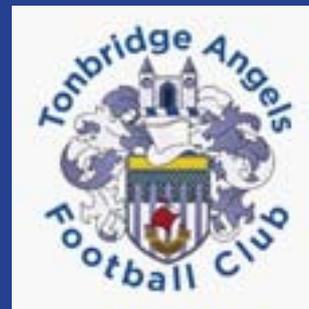


Up There Cazaly!

A historical look at Tonbridge Angels through the eyes of their supporters with original text by the late Brian Cheal. Part 11: Season 1961-62 and the club's first-ever relegation



Apart from Bobby Anderson (who signed professional forms on leaving the Army), only four new professionals were signed by the club for the start of the 1961-62 season, Jimmy Upton, Tommy Huckstepp, Ray Kemp and Fred Laslett. Huckstepp needed no introduction to the Tonbridge fans having been a prolific goalscorer for Dartford and previously Hastings. His battles with Paul Berry were still fresh in the mind. Jimmy Upton, a 22 year old full back, tall with gingerish hair, had been signed from Glasgow Celtic whilst for Ray Kemp it was very much a case of local boy returned home. A Pembury lad, he had been with Fulham since leaving school but having been released by the League Club he decided to try and make it with his local side and quickly became a favourite with the home fans. Twenty-one-year-old Laslett was signed from Crawley as cover for Tommy Bickerstaff but he was injured in the second reserve team game. It was a long time before he regained his confidence and was released halfway through the season, without making a first team appearance, to join Canterbury. Martin Arnold, who had been with Ipswich, took over the role of reserve

goalkeeper but he too was unable to mount a challenge for the first team spot and soon departed.

The Southern League season began with a tough trip to Hereford for the following side: Bickerstaff; Simmons, Lovell; Anderson, Berry, Hailstones; Smith, Skyme, McCurley, Huckstepp, Dennis. Huckstepp was quick to open his account with a seventh minute goal. Wing halves Anderson and Hailstones were in lively form and with Berry and Lovell outstanding in defence the Angels had little trouble in holding onto their lead until half-time. Unfortunately two quick goals midway through the second period were enough to give Hereford victory.

Back at home, local youngsters Tim Balsdon and David Aldridge were drafted into the Reserve team. A crowd of 903 saw the following side: Laslett; Upton, Clements; Norman, Roberts, Carswell; Balsdon, Kemp, Dunne, Long and Aldridge. Not to be outdone by Huckstepp, Aldridge opened the scoring in the sixth minute and further goals came from Long, Kemp and Dunne. Ray Kemp was the most impressive forward but the star

of the show was Jimmy Upton who capped a fine display by clearing two shots off the line with the goalkeeper grounded.

Two goals from Kevin McCurley gave Tonbridge the lead in their first home Southern League game against Clacton but slack defending allowed the visitors to take a point from an exciting match. The 2,002 spectators certainly got value for money and an extra 110 turned up to see Weymouth, led by player-manager Frank O'Farrell, beaten by the odd goal in five with goals from McCurley, Dennis and Skyme. Whilst the first team were losing 4-1 at Oxford, the reserves were engaged in an incredible goal spree at the Angel in their Metropolitan Professional Cup-tie with the West Ham A team. The Tonbridge team was: Arnold; Upton, Clements; David Thorpe (another local player making his debut), Dunne, Carswell; Durston, Micky Taylor (an amateur from the Maidstone area), Kemp, Long and, at outside left, Peter Munton, 22-year-old trialist from Aldershot. Brian Dear gave the Hammers a 30 second lead but from the kick-off Tonbridge raced upfield and forced a corner from which Munton steered in the equaliser. Five minutes later Munton cut in from the left and scored with a shot into the far corner and then the debut boy clinched a seven minute hat-trick after the goalkeeper failed to hold Taylor's drive. Danny Durston decided to get in on the act and his shot from an acute angle made it 4-1 after 10 minutes. As if they had not suffered enough West Ham had their goalkeeper carried off injured, not from exhaustion but after a collision, Dear took over the jersey. He had little to do during the rest of the half as the Angels took a breather and Wedge reduced the arrears in the



Training pre-season 1961-62 (left to right): Austin Dunne, Kevin McCurley, Ronnie Skyme, Peter Lovell, Gordon Norman, Johnny Dennis, Bob Anderson, Tommy Bickerstaff, Paul Berry, Bob Hailstones, John Smith, Gus Simmons, Alan Roberts

43rd minute, but refreshed from the break the Blues went goal hunting again. After 53rd minute Durston scored his second and in the 66th minute Munton ran onto a long ball and cracked his fourth past Dear. Ray Kemp had led the line intelligently and he popped up to score twice in two minutes, the second from Munton's cross whilst Durston unselfishly laid on the ninth for Taylor and the referee blew the final whistle to save West Ham from further punishment.

The second leg, also played at Tonbridge, four weeks later seemed a foregone conclusion with a 9-2 lead but West Ham picked a strong side with experienced Football League stars Andy Malcolm and coach Jim Barrett leading a team of talented youngsters many of whom were themselves on the threshold of a Football League career. It is interesting to look at their team: Dickie; Presland, Burkett; Malcolm, Bickles, Charles; Starkey, Barrett, Lloyd, Hugo, Dear. The only change in the Tonbridge side was Simmons at right back and the home officials laughed when West Ham manager Ron Greenwood, who had travelled to the Angel with his third side, predicted: "My boys are going to score eight and win a place in the next round."

