

## Part One

My name is Tony Cornell and today is the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019. I am the seventh President of Mildenhall Cricket Club and in this recording I will tell you my memories of my early days with the club. This recording will then become part of the MCC Heritage Project which we have called That's over. It will be available in the pavilion and on line via our website and Sound Cloud

### (SEVENTH HEAVEN

Fifty years at Mildenhall Cricket Club.)

In 1966, and just over a year after marrying a Chatteris girl, Jean Tate, we, along with our new baby Su moved from Cambridge to Beck Row. I was working for bookmaker Laurie Wallis and had been appointed manager of the Mildenhall betting shop a year earlier. Following a year of travelling daily backwards and forwards, we rented a semi-detached bungalow in Holmsley Green, Beck Row thus making my journey to work much shorter. Slowly we bedded ourselves into the social side of Mildenhall. I played darts for the Pear Tree in West Row. I joined the Mildenhall Ex-Servicemen's Club to play a game of Snooker and enjoy a pint. Through work and with my daily contact of local pubs all of which took bets for commission from their lunchtime trade I soon knew most of the characters in the town.

Jean for her part enrolled in evening classes at the Riverside School and was soon editing a free monthly paper entitled "What's on around Mildenhall". This was then printed through the good offices of Morrie Mears at his Winchmore White Furniture factory on the new industrial estate.

The following winter Jean joined an evening class that was also attended by Marjorie Pendleton. During a conversation between the two of them Marjorie told Jean that her husband Roger played cricket and Jean said that I had often spoke about my disappointment that I had not continued playing the game I had enjoyed in my teen years. Marjorie said the club was looking for new players and that Roger was organising a 2<sup>nd</sup> Eleven. Cricket had been my first love as a sport and in my own humble opinion was the game I had been best at. I had played for my Grammar school and been a regular opening batsman. However my local village side Somersham struggled and sadly after playing a few games for them they folded through lack of administration, rather than talent. This all culminated with my need to find a job and taking on a position that required Saturday working and I allowed my playing days to lapse.

Jean reminded me of how I had spoken about and how I wished I could still play cricket and encouraged me to go with her to a dance at the Ex-Servicemen's club where Marjorie introduced me to Mike Clarke. This incidentally was the first ever dance there (Nibs Audus a local duo) as the club had only recently relaxed their rules allowing ladies to enter the premises. I found out that Mike was secretary and seemed totally dedicated to Mildenhall Cricket Club. He welcomed me warmly and invited me to attend the upcoming A.G.M.

I attended the A.G.M. in early March and it was the one and only time I saw Major Arthur Neve. He was the President and had devoted over 50 years' service to the cricket club. Little did I suspect then that one day I would finish up doing the same thing. A well attended meeting left me in no doubt that the club was in good hands and financially sound. There was a treasurer's report by John Lawes on how the income from Bingo nights was allowing the club to think about securing a ground for itself. I already knew that the cricket club ground shared with the football club on the parish playing field. This was to be found at the end of Recreation way

beyond the Ex-servicemen's club. It was also the first time I listened to a Mike Clarke review of the year and the performances of the players and club. I thought it a nice touch when along with a couple of other names I was mentioned as likely new players. At the end of the meeting, Tuesday evening's dates for nets and training were announced. I resolved to go along and see if I could rekindle my interest.

For my first net I arrived with just a pair of plimsolls. There was one net situated on a concrete base laid down at the bottom of the field on what is now an outdoor exercise area beyond the Football Club ground perimeter. There was a club kit bag for the use of everyone. Needless to say left handers were not well catered for. Net practice was just that. People turned up grabbed a ball and bowled at the batsman in the nets. I managed to turn my arm over without giving away the fact that I was not a "go to" bowler. I managed to find a pair of left handers pads, although the straps and buckles didn't match very well. I had to make do with a pair of wrap round gloves with the old fashioned green rubber spikes protecting the fingers. Surprisingly there also appeared to be a communal protective box used by all. I picked a bat up for the first time for about six years. By the time I was starting to feel it coming onto the bat someone called "that's it" and my brief session at the crease was ended. From my first visit I quickly learned that in order to net in good daylight I needed to get to the nets early, as it was first come first served.

I had a couple of more nets and put my name down for selection for the first Sunday fixture of the season, a game away at Histon. I don't know how many names they had to select from and I found myself apprehensive as I walked down to Lacks Tobacconist and Confectionary shop at the High St end of St Andrews Street. There on a special noticeboard, was posted the clubs team for the Saturday and Sunday fixtures. I perused the lists and happily I found I had been selected to play in the game against Histon. I recognised one or two other names as people I had met at the net sessions.

Being selected immediately brought the problem that I had no kit. I needed a pair of flannels and a pair of boots. Everyone had white shirts for "best" so I used one of those. I had a friend in Cambridge named Brian Fisher and he ran and part owned Hobbs Sport shop in Trinity Street. I was able to buy cricket whites and boots from him at discount prices, a rarity back in the 60's. Pads, gloves and a bat would have to be chosen from the club kit bag and hopefully there would not be too many left handers playing.

How were we to meet and travel? Mike Clarke offered good advice. "Park in the Market Square and then travel with John Charlesworth. He doesn't drink and he is a safe driver". For my first game Jean set a pattern that was to continue throughout my playing days. She arranged to travel with me to watch how I performed. Her love of sport and in particular cricket stemmed from her younger days and she was a good spectator and understood most aspects of the game. We were told John had a smallish car and it was easy to pick out his Austin A30. I introduced myself to him and was told that Tony Carter from Kenny Hill would complete our passenger list. I also realised that the central meeting point for several of the players was within the Tigers Head pub that looked out onto the market Square from its site in the High Street. Eventually more apparent team members emerged from The Tiger and we set off in convoy. Mike was right about John, it was safety first and he never exceed thirty miles an hour for the whole journey. Needless to say the remaining cars left us in their wake. On the journey John informed us he made a similar journey every day to teach at Milton, just down the road from our intended destination of Histon. Later that day I found out that John's bowling matched his driving. He wasn't a bad bowler, however, and could work up a rhythm of line and length. However there never seemed much spin attached. He turned out to be a mild man, almost apologetic about bowling and always said thank you when removed from the attack.

Our other travelling companion Tony lived in Kenny Hill and had played for Shippea Hill. I never had cause to visit the Shippea Hill ground, but I later understood that it was very basic and the level of the opposition weak. I took to Tony straight away, he was a year younger than myself and that day we forged a friendship that continues to this day. More on him later.

