

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



Issue 54 (The last?)

May '99

WE'RE RAISING THE

FLAG

Fans of Luton Action Group

ARE YOU?

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

**38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road,
Luton, LU3 2RL.**

Tel: (01582) 573485. Fax: (01582) 653392.

Email: khayward@aol.com

- Editor:** Keith Hayward.
Backroom Boys: Phil Ivinson, Mark Ivinson, Andy Collon.
Executives: Jerry Darr, Mark Wilson, Nick Gazeley, Rhianon Gazeley, Jeff Smith, Steve Follit, Dave Kirkby, Chris 'Royston Runaround' Lennon and young Joe.
Casual Help: Trevor Norman, Steve Tyler and Paul Tindle.
Contributors: Our thanks to Graham Sharpe, Declan McCabe, Russell Bulkeley, Norman Samuels, Phil Darton, the Kelvin Davis Fan Club, Mark Hughesdon, Bill Church, Graham Barkus, Tony Allbones, Andy Hunt, Tim Bailey, Will Kelly, David Fleckney, Kieran McTague, Clifford Saunders, Chris Hallam, Kelvin Dunn, Martin Dear, Andrew Fazekas, Phil Wash and anyone else we may have forgotten to mention.
Cartoons: Brilliantly drawn by Adam Lloyd.
Action photos: Gareth Owen.

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EDITORIAL

The trouble with writing an editorial a week or so before publication is that it can be so easy to be overtaken by events. In the case of issue 53, an editorial written 10 minutes before publication would have been overtaken by events. We were in fact outside the ground selling that issue when people started saying that news of receivership had been heard on the radio at 7 o'clock, this being on the evening of the Reading match.

Much has happened since then, and more of this on the following pages. Meanwhile, David Kohler, like Nero fiddling while Rome burns, is going ahead with plans for another KohlerDome planning application. We are all aware that Luton Town FC needs a new stadium, but survival has to come first. If Kohler goes ahead with this application we will have to ask serious questions about what Luton Town will get out of it, especially bearing in mind that the promises of great riches in the past were never put in writing. It is also interesting to find that part of the reason for the boardroom dispute was that Kohler wanted guarantees that he would be involved in any new stadium development. Odd to think that he failed to get such an assurance when he was in charge and there were no boardroom disputes. In this case one may feel that he is perhaps less of a shrewd businessman than he would have us believe.

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Meanwhile, at pitch level, Lennie Lawrence is managing to really drag out this season's relegation battle. Having spent much of the season in mid-table, it seems we are looking at a late charge for the wrong end of the table. It is all very well complaining about a lack of senior players, but results were going badly long before there was a shortage of senior players. It is difficult to know what it is that has gone wrong, and I am not going to try and analyse that, but Lennie ultimately has to take the blame for what will have proved to be a very poor season regardless of the circumstances that have intervened. Yes, we had a good cup run, but teams from the second division that reach cup quarter finals would be expected to be in contention for the play-offs, not battling against relegation.

This will be the second relegation battle in three full seasons under Lennie's charge, and it really is not good enough. Perhaps, if the club does survive — and that is still in question — Lennie will do the decent thing and give the new management the chance to make a fresh start.

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Finally, a word of explanation about the cover price of this issue. Having increased the price of Mad as a Hatter! earlier this season, there is no intention to hit you with another price hike so soon, but FLAG, which is supported by Mad as a Hatter! needs money, and all the proceeds from this issue will be going to FLAG, so we hope you will not mind paying a little extra. And apologies for not finishing the season with the usual 60 page issue, but editorial time has been sapped by involvement with FLAG matters.

Raising the FLAG

When it was announced that Luton Town had gone into receivership, it was clear that it was time for the fans to mobilise to secure the future of the club. Fortunately, the nucleus of the group that was to become FLAG was already in place, following a couple of meetings with senior politicians that had taken place at the instigation of Luton South MP Margaret Moran. It was these meetings which had led to the rather strange sight of the leaders of the Luton Town Supporters Club and the Loyal Luton Supporters Club drinking together and discussing their differences, along with the editor of this organ. What came out of this was that all had concerns about the future of the club and that there was some expectation of the club going into administration.

As a result, the group were already organising when the receiver was called in, and had their first meeting just two days later. It was at this meeting that the name FLAG (Fans of Luton Action Group) was adopted, in preference to Supporters of Luton Action Group. What was decided at that meeting was that all concerned felt that the survival of the club was paramount, and that a future of community ownership was preferable. The meeting was not just a handful of people, but about 20, representing LTSC, LLSC, Mad as a Hatter!, Bobbers Travel Club, Town on Tour and Whosh. It was decided to announce our arrival with a leaflet at the following Saturday's Gillingham match, for which a sponsor was quickly found (thanks Steve).

The LTSC representatives, Yvonne Fletcher and Mark Chapman, had already had a meeting with the Bournemouth chairman Trevor Watkins and lawyer Malcolm Niekirk, giving a good insight into what FLAG needed to do next. This was the public meeting, which took place on Sunday 18th April. This was a nerve wracking experience for all concerned, who had no idea of how many people would come. In the event, the turnout was marvellous, with around 2000 attending, and after the aims of FLAG had been explained, donating over £10,000 to get the FLAG fighting fund off to a superb start. More importantly, the whole evening was run in a very professional manner, doing much to assure people that this was not an impossible dream, but something that could really be achieved. A debt of thanks is due to all who helped organise the event, and to those who came to speak.

So, what is FLAG trying to achieve? Obviously, the future existence of Luton Town is top of the agenda, but in a different form. The intention is to see a club which is owned by the community in partnership with investors, ensuring that no single individual can control the club in the future, and therefore place the survival of the club in jeopardy. It can be done, and already has been at AFC Bournemouth.

At Luton we have a club that has a reputation of failing to communicate with supporters, of underachieving in its off the field activities, and of doing the same, rather more expensively, with its on field activity. There is little or no

attempt to involve the community in the club. These are all things which must change. There is no guarantee of success in football terms, but it seems that in the present day football world only the immense wealth of an individual like Mohammed Al-Fayed can do that, and such people are very, very rare. It is also important to be aware of the fact that if Mr Al-Fayed ever chooses to withdraw from Fulham, that club is likely to be in very serious trouble.

In order to achieve this FLAG needs to raise a substantial amount of money, much of it for the fighting fund in order to push the scheme forward. We are fortunate that in a very short space of time we have a very professional organisation, with people who are willing to sacrifice their time to achieve this end. In the coming weeks you will see many further fundraising activities for FLAG, as we strive to achieve our objectives.

Many have asked what would happen to the money raised if FLAG was to be unsuccessful. In that event, any moneys remaining in the fighting fund will be donated to a charity, possibly one set up for the purpose, with the objective of promoting the development of football in the community — a deliberately wide ranging statement as this could depend on the prevailing circumstances.

There have also been questions as to what FLAG will do when it is successful. It would not be right to answer questions about individuals, but the club has to change dramatically in the way it operates. It must be much more responsive to supporters, and must be proactive in attracting more people to matches. Cash turnstiles have already returned — following a meeting between FLAG and John Kelly, the receiver — and many other suggestions have been made, and will be looked at in depth when the time comes.

Clearly, John Kelly will influence the next season if the club does survive, as he is the man making the crucial decisions at the moment, but from meetings FLAG has had with him, his intentions are to set the club on a sensible course for the future.

Whether FLAG is successful will become clear in the coming weeks, but one thing is certain, as fans we have shown that when we speak with a united voice we cannot be ignored.

To be successful, we still need more of your money. Apart from the bucket collections that are taking place, you can give money through any branch of the Nat West Bank, using sort code 60-13-28, account number 78503299, account name FLAG. Alternatively, send cheques payable to FLAG to:

FLAG, c/o The Luton News, Herald House, 60 Church St, Luton, Beds LU1 3JQ.

Finally, more details of FLAG can be found on the Internet at www.whosh.net.

Raise the FLAG — together we can do it!

Tickety-boo

First of all, I am not a Luton Town supporter. Never have been, never will be. I was born and raised in west London and supported Fulham because my dad did. I retained this allegiance when I moved to Luton in 1983 to get a job, even though Luton were a First Division side and we were in the Second. Having stuck with them through the bad times I'll be buggered if I'll change now we are (hopefully) heading for the good times.

I do, however, take an interest in the goings-on at Kenilworth Road, if only to keep in with the lads down the pub. I am not the only exiled 'foreigner' either. Apart from the occasional Premiership 'supporter' there are a number of genuine supporters from other clubs living in Luton plus a lot of new residents (including students at the University) with no real allegiance to any team.

Now, imagine the following scenario. It is early Saturday afternoon. Luton are at home against Blackpool or Oldham or another northern team. Fulham aren't playing (we're on Sky on Sunday, for example). On a whim I decide I'd like to go and watch Luton play. I put on my coat, go out and five minutes later stand outside the ground. I ask the turnstile operator for a ticket while clutching a £20 note. He will not sell me one as I have to get my ticket from the ticket office.

Okay, so I go to the ticket office to buy a ticket. The man in the office asks to see my membership card. What membership card? No card, no ticket. I could have asked Steve or Trevor to get me a ticket a few days ago but, remember, I am here on a whim. I decide to try the away end. I go to the away end and gain admission.

Unfortunately I am the only southerner in a crowd of 500 northerners. Mid-way through the first half the visitors score (this is Luton, after all). I clap politely while everyone else goes berserk. This lack of enthusiasm attracts the attention of several visiting supporters who decide I must be a Luton fan infiltrating the away end to cause trouble. My southern accent doesn't help. I spend the rest of the match feeling very uncomfortable and hoping like hell Luton don't equalise.

A few weeks later I have another spare Saturday and Luton are at home. I go shopping instead.

