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History

Welcome to the History Page!

Most of this is taken from a book produced for Southgate's centenary in 1986, but there's lots and lots of fascinating detail about the Redgra pitches and stuff as well.

If you don't know what Redgra is, you probably won't want to read on...

1886-1889

The first birth pangs for Southgate came in October 1886 although the game of hockey as we know it today had begun 15 years earlier. In 1886 three well known Southgate local personalities sent a letter to various local residents proposing a new hockey club for the area.

The support was so enthusiastic that no less than 20 locals turned up at the Cherry Tree Public House.

These founder members have been recorded for posterity as:-

A L Ford, W J Phillips, W A Burke, G & J Newman, H Goodwin, B & P Miles, I F Saunders, F P Francis, C Preston, E P Sugden, C Warner, R Davies, R Faithfull, R T Vivian, W B Brown, G A White, P F White, A E White

A L Ford was elected Chairman, W J Phillips Treasurer and A P White Secretary.

So the great Southgate Hockey Club was born. In the first 15 years many clubs were formed but only Richmond, Surbiton, Wimbledon and Blackheath remain today with an unbroken playing record, Teddington being acknowledged as the oldest Club with a continuous history.

Early in January 1886 Wimbledon Hockey Club called a meeting at the Holborn restaurant in London and representatives of these clubs and Trinity College Cambridge formed the present Hockey Association but

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Blackheath, being unwilling to accept the code of rules resigned a year later to form a separate Hockey Union. At Southgate's first committee meeting the Club Rules were drawn up.

The first President was R M D Littler who provided the pitch at his residence in the North East corner of Broomfield Park. This is on the road which presently runs from Palmers Green to Southgate. A builder's hut was used as the first pavilion.

Arrangements were made with the landlord of the Cock Tavern (with its sanded floors and spittoons) for the teams' changing facilities – even though it was 15 minutes walk away. R M D Littler was knighted by Queen Victoria in the 1890s for founding the Middlesex Victorian Fund to aid discharged prisoners. He became a famous QC and held many important offices including that of Lieutenant of The City of London but there is no record of his hockey-playing ability.

Three matches were arranged in that first season – one against Wimbledon Hockey Club and two against Ealing Hockey Club, later absorbed by Mid-Surrey. Southgate will always be grateful to Wimbledon for their invaluable assistance in the early years. The record of fixtures to the present time apart from a minor hiccup in the 70s is unbroken and Wimbledon and Southgate veterans, although not quite 100 years old, celebrated the outset of this centenary year with a match against each other at Southgate with a noble 1-1 draw as a result.

In the second season 1887/88 Surbiton, Teddington and Molesey became additional opponents-sadly Molesey too no longer exists but Surbiton and Teddington continue to number amongst our most worthy opponents and firmest friends.

It was not long, however, before the players took exception to walking to and from the Cock Tavern and the committee decided to erect a shed near the pitch at a cost net exceeding £3 for changing and washing purposes. This cost included the basins with a cold water service only and the players of those days must have been hardy individuals. There is no mention at this time of any teas being provided, but one must assume

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that the Cherry Tree was close enough at hand to refresh and warm the players. Two years later a wooden pavilion was erected with the agreement of the landlord, President and the Committee approved a cost not exceeding £21. It was also evident that the club had an eye to business as it was further agreed that they should accept an offer from the Southgate Cricket Club of £2 for the use of the pavilion from April 1st until September 17th-the cricket club undertaking to remove and re-erect the building, maintaining it in good order.

As early as 1889-1890 a table was surprisingly published showing the position of the principal London Clubs as follows:-

[In the table, which is not reproduced here for the time being, Southgate are fourth, behind Molesey, East Sheen and Teddington]

So after only three years Southgate Hockey Club had already affirmed its status in the hockey world.

1890 was another corner stone in the club's history when V E Walker, a member of that famous family of Middlesex crickets and owner of the Arnos Grove Estate (now Northmet House), offered the use of Southgate Cricket Club's enclosure during the winter season. This was accepted with gratitude and alacrity. It was the brother of V E Walker – R D -who in 1907 transferred the title to the ground in perpetuity to the present Trust who continue to administer- the area for the benefit of all the users. The original Trustees were A Bradshaw, Eugene White and R E Barker.

