

## High Wych History – 46-47-48 – The High Wych Cricket Club.

Once upon a time High Wych had a Cricket Club. I doesn't anymore Let me tell you about it.

As so often it is hard to work out when things started. Another factor is of course the way in which High Wych History is interwoven with that of Sawbridgeworth. So I had a good look at the website of the Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club and its excellent history page which can be found at: [http://sawbridgeworthccc.hitscricket.com/pages/page\\_2636/history.aspx](http://sawbridgeworthccc.hitscricket.com/pages/page_2636/history.aspx) . Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club, so you can see there, was started in 1862 as the Sawbridgeworth and High Wych Cricket Club. The Rev. Arthur Wilkins, vicar of Great St. Mary's was apparently "desirous of encouraging manly exercises amongst his parishioners, which might also counteract inclinations towards idleness - public-house frequenting etc." You will note that this was one year after High Wych became independent ecclesiastically, 40 years before it became a separate civic parish.

### CRICKET.

CHELMSFORD v. HIGH WYCH. — A team of cricketers from the late home of the present rector of Chelmsford, the Rev. H. F. Johnson, played a match against the Chelmsford club on the ground of the latter, yesterday (Thursday). As will be seen by the appended score, Chelmsford won by 70 runs on the first innings:—

HIGH WYCH.		1st inns.	2nd inns.
S. Deards, c Willcox	...	3	c Chalk, b Smith ... 61
H. Huntley, b Chalk	...	0	c Ridley, b Willcox ... 6
A. Caldecott, c Pryor	...	1	b Willcox ... 2
Bruce, b Chalk	...	9	b Willcox ... 2
Dent, b Willcox	...	0	b Smith ... 16
A. E. Beavan, b Willcox	...	1	b Smith ... 5
D. French, b Willcox	...	9	c Ridley, b Smith ... 0
J. W. Trusswell, b Smith	...	6	not out ... 14
W. Trusswell, b Smith	...	0	not out ... 3
J. Bell, not out	...	1	c Smee, b Willcox ... 0
Clarke, c and b Smith	...	0	did not bat ... 0
Extras	...	4	Extras ... 5
		<hr/> 34	<hr/> 114



1881: One of the earliest cricket matches in which a High Wych Team was involved

John Truswell, founding member of Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club, and their Captain. He also often played for High Wych

Yes, Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club originally was one with High Wych. Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club's first ground was in fact at Rowney Mead within High Wych's ecclesiastical borders. Then there were the people: Truswell, Wilcox, French and (William) Prout. William's Father John, who farmed at Blounts, was a benefactor of Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club. In 1882 he paid for new grounds near Roselands, now Sayesbury Manor, which still is the home of Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club.

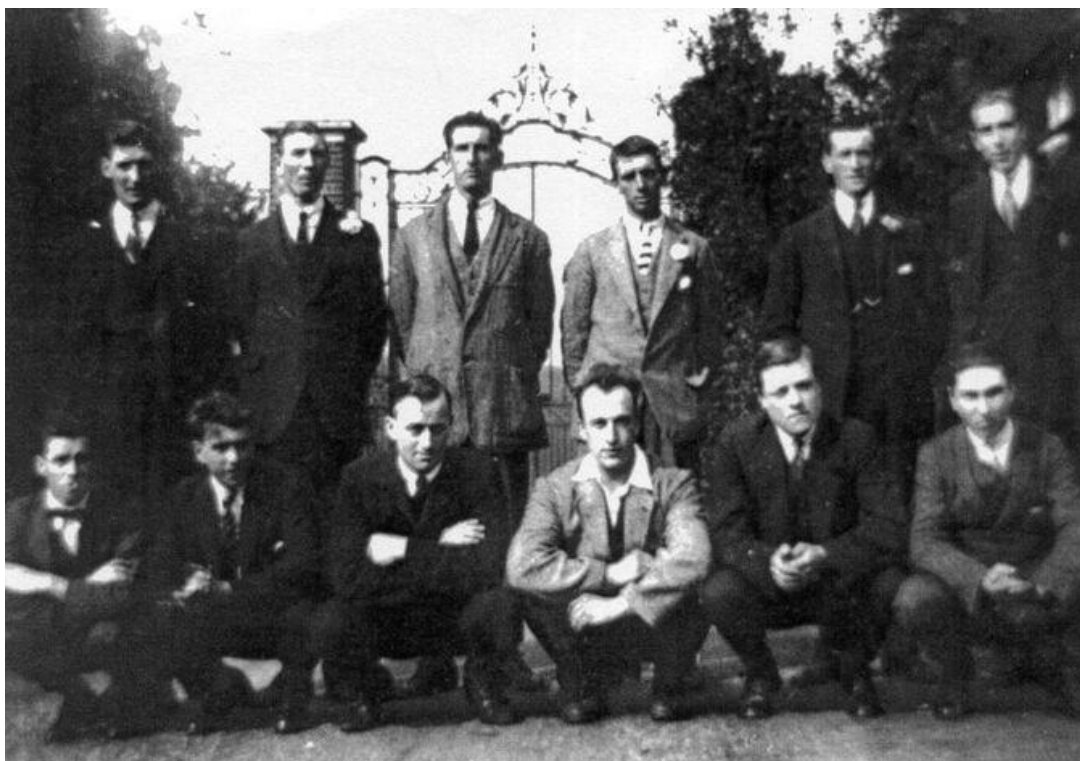
The earliest evidence I found of cricket being played by an actual High Wych team comes from 1881. It is uncertain whether there already was a separate club at that point. The above cutting from the Chelmsford Chronicle describes a match played between "our team" and one from Chelmsford. The latter team won. Eight years later, High Wych Cricket Club (HWCC) definitely did exist as a separate entity as reported on 11<sup>th</sup> May 1889 in the Herts Mercury. The occasion was a charity event raising money for the club. Horace Rackham had become our vicar by then and was also Cricket Club President. John Barnard was vice president and captain.

