

Northumberland's  
Non-League  
Cricket Clubs

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M. Dixon

Limited Edition of 120 copies.

Copy No 84.

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# Bamburgh C.C.

The origins of cricket at Bamburgh are obscure, but the game has been played there for over a century, the first known match result dating from July 1873 when Bamburgh, having challenged Belford which was even then an old established club, lost a two-innings game by six runs. This is not to say that an actual club existed at Bamburgh at that time, as games between villages were often arranged on a casual basis, and indeed the name of Bamburgh is not referred to again (at least in the Newcastle Journal) until 1881 when the village was beaten by a scratch side of visitors by 69 runs to 39. The following week a team referred to by the paper as Bamburgh Second XI played a visitors' team and won by 69 runs to 54, but it is unlikely that Bamburgh were actually running two sides, and what was probably meant was that this was simply a second match between the same sides. This season may have seen the beginnings of regular cricket in the village, because Bamburgh easily defeated Spittal and beat Belford by an innings the same year. These victories were largely due to the prowess of the Rev. Kearsley Thomas, who took seven wickets in the former game and twelve against Belford. He was a well known local player and his name also appears in a report of a game between Chillingham and Berwick in 1877, Thomas making second top score for Chillingham. Bamburgh again defeated Belford in 1882, dismissing them for 18, and they also (with a reinforced side) beat Berwick, but lost to both Kelso High School and Alnwick. Thomas was still their most proficient player, but he is not mentioned again after 1882. Perhaps it was because they felt his absence that Bamburgh entered upon a lean period. They lost their two reported matches in 1884, one of them to Belford by an innings, and in 1885 Belford beat them both home and away, getting them out for 19 in the first match. It is not known where Bamburgh's ground was situated at that time. They moved to the present ground about 1900 and it is thought that prior to that date the cricket field was situated where Armstrong House now stands, but even that may not have been the club's original home. In 1886 there is a report of a match which took place at Bamburgh, between Bamburgh and District and the Rev. W. Rudge's XI, (Rudge being a very keen cricketer who was then a familiar figure at games all over North Northumberland). The match was played "before a large and fashionable gathering of spectators, amongst whom were the Bishop of

Oxford and his party". The two-innings game ended in defeat for the home side.

Of three matches reported in 1892 Bamburgh won two and lost one (to Waren Mill). Their best players were Phelp and R.W. Clark, the latter of whom was a force in local cricket for many years. He made the first recorded century for the club (108 not out v Belford 2nd XI in 1894, Bamburgh apparently no longer being considered worthy of a first team fixture) and certainly they must have welcomed the strengthening of their batting, for their scores were low even by the standards of those days. Belford had bundled them out for 18 (once again) in 1893, and in the same season they had been defeated by North Sunderland by 26 runs to 14, though admittedly Bamburgh were four men short. Rock bottom was reached the following year when Lesbury dismissed them for four runs, though the victors did not shine with the bat either, having amassed fifteen. No doubt Bamburgh thought the game was as good as won. The main interest of this match, apart from the absurdly low totals, is that the first of many Nutmans appeared for Bamburgh, taking six wickets. The Bamburgh captain was J. Hutchinson.

In 1900 the club is stated to be playing "on the new ground in front of the Castle", which they have occupied ever since, and which forms the most impressive setting for cricket to be found anywhere in the North-East. The instinctive desire of any cricketer who sets eyes on Bamburgh's ground, if he has any sense of place in him, is to get a game on that ground by hook or by crook. Actually, the wicket is not without its imperfections, and the outfield is well grassed and somewhat rough, and visiting batsmen at any rate have found run-making hard work, though the bowlers have not been heard to complain. Until the last war, the Green was surrounded with metal railings, but these were removed by the Government to make their contribution towards the war effort. (There have been rumours that most, if not all, of such confiscated railings were never melted down and may even yet be rusting away in some secret hideout). Anyhow, there are no railings at Bamburgh now and this makes the Green virtually a public open space, with all the problems which that implies for those who try to care for the cricket ground. The Green is the property of the Armstrong Estate and the cricket club are grateful to have only a nominal rent to find. Lord Armstrong is its President.

