



SHRIMPERS TRUST

NEWSLETTER – Volume 2 Issue 1



THE INTRODUCTION – New Editor Robert Craven

FIRST OF ALL, many apologies for my first Newsletter running a little bit late. Previous incumbent Nigel Rickard was always bang on time, and I intend to be just as punctual, although circumstances have dictated that this edition is some six weeks after Nigel's fantastic run came to an end at 65.

Before I get on to all the details for the Shrimpers Trust's second trip to Cardiff inside twelve months, I'd like to personally thank Nigel for all of his efforts over the past six years - I'm sure that everyone will agree that he did a wonderful job in conveying the news of the Trust to it's members, and if I can carry on in the same fashion, albeit with a new style and design.

So, why is this edition six weeks and not five after the last as usual? Well, there's the small trip to Cardiff planned once again after the lads performed more heroics in the Area Final against Bristol Rovers on Tuesday to win through 4-3 on aggregate.

In essence, the clash was not half as close as that scoreline seems to suggest - the Shrimpers didn't perform very well in Bristol, but Mark Gower's wonder goal sealed a one-goal advantage, and how Rovers were ever in with a chance at Roots Hall is anyone's guess.

So, perhaps not quite as nerve-wracking as the triumph over Colchester United last time around, but every bit as special. As much as I am pleased for Wrexham's supporters, with all their club's financial worries, as the north Wales side get a trip to the south, I hope their experience is just as demoralising as ours was against Blackpool last year.

Yes, I was ecstatic just to go to the Millennium Stadium last time around, so in that respect the result didn't matter, and the final really was at this stage last time around, when we knocked out the U's, but this time, we're there to win it, of that there can be no doubt.

Ironically, myself and TLG colleague Mark Wallis were in south Wales just a couple of weeks ago to watch the Carling Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea. Hanging from the walls were huge posters of Raphael Benetiz and Jose Mourinho, and if Steve Tilson is portrayed in the same light, I'm sure they'll be more than one damp eye in the house.

As Blues go off to do that, the Shrimpers Trust will be organising all the coach travel to Cardiff. All bookings for the coaches, which are priced as follows, will go through the Trust, with the club concentrating on planes, trains and any other transport they can stuff up like last year:

- * Adult members: £20
- * Southend Junior Shrimpers and OAP Members: £15
- * All non-members: £25

Coaches will depart from Roots Hall at 7 o'clock - one hour later than last season on account of kick-off being at 2:05 p.m. in Wales, and from Basildon at 7:30 a.m. only. Normal stops will not apply.

The only exception to this is the overnight coach, which Craig Fillary is proud to announce will run again. The cost for this is £95 for adults and £55 for under-16s. Contact Craig on 01702 512169 for more details on this trip, which includes a 'Welsh' bed-and-breakfast.

Trust members will be manning the programme hut next to the Main Ticket Office at Roots Hall from Monday 14th March 2005 until the days leading up to the final, and you can also book in the Shrimpers Bar on home matchdays and via the internet at the website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk. Please be advised that any non-members of the Trust will not be allowed to sign up in booking their travel tickets.

The other way to book is through either regular travel supremo Chris Berry on 01702 558978 or 07703 898698, or, and this applies to the LDV only, Paul Yeomanson on 01702 302373 or 07860 825127.

Please be advised that, under compliance with the laws of the United Kingdom, no alcohol will be permitted on Shrimpers Trust coaches. Please have consideration for those willing to run transport to the final on your behalf and help make the experience fun for one and all.

Also, following on from last season, there will be no credit card bookings in person for travel to Cardiff. However, that facility can be used over the Internet when booking online.

Last season, we had a number of enquiries as to whether supporters who regularly travel away from home could have a block of tickets together, and we intend to have the same option this season for our members.

It has been confirmed that Southend United have been allocated the Southern End of the ground once again, and the Trust have secured block M19, at the front of the middle tier, as the designated area for members. To book your tickets, which cost £42 and £21, contact Terry Jeffreys at terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com or on 01268 523974. Tickets are on a first-paid, first-served basis, by cash or cheque only with full address and contact details required.



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Merchandising was a huge success last time around, and we are once again producing pin badges to mark the occasion, very much in the same style as last season to continue the run. Who knows, we might have a third final next season!...

Also, we will once again be ordering a consignment of special Shrimpers Trust commemorative shirts for the day. All orders must be made in advance through Paul Yeomanson, either in person on matchdays or on via email. Once again, it will be blue (even Geoffrey and Ronald have taken notice!).

Of course, over the coming days and weeks, there will be more and more information coming from both the club and Trust regarding the big day. Look out in the local media for all the details, and also have your eyes firmly fixed on www.shrimperstrust.co.uk for all the news direct from the Trust.

