

# CRAY WANDERERS IN 1991-92

By Jerry Dowlen, 18 March 2010

At the end of November 1991, four months into the 1991-92 season, Cray stood ninth in the Winstonlead Kent League. It seemed that the Wands had made a very satisfactory recovery from a series of pre-season setbacks that had nearly torn the Club apart.

During the summer, Cray had lost their main sponsors and financial supporters, Capp Walker. The recession in the building trade was biting deep. Moreover, Cray lost Peter Gaydon, the team manager of the last five years, when he made a move to Croydon of the Isthmian Division One and took with him almost the entire set of Cray players who had secured the runners-up spot for the Wands in the Kent League in 1990-91.

Not only this, but the exit of the sponsors dealt a fatal blow to the Wands' expectations of completing a move to a brand new ground, a permanent home, in Rectory Lane, Fooks Cray. Everything that had been sunk into this project during a large part of the previous decade was lost. It was heartbreaking.

But, as the new 1991-92 season started its activities, the Wands put on a brave face and started to pick up the pieces. Oxford Road had been allowed to fall into some minor disrepair, but now it was the only place that could be called the Club's home. A small band of Wands' stalwarts formed a committee, with members old and new, and rolled up their sleeves to start work.

To solve the little matter of where a team was going to come from, the Wands were indebted to Eddy Davies, who heard of their plight and made an approach to offer his services.

Eddy had previously been manager of the reserve team at Fisher Athletic. Stepping into the role of team manager at Cray, he brought with him a back-up team of assistant manager, coach and physio, plus a large pool of players who had served him at Fisher Athletic. Indeed, many of the clan had been with Eddy during his earlier associations with Croydon, Darenth Heathside, Beckenham Town and Riverside.

Amidst all the turmoil, it was disappointing but not surprising that Cray forgot to send in their entry for the F A Cup and F A Vase competitions. So the 1991-92 season saw the Wands absent from these. There was still the Kent League Cup and Kent Senior Trophy in which Cray could take part, to provide cup football for

the fans and it was decided also to enter again for the London Senior Cup, after a few years of having a break from this competition.

Eddy was also to make his mark at Cray by helping the Club to find new financial support and advertising revenue, to help pay the bills. For Cray had decided, despite the adverse circumstances, to keep a reserve side in operation for 1991-92 and also to run a youth team.

From the early season results, it wasn't immediately obvious how the new-look team would fare. The first two results at home were not encouraging, as Cray lost 2-0 to Kent Police and 5-1 to Tonbridge, respectively rated as one of the weakest and one of the strongest sides in the Kent League. But Cray had a 2-0 win when Thamesmead Town were the next visitors to Oxford Road. By then, Cray had chalked up a 2-1 away win at Slade Green. John Allwright scored after 28 minutes, but then netted an own goal in the 79th minute! Happily for 'Pecker', there was a late winner for Cray, scored by John Kelleher.

Alma Swanley, like Cray, had imported a new manager and a whole new team for the 1991-92 season. It was the former Sangley Sports side, with their manager Franny Fitzpatrick who was tragically to die a few years later. Alma were one of the early pacesetters in the table and Cray did well to earn a 2-2 draw at Green Court Road, after being two goals down at one stage.

A busy August ended with a 4 – 0 defeat at Darenth and a 0-0 draw with Greenwich and then the Wands opened September with three consecutive wins. This was a big morale booster and it certainly seemed that Eddy and his team were on the right track. One of the wins was 5-2 at Crockenhill, where the home side's 'keeper was sent off after 22 minutes and Craig Hanlon hit four of Cray's goals.

Despair then followed, as Cray lost their next four games. But the next two matches, long away trips to Deal and Ramsgate – the latter in midweek – yielded a 1-1 draw and a 2-1 win. And then, on 19 October, Cray at last had a cup fixture. It was in the Kent Senior Trophy and Cray beat Met Police (Hayes) by 2-0, avenging a 3-0 defeat a fortnight earlier in the Kent League against the same opponents.

By now, Cray fans might have spotted what was to become quite a trademark of Eddy's style of management, during his three and a half years' stay with the Wands. There was a veritable revolving door, as players came and went. I have listed below, the 43 different players who had made appearances, by the end of October when 19 matches had been played!

<b>Appearances</b>	<b>Name</b>
19	Paul Smith
18	John Allwright
17	Robert Welch
16	Pat Carolan
16	Perry Ramsey
14	Craig Hanlon
12	Paul Barron
12	Aaron Dodds
12	Dean Saunders
10	John Kelleher
8	Warren Leach
8	Neil Stevens
6	Micky Kennedy
6	Sam Wright
5	Tony Stapley
5	Sean O'Reilly
4	John Tallis
3	Colin Blaize
3	John Bryant
3	Mark Bullen
3	Nigel Collins
3	Kevin Elliot
3	Nigel Kelly
3	Alan Roughan
3	Highnel Spencer
3	Micky Tidmarsh
2	Mark Allen
2	Dennis Brown
2	Ron Collins
2	Billy Edwards
2	Grant Falvey
2	Jim Malynn
2	Mark Muscatt
2	Andy McKie
2	Ian Patterson
2	Glenroy Thompson
2	John Willis
1	Lee Davies
1	Trevor Franklin
1	Robbie Ervin
1	Clive Gartell
1	Alan Hawkins
1	Jerry Rossati

Moving into November, the Wands disappointingly lost at home to lowly Thamesmead Town in the Kent League Cup. But the campaign in the London Senior Cup got off to a better start, with a win away to Cockfosters.

