

NEWSLETTER – Vol. 9 Iss. 03. – January 2014

THE INTRODUCTION – Paul FitzGerald

Wow what a good time we are having....

It would be inappropriate of me to not focus on the on-pitch situation this month. What a great series of results, culminating in that amazing hammering of Millwall! The camaraderie in the team is something we've heard about before and indeed it has been recently reported. This squad at this moment really seem to have that in abundance and long may it continue. One point I'd like to make about our wonderful young keeper (who's already had an amazing season) is about when the Millwall goal went in. I suspect for the rest of us it was "oh well it's only one" If anyone saw Daniel's reaction you could see how much it meant to him – an attitude that will do him (and hopefully us) proud for a little bit longer, until the inevitable happens.

So ... onto the slightly less than mouth-watering match against Hull. Obviously interesting, because of the Phil Brown connection and let's face it beggars can't be choosers, they are a Prem team after all. So hopefully it'll be a sell out and by sell out I mean fare paying customers. A club like Southend needs every penny, as we all know only too well.

Off the pitch – another potential deadline has come and gone and (despite a very interesting meeting with our chairman just before Christmas) the digging does not seem to have started on the build for our long awaited Stadium

Further off the pitch, regular and long standing readers will know that the Trust occasionally teams up with a local charity and several committee members get off the settee for a fund raising exercise designed in some way to be painful. The walk to Colchester a few years back was very successful (and painful!) – we've been

looking for something similar for a while and in fact pulled a planned walk last season so as not to conflict with Bob Mays (and team) fabulous walk to Oxford. This year, we have joined forces with Southend Hospital (Stroke Unit) for a sponsored walk to Dagenham - this month in fact. The route has been carefully planned to include easy access to hospitals, which some of you will remember was an unplanned part of the route I had to take before I completed the walk last time! Full details on this are below, but I'd like to say personally, that any money sponsored will be gratefully received.



The Trust committee is always looking for new blood – so if you would like to get involved in any of our activities at any level, please don't hesitate to contact us.

As ever, you can contact me at pfitz666@aol.com if you'd like to comment on anything the Trust does or does not do.

STAGGER TO THE DAGGERS !!!!



On Tuesday 28th January several Committee Members will be walking the 28 miles to the away match at Dagenham & Redbridge to raise funds for the Trust and the Stroke Unit at Southend University Hospital.

Scott Barber, Clare Brooks, Tom Brooks, Shane Chapman, Rob Craven, Paul FitzGerald, Lesley Hicks, Darren Posnack and Alec Trott will also be joined by the Southend Echo's Blue's reporter Chris Phillips on this 28 mile trek to our local Essex rivals.



Through supporter membership and fund raising the Trust currently provides sponsorship to Southend United's youth department and has also helped raise money for specific items required by the club, including equipment for its physiotherapy department. We are always keen wherever appropriate to increase our investment by partnering other important causes within the club. We see Southend United Football Club as being an important part of our town.

We in addition see the Trust as having a role to play within the surrounding community which is why the walk between Southend and Dagenham & Redbridge will also benefit the Stroke Unit at Southend Hospital.

Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust cares for more than 380,000 patients each year. It's the local hospital for the Southend area and beyond, providing a wide range of acute services and specialist treatment.

Strokes are the largest single cause of severe disability and the third most common cause of death in the UK after heart disease and cancer. They will have a major impact on the lives of individuals they affect. The Stroke Unit at Southend University Hospital via its excellent services and state of the art facilities has dramatically helped to reduce the level of disability in stroke patients and has become one of the top three stroke services in the country. Through the Trust's fund raising efforts

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we want to help maintain the Unit's excellent services – as after all you never know when ourselves or someone close to us might need these services.

We do hope that you will sponsor us for our walk. You can either make a donation in support of the whole team's efforts or alternatively sponsor a specific walker. The choice is yours-- we really don't mind!

Any sponsorship pledge you can make no matter how small will be very welcome and in anticipation thank you so much for your support.

And sponsoring or making a donation couldn't be simpler. All you need to do is visit the Stagger to the Dagers Just Giving page here <http://www.justgiving.com/staggertothedagers> , or alternatively you can send a cheque payable to the Shrimpers Trust to: Stagger to the Dagers, The Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend on Sea, SS1 9FD.

If you are a UK taxpayer, please remember to tick the Gift Aid box when donating online as this will increase your donation by at least 25% at no cost to you.

Monies raised will be split 50/50 between the Trust and the Stroke Unit.

SHRIMPERS TRUST AGM – 30th January 2014

The Shrimpers Trust AGM will be held on Thursday 30th January 2014 in the Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall starting at 8.00pm.

This will be followed by a Q&A Session with Ricky Duncan and SUFC and England U18's Goalkeeper Ted Smith



18-year-old Ted Smith signed his first professional contract with Southend United prior to Blues' 2-1 win over Portsmouth on New Year's Day. Named captain of the club's Under-18 side for 2013/14, Ted made his England Under-18 debut in October, keeping a clean sheet in a 4-0 win over Hungary at St George's Park. Having joined the Shrimpers at the age of 12, he is now approaching 50 appearances for the youth team and has featured on the first-team substitutes bench.

Head of Youth Ricky Duncan is now in his ninth season during his second spell at Southend United. The former Cambridge United coach has overseen the development of ex-Blues professionals Franck Moussa, Johnny Herd, Stuart O'Keefe and Kane Ferdinand, as well as the progression of current Shrimpers talents Ryan Auger, Daniel Bentley, Jack Edwards, Seedy Njie and Jack Payne into the senior squad. Under his tutelage, the club's Under-18s have won the Football League Youth Alliance South-East Conference in 2008/09 and reached the Fifth Round of The FA Youth Cup in 2007/08 and 2010/11.

The Agenda for the AGM has been included with this newsletter and the Directors Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ending 30th June 2013 and the Minutes from our last AGM can be downloaded from the Members Area of the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk .

For further details contact Paul Yeomanson: (01702 302373 or info@shrimperstrust.co.uk)

FUNDRAISING

100 Club

The latest winners in the scheme, pulled out of the hat during weekly draws since the last newsletter were **Valerie Fane, Donna Stone, Albert Chittock, Wally Despy and John Cornwell**. The winner of the £275.00 Xmas Draw was **Peter Hall**.

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The nature of the 100 Club means the more people that sign up, then the bigger the weekly prize. To register your interest, you can still contact Alan Perry at alanperry4@hotmail.com or by calling 01702 476458 and put yourself in with a chance of winning the weekly prize.

Remember, the more people that sign up to the scheme, then the higher that prize will be. By setting up a standing order for just £5 a month (or just £60 a year), you put yourself in with a chance of winning around £28.00 per week at the present time.