Wrexham's supporters trust have approached us, and secretary Terry Jeffreys is liaising with them, about setting up the final as a day for lower league football. Of course, the selfish part of me believes that this should be 'our' final, but this is outweighed by the sense of altruism about supporters across League's One, Two and beyond.

We are not so far removed from Wrexham ourselves. Although Uncle Ron maintains a decent enough relationship with our landlords at Roots Hall, there is the possibility that we could be shut out of our own ground. We are by no means in a good financial situation.

So, if a deal can be struck with south Wales police and with the Football League, it would be great if 20,000 Shrimpers and a similar amount of Welshmen from the north were joined by 30,000 football fans from across the country, united in showing football's authorities that the Football League is **the** League. As Coca-Cola's (somewhat contradictory) slogan goes, 'Real football for real fans'.

Amongst the euphoria over getting to the final again, Ron's £6,500 donation to the Conservative Party appears to have been lost. This was not, it transpires, a club donation, although it was made on SUFC headed notepaper.

Some may say that it is a storm in a teacup. Others will justify it on the grounds of obtaining planning permission at Fossetts Farm. Personally, I cannot say that it rests well morally with me. I think that it was a mistake to use club-associated paper and embroil us in the saga. What's wrong with Martin Dawn's stationary anyway?

Further a field, the Football Association has decreed that next season's Fifth and Sixth Rounds will not have replays if a side is still involved in European action. It was the lesser of two evils - the other being playing the final on a Wednesday afternoon.

I'm firmly from the school that would like a thousand replays to decide a third round tie, so not having one is a bit of a blow. However, if the Shrimpers manage to progress to that stage of the competition, it could help us. Beating Arsenal over one game, rather than two, presents a better opportunity, even if it does mean less revenue for the club. Plus, if we were in the fifth round, we must've made some money already!

Port Vale could be re-branded the Port Vale Spitfires and play at the Reginald Mitchell Stadium in dedication to the construction of the Second World War aeroplanes and their designer. What nicknames could you see the Seasiders using? Answers on a postcard.

Talking of Jose Mourinho and Chelsea as I was earlier, what exactly is the appeal of the Premiership at the moment. From where I'm sitting, the Blues (recognise that name?) are a long way clear at the top with their financially-aided squad. Give me a promotion race that you could throw a blanket over such as our own any day - even if I would like to feel a little more secure in an automatic promotion spot.

On to the rest of the Newsletter, which you will have noticed has taken on a more regimented feel. As well as an exclusive interview with Mark Gower, the first in what I intend to be a series of one-on-ones that allow you, as Trust members, to ask questions of the Shrimpers squad and backroom staff, there is a look at how **your** money is being spent by Shrimpers physiotherapist John Stannard, all the reaction from the recent Trust functions, a look at how other Trusts are operating and a review of matches over the past month-and-a-half.

There will be a few teething difficulties I'm sure, and over time I would like to change the format even more, but for now this is how it will stay, if a little more punctual!

I hope you enjoy reading it, and any comments, suggestions or criticisms can be directed to robertcraven173@hotmail.com. And, I must also point out that at times I may present my own opinion rather than that of the Trust. Up the Shrimpers,

Rob



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THE INTERVIEW – Mark Gower

The Date: Friday 25th February 2004

The Time: 12:35 p.m.

The Venue: Boots & Laces

I'm probably much more nervous than my subject. My first proper assignment as Shrimpers Trust Newsletter editor is to interview Southend United's star midfielder, Mark Gower, a man who netted the Shrimpers' wonder goal in the LDV Vans Trophy area final first leg at Bristol Rovers just ten days earlier.

Armed with just a notepad and a plethora of pens, I'm not quite as prepared as Blues' Media Manager Dave Scriven, who clasps a Dictaphone in his hands as he walks into a quiet area of the complex to grab an interview with injured goalkeeper Bart Griemink.

Kevin Maher pours himself a glass of orange juice from the bar area, and a buoyant Mark Bentley bowls in and interrupts when United's captain asks if Carl Pettefer wants a drink; *"I'll have a cup of tea, Kev"*.

Myself, Club Liaison Officer Paul Yeomanson and Shrimpers Trust Secretary Terry Jeffreys are chatting away to Ross Hill, the one of the club's commercial team, when manager Steve Tilson walks in: *"Oh, Marky Gower!"* he exclaims, before exiting to remind his player that his work after a couple of hours training is not over.

