

4. Pinkneys Green Cricket Club in World War Two

In contrast to 1914, attitudes to sport in wartime had reversed in 1939. On a national level it was seen as essential to maintaining morale, capturing the zeitgeist of “Keep Calm and Carry On”. This feeling was reflected by club secretary Joyce Piercey when she addressed the AGM in March 1940:

“although times will no doubt be difficult, we are going to do our utmost to carry on. A number of our stalwarts are in HM Forces and we would take this opportunity of wishing them the best of luck and a speedy return to normal times.

We look to the coming season with confidence, certain that in despite of all the difficulties we will keep the club going along steadily until peace is restored”

The meeting ended with a motion that all past members serving in HM Forces be made honorary members for the duration of the war.

Thus Pinkneys Green embarked on what was to be its first and last war time season. At times it was difficult to raise even one team but with the cooperation of the players of St Marys & Nomads United, and Boyne Hill the club was able to complete most of its fixtures with a fair amount of success winning half of the eighteen matches.

The impact of the global conflict on the club was brought home in August. Firstly a small high explosive bomb was dropped on the thicket at Pinkneys Green. This was followed by the awful news that young all rounder Roy Peacock, whose family home was in Pinkneys Road, had died in a



navigation training exercise. Peacock was a Sergeant in the RAF and was part of an eight man crew on a Wellington Bomber which was last seen diving into the Bristol Channel streaming flames from the port engine. Only one body was recovered. He is commemorated on the RAF

memorial at Runnymede, the Stubbings war memorial and by the elm trees that line the western boundary of the ground to this day.

Cricket on the Green was then brought to a close in December 1940 when the Council received an order from the Berkshire War Agricultural Committee that six acres of the playing field were to be ploughed up and sowed with a spring cereal crop. This was at the instigation of the National Trust. Local farmer Jock Findlay took over the land and carried out the Committee’s orders. He felt this would be unprofitable with disappointing results but the War Agricultural committee accepted the responsibility and confirmed it would be returned to the National Trust when it has been restored after the war. Landlord of the Stag and Hounds, Johnny Walker described the wartime scene as: “Huge corn ricks where once stumps were pitched, and potato clamps decked the boundary”.

He went on to say that: “Great difficulty was experienced in keeping a small area of the ground - unploughed - in order to protect the right to play, being Common land, at any rate such was the thought”.



"Advertiser" Map
Maidenhead Thicket and Pinkneys Green showing sections (shaded) taken over by County War Agricultural Committee.

Amongst those working the land were Italian Prisoners of War. By 1944 a volunteer land army had taken over to clear the thicket for further cultivation and they were visited in July by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth who came to look at their work, starting at Pinkneys Green before going onto Bisham and Shurlock Row. Despite play ceasing for five seasons, the members continued to make the news with their wartime exploits. In September 1942 Bob Carter who had been present at the evacuation of British forces from Norway, was a leading supply assistant on HMS Aircraft Carrier Eagle when it was torpedoed in a convoy battle in the Mediterranean. He owed his life to a shipmate who shouted "swim for it Bob: this means 14 days leave". A nephew of Bert Sealey of Sealey's stores, Bob spent some time back home in Havelock Road before returning to active service and ended the war in Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon). Earlier in 1942, Lieutenant Philip Harrison, a signals officer in the Renaissance corps was reported



missing in Malaya. He was presumed to have been imprisoned by the Japanese but his parents in Pinkneys Road had to wait until August 1943 for this to be confirmed when a scorched post card was found in County Kerry, Ireland following an aircraft accident.

