

Tykes sunk without trace...

After eight years of gloom and despondency at Kenilworth Road the Hatters were finally on the way back to the top following the clinching of the Division Four title, in glorious style, in 1968.

Rarely had there been such an upsurge of interest in all matters Luton Town that summer, as everyone keenly anticipated another championship winning season of attacking football.

Season ticket sales were at record levels and because of this the Town were able to splash out on big money signings Mike Harrison from Plymouth, Laurie Sheffield from Oldham and Brian Lewis from Coventry.

A crowd of 6,659 turned out to watch the new look side pulverise Oxford from Division Two 3-0 at Kenilworth Road in a pre-season friendly and a good number of Hatters fans travelled to Norwich to see a 2-2 draw against another Second Division outfit.

Whoever the Town were to face on the opening day of the 1968-69 season were in for a torrid time with Oldham the unlucky fall guys.

Bright sunshine, a 14,747 crowd, new supporter Eric Morecambe and

Luton 5 Barnsley 1, 28-8-1968

LUTON: Read, Dougan, Jardine (Moore), Allen, Branston, Slough, French, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Harrison.

BARNSEY: Arblaster, Murphy, Booth, Bettany, Howard, Brookes, Earnshaw, Evans, Robson, Bradbury, Hamstead.

scintillating football left the Latics chasing shadows long before the end with the Hatters winning the game at a canter 4-0.

Next up were local rivals Watford in a League Cup clash at Kenilworth Road with over 20,000 seeing the Town storm to a 3-0 victory in a bone-jarring contest that produced a foul every two minutes.

A long trip to Barrow produced a point in a dour 0-0 draw before it was back to a Kenilworth Road, swathed in sunshine once more, for the visit of newly relegated Rotherham.

Tommy Docherty's Millers, who boasted future England centre-half Dave Watson, had no answer to the Town's own future international Bruce Rioch who blasted home a couple of piledrivers in an emphatic 3-1 victory to push Hatters up to the top of the table.

Conditions were altogether different four days later when Barnsley came to



HAPPY HATTERS: Luton Town line up at the start of the 1968-69 season. Back row, left-to-right: McDerment, Slough, Dougan, Taylor, Read, Branston, Jardine and Moore. Front row, left-to-right: Allen, French, Lewis, Sheffield, Rioch, Whittaker and Harrison

Luton as the next potential lambs to the slaughter. On a wet night, the game still attracted almost 18,000 to Kenilworth Road who saw Barnsley, who had accompanied the Town from Division Four the previous season, take the contest by the scruff of the neck and pile into the Hatters.

Playing fast, clever football on the greasy surface, Barnsley left the Town chasing the game for once and went close on several occasions before Rioch took control.

Picking up the ball 15 yards in his own half, Rioch accelerated through the Barnsley defence, beat four men en-route and crashed the ball home in full flight. "Rioch for England" chanted the crowd little knowing that he would eventually skipper Scotland!

In the 29th minute, captain Terry Branston headed home a Graham French corner and five minutes later Lewis nodded number three.

The Barnsley players could not believe that after being the better side

for 30 minutes they were suddenly three goals down.

The Tykes gained the consolation they deserved just after the interval but the Town soon worked up a head of steam once more with Lewis smashing home a free kick and then Keith Allen bringing the house down with a screamer into the top corner from the edge of the area to make it 5-1 to the table-toppers.

It was certainly a great time to be a Luton Town supporter!