

Derby clash victory!

Mr DICK BELL of Upton writes: I joined Old Instonians Rugby Club at the start of the 1938 season so was interested in your piece about the club (October 3) and well remember the field by Bidston Village Hall.

The field had a decided slope, and during the week doubled as a cow pasture, great care was needed in the timing of tackles, to avoid landing in the fertiliser.

The teams changed in the old C of E school, which is still standing, which is more than can be said of the old B.I., and the washing facilities consisted of a handful of galvanised iron baths filled, on a good day, with lukewarm water.

The playing strength was a mixture of pioneers who started the club, and "new boys" like myself who joined from school at a little later stage. Pioneers included Don Rigby, Tommy Ward, G. G. Wilson, Eric Hosker, Ken Page, Ron Hardie, Bobbie Lowson, Gus Ceha, Gwillam Edwards, Lionel Black, Gordon Astley, Ronnie Weir. Unfortunately, after all this time, my memory is a little blurred around the edges, and I trust anybody I have omitted will understand.

The re-forming of the club after the war was not without difficulties, there was a great deal of hassle in getting permission to use the school ground at Ingleborough Road, the playing strength of the old club had been badly hit by the war, the Hardie Brothers, Gwill Edwards, Lionel Black and Gordon Todd all lost their lives, and Bobbie Lawson's playing career was cut short by war injuries.

The other major problems were strengthening the fixture list, for in the days before the war, a new club with primitive facilities attracted a large number of

MEMORIES OF A PROUD INSTONIAN

3B, 3C and Extra XVs to its fixture list, anybody who would give you a game, in fact. Finance caused problems, like getting "volunteers" to run dances, raffles and other fund-raising activities.

The driving force behind the reforming of the club was Ken Coughtrie, who is shown standing on the extreme right on the photograph of the old team you published, others who played a prominent part were Hallin Winter, Tommy Ward, Brian Young, Norman Little, Mike Pollard, Paddy Ryan, Duncan Milne and Ken Page. It was the performance of the teams in the first few years after the war which consolidated the work of the backroom boys and put Old Instonians on the local rugby map.

I have two abiding memories of those playing days, both involving Old Parkonians and on both occasions we won with the last kick of the game. The first was when we won the Park seven-a-side tournament, and nobody who was there will forget the storming run by Bill Garry and Ivor Podmore which gave us a last-minute try, or Bill Garry's conversion which won the game.

The other occasion was the season when both the Old Parkonians and ourselves had gone through the season without being beaten, our regular fixtures with them had been abandoned, and a "showdown" was arranged late in the season. It was an evening game, and it was no place for shrinking violets. We were losing, when we were awarded a penalty right off on the touchline, in the closing minutes of the game, the street lamps were shining in Ingleborough Road, and a gale-force wind was blowing across the pitch.

Whether it was the best kick I ever took, or as my more cynical teammates would have it, the biggest fluke, is of no consequence, the ball went over the bar and we had won.

No story at the Instonians would be complete without a reference to the tea and bun brigade, the wives and girlfriends, who did sterling service with the tea urn in the cramped kitchen at Ingleborough Road. Names which spring to mind are Margaret Winter, Jean Lowson, Lulu Young and Mona Baines.

Finally may I wish the club every success in the future, and that it gives the players as much enjoyment as it gave me those many long years ago. It was fun and I wouldn't have missed it for the worlds.

The photograph of the old team is a little indistinct but I have managed to identify most of the people shown.

Back row: A. O. Jones, I Podmore (?), Ken Page, Gus Ceha, Gordon Williams (?), Norman Little, Mike Pollard (?), Ken Coughtrie.

Front row: ? Bill Garry, L. Hill (?), Ken Carr, Dick Bell, Eric Vick (?), Don Rigby.