They did not quite manage it but they came pretty close with a 6-1 win and



New signings: Ray Kemp, Tommy Huckstepp and Eric Carswell

Tonbridge, for whom Munton scored, were given a real footballing lesson. Barrett led the way with a hat trick, other goals coming from Hugo, Lloyd and Dear. The following Saturday saw both sides back in action at the Angel Ground for they had been drawn against each other in the Challenge Cup. It looked as though the Hammers would get their own back when they took a two goal lead in the first half but Angels' spirited second half performance brought them three goals and another cup victory. West Ham had to wait until December when they won a league encounter 4-0 for their revenge but there was no further cup glory for Tonbridge, who were knocked out of both competitions in the next

round by St Neots and the much improved Crawley.

In the Southern League Cup Tonbridge had been paired with Ramsgate. For the mid-week trip to East Kent Jimmy Upton replaced Simmons with Munton replacing Dennis and Kemp coming in for Huckstepp. Munton did not find his first team debut nearly so enjoyable and finished the match limping with a painful leg injury but Upton did more than enough to keep his place. Although the defence was seldom troubled the attack never got going and a 76th minute goal from Boyd Nisbet, which understandably delighted him, was enough to give the home side victory. Dennis and Huckstepp were recalled for the home leg, a scrappy encounter with four goals shared which saw both sides safely through to the knock-out stage. Huckstepp and McCurley got the goals, but the afternoon was completely overshadowed by the vicious tackle that virtually ended John Smith's playing career. It was mid-season before he had a run out in the reserves but his knee never fully recovered from the effects that high, brutal tackle from a third rate defender and the following season John Smith announced his retirement from playing although he remained connected with the club for many more years.

On the same day that the career of an old favourite had been put in severe jeopardy the Colts played their opening game in the East Sussex



Harry Haslam thinks it will help loosen the muscles. It's OK for Austin Dunne, Johnny Dennis, Paul Berry, John Smith and Gus Simmons, but how will Ronnie Skyme, Bob Anderson, Bob Hailstones, Tommy Bickerstaff and Alan Roberts feel after a couple of laps in this fashion

League away to Old Centmodians Reserves. David Aldridge bagged a hat trick with other goals coming from Barden, Balsdon and a home defender as the young Angels ran up six without reply. The team was: Burns; Harrison, Evans; Balsdon, Smith, Baylis, Barden, Aldridge, Parsons, Lewis, Bumpstead. A few weeks later Tony Burns, Tim Balsdon and David Aldridge were selected to play for Kent Youth in the county championship.

Following the loss of John Smith, Harry Haslam moved quickly to sign a replacement, securing the services of the experienced Micky Bull. Formerly with Swindon, Bedford and Hastings, a fast direct winger who specialised in the hard driven centre, Bull quickly fitted in, making his debut at Clacton where his cross was converted by McCurley for the only goal of the game five minutes from time. He also had a fine home debut when the visitors were Bedford, whom he had served so well for several years. Tommy Huckstepp silenced his growing army of critics with three goals as Bedford were beaten 5-3 and bagged another with two from McCurley to beat Merthyr 3-1.

Three successive wins, confidence growing, the scene was set for the FA Cup clash, at the Angel Ground, with

Tunbridge Wells, who were without a win in Division One. Following Gordon Hurst's departure Harold Fletcher had taken over the reins at Eridge Road and included another former Tonbridge favourite in Peter Peters. On a hot, sticky afternoon 2,947 people saw the teams take the field. Tonbridge: Tommy Bickerstaff; Jimmy Upton, Peter Lovell; Bobby Anderson, Paul Berry, Bob Hailstones; Micky Bull, Ronnie Skyme, Kevin McCurley, Tommy Huckstepp, John Dennis. Tunbridge Wells: Bill Farnfield; Ken Craggs, Jack Harrop; Colin Brittain, Gerry Boon, Ron Saxby; Joe Hall, Alan Back, Dai Davies, Doug Logan, Peter Peters.

Tonbridge took the lead after nine minutes. McCurley sent Dennis away down the left and the mercurial winger's low centre was cleverly slipped in by Skyme under pressure from three defenders. The Angels supporters then sat back and waited for the goals to come, unfortunately so did the team. They continued to have the better of a rather pedestrian first half although Upton had to clear off the line from Peters. The visitors gradually came more into the game after the interval but it was a rare mistake by Lovell which allowed them back into the match. Caught out in attack even Lovell's pace was not enough to recover this time as Back



Kevin McCurley and Tunbridge Wells goalkeeper Bill Farnfield in a duel during the FA Cup tie at the Angel Ground

took advantage of the gap, racing through to score with a fine solo effort after 53 minutes. Eight minutes later Hall's goal was eventually disallowed after the referee had gone back for the restart but the Wells continued to press looking full of confidence. Davies was giving Berry a real run around whilst Peters began to torment Upton. The Tonbridge defence now looked nervous and edgy whilst all life seemed to have drained out of the attack. In the 69th minute Peters waltzed around Upton to put the Wells ahead after a shrewd pass from Logan and after 77 minutes Peters wrapped it up with another coolly taken goal. It was a well deserved victory for the visitors who progressed to the First Round Proper where they lost 3-1 at Aldershot. Keeping goal for them that day was Jimmy Kirk persuaded out of retirement by Harold Fletcher.

Tonbridge supporters wallowed in post mortems. Harry Haslam was at least positive:

"Tonbridge are out of the FA Cup and deserve to be. Our boys played badly, for they showed no effort or fight. Credit, however, must go to Tunbridge Wells who worked hard and won well. You cannot judge the club on one game but I know 99 out of 100 people will blame me for the defeat.

