

MAD AS A HATTER!

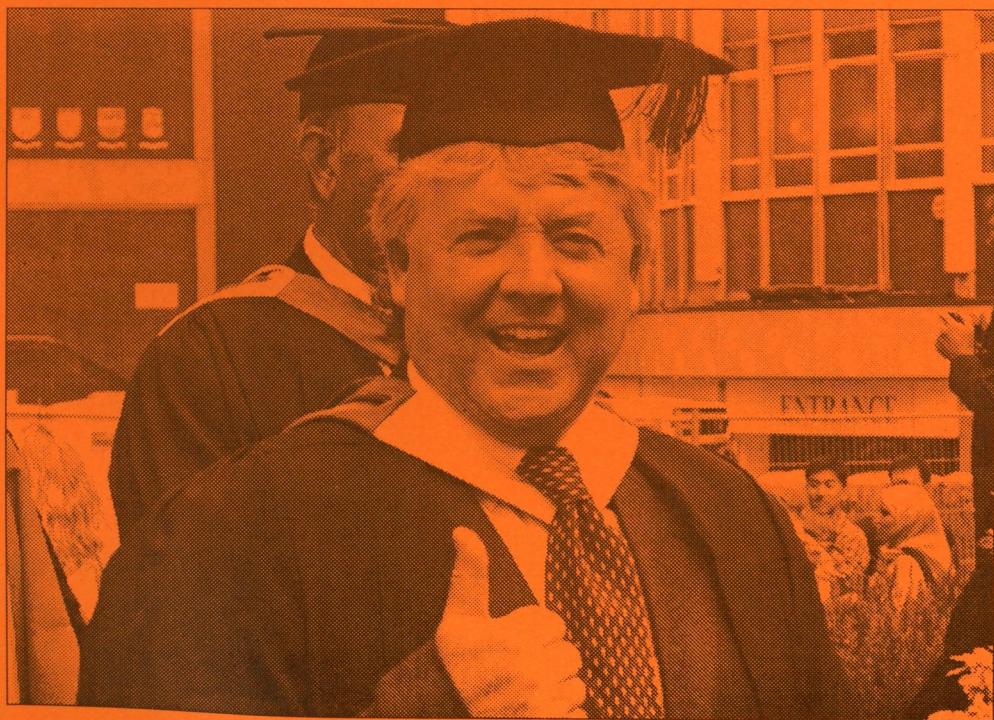
THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE



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MASTER OF FOOTBALL



BFJ on his way to be presented with an honorary degree at the University of Luton, awarded for services to football. On this occasion he's in full control of the (mortar) board!

MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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ED LINES

It's been a while. Two and a half years, two divisions, one relegation and one promotion, two chairmen and an administrative receiver, two managers, one glorious victory against our old enemy, more pints than I care to think of, one change each of job, address, and personal circumstances and seemingly a million occasions of being asked what had happened to the fanzine. As to the last of these, I'd often wondered whether the need for a fanzine had been replaced by the existence of mailing lists and message boards. However, having only lately been able to access message boards without my phone bill going through the roof (the price you pay for having even slightly old technology) I have realised that these things have their place, but supplement the fanzine – of course, if hundreds of you are not reading this, then I have been proved comprehensively wrong!

However, the catalyst for the return of *Mad as a Hatter!* at this time is one John Gurney. In particular, not his arrival but his first press release. For those who were following things, that was the one which ran to something like 11 pages, branded us all as undesirables, and brought to light ideas about changing the name of our club to London Luton, and the now famous London Luton Formula 1 Grand Prix track. I figured that if we had a chairman (or whatever he chose to call himself at any given time) writing fanzine articles of such high quality, it was only fair to have a fanzine to publish them. I have chosen not to reproduce that press release as much of it was actually very tedious reading, but maybe at some time in the future we could use some highlights!

Gurney's spell in charge of our club should go down as one of the worst periods for any club in history, and the football authorities should take action to prevent it happening again. Some hope. What football needs is a testing system to ensure that those who take control of professional football clubs are fit and proper people to do so, with the means to do so. It appears that Gurney would have failed and both counts, and while we may never know the truth of his intentions, he appears to have been an asset stripper bent on destroying Luton Town – presumably on the basis that without the football club to get in the way he might have been able to wrest control of the junction 10 land from Mike Watson-Challis and profit from development opportunities unencumbered by the need to provide a football stadium. What is certain is that we owe him no thanks for his brief tenure at Kenilworth Road, even if the end result is that the clubs finances are stabilised and prospects for the long term future of the club are improved.

Joe Kinnear's departure, at the very start of the Gurney era, will be well documented elsewhere. The style of his departure was unpleasant, but may have done the club a favour. Joe had been a high profile manager, but there are still big question marks about what he had done for the image of the club. There are even bigger question marks about what he had done for the finances of the club, through his own salary requirements and those of the players he had recruited. Spending on transfer fees may have been low, but we know little of what may have been paid in signing on fees, and there was clearly little control on Joe's

spending habits. It appears that Mike Watson-Challis may have operated in cashpoint mode most of the time, only taking control when Joe wanted to draw more than his daily limit. In spite of this his own PR was good enough to ensure he had a high profile amongst Town fans. Whether he should return at a future date is a moot point. Personally, I take the view that we should look forward, not back, and that a return to the past presents only opportunities for failure, rather than renewed success.

Gurney's spell in charge (all 55 days of it) reflected very well on Cherry Newbery. Often berated in these pages in the past, she has come out of this summer with almost hero status. She has proved beyond doubt her loyalty to and love of our club, and how anyone wanting to damage our club has to get past her first – and how difficult that will be. Thanks Cherry. Also frequently berated on these pages and emerging with some credit, is our old friend, *Luton on Sunday*. The *Accuracy* were straight on to the offensive with Gurney, and like a dog with a good juicy bone, would not let go until he was ousted. This probably owes something to the management having an affiliation to the Bedford Blues rugby club, but whatever the reason, thanks. Less credit to the *Luton News*, who chose to stick with reporting things as they happened, and failed miserably to point out how fanciful some of JG's ideas were, less still dare to voice an opinion – which is what all Town fans wanted. Three Counties Radio took a balanced approach, inviting JG to talk on the radio and even inviting him to answer questions from listeners, thus allowing him to dig his own hole. With Town fans Roberto Perrone and Ian Pearce on board to venture a gentle opinion, this worked rather well, and in time JG fell headlong into that hole.

And, to the present, what of Mike Newell. How should he be judged? There can be no doubt that he will take a very long time to shake off the stigma of being appointed by John Gurney, and that many Town fans will have difficulty forgiving him for accepting the job under the circumstances in which it was offered. However, we should not assume he is daft enough to believe he was elected as manager; interviewed on Radio 5Live, he was asked about the "fans vote", and asked if it was a loaded question, then stating that he did not think that the fans had much to do with it. What is likely is that Mike Newell, like many other managers before him, took a job which was offered, seeing any employment as an opportunity to advance his career. And, if we want success at Luton Town, we have to hope that he achieves exactly that. The signs so far are good, not only in the return of points, but the style of play that is getting the points. Long may it last!

Songs of Woe

Making fun out of disasters is not big or clever, and I'm certainly not writing this article to condone it, but I always listen to football songs with interest. Many people say that football chants and songs are made by oafs with no brains, but those people are limited to cardigan wearing far left do-gooders who have never attended a football match in their lives (but are happy to condone the miners who fought like hooligans in the 80's). I, on the other hand, think that football chants have an element of poetry about them and I am always intrigued to know where they started and wonder who had the imagination to think them up.

In the mid to late 80's my dad took me to Man United versus Luton and it was my first visit to Old Trafford. All I remember about the game was losing 2-0 to two penalties, both conceded by Paul Elliot handling the ball (he must have thought he was in goal on that day!). On the way back we were on a train from Manchester to Sheffield and in graffiti on the train was the "Munich song", sung by Liverpool fans "Who's that dying on the runway, who's that dying in the snow, etc...". It was the first time I'd seen or heard it. Leeds fans always used to take pride in singing it too.

Now, I'm not sticking up for Man United because, apart from the scum from down the road, I hate them more than any other team (that's another story thought!). But after recent disasters suffered by both Liverpool and Leeds fans, Man United had the opportunity to get their own back after decades of that hateful song. I remember in the first Man United v Liverpool game after the terrible Hillsborough disaster hearing the chant "Where's your famous Munich song?" (sung to the same tune as "We'll support you ever more"), to which the Liverpool fans probably got very upset, and rightly so, but they had no reply. The recent Man United v Leeds game bought a similar chant. "Always look in the Turks hands for knives" (sung to the tune of "Always look on the bright side of life"). Again, the Leeds fans had no reply to the quick thinking Man United fans.

The amazing thing is that these songs were obviously thought up in a very short space of time and had spread to thousands of others in order for them to be sung at the forthcoming match. On the one hand these songs are filled with imagination and thought, on the other hand they are cruel to say the least.

It brings me to think of other songs that have been thought of very quickly but have been very amusing or gone on to become firm football favourites:

- "Oh Teddy Teddy, he went to Man United and he won f*ck all", sung by Arsenal fans in the first Arsenal v Man United game after Arsenal had won the double and Teddy, in his first season at Man United, had won nothing.
- "Oh Teddy Teddy, he went to Man United and he's still a c*nt", sung by Arsenal fans in the first Man United v Arsenal game after Arsenal had won nothing and Teddy, in his second season at Man United, had won the treble.

