

History of Erlestoke & Coulston Cricket Club

The origins of the club began in the 1930's when locals from two neighbouring villagers formed the Erlestoke & Coulston Cricket Club (ECCC).

Like most village clubs at the time the players were drawn from all walks of rural life – farmers, labourers, professional people, tradesmen and artisans. The first pitch was a farmer's field on the side of a hill.

The club disbanded on the outbreak of World War Two and only the occasional cricket match was played against the staff and guests of the "big house" of the village, Baynton House.

The club was resurrected again after the War and began playing local league cricket but the changes in rural life, work patterns and economies meant that the club struggled to attract enough players to make it viable and the club was disbanded again.

Several attempts were made to re-start the club again but it wasn't until the 1980s when a few local enthusiasts managed to obtain use of a field called New Road from local farmer Eddie Look that the momentum built into positive action. With a pitch assured the club began recruiting local players and found fertile ground in the growing numbers of new commuters living in the surrounding villages and from enthusiastic local youngsters.

The club began to play regular cricket against local villages and grew from strength to strength. In 1988 the club committee negotiated with the MOD to begin leasing the Walled Garden site from them, located behind the George & Dragon pub in Erlestoke High Street.

The Walled Garden was formerly the flower and vegetable garden for Baynton House but the MOD took over the site in the 1930s as a camp site for troop exercises taking place on nearby Salisbury Plain. By the 1980s the Walled Garden had fallen into disuse and disrepair and was piled full of rubble and debris. The MOD was happy to lease the site to ECCC on a 21 year contract and an enthusiastic group of players, supporters and family set about raising the £5000 we needed to flatten and refurbish the site, get a water supply to the ground and then helped set about transforming the site so that the club was ready to host its first season at the Walled Garden in 1991. Our pavilion came to us in flat-pack form when an army tank flattened a hut on the Plain and we were called by the army to come and collect it if we wanted it. We transported it back to the ground and reassembled it and it has proved a great and functional pavilion for the club ever since. Today the Walled Garden is generally agreed to be one of the most attractive, unique and best playing grounds in the region.

We established a junior section in 1992 and has proved a highly successful and rewarding addition to the club and one that is still going strong today.

In 2013 we took a major step forward in securing its long-term future when it managed to negotiate the purchase of the Walled Garden site and its access road from the MOD. This was achieved with the help of funding from Sport England, The Devizes Area Board, The Landfill Trust and the club's own reserves.

The club continues to thrive and to grow, with a full fixture card of Sunday and mid-week village cricket, a flourishing junior and adult playing section and a wonderful, unique village ground on which to play and enjoy cricket. Now that we own the ground we have plans to further develop the facilities and amenities at the club including bringing mains electricity to the site, continuing to improve the grounds and building a new pavilion.