Now imagine this scenario. You, a lifelong Luton fan, are in London for the day. You are going to go to a West End show in the evening. While your better half goes shopping or crawls around the tourist traps you decide you fancy a football match (Luton were on Sky the night before). Who's at home today? Ah, Fulham! You arrive outside the Cottage, go up to a turnstile, pay your money and gain admission to either the home or away end. No problem. If you prefer you can sit in either stand. If you are very brave you can stand with the lunatic fringe in the Enclosure. The choice is yours.

If Luton were a team with 20,000 supporters trying to get in every week I could understand their ticketing arrangements. If they had a major hooligan problem it would make sense. If they were making pots of money each time they played you could call the ticketing system 'eccentric'. If every Luton home match was pay-per-view on Sky you would think, yep, you might as well keep the actual crowd numbers down to reduce the number of staff you need to employ and keep the disruption to the local community to a minimum.

However, none of this is the case, is it? If the casual supporter is to be discouraged from visiting Luton Town FC then they will either go elsewhere (Northampton, Rushden,

Stevenage, Watford or any of the London clubs) or they will be a very occasional visitor. He or she will not become a regular supporter because they will not feel welcome. Your crowds will continue to dwindle. Need I go on?

One of the first things any new regime at Luton will need to tackle is the way they treat all supporters. The Millwall thugs ran riot fifteen years ago. They won a great victory when Luton Town FC shot itself in the foot and banned all away supporters. They are still hurting Luton today with the restrictions on tickets. How much longer will you let the thugs make you discourage genuine supporters?

Declan McCabe

TOWN TRAVELS

Only one game to go, and the misery of the season is finally over. Now, a good turnout of Town fans has to be expected with the possibility that this could be the last ever match, but you should be warned about the likely result. The curse of the away wins, namely *Mad as a Hatter!* editor Keith Hayward WILL be at the New Den on May 8th, hoping to see his first away win in 9 nine months. Various reasons, ranging from work to apathy via serious hangovers, have seen the ed miss the away victories at Oxford, Wigan, Fulham, Burnley, and Notts County, and draws at Wrexham and Oldham with only the defeat at Ipswich added to that list. With away form like Town would have been in a play-off position. Of course, the editor is not superstitious, but is tarding to worry about the implications of this record.

Anyway, enough of that and on to the match. The New Den, as we all know, is a spectacular stadium, with a wonderful welcoming atmosphere! The *Evening Standard* every Friday, fails to recommend a pub for visiting supporters, although it is difficult to imagine why. But recognising that the *Standard* is a far greater authority on these matters than this publication, we will follow suit, and recommend that May 8th is the day for trying out some of those wonderful central London pubs you've always been meaning to visit. Have a nice day out, and we'll be back with you next season, God willing.

CALLING EXILED SUPPORTERS

Do you struggle to get news of the Hatters where you live? If so, Hatters Matters could be what you need. HM is a monthly newsletter for the exiled supporter. A comprehensive compilation of news of LTFC every month, by first class post. To receive Hatters Matters send a cheque for £6.50 to Hatters Matters, 38 Twigden Court, Luton, LU3 2RL. For a sample copy, send a stamped, addressed envelope.

PHILOSOPHY KIOSK

HARRY THE HATTER: 'MONSTER, MONSTER' [1]

The recent tragic death of Rod Hull (& Emu), while adjusting his aerial for the big match, has prompted us to re-evaluate the Town's recent form.

For us, the symbolic death of Emu, and a constellation of other phenomena are directly analogous with the Hatters current situation. Other recent astrological occurrence has pointed to an unholy triad. In the last few home games we have noticed that our mascot, Harry the Hatter, is becoming more like the great white shark from Stephen Spielberg's 'Jaws'.

Very few people have experienced the terror of looking into a predator's soulless eyes, a paradoxical moment,

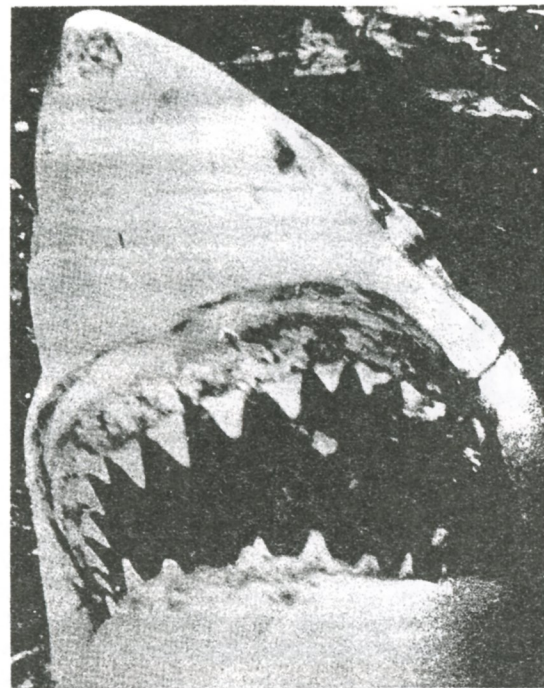


both benign and savage. Emu, the great white shark, Phil Gray, the mere mention of all of these, conjures the sublime fear associated with total terror. Our unholy triad, that of Emu, the great white and Harry the Hatter, point to something infinitely more terrifying.



Around ten minutes before every match Harry's black eyes bloom as he starts his silent predatory territorial patrol. The horror of the black primordial discs that serve as eyes remain fixed — never straying from a stare that exactly reflects that of the shark. Harry can be seen to have become a cipher [2] that mirrors the terror of the supporters collective anxiety. The post modernist theorist, Fredric Jameson has been quoted by the Lacan obsessed cultural theorist, Slavoj (mummy's boy) Zizek as saying:

'The vocation of the symbol — the killer shark — lies less in any single message or meaning than in its very capacity to absorb and organize all of these quite distinct anxieties together. As a symbolic vehicle, then, the shark must be understood in terms of its essentially polysemous function rather than any particular content attributable to it by this or that spectator. Yet it is precisely this polysemousness which... allows essentially social and historical anxieties to be folded back into apparently 'natural' ones'. [3]



20.31 Primal fear of mutilation: *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975): the great white shark.

The horrifying power of fascination that pertains to the presence of Hany seems to have increased recently, especially with his animated gestures to the crowd. Perhaps this is just our imagination, nevertheless we will be making a concerted effort to avoid catching a glimpse of our mascot full in the face for the remainder of the season.

[1] 'Monster, monster'- catchphrase of a well-known football agent with a taste for large cigars.

[2] Cipher, not only being an empty vessel to contain the desire of the match spectators. The important point is that the elaborate costume represents the desire of the club to exhibit a historically baroque phantom in relation to the clubs rich history and culturally unstable future.

[3] Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible*, (New York: Routledge, 1990) pp26-27, and Slavoj Zizek, *Enjoy Your Symptom*, (New York: Routledge, 1992) p133.

Moving on, and with the rejection of the KohlerDome, we have started plans on our own design for a multi-purpose super-stadium. Under the working name of 'The New Ken', this may, with the help of a well organized supporters group, prove to be the answer we need for a promising future. We will hopefully be able to unveil our preliminary plans for this exciting new development shortly. Watch this space.

Andy Hunt and Tim Bailey

**ON THE INTERNET?
JOIN WHOSH
WORLDWIDE HATTERS ON THE SUPER
HIGHWAY**

email request-ltfc@robots.ox.ac.uk



Addressing an attentive audience (above) at the FLAG public meeting is Malcolm Niekirk, the Bournemouth lawyer. And below is the man of the moment, John Kelly of Buchler Phillips, the official receivers.



NEW BROOMS AND INCENTIVES

Life has been rather hectic in the Shadow Director's broom cupboard during the last month. Finally, the board of directors saw through Kohler and saw him off. Just because he owned most shares he got away with most things unchallenged - or so it seemed.

Kohler had an up and down relationship with the Luton faithful but should have gone a couple of years ago when he was on the up. But he outstayed his welcome and now it is good riddance and thanks for nothing. As Kenny Dalglish said in January 1987, when we didn't get to Anfield for the FA Cup replay: "The truth will come out one day". That said, no right minded supporter can possibly agree with the actions that led to Coca going.

Still, it gave him a good reason to leave, enabling him to go with some sympathy and with dignity. At the end of the day the club can now look to the future, onward and upward?

The arrival of new brooms — in the shape of receivers — has certainly focussed the mind, in many cases. What a wonderful phrase — "Kohler was made redundant as managing director" — surely an appropriate title for the next chapter in our history. The other directors have exercised some muscle and Cliff Bassett's negotiations with Reading proved decisive.

We need strict financial discipline in the board room as we were on a disastrous path losing £1.5 million each season. No chairman worth his salt could allow that to continue. Action to stop such losses was long overdue. Suddenly, Lennie seems to have found some motivational skills. We've seen a bit of fight in the last few weeks. Well done, it was good to win against York after being behind. The players seem to realise they are playing for their futures.

There has never been a doubt that John Moore is Luton through and through, but I do have reservations about our fitness trainer! I'm sorry, but Mandy Malins.... there are a lot of our players who just don't seem to be fit this season.

Anyway, let's get back to this incentive scheme.....

Manager paid by results as well as the players.

Manager and players paid according to crowd size.

Players lose money if unfit to play.

Introduce a stricter disciplinary code with fines for suspensions.

Pay a bonus for kicking the ball out of the ground if we are leading.

Pay an allowance to players providing their own packed lunch/dinner on away trips.

On overnight trips reward the players for staying with relatives/friends.

Encourage D.I.Y. efforts for all employees re Stadium maintenance.

Make the Clubcall introduction even longer to increase telephone revenue.

Reward players for (say) fifteen consecutive appearances (ie. consistency).

Reward team for scoring three times in a match.

Reward goalscorers for every 5 goals.

The Shadow Director is watching events carefully as he thinks there may soon be a different name on the headed paper. He is hoping to see one or more new shareholders and there is a possibility that the fans may be able to get hold of some shares for themselves.

Enjoy the summer and let's look forward to us sweeping up the table next season, bristling with points, leaving the rubbish behind us and loads of wins in the bag.

