

SUSCT

NEWSLETTER 64

TIME is running out, people, so please do your duty. If you have not already done so, and thanks a million to all those of you who have, do try to sell your three books of SUSCT Christmas Draw tickets and help give Trust funds a major boost going into 2005.

A few of our members have sold *hundreds* of tickets, so 15 should not be too many for anyone. Once you have collected the cash, you should then send the money and stubs to Terry Jeffreys, 32 Herondale, Basildon, Essex SS14 1RR or Richard Coxell, 20 Redcliff Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1AY. And they don't mind how often the postman calls before December 28, when the draw will be made either before or during the home league date with Mansfield. You have to be in it to win it and, with the top three prizes being £1,000, £500 and £250, you would have to be slightly deranged not to take up the opportunity – if only because you are likely to be all but skint on draw day thanks to the cost of your Christmas excesses.

Another Quiz Night has been notionally set in motion for February 26, but before that get JANUARY 15 in your diaries. That is when we hope to be celebrating three points against Notts County with the first – fanfair please – Shrimpers Trust Race Night.

The tapes are scheduled to go up at 7.30pm and admission to the grand event will be £3 by TICKET ONLY. Please note there will be NO food provided. There will be eight races with eight horses in each, it is being 'professionally' organised and even if you are no good at backing winners you can still have a laugh. Full details – and tickets – can be obtained from Paul Yeomanson at the usual outlets. That means in person, from the SUSCT stand on match days, via the website and Paypal (www.shrimperstrust.co.uk) or ordered by post with a cheque payable to SUSCT from Paul Yeomanson, 194 North Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4EU. Please ensure you give details of your address and how many tickets you require. I am also sure Paul will be happy to explain the technicalities of the event should you so wish. The earlier you order your tickets the better, so let's make this a big Trust occasion. Children under 16 can attend but are not allowed to place bets in person.

Note, too, that the Trust has recently joined an exciting fund-raising initiative that could generate us significant cash for the coffers. We now have a webshop, with the web address www.buy.at/ShrimpersTrust This links to many high street retailers' websites and commissions are earned from these at an average of £2 per transaction! Retailers lending their support to this include: Marks and Spencer, Amazon, Comet, MFI, Co-op and Carphone Warehouse. Simply put, your purchases made via this shop will earn commission for the Trust. The shop is linked from our current website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk Please use the shop if you can and recommend that your friends and family use it as well.

Trust merchandise will make great Christmas presents, so snap up as much as you can and make yourself a favourite with family and friends alike. Just available is the new Trust key ring, which you can have dangling for a mere £1.50.

Problems with the November 15 committee meeting eventually saw it held on the 29th. Various other dates had been suggested and discarded – one because Bashers was going back to his youth to see a concert by The Tubes, famous, among other things, for their anthem ‘White Punks On Dope’. Sounds just like our chairman, eh?

Whisper it, but we are helping out C** U. Their Community Stadium Action Group has been circulating petitions to all league clubs to get signatures in support of their move to a new stadium. And let’s face it, even we want them out of Layabout Road. It was agreed to have a petition form available for signing at the entrance to the Shrimpers Bar for two home games.

We have not been overwhelmed as regards value for money with the publicity we have had for our sponsorship of the ‘Football in the Community’ scheme and have decided to look elsewhere. This could well involve us switching our attention to the newly formed ‘Senior Shrimpers’ set-up.

Quid A Goal is looking good, especially now the intake is being boosted by a generous £2-a-goal donation from Ron. Thanks to him for that. After the victory at Bury, the pot stood at £1,754.30 and John Stannard is likely to benefit from another piece of cardio-vascular equipment in the near future. It has been decided, reluctantly, to write off all pledges not paid up for 2003-04. The previously named guilty 10 or so should hang their heads in shame for letting us, and themselves, down.

