

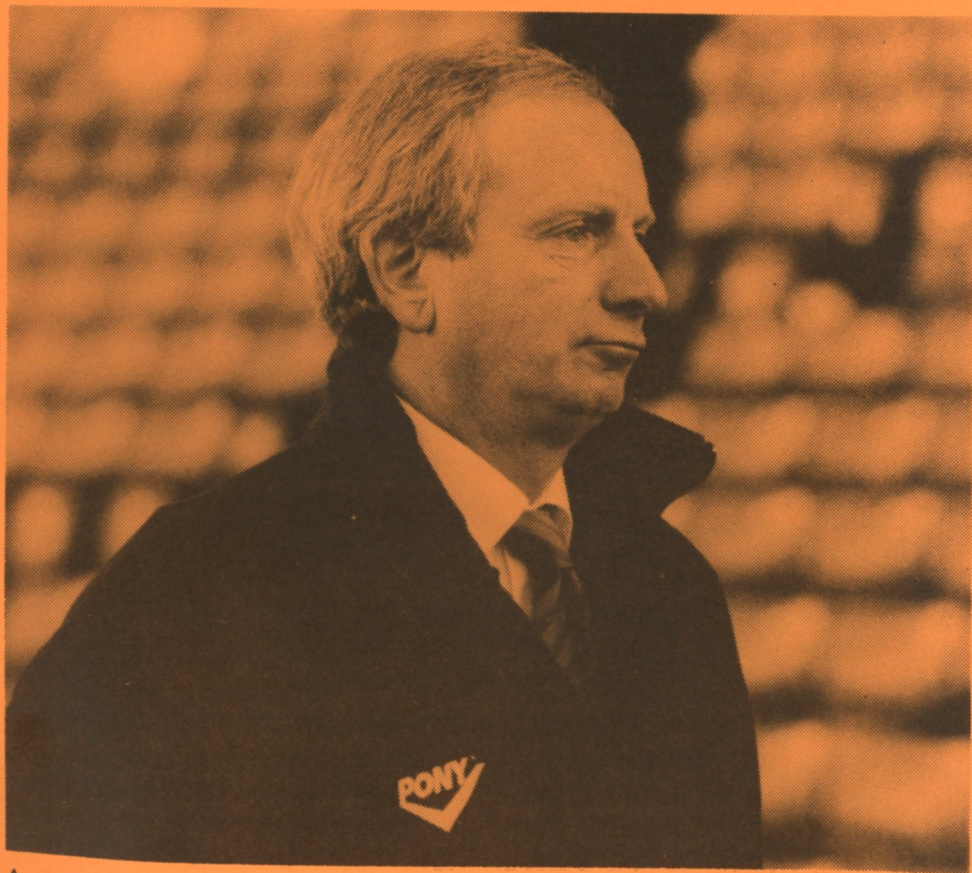
MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

Issue 38

Jan 97

Happy New Year, Mr Lawrence



A year ago a postponement at Palace left Lennie pondering the lack of teams below Town. With a bit of luck he's now pondering the lack of teams above us.

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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SPORTSPAGES, Caxton Walk, 94-96 Charing Cross Road, London WC2.
BRICKLAYERS ARMS, High Town Road, Luton.
THE CLUB SHOP, Luton Town FC, Kenilworth Road, Luton,
THE LUTON TOWN SHOP at ASDA, Wigmore Lane, Luton.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is available on subscription at £5.50 for the next seven issues (overseas surface mail £6.75, air mail rates available on request) from the usual address. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

EDITORIAL

OK, let's own up. We've criticised Lennie for not making the wholesale changes promised last summer, we've criticised the players for lacking professionalism, and we've praised them for giving their best in the cup rather than in the league. But now it's all coming good, and although we're not top of the division going into Christmas, we could well be back there by the time you read this. Even if that is not the case, things seem to be on the right track for a change, and writing an editorial suddenly becomes very hard work. That's because it's become a habit to moan about something. So, for want of anything better to whinge about, let's pick on a local figure of prominence.

Sir Graham Bright, MP. Or, as some would refer to him, Graham Shite. Or Graham Dim. Whatever, he is not actually held in the high regard that a popular MP would be. And his activities over the last couple of years have been little short of scandalous. It was perhaps reasonable for him to encourage the Secretary of State to call a public enquiry for the KohlerDome proposals, but since then he seems to have gone out of his way to interfere with the normal processes. Feeding information to opposition groups, releasing supposedly confidential communications with other ministers and "representing his constituents" in opposing the KohlerDome. Even though he failed to notice that the vast majority of the local population actually favour both the site and the scheme, he still opposed it. And all the while, it turns out, he is working on the side for Safeway, who are widely held to be the company who would run the supermarket under the Wyncote proposal.

Maybe it is true that Safeway hadn't told him about their interest, but an intelligent man should have realised that with a supermarket as part of the Wyncote proposal, he should have declared his interest anyway. Why he has made so much effort to get involved we will probably never know, and after the general election we may well not care. With his seat amongst the most marginal in the country held by the Conservatives, it will need a major turnaround in the polls for him to have any chance of representing the area for much longer. And to Luton Town fans voting in Luton South, it is tempting to suggest that you shouldn't vote for him. But keeping clear of getting that involved in politics, let's just say that you will soon have the opportunity to let Sir Graham know what you think of him. And whatever else we may or may not know about him, we do know he's no friend of Luton Town Football Club.

In closing, we hope you all had a good Christmas and we would like to wish you a very happy New Year, unless you happen to be Sir Graham Bright or Watford fans. To you a year of huge disappointment.

The Boring Old Fart and the Spirit of Christmas Past

December 1936

Does this sound familiar?

"What does rasp, however, is the fact that we are not getting points away from home as readily as a promotion side should"

Crusader, from the *Luton News*, December 1936.

There appeared to be concern at the lack of spirit, the attack was disappointing and one or two players needed a rest!

There were worries at the Luton Welsh choir influencing the result of the Cardiff cup match in January and a letter moaning at 15p tickets being an outrageous price (3 bob (or 3/-) to us oldies. But promotion was in the air.

December 1946

Notts County were thrashed 6-0 and Hughie Billington banged in 5 goals (I remember it well) including a second half "hat-trick". You had to score three goals in succession for it to be a proper hat-trick in those days, and assists were unknown. There were nearly 22,000 at the match.

For the coming cup match with Swansea all the reserved stand seats were sold out by 9.30 on the Wednesday morning.

December 1956

Old familiar story of no punch in the forward line as Town went down 1-0 to Sunderland at Roker courtesy of a Sid Owen toe-poke past Bernard Streten. Apparently the passing was of a mediocre standard because of the white ball!! Luton hadn't a clue, according to the *Empire News*.

Town were due to play Aston Villa in the Cup. The kick-off was at 2.15, you needed no tickets for the Kenny and it would have cost you two bob (10p).

December 1966

Town beat Chesterfield 3-2 in appalling conditions as a 19 year old Bruce Rioch cracked in a couple as Master Pleat supplied the passes and was complimented on his work rate. 5,096 were there to see it. And so (*skipping 76 and 86? Ed*) to:—

December 1996

Town 6 Crewe 0. Glory be, the Town begin to show cohesion, spirit and power, all at the same time, as the BOF got his Christmas present early. Although Crewe could not compete with first 10, and then 9 men, the determination was very encouraging for a promotion push. But, as in '36, away matches demand positive results. Let's hope they can do it.

The Boring Old Fart

Football Wizardry

It seems light years since I put pen to paper and had a good old whinge about the Town — yet records show that it is only back in issue 36 of *Mad* that I was condemning Davis and Co for their lack of passion and professionalism, and pointing out that Spider and Marvin would be more at home in a Danny Baker cock-up video than on any self respecting end of season Luton video.

Since writing said article, even I must put my hands up and admit that with hindsight (what a wonderful contraption that is), maybe I was a tad harsh. Long gone are the days when we propped up the league and looked up to the mighty Yorks and Shrewsburys of this world, to be replaced by days where we can actually look forward to matchdays and down at Watford (this was written 18/11/96 and by the time of printing I sincerely hope the scum are contemplating launching a relegation battle). Premiership giants (?) are swept away by a tide of attacking football, and even Marvin doesn't look very, very crap, just very crap.

People may point to a number of factors bringing about this upturn in form — maybe the defensive reshuffle after the Bristol City match, maybe the confidence a few wins has instilled, maybe Thorpe's new found goalscoring prowess or Lennie's tactics on and off the pitch. However, these suggestions pale into insignificance beside the real reason behind the turnabout — me no longer using my Luton mug to drink tea from on matchdays.

Back in 1990, on the day of that miraculous escape from relegation at Derby, before leaving for the match I expressly made the point of drinking a lucky cup of tea from my Luton mug. Obviously, with that cuppa being the instigator in us staying up, I continued in having my lucky Luton mug of tea every matchday the following season, again seeing Luton beat Derby on the last day of the season to stay up. With the minor blip of relegation getting in the way in 1992, I carried on with my routine until relegation last season. A lot of soul searching and deliberation took place during this pre-season, the outcome of which saw me give the old Luton mug (complete with round emblem and part of a matching set until the other got smashed during the 1992/3 season) one last chance.

However, the disastrous start to the season nearly saw it get sent for an early bath in the dishwasher as soon as the Burnley match, and the next two matches finally saw the mug get the axe, with the Bristol City game being its last in charge — it could hardly grumble, it had been given even more of a chance than Westley.

The following match against Rotherham saw the mug banished to the back of

the cupboard, and having won that game has been avoided like the plague on matchdays. Since this change in tactics, there's been no stopping us and I feel like a Luton mug on matchdays (in more ways than one!).

