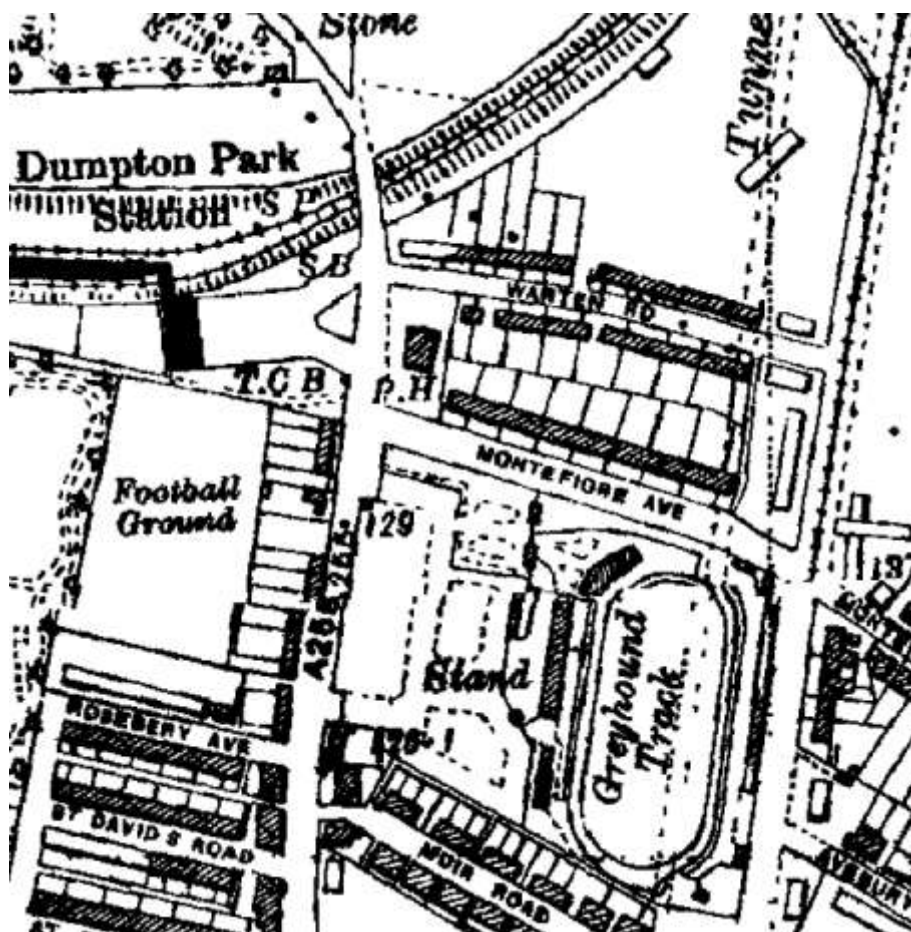


Senior Football in Ramsgate 1932 – 1940

In the early 1930s local wholesale newsagent Eddie Butcher made a serious effort to rejuvenate senior football in Ramsgate when he helped form a representative team of newsboys, the "Press Wanderers", who started off in the Thanet (Thursday) League.

With generous help from the Harrisons, a great sporting family who were keen to put Ramsgate on the football map, a large sum of money was provided to buy a new ground at Dumpton.

Popularly described as a stadium that "will make Ramsgate the mecca of sporting enthusiasts in East Kent", the new arena formed a triangle between Warten Road to the south and Salisbury Avenue. An impressive new stand was erected, and the Kent FA management committee admitted Press Wanderers to Kent League II for the 1932/33 season.



Few 'newsboy' pioneers appeared in the opening matches, as Messrs Butcher and Poulton, the Wanderers' secretary, signed on numerous recruits and players who made their debut at the new Dumpton ground. These included Myhill, Stennings, Cochrane, Cross, McCall, G.Bird, Ratcliffe, Ogilvie, J.Bird, McCroarty and Williams – a winning combination that delighted local fans.

