burt’ was intended by his parents and changed to the more conventional ‘Bert’ on the 1891 census.

⁴⁶⁸ Friday 14 March 1941: Barnoldswick & Earby Times, a local edition of the Colne Times

best season was 1914 when he took 101 wickets, twice bowling unchanged with Douglas to give Essex comfortable wins.

When cricket resumed after the war Tremlin was 41 years old and in 1919 played only ten games, his 29 wickets costing 36 apiece. His treatment was not over-generous to one whose service to the club had begun twenty years earlier. He was offered £4 a week as a ground bowler, but ‘his wages [were] to cease during the time he is assisting the county’, when he would have had a match fee and he was to have no benefit ‘till after a player of longer standing’, presumably Bill Reeves. Tremlin replied that he ‘was not prepared to accept the offer as the committee could not see their way clear to grant him a benefit’. Douglas as captain was asked to ‘communicate with him and confer with the chairman and the treasurer’. Tremlin did not play after 1919 and there is no further mention of the matter, so presumably it came to nothing.

After leaving Essex, Tremlin had a varied and successful career⁴⁶⁹. By 1921 he had returned to his wife’s native Lancashire to be professional for Pilkington Brothers in St Helens. In 1922 he became licensee of the Derby Hotel in Colne and applied to the Lancashire League to play for them as an amateur. They refused so he played a year for neighbouring Earby, which in his time was in Yorkshire but was transferred to Lancashire in 1924. In 1923 and 1924 he stood as a first-class umpire and then for ten years was steward and groundsman for Yorkshire Gentlemen CC at Escrick Park, York. In 1935 he returned to Essex to take up a post as groundsman and coach at Forest School, but he died suddenly in the Jubilee Hospital Woodford Green on 12 April 1936. In a strange twist, he was succeeded at Forest by Walter Mead.

* * * * *

In 1913 Mr AW Cooper complained that ‘a gross assault had been made on his son by four other ground staff’ – Percy Toone⁴⁷⁰, Harry Smith, Jack Freeman and Harold Mead. The men admitted ‘ragging’ but denied assault. A Special Committee found that Toone was the ringleader and he was not reengaged on the ground staff, although he returned for Essex and appeared fairly regularly at the age of 37 in 1920. A quick right-arm bowler, he did the hat-trick with his first three balls against Kent. The other three were severely reprimanded but kept their places on the staff. So too did Norman Cooper, but after becoming a private in the Royal Fusiliers he was discharged through ill health and did not rejoin the staff after the First World War.

Harold Mead, son of Walter, had joined Essex as a ground bowler and member of the ground staff in 1911 aged only fifteen. He immediately asked for his wages to be raised from 25/- to 30/- a week and for his railway fares to be paid; he got the increase but not the fares. Harold inherited his father’s spirit but not his skill as a bowler, for in four first-class matches he took only three wickets and he was not retained after the outbreak of the First World War.

Harry Smith joined the ground staff in 1907 at 15/- a week. In 1909 his wages were increased to £1 and he ‘should bowl in the nets in the afternoon’. Though his record on and off the field was undistinguished, he wrote at the outbreak of the First World War requesting a retaining fee and the committee replied in their familiar pessimistic way

⁴⁶⁹ Second sentence in this paragraph from the 1921 census, the rest based on a search of British Newspaper Archive on “Bert Tremlin”, 29 Dec 2022.

⁴⁷⁰ He first appears in the minute-books as PES Toone, initials that were also given on the 1911 census and apparently when he married in 1930. The only 17-year-old Percy Toone on the 1901 census was born in Surrey, whereas this one was born in Colchester.

that 'if the club were still in existence employment should be given to H. Smith on his return from the war'. A fast-medium right-arm bowler, he was given employment as a ground bowler in March 1919 when Bert Tremlin declined the offer. Smith played in seventeen matches between 1920 and 1922 without great success. He then disappeared not only from Essex cricket but also from the face of the earth, no trace of his subsequent movements or death having been discovered.

'Entirely ruined by bullying': Augustus Bernard 'Joe' Hipkin (1900-1956)

In the early 1920s my grandfather was hon. treasurer of The Warren, a cricket club based in Chingford⁴⁷¹. Their star player was a hard-hitting batsman and slow left-arm bowler who in 1921 described himself as an out-of-work tree-feller. My father remembered that he eked out a living doing odd jobs around the area. In 1923 John Pracy persuaded him to go down to the County Ground for a pre-season trial and, because he was so badly off, lent him the fare. In the nets he bowled Johnny Douglas, thereby earning himself the half-crown that the great man balanced on the stumps and gave to any young player who could disturb them. Even before he became captain Douglas had declared 'our great need is for a slow left-hand bowler'⁴⁷², and now he thought he had found one. Within a fortnight the two men were opening the bowling in Essex's first match of the season.

Augustus Bernard Hipkin was born at Brancaster on the north Norfolk coast on 8 August 1900. Older Hipkins in the village were described as agricultural labourers but his father, Ambrose, was a golf greensman. Around 1904 he took up a similar job for the Corporation of London, and moved to 62 Selwyn Avenue, Walthamstow. Norfolk was an area of great agricultural depression so many people moved to the north-east London suburbs in search of work and he was probably affected by similar pressures⁴⁷³. In May 1916, aged 15¾ Bernard, as he was then known, was accepted as a Boy Seaman on HMS *Impregnable*, only to be invalided out five months later. In 1917, still only 17¼, he signed up with the Middlesex Regiment, when he described himself as a labourer.

Hipkin soon settled into the Essex side and became a favourite with the Leyton crowd, who nicknamed him Joe because of his resemblance to the boxer Joe Beckett. 'Cricketer' in the *Manchester Guardian* described two of his catches as 'performed with an engaging sort of urchin alacrity', and doubtless it was this approach that appealed to the Essex faithful. Among them was my father, who naturally hero-worshipped the famous cricketer who often visited his parents' cottage and shop. Some seventy years later, Thomas Lesser remembered that Hipkin took a short run and got through his overs very quickly. In 1924 he topped the Essex averages with 109 wickets, including a hat-trick against Lancashire. Wisden commented:

Hipkin became a real power in the side. From being a change bowler taking 43 wickets at an average of 31, he rose to be the chief bowler, dismissing 109 batsmen. Length, flight and spin made him difficult on a drying turf. Altogether he gave promise of being the effective slow bowler Essex have needed since the retirement of Mead.

Joe Hipkin was a gifted all-round sportsman. As befitted a goalkeeper for Charlton Athletic, he was a magnificent fielder and held 209 catches in 232 matches. When I told

⁴⁷¹ Personal recollections in this section from my parents, Jack and Phyllis Pracy.

⁴⁷² LEMMON, *Douglas*, p41.

⁴⁷³ British Army Pension Records, 1914-20. Information about HMS *Impregnable* accessed Dec 2007 at: <http://www.gwpda.org/naval/rnbovest.htm>

my mother this, she was not surprised: 'He had hands like shovels,' she remembered. In a match at Leyton in 1923, Hipkin's catching ability worked against Essex. Middlesex were already using their twelfth man when a further indisposition forced them to borrow Essex's – Hipkin. Douglas, having guided Essex from a perilous 137 for 6 to the security of 376 for 8, was on 96 and seemed to have hit the four that would have brought up his century, when Hipkin raced round the boundary and clung on at full stretch to a brilliant one-handed catch. In the professionals' dressing-room afterwards, Hipkin convinced himself that the skipper would be furious but plucked up courage to go to the amateurs' room and apologise. 'You bloody fool, Hipkin,' Douglas growled. 'I would have broken your neck if you had missed it.'⁴⁷⁴

Douglas may to an extent have been the author of his own misfortune, for Hipkin would have been in the Essex side if the captain had not followed the all-too-frequent practice of saving on match money by replacing a contracted professional with an occasional amateur⁴⁷⁵. Major Noel Carbutt, a leg-break and googly bowler, had in 1920 bowled well for Combined Services and for the Army, but when Essex called him up had played no first-class cricket for over a year. He turned out only twice for Essex, taking two meaningless Middlesex wickets when the game was dead but conceding a total of 202 runs in just 36 overs.

Joe Hipkin, like Jack Russell, had a difficult relationship with Douglas, although in his case the criticisms seem to have been more justified. The Worcestershire professional Fred Root once heard Douglas declare: 'Joe, if you bowl that sort of tripe again I'll punch your head.' Sir Home Gordon said that Douglas 'entirely ruined Hipkin as a player by bullying him'. Others thought that he was relatively tolerant of Hipkin, and that the professional was his own worst enemy. His batting improved - against Somerset in 1926 he hit 85 of a 157 last-wicket partnership with Russell that nearly gave Essex the game – but his bowling fell away. He became more concerned with saving runs than with taking wickets; as Tom Pearce recalled, 'he was the first to the scorebook to see how many runs he had conceded'. In 1927 he made his two first-class centuries but took only 34 wickets.

In 1929, perhaps feeling somewhat liberated by the departure of Douglas, Hipkin came closest to the double, with 850 runs and 95 wickets. In the following winter, Essex paid him bonuses totalling £5 'for his work in the office and on the ground'; my mother doubted whether he would have been much good at paperwork, so he perhaps reverted to his old trade and did some handyman jobs. After that his career declined rapidly and he played his last first-class match in July 1931, a few days short of his 31st birthday – the very age at which the career of that great slow bowler, Tich Freeman, really began.

Events off the field did as much as those on it to bring about the end of Hipkin's career. After the 1930 season the question of his reengagement was subject to a captain's report. A proposal that he should, provided he worked on the ground, receive £2 10s winter pay was carried, but there was one dissident. In November 1930 the secretary advanced him £3 7s 'in respect of the maintenance order of his wife and child'. Castor's action was approved, but he was instructed to tell Hipkin that the advance would be

⁴⁷⁴ Anecdote from LEMMON, *Douglas*, p25.

⁴⁷⁵ In 1920 Douglas was one of a four-man selection committee, the others being the Chairman, HD Swan, the most experienced amateur, Percy Perrin, and the amateur wicket-keeper batsman Colin McIver. By 1923 McIver had retired and may have been replaced, but it is hard to imagine that Douglas would not still have had a major influence. Hipkin is unlikely to have been dropped for poor form, since his 2 for 80 was one of the less undistinguished bowling performances in the previous game, a heavy defeat by Yorkshire.

deducted from his first match money of the new season, and that no more money would be forthcoming. In February 1931 'paragraphs...appeared in the press about this player'⁴⁷⁶ and his 'general unsatisfactory conduct was discussed', although the decision about what action to take was deferred. In July 1931 it was decided not to reengage him, although he was given an unexplained gratuity of £2 before his departure. In his Essex career he scored 4,239 runs at 15.64 and took 518 wickets at 25.82.

Before the 1932 season Hipkin was appointed professional to Uddingston CC, then the Scottish champions. 'Tron Kirk' in the *Edinburgh Evening News* for 17 February 1932 reported:

Although Hipkin ... did little for his county, Essex, last season, it must not be thought that the club is getting a spent force ... The odd thing about Hipkin is that he can spin the ball in the most devastating manner at the nets. It may be that a season with a club may help him recover his confidence. It will not be surprising if he turns out to be one of the most dangerous bowlers in Scottish cricket in 1932.

Newspaper reports show that Tron Kirk's prediction was spot on: over the next twelve years, Hipkin took hundreds of wickets for Uddingston. In 1944 he was appointed captain by Uddingston's neighbours and great rivals, West of Scotland, and continued playing for them until 1952, when he was 52.

In 1927 Hipkin had married Hilda M Smith in Romford and they soon had son Douglas Bernard, presumably named after Hipkin's captain and his own preferred forename, but it did not work out well. They separated by agreement in 1929 but in 1931 she sued him for maintenance of £3 15s. He was committed to a month in prison but the sentence was suspended to allow him time to raise the money. They were divorced and Hilda was given custody of their son, but Douglas later went to Glasgow where tragically he died aged only six. In 1935 Hipkin was remarried, to Flora McNeil Frew who died in 1986. All three were buried in Bellshill (Bothwellpark) Cemetery.

Hipkin became a successful professional with Uddingstone CC in Glasgow and later with the West of Scotland club, although his premature death aged 56 was not unrelated to his alcoholic intake. Harold Faragher remembered him as a 'real character' who everybody knew, but he 'never had any money' and the members often bought him drinks. Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson said that he 'used to like his alcohol rather too much'. Frank Vigar, who was the pro at the West of Scotland club at the time of Joe's death, recalled that 'he died in the bar, filled up with pints of whisky by directors etc'.

James Albert Cutmore (1898-1985)

Even under the rather more liberal regime that began with the move away from Leyton, behaviour was as important as performance.

Jimmy Cutmore was born in Walthamstow on 28 December 1898 and in 1911 was living with his uncle, a musician and important influence in his later life. He joined the Royal Navy a week after his 16th birthday career and stayed for nearly six years. He was one of three young professional cricketers engaged by Glamorgan CCC in 1921, the year they became a first-class county, but he was not retained.

Cutmore's career began in late 1924 and early 1925 with a few undistinguished performances in the lower order, but then an injury to Eastman gave him a chance to

⁴⁷⁶ I couldn't find these paragraphs in the *Walthamstow Guardian* or the *Leytonstone Express & Independent*.

open the innings. He seized the opportunity to establish himself as the regular opener and was capped later in the season. He was a hard-hitting batsman who became a model of consistency, scoring over a thousand runs in each of his eleven full seasons from 1925 to 1935. Only he, Nichols and Jack O'Connor (both England cricketers) got the maximum 50/- winter pay.

His batting complemented that of Dudley Pope [see below p>>>] and the pair formed a most effective opening partnership, but even Cutmore never opened with quite the freedom of a Leonard Crawley. Donald Faulkner, who as a boy watched Essex at Leyton, explained the plight of the professional cricketer from the spectator's point of view: '...With the Cutmores and the Popes it was their livelihood...whereas with an amateur, it wasn't their living – oh well, if I'm not playing next week it doesn't much matter...'

Cutmore's best season was 1934 when he scored 1813 runs at 40.81. He often made his runs when most needed and in this season he twice saw Essex home to narrow two-wicket victories. At Gravesend in May Kent set Essex 163 to win and reduced them to 89 for 8 with five ducks and Tich Freeman apparently irresistible. Then Cutmore, who had opened the innings, was joined by Peter Smith and the pair knocked off the runs, Cutmore finishing on 97 not out. At Chelmsford in June Leicestershire set Essex a mere 88 to win but again they collapsed and only Cutmore stood firm with an unbeaten 36 out of 88 for 8.

In October 1934 Nichols and Cutmore requested benefits and 'the Secretary was instructed to submit the records of service of each of these Professionals'. Both at that point had exemplary disciplinary records so it was probably for purely cricketing reasons that Nichols, almost as good a batsman and a far better bowler, was granted a benefit for the 1936 season. Cutmore was told that 'at present the Committee could not see their way clear to granting him a benefit but intended to review the position again at a later date'. He must have been hoping that it would be his turn in 1937, but instead his career came to an abrupt end.

In August 1934 the committee decided that 'under no circumstances during the Playing Season could permission be granted to regular members of the County Team to play in Matches not arranged by the Committee' and 'agreed that a clause to this effect be inserted in all agreements'. Professionals could play in charity matches but 'the Committee would expect them to give preference to matches arranged for Essex charities'. In January 1936 they were told that 'contrary to a definite clause in the agreement, Cutmore at least had played Sunday cricket during the season'. The captain, Tom Pearce, had been asked and refused permission. It was agreed to write to Cutmore 'pointing out that breaches of the agreement would be met with drastic action'.

At first no such action was taken but unfortunately in 1935 Cutmore's batting average had fallen from 41 to 22, and he began the 1936 season in the worst form of his career. He hit a fine 137 against the Indians but scored only 208 runs in eight championship matches and was dropped.

In August 1936 Cutmore went to Forfarshire on a month's contract to take over from Gordon Hodgson, an outstanding footballer who is still fourth on the all-time list of goal-scorers in top-flight English football. He was also a fast bowler for Lancashire but football was always his priority so he returned early to his club, Aston Villa, for the new season. He wasn't much of a batsman and Cutmore wasn't much of a bowler so he wasn't a like-for-like replacement. Cutmore didn't get off to the best of starts when his

cricket bag went missing on his arrival in Dundee, but it had gone on to Arbroath and was soon returned. He began his month with a sparkling 74 against Lord Carnegie's XI but finished with only 143 runs in five innings. In his last match Forfarshire played West Lothian and he came up against Charlie Benham's son Fred, who scored 64 while Cutmore disappointed with a duck. The Dundee newspapers reported that he was expected to get a benefit in 1937, but that did not happen.

At the end of the season, 'after a full discussion and in view of Cutmore's unsatisfactory form and general behaviour it was agreed to dispense with the services of this player'.⁴⁷⁷ He asked the committee to meet him and reconsider their decision but they refused, agreeing unanimously that 'no good can come from an interview'. He had lost his job and his benefit. The harshness of his treatment is shown by the fact that he played 342 matches for Essex, and no other professional who played more than 240 was refused a benefit.

Officially, Cutmore was also refused a 'monetary grant', although he may have been given a small one through the back door. He and Joe Hipkin, like all the professionals, did their fair share of ground bowling. They usually earned £20-£30 a year, presumably dependent on how much they did, but each in his last year was paid over £50. No explanation for this is given, but it may have represented a small bonus for two established professionals who had left under a cloud and were not going to get benefits.

Edgar 'Johnny' Johnson realised that there was more to the abrupt end of Cutmore's career than a brief loss of form. He 'must have fallen out with the authorities... For some reason or other he didn't suit the Essex pattern, though he scored a lot of runs for Essex during his time there, they suddenly parted company with him...' After the Second World War Mr Johnson took up hockey and met Cutmore who was playing for Brentwood and 'I had the privilege of playing the week he was 65 and also again in the week he was 70...' Tom Pearce said that at the age of 74 he was banned from playing hockey for 'rough play',

Harold Faragher also watched him at Leyton and got to know him later, 'quite an attractive character, a good singer who did professional work on the stage'. The 1911 census shows him living with his uncle George Thompson, described as a musician, so that may well be where he learnt the trade. During his cricket career Cutmore often supplemented his income with music hall work but he was not quite good enough to make a full-time living from it, so became a sales rep with Horlicks. He remained very fit and died of a heart attack shortly before his 87th birthday.

Lawrence Charles Eastman (1897-1941)

Laurie Eastman was born at Enfield Wash in Middlesex on 3 June 1897 and the family moved to Leyton in 1902. Laurie attended Ruckholt Road School, and then the Leyton Technical Institute, which offered further education for boys of 13+. He was one of those middle-class cricketers who could have played as an amateur or a professional, and in fact did both. He wanted to go into the medical profession but his plans were disrupted by the First World War, in which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and the Military Medal. In 1921 he was a Inland Revenue clerk working for the Land Revenue department in Lincolns Inn Fields. He played six matches in 1920 and six in 1921 as an amateur. From 1922 until 1926 he was assistant secretary and played more or less full-time. In 1927 he officially turned professional (see above p>>>). A

⁴⁷⁷ ECCC minutes 14 September 1936.

tall hard-hitting right-handed batsman, he initially bowled medium-pace but changed to leg-spin.

