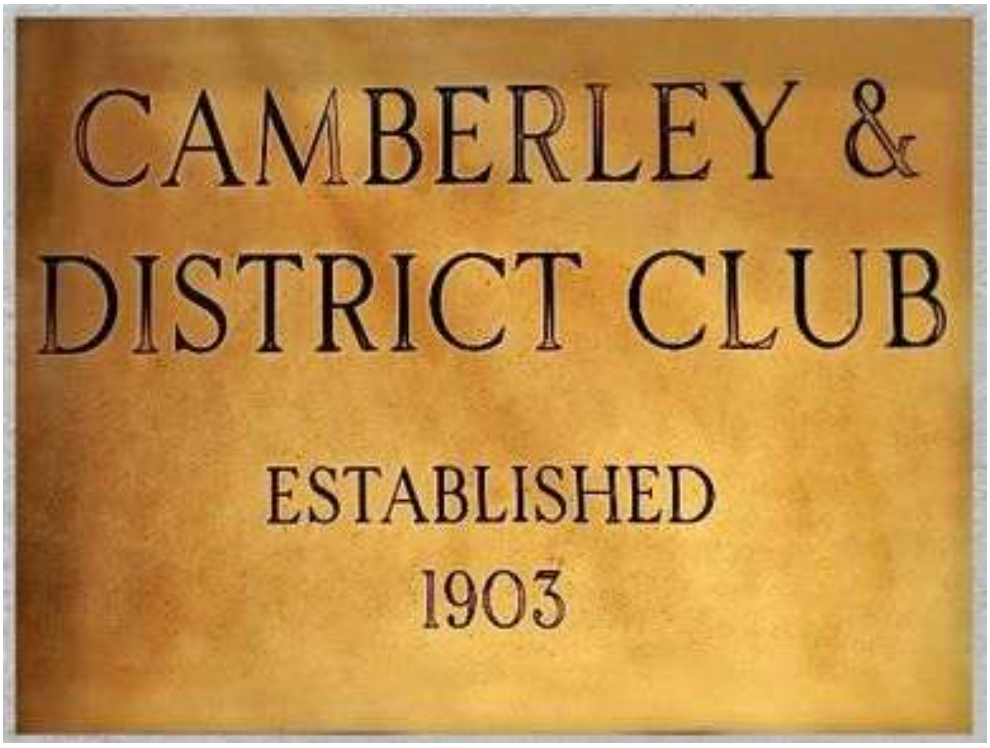
The Camberley & District Club: A Living History

A Chronological Journey from 1903 to the Present Day

1903: The Beginning

The Camberley & District Club opened its doors in 1903, originally established at 171 London Road to offer local gentlemen a dedicated place to socialise. Shortly after opening, the club moved to its current location to accommodate a newly built Billiards Hall.

To put the club's longevity into perspective, its founding took place five years before construction began on the RMS Titanic, and eleven years before the outbreak of the First World War. The year 1903 also witnessed the first transatlantic radio broadcast between the United States and Britain, King Edward VII was on the throne, Britain took control of the Fulani Empire, and both George Orwell and Bob Hope were born.



The historic brass plaque displayed at the Camberley & District Club, commemorating its founding year in 1903.

1906: The Early Leadership

William Henry Goffe became the Chairman of the Camberley & District Club in 1906. Born in Winchester in 1847 to Edward and Martha Goffe, William grew up on Kingsgate Street where his father worked as a spirit, wine, and grocery merchant. He began his career as a railway clerk in Kings Somborne, marrying a widow named Mary Osman in 1872. The couple relocated to Camberley when William was appointed station-master, moving into the house attached to Camberley Station. Following Mary's death in 1896, William dedicated much of his time to public service, serving as a local councillor from the founding of the Frimley Urban District Council until 1901. He retired from railway work in 1907, lived his later years in Woking, and passed away on the 23rd of October 1926 before being laid to rest at St Michael's Church in Camberley.



The final resting place of the club's early Chairman, William Henry Goffe, located at St Michael's Church, Camberley.

