

MAD AS A HATTER!

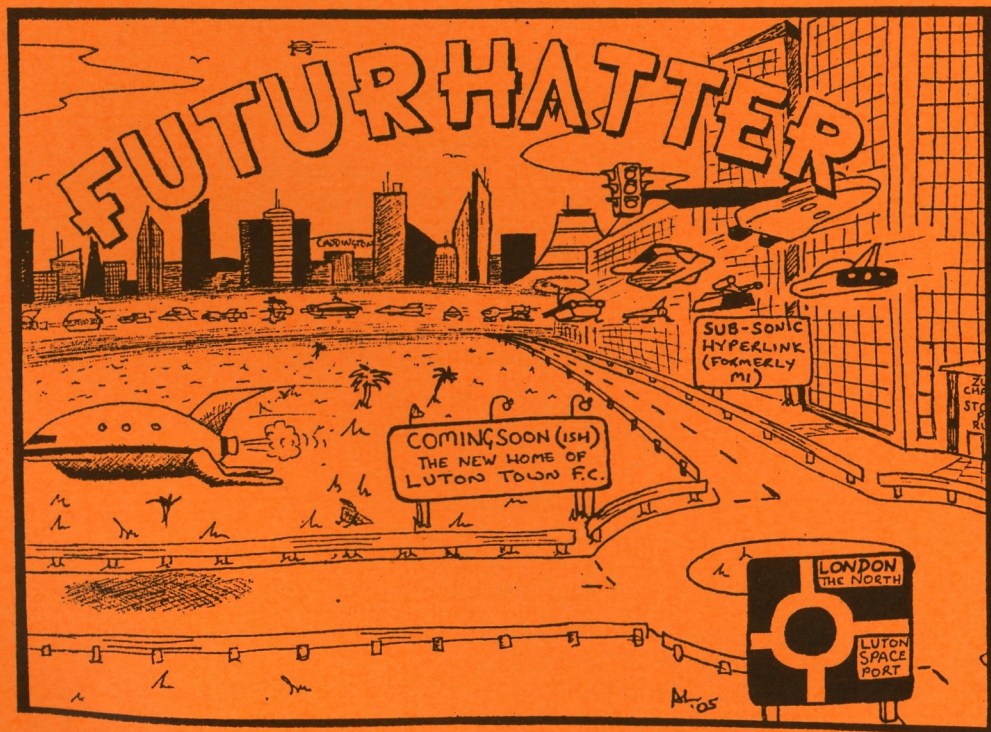
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THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

Issue 67

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COMING SOON...



MAD AS A HATTER!

THE LUTON TOWN FANZINE

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Ed Lines

All hail Mike Newell. As if guiding our team to the sort of league position we had long since stopped being brave enough to even consider dreaming about, and doing it with what Roman Abramovich probably considers to be irritatingly small loose change, he then appears on Sky TV's *Soccer AM* and tells the world that he is in his dream job! Yes, at Luton Town! Is there no end to this man's ability to say and do the right things? By way of explanation, he justified this comment by saying that you couldn't ask for more than to be allowed to get on with the job of managing the club by your board of directors. So, from a supporter's point of view it's good to know that Bill and Co. are getting something right.

If nothing else, we need to give the current board some credit for managing to increase the capacity at Kenilworth Road. Ever since Kohler decided we needed seats in the Kenny end rather than a planning application for a new ground, we have been told that it was not possible to put more seats in. And yet, this season, it has proved possible. One point to Mr Tomlins.

Sadly, just the one though. As ever, and this has been the one recurring theme through the history of *Mad as a Hatter!*, we await an announcement on the subject of a new stadium. It had been indicated that something might be said around the time of the celebrations (!) of being at Kenilworth Road for 100 years. Foolishly we anticipated... the inevitable silence.

So, where do we now find ourselves? The cynical view may be found in cartoons within the pages of this issue. But there is little to discourage this. If recent rumours are to be believed, then the Junction 10 project could be dead and buried, due to an inability to reach agreement on commercial issues. These seem to indicate that the club would have to forfeit income from its own stadium to a landowner. Hardly reasonable, I think you'll agree. If a man cannot control his own home, should a football club expect to control its own stadium? This is probably a ridiculous comparison but one man, and his home life, seem to be very much at the centre of things here.

If the project is dead, then the future for our club is bleak, as the search for an alternative home has gone on for many years and has, to date, proved fruitless. Every new road project around the town seems to have some brief hope, but nothing lasting. Perhaps it is time for the club to try and work in genuine partnership with the local authorities (Luton and South Beds) to try to move things forward, and ensure a future for our club. This is probably the only route to an alternative solution to the apparent impasse over Junction 10. If it is really necessary – we wait to see...

Next issue: Looking forward to Christmas and, more importantly, the three points that will be forthcoming against our neighbours to usher in the New Year.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SUPPORTERS CLUB

It is taken as read, and generally accepted with a mere resigned shrug of the shoulders that supporting our club has and probably always will be a roller coaster of emotions. We have witnessed managers, players and owners come and go with alarming alacrity; we have been helpless bystanders as a plethora of incompetents, con men, downright crooks, self-serving egotists and philanderers stood at the helm of a sometime rudderless ship edging the club towards the final precipice.

Nonetheless, the one constant variable amidst this frequent chaos and disorder is the undisputed steadfastness and stealth of the fans. This resoluteness is clearly manifested through a diverse number of various supporters groups, all of which in their own distinctive way both tangibly and allegorically add value and influence the way the club runs.

The Trust in Luton (TiL) is now the officially recognised voice of the fans. Each and every fan should freely pay the annual £10 membership fee safely in the knowledge that through membership of TiL, we are also shareholders in the football club, and as such the elected representative Kelvin Dunn, has the confidence to attend board meetings as a non-executive Director and act in the best interests of the fans and the club safely in the knowledge that he has the backing of the supporters via TiL membership.

TiL is not just a fans voice on the board. By means of a variety of fundraising activities, the present committee are actively raising money towards supporting the club's youth development, including Galden Hatter sales, the webshop, goalscorers' lottery and a Hatters XI v Showbiz XI fundraising match. As a TiL member you are also contributing towards kit sponsorships for both Marcus Heikkinen and Keith Keane.

The Luton Town Supporters Club (LTSC) similarly aligned to the club, is run by an elected committee; its members being amongst the staunchest of fans, many of whom have continued with unswerving loyalty to follow the club home and away regardless of any trials and tribulations and whichever division we have been in.

The LTSC offer discounted fares for Town on Tour coach trips, which I understand are window lickin' good. The LTSC dispatch a regular newsletter, arrange the 'audience with Bill Tomlins' evenings and organise supporters' events with guest speakers who entertain the audience with witty football anecdotes. Members can enjoy an annual Christmas quiz evening and at the end of each season vote for and attend the players' presentation evening. At present the LTSC is also raising monies towards purchasing a mini bus for the club.

The LTSC are automatically represented on the board of TiL, which leads me, in my normal trouble making, self-opinionated, ill-conceived, half-witted minority of one manner, to suggest that perhaps TiL and the LTSC might consider pooling their resources and working closer together or even merge as one entity. From the outside it frequently appears that both groups which are officially aligned to the club tend to duplicate each others activities.

The Junior Hatters are the future lifeblood of the club. With space at home matches at a premium, and the need to maximise revenue whilst we are still residing at the Kenny, we have to reluctantly accept that the club cannot on any significant scale realistically follow the lead of other clubs and let the kids in for a quid. Notwithstanding, the Junior Hatters section on the Luton Town official website has not been updated since the beginning of the 2003/2004 season, thus I haven't got a bloody clue if it is still running, what the membership costs are and whether they still meet on a Saturday morning.

For fans with an independent streak, originally formed in 1990 as a pressure group to highlight the nefarious self-serving activities of the Kholer regime, the Loyal Luton Supporters Club strongly believe that there should always be an alternative fans organisation, one that will not just blindly follow the official line but, which will instead, in an intelligent and articulate manner be unafraid to ruffle a few petulant egos if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the football club to do so.

LLSC are an independent unaligned supporters group out of choice; however, when the need arises for all fans to pull together as one united front they put their independence to one side and join the common cause. In recent times they had an active input into ridding the club of Gurney and in the subsequent formation of TiL. LLSC members helped formulate the business plan to rid us of Gurney and actively petitioned season ticket holders to withhold funds from the club whence Gurney's final desperate credit card scam came to light. Nonetheless, such is their unswerving ethical independent stance they did not seek any official representation on the TiL committee.

Smearred by Kholer, the members are not, as some would have you believe, a bunch of retired hoolies, but are amongst the most passionate and vocal of our supporters; the Loyal Luton ensign can be seen proudly flying at sporting events across the globe. They have contributed tens of thousands of pounds to the club via sponsorships and matchday promotions, they present their own player of the year trophies and organise regular coach trips for members to away grounds.

Whatever your football politics, it is undeniable that every football club needs an independent supporters voice such as LLSC. For the paltry sum of £5 you become a life member and are thus presented with a much sought after nifty and stylish pin badge, which in itself adds a certain kudos to your matchday wardrobe of choice. They are now actively promoting the development of a new stadium within the borough of Luton, and campaigning for the greater transparency and communication with fans that Bill Tomlins once promised.

Also independent but somewhat irreverent, the *Mad as a Hatter!* fanzine allows us all a platform to impart and air any personal views and opinions to a wider unsuspecting audience. Under the dictatorial Stalinist stewardship of chairman-for-life Herr Hayward, this very disparate, drunkard and dysfunctional group of pot bellied, middle-aged laggards, indomitably defy the odds and somehow manage to put together and publish this venerated fanzine several times a season.

Never afraid to let the football get in the way of a good all day drinking session, the fanzine 'executives' are often seen vacantly staring into the abyss, wobbling unsteadily into the ground ten minutes after kick off. Rest assured however, you are not contributing to their excesses. All profits from the fanzine are ploughed back into the club. In recent seasons, monies have been donated for fitness equipment, kit sponsorship, match and ball sponsorships, and the hiring of executive boxes. Most recently a substantial sum was donated to the official supporters club mini bus appeal; in fact, for as long as you continue to buy this under priced, undistinguished rag, money will be redirected to the club.

So, what of the high rollers, the hoi polloi who sit in the posh seats? The Century Club is the poor mans end of the high rollers offering at LTFC, aimed at the local entrepreneur who thinks he has money, but doesn't really. Next up is the Millennium Club and then there is the elusive Kenilworth Suite sect, for those with money to burn, but not enough for an Executive box. When you have too much money for a box, you get listed in the programme as a Director or Vice President!

The Century Club are a select shadowy group of local businessmen; they don't accept old riff raff like me for membership, entry is by invitation only. The initiation ceremony involves rolling up a trouser leg, perfecting the tap on the right nostril and a simultaneous wink of the

left eye, whilst wearing an apron and greeting fellow members with a funny handshake and blowing raspberries. I am sure the ceremonies involving naked virgins and goat sacrifices are grossly exaggerated.

Allegedly the Millennium Club meets in a secret windowless vault furnished with red velvet carpets and walls somewhere in the Nick Owen lounge. Rumours suggest that this secret brotherhood worship at an altar dedicated to Mike Watson Challis, toasting his continued good health, burning incense whilst chanting anti -Bill Tomlins mantras.

I haven't a clue what this lot do to raise money for the club; however, they do exert a lot of influence in high places and get the best seats in the house. They do not have to eat and drink the same crap as the rest of us and have access to flushable toilets which have seats and that are furnished with soft toilet paper and fresh bars of soap more than twice a season. I am also led to believe from the most unreliable and misinformed of sources that given all those joining the executive clubs above get to sit in the directors box area, they get a hefty discount for seats with a restricted view?

