

# Breaking Through At Last

## The Dons in 1930-31

After years of slow progress, the Dons win the Isthmian League and London Senior Cup for the first time



*More than 10,000 fans watch the Dons on the attack against Kingstonian during the London Senior Cup final at Selhurst Park*

Boasting a prolific attack and the meanest defence in the Isthmian League, the 30-31 Dons produced their best ever season in securing an Isthmian League and London Senior Cup double. With an introduction explaining amateur football between the wars and profiles of the men who starred for Wimbledon during a record-breaking year, this review of the campaign covers every league and cup game plus the Easter tour of Germany and Holland where the match at the home of Sparta in Rotterdam was watched by 15,000 fans.

H	A	IL TABLE 30-31	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
-	-	<b>1. Wimbledon</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>42</b>
D0-0	W1-0	2. Dulwich H	26	12	9	5	51	39	33
W3-1	L0-1	3. Wycombe W	26	12	6	8	67	45	30
W5-4	W3-2	4. The Casuals	26	12	6	8	71	56	30
D2-2	W7-3	5. St Albans C	26	11	7	8	67	66	29
W3-2	D2-2	6. Ilford	26	10	6	10	70	62	26
W4-1	D2-2	7. Oxford C	26	10	5	11	43	48	25
W7-2	L1-3	8. London Cal	26	8	8	10	43	53	24
D1-1	W2-1	9. Kingstonian	26	10	4	12	49	64	24
W2-0	W2-1	10. Tufnell Park	26	9	5	12	45	61	23
W2-0	W3-1	11. Nunhead	26	9	4	13	49	54	22
W4-3	W3-2	12. Woking	26	9	4	13	56	63	22
W3-2	W3-1	13. Clapton	26	7	4	15	62	75	18
W4-0	D0-0	14. Leytonstone	26	6	4	16	46	65	16

## Amateur Football between the Wars

Like society, football has changed a good deal since the interwar years. In the 1920s and 30s, a flourishing amateur game with its own leagues, cups and representative matches existed alongside its professional counterpart. Despite many games attracting five figure crowds, facilities were primitive and financial inducements were forbidden with amateur players only paid expenses and holding down ordinary jobs during the working week.

Although many clubs had a first team coach, often an ex-Football League player, who attended matches and treated injuries, sides were selected by committee, and it was expected that the first team captain would make any tactical alterations during games. Competition for players was fierce with some individuals moving on from clubs if they were dropped from the first team or perceived that their chances of winning medals were better elsewhere.

Regarded as the preeminent competition, the **Isthmian League** was one of several amateur leagues based around the London area whose names – Athenian, Corinthian, Delphian, Spartan – reflected the Olympic ideal. Taking part was seen as more important than winning and so no medals or trophies were presented to the champions (although the club could fly a pennant over the ground the following year) and there was no promotion or relegation.

With no floodlights available for midweek games, and the Dons entering numerous knockout competitions, teams that did well in the various cups often found they had a huge backlog of league fixtures to clear in the final couple weeks of the season when the light evenings returned. At the end of the 1929-30 campaign, for example, Wimbledon had to play six games in eight days to complete their matches.

Isthmian League winners	
19-20 Dulwich Hamlet	29-30 Nunhead
20-21 Ilford	30-31 Wimbledon
21-22 Ilford	31-32 Wimbledon
22-23 Clapton	32-33 Dulwich Hamlet
23-24 St Albans City	33-34 Kingstonian
24-25 London Calies	34-35 Wimbledon
25-26 Dulwich Hamlet	35-36 Wimbledon
26-27 St Albans City	36-37 Kingstonian
27-28 St Albans City	37-38 Leytonstone
28-29 Nunhead	38-39 Leytonstone

With **no substitutes allowed** for injury or for tactical reasons during matches, teams often had to play with ten men when a member of their side went off injured

and the sight of a player returning to hobble out on the wing was commonplace.

**Cup football** was far more important than it is today. Teams entered numerous knockout competitions and there was no question of resting players. With most ties being played on winter Saturdays, and replays commonplace, clubs often did not play a league fixture for many weeks in the post-Christmas period.

The **FA Amateur Cup** was the blue riband event with huge crowds gathering for the later rounds. The competition included the powerful sides from the North-East with the final usually played on a ground of a professional club.

Amateur Cup winners	
19-20 Dulwich Hamlet	29-30 Ilford
20-21 Bishop Auckland	30-31 Wycombe Wanderers
21-22 Bishop Auckland	31-32 Dulwich Hamlet
22-23 London Calies	32-33 Kingstonian
23-24 Clapton	33-34 Dulwich Hamlet
24-25 Clapton	34-35 Bishop Auckland
25-26 Northern N'ards	35-36 The Casuals
26-27 Leyton	36-37 Dulwich Hamlet
27-28 Leyton	37-38 Bromley
28-29 Ilford	38-39 Bishop Auckland



*Nearly 18,000 fans watch England take on Scotland in a 1937 amateur international at Champion Hill*

It was regarded as a big honour when players were called up to play for their league, their county or their country in **representative matches**. England's amateur internationals each year included games against Ireland, Scotland and Wales and attracted large crowds, often at professional grounds. However, as such games took place at weekends during the regular season, clubs had to field a depleted side when their star names were away.

## The Isthmian League Between the Wars

**Clapton:** runners-up in the first season of Isthmian League football, 1905-06, Clapton were one of six original member clubs. Playing at the quaintly named Spotted Dog ground in east London, the Tons' heyday was in the decade after the First World War when they followed up winning the title in 1923 by lifting the Amateur Cup in successive seasons.

**Dulwich Hamlet:** giants of the interwar years when the club won the Amateur Cup three times, the London Senior Cup twice and the Surrey Senior Cup on no less than six occasions. Hamlet were also champions three times and their first game at their new stadium on Champion Hill in October 1931, attracted 16,000 fans.

**Ilford:** another one of the Isthmian League's founder members. Having bought their spacious Newbury Park ground in 1920, they followed up by being crowned champions in successive seasons, 1921 and 1922. Boasting one of the most potent attacks ever seen in amateur football, the Foxes lifted the Amateur Cup in both 1929 and 1930 before reaching the final again in 1936 only to lose to The Casuals.

**Kingstonian:** after taking the place of the Civil Service side in 1929, the Ks quickly became fierce local rivals of Wimbledon. Having lifted the Amateur Cup in 1933, they followed up by winning the title in 1934 and 1937. In addition, the club won the Surrey Senior Cup five times during the inter-war years.

**Leytonstone:** after joining the Isthmian League in 1909, the Stones were members for 71 years. Playing at Granleigh Road, a ground overlooked by the westbound platform of Leytonstone High Road station, the club grew stronger during the 1930s before winning the league in successive seasons just before the start of the Second World War.

**London Caledonians:** another one of the original six and the inaugural Isthmian League champions. A club for exiled Scots living in the capital, the Calies shared a ground with Tufnell Park in north London. Their powerful 1920s team won both the league and the Amateur Cup, but the club went into decline during the 1930s before folding just before World War 2.

**Nunhead:** after joining the Isthmian League in 1908, the Nuns gradually established themselves as one of the best amateur sides in south London and won the league in successive seasons, 1928-29 and 1929-30. Unable to use the Brown's Field ground in Southwark after the Second World War, the club disbanded.

**Oxford City:** joining the Isthmian League in 1907 having won the Amateur Cup the previous year, City were renowned cup fighters before WW1. With strong links to the University, their White House Ground landlords were Brasenose College, the club never managed to win the title in the interwar years.

**St Albans City:** after replacing West Norwood in 1923, City brought the Isthmian League title to their Clarence Park home three times in the 1920s when the great Wilf 'Billy' Minter was leading their attack. Having made a name for himself by scoring all his side's seven goals when they lost 7-8 in a 1922 FA Cup replay defeat at Dulwich Hamlet, the club's fortunes declined after he retired at the end of the decade.

**The Casuals:** with strong links to the leading public schools, and hence often known as the 'Old Boys', The Casuals were founder members of the Isthmian League in 1905. Playing matches at Richmond Road, Kingston, they supplied players to the Corinthians, a club that played friendlies and appeared in the FA Cup. The two clubs combined to form Corinthian-Casuals in 1939.



*Nunhead playing Tufnell Park during the 1930s*

**Tufnell Park:** joining the Isthmian League soon after the First World War, the Tufts reached the final of the 1919-20 Amateur Cup where they lost to Dulwich Hamlet. Playing at the Northern Polytechnic ground in Holloway, the club won the London Senior Cup in 1924 but struggled for success during the 1930s.

**Woking:** having joined the Isthmian League before the First World War, the Cards moved into their Kingfield home in 1922 and have been there ever since. Struggling to attract high-quality players to their Surrey home, the club finished in the top half of the table just three times in the 20 inter-war seasons although they did win the Surrey Senior Cup in 1927.

**Wycombe Wanderers:** joining the Isthmian League at the same time as the Dons, in 1921, the Chairboys were members for over 60 years while playing at their town centre Loakes Park ground. Despite failing to win the league championship during the interwar years, the Wanderers nonetheless assembled the talented team that triumphed in the 1931 Amateur Cup final.

## Wimbledon FC Between the Wars

Like most amateur clubs, Wimbledon FC was run by its members who paid an annual subscription that allowed them to access to league games at Plough Lane (like season ticket holders today). Various groups were elected from amongst the membership with a selection committee meeting every Monday night to choose the club's three teams (first team, reserves and a Strollers (third) XI) for games the following weekend.

Unable to pay players, the club had to attract potential recruits in other ways. During the interwar years, the Dons became known for offering good facilities, the chance of winning cup medals and the camaraderie that existed at their Plough Lane stadium. In addition, in an era when foreign travel was rare, first team players had the 'perk' of going on annual Easter tours that often included games in front of large crowds on the Continent.

Having joined the Isthmian League in 1921, the club gradually developed their home, a former rubbish dump beside the river Wandle. By the 1930s, the Dons had become one of the best supported sides in amateur football. Up to 6,000 people were attracted to Saturday afternoon Isthmian League games with the number of spectators doubling for local derbies or matches in the later rounds of the big cup competitions.



*A section of the crowd at the Wimbledon v Yorkshire Amateurs Amateur Cup tie in the spring of 1932*

In the 1931-32 season, for example, there were 10,500 at Plough Lane for the top-of-the-table league clash against Dulwich Hamlet and 12,857 when Norwich City visited later in the autumn for an FA Cup first round tie. The following spring, 11,900 attended the Amateur Cup fourth round game against the Yorkshire Amateurs and 10,500 came to the London Senior Cup quarter final against Kingstonian that followed.

Having reached the semi-final of the **Amateur Cup** in 1930, Wimbledon were amongst the favourites for amateur football's greatest prize throughout the next decade. While local rivals Dulwich Hamlet, Kingstonian and The Casuals lifted the famous trophy during those years, the closest the Dons came was when Ken Wright's team took the famous Bishop Auckland side to a replay in the 1935 final.

Regarded as second in importance, the **London Senior Cup** was keenly contested as there were so many amateur clubs in and around the capital. Twice winners during the 1930s, the Dons' final against Kingstonian in 1931 attracted over 10,000 spectators to Crystal Palace's Selhurst Park ground. Having been dominated by Isthmian League clubs in the 1920s, Athenian Leaguers like Barnet, Hayes and Enfield started to challenge for supremacy in the following decade.

London Senior Cup winners	
19-20 Leytonstone	29-30 Ilford
20-21 Barking Town	30-31 Wimbledon
21-22 Ilford	31-32 Hayes
22-23 Nunhead	32-33 Finchley
23-24 Tufnell Park	33-34 Wimbledon
24-25 Dulwich Hamlet	34-35 Enfield
25-26 London Calies	35-36 Walthamstow A
26-27 Barking Town	36-37 Walthamstow A
27-28 London Calies	37-38 Barnet
28-29 Ilford	38-39 Dulwich Hamlet

Third in the pecking order, the **Surrey Senior Cup** was nonetheless seen as an important competition by the Dons' players and fans. Having shared the trophy following a drawn final in 1921, Wimbledon endured many frustrating defeats before finally lifting the trophy outright in 1936. Like the other two major cup competitions, the semi-final and final were played on neutral grounds.

Surrey Senior Cup winners	
19-20 Dulwich Hamlet	29-30 The Casuals
20-21 Metrogas/Wimbledon	30-31 Kingstonian
21-22 Metrogas	31-32 Kingstonian
22-23 Dulwich Hamlet	32-33 Met Police
23-24 Summerstown	33-34 Dulwich Hamlet
24-25 Dulwich Hamlet	34-35 Kingstonian
25-26 Kingstonian	35-36 Wimbledon
26-27 Woking	36-37 Dulwich Hamlet
27-28 Dulwich Hamlet	37-38 Tooting & M
28-29 Redhill	38-39 Kingstonian



## Wimbledon FC in 1930-31

**30<sup>th</sup> August** – The Dons kick off their 10<sup>th</sup> season as an Isthmian League club with an impressive 7-2 victory over London Caledonians at Plough Lane.

**20<sup>th</sup> September** – Unbeaten after five games, a 3-2 win over Amateur Cup holders Ilford confirms the Dons' position amongst the title favourites.

**11<sup>th</sup> October** - A crowd of 6,000 watch the Dons win a tight local derby 2-1 at Kingstonian's Richmond Road ground.

**18<sup>th</sup> October** – 10,000 fans see the Isthmian League's two remaining unbeaten sides – the Dons and Dulwich Hamlet – play out a goalless draw at Plough Lane.

**8<sup>th</sup> November** – While Dulwich are losing at Ilford, a 9,500 Plough Lane crowd see the Dons move to the top of the league after a 1-1 draw in the return game with Kingstonian.

**15<sup>th</sup> November** – A severely depleted Dons side win an FA Cup 4<sup>th</sup> qualifying round tie 2-0 at Nunhead to set up a first round meeting with Fulham.

**29<sup>th</sup> November** – The Dons play brilliantly to secure a 1-1 draw in front of 13,000 fans at Craven Cottage, but they are humbled 0-6 in the replay in SW19.

**13<sup>th</sup> December** – The Dons set out on the Amateur Cup trial with an impressive 5-1 victory at fellow Isthmians St Albans City.

**27<sup>th</sup> December** – A narrow, 3-2 victory over Clapton ensures the Dons enter 1931 still unbeaten and top of the Isthmian League table.

