

History of Old Instonians RUFC, unknown author.

Editor's Note. *This document is copied from a photocopy of a handwritten history by an unknown Old Boy author sometime around 1972. It came into my possession in February 2020 together with lots of photographs and other memorabilia that appears to have come from the Old Instonians RUFC. It was donated by Gwilym Williams who was at the Institute between 1956 and 1963 and played for the Rugby Club for many years. {Transcribed by Keith Dutton (Tate 1960/63)}*

This story is about the work and development of the Old Instonians Rugby Union Football Club. It begins at 7:45 PM on Monday the 18th of November 1935 in the school dining room of the Birkenhead Institute in Whetstone Lane. There were 52 old boys and pupils of the school presents. A leading figure was Ken Rice who opened the meeting formally proposing that Mr. A.O. Jones be elected chairman, which proposal was carried unanimously Mr. Jones was Chemistry Master at the school and was known affectionately to thousands of boys as "Chemmy" or "Bummy" Jones.

It is amazing how small things are taken for granted today, even the title of the club. It was originally called Birkenhead Institute Old Boys Rugby Football Club but obviously this was too much of a mouthful and something shorter had to be found. There was a strong body of opinion for calling it Old Birkonians but eventually the majority came down in favour of Old Instonians.

The first officers of the club were as follows: -

President – A. Wynne-Hughes

Chairman – A.O. Jones

Vice Chairman - K.J. Rice

General Secretary – P. Burrell

Treasurer and Fixture Secretary – E. Todd

1st. XV Captain – G.G. Wilson

1st. XV Vice Captain – K.J. Rice

2nd. XV Captain – C.K. Coughtrie

In addition, H.T. Davies and D. Rigby were elected to the general committee.

Mr. E. Wynne-Hughes (nicknamed "Chemmy") was headmaster of the school for over 20 years from the late 1920's and it was he who was instrumental in changing the school from soccer to rugby in the mid 1930's. As a young man in Cardiff he had been a distinguished performer at both codes of football. Peter Burrell in later years was better known at cricket and was a very distinguished captain of Oxtou C.C. Ken Coughtrie whose mate Don was a very well-known figure in the scouting world later emigrated to South Africa. Don Rigby still takes an active interest in the club appearing at such functions as hotspots and dinners and the occasional match, often with his friends from playing days Jeff Eddleston and Alan Theobald ("Theo").

Much hard work went into getting the club functioning, and saving money was an important feature. Annual subscriptions were fixed at 2/6d per annum. Dances were arranged at PAX Hall, and the Kingsland in addition to Hot Pots and even bridge drives. A ground was found in the vicinity of Bidston Church which was rented for £6 per annum and changing accommodation was found at Bidston school for 2/6d per week. Unfortunately there was no means of washing after a match but the ever resourceful G.G. Wilson obtained the committee's permission to purchase 6 zinc baths and a boiler for the staggering sum of £1 the caretaker of the school agreed to provide tea and also to prepare the water and baths for 5/- per week.

G.G. Wilson was obviously a leading light in the early days as in addition to being club captain his name appears as a leader of the club in many directions, many younger members of the club will remember him for a brilliant after dinner speech at the annual dinner about 1970.

Unfortunately (or possibly Fortunately) , no records of results of matches can be found but it appears that 2 XV's were regularly fielded and the 1st XV played teams such as Old Parkonians II, Rainhill Hospital, Port Sunlight II, Birkenhead Park III and other teams like Bidston R.F.C. and Birkenhead YMCA, both now defunct.

By good fortune a document was found showing team selections of 1937 containing the following names G.R. Edwards, Todd, Carr, Lawson, Don Rigby, Ward, E.G. Williams, Norman Little, Ken Coughtrie, Dickie Bell, Peter Burrell, Weir, Lockety, J.G. Williams, Hallin Winter, Gullen (killed in World War 2) and Atkinson, P.O. Jones. G.G. Wilson, N.E. Hosker and E.T. Hosker.