Paul Brush, the head coach, and Ross Maclaren, the director of the Centre of Excellence, sit at a table next to us as we stare at Cedric Anselin, putting in some extra yards on the training ground as he attempts to win a contract at Roots Hall. I've spoken to both in the past in my roles with *The Little Gazette* and the Essex County Football Association, but somehow I'm too uneasy to break into a conversation with either.

Gower, in uniform Southend United tracksuit of the same standard that I have already seen Adam Barrett and Spencer Prior sporting, strolls in, and we are introduced for the first time. By now it's just Paul and I, as Terry has traipsed off with physiotherapist John Stannard to observe the equipment the Trust have supplied the club upstairs, and it soon becomes evident that Paul will be on his way to get a few shots of punching bags and running machines.

"I've been told it's just a few questions you want to ask me?" Gower declares. "Erm, yes, about 35 actually", I reply, rather sheepishly, before showing him to a seat positioned exactly at a right-angle to my own.

I start, thankfully without a stutter, by asking how much involvement the 26-year-old had with the 1998 Worthington Cup-winning Tottenham Hotspur side. Back then, he probably felt the way I did now: *"I was in the squad, and played in the early rounds - both matches against Brentford, but I didn't have a major impact,"* he revealed. And the final? *"I did go,"* was the extent of his participation.

Paul was now dancing around the room, getting photos of me reciting the questions that I had been studying all morning. As he went, I asked what it was like to leave Spurs; *"It was difficult to go, as I had been there since I was 9. I got advice not to drop as far as I did, but I had been playing for the reserves for too long. In hindsight, I wouldn't have gone all the way down to Barnet."*

In Gower's first season, the Bees were relegated from what was then the Third Division, and fell back into the Football Conference, so the Edmonton-born talent is well-equipped to offer judgement on the main differences between the divisions. *"There are 4 or 5 good teams in the Conference, but League Two is much stronger,"* is his considered opinion. *"Down there you have a tough match ever three or four weeks, but here it is hard every week."*

When you include Motherwell, Gower has appeared for four clubs but, as his relaxed demeanour revealed, slouching back into his seat, he is happy at Roots Hall. *"I'm happiest here. Spurs is a lovely club, but I wasn't really part of the team and it was hard to feel at home. I have bad memories of Barnet as we got relegated there, and I didn't want to be there, so being at Southend is the best."*

With that, how much potential does the current side have? *"You never know. The core of the side have been here two years now and there is a main group, 4 came in during the summer and have done well,"* he explains. But perhaps the key factor is that the squad all get on well.

"We're all mates, and the team spirit is very good. At Tottenham, they were superstars and foreigners. Here we do stuff together, we go to dinner and we go go-karting - it is the best team spirit I've experienced."

The 5-foot 11-inch midfielder signed a two-year contract extension in the summer, and this seems to have been a key factor, but there was a mutual appreciation that a new deal would be good for both sides. *"I was happy to be here as I had had a good season. It was a bit of both really - I went and asked the manager, and he wanted a squad for two years with the same group of players."*



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At 26, Gower is starting to approach the peak of his skills, and he was quick to assure me that he still intended to make the most of the future. *"I want to play as high as possible, and hopefully that will be with Southend United. I'm 26, 27 years old and I am approaching the twilight of my career, so if I can get up a division or even above that, then I will be happy."*

It has not just been in the League that Gower has impressed, and he was as integral as any other player in getting the Seaside to the LDV Vans Trophy final in 2003/4. *"The main high of my career was getting to the Millennium Stadium."* And the main low? *"Losing out when we got there."*

Quick Questions

How do the players relax when travelling?

"Cards, some watch DVD's or listen to music, but I'm a cards man"

Who do you room with on away trips?

"Kevin Maher"

What do you do on the way back?

"Kevin makes a cup of tea! There is a stove and oven at the back, so you can have some ready meals, we take on grub and fluids and play cards"

What's your favourite tippie?

"Corona with lime"

Where do you shop for your gear?

"Lakeside and Bluewater"

What's your favourite holiday destination?

"Las Vegas"

What type of music do you listen to?

"All types, the last album I bought was Scissor Sisters"

What's your favourite meal?

"Steak and chips"

From team targets, we now moved on to Gower's personal abilities, with Steve Tilson by now advising his star man not to get 'trapped' by any difficult questions. The manager has used Gower all across the midfield, and his charge was quick to embrace his boss' versatility.

"All have got their positives. On the right, I'm crossing with my best foot, whilst on the left I can

cut inside and shoot. In the centre, I get to see more of the ball, but I'm happy as long as I'm playing."