**17<sup>th</sup> January** – A season's best crowd of around 7,000 at Barking Town's Vicarage Field watch as a second half goal from Frank Okin sees the Dons through to the third round of the Amateur Cup.

**14<sup>th</sup> February** – Having drawn at Plough Lane the previous Saturday, Hayes knock the Dons out of the Amateur Cup, winning a Church Road replay 3-2.

**21<sup>st</sup> February** – Veteran Frank Macey scores a hat trick as Kingstonian beat the Dons in the Surrey Senior Cup.

**28<sup>th</sup> February** – At the third attempt, the Dons beat Nunhead to move into the second round of the London Senior Cup

**7<sup>th</sup> March** – after eight successive Saturdays of cup tie football, the Dons return to winning ways in the Isthmian League with a thrilling 5-4 win over The Casuals.

**14<sup>th</sup> March**- 'Doc' Dowden's second half strike at Upton Park is enough to beat Enfield and take the Dons through to the London Senior Cup final.

**21<sup>st</sup> March** - Unbeaten in sixteen matches after a 2-0 victory over Tufnell Park, the Dons move to within a point of long-time leaders Dulwich Hamlet with six games in hand.

**28<sup>th</sup> March** – The Dons' unbeaten run ends as they are defeated by Amateur Cup finalists Wycombe Wanderers on their sloping Loakes Park pitch.

**23<sup>rd</sup> April** – Charlie Christie's 46<sup>th</sup> minute winner at Dulwich Hamlet puts the Dons level on points with the long-time league leaders. With the hosts concluding the fixtures, Wimbledon are closing in on the title.

**2<sup>nd</sup> May**- Five points from three games in four days, culminating in beating Oxford City 4-1, sees the Dons crowned as champions for the first time with a record 42 points.

**9<sup>th</sup> May** – more than 10,000 people at Selhurst Park watch captain Fred Gregory lift the London Senior Cup after the Dons beat Kingstonian 1-0.



**Wimbledon enter the field at The Casuals on 26 November 1930.** Fred Gregory, Dave Evans, Sammy Sowter, Eric Caesar, 'Doc' Dowden, Frank Okin, Frank Wade, Charlie Christie, Harry Hopkins. NB Bobby Goodchild is standing behind Gregory, while Ted Whisker is not in the picture.

## Who Was Who in 1930-31

When Roy Law and co lifted the Amateur Cup at Wembley in 1963 they were widely hailed as the finest team ever to wear Wimbledon blue, but one man begged to disagree. A long-term fan called Mr Brown wrote to the local *'Boro News'* claiming that the side that had done the Isthmian League and London Senior Cup double in 1930-31 contained the better players. Here we profile the team from that momentous year.

**Goalkeeper - Ted Whisker.** Joining the Dons during the 1929-30 season having been a member of the Army XI during his time in uniform, Ted Whisker established himself in the first team after WF Lewis was injured ahead of the opening game of the campaign and went on to appear in all 46 league and cup games as the Dons won the Isthmian League and London Senior Cup for the first time. A capable and reliable custodian, for the next few years he was the club's regular number one until the arrival of Ben Irish in 1932. His widow Margaret acted as landlady to many of the club's younger players during the 1970s and 80s, most notably Nigel Winterburn.

**Right back - Francis 'Sammy' Sowter.** Considered one of the best right backs in amateur football during the late 1920s and early 1930s, many judged Sammy Sowter unlucky not to be called up for international honours. His hard, clean tackling and powerful clearances meant he was called up to represent Surrey County, the London FA and the Isthmian League during his time at Plough Lane. Always calm under pressure, he was the team's regular penalty taker.

**Left back - Fred Gregory.** Born in Fulham in 1900 and undoubtedly one of the greatest full backs ever to represent the club, Fred Gregory gained schoolboy honours before joining the Dons during the 1921-22 campaign. A classy defender with a powerful kick, he was good enough to be capped 14 times by England at amateur level between 1927 and 1934 and, curiously, he played left back for the Dons but at right back for his country.

After finishing his playing career at Leyton in 1934, he returned to SW19 as reserve team manager and for the next three decades he fulfilled a wide variety of back-room roles. In the mid-1950s, Sydney Black co-opted home as vice chairman of the small management committee that played a crucial part in helping coach Les Henley to establish the Dons as the country's pre-eminent amateur side in the early 1960s.

**Right half - Eric Caesar.** Although only in SW19 for one year, Eric Caesar made quite an impression with his powerful performances. Signing during the 1929-30 campaign he moved to Hayes straight after starring in the two FA Cup ties with Fulham in November 1930. Within weeks, his elder brother Bill, who had played county cricket for Surrey, had also moved to Cox's Meadow and the two of them appeared in the Amateur Cup tie at Plough Lane in February 1931 and then in the final later that year.

**Right half - Frank Wade.** Having started out at the beginning of the 1929-30 season as inside left for the reserve team, Frank Wade was successfully switched to the half back line which suited his tough tackling style. Became a regular member of the first team following the departure of Eric Caesar and ended up playing in 19 of the team's twenty cup ties that year.

**Left half - Bobby Goodchild.** One of the club's great pre-war servants, Bobby Goodchild represented Wimbledon for more than ten seasons. A clever and committed player, he played at left half for the 1930-31 side but was switched to centre half when Ossie Parry was injured. He had switched to full back by the time the Dons reached the Amateur Cup final of 1935. His elder brother Tommy also gave the club yeoman service during the 1920s.

**Centre half - Ossie Parry.** Spotted while playing against the Dons for the Aldershot Traction Company in an FA Amateur Cup tie in the spring of 1930, Welsh born Ossie Parry moved to SW19 that summer and quickly became an automatic selection at centre half. Tall, strong and blonde, with a lock of hair perpetually curling across his wide forehead, he signed professionally with Crystal Palace in May 1931, playing 149 games for them before joining Ipswich Town in June 1936 and played until 1949, notching a further 236 games for the Suffolk side.

**Outside right - Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien.** For several seasons the club's most versatile utility man, Mick O'Brien occupied every position in the side apart from goalkeeper before settling down in to his favoured outside right berth. Totally committed to the cause, he scored the winning goal in the London Senior Cup final when the Dons were down to ten men at Selhurst Park. He was good enough to be called up to represent Surrey on several occasions.

**Inside right - DB 'Dave' Evans.** Another player who was recruited after first being seen in action for the Aldershot Traction Company side, Welsh international Dave Evans scored ten goals during the 1930-31 season. A clever and direct inside forward whose trickery bamboozled many a defender, he was a key

member of the side that retained the league title at the end of the 1931-32 campaign.

**Centre forward – WW ‘Doc’ Dowden.** By far Wimbledon’s best known pre-war player, William Walter Dowden, always known as the ‘Doc’, was a scoring sensation. Joint top scorer in the 1924-25 campaign, for the next eight seasons he finished as the clubs’ leading marksman with a best of 54 goals in thirty-five games in 1929-30. By netting thirty-seven times in 1930-31 and scoring another thirty-three goals the following year he made a major contribution to the Dons Isthmian League title triumphs of 1931 and 1932.

His form for Wimbledon led to Fulham giving Dowden a game for their first team at Watford in December 1930 but despite scoring the Cottagers equaliser in the dying seconds it turned out to be his only Football League appearance. After retiring during the 1934-35 campaign he was persuaded to return and led the march to the Amateur Cup final and scored in the replay at Stamford Bridge as his side went down 2-1.

Chosen to represent the London FA, the Surrey FA and the Isthmian League, the closest he came to being awarded an England cap was when he was called up as reserve for the 1930 international game against

Ireland. An employee of a Putney sports shop, the Doc was the Dons’ team manager in the post war years.

**Inside left – R ‘Harry’ Hopkins.** An experienced and tricky inside left, Hopkins scored sixteen goals in Wimbledon’ triumphant 1930-31 campaign. He had joined the club from the Royal Naval Dockyard at Chatham in the summer of 1929 and enjoyed four successful years at Plough Lane.

**Outside left - Frank Okin.** A fine servant to Tufnell Park, Frank Okin switched to SW19 in the summer of 1930 and his dashing displays down the left wing were crucial to the success that followed. Quick, skilful and with a powerful shot he set up many of the goals during the second half of that campaign.

**Inside right – Howard Barnes.** Making a few appearances at the end of the campaign, Howard ‘Boogie’ Barnes left the club before returning to Plough Lane a couple of months before the 1935 Amateur Cup Final after trying his luck at Crystal Palace. He scored the winning goal in the quarter final at Bromley and appeared in both the games against Bishop Auckland. Unfortunately caught in an air raid while in a cafe in London in early 1941, his injuries enforced the amputation of one leg below the knee.



*The all-conquering 1930-31 side with club officials. Back row: Bert Corke (Secretary), G Wickes (Assistant Secretary), Harry Williams (Treasurer), Jack Brown (Chairman), Ted Whisker, SJ ‘Jack’ Meadows (President), Dave Evans, Alec Ford (Trainer), Bert Watts (Coach). Middle: Frank Okin, Harry Hopkins, WW ‘Doc’ Dowden, Fred Gregory, Bobby Goodchild, ‘Sammy’ Sowter, Ossie Parry. Front: ‘Charlie’ Christie, Frank Wade.*

## Pre-season 1930-31



**Bert Corke**

Having gradually moved up the amateur game's pecking order during the previous decade, hopes were high at the start of the 1930-31 campaign. The previous year, the Dons had beaten a professional club for the first time – Guildford City in the FA Cup – and reached the semi-final of the Amateur Cup itself and it meant that as the season kicked off, the club's stock had never been higher.

After serving as club secretary for nearly a decade, SJ 'Jack' Meadows had handed his duties over to Bert Corke and taken on the newly created position of President. During his 10 years in charge, Plough Lane had been developed into one of the finest grounds in amateur football while the club's playing strength had gradually improved. The club's first XI were now amongst the favourites for the Amateur Cup and were expected to be challenging for Isthmian League honours.

By adding Dave Evans and Ossie Parry, the two best players from the Aldershot Traction FC side that had run the Dons so close an FA Amateur Cup tie the previous season, Wimbledon officials were convinced that they had assembled the most powerful squad in the club's history. In addition to their programme of matches in the Isthmian League, the men from SW19 had been entered for no less than seven cup competitions.

After a private Wednesday evening practice match, on the Saturday before the season proper began, the Probables beat the Possibles 6-0 in a match played at Plough Lane. Despite a brilliant performance from reserve goalkeeper Ted Whisker, 'Doc' Dowden grabbed a hat trick with two goals from Harry Hopkins and another from Reg Gardiner completing the scoring. Even after such a short preparation period, the Dons were deemed ready for the new campaign to commence.



### 1. Sat 30/08: IL 6,000

**Wimbledon (4) 7** Hopkins 7, Dowden 15, 17, 44, 80  
Harman 57, Evans 70

**London Caledonians (1) 2** Judge 19, McCracken 55

The Dons made an impressive start to what everyone at Plough Lane hoped would be a successful season by putting seven goals past a disappointing London Caledonians side. With their two new signings from the Aldershot Traction Company team, Dave Evans and Ossie Parry, drafted straight into the team, Wimbledon were on top from the start. Missing their international centre half Eric Gates, the Calies defence had no answer as the home forwards ran riot.

Completely dominant from the kick off, inside left Harry Hopkins gave Wimbledon the lead with a low shot in the 7<sup>th</sup> minute. 'Doc' Dowden then scored two goals inside two minutes only for Judge to reduce the arrears almost immediately. By half time, the home centre forward had made it 4-1 but soon afterwards McCracken pulled one back. Any signs of a visiting revival were quashed in the final quarter as the Dons ran in three more goals.

With last year's regular first team goalkeeper, WF Lewis, having dislocated his finger in a practice match, the highly rated Ted Whisker came into the side, but he had little to do as the hosts dominated. With five minutes still to play, the referee blew the full-time whistle, and it was only when a home official pointed out his error that the players returned to play out the remainder of the match.

"Wimbledon led off at speed – maintained almost throughout the first half – which was amazing under the weather conditions," a national newspaper reported. "Playing well together and backed by a steady defence, Wimbledon's forwards repeatedly harried the visiting defenders who they beat four times in the first half. Inevitably the game slowed as the heat took its toll during the second period, but the hosts were able to add three more goals. The Dons look a most formidable force."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman  
Callies: Best, Buchanan, Garden, Wootton, McDonald, Findlayson, Judge, McCracken, Conridge, Davis, Hamilton*





## 2. Wed 03/09: IL

**Wimbledon (2) 4** Hopkins 3, Harman 20, Dowden 46, Cottar 78

### Leytonstone (0) 0

Facing a Leytonstone side forced to field five reserves due to work commitments, the Dons were made to work hard for an ultimately comfortable midweek victory at Plough Lane. Full backs Sammy Sowter and Fred Gregory had to be at their best to deny the dangerous-looking Stones forward line while at the other end only inspired goalkeeping form Page kept the score down as Wimbledon registered their second successive win.

Despite making two changes to their starting line-up, the Dons went ahead when inside left Harry Hopkins gave his side an early lead for the second game running. With the Stones' veteran centre half, Harold Pease, having trouble subduing the dangerous 'Doc' Dowden, more goals followed. Wimbledon's star forward had three fine drives saved by Page before his fourth effort was only parried and Bill Harman followed up to net the second goal.

Dowden himself was on target within a minute of the restart and 12 minutes from time inside forward Laurence Cottar completed the scoring when he cleverly drew Page before slipping the ball into the net.

"Although those 'old reliables', Sowter and Gregory, did most of Wimbledon's defensive work, Whisker gave a good account himself in goal when called upon," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "With Parry at centre half, the intermediate line provided formidable opposition, while the fast-moving forwards were too quick for the visitor's defence."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Cottar, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman*  
*Stones: Page, Batchelor, Raybould, Mealand, Pease, Bailey, Birnie, Williams, Finney, Garrett, Harris*



## 3. Sat 06/09: IL 2,000

**Oxford City (2) 2** Richardson 24, Hacker 33

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Dowden 16, 69

The dominant Dons could count themselves as highly unfortunate as they dropped their first point of the season at Oxford City. Somehow finding themselves behind at half time at the White House ground, Wimbledon created chance after chance in a one sided second period. However, a mixture of stubborn defence, brilliant goalkeeping and poor finishing meant they only had 'Doc' Dowden's equaliser to show for their efforts.

