

- FOREWORD -

BRAINTREE CRICKET CLUB 1879/1979

Any history of a particular sport and a particular club need only be of interest to those with past associations with the game or are past or current members of that Club. However, I have endeavoured to provide a wider interest of not only the game that the Club is proud to have played for one hundred years, but I have explored the lives and backgrounds of its founders and the Club's contribution to its much respected position in Club Cricket in the County of Essex. Cricket Clubs as in all other sports have their triumphs and their failures and it is these that make any history the more interesting reading. Personalities too frequently make (and can break) any Club especially in small communities.

The records contained in the following pages will bring many names to those people of Braintree and Bocking who have known tradesmen and its business people of this century and the latter half of the 19th. Too many statistics have purposely been avoided and omitted, but many personalities who promoted the Club and helped to build on its 1879 foundation have been included. Omissions there may be, and for any of these I offer my apologies.

T.E. BUNN  
March 1979 - Honorary Life Member

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A BRIEF HISTORY

Braintree can in no way claim to be the oldest Club in Essex. The Maldon Club celebrated its Bi-centenary in 1955, but research has made it very clear that the "Gentlemen of Braintree" were playing the game in 1831. The first recorded game appears in the Chelmsford Chronicle of September of that year and reads "A match of cricket was played at Witham between eleven Gentlemen of Witham and Eleven Gentlemen of Braintree, which was won by the former". The detailed scoring of the game was printed. Two innings were concluded by each club with very low scoring, 49 & 18 against 24 & 17. In the early 1800's cricket games were played in the Braintree area, notably at Pattiswick Green. Gosfield Hall Park was a well known meeting place of cricket enthusiasts and games were played there against visitors from all over Essex, Suffolk and London. The Hall at the time was the seat of a Mr. E.G. Barnard, M.P. and many families from the nearby towns and villages gathered to watch these matches. The games attracted crowds of two to three thousand people. Some players and "the elite" retired to parties at the Hall after the game whilst many of the spectators are reported to have taken refreshment at the Kings Head, then kept by a Mr. Artley. - The seats of famous gentry provided advantageous conditions for matches as cricket was a game for the rich. Games were not played on Sundays and work then for the employed was of a six day duration. Only those work people "skilled in the game" were given time off or instructed to play on these social occasions. Betting was a common feature, not only on the result of the games, but on individual performances. It was a practice for players with some noted skills of the game to play for several teams in the area in the same season - Team games were not played as of today with a complete Saturday programme from May through to Mid-September. The times available for fixtures were determined by the seasons generally demanded (or allowed) by farming which was the main industry.

The first recorded game played in Braintree was on Hyde Field (an area now covered by the Town Hall and Bus Park) in the late summer months "after the haying was done". Interest in the game became apparent as on September 1st 1834 a game was played on the Hyde Field between the Married and Single of Braintree and afterwards an excellent dinner was provided by Mr. Cook (one of the Married team) at the Falcon P.H. in the High Street (now demolished) (commonly known as "The Gin Shop").

These early games were, without exception, low scoring, presumably due to rough pitches and crude batting with unsuitable bats and the long grass of the playing area.

In July 1842 the "Braintree Players" were invited to play the first ever game at the residence of Mr. Richard White of Highfields, Coggeshall against the new local team. The two innings concluded by each side gave Braintree an easy victory.

It was in the 1840's that competitive games between Braintree and Bocking were played on Mr. Durrants White Hart Field and they attracted many spectators..

It was not until the early 1850's that more regular games in Braintree and Bocking were reported and these show that well known personalities and local names began to appear as players and sponsors; e.g. Courtauld, Crittall, Tabor, Livermore, Holmes and Bearman. For several years a few games were played on the White Hart field but this was lost to the sport in 1871. Newspaper reports show that several of the Braintree players were taking part in games played by the Bocking Club which

evidently survived this difficult period, no doubt assisted by the developing Courtauld Company.

The year 1876 saw the formation of the Essex County Cricket Club at a Public Meeting in January 1876 (held at the Shire Hall, Chelmsford).

It was in 1878 that the first Australian team was to visit England.

We can only believe that these events were contributory to the official beginning of the Braintree Cricket Club in the year of 1879.

