

Up There Cazaly!

A historical look at Tonbridge Angels through the eyes of their supporters with original text by the late Brian Cheal. Part 10: Season 1960-61, the beginning of the Happy Harry Haslam era



Seven new players were signed in time for the 1960-61 season. Paul Berry, a tall stylish, centre half came from Chelsea for whom he had made three First Division appearances. He remained on the transfer list valued at £1,500. Jimmy Pearson, a former Youth International, had a similar valuation put on him by Morton where he had been a first team regular in the Scottish League before deciding to come south. A frail looking, fair haired forward he soon showed himself to be a player of exceptional skill but his time at Tonbridge was unfortunately brief. At the end of October he obtained permission from the manager to visit his mother in Scotland. He never returned and resumed playing for Morton.

Two very contrasting players, Gus Simmons and Danny Durston, were signed from Wisbech Town. They had both played in the Ilford side beaten by Woking in the 1958 FA Amateur Cup Final at Wembley. Full back Simmons had been on Tottenham's books as an amateur making their reserve team on a number of occasions. Brave, rugged, unorthodox, built like a cruiserweight

boxer, Gus was a genuine tough guy with a great sense of fun who was to become the club's greatest character of the sixties. Durston, who played on the wing, was very much a flyweight.

The accent was very much on youth. Apart from Pearson and Durston, both 21 years old, there were other new forwards, Boyd Nisbet, aged 23, Johnny Dennis, 20 and Tommy Long, 19. Nisbet, an athletic looking Scot was signed from Swindon after three years at Chelsea; Dennis had established himself in the Yeovil team as a teenager and despite his youth was already an experienced Southern League player, whilst Long arrived from Leyton Orient.

Television cameras were present for the first match of the season at the Angel Ground but not to cover the match itself. A local station was following up Stanley Berwick's grim warning that more financial support was needed if the club was to survive.

Dartford were the visitors and they included both Cliff Payton and Johnny Dougan in their forward line. John

Smith had been injured in pre-season training and, surprisingly, there was no place for Austin Dunne in the following line-up: Bickerstaff, Thompson, Lovell, Boswell, Berry, Hailstones, Durston, Pearson, Nisbet, Long, Dennis. A completely new forward line and with an average age of just under 21, surely the youngest to have represented Tonbridge in a Southern League fixture so far. They showed promise and played some attractive football but lacked punch and found it hard going against a tough and experienced defence. When they did manage to break through they found a young, amateur goalkeeper called Gerry Green in inspired form. With Paul Berry, making an impressive debut, keeping a tight rein on Tommy Huckstepp, the Darts were seldom seen as an attacking force but a goal from Fletcher was enough to send them home with the points.

The pattern of the season as a whole resembled a patchwork quilt. Some attractive football, occasional good performances, mingled with mediocrity and some appalling defeats. The defence, relying too much on Berry and Lovell, was erratic whilst the forward line continued to lack punch most of the time. It took two goals from Jimmy Constantine, deputising for Barry Bell, who failed to arrive in time for the kick-off to give Tonbridge their first victory at Cheltenham.

In the FA Cup a replay was needed to dispose of Sussex League side Bexhill and earn a trip to Tunbridge Wells. A warm, sunny day helped to draw a crowd of 2,300 to the last local derby played at Eridge Road but a hard, bumpy pitch made good football difficult and it was a very poor opening 45 minutes. After the interval



*Back row: J. Smith, P. Lovell, J. Constantine, D. Durston, T. Long, B. Nisbet, J. Boswell, P. Berry, T. Bickerstaff, C. Marks, J. Kirk, J. Crapper, J. Birch, G. Simmons, R. Taylor, A. Gorman.
Front row: J. Dennis, J. Thompson, J. Pearson, R. Hailstones, H. Haslam (Manager), A. Dunne, B. Beavers, B. Bell, R. Rawlings*



*The nine new faces that featured in the trial games of 1960:
Back row: Danny Durston, Paul Berry, Boyd Nisbet, John Crapper,
Ron Rawlings; Front row: John Dennis, Jimmy Pearson,
Barry Beavers, John Birch.*

Tonbridge began to take control and deservedly took the lead through Smith. Pearson, Nisbet and Smith all went close to adding a second but Dai Davies equalised with a fine header. Once again the Angels returned to the attack and the winning goal was a gem. Bickerstaff threw the ball out to Hailstones who chipped it to Smith, who was having a fine second half. He sent Boyd Nisbet racing through the middle to slam a curling shot into the corner of the net.

This brought a home tie with Hastings United and a crowd of 2,641 to the Angel Ground but it was all a terrible disappointment to the home supporters. Despite the presence of former Tottenham centre forward Len Duquemin, Hastings had a very ordinary side but Tonbridge showed no fight whatsoever. True, the referee seemed to stop the game three minutes early and ignored a blatant foul on Nisbet in the penalty area but it was the visitors who showed the will to win and they deserved their 2-1 success.

A fine 3-1 win at Maidstone put Tonbridge into the third round of the Kent Senior Cup but a pathetic display at Sittingbourne brought a 3-0 defeat whilst a powerful Bromley side administered a 4-1 drubbing at the Angel Ground providing the

Angels with an early exit from the Kent Senior Shield. The newly-formed Kent Floodlight Cup provided no joy either. Tonbridge were grouped with Bromley and Maidstone but were unable to progress. Ashford provided the opposition in the Southern League Cup winning their home leg 2-0. The second leg was an excellent game with goals from Boswell and Dunne giving the Angels a 2-1 victory. On the strange system both sides qualified for the next round when Tonbridge travelled to struggling Hastings and were thrashed 7-0.

At the end of October, Second Division Stoke City came to the Angel for a friendly but only 1,779 supporters turned up on a very wet evening. Goals from Bentley, Graham, Randals and Anderson helped the visitors stroll to an easy victory. Berry and Lovell were outstanding in defence for Tonbridge whilst Dennis, who provided the cross for Dunne to head the Blues consolation goal, was impressive in attack.