Amongst the players that day were Charlie Whitta and Phil Drakard, two larger than life characters, but like chalk and cheese. Charlie was primarily a spin bowler who could bat. I guess he was approaching 40. He played mostly for Hockwold. Again he was a mild man, but had a sharp wit. He could charm most umpires into agreeing that the batsman must be plum lbw. He worked the art of gamesmanship, sighing, gasping and then the large appeal. He was well known through Norfolk and Suffolk and was asked to guest for several of the strong sides in the area. He also ran his own eleven. When I first met Phil Drakard that day, he was living down the road from me on the back road to Lakenheath. He ran a haulage business in Hargrave with his brother. It was Phil who provided the lorry wheel bases that to this day still steer the sightcreens at Wamil Way. Phil was a batsman who also liked to bowl. His style was always attack. Running in hard with a sharp leap at the crease he would send down cannonball deliveries. He seldom bowled short, but often full. He hated to be contained when batting and took little notice of the team situation. I soon came to realise he was the hardest hitter Mildenhall had at that time. He could be charming, while a sudden change of mood he could be brash. It was not uncommon for him to stand in the slips and belch just as the bowler was releasing his delivery. He was generous when he had money and when he moved to play for Bury Railway it was rumoured that it was his cash that was attracting players. Payments to players then was very much frowned upon. He enjoyed life, but it dealt him a poor hand, he had trouble marriages including a wife who was paralysed after an accident and he died of a heart attack while relatively young.

Back to my first match and I recall we drew. Mildenhall only played friendly cricket as did most teams in Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. So it was the team that won the toss that batted from about 2.30p.m until tea at approximately 5.00 p.m. Generally the bowling side would average around 40/45 overs. A strict twenty minutes for tea and then the second batting side would get just over an hour and then 20 overs at 6.30p.m. This meant they got about 36/38 overs to chase a score. There was only one ball used for the match and in some games it was a ball that had been re-polished.

My contribution to that first game at Histon was 3 not out, so I had arrived. After the match we retired to a pub down the road where we had a drink with our hosts and I socialised with the likes of Mike Clarke, Derek Boughen, Steve Cooke, Alan Lockwood and Mike Kill.

I had enjoyed my day and with Jean making favourable comments I put my name down for the following week. This was a home game, the opposition escapes me. I arrived at the ground, George Hensby was just finishing cutting the square and someone else was line marking the boundary. There was one small, I won't call it a pavilion, shed that serviced everything. The front came down to provide an open window area for the scorers, There was facilities for a tea urn and the sandwiches and cakes would turn up later having been prepared under contract by Derek (Budgie) Boughen's mum. The changing facilities comprised of a long corridor along the back. The home team stretched one way and the opposition took the other half. Due to the width of the corridor, first man in was last man out. There was no washing facilities. However there was a tiny toilet block available next to the hut.

This time I made a few more runs and when we retired to the ex-serviceman's club for our after match drink, I was asked if I could turn out in the week for an evening cup match. This involved me travelling to Gt Cornard near Sudbury. Twenty overs per side, with the team that won the toss batting to take full advantage of the light. People often say that Twenty/20 is not

something new, however the games then had little in the way of restrictions used in the modern matches. Many teams used only two bowlers and many games ended with a ring of fielders circling the boundary. I neither batted nor bowled that night so with my exemplary fielding I had not been challenged.

That first summer in 1968 I played regularly for the Sunday team and turned out for several evening cup games. It was in one of these early cup games that I played alongside Edgar (Eddie) Lee. Eddie taught at the Riverside School, but it was not until 2009 that I learnt through his obituary in the Telegraph that he had had a distinguished war record, Details are listed in the clubs milestones for that year.

My first season was interrupted mid-season as Jean and I had booked our first ever overseas holiday package. We flew from Gatwick to Gerona in Spain and then stayed in Lloret de Mar. It didn't start to well when the Spanish customs man removed his gun from his holster and demanded that one of our passengers stepped forward and open a suit case. The rest of the holiday proved a success, even though cloud arrived most afternoons. We used the afternoon as siesta time anyway. The holiday was also notable for the fact that Jean got an inkling that she might be pregnant again. A trip to the local fish market did not end well.

When we got back to England I spent the rest of the summer playing Sunday Cricket and got to know among others, Micky Finnis and Terry Grinling who were the regular opening bowlers. George Hensby kept wicket to a useful standard, particularly on some of the ground we visited. Mike Clarke, Steve Cooke, Budgie Boughen, Tony Carter, Ron Pyne and Mike Kill were all regular players (more on these later). I continued to be made welcome and while not outstanding with the bat. I held my place and contributed runs on several occasions.

Micky Finnis was an outstanding bowler. He raced in hard with a fast action in his delivery stride. He was extremely competitive and woe betide anyone who misfielded, you could also expect his full wrath if you dropped a catch. Once the game was over everything was forgotten and he was smiles all-round. He had a lot to smile about. He had joined the club as a young teenager and in his first four seasons between 1963 and 1966 he had taken 230 wicket. In 1967, the season before I joined he had broken the club record by taking a staggering 143 wickets in all matches that year. Even allowing for the standard of wickets played on back in the sixties it is an extraordinary performance when compared to how many the modern bowler takes. In my first season Micky took a further 83 wickets. A Mildenhall boy he worked as sports editor for, what was then the Cambridge Evening News. He reported on the rise of Cambridge United and with his love of boxing, watched the careers of local boys Joe Bugner and Dave "Boy" Green. He was lost to Mildenhall early in the seventies when he married his first love Vera and then his job moved him away from the area.

1968 was memorable one for Mildenhall. They made it to the final of the coveted Orby Wood Cup final. I did miss out on selection possibly being a new boy. The final was regularly played at the Bury Railway ground not too far from the station. A small ground, fenced on three sides. You could just about walk the boundary without encroaching onto the playing area. However by the standards back then it had a picturesque pavilion and the playing area was well manicure. On top of all this it was acknowledged as one of the better wickets in Suffolk to play cricket on. Mildenhall were due to meet Westgate Brewery in the final, The Brewery team was the Bury St Edmunds in all but name. Greene King owned the Victory ground and Bury played there on Saturdays. The Mildenhall team proved giant killers that night and with good performances all round they lifted the cup. This at the time was the most prodigious win ever for Mildenhall.

So through the season I met John Lawes, Fred Locke, Neville Cole, and John Carpenter. Jean and I regularly attended the Ex-Servicemen's club as more dances were scheduled following the early success of the first one. We would meet with Courtney and Vera Hicks, Steve and Mary Cooke, Mike and Sue Clark and Roger and Marjorie Pendleton. I also got to know several fringe second team players and for the first time met a youth player, Peter Finnis (brother of Micky). The youth team was a bit of a misnomer by today's standards. We like several other clubs had one youth team and it was anyone under 21.

As friendships grew so did our socialising with Mildenhall cricketers and their partners. By spring in 1969 we were being asked to several functions. The Cricket Club had for a few years been holding a pre-season supper dance at the old Town Hall. A local band were expected to play a menu of waltzes, quicksteps, foxtrots and even some old time dances. The supper was supplied by Hagger's Bakery in the High Street, through the good offices of Bill Abbs. Bill was Trevor Hagger's master baker and had joined the club after the war, having been Trevor's batman in the army. We were served chicken breasts that had been heated in boilers along with potatoes heated the same way. The dance was well attended and brought funds into the club funds.

