

From "The Citizen" Tuesday 12 May 1891:

THE SPA CRICKET FIELD

A CRITICAL STATE OF AFFAIRS

We gladly accede to a request to give publicity to the following correspondence which has passed between Messrs. A. W. Vears and H. J. Boughton:-

My Dear Boughton,-

Referring again to our several conversations respecting the present condition of the Spa field, I am strongly of an opinion that we should at once call together a representative body of the various clubs connected with the Spa, or say, if you like, the full committees of the various clubs, and discuss the situation.

We have now undoubtedly arrived at a climax. The Cricket Club or the Football Club must go. Personally I much regret this, and very much wish the field was a bit bigger so that we could avoid playing football on the cricket pitch, and that the two clubs might go hand in hand on the same field. But this is impossible, and we must face the inevitable. It would be manifestly unfair, looking at it from a football point of view, if the Cricket Club, who are tenants of the ground, were to give the Football Club notice farther on in the summer, or just before the commencement of the football season. That, I think, is a great reason why action should be taken at once.

It is easy enough to point out many reasons why the Football Club should have a ground of their own. I maintain it is to their direct interest to secure a ground over which they would have entire control; and that they can never have on the Spa. It is quite possible public opinion will be in favour of football being continued on the Spa, because the Gloucester public have been very much spoiled by having such a central ground, and would probably be a bit horrified at first at having to go, say half a mile to the football ground. But all the real supporters of the game would soon get over this feeling in the knowledge of the fact that a properly enclosed ground is necessary for the future welfare and prospects of the club. Football has become such an institution in Gloucester that I question if it would not be well, after the committees have met, to invite a sort of public meeting to consider the matter. Someone must take the initiative, so I address this letter to you with full permission to make what use of it you like, together with your reply.

Faithfully yours,

A. W. VEARS

25, Brunswick Square, May 8th 1891.

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My Dear Vears,-

I am in receipt of your letter of the 8th May, but absence from home has prevented my replying to it before to-day.

I may begin by expressing my entire accord with the contents, and I do not see any better way of solving the difficulty we are in than by a joint meeting of the two committees. I understand from Mr. Smith that a Cricket Committee has been summoned for tomorrow (Tuesday) night for the purpose of discussing the state of the field, when, I take it, the matter will be thoroughly thrashed out from a cricket point of view, and suggestions made for further consideration by the joint meeting, which might be held in the early part of next week.

I will, for a few moments, refer to the ground as a cricketer, and, in doing so, I say unhesitatingly it has been absolutely ruined by football, and can never be of any real use again until it has been re-turfed, whilst it must be plain to everyone that if it were re-turfed now the new turf would be cut up irretrievably the very first time football was played on it. It is useless attempting to disguise the fact that there can be but little probability of the Gloucestershire v. Surrey match being played here in August, and if we lose this match Gloucester may as well bid good-bye to county cricket for ever. I am, and have always been, averse to taking a pessimistic view of things, but I really see little prospect of bringing off all our own first and second XI. matches this year.

Now, as regards the Football Club, I feel with you that it would be unfair and – having regard to the cordial relations which have hitherto existed between the Cricket and Football Clubs – unsportsmanlike in the extreme to delay giving the club notice to quit a day longer than we can possibly help; and I even go further than this, and say that seeing how popular the winter game is with the citizens, we ought not to give such a notice unless we can find a suitable field elsewhere upon which the Football Club can play. A ground over which the Football Club would have entire control all the year round would be of great advantage to them, and if once procured – as it might be by a very small pecuniary sacrifice on the part of the thousands interested – it would, I am sanguine enough to believe, be a source of profit to those who found the sinews of war.

I gather from the last sentence in your letter that you anticipate my thinking it worth while to publish it, together with my reply, and this I will do in the hope that it may lead to useful suggestions being made by some of the many readers of the *Citizen* who take an interest in two of the best games ever played by Englishmen.

Yours very truly,

HUBERT J. BOUGHTON.

Linden Grove, May 11th, 1891

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From "The Citizen" Thursday 14 May 1891:

CORRESPONDENCE

"FOOTBALL ON THE SPA"

(To the Editor of THE CITIZEN.)

Dear Sir, -

After reading the correspondence published in your issue of Tuesday evening between Messrs. Vears and Boughton with reference to football on the Spa field, it is quite apparent from a football point of view that a field over which the club could have entire control should be procured, so that it may be fenced in, and thereby greatly increase the gate money.

The question now comes as to where there is a suitable field. It has often occurred to me that the field near the Kingsholm end of Denmark-road, opposite Messrs. Wheeler and Son's entrance gates would be most suitable. There are several advantages: the trams pass within fifty yards of it; the field could be easily fenced; it is well drained, and there is no danger of it being flooded. The field in question, I have been informed, is the property of the Charity Trustees, which body is composed of business men, who would be, I am sure, pleased to accept the club as tenants, as they would be prepared to give a higher rent than could be secured for land used for agricultural purposes only, and at the same time afford enjoyment to the many thousand citizens who flock to witness the favourite winter game. Thanking you in anticipation,

I am, yours faithfully,

A LOVER OF THE GAME.

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From "The Citizen" Saturday 16 May 1891:

CORRESPONDENCE

"FOOTBALL ON THE SPA."

(To the Editor of THE CITIZEN)

Dear Sir, -

Your correspondent who signs himself "A Lover of the Game," has evidently been misinformed respecting the drainage of his would-be football field in Denmark-road. Had he lived in the neighbourhood as long as I have, not a few times would he have seen the field in question almost entirely under water; and I believe I am right in saying that this was the reason which a few years ago induced the occupier of the land

(which till then had been used for agricultural purposes) to lay it down. I might mention other disadvantages which his field possesses, but this alone will suffice to show that it is not at all suitable for the Gloucester Football Club. Thanking you in anticipation,

I am, yours faithfully,

A RESIDENT IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

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From "The Citizen" Monday 18 May 1891:

CORRESPONDENCE

"FOOTBALL ON THE SPA"

(To the Editor of THE CITIZEN.)

Dear Sir, -

Your correspondent who signs himself "A Resident in the Neighbourhood," whose letter you published in your issue of Saturday, is evidently not a lover of football, and does not therefore wish to see the game played near his residence, as his argument with reference to the drainage of the suggested field is scarcely correct. A resident whose house overlooks the field informs me that he has seen the Spa field half under water, and at the same time the field in question was quite dry. The field has a good fall towards a ditch, which skirts the lower end (and is never full of water, as it runs off faster than it accumulates) and is carried into the sewer on the Tewkesbury-road; hence my stating that "the field is well-drained." As to your correspondent's remark with reference to the field being laid down some short time ago because of it being frequently flooded, it is strange that for some 35 years, to my knowledge, this land has been in the occupation of the family of the present occupier, and that until recently they planted alternately potatoes, wheat, and other crops (which certainly cannot be grown with advantage in a field subject to flood) seeing that as a market gardener the late Mr. Roberts had few equals. If the other "disadvantages" which your correspondent says he has in store are as weak as the one he brought forward, I am afraid his opinion is not worth much, and in conclusion I may say that if the Gloucester Football Committee have to procure a ground in or near the city to which there are no resident objectors, football in Gloucester may be considered a thing of the past.

Apologising for further troubling you,

I am, yours faithfully,

A LOVER OF THE GAME.

May 16th, 1891