In six consecutive league battles Ramsgate Press Wanderers scored 30 goals and picked up 11 out of a maximum possible of 12 points, and in the 2nd Qualifying Round of the Kent Senior Cup at Crabble defeated Dover 7-1 (who had knocked Grenville out with a 2-1 home win in the 1st round). The Wanderers continued to impress when they beat Lloyds' Division I side at Sittingbourne, thanks to full back Stan Cochrane's free kick just before half-time. Unfortunately in the next tie away to Bexley, another senior XI, the Wanderers lost by a narrow margin.

By Christmas brilliant football and wise administration saw the Club occupying 4th place in the league, while more points and a further 17 goals came from January's fixtures alone, with centre-forward Stennings' contribution to the tally making him a striker opposing defences had to be careful with. Civil war broke out in Ramsgate on 25th February, when the Wanderers visited Grenville at Southwood in the league, and although the visitors won this most local of derbies comfortably, the debate between both sets of Ramsgate fans went on

for some time. Optimism prevailed at the end of the 1932/33 season, but although they finished on equal points to Sheppey United Reserves at the top of the League the championship was lost on goal difference and the Wanderers were runners-up. Accordingly, at a meeting during May Mr Butcher, in association with Messrs Poulton, Greengrass and Harrison, voted in favour of seeking admission to Kent League Division I.

Grenville continued in the Folkestone & District Senior League in 1932/33 and finished in 4th place, beating Dover United 4-0 at Southwood but losing 5-2 away. Grenville's Reserves and St Luke's were again competing in the Kent Amateur League (Eastern Section).

On 8th June 1933 officials of the county association elected Ramsgate Press Wanderers, along with London Paper Mills, to the Kent League's premier division.

This football revival required fresh talent compatible with the higher standard of opposition, and with between 150 and 200 players interested in joining the Club, Ernie Webster of Bolton Wanderers was signed as player-manager. Other new recruits were Joe Reedman (Mansfield Town and Millwall), Tommy Gore, Frank Torr (Gillingham), Bob Hindley (Swansea Town), Bob Iverson, Jack Lang (Folkestone) and Billy Hopkins. Several former members were retained and new players secured as the season progressed.

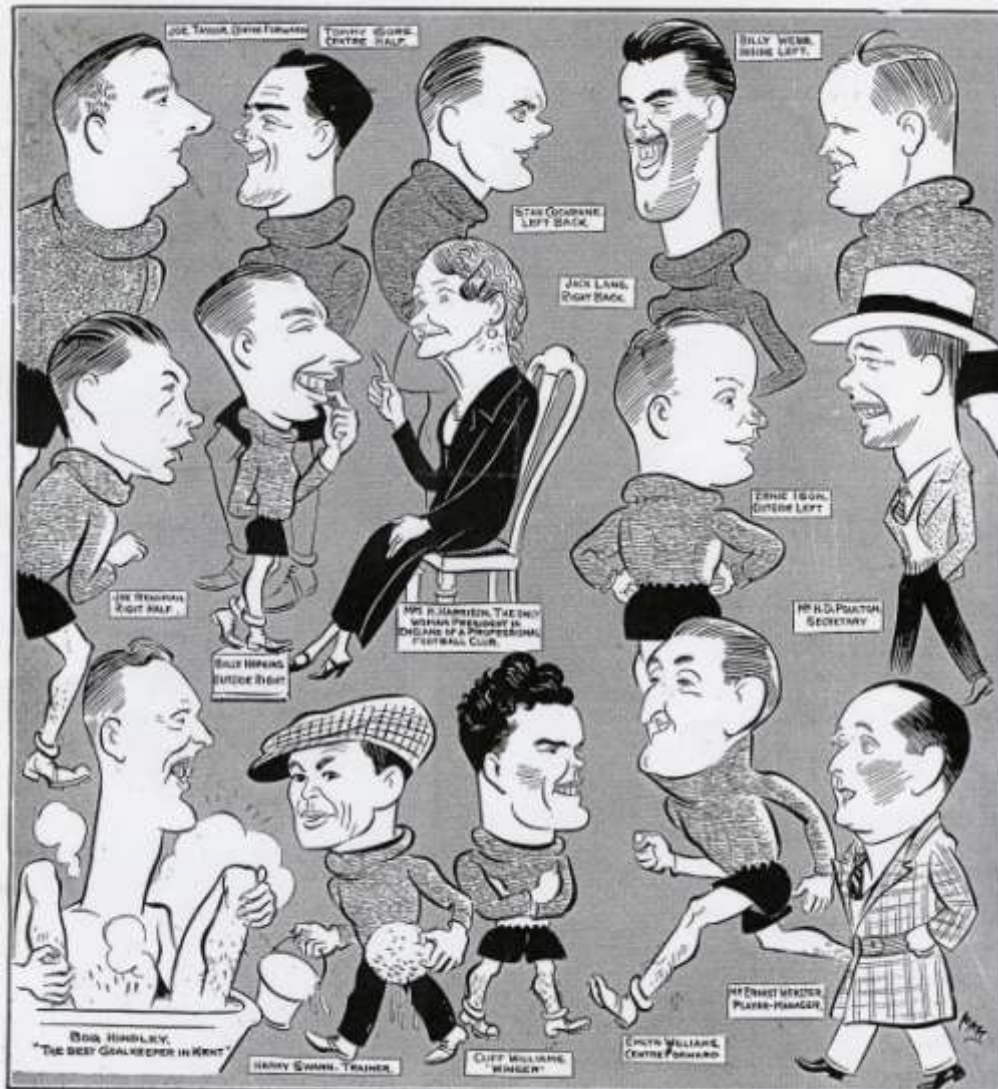
The 1933/34 season got under way on Thursday 31st August when the Mayor, Alderman Mrs Florence Dunn, kicked off in a league match against Folkestone in front of more than 2,000 supporters. Once again the Wanderers got off to a flying start with big victories over several established clubs, but had an early exit from the FA Cup when Aylesford Paper Mills won the 2nd replay. The Wanderers proved their resilience in an encounter with Erith & Belvedere when, after being two goals down, they fought back to a draw, and by the mid-season point they were top of the league and boasted a 100% home record.

