

## Twenty Years of Jersey Softball

### Friendly Games

Organised primarily by **John Oxley**, a number of teams had been established and began to play friendly games at Les Quennevais. The teams were as follows:-

Fire Strikers  
Fort Regent Cannons  
Raiders  
St Ouen Grisventres

### Formation of Jersey Softball Association

As a result of the growing interest in the game, a meeting was held in the Vauban Room at Fort Regent on **10<sup>th</sup> September, 1993**, to discuss the formation of a Jersey Softball Association. It was attended by the following:-

**John Oxley**  
**Carol Patterson**  
**Peter Hunt**  
**Peter Chandler**  
**Garry Le Maistre**  
**Larry Milanese**  
**Mark Mueller**  
**Annette Mueller**  
**Kevin Forde**

The following Officers were elected:-

**President – John Oxley**  
**Secretary – Annette Mueller**  
**Treasurer – Carol Patterson**  
**Tabulator – Suzy Forde**

### Formation of League

During the early part of **1994** a General Meeting was held and plans were put in place for the formation of the League. The construction of the fencing and Pitch 1 Diamond, that still exist today, were also completed. Indoor training took place in the Queens Hall during the winter months.

The teams that participated were as follows:-

Harvey Ballbangers (now known as Flyers)

Eagles

Misfits

Homeboys

Caesarean Tennis Club

St Ouen Grisventres.

The first fixture took place on **Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> June**, between **Harvey Ballbangers** and **Eagles**, with **Garry Le Maistre** taking the first at-bat and making the first hit.

### **Liberation Festival**

At the same time that the Association was being formed, **John Oxley** was also involved in bringing a softball tournament to Jersey, with the assistance of the Sport, Leisure and Recreation Department and a UK organisation.

It was decided to hold the event over the Liberation Day weekend and the Jersey Liberation Festival was born. UK and Guernsey teams travelled to take part in a very successful tournament which was held at Millbrook Playing Fields. Two local teams were also entered from the available pool of players. The high level of the ability of the teams that came over enabled the local players to develop at a much faster rate than could have been expected. The event also took place the next year, but the venue was changed to Les Quennevais.

### **End of Season Dinner**

The first League season also saw the beginning of the tradition of the end of season Dinner and MVP awards. The first dinner, organised by **Carol Patterson**, took place at the Jersey Rugby Club. This tradition has been maintained throughout the last 20 years.

### **Umpiring**

The Association was fortunate that there were a number of experienced players available to umpire League games, mostly hailing from America and Canada. A number of local players began to take up the challenge and it was decided to organise a course in order to qualify existing umpires and to recruit new ones.

BASU were approached and the first Softball Umpires course, which was well attended, took place in **1997**. A number of courses have been run over the years and the tie-up with BASU, and Mike Jennings, proving invaluable. Although the numbers have fluctuated over the last twenty years, the Association has been well served by those who have taken up the “clicker”.

### Uptons

**1998** saw the introduction of the “Uptons”, the winners of each League from Jersey and Guernsey competing against each other for the Channel Islands Club Championship.

### Inter-Insulars

The first inter-insular between Jersey and Guernsey took place in **2001**, the venue being Beau Sejour. Although softball had been played in Guernsey for over 60 years, the Jersey fledgling League team claimed a famous win. Since then a “B” fixture has also been introduced.

### Channel Islands Team

In **2005** the first Channel Islands team, including players from Jersey and Guernsey, participated in the World Series event at Heathrow. A team also participated in 2006 and 2007.

A Jersey team has participated in this event a number of times since, together with a number of other UK tournaments.

### European Championships

The Association, with its association with BASU’s Mike Jennings, decided to become a member of the European Softball Federation. The high cost of participating in the European Co-Ed Championships prevented a team from travelling for a period of time. However, in **2008** it was decided to participate in the Championships which were to be held in the lower-cost venue in Southampton. Although the standard was very high, the team achieved two victories against Slovenia, led by Captain **Sean Billson**. A narrow defeat by Ireland prevented the team from reaching the latter stages of the competition.

### Indoor League

An Indoor League was organised by **Ali Wade** and **Garry Le Maistre** for the winter months in **2001**, at Le Rocquier School. This continued until 2004 at a number of other venues (Grainville, Haute Vallee).

It was resurrected in **2011** by **Sean Billson** and has continued since.

### Corporate League

A Corporate League was formed and organised by **Franck Matthews** in **2008**, with modified rules to make the game more social. Teams were provided with a Coach and equipment by the Association and games took place on Wednesday evenings.

This League has been very successful, bringing the game to a wider range of participants and has also fed players into the main Sunday League.

### **Training Venues**

Millbrook Playing Fields was the first outdoor training venue. Its high visibility to passers-by generated some interest and was responsible, in some part, in attracting new players. However, the proximity to Victoria Avenue traffic and the windows of the Glass Church did cause some anxiety amongst the Committee!

A number of “open days” were organised to bring new players into the game. One new team was created from one such session.

The venue was lost when the Sport, Leisure and Recreation’s lease ran out and was not renewed. Since then the Association was made use of facilities at Haute Vallee and Le Rocquier Schools.

### **Committee**

The Association has been well served by four Presidents over the last 20 years, **John Oxley, Graeme Ferguson, Paul Wilkinson and Ali Wade** (two terms). At times, the Committee has run without a President but, due to the hard work of a number of committed individuals, business has carried on as usual.

The success and longevity of the Association has been in large part to the roots laid down during its formation. Add to that the contribution from Committee members, Umpires, Captains and sponsors.