

## THE CRICKET MATCH AT BOXGROVE IN 1622

By TIMOTHY J. McCANN and PETER M. WILKINSON

1972 marks the three hundred and fiftieth anniversary of a game of cricket played in the churchyard at Boxgrove. This is not the earliest mention of the word cricket, or even the earliest recorded mention of people playing cricket. It is important, however, as the earliest recorded instance so far discovered, of a game of cricket played by several named players, in Sussex, or, for that matter, anywhere else. The record of the game was first discovered by Dr. Hilda Johnstone when editing a volume of Churchwardens Presentments<sup>1</sup> and it has been written about frequently since that date.<sup>2</sup> However, recent research among the records of the Consistory Court at Chichester, has brought to light fresh documentary evidence about the game.

On Sunday, 28 April, 1622, Anthony Ward, servant to Daniel Earle, the vicar of Boxgrove, and Edward Hartley, played cricket together during the time of Evensong. On the following Sunday, 5 May, Edward Hartley together with Raphe West, Richard Slaughter, William Martin, Richard Martin junior, and others whose names were not recorded, played another game in the churchyard at Boxgrove, and were aided and abetted in so doing by Richard Martin senior and Thomas West, the two churchwardens of the parish. As a result of these two games, the participants were presented by the new churchwardens in their Easter Bills. Unfortunately, the original churchwardens' presentment for 1622 has not survived, but a record of it was written in to a contemporary register of presentments.<sup>3</sup> Under the heading of Easter Bills for 1622, the entry for Boxgrove reads:—"I present Raphe West, Edward Hartley, Richard Slaughter, William Martin, Richard

<sup>1</sup> Hilda Johnstone, *Churchwardens' Presentments, Part I, Archdeaconry of Chichester*, (Sussex Record Society, vol. 49, 1947), pp. 27, 28.

<sup>2</sup> The Boxgrove presentment has been printed in whole or in part, and discussed in the following books and articles:—Hilda Johnstone, *op. cit.*, H. F. and A. P. Squire, *Henfield Cricket and its Sussex Cradle* (1949), p. 32; H. F. and A. P. Squire, *Pre-Victorian Sussex Cricket* (1951), p. 4; John Marshall, *The Duke who was Cricket* (1961), p. 11; John Marshall, *Sussex Cricket* (1963), pp. 1, 2; R. F. Hunnisett, "Early Sussex Cricket," in *Sussex Notes and Queries*, vol. 16, pp. 217-221; and Rowland Bowen, "Some More Seventeenth Century Cricket," in *The Cricket Quarterly*, vol. 4 (1966), pp. 249-253.

<sup>3</sup> Register of Churchwardens Presentments, 1621-1670. West Sussex Record Office (hereafter abbreviated to W.S.R.O.), Ep. I/23/8, f.13.

Martin junior, together with others in their company whose names I have no notice of, for playing at crecket in the churchyard on Sunday, the fiftē of May, after sufficient warning given to the contrary, for three speciall reasons: first, for that it is contrary to the 7th article; secondly, for that they use to breake the Church-windows with the ball; and thirdly, for that a little childe had like to have her braynes beaten out with a cricket batt. And also I present Richard Martin senior and Thomas West the old churchwardens for defending and mayntayning them in it . . . . Wee present Anthony Ward, servant to Mr. Earle, our minister, and Edward Hartley, for playing at creket in the evening prayer tyme on Sunday the xxvij th of Aprill."

Following their presentment, the cricketers would have been cited to appear before the Consistory Court in Chichester Cathedral, and although no record of their citation has been found among the miscellaneous working papers of the Consistory Court, the record of their appearance is extant.<sup>1</sup> The record of the court, which has not been published before, is headed:—"In Ecclesia Cathedrale Cicesteriense loco consuetudinale ibidem die Veneris duodecimo die mensis julii anno domini 1622. Coram reverendo in Christo patre domino Georgio permissione divina Cicesterensis episcopo et Francisco Ringsted in legibus baccalario surrogato etc," and it continues under Boxgrove:—"Radulphus West personaliter citatus per Jo Butler litteratum viij die instantes julii pro causa sequente viz for playing at crecket in the Churchyard on Sunday the fiftē of May after sufficient warning given to the contrary by Mr. Earle the minister Quo die comparuit dictus West cui obiecta per dominum indicantem detectione supra scripta fassus est se pecasse publice obiurit unde domine cum pia monicione eum dimisit."<sup>2</sup>

Edwardus Hartley personaliter citatus per eundem eodem die pro causa predicta & also for playing at kreket in evening prayer tyme on Sunday the xxvijth of Aprill Quo die comparuit Hartley ut supra pro West.

Richardus Slaughter personaliter citatus per eundem eodem die pro causa predicta Quo die ut supra pro Hartley.

Williamus Martin personaliter citatus per Jo Butler litteratum 8<sup>o</sup> die instantes julii pro causa sequente viz for playing at crekett in the churchyard ut supra pro West Quo die comparuit ut ante pro Hartley.

<sup>1</sup> Detection Book for the Archdeaconry of Chichester, 1622. W.S.R.O., Ep. I/17/20, ff. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> The following is a rough translation of the first entry: "Ralph West personally summoned by the letters of Jo Butler on the 8th day of this instant July, for the following cause . . . on that day, the aforesaid West appeared and confessed that he was guilty of those accusations of the aforesaid lord in the detection written above, and he publicly abjured, after which, the lord dismissed him with a pious admonition." We would like to thank Miss Alison Edwards for her help in transcribing and translating the document.

