

Grantham Cricket - 1850 to 1950

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1 Purpose

The main objective here is to convey some information about the earlier years of Grantham Cricket Club, and about some of the people associated with it.

A primary source of the information is my father Ben Sewell, who passed on to me his own love of cricket. He was active in the G.C.C. from 1921, for more than thirty years. I shall digress a little, later on, to indicate some consequences of that influence on me.

2 Early Days

John Bullimore was born in about 1855. In 1868 he began an apprenticeship as a joiner at Ruston and Hornsby's in Grantham, where he helped to build the wooden parts of agricultural machinery such as threshing machines. John walked three miles to work each day from his widowed mother's house in Barrowby, arriving at 6 a.m., and leaving at 5 p.m. to walk home again. The wood he used in his work was initially prepared in sawpits in Sawpit Lane in Grantham, later called Welby Street, and now closed by the Isaac Newton Shopping Centre. In about 1875 John, now qualified, went to work for Parks, a building firm with premises in an old stone house in Swinegate. My father began his apprenticeship there as a joiner with Messrs. Parks and Son 45 years later, in 1921, and he qualified in 1927. John Bullimore told my father that he had seen cricket played on the London Road ground as early as the 1860s. The ground belonged to the Earl of Dysart, and it formed part of the Dysart Estates who owned a good deal of land in Grantham.

Ben Sewell was born in 1906 and christened Vern Edward. He was called Ven within his family, but universally Ben outside it. I tape-recorded an interview with

him in 1979, which ranged over many topics from his memories of Grantham, particularly from his earlier days. I transcribed this interview into a 44-page A4 typed document called *The Joiner's Tale*. It is the middle part of a Wiro-bound trilogy, having 88 photographs, which can be accessed on my web-site cited at the head of this article. I also wrote *A Sewell Family History 1807 - 2007*, with 106 photographs. These two books are listed in the References at the end of this account, and copies of both of them can be consulted in the Public Libraries at Grantham and at Lincoln. Ben died in 1980.

3 An 1862 Newspaper Report

I have in my possession a copy of *The Grantham Journal* dated Saturday, April 19, 1862. It is printed on both sides of one piece of paper, folded to make four pages, each 19 inches by 28 inches. It may have come down to me via my great-grandfather Lawrence Henry Sewell, who was born in Bourn (as it then was) in 1853, but by 1882 had butcher's shops in Grantham at 30 Castlegate and 2 Manthorpe Road. This newspaper contains a six-column-inch report of some matches played by The All-England Eleven in Australia. On 29 January they began a game against Twenty-Two of New South Wales in Sydney, in front of 25000 spectators, scoring 175 and 66, against their opponents 127 and 65. Individual scores in the 175 by the Eleven were Mudie 6, Griffith 20, Mortlock 76, Caffyn 38, Laurence 2, Bennett 3, Sewell 5, Iddison 2, E. Stephenson 17, Wells 1, H.H. Stephenson 11 not out. I wonder if this "Sewell" was a relative, but I have no evidence. The appearance of the name may, however, be the reason this newspaper survived in my family.

A match was next "speedily arranged" against a United Twenty-Two of the two "colonies" of New South Wales and Victoria, whose result was "the defeat of the Eleven by twelve wickets". This "gave great pleasure to the Sydneyites and the colonial cricketers generally, as it serves to prove that the All-England Eleven are not invincible". Six more matches were arranged.

Unfortunately there is no mention of Grantham Cricket Club in this newspaper, but it was mid-April.

4 1912 Newspaper Reports

I also have a copy of *The Grantham Journal* for Saturday, August 24, 1912. It is still printed on both sides of one piece of paper, but twice the previous size, and now folded to make eight pages, each 20 by 27 inches. It includes the *Melton Mowbray Journal*, and thus the news ranges over a wider local area. There is cricket news from both Grantham and Oakham areas, and some nearby villages.

A Saturday Grantham v. Peterborough match at London Road, for Allen's benefit, is described, and "was an all-round success". There was a "very fair attendance".

Peterborough were bowled out for 67 by M.W.Appleby (6 for 28) and W.Baines (4 for 29), who bowled unchanged. "It was quite like old times again to have as Grantham's first pair of batsmen the very popular captain, W.E.Thompson, and the Rev.E.J.Goldsmith, who had been very much missed from the games this season". The innings finished at 132 for 9. This is the first case that I have heard of in serious cricket that the winning innings continued well beyond the target. It was Peterborough's first loss of the season.

