

**THE VERY FIRST  
WEALDSTONE FC  
A HISTORY FROM 1883 – 1895**



**BY  
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**PART ONE: - WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?**

*Cover photo: Early in 2016 I received an email from John Perry about a family member, George, who had played for the first Wealdstone FC in 1892-3 and had a medal from the Middlesex Junior Cup Final of that year. What transpired after some research and a couple of meetings was that George Perry had in fact played for the club over five seasons but had not played in the final as he had been injured in an earlier match. The medal, pictured on the cover, was attached to an Albert Watch Chain with a pocket watch. The 'set' had, we believe, been presented to George by the club to record his part in the cup run prior to the final. He was to return to play the following season before a further injury, a broken leg, which was to end his career.*

## INTRODUCTION

Thanks are due to Matteo Tonna for his efforts and assistance with researching match reports and details that have been used to build this history. Thanks also to Terry Hissey and Martin Read for the read through and corrections!

When I started research in 1997 for *'The History of Wealdstone FC'*, I began from the point that we all thought we knew, the formation date of 1899-1900. That had been detailed on club badges and noted as the formation of the club when the Golden Jubilee Handbook was published in 1950. Compiling the information available at the time didn't take long as much had been destroyed when the club left Lower Mead, still more was destroyed in a subsequent fire, but from the remnants, and armed with a few phone numbers, research began.

Reading the Jubilee Handbook, it was very soon apparent that 1899-1900 wasn't the formation date of the club but a step on the way, not least as the quoted match report from the fixture against Northwood in 1899 stated that *"the club wore the same colours"*. Further investigation in the Harrow Observers of the time also brought forward comments that *"a number of the same players were used"*. The question was: same as what? And when? It started a four-year process reading backwards in time establishing the facts as they were recorded and were then available. With reasonable clarity, links were established back to the formation of two clubs, 'The Oaks' and 'Cogswell & Harrison' in Wealdstone in 1887, though there were a couple of older Harrow clubs that at the very least had a number of players in common.

At that time, the path was outlined but some pieces of the jigsaw were missing, so the date of formation remained the same. In an effort to build as complete a record of the club as possible, research continued and, as more information has been found over twenty years later, gaps have been filled and we can now tell the story of two Wealdstone Football Clubs.

What follows here is the story of the first of these clubs and the earliest days of the modern club.

## WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN

Football was being played in Harrow as early as 1870 with a number of sides playing under their own local variations of the rules. Matches are even recorded as being played under one set of rules for the first half and a second set of rules for the second period. They also sometimes involved twelve or thirteen players on each side and this was all despite the establishment of the Football Association Rules in 1863, which were intended to set a standard for all clubs and all matches nationwide.

By 1870 the rugby-style offside rule had been relaxed and replaced with a rule that a player would be onside as long as there were three opponents between him and the opposition goal. Additionally, matches were now played with a crossbar tape in place (literally, a tape tightened between two posts at the agreed height to form the goal), with handling of the ball banned on the field. Subsequent rule changes saw teams change ends at half-time but only if a goal had been scored. A further amendment in 1871 saw the introduction of the specific Goalkeeper position. He became the only person allowed to handle the ball in the act of protecting his goal. Prior to that it was allowable for all players to catch the ball.

The senior clubs in the area in the 1870s were Harrow School and Chequers who actually played in blue and white quartered shirts. The Chequers were later renamed Old Harrovians to reflect their origins at Harrow School, having already been recorded as such.

### OLD HARROVIANS AND HARROW ROVERS.

This match was arranged to come off at the Surrey Cricket Ground, Kennington Oval, on Tuesday, and took place accordingly, the competitors being principally old or present members of the great public school. It was finally arranged that there should be 15 on a side, the Association rules were adopted, and precisely at three o'clock the ball was sent on its course by Morton, the Captain of the Old Harrovians. The Rovers for a short time had apparently the best of the controversy, but in less than ten minutes after play had commenced Chenery, ably assisted by Vidal (who had been impressed into the ranks of the Old Harrovians as substitute), brought the ball down, and Chenery, by a clever side kick, put it under the line, the leather which struck against the post fortunately glancing upon the right side. After the change of ends had been effected the ball was kept well in the centre of the ground, and the play, which had been very fast at the outset, became much slower, the Old Harrovians being held well at bay by the pluck and determination of their opponents, some considerable time elapsing ere any decisive advantage could be gained by either. At last Vidal secured the ball, and by a brilliant run down on his part, Crake got hold of it, when in the absence of a goal keeper on the side of the Rovers the latter sent it under the line, thus securing a second goal for the Old Harrovians after thirty minutes' hard play since the last downfall of the Rovers' goal. Again ends were changed, and the game was renewed with great energy by both parties; but despite the strenuous exertions of the Rovers another goal was shortly secured by Vidal somewhat easily. Play was then continued until 4.30, but no further goal was recorded, the Old Harrovians winning by three goals to none. Chenery was most energetic for the victors, and Crake, Morton, Rhodes, and Vidal did great service. For the Harrow Rovers Paton (the captain), O'Shaughnessy, Rivett Carnac, the Welchs, and Thornton were most conspicuous, but nearly all played well. Sides:

OLD HARROVIANS.—M. T. Morton (back), C. W. Alcock, W. P. Crake, J. H. Morgan, E. B. Hartley, C. T. Reid (back), J. Stileman, P. Rhodes, E. Fairfield, A. Thompson, C. J. Chenery, P. W. S. Vidal, and V. Shaw.

HARROW SCHOOL.—W. B. Paton (captain), W. F. G. O'Shaughnessy, R. C. Welch, H. M. Temple, J. H. Mews, A. H. Thornton, F. H. Thornton, R. C. Thornton, F. L. Paton, P. T. Rivett Carnac, H. J. H. Giffard, A. W. Welch, and G. H. Kendall.

Uxbridge Gazette 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1886

The Town side appears to have been a scratch side rather than a fore-runner of a local club. It can be noted from

### FOOTBALL.

**MATCH AT THE SURREY CRICKET GROUND.**—The match between the Wanderers and the Harrow Rovers was decided at the Kennington oval on Wednesday. In consequence of the heavy rains the ground was far from being in a good condition for football, being so slippery as to prevent anything like a fine exhibition of dribbling. The contest proved to be a very one-sided affair, as the Wanderers won by four goals to none, two of which were taken by A. F. Kinnaid, whilst C. J. Chenery and A. W. Howard contributed one each. This defeat may in a great measure be ascribed to the want of knowledge displayed by the Harrow men of the Football Association rules, by which the game for the most part was governed. In the concluding portion of the match the Harrow rules were adopted, but without any success resulting the contest was brought to a termination. The sides were:—Wanderers: C. W. Alcock, A. J. Baker, Q. Hogg, A. F. Kinnaid, G. G. Kennedy, A. W. Howard, F. Stileman, M. T. Morton, F. Street, C. J. Chenery, and W. P. Crake.—Harrow Rovers: W. B. Paton, E. Bailey, C. B. Childs, —Pemberton, R. C. Welch, W. F. O'Shaughnessy, J. Mews, C. G. O. Bridgeman, H. M. Temple, J. C. Thompson, J. Baird, and P. T. Rivett Garnac.

Harrow Observer 16<sup>th</sup> December 1870

(The Harrow Rovers mentioned were in existence for around three years and were not part of the later club)

Most of the matches played were challenges but Harrow Chequers were entrants in three of the first six English (FA) Cup competitions without actually ever playing a match. In each competition they scratched before their first tie.

However, one of their players, Morton Betts, did play and is remembered for scoring the only goal in the first ever FA Cup Final (1872). He was playing for Wanderers versus Royal Engineers under the pseudonym "AH Chequer", i.e. "A Harrow Chequer" reflecting the team for which he had previously played. In addition to the Old Harrovians, an annual match was also played locally by the Home-boarders of Harrow School and the 'Town' side, a team it seems made up of local residents that assembled for the matches which continued into the late 1880's.

A MATCH between the Town and Old Homeboarders was played on Boxing-day in the Football Park, Harrow. Mr. Kinloch captained the Homeboarders, and Mr. Guildford the Town. Within a few minutes of starting the Homeboarders carried the ball down the ground and secured a goal. After this, with the hill in their favour, the Town defied the efforts of their antagonists for about 40 minutes. Watson, Mann, and Guildford made several runs up, and once brought the ball within a few inches of their opponents' goal, but the danger was averted by one of the Homeboarders, and shortly afterwards they secured another goal. This was succeeded by two others in rather rapid succession, and when time was called the Homeboarders were the winners by four goals to love. For them H. G. Kinloch, M. Kinloch, R. H. Hayward and Haygarth and Brown deserve high commendation, while for the Town, Watson, Cooke, Mann, and Guildford all did well.

