

## **White Roding Social & Sports Club**

### **Marks Hall Lane White Roding Essex**

The Club is sited at the Recreation Centre, which is a registered charity the responsibility of Trustees appointed by the Parish Council. The Recreation Centre (Sports Field) is open for use by all White Roding villagers and includes a Children's Play Area. Membership of the Club is open to all those living in White Roding and the surrounding area.

A short history follows but briefly the Club was set up in its present form in 1971 when the sports field was purchased and the clubhouse built. Since then the clubhouse has been considerably enlarged and the amenities improved, with a new bar area, kitchen, changing rooms and showers. All funds have been raised by the members with help from some additional grants. The clubhouse was built to provide accommodation for Club members for social events, and to provide changing facilities for sporting activities. With the formation of the Club the responsibility for the upkeep of the grounds was passed to the committee of the WRSSC.

The committee consists of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary and meets at least six times a year. This committee is responsible for the running and financing of the Club, Sports Field and all major social (fund-raising) events. In addition we have a President and several Vice Presidents. The AGM is held in June or July, when all paid-up members are welcome to attend.

Apart from frequent social events, advertised in the Parish News as well as in our own Club Newsletters and website, the clubhouse is open to members and their guests when there are home football matches and for other regular functions. It is open on Friday evenings from about 8.00pm. An annual subscription is payable, currently £15.00. Apart from the use of the Club's facilities, membership numbers are entered into a Quarterly Draw where prizes of £100 and £25 can be won.

White Roding Social & Sports Club, run by volunteers, is considered to be one of the best equipped in the area and is a credit to a small village such as ours. All the Club's facilities are available for private hire.

## WRSSC : History 1946 – 2020

Although village records go back to 1926 when a meeting was held to raise funds for “the erection of a Village Institute”, it was re-formed in 1946, after the war, as the Village Hall with responsibility for running it being passed to the White Roding Social & Sports Club.

In September 1946 a public meeting was held to elect officers – Chairman Mr Hoare, Treasurer Mr G Read (Jnr) and Secretary Mr P Lester. They and their committee were given the task of drawing up rules and forming the Social & Sports Club. Meetings were to take place in the Village Hall (then situated in Church Lane opposite the White Roding windmill) and the first purchase was a billiard table. Club nights were Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; tea and coffee would be served – permits and ration coupons permitting! By the end of the first year competitions were in full swing for billiards, table tennis, darts and shove ha’penny. At the December meeting of the committee the formation of football and cricket teams was discussed.

The original cricket pitch was replaced later by one laid out in a field at the eastern end of the village owned by Mr Stanley Haigh of Marks Hall Farm; the rent was £4-0-0 per year. The football pitch was located at the other end of the village in a field belonging to Mr Geoffrey Broad of Snow’s Farm. At this time, no changing facilities were available at either site but £17-17-6d (£17.87p) was spent on “cricket gear” and “about £25-0-0” on football equipment. A tennis section was also progressing, “two rackets had been purchased at approximately £3-0-0 each, also two dozen balls at 28/6d (£1.43) a dozen” although records do not state where this was played. Apart from membership fees, funds were raised by running an Annual Fete.

By the early 1950s Mr John Lukies had been elected Chairman and Mr J Howells Treasurer; Club funds had dropped to a very low level and it was suggested that Snowball Whist Drives and Dances should be run to increase income. As well as the Fete, a Christmas Party also became an annual event. The Fete held on August Bank Holiday in 1954 was followed by a Dance at which prizes were presented: Darts – F Bardell, Table Tennis – B Lester and Billiards – R Sapsford.

By the mid-1950s the Christmas Party had become the Annual Dinner & Dance, tickets 7/6d (37p), usually held either at Long’s in Bishops Stortford or Cannon’s in Chelmsford. In 1955 the Table Tennis Team – F Bardell, G Holdgate, B Lester and R Sapsford – won the Division 3 Stortford & District League and was promoted to Division 2.

After some discussion it was agreed that funds of £48-13s-8d (£48.68) should be made available to erect a changing room on the football meadow; a pavilion had already been built for the cricketers. Mr Perryman was asked to take on the job of groundsman at £30 per year as the cricket meadow was “getting out of hand”.

In 1960 it was reported that the Football Section had enjoyed another good season, finishing in the top four of their division, and L Bardell had been selected by the Chelmsford and Mid-Essex Football Combination to play for them in their Cup Competition. On the social side things were not going so well, the West Essex League Crib Shield being lost after having been won the previous year.