A month later, Millwall provided the opposition for another friendly and against a Fourth Division side there did not appear to be the same gap in class. In fact with a little more steadiness in front of goal, Tonbridge would have won. Roger Burrows, who had appeared a dozen times for Tonbridge Reserves the previous season, was at inside forward for the visitors whilst the Angels introduced a new goalkeeper, Gerry Green, the young Londoner who had defied the Tonbridge attack when playing for Dartford in the opening game of the season.

Just after the interval Smith opened the scoring for Tonbridge with a superb chip from 30 yards. Then the game exploded. Millwall goalkeeper Reg Davies reacted angrily to a challenge by Ronnie Skyme and the little Welshman was suddenly surrounded by threatening opponents.

THE FLOODS OF 1960



The Angel Ground finds itself under three feet of water in places

HARRY HASLAM



Harry Haslam was born in Manchester on 31st July 1921 and was an apprentice at Manchester United before signing for Rochdale as an amateur. He moved to Oldham Athletic in 1946, for whom he made two League appearances. After a short spell with Brighton & Hove Albion he moved to Leyton Orient in 1948 with whom he made seven League appearances, before entering the non-league scene with Guildford City. Haslam stepped into management with Barry Town in the summer of 1956 replacing previous Linnet's manager, Maurice Lindley, who later became well known as Assistant Manager to Don Revie during Leeds United's glory years. His four years at the Welsh club was eventful as he signed Swedish and Finnish internationals in a foretaste of his later management career in the Football League. Despite the foreign talent he brought to Barry, he failed to stem the slide in fortunes and as the average crowd dipped he was dismissed in January 1960.

Haslam took over the reins at Tonbridge in February 1960 from the late Jack Tresadern. He was to remain in position for eight years managing the club on a record 552 occasions before departing to become Chief Scout at Fulham under Bobby Robson. His tenure at Tonbridge is synonymous with his unearthing of Malcolm Macdonald who he brought into Southern League football. When Haslam departed, Macdonald went with him to Craven Cottage with Robson paying £1,000 for his transfer. Haslam brought a trophy to the Angel Ground in the shape of the Kent Senior Cup in 1965 when Bexley United were beaten 3-0 at Gillingham captained by Joe Carolan who had been at Manchester United while Harry was an apprentice at Old Trafford. In his initial season he steered the club to safety, but a season later they were relegated from the Premier Division. Two seasons in the First Division brought fifth and a promotion winning fourth in 1964. Tonbridge were relegated again in 1966 and his final two seasons brought mid-table finishes in the First Division. In his time he brought legendary players such as goalkeepers Tony Burns and Ian Seymour who moved on to Arsenal and Fulham respectively, Gerry Francis and Geoff Truett to the club.

Haslam became manager of Luton Town in 1972 and Macdonald followed him to Kenilworth Road in exchange for a fee of £17,500. Haslam led Luton to promotion to the First Division in 1974.

In 1978, he became manager of Sheffield United and he remained in charge until 1980. Under Haslam's management, Sheffield United almost signed Argentinian footballer Diego Maradona who was then 17 years old. However the agreed fee of £200,000 was increased and Maradona, who had made his way to the airport, had to remain in Argentina for the time being. Sheffield United denied Haslam the funds to purchase Maradona, but allowed him the £160,000 needed to buy the more established Alex Sabella. It was while out in Argentina that Haslam contacted Tottenham Hotspur's manager Keith Burkinshaw about Spurs possibly signing Osvaldo Ardiles. Burkinshaw flew out to Buenos Aires and the deal was done with Ardiles who also suggested to Burkinshaw that Spurs also sign Ricardo Villa. Haslam remained with the Blades until 1980 when he was dismissed after a pretty disappointing tenure for both the man and the club, but Haslam was not out of football yet as he was to join Bobby Robson's staff as England prepared for the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

Harry died in September 1986

He was rescued by Gus Simmons who raced 20 yards to put his arm around Skyme and the hostile gang mysteriously melted away. When things got tough it was good to have Gus around but Davies had the last laugh easily saving Dennis' feeble penalty. The visitors were stung and with Tonbridge also "gee'd up" the rest of the game took on the atmosphere of a cup tie. Harper equalised for

Millwall in the 88th minute but the only real disappointment was the size of the crowd, just 575.

Skyme, a short, wiry, inside forward with considerable guile and a dynamic shot, had been signed in September from his home town club Merthyr Tydfil, for whom he had scored nearly 100 goals. He scored on his debut against Bath City but the champions

won a most entertaining game by the odd goal in five. Heavy defeats at Guildford, Cambridge and Bath were interspersed with fine victories at Folkestone, Romford and Boston, where Jimmy Kirk, deputising for the injured Bickerstaff, saved a last minute penalty.

Centre forward was proving a problem position with neither Bell or Nisbet

Saturday, 31st December 1960 – Southern League

Tonbridge (4) 7 (Skyme 2 Bell 2 Smith Hailstones Boswell) Cheltenham Town (1) 3 (Burdon 2 Workman)

Attendance: 1,170

For those who did not see this game and did not believe their informers, I suggest they read the scoreline again . . . and very carefully.

Tonbridge said farewell to 1960 by slamming in seven goals. They broke their large run of defeats with their highest league win for years. They completed their first double of the season, boosted their goal average to 39 and, most important of all, allowed Mr Harry Haslam's last and greatest gamble to succeed.

What inspired the Angels to this sudden burst of success? The formula lies in the forward line. George Fenn, Ronnie Skyme, Ken Collishaw, Johnny Smith and Barry Bell combined skilfully, shrewdly, as a team and took their chances when they came. They all overcame the conditions, ignored dilly-dallying, shot first time and always pressed hard.

Mr Haslam carefully selected this line as the fastest possible to field, or in his own words, the players with the longest legs. He brought in former West Ham star and England youth player George Fenn, who controlled the right flank and often burst through with hair-raising speed. Barry Bell had his finest game and scored two of the best goals this season. It was easy for the inside forwards, who found chances at their feet, and for once they shot straight and hard.

