

SUSCT NEWSLETTER 41

E VER felt like throwing yourself off a cliff? Assuming there was one available, of course. And apart from that moment when the nation in general must have contemplated ending it all. I mean the instant at St Mary's which saw England's flap-happy chappy David Seaman wave Macedonia's opener into his onion bag to spark the greatest celebration in that little Eastern European land since Alexander the Great gave the Persians a drubbing at Gaugamela in 331BC. Sven, you don't have to hold yourself back like that Rhino huntress Ulrika probably begged you to between the sheets. Dump Seaman - NOW!

Anyway, my cliff-top moment came on October 15 at about 2.50pm. NEWSLETTER 41, another six pages of purple prose / sleep-inducing rambling (delete to taste) was about two paragraphs from completion before being despatched for distribution by our Terry next day. It was at that moment that my computer's hard drive suffered its second terminal event in six months. Stupidly, I had not yet backed up all my hard graft and the whole lot consequently disappeared into the ether never to be seen again. The Gateway bloke was very sympathetic, though - which was nice.

To say I was a tad miffed would be giving just a hint of how I felt. Especially as Number 41 contained a fair amount of key info, along with the usual meanderings. So, with my equilibrium somewhat restored, I have tried to reproduce to the best of my recollection as much of the initial newsletter as I can remember. And if I have missed anything out.....tough!

First off, a matter of genuine importance. **IT IS AGM TIME**. Those of us knocking about back around '65 will remember Bob Dylan whining '.....for the times they are a changin'. Well, that applies to the SUSCT committee as much as anything else. Of the old SUSC committee elected under 'The Builder' back on February 3 1999, less than four years ago, only Trevor Bashford, Richard Coxell, yours truly and Chris 'Mr Travel' Berry are still connected near the top with the affairs of what has evolved into the SUSCT. The likes of Clare Crammond, John Campbell, Alan Caulfield, Kathryn Medcalf and Jerry Moss (our former ambassador to the Sopotians) have served and departed.

Incredibly, all of the current committee are prepared to stand for another 12 months, but that will NOT be the case come 2003. Therefore, at the forthcoming AGM to be held at the Shrimpers Club on WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30 (7.30pm for 8), it is crucial that we try to get some more of our members interested and willing to stand for election to the committee. They can see what is what and then, hopefully, carry the torch forward when some of the present old-stagers call it a day.

The AGM is when our members get to be reminded of what the Trust has been up to in the last year, have the chance to query what has, or has not, been done and can suggest ways in which the Trust can move forward. But to do that, you have to **BE THERE**. So please, get the date in your diary now and come along on the night. If you have a moan, make it known. The AGM is the only sensible place to do it.

T HE present committee is: Trevor Bashford, Brian Cotgrove, Richard Coxell (vice-chairman), Kevin Feasey, Craig Fillary (treasurer), Paul FitzGerald, Terry Jeffreys (membership secretary), Derek Murr (secretary), Nigel Rickard, Dave Scriven, Mike Smith and Paul Yeomanson. If you would like to put yourself forward to join them, or to nominate someone else, please contact Derek Murr on degsmurr@hotmail.com or Paul FitzGerald on pfitz666@aol.com or 01702-478373. We especially need some female input. Don't be shy, ladies. Your views are just as important as those of the male species and we want to hear them. We also need someone who would like to spearhead our fund-raising efforts with the same enthusiasm and enterprise as did Donna Fillary. So get in touch.

The AGM is open only to fully paid-up members of the Trust and the SJS. Bring your membership card or some ID along so you can pass through our 'door security'. And also some cash for the raffle. We hope to have a high-

profile United representative present, Geoffrey King with any luck, to comment on the importance of the backing that the club gets from the Trust and also selected other high-profile matters of concern. So see you there.

'Allo, 'allo, 'allo. We have heard a lot of late about cash flooding out of the Nationwide League. And my spies tell me a bit more flowed from the system at Boots and Laces the other week, when the lads found themselves victims of a heist during training. It was not quite the Italian Job, but my insider reckons several thousand pounds worth of gear (that's in value not weight) was half-inched in the shape of a Rolex, other jewellery, cash, mobile phones etc. Word is that David Crown spotted a couple of ne'er-do-wells making their getaway, but was unable to intercept them. Sounds like one for the current Southend Constabulary equivalent of Dixon of Dock Green. Evenin' all.....

On to the committee front and news of goings-on at the two most recent meetings on September 23 and October 8.

