

## Barnet Make Wembley Debut

By W. G. WHITE

**B**ARNET FOOTBALL CLUB was formed in 1888, and although the records for the first two or three years do not appear to have been preserved, it is known that the club competed in the Olympian League. Their ground was then in Queen's Road, Barnet—on the site now occupied by Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School. The dressing room was at the "Black Horse" public house, some distance away, and their headquarters were at the old Salisbury Hotel.

In 1906, after competing in the North London League and the North Middlesex League and Alliance, they amalgamated with a works' club, Alston, and as Barnet Alston F.C. won promotion to the premier division of the London League.

This performance firmly established the club in senior football. In 1907 the club vacated their ground, which was then in Barnet Lane, and moved to the present site.

The year 1912 marked an important milestone in the club's history. They amalgamated with Barnet F.C.—previously Barnet Avenue F.C., another leading club in the town—and the new combination played under the title of Barnet and Alston F.C.

The year also saw the formation of a new amateur league—the Athenian League—which has done much for football in the south of England. The Barnet club was one of the original members and today they are the only club with an unbroken membership.

### ● FIRST LEAGUE TITLE

After the first world war it was decided to drop "Alston" from the title and play as Barnet F.C. It was not until the 1930–31 season, however, that Barnet first won the Athenian League championship, which they won again the following year. It was at this time that Lester Finch, one of their finest players, first came into prominence. Finch and Denis Kelleher, who played for Ireland's amateur team, were Barnet's two greatest players, and were both in the 1945–46 Amateur Cup winning team.

*It was in the 1937–38 season that Barnet reached the semi-final stage of the Amateur Cup for the first time, and then were beaten 2–1 by Bromley at Dulwich.*

Immediately after the second world war, Barnet had a wonderful run in the Amateur Cup competition. In 1945–46, led by Lester Finch, who had emerged from retirement, they won the trophy. At Stamford Bridge, Chelsea, before a crowd of 53,802 spectators, they defeated Bishop Auckland 3–2.

The following season they reached the semi-final, being beaten in extra time by Leytonstone on the Brentford ground.

In 1947–48 Barnet reached the final of the Amateur Cup for the second time in three seasons, losing to Leytonstone 1–0 at Stamford Bridge.

After reaching the semi-final stage again in the 1951–52 season when they lost 1–0 to Leyton at Tottenham, Barnet struck a lean period. Their fortunes reached their lowest ebb in the 1956–57 season when they finished bottom of the Athenian League.

### ● REVIVAL MAINTAINED

Coached and managed by George Wheeler, an England amateur international, and a member of the 1945–46 cup winning team, they reached the 1957–58 semi-final after a series of thrilling matches. After drawing with the ultimate winners, Woking, at Fulham, they were narrowly beaten in the replay at Brentford.

**Their revival has been continued this season, and on their way to the final they have beaten such famous amateur teams as the mighty Bishop Auckland, Wycombe Wanderers and Walthamstow Avenue—and this with a team composed mainly of young players.**

Against Willington in the second round, Barnet helped to create what must be an all-time scoring record, three goals coming in the first 75 seconds. Willington scored from the kick-off, but before the game was 75 seconds old, Barnet had scored twice.

While Barnet are a fast, skilful young side, they would be the first to admit that much of their success has been due to their fitness and there can be few fitter sides in amateur soccer today. In charge of their physical training has been Mr. Eric Shearly, a master at Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet—where the code is Rugby.

President is Mr. George Sanderson, who, as honorary secretary and then chairman, was the guiding power of the club before he became chairman of the Athenian League. Other officials with a long record of faithful service include Lionel Purrott, the honorary secretary, and Ted Whittaker, their treasurer.