It is rather surprising with his background that in May 1930 Eastman's 'general behaviour meant that Mr Morris would have to interview him'. He had been refused permission to take up a coaching appointment in Cambridge for the last fortnight in April, presumably so that he could participate in pre-season training, and he perhaps disobeyed that instruction. He played only once that season, but that was due to ill health, probably shoulder trouble⁴⁷⁸. In late May he was 'tried against Gidea Park but was still unfit', so it was decided to send him 'to be examined by Mr Bristow of Harley Street – the Club to bear the expense in respect of this examination but not of subsequent treatment'. He played against Lancashire in July but scored only seven and did not bowl so evidently had not recovered. He was not offered a winter retainer and his reengagement in 1931 was subject to a medical report.

He was reengaged but on 27 July 1931 the committee voted not to renew the contracts of Eastman and Hipkin. The decision on Hipkin stood, but on 7 September they decided that 'Eastman was to be reprieved at 30/- a week during the winter'. That was the rate for the younger professionals, even though Eastman was with the retirement of Russell the most experienced of the pros. He was also to be sent a letter about 'certain termination of future employment' if his form was unsatisfactory in 1932. That would seem a harsh judgment, because Eastman's all-round form was better than that of anyone other than O'Connor and Nichols. Perhaps there were still lingering doubts about his fitness or conduct, for in 1932 his form was much the same but the minutes record no further reservations about him.

Evidently Eastman satisfied the committee. In 1932 a financial crisis forced them to give bonuses in lieu of winter pay, and he had the top rate along with O'Connor, Nichols and Cutmore. He apparently experienced financial problems not entirely of his own making, for after the 1933 season he was granted £5 'for sympathetic reasons and in view of the position disclosed in his letter'. He had enjoyed his best season with the bat, scoring 1338 runs at 32.63, with three of his seven centuries for Essex. His request for a further advance on his wages was 'received sympathetically' but there was 'no adequate reason' for granting it. In April 1934 the committee did grant his request for a loan of £32 to be paid back at £2 a week – presumably from his higher summer wages. The minutes also reported without comment 'Eastman's behaviour in the acceptance of a Frinton Coaching engagement'. Over the next few years Eastman was a popular member of a successful side and no further disciplinary problems were recorded. The Lancashire and England off-spinner Cecil Parkin – whose career was virtually ended when he wrote a newspaper article criticising the England captain AER Gilligan – enjoyed watching Eastman, 'a good allrounder and a very happy fellow'⁴⁷⁹.

In May 1938 the committee decided to grant Eastman a benefit in the following season. There was no official rule about when professionals got their benefits, but earlier in the 1930s O'Connor and Nichols had theirs twelve years after debut. Eastman's was twelve years after he turned pro, so it seems that his period as an amateur was not taken into consideration. He was to have any match other than over the Bank Holiday and against the West Indian tourists. Like Nichols, he chose an August match at Southend against a neighbouring county, in his case Middlesex. As so often seems to have happened to beneficiaries, he was injured in the course of the match. Afterwards he claimed that he

⁴⁷⁸ Wisden in 1933 said he was suffering from that.

⁴⁷⁹ Cricket triumphs and troubles, C Nicholls, 1936, p161.

had batted for Essex in every position from no. 1 to no. 10 and it was the only time he had ever been no. 11. In a thrilling finish, he helped Ray Smith add 15 for the last wicket but was then out and Essex lost by five runs. The benefit raised £997/11/1 with a further £50 deducted for an advance loan. The club also donated £25 and paid the Pluvius Insurance premium of £35. Sadly, that was the last first-class match Eastman played. He played in charity matches for the London Counties team and captained them on their first appearance at Lord's, but did not have long to enjoy his benefit.

On the 1939 Register Eastman stated that he was a statistical clerk for Page, Calnan & Co., a leading firm of builder's merchants. This may well have been a regular winter job arranged by Clement Calnan, an amateur who played four matches for Essex without success but was an enthusiastic supporter. Eastman was listed on the Register as an ARP Organising Officer for his firm and in 1941 he was on duty when a bomb exploded close to him and he died at Harefield Hospital after an operation. His son Michael said that he was a heavy smoker and on the death certificate the cause of death was given as lung cancer, although the shock of the blast must also have contributed. Michael added that Laurie's younger brother George was a non-smoker and lived to be almost 88. George kept wicket most capably in 48 matches for Essex, but could not retain his place because he averaged below 7 with the bat.

Chapter 16: Away from Leyton, 1928-1945

After the First World War match money was set at £5 10s for home games and £6 10s away. That was not an overgenerous response to First World War inflation, although the club did agree to pay all railway fares to outmatches. In March 1920 the chairman and the treasurer met the professionals to agree wages but the outcome was not recorded. The committee may not have been entirely happy with it, for in August Essex proposed to a meeting at Lord's that 'all professionals' pay in England should be standardised'. Again it came to nothing, but that may have been to Essex's advantage, because as one of the poorest counties they would not have been able to match the money paid by the big clubs.

The loss of the minute-book covering the 1920s means that we know little about the Essex professionals during that period. There was probably a modest improvement in their conditions, and by 1929 standard match money was £8. During the last few years at Leyton, however, there was a major slump throughout the country, and for a while their very livelihoods were at risk. By the time Essex left Leyton the team usually included eight professionals, but they were scarcely less subservient to the committee than their predecessors half a century earlier.

From 1933 the improvement in Essex's fortunes coincided with a gradual upturn in the economy, at least in the South-East. Although there was still a long way to go, the professionals were treated much better than their predecessors, and their contributions to the Second World War were correspondingly more significant.

'Drastic economies'

As they reported to Leyton at the beginning of the 1928 season the professionals would have regarded the future with some optimism. The country was enjoying a modest degree of prosperity that they and their club were sharing. The team had finished in the top half of the table three years running, so win money provided a useful bonus. A concerted membership drive had made inroads into the financial deficit, so players had a degree of security. John Freeman had enjoyed an Essex record benefit of £1070 and

hopes were high that Jack Russell would beat it. Even before the First World War cricketers not selected for official tours had begun to coach and play abroad (from Essex Buckenham had spent a winter in New Zealand and Sailor Young one in the West Indies). In 1927-8 no fewer than three players obtained winter contracts overseas – Russell at Bloemfontein, O’Connor at Cape Town and Eastman at Otago.

The 1928 season was, however, as disastrous for the professionals as for the rest of the club. The policy of playing amateurs, some of whom were simply not up to first-class cricket, did nothing for the pros’ morale or their match money. With only two wins, talent and win money were minimal. Russell’s benefit fell well short of expectations and the younger pros must have worried that even if their careers lasted long enough for them to be awarded one it might be equally disappointing. Membership which in 1926 reached a record 2947 fell steadily until in 1933 it was only 1825, with the consequent loss of money to pay the professionals’ wages.

The world financial crisis that began in 1929 with the Wall Street Crash led in 1931 to a run on the pound and the establishment in Britain of the National Government, which cut the pay of all public servants by ten per cent. All of this coincided for Essex with a season in which results were poor and the experimental festival match at Clacton was the only home game unaffected by rain. The government ruled that professional cricketers were classified as manual labourers for National Insurance purposes, and the club had to find an additional £115 for that.

The 1932 yearbook reported that ‘drastic economies have been put into force’ and one of the cuts chosen by the committee, as by the government, was to reduce the pay of its employees. The decision, taken in October 1931, was fully recorded in the minutes:

After a long and full discussion, it was decided that the match pay of capped professionals be reduced to the following:

	Capped	Uncapped
Home:	£6 per match	£3
Midweek away:	£8 ”	£5
Weekend away:	£9 ”	£6

It was further decided that in any satisfactory financial year the value of the mark by which talent money is reckoned to be increased proportionately.

In May 1932 the professionals requested a revision of their reduced pay but were told it was impossible. The committee ‘would do so as soon as practicable’ and, for the first time, the pros were invited to be present at the meeting.

The 1932 season was no better on or off the field and the club again suffered heavy losses. In September 1929 Essex, £1750 in debt, had decided to ‘continue [winter pay] for now, but subject to re-examination’. In October 1932 the committee voted, for the only time since it was introduced in 1895, not to pay it, although ‘cases of hardship were to be examined on their merits’. The decision indeed meant real hardship. The senior professionals – Cutmore, Eastman, Nichols and O’Connor - could have expected winter pay of £2/10/- a week, or £85 in eight months. The junior pros – Sheffield, Peter Smith and Pope – would have had £2 and the latest recruit, Taylor, 30/-. A month later the committee partially reversed their decision, agreeing ‘bonuses in lieu of winter pay’. The senior pros had £25 each, the juniors £15 and Taylor £10. In April 1933 the committee awarded further bonuses of £12/10/- to the seniors, £7/10/- to the juniors and £5 to Taylor. The committee took no pleasure in making these cuts and did its best to

ameliorate them, but the pros received less than half their full winter pay and it must have been a very worrying time for them.

It was, however, the nadir of the club's fortunes and theirs. The clouds began to clear in 1933, the last year at Leyton. Improved results brought higher attendances and Essex finally gave up the unequal struggle to hang on to the old ground. The club made a small profit of £100 and the committee partially restored the cuts made in the previous two years. Capped professionals were to have £8 rather than £6 for home matches, which included Lord's and The Oval because they were so close, although from the increase they were to find their fares. Pay for away matches was unchanged. The young professionals had winter retainers of £2 per week and presumably the seniors had £2 10s, although that is not stated.

A list of salaries for seasons 1933-5, prepared for tax purposes, indicates that capped players would normally have got a minimum of £300, unless they were badly out of form. The two stars, Nichols and O'Connor, twice exceeded £400 and thus earned more than the Secretary, although he did have perks such as a first-class railway season ticket. Uncapped pros by contrast seldom had more than £150, and could earn as little as £57. Every player's income was different, so clearly the figures were not set salaries but included match and win money, talent money, coaching engagements, ground bowling and winter pay.

A profit of £100 scarcely represented the riches of Croesus. The committee, apprehensive about the uncharted waters of the peripatetic existence that was to begin in 1934, remained understandably cautious. The position of the capped professionals was still worse than before 1931, so they submitted a letter 'asking for some restoration of pay to compensate for the reduction made two years ago'. The finance sub-committee therefore recommended to the full committee that 'the principle be restated that pay should be on a match basis and not an annual salary'. In October letters explaining the position was sent to all the capped pros so they asked for a further meeting but the committee 'was not prepared to go further at present'.

The professionals were expected to reply to their letters but after a month none of them had done so. Perhaps seeing this as a form of group passive resistance, the committee got tough:

In view of the non-receipt of acknowledgements from the Capped Professionals of the letter stating that the terms of 1934 could not be reconsidered, it was decided that agreements applying to the 1934 season be sent to them for signature. The Hon. Treasurer was authorised to withdraw winter payments in the event of those signatures not being signed.

By December Cutmore, Eastman, Pope, Smith and Taylor had signed their agreements. O'Connor and Nichols as the most senior pros may have held out a little longer but there is no further mention of the matter so they presumably fell into line.

In 1934 Essex lost £415 but income from the lucrative Australian Test series more than outweighed that and the club made an overall profit of £1103. Wages totalled £1179 and talent money £211. At the end of the season the four senior pros were again offered £2/10/- winter wages, with £2 for Pope and Peter Smith. Sheffield and Taylor were given only 30/-, although that was not an economy measure but because the committee were disappointed with their form (see next section). It was also agreed that in 1935 Nichols and O'Connor should have an extra £1 per match. The capped pros may have missed a trick in not pressing for a restoration of their pay cuts when the club was in profit, for when they did so after the 1935 season they were told that 'nothing could be

done until the final figures were known'. Although a loss of £650 was eventually reported, the committee did discuss at length the possibility of increasing the professionals' pay but decided that it could not be done. After a financially successful 1938 season talent money was increased as promised, from 5/- per mark to 6/-, but in 1939 inclement weather and Eastman's benefit caused a loss of £1000 and a cut back to 5/-.

In 1936 the club arranged workmen's compensation insurance with the Excess Insurance Co. Ltd at 7/6 for cricketers and gatemen and 2/6 for clerical staff. Pros were to have no compensation for injury, but were to rely on the standard staff wage and any insurance payout, although in practice there was some flexibility. In 1938 Eastman was refused match money when he missed two matches through injury, but Sonny Avery was given an ex gratia payment of £10 when it became apparent that his injury 'would affect him for at least a month'.

Playing cricket can obviously be a hazardous occupation but being a gateman could be equally so. At Leyton the chief steward, former police inspector Henry Pink, had seen two men interfering with a car behind the pavilion. He asked them to leave the ground and the defendant, Joseph Anderson, asked 'Who will put me out?' 'I will have a try,' replied Pink, whereupon Anderson knocked him to the ground and kicked him, breaking his front teeth. Anderson was fined £5 and paid the doctor's fee of 5/-.

In the days before the National Health Service, medical fees were an important consideration and the club usually paid them, but only with committee approval. In 1935 they sent Nichols and the young professional Vic Evans to recuperate on a farm, paying the expenses. Evans was diagnosed with a heart problem and the Secretary arranged for him to work 'somewhere in the country'. In 1938 they agreed to pay eight guineas for treatment to Peter Smith's shoulder. The NHS was created in July 1948 and the following year the committee made 'an ex gratia payment of £6/6/0 to WB Morris, being half an account for treatment to an injured knee'. In 1953 they refused to pay Avery's medical fees because they said he should have used the NHS. In 1956 they paid match money to Gordon Barker and Mickey Bear when they were injured, although the minutes rather mysteriously say that Barker's eye injury 'ought never to have occurred'.

'Making room for amateurs'

Before the First World War, this was for two almost opposite reasons not a major issue at Essex. On the one hand, some of the amateurs were simply better cricketers: Kenneth Gibson replaced Edward Russell because he was a more capable wicket-keeper, not to save money. On the other hand, the professionals were kept firmly in their place, so that any legitimate grievances they may have had unlikely to have been aired.

It was in the 1920s under Johnny Douglas that Essex most often dropped professionals to play occasional amateurs, as in the case of Joe Hipkin and Major Noel Carbutt. (See above p>>>) Douglas's apparent preference for 'loyal [amateur] fellows' rather than professionals was probably one of the reasons why the pros became 'disgruntled' (see above p>>>). There was nominally a selection committee, but even in the more liberal time of Doug Insole and Trevor Bailey after the war it never met⁴⁸⁰, so in practice Douglas would have been responsible for team selection. This was a crucial period in the development of the club and it is particularly frustrating that the minute-book is

⁴⁸⁰ BAILEY. Wickets, p49.

missing. It would probably have recorded changing attitudes towards the pros and details of any disaffection among them.

Three factors mean that the 1930s saw significant change. First, the move from Leyton and the change of captaincy marked the coming of a more liberal regime. Secondly, professionals were becoming more assertive in standing up for their rights and seeking additional sources of income outside the Club. Thirdly, whereas in the 1920s there were few part-time amateurs worth their place in the side, in the 1930s Pearce and Wilcox, Crawley and Stephenson, Farnes and Read were fine cricketers who would have held their own in any company. Senior pros like Nichols and O'Connor were fixtures in the side, but younger professionals were often dropped to make way for such amateurs.

If such decisions were made before 1914 the minutes just recorded them without explanation, but in the 1930s the reasons behind them are often dealt with at length. The cases of Roy Sheffield and Reg Taylor show why young players were sometimes dropped when they did not quite fulfil their early potential. The son of a pawnbroker, Sheffield was educated at the Coopers' School, Bow. An attractive and much travelled character whose exploits included being arrested by Paraguay on suspicion of being a spy in its war with Bolivia, he settled into the Essex side immediately on his debut in June 1929. He appeared to be the answer to their perennial search for a regular wicket-keeper and was the first choice in that role for the next four seasons. Taylor was the son of a self-employed consultant mechanical engineer. He was educated at Southend High School and played regularly for the local club. He established himself in the side in 1932 as a batsman and scored over a thousand runs in 1933. Their good form was rewarded with the standard junior professionals' winter retainer of £2.

Early in 1934 Sheffield was dropped in favour of Tom Wade because of a loss of form behind the stumps: having consistently averaged almost two victims a match, he claimed only four in the first eight games of the season. Taylor's form also fell away and he averaged only 14. At the end of the season the minutes devoted a whole paragraph to Sheffield and Taylor:

The Committee expressed great disappointment at the form shewn [sic] by these professionals. The Secretary was instructed to inform them that their Winter Retainers would be reduced to 30/- and that the future of their employment with the club would be resultant on the form shewn next season.

Sheffield returned to the side in June 1935 to play purely as a batsman, although he also kept in five games when Wade was injured. Evidently he was back in favour for he, Wade and Peter Smith had weekly winter retainers of £2, the rate immediately below that offered to the four senior pros. Taylor missed the whole of the 1935 season through injury but was given £1 a week in the winter 'provided he accepts coaching made available by the Club'. Jack Durston, the old England and Middlesex fast bowler who had recently retired, had a school where he gave twice-weekly coaching sessions to several of the young Essex pros; the minutes noted that Taylor was among those who 'had made great progress'.

Sheffield and Taylor started well in 1936 but lost form just as capable amateurs such as Crawley, Brian Belle and Nicholas Vere Hodge were becoming available during the holidays. Both were therefore dropped for some games in August and so they wrote to request match money when 'stood down for amateurs'. The committee refused, but their response suggests that they were aware of past criticisms and that they had thought through their policy carefully: Sheffield and Taylor were not dropped 'to make room for amateurs of questionable ability, but to strengthen the side'. They agreed to grant

match money for the Cambridge University game where the professionals 'did make room for young amateurs', but 'in future professionals dropped from the side in order to strengthen the team by the inclusion of amateur players would not receive match money'. It may have been to make a point that the committee arranged for Taylor to stand as an umpire in Essex's 1937 game against Cambridge, the only time he did so in a first-class match.

The committee were still keen to include amateurs and wrote to twenty-three gentlemen asking whether they would be available in 1937. Evidently a good number were, for Home Gordon commented: 'The cricket shown was keen and no other County emulated the excellent example of giving trials to so many amateurs', although even he admitted that they had 'not quite the quality nor the time available to maintain their places'.⁴⁸¹ In 1938 the selection committee 'agreed that as many amateurs be included as possible, due consideration being given to the requirements of batting bowling etc'. That does not seem entirely consistent with the policy laid down in 1936, and it certainly was not guaranteed to advance the careers of the young pros. One of them, Frank Vigar, made his debut in 1938 and later recalled that some of the amateurs 'really were awful'. As late as 1949 Denys Wilcox 'expressed the desire to see more amateur players in the county side' and the President, Hubert Ashton, 'agreed that his suggestion should have the attention of the Selection Committee'. Trevor Bailey admitted that one reason for dropping pros was to save money, and made the reasonable point that festival crowds might prefer to see a local amateur rather than a run-of-the-mill professional⁴⁸².

After 1936 the careers of Roy Sheffield and Reg Taylor diverged. Sheffield had in the winter of 1935-6 suffered a severe knee injury playing football and in September 1936 'it was agreed not to re-engage this player'. In 1936 he travelled on the same ship as the MCC tourists to take a job as a guide in New Zealand's Chateau Tangariro National Park. Among the tourists was his Essex colleague Ken Farnes, who in his diary gave a wonderful account of their adventures together in the park. Sheffield settled in New Zealand where he did a variety of outdoor jobs and enjoyed an active retirement until his death three days before his 91st birthday.