- “Dodgy keeper” heard for the first time at Newcastle away in the FA cup 1-1 draw after Fueur had uncharacteristically fumbled a cross (only for Andy Cole to characteristically miss the resulting open goal!)
- “Oooooooooooooh! You’re sh*t” which was definitely started by Oxford United fans a few weeks before they played us at the Manor Ground in the late 80’s when an opposing keeper kept kicking the ball out from goal kicks (I remember the steward explaining it to me at the time). They then carried it on until the whole country started using it, and unfortunately some people still do.

There are countless others that I could mention but this article needs to be kept to a reasonable length. There are a few involving Luton that are worth a mention:

- “One Shaking Stevens” sung by Liverpool fans in 1993 when Kirk Stevens went in goal in front of the Kop after Jake Findlay went off with concussion (as he seemed to do every other week!).
- “There’s a glove up on the bar” (to the tune of “oops up side your head) sung by the Oak Road after a glove appeared from nowhere onto the cross bar (this one may not seem that great but it was very funny at the time!)
- “You all support Man U” sang to Stockport fans a few season back (and at every other set of visiting supporters ever since). Maybe someone would like to write to the fanzine to explain the origins of this song.

All of that brings me to the point of this article. A few of my mates (known to some as “The Killers” and “The Differents”) are quite good at making up funny (but pointless) songs in the pub after matches on Saturdays. A friend of ours moved to York recently and has been on the receiving end of many a good song about being a Northerner. Unfortunately I have been guilty of joining in and have sometimes been the instigator of a drunken rendition of “Go down t’pub and drink ten pints, I get really plastered, then I go home and beat the wife, coz I’m a northern b*stard”. This has been made especially unfortunate because during the summer I have moved to Nantwich due to work commitments, and just like those Liverpool and Leeds fans, I can feel myself coming in for a taste of my own medicine. I will look forward to the season when it starts (this article being written in June) and wait to hear what imaginative songs have been thought up for me.

Lastly, I am led to believe that there is a growing contingent of Lutonians in Nantwich and other parts of Cheshire who have moved to work at Ellesmere Port and other car production plants in the North West. If you know anyone then tell them to look out on the Lutonfc.com message board for me.

The Cheshire Hat.

When W-C met Mr G (or, what really happened at that fateful meeting)

Scene: The boardroom of a football club. The Chairman is sitting, alone, at the table contemplating a glass of fine white wine while reflecting how much easier it is to run a football club after removing most of the other directors from the board...

(Knock, knock)

“Oh, er, come in Yvonne, I wasn’t expecting you until...I say, you aren’t the fan’s representative to the board.”

“Absolutely correct, Mr Chairman, but I want to thank you for agreeing to see me.”

“Eh, what, when? I don’t recall having any appointments today apart from the board meeting with young Yvonne. I’ll have to check with Cherry...”

“Touch that intercom and you’re a dead man, Mr Chairman! Ha, ha, only joking, no need for you to go pale in the face like that. No, you agreed to see me just now, when you said “Come in”, remember? Blimey, I heard you were going senile, I didn’t know it was that bad.”

“What? No, not at all. No, not senility, definitely. No. So, what can I do for you Mr...?”

(Smack!)

“Ow! What the hell did you just hit me for?”

“Names are not important, Mr Chairman, remember that and save yourself some grief.”

“What? Er, but I have to call you something, don’t I Mr...?”

(Smack!)

“Names are not important, go on, say it, say it or I’ll twist your arm until it breaks, go on!”

“Names are not important! Names are not important! Ow! that really hurt you know. What do I call you, YES, YES, NAMES ARE NOT IMPORTANT BUT I HAVE TO CALL YOU SOMETHING...Ouch, ouch, ouch, Oh God! My fingers...”

“Hmm, good point, yes, sorry about your fingers but you can still write your signature with your right hand, correct? Good. Okay, you can call me the Middle-man.”

“And what can I do for you, Mr Middle-man?”

“No, Mr Chairman, it’s more a case of what I can do for you and this football club. I represent a mystery consortium of mystery overseas businessmen and I, that is, they are willing to take over the running of this club from you. As you are aware, it is losing money every day and costing you a fortune. I, er, the mystery consortium will change that. We will make this club the talk of the land and show shady businessmen the world over how to make money out of football.”

"Well, that certainly sounds encouraging. It's no secret I'm talking to another consortium about selling up. Well, it should be a secret, but it isn't. Anyway, they seem to have some well thought out plans..."

"Oh, plans, well, Mr Chairman, our plans will knock you for six. First, we announce we want to build a super-stadium on the valuable land at Junction 10, on stilts over the motorway. Then we add the multi-leisure complex, the giant cinema screens, the shopping centre, the luxury housing estate, the Grand Prix racing circuit, the lap-dancing clubs, casinos, theme pubs, cricket pavilion, spaceport, Disneyland-Luton..."

"Hold on, I say, did you say 'on stilts over the motorway?'"

"Yes. Well, strictly speaking the slip-road. Trust me, the press will love it when I make those announcements and the fans won't know what hit them."

"Well, it certainly sounds ambitious, Mr Middle-man, and who are your backers..."

(Smack!)

"Ah! Look, if you expect me to sell up to mystery consortiums I need to have some idea of who they are!"

(Smack!)

"Ahhgh! Yes, names are not important! I agree, they can remain anonymous!"

"Good. My backers must remain completely anonymous to avoid a hostile response from the handful of stick-in-the-mud fans who fail to agree this is an exciting new day for their club."

"Right. Er, I hesitate to bring this up, but in my experience successful foreign businessmen tend to have armed guards and live in virtual fortresses. Why worry about a few football supporters? Just asking, just asking, please not my right hand too...thank you, thank you, only the little finger is broken..."

"Of course, this will not be without costs. For starters, the manager and his assistant both get the chop."

"Not literally I hope!"

"Was that a joke?"

"Yes, sorry!"

"Don't try it again. No, I am a merciful man, they shall be sacked, not killed, to save money by paying up their contracts in full and hiring a new manager. This will doubtless cause some hostility, so I have a dupe, er, colleague from another struggling club who will do this while acting as a consultant and take all the blame. Wages will be paid thanks to season-ticket sales. The best players will be sold to reduce costs, a black picture will be painted about the finances of the club and finally, reluctantly, I shall sell the land at junction 10 to make a tremendous profit when the local council makes problems about the proposed strip clubs and drug dens vital to the success of the new stadium. Finally, the shell of the club will be sold on to a desperate group of supporters who have raised a few tens of thousands to buy me off, chickenfeed, but every penny counts in this game. Here, you haven't got a fanzine or supporter's trust here have you? The last thing we want is the fans to get organised"

"What? But that sounds terrible! Why would I want to sell to you under those circumstances? Er, no, no fanzine or trusts, I believe."

"Good. To quell your fears I shall make you Life President of the club. And pay you a fiver, it's all I've got at the moment until those rugby creeps from Bedford pay up the thousands they still owe me from when I was with them."

"Five pounds for my football club? You aren't serious!"

"No, sorry, you're right, I spent a pound on half a bitter in the local pub, £4 and that's my final offer, or would you rather keep on losing a million quid every day you own this wreck of a club?"

"How much? Good Lord, my accountant said it was costing me money, but not that much! And I'll be Life President, you say? Hmm, I like the sound of that."

"Yes, and the fans owe you a debt of gratitude Mr Chairman, or should I say, Mr Life President? Those fans who make a fuss or criticise you can be marked down for future elimination. Oh yes, your accountant is incompetent, trust me, not him."

"A debt of gratitude? Yes, it certainly brings tears to my eyes, well that or the extreme pain from my various injuries. The fans will remember me forever because of my actions today, won't they?"

"Yes. Sign here, here and here. In blood, if you please, look I'll even open a vein in your arm for you..."

Declan McCabe

CONTRIBUTIONS PLEASE

You'll probably be as amazed as I am that we've put together this issue, but there will be more this season (another 3 or 4 are planned, with next one to be available late October/early November). That won't happen without your help, so if you would like to send anything - articles, match reports, letters, cartoons, photos, press cuttings, or whatever, post or email to the addresses below:

Snail mail: MAAH, 195 Cutenhoe Road, Luton, LU1 3NQ.

Email: keith.hayward1@ntlworld.com

Letter from Mr Gurney to Mr Abramovich

When Luton were put into Administration, John Gurney seemed in a hurry to leave, and he left a few things behind in his haste. Found in his office was a letter addressed to the current Chelski chairman Roman Abramovich....

Dear Abra,

You may not have heard of me, but I have just bought a Second Division club (two divisions below your club) under false pretences. I say false pretences because I am pretending to be a rich man with vast finances like yourself with grand ideas for the club, whereas really I'm as poor as a lower class person.

However, I do have some great ideas, which include;

- a) An 80,000 seater stadium so the London Gurney Football Club will be able to seat all their loyal fans;
- b) A F1 track (the London Gurney Track, which will replace that dump Silverstone on the F1 calendar and bring in lots of cash for me / us);
- c) An Olympic skiing resort, so we can host the Winter Olympics;
- d) A Disney theme park and;
- e) A Space Centre (the John Gurney Space Centre) to launch the first manned flight to the Sun.

I have already moved this club forward by sacking the extremely unpopular, expensive, opinionated and pathetic manager Joe Kinnear and his side-kick the even more unpopular Mick Harford. This has raised my status within the area to almost God-like.