There are also overseas supporters groups, for example the Scandinavian Hatters and the Irish Hatters. The Scandinavians can best be described as bonkers. They ski down the mountains wearing their cowbells, swim the ice cold Fjords, sail to Luton in their longboats via the North Sea and the River Lea, book into a hotel, indulge in a spot of rape and pillage, get drunk, wander aimlessly around town singing football songs and when they finally get to the match, one of their number can be relied upon to mosey onto the pitch at halftime, fall to his knees and propose to his girlfriend.

They do, however, sport a top of the range Scandinavian Hatters T-shirt with a Viking helmet emblazoned on the frontage. It is the ideal accompaniment to the Loyal Luton pin badge. Unsurprisingly the Irish Hatters regularly hold their meetings in a pub and get very drunk. They frequently cross the Irish Sea to watch the Hatters in action. Bar the occasional cryptic posting on the lutonfc.com message board, little else is known of this tight knit group.

Every club needs their supporters groups, they generate valuable income, and provide a platform for fans to share tales of halcyon bygone days, meet one another socially before after and during games. On the field success comes at a price; the cost of players kit, matchday and match ball sponsorships are now are now prohibitive to many individual fans. There is a supporters group to suit every need and every pocket. Join one and you can continue to support the club not only vocally but financially too. You know it makes sense.

TiWC

NEXT ISSUE...

A bumper issue this time, with some stuff left out for want of space. Thanks to all who helped in this. The publication date for issue 68 will be Saturday December 17th, and the deadline for that issue will be Monday 4th December – although feel free to be in touch sooner. Remember that this will be a pre-Christmas issue and a preview of the much awaited M1 derby. All contributions will be welcome, sent to the usual address, as featured on page 2.

VOTE THEN... THE END OF SEASON POLL 2005

Unfortunately, the number of entries for the annual poll was lower than we would have liked, and certainly lower than it has been in the past. However, we think that they were still fairly representative of wider opinion. With the exception, that is, of certain regional bias in the voting of our correspondents from Walsall and Bristol.

Best Town Player: This was slightly closer than expected but was won by the "inspirational" Kevin Nicholls, "the heartbeat of the team" and "a real leader". Curtis Davies was a fairly close second, and according to one correspondent "Sol Davis was also superb".

Best Young Player: This was the clearest cut category with no competition at all for the winner Curtis Davies, which says something when we had Kevin Foley as a first team regular at the same time. "Brilliant" Curtis "will play for England", and "with his pace and skill, he'll go far – if he stays at the Town for a few more years" – although there may have been more than a hit of wishful thinking in that comment, as we now know.

Best Town Performance: There is probably little likelihood of an away game winning in this category, as obviously more of you get to see home games. And so it proved with the home hammering of Bristol City, making them "look like a pub team" as we "ripped them to shreds", proving the most popular this time – not least with our west country contingent. Edged in to second place was the "resilient" performance in the away win at AFC Bournemouth. "Not the best football we played, but the tactics, work rate and sheer desire to succeed" making it one of the best of the season.

Worst Town Performance: This was a closer choice and was decided by the votes of the Walsall jury, for whom "embarrassment" is clearly a major factor. Runner-up was the trip to Port Vale, with surprisingly few votes for the match at Hull. Now if anyone can explain why the worst away performance might have been "at Brentford – twice"...

Best Goal Scored: Always difficult to choose at the end of the season, as the most recent goals tend to be fresher in the mind, but this season it was further complicated by having no less than 87 to choose from! Brkovic's overhead kick at home to Bradford City took the honours, "none of us knew he had it in him". What also came out was that it isn't just the quality of the goal, but what it meant, which is why there were two last minute winners (Brko against Hull – "sublime") and one last minute equaliser amobngst the other goals mentioned.

Best Goal Conceded: There is a view that there is no such thing, and several of you chose not to vote on that basis. Fair enough, but the rest were evenly split between two goals, those being the ones scored by Leroy Lita at Ashton Gate, and Dave Hibbert's first at Vale Park, both of which were described as "tasty". There was also a vote for Steve Robinson's own goal scored at Doncaster, "one of the funniest things I have seen on a football pitch".

Best Opponents: Backing up the view held at the time that they delivered one of the most attractive demolitions ever seen at Kenilworth Road, the winners of this category were the Dutch maestros Ajax, "never has a hammering been so enjoyable". Of the League One sides only Barnsley warranted a mention more than once.

Worst Opponents: An interesting collection of nominees, with MK Dons, Peterborough, the ever hapless Stockport County and, perhaps surprisingly, Bristol City taking an equal number of votes. So the winner is down to an editorial casting vote, and I'll direct it to Peterborough, who were the perfect image of a Barry Fry team. 'Why not MK?' I hear you ask - because they are not even deserving of the opportunity to think we are bothered about them.

Idiot of the Year: The "moronic" Martin Allen, manager of Brentford. Why? "For pretending to be a leader of men". Still in doubt? "Just watch his buffoonery on the touchline for ten minutes". A vote was received for John Gurney, on the grounds that he will not have changed, but the editorial favourite, bearing in mind the category, was that which just said "Barry Fry - a no brainer"!

Hero of the Year: A tight one, where the odds were that Mike Newell would edge this one (Bill Tomlin's name is on standby for the year that a new stadium is actually given planning permission). As it turned out though, Kevin Nicholls took the honours for his penalties and for his captaincy, "plays with immense pride and is our best captain for a decade". Mike Newell was a not very close second.

Best Ground Visited: The KC Stadium, home of Hull City won this, showing that results may not completely colour your view of your surroundings. Not only that, but the surroundings of the stadium didn't colour your view either ("the rest of the city is still a dump"). Wrexham was a surprising contender, although perhaps more for the occasion than the venue, and Valley Parade also impressed. At least one correspondent seemed to get lost, as we can't find anybody who remembers a Town fixture at the City of Manchester Stadium!

Worst Ground Visited: Year in, year out, Kenilworth Road gets votes in this section. Except this year... which must mean it is a much better ground to visit when it is home to a winning team. The victors (?) are Colchester's Layer Road, Doncaster's Belle Vue and Chesterfield's Recreation Ground.

High Point of the Year: Not much doubt about this - it was winning the Championship at Wrexham. The actual moment chosen by correspondents varied slightly, but the venue and the date were all the same. The second choice was probably that of all those (*me included - Ed*) who couldn't get to Wrexham. For us, it was the climax of the Brentford home game which set the mood for the celebrations that followed.

Low point of the Year: A tough call in a season without too many low points, but the defeat away to Hull was the (un)popular choice, "we gifted them the match", on a day where the only good thing was the stadium. The second choice in this category was Luke Beckett's late equaliser at Huddersfield, but it least it mattered little in the end. Also worth a mention was "losing on the telly again", this time to Barnsley - the sort of game that would leave neutrals wondering how we ever got 98 points!

Referees: Even without asking you to vote for the best or worst, you almost universally chose the "none of the above" option. Some of you felt that they have a tough job, and were "generally not too bad", wondering if success alters your perspective. On the other hand, it was a case of what we might look forward to if we could not get favourable decisions at places like Doncaster.

Things to look forward to: Where do we start?... Two defeats of W*tf*rd... An away win at Leicester (*hurrah!*)... Relegating W*tf*rd... Premiership promotion push... Full houses at most home games... Watching quality opposing teams too... Finding out how good we really are... 3rd round of the FA Cup... The double over W*tf*rd... Forest in a lower division than us... The new ground announcement in 2012... Our 54th point this season... Dino not being our substitute keeper... 10,000 plus home crowds again... Getting some publicity in the press... Continuing our gradual progression... League games with W*tf*rd again... Major news on J10 being 'just a few weeks away... The Oak Road full every other game... Equal billing with Ipswich and Norwich on the local sport (yeah, right!)... 'The Sharpe Angle' praising Mike Newell for the first time...

NO SCORE DRAW

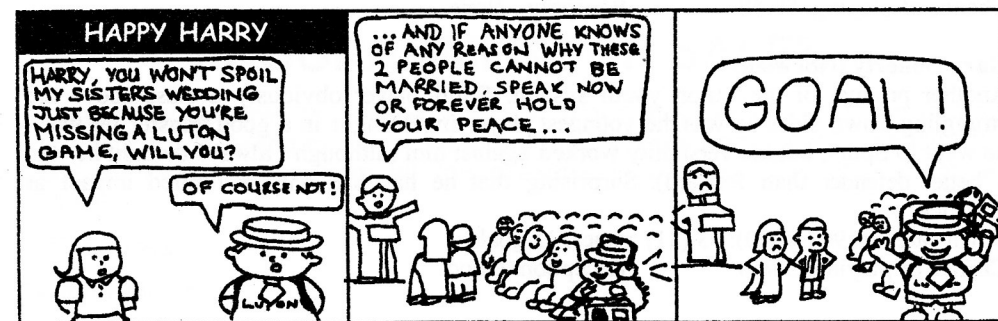
So, there I was in the summer, browsing the official Luton Town website, when I came across the intriguing heading "Luton Town needs you".

Interesting, I thought. Reading further, I found that the programme editor was looking for new writers including a cartoonist. The cartoonist opportunity really caught my eye. Having been for some time now, this fanzine's only (albeit semi-regular) cartoonist, I thought that this was my opportunity. The programme editor's idea was to have a Junior Hatter's page complete with a "Happy Harry" cartoon for the kids. As per the programme editor's request, I whisked a portfolio of my work off to him. I even enclosed a sample of my own "Happy Harry" cartoon to show what I had in mind. And I heard back... absolutely nothing!

Having purchased the early copies of the programme, I've noted that there is a cartoonist listed in the programme's credits but no actual cartoon has appeared yet! So, it appears that I lost out to nothing - even more damning!

Below is a copy of my Happy Harry example, so you can all judge for yourself. As for me, it's back to the drawing board. Or maybe not.

B.Dave.B



EX-HATTERS – CHEER OR BOO?

So ex-Hatter Matthew Spring has committed the ultimate crime (in some fans' eyes) of signing for Tw*tf*rd. I think he can expect a pretty hostile reception if he plays against us later this season. Although we will never know what other offers he had on the table, his decision does seem like a smack in the face to Luton fans who supported him through his years at Kenilworth Road. The only positive aspect is that Tw*tf*rd have expended a sizeable transfer fee on a player who has made no impact at Leeds in the Championship, has had a lot of injury problems and was well off his prime form in his final months at Luton.

This also got me thinking on how other ex-Hatters will be received by the Kenilworth faithful this season. There are actually very few ex-Town players at rival Championship clubs, but for those I could identify I predict the following receptions:

Gary McSheffery (Coventry)

Excellent loan signing (twice) for Luton. Fast, skilful and committed, a firm crowd favourite. Understandable when he returned to Coventry, his home town club, especially as during his first spell we were in administration and could not sign him.

Luton career (2003-4): 20(4) games, 10 goals
Chance of playing: High Reception: Good

Emmerson Boyce (C.Palace)

Came through the ranks at Kenilworth Road, improving season by season. Couldn't be blamed for grabbing a chance to play in the Premiership although it was disappointing that he went on a free. Reasonable reception at Selhurst Park, I would expect a more positive response at Kenilworth Road, especially if we are still above Palace at the time.

Luton career (1998-2004): 194(17) games, 9 goals
Chance of playing: High Reception: Good

Sammy Igoe (Millwall)

Loan spell in season 2003/4. Looked good on the left wing and many wished we could have signed him (if we hadn't been skint). Has tried his luck at a few clubs and it appears that the Championship is a level too high for him.

Luton career (2003): 2 games
Chance of playing: 50/50 Reception: None

Gary Doherty (Norwich)

Another product of the Luton youth system. Solid player obviously a class above the struggling Town sides he was the youngest player in. Brought in a good transfer fee when he went to Spurs, but his versatility worked against him (although I always thought he was a better defender than forward). Surprising that he has had only a limited impact at Norwich.

Town career (1997-2000): 53 (31) games, 15 goals
Chance of playing: 50/50 Reception: Good

Graham Alexander (Preston)

Bought from Scunthorpe, a midfield player turned right back, nobody at Kenilworth Road

saw him as an international footballer (even Scottish). Relationship with the crowd went downhill towards the end of his stay, culminating in him being barracked when he was taking a penalty – which he then missed (on purpose?).