Bells Sporting Chronicle 24<sup>th</sup> December 1870

the match report that from the Home Boarders team Kinloch, Hayward, Haygarth and Brown were to progress into the two local sides, as did Cooke and Mann from the Town team.

Mr Kay in responding to the toast of "The Officers," said that with all the excitement now manifest in Harrow, it was hard to believe that 14 years ago such a thing as Association football was unknown in the district. Thirteen years ago, he in conjunction with Mr Goshawk and others, started a club which eventually became the "Harrow Rovers." Five years since they developed into the Harrow Athletic Club, and got into the semi-final for the West Middlesex Cup. Three years later they joined with the Wealdstone Football Club, and the result was soon apparent by their getting into the semi-final for the Middlesex Cup. He trusted greater success would attend them in the future (cheers). He proposed the toast of "The Football Team," coupled with the name of Mr H Woodbridge.

Mr Woodbridge in responding, mentioned the great obligation they were under to Mr Hawkins of "The Havelock Arms" for the use of a dressing room for their opponents.

Harrow Observer 27<sup>th</sup> March 1896

Reporting on the Harrow Athletic Club AGM



1885 - 1890

Harrow Town

earliest matches, most likely as any details would have been required to be produced by the club and sent in to the newspaper, even then with no guarantee of inclusion.

Rarely was all the information available in one report. News, space and time restrictions allowing, a result or details of a goal scorer were included, though sometimes held over for one or two weeks until a space was available.

That changed late in 1885 when a second local club, Harrow Town was formed.

Some of the early match details are known, the first being a fixture against Westminster College played in late October 1885. It was one of a number of early fixtures from the inaugural season recorded, but the reports show little success for the club as they lost three and drew one of the four matches we know of, conceding 21 goals in the process. One positive was that they did manage to score at least once in each of those matches. The one known Harrow Rovers result from the same season also shows a loss, 1 – 2 at home to Acton Rangers.

**UXBRIDGE v. HARROW TOWN.** — This match was played in Light's field, Uxbridge, on Wednesday afternoon. The play up to half-time was very even, neither side being able to score, although both goals had been jeopardised several times. Shortly after the change Uxbridge scored out of a bully in front of goal, but some quarter of an hour before time Harrow equalised matters, and this state of affairs remained unaltered at the call of "time." Teams were—Uxbridge: "Minky" (goal), A. J. Taylor and A. Brooks (backs), E. Stevens, G. B. "George," M. Woodbridge (half-backs), C. Heron, H. Borton, F. Woodbridge, C. Coles, and A. Woodbridge (forwards). Harrow: Conway (goal), A. H. Brown and H. Scharlied (backs), A. H. Wood and F. J. C. Brown (half-backs), C. Colbeck, A. Paine, C. M. Wood, R. F. Hayward, M. H. W. Hayward, and G. G. Brown (forwards).

With modern views and rivalry, it seems a little strange to start a history of the first Wealdstone FC with the foundation of a Harrow side but we must, to reflect the origin of one of the two 'bloodlines' (one red, one blue) that were a key part to the beginning and end of the first Wealdstone FC. The very early days were recalled in a speech made at the Annual General Meeting of Harrow Athletic (a later club in the story) in March 1896.

The report for the meeting in the Harrow Observer refers to the fact that "It was hard to believe that fourteen years previously, such a thing as Association Football was unknown in the district. Thirteen years ago, he in conjunction with Mr. Goshawk and others started a club which eventually became Harrow Rovers". The report also refers to the merger of Harrow Rovers and a later Harrow Town to form the Harrow Athletic Club and a subsequent merger with the Wealdstone Football Club, both covered later in this history.

Looking back through the available records in local newspapers, nothing is recorded of the Rovers' (who initially played at Pinner Recreation Ground)



1883 - 1890

Harrow Rovers

**Harrow Town v. Westminster College.**—At Harrow, and resulted in a victory for Westminster by six goals to two. At the start the Harrow team seemed to have the best of the play, and in a few minutes secured two goals. This roused the Collegians, who soon succeeded in placing a goal to their credit. On changing ends, the College team carried all before them. Their combined play baffled the home team, who, however, played up pluckily, but could not break away. Before time was called Westminster had scored six goals. For the College, the full-backs (Rawlinson and Gregory) played in their usual good form. Lamb (half-back) and Bullough (left wing) were very conspicuous, the latter playing a very dashing game. For Harrow, Kinloch, Wood, and Clowes played well. Of the Westminster goals, three were obtained by Bullough, and two by Dyche.