KATHY Jeffreys will be able to give Terry’s sack a little extra boost after her £34.50 pick-up in the 100 Club draw. Other winners of late have been Paul Claydon of Rochford, Linda Strachan of Southend, Carl Barker of Ilford, Valerie Fane of Southend and Geoff Manning from up in Penrith. The 100 Club in fact remains the 68 Club, when we should have at least 268 (about 25% of our membership) taking part. There has never been a better time to sign up for just £5 a month, even though you may now have missed the bumper £350 Christmas draw. To join, all you need do is contact Alan Perry on alanperry4@hotmail.com or ring him on 01702-476458. It is so simple.

Darren Posnack produced his first treasurer’s report showing our finances remain in good health, though with often quite sizeable sums being due to the Trust from various sources it was agreed that the whole committee should ensure that all monies to be paid in are checked off securely as quickly as possible.

Membership secretary Paul Yeomanson reported a current Trust band of 1,189, comprising 1,000 adult members and 189 SJS. The SJS should shortly be swelled by two more as we have donated a couple of one-year memberships to be raffled as prizes by the Hamlet Rangers youth team. Trust life members now total 61.

NEW LIFE MEMBERS: Dean Allum, Martyn Austin, Mark Francis, Gareth Lewis, Tom Renvoize, Mike Smith, Rod Turner, Barry John Venus, Mike Way.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS SINCE NEWSLETTER 63: Del Appleton, Matthew Banks, Sally Ann Clark, Neil Clark, Martin Diggines, Mark Francis, Craig MacKenzie, Allan Pinkney, Kevin Turner, Alex Witt, Leon Witt, Michael Woods.

FINAL REMINDERS: Dave Barlow, Anthony Brown, Brett Burgess, Karl Butcher, Scott Cameron, Andrew Clarke, James Cunningham, Daniel Davis, Dave Dawson, Derek Jaques, Paul McKenzie, Paddy O’Conner, Ian Pogue, Chris Pollock, Roy Rice, Olivia Unwin, Oscar Wood.

I have details from the most recent liaison committee meeting on November 24, starting with the news that the Shrimpers Bar pre-match is now stocking not just hot pies but Wizard Dogs. This is not a South Korean delicacy, but a hot dog of some quality. So eat up when you can, as they could do with offloading a few more. Shrimpers Bar capacity will have to be reduced once the new annexe is in situ. Unfortunately, this will most probably mean an end to inviting in opposition fans until a capacity review has taken place. All Trust memorabilia has now been moved from the annexe into the main room or vestibule as a prelude to the alterations. And we promise that continuing gremlins concerning bar service before and after home games are being addressed.

DISTURBING racist chanting was heard at the Luton game and we want no repeat of it. The situation will be monitored, though we hope it was an unfortunate one-off. Standing instead of sitting remains a bugbear, especially as away supporters seem to get 'away' with it with impunity. But the penalties for home fans if this becomes a problem can be severe – cuts in home seating, for example. So remember that and try to stay in your place, much as you may not want to. Did we ask for the rubbish legislation and the jobsworths of the Football Licensing Authority? No. But, sadly, it looks like we are permanently lumbered as the tentacles of the nanny state grow ever longer.

A series of questions has been handed over to the club for answers from Trust-sponsored Mark Gower. When these are received, they will be available to view on the Trust website.

Letters are being sent by both the Trust and United to complain about the treatment of our supporters at the Yeovil game on November 20, particularly with regard to the searching of minors. It was in stark contrast to the welcome Yeovil fans and disabled followers received at the Hall last season, which earned both the Trust and the club widespread congratulations from cider country.

Paul FitzGerald handed over details of the proposed Shrimpers Trust Army Fund, an idea already being implemented by various other Trusts around the country, where certain sums are earmarked for improving, enhancing or increasing the club's playing staff in time of need. The sums involved would be used to pay wages or transfer fees, but all under the administration of a carefully selected, high-powered five-person management committee. This is an ambitious stratagem, though certainly worth investigating as yet another way in which we can aid the club. And that, of course, is what the Trust is all about.