After Harry Hopkins had wasted a glorious early chance and Dowden had hit the crossbar, the visitors deservedly took the lead when the Dons' prolific centre forward broke the deadlock after exchanging passes with Bill Harman and beating Ly Allison with a powerful shot. But the tables were turned when first Clive Richardson and then Charles Hacker scored to put the hosts in front by the 33<sup>rd</sup> minute. In the second half, City defended deep in an effort to frustrate Wimbledon and although Dowden bulldozed through to equalise, even he could not force a winner.

"Wimbledon can consider themselves extremely unfortunate in that they had to share points with Oxford City," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Showing a better understanding of each other's play, and displaying much more polish and football, Wimbledon were always a shade better than the home club."

Judging by the loud cheers that greeted each of their goals, plenty of Wimbledon supporters had chosen to holiday in the area and had come along to support their team.

*City: Allison, Arlett, Randall, Fround, Townsend, Holton, Richardson, Smith, Hacker, Deadman*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman*

TUFNELL PARK RECREATION GROUND, 13th, SEPTEMBER, 1930.

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**4. Sat 13/09: IL (11<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**Tufnell Park (0) 1 Black 52**

**Wimbledon (1) 2 Dowden 17, Hopkins 57**

At the Northern Polytechnic ground in Holloway where they had often struggled in the past, the Dons did just enough to win a scrappy game and consolidate their position at the top of the early table. Having established a 2-1 lead by the hour mark and with heavy rain making conditions underfoot treacherous, centre half Ossie Parry had to be at his imperious best as he marshalled his defenders to help quell a late Tufnell Park onslaught.

Despite being closely marked by Tufts impressive centre half Black, 'Doc' Dowden put Wimbledon ahead mid-way through the first half during a period when the visitors were well on top. The north Londoners equalised soon after the break when Black's powerful 30-yard shot went into the net through Ted Whisker's hands. Five minutes later the Dons regained the lead after Harry Hopkins ran almost the length of the field before firing home a stunning goal. Although playing against a side with only 10 fit men, it was Wimbledon who did most of the defending from them on.

"Harry Hopkins was the outstanding player for Wimbledon," the Surrey Comet reported. "He seemed the most comfortable on the slippery ground. How well he was able to control the ball was shown in the wonderful way he scored Wimbledon's deciding goal following a tortuous dribble against three of Tufnell Park's defenders."

During the week that followed, Dowden played and scored in a representative match that pitted an Isthmian League XI against their Spartan counterparts. By winning 5-3, the Spartans gained their first victory over the Isthmians since 1910.

*Tufts: Murden, Eastman, Hankins, Smith, Black, Ling, Clarke, Darling, McGowan, Lockey, Hooper*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman*

**5. Sat 20/09: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 9<sup>th</sup>)**

**Wimbledon (2) 3 Dowden 31, 37, Hopkins 53**

**Ilford (1) 2 Welsh 20, Dellow 62**

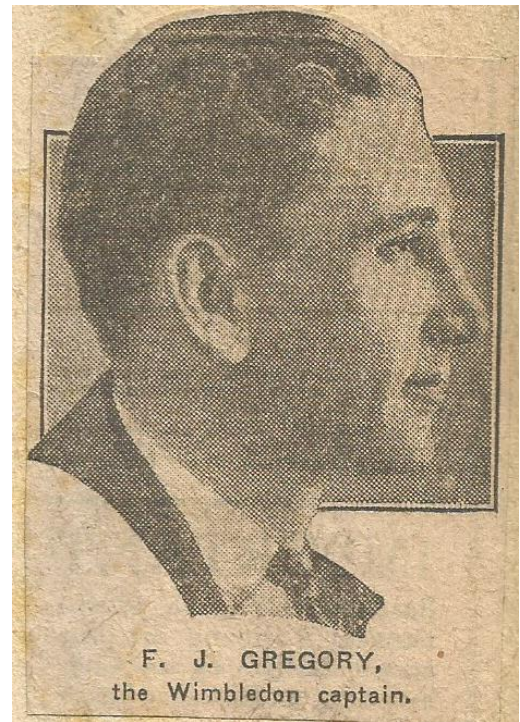
Against their most dangerous opponents to date, two more goals from 'Doc' Dowden helped the Dons to beat the powerful Ilford side and establish themselves as serious title contenders. Having won the Amateur Cup in successive years, the Essex side boasted, what many observers believed to be, the Isthmian League's best attack but, after falling behind, Wimbledon hit back to record a morale boosting victory.

Fresh from beating league champions Nunhead 8-2, Ilford were under pressure early on and RAF Officer Chaston in the visitor's goal had made several fine saves before Welsh broke away to give the Essex side a 20<sup>th</sup> minute lead. Wimbledon hit back immediately and won a penalty but Sammy Sowter's kick rebounded off the crossbar and it took another 10 minutes before Dowden equalised. Six minutes later the Dons centre forward gave his side the lead when he converted outside right 'Mick' O'Brien's pass.

Playing with the wind after the interval, Wimbledon were soon back on the attack and Dowden was able to set up Hopkins for the third goal soon after the restart. When Dellow pulled one back from Vic Potter's cross mid-way through the half it provoked the Dons to literally bombard the visitors' goal, but a mixture of poor finishing and brave goalkeeping meant that there was no addition to the score.

"Only on occasions were Ilford allowed to show their fine form of recent season as Wimbledon's defence could only be described as superb," the *South London Press* reported. "Fred Gregory and Sowter at the back were excellent, and their fine work evidently inspired the men in front of them. At first glance Parry seems rather clumsy, but this is due to his rather unusual style. His play was cool and clever all the time."  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Cottar, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman*  
*Ilford: Chaston, Triesman, Hayes, Ennals, Craymer, Sheppard, Potter, Welch, Dellow, Humphrey, Peplow*





**6. Sat 27/09; IL SChS 1 6,900**

**Wimbledon (2) 2** Hopkins 20, O'Brien 29

**Mitcham Wanderers (0) 0**

Playing their first cup game of the season, the Dons proved too strong for Mitcham Wanderers in a Surrey Charity Shield first round tie. In front of a best of season crowd at Plough Lane, the London Leaguers, who were to amalgamate with neighbours Tooting Town in 1932 to create Tooting and Mitcham, were two down after half an hour and from then on were never able to get back into the game.

Dave Evans had already hit the post before Eric Caesar started the move that led to the opening goal. The right half's pass found Evans and when he slipped the ball inside to 'Doc' Dowden the Dons centre forward set up Harry Hopkins who beat the veteran Shoesmith with ease. The hosts continued to press forward, and Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien hit the bar at the end of a dangerous move, but it was brief reprieve as in the next attack the outside right scored with a fierce cross shot.

"Although winning by 2-0, the Dons should have scored more," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Had the other forwards – good as they were - been as brilliant as Hopkins, the score might, without being unduly optimistic, have run into double figures. Wimbledon were never seriously threatened and were attacking for much of the play, which provided much excitement and was very enjoyable to watch."

In the days before the NHS and with only limited welfare provision available, the takings from 'charity' games went to local good causes.

*Dons; Whisker, Smith, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman Wanderers; Shoesmith, Wallace, Ellis, Pullen, Winterhalter, Wilson, Sealey, Kerridge, Nightingale, Brown, Monnary*

**7. Thurs 02/10: IL**

**Leytonstone (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (0) 0**

Forced through injury and work commitments to play six reserves for their Thursday evening trip to Leytonstone, the depleted Dons did well to maintain their unbeaten record after a hard-fought encounter at Granleigh Road ended goalless. Although the hosts had much more of the play, only the brilliance of J Page, in the 'Stones' goal, prevented Wimbledon from scoring on several occasions.

"Much of the game could truthfully be described as a tussle between Fred Gregory and Leytonstone," a national newspaper reported. "In midfield, a Wimbledon side that contained several reserves was completely outplayed by a very lively Leytonstone eleven. But Gregory seemed to be everywhere, covering up for the weaknesses of his colleagues and often disheartening the Leytonstone forwards by his powerful tackling and long and accurate kicking,"

With young Smith playing his second game at right back, the versatile Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien dropped to midfield with Bobby Goodchild and Frank Wade making up the half back line. Only Harry Hopkins of the club's regular forwards was available in the attacking line and that allowed 18-year-old Reg Gardner to make his debut at inside forward.

*Stones: Page, Gilbey, Raybould, Wolfenden, Smith, Batchelor, Hall, Marrable, Wood, Oakley, Seabrook  
Dons: Whisker, Smith, Gregory, O'Brien, Goodchild, Wade, Christie, Gardner, Cottar, Hopkins, Bartlett*



**Bill Harman**

**8. Sat 04/10: LChC 1 2,900**

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Gregory 55

**Dulwich Hamlet (2) 3** Sadler 15, 42, Levy 75

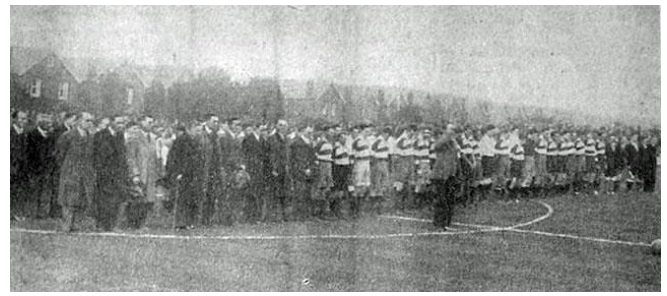
Facing an unbeaten Dulwich side that had taken advantage of the previous week's cup tie to knock the Dons off the top of the Isthmian League table, Wimbledon lost their unbeaten record in the London Charity Cup first round.

With Ossie Parry having not recovered from the injury he received against Mitcham Wanderers the previous Saturday, both sides created chances early on, but it was Hamlet's impressive centre forward WG Sadler who proved to be the star of the first half by netting two fine goals.

Ten minutes after the interval Bill Harman was fouled forty yards from goal and Fred Gregory stepped up to fire home a stunning free kick that went in off the far post. Wimbledon pushed forward in search of an equaliser and created a few openings, but it was Hamlet's David Levy who settled the outcome when he netted with a quarter of an hour to go.

"It would be rather inaccurate to say that Dulwich deserved to win, although they were slightly the better team," the *Surrey Comet* reporter wrote. "Actually, it was that Wimbledon deserved to lose, and got their deserts. Caesar filled in at centre back in the first half, Goodchild in the second but either could successfully divide his time between attack and defence. The home half back line was much weaker than Hamlet's,"

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Caesar, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harman*  
*Hamlet: A Solly, Robinson, Osmond, Murray, Hugo, Aitken, B Solly, Morrish, Sadler, Smith, Levy*



**Players and officials observe a two-minute silence before the match**

**9. Sat 11/10: IL (7<sup>th</sup> v 2<sup>nd</sup>) 6,000**

**Kingstonian (1) 1** Hedger 40

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Hopkins 30, Evans 84

A late goal from Dave Evans was enough for the depleted Dons to win at previously unbeaten Kingstonian and move just a point behind leaders Dulwich Hamlet, and with a game in hand. The large band of travelling fans in the 6,000 crowd were heartened that Wimbledon won a hard-fought local derby without Fred Gregory and 'Doc' Dowden who were off playing for a Southern Counties XI against the Northern Counties XI at Stamford Bridge in a trial match for the England amateur team.

Standing in at centre half for the now flu-stricken Ossie Parry, Eric Caesar did an excellent job in shackling Ernie Hannam, the Ks centre forward, as both sides tried to impose themselves in an even first half. After half an hour Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien had a shot charged down and Harry Hopkins followed up to give Wimbledon the lead only for outside left Hedger to equalise shortly before the interval.

Kingstonian dominated possession for much of the second half but with Eric Curnow and Sammy Sowter in outstanding form Ted Whisker had few saves to make. With just minutes remaining, Ks 'keeper Bates dropped a shot from Caesar at the feet of stand-in centre forward Dave Evans who gleefully accepted the chance to win the game from close range.

"It was thrilling game and Wimbledon really deserved their victory," 'Bee' wrote in the *Boro News*. "Victory was all the more creditable as the Donsy brought a side weakened by the absence of important players and they succeeded because their deputies worked well."

Before the match the players and officials from both sides had stood in front of the main stand as a two-minute silence was observed in honour of those who had lost their lives in the recent B101 airship disaster.  
*Ks: Bates, Lucas, Urpeth, Lee, Baldwin, Keene, McCarthy, Gibson, Hannam, Macey, Hedger*  
*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Sowter, Wade, Caesar, Goodchild, O'Brien, Cotter, Evans, Hopkins, Lloyd*





**10. Mon 13/10: LCC 1**

**Brentford (4) 6** Blakemore 10, 25, 40, Berry 11, 55, Lane 88

**Wimbledon (2) 2** Gardner 36, O'Brien 44

Fielding nine first teamers in a Monday afternoon London Challenge Cup tie at Griffin Park, Third Division Brentford proved too strong for a Dons side missing only Dave Evans from their regular XI. Ted Whisker had already had to make one fine save when Blakemore put the visitors in front in the tenth minute and within sixty seconds Berry had doubled the lead. After 25 minutes W Lane ran almost the length of the field before back heeling the ball for Blakemore to fire home his second.

As the professionals eased up, the Dons hit back through Reg Gardner but that simply provoked Blackmore to complete his hat trick. The amateurs refused to give up and Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien reduced the deficit shortly before the interval. Brentford played the second half at a leisurely pace and goals from first Berry and then Lane completed the scoring. In between 'Doc' Dowden should have taken one of a number of chances that came his way.

Explaining what he saw as the "wide gulf" between the sides, the reporter from the *Surrey Comet* wrote: "The professional must have good physique and be reasonably fearless in his play. The amateur has not such good physique, he is incomparably inferior in condition, and has to be careful about taking risks least his daily bread should suffer."

Invited to take part after reaching the Amateur Cup semi-final the previous year, the Dons were making just their second appearance in the London Challenge Cup, a competition that pitted the reserves sides of the capitals' Football League sides against a selection of non-league and amateur clubs.