It was through George Lewis, the brother- of Percy Lewis that in 1892 the first game against Cambridge University was played at Southgate when he was the first captain of the newly formed Cambridge UHC. Our visitors were entertained at "The Woolpack" Public House which still stands in the High Street where both teams changed and this practice continued until the outbreak of World War 1. By all accounts Cambridge responded with hospitality in later years at Trinity College followed by sessions at the Bull Hotel where the famous Audit Ale was brought across from the Hall. Shortly before 1900 permission was granted for a second pitch in the Southgate enclosure and the Hockey Club said goodbye to Broomfield

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Park. The Cricket Club at the same time obtained permission from the Walkers Co. have the first pavilion built and the Hockey Club paid a rental of £2 per season. This pavilion still stood in the 1950s and was known as the "tin shed" and used to house machinery and equipment.

Drainage and ground levels even in those days were a problem. In 1892 a sub-committee comprising White, Ford, Brown and Hatcher were asked to find out the best means of draining the hockey pitch and on March 2nd that year Mr Godwin proposed Hatcher's and Brown's plan be accepted subject to Mr Littler's approval and that in addition the corner of the ground be "raised".

1900-1914

By the beginning of the 20th century there were nearly 200 clubs affiliated to the Hockey Association. Hockey had not only become a respectable leisure activity but was being enjoyed by an ever-increasing number of people. 1900 saw the formation of the International Rules Board and an important seal of official approval came in 1901 when the Prince of Wales accepted the invitation to become President of the Hockey Association.

The turn of the century saw the Club fielding five sides but the teams failed to produce their previous good results and the playing spirit of the Club seemed to be at a low ebb – it was strange therefore that at that time Will Adams became our first international when he was capped for England. Five sides remained the format up to the start of World War- 1 and apart from an increase in the annual subscription to one guinea in 1905, there is no record of any further increase until after the war.

The arrangements and amenities gradually improved at Southgate. Changing facilities were provided in the School on The Green where the players had the luxury of a coal fire and teas were mentioned for the first time. Close by the School lived Eugene White, a Lloyds Underwriter and by far the most ardent of the founder members. He was the first Hon Sec 1886-1891 and 1893-1900. Hon Treas 1909-1924 and President of the Club 1922-1952 – 46 years service to the Club and one of the original trustees of the Walker Trust. Throughout his years of active service he

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never spared himself in his efforts to place the Club in the forefront of hockey in this country – a superb negotiator in committee, he will be remembered as long as Southgate exists.

His wife, whose christian name is not recorded, introduced teas, donating both the food and her time and she was supported by a band of voluntary helpers. This service was carried out for many years. Such was the dedication and unity of purpose with the family atmosphere created by those members, the establishment of a Club at Southgate could not have failed. So started the long period when wives and girl-friends of club members assisted with teas. Subsequent years produced three further stalwarts -

Mrs Wheaton, whose son Geoffrey was Assistant Secretary and played for many years in the First XI after World War II and Bobbie Parker, wife of another Assistant Secretary, one of the many posts Vice-President John Parker held. Yet another “tea lady” was Ann Mooney, wife of a further post-war leading official and Vice-President, Dick, who ran the successful Friday discos when the present pavilion was built. Women throughout this period were discouraged from standing at the bar end of the pavilion, used an outside WC and were expected to control their children at the tea bar end. Thelma Morpew fought and won the battle for women’s equality in the pavilion and laid the foundation for the entry eventually of the Ladybirds so much later. We are now [1986] moving to our great centenary dinner at Lords, a far cry from the homely functions Cis Norman created in the clubhouse on so many occasions. In the early 1900's the main transport of the day was the railway with the assistance of the horse and carriage. The nearest station was Palmers Green LNER, so the Club made arrangements with a Mr Eaton, who had a livery stable nearby, to hire his three-horse bus to collect the opposition at 1.58pm and return them for the 5pm train. The cost was agreed at 6d (2.5 new pence) per person.

The 1906/07 season saw the 21st Anniversary of the Club which was celebrated at “The Criterion”. Eugene White in the chair raised his glass not to the Club but to “Hockey”. Southgate had by then recovered their match-winning ways with the 1st XI winning all but four of their games

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and up to 1914 the Club remained in the top four in the London area. In 1908 under the initiative of the Southgate Cricket Club the Enfield builders, Alan Fairhead & Sons were commissioned to build a new pavilion for £350.