Luton career (1995-99): 174 (6) games, 17 goals
Chance of playing: High Reception: Poor

Simon Royce (QPR)

Looked better than many recent Luton 'keepers (not too difficult) and probably not much of a response to him as we would rather have had TT to abuse.

Luton career (2004): 2 games
Chance of playing: High Reception: None

Steve Kabba (Sheffield United)

Another short term loanee. Looked quite good but raw during short substitute appearances. Has since struggled to make a major impact in the game but has scored early this season.

Luton career (2004): 0 (3) games
Chance of playing: 50/50 Reception: None

Alec Chamberlain (Tw*tford)

Steady if unspectacular for Luton, has had a long if not ultimately successful career. Very much at the veteran stage and unlikely to play, or even make the bench.

Luton career (1988-93): 159 games
Chance of playing: Low Reception: Good

Matthew Spring (Tw*tf*rd)

If he had returned with Leeds (on the pitch and not on the bench) he would have received a good reception. However, he will now probably replace TT as our pantomime hate character (oh no he won't, oh yes he will, etc. etc.). Of his 30 goals only one was scored in the League Cup, can you remember who this was against?

Luton career: 281(8) games, 30 goals
Chance of playing: High Reception: Poor

JohnAstonFanClub

PROGRAMMES FOR SALES

In fact, they are free to anyone who can prove they are a Luton fan (not a collector) and is willing to collect. Assorted programmes from 1989-90 season to 2002-ish. Most games from all the seasons in between. £50 the lot to a collector.

Cliff Saunders

Milton Keynes

mob. +44 (0)7841 613095

ON THE BENCH

The authors of The Crappiest Town in Britain, who last year gave that accolade to Luton, had quite clearly never been to Stoke on Trent. I called into the Weatherspoons in the town centre, not seeing the "No away fans" sign until after I'd been served. A quick phone call to arrange a meeting with some fellow real ale fans in the Museum Inn, Newcastle under Lyme, and an almost equally quick bus ride, got me smartly away from Stoke. A couple of pints and a taxi ride later saw us at the Britannia Stadium, built on the site of a disused colliery on a hill-top just outside town.

We did well to hold onto our lead for so long after Steve Howard's dismissal by Andy D'Urso. I'll leave the debate over did he or didn't he to those who saw the "highlights" on Sunday morning – and you'll find out why I missed said highlights if you read on.

It was disappointing to lose after playing well enough, I thought, to get a point out of the game. By way of consolation, we went back to Newcastle for another pint, this time in the Old Brown Jug in the centre of town, followed by a taxi ride to the Bull's Head in Burslem. This is a pub that I had missed when we played at Port Vale, so it seemed like a good opportunity. I knew my train times and asked behind the bar for directions to the station, which I was assured was only 10 or 15 minutes' walk away.

I left in good time and followed the directions to the station, which seemed strangely deserted. On checking the timetable, the horrible truth slowly dawned: the station I wanted for my train back to Sheffield was Longton – this was Longport. Still, not to worry, it was only 7.40 and I knew there was another train from the central station at 9.15. I walked back to the Bull's Head for another pint and left there at 8.30 for the short bus ride to the town centre. There were two other people waiting at the bus stop. They'd been waiting half an hour, there was bound to be a bus along soon. Yeah, right.

The bus finally turned up at 9.15, just as my train would have been pulling out of the station three miles away. Arriving at the station just after 9.30, I checked the departures screen. Why did it only have buses to Stockport on it? The man at the ticket office explained: engineering works meant that there were bus replacement services on the line to Manchester. Could I get to Sheffield that way, as there were no trains via Derby after 9.15? Certainly, he said: just catch the 10.40 bus to Stockport, get another bus from there to Manchester Piccadilly and there's a train to Sheffield from there at 7.45 in the morning.

Thanks a lot! I went and sat on the bench beside the War Memorial in front of the station and contemplated the night ahead. I was due at work in Sheffield at 11.00 the following morning: my chances of getting any sleep before then seemed slim, to say the least. The last thing I needed was to fall asleep on the bench and miss the bus to Stockport. Fat chance: have you tried sleeping on a bench? I was wide awake and waiting as that bus pulled in an hour later.

Two hours and two buses later I was at Piccadilly with seven hours to kill until my train. The main station is kept reasonably warm and there were a few people waiting there, or just lying on the floor sleeping off the beer. The drawback was the horrible, almost incessant musak, interrupted only by announcements of trains to Manchester Airport or Leeds (why not Sheffield?). No chance of sleeping through that. I found a bench on a platform and tried to doze, being woken every five minutes or so by cold, cramp, the station cleaners or yet another train to Manchester Airport or Leeds.

By the time the sun rose next morning, the musak didn't seem so horrible: it was so cold on that bench, I just had to get somewhere warm. The final couple of hours before the train passed in a series of weird semi-waking dreams prompted by songs like Big Yellow Taxi and Vincent (at

least I was spared Bye Bye Miss American Pie and Bohemian Rhapsody). I finally got some sleep on the train and arrived back in Sheffield by nine o'clock, ready to start work two hours later.

Strangely, I forgot all about the Championship highlights programme on ITV that morning, so I couldn't say whether Steve Howard's sending off for spitting was justified or not. You'll have to ask someone else.

Will Larter

Coca Cola - The real thing?

When Sir Brian Mawhinney, Chairman of the Football League, announced in the summer of 2004 that there would be new sponsors of the lower three tiers of English professional football, and that it was being "revamped" (League Two became, er, League One) and the Championship was re-introduced because, fair enough, the Football League has always governed this pre-1992, when a completely separate organisation created the Premiership, or more to the point administered it. The aforementioned chairman also stated that with the new deal with Coca Cola it would be probably "the most significant deal struck in the League's history".

So, why then after Luton powered through their division, totalling 98 points, finishing 12 points higher than their nearest challengers and brushing off most teams, did they earn a cheque for... (drum rolls please. C'mon, a little louder...)... £25,000!!! £25,000?? I was absolutely shocked. I thought to myself, what will that get you nowadays? A weeks' worth of wages on Howard's new contract? Beresford's gloves from last season (sadly unused...)? Maybe even purchase Showunmi a right foot.

What a joke. Yeovil "earnt" £15,000 and Sunderland a "whopping" £50,000, which should actually cement their financial standing in this year's Premiership! The kind of players Mick McCarthy needs to survive this season are going to want something approaching £50,000 a week! Perhaps our new sponsors can help...

In finalising this short rant, it is worth noting the prize money dished out in the Premiership. to the teams we are now expected to compete with:

Southampton	A poor team who finished bottom, prize money £500,000
Norwich	Another poor team, finished a point above Southampton but with much worse goal difference. Prize money £1,000,000
Crystal Palace	Relegated with the same points as Norwich. Prize money £1,500,000.

So, next time on a hot summer's day, when you wish to quench your thirst, and decide to invest some of your pennies with one of the planet's largest brands, think, as a supporter of your club, where that money (or any of their billions for that matter) is going. The League One champions?

Well, at least we are the real thing...

Tony Allbones, Kenny, Block C

WORLD CUP BECKONING?



A few Hatters have been off playing international football recently, but most have not come too close to having a visit to Germany next summer. The last one in with a chance is Carlos Edwards, who is still involved with Trinidad & Tobago. He is seen here training with T&T, ahead of their recent qualifiers, in the exotic surroundings of Panama City. Next stop Bahrain then, Carlos?

SPLIT LOYALTIES? YOU BET...

Betting: a mugs game. Being the son of a bookmaker I should probably realise this more than most. However each and every season without fail I will place a bet on what is one of the most unlikely scenarios in sport. The pre-season football accumulator whereby you bet on clubs who you believe will win each league (straight win – even more unlikely!) or at least gain promotion (each-way – my preferred and a little more realistic choice – hmmm!). My one rule for the bet has and always will remain the same – never back your own team.

This is where Luton Town has genuinely let me down in recent seasons. After years of underachievement the club are on the upward curve. Champions last season, promoted from the bottom tier of league football a few seasons ago. The rule stays in place though. Call it superstition or whatever, I know the second I start placing money on my own team it will all start going wrong. Defeat will follow defeat and the club will begin to spiral back down the divisions. As football fans we all have this ridiculous belief that actions we take will directly impact the club we support. Hence for the past couple of seasons I haven't even come close with my tips as the Hatters have eaten up a promotion spot.

The accumulator is nonetheless a bet I continually return to as it livens up the season, especially if the Hatters have an off season (see the Lennie Lawrence years...). I suddenly develop an affection (which usually turns to hatred by the end of the season) for teams who, in the past, I could care less if they barely existed: Lincoln, Swindon, Barnsley, Wolves, Sheffield United, the list goes on and on. Year after year it only takes one to mess it all up but I never learn.

So, what of this season? Each-way I have staked money on Macclesfield in League 2, Doncaster in League 1, Crystal Palace in the Championship and Manchester United in the Premiership. Last season Macclesfield, after a storming run from Christmas, flew into the play-offs. With Luton old boy Brian Horton at the helm and a clutch of new signings, most notably Martin Bullock who has terrorised every Hatters full-back I can think of through the years with Barnsley and Blackpool, surely they would at least emulate last season. They currently sit near the foot of the league. Already the bet appears to be in tatters.

The formula for picking teams is obviously not particularly scientific, but I usually select sides which performed especially well against Luton the season before, if they played in the same division. From last season I delved into my not so trusty memory-bank to pluck out the options of Huddersfield or Doncaster. It looks again like I've made a dud choice with the boys from Belle Vue who boast the talented and once wayward Michael McIndoe. Part of my reasoning (or lame excuse) for this were the skinny odds on offer for Huddersfield – the bookies are rarely wrong (I should know!). Still, since knocking Manchester City out of the League Cup, Donny are picking up. Long may it continue...

Palace, with Andy Johnson leading the line, are surely bound to use some of that good old bouncebackability, I thought. As we well know, since they were so efficiently jolted by Luton on the opening day of the season, the Eagles are somewhat struggling to come to terms with life back in the Championship. I still think Palace will be up the top come the end of the season. Am I still misguided?

With the current (very boring from where we are sitting) debate about how entertaining the Premiership is, picking a team to finish in the top three is limited to... three. Chelsea (silly odds), Arsenal (Vieira-less) and Manchester United (Fergie should have quit back when they did they treble, but they'll surely finish in the top three...) are the only candidates really. To at least get some half decent odds I plumped for United.

I remember walking into the bookies before the season began and thinking "come June 2006 I'm going to be a rich man when these certainties check in!" But thanks to the likes of Grimsby (who

would bet on fishy people?), Southend (we destroyed them in the FA Cup last season) and dare I say Luton... the form book as well as my bet appear to have been thrown out of the window. But who knows? I said in my last article that I'm an optimist and since then the Town have started better than any of us could have really hoped, maybe all of my (!) teams will come good. To be honest I'd rather they didn't if it meant Luton staying amongst the big hitters in the Championship. Betting? It really is a mugs game.

Steeven Sharpe

Great railway journeys of the world

Oh what fun it is to see Luton win away! A lovely sunny autumn afternoon in the Welsh capital got off to a bad start when some hesitancy between Carlos "After you Chris" Edwards and Chris "No after you Carlos" Coyne led to an early goal.

However, our usual brand of confident attacking play soon saw us in charge of the game, and it was no surprise when we equalised before half-time, a lovely cross from Ahmet Brkovic finding the unmarked Dean Morgan, who finished with aplomb while the Cardiff defenders were still appealing for offside against Steve Howard.

The second goal also came from a Brkovic cross. This time Howard nodded it back into the danger area and Peter Holmes finished from close range. We could have had more, but we let Cardiff back into the game and finished a little nervously.

