

"THE FINEST AMATEUR GOALKEEPER IN ENGLAND" – GEORGE BARRON

By Peter Goringe

There is another former Cray goalkeeper who deserves a mention – George Barron. Born in Marylebone, he joined Cray in their disastrous 1933-34 season and got plenty of practice in goal! He then had two good seasons with the Wands in the Kent League and was spotted by Tottenham Hotspur and had a successful trial.

Tottenham ran a nursery club at Northfleet United in those days, as did Arsenal at Margate and Charlton at Bexleyheath & Welling. All these sides were in the Kent League, which must have created a lot of interest. George spent two seasons at Northfleet who, not surprisingly, had a very good side. They won the Kent League ahead of Margate in 1937 and were third in 1938, with Margate champions. Cray could have done with George for those two years. They lost their Fordcroft ground and crashed to the bottom of the Kent League, conceding 294 goals in the two seasons!

Whilst at Northfleet, George Barron played alongside future internationals Les Medley (England) and Ron Burgess (Wales) as well as Bill Nicholson who went on to be Spurs' manager when they did the 'Double' in 1961. By a strange coincidence, Vic Buckingham, who was West Brom's manager when they won the F A Cup with ex-Cray man Jim Sanders in goal, also played for Northfleet a couple of years earlier.

In 1938, Spurs moved another 'keeper into Northfleet. He was Ted Ditchburn, who went on to make 6 appearances for England after the war. It seems George may have been offered a professional contract at this point, but he declined and was 'loaned' to Erith & Belvedere, to make way for Ditchburn. It was certainly a long-term loan as he stayed four years!

George is remembered with great affection by the oldest 'Deres fans. They had a great team during the war. In 1941-42, they won the Kent Senior Cup and scored 253 goals in just 44 games! Martin Ruddy, who later played for Cray, bagged 84. I imagine their goalie didn't have too much to do that year, but in the Erith club history George Barron is listed as their all-time best 'keeper.

George remained on Spurs' books throughout the war. On one occasion he was called up to play for the first team. This was on 17 October 1942, for a War-Time Football League match at Reading. Spurs won 6-2. At about this time, 'the man widely regarded as the finest amateur goalkeeper in England' moved on to Bromley. He continued to play for Bromley after the war, winning a Kent Amateur Cup Winner's medal against Erith in the 1946-47 final.



George Brown Benefit Match 1957—(Bromley 1949 Team).
Back Row, Left to Right : Charlie Fuller, John Smith, Stan Charlton, George Barron, Tommy Hopper, Don Chantry
Front Row, Left to Right : Tommy Fuller, Cyril Martin, Eric Fright, Reg Dunmall, Martin Ruddy.

On retiring from football, George and his wife Marjorie were prominent in civic life in Erith and their son, Paul, followed in his Dad's footsteps. He was Crystal Palace's 'keeper for a number of seasons and, I believe, played for other Football League clubs.

George Barron was described as 'consistent, week in and week out'. That consistency helped him to enjoy a long and successful career at a high level, a career which began in the Wands' colours.