

# SPORT

## Football, Cricket, Tennis, Rifle Shooting

### *Tape 1 -*

No recreation ground until late 1950's when the Common was de-requisitioned. Played on the Pightles (near bungalow behind Shepherds Hut road to Cottesmore Farm) and area behind New Rectory. Rivalry between Ewelme and Benson Clubs – he played for men's clubs at 12 yrs old.

### *Tape 3 -*

WI folded some years ago and Mothers Union. Her mother played cricket for a womens team in field opposite Shepherds Hut.

### *Tape 10 -*

She was captain of Ladies Cricket Team after 1959. St Edward's School Cricket Team (Teddy Bears) from Oxford used to come and play. Went back to Shepherds Hut and had to drink 8 pints of beer to qualify for the teddy bears tie – a red one with teddy bears on. One boy used to ask her father to unlock the piano and he would play it – he was the actor/comedian Dudley Moore. They used to be very high spirited and climb on the roof etc. Bill Edwards had a couple of model lions on gateposts at his land at Berrick. They took them away but Bill got them back. Wandsworth Bus Company came down in a double-decker bus. Ewelme Cricket Club didn't encourage them because they came for a fun day and ECC played seriously.

A stream ran across Cow Common along cricket pitch and through Edwards Farm and into the pool. Put underground when cricket pitch made.

About 1959 - Mr Castle a Pole, bought Orpwood's farms and stopped the players on his fields - not a German as Herbie thought. Lived at Church Farm. Mrs Castle nice woman who had lots of horses and built stables at Church Farm - bought them from Stowe Fair. Held riding holidays. She rode with her.

### *Tape 13 -*

Common land used as a cricket pitch by Winmill Farm used for cricket pre 1952. [The Pightles] Overgrown and sold to Oliver Medley even though it was common land. The Mountbatten Trust bought it eventually.

### *Tape 18 -*

Fred Winfield had built a wooden shack for a sports pavilion. They moved the pavilion from there to the back of the new Rectory and played up there for years. Then it shifted to the Common in 1956. The Common was ploughed up during the war. Sir Donald had to go through parliament to get the Common fenced. They also used to play on the ground opposite the Lamb Inn. Cocoa Barracks, were bungalows at the Pightles, pulled down for the runways. Played cricket there, one end of the village against the other.

Rifle Range – Jack Orpwood (killed in WWI) was a good shot and won cups.

### *Tape 19 -*

Men played tennis at the Orpwood's grass court.

### *Tape 20 -*

Laundry – delivered and collected – came from Henley.

### *Tape 21 -*

He felt that the making of the Recreation Ground and the building of the Village Hall were the two most important events in the village.

We never had a recreation ground here [before 1959] but we have always played football and cricket. I have drawn a sketch of the 5 fields we played in. One of the features of village life was that although surrounded by land very few had recreation grounds as such. In my lifetime I played in 5 different fields in Ewelme. Like most villages we played due to the generosity of the local farmer - mostly the Orpwood family who allowed us to play in their fields. But it was a problem playing nursemaid to horses and cows before you could play and the pitches and fields were never very good. Sometimes the farmer changed his farming programme and wanted to plough the playing field, so we had to go around the various farmers to find somewhere else to play.

Sport survived because there were a lot of young men who wanted to play organised sport. There was no television and few had radios - there was little else to do. Gradually local football leagues were formed mostly based on the villages south of Oxford from Cowley down to Ewelme so we were always on the extremity of the Cuddesdon League. We played in that league until it was abandoned and Oxfordshire generally took over.

Although most young men of the village played in sports in the earlier years, in later times there were not enough to make up teams (after the War when families began to scatter) so we had to borrow men from other villages.

I started playing cricket in Ewelme when I was 10 [in 1927] and I played until I was 55 and football until I was 50. In all I had 40 years. I used to open the cricket batting with Mr Winfield. He taught me a lot. We went out to bat at Warborough. He used to take the first ball and he got bowled first time and he said to me as he passed me - "No need to worry about the bowling, boy, there is nothing in it!"

All the little hamlets had a cricket team - Stoke Talmage has about 10 houses but they always had a cricket team and always had bloodstained stumps their pitch was so dreadful.

We never played on a Sunday - only Saturdays. If we did happen to play on Sunday we finished before 6 o'clock so we could go to church. Rev Jenkins played in our cricket team but we always went to church if it was a Sunday.

We played all the surrounding villages, mostly local. We used to cycle then we had a bus from Mr Aldridge from Benson (opposite Crown pub). Just after the War Rev. Jenkins had a church bus which we used, then we got more serious games and hired Houses buses from Watlington.

The wives did teas - when we played at [Cottesmore Farm] we went across the road to the Lamb, when we played on the School playing fields we went to the Reading Room.

When we played Benson at football it was a bit of a grudge match, all local football was fairly rough, not bad tempered but robust. We had neutral umpires in League football, but we never had umpires for cricket matches, had to be one of the players decided on at the opening - and usually someone who was due to play No. 10). Obviously caused a few problems.

I played sports at school (Wallingford Grammar), athletics, football, cricket, hockey, tennis. Every Wednesday and every Saturday - if you were not prepared to play you were dropped. I spent my life playing sports.

