

How old Jock missed his Wembley trip!

CARING for the players and grass alike at Wycombe Wanderers has been the business of Jock Sheppard for the past 11 years.

He is the groundsman at Loakes Park, as well as trainer to the team during the season.

Jock, who wore the colours of the Blues many times just after the war, has been watching over the players since 1958. A decade later he became the club's groundsman.

He started as trainer to the team in the 1958-59 season. He had been asked the year before but declined the offer, and missed out on a trip to Wembley for the Amateur Cup final.

One trip to Wembley down, Jock started treating the players with his magic sponge. He may not have been down Wembley Way with the team yet, but perhaps his day will come.

Back garden

In 1968 he became the club's groundsman. They were looking for someone to take the position and Jock, who played cricket for Wooburn Narkovians and helped look after the square there, said he would do it.

From that moment to this he has cared for Loakes Park like it was his own back garden.

Surprisingly it is not the slope on the ground that causes the biggest

MIKE ALLEN meets a man for all seasons

problems for Jock, although it can be trouble "walking up the slope when it is very wet".

The biggest headache is a chalk ridge which runs through the middle of the playing surface. The grass does not like growing on it, and any water running down the hill collects until it is high enough to pass over the ridge.

So, contrary to popular opinion, the bottom of the slope is not always the wettest part of the pitch.

Jock was born in Scotland — Glasgow to be precise — but moved down to Wycombe when he was 15.

He brought with him a broad Glaswegian accent, but had lost it within four or five years. However, he retained his pet name.

He was football mad as a schoolboy, and after hours of practice was able to use his left foot as effectively as his right. This enabled him to play in a team as wing-half on either side of the pitch.

During the close season Jock cuts the grass and generally tends Loakes Park, and during the playing season he checks the kit, fills the baths for players after matches and training, and of course, looks after the players themselves.