For the Christmas day match at Dumpton the Wanderers beat Margate 2-0 in front of a crowd of approximately 5,000, whereas for the return match at Hartsdown Park on Boxing day only 3,500 saw Margate win 3-1.

Memories of Harry Collyer's team a decade earlier were rekindled with the Wanderers' Senior Cup successes. Three comparative newcomers to the first team, Ernie Ison (previously with Brighton & Hove Albion and Watford) and Cliff and Emlyn Williams, scored the goals that beat Sittingbourne in an earlier round, but the game proved expensive, with the players suffering severe injuries during the course of exchanges. Grenville 6-0, Ashford 3-2, and Maidstone 1-0 were the January Senior Cup victories leading up to the semi-final at Dover against Southern League Margate on 10th March. A local derby and cup tie in one saw a very lively match in front of 3,863 spectators, and though the Wanderers finished on the wrong end of a 5-1 score line, some excuse could be found in the injuries they sustained (with Webster and McGroarty hobbling about and Lang unconscious in the dressing room).

Notable results during 1933/34 were the 8-4 defeat of Erith & Belvedere but, on the debit side, a 10-1 trouncing at Priestfield stadium. Overall though, the Wanderers had a satisfactory season and amassed 44 points from their 36 League games with 19 wins and 6 draws (scoring 84 goals and conceding 55). In addition to the dual defeat of Northfleet, the Wanderers reached the semi-finals of the Senior Cup and the Kent League Cup, and were unbeaten until mid-November (and unbeaten at home until just before Easter). The Club were also, according to a caricature in the Sunday Graphic & Sunday News, the only professional club in England at that time to have a woman president in Mrs H Harrison.

RAMSGATE PRESS WANDERERS. By "MATT"



Reproduced from the SUNDAY GRAPHIC & SUNDAY NEWS, March 25, 1934

On all sides it was agreed that Ramsgate Press Wanderers FC was sound from both a playing and financial perspective, however the Committee wasn't content to rest on their laurels and renewed their search for even better talent.

Among local businessmen interested in the furtherance of Ramsgate football was Councillor Percy Turner, who became Chairman, with the retiring Chairman Mr L Hogbin announcing steady improvement and hopes for a bright future, and Messrs Narramore and Swendell elected to serve on the committee. Figures for 1933/34 showed membership up to 275; £120 had been contributed by various means to club funds and Mr K Billingham officially disclosed a balance at the bank of nearly £60.

