

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 46

Mar 98



"KOHLE! THE HERO'S SUPPOSED
TO SAVE THE DAY BEFORE HE
RIDES INTO THE SUNSET!"

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road,
Luton, LU3 2RL.
Tel: (01582) 573485

Editor: Keith "old git" Hayward.
Backroom Boys: Phil Ivinson, Mark Ivinson, Andy Collon.
Executives: Jerry Darr, Mark Wilson, Nick Gazeley, Rhiannon Gazeley, Jeff Smith, Steve Folliot, and Dave Kirkby.
In Exile: Chris "Disco inferno" Lennon.
Casual Help: Trevor Norman, Steve Tyler and Paul Tindle.
Contributors: Our thanks to Graham Sharpe, Russell Bulkeley, Andy Whiting, Murray Craig, the Boring Old Fart, Steve Guy, Clifford Saunders, Tim Kingston, Tony Allbones, Dave Pearson, Alan Robinson, Roger wash, Phil Darton, Bluebird Jones, C. Staniforth, Katie Francis, Martin Blake, Barry Mills, Declan McCabe, John Clark, John Solomon, Leigh Wells and anyone else we may have forgotten to mention.
Cartoons: Drawn by Adam Lloyd and B. Dave B.
Action photos: Gareth Owen.

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EDITORIAL

With everything that has happened in the last couple of months, it is difficult to know where to start, and quite what to say in this small space. A lot of people will be expecting, or hoping for, a severe slagging off of the management at LTFC. You will be disappointed (it's elsewhere in this issue). I'll start with the state of the team. It's looking increasingly as if my thirtieth year of watching the Town will be marked by a return to the division where this odyssey started, and this is not something I look forward to. In common with most supporters, I was deeply distressed by the sale of Tony Thorpe, and feel that selling the one man who might have been able to score the goals that could save us was near to suicidal. I have a small amount of sympathy for Lennie, who probably had little say in this, and who's influence in team selection has been hampered all season by injuries. But then we have had the farce of signing a short term replacement, which was apparently going to be Bradley Allen, but later turned out to be the unrelated Spurs youngster, Rory Allen, via Steve Jones and various other players. Meanwhile, our best striker still appears to be Steve Davis. Let's hope that young Rory can produce the goods that Phil Gray seems unable to.

At the same time as bidding farewell to Tony Thorpe, we say goodbye to Ian Feuer, who has gone to play for New England Revolution in the States after being unable to find a revolution in old England. From comments he made on the radio and in the press it seems that he was somewhat homesick, but will always have a soft spot for Luton Town (and not David Kohler's patch of quicksand). We, at Luton, will return the compliment, and we wish him every success in the States. Unfortunately, Lennie Lawrence was probably right that the price paid for Ian was somewhat inflated, and there can be little doubt that a 'keeper at a struggling 2nd Division club was never going to be worth half a million quid, so a loss was inevitable. Now that Ian has gone, it is time for everybody to back Kelvin Davis, rather than slagging him off for not being Ian Feuer.

So, with only 8 matches left, we need some serious luck and more goals than have been evident so far this season. We have regularly seen performances that will be good enough to keep us up, but usually these have been in the last 20 minutes of a game after we have conceded a couple of soft goals. If we see these sort of efforts from the word go, then we might start winning and reach safety. If we don't, then we'll lose and we really will be off to Rochdale and Darlington next season. The big question is, do the players care enough? It's tempting to suggest that the directors and chairman don't.

That's it for now. All that's left to say is that with a bit of luck and a sudden flood of contributions there will be another issue of *Mad as a Hatter!* out for the Carlisle match on May 2nd. As deadlines are short, get your contributions in quickly, please.

A MOOD OF DEPRESSION

This week, as every week, I witnessed another appalling home performance of Luton Town FC, received the news that Tony Thorpe has just been (under)sold to Fulham, and heard David Kohler rubbing salt in the wound by telling us we could not wait until the season's end to sell our best and only decent goalscorer, and amazingly stating that we would not have got such a good offer for him at a later date. This move has probably condemned us to relegation and will lead to even greater loss of revenue to the club — what superb business sense! Contrary to what Mr Kohler would have us believe, the supporters know we have to sell to pay the bills and it was inevitable that Thorpe would be transferred, but the timing of the transfer could not have been worse.

I have also read Lennie Lawrence's criticisms of the fans for not getting behind the team and for their anti-Lawrence chants. He seems to think the Luton fans are abusive yobs intent on ruining the confidence of the team (my own theory is that the manager is doing a good enough job of that on his own). In fact, the vast majority of fans continue to give their loyal support, but now the regular supporters have begun to feel that enough is enough and it is time let the management know why we feel the way we do.

It is indicative of the style of management at LTFC for the last five years that the supporters are increasingly thought of as incompetents by the club. Time and again Lennie Lawrence reels out a string of unfeasible excuses after every disappointing result and recently has started using the 'long injury list' one when we are probably better off injury-wise than at any other time of the season! He talks about who is and is not to blame for the current situation. Well, I'm afraid it is painfully clear to everyone in the stands....

When a manager constantly;

- fails to motivate the team,
- substitutes the best players on the pitch,
- plays players well out of position (Dwight Marshall on left wing, for example),
- ruins the confidence of Ian Feuer by treating him like a scapegoat for that terrible defence,
- makes unforgivable transfer blunders like signing 'one-goal' Philip Gray after missing out on the excellent (and cheap!) Barry Hayles, and consistently lets players go for bargain bucket prices.

How does he expect us to blame anyone else?

Lawrence has now said the team are 'underachieving, but not by much' and we should be mid-table. He goes on to recite the old Kohlerism that we, the fans,

have been 'spoilt' by our success in the Eighties and implies, as Kohler has done every time we have been relegated, that we should be happy with our lot in the lower leagues. This implies that the management are resigned to playing at this level, or lower, indefinitely.

To counter the fans' understandable anger, Lawrence has lauded Phil Gray as our saviour, commenting that he will probably score 'two or three goals for us before the end of the season'. This is an outrageous and pathetic admission of a crap buy. Gray is, after all, supposed to be a centre forward!!! I think the manager and a few misguided fans who obviously didn't see him play for us the first time round ought to be reminded of his 'goalscoring prowess'. In the two seasons when he was with us before we were relegated from the old Division 1 and nearly relegated from the new Division 1. Gray scored 22 league goals over those two seasons, a large number of which came when he finally got some sort of form together in his last few games for us when everyone knew he was bound to be transferred. We finally got rid of him and the fans breathed a huge sigh of relief. He is not the only player that has been crap, obviously, I could run through a large section of the whole first team. It would be a shame if our promising youngsters like Andrew Fotiadis, Sean Evers, Kelvin Davis and Matthew Spring got the apathetic bug that has swept through the club over the last few years. These players are playing with more enthusiasm and skill than any of the over paid has beens and never will be's that are drawing the salaries that make us the second highest paying club in Division 2 (behind Watford). That's why I seriously believe if Lawrence wants to regain at least some confidence from the fans he should do what he promised then failed to do when he took charge and clear out the dead wood and have some faith in the youngsters.

The supporters know that we have overcome far worse situations on the pitch in the past but only with some confidence and ambition from the board and manager. That is obviously, by their own words, sadly lacking at Luton, is rubbing off on the players and is why we are heading for Division Three and beyond.

Andy Whiting

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.

Can you hear us on the radio? Excellent stuff!

Local radio is a necessary evil in that we would all probably listen to Radio Five Live given the choice, but sadly it offers comprehensive coverage only of the major, national sporting events with only brief references to Division 2 where the Hatters are domiciled. Accordingly, to receive up to the minute news, commentaries, score flashes, interviews with players and coaching staff etc, we have to listen to the coverage on Three Counties Radio.

Broadcasting on 103.8 FM and 630 or 1161 AM, Three Counties is a BBC station, previously known as Radio Bedfordshire but renamed due to it also covering Hertfordshire and much of Buckinghamshire. It is a somewhat unoriginal name, as to an outsider it could be any three counties in the country. I suppose that the trouble is that there is no generic term which covers the area, the rival commercial station having bagged the name Chiltern, and Radio North and North West Home Counties or Radio We Talk Like Cockneys But Not Quite The Same would both be a bit of a mouthful! The area does not have a distinct regional or geographical identity, and I remember when I lived in Luton I watched Central and Thames/LWT but not Anglia TV (very annoying as I missed the dulcet tones of Gerry Harrison's Commentaries). But it illustrates the point that in reality Luton is not London, nor the Midlands or East Anglia.

The sports output from 3CR has improved dramatically over the past few years. In the bad old days it was classic light entertainment with a large musical content — "there's been a goal at Ewood Park, but first of all let's listen to 'Fernando' by Abba". This mixture of sport and MoR pap was very frustrating as was the emphasis on minor sports going on locally — "another goal at Ewood Park, but first a report on the East Anglian girls netball tournament at the Stopsley Regional Sports Centre".

However, the station has now sharpened up its act and is much more professional, illustrated by the fact that the last two presenters have both moved on to better things at the World Service and Five Live respectively. The output consists of "Team Talk" on Fridays between 6 and 7 pm, previewing the weekend sporting action, "Sportsound", the main show of the week, between 2 and 6 pm on Saturdays, midweek specials centring on fixtures on Tuesdays or Wednesdays, and regular daily sports desks following news bulletins. Unfortunately a recent programme reshuffle has resulted in the regular sports output being cut by two hours a week.

"Team Talk" sets the scene for the weekend and previews all the forthcoming action with interviews, team news, injury updates and Lennie's highly articulate and plausible excuses for the latest debacle. The coverage is comprehensive and includes Luton, the other lot at Junction 6, Stevenage Borough and their Conference struggles (their chairman Victor Green is always good value when he is on air as he is arrogant, self opinionated and

never answers the question — in short the ideal club chairman. This used to be our local privilege but the whole country was subjected to his views following Stevenage's progress in the FA Cup), plus a wide ranging non-league round up which encompasses all the local sides and highlights those doing well in the FA Cup/Trophy/Vase. The big two local Rugby Union teams are not ignored and Bedford and Saracens are featured weekly, as is the progress of the cumbersomely named Watford and Hemel Royals basketball team. Nothing regal about them as they contrive to lose nearly every game, but it's fun to hear their effusive coach, Vince MacAuley Razzack (*"I'm a big Luton fan" — well, he would be*), come up with excuses for their dismal lack of success. The programme also encourages fans to phone in to make comments. One feature I miss is the bit on Luton or Watford which included a chat with the editor of their opponents fanzine, highly informative given the lack of coverage given to Division 2 in the national media. It was interesting to hear about other clubs misfortunes and whether or not they had a striker in form. Perhaps this feature could be reinstated if anyone in 3CR is reading this (*Croftie*)?