The Shadow Director

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE

It's fast approaching that time of year when some readers will be wiping the dust from their text books and revising for the forthcoming A-Levels. After this, the really hard work begins as you've got to make the final decision about where to go to university.

Here's some advice, forget anything you may have heard about the criteria being a good reputation, a lively city and the course looking interesting. Believe me, your main objectives should be finding a University no more than 80 miles away, a direct train to Luton and preferably a team in the same division as Luton.

At the start of my time at University in Leicester, I decided to make a clean break from Luton. The season-ticket renewal form remained unopened as I decided the costs of travelling home from Leicester for Luton matches was too much for my meagre student grant to handle, and the best way to make friends was to stay in Leicester and play for the Uni football team. I'd only come home for the big matches. And W*tf*rd.

Three years down the line and I've missed a bare handful of games and spent God knows how much money going to and from Leicester every Saturday, after the previous Saturday promising I would not put myself through all the misery again. Train times are now ingrained on my memory, as is the mad rush every Saturday running from Kenilworth Road to the station like a madman trying to get the 5.07 pm back to Leicester. Why is it that Luton matches always seem to end at about 5 pm? We're always a late result on Final Score, thus prolonging the agony even further.

As a Luton fan at a University outside of Luton you are likely to be in a minority of one and an endangered species amongst the rabble of Premiership supporting fans. Three years on, and I've never met a Luton fan up here (although once while walking in my Luton shirt, I walked past a bloke in a W*tf*rd shirt, like a scene in a Western, I kept my cool. Don't rise to the bait). However, in this privileged position all Luton fans should put up a show of solidarity and aim to ingrain Luton and it's players into the lives of all football fans they meet at University. Go on, educate them about Keegan's shocking decision to persist in leaving Marvin out of the England squad.

Notable successes have included:

- In the first year being denied entry at 'Bar Gaudi' because 10 boozed-up lads (is there any other kind?) were singing "One Bontcho Guentchev" for 100 yards until the pub where the bouncer told us our name wasn't down and we weren't coming in. Certainly not singing about footballers (had he ever seen Bontcho play? Trade Descriptions will be after him for implying Bontcho was a footballer!).
- 10 lads singing "10 years, it only took 10 years" and asking bemused girls "Do you like W*tf*rd?" after leaving the 'Zanzibar' night-club. Most replies

were something along the lines of "**** off which shows the deep loathing of W*tf*rd across the nation (or maybe not).

- Stalking a drunk and slightly worse for wear Matt Elliott after leaving 'Mosquito Coast' night-club on the same night as above where he eventually told us to ',** off (it was the night for it) or he'd chin us. When we were of a sufficiently safe distance we informed him that "Scotland were ****" and then legged it with Elliot in pursuit.
- In my second year, Steve Claridge being a regular (as in twice a day) at my local bookies with me walking in, with my Luton shirt on, and him barely noticing. (Incidentally, never bet on Luton in an accumulator, they will ALWAYS let you down. And it's unlucky).

I've also discovered the joys of Championship Manager. For anyone who hasn't played it, suffice to say if you do, you will develop obsessive and irrational behaviour to the detriment of your studies which will be pushed to the background as at 3 am you're screaming at the computer after it has disallowed a late goal by Spider at Preston. I actually won the Cup Winners Cup for Chelsea with Tony Thorpe, Steve Davis and Kelvin in the starting line-up which, as you can imagine, was a very proud moment. With Luton I content myself with the obligatory pre-season friendly with W*tf*rd, and keeping Thorpe on my shortlist as he spurns the club's advances.

Another thing about being a student is you will gain access to a student membership card. This is much appreciated as without these concessions my overdraft would be reaching titanic proportions. However in the club's infinite wisdom this concession only applies if you buy a ticket in advance and not on the day of the game. If as a student you make a late decision to come down on the day of the game you are charged £13 for the privilege of watching Luton against Lincoln with however much your travel expenses are. With the club in receivership maybe Luton will start actually making some policies which actually benefit fans and encourage them to attend rather than stoking up resentment with many staying away.

The club will no doubt read this and decide to do away with the student card.

I'm going travelling around Europe (can't face actually doing 'real' work just yet) throughout August and September (Dad, you can have the season ticket for these games), so I'll have to rely on the World service radio and reverse charge phone calls to my brother from Budapest pleading with him to tell me the Wrexham versus Luton score.

I'll be back at the Kenny in October which means if it's anything like last season I'll get to see about 4 victories all season!

Kieran McTague

THE END OF AN ERA?

Do you remember where you were when you heard the news? Were you as shocked as I was to hear he was gone? Sacked by the Receivers, discarded, despite all his dedication to his club. It must be said that the man had his critics, and that sometimes he deserved the criticism but will Luton Town FC ever be the same again now that Laurence Lennison has been made redundant?

I had been invited to the public meeting held in the Brickeater's Arms to discuss the situation at the club. Over 25 other supporters attended and one of the Receivers was there too. The venue proved unable to fit in everyone who wanted to attend although apparently the bloke outside the door had been barred a week earlier by the landlord. Also in attendance were people from the rival fanzine *You're Mad to be a Hatter*, a representative of the Top Hatters Supporters Club, a young gentleman from the Provisional Wing of the Luton Loyalists and, via the internet, the President-for-life of the Luton Long Distance Travellers. Danny Crofter, the well known local radio presenter from Two-and-a-bit Counties Radio was the Master of Ceremonies for the evening.

Lennison started the meeting by announcing the formation of a group incorporating all the fan's groups attending called FLOPWIT: Fans of Luton OPposed to Winning Teams. He explained his idea to us.

"What would you lot expect Luton to achieve next season?" he asked.

"Stability," said the Top Hatter.

"Probably go down, lose our league status the next season, merge with Hitchin Town a year later and all die of the plague the year after that," groused the fanzine editor.

"Hornets in the Cup Final," mused Crofter.

"Mid-table obscurity. Perhaps a chance of a play-off place." I supplied.

"Hello, has the meeting started yet?" emailed the Traveller.

"Total domination of this poxy division and a 100% record home and away!" thundered the Luton Loyalist Provo.

"Right," Lennison said, "Now imagine that we had won an extra six or seven games this season and found ourselves just short of a play-off place. What would you want me to do pre season?"

"Buy a thirty-goal-a-season striker to build on this years' success" suggested the crowd as one.

"Commit Hairy-Kari for being such a dismal failure!" the Luton Provo demanded.

"Exactly!" trumpeted Lennison, ignoring the volatile youth. "We would be

committed to more expense chasing an impossible dream. Far better we accept what we've got, stay in this division for a few more years, cut our cloth to keep the wolf from the door and count our blessings. Those are the aims of FLOPWIT. Controlled, managed decline."

"Aren't you somewhat lacking in ambition?" asked the Receiver.

"You must face reality," Lennison told him. "Sure, I'd just love to have a rich Arab or gay pop star chuck millions of pounds at us to get us up to the Premiership but that never happens at this level. We are a small club with only a few fans and very limited resources. Rather than try to buy our way up we must sell our best players and pocket the profits...er, I mean, use the money we receive to keep the club going while adding the necessary infrastructure to our holdings."

"Like your expensive new office in Harpenden?" I asked.

"Er, yes."

The Receiver was busily scribbling notes.

"I want to just add my greetings to all you supporters who are here today. Thanks for coming, your support is invaluable," sent the distant Traveller.

"We don't need no money!" bellowed the Provo. "We will crush the puny opposition with our own resources. Luton lads proud to wear the Luton shirt will die, yes, die for our club before they accept defeat. Our motto must be 'No Surrender to the Scum of Division 2'!"

"Quite, but surely you don't support decline?" I asked the bellicose man.

"I support Luton Town! And don't you forget it!" he cried.

"How does a fanzine editor defend such a stance to his readership?" I tried next, turning to the *You're Mad to be a Hatter* man.

"Oh, a lot of fans support the idea," he told me. "The only real alternative to trying to muddle on through is to do something radically different. Another bunch of supporters have formed a group called FLASH or FLAP, or something..."

"FLAG. Fans of Luton Action Group."

"Yeah, daft name, daft idea," he continued. "They want some sort of community ownership, like Bournemouth. Sadly for them, there's too much apathy here for that to work. Too many fans won't put their hands into their pockets to save the club."

"What else can you expect from part-time, fair weather supporters?" demanded the Provo. Many Luton fans will remember that the Luton Loyalists pride themselves on attending every first and reserve team game home and away, including friendlies. The Provisional Wing split away from them after a dispute over whether last year's pre-season friendly against Upper Volta

should count as most fans were put off going by the civil war. The Provisional Wing went, even though four of their number failed to return.

"Why do you want to help FLOPWIT?" I asked Crofter.

"Well, as a prominent Hornets fan I can only express my admiration for these people," Crofter replied. "I strongly urge all true Luton fans to ignore FLAG and support FLOPWIT."

"I'm sure the meeting must be absolutely fascinating," read the next email. "I wonder if somebody could be so kind as to reply to one of these messages and tell me what is going on?"

"Where do you want fans to send their contributions?" I asked next.

Lennison beamed at me and said, "I don't. You see, that is the beauty of FLOPWIT. If you want to support FLAG you have to give them money or some of your time or lend them an office or something. To support FLOPWIT you just do nothing at all. Let events run their natural course. Go along with whatever happens. I am convinced that many Luton fans will do just that. I welcome each and every one of them to FLOPWIT's ranks."

At this point the Receiver handed Lennison a sheet of paper. Lennison read it and said, "Ah, a cheque. We don't really need...Hang on, it's a P45. It's my P45. You can't do this! You can't give Laurence Lennison the sack! We haven't been relegated yet! Why, this club can't survive without Laurence Lennison. You would be better off firing the Chairman rather than Laurence Lennison."

"Funny you should say that..." began the Receiver, taking out another P45.

"Oh, stuff the lot of you," grouched the next email, "I'm going down the pub to get slaughtered."