Even the newsletter got a mention. It seems some significant feathers were ruffled by my alleged description of the fixture switches to Friday nights as 'fraudulent'. In fact, I said 'tantamount to fraud', which is slightly different. Whatever, I am happy to stand by my view. I said the 'Christmas shopping' reason for switching the Chester fixture to Friday from Saturday was utterly spurious and feel I have been vindicated. The total number of Premiership and Coca-Cola League matches played on December 17 – including ours – was.....4. Those that remained as scheduled on December 18 tallied.....just the 36!

Ron also put in a surprise show at the liaison gathering. He was happy to hear there was general satisfaction with the team at present, felt that Fredy Eastwood was a significant signing – dead right – and revealed that Tilly has been encouraged to look to continue to strengthen the team.

NEXT it was on to our new venue. The option to purchase land at Fossetts Farm has been completed. This gives 20 acres, enough room for the football ground and enabling development. Two acres will also be taken up by the relief road. Ron is apparently keen on a stadium capacity of around 22,500, bearing in mind a potential 300,000 catchment nearby and 750,000 within 15 miles. My only observation on that would be: Remember Darlington. There must be 15,000 of the seats in their fine arena that have never had a bum on them. Ron has placed a fully funded proposal to Delancey to acquire their 50 per cent shareholding in SEL and Delancey are reviewing the small print. Ron said if a deal is done he will then be keen to discuss with supporters what they want at the new stadium and looks forward to their input. Again, encouraging. Realistically, Ron sees us as a potential Millwall, a club capable of playing to regular 10,000 gates and with the potential to make the Premiership. With Manchester City currently running a debt of £60million, I really wonder if the very top rung would be a good idea. The Premiership is now an unreal world all of its own, no longer a part of the football fraternity we know and love. Jump in with those sharks today and you can regret it for ever – just ask Barnsley, Bradford City, Leicester, Wolves, Sunderland etc etc.

Trust vice-chairman Paul FitzGerald has since spoken to Delancey kingpin Colin Wagman, who is enthusiastic about Ron's doings. He is considering the proposal over SEL and further talks are expected next month. It may get 'interesting' if they decide to stay put. In reality, there are still as many ifs, buts and maybes over the club's future home as ever. But the issue does seem to be moving forward – it has to – and the Trust will remain firmly on the case.

Paul has also been working on our 'Corporate membership' plans, which will allow companies to join the Trust for various fixed fees from £50 up to £1,000. The cost to them will depend on what they want back from us in

terms of how, within our own boundaries, we can assist their business. Feeler letters have been sent out to various parties and we are now awaiting the feedback. Yet again, this could be a valuable source of income.

So, the lads. How have they been performing recently on the slippery road to what we profoundly hope will be better things come May? Not too bad, actually, and surely we now have a glorious chance to push on over the holiday period against a series of teams we should be turning over if we really are serious about going up.

SOUTHEND 0 LUTON 3 (H, FA CUP 1st rd, 12/11/04): No need to dwell on this nightmare for any longer than necessary – especially as I was unable to be present and so have had to rely on the observations of those unfortunates who were. Sky always like to make their TV clashes out to be cracking contests, but even they must have struggled to keep interest alive as we succumbed to three-down by half-time. Another Bart blooper laid the groundwork and a couple more moments of sloppiness presented the Hatters victory on a plate. A crowd of 6,683 was probably below expectations and this was our first exit in the first round for five seasons. But, overall, the attitude to this defeat seemed to be ‘So what!’ We all know the priority for this campaign and the less that stands in the way of it, probably, the better. We went out live in Singapore and God knows what they must have made of us, especially as commentator Shebby Singh apparently got into the habit of referring to us as ‘Southampton’.