C Poynton (Tottenham Hotspur) was signed as player-manager for the opening of the 1934/35 season, while only three of the previous season's 'regulars' were retained: Ernie Webster (wing-half), Ernie Ison (outside-left), and Jack Lang (defence). A number of reserves were again asked to sign and the services of several experienced footballers were secured. Great things were expected of full-back J Watson (Warwick and Coventry City), left-back Viercent (Tufnel Park), half-backs Nottage and Edwards (Islington Corinthians), forward T Wilson (Sheerness), Tomlinson (Redhill) and Terris (Chelmsford Town).

Other players that season included J.Hill (a 27 year old centre-forward who during seven seasons had scored 75 goals for Jarrow, 52 for Newport 52, 95 for Darlington, 52 for Blythe Spartans, and 78 for Spennymoor United), F.Dreyer (a 26 year old inside-right who had been a centre-half with Newport County and inside-forward with Gateshead, where he had many goals to his credit, J.Mulkeen (a 23 year old goalkeeper previously with Folkestone), T.Robinson (a centre-half who was a well known county player, had experience with Torquay and came from Margate). And half-back Harry Ward (who had previously been with Grenville but had recently returned from a career with the French club Nimes).

Admission charges were reduced and ground improvements featured increased covered accommodation – 2,400 people could be adequately sheltered in inclement weather, while seating was provided for 1,600. Yet in spite of every effort to satisfy fickle supporters, receipts from home games got smaller and the spectre of extinction hovered.

Rapidly declining gates made it apparent that expenses were not being covered and players, called upon to help the Club out of financial difficulties, agreed to accept a cut in wages. Strangely, the performance of the team gave no cause for this unhappy position. Without hitting the highlights, consistent form attained 2nd position in the league table by Christmas.

On 16th February Ramsgate visited Canterbury Waverley in Kent League Division 1, and by then had slipped to 3rd place above Gillingham (in 4th) and also Canterbury Waverley (in 5th). According to 'The Waverley News' match programme the Ramsgate team that day was due to comprise of Mulkeen, Holmes, R.C. Wilton, Webster, Ward, Robinson, Wilson, Coleman, Williams, Wallace and Ison.



Ramsgate's connection with Tottenham Hotspur saw the London club send their 'A' team (3rd XI) down to Ramsgate for a friendly match on 21st March 1935. Ramsgate won the match 2-1 and although details of the team and scorers have yet to be tracked down, Tottenham's archives record their team as Nicholls, Dorling, Hicks, Walker, Bellamy, Levene, Hitchins, Lister, Ivory, Briggs and Lynch – the visitors' goal being scored by Briggs.

Although Ramsgate eventually finished the season in 7th place, the double had been achieved over Aylesford Paper Mills, Tunbridge Wells Rangers and Maidstone. The best win of the season was the 7 goal victory against Bexley Heath in November 1934, where the man of the match was undoubtedly T. Wilson, who went on to give long and loyal service to Gillingham.

Grenville won the Kent Amateur League Division 1 (Eastern Section) in 1934/35, with a 4-3 away win at Dover (but succumbing at Southwood 4-8). Grenville also knocked Dover out of the Kent Amateur Cup, with a 4-1 away win. St Luke's also played in Division 1 Eastern this season, beating Dover 5-2 in Ramsgate but losing 4-1 away, and finishing the League in 12th place out of 13.

Prior to the start of the 1935/36 season, and the demise of Press Wanderers, fresh negotiations were held with London clubs in the hope that the Ramsgate side might be adopted as a 'nursery', similar to the arrangement with Arsenal that had been of such benefit to local rivals Margate. Secretary, Mr George Baker, later announced Fulham's interest and that, he promised, they would supply players.


