

Henry Attfield, 18th century Cricketer

Revised in December 2008¹

by John Attfield

Very few Attfields have achieved the distinction of an entry in the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia. Indeed the only historical Attfield entry to be found there refers to an 18th century English cricketer and reads as follows:

Henry Attfield (1756 – c.1829) was an English cricketer who made his first known appearance in the 1773 season. Aged 17 at the time, he must have been a genuine 1773 debutant. He was a native of Bagshot in Surrey. He played frequently for Surrey but was still only 26 when his career ended in 1782 (sic). He seems to have been known as “Field” and this often appeared on old scorecards.²

A further summary of the published information about Henry Attfield has been kindly provided by cricket’s “Bearded Wonder” Bill Frindall:

Henry Attfield was born at Bagshot in 1756 and was only 17 when he first appeared for Surrey against Hambledon. He lived most of his life in Chertsey, dying there c1829 when 73. No tombstone was erected to his memory. A sawyer by trade, his name was usually abbreviated to ‘Field’. He was in the Surrey XI (along with ‘Lumpy’ Stevens) that was invited to Paris by the English ambassador, the third Duke of Dorset, a mission aborted by the onset of the French Revolution, luckily before the team sailed from Dover.³

So this Henry Attfield was apparently a not insignificant figure in the early history of English cricket. But which Henry Attfield was he? This article examines the evidence.

English village cricket in the 18th century was a remarkable social institution. Leap-frogging social barriers, squire and farm labourer, grocer and parson met together to enjoy a game which consisted of rapid, exciting and energetic play. Not yet the deliberate, considered, “scientific” exercise of later times, it was an often boisterous pastime provoking free fights among excited



1. A cricket match in the 1750s

spectators, and even occasionally among the players themselves. The money to be won gambling on the outcome of a match attracted aristocratic and shady low-life followers alike. Cricket attracted some of the leading political figures of the day, and certain aristo-

cratic households might find employment for gamekeeper or gardener merely on account of his prowess as batsman or bowler against a rival's team. Important matches were often associated with great-house events such as a county ball. The more popular fixtures could attract huge audiences of up to 10,000 or more spectators.⁴

Henry Attfield indeed played cricket alongside the great players of his day as well as their aristocratic sponsors such as Lord Tankerville and the Duke of Dorset. He played for the famous Chertsey Cricket Club from 1773 until the late 1780s, at a time when Chertsey virtually represented Surrey (and matches against their principal rival, the Hambledon club, were frequently billed as Surrey v. Hampshire). Among others he played alongside the famous bowler Edward "Lumpy" Stevens, on whose account the third (middle) stump was introduced in 1776, and it is possible that Henry Attfield played in the first ever match with a middle stump, Chertsey v. Coulsdon in September 1776 – although no scorecard of this game has survived.⁵

Without doubt Henry Attfield was a more than useful player. In a cricket career spanning at least sixteen years from 1773 to 1789 he played in more than 26 matches for teams including Chertsey, Surrey, Hampshire, "England", "All England" and the Duke of Dorset's XI, scoring a total of some 600 runs.

Summary of Henry Attfield's known career record:⁶

Matches:	26 (matches with known scores only)
Innings:	48 (4 not outs)
Runs:	599
Career Average:	13.61
Highest Score:	49 (for Surrey v. Hampshire, 13-15 July, 1775)
Catches:	5
Wickets:	1 (note: bowling statistics in this era are incomplete)

Records of Henry Attfield's known individual match appearances are listed in the appendix at the end of this article.

Most famously, in 1789 Henry Attfield was included in a team that the Duke of Dorset planned to take to Paris to introduce the game of cricket there. The Duke, who had been appointed Ambassador to the Court of Versailles in 1783 and was on friendly terms with the French royal family, wrote in June 1789 to his friend and fellow cricketing enthusiast Lord Tankerville, asking him to get a team together to visit France and show the art of the game, with the hope of improving relations between the two countries.

