

THE START OF THORNBOROUGH SPORTS CLUB

TED CLARKE (EC) INTERVIEW OCT 2002

BY BERNARD GARBE (BG)

EC It was a long time ago that it started, 42 years ago. It started in 1960.

BG Was the Club started for the Sports Day?

EC The first starting, I must tell you. I used to do a thrift club and I had a sick-and-divide club at the Two Brewers. This I would do on a Friday evening. On this particular Friday evening, I walked in and the landlord of the pub, David Glaister was there plus Mr Luckwell. He said to him, you haven't met this man yet have you, that was myself, he said "No" - that was when I first met Mr Luckwell.

BG And who was Mr Luckwell?

EC He was a film producer who lived in the village. He used to have a house in the village, but lived away with his job. He said to the landlord and to myself, "Why don't we start a Sports Day?" And both of us said, "What do you actually mean by that?" And he said, "Well a Sports Day, where you have races and all that". And the Landlord said, "Yes, not a bad idea". It got started like that. We got talking, "I'll give you money to start it", which he did. He gave us £50 to start it off with and he had half the village round his place the next night for a drinking party. We formed a Committee. The Landlord, he was Secretary and myself acted as Chairman and a Mr Reid, who was an oldish man, came onto it and Mr Barlow who kept the shop. He was a good man and looked after the money for us for a time.

BG What time of year was this - in the summer?

EC This was the first Friday in July, well yes the summer of course, 1960, not 1961, but I haven't said anything about the error in the Thornborough News recently.

BG Did we miss one year perhaps. Was there a year when we didn't have a Sports Day?

EC Well there was one and do you know there had been a lot of rain on the Friday evening and Johnny Cranwell, he was on the Committee. Him and I on that morning, walked down the run that we marked out for the Steeple Chase and we got soaked because of going through the corn, you know. And it kept fine until 12 o'clock or so, then it piddled with rain and then we met an hour later and decided we would cancel it, which we did. And we had it later, on my birthday, on August 31st.

BG So you had one in the same year?

EC Yes we had one the same year.

BG Which year was the cancelled Sports Day?

EC Well it wasn't late – it would be perhaps about 3 or 4 years later. Probably mid sixties. Yes, we had it then. Of course, later on in that afternoon, about 3 o'clock, it came out fine and sunshine.

BG How many people did it take to organise the Sports Day then?

EC Well in the first instance, when it first started there was about half a dozen of us. 'Course we didn't have any teas or anything like that. They had my milk to drink and the wife and sisters were just sat on the grass opposite the old house that burnt down as that was where we lived. Anyway she said to her sisters "Do any of you want a cuppa tea" to which they said "Yes, we'd like a cup of tea". "I'll hand it through the window", which she could from the kitchen. Then other people seen it and there wasn't no cuppa tea for me, I had to off and have a pint of beer. And of course everyone then went and asked her for a cuppa tea. They didn't realise. There was only one year then, that there wasn't any tea.

BG And that was the first year?

EC Yes, that was the first year and that was the only year with no tea provided. Then, we made the teas in the old guide hut and the ones who used to do it were my wife, three of her sisters and Mrs Arthur Goodger. That's five of the family and there were times when they wouldn't see any of the sports, they were doing the teas. Because actually in those days it was on the Green, of course. They played cricket up there then behind our old house, but they used to set the tables on the Green and have tea there.

BG The Sports day used to go on for a couple of days didn't it?

EC Well what happened was, the first, this next year, someone suggested that we had putting the shot, throwing the javelin, long jump, high jump, throwing the cricket ball and all that, which they did because my son in law Mick, he used to work in Bicester and he managed to get a shot and a javelin from Bicester. I worked on the Council and they spoke to the Foreman on the Council and they offered us a rope for the Tug of War and that was how we got it all together. We had it on the Friday evening, start about 7.00 and go on 'til about 9.00 pm, about two hours of it 'cause that's how long it took. We didn't have the children then, just the older people. The children couldn't put the shot, throw the javelin or throw the cricket ball, so we just had did that. That was on the Friday. We started on the Saturday about 12.30 with a Fancy Dress for them and then it got that we had a Fancy Dress for the men, showing their fancy knees. That was good fun, laugh! We finished off about six o'clockish and one or two of them organised a comic football match afterwards.

BG What is a comic football match?

EC Well, you know they dressed up and acted the fool – in two teams of course – but you ought to ask Dougie Scott about that, course he was one of them. When we finished we would present all the prizes with my Jean. She done a lot of the writing and did for a long time. When we finished and got all the prizes out, we then went and had a dance.

BG Blimey, that was a long day.

EC Yes it was a long day and I tell you what Bernard, it was a long day because they told me, those in charge, that they wanted the room for the Sunday, so I stopped 'til 2.30 in the morning for a year or two, clearing it all up so they could have it for the following day. But we done it.

BG I can remember going to Discos in that village hall.

EC I tell you what, you had a lot of fun in that hall – I don't care who it was – you could have some jolly good fun.

BG One of my school friends was Tony Glaister. His dad wasn't the publican then, he lived down Back Street

EC That's right, in the bungalow there. I used to get on well with Toby. He was a good man for the village. It went on from there, people came on to the Committees. There was one time when, believe it or believe it not, there was 12 people on the Committee, 11 women and 1 man, me being the only man. That only happened the one year.