Quid-a-Goal

Our Quid A Goal scheme is now up and running for the 2013/14 Season.

So far this season the total raised after 21 games is £1,024.25.



The aim of the scheme - like most of the Shrimpers Trust's activities is to raise money for Southend United Football Club and make sure that there is a club for us to be supporting in the foreseeable future.

In particular, some of the money raised from this Seasons "Quid a Goal" scheme will be donated to the Southend United Physio Ben Clarkson and his Department to help purchase much needed equipment.

This is how it works:

Those who support the scheme with a pledge have their name and details of their pledge displayed in the United match program each week and are detailed on this web site.

We ask you to pledge £0.25, £0.50, £1.00 or more under various headings such as clean sheets, various players scoring goals, or team goals. This does not have to cost you a fortune as you can easily judge in advance how much your pledge will cost you come the end of the season.

For example, the Blues rarely manage more than 80 goals in a season from 1st team matches. A £0.25 per goal pledge would therefore most likely not cost you more than £20.00 come the end of the season. If funds are tight how about £1 for every goal scored by our full backs? The 08/09 season would have cost you £3.00. If you chose to do £0.50 per point and we finished up with 80 points. At the end of the season we will write to you thanking you for your support of this initiative and asking you to send us a cheque for the amount of £40.00.

Last year this scheme raised around £1,300 from the 40+ people that helped us. This includes support by some of the Southend United's directors.

If you would like to help raise funds for this worthy cause you can do so by completing a QAG Entry Form which are available at the Trust Info Stand in the Shrimpers Bar prior to any home game.

Entry forms are also available from the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk

SHRIMPERS TRUST PLAYER OF THE MONTH – VOTE NOW !!!

Trust Members can now vote for the Shrimpers Trust SUFC Player of the Month for *DECEMBER 2013* by logging into the Members Area of the Trust website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk

All you need to do is login to the Members Area of this Website, go the Player of the Month Voting page and cast your vote for one of the following six nominated Players.

Daniel Bentley, Ben Coker, Kevan Hurst, Luke Prosser, Michael Timlin and John White.



Voting closes at midnight on Thursday 16th January 2014, with the presentation taking place prior to kick-off at the home game vs Chesterfield on Saturday 18th January 2014.

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XMAS DRAW - 2014

The Shrimpers Trust 2013 Xmas Draw took place at half-time on New Year's Day during the game vs Portsmouth.

The following winners were drawn by Blue's midfielder Marc Laird.

| | Prize | Ticket Number | Name |
|-----------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 st | £500.00 | 5038 | Bryn Martin |
| 2 nd | £250.00 | 11396 | Derek Monk |
| 3 rd | £100.00 | 14314 | Lesley Hicks |
| 4 th | Signed SUFC Football | 1784 | Danny Collins |
| 5 th | Bottle of Champagne | 1775 | Rick Richards |



All the winners have been notified and the Trust would like to thank all those that bought and sold tickets helping us to raise just over £2,300.

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to New Life Members (Total 219)

Lesley Hicks.



Life Membership of the Trust currently costs £100.00 if you have an email account or £125.00 if you prefer to receive Trust Mailings by post.

If you are interested in joining this group please contact our Membership Secretary, Paul Yeomanson via email at membership@shrimperstrust.co.uk.

You can also join up as a Life Member in the Membership Section of the Trust Website www.shrimperstrust.co.uk, and postal applications will also be accepted at **Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend-on-Sea, SS1 9FD**.

Welcome to New Members since the last Newsletter

Jack Braithwaite, Chloe Chapman, Daniel Chester, Alison Cook, Ben Roberts and Robert Spooner.

****Please note that the Shrimpers Trust would like to know if any of its members' addresses change, or if they have a new email address so that newsletters and other correspondence can be sent to the correct address. Please send any change of address details to **The Shrimpers Trust, PO Box 5830, Southend on Sea, SS1 9FD**, by email to membership@shrimperstrust.co.uk or alternatively fill in our on-line contact details form which can be found in the Membership Section of the Trust Website, www.shrimperstrust.co.uk ****

FORTHCOMING FUNDRAISERS

QUIZ NIGHT

Saturday 18th January 2014
The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall

The Shrimpers Trust will be holding a Quiz Night in the Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall on Saturday 18th January 2014.

The doors open at 7.00pm with commencement of the quiz at **7.30pm sharp**.
The cost will be £10.00 for adults and £6.00 for under 16's.

Included in the price will be a choice from 5 meals (*Chicken & Chips, Chicken Nuggets & Chips, Sausage & Chips, Fish & Chips or Vegetarian Spring Roll & Chips*). The meals are provided by the Fish House and will be served at around 8.45pm.



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Ideally we need tables of 8, but if you would be happy to join others who will come in parties of less than 8 please let us know.

For further details or to book a table contact Alan Perry (01702 476458 or alanperry4@hotmail.com)

RACE NIGHT

Saturday 1st March 2014
The Shrimpers Bar, Roots Hall



First Race at 7.30pm.

This is a great event for all the family, with Cash Prizes for each race plus chances to win Bottles of Wine, Trust Goodie Bags, a Meal for Two at the Elements Restaurant in the Rendezvous Casino at the Kursaal, a Meal for Two at the East Chinese Restaurant.

Tickets cost just £2.00

For further details contact Paul Yeomanson: (01702 302373 or info@shrimperstrust.co.uk)

CHINESE NIGHT

Thursday 13th March 2014
East, 33 Alexandra Street, Southend on Sea.



The evening begins at 7.30pm and the cost will be £15.00 per person for an 'all you can eat' buffet.

We welcome Members and Non Members alike so why not come along for some good food and chat.

For further details contact Alan Perry: (01702 476458 or alanperry4@hotmail.com)

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO! – SUFC 1st TEAM MATCH REPORTS

Welcome to our new Southend United 1st Team Match Report section for the 2013/14 Season.

This season the match reports are being written by Trust Member Gary Beard, and as you read them you will realise that they are not your normal run of the mill reports, which you have probably gathered from the title.

The Trust Committee would like to thank Scott Barber for providing us with match reports in previous seasons.

Thursday 26th December 2013
AFC Wimbledon 0 Southend 1



It was the start of a nightmare journey. First of all there was a bridge stacked to the hilt with queuing traffic. Perhaps the minister who thinks 'Toll booths help to keep traffic flowing' should venture down to this border between Essex and the swamplands before reiterating that nonsense ever again. Then, once that had been traversed, there awaiting us was a game of Statues. You know the one, you played it as a child. It's where you have to creep up to your target; moving only when you think you won't be spotted. Othertimes you have to remain as still as a statue. Hence its name, and it was exactly what we were being forced to do. First of all we would rush forward, oh all of 100 yards, and then everything would grind to a halt as signs appeared stating that we could go at 40 m.p.h. We had more chance of Albert forgetting to mention his second course ! Indeed our average speed of just 20 m.p.h around the road to hell tells the story best of all. Talk about stop, start ... we were like a couple of tortoises celebrating St Valentine's Day!

