

Chapter 17

The Move From Rodney Parade To Spytty Park

Although many people played their part in setting up the new ground at Spytty Park, the following people were the main drivers :-



Eddie Mogford - Chairman



Fred Wangler - Treasurer



Mike Grace - Groundsman

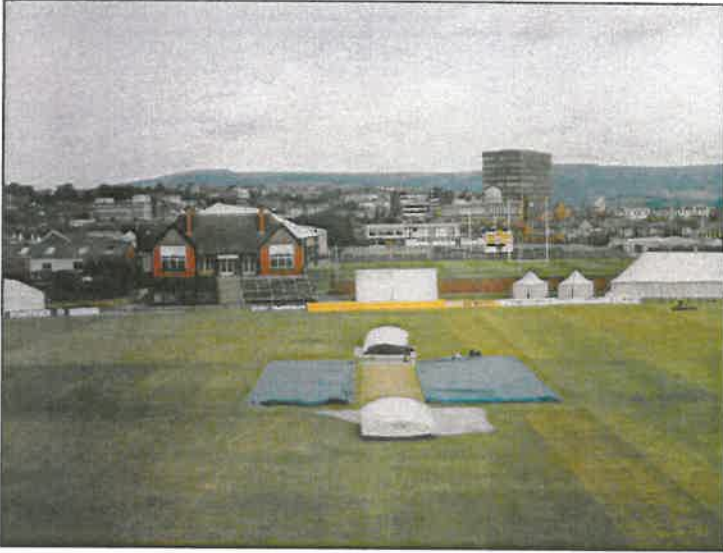


Mike & Dave Knight - Players, Junior Coaches, Groundsmen

***The Men Who Saved
Newport Cricket Club***

The Impossible Dream Comes True!

From This



**Rodney Parade
Before the Final First
Class Match
(June 1990)**

To This



**Spytty Park
Before Building Began
(May 1990)**

And Finally This



Spytty Park - ICC Trophy Training Base (June 2013)



'The Men Who Saved The Club'



Rodney Parade - 'The End is Nigh'

Ground Staff at Rodney Parade

In the mid 1980's, the prospects of a sale of the Club's Rodney Parade Cricket ground were growing by the day. A long battle by Cricket Club members to fight the proposed sale led to tensions between the Club and the NAC Management. There was a significant deterioration in the relationship and in a move probably designed at making the Cricketers walk away from their home, the NAC groundstaff spent less and less time preparing the Cricket ground.



Saving Grace - Mike Grace (Great Grandson of EM Grace, W G Grace's brother)

At a Cricket Committee Meeting, the rapidly deteriorating ground problem was discussed, with Mike Grace making the bold comment 'I could do better myself' - that was the start of a 30 year commitment to working on the Cricket ground, both at Rodney Parade and at Spytty Park.

With all ties to Newport Athletic Club being severed in 1988, when the ground was eventually sold, the Club was officially recognised as Newport Cricket Club, but this meant that the Cricketers had total responsibility for the ground's upkeep.

Although engaged in full time jobs, hours of dedicated devotion to the Rodney Parade playing surface by Mike Grace and his team of helpers - Eddie Mogford, together with Mike and Dave Knight, plus others, soon brought it back into pristine condition and the Club were able to enjoy excellent playing conditions until their eviction from the ground following the 'Ashes Match' in September 1990.

Glamorgan Return to Play at Rodney Parade

First Class Cricket hadn't been played at Rodney Parade, since the last of Glamorgan's Championship matches against Warwickshire in 1965. However, in 1988, Glamorgan were celebrating their own Centenary and decided to visit many of their 'out grounds' to mark the occasion. With the 'Death Knell' looming it was a fitting time to play at Rodney Parade, a ground they had not played First Class cricket on for 23 years. On 22nd May 1988, First Class cricket returned to Newport when Glamorgan CCC played Derbyshire in the Refuge Assurance 40 over Sunday League.

Mike Grace and the Club's voluntary helpers were left to prepare the ground for the match, a task which they did superbly and further Sunday League matches were played at the ground against Gloucestershire (1989) and Yorkshire (1990).



Club volunteers get things ready for the Derbyshire match



Glamorgan v Derbyshire at Rodney Parade (1988)



Spytty Park - 'The Men Who Saved The Club'



The Creation of the Spytty Park Ground'

A 'New Beginning' at Spytty Park (1992)

As the 'last rites' were being proclaimed at Rodney Parade in 1990, a new vision was developing at Spytty Park.



Eddie Mogford (Chairman) leads the Way Forward

In what was a very traumatic time for the Club - with its very existence in jeopardy, the Club's Officers led by Chairman Eddie Mogford, worked hard to keep the Club alive. From the depths of despair, a group of dedicated workers began to assess their options (which weren't many!!)