Next, I let the fans vote for their new manager in a way you would appreciate (they get 10 votes each, I get 50,000 votes), and the fans are so happy with me, they have boycotted purchasing their season tickets because they feel it is unfair to pay such a small amount for such quality facilities and entertainment they will be offered. I'm sure you'll agree that I have done a fine job so far but a have a small but annoying cash flow issue that needs to be addressed.

If you like my plans (which I'm sure you will), then please send a cheque for £3½ billion to Bank account number 4443 5691 6000 at the Bank of Geneva, Switzerland. I will then send your receipt in the post. I think with your connections we can make a fine team.

Yours sincerely,
John Gurney

P.S I enclose a S.A.E.
P.P.S. Any chance we could loan Frank Lampard?

Peter Bulkeley

In the jungle, the mighty jungle, the Hatters roar tonight.....

September 10th 2002. Luton have just beaten the Scum 2-1 thanks to a rocket from Spring and a class finish from Howard. 5,000 delirious Luton fans are going mad in the ground, with more whooping up the celebrations in Luton. Meanwhile, in the heart of the Bolivian Amazon, much to the amusement of the locals and various other travellers, a rather sweaty Hatter is about to go on a serious drinking spree making sure everybody knows about the glorious Hatters beating the Scum!

In 2001, along with a fellow Hatter by the name of Jez, I decided to head off on my travels around the globe. I needed a break from the rat race and thought it would be a most splendid idea to head off to Japan for the World Cup and then onto the delightful and mysterious lands of South America. Never did it cross mine or Jez's mind that we would miss a Luton Scum clash.

Come one morning in Sao Paulo, Brazil, whilst recovering from the previous night in a youth hostel internet café, the worst possible thing happened. Out of the bag came 'Watford.....will play.....Luton Town' and straight into my email inbox came about 80 emails asking me when I was coming back! Now I got emails from people who I hadn't heard of for a few years, but as soon as they saw that we were due to play the scum, they mailed me! B*stards. And bollocks. On a trip of a lifetime, and we get the scum. For three days I seriously thought about flying back from Chile (the country I planned to be in by the time the game came around) to be at the game. I went as far as contacting airlines about returning for the game but in the end, cold, common sense prevailed. I stayed in South America.

With the knowledge that we would be somewhere in South America for the game, the quest was on to be in a town with internet access. As the game got ever closer, we soon realised that we would be in the middle of the Bolivian Amazon. We were now getting desperate to know if there was an internet café in the little town of Rurrenabaque, our stop off point for the Amazon. Fortunately, fellow sad bastard travellers informed us that we would be OK. God bless modern communication! We just had to make sure that we were back from our respective trips into the Amazon, a quite stunning part of the world, in time for the game. Disaster for Jez, his trip would not be back till the afternoon after the game. Great news for me, mine was returning the evening before! Like a good friend, I told Jez I would listen extra hard for him. You can imagine the response.

I had a truly awesome time in the jungle, or Pampas to give them the correct name. They are an incredible sight, vast wetlands stretching out before you, criss crossed by rivers and populated with all kinds of exotic creatures, anacondas, jaguar, capybaru, pink river dolphins and alligator's. But all I had on my mind was getting back in time for the Big One, Luton v Scum. I bored my fellow travellers senseless

This was to be the story of the game for me, delayed response to all types of action but it was great to hear it all. Come full time and I'm off down the dirt road to the bar, doing a little 'Bring Me Sunshine' routine for the benefits of the locals. I then proceeded to spend the night bursting into spontaneous song and generally really scaring locals with mad dances and loud outbursts of joy! The night ended with me re-enacting Springs' goal on a stone. Not the best idea, as my big toe soon exploded, leaving a delightful trail of blood up to the hostel I was staying at. I didn't care though, as we had beaten the Scum 2-1!!! Next day was a bit painful though, but it was soon forgotten as I relayed the news to a very happy but slightly pissed off Jez. Mind you, I think the Mosquito Bar had their biggest night ever that night!

Mark Araci

Ten Reasons Why We Like John Gurney

1. We did not lose a single match under his leadership;
2. He let us keep our season ticket money for an additional month;
3. Nope – that's it!

IT'S YOUR FAULT, DES!

Some people blame John Gurney, some David Kohler. David Evans and Peter Nelkin get mentions, as do Terry Westley, Lennie Lawrence and Ricky Hill. Try even Dwight Marshall's broken leg a few years back which ensured our relegation to division two. But to my mind, there is only one man responsible for the mess Luton have found themselves in over the last decade or so, and that's Des Walker.

Des Walker has played almost 800 games in his career. He has scored just one goal. It was against Luton Town on 1 January 1992 and I believe that everything which has since gone wrong for the Hatters can be traced back to that moment.

So let me take you back. It was that long-distant time when Luton were in the top division, and with the Premiership set to start pouring huge wads of cash into clubs' pockets the following season, yet another successful relegation fight was vital. The 1990-91 season had finished with the near-annual last-day decider, when a certain Mick Harford scored what was surely the most intentional own goal ever while playing for Derby as we won 2-0 at Kenilworth Road.

The real shock had come shortly afterwards, when that nice Mr Nelkin sacked Jim Ryan – a gross injustice to a good manager doing a tough job – paving the way for David Pleat's return.

But it didn't do much to improve matters on the pitch – which had finally returned to grass at KR – and with only a few home wins under our belts, it wasn't long before we were rock bottom and looking doomed, doomed I say.

Scoring goals proved a real problem from the start, with the first strike coming in a 4-1 drubbing at Chelsea in the fourth match of the season. Brian Stein had returned from playing in France and came home to Luton, but it was one season too many for Brian and he scored just three goals in 39 appearances.

Pleat then turned to Big Mick for salvation and paid Derby £250,000 for him to start his second spell with us. And boy, did he have a second debut to remember. One down to Oldham at home with just minutes to go, and having done little all match except get booked, Mick scored two at the death – the second a spectacular overhead kick from a Kurt Nogan cross, if memory serves – to send us into raptures the like of which I have rarely experienced in the Main Stand. But this was a brief turning of the tables. That season, Luton displayed a fatal if admirably consistent habit of conceding goals in the last ten minutes of games, especially away from home. Had all games been 80 minutes long, we would have finished a comfortable mid-table.

It was a season of memorable matches – anyone remember the game at White Hart Lane when we were a goal up after 70 minutes and cruising, only for the floodlights to go out? Following the resumption, we conceded four.

But with despair setting in, the fixture list threw up a pleasing anomaly of three consecutive home games over Christmas. First Coventry were narrowly beaten on a Friday night, and

then a Harford goal saw off champions Arsenal 1-0 on Boxing Day in front of 11,000 fans – I can still remember the superbly disguised pull by Trevor Peake on Ian Wright which prevented a certain equaliser for the latter and red card for the former. A couple of days later, Chelsea were despatched 2-0, and suddenly we were off the bottom and hope was revived.

So it was in good heart that we travelled up to the City Ground on New Year's Day. And things soon got even better as Mark Pembridge hammered the first goal in the country that year after just 33 seconds. From thereon the game passed slowly, but Luton were secure. Cries of 'Come on you Tricky Trees' somehow didn't inspire the home team, and by the second half, the Forest fans were getting on their players' backs. That much-coveted first away win was in sight.

On the game went, and it was in the 94th minute that Des Walker picked up the ball in his own half. Rather than just hoof it, Walker took the unusual step (for him) of taking the ball over the half-way line. And then he ran up the left flank. And he ran and ran and ran. He ran past defenders shocked into total inaction by Walker's presence in the Luton half. He ran into our box with scarcely a challenge in sight. It was fortunate for him that in goal was Steve Sutton, on loan from Forest, who was probably more stunned than anyone to see Walker from the front and sizing up a shot. The ball fizzed past him into the top corner with barely a flicker from the keeper.

The City Ground erupted, Walker almost collapsed with the effort and surprise of it all, and we had blown it, big time. In the next away game, we were one up at Liverpool with five minutes to go and somehow lost 2-1 in front of a baying Kop making noise like you would never believe. Then it was on to Hillsborough, where Sheffield Wednesday recovered from 2-1 down with, you guessed it, ten minutes to go, to win 3-2.

We kept it interesting to the last game, as usual, thanks to home form that only the top teams could match – winning ten and losing just four at KR all season. We had to win at already relegated Notts County, while Coventry had to lose at Aston Villa. Within something like 13 seconds, Coventry were behind – not that anyone on the terraces believed me, even though I was patently plugged into a radio – and when Julian James put us in the lead, it looked like survival might somehow be ours. But then County scored twice, the second a classic Alec Chamberlain far-post cross misjudgement, and it was down, down, down without a single away win. Twenty-one away games had yielded five draws, 16 defeats, 14 goals and an embarrassing 54 hitting our net.

So let's imagine for a moment that Des Walker had hoofed it, as he has done in every other match of his career. Trevor Peake would have soundly cleared it, the ref would have blown up and it would have been four wins on the trot, out of the bottom three, and a Luton team emboldened on its travels.