Having celebrated our inevitable victory in advance, with a few pints at the Cayo Arms (surely one of only a very few pubs to be named after a member of the Welsh Liberation Army), I had time for only a hurried pint on my way to the station, with a five and a half hour journey back to Sheffield in prospect.

Those mighty railwaymen at Virgin having decreed that no travel is allowed between Cardiff and Sheffield in the evening, I had to first make my way to Manchester Oxford Road. The route carefully avoided any stretch of track where the train might be allowed to go faster than 60 miles an hour, with stops at Newport, Abergavenny, Betws y Coed, Llanfairpwll...llantisiliogogoch, sorry, may have dropped off for a minute or two there, Ludlow, Church Stretton, Shrewsbury and Crewe.

I arrived in Manchester before kicking out time with alcohol level getting dangerously close to sober. Picking my way carefully between groups of people seemingly dressed only in someone else's underwear and stepping daintily across pools of vomit, I found my way to a Joseph Holts pub, the Old Monkey, situated half way between Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations. With bitter at only £1.41 a pint, this was too good an opportunity to miss. The person standing next to me at the bar paid more than a fiver for a gin and tonic and a bottle of Stella. A glance at the distorted noses and lacerated scalps of the other drinkers gave a clue to the possible uses such a bottle might be put to (and the men were almost as rough).

I made my way to Piccadilly in plenty of time for the train to Sheffield (no sleeping on benches for me this time) and arrived home before midnight. Grateful thanks for the route planning must go to our esteemed editor. Cheers, Keith, don't know what I'd have done without you. Got any suggestions for the game at Plymouth next Easter? (*Well, as it happens... remember that pushbike you used to get from Land's End to John O'Groats...?*)

Will Larter

RADIO DAYS

I was 10 years old in May 1959 when the Town reached the FA Cup final and lost 2-1 at Wembley to Nottingham Forest. At the time we lived at 47 Conway Road and the Town's captain, Syd Owen, lived at No.43 - next door but one to us! I was good friends with John Ross at No.49 and we sometimes used to play with Syd's daughter Pat, even though she was a girl! I vaguely remember some birthday parties, too - I think we all used to attend each other's. The Owens eventually moved on to Leeds and much later, of course, Pat became Mrs. Peter Lorimer.

I don't remember anyone in Conway Road being lucky enough to get a ticket for the match - certainly my dad and I watched it on TV, in black and white, 405 lines (*cue youngsters asking what that means - Ed!*)

Anyway, a couple of years ago a mate of mine here in Jersey, a Nottingham lad called Mick Hollis - a lapsed Forest supporter - mentioned that he'd been clearing out the loft and he'd come across some old 5 inch reel to reel recording tapes including one that he'd remembered being in the family - one labelled "1959 Cup Final". Now I still have a working reel to reel Philips tape recorder (remember valves - diodes and triodes? We even did them in Physics!) so I was given the tape to keep as I had the means with which to play it.

I must admit I didn't sit down and play it all through, but I did sample it, both sides, and it is a recording of the BBC's radio commentary of the entire match. Considering the recording must have been effected simply by the placing of the microphone in front of the radio's speaker, the sound reproduction is pretty good. No need to turn the volume up too much.

For a while I did nothing further until one weekend there was a short feature in one of the national newspapers about how the British Library were keen to increase their archive of recorded sound and how they hoped people would let them know if they had something they thought might be of interest to the Library. So I emailed and told them about the tape.

Within 24 hours I was emailed back by one Andy Linehan who told me yes, they were very interested! Andy (a devoted Wimbledon supporter, by the way - the "proper" Wimbledon that is, the one we remember too) had looked into the football archives and cross checked with the BBC and it seems that the only record that was left of the match was a 90 second compilation of what someone had decided were "highlights". Everything else must have been erased or discarded. These highlights, incidentally, didn't include Dave Pacey's goal for the Town! Bloody cheek!

So, at his request, I sent the tape off to Andy at the British Library so that their technical people could work on copying it. A few weeks later and I'm the very proud possessor of a 2 CD set of the 1959 FA Cup Final! The arrangement was that the extra CD copy that I now have is for my own personal use only - I think that there must be some copyright issue now that the recording is an official British Library item. But for those who are interested, the Library itself is in Euston Road, NW1 2DB and the the BL's Archive references for their copy are as follows:

2CDR0013189

2CDR0013190

Andy Linehan (who officially is the Sound Archive's Popular Music Curator but also has a watching brief on sports recordings) has an email address: andy.linehan@bl.uk

Graham Fildes (the Jersey Hatter)

WAITING FOR THE BUBBLE TO BURST...

09.08.05 RIP ROARERS 3 SOUTHAMPTON 2

There is something unique about a floodlit evening kick off at the Kenny. OK, the stadium is dilapidated and crumbling, season tickets were double booked, the toilets were already blocked and overflowing by 7.30, and amazingly the catering has somehow during the close season plunged to a new nadir; but leaning heavily on past experiences and steely determination, we have grown so accustomed to such minor distractions it hardly matters anymore.

The ground was packed and rocking to the rafters. The new seats in the Kenilworth stand helped create a cacophony of noise as the match kicked off. Under the expert tutelage of Dennis Wise, the Saints soon proved to be masters of the darker arts; sly tugs, late challenges, petty niggling, over reacting and easily conning "Wiggy" Bennett, a referee, who rather worryingly appeared to be on intimate first names terms with many Southampton players.

Twice the South Coast side twice went ahead, and twice Luton fought back to equalise. It appeared that the heroics of Niemi in the Southampton goal would salvage a point for the visitors, until in the very last minute home debutant Dean Morgan swivelled his hips to the right and then to the left; Wise was left dizzy and cross eyed, aimlessly twisting like an out of control spinning top whilst in the meantime Morgan had left a despairing Niemi floundering as the swirling swivelling ball ripped into the back of the net.

It was a great night and a great victory. The Saints may have come marching in expecting victory, but they slouched home tattered and torn with their tails firmly between their legs.

TtWC

13.08.05 TOWN 0 LEEDS UNITED 0

Out of the two teams, we had the better of the play but couldn't find a way past the blanket defending of Leeds. They had chances to win in but we had more. But 0-0 it finished. 7 points from our first 3 Championship games and we're in dreamland!

And Matthew Spring stayed on the bench. He serves a warning to any players who maybe would think, like Springy must have, that better times can be had elsewhere. Remembering that in our team, he was a main player alongside Nico in midfield and was only replaced by a revitalised Robinson. He left and things haven't worked out for him. With hindsight, he should have stayed.

Still, I'm sure Spring will learn from this and not make any other completely shocking and abysmal footballing career choices!!!

BDaveB

I gave up my usual seat in the Kenny for another seat in the Kenny for this game, as I was entertaining a 'Leed', or whatever the hell those Northerners refer to themselves as. My Northern chum was a little perturbed by the pre-match pub experience and worried about whether to wear a Leeds scarf. I advised him not to on the basis that it was warm and Leeds are a naff team to support. He saw sense. Shame that the game wasn't as good as the Southampton game, but then how many have been? Leeds kept saying how good Curtis looked. I told him it was a team game and one man didn't make it etc. Credit to Leeds, we both pissed ourselves when Micheal 'I ain't got' Ricketts missed their best

chance. We shaded it, but didn't win. Leeds went to a barbecue in Wimbledon, swearing Curtis would be off.

K1

20.08.05 STOKE CITY 2 TOWN 1

Steve Howard is a good footballer and a good goalscorer for Luton Town. Not everybody's cup of tea, he has been described as overweight, slow, lazy, too mouthy and brainless. However, even if you belong to the anti-Howard camp I am sure you would not expect the guy to spit at anyone. Argue with the referee, yes; miss with a header from eight yards as he did in the early minutes of this game, quite possibly; blame someone else's pass for his poor control, regularly; but spit at another professional? When he was sent off early in this game everyone was baffled. The local crowd saw nothing (and they appealed for everything in this match) the Stoke City players didn't complain apart from Chelsea reject Duberry and no-one in the ground was expecting it, least of all Howard and the Stoke number two who was supposed to have been the victim. Even the radio stations after the game were unsure as they gave the reason for dismissal as all of the following within a twenty minute slot: serious foul-play, dissent, foul and abusive language and spitting!

Luton started well with Dean Morgan causing problems down the left flank and both Ahmet Brkovic and Kevin Foley finding plenty of space on the right. Crosses came in from both sides and the Hatters looked the more likely side to score throughout the first half which they dominated. Whether Warren Feeney will ever score I don't know but his pace and movement pull the opposition about and create space for others so he is worth persevering with at the moment. Morgan did score again as he finished calmly with time on his side after finding the ball at his feet in the opposition box. Luton should have had a penalty kick in the same box when a Potter's defender tried to stretch Feeney's football shirt into a baggy jumper, but the hopeless Andy D'Urso who was well placed did an Arsene Wenger and turned away.

D'Urso was mostly useless in this game which simply meant he lived down to the Luton fans pre-match expectations. Stoke should have had a penalty in the second half when Sol Davis rashly went through a forward in the corner of the box but again the well-placed referee ignored the appeals. We all like to see the advantage played but D'Urso was determined not to make any more decisions after his early mistake with Howard. The umpire was ably assisted in his unique rule interpretations by his two lines-persons whose idea of clear daylight between defender and offside striker was clearly affected by the bright sun.

We cannot blame the officials for the result however as Luton had chances to win this game including opportunities to go 2-0 up which would have put the game beyond an unimaginative home side. City were simply waiting for Luton to tire and looking to capitalise on mistakes or weary play: which they did. Some may question the hasty return of Marlon Beresford who, despite being virtually infallible last season let Stoke's first one through his guard and under his body - it should have been a regulation save. Others may say that Enoch Showunmi should have been introduced at half time as he was always the most likely to score that individual wonder goal that every ten-man team needs to take the three points. Personally I would question the replacing of Brkovic with Carlos Edwards (a poor man's Dean Morgan on admittedly limited showing) when Kevin Nicholls was clearly finished three-quarters of the way through a hard game with a dodgy ankle for half of it. Steve Robinson also ran his nuts off but equally died in the last ten when we were

hanging on for a point. Curtis Davies was awesome again (cheerio mate and good luck) whilst Mikka Hakkinen drove another fantastic race, always looking composed. Paul Underwood did well at both left back and left midfield and seems to be back in his early Luton form thank goodness.

Bizarrely, the post-match scramble for exeunt seemed to be the Stokies priority as many red-and-whites shirts were seen streaming for the car park long before the final whistle. As they were playing a tiring team of reduced numbers one can only assume that they thought Stoke had as much chance of a winner as I had of getting a brandy-and-coke in the stadium bar. However, the game actually finished with an unstoppable twenty yard shot from a Stoke player with much more space than he should have had. Whilst you could not blame the keeper for that one I would like to have seen a knackered Nicholls close down a player one more time rather than stand and watch. It was a good strike I grant you, but rather than "worthy of winning any game" I would say it was more than a distinctly average Stoke side deserved. This lot will not finish in the top ten this season and that's a promise.

Cliff Saunders

23.08.05 LEYTON ORIENT 1 TOWN 3

There was a cheer as I breathlessly entered the Matchbox Stadium, or whatever it is now called. Not for me, but a no goal for the boys on the edge of Olympic land. Thanks to a creaking tube system the route across London turned into a start, stop, slow crawl, stop and finally full speed after Liverpool Street. A Central line trip of 58 minutes from the delights of West Ruislip turned into a sticky and crowded 1 hour 39 minutes. Get it sorted Tony.

After a final sprint from the station I was in, but where was everyone else? Even the Luton section was not full, but it was nice to see some of the crowd in suits after a hard day in the City. It was a lovely warm dry evening for football, the visitors Luton were from two divisions higher, but still no cup fever from this section of London. So, as the sun sank in the west, as usual, the game was under way.

With Luton using reserve players, and those back for injury (*Do you mean back FROM injury?* - Ed) it was not the strongest team we could put out. The result was a team getting used to each other, and it took some time for it to begin to work. Orient were by far the more organised team, but had a terrible problem of actually staying on side. In the end it took them 90 minutes to achieve it.

