

# Southend United Supporters Club



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## SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER 12

FIRST there was Piltdown Man. Now he has been joined by Southend Man, with consequences as potentially earth-shattering.

Piltdown Man was the name given to the first of two skulls found in 1912 in Piltdown Quarry, Sussex. It was claimed to be from a primitive hominid, the missing link between man and the apes. And best of all, he was British! When parts of a jaw bone were uncovered, and then a second skull materialised in 1917, the scientific community was positively orgasmic - similar to the reaction when our equaliser hit the net at Orient. But doubts lingered. The bones just did not fit in with similar discoveries. And the doubts grew until, in 1953, it was accepted that the whole thing was a gigantic hoax. The skulls were proven no older than the 14th century, while the jaw bone was declared to have come from an orang-utan - a creature not generally recognised as being native to Sussex! The boffin world was gobsmacked.

Now equal incredulity has followed the news that a part of Blues' new stadium location is playing host to a Bronze Age burial site, containing, presumably, aforesaid Southend Man and assorted other cadavers of yore. It could only happen to us, right? With English Heritage, and ergo the usual collection of Swampies and sandal-wearing eco collectives, likely to be ready to cry foul at any attempt to pour a few thousand tons of ready-mixed anywhere near Mr Shaggy, who knows where this latest fly in the ointment could take us. Funny how this has only just cropped up, of course. You can almost see Anton Johnson with a big smirk on his face.

Needless to say, your committee is on the case. It was agreed at our last meeting on February 7 that Martin Penton would inquire of both English Heritage and Southend Council what the true position is and also confirm with the Council exactly where they stand currently on the stadium's birth. We await their reply with interest.

I'm really sorry, but I can't go any longer without saying it. AGM, Shrimpers Club, Thursday February 24, 7.30pm for 8. Don't keep those views and ideas bottled up. Be there!

Right, on into the bowels of SUSC NEWSLETTER NUMBER TWELVE. And for starters, back to the committee meeting. Paul Fitzgerald, our new membership-attractor-in-chief, attended the Supporter Involvement in Football Clubs Conference in London on January 27. Environment Secretary Chris Smith - an Arsenal fan this week - is keen to provide funding to help give supporters' clubs a greater say in the game. This additional influence could then, in an ideal world, even lead to fans on boards of directors. There should also be assistance for SCs like ours to get a stake in the likes of Southend United through share purchases. This may not be immediately possible, as we have already found out. But the government is prepared to offer funds for such purposes to SCs throughout the league. And, naturally, we will apply for whatever grants we can get to enable SUSC to play as big a role in the cause as is feasible. We will see what happens. Many thanks to Paul for his efforts, as he attended the gathering at very short notice. All 92 League clubs were also invited to send representatives, with their attendance, surprisingly, estimated at - ZERO. So while the Smith plan may be worthy, don't hold your breath if it requires nationwide football club co-operation.

The last planned meeting with John Main had to be postponed after something 'came up' at the last minute. His lunch, a lottery win, a knighthood? We don't know. But a new date is in the offing.

Ron Martin is apparently very keen to meet SUSC and answer any questions that might ease our troubled minds. So keen that a date has already been fixed - Thursday, March 23. Ron still seems quite happy there are 'no problems' with the stadium plans, despite our neanderthal pal rising from the grave. Fine - we love an optimist. We could also be changing charges for both that date and the next face-to-face with Alan Little. Members would still pay £1, but non-members would have to find £3. Watch out for the verdict. Looks like all the more reason to join our happy band.

We will be having a word with John Main to see if punitive retribution should be taken against Barry Hearn Rip-Offs Inc. for the £15 take-it-or-leave-it ticket price at Orient. Perhaps their fans would like to cough up the same at Roots next season. £15 is definitely well over the top compared, say, to the £7 terrace slots available this weekend at Darlington. And so what if Os fans pay the same amount. More fool them. We were supposed to have 1,200 tickets, but heaven knows how many were jammed in our section of Brisbane Road by kick-off. So that's how you become a multi-millionaire.....