Whilst the cricket and football teams continued to play regularly and have some success in their leagues, the Social Club was lacking support. At the AGM in 1966 it was decided to close this side of the club but the sporting activities – the name, the White Roding Social & Sports Club – would continue. Terry Chaston became Chairman of the sports side in 1967 when it was decided to run a second football team. For the following season the elected officers were: Secretary Percy Lester, First Team Captain Eddie Husson and Vice Captain Keith Crouchman. Match fees were increased to 3/- (15p). The original Village Hall, now some 40 years old, was finally closed in March 1967 and demolished the following year.

In 1968 the purchase of the current sports field, five acres of Bretts Farm behind the 'Black Horse', was completed with funds raised from the sale of the Village Hall site. Work started on levelling, draining and sowing the cricket and football pitches, final cost £1033-16s-8d (£1033.83), and the new grounds were formally opened with a Grand Fete on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1970. The money received from the sale of the Village Hall had been held in trust by three trustees: Geoffrey Broad, John Lukies and Fred Monck. The Parish Council subsequently became the lead trustee and it was confirmed that "the field is only to be used as a recreation ground for sporting activities and for the provision of a village hall and car park".

Planning and erection of the new building was started in 1971 and it was formally opened with a Wine & Cheese Party on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1972. The cost of the Marley building was £2268, to which must be added the hard work put in by a band of volunteers who prepared the site and carried out all the decorating.

The running of the Recreation Centre was handed over to a Management Committee which drew up the rules and set a membership fee of 50p per month with seasonal cricket and football members paying £2 per season. The Management Committee met very infrequently having delegated its responsibilities for the Recreation Centre to the committee of the White Roding Social & Sports Club.

Before long it was realized that more space was needed and an extension was added in 1973 at a cost of £456. This enabled the kitchen to be moved and a new bar installed, at the same time a garage was built to house mowers etc. This process of extending and rebuilding has continued over the years with a new lounge area being added in the mid-1980s when the bar and kitchen were transposed. A further extension enabled the changing rooms to be moved and the new kitchen enlarged, this was followed by the refurbishment of the Ladies toilets and the refitting and extension of the Gentlemen's toilets and showers, the latter partly paid for by a generous and welcome grant of £3575 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts.

With the building of the new clubhouse the social activities restarted and regular Club Nights, Crib Evenings, Quizzes, Race Nights and other events take place throughout the year, including our biggest fund-raiser the Annual Fete. There are also Annual Dinner & Dances, with Cricket and Football Presentations, in the clubhouse as well as other Dinners, Discos and Christmas Parties. In 1996 we celebrated our Golden Jubilee with a Grand Ball held in a marquee adjoining the clubhouse.

As the new club facilities rose like a phoenix from the ashes of the old village hall, so did the enthusiasm of the members. As well as the social activities mentioned above, the cricket and football teams, playing virtually every Saturday and Sunday during their seasons, have achieved many successes over the years, the cricket team frequently carrying off both the Dewar Cup and the Davies Cup, and the football teams also having their share of success in their League and Cup competitions. In 1995 the Sunday Reserves football team was presented with a football by the League in recognition of being the only team not to receive a booking during the season.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century came to an end with the club in a good financial state and amenities further improved by the re-equipping of the kitchen and the extension of the bar lounge with the provision of new furniture. Another Ball welcomed the new millennium.

In November 2001 the bar was redesigned, providing an L-shaped bar counter with an enlarged serving area. The total cost was around £6500.

In 2004 a new visitor's changing room was built so that the home team's facilities could be enlarged. At the same time enlarged toilet facilities, including a disabled toilet, were installed; the cost was over £40000. More social events such as the Auction of Promises, Annual Golf Day, and "Theme" Dinners (Italian, Mexican, English etc.) have been added to the calendar and proved to be useful fund-raisers – as well as being very enjoyable. More recently the roof has been repaired, the hall ceiling renewed and the outside painted.

On October 21<sup>st</sup> 2005 a dinner was held to mark the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar – the menu was traditional and the hall suitably decorated; the singing of Land of Hope and Glory, and other traditional songs, had to be heard to be believed!

In 2006 a Diamond Jubilee Ball was held in a large marquee adjoining the clubhouse, on a lovely summer's evening. Over 200 members and guests sat down to a five-course dinner and danced to a seven-piece band until 2.00am – all at a ticket price of £45.

More of our regular Theme Nights were organised when the hall is suitably decorated to represent a country or event, the chosen menu and drinks also reflect this. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2007 we celebrated St Andrews Day. In 2008 we had another Wine Tasting & Quiz; these have proved to be very well attended and have become an annual fixture. More Theme Nights – Bulgarian, English, Scottish, French, Swedish, South African, Mexican and German amongst them – have been held, each attracting 40 to 60 members and their guests.