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Caesar, Goodchild, O'Brien, Gardner Evans, Hopkins, Lloyd*  
*Bees: Fox, Stevenson, Benn, Davies, James, Salt, Foster, Roberts, Lane, Blakemore, Berry*



**11. Sat 18/10: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>) 10,000**

**Wimbledon (0) 0**

**Dulwich Hamlet (0) 0**

The eagerly awaited top-of-the-table clash between the last two undefeated sides in the Isthmian League ended, perhaps unsurprisingly, in stalemate. An exciting game in front of a crowd of 10,000 at Plough Lane left the Dons and Dulwich Hamlet still separated by just one point after 90 minutes had produced no goals.

IL @ 19/10	P	Pts
1. Dulwich H	9	14
2. Wimbledon	9	13
3. London Cal	11	11
4. St Albans	7	10

Hamlet's international pair of Lesley Morrish and Edgar Kail were outstanding on the right-hand side of their attack until the latter was injured in the second period, but Sammy Sowter and Fred Gregory did well to restrict them whenever they were within sight of goal. Dave Evans and 'Doc' Dowden both created openings in the second period but defences were generally on top.

"Nothing finer could be desired than the play of Sowter and Gregory at the back for Wimbledon, particularly in the first half when Dulwich Hamlet frequently attacked," a national newspaper reported. "The Hamlet were better when playing against the sun and wind, but Wimbledon had the better of the closing half, and that they did not score was due to some splendid defending from Robinson and Osmond."

Edgar Kail was a much-marked man in those days. The last amateur to play in the full England side – he gained three caps in 1929 – he stayed loyal to Dulwich despite lucrative offers from numerous professional clubs. A wine and spirits salesman, he notched more than 400 goals during a decade with The Hamlet. In 2003, the approach to the new Champion Hill stadium was renamed the Edgar Kail Way.

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, EJ Caesar, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Gardner*  
*Hamlet: Solly, Robinson, Osmond, Murray, Hugo, Aitken, Morrish, Kail, Sadler, Smith, Levy*





**Sammy Sowter**

**12. Sat 25/10: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 11<sup>th</sup>)**

**Wimbledon (2) 4** Dowden 13, 64, Sowter (pen) 33, Evans 70

**Woking (0) 3** Lockwood 58, Mason 69, Warnes (pen) 82

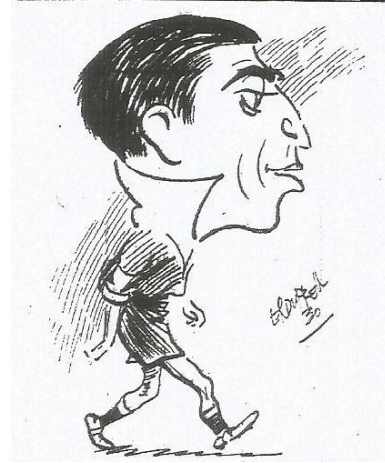
The most exciting game of the season so far in SW19 saw the Dons just edge out mid table Woking by the odd goal in seven. Having lost 2-4 and 1-6 to the Cards the previous Christmas, Wimbledon were out for revenge but after leading 2-0 at the break they were shocked as the visitors hit back to equalise. Having seen their favourites go onto reestablish their two-goal advantage, the home faithful were left biting their nails after Warnes converted a late penalty.

Montgomery in the Cards goal was in fine form, but he could not keep out 'Doc' Dowden's low drive in the 13<sup>th</sup> minute when he converted Reg Gardner's cross. Watson nearly replied for the visitors when he struck the bar midway through the half before Wimbledon doubled their lead after Dave Evans was brought down in the box and Sammy Sowter converted the resulting penalty.

The Dons right back went off injured at the start of the second period and the Cards took advantage with Lockwood and Mason scoring within three minutes to level the scores. Wimbledon went straight back on the attack and eventually Dowden put them back in front with a fierce drive and soon afterwards Evans struck the fourth. Woking refused to give up and pulled on back from the spot before the close.

"There is no apparent weakness in this Wimbledon team," one journalist wrote in his match report. "Each line worked in fine style, especially the defence and the kicking was never wild or misplaced. Had the home team had the ordinary run of luck they would have had six goals instead of four. By the merest stroke of bad luck one shot hit the underpart of the crossbar and bounced into play and another hit the upright and returned to play in the same style."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Gardner  
Cards: Montgomery, Turner, Beadle, Seddon, Craddock, Harris, Warnes, Lockwood, Watson, Mason, Blunden*



**Frank Okin**

**13. Sat 01/11: IL**

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Gardner 40, 89, Caesar 70

**Wycombe Wanderers (0) 1** Channer 50

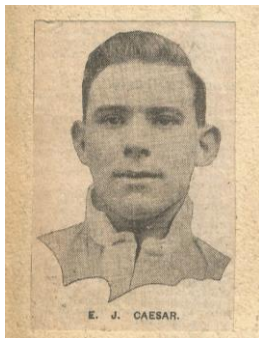
With the Casuals holding Dulwich Hamlet to a draw, the Dons' hard-fought win over Wycombe Wanderers at Plough Lane took them back to the top of the Isthmian League table, albeit only on goal average. Making light of the absence of 'Doc' Dowden, away representing the London FA, and Sammy Sowter, who was injured, a battling second half display finally allowed Wimbledon to overcome the Chairboys.

With winger Frank Okin finally fit to play, the Dons were on the back foot in the opening minutes as Wycombe created three good chances to open the scoring but five minutes before half time the hosts took the lead when a shot by Dave Evans was blocked, and Reg Gardner fired home the rebound. Soon after the break Channer levelled the scores but that seemed merely to fire up Wimbledon who started to dominate the play. Goalkeeper Jim Kipping made several fine saves before Eric Caesar restored the lead. In the closing minutes Gardiner got a third goal following good work from Evans.

"It took Wimbledon a long time to settle, and it was 40 minutes before Gardiner opened the scoring," 'Bee' reported in the *Boro News*. "After the interval, Wimbledon were superior and only great defensive work, especially on the part of Kipping, saved the wanderers from a much heavier defeat."

Although the action on the field was exciting, the loudest cheer of the afternoon came when Fred Gregory's sliced clearance smashed into a tray that the groundsman was carrying around the edge of the pitch and sent his mugs of tea flying into the air.

*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Gardner, Evans, Hopkins, Okin  
Wanderers: Kipping, Crump, Cox, Rance, Badrick, Timberlake, Simmons, Channer, Brown, Braisher, Britnell*



**14. Sat 08/11: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 8<sup>th</sup>) 9,500**

**Wimbledon (1) 1 Hopkins 43**

**Kingstonian (1) 1 Hannam (pen) 40**

The Dons took advantage of Dulwich's defeat at Ilford to draw with Kingstonian and move a point clear at the top of the table. Playing at home for the fourth Saturday in a row, Wimbledon had to come from behind in front of another large crowd and, despite coming under intense late pressure, they held on and were now the Isthmian League's only unbeaten team.

The Dons had the better of the early exchanges and should have taken the lead when 'Doc' Dowden was fouled but Eric Caesar fired the subsequent penalty well wide. By contrast, when the Ks were awarded a spot kick following Ossie Parry's handball, Ernie Hannam made no mistake from twelve yards.

Desperate to make amends, Caesar then beat three men before releasing Harry Hopkins to equalise and early in the second period the inside left was unlucky not to put his side in front for the first time when he struck a post with a powerful drive. That was the closest the Dons got though, and Ted Whisker had to make a series of saves in the final quarter to keep the scores level.

"Such keen local rivalry may be much to the liking of the onlookers," one journalist wrote, "but there can be no doubt that it does no good to the quality of the play. Take one unbeaten League team (Wimbledon): bring it into contact with its neighbour (Kingston), once beaten only and that by Wimbledon: surround them by 10,000 spectators almost fanatical in their partisanship, and there is the recipe for Saturday's match."

It was a sign of the growing respect with which the Dons were held that four of their players - Sammy Sowter, Ossie Parry, 'Doc' Dowden and Dave Evans - had been chosen for the Isthmian League in a representative match against the London League at Leytonstone.

*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Caesar, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Ks: Broderick, Lucas, Urpeth, Lee, Jarrett, Keene, McCarthy, Gibson, Hannam, Macey, Birks*

**15. Sat 15/11: FAC 4Q**

**Nunhead (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (2) 2 Morley (og) 15, Hopkins 20**

Despite the absence of arguably their four best players, the Dons emerged victorious from a hard-fought FA Cup fourth qualifying round match at Nunhead. Wimbledon supporters made up about half the crowd in Southwark and they witnessed a game played in wretched conditions on an almost grassless pitch. Two goals ahead after 20 minutes, the visitors defied the elements and the Nuns forwards to earn a first-round meeting with Fulham.

Travelling to the quagmire of Brown's Field without Fred Gregory and 'Doc' Dowden who were away on England amateur international duty and Sammy Sowter and Ossie Parry who were injured, the Dons had to battle hard. The pattern was set early on when a Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien shot got stuck in the mud. Before long Morley handed the visitors the lead with an own goal as he tried desperately to clear Harry Hopkins' header and the inside forward added the second shortly afterwards.

"No-one could have said that the homesters lacked grit from then on," the *South London Press* reported. "They were persistently attacking for the remainder of the game, and only on a few occasions could Wimbledon break away and try to increase their lead. But Nunhead's onslaughts were too often the efforts of desperation and ended up with bad distribution of passes and shooting which was wide of the mark."

One of the greatest players ever to represent the club, Eric Mulley, who made his 130<sup>th</sup> consecutive appearance in goal for the Nuns that afternoon, appeared regularly between his debut in 1924 and the club's demise during the Second World War. The next-door neighbour of Dulwich custodian Alf Solly, he won many representative honours and a solitary England amateur international cap in 1936. Also, an excellent wicket keeper, he turned down the chance to join Surrey CCC in the 1930s.

*Nunhead: Mulley, Hooton, Groves, Morley, Cox, Ellis, Mills, Saggars, Gordon, Sidey, Bartholmew*  
*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Smith, Caesar, Goodchild, Wade, O'Brien, Gardner, Evans, Hopkins, Okin*



**A section of the crowd at Richmond Road**

**16. Sat 22/11: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 6<sup>th</sup>)**

**The Casuals (0) 2** Cree 57, Wright 89

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Christie 10, 62, Dowden 80

A narrow victory over a deleted Casuals side at Richmond Road maintained the Dons' lead at the top of the Isthmian League table. With Harry Hopkins giving a wonderful exhibition of the art of playing inside forward, Wimbledon did enough to secure victory and afterwards there were no reported injuries ahead of the big cup tie the following weekend.

Playing with a strong wind behind them in the first half, Wimbledon were soon pressing forwards and it was no surprise when 'Charlie' Christie, making only his second first appearance of the season, scored from Frank Okin's centre ten minutes after the start. But the Dons were unable to add to their lead before the break and the Casuals started the second period very strongly and soon equalised.

Captain Fred Gregory responded by reorganising his attackers and restoring 'Doc' Dowden to his favoured centre forward position. After Ted Whisker had made a point blank save, the play switched to the other end where Dave Evans set up Christie who restored the lead with a fierce cross shot. When Dowden added a third, it made the game safe although the hosts did score again in the final moments.

"Wimbledon's star is still in the ascendant after a hard-fought victory over the Casuals at Richmond Road," the *Boro News* reported. "If the victory was a narrow one, it was well merited and there was no doubt that the better side won."

*Casuals: Wakeford, de L Evans, Stevenson, Griffiths, Ross, Ling, Wright, Shearer, Cree, Benka, Barritt*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Goodchild, Wade, Christie, Hopkins, Evans, Dowden, Okin*



**Frank Wade**

"By common consent, Wimbledon are accredited with being the strongest amateur team and for their match at Craven Cottage many believe in their capacity to survive," former player Charles Bucham wrote as he previewed the weekend's FA Cup first round ties.

"That it will be the keenest and closest of cup tie games there is not an atom of doubt," the *South London Press* reported. "Additional interest is aroused by the fact that the match will be a real local 'derby', since Wimbledon are the nearest senior amateur club to Fulham's ground, and because there is much personal connection between the teams. Some of the Dons are on the Fulham books as amateurs and Dowden has several times played for the reserves."

"Can Dowden lead a rapid, smashing forward line that can shock the professionals out of their soundness and rob them of their invincibility at home? The Dons have pace and the will to startle any defence, and two great backs in Sowter and Gregory, and a clever centre half in Goodchild with Wade and Caesar alongside. Hopkins and O'Brien are outstanding in forward combination with Dowden."

Meanwhile the *Surrey Comet* was less optimistic in its preview. "Putting aside the fact that Fulham are at home, and the greater physical fitness of the professional side, it does not look possible for any Isthmian league club, undefeated in this though Wimbledon may be, to beat a Third Division club, no matter where they may meet."

Apart from the still injured Ossie Parry, the selection committee had a full squad to choose from and thousands of Wimbledon supporters were expected to make the short journey to Craven Cottage to cheer on the Isthmian League underdogs.





**17. Sat 29/11: FAC 1 13,000**

**Fulham (1) 1** Price 30

**Wimbledon (1) 1** Dowden 10

Backed by thousands of their supporters, the Dons caused one of the shocks of the FA Cup first round by drawing with Third Division Fulham at Craven Cottage. It proved to be a game of two halves with Wimbledon creating the better openings during the first period but having to defend for long periods after the break. Few denied that the visitors deserved a replay.

Wimbledon attacked from the start and 'Doc' Dowden opened the scoring after 10 minutes. Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien beat the Cottagers offside trap before passing to Frank Okin and from his centre the Dons's centre forward fired the ball home. Johnny Price's equaliser 20 minutes later was something of a 'gift', the ball coming to him when only a few yards out off a defender after Temple had crossed the ball.

Many of the crowd expected the superior fitness of the hosts to tell in the second half but Wimbledon stuck to their game plan and were applauded off the pitch at the end. Particularly deserving of praise was inside right Dave Evans who kept playing to the end despite breaking his nose with half an hour to go.

"Fulham might complain that they had what looked like a good goal from Avery disallowed, but the most rabid home supporter would admit that the amateurs thoroughly deserved the right to replay," a national newspaper reported. "Wimbledon, in fact, were as good as the home team in every department, and in some respect, they showed definite superiority. All through the game they showed a rare confidence, and it was no surprise when they took the lead."