While at the dance I was approached by Mike Clarke and asked if I would consider being Treasurer. I was a bit surprised as I had no inkling that John Lawes was about to step down. Mike explained that John was leaving the area as a result of a change in his job. I did not get to know John that well as he captained on a Saturday and our cricketing paths crossed only through the evening games. I must admit I found him a bit aloof and did not particularly enjoy his company. I think he saw himself as a man's man and he seemed not to enjoy mixed company.

February 1969 also saw the arrival of Jacqui, a sister for Su. So at the 1969 A.G.M. I was elected to serve as Treasurer of the cricket club. I was confident I could do the job as accounting was my job (even if it was mostly turf accounting). I think the current rules would prevent me from being elected after such a short time as a member. I was also happy to take on the role as I felt it had a bit of status and I not being local would get accepted by all the members. Whatever I thought about John Lawes I had to admit that his book keeping was ok and my transition to the Treasurers role went smoothly.

Committee meetings were held every quarter. Slowly I realised that the hope of the club's own ground was not a pipe dream. The club had a good bank balance and there was money coming in every week from the club's Friday night bingo sessions (more in a moment). By now I knew that Mike worked as an architect for Mark Jennings in Bury St Edmunds and that he was devising a plan to buy land identified along Wamil Walk and down by the river. The land was owned by the Parker family. They owned the local mill and had various other interests in the town including a modern dairy.

Brian Vale had been the driving force that got the Cricket Club involved with bingo nights on a regular basis. From humble beginnings in rooms behind the White Hart public house, this was located in the high street and turned into residential properties in 2017 the sessions then relocated to the Town Hall and by the time I joined the club it had moved again and was now occupying the Comet cinema every Friday night. The cinema was a single story venue with a capacity of 400 seats. It had a large cinemascope screen that could be raised, leaving a staged area where the bingo caller could observe everyone in the hall and where the bingo balls would be drawn by the caller from the Club's "Golden Goose" bingo machine. The club had also progressed to printed bingo tickets, casting aside the wooden tablets that customers covered with bottle tops. In order to maximise attendance the Club hired buses to bring in people from the surrounding villages. The furthest bus started off a route from Brandon. As a

result of this service the average attendance was over 350 and would reach capacity as a rollover jackpot increased. The money used to purchase bingo tickets was all redistributed back as prize money. The club made its own revenue from a regular draw and any surplus money from entry tickets, less site rent to the Cinema proprietors.

As Treasurer I decided that I should get involved with helping to run the bingo nights. The club had a regular team of half a dozen bingo ticket and draw ticket sellers. This was mainly done by the wives and girlfriends of the members. In addition there would be another four volunteers standing in strategic places ready to call back any "house" calls. I joined the volunteers and observed how the evening panned out.

The calling started at 8 p.m. There was a break half way through for more selling of draw tickets and then a second session, with everything concluding around 9.30 p.m. Mike Clarke was the resident bingo caller and while the first session was being called it was customary for the male volunteers to adjourn to the nearby Volunteer (apply named) pub for a pint. It didn't take Mike long to catch onto the idea that if I called the second half, he could also go for a pint. I have never been a shrinking violet so I knew my public awaited me. I was to be in show business, well a bingo caller. I had a baptism of fire. My first evening calling and I stood before almost 400 people, checked a call for one line and instead of pressing on to look for a full house I released the balls already extracted from the Golden Goose and they re-joined all the others. Oh dear! Fortunately some of the ardent players bought a full strip of bingo cards and they had all the 90 numbers printed on the sheet. So I had to extract all the balls, take off the original ones I dropped incorrectly, release the rest and then carry on. It was a smooth operation that belied the turmoil in my stomach. I decided nothing worse could happen and so I called regularly after that. I did have several ladies tell me I should handle my balls better and one bold lady even suggested they needed washing! With the conclusion of the bingo the volunteers would relocate to the Ex Servicemen's club for a couple of more beers.

So 1969 saw me bedded in as fully active member of the Cricket Club, a family man and manager of the local betting shop. The cricket I played in was of a mixed standard. Mildenhall were no better than many of the village teams, except of course Worlington, they had only recently reformed at that time, with many of their players being ex Mildenhall. Nothing's changed! We had strong fixtures with Lakenheath, Tuddenham, Exning and Bury Railway. There was also some tough games against Cambridgeshire clubs like Papworth and Cambridge Grasshoppers. There was also visits to some Norfolk grounds through fixtures found by Bill Abbs and his Norfolk connection. Trips to Heacham, Hunstanton and even Cromer. However some fixtures would be made because of the hospitality afforded after the match. At committee I heard it said "We must keep the fixture they are a good drinking bunch". The standard of the grounds varied as well. I played at Littleport where they had to take the sheep off before we could start a game. We arrived for a cup match against Kennet and Kentford to find Ken Gardner cutting the wicket with a hayter (rotary mower). Another cup game at Great Barton descended into farce when the ball was lost, buried deep in the long grass of the outfield. I also remember that year we were facing Bury Railway in an all day Sunday fixture, when it started to rain. By the time we left the ground, the drainage had failed and the whole field had turned into a lake. Toilet and washing facilities were few and far between. It generally transpired that poor facilities also meant a poor tea.

Allowing for the equipment and the standard of facilities I still reckon our hardest games were of a standard near to today's top league games. . However there was not as many of them. I continued to hold my place in the first team again without standing out too often. It was an era when the spirit of the game was much more evident. It required two captains who were prepared to risk take in order to win a match. There was no perceivable advantages for the

batsmen. Fielders could be placed virtually anywhere. The game was therefore quicker as it took less time to set a field. No one-day wides, no restriction on short pitch bowling. It was up to the captain to maintain a degree of fair play. Silence seemed more intimidating than the modern sledging. Playing under the "friendly" banner also gave the captain discretion to open up a game when one side was clearly winning. Occasional bowlers would then be used to keep the game going, this in turn gave fringe players a chance to get involved. One area that has transformed is the clothing and kit the modern players have. Gone are the days of sharing gloves, pads or bats. In has come better protection including the sensible wearing of helmets. Ironically many of the wickets were far more dangerous then than they are now.

Within the club I was getting to know my team mates better. Grenville Dale a teenager who had a reputation as a goalkeeper, his skills soon translated to his fielding. He was a decent bat, but had many idiosyncrasies. No matter the weather he would always bat in a sweater. He would disappear quickly on a Saturday to go to a gig with his band "Justus". Steve Cooke was to become my captain and he knew how to make a game entertaining. "Always be prepared to lose if you want to give yourself a chance to win" was his motto. He loved his cricket and was a good golfer. It was said at golf he always played to his strength and never tried to over hit the ball. He batted that way two. His wife Mary was his rock and he had a young son Trevor doing well in the youth setup. Tony Carter was also proving to be a good social companion, He liked to open the batting and compiled scores and it was rare for him to score fast. Like Gennie Dale, Tony played in goal during the winter months and went on to play for Mildenhall FC. Both Steve and Tony could put on the gloves and do a decent job behind the stumps.