The Saturday programme follows a similar pattern with the added attraction of regular reports from the games. Reports are given every 10 minutes or so, and every time a goal is scored — preceded by an irritating jingle which induces panic in me as it's usually a goal against the Hatters. The three main teams are covered with reports before, at half-time and after non league games. Barnet used to be covered on the dubious premise that they were in Herts, until Stevenage reached the giddy heights of the Conference, when Barnet were dropped and placed back where they belong in metropolitan London (another illustration of the vexed question of geographical identity).

Both shows occasionally feature live match commentaries. I often wondered why it is not done more often as it is a great service if Luton are playing Carlisle on a Tuesday night, but apparently it relates to cost and poor old 3CR can't afford to do it regularly (*they have a facility to do all LTFC home games — imagine how irritating that is for Hornets fans!*). The style of commentary copies national radio with a commentator and summariser to provide expert comment and colour. It's fair to say that Julian James is a better full-back than broadcaster, but I quite enjoyed Peakie when he did it. One night, for a laugh, they ought to ask John Moore to do the summarising as despite living in Luton since 1965 he is more incomprehensible than even Kenny Dalglish! Luton are covered by the unemotional and impartial Simon Oxley, who doubles up as the Hatters programme editor. He is not too bad, he does mention our opponents and can be surprisingly candid, in that if we are playing like a Sunday morning pub side he will say so.

The whole show is presented by David "Croftie" Croft. He replaced Mike Naylor who can now be heard doing the sports desk on Five Live. Croftie learnt the ropes under the smooth talking Naylor, but hasn't picked up his

measured delivery as he is very excitable, never more so than when talking to a Bristol City supporter who was extolling the virtues of the Robins and how they were going to gub Watford (an eminently laudable aim) and Croftie got a bit carried away and said that Watford would whip their greasy little bottoms, which rather nonplussed the Bristolian caller.

Croftie calls everyone "mate" and I would be a rich man if I had a fiver for every time he says "excellent stuff". His presentational style is somewhere between GLR, the hip London station aiming for the "yoof" market and the "slippers and pipe" style of the more staid BBC county stations, a slightly surreal world where presenters talk about their cats and what they saw as they drove to work. Croftie also has to be Mr Neutral on the basis that he can't bite the hand that feeds him, but I'm sure he would love to ask the slippery David Kohler more pertinent and controversial questions but knows that he cannot upset him or else the club would withdraw co-operation.

He is aided by the cute Helen Wingrove, who is in no danger of emulating Eleanor Oldroyd or Charlotte Nicholl. Like Croftie, she is tremendously enthusiastic and gushing but prone to inaccuracies under the pressure of live radio — such as the time she got muddled up between Jimmy and Micky Quinn. Her match reports can be good fun as her delivery is staccato and ignores punctuation with hilarious consequences.

I also enjoy Neil Roy who has covered Bedford RFC for years but because the successful Saracens have moved to Hertfordshire he has to do commentaries from Vicarage Road. Somehow, the groundshare is appropriate with rucking and mauling seeming totally in place at Vicarage Road. Neil is a real traditionalist — a Barbour, tweed cap and hip flask man — and struggles with Nigel Wray and Frank Warren's get up and go style in the professional era. Dancing girls, disco music and motorised kicking tees (*what?*) clearly aren't Neil's style, but he struggles gamely to cope with the changes.

The show also features the views of the listeners who are encouraged to ring up and participate. It is radio on the cheap and can be a bit hit and miss as Croftie struggles to cope with assorted 12 year-old, the inarticulate, the insane (i.e. Watford fans), the monosyllabic and occasionally someone who can string two words together. Funding seems to have dried up a bit recently on the prize front, but in the past I've done quite well out of it, winning assorted match tickets, books and videos.

So there you have it, a potted review of Three Counties Radio and its sports content. I hope it hasn't been too negative, because with the lack of a decent local newspaper (3 pages a week from the Luton News is dismal) the radio is the main source of information for Hatters fans. Also, when all is said and done it is easy to poke fun at Croftie and his team, but it's a job we would all like!

Murray Craig

Bad Business

Well, a month is, as they say, a long time in football. I picked up my paper today and noticed one significant result from last night's football matches. I'm not talking about defeat for the Town at Preston. No, I would refer readers to Fulham beating Bristol Rovers 1-0. The reason is that the goal came from one Tony Thorpe on his home debut for his new club.

Last week I went to see Luton play Wigan, when news was just breaking of Thorpe's transfer to Fulham. We all knew that he was going to go at some point, but it begs the question, "why now?". To make matters worse, he was sold to a fellow 2nd division side for a fee of just £800,000. The chairman of our club claims it was business — that of a selling club. Well, Mr Kohler, what sort of businessman does that make you? Not the best, I would suggest, if it's true that Bristol City offered £1.2 million for the same player a few weeks previously.

Tony Thorpe was an asset that was always going to be cashed in while we don't have the benefit of a forward thinking chairman willing to invest great sums of cash into this club as per the like of Jack Walker. However, did it not make sense to hold on to Thorpe and his thirty goals a season until we had managed to secure our safety? Al Fayed, Keegan, Wilkins and all Fulham fans must be rubbing their hands with glee at this timely bargain of a good striker.

I'm sure Kohler is also rubbing his greedy little hands together, with a smile on his face, knowing that he has another few hundred thousand to put towards his own holy grail. Not a new striker, or midfielder or defender, but the KohlerDome. Yes, Luton Town will have the greatest stadium ever..... in the Conference. Perhaps Stevenage can hire it when they need a bigger ground in those cup runs.

Yes, a month is a long time in football because in my last article I claimed to be an optimist. Now it is beginning to dawn on me that all Luton fans have to look forward too, is wondering where the next goal will come from now we've sold our best player. Perhaps Marvin Johnson should be employed as a striker as since I claimed he should be put out to pasture he has scored two goals in three games! My brother suggested that whoever I criticise may then be inspired to prove me wrong, as did Mr Johnson! I'm desperate for Luton to stay up so I'll try anything once. Here goes.... isn't David Oldfield all puff and no fire or, to put it another way, past it?(!)

I'm definitely in a pessimistic mood this month. I'm sure my two 'friends' in the front row of the Kenilworth will take some sadistic delight in knowing that the girl I'd been chasing at work finally blew me out the other week! Why is my love life so intrinsically linked to the up and down fortunes of Luton Town FC?!!

Steve Guy

FALSE ECONOMY

I was going to write a bit about the false economy of selling Tony Thorpe but, when it comes down to it, what's the point in writing on the subject of the bleedin' obvious. Even so, perhaps the opportunity should be taken to go over a few of the more glaring points.

1. The deal can only be seen as good in the short term. The losses that the club are suffering now can only get worse if, and when, we're relegated again.
2. The statement that £800K was a good price for a 2nd Division player rankled. The fact that Thorpe is a 2nd Division player is in no small part due to the fact that Luton Town sell every half decent player they have. How good would he be, and how much would he be worth to a Premiership club (let alone bloody Fulham), if he'd played for a competent Town side? Thorpe may well be sold on, for three or four million in the future. Luton Town, and its supporters, have been denied the opportunity of finding out how good a player Thorpe is.
3. Kohler predicting that such a high price would not be paid for a 2nd Division player again..... something which, given the financial predicament of the club, does not inspire confidence. So, what happens next year when the club, whether hanging on in Division 2 or settling down with the strugglers in Division 3, need to sell again? How much do you reckon the police would pay for Kohler's dog?

In all, the sale displays an incredible shortsightedness. Meanwhile the club, and increasingly the fans, cling on to Kohler's stadium dreams. The future of our club is sitting on a desk in Whitehall. In the meantime back at Kenilworth Road, with everyone hanging out for the hope of a glorious future in the Dome, the situation is becoming increasingly dire. Kohler's bright new future line sounds like that which may have been taken up by the Captain of the Titanic; spending his last precious moments trying to reassure passengers of the wonderful ship that the QE2 will be ("it sounds very nice Captain but, dash it all Sir, won't we all be drowned by then?").

So, we're all agreed, it's a false economy, right?

However, even if we managed to get David Kohler and the board to admit it, it's hard to argue against their "we've got no money, what do you want us to do?" defence. The only certainty is that the whole sorry story leaves a bad taste in the mouth. I've no doubt that the well meaning, but unfortunately financially limited, board members feel as bad as the supporters.

In the end, over and above matters of loyalty and habit, we go to football matches because we enjoy going. Luton Town FC have, since the early 80's at least, made it difficult for its supporters to do that. Ironically, one of David Kohler's attributes (albeit in a apparent list of one) is his PR skills. He's a chairman who isn't averse to speaking to the fans. Granted, he doesn't necessarily tell you what you want to hear (though I like his Junction 10 adaptation of 'Jerusalem'), but the fact is that he's prepared to talk. He even appears to listen (maybe he's learnt the attentive look from his dog). Surely his biggest PR challenge in the coming weeks will be to try and fight off supporter disillusion and try and sell a few season tickets.

The Thorpe sale, the disillusion, and now the plug. The position of the club at the start of next season is of particular interest to me because, with a bit of luck and help from The Book Castle (and the Nick Hornby bandwagon), I've got a (Town supporter's) book out in August. It's all but complete now, although the final chapter (and overall tone of the book) rather depends on the result of a certain public inquiry.

Hopefully, the result of that inquiry will help create a favourable atmosphere for the publication (the Town avoiding relegation, and a good World Cup for England are other influences to consider) but, in the meantime, I'd like to invite you to buy my book in August. Please.