Taylor returned to the side in 1937 although he was again dropped in August, but in 1938 his form improved and he played throughout the season. In 1939 his batting fell away but he took 55 wickets with his previously occasional slow left-arm spin and was again ever-present. At the outbreak of war he was in the Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve, which mainly recruited amateur yachtsmen, but he joined the RAF. He became the first professional cricketer to win the Distinguished Flying Cross, awarded for his outstanding work as an observer during the Dunkirk evacuation.

After the war Essex offered Taylor the standard terms of a capped professional but ironically he chose to play the 1946 season as an amateur, although he is unlikely to have caused any aspiring young pro to 'be stood down' in the way that he was. The committee decided that 'the position of R Taylor should be as the other capped players', with the rather curious result that he, though an amateur, earned £15 from thirty talent marks. Undoubtedly some of them were awarded for his performance against Warwickshire, when he joined Denys Wilcox with Essex still needing 47 to avoid the follow-on and the pair added 263, a county eighth-wicket record that enabled the team to win by an innings. At the end of the season he announced his retirement. Although as an amateur he would not have been eligible for a benefit, the club could have

⁴⁸¹ Essex year book, 1938, p27, 29.

⁴⁸² Wickets, p51.

organised a testimonial. Instead they made ‘an ex gratia payment of £250 for his services to Essex cricket’. Reg Taylor went into business and emigrated to South Africa where he died in 1984.

Morris Stanley Nichols (1900-1961)

Nichols’ career contrasts with those of his contemporaries Joe Hipkin and Jim Cutmore, showing that rewards for the professional who combined talent and conformity could be great. He was born at Stondon Massey on 6 October 1900. His father was also named Morris but on the 1921 census listed him as just Stan, which is how he was usually known. Nichols senior was a farmer but the early 1900s were a time of agricultural slump in Essex, and in 1911 he was an insurance agent. In 1921 Morris had reverted to farming, at Childs Farm in Writtle with Stan as his assistant, but he left the farm in 1923.

This may have been the trigger for Stan to have a trial with Essex. Aged 12, Stan began to play club cricket for Wickford, where Morris was a leading member. He was recommended to Essex by the Chelmsford CC captain Percy Turrall, who aged 44 in 1927 on his home ground hit 45 against Oxford University in his only game for Essex. Encouraged by Percy Perrin (see above p>>>), Nichols established himself in the Essex team in 1925. Sir Home Gordon, a friend of Perrin but a supporter of Sussex, considered that if he could have had one interwar player to save his life it would have been Nichols⁴⁸³.

Like Johnny Douglas, who captained him in his early career and whom he succeeded as Essex’s leading all-rounder, Nichols made himself into a great cricketer by sheer determination and hard work. The double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets in a season was only ever done 20 times for Essex; eight of them were by Nichols. He took 1608 wickets for Essex, just two fewer than the all-time record holder, Peter Smith, but Nichols scored 15736 runs at 26.31 as compared with Smith’s 9652 at 18.14. Charles Bray reckoned that Nichols’s greatest success came after Essex left Leyton, when he found the festival pitches far more helpful to his bowling. Only in 1934, when he had not fully recovered from the effects of touring India, did he take fewer than 100 wickets.

The amateur schoolmaster Brian Belle thought that Nichols was a better bowler than Ken Farnes because he made more skilful use of the new ball whereas Farnes relied on sheer speed. The older professionals agreed with Belle, believing that Nichols should always have been allowed to choose the end from which he wanted to bowl. As a schoolboy Trevor Bailey saw both men, but it was on Nichols that he modelled his own style. Nichols was unfortunate in that he played for a still unfashionable county when there were many good fast bowlers around, so he appeared in only fourteen Tests. Essex supporters were particularly disgruntled when he was selected in the squad but made twelfth man so he could not play for the county either.

For Edgar ‘Johnny’ Johnson, Nichols was ‘a wonderful fast bowler’, and the thing he particularly remembered about him was ‘the size of his feet...bigger than anyone else – when he padded down you really heard him coming!’ Bray concurred: ‘I could put my foot into one of his cricket boots with one of my shoes on. His action when bowling could scarcely be described as poetry of [sic] motion. His arms flailed, his feet splayed and his body rolled like a sailor’s walk in fast motion. But for all that he was a magnificent bowler...’ Sir Home Gordon thought that he would have been even better

⁴⁸³ GORDON, p325.

if he had not been flat-footed, which meant that ‘try as he has ever so hard, he can never get onto his toes at the moment of delivering the ball, thus losing just that extra little bit of nip which is so devastating’.

Nichols’s greatest match was at Huddersfield in 1935 when he took 11 for 54, and his score of 146 was more than Yorkshire could manage in both innings. He and Hopper Read bowled them out for 31 and 99, and Essex won by an innings and 204 runs. Yorkshire in 1935 were the champions for the fourth time in five years and it was their only defeat of the season. The story is told of a Yorkshire committee man who arrived late and noted with satisfaction that the score was 27 for 9. ‘How many has Bowes got?’ he enquired. ‘Bowes?’ the gateman replied. ‘He’s only just gone in!’ Nichols’s telegram to Charles Bray, his captain when Holmes and Sutcliffe made their 555 and he conceded 106 runs, needed no explanation: ‘Revenge is sweet.’ The committee expressed its appreciation with a letter of congratulation and an *ex gratia* payment of £10.

In 1936 Nichols was awarded his benefit in recognition of the ‘invaluable service’ that had yielded 9500 runs and 1090 wickets⁴⁸⁴. The club did all it could to ensure that the benefit was a success, insuring it for £500 and enclosing a remittance slip with the annual report sent to members. Nichols could have any match other than the Bank Holiday game at Chelmsford. Wisely he chose the Kent match at the well-supported venue of Southend, which was in the second half of the season when Essex almost invariably did well. He top-scored with 110, but needed to do little with the ball as Farnes’ fearsome bowling meant that Essex won by an innings and 216 runs in two days. Tich Freeman blamed the amateur for his fellow-professional’s loss of income (see above p>>>), but Nichols’s benefit year still realised £1177/5/6.

In 1939 Nichols was in his 39th year but his form showed no signs of decline, even though the season of eight-ball overs – the sole, experimental one in English first-class cricket – cannot have eased the demands on the veteran’s apparently inexhaustible stamina. He did the double for the fifth consecutive time and was selected for the England tour of India in 1939-40, but when that was cancelled became a sergeant-instructor in the Army. By the end of the war he was 45 years old and he played no more first-class cricket, although the minutes have a rather sad postscript to his great career with Essex: ‘Nichols MS had not replied to letters and it was not worth pursuing the question of his engagement’. He went into the Birmingham League which Charles Bray felt was a mistake because ‘a player of his experience and reputation should have secured one of the best coaching jobs in the country and thus ensured his future’, as did Jack O’Connor⁴⁸⁵. Nichols nevertheless remained active in the game until about three years before his death in 1961.

Dudley Fairbridge Pope (1906-1934)

The rules for residential qualification changed little between the wars. Essex had a large population to draw on but not much money, so they usually relied on home-grown talent. In the late 1920s, however, several stalwart batsmen were nearing the end of their careers and no obvious replacements were coming through. The county therefore made an exception for Dudley Pope, whom in 1928 he began a residential qualification for them. The minutes record that ‘Pope had a room at 28 Brewster Road (10/- a week),

⁴⁸⁴ ECCC minutes. LEMMON, *Essex*, p193._

⁴⁸⁵ *Essex County Cricket*, p50.

suggesting that the club still organised or at least monitored accommodation for young professionals qualifying by residence.

Pope was born on 28 October 1906 in Barnes, then in Surrey, now in the London Borough of Richmond. His unusual middle name was his grandmother's maiden name. His father was an estate agent and his grandfather an accountant. He was educated at Clark's College in Ealing, one of a group which aimed, and still aims, to give a sound education for entry into the Civil Service and commercial occupations. He was therefore clearly rooted in the middle class.

Pope began to establish a reputation as batsman playing for Ealing Dean CC and Clark's College in 1922⁴⁸⁶. Aged just 16½, he went for a trial at Gloucestershire in May 1923 and was the only one of more than thirty boys to be taken on to the ground staff. Gloucestershire found accommodation and employment for him and arranged for him to play for Bohemians CC. After an unsuccessful debut in 1925, they allowed him to go home on condition that he went to Patsy Hendren's cricket school in Middlesex. The captain, DC Robinson, reported an improvement but it did not show itself on the field and he was dropped after scoring 14 runs in 6 innings. In 1927 he showed some improvement and made 46 not out against a Middlesex team including Hendren, but still only scored 96 runs in 12 innings and 'his services were dispensed with' at the end of the season. Unfortunately the relevant Essex minute book is missing so we don't know why the county took Pope on, but it's possible that Robinson or RP Keigwin, who both played for Essex before the war and Gloucestershire afterwards, felt that he had not done himself justice and recommended him to Essex. Certainly it was to his advantage, because he could play for his local club while living in Leyton to qualify.

In October 1929 Pope was interviewed by the captain, HM Morris, and agreed to do suitable winter work but in December turned down an offer of a few weeks' employment that he found unacceptable. The committee arranged to interview him at their next meeting, but in the meantime the Secretary offered him work on the ground which he did for a few weeks. He soon found himself more congenial work coaching at the West London Indoor Cricket School which the committee accepted, although he forfeited his winter pay and was required to attend at the County Ground in April. He had not yet completed his qualification period, and his independent spirit was typical of the new breed of professional that emerged between the wars.

Early in 1933 Pope and his county colleague Peter Smith set up a sports warehouse just outside Chelmsford, and after the season they opened a shop at 21 Tindal Street. The business thrived and is still going strong, although it has moved to Moulsham Street.

Pope fully justified Essex's faith in him, consciously setting out to establish himself as an opening batsman with a sound defensive technique. Harold Faragher modelled his own style on that of Pope, who was 'not a quick scorer but very correct'. He imitated everything Pope did, right down to the way he twiddled his bat while waiting to face the bowling. He would dash from Ilford to see the last two hours' play at the County Ground, and then dash home to play with the other boys, when 'I was Dudley Pope'. Pope scored over a thousand runs in four of his seasons with Essex and 977 in the fifth. He left the best till last, making 1750 runs in 1934, with 690 runs in the final nine matches that included 23 and 108 against his old county Gloucestershire in the last of all.

⁴⁸⁶ Thanks to Roger Gibbons about Pope's Gloucestershire career in this paragraph.

Dudley Pope was tragically killed in a car crash at Writtle less than a fortnight later, a few weeks short of his 28th birthday. He and his friend and business partner Peter Smith had hired cars to enjoy a weekend away at the coast, itself a sign of changing times for professional cricketers, and the brakes on Pope's car failed. Faragher read about his death in the paper and was 'quite shocked' because 'he was my idol'.

His funeral service was held at Chelmsford Cathedral and the Provost, Canon Morrow, gave a moving tribute which made a perceptive wider point: he said that

Dudley Pope possessed a splendid character, and he was one who would have shed lustre on any profession he had taken up. His loss would be great for two reasons — firstly, because of his geniality and humour which made him such an excellent companion, and secondly because he was of type of young man now taking up professionalism in sport and raising it a high level.

His cap and bat were placed on top of the coffin and buried with him at Chiswick Cemetery, close to his childhood home. He left £3362 which would be worth about £300,000 in 2023, a remarkable amount for a young professional cricketer.

Committee minutes had seldom even noted the deaths of professionals, much less acknowledged their contributions, and it was perhaps another sign of changing times that the chairman referred to

The very severe loss that the Club had suffered through the death of Dudley Pope and on behalf of the Committee expressed the very great appreciation of this professional's services and the deep sense of loss that was felt.

His death left unanswered the question of what he might have achieved in the next few years.

The Smith cousins, Peter (1908-1967) and Ray (1914-1996)⁴⁸⁷

Thomas Peter Bromly Smith was the son of a farmer who, like Morris Nichols senior, was affected by the agricultural slump of the early 1900s⁴⁸⁸. In about 1903 Thomas John Smith became a traveller in chemical fertilisers, and worked for Fisons of Ipswich for 35 years. Thomas's father was Peter, which may explain why Smith junior was always known as Peter. Peter's Smith and Bromly grandparents were also farmers, neighbours in the small village of Little Totham near Maldon. His parents and grandparents all had live-in servants, so evidently were fairly comfortably off. It is significant that Peter chose from the outset to be a professional cricketer, whereas someone from a similar background a generation earlier might have felt obliged to play as an amateur.

Peter and his younger cousin Raymond were Essex mainstays for almost thirty years. They were important member of the powerful pre-war side, and afterwards they carried the Essex attack almost without support for several years. After retiring, Peter was the first ex-professional to become a committee member and later Ray joined him.

In 1947 Peter Smith had an excellent season both on the field and, as the beneficiary, in his pocket. He bowled an incredible 1636 overs and took 172 wickets, an Essex record that will never be beaten. Against Derbyshire he hit 163, a world record for a number 11 batsman, and shared in a partnership of 218 with Frank Vigar that enabled Essex to become the only county to have double-century partnerships for every wicket.

⁴⁸⁷ John Broom has written a Lives in Cricket about Ray and is writing one about Peter. I haven't yet read either of them but will amend this section when I have.

⁴⁸⁸ This paragraph based on <http://www.thorganby.co.uk/Essex/Thomas%20John%20Smith.htm>

His benefit raised over £3000, more than twice the previous Essex record obtained by Nichols in 1936.

Early in 1948 Smith split a finger and missed five weeks but still bowled 947 overs, and at the end of the season told the committee that he 'found continuous cricket too much of a strain and wished to regard his first-class career at an end'. They regretted but did not oppose this, and asked the Chairman, Hubert Ashton, to meet Smith. He 'hoped to be fit but could not commit himself as a professional', eventually agreeing terms in April 1949. In 1950 aged 41 he bowled 1415 overs and took 127 wickets. In August 1951 the committee accepted his resignation with regret, but he played on to the end of season and with five wickets against Derbyshire in his penultimate match eclipsed Nichols's record of 1608 wickets for Essex.

In 1958 Smith became the first ex-professional to join the committee, although six years later he had to resign for business reasons. In 1967 he tragically died of a cerebral haemorrhage following a fall while on holiday in France, and at their next meeting the committee stood in his memory.

Ray Smith was educated at King Edward VI Grammar School Colchester. Six years younger than Peter, his career often followed lines similar to his cousin's but a few years later. His debut season, 1934, was scarcely less disappointing than Peter's and his application for winter pay was rejected. Like Peter he improved in his second season, although he did not cement his place in the team until 1938. A fierce hitter and medium-pace bowler, he was often the man to make way when Read, Farnes and Stephenson came into the side.

In 1936 the minutes noted that 'Smith R had had an offer from Forfarshire CC which might be more than he would earn in 1937 with three amateur fast bowlers in the side'; it was agreed that 'his services should be retained' and that he should therefore be guaranteed a minimum wage of £220, an offer which he accepted with thanks. It was a far-sighted move by the committee, for after the war the loss of the three amateurs and Nichols left Essex bereft of fast bowling. Ray Smith willingly filled the gap, although all too often Tom Pearce had nobody else to turn to and Smith was grossly overbowled. When he had sent down his quota of seam he often came back and bowled off-spin, signalling the switch by donning his cap. In 1947 he took 125 wickets but bowled 1557 overs and conceded 4658 runs. He often grumbled good-naturedly that his hundred-wicket haul was the most expensive in English cricket history. In that season he and Peter bowled 3082 overs for Essex, almost three times as many as all the other bowlers put together.

Ray Smith's best years were lost to the war, during which he played many fund-raising matches. Typical was a game at Chelmsford in 1943, when he captained an Essex XI against a British Empire XI and £148/17/5 was raised for the Red Cross. His benefit in 1951 realised £3700 and but for poor weather on the first two days of the match at Southend would probably have exceeded £4000. Accrington CC offered him attractive terms to play League cricket, so Essex gave him a three-year contract and a testimonial. In 1955 he told the committee that he was still keen to play for Essex despite offers from Lancashire League clubs, and it was agreed to extend his contract on an annual basis. He retired at the end of the 1956 season. Like Peter, he was aged 42 and gave the club good notice of his intention.

Frank Henry Rist (1914-2001)

Rist was born in Wandsworth on 30 March 1914, the son of a policeman who in 1921 was a CID officer based at Hackney. Frank was a professional who joined the ground staff aged eighteen in 1932. Later as Essex's chief coach he helped to bring on some of the young cricketers who became the backbone of the all-conquering Essex team of the 1980s. He was one of the great unsung heroes of Essex cricket. Lemmon wrote:

Few people outside Essex would be able to recognise the worth of Frank Rist to the county. He joined Essex in 1932, made his debut in 1934 and played his last game... in 1953. During his long association with the county he appeared in only 65 matches... [yet] he was a cricketer whose worth could never be gauged by statistics... After World War Two... he was mainly concerned with the welfare and development of young players and simply played himself when required. In 1949 he became the county's official coach, and, in the difficult financial period in the late 60s, he ran the 2nd XI and coached without receipt of any salary. The county's debt to him is incalculable...

Though he was not always treated as well as he might have been, he comes over in his interview with the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop as a cheerful and uncomplaining man who appreciated the opportunity to have a long and happy association with the game that he loved.

As a boy Frank Rist 'always wanted to play football and cricket'. His father was a CID inspector who ran the station team, for which Frank played. When he left school aged fourteen he worked for a rubber company at Hackney Wick.

The Guv'nor called me in his office, I thought I'm in trouble here and he asked me if I'd go down and play cricket for his firm... against Welwyn Garden City. We won the game... and he sent his chauffeur to pick me up and bring me back home and... on the Monday he called me in his office and said 'I was very pleased with what you done'... He gave me a couple of pound for playing which was more than I got in a month and he said, 'I know you're very interested in becoming a cricketer and a footballer. Now while you're here you can have as much time off as you like to play.' Well, I was made, wasn't I?

He had watched the Essex and England players Jack O'Connor and Stan Nichols at Leyton, and he had coaching lessons from them. Knowing that he wanted to become a professional cricketer, they recommended that he came on to the staff. Working under Dick Brewer, he did all sorts of jobs around the ground. They included mowing the outfield on a motor-mower, cutting and rolling the pitch, and covering the ends of it when it rained.

Rist also played for the Club & Ground XI and remembered his last match at Leyton, when he scored a hundred against Buckhurst Hill:

These two policemen were standing watching me and they knew me and I think I hit the ball out the ground about six times and they scarpered, because they saw me later and said 'Well, we thought you were going to injure someone so we left you to it...'

On the second day of Yorkshire's 555 partnership, his job was to answer the phone in the Pavilion to all the people ringing to ask whether the record had been broken. The atmosphere was 'terrific'. Matches were regularly written up in the national press:

We had the scoreboard, as you came in the ground it was on the far side of the ground... Then you used to have a tent more or less attached to it, and the scorer, they was altogether there, they could check the score and they could go and have a talk with the scorers...

Rist said that on the whole the Pavilion compared well with others he remembered, although facilities were not as good as at the Test match grounds. Amateurs and

professionals dined separately. The visitors' dressing-room was shared by their amateurs and professionals, but the Essex pros had 'a little place that was sort of attached to the Pavilion' while the amateurs had their own dressing-room. 'We were treated like pros and they were treated like amateurs [but] we got on all right on the field, obviously.' He particularly remembered Ken Farnes, Hopper Read and Leonard Crawley. The committee were mostly retired amateurs, although they did not always turn up at matches. He accepted the situation because 'It was all we knew, wasn't it?' He thought that the amateurs were wealthy and could afford the time to play a game that could take three days or at least two – 'depends how they batted and bowled'. After the war, they 'got paid [and] weren't amateurs, they were pros' because they claimed expenses such as petrol.

