

Cricket in Dinton ... The Earlier Years.

In the 1920s both Stone and Ford had a thriving cricket club and competed throughout the summer months against neighbouring village sides. Stone has a very fine public recreation ground where cricket, football and bowls could be played. Ford had a playing field and in one match in 1928 there were five members from the Ludlow families as well as a Welford and a Keen. There was no recreation ground in Dinton.

The Dinton cricket field was made possible by the arrival of Sir William Currie who had purchased Dinton Hall and its estates in 1934. Sir William was the chairman of the P. & O. Shipping line and a very keen cricketer. The ground was soon prepared, a wooden pavilion erected and a team was formed. Sir William (President of the club) was a playing member along with Major Watson and many other Dinton parish men. In the Bucks Herald of May the 18th 1934 Dinton scored 164 playing Wooten who scored 64. The report of the match stated that Dinton won as a result of the fine batting performance by these two men.

When the Second World War came in 1939 cricket ceased in Dinton. Major Watson returned to the army and the war and all the eligible young men were called up. Geoff. Weedon (my cousin) joined the tank corps in 1940 and was later captured by the Germans at the siege of Tobruk. He remained a POW until the war ended and returned to Dinton to continue working as a gardener for Sir William Currie. Arthur Gregory joined the RAF and survived the war. John Tapping became a paratrooper and died in a glider crash as it was crossing the Rhine in Germany. George Yates joined the Royal Navy as a cook and safely returned to Dinton. George took up employment at St. John's Hospital and then joined the hospital cricket team in Stone. Major Watson also returned to his Dinton home (Glebe House) and was now a Colonel. He was the church organist and choirmaster. Sir William's elder son Captain William Currie did not survive the war.

During the war most of the Dinton cricket field had been ploughed and used for growing crops and a very small area including the pavilion had been left to allow an area for children to play. However the pavilion was burned down completely (blamed on the evacuees of course!) but the real culprits were never discovered. After the war the field was then returned as a playing field but the preparation took a great deal of time, a couple of years. In the meantime the Dinton men wanted to play cricket again. Dr. Ralph Gardiner an eminent surgeon at the Royal Bucks. Hospital, his wife and two children now occupied Wooten farm and he made the field opposite the Seven Stars public house available. The batting pitch was roped off but the outfield was still used to graze a herd of cattle. They kept the grass fairly short and were moved to another field for the duration of each match for their safety. Sharing a cricket field with a herd of cows brought a whole new meaning to fielding in the slips!! This field did however serve its purpose and finally the old cricket field was ready. Swings and see-saws had been erected in addition for use by the younger children of the village and cricket returned. The field was quite large and there was plenty of space to accommodate a football pitch as well. There was also a small wooden shed which was not large enough to house two teams for tea. The village ladies prepared and served tea in the village hall.

There were still some of the old guard available to form a new good team and there were some newcomers to the village who became keen members. The old guard were Jack Gregory who farmed Westlington farm, Tom Brandon the builder, Henry Jeffrey who was Sir William's chauffeur, Reg. Jones from Upton, an all rounder who was a fine wicketkeeper and there many others. Newcomers George Kerr, straight from the army moved into Jasmine cottage in Dinton and his brother Dr. John Kerr a doctor at St. John's Hospital were both very enthusiastic players and Dr. Gardiner would often keep wicket when required. Charles Clark Darton a publisher arrived from London to live in Dinton just before the outbreak of the war and although now not a youngster, age did not prevent him from playing cricket with great enthusiasm. He could keep wicket, bat and bowl! Charles Darton was a pillar of society, church warden, ARP warden during the war, bell ringer and member of the church choir. He died in Dinton in February 1955. Another occasional new player was Frederick Allen the wartime news reader and radio presenter for the BBC. He lived at Bigstrup farm. The secretary for the club was Reg. Ward who lived at the Forge and I was the scorer for a couple of seasons.

The whole team was from Dinton parish which of course included Upton and Ford but sometimes there was the odd 'guest' player and all matches were 'friendlies'. There were no leagues in those days and if a team turned up with a man short the opposition would often lend them a man to make up their eleven and they played in the true spirit of the game of cricket. That's what cricket was all about in those earlier days.

Following the cricket season a Dinton football team was formed as a lot of the younger cricketers also played football and this also proved a great success in the village for many years.

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