A Thursday match is also described, against Sleaford, who batted first to score 50 (M.W.Appleby 2 for 20, T.H.Bowman 7 for 24). Grantham finished with 91, and thus "won by 41 runs" using the same curious convention as in the Saturday game.

In addition to the Grantham players just named, on Saturday R.S.M.White, J.W.Clarke, M.Broughton, S.F.Nott, H.Lee and S.F.Rudkin played; and H.C.Bell, W.C.C.Cox, R.E.Southwell and J.Fillingham played on the Thursday; so some played on both days.

5 School Cricket

Ben Sewell explained in *The Joiner's Tale* how he first began to take an interest in cricket in 1919, at Dame Margaret Thorold's Grammar School in Sedgebrook, which he entered in September 1918 with a Free Place Scholarship. Here he played *ad hoc* games on a very rough pitch in the School field during the lunch hour. But the School closed at the end of 1919, and Ben was among a group of pupils who transferred to The King's School in Grantham. He played cricket at King's in 1920, but his two surviving School Reports for that year have no space for comments on games.

6 First Visits to London Road

During the 1919 season the Sedgebrook schoolboys from Grantham, if they had not travelled by bicycle, would often return from Sedgebrook on the 2.45 p.m. train. My father recalled that they would arrive at Grantham Station about 3.00 p.m., walk down Launder Terrace, and enter the cricket ground on London Road, where they would see the greater part of the afternoon cricket. In that year the Machine Gun Corps had a very strong amateur side captained by Major Black, and with Captain L.H.Tennyson in the side. This illustrates the very good class of cricket that was to be seen at London Road in that year.

Ben recalled that he saw some great matches there. On one occasion around this time a man called Dyson, who subsequently played for Yorkshire, was batting for a Services side. The rations for those sides were brought to the ground in a transport wagon drawn by two mules, one on each side of a central shaft. This wagon had delivered its load, and it was pointing towards the double gates at the football (north) end of the ground. At that moment Dyson hit a tremendous skyer which went right

over the ropes and dropped with an almighty bang on the central shaft of the waggon, exactly between the two mules. This was like the starting gun for a race. The mules shot out of the gates, along London Road, past the Town Hall, along the High Street, and were eventually brought to rest at the bottom of Watergate. That was about a mile and a half, but nobody could stop them. Ben just saw them disappear through the gates, but fortunately there was little traffic about, and hardly any motor traffic. “Of course the town was used to seeing unruly mules and things running away like that.”

By 1979 the Grantham Cricket Club had evidently been using the London Road ground for over 100 years. Ben described a two-day charity match which he saw there at the end of the 1919 season. It was between Yorkshire (who included Wilfred Rhodes, Herbert Sutcliffe, Waddington and Dolphin) and Hampshire (including one or two local amateur cricketers). The Hampshire team included A.P.F.Chapman, who was then Captain of Uppingham School. Ben remembered seeing Rhodes coaching Chapman in front of the pavilion before the match began. On the second day Chapman scored 75 not out, and his class was evident for all to see. He went to Cambridge that Autumn, where he got a Blue in his first season; later he became Captain of England.

At Christmas 1920 Ben was rising 15 (on 16th March 1921). When he came home from King’s School at the end of the Autumn Term, he was told by his mother: “Your Dad and I think you have had enough schooling; you start at Parks’ on Monday.” He told me that he was rather disappointed at this announcement, because he had been quite enjoying school. But it was thus that he began his joinery training under John Bullimore, who evidently also told him some very early stories of Grantham cricket.

7 Joining the Club

Ben told me that at the start of the 1921 season “I well remember going down there [to the London Road ground] in the evening, and joining the Boys’ Section as a Junior Member; and paying four shillings subscription to the late George Bennett, who was Editor of The Grantham Journal at this time, and a very keen local supporter”. His receipt survives, in fact for five shillings, and signed by J.G.Bennett (of 14 Chaucer Terrace) on May 12 1921. Ben’s Membership Card for that year also survives, with nearly 30 subsequent ones which I still have. He played for the Junior side in 1921 (at the age of 15), for example against the local Boy Scouts. By 1926 he was playing regularly for the Saturday Second XI, and he was Captain of that team for four years, from 1932 to 1935. Ben was mainly a batsman.

His 1921 Membership Card shows a total of 52 fixtures for all the senior Club teams. There were First and Second XIs on Saturdays, and a Thursday XI. Obviously the Club was a thriving concern in those post-War years, and it must have had enough players eager to fulfill all those fixtures. The Club Captain was Mr. W.E.Thompson, a name still prominent when I joined the Club as a ten-year-old in

1944.