Rist was paid £4 a week in summer and £3 in winter, with an extra £2 if he played in the first team. In winter he played soccer, initially for Clapton Orient but then with Charlton Athletic. He was the famous manager Jimmy Seed's first signing after moving from Orient to Charlton. With typical modesty, he did not mention that he was their centre-half when they made their unprecedented rise straight from the old Third Division to the First in successive seasons. When he got into the Essex first team his pay went up to £8, with £6 in winter. Essex 'were not bothered' about his playing football, because the cricket and football seasons did not overlap and many men played both sports at first-class level. Denis Compton, who was 'probably the best cricketer I've ever seen', played cricket for Middlesex and football for the Arsenal, as did his older brother, Les. Football was 'more beneficial financially' but the cricketers thought they also were well paid, even though they had to pay for their own bats, pads and other gear.

The Essex cricketers bought their equipment from Breeden's, the bat manufacturers who had a shop under an arch at Leyton Midland Road station. Most equipment has changed little since their time, although 'we had great big heavy [boots], leather things, but now they're like slippers what they play in'. When he first started playing he would have had to pay two guineas for a top price bat, but later he was sponsored and given all his gear by Gray Nicholls, a big firm manufacturing sports goods, although he did not have to wear their logo.

If players were sick or injured they got their basic pay but no match money, although 'no one ever seemed to get sick or injured in my day... not like they are now'. There was not as much protective gear as in the modern game and it would perhaps have prevented the odd injury. Rist never got hurt on the field, perhaps because he was 'a big lad' who had 'always played with big fellows like policemen'.

When Essex played at Leyton Rist was in digs close to the ground at Francis Road, where his father's police station was. He thought that the players took the change to a more nomadic existence in their stride. The younger players stayed singly in various digs; for a while he lodged in Chelmsford where his landlady was the wife of a former Essex cricketer. He thought that Essex left Leyton to reduce overheads and because of lack of support there. Crowds improved when the club went nomadic because 'we spread ourselves out so that members didn't always have to travel so far'. The improvements to the new headquarters at Chelmsford had made it into 'a very nice ground now'.

During the war Rist was stationed in Blackpool where he played League cricket and came up against older class attitudes. Younger cricketers had great respect for capped professionals – 'you almost stood to attention, you know'. He was therefore greatly

honoured to play against Harold Larwood who, as a professional of the old school, thought that only amateurs should be addressed as Mr.

He was coming down the steps before the game and I went after him and said, 'Hello Mr Larwood'. He said, 'My name is Harold, not Mr Larwood. Remember that, OK?' ... The ground was packed... I went in first, scored a hundred, mind you he wasn't the bowler that he was in his prime... I can always remember our captain, he was a wing commander, playing for Somerset. You stood to attention when you spoke to him. They suggested that I should have a collection, 'cos professionals in those days had collections in the league, and the captain said no, he's a service player, he's not entitled to a collection. I could have done very well...

After the Second World War he captained the Club & Ground XI and joined a sports outfitters' in Walthamstow that was owned by his father-in-law, Arthur Sedgwick. Essex asked him 'to become coach, which was an unpaid job, they couldn't afford the money, but I was in a position where I could have what time I liked off, and all they did was pay for me petrol...' He also had a testimonial that raised just over a thousand pounds which was 'quite good'. His work with Sedgwick's ensured that he was never on the dole. After retiring, some of his colleagues 'got decent jobs, but some of them didn't', although he couldn't remember any specific cases. He kept in touch with some of his former footballing colleagues who became managers and then 'came in the shop and bought their gear'.

Chapter 17: After the Second World War

Soon after war was declared on 3 September 1939, the committee decided that all the capped professionals would be paid up to the end of the month. First-class cricket was suspended but in 1940 the club arranged ten friendly one-day games, for which professionals received £1 plus expenses. Essex won six matches but the other four were cancelled 'due to a ban on travelling in restricted areas'. Retrospective payments for professionals would be considered when county cricket restarted, although 'any necessitous cases would be given consideration'. All of the professionals joined up, and most of them became officers⁴⁸⁹. Among them were Pilot Officer Reg Taylor, who for his service as an observer with Bomber Command at Dunkirk became the first professional cricketer to win the Distinguished Flying Cross, and Captain Peter Smith of the Essex Regiment, who in 1943 was appointed staff-captain of Combined Operations and Troop Movements at Alexandria in Egypt.

In the autumn of 1945 the committee met the senior professionals and implemented without recorded discussion Peter Smith's 1938 request that capped pros should have their basic pay increased. Match money was abolished, so all received a standard annual salary of £450 plus win and talent money. Stanley James 'Chick' Cray was not demobilised from the Army until early in 1947 and initially had £350, as did Bill Morris who was signed on special registration and played seven matches in 1946. Players capped during the season were to be brought up to £450 per annum from the date of their cap. Talent money was increased to 10/- per mark with an upper limit of £150 but that proved to be a rather optimistic proviso, since comfortably the two highest earners were Ray Smith with £40 and his cousin Peter with £32 10s. Hotel expenses for pros – a set 10/- a night – totalled £123 and were deemed to be 'heavy', although there is no record of amateurs' hotel expenses. Cost increased so in 1947 the hotel allowance was

⁴⁸⁹ BRAILSFORD, p93.

increased to 15/- a night but talent marks reverted to 5/- as before the war, and in 1948 Tom Pearce allocated 300 marks.

War and retirement had broken up the powerful side of 1939 and the 1947 report noted rather wryly that 'there was evidence of a Fighting Spirit in the way in which the less experienced players retrieved the position when a bad start had been made'. A small perk for the capped professionals was that the club provided them with blazers, caps and sweaters, and approached MCC for the extra clothing coupons that would be needed; sweaters with the club crest cost £3 15s (6 coupons), blazers £3 10s (10 coupons) and caps with badge £2/4/6.

In 1948, replying to a letter from Derbyshire querying the principle of special registration, Essex declared that they supported it because 'housing conditions still made it difficult for players to qualify by residence'⁴⁹⁰. There was perhaps a degree of self-interest on both sides here: the northern county was relatively unscathed by bombing whereas Essex suffered severely, particularly in the urban south-west of the county and along the Thames estuary. The committee may well have had in mind the case of Eric Price, a talented left-arm spinner who they had recruited when he fell out of favour with his native Lancashire. The minutes noted that he was having great difficulty in finding accommodation, and he returned north after two seasons.

In 1947 the committee had reiterated their opposition to Sunday cricket because 'playing seven days a week was too much'. They 'appreciated the spirit of playing in benefit matches but it was not in the best interests of the club' so 'the captain's approval was always to be sought'. Later in the year, though, they authorised eight Sunday matches to be organised in 1948 by local clubs for the benefit of Tom Wade, described in the annual report as 'this unassuming man and fine wicket-keeper'. It raised over £3900, comprising £1500 from the one-day games, £660 from his benefit match against Surrey at Ilford in June, £660 ground collections and the remainder from individual donations. It was a record amount that stood until 1963,

The next beneficiary was **Alfred Victor 'Sonny' Avery**. He joined Essex as a fifteen-year-old in 1930 and had already acquired his nickname while playing for his local club. Theoretically he was employed as an office boy, but Jack O'Connor recalled that 'when there was a match in progress the face of Sonny Avery was usually to be found glued against the window so that he could watch the county stars in action'⁴⁹¹. The 1931 annual report noted that of all the young players enrolled at 'Razor' Smith's Cricket Nursery 'most encouragement for the future may be obtained by the form of Avery (A.), a slow left-arm bowler'. He was therefore transferred to the cricket staff in 1932 and made his first-class debut in 1935. He became a regular member of the side in 1937, though as a solid opening bat rather than as a bowler. At the end of the season he was offered a winter retainer of £2, the same as Peter Smith and Tom Wade who had been on the staff for eight years, 'on condition he does not go abroad on a football tour'. In 1939 aged only 25 he topped the averages in a powerful Essex batting line-up and an England call must have been a possibility, but instead he lost the next six years to the war. In 1946 he made 79 in a Test trial but that was the nearest he came to representative honours, even though he continued to bat very consistently for Essex.

⁴⁹⁰ ECCC minutes 1 Nov 1948. It perhaps had a similar effect to the abolition of the Settlement laws in the nineteenth century.

⁴⁹¹ O'CONNOR, p20.

In 1950 the committee granted Avery a benefit, noting in the annual report that 'he has been a loyal member of staff but has been constantly unlucky in the matter of injuries'. He was a Romford man and he chose for his benefit match the Bank Holiday game of the first festival there. Though the game was petering out into a draw, an exceptionally large third-day crowd boosted his share of the gate takings to £1007, an Essex record. In 1950, however, the number of county matches was increased from 26 to 28 and 'there were only three brief midweek rest periods', so the committee authorised only four Sunday benefit matches during the season rather than Wade's eight. Income from local events was therefore substantially less, so Avery was also unlucky with his benefit, which realised a relatively disappointing £2800.

In 1949 the nine capped professionals were all reengaged at £450 a year, along with three Second XI caps at £350. The principle of abolishing individual talent money in favour of a team system was agreed in principle, and Pearce later submitted more concrete proposals. At the end of the season the committee met Peter Smith, Wade, Dodds and Rist, speaking on behalf of all the professionals. They agreed with Pearce that talent money should be abolished, and it was replaced with a system whereby bonuses of £4 per win and £1 for first innings lead were shared out according to the number of appearances.

The same four professionals also met the President, Hubert Ashton, to put forward their colleagues' 'requirements'. They pointed out that Essex pros had the lowest maximum earnings in the country because their salaries were not particularly high anyway and they did not get match money, figures that a table produced by the Secretary confirmed. They therefore asked for salaries of £400 for capped pros and £350 for Second XI caps, with the reintroduction of match money at £5 for three-day matches and £2 10s for twelfth man duties and two-day matches. They also wanted closer cooperation with the committee with an informal luncheon at the start of the season; notification of end of contract by 31 July to allow a chance to look for a new job before Essex pay ceased on 30 September; standard pay rates, match money and equipment for young pros. Finally they pointed out that Essex were one of only four counties without a masseur, and Harold Dalton was immediately appointed.

It was all a far cry from the days less than twenty years earlier when the committee had imposed a ten per cent pay cut and abolished winter pay. Although they called the professionals' demands 'proposals' rather than 'requirements', they conceded all except that match money was £4 and £2 rather than £5 and £3. They noted that 'in some cases additional expenditure had proved beneficial', but in fact found the estimated cost of £1000 by cutting staff. They saved £450 on Eric Price who had not been able to settle in the south and wanted to return to his native Lancashire, £350 by releasing Bill Dines who made a fair start to his first-class career but after July 1947 took only two wickets in five matches, and £300 by terminating the contract of the Secretary's assistant, W Hollowell, and giving some of his duties to Trevor Bailey. In April 1950 they had an informal supper with the pros, all expenses being borne by the club. Harold Dalton was appointed masseur, initially for home matches, and proved so successful that he became the first physiotherapist to tour officially with an England party, to Australia in 1954-5. Eight capped pros, two Second XI caps and five uncapped youngsters were retained for the 1950 season, by which time Pearce, Insole and Bailey were the only amateurs playing at all regularly and there were usually eight professionals in the side.

In 1949 the club had made a profit of £1942 but in 1950 that was more than cancelled out with a loss of £2534 and the committee had to take a serious look at its expenditure. The Secretary drew up a summary which gives a useful snapshot of the professional staff immediately after the improvement in their wages:

Age	Name	Basic pay	Match money
		Capped	
36	Avery	400	116
29½	Cray	400	84
31½	Dodds	400	116
30	Horsfall	400	96
42	Smith P	400	124
36	Smith R	400	124
33	Vigar	400	116
40	Wade	400	116
		Coach	
36½	Rist	450	
		2nd XI caps	
20	Greensmith	350	10
33	Morris	350	64
25	Preston	350	58
		Uncapped	
16½	Bear	144	+ Club & Ground expenses
18½	Cousens	96	34 + Club & Ground expenses
18¼	Taylor	144	30 + Club & Ground expenses

In 1950 Pearce handed over the captaincy to Insole but Essex had an appalling season, finishing bottom of the championship for the first time in their history. Insole recalled:

We needed to do a considerable bit of pruning and that was the difficult bit. I had to suggest that three or four of the senior pros were past their best and that didn't make me the most popular man... The trouble with having long-serving members of staff is they tend to go on playing and block other people and it's awfully difficult to hoick 'em out.

Before the war the amateur players had sometimes defended the professionals against the committee, but now the attitudes were almost reversed: the young captain argued against renewing the pros' contracts while some committeemen wanted to keep them.

On 6 October 1950 the committee agreed not to renew the contracts of three players. **Tom Wade**, who was 40 years old and troubled by fibrositis, had given yeoman service for 22 years. The 1951 annual commented that 'he stumped only 10 and his skill in this direction showed some falling-away from the high standard that he has set himself', and showed great kindness but not strict accuracy in announcing that he had 'decided

to retire during the winter'. **Ivor Skinner** was a young fast-medium bowler who appeared thirteen times in 1950 but lacked penetration and was dropped when Ken Preston returned from injury in August. **Chick Cray** played a full season in 1947, but after he lost form in 1948 Dodds and Avery established themselves as the regular opening pair and he was 'not able to command a regular place in the County XI'. The committee later decided that Cray should not have a testimonial and clarified the circumstances of his departure: he 'was not dismissed and did not resign but his performance was somewhat disappointing so they could not renew his contract'. Cray was coaching in South Africa when the club notified him of its decision by letter, and he was very shocked. He wrote to his MP, who happened to be the club chairman Hubert Ashton, and compared his figures with those of team-mates who had been retained. 'He sympathised,' Cray recalled, 'but he didn't go any further'⁴⁹². The committee was divided over **Frank Vigar**, who must have been one of those whose figures Cray cited. Like him Vigar was 'rather disappointing with the bat', averaging 24 to Cray's 26, but he was a safe fielder close to the wicket and could bowl leg-breaks, albeit erratically. They voted 12-8 not to reengage him but then rather fudged the issue by deciding to give him a further year's engagement.

Although the committee took a fairly tough line on the sackings, they seem to have gone out of their way to treat the professionals as human beings rather than naughty schoolboys. They gave Wade complimentary tickets to matches 'as for Cutmore, Freeman, Mead, O'Connor, Russell, Young'. This seems to have been in response to a request from the current pros, recorded in the minutes on 19 September 1949. In purely financial terms it was negligible but in terms of goodwill towards the old pros who had served the club so well it was invaluable. The omission of Nichols suggests that it only applied to men who were still living in the Essex area. I had often come across reports that Cutmore was involved in benefit matches and other club activities right up to the end of his long life, and was surprised that he was willing to do so in view of the unhappy circumstances surrounding his departure; perhaps this was an olive branch which helped heal the breach with one whose punishment was out of all proportion to his misdemeanour. A similar post-war move was the giving of wedding presents to professionals: Gordon Barker, Geoff Smith and Les Savill were all recorded as receiving ten guineas, while the ever-loyal Frank Rist had £25. The young professional Ernest Stanley scored heavily for the Second Eleven but was unable to repeat his success at the higher level; he asked Tom Pearce 'whether he could stay with the club even though his position was insecure', and was rather gently advised that 'it might be in his better interests to take up a different career'.

The professionals' response to the crisis was a further illustration of how much things had changed. A sub-committee met them and reported their 'sincerely held views about the club's lack of success'. They were also uneasy about an open letter to the press that mentioned finance and Wade's loss of form. Peter Smith declared that 'the committee was split from top to bottom and the management of the club was thoroughly unsound' – a view he could not have openly expressed before the war. Insole and Smith met for lunch and then a meeting with all the professionals 'led to the restoration of full confidence between the captain and the players'. The clearing of the air led to a much improved performance on and off the field. Essex won six matches and lost only two, so rose to eighth place in the table. The attractive way they played cricket brought in the spectators and resulted in a small profit.

⁴⁹² CHALKE, Stephen. When the fat lady sings, IN The Wisden Cricketer, Oct 2004, p61.

Professionals were considered for appointment to the selection committee, and if Insole and Bailey were missing the team would be captained by ‘the best man available, be he amateur or professional’⁴⁹³. It is not always known who captained the side in their absence, but among those who certainly did during the 1950s were four professionals – Sonny Avery and Dickie Dodds (three times each), Ray Smith and Bill Greensmith (once each). I can in fact find no record that any amateur filled in for Insole and Bailey. Charles Williams and Jack Bailey, for example, were Oxford captains and capable cricketers who went on to distinguished careers and certainly could have captained Essex, but neither is listed on CricketArchive as doing so.

After the 1953 season the committee reverted to a tougher attitude. Arnold Quick was a JP and director of IPC, who advocated reduced salaries and increased match money because the professionals would ‘play harder’ and it would give the committee ‘a greater disciplinary hold’. Between 1936 and 1952 he appeared 19 times for Essex and finished with a batting average below 14, so it could be argued that his own career scarcely gave him the authority to tell other cricketers to play harder. It was, however, agreed that the pros would have salaries of £300 and match money of £9. This meant that pros who played in all thirty first-class matches would take home £50 more than before, but for each match below twenty they would have £5 less. They opposed this because of lack of security if they should lose form and asked for £5 match money. They were told that £4 ‘should be enough incentive’ but then the committee seemed to contradict its own argument by reverting to its original proposal of a £9 ‘incentive’ with only £300 basic salary.

Midway through the 1954 season Insole told the committee that the professionals were dissatisfied with their basic rates of pay and it was having a bad effect on their play. It was one of the wettest summers on record and Essex won only three matches, dropping to 15th place. At the end of the season the committee accepted Insole’s advice and went back to a policy of higher salaries and lower match money. Basic salaries reverted to £400 with an increase to match money of £6 for the First XI and £4 for the Second. Win money was £4 with £1 for first innings lead. Bailey nevertheless said only five of the professionals were good enough and the retiring Hon. Secretary/Treasurer, HG Clark, said they were not trying.

Sonny Avery and Frank Vigar were not reengaged, and the annual report thanked them for their ‘long, loyal and distinguished service’. After retiring, Avery initially worked at the Ilford Indoor Cricket School and at Forest School; in 1957-8 he was coach to Gloucestershire and in 1960 became coach and groundsman at Monmouth School. Gordon Barker, a Yorkshireman who had hit a century on debut in a friendly match against the Canadians, was signed on special registration to replace Avery as Dodds’ opening partner.

In 1955 Essex won twice as many matches, but that was largely because the weather improved, and they only moved up one place. Four matches were televised, for which the professionals had special fees that were pooled.