Once inside the ground the freezing conditions caused Marlene to get all inventive. Her feet turning into slush, she strategically positioned a pair of plastic cups over her shoes. Wishing to conserve her inner body temperature she wasn't speaking very much. Accordingly we could only assume that the 'accruements' were working as required.

Puffing out water vapour like an exhausted steam train, Albert, a plastic adverting board for why cyclists look silly, was enveloped by mist as he expounded about the hot dog and chips that he was consuming. You'd have thought that he had personally hunted down the unfortunate hog and planted the seeds the way he was going on. Rumour has it that Mrs A tries to

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enforce a sponsored silence at home. Last year they collected 20p! Still the pillar of fog that he had become warned those in the know to give him a wide berth.

Stuck right next to him, Boycie was thinking that even the Ark Royal wouldn't have done the job. Still, we had somehow arrived at the ground early enough to be able to claim the front row of what they laughing called the away section. So that was some consolation even it did mean that we could only see two thirds of the pitch. Our view, being blocked by the dugouts, meant that whenever the ball went anywhere left of the 6 yard box we had to rely on crowd noise to tell us what was happening. Giant TV screens should have been erected to solve this problem but, like us, AFC are stuck for cash. Life is tough for both clubs and supporters in the lower leagues. One day though, if we're very good and behave politely, then we'll all become as 'deserving' as those clubs that don't pay any of their bills !

Blues kicked off in their piranha strip of yellow and black. Our hosts were playing in blue and this lead to some odd moments of consternation and confusion as people, forgetfully, shouted out "Come on you Blues!" The players knew though who was doing the supporting and who wasn't . And it wasn't the home fans either!

Passionate about their club they most certainly are. Haven their identity stolen from them by Franchise F.C and having to fight their way back into the league is proof enough of that. But, apart from when urged on by their 'Womble' mascots or when a free kick or corner occurred, hardly a peep came from them. We on the other hand were shouting out support throughout the game, regardless of where the ball was. That's not to say it was another 'Pompey' experience. Indeed it was far from it. Blues Voice, without their drum kit, were shadows of their usual selves. But still our support far outshone that provided by the home supporters.

Possibly that's because we had more to cheer about as we were running the game. Ok, AFC had their moments. But that's all they were, brief glimpses of a blue shirt in our area; very little more. We on the other hand were probing and exploring their defences almost all the time. Unfortunately though, all our spying missions told us was that Wimbledon were a defensive minded team; seeking to catch us out with a high ball. Accordingly we were going to have to be patient.

Will Atkinson nearly scored our opener when after drifting his way past a couple of defenders he found himself in a position to take a shot. Unfortunately though the bumpy, uneven, nature of the pitch caused him to mishit it just enough to see it fly wide of the target. Then Hurst, the inner voice called 'Mike' urging him on, let fly one hell of a beautiful volley from just outside and wide of the area. In a perfect world it would have burst the back of the net but, life being life and this being Southend that we are talking about, it drifted just past the far post.

The referee meanwhile had been busy taking names. Two of our hosts and one of ours. All three were fairly weak bookings but, as Boycie had said on the way up "The ref likes playing with his plastic" and Albert, understandably, was getting rather nervous. White, seemingly determined to get his first leaguer goal, then went close with a drive from out on the wing that blazed just over the bar. Wimbledon could hear us knocking but they wouldn't let us come in.

Even so their frustration was evidently growing and a number of home tackles had led to our heroes requiring treatment. Then, came a tackle so late that chocolate hens were anxiously re-counting their eggs as it reached its target. Rob Kiernon, about to be recalled to Wigan if rumour holds true, had been having a splendid match. With his usual dance partner, Prosser, side-lined by injury, he was holding the back line alongside Phillips really well. AFC had obviously decided to take him out!

It's kinda hard to say what occurred first, the referee's whistle, the linesman's flag or the shouts of outrage from the Thunderbird crew who were not 5 feet away from the incident. Obviously realising that the game was up, Kiernon's assailant threw himself to the ground and rolled around in feigned agony hoping against hope that he would be mistaken for the victim.

There was more chance of Marlene winning the Eurovision Song Contest! With Mike, Boycie, Albert and our aforementioned siren, all enthusiastically identifying themselves as witnesses for the prosecution there was absolutely zero possibilities of him getting away with it. But still he tried. The ref however, looking to fulfil his quota of one sending off every second game, wasn't having any of it and so soon Wimbledon's eleven had become ten. Strange how the limp and broken leg magically repaired itself as their dismissed soldier marched off the pitch! Only Denzil was shaking his head. In his book, in-between all the scribbled love hearts bearing the name 'Goldilocks', all four cards had been 'soft' and unwarranted. Presumably the book also advises him to happily indulge in one of Sweeny Todd pies before taking a seat, providing that is that he ever has a need to visit a barber's!

The second half started as pretty much expected. Wimbledon pushed forward hoping for an early break and then, once it hadn't arrived (A bit like one of Straker's passes!) they set up their defensive wall and stayed behind it. We huffed and puffed but only a few straws fell out. Clearly a change of plan was required and Brown obliged by replacing Leonard with Woodrow. A move that weakened our midfield to the benefit of our attack (Corr). It disappointed Boycie however who had enjoyed watching Leonard play.

A short while later and Corr was exiting stage right as Eastwood entered the play. Both Straker and Hurst had been finding it hard to get time to plant a decent cross into the box. So whilst the loss of Corr reduced our ability in the air, perhaps Eastwood would have more joy on the ground. As by now the ball had pretty much taken up permanent resident in their half (The one that we could see 100% of !) this tactic seemed quite reasonable.

Therefore it was somewhat ironic that the only goal in the game arrived via a header. It was scored by Woodrow following a superb cross from White and it sent the away stand into delight. The away dugout wasn't exactly a scene of desolation either as players and management alike all jumped in the air, pumping it for all they were worth.

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With the top of the table being so close, three points would be extremely valuable today and although we had certainly had to be patient, perseverance had paid off and barring disasters the points would be all of ours. And so it turned out to be although a very late scare did occur when Phillips recovered from a slip that gave Wimbledon possession, put in a Bobby Mooreish tackle that, viewed by the great unwashed TV sofa bound 'supporters' would have had them dropping their cups of tea in amazement. One, because it was such a great tackle and two because the name of someone actually playing on the pitch was spelt in English!