It is interesting to note that's in the pre-war period K.W.R. (Ken) Carr and W.N. (Bill) Gary were both admitted as members of the club having left school. In fact, Ken Carr was elected to the committee as the first year out of school member. A document dated 27th of August 1938 in the shape of "Form of Proposal for Membership for William N. Garry" still exists. Incidentally according to the document Bill had no profession, nor at that date had he found a proposer or seconder. Both these players subsequently played for Birkenhead Park and Cheshire, and in fact Ken Carr successfully captained Birkenhead Park and the County for a number of years.

The club continued to function successfully until the outbreak of the Second World war in September 1939 when it was compelled to disband temporarily although it would appear as though a few matches were played in 1940 with L. Black as captain and G. Lawson as vice-captain.

The club was reformed after the war when the headquarters were moved to the school playing fields at Ingleborough Road and remained there until 1958. Although the club appeared to function fairly satisfactorily from the end of the war to 1953, in retrospect it appears as though it was becoming weaker in both playing strength and possibly fixtures, and the financial position was nothing short of disastrous. The facilities for men at the school ground were inadequate and at least 1 club dropped fixtures because of this. In an attempt to improve this Norman Little was the leading light in building a bath and better extra boilers, but funds were so low that Norman actually lent the club £50.00 to finance this operation. The treasurer Paddy Bolam is recorded in the minutes of the committee meeting in November 1953 as stating that the club was not solvent but that by the end of the season 1953/4 it was hoped to be. In addition to the financial difficulties there were definite difficulties in playing strength. Firstly, quite a large number of very good players had moved to senior clubs in order to obtain better playing conditions or to enhance their chances of playing County or even international rugby. Among such players were Ken Carr and Jasper Bartlett. Jasper went to Waterloo playing for Cheshire and eventually England. Secondly this was the time of national service so that this delayed the recruitment of many promising schoolboys.

Indeed, things looked black for the club, and although many members worked hard there appeared to be a lack of direction with much effort being wasted with the consequent frustrations. It is difficult to single out one person within a club but it's fair to say that two persons played a very large part at this time to get the club back on course. These two were G.A.T. (Gordon) Thomas and S.B. (Stu) Huntriss. Gordon was an academic having graduated from Cambridge and he had a flair for ideas and putting them over. Suffice to say that the newsletter was produced completely by himself for very many years and it is still going strong today. Stu was a born leader and athlete. Ex-RAF pilot. ex-school Victor Ludorum, ex-Birkenhead Park and Cheshire winger, he commanded respect both on and off the field. For the seasons 1953/55 these two captained the 1st. XV between them. Such were their powers of leadership that with very few changes the side from having slipped badly became probably the most successful the club has known and stayed that way for about 7 years. The North Wales 7 a-side was in April 1954. It is imagining amazing what a winning side will do for the morale and this now became very good. But the club still needed direction. These two together with other stalwarts such as Norman Little and Gordon Williams maintained that the club must have an aim and an ambition and that this must be "a ground and clubhouse of our own". Remember in 1953 the club had to borrow £50.00 from one of its members.

The financial turning point seemed to take place in 1954 when a number of successive fundraising schemes were run. Stu Huntriss was responsible for organising a Christmas draw for a TV set (a most exceptional prize in those days) which produced £100.00 profit. (Interesting to note that 19 years after the event Mike Pearson happened to mention that he sold the winning ticket.) Norman Little organised a Christmas dance which produce £40.00 and Ray Binyon a profitable jumble sale. Other smaller but profitable functions were also held so that in January 1955 the treasurer was instructed to invest £250.00 in paid up shares in the Halifax Building Society. This was the new Ground Fund which was to grow gradually until 1961 when it reached the sum of £1000.00. It is worthy of note that in January 1955 the following were members of the general committee E.G. Webb (Chairman), E.G. Williams, S.B. Huntriss, T.P. Bolam (Treasurer), S. Lichfield, N.G. Little, H.G. Scott, J.S. McDonald, R. Binyon, R.E.P. Wright, Jeff Eddleston, Brian Huntriss, G.A. Thomas (Secretary), Mike Pollard and Jeff Thomas.

