

## **All Our Yesterdays – 50 Years Ago, Number 2 – John Bowness**

I thought I would indulge with a bit of nostalgia for me to record a second clash of the season between Jones and Shipman and Egerton Park in Division 2A, bearing in mind with J & S that it was the age of many works clubs in the league, which was why it was thriving at the time.

In this case Steve Cloke and Melvin Matts teamed up with Fred Day, one of the most sporting players I ever played against. But it was Steve and Melvin I was interested in because at that time these two and myself played in the Midland Counties League for Leicester 2nds – we had a three year spell of not being beaten.

In those days you were allowed to put more than one team in the league but you could not have more than one team in a division and Leicester had a very good team in Division One which left us able to top Division Two each season, but it honestly was a bit tougher than it sounds.

Back to the league match it was a revenge clash for J & S against the Melton team, the two teams being the top two, and Steve recorded his best ever maximum thus far when he defeated Colin Truman, Melvin having done so earlier, and then these two combine to win the doubles and the match although, I think in the end, it was Egerton who went up bearing in mind it was a Division 2A and 2B situation with just one from each up to the first division.

Talking about the Midland Counties League the men's firsts were in danger of relegation after losing to Nottingham 6-4. Leicester's team was Graham Hughes, Charlie Jacques and Colin Truman. The second team defeated Darlaston 9-1 with Paul Randell coming through the ranks in that match, along with Melvin Matts and myself.

Perhaps one or two of you who were around then and for a few years after will remember players in the two veteran teams, all real stalwarts in local table tennis. The firsts had John Bryant, John Ellis and Phil Overend while for the seconds it was Fred Day, Bryan Hall and Harry Ward, all six being a delight to play against.

As I said earlier at that time we still had the A and B streams of divisions from two downwards and that year there was a Division 9A and 9B which prompted a call for a more straightforward arrangement as it actually meant we had 17 divisions and growing.

In those two divisions we had 22 different clubs and only one of them, Knighton Park, is still in existence. I won't list the other 21 as it makes grim reading to note so many clubs falling by the wayside along the way as the league went from 17 divisions, to a peak of 20, and now five.