

# Feethams Flyer Special

## Issue 31



Charles Pepper was a professional cricketer at Darlington CC before the 1st World War. This is his story.

# Darlington Hero, Charles Pepper

*Charles Pepper*



# How the research developed

A letter from Bill Pepper to Tim Dobson

Grantham,  
Lincs.

Tim,

Please find enclosed picture and info about Charles Pepper. The articles are probably only of passing interest for you the Scottish article is interesting for the style of writing.

The Pepper family originated from Nottingham. Charles was born in Ireland because his father was a soldier serving there, although Charles' mother was Irish.

All of the four <sup>(Charles')</sup> sons were sportsmen. Harold played for Derbyshire 2nd XI club ground, and ran a team called the 'F' a well-known travelling Derbys team. <sup>FRID</sup> obituary was in Wisden about 5 years ago.

All three grandsons have played cricket. John Pepper is past captain and president of Brixham C.C. I also played a lot of football and cricket.

Michael played for Belper, Derbys. None of the above is probably of much interest to you. I am glad you have written about Charles, <sup>though</sup> and I think it is wonderful that over 100 years on, he is still remembered.

Regards,

Bill Pepper.

A while ago whilst writing the history of our club, I came across the story of Charlie Pepper the Darlington professional before the Great War.

After much research I discovered he had actually been an allround sportsman playing cricket for Nottinghamshire CCC and football for Notts County both as a professional.

He sadly died at the Battle of Pasedale in 1917.

The club online history has more about this brave man.

His Grandson, Bill stumbled across an article in the Feethams Flyer about his Grandfather. He has since written to me (see left) and sent me some photos and cuttings about Charlie.

We are indebted to Bill Pepper for his help with our history.

Charlie Pepper will remain alive in the hearts of all Darlington Cricket Club people for ever.

## Charles Pepper, Cricketer and Hero 1875-1917

Charles Pepper was professional at Darlington in 1902 and remained at the club until 1904. An Irishman by birth, he grew up in Youghall, County Cork where he was born on June 6th 1875. He moved to England as a young boy and soon showed enormous talent for the game.

As a teenager he was employed as a professional with Rye cricket club in Sussex and then Brechin in Scotland. Obviously an all round athlete he was also a footballer player for Bedford Town FC.

It was reported that he was a careful batsman with a “good array of shots all round the wicket” His favourite shot being the leg glance.

He could bowl either medium pace or leg breaks. He was brilliant at varying his pace, something we think of as a modern addition to a bowler’s armoury.

Having topped the club’s batting and bowling averages in 1902 he was re engaged the following year. A very popular player, he saddened many when he then accepted an offer from Bedfordshire and left the club.

It is reported that many local cricket lovers were sorry to see him go.

He was a Nottinghamshire cricketer and played ten times for them around the turn of the century.

When was broke out Charles joined up with his local regiment, The Sherwood Foresters ( Sergeant 32476 Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment)

He was part of the initial force sent to France at the start of the Great War as the Sherwood Foresters served with distinction in the major battles of world war one. He rose through the ranks from private to Sergeant.

At the battle of Paschendale (the third battle of Ypres) in 1917 the Foresters were to play a major part in General Hague's “big push”. The battle began in July and was known as The Battle of the Mud. ***Continued on page 3***



The grave of Charlie Pepper at the cemetery in La Clytte





On July 18th a ten day barrage of shells was fired over the German lines. Three thousand artillery guns fired over four million shells. Therefore, the German army in the area fully expected a major Allied attack - so any vague hope of surprise was lost, as was true in any attack that started with a major artillery bombardment.

The infantry attack started on July 31st. The Germans, as happened at the Somme, were fully prepared and the Allied attack, launched across a eleven mile front, made only small gains. Then in the early days of August, the area was saturated with the heaviest rain the region had seen in thirty years. The area in Flanders became effectively a swamp. Tanks, sent forward to help the infantry, simply got stuck. Infantry soldiers found movement very difficult. The impact of the artillery bombardment had destroyed the drainage systems of the region which greatly added to the problem. The shell craters made by the Allied shelling filled with water and did not allow advancing men the opportunity to hide in them. The fields through which men should have gone became impassable.

These were fought between September and October 1917. These gave British forces the advantage in the territory to the east of Ypres. Haig became convinced that German morale was on the verge of collapsing and ordered that the offensive be continued to Passchendaele Ridge.