*Cottagers: Icton, Gibbon, Barrett, Oliver, Dudley, Penn, Temple, Hammond, Thompson, Price, Avey*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Goodchild, Wade, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*



**18. Wed 03/12: FAC 1R 12,146**

**Wimbledon (0) 0**

**Fulham (1) 6** Penn 35, 70 Whisker (og) 47, Gibbons 51, 83 Hammond 71

Determined to prove that Saturdays' game was an aberration, Fulham gave the Dons a football lesson in the second half of their FA Cup replay at Plough Lane. Handicapped by an injury after just 10 minutes, 'Doc' Dowden shot wide when set up brilliantly by Harry Hopkins and the centre forward had to be moved out to the wing shortly afterwards. Most of the first period was even before the visitors took the lead when Penn fired a shot in off the post shortly before the break.

Watkins charged Whisker and the ball over the line two minutes after the restart and four minutes later Gibbons scored a great goal to put the visitors in complete control. Now visibly tiring, Bobby Goodchild had represented Surrey against Essex in a representative match the day before, Wimbledon nonetheless tested Icton with a few long shots. In the last quarter Fulham added three more goals to give the final scoreline a somewhat flattering look. One consolation for home officials were the record gate receipts of £738.

There was an unsavoury incident towards the end of the game when a section of the home supporters became incensed, and a stone was thrown after a Fulham forward appeared to attack a Wimbledon player following a robust tackle. Almost immediately police officers were deployed, and the disturbance ended.

"A rather lucky goal was all that Fulham could produce at Wimbledon in the first half, but in the second period the home defence fell to pieces," the man from the *Surrey Comet* wrote. "Then the bigger and stronger visitors burst through almost at will. All that remains for Wimbledon is a little addition to the club's interesting history."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Caesar, Goodchild, Wade, O'Brien, Gardner, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Cottagers: Icton, Gibbon, Lilley, Oliver, Dudley, Barrett, Temple, Hammond, Watkins, Gibbons, Penn*



**A St Albans defender heads clear to end a Wimbledon attack**

**19. Sat 06/12: SChS SF**

**Wimbledon (2) 5** Cotter 20, 22, Gardner 46, 48, Goodchild 75

**Egham (0) 0**

With an Amateur Cup trip, the following Saturday, the Dons were able to rest several key players and still beat Egham in a Surrey Charity Shield semi-final with some ease. Fresh from beating Woking in a cup tie the previous Saturday, the Spartan Leaguers came to Plough Lane hoping to spring a surprise but Wimbledon, even without six of the men who had appeared against Fulham, were always too strong.

In light so poor that it was decided beforehand that the match would be limited to 40 minutes each way, 'Doc' Dowden's replacement Lawrence Cotter put the hosts two up before the interval. The visitors continued to be outclassed in the second half and two goals from Reg Gardner and another from the ever-reliable Bobby Goodchild led to a 5-0 victory.

"Although the Dons were distinctly better than Egham, such a wide margin might create a wrong impression regarding the merits of the two teams," one national newspaper reported. "Wimbledon did not play that type of football that has become associated with the unbeaten isthmian League team, but on the other hand, Egham, although not in the same class as Wimbledon, showed up well enough to prevent the home team giving a display of 'pretty' football."

With Southern Railway offering cheap day return rail tickets to St Albans for 3 shillings (15p) the following Saturday, the Dons were expected to be well supported in their Amateur Cup tie at Clarence Park. Although the Hertfordshire Citizens had begun the season well, Wimbledon were the favourites to win.  
*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Smith, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, Gardner, Cotter, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Egham: Shelcott, Pimble, Reeves, Bold, Collins, Hutton, Goodman, Armstrong, Prestoe, Moseley, Weller*

**20. Sat 13/12: FAAC 1**

**St Albans City (1) 1** Minter 2

**Wimbledon (4) 5** Dowden 14, 31, 85, O'Brien 38, 43  
 Overcoming the shock of falling behind in the 2<sup>nd</sup> minute at Clarence Park, the Dons produced a brilliant display of attacking display football to overwhelm St Albans in the Amateur Cup. Having scored four goals before half time, Wimbledon were able to negotiate the second 45 minutes against demoralised opponents with some ease.

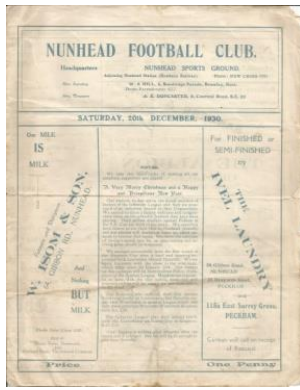
Stung by the prolific Wilf Minter's early score, it took Wimbledon until the 14<sup>th</sup> minute to equalise through 'Doc' Dowden but for the rest of the first half they simply toyed with the home defenders and ran in three more goals. After the interval, Ted Whisker had to make one or two good stops before Dowden added his third and the Dons fifth goal.

"Wimbledon have been acclaimed to be one of the best present day amateur teams in the land," the man from the *Herts Advertiser* wrote in his match report. "Judging by the form they showed at Clarence Park on Saturday, they justified many of the glowing things that have been written concerning their prowess. Wimbledon's success was richly deserved. They were better and quicker than St Albans in almost every department and their teamwork was much superior."  
*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Gardner, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Citizens: Ward, Runciman, Clark, Figg, Tibbett, Short, Cooling, Pickering, Minter, Smart, Wyatt*



**The Dons attack at Clarence Park**





**21. Sat 20/12: IL (10<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**Nunhead (1) 1** Cox 1

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Okin 15, Dowden 58, 76

Falling behind to an early goal for the second week running, Wimbledon gradually got on top before emerging victorious at a muddy Brown's Field. On a surface that made passing football impossible, the Dons looked much superior to Nunhead and kept their unbeaten league record intact following two goals from 'Doc' Dowden in the second half.

In the first attack, Tarrant crossed for Nunhead captain Albert Cox to volley home an unstoppable shot but that was as good as it got for the hosts. The visitors rolled up their sleeves and were soon on the attack with Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien hitting a post before Frank Okin equalised from Harry Hopkins' cross after fifteen minutes play.

Inside left Hopkins was the difference between the teams in the second half continually setting up chances for Dowden with his clever runs and passes. The Dons centre forward had already hit the post before he gave his side the lead with a drive thirteen minutes after the restart. Nunhead's goalkeeper Eric Mulley kept his side in the game with a series of fine saves before Dowden made certain that the points were heading back to SW19 with less than a quarter of an hour remaining.

"Familiarity with their peculiar ground is worth a goal start to the home team," the reporter from the *Surrey Comet* wrote. "Although the ground more resembled a treacherous, ploughed up mud slope than a football pitch, they ought to have been able to adapt themselves to it sufficiently to hold any team. Therefore, it was to Wimbledon's credit that they were able to settle down to win. Certain it was that they would have won by a far bigger margin on dry ground."

*Nunhead; Mulley, Hooton, Groves, Morley, Sidey, Davis, Mills, Cox, Hill, Tarrant, Wadey*  
*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Gardner, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*



**22. Sat 27/12: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 14<sup>th</sup>)**

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Hopkins 16, Christie 69, Gardiner 82

**Clapton (1) 2** Dand 46, James 88

The Dons completed a highly successful year at Plough Lane with a hard-won victory over bottom-of-the-table Clapton. Without 'Doc' Dowden, Sammy Souter and 'Mick' O'Brien, the hosts struggled to gain control on a muddy morass of a pitch. When the visitors pulled the score back to 2-3 with minutes to go, Wimbledon were reduced to wasting time.

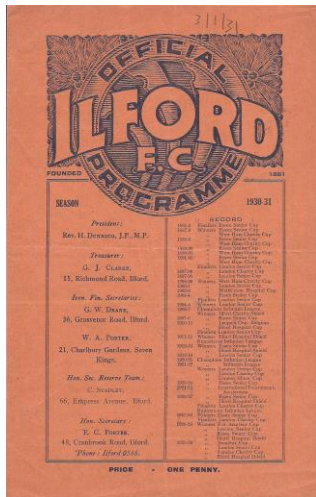
IL @ 28/12	P	Pts
1. Wimbledon	14	24
2. Dulwich H	15	22
3. St Albans	15	20
4. Ilford	16	18

"For a time, it looked as though the Dons would lose their unbeaten record," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Heavy rain, which commenced before the match started, turned the ground into a quagmire, and before the end of five minutes play it became obvious that Wimbledon would have to battle their way to victory."

Having nearly fallen behind while attempting to play passing football, the Dons reverted to a more direct approach and Fred Gregory had hit the bar with a long shot before Harry Hopkins turned the ball home. In the second half, the Tons equalised before goals from 'Charlie' Christie and a Reg Gardner strike looked to have wrapped up the points. But when James pulled one back, the visitors mounted a late assault.

It had been a busy festive period for the Wimbledon players. Five first teamers had featured in a 1-1 draw with Luton Amateurs on Christmas morning and Ossie Parry, Bobby Goodchild and 'Doc' Dowden had played for the Isthmian League against the Corinthians on Boxing Day. Dowden missed the Clapton game as he was making a scoring debut for Fulham in their Third Division game at Watford - it turned out to be the only appearance he made for the Cottagers.

*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, Gardner, Austin, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Clapton; Tietjen, Mc Donald, Taylor, Rowles, Inns, Ennals, Cooper, Britton, Roupe, James, Dand*



**Ted Whisker**

**23. Sat 03/01: IL (5<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>) 4,000**

**Ilford (0) 2** Potter 51, Dellow 80

**Wimbledon (0) 2** Hopkins 66, Dowden 70

A thrilling game on a heavy pitch ended with honours even as the Dons drew with Amateur Cup holders Ilford at Newberry Park. Up against the side with the best attacking record in the division, Wimbledon had Ted Whisker to thank for the fact that they kept their unbeaten league record intact and with their nearest title rivals, Dulwich, Kingstonian and St Albans all losing, it was a good afternoon for the visitors.

With Fred Gregory absent, Sammy Sowter, Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien, Dave Evans and 'Doc' Dowden all returned to the side and the first half was a lively affair with both goalkeepers in fine form. The deadlock was almost broken when home centre forward Reg Dellow sent in a fierce shot and when the ball squirmed under Whisker's body it was kicked off the line with home forwards appealing for a goal.

Soon after the break, Vic Potter gave the hosts the lead and for a period Ilford were completely dominant but then the impressive Harry Hopkins equalised, and Dowden's 20<sup>th</sup> of the season put Wimbledon ahead. The dangerous Dellow finally escaped the shackles of Ossie Parry to level the scores near the end and with the light fading on a dank afternoon, Whisker made more important stops in the final moments.

"The game, according to an Ilford official, was the finest seen on the home team's enclosure this season," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Ilford certainly went all out to lower Wimbledon's colours but there were three visiting players who had inspired games. Parry's long kicks and Goodchild's dangerous shots were features of the match and Whisker made numerous brilliant saves."

*Ilford:* Chaston, Gibson, Wilton, Sheppard, Graymer, Triesman, Potter, Welsh, Dellow, Drake, Peploe  
*Dons:* Whisker, Curnow, Sowter, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin

**24. Sat 10/01: LSC 1**

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Hopkins 39, Dowden 89

**Nunhead (2) 2** Wadey 26, Saggars 44

Many spectators had already left the ground when 'Doc' Dowden grabbed the late, barely deserved equaliser that kept Wimbledon in the London Senior Cup. On a frosty pitch that made passing football difficult, the Dons fans that remained let out a huge roar when their prolific marksman saved the day.

Seemingly determined to avenge the two pre-Christmas defeats they had suffered at the hands of the Dons, Nunhead deservedly led 2-1 at the interval. In very poor light the referee wisely decided to turn straight round without an interval at half time to allow the game to be played to a finish. In the last few minutes, the Dons pushed forward, desperately searching for an equaliser but their cause looked lost until Sammy Sowter sent in a cross that Harry Hopkins nodded on for Dowden to score with almost the last kick of the match.

"After their wonderful display at Ilford the previous week, Wimbledon were expected to comfortably beat Nunhead for the third time this season," 'Bee' wrote in his *Boro News* match report. "Instead, they had to thank Whisker, Sowter and HE Smith for the fact that they were not heavily beaten. Whisker was the hero of the game and the backs played heroically against heavy odds."

The Wimbledon players wore black armbands to honour the passing of Sir Joseph Hood, for many years the club's President, who had died that morning. The former Wimbledon MP had been a benefactor to many local causes and a staunch supporter of the Dons.

*Dons:* Whisker, Smith, Sowter, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin  
*Nuns:* Mulley, Hooton, Halliday, Munroe, Sidey, Davis, Parish, Daniel, Saggars, Tarrant, Wadey



## 25. Sat 17/01: FAAC 2 7,000

**Barking Town (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Okin 54

A 54<sup>th</sup> minute goal from winger Frank Okin was just enough for the Dons to beat Barking Town and advance into the third round of the FA Amateur Cup. On a muddy pitch, with two fired-up sets of supporters in a 'best of the season' crowd at the Vicarage Field shouting themselves hoarse, the Athenian League hosts had the chances to have won the tie in the first half but, having weathered the storm, it was Wimbledon who emerged triumphant.

Previously unbeaten at home, Barking had three clear opportunities to take the lead in the opening period but the Wimbledon defence – with full backs Fred Gregory and Sammy Sowter outstanding – stood firm. Nonetheless, had home centre forward Keeble shown more composure in front of goal the large Vicarage Field crowd would have erupted.

Having ridden their luck, the Dons emerged for the second half determined to attack and they forced several corners before taking the lead when 'Doc' Dowden's shot came back off the post allowing Okin to stab home the rebound from close range. With a large contingent of travelling supporters cheering them on, Wimbledon looked the stronger side in the closing stages.

"Barking, in the first half, with the wind against them, should have scored on at least three occasions, but at the interval neither side had registered a goal," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "It was expected that in the latter part of the game, Barking, with the wind behind them, would win. But, like Wimbledon in the early stages, they were unable to control the ball and towards the end the visitors, after scoring, were the more dangerous when on the attack."

*Town; Snook, Batchelor, Gibbs, Best, Cornish, Stannard, Baker, Davies, Keeble, Jarvis, Carter*  
*Dons; Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*



## 26. Sat 24/01: SSC 1

**Wimbledon (2) 4** Evans 12, 78, Dowden 43, Gregory 54

**Sutton United (1) 1** Lewis 20

Gradually making their superior pace and skill tell against a Sutton United side who fought for every ball, the Dons eventually emerged as comfortable Surrey Senior Cup winners. But the visitors angered many of the Plough Lane faithful with their often-crude attempts to play both the man and the ball and left the field with the boos of the home fans ringing in their ears.

