

## Bluntisham & the game of Bandy

Bluntisham and Earith can rightly claim to have invented the game of Bandy a precursor to what is now Ice Hockey. A game played on frozen fens, by teams wearing home made Bandy skates, tree branches as Bandy sticks, an Indian rubber ball and absolutely no protective clothing whatsoever other than a "warm pair of trousers".

The Tebbutt family who lived in Bluntisham for generations are recognised as being integral to the development of the game and spreading its popularity across Europe and Scandinavia. The Barograph at the centre of the village was erected in the memory of Charles Prentice Tebbutt and his wife Mary Goodman.

To understand the history of the game of Bandy, it is important to understand how the Tebbutt family came to live in Bluntisham. How their passion for the sport as a family helped cement Bury Fen in the sporting archives and the creation of a sport still recognised by the International Olympic committee today.



Bury Fen Bandy Club - Courtesy of Frances Tebbutt

## **1066 and all that!**

After 1066, William the Conqueror introduced the Feudal system in England, which meant that all land belonged to the King. This land was leased to his lords, Knight's, Bishop's, Abbot's, or Priors. They reimbursed the king for the land via money, goods, men for fighting and religious direction. These units of land were known as manors & their "owners" on behalf of the King were the lords of the manor.

Various areas of Bluntisham came under different manors, one of which was Barnfield Farm & this manor was part of the Bishop of Ely's manor. The farm passed between tenants and the first recorded tenant being Henry Farr in 1609.

The English civil war saw changes to the "management" of the Manorial system. In 1654 parliament created a commission to confiscate lands from the Dean & Chapter of Ely & the land was sold to Giles Calvert of London.

During the restoration the manor was restored to the Dean & Chapter, who then let the land on longer terms to tenant farmers. The land was finally sold via the ecclesiastical commissioners in 1870.

## **The Tebbutt Family Arrive**

By the late 1700s the tenant farmer at Barnfield Manor was William Prentice. William was born in Aldwinkle in Northamptonshire in 1727. He appears to have moved to Bluntisham by 1750, when he married Ann Crouch. Together they had 2 sons together Matthew born in 1751 and John born in 1756. Tragically, John died in 1759, Ann in 1762 & Matthew in 1782. Matthew had married Blanche Freeman in 1774. Blanche was widowed at 29 & in her will of 1808 established the Blanch Prentice Charity which is still active today.

