

# Clubs

The village has a wealth of clubs and organisations covering a wide variety of interests. Amongst the oldest of these is the **Mortimer Cricket Club** which celebrated its official centenary in 1990, although it is certain that cricket was played in the area for many years before 1890. The Reading Mercury reported a game being played during The Mortimer Revel held on Whit Thursday, 28 May 1801 when batsmen scored notches rather than runs and betting was an important feature of the game. The Club's first constitution of May 1893 shows an annual subscription of 2s 6d and records show that this did not change until after the Second World War. Among the many interesting matches played during the club's long history was one in August 1957, staged as '*M.C.C. v The West Indies*', in reality Mortimer Cricket Club versus a team of West Indians who lived and worked in the Reading area.

**The Mortimer Club** (previously known as **The Mortimer Working Men's Club**) has been in existence nearly as long. It is recorded that sixty members attended its inaugural meeting in October 1892 and it was minuted that "*whisky, rum, gin and brandy be organised from The Army & Navy Stores via the Vicar*". Other early minutes note that ales cost about 2d a pint, and that a debate was held as to whether ladies could attend a concert there. During and after the First World War the club was used as a hospital and convalescent home for servicemen.

The **1st Mortimer Boy Scout Group** was among the first of the youth organisations and was formed in 1909 by the Vicar of Mortimer. They flourished for some years before interest waned, numbers dwindled and it was disbanded from 1926 to 1928. In 1928 a new troop was formed by Mr Zebedee. A plot of land was given by General Lambton and, with help from Lady Margaret Campbell, a headquarters was built. The troop was then named 'Lady Margaret's Own'. Scouting gained in strength until 1939 and the onset of the Second World War when most of the Scouts were called up. The fifteen- and sixteen-year old Scouts became runners for the Air Raid Wardens, and some joined the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers) - later the Home Guard - and so kept scouting alive. In 1943 the remainder of the Scouters were called up. Six of the lads died serving their country.



After the war years the troop was re-formed and twenty boys were at the first meeting in 1952. Many changes were introduced into the Scouting movement in 1959 and local boys, together with parents, voted that the 1st Mortimer Group should become **Baden-Powell Scouts**. They have grown considerably in numbers and achievements since 1969.

Younger girls in the village were first able to join the **1st Mortimer Brownies** in February 1930 and held their meetings in the hut in King Street. For older girls the **1st Mortimer**

**Guides** was formed around 1930 and flourished until the start of the Second World War. The company was re-formed in July 1954.

**Mortimer Football Club** was one of the earliest sports clubs in the village. A Mortimer Football Team was in existence before the First World War when they played in what was then The Wednesday League. During the 1920s a Miss Capron started a youth club for the young men of the village which was known as the **Garth Club** and from that came the **Mortimer Garth Football Club**. They met with considerable success during the 1930s and Miss Capron achieved national recognition as an honorary member of the Berkshire & Buckinghamshire Football Association. In the 1950s and 1960s there were teams called Mortimer Men's Club and The Mortimer Garth. These were amalgamated in 1985 to become The Mortimer Football Club.

First among the women's organisations in the village was the **Mortimer Women's Institute** which was formed in May 1920 with the Hon. Mrs Charles Lambton as its first president and a committee of eighteen ladies. In the early 1930s the annual programme featured monthly texts such as '*Don't Rest on your Laurels, They Make a Poor Mattress*' and '*The Largest Room in the World is the Room for Improvement*'. Although the Mortimer branch has now closed, the lively Mortimer West End branch formed in 1974 continues to flourish.

The Mortimer branch of the **Royal British Legion** (the prefix 'Royal' was granted by H M The Queen in 1971) was formed in the spring of 1921 with Brigadier-General the Hon. Charles Lambton as president, a post he held until 1949. Mortimer was the first branch to be formed in this area and was looked to as a leading example. Membership numbers rose to 136 but have since fallen.

Following the success of the **Royal British Legion** in the village a Mortimer Branch of the Royal British Legion (Women's Section) was started in January 1927 with the Hon. Mrs Charles Lambton elected as the first president. She remained in that office until 1958. An officer who served an even greater number of years was Mrs Dorothy Brooker who was Hon. Secretary from 1944 until 1977.

Drama and entertainment have been represented in Mortimer for many years. The highly successful and popular **Mortimer Players** were started in the early 1920s with Miss Aldridge, Miss Litt and the Reverend Beckwith among the first members. After the Second World War it was re-formed as **The Mortimer Dramatic Society** in 1950 with some fifty members. For its first performance the following year, seat prices were 3s 6d and 2s 6d with unreserved seats costing 1s 6d and programmes 3d. R. F. Delderfield's comedy 'Worm's Eye View' was staged in April 1953 in aid of Coronation funds and the Society goes from strength to strength.



One of the most successful organisations in the village is the **Mortimer and District Motor Cycle Club** which was founded in 1934 by Mr Joe Challis with seven members. In its heyday the club became one of the largest in the country with almost 300 members. It closed down during the Second World War and re-opened in 1946. In 1947 - 48 the club hosted and ran the European championships. Since then it has run several world championships as well as many British championship meetings.

One of the purely social clubs in Mortimer is the **Silver Link** club which caters for the over-sixties age group. It was founded in October 1955 with "*25 persons present and 10 elected to the committee*". Then it was suggested that the club be called the Darby and Joan Club. The annual subscription was 1s 6d. and discussion about possible activities resulted in suggestions of leatherwork, rug making, knitting and card games. At the second committee meeting it was reported that the title of Darby and Joan was restricted to clubs run by the (then) WVS and the name Silver Link was decided upon.

The **Mortimer Tennis Club** which was formed in 1978, was the successor to one started some years earlier and later disbanded due to lack of support. By 1980 the club had around 60 members with the junior section being especially active.

Among the newest of the local groups is the **Mortimer and District Flower Circle** which began in May 1975. The club takes part in many activities - flower festivals, village carnivals, local and area events, and has raised nearly £1,700 for local and national charities.