YEOVIL 3 SOUTHEND 1 (A, LEAGUE TWO, 20/11/04): I must admit that when I saw, while on NoW duty, that Kevin Maher had been sent off again just when all hands were needed at the pumps with the score 1-1 and only seven minutes to go, I was ready to give him both barrels. But then I witnessed the action on TV and can only say that if the incident which led to the skipper’s red card was the norm for a booking, there would be about 10 players left on the pitch at the end of each game. Mick Fletcher has joined the elite ranks of Ross and Kettle – ‘referees’ you dread being put in charge of your match. How do these blokes survive on the league list? Their reports must be shocking and yet no action ever seems to be taken against them. Look what Ross got away with in the recent Luton v Bradford City clash. After Bart was caught in no man’s land as the home side were nodded in front, Adam Barrett yet again got his bonce on to a KM free-kick to flick us level. But Mr Maher’s exit shot our organisation, Yeovil sneaked back in front within two minutes and made matters worse by grabbing another shortly afterwards. A point would have been more than acceptable against a side very likely to be in the mix at the crunch. April 30 at the Hall could be a humdinger. Just to dwell on a sadly negative point, the indiscriminate personal searches carried out before some people gained access, particularly of teenagers, were totally out of order.

SOUTHEND 1 GRIMSBY 1 (H, LEAGUE TWO, 26/11/04): My heart, like many others, sank as my eyes turned to the top left corner of the match programme’s back page to be greeted by the nightmare message. Ref: Mr J Ross. Yes, Jo(k)e Ross was back in town and, as if to prove this encounter never really took off, even this serial disher-out of yellow cards had a problem finding some trouble to manufacture. The first half-hour saw plenty of Blues probing but no end result as the Mariners showed the limit of their ambition was to defend in numbers and break swiftly when they got the chance. Unfortunately, they were quite good at it and one of their forward forays on 33 minutes saw an attempted Wayne Gray back-pass hit Adam Barrett and fall beautifully for not one but two of the Town players. Bart was comprehensively beaten. The biggest cheer of the night so far came as the Blue Belles whipped off their tops. I was also amused to read in the programme that Michael Husbands had been diagnosed by the club specialist as having a case of ‘tendentious’. I don’t think so. That ‘Friday magic’ was proving as illusory as any sensible person would know it to be as Town began the second half by hitting the bar. AB then nodded wide from six yards the sort of opening he has been burying all season. But there is always Fredy. He may look out of the reckoning at times but, fortunately, can suddenly unleash the 25-yard, left-foot howitzer that hauled us level on the hour. We battered them for five minutes before a shocking Duncan Jupp crossfield ‘pass’ put Town’s Andy Parkinson clean through and Bart had to be at his best to block him. Town also had two more great chances after that to do us and a point was probably all we deserved. What should really concern us is that after this game only bottom-placed Kidderminster had conceded more goals than Blues’ 28. Tilly, sort it out – urgently! My brother followed this game on the internet and was able to hand me three A4 pages of match facts and stats for the last SEVEN minutes alone. Unbelievable. Better to be there, though, mate!

NORTHAMPTON 0 SOUTHEND 2 (A, LDV VANS TROPHY 3rd rd, 30/11/04): I think there were a few about who felt our latest assault on the Millennium Stadium might bite the dust here. But, no, Blues were well up for it. For some daft reason the match was made all-ticket for travelling fans. Answers why on a postcard to the panic merchants at Sixfields. From the hopeless FA down, can there be anything worse or more useless in the majority of instances than a footballing bureaucrat? This was game over and done with in 21 minutes as first Carl Pettefer opened his account for the season and then Dudders followed up with a second on his former stamping ground. We now face old LDV rivals Swindon at the Hall, with a place in the two-leg southern area final awaiting the winners. Messrs Berry and Yeomanson must be getting twitchy already.

