

OUTBREAK OF SECOND WORLD WAR

HITLER INTERFERES IN WOOLLER'S SECOND TERM AS CAPTAIN

The 1939–40 season was the most fateful one in the club's history. Wilfred Wooller was the captain appointed by the members for a second term, he nominated Les Spence as his vice-captain. Ken Street for the Athletic XV was also appointed for a second term. These three players had enjoyed life together, particularly as Rugger men, and together, they were destined to share in the tragedies and miseries of war. The football committee elected for 1939–40 at the A.G.M. were: Gerald E. Heslop, Jim Batstone, W. M. Douglas, Danny Davies, Arthur H. Jones, G. V. Wynne-Jones, D. L. Evans, R. A. Cornish, Johnny Thomas, Frank Davies, W. Jack Evans and Vic Scott. The management committee of the Athletic Club decided that, under war conditions officers and committees were to remain in office, in continuation as it were.

The prospects for another successful season were excellent, Cliff Jones was now available after his studies, and top newcomers were Les Manfield—already Welsh capped from Mountain Ash—Howell Loveluck from Bridgend, Roy Roberts another grand forward, Len Arnold a full back, and another promising ex-Pontypridd Grammar schoolboy threequarter H. Roblin. But the acts of aggression by the Nazis under Hitler in Europe in the last two years or so had cast the shadows of war over Britain. Hitler had deceived our Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in Munich and Germany now invaded Poland.

During the week leading up to our first match with the Cardiff & District R.U., the young press reporter J. B. G. Thomas introduced a photographer to the Cardiff club for a story and pictures of the team which was probably the best club one in Britain. Two first team

matches only were played, and one by the Athletic XV. The District match took place on Friday 1st September 1939 and ill-fortune was to befall Cliff Jones who dislocated an elbow. Bridgend at home and Llanharan away for the Athletic on Saturday the 2nd ended Cardiff's official season. On the following day, Sunday 3rd September 1939 Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, broadcast to the nation and said we were at war with Germany, and warned us of the evil things we faced. The nation was called upon to pray in the churches of the land.

In the call to arms, many local sportsmen had joined the 77th A.A. Regiment, Royal Artillery which for some time was quartered in Penylan. Wilfred Wooller and several of his team, including the vice-captain Les Spence and Ken Street the captain of "The Rags" were serving in this unit, and with a number of players still available, and in the services nearby, it was felt that some matches could still be played for war-time charities and quite a number of clubs, mainly Welsh, co-operated to this end. As I had maintained details of all the matches which were played, I have appended here the results of the 1939–40 season. The curtailment owing to war to only two official 1st XV matches, and one Athletic XV match, had the technical effect of giving the 1st XV its only unbeaten season in history, and another unbeaten one for the Reserve team.

Readers may be interested in the names of the players who took part in the official matches: Len Arnold, Ray Bale, J. J. Beswick, Selby Davies, W. E. N. Davis, Graham Hale, R. Holbrow, Cliff Jones, also Cliff Jones a hooker, Emrys Jones, E. "Ianto" Jones, E. R. Knapp, Howell Loveluck, Les Manfield, W. G. Morgan, Tom Parry, Gwyn Porter, H. Roblin, Roy Roberts, Les Spence, R. Tarrant, V. Neil Taylor, Dr. Ron Tipple, L. G. S. "Jumbo" Thomas, Godfrey "Gogga" Williams, T. Lyn Williams and Wilfred Wooller. For the war-time charities matches they were supplemented by another 23 players in all. The players who took part in the Athletic XV's match against Llanharan were: J. J. Beswick, E. L. Bevan, Gwyn Davies, R. C. Gillard, Jim Hickey, R. Holbrow, Emrys Jones, H. Roblin, K. Street, R. Tarrant, R. Thatcher, R. M. Thomas, Gwyn Williams (Clydach Vale), Godfrey Williams and T. Lyn Williams. The chief scorers in the war-time charities games were E. R. Knapp with eight tries and Wooller and Duncan Brown who shared most of the goal kicking.

On 9th March 1940 Wales staged an international match for war time charities on the Cardiff Arms Park against England, Wooller was the Welsh captain and E. R. Knapp, H. O. Edwards—then of Neath—Les Manfield and W. E. N. Davis took part. One can say that Hitler deprived us of seeing the Australian tourists who were caught up in the war, and also the French clubs L'Aviron Bayonnais and Stade Bordelais. Amongst the advertisements in our official programme for 2nd September 1939 was one for "The New Ford" 8 h.p Saloon Car at £115—£25 deposit secures.