In line with the request made by the senior pros in 1949, the committee advised three professionals in July 1955 that their contracts would not be renewed. **Peter Cousens** was a slow left-arm bowler who did the hat-trick in 1950, his debut season, but was lost to National Service for two years and on his return could not recapture his earlier form. **Dick Horsfall** was a hard-hitting batsman who had been on the staff since 1947 and

⁴⁹³ Minutes 4 Dec 1950 - they cited the case of Jack O’Connor in 1938 [see above, p>>>].

had his best season in 1953, but his form then fell away badly. He was given until the end of the 1955 season to improve but he was of a nervous disposition at the best of times, so the ultimatum can have done little to improve his confidence and he was duly released. He was given a special award of £500 in recognition of his nine years' service, but for some unexplained reason this was not to be announced until after the AGM. **Michael Bear** was a left-handed batsman whose excellent temperament and superb fielding were recognised when he first came on to the staff as a 16-year-old in 1950. Determined to prove the committee wrong, he hit 53 and fielded brilliantly against Warwickshire at Edgbaston, thus earning himself a reprieve. Although his eventual career batting average was only 24 and he did not bowl, his outfielding was reckoned to be worth 30 runs an innings – he was a one-day fielder ten years before that form of county cricket was invented. I well remember him at Leyton in the 1960s, racing round the boundary then picking up and sending in a pinpoint return all in one movement.

In 1957 Essex had their most successful year since the war, finishing fifth in the table and enjoying a corresponding increase in attendances. By the end of June they had already won six matches – as many as the whole of the previous season – and the committee offered bonuses of £6 (rather than £4) for 7-9 victories and £8 for ten and above. Eventually there were eleven wins and Bailey gave the committee examples of the difference it had made to typical capped and uncapped professionals:

		Ken Preston (capped)		Michael Bear (uncapped)
	1956	1957	1956	1957
Basic	400	400	300	300
Match money	180	186	138	162
Win bonus	18 10s	37	9	32
12th man				6

Preston, who was acting as senior pro, wrote to say that the Second XI players were dissatisfied with the increased differential from their own bonuses, but the committee replied that the players 'had it in their own hands' and continued the new system from the outset of the 1958 season. Unfortunately rain made it 'an apology for a summer' and five matches were almost entirely washed out, but Essex still had nine wins and the pros got some of their additional bonus. Preston earned £593 10s in 1955 and £744 in 1958, while other senior pros enjoyed comparable increases. At a time when annual inflation was below 5%, it represented a rise of over 10% in real wages.

One of those to benefit was **Roy Ralph**, whose story was remarkable. A medium-pace bowler with Ilford CC, he made his debut as an amateur aged 33 in 1953 when Essex were badly hit by injuries. After playing a further five matches in the next two years, he came back in June 1955 to cover Trevor Bailey's absence and did so well that he retained his place when Bailey returned. In 1957 he took 102 wickets and Doug Insole recalled what happened next:

I well remember we had an amateur playing for us in the 50s called Roy Ralph, an Ilford man, he was a tailor in Stratford... He did better in county cricket than in club cricket because he tended to have his catches held. And at the end of the season he came to me and said 'Skipper, do you think the club would take me on the professional staff?' and I said 'I'm sure they would, Ralphie, any particular reason?' 'Well,' he said, 'there doesn't seem to be any advantage to being an amateur in this side.' I took that as being something of a

compliment, he felt that he wasn't getting any different treatment from anyone else which I hope was right...

Insole reported the request and the committee, perhaps feeling generous because of Ralph's contribution to a very successful year, agreed that he need not wait until the new season but could start on 1 December. The 1957 annual report noted that 'Mr R Ralph took 100 wickets and his success has encouraged him to join the staff as he can no longer afford to play as an amateur'. In 1960 the club gave him a perk by deciding that 'blazers should be bought from Mr LHR Ralph'. When past 40 his bowling lost a little of its bite but his batting improved and 'he always retained a keenness and enthusiasm which would do credit to a man just starting the game'. In 1961, at his request, the club granted him a testimonial, although he had to share it with the masseur, Harold Dalton. Ralph was to have 60% of the proceeds, and Dalton 40%. At the end of that season the club agreed to retain him on a match-fee basis but he went into Staffordshire League cricket and did not play for Essex again, although he later returned to coach in the area.

In 1959 **Ken Preston** was awarded a benefit and the committee decided that no capped professional should play in more than four of the six one-day matches organised for him. In an attractive little booklet his benefit secretary offered as the prize for a crossword competition life membership of the club. The committee had no objection to the competition but, perhaps apprehensive about who might win it, asked for more information about how it was organised. They decided that 'all future beneficiaries should consult the club regarding their benefit arrangements'. Preston became senior professional on the retirement of Dickie Dodds in 1959 and was drafted on to the selection committee in 1961. He remained on the full-time staff until 1963 after which he was put on a stand-by basis. He appeared three times in May and six in August, when his retirement was announced. There was a presentation and a special collection during the Australian match at Southend – splendid timing, since the weather was mostly good and the county put the spectators in a generous mood by beating the tourists.

Frank Henry Vigar (1917-2004)

When I was doing my Open University project in 1982, the late Leslie Newnham suggested that I might write to Frank Vigar, and I was very grateful to him for a most enjoyable conversation. He was obviously proud of his time as a professional cricketer which had very happy memories for him, although he by no means forgot the down side of his career: he was very open about the best and worst of the pro's life.

Vigar was born on 14 July 1917 at Bruton near Wincanton in Somerset. His father came from a farming family and was a farmer himself, but in 1924 moved to Clacton and became a carpenter and joiner. In 1935 the Secretary, Brian Castor, 'saw F. Vigar aged 17 a bat and bowler' who was 'to be given every opportunity of playing club and ground cricket this year'. Vigar made his first-class debut in 1938 and more or less established himself in the side in 1939. He was considered for a projected tour of the West Indies, but became one of those unlucky cricketers whose best years were lost to the war, after which he was a valuable county player but never again considered for higher honours.

Vigar was a corporal in the RAF and in 1943 was posted to Londonderry where he helped Brigade CC win two competitions, coming second in the batting averages and topping the bowling with 48 wickets at 5.20. On 25 January 1944 in Derry Cathedral he married Ethel Margaret Craig (1923-1996), who had been a teacher in the Sunday school there. Their daughter Barbara was born in 1948.

Vigar recalled that even the liberal-minded Tom Pearce could have his more reactionary moments. Ernie Tedder, the enthusiastic and popular captain of Woodford Wells CC, worked in his family printing business. In May and June 1946 he appeared eight times as an amateur for Essex when they were struggling to establish a settled side after the war. The team was meeting at Euston en route to Northampton and Tedder was due to join the party:

‘Vigar,’ Pearce said – not Frank, you see – ‘have you seen Mr. Tedder?’ ‘Oh, you mean old Ernie.’ The old’ns like him wanted all this Mr, but the young amateurs didn’t – they just wanted to muck in with the rest. The war was a good thing in that respect – all this discrimination died out and you didn’t know who was amateur and who was pro unless you looked in the paper and saw the initials.

Even after the war professionals still resented ‘awful’ amateurs, but ‘it wasn’t so bad if an amateur came in because you only lost match money – you were on salary so that wasn’t affected. You didn’t resent being dropped if your replacement was a good one and you knew you were playing badly’. They welcomed the young but already much-respected Doug Insole as captain, although they ‘sometimes wondered whether he and Bailey were getting the same as them’. By then Bailey was openly paid as assistant secretary so they must have suspected that Insole was receiving under-the-counter payments, although there is no evidence that they ever raised the issue and he would certainly have refuted any accusation.

Two anecdotes about Insole’s superstition show that, though Vigar was aware of a difference in education, the old class barriers had broken down and he felt no need for deference.

We were sitting on the balcony watching a big partnership and I got up. A hand descended on my shoulder and he said ‘Sit down, or one of them will get out.’ I just had to sit there with my legs crossed! – amazing in such an educated man.

At Westcliff in 1952 the team was cruising to an easy victory against Glamorgan, so Insole distributed the win money whereupon a collapse ensued. Insole rushed round, collected it all up again, and Essex scraped home by one wicket. Needing 86 to win, they collapsed from 44 for 0 and then 77 for 3 to 81 for 9. I think Insole must have dished out the money before he went in to bat and collected it up as soon as he was out, when Essex were 80 for 6. By then Vigar was batting, so he must have been told about the episode by his team-mates. It was he who then knocked off the remaining five runs, although this most courteous of men was most incensed about a report in the Essex annual that the winning stroke was ‘a snick for 4, which was almost a chance in the slips’, whereas it was in fact an authentic leg-glance

Frank Vigar was unlucky with his benefit, which was at Ilford against Sussex in 1953. It was cold enough to keep spectators away but not wet enough to claim on the insurance. He was nevertheless able to buy a house and a car on the proceeds.

Vigar had a poor 1954 season and was not surprised when his contract was terminated. He missed the old life and was uncertain about the new: ‘If I had my time all over again I’d still play cricket - it’s a wonderful life - but I’d make sure I learned a trade of some description. It’s very worrying when your time comes.’ He turned down the offer of a contract for Somerset - for whom he had a birth qualification - because of concerns about security, but ironically moved further afield to become a professional cricketer with West of Scotland CC for three years.

Vigar moved back to Chadwell Heath with no clear idea of the future and went round various firms trying to get a coaching and groundsman's job. Eventually Berger Paints, a local firm which remembered his Essex career, offered him a job as groundsman/coach and secretary of the sports club. Then Berger lost its sports field and he was made redundant, so he tried several jobs within the firm and worked as an inspector in the laboratory until his second retirement. He died a few weeks short of his 87th birthday, maintaining his interest in Essex cricket to the end⁴⁹⁴.

Thomas Carter 'Dickie' Dodds (1919-2001)⁴⁹⁵

For most of Doug Insole's time as captain, his senior professional was Dickie Dodds. Insole and Dodds had great respect for one another, not in the class-based manner of Hugh Owen and Henry Pickett but as equals from similar middle-class backgrounds who had chosen different paths. Dodds wrote: 'I was one of the few who would travel as [Insole's] passenger. He used to say, "I like having Dickie with me. He prays while I drive."...However, I learned by experience to have great respect for his skill at the wheel, as in many other things.' Insole wrote: '[Dodds] is greatly respected by everybody in the side, and his attitude to the game and to the club has been a fine example to the younger players.'⁴⁹⁶

Dodds was born on 29 May 1919 in Bedford, the son of the vicar of Riseley in Bedfordshire. He attended the minor public school Wellingborough, where the headmaster's priorities were 'first cricket, second football, third athletics, fourth study'. Late in the war he became keenly interested in the Moral Re-Armament movement, to which in 1957 he donated his entire benefit⁴⁹⁷. A friend introduced him to Tom Pearce who invited him to Essex for a trial, but he sought God's approval before joining Essex. He went as a leg-break bowler who could bat rather dourly, but Jack O'Connor who was running the session came up to him afterwards and told him: 'You're just the man we're looking for to open the Essex innings'.

After his first day's county cricket Dodds asked God how he should play and was told 'Hit the ball hard and enjoy it', an instruction that inspired the title of his engaging autobiography. He took the advice and became one of the most exhilarating, if exasperating, openers in the history of the game. He made no secret of his beliefs but he did not force them on his team-mates, who regarded him with great respect and affection. Fielding was never his strongest suit and after one lapse Pearce was unusually sharp with him. 'Sometimes, skipper, you provoke me to wrath', he replied, thereby reducing the whole Essex side to helpless laughter for the next ten minutes⁴⁹⁸.

Having played his first season as an amateur, Dodds had to decide whether to turn professional, for him a moral choice:

I felt that if you were going to give your whole time to playing cricket and had no private resources on which to live you should be paid for it openly. I knew there were various ways in which one could be paid and yet retain amateur status. Somehow this did not seem to be in line with the spirit of the revolution to which I had committed myself. So I signed a professional agreement with Essex and sent it off...

⁴⁹⁴ Note on the Essex website message-board by Alan Vigar, June 2004.

⁴⁹⁵ This section based on DODDS, Hit hard and enjoy it.

⁴⁹⁶ DODDS, p63 - INSOLE, p72.

⁴⁹⁷ INSOLE, p72

⁴⁹⁸ Anecdote recounted by Trevor Bailey in interview with Ralph Dellor.

He therefore saw both sides of the amateur/professional divide. At Old Trafford it was literally a matter of upstairs downstairs. On his first visit he ‘lunched upstairs in the pavilion with the amateurs and Lancashire officials. And very fine it was, with brandy and cigars to finish with for those who wished’. On his return he ‘trooped to a dining room below the dressing-room with the other pros and the fare was much plainer’⁴⁹⁹. At another county, Dodds saw a professional doff his hat to his captain and say deferentially ‘Good morning, sir’. He was not surprised that that county ‘always had trouble between officials and players’.

Essex was not free of such discrimination, though Dodds felt that it was never quite as divisive:

There was a time when Essex played away matches during which, while we all stayed at the same hotel, paid for by the county, the professionals had to have a meal within a price limit or pay the extra themselves, while the amateurs could have their fling. This caused some momentary feeling but it never amounted to much. The camaraderie and general enjoyment of life and cricket among the Essex players was too great for much of that.

He went on to say:

A professional cricketer’s life is in every way insecure. A serious injury can end it any day. The condition of employment is the making of runs or the taking of wickets. These are a player’s security.

In 1959 Dodds suddenly stopped making runs, and at the end of the season his employment with Essex ended. He did some cricket coaching, but devoted most of his time to the cause of Moral Rearmament.

Paul Antony Gibb (1913-1977)

In 1951 Essex signed on special registration a player who created a sensation by becoming the first Cambridge blue to turn professional. Paul Gibb was born in Bransby, Yorkshire on 11 July 1913. He was descended from a distinguished family of civil engineers, and his grandfather was knighted for services to transport. He attended St Edward’s, a public school in Oxford, and batted so well that he was recruited by Sir Julian Cahn - nominally as a salesman, but in fact to play non-first-class cricket for Cahn’s team. Gibb went up to Emmanuel College Cambridge where, because he went on several overseas tours, he took four years to complete his history degree and enjoyed the rare distinction of gaining four Blues.

When in 1935 Gibb made his Yorkshire debut, he made 157 not out and must have thought this county cricket was a pretty easy game. He next scored 0 and 11 in ‘Nichols’ match’ at Huddersfield, when Essex won by an innings and 204 runs, so perhaps revised his opinion a little.

In the following spring Yorkshire toured Jamaica and none of the other amateurs was available so the 22-year-old Gibb was asked to captain the side. A few years earlier, even the affable Denys Wilcox had found leading Essex in similar circumstances daunting. For Gibb, a painfully shy man, the experience of captaining a hard-bitten and successful bunch of professionals overseas was even worse, especially as he had great difficulty in carrying out the social duties that accompanied the post..

⁴⁹⁹ Trevor Bailey (*Wickets*, p53) recalled a trip to Old Trafford – perhaps the same one – when “our amateurs stayed at a different hotel, but this custom was quickly ended, though it lingered on in some counties for many years”.

Before the Second World War Gibb played first-class cricket for Scotland, Cambridge University, Yorkshire and England. He was a solid if unexciting batsman who often kept wicket, although he was not in the very top flight of keepers and his selection sometimes caused controversy. A fine 1938 season resulted in his selection for England, although first bad weather then injury meant that he did not play. He went as reserve wicket-keeper/batsman on the 1938-9 tour of South Africa, where an injury to Len Hutton gave him the opportunity to open the innings. He did so well that he retained his place throughout the series, although he did not keep wicket. Despite this success, he played no first-class cricket in 1939, appearing instead for Sir Julian Cahn's team. This was presumably because Cahn was able to give him the secure income not available to an amateur in first-class cricket.

In the autumn of 1939 Gibb took a teaching post at Hurstpierpoint School and married Joyce Cooper, daughter of the then Lord Mayor of York. Their two sons later attended public school while Paul was a professional for Essex. After a year he went into the RAF where as a Pilot Officer he flew Sutherland flying boats for Coastal Command. The experience seems to have accentuated the private, solitary aspects of his character.

In 1946 Gibb returned to first-class cricket as a wicket-keeper/batsman for Yorkshire and England and toured Australia, but was dropped after a poor performance in the first Test. Hospitalised with a growth on his head, he was disillusioned by the failure of the manager or captain to visit him and returned home before the New Zealand leg of the trip. His father-in-law found him a job with a gentleman's outfitters in London, and his cricket career seemed to be at an end.

Doug Insole explained how Essex came to sign Gibb:

There were some guys who really weren't good enough then. One of those was Tom Wade who'd been a tremendous wicket-keeper and it was very sad to have to say 'Well I think we need another wicket-keeper' and we got hold of Paul Gibb. That was a tremendous coup really because he did us six years magnificent service...He was eccentric, a very stubborn man but extremely pleasant.

At the meeting on 6 October 1950 when the committee agreed not to renew the contracts of Wade and Cray, they also discussed the 'possible engagement of P.A. Gibb as a wicket-keeper to take over from Wade...on the normal terms of a capped professional'. Although the possibility was not minuted at the time of his appointment, he soon plugged the gap at no. 3 created by the departure of Cray.

Gibb was missing his cricket and wanted to return to the game but could not afford to do so as an amateur. The move therefore benefited both him and Essex - they needed a wicket-keeper/batsman whereas Yorkshire and Surrey, for whom he was qualified by birth and residence respectively, did not. The move caused consternation in the establishment and MCC placed his membership in abeyance for as long as he was a paid cricketer. The decision seems decidedly hypocritical, for they had only two years earlier admitted 26 distinguished former professionals as honorary members, and Gibb's colleague Trevor Bailey and other so-called amateurs were in fact paid secretaries.

Gibb gave Essex excellent service. The security of a professional contract meant that for the first time he was able to play throughout the season. He scored over a thousand runs in four of his five full seasons, falling short only in 1954 when it was very wet and he missed the first month of the season through injury. In 1952 he claimed 87 victims, the highest in the country and a new Essex record for a wicket-keeper. Early in 1956

he injured a thumb and he retired at the end of the season. The committee granted him a testimonial of £250 for his six years' service. He was replaced by Brian Taylor, who had seized the opportunity presented by Gibb's earlier injury and played alongside him for two seasons.

Essex immediately recommended Gibb to Lord's as a first-class umpire and over the next ten years he officiated in 236 first-class and seven Gillette Cup matches. He spent his winters coaching in South Africa where one of his pupils was the great allrounder and cricket administrator Mike Proctor. Eventually he dropped out of cricket altogether and became a bus driver. Always a reclusive man, he was reluctantly persuaded to attend the 1977 Centenary Test at Melbourne but insisted on wearing contact lenses and a toupee, and took great pleasure in passing unnoticed among his former team-mates. His captain, Doug Insole, later claimed that Essex were often in the forefront of social change in cricket and the case of Paul Gibb supports his assertion.

Discipline

The war ended any lingering tendency for Essex to treat their professionals as recalcitrant schoolboys. In the few recorded cases, the club seems to have done no more than exercise the reasonable discipline that any good employer applies when necessary.

Bill Greensmith (1930-2022) was a leg-spin bowler and useful lower-order batsman. He was barely seventeen when he made his debut in 1947, but had to do National Service in the RAF and did not establish himself in the side until 1951, when Peter Smith retired. As early as 1950 the committee wrote to him 'reminding him of his obligations to the Club', and after the 1954 season he was warned that he 'needed to apply himself more seriously and keep more regular hours'. In 1955 he was reprimanded for an unspecified minor breach of discipline but kept his place in the side. Following an injury, he lost form in the wet summer of 1958 but returned to his best in 1959 which was much warmer and thus more suitable for a spinner. He was awarded a benefit in 1963 but took only one wicket in five matches and retired at the end of the season. Greensmith achieved a record benefit of £4400, despite his lack of success on the field and the fact that, according to the minutes, he 'upset a number of organisers, officials and players'.

