

How it all began

I have been asked to write a few lines about the club I know so well as Writtle Minors.

As you all know we now have a comprehensive programme, with age groups from 9 years to 16½ and the best equipment money can buy ranging from balls to goal posts.

Although things weren't all ways quite like this way back in 1968, when the old Mini-League was formed by my old friend and rival Ted Revel (ex- Manager of Westlands UTD), when at that time I was helping to run the local cub team with John Marden, we managed to steer that team to the Cup Final which we won.

My son was a member of that team and to further his football career we entered the team in the Mini-league.

Ken Blackburn was my right hand man at the time, but where to start we had no idea, with no money, no kit, no clubhouse, ground or goals.

Through a friend we managed to 'scrounge' a second hand kit (which incidentally is the same colour as it is today, green and white hoops) a donation of seven and six, 37½ p in today's money and a new football given to us by Writtle Senior Club we made a set of goals out of scaffolding tube, and were allocated a small piece of ground at the playing field 75 yards X 35 yards, which was well under the regulation size, and were allowed to play on the pitch for our first season.

Our team consisted mainly of the Cub Team which were mentioned previously and the boys were all 12 years of age, the mini-league was for 13 year olds so our chance of a trophy the first season was to say a little remote.

I may add at this point, that at the time there were no registration fees and subscriptions were one shilling (5p) a game. Out of this the boys had an orange at half-time and a drink at full-time. The referee fees were supposed to be 50p, but most gave their services free.

So with our backs to the wall away we went into our first season.

Part 2

Our first Season went better than we expected, instead of being on the receiving end most of the time we did our own share of dishing it out and at the close we finished half way up the table. During the season I lost Ken Blackburn and then as now there was a lack of transport, I knew then that I had to find a fund raising scheme to enable us to purchase new gear and also if possible to buy some sort of transport in form of a van.

During the close season I, with the help of Mums and Dads organised a sponsored walk, the route took us twenty five miles along main roads & around Blackmore, it was a success and the money that was raised put us in a healthy position for the year ahead. Quite a few of the walkers had no connection with Writtle Minors at that time, but in the months ahead they came to the playing fields on a Wednesday night to train, before the start of the following season we had as many as thirty boys looking for a place in one team. Something had to be done to repay these lads so I with the help of some of the fathers who in the end became Managers started friendly football games outside of the area. It proved such a success that before long we had as many boys as we could handle and further leagues had to be found.

Ted Revell and myself started the Under Eleven league, and the Mini - League started the Under Fourteen League, now football in the area was going places.

Most of the first years walk money was spent on new strips, balls etc. so we decided to have another walk, this time I planned a good route around the footpaths of the village (the same one as we still use today). With the proceeds of the second walk we purchased a Bedford Van, many hours were spent cleaning, repairing and. rubbing down until at last with a new coat of paint Writtle Minors were the toast of Chelmsford.

We entered the van in the Carnival and won a prize, and now the boys with their efforts of walking could ride to their matches in comfort.

Writtle Minors were on their way.

Part 3 "from 37 ½ p to a four figure sum"

With transport to take our teams to away matches, it wasn't long before Writtle Minors were the envy of most Mini – League clubs. We had several star players like Nigel Spinks, Anthony Rowell and Ian Smillie. We had teams in the Under 11's, Under 12's, Under 13's, & Under 14's age groups and in the 1971/72 season started to get our name on the League Trophies, the first being the Under 11's and every year since then one of our age groups have won a Trophy.

Looking back on how times have changed! In the early days it was friendly football – there were no bookings – Referees spoke to the boys who had done wrong. Today football is far more competitive – there are some good teams still around and Writtle Minors boys have to work hard to compete – and they do!

One or two things I have left out – the new van, the trips to Germany and Bournemouth, our annual Sponsored Walk, our Dances and Discos, our numerous Managers over the years, The help from our wives, our boys and our pleasure from watching Writtle Minors play home and away.

We started the club with 37 ½ p and today we boast a four figure sum. I have derived endless hours of pleasure from Writtle Minors and there is only one thing left to say.....

Writtle Minors are here to stay !!

Bob Cooper



Bob Cooper pictured presenting Nigel Spink with an end of season award