Ten minutes of uninspired Cheltenham bustle and Tonbridge triumphantly took the lead. Inside right Skyme – a shrewd judge of an expert centre from Fenn - thumped the ball goalwards with such force that it left goalkeeper and defenders quite uncertain of their sorrow. Goal number one.

Tonbridge toyed with Cheltenham as a cat does a mouse. Their effortless and seemingly deceptive probing led to the second goal when Fenn again took charge of the right flank. This time it was Smith who broke through with a sizzling shot from outside the area. Goal number two.



And for some time, the Angels carrying their “unpredictable tag”, treated their Gloucestershire opponents with contempt! After 30 minutes, Skyme seized another chance to crash home a shot and jumped with joy as Tonbridge took real command for the first time in months. Goal number three.

It seemed as though Cheltenham would never manage a goal, but they earned part of their revenge when Burden flashed down his line to jump on to a pass from Deacon and crash past the unplaced Kirk.

Tonbridge stormed into the attack again and Skyme hit the bar. The Cheltenham defence stopped another shot but left half, Bob Hailstones, who did not have a good game, took over the scoring role after 40 minutes and his chip shot spun over the line. Goal number four.

In the second half Cheltenham were never really in the game. The Angels really piled on the pressure and after 50 minutes, Boswell hit the back of the net with a hard, low drive from 25 yards. Goal number five.

Cheltenham came away with the ball and Kirk safely gathered a shot from Workman. After 60 minutes, the energetic Bell took a pass from Smith in his stride, accelerated and thundered the ball past Gourlay, who lay outstretched in the mud. Goal number six.

Minutes later, Bell was on the warpath again. He started from the corner post and twisted by the right back. He foiled the centre half and from an angle of 80 degrees, crashed home the best goal of the game. Goal number seven.

During this period of Tonbridge domination, the score should have been 10-1. Collishaw, who was content to give the inside forwards the scoring chances, saw his header scrambled off the line and the Cheltenham keeper unleashed a fine one-handed save to tip Fenn's shot over the bar.

As so often happens in high scoring games, Tonbridge eased their pressure and Cheltenham scored twice. Once, Kirk allowed a Burden free kick to drop under the bar and inside right Workman ran through to clinch Cheltenham's third goal.

The end of the game was not without drama. The visiting centre-half, Hyde, had his name taken following a tussle with Collishaw and Tonbridge suffered from injury. Hailstones dropped to left back and Smith left the field with a crippled leg.



looking up to the task. Skyme, Dunne, Bobby Anderson, a Scottish soldier and even winger Johnny Dennis were tried in the position with little success. Ken Collinshaw, a fiery amateur from Cray Wanderers, had an impressive debut scoring both goals in a 4-2 home defeat by Bedford, the first after just two minutes, but injuries and suspensions limited his chances and he was unable to live up to such a spectacular start. The best game of the season was against Yeovil. With both sides playing fast, open, attacking football and neither defence entirely safe it was a real thriller. Dennis opened the scoring with a spectacular drive and turned in a fine display against his old club helping Tonbridge to a 4-2 win.

Five successive victories had taken Tonbridge into ninth place in November but the first seven matches of December produced just two draws sending them tumbling down to 17th, three points clear of the relegation positions. Christmas bringing one point from two encounters with Clacton. Centre forwards of the month were Barry Bell, Austin Dunne, Paul Berry, who scored twice at Dartford, but was badly missed in defence, and Johnny Smith.

For the visit of Cheltenham on the last Saturday of the year, Harry Haslam changed his team and above all his tactics. Kirk replaced Green in goal behind the usual defence of Simmons, Lovell, Boswell, Berry and Hailstones. Inside forwards Skyme and Smith also retained their places but Collinshaw returned at centre forward with Bell replacing Dennis on the left wing. At outside right former West Ham player George Fenn, a recent signing from Bedford, was brought in. Haslam said afterwards that he had picked the players with the longest legs. An exceptionally wet winter had produced consistently heavy pitches and Tonbridge's lightweight attack had become increasingly bogged down but now a transformation took place. Some of the intricate short passing and elaborate dribbling replaced by fast, direct, attacking football. Poor Cheltenham never knew what hit them. Barry Bell had his finest match for Tonbridge, with Johnny Smith the

brilliant mastermind, he and Fenn tore the visitor's defence to shreds.

Fenn supplied the pass for the first goal when Ronnie Skyme lashed home his centre after 10 minutes. The second goal was a classic. Smith picked up the ball in his own half, carried it forward and then sent Fenn racing down the right. When the winger

slipped the ball inside it was Smith who blasted it in from just outside the penalty area. Skyme scored his second and Tonbridge's third on the half hour and Border reduced the arrears before Hailstones made it 4-1 after 40 minutes. Five minutes into the second half, Boswell scored with a hard, low drive from 25 yards and then 10 minutes later Barry Bell struck with

JOHN SMITH



John Smith was born on 18th November 1929 in Greenock, Renfrewshire. His early football years progressed through juvenile teams before earning two caps for Scotland Juniors whilst with Ardeer Recreation Juniors. Despite many attractive offers across the border, John preferred to stay in Scotland and signed for Stirling Albion in 1950. He shared in the ups and downs of Albion captaining the team in both promotion and relegation campaigns. At the time he was reckoned by many good judges to be Scotland's best uncapped senior player. After making 195 appearances and scoring 25 goals he departed for Dumbarton in May 1957 where he made 77 appearances, scoring 16 goals before he headed

south for the Angel Ground. His Tonbridge debut was made at Bath City on 22nd August 1959. In his first season he was the leading goalscorer with 24 goals from 45 appearances. Smith had another good season in 1960/61 scoring 16 goals from 51 outings but early in the following season he received a bad injury at Ramsgate in a Southern League Cup match that restricted him to just 12 appearances and he retired at the end of the term. He had made a total of 117 appearances, scoring 43 times. He became first team trainer and was caretaker manager for a short period at the opening of the 1968/69 bridging the gap between the end of Harry Haslam's time and the appointment of Doug Baker. He was pressed into service for the last Kent Floodlight Cup game of 1967-68 and scored in a 9-1 romp against Maidstone United. Baker's time was short and in January 1969, Smith was back at the helm. But following a distinctly unsuccessful 12 months, in which he picked himself twice, he resigned. John died on 3rd August 2016 at the age of 87 having lived in Pembury for many years.