Doug Insole recalled an altercation with **Gordon Barker** in the late 1950s:

It was a very loose rein, there wasn't too much discipline required, although there were occasions when it was. I remember having one big up-and-a-downer with Gordon Barker when he was very openly critical out on the field and I said, 'I can't have that Bark, off you go, and don't bother turning up for the next two matches'. We went in the dressing-room and Dickie Dodds was the senior pro. He said, 'Would you reconsider your decision?' I said 'Only if I get a grovelling apology because one simply can't have that sort of thing'. So he said, 'Well I'm sure Bark is extremely sorry,' and I said, 'Wheel him in then'. So in came the Great Bark and said his piece. We went down to Somerset and we were bowled out for 190 and he got about 120 of them so it was just as well I changed my mind⁵⁰⁰.

⁵⁰⁰ Insole said that he hadn't checked the details of these matches and I'm not certain which they were, but the most likely candidate was in 1958. At Taunton against Somerset Barker made 50 out of 270 and a "fine aggressive" 67 as Essex knocked off 113 to win by six wickets. Barker had disputed the timing of a declaration, and that too would fit: in a rain-ruined match at Clacton Insole declared on 27 for 2 to set Hampshire 146 in 110 minutes, which they achieved with 3 wickets and a few minutes to spare.

This was not a case of an amateur captain abusing his authority over a pro, for Insole took a similar line when his friend and fellow-amateur Trevor Bailey ‘thought he could do with three days off’ after the gruelling Headingley Test of 1953 (see above p>>>).

An aggressive left-handed bat and useful slow left-arm bowler, **Peter Spicer** (1939-1969) was an altogether sadder case. In 1957 he had a good season for the Second XI so his winter retainer was increased, but on 28 July 1958 Bailey as Secretary told the committee that ‘the general behaviour of P Spicer and in particular his language had been far from satisfactory’. Bad language might have been acceptable in the 1930s from Bailey’s privately educated predecessor, Brian Castor, or indeed from Bailey himself. Doug Insole was given a first-hand account of the 14-year-old Bailey’s debut for the Club & Ground XI, when Castor as captain dropped a slip catch and ‘the flow of language from the bowler was at once a delight and an education to the young professionals in the side’⁵⁰¹. Keith Fletcher recalled that when he joined the staff Bailey’s vocabulary had lost none of its vigour⁵⁰², but from a 19-year-old secondary school boy such language was not acceptable.

It was decided to dispense with Spicer’s services with immediate effect, although he was paid to the end of August. He had scored 128 runs for once out and taken four wickets in his last match for the Second XI, whose representative told the committee:

The unfortunate episode regarding Spicer has deprived the Club of a boy whose natural ability to play the game was great, but whose temperament and character etc prevented either the club or himself realising his potentialities.

The Second XI captain, Arnold Quick, was something of a disciplinarian but chose not to make the issue public. In his review of the season for the Yearbook he airbrushed out Spicer, who despite missing August played more innings than anyone other than Quick himself. Quick declared that ‘the general conduct, appearance and behaviour of the side was of a high standard throughout the season’.

The committee agreed that Spicer would be considered for reengagement the following April or after his National Service. In April 1959 he wrote to ask whether he could play when on leave, and was told that he ‘could play as a professional when selected’. When his National Service finished he was reengaged at £6 a week. The right-wing press often advocates some form of National Service to improve the behaviour of unruly young men and the committee probably had similar hopes, but if so they were disappointed.

Spicer made his first-class debut in 1962 at Taunton. His first scoring stroke was a six into the pavilion and he made a scintillating 80 with another six and 14 fours, but he could not maintain that form and was dropped. Recalled towards the end of the season, he seemed determined to make the most of his opportunity. He made an uncharacteristically patient 86 against the Pakistanis, and a more typically swashbuckling 54 when Essex needed quick runs to set championship-chasing Warwickshire a target.

The 1963 yearbook commented that ‘if he could learn to combine his natural aggression with more reliability he would be a great asset’, but it was not to be. In August 1962 it was decided to retain him but ‘he still needed an improvement in his personal behaviour’ and the chairman had been asked to speak to him about it. At the start of the 1963 season the altogether more reliable Keith Fletcher forced his way into the side.

⁵⁰¹ Quoted, *Bailey on Bailey*, p21.

⁵⁰² *Ashes to ashes*, Headline, 2006 pbk ed, p146.

There was no place for Spicer and in July the committee decided not to retain him. In August he played twice at Leyton, covering the injured Michael Bear, but unlike Bear eight years earlier did not take the opportunity to change the committee's mind, scoring only 19 runs in four innings.

After leaving Essex, Peter Spicer joined the Fire Service and did some coaching in Holland. There was something of the rebellious James Dean in him and tragically he came to a similar end, for in 1969 he was killed in a road accident.

The search for spinners

After the retirement of the tireless Ray Smith, Essex needed a spin bowler to support Bill Greensmith. Before the Second World War they had had to find someone from within the county and often failed to do so, but after the war freeing up of registration rules gave them a much wider range of options, which they used.

In 1957 they signed the slow left-arm bowler **Ian King** from Warwickshire on special registration. He was tidy but not penetrative, so when he informed them that he had accepted a business appointment and could not continue as a professional the committee did not object. They turned to a young local off-spinner who had in 1957 taken 33 wickets in the Second XI. **Paddy Phelan**, then an apprentice at De Havillands, was initially engaged on a match-fee basis but took 50 wickets in 1958 and was offered a contract. Like Peter Cousens, he lost two years to National Service and never quite fulfilled his promise as a cricketer, but after retiring from the game in 1965 had a highly successful career as a mechanical engineer.

In August 1958 Phelan had to undergo a medical examination and was replaced by another Essex-born off-spinner, the amateur **Alan Hurd**, who had bowled well for Cambridge University. Hurd took ten wickets against Kent in his first match and kept Phelan out for the rest of the season. He continued taking wickets for Cambridge, Essex and the Gentlemen over the next two years, but they were at a higher cost. After the 1960 season Phelan returned from National Service and Hurd, who became a schoolmaster, played no more first-class cricket.

Terry Kent was a professional slow left-arm bowler and 'probably the best all-round fieldsman in the Club', who came on to the staff in 1958. From 1960 to 1962 he played ten first-class matches and 'bowled steadily but was unable to produce the figures'. In the winter of 1962-3 he told the committee that '£7 10s was difficult to live on with a wife and child', and soon afterwards decided not to continue with his professional contract.

Dr Carlos Bertram Clarke was an amateur leg-break and googly bowler who toured with the West Indies in 1939 and after the war settled in London to work in the National Health Service. From 1946 to 1949 he played 49 times for Northamptonshire and then enjoyed great success in club cricket, but it was something of a surprise when in 1959 Essex signed the 41-year-old on special registration. Doug Insole considered it 'a retrograde step' but was too sensible a captain not to make use of Clarke's experience when appropriate. Bertie Clarke took 58 wickets in 18 matches and retired after the 1960 season. He was awarded the MBE for voluntary social work in the West Indian community, and continued in medical practice until two years before his death in 1983.

Three years after his phenomenal achievement of taking 19 wickets in a match against Australia, **Jim Laker** wrote *Over to me*. The book was so outspoken about the hypocrisy of shamateurism that he was banned from the pavilions at Lord's and The

Oval by MCC and his county, Surrey. Laker was particularly incensed by rumours about the so-called expenses of amateurs touring Australia with him, commenting in all seriousness that he had thought of turning amateur because he would be better off. Before the war, 'professionals dreamed of a coaching appointment at £250 a year' but by his time 'there was not enough money in it'. After two years playing League cricket and developing his business interests, Laker wanted to return to first-class cricket and did appear as an amateur. On a journey back from Manchester where they had been speaking, Trevor Bailey persuaded him to turn out for Essex. To Bailey's surprise, some of the committee opposed the move even though 'they were getting the best spin bowler in the world'. Eventually they accepted his offer to play for them by 10-6, and applied for special registration. Because they played on park grounds, Essex had to produce grassy, seamer-friendly wickets that would not break up too quickly, but they were not always to Laker's liking. At Romford Bailey won the toss and asked Laker whether he thought Essex should bat or bowl, so he went to have a look and was away 'for ages'. When Bailey asked him where he had been, he replied 'Looking for the wicket'. Terry Kent dropped out of the side once Laker arrived, but Paddy Phelan benefited from his advice and enjoyed his best season in 1964, when he took 66 wickets and won his county cap. Though only able to appear in 30 matches over three years, Laker took 111 wickets at 21.32. 'Although I didn't make any money I certainly wasn't out of pocket and I had a good time with my little swan-song,' he recalled. 'Indeed, I got quite keen...' Brian 'Tonker' Taylor reckoned that Laker's influence on the Essex dressing-room lasted long after his departure.

Ironically Essex, who seldom had two top quality spinners at the same time, suddenly found three within their own borders. **Robin Hobbs** was playing for Chingford when he was spotted by Insole and Bailey who signed him in 1960. He was a leg-spinner, so when Greensmith lost form in 1963 Hobbs was the natural choice to replace him. He became a regular in the Essex side and from 1967-71 played seven Tests for England without quite establishing himself as a bowler of international class. Often there was only room for two spinners and Hobbs to an extent lost out to his younger contemporaries **Ray East** and **David Acfield** who came into the side in the late 1960s. They typified the old contrast between professionals and amateurs. East was educated at East Bergholt Secondary Modern, was an apprentice electrician and after retiring became a coach; Acfield was educated at Brentwood and Cambridge, fenced for Great Britain in the Olympics and eventually became Chairman and then President of Essex. They matured into a most effective spin partnership and eventually helped take their county to three championships and three one-day competitions from 1979 to 1984, the last six years of East's career. Yet neither was an amateur or a professional, for both had the status of cricketer.

Part IV: Epilogue

Chapter 18: From bankruptcy to the Championship, 1963-79

'Reducing the staff for economic reasons'

During the 1950s Essex more or less broke even and few worries were expressed about staff numbers, but the wet summer of 1958 brought about a loss of £1628. The committee were still hoping to clear their overdraft and agreed that it would be impossible to cut the staff without affecting performance. At the end of the 1959 season

the only player not retained was Dickie Dodds, who just past his 40th birthday lost form and did not play after June. A dry summer and a wonderful spell of early season form encouraged good attendances. The overdraft fell from £3800 to £258, and the main concern was that young players should have the chance to come through. In February 1960 Trevor Bailey “drew attention to the size of the professional staff” and suggested that “some might be disposed of at the end of the season” because “it was important not to miss young talent”.

1960 was another wet season and as early as July the committee considered reducing the staff to thirteen. They would have included 18-year-old Robin Hobbs and 16-year-old Keith Fletcher, who had only just come on to the staff and not then made their first-class debuts. Bear, Ralph, Greensmith, Savill and Preston were all considered doubtful, but Insole wanted them kept and in August the committee agreed to do so. In December an overdraft of £2213 was announced. Insole wrote to say that the club needed to put its finances on a firmer footing and, contrary to his earlier argument, he conceded that there would need to be cuts in staff. In February 1961 the committee decided that they needed to save £5000 and identified the portable scoreboard, the Young Amateurs side and the professional staff as three possible areas, but nothing was done until the end of the season.

In August 1961 the committee confirmed that they “needed to reduce the staff for economic reasons” and “after a long discussion decided to dispense with the services of L Savill and T Moye”. Moye never played for the first team and his departure can scarcely have made a big dent in the deficit. **Les Savill** had been on the staff since 1953, when as a 17-year-old in his second game he made a brave 67 against Hampshire, but like several of his contemporaries lost two years to National Service and never quite made up for them. His best year was 1959 when despite a broken finger he scored 1197 runs, but after his disappointing 1960 season Insole told the committee that “Savill lacks confidence and is clearly worried about his future, which is exasperating”. Essex had taken out insurance on behalf of the players and when Savill left he surrendered his, which was worth £50; the club made it up to £100 and sent him a letter of thanks. After working for a bank, he became a teacher and then went into social work. Once again the committee was divided over **Michael Bear**, who injured himself before the season and “apart from his fielding never looked a first-class cricketer”. Presumably it was his fielding that won him a reprieve by the narrowest possible margin of 9-8, but if so it was fortunate for Essex because he finally fulfilled his potential as a batsman, making well over a thousand runs and averaging around 30 in four of the next five seasons.

These cuts saved only £576 which was not enough but three players eased the committee’s problems by resigning. Roy Ralph went off to League cricket in Staffordshire but the other two left because they felt they could earn more money elsewhere. **Joe Milner** introduced himself to Doug Insole during the MCC tour of South Africa in 1956-7. Insole encouraged him to come to England where he qualified for Essex, making his debut in 1959. Milner, used to the hard wickets of South Africa, thrived in the warm summers of 1959 and 1961 but found it hard to adjust to the damp conditions of 1960. At a committee meeting in January 1962 Insole tried to persuade the committee to increase players’ salaries but the new Hon. Treasurer, Arnold Quick, said there was no money. At the same meeting they learned that Milner had resigned “for financial reasons”, and he returned to South Africa.

John Taylor, a capable wicket-keeper/batsman who joined the staff in 1958, suffered from the perennial problem that there is only room for one 'keeper in a team, and the incumbent was his unrelated namesake Brian "Tonker" Taylor. In 1960 the committee felt that "there was a case for increasing the salary of the Second XI wicket-keeper J Taylor because his First XI appearances were restricted". They upped his salary to £400 which was between the £450 of a First XI cap and the £350 of a Second XI cap. Tonker had a good season with the bat but was less assured with the gloves and John was tried for five games in August, Tonker playing as a batsman. John began the 1961 season as first-choice wicket-keeper but Tonker recovered his form and soon returned to the side. John played five games as a batsman but it was apparent that Tonker was a fixture in the side so at the end of the season John resigned and went into business.

At the start of the 1962 season the capped pros and the Club Coach, Frank Rist, were put on a scale from £500 to £575. The salaries of the senior players were to be increased "when and if the financial position of the club improved". Second XI caps got £350 to £375 and Paddy Phelan was in a special category of his own with £350 to £400. Young players such as Geoff Hurst were paid £6 a week. Hurst was one of the last generation that could attempt to play football and cricket at a professional level, but he decided to concentrate on the winter game. It was probably a wise move, for in his sole first-class game for Essex he failed to score a run whereas in football he is still the only man to score a hat-trick in a World Cup Final, and one of the few to be knighted.

The abolition of the amateur/professional distinction and the introduction of one-day cricket did nothing to ease Essex's problems. After the 1963 season Ken Preston on behalf of the professionals asked for £700 for capped players from their fourth year, adding that the players themselves favoured the pay differential. The club by then was £5095 overdrawn so could not meet the request in full but went some way towards it: First XI salaries were increased to a basic £575 with £600 after three years, and £650 after six years and for all England players. For the newly introduced Gillette Cup there was £5 appearance money per match and £2 for a win in the first round which was doubled after each win, although in the first six years of the competition win money cost the club less than £100. Second XI salaries were not increased. Greensmith and Spicer were not retained and Preston was put on standby, but they were purely cricketing decisions not dictated by finance.

In October 1963 the committee heard that the medium-pace bowler Jim Standen was unhappy with his county Worcestershire and wanted to switch to Essex. He kept goal for West Ham United and from his point of view it obviously made sense to play cricket in the same area. No more was heard of the matter, so presumably the committee either did not want him or could not afford him. Standen probably changed his mind anyway, for in 1964 he achieved the unusual double of helping West Ham to win the FA Cup and Worcestershire win the Championship. With 64 wickets at an average of 13 it was his best season for Worcestershire, and he stayed with them until the end of his first-class career in 1970.

In July 1964 John Wilcox, son of former captain Denys, made his Essex debut. He had been the model in demonstration photos for a coaching manual written by his father and Trevor Bailey, so he would have had no excuse for lacking a correct technique. He made a useful 46 not out in Essex's victory over the Australians, their first since 1905, and it seemed likely that he would follow in his father's footsteps. He did so, but only as headmaster of the preparatory school that had been owned and run by his father and grandfather. He played a few games in May 1965 but Bailey thought he lacked the

application to succeed at the highest level, although some of his team-mates felt that he had been harshly treated. In any case, his main commitment was to the school and he resigned from the Essex staff later in the year. He returned for four matches at the end of the 1967 season, ironically to replace Bailey after his retirement.

In August 1965 the new Hon. Treasurer, AG ('Tiny') Waterman told the committee that the finances were 'at a low ebb and deteriorating'. The secretary-captain, Trevor Bailey, reported that 'five or six did not contribute enough to justify their place'. It was agreed that for both these reasons the staff should be reduced, and that team selection for the rest of the season should be done accordingly. Having won two matches all season, the team needed to win their last two to avoid the wooden spoon. Amazingly, they did so, but fifteenth place and a first-round cup exit scarcely represented a triumphant season.

As in 1961, resignations assisted the committee in its difficult task of pruning the staff – Wilcox to run his school and Paddy Phelan to go into business. Geoff Smith wanted to know whether he would be retained because he too had commitments at a school. After some discussion the committee decided that if he would tender his resignation they would offer him a testimonial, but by October the financial situation had deteriorated so rapidly that they were "unable to do more than give Phelan and G Smith their insurance policies".

The committee decided to keep Barker, Taylor, Knight, Fletcher, Hobbs, Keith Boyce, and Rodney Cass. The retention of the 42-year-old Bailey seems to have been taken for granted without any discussion at all. After long discussion, they added Bear, Graham Saville and Brian Edmeades to the list. They also wanted to find room for the two 18-year-old spinners - Ray East came on to the staff in February 1966, and David Acfield had just gone up to Cambridge University. They therefore 'dispensed with' Eddie Presland, Peter Lindsey, Geoff Hurst and Roger Wrightson. On 27 October Waterman announced an overdraft of £12,338 and further debts of £1356.

This drastic pruning inevitably had repercussions, some of which had echoes of earlier times. Bailey complained that sides were sometimes unbalanced, particularly when players were injured. Essex had to withdraw Barry Knight from the MCC team that played the West Indies and, because he would have had a match fee, made up the difference. Local clubs were asked to recommend suitable amateurs to plug the gaps. Jim Laker was asked to come out of retirement again and was willing to do so, but needed to get match-fit. Another former England cricketer, Peter Richardson, expressed an interest in joining Essex but needed to get clearance from his employer, the Essex-based civil engineering contractors W & C French. In the end neither man managed it.

Non-contract professionals such as Geoff Smith and **Stuart Turner** were put on a £12 match-fee basis. Smith appeared three times in June and then retired but Turner, who had played nine games in 1965, asked for the same terms that he had had then. At that time the club considered that 'neither his batting nor his bowling was up to standard', and refused. Presumably because he was not a fully contracted player, they forgot to tell him that he was not retained. It was not the best way to treat a man who could be a somewhat prickly character, so over the next two years he set about proving them wrong, performing wonders for his departmental team at Fords and for Buckhurst Hill CC. In 1968 the club approached him to return, initially on a £10 match-fee basis, and he became a key figure in the Essex side. He was unfortunate that England did not in his day have a policy of selecting separate Test match and one-day squads, for although he was not quite good enough to play at Test level he was for several years the best one-

day player in the country. It was, though, particularly appropriate that the benefit year of this dedicated county cricketer should fall in 1979, when Essex enjoyed their first summer of success. What he lacked in ability he more than made up for in sheer dogged determination and he was always a most popular figure with the Essex crowd.