It therefore appears that I have pulled off a stroke of genius for the Town this season, although I have to admit that the scum equalising against us was my fault.

Last season, with the Town winning 1-0 at the pigsty, I made an educated decision not to put my Luton hat on my head for the remaining 20 minutes as luck had been going our way with the hat in my inside pocket — then came Peakie's brainstorm and the Watford equaliser. So, this season I went to the match knowing exactly what had to be done — I was to put my hat on my head when we went 1-0 up. It wasn't until the bedlam of Showler scoring had died down that I scrambled to take my hat out of my inside pocket that I realised that I'd left it in the car. From then on I'm afraid the result was a foregone conclusion despite the fact that the bastards should've been four down by the time the prediction became reality.

I would also like to take this opportunity to apologise to those people who stood on the terrace at Reading the other Boxing Day when, whilst watching a piss boring 0-0 draw, I had to be the one to point out the fact that at least it wasn't raining — only for it to start coming down buckets. Move over Mystic Meg and make way for Liability Led.

Led

THE WIMBLEDON REPLAY ~ A BUM DEAL!



Half Term Reports

Ian Feuer

Showing outstanding form once more this season which, by all accounts, does more harm than good for us. It has been said that if we were to be offered anything like £1 million, then the club would have to seriously consider it. Bollocks, cos' that makes Jurgen Sommer worth about £100,000. Many people (not only Luton followers) say he's the best keeper in the Nationwide League. More of a crowd pleaser than that allegedly cheating bastard Grobelaar.

Julian James

Fairly solid for the first half of the season, but still has an uncanny habit of getting caught out of position, or being skinned by the occasional more adept winger. His timely challenges are still evident, as are his effort and application. Deserved testimonial in pre-season and scored a cracker of a goal at Bournemouth. Shame we lost really.

Mitchell Thomas

Despite at times being labelled the club's donkey, I believe that a lot of the criticism is a little unjust, especially on his efforts this term. Looks solid at the back, and his willingness to go forward down the flank and link up with Hughsie has always been evident. Wins most tackles, and most of the aerial stuff, and pulled off a brilliant save against Plymouth in that 3-3 draw. Pity it was termed a professional foul, and followed by a red card then.....

Steve Davis

At present, having another outstanding season for us. Lost the captain's armband and that extra burden upon him. Has been Man of the Match in a fair few games this season, none more than the cup tie at home to Wimbledon, when he just missed out on a new mountain bike, Alexander riding off with it instead. Commanding at the heart of defence, never shirks a challenge, and wins all the headers. Makes up for what he lacks in pace by scoring a few goals. Keep it going, Stevo.

Gary Waddock

Consistently performing for us this season, Gazza's contribution to the team this year has been exceptional. Has taken over as team captain, based on his fiery determination to succeed. Never more at home than when the tackles are flying in, he always seems to be enjoying his football, often smiling to the dugout, or more often than not, his marker who he's just kicked ten bottles of shit out of just to regain possession. Good old lad. Just like Peakie a couple of seasons back, playing the best football of his career — late in his career.

Graham Alexander

When he first arrived at the club last season, he was far from Alexander the

Great. More like the Great Twat. But it's amazing what a year can do, and the boy's been another consistent performer this season, and an asset. His set plays have now improved the team's chances of scoring from set pieces, but is still due a goal (*He was - Ed*). Looking more and more like Noel Gallagher from Oasis everyday with that hairdo. Let's just pray he doesn't end up on drugs and running off with Patsy Kensit. Oh, you mean he already has?!

Ceri Hughes

Is now performing well enough, consistently, to be gaining recognition from the bigger clubs where, he has made no secret, he wants to go. It's always been his consistency which has let him down (and the odd red card or two), but his temper now seems (touch wood) to have been curbed, and twice already this season (particularly at Plymouth) he has been seen separating potential rucks. Still the biggest Hughes who's ever played for Wales.

Tony Thorpe

Without doubt, the most skilful and creatively inventive player at the Town. I remember when he scored that 30 yarder at Newcastle in the cup a few years back, David Pleat mentioned that he had "similar touches to Beardsley". Now, nearly three years on, it's easy to see why. Able to conjure up situations at any point, his ball control is often mesmerising, leaving embarrassed defenders on the floor. A very clever player, and also leads the division's charts (4/12/96). Prettier face than Beardsley.

David Oldfield

Out of action for the last month or so with a hamstringing injury, Skippy's form so far this season has also been promising. Willing to run all day and one of the best players at holding the ball up and bringing others into play. Has good strength and a clever brain on him. Chips in with a goal in four games, and adds that competition for places up front that we've not had for ages. Varies the attacking options. Another who needs to continue his efforts.

Others

Showler needs to get involved a bit more and get stuck in. Guentchev needs to stop running around at 130 mph when the ball's nowhere near him. He also needs to get better..... As I write Marshall's only been in for four games, but scored five goals, need I say more. McLaren does a steady job, still learning and perhaps needs a little more decisiveness in the tackle. Kim Grant needs to lose weight quickly, as he doesn't look at all sharp. Stuart Douglas needs more composure in front of goal, but Fotiadis looks most promising, with the pace and strength he adds to the side — if he's not injured.

Overall, a satisfying start to the season, but as only Lennie and his squad know too well, it's where the Town are positioned on May 3rd which is how they'll all be properly judged.

Tony Allbones

Look to the future

I firmly believe that Lennie Lawrence is the best thing to happen to Luton Town for about 20 years (even though I don't go back that far). He is honest, hard working, vastly experienced in professional football and has earned the respect of most supporters by not mincing his words.

- I think he should be offered a ten year contract.
- His objective should be to lead us back into the Premiership for the start of the new century.
- It should be his responsibility to set up and maintain a high quality youth system from ten year olds to seventeen year olds.
- Also, he should bring back Mick Harford as a coach with a view to Mick taking over as first team coach at the end of the 2000/01 season, with Lennie then moving upstairs to the role of Chief Executive dealing with negotiations for incoming and outgoing transfers and existing player's contracts.

Making an appointment like this would provide the club with a sense of stability after constant chopping and changing and in-fighting within the club the last seven or eight years and it would have everyone pulling in the same direction.

In an ideal world, this is how I would like Luton's future to go:

1996/97	Champions of Division Two.
1997/98	Consolidation of Division One status.
1998/99	Improve squad and finish higher.
1999/2000	Promotion to the Premiership as Division One Champions.
August 2000	Opening game of first season in Premiership inside the Whitbread Dome.

The King of Wishful Thinking

ON THE MOVE

Mad as a Hatter! (or at least, the Editor) will be off to a new address in the next week or two, but at the time of going to print we don't have a definite date for this historic (?) event. So, in the meantime, please send anything and everything for the fanzine to what will hopefully soon be the old address, as printed on page 2. We'll pay, and rely on, the Royal Mail (a fine bunch of chaps) to ensure that it all gets redirected. And, with a bit of luck, we'll be able to reveal the new address to you in issue 39. The phone number on page 2 may still be used, as it is going with the editor to his new abode.

All football fans will know by now about the terrible plight of Brighton & Hove Albion and our fight to save our club.

Thanks for all the messages of support we've received!

But there's something you can do which will really help our campaign - by hitting 'chairman' William Archer in the only place he cares about...HIS POCKET.

Archer is a major director of Focus D.I.Y., the well-known home improvements chain.

BOYCOTT FOCUS D.I.Y.!

Ask your friends, families, and work colleagues to join this campaign - and if they say they're not interested in football, tell them this isn't just about football, it's about popular culture being destroyed by an absentee imposter whose total financial investment in our club amounts to...£56.25.

We need William Archer out of our lives to save our club. With your help, we can force Archer to the point where he needs us out of his life so he can stay in business.

Please support us! ARCHER OUT!

Attila The Stockbroker (John Baine)

Founder, Brighton Independent Supporters' Association

**BOYCOTT
FOCUS D.I.Y.!**



He's back! Dwight Marshall (above) gets in a tussle with a Crewe defender who seems to bear a resemblance to Frank Skinner.
Below, is that Paul Showler showing of his muscular (?) frame?



The Great Striker Debate

With a consistent defence of James, Thomas, Davis and Johnson and a consistent midfield of Waddock, Alexander, Hughes and Showler it seems the only places really up for grabs have been the two who play up front. Many combinations have been tried but few have actually worked, with goals coming more from midfield or individual efforts rather than a great striking partnership. Let us then look at the contenders for the number 9 and number 10 shirts.

Kim Grant

Despite scoring a few goals during his spell at Kenilworth Road he does spend some games ambling around the park wishing he were somewhere else. A bit too up and down to command a regular first team place, he lets himself down with his inability to pass accurately and his wayward shooting. Considering his international status and his £1/4 million price tag you can't help but end up thinking there's more to him.

John Taylor

John looked a semi-useful player early last season but was never even a shadow of his former self post-operation. Having a centre forward who hadn't scored even one league goal surely made us a laughing stock. With so much competition from the youngsters and with Marshall back to full fitness the time has come to let him go and play first team football where his skills will be appreciated, wherever that may be (*Colchester, perhaps*).

Andrew Fotiadis

Young, enthusiastic and talented, he is surely a great hope for the future. Sadly injured after his confidence boosting first goal, he claimed a permanent first team place earlier this season and showed more pride and determination than Kim Grant ever would. He's only young and let's not expect too much too soon. Perseverance permitting, we may have a key to future glories. We can but hope.

Stuart Douglas

Once again no shortage of youth or enthusiasm. However, composure in front of goal has sometimes been lacking through his over anxiety to score. With recent injury problems he has been getting a decent run out, although his poor goals per chance ratio won't have done his future cause any good. With such speed and determination you can't help but be on his side, but if your head ruled your heart he wouldn't be in the starting line-up just yet.