Lord Tankerville, whose estate was at Walton-on-Thames and who was the principal patron of Surrey cricket, enlisted the aid of a stalwart of Chertsey Cricket Club, William Yalden to select the team. The team was chosen and the following players were selected: Yalden, Attfield, Tankerville, John Edmeads, John Wood, William Bedster, Lumpy Stevens, G. Fry, Daniel Etheridge, Stephen Harding, plus the Duke of Dorset himself. This was virtually a current or past Chertsey XI.

The travel arrangements were made and the team arrived in Dover on either August 9 or 10, 1789. It is not clear what the Duke planned to do with the team in Paris – whether they would have played against teams of local people, or five-a-side exhibition matches among themselves – but in any case the political situation in Paris was becoming untenable. Having advised British residents to leave Paris as soon as possible for their own safety, the Duke himself hastily set sail for England, reaching Dover on Monday August 10, where much to their surprise he encountered his fellow cricketers who were just about to embark.

Thus the French Revolution ended the grand plan to send a cricket team to Paris on a goodwill mission! For a while afterwards, the Duke kept up a correspondence with the Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, who had befriended him and who, for her part, was said to have kept the Duke's own cricket bat preserved in her closet "as a relique of British prowess".⁷



2. John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset (1745-1799)

The authors of "The History of Chertsey Cricket Club" speculate about how the details of the tour may have been preserved. They may have come from a newspaper article but it is more likely that they were discovered in a document belonging to a member of the Yalden family, possibly William Yalden's son who was still living in Chertsey in 1859, when it appears that he was interviewed by Arthur Haygarth, the author of "Cricket Scores and Biographies".⁸

But who was Henry Attfield? According to the cricket records he was born at Bagshot in 1756 and died at Chertsey c.1829. However the only evidence we really have for these dates is Haygarth's "Scores and Biographies", published long after the event in 1862, and even this gives a question mark for his death year.⁹ And no such person matching these dates can be found in Surrey's genealogical records. So the question of his real identity is unresolved. Attfield was a local name in West Surrey at that time and there were several Henry Attfields around, but which of them was the cricket player? The rest of this article looks at possible answers to this question.

To approximately match the dates of 1756-1829 cited in "Scores and Biographies", the time envelope into which "our" Henry would have to fit is a birth date in the 15-year period 1745-1760 and death date in the 20-year range 1819-1839. A birth date of 1756 would mean that Henry was only 17 when he made his debut, which seems rather young for someone to be playing in such illustrious company, and anyone born after 1760 would definitely have been too young to have appeared in a high-stakes cricket match in 1773.

Here is a list of all the Henry Attfields that I have been able to identify in West Surrey with birth/death dates falling in the relevant period.¹⁰

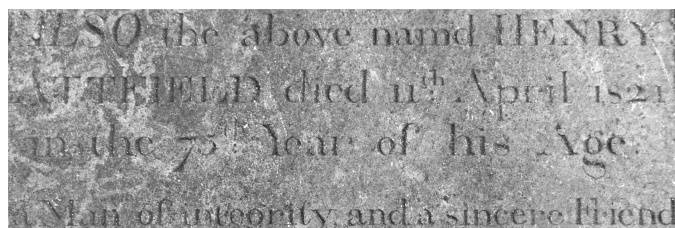
1. Henry Attfield, baptised (as Henry Field) on July 10, 1746 at Windlesham son of Henry and Jane; died on April 11, 1821 at Chertsey. He married Mary Dee at Chertsey on December 23, 1767. In 1791 he was a draper in Chertsey.¹¹ Note: Bagshot is in Windlesham Parish. In my view he is the best candidate for various reasons which are outlined below.
2. Henry Attfield, baptised on November 27, 1753 at Worplesdon, son of William and Jane Hewitt. He was alive in 1826 when he was mentioned in his brother's will,¹² and is probably the Henry Attfield, gentleman, who was buried on August 12, 1834 at Stoke Next Guildford (although the burial record gives his age as 76 which would date his birth to c.1758). This Henry's dates fit quite well, but in his case there is no positive evidence of any connection to Chertsey.
3. Henry Attfield, baptised on May 4, 1755 at Egham, son of John and Mary. This is assumed to be the same Henry Attfield who was buried at Virginia Water on November 13, 1839 aged 91, which however implies a birth date c.1748. He cannot be ruled out as a possibility because a player called "Atfield" is recorded in a match between Bagshot and Egham in 1803, (see note in the Appendix).