The journey home was much more straight forward than the one coming up. It took around half the time too. So it was very happy and contented bunch of Thunderbirds who tumbled down Thunderbird II's steps at Tracy Island, before waving it goodbye into the night. So sad then that each and everyone of them, (Bar Albert who we'd ejected out moments earlier, back into the very same ditch that we had found him) had left something on board.

Marlene had lost her sunglasses, Boycie his mobile and Denzil his gloves. Jeeps, it's just like being in charge of a school trip sometimes!

Sunday 29th December 2013
Accrington Stanley 1 Southend 1



It's the morning after the day before and I'm trying to gather my thoughts together about all of yesterday's happenings. We made an early start. I know that, and it was a far too early one on two accounts. The first was the usual problem of getting Denzil conscious before the midday news; whilst the second was that in all truth we could all have had an extra hour in bed and still made the game quite comfortably. In fact, once he was awake, our unimpressed navigator made quite a bit of noise about that!

The skies above Essex had been blue and clear and so were the roads. Hardly another set of car lights to be seen on either the A127, or the M25. Indeed, up until Birmingham appeared on the radar, everything was going swimmingly. Indeed so much was the case that Mike took the time to make a small diversion in order to allow his fellow Thunderbirds to view Villa Park from close up. Were they appreciative? Not a lot!

But from that point on, our flight was dogged by hold up's. Stationary '40 m.p.h.' signs becoming a feature of our travelogue. In order to try and ease our passage we stopped for breakfast. The idea was sound, its execution perfect, but the jams were still there when we exited the service station. So a bit later we did it again, and then again. But apart from very, very contented stomachs we achieved hardly anything else as the road was still extremely busy. The resultant sleepy Marlene did though ensure though that we only played a few games of 'Millionaire'.

This allowed time for Denzil to play with his maffs books. Bored with reading maps upside down and the G.P.S system on his mobile making him walk around in circles, he has turned to numbers for solace. The fact that having a student card (He's a pupil of the Open University) earns him discounts whilst at the same time suggesting that he's a lot younger than the half century and a lot of extra plusses than he actually is, playing no small part in his decision of course!

So now, as the rest of the flight crew tried to make amusing names out of car numbers, the navigation compartment of Thunderbird II was full of the sound of deep sighs and much erasing out. Then he had an epiphany moment as, picking the discarded book up from the floor for the umpteenth time, he discovered that all of the answers were in the back. From then it was simply unbelievably as, time after time, he proudly held up for display a number that bore a startling resemblance to one that was also contained in the latter chapters of his copy of the Early Learning Centre's masterpiece, 'How to Count Without Losing Your Socks!'

Unmistakeable signs then started appearing announcing that we had finally reached 'Up North' and the Eddy Waring appreciation society sprung into full voice. Though just why "Hull Kingston Rovers" was being included in the whippet chorus was a bit of a puzzle. Even allowing for Mike's driving, we were still on the opposite side of the country!

Accrington's ground was buried amongst a nestle of bungalows; only it's floodlights (Four torchlights strapped to a post) giving its location away. However the inhabitants of this little football ground were extremely friendly, nay a single bead or piece of coloured glass did we have to exchange. Instead we were greeted like long standing friends. The only question, asked of us by a rather anxious steward, being "Exactly how many of you are there?"

Accrington had no idea how many Southend supporters to expect, and after our conversation with them they were still in the dark. Over optimistic Denzil suggesting perhaps 500, Boycie more prosaically, and accurately, around 200 (The actual figure was 271). Then, as Mike disappeared to conduct scientific experiments involving a nearby burger van, the rest of the Thunderbirds took up roost towards the far side of the terracing immediately behind one of the goals.

A cool, (Read freezing), breeze was blowing across the width of the away end. So Mike, his test subjects warming both of his hands, was rather puzzled to see his flight crew 'densely' packed together, right where the wind was fiercest. Shrugging his shoulders he suggested a move to more sheltered, warmer climes; a proposition that was seized upon by everyone save Boycie who was once more so deep in conversation with Granddad that WW III could have been fought around him and he wouldn't have noticed!

Although Uncle Albert hadn't made the trip up to the borders of civilisation his aura evidently was still upon us. Evidence of this being our singling out by Accrington's head of security who was keen to conduct an extensive interrogation with these brave

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Southerners. Equally I suppose it could have been the fact that he hailed from Romford and so was keen to be able to talk proper English for a while after becoming marooned in the land of ‘E by gum’.

Turned out to be quite an interesting chat. Ambassador Boycie leading the way with the rest of us chipping in from time to time (Mike didn't take that last sentence literally by the way. Access to his sticks of special scientific interest being ring fenced with especially reserved rights!) As well as marshalling the security forces at Accrington he also performed a similar job at nearby Burnley. Although he enjoyed working at Turf Moor the town itself was red carded. Not being a very pleasant place at all in his book. We also discussed how difficult it was for small clubs, such as Accrington, to attract fans away from their more established, successful ??, neighbours; thinking of own efforts to save ‘Wet Spam’ supporters from the life of misery that they so richly deserve. The friendly guard pointed out that this was even more of a problem up here because everybody was so territorial. The absolute hatred shared between Burnley and Blackburn being so real that it made all other such rivalries a walk in the park in comparison.

Out on the pitch, our team had been subjected to a few changes. With Kiernan having been recalled by Wigan Prosser was back in the side as so too was Woodrow at the expense of Corr who, having played so many games as our one forward, probably welcomed a break. Our pre match exercises were being carried out in a professional manner and so all the signs were saying that we were up for this one.

The away terrace was also tuning up. Cries of ‘Come on you Yellows’ echoing around the ground. An old favourite that has been resurrected; hopefully to similar effect as last time when it saw us being promoted! The two teams lined up with Blues attacking towards our end and we started well. Atkinson going close to putting us ahead but he just couldn't stretch enough to make contact with a cross from Woodrow. Straker then set up Timlin but the midfielders' effort was saved by the goal keeper. A man who was going to be a thorn in our sides all afternoon long!

For the first 20 minutes or so it was all Blues as we played up a slight incline on an otherwise fine surface. Such a change from our previous visit when it was unplayable and the match was called off just as we arrived! Our defence looked assured despite the loss of Kiernan, the midfield compact and alert whilst upfront Woodrow was doing his best to be a target man.