More information, for those of you interested enough to have read this far, to follow.

Tim Kingston

DEADLINES

As this issue nears completion, transfer deadline day has passed. The Town have signed, on loan, goalkeeper Mark Gayle from Crewe, which is fair enough as cover for Kelvin Davis. But the tale of the missing striker went to the wire. The Bradley Allen story finally ground to a halt when Charlton were unwilling to let him go without getting themselves a replacement. Worryingly, the number two on Lennie's list was Steve Jones, also at Charlton. Eventually, the services of Rory Allen (no relation) were secured on loan from Spurs. Hopefully, he will prove to be fully fit and do the job he's been brought in for. But this begs one question — what is this fixation that Lennie has with players named Allen? And how many more Allens are there?

K.F.H.



At last, a picture of the Town's star striker. Not only that, but one of Phil Gray as well!



A QUESTION OR TWO

Question — What is the connection between all of the following fixtures?

8/4/72	Blackpool	3/12/83	Coventry City
1/5/74	Sunderland	12/2/84	Manchester United
14/9/74	Ipswich Town	6/2/88	Oxford United
23/10/76	Southampton	12/1/91	Southampton
22/2/78	Tottenham Hotspur	3/10/92	Portsmouth
26/2/79	West Ham United	7/11/92	Grimsby Town
7/5/83	Everton	3/12/94	Sheffield United
19/11/83	Tottenham Hotspur		

A little clue, add the following to the list:-

20/9/97	Wrexham	20/12/97	Bristol Rovers
4/10/97	Watford	24/1/98	Fulham

Answer? It's the total list of all the home league games, in the past 30 years, in which we have let in at least 4 goals. Before the start of this season the total was just 15 games in 30 years.

In the past we had the satisfaction of knowing that:

1. on the day we had been beaten by the better team (except Oxford who we beat 7-4) or we just didn't care (the Sunderland promotion party), and
2. it wasn't going to happen again for another 2 years.

More questions.

What the hell is going on?

When are the players going to start fighting for each other (at home)?

What is the idea behind the team being coached by Lennie Lawrence and Trevor Peake during the week and then adding John Moore to the bench on match days?

Does anybody remember February 1996? Reminder — we had just pulled out of the relegation zone and the talk was of a possible play-off place.

Arsenal, Wembley, was it only really 10 years ago?

When is the torture going to end?

Derbyshire

A HISTORICAL RIGHT OF REPLY

In response to the article from Brian Ellis (Restricted History) in issue 45, I can assure him that all the club's record books etc. do not reside anywhere but under the main stand at Kenilworth Road.

The records room has moved three times over the last ten years (I know, as I won the job of boxing the records and placing them in some kind of order) from the old Kenilworth Road offices, to temporary premises in Dunstable Road and on to its current home which is a room about 12 feet by 4 feet adjacent to the changing rooms. The room not only holds the record books Brian mentions but also all the financial records that any Limited Company is required to keep as well as files from all the other departments within the club and some massive boiler pipes!

The room is a mess, but due to the acute lack of space at Kenilworth Road this is the best the club can do until relocation. It is then anticipated that a proper museum will be incorporated in the design which will allow all supporters to see the cups, caps and historical printed material donated to and kept by the club over the years.

When I became interested in the history of the club, some 30 years ago, I spent months at Luton library gathering statistical records not knowing that such things as team books might have been available at Kenilworth Road. When I did eventually see them, on being asked to work alongside Tim Collings on the 'Luton Town Story', I was disappointed as they were extremely difficult to decipher due to the ancient method of carbon copying and bad handwriting.

As has been stated before, the book would have contained full team statistics but John Smith, the club's chief executive at the time, felt that it would be top heavy and cut back that section. No further attempt was made by myself as I could not spare the time to spend several weeks at the Football League HQ at Lytham St Annes to check pre-war attendance figures but I now understand these can currently be obtained from an external source.

The initial print run of 3000 sold quickly but the run-on 3000 took over a year to sell out at a time when the team was rather more successful than it is now. I do remember reviewers felt that any early narrative history was "dry" and they all looked forward to the parts covering eras they could relate to.

Over the past 13 years I must have contributed 500,000 words to the programme covering all areas and eras in the club's history and as such have

probably rewritten the 'Luton Town Story' twice over. Despite this I rarely receive comments good or bad and am therefore clueless as to what people want.

I would remain to be convinced that historical reserve and youth team details are required reading, bearing in mind the number of spectators who actually attend those matches, and although a book containing team groups might be an attractive proposition the best pre-war photographs are owned by certain London agencies and are expensive. I happened to be with Dennis Turner (the Fulham historian mentioned by Brian Ellis) when he negotiated the cost (which he paid for out of his own pocket) of team groups for his book!

Bearing in mind the reviewer's comments on early history, a 20 year record is in preparation which not only covers an era most supporters can relate to, but also updates the 'Luton Town Story', as a lot has happened since 1985. Also, a complete 'Who's Who' has been slowly coming together over the past 18 months.

Finally, the word 'profit' is mentioned more than once and supporters must realise that most football books, especially those of a specialist nature, do not enable the author to retire on the proceeds. The two books published by the club did not produce much in the way of profit and I did not seek or receive any financial reward. Similarly my programme articles and historical support work for the club are supplied for a couple of gratefully received season tickets and I am not alone as many others give up their time on an unpaid basis for the club they love.

Roger Wash

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

Well, there's only one more issue to come this season. Your contributions are always welcomed, and we look forward to receiving your cuttings, articles, match reports, letters, drawings, photos, money etc, etc. We can accept contributions on disk, but would ask that you send a hard copy, and details of the format in which the item was prepared (and filename). Such items should be sent to the above address. The deadline for issue 47 will be April 20th, and it will be on sale May 2nd.

SCRIBES CORNER

I see Mitchell Thomas was one of the players speaking out in the nationals about John Motson's 'inability' to tell the difference between black players. Strangely, nobody ever had the problem of being able to identify Mitchell. He was the shit one.

=====

Luton Town Supporters Club — they really know how to criticise, don't they? I'm convinced that if Kohler sold all our best players for his own personal fortune, and we got relegated to the Ryman League, then the "official" supporters club would issue a statement saying everything is fine and dandy and they're behind him 100 per cent. At least we have another supporters club (LLSC) not afraid to speak their minds and criticise, when needed. Oh, and LTSC, how about another "Evening with....." in the Eric Morecambe Suite. I bet those are the highlights of your season aren't they?

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Further to the LTFC 1998 calendar. On the first day of last month, when I had to change it over to February, I noticed a strange thing. Lennie's name had been spelt wrongly. On the calendar it says 'Laurence' as opposed to Lawrence. The amount of respect they have for the man is unreal — they can't even spell his bloody name right.

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Did anyone see the scum match programme on Valentine's Day, with bosom buddies Turnip and Lawrence. Our manager is an absolute disgrace. I don't care if it was a cheap publicity stunt (aimed at promoting friendliness between us and the scum (yeah, as if)). There is no way the manager of LTFC should be wearing a WFC scarf. It seems to me that we now have a perfectly good reason why we've been so shit this season. We've been infiltrated by a scummer.

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One thing I was impressed with at Vicarage Road was Radio Hornet. Decent speakers, good bass, (mostly) good music. We could do with something like that at Luton — anything is better than the Ski Sunday theme blasting through the oldest tannoy system in the world.

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I thought it was great when the referee told Harry Hornet to sod off. I agreed with him entirely — I was having trouble telling him and Jason Lee apart as well. Although, deep down I knew the big lumbbersome oaf who couldn't play football was in fact Jason Lee — so it was quite easy to tell them apart.

=====

Mystery of the issue: Where the hell has Harry Hornet's massive arse disappeared to?

Altogether now, "Where's your arse gone, where's your arse gone?"

=====

It's a shame the scum are going up (please God, let Bristol City win the title) and we're going down. I'm going to miss the 'let's go mental' when we score at Vicarage Road. It's one of the best moments of the season.

=====

Rumour has it (from not the most reliable source you'll ever have) that four Luton players were in 'Legends' the night before the Bristol City game (I think Thorpey was one of them — 'dead leg' and all). Now, if this is true and any of them were in the squad the next day, then they should be fined (at least) a week's wages. I think a bit of internal investigating is in order.

=====

Moving on to Harlow, the scummer at college was a lad on the post graduate course called Kieran. However, the post-grads left college on Friday February 13th, so I didn't even get the chance to confront him the Monday after Valentine's Day. Now, according to our scouse Law?PA lecturer, Kieran is a keen follower of sport. Which begs the question, why the hell is he a season ticket holder at Watford then?

=====

Phil Gray	- unfit alcoholic from the continent	£400,000
Juergen Sommer	- goalkeeper (allegedly)	£600,000
Matthew Upson	- young inexperienced defender, kept out of Town side by Marvin	£1,000,000
Tony Thorpe	- proven goalscorer, 50 goals in under two seasons.	£800,000

Work out the logic for yourself, because I'm buggered if I can.

Chris Lennon

Dear "Mad",

The fun people in our "Investors in People (IIP)" unit lent me a video today. IIP is a national initiative to raise training standards in the workplace. The blurb says:

"When everybody knows what they are doing, they can do it well, work with their team mates to achieve their objectives, and yet still be willing to go on improving those skills where necessary, you know you're on the winning side."

In view of this it was a little surprising to find that the video is fronted by Rik Mayall wearing Luton kit and broadcasting from Kenilworth Road. Cut into interviews with employers and workers is much footage of Town players demonstrating the ideals of team work. It culminates bizarrely with the metaphor of football as ballet with Mayall and the Town players wearing tutus instead of shorts.

However, the blurb goes on, more realistically:

"Imagine what it would be like for a footballer if all he knew about his job was that he had to kick the ball if it came his way without any indication of why he had to kick it...."

This gem, "Investors in People — What's in it for me?" comes from Investors in People UK, 4th Floor, 7-10 Chandos Street, London, W1M 9DE, tel 0171 467 1900. It lasts for about 13 minutes. I have no idea whether it costs anything but it is a must for any serious student of Town memorabilia.