These three are the only candidates who fit the required date ranges. A Henry John Attfield was baptised on August 28, 1764 at Chobham and buried at Chobham on August 19, 1829 aged 65. In this case the death date would fit well but he would be too young to be playing cricket in 1773. Finally there is also a Henry Field who was baptised on April 5, 1759 at Coulsdon, son of John and Anne. His later history is unknown. He cannot be ruled out because Coulsdon was the home of an early cricket club, but on the other hand Coulsdon is a long way from Chertsey and there is no evidence that a player named Field ever played for Coulsdon.

While none of the above-mentioned persons can be entirely excluded, in my opinion the most likely candidate is Henry Attfield of Chertsey, 1746-1821. Although absolute proof is lacking, there is some compelling circumstantial evidence:

- a) This Henry Attfield – like the cricketer – also used the name Field; indeed he was baptised as "Field" although he was married and buried as "Attfield".
- b) As the cricket records say, he was born at or near Bagshot (Parish of Windlesham) and died at Chertsey.
- c) Cricket was in his blood: his grand-nephew George Cooke Attfield played county cricket for Somerset and Surrey between 1845 and 1856.¹³

On the negative side, in contradiction to the account cited by Bill Frindall this Henry Attfield was not a sawyer by trade (at least not by 1791). And he certainly has a tombstone, located behind St Peter's Church in Chertsey and still in excellent condition.



3. "A Man of integrity and a sincere Friend", the epitaph on Henry Attfield's gravestone in Chertsey churchyard

But the most persuasive evidence in favour of this Henry Attfield, in my opinion, is his apparent family relationship to another contemporary Chertsey cricketer, William Yalden.

William “The Yold” Yalden – 1740-1824 according to the cricket archives and thus a close contemporary of Henry Attfield – was a leading member of Chertsey Cricket Club and played for various teams including Chertsey, Surrey, Hampshire and “England” from the 1760s until 1785. As mentioned above he also played a leading role in the Duke of Dorset’s abortive Paris tour in 1789. He was a very good batsman but was primarily known as a wicket-keeper. Yalden and Tom Sueter of Hampshire were the two foremost wicket-keepers of the 18th century. Fielding records are incomplete but there is no doubt he took many catches. Stumpings are more difficult to find because they were often recorded as run outs, though there is one scorecard in which dismissals are recorded as “put out behind The Yold”, i.e. stumped by Yalden.¹⁴



4. The Cricketers at Chertsey Bridge

Yalden lived for most of his life in Chertsey, where he was a licensed victualler and a long-time member of the local cricket club. He kept a large riverside inn called the Walnut Tree at Chertsey Bridge which later changed its name to The Cricketers. He also managed the cricket club’s Laleham Burway ground situated close to the town, supplying refreshments during the great matches.¹⁵

The name of Yalden is uncommon enough that it is reasonable to seek a positive identification in the genealogical records.

Although the cricketing records give his birth date as 1740, the cricketer William Yalden was almost certainly the one who was baptised at Send, a village south-east of Woking, on February 3, 1741/42, the son of William Yalden and Martha Hone. Incidentally, Send was also the birthplace of Chertsey’s most famous 18th century cricketer, Edward “Lumpy” Stevens. William Yalden died in 1823 and was buried – like Henry Attfield – at St Peter’s Church, Chertsey on January 9, 1823 (aged 80 according to his burial record).

William married Sarah Green (c.1744-1819) at Chertsey on October 24, 1770 and their son John – the one who was interviewed by Arthur Haygarth in 1859 – was born there c.1776. John Yalden married Mary Ann Edmead at St Martin in the Fields, Westminster, on February 25, 1802. It is quite possible that Mary was related to another Chertsey cricketer, John Edmeads.

