

# More than Cricket?

(Bathley Lane, Little Carlton OS Ref: SK778575)



South Muskham and Little Carlton Cricket Club

When I first moved to this area there was a thriving South Muskham & Little Carlton cricket team. Not being much of a cricketer I could not comment on the quality but the games were thriving social events, as was the after-match debrief, and court, held in the Crown Inn, North Muskham. There was always demand for new players and for 'other-halves' to make the 'cricket teas'; sometimes a competitive venture in itself.

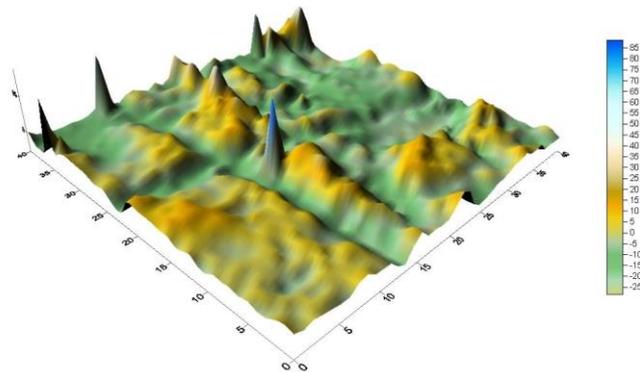
Sadly, the idea of afternoons spent with a village cricket team seemed to have declined, almost to an event of yesteryear. Perhaps it is the hectic lives we all lead or the concept, now, of 'other halves, making the teas!

Sidetracking from the thread of this article, I still chuckle about one new player and his lady-friend. He had been playing for the team a short while and his lady had volunteered to produce the teas for her first time. Tea break came with not a sign of the catering, nor the caterer, so the players were not best pleased. It turned out, the said lady had been apprehended for trying to shop-lift the ingredients in Morrisons. But I digress.

The cricket pitch, now rarely used for cricket, is at one of those sharp corners in Little Carlton, a lovely ground in a very pleasant spot. Around 2009, I was involved with the Muskham Vale Heritage Group and we were looking for any interesting local finds or anomalies. This cricket pitch had one.

In dry weather, a line became visible across the outfield. These 'crop-marks' are a sign of some change beneath the ground. For example, an old ditch, holding moisture longer than the land around, may make the grass stay greener whilst a buried dry ditch can leave a scorch mark. Muskham Vale Heritage Group were asked for their opinion.

The first stage was to carry out a non-invasive survey, known as a resistivity survey. This checks the resistance of the ground to the passage of a small electrical current. The survey is carried out in metre wide rows, a metre apart, grid by grid. The results were quite spectacular with a clear line across with another crossing, almost at right-angles (see below):



Two distinct lines (dips), across the tested area [plus a few odd spikes here and there]

The results proved the existence of the marks, but what could they be? We were not going to dig up the pitch so looked for other clues. There was talk of a Prisoner of War camp in the area so we wondered if this field was included in that area.

From research, the field had not been involved and the camp was actually across the road, now a residential area. In fact, the so-called POW site seemed to have been used as some form of barracks and then housed former POWs who could not return home at the end of World War II as their homeland was in Russian occupation. Many of these former POWs worked in Newark, cycling in from the camp. Some made toys to sell locally and others settled, married and have descendants in the area. The camp did not close until 1949 or 1950.

We managed to track down an archive photograph (below) showing the lines of accommodation huts making up the camp. To the left is the cricket pitch and the cross of cropmarks can be clearly seen. However, other fields show continued cropmarks, particularly noticeable in the lighter coloured image on the photograph.



The full origins of these ancient field systems is not yet known. They are protected by English Heritage and are listed with the earthworks and remains referred to as Little Carlton Medieval Village.

In archaeological terms, the phrase 'Deserted Medieval Village' (DMV), or shrunken medieval village, is something of a catch-all. The Medieval period spans from the departure of the Romans, in 476 AD, to almost 1500. Cynically, 1,000 years of lumps and bumps, most of which have been protected from development without first being clearly dated by excavation.

At Little Carlton, the tiny fields and crofts suggest a very early medieval farming system, before the development of open fields systems which could date from the Saxon and Viking era.

Amazing how a request to look at odd scorch marks across a cricket field can lead to the discovery of a link to the ancient field system, fascinating aerial images, and stories of World War refugees.