He also acknowledged that he does have some weaknesses. *"Being right-footed on the left, I have to concentrate on getting to the byline, on working on my 'worst' foot and on getting the ball into the air to beat the first defender."*

When asked what his upturn in form had been down to, Gower's answer was two-fold: *"A little bit is down to fitness, I've been injured, I've been ill but I am now getting it back to a level that I am happy with. I am being more positive. Being an attacking midfielder in wide positions, my main job is to score goals, so I have been a little more selfish, shooting rather than going wide."*

One of those instances saw him net his second goal in three matches at Bristol Rovers' Memorial Ground. *"That goal is up there amongst my best. I didn't expect much, but it swerved and dipped and there was a bit of luck involved!"*

That was the Englishman's 6th of 2004/5 in 33 games, and he revealed that he does set himself targets: *"10 goals is the personal tally I want. I've got 6, so that's 4 to go, but as far as assists go; I want to get as many as possible. I think 10 goals is a good return, and last year I got 9. I have no problems with how many I have got, and if you asked the gaffer he'd say the same."*

Having been suitably chastised for asking a slightly difficult question, I decided to move on. Does it concern Gower that he has struggled to complete 90 minutes consistently? *"Yes, but when we're leading, I'm an attacking player, so you want to protect that lead and perhaps that's why I have been taken off."*

With Blues experiencing their most successful season in over a decade, the club have been expected to play two games in a week on a number of occasions, and Gower acknowledged that it can be tough to do so. *"The way football is going, it is based on fitness, it is getting more physical and players are becoming athletes. Playing for 90 minutes now makes you feel jaded."*

At times, he has been the target of Roots Hall's boo-boys, but Gower was quick to praise the core Southend support: *"The majority of fans are first class here, like every club. Home and away they have been tremendous this year, and they sing from first to last. Every club has a few idiots that boo, but they are good on the whole."*

Offering advice to some of his young fans, the midfield playmaker declared that he started his



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career at non-League level: *“I played for Gidea Park Rangers in Romford and was spotted by a scout. If you keep playing, then hopefully you will get spotted, and recently some people have got into their 20s before making the grade, so keep working hard.”*

Some of those working hard have been the Shrimpers' Under-18 side, and Gower told me of their joint training sessions. *“On a Friday, the manager wants to work with the first team on a pattern of play, and the youth team get involved in that. We look at set-pieces together, and that is usually at the end of the week.”*

Can the current squad, as a whole, be successful, I asked. *“That’s difficult to answer. We have a young squad, with only Andy Edwards over thirty, so it has a lot of potential. Any one of them could play at a higher level. This season, we have a good core, and hopefully it will be capped off with the play-offs or promotion.”*

Gower was now becoming a little fidgety, with his lift back home, captain Maher, getting to the

bottom of his glass. We moved on to more general questions. Why don't footballers give up more of their time to schools and the community?

“It varies. At Southend, it’s the best I have seen, but you do have your own life to live. Today, some of the lads have gone away to do a presentation, so the lads do put time into that, and they do go into schools.”

And is racism rife in the game? *“I’ve never really experienced it, maybe heard a few comments, but that’s all.”*

With that, there was a shake of the hands, and time to snatch a final answer - is Mark aware of the work of the Shrimpers Trust? *“Helen Norbury [the club secretary] rung me about that the other day. I haven’t received any newsletters yet, but I have given her my address to forward on, so I look forward to it in the future.”*

Hopefully, Mark is reading it now, but with that, my chat with one of my heroes was over as he scooted off with 'Kev' and 'Petts'.

THE RECEIPTIEN – John Stannard

After that interview, myself, Paul and Terry journeyed upstairs to see the gymnasium facilities above the main function room at Boots & Laces, and see exactly what your money raised has provided for Southend United Football Club.

There are pictures (worryingly involving Lawrie Dudfield sitting on a couch) on the Shrimpers Trust website - www.shrimperstrust.co.uk - whilst Terry also explains some of equipment that we have provided for John Stannard, the club's physiotherapist.

The former Barnet and Dagenham & Redbridge sponge-man, a willing contributor to the Shrimpers Trust Question & Answer session in the past, talked us through the carnage that awaited his arrival following the departure of previous incumbent, John Gowens, and the vital role the Trust's money has helped the club.

As well as the aforementioned couches, Quid-a-Goal money has also purchased Ultra-Sonic equipment and rehabilitation goods.

Importantly, your money has helped John to set up circuits around the gym, so that up to twenty members of the first-team (or youth team) squad can be involved in training at the same time, although he also revealed that the club could not install any further weights upstairs as the floor might not be able to take the strain!

Unfortunately, Southend still have problems in that the running machines are only working at 50% (well, one out of the two is out of order) and the major concern for John was cardio-vascular equipment.

