

## Club Activities

### Under 12s football team

After coming together only last year, the current under-12s team are making good progress. Their first season as a team was a massive learning curve, playing against teams who have already been together for a number of years. They narrowly lost the Invitation Cup Final on penalties having held the lead for almost all the game. In their second season they have already taken points from Ashville, Heswall, West Kirby Panthers and Sutton Strikers. Having spent almost all the previous season propping up the table, all the hard work the squad have put into the training sessions is starting to pay off. They are a good group of lads, who are supported by parents, family and friends. At matches they try to play games in a sporting manner and are a credit to our club.

*Billy Neil, Manager*

### Saturday Night Fever

Joan and Debbie took 15 members to see Saturday Night Fever at the Empire Theatre in Liverpool. The talented dancers in the group were inspired to devise a dance routine which they are hoping to show at the Open Evening in January.

### Referee training

Did you know that there was a massive shortage of referees in amateur football? The Club is helping to change the situation by sponsoring Sean McCarthy, aged 17 and a senior Club member, to train as a referee. Football has always been central to Shaftesbury's existence and it seems very fitting that we help put something back into the game in this way.

### TaeKwon-Do

Shaftesbury runs a very active and successful TaeKwon-Do Club. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 7 members entered the British Open Championships at the Ponds Forge International Stadium in Sheffield. James Morris, Philip Birkett and Christopher Graham entered the under-13 blue and red belt sparring competition, Christopher getting to the Quarter Finals. James Kelly (Junior Instructor) reached the Quarter Finals in the 13-17 under 52kg sparring and Michael Carr entered the 13-17 black belt 1<sup>st</sup> degree patterns. In the adult section Tommy Hayes (Instructor) reached the Quarter Finals in the under-63kg sparring and, last but not least, Sheena Harris got to the Quarter Finals in the Adult yellow belt patterns and won a bronze medal in the yellow and green under 65kg sparring. Very well done all, for your achievements which involved some difficult fights. In February the group will be entering the English Championships.

### New Appointment



Members will recognise Darren Sharrock from his involvement with the Club as a part-time Youth Worker for the past two years. We are very pleased to welcome him as a full-time member of staff since last November. Darren is very enthusiastic about his new role as Youth Support Worker and he is buzzing with ideas about new projects and activities he hopes to introduce. Amongst other schemes Darren hopes to bring our plans for the allotment adjacent to the Club into fruition.

### Remembrance Service

The Club holds a remembrance service every year in honour of those Old Boys who lost their lives as soldiers in the First and Second World Wars. The service this year was well attended by veterans, their families, Old Boys and members of staff and Council. Phil worked hard to create a history display which was a fitting tribute to the men who lost their lives. The display included the Shaftesbury memorial boards, some mementoes, and pictorial and written information about the experiences of serving in wartime.

## Tractor Appeal

The Club hereby launches its tractor appeal. Barry Cavanagh, who maintains our grounds and playing fields to a very high standard, inherited a dilapidated tractor when he took over his post 20 years ago. The time has long past when the tractor should have been replaced. The quality and variety of the playing surfaces is central to Shaftesbury's activities and to its success in attracting users from all over Wirral. The Club has pledged to purchase a new tractor for Barry but this is a very large item of expenditure. We plan to focus some of our fund-raising efforts on building up a tractor fund with an overall target of £20,000.

To kick-start our fund-raising efforts the Oxtan Society has agreed to give us 25% of their annual Secret Gardens Charity donation in 2006. We are very grateful for this generous donation and remind all readers that this event is a very special opportunity for garden lovers and others who can enjoy the numerous associated activities. It will be held on Sunday May 14<sup>th</sup> 2006. Details will be advertised locally nearer the time.

## Shaftesbury remembered

This year marks the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Shaftesbury Youth Cub. As part of the celebrations of such a long and remarkable history, this is the first of a series of articles about former members of Shaftesbury. If you would like to be interviewed or know of someone who has memories of Shaftesbury (recent or distant past) that you think might be of interest, please get in touch with Patsy Taylor or any of the Club staff.



**Len Mitchell** has memories of the Youth Club going back over 70 years. He is one of a still thriving number of men who joined the Club before World War II and speak warmly of the importance of the Club in their own lives. Len, who now lives in Greasby with his wife Win, joined Shaftes in 1934 when he was 9 years old and stayed a member until 1939. This was also the year Len left school just before his 14<sup>th</sup> birthday. In his working life Len, a skilled boilermaker, went on to rise through the ranks at Cammell Laird and Harland and Woolf in Liverpool ending up in the Civil Service when the shipyards closed down.