Sharing leadership in 1906 was the club's President, Ferdinand William Baker. Born in Clapham in 1864 to an accountant named Ferdinand Baker and his wife Clara, Ferdinand was baptised in his mother's home village of Dalby, Yorkshire. By 1891, Ferdinand had established himself on Camberley High Street as an accountant and surveyor, co-founding Sadler & Baker—a firm that became highly respected local estate agents, property valuers, and surveyors. He lived with his widowed mother at the High Street premises before they relocated to a home they named Dalby Lodge on London Road. Following his mother's passing in 1911, Ferdinand eventually married Ellen Maud Payne in 1932. He passed away at St Anne's Heath in Virginia Water on the 1st of June 1936 and was buried at St Michael's Church.



The original premises of co-founder and President Ferdinand William Baker's firm, Sadler & Baker, pictured on Camberley High Street in 1904.



The headstone of Ferdinand William Baker (d. 1936) and his wife Ellen Maud at St Michael's Church.

1911: A World Record Connection

In 1910, a young Australian named George Gray sparked a massive revival of interest in the game of billiards across England. Sponsored by the billiard table manufacturer Riley's, Gray embarked on an English tour, playing his first public match in Leeds. The pinnacle of his tour arrived on the 18th of March 1911 at Holborn Town Hall in London, where he achieved a staggering, unfinished break of 2,196 against Cecil Harverson. A historic photograph discovered in the cellar of the District Club is signed and dated the 16th of March 1911—strongly indicating that Gray visited the Camberley clubhouse for an exhibition just two days prior to setting his historic world record.



A rare promotional portrait of Australian billiards sensation George Gray, discovered in the clubhouse cellar and signed "16/3/1911".

1912: Victory on the Range

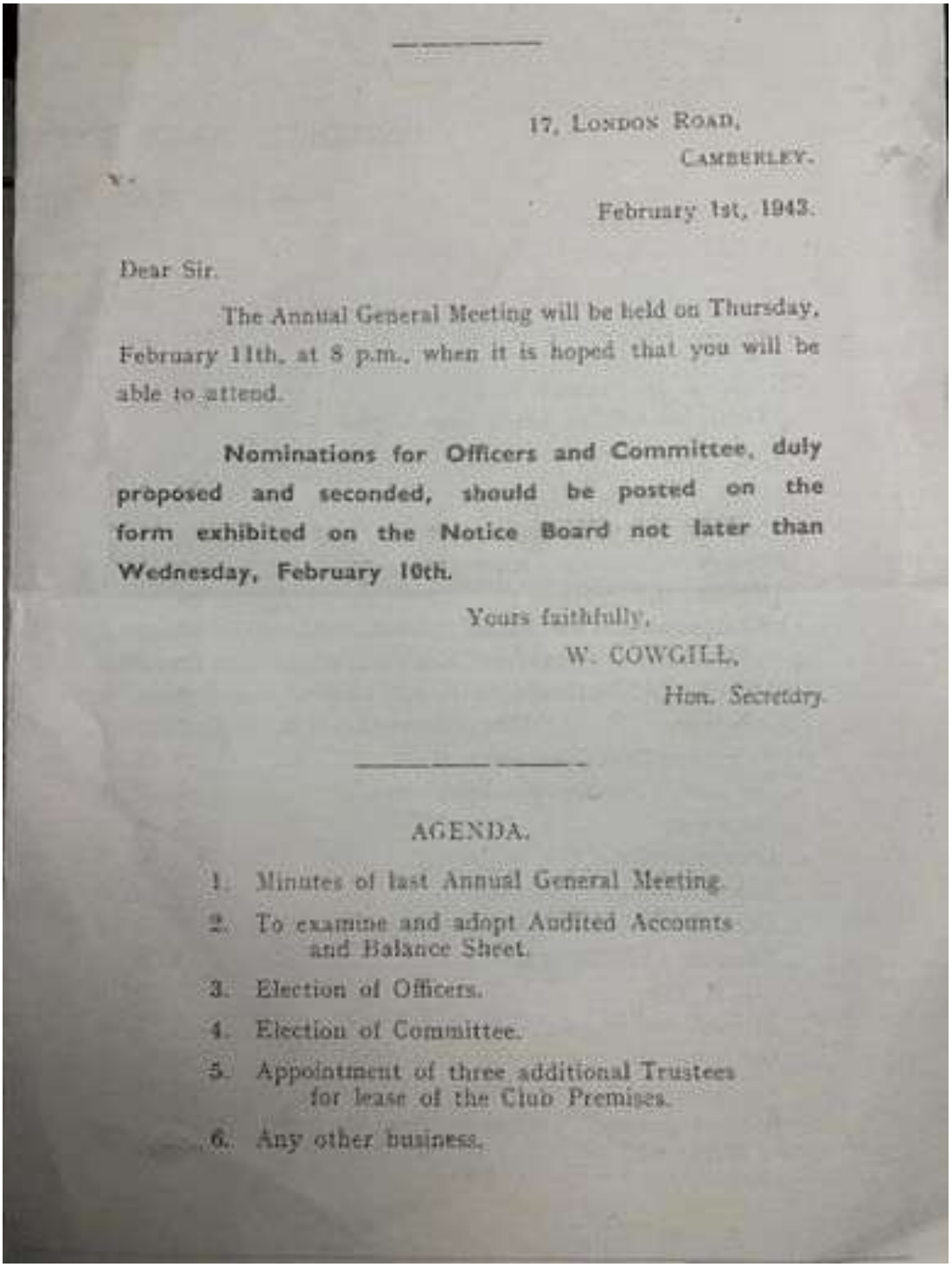
In 1912, the Camberley & District Club field team engaged in a competitive rifle match against the Gentlemen of the Royal Military College. In a testament to the club's sharpshooting prowess, the District Club secured a decisive victory, winning the match by 15 points. The victorious team comprised C. Bunch, L.H.W. Foster, L. Pearmain, E.G. Fulton, C.W. Knowles, J.C. Daniels, and D.B. Crooks.