For starters, confirmation that the first SUSCT quiz night of the season will be held at Boots and Laces on Saturday, November 2, 7.30pm for 8. Dave Scriven probably has no tables left by now, but you can check or fit in as an individual with one of the other groups by contacting him on dave@shrimperzone.com Be prepared to make your food choice of fish and chips, veggie burger etc and try to bring a prize along for the raffle if you can. Price is £7.50 for adults and £3 for children. I know the quiz master will shortly be warming to his particular task, so let's hope for another good night.

Membership secretary Terry Jeffreys has had a cull of those too idle to respond to his missives concerning renewals etc, which has reduced our overall number to around 650. However there is also now an excellent SJS membership of 119, for which Chris and Rosemary deserve hearty congratulations after all the work they have put in. While Trust membership may have dropped, our figure is still excellent in relation to average gates and moves are afoot to increase it further. Membership forms are now available in the club shop and should also be visible in the Roots Hall bars. If all goes according to plan, we will also be having a membership drive at the Hartlepool game on October 25. Remember that all newsletter receipt and membership queries should be directed to terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com or 01268-523974.

The vexed issue of no-shows for away games saw the agreement of a penalty of £5 to be added to the next travel price of any future offender - with NO exemptions. We can no longer be mucked around by a minority who think they can escape their indiscretions without comeback. If you cannot be bothered to contact Chris Berry to let him know you cannot travel on the coach, then you must pay the price. It really is that simple. And if £5 does not prove a sufficient deterrent, then it can always be increased further - as, in fact, it already has been in one case. The number on match day is as ever - 07703-898698. Chris will also be taking bookings for Leyton Orient (October 29) and Bristol Rovers (November 9) on that hotline, as well as his domestic 01702-558978.

ONE further travel detail. It would help us if any of our members who have medical conditions that might crop up on the road could let Chris know. For example, if you were epileptic and had a seizure, we would want to do something more than just gaze at you, ring hands and wonder what to do next. If we had knowledge of what would be the best action to take, it could prove hugely beneficial. Then again, should you prefer to take your chance with a potential kiss of life from Bashers - and that could mean tongues - fair enough.

Stephen Broad was confirmed as Player of the Month for August / September, with a double donation to be made to his charity as he was collecting his award for a two-month period. With Leon Cort still holding the original trophy 'somewhere', Chris agreed to come up with some stand-in silverware on presentation day against York and produced something about the size of the UEFA Cup. More great work from Mr Travel.

If fact, Mr Berry is on an unstoppable roll, as he also came up with some very attractive keyrings which could be a handy SUSCT item. It is certainly one we will be looking at further in conjunction with the TJ badges.

Terry has been making good progress on the Hall of Fame and it is hoped that we should be able to set a date shortly for the first entries to be made.

Dave Scriven has also been beavering away on the new Trust website. At the moment, I find the easiest way to access it is to go to Google and just tap in SUSCT. It's looking good. Dave would also be delighted to hear from anyone wishing to partake of his 'Quid A Goal' enterprise. This is where you contribute to the Trust by pledging £1 for every time Blues find the net in a first-team fixture, be it League, FA Cup, LDV Vans etc. You can sign up as an individual or in a syndicate, but Dave has the full details. All you need to do is get in touch with the boy wonder. The cash is most likely to go towards providing equipment for the physio's department at the Hall, which is likely to be lost when John Gowans moves on. But that is still under consideration.

The Christmas Draw tickets should be ready for distribution shortly, with cash prizes of £1,000, £500 and £100. United have also very generously stepped in to offer a mini season ticket and a signed shirt of the winner's choice. To help our sales push, those who offload the most can put themselves in line for one of three little earners - £100, £50 or £25. So, PLEASE, when they drop on the mat get flogging. This is our biggest fund-raiser of the year. The draw was due to take place on Saturday, December 28 v Scunthorpe. But suddenly this fixture has been switched to the 29th, so watch out for it then.

(Selfishly, I believe this date switch has been made a bit late in the day. Blimey, we are two months into the season. Has it really taken this long for Rob and the lads to realise they might be a bit 'tired' after facing Cambridge on Boxing Day? Most important of all to this season ticket holder, though, is I can no longer attend the match as I have to work.)

Our shirt sponsorship remains on hold while we wait to see what happens on the United transfer front.