And so we have come to the end of an era. Perhaps, also, the end of Luton Town? Only time will tell. Only time, and the number of supporters who support FLAG against the number who are FLOPWITs. Which are you?

Declan McCabe

BACK ISSUES

Most back issues are still available. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, 35 to 38 and 47, and issues 3, 13, 23, 26, 27, 28, and 42 are in very short supply. Issue 1 is free, 2 to 34 will cost you 25p plus SAE per copy and all others remain at 50p plus SAE each. When requesting back issues from us (at the usual address - see page 2) 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.

SHORT CUTS

...the opposition, just before half-time.

Although missing the power of Gary Doherty, off on international duty with the Irish youth team for a month, Lennie Lawrence persisted with a three-man strike force, a tactic that served him well in the 1-1 massacre of Reading on Tuesday.

Phil Gray, Stuart Douglas and the other returnee Tony Thorpe all battled away without getting the breaks against an enormous defence.

Lennie talks bollocks. We think you might find that they have failed again, Lennie.

Watson: I nearly quit

MARK WATSON faces old club Watford today, admitting: "I nearly quit because of them, they left a sour taste in my mouth."

Oxford's Canadian
Mark Watson 27

An interesting concept from the *Accuracy on Sunday*, a 1-1 massacre?!!

that doesn't recur."

An upbeat Lawrence went on to predict a better season for the Hatters and said that failure from either himself or his players would not be acceptable.

"I think the future's bright," he stated boldly, "we've had the away record of a top two side, it's the home form that had let us down. I had never failed in a one-off promotion or relegation deciders until last season's play-offs but I resolve that myself and this set of players will never fail again."

Surely a more common occurrence than is reported here!

STOKE V LUTON

result for me and this club."

Stoke were boosted with the news that Graham Kavanagh has signed a new three-year deal and that Richard Forsyth is ready to return from injury.

Luton boss Lennie Lawrence is expected to recall David Oldfield to his attack.

ONE TO WATCH: Graham Kavanagh (Stoke)

PREDICTION: 2-0

This would have been an interesting selection by Lennie, or perhaps it was just wishful thinking.

This came from the *Daily Star*. Bet the sports editor felt a right tit after that boob!

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear "Mad",
I thought I would just respond to a couple of "Bitter and Twisted's" points in the last issue. I can't understand his thinking behind a player's failure to sign a new contract. He says if they won't sign, they should be dropped and made to play in the reserves. As it happens the Alexander scenario is academic now as he signed for Preston yesterday. However, it must be in the club's best interest to play its strongest available side, whether or not they've signed a new contract. To drop them would only be a case of cutting off your nose etc etc. If "Bitter and Twisted" was looking for a new job and his employer found out, would he consider it acceptable if he was relegated to office teaboy until he had left? It has to be faced that these blokes are professionals and, like it or not, they ply their trade wherever they can get the best deal. Because of that I don't think you could expect them to have the same level of loyalty to the club that we have. We are fans - fanatics - they are employees. They get paid, they do a job. We pay to see them do that job.

Whilst on the subject of Graham Alexander, I'd just like to say that the jeering he received against Reading was disgusting. If ever there was a time to get behind all the players, that night was it. Also, please let's not have loads of letters saying that he missed the penalty on purpose!

Second point, why does "Bitter and Twisted" think that the stewards have to be Luton fans? Again, it is just a job. They presumably tell him to sit down because he is either in someone's way and they can't see, or his lambasting of LL and the players contains foul language which people may find offensive.

Lastly, he's answered his own question about why Bumbles Bar is closed between 4 and 7 on a Saturday afternoon; it's obviously to stop disillusioned Luton fans from drowning their sorrows!

Kelvin Dunn,
Dunstable.

Dear "Mad",
I would like to draw attention to something which seems to have been completely overlooked on match days, that is, the influence of music to empower and to give fire and enthusiasm. Perhaps instead of playing the flaccid 'Let me entertain you' by that very whore of Babylon, Robbie Williams, as a stir up style song, the club should instead follow a classic example and add a bit of Uber Culture to the proceedings.

I suggest the beautiful 'Romeo and Juliet' as aired by Sunderland FC. Just imagine the strength of emotion that our ground's tinny speakers could instil in our crowd and team. The sight of Harry the Hatter dancing around to this would surely loosen the team's nerves enough to beat the strongest of opponents. If this is not possible, as a second option, I suggest an early '70s influence. "Down, Down, deeper and Down" by Status Quo or anything by Nick Drake will do. Really, it will.

Andy Hunt,
London, E14.

Dear "Mad",
Can anyone help please? At 9pm on Sunday 11th April on ITV, did I really see Robson Green in the Arsenal number 7 shirt skinning Wayne Turner in the Luton number 3 shirt and

crossing for the Arse to score in front of the Clock End?

Now, I know most players skinned Wayne but.... then again it could be the result of the dodgy party I was at in Newbury the night before.

Martin Dear,
Thatcham, Berks.

Dear "Mad",
I am writing following my decision not to stand as a candidate for the Independent Residents Party in the May council elections. For those who are unaware, the people behind this group are so fanatical anti-Luton Town FC it is unbelievable. In fact, all of them including main members of FAST are opposed to our beloved club having a new ground in Luton at all.

To cut a long story short, I was asked to stand as a candidate for Luton South (yes, it was me in the Star Trek uniform), the ward which includes the junction 10 site, for the Independent Residents. Which surprised me as I am a lifelong Luton fanatic and the parties putting me up were anti-Luton. So, I went along with this intending to finally put an end to bloody Len Elson and his FAST cronies.

The plan being that had I won and become a councillor for Luton South, I would be representing Len Elson and his cronies and would repay them in kind by supporting a new ground on Junction 10. But I have now told them of my decision not to stand, as I refuse to represent such a bunch of complete tossers (to put it mildly) in my area of town.

Andrew Fazekas,
Luton.

Dear "Mad",
Another Saturday, another choice. This time the question is whether I tidy up the garden by collecting all the cat turds that have accrued during the winter, or do I go to see the Town play the turds at the bottom of the league, Lincoln Shitty. And, having chosen to show my loyalty to the club in these dire times, Lincoln proved to be every bit as bad as I expected — and, how often have I had to say this, we were even worse. So, yet again, I was destined to see a pile of shit whatever I choose.

One thought did strike me towards the end of the Lincoln match. In the past a Luton team would have given everything to get an equaliser throwing caution to the wind in the true style of shit or bust. Doesn't happen these days. Now we get shit AND bust!

Cheers,
Phil Wash,
Orpington, Kent.

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

That's it for the season but we need you to help fill the space on these pages again next season. So, if you would like to send any cuttings, articles, match reports, letters, cartoons, photos, whatever, get them to us to arrive by mid to late July. Remember, we now have facilities to receive contributions by fax and email, as well as post. The postal address is MAAH, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL. Fax: 01582 653392, email khayward@aol.com

JUST ANOTHER LOCAL ELECTION

Well, not an election as such, but we are after your votes. Regular readers will be used to this sort of nonsense at the end of each season, when we ask to tell us about the individuals and events that have shaped the suffering and brief moments of joy of the past nine and a bit months. Once again we've given you a from to make life easier for you, but you don't have to use it, all we ask is that if you choose not too you keep your answers in the same order! As ever, comments backing up your nominations will be most welcome.

The closing date is Wednesday June 30th, after which we will have a draw of the entries from the ageing Wembley '88 straw boater, with the winner receiving an exciting item of leisure wear from the LTFC collection. Remember, send your completed voting forms to Mad as a Hatter!, 38 Twigden Court, Mount Pleasant Road, Luton, LU3 2RL.

- 1 BEST TOWN PLAYER.....
- 2 BEST YOUNG PLAYER.....
- 3 BEST TOWN PERFORMANCE.....
- 4 WORST TOWN PERFORMANCE.....
- 5 BEST TOWN GOAL.....
- 6 BEST GOAL AGAINST.....
- 7 BEST OPPONENTS.....
- 8 BEST OPPOSING PLAYER.....
- 9 WORST OPPONENTS.....
- 10 WORST OPPOSING PLAYER.....
- 11 GOOD REFEREE.....
- 12 WORST REFEREE.....
- 13 IDIOT OF THE SEASON.....
- 14 HERO OF THE SEASON.....
- 15 BEST GROUND VISITED.....
- 16 WORST GROUND VISITED.....
- 17 LOW POINT OF THE SEASON.....
- 18 HIGH POINT OF THE SEASON.....
- 19 THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO.....
.....
- 20 THINGS TO DREAD.....
.....
- 21 OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT LTFC.....
.....

And if there's anything you'd like to say about *Mad as a Hatter!*, like what we could do to improve it, whether we should double the price, that sort of thing, please feel free to mention it.

STAYING UP.....

Once again there were a few more match reports than we were able to use in this issue. For this, thanks very much, and apologies to those whose reports we were unable to use. Please keep up the good work. The last few match reports for this season will appear in the first issue of next season, so please keep writing.

13.03.99 DOWN 1 STOKE CITY 2

In the past I could always rely on my football team to cheer me up, especially when life got me down. Alas no more. This has to be the most depressing run of form I have ever seen from a Luton side who barely look capable of scoring let alone winning, so in reply to the criticism levelled at Town supporters for the stick being given to the team and especially the manager please look at this from the fans' point of view. What is happening on the pitch is simply not good enough. Losing is not so bad when the team genuinely looks bothered and gets stuck in, but some of the performances of late have been some of the worst I have seen in over twenty years. I have always been a strong believer in the theory that what players lack in ability they make up for in spirit and attitude. However, this is where the manager comes in and, frankly, Lennie does not strike me as a great motivator of players.