At this stage it would be appropriate to mention some fundraising schemes during the period 1955 to 1961. Ron Harris was deeply involved as was Ted wood and Ray Lamb and special mention must be made of the weekly Tombola sessions at the Kingsland organised by Len Malcolm and aided and abetted by such as John Mandy, Bert Bushell and Brian Riley.

It would also be appropriate to note that in the early 1950s many meetings were held at 9 The Weind, Rock Ferry which was the home of E.G. Webb the chairman. His guidance was most welcome as was the free use of his home for meetings on so many occasions. The club is indebted to him for his hospitality and also to Mrs Webb who provided welcome refreshments so many times.

A committee that met more regularly than most was the selection committee. During the 1950s until the club had its own clubhouse, selection was held usually on Monday evenings at the home of various members. This committee consisted of the team captains and one other nonplaying member plus the team secretary. Amongst outstanding team secretaries in this period there was Bob Howard who set a very high standard and indeed in the quiet efficient way he discharged this difficult job. For many years Len Malcolm was a dedicated chairman of selection whose sage head was of enormous help on the general committee. Among non-playing members who did their stints on selection were Paddy Ryan and Harold Beckett. Paddy usually watching matches at home because of his commitments on the club bar and Harold usually in the Wilds of Lancashire, Cheshire, or North Wales with an away side.

A point worth making is how the increasing popularity of the car has played its part in changing the nature of fixtures of rugby generally. In the early days of the club most fixtures were very local even mainly confined to the Wirral. After 1946 the club tended to broaden its horizons, so that fixtures were as far afield as Widnes, Orrell and Saint Helens in Lancashire and Rhyl and Bangor (1952 onwards) in North Wales. It is interesting to note that when playing away at Old Widnesians (now Widnes) the team caught the steam train from Liverpool Central High level (now no more) to Farnworth Station. The return journey in a coach with no corridor after a few pints in the Station Hotel could be decidedly tricky. Meeting places for away games were very often Pier Head, Woodside Hotel, or Hamilton Square Station. Very often on return journeys players from different clubs met at various hostelries much as The Pier and Rigby's (in Liverpool) and the Woodside. Many clubs having no club houses of their own, teams often had favourite pubs where they met and in the Old Instonians case this was the "Prenton", Old Parkonians use the "Claughton", Old Wirralians the "Bridge Inn", Old Birkonians the "Caernarvon" and so on.

A very sad event had to be recorded in 1956 and that was the sudden and untimely death of Jeff Thomas. Jeff (younger) brother of Gordon had only been married 3 months when he died and naturally his wife, father and brother were grief stricken. He had been a very keen enthusiastic hooker for the club and although never having played 1st. team rugby his game was never less than wholehearted. In his memory his father and brother donated the Jeff Thomas Memorial Trophy which was to be awarded annually "to the playing member who in the opinion of the general committee has done most for the club both on and off the field". For the very reason for which it was donated and because it is open to be worn by any playing member regardless of the team he played for this trophy has become a most coveted award and it is appropriate that its winners are recorded.

1956/7	-	P.A. Ryan
1957/8	-	N.G. Little
1958/9	-	J. Fisher
1959/60	-	J. Bassett
1960/1	-	R. Harris
1961/2	-	H.S. Jones
1962/3	-	T.S. Hodgson
1963/4	-	J. Mandy
1964/5	-	J.G. Williams
1965/6	-	L.C. Lindop
1966/7	-	J.B. Huntriss
1967/8	-	A.K. Jones
1968/9	-	R.W. Jones
1969/70	-	I.G. McDougall
1970/1	-	G.F. Brown
1971/2	-	M. Armitage