Alas though he wasn't and as Accrington came to appreciate this, and so stole the ball of him more and more regularly, so their influence upon the game grew. A header that really should have been directed better, signalled their intentions and then a few minutes later, following a great save from Bentley, the ball ran free to a home forward who had a tap in. Fortunately its connection to the mains was suspect and so the ball went over rather than into an empty net.

Accrington did not lose confidence though and it was they who finished the half the much stronger team. Just before the break an incident occurred involving Straker, an Accrington winger, the home crowd and the referee. The Blues winger/midfielder had been fouled wide out on the right and for some reason both the home supporters and their player were laying into Straker. From where we were some 50 yards away it all looked, and sounded, rather nasty; possibly racial in its content. The referee only exacerbating our discomfort by having a go at Straker too before blowing the whistle for half time.

Straker, still being derided then went face to face with his assailant before being escorted back to the changing rooms by his concerned team mates. They looked ready for a bundle and the atmosphere was rather tense right up to their disappearance down the tunnel. For our part no one was really certain as to what had just occurred but speculation was running rife. Denzil and Marlene had nothing to offer to the debate that was raging though, having disappeared to the washrooms before the incident arose as neither wanting to be held up by a queue. Indeed the facilities, although better than Portsmouth, were on the small side and so big, cross legged, delays did occur.

We came out early for the second half; obviously still reeling from a blast from the manager. Accordingly we started the second half at a much faster tempo. Almost taking the lead within five minutes when Hurst's pass found Timlin whose powerful goal bound shot was somehow saved by the goalkeeper. All looked good but gradually, just as in the first, our foot came off the throttle and so Accrington came back into the game.

They were being abetted by a referee who hadn't awarded us a free kick for well over an hour (All game through we only got four!). Plenty were going the home sides way though and following a 50/50 challenge, the like of which most ref's, even in these petticoated days, would simply ignore, they got another just to the far side of our area. The ball was struck well but it was heading wide of our goal when ‘Disaster’ it hit Phillips leg and went into the net. Unbelievable!

Ok, so they had been knocking. But only in the way a church mouse does a door behind which it fears a cat sits. So we had been coping quite comfortably despite all their efforts. But now we were a goal down! Question was, how would we respond ?

Well Eastwood had already come on for Straker, now Corr replaced Woodrow and Payne, Timlin. So we reengaged gear and then went for their throats. The Accrington goal mouth being pummelled from all angles. Corr had a terrific header saved, then Hurst was denied too by their ‘Man of the Match’. And when we finally did beat him, it was only to see the ball cleared off the line by defenders; a scene that was repeated on two separate occasions. It seemed as if we would never score but then from a corner, Prosser headed home and everyone went ape. The bench danced onto the pitch and behind the goal up the other end of the field, after a few seconds delay, there was sheer bedlam as scarves, hats and even gloves went flying into the air in celebration.

The delay was caused by us simply not being able to see at all what was happening up there at the far end of the pitch. The floodlights were barely glow worms, casting light only about as far out as the touchlines. The centre of the field was almost pitch black and so it wasn't until Prosser came charging up the field, chased by his delighted team mates that we knew for certain that we had scored.

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Now there was really only one team that was going to win the game and oh how we tried. But a mixture of determined defending, brilliant goalkeeping and a fast ticking watch denied us. The player's reaction as the final whistle blew telling the whole story as each and every one of them fell down on their knees in despair. It was as if we had just lost the F.A cup final, so disappointed and stricken did they look and it was a good 30 seconds or more before the first one stirred to accept our applause. Such a reaction to a draw, away from home, speaks volumes for our determination to gain success this season!

The trip home was much faster than the trip up and was uneventful except for one incident at a service station close to where the M1 meets the M25. We had stopped for fuel and a comfort break and so it was whilst he was indulging in the latter than Boycie was very startled to be greeted by a firm "Hello Mate!".

The interruption quite cut off his flow and, being in the gents, he was quite uncertain how to respond. Then he recognised who was talking to him ... it was none other than Ben Coker ! And the rest of the team were flowing into the gents behind him. Outside Mike was having a quick conversation with Timlin, whilst Denzil had already spotted Corr and Eastwood.

Then Marlene reappeared and was quite flustered to hear what had just happened. She was very disappointed not to have had a chance to discuss the game with her heroes. Her dismay hardly helped at all by the rest of us exchanging the names of those we had spoken too ; little schoolboys, swapping and exchanging picture cards. Mike laying claim to Timlin, Payne and Laird whilst Boycie spoke to Coker, White and Prosser. Then to her great joy and excitement all of them reappeared, heading towards the food halls and so she dashed off with Mike to see if they could catch up with Straker.

Who turned out to be a very pleasant person to talk to indeed. Mike asked him about the incident just before halftime and Straker grinned, saying that it was just one of those things with the crowd. A bit of heckling and no more. Mike then said that people had been worried in case there had been another element to it to which Straker just laughed again and said 'No, nothing like that'. Marlene then congratulated him on the game but the young Blue wasn't to be appeased. Instead he said that the whole point was to get points and that they were disappointed to have just got the one. An attitude, totally reflected by the player's reactions at the end of the game.

So, rather chuffed at having such an opportunity to meet the team, all of whom appeared to have been just as pleased to see us, indeed many thanked us for taking the trouble to travel to Accrington, we continued our flight back to Tracy Island. It had been a good end to rather a long day and, despite what the players felt, four points from two away games wasn't at all a bad harvest.

Wednesday 1st January 2014 Southend 2 Portsmouth 1



Victoria Avenue was a wind tunnel full of spit and fury. Clouds raced each other to sweep down its length before releasing bomb loads of water upon the storm battered supporters below. The club shop was fast becoming a refugee centre for the half drowned and many wondered if the game would actually be going ahead. If it did, then it would be the only one in the whole of Essex where every other match, at any level, had already been postponed.

The store's windows were veritable waterfalls; rain pouting down them in torrents before being temporarily cleared by the buffeting gale. A situation that afford brief views of a car park full of bent over figures, all apparently paying homage to the 'Hall of Wonders'. And nearby, the tops of trees were very reminiscent of a dog head's stuck out of a car window as their branches got whipped this way and that by the forces of nature which were giving full vent to their fury.

Inside the stadium; the name of which still freezes the blood of Alex Ferguson, the picture was just the same. The pitch was a storm tossed sea of green; the players of both teams shipwrecked sailors awaiting the arrival of Grace Darling and her dingy. Only up in the stands was there any sanctuary from the conditions and even here an eager wind sought out those parts that weren't fully protected. Today's game was obviously only going to be enjoyed by the fully committed.