Here Len tells his own story about Shaftesbury focussing on the annual camp at Penmaenmawr - the significance of which for the lives of the members, their families and the local community is difficult to overestimate and which continues in a different form to the present day,

*I joined the Shaftesbury Boys Club (known as the Shafts) in 1934, having reached the required starting age of nine. The entrance fee was one penny for the whole year. In return you were given a tally with a number on it. You had to produce the tally to gain admittance to the Club and this was strictly adhered to. No tally, no admittance. For security, boys threaded cord through the hole in the tally and tied it with a knot, then tied the other end to the belt on their trousers and slipped the tally in their pocket. There was competition each year to be first in line and get tally number 1. I once managed number 7 which was still quite an achievement!*

*The Club was situated in Thomas Street (backing on to Jackson Street) and open Monday to Friday (7.30pm to 9.00pm) to all boys in Birkenhead but as there were no cars then, and trams and buses cost money, the majority of the boys came from the area surrounding the Club. Also in many cases it was a family tradition from father to son, with the father staying on as an "old boy". In my case all five brothers were members – Dave, Frank, Len, Kevin Ron – and, of course, all the cousins.*

*The Club had a very large hall, which served as a mini gym and provided enough space for indoor games. It was also the venue for concerts and the Christmas entertainment. There was a snooker table and table tennis, but there were age limits on using them. Several rooms held craft classes including Meccano, cobbling, bookbinding and painting.*

*The one that caught my eye was bookbinding. Don't ask me why! Outdoor pursuits such as football and cricket were held on the ground next to Tranmere Rovers under the watchful eye of Owen Bennett, the resident caretaker/grounds man. (Later this became the present site of the Club and grounds: Editor.)*

*The highlight of the year was the camping holiday to Penmaenmawr in North Wales. My first trip was in 1935. The cost of the holiday was five shillings (25 pence today) saved with coppers paid weekly over the year and recorded on the Club's holiday card. Not all the members were able to go because their families were too poor to afford it. I got my pennies by rising at 6am Saturday, going to the gas works and buying around 4 bags of coke (not coca cola or cocaine) for 2d, selling to neighbours for 3d, and saving the profit towards the camping holiday. The holiday took place the third week in July. We all gathered in the hall by 5.00pm on the Friday evening, the Shafts' band at the ready: 20 bugles, 20 kettle drums, 1 bass drum. We had the Shafts' banner and a mascot, Georgie Crawford, dressed in his silks, the same colours as the banner, blue and gold.. There were anything up to 200 excited boys with pillowslips over their shoulders containing their holiday things (no suitcases then). Some lads had only the clothes they stood up in and had no spare ones to take with them Nevertheless less they were happy and waiting with bated breath to hear the command "Forward". Then off we would march, in orderly lines, the band playing, the mascot in front twirling his baton, and all the parents, neighbours and other children lining the street and waving goodbye. We went to camp by train and still excited by our great send-off and the prospect of things to come we sang the Shaftesbury travelling song which we repeated all along the 72 mile journey. (The words are below. Mrs Mitchell tells us Len still taps out the words whenever he visits Penmaenmawr: Editor).*

*We are the members of the SBC,  
Everybody knows,  
We know our manners,  
How to spend our tanners  
We are respected wherever we may go.  
And when we travel on the railway lines  
We open the windows wide,  
We know how to use our feet,  
High tiddlley high ty down the street,  
We are the Shaftesbury boys!*

*The camp was all set up by the advance party, which included Old Boys and Club Officers. Our arrival was greeted by the local residents and we marched for half an hour to the campsite. When we arrived we were allocated to one of about 70-75 Army bell tents and a tent captain was appointed. I was a Captain in later years. We slept on mattresses filled with straw. There was a strict daily routine. For example we were called to meals in the large marquee used as a restaurant, by the head bugler Cubby Bennett to the tune "Come to the cookhouse door, boys"; a call promptly obeyed as were (like most young boys) always starving. The food was good, probably much better than some of the boys got at home. Toilets were a different story, just a hole in the ground, which we called "The Dead Man!" Duties for the day were allocated after breakfast. The rest of the boys would return to their tents to make their beds and tidy up for inspection by the captain and an officer - before a final inspection by a senior officer who would award points which would result in a tent prize at the end of the week.*

*It would take too long to recount all the things we got up to in our free time, like swimming, climbing, sports games and competitions. It is enough to say that a great time was had by all and, on the way home, we would all agree "Roll on next year!"*