

S. S. M. Cricket Team, 1910.



H. V. EVANS

R. H. PINNOCK

A. W. F. EDMONDS

C. W. HILLS

I. F. DRYSDALE

A. M. REES

E. A. CLAXTON¹

D. G. CHURCHER

A. L. GRACIE

T. A. CARNEGIE

A. S. WILLIAMS

ARCHIVES

History of Cricket at Eltham College

Cricket has always been the major summer sport at Eltham College. There are no records of matches in the very early years, but once we moved to Blackheath in 1857 opportunities increased. The 1881 Elthamian tells us that: "a scheme has lately been set on foot to try and get a field of our own for cricket, instead of the open heath." Matches were arranged against City of London School and HMS Worcester; as well as the 2nd XIs of Merchant Taylors' and Mill Hill. As with other sports, we suffered from having smaller boys than our opponents, but we held our own and won as many matches as we lost on the bowler-friendly surface up on Blackheath. Staff, including the

G. GAIT.—A steady bat, who has very seldom come out with a "duck's egg." Has made several good catches, and is useful for a change bowler.

R. GILL.—A very good fielder, and has done the team good service as a longstop. Never does himself justice in the batting line owing to extreme nervousness.

B. WALDOCK is a fair all-round player, very sharp *sometimes* in the field, and has shown some very neat cricket this season. Promises much for next year.

A. COUSINS.—A tolerably good fielder; can catch pretty well; formidable when playing against slow bowling: perhaps carries his "slogging" a little too far.

J. DAKIN.—Not very reliable, either in batting or fielding. Has played nevertheless some very good innings.

A. PEARSE is also hardly to be depended on for runs. Has made several catches during the season, but does not run hard enough after the ball.

The 1883 1st XI

Headmaster; sometimes turned out for a school XI to make up the numbers. Typical totals were around 50 or 60 all out, but sometimes totals were as low as 14, with the highest individual score for the season around 40 and the Batting Cup being awarded to a player with an average of 9 or 10. A sash was awarded to any batsman who made 20 or more. Extras (mainly byes and wides) were frequently the highest scorer - 15 out of 36 or 17 out of 40 - and long-stop was a key fielding position. The Archives contain detailed reports and scorecards for many of these nineteenth century matches.

Two of the greatest cricketers in our history played in the 1st XI in the 1890s. Tom

Pearce, who later donated the Blackheath Cup for all-round sporting excellence, came over from Hong Kong in January 1896 at the age of nearly 13. By the summer of 1897 he was Captain of Cricket and remained so for three years. His figures were not remarkable by

Tom Pearce



today's standards – an average of 25 or so – it was the way he made his runs. No-one brought more pleasure to the younger pupils watching, who had sat there up on the Heath since early morning to "bag" a pitch or carried a tent up from school to act as a pavilion. It was all worth it to see Tom Pearce's flashing bat. No boy at our school ever forgot his 90 against Colfe's in 1899 – they still talked about it 50 years later. He subsequently returned to Hong Kong and played international cricket for them, scoring several centuries, before losing his life in 1941, defending Hong Kong against the Japanese invasion.

The other star of that period was Chauncey Gillespie from Ireland, who captained the 1st XI for two years before Pearce; he was also Rugby captain and Head Boy. On the rough wickets on Blackheath he was simply unplayable, taking around 200 wickets in his career; including 94 in one season, 1895. Beat that!

BOWLING AVERAGES.						
Bowler.	Overs.	Maidens.	Runs.	Wickets.	Average.	
C. M. Gillespie	210	65	406	94	4.3	
H. F. Hadfield	28	7	81	13	6.2	
J. F. Haegert	23	3	71	9	7.9	
H. T. Hutton	160	36	407	44	9.3	

Hutton bowled six wides.

The move to Mottingham in 1912 brought greater opportunities for cricket, better pitches and training facilities. The great Leslie Gracie, the best all-round sportsman we've ever had (he captained Scotland at rugby), tried his hand at cricket as well. Sure enough, he was a star and scored the first ever century for the school – 106 not out v Dudley House School on 29th May 1912. He also took 47 wickets that season, while in the equivalent of Year 10 – he was in the 1st XI for 6 years – and in the picture of the 1910 team he was just 13.

