

# **SUSCT NEWSLETTER 13**

---

**COMPUTERS.** How did we ever live without them? In my case, very easily. But in these enlightened times the accepted wisdom is they are a must. So I have just handed over a small fortune to Gateway UK to join the worldwide association of nerds hence the slightly different look to the old newsletter format. My new PC friend and I are currently spending a lot of time circling each other warily. It is like being a learner driver again. That drop cap start at the beginning of the paragraph was definitely the equivalent of a hill start. You can tell this is **NEWSLETTER NUMBER THIRTEEN.** But bear with me and hopefully we will get in the swing sometime before 2010.

Without further ado, on to the key business of the month the AGM held during the deluge on the evening of February 24. We could not have picked a worse night for weather and many thanks to the 30-plus members who ventured out. John Main, much to his credit when he had no need to, also attended throughout.

We kicked off with chairman Trevor's review of SUSC's second year in existence. After a tribute to the early work put in by Tony and Carol Hall, Trevor went on to mention the concerns over the new ground, the worry of the club being controlled by developers and the need to keep United within the Southend borough. At least United now have their best ever merchandise, thanks to Mrs Main, and Trevor recognised that we currently have a football chairman who has done his best to be helpful whenever possible both to SUSC and individual fans. We want that relationship to flourish until one day we might see a fan on the board. It could be you Mr G!

New committee appointments mean we hope to build socially on the very successful quiz nights and Q & A sessions we held during the year. But remember such events are only worthwhile if YOU attend them. Our biggest success remains our away travel, in the capable hands of Chris Berry. The format remains that any profits made will be ploughed back into reducing prices wherever possible. It was suggested from the floor that perhaps the fares may be too high. But once Trevor revealed that costs could be cut if switched to coach with no toilets, TV etc it was understood we are getting as good as we can get at the cheapest prices we can get. We do travel huge distances in the Third Division, though, and Trevor suggested it might be time to look again at reviving the old Third Division South and North. Trevor's heartfelt thanks to a host of people both on and off the committee then saw the Kleenex broken out before Richard Coxell took over.

Our vice-chairman, standing in for membership secretary Kathryn Medcalf, revealed that the president of Gillingham's supporters' club reckoned you were doing well with a membership of 10 per cent of your hard-core fan base. For Blues at the moment that base is around 4,000, so current SUSC membership of around 330 is moving steadily towards the certainly achievable 10 per cent mark of 400. We are 100 members up on last year including our latest honorary member, comedian Terry Alderton. Terry even phoned to thank us for such a tribute. Trevor's treasurer's report was next on the agenda details of which may (or may not) be with this newsletter for you to mull over. Next it was on to the election of SUSC officers. A painless proceeding saw the following put in the firing-line for 2000:

**CHAIRMAN / TREASURER : Trevor Bashford**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN : Richard Coxell**

**SECRETARY / PRESS-PR : Derek Murr**

**MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY : Paul Fitzgerald**

**COMMITTEE : Jeff Allen, Chris Berry, Martin Cranmer, Kathryn Medcalf, Jerry Moss, Kirstine Nicholson, Martin Penton and Nigel Rickard.**

Be it complaints or salutations, these are the people to approach.

The meeting closed with an impromptu Q & A session with John Main. The key issue raised concerned, as usual, the new ground. John remained upbeat about the plans, claimed continued unwavering support from Sir Teddy Taylor and the council and insisted any Cretaceous corpses rumoured to be buried in the environs of Boots and Laces need not concern us - though more of that later. He is adamant that there can be no development on the site other than the proposed football stadium, but has no control over the timing of the planning application going in. He admitted: As far as I am concerned it should have gone in last summer." Let us hope Ron Martin can tell us why it did not at the Q & A on March 23 in the Shrimpers Club. This gathering was on, off and right now (March 12) is ON again. Be there and put him on the spot. The Swansea bother and its poor handling was also brought up. It led John to say that the issue of ground security "worries the pants off me." And so it should when football clubs are using 'security' personnel whose sole raison d'être for the most part is to pick up a bit of extra pocket money. Sorting out terrace trouble and dealing with genuine yobs in situations where the odd bout of fisticuffs might ensue is just not part of their agenda. Should young girls and women, in all seriousness, really be wearing the fluorescent jackets? You tell me.

Our Main man expects a sweep-out of those players not up to scratch and whose contracts will end after this season. We can then dip into the anticipated pool of about 700 likely to be on offer from other clubs. Judging by the Exeter agony, I can think of eight who should be clearing their lockers already. At least against Macclesfield we had 10 good minutes. Alan Little condemned the Devonians for their negative tactics. But what did he expect from a side arriving at Roots on the back of a home defeat by Chester - potentially the worst team in the League? And what is positive about us lumbering on ad infinitum with five at the back? When Leo appeared, I thought we were going to try six. If that is the strength of Little's tactical analysis, we are deeper in trouble than I realised. OK, Brighton's winner was a joke. But once more we failed to score. The last goal we constructed, rather than were gifted by the opposition, was Neil Tolson's at Orient back on February 5. At least we can relax again, though. The play-offs are now totally out of the question.