"Now I intend to get my boys up the League. Although we will do our best



Our author, Brian Cheal is flanked by Harold Fletcher (left) who brought his Tunbridge Wells team to the Angel Ground for an FA Cup tie on 23rd September 1961 and left with a place in the next round and Charlie Marks, who departed the club at the end of the season. Picture taken from the 40th anniversary celebration in 1988

to finish with the leaders, I am not saying we will win but we definitely won't be relegated. Forget Tunbridge Wells, forget the FA Cup. Watch out for our progress in the League and enjoying success that we may achieve."

That last paragraph must have haunted him though, at first, events seemed to be bearing him out. Cruel September had not finished with Tonbridge though. Four days after the Tunbridge Wells defeat the Angels went to Dartford for a Kent Senior Shield match. Dunne replaced Anderson but there was a complete transformation from Saturday's limp display as Tonbridge found themselves two goals down with both Berry and Huckstepp crippled passengers. The Blues staged a tremendous second half fight back with McCurley scoring twice and Dennis having a shot punched off the line by the Darts full back. It was an obvious penalty to everyone but the referee. More serious however was the injury to Paul Berry. It was an accident, he trod on the ball while challenging Dartford's player manager Alf Ackerman, but he was out of first team action for the rest of the season.

It was a knee injury even more serious than that of John Smith. Paul Berry did eventually play Southern League football again briefly but he was never, remotely, the same player so September 1961 had seen the virtual ending of the playing careers of two fine Tonbridge players.

Dunne took over at centre half with Ray Kemp replacing Huckstepp and the Angels quickly got amongst the goals beating Cheltenham 5-1, and beginning the Kent Floodlight Cup campaign with a 6-3 win over Bromley. A point at Folkestone put them into eighth position (P9 W5 D2 L2 F24 A18 Pts 12) with games in hand over all the teams above but Percy Tompson, a veteran supporter, was not impressed, "Take a look at this", he said displaying the league table in his match programme, "and enjoy it while it lasts, because that is as high as we will get."

His words were all too true. Six goals shared at Folkestone was followed by a 3-1 defeat at the Angel by Cambridge City after Huckstepp had opened the scoring with a superb header which rocketed in Bull's hard

driven cross. This put an end to a run of five consecutive league games without defeat, four of them won, form which would not be remotely approached again. In fact never again during the season would Tonbridge win consecutive league matches and having won five out of the first nine games only five more were won of the remaining 33. A week after the Cambridge defeat a 1-0 victory was gained at Bexleyheath. That was on 21 October. From then until Boxing Day only one league match was won, but what a win!

Jimmy Upton had held his place at right back but both he and Lovell were suffering from the indifferent form of their wing halves. Anderson had been most disappointing since signing professional forms, seldom looking the same player as he had done the previous season, whilst skipper Bob Hailstones although never giving less than a 100% effort was clearly no longer the force that he had been. There was much debate amongst supporters regarding the attack, a lot of which centred around Tommy Huckstepp who had some great admirers and some virulent

**Saturday, 25th November 1961 – Southern League
Tonbridge (1) 4 (Dennis, Skyme 2 McCurley (pen)) Chelmsford City (3) 3 (Taylor 2 Brown (pen))
Attendance: 1,659**

Magnificent – that is the only way to describe Tonbridge's fantastic comeback in the second half of this tough Southern League tussle. With only ten men – their giant inside left, Tommy Huckstepp, was sent off the field in the 55th minute – the Angels wiped out a two goal deficit and then went on to snatch two well-deserved points from league leaders Chelmsford City.

Yet the early stages of this game promised none of the excitement that had the 1,659 Tonbridge supporters roaring for the Angels in the dying minutes.

Cock-a-hoop Chelmsford snatched an early lead, completely outplayed Tonbridge for the first 20 minutes and looked to be cruising to an easy victory.

Tonbridge manager, Mr Harry Haslam, made a wise decision when he decided to replace injured John Dennis on the right wing with Gus Simmons. It was a gamble – and after 20 minutes it came off when the former right back hesitated before lashing home a Micky Bull corner.

Things looked bad for Tonbridge soon after this when Austin Dunne handled the ball on the goal line with Tommy Bickerstaff well beaten. Brown took the spot kick and scored.

Soon after this Chelmsford's right back Stevens and Huckstepp went down together. As they got up the defender appeared to butt Huckstepp in the stomach with his head. Huckstepp retaliated – and was sent off.

With ten men Tonbridge suddenly lunged into new life and time and again the forwards stormed into the visitors' half. Skyme, showing better form than he has for months, took full advantage of a cross perfectly laid on by Micky Bull and crashed it into the net. Still the onslaught continued and once again Skyme was through on his own, only to be brought down in the area by Chelmsford defenders.

The referee pointed to the spot and Kevin McCurley stepped up to put his side on equal terms.

The supporters roared their support as the Angels battled for the winner – Chelmsford were not in the game at this stage – and finally Skyme made himself the hero of the day when he netted in the dying minutes from a Bull cross and gave the Angels their first Southern League victory since 30th September.

Both of Chelmsford's first two goals were scored by their outside left Taylor

critics. It was certainly a contrast with the previous season when Tonbridge did not have a regular centre forward that now they had two and there were times when McCurley and Huckstepp did appear to get in each others way. The ex-Dartford man obviously struggled at times in his slightly different role and when Kemp replaced him the line appeared to move much more freely but Huckstepp had maintained a good goalscoring record and was back in the side for the visit of Chelmsford on the last Saturday of November. McCurley continued to score consistently. Skyme was supplying the craft from inside right but Dennis had fractured an ankle so Bull switched to the left with Gus Simmons coming in at outside right.