Tony Thorpe

Already Tony is close to overtaking Dwight's top performance over the past couple of years. Surely a twenty goal a season man if we can hang on to him,

his skill in and around the box have been a revelation this year. When you bear in mind the games he missed through suspension and the games he started on the bench, you realise just what his tally could have been by now. A first choice every time, so let's not sell him to the likes of QPR, or we won't get back up at the first attempt.

David Oldfield

A dramatic improvement on his poor start last season, he has been a useful asset up front. His pace and determination are an example to the team and he is certainly in contention now Dwight has returned. Began the season as top scorer but injuries have curtailed further additions to his total. His ball skills can let him down, but overall well suited to Division Two football.

Liam George

Youngest of all the new wave of teenagers, Liam looks destined for the greatest glory. So far, he has shown no sign of nerves as he has made the step from youth team to reserves look easy. Three goals from three reserve appearances put him on the verge of senior selection, although Lennie may be keen to withhold one of his greater assets for the time being. If top players once again leave the club through financial difficulties, then it gives me at least some hope that players of Liam's standard are progressing through the ranks.

Dwight Marshall

The man himself, the one player to have consistently proved himself to be an out and out striker. His injury last season was the final nail in the relegation coffin. He's not getting any younger, but until I'm proved otherwise he remains the best we've got. If he and Thorpe link up and really get going, we really will be in with a chance of going up at the first attempt. As the crowd sings, there really is only one Dwight Marshall.

Jamie Woodsford

Very much the same comments as the other youngsters, although his miss during the Slip End benefit match will do his selection chances no good! Made a decent sub appearance in last years Anglo-Italian match but since then has found himself at the back of the queue. With the likes of Fotiadis, George and Douglas around he may be forced elsewhere if he is to play regular first team football.

So there you have it. The long term future looks rosy and so does the short term, so long as our friend Mr Kohler doesn't get panicked into buying (*eh?*). Now at last we can build on our usually solid back four and win the matches that will make this our promotion year.

Ian A.

SHORT CUTS

By JACK DONNELLY
Blackpool 1 Watford 1

WATFORD bore all
Tell us something new!

1987
It's October, and the big football story in the paper is the call-up of Tottenham defender Mitchell Thomas to the England squad. Yup, it really happened. David Backham has other things on his mind. Was Spider ever really that good?

ACCORDING to Radio 5's Jane Garvey, Bulgaria frightened their opposition, though not with intimidatory tactics of old. "They all had faces only their mother's could love," she reckoned.

A tad harsh on Bontcho, perhaps.

But it was to be the year of the underdog. The crazy gang beat Liverpool 1-0 and the mad Hatters pulled off their heroic victory on April 24 1988. Brian Stein scored first for Luton but Arsenal hit back twice and Luton heads began to drop. But when hero keeper Andy Dibble replaced the injured Les Sealey and saved Nigel Winterburn's penalty, things swung back in Luton's favour. Danny Wilson levelled the score and Stein scored his second to seal victory for Town with virtually the last kick of the match.

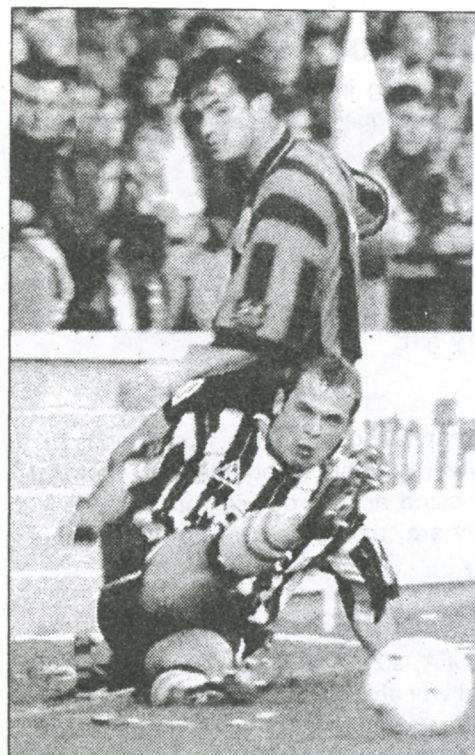
The Watford programme rewrites history. Does Sealey now get a winners medal?

Q. What makes school days happy days?
A. A visit to Watford.

A comment from some of the younger Hatters at the pigsty on October 29th, or just the thoughts of the son of a MiG?

Breathing a sigh of relief, stood. "Some bloke behind the net had been blowing a whistle and did it again," Dave Webb, the Brentford manager, said. "Why else would Kevin have stopped like that?"

Surely Wayne Turner isn't resorting to dirty tricks to bring on Brentford's downfall!



● FEET FIRST: Torquay United's Charlie Oatway beats Graham Alexander to a loose ball during Luton Town's FA Cup win at Plainmoor yesterday.

From the west country *Sunday Independent*, a case of mistaken identity — presumably written by the Torquay United PA announcer!

And this is from Garry Nelson's column in the *Grauniad*. Who? TONY Feuer?

Standing between Torquay United and a bumper slice of fame and high finance were Luton Town. Currently flying high in the division above us, the Hatters would doubtless provide a difficult test.

Initially it was a test the home side looked more than capable of passing. Three stunning saves from Tony Feuer kept Luton in the tie, but as more questions were asked they were the ones with the right answers. Ceri Hughes scored just before half-time and that proved fatal for the gallant Gulls.

And a farewell message from a Wimbledon supporter — with one 'Ha' for every one of their fans!

P.P.S.

Stewart Castledine

after 93 minutes

Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha,

Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha,

Phantom whistler sinks Brentford

Bristol Rovers..... 2
Brentford 1

New in the club shop for 1997

The stunning new oversized scarf, apart from being impractical to the point of being cumbersome, has opened the door for more quality* products in the same line:

Mugs

At last we seem to have got it right; our new ceramic mugs have a classic crest design in strident colours. Without a poncy curved lip — our new line are the classic shape and design. And, if you like tea, you'll love the capacity of our new mugs. They hold up to 4 pints! An ideal novelty gift.

Hats

Is your favourite hat too small for you to wear without looking like a pinhead? Never fear, buy one of our new range of hats (available in bobble, ski, flat and Luton/Celtic), designed to fit a Happy Harry sized head. Too big for a tea cosy, not big enough for a sleeping bag. In fact they are, to the best of our knowledge, totally useless. An ideal novelty gift.

Football Keyrings

Our new football key fobs are attached to a FIFA, size and weight approved, ball. You'll be unlikely to lose your keys — and totally unable to store them in a pocket. *Warning: playing football with keys attached may result in cuts, bruises, scuffery and eye loss.* An ideal novelty gift.

*Quality may range from good, fair or poor — depending on supplier and specific batch.

Tim Kingston

SHITEY BRIGHTY MP in SUPERMARKET CHALLENGE!



with acknowledgements to Knockout Fun Book 1952!

"Mad" Merchandise



Have you got one yet? Because Jimmy Ryan hasn't. The new '74 away shirt from Mad as a Hatter! is available now, in wonderful white, blue and orange. Made in England in 100% cotton with an embroidered LTFC 'football' badge, and definitely not a replica of the one modelled in the picture. Already modelled at Town games by a select few, this is now on general release, and can be yours for just £28.95, including post and packing, and comes in two sizes — L & XL.

The home shirt, as pictured, is still available, but now also priced at £28.95.

Another excellent product - Luton News

Please send me a 1974 home/away* shirt. I enclose a cheque for 28.95

Name:..... Size: L/XL*

Address:.....

(*Delete as appropriate)

Cheques payable to Mad as a Hatter!

Send orders to: 292 Icknield Way, Luton, LU3 2JS.

Kenilworth Road Aerial Photo

10"x8" Aerial colour photograph

A visual reminder of the ground's character before the days of the Taylor Report (and before the Kohlerdome?)



ONLY £3.50

Two versions available — new (as above) and old (as in Issue 34). Special price for the pair - £6.00

Please send me the new/old aerial photo. I enclose a cheque for £3.50/6.00

Name:.....

Address:.....
.....
.....

Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Orders to 292 Icknield Way, Luton, LU3 2JS.

HE BANGS THE DRUM

The 12th of November 1996 was a strange night at Kenilworth Road. Supposedly the biggest game for quite a time — floodlit cup tie, top Premiership opposition, the Town having heroically earned the right for a replay. But it wasn't as big a match as it should have been. Most importantly it was against Wimbledon — the one team in the Premiership with zero glamour. Wimbledon have staged, and sustained, their meteoric rise on the back of booting the ball up the field — running and kicking their hearts out, being "crazy" and pissing off opposing teams with their bloody ghetto blaster. Before learning that Vinny Jones was a Watford fan, my feeling towards Wimbledon was torn between contempt and grudging admiration. — never jealousy. Honest. Who'd be a Wimbledon fan..... unless your also into chess, Star Trek and called Nigel? Apart from the Wimbledon effect there was the fact that, for many Town fans, the cup run hadn't yet caught the imagination — especially since hundreds had been priced out of the second leg of the previous round at Derby. Lastly, the Coca Cola Cup, through gross American over commercialisation — which makes Sky TV promotion seem quaint — has made the League Cup competition look decidedly tacky.

In way of a change, we sat in the Kenny that night, a better view in someone else's seat and an atmosphere verging on the lunar. However, one gentleman had decided to do something a little bit special to mark the event. Like a crazy Italian ultra, he'd decided to bring along his big bass drum and lead the Kenilworth Road crowd into a chanting frenzy. The drum sounded "Boom, boom, boom-boom-boom, boom-boom-boom-boom" as loud as thirty sets of clapping hands. And, at first, quite a few supporters felt duty bound to put the name "LUTON" at the end of his solo. However, thankfully, by half way through the first half the response was more muted. Those who continued to join our self appointed Ringo being outnumbered by those requesting he shut his bloody noise up a while. By the second half the drum was being used, somewhat pathetically, to applaud Town moves. Conclusive proof that the Kenilworth End has forgotten how to support the team? Whatever.