When thinking about the game of rugby and records of various seasons one is bound to think of captains. The Old Instonians RUFC has always insisted that they have not a "1st. XV" captain but a "club" captain. This makes the job harder but also much more rewarding. Over the years some players have made good playing captains but poor social captains and some wonderful social captains but whose playing record was dismal. It is hard to single out any one captain, but two do suggest themselves as being outstanding. Firstly, Stu Huntriss who as mentioned earlier was a true leader of men who could show by example both on and off the field the high standard he required. It was a pleasure to watch him control his threequarters and to see the artistry he himself displayed. Secondly, Jack Bassett who was a very different type of man to Stu was who nevertheless commanded the respect of all who played for him. He had a knack of making players raise their game when he was captain and could make an ordinary side look good and a good side look great. Always a man to call a spade a spade, and with no favourites, so that even his best friends were not protected from his sharp but honest tongue on selection. A loyal Instonian, Jack never made the big time, in fact he himself says the nearest he came to it was when he was sent off at Caldý in the early 1950s. He later received a letter from Cheshire Disciplinary Committee stating that because of his misdemeanour he would not be considered for County selection that season.

Perhaps at this stage one ought to mention some of the backroom boys whose names appear on no honours boards but who have worked hard for the club. People like John Mandy who for many years captain the 3rd. XV and was a loyal and hard-working member of the bar committee. Tom Hodgson, Rod Jones, John Fisher, Ron Kirchner, Jeff Eddleston, Lefty Clark, Roy Lamb, Dave Jones, Bert Bushell, Harry Smith, Ray Binyon, Jet Kearney, Billy Upton, Jack Bell and many more who helped in so many ways on and off the field to make the club tick. Also here is a chance to say thank you to some of the backroom girls. To people like Winnie Eddleston, May Huntriss, Hazel Theobald, making teas at Ingleborough Road. To Jill Beckett and Norma Nora Ryan slogging through the mud of Greasby or helping man the barricades to repel invaders at the club's famous Greasby barbecues. To Mona Bell for her devotion in typing the weekly newsletter for such a long period and too many more who although remaining anonymous nonetheless deserve the thanks of all.

From 1954 onwards the search was on to obtain a site which would be suitable for playing pitches and club HQ. For a number of years, the Ground Sub-Committee first under the chairmanship of Ray Binyon and later under Arthur Rixon scoured Wirral looking at sites at Hooton, Eastham, Heswall, Thurstason and Neston, in fact almost anywhere but mainly without any success. Sometimes with some success only to find insurmountable problems or dead ends. It was a most frustrating time to all engaged on the problem. The situation became more and more pressing as time went by as the club's tenure on Ingleborough Road became less and less secure. It was only a matter of time before it would receive final notice to quit. During 1957 the Ground Committee found that the sports ground belonging to the RAF at Pump Lane, Greasby was not in use and that furthermore there was a pavilion on the site with water and some heating laid on. In many ways this was far from an ideal site, too far out of Birkenhead (it was in 1957) no electricity laid on, no more than one year's lease at a time (this being most important). However, beggars cannot be choosers and it was decided to move on to Greasby Ground as soon as possible. The annual rent for the ground and pavilion was £55.00 per annum and the first game was played there in March 1958.

It is a simple matter to write that the club moved ground to Greasby, but the move brought so many problems and frustrations, the club was stretched to near breaking point. It was forced to move in the middle of the season and undoubtedly one of the hardest hit people was the club captain E.T. Wood. Fortunately, Ted was an amiable chap with very broad shoulders (both literally and metaphorically) and he staggered through a season when many a lesser person would have resigned. A new ground