Chelmsford sat proudly at the top of the table having lost only one of their 16 league fixtures and their team contained a wealth of Football League experience with men such as former Preston inside forward Dennis Hatchell, Peter Harburn, a prolific goalscorer for Brighton and former Portsmouth and England wing half Len Phillips. They gave Tonbridge a football lesson during the first half taking a two goal lead inside 12 minutes but there was a glimmer of hope for the Angels. Without their usual centre half, Tiffin, the Chelmsford defence looked a little panicky when the home side did mount an attack. The bustling, unorthodox style of Simmons on the right wing was unsettling them and it was Gus who reduced the arrears with a powerful angled drive before the interval.

In the first 15 minutes of the second half disaster struck, twice. First Chelmsford were awarded a penalty from which they duly increased their lead when Dunne pushed a certain goal over the bar with his hands. Then Huckstepp who had been having one of his more frustrating afternoons, was pulled down in the penalty area by Phillips. The referee, to the amazement of the crowd, waved play on, whereupon Huckstepp rolled over and landed a big right hand to the side of Phillips' head. A linesman spotted the punch and Mr Huckstepp was soon on his way back to the dressing room. 3-1 down to the league leaders with

only 10 men, a lost cause surely but a wiry Welshman called Ronnie Skyme had other ideas. With 25 minutes remaining he received a square ball from Mickey Bull. He stood 35 yards from goal with room to advance but, from what premonition I know not, he moved onto the ball and hit it first time. The ball flew from his boot like a tracer bullet. The crowd gasped as the ball flashed past the stationary Chelmsford goalkeeper, Collier, and then roared as it bounced down from the roof of the net. The Angel Ground had already witnessed spectacular shooting from the likes of Alec Ross, Duggie Reid and Joe Ball and the future would bring more from Geoff Truett but surely there was never in history of the club a shot to equal this one by Skyme. It was also the spark that ignited this particular game.

Now the 10 men of Tonbridge pushed forward ceaselessly. Now the crowd roared as though they were 10,000 strong and now the Chelmsford defence met fire with utter desperation. A weak referee allowed the game to get completely out of hand as foul followed foul, skirmish followed skirmish and more fists were thrown. The crowd now incensed as well as passionate grew louder and louder as the blue shirts still poured forward only to be repelled, often

unfairly. Then Skyme picked up the ball in midfield and raced towards the penalty area. Two defenders converged upon him. Their intention was clear and Skyme knew what he had to do. Skilfully holding them off he forced his way into the area, then turning across he was brought down. It had to be a penalty. The atmosphere was electric but "ice cool" McCurley placed the ball on the spot and then hammered it against the stanchion just as he always did.

3-3! Would the Angels settle for a draw, would they hell! Somehow the crowd found a new set of lungs. The Angels came forward again as the minutes ticked away. Into the last five minutes. A corner on the left, Micky Bull does not drive it as usual but curls it teasingly, drawing everyone to the near post. A host of heads go up but are beaten, the goalkeeper too is beaten but who is this lone blue shirt coming in at the far post leaping higher than he had ever leapt in his life? Yes, of course, it was Ronnie Skyme, 4-3.

The supporters went home warm and hoarse to tea. There was little left to say but much to remember. It would have to go down as Ronnie Skyme's match. The dapper inside right had carved himself a place in the Angels'



Rare photograph, courtesy of Tim Balsdon, of what is thought to be the Possibles side in a pre-season Probables v Possibles. The identification process has ended with this line-up, but not to be guaranteed that it is completely accurate. Back row: Charlie Marks, Unknown, Dick Clements, Jimmy Upton, Eric Carswell, Tim Balsdon, Gordon Norman. Front row: Dave Aldridge, Austin Dunne, Fred Laslett, Ray Kemp, Tommy Long



Tommy Huckstepp watches his attempted pass to his centre forward intercepted by the Weymouth defence at the Angel Ground

history.

It was to be one of the few bright spots of the winter. The Reserves had also slumped from their mid-table position and were now in the bottom three. The 5-1 victory at Newbury at the end of January was the first since early October and the first league win since 13th September. Apart from the JAC's who continued to perform so well in the East Sussex League the only relief came in the Kent Floodlight Cup, seven points out of eight, and the

Kent Senior Shield when the replay with Dartford was at last staged on 13th December. For this match Harry Haslam switched his full backs, Upton and Lovell, to the wing half positions with Hailstones reverting to his old left back role. Simmons dropped back to right back with Kemp taking over on the right wing. McCurley moved to inside left with Huckstepp played as an out and out spearhead. The whole side played with greater spirit and energy. McCurley revelled in his new role proving the mastermind behind a lively

attack whilst Huckstepp was a real force scoring three times as Dartford, who were having a tremendous season, were beaten 6-2.

Unfortunately the Angels were unable to reproduce this form in the league. Five league matches in December brought four defeats and a rare Christmas victory when Worcester were beaten by three clear goals at the Angel on a bitterly cold Boxing Day. Once again Huckstepp was at this best scoring all three. There was good news on the financial front for the first time for many years. Stanley Berwick announced that the costs of floodlight installation had been fully defrayed and here Harry Haslam's introduction and running of a new scheme, the Improvement Fund, in co-operation with the Supporters Club was largely responsible. At last we were able to look forward with some confidence in the future of the club.

The New Year saw a return to first team duty of John Dennis and a brief improvement in results. A splendid draw at Bath was followed by an easy Kent Senior Cup win at Erith and a most welcome league victory at Merthyr by 3-2 with goals from McCurley, Skyme and Kemp. Despite their bad run of results Tonbridge remained in a mid-table position although only five points ahead of fourth bottom Merthyr Tydfil. What we didn't know at the time was that only one more league victory would be obtained during the rest of the season.