1970 saw a new milestone for Mildenhall. It was the introduction of a Single wicket competition. Bill Abbs had been elected as President and he had presented a large pewter tankard to the club to be played for in a competition of their choosing. The first Saturday in July was set aside for the competition. It was agreed that the club would put on a lunch at the Ex Servicemen's club during a break in the middle of the competition. Jean was put in charge of lunch and enrolled several of the wives and girlfriends (a template for the years to come). I managed to get a Saturday off and put my name down to play. It was agreed to start at 11a.m with just under 20 players in the draw. Mike persuaded me to run a book on the outcome of the competition and many players had a punt on who might win. I did say that no one could place a bet on myself, so that I could not be accused of any skulduggery on the field. My first opponent was George Pooley. George was a Worlington man who still turned out regularly for the club. He was a slow bowler, whose reputation as a batsman was not great. He was one of those bowlers who sometimes could not get started with his run up and would leave lots of stud marks as he churned up the grass. George was a regular at the Ex Serviceman's club and on a Saturday night would give us a song at the end of proceedings. His favourite was "Diana" a Paul Anka song. If anyone knows the song you would understand that George could also stutter his way through the lyrics, in similar vein to his run up. I defeated George and reached the quarter final where I played and beat Neville Tribe an all-rounder who never quite stood out at Mildenhall. In the semi-final I came up against an eighteen year old Paul Haylock who went on to be one of the better all-rounders of the early 70's era. I bowled Paul and knocked off just 7 runs to win. I had made it to the final. My opponent was Fred Locke. Fred was a batsman with a reputation for being gritty and stylish, he was also a regular bowler. I really thought I would do well to get beat him. My thoughts were compounded when I was out for 4. However Lady Luck shined on me that day. Ron Blewett the umpire and I were probably the only two people on the ground that thought Fred was lbw after scoring just 2. I had become the first ever Single wicket winner at Mildenhall. I had also pocketed all the money wagered on the completion. I was disappointed when Bill Abbs said he had hoped that one of his boys that had come through the youth team would win. That was Bill he often said what was in his

heart rather than toe the line, he made a good local councillor for many years. Ron Blewett by the way followed cricket but did not play. He had come to Mildenhall with the "overspill" scheme. Mildenhall had been designated an overspill town and was accommodating people and industry from the London boroughs. Sadly he didn't live to an old age.

The Single wicket day proved so popular that it became an annual event for the next 25 years. It was also used as the first day of cricket to be played at the new Wamil Walk ground. Fittingly it was Mike Clarke, the architect of the new ground, who struck the first ever boundary scored there. I think the biggest entry saw 28 players playing for 9 hours in 1973.

In 1970 Mildenhall Cricket Club organised a week's tour to Malvern and District. The club had a couple of years before been to Wales and also Hampshire. So while touring was new to me, several cricketers had been on a tour before. Our party included Phil Drakard and Charlie Whitta (roommates), Mike Clarke, Micky Finniss, Tony Carter, Budgie Boudgen and Mike Kill. David Bailey from Kirtling was guesting for us, as was Dick Goudge who played for Friar Barnet and knew Mike Kill. We had three youngsters in the group. Grenny Dale, Jack Youngs and David Minton. The last named lived in Barton Mills and was finding his feet as a bloodstock agent working for the Curragh Bloodstock Agency in Newmarket. We had fixtures at Brewood and Leominster but we were then let down by a last minute cancellation. David proved his worth when at short notice he was able to secure a fixture with his home club at Shifnal in Shropshire after we were let down at the last minute. I remember the whole tour party went back to his parent's farm after the match and enjoyed the hospitality his father and mother provided. Grenny at that time was very friendly with Dave's sister Angie. David went on to have a very successful career and bought and sold for horses for the gentry. He was to become a good friend of Henry Cecil, Michael Stout and Gavin Pritchard Gordon. One of his first purchases was Comedy of Errors which he bought from his Uncle Tom Corrie. It went on to win the champion hurdle at Cheltenham three years running for its new trainer Fred Rimell.

For me the tour memories were mostly not cricket related. Climbing the Malvern Beacon, drinking late in the snug bar of our guest house and the two elderly ladies who ran the place and left us to buy our own beer from off the bar shelf and trusted us to put the money in their till. It was great for bonding with cricket and fun shared and this pattern is still favoured by the club. There have been many tours since and they have always been family friendly.

By 1970 I had cottoned on to which teams were the strongest and I could now identify the better players of these teams. Just down the road Lakenheath lined up with four front line quick bowlers, Mike and Colin Rutterford, Richard (Dickie) Bond and Joe Bamford. All four were also decent batsmen. Support came from Fred Wootton batting and Terry Sizer a fine slow bowler. Tuddenham had Barry Adams a stylish opening bat, Andy Titcombe, wicketkeeper batsman, Peter Middleditch an all-rounder and a young "Bub" Grant. They were soon to be joined and strengthened by three Cockerton brothers from nearby Higham. Higham were disbanded as a result of the A45 (now the A14) being re-routed right through their ground. They were also soon to acquire our own Ron Pyne. Ron was a likeable rogue. He was a class opening batsman, he kept wicket often standing up to Micky Finniss and could also change a game with some deft wrist spinning. He too had arrived at Mildenhall as a result of the overspill scheme. Ron was however always on the edge of the law. He opened the batting one Saturday afternoon, shortly after a local policeman (we had some then) came up to the ground and asked to speak to Ron. It was pointed out that he was batting. Ron obviously noted the policeman and batted out the innings only returning to the pavilion at teatime. Following his departure to Tuddenham, he moved to the village and the story goes allegedly that he wired his electricity supply into his neighbour's meter. He disappeared for a long time and it was thought he might one day return as a result of Her Majesties pleasure.

Bury Railway was an all-day Sunday fixture early each September on their railway ground. They usually had Fred Younker to open the batting for them. Fred was West Indian and built in the mould of Shriv Chanderpaul. He was a fine batsman, but not a particularly good sport. In the days when you were still expected to walk, everyone knew Fred never would. Others included Jack Stiff, Colin Fisk, John Sandry and Ted Bishop, who kept wicket. Two youngsters Malcolm Waterson and Peter Webb were also catching the eye.

Worlington could count on Clem Tompsett, although he was past his best by the time I faced him. Richard Thornally had played better grade cricket at Ely, however their side never seemed as strong as the afore mentioned clubs.

So that was my beginning. In my next recording I will tell you about our centenary and the latter years of the 70.s.