Maybe we would have held on at Anfield; surely we would have done at Hillsborough. We might have taken the points at QPR, rather than let Les Ferdinand turn a 1-0 win into a 2-1 defeat. We wouldn't have had to worry on the last day, and we would have entered the Premiership age with our noses firmly in the trough. David Pleat, reputation enhanced, would have been able to hold onto Mick (12 goals in 29 games that season) rather than have

to sell him to Chelsea, and strengthened the squad while good youngsters such as Hartson, Telfer and Oakes learnt their trade at the top. Luton could have thrived in lower mid-table and become a fixture in the top league, like Southampton or more recently Charlton. The Kohlerdome would have been built, we would never have heard of John Gurney, and we would now be welcoming Manchester United, Arsenal and maybe even the odd UEFA Cup opponent to the warmth and comfort of our indoor stadium with removable pitch (let's face it – put next to Gurney's Formula One track, it was almost plausible).

Instead we've had a decade of at times pretty depressing decline. So next time you see Des Walker, don't hit him or anything. Just pin him up against a wall and ask him: Why? Why, Des? Why us?

Neil Rose

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Mad as a Hatter! is again available on subscription at £6.00 for the next five issues from the address on page 2. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

Potter plans

■ **THE British director behind smash hit *Four Weddings and A Funeral* will direct the fourth Harry Potter movie.**

Mike Newell will be the first Briton to direct the boy wizard when he begins work on *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* next April.

Looks like our new manager has an interesting, not to say lucrative, sideline! Perhaps he can get hold of some of that magic to keep us free of injuries for the rest of the season!

This archive cutting from *The Sun* is a few years old, but worthy of an outing. Probably just as well that Mitchell was a footballer (discuss...) rather than a Lycra clad sprinter!

SHAFTH arrives back from Catalonia to discover **LES FERDINAND** has taken prize and show in football's golden jockstrap awards. But hang on a minute, who's this swaying into view with playful grin on his face and a Luton Town programme stuffed down his shorts? Why it's Hatters' defender **MITCHELL THOMAS**.

According to some pretty dubious sources, Mitchell is so mighty of sword that, in his Spurs days, he played with extra strapping to avoid loose penalty area tackles.

Apparently in this crucial department, even big Les acknowledges Mitchell as "The Daddy" ... unless you know different.

WHAT MIGHT (NOT) HAVE BEEN

SATURDAY 6th MAY 2023: As I make my way along Harford Way, to enter the EasyDome stadium, I gaze up at the bronze statues of our modern day founding fathers (John Gurney and Mike Newell) and reminisce on how things have changed over the last 20 odd years. It seems only a short while ago that London Luton were struggling at the foot of Division 2, whilst our archrivals in Hertfordshire gloated from their lofty position in Division 1. How things change, the once successful Watford now struggling for survival in the lower reaches of the Southern Conference. Their demise probably started around the time that Graham Taylor was institutionalised after his unfortunate incident, and subsequent breakdown when a tabloid journalist made the mistake of mentioning turnips during a post match interview. Indeed turnips and other vegetables have not helped their cause, particularly when the local council demolished Vicarage Road in order to expand the local allotments, believing this to be a better use of the land. It was also DNA evidence found on the end of a cucumber that helped to convict Elton John after the junior Hornets scandal.

Whilst Watford have disappeared into obscurity, London Luton on the other hand have gone from strength to strength and currently lie 2nd in the Euro Premier Division. Today's success can be traced back to that memorable day when Mike Newell was installed as manager by our benevolent chairman John Gurney. This heralded the start of London Luton's rise to the top of the European football leagues. Whilst many other teams were hit very hard in 2013 due to a Federal Europe ruling, that scrapped the transfer system and replaced it with a weekly contract system (or Pay as you Play), Luton's crop of loyal home bred stars went on to win just about every cup and championship going. Most of the major clubs went bust at this time, with their expensively assembled squads free to walk away and pursue lucrative pay as you play games, often for a different club each week.

Another major factor in London Luton's success lies in the magnificent stadium and facilities that they have at their disposal. When the long running saga of London Luton's relocation was finally resolved in 2004 and the first phase of the EasyDome was constructed and opened in time for the start of the 2004 season, London Luton's rise to their former glories was almost complete. The new stadium was such a success that there have since been a number of further upgrades increasing the capacity to its present 72,000. Only last week the EasyDome hosted its 14th international football match, which saw Great Britain beat the USA by 6 goals to nil. It is hoped that one day the dispute over the derelict and decaying Wembley stadium will be resolved and the 20 year argument between the planners and the FA will finally be laid to rest to provide a new permanent national stadium to be proud of.

And it's not only the international matches that are bringing in the money. The London Luton Frankfurt Galaxy NFL franchise is doing pretty well, attracting regular

gates of up to 20,000, although relying on all the supporters flying in was a mistake, as the airport just can't cope with any more. If only the third runway had been built. The rugby side was something of a failure when some of the more wealthy London Luton Irish supporters decided that it would be better to take the team to Dublin rather than fly in to London Luton every week – although they were relying on Ryanair, who actually flew them to a small airport near Calais. Still, the grand plan will soon come to fruition if Bernie Ecclestone maintains his promise to take the British Grand Prix away from Silverstone – the London Luton raceway is almost ready.

Anyway, it's time for me to hand over my season smartcard and enter the ground, pick up an eProgramme (a bargain at only €20 for 500 Mb) and take my seat. Some people prefer to use one of the many virtual stadiums, but personally I feel that you can't beat the live experience. If we can beat Brussels FC today, we can go top of the league.

Here's to the future, and may the good times continue...

Quiet please

I am sure I am not alone in wondering about the lack of a one-minute silence before the Rushden & Diamonds game in memory of Ray Harford, who died that morning.

I will confess to not being up on the technical side of these things, but surely it isn't difficult to arrange one? There seemed plenty of time pre-match to announce one would be staged before the Yeovil game, so why not do it straight away? After all, the crowd was always going to be bigger on the Saturday, meaning more people could pay their respects.

Who is it who makes the decision? I couldn't believe the club was unable to organise a silence to honour the man who led us to Littlewoods Cup glory.

Although it was more or less with the team he inherited from Pleat (and Moore), Harford, because of that great day in April 1988, will be remembered as LTFC's most successful manager.

For that, we say thanks.

RIP Ray.

Scoop



Tony Thorpe and Steve Howard celebrate a goal during the Carling Cup tie against Yeovil. Presumably not the one scored by Emerson Boyce!

A MATTER OF TRUST

Once upon a time, I foolishly wrote, "The one certain thing when you're following the Town is that it'll never be boring." The events of this summer have proved me right in the most spectacular way. After the final whistle at Swindon, I was looking forward to a nice, quiet close season; no international tournaments to distract me, and the tour of Scotland coming up at the end of July. In short, I thought I would have three months when Luton Town wouldn't be my first waking thought. How wrong could I be?

You all know the story by now. An anonymous consortium buys the club at the end of May. Joe Kinnear and Mick Harford are sacked. A rowdy but non-violent demonstration outside the ground scares away Roger Terrell and Lee Power, forcing one John Gurney to become the public face of the new owners. He announces plans for a huge new stadium (complete with a million and one other sports, as well as a Formula One racetrack), suggests a commercial link up with the airport, moots the possibility of buying up Franchise FC, and most notoriously decides that democracy should choose the Town's next manager.

The week after the sackings of Joe and Mick, a group of disgruntled fans met in the Bricklayers' Arms for a nine-hour meeting, the conclusion of which was to set up a Supporters' Trust. Almost one hundred clubs now have a Trust; it is a democratic organisation of supporters and the long-term solution for supporters to have a say in the future of their club. Several clubs, like York, are now owned and run by their Trusts; dozens of others, like Brentford's Bees United, have a shareholding in their clubs. And now, after the success of the pledge scheme that withheld money from the Gurney regime, Trust in Luton has acquired shares in Hatters Holdings, the major creditor that put Luton into administrative receivership, meaning that members of the committee are in regular dialogue with Barry Ward, the receiver, and the club staff.

Since the first public meeting at Kenilworth Road, right back at the start of June, hundreds of Luton fans have signed up to become members of the Trust – but we know there are hundreds more out there who haven't yet signed up. There's no need to worry that the Committee is a closed shop and you won't have a say in the Trust actions: the Committee is just the

...continued on page 22

Membership Application Form.

The Trust is an Industrial and Provident Society.

Please return the completed form and remittance to: Trust in Luton, c/o 39 Upper George Street, Luton, Beds LU1 2RD
Please complete the form in block capitals.

Name: Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss or Company Name _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Date of Birth _____

Phone No: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Minimum membership donation for 2003/04 season is as follows. Please tick the appropriate box.

Adult – Full annual membership	£10	
Over 60 - Full annual membership	£5	
Junior (under 16) - annual membership	£5	
No Share issued or voting rights		

I also wish to donate the sum of £ _____ to “Trust in Luton” for use in accordance with the objects of the Trust.

I enclose a cheque/postal order (made payable to Trust in Luton) to the value of £ _____.

I understand that the sum of £1 from a full member’s first payment will purchase a share for that member in Trust in Luton. This will give that person, or their proxy, the right to vote at all “Trust in Luton” meetings and elections.

I agree to abide by, and be bound by, the rules of the Trust’s Constitution*.

*A copy of the constitution is available on the Trust website <http://www.trustinluton.com>

Signed Date:

For the Purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998 I confirm this information can be held on Computer file for the purposes of (1) Group administration.
(2) To inform you of matters, including marketing material, relevant to the Trust and Luton Town F.C. No information will be passed to other parties without permission being obtained. Please tick the box should you not wish to receive this material ☐

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY:

Membership Number: Share Number: Date Issued:

This portion to be returned to you as your receipt

The amount of £ Has been received from
Ondate.