of our own brought new problems such as marking out the pitch, putting up the posts, lighting the boiler and fire, cleaning out the pavilion, etc. These things were new, and new arrangements and help was required, it was a case of learning by experience. Of course, the problems were overcome, and things gradually got better, and Jack Bassett led the club to two very successful seasons from 1958 to 1960. However, the efforts of members were side-tracked for two or three years to the physical running of Greasby Ground, away from the money-making functions still required if we were to eventually obtain a permanent site for the club. Nevertheless, some wonderful times were had during our five years staying at Greasby not least of all the magnificent pints drawn straight from the wood by Paddy Ryan and drunk under hurricane lamps and tasting like nectar. When Paddy's ale ran out one could always retire to the New Inn, a cosy little pub eventually pulled down to make way for the Red Cat. The club actually ran dances or "hops" as they were known at Greasby and the hardy and sporting girlfriends and wives used to make their way through the rain and mud outside in the car park to the warmth and hospitality of the clubhouse to dance to the gramophone (before the days of record players) kindly brought along by Norah Wilkinson now much better known as Nora Ryan.

Norman Little conceived the idea of a Summer Barbecue and the first one in 1958 was most successful with about 200 people present. This became an annual event and grew and grew in size so that in 1962 (our last year at Greasby) about 650 people attended what was considered to be a most successful social function. That year the Barbecue was also a great financial success and including the profits on the bar made about £230.00. Brian Cadman was social secretary and did much hard work as did Ron Hartley, Paddy Ryan, and Harold Beckett with the help of his wife Jill and of course many more willing hands. The club did run one more Barbecue at Woodchurch but the site did not lend itself in the same way as Greasby and in any events this was the dawning of the age of vandalism which finally swayed the Committee to cancel what have been a most enjoyable annual affair.

The RAF indicated that they intended to sell the land at Greasby, but enquiries soon led the club to realise that it was not within our reach (probably a good job in the long run). The hunt began again for a new ground and after prolonged searching the Ground Committee came up with a piece of land on the Arrowe Park side of the Fender adjacent to the road bridge taking Woodchurch Road over the Fender. It is difficult to picture now but in retrospect it looked a very scruffy piece of land uneven and covered in scrub, gorse and hawthorn hedge, the last place for a rugby ground. However it was discovered that the land belonged to Birkenhead Corporation who had absolutely no plans for its use (and probably could not understand how anyone could have) and we were only too pleased to rent the land at £50.00 per annum on a 25 year lease. It was discovered that planning permission could be obtained to build a pavilion. The decision to move to Woodchurch was made in December 1960.

Since moving to Greasby in 1958 the club's expenditure had increased and to begin with our revenue had declined, although in 1961 and 1962 this swing in revenue was reversed. Nevertheless, in June 1961 the Ground Form stood at only £1,000.00 but the minimum amount required for Woodchurch Ground was £1,000.00 to level, drain and seed two pitches and £2,000.00 plus for the building of a pavilion. It was hoped to raise the £2,000.00 plus by way of loans from the Rugby Football Union and Cheshire Rugby Union. Any deficit above this figure would be met out of profits made on current functions. Looking back, it rather reminds one of wartime airplanes "coming in on a wing and a prayer". However, the club was fortunate in having P.A. Ryan as its treasurer from 1960 for eleven years. To the uninitiated, Paddy can make a Balance Sheet appear to members at an AGM that the end of the world is nigh, and if they do not immediately sell 10 books of draw tickets and pay their subscriptions at once, the club will fold up at the end of the month. Paddy can take the same balance sheet to the bank the following day and on production of which and a letter from the secretary of the RFU obtain a temporary overdraft of £500.00.

It appeared that the combined cost of the pavilion and ground was £3,800.00 and the bulk of this was financed by club funds £1,500.00, loan from RFU £1,500.00, loan from Cheshire RU £300.00. It was felt that once the pavilion was built and operational all money from social functions at the club would soon pay off any deficits the club might incur in the building of the pavilion.