The Essex Chronicle of Friday March 14th gave the following report of the inaugural meeting and it is given in full for its historic value.

"On Tuesday evening of last week (4th March) a meeting was held in the Meeting Hall, Church Lane (now St. Michael's Lane) to consider the formation of a Cricket Club, when there were eighteen gentlemen present, Mr. R.H. Johnson, in the Chair.

After some discussion on the probability of a Cricket Club being a success it was proposed by Mr. Talbot and seconded by Mr. A.R. Dyer "that a Club be called "The Braintree Cricket Club" and that it be under the management of a President, A Treasurer, Secretary and Captain and eight Committee men".  
- carried unanimously.

The rules were proposed by Mr. F.H. Crittall and seconded by Mr. T. Nicholas and carried. Rule 4 provides "that subscriptions to the Club for playing members be 5s. per annum paid in advance", it being thought advisable to make it as low as possible so that the Club shall be within the reach of all.

It was proposed that Mr. George Courtauld =MP, be requested to act as President; Mr. R. Crittall, Treasurer; Mr. A. Talbot, Secretary; Mr. F. Mott, Captain, and the following eight gentlemen Committee: Messrs. F.H. Cooper, F.H. Crittall, A.R. Dyer, H.A. Jackson, R.H. Johnson, F. Livermore H.F. Row and G. Vennell.

The meeting then terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chairman."

The rental charge for the ground was by no means cheap and the five shilling subscription was not within "the reach of all" when in 1879 the average wage of a manual worker was about ten shillings per week. It appears that a class distinction existed. The then combined population of Braintree and Bocking was under 8,000 persons. It is interesting to record that the business men and tradesmen of the Town were those responsible for promoting the Club. The President, Mr. George Courtauld was a Member of Parliament for the Maldon Constituency, and lived at Cut Hedge, Gosfield. The rental charge was £14 per year for Queens Meadow, Bocking.

The Treasurer, Mr. Richard Crittall, was the elder brother of Francis Henry Crittall, the founder of the Crittall Manufacturing Company, also a member of the original Committee. Richard Crittall later left Braintree and in London formed the well known Richard Crittall (Heating and Ventilating) Company, but in 1879 both were helping to run a comparatively small ironmongers shop in Bank Street. The Club Captain, Mr. F. Mott was a farmer of Panfield Lane. Mr. Robert Johnson,

who chaired the inaugural meeting was a local coal merchant and great sportsman and player of football in particular. In later life he was Chairman of the Essex County Football Association. Mr. F.H. Cooper was a Baker and his shop is now that of Thorogoods - Bakers and Confectioners. Mr. A.R. Dyer, a grocer of 11 Bank Street also had premises in Church Street, Bocking - Mr. Dyer later became Captain of the Club and he left Braintree in the 1890's to establish additional grocery businesses in Winchester, where later he became Mayor of England's Oldest City. Mr. F. Livermore, who played cricket for several clubs in North Essex, had a plumbing business in Manor Street and until recently the name of his firm was still in use for similar work. Mr. H.F. Row was the owner of a mineral water Company in Manor Street (later Jordans and Archers) but now no more. Mr. Vennell owned a drapers shop in Bank Street. Mr. Talbot and Mr. Jackson were local people living in the Avenue area.

In the Essex Chronicle of May 9th 1879 a brief note under Cricket News read "Braintree C.C. played their opening game on their new ground on Mr. Perry's field on Thursday evening. (The opponents were not named). A liberal programme of games has already been arranged".

It is interesting to note that in the same edition of the paper a report of the "A.G.M. of Bocking Cricket Club was held at The Bull Inn". In the previous year they "won 5 of 7 games played on Mr. Holmes field".

The first season of the Braintree Club was a success and even more games were played in 1880. Enthusiasm for the game grew and in August the Chronicle reported:

"A novel game of cricket was played at Panfield Lane, the two sides consisting of eleven picked men with broomsticks against fourteen less expert players with bats. The "bats" were first to go to the wicket and score 41. The bowling of F. Mott and J. Coward was too much for them. The "sticks" scored 51. The match was not very attractive to the cricketers, but caused great amusement for the large number of spectators". "(The Panfield Lane ground was in the area now covered by Rosemary Avenue)."