I am afraid the website remains moribund for the time being, though through no want of effort from Richard Coxell. But Richard promises 'exciting new plans ahead'. So watch this space.

His hard work on the Blue Boar plaque failed to secure him a picture in the Echo. That honour went to Sir Teddy, Trevor and the Berry boys. The Times also gave the unveiling a mention. Ah, friends in high places. United have done pretty well of late, too, in the Currant Bun. Young whippersnapper Dave Kidd did the Swansea match proud with his report, Richard was quoted in depth (OK, 10 words) in a story on the SUSC player sponsorship jinx and then came yours truly's tale of the Blues' newest website sponsor - Marie Stopes International Vasectomy Centres. Ouch! Outstanding - or should that be upstanding. Whatever, all publicity is good publicity in these days of Premiership, Premiership, Premiership.

Good to see that jinx now looks a thing of the past. Neville Roach may be yesterday's news, but Martin Carruthers has hit four goals since we put £100 in the kitty to back him until the end of the season. What value. Martin deservedly won us the Swansea clash, while the first of his double against Hartlepool was a triumph of intuition and determination. We will miss Neil Tolson alongside him, though it has been pretty clear Tolson has not been moving that freely of late. I hope Trevor Fitzpatrick will get another chance in his place. He has so much potential, but definitely has piled on some unwanted lard during his injury lay-offs. Even so, I would hardly rate the way boss Little substituted him last weekend as a victory for man-management. And that is not the first time this season.

There were no arrests over the West Stand fisticuffs with the sheep worriers. Yet at the same game there were evictions from the South Stand lower for swearing. Yes, there have been previous warnings, but we intend to tell John Main that there is still a perceived stewarding problem in that area of Roots Hall.

Our huge and vociferous following at Orient was, in fact, nine short. That was the total of no-shows for the SUSC coach journey. But in the wake of the warning in NUMBER ELEVEN, at least all nine were new bookers. They may or may not get a second chance in future.

Blues' MBNA credit card is offering an interest rate of just 6.9 per-cent at the moment. If you have one, you might well require it should you wish to see George Best at the 64th Sportsman's Dinner. The price, with Shrimphile comedian Terry Alderton thrown in, is an astonishing £49 a head. It's enough to make you

choke on your three-courser. These evenings now have a corporate customers only look to them. Sad.

At least Exeter are getting it right. They unveiled their new stand behind one goal last weekend - a lovely, modern.....terrace. How nice if it were to start a trend.

Didn't Martin Aldridge play for us - and score - a couple of seasons back? You know, the one tragically killed in a car smash about three weeks ago. I only ask because I watched Darlington and Peterborough hold a minute's silence before their game on Sky, yet I don't remember the player having any connection with either side. On the other hand, we seem to have forgotten him altogether.

Ron Pountney has revamped testimonial plans in the pipeline. Nothing to do with us this time round, though Paul Fitzgerald is on the new organising committee. It is hoped to get Ron some sort of match at Roots Hall, but not, it seems, any longer against West Ham. There could be an 'international celebrity' involved as well. Your guess who is as good as mine.

Stan the Man - or should that be Stan the Fire-Man. He was lucky he did not extinguish his fledgling Leicester career along with the City squad's stay at La Manga. The bloke looked to have it all when he left us, but seems to have preferred life in the £25,000-a-week comfort zone to really putting himself out and becoming one of the nation's greats. I would still love to see him scoring stunning goals in the Premiership like he did with us, yet I fear the worst. What a bloody waste.

Fancy that. Colin Murphy has quit the Burma (or Myanmar as they like to be known at present) coach's job. Rumour has it the language barrier was the problem - they could not understand what the hell he was on about. I reckon he only got the post because he had experience of working with dictators! As for Dave Webb, he is lording it at Yeovil. How the mighty are fallen. At least Mick Gooding has landed on his feet with his new two-year deal. All he has to do now is prove to us he is worth it by helping Mr Little get us up - next season at the latest.

Hang on a minute. It may have slipped your mind. AGM, Thursday February 24, Shrimpers Club, 7.30pm for 8. Get in the swing.