So far, with Freddy Eastwood up to 17 goals after his fortunate strike at Chester City plus another

in the LDV, and providing that all of your pledges reach us, we have passed the £3000 mark of 2003/4 this time around.

That means that we should be able to help John out by supplying his number one target, a cross-trainer which, with my very limited knowledge of physiotherapy goods, appeared to be able to help players unable to use their legs to any great degree to build their upper-body strength.

Of course, a new treadmill would not go amiss, so the more goals that the Shrimpers score, the more clean sheets Bart and Darryl keep and the more pledges we receive from yourselves, then the quicker our players will return to full fitness.

Well done - and keep up the good work!



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THE TRUST – What We've Done

Committee Meeting Highlights (07/02/2005)

Following a series of approaches from various people, the Trust have started to look into the possibility of setting up a Community Fund, donating a small percentage of our yearly income to worthy causes. It was decided that Barry Harris, who has once again decided to run the London Marathon, should receive a small amount of money to give to his chosen charity.

The Buy.At facility at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk has been successful, with the Trust earning £115.21 over the busy Christmas period and a further £20.94 during the early part of January in the post-festive sales. With good early progress on the link, we are now in line for a bonus from Buy.At, so continue clicking away and help us raise money for the proverbial rainy day.

The End of Season raffle will soon be amongst us, and it was decided that this should take place at the final home match of the season, which is the potentially massive clash with Yeovil Town at Roots Hall on Saturday 30th April. Tickets are either included with this Newsletter if you receive it by post, or in the Royal Mail postbag for the rest of you. Remember, if you can help us by obtaining your copy through email, get in touch with Terry Jeffreys on terry.jeffreys@btinternet.com.

A reminder to those who visit the Shrimpers Bar on a matchday and ogle the Hall of Fame - you too can sponsor a player for the small fee of £25. Just let us know who it is you believe should be inducted, if possible with a small explanation of why, and let us do the rest!

Liaison Meeting Highlights (19/02/2005)

Colin Woodridge, the ex-manager of the club shop, has now departed Roots Hall. With any luck Southend supporters will now be able to get merchandise on time - and the LDV Vans Trophy badges and medals might just arrive before the cricket season finishes!

Trevor Bashford, our erstwhile chairman, took advantage of the new vacuum cleaner that the club have provided for our functions. However chips, it seems, will not be allowed in, despite the fact that the club do not sell them at all inside the ground. Visiting supporters must find it strange that seaside town does not sell chips at it's ground, even if the Fish House is a rival.

Turnover is up £15,000, so bacon rolls won't go on the menu, and it seems that Geoffrey King believes that SUFC serve as good a menu as anywhere else in League Two. Has he ever been to Aggborough (that's in Kidderminster in case you don't know Geoff), the Memorial Stadium or even, heaven forbid, York Street, Boston? If he has, he hasn't slummed it with us on the terraces.

Signing in must continue on the door if you don't have your membership cards I'm afraid. In the only five minutes of the past eighteen months that a Trust member hasn't been on duty, GK decided to pop along...and castigated us for not being there. When he starts taking time off work to get to matches and plans his whole life around the Shrimpers I'll start listening to him, although between us we do not envisage the situation happening again.

At least he and Ron are working behind the scenes on Fossetts Farm. Before I get a reputation for knocking our directors consistently, I do believe that they are trying their hardest to preserve the club's future, and we should be grateful for that. It appears that factors outside of their control have conspired to delay the submittal of plans, so thankfully we have success on the pitch to take our minds off of it.

Also, the bods in the boardroom plan to continue the successful advertising campaign around the town. As well as local buses, railway stations and shops showing posters of upcoming matches, GK will be getting in touch with the Tourist Board in the town to make sure that future games are given due coverage in the town centre and at the top of the pier.

*** Full details of both meetings are available online at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk ***

Quiz Night



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Following the 1-0 win over Bury, Alan Perry successfully organised yet another fantastic Quiz Night, with thirteen tables packed into the Shrimpers Bar for ten rounds of questions and a Fish House-inspired fish-and-chip supper. Nigel Rickard proved that there's life in the old dog yet by accompanying brother Guy to score for the evening, with his sibling asking the questions.

The questions, as ever, were extremely taxing, and proved that you need a good mix of ages and specialised subjects to concede. For my group, banded 'Team Judas' by Chris Berry on account of cobbling together a group of youngsters, this was a bit of a struggle, but a top ten finish was a respectable position. If myself, the *Southend Evening Echo's* Chris Phillips and a bunch of fellow reprobates can enjoy ourselves, then anyone can. Come on, let's be having you, as Delia Smith might say!

In total 92 people turned up, including the *Shrimpers-Online* website team at the very last minute. They raised the grand sum of £616.12 between them, including the ever-successful raffle.