The A.G.M. of 1881, held at the White Hart Hotel was commenced with a substantial tea. This meeting decided several new appointments in the Clubs Management - Mr. Edward Holmes (Solicitor) became President and Mr. A.R. Dyer succeeded Mr. Mott as Club Captain. Several new names appeared in the Committee, and there were notable omissions. The Treasurer reported credit balance of £2.

The annual meeting of 1882 reported a moderate playing season. This meeting was held at the Horn Hotel and the only important change in Management was Mr. F. Smoothy taking the office of President but the finances of the Club were in trouble and Mr. Perry had increased the ground rental to £28.00 per annum. A Mr. Hawkes complained about payments being made to some "professional players" and Club members not being asked to play.

1883 saw the arrival of Dr. J. Harrison (Jun) and at the annual meeting on April 5th he was elected Club Captain. (In the two previous years Dr. Harrison had brought a team from London to play the Braintree Club) - George Courtauld MP was back again as President.

Dr. Harrison's achievements with both bat and ball gave the Club a winning sequence of

games. His inspiration evidently brought improved cricket from regular members and in the following year the Doctor scored the first century of the Braintree Club. Playing at Witham he scored 119 out of Braintree's 219 but this was not enough to prevent Witham from winning by 5 wickets.

It was in 1884 that the first competition for Club Cricket teams in Essex was promoted and known as "The Essex Challenge Cup." Braintree entered the competition and were drawn against the strong Brentwood Club, known as the "Zouaves" and they were heavily defeated. Brentwood was the headquarters of the newly formed Essex County Cricket Club and the defeat that the Braintree C.C. suffered came from the leading exponents of the game and at the same time the County were advertising and inviting players for trial games. A Braintree player of that year was by chance contacted in 1954 as a result of an article on the Braintree Cricket Club in the Braintree and Witham Times. In correspondence Mr. H. Turner then 90 years of age and a resident of Abernethy, Saskatchewan, Canada, expressed his disappointment at not being chosen for this very special cup game, but he named most of the players who represented the Club - Dr. Harrison Capt.; Messrs. Dyer, Mott, Cooper, Cunnington, Brown (B), Dace, Rippingale, Livermore and a Mr. Grout from Dunmow. From these names it appears that Braintree included a few "outsiders" from their regular eleven and Mr. Turner writes "I was not included in the select circle". In further correspondence Mr. Turner confirmed that in the years up to 1890 the Club got into financial difficulties and little cricket was played. At the annual meetings new names appeared as officers, notably Frank Bearman of Bocking, who in later life was Chairman of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. Mr. H.J. Cunnington (Solicitor) became President and Mr. J.E. Holmes, son of Edward Holmes, the Bocking End Solicitor, was elected Captain (following his success at Felsted School where he was Captain of the Cricket Club). Messrs. Livermore and Mott were still members of the Committee and still playing. In an effort to sponsor cricket games locally especially at Queens Meadow, a Mr. F. Rankin of the King's Head P.H. supplied an excellent lunch and tea" when the Dunmow C.C. were the opposition. To complete this "Derby" game, "the Braintree Excelsior Band gave a selection of excellent music". It became quite a common attraction to have a band at cricket matches. - Doctor Harrison was establishing himself as a great local sportsman and each year organised a game against a team from London. In 1888 his guests were from the Victoria Club and Braintree playing against a team that included three Surrey professionals lost by one run 83 - 82.

During these disappointing years of the Club several other teams came into being, and reports in the Chronicle show games between The BrushMakers, Constitutional Club, The Weavers, Crittalls, Bocking (an established team), and Braintree Gordons (more renowned for their prowess at football). It was our correspondent Mr. H. Turner who became the Captain of the Gordon's Cricket Club and he continued to keep this office until the Club was disbanded five years later. The Brushmakers included Mr. Gerald West and Mr. H. West and two personalities to make names for themselves in later years in local cricket; Clem Rankin and "Spinner" Vale (grandfather of one of Braintree's more recent players - Tony Owers).

The 1890's saw the introduction of the "non-jarring" bat with cane handle and rubber grip at 15/- each (1979 prices vary from £20.00 to £40.00 ).