The move from Greasby to Woodchurch took place at the beginning of the season 1960/63 and once again the club captain this time G.A. (Tony) Doveston must have everyone's sympathies. To begin with no pictures were available at Woodchurch and games were played at Ingleborough Road, the Solly Recreation Ground or an Old Birkonian RFC pitch, and very often it was not known until an hour before the game which pitches would be used. In addition, the clubhouse was but barely finished, bar not properly fitted and inadequate heating (this heating problem took a long time to overcome). For the next nine months one of the paramount tasks was to make money and this meant using the clubhouse to the utmost for social functions. Praise must go to members like Paddy Ryan, John Mandy, Tom Hodgson, and Harold Beckett during this period for organising and running some kind of "dance" (for want of a better word) very nearly each Saturday. The money certainly started to flow in and the financial position shown at the next AGM was far better than might have been expected.

Unfortunately, membership, particularly playing strength, had deteriorated because of the poor playing conditions but the club was fortunate in one respect. At the time of the move to Woodchurch the Head Prefect of Birkenhead Institute was A.K. (Alan) Jones and he was most helpful, (especially to the selection committee) and each week would produce anything up to ten school boys to help make up the junior side players like Lend Lindop, Geoff Clays, Alec Cotgrave and Peter Kevin. It is certain that because of Alan the club had a very good flow of new members which undoubtedly helped in later years, incidentally Alan served the club well in many capacities and was a member of the General Committee for some six years. One of the main talking points at the time was whether or not the club should remain a closed old boys club as it was one of the very few left. It would be wrong to take sides on this issue because at the time of writing the question is still not fully resolved although about 1970 a rule was passed allowing a 10% intake of non old boys. There is a strong body of opinion that the club should be fully open and even change his name to get away from the old boy image. Naturally there are some older members who opposed such a move built in times of "the winds of change" this course seems inevitable. One thing is certain, however, the name of the new club will be very much harder to conceive than the name Old Instonians.

Gradually from 1963 onwards things began to settle down and the clubhouse gradually took on a character of its own and even became relatively warm eventually. It was obvious some mistakes had been made in the design but nothing now could be done, for example there was no smallish bar where the older non playing members could meet for a drink and a chat and this was a great pity as it is essential to any club that these type of members are fostered as they are most useful in many ways. From a playing point of view things are not too good and the club went through some lean years which compared poorly with the mid and late 1950s. Perhaps this was inevitable because the two moves, both to Greasby and then the Woodchurch had sapped the club's energy. And then the bombshell fell with the advent of the M 53. Incidentally in the minutes this was variously named the West Wirral Road, the Mid Wirral Motorway, Central Wirral Road, Cross Wirral Motorway. The fact the M 53 would disturb the clubhouse and ground first became evident about end of 1966 and in mid 1967 a committee was formed comprising Dr. A. (Andy) Hodgson, R.W. (Bob) Smith and Norman Little to investigate and report on the implications.

A further difficulty arose on the horizon. The Birkenhead education Department announced plans to close the Birkenhead Institute and to transfer the boys and staff to Rock Ferry High School. In fact, this never took place (probably due to very strong protests from old boys of the school in all walks of life)

but at the time and for a number of years this remained a real threat. Such a threat in fact that three or four meetings took place between officials of the Old Instonians and Old Rockferrians Rugby Clubs with a view to a merger. Plans were quite advanced before it was eventually decided against this move.