This was opened in June 1909 by R D Walker and the Press reported "The pavilion is thoroughly in keeping with the beautiful old ground and is constructed of wood and stucco with dark oak supports and red-tiled roof. The main room is 34 feet long and the dressing rooms are commodious with a shower-bath attached". Many players will remember this building as it was only demolished on the completion of the present one in 1968. The first recorded Easter tour was in 1904 when Southgate accepted a challenge from Guernsey. The team was organised by the Lewis brothers (four were then currently playing for the Club). They arrived on the Island on Good Friday and won their first game. With lobster lunches, Guinness and Bass at 2.5d a bottle and Benedictine at 3d a glass a very satisfactory tour resulted and not much discussion was needed to resolve to return the following year.

By 1914 Southgate had fully established itself as one of the leading hockey clubs in the country. Sadly, with so many of its members joining Kitchener's Army, we were forced to close for the duration of World War I.

1918-1939

Now in 1986 it is facile to declare that a Club of Southgate's standing could not disintegrate even after a closure of more than four years. Such a tragedy might nevertheless have happened but for the actions of such stalwarts as Eugene White, George Adams and Martin Lewis who took the initial steps to reconstruct the Club and the 1919/20 season saw the Red and Black shirts speedily on the field again.

The records of minutes from 1918-1925 have been lost, but we know that in 1928 the Groundsman's cottage was built dedicated to R D Walker who unfortunately died in that same year. The Walker family had been so generous and enthusiastic in their relationship with the club over the years

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Hockey was scheduled for only the second time in the Olympic Games in 1920 in Antwerp, when England again won the Gold Medal, having previously won it in 1908. In 1924 the FIH was formed which is accepted as the world governing body today. In 1927/28 the committee of the Club decided that Club ties and stockings be introduced at a price of 4/6d each.

From time to time the Club Records showed that the state of the ground and lack of drainage was always a constant problem. However, treatment was spasmodic until the thirties when a committee was formed and money at last spent on drainage on the then only ground. In those days clay pipes were used, which would have silted up in some ten years and as no records were kept of where the drains ran for maintenance purposes we still have the same old troubles back time and time again to this day. Wet weather has always been a problem at the Walker Ground because of the heavy clay sub-soil and the difficult matter of scratching games was a cause of annoyance and unrest. It was recorded in 1930/31 season that some members had commented that if it was decided to let the game be played, some would claim the ground would be irreversibly ruined, whilst others would say if the matches were cancelled then it was due to a lot of old women who should know better. After a very wet winter the Fourth XI skipper sent the committee the following verse:

“Oh a curse Uncle Arnold upon your vile head

May mice make a nest in the foot of your bed

You rose from your pillow this morning to spy

And a wee speck of snow caught you slap in the eye

With craven misgivings your courage fell flat

And you thought “I can’t let the poor lads play in that”

May your windows leak draughts and your door be unlatched

Three times in four weeks the IV game has been scratched”

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1931 saw Jack Dallas as Club Secretary and during his reign founded the Tankards Hockey Club. Jack was a tireless worker and the Club prospered in an excellent atmosphere during his stewardship. Notwithstanding the Club's good playing fortune in the 1931/32 season it suffered a grievous loss with the death of Eugene White who had been a founder member and the heart and soul of the Club for 46 years.

Jack Dallas also instigated the Southern Counties Fixtures Conference which was a success from the start, enabling all clubs to have a wider interchange of fixtures and continues to the present day. 1935 saw the new extension to the pavilion – tea and other necessary liquid refreshments were now available in comfort with hot water and showers. On Friday October 25th the Club's Golden Jubilee dinner was held at the Trocadero Restaurant,

The occasion was reported in the national press with the comment that the following day the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th XIs suffered defeat and it was left to Henry Paige's Fourth XI to stop the whitewash but only with a draw.