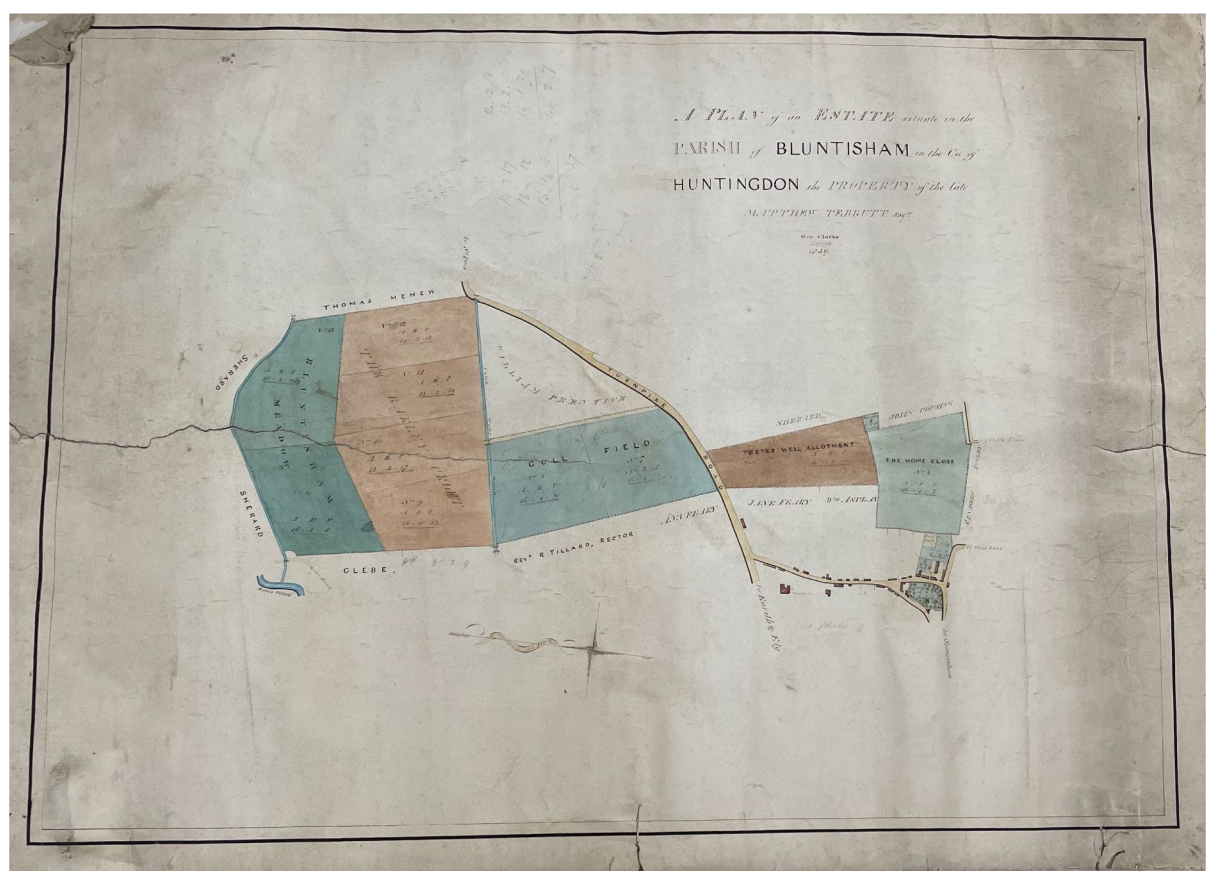
All of this sadly left William Prentice a widower and no heirs and it is for this reason that we can only presume that he left his farm to William Tebbutt, his nephew & the Tebbutt family arrived in Bluntisham. William Tebbutt (1767-1815) was the son of Jonas Tebbutt and Mary Prentice, the sister of William Prentice and was born in Northamptonshire.

William Tebbutt was already married to Ann Thompson (1770-1834) when he inherited the land & house in Bluntisham, that house was The Walnut Trees. William & Ann had 4 children, 3 of whom were born in Bluntisham, the eldest son being Matthew Tebbutt born 1798.

William continued to farm the land and added more property and land. In 1784 Mr Cox Feary had started to establish the Baptist Church in Bluntisham. Initially established by 26 residents of Bluntisham & surrounding villages, all services had been in a barn but in 1787 the first stone of the meeting house was laid by Cox Feary. William & Ann Tebbutt were to join the church. Ann on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1803 & William on January 18, 1804, & thus the strong links between the Tebbutt family and the Baptist Church were established.

William Tebbutt and Mr Coxe Feary appear to have been close friends. William Tebbutt died in 1815. It is reported that whilst in Cambridge he was kicked on the leg by a horse at the Pickerel Inn and died from a fever in January 1815. In the book "A Century of Village Nonconformity" (Dixon) it reads: "In January 1815 Mr Feary sustained a heavy loss in the death of one of his best friends Mr William Tebbutt."

Mathew Tebbutt, William's eldest son, inherited the farm in and farmed the land until 1827. With it then being taken over by his brother-in-law William Asplan. William Asplan farmed the land until 1847 when it was leased to Charles Prentice Tebbutt.



Bluntisham Land Ownership 1839 - courtesy of Frances Tebbutt



## Charles Prentice Tebbutt & Family

Charles Prentice Tebbutt, 1824-1910, was born in Bluntisham, the son of Matthew Tebbutt and his wife Mary Ann Clark. Charles was the eldest of seven Children, five sisters and one younger brother.

Charles went on to marry Mary Goodman, the daughter of Joseph Goodman of Houghton. Joseph Goodman was the business partner of Potto Brown at Houghton Mill, where the mill prospered under their management, producing a tonne of flour per hour which was sold as far as London and Leicester.