Members of the Royal Military College on the training grounds at Sandhurst, around the time of the club's 1912 victory match.

1943: Wartime Resilience

Even in the midst of the Second World War, the club remained a thriving hub of the community. The agenda for the Annual General Meeting held on the 11th of February 1943, issued by Honorary Secretary W. Cowgill, reveals the club's strong financial standing and wartime contributions. At the time, the club held £4,447 9s 11d in the bank alongside £200 in Australian Stock. Demonstrating immense civic pride, the members actively financed local Prisoner of War funds, covered Air Raid Precautions (ARP) expenses, and collected donations for the British Red Cross.



17, London Road,
Camberley.

February 1st, 1943.

Dear Sir,

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday, February 11th, at 8 p.m., when it is hoped that you will be able to attend.

Nominations for Officers and Committee, duly proposed and seconded, should be posted on the form exhibited on the Notice Board not later than Wednesday, February 10th.

Yours faithfully,
W. COWGILL,
Hon. Secretary.

AGENDA.

1. Minutes of last Annual General Meeting.
2. To examine and adopt Audited Accounts and Balance Sheet.
3. Election of Officers.
4. Election of Committee.
5. Appointment of three additional Trustees for lease of the Club Premises.
6. Any other business.

The original typed agenda for the club's wartime Annual General Meeting, dated 1st February 1943.



A classic 1940s archive photograph capturing club members around the snooker tables.



Members socializing in the games room during the 1940s, featuring Michael Stone (third from left).

1953: Aerial Reconnaissance

On Tuesday the 5th of May 1953, the Royal Air Force took a number of aerial photographs around Camberley, most likely due to the presence of the Military Academy. These files were declassified in 2023, offering a bird's-eye view of the club from all angles, showing the facility completely surrounded by lush residential gardens.



A declassified Royal Air Force aerial photograph from May 1953, showcasing the clubhouse nestled within residential gardens.