See yer,
John Clark,
Bristol.

Eds note: Somehow, the idea of a comedian in LTFC kit seems very realistic at the moment. Not funny, but realistic. And as for players in tutus.....

Dear "Mad",

Monday March 2, 1998: Nick Owen, on Central TV, discussing the latest Royal Mail stamps — "There ought to be a set of stamps depicting my football team, as they're used to getting licked regularly."

Could I make an early plea, rather than wait until the end of the season? Having watched Luton all over the country, again, I would be most upset to have to miss the play-off game at Bristol Rovers or Northampton (with their very small away ends) while hundreds of season ticket holders watch their one and only away game of the season. So could Luton please make plans now (March) to ensure fair distribution of tickets for the play-offs.

John Solomon,
Cannock, Staffs.

A spot of optimism, eh! Seriously, why shouldn't season ticket holders get some advantage in this? Many of us also watch the Town home and away and lash out a large amount of money in May or June to ensure that we do get tickets for matches when they might be restricted.

Dear "Mad",

I write in response to the article by Chris Lennon. I would confirm that I was "that bloke going into Motor World", but I must correct him on the number of Luton fans in Harlow.

Apart from myself, my father, my brother and my sister are also Luton fans. The latter I converted; originally she supported Man United. So, it appears there are 5 Luton fans in Harlow.

However, if it wasn't for my father, I could well be visiting Vicarage Road on a Saturday afternoon. You see, my father, many years ago, when he was a young lad, followed the Hornets on a regular basis until one day, the Hornets sold their best player, Tony Currie, so he decided to switch clubs and started to follow Luton. So to my father I am extremely grateful.

Leigh Wells,
Harlow, Essex.

PS: Just remembered, I've spotted two other Luton fans, so now it's 7 Luton fans in Harlow.

WREXHAM EXPERIENCE

A few things to know about Wrexham (for next season if we stay up):

- ♦ It is flat — the nearest decent hills are a bus ride away.
- ♦ There are lots of sheep.
- ♦ The town is not only flat but bloody boring too.
- ♦ Beware of drunks from Oxford jumping on your Luton top (thankfully I wasn't wearing it at the time) in pubs, while trying to explain the meaning of life to you.

In ~~Llangol~~. ~~Llangol~~.. the place near Wrexham where they have mountains, the sheep are well strange. When you go into a field the sheep stare at you for a few seconds, then they all leg it to the other side of the field (who can blame them when you consider the rumours about country folk), leaving you to stroll through, head held high, like some middle age landlord observing peasants meekly doffing their caps as you pass by.

However, in one particular field it all started as normal, then (and I swear on my love for Malcolm MacDonald this is true) they started mobbing up. There was a large group tentatively moving towards me, the one at the front gawping at me in a real funny way.

Oh no. "Look, I am not your shepherd or a farmer out for a bit of slap and tickle!" Then I remembered they were north Welsh sheep, and probably spoke Welsh as their first language. So, with no point in trying to reason with them, I decided to leg it.

Phil Darton

JACKANORY
THE INCREDIBLE
STORY OF
"GORDON'S
GLOVES"
(OR WHY IAN
FEUER'S A BIT
SHIT THIS SEASON)

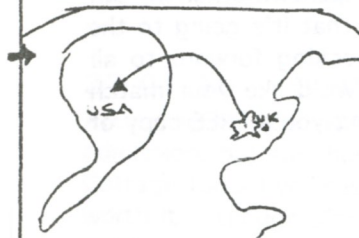
ARE YOU SITTING
COMFORTABLY. THEN
YOU'RE NOT IN THE
MAIN STAND & I'LL
BEGIN....



AGING SUPER-KEEPER
GORDON BANKS
RETIRES FROM
FOOTBALL AND
THROWS AWAY HIS
GLOVES...



BUT GIVEN HIS
AMAZING THROWING
ABILITIES, THEY
LAND IN AMERICA...



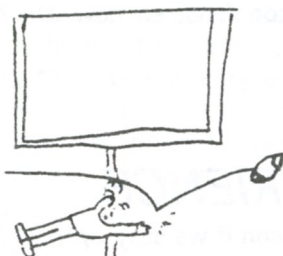
... ON OVERLY
TALL IAN FEUER



WHEN IAN PUTS
THE GLOVES ON,
HE REALIZES
THEY HAVE
SPECIAL MAGIC
POWERS



UNFORTUNATELY, THEY
WERE SHIT FOR
AMERICAN FOOTBALL...



AND BASKETBALL



BUT THEN AMERICA
DISCOVERED A
NEW GAME

IT'S A BALL & YOU KICK IT
WITH YOUR FOOT. LET'S
CALL IT SOCCER



THE CAPTAIN OF THE
SOCCER TEAM WAS
ALWAYS ENCOURAGING
IAN TO FIND THE BEST
POSITION FOR HIM TO
PLAY IN

FEUER, YOU'RE SHIT AT
SPORTS. GO IN GOAL



BUT IAN BECAME
THE GREATEST
KEEPER IN
AMERICA.

DAMN. WE MUST MAKE
THESE GOALS BIGGER



AND SORT HIS
FORTUNE IN
ENGLAND

DAMN. WE MUST STOP
THESE FOREIGNERS
PLAYING HERE.



IAN WAS SPOTTED BY
LUTON MANAGER
TERRY WESTLEY

WELL, IAN MY GUIDEDOG
LIKES YOU



GIVEN IAN'S SUPER
SKILLS, HE WAS
KEEPING OUT OF
THE TEAM KELVIN
DAVIS



KELVIN PLANNED
TO GET RID OF
IAN



AND SO...



AND....



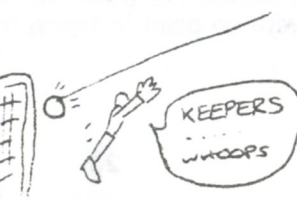
KELVIN FOUND OUT
ABOUT IAN'S
MAGIC GLOVES
& THREW THEM
AWAY...



BUT GIVEN KELVIN'S
AMAZING THROWING
ABILITIES, THEY
LAND ... TWO YARDS
AWAY IN THE BIN



WITHOUT HIS MAGIC
GLOVES IAN WAS
JUST AN AVERAGE
DIVISION 2 GOALIE



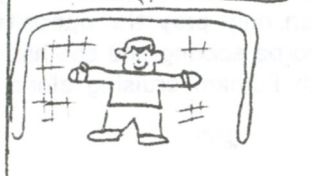
THE END



THE CHARACTERS AND
EVENTS DEPICTED
IN THIS STORY ARE
ENTIRELY FICTITIOUS
AND ANY SIMILARITY
TO ANY PERSONS OR
"BILLY'S BOOTS" STORIES
FROM ROY OF THE
ROVERS IS PURELY
COINCIDENTAL.

EPILOGUE
BUT WHAT HAPPENED
TO KELVIN

I'M IN GOAL NOW.
HA HA HA HA HA



HOWEVER, LATER
THAT SEASON

WHAT A SAVE -
BY THE BIN



SINKING SLOWLY

As depression gets deeper in the Kenilworth Road area, and we look out our maps of Halifax, Hull and Hartlepool, things are definitely looking grim. Whether we can escape remains to be seen, but there can be little doubt that it's going to the wire. So, fingers crossed everybody — unless you are looking forward to all those new grounds next season..... In the meantime we'd like your match reports please, to the usual address, and in return we'll send you a FREE copy of the next issue.

13.12.97 CHESTERFIELD 0 TOWN 0

There's something about playing at Chesterfield and not seeing the entire game..... after last season's helping of Pea soup, this time our group missed the first ten minutes of the game thanks to the sheer incompetence of the taxi firm who sent their cars to the wrong pub! However, after suffering the last eighty minutes, I was wishing we hadn't bothered risking life and limb in flagging down another cab and instead remained in the aforementioned pub. I can honestly say there is nothing else to say about the match during which each goalkeeper was required to make just one save!

Steve F.

24.01.98 POOR LUTON 1 FILTHY RICH FULHAM 4

You see, if only that nice Mr Al-Fayed had chucked £30 million at Luton instead of Fulham things would have been different. For starters, the *Luton on Sunday* reporter would not have spent half his article pricing each Fulham player instead of analysing what Luton did wrong.

As an exiled Fulham fan living in Luton I had been waiting 15 years for this game. While the 1994 League Cup tie came as a pleasant diversion (and was one of the few things we won that season) it was league action I wanted. When it finally came, I had problems getting a ticket thanks to your ludicrously small away allocation and our legion of newly discovered "die hard" supporters. "Where were you when you were poor?" you sang. Too bloody true.

The game itself is being regarded by us as the first time the new Fulham team really clicked, so in that sense Luton were unlucky. To go a goal down within 40 seconds does put a bit of a dampener on things. Press reports that your manager expected us to finish in the top three, or even the top two suggested to me that he expected to lose this game, since the only way we can catch Bristol City or your friends from Hertfordshire is by beating the likes of Luton away. Maybe this communicated itself to your players.

I thought that Oldfield and Alexander had good games, and possibly Thorpe too, although he received such poor service that it was hard to judge him fairly. Feuer had the sort of nightmare you can only pray the opposition keeper has. Apart from the five minutes between Thorpe scoring and the half time whistle, the rest of the team was very poor, with Fulham cruising along in second gear then

stepping up the pressure and scoring. Except for Wayne Collins who preferred to head wide.

My only regret is that we did not tape Lennie's half-time talk and play it to all our opponents. It seemed to knock the stuffing right out of your lot.....

Declan McCabe

27.01.98 FULHAM 1 TOWN 2

Attending an Auto Windscreens away match appears a particularly embarrassing admission, but for those of us London based supporters the chance to visit the Cottage for a fiver seemed too good a chance to miss. In retrospect it was well worth it, although after witnessing the shambles of the previous Saturday I can't say I was overly optimistic as we approached the ground.

However, a bizarre evening began when we were met by a handwritten sign saying "Visitors seats £5". Naturally, this lead onto an open terrace (anyone fancy suing the charming Mr Al Fayed under the Trades Description Act?). Also "Diddy" David Hamilton — a 70s Radio One DJ for those of you under 21 — was reading out the team news. Where's he been for the last 10 years?