When Sutton left winger Bill Harman, who had begun the season at Plough Lane, set up his centre forward, Lewis, to bundle home an equaliser after 20 minutes it briefly looked as though the Dons would struggle to win their local derby. But 'Doc' Dowden restored the lead just before half time and soon afterwards Fred Gregory fired in a tremendous free kick from near the halfway line that deflected into the net off a defender. Twelve minutes from time Dave Evans grabbed his second from close range as Wimbledon recorded what ultimately proved to be a comfortable victory.

"It was the most unpleasant game that has been played at Plough Lane for a very long time," 'Bee' wrote in the *Boro News*. "The visitors' tactics were uncalled for, even allowing for the cup tie atmosphere. The defenders were the worst offenders in this respect, but some of the forwards were by no means blameless. Several Wimbledon players received nasty knocks, and Christie was badly injured."

With Dave Evans beginning to regain the form that had made him such a menace before his injury at Fulham and Harry Hopkins simply toying with the Sutton half back line, the Dons had two inside forwards who were good enough to take some of the pressure off Dowden.

*Dons; Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Us; Bedford, Lever, Shepherd, Harris, Delventhal, Mollet, Hance, Last, Brown, Lewis, Harman*





**27. Sat 31/01: LSC 1R 4,500**

**Nunhead (0) 1** Gordon 64

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Goodchild 72

Under pressure for long periods, the understrength Dons were fortunate to still be in the London Senior Cup after extra time in the replay at Nunhead. With four key men missing at a muddy Brown's Field, Wimbledon fought bravely to emerge with a draw after being on the defensive for much of the match. It meant another replay would be needed to determine the winners.

Having somehow survived a torrid opening half, Wimbledon fell behind as they kicked down the slope after the interval and had to show real determination to get back on terms. Finally producing their best form, Mick O'Brien had hit a post and Frank Okin had seen three shots bounce back off defenders before an excellent goal by Bobby Goodchild, playing at centre half in place of Ossie Parry, secured parity.

With Fred Gregory injured, Dave Evans and Parry playing in the Welsh amateur trial match at Leytonstone and 'Doc' Dowden similarly engaged for England at Watford, the Dons were missing several key players while Nunhead were without goalkeeper Eric Mulley who was also at Vicarage Road. Had the international selectors been present they could not have failed to notice left back Sammy Sowter who played the game of his life, brilliantly tackling, anticipating and clearing.

"Any hopes of a clever and fast game were dashed before kick-off for the ground was in such bad condition that dribbling and neat passing were impossible," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Pools of water stopped the ball in progress, players were covered from head to foot in mud and nearly all were run to a standstill long before the end. It meant that, when it came, extra time was a farce, with players barely able to break into a trot."

*Nunhead; Pope, Hooton, Halliday, Munroe, Sidey, Davis, Parrish, Saggars, Gordon, Tarrant, Wadey*  
*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Sowter, Wade, Goodchild, Cotter, O'Brien, Gardiner, Austin, Hopkins, Okin*

**29. Sat 07/02: FAAC 3 10,223**

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Dowden 22, 83

**Hayes (1) 3** Brown 42, 98, Welsh 75

Facing no fewer than four men who had been part of the team that had reached the semi-final the previous year, much fancied Wimbledon were knocked out of the Amateur Cup following an extra time goal by ex-Don Ralph Brown. Being outplayed at home by Athenian League opponents was a bitter pill for the large crowd who had come to Plough Lane expecting to see the Amateur Cup favourites progress.

Harry Hopkins fired over an open goal before 'Doc' Dowden scored the first goal, but the lively Hayes side responded well, and Brown equalised before half time. Both sides missed penalties after the interval as Gower saw his kick saved by Ted Whisker before Sammy Sowter fired wide at the other end. With 15 minutes to go a rare mistake by Fred Gregory allowed Welsh in to put the visitors ahead only for Dowden to head a late equaliser from a Sowter free kick.

With the scores tied at 2-2 after 90 minutes, thirty minutes of extra time was played, and it was Hayes who proved to be the superior side. They had already forced several good saves from Whisker before Brown scored following a pass by Lloyd. Amazingly there was still time for the visitors to be awarded another penalty and this time Knight failed to hit the target. The Dons were unable to take advantage of the let off as they exited the cup every amateur club craved.

"Over 10,000 people saw Hayes gain a great and deserved victory," the *South London Press* reported. "Showing wonderful dash, they fairly rushed the homesters off their usual game and it was all the Dons could do to hold onto a 2-2 draw at the end of 90 minutes. Extra time allowed Hayes to gain the upper hand for which they had been desperately battling. Although a match between Wimbledon past and present was fought with great keenness, there was no unpleasantness."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Cotter, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Hayes: Holding, Maskell, Gower, Caesar, Wainwright, Butcher, Knight, Rowe, Welsh, Brown, Lloyd*



**Kingstonian on the attack at Plough Lane**

**30. Sat 14/02: SSC 2 7,200**

**Wimbledon (0) 2** Roche 70, Dowden 73

**Kingstonian (1) 3** Macey 23, 48, 87

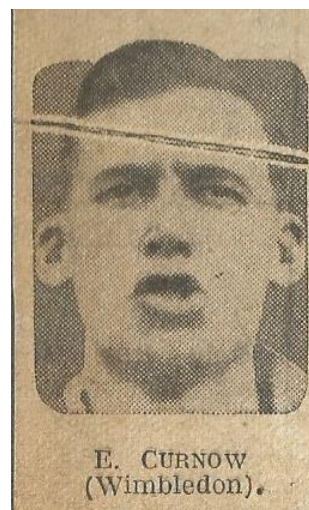
37-year-old inside forward Frank Macey was the Kingstonian hat trick hero as the Dons lost a big cup tie by the odd goal in five for the second week running. It was little consolation to the dejected home troops and their supporters in another large crowd that they played well against the Ks. Having hit back from two goals down, with better finishing Wimbledon might had won the game before the late denouement.

With Fred Gregory and Dave Evans absent, playing against each other in the England v Wales amateur international at Bournemouth, Fred Roche and Cyril Knight were called up from the reserves and the Dons took some time to settle. The Ks veteran inside forward took advantage to open his account with a fine drive and when he scored his second with a header from a corner just after the break it seemed the contest was over.

But the Dons responded brilliantly and had already gone close on several occasions before Roche forced the ball home from close range. Two minutes later 'Doc' Dowden levelled the scores and Brodrick had to make several saves as the hosts threatened to grab a winner. With time running out and a replay looking increasingly likely, Macey completed his hat trick with a close-range snapshot three minutes from time.

With two consecutive defeats leading commentators in some national newspapers to claim that the Dons had gone stale, the club came out fighting. "We have lost two cup games in succession by an odd goal when without key players," a spokesman thundered. "There is no panic at Plough Lane."

*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Sowter, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Roche, Knight, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin  
Ks; Brodrick, Russell, Urpeth, Lee, Baldwin, Keene, McCarthy, Gibson, Hannam, Macey, Birks*



**31. Sat 21/02: LSC 1RR 7,200**

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Okin 12, Hopkins 50, Dowden 89

**Nunhead (1) 1** Gordon 14

In front of another large cup crowd, the Dons halted their run of home defeats by edging out Nunhead in the second replay of their London Senior Cup tie. Having been on top during most of the first two games, it was the Nuns' turn to be on the defensive against an almost full-strength Wimbledon team, but the result was in doubt until the final minute.

Having made the early running, it was no surprise when Frank Okin gave the Dons a 12<sup>th</sup> minute lead only for Nunhead's Gordon to equalise soon afterwards. Still level at the break, Harry Hopkins scored early in the second period and only the brilliance of the Nuns goalkeeper Eric Mulley kept his side in touch until 'Doc' Dowden made the game safe in the final minute.

"This was the first appearance of Evans for his club for a month on account of having played in a trial and two international matches for his native Wales," 'Bee' wrote in his *Boro News* report. "His reappearance infused dash into the attack, and this has been missing in recent games. The forwards swung the ball about and kept the Nunhead backs on the move throughout the game."

Further representative honours for the club were announced the following week with Dowden and Sowter chosen to represent the Isthmian League in a match against the Royal Navy on March 19<sup>th</sup> and Fred Gregory retaining his place in the England team to play Scotland two days later. Meanwhile, after winning 3-1 at Ilford, Dulwich Hamlet moved three points clear at the top of the Isthmian League table, although the Dons now had four matches in hand.

*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin  
Nunhead; Mulley, Hooton, Halliday, Munroe, Sidey, Davis, Parrish, Mills, Gordon, Tarrant, Wadey*





### 32. Sat 28/02: LSC 2

**Wimbledon (1) 3** Evans 16, 81, Dowden 56

**Haywards (Enfield) (0) 2** Phillips 75, Magner 85

The Dons advanced into the last four of the London Senior Cup after beating Spartan League side Haywards at Plough Lane. The main talking point afterwards concerned the visitors first goal that everyone in the ground apart from the referee could see was carried into the goal on Phillips' arm. When the official awarded a goal there was pandemonium with several spectators running onto the pitch to make their feelings known.

Against opponents who had scored 78 goals in all competitions, the Dons decided that attack was the best form of defence and were deservedly two up after an hour. The visitors did not give up and had created several good openings before, with 15 minutes left, outside left Phillips burst into the area and when he was fouled by Sowter scooped the ball up in his arms and carried it into the goal. The home players had to persuade the invading fans to leave the field of play before the game could resume and loud boos rang out every time the referee made a decision against the Dons.

Dave Evans soon restored Wimbledon's two goal advantage and despite a late goal from the Spartan Leaguers centre forward Magner the hosts won through. As the officials left the pitch at the end of the match, a spectator in the main stand hit the referee over the head with his bowler hat much to the amusement of those sitting around him.

"All the excitement associated with cup football was provided at Wimbledon on Saturday when the Dons beat Haywards by three goals to two in the second round of the London Senior Cup," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "The spectators created some of the thrills and at one point in the game several over enthusiastic fans invaded the ground to express their indignation at the referee's decision. Feelings ran high throughout a match that was in the balance until the very end." *Dons; Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin Haywards; Jessup, Bintcliffe, Whatley, Heal, Daniels, Bungay, Hayward, Davies, Magner, Phillips, Evans*



### 33. Sat 07/03: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 3<sup>rd</sup>)

**Wimbledon (1) 5** Evans 34, 52, Dowden 47, Goodchild 55, Gardiner 58

**The Casuals (3) 4** Briggs 30, Bryant 39, Shearer 43, Moxon 87

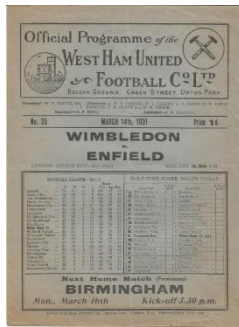
After eight Saturdays of cup tie football, the Dons made a winning return to Isthmian League action by beating the Casuals at home. With gale force winds helping to pin Wimbledon down in their own half before the interval, the visitors built up a two-goal lead, but it was different story in the second half when the hosts simply blew their opponents away.

Even though they were missing eight first team players, the Casuals were dominant throughout the first period and should have turned their possession into more goals. Wimbledon had their backs to the wall as crosses rained in on their beleaguered defenders. After the second goal went in a stray dog wandered onto the pitch and when Ted Whisker tried to catch him, he licked the goalkeeper hand as if in sympathy.

The second period was an entirely different story. With the wind behind them the hosts forced a series of corners and four goals in less than 10 minutes put them in complete control. Despite allowing Moxon to net a late consolation, the hosts never looked like throwing away a precious point. The result left the Dons in second place, three points behind leaders Dulwich. But while Hamlet had just four fixtures to complete, unbeaten Wimbledon had 10 matches still to play.

"A strong wind blowing from end to end made accurate football well-nigh impossible and had a good deal to do with the high scoring," a national newspaper reported. "It was in the Casuals' favour in the first half, and they built up a 3-1 lead. The second half, however, saw Wimbledon definitely superior, and it seemed only a matter of how many they would score."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Gardiner, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Harvey Casuals: AM Russell, Ross, GW Russell, Bryant, Woodbridge, Briggs, Fabian, Moxon, Shearer, Jenkins, Glyn, Davies*



**34. Sat 14/03: LSC SF 5,500**

**Enfield (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Dowden 48

The Dons had their defenders to thank as they reached final of the London Senior Cup for the first time. Ossie Parry, Fred Gregory and Sammy Sowter were in superb form as Enfield were edged out by a single goal victory on an Upton Park pitch that was almost totally devoid of grass. The crowd in the East End included many Wimbledon fans who paid 1s 7d (9 1/2p) to travel along the District line to the match.

The north London side dominated the first half hour and only had themselves to blame that they were not ahead by the interval. Producing some brilliant build up play, only a mixture of desperate defending and woeful shooting ensured that Ted Whisker emerged unbeaten. Emerging to produce a far more workmanlike performance, the Dons were on top from the start of the second period. Harry Hopkins burst through to set up Dowden who fired the ball high into the net three minutes after the restart and Wimbledon could easily have extended their lead in the period that followed.

“Parry had a splendid match and some of his heading was little short of marvellous,” the *Boro News* reported. “He took great risk sometimes in diving for the ball low down, but he generally managed to head the ball away and was very prominent in breaking up attacks. No fault could be found with the defence which certainly saved Wimbledon.”

In arrears after ground improvements, Enfield had asked for the tie to be played at Plough Lane believing that a large crowd there would clear their debts, but the London FA had turned them down. With Dulwich Hamlet losing their Isthmian League match at Oxford City, the Dons strengthened their position in the title race without playing. In the week that followed Ted Whisker, Harry Hopkins and ‘Doc’ Dowden represented the Isthmian League against Birmingham Amateurs in a challenge match.

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Roche, Gardener, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Enfield: Holmes, Dyson, Lawrence, Davies, Johnson, Walton, Drew, Green, Anderson, Besworick, Irons*

**35. Sat 21/03: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 11<sup>th</sup>) 4,400**

**Wimbledon (2) 2** Dowden 25, 89

**Tufnell Park (0) 0**

A goal in each half from ‘Doc’ Dowden was enough to leave the Dons breathing down the neck of top of the table Dulwich Hamlet. Against a Tufnell Park side that offered little in attack, the Dons were able to control the match without ever having to get out of second gear and but for visiting keeper Murden would have win far more comfortably.