Charles and Mary went on to have seven Children together: Neville Tebbutt (1852-1929), Sidney (1854-1927), Jessie Tebbutt (1857-1859) Arnold Tebbutt (1858-1940), Charles Goodman Tebbutt (1860-1944), Louis Tebbutt (1862-1947) and Alice Tebbutt (1868-1957.)

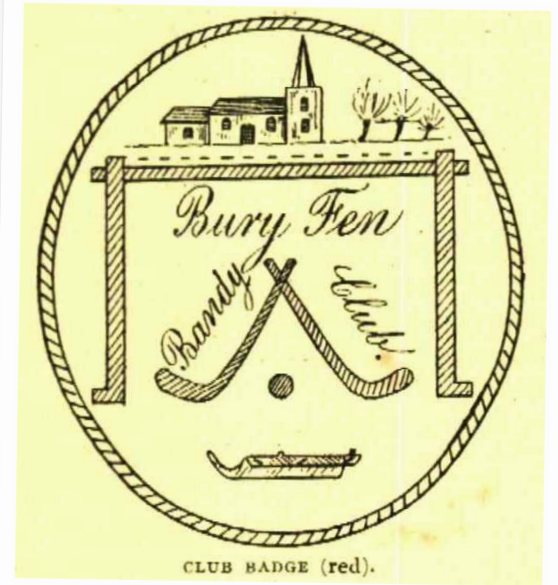
Charles Prentice Tebbutt was a landowner, bank manager and JP. He was a prominent member of the Baptist church. He was heavily involved in the community, school and church throughout his life. He was also a keen sportsman and skater. He is credited with inventing the sport of Bandy or certainly being a pioneer in establishing the rules of the game and with his family spreading its popularity.



Tebbutt Family in 1899 - Courtesy of Frances Tebbutt

## Development of the game.

In the “handbook of Bandy” published in 1896, it states that up until the 1850s Hockey on Ice was largely a fenland pursuit. Our area was blessed with several natural “bandy” fields, in that there were and still are several waterside meadows. The fens that sit alongside the Ouse River are Little Fen & Bury Fen. Back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the practice during winter floods was to open sluice gates & allow these fens to flood. This muddy water leaving a fertile sediment on the land. It was while water was left on the land and the weather cold enough that the fen froze & you were left with a track of frozen ice perfect for skating and a game of hockey on ice. To further improve the ice, more water from the river was let through the sluice to cover the existing ice & create a near perfect sheet of fresh ice.



So Bluntisham & Earith find themselves in the perfect location to become a centre for skating and Bandy. At this time before the railway, Earith was a little port on the river, & watermen were more than keen to don their skates and join the game or skate along the Fen drains to Sutton, Mepal & Welney in search of opponents. This combined with a local enthusiasts created the perfect circumstances for the game of Bandy to thrive.

Bury fen was by far the most superior area, due to its size & location of the local team were reported to have never been defeated. However, there were no formal rules. Goals formed by twigs or coats on the ice, Bandy sticks of all shapes & sizes and no formal matches, leagues, or defined rules. If it was frozen at Bury fen it literally was a case of get your skates on.

The Bury Fen Bandy Club Team - Courtesy of Frances Tebbutt

In 1882 the first set of rules of Bandy were drafted by Arnold Tebbutt & Mr Frederick Jewson of Earith, from the Jewson family who established Jewson builders' merchants in Earith in 1836. In 1885 these rules were further defined with the help of Neville Goodman, brother of Arnold Tebbutt. He was a founding member of the National Skating Association (NSA) and the NSA adopted this code until 1891.