Crib has continued to be played every Wednesday from September to June. Denny Gooday who has run this for over 30 years retired in 2008. Football and cricket have been well supported but no trophies have been won recently. The 2008 Summer Ball was reckoned to be “the best so far”.

All the Club’s crockery and cutlery was replaced in 2009 and new round tables and chairs have been purchased. This enables us to host weddings and private functions, which are a substantial income earner, in some style. Sport continued although cricket teams are harder to arrange. We have three football teams; in 2010 the Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> Team won the Premier League Cup but the Reserves were relegated. This year saw the demise of the Saturday Team but it will be replaced by a Veteran’s Team.

Geoffrey Broad, who provided the original football pitch in the 1940s and was a founder trustee of the reformed WRSSC in 1970, died in 2011; he generously left a legacy of £2000.

2011 was over-shadowed by the tragic death in August of long-time Club cricket and football player Simon “Crunch” Crouchman, he was also a very active committee member. Sadly the deaths of Lyn Clarke, also a long-time committee member, and Denny Gooday, our President followed. The recession had an impact, particularly on the Summer Ball, other regular social functions however were better supported so we still were able to spend money on redecorating the hall and bar and install new lighting in the bar. A reduction in price of 25 – 30% from Greene King, as our loans had been paid off, was also welcome. On 6<sup>th</sup> June we celebrated the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee with a “Street Party” held on a cold, wet day in a marquee on the sports field. The River Pageant followed on a giant screen in the welcome environment of the Club. A BBQ was held on the Monday before enjoying the Concert staged at Buckingham Palace and the lighting of the beacons. The WRSSC one was built at the last minute, with little attention to “health and safety”. In sport, league cricket continued with Cloghams but Sunday friendlies were getting harder to arrange. Both the Vets Football Team and the Crib Team were complimented on the food they provide but no trophies were won.

Improvements continued in 2013 with the building of a “gazebo” outside the patio doors, this being partly funded by donations made in memory of Simon Crouchman and a grant from UDC. Social events continued with Italian and Polish Nights, BBQ, Music and General Knowledge Quizzes, Wine & Cheese Tasting and Quiz and renewed Bingo Nights as well as another successful Summer Ball, Fete and Golf Day.

During 2014 the Ladies toilets were refurbished following a flood and maintenance continues to keep the property in good order. One oven has been replaced and a new fridge/freezer bought for the kitchen. The cost of supplies from Greene King have increased over recent years, not least because of an increase in VAT, and bar prices will soon have to be revised.

In case of emergencies a defibrillator has been bought and an evening was spent with members having instruction on its use.

Weekly Whist and Crib continue to be well supported and the Thursday Crib League Team won the Team Knockout Cup as well as the Pairs Cup in 2014. Annual events such as the Race Night, Golf Day, Summer Fete, Wine Tasting & Quiz and Christmas Party continue and, along with other social events, notably the Summer Ball now held every other year, the next being in 2021. These make a useful profit which goes towards the running costs of the Club.

Over the past few years there have been further changes, the most notable being the loss of the Cricket Team due to a lack of players, this is a problem county- or country-wide. To some extent this loss has been offset by the three football teams: Sunday League and two Veterans Teams. The Crib team left the Chelmsford League at the end of the 2018-2019 season and went out on a high when Fred Bardell and David Edwards won the Pairs Cup. Both Wednesday Crib and Thursday Whist are seeing increasing numbers.

Maintenance of the building continues with the kitchen being deep-cleaned and a new floor covering laid; some bar furniture has been renewed.

At the start of 2020 a Coronavirus pandemic – Covid-19 – broke out causing numerous problems. These included the cancellation of all Club activities affecting Events, Sport, Social Evenings, Crib & Whist, Private Bookings etc. The closure of the Club provided an opportunity for a band of volunteers to plan and carry out renovations of the hall and bar area. Footballers redecorated the changing rooms. A government grant of £10000 helped to cover our loss of income and pay for this. By August Football restarted and the bar reopened but under controlled conditions.

We expect the use of the club and its finances to continue to go from strength to strength once things get back to normal thanks to the endeavours of the members.

***The Officers and Committee of the WRSSC always welcome new members.  
Membership details can be obtained from:***

***David Bardell  
Dacres, White Roding, Essex CM6 1RG.  
Tel. 01279 877969  
or 07711 130242  
[dave.bardell@btinternet.com](mailto:dave.bardell@btinternet.com)***