Things got even weirder on the pitch as Dwight gave us the lead. Much hilarity was generated by Fulham's ridiculous pony-tailed attacker who, when not whinging, was falling over or whacking crosses virtually into the River Thames. By now, on the pitch, things were looking comfortable.... until the traditional and expected second half collapse, with first Fulham equalising then Kelvin Davis making a succession of wonder saves to keep us in it as the defence continued to go walkabout.

It was now getting pretty cold, the temperature was dropping fast and the Town were desperately hanging on. Just as the additional torment of extra-time/golden goal was looming, Tony Thorpe appeared as sub and saved the day. Only on the pitch a matter of minutes, he managed to direct a cross/shot into the net via the post in front of the travelling contingent and seconds later it was all over.

Cue delirium. "Wem-ber-ley, Wem-ber-ley." Pity it wasn't a league game!

Barry Mills

31.01.98 TOWN 1 AFC BOURNEMOUTH 2

Ever noticed how some matches are so memorable that you have forgotten everything about them within a matter of days? This game was one of them.

However, having read a few reports, something becomes vaguely familiar. In particular, the way a certain Jason Brissett rose majestically above all those taller blokes in Luton shirts to head the first goal past a helpless Kelvin Davis. How did he outjump our defence? And how the hell did the cross get put in to allow him to have a ball for his head to connect with? And this after only 10 minutes. Forty eight minutes of not very memorable football later, Steve Fletcher must have thought Christmas had come early when Richard Harvey managed to head what had been a harmless ball straight into his path, and he took full advantage.

Inevitable, being 2-0 down was the cue for the Town to try and score a goal, and when it came it was from the previously hopeless Marvin Johnson. Having apparently spent most of the previous 70 minutes struggling to come to terms with the precise details of which parts of the body can and cannot be used in Association Football, and seemingly thinking that the red card might be the best way of getting over this problem, he appeared in the Bournemouth six yard box and managed to divert the ball into the net. The reaction of most of us in the Kenny was unusual to say the least — absolute hilarity. The worst player on the pitch suddenly becoming a potential saviour was the best joke most of us had seen or heard for weeks. Somehow, this actually softened the blow of losing yet again.

K.F.H.

07.02.98 WREXHAM 2 TOWN 1

The game was played out in midfield with all the players manoeuvring in a set area dictated by both defences holding their lines about 25 yards out from their respective penalty areas. Great, I thought, just a matter of time before we pass our way through this lot and win the game.

My optimism was increased by the first Wrexham move, half an hour into the game, which ended with a shot that sailed over my head reaching a policeman standing at the back of the seats behind the goal.

At half time I set myself up for our imminent victory with a coffee 30p cheaper than its Kenilworth Road equivalent.

Then against the run of play — and my forlorn hope — the sheep farmers scored. Then came the Wrexham Minuet (not as good as the Millwall Minuet), they scored again, and Steve Davies got a great lobbed goal, but so late that we never got back into their half to threaten turning it around.

A special mention for the Thin Controller and friends who missed the last two goals to catch the train home.

Phil 'Highbury Hatter' Darton

14.02.97 Wxxxxxx 1 TOWN 1 (PRIDE RESTORED)

A Desperate Search for Pre-Match Ale

Remember the sobriety that surrounded the brilliant 4-2 win in '94 due to a 12 o'clock kick-off? I find it crap trying to celebrate un-bevvied, so three of us decided to try to avoid a repeat this year. There were known to be several hostelries in central London that opened at 7 am for market workers, post office workers, builders and nurses — but were any of them open on a Saturday? We set off from Luton station on the 06.51 train to find out. I even stayed in on Friday night, so as to be in pristine condition to consume a shed full of beer, if possible. The hostelries featured in this sad tale will remain anonymous.

When I worked by Waterloo, after a hard night's work we often frequented a boozer near London Bridge station, but I had been tipped off that it was no longer open on Saturdays, so it was not on our itinerary. Our first port of call was Mount Pleasant, where allegedly a pub near the sorting offices would be open. We

arrived at 07.40; all was quiet. A newspaper vendor gleefully informed us that it no longer opened. Bugger.

Undeterred, we went for option two; a pub which opened for the Spitalfields Market workers, just up the road from Liverpool Street station. But when we reached the market, a large car park sign proclaimed, "open Mondays to Fridays and Sundays". The pitch blackness inside the boozer confirmed our fears. Shit.

It began to dawn that we had got out of our beds at 05.30 for sod-all. We went to a greasy spoon where, being a born Londoner, I tried to recall where there was a market that was open on Saturdays. Bingo! Chapel Market, up by the Angel, Islington. We bolted down our breakfast and made haste to Moorgate for the Northern Line. Upon arrival at our third destination, I asked a stall-holder whether any pubs were open. He gestured to the pub we were now standing outside: "This one normally opens at half nine" — it was only 0840. Even though we had to be on a train out of Euston by 1030 to meet the rest of our group at Shitford, we were determined to at least stay for one beer, so we walked to the nearby Sainsbury's and purchased some tinnies. We then took on the appearance of three winos, standing in the street at nine in the morning, supping beer, before arriving back at the aforementioned drinking establishment at exactly 09.30. Fifteen minutes later, there we were, still waiting. Not only did the pub not open, but on closer inspection it looked like the dump hadn't opened for weeks!

Admitting defeat, we made our way to Shitford Junction, where we were given a police escort all the way to the hole. I have to admit that the policing on this day was the most effective I have ever seen, although escorting Town fans between the stations in St Albans did sound like overdoing it. I mean, given that it was before opening time, where the hell else were Town fans going to go when they got to City station, but straight down to the Abbey station?

The Game: A spirited performance by the Town earned a draw. The best player on the park was Tony Thorpe, who ran their players ragged, and should have scored with a header just before half-time. The old stagers, like Thomas and Johnson — criticised by all of us for most of the season — came good for the big one as usual. It was so much nicer to score second, after seeing them wipe out our lead on the previous two occasions at their place, though in the 93rd minute would have been even sweeter. The highlight of the game was the goal-saving divot, just as their player was about to shoot for a certain 2-0 lead. Serves them right for allowing Sarascum to play on their pitch.

After: "Now can we go into a pub please?" A pleasant afternoon and evening was had in St Albans — off the beaten track though, as most city centre pubs were shut, and the Old Bill were virtually forcing Town fans back into Bedfordshire. Oh, and remember the London Bridge pub I had been advised not to try in the morning? An apologetic colleague came up to me on the Monday morning, and advised me that he had been drinking in there after night turn on Saturday morning! I lied, and told him we had found somewhere else, "without any problem".....}#!!)@=\$?&!!

The Thin Controller

17.02.97 AFC BOURNEMOUTH 1 TOWN 0

After the creditable draw at W*tf*rd, about 500 Town fans stupidly made this trip. By Bournemouth's standards the overall attendance was big; this being a major game for a club not familiar with visits to the twin towers.

Lennie Lawrence shook his head in disbelief at the "Lawrence out" chants that greeted the winning goal. If he can't understand why we were so upset, let me enlighten him:

Tony Thorpe was injured. We played only the impotent Marshall up front. With the only other player making any progress in the opposing half being Chris Allen, whose distribution and finishing was, as ever, abysmal, it was so obvious to anyone watching that the 11 players on the pitch were not capable of winning this, or any, game.

It looked as though we were playing for a 0-0 draw in a game that couldn't possibly end 0-0!

A fit again Phil Gray was on the bench.

Lawrence finally saw fit to bring him on when Bournemouth scored with three minutes to go. So much time to retrieve a situation that was Lawrence's making. Why didn't he come on with 30 minutes to go?

We had wasted half a day travelling all that way for bugger all.

PS: Lawrence out.

Objét

21.02.97 TOWN 0 BRISTOL BLOODY CITY 0

OK, we didn't win, but Waddock didn't play, Gray did and we weren't totally out-classed or made to look stupid. Basically, the midfield at last offered something going forward, there was movement up front, and against a half decent side.

Two questions:

- Tony Thorpe were you watching? Your goals are great, but can you run?
- Why was Waddock on the bench? What was the point? To quote Lawrence "Simon Davies needs to pull his finger out". So play him you pillock. He's got class and should be given the chance to prove it. Ten game run minimum.

Two asides:

- Listen to Radio 5 phone-ins. When you hear Liverpool, substitute Luton. The players don't try, the manager's soft, can't motivate and is tactically naive. Sound familiar? And they're 3rd in the Premiership. What point in succeeding?
- I've seen the answer to our ills. He plays for Cardiff on the right side of midfield and has star written all over him in big, gold, shiny letters. Name: Jason Fowler. Age: young. I'd swap our whole midfield, or Tony Thorpe, for him. Trust me on this one.

For a surreal experience, try watching Luton whilst listening to rugby on a walkman — it's dead weird.

It's too late in the season for 'Lawrence out'. If he resigns now he's taking the piss.

Bluebird Jones

24.02.97 TOWN 1 WIGAN ATHLETIC 1

Coming to Kenilworth Road is becoming tedious to say the least. Matters were made unbearable by the club's decision to sell its best player and only goalscorer at a critical stage of the season and at a price considerably lower than his true worth..... and to a club that will, at best, scrape into the play-offs in our division. This bombshell was dropped on the afternoon of this game and the pre-match atmosphere in the pub was funeralsque.

The standard of football was as crap as usual and when Wigan took the lead direct from a corner early on the tension in the crowd grew instantly.

The 'anti' taunts were now directed towards Kohler as well as Lawrence. Oldfield then scored a good equaliser but having conceded the first goal at home Luton could obviously not win the game. This was confirmed when the unmarked Gray, eight yards from goal with the keeper grovelling on the floor, contrived to miss. Now I bet a certain other player would have scored..... that's two points the transfer has cost us already after just one game!

Steve F.

28.02.97 PLYMOUTH ARGYLE 0 TOWN 2

Certain Luton players made the right choice of pass (and head) in the closing stages of this match. The Town lads then had the skill to implement their correct choice of play, a good attack into the wind with a striker chasing and a competent header — 1-0. A sensible ball out of defence, an accurate pass in to the central striker's path, an adequate chip shot to follow — 2-0.