## APPENDIX A.

### RULES OF THE BLUNTISHAM AND EARITH SKATING HOCKEY CLUB.

- I. The maximum distance between the goals shall be 220 yards, and the goals shall be upright poles with tape or lath across at the height of 7 feet. The maximum width of the goals to be 22 feet, but if sufficient ice is not available to get a length of 220 yards with a proportionate width, then the goals shall be in the proportion of 1 foot wide to every 10 yards apart.
- II. The hockey used shall not be more than 6 feet long, or more than 3 inches wide or thick in any part.
- III. The ball to be used shall be a solid india rubber ball with a diameter of not more than  $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. and not less than  $2\frac{1}{8}$  in.
- IV. In commencing, the Umpire or one of the Captains shall throw the ball straight up half half-way between the goals. At half time and whenever a goal is obtained the players shall change ends and recommence in the same way.
- V. When a bye is hit, the goal-keeper shall hit the ball off within 6 yards of the goal posts, when no opponent shall be within a distance of 12 yards in front of the goal lines, this being the only restriction as to where the players shall stand, except that no player shall persistently stand within a distance of 12 yards of an opponent's goal, thereby impeding the movements of the goal-keeper.
- IV. If the ball is hit off the ice or beyond that line which is considered the boundary, it may be picked up by the first comer who must take it to the place from where it left the boundary and he shall have a free hit from that point.

### *Appendix A continued.*

- VII. If the ball rises into the air it may be stopped by the body or hand of the player, but if caught it must be dropped instantly at the feet of the person who caught it, except in the case of the goal-keeper, who shall have the liberty of throwing the ball away from him.
- VIII. The hockey may be used to catch, lift or bear down the hockey of a player, but no player under any circumstances whatever to be allowed to raise his hockey higher than his shoulder, and any charging, holding with the hands or hockey, any tripping or rough play of any sort to be peremptorily put down by the Umpire or Captains.
- IX. The full number on each side to be 15, but in case of short goals, etc., Captains to arrange the number as convenient.
- X. To obtain a goal the ball must pass between the goal-posts and under the tape.
- XI. If any player throws or drops his hockey, an opponent may pick it up and throw it away.
- XII. No player to be allowed the use of more than one hockey at the same time.
- XIII. All players disobeying these rules after being once warned or called to order by the Umpire or Captains may be prevented from taking further part in the game.

FRED. JEWSON, }  
ARNOLD TEBBUTT, } HON SECS.