An alternative 1953 RAF aerial view highlighting the layout of the Billiards Hall roof from the north.



A wide-angle 1953 reconnaissance photo showing the club's proximity to the main London Road corridor.

1963: Hidden in Plain Sight

Due to the club's unique architectural position—tucked away down an alleyway off London Road—many opportunities to capture it in early local photography were lost. However, a rare glimpse was caught in a 1963 photograph featuring a number 3 bus bound for Reading. Just to the right of the bus, the distinct front entranceway to the club is visible, capturing a moment in time for commuting members.



A snapshot of London Road in 1963, showing a Reading-bound bus alongside the narrow alleyway entrance to the club.

1970: Neighbours and Frontages

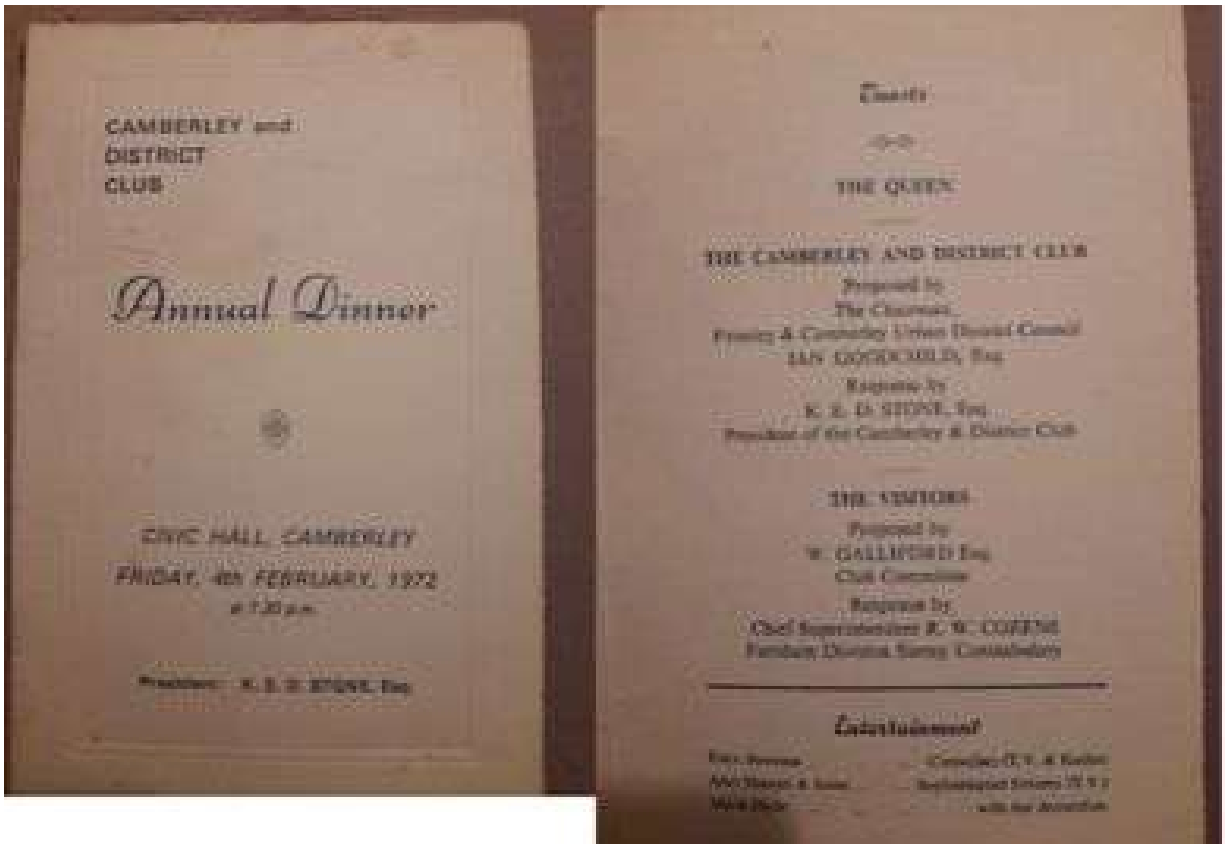
While the club remained set back from the main road, the street-facing portion of the building has always housed distinct commercial tenants. In the 1970s, the front unit was occupied by Shorts Jewellers, a business run by the grandmother of local resident and long-time club friend David Rice. In the modern era, this prominent storefront serves as the headquarters for Five Sixes Taxis.



