



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Cleeve Prior and Football

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#### Early Football

The Cleeve Prior team's origins are unclear and in the 1905-06 season, we see many familiar village names on the team sheet for the Littleton Star team, when they finished in fifth position in the North Cotswold league



Back Row L to R: S Moore, T Cole, W Emms, H Emms

Middle Row L to R: P Wheeler, F Bayliss, W White, C Moore, J Brooks, J Rose

Bottom Row L to R: R Moore, A Hemming, J Ankers, J Harrison, J Ballard

We do know that once formed the Cleeve Prior team played on a ground at the corner of Mill Lane.



Back Row L to R Alfred Selby, Jack Hammond, Fred Ballard, Gordon Selby, Phil Moore, Tom Hathaway, Jack Hiatt, Eric Carter, George Porter

Front Row L to R Jack Ankers, J Watson, Danny Brown, Vic Childs, J Haskins,



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This Team had one Famous star Jack Wheeler

**William John (Jack) Wheeler** (13 July 1919 – 10 January 2009) was a professional footballer who was born in North Littleton,

Jack started playing in village and mid-week football in the Evesham area for teams such as Cleeve Prior Amateurs and Evesham Early Closers, he also played in the Evesham Town reserve team before returning to mid-week football. While at Evesham Early Closers he had a trial with Coventry City. He joined Cheltenham Town in the summer of 1937 and played for them in the Southern League before joining First Division Birmingham as a professional in 1938. He was signed as understudy and potential successor to England goalkeeper Harry Hibbs, but played only five first-team matches – as the youngest goalkeeper in the First Division – before the Second World War interrupted his career. During the war he served in the 6th Armoured Division in North Africa and Italy, but when he returned to his club, future England international Gil Merrick had established himself as first-choice goalkeeper. Wheeler played six matches in Birmingham's Second Division championship-winning 1947–48 season when Merrick was injured, but before the next season started he was transferred to Huddersfield Town.

Wheeler had to spend some time in the reserves before becoming a first-team regular at Huddersfield. They were relegated in 1952, but promoted back to the First Division in the following season. Wheeler and the five defenders in the side (Ron Staniforth, Laurie Kelly, Bill McGarry, Don McEvoy and Len Qusted) shared the distinction of playing every game of the club's 42-match promotion campaign, a league record.

In 1956 he joined Southern League club Kettering Town, where the former England international Tommy Lawton was player-manager. Though the club had struggled the previous season, Wheeler helped them win the Southern League title in 1956–57, playing 47 matches in all competitions. When Lawton took over as manager of Notts County at the end of that season, he asked Wheeler to come with him as coach and trainer.



Statue of Jimmy Sirrel and Jack Wheeler manager and coach of Notts County FC in the 1970's and 1980's. Situated on Meadow Lane near Notts County football stadium.

#### *References*

*Information from Wikipedia*

*Cleeve Prior Village Archive*



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#### Cleeve Prior Football Club - John Lynes

After Jack Wheelers local playing days in the thirties and forties the Cleeve Prior Amateurs disappear as a team

It then took four men enjoying a pint in the Kings Arms one evening in 1964, to come up with the idea to resurrect the club. Thus these men became the founding members and committee of the new Cleeve Prior Football Club.

They were joined by John Lynes and David Yapp [living next to each other on the green] George Cole and Tom Pears [the elder]-all from Cleeve. It should be noted that for the next two or three years the team was entirely from Cleeve Prior with just one foreign signing- a lad from Bickmarsh- a good mile away!



The next job was to find a pitch, and Bert Lloyd, who ran the Manor Farm, agreed they could use the Marlcliffe Field, next to Alf Plummer's House. They set it up with enthusiasm but with little of what one can expect from a new club.

First the pitch had to be mown using borrowed agricultural machinery, and then marked out by John Lynes who did it regularly for the next ten years. During the week the sheep were grazed on the field so an army of volunteers was required each Saturday morning to collect and remove the sheep droppings, It kept the grass short but at some cost.

A shed was procured, but only for visiting teams, Cleeve Prior players changed at home. Gents toilets were simply a corrugated sheet erected behind the shed [no ladies]. All tea and oranges had to be



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brought from Cleeve [there was no water or electricity on the field]. And thus we come to Janet Lynes-John's wife

Loyally Janet- a woman of some determination- took on the not inconsiderable task of providing tea and oranges on Saturdays, but thereafter also washed and ironed the team's kit each week. No one knows if she smiled a little when the team folded!

For two years the Cleeve Prior team played friendlies, but in 1966 they joined the Stratford Alliance league. At one time or another they played teams like Shotton, Alveston, Alcester, Shipston, Wellesbourne, Bidford and Kineton

The football was played in a friendly but ferocious style. Such men as Richard Bacon and John Lynes were the "hard" men in the days when hard but fair was the rule of football. This was accepted and so a player like George Bayliss, who twice broke his leg, still came back for more after each injury.

As time went on selection of players widened and men from Bidford and other villages were recruited. One notable addition to the team was a Dutchman- Hans de Vries. Hans was a film star and was courting a young lady called Jane from the Kings Arms. His notable films were *Shalako* (1968), *Billion Dollar Brain* (1967) and *You Only Live Twice* (1967). He unsuccessfully auditioned for the role of James Bond when George Lazenby took the role, and regularly played for Cleeve whilst courting. He was a good footballer but his greatest success [Hans claims] was to bed Bridget Bardot!

The committee knew that the football team would need funding and this they set to with a will. They held weekly whist drives [which continued well into the 2000's, after the team had disbanded]. Every family in Cleeve Prior and North Littleton was encouraged to join the Hundred Club with weekly prizes and a monthly bigger prize. They held weekly dances in the village hall which were always popular most noticeably with the local constabulary

Each week a couple of coppers would arrive on their regulation bicycles to ensure there was no riot, and to partake of a couple of free pints behind the bar.

Team performance was something that the committee took seriously, and there were awards, normally cups, for the best newcomer and the best individual, with the committee giving them marks after each game. Proper fitness training was provided each week by Mrs Dorricott who lived next to the pub.

The presentations were at a dinner in the Park view in Evesham.

By this time the President was Roy Ravenscroft, and it was his idea that a vice President was needed, who could be better than Sir Gerald Nabarro, the local MP. Sir Gerald was delighted to accept.

For this dinner they asked if they could use a room in the manor and this the farmer allowed.

The dinner was a success especially for Janet Lynes, who was rung by Lady Nabarro to enquire what dress Lady N. should wear, to be appropriate for the evening.



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Jane Lynes   Lynda Lynes   Sir Gerald Nabarro

The team carried on for the last two years under the aegis of David Yapp, but eventually the black



Back row L to R	George Cole	John Lynes	Unknown	Clive Fletcher	Terry Perkins	Richard Bacon	Pete Ballard	David Yapp
Front Row L to R		Terry King	Richard Cox	Brian Jelfs	David Brotherton	Harry Brotherton		

and white stripes & white shorts played their last game in 1975. But nonetheless it had been a successful and accomplished decade for the four men who had the idea while enjoying a pint in their local pub.

Account & pictures from John & Janet Lynes