It is a long story, but briefly it became evident that a slip road was planned to run directly through the ground upon which the clubhouse stood, and the future appeared bleak indeed. Although it may seem laughable now the general committee committees first reaction was to try and persuade the planners to divert the M 53! It soon became clear that this could not be done, and some other course needed to be taken. Once again fortune smiled on the club in the shape of Brian Huntriss (Stu's little brother) who was elected chairman. Brian is a different character to his brother being more brash and more of an extrovert, but he has two fine qualities, 1) he fears no man. 2) he is nothing if not persistent and persuasive. (a person on the other side could say stubborn and menacing.) These qualities were just what the club required, and the committee sought the outside help of anyone, local councillors, local MP's, R.F.U., Cheshire Rugby Union, and sympathetic persons who might be of help. It will be in 1962 the club signed a 25-year lease of the ground with the Birkenhead Corporation and this proved to be a trump if not the trump card. The committee pressed on with unflinching enthusiasm to obtain the maximum compensation from the authorities that was possible in order to realise sufficient cash for the club to rebuild its clubhouse and ground to the highest possible standards. Suffice to say that they were extremely successful as evidenced in the magnificent developments the club now has at Woodchurch. It is a far cry from Bidston and zinc baths of 35 years ago. One does not like to single out members for their efforts but in connection with the building of the new ground and clubhouse and the obtaining of compensation the three names Brian Huntriss, Howard Jones, and Andy Hodgson stand out. To all these other club members and friends outside who fought the club's battles so well, we shall ever be indebted.

So, it came to pass that once again we moved onto new ground and clubhouse in September 1970. Once again, an easy thing to write, but so hard to accomplish. The bulldozers moved in and smashed the old clubhouse in August 1969 and for twelve long months the club had no HQ. At this stage no thanks can be too high to the Old Birkonian RFC, who granted full use of the facilities of their clubhouse. In addition to one or two pitches provided Old Instonians could arrange their own changing facilities. This the club did with the cooperation of Birkenhead education committee and Park High School. Obviously, conditions were far from perfect but at least the club functioned in the season 1969/70. Once again, the man that bore the brunt was the club captain R. (Bobby) Byrne who struggled manfully under arduous conditions. Doubtless Ted Wood and Tony Doveston both out of the district knew exactly what he went through. The seasons wore on and the new clubhouse slowly went up and then was finished and September 1970 arrived, and the move took place. The new clubhouse contains amongst many other things a separate cocktail bar and it has been pleasing to note some of the "older" faces that are now seen at the club taking talking over times past. Unfortunately, Brian Huntriss suffered ill health at this time and resigned as chairman but was succeeded by Jack Bassett.

The club only had one pitch to use until early 1973 when the new first team pitch became available and again the club were indebted to the Birkonian RFC (as they were then called) for allowing them use of one of their pitches. Under the captaincy of Geoff Brown and Len Lindop the playing record of the club began to improve and the signs of coaching under Alan Steadman started to show but it is a slow process and hard work and graft will be required to reach even satisfactory standards let alone good or even great ones. In effect, the club moved ground 3 times in 12 years with consequent upheaval and strain put on the administration and playing strength. This probably put the club back 10 years compared with other clubs who made one move in the 1950s or early 1960s and in these

days of hard competition this is a lot of leeway to make up but if the members of the present and future apply themselves with the vigour of those of the past the club will surely move from strength to strength. Remember from insolvency to a £25,000.00 ground/clubhouse complex from 1950 to 1970 and anything is possible.

In social activities the club undoubtedly reached its zenith in February 1972 when the Annual Dinner was held at the clubhouse for the first time. Over 100 people sat down to enjoy most unforgettable evening. The meal itself was good by any standards and even a strike producing a power cut from 21:00 to midnight only added to the atmosphere with after dinner speeches by candlelight (once again the committee was up to the occasion). The principal guest was the famous Welsh International and British Lion Cliff Morgan who spoke magnificently and who obviously enjoyed the informal club atmosphere. He was well supported by ex-England captain Dick Greenwood and the club's own Jeff Eddleston.

Pen pictures of some Old Instonians.

J.S. (Jack) Bassett played regular first team rugby from 1947 to early 1960s at wing forward. A devastatingly destructive player who would panic the opposition into many mistakes. An outstanding captain who appeared regularly in West Cheshire representative matches, later Club Chairman.

A. (Arthur) Rixon the club's outstanding scrum half of certain County potential. Played for Birkenhead Park 1st. XV on a number of occasions. Although pressed to join park many times he preferred to be loyal to Old Instonians undoubtedly through his own disadvantage. Captain 1955/6 and Cheshire Trialist.