During the early years of this century, Bamburgh cricket was dominated by R.W. Clark and J. Nutman, who shared the wickets in almost every match and frequently contributed the lion's share of the runs. It was, however, as bowlers that they were most feared; for example, against Warkworth in 1903 Nutman took seven for eight runs



**BAMBURGH C.C. 1950**

**Harley Pitt, Doug Clark, John Dryden, Crewe Dixon, Jim Brewis  
Aidan Nutman, Ernie Nutman, Andrew Nutman, Geo. Dryden, Fred Anderson  
Lewis Mole, Andy Hinson, Binnie Hinson**

and Clark the other three for seven runs; in 1904 Nutman took six for thirteen v Embleton and Clark four for ten; against Rock, in the same year, Clark took six for twelve and Nutman three for three. Belford had by this time reinstated Bamburgh among their first team fixtures, as well they might, for Clark took six of their wickets cheaply and then made top score. These two players disappear from the scene later in the decade, but the club continued to do well until the outbreak of the First World War. N. Spicer was an effective all rounder and T. Wake (who also appeared for Embleton) and W. Wake took many wickets around 1910. There were two W. Wakes, Wilfred and William, but it is impossible to distinguish between them in the newspaper accounts of games. Two good batsmen of this period were J.C. and J.E. Hutchinson of Bamburgh Hall: they were even better known in rugby circles and J.E. made one appearance for England. In the years immediately prior to the War the most successful bowlers were T. Wake and a player with the somewhat Gilbertian-sounding name of Captain Coke, whilst A. Ryott a sound opening batsman, made many runs, especially in 1914. The Rev. W. Watson made 123 v Wooler in 1912, and the Hon. W. Watson-Armstrong, Lord Armstrong's heir, played from time to time and got a few runs, his coming of age in 1913 being attended with great festivities.

Cricket was again in progress at Bamburgh by 1921. Ryott and Coke were still playing. In these years fewer matches were reported in the press but much the same fixtures seem to have been played, including Berwick, Tillside and Alnwick 2nd XI. A great bowler was Jim McDougle, who took six for 41 v Berwick in 1931, and E. Wood a schoolmaster and the son of Sam Wood, himself a well known cricketer of an earlier generation, was the leading batsman for a long time. He made 104 v Gateshead N.E.R. in the early thirties. By 1930 Aidan and Ernie Nutman who were to be leading members of the Club for so many years, were already turning out: George and Crewe Dixon were also appearing for the village not long before the outbreak of the Second World War.

With the return of peace (which was celebrated by a Boys v Girls fancy dress match on the green) Bamburgh were able to resume with a fair quota of pre-war players which included the Nutmans, the Dixons, Jim Mather, Eddie McDougle, Norman Brewis and Andrew Humphreys, but the ground was in a poor state, having been cut up during the War by tanks and other vehicles, and during the 1946 season matting had to be used. Part of the ground was relaid in 1949 and further reurfing was carried out in 1953. In 1948 the club obtained very fair results, winning 19 of their 29 matches and Aidan Nutman topped the batting averages and Ernie Nutman the bowling, taking 74



BAMBURGH CASTLE C.C.

Back row: E. Anderson, D. Taylor, Ronnie Taylor, T. Aitchison, Ray Taylor, L. Hinson.  
Front row: J. Nesbit, A. Hinson, B. Kay, S. Taylor, B. G. McKinnon



wickets. This was the club's best season since the War, judged purely in terms of results, and was not approached again until 1974. Bamburgh has not often lacked good bowlers, but Ernie Nutman throughout his long career, was one of the best they have ever had. Village players as a rule have little liking for slow left arm bowling of any accuracy, and many of them found Ernie an insoluble puzzle. He headed the club's bowling averages as recently as 1972, as he had so often done in the past, and he was also a good batsman who came first in the averages at least once (in 1955). His brother Aidan was for many years one of the best bats to have appeared for the village, and was captain for some time. He also enjoyed a long career, during the later stages of which he intrigued visiting players by turning out in suede shoes in the interests of comfort. There were, however, several other successful players besides the Nutmans. There was Jim Brewis, who took many wickets very cheaply, and Crewe Dixon, another of Bamburgh's leading run scorers, who was very consistent over many years and frequently came out top, reaching 120 not out v Belford in 1957. Though primarily a batsman, he also managed to head the bowling averages one year, and he has done a good deal for the Club off the field. Another bowler who was very destructive, especially on his own ground, was Gordon Whitelaw. He was extremely successful between about 1955 and 1965 and in 1961 became almost certainly the first man from the Club to reach 100 wickets when he took 103 at 8.7 each.