As it was, after a busy spell for Marlon Luton looked the stronger, Enoch could have had three goals in the first half but the ball and him looked strangers. The goal finally came just before the first half closure. Orient failed to clear a corner and Coyne, from the edge of the area, lobbed the keeper and into the net it went. It was time for a happy coffee, which turned out to be awful.

The second half was much better, Luton were on top but unable to finish the job. A great free kick from Morgan rattled off the bar, the ball would just not go in. A misdirected clearance from the keeper went straight to Enoch, coming in from the right and passing one defender he fed Feeney. Side stepping the keeper he made no mistake and slipped the ball in the net. Game over and the Feeney goal machine was under way. Orient's goal was under siege and not surprisingly Town bagged a third goal. Unfortunately for the Orient captain it turned to be him, Alexander, who blasted it into the net from a Kevin Nicholls free kick.

On the stroke of full time the Orient finally came up with some Eastern promise and

bagged the consolation goal. The late rush of substitutions brought on Peter Holmes for Captain Kev, but why was Holmes not playing from the beginning. Instead fringe player Michael Leary (the one without the 'O') played the whole game. With minutes to go it would have been 4-0, but Enoch scuffed his cross to the said Mr Holmes who was racing into the box.

The trip home went without a hitch. Thank goodness.

Normski - the Cheltenham Hatter

27.08.05 LEICESTER CITY 0 TOWN 2 *Doing without Curtis*

Yes, I know Curtis Davies's last game was against Millwall on Bank Holiday Monday, when he scored the winner. However, my last sight of him in a Luton shirt was at the "cheese and onion crisps" stadium in Leicester.

If I had known that the status of the match had changed from "pay on the day" to "advance tickets only" I would have been worried. Ignorance is bliss, but why do they make these changes? (A similar thing happened with the Palace game. Tickets were on sale to season ticket holders only until three days before the match, then to members. I asked for mine to be sent to my mother's address in London, as I was afraid of missing the post in Sheffield. Luckily her postman is an observant, intelligent and resourceful chap, because the ticket office somehow managed to get the address slightly wrong and my ticket could have been lying on the mat in the flat upstairs until her neighbour returned from holiday a fortnight later.

As it was, after a couple of pleasant pre-match beers, I arrived at the ground about five minutes before kick off, ticketless. I must have been walking widdershins around the ground; something I remember from folk stories can have dire consequences, as I ended up doing almost a circuit of the whole stadium before finding the entrance for away fans. By this time, the sound of the crowd at kick off could be heard. The turnstile operator directed me to the ticket office, where someone spotted the Luton logo on my shirt and directed me back the way I had come to a sort of hamburger stand labelled "ticket collection point for away fans". How could I have missed that? Fortunately, contrary to the "tickets only" sign, they were prepared to let me in for the sum of only £22 cash. I then had to pass the rottiweilerish attentions of the bag search jobsworth at the turnstile before taking my seat in the sixth minute of the match.

Ahmet Brkovic's overhead kick from Warren Feeney's header was worth the admission fee, and we held on to the lead comfortably enough without playing as well as we had against Palace or Southampton, for example. Leicester were making little headway against our midfield and defence until the last few minutes, when a Dion Dublin toe-poke rocketed against the post and bounced harmlessly out. Almost immediately, we broke upfield and Enoch was one on one with their keeper, who did well to keep him out. In the subsequent melee he was brought down and Nicholls converted from the spot.

It was only later, when viewing the highlights on ITV, that it became apparent that Dublin's shot had been deflected by Curtis at full stretch. Without his slightest of touches it would certainly have gone in and we would have only drawn.

I made it through the post-match beer session without missing any trains or sleeping on any benches, so my memories of Leicester are an improvement on Stoke.

I "watched" the Millwall game on Ceefax - if there is a Hell, I shall spend eternity following Luton games that way - and was relieved to "see" a late goal by Davies giving us all three points. There had been talk of Premiership clubs showing an interest, but it seemed

nothing substantial enough would be offered before the transfer window closed on the Wednesday. That would have meant we would keep him until the New Year at least, but it was not to be. An offer of "only" £3m was accepted and he was on his way.

Looking back, it seems incredible that his first game for Luton was not even two years ago: the LDV Vans Trophy game at Rushden and Diamonds on 4 November 2003. To go from that to Player of the Season 2004/5 in League One was remarkable, and it was inevitable that he would play in the Premiership before long. Signing for West Brom, though, makes it more likely than not that he'll be back in the Championship next season!

We will miss his solidity in defence, his giant leaps to head the ball, his mature reading of the game for one so young, his ball skills and surging runs through to the opposition's area, his enthusiasm and enjoyment of the game. Most of all though, we will miss his entrance onto the pitch at the start of the game and after half time, and his exit at the end of the match: all elbows and knees, like some sort of cross between a giraffe and a gazelle.

Thanks for the memories, Curtis, and good luck.

Will Larter

29.08.05 TOWN 2 MILLWALL 1

After the excellent win at Leicester, a few of us stayed in the East Midlands to see England clinch the fourth test at Trent Bridge the following day. The 'easy' fixture of the bank holiday weekend proved to be anything but, but it's a measure of how well the Hatters have settled in the championship that a bit of expectancy has returned to Town fans.

The Town started off well and Feeney gave us a deserved lead after twelve minutes with a powerful, well placed volley into the bottom corner. This gave us the confidence to play football with a swagger and Millwall struggled to get out of their own half. However, without Stevo (or Coyne for set pieces) we had no aerial presence and the intricate passing usually petered out. The Town should have had a penalty after half an hour for a clear push on the edge of the area, but when the ref said no, we went off the boil and the Lions finally got into the game.

The second half got off to a shocking start when Morgan made a complete hash of shepherding the ball out, which led to a cross that May easily put past the out of position Beresford. This was a shock to the system and Millwall seemed to sense our unease and started to look for, incredibly, their sixth straight win at Kenilworth Road. To shore things up, Morgan, who had a poor match, was soon replaced by Sol, who settled things down immediately. In attack, Enoch was replaced by Coyne. This was a surprise but we looked more competitive with Coyne out there, so credit Newell for taking the risk. The winner came with twelve minutes left. A Nicholls free kick fell kindly to Curtis Davies who, in his last meaningful act for the Hatters, fired home from six yards via a defender. A rubbish Millwall side offered us no threat from then on. Nor did their 'army' of fans who couldn't even half fill the Oak Road.

The international weekend now gives us almost two weeks to sort out our best team now some of the injured players have got back into the side. Dean Morgan has started off well for the Town but Sol and Unders look more secure on the left and Morgan will probably have to win his place back. Howard Mill, of course, walk back into the side, even though we always win without him. However, we always look ragged up front without Stevo and a lot of those victories were a bit lucky. Showunmi, at this level, must surely be left as a substitute. I'm sure Morgan or even Brko could play up front in an emergency. Either that or tell Howard not to spit when the ref is talking to him. I was wondering how Newell could

best fit Coyne into the starting line up without disrupting our defence, when along came Bryan Robson to end that particular conundrum. Bastard. Fair play to Bill and Mike for ensuring the Town received a good price for one of our starlets for the first time in years. Hopefully, young Curtis won't go to waste like Upson (for five years) and Doherty. At a club like West Brom he's got a good chance of progressing even further. Far more importantly, how will the Town fare without him? Foley, Coyne, Heikkinen and Davis should make up a decent back four, but there isn't a lot of pace between them and Perrett, Keane and Barnett offer limited cover. I won't be surprised if we miss Davies hugely. Good job we picked up thirteen points out of eighteen while he was still around.

Richard Ward

10.09.05 TOWN 1 WOLVES 1

With this game marking the first 100 years at Kenilworth Road, it was fitting that there was a parade of Hatters' legends prior to the game. Introduced by the media legend Brian Swain, they ranged from the 84 year-old Billy Waugh to the 35 year-old Julian James, via players from the childhoods of most Town supporters. Most notably from my own were Terry Branston, Max Dougan and John Moore, stalwarts of the 67-68 promotion campaign. From the 74-75 season we had Alan West and the ageless Bobby Thompson - he hasn't changed one bit in appearance or probably speed! - and Kirk Stephens, albeit not quite as lithe as he used to be, represented the Pleat era promotion team. If the current Town players had the memories that these players brought back for many of us they would need no additional inspiration to beat the Wolves.

As it turned out, there was plenty of inspiration on display with Coyne and Sol Davis making their first starts of the season, and no sign of Curtis being missed. It was a lively game and Miller, for the visitors, looked a threat so it was a relief when he was taken off. Unfortunately, this was just after Cort had opened the scoring brushing the ball home at the far post from a neat low cross. The remainder of the first half was one way traffic, with the Wolves defence bombarded, aside from a break in "added" time from Ricketts with a poor finish by Cort.

At half time Newell was sent off and forced to watch the second half from the stand. In spite of being half a dozen rows in front of me, I spent most of the second half wondering why he was missing from the dugout! The frenetic pace that had been evident at the close of the first half continued, and Unders, Feeney, Heikkinen and Brko all went close before Nico drove the ball home sweetly from 20 yards out, converting Morgan's excellently placed pass. Although Enoch just failed to connect with a late chance, it was a super save from Marlon that kept the Town in for a point at the end of a pulsating game.

KFH

13.09.05 CHEATING NIGGLING RANGERS 1 TOWN 0

I don't like QPR, I never have and I never will. I have an irrational hatred for the fans, the club and the team. Loftus Road is always a horrible place to visit, this was no exception. Old Steptoe's boys are an ugly team to watch, full of niggling fouls, off the ball challenges, time wasting and in the case of Tommy Doherty outright pugilism.

We dominated the first half, and should have been at least two up. We never took our chances and paid for it in the second half. Rangers never played particularly well, it was more a case of them knocking the Hatters out of our stride. The winning goal summed up the type of football Rangers play. A dive of Olympian proportions won them a free kick on

the edge of our penalty area. From the resulting free kick, everybody in the ground except the myopic match officials saw parrot head Bircham manhandling SuperKev and dragging him from the end of the wall. Resultingly the ball went into the back of the net via the exact spot Nicholls once stood. It was nothing more than blatant, well rehearsed cheating, summing up the whole ethical stance of a rotten club.

It became transparently obvious even before kick off that we were in for a bad night. Rangers were informed by our club officials that in addition to those who had already purchased tickets a further 1500 would be travelling with the intention of paying at the turnstiles. Obviously a well run business would have made contingency plans for such variables. Unfortunately QPR are not a well run club.

Despite being informed by our club officials at 7.10pm that there were still nearly two thousand visiting fans trying in vain to enter the ground, the Rangers safety officer refused to open the lower tier for us until the top tier was full. It was nearly 7.45 before the majority of fans started to take their seats in the lower tier. Fans were still streaming in nearly thirty minutes after kick off. Many more just gave up and returned home.

Notwithstanding, we were all kept locked inside the ground for yonks after the final whistle and even then we were only allowed to exit in near single file via one small exit. It wasn't only us fans who suffered at the hands of Rangers. A reliable source tells me that a faithful club servant worried by what was unravelling before her eyes, stayed behind in the Director's box to ensure that all of our fans exited safely. Resultingly, somebody turned off the lights in the main stand, and she was herself locked inside the ground. She had to summon a steward to get out.

I earnestly hope that we reciprocate the hospitality shown by QPR and meet out the same treatment to their fans and club officials when they visit Kenilworth Road on the 21st January. It is all they deserve.

TtWC

17.09.05 DULL CITY 0 TOWN 1

Now let's not get too carried away with this win. After all, they did beat us 3-2 on aggregate and were the real champions last season, so just because we won this match and are considerably higher than them in the table, it doesn't mean that we're better than them. The league table is notorious for lying, as Lennie Lawrence and Peter Taylor will tell you.