IL @ 22/03	P	Pts
1. Dulwich H	23	30
2. Wimbledon	17	29
3. The Casuals	23	25
4. Ilford	23	24

Already struggling to hold their hosts, when full back

Virecant received a blow above his eye after 15 minutes and had to leave the field, the Park defence was at full stretch. Several shots had already been charged down and fisted away before Dowden opened the scoring. The visitors were back to full strength after the break, but the Dons continued to be on the front foot and both Dave Evans and ‘Harry’ Hopkins went close before Dowden’s last-minute effort made the game safe.

“Tufnell Park were simply not in it as a team, and were overplayed to a great degree,” ‘Bee’ wrote in his *Boro News* report. “Some good goalkeeping by Murden and weak finishing by the Wimbledon forwards kept the score down to two goals, one of which was obtained in the last minute. The visitors certainly had all the luck that was going, and they were fortunate to escape so lightly.”

With just over 4,000 fans in the ground at kick off time, the attendance was boosted by two train loads of Wimbledon fans who arrived at Plough Lane around 3.30 wearing light blue and dark blue rosettes having just watched the boat race at Putney. With Fred Gregory away representing England v Scotland in an amateur international and ‘Mick’ O’Brien still out injured, young Fred Roche had continued up front.

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Balkwill, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Roche, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Park: Murden, Hawkins, Viercant, Smith, McGowan, Ling, Clarke, Downs, Lutterlock, Wilson, Tickman*



Ossie Parry

**36. Sat 25/03: IL (7<sup>th</sup> v 2<sup>nd</sup>) 4,000  
Wycombe Wanderers (0) 1 Braisher 83  
Wimbledon (0) 0**

The Dons' long unbeaten Isthmian League record was ended by Amateur Cup finalists Wycombe at Loakes Park. Playing up the slope and into a strong wind at a ground where they had rarely enjoyed success in the past, the visitors did well to reach half time still level. However, Wimbledon failed to exert much pressure on the Wanderers back line during the second period and were eventually beaten by a late goal.

With the elements in their favour, Wycombe had more of the play during the opening period and the returning Fred Gregory had to be at his best to restrict the home forwards. Frank Okin did produce one full length save from Grafton when Wimbledon attacked but Ted Whisker was much the busier of the two goalkeepers. After the break the speedy Okin proved a constant menace as he raced down the hill, but he was let down by 'Doc' Dowden's poor finishing.

Soon after the restart Dowden hit the post with a low drive before Druce struck the bar for the hosts at the other end. With seven minutes to go Ossie Parry's attempted clearance bounced off one of his fellow defenders and into the path of centre forward Dick Braisher who scored from two yards out. It meant the Dons returned to London a beaten side.

Although club officials felt pride that it had taken until late March for the Dons to be beaten in the league, it was disappointment to lose to a Wycombe side that was missing several players due to injury. Apart from the previously ever-present Bobby Goodchild, the Dons were at full strength.

"If there is to be any blame for the defeat it must rest with the forwards." the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Nonetheless, it was game so closely contested that neither side deserved to lose."

*Wanderers: Grafton, Crump, Cox, Rance, Badrick, Greenwell, Bates, Richards, Braisher, Druce, Britnell*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Gittins, Christie, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*



The tour party pose for the camera while in Holland

**Easter tour of Germany and Holland**

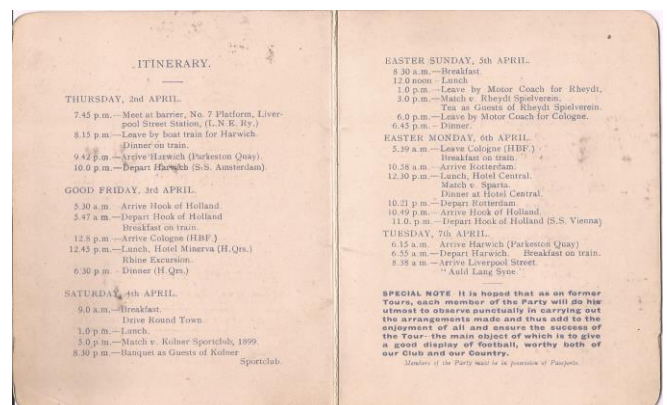
**Thurs 02/04.** A 14-man Dons squad, accompanied by 12 officials, set out on an Easter weekend tour of Germany and Holland. Catching the Thursday night boat train from Liverpool Street Station via Harwich they arrived in the Hook of Holland in the early hours of the morning.

**Fri 03/04.** Travelling by train the party reached Cologne by lunchtime and enjoyed a tour of the Rhineland before an evening meal at their city hotel.

**Sat 04/04.** On Easter Saturday, the party had a tour of the city before facing a combined team from the Cologne Sports Club and Mulheim in the afternoon. In front of around 6,000 people, Harry Hopkins scored as the Dons drew 1-1

**Sun 05/04.** Having stayed in Germany overnight before another afternoon game, the Dons faced the Rheydter Sports Club team. Harry Hopkins was again on target in another 1-1 draw played in front of close to 7,000 spectators.

**Mon 06/04.** After leaving Cologne at 5.30am on Easter Monday, the party drove south to Rotterdam arriving in time to face Sparta in front of 15,000 fans. Looking tired after their long morning drive, Hopkins, 'Charlie' Christie and Cyril Harvey were on target as the Dons lost 3-5 – their first defeat ever on a continental tour. After an evening meal the party left for home and after another overnight boat trip they arrived back in England early the next day.





GROUND, 11th APRIL, 1931.

LONDON CALEDONIANS		WIMBLEDON	
1. G. BEST	Goal	11. H. WOODS	Goal
2. G. GARDEN	Right Back	12. G. GARDEN	Right Back
3. H. G. BLAIR	Left Back	13. G. GARDEN	Left Back
4. H. HAMILTON	Half Back	14. H. HAMILTON	Half Back
5. G. MACKAY	Half Back	15. G. MACKAY	Half Back
6. G. MCDONALD	Half Back	16. G. MCDONALD	Half Back
7. G. RAE	Half Back	17. G. RAE	Half Back
8. G. READ	Half Back	18. G. READ	Half Back
9. G. WOOTTON	Half Back	19. G. WOOTTON	Half Back
10. H. WOODS	Goal	20. H. WOODS	Goal

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**37. Sat 11/04: IL (6<sup>th</sup> v 2<sup>nd</sup>)**

**London Caledonians (2) 3** Hamilton 22, Mackay 32, Read 60

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Evans 78

With the London Caledonians introducing several younger players into their line up for their last league game of the season, an understrength Dons team were embarrassed as they went down to their second successive away defeat. With visiting fans making up most of the crowd in north London, one was heard to remark, "They should cut out these continental tours," as Wimbledon went down to a home side that had won just seven of their previous league games.

The visitors opened brightly and had a strong appeal for a penalty turned down before goals from Hamilton and Mackay gave the Tufnell Park based team of Scottish exiles a half time advantage. The Dons emerged after the break in a far more determined mood and shots from 'Doc' Dowden, Frank Okin and Harry Hopkins were brilliantly turned aside by Best. But the Calies were not finished and Ted Whisker had made several fine stops at the other end before Read scored the third goal on the hour. Dave Evans pulled one back with 12 minutes to go but despite continual pressure from then on, Wimbledon never looked like getting back on level terms.

"Wimbledon lost because their forwards failed lamentably to turn to account the many scoring opportunities which fell to them," one national newspaper reported. "Dowden, often failed to do the right thing when well placed, and Evans and Hopkins, the other two inside forwards, were no better at finishing off good midfield movements."

With Kingstonian beating Leyton in their semi-final, the Dons knew they would be meeting their local rivals in the final of the London Senior Cup. The match was expected to attract a crowd of well over 10,000 spectators to Selhurst Park.

*Calies: Best, Garden, Blair, Caird, Wootton, McDonald, Rae, Read, Mackay, Glen, Hamilton*

*Dons: Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Knight, Goodchild, AT Bridge, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*

**38. Sat 18/04: IL (2<sup>nd</sup> v 9<sup>th</sup>) 5,000**

**Wimbledon (0) 2** Okin 48, Hopkins 55

**Nunhead (0) 0**

With Ossie Parry returning at centre half, the Dons tested the nerves of their supporters before beating Nunhead at Plough Lane. Only playing like potential champions for a short period after the interval, Wimbledon nonetheless proved too strong for the Nuns and were relieved to be able to ease off in the final half hour.

Apart from a breakaway when McCall fired in a shot that came back off the crossbar, the hosts were in control for most of the first half but once again contrived to miss numerous chances. With the usually prolific 'Doc' Dowden off form, the Dons forwards worked hard but were foiled by a mixture of poor shooting and the brilliance of Eric Mulley in the Nuns' goal.

Frank Okin was the best forward on view, and it was appropriate that the left winger broke the deadlock when he received a return pass from Harry Hopkins three minutes after the break to fire home the opener. Dowden then hit the crossbar before Hopkins made the game safe by converting with a powerful header. With the visitors quickly reduced to nine men following injuries, Wimbledon were able to see out the game without difficulty.

With Dulwich only able to draw with Kingstonian, the Dons had further strengthened their position ahead of the Thursday night showdown against league leaders at Champion Hill.

"Only for about 20 minutes on Saturday did Wimbledon play like the probable Isthmian League champions they are, but it was sufficient to give them two valuable points against Nunhead." the *Surrey Comet* reported.

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Balkwill, AT Bridge, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Nunhead: Mulley, Hooton, Rhodes, Munroe, Cox, Davis, Mills, Tarrant, Gordon, McCall, Bartholomew*



**39. Thurs 23/04: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 2<sup>nd</sup>) 7,000**

**Dulwich Hamlet (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (0) 1** Christie 46

On a night of high tension and great drama, the Dons effectively wrapped up the first Isthmian League title in their history by beating Dulwich, the only side that could have pipped them to the crown. The two points they earned at Champion Hill took Wimbledon level with the Hamlet at the top of the table but while the hosts were completing their fixtures, 'Doc' Dowden and co still had five matches to play.

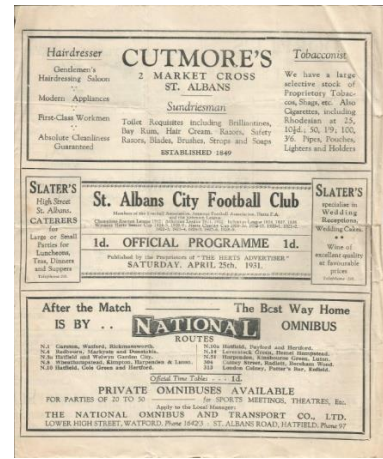
IL @ 24/04	P	Pts
1. Dulwich H	26	33
2. Wimbledon	21	33
3. The Casuals	26	28
4. St Albans	24	28

Disaster struck when Dave Evans was injured in the 10<sup>th</sup> minute, but the hosts were unable to take advantage such was the tenacity of the Dons' back line from then on. Having absorbed a good deal of home pressure in the first period, within a minute of the restart 'Doc' Dowden set up right winger 'Charlie' Christie and he gave goalkeeper Alf Solly no chance with a low drive.

The visitors did not rest on their laurels and almost increased their lead when another effort from Christie struck the post. Dulwich hit back and left winger Stanley Smith fired in a shot from 30 yards that beat Dons goalkeeper Ted Whisker but came back off the underside of the bar. Hamlet continued to push forward but the well organised Wimbledon defence held out to record a famous victory.

"The Dons won the vital points fairly and squarely," a national newspaper reported. "Within the opening few minutes, DB Evans, their inside right, was injured and had to leave the field. He returned in the second half but could only hobble about on the touchline. So, Wimbledon as good as won with ten men. The visitors were far quicker to the ball than the Hamlet and their teamwork was superior throughout."

*Hamlet: Solly, Robinson, Osmond, Montgomery, Hamer, Aitken, Morrish, Kail, Robbins, Moseley, Smith*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, AT Bridge, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*



**40. Sat 25/04: IL (4<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**St Albans City (1) 3** Minter 12, Lemarie 65, Wyatt 89

**Wimbledon (2) 7** Dowden 13, 32, ?, ?, ?, Hopkins 52, Okin 62

Needing just a point to be confirmed as champions, the Dons stuck seven goals past St Albans to delight the travelling supporters at Clarence Park. In driving rain, the visitors fell behind early on, but a deluge of goals from 'Doc' Dowden saw Wimbledon home.

Fourth placed City began strongly, and a huge roar went up when Wilf Minter opened the scoring but within a minute Dowden had quietened the home fans by equalising. The Dons' centre forward gave his side a half time lead and Harry Hopkins extended the lead soon after the restart.

Playing his first game in the first team, young Howard Barnes set up the fourth goal by beating two men and freeing the pacy Frank Okin to score. But the hosts were not finished, and they broke away to score when Dick Lemarie headed home a Stan Wyatt cross.

That was the cue for Dowden to hit a ten-minute hat trick and make the score 7-2. There was a bizarre incident in the last minute when St Albans's Wyatt fired the ball home through a hole in the side of the net. The referee was clearly unsighted as he allowed the goal to stand but such was the Dons dominance that there were few protests from the visiting players.

"For our final home game, we are fortunate to be visited by the team who will surely secure the title," the editor of the St Albans match programme wrote. "By their victory over Dulwich Hamlet, their nearest rivals, Wimbledon took the leadership, and with five games still to play should finish as champions with a substantial margin of points to spare. Their honour is a deserved reward for consistency."

*City: Gatward, Runchman, Clark, RC Lemarie, Tibbett, Short, Coulson, Kerrison, RJ Lemarie, Minter, Wyatt*  
*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, AT Bridge, HH Bridge, Goodchild, O'Brien, Barnes, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*





#### 41. Mon 27/04: IL (14<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>)

**Clapton (0) 1** Inns 85

**Wimbledon (3) 3** Goodchild 21, 34, Davenport 42

Beginning an extremely busy week with six regulars missing the new champions proved too strong for lowly Clapton at the Spotted Dog. Against a side that had been showing improved form in recent weeks as they fought to avoid having to apply for re-election, Wimbledon were three goals up at half time and even though the hosts managed to pull one goal back five minutes from time the result was never in doubt.