Oh for Stanley Victor up front with Martin Carruthers. Those first two finishes against Sunderland were straight out of his 92-93 scrapbook. There can be few things more exciting on a football pitch than The Man in full flow.

I had to rewind the video and check my eyes had not deceived me the first time I saw the TV ad for CGU pensions featuring that dark-haired maiden romping around in her Blues shirt.

Her lucky bloke will do well to reach 65! Exactly the sort of exposure we need. My surprise was almost equalled by seeing Alan Foggon scoring a goal on Nationwide Football Extra during his Middlesbrough days - and weighing less than 16st.

Despite the SUSC jinx on him, the Cayman Islands decided to take a World Cup gamble on Neville Roach - or Neville Roberts as The Independent referred to our out-of-favour striker. The lads from the tax haven Caribbean paradise got a 5-0 drubbing in their first friendly. Then the jinx must really have kicked in. FIFA banned English-based players from taking part in the qualifier against Cuba, who proceeded to drub the Islands boys 5-0. So don't hold your breath about seeing our Nev in South Korea and Japan in 2002. It also left me wondering about Nev's Cayman connection. My News of the World annual gives his birthplace as. . . . . Reading.

Apologies for referring to Chris Smith in NUMBER TWELVE as the Environment Secretary. He is, of course, Culture Secretary. Ah, culture. You know, being spoiled for choice between Friday Night's All Wright and So Graham Norton. Now Chris is happy for everyone to know he is gay. So it should come as no surprise that Sports Minister Kate Hoey and Tony Banks are currently doing their best to encourage any gay Premiership or Nationwide players to reveal themselves and be declared role models, when any there are probably just want to get on with life quite normally and undisturbed. So far I hear no rumours of closet doors being thrust back in the home Roots Hall dressing room, but it's a chance for one of the lads to make his name - and the headlines!

Well done to the Junior Blues for coming 5th in a poll in The Independent on how the 92 league clubs look after their young supporters. Southampton topped the tree, with M\*\*\*\*\* U\*\* a pathetic 61st. I also see Sammy the Shrimp is available for party hire. At least he doesn't have to worry if it's fancy dress.

Oh well, back to the gravitas – and your new committee's first meeting on March 8. Needless to say the chief topic discussed was, you've guessed it, the new ground. Martin Penton contacted both English Heritage and the council for the latest position on the 'burial site' situation and was given the usual runaround. Meanwhile Richard has done some ferreting and discovered that far from being a burial site all that has ever been found on that particular designated area of 14 acres – the entire Blues site is 72 acres - are a few bits of 13th century pottery. Any bones are likely to be the remains of someone's takeaway! The spot is also shown as a monument on maps, meaning it should not have been disturbed in any shape or form. Yet half of it has been ploughed over and the rest is completely spoiled. Our next steps are i) Grill Mr Martin on the 23rd; ii) Tell the football club we are going direct to English Heritage and the council to see what is going on. Paul Fitzgerald will liaise with Martin on the latter.

The website. You've heard it before, but there are exciting plans due to come to fruition in the near future. Richard, we believe you.

Our regular monthly meeting with John Main took place on February 21. Talk about the new stadium and the Swansea problems brought comment already detailed as above. But John appeared to warm a little more to the idea of a supporter possibly being elected to the board at some (distant) time in the future. His big worry, of course, is confidentiality etc. S USC, through Paul Fitzgerald, will also continue looking into the possibilities for us of the Supporters Trust initiative. Investment by fans could benefit both us and the football club. More on that in the weeks ahead. The next get-together is planned for March 28, when the issue of ticket prices for next season is likely to loom large. Our current form suggests to me the possibility of a sub-3,000 home gate before the end of the season – hinting that plans for any further swingeing increases could be counter-productive to put it mildly.

We are thinking about some sort of end of season 'do', with a presentation to our Player of the Year. It is hardly at the detailed planning stage yet, but would be a good opportunity for S USC members to get together.

I was interested to discover why the Macclesfield match was played on a Friday night. It seems Essex police could not cope with covering such an encounter on the Saturday and at the same time be involved in a planned hijack practice at Stansted. But thanks to the Afghan 'terrorists', they got a real-life practice beforehand, so we could have played on the Saturday after all.

Thanks a lot to all those who travelled with us to Halifax. We had only one no-show – and he rang to apologise for not being able to make it. I hope the same helpful attitude was maintained for the Brighton journey.

Our finances remain no cause for concern, though I am afraid it is coming to 'that time of year' again – the moment when membership renewals start to crop up. For the third year running, membership of S USC will be just £5 – less than three pints or two packets of cancer sticks. It is the last word in bargain basement and no danger to your health. So when your membership renewal slips arrive from our new Hon. Mem. Sec. Paul Fitzgerald, please return them with your fiver as soon as you can. It makes everyone's life easier and gets your details down in the new database nice and efficiently.

The next committee meeting is on April 6. Any queries, problems etc just contact your nearest committee member. For newsletter comment, I am on [nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk](mailto:nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk) Anything personal, better to try Dear Deirdre.

NR

Quiz question: If Mike Marsh was so badly crocked he had to quit both us and the game, how come he is now spearheading Kidderminster's bid for the Conference title?