Leslie Gracie was one of a select band of boys lucky enough to play cricket for the school against W G Grace, the incomparable cricketer of the 19th century who lived in Mottingham Lane for a few years until his death in 1915. WG came over to school a few times after we moved in, even helping out as a track marshal on Sports Day in 1915 (the year

WG Grace, Mr Hayward and admirers



Leslie Gracie won every Senior event). In 1914 Dr W.G.Grace's XI played two matches against the school, one on our pitch and one at Eltham Cricket Club. In the second match WG (by then over 65 years old) was bowled for one by Richard Eric Rees, who lived off the story for the rest of his life. Amazingly we have a photo of WG Grace talking to headmaster WB Hayward, and some local young ladies. The picture was presented to the school by Tom Cochrane OE in June 1979.

If Grace was the most famous cricketer of the 19th century, in the first three decades of the 20th century it was Jack Hobbs. And yes, he too played at Eltham College. Several times, in fact – Physics teacher Mr HG Occomore picked a side once a year to play the 1st XI and Hobbs turned out for “Occy” every year from 1934 to 1940. Many Old Boys remember those games, and how Hobbs used to knock up a quick 50 or so and then give his wicket away to a deserving bowler. Don Bradman never played at the school, as far as I know (!), but we do have a bat signed by him in the Sports Hall.

The bat was donated by Ray Dovey, who played for Kent against the touring Australians in 1948 – their signatures are on it. Dovey was the only OE to play first-class cricket in England for a lengthy period; he left Eltham College in 1936 while still in the 5th form (Year 11) to join the Kent staff, and of course his career was seriously disrupted by the war. Nevertheless he took 777 wickets in his career with his off-breaks, including 8-23 and 5-52 in one match against Surrey in 1950.



Ray Dovey

A high point in Eltham College cricket came in the 1980s when we had a series of excellent teams. In particular the 1st XI of 1982 is remembered for the fact that two boys scored over 1,000 runs each. Martin Holcombe (whose son Will is a current Eltham College cricketer) and Martin Surguy scored 1,039 and 1,159 runs respectively. I doubt if that will happen again. But records are there to be



Chris Harden

broken, as this season has shown. Leslie Gracie's century in 1914 was eclipsed by Donald Hicks' 153 in 1932 (Hicks also took 172 wickets in his career). This stood as the school record for 50 years, although James Bradnock's 149 in 1959 came close. It was Martin Holcombe who surpassed it in 1982 with 155*, equalled in 1994 by Jonathan Bensted. And this season, 2010, Chris Harden scored 158* v the Forty Club to set a new record. His stand of 277 with Richard Fleming is also a record. If we don't have a Flintoff or a Botham amongst our OEs, at least we can claim the best cricket website in the UK. Cricketarchive.com has every scorecard and statistic you could possibly want, including Tom Pearce's exploits for Hong Kong, Ray Dovey's bowling for Kent and a further 340,000 players. And it's all run from Petts Wood by Philip Bailey OE, the Chief Statistician for Wisden.

Apart from Ray Dovey, few OEs have played first-class cricket. Tom Pearce, of course, played for Hong Kong. In England Richard Hart played for Cambridge University in 1987 and 1988, Paul Clinton played for Oxford between 2004 and 2006 and Johan Malcolm-Hansen played for Loughborough University and then Leicestershire in 2007 and 2008. But we still haven't had a real Test cricketer. So come on all you boys in the U14s and U15s – maybe you could be the first.

MJS

ELTHAM COLLEGE CRICKET CLUB V CATERHAM C. CLUB		HOME CLUB		VISITORS		ON 20 THURS 19 82	
BATSMEN	TIME IN/OUT	RUNS SCORED		SCORING RATE	HOW OUT	BOWLER	TOTAL
		50	100	150			
1 M. HOLCOMBE	5/19	21	101	104	2	NOT OUT	69
2 M. PRATT	3/16	14	2	1	0	PHYS	3
3 M. SURGUY	6/28	2	1	4	2	NOT OUT	52
4 H. WRIGHT							

A typical entry from the 1982 scorebook - Holcombe and Surguy take us to a win by 9 wickets over Caterham