The Essex Challenge Cup was won outright in 1890 by Chelmsford and it was reported that "its hoped for contribution for the good of the game, had failed and often led to unfriendliness".

A Braintree player who became a stalwart of the Club after World War One appeared as an outstanding batsman in local cricket for the first time in 1892 - Charles F. Blanks, later to become

Registrar of Births and Deaths, etc. was playing for Braintree, the Gordons and Gosfield.

Braintree's Cricket continued throughout the years to the beginning of World War One and it seems that several local grounds were used including fields at Coldnailhurst and Spaldings farms in Panfield Lane and at Lynton, London Road. Mr. Francis Henry Crittall encouraged local cricket and many games during the years that he lived at Lynton were played on his private ground adjoining the house (now demolished and covered by the Godlings Way Housing Estate).

Mr. Crittall left Lynton in 1900 to live at Monken Hadley and again he made available a field for his firm's cricket and football teams. The Essex Chronicle continued with reporting games by Braintree Cricket Club and the results were always given by "Slogger". The football reports were by "Kickett Forward". In 1914 Braintree's opening game was against Manor Works and they were heavily defeated. (124 - 28) An interesting excerpt from the Essex Chronicle report of this game refers to the top score of 34 runs made for the Work's Club by Mr. W.W. Thomas who in later years played for Braintree and became its Chairman in 1949. Later in this same year the Braintree side was obviously improving its cricket and they hoped to challenge the still very strong Witham side - Charles Blanks was scoring a lot of runs and E.C. Gibbard (of W.H. Smith Railway Station Bookstall and newspaper distribution), H.G. Cobb (Manager of Barclays Bank Braintree) and for the nearby Rayne Club, Charles Hutley who became Braintree's Captain in the 1920's were all scoring runs.

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From the very early days of cricket/Braintree there have been annual games, Tradesman V The Police, played on the Club's ground on Thursday and in the Pavilion is a photograph showing those taking part as far back as 1902 at Lynton London Road. These games are still played and in recent years have been able to raise considerable funds for local charities.

After the first World War cricket teams were slow in getting together again almost certainly because of the great loss of so many young men but Braintree's team with some of those playing in 1914 got together for a limited number of games in 1920.

By 1922 after using several grounds from Panfield Lane, Spaldings meadow and London Road adjoining Marshalls, the present day ground was made available by arrangement with Messrs. Courtaulds Limited and later a lease was signed. For record purposes an extract from this first important document is given:- "Lease dated April 25th 1923 between Courtaulds Limited and Henry George Cobb of Braintree, Bank Manager, and Charles Hutley of Rayne, Farmer. Term 5 years from March 25th 1923".

This agreement has been continuous ever since, with just a few minor variations. The Club has always enjoyed excellent relations with this local Company and its Estate Management Department in Coventry.

The two gentlemen who signed this first agreement became established figures in the Essex Club cricket circles - Henry Cobb, was Braintree Cricket Club, a first class administrator, a Secretary and a second eleven player and of similar stature to the great W.G. Grace, and was always imparting advice to younger players. Charles Hutley was Club Captain and kept this office for several years. A great character and leader both on and off the field particularly on the social scene.

Cricket was played in the early twenty's without the accommodation and amenities provided by almost every Club in the 1970's - Braintree's Pavilion was a large wooden shed, adapted with large flaps that were hooked up to roof level each side of its central door. It was large enough to take equipment and a tea table plus room for the two scorers. Consequently, visitors had to change in a room at the nearby White Hart Hotel and then they had to walk on to the ground about 300 yards away.

In 1924 with its assured ground, the Club engaged its first and only professional player/groundsman, Alan Pritchard, a good batsman and wicket keeper who held this position for several years until he invested in a sports shop of his own in the town.