Signed Position Held

vehicle by which the Trust will establish itself. As soon as we can organise it, democratic elections will be held in which any paid-up member over the age of sixteen will be eligible to stand for office.

So what's the plan now? The main aims and objectives of the Trust are in the constitution, and they are and always have been as follows:

- To strengthen the bonds between the Club and the local community.
- To work for the football and financial success of the club.
- To uphold and preserve the tradition and heritage of Luton Town, and to secure the club's long-term future in Luton.
- To encourage and promote supporter representation on the club's board acting as communication to the supporters.
- To acquire shares in the club, formally creating a supporters' stakeholding.
- To promote coaching schemes to develop the football skills of local young people and promote local interest in football.
- To raise money in such a way as to promote the aims and objectives of Trust in Luton and to the benefit of the local community, Luton Town Football Club and its supporters.
- To ensure that all profit is reinvested back into the club.

These are all things we want for our club, to ensure that no faceless gang can ever take it over again and treat us all like mugs. When Mick Harford returned as Director of Football, he declared, "The supporters are the saviours of this Club." Yet without the solidarity that's been engendered over the summer, what we've all achieved so far wouldn't have been possible. So please, if you haven't done so already, sign up to the Trust. If you have, then get your friends and family to sign up too. And please, all Trust members, give the Committee, whoever they are or may be in the future, your total support.

Thanks for your backing so far. Keep the faith.

Caroline Dunn
Trust Media Officer



Paul Hughes in action during the Carling Cup tie against Yeovil

WHAT SORT OF CHAIRMAN ARE YOU?

Football. The nation's game. The great leveller. The last bastion of the last bits of the working class. Real ale, spit and sawdust, replica kits, Russian billionaires, scandals, executive hospitality, floating pitches, stilts, motorways, mistletoe and wine.

And yet outside the Premiership ©, it is still possible for an 'Honest Joe' to rise from Johnny No-One to the elevated role of Chairman. Our own beloved Hatters have had some truly cuddly characters as Chairman. Honest folk who prefer cheddar to stilton; who use tinned shoe polish rather than bottles with bits of sponge on the end. Good, honest fellas you might disagree with on day-to-day issues, but who you know you could chat with in the boozer about wider, more important issues in the world. From the careering, careerist fiscal-eyed toads of the 80s; to the sturdy, forgettable dabblers of the 90s and the more recent crop of mad idealists.

Every football fan knows they could have done better, but really, CAN YOU? What kind of Chairman would you make? Answer the following questions and you'll see – it's not that easy to be a successful Chairman.

You're fairly confident of being able to raise some extra revenue for the forthcoming season. What are your guts telling you should do?

- A. Imagine you're about to embark on a gentle comedy style adventure to the top, and appoint the most skilful player in the club's history without even asking to see his CV?
- B. Fawn over the Prime Minister and try to buy your way into their favour, offering her a free season ticket for life right next to your loyal servant....?
- C. Employ some sci-fi geeks to come up with some fairly vague, slightly ridiculous and some-would-say vain ideas for a modestly sized, modestly over-priced new stadium?
- D. Release entirely well realised and workable plans on the late night website, which variously include floating the motorway over a recreation of the stadium from 'Gladiator', surrounding it with a Formula One race track the elves have grown for you in a field near Leighton Buzzard and getting so upset that you're suddenly not transformed into Citizen 'bleedin' Kane, that you decide not to honour the pay roll.

What one item do you plan to take to your first board meeting?

- A. Flopsy, the lovely cuddly Luck Mascot, and a brand new autograph book
- B. A hugely flattering picture of HRH the PM of the day;
- C. A technical drawing (of a giant tick hollowed out, with seats in it)
- D. Class A firearms

How would you plan to ingratiate yourself with the local community?

- A. Make them all a little uniform from green felt, with tiny tiny bells
- B. Build a huge great fence around the indigenous population and ban everyone else
- C. Try to convince them I'm a serious business man (with a big dog)
- D. Fool them into thinking I've got a load of friends with lots of money

How do you get around?

- A. Driven around in Happy Harry's Magic bus
- B. On a trail of my own secreted slime
- C. In an artist's impression of a souped up sports car (copied off of 'Back to the Future')
- D. Rough shod, right over the town folk, in a big sturdy caboose

Milton Keynes?

- A. No way, we're Luton Town, and Luton Town we'll stay – 'til we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land off Junction 10.
- B. Why not? There are tremendous possibilities, I'm a self-made, self-styled Captain of Industry me... are you watching me Ma'am? MA'AM, forget Archer *look at meeeee*
- C. Why should we? Eh? No point... or is there? Well, if we find there is, we can simply fly the stadium North... have you seen my floating shrubbery?
- D. ...will soon be amalgamated into the London Luton franchise

Alright then, where would you relocate?

- A. We won't. I've just said, we're going to build Jerusalem next to the motorway, and I know and trust a bloke who says he can do it
- B. Any place *she* thinks will look nice... especially now Dennis has gone
- C. Next to the motorway. Honestly. No, *really*.
- D. In among the training stadium, grand prix track, airport car park and the, as yet to be announced surprisingly sane space exploration facility/Bond villain's lair.

How do you dress for footballing occasions?

- A. Smart blazer – just as smart as it appeared in my picture in the programme.
- B. Smart blazer, over a cheeky "Ken Bates is a pansy" t-shirt, Bomb the Belgrano tiepin – a carnation (and a rolled up copy of the FT) so she'll know me if she does turn up.
- C. Smart blazer, cheeky smile – with a huge dog which you hope helps convey the image "Noel Edmonds – *Darkside*"
- D. Would that be NFL, Anglo-Irish petanque rules or London Luton F1C? Either way, sweating profusely.

Where do you see the club in five years time?

- A. Top of EuroDisney League Division Two
- B. Junior Under-secretary for Hygiene Collection Div 3 (South)
- C. Best ground in the conference
- D. Unibond Allsports World camps and Constructors championships

How do you know it's time to go?

- A. When wifey wakes you up
- B. When you've sold the ground and lost any chance of political advantage/hope that she'll ever go out with you
- C. When then postman starts delivering incendiary devices. Allegedly.
- D. When you realise that, despite what those voices in your head are telling you, the Mysterons don't really exist

How did you fare?

Mostly A's – In the past you've been a successful businessman, now you want to live that dream... but will it turn into a nightmare? A poisoned Challis? Your beloved club is in safe hands while you're at the helm, throwing money at it, but how long can you carry on doing that? Just make sure, when you do go – you leave the club in safe hands... You're a cuddly fella and all but, if you go giving your loved ones to gangsters, those invitations to baby-sit are going to dry up.

Mostly B's – My Right Dishonourable friend the MP for Guff, how the devil are you Sir? The rule of Luton Town Chairman is a labour of love for you too... but not necessarily for the club. She said she was interested in football when what she was really interested in was vilifying its supporters – and even when you set about banning them, she wouldn't go out with you. Does it mean she doesn't fancy you? Nonsense! Still, football clearly isn't her scene – better to sell out and bugger off.

Mostly C's – Rome wasn't built in a day, and a club like Luton can't be torn down overnight either. It takes years of planning, more planning, artists impressions, computer generated models, planning applications, Pedigree Chum, Government enquiries... and all the time the team sinks further and further down the league – so, when the dream is over, what are you left with? Take a tip from the Littlest Hobo (although every stop he made, he made a new friend) and hit the road.

Mostly D's – HALLO, what have we here then? You make every other Chairman we've had seem almost sane. Someone with your talent and imagination is wasted in Second Division football and (alleged) organised crime. You should be in politics or, better still, please do us all a big favour and take over at Watford...

AJ & TP Kingston

BACK ISSUES

Most back issues are still available, in spite of my best efforts to reduce the numbers while moving house. We have sold out of issues 10, 11, 22, 24, 26, 27, 35 to 38 and 47, and most other issues are in very short supply. Issue 1 is free, and all others will cost you 40p per copy, inclusive of postage. Cheques payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* Please do not send cash by post as it rarely arrives.

KINNEAR – HERO OR VILLAIN

What's the most depressed you've ever been? Relegation at Notts County? No. Losing the 1989 League Cup Final? No way. Three losing FA Cup semi finals? Not even close. The answer is losing away at Port Vale on 25 November 2000. We lost 3-0 and, as the saying goes, were lucky to get nil. It was the worst performance by a Town team I had ever witnessed, and I left mid way through the second half. I was back in my new Shropshire home seconds after the final whistle had gone. It was so bad I didn't go to Stoke the following Saturday (we won, of course).

More despondent Saturday afternoons followed watching Sky's Soccer Special, and just when you thought it couldn't get any worse - it didn't! Joe Kinnear arrived in a glorious blaze of publicity (in my house). I remember watching his first press conference on TV. There was no doubt who was now in charge at Luton - Kinnear was the only member of LTFC there! My next game was on a February Tuesday night at Walsall. We lost 1-3 but the change in the players was massive, and once again, the Town supporters were creating a real buzz. We were unlucky to lose that night, but still hopeful of avoiding relegation. We didn't, but there was no way we'd spend more than one season in Division Three with the positive vibes now sweeping through the club.