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-----Part Two

My name is Tony Cornell and today is the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019. I am the seventh President of Mildenhall Cricket Club and in this second recording I will tell you more of my memories of my early days with the club. This recording will then become part of the MCC Heritage Project which we have called That's over. It will be available in the pavilion and on line via our website and Sound Cloud

With the start of the season in 1971 imminent Mrs Morley the manager of the Comet asked the cricket club if they were interested in running bingo on Good Friday. It had been traditional to show religious films only, I guess this had been the only way they had been allowed to open in less liberal years gone by. Clearly it was not a profitable arrangement for them. We said we would be happy to give it a try. I'm not sure what it says about society but the punters came in droves. The cinema sold well over 500 entry tickets and people were seated everywhere including the aisles and gangways. The capacity was registered at 400, fortunately we had no authority arrive to do a spot check that night.

1971 was memorable for me because towards the middle of May I caught the mumps. I had often been told it was not something you should get when you are an adult. Anyway everyone said you probably had it as a child and you will be ok. My mother could never confirm that I had had it. Sure enough at the tender (sic) age of 28 I got it. King Kong would have been proud of my testicles. The illness attacks the glands. The pain was acute, however the lack of strength and tiredness continued for 6 weeks after my unmentionables had returned to normal size. It was August before I was ready to play cricket again. I was desperate to play because we had by then bought and acquired the land at Wamil Walk and work was in full swing to get it ready to play on by mid- summer of 1972. Indeed I did resume and managed to play in the final game played at the St Andrews ground. At the end of the games George Hensby lit a flame and we ceremoniously burnt the stumps and bails. It was intended to place the ashes in an urn and used for a trophy on the new ground. Somehow the ashes were lost in transit and were never found.

Part of our move to Wamil including taking down the Nyssen hut that the ground preparation equipment was housed in. This was done successfully moved from the bottom end of the St Andrews St ground and then erected in the far corner of the Wamil Way end, and is still being used to this day. I hope nobody slaps a preservation order on it. George Thornally was a long-time member of both Mildenhall and Worlington. He offered to have a lovely beech tree that had grown next to the hut uprooted and transported down to the new ground for re planting. However the Parish Council ruled against us moving it. Sadly it was felled in 2017.

Also in 1971 Jean and I launched our brain child, the first ever Mildenhall Cricket Club dinner dance. It was held at the old West Row village hall. There were about 60 people in attendance. We formed a sub- committee to run the event. A band called Silver Ace were booked and catering was supplied by Hagger's. In the meetings held to organise the evening it was suggested that we should put on a cabaret. The line-up for a "Supremes" song aimed at the members included Steve Cooke, Trevor Cooke, Tony Carter, and Budgie Boughen, they became "The Untouchables". It was also agreed that Grennie Dale and myself would do a skit centred on a ballet theme. So with the help of Jean and some beautiful ballet music, Grennie Poppov and Antoino Tightsplitin were created, complete with no strides. The village hall had a pair of saloon bar type doors into the main room. Grennie parachuted through them and audience fell about laughing. I followed behind in my little tutu and we spun and danced for a couple of minutes. I modestly think we were an overnight sensation. Everyone agreed it had

to be an annual event. So for the next 25 years the Dinner Dance always had a cabaret. The boys wrote the words and Jean became conductor and choreographer. I will write more on the various cabarets in due course.

At the start of the season in 1972 the club received some bad news. The Comet Cinema was to be sold. Any hope that we could negotiate a new hiring contract were soon dispelled when we learnt that the new owner Arnold Audus was intent on running bingo five nights a week and films were to be few and far between. Bingo had been the cash cow that had allowed us to fund our move to Wamil and we had not even got there yet. A meeting was arranged with Arnold and he told us of his plans to bring his whole family up from London to staff and run the bingo and cinema. There would be no accommodating of our Friday night sessions. We did however have a trick up our sleeves. We held the Bingo licence for the whole of 1972. This had been overlooked by the new owners. "Well it's no good to you without a venue" he said. "The venue is not much good to you without a licence" was our retort. So we worked out a deal. We agreed we would transfer the licence for a consideration of £1000. This would give us a cushion during our transfer of grounds. Our last bingo was held on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. I also agreed to carry on calling bingo for three months on a Friday night to help the smooth transfer of owners.

By 1972 I knew most of the old guard. So along with Bill Abbs president there was Courtney Hicks Vice president, Ken Tate Chairman, Roger Pendleton and Mike Clarke's father-in-law Vic Pegler who was a Life vice president.

As we looked forward to playing on our new ground at the beginning of July we made a promotional blunder. We discussed how to inaugurate cricket at our new home. To ensure as many of our members as possible could take part in the first day's cricket it was agreed we would hold our single wicket competition that day. We had however already agreed to play a home game against Littleport, a fixture that had been an annual match for some time. The committee felt that if they wrote to Fred Watson, who was fixture secretary, and many other things at Littleport he would understand that this was a one off unique occasion for Mildenhall. Fred was not understanding and not amused. Yes we could go ahead but we would not play Littleport again while he had anything to do with it. I could see both sides. I think Fred was a bit dogmatic, he acted as a self-promoting area fixture bureau and helped many clubs find new fixtures. However on this occasion he didn't want to compromise.

The first half of the season saw us play all our fixtures away. Stone picking on the new ground became a regular volunteering task as the young grass took hold. A new club house and pavilion was taking shape under contract to Wm Clarke builders. With money now tight as a result of the lost bingo Mike was forced into a more utility building as savings needed to be made. Committee meetings were now taken up with how we would administer our club and ground. I remember one tedious evening when for over an hour we debated whether our new keg beer Double Diamond should be 15p or 16p a pint. You hardly get a mouthful for that price now.

A preview night at our new venue was planned and local dignitaries were invited to join us. One who was not able to be there was the Minister for Education who had signed one of the cheques granted to us. That was Margaret Thatcher. President Bill Abbs unveiled a large wooden plaque marking the occasion. Unbelievably we witnessed a guest throw her cigarette stub onto the brand new carpet before putting her foot on in to stub it out. She was left in no doubt that his actions were not approved of. Still we now had a pavilion with a function room, a snug area complete with a small bar that had a hatch that could open into the function room. For the first time we had a kitchen, bar store and not least two separate changing rooms along with members and public toilets. The carpet was grey, the wall were showing as breeze blocks

painted dark green and there was a good supply of black tables and chairs, The snug had a softer range of black seats and this area soon became a regular haunt for card games. The pavilion had numerous windows and an ingenious system had been devised to have shutters to close over each window when the pavilion was shut. It required one person to push a bolt through the shutters and then through into the inside of the pavilion and a second person stayed on the inside and screwed a butterfly nut onto the bolt to tighten it all together. I for one was often left as last man standing with no one to assist with the shutters. How many others got caught like this I have no idea.

