

Nostalgia

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Anyone for tennis? 100 years of a much-loved local club

A century ago we were providing work for many unemployed First World War soldiers by building public parks and gardens in Norwich and across Norfolk.

Not only did they provide much-needed employment in tough times but many of them offered people the opportunity to get out and about and take part in a range of sporting activities... including tennis.

In 1924 Heigham Park re-opened with 10 courts and work started on Eaton Park in the city which would offer many more courts and across the county recreation grounds and memorial halls were taking shape.

At Blofield five acres and nine perches of land, on the old A47 Norwich to Great Yarmouth Road, had been acquired by 1921 and later conveyed to the parish.

Major William Harker and his wife Margaret, farming landowners of Blofield Hall, commissioned the brilliant architect Edward Boardman to design and build a parish hall as a gift to the community.

The development included a range of sporting activities including tennis courts and in 1924 the Rt Hon Viscount Bury MC, Colonel Walter Egerton Lucian Keppel, eldest son of the 8th Earl of Albemarle, officially opened the War Memorial Recreation Ground and tennis matches were part of the celebrations.

That was the start of Blofield Tennis Club which has played a leading role in so many lives for one hundred years and continues to do so.

To mark the anniversary members have been celebrating this year and have published a delightful booklet looking at the life and times of the club and its members over the decades.

It has been researched, written and designed by BTC member, Chloe Veale, who thanks the help and generosity from so many people who have shared their memories, photographs and archives.

This has resulted in a highly entertaining and informative booklet which is a great example

of community spirit.

We follow the fortunes of the club over changing times, how it expanded, and are introduced to some great characters such as Harry Lincoln and the legendary George "Did" Basey-Fisher.

And why did they call him "Did?" Because he always "did" so much for the club over 50 years. He died in 1999 but his memory lives on.

A memorial seat was unveiled by Did's wife Babs and his daughter Barbara on the occasion of the Basey-Fisher tournament.

And the book states: "Through a century of tumultuous events and social changes, Blofield Tennis Club has strived to stay true to the principles of its founders. It continues to open up the wonderful game of tennis to as many people as possible. This is our story and it's not finished yet."

Blofield Tennis Club: Our Story So Far 1924-2024 is on sale for £5 at Mitchell's Newsagents, Blofield or email your order to: Blofieldtennisclub@btinternet.com



In the spirit of the 1920s, members of Blofield Tennis Club celebrating their centenary in the summer

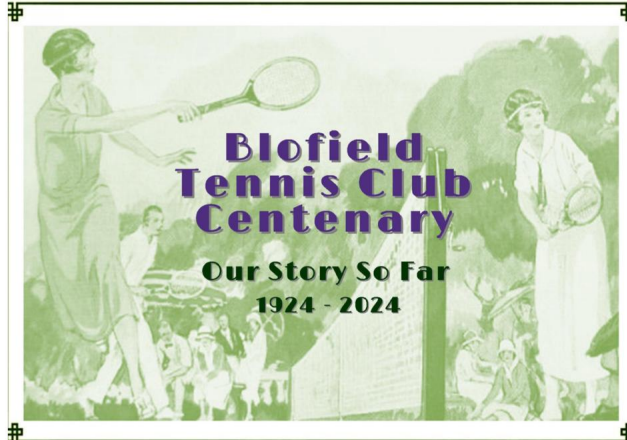
Image: BLOFIELD TENNIS CLUB



The official opening of the Parish Hall and War Memorial Recreation Ground, Blofield, in 1924. Image: Courtesy of the Pilch Photo Archive

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The booklet published to celebrate 100 years of Blofield Tennis Club



Blofield Tennis Club players in 1959

Image: COURTESY OF MICHAEL MOORE

The much loved George 'Did' Basey-Fisher at Blofield Tennis Club in 1959

Image: MICHAEL MOORE



Members of BTC, past and present, with the memorial seat in 2000 to remember their captain George 'Did' Basey-Fisher. His wife Babs and daughter Barbara are seated

Image: COURTESY OF THE PILCH PHOTO ARCHIVE