Today was the ideal opportunity to get some points in the bag and to try and put the poor performances of the last few months behind us. What better team to play than a side allegedly in worse form than ourselves. Sadly, as seems to be the way these days the opening twenty minutes or so brought my optimism to an abrupt end. Quite simply we are not good enough, even for this division. To watch Luton today was a painful experience. Tuesday night's debacle against Fulham was bad, but the first half against Stoke was an utter disgrace. If people at work are judged on performance then at least half of the team would have been picking up their P45's at 3.45 pm or thereabouts. Two poor defensive mistakes cost us the game. At two nil it was effectively game, set and match. The second half was an improvement but we were left to much to do. One goal in open play in five previous games tells its own story. There are too many players who appear not to give a s+!t about the club or, for that matter, the supporters.

It is easy to criticise those who chant anti-Lennie songs or give the team a bit of stick, but with the rubbish currently being served up it is hardly surprising supporters react the way they do. But I do feel that Lennie has run his course at the club. The middle of March is not an ideal time to sack your manager but I cannot see things improving under the current regime.

All in all it is a very sad state of affairs both on and off the pitch, both of which go hand in hand. That said, I find the situation on the pitch unacceptable but unlikely to change.

I hope in time I am proved wrong.

J.S.

20.03.99 CHESTERFIELD 3 TOWN 0

Decided to get a B&B in Chesterfield with my Dad to do a bit of sightseeing and hill walking. You are not going to believe this but the road running along the top of the one we were staying in was called St Lawrence Street, I decided to do the only decent thing and trash the sign (only joking Mr Palmer). Anyway, the old girl running the B&B turned out to be a Chesterfield season ticket holder. As we were leaving on the Saturday morning and were not going to see her after the match it was fun telling her how Luton were playing well and had been unlucky to lose the last 7 or 8 games, and were going to tear her lads apart with our fast passing game. It was a great place to stay, a farmhouse with a dog so docile and slow he even made Stuart Douglas walking back from a failed attack look fast.

We had use of the front lounge and I couldn't quite believe my luck when I found out they don't lock their drinks cabinet, though I think they might if I stay there again. It was also great to see my dad, who doesn't come to many matches, get into the spirit of it all when, while paying his bill, he said that he hoped that the landlady would have a lousy time watching her team on Saturday. Of course, we all now know the sad reality of that remark.

Oh, and the match itself..... Well, the team did not seem that bothered about it so I don't think I will bother myself with writing anything about it. Anyone got a route map for Halifax?!!

Highbury Hatter

27.03.99 TOWN 1 GILLINGHAM 0

After the unexpectedly good performance against Reading, the morale amongst Town fans was further boosted by the appearance of Tony Thorpe on loan — a rare piece of good business by LL. Gillingham fans meanwhile, were obviously confident judging by their almost filling the Oak Road end.

This confidence seemed well founded as the Gills pretty well ran the show in the first half, with the Town, particularly Thorpy, struggling early on, though he did gradually settle in quite well and Kelvin being called upon time and time again to atone for his team mate's errors with some superb saves. The Town took the lead just before half time, and it was particularly unexpected by the fact that it was the result of a corner — something positive to be gained by Alexander's departure. It was laughable for Dyche to claim the final touch, but who cared?

The second half was slower than the first with the quality poor from both sides, bar some nice touches and a great run by Thorpy, and a couple more fine Kelvin saves. After a huge let-off for the Town deep in injury time, we went off to watch the England match ecstatic that we had gained four points from two games against in form sides — when we had expected nil — and relieved that the climax to the 98-99 season now promises to be a boring one (that is, if you can ever call a trip to the New Den boring!).

The Thin Controller

02.04.99 OLDHAM ATHLETIC 1 TOWN 1

What better way to spend a Good Friday but making the 'short' hop to Greater Manchester. Oldham is a bit more low key now, than the time I got caught out in the mid seventies. It is nice to sit outside the pub at the top of the road with that 'Babe Magnet' orange away top, without getting too much grief. Of course, there was the added bonus for me that should Luton get a win it may well condemn the Latics to a nice dose of 3rd Division footie.

Anyway, unlike last time up there, they gave us the whole end instead of shoving us in the corner. The atmosphere was pretty good, around 400 other Luton fans had also decided Good Friday in Oldham was a good idea. It started well. Thomas neat header was easily whacked in by the ever improving Phil Gray.

Two wins on the trot could it be? Dream on! We needed a second goal, and but for the ref we would have got it. He must have had a bet with his mates that he would never again in his life give a penalty. Thorpe had his standing leg taken away from him about eight yards out and he waved play on. Then he failed to give them two penalties, so at least he was consistent and we held on for 1-1 despite being pinned back in their half for most of the second half. Phil Gray hit the bar towards the end, a victory would have been a bit harsh on Oldham, but I would not have minded that much!!

Highbury Hatter

06.04.99 TOWN 2 YORK CITY 1

Had to finish work early in order to be in Luton for the 7.45 kick-off, and for the majority of the game I wished I'd stayed in Derby and done overtime. Yes, I know the result's the most important thing but, to be honest, Luton were crap. To see the players waltz round the pitch in such a lackadaisical manner makes my blood boil. The players showed no pride in wearing the shirts (except Gray and Foti) and seemed content to simply play out the game. This sort of commitment is not good enough and although I'm happy we won the game, our performance was extremely mediocre. This is what we've got to look forward to next season — same players, same manager, same story, as we've got no chance of signing Thorpey who makes a great difference to our side. I may be a moaning bastard, but it's only 'cause I give a damn.

For the record, Thompson scored a great free-kick to open the scoring (I refused to clap under principal that I only clap Luton players!). Spring equalised with a 25 yard effort (I didn't see it, I was at the burger bar paying £14 for a burger, £6 for a Snicker and £4.85 for a hot chocolate) and Fugee stayed on his feet long enough to bundle the winner home, in the dying minute. Shitty game, shitty manager, shitty McKinnon (didn't play but still useless) but at least it's 3 points to our play-off dream.

The next morning Halifax sacked their manager despite being only 3 points from a play-off position. The board cited poor results as the reason, which got me thinking — why haven't we got a board of directors so ambitious? Third season in Division 2, Lennie must wish he's not at Halifax. If only we had a board that

wanted us in Division 1, we might have got a new manager, instead of the skulker we have in charge of the team now.

Ilkeston

10.04.99 NORTHAMPTON TOWN 1 TOWN 0

I purchased a fanzine at Sixfields. This is a rarity for me nowadays, as most fanzines have become tired and hackneyed. The 'big clubs' produce fanzines of glossy monotony bemoaning the lack of investment and reiterating their own ludicrous expectations for their once great team. Clubs with smaller support tend to produce fanzines written by one or two people only. Fortunately for the Towns of Luton and Northampton, neither scenario is the case regarding Mad As A Hatter or What A Load Of Cobblers.

The reason for mentioning the above lays in the content of the home team's unofficial rag. Every contributor ranted at the negative tactics of Ian Atkins. Despite the former Colchester manager's recent success, Northampton fans have had enough. Not surprising really: they were awful. The sole Cobblers tactic was sussed early by the travelling contingent from Junctions 10 & 11 and met with howls of "Hoof!" at every big boot forward. Having said this, Howard up front for Northampton looked their best player and gave both Chris Willmott and Gavin McGowan problems. Willmott came through it with another battling display that can only endear him to the Luton faithful. McGowan, on the other hand had a poor game and would not be missed during his forthcoming suspension, were it not for our total lack of 'bods' as Lennie puts it.

This player shortage is presumably the reason for throwing Tresor The Unready into the deep end. Luton have a habit of introducing youngsters with startling promise who make an immediate impact, and then fade away into nothing or are discarded (Greene, Williams, Nogan, Skelton, Paul Gray and Woodsford amongst them). Lets hope TK follows the opposite career path, because if this disinterested display is the best he can produce then we might as well off-load him now. I will give the guy the benefit of the doubt but I expect more from a young player who should be out to impress on his full debut.

Everyone else worked hard except an obviously unfit Andrew Fotiadis. Fotiadis is a very frustrating individual, as he looked the most dangerous player on the pitch when he had the ball; he just did not have the ball that often. However, I have thought hard about it and I just cannot think of a reason to keep paying him next season. Fotiadis' injury record is nearly as bad as Paul Showler's, especially if you make allowances for age!

As for the run of play, Luton did not threaten much until the last twenty minutes. During the last twenty minutes we could have had half-a-dozen goals! We should definitely had two from the improving LZ-O and the tireless but useless Stuart Douglas. How we miss Phil Gray. This lack of punch up front is the reason we needed to maintain a clean sheet against a bottom side like the Cobblers. Unfortunately, Kelvin Davis spoiled a good display by making another gaff of the kind that is presumably stopping a richer club making a bid for him (yet).

Entertainment wise, I am glad it was only £10.50

Attendance: full-house in the away end with the rest of the ground at about 90%.

Clifford Saunders

14.04.99 MANCHESTER CITY 2 TOWN 0

Firstly, all you sad bastards who shook hands with Alexander and Davis before the game have short memories. Both wanted to leave the club and showed little loyalty to the team, yet you treat them like the return of the prodigal sons. I felt embarrassed for you, you sad twats.

The game itself was crap. City started like lightening and were 2-0 up within ten minutes. For the first goal, Dickov went clear of a non-existent defence, following a flick on by Goater. The second goal was the result of a superb near post flick on by Kandol, unfortunately the wrong goal! Tony Vaughan couldn't miss, 2-0. By now (7.55) I figured the final score to be 6-0 at least, then either Man. City or Luton found their feet. Luton still played shit, but at least City failed to add to the goal. We failed to look like scoring until Thorpey came on with about 10 minutes left, but even then only had one decent effort.

I refuse to criticise the youngsters for this performance, but some of the other (?) players were an embarrassment; McGowan, Thomas (again) and Johnson, looked well dodgy. With the team we fielded, we were lucky to get nil. The game was pure frustration and we never looked like scoring. The only bright spot of the game was seeing some 10 year old Man. City lad get nicked, and walking down with the old bill, thinking he was Al Capone.

The ground was OK but the surroundings were shitty to say the least. The City fans were extremely aggressive, but the old bill only seemed interested in sorting out Luton fans. Man. City fans are scum and you're welcome to the hell-hole of Moss Side. It's all you deserve you Northern scum.