The first Saturday in July duly arrived and by the luck of the draw Mike Clarke drew Roy Young in the first match and of course having been the architect he elected to receive the first ball bowled on the ground and he soon became the first cricketer to score a boundary on the ground. Sadly after all the hype the weather played its part and the competition had to be abandoned when continuous rain arrived around lunch time. Speaking of lunch, the new pavilion allowed for the club to set up teas in two rows with each team occupying a table. The teams always sat together and ate together. Hats and caps were most certainly not worn at the table. Tea was the drink offered and no one drank juices, squashes or from cans. Sadly this tradition was lost towards the end of the millennium when catering for four teams became the normal, also in my opinion it saw the decline in eating habits.

I wrote about how Mike Kill had been playing in my first ever match for Mildenhall. Mike had come to Mildenhall in the mid-sixties and joined the club in 1966. He worked at that time as a maintenance man for Winchmore White Furniture. They were owned by Morrie Mears and his family and had relocated to Mildenhall as part of the "Overspill" scheme. Mike had done national service as a redcap and had been on duty in what was then West Germany. He loved his cricket and very much enjoyed the social side as well. He had soon got involved with ground preparation and so by the time we moved to Wamil he was working in tandem with Mike Clarke in keeping the new ground up to scratch. It was the start of a love affair for Mike that has continued for 46 years. He enrolled his father Jim (who was retired) to become chief outfield grass cutter. Mike never quite decided for himself whether he was a batsman or bowler. On his day he would be good at either, but often suffered from self-doubt (well he would talk himself down). Socially we would sometimes go out for a late drink on a Saturday and The Griffin at Isleham was a favourite haunt especially when they called time for a "lock in", they usually had a pianist and we would join in a late night sing song. Mike also had been friendly with a publican at the Volunteer and when he moved to Barnham, just outside Thetford we would motor over there for an after-hours drink. Mikes wife Connie would come along as did Jean and Tony Carter often did the driving. Mike had been happy to also give us a song on a Saturday night at the Social Club (It changed its name from Ex-Servicemen's Club) and a Saturday singsong at the new clubhouse was an occurring event.

With our new home baptised it fell on the members to help fund everything and a series of events took place. Friday night became a full social event with cards, darts, dice and even shov'happeny. The dartboard was in full use all night. We quickly learned that being out of the way we could be a bit more liberal with our bar opening times than was legally permitted. A full house did however mean that with a low ceiling the rooms soon filled with cigarette smoke and it was not unusual to go home with a headache more from the tobacco than the alcohol.

Nets were constructed at the river end of the ground, but as this proved to be the softest area to play on they were moved nearer the clubhouse in 1973. With selection taking place on Tuesdays, it was agreed net practice would take place on the same evening. This meant that the bar would do well on these evenings as the culture was that any opportunity to have a

beer must be taken. Limited licencing hours saw people having shorter windows to enjoy an alcoholic drink. Supermarkets and drink driving were not issue of the time.

John Carpenter became self-appointed barman. He was second team captain having engineered a coup against Roger Pendleton, who had been in charge for a number of years. John arrived at his first few games as captain complete with his captain manual having no experience of taking charge. His times as captain and barman were both short lived. He and his wife Pat lived in Beck Row and took Alan Hey and his wife Dianne under their wing when Alan joined the club. Alan Hey had work at Anglian Water and found a house in West Row. He proved a good acquisition and developed an opening bowling partnership with Gerry Widger who was to arrive in the following season of 1973. John meanwhile continued to pick and choose what he wanted to do. He opened the batting, he kept wicket, but soon tired of things after he had tried them. I understood he was however a very good golfer and had shown a lot of promise as a young footballer. His cricket ability however was never quite as good as he would have wished.

Around this time I made my first 50 for the club. I had by chance got a Saturday off and went, on debut with the second team to Earith. There were some keen players in the side. Alan Abrey, Bryn Gore, Alan Benton and a couple of more senior members George Pooley and Doug Rutherford. Roger was still captain that day and as I went in to bat at number four Roger was umpiring. He said "If we keep losing wickets like this we might have to make it a two innings match. Another wicket was lost soon after I arrived at the crease and I was then joined by Doug Rutherford. As a senior player I dare not fail. Together we forged a 50 partnership and gradually took control. Two things I remember is my relief when I went passed 50 and watching Doug hit a six straight into the Earith pavilion and it went straight through and came out the other side of the building. We eventually posted over 150, which under the circumstances and state of the ground was more than enough. George Pooley ripped out five of the middle order and the game was ours.

A tour to Wolverhampton in 1972 proved to be a bit of a wash out with rain arriving most days. The highlights for me was a day at Wolverhampton Horse racing and a visit to the cinema to watch a very soft porn film that had us in fits of laughter. Dick Goodge remained unconvinced by the young buxom actress's claim that she was only 16. When the lights went up, half the tour party was dotted about the cinema.

With the bingo revenue lost. The committee decided to make full use of our new pavilion to drive up bar profit. Friday nights would continue out of season. The club decided that it would make use of the football pitch that was adjacent to the cricket field and the creation of a cricket club football team was agreed. Although fixtures would not commence until 1974, they would play friendly matches on a Sunday morning against other cricket clubs and some of the local football teams. So Wamil Wasps came into being. I still possess a gold and black striped shirt. Early team members included "oldies Roger Pendleton and Steve Cooke. Senior players Tony Carter, Grennie Dale, Mike Clarke, Mike Kill, Alan Abrey, Alan Hey and myself played regularly. However it was the youth legs of Malcolm Grubb, Paul Haylock. Trevor Cooke and Jack Youngs that held it together. After a few games some of the seasoned members found it was a step to far and retired. We accepted a few guests and the team was successful for a number of years. Selection was mainly the first 11 to arrive with numerous substitutions throughout the game.

The club also entered the local "Industrial" darts league that played on a Monday night. It had two divisions and was right for us. The local pub league played on Wednesdays and had as many as five divisions. It's hard to imagine how popular darts was then. The local industrial darts league had been the brain child of Chris Nugent. He was secretary. He eventually started

his own insurance business in St Andrews St. A few years later his business partner James Dowsett paid someone to murder him and he was shot dead in his office.

I was captain when the darts team won promotion and was also a member of the team that won the Orby Wood darts cup, played for by teams that competed in the Orby Wood cricket competition. However I was more of an Aimlow than a Bristow.

Christmas saw the introduction of a Children's Christmas party for members off springs and on the Saturday before the big day the club held a Christmas party. The party was also the night that presentations were made to the various pub competitions (Darts, Crib, Dominoes and Shov'happeney) the club held. This format continued for many years

In 1973 it was still customary to buy a "Jug" if you scored fifty or if you took five wickets. I understood why a bowler might want to say thank you to his catchers and fielders, but I never could quite see the logic of a batsman doing the same thing. However players were beginning to appreciate the quality of wicket they were now playing on. Tony Carter scored 883 runs and Mike Clarke hit a life time best of 519 runs for the season even if was for a modest average of 17.30. As time went by the "Jug" buying ceased as the fifty run target became much more frequent.