Conclusion: Luton are not world beaters, but neither are they crap.

The Highbury Hatter

03.03.97 PRESTON NORTH END 1 TOWN 0

This was the nearest I've got to Lennie Lawrence all season, being a Kenny End season ticket holder, so as I supped my pre-match pint I was relishing the prospect of abusing him. Sadly (?) in the first half we simply played too well for abuse to be shouted, and for some reason Preston were unable to cope with our pretty passing. For all our possession though, we still barely created a chance — on a night when Tony Thorpe opened his account for Fulhams.

The second half began fairly similarly, but being frustrated at being caught offside 20-odd times, Preston became more determined, and gained control of midfield; a winner became inevitable, and pretty football lost to hard graft as it always does in this poxy division. The Town improved again in the dying minutes, but could not salvage a deserved point.

What a shit ground. The TV cameras face the new main stand, thus hiding the awful cow shed we had to stand in. There is no seating for away fans, so we were all squashed into a tiny terrace, with only about a third of us sheltered from the incessant rain. Still, nice pies though.

Objét

Buoyed from our success at Plymouth, the Travel Club set off in confident mood for Deepdale — the only worry being the announcement of a pitch inspection scheduled for 4 o'clock.

However, with the weather clearing we settled back to watch a video on the coach. Marvellous what today's modern modes of conveyance offer! It was "The Full Monty" and I have to admit that I thoroughly enjoyed it — there was even a plot to it (obviously Mr Lawrence was not involved in the production), and it offered reasonable entertainment.

Not quite so good was the second feature — Nick Hancock's efforts at "Footballing Hell". Strangely, no Hatters clips in this one. The rest of the journey passed uneventfully, once it had been confirmed that the game went ahead.

On reaching the ground a rather pleasant hostelry was found where the beer was good and the locals very welcoming. We found that we had much in common — proud history, poor current form and even one time incumbents of a plastic pitch. One of the lads had felt incensed enough to write to their captain, Sean Gregan, who had gestured to the crowd at the previous home match. He showed us the reply, handwritten and sincere unlike Mr Lawrence's somewhat curt reply to my friend's letter to him — at least he bothered, I suppose.

Unfortunately, that was as good as the evening got. It was raining hard again by this time and as they kicked off you somehow sensed that the conditions would not be to our liking (I nearly resorted to a Lennie-ism there and offered this as an excuse!). For most of the first-half it was pretty uneventful with Luton having most of the possession. Waddock huffed and Oldfield puffed and a couple of half chances came along, but nothing to get excited about. Preston, it has to be said, did not trouble Kelvin once in that first period.

But it was a different story after the break. Those venerable sages amongst us, who had seen this sort of thing before, nodded to each other and said, "their gaffer has got to 'em at half-time". They looked fired up (what DOES Lennie say to our lot during the break, for Heaven's sake?). This woke their fans up and a goal looked on the cards. When it did come it was disappointing that neither Kelvin or the guy on the line made any attempt to actually go for the ball.

After that you knew there was no way that Luton were going to score, even if they did come to life in the last 10 minutes where they exerted a lot of pressure, but still did not create anything clear cut. News of Thorpe's first goal for Fulham really rubbed the salt in.

As usual, after an away defeat so far from home on a wet midweek evening, it seemed an awful long way home (even though Phil, the driver, did well to get back to Luton before one o'clock), but it gave us plenty of time to reflect on the particular merits of certain individuals — and reiterate that when Mr Kohler took over the club, we were competing against the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool in the top division. This result left us 20th, with every prospect of facing teams like Mansfield and Lincoln — no disrespect to them — next season.

"Well, we didn't get even half a Monty tonight", one lady sighed on the way home. And that reminds me; if that's your best at Outstripping a defence, Phil

Gray; and if that's the best Tackle you can muster, Mr Alexander, then don't even think about a 'secondary career' on stage.

Alan Robinson

PS: Question: How many Luton directors does it take to change a light bulb?

Answer: None — Lawrence would have made so many excuses for the old one, they wouldn't bother!

07.03.97 TOWN (Now striker-less) 0 WYCOMBE (Never had one) 0

FACTS:

1. Wycombe's first goal attempt was after 76 minutes. The first shot on target came 7 minutes later.
2. As they came for a draw, there was no need to try to score, as we couldn't.
3. Wycombe were probably the worst outfit we have seen this season, but they *still* comfortably kept us at bay.
4. All of our shots were straight at Wycombe's keeper.
5. Dwight Marshall will never be anywhere near the player he was before he got injured at Sunderland. So please stop hero-worshipping him. *When did he last score?*
6. Our being crap is no longer Lawrence's fault. He should have been sacked ages ago. Blame David 'Ambitious' Kohler.
7. Lawrence has got to make more use of Fotiadis and Simon Davies.
8. Luton Town Arse Licking Supporters Club: Wake up to what is going on. You cannot support the board in the sale of Thorpe.
9. Make no mistake, we're going down. Again. Our third relegation since Kohler arrived at this club.

The Thin Controller

14.03.98 BURNLEY 1 TOWN 1

Early start from Luton. Train to Leeds via Derby and then across the Pennines through Bradford and Halifax (*practise for next season?*) alighting at a place called Mytholmroyd for our first port of call — a pub to watch the Arse beat Man Utd — excellent result.

Eventually arrive at Turf Moor. Bit different to last season as both teams were going strongly and twice as many punters turned up compared to this year.

Overall, we played pretty well apart from in front of goal. Defence looked steady, midfield actually looked effective at last and at least we created chances. Burnley took the lead early in the first half against the run of play, but Thomas levelled with a deserved equaliser.

We should have won it, but Gray and Evers cocked up. Burnley were bloody crap and their fans deserve a better team than that. I couldn't believe Waddle got a standing ovation when he came on as sub — until I realised it wasn't Waddle!

A point apiece was no good for either team really.

Steve F.

GOING, GOING.....

This would normally appear as an editorial, but the timing of issue 46 means that this could be out of date by then. I'm writing on Wednesday 25th February, the day after we heard that Tony Thorpe was being sold to Fulham for £800,000. It's also the day after a 1-1 draw at home to Wigan and the day that it was announced that Trevor Peake was leaving to join Coventry.

So why choose to write now rather than wait? Because I'm so bloody angered by the sale of Thorpe and the general state of our club. Dealing with Thorpe first, we probably shouldn't be surprised that with the club in the bottom four, this has been seen to be the ideal time to sell our top scorer. No doubt this will help no end with our efforts to avoid relegation. Of course, it has happened before, and if Lennie Lawrence thinks it's really worth hanging around at this club, he should perhaps look back in time to check out what happened to Jimmy Ryan.

As for the board, and the management of the club, the sale of Thorpe is allegedly because of the financial position of the club, which is losing £30,000 every week. We are not stupid, and do understand that players have to be sold to balance the books, but on this occasion the timing stinks. And I, for one, seriously doubt that this sale will help the financial position if it results in relegation. If the losses are £30,000 a week now, what will they be in the 3rd Division with lower gates?

Since David Kohler arrived at this club the losses have increased from something around £5,000 a week to £30,000, in spite of constant cost cutting exercises, and we've managed to go from the league's top flight to (nearly) the bottom. What has to be asked of the other directors is, would they run their businesses like this? Has Universal Salvage become a succesful company by reducing it's sales and increasing it's overheads? Has Sky Ford established itself by selling cut price cars with an increasingly ineffective sales force? I don't think so, and it's about time some business acumen was applied to the promotion and selling of Luton Town FC. If the main product is getting worse, which it is, then something more must be done to get the crowds through the turnstiles. Selling Tony Thorpe is not the answer, as the attendance for the Wigan match testifies. Of course, it may be that the directors don't care, and are prepared to let the club go down the financial pan. Who knows?

It hurts to compare our club with one from Hertfordshire, but at the end of last season it was Watford who had all the problems, but it was they who changed things, not us. And what has happened since says it all.

K.F.H.

Raving Mad!!!



The editor has a bet that Paul McLaren will score four goals this season. Pretty stupid, huh? And talking of the editor, he has a soft spot for the departed Trevor Peake, as almost certainly the last player about who he will be able to say "He's older than me!"



SIMPLY MAD

Afetr recently purchasing 'A Hatter Goes Mad', written by local teacher Kristina Howells, I sat down one post-Christmas evening to have a good read through and to assure my self that being an avid Town fan was not such a bad thing after all.

Though lacking in any journalistic talent, it was clear that Kristina, who apparently is Luton "through and through", pretty much knows sod all about the club and is making a nice little earner from it. Here are some of the more concerning bits from the book....

Page 61, and a small account of our historic win in 1988 at wembley. Kristina goes on to say "Still in the 1st half, Arsenal scored again." Yeah, even Alan Smith weren't that quick luv. Then, moving on to say "with a few minutes left, the winner." Wrong again author. 14 seconds lapsed between Lukic hitting the turf and Joe worrall blowing his whistle, I've counted a zillion times.

Page 5, and a photograph of, and I quote, "Luton Town players celebrating a winning goal." Sadly, it was the match against Barnsley, at the end of the 95/96 season in which we went down. Tony Thorpe's effort only pulling back the deficit, to 2-1. Nice caption, wrong picture.

Moving on to another 'wrong caption' moan, and page 86, where it shows the scoreboard with Luton Town 6 Crewe 0 on it, and 78 minutes on the clock. The caption below reads, "...shows the time of the sixth goal Luton scored." Erm, wrong again Miss. The scoreboard actually bugged up at this point, and Skippy never knocked in our sixth until the final minute.

Just to finish off, a couple of other interesting points within the book. Firstly, Damian Matthew (anybody remember him?) goes on to say his best moment for the Hatters was a "piece of dribbling against Bristol City — I hit a post." Well, buggre me, what a highlight. And finally, and I'm sure all of you reading this will have a quiet snigger — a bit from Ceri Hughes and his ambition, he says, is "...to make as much money as possible." At last, honesty prevails. Perhaps the author of the book had the same thing in mind.....