My own Membership Cards for the 11 seasons 1944-54 also survive, and show the junior (under 17) subscription still to be five shillings. In 1954 the subscriptions were 30 shillings for playing members aged 21 and over, 10 shillings for ages 17 to 20, 5 shillings under 17, and 10 shillings and sixpence “minimum” for honorary members and Vice-Presidents.

The 1920s Membership Cards served, of course, as Fixture Cards. They carry the legend (e.g. 1925) “Members’ Subscriptions 10/6 and upwards, which admit the Member and One Lady to Ground and Enclosure for all Matches”. This was augmented in 1926 to exclude county matches.

8 The Old Pavilion

I can remember going into the old pavilion which stood on the southern side of the ground, and which had the practise nets to the east of it which I used as a boy. Beyond that net area was the path to a Tennis Club, which was behind a long line of mature poplar trees. These trees stood along the whole eastern side of the cricket playing area, and they gave substantial character to the ground. They must have been perhaps 80 feet high (certainly more than the length of a cricket pitch), and they dominated the scene as soon as one entered the ground from London Road, which ran along the western side of it behind a long and high stone wall. Pedestrian entry to the ground was via a small gate in that wall, behind which sat Briggs (in the 1940s) who collected the pennies from would-be spectators. Beyond the poplar trees was also the River Witham and the back gardens of Dudley Road.

My father says in *The Joiner’s Tale* that the professional at Grantham at one time in the nineteenth century was Alfred Shaw, who was a member of the first English side to play a Test Match in Australia, at Melbourne in 1878. There were photographs of Shaw, and of W.G.Grace, and others, on the walls inside the old pavilion. I can remember that pavilion myself. It had been there for many years. It was a wooden building, and the front, as was usual in those days, had flaps which opened out in the summer, with a desk just behind for the scorers and spectators to sit at. There was a passageway behind that, and the dressing rooms immediately further behind.

But very unfortunately that pavilion was burnt down one Sunday night in 1944 or 1945. Ben said that the ground had been lent to a local munitions factory, who used it for a game, and who perhaps left some lighted cigarettes in it. Whatever the reason, the whole pavilion was burnt down, and many members lost their gear which they had kept in the pavilion. I can distinctly recall my father telling me, at home the next day, that the pavilion had been burnt down. I remember well my regret at this news. Ben had played on the Saturday, and he had brought his own gear home. I imagine that the greatest loss, in one sense, would have been that of previous seasons scorebooks, photographs, and Club records, which might have been

stored in the pavilion. That pavilion may have been eighty or more years old.

Another wooden building was acquired to serve as a pavilion. It was a single-story building, quite long, with changing room facilities inside, but of less character than the pavilion which it replaced. It was placed in the south-west corner of the ground, and adjacent to the London Road wall.

9 Wartime Cricket

During the 1939-1945 War there was quite a lot of Services cricket. Ben Sewell played for the Grantham Thursday XI in a game against R.A.F. Spittlegate. *The Joiner's Tale* describes how in that match Jack Poole, one of the older but sprightly members of G.C.C., played a rather rumbustious innings, for him, of 37. At tea time the Grantham side discovered that the bowler against whom Jack had hit most of his runs was the great Keith Miller. Miller had just started his career in Australian cricket, but he was unknown to English cricketers then, and nobody had any idea that he was in the Spittlegate side. Wartime conditions meant that members had to prepare their own wickets, and do all the work on the ground themselves.

10 The Thompson Cup

There was a popular competition organised by Grantham Cricket Club in the 1930s and 1940s for a trophy called The Thompson Cup. This began round about 1936, according to *The Joiner's Tale*. This trophy was presented by W.E.Thompson who, as Ben Sewell tells us, was a great friend of Grantham cricket. "He had been Captain, he'd held all the offices. He'd been Captain of Lincolnshire, and he was a very, very good Minor Counties cricketer". The G.C.C. would have seen this competition as a way of raising funds, which they needed. The format was that of a limited overs evening game, perhaps 20 or 18 overs per side according to the light, and of the knock-out type, between any sides who cared to enter. It was targeted at the surrounding villages, who provided spectators by the bus-load, and at anyone else who cared to enter a side.