In the early fifties Andy Hinson became prominent and has remained so ever since. At first he kept wicket but his brother Lawrence later took over this role, and Andy blossomed forth as a medium pace bowler, being the leading wicket-taker in 1963, when despite the fact that Whitelaw also took 53 wickets cheaply and Ernie Nutman 51, Bamburgh could win only seven matches out of 31. Andy Hinson's great moment as a bowler came in 1974 when he performed the rare feat of taking all ten wickets. But it is mainly as a batsman that he will be remembered. Bamburgh is never an easy place to score runs, and twenty runs there is worth many a fifty elsewhere, so that anyone who can consistently do well with the bat must be either very gifted or extremely lucky, and indeed even the best of us needs some good fortune on pitches of this type. In 1959 Andy Hinson made 875 runs, average 31.2 – easily the best batting figures since the War – and he had a fine all round season in 1964 when he headed both tables, quite apart from other years when he has topped the batting with figures which do not appear particularly impressive to those who do not appreciate their real value. For some years Andy Hinson has been a popular club captain in addition. (Bamburgh some years ago joined the ranks of those clubs which find it easier to operate under a Saturday and a Sunday captain).

In the mid sixties the club acquired a useful recruit in John Evans, a quickish bowler and presentable batsman who had previously played for St. George's Rovers and had taken up a teaching post in the area. He led the batting averages in 1966 and later became Sunday Captain. He is now Hon. Secretary. Bamburgh, like many clubs of its type, has been fortunate in its administrators. In particular they have been indebted to George Dryden and his brother John (recently dead, unfortunately) of Glorum. George was in turn Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman, and the highly successful club Barbecues were held on his land for some years. John Nesbit, another enthusiast, succeeded George Dryden as Treasurer in 1966. A further loyal devotee was Willie Graham who was presented with a silver salver in 1971 in recognition of his efforts.

Since about 1968, the club has run a weekend tour in June to Crieff and Comrie in Perthshire, which has proved a popular venue.

In the late sixties and early seventies Bamburgh were often able to call upon the services of Peter Forster, the former South Northumberland and Northumberland County slow left arm bowler, who had given up league cricket. He could no doubt have reaped a considerable harvest of wickets had he felt so inclined, but it was the batting averages he headed in 1972. Once upon a time his batting had shown promise rather than his bowling, but once the latter developed his batting became a cheerful death-or-glory affair. He could put terrific power into his shots. Trevor Bourn, a sound and fluent opening batsman, also formerly of South Northumberland and the County side, likewise turned out periodically for Bamburgh after retiring from the League, but he played less often than Forster.

The best prospect that Bamburgh has produced in recent years was Ian Nichol, a fast bowler, who had a great deal to do with the Club's successful season of 1974, when they won 22 of their 37 matches. His contribution was a record tally of 115 wickets at 7.75 each, including all ten wickets in one match (Andy Hinson also performed the same feat that year). Understandably, Nichol has since departed to the league, and Worcestershire has shown interest in him. In that season of 1974, Eric Anderson, an all rounder who had once headed the bowling averages, came top of the batting.

In 1977 the club suffered a considerable set-back when its pavilion was destroyed by fire. It was a curious wooden structure suggestive of a mission hall, in which the changing accommodation, for the visiting team at least, was claustrophobically small and one was

always in danger of emerging with someone else's gear on. It was like being in a communal bath without water. The passing of the pavilion was no doubt lamented, however, by the home club, who are saddled with the problem of replacing it, and in the meantime they have had the use of the tennis pavilion.

Sunday cricket was introduced at Bamburgh on a modest scale in 1957 and now the club has no difficulty in maintaining a full fixture list. A move in 1973 to play league cricket was defeated. Given the superb setting of the ground, and the ever-increasing popularity of the North Northumberland coast in general, it is safe to assert that as long as the game endures, there will be cricketers eager to come to play at Bamburgh.