It was on 13th September that Charles Pepper was killed in action and he was buried in Belgium at La Clytte Military Cemetery. He died bravely in an action by the 16th battalion of The Sherwood Foresters, The Notts and Derby Regiment. *Below are articles published during the war years relating to Charles Pepper and reporting on his death ion action.*

**A GREATER GAME.  
BURTON SPORTSMAN-  
SOLDIER.**



**SERGEANT C. PEPPER.**

Sergeant C. Pepper, of 63, South Uxbridge Street, is a very well known local sportsman, being the professional to Messrs. Worthington and Co.'s Cricket Club, and an old Notts. County player. In 1914 he won the "Burton Daily Mail" batting prize, given by Colonel R. F. Ratcliff, M.P. A native of Nottingham, Sergeant Pepper came to Burton several years ago, and had played with Messrs. Worthington's team for nine years. He enlisted on April 20th of last year in the 16th (Sportsman's) Battalion Sherwood Foresters, and has been in France some months.

**32476 Sergt Charles PEPPE**

Burt

Sherwood Foresters 16

KIA 13/09/1917 Fr / Flande

**BC 27/09/1917 Pg.4 Col.5 Pos.M**

**SERGEANT PEPPER.**

Letters received by Mrs. C. Pepper, of South Uxbridge Street, from an officer and the Regimental Chaplain pay warm tribute to her husband, Sergeant Charles Pepper, of the Notts and Derby Regiment, who was killed with his Colonel, as stated in these columns, on September 18th. The chaplain in referring to the great loss, says: "It must always be a comfort to you to remember how bravely and faithfully he has done his duty. He and his Colonel lie side by side in a peaceful little cemetery, in a pretty country village a few miles behind the firing line. All our officers and men who were not engaged at the time in the trenches attended the funeral—more than 200 being present. Buglers played the Last Post, and I cannot tell you how impressive it sounded; there were sixteen. The cemetery is beautifully kept and you may be sure the grave will be most carefully tended. I know how sadly your husband will be missed out here." The letter from the officer says: "When I joined the battalion last December your husband was my platoon sergeant, and I always found him a brave and cheery soldier, and one that could always be relied upon. He was very popular with Lieutenant —, who had played cricket against him in civil life, also myself. We never missed a suitable opportunity of chatting about our cricket experiences in the good old days."



On the more refined cricket field, Sgt CHARLES PEPPER of South Uxbridge Street had achieved distinction as a professional. A fine footballer with Notts County, he had few equals locally with bat or ball. As a young man he had been spotted by Arthur Shrewsbury, a fine player himself and a keen judge of others, who was instrumental in his signing as a professional for Rye C. C. in Sussex. He then transferred with success to Scotland and then played a number of County Championship level games for Nottinghamshire. On the move again he played for Bedfordshire after a career-threatening injury and then in the Lancashire League made 99 against the full County team and took 85 wickets



Sgt Charles Pepper

An interesting piece written about fallen sporting heroes from the war years by a gentleman called John Redfern.

Thanks to Bill Pepper for sending this to us.

I will include the whole article on the website

[www.dcchistory.com](http://www.dcchistory.com)

by John Redfern

at an average of 11. Finally, he became the pro for Worthington and Co's C.C. in Burton and entertained many a visitor to the Branstone Road Ground. In France two of his officers had played cricket against him in civilian life and, as one of them wrote to his wife, "we never missed a suitable opportunity of chatting about our cricketing experiences in the good old days."

# we shall remember them...

**Remembering the fallen heroes who played for Darlington CC and gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country.**

**We will remember them....**

**For the Fallen by Laurence Binyon**

*With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.*

*Solemn the drums thrill; Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres,  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.*

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds un-  
counted;  
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;*

*They sit no more at familiar tables of home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.*

*But where our desires are and our hopes profound,*

*Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known*

*As the stars are known to the Night;*

*As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain;  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our dark-  
ness,*

*To the end, to the end, they remain.*



**Killed.****FORMER LOCAL PROFESSIONAL**

Regimental Sergeant John Pepper has written to Mrs. Charles Pepper, of South Uxbridge Street, stating that her husband and his brother, Sergeant Pepper, was killed by a shell in Belgium, along with his colonel, on Thursday, and that both were buried on Saturday, the funeral being attended by 8 officers and 150 men, and given full military honours. Rifleman Pepper—"Charlie," as he was familiarly known in cricketering circles—volunteered in the Sportsman's Battalion, afterwards transferring to the Sherwood Foresters. He had been out in France about eighteen months, and was 42 years old. He leaves a wife and four boys, three of whom are in the Parish Church choir. Mrs. C. Pepper has lost in the war her husband, a brother, and eight cousins, while four other brothers are still with the Colours.

