

The early days of Alderbury Cricket Club

In 1985 Alderbury Cricket Club celebrated its centenary with a commemorative booklet (now long-since out-of-print) and a series of specially-arranged matches.

There is, however, evidence that there was a club in the village some 40 years or more before. In Charles Dickens's novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, originally published in 1842 and set partially in Alderbury, although the village is not named, there is mention of cricket at the Dragon (called the Blue Dragon in the novel but believed by many to be based on the Green Dragon in reality). In addition, in the *Salisbury & Winchester Journal* for August and September 1848 there is the mention of a cricket match between Alderbury and Downton. Between 1855 and 1880 there are several references to Alderbury playing matches against local teams such as Farley, Pitton, Laverstock and East & West Grimstead.

Where the club's home ground was is not clear but it was probably on the site of the present Recreation Ground, adjacent to the current Village Hall. Nor is it clear how the club travelled to away games, at least in the early days. Did they walk, unlikely but possible, did they travel by horse and cart or – at least in later days – by bicycle? We do know that by 1902 they were playing a match against Broadwindsor in Dorset, travelling by train to Crewkerne, although how they got from there to the site of the match is not mentioned.

It was obviously a well-supported club in the 1890s as there is a report of an end of season match between the first eleven and a side composed of 'the next eighteen'. It also put on an entertainment for villagers in 1890 in the school. However, times change and ironically as the population of the village grew fashions changed and the club did not survive much longer after it celebrated its centenary and in 1999 it was forced to disband due to lack of support. What is the chance of someone out there trying to resurrect it?

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