

March 2019 Interview with Lou Handy by Tony Cornell

TC

My name is Tony Cornell and I am a volunteer working on the Mildenhall Cricket Clubs That's Over heritage project. Today is the 15th March 2019 and I am interviewing Lou Handy the club Chairman in the Mildenhall Cricket Club pavilion. Lou and I will be discussing his early life and how he came to play cricket for Mildenhall. The record of this interview will be archived at the cricket club and will be made available to the public. It may also be available on line and used to promote the heritage and history of Mildenhall Cricket Club and the town as a whole. So hallo Lou thank you for seeing me today can you tell me your full name and date of birth?

LH

Thank you Tony my name is Louis Kenneth Handy and I was both on the 11th November 1963.

TC

And where were you born?

LH

Oh born in Lincoln

TC

Born in Lincoln

LH

My father was in the Air Force, the American Air Force and we went to the US immediately for 4 and a half, 5 years, came back and settled in Mildenhall Air Force base on his return.

TC

And that would be around 74, 75, 1974, 1975

LH

Yes

TC

OK, and in your early informative years was there any sport in your life at that time?

LH

Yes so it was mainly its football, as most youngsters in this country we would be playing football. But we also had an interest in cricket although we had no formal training in mind. Obviously my father knew nothing about cricket as you can imagine. So we played out the back in what we called the close. We found some bits of wood, made some stumps, found a fairly flat piece

TC

This was in Beck Row?

LH

Yes we would play ourselves so we sort of understood what the game was and we had a hard rubber ball rather than a leather ball. I don't think our father trusted us with a leather ball to start with. So

we played it in the back garden, well not the back but the close where we sort of knew the game but had no formal coaching or training before we came to Mildenhall.

TC

OK um and what school was you attending then?

LH

Went to Beck Row primary to start with and then came to Riverside and this is where I met Andy Squire and that's where the connection was to coming and play cricket because he knew the family was very sport orientated and we could play cricket as well as do football along with doing athletics etc. So that was our link to Mildenhall Cricket Club initially.

TC

Ok

LH

To some degree it was Andy because he always knew, but actually my father met Seamus O'Dowd who was involved with the cricket club youth section at the time. He met him in the so called watering hole at The Bell. He came back one night and said you are going to play cricket for Mildenhall. So I knew Andy from school. We said yes we would go along and as they say the rest is history.

TC

OK So initially would you have come down, I don't remember (pause), presumably there was some formative training or nets for the youth team.

LH

There was a small amount certainly in the dome in the Easter holiday and the various school holidays they use to run cricket training sessions. Rod Blackmore I believe use to run them. Mildenhall would have had some stuff in the dome. It was fairly structured and you use to turn up in your whites etc and you went through proper present and correct batting techniques which in them days was high shoulder, forward defensives and nothing like todays coaching I'm sure. That on memory more coaching from there than at Mildenhall, we did some nets but I don't know that we ever had any coaching.

TC

Shamus was more of an administrator he was not really qualified to coach or train, he was just an organiser really

LH

Yes absolutely. He had a son who liked playing and I guess he had a son playing and he got involved. Greg O'Dowd

TC

Greg O Dowd

LH

So yes Shamus umpired though I'm not sure how good an umpire he was, but to be fair at 13 years old you don't really care as long as you've got someone organising it for you. We came down, all four

of us came down Tim to start with but Ian would have been, I would have been 13 Ian would have been 11 slash 12 and Rick 9ish so we all played apart from Tim who played later on.

TC

So that got you into playing cricket. Have you any recollection of playing a first senior game.

LH

Good question Tony, in the good old days as we called them Um it was an honour to play for Mildenhall, there was only two sides, Saturday 1st team. Saturday 2nd team, Sunday 1st team and Sunday 2nd team apart from that there was no cricket it was Under 21 and Under 15 and Under 13 with what was conducted as youth cricket. So we got called up to go and field for the first team and we were ecstatic. With Ian and me being young and athletic and able to run around we got picked for the first team regularly just to go and field. And to be fair we were happy as Larry in fact if we got picked just to go and field you know. It's not the same nowadays, but in those you were happy to field. You usually had a scorer people would be on hand to score, you would be happy to score you had to be involved in senior cricket and if you got a game even better I can't recall much particularly because at the time we were just running around fielding. I do recall playing (pause). The first opportunity I got to bat was for you Tony. We played in the Sunday 2s at Cokenach. As a young lad you are always keen to field as you do and then you gave me an opportunity to bat a number 4. I was all made up I went out and promptly got zero, certainly single figures but at least I had had an opportunity to go out and bat against men so that was against Cokenach with the likes of Tim Cannon he was at the time a bit of a local cricket celebrity who always smashed the ball all over the park.