Tonbridge FC Career Statistics: Appearances 120; Goals: 44



Smith angles his shot past two Cheltenham defenders for the winning goal on 31st December 1960

two superb goals in quick succession. First he took another fine Smith pass in his stride, accelerated past the full back and thundered the ball into the far corner of the net. Then, out by the corner flag, he suddenly twisted past the, by now bewildered, full back, beat the covering defender and from the narrowest of angles crashed in a great goal. Cheltenham scored twice as Tonbridge understandably tired a little in the closing stages but the crowd of 1,170 were more than happy with a 7-3 score.

The revival was only temporarily halted by a 5-2 reverse at Chelmsford as it was followed by three victories, 1-0 at Wisbech; 3-0 and 2-1 at home to Guildford and Chelmsford respectively. Tommy Bickerstaff returned to the side at Wisbech and made several fine saves, whilst Gus Simmons and Paul Berry coped exceptionally well with former England internationals Billy Elliott and Jesse Pye. Bell scored the goal, in the 77th minute, but unfortunately pulled a groin muscle in the closing stages. It really was rotten luck that he should lose his place through injury just as he had found his form. This meant an early recall for John Dennis who responded with a lively performance against Guildford but the highlight of this game was the third goal scored by Bobby Anderson. After a few unsuccessful early season appearances in the forward line,

Anderson had been competing with Jimmy Boswell for the right half position. A player of obvious skill he had produced some promising performances but in this month he surpassed himself. Receiving the ball on the half way line he weaved through the centre of defence, beating six men before drawing the goalkeeper Eric Gill and coolly sliding the ball past him. Surely the finest goal seen at the Angel for many years.

On 9th February Anderson was selected to play for the British Army against an FA XI at Sandhurst but there was a problem about having armed forces personnel playing for a football club. There was no guarantee that they would be able to obtain leave for a particular match and can sometimes be confined to barracks at short notice. So it was for that Anderson missed the next two matches at Yeovil and Wellington, both times at short notice. Once again, or in fact twice again, it was Jimmy Constantine who laid down his bucket and sponge and took over the centre forward position. At Yeovil he opened the scoring after 15 minutes. A fine all round performance, with Bickerstaff and Berry outstanding, and a late George Fenn goal earned Tonbridge a point but the trip to Wellington proved fruitless although Connie again played well and was easily Tonbridge's best forward.

January had seen the Angels climb back to the halfway mark but two further defeats by Cambridge City and Worcester put them right back into trouble in 17th place (P30 W11 D3 L16 F51 A68 Pts 25), two points ahead of Cheltenham and one ahead of Clacton who had a game in hand. With four teams to be relegated, Boston, Wisbech and Hastings already looked doomed but with Romford also on 25 points from 29 games; Dartford (28 games) and Wellington (27 games) on 26 points, Guildford (32 games, 28 points), Kings Lynn (30 games, 29 points) and Folkestone (28 games) and Worcester (29 games) on 30 points, it was obviously going to be quite a battle to avoid 19th place.

Anderson's Army colleague, Green had moved on by now and Ken Collishaw, suffering from a troublesome leg injury, and for him, troublesome referees, did not play again for the first team after early February. Against Cambridge City John Dennis became the 11th player to be tried at centre forward and one has to say that the veteran trainer Jimmy Constantine had looked the best. John Kenny staged his benefit match during the bad run and despite the presence of Bernard Joy, George Swinden, Tony Pawson, Peter Lorenzo and Fred Ridgeway, the crowd was very small.

On 18th March Romford visited the Angel Ground for what had become a vital match. Romford included former Spurs and England goalkeeper Ted Ditchburn and former West Ham centre half Malcolm Allison. They also introduced a new centre forward, Welsh International Trevor Ford, who had been rumoured to be coming to Tonbridge at the start of the season. When it came to introducing new centre forwards, however, Romford were mere novices. Tonbridge also introduced a new number nine, their 12th, and as it happened the last of the season. On Friday Harry Haslam completed the signing of Kevin McCurley from Oldham Athletic. McCurley, 34 years of age, was an experienced player having also seen service with Liverpool, Brighton and Colchester. He opened the scoring after 20 minutes of his debut following up quickly when Ditchburn was only



Harry Haslam hands a wedding present to Ronnie Skyme who was married in Llanelly. Back row: Anderson, Collishaw, Dennis, Fenn, Lovell. Front: Haslam, Berry, Simmons, Hailstones, Smith, Skyme, Bickerstaff, Constantine.

able to parry John Smith's fierce shot. The burly, dark haired McCurley was generally more impressive than his opposite number Ford who was played out of the game by Paul Berry. Nisbet played outside left with Dennis switching over to the right where he seemed much happier than of late. It was his low cross, after being put through by the busy, intelligent Anderson, that was fired in by Skyme to complete the 2-0 victory.

