

THE BAVERSTOCKS OF WEST PARK LANE



BY CHRIS BAVERSTOCK

In 1947 we moved to Damerham from Brickhill into a new council house at No. 6 Back Lane. It was called Back Lane until somebody decided that this was not "posh" enough and it became West Park Lane.

To us the house seemed a luxury, running hot water and a bathroom with a flush toilet. Our neighbours were the Jerrard family. They kept a Jersey cow and often we would find a bucket of milk put over the fence. One Sunday when Dad (Joe) was doing something in the garden, Budgie called out "On the Sabbath thou shalt not labour neighbour".

On the other side lived Taffy Jones. He was a wiry Welshman with a quick temper. He was one of the first people in the village to own a television. It was quite small and he sat close to it in the corner. One day there was a disturbance; some Welsh oaths and the television went flying up the garden!

I have many wonderful memories of my childhood in Damerham. I have often thought of writing a book, but there are so many books about villages and most of the people who might appreciate mine are gone. I was eight years old and there seemed to be endless days to play. My best friend was Ian Penny. I

remember sliding down the side of White's Pit in a tin bath and lining up bottles and firing at them with a catapult, swaying at the very top of a fir tree at the entrance to West Park Drive and jumping the hatch.

I remember with affection the School and the teachers Nellie Tiller and Miss Mackenzie; the chapels and Sunday schools run by Jos Tiller and George Colbourne, the church when Arthur Phillips came and we had a real "choir" and working on George Bryant's farm with Johnny Bailey and Peter Hooper.

The Cricket Team

I suppose that I got my love of Cricket from Dad. He had been a good fast bowler for Damerham for many years. After the War when I saw him, and played with him, he was past his best.

He took me to watch Hampshire play at Dean Park where we saw the Australians with Lindwall and Miller and the West Indies with Weekes and Walcott. We also saw the South Africans at Southampton where Whacker Winslow hit a ball over the stand during a magnificent innings of 80. Of course we had never seen any of these great players before - there was no television.

We also played cricket in the road at Back Lane. Mostly my brother Malcolm and I, but sometimes Dad would play. There was a hedge and a field on the off side and gardens on the leg side so it taught you to hit straight - we didn't want to lose the ball.

In the "fifties" Damerham had a good, though ageing, team. The photograph was taken about 1950 and probably at Somerley.



From left to right standing: -

Harry Grey. Umpire. Completely unruffled. He was also Church warden and bell ringer.

John Hockey. I have seen him hit a ball over the cricket hut into his yard beside the Compasses. He supported the "Saints" and had a trailer painted in their colours.

Les Nicklen. He was a very good opening batsman and a gentleman.

Arthur Percy or "Little Peck". (I don't know why). A portly man with short grey hair who worked for the Post Office. He had no respect for bowlers. I remember him at Broadstone lifting the ball with some regularity into the Pinewoods that surrounded the ground.

Dad. (Joe Baverstock). Right arm fast bowler. Left hand bat. Obviously still enjoying a fag.

Reg Budd. Uncle Reg. He fielded in the slips and always wore his flat cap - well he didn't have much hair.

Arthur Lush. "Brusher". He gave me my first insight into spin bowling on a drying wicket. At Longford Park it had rained, the sun came out, Brusher came on to bowl and they were all out for 33!

Len Ellswood. He came from Lancashire. He was wicket keeper and a good batsman. He always wore a black and yellow cap. He made a century against Bournemouth Commercial Travellers - a rare event!

Cyril Hooper. A steady opening bat. He became captain of the club and held it together for many years.

Sitting: -

Bert Shepherd. He was gardener at West Park House for a while. He had a powerful cover-drive.

Billy Ings. He was captain and the star of the side both with the bat and the ball. Although, I do remember him getting a duck at Wimborne so that he could go and get engaged!

Stan Waterman. "Speedy". I guess he was known as Speedy because of his slow scoring rate. He was a stylish left arm slow bowler.

I first played for Damerham in 1954.

My main claim to fame was in 1959 when in a match against Rockbourne on July 14th, I hit a six, which struck the scoreboard and knocked all the numbers off except a six! This I suppose is a candidate for the Guinness Book of Records!