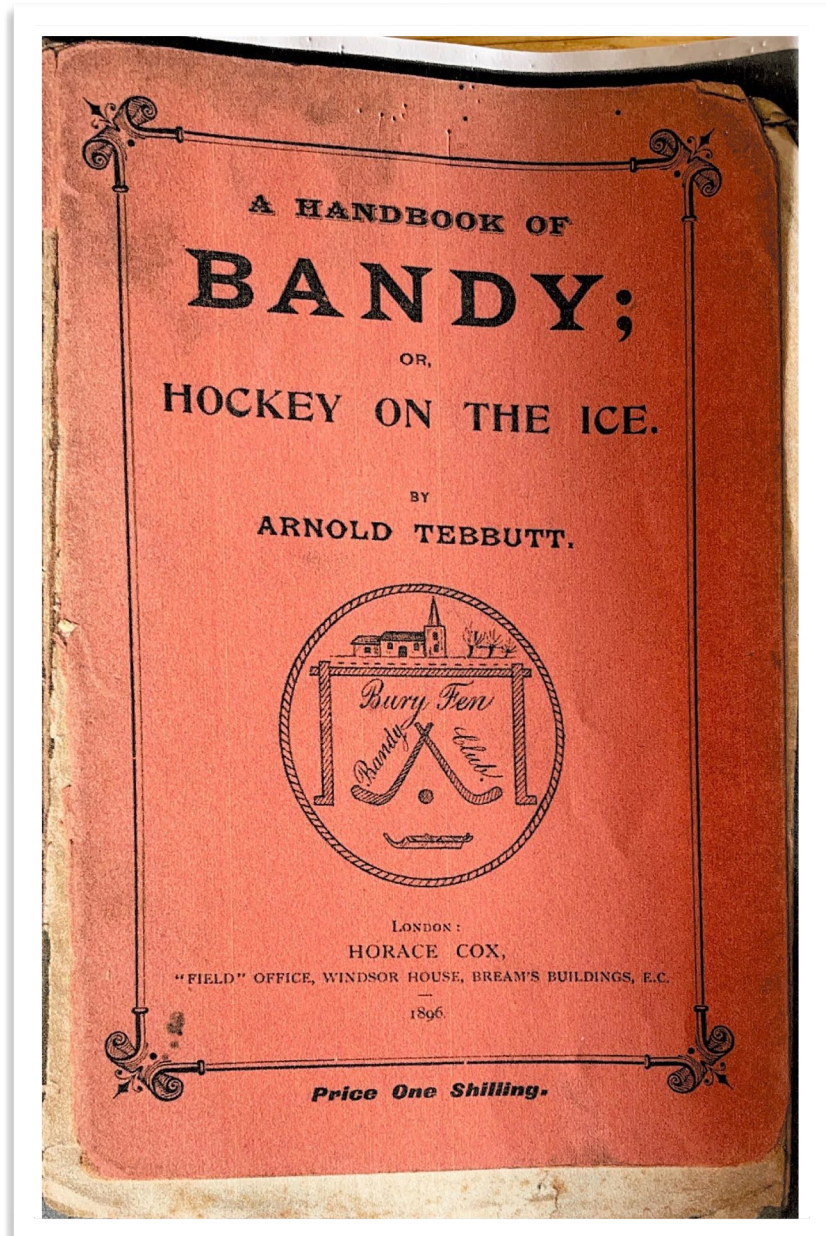


Courtesy of Frances Tebbutt



The years from the late 1870s until 1891 saw an expansion of the game & teams were formed both locally and nationally including the Virginia water club who were to become the arch enemies of the Bury Fen Bandy Club. Other teams were established in Winchester, Surbiton, Putney & Chislehurst. In 1891 members from all these clubs met at Anderton's hotel in London & a Bandy Association was formed & the code adopted.

By 1896, it appears that the game reached its peak in popularity, more teams entered the league and a match played at St Moritz, Buckingham Palace & Sandringham in the presence of royalty. Clearly not a game of the working classes of the day and in the handbook of bandy by Arnold Tebbutt it is claimed that "no other game equals it in brilliancy". This handbook sets down the rules, conditions for playing, suitable attire and equipment needed to play.



So, should the correct weather conditions allow a game of bandy in 2022, here's what you need to get started:

- Eleven players in a 2-3-5 formation
- 100 x 200 yds also a patch of ice deep enough Something to help keep the goalkeeper warm.
- A small Indian rubber ball, bandy stick (ash or willow being the suggested preference) and a pair of skates.

One hurdle that us modern day bandy players won't encounter is letting opposing teams know that the match was on. The telephone wasn't invented during the heyday, so teams communicated by sending telegrams. However, this was potentially a costly business, as telegrams were charged for by the word. One team spent over £160 sending telegrams in one particular busy season.

To this end Sidney Tebbutt devised the Bandy Telegraphic code. This code meant telegrams were less expensive and brief

## CHAPTER VI.

### TELEGRAPHIC CODE.

It is obviously impossible to arrange matches before the frost appears, and, as a result, communications between clubs generally takes place by telegraph. So much is this the case, that last year one club spent no less than £5 on telegrams, and it cost one gentleman 30s. to arrange one match.

Mr. Sidney Tebbutt has therefore drawn up the following "code," which it is hoped will prove a considerable saving to both clubs and individuals.

Of course it will be necessary before sending a wire to know that the person to whom it is being sent is in possession of a copy of the code.

It will also be advisable to put the word "Bandy" before the code word, as thus, "Bandy Veneno," although it is not absolutely necessary.

There are two copies of the code printed to enable one of them to be cut out and carried in the pocket-book. The code is drawn up in connection with the telegraphic code book, "Unicode," published by Messrs. Cassell for 2s. 6d. each.

Word to be used.

VENENO. Will you play us a bandy match under Association Rules on the at (Date and place to be put after word.)