The street-facing storefront of the building in the 1970s, back when it was occupied by Shorts Jewellers.

1972: A Night of Stars

On Friday the 4th of February 1972, the club hosted its spectacular Annual Dinner nearby at the Civic Hall under the leadership of President K.E.D. Stone. With Chief Superintendent R.W. Cozens and the Farnham Division Surrey Constabulary attending as honoured guests, the evening featured top-tier variety entertainment. Members were treated to comedy from Felix Bowness (who later found fame in Hi-de-Hi!), mind-boggling illusions from celebrated magician Alan Shaxon (who later famously taught sleight-of-hand tricks to Tom Cruise for the Mission: Impossible films), and musical accompaniment by accordionist Maria Hyde.



The souvenir programme and toast list from the club's star-studded Annual Dinner on 4th February 1972.

1978–Present: The Modern Era & Memories

Reflections from David Woodhouse (2025 President)

David Woodhouse joined the club in November 1978 after being introduced by Steve Nicholson and undergoing a formal interview with the President. At the time, the club was managed with a rod of iron by the committee, the stewards were Ian and Daphne Shutt, and the membership was almost exclusively comprised of local business people. It was a strict, male-only environment where no women were permitted in the club rooms. The club featured three snooker tables, requiring members to post their names to reserve a single frame, and regularly served popular lunchtime meals. Major calendar events like St. George's Day and Christmas were celebrated formally, and the Annual Dinner at the Civic Hall drew notable guest speakers.

By the early 2000s, a regular Friday night gathering of eight or nine members earned the affectionate nickname "Dad's Army"—a title that has proudly stuck to this day. During this era, the club faced sudden financial ruin and the threat of permanent closure. Stepping up to save their institution, David and several fellow members personally injected emergency funds to revive it. David subsequently joined the new committee, briefly stepping down due to midnight-running meetings, before rejoining in 2016 and being elected Chairman in 2018. Aside from a brief hiatus from August 2022, he was recently voted back into the chair. Over his 45 years of continuous membership, David has witnessed profound evolutionary changes, including a rotation of ten different stewards, complete shifts in management style, the historic introduction of female members, surviving the COVID-19 pandemic, and organizing the beloved annual trip to Goodwood.

The Evolution of the Clubhouse Bar

Family ties run deep at the club, as noted by Richard Stone, who recalls his childhood when his father and uncle served as President and Chairman. The side room functioned as a bustling dining room where members gathered for lunch, and Richard would sit out the back helping count up the till change.



The London Road entranceway in 1980, showing the small courtyard office before it was dismantled.

The physical landscape shifted over the decades as well. In the 1980s, the entranceway housed a small external office. While this structure has long since been removed, the felt lining remains visible within the modern brickwork of the Cabin Bar wall. The interior bar area also evolved; old photographs show a much brighter space illuminated by an original, open skylight, alongside a side room dedicated entirely to formal dining.



A crowded night at the pumps in the 1980s, featuring popular regular Archie Macintyre (far left).



The main lounge area in the 1980s, showcasing the distinctive green upholstery and the open central skylight.

