

Mr. Harry Pyrke

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IT is significant that the year Mr. Harry Pyrke returned to Christchurch, after six years' absence, the Football Club have won the Hants League Div. II championship. Once before under the guiding hand of Mr. Pyrke as Chairman the Club leapt to the top of the Div. II table. "Football is my one and only love now," he says. But funnily enough as a young man he wasn't interested in soccer. Rugby was his game. At the height of his career he played for the Transvaal against an English touring side in 1904. Transvaal won by six points to three.

JOINED MOUNTED POLICE

He joined the Army when he was fourteen-and-a-half. "How old are you son?" asked the recruiting sergeant. "I'm 18 today sir," replied young Harry with his heart in his mouth, and the sergeant believed him.

He fought in the Boer War and then transferred to the South African Mounted Police for twelve years. He reached the rank of Troop Quartermaster Sergeant. Out of uniform for the first time in fifteen years, he returned to England just before World War I broke out, and in 1915 found him fighting at the first battle of the Somme.

Commissioned, he found himself back in England for a time, and then he went to Cairo. For the last six months of the war he was on military court work.

Back in "civvy-street" he had plenty of time for sport and played for Bristol and Clifton. At 42 he played his last game. "It had to be," he explains, "you see I broke my leg."

Coming to Christchurch in 1933 he interested himself in the Christchurch Football Club. It was in the Bournemouth Senior League then, but in four years it was playing in the Hampshire League Div. I.

ELECTED BY ONE VOTE

In 1936 he stood for the Council. He was elected—by one vote.

Perhaps his most outstanding achievement whilst on the Council was to get a motion passed agreeing in principle to the provision of a public swimming pool on Quomps.

"When the estimates came through the following year it was forgotten," he said.

Together with the late Mr. E. Rainsley he helped to form the Christchurch Lads' Cub. During this time too he was well known as "Castlemain", the sports writer in both the "Christchurch Times" and the football programme.

In 1939 came war, and again Mr. Pyrke found himself in uniform. This time it was the Home Guard and for a while he was second-in-command at Christchurch.

In 1942 he went to London and worked with Odeon Theatres. When he retired, however, he had only one thought—to get back to Christchurch. Now he is here.