The game itself wasn't too bad. The first half was fairly even - both sides had good chances and both sides having a goal disallowed. Carlos Edwards had our best chance from just outside the area, shooting at a nice height for Bozo Myhill to push over, although to be fair not many makeshift right-backs would have done better. Brko had a legal goal disallowed after a free-kick was put into the box, Feeney stuck out a leg and missed it and Brko scored. He was offside when Feeney stuck his leg out but not when the free-kick was taken. I blame the new offside rule. Barmby also had a goal ruled out that looked suspicious to me, although that could be because the Hull fans around me were biased. No need to worry about me changing my team - we were in the restaurant, in the stand by the dugouts.

The second half was dominated by Luton. Howard hit the post, Elliott hit Perrett in the face and Howard went on to score the winner after a superb bit of skill from Brko. Mike Newell went crazy with delight when we scored - he was seen to jump off his seat and clench his fist in a gleeful manner. I just wish I had his self-control; when I jumped up to celebrate a lot of people looked at me in a funny way (more funny than usual), and one big

guy in the next block just stared at me for a long time. One guy behind tried to rile us later on by calling us 'southern cheats' (well, words to that effect) when Perrett went down injured. Elliott's shot at Perrett was actually his only contribution in the game, partly because of him being tired from all that work he had to do last season, although Carlos Edwards should be given credit for shutting him up. A good day was made even better later on when Sheffield United came from 2 goals down to beat W*tf*rd 3-2. The only disappointment of the day was that we only took about 400 fans, although considering the midday kick-off and Sky, it wasn't as bad as it could have been. Man of the match for me was Brkovic, but once again it was a team performance with no one standing out above the rest. Only Perrett looked a weakness in the first half but played much much better in the second.

Big Bopper

20.09.05 READING 1 TOWN 0

Seven nights earlier Luton, wearing all black, had lost to a dodgy second half free kick against a team wearing blue and white hoops. Exactly the same happened on this occasion at Reading, the only non-similarity being that this time Luton dominated both halves rather than just the first, with Mike Newell being justified in claiming "we were robbed". Forced team changes seemed to have no effect on the fluidity of the football Luton produced throughout this game and as seen in recent weeks. Notbale was the performance of Leon Barnett, who showed great promise before a second half injury. It is clear to see Reading's recent success is built on a solid defence which they have, and the odd freak goal.

Witch

23.09.05 TOWN 2 SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY 2

It's the 23rd of September and a cold Friday night. When I got into the ground I realised what a waste of time it was as there were Sky cameras out in force and I knew I should have stayed at home and watched on the TV. However my mood changed suddenly as KO drew closer, the atmosphere inside the ground was fantastic. And it got even better once Howie scored in the second minute and the rather fat half naked chap in the Sheff Wednesday section started making a fool of himself, even though he didn't see it.

Luton really should have won and we battered the Wednesday goal on many occasions but the creator of Little Britain, Mr Lucas, in the Wednesday goal worked a miracle and kept out most of what was thrown at him. It was one a piece at the break and the football was really flowing or as MN would say "football was being played". Both teams were playing football, which is why the first ten minutes or so after half time were rather shocking. The game didn't really get going but the fans certainly were. "Mike Newell's Barmy Army" was going over and over and over and over and over, I think you get the message. This DID spur the lads on, so I will take my congratulations for helping gain a point, and with this two goals came around quickly first for Wednesday and secondly for Luton. Robinson went close, Feeney went close, as did Nico and Hoiwe but nothing came due to fine handiwork by the Wednesday keeper, he must practise a fair bit (*like for most of half time...*).

A point wasn't fair so don't listen to those who say it was. A good performance though which has been re-inforced with our march onwards and upwards in the games preceding it. Up the town!

Dan Strobe

27.09.05 TOWN 3 PRESTON 0

I always knew Tuesday night games would be a bind when I moved up north. The 300 mile round trip is bad enough on Saturdays, but the long trip home after a night match can be a real bind. The journey home after heavy Tuesday night defeats to Blackpool and Crewe will be etched on my memory for many years. Going through the bad times is character building, and it certainly makes you appreciate the good times even more. It has to be said that Preston must have been gutted to have gone in 3-0 down at half time having had the majority of the ball in the first 45 minutes. I'm sure there's a footballing cliché somewhere about not winning football matches by passing the ball round nicely in your own half, and this would certainly apply to Preston. To put it bluntly, a bit like Cat Deeley, they had f*ck all up front. Or perhaps that is doing a dis-service to the mighty Finn at centre half.

Preston changed their formation at half time, and you wonder whether that was to limit the damage rather than try and get back in the game. The highlight of the second half was the Aussie Bully letting rip with a 25 yarder that cracked off the bar. I think the seats at the back of the Kenny might have collapsed if that one had gone in.

My journey home was a delight, and listening to Mike Newell put Ian Pearce in his place was hilarious. Let's hope Tuesday nights continue to be such a pleasure in future.

The Cheshire Hat

01.10.05 WALES'S FINEST 1 MIGHTY HATTERS 2

Parallel Universe

Was this really Cardiff? The trains ran on time. OK, it rained, but not all of the time. And the fans who have previously greeted us with rocks, bottles and coins seem to have been replaced by a fair minded crowd, many of whom applauded the lads at the end of the match.

The infamous cup match was 11 years ago, and we have been back a couple of times since. But this really did feel different. A different century almost (yes, I know that it *is* a different century, but you know what I mean).

One thing remained the same though. The result. And again, it was a richly deserved win after a tremendous game. Even though we went a goal down we were always in control. We dominated midfield and created chance after chance. It was only a matter of time, and so it proved. A superbly taken goal by Morgan and one after the break by Holmes were scant reward for our football. Although we have Howard up front there are definite echoes of the 1982 promotion team about our midfield play. Brian Stein was clearly paying attention.

But we could have lost, despite our dominance. Although we hit the woodwork twice, so did they. We were still a bit sloppy at the back, and Marlon had an outstanding match. One was tempted to rue the departure of Curtis Davies until watching his back pass on TV later. This is a good team. They clearly go into every game expecting to win. Every player had a good game and maybe a trip back to Cardiff in May is not fanciful (Yes Kevin, I know you think automatic promotion a real possibility and who am I to doubt it the way you are leading the team. Let's just call it an emergency back-up plan). Considering that six of the starting line up played in the 4th Division this is doubly impressive. Kinnear bought well, but it is Newell who has made them such a good side. No doubt the Premier league parasites will be sniffing around again in January. Let's just enjoy it while we can.

Clark

"I say Referee, are you absolutely sure that decision was the correct one...?"



🐟 BabelFish Translation: 🐟
In League with The Hatters

Al Jones

Sharpe Angle

So, farewell then Curtis,
You were our greatest prospect.
We knew you would never leave unless there was a very good reason.
Sadly, three million good reasons suddenly came up.

Did you know, by the way, that Curtis Davies' middle name is Eugene? His fellow Davis, Sol, has Sebastian as his middle monicker. I discovered these two mildly interesting facts in the latest edition of the Footballer's Who's Who, which also reveals that Enoch's middle name is Olusesan, and Paul Underwood's is Victor – possibly after his Dad's favourite comic? Dean Morgan is a Lance, Steve Howard a common old John, just like Chris Coyne, while Kevin Nicholls – you might have guessed – wanted more than his fair share of names and helped himself to both John and Richard.

Paul Hughes' middle name is Paul. No, he isn't Paul Paul Hughes, he is really John Paul Hughes while another member of the squad masquerading with a false first name appears to be Carlos Edwards, who opts for that more manageable handle rather than using his given Christian name of, er, Akenhaton. And, Rowan Vine is not content with one unusual name, but has Lewis in the middle. Michael Leary is an Antonio, would you believe, and Leon Barnett a Peter. Marlon Beresford's parents probably felt they'd already made him suffer enough, so didn't lumber him with another dodgy appendage to carry round. Nor did Calvin Andrew's.

And before you accuse me of making cheap fun at the expense of our gallant lads, you should know that my own 'other' name is, ahem, Reginald.

England won the Ashes, then. Good, but better had they done it with a side of Englishmen. And with an English manager. And English bowling coach.

Which reminds me of my rock solid view of Sven. Regardless of whether he is a good, bad or indifferent manager, he should never have been appointed England manager. International football should be just that. A squad of players from a specific country, managed by a manager from that country. In club football you can buy the best you can afford, or want. The whole point of international football is that it is supposed to be played between representatives of different countries, managed by a representative of that country.

By the way, Mike Newell is a 33/1 shot to succeed Sven. He is shorter than that to succeed Mike Newell, though.

Congratulations to whoever is responsible for the level of fitness the side is currently showing. It was noticeable after the Wolves game that when the final whistle blew, several of the visiting players almost collapsed on the pitch, exhausted. It is a tribute to the side's conditioning that they have not been found wanting for fitness levels against any opposition so far this season. However, I wonder whether both teams ran themselves to a standstill in that game which was played like a Cup tie – in the midweek matches that followed, Luton looked leg weary in the

second half against QPR and lost, while Wolves conceded a very late goal at home against Millwall and lost.

Does anyone agree with me – or even know what I'm talking about – that QPR have become the new Bristol City? And is there an argument beginning to take shape that Warren Feeney could be the new Rowan Vine?

A friend of mine – a writer for the Racing Post, as it happens – has taken to ringing me every few weeks apparently just so that he can ask me – rather wistfully, I fancy – how Paul Underwood is getting on.

You see, Graham Greene is a Rushden fan and he still can't get his head around 'Unders' decision to leave that club to come to Kenilworth Road.

'He turned down other offers, you know' says Graham, plaintively.

And clearly he isn't the only Rushden supporter still feeling that way, as a newly published book, called Cult Heroes, shows.

The book lists a cult hero for every England and Scottish League club – and there on page 126, looking, it has to be said, alarmingly youthful, is Mr U – 'Mr Consistency, he could play in every position for our team and never, ever had a bad game. He was simply Captain Fantastic'.

Aah, nice – so, who do we find on p88 as cult hero for LTFC? That's right, Mick Harford – 'For the six years when he was considered to be at the top of his game and coveted by many of the top teams in the country and abroad, he played for Luton Town. The Hatters fans love the fact that he stayed put when many others took the cash.'

Dean Morgan has attitude. Discuss. Reading fans obviously believe that to be the case. A couple of previews of the forthcoming season saw Morgan named as the player Reading would most like to get rid of. But Mike Newell clearly doesn't think so as he says he has been after Dean for some while but couldn't afford him before. And Dean himself doesn't think so, he reckons he's just been looking for a place where he'd be appreciated and encouraged. But do his team-mates think so? On balance, maybe not, although after his indecision led to a goal in the Wolves' game there may have been one or two who would not have been upset to see him substituted. He does occasionally seem to get an ear-bashing from one or two players in particular after a wayward run or undelivered pass.

To me he looks to have something of a wayward mindset during games and seems to over-react to small incidents and let them upset him rather than forgetting about it and getting on with the game. There is no doubt his goal against Southampton won us two points, although arguably his mistake against Wolves cost us as many, but overall I would say he has made a very positive impression and can only get better as the players around him begin to appreciate and tune in to his positive side rather than reacting against his negative side. Every team needs an unpredictable element within it and Morgan certainly brings that along big-style.

Graham Sharpe

The Wiltshire 'Atturrrr

Greetings from deepest darkest Wiltshire. Strange place for a Hatters fan but there you go.

Since moving down here from Luton in 2002, I have had to endure various bouts of banter from "local" rivals (specifically Swindon Town and Bristol City fans). These were especially loud at the start of last season, when Administration was still staring us in the face and a new, unproven (not now, I hasten to add) Manager had been installed. Naturally, I jumped to our defence and made the appropriate bets about who would finish highest in the league.

They then went a bit quiet toward the end of the season. Bets were settled and several free beers were enjoyed. Now they, literally, are no longer in our league and even the more recent taunts like "see you next season" (not Tuesday) have been rather muted after a very promising start to the Championship campaign. So Ya Boo Sucks to them!!!