BG That was a big Committee – No problem with Tea and Cakes then!! You must have also marked out lanes and things then.

EC Oh yes, that was all done. Mick (Mc Straw) did quite a bit of the marking, with one or two other people who would mark out the Greens as well.

BG The Sports day – was it the only event that you arranged with this committee.

EC Yes the Sports Club was the Sports Day. It was nothing to do with anything else as such. I was 20 years on the committee when I came off of it.

BG The committee must have changed – when they started to do other things.

EC Oh yes, they run raffles had a bowling for the pig other bits of sport.

BG I joined the Club in about 1990 and by then they were doing lots of other events, such as children's parties, and old folks outings. So obviously between you leaving the Club and me joining there must have been lots of changes with the committee?

EC We used to have the old people in the February time having a party. When they finished they used to go home at 7.00 pm. We used to clear up all the bits and pieces and that what was good enough to eat the ladies on the Committee would lay up the tables and we would all sit down and have someone with a disco or something and then you could invite a couple of more people and finish about 12.00 o'clock . Did that for seven years.

BG You liked your long days didn't you?

EC Yes, I was used to it you see and still am today. But never mind, I wouldn't say one word about it. I enjoyed the people who came and I knew all the people who came, many of the chaps I worked with came. Then we used to have the Christmas parties for the children and the older people so everyone got involved.

BG When the did the Christmas parties and the old folks parties start?

EC I would say in about 1965. I would somewhere like that – the same for the children’s parties. We used to have two lots of children’s parties, one for children from say 5 ‘til 10 years and then another for the older children, 10 ‘til 16 or so.

BG We still do the same thing today, but we find the older children don’t want to join in.

EC Yes, well that’s it. I could see some of that last night. I noticed some of them thought that they didn’t want to be here, but that’s beside it. Well yes, the kids enjoyed and we used to have Charlie Carder. He used to live in Akeley, but he went on to live in Winslow. I haven’t seen him lately. He was marvellous with the kids and the older folk as well. He was an Entertainer. He would do anything to make you laugh – a comedian and magic. The disco came in afterwards and that was mainly for the Committee to jig around.

Twenty years is a long time to be concerned with it and I was concerned about it. I was clearing up after the Sports Day on my own, and a lady came up to me and said “You’re just the person I want to see” “Why didn’t my boy win any prizes yesterday?” I told her that maybe next year, he will go out and win all the prizes, but she couldn’t see it. He was one of the younger ones, you see. I told her to come to the Committee and put her point across to the Committee, but of course she never came.

BG You still get people doing things like that.

EC Oh yes you do, no doubt you do. And yet his brother Colin, he is a real case. It wasn’t Paul who was doing it, it was his brother! We used to live in the house on the Village Green you know, it got burnt down. Well my wife never locked the door, she would go out charing to someone or other and yet she always knew that someone had been in and when she found out it was Colin. But he just went round the house, never ever touched a thing; he would go upstairs and downstairs, but never touch a thing. He always called me Mr Dixon, after the chap in the old Manor where I used to work. That was a sad thing that happened to him.

BG What happened to him?

EC Oh, booze, too much to drink. Anyway he went to the Doctor and been under the Doctor a couple of months and one day I asked him how he got on. He said that his heart was not right and other things. I told him to be careful. Anyway about a week later, the gardener who used to go in every morning to sort out the fires and that, well he found him, on the floor by the sink. He wasn’t gone, but as good as. The doctor come. That was a sad old job to me.

BG Did he take part in any of the village events?

EC He didn’t take part, but he always gave something, or his wife. At Harvest festival, I would take a barrow load of vegetables to the Chapel or the Church and she was ever so kind. Oh yes he was very generous in giving to the Cricket Club, with donations.

BG When did the Negrettis move in, was it after him?

EC No. After Mr Dixon ? Yes, I’ll give you the full list of dates if I can...
In September 1937 Richmond Watson and wife moved into Manor.

Then in 1942 they moved out, him and his wife split up and he went to live in Wakefield and then Mr Wilson came from Grendon Manor and he lived in there in 1942 until 1952. He left and Mr Dixon brought it and he died on 25 May 1962 and then Negrettis came along and brought it in about 1964. Mrs Dixon had it for a couple of years but didn't sell it. It was empty for a while.

But what struck me is all the "2s", 1942, 1952 and 1962.

BG Who was the sort of leading light in the 1980s in the Sports Club. Was it Mary Wise or Jean?

EC I can't tell you, but Derek Worth was Chairman for some time after I packed it in, but I can't really tell you.

BG Jean was heavily involved?

EC Oh yes, Jean Horwood was.

BG I meant your Jean. She was involved in it when I was first on the Committee.

EC Oh yes, my Jean used to do all the writing and that. Yes Jean was involved. There was only one year that she didn't and that was when she had the boy and her mum said, if you go, he'll be running after you all the time on the Sports Day and won't be able to do anything and that is the only time that she has missed doing something in one way or another. . She never refused anything, you know that. I used to tap her on the shoulder and say "You do it Jean".

BG Even though she is not on the committee now, she is always helping out at events.

EC Yes she is always ready to help and ready to do. She goes to the WI and there is never a word of grumble with the girl.

BG And Pam helps out as well.

EC I'm lucky to have two girls as they are, who help so much.

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