TC

We are talking in the days of the 70,s when there was no league cricket by Mildenhall. It was friendlies Which my recollection of that was that you were able to help youngsters to have a game of cricket because the end result, while you wanted to win it was not the be all end all of the game.

LH

I think that was the point but there was also a point where cricket people were getting more competitive and wanted to play league cricket, I think Mildenhall were quite late in joining some of the leagues. There was a reluctance, perhaps by some of the committee, which may or may not have been a bad thing, but for a youngster, from a youngster's point of view was quite keen to play cricket. I think when we joined the Suffolk league I know there were people like myself who were pleased with playing that because sometimes games meandered to a draw, but that said it certainly gave people an opportunity to actually play and get involved and the result didn't matter, didn't matter so much shall we say. Obviously we played to win but it wasn't the primary motivation.

TC

My recollection is that it was a time of change and the old school were really beginning to become old, new life was being breathed into the town through the overspill and yes there was a lot of influx of new people coming to join the club and yes they were keen to play league cricket. Who, can you remember who were the people who stood out as cricketers at that time? Was there any names you remember?

LH

When I first joined I am pretty sure that the first team was captained and I think was maybe on a Saturday and vice-captain on a Sunday, either Tom Whittingham who I recall was a slow bowler and

also opened the batting, or certainly batted in the top three. And Peter Finniss who also was captain, or just vice-captain, and he was an all action, middle order batsman who liked to hit it and obviously medium pace and swung it quite a lot. So for me they were the two first team names I knew. Obviously Mike Kill was quite prominent and yourself (Tony Cornell) was captain of the Sunday 2s at the time and also the likes Bob Birch who was big strapping six foot plus chap who was a good friend of yours I believe Tony.

TC

He was and still is

LH

Yeah, he moved out to Norfolk at some time. I do recall batting with Bob Birch in the Littleport final and then I ran him out. It was one of those where you play a lovely shot and you run on the shot, but realised that it has gone straight to the fielder and Bob was run out by about ten yards. But being a sort of gentle soul he let me off without reprimanding me. But, as you say there was a new crowd coming through which shall we say that was led by Chris Cooke, Martin King, Philip Palmer, Nicky Power, for anyone who knows those names they will know there was quite a bit mischief going on. As well as the cricket, they were very keen and very competitive cricketers, but they also liked a bit of a laugh, so the changing rooms were always quite lively at those times, especially pubs, we used to spend a lot of times going to pubs after games, it wasn't so much when we were playing those friendlies, not so many of those clubs had their own bars, so you would go the local watering holes. The Bees, the bees in the wall.

TC

The bees in the wall, there was one in Whittlesford.

LH

Yes,

TC

Yeah, yeah, I do remember that. Yeh it was trying to curtail the exuberance of youth sometimes. From my recollection of being captain in those days. So, the progression then, was presumably was, did you go 2nd team 1st team, or did you automatically carry on playing for the first team

LH

No I think we tended to drop so what we did at the start was field for the first team and then play some second team games to get experience, obviously to develop some skills and then worked our way back up to the first team. It was a reasonably short transition, but I remember playing Sunday 2s for you (Tony Cornell). I don't know that I played much for the 2s on a Saturday, but then ended up going back into the first team, batting low down the order and not bowling, particularly often, although on a Sunday we would get more opportunity. We did have some very good players so it meant of course batting down the order you didn't get much of chance, likes of Martin King, Chris Cook, they were good cricketers as well as the established players.

TC

And they were mainly all-rounders as well, weren't they.

LH

Yes indeed. Virtually, in those days, virtually I those days everyone was an all-rounder. So in theory the top five could be the five bowlers, but obviously the likes of Gerry Widger would open the bowling and would bowl pretty long spells, in those days you could every over, well in the friendlies, not so much obviously it wasn't a set number of overs, certainly in the early league cricket you could bowl 22 or 23 overs.