The Joiner's Tale tells us that hundreds of spectators would be present at Thompson Cup matches, and they would fill a wooden stand on the London Road side of the ground. This was a stand which actually belonged to Grantham Football Club (*The Gingerbreads*), and in the winter it would be filled with spectators watching Midland League G.F.C. home games. The G.F.C. pitch was on the northern end of the G.C.C. outfield, and it also had a covered shelter along the length of the far (northern) touch-line. From this I watched my uncle Cecil Page play centre-half for *The Gingerbreads* around 1945. The G.C.C. were lessees of the Ground, and they sub-let it to the G.F.C.

In contrast to the attendance at Thompson Cup matches, on summer Saturdays and Thursdays the stand was almost empty, and the few spectators sat on seats be-

hind a rail at the boundary edge. My sister Ann remembers swinging on that rail when our mother came to help provide the cricketers' tea, which was of course a traditional duty shared by the wives in turn at home games. Sunday cricket seemed to be unheard of in those years, and I can still remember a slightly repressive general social atmosphere on Sundays, but not prominent in our own household. Almost no shops were open, for example, in marked contrast to the situation now.

So the Thompson Cup Competition was very successful, and matches were a major social occasion. The entrance fee for spectators began at three old pence. The money thus brought in was very acceptable to the G.C.C., and the competition produced some very keen and exciting cricket. For some of the local teams it was the highlight of their season, because few had previously had the opportunity of playing on the London Road Cricket Ground, on Grantham's cricket ground.

Ben Sewell played in the Competition for a team called Grantham Tradesmen. In the early 1940s it was not always possible to fulfill a normal fixture list, but on summer evenings after everybody had been busy on war work some light relief was welcome, and the G.C.C. tried to sustain the Competition with as many teams as possible. So in one year Harold Leek, who was landlord of *The Barley Mow* opposite the cricket ground, and a member of G.C.C., put together a team from among G.C.C. members which was called *The Tradesmen*. The players were, in many cases, exactly that. For example, in addition to Harold Leek the publican, there was Bert Pulford, a batsman who had a sweet shop and who ran a kiosk at the Bus Station, which at that time was next to the Public Library and Police Station. Len Simpson was the rather ample wicket-keeper who ran a fruiterer's business in Westgate. Bill Skerritt was, I believe, the husband of Kit Austin, whose family had a fruiterer's business on St. Peter's Hill (only a hill top really). Bill was in the Royal Air Force, but he played occasionally for The Tradesmen. Cyril Hatton was a newsagent (and also a first class footballer with Notts. County), and he played. Harry Sellors was a plumber with premises in Park Road, and Ben Dunk was a burly railwayman, with a son Ken - they played, with others whose names I do not recall.

Another strong side in the competition was provided by Aveling Barford's, the local engineering firm. In one year they met The Tradesmen in the Final, but The Tradesmen lost. There had been some dissatisfaction within the surrounding villages that the G.C.C. had, in fact if under another name, entered a side into the Competition at all. But there was a reason in one year, namely that there would otherwise have been an odd number of entrants.

A strong "atmosphere" was created by the enthusiastic crowd which occupied the stand, and loud vocal encouragement was frequent. Ben tells the story of an incident during the first game The Tradesmen played, against Barford's. This was quite a local "Derby", with a large crowd and almost a Test Match atmosphere. Bill Skerritt was bowling, and the game had reached a very quiet period. The batsman kept pushing the ball back, when suddenly a voice from the stand called out "Skerritt, why don't you bowl him a banana?" This brought the house down, with great hilarity.

11 Quality of Wickets

So the G.C.C. was always able to find plenty of enthusiastic players, but spectators for home games were usually sparse. This was even the case when Lincolnshire played there, which therefore did not happen very often. But the standard of the playing surface and the wickets was always good. Mont (M.W.) Appleby, who had been captaining G.C.C. sides in the 1920s, was also Ground Secretary for many years. He knew a lot about the preparation of wickets, and he chose and trained the Groundsman.

12 Visits to Trent Bridge

The nearest first class cricket to Grantham has always been at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, where the Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club play. It is part of a cricketer's education to go to such places to see the game played at the highest level.

Ben Sewell's first visit there was to the Notts. v Surrey match at Whitsuntide in 1922, when he was 16. Ben hired a bicycle to go there with his friend Bob Austin, the son of a Grantham fruiterer. But the journey was interrupted because a cotter pin broke, and Ben had to have it repaired *en route* by the local blacksmith at Bottesford. They had left Grantham at 8.30 a.m. and just arrived in time at Trent Bridge, as the bell for the umpires and players to come out onto the field was ringing.