What is for sure is that, time and again, the only coherent Town support is to be heard from the Maple Road cheap seats — as the hardy souls sat therein attempt to outsing, and seek fun at the expense of, the away fans (both objectives are obviously easier if we're winning). Last year it was painful. Having to wear that inane grinning "couldn't care less" face as the away fans took the rise, and their teams took the points. Having to respond to "Shit ground, no fans" at each and every match (no change there this year). Occasionally heavy-handed stewards..... (but hey, they're better now — especially as 'Boston' is usually in the Oak Road now, no doubt ringing his

hands in anticipation). But it's not a totally thankless task. No matter how tame an anti-away fan chant may be — ie, "Is that all you take away?" — there is likely to be at least one bloke, usually sat on his own, who will get suddenly and hilariously irate. And the classic impromptu display of last season must have been when Millwall fans were politely applauded en masse, and much to their chagrin, when they sang their melodramatic "No-one likes us" anthem.

But such improvisation is, sadly, very rare. Some recent attempted away fan put downs have been almost shit-witted. Take, for example, "You should've come in a taxi". It worked well at the handful of York fans who bothered to turn up midweek — but against Boreham Wood? There were bloody loads of them. There's an ironic smile or two to be had at the same chant sung at a totally sold-out away end — but at 1000 non-league fans on a big day out? It was embarrassing.

Old songs have set parameters after which everyone shuts up in unison. New chants, nicked from other clubs' supporters are almost all rubbish. Surely the worst has to be "Stand up if you hate the scum" which, though based on safe anti-Watford rhetoric, is surely impossible to carry off with dignity. So, the idea is..... we stand up, because we all hate Watford..... and then, when the song fades, or the stewards and police start looking, sit back down like good boys and girls. What's the point? Why not "If you hate the scum and know it (and really want to show it) stamp your feet"? And, as for "Cheer up Graham Taylor"..... the words don't span. Neither does "Cheer up Kevin Keegan" (which Man Utd fans sing - mostly at the telly), but it's a sad day if we're now taking our lead from the Glory Guys. And it came as a surprise to me to find out that the "stand up" song was ripped off (from the Arsenal/Spurs, I believe) — I thought it was so crap that no-one would try and copy it. The nicking of that dumb chant and the "We beat the scum...." one, also leads me to believe that many Town fans — subconsciously maybe — regard the Luton /Watford rivalry as Arsenal/Spurs little brother, otherwise why do we seem to want to copy them so much. You might realise how sad this idea is when watching Spurs at home on the telly — their doltish fans waving hard at the cameras 'cause they can see their ugly mugs on the big screens behind the goals. Doubtless the screen at Highbury theme park offers the same attraction. Luton fans, pre-Dome anyway, should be under no illusions that they are much closer to traditional football supporters than their glitzy Norf London counterparts.

So, originality please. It is customary to end such an article with two heartfelt, but unquestionably sad, appeals to the crowd to "get behind the lads". Firstly, come on Kenilworth Road — give us a few songs. If not, your

pitiful attempts at "Come on you Hatters" (which can only be heard past the halfway line if the Town have a corner up the Kenny, looking for a winner or equaliser, in the last minute) will continue to earn mocking applause from the Maple Road singers.

And you, self-same mocking singers, get at least one original song worked out — rather than bloody Jive Bunny samples of songs we once sang much louder on the Oak Road terrace, or songs you've heard on the telly. In time honoured tradition, here is the compulsory list of suggested songs (I should also have written a LTFC hymn with eleven verses and a chorus, but didn't have time):

- 1 "Trolley in the Lea" — to the tune of Ferry cross the Mersey.
- 2 The little known Bruce Springsteen out-take "Born in the L&D"
- 3 The Small Faces "Up the wooden hills to Bedfordshire"
- 4 "Ding Dong Merrily on High" with the chorus changed, after singing "Gloria" for two minutes in one breath, to "Mick Harford is ex-Chelsea"
- 5 "Knees up Luton Town" - Haven't heard that one in a long time.... never hurt

Yes, that's what you should be singing..... But, as a fan whose level of support rarely goes much further than a couple of rounds of "Come on Luton" and shouting meself hoarse with solo rants at linesman, it's surely futile — and more than a little sad — to attempt influencing those gallant souls who sing the songs. Maybe I should try and get my hands on a big bass drum.....

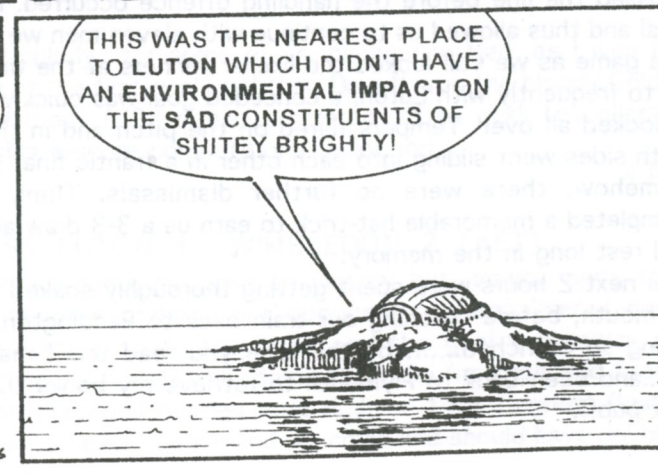
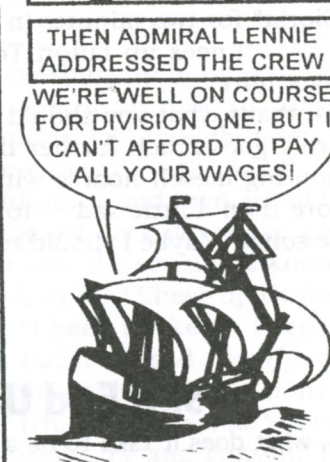
Tim Kingston

Slip End United 0 Luton Town XI 5

So, what does it take to be a die-hard Luton fan? Is it turning out twice a year to see us take on the scum? Is it buying the latest green/black/red/yellow/white (delete as appropriate) kit which Pony has thrust upon us even though we only need two? Or is it standing on a frost bitten village pitch in a blizzard watching the reserves/youth team take on a third rate Sunday league team in a benefit match? Well, if it's the latter then I'm in luck as I was one of the hardened few who turned up to watch the Slip End v Luton match early one Sunday while most reasonable people are laying in bed with the Sunday papers. The match itself offered nothing too spectacular as once the score had got to 3-0 Luton started taking it lightly and shooting from way outside the box (no change there then!). The locals took the match deadly seriously with some screaming touchline instructions but their shouts were to no avail as Ben Chenery scored four goals and even John Moore should have scored (though his miss was nothing compared to that of Jamie Woodsford!). Well done to all those who turned up and I hope that Slip End welcomed the money that we helped to raise.

Ian A

PANTO-TIME WITH BOBBINSON CRUSOE



IN THE FRAME...

Yep, it's looking like relegation is one thing we don't have to contemplate this season, and we're maintaining position for a stab at the promotion places. Just one question — when are the attendances at home games going to start getting better?

As ever, we welcome match reports from readers, which should be sent in to the address on page 2. About 500 words seems best, but remember, size isn't everything!

02.11.96 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 3 TOWN 3

Having completed the longest journey to a league venue this season and wading to the ground as the heavens continued to open, I couldn't help feeling that we were about to witness a rancid 1-0 defeat at rain-soaked and wind-swept Home Park (and all this four days after the demoralising scum equaliser at the ground where injury time lasts until the bastards in yellow score a goal).

Thankfully, due to the elements, we chose to sit but because we were amongst the last in the ground (how unusual!) we were given seats among the Pilgrim's fans, albeit adjacent to the majority of the seated Town contingent. This proved very interesting to say the least, particularly as we then proceeded to witness the most entertaining 90 minutes of the season thus far. Thorpe opened the scoring from an intelligent corner during a first half hour which Town completely dominated. Argyle equalised with a header before half time but Thorpe restored our advantage with a fortuitous goal at the start of the second period. Then the game turned when the man in black awarded Plymouth a penalty after a goalbound effort was handled by Thomas who was therefore dismissed. Luck certainly did not favour the Town as Feuer had clearly been impeded in the move that led to the penalty, and it was widely considered (*not by me — Ed*) that the ball had, in fact, crossed the line before the handling offence occurred. Had the ref awarded the goal and thus allowed us to continue with eleven men we may have gone on to win the game as we still looked the likelier winners at the time. However, as happens all too frequently with Luton, a conceded goal was quickly followed by another and it looked all over. Tempers flared on the pitch and in the seats as players from both sides went sliding into each other in a frantic final 10 minutes during which, somehow, there were no further dismissals. Then, at the death, Thorpe completed a memorable hat-trick to earn us a 3-3 draw and ensure that the game will rest long in the memory.

The next 2 hours were spent getting thoroughly soaked walking between pubs in Plymouth, before catching our train back to Paddington. I don't remember ever being so drenched..... by the time you read this I may finally have dried out (.....and been back to Plymouth to retrieve my books that somebody left in the last pub!).

Steve F.

09.11.96 TOWN 2 NOTTS COUNTY 0

Like Murphy, I'm not bitter!!!

Matchday started early — an 11.00 departure from a cold, but sunny Nottingham, we headed off to take in the smoke filled atmosphere that is the Bedfordshire Yeoman (a twelve o'clock kick-off for England in Georgia promised some alternative pre-match entertainment and a few too many beers). For once I'd managed to con someone else to drive — in this case a Notts County fan — and I was intent on making the most of the day!