Easter Festival and tours did not start again after World War 1 until 1930. We then entered a team in the Scarborough Festival which was a great success and 1931 the Club went to Folkestone where we were unbeaten and continued to take part in that Festival until 1936. The following two years we sent teams to Bournemouth. In 1938 the Club received a letter via the

Hockey Associations from "Der Club am der Alster" of Hamburg to take part in their Easter Festival in 1939 which is the first record apart from our visit to the Channel Islands of us touring abroad. So keen were they to have a club of our standing that free accommodation at the Atlantic Hotel was provided and the Vice President of their Club – Herr Hachman – wrote "a big bankett was to be held (evening dress)". They also asked us to bring our Club flag, the letter ending "The greetings of German sport -Heil Hitler". Although the clouds of war were approaching the team received every hospitality and kindness. Three games were played, we winning two

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and losing one. Gordon Wills recalls how little thought was given by the touring side to the obvious signs of impending war.

Although efforts were made to play some hockey in 1939/40, this proved impossible with members joining the forces so that few were left and Southgate again closed for the duration.

1945-1978

Throughout the war years Martin Lewis had always hoped he would be instrumental in reconstructing Southgate as soon as the opportunity arose. With the war in Europe over in the Spring of 1945 he sent out a call for assistance and was immediately joined by Ian Barclay, Tom Plant and AJ G (Uncle) Hands. With the aid of the 1939 members' address book and advertisements in The Times and Telegraph sufficient members immediately came forward to run one side. By Christmas two teams were running – a remarkable achievement in such a short time and Southgate was back in business.

It was not an easy matter to join a club or for the Club to exist at all after the war due to clothes, petrol and food rationing. No shirts were available and members were given a likely list of addresses of past players to see if shirts and socks could be purchased. Bus or train transport was the usual with perhaps a raid on the available petrol for a car to be used every third week. The writer joined the Club in the winter of 1947 by luck in fact. After looking in the telephone directory he sent a letter to the Hockey Association and received a polite reply informing him that he was unsuitable. He had inadvertently written to the Ladies HA. However, they put him in touch with Uncle Hands who, of course, recommended Southgate Hockey Club as he did whenever anyone wrote to the Hockey Association, he being their Assistant Secretary for many years.

The 1946/47 season saw the Club with four sides out every Saturday and the following year a fifth XI was added. Southgate celebrated its Diamond Jubilee on March 19th, 1946 at Kettners Restaurant. The chief guest was Sir Denys Stocks, CB, OBE, who was the then President of the HA and 18 other guests were present from the country's HA and clubs. Speakers

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praised the Club for its contribution to hockey and reminisced over the many incidents during their hockey careers.

Thanks must be recorded for the superb co-operation the Club received from the Trustees of the Walker Ground and the Cricket Club during this period. In particular Rupert Burton, a man of much experience and sound judgement, gave enormous assistance in the early days after World War II. Credit must also be given to R F Broadbridge who bore the responsibility for ground maintenance.

The Olympic Games took place at Wembley Stadium in 1948 and the British Hockey Board entered a team after a gap of 28 years. GB reached the finals but lost to India 1-0 It was noticeable that the GB side played with the English style stick and the stickwork displayed by the Indian side with the short-headed variety established the change to the stick used now world-wide.

The results of the 1st XI were well above average in the 1945-1950 years and during the 1950s there was a very successful time for the Southgate club with results showing the club to be in the top four or five in the country. By now the pitches had been restored to a first class condition by that excellent groundsman, Alec Hill, who worked alone under the delegated authority and guidance of the Cricket and Hockey Clubs who each then had a six months suzerainty of the ground and pavilion During this period the Trustees remained very considerably in the background, allowing the user clubs virtual autonomy. By 1957 the pitches were the pride of Southgate and the envy of most visiting clubs, also drawing admiration from the National Press. It would surprise present day members to learn that there were relatively few cancellations- a random check over 3 years in the mid-50s including the bad winter of 1956/7 shows that only between one and two games at home on average were lost by each team.

At the AGM in May 1958 it was agreed that the General Committee produce a workable scheme for building a new pavilion. The following year the Cricket Club agreed to join in and Andrew Knox, Laurie Norman and Robin Willmott joined as our members of the team to put the

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arrangements into motion. In order to take advantage of the considerable Government and Local Authority grants, the Trustees assumed responsibility for all these new arrangements and since that date have exerted their guiding influence to a far greater extent than had ever been the case in the past.

In the meantime a refurbishment of the old pavilion was put in hand, including the installation of electricity, redecoration and the purchase of our first fruit machine. So busy was the programme that our 75th anniversary in 1961 went almost unnoticed.