They sat on wooden benches on the grass at the Radcliffe Road End, in the corner where the large scoreboard now stands. There were up to 20000 people in the ground. This was always a classic Whit Monday fixture in those days, popular with Nottingham people on their Bank Holiday. The crowd on that morning were anxious for Surrey to finish their innings, begun on the Saturday (no Sunday county cricket in those days), but the great Surrey bowler Bill Hitch came in to bat against the bowling of Richmond and John Gunn. In less than half an hour Hitch scored 50 in 11 scoring strokes. He hit three sixes into the Ladies Pavilion (at the side of the main Pavilion), "and the rest seemed to be all fours".

In 1924 Ben took a mid-week day off from work (forfeiting a day's pay, and traveling by train this time) to see the South Africans led by H.W.Taylor, and including Dave Nourse who scored 180, and the famous outfielder R.H.Catterall. In other years Ben saw J.B.Hobbs score a century, more than once. I have a number of Ben's Trent Bridge scorecards which, in those years, were reprinted on the Ground when each wicket fell.

This was the period also when the distinction between amateurs and professionals was still strong, and marked in particular by separate dressing rooms. Amateurs had central balconies, and professionals could be at the back or side of the pavilion. Thus at Lords Ben saw F.T.Mann come down the centre gangway, to open the Middlesex innings with (Patsy) Hendren H., who came from round the back of the pavilion to

join him before they walked out to the wicket together.

Twenty and more years later, in 1947, Ben introduced me to first class cricket, and again it was the South Africans at Trent Bridge, led by Alan Melville and including Nourse Junior. The admission charge was two-and-sevenpence. We always sat in the upper level of the stand at the Radcliffe Road end, “behind the bowler’s arm”, and we saw Alec Bedser moving the ball about. I once saw Jack Hobbs there long after he retired, walking round the ground seemingly unrecognised. Also in 1947 we saw Compton and Edrich get hundreds for Middlesex at Lords in their season of glory, after Robertson and Brown had done their duty for the crowd by getting out early; and in 1948 we saw Bradman get a hundred there.

By 1948 I was launched as a cricketer myself, playing for King’s School Under 14 XI, and getting some colts cricket on London Road for G.C.C. I recall being hit in the face there when running a single, when the ball was thrown back in out of the Sun.

In my own subsequent cricket career I was captain of the King’s School XI in 1953, and I played for student and staff sides at the Universities of Nottingham (1954-1963), Bristol (1964-1966) and Reading (1967-2002), a total of 55 seasons between the ages of 13 and 68. But I was a slow developer, not scoring a 50 until I was 38. Eventually I scored nearly 20000 runs at an average of 33 for the Reading University Academic Staff Cricket Club, with four centuries. It seems that persistence pays in cricket. The book by Giles (see References) records some of this. I usually opened the batting. On my web-site I describe 17 Berkshire cricket grounds.

During and after his playing career, in some of the years when he was teaching woodwork and metalwork at the Boys’ Central School (1933 to 1971), Ben would take groups of schoolboys to Trent Bridge, to supplement the cricketing instruction which he also gave at School.

13 Grantham Cricket Club Membership Cards

There have survived in my possession my father’s Membership Cards for each of the seasons 1921-1939, 1941-1947 and 1952-1953 (his ages 15-47); and my own for 1944-1954 (ages 10-20). They are all well presented, and convey the impression of a thriving Club which was a major local institution. It was evidently well established as such even in 1921, and there must be a detailed and vibrant history before that date which is not available to me at present. The description of 1912 newspaper reports in a previous Section above supports this suggestion.

The cards for 1921-1929 are each printed on (both sides of) just one piece of folded card, having a varying (external) colour for each year; for 1930-1939 they have a handsome green (blue in 1930) external cover with eight internal pages. In the 1940s a soft green card cover was used, until a hard one was reintroduced in 1948.

The annual Membership Card of a cricket club can be the single key publication which asserts the identity and health of that club, and it is a treasured possession of each member. It lists the honorary members, the active officers, and the fixtures. In the case of Grantham Cricket Club the cards of V.E.Sewell and myself tell us that the President was Lord Brownlow from 1921 to 1927, Major R.T.Ellison from 1928 to 1931, Lord Brownlow from 1932 to 1947, and Brigadier E.J.Grinling from 1948 to 1954. In each of those years about 70 Vice-Presidents are listed, many of whom were prominent and well-known names in the titled, professional and business life of Grantham and the surrounding landed area. This fact alone is a testament to the health and standing of the Club in those years, and by extrapolation for many years before 1920.

