

Lizzy Ashcroft Collection

English National Football Museum, Manchester

Credit: Steve Bolton
(ed. Katie Musgrove)

Women's Football History at the Museum

The English National Football Museum committed itself to attempt a 50% representation of women. Given the spatial constraints, lack of pre WW2 memorabilia and a historical emphasis on the men's game this included things like female voice overs to male exhibits. However, with a grant from the Association of Independent Museums the museum was able to open the Lily Parr Gallery July, 2021. With Steve Bolton, Lizzy Ashcroft's grandson's permission a number of items have been loaned from the 'Lizzy Ashcroft Collection' to the museum.



1921 St Helens Ladies FC - Medal



This is the medal from Lizzy Ashcroft's debut game when she was aged just 16 on 20th April 1921. Steve found this in a box of tat (old buttons, nails, etc) which had been lying forgotten in his uncle's garage loft for 35 years. Notice the beautiful St Helens, Birmingham and Cheshire* Crests on the front (* Cheshire dropped out at the last minute and were replaced by Stoke...).

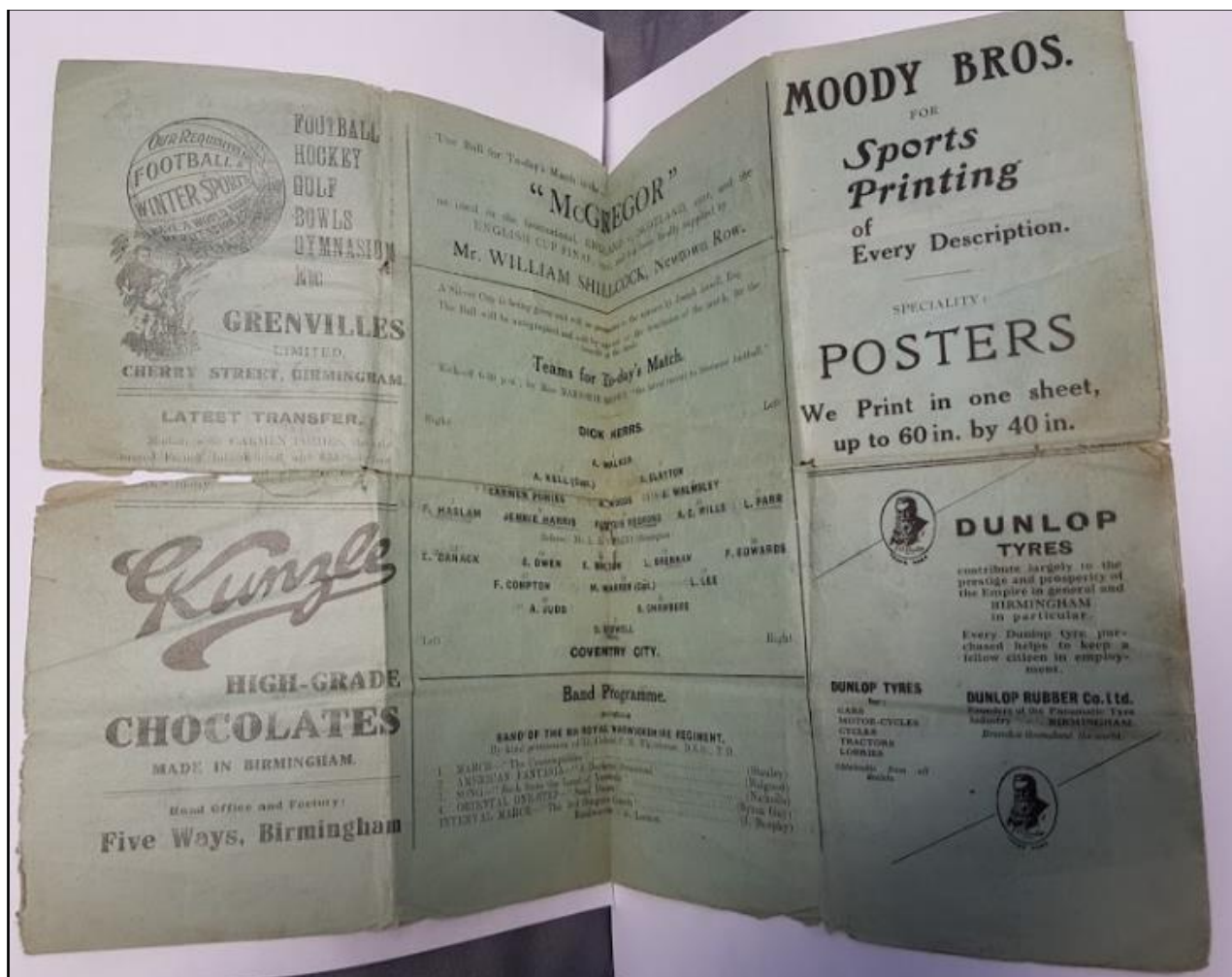
1934 Royal Lancashire Agricultural Show - Bolton - Medal