The Kempston Methodist

BACK ISSUES

Back issues once again available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, and 35 to 37. Issue 1 is free, 2 to 34 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 (second class is 31p for one issue). Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

LUTON TOWN PLAYERS — ALL TALK?

Last April I attended the Luton Town Supporters Club end-of-season presentation evening at the Kent Athletic Club, Luton. I spoke to Dwight Marshall who was very chatty. Last year I spoke to Gary Waddock who was equally willing if a little embarrassed by the attention. Previously, I have spoken to Tony Thorpe and Des Linton. I tell you this to exonerate the above from the following complaint. I also exonerate the down-to-earth Andrew Fotiadis and the ever popular Ian Feuer.

Every other player seems totally uninterested in the supporters. It is not asking much to expect professional footballers whose wages we pay, to make an effort to speak with us just once a year. As soon as they arrive they head straight for the corner by the bar and stay there. Until, of course, they have to be dragged to the floor to collect their prizes. Attitudes to receiving an award range from sullen to completely nonplussed. These guys are not employed for their oratory skills, I know, but I wonder if there is any connection between quietness on the microphone and quietness on the pitch. Lennie is often complaining that the players do not talk enough on the pitch. Maybe they need a confidence course or lessons in public speaking.

The players simply talk amongst themselves before the presentations, then afterwards most disappear as quickly as possible. Maybe they all go home for an early night because they have training tomorrow? Sometimes a conversation can be wrung out if one makes a particular effort. However, I believe the players should make the effort. They should spread out amongst the supporters and start conversations themselves. I bet they are not so reticent in a nightclub full of bimbos (is there any other kind?).

I think the players would get a much more understanding response from fans on the terraces if they did not remain so aloof in social circles.

Clifford Saunders

EXILED HATTERS FAN?

If you are an exile, you'll want to keep up to date with what goes on at Kenilworth Road, and with Hatters Matters you can do just that. Hatters Matters is a monthly newsletter designed specifically for the exiled fan, and provides all the news that you won't find on teletext.

To subscribe for one year (12 issues) send a cheque for £6.00 (payable to Hatters Matters) to: Hatters Matters, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL. Or just send an SAE for a free sample copy.

TOWN TRAVELS

By the time you read this we have only three trips left,, and two of them are awful for drinking. On March 11th we're off to Gillingham, to play Gillingham (as opposed to Brighton next season?) and this is not widely considered a great place for beer. However, for those travelling by train there are a few options, and the WILL ADAMS, 73 Saxton Street (Fullers and guest beers) may be a good option. Alternatively, the ROSENEATH, 79 Arden Street or the DOG & BONE, 21 Jeffrey Sreet (both with guest beers) will be worth a try. The latter of these two apparently welcomes away supporters.

The second trip is the wonderful experience of Bristol Rovers. Our Bristol correspondent John Clark provides the following information. For those travelling by road, enter Bristol from the north on the A38. About 2 miles north of the city centre pass the Royal George and the Duke of York (the nearest pub to the ground) on the left. Immediately past the Duke of York fork right into Kellaway Avenue. After about three quarters of a mile (just past Tesco) is the Kellaway Arms, a decent boozer with Smiles and Marston's Pedigree. Kellaway Avenue is a decent place to park for the match.

Nearer the City centre but *en route* for the ground is a very fine alehouse recently acquired and refurbished by Bath Ales. Serving the full range of Bath ales plus a guest beer, a warm welcome is guaranteed at the HARE ON THE HILL for Luton fans. Who knows, Hatters Ale may even be available. To find this pub follow Stokes Croft (A38) north from the city centre. After about 5 minutes walk turn left immediately past the BRISTOL BREWHOUSE (well, OK, after a pint in the Brewhouse) up Ninetree Hill. Halfway up you will see a tiled pub off a road to the left, next to the flats. Highly recommended. For other Bristol pubs see the information published in issue 38 of *MAAH!* last season.

Our final away trip this season is the oh so exciting visit to Griffin Park for a relegation battle. Considering that this ground is reputed to have a pub on every corner, this must be one of the worst grounds in the country for drinking. It's miles from the "nearest" railway or tube stations, and just as far from a half decent pub. The best bet is probably to drink somewhere reliable and further away and then make a late dash for the ground by tube and taxi — although if memory serves, taxis are also hard to come by in the area. If, however, you are determined to drink in Brentford, look for the High Street and try the BEEHIVE (no. 227) or the MAGPIE & CROWN (no. 128), or just round the corner in Catherine Wheel Road, the BREWERY TAP (Fullers). These will be about 15 minutes walk from Brentford station, and a similar distance from the ground. Enjoy.

K.F.H.

BEATING THE AWAYDAY BLUES

Or, what an earth can you do when the Town are playing away and the other half wants you to stay at home and look after the kids.....

Number 2: Rugby

This article should be in two parts, pre- and post- Professionalism, because the advent of professional Rugby Union, buoyed up by our old friend Sky TV and its stacks of cash has certainly led to dramatic changes in the sleepy world of club rugby.

The first thing to say is do not be fooled by the TV coverage of Five Nations Championship with 60,000 plus crowds and games played with a ferocious intensity. Club rugby more usually resembles Barnet v Northampton, a sedate game at quaint, slightly dilapidated, venues in front of 800 or so. Or rather, it used to, as professionalism has had a stunning impact on club rugby, and not all good in my opinion.

I used to like going along to Goldington Road to watch Bedford, parking near the ground was easy, one could amble in at 2.59pm and obtain a good view in the Grandstand at modest cost (certainly compared to football), food was cheap as it was prepared by old dears on a voluntary basis, one could have a pint or two while watching the game — all very civilised.

However, with the arrival of Frank Warren and his money all had changed, lots of razzmatazz, big signings including Martin Offiah and other assorted internationals, temporary stands have sprung up, glitzy marketing techniques have been introduced. This is all very well but has resulted in admission prices increasing dramatically and the ground becoming uncomfortable as it cannot really accommodate the much larger crowds in terms of facilities, toilets, catering and car parking.

There is no doubt that warren's investment has galvanised the club but people are paying for it and it no longer has such a cozy atmosphere. However, it has resulted in some success as last season Bedford finished 4th in the Second Division and qualified for the play-offs, but lost over two legs to Bristol. They also had a memorable game against Rob Andrew's star studded Newcastle, who had seven British Lions playing for them that day. Bedford won 34-28 in front of about 5000 spectators. This season the team is currently unbeaten and are top of the 2nd Division and looking good for automatic promotion.

Bedford has always been a strong side with a competitive fixture list against the top clubs. they won the Rugby Union Cup (then called the John Player Cup, now the Pilkington Cup) in 1975, and since the inception of the leagues

have usually been in Division 2 with the odd relegation and promotion. When they last went up to the 1st Division it was a humiliating experience as they lost every game and were relegated. The club relied heavily on two local institutions for its players, namely the private schools in the town and the farmers from around the county. This tradition has been maintained as they still have a Farmers and School gate at the entrance to the ground.

Union as a game used to be a bit hit and miss regarding entertainment value, on a bad day it could involve 16 hefty forwards lumbering into each other, a lot of tactical kicking and all the points coming from penalties. Conversely, when played well it makes for really exciting stuff, fluent running, fierce tackling and tries galore. Professionalism has improved the quality of entertainment as the game tries to market itself knowing that newcomers will not come and watch sterile encounters dominated by the boot.

Locally, Bedford now have a rival in that Saracens have relocated from their old ground in Southgate, north London after one season at Enfield FC, to Watford. Like Bedford, Saracens have also benefited from a vast injection of cash from a wealthy backer (Nigel Wray) and the club has been transformed. Traditionally, they have always been the poor relations of the other London sides such as Harlequins and Wasps, and Bramley Road, the club's former headquarters, had very spartan facilities on a ground owned by the local authority. Saracens does have great potential though with the very large catchment area of north London, Herts and Essex to itself.

Accordingly, recently I broke the habit of a lifetime and went along to Vicarage Road voluntarily, and without Luton forming the opposition, to see Saracens take on the French side Narbonne in the European Conference. I hate to say it but the ground is pretty impressive these days. Rather than relocating or not as the case may be (when will the findings of the Public Enquiry regarding the KohlerDome come out?) they have opted for a gradual redevelopment over a period of years and now have 3 imposing new stands leaving the tatty old main stand which will obviously be replaced in due course. Anyway, the splendid facilities are somewhat wasted on Saracens as there were only between 3000 and 4000 in the ground huddled together in the Rous and Main Stands.

Admission was £10 or £15 to sit in the top of the Rous Stand which compares favourably with prices for football. Indeed, to pay £10 for a seat on the halfway line (with no pillars and posts to impede the view) to watch a game where both teams are stuffed full of internationals compared to 3rd Division scufflers is very reasonable. The game itself was a feast of running rugby with Saracens scoring six to Narbonne's three, not a single penalty was taken which is illustrative of the changes in the game. Other innovations included

not one, but two troupes of dancing girls, loud disco music after every try and, most bizarre of all, a radio controlled car to take transport the sand to enable the kicker to take the conversions! It will be interesting to see if Saracens success on the playing field results in larger attendances.

For the old fashioned and nostalgic, there is a third local choice as Tabard RFC play at Cobden Hill, Radlett. This "ground" is rugby at its most basic consisting of a pitch, a grassed bank and a club house. A few seasons ago Tabard had a good run in the Pilkington Cup and played first division Northampton, and to maximise the attraction of this they erected a temporary stand which has since disappeared. Tabard do remarkable well considering that Radlett is not much more than a village and play in the National League, Division 2 South, which is the equivalent of the 4th Division and well above Luton RFC and Stockwood Park.

In regard to all of the above being child friendly, a vital concern to any dad if he uses the excuse of taking the children to the match to avoid shopping and such like, then Bedford and Tabard are the best as they do not charge and with the grounds being enclosed they offer plenty of scope for kicking a ball around or playing while the game is on. Obviously, this is impossible at Vicarage Road where Saracens are supposed to charge £5 for children's entry, but so far they have let my 6 year-old in for nothing. Expenses will all mount up when they get bigger.

