

Edgar Wheeler from Accounts told by Reg Wheeler and Gillian Gould

Edgar Wheeler lived on East Side, North Littleton, and was a very strong Birmingham City supporter. He lived with his Aunt Sarah and as Reg said he was "As honest as the day is long". He and his brother Frank were close and did a lot together but both Gillian and Reg confirmed that they fought like cat and dog. On one occasion Gillian remembered that Edgar asked Frank to go and buy some land while he was at work on the railway, but he did not go. They ended up having a fist fight and one of them had their jaw broken. Gillian's father would regularly come home and tell her that Frank and Edgar *"were at it again"*



Photo of Edgar as a youth, long before he became a very eccentric bachelor!

He bought his market garden strip on a 40 year lease from Chris Grey at the Manor in about the 40's. The market gardening plots went all the way to the North Littleton Cross roads, and by this time most had been in their respective families for many years.

Having bought the allotment he had about 2 acres on which Reg said he grew artichokes, onions, beans sprouts peas asparagus and wallflowers. Reg also confirmed that in the main the most important crop from the cross roads to Cleeve Prior was in fact fruit as this gave the best return. He recounts that when he was young, he had a seven week holiday from Blackminster School, and he used to go and pick Pershore plums for the Hemmings. One year he managed to pick 7 tonnes in the holidays which earned him £146 *"that was a lot of money for a kid"*

Reg tells us that Littleton was famous for Asparagus due to the heavy clay salty soil. They used to treat the soil with salt or lime and on many occasions they would take loads of soot which was brought out from Birmingham. They used to let this stand for a year before it was used.

The hovels were made of tin and wood and were built individually by the gardeners themselves, they also used to line them with seed bags to keep them warmer. Edgar and his gardening friends stuck together and would all meet together in one hovel at a lunch time to eat their bread and cheese, and to brag about who had the best produce. Gillian recounts how ever Sunday afternoon after dinner all the gardeners from Littleton and around used to walk line abreast down the Road to Cleeve,

"As there were not many cars about in those days, where they went I do not know but in those days the pub would not be open,. One man called Stan, over the bank there, used to have a lot of men sitting around, and there was another man from middle Littleton a Gisborne used to cut the men's hair in a shed along the road"

The different Stories about Edgar tell us he was a bit of a recluse, Gillian said he never had much to say. He seemed to trust every one and several times became the victim of some scams. One time he had a traveller come to decorate for him, and he took him to the bank and made him get out a cheque for over 700 pounds, all his money. When he told Reg, he rang the police and they tracked the man down and ripped up the cheque. He then borrowed some money from another Lady, which he knew he had to pay back, but she made him put her name on the deeds of his house, Reg had to get that taken off too, he was rather easily taken in.

He was truly eccentric and one time took his stairs out of his house and put them up against an apple tree, he then used to use an ordinary ladder to go upstairs to bed.

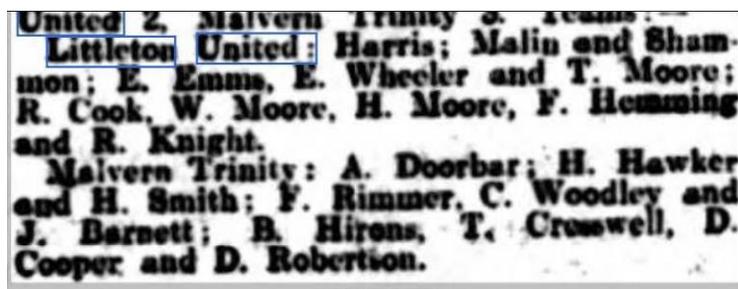
Eventually he had to sell his house and move in to Durcott Lodge Home in Evesham. The house went up for auction, and they started the sale at £10 fortunately the bidding went on and it eventually sold for £27,000. He told Reg one time that he was impressed with the home as he thought he had to pay them, but he said *"they pay, me look in that drawer"* In the drawer was over £1500 . It transpired that he had the money in his pocket when he fell out of a tree. He was taken to the hospital and they gave it to the care home to return to him. He did not understand this, and thought the care home were paying him to live there.

This was not the last time he was to fall out of a tree. Gillian tells how in the early 90's he was again up a tree and he fell and had a heart attack. His friend Norman Willets put him in a wheel barrow and wheeled him to the ambulance on the road. She says that he did not last long after that and he died in 1993.

"He was a bit eccentric, two pence short of a shilling, when we used to go round to North Littleton I will always remember him just stood in the doorway of his cottage, as he would reach the top, he never had much to say, he just grinned."

Evesham Journal archive

Unfortunately football news reports don't say who the correspondent was, but Edgar does turn up as a club secretary in 1929 (reporting may have been part of this role) and he appears to have played for the team in October 1930. Both a B. Wheeler (probably the Benjamin Wheeler on the 1941 farm survey map) and L. Wheeler turn up too – they're not siblings or Edgar's father, so would be interesting to know how they were related.



Interestingly, Edgar was caught riding a bike without lights in 1941, which suggests he might not have served during WWII. Market gardening was a reserved occupation over the age of 25, so he probably wasn't called up. This raises the question though

of where his land was, as he's not on the 1941 farm survey map for Cleeve Prior or the north side of North Littleton.

LIGHTLESS BICYCLE. — Edgar Wheeler, 86, Deacle-place, Evesham, was fined 15s. for cycling on the Evesham-Offenham-road without lights.—Defendant told P.C. Parsons "the front light was all right until I got over the bank." When asked why there was no red rear light he said. "I was unable to get a battery, so I left the rear light off."