Talking of the Championship, so far so good!! Performances against Millwall and Hull (am I the only one who thinks the Hull game was better than the Man Utd v Liverpool match the following day?) have been impressive and the Manager was justifiably aggrieved about the Wolves and QPR matches. Curtis Davies will be a loss for sure but £3 million is £3 million. Nice to see Brian Robson being prudent with his boss's money as usual. And what was his first act? To miss a sitter from less than 6 yards. Ah well – we'll buy him back for £1 million when they get relegated.

So, the saga of the new stadium rumbles on. Promises around the club having a new home are starting to rank amongst such classics as "the cheque is in the post" and, yes, the other one. In the time that this saga has (so far) taken, we have competed (or not, as the case may be) in two World Cups and three European Championships. Labour have won three general elections. A Space Probe has been built, sent off to, and reached, Saturn. The Millennium Dome has been built, filled, used, emptied, closed, re-opened, closed again, robbed, sold, not sold and will now doubtless rot. England lost 1-0 to Germany at Wembley, which was then closed, knocked down, rebuilt (at a cost that would make Roman Abramovic run for cover) and will soon be ready again.

Many of these things have been much extolled examples of incompetence, delay and blown budgets. Yet they all started and either have been or will be completed before one sodding brick is laid at the Junction 10 sight. Even my youthful good looks are beginning to fade (no comment, Editor!). It beggars belief.

Still. Look on the bright side. Swindon Town were recently told they could not move to a former land fill site. I'd have thought it would be the perfect place for them.

Talking of landfill sites, we have the joy of Scumford home and away again (the new stadium was promised last time we played them in the league!). I remember my last MAAH cartoon in honour of them and will be scribbling away in preparation...

Finally, I see Chris Coyne is still harbouring hopes of international selection for his beloved Australia. Good luck Chris – they need someone who can hold onto the ball (don't they, Shane...!).

Adam Lloyd

A Season to Forget

Can anyone remember May 5th 1996? Our last game in Division 2. To be honest, I can remember bugger all about that season. It was a crap season, it comprised:

- A humiliating 7-1 defeat to Grimsby in the cup.
- A failure to beat a hopeless W*tf*rd team who were relegated in 23rd position. Unfortunately we were relegated in 24th.
- We scored only 40 goals in the season and a miserly 10 away from home.

but looking at the team sheet for the final game I felt very depressed. Here's why:

1. Feuer. Tall elegant American. Perfect physique for a basketball player. Wish he had considered that as a career. However, he was Player of the Year.
2. Chenery. Who the bloody hell was Chenery?
3. Thomas. A tremendous defenfer, quick, strong and robust in attack. In 1986, that is. On the other hand in 1996 he was slow, ponderous and useless.
4. Waddock. Supposed to be a combative midfielder. However, he was not a poor man's Nicky Butt, but a pauper's Nicky Butt. Completely ineffective.
5. Patterson. Brought in to beef up the defence. That worked well then – we conceded more goals at home than anyone else.
6. Johnson M. Legend.
7. Guentchev. Potential match winner, guaranteed money grabber.
8. Taylor. Amazingly, became a worse manager than he was a centre forward.
9. Thorpe. Hope he enjoys reserve team football, he deserves worse!
10. Grant. Signed for £250,000. Have we ever wasted such money? Let me think... oh yes, Viistrup and Riseth bought for £300,000 earlier that year.
11. Oakes. Forever remembered for the FA Cup quarter final hat-trick. But what went wrong?

Looking at that appalling line up we will surely have a better season this year. It would struggle to be worse.

Andy C

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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FIRST GAME NERVES

A trip to the Palace

The first game of a new season, our first in the "Championship" and our first as the very first champions of "League One". Why was I feeling so nervous? Maybe it was the similarity to the start of our previous step up, at the start of the 2002/3 season. We had finished the season before in a spell of brilliant form, unbeaten for 14 consecutive games in "Division Three" to finish as runners up to Plymouth. Confidence was sky-high, Big Fat Joe had got us out of the basement of the Football League at the first attempt, and we had done it in some style. OK, there had been a few banana skins on the way, such as the 4-1 away defeats at Mansfield and Macclesfield, but the memory of that run of form at the end of the season seemed to presage another good season ahead.

Then came that first game of the season. A bright sunny Saturday in August, Kenilworth Road the best ground in the country, BFJ's new signings grinning at us from the front page of the programme: Steve Robinson, Tony "My mother's just an honest working girl" Thorpe and Alan Kimble. What could possibly go wrong?

Well, making Peterborough look like Brazil, for a start. We were a goal down before we'd had time for even one chorus of "Come on you Hatters". Robbo and the even more useless Robbie Winters (who he?) were replaced by subsequent goalscorers Ahmet Brkovic and Dean Crowe, and Andrew Fotiadis came on for the aforementioned whorson but we still lost 3-2 (the first of four such scorelines that season – we also won by that margin three times).

Defeats at Blackpool and Plymouth followed, with Carl Emberson picking the ball out of the net no fewer than 10 times in three games. By the August Bank Holiday we were bottom of the table, with one point from five games. The only possible light at the end of the tunnel was the clean sheet at Cardiff that secured our solitary point. OK, things got better after that, though for long spells that season we were much better at conceding goals than scoring them. We crept into a play-off spot over Christmas but blew it in March, with a run of three defeats that culminated in our final 3-2, away at Mansfield, consigning us to mid-table mediocrity.

Memories like that would make anyone nervous.

Will Larter

RAVING MADI!!!

Dear Mad,

Don't let anyone else know, but Luton's start was brilliant when I was out of the country. I'm sure my plane touched down at the same moment as Stoke's second goal went in!

Bill Church
Gloucestershire.

It's OK Bill, we won't tell a soul.

THE NEW HATTERS' STADIUM

Yes, I'm going to have my two penn'orth on this subject. To put you all in the picture I do not live in Luton, or anywhere near the place. Every game for me is an away game with a round trip of 186 miles. Why Luton? Well, as a nipper I lived in Caddington.

The result of all this is I'm not exactly up to date with the finer points of the story of junction 10. But last week I went and saw the cracking victory at Leicester. What a great stadium it is, apart from the awful tannoy system. So, what has that to do with our situation?

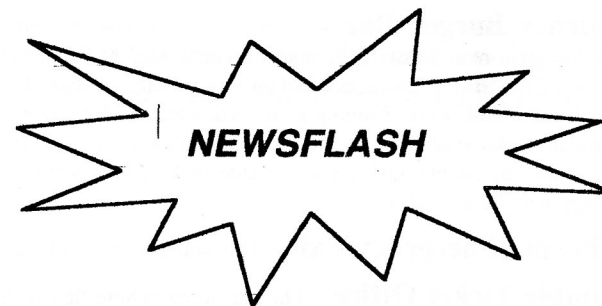
Well, both places are unattractive industrial urban areas on the edge of the M1. With routes to the centre that do tend to get busy on Saturday match days. The big difference is that the 32,000 seater 'Gary Jug Ears Crisp Stadium' is not built on the outer edge of the place. While the Challis gang aim to get us on the green belt, Leicester went for the brown field. They even have a very ugly electricity sub-station right outside.

So, my question is why the hell can't we? With the demise of so much vehicle manufacturing within the town, a brand spanking new stadium would be a great replacement for Vauxhall. Being on a brown field location the basic infrastructure exists for roads, utilities and public transport, so Taffy Prescott will have little or no excuse to refuse development. What could the locals moan about, no to a football ground but yes to a car factory? That would not hold much water at any inquiry. Place a nice multi storey car park, with fitness centre, hotel, the 'Eric Morecambe Arms' pub, and a selection of take-aways and everyone would be happy. The council would love it.

I'm just not sure what the catch to this idea can be.

Profit, That's it.

The Cheltenham Hatter



8000 Luton fans have been charged for misconduct relating to the Hatters' 1-1 draw with Wolves. The 8000 fans were heard shouting abuse at the referee Mr Probert and will have until the end of October to appeal against the charges. If they can be bothered of course.

Enoch Showunmi has also been charged with misconduct in the same game, after he reportedly said to Mr Probert "Are you sure that that was the right decision, Mr Referee?" after Probert gave a foul against him.

In a separate incident, Luton goalkeeper Marlon Beresford has been charged by the FA for kicking the ball at Mr Probert. Probert said that it was an unprovoked attack on him, whereas Beresford has argued that he was taking a goal kick at the time.

Now that it is almost certain that the new stadium is going to be built within two years (please God), you may be thinking that the club need to hurry up and publish their plans for the stadium. However, the truth of the matter is that the club have got plans for the stadium, they just haven't had them published yet. Until now. Thanks to a mate of mine who is a close friend of Cherry Newbery's hairdresser's gardener and some risky theft of confidential papers, I can exclusively reveal some of the plans for the Landry Zahana-Oni Stadium (as it will be known). The reason that I have only published parts of the plan is because I think that's too unfair on the club, who must have their own reasons for disclosing the information. Also, I don't want any of the tabloids stealing what is rightfully mine. Anyway, onto the plans:

1. **John Gurney Burger Bar** – Obviously, no new stadium can be complete without a mention of the great man himself, the man who appointed Mike Newell as manager, and after consultation from LTSC, Bill Tomlins decided on this tribute, so that His legacy will never be forgotten. Apparently, the club were planning a life size statue of John Gurney, but they didn't own enough land. Instead, a statue of Brko in mid-air doing an overhead kick is going to be built. At the moment, this is an impossible task for any statue maker, but by the time the stadium is finished the technology will be available.
2. **Tony Thorpe Emergency Exit** – This warrants no explanation.
3. **Alan Kimble Ticket Office** – The reasoning behind this is unclear, but I think that I've worked it out. The club are planning to keep the same ticket office staff that worked at Kenilworth Road, and the only thing that Bill has seen that is slower than the staff is Alan Kimble. So put the two together and the name for the new ticket office is obvious.
4. **Marvin Johnson Club Shop** – The reasoning above could be applied for this as well, although personally I think that Marvin's contribution to the sales in the club shop (photos, names on shirts, mad rush to meet him when he walks in the shop etc.) has persuaded Tomlins to name the shop after him.
5. **Carl Emberson Presentation Room** – A new feature at the Zahana-Oni Stadium will be a specially designed room, where the end of season awards will be presented to the players, as well as any other awards they may pick up during the season (don't ask me how it will be specifically designed). The room was named after Safe Hands because of the many gifts he has

presented over the years (think of Barnsley away in 2003 and Macclesfield away in 2002).

6. **Julian Joachim Car Park** – After scoring a hat-trick for Walsall against Hull last season and ensuring that Luton were free to take the League One title (and subsequently turning down Walsall and signing for Boston to the delight of all Walsall based Hatters), the Luton board unanimously decided to honour him by naming a part of the new stadium after him. Although don't ask me how they decided on the car park - your guess is as good as mine.
7. **Bob Morton Way** – Any Luton fan who can remember that far back will tell you that Bob Morton was the greatest player ever to have played for the club, so he definitely deserves to be remembered. The board had already decided on the names of the stands, so the road leading up to the ground was the only option left. Speaking of the stands...
8. **Mick Harford, Bruno Stein and Enoch Showunmi Stands** – No self respecting Luton fan can disagree with the choice of names of stands for the new Zahana-Oni stadium, although the reason that Enoch was honoured isn't as plain as you think it is. Apparently, one of the board members dislikes the sports editor of a local paper (legal reasons prevent me from being any clearer), and he realised the best way to get one over on him was to name one of the stands after Enoch. The bloke's spellchecker would then explode (with both Showunmi and Zahana-Oni).
9. **Lee Mansell Stand** – The final stand for away fans is named after accomplished right-back Lee Mansell, simply because in the last two years that Mansell spent at Kenilworth Road, he looked like he was playing for the away team, so who better to name the stand after? The name was actually decided two years ago, and since then Lee Mansell has had the last laugh of course, after joining a bigger club in the summer.