LDV Pennant Around The World

It just so happens that as Southend were battling their way past Bristol Rovers in the 2004/5 LDV Vans Trophy, a pennant from last season's merchandise is winging it's way around the world in conjunction with the *ShrimperZone* website. Starting off at Roots Hall on February 11th, via Ade Butteriss it has now been to both Perth and Melbourne in Australia thanks to Scott Pyle and Brian Goodman and now Tim Hynson. Follow it's progress via the map at www.shrimperstrust.co.uk.

New Life Members (total: 75)

Ronald Allen, Simon Dodd, Luke Mayes, Simon Mayes, Adam Pye

New Members

Ashley Abrams, Katie Adams, Jon Adams, Michael Arnold, Lee Baynton, Peter Beach, Berry Beach, James Bell, Peter Bennett, Ruth Campbell, Robert Chapman, John Chapman, Matthew Corstorphine, Cemile Dagcilar, Paul Dawson, Amanda Day, Stephen Dickens, Tom Dosser, Steve Dunn-Lowes, David FitzGerald, Daniel Fletcher, Kenny Goodbourn, David Healy, Derek Jaques, Stephen Ladd, David Moore, Alex Muscat, Frederick Neil, Tony Neil, Norman Norris, Michael Ossowski, Matthew Overall, Simon Peacock, Chris Pither, Jayne Quildam, Norman Redmond, Joe Rowland, Robin Rowland, Paul Sargeant, Paul Seymour, John Slassor, Paul Smith, Anthony Smith, Justin Smith, Paul Taylor, David Tindall, Frank Van Wezel, Charlie Warman, Lesley Watson, Peter West

THE NEWS – Away from Home

Brentford Supporters Trust and Bees United

Someone at Griffin Park must be influenced by our very own Terry Jeffreys, as they decided to walk the 300 miles to Victoria Park, Hartlepool on February 11th-23rd. They intended to raise £10,000 for both organisations, as well as charities Heal and the Helen Rollason Cancer Care Appeal.

Community Mutual and the AFC Bournemouth Trust Fund

I have personal experience of Cherry Aid, the south coast side's attempts to raise money for the club as I was accosted at a Football League Youth Alliance Cup by bucket-men at Dean Court for an Under-18 match. Supporters have raised over one million pounds to keep afloat, and the Trust Fund handed over golden shares to the 2,500 members of the Community Mutual to obtain majority voting rights in the club. Bournemouth have pioneered schemes such as CherryChange and PlayerShare.

Wycombe Wanderers Supporters Trust

The Chairboys' trust have appointed Keith Blagborough as a Director on the Football Club's board. Commenting on the earlier announcement of the purchase of 100,000 shares by the Supporters Trust, Ivor Beeks, Chairman of Wycombe Wanderers Football Club plc said "We look forward to working with a member of the Wycombe Wanderers Supporters Trust as a Director of the plc Board. This is a significant step forward in the change of our constitution and the Supporters Trust is to be congratulated on raising the first half of the funds required.



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The Board welcome this development and fully support the initiative to encourage fans to contribute to the final stage required in twelve months time."

THE MATCHES – Blues in Review

jan 25: swindon town (h) w2-0 [ldv]

Just a couple of weeks after (sort of) relieving myself of my first-team duties with *The Little Gazette*, I was thrust back into them by making notes for this newsletter! It all started off very well, as United strode into the area final of the LDV Vans Trophy for the third time in just five seasons.

Swindon had knocked the Shrimpers out of the 2003/4 Carling Cup at Roots Hall, and when Steve Wignall offered goalkeeper Rhys Evans the chance to sign for Blues from Chelsea in that summer, he had bemoaned our lowly status.

Evans had egg well and truly on his face after 73 minutes of this match, though, as Nicky Nicolau swung in a left-wing corner and it eluded everybody to settle into the bottom right-hand corner of the net. Lawrie Dudfield had already easily outpaced Jerel Ifill to lob Evans in the first half. 2-0, and bring on Bristol Rovers, who saved us another hysterical ticketing situation with Leyton Orient.

jan 29: darlington (h) w2-0 [league two]

The Quakers had mauled us 4-0 at the 'Reynolds'/'New'/'Williamson Motors' Stadium in October, so revenge was sweet for a Seasiders side now oozing confidence at Roots Hall. Steve Tilson's men seem to perform better against the leading sides in League Two this season, and had Darlo won this time around they would have leapfrogged Blues into fifth place.

Saved from having to watch Trevor Kettle referee for the first time since the Canvey Island debacle and the Park Lane sequel, replacement Andy Penn did alright, although it took the introduction of Mark Gower and Freddy Eastwood to turn the match on it's head as it headed for a goalless draw.