Without major contributions from the Essex County Cricket Supporters' Association the club would have had severe financial problems much earlier. The club's committee had rejected the idea of raising money with a football pool, but in 1955 'necessity overcame convention', and the committee gave their blessing to the setting up of an autonomous association. With Frank Rist's father-in-law, Arthur Sedgwick, as chairman and Ken Preston as organising secretary, it soon had over 12,000 members. In 1957 they gave the club £2766 and '2000 gaily coloured chairs', their £4233 'was vital in the rain-drenched year of 1958'. In 1959 they donated £5000 and in 1962 £8500. In 1963 every Essex match was affected by bad weather, but income from the association and from the enthralling Test series against the West Indies enabled the club to make a small profit. In 1964 the association's donation of £9481 was second only to members' subscriptions as a source of income for the club, and Bailey paid tribute to 'this fine organisation which has done, and is doing, so much for the County Club'.

It was therefore a great shock when a complete breakdown in relations between the two organisations aggravated an already difficult situation. In July 1966 the association announced that it would give the club no further money except for specific projects, and the club responded by dissociating itself from the association. Ken Preston, who had done much good work as secretary of the association, had become president and in September declared the club's decision a 'bombshell'. His former captain, Doug Insole, had been elected Essex vice-chairman and explained that the club thought the new secretary an unsuitable person to run such an association. In October Preston, a man of great integrity, resigned from the Supporters' Association. The club contemplated the possibility of legal proceedings against the association because it was being badly run and the money it was raising was not getting through to the club. It was a course of action that the club could ill afford, either financially or in terms of good will, but within a month the diplomatic skills of Waterman and Insole had resolved the problems.

The 1966 season was even more disastrous on the field and on the balance-sheet. The team did get through to the quarter-final of the Gillette Cup for the first time, but lost ten championship matches rather than seven and fell to sixteenth place. The overdraft rose to £12,500 and in September Waterman, in a classic piece of English understatement, reported that 'it was not easy to perceive how the club was going to get through the next three months'. The economies introduced after the 1965 season were 'a help but not enough'. The staff remained unchanged except that the fast-medium bowler Tony Jordan replaced the batsman Graham Saville, while East was given a full contract and the 17-year-old John Lever was also offered terms. The coach, Frank Rist, and the masseur, Harold Dalton, had their salaries reduced and the assistant secretary, D Watt, was not retained. The county told the Brentwood and Westcliff clubs that it could not increase its contribution towards their festival facilities.

Annus horribilis - 1967

The year 1967 ranked with 1892, 1912 and 1928 as one of the four most miserable in Essex's history. They were knocked out of the Gillette Cup in their first match and in the championship, while they rose to the dizzy heights of fifteenth, they were level on points with Nottinghamshire who contrived not to win a single one of their 28 games,

and only two ahead of Gloucestershire who had five washed out. The real problems, though, were off the field.

The first topic at most committee meetings was the overdraft. A shortfall in subscriptions – not surprising given the poor results in 1966 – meant that the deficit in March was £11,823 compared with £8142 in the previous March. In August the overdraft was little changed and Waterman warned that “if £2000 were not raised it might be difficult to maintain the club”, but within a month the deficit rose by a further £2000 to £13,493. Drastic cuts in expenditure were more than cancelled out by loss of income: India and Pakistan were not the draw that West Indies had been in 1966 and therefore income from Tests fell, the Essex Supporters’ Association was still in turmoil and contributed little, and continuing poor results brought a further drop in membership. JRL Sharman, who had been on the committee since 1923 and perhaps seen it all before, offered to contribute £50 to help clear the arrears. He suggested that other committee members might like to do likewise and Tom Pearce thanked him for the offer, but felt that they might not all be in a position to do so.

Despite all their problems, Essex had remained a fairly happy club, but 1967 also saw a conflict as bitter in its way as the Douglas affair forty years before. Once again it involved the departure from the captaincy of a great Essex and England allrounder in decline. Trevor Bailey resigned as captain at the end of the 1966 season and a small sub-committee was appointed to decide his successor. The senior professional was Gordon Barker who had been Bailey’s vice-captain, and the players expected him to take over. He was, however, a rather introverted character so the choice seems to have been between the wicket-keeper/batsman Brian Taylor and the England all-rounder Barry Knight. Bailey recommended the appointment of Knight but the sub-committee favoured Taylor, so Doug Insole proposed at a meeting of the full committee on 30 January 1967 that Taylor should be offered the post.

For Brian Taylor, being appointed captain was the highlight of a long and richly fulfilling career. As a professional, the best he had hoped for earlier in his career would have been to follow in the footsteps of Peter Smith, Dodds and Preston, all highly regarded senior professionals. It is unlikely that the decision to appoint him owed much to abolition: the precedent of professional captains had already been set by other counties and even England, Essex had shown in the 1950s that they were pretty relaxed about pros captaining the side, and the only remotely plausible candidates from a traditional amateur background – Acfield and Jordan – were barely 20 years old and only available for half the season.

The committee also decided that Bailey should have a testimonial, which would be in 1968. That meant that the benefits of Knight and Michael Bear would have to be postponed, so they put their case to the committee, which offered Bear 1969 and Knight 1970 or 1971 but both men refused and resigned. Bailey, ‘in order to restore harmony’, offered to take his testimonial in 1967, but that meant that it would be organised in great haste so he wanted ‘fair compensation’ for his sacrifice. It realised £4388, which was about par for an Essex player at the time but not a large sum for a great player who had given the last twenty years of his life to the county.

Bear, who despite his brilliant fielding was never more than a good county cricketer, had little choice but to withdraw his resignation and accept the offer of a benefit in 1968. It realised £4595, but injury forced him to retire at the end of the season⁵⁰³.

Knight, by contrast, had done the double four years running and was an established England player, so he had more clout. He decided to take up residence in Leicestershire and sought special registration for that county. Essex refused permission so Knight spent the 1967 season in limbo, losing his England place and just appearing in a few friendly games. In 1968 and 1969 he played regularly for England and Leicestershire, but in September 1969 he was appointed promotions manager for Adidas in Australia where he settled and became the owner of three indoor coaching schools. He never played first-class cricket again.

It was unfortunate that the committee made two almost simultaneous decisions that would have disappointed Barry Knight, and it was hardly surprising that he took umbrage. Both sides lost out. Knight did not get his benefit and, although his form from 1966 onwards was not as good as in the previous four years, his retirement at the age of 31 must have been premature. The club lost a fine player who would have given much-needed experience to a very young side, and perhaps helped them to gain honours earlier than they did.

Such was the traumatised state of the club that its annual made no mention of Knight's departure, nor indeed of any of the troubles through which it was passing. When in 1994 another Knight, Nick, deserted the club in similarly controversial circumstances, the yearbook did at least mention the fact. And after 2001, an *annus horribilis* almost as bad, it actually carried an article with that title.

Losing their best all-rounder was almost like losing two players, and the Essex playing staff looked thinner than ever. The committee approached Surrey's Richard Jefferson who had just retired but he was not interested, although some thirty years later they had more success with his son Will. They sought to recruit the Rhodesian-born Oxford blue Frederick Goldstein but Northamptonshire offered him more money, although in the event he played only ten games for them. The new captain, Brian Taylor, believed in his young players, and was relieved that the committee's search came to nothing. Perhaps they were too: when Taylor said he would prefer not to bring in outsiders, Insole replied, 'You've made my day'.

Bailey stayed on for a further year and initially the club offered him a salary of £500 plus match money and hotel expenses, although he decided to waive the salary. John Lever was never as good a batsman as Knight but replaced him as a bowler, on a salary of £10 a week plus match money. Eddie Presland came back on a match-fee basis and played seven games in May and June. Ken Wallace, John Wright, Howard Sherman and Denis Sayers were all good club cricketers who in 1967 covered gaps in the side on an amateur basis.

It was rather curious that with only twelve staff two of them were left-handed wicket-keeper/batsmen, Brian Taylor and Rodney Cass. When Taylor first became captain Cass kept wicket but at a meeting on 11 July 1967 the committee decided that he had

⁵⁰³ The committee had a long discussion about the effect on Bear's benefit of Sunday League cricket, which would have meant that there were very few Sundays free for the lucrative one-day club matches that were so important for benefits. After discussing various options, the committee decided to give Bear ten per cent of the takings from the season's home Sunday matches, but in the event the League was not introduced until 1969.

‘not proved himself as a wicket-keeper’. Even though he had only just hit his maiden century, they suspended his contract immediately and the game that started the next day was his last for Essex. The Worcestershire wicket-keeper Roy Booth retired at the end of the 1968 season so they recruited Cass, who played for them from 1969 to 1975 and often did well against the county that had sacked him. Cass was replaced by Brian Ward, a rather dour but adhesive batsman who initially played on a match-fee basis but soon established himself in the side. In November 1967 the committee decided that they would need twelve players for the new season, but because Acfield and Jorden were up at Cambridge they would begin with nine.

Turning the corner

September 1967 marked the nadir of the club’s financial fortunes and 1968 saw a small but distinct improvement. Sponsorship of the new Sunday League brought in £3200 which was passed directly on to the players, who also had a pay rise of 25 per cent. In June 1968 it was agreed that staff would have £5 for a win, with £6 if the team won five matches or more. That was the first season in which batting and bowling bonus points were awarded in championship matches: Essex players were paid £1 for two, £1 10s for four and £2 for six.

In September 1968 Waterman, rather in the spirit of Jeeves, still regarded the position as ‘disturbing’, but the deficit was down to £8174. In May 1969 the net overdraft was still £6800 but much-improved performances on the field brought in the crowds and a surplus on the season of £2750 eased the problems. Sixth place in the championship was the best since 1961 and the side won two Gillette Cup matches for the first time, but the real revelation was their performance in the new Sunday League. Eleven wins took them to third place in the table, and one more would have been enough to give them a share of the title with one-day kings Lancashire, whom they trounced.

In 1970 the cricket authorities learned the painful lesson that the game cannot cut itself off from the harsh realities of the world around it. In the aftermath of the D’Oliviera affair (see above p>>>), and as a result of a highly effective campaign led by the young Peter Hain, South Africa’s 1970 tour of England was cancelled. Soon afterwards they were expelled from world cricket until apartheid was dismantled over twenty years later. The majority of cricket administrators were more concerned about the financial loss than about any moral implications, and Essex were no exception. As early as January they recognised that if the tour were cancelled loss of income might place their financial improvement in jeopardy, and identified the need for alternative sources of income. In the event, the financial gap was bridged by hastily organised unofficial Tests against Rest of the World sides that included four South Africans.

Essex’s results in 1970 were not quite as good as in 1969, but the team continued to play enterprising cricket and attendances remained high. Match money was reduced from £7 to £4 but salaries were increased to £850 for a capped player, £900 after three years and £1000 after six. Brian Taylor reported that “there was a fair amount of disappointment among the players” at this, although the committee agreed that if membership increased there would be a corresponding rise in salaries. The club was still “living on a razor edge”, but they invested in extra seating to accommodate the increased crowds. The new pavilion at Chelmsford was opened on 17 May and in the winter the club began to get a return on their investment by hiring it out for weddings and other functions. A new Public Relations Officer with particular responsibility for fund-raising was appointed, and business sponsorship increased. On 30 December

Waterman told the committee that a deficit of only £600 was “most satisfactory, all things considered”.

From promise to fulfilment: the 1970s

The minutes from 1971 are not accessible, so I can only offer a brief summary of the 1970s. They were a decade of overall improvement. Brian Taylor retired in 1973 and Keith Fletcher took over, building on his legacy; he hid a shrewd cricket brain behind a somewhat diffident manner and earned the respect of all of his players. The nucleus of players assembled by Taylor was strengthened by the progression through the ranks of Graham Gooch and Keith Pont, and the shrewd recruitment of Ken McEwan, Neil Smith, Brian Hardie and Mike Denness. Essex three times came joint top of the John Player Sunday League but lost out on different tie-break methods: Ray East suggested that next time it would be because their sun hats were the wrong shape. From 1972 to 1977 they only once finished in the bottom half of the Championship table and in 1978 finished second to Kent, their highest placing ever. In the Benson & Hedges Cup they lost a thrilling semi-final off the last ball when scores were level but Somerset had lost fewer wickets.

But all of this was just the prelude to a golden age which lasted from 1979 to 1992. Off the field, the appointment of Peter Edwards as Secretary/General Manager brought a more business-like approach to the county’s affairs. One small example: he noticed that whenever he asked his assistant to photocopy documents she was gone for a while, and on enquiring why discovered that she had a quarter-hour walk to and from the library to use the public one. This perhaps gave the players greater confidence that their affairs were in good hands and, having won nothing significant in 103 years, won two competitions in a month. On 21 July 1979 Essex beat Surrey in the Benson & Hedges final at Lord’s, and exactly a month later victory at Northampton sealed the Championship which they had led all season. Over the next thirteen years they won six Championships and four one-day competitions and were arguably the best side in the country. It was all a long way from the group of gentlemen which set up the club in 1876.

Conclusion

[This was the conclusion to my U of Essex essay - it’s quite good, but perhaps more appropriate to academic work than to this piece.]

‘If the French *noblesse* had been capable of playing cricket with their peasants, their châteaux would never have been burned,’ wrote GM Trevelyan⁵⁰⁴. His perceptive linking of leisure and class has increasingly been recognized over the last 50 years⁵⁰⁵, although his romanticised view of the harmonious relations between ‘squire, farmer, blacksmith and labourer’ comes dangerously close to the apple-cheeked milkmaid school of rural social history. Class connotations in cricket had begun a century before the French Revolution, when landed gentry assumed a control which partially survives today⁵⁰⁶. Unlike football, cricket enjoyed universal playing laws and a single

504 TREVELYAN, p412.

505 For instance with the founding of the Journal of sports history at Manchester University, whose Press published several of the books I have used.

506 BAILEY, Peter. Leisure and class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control 1830-1885. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p144-5. Even as I was writing this essay, the M.C.C. voted against admitting women and an industrial tribunal found against the Hon. Tim Lamb,

organizational structure embracing all classes. It became the symbol of respectable society and ‘the great recreational discovery of the later Victorians was that sport could be equated with virtue’⁵⁰⁷.

Essex County Cricket Club was born in a spirit of class distinction at ‘a small but influential meeting of gentlemen’, just as the upper-class elite was reasserting its authority in the game. The lead came from James Round who moved in such circles, although his declared aim was ‘to establish cricketing in the county’. Essex’s rapid development from an amateur and amateurish club into a semi-commercial organization was due largely to CE Green, whose education and lifestyle admitted him to Essex gentry circles,⁵⁰⁸ although they resented the move from rural Brentwood to suburban Leyton. In 1894 Essex achieved first-class status, and for the next fifty years its teams were equally balanced between amateurs and professionals: the First World War made surprisingly little difference, and only after the Second did they become mainly professional.

Caste rather than money was the main distinguishing feature. The carefree wealthy amateur was rare before the First World War and virtually extinct after. Some public school amateurs received more in ‘expenses’ than board school professionals in wages, though probably not in Essex. The class divide was marked by many petty distinctions, and disputes only had one winner: early in the 1900s Carpenter and Mead had to climb down unreservedly to be re-engaged, and as late as 1936 Cutmore’s consistency counted for nothing after a minor misdemeanour and a brief loss of form.

But such a clear-cut picture is too simplistic. There were three broad social classes but only two categories of cricketer, and all middle-class aspirants had to choose between them. Some Essex amateurs who were committeemen and team members felt a tension between the two roles.

This ambivalence perhaps foreshadowed the 1950s when class distinctions virtually disappeared – perhaps more in Essex, ‘a democratic and easy-going club’⁵⁰⁹, than some others. The relationship became one of employer and employee, and ex-professional Peter Smith was elected to a committee that had employed former Cambridge blue Paul Gibb. Abolition of the distinction between amateurs and professionals was followed by one day cricket and, for Essex, unprecedented success on and off the field. Essex supported abolition, and one-day cricket helped make the club profitable. Though still concerned about form and injury, Essex cricketers knew their livelihoods no longer depended on the club’s capricious finances: increased confidence led to a ‘virtuous circle’ of success on the field, large profits and further security⁵¹⁰.

* * * * *

I saw some of the Leyton festival games in the 1960s and 70s, and revisited the old ground with two friends on a glorious Sunday afternoon in June 2003, when the two thousand spectators enjoyed the atmosphere of an occasion that was great fun on and off the field. In February 2006 I gave a brief talk to the Leyton & Leytonstone

younger son of the Earl of Rochester and a leading cricket administrator, in a case of alleged sexual harassment. Perhaps gender rather than class is now the issue.

507 BRAILSFORD, p83.

508 THOMPSON, p127.

509 BAILEY, A history of cricket, p50. As a typical public school/ Cambridge University amateur and an Essex loyalist, his assertion may not be entirely unbiased! - other writers, though, have expressed similar views.

510 Through sponsorship deals and increased membership. SISSONS, p316.

Historical Society and had the opportunity to look over the ground from the ‘large central room in the pavilion [that] provided a splendid vantage point’. On both occasions I had an overwhelming, almost mystical sense of the ghosts of Essex past – with apologies to Francis Thompson, ‘my Douglas and my Russell long ago’. Though the catalyst for this work was my Open University project, it was inspired by my lifelong love of Essex cricket.

David Pracy, first published version January 2023

Appendix 1: Sources

Inevitably I have had to use secondary sources, particularly for clubs other than Essex where there simply is not time to consult all the original documents. They vary from ghost-written autobiographies and dreadful rehashes of books which were never very good in the first place, to high quality studies – based on carefully evaluated primary and secondary sources and fully footnoted – of which any historian could be proud. I have tried to use only those that seemed to me well researched and with something original to say. For Essex, however, I have gone back to the primary sources and looked for new ones.

Essex County Cricket Club administrative records

A surprisingly high proportion of documents have survived the club’s various moves. Undoubtedly the biggest losses for my research were the minute-books for 1876-86 and 1920-28. A few annual reports and score-books are missing, but that was less of a problem.

Researchers owe a huge debt to the late Leslie Newnham, the club statistician in the 1970s and 1980s, and the late Peter Edwards, Secretary-Manager 1979-2000. Between them they arranged for the club’s archives to be transferred across from the slightly hazardous environment of the County Ground to the safety of the Essex Record Office. My impression is that this was an unsystematic process, and that as the Club came across items it sent them over the road to the ERO: several of the minute-books only came to light after I began my researches in 1982, and I live in hopes that somebody clearing out a cupboard or an attic may unearth the other two.

This has resulted in rather illogical numbering, particularly of minute books, but the run is now almost complete and therefore an invaluable source. All ECCC items have the ERO prefix D/Z 82 and the scorebooks are numbered /2 to /10. The administrative records are numbered /1, and the relevant items have the following suffixes:

Committee minutes. 1: 1886-93; 2: 1893-1900; 3: 1907-13; 4: 1929-35; 5: 1958-65; 35: 1900-7; 50: 1913-20; 51: 1935-51; 52: 1951-8.

Finance sub-committee minutes. 1913-20: 36.

Annual reports: 6/1-155.

I also looked at the James Round papers [D/DR F55-6], which unfortunately had nothing about the origins of the club, although there were other items of interest.

Other key sources

The CricketArchive website is the most reliable and accessible source for scorecards of first-class matches. In particular the Player Oracle option gives easy access to the records of individual cricketers that previously could be found only with painstaking

manual searches. I have used this to find, for example, patterns of unavailability for amateurs and periods in which professionals might have been dropped for disciplinary reasons.

