

North Muskham Playing Field

How it came about 1975-79



It all began in October 1975 when three village residents, all parents of young children, decided to investigate the possibility of providing a playing field in the village. The first step taken was to arrange a meeting with the Community Development Officer at Newark District Council, Mr E Garner, in order to obtain all possible information re: commencing a playing field project. Subsequently, the three parents namely Vic Armond (still resident in the village on Main Street), Ann Eckersley (then living on Waltons Lane but now in Beccles, Suffolk) and Ann McKenzie (then living in Trent Close but later moved North) decided to form the North Muskham Playing Field Association.

The next step taken was a letter sent in November 1975 to the North Muskham Parish Council by Vic Armond to request joint action towards acquiring a playing field. This letter was considered at the Council Meeting in January 1976 when it was decided by a vote of 3:1 with

one abstention to go ahead with a playing field project and thereby precept a 1p rate. As a direct consequence of this decision the North Muskham Playing Field Association Committee was officially formed in order to support the Parish Council in raising funds.

The first meeting of the Association took place on 27 January 1976 at which the following committee was formed:-

Chairman	Vic Armond
Secretary	Trevor Frecknall
Treasurer	Ann Eckersley
Members	Ann McKenzie
	David Mellors
	Janet King

Subsequently several other villagers were invited to join, namely Tony Patterson, Jim Walker, Margaret Paine and later Joe Crampton who replaced Trevor Frecknall as Secretary.

In March 1976 a generous offer was made by Bob Beard (a Newark District Councillor) of a “free to use” temporary playing field on his land just off Main Street. This offer was gratefully accepted. Meanwhile, plans were being made for various fundraising events and on 25 April 1976, the inaugural event “The Big Kick-off” was held at Muskham Primary School with a ‘Dads v Lads’ football game, a ‘Mums v Girls’ netball game, a pot smashing stall and the launch of a sunflower growing competition.



The temporary playing field on Main Street 2020

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Subsequently, in May 1976, it was decided to attempt a revival of the old Muskham Feast and plans were made to hold the first revival on the traditional second Saturday in September at the temporary playing field. The event duly took place with great support from the village raising significant funds and was therefore repeated in the following years before moving to the newly acquired playing field in 1979 and successive years.



The Half-time Collection Box for Muskham United

During 1977, after several sites in the village had been considered, the Parish Council with significant help from the County Councillor and later M.P. Andy Stewart, were able to purchase a seven acre field on Nelson Lane from Mr Staniforth, a South Muskham farmer. Part of the purchase agreement was for planning permission for the three bungalows which now form the field boundary along Main Street and also included a covenant that no further housing development would take place on the field. At the time of purchase a contribution of £1,000 was made by the Playing Field Association.

There were many other fundraising events during the period 1976-79 including the following:-

- Street cleaning family rota - payment received from P.C.
- Charity stall in Newark Market Place - donated items sold each July
- Barn Dance - held each summer in a barn at Burridge Farm, Crab Lane, courtesy of David Burnett, after cleaning and preparations were carried out by Committee members and friends.

- Sunflower competition - children given young plants in spring to grow and obtain sponsors. Plants were measured for height in September with principal judge Reverend Canon Snow, then vicar of North and South Muskham.
- Cheese and Wine Parties - several held.
- Scrap Metal collection - one-off.
- Social Evenings - Several dances held plus a one off organ recital.
- Social Cricket Team - Friendly matches played with main social base at the Crown Inn (now converted to Crown House) on Main Street, courtesy of landlady Barbara Rennison.



The First Pavilion in the background, 1979

With the new playing field available for use in 1978 the need arose for a pavilion particularly to provide changing facilities for the newly re-formed Muskham United football club whose U15 youth team were using the temporary playing field during their first 1977/78 season. An opportunity arose to acquire a wooden building from the Royal Ordnance site in Newark (now Brownhills Motorhomes) which was being vacated and this was duly purchased for £70, dismantled and transported to the village courtesy of Jim Walkers transport and then re-erected onto brick foundations built by village builder and cricket team member, Mick Howell. All such work was carried out by committee members and friends at no cost, under expert supervision from Jim Walker and Mick Howell.



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Digging the Foundations: Tony Patterson, Vic Armond, Lucie Armond, Jim Wishart, Mick Howell

In June 1979, the 8th and last newsletter of the Playing Field Association was circulated to all houses in the village (mainly by the Briggs family who were then operating a milk round from their Main Street base), announcing that as from Tuesday 26 June the North Muskham Parish Council were forming a Playing Field Management Committee comprising representatives from the Parish Council, the Playing Field Association, Muskham Utd F.C and any other organisation wishing to be involved. Obviously, it made good sense to have the new playing field further developed and managed by a truly representative single committee. It is worth noting that at that time the Playing Field Association had raised £2,500 in its three and half years of existence.



Boys Team Muskham Feast 1981



Muskham Feast 1981



Muskham Feast Fancy Dress

Fundraising by the Association continued for a few more years into the 1980's. However, the Playing Field overall management passed successfully to the Parish Council who have continued to manage the extensive playing field, including the replacement of the original wooden pavilion with halls that are purpose built of brick, the second of which now forms our first class Muskham Rural Community Centre.

Dr VJ Armond

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