Over one hundred points and over one hundred goals saw us surge back to Division Two at the first attempt. Amazingly we only finished as runners up. Our home support increased dramatically and away from home the support was phenomenal. No doubt about it Kinnear, along with coach big Mick Harford, had really started something. But something was nagging away in the back of my mind. What happened to the football? Sure, Taylor and Valois were brilliant down the left, but was Steve Howard the only player capable of receiving the ball? But whatever, it worked in Division Three. In our last game at Shrewsbury, my local paper, the Shropshire Star, described the Hatters as "skilful monoliths"

The start of the 2002/03 season was dire. Taylor and Valois had gone, so now everybody pumped the ball up to Howard. I could see it coming, and was calling for a change as early as the Blackpool away game. The buzz was still there, but the football had departed. Ironically our form was a whole lot better against the eight teams that finished above than the rest below. By the time of the Plymouth home game I could watch no more - Lennie Lawrence's play off team was far superior in every part of the field. The football I was watching was not fit to grace Kenilworth Road. And yet, I felt confident that for 2003/04 we would reach the play offs at the very least.

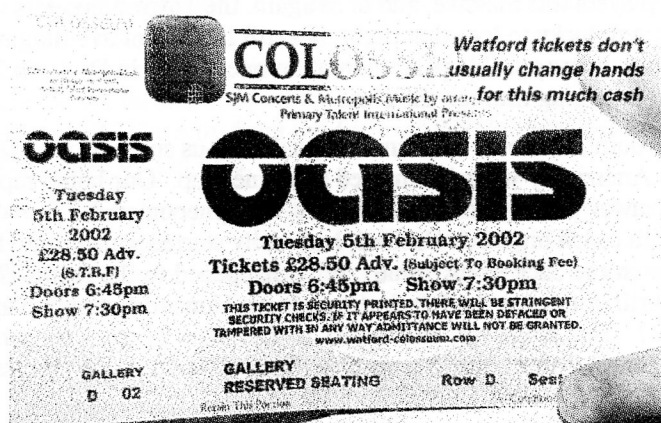
Then rumours started circulating that Kinnear was taking a cut of some players appearance money, that he had almost bankrupt the club paying first division wages to second and third division players, that his contract situation was very dubious. He started to brag about which players he was going to sign - the Shropshire Star had a running joke that he was at more Wolves reserve games than Dave Jones! And he started a previously non-existent rivalry with Plymouth. But what got me was when he invited Wimbledon to share our new

ground at Junction 10. Yes, of course, he had readily agreed to Wimbledon's move to Dublin when he was boss there, hadn't he.

I wasn't sorry to see Kinnear go, but like everybody was shocked at the way it happened. It was ironic if, as some believe, it was Kinnear who introduced Gurney to MWC.

Now he has gone, the Town have kicked off the new season playing proper football. At one point during the summer, supporters were saying that only Thorpe or Howard was actually worth any money. Now it's Spring, Coyne, Boyce, Foley and Beckwith as well. You see, they're all *footballers*, not the dinosaurs they had been for the previous two seasons.

Roger Holdstock



"What the fuck are we doing in Watford? Does it only ever get interesting here when Man City show up?" – Noel to the Colosseum crowd

Noel Gallagher makes a mistaken assumption – the only time it gets interesting in W'tf'rd is when the Hatters turn up!

MORE MONEY THAN SENSE?

£425,000 per year. That's over £8,000 per week. What a ridiculous amount to be paying the manager of a Division 2 club, let alone a Division 3 club (assuming that was Kinnear's salary whilst we were in Division 3).

I know a lot of people will accuse me of being a Gurney sympathiser, but nothing could be further from the truth. What I am is a Luton Town supporter, and as such I have the best interests of the club at heart at all times. It is certainly not in the best interests of the club to be paying its manager over £8,000 per week (especially when Darius Vassell, a England international, is only on £5,000 per week at Aston Villa).

What Mike Watson-Challis did for Luton was admirable, but that's about where it ends I'm afraid. As a direct result of that overspending we now find ourselves in a position which is untenable again. The short term throwing around of money will never hide the fact that the outgoings at Luton are far bigger than the income. It is reported that MWC put over £20m of his own money into the club, and that lasted three years. That is £133,333 spent per week, on top of the other income generated at the club by fans, sponsors and other commercial activity. And what did it buy us? Runners up in Division 3 and then right back where we started.

Spent wisely, £20m should have been enough for Luton to stay solvent for twice as long whilst maintaining a challenge for Division 2 honours. There's no way that the turnover at Crewe Alexandra has been more than £20m over the last 3 years and they are in Division 1. That's what being prudent and putting the money in wise hands buys you. What we've got is what happens when you thrown your money round without a thought for the bigger picture.

I don't want anyone to think that I am having a go at MWC, as I said earlier what he did when he bought the club out of administration last time round was admirable. What he did thereafter, unfortunately, showed a lot of naivety. He gave a large amount of money to a rookie manager to spend without seeming to care what he did with it (£425,000 on Ovendale and several thousand pounds per week in salary I rest my case). This meant that the outgoings kept going up whilst the income was never going to go up at the same rate, if at all. It was all set for disaster from the beginning.

What we need now is a steady pair of hands at the helm (certainly not Gurney, but also not another Watson-Challis either). According to early reports it may be that Ward is our man, although I don't like the sound of the rumours about Thorpe and Spring being sold (by the time this is printed we will no doubt know how true those rumours were). But we must be realistic, and that applies to nobody more than the fans. The only three things that will make this club solvent are

- 1) An extra 3,000 people come out of the woodwork and start paying to come down to Kenilworth Road every other week
- 2) A sugar daddy with deeper pockets that MWC turns up.
- 3) The outgoings are brought down to a manageable level.

We all know that options 1 and 2 are very unlikely to happen, so the next few months and perhaps years are going to be a bumpy ride. Players we want to keep will be sold, players we want to keep will leave because they have been asked to take a pay cut to help and they don't want to, no new signings will be made that are of a much higher standard than those already at the club. All of these things will piss us off, but at the end of the day it's the only way our house will be put in order and the only way to ensure the club will survive.

The Cheshire Hat



The Caught Short Report

K2 latrine, Kenilworth Road stand

Call me old-fashioned, but I always appreciate a little bit of room when straining one's greens and, to this end, can recommend no slash palace more highly in the Town's stadium than the central latrine block under the Kenilworth Road stand.

Whilst one would not consider dining in the vicinity, the toilet is comparatively bright and airy. It houses urinal blocks on all four walls – so one doesn't necessarily have to piss while rubbing shoulders with one's fellow supporter. The décor is white and functionary, the only embellishment being poster display units advertising the film "The fast and the furious" ... announcing the films' release in 2001. One often wonders how much, in terms of financial remuneration, the club gleans from its ongoing endorsement of this boy-racer classic.

The dual cubicles, typically, tend to let the toilets down a touch. Naturally the locks don't work, toilet roll is invariably strewn across the floor, sodden in urine. Not somewhere where one would want to sit down and read the matchday magazine. Indeed, one would be put off actually sitting down on these conveniences at all – even after having put paper on the areas where your arse is in contact with the seat. If one does need to "drop the kids off at the pool", then this certainly a hoverer. And bring your own paper.

Not an appealing prospect but, for the haltime puissant, this latrine can be recommended.

Maple Road pitch level toilet, New Stand end.

Although lacking the grotesque pitch black wonder of the old piss pits at the back of the old Oak Road, the latrines in the bowels of the Main Stand hark back to a distant age. There is a no-nonsense sensibility about these conveniences which belies the myth that taking a leak is in any way a function that requires any kind of pleasantry. One feel almost compelled by the surroundings to walk in, splash your boots, and leave in as little time as possible. There is, one feels, something living in these toilets... and one never honestly wants to know quite what.

Yet despite the attack of the senses – especially on the nose, suffering bouquet of piss, shit with the merest hint of some primitive cleaning product – the toilets are reasonably functionary. They are also bigger than one might be led to believe when entering at the bottled necked entry/exit door. If one feels brave, or compelled by the bladder to do so, there is additional wazz space towards the back of the block past the cubicles.

However getting there does require some circumnavigation during busy periods – with a little too much scope for bumping into fellow supporters. With bodily contact a distinct social faux pas in the staunchly heterosexual arena of the football ground toilet, such ventures must be partaken with caution.

If one is caught with the urge to make use of this facility then it might be an idea to wait for an opportune moment when the bogs are relatively clear.

Malcomb Turner (with a silent "b")

EARLY DOORS

09.08.03 TOWN 3 RUSHDEN & DIAMONDS 1

You'll never beat the Luton...

The opening day of the season – a time to get back into football, to chat to fellow fans you haven't seen since May, to look forward eagerly and anticipate your club's chances in the coming campaign.

But August 9 was no ordinary opening day of the season. How could it be, having spent pre-season on Planet Gurney?

Hands up those who, just a couple of months ago, didn't think we'd see the start of the season? And keep those hands raised if just seeing the mighty Hatters run on to the Kenny Road turf sent a tingle down the spine or brought a lump to the throat.

And the reception reserved for God was, quite simply, special.

But enough of the sentimentality!

It's good to see that some things at Kenny Road never change. We've become used to comedy goalkeepers, so what a change it is to see a clown on the opposing side.

Step forward silly Billy Turley, and possibly the funniest goalkeeping "moment of madness" of all time. Can anyone explain quite what he was doing? Come to mention it, does anyone really give two hoots?