Ilkeston

17.04.99 TOWN 0 LINCOLN CITY 1

The players lined up. The ref blew the whistle. The game commenced.

Nothing happened for the first fifteen minutes.

Nothing much happened for the second fifteen minutes.

No more of interest occurred up to half-time.

No chocolate of any description on sale at the tea-bar. Who does sort out the stock levels for grub? Second half starts.

Nothing of note. Then a goal for Lincoln City — cue unbelievable noise from the handful of Lincoln supporters in the Oak Road. Easily the best, if not only, good move in the game.

The ref booked two Lincoln players to try and insert some controversy into the fixture, but it did not work.

Nothing happened for the rest of the half. To coin a phrase: "Football's a pitch, and then the final whistle goes".

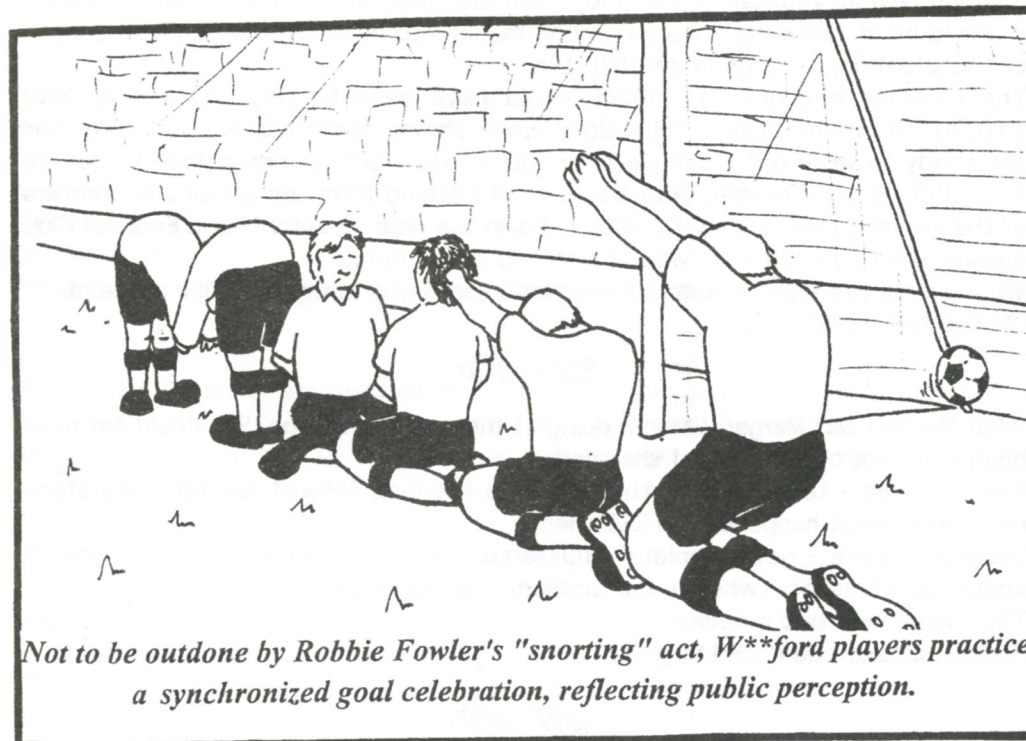
We have seen some crap at Kenilworth Road in the last few years, but rarely can

Luton fans have witnessed such an uneventful match as this. Even Lincoln 'fighting for their lives' City could find little enthusiasm or spirit to inject into a dire game of soccer.

I know we are safe from relegation but people pay good money to walk through the turnstile, and they are entitled to something better than this: youth team or not.

Attendance: as many as could be expected for a game like this. Bizarrely though, the queue at the tea-bar under the main stand was by far the longest ever seen! There were more Hatters queuing to find out what items were sold out this week than there were Imps in the whole away end.

Clifford Saunders



*Not to be outdone by Robbie Fowler's "snorting" act, W**ford players practice a synchronized goal celebration, reflecting public perception.*

WANTED

Football Programmes and memorabilia.

Please telephone Nick Albone (01767) 260992

SCRIBE'S CORNER

For the past few issues, every time I've come to write this column, the future of the club has changed dramatically.

Last issue, Kohler's letterbox was reeking of four-star and LTFC was in turmoil, but things couldn't be more different this issue.

With receivership an apparent 'beginning of the end', there came an upturn in fortunes and an unbeaten run which has hopefully warded off relegation.

And then there is FLAG ...



I couldn't have been more impressed by the set-up of the group at the public meeting held at Vauxhall. It was a lot more organised and in-depth than I imagined it would be at this early stage, although taking into consideration the seriousness of the situation, it's a good job that it is.

The turn-out was good (although could have been better) and raising over £10,000 from the bucket collections alone shows how much we still care. For somebody to write out a cheque for £500 is great, but for one person to donate £120,000 is unbelievable. With this sort of backing from the genuine supporters of the Hatters, then John Kelly will be shown the door of Luton Town Football Club quicker than you can say "who the f*** is David Koh...".

We must succeed, we have to succeed and more importantly, we WILL succeed.
UP THE HATTERS!



What the hell was Margaret Moran doing at the meeting though. She could not have been more out of her depth if she tried.

First mistake - tell everyone that she is a life-long Millwall fan (she therefore remembers what happened in 1985 then).

Second mistake - get completely flustered and rattled when she gets heckled about John Prescott (where's our stadium then Ms Moran)?

Third mistake - talk rubbish.

Fourth mistake - do I need to go on?



David Kohler's new planning application for Junction 10 must surely spell it out to everyone what kind of man he is.

Having been relieved of his position at the club (thanks Mr. Receiver), he is still intent on building the Dome there (LTFC will play there under the same terms - who are you trying to kid)?

I know that Mr. Property Developer still has the right (like anyone) to submit an application, but that site is going to be OUR new home (FAST and SAD can f*** off). If he had the good of the club at heart (which surely he has had since 1990),

he would have left well alone.



So our little unbeaten run has seen off any lingering doubts about relegation has it? Don't even begin to think that you've weathered the storm Lennie Lawrence. We still want you out of our club — we're just concentrating our efforts on making sure we will have a club for you to get out of.

But while you're still here, I'm just going to have to repeat my message from last issue:

LL - YOU ARE AN APPALLING MANAGER, PLEASE LEAVE NOW.



Are highly paid football stars enjoying a lifestyle to match? After overhearing a conversation in a local snooker club last week, I'm not too sure.

Tony Thorpe: "Shall we go back to yours for a cup of tea Whitey?"

Alan White: "Can do - I've got some biscuits in".

Thorpe: "Which ones?"

White: "Chocolate chip ones".

Thorpe: (sigh) "Why can't you get some decent ones in for a change like digestives?"

What interesting lives professional footballers have nowadays!



A message for bitter and twisted from Ilkeston (issue 53).

The reason Bumbles Bar is closed from 4-7.00 pm on Saturdays is because if they stayed open, the 14 and 15 year olds who go down there wouldn't get a chance to do their weekend homework.

Pretty sensible idea if you ask me.



Mixed fortunes for Saffron Walden Town and Royston Town this month (I don't know if any of you actually care what they do, but I'm going to tell you anyway).

The Bloods got to within three games of going through the whole season unbeaten before going down 2-0 at Southend Manor. Their first defeat of the campaign has also (incredibly) completely blown their chances of lifting the Schweppes Essex Senior League crown (and second place is looking doubtful as well at time of writing). Meanwhile, the Crows' nine match unbeaten run was promptly followed by a further nine games without a win in the Minerva Spartan South Midlands League, as their slim title chances were ended as early as the start of March.

Who needs the trials and tribulations of a Football League club when you've got minor football to keep you occupied!



The semi-final coverage of the FA Umbro Sunday Cup in the papers made me laugh. St. Joes' opponents in the April 25th final were Little Paxton — a St. Neots based team who are covered by one of our sister papers (The Hunts Post). After their 2-0 win over favourites, Littlewoods Athletic, one of the local papers (Cambridge Evening News, I think) was billing them as favourites for the final, because "their opponents (St. Joes) needed extra time to book their place". So, St. Joes were the underdogs were they? The Cambridge Evening News obviously ignored the fact they won it in 1995 and 1996, were runners up last year and have ex-England/Chelsea/Luton star Kerry Dixon among their number. It's the type of error more commonly associated with newspapers like the Hypocrites on Sunday.



Funny quote of the week, overheard at the FLAG meeting: "Why is it that every club that's submitted an application [for a new stadium] has been granted — Reading,erm, — you name them." Good point, mate — but it's a shame you can't!

Scribe

MEETING THE POPE

A very holy young boy is going to the Vatican with his mum to see the Pope. The boy is a bit worried about whether or not they will see the Pope amongst the thousands of people. So, his mum says, "Don't worry son, the Pope is a big football fan so I'll buy you a Luton strip, the Pope will see the famous white and blue strip and he'll talk to you".

So, they buy the strip and the boy wears it while they are standing in the crowd as the Pope goes along in his Popemobile. Next thing John Paul stops the Popemobile and gets out to talk to a different little boy wearing a Watford top. Then he gets back into the Popemobile and it drives right past the Luton fan.

The little boy is very upset and is in tears. "Don't worry," says his mum, "I'll buy you a Watford strip, we'll come back tomorrow and then the Pope is bound to stop and talk to you."

They return the next day with the boy now wearing the Watford shirt. The Popemobile comes along and the boy is very excited. Sure enough, the Popemobile stops, John Paul gets out, bends down to the little boy and says "I thought I told you to fuck off yesterday!"

Will Kelly



Nick Owen (left) was the celebrity speaker at the FLAG public meeting.

Below, Sean Dyche is seen in action at Northampton.



An Open Letter to Lennie

Dear Lennie,

So, Mitchell Thomas as a centre forward. Mm. And we're supposed to believe you haven't finally lost the plot.

You told us on the radio the other day, that although you weren't a Luton supporter, you still "quite like this little club".