BUT talking of sponsorship, we are going ahead with a match sponsorship - despite the fact our last experience of this was not one of the happiest. Our big day will come on December 14 v Boston. Amongst our entitlements is another executive box. We plan to fill this with a couple of committee overlords to ensure all runs smoothly and then invite a selection of our members - to be drawn out of the hat at random - to join them. The only drawback for our guests is that they will have to pay their own drinks bill!

The club are doing their bit in working with those trying to get the North Bank up and pumping out the volume once again. This hallowed part of the Hall could, it seems, possibly reverberate with Blues voices as of old and various groups are pushing hard for this. The Trust, as ever, is keen for some input from its members, so you will find a cut-out slip at the end of the newsletter which you can send to Terry and let us know. It will take only seconds to fill in, so try to find the time and then send it off.

There have also been two Liaison meetings on September 25 and October 14 between Trust representatives Dave Scriven and Paul FitzGerald and Geoffrey King, Derek Wilshire and Chris Phillips from United. But before we come to details from those, what have the boys in blue been up to since the Worthless Cup exit against Wimbledon? (Apology. The little match reports and 'fascinating' snippets are usually done after each game. I am afraid my memory is not now quite up to noting every detail from a month and more ago, hence the odd 'abridged' version).

MACCLESFIELD (H, September 14, W1-0): Leon Cort capped a great individual performance by nodding what proved the winner after 26 minutes. Problem was we had to suffer 64 minutes of agony after that as we refused to land a decisive knockout blow on the Silkmen.

KIDDERMINSTER (H, September 17, L0-2): A win would have sent us up to fifth, so in time-honoured fashion we turned in an absolute stinker. Poor Damon Searle endured a particularly torrid nightmare. Two bad goals given away, with Darryl again reluctant to come for what proved a telling cross nodded in from the six-yard line. Another slow start to the second half encouraged the visitors to make it two. Kidderminster were no better than well organised, but we seemed clueless as to how we should go about breaking them down. One to forget - swiftly.

AGM AGM AGM - October 30 October 30 October 30 - Be there, Be there.

LINCOLN (A, September 21, L2-1): Travel by SUSCT coach was a bargain-basement £15. But having arranged to meet some old friends in Lincoln, I had to let the train take the strain - for £53.10 return. See the value you get with the Trust? I especially enjoyed my trip back, when the late connecting train from Lincoln to Newark arrived just in time to enable us to wave the Kings Cross express out of the adjacent platform. Result? An unforgettable 56 minutes in the Newark waiting-room. As for the match, it was played on a Sincil Bank pitch which has no place in the professional game. Bumpy and with grass that was ankle-length. Clearly it did not suit our smooth passing style as we were a shambles for much of the 90 minutes. Our one shot on target in normal play came from Graeme Jones and was of such velocity that you could have walked past it. We gifted them a couple in quick succession to send their siren operator into orgasm overdrive, though Neil Jenkins - still looking a bit too much like Leon Johnson Mk II for my liking - cracked in a tasty 20-yard free-kick. It was hardly much consolation, though, for the 250-strong Blue throng. One thing about Lincoln fans - they are some of the fattest I have seen. Everyone turned up for the coach. Well done.

E XETER (H, September 28, W1-0): Three points in the bag to everyone's relief, with Graeme Jones shrugging off his Diego Forlan tag by slotting away his first United goal from a low Tes cross. And that was about the only highlight, as apart from that neither side mustered a single shot to worry the opposition's keeper in the ENTIRE 90 minutes. Dismal. The vice-chairman was so enthralled he began to ponder on the design of the seats in the East Greens. Yes, there is no doubt that the curve to the backs does take away about three inches of much-needed leg-room. Ron, who sits alongside me, recalled that Exeter provided the opposition for the first home game he saw - back in 1946-47. Now there is devotion for you. We drew that one 2-2, with starring roles from the likes of Ted Hankey, Stan Montgomery and Alf Smirk. Happy days, I imagine. I was trapped in the headlights of a Pulse Cheerleader's gaze pre kick-off and forked out for my first 50-50 ticket. The Jezebel dared to give me a loser.

BURY (A, October 5, W3-1): The air at Wapping Towers was the wrong sort of blue at 3.03pm as the videprinter revealed we were behind already at one of the shrines to past United glory. But, of course, we knew we would always come back to win, didn't we? Three goals in the last 25 minutes from Messrs Jones, Jenkins and Bramble did the trick. And though none of them could be described as classics from what I saw of them on Sky next day, who cares? It seems that, overall, all that went wrong was a couple of naughty no-shows in the shape of non-member MATTHEW HARRIS and member DARREN POSNACK. Afraid that is £5 extra on top of your next booking. In future, don't take a fall just make that call to the Berry boy on 07703-898698. You know it makes financial sense.