William’s parents, William Yalden and Martha Hone, were married at Horsell, Surrey, on July 11, 1742. Martha, baptised at Horsell on September 26, 1719, was the daughter of John Hone (c.1684-1743) and Ann Collyer who were married at Horsell on July 18, 1710. John and Ann Hone also had another daughter, Ann – Martha’s sister – born in 1711, whose is referred to in the will of Henry Wallden (1788) as follows: “two Sons of my Brother James Wallden deceased otherwise two sons of Ann Hone Daughter of John Hone

Clarke of Horsell deceased".¹⁶ This curious wording presumably means that James Wallden and Ann Hone were the parents of these children although they did not marry. James Wallden was buried at Horsell on February 24, 1784.

The key passage in Henry Wallden's will linking William Yalden to Henry Attfield's family is as follows: "I also give to Mary Attfield daughter of my sister Sencia twenty five pounds".¹⁷ Sencia Wallden – the sister of Henry Wallden and his brother James – married Stephen Dee at Horsell on May 11, 1725 and it was their daughter Mary Dee (born at Chertsey on July 17, 1748) who married Henry Attfield at Chertsey on December 23, 1767.¹⁸

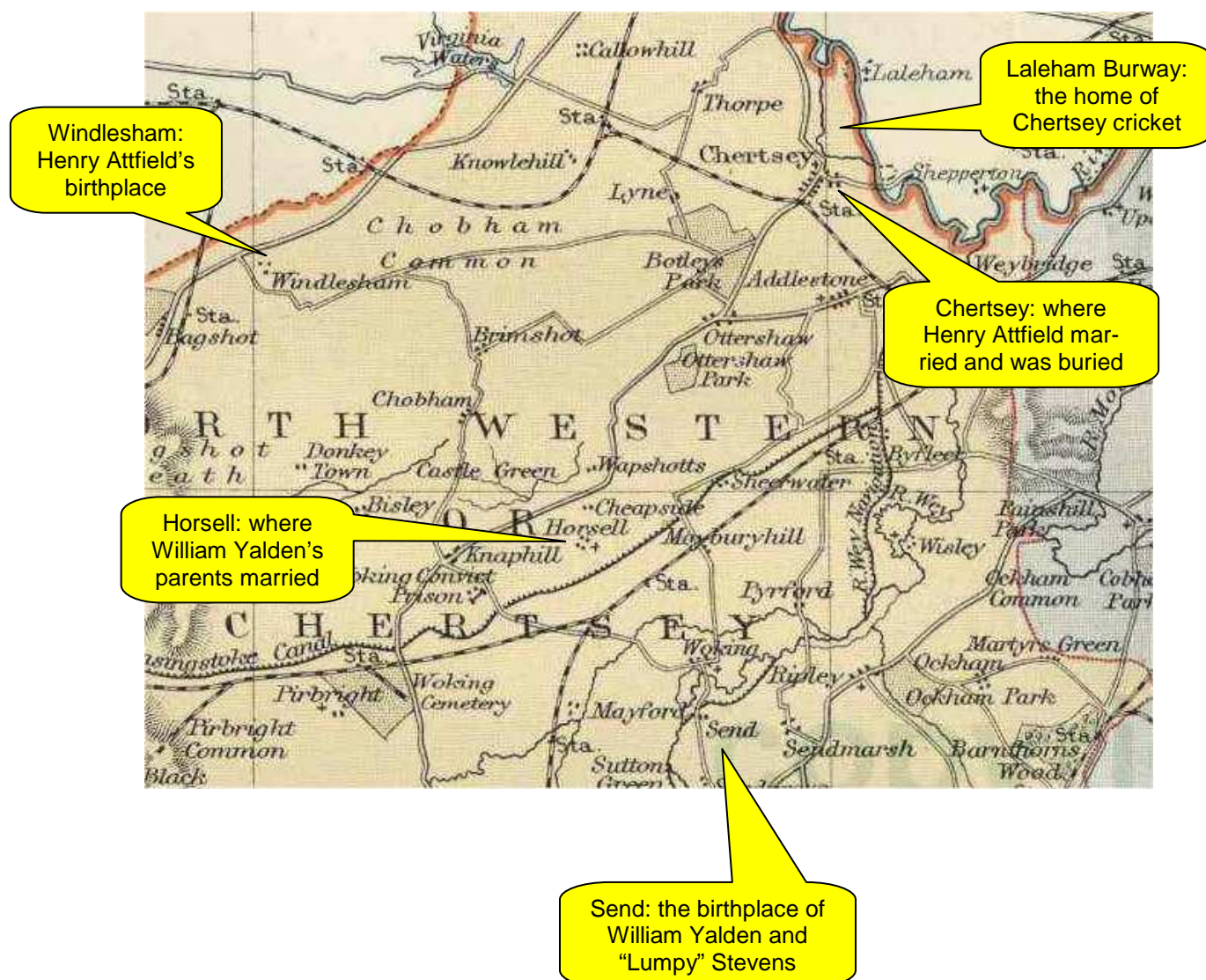
Thus, to summarise the evidence of this important will, Henry Attfield's wife's uncle – James Wallden – was not-quite-married to William Yalden's aunt (i.e. his mother Martha's sister). Given the fact that so many of the cricketers of this era had mutual family links, this represents further powerful circumstantial evidence that this Henry Attfield of Chertsey (1746-1821) may indeed be identified as Henry Attfield the cricketer.