It seems incredible that it is already more than 12 months since our last annual meeting, which was held on February 3 1999. (Almost as incredible as Steve Tilson being voted Blues' Player of the Millennium).

It was a shock to lose founding father Tony Hall to the Junior Blues. But Trevor Bashford has battled a huge personal workload to do a sterling job as chairman and treasurer, more than ably assisted by his deputy Richard Coxell. Other officers and committee members elected that night were: Secretary / Press Officer - Clare Crammond; Membership Secretary - Kathryn Medcalf; Committee - Chris Berry, John Campbell, Alan Caulfield, Martin Cranmer, Jerry Moss and Nigel Rickard. Clare has since resigned from both her posts, Alan Caulfield has left the committee and John Campbell is leaving. Martin Penton and Paul Fitzgerald have been co-opted on in the interim, to the committee's benefit. Any new blood, young or old, wishing to stand for office this year should get the relevant nomination in to Trevor before the 24th.

After 27 months in existence, S USC remains in good shape. Our current membership stands at close to 300, though there remains scope for a significant increase in that number. The scrapping of the 'Independent' from our title has probably further strengthened what, overall, has been a good relationship with the football club - especially John Main. That he agrees to meet three of the committee each month on a voluntary basis to discuss whatever topic we wish would stagger fans at some clubs. Newcastle and M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\*\*\*\*, for example.

Chris Berry does a superbly efficient job on our SUSC coach travel up and down the country at the most reasonable prices around. We could use cheaper coaches than Supreme, but we reckon the extra comfort and United connection are worth that bit extra. The only well documented let-down on the away-day front are those who undermine us by booking seats and then not turning up.

Our finances are sound, which is why we can afford to give loyal followers the benefit of going to places like Torquay and Plymouth for £5. If there is spare cash in the kitty, rest assured it will get back to members one way or another. Trevor will provide full audited accounts at the AGM, which is more than some organisations not a million miles away have been able to boast up until this year. And how can we forget the bonus of your monthly newsletter. That has to be worth the peanuts membership fiver on its own!!!

Our social events have been limited to our very successful Q & A sessions with Messrs Main, Storrie, Little etc plus two quiz nights. If you want more social events, let us know on the 24th. If you do, all we would ask is that you attend them. A social secretary would be even better.

SUSC's player sponsorship has, touch wood, hit on a winner at last with Martin Carruthers. Up until Martin, any player we have backed has found the link to us as beneficial as a pick-me-up from Dr Harold Shipman.

Richard Coxell's SUSC badges went down a storm and the plaque he arranged for the Blue Boar was a master-stroke. I think the prediction competition brought in more entries this season and it would be nice to believe we played a part in getting Blues to bring in Sammy the Shrimp as our new mascot - though whether he is as big a success as he might be remains open to question. Our flag now flies at every away game and, with all the effort put in behind the scenes, I reckon we are genuinely on the map.

We have members worldwide and, while preparing NUMBER ELEVEN for despatch, I discovered we also have them in 24 other counties than Essex as well - from Lancashire to Hampshire, Norfolk to Dyfed. All it requires is for our present membership to stick with SUSC - i.e. renew a.s.a.p. when required - and for as many others as we can attract to sign on the dotted line. The stronger we are, the more chance of some influence where or when it might just count.

As of this moment, the new ground has to be our biggest concern. We've had Keep Chester Alive, Keep Barnet Alive and we don't want Keep Southend Alive. Unveiling of the plans is now due before the end of this month. Plus, of course, we need a side capable of bringing bigger crowds back to Roots Hall and escaping what, let's face it, is far from a quality Third Division. Northern bookie Fred Done has already paid out on M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\*\*\*\* winning the Premiership. Somehow, I do not think I will be able to persuade Coral's to cough up on my £5ew on Blues to go straight up this season.

Any comments, criticisms or comeback, the address is as usual - [nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk](mailto:nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk) A year of newsletters - hope you found some snippet to enjoy.

NR

One more time - AGM, Thursday February 24, Shrimpers Club, 7.30pm for 8. Get fell in!