The fixtures arranged against strong opposition attracted many spectators (3 to 400 was common place at first eleven games and ground collections were a welcome addition to the Club's funds). With the teams several good players it is opportune at this stage of the Club's history to mention some of these by name - Charles Hutley, local farmer was a popular Club Captain; Frank Rose, a fastish bowler was proprietor at the Hope Laundry of Rayne Road; V.R. Bromage (Brummy), was a hard working Secretary and a middle order bat; John Cockburn and Len Richardson, Valentine Britton, Dr. T.P. Lewis, Tom Rowley and Charles Blanks were all good batsmen aided occasionally by Ken Clark of Balls & Balls, and W.A. Smith, T.E.B. Reid and Cecil Vaughan, the last two mentioned being Courtauld employees. - The bowling of Sid Smith in 1922 - 1924 was outstanding and he was recognised as one of the best fast bowlers in North Essex. With Frank Rose, John Cockburn, Dr. Lewis and the Vaughan-Smith combination the team gained much respect from its opponents. An amusing "skit" printed in the Essex Chronicle following Braintree's first victory over the highly regarded Witham Team on their ground in 1924 is given in full:-

#### Who Won the Match?

"I won the match," said young Sid Smith. "For I took six wickets for thirty-six".

"I won the match," said T.E.B. Reid. "For I took three wickets when greatly in need."

"I won the match," said old Frank Rose, "I bowled Bert Wakelyn with one of my slows."

"I won the match," said Valentine Britton; "I made the runs with my wonderful 'hitton."

"I won the match," said old Charlie Blanks, "For I got no catches, for which many thanks."

"I won the match," said Tom Rowley, 'twixt slips, "For I made a wonderful stroke through the slips."

"I won the match," said Pritchard, the Pro., "For mighty few byes did I ever let go."

"I won the match," said dear old Brummy, "I caught the Capt. Wilson upon my wee Tummy."

"I won the match," said Cockburn. "You know, I ran out J. Dixon with a jolly good throw."

"I won the match", said Smith, W.A.; "I spoke to the skipper when things went astray."

"I won the match," said Lewis, T.P., "For I went off early - yes, just after tea."

"I won the match," said Hutley, the Master, "For you'd none of you played if I hadn't ast' year."

Such was the spirit of the Club.

A local exhibition piece at this time was the splendid 14 seater bus, used by the Club for its away matches and tours owned and driven by Tom Leonard. In the early twentys the Club enjoyed a weeks tourbased in the Eastbourne and Hastings areas. A photograph in the Pavilion, shows the Braintree touring team when playing at the famous Saffron's ground, Eastbourne. The Club was well supported by local tradesmen between the wars and several of these deserve a mention in this history.

Mr. A.G. Wicks - Building Contractor - The Club's first Chairman and father of Tom, Len & Ray, all of whom played for the Club.

Mr. W.W. Thomas - Chairman in 1949 - 1953 and player 1922 - 30.

Mr. C.B. Saunders - Chemist - Thursday player and later Chairman of Braintree U.D.C.

Mr. Ken Ingram - Jeweller

Mr. P.W. Parkes - Jeweller

Messrs. Gerald & Fred West - Brushmakers

Mr. Bert Piggin - Grocer

Messrs. Bullock & Ransome of Courtaulds Limited, both of whose sons played for the Club.

Mr. Charles Howard, Grocer, whose sons Bobby and Norman played for the Club.

Mr. W.F. Pilcher - draper (and occasional Thursday player).

Mr. Bert Howard - draper ( " " " " ).

Mr. Frank Dance - Tobacconist & Nurseryman and player for the Tradesmen in the 1920's.

Dr. H.G.K. Young - player 1910-24, the last under arm bowler seen at Panfield Lane.

and many others too numerous to mention, but not forgetting Bert Cornell, Umpire for more than 20 years.

Many players joined the Club in the years between the two wars and just a few who contributed to the well being on the field and socially are Valentine Britton 1st XI Captain 1930-35, a brilliant batsman who played for 19 years for the Club, Geoffrey Rowell, B.J. (Bunny) Mott,

Sonny Fuller, E.C. Gibbard, A.E. Sharpe, E. Graver, W. Granger, Percy Hasler, The Cousins brothers (farmers), Stan Taylor, Tom Britton, Last Pritchard, Harold Radford, Aubrey Beard, Jack Read, Stan Wright, Cyril Martyr, Seymour Pawsey, Jack Sargent, Leslie Arnold, Nelson Moody, Tom Rose, John Pilgrim, Trevor Bevan, Peter Jones, Ken Nankivell & W.H. Nankivell (later became President of the Club), Ray & Len Wicks, Bobby Howard, Bob Richardson, Harry Warde, Cyril Challis, Raymond & Colin McLeod, and many others.