TC

Absolutely

LH

And it didn't lead to necessarily at that stage to improving youngsters, in fact, youngsters probably got less of a chance., because once we started in a league and people wanted to win, a bowler could bowl 23 overs on the spin, then that bowler would bowl 23 overs, that's what it meant for someone to win. It wasn't until into the 90s somewhere that they started trying to limit the number of bowlers and I think when we joined the Two Counties in 1990 you could still bowl half the overs, somewhere in themid-90s possibly they reduced the leagues to 15 overs maximum, which still stands to now in the Tow Counties

AC

And on the same sort of subject, presumably if you got to play you probably got called up for the mid-week cup teams occasionally, just be there mainly to field for those wouldn't you?

LH

The cup teams were always interesting, because again they wanted some good fielders because it was 20 overs there wasn't much opportunity to bat or bowl, but

AC

Like again the bowlers could bowl ten overs each,

LH

Yes, t10 overs each, but we did have at one stage about three Americans playing so we had Winfield St. Hill, Kichen and the third was Dennis Roberts. He used to bat without gloves, as I remember and those three were absolutely hilarious. They would just be the whole game chatting and winding each other up. So We had the likes of Chris Cook and Martin King then we had the likes of the Americans then we had the old established guys, then we had a couple of youngsters, so we had a right mixture, and we had our captain.

I think we were normally very pretty successful, I don't know if we won many cups, but we did quite often go through to the finals or semi-finals. We played a lot of 20 over cricket and it was in the days when if you got 80 in a 20 over game you thought you had done well, because people would bat with the old mentality, there was done of this go out and whack it from ball one. People still batted as though it was a 40 over game and they played it in a 20 over game. So once you got to 80 you figured you had a decent opportunity.

AC

And winning the toss and batting in the best light was always a bit of a help as well.

LH

Yeah. Absolutely some of the grounds you played obviously didn't have sight screens, when playing the Orby Wood you played a lot of village sides out in Bury, I can't remember the name of the ground where the boundaries are basically the roads and paths, no sight screens, so if you won the toss you would bat first, get some runs and hopefully and hope they couldn't see in the second innings. With the likes of Martin King and Chris Cook bowling quite quickly.

AC

Around that time my recollection is that there was a lot more village teams and a lot more village teams entered the cups, which led as you say to some of the precarious places that you would finish up playing.

LH

I mean in those days cup cricket was quite prestigious, people wanted to win cups and then the Orby Wood was the big one to win. There were obviously other trophies, the one at Exning was always well attended and people really looked forward to those cup games, it has obviously died off a bit now. Again circumstances have changed people can't get the time off work, etc. but in those days it was touring games and evening games you always managed to sneak off work early and the boss didn't seem to mind. Obviously as long as you did your work.

AC

I remember the famous day, you will probably be able to talk me through it, when I captained the team at Kirtling.

LH

I do indeed, yeah. Tony you were kind enough to let us bat 1,2,3 and 4.

AC

The four Handy brothers

LH

1,2,3 and 4, and I believe we were 32 for 4 and I believe that Rick might have got 32 of those, me Ian and Tim none of us got off the mark. I remember whacking one off square leg straight down square leg's throat and the rest of us didn't do so well. But, we certainly, it was a good day for us, the four of us batting the top four.

AC

Can you remember what sort of ages you would have been then, when the four of you played together?

LH

In order for Tim to play in must have been the best of 10 perhaps 12 or 13, so I must have been close to going to College I imagine, so I would have been 18, 19, seven years between us, so if Tim was 12 I would have been 19 and probably the season before I departed for University.

AC

So you went off to University in

LH

I went to Oxford Polytechnic in 1989, no in 1982, the memory, no fun in getting old, 1982-1985.

