

ARUN GAZETTE, Friday 12 September 1980

**Centenary of the game in a Sussex village where John Ruskin played**  
**CECIL RHODES CAME DOWN TO BURPHAM FOR HIS CRICKET**

by  
*Brian Shewry*



BURPHAM and Warningcamp cricket team 1980: Back row, Chris Brammond, Timmy Smart, Anthony Tester, Chris Horn, Dave Laparie, Andy Lane, Les Humphrey (honorary groundkeeper). Centre row, Ron Binfield, Tony Puttick, Chubby Horne, George Foster (captain), Henry Blackall, Nick Chitty, Maurice Challen. Front row, Gregory Binfield, Mark Tester, Colin Standing, Terry Blackall.

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**HUNDREDS of visitors are expected to converge on the beautiful downland village of Burpham this weekend to join in the centenary celebrations of the local cricket club.**

Their big event is an all-day match on Sunday between Burpham and Warningscamp players and the Sussex first eleven, with the aim of raising £1,000 for the financially-ailing county club.

A splendid 56-page souvenir programme has

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been produced for the occasion, containing a fascinating history of the village club compiled by treasurer Edward Corcoran.

He recalls the earliest days back in 1880 when the club was formed by Mr E. Dawtrey Drewitt, a farmer who was 'squire' of Burpham and lived in Peppering House.

An enthusiast, he laid out a cricket ground on a field adjoining his home, with a wonderful view of the Arun

valley, and invited cricketing friends, such as Dr. W. G. Grace and Ranjitsinghi, to play for his Burpham team against visiting elevens.

On one occasion Burpham were playing a college team from Oxford University. A member of the Drewitt family was chatting to a young visitor and asked him what he planned to do after leaving Oxford.

'I shall go back to Africa,' he replied. It was later dis-

covered that he was Cecil Rhodes.

Another distinguished visitor who played cricket on the Peppering ground was painter and critic John Ruskin who described the view there as the second most beautiful in Europe.

After Mr Drewitt's death at the turn of the century, the land was put back to a farming use and for some years cricket was played on a field behind the present churchyard.

After the first world war regular fixtures included one against the St Barnabas Boys' Club at Mitcham who

camped every summer in the nearby hamlet of Wepham. Old boys of this club still visit Burpham every year and are generous benefactors to the village.

At one match Burpham won the toss and, having decided to bat, gave the 'saints' a new ball which had cost 25 shillings. Bert Greenfield opened the batting and hit the first ball for six. It went into the river and was never seen again.

Later Mr Harold Collyer of Peppering Farm made some land on the downland turf available to the club and matches were played above

Peppering High Barn for several years, with a portable shepherd's hut on wheels as a pavilion and store.

Mr Corcoran reveals that in the interval between innings beer was provided instead of tea. It was often brought in a 4½-gallon barrel by Miss Kathleen Graburn or by Mr Charles Foster in the Graburn's dog-cart.

### New pitch

By the end of the twenties the club wanted to have its ground nearer the village and the downland turf was taken to form a new pitch in a field by the Arun at the foot of Jacob's Ladder.

Matches were played there for a couple of seasons but the site proved unsuitable. In 1931, with the help and encouragement of the 16th Duke of Norfolk, the club moved to its present picturesque ground.

This is situated on Burpham Camp, a national

monument and one of King Alfred's Saxon strongholds. It has led to the club adopting the head of an armed Saxon knight as its emblem, which is depicted on the club flag and worn as a crest on the players' sweaters.

Mr Corcoran says that both before and after the move to the new ground the club produced some splendid characters still talked about today.

He instances George Goodyer, the village wheelwright and coffin-maker and Harry Budd, the blacksmith - they lived opposite each other. Harry ran the club for many years and was their umpire, a job in which his sense of fairness was that Burpham should win.

Both men apparently derived a great deal of amusement from hurling insults at each other across the street.

One day just before a match Harry was arguing about the time. George took a heavy clock and shouted 'If you are so ignorant of the time, take this.' And he threw the clock across the road at Harry's head.

The new ground enabled the club to build up quite a reputation during the 1930s, with Arundel and other

strong clubs frequently beaten. At one match bowler Henry Blackall took all 10 wickets in an innings.

Cricket was played when possible throughout the second world war, although a great deal of restoration work had to be carried out afterwards because Canadian troops encamped at Burpham drove their jeeps and armoured carriers over the ground while training for the D-Day invasion.

'The Canadians were friendly but wild,' Mr Corcoran writes. 'They would open fire at anything that moved - rabbits, hares, pheasants - with live cartridges. Some bullets even went through the cricket pavilion.'

They gave ammunition to the cricketers enrolled in the Home Guard and there were contests between them and the Burpham 'boys', shooting at targets against the



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TAKEN at the turn of the century, this picture shows the River Arun below Cliff Cottage and the Burpham cricket ground. Farm workers took hay across the river in punts for cattle in the fields towards the Black Rabbit. The 'old chap' in the punt has not been identified - can any reader help?

chalkpit in the meads beyond Peppering.'

One of the post-war tasks was removing a concrete pill-box and a gun emplacement built on the cricket field. In addition, a bomb fell on the far side of the rampart bordering the ground, breaking windows and tiles.

### Cheap

After the war the club achieved an almost unbeaten record for several years. At home matches the players walked to Mr Wakeham's cottage near the

blacksmith's forge for the tea interval.

Mrs Wakeham apparently served excellent teas consisting of home-made cakes and jam for just one shilling, with the players sitting in front of the cottage, protected from the weather by a shelter.

### Record

Later on, Mrs Polly Briggs provided first-class teas for 1s 6d at the George and Dragon and when it came to buying provisions she took the advice of a countryman who was 'uncannily accurate at forecasting the weather.'

One of the most extraordinary cricketing feats in the club's history occurred in 1968 and attracted a banner headline in the Littlehampton Gazette: 'Ron Binfield hits 38 in an over.'

The report - of a match against the Privateers on August 16 - stated that a

total of 145 runs was insufficient to give Burpham and Warningcamp victory. They were beaten by four wickets in a high scoring match.

'But batting number six, all-rounder Ron Binfield scored an undefeated 50, hitting 38 off a single over.' This unprecedented feat, Mr Corcoran records, was achieved with the aid of a no-ball and he believes it is unlikely that it will ever be bettered.

The present village hall and cricket pavilion was built in 1972, with the cricketers constructing the foundations as their voluntary contribution to the project.