Of the old brigade Stan Cochrane, 'Tug' Wilson and Ernie Webster remained at Dumpton and two goalkeepers were sought – Richards of Merthyr Tydfil and Jackson of Gillingham. The 'Press XI' for the opening game of the season caused quite a stir locally, revealing that three Margate players (Braithwaite, Tricker and Freddy Forward) had decided to move to Ramsgate. McCormack was the goalkeeper eventually found to fill the 1st team vacancy, but the die was cast. The season had little to commend it, with the Wanderers languishing at the foot of the table. While Southern League Margate had a championship-winning season, Ramsgate were at the bottom of the Kent League and were knocked out of the FA Cup at home by Margate, losing 5-1 in front of a crowd of about 5,000.

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With a successful Margate club sweeping all before them support inevitably crossed the island. Grenville and St Luke's continued in Division 1 (East) of the Kent Amateur League in 1935/36, along with Ramsgate's Reserves.

In September 1935 Grenville found themselves involved in a three-leg tie against Dover in the preliminary round of the Kent Amateur Cup when, having initially beaten Dover 5-3 away in front of a crowd of 494, the game was replayed following a protest that Grenville had used ineligible players. Dover won the replay 1-0 but used 2 ineligible players themselves, with the tie finally being decided at the 3rd attempt at Dover, 3-0 in the home side's favour.

Dover had cup success against other Ramsgate clubs too, knocking St Luke's out of the Kent Benevolent Cup with a 10-0 home win, and later beating Ramsgate's Reserves 2-0 in the final before a crowd of 1,037. In the League St Luke's beat Dover 4-2 at home and Grenville drew 3-3 with Dover at Southwood – all other league fixtures between Ramsgate clubs and Dover went in the latter's favour. Final League standings had Grenville in 5th spot, St Luke's in 8th, and Ramsgate's Reserves in 11th out of 11.

On 30 June 1936 Wanderers announced that, showing a £6,000 loss over three seasons, they would not seek re-election to the Kent League. All efforts to arouse better support had received little or no response, and it was regretfully decided to put the Dumpton Stadium up for sale.

Several of the Wanderers' squad went on to have successful league careers. Folkestone borne defender Bob Iverson went on, via Wolves, to play for Aston Villa from 1936 to 1948 (making 153 appearances and scoring 12 goals).



The most successful must have been Ted Harston (left) who, after playing for both Town and Wanderers, set the record for scoring the highest number of League goals in a season for Mansfield Town of Division 3 North, scoring 55 out of Mansfield's total of 91 in the 1936/37 season. Having scored a total of 85 goals in 75 games for Mansfield, he was bought by Liverpool in June 1937 for the then record transfer fee of £3000. He only played for Liverpool on five occasions during the first-half of the 1937/38 season. He scored after only 13 minutes of his debut at Chelsea on the opening day of the season but Liverpool lost 6-1. He then scored twice in the next game when Portsmouth visited Anfield but lost his place in the side to Fred Howe after four matches had been played.

Following the demise of Ramsgate, and later Margate in 1938, amateurs Grenville and St Luke's provided the only senior football in Thanet as World War 2 approached.

Grenville were runners-up in to Dover in the Eastern Section of Division 1 of the Kent Amateur League in 1936/37 while St Luke's finished 10th of 13. Dover did the double over Grenville in the league – 2-0 at Ramsgate and 6-0 at Dover, the latter in front of a crowd of more than 1,000. St Luke's managed a point off Dover, with a 1-1 draw at home, although they lost 8-0 away.

In 1937/38 Grenville and St Luke's (and Dover) played in the Kent Amateur League 'Premier' Division (Eastern Section). Grenville finished the league in 7th place despite being beaten by Dover 4-2 at home and 2-0 away, while St Luke's (who finished 11th of 12) beat Dover 3-2 at home but lost 5-0 away.

Grenville (and Dover) moved into Kent League Division 2 for the 1938/39 season, the Ramsgate side finishing runners-up, with Dover again doing the double over them (Grenville losing 3-1 at home and 2-1 away). St Luke's remained in the Kent Amateur League, finishing 6th of 11 in Division 2.

In 1939/40 the Kent League closed down in September when competitive football was suspended at the outbreak of war, with most teams having played only one or two fixtures. A number of clubs played friendlies in October and at the end of that month the Kent FA formed the Kent Regional League, with Grenville playing in the Eastern Group alongside Dover, Gillingham, and the newly formed Margate Football & Sports Club (for whom a new wooden stand was erected at the top end of the ground at Hartsdown Park, and with Bill Fogg as Manager).