A fate that, it appeared, had finally fallen upon Uncle Albert who was absent from all his posts. The bar taking were down, there were no hold up's in the loo's and flying elbows too were not a feature of the landscape. Strangely the non-appearance of our unrepentant O.A.G caused much concern and many were those that enquired about his health. Unfortunately it was not of its best. An old chest complaint preventing him from being able to attend the game. Hopefully though he will back on form for the Millwall game this weekend though. (Did I really write 'hopefully' just then?)

Portsmouth had been expected to bring quite a few of their fans with them up the A3 and around the M25. Accordingly the whole of the North Bank had been made available to them. But in the event they only brought down a few more than we had managed to take down to them on a similarly wet and cold Tuesday night. In fact, add in the Blues supporters that had to turn back because of an accident blocked A3 and we would have had more! And this being a bank holiday too. Pitiful Pompey, Pompey Pitiful!

Alas diminished though their numbers were, they still included people armed with cow bells and tin cans that they had hammered into instruments of audio torture. Accordingly, whenever they stopped belching out their one and only song, it was only to berate our ears with the sounds of some alpine pasture. Bizarre! For a team that still, despite all the evidence to the contrary, thinks itself to be 'big', its support could only be rated as poor when the time for it became needed. But more on that later.

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Because as kick off approached, with Blues attacking the South Bank, both sets of supporters were in fine voice and exchanging a lot of good natured banter. The awful condition were obviously going to have a lot to say too and a game, that could have been a keen competition between two decent sides, was now going to be more of a lottery. Everything therefore depended upon who could master the wind first and Portsmouth, who won the toss, clearly thought that they had by opting to play with it in the first half.

It could, and should have been a masterstroke! With Blues barely able to clear the halfway line with any clearance, the ball just kept on coming back towards our goal. Equally, when we did have the ball at our feet, we had to run into a wind that was gusting at 60 m.p.h+. Same for both teams you might say, but as Pompey ensured that they always had at least five men behind the ball they were able to maintain a superior position. In Napoleonic times great fleets of ships would battle to get to windward of their opposition; today Pompey had it handed to them on a plate. The situation would change of course following halftime when the teams exchanged ends. But, and it was a big but, we had to somehow survive until then!

It all looked very doubtful as Pompey began to lay siege to our goal. A lovely effort from a free kick tested Bentley but our young goalkeeper rose, literally, to the situation and pushed the ball to safety over the bar. But just moments later his reaction were being tested again as a neat header by Ricky Holmes, a Blues target for a couple of seasons now, was flicked towards the corner of the net. Bentley however, at full stretch, again managed to tip it away to safety.

We were being forced to concede a lot of corners though and it's to be hoped that our coaching staff were making notes. Not because we were once again experiencing the problems at set pieces that so plagued us earlier in the season although we were finding things difficult, but rather because of the variety of tactics that Portsmouth were using to deliver a deadly ball into the area. Dummies, step overs, blind runs ... they employed them all and we were being stretched to keep them out.

Accordingly it was looking more and more inevitable that they would eventually find their way through. But with Bentley performing miracles, saving a forceful drive from the edge of the area and then soon after somehow pushing a goal bound header to safety, there was still hope. Indeed we could have taken the lead ourselves as following a Pompey corner we broke away and Leonard ran almost the length of the pitch, ghosting past tackles with consummate ease, before seeing his shot from inside the area blocked by the keeper.

The wind was a fierce competitor though and you could see the amount of effort that our players were putting in just to have an occasional say in the game. Even great oaks break in storms though and so when the ball ran clean into the box following yet another Pompey corner, there was no time to even shout 'Timber' before the ball had been blasted into the back of our net. 1 – 0 down and the 900 or so Portsmouth supporters behind the goal were going ape. But so were our fans too, and as the game restarted, to anyone, say who had popped out for a cup of tea or a cockle sandwich, it would have been hard to say which team had just taken the lead so much noise was being generated by both sets of supporters.

Somewhat strangely, the goal appeared to settle both teams. They, obviously, set about seeking a second, possibly decisive goal, whilst we began asking questions of their defence too. The conditions hadn't changed any; rain was still pouring down like a dam had broken and the wind was just a continuous maelstrom of noise. However both teams were now playing better football. Pompey looking quite a different team from when we had met them at Fratton Park when, manager less, they had looked to be very one dimensional. Today they were a fast moving team with lots of evil ideas.

Brown, realising this, decided to shuffle his pack some and so replaced Straker with Corr, his team formation becoming one of 4 4 2 rather than 4 5 1. As he said after the game, "It could have been anyone who came off, I just had to change things a bit". Accepted, but doing so just five minutes from the break was somewhat odd as it would allow his opposite number time to re plan his own strategy during the break.

However it was a strategic masterpiece as within seconds Corr had laid the ball off to Leonard who, despite being well outside the area, neatly evaded a tackle before letting fly. The ball taking a slight deflection before whizzing past the stranded goalkeeper to put us back on level terms. Lubbly jubbly.

Now it was our turn to celebrate, theirs to support. Only it didn't quite work out that way. Oh, we did our bit ok. Every home stand a wild scene of waving scarves and loud cheering but from the away end, not a peep. Sadly it seems that Portsmouth are indeed still a 'big' club in that their supporters only do the 'supporty' thing when times are good. When they turn bad, disassociation becoming the name of the game and in stark contrast to our reaction when we fell BEHIND, they could barely raise the enthusiasm to even watch their side when it was back drawing!

No Blue Belles at halftime much to Rodney's heartfelt expressed disappointment. But given the very inclement conditions, would he have dared bare even a single knee for the cause out there on the pitch? Thankfully the answer to that question was a very firm no. Can you imagine the amount of therapy claims if it had been a yes!

With the wind now behind us, we took the game to Portsmouth right from the restart. Now it was they who were finding it difficult to clear their lines and as we began to claim more and more corners you could see that the pressure was building. Their fans reacted by just snuggling down deeper in their seats and rearranging their collars and scarves against the still spiteful wind. Pompey supporters? Us? What gave you that impression?

We on the other hand were getting right behind our team but, as time ticked on and the conditions eased, it looked as if that second, winning, goal just wasn't going to come. Eastwood replaced Woodrow and Clifford, Atkinson but it made little difference. In fact Pompey had the two best chances during this period of play, wasting both of them by blasting the ball way over the bar when it would have been easier to score. On one famous occasion they even headed the ball out of the ground. Into a headwind of a gale that took some doing!

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A draw then appeared to be on the cards and, on the balance of play, it was probably a fair call. They had had much the better of the first half, we the second. Although as the wind calmed down so the game had become more balanced. The board went up for 4 extra minutes and it looked very much as if both sides had settled for a draw. Useful point, but given the results of other games, it would still see us slipping out of the play off positions. Three would be a much better harvest.