Sergeant Pepper had been the professional for Worthington and Co's Cricket Club for several years prior to the war. He had few equals locally with bat or ball, and he was a great favourite with players and spectators alike. Both on and off the field he was courtesy itself, and his quiet, unassuming manner won for him many friends. He showed that he had the making of a good professional shortly after leaving school. He had every opportunity of becoming proficient, for he joined the Nottingham Forest Wanderers—a club of some repute, which had from time to time turned out many good players—and it was while with this team that he made 75 not out against the Notts. Castle at the age of seventeen years. This was a splendid performance, because on that occasion there was some good bowling. So well did he acquit himself while in the Wanderers that he came under the eye of the late Arthur Shrewsbury, who, himself a remarkable player, was a keen judge of the capabilities of others, and it was through his instrumentality that Pepper was engaged as professional for the Rye (Sussex) C.C. Here he knocked up a century with the attack coming from Cyril Blen'l, who was qualifying for Sussex, and who will be remembered locally as having for some seasons assisted Allsopp and Sons and Tutbury as professional.

Pepper transferred his services to Brechin, Scotland, where he played against Frank Sugg's English Eleven, and made the top score of 45 not out against the bowling of

out against Grange, Scotland's premier club, and the following day took eight wickets against Leith Caledonians for 40 runs. He also played against Lord Glamis's Eleven at Glamis Castle, Forfarshire, opposed to several of the best Scotch cricketers, and once captured eight wickets for 20 runs and made 40 in the same match.

In the meantime Notts were casting an envious eye upon him and he had a trial with them in the Notts v. Yorkshire Colts' match, and made a very successful debut, carrying his bat through the innings for 57 runs. The following season he made 85 at Sheffield against the Yorkshire Colts, and this success was followed by a good trial with the County Eleven, Pepper appearing against Middlesex, Essex, Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, and Lancashire. In the latter match he made 67 for once out, whilst he took three wickets for 21 runs against Essex at Leyton. These could be considered very creditable performances considering the class of cricket he was engaged in. Desiring a change Pepper subsequently migrated to Darlington, where he still kept up his reputation, and came out at the top of both batting and bowling averages. Whilst playing against Tynemouth, however, he met with an accident, injuring his side whilst bowling very fast, after taking four wickets very cheaply.

He then qualified for Bedfordshire, and made a few centuries for them in their club and ground matches, two notable successes being 135 against eighteen of Biggleswade and 100 against Bedford Grammar School. For some reason or other he could not settle at Bedford, and he then went to Kendall, where he stayed until he joined Worthington and Co's club. For Kendall he did some really excellent work, both with bat and ball, and at this time was considered the best bat in North Lancashire. His best performances, perhaps, were 99 not out v. East Lancashire (Lancashire League team), 99 v. Lancashire, and 79 not out v. Barrow-in-Furness. As a consequence he materially helped his club, and they won the North Lancashire League Cup in the year 1905. Besides this excellent batting, he also obtained 85 wickets at an average of 11 each. Every frequenter of the Branstone Road ground knows what excellent

work Pepper accomplished for Worthington and Co. during his connection with the club. He also rendered signal service for the Burton C.C. on numerous occasions.



from Scottish magazine

An article that appeared in a Scottish Magazine during 1900. Charles played successfully there for Brechin for several years

## CRICKET PROFESSIONALS OF SCOTLAND.

### CHARLES PEPPER, Brechin C.C.

I suppose the good folks of Brechin have played cricket on the village green for decades, but up till a few years ago the qualities of the ancient town, as far as the exposition of the game goes, were hid behind a bushel. I'm not so sure about the past of Brechin cricket, but I'm positive about the future, and the horizon appears very bright. It was last year that I began to take Brechin seriously, for, lo and behold! one Saturday evening came the news that the men of Brechin had met and vanquished, yea, literally mopped the floor with Scotland's premier team, The Grange. That was a glorious day in Brechin; the long bottled-up enthusiasm bubbled over, and the dawn of a new era was heralded with all the exuberance and manifestations of delight that are evidenced at—let me see now—well, a municipal election. There must be some factor at the back of this rise to fame, and it requires not the wisdom of a seer to distinguish the agency that has been at work. His features are presented to my readers on this page, and he rejoices in the name of Charles.