The next round of the Southern League Cup brought a humiliating 9-3 defeat at Yiewsley, but progress was made in the Kent Senior Cup with a 3-1 victory at the Priestfield Stadium against Gillingham Reserves. In the next round a 4-3 defeat was suffered at Ramsgate after a 1-1 draw at the Angel. The Kent Floodlight Cup seemed totally divorced from the season however as Tonbridge easily won the Western Section with the following record: P8 W6 D1 L1 F25 A 9 Pts 13.

February saw the departure of Tommy Huckstepp and the arrival of Fred Crump and Johnny Rainford. Huckstepp's brief stay had been full of controversy. On reflection he



Ronnie Skyme
Appearances: 125
Goals: 42



Micky Bull
Appearances: 65
Goals: 36



Tommy Huckstepp
Appearances: 29
Goals: 22



Johnny Rainford
Appearances: 76
Goals: 4

may not have been the right signing at the time. Big and powerful with close cropped blonde hair he was a fearsome sight as he charged bull-like through a defence. There were times when he appeared lethargic and clumsy but when he was played as an orthodox centre forward and given the right service Huckstepp was still a force to be reckoned with as his 21 goals, including three hat tricks, in just over half a season prove. It was also a fact that after his move to Gravesend, Kevin McCurley never looked so effective and his goals came far less frequently.

Fred Crump, a tall well built goalkeeper was signed from Merthyr Tydfil and was thus reunited with his old chum Ron Skyme. He made his debut for the reserves in a fiery cup tie at the Angel against Crawley. A full time the score was 2-2 and then there was a protracted row as to whether or not there should be extra time with the Crawley officials insisting that it was now a replay at Crawley. Eventually extra time was commenced, the visitors scoring twice more without reply. The same day Tonbridge were losing a Southern League match at Bedford by 7-0 so Crump did not have to wait before making his first team debut, taking over from Tommy Bickerstaff



Centre forward Ray Kemp heads home goal number seven in the Angels Reserves 9-3 win against West Ham

on 5th February against Cambridge United. He was to hold the position practically unchallenged for the next four seasons.

Johnny Rainford was signed from Brentford, where he had made 299 first team appearances scoring 42 goals, only losing his regular first team place during the current season. Previously with Cardiff City and Crystal Palace he had appeared most for the Bees at inside forward but he slotted

into the right half position at Tonbridge and immediately impressed everyone with his tremendous skill. After two away games he made his home debut against Folkestone on 24th February, a game that neither he or anyone else who was there will be able to forget.

By now Peter Lovell had reverted to left back with Bob Hailstones once again at left half. Gus Simmons was keeping Upton out at right back whilst Ray Kemp had occupied the number ten shirt since Huckstepp's departure. With the lower half of the table packed very tightly, only five points separating 11th placed Wellington from Bedford who were 20th, the game was something of a relegation battle. Tonbridge stood 15th with 24 points from 26 games, Folkestone 18th with 21 points having played two games more.



Bath City goalkeeper Ian Black sticks out a fist to stop this header from Tonbridge centre forward Tommy Huckstepp during the Southern League encounter on 27th January 1962

A tremendous wind blew down the pitch towards the river and, for the only time in Brian Cheal's life, he got the better of the old sage Percy Thomson. Despite having the wind at their backs Tonbridge were awful and trailed 3-0 by half time. In the circumstances it was understandable that the crowd in the long stand were pessimistic as they drank their half time "cuppas". Only one voice was raised against when Percy announced "Tonbridge have lost this, no doubt about it." Out of sheer cussedness

rather than any logic, Brian surveyed the few coins in his possession. "There's a tanner here that says Tonbridge won't lose", he challenged.

When Folkestone increased their lead a minute after the restart, humiliation seemed assured. It was just a question of how big the rout would be. With 32 minutes remaining Ronnie Skyme sent a 30 yard pass out to Dennis on the left wing and raced into the goalmouth to slip in the return for a consolation goal. After 65 minutes Ray Kemp ran 30 yards, beating two defenders to score a superb solo goal and restore some respectability, but Tonbridge it seemed had more than mere respectability in mind as they laid siege to the visitors goal despite kicking into the teeth of a gale. After a concentrated attack the harassed seashiders conceded a corner which was taken by Bull and thumped into the goal by Johnny Rainford. 3-4 and now the impossible began to look quite realistic but then Folkestone retaliated bringing a desperate save from Crump. Simmons headed the resulting corner off the goal line as the 1,382 spectators collectively

held their breath. With two minutes to go Rainford went on a run. On reaching the Folkestone penalty area he appeared to be hampered but the referee waved on the play. McCurley picked up the loose ball and slipped it to Kemp who scored his second to make it 4-4. Even dear old Percy was quite nonplussed as he presented Brian with his sixpence. In a busy March, seven league matches brought four defeats, two draws, both away and just one win at home to Kings Lynn by 4-1, scored by Dennis, Skyme, Kemp and Micky Taylor, who had replaced Bull. Four days later Oxford United, already comfortable league leaders, made their last Southern League visit to the Angel Ground for in July they were elected to the Football League. The Angels put up a good fight but lost a most entertaining match by the odd goal in five. During this month, the Reserves suddenly sparked their dismal season into life with home wins over Newbury (8-1) and Woodford (7-1). Against Newbury, Bob McKenzie, promoted from the JAC's scored five goals.

April began with Charlie Marks leaving

the club having been appointed team manager of Bromley. Apart from his first season with us Charlie had been a regular reserve at Tonbridge and had still been playing for the seconds this season. There have been few more popular characters to wear the blue shirt than big, genial Charlie.

