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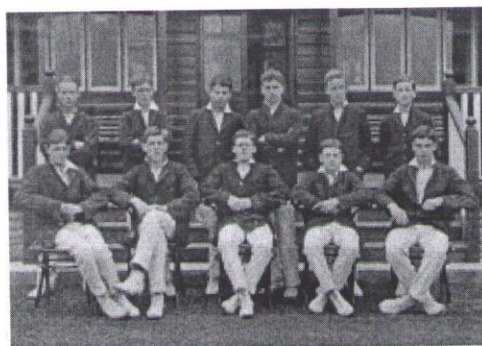
“The person standing next to father in the photograph was killed” - former Gresham's pupils remembered in centenary cricket match

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Exactly 100 years after their father played in a cricket match weeks before the outbreak of war, the sons of a former Gresham's pupil returned to watch a match played in his and his teammates' honour.



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Gresham's 1914 cricket team. Back row, from left: C D Wells, R A Fitzgerald, J A Nicholson, D W Jacques, C A Hill, J Jefferson. Front - C R H Farmer, J H C Wooldridge, A H Graves, J F Laverack, C H Steven. Six of these young men did not return from the First World War.

Like today, the annual end-of-year Gresham's cricket match in 1914 between pupils and former students took place on a sun-baked afternoon where players batted and bowled into the evening.

The youngest of the school team, 15-year-old Julian Jefferson, was to spend three more years at the school before serving in both wars.

But six of his teammates and five of the old boys team were not so lucky, and lie buried in battlefields across the Channel.

Sons Richard, 72, and Ingleby, 76, were invited to the match, which this year took place three weeks after the end of term.



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Gresham's WWI memorial cricket match. The teams line up for the camera. Picture: ANTONY KELLY

A photo of the team remains in the Gresham's archives, and younger son Richard said his father would not have known at the time how significant that day in 1914 was to become.

After the bugle was sounded with a prayer and minute's silence before the match, Richard, a retired teacher, of Holt, said he was emotional, adding: "The person standing next to father in the photograph was killed.

"I never heard him talk about it but I would have loved to ask many questions."

Julian never saw active service in the First World War, as he was still training in 1918, but he went into the army and served in the Second World War as a brigadier.



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Gresham's WWI memorial cricket match. A minutes silence is observed. Picture: ANTONY KELLY

And while he went on to marry and have four sons, six of his teammates were among the 108 Gresham's pupils and three staff who died in the First World War.

Speaking to the group players and supporters, deputy headteacher Simon Kinder said the lives of the original 24 players were transformed forever.

"This is a moment of history," he said. "All of the 24 cricketers here today take to the pitch in memory and in honour of their counterparts in 1914.

"The timing could not have been more poignant or historically significant."

Among the team of young cricketers was 14-year-old Billy Buckingham, who said it was a privilege to be remembering the 1914 team.

He said: "It is a great part of our school's history and I have been at the school for most of my life.

"It is poignant when I realise that if I was playing back then, six of my teammates would have died."

Uncovering the history of the 1914 match was thanks to former Gresham's history teacher Sue Smart who released a book, *Honouring the Fallen*, in 2001.

Mrs Smart spoke about the players including Julian, adding: "We are so very honoured and delighted that his sons have come to be with us today. It is by far the most special link we could possibly have had."