

The Cragg Cup.

Some memories about The Cragg Cup inter village cricket competition - as related by David Wright.



The Cragg Cup was presented to East Winch Cricket Club in 1954 by Mr Cragg, a great cricket lover, who lived at East Winch Hall, (now the home of Adrian Flux Insurance).

The Cup was to be fought for in an inter village, 20 over, knockout competition. Mr Ralph Burman, a resident of the village, was also a cricket lover and became the driving force behind the running of the competition. He had a very good ally in Mr Walter Williamson (known as Wibby).

I only came to the village as a small boy in April 1956, so did not know much of the early beginnings of the competition. However, Ralph Burman's sons, Colin and Peter have been able to fill in the history for me.

A committee ran the Competition, independent of the Cricket Club. This independence and the manner in which was run, was, I believe, why it was so highly thought of in the area.

All matches were played at East Winch on a Tuesday or Thursday evening. This arrangement was a little unusual, being different from the normal home and away format. Neutral umpires and scorers were also used, being brought in from other villages - again a different procedure from other competitions.

Matches started promptly at 6.30pm; if things were a bit slow, Mr Burman would go into the dressing room, clap his hands and say, "come along Gentlemen", and out they would go.

The Cricket Club was lucky enough to have a groundsman, name of Dick Neal, more of whom later. Dick Neal would always make sure that the wicket was in good order - though the outfield might not be quite as good.

The arrangements for the Competition Final were a little different. It was arranged to make a good afternoons cricket and was always held on August Bank Holiday - the first Monday of August.

An early start would be required to prepare the ground. Mr Burman would bring straw bales for seats around the boundary. The ground would be quite full with about 100 cars being counted on occasion.

The match would be a 30 over game, unlike the 20 over games of the knockout rounds. Start would be at 3pm, with tea being taken after the first 30 overs, the second innings being played after tea.

Matches were always held in a good atmosphere. Often a local personality would be invited to present the cup to the winning team, or Mr Burman would do the honours. I do remember Reg Davies, the former Welsh International footballer, and later the manager of the King's Lynn football team, presenting the cup in 1968.

I remember one 'wet' final - in 1960 - when Boughton played North Runcton. Thunderstorms at teatime threatened to put a stop to play, but the ground dried out and they played on. Memory says that North Runcton were not too happy about the situation. It was usual for the match to finish around 7pm and everyone would finish the day at the Carpenter's Arms.

I mentioned Dick Neal, our groundsman. I believe that he deserves much credit for the state of the wicket at East Winch. Dick was a professional groundsman at West Norfolk Fertilisers (the Muck Works) at Lynn.

Very few village clubs were lucky enough to have a 'proper' groundsman to look after the ground; Dick also tended the bowling green in the village.

We were one of the first clubs in he area to have covers for the wicket - nothing special, stack sheeting suspended over seats, just enough to keep the wicket dry.

Most evening I would spend with Dick - we lived next door but one to each other in Station Road. I helped him from time to time after I moved to the village. Gradually he allowed me to work on the pitch, under his watchful eye. He would arrive home from work at about 5.15 pm and if it looked as if it might rain I would dash around to see him and ask if he wanted to put the covers over the pitch - I must have driven him up the wall! Eventually, in 1963, I took over the role of groundsman.

Work on preparing the wicket for the Cragg Cup final would commence about a month before the match was due to be played. Clay would be sieved and spread over the wicket, watered and rolled to get a perfect pitch. During the winter, special clay would be spread over the wicket to keep it in tiptop order.

Looking back to those days, Dick was like a Father to me; I had lost mine before moving to East Winch.

I have recently been told that the Lancashire County team would have liked to get him to join the ground staff at Old Trafford; that shows the value of the man. Dick Neal was undoubtedly a very great asset to East Winch Cricket Club.

East Winch won in 1954 - the first year of the competition and again in 1956. However, it was a further 33 years before the cup was again 'at home'. West Acre was the most successful team - winning on seven occasions.

Below see the results of the competition year by year.

1954 East Winch CC	1955 East Walton CC	1956 East Winch CC	1957 Marham CC
1958 Gayton CC	1959 Boughton CC	1960 Boughton CC	1961 Castle Acre CC
1962 West Acre CC	1963 Heacham CC	1964 Narborough CC	1965 Gayton CC
1966 Runcton Holme CC	1967 Grimston CC	1968 Rougham CC	1969 Bircham CC
1970 Bircham CC	1971 Rougham CC	1972 West Acre CC	1973 West Acre CC
1974 West Acre CC	1975 Bircham CC	1976 Bircham CC	1977 Rougham CC
1978 Bircham CC	1979 Narborough CC	1980 Weasenham CC	1981 Weasenham CC
1982 Weasenham CC	1983 West Acre CC	1984 Lexham CC	1985 Lexham CC
1986 Hillington CC	1987 West Acre CC	1988 West Acre CC	1989 East Winch CC
1990 Burnham Market CC			