First Eastwood fought his way into the area before squaring to Mark Bentley, who found that he did, after all, have his shooting boots on and drove past Sam Russell, and then the former Grays Athletic sharpshooter netted himself in the injury time from a Gower centre. My mate Matt Phillips, an Ipswich Town fan who had come along ostensibly to see Alun Armstrong, instead left predicting promotion for the Shrimpers.

feb 4: swansea city (a) d1-1 [league two]

In a game featuring one of League Two's most slippery-shoed strikers, Lee Trundle, it was unbelievable that instead it was Lawrie Dudfield that was booked for diving by over-officious official Mark Warren. Upended dramatically by the proverbial brick out-house, Ezomo Iriekpen after Trundle had stylishly turned in a second-half throw-in, Dudfield was astounded as he was shown the yellow card on the very spot where the skid marks showed the defender's awful challenge.

Thankfully, Wayne Gray popped up just a couple of minutes later to level matters as he strode clear of the Swans defence to slot coolly past Willy Gueret. Darryl Flahavan was the hero for Blues, though, as he denied Trundle and Paul Connor, whilst the woodwork also saved the Shrimpers' blushes and gave them a fine away point at the Vetch Field, the most intimidating ground in the division.

Somewhat sadly, this should (play-offs notwithstanding) be the last time that Southend fans visit one of the few arenas with true character left in the Football League; a place where the organisation of the stands is so slipshod that some supporters - including my brother and *TLG* colleague Matthew Donohue - actually briefly entered via a Swans turnstile!

The trip home did not go without its problems either, as Chris Berry presided over a coach breakdown, and not for the first time this season. The 36 supporters stranded did their best to put the three-hour delay behind them, however, and guzzled an improbable 65 refills of Football League-sponsors Coca-Cola before the staff at Reading services finally cottoned on. All that for a total of £1.89 - well if these greedy refuel stops will continue charging extortionate prices, then football fans and fellow travellers will take advantage of these deals. Thanks to John Bridge of Supreme Travel for writing off the coach fee as well.



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feb 11: scunthorpe united (h) d0-0 [league two]

After a point at one of our promotion rivals, another visited Roots Hall on a Friday night as Scunthorpe United came to town. A massive 323 Iron fans made their way down the A1(M), yet another message that Friday football might not be the way to go, although the overall attendance of 8224 suggests otherwise.

The match hinged on one incident eleven minutes from time as Freddy Eastwood's path into the penalty area was blocked by the hand of Scunny captain Andy Crosby, blatantly three yards inside the box and right in front of assistant Steve Rubery. Despite seeing the incident well enough to award a set-piece, referee Paul Taylor adjudged it to have taken place outside of the area, and only gave a free-kick.

Flahavan was again heroic, saving well from an Ian Baraclough header in a Gordon Banks-esque save, whilst Steve Torpey and Jon Walters wasted chances for the away side. Mark Bentley had the opportunity to win in the dying moments, but veteran keeper Paul Musselwhite saved his first effort and was given the time to recover for a second vital save.

feb 15: bristol rovers (a) w2-1 [ldv]

The LDV Vans Trophy again allowed United some respite from the League campaign, and thanks to Mark Gower's heroics Blues took a 2-1 lead into the second leg of the tie at Roots Hall this week. Rovers, suffering with injury problems, named just Junior Agogo as a lone striker, and he aided Blues' exploits by firing a penalty kick laughably over the crossbar on the half-hour.

Only eight minutes were on the clock when Lewis Hunt's second attempt at a right-wing cross found the head of Lawrie Dudfield, and the forward nodded past former Shrimpers loanee Ryan Clarke. Slack marking allowed Richard Walker to return the favour early in the second half, but Gower drifted in from the left with Nick Nicolau ready to replace him and then sent a dipping shot over Clarke and in via the underside of the crossbar.

feb 19: northampton town (a) w2-1 [league two]

Travel supremo Chris Berry was unable to take the fleet of Supreme coaches to Sixfields for our second visit of the year due to unfortunate circumstances, so son Tom took over the reigns, so becoming the first SJS to single-handedly run a coach to an away game, and in the process set a new age record at just 15. Chris', and everyone's thanks go to Tom and Victor Peretti, a Trust member willing to undertake another vehicle, as well as Chairman Trevor Bashford, who assumed control of proceedings.