Mike Clarke was one of life's passionate cricketers. He had started playing for Mildenhall in 1952 at the age of 13. His ability was modest, but his passion enabled him to have some success on the field. He was a predominately a front foot playing batsman and often got his pads in the way. He could also bowl useful off cutters and had quite a bit of success later in his career playing second, third and even fourth X1 cricket. He worked for architects Mark Jennings in Bury and was ideally placed to draw up plans for the new ground at Wamil Way. As secretary he also coped with much of the admin surrounding the purchase of the ground. I had a continuous stream of bills, receipts and of course if you knew Mike, a bit of "cash in the hand" to account for. When we took over the ground Mike was on site most evenings, manicuring the outfield, but concentrating mainly on the square. He repaired foot holes after every wicket was retired. He would be last man into the club house in the evening for a beer before going home. He was to become Chairman when I resigned in 1998.

There were many clubs who lined up to play at Mildenhall and meant a strong second eleven fixture list grew. Many villages had sides back then. Sadly while Mildenhall has grown as a club over nearly fifty years since, there have been many casualties in that time. I can list Ampton & Culford, Brandon, Bury Railway, Eriswell, Great Barton, Higham, Horringer, Kennett & Kentford, Kirtling, Newmarket, Pimpernel (Barrow), Shippea Hill, Thurston and Whepstead and that is just West Suffolk.

David Minton used his connections with the racing fraternity to bring a team of trainers and jockeys to play a fund raising match in August. Michael Stoute, David Nicholson, Vic Dartnell, Macer Gifford and Gavin Pritchard Gordon were included in their team. David also managed to persuade three comedians to appear at the match. The TV hit show "The Comedians" was in residence at a Great Yarmouth theatre. So Duggie Brown, Mike Burton and George Roper took time out on the Sunday to attend. The day was spoilt when after just a few overs the rain arrived and washed out the remainder of the day. Consequently the expected crowds we hoped for never arrived. In the evening Jean and I got invited to David's auctioneer friend John Richardson's house in Barton Mills where George Roper, sitting at the kitchen table, entertained us with his complete stage act.

The Mildenhall team benefitted with the arrival of Gerry Widger into the club. When Gerry had first moved to Mildenhall he played for Higham. However the dualling of the A45 (now A14) meant the ground was sacrificed for the benefit of road users. He was a wonderful asset and

took 68 wickets in his first season, joining Alan Hey as the opening bowling attack. Alan took 61 wickets that year. Gerry's reputation was to grow as the seasons went by and he made it into the MildenhALL OF FAME in 2015.

The club's batsmen also benefitted when for the first time the club invested in sightscreens. Phil Drakard sourced two lorry chassis. Forty five years later they are still in use.

Two years (1974) after moving to Wamil, the club was still involved with "Friendly", running two teams on Saturdays and Sundays. The only opportunity for silverware was in the midweek cup competitions. There was however the beginning of an undercurrent for change. The Suffolk League was now established and clubs around us were showing interest in joining. Malcolm Grubb was very much in favour of change. Malcolm held his place in the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 mainly as bowler who batted a bit. He worked in the sports department of the Newmarket journal and covered all sports. He carried the support of many of the younger members, however the old guard remained in the majority and resisted any change.

There was contrasting performances on the still newish wicket at Wamil. Tony Carter and Grenville Dale both emulated Bill Abbs the only Mildenhall cricketer to have completed a 1000 runs in a season. This feat is by no means rare in today's game which probably proves how playing conditions improved after the ground move. In direct contrast Gerry Widger and Trevor Cooke both claimed 100 wickets which might disprove my playing conditions theory, except to say no one in the forty odd years since has come near to taking 100 wickets.

Early in May in a game against Kings Lynn, Tony Carter and I recorded a partnership of 159 runs, a club record at the time. At that time I scored my highest score of 74. In the dressing room after the match it was suggested the record partnership would last a long time. In fact it was surpassed two weeks later against Frier Manor when Tony and Grenville put on 191, with Grenny Dale recording the first ever century scored at Wamil.

Once again we entertained the Racing fraternity. David Minton brought a strong line up including Michael Stoute, Gavin Pritchard Gordon, Ben Hanbury and wearing his riding out hat jockey Brian Taylor. Brian the previous month had ridden Snow Knight to victory in the Epsom Derby. He fielded like a demon chasing everything. Gerry Widger showed no charity however when he bowled Taylor for a duck. Sadly ten years later in Hong Kong Brian Taylor was thrown from his horse as he crossed the finishing line and died two days later as a result of his injuries.

1975 began with a change in Chairman. Ken Tate who had held the post since 1966 stepped down Ken had steered the committee through the ground move. However his other interests left him little time to be involved with cricket club and he had retired as a player in 1962. Committee meetings were now monthly where previously they had been quarterly. The club elected Courtney Hicks to become Chairman, a post he held until 1990. Although I say it myself the committee was strong. Mike Clark Secretary. Peter Finnis ass: Secretary, I was Treasurer. We also had amongst others Mike Kill, Roger Pendleton. The room was never short of opinions and meetings ran over several pints. Courtney was Welsh and a travelling salesman. He worked for Hoover and in later years selling haberdashery items. He was happy to empower people to get on with their jobs, He did like the principle of raising standards throughout the club. By coincidence we discovered that 1976 was to be the club's centenary and this galvanised Courtney's development plan (more on this later).

Courtney was also instrumental in organising a tour to his beloved Wales. He hailed from Machen a small village near Caerphilly. Our first match would be a Sunday fixture against his old village team. 1975 was one of those long hot summers with endless sunshine.

The ground was a mile out of the village. It was also situated one field in from the road. Parking was road side and all the kit had to be carried across a cow field. The match was scheduled to be an all-day game with an 11.30 start. One hour into the game lunch was called and everyone traipsed back to the cars and then drove back to the local pub (Frium Ista?) for a buffet dinner. Lunch ran for nearly two hours with alcohol included. Our concentration was ruined however on a very hot day we held on for a draw.

The changing facilities were sparse. We were asked however if we would like to shower. Several of us said yes please. So we were lined up behind the "pavilion" asked to strip and were then doused from a hand held water pipe. By the time we were dressed we were sweating again.

On the Tuesday evening at our hotel, the captain of the local Civil Service team we were due to play on the Wednesday, turned up. He spoke with Steve Cooke and said as it was to be another all day game, he would make it a two innings match if they rolled us over cheaply. It was a given that there would be no toss and we would bat first. The match was played at a ground on Barry Island on another fine sunny day. Mildenhall broke all records as Grenville Dale scored 151\* and Phil Drakard smashed his way to 103. The ground had a corrugated fence one side and at times it was like a drum roll with so many balls being aimed at it. Mildenhall closed on over 300 for 4. I still think my two runs were the straw that..... The Civil Service side were bowled out for just over 100 with Cess Robinson extracting demons from the pitch (his words) taking several scalps. Never had an opposition captain looked more desolated.