In the years that followed High Wych Cricket Club regularly played matches. Brothers John and Edward Prout even played for Hertfordshire County in 1899, 1900 and 1901. HWCC's home ground was at the Manor of Groves by kind permission of Mr. F. Silva who lived there roundabout 1910. Mr. F. Silva was president whilst his son John was captain. W. Hanbidge was secretary and treasurer. It might even be possible that High Wych Cricket Club played there before. After all Edmund Barnard nephew of the aforementioned John lived there before the Silva family.

In the first world war no cricket was played at the Manor of Groves. It can be assumed that the ground was used for grazing or even ploughed over. A record book mentions an AGM which was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1919 so that was when things started again.

Fiftythree members joined in that first post war year, an all time record I believe. Mr. Buxton was chairman, J.W. Silva captain and there were 9 vice presidents as well as 9 honorary members all contributing funds. Eughteen matches were played that season of which 11 were won, 5 lost and one drawn. One match was cancelled. Needless

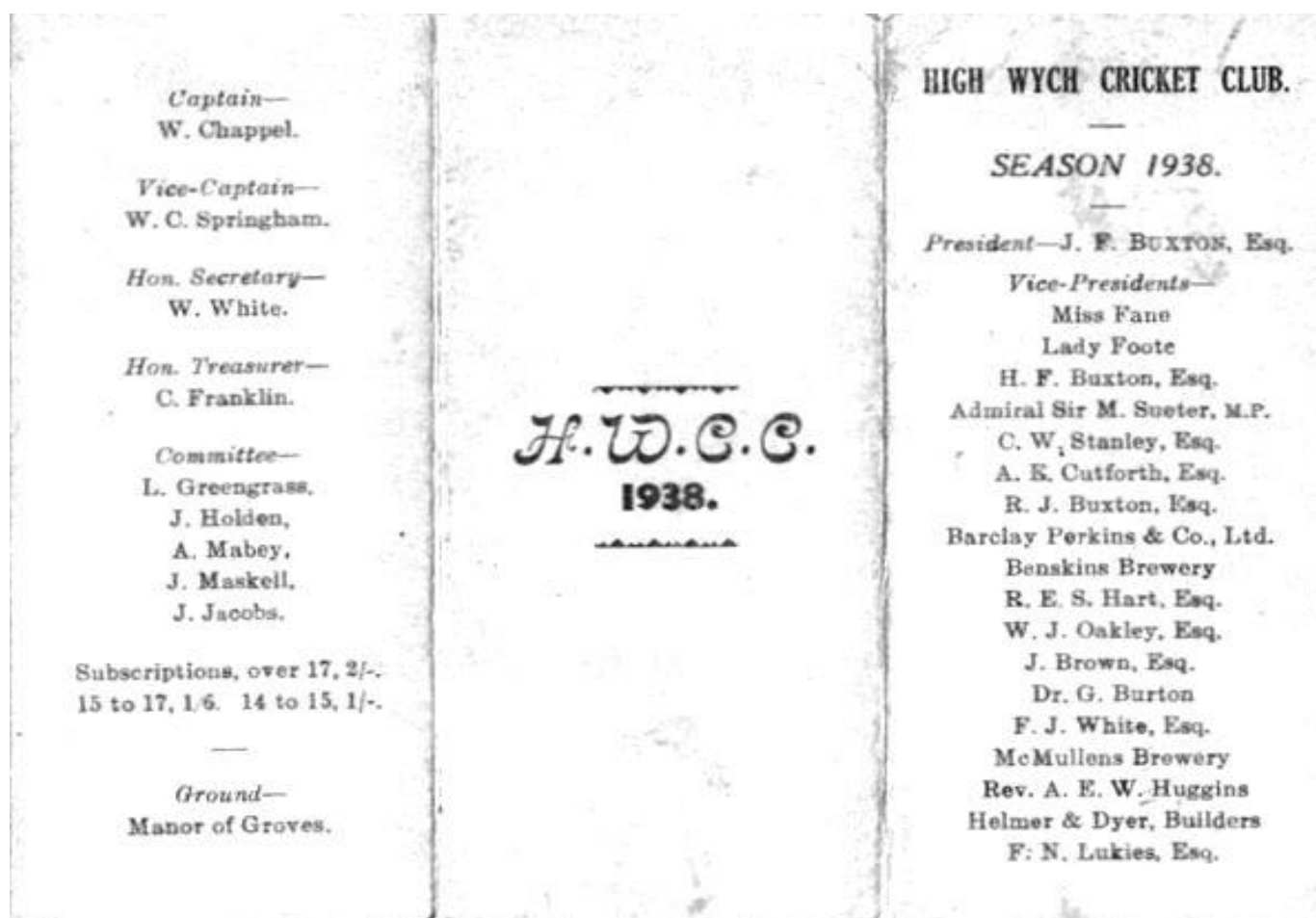
to say they were different times then. In 1925 match balls could be bought for 10/6, practice balls were only 3/6 and bats were 25/ each. One year later High Wych fielded two teams. The first 11 played 19 matches of which 14 were won and 5 lost; 2 matches were cancelled. The second 11 played 11 matches of which 6 were won, 5 lost and 3 cancelled. Who the star players were I was unable to establish neither did I come across any photograph. High Wych cricket was played for fun. The record book did not even bother to mention batting averages. The only pre WW2 picture, shown underneath, dates, so experts told me, from the mid thirties.