Well, so do I and I am a supporter, to the point where I actually pay about one thousand pounds per season to buy season tickets to watch this little club which I support play. But I've barely seen them play at all in 1999. Not that I haven't been at the games, but I've just seen a confused bunch of individuals wandering around the pitch wondering just what they were doing and why they were bothering to do it.

And the debacle against Lincoln was the final straw. Playing a wing-back system without the players to make it work didn't seem very sensible. Playing the Ivory Coast laundry-man who has yet to reveal the slightest ability at this level was so ridiculous that even you had to take him off at half time.

By why wasn't Doherty on from the start? OK he'd just stepped off a plane from Nigeria, but if he wasn't up to it, the best way to find out was to have him on from the start rather than bringing him on when it would have cost another sub to replace him if he couldn't do it.

You've been pretending for some time that we weren't in the relegation battle, when most supporters knew we were — scrambled victories over Gillingham and York couldn't disguise the almost complete lack of cohesion and invention which has been shown throughout 1999. Now, I'd say, we will struggle to take more than four points from our remaining four matches — and that may just put us into Division Three.

So, just what have you achieved since you've been here? One botched top-half season, one relegation, two bottom half finishes. The exit of several talented, popular players and the entrance of several inept loan players, one or two cheap purchases, none of whom has threatened to increase in value and er, that's about it.

It just isn't good enough. It isn't all your fault, but too much of it is. Goodbye, and I hope they can still find a job for you at Charlton, because I'm sure you DO support them.

Graham Sharpe

A BREAK FROM THE NORM.....

So, Luton Town's 115th season draws to a close and there is the distinct possibility that it could be the last. Receivership has put the entire club in danger. John Kelly has stated that if it is not sorted out by the end of May the Football League will omit us from the fixtures for 1999/2000. Several people can be blamed for this predicament but now is not the right time. Every single Luton Town fan, and indeed every Lutonian, needs to come together and fight for the survival of OUR club. By the time you read this, FLAG will have been launched and I hope that it has received universal support. I have been promoting the cause in deepest Hornet territory. We all hate W*tf*rd with a passion but a situation like this tends to unite football fans. I am delighted to say that some W*tf*rd supporting colleagues of mine have donated £100 for FLAG. As they said, W*tf*rd's success would not be as good with no Luton to take the piss out of!

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Something lighter. With the current financial situation at Kenilworth Road club staff have been asked to get summer jobs for the close season. A leak at the club has revealed the early employment details:

Lennie Lawrence	will be joining the Samaritans.
Marvin Johnson	will for the 11th summer be touring with Pogo's Magical Circus.
Mitchell Thomas	will be coaching the Mongolian sprint relay team.
Gavin McGowan	will join the post office so that he receives cards throughout the summer.
Paul Showler	his luck has continued! Paul has already lost his job as a Casualty extra after the Director thought his injuries were unrealistic.
Ticket office staff	are running Customer Service seminars for railway staff.
Cherry Newbery	has taken over and set up a dictatorship in a small Eastern European republic.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

The game at Maine Road was over with after 10 minutes so we spent the rest of the evening exchanging banter with City fans. A big hello to Fat Boy at the front of the stand. He was very passionate about his team but became very annoyed at Luton fans comments. By the end of the match he was very heated and was even turning round when "Fat Boy" was called out.

It was also funny to see that it took two policemen to eject a City fan aged about 13! I wonder why crime is so high on Moss Side!?

The journey home saw us hit traffic from the Villa Park FA Cup semi final replay. Didn't the Arsenal fans look happy!! I mouthed 'Cheer up' to one and was treated to a one fingered salute!

ΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩΩ

The summer is here and if the club survives surely there will be a massive change in staff and attitude. OUR club, that is an important part of our lives, has to survive. It needs to entertain, annoy and ruin weekends in the future.

"WE LOVE YOU LUTON, WE DO...."

The other Lawrence Inquiry

Now then Lennie Lawrence, I know the players and officials read this fanzine, I hope you do too. Listen mate.

Point 1

In an article in the *Daily Telegraph* dated 23rd February which focused on the club's current plight, in the aftermath of Kohler's resignation, you were quoted as saying "if results continue like this, I really fear for my job".

Apart from a 1-0 win over Blackpool, defeats at the hands of Wrexham, Bristol Rovers, Notts County, Walsall, Fulham and Stoke City (13/3), have not had the desired effect that Luton Town supporters would like. Mr. Lawrence, when you, yourself, were quoted as saying "if results continue...", would I be fair in assuming that six defeats in seven is not in the best interests of this football club? You do not deserve to be here after these comments.

Point 2

After the Fulham game/thrashing/debacle (choose one to reveal correct answer), in a short interview with yourself, with reference to supporters abuse towards you, you mentioned that when the club was in the "Worthington quarter final" and flying sixth in the league, there was no such derogatory comments, and that fans are fickle. I'm sorry, you're wrong boss. When we were "flying" a couple of months before Christmas, most Luton fans, including myself, were totally against you then.

I appeared live on national television back in November with six other Luton fans, three days after we beat Barnsley and we were all really high. The presenter said "so, Lennie Lawrence is doing well for you then". We all disagreed, and this was only three days after that Barnsley win. The presenter was taken aback, but this is in view that all the media and anybody in football fortunate enough to not know Lawrence, regard him as a decent manager.

Remember how Liverpool are now living in the shadows, and hanging onto the 70's and 80's, are still a great club.

That is Lennie Lawrence and Charlton Athletic. Times change Lennie, and it's time for a change.

Point 3

In summing up then, quotes from the *Beds on Sunday* (14/3), the day after the Stoke game. It's these comments that have finally pushed me over the edge, scandalous, to say the bare minimum. "What Luton really need, and now, is a new set of supporters". If myself, or any other Luton fan were to get hold of this journalist, he'd have no hands to write with. To accuse fans, and many of them in the main stand are season ticket holders (including myself), is sick. Absolutely sick. Who is this journalist? I'm prepared to meet him, if he reads this article,

and wants to respond. Tosser.

And then, just to finish off, "do not even deserve to be called supporters, liabilities would be a better descriptive term". It's called passion and commitment mate. Something our manager has "nil points", as the French would say. Forget the twat who threatened Kohler with a petrol bomb, we would just like to see our club start doing things and we never, never will with Lawrence in charge.

I'm holding back a lot of what I, and others, would really like to say, but that's only because the Fanzine is regarded as a family thing, if you like. But let's get this clear. Lennie has used every conceivable excuse he can muster. He has fielded at times weakened, but on most occasions, full strength sides, and yet still, the players clearly are failing to play for him. Please leave now, the supporters deserve better.

Thankfully, Luton will still be playing in a league sponsored by "Nationwide" in two years. A trip to Dover in the Conference anyone?

Tony Allbones, the Kempston Methodist

The Short Sharpe End

I shared a table at the recent Boxing Writers Dinner with Luton Town supporter Billy Schwer, who is preparing for a European title fight early in May, which I'm sure he'll win en route to a crack at the World Championship.

Ironically, the day after we'd lost 2-0 at Maine Road, we had to applaud politely as the Young Boxer of the Year award, which Billy won himself a few years back, was handed to the up and coming Richard Hatton — a Manchester City fan.

= + = + = + =

Finally, a pertinent quote: "When outstanding success passes a team by in season after season, it is a hard task to maintain an avid interest, and for a club's officials to continue to provide a side giving a high standard of playing entertainment."

This was taken from Harold Mayes article about Luton Town in the programme for the 1959 FA Cup Final, in which the proud boast on behalf of the club was: "Twice promoted, never relegated."

How frustrating that in recent seasons completely the opposite is true.

Graham Sharpe

With apologies to you Graham, it seems that earlier part of this issue's Sharpe End must have got lost in the post.

FACT OR FICTION?

A letter from Rt Hon John Prescott, MP.

Dear Mr Receiver,

Thank you for your recent letter (by coincidence did you know you share you surname with three other league chairmen?) - sorry, I digress - I thought it a splendid idea to build a new ground and must admit I was surprised no-one from your club hadn't thought of it before.

We, as a Labour government, are committed to projects that provide work, are forward thinking, and enhance communities so I say develop, develop, develop.

The site in question seems ideal, close to the airport and M1 motorway and in a low population area so any objections wouldn't be a problem, if you know what I mean. Tony, I am sure, will agree, especially as stadium usage times would coincide with minimal traffic flows on said motorway.

I think it 99% certain I can get this application passed in no time so you can start building a superb new facility such as Reading, Derby, Huddersfield etc.

I thought calling the stadium the 'Receiver Dome' was quite catchy although maybe if you could attract major sponsorship the Pepsi Dome or the Coca Dome might have more 'street cred' with your younger supporters.

I also understand another club not far away share with a Rugby team so maybe..... no, sorry, I wasn't thinking, you couldn't possibly play football on a surface used for Rugby unless the ball was in the air most of the time.

As regards a successful planning application for your stadium I can only think of two stipulations that would really help move things along - coming from Hull (sorry to mention that, my secretary pointed out that it may be insensitive to bring that up) we do like our pigeons, so if an executive box could be used as a temporary loft when I'm down in London I could indulge in my hobby.

Secondly, and I am sure this wouldn't be a problem, as Labour colours are Red and Yellow it would be appropriate to change your strip from blue and white for obvious reasons.

Good luck, and I look forward to being present at the official stadium opening.

Best regards,

John Prescott.

Dear Mr Prescott,

Thank you for your letter and helpful comments. No problem about the pigeons, but we've decided to stay at Kenilworth Road.

Best regards,

O. Receiver

The William Hill HatterLeague 4

At last, we have reached the end of the HatterLeague season. The home match against Lincoln marked the conclusion of the competition, although you would be forgiven for having failed to notice, what with so few of our HatterLeague players appearing in recent matches. Amongst the players, Matthew Spring has been the star performer, and has added 35 points to his personal total since publication of the last issue, including some Man of the Match awards. Chris Willmott also won a couple of MoM awards, but sadly was not among the players available! Sadly, our list of players this season included too many who were destined to leave, or simply be out of action through injury, and this has certainly caused problems for some managers (apart from Lennie).