The Captain, or Club Captain, or Honorary Club Captain, for 1912 and for all the seasons 1921-1954 of which I have Membership Cards, was W.E.Thompson of (in 1936) 39 Manthorpe Road, except for 1930 when M.W.Appleby was Captain. W.E.Thompson was also Treasurer for 1921-1930, and jointly so with H.C.Lile for 1931-1940. He was joint Ground Secretary with J.Bennett in 1936. Plainly W.E.Thompson was a hugely influential and enthusiastic member of G.C.C., and we have already indicated above the character of the Thompson Cup competition which his initiative started. His role in the Club merits more detail than I have information about.

From 1921 to 1939 the G.C.C. was regularly playing two Saturday games and two Thursday games (except for 1938 when only one Thursday team was fielded). There were also some extra games such as on Bank Holidays. Wartime halved the Fixture List, and in 1941-1946 there was only one Thursday game and one Saturday game. 1947-1951 saw one Thursday and two Saturday games. Sunday fixtures were added to these for the very first time in 1948.

14 Captains, Vice-Captains and Secretaries

The personalities of some well-known and respected Grantham citizens are recalled to memory when we study the lists of active Club officers in these Membership Cards. We will consider, with approximate divisions, the four decades of 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s for which I have information, in turn.

Saturday 1st XI and Thursday 1st XI Vice-Captains are named for 1921-1931, but no Captain, leaving us to assume that W.E.Thompson regularly led the side on both days in those years. The Captains and Vice-Captains of the various sides, grouped broadly by decades, were as follows.

In 1921-31 the Saturday XI Vice-Captains were S.F.Nott (21), M.Broughton (21-27 and 30-31), J.C.B.Thompson (28) and E.L.Parker (29). The Thursday XI Vice-Captains were M.W.Appleby (21-27), E.L.Parker (30) and J.C.B.Thompson (31). The Saturday 2nd XI Captains were A.Musson (21-23), A.E.Bailey (24-30), A.H.Dexter

(31). Saturday 2nd XI Vice-Captains were C.J.R.Smith (24), A.N.Weekley (25-29 and 31) and W.Styles (29-30). Thursday 2nd XI Captains were H.Johnson (24-25), T.W.Hanson (26), C.Watson (27-29) and S.Pulford (30-35). Thursday 2nd XI Vice-Captains were C.Watson (24-26 and 31-33), R.Chalmers (27), S.Pulford (28-29) and C.W.M.Cameron (30).

In 1932-39 the Saturday XI Captains were Matt Broughton (32-34 and 38), F.Cullen (35-36), C.B.Bailey (37) and J.W.Tilzey (39-44). The Saturday XI Vice-Captains were F.Cullen (32-34 and 37-38), E.Roberts (35), M.E.Appleby (36) and S.F.Musson (39-43). The Thursday XI Captains were P.H.D.Gosden (32-38) and H.W.Martin (39). The Thursday XI Vice-Captains were W.J.Hall (32-33), E.L.Parker (34-35 and 39), C.B.Bailey (36-37) and W.Skerritt (38). Saturday 2nd XI Captains were V.E.Sewell (32-35) and H.O.Sellors (36-39). Saturday 2nd XI Vice-Captains were H.O.Sellors (32-35), A.W.Robinson (36-37), P.H.Munton (38) and G.W.Sprawson (39). Thursday 2nd XI Captains were G.W.Sprawson (36) and W.Skerritt (37 and 39). Thursday 2nd XI Vice-Captains were J.Nixon (34), G.W.Sprawson (35), W.Skerritt (36), C.E.N.Rumfitt (37) and B.Pulford (39).

In 1941-46 the Saturday XI Captains were J.W.Tilzey (41-44) and C.J.R.Smith (45-46); and the Vice-Captains were S.F.Musson (41-43), C.J.R.Smith (44), S.Jackson (45-46). The Thursday XI Captains were E.L. Parker (41-42), H.Pulford (43) and H.Leek (44-46); and the Vice-Captains were H.Pulford (41-42), J.O.Cowin (43-44) and S.Jackson (45-46).

