

Emsworth Football Exhibition *Extra*

by Steve Miller

In January 2017, the Emsworth Maritime and Historical Trust invited me to put together an exhibition about local football.

Having left Emsworth over 50 years ago and only been involved directly with football in the town in the 1950s and early 1960s, I wasn't sure that I would be able to do the subject the justice it deserved.

However, I had written a book entitled 'Emsworth Youth Club Football 1958 – 1962' which was based on my personal recollections and backed up by information from numerous newspaper cuttings featuring scores, match reports and team photos that my parents had collected over the years. I had also written narratives about football at Emsworth County Primary School in the early 1950s. I decided to use these as a basis for the exhibition and to start the task of researching data held in the Museum archives to supplement my personal contributions.

Using the Museum's Omeka content management system, I started to gather the relevant acquisition numbers related to 'football' that was held in the archives. The system identified a number of photographs that were available. With help, a collection was scanned and printed ready for the

exhibition. In some instances, the players' names were available, but sadly in a high number they were not.

When collecting the available data, I discovered that since the early 1900s, Emsworth Wanderers, Emsworth Wednesday, Emsworth Brotherhood, Emsworth United, Emsworth Boys' Club, Emsworth Youth Club, Emsworth County Primary School and Emsworth House School all represented the town.

Each season on Saturdays, Wednesdays (when early closing days were still in operation) and Sundays from the middle part of the twentieth century, teams had turned out in the West Sussex League, the Portsmouth League, the Waterlooville and District League, the Lads League, the East Hants League, the Havant Sunday League etc.

From 1909, Emsworth teams played their home games at 'The Diamond Jubilee Recreation Ground' or the 'Common', as it was more generally known to locals. Prior to 1909, records suggest games were played on ground adjacent to Beach Road.

In the 1940s and early 1950s, I recalled there was a very soggy pitch in Seagull Lane (Brook

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Emsworth Football Exhibition Extra continued



Emsworth Wanderers 1908-1909

The team played in the Portsmouth and District Lads League. In 1907-1908 they played their games in land located off Beach Road. In 1908-1909 they relocated to Emsworth Common (Recreation) Ground. The Club's president was Dr L E W Stephens.

Back l to r – E J Hoar (Hon Sec), Rogers, Critchett, Rudland, House, Bailey; Middle l to r – Phillips, Antil, Jenkins; Front l to r – H Gilby, Coombes, A Boutell (Capt.), C Head, F Dridge

Meadow) that was used for some games. But at the time I could find nothing in any available records that would confirm this!

At this stage, it was disappointing that there were so many nameless, but in some cases very familiar, faces staring out of the archive photographs. Nevertheless, the material was now sufficient to fill the ten wallboards and the three display cases in the David Rudkin Room.

The exhibition, 'A Brief History of Local Football' was opened by Ray Crawford, the

ex-Portsmouth, Ipswich and England centre-forward, on the 17th June and ran until the 9th July 2017.

That's when the people of Emsworth came to the fore:

Kenny Jeffery provided a narrative describing his family's involvement in Emsworth football, an account of Emsworth Church Schools in the 1954-55 South East Hants Cup Final and when Emsworth United won the West Sussex League in 1961-62. These were included in the exhibition at the eleventh

hour along with photos of the winning West Sussex League team and Kenny's medals.

Jill Littleton, Janet Searle, Colin Marley, Roy Miller, Norman Bishop, Doug Bishop, Dave Smith, Kenny Jeffery, Bernie Gudge, John Lillywhite and many others identified a number of players in the photographs that were previously unknown. Strange that once the name was identified the memories of the person came flooding back!

Gwen Jones brought in two photographs of a trophy-winning Westbourne team, but the team consisted of players who at one time had played for Emsworth. This supported evidence that there were times when Emsworth could not raise a team to play for the town.

Richard Joy took us into the 1970s when he provided a photograph of the Emsworth team that won the Malcolm Simmons Cup in 1971-72.

The existence of the 'soggy pitch' in Seagull Lane was confirmed by a number of visitors and by two photographs that appeared in 'Brook Meadow Through the Ages' published by The Brook Meadow Conservation Group.

John Shacklady travelled from Southsea to visit the exhibition and provide a photograph and players' names for the Emsworth team that won the West Sussex League in 1967-68.

Jill Littleton organised a get together in the Museum that included her brothers *Rusty* and *Ivan*, *Keith Sadler* and *Sammy Offer* who all played for Emsworth teams in the mid-twentieth century. Jill's sister *Avril* and *Sammy Offer's* wife *Jill* also attended. Jill Littleton was particularly pleased as this was the first time her family had been together for 20 years.

Bessy Offord searched and found her late husband *Jimmy* in the photographs. She proudly showed me photographs of her grandson *Luke* who signed professional terms for Crewe Alexandra in 2016. Emsworth's football connections continues through the ages!

I met up with so many old friends, some for the first time in over 50 years.

So, was it all worth it? Personally, I think it was well worth it!

This wasn't so much about football *per se*: the exhibition's content was more about the people of Emsworth and the town's rich heritage.

Exhibitions of this kind give the Museum the chance to give free access to the public and help to bring past memories into the present.

The attempt to generate new and confirm previously speculative Emsworth football material has been reasonably successful. When fully updated the Museum's Emsworth Football archive will have benefited from the memories and recollections of the people who attended the exhibition.

My thanks go to the EM&HT for giving me the chance to put on the exhibition and to Bernie Gudge for scanning and printing the nostalgic photographs in the 'Pictorial History' sections.

Sadly, the antics/comments of famous Emsworth supporter 'Tuley' Kennett, who allegedly on one occasion implored that he 'heard the linesman wave his flag twice', will forever be consigned to urban myth.