

## The Reverend Owen Jones - A Cricketing Cleric



Of all the Characters who played cricket for Cowbridge there can have been few to compare with the Reverend Owen Jones, a man who was there at the start of the present club.

Born in 1860 Jones went to Llandovery College and then Jesus College Oxford. It was there in 1881 that his exuberant behaviour first got him into trouble, being rusticated for six weeks for 'gross disorderly behaviour' in a railway carriage. Perhaps this incident led Jones to mend his ways as he took Holy Orders shortly afterwards.

In the 1890's he was a curate in Neath and joined the then famous Cadaxton club, by some margin the strongest in Wales. There he gained a reputation as one of the fastest bowlers around appearing 17 times for Glamorgan in minor County Cricket.

Owen Jones came to the Vale of Glamorgan in 1896 following his appointment as Vicar of Llansannor, Llanfrynach and Penllyn and he then began his association with Cowbridge cricket. During the previous year the Cowbridge Cricket ground had been opened as the headquarters of the Glamorgan Gypsies and Jones became a prominent member, taking 9-12 against the Welsh Regiment in 1904. Simultaneously, the Reverend captained the Cowbridge Wanderers, the side that played on the school ground between 1906-11. Indeed in that last year he again claimed a nine wicket haul, before the Wanderers took a lease on the Gypsies ground and the Cowbridge Cricket Club was established. They had ceased to wander and Jones had a ground to display his talent.

Everyone who remembered Jones was struck by the physical energy of the man - a sort of Edwardian ecclesiastical Botham. He had been a fine boxer - a sport he continued to practice to sort out the rowdies in the City Inn. His favoured hostelry was the Duke of Wellington where he often spent a quiet hour with his friend Arthur Spencer when Cowbridge were batting - not the best example perhaps but Owen Jones clearly played for fun.

Once cricket re-started after the Great War, Jones was again to the fore even though nearly sixty. The late Selwyn Davies often told a story of how in his first game for Cowbridge he contrived to drop a catch off the clergyman's bowling. "For God's sake, buy a bloody bread basket boy" roared Jones to the teenage debutant, utterly shocked at the Rector's language.

By 1923 Jones was still addicted to the game, scoring 58 and then taking 4-16 in one match. That was his last hurrah. The great life force fell away during the Autumn and he died on December 20th. His reputation though, has survived and we can just imagine how much fun it would have been to have played alongside the Reverend Owen Jones today.

## William Russell - Cowbridge Premier Professional



*William Russell (Top row, 2nd from right)*

To Cowbridge cricketers of the early part of the 21st century the names William Russell, TH Gange and Ingram Pell may not mean much. To our predecessors of a century these men were the Cowbridge professionals - men who played big parts in the club of the times - and the greatest of them was Russell.

William Russell came to Cowbridge in 1896 when the ground was opened. Born in Norfolk in 1867 Russell had played for Middlesex 2nd XI in 1894 and 1895. His arrival at Cowbridge was at the behest of the club's patron and creator of the ground, E.H. Ebsworth of Llandough Castle. Russell was employed by Ebsworth to play for his various terms and look after the ground. However Russell's quality as an all rounder was such that very quickly he came to the notice of the Glamorgan selectors.

Mr. Ebsworth had not engaged William Russell to play for the county and the squire preferred his employee to devote his energies to his groundsman's duties. Indeed in 1896 Russell was selected for a match against Surrey 2nd XI at the Oval, but after meeting a deputation of selectors Ebsworth stood firm and the team left Cardiff General on the Paddington train - without William Russell.

Ebsworth was pilloried in the press for his parochial attitude and eventually relented to the extent that inbetween Cowbridge duties Russell played 102 matches for Glamorgan between 1897 - 1906. A highest score of 143 v. Berkshire in 1899 and best bowling of 7-43 against Devon were just examples of the quality of his play. When Glamorgan won the minor County Championship in 1900, Russell was widely recognised as the key man, taking 10-83 against Wiltshire, 9-86 against Surrey and 9-68 in the Berkshire fixture.

William Russell's career was sadly shortlived, he died in 1908 and was buried in Cowbridge churchyard. His memory as the greatest of the Cowbridge early professionals has far outstripped his sadly short life.