In 1947-1954 the Saturday XI (47-50) or 1st XI (51-54) Captains were H.W.Martin (47-48) and H.L.Pacey (49-54); and the Vice-Captains were C.J.R.Smith (47-48), D.Cumming (49), E.F.Wilcox (50) and J.W.Wildman (51-54). The Saturday A (47-50) or 2nd (51-54) XI Captains were H.O.Sellors (47-49), J.H.Bowthorpe (50-52), N.Burnett (53) and E.F.Wilcox (54); and the Vice-Captains were B.Dunk (47), P.L.Kirkby (48-49), H.O.Sellors (50), N.Burnett (51), T.Lambley (52-53), N.Burnett (54). The Thursday XI Captains were H.Leek (47-53) and E.C.Gibson (54); and the Vice-Captains were W.Skerritt (47), W.S.Lunn (48) and H.J.Pacey (49-54). The Sunday XI Captains were W.Skerritt (52) and P.Thoday (53-54); and the Vice-Captain was W.Selby (52-54).

The Club Secretaries were J.G.Bennett (21), F.E.Trotter (22), S.Scragg (23-24), J.Jenkinson (25-26), H.Basnett (27), J.W.Dewey (28-32), C.Prowse (33-38), S.F.Musson (39), J.W.Tilzey (41-42), J.W.Tilzey and J.S.T.Finn (43-44), W.R.Smith (45-48) and P.L.Kirkby (49-53).

The Ground Secretaries were M.W.Appleby (22-34), M.W.Appleby and J.Bennett (35), W.E.Thompson and J.Bennett (36), M.W.Appleby (37-39), L.Simpson (41-45), L.Simpson and H.Leek (46-47) and E.G.Culley (48-49).

15 Remembered Players

One of the most familiar of these names to me personally is C.J.R.Smith, Charles James Rice Smith. He was one of my father's best friends, and a school teacher too, who lived at Stonebridge off Avenue Road. Charlie Smith was a rather burly figure, and a brisk leg-break bowler with bounce, with a faster arm action than usual for a leggie, so that the batsman could be surprised. He was surely always a useful member of his side. It is interesting to see that he was Vice-Captain of the Saturday 2nd XI as early as 1924, when he would have been only 20 if he was two years older than my father, which is quite possible.

I remember several of the other players. Frank Cullen was our next door neighbour in Gorse Rise, before he moved to become Head of Ancaster School. His son Robert was a school friend of mine, as was David, the son of Gerry Sprawson. Stan Musson, Eric Wilcox, H.L. (Bull) Pacey, H.J. (John) Pacey, Jack Wildman, Mont Appleby, John Tilzey, Bill Skerritt, Harry Sellors, Ben Dunk, and others, were all part of my cricket scene associated with London Road. Some of them feature in combined team photographs at the King's School field, at Old Boys' matches when I played for the School in 1950-53. Jock Cowin taught at the School, as did Peter Thoday. Thoday was my Burleigh House Master, and when I was House Captain in 1952 he gave me a book by Fingleton about Bradman, which I still have (see References). I believe Thoday played hockey for Wales. Until I wrote this piece I did not know that he had captained the G.C.C. Sunday XI after I left School.

16 The Opposition

Here I will use the information in the Fixture Lists, which are contained within the Grantham Cricket Club Membership Cards, to summarise the variety of teams against whom games were played during the period 1921-1954. There is much to be learnt or inferred from these apparently dry documents. It will already be clear, from the numbers of people in the lists of Captains and Vice-Captains, that this variety of opponents was considerable. Even as early as 1921 there was a total of 55 fixtures arranged. The first Table below gives the Fixtures for 1923, starting on Saturday 5th May and finishing on Saturday 8th September. Why do my father's Membership Cards for each of the three seasons 1921-1923 have a yellow Excise Revenue stamp for nine pence stuck on to the back, as if a tax had been levied and collected on his subscription?

In the decade 1930-1939 the G.C.C. reached a prime level of activity, fielding four sides each week for most weeks, two on Thursdays and two on Saturdays (except for 1938 when there was only one Thursday side). For example, in 1934 the Fixture List has 68 Club games, a two-day County match against Norfolk in Grantham, and a County Colts game against Leicestershire Colts. (There is also a loose but printed slip within the Membership Card stating that "In view of the serious financial position of the Club the Committee earnestly requests that members will make every

effort to increase their subscriptions and pay them at the earliest possible moment”.

