Fifty years ago, our two clubs met in a titanic Amateur Cup clash at the Dolphin speedway Stadium

Slough Town’s one-time ground, the Dolphin Stadium was built for speedway but could house 10,000 crowds

between two of the best-supported amateur clubs of the day - not just because of the promise of FA Cup glory in the next round, but because Athenian League champions Slough were desperate to establish themselves as worthy of Isthmian membership.

There was no natural promotion between the leagues. If you wanted to join the amateur elite (the Isthmian League) you had to be formally invited and even winning a parallel league was no guarantee.

The Stones had their invitation, four years earlier, and were established in the top half dozen Isthmi. But they were well aware of the threat posed by the big, uncompromising Rebels who would go on to dominate the Athenian League (rivaling clubs like Dagenham, Bishop Stortford, Maid-enhead, Leatherhead and Hayes) for the next decade.

The Stones had powerful centre-backs in Bobby Hatt and John Delaney, who had scored an amazing 51 goals between them the previous season, while strikers Bob Stevens (32 goals) and Chris Mullan (41) were clearly also men of the moment. But Slough’s then home, the Dolphin Stadium, Delaney and Hatt began waiting in the wings.

In front of a 2,900 crowd at Lower Mead four days later for the replay. Another big crowd (2,983) saw a slightly nervous start from Dave Underwood’s team but we

Chris Reynolds. The 500 Stones fans made themselves heard in the deep stands of Slough’s quirky speedway stadium, but as the game wore on it seemed inevitable that the home side would equalise... and they did.

So back to Lower Mead four days later for the replay. Another big crowd (2,983) saw a slightly nervous start from Dave Underwood’s team but we
the few amateur clubs in the country who can boast a higher average gate than the Rebels. So far this season they have averaged between 2000 and 2500 and expect to bring over 500 to the Dolphin.

Our visitors league encounters so far this season have been mainly successful having lost only 3 matches to date, to Enfield, Dalwich Hamlet and Walthamstow Avenue. Last season we were champions in 1952 and runners up in 1953, 1959 and 1961. In 1960 they were both the English players and extremely experienced. Townend was in the last Olympic squad with Liverpool and Fulham and was manager of Hastings. A man well experienced in football, missing from the Stones line-up today is Dennis Montague, one of their outstanding players.

Saturday September 21st 2001, Ryman Div One: Wealdstone 2 Slough Town 1

In those days our programme was a bit more basic and the details of that previous epic FA Cup meeting barely touched upon. Instead the news was all about a good start to our season, with this excellent 2-1 win over the Rebels pushing us up to 5th in the table after wins over Bromley 4-1, Walton & Hersham 2-1, Oxford City 3-1 and a solitary defeat at our nemesis Harlow Town (2-0).

Manager Gordon Bartlett was waging his usual battle with the (pretty much non-existent) budget but had managed to attract some decent new players to the White Lion ground, which we shared with landlords Edgware. Richard McDonagh, Bryan Hammett and Vinny Somers had joined from Hemel and Jason Shaw from Hampton and the 2000-1 season was receding into memory.

But not for long. The team flattered to deceive. After a goalless first half against Slough we went 2-0 up thanks to an own goal from right back Clement James and a 73rd minute strike from Lee Walker. Junior Haynes pulled one back but we streamed out of the ground, en route to the White Hart a few minutes later with dreams of a title challenge and possible promotion.

To be fair, that lasted a few weeks more. We won two and lost two and then went to the runaway leaders Aylesbury United and were held 2-2... but then came the run (as beautifully described by Mick Fishman in the 70 Years of Wealdstone book) as a 'well-greased pig sliding down a slippery slope'.

Apart from a 2-1 victory at Bromley on the weekend before Christmas, Bartlett's troops failed to win between October 2nd 2001 and March 9 2002 - a run of one win in 27 games!

And that included the thumping defeat at Wexham Park...


Saturday January 12 2001, Ryman Div One: Slough 6 Wealdstone 0

The Rebels offside trap is now quite famous or infamous depending upon your locality and where your loyalties lie. Time and time again we hear the cry from the opposition supporters "play the game!" Insults and threats are hurled at our players as opposing forwards are caught offside, sometimes only inches inside the Slough half. Trying officials have been upset at our tactics and some people have stated that playing Slough is like playing the Brigade of Guards.

This was the Slough viewpoint, described as the Rebels' "best display in many a season". Were they good or were we bad...?