Harrow Observer 30<sup>th</sup> October 1885

The coverage in those formative years was sporadic at best, even Old Harrovians, the senior club in the district were rarely mentioned, though there was a news piece on the old school team published in the Dundee Courier on 13.04.1886.

The paper reported that an alumni had presented the school with a cheque for £10,000 (approximately £900,000 today), for the purchase of a football field in memory of a former headmaster.

Harrow Observer 31<sup>st</sup> December 1885



have walked the last mile or two to the ground as few like the Harrow Recreation Ground in Hindes Road (where both Harrow clubs had played since it opened in 1885) were adjacent to either railway.

## 1886-87

Twenty-five matches in all are recorded across the two clubs for the 1886-87 season, with challenge matches once again featuring local sides and those with the best transport links. The majority of the opponents were clubs that had been established for a number of years and these included Watford Rovers, a forerunner of the Watford FC of today.



Watford Observer 16<sup>th</sup> October 1886

Another club that has remained in existence since those fledgling days is Southall FC though many such as Watford Church Institute, Acton Rangers and Crescent (from Harrow) have long since been consigned to history.

The season included a lot of travel for matches as the Watford, Rickmansworth and Aldenham areas provided a number of opponents yet few matches seem to have been played against local clubs in the Harrow area or at Harrow School. Three matches were played between the two Harrow sides, one showing the strength of the clubs, it being a reserve team fixture.

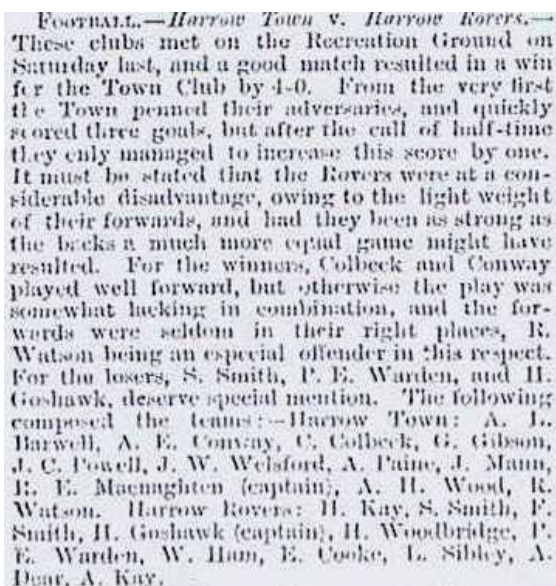
Harrow Town opened the season on the 9<sup>th</sup> October with a fixture against Watford Rovers, losing 3-4 at home. They had fought back well from 0-2 and 1-3 down to equalise, only to let in a fourth goal with three minutes play remaining. Typical of the time, the match

report names both sides and the Watford goal scorers, but not those of Harrow, except it does state that the first Harrow goal was an own goal!



The following week, Harrow Town were victorious against a visiting team from Watford Church Institute, scoring a solitary goal,

and that was followed by the first match of the season between the two local rivals. Harrow Town hosted Harrow Rovers (though both played their matches at Harrow Recreation Ground) and the Town side ran out winners 4-0. Town had scored three times in the first half, but it was noted that *“the Rovers were at a considerable disadvantage due to the light weight of their forwards”*. The comment continued *“had they been as heavy as their backs, a much more equal game might have resulted”*.



Harrow Observer 29<sup>th</sup> October 1886

As the season progressed, both sides saw some improvement on the previous seasons results, each recording a number of wins, but it was the Town side that held the local honours by winning both ‘first team’ matches by the same 4-0 score line. The Rovers did gain some revenge as they won the match between the two reserve sides 3-1. The Rovers, having lost away to the strong Aldenham Institute side in mid-November showed some improvement over the season and they scored a victory at home in the return match, 3–2.

Both Town and Rovers were cementing their place in local football and were striving for continued improvement. Aided by new players and regular practice matches when no challenge had been scheduled, the sides achieved a level of stability at the core of their respective teams and each side finished the season with three consecutive victories to cheer their supporters.

Another significant event occurred midway through the season late in 1886 as, just a few miles away from Harrow Recreation Ground in Ferndale Terrace alongside the London & Birmingham Railway line as it led to Harrow Station when Cogswell & Harrison, Gunmakers leased a new factory. (The station was renamed Harrow and Wealdstone Station a few months later, providing early recognition of the village of Wealdstone in its own right).

The company, relocating their manufacturing from Birmingham to the village was in itself an event many may not have been aware of at the time, but the move was to lead to the birth of the 'blue' bloodline of the first Wealdstone FC.

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