Saturday XI 1923	Saturday 2nd XI	Thursday XI	Thursday 2nd XI
Newark	Belton	Notts. Amateurs	Croxtton
Egerton Park	Bourne	Leicester	Gonerby
Notts. Banks	Egerton Park	Leicester	Gonerby
Burghley Park	Barrowby	R.A.F. Spitalgate	
Sleaford	Bourne	Peterborough	Allington
R.A.F. Cranwell	King's School	R.A.F. Spittalgate	
Egerton Park	Folkingham	Stamford School	Kesteven County Asylum
Sleaford	Stoke and Easton	Notts. Amateurs	
Lincoln	Folkingham	Newark Amateurs	Knipton
R.A.F Cranwell	Barrowby	Peterborough	Allington
Notts. Banks	Egerton Park	Sleaford	Kesteven County Asylum
Ruston and Hornsby	Wesley Sports	Old Stamfordians	Knipton
R.A.F Cranwell	Barrowby	Peterborough	Allington
Notts. Banks	Egerton Park	Sleaford	Kesteven County Asylum
Ruston and Hornsby	Wesley Sports	Old Stamfordians	Knipton
Peterborough	Peterborough	Gonerby	
Harmston Park (B.H. Mon.)			
Mr. Charlton's XI (Friday)			
Lincoln	Stoke and Easton	Grantham Thursday	
Harmston Park	Knipton	Sleaford	Notts. Thursday Victoria
Peterborough	Peterborough	R.A.F. Spitalgate	Notts. Thursday Victoria
Ruston and Hornsby's	Hough-on-the-Hill	Gonerby	
Burghley Park	Hough-on-the-Hill		

The list of opponents in, for example, 1935 is as follows. Some were played twice, home and away.

Saturday 1st XI: Egerton Park, Lincoln, Newark, Burghley Park, Old Nottinghamians, Belvoir Estates, Notts. Forest, Forest Amateurs, Sleaford, Grantham R.A.F., Newark, Radcliffe.

Saturday 2nd XI: E. and W. School Cranwell, Lincoln City Old Boys, T.W.Rust and Co., Radcliffe, Boots Athletic, Old Petriburgians, Aveling Barfords, and some of the 1st XI opponent Clubs.

Thursday XI: Mr F.England's XI, Cranwell Command, Peterborough, Belvoir Estates, King's School, Radcliffe, Notts. Forest, Woodhall Spa, Notts. Harlequins, Oakham, Commander A.G.G.Webb's XI, Old Stamfordians, Egerton Park, Notts. Forest.

Thursday 2nd XI: Bestwood Park, Notts. S. Victoria, Notts. Corinthians. Athletic Club, Burghley, Newark Borough Police, R.A.F. Grantham, Trent Motors, Notts. Unity A, Peterborough, Peterborough Co-op.

The character of the Fixture Lists in war-time was markedly different from the pre-war and post-war Lists. The number of games was reduced to little more than a dozen each for the Thursday side and for the Saturday side, the distance of the opponents was more local, and R.A.F. opponents were more prominent. But each of the two sides did get a game each week. Perhaps the most difficult year from the viewpoint of arranging a varied List was 1943. This is illustrated by the second Table below.

17 References

Fingleton, J.H. *Brightly Fades the Don*. Collins, London. 1950.

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Sewell, Michael. *A Sewell Family History 1807 - 2007*. 144 pp. Privately printed. March 2007.

Sewell, Michael. *Ben Sewell - Furniture Maker, with The Joiner's Tale, and Diary of an Apprentice*. 86 + 44 + 22 pp. Privately printed. November 2007.

Saturday XI 1943	Thursday XI
Lincoln Lindum	Capt's. XI v. Vice-Capt's. XI
Capt's. XI v. Vice-Capt's. XI	King's School
Capt's. XI v. Vice-Capt's. XI	Notts. Harlequins
R.A.F. Hospital Rauceby	R.A.F. Langar
British M.A.R.Co.	King's School
R.A.F. Bottesford	Notts. Harlequins
Newark	R.A.F. Hospital Rauceby
R.A.F. Grantham	R.A.F. Langar
R.A.F.Hospital Rauceby	R.A.F. St. Vincent's
R.A.F. Bottesford	R.A.F. Grantham
R.A.F Regiment	R.A.F. St. Vincent's
British M.A.R.Co.	R.A.F. Grantham
Cranwell Command	R.A.F. Hospital, Rauceby
Over 35s v. Under 35s	R.A.F. Regiment
Newark	R.A.F. Grantham
R.A.F. Hospital Rauceby	R.A.F. Regiment
R.A.F. Grantham	R.A.F. Grantham
Cranwell Command	R.A.F. St. Vincent's
Lincoln Lindum	

On a June Monday a match against a Combined Aveling-Barford and Ruston-Hornsby XI was also scheduled.