On the field the team slowly slipped nearer and nearer the bottom four. Gus Simmons had replaced Austin Dunne at centre half with Upton regaining the right back spot but it was the attack which was now the main worry. Kevin McCurley had equalled Jimmy Constantine's goalscoring record of 39 by the end of February but then lost form in March adding just one more to create the new record of 40. A ligament injury prevented him playing at all in April and he was released at the end of the season. Kemp took over at centre forward with John Smith making a welcome return to first team duty. The first four games of the month were all drawn including a rare point at Gravesend but both home Easter fixtures were lost. On the Saturday, Bexleyheath's 10 men, Kelly having been sent off in the first five minutes, put up a defensive barrier to win 1-0, whilst on the Monday a late rally was not enough to prevent Gravesend gaining a 2-1 win. A goalless draw at Guildford sent the Angels to, already doomed, Kings Lynn needing a win to have any chance of staying up but a 3-2 defeat meant that relegation was a certainty and Tonbridge finished 19th (P42 W10 D14 L18 F71 A92 Pts 34).

The Reserves finished 14th in a 17 team Metropolitan League with 23 points from 32 games, 102 goals conceded but 84 scored, the sixth best attacking record.

The Kent Senior Shield Semi-Final against Folkestone was lost by the only goal of the game and the Kent Floodlight Final brought two hard games with Ashford and a 3-3 aggregate. Tonbridge won the toss for home advantage in the replay but that is all they won, the cup once again going east with Gus Simmons proving an enthusiastic if unorthodox deputy centre forward.

Ray Kemp gave Tonbridge at first

Kevin McCurley



A strong, bustling centre forward, Kevin McCurley was born in Consett, County Durham on 2nd April 1926, he began his career with non-league Worthing before moving to Brighton & Hove Albion where he scored 9 goals in 21 league appearances, before being recruited by Liverpool. He made no league appearances for Liverpool and was sold to Colchester United for £750. He made 224 league appearances in eight years with the U's, scoring 92 goals. He was released in 1960 and after moving to Oldham Athletic

for a nominal fee in the summer of 1960, McCurley suffered a dislocated knee-cap on his Oldham debut and never played for them again. He moved to Tonbridge in March 1961. He made his debut against Romford on 18th March 1961, scoring the opening goal in a 2-0 win. His 12 goals in 12 appearances proved vital in the Angels avoiding relegation in 1960/61 season. Despite playing in a struggling side that was eventually relegated, he had equalled Jimmy Constantine's record of 39 goals by the end of February 1962. A subsequent ligament injury meant he could only manage one more goal to set a new record and he was released at the end of the season, moving onto Ramsgate, Canterbury City and ending his career in 1964 at Snowdown Colliery Welfare. Kevin was residing in Margate at the time of his passing in May 2000.

Tonbridge FC Career Statistics: Appearances 67; Goals: 52

half lead at Ashford but Shepherd equalised on the hour, good work by Crump and Simmons enabling the Angels to hold out until the end. 1,835 people turned up to see the return when Johnny Dennis thumped home a seventh minute opener. It looked enough to bring the cup to Tonbridge but Collins equalised for Ashford in the last minute. A big cheer went up when the ever popular Gus Simmons headed in Taylor's cross after two minutes of extra time but the visitors fighting spirit would not be denied and once again Tonbridge saw the cup snatched from their grasp when Hughes headed in Peplow's free kick in the last minute of extra time.

The play off brought another 1,707 to the Angel and they saw the visitors take a 27th minute lead when Clayton latched onto a poor Simmons pass. Ashford were good value for their half-time lead but Tonbridge improved after the interval, deservedly drawing level with a Skyme penalty. Home pressure mounted but the cup was bound eastwards, Collins scoring the winner eight minutes from time

following a breakaway. It was a sad end to a most disappointing season.

Only Folkestone conceded more Southern League goals than Tonbridge but it was ironic that, having at last got the defence sorted out, only 10 goals conceded in the last nine games, the attack, in particular Kevin McCurley, should stop scoring goals, only six in those same nine games, with both Huckstepp and McCurley missing. Of course it had been a severe blow to lose two players of the calibre of Paul Berry and John Smith for most of the season but if McCurley had been fit and in form for the last month it is probable that his goals would have saved Tonbridge for a second consecutive season.

Whichever way one looked at it, relegation was a sickening blow. At the Supporters Club Annual General Meeting, Stanley Berwick represented

the parent club facing a hostile audience with his usual dignity but even he was somewhat nonplussed by one question, "Has Mr. Haslam ever managed a team that finished nearer the the top than the bottom?"

A cruel jibe, but soon they would see. Off the field, a miracle had been worked. The Improvement Fund Daily Draw, inaugurated by Harry Haslam, with support from the Directors and the Supporters Club, had proved a real life saver. This, together with prudent budgeting, had wiped out the club's heavy debts and, at last, the club had a sound financial base. Now Tonbridge could compete with the better Southern League clubs in attracting players of high calibre and soon there were rumours of exciting signings but rumours with a difference. This time they were true.