A Home Cricket week was introduced in 1924 and opposition from surrounding town teams provided the Town with an attraction during the holiday week and the games were well supported.

The Thursday eleven, made up almost entirely of the Town's tradesmen, unable to take Saturdays off from their business, continued to prosper between the wars. There was plenty of opposition available and this added membership complimented the two Saturday elevens, and provided players for Bank Holiday fixtures.

Club fixtures in the early 1930's were maintained with moderate success. In 1936 a then recent newcomer to the area, Frank Lloyd, an accountant attached to the East Anglian Electricity Authority and Suffolk cricketer mainly noted for his bowling achievements was appointed Captain of the Club. The leadership of Frank Lloyd brought about a boost to the Club both on and off the field and he was the spear head of a fund raising promotion for a new Pavilion.

Frank Lloyd now enjoying retirement in St. Neots has explained that the years 1935-39 was a "period of immense change". The club's playing strength was improved by the newcomers including L.K. Lucas & G. (Bill) Went both schoolmasters, with Val Britton still a class batsman and Don Berry. In 1936 Frank Lloyd and the Committee decided that the Club needed an up to date attractive Pavilion. Several fund raising promotions, varying from whist drives to flood lighted dancing at the ground. Frank Lloyd appealed to many tradespeople and firms all in 1937. So successful was the appeal that the Pavilion was built by Mr. A.G. Wicks Company on very favourable terms, paid for and it was ready for a grand opening ceremony on May 28th 1938. Col. Sir E.A. Ruggles-Brise Bart, M.C., M.P. opened the Pavilion, supported by Mr. W.J. Courtauld and Mr. G.T. Bartram, Mr. C.B. Saunders, Chairman of the Braintree & Bocking Urban District Council and the Secretary of the Club Cricket Conferences. The opponents for the match on that eventful day were Courtaulds (unfortunately it turned out a very wet afternoon and not a ball was bowled).

A photograph showing the officials and players who attended the opening ceremony hangs in the Pavilion. Mr. William Julien Courtauld was now the Club's President. Players chosen for the May 28th game included some previously mentioned plus Jack Read, opening bat and wicket keeper, Cecil Purkis, the new Secretary, Bob Richardson, Fred Tarbun, Tom Britton and J. Pilgrim. Most of these cricketers were playing again after the 1939/45 war, together with several of the second team, namely Roy Cook, Reg. Perkin, Cyril Challis, Tom Rose, (son of Frank Rose).

During the war years, the ground was finally leased to a sheep farmer but only after great effort and guile by Mr. H.G. Cobb preventing the field from being ploughed up for home food production. This continuing interest and effort to conserve the ground and thus ensuring continuity of Braintree Cricket Club after hostilities is worthy of mention. From correspondence still available in 1979, it is apparent that without his help (and almost certainly some financial

aid) the Club might well have had to obtain another ground in 1946 and all this coming from a man well into his eighty plus years and with over sixty years continuous membership. Unfortunately, Mr. Cobb died on March 22nd 1944 aged 83, and did not see the result of his labours when cricket started again at Panfield Lane early in 1946. Mr. H.G. Cobb, Manager of Barclays Bank, Braintree from May 1907 to 1926, a bachelor, must surely be recorded as the Father of the Braintree Cricket Club.

Unfortunately, the Ministry of Works decided to claim a small area of the ground for the U.S.A. Forces in the district and built what were a series of hatted dormitories. The land was lost permanently, but it did not reduce the area to an extent that ruled out its future as a cricket ground.

After the war years, an immediate start was made to get the ground and in particular the "square" ready for the 1946 season. (The pre-war Club Captain, Frank Lloyd, had unfortunately left the district). Bill Went and Don Berry led this attack and they achieved incredible results backed up by a few willing members, keen to carry on where they left off in 1939. The wicket and outfield including the Pavilion were all in good shape for the May opening of the 1946 season and two Saturday elevens were playing, captained by Ray Wicks and Roy Cook.