(N.B.—I have permission from Charles to become jocular at this stage.) He hails from Nottingham, famed for lace and William Gunn, and, as an inheritance, in due course became a cricketer. That grand old batsman, the pride of Nottingham, ay, of the world—Arthur Shrewsbury secured Pepper his first engagement at Rye, in Sussex. The young man did magnificently there, bagging over 100 wickets at about nine runs per wicket; and wasn't

Charley a proud fellow when he scored exactly the century against a rival Sussex club, in whose ranks was Cyril Bland, the now famous Sussex bowler. This was the beginning, and in 1897 he trekked northwards, over the Border, to the land of brown heath and shaggy wood, or as much of the heath and wood as can be found in the Cathedral town of Brechin. I positively hate quoting figures as evidence of prowess, but just to show how he came to the front, I must give his batting averages for the three years he has been in the club's service:—1897, 16.00; 1898, 24.00; and 1899, 32.42. There's no getting over these figures, they sort of speak eloquently "on their own," and it does not require a man of keen vision, aided by a pair of double-distilled patent magnifying microscopic eye-glasses, to distinguish the improvement. He is such a good, all-round man, that it's a toss up whether I give preference to his batting or bowling. Personally, I like to see him at the wicket, all eagerness and up to every dodge. He plays a straight bat, with a barn-door defence if he chooses, but he gets set so quickly that he

really never requires to funk the bowler, as the said bowler generally gets enough to do watching his best balls out, slipped, or driven with an ease which lends grace to his batting. Charles is a painstaking bat, and if he takes it into his head, he'll stay at the wickets all day, and a bit of the next, just to show the opposition he can do it. Of course, he is not like the railway stationmaster, who hatted against the porter at the wayside station for six weeks, but what I want to get at is the difficulty bowlers have to shift him. Just take, for example, this year, a week or two ago when playing for Notts Colts against Yorkshire ditto, he went in first, and though he had an injured hand, carried his bat right through the innings for 57 runs. That proves my argument, me lud! He bowls an apparently easy ball, but you have only got to face an over to realise how deceptive he is—you begin to wish you had played croquet instead. Along comes a slow, then a medium with the least show of side on, then, my stars! down whizzes the express, and you have got to look mighty slick to stop the last-mentioned engine, or else it stops your career for the time being. In 1897 Frank Sugg brought a strong English eleven North, and one match was played at Arbroath. Schofield Haigh and Johnny Briggs had quite a hot time, a picnic in fact



CHARLES PEPPER.

feather to his cap. He is not a mammoth scorer, but if there is one man in Scotland that can break up a bowler to atoms better than the Brechin pro., please introduce me. He fails to be numbered amongst the select coterie who have captured all ten wickets. It was on the 26th day of August last year that Lord Glamis captained a powerful team, including L. M. Balfour Melville, E. S., and Tom Hainsworth, against the pride of Brechin, but

Charles cleared out the lot and retired for a small lemon with the whole bag of tricks at a cost of 43 runs—there's a picture for you! I could go on till the millennium telling of the good things he has done, but I've said enough to show what a really good fellow he is with bat and ball. The effect of his good work has been felt in the team which he coaches, and when the history of the club comes to be written up in after years, the name of Charles Pepper deserves to be recorded in big type, for he laid the foundation-stone. The pity is he won't be long with us (for we do want such men in poor, benighted Scotland), as his county calls for him. We do not grudge him the promotion to the company of Shrewsbury and Gunn, but we will miss him. A right good fellow, and a gentleman to boot, quiet and unassuming, yet the jolliest and most sociable when the battle's lost or won, he is a prime favourite in Brechin, and when he goes to the wicket the good folks light their pipes and settle down to see him give the bowlers pepper—and somehow or other he generally manages to get there—and that's all that's required. R. D. M.