

Shevington Recreation Ground

2011 marks the ninetieth anniversary of the gift of the land in the centre of Shevington as a recreation ground. The 'old trustees', as the trust deed describes them, were appointed in June 1921. The land for the recreation ground – some 6.5 acres - was the gift of John William Ainscough and was to be held in trust, for ever, for 'any purposes calculated to promote the spiritual moral intellectual or physical welfare and the reasonable recreation advantage or benefit of the residents of Shevington.'

It was a generous gesture by a local landowner and the Recreation Ground continues to provide what the trust deed intended.

Shevington Football Club has evidence that the ground was used for football games as early as 1904 and believes that games were played there even before that date.

The Recreation Ground and the Memorial Garden and Park have created between them a green space in the middle of Shevington which should be the envy of every community; it provides recreation and a breathing space for everyone.

The Football Club has used the ground to provide a playing space for fifteen teams, from under eights, under nines, and teams at each age from ten to seventeen, two adult teams and a veterans' team – for the over thirty-fives!. It has achieved FA Charter Standard and has a thoroughly researched and very well planned development programme . Every season the club provides at least eleven thousand hours of recreation for players of all ages.

Particularly in the past few years the club has engaged with thousands of players and given much to the whole community.

But this is only one part of what the Recreation Ground can do and has done during the more than ninety years of its life. Some older residents remember there being tennis courts on the east side of the ground, near the church yard hedge; some remember cricket matches taking place. In the past forty years it has been used for the village carnival, with stalls, floats, welly throwing competitions and tug o' war contests. Local funfair operators visited periodically until one damaged the ground very badly and necessitated expensive repairs – paid by the trustees!

It is the word, 'paid' that is key here. Keeping the ground in good repair and fit for all the purposes for which it is used does not happen without cost. Shevington Parish Council offers generous help with the up-keep and the Football Club fees

and contributions in kind from its volunteers are a significant help. The Charity Commission, which supervises the conduct of all charities, has made it clear that the trustees can never again sell any of the land to raise capital for the ongoing maintenance of the recreation ground – something that happened in 1996 – 97, when land was sold to build apartments in the northwest corner of the ground.

Over the years very many volunteers have helped to maintain and improve the quality of the playing and recreation surfaces; grants have been obtained for landscaping and footpaths and many people have given their time to tidy, plant shrubs and trees. The Community Association, Britain in Bloom volunteers and members of the community who take pride in the ground have all helped.

The Trustees are grateful to all those who have helped to maintain and improve the Recreation Ground: it is a great gift to the community. But the gift came without the financial means to sustain it without outside help. The Football Club, the Community Association and the Parish Council have all helped and continue to help, but what will ensure that the ground is sustained for the benefit of all is as many volunteers as possible doing what ever jobs they can, no matter how small, to keep this open space open and to be enjoyed.