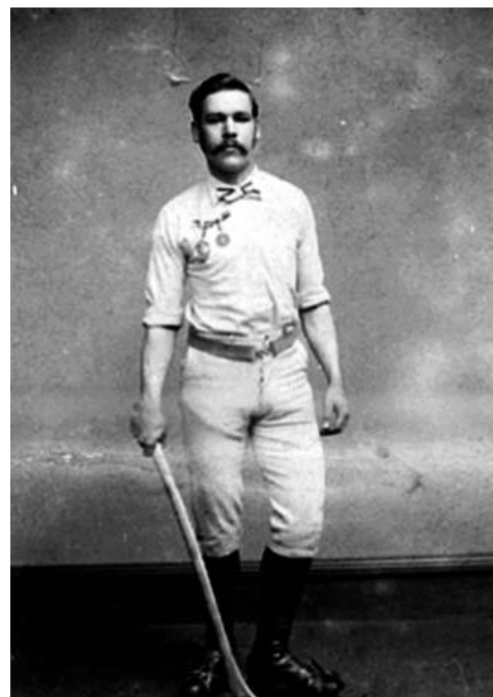
VENENUM. If date mentioned is not convenient, mention dates on which you can play.



# Bandy goes Global

Charles Goodman Tebbutt was born in Bluntisham in 1860 & was the 5<sup>th</sup> of the seven Tebbutt siblings. An extremely keen sportsman, he was a decorated speed skater, keen cricketer, footballer and an evangelical Bandy player.

Charles Goodman Tebbutt had visited Holland on numerous occasions to take part in and watch skating races. The great skating feat was the visit to the Two cities of Friesland on skates, a distance of 130 miles. Charles Goodman Tebbutt and his brother Lewis Tebbutt completed this feat in 12 hours & 55 minutes. Whilst skating in Holland Charles Goodman Tebbutt was struck by the potential to export Bandy to the continent.



C. G. Tebbutt - courtesy of Frances Tebbutt

In 1890-91 a team from Bury Fen travelled to Holland for the first international game. Bury Fen representing England beat Holland 14-1. Amongst The Bury Fen team were: – Louis Tebbutt, Charles Goodman Tebbutt, Neville Tebbutt, Arnold Tebbutt, Maurice Warren, Joseph Goodman, H. Wadsworth, Sidney Tebbutt & Fred Jewson. The team in the photograph are thought to be the Dutch team



Charles Goodman Tebbutt went onto spread the same to Norway, Germany, Sweden & Denmark and to this day is known as the father of Bandy. The two following photographs are from a match played by the BFBC in 1899 in Berlin.



BFBC team- Berlin 1899 - Courtesy of France Tebbutt





The first National Bandy league was in Sweden in 1902. It was played at the Nordic Games (precursor of the winter Olympics) in 1901 – 1926. The Ligue International de Hockey Sur Glace (LIHG) was founded in Paris in May 1908. In 1955 the organisation changes its name to The International Ice Hockey Federation as the indoor game became more popular. In 1955 the Federation of International Bandy (FIB) was established.

The game of Bandy (with eleven players) is still known as Bandy and is played both indoors and outdoors. The Bandy World Championships are played every two years, but were cancelled in 2020 due to the global pandemic and again in 2022 because of the Russian invasion of the Ukraine, which meant too few competing teams.

The FIB is recognised by the IOC as an international sports federation. Currently there are 28 member nations of the FIB. The last Men's World Championship was won by Sweden in 2019 and the last women's WC in 2022 was also won by Sweden.

Great Britain sadly was never won a world championship, but the GB Bandy Association thrives ([www.greatbritainbandyassociation.com](http://www.greatbritainbandyassociation.com)). The men's & ladies teams competing in the World Championships. For anyone interested, training takes place at Peterborough Ice Rink.

It would be wonderful to see Bandy on the Bury Fen again, or even to have local representation on the GB team.

There are no longer any members of the Tebbutt family still living in the village. However, their links remain strong, and we are delighted that the Tebbutt family are happy to contribute to the Heritage Project and we thank them for their help in providing us with the sources to relay the Tebbutt family contribution to this international sport. The Tebbutt family would like to acknowledge the late Philip and Phylis Tebbutt of Bluntisham in that they kept, maintained and passed on the family archive.

Thanks also to Dr Carl Giden of the Swedish Ice Hockey Historical Society for his contribution with regards to the history of the FIB and IIHF.