By February 1967 the new pavilion had been built including 2 squash courts and it was opened with considerable ceremony and an enormous buffet for the 300 guests. Although it was an undoubted achievement, we were all a little sad to leave the homely atmosphere of the old pavilion.

In November 1967 the Borough of Enfield offered the use of an all-weather pitch at Southgate County Lower School in Oakwood and this has since been used by the Club and is described as All-weather 1 in our current [1986] fixture list. Meantime the results of the Club during the 1960s were mainly average. In 1962 and 1963 no games were played for a period of over 2 months owing to the exceptional weather with snow covering the grounds, so that apart from the occasional game of football on the back pitch on the snow and a team cross-country run, little activity was possible out-of-doors. 1969 saw the introduction of the London League and Southgate have been winners on several occasions and have always been close to the top and immediately the Premier League was formed, Southgate took its place in that section.

Looking at the 1970 results, one can see the build-up in playing strength throughout the Club and in particular the first XI. They became European Club Champions in 1976 and held the championship in 1977 and 1978. A superb achievement.

Clubhouses

“We must have a pavilion in keeping with a Club of our standing” – 1888

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1886 – hockey in the grounds of Broomfield House

The first President of Southgate Hockey Club, from 1886-1901 was barrister Sir Ralph Littler, a formidable and influential man who moved into Broomfield House in 1874. He provided the first pitch in the north east corner of what is now Broomfield Park, close to Palmers Green railway station, which had opened in 1871. A builder's hut was used as the first pavilion. Arrangements were made with the landlord of the Cock Tavern, with its sanded floors and spittoons, for the teams' changing facilities – even though it was 15 minutes walk away. The Cock is now a night club at the junction of the North Circular Road. It was not long, however, before the players took exception to walking to and from the Cock Tavern and the committee decided to erect a shed near the pitch changing and washing purposes. It cost less than three pounds, and included basins with cold water only. The players of those days must have been hardy individuals. There is no mention at this time of any teas being provided, but we might speculate that they repaired to the nearby Fox Inn (which still exists in its rebuilt 1904 building), or to the Cherry Tree, where Southgate Hockey Club was originally formed.

1888 – 1890: the first pavilion

This was wooden, erected with the agreement of the landlord-cum-President, and the Committee approved the scheme with a budget of £21. It was dismantled for Southgate Cricket Club to use at their ground during the summer. The cricketers paid 2 guineas to the hockey club for this.

1890: the Club moves to the Walker Ground

Southgate Cricket Club had played at Waterfall Road since it was formed in 1855. Vyell Walker, a member of the famous family of cricketers, realised that due to the growth of the village of Southgate, recreation space for the public was going to become limited, and several acres of pasture land from the family's Arnos Grove Estate was turned over permanently for sport. The hockey club gratefully accepted an offer from Vyell Walker to use the facilities, and moved there in 1890, when £600 was spent on fences and gates. The land was placed in Trust in 1907, and the

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club had found its home for the next 107 years. Changing took place in a school room on The Green, and teas were provided – at no cost – by the wife of Eugene White, one of the stalwarts of the club’s early years.

1890 – 1950s: the “tin shed”

Rather than relocate the wooden pavilion, the cricket club decided to erect a permanent structure, and the hockey club was charged £2 to use part of it for storage. This survived into the 1950s housing machinery and equipment, and was known to everyone as the “tin shed”. Apparently it was cold, draughty, and wet place to consume tea and buns by the light of an oil lamp, and accounts survive of Cambridge University Hockey Club being entertained in the 1890s at the Woolpack in the High Street. In 1900 a groundsman was employed for the first time.

1909 – 1968: the second pavilion

The cricket club, as ‘senior partner’, initiated the construction of a new pavilion, at a cost of £350. The Press reported: “The pavilion is thoroughly in keeping with the beautiful old ground, and is constructed of wood and stucco with dark oak supports and red tiled roof. The main room is 34 feet long and the dressing rooms are commodious, with a shower bath attached”. It can be seen in this picture of the 1945/46 1st XI, and its layout can still be seen today in the shape of the area between the 1967 clubhouse and the equipment shed. In 1928 the cricket club turned down a hockey club proposal for a telephone to be installed, but in the following year hot water arrived for the first time when the plumbing was upgraded for £336. It also seems that a bar was operated for the first time in 1929. The pavilion was extended in 1935, providing a kitchen, and additional changing and social space. It was refurbished around 1960, when electricity was installed for the first time, along with a fruit machine, but it was clear by then that it would need to be replaced.