Fred Gregory, Sammy' Sowter, Ossie Parry, Dave Evans, Frank Okin and 'Doc' Dowden were all unavailable but the youngsters who stepped up did enough to suggest that the future of the club was in good hands. With the wind behind them on a blustery evening in the East End, the Dons dominated the first half and captain for the night, Bobby Goodchild, scored twice with Dowden's replacement Davenport grabbing the third.

The Dons' debutant centre forward could have scored more but his eagerness to impress meant that he was frequently caught offside when the visitors attacked. Now playing against the elements, Wimbledon spent much of the second period defending but it was only in the last five minutes when Ernie Balkwill slipped and allowed inside forward Inns into beat Ted Whisker from close range, that Clapton threatened.

"Clapton's prospects of avoiding the necessity to apply for re-election to the Isthmian League were practically extinguished last evening when they lost 1-3 at home to Wimbledon," a national newspaper reported. "The strength of Wimbledon was in the half back line where Goodchild excelled in his combination with the forwards. He scored twice in the first half and Davenport added another."

*Dons: Whisker, Curnew, Balkwill, Wade, Harris, Goodchild, O'Brien, Christie, Davenport, Hopkins, Barnes*



**Harry Hopkins**

#### 42. Wed 29/04: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 4<sup>th</sup>)

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Dowden 5, Hopkins 66

**St Albans City (2) 2** Runchman (pen) 35, Riley 44

Woeful finishing and questionable refereeing cost the Dons a point as, despite dominating St Albans, the champions but could not turn their superiority into goals. With many of their stars back on duty having missed the game at Clapton, the large crowd at Plough Lane endured a frustrating evening as their favourites frittered away several good chances and the official made several mystifying decisions.

'Doc' Dowden had headed the hosts ahead within five minutes, but Ted Whisker had to work hard to keep the lead intact as City launched several dangerous raids as they searched for an equaliser. Around the half hour mark, the Dons had what looked like a perfectly good goal disallowed and then, 10 minutes before the break, the home fans were infuriated when the visitors were awarded what looked like a dubious penalty.

Herbert Runchman equalised from the spot and then, after Howard Barnes had headed a glorious chance over the bar, the visitors stunned the crowd by taking the lead just moments before the break. Wimbledon attacked incessantly after the interval and were rewarded when Harry Hopkins turned home a corner. Despite piling on the pressure in the later stages, the hosts had to settle for a point.

"It has been wonderful to see the boys pull together so splendidly," team captain Fred Gregory said in response to a question about the team's success. "Whenever a reserve or a Stroller has been selected for the senior side, he has been received by the regular players in a sporting spirit and offered every encouragement possible."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Butt, Parry, Gittins, Christie, Barnes, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*City: Gatwood, Runchman, Clark, RC Lemaris, Tibbett, Short, Gray, RJ Lemaris, Minter, Kerrison, Riley*



**The reserve side with the South London Charity Cup**

**43. Thurs 30/04: IL (13<sup>th</sup> v 1<sup>st</sup>)**

**Woking ( ) 2** Mason, Knight (og)

**Wimbledon ( ) 3** O'Brien x2, Butt

Showing few signs of fatigue despite playing their third games in four nights, the Dons completed a league double over Woking by triumphing in an exciting game at Kingfield. Often underrated, Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien was the visitors' hero scoring two goals while Harry Butt added the third.

Needing a win in each of their final two games to beat St Albans City's record Isthmian League points haul – 41 in 1926-27 – the Dons proved too strong for their hosts as they secured their fourth successive away victory.

The following day the club received a telegram from Lady Hood, the widow of the recently deceased Sir Joseph. "Congratulations on winning the title," it read. "Good luck for the record on Saturday."

With the club's second and third teams having already lifted trophies in cups, before the season ended the first team still had three chances to add a knockout prize to their league triumph. Having come third in their league, the reserves had beaten Thornville (West Croydon) 3-0 in the final of the South London Charity Cup while the Strollers romped past South Tooting to win the final of the South Western Cup 4-1.



**44. Fri 01/05: SCC F 2,900**

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Barnes 17, 66

**Guildford City (0) 0**

With three cup finals in the space of eight days, the Dons brushed aside the challenge of the Southern League professionals from Guildford City to win the first – the Surrey Combination Cup. Nearly three thousand fans inside Plough Lane saw two goals from Howard Barnes ensure victory and the hosts could easily have won by more goals had it not been for a great performance from City goalkeeper Lloyd.

Played at a fast pace, the game allowed young Howard Barnes to showcase his fast-maturing talent. Appearing in place of the injured Harry Hopkins, the inside forward had already shot just wide when he headed home 'Mick' O'Brien's cross to give the Dons a 17<sup>th</sup> minute lead. 'Doc' Dowden saw three fierce shots saved as Wimbledon continued to dominate in the lead up to half time.

A minute after the restart, the professionals were handed a lifeline when a handball led to the award of a penalty. The Wimbledon goal had a lucky escape when Smith's shot came back off the post and the centre forward fired the rebound over the bar. Barnes made the visitors pay by adding the second goal midway through the second half and by the end he had been denied a hat trick when his fierce shot hit the upright.

At the end Fred Gregory received the cup from the President of the Surrey FA, Mr Northcott.

"The winner got full value from their gifted reserves, including Barnes, who is a young inside left from the Strollers" one national newspaper man wrote. "His first goal was a header from O'Brien's pass and the second a glorious long-range drive. Outstanding men on the winning side (in addition to Barnes) were Okin, Parry and Curnow."

*Dons; Whisker, Curnow, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, O'Brien, Dowden, Barnes, Okin City; Lloyd, Allison, Phizachley, Stelford, Williams, Harrison, Grove, Rooke, Smith, Tinkler, Barclay*



**Jimmy 'Mick' O'Brien**

**45. Sat 02/05: IL (1<sup>st</sup> v 6<sup>th</sup>)**

**Wimbledon (2) 4** Christie 25, Sowter (pen) 44, Okin 70, O'Brien 85

**Oxford City (0) 1** Hacker 88

A comfortable victory over an in-form Oxford City side saw the Dons become the first team ever to rack up 42 points during a full Isthmian League campaign. Despite playing for the fourth day in a row, Wimbledon made just one change to their line-up and were rewarded with a relatively easy win over a team that had previously been unbeaten since February.

Attacking from the start, the Dons had several chances to score before they finally opened their account mid-way through the first half when 'Doc' Dowden helped on Fred Gregory's long ball and 'Charlie' Christie beat two men before firing past Encil Simmonds. The hosts continued to press forward and were rewarded right on half time when an Oxford defender handled the ball in the area and Sammy Sowter converted the penalty at the second attempt. With Wimbledon looking increasingly weary after the break, City rallied and Ted Whisker was called on to make several fine saves before Frank Okin increased the lead at the other end. Five minutes from time a flowing attacking move resulted in 'Mick' O'Brien scoring the fourth before Charles Hacker grabbed a very late consolation.

"Spectators who anticipated an 'end of season' touch about the game soon had their fears dispelled," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "Both sides played with commendable keenness from the kick off to the final blast of the whistle."

The triumphant Dons had completed a record-breaking Isthmian League season in style winning 18 of their 26 fixtures and losing just twice. Plough Lane had proved to be a fortress with the team remaining unbeaten in SW19 and drawing only twice.

*Dons; Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, O'Brien, Dowden, Barnes, Okin City; Simmonds, Arlett, Venner, Randall, Marley, Townsend, Holton, Jones, Hacker, Guilfoyle, Neale*



**Surrey Charity Shield**

**46. Mon 04/05: SChS F**

**Wimbledon (1) 2** Dowden 8, O'Brien 81  
**Sutton United (0) 0**

The Dons signed off another season at Plough Lane by winning the Surrey Charity Shield for the fourth time. However, had neighbours Sutton taken their chances they could easily have taken home the shield themselves. The visitors rough tackling did not impress the home fans and three of their number were cautioned by the referee but Wimbledon, who were clearly saving themselves for Saturday's London Senior Cup final, stood firm in the face of a second half bombardment.

Centre half Delventhal's late arrival meant the Us kicked off with only ten men and he was soon seen running along the side of the field carrying his boots and loosening his collar and tie before he disappeared into the dressing room to change. The centre half had still not entered the playing arena when Mick O'Brien cleverly set up 'Doc' Dowden who fired his side into the lead.

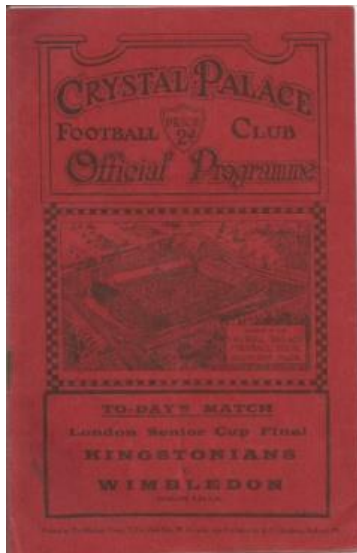
After the break the visitors dominated the play and Ted Whisker made several fine saves before the hosts made the game safe in the final 10 minutes when Charlie Christie found O'Brien who cleverly sent Bedford the wrong way with his shot.

With the proceeds from the 'large and enthusiastic' crowd contributing several hundred pounds to local good causes like the Nelson hospital, Mr Wilson, the secretary of the Surrey FA, presented Fred Gregory with the Shield after the final whistle.

"For their Surrey Charity Shield final with Sutton United, Wimbledon marched onto the field with the air of conquerors to the lilting strains of 'Betty Co-ed'," a national newspaper reported. "But, believe me, they had to fight desperately hard to get the better of a dogged Sutton side. Indeed, it was not until O'Brien scored from Christie's pass in the glimmering twilight that the issue was definitely settled."

*Dons; Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, Christie, O'Brien, Dowden, Hopkins, Harvey Us; Bedford, Lever, Shepherd, Harris, Delventhal, Moffatt, Hance, Lewis, Hadkiss, Brown, Mason*





***The Dons on the attack at Selhurst Park***

**47. Sat 09/05: LSC F 10,000**

**Kingstonian (0) 0**

**Wimbledon (0) 1** O'Brien 53

In front of more than 10,000 fans at Selhurst Park, the Dons completed their most successful season ever by adding the London Senior Cup to their Isthmian League title. After their captain Fred Gregory was rushed to hospital with a serious injury, Wimbledon were forced to play with 10 men for more than an hour but nevertheless did enough to beat their fierce rivals Kingstonian in a hard-fought game.

The two teams cancelled each other out early on before the Dons captain was carried from the field clutching his neck. Having passed out in pain as he left the ground, remarkably, he later returned to play the final minutes. While Gregory was away Bobby Goodchild did the work of two men in the half back line as Wimbledon held the much-vaunted Ks front five at bay.

Seven minutes after half time the 10 men went on the attack and Frank Okin crossed for 'Mick' O'Brien to head the ball home. The skipper was back on the field in time to help repel a late Kingstonian surge and at the end he went up to receive the trophy from Isthmian League secretary Harry Hubbard.

"The best team won!" - that appeared to be the opinion of the majority of spectators at Selhurst Park," the *Surrey Comet* reported. "The Dons were individually stronger than their opponents, who they were able to keep at bay, even when Gregory, their captain and international full back, was off the field for a long period."

*Dons: Whisker, Sowter, Gregory, Wade, Parry, Goodchild, O'Brien, Evans, Dowden, Hopkins, Okin*  
*Ks: Brodrick, Russell, Urpeth, Lee, Baldwin, Keene, McCarthy, Gibson, Hannam, Macey, Birks*

The *Surrey Comet's* verdict that "the best team won" produced an angry response from some Kingstonian supporters, several of whom wrote to the newspaper to complain about its coverage of the game.

"It is a pity that your reporter at the London Senior Cup final left his spectacles at home, but even without them he ought to have been able to give a more accurate of the game," one letter began.

"Who is your football correspondent? Did he really attend the Selhurst match? Is he quite incapable to writing a true, fair and accurate description of a Wimbledon-Kingstonian game?" another asked.

"Surely if a team attacks for three quarters of a game they must be superior," Messrs Cudmore, Godfrey and Marsh wrote. "Wimbledon, for more than an hour, played seven backs, a goalkeeper and two forwards, and should have had at least one penalty given against them for deliberate handling."

Responding to the letters, the sports editor replied: "The writers are as entitled to say that the better team lost, as we are to say that the best team won. It is a difference of opinion. In only one letter is there any reference to the fact that Wimbledon were one short during the game. As a matter of fact, they were without a vital defender, Gregory, for two thirds of the period. But the overcoming of this difficulty did not make them the better side - it was their general play."

Perhaps the final word should go to *The Times* correspondent who ended his match report by stating: "Wimbledon proved the stronger, better balanced and more accurate team."



*Players and officials pose for the camera before the final home Isthmian League game of the season against Oxford City. Back row (players only): Frank Wade, Sammy Sowter, Ted Whisker, Ossie Parry, Doc Dowden. Middle row: Mick O'Brien, Fred Gregory, Bobby Goodchild. Front row: Frank Okin, Charlie Christie, Howard Barnes.*

## Appearances and Goals

Player	IL	Cup	Tot	Gls	Player	IL	Cup	Tot	Gls
Max No.	26	20	46		Fred Gregory	20	15	35	2
Al Austin	1	1	2		Bill Harman	5	2	7	2
Ernie Balwill	3		3		AS 'Gus' Harris	1			
Howard Barnes	5	1	6	2	Cyril Harvey	1		1	
SU Bartlett	1	1			Harry Hopkins	24	19	43	16
AJ 'Dick' Bridge	5		5		Cyril Knight	2	1	3	
HH 'Bert' Bridge	2		2		EM Lloyd	1		1	
Harry Butt	2		2	1	H Milnor	1		1	
Eric Caesar	10	6	16	1	'Mick' O'Brien	18	16	34	9
Charlie Christie	9	4	13	5	Frank Okin	14	16	30	6
Lawrence Cottar	4	3	7	3	Ossie Parry	17	14	31	
Eric Curnow	8	7	15		F Roche	1	2	3	1
R Davenport	1			1	HE Smith	1	4	5	
'Doc' Dowden	20	17	34	37	Sammy Sowter	18	14	32	
Dave Evans	16	10	26	10	WH Stevenson	1			
Reg Gardner	7	7	14	7	Frank Wade	14	19	33	
H Gittens	2				Ted Whisker	26	20	46	
Bobby Goodchild	25	20	45	5					

Appearances and goal scorers as published in the Friday 08/05/31 edition of the *Wimbledon News*