

THE CRICKET TEAM IN THE 1930s & 40s

Stratfield Turgis and Hartley Wespall Cricket Club (to give its full title), opened the 1937 season with an away fixture against Hazeley Heath.

The team, composed almost entirely of local residents, read as follows :
Bob Smith (captain), Charlie Barnes, Billy Elliott, Tom Skinner, Bernard Higgs, Jim Stacey, Cyril Taylor, Arthur Turvey, Bill Goring, Leslie Appleton and, - completing the eleven, - myself, aged fourteen and a half, and a new arrival in the village.

We made the short journey by means of two vans, a motor-cycle and a couple of bicycles. The Hazeley Heath ground had been conjured out of the surrounding heathland and was over-grassed, with a pronounced slope running East/West and also North/South

The match turned out to be heavily one-sided thanks to our captain who took eight wickets for under three runs apiece. My own contribution was rather more modest. I scraped together an undefeated two runs and managed to cling on to a catch at square leg. More than ~~sixty~~^{Sixty} years later, I can still recall the sting of the impact and the subsequent flood of relief.

Although our opponents were comprehensively outclassed, I was much impressed by the accuracy and force of their throwing. When I mentioned this, I was reliably informed that the poachers in their team, developed their skills by knocking over rabbits, pheasants and similar illegal targets.

After the match, both teams repaired for refreshment to the nearby Shoulder of Mutton. Our captain patted me on the shoulder, spoke approvingly of my catch and bought me a glass of lemonade. I sat on a bench in the sunshine, listening to the men's talk, and feeling highly pleased with myself.

However, my self-esteem was soon punctured when, for the match against Winchfield, all the regular players were available, and I found myself relegated to the humble position of scorer.