The 1947 season brought changes to officers, some of the old brigade decided to stand down, having seen the Club established once again and the captaincy of the first eleven was given to Tom Bunn with Don Berry as his deputy. Roy Cook, Captain, of the second eleven was a remarkably brave man and a very keen cricketer. Roy had both feet blown off during his war years and not only did he continue his cricket, but he bowled with considerable success and took many slip catches despite his very limited movement. The President of the Club was now Lady C.C. Bourtauld and Mr. A.G. Wicks, Chairman. A much improved team with a strong fixture list gave creditable performances and continued to be a leading team in Essex for many years. Sunday games began in 1948 and these attracted quite large crowds in the late forties and early fifties until television made its inroad to change so many ways of life and recreation.

New faces appeared at Panfield Lane and several of the young members of the late thirties and the post 2nd World War years matured into really good cricketers and competition for places in both the Saturday elevens became quite fierce. It is worth while recording in this 1979 history some of the names of players who served the Club well in the early post war years, the fifties and the sixties - Bill Went (Captain for a year), Don Berry, Paddy Miles, a really fast bowler, Leslie Pearce, Reg. Perkin, later to become Chairman and elected a Life Member in 1972, Peter Gant, George Weavers, Bob Catrall, Derek Cant, Derek Angel, Alan Helmer, Nigel Granger, George Maddams, Norman Richards, Peter Hopkins, Geoff Smith, Harry Cullum and Tommy Gould, Len Newport and Dick Ainger, and the Wood Brothers.

Other stalwarts of the Club many of whom did not actually play cricket are worthy of note. A great deal of work and time is taken in planning and organising a top class cricket club. For many years most of the ground work and wicket preparation was a labour of love for the club workers - the Challis, Chairman and Secretary and umpire for many years; Len Richardson, Jack Owers, Dick Felton, Norman Stobbart, George Cook, Stan Gaunt, Committee members and reliable ground workers. Cricketers Reg. Perkin, Tom Bunn, Fred Byford, Roy Gould, Alan Helmer, Peter Byford, Tony Owers, Gordon Siebert (scorer for many years), Vic Lewis. etc.

A Colts XI (under 18 year olds) was started in 1948 and in later years the Club received considerable dividends from several of its original members. The outstanding junior was Geoffrey Smith. Geoff soon proved to be an attractive batsman and as early as 1948 played some games for the Essex Club and Ground team and following successful games in 1950, he was offered terms in 1951 which he accepted and thus became the first Braintree C.C. member to join the County on a full time basis. It did not take Geoff very long to obtain a regular place in the County team and he enjoyed a successful term with them until he resigned in 1966 to take up an attractive business appointment. Following his leaving the County he returned to this Club and Captained the first eleven for three seasons.

Almost all cricket clubs be they village, works or town team need the support of members who have either played cricket or have a keen interest in the game and in this area, Braintree have in post war years been most fortunate. This history would be far from complete without mention of some of them. Experienced business men have guided this Club in difficult times and on delicate issues. To name a few - in 1948 Mr. W.W. Thomas became Chairman following the death of Mr. A.G. Wicks. The Club Secretary was Mr. H. (Joe) Challis and in March 1951 the Club, through a press report first read the news of a proposed compulsory purchase of the Panfield Lane ground by the Essex Education Committee to provide additional playing fields for the proposed enlargement of the Braintree High School. Immediate enquiries were made which confirmed the press report and the Club at once sought advice and set about combating the threat. In addition to seeking support from many quarters a local petition objecting to the proposal very soon collected some two thousand plus signatures. It all took the Chairman and other officers a great deal of time and cost the Club some money. However the threat remained until December of that year when the County Planning Advisor advised the local U.D.C. by letter - "The Ministry of Education has now issued new regulations governing the sizes of sites for schools which require smaller sites than hereto, and that as the land occupied by the Braintree High School is practically up to the new standard the proposal of the Education Committee to acquire the Braintree Cricket Club ground as a playing field for the County High School is not likely to proceed."

The objections and the petition proved all worth while and in the opinion of the B.C.C. the battle was won. - The Essex Chronicle Editor in congratulating the Club quoted - "In simple language it means that the Ministry has been clean bowled".