LEYTON ORIENT 2 SOUTHEND 2 (A, LEAGUE TWO, 7/12/04): A crowd of 3,852 was all that got to see this contest at the building site currently masquerading as a football ground called Brisbane Road. There might well have been another 1,200 Blues fans present under normal circumstances. But those 500 lucky enough to get tickets saw the lads bag an important derby point against a side who have been a bit of a jinx on us over recent seasons. Good point or not, though, we still dropped down to 11th after it. A dodgy early penalty gave them the advantage before Fredy Eastwood nudged in a Kevin Maher free-kick. Soon after Wayne Gray spun and tickled in a Spinner downward header from a KM corner. Spinner then lost his man on the hour from a long cross, Lewis Hunt left his own man to cover and a simple free header resulted for the bloke standing all on his tod. Damn.

BURY 0 SOUTHEND 1 (A, LEAGUE TWO, 11/12/04): Something about Bury always makes me wistful. I spent six happy years living there in the early 80s and enjoyed a feeling of sheer exhilaration that has never been matched at a game since when Benjy put the ball in the Bury net back in 1991 and 2,000 Blues fans went to heaven. And while I was unable to attend this fixture, I don't know why but I was 100 per cent confident we were going to win. For once, glory be, I was right – though at the finish it was a close-run thing. Remembering those days when the last award we wanted during a game was a penalty, it is a relief at present to have someone in Wayne Gray who actually appears to know what he is doing from the spot - even if it can look a bit over-casual. And when a handball gave him the chance to do the business once more on 27 minutes, he made no mistake. Other opportunities came and went at both ends before we arrived at the stage of the game which frequently gives us more trouble than any other – injury-time. Two minutes in and Adam Barrett handled in the area. If a 90th-minute equaliser had been indicated on Sky Sports' results programme I would not have been surprised. But Bart made himself a hero with a fine stop from their spot-shot down to his right. I have been an unashamed Bart critic ever since he was signed, but in recent games he has probably saved us at least three points. Could he yet win us all over? Back up to sixth. All those who travelled on the coach got a £2 discount for a full attendance. Excellent. And the raffle made £18!

Leon Cort must be a little bit worried. Spud said after the recent 4-2 Hull drubbing at Swindon: "I'm looking for a central defender." Drewe followed up his treble for Rushden and Diremonds with one more onion bag trembler, but it did not prove sufficient to earn him a move and he is now back on home soil preparing for a lengthy stint on the bench at the very best. Leon Constantine turned out to be such an invaluable goal machine for Torquay while on loan from Posh that they have answered the prayers of the Fat Controller and coughed up £100,000 to secure his services on a permanent basis. I think we missed out there. Great shame about Jay Smith rupturing an Achilles in training and ruling himself out for the season just when he was close to a first-team comeback. Let's hope we see him in a Blue shirt again in 2005-06.

Small error last time out in the charity to which Mark Bentley donated his Player of the Month £50. In fact it went to Families In Focus, which supports autistic children in Essex.

SORRY to all those who had problems receiving their last newsletter by e-mail. It seems a certain word contained within 'Sc_nthorpe' caused havoc once it came into contact with a number of people's company firewalls. Amazing. At least it got us a mention within the legendary columns of SunSport's Monday column 'Ebenezer Da Geezer'. Though whether that is a good thing or not is a matter for debate. If you are having any e-mail difficulties, though, contact Paul Yeomanson on p.yeomanson@bluevonder.co.uk For postal recipients, the man to contact is Terry Jeffreys on terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com

Continuing the brief SunSport theme, I am delighted to report that Blues are in an equally good position to go for glory in the Bores League as they are in League Two. I look forward to collecting the £20 prize.

BORES LEAGUE (as at 8/11/04, next fixture 3/1/05)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lincoln	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
Southend	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Bristol R	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Northampton	3	1	0	2	5	6	3

An addendum to the mention recently of the sad death of Charles Clenshaw, whose estate are donating his remaining United shares to the Trust. Whilst acknowledging his generosity, we had no idea his lofty status would merit a half-page obituary in The Guardian. It seems he was not only a brilliant mathematician and Professor of Mathematics at Lancaster University, but also the developer of the mathematics that makes computer software work.