Monday 6th August 1934 - Crowd 10,000
Dick Kerr Ladies FC 1 v 2 Belgian Ladies FC

The Belgians came over for a tour and played 7 games. They lost 6 and won 1. The game was at the Royal Lancashire Show and it was played in the main show ring. A tremendous downpour turned the pitch into a quagmire and the women were commended for their pluck and determination. The crowd was reported at 10,000 and the Belgian joy when Rachel Donvil slotted in the winner at 1-1 knew no bounds. Both teams received an ovation at the end of the game.

1921 Dick Kerr Ladies FC v Coventry Ladies FC - Football Programme

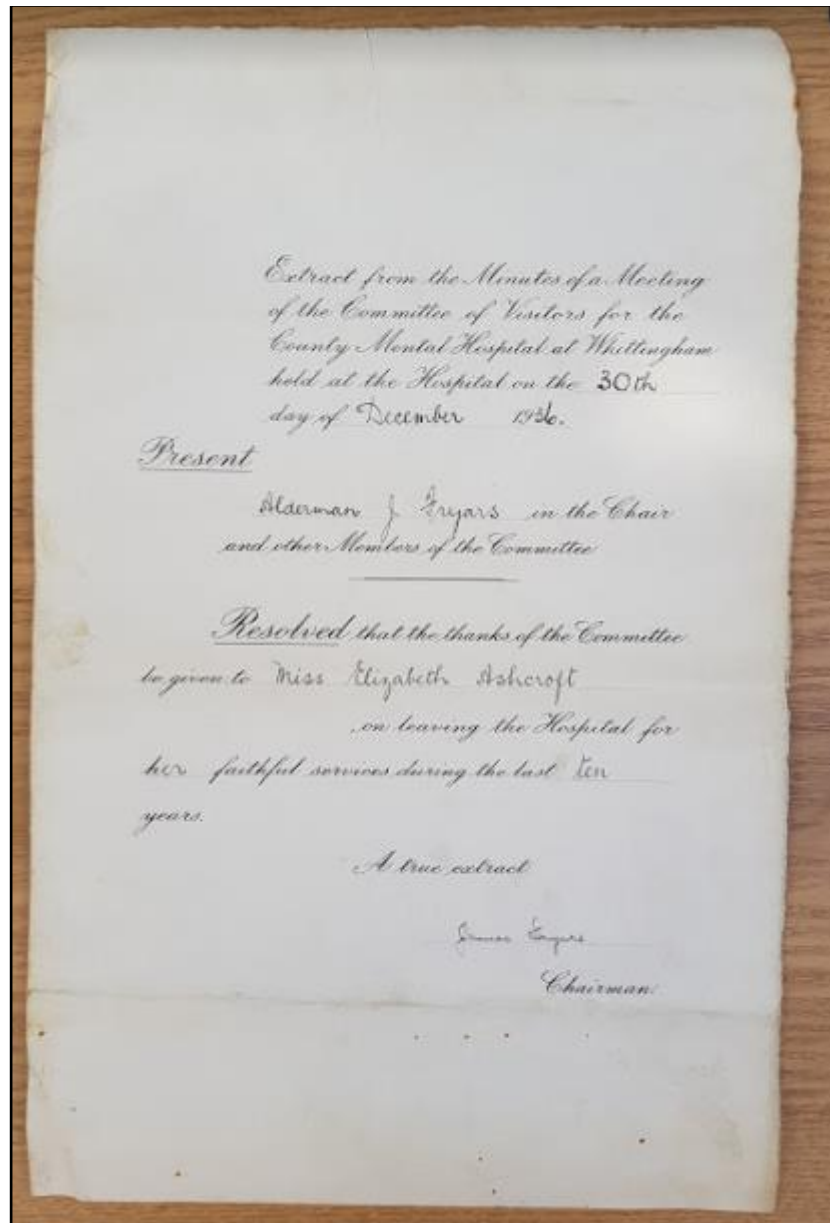


Thursday 25th August 1921 (1921-1922 was the infamous 'Ban 'season...)