The omens were good — Town in the middle of an impressive unbeaten run, County in the middle of a crisis. As it turned out, the Town performance (like England's from the hours before it) was efficient but largely uninspiring. County would have been stuffed, but for an outstanding keeper, Darren Ward, who pulled off a hat-trick of world class saves in the opening six minutes. Two first half goals, one a crisp turn and shot from Thorpe, the other a bizarre 35 yard free kick which everybody left. And that, as they say, was that.

The only real entertainment in the second half came in the form of a civil war amongst the County fans in the Oak! For those of you who live outside of Nottingham, a sizeable contingent of County fans (if that's not a contradiction in terms) has been trying to get rid of Colin Murphy for months now. It's not just that Notts have been struggling (having just missed out on promotion last season), but more to do with the fact that the bloke is a complete dickhead. He makes Westley look positively competent and hasn't got the guts to face his critics.

Anyway, towards the end of the game, it all got too much for the Pies fans and we had the somewhat bizarre sight of fisticuffs between the "Murphy Out" banner wavers and those who wanted to give their team some much needed backing. The stewards and police (like the rest of us) were left completely bemused. Oh Happy days!!!

Pete H — *The Nottingham Hatter*

A very peculiar day. Particularly for some of us involved in Mad, as I won the sweepstake on the scorer of the first goal, and then Dayoff won the bloody Golden Gamble at half time, and then, £527 richer, buggered off to work to collect a further £66 on their Predict-a-score competition. Lucky sod.

K.F.H.

12.11.96 LUCKLESS LUTON 1 WIMBLEDON 2 (AET)

Yet another game where we came so close to victory but, again, injury time seemed to come from nowhere to hand our opponents an equaliser. I don't remember either trainer coming on to the pitch and the goal took away our deserved victory. We began the match well, dominating the first half and took a deserved lead when Dean Blackwell headed past Sullivan from Hughes' floated free kick. A one goal margin is never enough and we could and should have doubled

our lead. However, at the other end Ian Feuer made an excellent save at the feet of Dean Holdsworth. He has kept us in so many games this season and in my view is priceless, if only we would tell the prospective buyers so.

As the second half began, it was obvious the pattern of the first half was going to be reversed and we didn't really help our cause by needlessly giving possession away. They kept trying to put the ball over the top for their forwards to chase, but it was always cut out. However, they eventually got the equaliser four minutes into injury time. Castledine eventually hooking the ball in off the post after a scramble. The Watford game came flooding back all over again. I thought, as we had done at Watford and at Selhurst Park, we done enough to win the game, but we were cheated by referees watches. After they had equalised, I couldn't see us scoring again, our only hope was holding on for penalties. Thorpe's departure, Grant's downturn in form and Showler's illness seemed to be still with him. Our only real hope of a goal was Douglas, Guentchev or Hughes. None of these are recognised goalscorers. With no cutting edge up front, we never released the pressure off the defence. Peter Fear's drive eight minutes into extra time had been coming for a long while. The only real difference between the teams, fitness, began to show. There were supposed to be two divisions difference between, but fitness was the only factor I could see. We should have beaten them away, and should have put the game beyond reach by the end of the first half. As Ian Feuer said to us in the Reading service area after the Bristol City game, Luton are the unluckiest team he has ever played for, and everything seems to be going against us at the moment. We can look back and say we did ourselves proud and still did well knocking out Derby. Luck is supposed to even itself out over the season, and I only hope we get half of what we deserve against the Hornets, and we should win by 4 goals easily.

Jon England

16.11.96 GUARDIAN 0 TOWN 1

The excitement of the 1st round of the FA Cup presented the delights of a day out to the seaside at Torquay, who, at the close of last season, were propping up all four English divisions. The trip to Devon was a nice easy drive. as being an exiled Hatter in Cheltenham, I was already halfway there. At £8 the away end terracing worked out at £1 a step, which made the cost of a seat at the Kenny End almost good value. Though the hundreds of Town fans were graced with a hot bright first half as we squinted directly into the sun. Torquay set out for the early goal, with the Luton defence looking slow and tired after the rigours of the mid-week match against Wimbledon. Ian Feuer produced a brace of cracking saves to keep the scores level before Luton even entered the opposing half. Skelton replacing Spider had an awful start but gradually improved and overall had a fair game. Luton's main problem was the forward line, Douglas isolated and outnumbered as Bontcho and Showler were hand in glove on the left wing. Only when Hughes and Alexander moved up did we pose any real threat, and so it proved just before the break.

Hughes coming from the left drilled a hard low shot through the packed Torquay defence and beyond the keeper. Douglas missed a great chance, after an excellent move, by a whisker which should have settled the game. The second half was a bit of a let down. True, all the decent goal chances came from Luton, but it required the arrival of SuperDwight Marshall to give the travelling hordes of Hatters something to really cheer about. He certainly terrorised the Torquay defence for the rest of the game with his arrival back in the first team. The only other high point of the match came from the tannoy announcer who tried to substitute two Luton players for a couple of Gulls.

Torquay's number 8, the player-coach Garry Nelson, apart from being a successful author, now writes a column in Friday's Guardian sport, which highlighted the fact that he doesn't even read the club programme. Result — he had Tony Feuer in goal!

One final point, the fish and chips were brilliant.

Normski

Clotted Cream again

Without our own Thorpe Guided missile, but Ceri managed to fire an important bullet and the the rumour that he went on to South Wales to celebrate with orange juice is..... well, just that, a rumour.

Anyway, cheers and "yaki da" for making an 8 hour coach journey just a little bit more bearable.

Phil 'orange juice' Darton

19.11.96 PRESTON NORTH END 3 TOWN 2

Very, very few of us got to this one. There was of course plenty of late postponement risk involved, what with the atrocious weather in the midlands. But Preston was just above all that snow.

A pretty poor performance did nothing to warm us on a progressively chilly night. Nor did the catering TABLE situated on the terrace — surely the most basic eatery encountered by Town fans since those trips to Plough Lane. The pies were tasty enough (same make as at Burnley and Bury?), but they were luke warm as there was no oven to keep them in. And no garnish (ketchup) either. I somehow expected more from the Deepdale ground that had looked impressive enough on the box. I was impressed though, with the packed home terrace, which resembled, and sounded after each Preston goal like, the old Trent End at the City Ground. Our sparsely populated pokey-bit-at-the-side was never going to compete. A bit like some of our players.

The Thin Controller

23.11.96 TOWN 2 ROOVARS 1

Gary Waddock. Week in, week out, we shout at him, complaining about his negativity (eg. "Shoot you crab!"). Today he wasn't playing, and the Town looked totally lost — the back four missing the simple trading of passes with Gazza, and

This was the fourth game in the last month in which a goal had been scored after 90 minutes in injury time, and the Town's second in five days (stop leaving early, folks!). It was definitely handball — the only thing in the Rovers player's favour being that he was being distracted by an insect — well, being climbed all over by a 'Spider'. Well, tough! About time WE had some last minute luck. A very coolly taken penalty by Thorpy considering the circumstances — the difference between being 4th and 8th in the table. The Rovers fans must have been as sick as we were down at W*tf**d the other week. Shame.

30.11.96 A TEAM BEGINNING WITH B 3 TOWN 2

After that the Town woke up and took the match to Bournemouth, putting them under continual pressure, and so it was no surprise that the score was levelled. Another free-kick was wasted until the ball was fed to Julian, who produced a shot straight out of the Tony Yeboah manual, leaving the keeper flying through the air as the ball went in off the post. This was more like the real Luton, non stop attack, with a just reward of a second goal just before the break. Showler fed Hughes who supplied a perfect cross from the left for SuperDwight to head in at the near post.

The half-time entertainment was provided by the local boys in yellow. While everyone was enjoying coffee and pies, and watching the sun go down, plod came a-stomping through the away end. Peace and order was destroyed as they got their man, or at least a man in the crowd. No stewards had been involved and all had appeared well, so what was it all about? If one of Mad's crime reporters has inside information, perhaps he will spill the beans on this unhappy episode. Bournemouth now let loose their secret weapon, the floodlight. Was there more than one? I've seen better illumination in Tesco's car park. Scotland would have had the kick-off brought forward to midday, before heading off to the south of France. Clearly the lack of light hindered the Luton team, as the dark shirted Cherries seemed to roam around the pitch completely at will. For over half an hour there was only the home goalkeeper at our end, as the Town goal came under continual assault. Finally, it cracked, and then fell to pieces as Bournemouth won the aerial battle and bundled two goals in as many minutes. A spate of substitutions did little to alter the play until the Town made a last gasp do or die

03.12.96 TOWN 2 YORK CITY 0

I've had more entertainment watching a certain NHC Division 6 football match at a wet and windy Stockwood Park than I had watching this game. The first half was awful, and the second half only improved because we scored two good goals in it. Marshall hit his third in three starts after Thorpe's effort had been parried, and Thorpe sealed the points on 70 as he met Showler's cross. Woeful performance, but up to fourth in the table. Not much else to say really.

07.12.96 TOWN 2 BOREHAM WOOD 1

K.F.H.

10.12.96 TOWN 2 LEYTON ORIENT 1

This was the sort of match you go to if you've been starved of football due to being unable to get to all the away games the side are playing. Which makes it all the more astonishing that as many as 1,500 turned up for this, in the middle of a run of four HOME matches. Personally, I went for the £5 seats (and bugger Frank Warren) and still wondered, for much of the match, why I had bothered. The cheering when Grant scored the winner wasn't just happiness, it was relief that the game wasn't going to drag on into extra time. Grant, incidentally, put up with a lot of stick during the game and answered his critics in the best way possible. Lennie had said before the game that there was money to be made if you got to the final, and that's probably right, but at least few Town fans will be complaining at a trip to Northampton in the next round.

