Although cricket had been played in Christchurch from the early days of its settlement in 1850 it was not until the Canterbury Cricket Association was formed in 1877 that any semblance of a competition was created. The formation of the Association was due in part to ensure better management of Hagley Park and partly to select Canterbury teams.

The first true competition began in 1882/83 with 4 clubs taking part, United, Midlands, Addington and Lancaster Park. Sydenham was formed when it joined Addington for the 1895/96 season.

Hagley Oval was first used for inter-provincials matches in 1864/65 and up until the new Lancaster Park ground became available in the 1882/83 season it was used on a regular basis for provincial and club matches. After that period inter provincial matches were only played on Hagley Oval when Lancaster Park was unavailable over the Christmas period due to the precedence of cycling carnivals over cricket. During WW1 when Lancaster Park was laid down in potatoes to help the war effort eight inter provincial games were played at Hagley Oval.

In 1905 the pressure to move to a district based scheme such as played in Sydney came

on the CCA. It was claimed it would increase player numbers, promote rivalry between players and clubs and stimulate interest in the senior competition and the game itself. In July 1905 the CCA approved the scheme by a vote of 15 to 5. It was agreed to trial it for two years and 6 clubs were created with United and Midlands going out of existence and Lancaster Park (Linwood) and Sydenham being joined by East Christchurch, West Christchurch, St Albans and Riccarton. The district scheme was abolished in 1919.

West Christchurch, St Albans and Riccarton were allocated Hagley Park and Sydenham was allocated Sydenham Park. Linwood and East Christchurch jointly shared the Lancaster Park ground and did so until East Christchurch moved to Burwood Park in 1962. The Lancaster Park club finally moved from the ground in 1996 when it merged with the Woolston Working Mens club.

**Lancaster Park**

The conceptwas developed by a well known cricketer **A M Olliver**, one of three brothers who played for Canterbury. He noted that a good number of those who played at Hagley Park came from Opawa and that after their long trek home they would discuss the possibility of finding a cricket ground closer to home. Olliver had the vision of a ground that would be the home for cricket and by reasonable gate charges would enable clubs and the Cricket Association to be self supporting.

Early in 1880 his chance came and in consultation with two other leading citizens, **Andrew Duncan** and **EJC Stevens** he brought his scheme before a meeting of enthusiasts at Warners Hotel. And so on May 8 1880 the Canterbury Cricket and Athletic Sports Company Limited was floated with the original directors being Duncan (Chairman), Stevens, A Cracroft-Wilson, R Sutherland and Ollivier. The capital was fixed at 4,500 pound with 450 shares being created. Stevens (25), Ollivier(20), Wilding (20), plus 47 other people.

Soon after the directors, at a cost of 2,841 pounds, purchased the 10 acres of the “Lancaster Estate” from Benjamin Lancaster of Bournemouth England who was an absentee client of the land agents Harman and Stevens. ie 284 pounds per acre compared to 3 pounds per acre for immigrants

At the first meeting of the club in July 28 1881 the name Lancaster Club was adopted and the concept was to promote all other sports including tennis and bowls. By the end of 1881, the land was starting to look like a sports ground, with leveling finished, fences constructed, drainage laid and sowing with Devonshire evergreen grass seed completed. The terraces were turfed, and plans were underway for a pavilion and stand.

However ground preparation and construction of a pavilion added another 4,000 pounds to the cost and this was funded by a loan at 7% interest. A comment was made that the cost of formation had exceeded estimates, a situation that the ground was to become familiar with in future years.

The Parks opening was scheduled with a cricket match for the 8th October 1881 but this was canceled due to rain.  The Canterbury Athletics Association who had the ground booked in advance for the 15th of October then became the first association to hold an event on the ground. The first gate receipts for the Park were received (£78 2s).

However there were some lean years ahead for the Company with its mortgage of 4,000 pounds. The ground was not that popular with some members of the well established older cricket clubs where the habit of walking to Hagley Park to watch cricket amid delightful surroundings and with free admission was hard to break in favour of going in another direction to Lancaster Park and then having to pay for the fun.

In July 1898 the land to the south the ”Frog Pond” was offered to the directors but they declined and so **Fred Wilding**, who became Chairman in 1885, purchased the land. He offered to lease it back to the company but this offer was also declined. However two years later the land comprising just over 3 acres was finally purchase by the company for 1,095 pounds, ie 365 pounds per acre, 17 years earlier the price was 284 pounds per acre.

The Canterbury Rugby Union entered into a 10 year lease in 1892, one of the conditions giving them exclusive use of the ground from April 1 to September 30 each year. By this time rugby and cricket were the chief tenants and the directors felt the two sports should own the park themselves. Rugby declined the offer but cricket accepted and so on April 6 1904 Lancaster Park became the property of the Canterbury Cricket Association. Cost 6,000 pounds with a mortgage of 4,000 pounds.

