

By Gary Fawcett MBE

Back in the 1978 / 79 season I moved with my family to my present home at Brook Farm, Wilson. Prior to our move we had been living for about 5 years in the Peak District and I was playing for Davenport RFC on the outskirts of the Manchester conurbation.

The Clubs in this locality did not then include Melbourne, Castle Donington or Shepshed, and Rolls Royce were perhaps more centred around the company workforce than they are now. I had to give some thought to which club to join, since travel distances to Derby, Burton, Coalville, Ashby, Loughborough were all perhaps 6 miles or more.

However, I had the summer months of 1979 to make a decision.

Having played rugby regularly since 1957 / 58 season it was well known that I was a rugby player, I wore rugby sweaters and I talked about the sport in pubs (in other words I was just as boring as I am now). It therefore arose that there were others amongst my drinking circle who had played the game or might be interested in doing some pre-season training. In particular my brother-in-law William Shields and Denis Smith from Melbourne were keen.

Consequently we started a routine of Sunday morning sessions at which I trained and coached all who turned up - many of them new to the game but keen on the "craic". The normal routine, starting at about 10.30 am, consisted of :- running, from Brook Farm, around Breedon Church and back, into the field for rugby training, touch rugby, jump into cold swimming pool, and then spend the next several hours in one or more pubs.

As you might imagine, this was a social success even if the rugby skills were not necessarily of the highest quality. The numbers gradually built up until we had quite a squad, over half of whom were newcomers. By this stage I think we may have had Andrew Bainbrigge (Bengo), Ian Williams (Cottney) and maybe others who continued playing for Melbourne RFC until recent years.

At the start of the 79 / 80 season William Shields, Denis Smith and I joined Coalville RFC and our Sunday morning sessions came to an end as the summer passed. However, we resumed our Sunday morning routine in the summer leading to the 1980 / 81 season.

Then our playing days began! We started under the name of Wilson (or, believe it or not, Wilson Knitting Circle!) playing our home games at Coalville. Because about half our squad were playing for other clubs on Saturdays, including myself, I arranged 2 Sunday fixtures in 1981 / 82. Then the 7 Sunday fixtures in 1982 / 83 were, I think, played under the name of Melbourne.

Without dragging out the archives, my recollection is that the club rules were drafted, and a meeting was called to elect a committee, in 1983. We joined the RFU, 3 Counties RFU, and Derbyshire RFU at that time. Thereafter, we played a full season of Sunday fixtures in 1983 / 84.

We finally took the plunge to become a conventional Saturday club in 1984 / 85. The rest, as they say, is history!