1967 – 1997: the modern clubhouse

The club had joined with the cricketers in 1958 to plan a new clubhouse, and it should be noted that the one of the three members of the hockey

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club's team was Robin Willmott, now Chairman of the Southgate Sports and Leisure Trust, whose experience in pursuing that scheme has been invaluable in shaping the Trent Park project. The hockey and cricket clubs had run the ground between them up to this point – for 70 years or so. However, when the scheme for a new clubhouse was investigated, it became clear that the charitable status of the Walker Trust presented a variety of financial benefits, and it assumed the controlling role, through the Walker Association, which continues to this day. Funding was raised by club members, aided by the Inland Revenue's generosity, along with grants. It took longer than hoped to get the agreement of all parties to the project, but the completed clubhouse was opened in February 1967. It was seen as one of the leading designs of its day, combining changing, dining and social areas under one roof, which at the time was groundbreaking. The clubhouse included squash courts – the additional sport required to secure government funding, and club members had use of the two squash courts prior to the formation of the current squash club. The clubhouse was extended to accommodate the Adelaide clubs in the early 1970s, and further squash courts and ladies changing facilities were built in 1981. This allowed the formation of the current ladies section of the club. The bar was extended and refurbished to a high standard in 1994, and is now an excellent venue, with attractive views across the historic ground.

Pitches

The Walker Ground pitches

A Ground Committee was formed in 1923 to manage the ground, and this survived right up to modern times, in a different form, with members of the club inspecting the pitches with the groundsman on a Saturday morning right up to the 1996/97 season. Drainage problems dogged the Walker Ground from the beginning, due to the presence of London clay. Work was carried out as early as 1892 and again in 1930. By the 50s the pitches were of the pride of the club, the envy of our visitors, and even admired in the national press. Cancellations fell to a very low level. However, this high standard was not to continue, and the quality of the pitches was a cause of concern by the late 1970s. Significant improvement

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work was carried out to the 'A' pitch in 1985/86, which meant it was unfortunately not available during the Easter centenary tournament of 1986. Poor weather caused the pitches beyond the trees to be unusable due to flooding for a whole season just a few years ago; new drains were laid into the pitch nearest Waterfall Road in the early 1990s.

The reduced use of recent years helped the quality of the pitches, but at the same time players' expectations had risen, and today few are happy playing on grass, a fact which could not have been contemplated by our founders. The ground staff, over the years, have to be given due credit for their achievements in producing fine hockey pitches, but a feeling amongst club members that games were being unnecessarily cancelled – rightly or wrongly – dates back a long time. The 4th X1 captain of 1930/31, Ken Constable, put his feelings into verse:

Oh, a curse, Uncle Arnold, upon your vile head,

May mice make a nest in the foot of your bed.

You rose from your pillow the morning to spy,

And a wee speck of snow caught you slap in the eye;

With craven misgivings your courage fell flat,

And you thought, "I can't let the poor lads play in that";

May your windows leak draughts and your door be unlatched,

THREE TIMES IN FIVE WEEKS THE 4TH GAME HAS BEEN SCRATCHED.

1967 – all-weather ("redgra") pitches

These pitches, surfaced in a fine shale or gravel, would withstand much more intensive use than grass, were more level – a vital pointer to the future – and were more weather-reliable than grass. With most hockey players wearing football boots, non-studded footwear was now required,

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and the failure to bring the correct footwear meant that a special footnote advising members to bring “plimsolls” was included in the fixture card for many years to remind players and opposition. A fall at speed was likely to lead to a “redgra burn” – an unpleasant event. The club used the pitch at Oakwood (now Wolfsen Hillel) School on Chase Road from 1967-1988, but on a very infrequent basis, and not by the 1st team. This contrasts interestingly with the fact that 6 Southgate players won Bronze medals at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 – on artificial grass. The New River pitch in Wood Green started to be used in 1977, and was upgraded to artificial grass in 1984. The Summer Tankards also used the poor quality and flood-prone redgra pitch at Northumberland Park Community School next door to Tottenham Hotspur.