This article is based on preliminary researches and is by no means definitive. I will amend and update it as and when more evidence comes to light. I would be most grateful for any further information that would shed any light on the true identity of Henry Attfield the cricketer.

John Attfield
Buchholz, Germany
December 2008

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All the principal locations mentioned in this article are shown on this map



Appendix

Full list of matches in which Henry Attfield is known to have appeared¹⁹

1773

- August 26, for Surrey v. Hambledon, at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (scored 7 & 3 runs)
- September 16-18, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (4 not out; 1 catch)
- September 27-28, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (8 runs)

1774

- July 28, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Guildford Bason (3 & 16 runs; 1 catch)

1775

- July 6-8, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (5 & 15 runs; 1 catch)
- July 13-15, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (49 & 15 runs)
- September 7-9, for Chertsey v. Coulsdon, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (3 & 2 runs)
- September 21-22, for Chertsey v. Dartford, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (0 & 8 runs)
- September 25-27, for Chertsey v. London, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (19 & 12 runs; 1 catch)

1776

- August 6-8, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (0 & 5 runs)
- August 26-28, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (8 & 28 runs)

1777

- July 22-26, for England v. Hampshire, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (16 & 0 runs) – *Attfield played as substitute for J Minchin retired hurt*

1778

- September 10-11, for Chertsey v. England, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (24 runs)
- October 6-8, for Surrey v. England, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (18 & 0 runs)

1779

- August 9-11, for Surrey v. Kent, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (7 & 25 runs) – *Attfield's dismissal in Surrey's second innings was recorded in a newspaper as "gave out wrongfully"*
- August 23, for England v. Hampshire, at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (17 & 16 runs) – *Attfield played as substitute for Thomas White*
- September 13-16, for England v. Hampshire, at Moulsey Hurst (9 & 46 runs)

1780

- June 27-28, for Duke of Dorset's XI v Sir H Mann's XI, at Sevenoaks Vine (1 run & 13 not out)
- August 8, for Chertsey v. Maidenhead, at Priestwood Common (scores not known) – *source Waghorn*²⁰
- August 31-Sept 1, for Hampshire v. England, at Bourne Paddock, Bishopsbourne, Kent (13 & 0 runs) – *Atfield played for Hampshire as “given man” (i.e. on loan)*

1782

- July 3-5, for All England (Hampshire) v. Kent, Sevenoaks Vine (16 not out & 6 runs; 1 catch)

1783

- September 5-6, for Chertsey v. Berkshire, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (41 & 18 runs)

1784

- June 22-23, for Chertsey v. Coulsdon, at Laleham Burway, Chertsey (21 & 19 runs)

1788

- June 9-10, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Moulsey Hurst (22 runs)
- July 2-4, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Perriam Downs, Luggershall (10 & 5 runs) – *4 gentlemen & 7 players on each side. For Surrey Atfield took the place of a gentleman*
- July 13-16, for England v. Hampshire (Duke of Dorset), at Broad Halfpenny Down, Hambledon (scores not known)
- August 13-15, for Surrey v. Hampshire, at Windmill Down, Hambledon (2 not out & 11 runs)