The HatterSix players and their scores are:

Code	Player	£	Pts	Code	Player	£	Pts
<u>Goalkeepers</u>							
301	Kelvin Davis		0.7 m	-3	302	Nathan Abbey	0.3 m -28
<u>Defenders</u>							
311	Gavin McGowan		0.5 m	-7	315	Steve Davis	0.8 m 14
312	Julian James		0.4 m	-34	316	Alan White	0.6 m 3
313	Mitchell Thomas		0.6 m	20	317	Gerry Harrison	0.7 m 7
314	Marvin Johnson		0.6 m	32			
<u>Midfielders</u>							
321	Sean Evers		0.6 m	63	327	Ray McKinnon	0.7 m 36
322	Matthew Spring		0.5 m	105	328	Jimmy Cox	0.3 m 2
323	Graham Alexander		0.7 m	63	329	Michael McIndoe	0.4 m 13
324	Paul McLaren		0.6 m	29	330	Andre Scarlett	0.3 m 7
325	Paul Showler		0.5 m	7	340	Kofi Nyamah	0.4 m 0
326	Simon Davies		0.4 m	2			
<u>Strikers</u>							
331	Phil Gray		0.5 m	77	335	Liam George	0.5 m 4
332	Stuart Douglas		0.4 m	75	336	Dwight Marshall	0.5 m 0
333	Herve Bacque		0.7 m	0	337	Gary Doherty	0.3 m 25
334	Andrew Fotiadis		0.4 m	19			

Having got the player details out of the way, let's move on to the final results. The winner of the 1998/99 HatterLeague title is none other than yours truly, Mad as a Hatter! editor Keith Hayward. With winning the last Manager of the Issue bonus, I made up a further 6 places in my late season charge to win by 8 points from Vic Prior. Sadly, however, the rules prevent me from benefitting apart from the kudos of being able to put my own name in the roll of honour of previous winners in the future (and being the first ever winner from Luton). The surprise beneficiaries of my misfortune are those arriving in the next three places who all receive a prize one place higher than their finishing position. The runner up, Vic Prior will, we hope, not be disgusted by receiving a William Hill betting voucher worth £50, with third placed Kevin Hardy getting a voucher for £25 and fourth placed Les Miller winning a £15 bet. All prizes will be sent out directly by our wonderful sponsors, William Hill. For anyone who happens to be interested, the editor's winning team comprised Kelvin Davis, Marvin Johnson, Steve Davis (replaced by Gerry Harrison), Matthew Spring, Graham Alexander and Phil Gray. Makes you wonder how I managed to win, really, doesn't it? Seven players used, three no longer at the club, and still gets first place - miracles do happen, eh? On reflection, it would seem that the timing of transferring Steve Davis out of the HatterLeague team was the most important factor of the season's competition.

Leading Places:

1	SIX MAD!	Keith Hayward (Luton)	323
2	DISGUSTED OF TUNBRIDGE WELLS	Vic Prior (Tunbridge Wells)	315
3	BARRY READS LOTS OF BOOKS	Kevin Hardy (Barton-le-clay)	301
4	MILLER MAGIC	Les Miller (Kempston)	293
5	DAN'S RUBBER LEGS	Daniel Bennet (Bedford)	288
6	KING-SIZE ALLSTARS	Steven Sharpe (Pinner, Middx)	285
7	ANDY'S TOP HATTERS	Andy Wesson (Luton)	222

Down at the far end of the table, Andy Hunt had little competition in winning the proverbial wooden spoon, managing to finish a very convincing 94 points clear of any opposition, the gap being greater due to David Harris' late charge for... erm, safety. Andy's team was made up of Nathan Abbey, Mitchell Thomas, Julian James, Simon Davies, Paul Showler and Andrew Fotiadis. Do you get the impression he didn't want to win? Yup, me too. Incidentally, good to see a bit of harmony prevailing, with Mr and Mrs Daniels sticking together, although I will make no comment on their relative positions! And greetings to Martin Dockerill, just creeping into the bottom five at the last. Good to see Houghton Regis represented!

Bottom End:

119	HOUGHTON HATTERS	Martin Dockerill (Houghton Regis)	103
120	RUSTY SUBMARINES AGAIN	Dave Daniels (Sleaford, Lincs)	94
121	BUMPS-A-DAISY	Mrs Sam Daniels (Sleaford, Lincs)	84
122	DAVE'S DYNAMOS	David Harris (Southampton)	80
123	WHO ARE YA?	Andy Hunt (London)	-14

So, that's it for this season. Just to round off, worthy of mention are the two best individual player performances. They were, both with 12 points, Marvin Johnson at home to Northampton Town (clean sheet and Man of the Match) and Phil Gray, away to York City (one goal, two assists and Man of the Match).

No doubt this competition will be back next season, in yet another revised format, so we will see you then.

K.F.H./R.B

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is available on subscription at £6.25 for the next seven issues (overseas surface mail £7.50, 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.

LUTON TOWN LAPEL BADGES WANTED

I collect Luton Town badges and I am prepared to pay a fair price.

Contact: Allen Ridley. Tel: 0956 281092 or 0181 656 9457

POETRY CORNER

I am sitting in complete shock with the latest news. I suppose it had to happen - team in decline, Kohler resigning after attack, ground rejected and now financial mess. The writing has been on the wall especially when you look at what has happened at other clubs like Brighton, Doncaster etc. I have just written the following emotional and bitter poem as soon as I heard the news about voluntary receivership. I may go back and rewrite it when I am sober!

I know we can all point fingers at who is to blame, I think it is the greed at the top (yes I am jealous) which is slowly destroying the idea of a national football league. The only way forward is to try and follow the positive moves of clubs like Charlton — remember their black years away from the Valley? Fans led that revival and are actively involved on the Board. Bournemouth were in a bleaker position than us recently and their new Chairman is a fan who led their rescue package. Mad would appear to be in the best position to spearhead our fan based recovery. Any ideas?

Bill Church, Frampton Hatter

Premiership Blues

Fat cats expand, via plcs

Boosted by satellite T.V.s

Sucking dry the grassroots

To fill their golden boots.

Now Murdoch wants Man U in his bed,

While his bed on the rest tread.

Hansen interviews the new millionaires

While, for those beneath the stairs

Noose of debt tightens its chord

At Palace, Pompey and Oxford.

Where there once was hope

We are left like a cheap soap

Ground rejected, club in free fall

Voluntary receivership our latest call

Eric's smiles are now a distant ghost

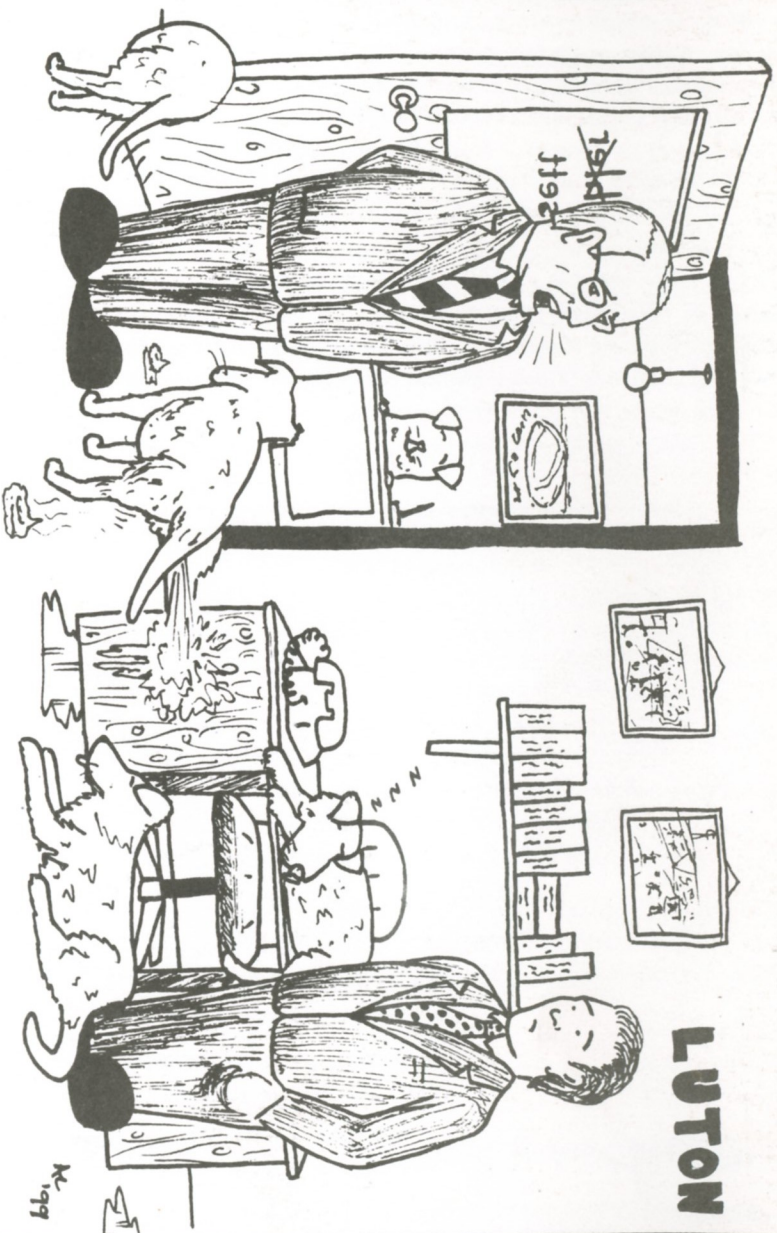
Yet, Payne's ten goals are still the most!

Embarrassed by riots and bans

Plastic pitch had few fans

Bournemouth and Charlton point the way

Community based to stop the decay!



Not Retrievers, for Christ's sake: I said "call in the Receivers."