K.F.H.

14.12.96 TOWN 6 CREWE ALEXANDRA 0

Just what we've been waiting for. For weeks the Town have been winning games by the odd goal or two, and threatening, if everything came together, to give someone a thrashing. And this was the day it all came together. The perfect start with Alexander knocking in the first after only 2 minutes, and the game sewn up on the half hour when Thorpe netted his second with a penalty. The second half was just played for fun, and to be fair to Crewe they didn't shut up shop after two players had been sent off, although they probably don't know how to. The second sending off was indisputable, but it did come as a surprise that the hideous foul on Thorpe warranted a second yellow card and not a red in it's own right. In the end the result was superb, but really it wouldn't have been an injustice if the Town had scored another couple, and the six would probably have been scored even against eleven men.

Ken Ross

18.12.96 MILLWALL 0 TOWN 1

On top of the world! Happiness is going top of the table, and doing it with a last minute goal is even better. The only downer was having to wait to celebrate after the game, until a safe distance from the ground.

The first half of the game was pretty scrappy and disappointing, but the second was better and the Town just about had the better of it. The best chance of that half had fallen to Julian James, whose shot struck the post, but the time that Guentchev was allowed to do bugger all suggested that Lennie was settling for the draw. Even so, it seemed to be drifting off into a goalless draw when Ceri struck the ball and, seemingly in slow motion, it made it's way into the net, sending the assembled throng of Hatters fans into raptures of joy.

Although the crowd was disappointing for a top of the table clash, and the Town following might have been better, there still seems to be a tendency for people to pick out odd games to attend. The bloke near me was typical. The 'Banana Milk Shake' man, he spent much of the first half venting his spleen at assorted Town players, apparently expecting to be watching a team of world beaters. This sort of thing is OK from the regular supporters, but not from occasionals, and this guy gave himself away as that. On the chant of "Stand up if you hate the scum" he commented to his companion that "it might be a bit risky calling this lot [ie. Millwall] the scum." Ah, good, a Town supporter who doesn't realise that the scum are a team from south-west Hertfordshire. Dedicated or what? What must he have made of the abuse directed at Lavin during the second half?

Still, top of the table and the first time we have led any division for fourteen years, most of which have been spent struggling against relegation. What a great feeling it was to wake up the following morning with a huge smile to go with the hangover. This is what football is all about for supporters, and why a year ago we were chanting "Westley out." Top of the league, eh. Now let's stay there.

Flogs a Dead Horse

Half Time

Picture the scene. It's half time. We're strolling to victory. What can make the seemingly lengthening half time interval pass that bit quicker? Count the away support? (57 I think, but the flow to the refreshments put me off) I could leer at the gorgeous Miss Leather — but I've done that for the last couple of games since she's become a redhead (it's true what they say about them). Hold on a minute. Yes, activity. It's the half time kids penalty competition returning after a break. What draws me to this spectacle? Is it the chance to just see anybody kicking a ball about to feed my football habit? Is it, perhaps, the opportunity to see small boys in shorts? No. It's the chance to once again see that strange looking ref bloke. From my seat in the Kenilworth I can watch as he sneaks off five minutes before the break to change into his full referee's kit — immaculately laundered, white turndowns on his black socks and complete with notebook.

Is this man in the twilight of an illustrious career in semi-pro football, or is he still on his way up the ladder — and hasn't yet reached the bottom rung. But wait. A major development. He's not going on. It's his rather round son stepping out onto the hallowed turf. Is my hero injured or just giving a fat boy a push on his chosen career? He watches proudly as his offspring has a steady introduction (no dissent from any of the three seven year olds), and applauds him off. A fatherly arm around the shoulder and, perhaps, a hint of advice ("that whistle for the third spot kick was just a fraction too long") on their way back to the rest of the family. I can't concentrate on the second half. My mind idles instead on how many other members of the family don the black strip. I have this terrifying thought that they all do and love nothing more than a discussion on the offside rule over breakfast.

Sad Bloke (F Block) Kenilworth Road

OO AR YA! OO AR YA!

The Guardian Thursday December 12 1996

It began as a dream: the building of a dome twice the size of Wembley Stadium to mark the new millennium. Luton's prestige would rocket throughout the world. But with nothing to show except a hole in the packet the reality is a nightmare that threatens to make the county a laughing stock.

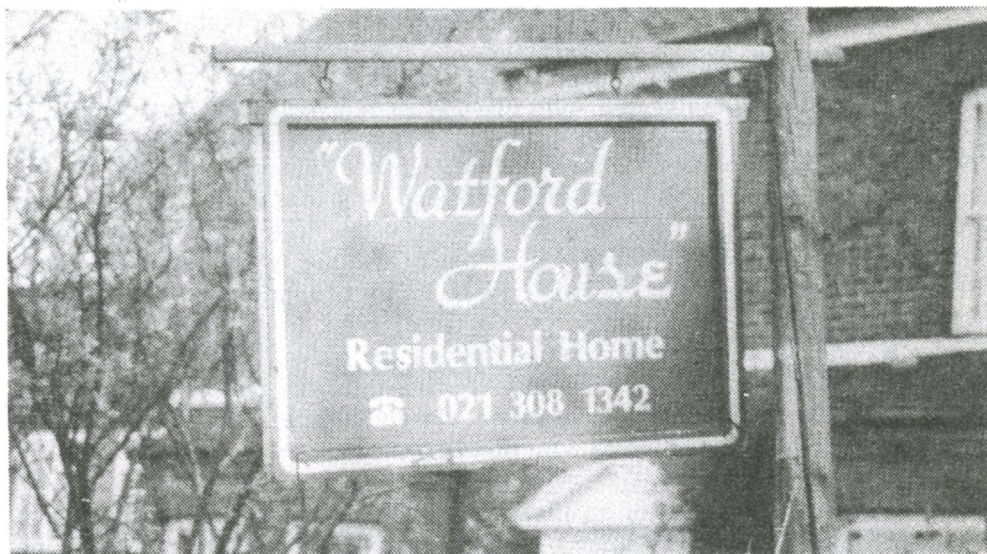


THEY ARE GREENWICH, WE ARE LUTON - TRUST ME!

WHO ARE YOU? Lx.

Doubts over funding of dome

Ewan MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent



This sign was spotted near Birmingham by Jayne Bulkeley, who wonders if this is where Watford players go to or, more likely, where they come from. The bus below used to be a good advert for LTFC. It could do with repainting in yellow and black now as, neglected, dilapidated and with no means of going anywhere, it's a better advert for Watford.



New video titles in the Club Shop

There's only one Dwight Marshall

Last season the goals of Luton Town's most prolific goalscorer threatened to save the club from relegation. Sadly, it wasn't to be. "There's only one Dwight Marshall" highlights the Jamaican's goals, and, to prove the point, shows how knackered the team were without him.

Luton Town — By far the greatest team the world has ever seen

Is the flashing LTFC crest screen saver on David Kohler's computer the best he can do? Don't be daft! Apart from a phenomenal Tetris score, DAK has also used modern computer methods to superimpose the stars of the current Town team into the great teams of the past. Amaze friends and family as the current Luton Town side appear to play and win classic matches. Currently available — the 1970 World Cup Final, the 1953 FA Cup Final, the 1988 Littlewoods Cup Final. And still available from our bargain bucket.

Terry Westley — "Top six side"

Terry explains his hopes and expectations for the 95/96 season. "Ideally we'll be going for an automatic promotion spot, but a play-off position wouldn't be a disaster" says Terry, as Mick McGiven nods vigorously at his boss's wide eyed optimism.

Terry Westley — "Heavyweight Champion of the World"

Terry explains his hopes and expectations for his attempt at the World Title. "I need to work on my strength, weight, stamina and height" says Terry, after a preliminary bout defeat at the hands of Joe Bugner (Mrs.), "what I do have is blind optimism, and plenty of it" he adds, as Mick McGiven nods vigorously and prepares to see his boss suffer another mauling.

Tim Kingston

A XMAS NURSERY RHYME

*Bolton are coming, making all the din,
Please to put your money on a great home win,
If you haven't any money then cheer us all the more,
We'll play the beggars off the park and draw Gunners in Round 4.*

The Boring Old Fart

RAVING MAD!!

Dear "Mad",

You thought Wimbledon's away following was pathetic, but it's usually even worse. My Wimbledon mate said he only recognised the "15 or so hardcore"(!) and the "other 400 were the glory hunters who only turn out for the big cup games". Could be a good Coca Cola Cup Final this year. Is the Dallow Road Brache Sparta pitch booked?

Kev
Luton.

Dear "Mad",

Thank you muchly for publish my letter of tactics advice for win team. It is much notice that team do better than after so must have takenly my advice.

At this writing time, mostly scorers are poorly, so goals left to Davis who has a good shot on his head. This was at Preston and lost 3-2.

However, I also notice that reserve team is nicely in the table top after a win against Spurs. Also young team is highly in the top as well. This is a good importantly and in years to come will produce better team for firstly league games.

Now advice of mine has been taken, I gladly supply more for team to keep the promotion pushing.

Away from home is firstly best to win or if not draw so only get 1 point. Not goodly to loose or no points are won.

At home it may be goodly to laxative the visiting team before the match (not quite enough to kill them). Not make the mistake of Mr Westie last year and laxative own team. Also too make win certain it goodly to give referee some laxative. This stop him for adding more time for late goal against. Some may think this is cheat but it okay if not found out.

Nextly is not to sell the players who do goodly for team and so removey confidence of squad.