A 3-2 defeat, seven days later, at Weymouth pushed the Angels down to 18th place and Easter began with the vital positions looking like this:
 9th Folkestone played 31 points 33
 10th Gravesend 34 33
 11th Worcester 32 32
 12th Kings Lynn 32 32
 13th Dartford 31 30
 14th Guildford 34 29
 15th Wellington 30 28
 16th Cheltenham 33 27
 17th Romford 31 27
 18th Tonbridge 32 27
 19th Clacton 31 25

At Hastings on Good Friday, Tonbridge gained handsome revenge with five goals against one from the bottom club. Two goals from Ronnie Skyme, taking him to 22 for the season, one from Nisbet, an own goal and Bob Anderson wrapped it up with a fine solo effort. On Saturday, league leaders Oxford United, having changed their name from Headington, attracted a crowd of 2,010 to the Angel Ground and they certainly got their money's worth witnessing a rousing battle. The visitors had the better of the first half taking the lead through McIntosh but after the interval the boys in blue, inspired by Smith and Anderson, began to get on top. The equaliser came in the 65th minute when Dennis, having a fine match, beat two defenders and supplied the perfect cross for McCurley to head in. McCurley, looking much sharper than in his first few games, had a shot cleared from the line as Tonbridge really piled on the pressure but Oxford defended like the champions they were soon to become and held on to a point. 1-1 was also the score on Monday in the return with Hastings but that was the only resemblance between the two games. Tonbridge looked rather jaded

after two excellent performances and were a little lucky to snatch a point with Smith's last minute equaliser.

Four points from three holiday games was a fair return but a poor performance at Bedford resulted in a 1-0 defeat and it was back to square one, still very much in the relegation mire. One wonders what was in Harry Haslam's mind as he pondered on the selection for the Monday night fixture with Folkestone, the first of two vital home games. What relief he would have felt if only he could have known that shot shy Tonbridge would score 11 goals in those two matches, six of them from Kevin McCurley, with just one in reply. The masterstroke as Haslam shuffled his pack yet again was switching Smith to outside right although it seemed a strange decision to most supporters. Certainly Tonbridge had been short of one good winger with neither Fenn nor Nisbet living up to their early promise whilst Smith himself had been losing a little of his sparkle after another hard season. Dennis moved back to the left wing with Anderson taking Smith's

number ten shirt. Austin Dunne, unlucky to be out of the side for so long took over at right half.

Dunne provided much needed steel in the midfield department; Anderson filled the inside left berth with energy, skill and intelligence but Smith was an absolute revelation. Parading his full repertoire of skills with a new lease of life he teased and tormented the poor Folkestone left back mercilessly. After 16 minutes the Angels were two up through a brilliant Ronnie Skyme solo effort and a Paul Berry penalty. There were several more near misses but Tonbridge appeared to be coasting when McCurley struck in the 79th, 83rd and 86th minute to record the first Tonbridge hat trick of the season. Smith was involved in the first two whilst Anderson provided the pass for the third.

Whilst England were hammering Scotland 9-3 at Wembley, Tonbridge put on their own goalscoring show at the Angel on a warm, sunny April afternoon. Lowly Boston never really provided much of a test and with

Gus Simmons



Gus Simmons was on the books of Tottenham as a youngster and played in their reserve team as an amateur before joining Ilford. He played for them, his local club, in the 1958 FA Amateur Cup Final where he featured as right back in the 3-0 defeat by Woking at Wembley Stadium. His programme pen picture read: "A local product he joined in Ilford in 1949. This is his fifth season in the first eleven and he is proud of his record of having missed only one first team match, that being when he was married 18 months ago. A trenchant and lusty defender with tremendous energy. Breeds budgerigars as a hobby. Aged 27, he is a foreman carpenter by trade. His celebrated grin often disconcerts opponents beaten in the tackle – worth a goal to Ilford, they say!" Gus left Ilford for Wisbech Town in July 1959

where he stayed one season before joining Tonbridge in July 1960, ironically making his debut against his former club and his no nonsense style made him a firm favourite of the home support, less so on away grounds! He stayed at the Angel for eight seasons in which time he clocked up 220 appearances, scoring on four occasions. In the summer of 1968 he departed on a free transfer for Gravesend & Northfleet.

Tonbridge FC Career Statistics: Appearances 220; Goals: 4

Saturday, 29th April 1961 – Southern League
Tonbridge (1) 3 (Dunne McCurley 2) Hereford United (1) 2 (Williams Daniel)
Attendance: 1,476

Tonbridge have avoided relegation. But one minute after half-time at the Angel on Saturday, it seemed they were doomed to defeat and possibly First Division next season, as Hereford centre forward, Ray Daniel, hooked the ball into the net to put the visitors into a 2-1 lead.

The Angels needed one point to ensure they stayed in the Premier Division. But a goal down, things looked black. Then came a magnificent fight back – and two superbly taken goals by centre forward Kevin McCurley.

It was a win Tonbridge certainly deserved and as Chairman Mr Stanley Berwick said afterwards, “One we certainly needed.”

Only change in the side was Danny Durston, who replaced the injured John Smith. And if the 1,476 supporters had any doubts as to his ability they were soon to disappear.

The fair-haired right winger dazzled the Hereford defence with some brilliant ball control. In fact, the whole team gave a great display. The only serious error was made by centre half Paul Berry, when he let Williams in to score Hereford's first goal.

A typical Austin Dunne piledriver from 35 yards out in the 20th minute streaked into the top corner of the Hereford net to put Tonbridge ahead.

Then Hereford hit back, Williams snapped up a chance when Berry blundered and it was 1-1.

Hereford, third in the league, and challenging for talent money, began to get on top and racing into the attack straight after half-time, scored again through Daniel.

But they did not reckon on the fighting spirit of Tonbridge. Two goal-line clearances and a series of good saves from 'keeper Isaacs halted the Angels from scoring, but the Hereford side was helpless to stop McCurley as he held off two defenders and raced through to slam the ball into the corner of the net after 67 minutes.

Spurred on by a cheering crowd, Tonbridge stormed upfield and six minutes later McCurley pulled down a left-wing centre from John Dennis and cracked in the winning goal.

Tonbridge: Bickerstaff; Simmons, Lovell; Dunne, Berry, Hailstones; Durston, Skyme, McCurley, Anderson, Dennis.

Hereford: Isaacs; Layton, Oliver; Masters, Niblett, Russell; Hardiman, Williams, Daniel, Morris, Dixon.