The High Wych Cricket team in the 1930s - Backrow left to right: Albert Crane, Charlie Fish, Bill Clements (??), Charlie Raven, Joe Holden, Sid Fish. Front row: Clarence Pink, Bert Batt, George Johnson, Walter White, Alf Springham, David Springham. This list found amongst the records of the late John Smith, is disputed by the way. If readers can help I would be grateful

There is no doubt that the cricket club was well established in the thirties when the above picture was taken. We read that in 1935 "the best batting average was won by W. Springham and the best bowling average by J. Clements. In that same year the rule regarding residential qualifications was cancelled. This meant you could play for High Wych Cricket Club whilst not actually a High Wych resident.

The same names of players often return: Batt, Clements, Fish, Holden, Mascall, Pratt, Springham and White. On the committee were people such as Boswell, Teesdale and Mabey. The aforementioned Walter White was groundsman whilst Mrs. Fish often provided the teas. Teams played against were Gt. Hallingbury, Hunsdon, Matching Tye, Much Hadham, Sheering and Thorley. Sawbridgeworth was hardly mentioned. Can it be they were not played against because High Wych was considered not serious (or good) enough?



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As in the Great War, no organised cricket matches were played during the Second World War. John Oliver remembers donkeys grazing on the grounds there during that time. In 1946 however things did start again and another golden age started.

After the forced inactivity caused by the second world war cricket was once again being played at the Manor of Groves from 1947 onwards. An article in the Herts and Essex Observer of 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948 reported on an AGM. Mr. Buxton was still president, William Chappell, the secretary told the meeting that 27 matches were played of which 16 were won 6 lost, 3 drawn and 2 abandoned. Mike Elsdon was the new treasurer and reported a membership of 42 plus 12 youngsters between 14 and 17. The club was certainly off to a flying start although the finances were a bit shaky.