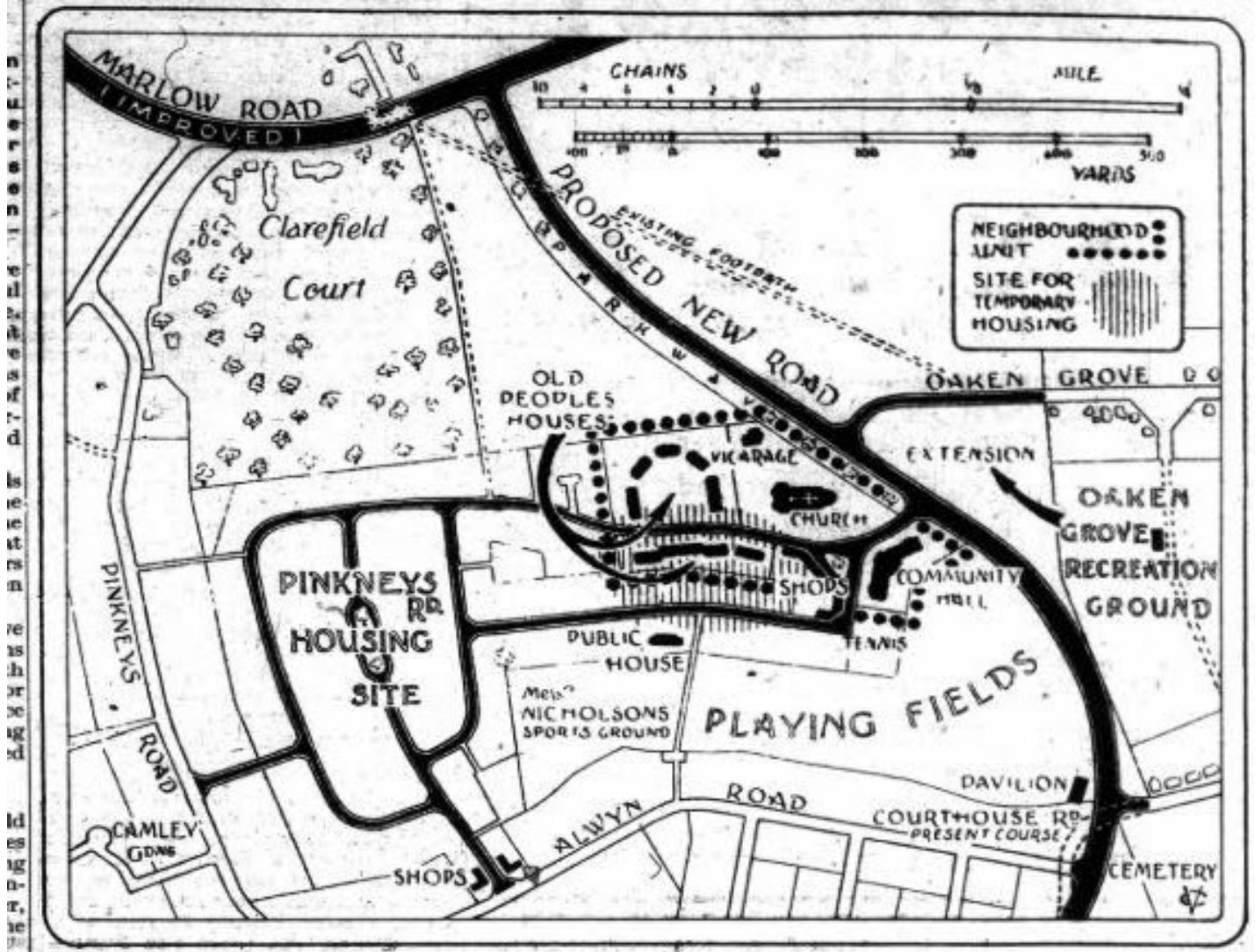
Dennis Mosenthal, son of club President Edgar, was taken prisoner by the Italians at Tobruk in June 1942 whilst serving as a Captain in the 2nd South African Division. He was subsequently transferred from Italy to a German Oflag (a prisoner of war camp reserved for officers). In February 1944 he was reported as acting as a producer of a musical comedy. He returned home safely in May 1945. Future club president Major Gordon Palmer of Fernhurst was awarded an MBE for gallant and distinguished service in Malta in January 1944.



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17th, 1945.

PLANNING A NEIGHBOURHOOD UNIT

SUGGESTED LAY-OUT for PINKNEYS ROAD HOUSING SITE



Following the success of the D-Day landings in the summer of 1944, attention began to be drawn to the post war future of the country. For Maidenhead this involved the construction of large scale social housing with one of the biggest estates planned for Pinkneys Green where 24.57 acres of land had been bought for £4,250 from Farmer Findlay. The roads were to be named after British Bomber planes, with many of the ensuing inhabitants playing a pivotal role in the club's fortunes post war. Initially 100 prefabs were to be built, to last for

up to 10 years until the 280 permanent dwellings were ready to be occupied.

The sight of a V2 bomb bursting over Pinkneys Green (it eventually landed in Cockpole Green) was a reminder that hostilities had not quite finished but signs of a return to normality increased throughout 1945. In June Marjorie Palmer finally married England test star Freddie Brown having called off the engagement before the war.

Having hit the club's first century in 1938, Harry Plummer showed he was equally talented with the ball. Formerly living in Allenby Road and working at

Hewens Garage, Plummer had spent the war as a Staff Sergeant in the 32nd Brigade Workshops (REME). In 1945 he took 14 wickets at an average of 3 for the Brigade cricket team.

Following VJ day a meeting was held at the Waggon & Horses to discuss the revival of the club. It was unanimously agreed to start work on the playing pitch in the anticipation of it being released by the Berkshire War Agricultural Committee. Edgar Mosenthal instituted a fund for the necessary cultivation and preparation. By the time of the AGM in April 1946 the outfield had been resown by Jock Findlay and the ground returned with the full encouragement and cooperation of the National Trust and Berkshire War Agricultural Committee.

Away friendlies resumed on 11th May with a win against Maidenhead & Bray 2nd XI. The first post war match back at Pinkneys Green took place on Whit Monday June 10th. The visitors were long time opponents, Mocatra, the gregarious eleven of taxi drivers from London. President Mosenthal formally re-opened the ground at the tea interval when the players stood in silent tribute to those who had lost their life in World War Two. Despite very bad weather, a good number of spectators watched an enjoyable game, won by the Green by 15 runs.

Bibliography

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