And then, out of a (sic) blue, we had them! The ball had been playing fairly harmlessly wide of the penalty area and in front of the East Stand when suddenly it turned into a missile that simply flew across a packed area and into the far corner of the net! A shout of 'Goal' or more simplistically 'Yes' usually greets such events but on this occasion only one word was on everybody lips' "WOW!".

Wow, what a shot, wow what a beaut of a goal, and wow at such a time! Leonard, who else?, had looked up after receiving the ball from Corr, seen a gap and then gone for it with superb results. Both in terms of execution and timing. Now Portsmouth's fans had an excuse to act stunned. Indeed as so were we, for a glorious moment, too. But then everything erupted as the stands at Roots Hall began a rockin and rolling with every home supporters up on their feet, saluting a simply fantastic shot.

It was a brilliant goal and although Portsmouth had time for just one more, desperate, attack, the final whistle blew soon after. It sent the ground wild all over again. What a Christmas! Seven points out of a possible nine, with two of those games being played away. Rather a good return and better than we have managed over similar festive periods. A good start to 2014 but can we keep it up?

We're currently 4th in a table where only 6 points separate the top seven. If this was the Premiership the media would be wetting its collective knickers. As it is the situation has barely been noted by those with their noses too close to the money. No worries though, the Football League has always been the best league in the world for real football and excitement. And if things continue in this way, come next May we could be getting very excited indeed!

Saturday 4th January 2014
Southend 4 Millwall 1



"Ball number 6 Southend United!!!"

And the looooooong wait that had started at the strange time of 17:30 hours the previous evening was at last over. Our ball had just been drawn out of a bag that many feared would not even contain our name. Ok so we had had home advantage but, playing host to a team, as we did, that was two divisions above us, we should have been so far out our depth that a skeleton crew from the Lusitania were taking us on a deck by deck tour.

Instead, rather than being sunk, we had risen way above our humble, and hopefully temporary, abode in the second division of English Football to rip apart the representatives of the Championship by four glorious goals to their singleton. And it could have been by far more! We had been simply superb.

But just why had, a game, of 90 minutes duration, that kicked off on time at three o'clock in the afternoon not finished until some two and half hours later? Was this some mad cap scheme by FIFA to test the endurance of our players, or well just what?

Patience dear reader. More light will be shone on that subject a little later but, rather than trip over our feet by leaping from one moment of high drama to another; lets instead consider them in sequence. Starting with the arrival of Uncle Albert!

Absent from our previous tournament (His media correspondent suggested a cold, the Thunderbirds suspected too much tipping of a bottle) he was determined to make up for lost time today. Flamboyantly dressed (Mrs A had taken advantage of his 'illness' to iron his jeans. They now looked less like an elephant's backside and more like a cattle grid), he battled his way along the rows of seats until he loomed ominously above the Thunderbirds roost in the West Stand. Then with a cry of 'Look out below' he launched himself deftly into the air; nimbly gaining his seat in one fluid motion. Well that's how his exhausted P.R man would have described it. In actuality, accompanied by enough huffs and puffs to suggest that an ancient steam machine was about to explode, one leg flayed the air before his torso, obeying the rules of gravity, toppled over behind it. Think of it as being a one man avalanche and you've got the rough idea.

Already present in the nest were Mike, The Greens, Trigger and Alan. Trig's was absorbing all the data contained within his match day programme whilst Boycie was paying close attention to the two strangers that were seated directly in front of him. With low brows, bruised knuckles and vacant expressions they were either a fortunate pair of survivors who had just fought their way out of one of Marlene's concert's or they were Millwall supporters!

Accepted that the club would have found it difficult to sift wheat from barley when selling tickets; particularly if an address somewhere along the Essex Rivera was provided. But even so these two looked like they would have had difficulty remembering their names let alone say words with more than one syllable. However as it turned out, Boycie so enjoyed destroying their morale (Our total control of the game also helped) that, even at 3 – 0 down, the natural survival gene that they shared between them preventing them from causing any trouble. Even so Blues ... the West Stand, and indeed the South and even the cockle digesting East should be for home supporters only!

Under a steel coloured sky the teams took to the pitch. The gales of the past few days have subsided to a mere breeze but there was a still a threat of more rain in the air. Perhaps that's why Millwall came out looking like a troop of walking traffic

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cones. Their bright, orange strip should have been accompanied by the distribution of free sunglasses. But in today's overcast, gloomy conditions such largesse on their part wasn't required. But still it went a long way towards explaining why none of their supporters bore any evidence of their club's away strip. Even on the Costa Bravo it would have been considered a tad overstated and in the backstreets of Millwall....

Perhaps they thought that the sartorial style of their kit would blind us to their shortcomings. But straight from kick off we were so far down their throats that the distant gleam of their shirts was a lighting aid. In fact it was one of their defenders who was left 'apparently' seeing brightly coloured stars soon after the game had started following a clash with Corr in which he had come of worst.

Playing up his 'injury' to the full he required 'On the pitch' treatment for a good few minutes before hobbling off onto the touchline where an amazing recovery took place such that he was urgently requesting permission to re-join play just seconds later. Medics, such as the wizard that Millwall's man with the black bag undoubtable was on this evidence, should be forced to join the National Health Service such are their awesome skills with just a bottle of water and a sponge!

As an attempt to break up our flow it failed. But the incident did serve to show how quickly we had placed Millwall on the back foot. Straker first served notice of our intentions by having his shot from the edge of the box blocked by the goal keeper's legs. The ball ran to Timlin who blasted it straight back only to see it cleared off the line by a very revived defender. The North Bank, full of travelling supporters with a whole two songs in their arsenal, fell silent as a result.

But the excitement wasn't over just yet because the ball rebounded up into the air to where it was met by Corr whose headed effort alas met exactly the same fate as Timlin's; Millwall's captain heading it clear just as the linesman was about to signal goal. Millwall were under a blue cosh and everyone knew it. Their stand in manager, and ex Blue, Harris, must have wished he was sitting on the opposite die of the dugouts.

We were playing some fantastic football; moving the ball around the pitch in almost complete freedom. Millwall's role in the game being reduced to that of only chasing shadows and so it was surely only a matter of time before we scored. But as the minutes ticked by and our supremacy grew the time to score was now! Allow the game to go on just a little longer and surely Millwall would come to realise that whilst we had plenty of skill, we lacked teeth!

Then John White put in a tremendous cross from the right into the area and Corr, soaring like a bird, rose to meet it before firmly planting the ball home with a well-directed header. The Hall simply exploded as the entire team, bar the stranded and unemployed Bentley, ran to the touchline in celebration. The play leading up the goal had been a pleasure to watch and its finish accomplished with some style. So now we were all having a party!