Right: Ronnie Skyme in a goalmouth tussle with the Hereford goalkeeper.
Below: Centre forward Kevin McCurley watches as his shot flashes past the Hereford defence to score Tonbridge's third and winning goal.



Skyrne and Anderson on top form, the Angels strolled through the visitor's defence almost at will. The two inside men scored one each in the second half whilst McCurley had scored in the 7th and 25th minute. There was also an own goal and when the referee awarded a late penalty up stepped McCurley to score his third and the first of those penalties which were

to become familiar to Tonbridge supporters. Hard and low against the stanchion, they never varied. Tonbridge's complete dominance was best summed up by the fact that Boston's best player, by a very long way, was their goalkeeper Roberts. Despite being beaten six times he made a number of fine saves. Afterwards he was philosophical

saying: "I wish we could play teams like Boston."

Those two fine victories had not made the Angels safe, however, they still lay in 18th position, with 33 points from 37 games, above Dartford on goal average with a game in hand. The situation was still very congested. Clacton had enjoyed a particularly

The Tonbridge JACs

Article taken from Aaron Hill's blog Tonbridge Football Archive

When Manchurian Harry Haslam arrived as the new Tonbridge FC manager in February 1960 it was apparent there was the need for young players to support the first team as well as the reserves following a crop of injuries in the first few months alongside a heavily congested fixture schedule. Harry had been inspired by the Busby Babes and aimed to set up a youth system for the Angels.

Calls went out for young players to come forward with the intention to set up Tonbridge Youth team for the following season. Whilst a Tonbridge & District League youth team played against a Gillingham FC Colts on the 15 April 1960, a Tonbridge FC youth team for the following 1960-61 season did not materialise.

However Harry Haslam's persistence to follow the Manchester United's Busby Babes youth football model came to fruition by the summer 1961. The Tonbridge JAC's (Juniors And Colts) was formed with the 'Colts' playing in the East Sussex adult League to provide an appropriate challenge for the youngsters.

The Courier on the 5 January 1962 reported that: *"The club has its newly formed Colts team. With nearly 40 youngsters playing regularly. The manager has a wonderful reserve of potential footballers to draw on—an advantage shared by few other Southern League clubs."*

The following month, the interest in the Colts team enabled the team to play their next league fixture on the Angel Ground against the Hastings Civil Service on the 10 February 1962. The Colts ran out comfortable 7-1 winners, as detailed the Courier report dated the 16 February 1962:

"Tonbridge Colts strengthened their promotion bid by slamming the seashiders for seven at the Angel on Saturday in an East Sussex League Division Two tussle. This was the first time they had played on the Angel Ground on a Saturday afternoon and they attracted nearly 300 spectators. Leading 3-1 at half-time, the Colts simply over-ran Hastings in the second half to score four more. But some are in urgent need of heading practice. Although he had little to do John Morley, the Colts' 14-year-old new goalkeeper from Eastbourne showed some nice touches and made one excellent save. Tonbridge goals were scored by Roberts (2), Tully (2), Marks (2) and Hendy."

The Colts team's success on the pitch resulted in a runners spot in East Sussex League's Division Two, which was a fantastic achievement for the youngsters in their first season.

Such was the success of the JAC's, that the following two seasons 1962-63 and 1963-64, the JACs fielded three teams, two teams playing in the East Sussex League (First XI in Division One and Second XI in Division Two), whilst the younger players played in the Tunbridge Wells Minor League. The club also enjoyed local league minor cup wins as well as playing in the Kent Minors Cup.

A number of JAC's players moved onto the reserves and through to the first team, the most notable being goalkeeper Tony Burns, who in later years returned as the first team manager. The now defunct Flying With The Angels website provided an insightful interview with Tony Burns from around twenty years ago on his memories of playing for the JAC's

"Nearly 30 years later Tony Burns returned to Tonbridge as manager and we met and talked about the fun we had playing for the JAC's. There was still no money for Tonbridge to run a youth team but that did not stop Harry, so why should it stop us now. Arthur Hull had provided the JAC's with footballs back in the 60's, so we now approached his sons who are running the shop. Despite the recession they donated a full set of playing kit."

By the 1964-65 season, the JAC's fortunes had waned, as they could only field a single team in the East Sussex League, with the team finishing second bottom in Division One. Unfortunately it signified the end of the JAC's. Whilst Harry Haslam continued as the club's first team manager for another three seasons, the club did not run another JAC's team or any other youth football team during the rest of Harry's tenure.

good run and all of the sides, apart from Dartford, seemed to be picking up points. A 3-0 defeat at Kings Lynn left Tonbridge needing two points from their last three games, all at home, against Worcester, Hereford and Weymouth.

Worcester proved rugged opponents on Thursday, 27th April, but after a goalless first half Anderson converted Smith's cross to open the scoring. A Simmons foul allowed Worcester to equalise from a penalty but when McCurley thumped Skyme's through pass into the net it looked as though Tonbridge were safe. The visitors were in determined mood however and equalised in the closing minutes to keep supporters nerves on edge. A minute after half-time on Saturday they had nearly snapped as Ray Daniel gave Hereford a 2-1 lead. Danny Durston had replaced the injured Smith but otherwise the team was unchanged from the one which had been showing such good form. Bickerstaff; Simmons, Lovell; Dunne, Berry, Hailstones; Durston, Skyme, McCurley, Anderson, Dennis. A tremendous 35 yard pile driver from Austin Dunne after 20 minutes gave the Angels the lead but a nervous Berry blunder allowed Hereford to equalise, then straight after half-time Daniel put them ahead. Now in grave adversity, Tonbridge pushed forward and cheered on by the crowd of 1,476, began to play really well. Durston showed the sort of form that made the supporters wonder why he had spent most of the season in the reserves and receiving strong support from Dunne and Skyme began to tease the left side of the visitors defence. In fact the whole team was playing well but third placed Hereford defended stubbornly. Goalkeeper Isaacs was in fine form making a series of superb saves and when, on two occasions, he was beaten a defender was on hand to clear off the goal line. At last, after 67 minutes, the hero arrived on cue, it was McCurley to the rescue. Not even Hereford's redoubtable defence could stop "Big Mac" as he held off two defenders and powered his way through to slam the ball into the corner of the net. Six minutes later, McCurley chested down a Dennis centre and cracked in the winner.