This should have provided a 20 match programme for the clubs but, owing to various circumstances, some teams were unable to fulfil all their fixtures. Grenville lost 9-0 at Dover in front of more than 800 spectators on 11th November, but beat Dover at Southwood 4-0 on 16th December. Grenville played Margate on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, losing 6-0 at home and 3-1 away (in front of a crowd of 300) respectively. Grenville visited Dover again later in the season for a friendly, which ended as a 3-3 draw.

Mobilisation in east Kent did bring a bonus to Grenville, in the shape of two players in khaki who took the local scene by storm. To quote a contemporary of those times 'Micky' Donoghue and 'Mart' Martin (better known to post-war Redskins as 'Pat' and 'Kipper') "left opposing defenders doddering in the dust like so many rheumatically octogenarians".

		Pl'd	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts
1	Shorts Sports	20	18	1	1	115	29	37
2	Gillingham	19	15	2	2	91	32	32
3	Aylesford Paper Mills	19	9	1	9	65	60	19
4	Margate	20	7	5	8	47	44	19
5	Dover	18	9	1	8	56	58	19
6	Lloyds Paper Mills	19	6	4	9	58	69	16
7	Sittingbourne	19	4	8	7	48	66	16
8	Canterbury Waverley	16	6	3	7	37	57	15
9	Ramsgate Grenville	15	5	3	7	40	62	13
10	Ashford	19	4	4	11	44	59	12
11	Maidstone United	18	1	2	15	23	88	4

St Luke's were knocked out of the Kent Senior Cup at Hartsdown on 2nd December 1939, when the new Margate club won 3-0. Grenville restored Ramsgate's pride, and avenged St Luke's, by knocking Margate out of the Kent Senior Cup with a 5-0 thrashing on 30th December at Southwood.

Grenville's crowning glory in the 'pre-Dunkirk' days must have been securing the title of Kent's Best Amateurs by winning the Kent Amateur Cup on 7th May 1940.

A report exists from an earlier round, a 16 goal thriller against Eythorne Sports (who won the Kent Amateur League South Regional Division that season), as follows:

"It was an amazing game packed with incident throughout. A goal from Martin in the first few minutes foretold the shape of things to come and after that it was just a case of two bemused goalies extracting from the nets a ball they must have heartily loathed.

"Individually the match was a triumph for Martin and Donoghue, those two services players who performed miracles with the mediocre and changed

Grenville into a formidable eleven. In that, their first game, they scored eight goals between them!

“Martin was all one would expect from an Army player. He was the Alex James of the side; a schemer whose wiles and craft welded five forwards into an aggressive unit. He differed from Alex in that that star was the possessor of a not too powerful kick. Martin ... well, goalkeepers he met still have unpleasant memories of his shooting abilities!

“About young Donoghue. He was without doubt the best centre-forward seen at Ramsgate in years. Not because he could hit a ball on the run like no one I had seen before; not only because he streaked about the field as though he were mounted on one of his namesake’s favourite horses; but because for perseverance and wholehearted enthusiasm for the game one could use a wartime ration of petrol trying to find his better”.

Robins, inside-left, another serviceman, completed a trio that would have put grey hairs on most defences in the country and in the final tie, versus Lloyds PTC, those three, aided and abetted by QMS Ernie Webster, inspired team spirit and imbued the local lads with such fire and enthusiasm that the premier award for non-professional sides was carried off with comparative ease. Those local lads included Munday (goalkeeper), McGroarty and Thompson (backs), Ward and Watson (halves), and Hoare, Newton and Fenner (Forwards).

Grenville beat Lloyds Paper Mills 7-3 in the final of the Kent Amateur Cup, and the elusive, brilliant, sharpshooting ‘Micky’ Donoghue scored 5 of them!

Alderman Kempe, president of Grenville and champion of local soccer, expressed his faith in Ramsgate football and made a strong case for a municipal sports stadium at Margate Road. Although his faith in the game has been justified, the Margate Road scheme failed to command the support it deserved, and Southwood was destined to remain the permanent home of Ramsgate football after the war.



Alderman A.B.C. Kempe