Southern League Premier Division 1961/62

		P	W	D	L	F	A	GA	Pts
1	Oxford United	42	28	5	9	118	46	2.57	61
2	Bath City	42	25	7	10	102	70	1.46	57
3	Guildford City	42	24	8	10	79	49	1.61	56
4	Yeovil Town	42	23	8	11	97	59	1.64	54
5	Chelmsford City	42	19	12	11	74	60	1.23	50
6	Weymouth	42	20	7	15	80	64	1.25	47
7	Kettering Town	42	21	5	16	90	84	1.07	47
8	Hereford United	42	21	2	19	81	68	1.19	44
9	Cambridge City	42	18	8	16	70	71	0.99	44
10	Bexleyheath & Welling	42	19	5	18	69	75	0.92	43
11	Romford	42	15	9	18	63	70	0.9	39
12	Cambridge United	42	13	12	17	76	78	0.97	38
13	Wellington United	42	14	10	18	75	78	0.96	38
14	Gravesend & Northfleet	42	17	4	21	59	92	0.64	38
15	Bedford Town	42	16	5	21	73	79	0.92	37
16	Worcester City	42	15	7	20	51	64	0.8	37
17	Merthyr Tydfil	42	13	11	18	62	80	0.78	37
18	Clacton Town	42	13	10	19	74	91	0.81	36
19	Tonbridge	42	10	14	18	71	92	0.77	34
20	King's Lynn	42	12	8	22	59	74	0.8	32
21	Folkestone Town	42	12	6	24	64	103	0.62	30
22	Cheltenham Town	42	9	7	26	48	86	0.56	25

Obituary: Ray Kemp

Ray Kemp RIP

Super striker remembered

Popular and lethal striker Ray Kemp who played for the Angels throughout most of the 1960's has sadly passed away at the age of 78. He totalled no less than 303 appearances with a further 17 as substitute and scored 118 goals.

After his footballing career ended he and his wife moved to Dorset where he worked as part of the advertising team for a local newspaper and in his spare time became involved with a skittles team. He also enjoyed telling stories about his football exploits. An example could well have been a match the Angels played against Ramsgate when Ray scored a disputed goal for possible offside. The goal stood, the opposition's captain was sent off but refused to leave and the match was eventually abandoned with the police called! (Thanks to Tom Spence)

Ray also played football for Gillingham and Fulham and enjoyed competing in golf and cricket. His employer in Dorset, Philip Evans of View From Newspapers said at his funeral: "He was one of life's gentlemen, always looking on the bright side of life, and was much admired by all who knew him."

There's sure to be many more memories from our older supporters as we remember with fondness a player who contributed so much for our club.