With great help from Newport Borough Council, particularly from Mayor Councillor Rosemary Butler and Director of Leisure, Alf Ropke. With Grants being received from The Foundation for Sport and Arts, along with SPORTLOT, the ground at Spytty Park was born, with two Cricket Squares being laid and the outfield levelled during the summer of 1991.

For two seasons (1991 & 1992), as the new ground at Spytty Park was being laid, the Club was 'homeless' playing all of its 1st team matches away from home.

The 'Opening Match' Sunday 12th July 1992

The Opening Match on the ground took place on Sunday 12th July 1992, when a South Wales Argus/Newport C.C. team played a star studded Lord's Taverner's Team invited to 'Officially Open the Ground'. Although the 3rd XI played on the artificial wicket on the reserve ground during 1992, the 'Opening Match' was the only match played on the ground that year - a full fixture list of matches at the new ground would start in 1993.

Although two new squares had been laid and the outfield levelled, much work was required in the early days to establish Spytty Park as a true cricket ground. With limited equipment and no money, the first few years at Spytty Park were very difficult and the ground was little better than a Parks ground. However, the determination and dedication to creating a top class Cricket facility to rival that at Rodney Parade was always evident and no obstacle would deter the Club stalwarts. Mike Grace, together with his loyal band of helpers - Eddie Mogford, Mike and Dave Knight and others set about the enormous task of maintaining two Cricket grounds.

Over a ten year period the ground was gradually transformed - artificial practice nets and wickets, a score board and tiered steps for viewing from the pavilion all followed, as the ground improved. As the profile of the Spytty Park Ground improved the importance of matches played at the ground also improved and by 2007, long term plans were beginning to fall into place, the Spytty Park ground and facilities were beginning to draw envious eyes.

Major Events/Matches at the new Spytty Park Cricket Ground included :-

- **175th Anniversary**

The 2009 season represented a significant milestone for Newport Cricket Club. Club officials and volunteers had worked tirelessly for nearly two decades to safeguard the Club's future and against the odds the Club had survived to see its 175th anniversary year - the ground at Spytty Park was now firmly established.

- **Spytty Park becomes a 'Centre of Cricket Excellence'**

By 2011 high profile matches had become a regular occurrence at the ground with Glamorgan 2nds, Cardiff MCCU, Wales Minor Counties, Wales age group teams and Cup Finals all being staged regularly at Spytty Park.

- **ICC Champions Trophy – Training Base**

By 2013, Newport's ground at Spytty Park had been transformed into a magnificent cricket ground with the Club winning the South Wales Premier League 'Ground of the Year' several times. However, in 2013 the ground surpassed anything that Rodney Parade had achieved, when it was selected as a Training Base for the 2013 ICC Champions Trophy. The full Sri Lankan squad took part in a full scale training session prior to their opening ICC Trophy match against New Zealand at the SWALEC Stadium (Cardiff), with the ground and facilities receiving excellent reviews. The ground was used again in 2017 by Pakistan as their training Base for the ICC Tournament.

- **First Class Cricket ('List A') Returns to Newport**

With the sale of Rodney Parade in 1990, it was felt that First-Class Cricket would never be played in Newport again. However, the impressive facilities at Newport Cricket Club's Spytty Park HQ, prompted the return of 'List A' cricket to Newport, when Glamorgan played Pakistan 'A' on Friday 15th July, 2016. 25 years after leaving Rodney Parade the Club's Officers and volunteers had achieved the impossible dream First Class cricket returning to Newport!

- **The Impossible Dream is Completed - County Championship Cricket Returns to Newport**

County Championship Cricket returned to Newport for the first time since 1965 - Glamorgan v Gloucestershire.





Spytty Park - 'The Men Who Saved The Club'



Spytty Park Becomes a First Class Ground'

▪ ICC Champions Trophy – Training Base in 2017 (Again)

Following the success of hosting Sri Lanka for training in 2013, the Club was once again selected as a Training Base for the 2017 ICC Champions Trophy, with Pakistan training at the ground before going on to win the ICC Champions Trophy by beating India in the Final.

▪ County Championship Cricket Returns to Newport

The Club's relationship with Glamorgan CCC had blossomed in recent years, staging ICC Trophy Training, Glamorgan CCC 1st XI Training and many other high profile matches. With Sophia Gardens being a venue for the 2019 Cricket World Cup, Glamorgan approached the Club to stage matches, and for their 1st team to train at Spytty Park, during the six week period. On 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th May, 2019, 4 Day County Championship Cricket was played at the Club's Spytty Park Ground, to complete the set of high profile fixtures. It was the first time that County Championship Cricket had been played in Newport since the Championship match against Warwickshire in 1965. The match against Gloucestershire rekindled memories of former glories at Rodney Parade with 'That Match' back in 1939, when Gloucestershire's Wally Hammond scored 302 and Glamorgan's Emerys Davies replied with 287n.o. in a memorable game that broke many records.