Tonbridge had survived for another season in the Premier Division.

It was no doubt the form of the side over the last month of the season that persuaded the club to retain all if its first team regulars; the full list being: Bickerstaff, Simmons, Lovell, Dunne, Berry, Hailstones, Smith, Skyme, McCurley, Dennis, Marks, Kirk and Long, whilst Bobby Anderson signed professional forms on completing his national service. There was a note of optimism from Harry Haslam who said: "We have now got the nucleus of a good team and this should enable us to starting the season on the right footing."

Veterans Joe Thompson and Jimmy Boswell were released after two seasons each with Tonbridge and both joined Canterbury City. Thompson had never been quite the same player as in the previous campaign and spent over half the season in the reserves. Boswell started the season playing particularly well but began to struggle on the heavy grounds and was increasingly left out. He did not make another first team performance after the Kent Senior Cup defeat at Sittingbourne on 4th March but he must go down as one of the best

attacking wing halves to have played for Tonbridge.

Forwards Boyd Nisbet, George Fenn and Barry Bell were not retained and neither was Danny Durston, although he returned to the club the following autumn to assist the second team.

Although he was on the original retained list, Jimmy Kirk decided to retire after four-and-a-half years at the Angel. This brought to an end to the constant rivalry for the goalkeeper's jersey between two very popular but very contrasting Scots. Tommy Bickerstaff, bubbling, enthusiastic, spectacular, erratic but sometimes brilliant. Kirk, calm and unflappable, not so athletic as Bickerstaff but more experienced and sounder in judgement. Bickerstaff was the man in charge when Kirk arrived in November 1956 and his form meant a long wait but Jimmy came into his own in the following two seasons despite bad luck with injuries. It was injury that cost him his place at the start of the 1959-60 and Tommy's good form ensured that things stayed that way. He was also the guvnor during 1960-61 season and when the 35-year-old Kirk had to deputise he made more mistakes than in the past although he still retained

Southern League Premier Division 1960/61

		P	W	D	L	F	A	GA	Pts
1	Oxford United	42	27	10	5	104	43	2.42	64
2	Chelmsford City	42	23	11	8	91	55	1.65	57
3	Yeovil Town	42	23	9	10	109	54	2.02	55
4	Hereford United	42	21	10	11	83	67	1.24	52
5	Weymouth	42	21	9	12	78	63	1.24	51
6	Bath City	42	18	14	10	74	52	1.42	50
7	Cambridge City	42	16	12	14	101	71	1.42	44
8	Wellington Town	42	17	9	16	66	68	0.97	43
9	Bedford Town	42	18	7	17	94	97	0.97	43
10	Folkestone Town	42	18	7	17	75	86	0.87	43
11	King's Lynn	42	13	16	13	68	66	1.03	42
12	Worcester City	42	15	11	16	69	69	1	41
13	Clacton Town	42	15	11	16	82	83	0.99	41
14	Romford	42	13	15	14	66	69	0.96	41
15	Guildford City	42	14	11	17	65	62	1.05	39
16	Tonbridge	42	16	6	20	79	85	0.93	38
17	Cheltenham Town	42	15	7	20	81	81	1	37
18	Gravesend & Northfleet	42	15	7	20	75	101	0.74	37
19	Dartford	42	13	11	18	57	90	0.63	37
20	Hastings United	42	8	9	25	60	100	0.6	25
21	Wisbech Town	42	9	6	27	58	112	0.52	24
22	Boston United	42	6	8	28	62	123	0.5	20

The season ended with a look to the future with the formation of the Tonbridge Junior Athletic Club, known as the JACs, unofficial youth team for Tonbridge Football Club. They entered the East Sussex League with the idea of playing most of their home matches under floodlights on the Angel Ground and providing a valuable stepping stone for young, local footballers towards the Metropolitan League. With well-known Kent referee Jack Fox as chairman, skipper Tim Baldson, Secretary Miss Pat Ryan and players David Aldridge, Peter Jeffrey, Peter Lockyer and Mike Barber on the committee, their aim was to be entirely self financing so as to cause no extra financial strain on the parent club.



Name	SL	FAC	SLC	KSC	KSS	KFC	Total	Goals	Career Apps	Career Goals
Anderson, Bob	19	1		2		2	24	8	24	8
Bell, Barry	7	1	2				10	4	17	8
Berry, Paul	41	4	3	2	1	4	55	5	55	5
Bickerstaff, Tommy	26	4	2	2		3	37	(6)	223	2
Boswell, Jimmy	19	4	2		1	3	29	3	73	9
Collishaw, Ken	7						7	3	7	3
Constantine, Jimmy	3	1					4	3	146	110
Dennis, John	39	4	3	2	1	4	53	8	53	8
Dunne, Austen	19	2	3		1	2	27	5	157	15
Durston, Danny	8						8		8	
Fenn, George	9			2		1	12	1	12	1
Green, Gerry	7						7		7	
Hailstones, Bob	40	2	2	2	1	4	51	3	338	6
Kirk, Jim	9		1		1	1	12		75	
Long, Tommy	12		1		1		14	1	14	1
Lovell, Peter	42	4	3	2	1	4	56		113	
McCurley, Kevin	12						12	12	12	12
Nisbet, Boyd	15	3	2			2	22	5	22	5
Norman, Gordon	2			2			4		4	
Pearson, Jimmy	9	4	2			2	17	1	17	1
Simmons, Gus	29	2	2	1		2	36		36	
Skyme, Ronnie	38	2	1	2	1	4	48	18	48	18
Smith, John	37	4	3	2	1	4	51	16	99	41
Thompson, Joe	13	2	1	1	1	2	20		65	1
() = clean sheets							+ 4 own goals			

