

BURTON ESTATE CRICKET CLUB

Burton boasted a most successful cricket team in the 1930's but the playing of cricket disappeared from the village during the war years. The team was resurrected almost immediately after the war finished. The cricket ground was situated in the lower Burton Park to the south of the avenue of trees leading from the Hall Yard to Dunster Lodge.



A purposely prepared and levelled square is still evident if one looks closely. It had sufficient width for approximately 6 tracks and with space at each end for the wicket keeper to comfortably stand on cut grass.

At each corner of the square was a fixed timber post containing hooks to which we attached the removable barbed wire fencing. The chore, before and after each game, was to obtain five members of the team to uplift the removable posts and barbed wire and manhandle these to a position outside the boundary. The outfield was never cut; the only semblance of short grass was when the bullocks were introduced to the parkland but this inevitably resulted in cow pats here, there and everywhere. Many 'accidents' occurred!

There was no such thing as a boundary line. The boundary at one end was deemed to be the avenue of trees (room for argument here) and at the other end it was the park fence. A motley array of old wickets, white flags etc. indicated the boundary at each side of the ground. If the ball hit one of the four corner posts, which were firmly embedded in the ground, then lie was deemed to have scored 2 runs.

The Club sported a horsedrawn roller from the pre war years, consisting of a heavy roller, with a concrete block on top and a pair of shafts. The ground boasted a timber pavilion of quite reasonable size, having a centre door with opening wooden panels either side. Housed in the pavilion, was a set of leather shoes for the horse to wear and to avoid damage to the pitch. No horse was used post war but reliance was placed upon four or five members of the team to pull the roller. During the immediate post war period, the square was mown weekly by Ted Crow (Chauffeur to Lord Monson) who used the 'Hall sit-on mower'

Afternoon tea was usually taken in the village school — now the Burton Estate Club. It usually took longer to walk to the schoolroom, have tea and then walk back to the cricket ground than it did to play the match itself.

Tea was provided for 24 persons plus two scorers, that is, if anyone could be found to keep the scorebook up to date. Usually members of the team had the job of taking it in turns to umpire and to keep the score.

Burton played in the Burton Hunt League. Teams in the league at that time included Aisthorpe for whom Stan Rollett, Stan Waite, Syd Waite were stalwarts. Bishop Norton could field an XI, all with the name of Cook. Other teams included Glenthams, Waddingham, Snitterby, Welton, South Kelsey, Claxby, Owmy and in later years, North Carlton.

Burton was fortunate in having an umpire who professed keen interest. One Mr Will Elliott who lived in North Carlton and was Head Gamekeeper on the Monson Estate. Mr. Elliott was a character in his own right and possessed his own transport. A shooting stick was never far from Mr. Elliott and this was used to rest upon either at square leg or behind the wicket.

For a number of years the writer had in his possession an original cartoon which appeared in Punch magazine and which depicted, quite accurately, the Burton ground with the barbed wire surrounding the square. The cricketers were on the outside looking in whilst the bullocks were on the inside looking out. The pavilion was in the background amidst the trees with the words 'Burton Estate Cricket Club'. Unfortunately this cartoon cannot now be found.

Eve Hobson, the village blacksmith, was the captain in the early years. His place in the team was assured week after week due to the fact that he was captain and, more importantly, owned a motor car with which to transport players to away matches. Eve could 'bowl a bit', 'bat a bit' and fielded at mid off. On a good day he could occasionally catch the ball. His enthusiasm could not be bettered.

Frank Ormsby opened the bowling with considerable speed and ferocity. His average haul of wickets would be 5 or 6 for 10 runs or so. Frank would bat at No. 10 or 11 and would wear just one pad on his left leg, feeling it would be a waste of time to put the pad on. Frank worked on the Estate and lived with his brother George in a cottage, now demolished, on the site of The Waterhouse.

George Ormsby was one of the better cricketers in the team and he could be relied upon to score 8-12 runs out of the team score of 45 — no mean achievement on our wicket.

Walter (Walt) Lane who lived in South Carlton, opened the bowling with Frank Ormsby. Walt was a steady opening bowler with a throwing action but no umpire dare 'no ball' him. He made no pretence at being a batsman and would bat at No. 10 or 11. His specialty was a 'cow shot' which very occasionally connected when he would score 4 — more often that not his score would be 0.

George Cooling was another steady member of the side who was selected for his ability with the bat. He opening the batting and a good score for him would be perhaps 4 or 6 runs. He could however, be relied upon to 'last' for 4 or 5 overs. Quite a feat. George's attitude to batting was similar to that of Trevor Bailey; his bat was seldom lifted more than 2" from the block hole and was seldom moved more than 1" to the left or to the right. There was certainly no back lift or swing of any description. Had George played on the type of wickets now enjoyed by the majority of cricketers, he would undoubtedly have been able to bat all day. George lived in one of the cottages, now demolished, on the site now occupied by the garage of Mr. Rowland!

Mr. Wilf Russon also played from time to time (Pete Russon's father). He too had a particularly good 'eye' and was known to hit the ball out of the field when 'his luck was in'.

Ted Crow (Chauffeur for Lord Monson) was a most enthusiastic member of the team and was the proud owner of a pair of white trousers (some 8 of the team wore 'whites' with the rest in grey). Ted undertook most of the mundane work in running the club, Cutting grass, marking out, etc. Not the most free scoring of batsmen but could contribute a few runs towards the 'aimed for total of 45 or 50'.

Jack Sentence was the head gardener at the Hall and was the only true all rounder in the side. He could bat, bowl and was an excellent fielder. At this stage it is perhaps worth making the point that the average length of an innings would be 18 or 20 overs. Usually these 18 or 20 overs could be quite easily bowled by Frank Ormsby and Walt. Lane between them. Hence not often did anyone else get the chance to bowl.

'Shep' Millburn lived at No. 2 Hillside Cottages and as his nickname implies, he was the Shepherd for Mr. J. Evens. He was a capable cricketer, an all rounder who also played for Lincoln Claytons on Sundays.

Basil Reigels lived in South Carlton — in a thatched house, now demolished — on the site of the present Council Houses. He rode around on a motorised scooter and could always be relied upon to turn **up**. I had a particularly good 'eye for the ball' and would regularly hit the ball into the next field over long on.

Dennis Milligan was undoubtedly the best batsman and wicket keeper in the team. He was famed for his 'leg sweep' and could always score 10 or 15 runs. He also played for Lincoln Claytons on Sundays. Unfortunately Dennis was the dairyman for the Farmer Mr. John Evens and had to leave most matches early to go and milk. This was a distinct drawback and on many occasions Burton had to



WG was not a member!

'make do' without his batting or wicket keeping. Dennis lived in one of the 3 cottages which have now been transformed into 'West side' and 'Kennel Cottage'.

As the 1940's drew to a close, the younger boys in the village came to be selected for the team, including the writer who was full of promise but who never actually put that promise into practice. John Hobson, son of Eve Hobson, who was a first class slip fielder and an aggressive batsman. Ray Sharpe — a true all rounder with a superb 'square cut' Sam Fasham who was no mean batsmen and who could bowl as fast as anyone but could rarely put the ball within three feet either side of the wickets.

Finance to run the club was usually raised from one or two Whist Drives & Dances held in the old schoolroom (now the Burton Estate Club). In those days a whist drive would attract 8 or 10 tables i.e. 32/40 people. Some £6 to £8 would be raised and this would normally be sufficient to run the team for a year.

Spectators at the village cricket matches were usually notable for their absence! The only regular spectator being Canon Caulton, the resident vicar who lived at the Burton Vicarage.

Mike Wilson