AC

1982-1985

LH

Yeah. I came back every summer, to play cricket. I used to come back once every term, so at the start of the season I only played one or two games, so was obviously back for the second half of the season, where I played and in those days I typically played in the 2s, when I came back the 1s were fairly strong and established side by then. When I left I just started opening the batting for the 1^{ss}, but obviously not being in for the first half of the season you end up, you can't walk straight back into the side so I seem to recall most of these years playing 2s and cup games, but I always used to come back, so for the second half of the season I always used to come back for the Dinner Dance, which was never missed. I think I started that when I was 15 and I have not missed one since, no matter where I have been I have always come back for that. Yes so those years I played half a season each and I was up in London three years working and I used to still come back for the first couple of years, but for the second couple of years I had a different job and I played down Surrey way and probably played 2 or 3 games for Mildenhall each year when I came back for holiday, because I never used to holiday as I didn't go away. My holiday was playing cricket, so I used to come back to Mildenhall and play basically two or three weekends and try and get as many games as possible. Obviously no more than 4 or 6 then head back down to London again.

AC

And, the sort of guys you were playing alongside when you first came back. Who would they have been then?

LH

So at the time school mates, Andy Squire would have still been here, at one stage Andy went to Bury Rail to try and get recognition for the Suffolk side, at the time Mildenhall was a very unfashionable area and so it proved when Andy went to Bury Rail, obviously on a smaller ground and, which suited batsmen, your 30s become 50s and your 70s become 100s and low and behold he ended up in the Suffolk set up. So Andy was still playing then, Andy Clark, Mike Clarke's son, was still playing. We had quite a young side, we had the likes of the next generation, David Widger, son of Gerry, Chris Reeve was playing, Martin Taylor was quite young, or very young but just appearing on the scene, there was still the back end so Chris Cook and Martin King were still playing, but once you got into league cricket they sort of almost disappeared which was a great shame, because they were the more competitive ones, so Mike Turner was a long standing player at Mildenhall, Mike Turner, Andy Carter the kind of players who weren't probably in the first team in those days.

AC

Had Stevie Hunt come on the scene?

LH

Steve, yes Steve was a bit young, he came, but to be fair I didn't know much about Steve early doors, because I was away when he probably joined so I knew of Steve but it wasn't really until the 90s that several of us came back, we all finished college at the same time, that I got to know Steve. Steve was the year below me so he was Ian's year. So in those years I probably wouldn't have known him, but there would have been in the second team yourself, the likes of Killer, Alan Finnis, Cess Robinson, Bob

Rider, I used to open the batting for the 2nd team with Bob Rider and I believe at that time Alan might have been captain of the Sunday 2s for a while.

AC

Alan Finnis, yea, there was a time when he captained the Saturday seconds and I did the Sundays.

LH

I remember playing for Alan, I remember coming back to a game against Thurston, when I was desperate to bat at the time, I said to Alan if you get me to bat I will get you a 50. Literally he put me to bat at number 5, not unreasonable, seven overs to go when I got in and I said to Alan I will score 50 and low and behold I got 50 not out. I promised him I would score 50 and the so game lives long in my memory.

Cos I remember the first time it happened to me ever, and I am not the most attacking batsman ever, there was all nine fielders on the boundary, there was a bowler and keeper and nine on the boundary, so I do still remember that one. But yes, so I played for Alan on a Saturday and you (Tony Cornell) on a Sunday.

AC

And your recollection of what the league set up was in those days

LH

So we joined the Suffolk League, which was called various things in those days, Dairytime, Willingdale, it went through a number of guises, and that was then the first introduction to league cricket. So we were obviously very keen to play in those games. I don't believe Bury, well Bury might have played at the start but I don't believe they played their first team. Certainly towards the latter days, because I know that the real rivalry was between ourselves and Worlington. That was sort of into the early 90s we played but it might have been late 80s early90s, there was quite a rivalry between Mildenhall and Worlington. Very friendly rivalry players played everybody knew each other, played very hard, played very fair. They had the likes of Andy Ford, Gallop brothers, Brian Howe, Ian Starling, so people ended up also playing for Mildenhall so there was a big connection between the clubs then. We ended up playing, Deben Valley was another half decent side, Old Woodbridgians, they were a decent side and Tuddenham obviously had a good side, they had the likes of Bub Grant, Kevin Poole, Nigel Lomas, Neil Cross and then the two chaps who used to open the bowling, I can never remember their names.

AC

Cockertons?