This large mortgage created difficulties and the financial position was always a problem for the Canterbury Cricket Association. Over the next few years a number of meetings were held with the Rugby Union before a joint ownership arrangement was entered into on June 13 1911. Lancaster Park Limited was formed with three directors from both rugby and cricket.

However the enthusiasm of the new company in building more stands had stretched their finances and by 1915 the ground was again in financial difficulty. A Citizens committee of 20 was formed and they canvassed the city for donations and raised 5,250 pounds and removed the debt.

Before disbanding the Citizens committee recommended that the number of directors should be increased to include the Mayor and a representative from other sport bodies. There were now 8 directors.

During WW1 Lancaster Park was dug up and planted in potatoes but with no income by Armistice Day in November 1918, the company was again in need of money. It was now necessary to raise 8,000 pounds. The Commercial Travellers Association was approached to see whether they could raise sufficient money to free the Park from debt and they formulated the concept of creating three Art Unions to be spread over 12 months. These were successful and raised over 12,000 pounds which not only paid off the mortgage but enabled money to be set aside for improvements to the Park.

The result of this activity saw the Park vested in the Crown and a private members bill, the Victory Park Act, was passed on September 4 1919. It also changed the composition of the Board to include 2 directors from the commercial travelers, a total now of 10 people.

These arrangements basically remained unchanged over the next 76 years until Jade Stadium Limited was established in December 1998 to manage the existing facilities on behalf of the Victory Park Board and the Christchurch City Council. A five-member board of directors, drawn from Christchurch’s business community and the Christchurch City Council, governs the company.

One of the new decisions was to reduce the size of the cricket block, down from at one stage eight pitches to three pitches. As an alternative to the problem of less access for cricket, portable pitches were trialed and the first pitch was used on Feb 9 1999 when Canterbury played Central Districts. They are now a totally acceptable substitute for Test and one day matches and three portable pitches are used, two for cricket and one for rugby to replace the cricket area.

**People**

**Fred Wilding** was an outstanding sportsman and administrator, born in Wales in 1852. The son of a doctor and educated at Shrewsbury school he came to NZ in 1879. In England he held the public schools long jump record of over 20 feet for many years, played rugby for West England, boxed and was a good rower. He played cricket for Canterbury for over 20 years and was the first player in NZ to do the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets. He was five times double tennis champion of NZ and was the father of Anthony Wilding. He was president of the Canterbury Cricket Association from 1907 to 1923 and became its first life member. He was the founder of Wilding Park, the tennis venue that was named in his honour and as a memorial to his son, Anthony who was killed in action in France in 1915. A barrister he died in 1945.

**Edward (EJC) Stevens** was born in Lancashire in 1837 and came to Christchurch in 1858. He had studied agriculture in Gloucester and set up as a land agent in the city. His enthusiasm for cricket saw him organize the first matches in 1864 which Canterbury played against Otago and the touring England team. By raising 300 pounds he was able to develop the ground and build a pavilion which still stands today. He also was instrumental in the formation of the Canterbury Cricket Association in 1877 and the development of Lancaster Park. He played 13 matches for Canterbury between 1864 and 1884. Stevens had much success in property, farming, and politics and was prominent on the Canterbury Provincial Council and the NZ House of Representatives. He served on the Board of both Canterbury College and the Christchurch Press company. He died in 1915 at the age of 77.

**AM Ollivier** was born in London in 1851 and came to NZ two years later. He was educated at Christ’s College and became an accountant. He played 11 matches for Canterbury between 1867 and 1882 and was only 15 in February 1867 when first selected. Opening the batting in the second innings he top scored with 11 out of a total of 32. He is still the youngest player to represent Canterbury. In January 1875 against Otago at Hagley Park along with CC Corfe he added 119 runs which was the first century partnership in NZ. He selected the first NZ team which played NSW in 1884 and umpired on the second day. In December 1894 it was Ollivier who proposed the resolution that led to the formation of the NZ Cricket Council. He selected the NZ team which played Queensland in 1896. Olliver also made two appearances for the Canterbury rugby team. He served on the Christ’s College Board of Governors, was a keen gardener, chorister, alpine climber, angler and the NZ 1888 chess champion, a man of many and varied interests. He was the first person to climb a mountain in the Southern Alps which was named after him. Mount Ollivier was later to be famous as the first mountain that Sir Edmund Hilliary climbed in the Mount Cook region. One of his sons, Keith, played for NZ in 1905/06.

He died in Christchurch on October 21 1897 at the age of 46.

**Thomas Duncan** was born in 1821 and came to NZ on the Randolph. He was a pioneer Peninsula farmer and lawyer and is infamous for having eloped to Gretna Green with a ward who was the daughter of the Earl of Rollo. He was a Crown solicitor and one of his early partners was a nephew, Andrew Jameson the founder of the Christchurch Golf Club. The firm was known as Duncan and Jameson, later when Duncan was joined by Henry Cotterill the firm of Duncan Cotterill was established in 1879. He was the mayor of Christchurch from 1870-71.