Interviews carried out by the Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop in 1999 as part of a Lottery bid to restore the pavilion at Leyton, and by Ralph Dellor with former players in the 1980s on behalf of Essex County Cricket Club.

Well-researched **biographies** of Charles Kortright, Charlie McGahey, Johnny Douglas, and Kenneth Farnes; autobiographies of Dickie Dodds and Doug Insole.

Books and periodicals

ARLOTT, John and TRUEMAN, Fred. On cricket. BBC, 1977.

ARMITAGE, John. Man at play: nine centuries of pleasure making. London, Warne, 1977.

BAILEY, Jack. Trevor Bailey: a life in cricket. London, Methuen, 1993.

BAILEY, Peter. Leisure and class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control 1830-1885. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978

BAILEY, Trevor. A history of cricket, Allen & Unwin, 1978.

BALL, R.F and GILBEY, T. The Essex foxhounds. London, Vinton, 1896.

Bell's Life of London, 1876-1885.

BIRLEY, Derek. Land of sport and glory: sport and British society 1887-1910. Manchester UP, 1995.

BIRLEY, Derek. A social history of English cricket. Aurum, 1999.

BIRLEY, Derek. The willow wand: some cricket myths explored. Aurum reprint, 2000.

BRAILSFORD, Dennis. Sport: a social history. Cambridge, Lutterworth, 1992.

BRAY, Charles. Essex county cricket. London, Convoy, 1950.

BROOKES, Christopher. Cricket. Weidenfeld, 1978.

Chelmsford Chronicle.

DEATON, Guy. Schola Sylvestris. Forest School, c1976.

DODDS, T.C. Hit hard and enjoy it. Tunbridge Wells, The Cricketer, 1976.

Essex Review.

GIROUARD, Mark. The return to Camelot. London, Yale U.P., 1981.

HEY, David. The local history of family names. In *The local historian*, vol 27 no. 4, November 1997 - supplement.

HOBSBAWM, Eric J. The invention of tradition, CUP, 1984

INSOLE, Douglas J. Cricket from the middle. Muller, 1960.

JARVIE, Grant and MAGUIRE, Joseph. Sport and leisure in social thought. London, Routledge, 1994.

KELLY's directory.

LEMMON, David and MARSHALL, Mike. Essex County Cricket Club: the official history. London, Kingswood P., 1986.

LEMMON, David. Johnny Won't Hit Today: a cricketing biography of J.W.H.T. Douglas. Allen and Unwin, 1983.

- LILLYWHITE, John. *Cricketers' Companion* (Green Lillywhite, 1865-85)
- LILLYWHITE, James. *Lillywhite's Cricketers' Annual* (Red Lillywhite, 1872-1900).
- LOWERSON, John. Sport and the English middle classes 1870-1914. Manchester U.P., 1993.
- MANGAN, J.A. Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school. Cambridge U.P., 1981.
- MASON, Tony. Association football and English society 1863-1915. Brighton, Harvester P., 1980.
- MEREDITH, Anthony. The Demon & the Lobster: Charles Kortright and Digby Jephson, remarkable bowlers in the Golden Age. Kingswood, 1987.
- O'CONNOR, Jack. The young cricketer's manual. Thorson, 1948.
- OPEN UNIVERSITY. A401 - Great Britain: sources and historiography 1750-1950.
- PATTERSON, W.S. Sixty years of Uppingham cricket. Longman, 1909.
- RAE, Simon. W.G. Grace: a life. Faber, 1998.
- SALE, Charles. Korty: the legend explained. Hornchurch, I. Henry, 1986.
- SANDFORD, Keith A.P. Cricket and the Victorian society. IN *Journal of social history*, XVII, 1983, p305-317.
- SISSONS, Ric. The players. London, 1986.
- THOMPSON, F.M.L. English landed society in the 19th century. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963.
- THURLOW, David. Ken Farnes: diary of an Essex master. Manchester, Parrs Wood Press, 2000.
- The TIMES.
- UNDERWOOD, David. Start of play: cricket and culture in eighteenth-century England. Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 2000.
- VAMPLEW, Wray. Pay up and play the game: professional sport in Britain 1875-1914. Cambridge UP, 1989.
- WARNER, Sir Pelham. Gentlemen v Players 1806-1949. London, Harrap, 1950.
- Who was Who 1916-28
- WILLIAMS, Jack. Cricket and England: a cultural and social history of the interwar years. Cass, 1999.
- Wisden's cricketer's almanack.
- WYNNE-THOMAS, Peter. The history of cricket: from the Weald to the world. London, Stationery Office, 1997.

Appendix 2: Benefits

There has never been an official period after which benefits were automatically granted. Often the decision was dependent on the state of the club's finances. The first beneficiary, Henry Pickett, was twice put off because the club could not afford it and had to wait sixteen years. The next one, Walter Mead, was fortunate enough to ask for his benefit when the finances were enjoying their brief upturn and had to wait only ten, which to be fair to the Essex committee was an exceptionally short time: Johnny Briggs of Lancashire and England was told after fourteen years that his application was premature, although he had his benefit a year later. After Mead came Bob Carpenter,

who made his debut two seasons before him but did not establish himself in the side for three years, whereas Mead made an immediate impact. I have not discovered whether professionals were officially capped before Essex gained first-class status, but if they were it would explain why Mead took precedence. In 1904 the benefit of Yorkshire's George Hirst realised over £3700 and even a journeyman professional in one of the better-supported counties could hope for about £800⁵¹¹, so the Essex men must have been bitterly disappointed with returns recorded in annual reports as below £200. It is therefore not surprising that Carpenter and Mead were affected by money worries, although the committee did all they could for the two men and must equally have been disappointed by what they perceived as the professionals' ingratitude.

Home Gordon in his VCH piece asserted that Pickett received about £500 and Mead about £800. These figures would have been closer to the normal for a benefit even at one of the more unfashionable clubs like Essex, but the amounts in the club's annual reports are always very precise and even the gross figures before deductions are well below those given by Gordon. I am at a loss to explain this discrepancy but have gone with the annual report figures, which are based on audited accounts.

Tom Russell became a regular member of the side two years after Carpenter and would have had his benefit two years after him, but the finances reverted to their usual parlous state and he actually asked for it to be postponed. In 1905 there was a peculiarly mean-minded proposal that pros should have no pay in the winter pay after their benefit, but happily that came to nothing.

There was no obvious logic to the arrangements made for the next generation of professionals. Buckenham made his debut in 1899 and took seven years to establish himself, but in 1912 became the only professional before 1939 to be granted a benefit without a request being recorded. Reeves began in 1897, played steadily for 16 years, asked in 1913 and received in 1921. Young started in 1898, after the one glorious season of 1899 was largely disappointing until his retirement 13 years later, asked in 1914 and received in 1925, 13 years after retiring. Tremlin, who began in 1900, played more matches, scored more runs and took more wickets than Young, but asked in 1919 and did not receive. It may be no coincidence that Buckenham was the best-educated of the four and a model professional, whereas Tremlin's place of education is unknown and he had several minor disputes with the committee.

Undoubtedly the First World War disrupted benefit arrangements, and the loss of the relevant minute-book means that details of any discussions are unknown. Bill Reeves, John Freeman and Jack Russell, all members of the family that served Essex so well for so long, had to wait 24, 21 and 20 years respectively. For all their insistence that the professionals should join up, the committee seem not to have taken their years of war service into consideration in deciding when pros should have their benefits. They may have been handicapped by their continuing money problems and by the sale of the ground in 1921, because they then had to share gate receipts with the Army Sports Board. At the end of the 1924 season an appeal for funds eased the financial situation, and the committee asked about the board's attitude to benefit matches. The board had no objection provided that irrespective of benefits there were at least six matches at Leyton with Saturday starts, which were more lucrative. In 1925 there were six Saturday starts but Young's match against Somerset began on a Wednesday. Freeman's match in 1926 was one of only five Leyton matches that had Saturday starts, so perhaps

⁵¹¹ VAMPLEW, p5.

the improvement in Essex's finances in 1925 encouraged the board to take a more relaxed attitude.

For Essex's first two beneficiaries poor weather was truly tragic, leading ultimately to Pickett's suicide and to Mead's two-year breach with the club, so the committee started to insure benefits against rain. The first mention of 'insurance of the Gate' came for Freeman's benefit in 1926 when it 'again saved the situation', implying that it had done so earlier, but I have not traced when. The committee insured Nichols in 1936 for £500 with a 12% premium, and Eastman in 1939 through Pluvius Insurance with a premium of £35.

From 1933 onwards there seems to have had an unofficial rule of thumb that a player should have a benefit about twelve years after he made his debut or ten after he was capped. Essex's relative prosperity in the 1930s meant that Jack O'Connor and Stan Nichols both had their benefits twelve years after their respective debuts. O'Connor in 1933 was refused the Whitsun match but 'allowed any other provided he gave the club an option on his services for the next five years'. I found no such condition placed on any other Essex beneficiary, although it may have applied to those who took theirs in the period for which the minutes are missing: Kent in the 1920s imposed similar restrictions because they were concerned about losing players to other counties and to the leagues, but by the 1930s these concerns had faded⁵¹². Eastman also had to play as a pro for twelve years, his time as an amateur not being taken into consideration even though the annual report commended his 'twenty years valuable service'.

During the 1933 season O'Connor was allowed four collections on the ground at Leyton, which may have happened earlier but if so it was not recorded. In 1936 Nichols was allowed one collection at each of the seven festival grounds (not one at each match, 'in his own best interests'), and one on August Bank Holiday. The move away from Leyton was thus of undoubted advantage to the beneficiaries, for they had seven or eight collections rather than four, and a much larger number of possible donors.

Committees often made small contributions to the benefits of players in other counties, a practice which could become slightly absurd although Essex professionals, playing for a less wealthy club, were perhaps net gainers: Essex gave three guineas to Jack Iddon because Lancashire had donated five pounds to Nichols, but surprisingly Iddon finished up with only £89 more than Nichols. Lancashire beneficiaries in the 1920s had averaged over £1500, substantially higher than Essex ones, but in 1939 Bill Farrimond got only £1000, rather less than Eastman. This may well reflect Essex's visiting more grounds and their improved results.

The committee during and after the Second World War were much less gung-ho about the war than their predecessors in the First, but treated their beneficiaries far better. Peter Smith and Tom Wade had their benefits as soon as practicable after the war. Smith received over £3000 and Wade nearly £4000, figures that probably owed much to the huge enthusiasm for cricket in the immediate post-war years. In 1948 the committee decided that 1950 would be too early for Sonny Avery's benefit but in 1949 reversed their decision because he 'was first engaged in 1930 and capped in 1937'. Avery had played only seven full seasons and evidently his Second World War service was included in the calculation. Ray Smith and Frank Vigar had their benefits in 1951 and 1953 respectively, and the loyal coach Frank Rist a testimonial in 1954.

⁵¹² WILLIAMS, p27.

They were the last of the veterans whose benefit and testimonial arrangements had been disrupted by the war, and the committee then made an official ruling that ‘nobody should have a benefit before they had given ten years’ service’, which they have broadly followed ever since. The first two beneficiaries after this - Dickie Dodds and Ken Preston - did eleven full seasons and had their benefits in the twelfth. Bill Greensmith had to wait a year longer but had – by contrast with the exemplary Dodds and Preston – presented a few disciplinary problems. Roy Ralph was an unusual case in that he was 35 years old when he became a regular member of the side and 38 when he turned professional, but in his last season, when he was 41, the committee granted him a joint testimonial with the masseur, Harold Dalton.

In every benefit from 1897 to 1967, the committee donated £25, which represented 17% of Henry Pickett’s benefit but less than 1% of Brian Taylor’s. In Taylor’s case, committee members recognised that it was not an over-generous contribution, but it was the standard figure. The club was then in the middle of its worst financial crisis but committee members agreed that they would ‘try to do more’, apparently through individual contributions.

As the financial situation improved, benefits for established players became the norm, although Keith Fletcher points out that it could be hard for those ‘struggling on the fringes of the team’⁵¹³. Alan Lilley, for example, got one after retiring but Graham Saville never did.

Figures for benefits vary somewhat, probably because money tends to dribble in for several months after the event is officially over. I have therefore taken the highest figure I can find.

Name	Debut	First requested	Granted	Opponents and location (Leyton until 1933)	Amount raised
Henry Pickett	1881	1894	1897	Hampshire	£150
Walter Mead	1890	1899	23-25 Aug 1900	Middlesex	£137/2/3
HA ‘Bob’ Carpenter	1888	1899	18 -20 Jul 1901	Lancashire	£180/15/3
Tom Russell	1888	1901	6-8 Aug 1905	Middlesex	Annual report missing
Claude Buckenham	1899	Not recorded	30 May, 1, 2 Jun 1912	Middlesex	Not given in annual report
Charles McGahey	1892	1914	1914	[Testimonial]	£132/16/11
Bill Reeves	1897	1914	15-17 Jun 1921	Middlesex	Not given in annual report
Sailor Young	1899	1913	1-3 Jul 1925	Somerset	Not given in annual report

⁵¹³ Ashes to ashes, p24-5.

John Freeman	1905	? – minutes missing	24, 26, 27 Jul 1926	Middlesex	£1070
CAG ‘Jack’ Russell	1908	? – minutes missing	16, 18, 19 Jun 1928	Surrey	£834
Jack O’Connor	1921	1930	12-14 Jul 1933	Yorkshire	£646/15/6 + ‘considerable sums paid direct’
Stan Nichols	1924	1934	1936	Kent, Southend	£1177/5/6
Lawrie Eastman	1920 [1927 as pro]		1939	Middlesex, Southend	£1072/11/1
Peter Smith	1929		27-29 Aug 1947	Yorkshire, Southend	‘Just over £3000’
Tom Wade	1929		5, 7, 8 Jun 1948	Surrey, Ilford	‘Over £3900’
Sonny Avery	1935		27, 29, 30 May 1950	Worcestershire, Romford	£2757/12/9
Ray Smith	1934		4, 6, 7 Aug 1951	Worcestershire, Southend	£3700
Frank Vigar	1938		30 May, 1, 2 Jun 1953	Sussex, Ilford	£2307
Frank Rist	1934		1954	[testimonial]	£1274
Dickie Dodds	1946		31 Jul-2 Aug 1957	Middlesex, Leyton	£2325
Ken Preston	1948		5-7 Aug 1959	Gloucestershire, Leyton	£3655
Roy Ralph / Harold Dalton	1953 1950		1961	[testimonial]	
Bill Greensmith	1947		1963		£4400
Gordon Barker	1954		1965		
Trevor Bailey	1946		1968	[testimonial]	£4388

Appendix 3: Gentlemen v Players of Essex - fantasy elevens

Every cricket-lover enjoys making up fantasy sides that include cricketers who were not even alive at the same time, much less in the same team. I am no exception and have selected teams for an all-time Gentlemen of Essex v Players of Essex match. My basic criterion for selection was the batting and bowling averages in Essex matches, and I established a rather arbitrary minimum of 50 games for the county. Doubtless

readers who might not dispute a word of the main text will disagree violently with some of my choices.

It was of course great fun, but also had a slightly more serious purpose in that I wanted to see how amateurs and professionals compared as cricketers. It was often said that cricket was a game designed above all for amateur batsman, and this rather random example would seem to prove the point. Bowling figures were fairly similar, the difference of five being explained by the relatively high averages of Buckenham, who was particularly unfortunate in the matter of dropped catches, and Peter Smith, who after the Second World War was grossly overbowled.

The most surprising result was the marked statistical superiority of the amateur batsmen, even though Jack Russell's figures were best of all. My initial thought was to pick batsman who averaged 30+ but this resulted in a great discrepancy. Eight amateurs qualified - the six selected + AJ Turner (36) and Gillingham (32) who were undoubtedly the hardest to leave out - but only two professionals (even Carpenter's average was only 29.5 exactly, so I rounded it up to 30). Trevor Bailey's assertion⁵¹⁴ that in the 1950s 'only Doug [Insole] was a high quality batsman' is supported by the figures, and may apply to other amateurs in earlier periods.

Lacking the ability to program the game into a computer, I assumed that in the first innings each batsman would score his career average rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. In the second innings the three most economical front-line bowlers took two wickets, while the other two front-line bowlers and two support bowlers took one each, all conceding the number of runs appropriate for their career average. It was a rather artificial exercise, but I think that overall the best of the amateurs would have beaten the best of the professionals.

Gentlemen

LG Crawley 34. Probably the most exciting amateur to play for Essex and an authentic opener.

TE Bailey 35. One of Essex's great all-rounders. Playing in the era of Dodds, Avery and Barker, he seldom needed to open for Essex but did the job well for England and Essex when necessary.

PA Perrin 36. Not the best of fielders, but his sheer weight of runs makes him an essential choice.

CP McGahey 31. His contemporaries Turner and Gillingham had better career averages, but McGahey formed many large partnerships with Perrin and his leg-spin would be useful when necessary.

DJ Insole 39 (captain). Amazingly this side contains seven official captains (including Perrin who deputised for Douglas in 1926), thus demonstrating my point that Essex were usually very lucky in having skippers who could actually play cricket. Insole would be my choice for his enterprising approach and rapport with the professionals.

TN Pearce 34. Turner had a better average, but Pearce's was almost as good and he was instrumental in the liberalisation of the club.

⁵¹⁴ Wickets, p60.

JWHT Douglas 28. No mere mortal like me would dare leave out the man who **was** Essex cricket for 20 years. He and Bailey would be most effective first change fast-medium bowlers.

CD McIver 27. KL Gibson was the best wicket-keeper among the Essex amateurs, but he appeared only 36 times, and McIver was easily the best batsman.

CJ Kortright 18. Probably the fastest bowler of all time.

FG Bull 12. Essex's best amateur slow bowler.

K Farnes 9. Almost as fast as Kortright –a formidable opening partnership.

All out 313

Players

TC Dodds 29. The professional answer to Crawley as a hard-hitting opener.

AV Avery 34. The most consistent professional opener.

HA Carpenter 30. His earliest matches were before Leyton acquired its blameless reputation and his last when he was aged over 50, or he might have done even better.

CAG Russell 41. Statistically Essex's best batsman before Gooch, and a useful change bowler.

J O'Connor 35. Second only to Russell among the professional batsman, and a capable leg-spinner.

MS Nichols 26. Left-handed bat and fast-medium bowler, a genuine all-rounder.

BR Knight 25. Second only to Nichols as a professional all-rounder.

B Taylor 22. Possibly not the best Essex wicket-keeper ever, but claimed by far the most victims and was an enthusiastic loyalist all his life.

TPB Smith 18. Fine leg-spin bowler and Essex's leading wicket-taker.

CP Buckenham 15. The best of Essex's pre-war fast-medium bowlers, whose figures would have been better if more slip catches had been held.

W Mead 11. 'The Essex Treasure' – chiefly a slow-medium off-break bowler but employed a great variety of deliveries.

All out 286

Gentlemen's second innings

Nichols 2-42

Knight 2-45

Mead 2-39

Buckenham 1-26

Smith 1-26

Russell 1-27

O'Connor 1-33

All out 238

Gentlemen won by 32 runs

Players' second innings

Kortright 2-41

Farnes 2-39

Bull 2-43

Bailey 1-22

Douglas 1-23

McGahey 1-31

Insole 1-34

All out 233