

Gladiators got out and about



COUNTRY LIFE: *Gladiator Club members pictured at a camp in the 1950s*

CAMPING trips were popular with members of the Gladiator Club in Oxford.

The young men and women enjoyed trips to places such as Plymouth, Guernsey and Snowdonia.

But this picture was taken closer to home.

John Bryden, who sent in the picture, remembers the location as Wytham Camp on the Eynsham road – possibly what today we call Hill End Camp.

He is second from the right in the back row, with his future wife Adele immediately in front of him.

Mr Bryden, of Sutton, Sur-

rey, believes the picture was taken at a weekend camp in the early 1950s.

He recalls: "We had a bonfire, went on walks and swam in the Thames, which was not far away."

The Gladiator Club grew out of the St John's Boys' Club in East Oxford.

The boys' club, supported by SS Mary and John Church and the Society of St John the Evangelist, better known as the Cowley Fathers, provided numerous activities during the war.

After the war, with hundreds of servicemen being demobbed, it changed char-

acter to serve a slightly older membership.

Father David Hemming, of the Cowley Fathers, said his aim was "to continue the fellowship and service generated by the war, against the background of the Christian faith".

According to Mr Bryden, the club helped to rehabilitate many of those returning from war.

The club was opened to young women as well as men and for a time for named St John's Adults.

However, a house in Iffley Road was bought for new headquarters and the name Gladiator was on the front

gate and was adopted.

Activities over the years have included table tennis, mixed hockey, badminton, squash, dancing, darts and music sessions.

And as we have already recalled (*Memory Lane*, December 15 last year), drama played an important part in the club's programme, with numerous stage productions.

Among the actors appearing in the shows was Oxford-born Patrick Mower, now one of the stars of the ITV soap opera *Emmerdale*.

Do you recognise yourself or anyone else in the picture above?