1985 – artificial grass pitches revolutionise the game

It was clear in the late 70s that artificial grass was going to be the future of the game, however distasteful for the purists. There were only a handful of pitches in the whole of North London by the early 80s, but if Southgate was to keep up to speed with the international game, it needed to use them. The 1st X1 first started using artificial grass pitches for home games in 1985, using a combination of New River, Parkside in distant Neasden and Pickett’s Lock in Edmonton. The Parkside pitch quickly fell into disrepair. New River, despite its very level surface, has no watering system and the carpet was not replaced in the late 80s when it became badly worn. Pickett’s Lock has an adequate watering system, But this was rarely used, and has become rather bumpy in parts.

The increasing use of artificial grass pitches meant a wrench not only in terms of hockey played at the Walker Ground, but also in terms of the club’s social life. Players from home and away teams would often go home straight from the pitch where they were playing without returning to the Walker Ground. This pattern is now all too familiar to teams playing at other clubs, who, with a few exceptions, find themselves in the same position. The other consequence of using artificial grass pitches is that games are now spread throughout Saturday, and it is not uncommon to be playing a game the other side of London at 11am or 4pm. This seems to be the unavoidable pattern of the modern game, and whilst the club

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tries to minimise this effect, having just two pitches to support 11 teams means that this will continue indefinitely. When all hockey was played on grass, with games starting at the standard times of 2.45 (2.15 in November, December and January), the Walker Ground bar would be a packed and vibrant place to spend time after a game, with several teams all socialising at the same time. Players would see the same people week after week, and build friendships not only inside the club, but with opposition players as well. A concern of many club members who remember those times is that we will never recapture that special atmosphere.

When, in 1986/7, the 1st X1 played their last home games on grass at the Walker Ground, the significance of this fact was lost to the club at large, but just two seasons after Southgate Hockey Club started to use artificial grass, the revolution which would ultimately lead to the club's relocation had been accomplished. Artificial grass was a necessity, not an option. In 1989 New River was the venue for our victory in the first National League season, when we defeated Hounslow 5-1.

In 1990, the club moved its National League games to Broomfield School, where a sand-filled pitch had been laid by the London Borough of Enfield, partly with the club in mind. It is one of the best sand-filled pitches in the country, but lacked the spectator and social facilities enjoyed by some other National League clubs. As Broomfield School's pitch does not have floodlights, the club has also used pitches at Whitefields School at Brent Cross, Dame Alice Owen School at Potters Bar, and occasionally other venues for training, bringing the number of venues the club has used regularly in the last fifteen years close to double figures. With the hockey season getting into full swing in September, difficulties have occurred because of the long-standing arrangement whereby the cricket club has had access to the pitches, and priority use of the clubhouse until October 1st. These were brought into sharp focus when the National League was created, and with Southgate staging occasional home matches in September. These difficulties have always been resolved amicably with the understanding help of both the Cricket Club and Chris Sexton, the Walker Ground Administrator

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History of Trent Park

Once part of Enfield Chase, an extensive and ancient royal hunting ground, with Enfield to the east, Potters Bar to the north, and the village of Monken Hadley to the west. At the southern tip was a gate giving entry to the Chase – and as the blue commemorative plaque next door to Wimpey's tells us, this is how Southgate got its name.

There remain two Chase Sides: one in Enfield Town; the other being Southgate's main shopping street. Chase Road runs between Southgate and Oakwood tube stations, and Chase Farm is the name of local hospital. Common rights over the Chase were enjoyed by the people from adjoining parishes from medieval times, including the right to graze cattle and collect firewood. In the autumn, pigs in large numbers were driven into the woodland to feast on acorns. But by the 17th century, with less royal interest in hunting, and increasing demand for land for farming to feed London's growing population, the status of the Chase was certain to change. By 1660 between 200 and 300 families had set up home on the its edges, and both timber and deer were plundered, which the local authorities were powerless to stop. In addition, London's successful merchants looked to turn their wealth into property by investing in land around London, and the farming community sought to change from the traditional open fields and commons to enclosed farms. The pressure from these influential groups led to legislation which allowed the Chase to be divided into plots and sold. However, the Enclosure Act of 1777 provided for a park to be maintained, thereby ensuring as open space what would become Trent Park

The first owner was Richard Jebb, a doctor of strange methods, who cured the King's brother of a strange illness in Trento in Austria. He acquired part of the Chase shortly afterwards, and when knighted took the title Sir Richard Jebb of Trent Place – perhaps to please the King. Jebb built the first house, and a farm. The house was enlarged and improved by subsequent owners, and by the middle of the nineteenth century had become an impressive mansion set in a landscaped estate, fit for nobility.

