

## **BRAMSTON SPORTS CENTRE**

The Bramston club is a good example of how an excellent venue, keen organisers, a largely untapped contact area and good marketing can produce an instant table tennis club.

The club took their first steps in the 1974-75 season after some ex-league players had met at the Bramston Sports Centre and decided the centre ought to run a league club. Notices on the notice board brought in several more players with some experience and others with none and by the start of the season they were able to enter three teams.

More importantly they set up a four-table practice session every Sunday night in the gym which not only helped their own players to develop but brought others into the fold. It worked so well that the number of teams went up to six the following year and eight the year after that.

Former league general secretary Baden Woods and ex-Crittall Witham player George Earle were the main organisers, with help from Nigel Sutton, who ran the B team, sports centre employee Paul Whybrow, one of the centre's top squash and badminton players, and Geoff Lang, whose youngest two sons both took up the game.

The club also ran a junior team which included Robin Lang and Steve Edmonds, who within a few seasons were among the top players in the league, Lang going on to take the men's singles title. At the start of their first season, Lang won just three of his first 20 singles and Edmonds five. From little acorns...

The addition of Neil Williams strengthened the A team enough to keep them in division one the following season while the newly promoted second team finished third in division two and the third team second in division three.

More significantly, the junior team rose from third from bottom the previous season to win division four with ease.

The following season they were doubly promoted to division two and proceeded to win that. That season also saw the arrival of men's singles champion Derek Wood from College, his former Hertfordshire teammate Mick Borshell, who had just moved to the area, and Tom Elder and Ken Jackson from the Colchester League club Tiptree.

It proved to be the high point of the club's existence. The A team won division one by eight points, with the second team holding its place in the division. The junior team (Bramston YC A) won division two with the C team just pipped for the runners-up spot.

But then the centre put up prices, already regarded as high, and Wood set about finding somewhere else to play. He found the Witham Town Football

Club had a good size hall that was available, established a new club there and most of Bramston's players followed him.

That left the sports centre with just three teams. Worse was to follow as the sports centre required them to play in the totally unsuitable projectile room and the exodus of players meant that Sunday evening practice was no longer viable.

The club struggled on for a bit, including a spell in the pavilion on the Stevens Road sports field, and actually put together a potentially league-winning team of Martin Speight, Mark Bannister and Ian Carson in 1981. But they were not able to play regularly enough and finished third.

It was a swansong. After the 1981-82 season, enough was agreed to be enough.