Reproduced from the Tonbridge Angels Website, 26th June 2019



Southern League Premier League 1961/62

Date	Opponents	@	Comp	Res	Att	Pos	Goalscorers
Sat 19/08/1961	Hereford United	a	SL	L 1 2	2832	16	Huckstepp
Wed 23/08/1961	Clacton Town	H	SL	D 2 2	2002	18	McCurley 2
Sat 26/08/1961	Weymouth	H	SL	W 3 2	2112	12	McCurley, Dennis, Skyme
Sat 02/09/1961	Oxford United	a	SL	L 1 4	3652	16	Huckstepp
Tue 05/09/1961	Ramsgate Athletic	a	SLC	Pre i L 0 1			
Sat 09/09/1961	Ramsgate Athletic	H	SLC	Pre ii D 2 2	1776		Huckstepp, McCurley
Wed 13/09/1961	Clacton Town	a	SL	W 1 0			McCurley
Sat 16/09/1961	Bedford Town	H	SL	W 5 3	1798	9	Skyme, Huckstepp 3, McCurley
Wed 20/09/1961	Merthyr Tydfil	H	SL	W 3 1			McCurley 2, Huckstepp
Sat 23/09/1961	Tunbridge Wells United	H	FAC	2Q L 1 3	2947		Skyme
Wed 27/09/1961	Dartford	a	KSS	QF D 2 2			McCurley 2
Sat 30/09/1961	Cheltenham Town	H	SL	W 5 1	1525	9	Skyme, McCurley 2, Kemp 2
Mon 02/10/1961	Bromley	H	KFC	W 6 3	1580		Bull, McCurley 3, Huckstepp 2
Sat 07/10/1961	Folkestone Town	a	SL	D 3 3	1650	8	Huckstepp, Dennis, Kemp
Wed 11/10/1961	Canterbury City	H	SLC	1 W 2 1	1500		McCurley pen, Bull
Sat 14/10/1961	Cambridge City	H	SL	L 1 3	2161	10	Huckstepp
Mon 16/10/1961	Sittingbourne	H	KFC	W 3 1			McCurley pen, Greenwood og, Anderson
Sat 21/10/1961	Bexleyheath & Welling	a	SL	W 1 0	2977	7	McCurley
Tue 24/10/1961	Maidstone United	a	KFC	W 4 0	600		Kemp 2, McCurley 2
Sat 28/10/1961	Wellington Town	H	SL	L 1 4	1764	9	McCurley
Tue 31/10/1961	Bromley	a	KFC	D 1 1			McCurley
Sat 11/11/1961	Romford	H	SL	D 0 0	1407	9	
Sat 18/11/1961	Kettering Town	a	SL	L 1 2	2100	10	Huckstepp
Sat 25/11/1961	Chelmsford City	H	SL	W 4 3	1659	9	Simmons, Skyme 2, McCurley pen
Sat 02/12/1961	Yeovil Town	a	SL	L 1 4	2571	11	Huckstepp
Sat 09/12/1961	Guildford City	H	SL	L 2 4	1448	11	Bull, McCurley
Wed 13/12/1961	Dartford	H	KSS	QF r W 6 1	1000		McCurley 2, Kemp, Huckstepp 3
Sat 16/12/1961	Hereford United	H	SL	L 1 3	1465		Skyme
Sat 23/12/1961	Weymouth	a	SL	L 1 4	1142	12	Simmons
Tue 26/12/1961	Worcester City	H	SL	W 3 0	834	11	Huckstepp 3
Sat 06/01/1962	Bath City	a	SL	D 2 2	2413	11	McCurley, Skyme
Sat 13/01/1962	Erith & Belvedere	a	KSC	1 W 4 1	450		Huckstepp, Kemp 2, McCurley
Sat 20/01/1962	Merthyr Tydfil	a	SL	W 3 2	760	12	McCurley, Skyme, Kemp
Mon 22/01/1962	Yiewsley	a	SLC	2 L 3 9			Huckstepp 2, Lovell
Sat 27/01/1962	Bath City	H	SL	L 1 2	1637	12	Skyme
Sat 03/02/1962	Bedford Town	a	SL	L 0 7	2074	15	
Mon 05/02/1962	Cambridge United	H	SL	D 3 3			Kemp, Skyme, McCurley
Sat 10/02/1962	Gillingham	a	KSC	2 W 3 1	1005		McCurley 2, Skyme
Mon 12/02/1962	Gravesend & Northfleet	a	KFC	W 3 2	455		Kemp, McCurley 2 (1 pen)
Sat 17/02/1962	Cheltenham Town	a	SL	D 1 1	1590	15	McCurley
Mon 19/02/1962	Gravesend & Northfleet	H	KFC	W 5 0	1687		McCurley 2, Kemp 2, Bull
Sat 24/02/1962	Folkestone Town	H	SL	D 4 4	1383	14	Skyme, Kemp 2, Rainford
Tue 27/02/1962	Maidstone United	H	KFC	W 3 2	689		McCurley, Kemp 2
Sat 03/03/1962	Cambridge City	a	SL	D 3 3	3585	14	Skyme, Dennis, McCurley
Mon 05/03/1962	Sittingbourne	a	KFC	L 0 4	512		
Sat 10/03/1962	Ramsgate Athletic	H	KSC	QF D 1 1	1434		Kemp
Mon 12/03/1962	Yeovil Town	H	SL	L 1 4			Dennis
Wed 14/03/1962	Ramsgate Athletic	a	KSC	QF r L 3 4			Kemp, McCurley, Skyme
Sat 17/03/1962	Wellington Town	a	SL	L 0 4	2122	15	
Mon 19/03/1962	Worcester City	a	SL	D 1 1			Rainford
Sat 24/03/1962	King's Lynn	H	SL	W 4 1	1153	14	Skyme, Kemp, Taylor, Dennis
Wed 28/03/1962	Oxford United	H	SL	L 2 3	1500		Skyme, Taylor
Sat 31/03/1962	Romford	a	SL	L 0 1		16	
Sat 07/04/1962	Kettering Town	H	SL	D 1 1	1296	17	Smith
Mon 09/04/1962	Cambridge United	a	SL	D 1 1	2060	17	Dennis
Sat 14/04/1962	Chelmsford City	a	SL	D 1 1	2048	16	Skyme pen
Wed 18/04/1962	Ashford Town	a	KFC	FINAL i D 1 1			Kemp
Fri 20/04/1962	Gravesend & Northfleet	a	SL	D 0 0			
Sat 21/04/1962	Bexleyheath & Welling	H	SL	L 0 1	1693	18	
Mon 23/04/1962	Gravesend & Northfleet	H	SL	L 1 2	1510		Skyme
Wed 25/04/1962	Ashford Town	H	KFC	FINAL ii D 2 2			Dennis, Simmons
Sat 28/04/1962	Guildford City	a	SL	D 0 0	1944	19	
Wed 02/05/1962	King's Lynn	a	SL	L 2 3		19	Skyme, Smith
Fri 04/05/1962	Folkestone Town	a	KSS	SF L 0 1	600	19	
Mon 07/05/1962	Ashford Town	H	KFC	FINAL r L 1 2	1707	19	Skyme pen

Player Statistics 1961/62

Name	SL	FAC	SLC	KSC	KSS	KFC	Total	Goals	Career Apps	Career Goals
Anderson, Bob	14	1	3			4	22	1	46	9
Berry, Paul	7	1	2		1		11		66	5
Bickerstaff, Tommy	24	1	4	1	2	4	36	(5)	259	2
Bull, Micky	24	1	1	1	2	7	36	4	36	4
Crump, Fred	18			3	1	7	29	(3)	29	
Dennis, John	34	1	3	4	2	10	54	7	107	15
Dunne, Austen	25		2	4	3	10	44		201	15
Hailstones, Bob	40	1	4	3	3	11	62		400	6
Huckstepp, Tommy	20	1	3	1	2	2	29	22	29	22
Kemp, Ray	27		2	4	1	9	43	21	43	21
Lovell, Peter	42	1	4	4	3	10	64	1	177	1
McCurley, Kevin	36	1	4	4	2	8	55	40	67	52
Munton, Peter	1		1	1		2	5		5	
Rainford, Johnny	17			2	1	7	27	2	27	2
Simmons, Gus	34		1	4	2	7	48	3	84	3
Skyme, Ronnie	41	1	4	3	3	10	62	21	110	42
Smith, John	12		2		1	3	18	2	117	43
Taylor, Mike	11			1	1	2	15	2	15	2
Upton, Bobby	35	1	4	4	3	8	55		55	
() = clean sheets										+1 own goal

Stats: Dan Couldridge



This small boy is right on the spot for a first class view. And so was Ron Skyme, whose shot beat a defender to put Tonbridge a goal up



A Bedford defender shares the agony of his goalkeeper as the ball bounces from Huckstepp's head into the net for the fifth goal

A couple of photographs from 1961/62 which we have been unable to identify. Right, is the reserve team game against West Ham which was won 9-3 but the Tonbridge player is unidentified. Below, Fred Crump making the save and in the background is Paul Berry but the foreground Tonbridge player has defeated us