SADLY, we have another passing away to report. That of PAUL HOLLAND, who most Trust members will remember for running coaches to games in the days before we decided to get involved as well. Bashers has sent a letter of condolence to the family, the Trust was due to be represented at the funeral, a tribute was to have been placed in the Chester programme and it is hoped the club will remember Paul in some way.

As thanks for the Trust's sponsorship of the opening game of the season against Cheltenham, United have presented us with a superb old-style match ball memento. This is much appreciated and will be on display in the Shrimpers asap.

At last, United have also managed to get out the DVD of last season's campaign just in time for the festivities. So if you have £17.99 (has it won an Oscar?) burning a hole in your pocket and a Blues fan to buy for, you know that you now have another gift idea under your belt.

CALLING THE LADEEEZ

"Women of all ages! Have you followed your team to Wembley (or Cardiff)? Did you see them secure promotion? Were you there in the dark ages of relegation? A researcher requires female football fans of any generation to complete a questionnaire and possibly participate in a short interview. For further details, please just e-mail carrie47@hotmail.com or caroline.dunn@uel.ac.uk or telephone 07963-304275."

Thanks very much.

Carrie

Trust in Luton Communications Officer.

Any of our female members, please assist Carrie if you can.

FANCY BEING ON THE FOLLY?

The BBC are making a new 10-part property documentary series. They are looking for first-time buyers keen to purchase a property with a co-buyer but who have not yet found the right person. They will try to help find that person (but if you are a bloke don't gamble you will be fixed up with a babe who loves cooking, housework and footie!) The duos chosen will receive £3,000 towards stamp duty and other costs and be given expert advice by a property guru. To show what you are passionate about, you can bring the cameras down to the Hall and tell them all about the Trust. If you fancy giving it a go, then contact: Beth Davies, Researcher, Come Buy With Me, RDF Media on 0207 013 4561.

IN accordance with discussions held on October 20, the Trust has at last received a sum of £6,000 as our slice of the transport profit for the Cardiff trip back in March. Excellent work by the Beaver and Mr Berry, as ever, in getting this issue resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all parties concerned, even it possibly took a

tad longer than it should have done.

On the travel front, upcoming trips are to Wycombe (December 26), Kidderminster (January 3) and Mansfield (January 22). But note that the Boston game due to be played on January 8 is now being rearranged as, somehow, they are still in the FA Cup. To book your place on the Trust coach or coaches, contact Chris Berry on his usual numbers – 01702-558978 or 07703-898698 (no texts). Demand could be heavy, so get in quick. Also watch out for details in all the usual places of the Swansea jaunt – always popular – on Friday, February 4, which will be Ron-subsidised as that is the night he reckons we could go top of the table!

A quick warning to our travelling fraternity. On the Shrewsbury trip one of our number was taken ill and the only contact that could be made was via her mobile phone. Regular travellers at least should let Chris B have a number that can be rung should something unexpected occur and ANYONE with a medical condition that may affect them during a journey should make Chris or Paul Yeomanson aware of it WITHOUT FAIL.

BIT of centenary news. Don't strain your brain any longer trying to think of SUFC personalities who might look good on a plinth. The statue plan no longer appears to be in operation. Instead, the idea now seems to be that a large wall-mounted plaque mentioning a variety of players / managers / club stalwarts from over the decades would be a better idea.

The last of the Trust's LDV Vans Wyndham Plastics shirts has found a meritorious new home at the Spread Eagle in Victoria Avenue, Southend. The landlord allows the committee to meet in the pub's upstairs room every three weeks at no charge and was delighted with the shirt as a token of our thanks.