More new faces arrived. One of them, Hughie Mann, scored on his debut and earned Cray a 1-1 draw at Tunbridge Wells. Another new signing for Cray was goalkeeper Terry Thoroughgood, who stated in his pen picture that his matchday superstition was to put a copy of The Bible in the net!

And so, at the end of November, the Wands were a respectable ninth in the Kent League table, with 27 points from 20 games and were still in two cups.

No one knew then that this was to be the start of a dramatic and record-breaking decline in the team's results. It all began to go badly wrong when the Wands lost 1-0 at West Wickham, to crash out of the Kent Senior Trophy and then fell out of the London Senior Cup too, losing 5-1 away to Wingate & Finchley.

By the time the 1991-92 season had ended, Cray had fallen to fourth from bottom, with 31 points from 40 games.

This suggests that a mere four points were added, during the period from December to May! And, indeed, it was a bleak harvest for the Wands. But, the record was made to look a little worse than it actually was, by the mid-season withdrawal of the Met Police (Hayes). They ceased activity in late November. By that time, Cray had met them twice in the League, winning once and losing once. Cray's three points from the won game were wiped from the record.

So, in fact, the Wands gained seven more points in total, by virtue of two wins and a draw, during the winter and the spring. But, obviously, there was a big decline and it was a good job that Cray had some points in the bag from earlier in the season, so that their final position was just above the re-election zone.

The pendulum started to swing in the wrong direction when the Wands were defeated on 7 and 17 December in cup ties away to West Wickham and Wingate & Finchley. It meant an end to all cup competitions for the season, as the Wands duly made an exit from the Kent Senior Trophy and the London Senior Cup.

In their final fixture of 1991, Cray lost 3-0 at Herne Bay. A 1-1 draw at home to Darenth Heathside was an okay start to the New Year, but next came a run of nine consecutive defeats. It was a big relief when the sequence was broken by a 2-1 home win against fellow-strugglers Chatham Town. Unfortunately, this did not signal a turning of the corner. The next four games were lost and then came a 2-1 away win at Kent Police, who were much higher up the table than Cray and were enjoying one of their best ever campaigns in the Kent League. After that, the Wands had no more joy. They lost their remaining four matches.

Altogether, for the period of the 1991-92 season that ran from December to May, Cray's record in the Kent League was two wins, one draw and 19 defeats. If you add the two cup games, it was 21 defeats. And, just to rub salt into the wound, it could be mentioned that Cray's first four matches of the following season (1992-93) brought four successive defeats!

### CRAY WANDERERS' 1991-92 RESULTS

Venue	Opponents	Comp		F - A
(H)	Kent Police	WKL	Lost	0 - 2
(H)	Slade Green	"	Won	2 - 1
(H)	Tonbridge AFC	"	Lost	1 - 5
(H)	Thamesmead Town	"	Won	2 - 0
(A)	Alma Swanley	"	Drew	2 - 2
(A)	Darenth Heathside	"	Lost	0 - 4
(H)	Greenwich Borough	"	Drew	0 - 0
(A)	Crockenhill	"	Won	5 - 2
(A)	Thames Poly	"	Won	3 - 2
(H)	Tunbridge Wells	"	Won	1 - 0
(A)	Faversham Town	"	Lost	0 - 4
(H)	Herne Bay	"	Lost	1 - 2
(A)	Danson Furness	"	Lost	0 - 1
(A)	Deal Town	"	Drew	1 - 1
(A)	Ramsgate	"	Won	2 - 1
(H)	Beckenham Town	"	Drew	0 - 0
(H)	Thamesmead Town	WKLC	Lost	1 - 2
(A)	Cockfosters	LSC	Won	2 - 1
(A)	Tunbridge Wells	WKL	Drew	1 - 1
(H)	Crockenhill	"	Drew	2 - 2
(A)	West Wickham	KST	Lost	0 - 1
(A)	Wingate & Finchley	LSC	Lost	1 - 5
(A)	Herne Bay	WKL	Lost	0 - 3
(H)	Darenth Heathside	"	Drew	1 - 1
(H)	Faversham Town	"	Lost	2 - 3
(A)	Sheppey United	"	Lost	0 - 1
(A)	Slade Green	"	Lost	0 - 2
(H)	Deal Town	"	Lost	0 - 1
(H)	Corinthian	"	Lost	1 - 2
(H)	Alma Swanley	"	Lost	1 - 4
(A)	Whitstable Town	"	Lost	0 - 2
(H)	Danson Furness	"	Lost	0 - 2
(A)	Corinthian	"	Lost	1 - 3

(H)	Chatham Town	"	Won	2 – 1
(A)	Thamesmead Town	"	Lost	2 – 3
(A)	Beckenham Town	"	Lost	1 – 5
(H)	Ramsgate	"	Lost	1 – 2
(A)	Greenwich Borough	"	Lost	0 – 2
(H)	Thames Poly	"	Lost	1 – 2
(A)	Kent Police	"	Won	2 – 1
(A)	Chatham Town	"	Lost	0 – 2
(A)	Tonbridge AFC	"	Lost	0 – 5
(H)	Sheppey United	"	Lost	0 – 4
(H)	Whitstable Town	"	Lost	0 – 3