To help overcome that predicament Mike Elsdon organised a number of fundraisers the most remarkable of which was the organised betting on the Grand National or the Derby. Many villagers took the opportunity for a punt. Reading the list of villagers' contributions was like reading a High Wych who is who: Carter, Clow, Kempthorne, Pedder, Puncher, Ruse, Springham and many more; all those well known names were there.

In 1950 Alexander McCowan, better known to all as Mac joined HWCC and became secretary. He had found work on the team of architects who, led by Sir Frederick Gibberd, drew up the plans for Harlow New Town. Mac and Mike Elsdon struck up a friendship and it was their combined stewardship that made HWCC flourish. Apart from the fundraising there were coaches to be hired for the away games and rotas to be drawn up for the tea ladies. Then there was the pitch which had to be kept in a good condition. Club members took over responsibility for that from the Manor of Groves owner and Club President Mr. Buxton who had earlier contemplated grazing cattle on the field which would have rendered the ground "troublesome and unpleasant to play on". The grass had to be cut "clipper high". This of course was the responsibility of groundsmen such as Len Blackaby.

3. That the Annual General Meeting of the Club be held in the month of October to elect the officers and Committee and to discuss all matters relating to the Club: and further, that any other meeting may be called by the Hon. Sec. at any time

4. That the affairs of the Club be managed by a Committee consisting of Captain, Vice-Captain, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, Groundsman, Umpires and nine others.

5. That the minimum subscription for playing members over 17 years of age be 15/-; for non-playing members over 17 years of age be 7/6; for age 15 to 17 years 2/6; for 14 to 15 years 1/-; due on May 1st.

6. That no one be allowed to play in a match or use Club properties if his subscription be not paid after one month from start of the Season

7. That the players in a match be selected by Captain, Vice-Captain, Hon. Secretary, and Groundsman 10 days before a game. Any member wishing to play in any particular match must give at least TEN DAYS notice to the Secretary.

8. That the rules be printed and a copy sent to each member of the Club.

9. That the acceptance of new members be subject to the approval of the Committee.

## HIGH WYCH CRICKET CLUB SEASON 1953

President: J. F. BUXTON, Esq.

Ground: Manor of Groves

Captain: R. Emery Vice-Captain: E. Burrows

Umpires: N. Jacobs, J. L. Maskell

Scorer: Roy Walker Groundsman: L. F. Blackaby

Chairman: L. G. Soady

Vice-Chairman: R. Woods

Hon. Sec.: A. J. McCowan, 10 Chippingfield, Harlow  
Phone: Harlow 2194

Hon. Treas.: M. B. Elsdon, High Wych, Sawbridgeworth  
Phone: Sawbridgeworth 2129

Committee: L. Greengrass, N. Jacobs, L. G. Kempthorne,  
J. L. Maskell, F. Shaw, H. Smith, J. Thorpe,  
R. Underhill, Rev. J. M. Walters.

Auditors: L. A. C. Helmer, A. R. Mabey

### RULES

1. That the Club be called the "HIGH WYCH CRICKET CLUB."

2. That Wednesday be practise night and Thursday night be devoted to work on the ground, or if wet, Friday night.

Most importantly there was the cricket itself. It was popular and it was fun. To prove that point there were the annual match between a staff team from builders Helmer & Dyer and HWCC itself. As for more “straight forward encounters, in 1958 the club played 32 matches of which they won 13 and lost 18. Len (Biggy) Kempthorne headed the batting averages with 16.2 for his 7 innings. Next came R. Goldstone who played 18 innings for an average of 15.2. The most successful bowler was E. Pettersen with 131 overs and 55 wickets for an average of 4.15. Runner up was Peter Monk who took 42 wickets in 129 overs and had an average of 7. The Herts & Essex Observer further reported “The captain (A.J.McCowan) said he was glad no matches had been drawn and that in addition they had won practically every “beer” match”.

It was often said that the Half Moon functioned as the club’s headquarters. That point was made clear by Mac when in 1956 he gave young Terry Taylor a lift on the way to his first match. “There it is” Mac said as they turned the corner from High Wych Road on their way to the Manor: “there is our HQ”. Alec and John Cutting also provided a useful link to Harlow Rugby Club, the source of a number of players, since by now the Club, playing two games each week, could no longer find enough players in the village.