1886

SOUTHGATE HC

The estate passed through a number of hands until being acquired by the Sassoon family and was inherited by 23 year-old Sir Philip Sassoon following the death of his father in 1912. Sassoon's impact on Trent Park is the most dramatic of any single individual, and the evidence of his work remains to this day. Sassoon, a cousin of the war poet Siegfried Sassoon, was extremely wealthy – a millionaire – but was clearly more interested in high society and politics than the merchant world of his family. He followed his father as MP for Hythe, a position he held for the rest of his life, and rapidly established himself as one of the most eligible bachelors in the country – although he was never to marry. He carried out major alterations to the mansion, which was lavishly decorated inside in great style, and at vast expense. The grounds were also developed, with a nine hole golf course north of the lake (not to be confused with the modern Golf Club next to Snakes Lane), and an airstrip which was laid parallel to the existing road which runs east from the Hockey Centre – the existing sports hall was the hangar. The large obelisk to the north was added to impress the honeymooning Duke and Duchess of Kent in 1934, and sweeping views across the estate to that landmark are maintained to this day, best seen from the mansion terrace.

Sir Philip became renowned for his glamorous parties held there in the 20s and 30s. Guests included Charlie Chaplin, George Bernard Shaw, Winston Churchill, David Lloyd George, and members of the Royal Family. Hospitality of such high standard was maintained by a battalion of domestic staff which would have put the finest hotels in the land to shame. Sassoon was not just a playboy – he pursued a successful political career, using his social contacts along the way. He was parliamentary private secretary to David Lloyd George, and later became an Air Minister. In 1937, with war looming, he hosted a conference to try to stem the tide of European fascism.

In 1939 a bout of 'flu turned into a fatal lung infection, and Trent Park's most influential owner died. His ashes were scattered over the estate by a plane from 601 Squadron. Whilst Sassoon had been overseeing major changes to the Trent Park estate, the local area was changing too.

1886

SOUTHGATE HC

When Southgate Hockey Club was formed in 1886, Southgate itself was a village, sizeable and relatively well-heeled, but some miles from what was then built-up London. The area around Southgate remained very rural up to the First World War, but the creep of urbanisation continued, with housing developers swallowing up most of the surrounding open land between the wars. This was accelerated due to the extension of the Piccadilly Line from Finsbury Park to Cockfosters, which was completed in 1933, taking a slice off Trent Park. Snakes Lane was diverted to its current exit, previously forming a crossroads with Chase Road and Bramley Road. A farmhouse demolished because of the Underground development and replaced to the east now houses the Trent Park Equestrian Centre. What is now suburban Oakwood was entirely created by the arrival of the underground station – known as Enfield West between its opening and 1946 – and the local architecture makes this clear.

During World War Two, the mansion was used as a 'Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre' and it is said that the first intelligence of the V2 campaign was learnt here. It is also believed that in 1941, the Enigma code breakers at Bletchley Park discovered a plan to try to rescue Rudolf Hess from Trent Park. Hess, Hitler's No2, had parachuted into Scotland on an unofficial mission to try to persuade Britain to fight against Communism, rather than Nazi Germany. Hess was actually held elsewhere, but a plan was hatched involved a bombing raid, which would mask a parachute drop of elite troops. The mission went ahead, and although full details have not been released, it is understood that at least two German soldiers were surprised and captured by waiting troops and police, wearing civilian clothes, but carrying German rations. Their fates can only be guessed at.

After the war the Ministry of Education requisitioned the mansion and five acres of land for a teachers' training centre, which opened in 1947. Hannah Gubbay, who had inherited the estate from her cousin Philip, moved into one of the smaller houses, where she lived until her death in 1968. In 1951 Middlesex County Council bought the remainder of Trent Park by compulsory purchase to preserve it as green belt, or it may very well have disappeared under the bulldozer – another moment of vision comparable to the Enclosure Act of 1777. The teachers' centre passed



through a number of changes, becoming part of Middlesex Polytechnic in 1974. In 1992 Middlesex University was created.