YORK (H, October 12, W1-0): Better very, very, very late than never, eh? Barrington B did the bizzo after 91min 50sec - perfect timing after what once more was not a classic encounter. The first 45 saw the hopeless five at the back rolled out again for some reason in a home game and it proved, as usual, a massive drain on our attacking potential. Thankfully, Rob saw the light at half-time and relieved Phil Whelan of further responsibility, which was possibly as big a blessing to him as to us. Ian Selley departed, too. Steven Clark did the odd bit of headless chicken down the right, but hugely increased our threat and BB eventually turned out to be the true supersub. Up to fifth, though we dropped a slot after Bournemouth beat Hartlepool next day. I'm getting dizzy. The Player of the Month trophy was beautifully presented to Stephen Broad by beaming 10-year-old SJS member Danielle Atkins, who will always remember where she was on the day of our 1,000th home win. No luck on the 50-50 again.

SWANSEA (A, October 19, L1-0): Spitting blood? Me too - and I was not even there. A victory would have put us second and set up a stunner at the Hall on the 25th against top-of-the-tree Hartlepool. Instead, facing a team bottom of the table with NO wins and NO clean sheets in ELEVEN games, we come up with another wretched result. Forget the Whelan 'goal'. That is clutching at straws. What the hell was the team we put out? No Tes, so we played 1-9-1 ie Darryl, nine defenders and midfielders and Barrington up front. Don't we have any other forwards or is it obligatory for us to worry about the other side rather than go out and take it to the opposition? It looks like we approached this one in the same way England did Macedonia. Better safe than sorry - and that is hardly the mark of promotion winners. Confidence will also surely have been dented for the LDV Vans trip to

Swindon (he said ironically). Blimey, just mentioning that fixture has me overcome with excitement. We have now scored 0 or 1 in seven of our last eight league games. It won't do. And, sorry, Beardo, it was a clear penalty.

F OUR other negatives from Swansea - no-shows DARREN TAYLOR, ROSS BREWSTER and DANNY MATTHEWS, who cop the £5 penalty, plus GRAHAM TAYLOR. Mr Taylor appears to think we are running coaches purely for his benefit, as this was at least his third no-show of the season. He will now have to pay the £20 fare for the trip to Wales before he can partake of an SUSCT coach again. And quite rightly. But there were also two big plusses. First, there were two coaches. Second, Matt Overall and Brian Cotgrove were presented with United club crest clocks at Membury services for being last season's top travellers. They went to every away game and clocked up a stunning 10,216 miles each. A fantastic effort from a duo who truly deserve the tag 'loyal supporters'. G Taylor, please note.

Right, on to the Liaison Committee. On the vital issue of the club's future location, GK has reiterated that the club's lease at the Hall WILL be extended in March. Any info on possible relocation will be released as soon as there is any. If any move becomes 'on', United representatives will take part in a 'Q & A' at a Trust-organised symposium.

For the pie fans amongst you, further changes to the Hall catering set-up are due in about six weeks' time. These will involve a new menu plus a change of supplier. United are also trying to purchase a mobile catering unit to be used in the Hall car park on matchdays.

A new range of Yves Saint Laurent - OK, something like it with a Blues feel - will be arriving in the club shop shortly. It would be nice to get a bit of Trust gear available and we will be investigating this further. Trust members can also now cash in at the shop with a 5 per cent discount on all goods purchased as long as a membership card is produced. There is also a 10 per cent discount for season ticket holders during the month of November. Sadly a season ticket-holding SUSCT member will NOT get a 15 per cent discount! Don't forget, too, that if you have a season ticket you can get a pal in for a fiver v Hartlepool if you pre-purchase.

We still hope to get back our missing sponsored Darryl shirts from last season for fund-raising purposes. But if they do not turn up, we have been told we can have a couple of others.

N EXT a plea from the very top. Complaints are growing about the foul language being used inside the ground during matches. The beauty of the English tongue is being abused enough as it is by 'yoof' presenters on TV and the like without adding to the damage. I swear, but I do not do it in front of women and children and no one else needs to either. It is embarrassing for those who do not like it and makes an embarrassment of the perpetrator. So do United, and yourself, a favour and try to cut it out. Thanks a lot.