I love reading the thoughts of gnat-witted goons like Newcastle chairman Freddy Shepherd. This is the sweaty, balding, overweight lard lump who opted a while back to go indulging himself with a few continental ladies of ill repute rather than get to know the 'dogs', as he referred to them, of his own fair city. He also boasted about the extent of the profit he made on a £50 football shirt that costs less than a fiver to make. So what a great service the *News of the World* did us all by revealing Freddy and his repulsive partner in crime Douglas Hall in all their 'glory'. Freddy recently proclaimed that the fate of the small clubs doesn't matter. No, as long as the Geordies are near the top of the Premiership (he wishes!) and he is raking in his dividend, the rest can go hang. It should be a real comfort to us all to know that it is arrogant, selfish, self-indulgent, greed monsters like this, pampered by their servile TV acolytes, who now have the biggest say in how our game is run. No wonder football is going straight down the gurgler when a disgrace to the game like Shepherd can weasel his way back into it so easily.

Luckily, help is at hand. The Trust's Robert Craven has just started work with the Essex FA. By 2020, at the latest, I am confident he will be the FA's new chief executive, guaranteed to ensure a bright new future for all those clubs like United outside the top flight. If, of course, there is an outside the top flight by then. FIFA's 'allegedly' corrupt overlord Sepp Blatter has announced that the transfer window is to come in for Football League clubs as well. So we can see his commitment to our futures is alive and well – not. Barry Fry has already said he fears for Peterborough if that is the case and he will not be the only one feeling jittery.

NICE to see Trust member Graham Smith so enjoyed his radio summarising stint against Oxford. He said he got a day to remember for his £180 outlay and this is something we hope to organise again in the future in conjunction with BBC Essex.

Apparently a welcome article on the Trust cropped up in a recent edition of the Evening Echo. I didn't see it, but I do know all publicity is good publicity – even with Mr Beaver in the accompanying photograph!

To end with, what could be more fitting than a timely seasonal tale that has a veritable whiff of holly, mulled wine and one or two other things about it?

The recent 50th birthday celebrations of one particular long-time United devotee allowed me to renew the acquaintance of an old friend of the football club from the early 90s. And he kept us all enthralled with some glorious tales of both how the lads back then used to love being entertained and generally kept themselves amused.

Christmas parties were especially popular, with no shortage of young damsels apparently eager to join in the fun if the right do could be arranged – as, one year, it was. Even so, certain of the female ‘guests’ were apparently wary of a particular member of the first-team squad at that time as, to quote one of the ladies in question: “He knocks us about.” Clearly, said beau was a romantic of some considerable class.

Two players, I hear, were so eager to ‘woo’ another of the demure females on the evening in question that they were quite happy to do so at the same time in a room provided at the location especially for them. I’m shocked. Some of today’s Premiership stars will be devastated to discover their antics are old hat.

Could there also be any truth in the story that one of the managers from around that era had a close female relative who was known to liaise regularly with a certain member of the then first-team? And they were definitely not talking tactics.....

There is also the tale of the United regular whose business sidelines made Del Boy look a novice in comparison. Some nice bucks were made by all accounts, allegedly in cahoots with another performer who continues to ply his talents at a much higher level.

A HHHHHH, the halcyon days. But they still did the business where it counted – on the pitch! I will leave you to try to guess the identities, as the current laws of the land suggest it may be unwise for me to reveal all if I want the newsletter to appear again. My lips must remain firmly sealed.

And there you have it until Number 65, when we will be in 2005. Doesn’t time fly? Any moans, groans or words of praise for the above contents, or even a snippet for future inclusion, just send what you have straight to nigel.rickard@the-sun.co.uk

Best wishes for turkey time and the new year to all our members and everyone at United – and here’s to 12 more points in the stocking! That’s the one Christmas present that we all want.

NR (14/12)

PS 1. Happy birthday to the chairman, Trevor Bashford, who will be bringing up his half-century on December 19 – hopefully, still basking in the warm glow of three points taken off Ian Rush’s men.