

Oldbury boys who did battle on the hallowed Hawthorns turf

FORMER Oldbury schoolboy John Campbell (who nowadays resides at 38 Woodlands Grove, High Heath, Whitchurch, Shrops), wrote in to us on the subject of a Grammar Schools' Cup final in which he was involved, half a century ago.

He has provided the following details...

"This programme and photograph relates to the Grammar Schools' Cup Final on April 6th 1960, between Handsworth Grammar School and Oldbury Grammar School.

"At a recent reunion for the year of 1953 at Oldbury Grammar School I met up with **Roger Baggott** from my schooldays and soccer playing days for the Cresconians. I mentioned that our School Cup Final held at the Hawthorns was now 50 years ago; this brought back memories of our semi final and final games.

"In the semi final we were pitted against **Wednesbury G.S.** who had turned in excellent results, sweeping teams aside with high scores in their favour. The sides met on a neutral pitch used by West Bromwich G.S. in Newton Road. When we were changing for the all important game their Captain and a couple of players entered our dressing room and informed us that the green jersey of our goalkeeper would clash with our shirts. Their confidence was supreme. Someone came up with a yellow top which was given approval by the delegation.

"In the warm up we noticed that for one of the goals both posts sloped backwards from the vertical. Wednesbury took an early lead with the assistance of the goalposts - a looping effort dropping like a stone into our net; this spurred us on and it produced a performance of true Oldbury grit. We went 3-1 up with the third goal scored by Roger Whittaker.

"Wednesbury pulled a goal back near the end to make it 3-2 in our favour.

"Our team consisted of nine Baggies supporters - indeed I was sure **Bob Fox, Roger Baggott** and **Roy Smallwood** had blood group W.B.A. and their joy could not be contained at the thought of playing the Final at the Hawthorns on

their hallowed turf.

"Despite being a Villa supporter this too was a great moment for me. As we sat in the dressing room passing the wine gums around the same delegation came in and solemnly asked if the match could be replayed again on account of the one set of goal posts being out of kilter. The short pause that followed was by responses that left them in no doubt of the outcome. We were on our way to the Hawthorns.

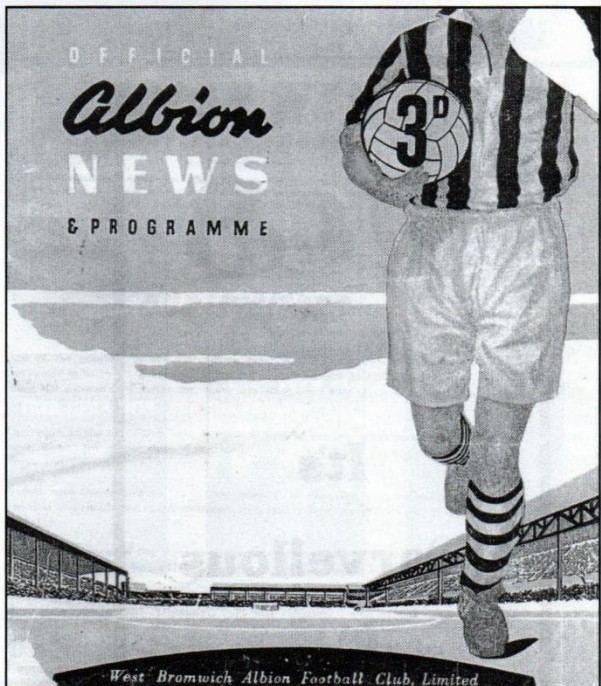
"The Final was against **Handsworth Grammar School**, a very strong side both physically and skilfully. They too had beaten sides comfortably but we did have the knowledge that they could be beaten as we had defeated them on their own ground - 5-4 earlier in the season. Our side consisted of three of above average height, two of these being our brilliant goalkeeper Brian Wyton and our centre half Tony Bristow who brought strength to the centre of our defence. The other eight were smaller physically but having played soccer for seven years in the school teams and playing head tennis with usually a bald tennis ball every school break and lunch hour meant that our soccer skills had been honed and had developed an instinctive approach to the game.

"The Final started well for us and we took a two goal lead through Roger Baggott and Captain **David Bailey**. As the game wore on we were brought back to two goals all. Extra time was allowed with ten minutes each way as preparation was needed for Albion's Reserve match with Blackburn Rovers. After extra time and exhaustion it was agreed to share the cup for six months each, honours truly shared.

"These matches have stayed with us all our lives and are brought to mind whenever we meet; our worthy opponents in both games played their part in making these treasured soccer memories."



Back row: Michael Frone, Tony Bristow, Bryan Wyton, Derek Spooner.
Centre row: John Campbell, Roger Baggott, David Bailey (Capt.), Robert Fox.
Front row: Barry Bywater, Roy Smallwood, Roger Whittaker.



The cover of the programme (the famous headless footballer design).