LH

That is, Cockertons yes. I remember Neil Cross used to bowl to a 9/2 leg side field. Bowl round the wicket and low and behold get those wickets because people got so frustrated they got caught. Bub Grant was probably the biggest hitter locally and he could hit the ball very hard, a couple of nemesis like Martin King could always get him out and Martin Lyes could always get him out. Cos they bowled quite quick and quite full. He was a big chap, but, if you pitched it round about his toes on leg stump you would get him and so if he got going you would be chasing leather for the afternoon, but if you got him early, if those guys got him early. So we had sort of mixed fortunes against those. Lakenheath had a strong side, I remember the likes of Graham Heywood, who was a teacher at the school, and Dickie Bond, Terry Sizer and Lakenheath were well known, as I say, as a drinking side, they loved their

cricket, but they loved their drinking in the bar as much. Like as I said it was a different era, people could drink and drive, so you played a local side and you would drink and they would all drive home and to be fair no one I knew ever had an accident. They all lived locally and they went round the back streets, and obviously you wouldn't condone it in days like this, but it was a different era and they played hard and they drank hard. So they was a lot of good local sides and there was a good contest.

AC

And then there was team who have faded slightly, Stowmarket, was a strong team in those days.

LH

Yes Stowmarket was strong in the late 80s to early 90s. They had Adam King, Nick Peck and Clive Witherley was keeping and Rutterford was the bowler, went from Lakenheath to Stowmarket.

AC

Colin

LH

Yea, he was a good cricketer, it was county cricketer I believe, wasn't he?

AC

The one I remember, through indoor cricket, was Roger Bolton.

LH

Yes, yes, he now umpires. So they had a good side and I think when we sneak into the 90s when we joined the Two Counties, we were in division three because, the Two Counties only had three divisions in 1990 when we joined and Stowmarket were in division three as well, they just joined it was between Mildenhall and Stowmarket to see who would go up the first season. Unfortunately we lost out to them and we came second and in those days only the top team went up. But I think once they got into division two, they never got, I don't know that they every got to division one. I might be wrong but I know that I think once King and Peck saw off their salad days were over, they tended not to be quite the leading lights, they faded a little bit and it as good to see them get promoted last year actually. So they back in the day they obviously moved grounds, I used to love their old ground at Earl Stonham, where Earl Stonham now play, but it used to be Stowmarket's ground. I always enjoyed those visit there. Again they were another good social side where you would go along, think they had a little social club, bowls club next to it and so it was always quite lively, there was always things going on. There was a lively place and you always looked forward, I always looked forward personally, to trips there because the straight boundaries were fairly short so if you had a big bat and played through the line you were not guaranteed but you could certainly score more runs than you could at Mildenhall where the boundaries were another 30 yards longer.

AC

So Mildenhall by now have joined the Dairytime league and moderate success. Did they ever win it?

LH

Yep, so we won it at least one year, I now it was a very well contested competitor, particularly in its early days. Say Tuddenham were near the top Bury won it, Worlington, ourselves and Lakenheath would always be there as were Deben Valley. I think we only won it once and once we came runners up to Worlington. There were a couple of seasons where there was real rivalry between us and

Worlington, we won it one year and they won it the other year. But the difference between us and Worlington, was that we ended up going into the Two Counties, Worlington didn't take that opportunity to start with, which later on takes us on to where perhaps got a couple of their players.

AC

Mildenhall by now are used to being a competitive league cricket team. So what prompted the change from Dairytime to Mildenhall joining the Two Counties?

LC

In the Dairytime, some of the stronger sides I think, started to look for cricket elsewhere. Say, for example Bury St. Edmunds never put their first team out in the, well they didn't towards the latter years towards the late 80s they didn't put their first team out. So, I think they had already joined the Two Counties, so I also think Sudbury were a team that didn't necessarily put their best sides out so we got to the stage where we started to think well there is another standard of cricket we could get involved with and it was still reasonably local and well, we obviously knew Two Counties existed at the time and we joined in 1990 there was only three leagues, so it wasn't as if it was a massive league. I suspect there was only 30, just over 30 plus, or maybe mid-30s teams when we joined in 1990, in division three. But we were certainly aware that, by then I guess the friendly cricket amongst the youngsters no one wanted to play and I say that generation had moved on and the people who had played the friendly cricket were probably getting older and playing in the twos and the first team guys wanted to play, once they had the taste of league cricket, and I am guessing also with more TV coverage of cricket etc. things like the John Player 40 over cricket, which was a very popular on the TV, I remember watching them, so Mildenhall then effectively had a vote to join the Two Counties and we were admitted in 1990. As I say we joined in division three along with Stowmarket, I am not sure if Stowmarket joined the same year as us, but at the time only one team could go up from division three and at the time Stowmarket were still in their pomp with the chaps mentioned earlier certainly Nicky Peck was scoring, loved batting at Mildenhall, scored 100s many times. We came second and they got promotion in the 1990 season. In those days you would get no end of cricket because we were playing Dairytime (or Suffolk League) and the Two Counties and they were both either on a Saturday or a Sunday. Basically you would play 40-48 league games a season. To be fair at the time I reckon I played 40-44 of those games. As I say as a young lad I wasn't interested in holidaying all I wanted to do was play cricket. So I played every weekend Saturday and Sunday, along with, we had a very young team, or youngish team and everyone really wanted to play, so Mike Turner was still captain I believe at the start of that Two Counties realm but there was the likes of, I came back from college along with my brother Ian and Steve Hunt came back from college. Andy Squire was playing at Bury Rail, but in 1991 he came back to Mildenhall, once he