On the pitch, plans were going similarly awry. The Cobblers were in the ascendancy when Eric Sabin and Charley Hearn assisted Martin Smith to finish all-too-easily. Sabin and ex-Col U forward Scott McGleish were then denied by Darryl Flahavan, who continued to show that Bart Griemink's absence was not influential. The late, late show followed - Adam Barrett netting his eighth and ninth goals of the campaign as Kevin Maher and Mark Gower supplied set-piece balls for the central defender to power into the bottom left-hand corner each time.

feb 22: shrewsbury town (h) w1-0 [league two]

The cold snap in southeast Essex and beyond could have caused the Tuesday night clash with Shrewsbury Town to be abandoned, but thankfully the Football League's ridiculous rule that there should be yellow balls and not orange ones for use in the snow did not leave Steve Tilson seething. Joe Ross, the bungling referee, was left in a true quandary as the white stuff arrived from all angles.

Freddy Eastwood, Mark Bentley, Lawrie Dudfield and Carl Pettefer all fired off target in a lacklustre attacking display from the hosts, whilst Flahavan did well to palm out a Kelvin Langmead effort and Luke Rodgers blazed over for the Salop. Frustrated Southend, who had 20 shots on goal in total, finally grabbed a winner on 79 minutes when Duncan Jupp crossed for Bentley to head into the path of Eastwood, who stabled home. Wayne Gray could have won it seconds later, but instead, the shivering Shrimpers supporters were left to wait until after the snow had cleared and the defence held firm before getting another vital three points.

feb 26: bury (h) w1-0 [league two]



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Another less-than-convincing performance from Steve Tilson's men, but three more points to the cause that now decreed Blues level on points with the team in second place, although with a hugely inferior goal difference. It also represented a fourth successive 1-0 win, and increased the run to just two defeats in a massive 22 matches for the Seaside.

The only goal of the game came three minutes before the half-time whistle as Mark Gower's free-kick from just outside the area was flapped at by Andy Marriott, and the custodian dropped the ball at the boots of Eastwood, who netted his fifteenth goal of the campaign as he goes in pursuit first of 20 and then Leon Constantine's mark of 2003/4. Absolutely nothing happened in the second half, which was fortunate as Blues again caused much nail-biting in the stands.

mar 5: chester city (a) d2-2 [league two]

Third place, and an automatic promotion place for the first time since dropping to the basement division six years ago was tarnished on two accounts in a 2-2 draw at what used to be named the Deva Stadium. Firstly on the pitch as Southend put in their worst performance of the season, and then in the stands as a Cestrian made alleged racially abusive language and gestures to Lewis Hunt. The defender was supported fantastically by the 350-or-so Southend supporters present, and it can only be hoped that the Cheshire authorities act and do not bury their heads in the sand as the initial reaction appears to suggest.

Twice the Seals took the lead - firstly through Michael Walsh, a youth-teamer with his inaugural senior goal as Spencer Prior stood and watched on the goalline, and then as Ben Davies tapped home unmarked from close range. In between, Mark Gower's sweetly-struck free-kick dipped over the wall and into the bottom left-hand corner just before the break, and then Freddy Eastwood stabbed home in a seemingly-offside position to rescue a point five minutes from the end.

mar 8: bristol rovers (h) d2-2 [ldv] (agg: 4-3)

Replace Drewe Broughton with Freddy Eastwood, Leon Constantine with Wayne Gray and Leon Cort with Adam Barrett and just like last year, Southend United reach the Final of the LDV Vans Trophy with a home draw to secure a 4-3 victory on aggregate. This time, Bristol Rovers, and not Colchester United, were the opposition, and they put up a decent fight, even if they were slightly fortunate to be handed a second equaliser.

James Hunt hit the crossbar early on to give an indication that the Pirates were not down and out, but after Freddy Eastwood's shot was parried out, Wayne Gray opened the scoring to open up a two-goal advantage overall. Just when it seemed that Blues would get to half-time and virtually stick 99% of their second foot in the final, Spencer Prior slipped, Ryan Williams crossed and Richard Walker nodded in to pull matters level on the night.

Eastwood hit the bar early in the second period to level that count, but he made no mistake when Wayne Gray, after robbing Craig Hinton of possession, passed inside unselfishly to set up the Shrimpers top scorer. Unfortunately, when he was cleared pushed in the lead up to the second Pirates goal, referee Phil Crossley ignored his pleas and Junior Agogo slammed in a fine leveller. Darryl Flahavan made a wonderful one-handed save to push a Walker shot around the post that the official also missed, awarding a goal kick, but that was as close as the visitors got to forcing extra time. Roll on Cardiff!

And this is where we must end, on a tremendous high! I've held on too long for more and more details for the Cardiff trip, but the Newsletter must roll, and the next one will be out in a month's time, ready with all the reaction from Cardiff.

Until then, auf wiedersehen!

Robert Craven (10/03/2005)