Asking if Millwall's heads dropped was akin to enquiring if Marlene shaved her tonsil's with sandpaper. They were down and out, as sad and poor a team as have visited Roots Hall in a long, long time. Colchester in orange, they had nothing to offer and, but for their goalkeeper they would have almost immediately been two down but somehow he managed to save a tremendous shot from Atkinson. We were the torch and Millwall the bonfire!

Then, just after a Blues corner had ended with the award of a goal kick, the floodlight in the corner of the ground, at the junction between the West Stand and the North, suddenly went out. It meant that there was shadow in that area of the pitch which extended perhaps 10 or so yards in either direction. However, compared with the fairy lights at Accrington just the week before, we might as well have been on the equator at midday. Nevertheless the referee picked up the ball and left the field. Perhaps he was afraid of ghosts because that's all there was of a chance of Millwall staging a recovery!

As the players desultorily kicked a ball about so the other three lights went out. Now we were down to the standard of Crawley's lighting system. Later it was revealed that all the lights had had to be turned off so that a blown fuse could be replaced. Then, being halogen lights, they had to be allowed to cool down to almost zilch, before having their wicks gradually turned up again. This meant a 15 minute delay in play. But, no one knowing this at the time, player by player left the pitch leaving us fearing another Aldershot whilst the revived Millwall fans behind the goal began celebrating their apparent escape. The two mutts in front of us didn't say a word. Boycie did though!

After a while Blues returned to the field and began warming up ; just as if no play had yet taken place. Buried deep in their changing room Millwall were being told the time of day by their manager (It was 15:26) whilst also discussing a change of tactics. Carry on the way they were and they were surely looking at being at the wrong end of an Aussie test score!

Sure enough, once play resumed they came up us much stronger. It was only a gust in the wind though and we soon had them retreating like dogs back into their kennel. They simply had no answer to our inspired midfield, every blue of which was playing out of his skin. Millwall had been obviously been told to stay close to Corr. Much good that had done them! And that left plenty of room for our midfielders to turn into snipers. If Timlin wasn't warming the goalkeeper's hands, then Atkinson or Leonard or Clifford was. It was becoming a turkey shoot!

By now the heavens had opened and Millwall were not enjoying their day trip to the seaside one little bit. Then life got even worse for them as one of their forwards received a straight red card after stamping down on Coker's foot after the Blues defender had beaten him to the ball. The fact that Coker was attacked right over the other side of the field from his usual berth will tell you volumes about how each and every Southend player was supporting his teammates. In comparison Millwall weren't even exchanging tweets!

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What a first half! Blues in total control of a game in which they should have been second best; a fantastic team goal finished off by Corr; floodlight failure and now a sending off. Then it got even better as Millwall, pushing up into our half got caught out by some sublime passing and an even better finish.

Timlin, on the ball, inside his own half, centre of field and about 10 yards short of the centre circle played a pass to Corr who, on the centre spot, marked by two players, his back to goal, twisted to his left playing one touch football to place the ball straight into the path of Atkinson, in front of the East Stand and inside his own half. The Blues midfielder urged on by a home crowd that to a man were up on their feet, charged towards goal, chased by two desperate, and gasping, defenders. Then, just as he reached the centre of the pitch, about a yard out from the penalty area, he appeared to run out of steam. This ploy encouraged the goalkeeper to rush off his line, leaving him vulnerable to one of the neatest executed chips that you will ever see. The roof simply blew off Roots Hall!

Just days before we had witnessed what we were all sure would be the goal of the season in the last minute of the game against Portsmouth. Now it had a challenger and just what a superb, fantastic goal it was. Atkinson had kept his cool and was now in front of the dugouts celebrating with his teammates and his manager. The home crowd who were going absolutely berserk. Millwall just looked to the heavens.

The houses of Westminster are more traditionally the location for the discussion and debate of split opinions. But no Lord or Lady was the equal of either of the leaders of the disputing parties within the Thunderbirds nest during the break. Boycie 'Eoyore' Green was dismally forecasting a scenario whereby a penalty, arising from a challenge by our goalkeeper that resulted in his sending off, put Millwall back in the game whilst Mike 'The Fonz is cool but Mike is ice!' was eagerly anticipating our third or perhaps fourth goal. Viva la difference!

With half the occupants of Battersea dogs home, accompanied by Felix and all his mates still falling from the sky, the second half was kicked off by Millwall; now attacking the goal behind which those of their supporters who hadn't already abandoned ship, sat or rather stood. The football authorities are said to be considering allowing terracing back into grounds. On this matter, certainly no other, Millwall were ahead of the game.

Just as after the earlier restart, following the floodlight failure, Millwall charged forward into the attack. And, just as in the 1st half, we stood firm, took stock, and then tore them to pieces again! White reminding them of our intent, shook the bar with a header and Timlin went close with a low drive. The scoreboard was twitching but no updates were available just yet.

Then its operator was cheerfully typing out 'Goal!!' as a cross from White got beaten away only to fall to the foot of Timlin who, having already had two attempts that set his sights, hammered the ball home to send the home crowd delirious and Blues three goals up. Disco dances were breaking out everywhere!

Save in the North Bank, which by now had a very deserted look to it. Therefore there were only a few away supporters around to witness Millwall get a goal back. A cross into the area being met by a neat shot to 'theoretically' put the visitors back in play. It was nothing more than notional because although for once Blues had lost concentration, now it was back and Leonard was testing their goalkeeping with a long range effort. Unfortunately he proved up to it, just! The ball bouncing for quite some time after the ball had been pushed up onto it.

Corr then almost doubled his tally but was dismayed to see his positioned header rebound the wrong way from the inside of the post. We were knocking and Millwall's straw house was beginning to tumble. Like wolves at the door we harassed and chased them all over the pitch. Our one man advantage seemingly three or four. They just didn't know what to do and the game could quite easily have being a rout.

As it was we had to settle for just one more goal. That man Leonard scoring his third in two games. And it was almost a repeat of his last. Corr again the supplier, nodding the ball down into his path before our young midfielder pulled back his foot and release the trigger from just outside the area. 4 – 1 and with the Millwall supporters exiting stage right faster than the rain was now falling it was time to call it a day. Some two and a half hours after the match had stated. Injuries and the broken fuse adding almost 20 minutes to actual game time.

And play time it had been for us. Four glorious goals which now hopefully meant a dream of a 4th round tie. Just who it would be against was now being decided. But wouldn't it be nice to finally draw Arsenal, the only team that we have never played. A bit like Man Utd really ... and we all know how that turned out!

Come on you Blues !!

10th January 2014