Richardus Martin junior personaliter citatus per eundem eodem die pro causa predicta Quo die comparuit ut ante pro Hartley. Anthonius Ward quesit per eundem eodem die pro causa sequente viz for playing at kreket in evening prayer tyme on Sunday the xxviiijth of April. Quo die comparuit ut ante pro Martin junior. Richardus Martin senior et Thomas West nuper gardiani ibidem personaliter citati per eundem eodem die pro causa sequente viz I present the old churchwardens for defending the said Raphe West Edward Hartley Richard Slaughter Wm Martin & Richard Martin junior in there said play and maynteyning them in it Quo die comparuit Thomas West et fassus est eundem esse verum unde dominus cum monicione eum dimisit.”

The procedure must have been sufficiently unpleasant to make the players wary of a future game. It involved a four mile journey from Boxgrove to Chichester, and more important, probably the loss of a whole day's work. There in the Cathedral, they had to endure fairly ignominious treatment of both their self esteem and their pocket. First came the public confession. This would involve each of the men reciting in open court a suitably penitent statement of their offence and their repentance. They were then admonished by the judge—on this occasion the Bishop himself. This must have given the occasion a greater sense of gravity than might be expected, for during this period most of the courts were conducted neither by the Bishop himself nor his commissary, but by a more lowly surrogate. Bishop Carleton<sup>1</sup> was perhaps rather exceptional in presiding at a number of the sittings of his court at this time; and in detection cases<sup>2</sup> where the rôle of the judge was frequently to deliver a moral lecture rather than a legal judgment, his presence must have added considerably to the efficacy of the sentence. Finally came the fees. Opposite the name of each offender in the Detection Book the scribe has scribbled the figure xiid presumably the amount extracted for the court's expenses. Although this might not seem too formidable a sum to the husbandmen among the players, it would be a fairly crippling sum for a mere servant like Ward.

Other contemporary records give us an idea of the age and social standing of the players. The baptism entries in Boxgrove parish register<sup>3</sup> at least suggest that the game was more than a schoolboy lark in the churchyard; for Ralph West was christened in 1588,

<sup>1</sup> George Carleton, Bishop of Chichester, 1617-1628.

<sup>2</sup> A detection case was tried by summary jurisdiction in which cases were dealt with in a single hearing, without the extended formality of a defended case, which would often run to several months.

<sup>3</sup> W.S.R.O., Par. 27/1/1/1.

William Martin in 1594 and Richard Martin junior in 1606.<sup>1</sup> The register, together with the wills proved in the Chichester ecclesiastical courts also show why the old churchwardens defended and maintained them in the game, for the three players we have mentioned prove to be their sons. This in turn sheds an interesting light on their social status, for churchwardens had to be at least respectable householders. In their wills<sup>2</sup> both Thomas West and Richard Martin senior describe themselves as husbandmen, which would suggest they were probably tenant farmers. Their probate inventories<sup>3</sup> show that they both lived in similar six-roomed houses, and each left personal estate valued at £89—quite a substantial sum. Ironically, one of them seems, before the game, to have been on friendly or even intimate terms with the vicar Daniel Earle. Two depositions in the church court<sup>4</sup> indicate that in 1612 Richard Martin senior and Earle had been summoned together to the bedside of a dying parishioner, while his will, made only three months before the game, names his “wellbeloved friend” Earle as his overseer.

Finally, there are three points of interest about the presentment itself. First, that playing cricket was considered to be contrary to the 7th Article. When they were preparing their Easter Bills, the churchwardens would, presumably, refer to a set of Visitation Articles, which must have provided them with a general framework for making presentments even when they were not actually making their return at a Visitation. Unfortunately, no articles for 1621 or 1622 appear to have survived, but those administered by Bishop Montague in 1628, throw an interesting light on the affair. In the section headed, “Articles concerning the Church, the Ornaments, sacred utensills, and possessions of the same,” the 7th article reads, “Whether is your churchyard well mounded, and fenced, kept cleane without Nusance, or soyle cast into it: is it inchoached upon, and by whome: doe any offensively keepe doores, outlets, or passages into your churchyard: doe any use to quarrell, fight, play or make meetings, banquets, Church-ales there, doe any keepe Courts, Leetes, Lawdaies, Musters there, or otherwise use it being a consecrated place, prophaned contrarie to the 88 Canon.”

Secondly, the fact that there was a danger of breaking the windows of the church suggests that some sort of hard ball was used for the game. Several writers have remarked on the third point—the reason why the little child was in danger of having her brains beaten out

<sup>1</sup> Baptismal entries for Anthony Ward, Edward Hartley and Richard Slaughter have not been found.

<sup>2</sup> W.S.R.O., STCI/18, f. 74, and B. Dean, f.3, 1622.

<sup>3</sup> W.S.R.O., Ep. I/29, Boxgrove, 2 Feb. 1630, and 27 Dec. 1622.

<sup>4</sup> W.S.R.O., Ep. I/11/12, ff. 30, 31.

with a cricket bat. Both Rowland Bowen and R. F. Hunnisett have suggested that the rules under which the game was then played, allowed the batsman to hit the ball twice, not just if he was in danger of being dismissed, but also for his "general advantage." Certainly the West Hoathly inquest<sup>1</sup> on Jasper Vinall who was killed after being struck on the head by Edward Tye, who was playing cricket with him, in 1624, and the death of Henry Brand of Selsey from a similar injury in 1647<sup>2</sup>, powerfully support this argument.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Record Office, Clerks of Assize, S.E. Circuit Indictments (Assizes 35) 67/8, m. 68.

<sup>2</sup> W.S.R.O., QR/W 61, f.59/63. See also F. H. W. Sheppard, "Cricket Bat," in *Sussex Notes and Queries*, vol. 12 pp. 42, 43.

<sup>3</sup> A commemorative match between a Boxgrove team and an XI representing the West Sussex Record Office was played at Boxgrove on Saturday, 13th May, 1972. The Record Office XI won by five runs.