AC

That was a real turning point.

LH

Yeah and in 1992 Rick came back from Ipswich, so we had literally five players who were first team players who just suddenly reappeared at Mildenhall at the same time added to the fact that the likes of James and Mark Taylor had just come over from Brandon or Lakenheath, so we suddenly had this crop of young players indeed even the likes of Martin Taylor and David Widger, Robert Wilden, so our team was basically virtually under, they were all sort of between 15 and 28, so they were all sort of not quite in their prime not like some of the other sides, but we were very athletic, we used to save 30 runs in the field. So we were plus 30 in the field compared to any other team. So, we got involved in Two Counties, we still competed in the Dairytime, but as time went on, as the season went on the

focus, if you could only play one game a weekend, you always ended up playing the Two Counties. And it was also occasionally some strange ones where a team would be in the Suffolk League and also in the Two Counties would be a double header that counted for both leagues, which was obviously that would not happen nowadays, but certainly in a time when you were trying to fit in so many games of cricket in.

AC

My recollection, I remember one was 40 overs match and one was 45. So in theory you could have had two different results. It was never a case of that.

LH

I think you are right, but in theory you could have batted second and after 40 overs lost the game and after 45 overs, you could have won it. But we didn't have too many of those. That was when we were introduced to the likes of Long Melford, so we played Long Melford the only one season in 1991 and we got on pretty well with them and they asked us to attend their cricket week, we then spent the next 21 years travelling to Long Melford for the cricket week, which was by anyone's standards 21 years heading off to the same place for cricket week, we must have enjoyed their company and they must have enjoyed ours. So we started going further afield as far as Maldon and places like that, Halstead, so we got introduced to new clubs it was actually a very exciting time because as I say we were a young very dynamic side and peoples recollection of us when we got to division one. I have skipped a little bit, there I will go back. We got to division one I met some people, they said later on that Mildenhall were like a breath of fresh air in division one, because we had that enthusiasm and there was, maybe we were country boys but we were competitive, but there was an edge you know, but it was never personal, just good, hard cricket played between, you know, guys who were trying to win and as soon as you walked off you shared a beer together, in those days again, it was more of a case of having a beer after the game and these clubs tended to have a lot more of their own bars so we didn't have to go and find a pub to drink, you just stayed there straight away afterwards so a bit of a change in the culture, but we, as I say, liked to play hard and party hard. We had enough people who would drive, because by then obviously people were more aware of drinking and driving and so we had our designated drivers. It was an exciting time because as you say we were not particularly close to certain clubs, so like Long Melford, Halstead and Maldon, but still to this day when I play Maldon, Frinton, Frinton, was another side where there was mutual respect between the teams. It still goes on today because the older players have still got that respect for each other so that word has been passed down, so when we play Maldon it is always good fun and I guess it is the same with the Maldon side when they play Mildenhall over there. They know they are going to have a hard game, but have some good fun afterwards and they bring a minibus so. It was a time where we met the players, played at new grounds. It's the same as anything you play the same players over and over at the same grounds you tend to make friends, but also you can also get a bit bored, so we had been playing the Suffolk sides for years and years, you know we played the same people, different sides it was fresh and new everyone was keen to play.

AC

You were part of the team that joined the Two Counties in the third division and fought your way to the..