Newport International Sports Village (NISV)

A 'Sports Village' was the long term vision of the Newport Council, with the Cricket Club being the first club to locate at the site in 1992. Newport County soon followed, moving to Newport Stadium (Athletics) while other facilities snowballed. An Astro Turf Pitch, an Indoor Tennis and Cricket Centre, a Swimming Pool, not to mention the Velodrome and FAW Headquarters that followed later, were all built on the prestigious site and by 2014 the vision of the 'Newport International Sports Village' dream had come to reality - Newport Cricket Club occupied a central stage at the complex. How long serving Club Chairman/President, Bill Jones who died in 2000, would have loved to have seen the ground now!



Newport Cricket Club Museum

The Club's Museum created by Mike Knight, recognises past and present Club stalwarts who are recognised for their service to the Club in the Museum's 'Hall of Legends'. The inaugural 'Legends' elected were - Eddie Mogford, Mike Grace, Fred Wangler and Mike & Dave Knight, all of whom dedicated much of their time to 'Save Newport Cricket Club' Recognition as being the first members of the Club's 'Hall of Legends' is testimony to the work that they did to create a new and exciting future for Newport Cricket Club at Spytty Park.





Spytty Park 'A Centre of Sporting Excellence'



'The Club's Volunteers'

Since the Club's relocation to Spytty Park in 1992, there had only been one paid officer - the Club Steward, with all other tasks being carried out by volunteers. Some of the volunteers had devoted a lifetime of service to Newport Cricket Club and with the return of County Championship Cricket to Newport in 2019 for the Glamorgan v Gloucestershire match they deserve special mention.

Long Serving Officers

The Club is grateful to the service given to the Club by it's Officers in 2019 :-

Paul Morris (Steward for over 20 years)

Fred Wangler (Treasurer for 42 years)

Phil Stallard (Secretary for 26 years)

David Shakespeare (Fixture Secretary for 19 years)

Groundsmen

Mike Grace, Eddie Mogford, Mike and Dave Knight all involved in ground work at Rodney Parade were still in charge of the grounds at Spytty Park and had been instrumental in making the Club's Spytty Park Ground a First Class Venue. Other reliable helpers on the ground included David Shakespeare, Mike Rutledge, Allen Wood, Robert Brown and Graham Kingston all devoting time, effort and energy to the Club's cause. With the development of the FAW's Dragon Park HQ at Spytty Park in 2014, FAW Head Groundsman Geraint Scannell was a source of constant advice and support until he left in 2019.

Mike and Dave Knight Retire from Work

In 2011, Club stalwarts Mike and Dave Knight took early retirement from their employment as School Teachers. Although totally committed to Newport Cricket Club beforehand, they were now able to devote all of their time to the Club and became full time voluntary workers, spending most days at the Club working on the ground and evenings coaching the Juniors. With Mike becoming Club Chairman in 2017, through his drive and leadership the Club made rapid strides both on and off the field.

The 'Monday Club'

Under the guidance of Ray Larcombe a group of ex-players and supporters (Mike Rutledge, Dave Kershaw, Eddie Mogford, Dr. Peter Brown, Mike and Dave Knight, Dave Shakespeare, Merfyn Walters and Graham Kingston) formed the 'Monday Club'. The group met on Monday mornings throughout the winter to undertake various projects, including painting, making and erecting picket fencing to be positioned around the perimeter of the ground. Further work under Ray Larcombe's guidance saw entrance gates and security fencing erected around the ground and ornamental flower beds created. During a five year period between 2014-2018 their work had resulted in transforming the appearance of the ground.

Sponsor Committee

In 2017, Mike Rutledge led a newly formed Sponsorship Committee, creating much needed funds to support the Club. In each of the first two years over £10,000 was raised by the group to purchase a new artificial wicket on the reserve ground, new covers for the main ground and extensive new ground machinery. Mike and his team also gained Main Club Sponsorship deals with Nandos, VW Sinclair (Newport) and Chow Taxis.

Other Volunteers

Other Club volunteers Lorraine and John Morris (Clubhouse), George Clayden (Fund Raising), Andy Aston (175 Club) and Adrian Myatt (Clubhouse and Museum) all devoted much time in support of the Club. In addition our grateful thanks go to the Tea Ladies, Umpires and Scorers who all give up their time for the benefit of the Club.

What does the future hold for Newport Cricket Club???

Who will be the next of Newport Cricket Club's star players???

Will there be other Newport Cricket Club LEGENDS???