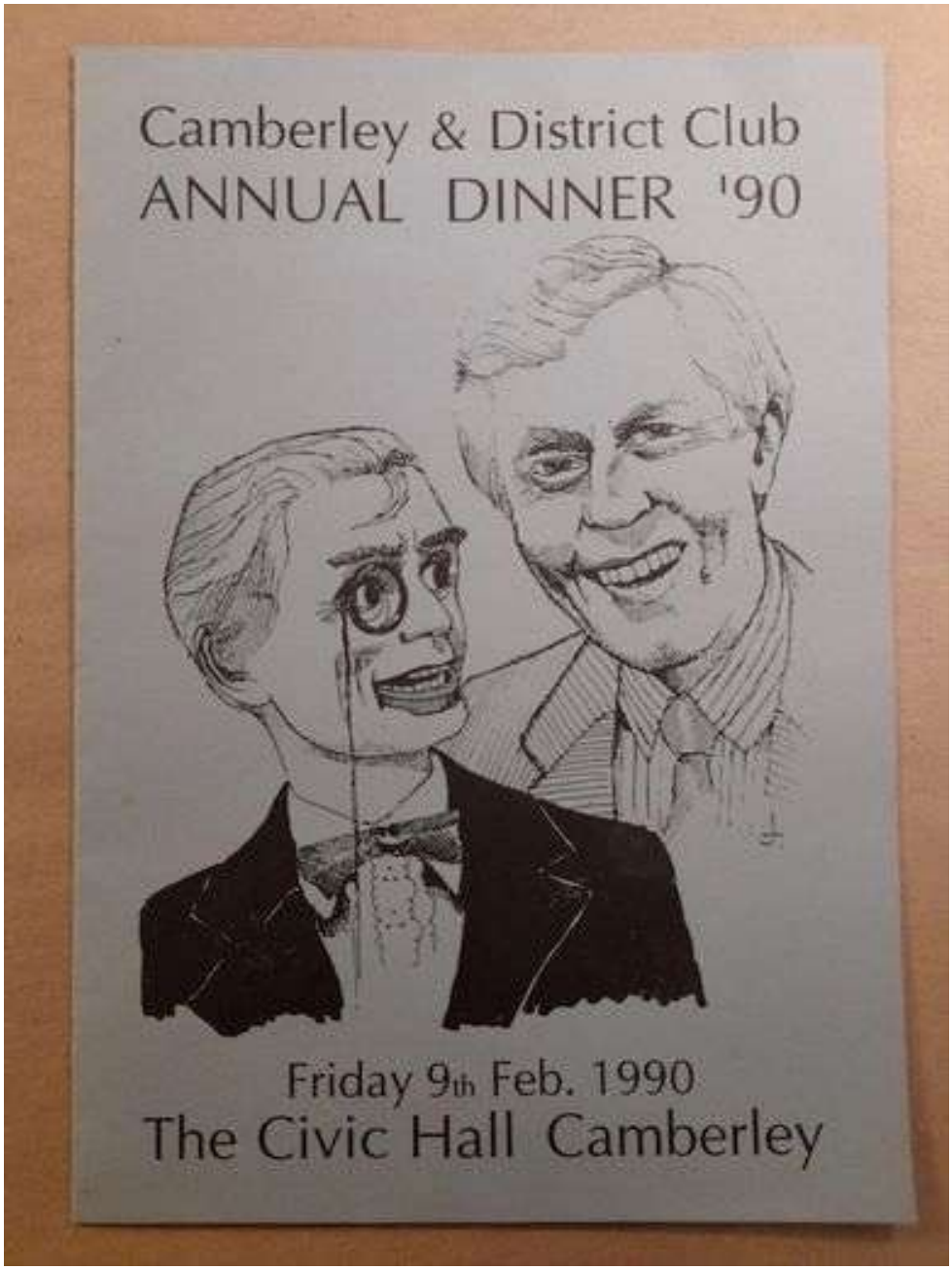
The bar has been home to many beloved local characters. Nicola Sherlow fondly remembers her late father, Johnny Archibald, who ran the bar and lived in the flat directly above the clubhouse roughly 40 years ago. Sadly he passed away in 2005. Long-time members also warmly remember Ian and Daphne Shutt's legendary stewardship. "Shuttie," a robust presence behind the bar, famously survived a tumble down the cellar hatchway—an incident that prompted the immediate installation of safety stays to keep the trapdoor firmly locked open.