A beer match was agreed and when we batted Jean was allowed to put on the pads near the end of our innings and Cess was forcibly retired so she could bat. Her four runs doubled my efforts and we went to the Barry Island fair that evening had T shirts printed saying so.

On the Thursday we went to Glyn Park, a beautiful ground set adjacent to the River Eley to play Miskin Manor. To begin with we found them unfriendly. During our innings they spoke only in welsh and one or two of our batsmen found this a bit unsporting. However as hosts off the field they redressed the balance. Their ladies had prepared a wonderful buffet for the evening. A rope into the river was pulled out with a barrel of beer at the end of it. In this hottest of summers it was the best place to keep it cool. It turned out to be the first time they had entertained a touring team and together we drank and sang the evening away. I have no recollection of the match result or how I got home. We stayed at an hotel in Llandaff road Cardiff and I do remember next morning Malcolm Grubb asking for seagull on toast as he had had an early alarm call from a flock of seagulls nestling on the hotel eaves and his bedroom window ledge.

The committee spent the winter formulating plans to celebrate the "Centenary of Mildenhall cricket Club. Malcolm Grubb began detailed research through the archive of his paper to get some order into the history of the club. A celebration booklet was also planned (copies still exist). This in turn led to the Mildenhall Milestones that continues to this day. We got an agreement from Suffolk County Cricket Club that they would play Huntingdonshire in a first ever county match at the ground. Various other matches were pencilled in and it was decided to hire a large marquee for the week. To cover costs events were planned to take place every evening during the "Centenary week".

One of these was a darts tournament. We constructed six portable dartboard stands and invites went out to clubs, pubs and other organisations. Take up was excellent. Alan Hey was adopted as bar manager for the week and liaised with Greene king to have a long bar installed down the side of the marquee.

Thursday night was planned as a Country and Western night. Trevor Cooke was put in charge as it was his suggestion that we used the popularity of the Newmarket "Grand Old Oprey" as a selling point. The duo of Mickey and Griff were booked. They heralded from Twickenham and had been discovered by popular skiffle player Lonnie Donegan. They had been in the "Hit Parade" (The Charts) with a song called "A little bitty tear let me down". A support and backing band was also booked. This proved to be a sell out with over 400 packed into the marquee. I had the pleasure in meeting the duo after their performance as they used the pavilion as a changing room. They were great show people and a nice with it.

So the programme for the week was agreed

Monday A match v Pilgrims CC (A touring side)

Tuesday A Darts Tournament

Wednesday Suffolk CC v Huntingdon CC. A first county match)

Thursday Miki and Griff, Country & Western evening

Friday Entertain the OAPs of Mildenhall

Saturday Buffett Supper and Dance

The whole week proved to be a tremendous success. The weather in August was hot and sunny and all the events were well supported. We borrowed the Cycling Club caravan and had members sleeping on site overnight. Trevor Stebbeds (Nosher) along with Alan Hey kipped down in the marquee and guarded the bar. There was a real sense of camaraderie with so many members taking time out to help with the various matches and events.

The climax of the week was the Buffet Dance. Grennie Dale's band (Justus) manager had book a group called Plimsoll Sandwich and his other managed band Nelsons Column would support. Grennie was horrified to learn at the eleventh hour that Plimsoll Sandwich had dispensed with strict tempo and were playing Soul. He had nothing to fear, they went down a storm and our more sedate audience loved them and called for several encores.

Members ran the bar and did a full bar waiter service. Bernie Klatt from the speedway provided the meal. To assist with fund raising Mike Clarke came up with the idea that we would sell book matches with winning draw prizes indicated on the inside cover. Some of our young match sellers got carried away and re sold many of the discarded losing book matches. As treasurer I was able to breathe a little easier after calculating a healthy profit for the week, on what had been an expensive initial layout for the club.

The club had shown it had moved forward and was striving to become a county ground and had standards of excellence.

One of the artefacts from the centenary celebrations that has survived was a bat with signatures of the England and West Indian teams that played in the Lords test of 1976. It was given to the club by Mrs Alan Knott. Jean, myself, John and Beryl Squire had travelled down to Margate to the annual dinner of Beltinge Cricket Club. Beltinge toured East Anglia for several summers and regularly played Mildenhall and as a result friendships were made. We had expected Alan Knott (England and Kent wicketkeeper) to attend as President of the Beltinge club. He was however unable to attend, but his wife did and on hearing it was to be our centenary promised to get us something to use for a raffle. In course of time the bat arrived and we decided to keep it. Geoff Hodge got it housed in the triangular case it still sits in, and will for some time as Geoff lost the key to the cabinet.

1977 saw the first full blooded Minor County match at the ground, but for me the highlight of the summer was playing in the West Suffolk Newspapers Jubilee cup competition. Instigated by Malcolm Grubb the sports editor of the Newmarket Journal, his paper group organised the event to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee. We battled our way through to the final with a squad of much changed since I joined in 1968. We were fortunate that Bob Birch (Ordnance Survey), Tom Whittingham (Teacher), Alan Hey (Pharmaceutical) and Andy Borrett (Farming) all moved into the area and joined the club. Andy Carter, Trevor and Chris Cooke along with Peter Finnis had also matured into men's cricket. Although we didn't consider ourselves favourites, we won the competition at the Bury Railway club ground, beating Hadleigh at a time when Dick English was in his pomp for the opposition.

The playing strength was increasing and we were now putting out good sides both weekend days for 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> X1 matches. There was also an influx of touring matches and along with midweek cup games there was an invitation to join the newly formed midweek league.

On a personal front I was tiring of being Treasurer after eight years and felt it was shackling me at every social and sport event. Sunday mornings I would empty my clothes of notes and beer mats and cash and hope it would all tally? The committee accepted my resignation and I was presented with silver salver drinks plate that was engraved underneath thanking me for my work.

1978 Season saw me elected to captain the Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> X1. I had reached the grand old age of 35 and felt I had experience to pass onto my peers and the younger players. Then my age was considered to be a time when players were "getting past it". Happily that is no longer the case. My first game was a win at Thurston School against Ixworth. I remember having Ray Crane and Jack Youngs to open the bowling and a young spinner Andy Clarke to back them up. Mike Clarke was also in the team. This was the start of fourteen years' service in the captain's role. So ten years in and I was still very much involved as a captain and committee member.

Jean and I were passionate about the annual Dinner Dance. Its establishment had been helped by the introduction of more club awards and the half an hour cabaret spot the dinner committee provided each year. Meetings and rehearsals began in August in anticipation of the November Date. In my next recording I will recall my many memories of those 25 years of cabaret