Lastly not too get disappointed muchly if team do not up they go. As we say in Finland, "What uply the goes, certainly down the comes nextly."

Yours muchly entertaining,
N. Viren.

Dear "Mad",

With all the recent success we can only be optimistic about the rest of the season. There is absolutely no reason at all why we shouldn't make the play-offs, if not an automatic promotion place. However, Barry Fry, speaking of Luton on Anglia TV, hit the nail firmly on the head. "Luton should be there or thereabouts providing they can hang on to Ian Feuer and Steve Davis — though due to the

financial situation it's unlikely they'll be able to keep them much longer than Christmas."

David Kohler must surely know by now that selling off all your best players, quite simply, is not the best option. We have after all learnt that over the last six years. He should perhaps take a leaf out of Stevenage Borough's book. They were offered a massive amount for Barry Hayles, considering he is a non-league player. Although Borough's fans may have their grievances with Victor Green, he has put their promotion campaign and the long term interests of the club first (the benefits of which he will be able to reap as well). With a bit of luck we won't get any offers for our best players, but DAK has got to take everything into consideration if we do. As far as I know there are no immediate plans to sell either of our two best players. Let's just hope there won't be any for some time yet.....

Lee Agnew
Harlington, Beds.

PS. Tony Thorpe as well.

PPS. W*tf**d are just a bunch of jammy gits.

Dear "Mad",

I hope you all enjoyed your day out at the Gay Meadow in October. Although I felt about ten feet tall walking into work the following Monday morning, I couldn't help but recall what Oscar Wilde said with great insight many years ago: "Shrewsbury? - never been there! But my friends tell me that the ale's a lot better than the football."

Up the Hatters!

Pete Jones
Shrewsbury.

Dear "Mad",

The crowds are still low, but do people know you can pay on the day? A lot of people think you have to plough up to Bury Park to buy a ticket in the week, but you can get one from the ticket office before the kick-off. Maybe the club could make more floating local supporters aware of this.

When forecasting the budget for this season, the club had anticipated an average home attendance of 6,200, but we've constantly fallen well short of the mark despite things going well on the pitch.

Maybe introducing deals such as "3 games for the price of 2" could be just the ticket to encourage the stayaways back. Every bit of revenue is crucial as we must keep this squad together for the foreseeable future.

Kev
Luton.

Dear "Mad",

I have just finished reading the editor's little piece on Matthew Harding in the last issue of Mad, entitled "Just One Minute....." Now, once again, without wishing to be too disrespectful, I totally agree with the comments made by the editor.

Sure, one minute's silence at the Chelsea v Spurs game, and possibly across the Premier League programme, but not throughout the Nationwide league as well. Over the last couple of seasons, both Matt Busby and Bob Paisley, who both stood for what football is, have passed away. Their efforts in their time were truly great, and have helped put football where it is today — i.e. the best in the world. And so, we remembered them.

Matthew Harding did pump a lot of money into Chelsea with the likes of Vialli and Di Matteo arriving, but at the end of the day, Chelsea are still going to be Chelsea and, that is, win some, lose some, and the occasional cup run.

When my £10 million lottery jackpot comes up, and after putting half of it into my club, and I suddenly pass away, I expect Darlington's fans to honour me.....

Tony Allbones

Kempston.

Dear "Mad",

I have just come back from Preston — it's 2.30 am — and I'm f***ing angry. No, it's not the fact that we got beaten, nor is it because me and my mates took a day off work, driving 400 miles (spending £45 on petrol) there and back in some of the worst weather conditions ever seen. What pissed me off is the "performance" of Bontcho Guentchev last night. If he can't be bothered to even try then I suggest that the Black Sea Blunderer buggers off home. His attitude was, and is, appalling and his "I can't be bothered and anyway I'm an international don't you know" manner is not acceptable in any team, let alone one looking for promotion. It's not as if the silly Bulgar is any good; yes, his pace is deceptive — he's slower than he looks — and he can control the ball equally well with either shin. In fact, when it comes to a shooting chance then "Botchup" can't hit a cow's arse with a banjo.

When you add his piss-poor attitude to his total lack of ability then you wonder why Lennie, who seems to have things sussed out, keeps picking him. Surely, playing Jamie Nogoodsford or some of the younger players (Barr or George?) perhaps would be more effective in the long run. Maybe the fall of communism has got something to do with our posing prat: time was when the KGB would have him down the salt mines for not following the party (ie, LTFC) line due to his lack of industry. In short, if he cannot be assed to put in some effort then let's get rid of him, Lennie; perhaps Mr Kohler can get his hands on one of those special umbrellas and threaten our lazy hero that it will be used on him — I think he'll get the message "sharpish".

In fact, speaking of our esteemed chairman, perhaps he could ask Santa for a couple of new midfield players this Christmas. The cupboard is awfully bare in

this area and, after all, we have behaved ourselves this year. On the basis that every Hatters player returns boomerang like, then it's about time that the prodigals Garry Parker and Mick Harford came back. The former in the centre of the park and the latter to play as a central defender if (when?) Stevo departs to Wolves or wherever. How about it, Mr Chairman?

Gerry Callaghan

Stevenage.

Dear "Mad",

As a Luton Town fan from the leafy glades of Surrey my journey home from Kenilworth Road takes me round the M25, and on this journey we pass many other cars with various Luton merchandise adorning their back windows. This is also the case travelling back from the far flung reaches of the world such as Preston and the suburbs of Manchester. This prompts me to suggest to the gentry of the south-east to band together to form a supporters club. This would enable us to make travel arrangements en masse to away games thus keeping our own financial outlay to a minimum (plus using a coach company that will let those that smoke smoke, and stop at pubs on route rather than over priced service stations). So, all those out there who live in Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Hampshire and south London, and are interested in please write (and include phone number) to:

Mark Durbridge,
8 Mynns Close,
Epsom,
Surrey, KT18 7NU.

THE CHAIRMAN LOOKS A-HEAD!



TOWN TRAVELS

Blackpool

The first away trip of the new year and it's off to sunny (?) Blackpool. Our first trip to Bloomfield Road for donkeys years, to see if we can do the double over the tangerines. The information on pubs comes from Norman Samuels.

The best two old fashioned pubs are the FLEECE in Market Street, and the MITRE in West Street. These are near the North Pier and not far from Blackpool North railway station. Near the ground there is the WATERLOO HOTEL, on the corner of Waterloo Road and Central Drive. I have used this one myself and know it is a fair one to drink at. A bit further away on the Promenade near the South Pier is DUTTON'S ARMS and YATES. They always have a selection of beers. The only one to avoid is the Bloomfield, for obvious reasons.

Notts County

No guest writers for this so you'll just have to put up with the usual old crap. This takes us to one of the best grounds in the division. Meadow Lane is a much better ground than Millwall's New-ish Den as it seems to have been designed more for the supporters than for the impression of grandeur it creates. And, if memory serves, the pies are pretty good. As for pubs, we used to recommend the Tom Hoskins, just down from the station, but recent visits suggest that the beer quality is not what it once was. The better pubs are now probably found by turning away from the ground to the city centre, but not far away are the CANAL TAVERN, and the FELLOWS, MORTON & CLAYTON BREWHOUSE COMPANY, both on Canal Street, and the NAVIGATION INN just round the corner in Wilford Street. Nearer the ground are the TRENT BRIDGE INN, Radcliffe Road, or the TRENT NAVIGATION and the MAGPIES, both on Meadow Lane.

Bristol Rovers

Off to the Memorial Ground for our first daylight visit, which is just as well, because the floodlights were crap on our previous game there. The pub guide, or crawl, is compiled from the benefit of local knowledge by our exiled Lutonian in Bristol, John Clark.

Pubs near the ground are ordinary. To the north are the DUKE OF YORK and ROYAL GEORGE, both unremarkable. Nearest the ground is the WELLINGTON, a pleasant pub with boring Courage (now S&N) ales.

Recommended is a pub crawl starting at the city centre end of the A38, Stokes Croft. If travelling by train, take a 8 or 9 bus from Temple Meads forecourt to St James Barton (a roundabout near the bus station). From here you can head north towards the Memorial ground which is about 2 miles. First pub is the BELL in Hillgrove Street, about 5 mins walk. This is now a Butcombe tied house. It serves

other ales, but if Butcombe is on offer..... A good traditional boozier. Return to Stokes Croft for a really strange alehouse. This is the BREWHOUSE, the Ross home brew house. Some years ago this was a scruffy, large pub called the Black Swan. It was then converted into a theme pub called Mozart's which lasted about 10 minutes. Ross could not afford to convert it, so it now has exposed floorboards along with cheap and nasty theme pub fittings. It usually has about 6 beers, all of which are served in erratic condition. The Ross beers are particularly erratic. This is a difficult area of the city and the Brewhouse has a strange clientele. Unmissable!

Head north. The next pub is about 5 minutes walk, the CAT & WHEEL. It is leased by Moles. Not a bad alehouse. Brilliant railway bridge next to it. A short walk then, to the PRINCE OF WALES. A decent pub. Courage ales with a guest, Butcombe last time I was there.

Carry on north. Avoid the Hobgoblin (properly the Royal). Wychwood ales are appalling at the best of times, but here they are usually off and vastly overpriced. Next is the FORESTERS which has moderate Bass, but little else to recommend it. Further up is the Bristol Flyer. This is expensive but does a good pint of Smiles. Sometimes it has doormen. Not a good football pub. The ROBIN HOOD'S RETREAT boasts a fine traditional public bar, but only Courage ales.

From here it is about a mile to the ground. There are another 5 pubs on the A38 Gloucester Road, all of which are dreadful except perhaps the JOHN CABOT which at least sells Bass and Pedigree.