M. (Mike) Pollard an exceptional athlete, in addition to being a flyhalf whose ability was recognised by a Cheshire Trial, he was a fine soccer and cricket player. Captained the club often after a spell with ???????.

S.B. (Stu) Huntriss after a spell with Birkenhead Park where he gained Cheshire caps on the wing. He returned to the club for two playing seasons 1953/55. Captain 1953/54 with exceptional success and his leadership and expertise laid the foundations of good rugby for many years. Later served on general committee.

J.R. (Jim) Crowe first played for the club in 1954 after a number of years at soccer. A player of tremendous strength and stamina operating for the Old Instonians as prop, hooker, and no. 8. join Birkenhead park in 1959 and subsequently captained them for a number of seasons and was capped for Cheshire many times. A very hard but very clean player who earned the respect of friend and foe alike.

A.R. (Tony) Morris first appeared for the club 1st. XV as a young winger in 1952. He subsequently captained the club from 2nd row in 1968/69 and was still playing first team rugby 1972/3. A very hard and capable player.

A. (Andy) Mackintosh yet another convert from soccer in 1962/63 subsequently skippered the club for two seasons 1965/67. Joined Birkenhead Park and had several successful seasons with them scoring many tries before re-joining Old Instonians in 1971. Later left the district and played for Davenport, centre or wing.

[A. \(Alan\) Steadman](#) a very early developer at the game, playing for Birkenhead Park 1st. XV when only 17 at full back. Joined Old Instonians later in 1966. He successfully skippered the club in 1967/68 from fly half mainly. A shrewd reader of the game became the club first coach in the season 1972/73.

[A.R. \(Bert\) Bushell](#) an outstandingly loyal club player and member who played regularly from the late 1940s until 1972. Bert would play for any team in any position, home or away, at a minute's notice. Served on committee and spent long hours working for the club in many capacities.

[J.R. \(John\) Mandy](#) played for the club for many years from the early 1950s to the late 1960s. A good player in his own right at fly half, centre, or full back. He very successfully captained the 3rd. XV for many years in the mid 1960s keeping the junior playing strength together as a crucial time.

[A.G. \(Norman\) Little](#) played for the club from June 1939 as hooker. Later played 1st. XV prop for a number of years then became a very staunch 3rd. XV captain. Served the club on committee for many years in such capacities as Social Secretary, Secretary and Chairman.

[G.A.T. \(Gordon\) Thomas](#) a fine flank forward, who skippered the side 1954/5 and later served the club for 5 years as Secretary and 4 years as Chairman. Gordon had a fine brain and was very witty with a range of ????? which in his day was second to none.

[P.A. \(Paddy\) Ryan](#) an accomplished player for many years who played in many positions but who is probably best remembered as a very successful hooker in the early 1950s. He later captained the 2nd. XV to some very fine playing records for a number of seasons. Probably the most loyal Old Instonian of all time having been Social Secretary, Treasurer for 11 years, Chairman Bar Committee, member of Selection Committee etc. Colour of eyes black and Amber.

[J.B. \(Brian\) Huntriss](#) a very fine three quarter in his day who really took some stopping when flat out. He was probably at his best when playing under big brother Stu. Later was a power as Chairman in negotiations with the authorities for the move onto the present clubhouse and ground.

[H.G. \(Harold\) Beckett](#) another convert from soccer. Was loose head prop for 1st. XV during most of the 1950s. Successful social captain of club 1952/53. Later chairman of selection and Liverpool Society Referee.

[R. \(Ron\) Harris](#) an enthusiastic player and worker for the club in many capacities. Played prop, hooker, and flank forward, for 1st. XV and captain the club 1961/2. Later left the district and played for and captained Thornton Cleveleys.

[L.C. \(Len\) Lindop](#) first played for Old Instonians at the age of 15. A very good flanker. Captain of club 1971/2 and 1972/73. A very loyal Old Instonian who has worked hard for the club in very many ways.