**The High Wych Cricket team of 1959. Standing left to right: R. Wood (umpire), M. Smith, T. Taylor, P Monk, W. Warburton, P Brown. Seated: J.F.Y. Cutting, A.J. McCowan(captain) E. Pettersen, J. Nicholl. In front: R. Goldstone, P Williams.**

Whilst Mac and Mike continued in their tenure, Terry Taylor became a stalwart of HWCC. He still looks back on that time with pleasure: “It was village cricket at it most attractive, a group of friends enjoying themselves in beautiful surroundings. We made friends with many opposing sides who we played year after year, and the friendship was usually cemented in the Half Moon after the game. Yes we did have fun!”



Teams played were the same as before: Birchanger, Hockerill, Matching Green, plus some new ones: the Woodcutters, Standard Telephone and the Bushwhackers.

That last team was a group of BBC personnel and actors organised by Dick Clement, the television script writer responsible for "the Likely Lads" "Porridge" and "Auf Wiedersehn Pet". Clement was a school friend of Terry Taylor. Well known Bushwhackers were James Bolam and memorably, Tom Courtenay. The actor was actually a pretty good fast bowler, but when he came on the young lad scoring shouted out "Bowler's name please". When the man in question shouted back "Courtenay" the lad added insult to injury by calling back "How do you spell it?". Well, actors like to be recognized so our famous actor friend was not best pleased!



**A picture from 1962, back row: Graham Springham, Andrew Elsdon, Dick Clement, Peter Robinson, Bob Pearson, David Taylor, front row: George Johnstone, Terry Taylor, Geoff Corner, Dave Hills, Terry Wright**

Then there was the occasion in the sixties when High Wych actually beat Sawbridgeworth 2nd eleven on their home ground. This brought a bit of needle into the eagerly awaited return match which proved to be a tense low scoring game which culminated in High Wych needing just one run to tie and two to win, but with nine wickets down. Their last batsman hit the ball to a fielder and run through for the vital run, just as the fielder returned the ball to the Sawbridgeworth captain and bowler. "How's that" he shouted, triumphantly breaking the wicket. Unfortunately, the umpire called upon to make the vital decision was a very young boy who, completely flummoxed, just muttered "Dunno". "Of course it was xxxxx out" said the Sawbridgeworth captain and marched his team off the field. Sawbridgeworth claimed they had won by one run; High Wych called it a draw. It was a few seasons before High Wych were to play a Sawbridgeworth team again.

Another story from Terry Taylor concerns an away game at Great Parndon who were captained by the father of John Nicholl, one of the High Wych players. It was an all-day game, but at lunch time the weather broke and the rain teemed down. Thinking there was no possibility that play would resume the two teams settled in at the local hostelry where many beverages were consumed. However, after a couple of hours ..... yes somebody ran in and announced that play could be resumed. Now as it happened John was about to bowl and he anxiously asked his team mates not to let his father know how much he had consumed. However, he rather gave the game away by promptly bowling three consecutive wides. The actual result is lost in the mist of time.

Matches at the Manor were not well supported but the exception was Buke (a famous character already mentioned in earlier articles) who probably came more for the free teas than the cricket. He also helped by catching moles, for a fee of course. After a while however it was discovered he tried to collect his fee more than once with the same mole.

By the time Terry joined, the Egertons had taken over as residents at the Manor. They in turn were followed by the Scott family. Mac and Mike had retired from duty at some point in the late sixties although they continued to support the club of course.

Mr. Scott as his predecessors at the Manor became president of the cricket club. He took an active interest and together with the Terry Taylor, who now was chairman promoted: the Colts, a special team for youngsters. Members were amongst others: Billy Bury, Graham Springham, Andrew Elsdon and Stephen Badcock who remembers it all very well: "Yes I was a High Wych colt, not a very good player though. I have fond memories of the cricket club; as members we had access to the cricket club grounds practically 24/7. This meant that in the summer months we congregated at the grounds whenever we liked. By the way there were no drugs or alcohol in those days, well not for us anyway! It was our job to roll the pitch with the big roller which took quite a few of us to get moving. Chris Webb will also certainly remember as he lost the heel to his Cuban style boot which somehow got under the roller! It was a good fun place to be and enjoyed by all."