Dick Kerr Ladies FC 4 v 0 Coventry Ladies FC at St Andrews, Birmingham

Dick Kerr Ladies programmes are rare and valuable. This one from the ban season is one of only a few known to exist from the 'Ban 'season. (The English FA Ban took place on December 5th 1921)

1926-1936 Whittingham County Mental Hospital - Parchment to mark 10 Years Service



This letter thanks Lizzy Ashcroft for 10 years service at the County Mental Hospital (CMH). The Whittingham CMH was very important to the Dick Kerr Ladies. It operated like a sports university for the nurses. By 1938 articles are describing the full strength Dick Kerr Ladies as being made up of 7 nurses from Whittingham with Lizzy Ashcroft being one of them from 1926 to 1936.

**1925 Dick Kerr Ladies FC - 'World Champions' - Postcard with Alfred Frankland instructions
(Lizzy is holding on to Lily Parr who is holding the ball...)**



Text on Rear

"Final Notice" "Don't forget sweater, etc. Carry extra shorts."
"Stafford June 8 Wednesday" "Miss Ashcroft, Miss Knowles, Miss Crossly"
"Your meeting at Starchouse Square very prompt at 1/15 pm."
"Have all stays, Boots, jerseys, shorts, etc, AF"

Lizzy Ashcroft is holding onto Lily Parr who is holding the ball. The Stafford Infirmary Pageant and Carnival had organised for the game to be played on Stafford Rangers Football Ground to raise funds for the hospital. One week before the game the Staffordshire FA invoked the ban and a new ground had to be found. Lieutenant Colonel HP Hunter the Chief Constable of Staffordshire Police came to the rescue and the match was played at the Police Sports Ground at Silkmore Lane. The Dick Kerr Ladies defeated the 'Rest of Lancashire' by 8 goals to 2. Alfred Frankland took to the press to encourage people to attend the game and express his frustration with the FA.

1932 On board L'Oise French Naval Gunboat in Belfast Harbour with Carmen Pomies - Photo



What a fascinating and unique photo. As part of a French Navy exercise four frigates were moored in Belfast Harbour. The sailors were given shore leave to watch the game at Grosvenor Park where France won by 4 goals to 3 in a keenly contested game. The crowd of 15,000 is somewhat of a record and it was many, many years before that was broken. The French touring party was given the five star treatment which included a tour of the harbour and a visit to the flagship L'Oise. The photo above shows: Naval Officer, Monsieur Janvier, Lizzy, Darreau sister, Andree Gaukler, Carmen Pomies.

1933 Whittingham CMH 'Tower of Friends 'with Lily Parr/ Margaret Thornborough - Photo



Text on Rear

Good souvenir. Whittingham 18th of August 1933

From Steve Bolton, grandson of Lizzy Ashcroft:

“Three years ago I finally managed to get hold of one of my younger cousins and we opened my Uncle’s garage in Bilsborrow. I was hunting for a legendary suitcase and the first thing we saw in the rafters was a suitcase. 200 photos toppled out including the one above. It was many months before I assimilated all the information and realise just how unique and important this photo was. Quite simply, this is just a bunch of mates larking around and having the time of their lives. It is a beautiful sunny day in the beautiful grounds of the old County Mental Hospital. They are touring around, playing football which is the game they love and going to Mayoral receptions as the honoured guests.”

Top: Lizzy Ashcroft, Friend, Andree Gaukler, Lily Parr, Margaret Thornborough

1934 Empire Services Bowls Club - Margaret, Carmen, Lizzy - Photo



From Steve Bolton, grandson of Lizzy Ashcroft:

“This is my favourite. When I opened the three suitcases which had been lost for 35 years I only had one photo of my granny. I remembered her as an old lady. When I first saw this photo I could not have identified granny. Women wearing trousers continued to be ‘controversial’ in the UK even in the 1950s and 1960s... This is 1934 and don’t they look fabulous?”

1934 Empire Services Bowls Club - Posing with Belgian side - Photo



These are the top sportswomen of their day. Jenny Toitgans as well as being the Belgian Captain was an olympic discus thrower. What a fabulous and beautiful photograph, they look so confident and emancipated.