Other things to note are an impressive debut by Courtney Pitt, and a strong first start for Kevin Foley, who looked anything but out of place at right back.

And although they keep trying, the Diamonds haven't quite found it within themselves to do anything but lose to us. Oh well!

Scoop

12.08.03 TOWN 4 GIANT KILLERS 1

Cup crazy Hatters!

They came, they saw, they went home with their tails between their legs! When the Town were drawn against the league new boys, the biggest regret for most of us was that we would be going out of the cup without the chance to visit a new ground first. Well, no new ground, but no cup exit either, and the night of tension and nervousness that was anticipated failed to materialise. It started with a well observed minutes silence in memory of Ray Harford – maybe fittingly before a League Cup tie, even if a couple of days later than it should have been. The first half was mixed, a lovely maiden goal for Foley, and some good football, but little to choose between the teams.

However, the second half was a different story, as Town swamped the visitors. But first Boyce, pretender to the great Marv's crown, equalised for the visitors. A few moments of worry, but no problem as first Thorpe, then Pitt with a terrific free kick, and finally Howard put the tie beyond doubt. So much so that the last 20 minutes were a bit anticlimactic!

Still, Hatters into the second round, and a nice exciting visit to The Valley to look forward to. And worth remembering, Charlton were knocked out by Oxford last season!

Anon

16.08.03 HATTERS 1 REAL HATTERS 2

2-1 to the real Hatters...

Nobody ever takes any notice of league tables in the first couple of games. Well, unless you're top, of course!

It's a bit hard to know what to say about the start we've had. I thought our number one priority was just to ensure we stayed in this division, not go full steam into a promotion charge?

But let us not get carried away. The season is but two games old, after all, and our threadbare squad hasn't been hit by too many injuries yet.

For now, let's just say we're six points nearer safety – and, come to mention it, six points better off than this time last year!

Edgeley Park was a new ground for me, and my lasting impression will be of Becks knocking a hole in their tin-pot roof with a goal kick. And people say Kenny Road is a shit hole (although they have a point!).

Wasn't it a shame to hear Carlton "son of PC" Palmer on the whinge after the game. Someone should teach him the offside rule, and about defenders heading the ball back!

And it's good to see the *Accuracy on Sunday* living up to its name. I know that *Mad!* hasn't been about to keep it on its toes, but this is almost like a "welcome back" present.

Our opener an own goal by Lambert? I must admit I haven't seen the goal on telly, but surely Neilson has got something to say about that?

Still, a good away performance, and if Thorpey had had his shooting boots on we'd have won by a comfortable margin.

That might also have been the case if Stockport had been reduced to 10 men early in the second half, for that professional foul on Thorpe. How more blatant did it have to be? And it didn't help the ref booking Foley about 10 seconds later for what could be seen as a similar offence.

Newell might have had his doubters at the start of the season (not me, I hasten to add), but no-one can argue with three wins and nine goals at the start of a campaign.

Long may it continue!

Scoop

STAT ATTACK

A statistical preview of the Town's forthcoming fixtures

Luton start September with 2 away games firstly at **Notts County**, and then to **Plymouth**. The stats would indicate that Luton are likely to pick up at least a point in the first encounter but don't hold out much hope for the trip to Home Park.

Luton have won 12 of the 30 league matches at **County**, only losing 8, with just 2 defeats in the last 13 encounters. The most remembered was the 2-1 defeat that meant the Hatters were relegated in 1991/92. A 4-0 win in November 1976 was the biggest margin of victory by a Luton side, with the most goals coming in a 5-4 defeat in January 1952.
Last time: 1st March 2003 Lost 2 - 1 (Tony Thorpe)

As for **Plymouth**, and again it's 30 away league encounters, the stats aren't so pleasant reading. It's just 5 victories, 6 draws and 19 defeats! After 9 defeats and a draw Luton finally won at Plymouth in 1937/38. With nearly 10, 20 and 30 years between the next victories (excluding a lone win in 1961) it looks like 2038 before 3 points will be achieved again!

Last time: 17th August 2002 Lost 2-1 (Steve Howard)

Port Vale come to Kenilworth Road for a match in mid September and the statistics are promising. Vale have failed to win since their first ever trip to Luton back in 1898! Of the 6 victories the biggest was 5-0 on May 14th 1966.
Last time: 9th November 2002 Drew 0-0.

Queen's Park Rangers are next, and they have played Luton in more league matches than any other side. The game on September 20th will be the 81st! On first glance the stats look good, with 22 victories and only 6 defeats when playing at home, having said that Luton have failed to win in the last 5! Interesting fact: All 5 matches played at Kenilworth Road in the 1970's ended in a draw!
Last time: 24th November 2002 Drew 0-0

Prior to last seasons win the previous victory at **Oldham** had been 25 years and 13 matches ago!! Luton had won 5 of the opening 6 encounters, and then had that long wait for the next victory. For the record of the 19 matches, the home side have won 8 and there have been 5 draws.

Last time: 19th October 2002 Won 2-1 (Andrew Fotiadis and Tony Thorpe)

Into October and Luton are on their travels once more. **Swindon Town** have hosted the Hatters on 26 occasions, and have come out on top in half of these. It was the 15th match before Luton registered a win, 1-0 in February 1935 with Sam Bell scoring the decisive goal. 37 years later (but with only 5 games played in this time) Luton managed back to back wins at Swindon. Vic Halom netted twice in September 1972, and then Barry Butlin achieved the same feat 17 months later, both ending in 2-0 victories. Maximum points were also achieved during 1994/95 (Kerry Dixon and Scott Oakes scoring in a 2-1 win), and in 2000/01 with a 3-1 win.

Last time: 4th May 2003 Lost 2-1 (Tony Thorpe)

Tranmere Rovers are the visitors, as are the SKY TV camera's, on Monday 6th October. Luton have won 70% of the matches as hosts, although this could also read 7 out of 10 matches! The first 5 games were all won, with a 27 year gap between the first encounter in March 1939 and the next in the same month in 1966. The only scoring draw came in 92/93, a 3-3 thriller with Steve Claridge, Des Linton and Scott Oakes on the scoresheet. The point was Luton's first since being relegated from the top flight...and it took 5 games! The only defeat came in December 1993 when John Aldridge scored the only goal of the game.
Last time: 5th April 2003 Drew 0-0

Talking of SKY camera's the last time they came to Kenilworth Road it was **Wycombe Wanderers** who were the visitors (It's Ok I won't bore you all with the story of how I was on their "Fanzone" feature that night!). Going into that game Luton had a wonderful record in front of the SKY camera's, and had never lost against Wycombe in a competitive match.....the visitors won 2-1!!

Last time: 25th January 2002 Won 1-0 (Matthew Spring)

I mentioned Luton's first point of the 92/93 campaign came against Tranmere, well the following week the first win came with a 2-1 victory at **Brentford**! This was just the 8th win in 30 attempts when Luton have been the visitors. A 6-2 win in February 1964 was the most notable, with John O'Rourke scoring four and Harry Walden bagging a brace.
Last time: 7th September 2002 Drew 0-0

AFC Bournemouth may have a new ground since the last time we were there, but it's on the same piece of land! Luton fan's will be hoping that the pitch being in a different place will improve their luck, as the Hatters haven't won on it since Malcolm MacDonald scored the only goal of the game in August 1969!! With just 5 victories from 23 trips down to the South Coast side it's certainly time for another win!

Last time: 1st January 2001 Lost 3-2 (Andrew Fotiadis, Adam Locke)

And finally..... **Peterborough** come to Kenilworth Road on 25th October for just the 8th time in league action, and the stats are close. Luton lead 3 games to 2, and by 13 goals to 9. Both of the Peterborough victories have been 3-2, although they had a 38 year wait between them! Luton's best win was 3-0 in October 1996 when Paul Showler scored twice after Steve Davis had opened the scoring.

Last time: 10th August 2002 Lost 3-2 (Dean Crowe, Ahmet Brkovic)

Simon "Statto" Pitts

For more in depth statistics of every single Luton Town FC competitive match, as well as current player appearances and goals please check out www.lutonfc.com/stattoindex.asp

THE UNTOLD STORY...

The Summer of 2003 will obviously go down as one of the darkest, most bizarre periods in Luton's recent history. The events are well documented, but it's the (currently) untold parts of the story that I think quite a few of us are still interested in.

Rumours have flown around the Message Boards about the role that Eric Hood played in the deal that saw Mike Watson Challis sell up to John Gurney. It didn't take Luton fans long to dig up some of John Gurney's history (the Internet can sometimes be a wonderful thing), and surely if Mike Watson Challis had seen even a quarter of those 'facts' he wouldn't have touched JG with a barge pole. So, what is the real story behind their choice? How could John Gurney have pulled the wool of Mike Watson Challis's eyes so easily?

It will be interesting to find out if the BBC really were filming a documentary (Trouble at the Top?) and if so, what they managed to catch on camera. Although 95% of what John Gurney said appears to have been a mix of half-truths, lies or just total rubbish, it's the other 5% that is worrying me. The fact that Joe Kinnear wasn't directly employed by the club or had two contracts (a breach of Football League regulations?), the fact that the club have no official tenancy agreement with Luton Borough Council to stay and play at Kenilworth Road, etc. We currently have a transfer embargo hanging over us – what other sanctions might be heading our way in future?