We played tennis for a short time on a court at Rokemarsh and we planned a Ewelme tennis hard court on the Common but money ran out. I would like to see that done now. Also my favourite hobby horse is to build a wall on the recreation ground. Build it with all the old things we can find so that when the [youngsters] kick or bat a ball against it they have to dive about to play it back. I lived at Kingspool Cottages and used to kick a ball against Lt Cmdr Browne's barn wall. All sportsmen of that generation played in their streets - a wall on the recreation ground would help the children of the village to practise.

The Ladies Cricket Team - Mrs Nowell-Smith from Hill House played cricket as well as a man set that up. They were never very good but we used to have some fun and games with them.

Ewelme Football Club gained the Oxfordshire Senior League - they were very good -my son played in it - one player who joined as a boy later played for Reading – Richard - one of the Spiers brothers.

When we came back from the War we had to start again. I took on the cricket club and organised our own fixtures. I carried on for a long time Grundons helped keep the cricket pitch cut. The ground was much steeper. We got the football pitch level but asked them to leave the sides slightly raised. The Common was levelled by Grundons who had machinery to do it. We had a drain put down the middle and the small changing shed (about 16' X 16') was carried over on a trailer from the field behind the Rectory.

All the [Sports] clubs formed in the years before the War were self-contained, they raised their own funds (Whist Drives etc) and bought their own equipment. The last move was because the farmer who took over from Tom Orpwood (A German married to an English woman) wanted us out overnight. Fortunately, at that time we were already making arrangements with the Parish Council to obtain a recreation ground for the village and for ourselves. You probably know the history of how the present recreation ground was obtained and how it was laid out. We were playing at that time in a field behind the Rectory when we had to leave. The Common was being de-requisitioned by the Government after the War and some money had accrued from the War Agricultural Committee - about £800 which the Parish Council were able to lay their hands on. This was used to level a piece of the Common and fence the rest to make some income and make the recreation ground where it is now.

That caused a lot of arbitrary and sometimes strong wrangling about fencing the Common. There was a lot of animosity and people against fencing it at that time. It had to go to Parliament to get official permission to fence it. [Sir Donald Somervell]. We had to do about a mile of fencing all the way around the Common.

#### ***Tape 23 -***

He was a keen sportsman and belonged to football and cricket teams for years.

#### ***Tape 28 -***

He played cricket particularly about late 1950's. Players drawn from all over. Can remember that Andrew Millar was in the team also Les Foster who owned the cobblers in Crowmarsh and the Miners boys. He played for English schoolboys. Started work at 15 and spent all his holidays playing cricket.

She remembers cracking football dances at the old barn before it was converted in Chaucer Court. People came from all over the place. Those involved in football were the Greenway boys and Tony Reeves. At that time all cricket and football was played at the top behind the graveyard by the side of the New Rectory. It moved down to it's present site in the early 60's.

#### ***Tape 30 -***

There was a very strong Cricket Club and Football Club and later a Tennis Club. When Fred Harwood first came to marry Norah Winfield in the latter part of the 30's he began to have a strong influence on sport - a great sporting man. There were tennis courts at the west end of the football and cricket field up above the church on the hill at the top.

Said he had difficulty visualising enough flat ground. He asked about the playing field on the common. And if the Golf Course was there. The curvature of the surface of the "Top Field" was so great that a player at one end of the field would not be able to see a football at the feet of a player at the opposite goal!

You may imagine the additional momentum enjoyed by a well-smitten cricket ball! Fortunately the longer grass in the outfield helped to keep the ball within reasonable reach, but then again delays in retrieval were common as fielders tramped up and down in their cricket boots trying to find whether the ball was lurking!

The common playing field came much later - it was only rough land when he lived in Ewelme. Cannot remember a golf course.

***Tape 35 -***

Mrs Noel-Smith was a great cricketer. Every year we used to have a men's versus ladies match. The men would play left handed if they were right handed. I had never seen a proper lady cricketer before and she bowled overarm.

***File 58 -***

I would cycle up to Nuffield Golf Club and caddy for the golfers. I would get a shilling lunch money. I got 1/6 plus 1/- so 2/6 for the 18 holes plus lunch money. I hung around for afternoon players. I would find lost balls and sell them to the Caddy Master. I would take sandwiches and go to the Crown at Nuffield and buy half a pint of shandy. I remember one lady who was on her own and I was asked to caddy for her. I already had 5 or 6 shillings and I carried her bag for 18 holes, but she kept cuddling and kissing me as I reminded her of her son she had just lost. Her husband said I shouldn't be embarrassed it was OK. I ended up with 30 shillings. I had borrowed my brother's bike and I cycled down Gangsdown hill afraid I would be robbed. I bought my first pair of long trousers from Pettit's which cost 10/- with that money and gave the rest to my mum.

***File 72 -***

I remember the sports ground being relocated to its present site at the Common. I had watched both football and cricket at the old site. The new site soon earned the nickname of "*Flintstone Stadium*" due to the injuries incurred from its lack of topsoil to bury the sharp flints exposed when it was scraped out from the old field. My neighbour Les Foster was a keen cricketer and was wicket keeper for Ewelme for a number of seasons, I sometimes travelled to matches with his family and the team, on House's coaches from Watlington.