LH

Yes, certainly. We didn't get promoted the first year, we lost out to Stowmarket, the second year, I think it might have been two up, but we won the league in division 3. I believe in that year 1991, and

went up to division 2 and we literally went straight through division 2. We hardly lost a game, I think by then we had sort of got used to the Two Counties, the standard that was there, was probably higher than Dairytime, because, as say the bigger sides weren't playing their best sides in the Dairytime. We got used to that standard of cricket, I say having Andy come back and Rick appeared, they both, well Andy obviously played for County six or seven times, was a different class when they were playing. Rick, as I say didn't, play for the County, but was one of the most destructive batsmen Mildenhall ever had. So we had those two added to what was already a decent, competitive side, made a massive difference.

AC

And, by the time you got to that, which would have been the mid-90s, the culture of having players was drifting away from having just local village lads.

LH

Indeed

AC

You were sourcing players elsewhere by that time.

LH

By then we were, from what, the era which was probably prior to the EAPL when people were getting paid, we actually had some local players who played for us. For example I was always good friends with Brian Howe and Ian Starling and as I mentioned earlier Worlington did not join the Two Counties until later, so they were after a higher standard, so in the end both Brian and Ian came to play for Mildenhall and they joined us possibly when we were in division 2, which again when you had those two into Rick and #Andy it made a massive difference. They came to play for us, so our catchment area was a bit bigger. We were the only ones locally at the time, cos Tuddenham hadn't joined, Worlington hadn't joined and Lakenheath, if you wanted to play that high standard Andy Bond came over for a season, Nicky Rutterford came over for a season from Lakenheath in the, probably in the mid-90s, we had probably hit division one by then. I recall our entry to division one was a bit of a baptism by fire, our first game was over at Clacton, who had Alvin Grenidge, who was Gordon Grenidge's brother, if you read his stats I believe his stats for that season he averaged over 111 with the bat and his average with the ball was less than 10. He was one of the first pros, I guess that we started to come across, so at the time Clacton probably had a couple of pros and he was basically the premier player in the premier league and we went over there and it was very wet and soggy, we were a little bit green behind the gills, they convinced us to come over even though it had been raining, they convinced us to get in the cars and drive all the way over the Clacton, which we did, and then managed to convince us that it was fit enough to play, so we decided we would go and have a bat and were rolled over for about 100, not many more than 130, I think, and then Alvin Grenidge came in and scored 100 not out in very short order. So our introduction was a baptism by fire. To be fair we lost our first 11 games in division one, so people were starting to panic a bit. Amongst the older players, I say older, but we weren't that old there was a belief that we actually weren't that far a way we kept just missing out we finally won a game, I believe we won at Witham. At Witham we won a game and the second half of the season we won something like 8 out of 12 and ended up being, not even close to relegation. So at the start we were nailed on for the first half of the season, but the second half then again we found our feet and understood what division one was about and I guess we stepped up and started to win, obviously people started to believe in ourselves. So we didn't have any paid players as such, we

did certainly have players that we were almost like a catchment area for the local sides who wanted to play at a higher standard.

AC

Andy's influence with two of the Bury lads ..

LH

Yea, Colin Graham came across as well

AC

And Peter

LH

Yea, Peter Webb, so get them both from Bury Rail. I guess Andy had probably here for a year or two and then he got them to come over, I know Colin didn't come over originally but then he came over later on. Peter followed Andy, probably in the same year but certainly the year after. Because Peter was probably very much still in his prime. He took a lot of wickets for Mildenhall in his early days and obviously he had quite a long spell with us. He was a good bowler and knew where to set his field. He also could bat, I know he gets a lot of grieve for his batting, limited number of shots he's got, the fact is he never gave his wicket away and he would stick at it, stick at it, stick at it, and he would help the team with bat and ball. And of course Peter liked to chat, so he was a very big member of the Club at the time.

AC

Colin was a fine bowler

LH

Yea, Colin was an excellent bowler, he might have just been passed his best, I think he was at the back end of his Suffolk career when he came to us. As a Club man he was fantastic he played, he played hard, he was a good social guy, and of course he was used to playing division one cricket, he used to play county cricket so he sort of brought a knowledge and experience that we were sort of lacking apart from perhaps the likes of Andy and Rick. We had all made our way up there rather than have the experience at that standard.