The wood-panelled side room set up for formal lunch service during the club's busy dining era.

1990: Laughs at the Civic Hall

The annual club dinner held at the Civic Hall Camberley on Friday 9th February 1990 was another memorable evening. It featured a grace and loyal toast by John Martin, a toast to the guests by Chairman Alex Stark, a vote of thanks by Bert Broster, and an unforgettable reply and toast to the club delivered by the famous ventriloquist act Ray Allen & Lord Charles.



The illustrated cover of the 1990 Annual Dinner programme, featuring guest entertainers Ray Allen and Lord Charles.

1990s: Character and Comedy at CADS

Long-time member Doug Fish preserves vivid memories of the club's distinctive characters from this era. He recalls the strict "Men Only" policy of yesteryear, when women were only permitted inside on Friday evenings to enjoy the available snacks. The clubhouse was defined by its larger-than-life regulars, including:

- **Ken Harvey:** A local council worker and unmatched billiards player. While most members preferred snooker, Ken could masterfully dominate a full-sized table using just three balls, routinely defeating challengers even after granting them a 50-point head start. He was equally skilled at darts, utilizing a unique waist-high wind-up throw, and possessed an endless repository of Northern tales and jokes.
- **Mike Stone:** A prominent local regular, lawyer, and former Camberley Rugby Club player. Mike was fondly teased by fellow members because his clothes never seemed to quite fit him correctly—his ties were perpetually "squiffy," and members joked that even a top-class tailor couldn't make a suit look right on him.
- **Ian "Shuttie" Shutt:** The club's robust, long-term steward who managed the bar alongside his wife, Daphne. "Shuttie" famously survived a dramatic fall straight down the cellar stairs. Fortunately, escaping major injury, the incident prompted him to immediately install safety stays to keep the cellar trapdoor securely locked open in the future.



The exterior facade of the clubhouse extension facing Sparvells Way, pictured during the mid-20th century.

2005: Breaking the Glass Ceiling

For over a century, the club maintained traditional male-only rules, though by the 1980s women were gradually permitted into the front bar strictly as "guests" (despite the clubhouse lacking a female cloakroom). The true turning point came in April 2005 during the annual St. George’s Evening Meal. Tricia Woodhouse directly challenged the sitting President, Rod Griffin, regarding the total absence of female members. Recognizing it was time for change, the committee had recently agreed to allow joint spouse memberships. Rod handed Tricia an application on the spot, and she officially became the first female member in the history of the club, despite initial pocket opposition at the next committee meeting.

Tricia continued to trailblaze, joining the club committee in 2006 as its first female member. At the 2008 AGM, she stood for election and was voted in as the club's first-ever female Club Secretary. She managed the position with fierce dedication until July 2022, leaving behind a tremendous legacy of work that included spearheading the annual Christmas Draw, coordinating the Goodwood excursions, and stepping in to work behind the bar whenever duty called.

2007: The "Champagne Frenzy"

Current member Paul (Minty) Kendall recalls his unforgettable introduction to the club on Sunday the 13th of May 2007. Invited by his boss, Alan Rees, to watch a crucial football match, Paul popped into the local Coral bookmakers. Knowing absolutely nothing about football, he placed a speculative 60-1 bet on Carlos Tevez to score and underdogs West Ham to defeat Manchester United 1-0—a match where United were poised to win the league and West Ham faced relegation.

Stepping into the club for the first time, Paul was instantly swept up in a cracking atmosphere, surrounded by members boisterously arguing over whose round it was, leaving him holding five different free drink tickets. When Tevez scored on the stroke of halftime, the club erupted. Despite local legend Alan Hibbins desperately trying to buy the bet slip off him for £50, Paul held his nerve through a tense second half. When the final whistle blew, he was £610 richer, bought a legendary round for the house, and immediately applied to join. Paul went on to serve as the Club Secretary for years, eventually stepping down from the role in 2026. To this day, that legendary afternoon lives on in club lore as the "Champagne Frenzy".