Smoking within the ground is another vexed issue that the club is studying. Chiefly because of those selfish few who will insist it is their right to dispense their foul smoke and rancid breath over those in 'no smoking' areas who do not happen to appreciate it.

A few fans have also rightly been getting the hump because they have discovered bird droppings on their seats. United will sort it if you let them know precisely where the problem lies (or flies!)

It seems to be paying off to buy your tickets on line. Around 250 people currently do so with a price discount of up to 20 per cent and all tickets delivered to your home. Another United triumph, it appears.

The Trust was very sorry to hear of the death of honorary member Ted Singleton, a player for United around the war years and a keen follower of the club through to the end.

I see it did not take long to forgive ITV for dropping the Nationwide League in the brown stuff. The top brass have agreed a new deal worth a whole £2million for highlights of matches to be shown. No one would come up with a better offer, so £34,000 will enter the United coffers in a take it or leave it scenario. And these days, there is no leaving it. Not sure when screenings start, though.

Ruel Fox did not linger long with us and even less long with the enemy up the A12. So Stanway Rovers (who?) must really have pushed the boat out to persuade him to sign for them, as I understand he was after something akin to £2,500 a week from C** U. No wonder we showed him the door.

What has happened to the club website? It has gone the same way as a number of other clubs'. As I do not wish to give them the information they want - or rather their internet partners want so they can flood you with a torrent of special 'offers' - I will now look elsewhere for my Blues news.

While we look to get back the North Bank to try to increase the almost non-existent atmosphere at our home ground these days, York opted to try some taped chants piped through their PA system. The League response was a predictable 'Oh no, no, no, no, no'. Spokesman John Nagel declared: "After consulting with our safety officer (why?), I can confirm it is not something we want to see."

Spud seems to have made a good start at Hull. I am sure he is already looking forward to a warm and friendly welcome when he brings the Tigers down to the seaside on February 1.

T HERE was an excellent concert held recently at Deanes School in Hadleigh featuring the band of the Parachute Regiment. Whilst in attendance, I noted details in the entrance hall of a great half-term soccer school for boys aged 4 to 14 and girls from 6 to 14. Only one problem. The soccer school was run by bloody Charlton Athletic!!! What's wrong with the headmaster? Doesn't he know it is Blues news only in our local seats of learning.

I told colleagues at work that if United ever signed Dennis Wise, a player I regard as the most disgraceful in the current game, I would return my season ticket. Naturally, they found that very hard to believe. So when Millwall, for reasons known only to them, decided to buy the cheek-busting taxi wrecker, I immediately flogged my small basket of Lions shares on principle. Luckily for me, they were worth buttons. But I felt somehow cleaner after doing so.

Short of cash? United are still looking for people willing to flog programmes on match days. It is £8 in your pocket plus a match ticket. So if you fancy it, contact Brian Wheeler at Roots Hall and start practising your £2.20 tables.

Our poor Premiership lambs are tired again. So FIFA have said they will look at a games limit for the put-upon, £25,000-a-week-plus whingers. Next time you watch a game, see how much time they spend just walking around. Then thank your lucky stars it is not your hard-earned going into the pockets of football's top poseurs.

And there you have it. It has been a blast - errrr, not quite. Anyway, sorry again about the unavoidable delay in NUMBER 41A and any comeback of whatever hue, you know where I am - nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

NR (21/10)

PS 1. Talking of the club shop, it employs a genius. Cheryl found time to give the first - and only - answer to the quiz question from last month: If RN is RN, ST is ST and JG is JG, why is DC MM? This referred to a picture in which David Crown was wearing a top that, Cheryl reveals, must have belonged to Marc Massey. Rob Newman, Steve Tilson and John Gowens were wearing their own. What a star you are, Cheryl.

2. Anyone who in the past has had cause to send me personal details such as their home address, telephone number, e-mail address etc, please send them to me again at The Sun as my home computer address book is also now floating around Pluto. Thanks a lot. Gateway replaced my hard drive and the new one lasted approx two and a quarter hours. I had to finish the newsletter in the office on my day off! My computer 'tower' is now having a service.

RETURN TO THE NORTH BANK

Question: Do you disagree with United fans returning when possible to the North Bank at Roots Hall?

Name:..... Memb No:..... Tick one of: YES..... NO..... and then return to:

Terry Jeffreys, 32 Herondale, Basildon, Essex. SS14 1RR