Results 1960/61

Date	Opponents	@	Comp	Res	Att	Pos	Goalscorers
Sat 20/08/1960	Dartford	H	SL	L 0 1	2078		
Wed 24/08/1960	Gravesend & Northfleet	a	SL	L 0 2	3488		
Sat 27/08/1960	Cheltenham Town	a	SL	W 2 0	1669	15	Constantine 2
Mon 29/08/1960	Ashford Town	a	SLC Pre i	L 0 2			
Sat 03/09/1960	Wisbech Town	H	SL	W 3 0	1619	7	Nisbet, Dunne, Smith
Mon 05/09/1960	Ashford Town	H	SLC Pre ii	W 2 1	1800		Boswell, Dunne
Sat 10/09/1960	Bexhill Town	H	FAC Pre	D 2 2	1690		Anderson, Smith
Wed 14/09/1960	Bexhill Town	a	FAC Pre r	W 2 1			Smith, Nisbet
Sat 17/09/1960	Bath City	H	SL	L 2 3		16	Smith, Skyme
Wed 21/09/1960	Guildford City	a	SL	L 1 4			Dennis
Sat 24/09/1960	Tunbridge Wells United	a	FAC 1Q	W 2 1	2344	18	Smith, Nisbet
Thu 29/09/1960	Cambridge City	a	SL	L 0 6			
Sat 01/10/1960	Yeovil Town	H	SL	W 4 2	1300	18	Dennis, Smith, Skyme, Hayward og
Sat 08/10/1960	Hastings United	H	FAC 2Q	L 1 2	2641	18	Hailstones
Tue 11/10/1960	Bromley	a	KFC	D 1 1			Boswell
Sat 15/10/1960	Folkestone Town	a	SL	W 3 1	1770	14	Skyme 2, Dennis
Mon 17/10/1960	Gravesend & Northfleet	H	SL	W 2 1	1013		Smith, Dunne
Mon 24/10/1960	Maidstone United	H	KFC	W 5 1			Skyme 2, Dunne, Dennis, Smith
Sat 29/10/1960	Romford	H	SL	W 2 1		9	Dennis, Pearson
Tue 08/11/1960	Bromley	H	KSS QF	L 1 4			Skyme
Sat 12/11/1960	Boston United	a	SL	W 2 1	2399	9	Dennis, Smith
Wed 16/11/1960	Hastings United	a	SLC 1	L 0 7			
Sat 19/11/1960	Bedford Town	H	SL	L 2 4	1543	10	Collishaw 2
Sat 26/11/1960	Bath City	a	SL	L 0 6		12	
Sat 03/12/1960	King's Lynn	H	SL	D 2 2	820		Smith, Skyme
Wed 07/12/1960	Oxford United	a	SL	L 0 1	3702		
Sat 10/12/1960	Hereford United	a	SL	L 0 3	1923		
Mon 12/12/1960	Wellington Town	H	SL	L 1 4	522		Berry pen
Sat 17/12/1960	Dartford	a	SL	L 2 3			Berry 2
Sat 24/12/1960	Clacton Town	H	SL	D 3 3	958		Smith, Skyme, Long
Mon 26/12/1960	Clacton Town	a	SL	L 1 3			Bell
Sat 31/12/1960	Cheltenham Town	H	SL	W 7 3	1170	14	Skyme 2, Bell 2, Smith, Hailstones, Boswell
Sat 07/01/1961	Chelmsford City	a	SL	L 2 5	4000	16	Skyme, Collishaw
Sat 14/01/1961	Wisbech Town	a	SL	W 1 0	1693	14	Bell
Sat 21/01/1961	Guildford City	H	SL	W 3 0		12	Skyme, Smith, Anderson
Sat 28/01/1961	Chelmsford City	H	SL	W 2 1	1237	11	Hailstones, Smith
Tue 14/02/1961	Bromley	H	KFC	D 2 2	1225		Dennis, Anderson
Thu 16/02/1961	Yeovil Town	a	SL	D 2 2		13	Constantine, Fenn
Tue 21/02/1961	Maidstone United	a	KSC	W 3 1			Anderson, Smith, Dennis
Sat 25/02/1961	Wellington Town	a	SL	L 0 2	1729	14	
Sat 04/03/1961	Sittingbourne	a	KSC	L 0 3		14	
Tue 07/03/1961	Cambridge City	H	SL	L 1 2	1154		Berry
Sat 11/03/1961	Worcester City	a	SL	L 1 2		17	Skyme
Tue 14/03/1961	Maidstone United	a	KFC	L 1 2			Anderson
Sat 18/03/1961	Romford	H	SL	W 2 0	1608		McCurley, Skyme
Sat 25/03/1961	Weymouth	a	SL	L 2 3	1137	18	Nisbet, Wright og
Fri 31/03/1961	Hastings United	a	SL	W 5 1	1980		Birrell og, Nisbet, Skyme 2, Anderson
Sat 01/04/1961	Oxford United	H	SL	D 1 1	2010		McCurley
Mon 03/04/1961	Hastings United	H	SL	D 1 1	1327		Smith
Sat 08/04/1961	Bedford Town	a	SL	L 0 1	2100	16	
Mon 10/04/1961	Folkestone Town	H	SL	W 5 1	1292		Skyme, Berry, McCurley 3
Sat 15/04/1961	Boston United	H	SL	W 6 0	1460		McCurley 3, Shepherd og, Skyme, Anderson
Sat 22/04/1961	King's Lynn	a	SL	L 0 3	1627		
Thu 27/04/1961	Worcester City	H	SL	D 2 2			Anderson, McCurley
Sat 29/04/1961	Hereford United	H	SL	W 3 2	1476		Dunne, McCurley 2
Thu 04/05/1961	Weymouth	H	SL	L 1 2	1092		McCurley

Stats: Dan Couldridge