By the early seventies Terry Taylor had become chairman. Peter Robinson was secretary and G. Johnson treasurer. Peter Monk apart from continuing as one of the star players was groundsman. David Beedle who joined in 1967 was another player and committee member.

Keeping the club going was a struggle. Transport had to be arranged, tea rotas maintained, score keepers identified and the ground had to be kept in good condition. To do that the club had to buy and maintain equipment. David Beedle: "About 1969 our trusty Dennis mower became a pig to start and pretty unreliable. Mike Elsdon who used to repair it couldn't help anymore. So, with the help of George Haugham, who worked at Hayters, we found a replacement Hayter Twenty Six mower also with ride behind the seat. George kindly serviced it each year. One year we used John Tulloch's Fordson Dexta to pull the large hand roller round the outfield. This made us realise we needed to go the next step and we purchased a set of gang mowers from Down Hall – these were collected by Anthony Mynott, who also loaned a tractor each week to pull them. This allowed us to use the Hayter to keep all car parking and rough grass areas tidy. We then decided to purchase our own Ferguson TED tractor. A new or rather a new second hand one was acquired from Henry Fish of Hoskins Farm for the princely sum of £ 90."



1978: David Beedle riding the “new tractor”

The programme for the 1970 season lists the usual opponents: Birchanger, Hockerill, Matching Green, Takely, Hatfield Heath, Standard Telephone and the Bushwhackers. In 1975 there was a fundraising dinner, possibly to celebrate the club's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but as we are not sure when HWCC actually did start there is no proof of that. In 1976 Peter Robinson suggested a cricket tour over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The first of these went to Gloucestershire, playing Northleach, Stratton and Upton St Leonards. The Stratton game never took place due to a torrential downpour and the only game played was darts in a pub in Cirencester. These continued until 1986. As the years rolled on the situation did not change much with the financial situation being borderline and the results never being earth shattering, but somehow that was not the point of it all.



**August 1974 – Peter Monk bowls to Sheering's Graham Brown as Ray Griggs looks on. High Wych lost that game, but the day before we did beat Takely.**



David Beedle who by now had become chairman remembers being invited to the Scott's home at the Manor of Groves on a winter's evening in early 1986. Over a gin and tonic it was explained to him that the field would in future be needed for agricultural purposes (grazing cattle) but the club would graciously be given a year's notice. During the conversation it also became clear that an all out sale was not altogether out of the question.

A last match at the Manor took place on a sunny September day in 1986. The club's eleven played a team of "old boys" made up of five past captains plus assorted other people associated with the club over the years. The club side won with 155 runs, 40 too many for the Captains' or rather Chairman's eleven.



**September 1986, the last match played at the Manor of Groves: old High Wych boys played new High Wych boys. Do you recognize anybody?**

Finding an alternative to the grounds at the Manor of Groves was no easy task. David Beedle and Peter Robinson volunteered to find a new base. Various possibilities were investigated; most proved unsuitable. In the end builder David Harris came to the rescue and from the start of the 1987 season High Wych Cricket Club played at Pishiobury in Sawbridgeworth.

This did not prove to be a success and only one season was played at Pishiobury. As at the Manor the club had to look after the grounds. Under the agreement with Harris this included a big area which had been a football pitch when Pishiobury had been a reform school. Plenty of cricket had been played there before (the headmaster was very keen) After a very wet September however, the club just could not keep up with the grass cutting and were asked to leave.

One last season followed during which the club was a "touring side" with matches being played in Harlow and at Leventhorpe school. In a way of course this was nothing new. (see earlier on) At the end of the 1988 season the inevitable had to be accepted: the end of a club which had been about for a century.

Could one day cricket be played again in High Wych? It seems unlikely, but wouldn't it be nice!

Sources this time were: Stephen Badcock, David Beedle, Andrew Elsdon, Terry Taylor, [cricketarchive.com](http://cricketarchive.com), the Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club website, the Chelmsford Chronicle, the Herts & Essex Observer, the Herts Mercury, Wikipedia, Ancestry.co.uk and as always county archives aka HALS. We still need your personal contributions, memories, stories and photographs as well as your criticism, positive or negative. Contact me at: [theo@vandebilt.co.uk](mailto:theo@vandebilt.co.uk) or phone me at 01279 725468. You can also check my blog at <http://vandebilt.co.uk/history/>