The Annual Dinners of the Club which had become "an occasion" before the second world war were revived in the late 1940's and guests included Trevor Bailey, Douglas Insole, Peter and Ray Smith and Ken Preston, all Essex senior County Players. (In 1937, and in the Lloyd era, Tom Pearce the Essex Captain immediately after the war, was one of the Clubs guests). The Club also extended its help to supplement several professional players benefits and the County Nursery Fund, by playing County teams at Panfield Lane. The cricket followers of the town and other local clubs joined in these promotions and attendances averaged well over a thousand people around the ground.

The Club's files contain considerable correspondence covering another threat emanating from the Essex County Council when in 1962 a proposed inner ring road was to pass through the ground and this would have ruled out cricket completely had the scheme gone ahead. All this was finally ruled out and even seventeen years later this road in a modified form has yet to be approved and started.

Following the death of Lady Courtauld in 1954 the Club was fortunate in having

Mr. W.H. Nankivell, O.B.E. and a local Director of Courtauld Limited as their President. Mr. Nankivell, well known for his earlier activities in Essex sports, football and athletics in particular had played a little cricket for Braintree in the 1930's. He was an active and much respected President from 1955 to 1974. He was succeeded by Mr. W.R. Regan of Globe Construction Limited of Felsted but who has now relinquished office because of his continued absence abroad on business activities and he is succeeded by Mr. Colin Williamson, the Deputy Chairman of his Company and a Club Member for many years.

With the continuing growth of Braintree and the changes from the once accepted terminology that the English were a nation of shop keepers so has the constitution of Braintree's Cricket Club changed. No longer is the Club managed, captained and made up of tradesmen. Today it is the Company representatives, the office staff and even the new breed of London Commuters, that control and enjoy the amenities of the new enlarged Club Pavilion, complete with its bar, showers and fine changing rooms. But still the Club relies very much, as it has always done, on a small nucleus of willing helpers. Now the man in charge and very much the leader of the Club is Mr. Harry Cullum. Past Secretary, Treasurer, player and now the Chairman since 1972 (and in addition a fully qualified umpire), and with twenty eight years continuous active membership.

It would be remiss not to mention the Ladies who have helped the Club certainly since 1920, Braintree Cricket Club has gained a reputation for its interval teas and the ladies, wives and friends have been entirely responsible for the standard they have set (and usually they show a little profit at the end of each season).

The advent of League Cricket to this area has been the Club's 1st XI participating in the Two Counties League since 1973. Whatever ones view of this type of competition it was necessary to enter the League in order to retain fixtures against the senior Clubs in Essex and Suffolk. Other local Clubs in the competition are Halstead, Coggeshall, Witham, Dunmow and as from this year Colchester. This means that the local rivalry still exists. The 2nd XI entered the competition in 1977. In order to encourage the youngsters of the district, a coaching evening has been held each week during the season for the past five years. This is under the control of Len Woolmer, a qualified Coach and it has been very successful as is evidenced by the number of players who have advanced to 1st XI standard.

And what of the future. The Club will continue to hold its own on the field of play. Young players like Mark Gouldstone, Terry Fisher and Stewart Cook, to name a few, will form the nucleus and under the leadership of the present Captain, Tommy Gould, a fine all-rounder and a great worker in the administration of the Club, success is assured.

A Club, however, does not function correctly without a hard working Committee and during the past few years the efforts of members such as David Robinson, Dennis Stephens, Harry Martin have done much to achieve the present position. Mention must also be made of the occupier of the score box for almost twenty years - Gordon Siebert.

The Centenary Year has been used as the occasion to extend the Pavilion at a cost of \$,000 which contrasts sharply with the cost of approximately £250 when the main structure was erected in 1938. This extension will improve greatly the social activities which can now be held on the Club's

own premises.

A hundred years have gone and no one can accurately forecast what will happen in the next hundred years. One thing, however, is certain. Whatever changes may take place on the economic and political scenes, cricket will continue to be played. The game, which in the early issues of the Laws, was rightly described as "The Noble Game of Cricket" will always keep its place in sporting activities and long may it continue at Panfield Lane in the name of Braintree Cricket Club.

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