Murray Craig

RETURN OF THE BORING OLD FART

When the B.O.F.'s pen ran out in tragic circumstances at the end of last season when we failed to get promotion, he found his inspiration went. Now, in even more tragic circumstances he is forced to express his feelings as Town head seemingly inexorably for the delights of the Conference (plying at Gateshead in front of a crowd of 468 for instance).

Lines written on a country privy following Thorpe's transfer:

As Kohler builds more castles in the air
The sullen crowd slopes slowly from the ground,
And homeward drives the BOF in sad despair,
As Kenilworth will soon give out no sound.

WilliamHILL HatterLeague

Update 4

So, with the fourth update we are close to the end of this season's competition and the transfer of the two players who were seen as being our best pair seven months ago, most teams will now be completely knackered in terms of their chances of making any further progress. Ian Feuer's points ranking has dropped dramatically and now has no chance of improving. Tony Thorpe, however, could yet finish as the top scoring striker on our list. The players scores listed are up to and including match number 29, Wycombe at home.

<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Pts</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Player</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>Pts</u>
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
201	Ian Feuer	0.9 m	-14	203	Nathan Abbey	0.3 m	-29
202	Kelvin Davis	0.3 m	10				
<u>Defenders</u>							
211	Gavin McGowan	0.4 m	-34	215	Darren Patterson	0.6 m	-3
212	Julian James	0.4 m	-2	216	Mitchell Thomas	0.4 m	12
213	Marvin Johnson	0.5 m	-20	217	Richard Harvey	0.3 m	-30
214	Steve Davis	0.8 m	52	218	Alan White	0.5 m	11
<u>Midfielders</u>							
221	Graham Alexander	0.7 m	72	224	Sean Evers	0.3 m	11
222	Gary Waddock	0.6 m	31	225	Simon Davies	0.4 m	6
223	Paul McLaren	0.5 m	50	226	Paul Showler	0.5 m	0
<u>Strikers</u>							
231	Tony Thorpe	1.0 m	67	235	Stuart Douglas	0.5 m	2
232	David Oldfield	0.7 m	57	236	Liam George	0.2 m	1
233	Dwight Marshall	0.5 m	5	237	Kim Grant	0.2 m	0
234	Andrew Fotiadis	0.8 m	4	238	Phil Gray	0.8 m	10

In the team listings, Dave Pearson continues to lead the pack with David Trillwood seemingly stuck five points behind. However, Martin Blake continues his charge up the table, improving from 5th place last time round to 3rd this time. Could he yet take the title? Watch this space. His cause has certainly been helped by being "randomly selected" as Manager of the Issue after the top four all qualified for the additional points. Daniel Bennett has also risen up the table by three places, but looks to be too far behind too make a challenge for anything better than third place — although that would still be among the prizes.

There doesn't look to be much chance of any other challengers emerging from the pack, which is a pity, as it would be nice to have a bit of competition going in to the last couple of weeks of the season.

<u>Pos</u>	<u>Team Name</u>	<u>Manager</u>	<u>Pts</u>
1	DERBYSHIRE 1968	Dave Pearson	196
2	THAMESLINK HATTERS	David Trillwood	191
3		Martin Blake	175
4	LUCKY DIP	Daniel Bennett	166
5	LUTON 3 ARSENAL 2	Steve Lindsay	149
6	SCUM SPICE - DER, HOLIDAY TO TURKEY!	Terry Lennon	145

Down at the bottom end of the table, Maxine Whiting and Roger Brown were tied in last place last issue, but Roger has made the sort of escape from the basement that the rest of us can only dream of, having risen to 68th place. This leaves Maxine stranded in 78th, and looking a certainty for the drop, although some sympathy should be extended here as she had "help" in selecting her team.

73	MILK MILK LEMONADE	Gerry Callaghan	1
74	RICHARD'S VILLAINS	Richard Price	0
75	PLAY HARRY THE HATTER	A. Griffiths	-11
76	DAN'S DUFFERS	Daniel Ripley	-13
77	THE ONLY WAY IS UP FC 97	Patrick Sammon	-14
78	HARRY HASLAM LEGS ELEVEN	Maxine Whiting	-32

So, with HatterSwaps no longer available. all you can do is sit back and hope for the best, or just hope that in next season's competition the rules are a bit more sociable to allowing you to improve your chances during the season.

KFH/RB

THE PLYMOUTH MYSTERY

Who was the guy I have never seen before following Luton, who got chucked out for chucking a plastic bottle of coke at the Argyle keeper.

He wore a Chelsea shirt and was escorted out by stewards and police who must have studied the video trained on the away end during the game.

I must admit I would have liked to have seen the slow motion. It was a terrible effort, falling woefully short of the keeper, though at least it landed in the back of the net, as did 2 Luton goals shortly afterwards!

My point here is unless Andy Gray played the film back using a yellow and blue felt tip to prove the issue he should never have been shown the red card.

Finally, could he not have just waved his arms around a lot, like the rest of us did, shouting at the keeper and then he could have drunk the coke when his throat got sore.

Phil '3-2 Wembley, Highbury Hatter' Darton

The Sharpe End

So, farewell then Tony Thorpe.

You were only small

And at one time no-one thought you were a striker.

But David Pleat called you the next Peter Beardsley,

And Lennie Lawrence turned you accidentally into a makeshift forward,

Admitting that he really didn't have a clue whether you'd be any good.

(With apologies to Private Eye).

Tony Thorpe's main problem as far as Luton fans were concerned seemed to be that he wasn't Malcolm MacDonald, Mick Harford or John Hartson — the powerful, bustling strikers of whom supporters seem to be so fond. Thorpey was in the Paul Walsh mould. Nippy, with quick feet and an eye for goal, but not always looking as though he would be prepared to die for the cause.

Personally, I was quite happy to forgive him that — having been that type of player myself. In fact, I was nearly knocked out by a colleague in a recent Veterans match for declaring, when asked to track back, that "I don't do defending!"

Anyway, that's neither here nor there. I'm sorry to see him go, but I can't help thinking that the rather begrudging approval he received from the Kenilworth Road crowd hastened his departure. And, listening to him interviewed by Three Counties Radio on the day he left, that opinion is given credence by his comment that he felt that not everyone would be sad to see him go and that he'd miss most of the people at Luton.

I know one thing though — I really hope young Master Thorpe comes back to haunt us next season. Because to do so we'd either have to be in the same division as Fulham, or we'd have to be playing them in a later round of the FA or Coca Cola Cups, which would mean we were actually having a cup run!

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I brought a friend and his son, who support Fulham, along to Kenilworth Road for the Fulham match as guests. They sat with us in the New Stand. When Fulham went two up a couple of other Fulham supporters began to display their happiness, which didn't go down too well with a few of the disgruntled home fans.

Words were exchanged, although tempers cooled before any physical unpleasantness took place.

It was difficult to know how to react. I'm not a violent chap physically, but I have been known to utter the odd wounding comment or two. And I get as upset as the next man if my team is playing badly or losing. And I really resent someone else being pleased about it. Which, of course, is a fault in my own make up.

But I would certainly prefer not to have to put up with gloating away fans in what

is essentially a home enclave of the ground. So, should the club knowingly permit away fans to be allowed into home areas as guests?

As this is a civilised country, of course they should.

And should those guests keep silent until they are in their own cars or homes before celebrating?

Of course they bloody should!

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I can't claim to be on terms of any great intimacy with Lennie Lawrence — I did endeavour to conduct an exclusive interview with him for Mad as a Hatter! when our paths crossed at a reserve match recently, and I can now reveal the full text of the in-depth discussion which ensued:

ME: "Good luck for Saturday, Lennie."

LL: "Thank you."

Whereupon he strode off around the pitch.

Now, I've sat and considered whether there were any hidden revelations contained within this exchange, but although there are undoubtedly authors out there who could conjure an entire book about Lennie's state of mind on the basis of this material, I am not one of them.

Still, over the past few months I've developed something of a soft spot for Lennie's ability to discover pitfalls in all situations. I'm convinced that come the day he wins a million on the Lottery he will bemoan the fact that last week it paid one million and one pounds.

But I think that following his performance before the Wigan match he can only now deteriorate. Because here was a match in which he actually made his excuses for a defeat BEFORE the game had even started.

He put forward a whole series of scenarios which would justify us not winning the game — we could miss a few chances and concede a sloppy goal; we could concede goals and not create any chances; we could miss a few chances, take one or two but defend badly, etc, etc.

The Wigan preview was his finest since the Bristol City away game prior to which Lennie had predicted that we might just as well not turn up because of our injury situation, then seemed gloomily pleased that the ensuing 3-0 defeat lived up to his worse fears. If Lennie were a Winnie the Pooh character he'd definitely be Eeyore.

Seriously, this sort of defeatism can only be contagious for the players, surely, and although realism needs facing up to, a positive frame of mind can often produce a positive performance.

Graham Sharpe

Watford Football Club



3.00 pm, Saturday Afternoon,
Vicarage Road Stadium.

You can almost feel the buzz as ____ And you fall into a deep sleep!
the game kicks off. The
impressive backdrop is Watford's
recently developed 22,000 all-
seater arena.

During the 90 minutes action, all ____ Why? There's nothing
eyes are on the pitch. ____ to watch!

But before and after the match, and at half time, another form
of entertainment is taking place.

In the club's executive boxes, sponsors' lounges and
hospitality suites people are getting better acquainted.

Supporters, guests and business people are enjoying the
convivial atmosphere for which Watford is famous.

It's the type of atmosphere where clients become friends, staff
are motivated and business deals are concluded.

The type of atmosphere you should experience. _____ if you're lacking a real

For more information please call the Marketing Department on ____ life!

01923 406000

Poached from Silverlink Trains timetable, under the heading
"Attractions (*sic*) on Silverlink".

← Oh Dear. Elton's at it
again!

**"STINKING,
LOUSY, THIEVING,
INCOMPETENT
SCUM."**

(Frank Dobson)

Here we have the answer of the Health Minister to the question: "Madam Speaker, would the minister express his opinion on the inhabitants of the waste ground adjacent to the hospital in Vicarage Road, Watford?"