Everything that happened whilst Gurney was in charge was carefully engineered to give him a "don't blame me" get-out clause. After all, it wasn't his choice to sack Mick and Joe, it wasn't his decision to hire Mike Newell as Joe's successor... the bloke was already covering his tracks for when he 'reluctantly' sold up and departed with money he hadn't earned in his pocket.

As soon as the outrageous rubbish started (London Luton FC, F1 Racing Track, Merging with Wimbledon, etc. etc.), a lot of Luton fans sussed out what he was doing. Professional Sports clubs aren't your normal ordinary business concern. You get a passion and loyalty from the customers that you simply don't get anywhere else. If someone comes in and is obviously ruining the business, people won't simply sit back and let it happen. John Gurney was obviously counting on that. Thankfully, this time he chose to bite off a bit more than he could chew. He chose the wrong club, the wrong employees and the wrong fans to mess with.

Luton Town might be a small club in the grand scheme of the Football League, but it has achieved great things (or "over achieved" if you want to use a Lennie-ism). Luton Town FC still has a high profile despite its current lowly status. At the time, the news that Mike Watson Challis had only loaned money to the club seemed a bit worrying, but as it turned out, that was the one thing that ultimately gave Trust In Luton the leverage to push John Gurney out.

Unfortunately, John Gurney's shadow still lurks in a darkened corner of the boardroom. He's not gone completely from the club, and even when he no longer has any connections with LTFC, his own horrible legacy will still linger for years to come.

Thankfully, it looks like the FA might be taking steps to ensure that this kind of scenario can't happen again in the future, but I doubt we'll find out what really happened for a while yet. As someone else once said, The Truth Is Out There - somewhere.

Anon.

RAVING MAD!!!

Dear Mad,

You wildly and inaccurately claim that there has been no fanzine for the last, what, 2½ years? Well, I beg to differ. Whilst you haven't been able (or willing, dare I suggest) to get your act together and produce the printed version that so many of us cherish, a devoted few of us have been regular readers of the all too brief weekly page that still appears on Teletext. That's every Thursday afternoon on page 545 for a day or so. And a cracking good read it is too. I recommend that you (and other readers) start having a regular look at it. That's Thursday afternoon, ITV page 545. Don't miss it.

Anyway, thanks for finally getting round to producing the real fanzine again – about bloody time too!

P J Smith,

Leighton Buzzard

Dear Mad,

Good news! I am delighted to hear that Mad is returning especially with the present situation. I have missed your deadline but will try and come up with something- possibly on how I contemplated life without a club to support - I was so depressed in the summer that my mates who support other lower league clubs gave up taking the piss out of me about football.

Bill Church,

Frampton on Severn.

Dear Mad,

Good to hear that Mad will once again be gracing the terraces. I am not quite sure why you sound so apologetic about the gap. Anybody else could have taken it on if they wanted. So I don't see why you should feel responsible for letting down millions of Hatters fans worldwide who have desperately been seeking other diversions to fill the aching void you have left in their lives.

I have attempted an article. As always, not the least bit offended if it ends up on the cutting room floor, or is held over for the next Mad in October 2007 (no, don't worry, this is not a cheap shot, you are not to blame).

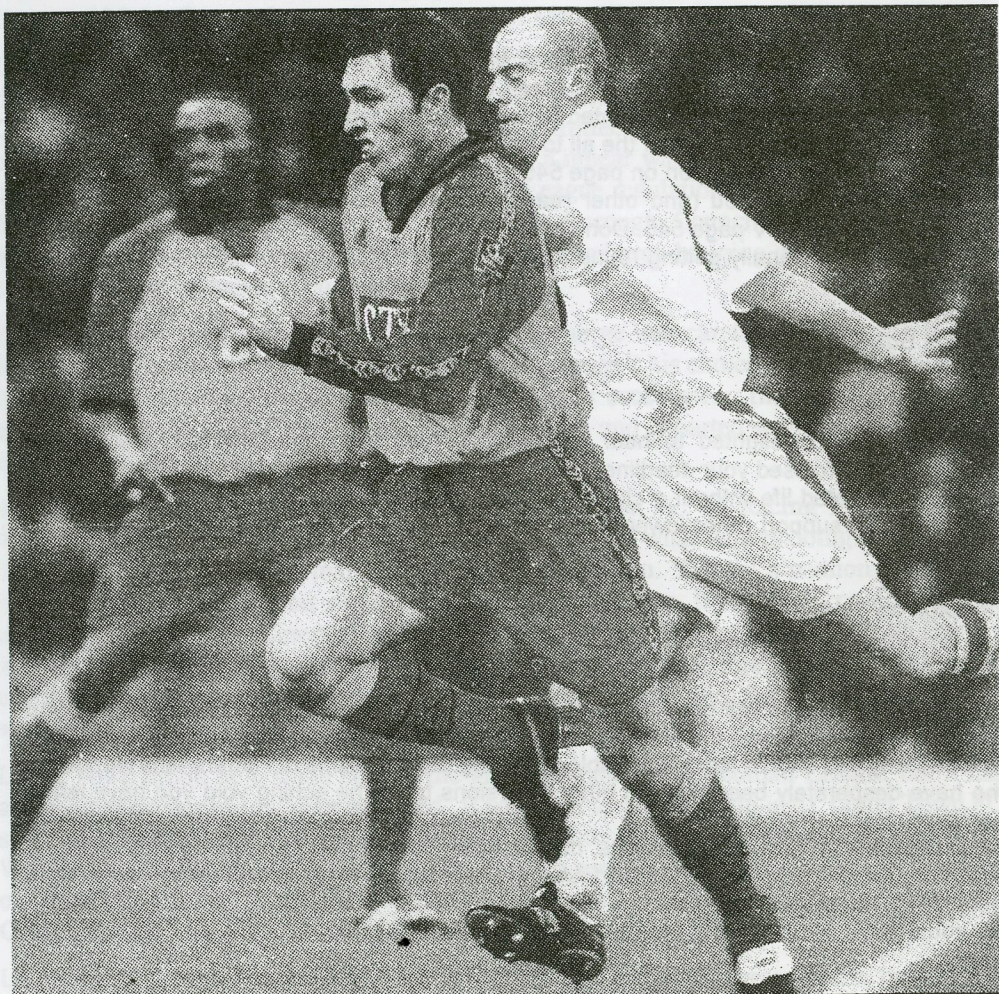
See you soon,

Clark,

Bristol.

PS: Junior Clark says, "Yes you are to blame."

Dear Mad,
 Please find enclosed a clipping from the western edition of the *Mail on Sunday* (my mother's, honestly) of a Bristol City match against our friends from just down the M1. I think this offers an explanation of Thorpey's poor form after his move down to the West country. It occurs to me that City were sold a pup by Fulham, and didn't pay a cool million for our diminutive, Leicester born striker, but in fact Grant Mitchell from Eastenders. This should be a salutary lesson to any club, that it's a good idea to be familiar with any player that you are about to spend a small fortune on.
Peter Clark,
 Bristol.



City sub Tony Thorpe can't keep pace with Watford's Richard Johnson

Picture: CHR.

Letter from Nathan Abbey to Mike Newell

I've managed to get hold of the letter that ex-Luton keeper Tanny Abbey sent to Mike Newell asking him about a possible return to his former club.

Home for Useless Players
 c/o Vicarage Road
 Watford

13th July 2003

Dear Mr. Newell,

I was extremely pleased to hear about your recent appointment as the new Luton Town manager as I have always admired you as a player and now as a manager.

Isn't it strange how we have both had good fortune which now enables our paths to cross? You have become the Luton manager and I have managed to manoeuvre my contract and career to ensure my availability for you.

I have recently terminated my contract at Northampton (where I was extremely successful and popular) due to a difference of opinion with the local management. They seemed to think I was too good to play in their team so left me on the bench. Therefore, I am now available for signing for my favourite old club. I was really disappointed to leave Luton a couple of years ago, where I had become a firm fans favourite, producing performances of such quality, people cried thinking about them.

Given the right circumstances, I am prepared to honour you with my presence between the posts this season. At this moment, Luton need my talent, although I warn you that my presence in the team might take the spotlight away from the rest of the players and you the manager, because whenever I play, I become the centre of attention.

I enclose a stamped addressed envelope for your reply

Yours sincerely,
 Nathaniel (Tanny) Abbey

PS: If this is not acceptable, I could also serve the hot dogs at half-time.

Peter Bulkeley

Voting Form for Luton Town Directors

Here is your Luton Town Manager's voting form. Please vote for one of the three candidates listed below. Entries should be submitted by 18th June and no later.

John Gurney, London Luton Chief Executive



Directors Name :

Candidates	Profile	Mark 'X'
Steve Cotterill (medium)	Achieved promotion with Cheltenham to the Third Division and the Second Division. Also has experience with Stoke and was briefly assistant manager at Sunderland to Howard Wilkinson.	
Joe Kinnear (expensive)	Achieved nothing with Wimbledon, got Luton relegated and couldn't even reach 100 points or goals in Div. 3. Did bad job last season, didn't even get them promoted. Chairman recommends that you don't vote for this candidate.	
<u>Mike</u> <u>Newell</u> <u>(cheap)</u>	Was a major part in Hartlepool's promotion bid last season. Ex-Luton Town player and very popular with the fans which we need at the moment. Vote for him if you want to keep your job.	

Thank you for voting in this extremely fair and exciting new system. We hope that you make the right choice and your vote will go a long way in ensuring success for this club.