A small detour, however, takes you up to the ANNEXE INN, which is not bad. After the Robin Hood's Retreat, take the second right (ignoring a little lane). Bear right past a grassy square (Morley Square) then turn left at the crossroads into Nevil Road (just to the right at this crossroads is that other great sporting cathedral, Gloucestershire CCC). About 100 yards on is the Sportsman (properly the County Ground Hotel), and next to it is the Annexe. Here you will find Smiles, Wadworth, Theakston, Pedigree, plus a usually interesting guest. It also has good separate children's facilities.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Three more issues to go this season and, as ever, we need your help to fill them. Contributors receive a free issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* by way of thanks, so, to receive yours, get that match report, article, letter, cutting, cartoon or whatever off in the post to the above address. Deadline for issue 39 is 28th January, and it will be on sale on 8th February.

The Sharpe End

Luton being paired with non-league Boreham Wood in the 2nd round of the FA Cup reminded me immediately of the time, many years ago, that they were drawn away to Hillingdon Borough. If I remember rightly we were, at the time, in the old Third Division and Borough were in the Southern League — it would have been at the tail end of the sixties or the very beginning of the seventies.

I was already a committed Luton supporter but also happened to be the sports reporter for Hillingdon Borough's local paper, the *Hillingdon Weekly Post* so, of course, approached the game with mixed loyalties — well, not really, I wanted Hillingdon to get the mother of all thrashings.

I had a word with my editor, suggesting to him that he might be better advised to get someone more neutral to cover the game, but he would have none of it. "Sharpe — every decent reporter is expected to be able to maintain a neutral position when reporting the news. In sport, however, we expect our readers to be able to count on reading what they want to read — a report in favour of their team. And remember, they pay your wages."

Which didn't stop me turning up for the game wearing a Luton Town scarf and rosette, to the dismay of the other residents of the press box. Usually there was only me and the chaps from the *Hillingdon Mirror* and the *Uxbridge Gazette* who covered Borough's games. On this occasion the hack pack from Fleet Street was also present — "Wot's 'is name, mate?", "Ood 'e useter play for then?"

Bruce Rioch was in the Luton team that day, I'm sure (*actually, he wasn't, but Malcolm MacDonald was — Ed*) — not that it did us much good. We got beat and I set off back to my office in a foul mood. When I got there they were already planning to run the story of the game as the lead story in the entire paper, let alone the sports pages. "Right, get the story written, quick," I was told.

I pleaded for a little time so that I could get over my disappointment and bring myself to compose a piece in praise of the gallant Borough, but no, it had to be done now.

So, it was done. And it went into the paper. And it was all about how lucky Borough were to win the match. How the greatest day in their history was just a fluke and that ninety-nine times out of a hundred they would have lost to Luton. So, it came to pass that I was far from the most popular man in Hillingdon for the next couple of weeks. The paper was picketed and the readers' letters column was oversubscribed with letters suggesting what should be done to me in no uncertain terms.

The only good news from my point of view was that I had taken the precaution of writing the story under my pseudonym of Tony Potts (I always made the tea so

the editor re-christened me 'tea-pot' which became T. Potts) which meant that not everyone knew I was actually responsible — but the people at Hillingdon Borough knew all right.

Not that I cared.

Sitting watching the first half against York, in which there wasn't a lot happening, I started to muse on just how much time teams in general, not just our trusty band, actually spend practising or devising tactics for throw-ins.

On the evidence of Mitchell's aimless bungs along the touchline or into someone's solar plexus, the answer is not a lot. In actual fact, you'd think they'd be regarded as of just less importance than free kicks, as they do give the team the chance to restart the game in a manner beneficial to them.

Throw-ins are of particular importance to punters these days, as bookmakers who specialise in spread betting now take bets on when the first throw-in of a match will take place. You bet on whether it will be before or after the timespan predicted by the bookie and win or lose more or less depending on how right or wrong you are.

I wish they'd been doing it when David Pleat was Luton boss — his favourite kick-off tactic seemed always to be to win the toss, for one striker to pass it to another who would then larrup it as hard as possible down the opposite wing and out for a throw-in which would put the other team under pressure deep in their own half. All of which action would mean that there would be a throw-in within about three seconds of kick-off in every game we played, because it seemed like if we won the toss we'd elect to kick off, and if we lost the toss the opposition would choose ends and let us kick-off!

Gloves? I'd ban 'em. What sort of namby pamby feels the need to cover up his hands before going out to play — they don't wear sun hats when it's hot, do they, so why do managers let players get away with gloves? They've probably been bribed by the kit manufacturers to do it — what next, scarves and bobble hats?

Show me a player who ever lost a finger to frostbite and maybe I'd go along with the wearing of gloves, otherwise, what possible benefit can they give — if players feel the cold they should just run around a bit more!

Graham Sharpe

HatterLeague 2 Update

The HatterLeague ('surreal', if you believe the review in Total Football) is going from strength to strength — and the scores are going through the roof (kind of). Fifteen games have been played, and a leading pack is starting to pull away.

Leading the way is Andy Wesson with his suitably named Top Hatters on 242, with Neil Saunders' Red Dwarf inspired team 2 points behind. Only 7 points separate the top eight with issue 37's leader Simon Alcock now bottom of this group in eighth. Of the other teams our reigning champion Karen Maxfield is in 57th with 191 points and I'm putting in a woeful performance in 67th with 183 (*for those of you who don't know, this was penned by Chris*). It's worth noting that Karen was in a similar position this time last year before coming from nowhere in the last few weeks, so nobody is written off just yet.

Well, when we say nobody is written off, we exclude Mike Hann. He's still bottom, surprisingly (!), but at least his team name is now wrong, thanks to McLaren scoring some points. After one let-off (at Preston where Macca scored a point, and lost it by being booked), two appearances since have improved the position of Mike's team. However, forgetting about him (it's easily done), Andrew Maslen is in unofficial bottom place with 79 points while Lewis Durbridge is trying to emulate his mother's (Edna) bottom place last year as he's in 121st with 82. Barring these three nightmares, everyone else has a score in treble figures.

The top and bottom teams after match 15 (York City (H)) are as follows:

Pos	Name	Address	TeamName	Pts.
1	Andy Wesson	Luton	Andy's Top Hatters	242
2	Neil Saunders	St Neots	Gespachto Soup	240
3=	Andrew Ormiston	Bedford	Lucky Seven	239
3=	Sarah Yates	Peterborough	Sarah's Supersonic Stars	239
5=	Elizabeth Hansell	Luton	Happy Hatters	237
5=	Dale Williams	Bletchley	Happy Hatters	237
5=	Mark Nelson	Leeds	Showdown In Unicorn Car Park	237
119	Noel Cresswell	Milton Keynes	Red Hatter 2	105
120	Trevor Emery	Bedford	And, Why Not	100
121	Lewis Durbridge	Epsom	Bontcho's Boys	82
122	Andrew Maslen	Bedford	David Pleat Smells of Cheese	79
123	Mike Hann	St Albans	Minus 3 Every Game (And Cheap)	-47

Don't forget that you can still use your HatterSwaps to change your team around, and nearly 30 transfers have been made so far. Just remember (and this includes you, Curtis from Belfast), don't overspend when you are

swapping your team around, because we can't allow it. But please do remember to include a first class stamp with every transfer request.

Code	Player	£	Pts	Code	Player	£	Pts
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
101	Ian Feuer	0.8 m	37	103	Nathan Abbey	0.2 m	-15
102	Kelvin Davis	0.5 m	-15	<u>Defenders</u>			
111	Steve Davis	0.7 m	57	116	Mitchell Thomas	0.5 m	25
112	Darren Patterson	0.6 m	-15	117	Ben Chenery	0.4 m	-15
113	Marvin Johnson	0.6 m	24	118	Des Linton	0.5 m	-17
114	Richard Harvey	0.5 m	-15	119	Trevor Peake	0.4 m	-15
115	Julian James	0.5 m	27	120	Aaron Skelton	0.4 m	0
<u>Midfielders</u>							
121	Gary Waddock	0.6 m	14	125	David Oldfield	0.6 m	12
122	Tony Thorpe	0.6 m	69	127	Paul McLaren	0.4 m	2
123	Graham Alexander	0.5 m	32	128	Sean Evers	0.3 m	0
124	Ceri Hughes	0.5 m	37	129	Paul Showler	0.6 m	6
<u>Strikers</u>							
131	Dwight Marshall	0.7 m	20	135	Stuart Douglas	0.5 m	4
132	Kim Grant	0.5 m	13	136	Jamie Woodsford	0.3 m	0
133	Bontcho Guentchev	0.5 m	6	137	Andrew Fotiadis	0.6 m	0
134	John Taylor	0.4 m	0				

Uninteresting HatterLeague Facts

- It was 10 HatterLeague games before the Town concede ,more than one goal (first time was away to Plymouth (3-3) in game 10).
- Tony Thorpe holds the HatterLeague Best Individual Performance with 18 points in the aforementioned Plymouth game.
- Only four other individual performances have earned double figures.
- So far, Des Linton is the worst HatterLeague player with -17 points. Quite an achievement to be two points worse than players with no appearances!

Well, that's about it for now, we'll await your transfers as you try to catch up with the leaders by bringing Dwight Marshall into your team. Don't forget that anything sent to us now has to have the new address on it. See page 2 for details.

Anyway, from us, have an unreal New Year!

Chris Lennon, Russell Bulkeley and K.F.H.

SANTA IS A LUTON FAN



BACK ISSUES

Back issues are still available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 25, 27, 35, 36 and 37. Issue 1 is free, 2 to 27 will cost you 25p per copy and all others remain at 50p each. When requesting back issues please include a stamped addressed envelope with sufficient postage. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.