1789

- June 8, for Moulsey Hurst v. Uxbridge, at Uxbridge Moor, Middlesex (11 & 2 runs; 1 wicket)

Note

A player called “Atfield” also appeared in a match between teams from Bagshot and Egham at Runnymede, Egham, on September 9, 1803.²¹

Picture sources

1. With acknowledgements to the Findon Village website, <http://www.findonvillage.com>
2. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sackville%2C_3rd_Duke_of_Dorset
3. Photo by the author
4. Photo © Copyright Dr Neil Clifton and licensed for reuse under the Creative Commons Licence, for which see <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/628232>

Footnotes

¹ The main revisions are the removal of a speculative paragraph concerning Thomas Swayne which I no longer consider to be realistic, and the use of a more contemporary map of Surrey (on p.7) to illustrate the locations mentioned in the article.

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Atfield. The Wikipedia entry is actually taken from the 1771-1775 chapter of John Leach, "From Lads to Lord's", published online at <http://www.jl.sl.btinternet.co.uk/stampsite/cricket/ladstolords/1771.html>

³ From the BBC Sport website, "Stump the Bearded Wonder No 99", http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport2/hi/sports_talk/stump_bearders/4556921.stm

⁴ John Goulstone and Michael Swanton, "Carry on cricket: The Duke of Dorset's 1789 tour", *History Today*, Aug 89, Vol. 39 Issue 8, p18.

⁵ See "The History of Chertsey Cricket Club", researched by L.C.Dodd and edited by K.O'Keeffe, and available in PDF format from the Chertsey C.C. website, <http://www.chertseycc.org.uk/History/history.html>

⁶ Statistics calculated by the author from individual match data at: <http://www.cricketarchive.com/>

⁷ Goulstone and Swanton, op.cit. According to "The History of Chertsey C.C." op. cit. the tour is mentioned on p.60 of the first volume of Arthur Haygarth's "Cricket Scores and Biographies" and story was also re-counted in the *Daily Telegraph*, 1.4.1989

⁸ "The History of Chertsey C.C." op. cit.

⁹ Email to the author from Peter Griffiths of CricketArchive.com, 13.9.2006

¹⁰ Unless otherwise indicated the source for all birth/baptism and marriage data in this article is the International Genealogical Index (IGI) at <http://www.familysearch.org>, and the source for burial data is the National Burial Index (published by the Federation of Family History Societies)

¹¹ Universal Directory of GB, 1791

¹² Will of William Atfield of Stoke Next Guildford, gentleman, Probate London 24.3.1829, PRO Ref 11/1752

¹³ Benny Green, ed., *The Wisden Book of Cricketers' Lives*, 1986. For George Cooke Atfield's cricketer statistics 1845-1856 see: <http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Players/36/36249/36249.html>. Some of George Cooke Atfield's brothers are also recorded in the cricket archives. And in the 1870s Henry Atfield's great-grandson James Wheeler married a first cousin of the wife of Kent cricketer Richard Thornton Thornton, two of whose brothers also played county cricket.

¹⁴ See Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Yalden (and John Leach op. cit.). For Yalden's cricket records see <http://cricketarchive.com/Archive/Players/77/77386/77386.html>

¹⁵ "The History of Chertsey C.C." op. cit., and Leach op. cit.

¹⁶ Will of Henry Wallden of Chobham, yeoman, dated 13.1.1788, Probate London 10.11.1789, PRO 11/1185. Transcript available at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~engsurry/t-z.htm>, ref. SRY2019

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Source: West Surrey Marriage Index (published on CD-ROM by the West Surrey Family History Society). The bridegroom is recorded as "Henry Hatfield". There is no entry for this marriage in the IGI

¹⁹ The source where not otherwise indicated is individual match data at: <http://www.cricketarchive.com/>

²⁰ "The Dawn of Cricket" compiled by H.T. Waghorn, Marylebone Cricket Club, p.53, see http://acscricket.com/EarlyCricket/Books/Waghorn_F.html (under "Field")

²¹ Source: S. Britcher's scorebooks, 1883, p.28, name index compiled by Don Ambrose of the Early Cricket Project, http://acscricket.com/EarlyCricket/Books/Britcher_A.html