AC

Did Colin and Ian Starling play at the same time at all?

LH

They would have played at the same time still. So we had a very good opening attack we won the Suffolk Cup, which we hadn't done before then. We beat Bury in the final.

AC

Having got close a couple of times.

LH

Yea, got close to it. Colin was one of the main, I believe Colin, Brian Howe, Rick and Andy were the, certainly days to remember. So it was a time when we had a very good bowling attack and we were very good in the field, so we had batsmen, we could virtually bat down to 9, 10 11.

AC

What is your recollection of the demise of the Dairytime. Was it our choice or was we forced into that when the rule changed to going Saturdays only league cricket.-

LH

Yea, I guess it was moving that way already, but at the same time given the choice you would always chose Two Counties over Suffolk League. Maybe because by then we were in division one and was obviously enjoying the contest and by then holding our own in that league, I mean in the early days we were happy to survive, but we were starting to compete and get even further up the league. The Suffolk league we tended to put out not quite such a strong side, because there again people, as times changed, people couldn't play twice at the weekend, your choice would always be Two Counties over Suffolk and then obviously in the mid-90s they introduced the EAPL as another standard completely, so we obviously wouldn't have been able to play in three of them anyway. I think we played, I think we may have put our second or third team in the Suffolk League until it finally folded and its demise. One they tried to move all the games to Saturdays, which made sense, the variants in the team standards and strengths from Saturday and Sunday could vary so you know you might be lucky to play a team on a Sunday but not so lucky to play them on a Saturday, depending on who was available or vice versa. They tried to standardise stuff. Two counties by then had swelled in numbers so they had to be much more organised so I guess that is when that administration took off and then ended up making it Saturday only. Which for a lot of lads was a good thing, you could focus on your Saturdays if you wanted and play Sundays then it was your choice, but you weren't, effectively you didn't miss out by not playing Sundays. So I think again, probably changed the landscape of cricket, local cricket again because up to then it was always Saturday and Sunday, whereas once you started playing that you ended up with the EAPL coming in playing 120 overs games, people didn't have the energy to play Sunday cricket, so Sunday cricket from a Mildenhall perspective probably locally started to tail off a bit.

AC

Okay, so we have spoken a lot about the cricket side of it, we got to be a fairly successful team in the Two Counties, so just finally I wanted to ask you what the situation was regarding how we just finished up in the EAPL.

LH

So I wasn't on the committee at the time and I wasn't too close to it, but I do know Mildenhall applied to be in the EAPL, but initially we weren't accepted. And I think in the end another one of the teams couldn't make it, we said we were more than happy to step in, so we did in effect get accepted into the League, I think it was around the time there were 10 teams in the premier league, not sure if it was 10 or 12.

AC

Your recollection is probably no different than mine, I can't remember.

LH

So we ended up being accepted for that and I think that it was around the time of the Ornbos, certainly both Ornbos boys were playing first team and they also knew Mark Feltham family and Mark had just retired from Surrey and could still play but had a knee injury and so in effect he became our first paid

coach. He ended up coming back to Mildenhall on a Friday night, playing EAPL on a Saturday, and then coaching the youngsters on a Sunday and then he would go back to Surrey. I do remember the very first ball, we played Granta the very first game of the season, and Sam Ornbø had first delivery and it was actually before the league started, it started at 11.00am, and our umpires allowed us to start at five to eleven, the very first ball that Sam bowled he was up against Granta's number one batsman, he opened for Cambridge and Sam bowled him, cleaned his wicket with the very first ball of the season, which technically speaking was before the season started. Our introduction to EAPL.

AC

We were up and away.

LH

Yea.

AC

Well that is a good time to come to a pause and halt for the time being. I have very much appreciated listening to all your reminiscences about the early days at Mildenhall. We haven't spoken much about admin and so on and so forth, so you and I will be having a second interview at some time. Once again thanks very much Lou. Many thanks.

LH

It has been a pleasure Tony, thank you very much. Then we come to the social side, which was a massive thing at Mildenhall. Certainly it is now and always has been, which I am obviously keen to carry on, but there was a real social, family time and that's what Mildenhall was known for.

AC

And that will give us another reason to have a further interview.

LH

I am sure we will talk more about the social than the cricket.

AC

I am sure we could. Okay thank you very much.

LH

Thank you Tony.