Make sure that you read my follow up in 100 years time, entitled "Features of the new Lennie Lawrence Stadium".

BACK ISSUES

Will nobody ever take these off my hands? We've still got tons of them, and we will almost give them away. The only issues we've actually run out of are numbers 10, 11, 22, 24, 26, 27, 35 to 38 and 47. Issue one is free, and all others up to issue 55 will cost you just 40p per copy including postage, but that will drop to 25p per copy if you order more than 3 at a time. for issues 56 to 60 the price is £1.00 each including postage. Cheques should be made payable to *Mad as a Hatter!* and sent to the address on page 2. Please don't send cash by post as it never seems to arrive - although this should not be seen as a slight on our wonderful postmen!

STAT ATTACK

Sat 22nd Oct Plymouth Argyle (H)

There is a long history between these sides, with the Hatters holding a massive advantage of 13 wins to 5 over the past 84 years. The more recent history shows that Luton are unbeaten in the last 7 matches, and nearly 36 years! With 91 goals from 31 games entertainment is not a problem, and in fact there has only been one nil-nil draw. Luton scored 5 in 1929/30, and Plymouth managed 4-3 wins either side of WWII. Luton responded with 5 wins and 2 draws before losing again in 1961. The two sides didn't meet for 20 years after a 1-1 draw in 1976/77, and in February 1996/97 it was another share of the points as Tony Thorpe scored twice. There have been 4 meetings since at Kenilworth Road and Luton have won 3 of these without conceding a goal. Thorpe scored twice again in the following season in a 3-0 win. In 2001/02 Luton may have finished as runners-up to Plymouth, but the visitors were beaten 2-0 courtesy of goals from Kevin Nicholls (penalty) and Steve Howard. A year later a solitary goal, again from Thorpe who'd returned to the Club, won the tie.

Last time: 20 March 2004 Drew 1-1 (Chris Coyne)

Sat 29th Oct Coventry City (A)

With Coventry playing in a new stadium Luton will be hoping that they can improve on their awful record at Highfield Road. Luton managed to win on only 2 occasions from 30 visits, with just 6 other matches ending in a draw. The goals tally is obviously very one-sided with the Sky Blues registering 70 compared to 26 for the Hatters. Luton have lost the last 5 matches, scoring only once (Graham Rodger in 1990/91!) and conceding 13! Anyone who travelled to Coventry on New Years Day 1987 saw Brian Stein score the only goal of the game, to secure Luton's first win at Coventry for 56 years. The first win had come in November 1930 when Andy Rennie scored twice in a 2-1 win. The rest makes rather depressing reading, including the statistic that Coventry have scored 4 or more in 10 of the 30 meetings!

Last time: 21 August 1991 Lost 0-5

Tues 1st Nov Sheffield United (A)

As away games go taking points from more matches than you lose is probably acceptable, and that's exactly what Luton have done when travelling to Bramall Lane. Three victories and six draws from 17 matches, coupled with 23 goals and 27 conceded, is a good return. The matches started in 1938, but it wasn't until the 7th meeting, and on Boxing Day 1955, that the Hatters recorded their first win. It was a comfortable win as well, with goals for Mick Cullen, Gordon Turner, Reg Peace, Bob Morton without reply from the home side. 22 years later, but with only 3 matches between, Luton recorded a 3-0 win. Ron Futch and Jimmy Husband with a brace were the goalscorers. Luton continued their high scoring victories in October 1994 with a 3-1 win, Julian James and Kerry Dixon scoring after United had scored an own goal.

Last time: 23 March 1996 Lost 0-1

Sat 5th Nov Burnley (H)

Using the same theory as above Burnley will be happy with their record at Luton, having

won 8 and drawn 3 of the 21 matches. Luton may have won the last two encounters, but Burnley had won the previous three! The sides met for the first time in March 1898, Luton won 2-0, and it was 40 years before the two sides met in League action again. Once again the Hatters took maximum points with a 3-1 win, and the following season it was 3 in-a-row with a 1-0 victory. Burnley then went on their own 3 match winning run, before Luton crashed home 9 goals in 2 games in the late 50's. Firstly a 3-2 win in 57/58, and then a 6-2 victory in 58/59 with Allan Brown scoring a hat-trick, Bob Morton a brace with Dave Pacey scoring the other. Another high scoring victory, 4-1, came in April 1979 when Bob Hatton, Brian Stein (2) and Steve Taylor (with his only goal for the Club).

Last time: 6 November 1999 Won 2-1 (Neil Midgeley (2))

Sat 19th Nov Norwich City (A)

Luton travel to Carrow Road knowing that they have only won on 7 occasions, from 32 attempts. There have been 9 draws in this fixture, which leaves 16 defeats. The Hatters have managed 37 goals, but have conceded 53. This fixture dates back to 1920, and in fact 2 of the victories came in the first 3 meetings! Luton lost 3-0 in 1920/21 before winning 1-0 the following season, and 2-1 a further season later. It was 12 games and 15 years later that Luton were victorious, although they made up for lost time with an emphatic 4-0 scoreline. This feat was repeated in October 1961 when Alec Ashworth with a brace, Roly Legate and an own goal secured another comfortable victory. 20 years later, and in the promotion season of 1981/82, there were 4 more goals in this fixture, but it was a 3-1 scoreline, with Raddy Antic, Steve White and Brian Stein finding the net. After 4 draws and 3 defeats Luton won 3-1 again, courtesy of a Lars Elstrup hat trick. Luton haven't been beaten for nearly 10 years by Norwich, courtesy of the last encounter being in 1995/96!

Last time: 20 January 1996 Won 1-0 (Bontcho Guentchev pen)

Tues 22nd Nov Crewe Alexandra (H)

This fixture only dates back to 1963/64, and in the last 42 years there have been just 7 league meetings at Kenilworth Road. After an opening encounter 3-3 draw, Luton won the next 5 fixtures and only conceded 1 goal in the process!! There were 4-0 wins in 1965/66 and 1967/68 with a 2-0 victory in 1968/69, with Alan Slough and Keith Allen on the scoresheet that day. Crewe's only goal came in the 1966/67 fixture when they lost 2-1, courtesy of a brace from Gordon Riddick. The last two encounters have seen 10 goals, with big victories for both sides. Luton hit Crewe for six in 1996/97, with the visitors winning 4-0 in 2002/03. Despite being promoted at the end of the 96/97 season Crewe were soundly beaten at Kenilworth Road courtesy of goals from Tony Thorpe (3), Graham Alexander, Paul Showler and David Oldfield.

Last time: 22 March 2003 Lost 0-4.

Sat 26th Nov Crystal Palace (H)

After an opening day victory Luton will be looking for the "double", and the statistics are certainly in the Hatter's favour! Luton have won this fixture on 12 occasions, drawing 7 and losing just 4! Looking at it another way though, and Palace are unbeaten in the last 15 years at Kenilworth Road. The first fixture was played in November 1920, with the sides sharing the points and 4 goals. Luton then went a further 12 games without failing to score, before Palace won 4-0 in September 1963! This was Palace's second victory at Kenilworth Road, having won previously in 30/31. Luton had dominated this fixture though,

with 8 wins during the 12 games, and scoring 37 goals in the process! Some of the most notable victories, 6-1 in 27/28, 5-3 in 28/29, 6-0 in 35/36 and 5-2 in 36/37. There were hat-tricks for Colin Cook and a certain Joe Payne in those last two matches. This fixture hadn't been played for 27 years prior to the Palace win, and it was a further 11 years before it was played again. Since then the sides have played out 4 wins for Luton, 2 for Palace and 3 draws. Defences have been on top in those 9 fixtures as Luton's 2-1 win in 72/74 was the only match that saw either side score more than 1 goal!!

Last time: 2 March 1996 Drew 0-0 (The only goal-less draw between the sides at Kenilworth Road)

Sat 3rd Dec Reading (A)

With only 18 goals scored, 40 conceded and just 5 wins from 21 fixtures you could say that the Hatters don't have a particularly good record at Reading. Having said that there have only been 5 meetings in the last 35 years! Luton won the first match, 5th February 1921, courtesy of the only goal of the game from George Butcher. After two defeats, the same scoreline gave the Hatters all the points once more, this time Syd Hoar was the goalscorer. Seven defeats, two draws, and nearly 40 years passed before the Hatters were celebrating again though! On this occasion they managed 2 goals, with Billy Harber and Gordon Riddick finding the net. The 2-1 scoreline was repeated in their last victory, when Andrew Fotiadis and Liam George scored in 99/00. This match was just a year after Reading officially opened their new Madejski Stadium with a 3-0 win against Luton.

Last time: 23 December 2000 Lost 1-4 (Lee Nogan)

Sun 11th Dec Southampton (A)

The Sky cameras will be at the Friends Provident St Mary's Stadium as the Hatters play there for the first time. Luton will be looking to build on the 8 victories and 6 draws from the 27 matches played at the Dell. Luton also scored a very respectable 44 goals from these games, thanks largely to a 6-3 win in 37/38, 4-0 in 38/39 and 3-1 in 46/47, which also gave the Hatters maximum points from 3 consecutive trips to Southampton. Another very credible statistic is that Luton scored in 12 consecutive games as well, that was until 3rd February 1962 when the home side won 3-0. Luton had had back to back victories in this tie in the early 50's, again scoring 3 goals on both occasions! Ron Futchter scored the only goal of the game in 77/78, and since then the victories have both been by 2-1. In 85/86 the current management duo of Mike Newell and Brian Stein both scored, and during the 1990/91 season Lars Elstrup netted twice.

Last time: 21 March 1992 Lost 1-2 (Mark Pembridge)

Sat 17th Dec Stoke City (H)

Stoke are one of only six current League sides (can you name the other five?) who have won more league fixtures than they have lost at Kenilworth Road! They have 7 victories to Luton's 5, and there have been 5 draws. Stoke set the ball rolling by winning the first encounter, by a solitary goal. Luton were then convincing winners in 54/55 and 60/61, winning 3-1 and 4-1 respectively! Amazingly there were then 3 consecutive 0-0 draws, followed by another Stoke victory, 2-1, in November 1977. The bizarre draw sequence then continued with another two matches ending goal-less, which means all 5 draws ended 0-0!! Luton won 2-0 on the opening day of the 1984/85 season with Paul Elliott and Frankie Bunn scoring, and then there was a 9 year wait before the next encounter! Luton made up

for lost time though, trailing 2-0 they found themselves 3-2 up by the interval, and eventually winning 6-2! Kerry Dixon scored a hat-trick, with Ceri Hughes, Scott Oakes and John Hartson adding further goals. Stoke won 3 games during the 1990's before the Hatters won again in February 2000, Phil Gray netted twice in a 2-1 victory.

Last time: 7 April 2001 Lost 1-2 (Lee Mansell)

Simon "Statto" Pitts

www.lutonfc.com/stattoindex.asp

PS: For those who are interested the other five Clubs are: Birmingham, Macclesfield, Manchester Utd, Tottenham, and Wigan!

Drinking in Yorkshire

Part 1: Sheffield United (Tuesday, 1st November)

Two outstanding real ale pubs are within 15 minutes' walk from Bramall Lane. The **Sheaf View** (25 Gleadless Road) can be seen from the train (look out on the right hand side in the direction of travel, about a kilometre before the station). Reopened in 2000 after being near derelict for years, the Sheaf View has a variety of well kept local real ales, plus continental beers on draught and in bottle and usually two real ciders. Those of you who have been paying attention will have realised that the pub is about a quarter of an hour's walk from the station, roughly parallel to the track. Turn left out of the station, along Queens Road and (briefly) London Road before turning left uphill just after going under the railway bridge.

If time allows, a visit to the **White Lion** (615 London Road) is a must. It's just down the hill and a few yards along London Road. A good selection of real ales, and a genuine old pub atmosphere. There are several small rooms, including what appears to be an airtight smoking room and, mercifully, another room for non-smokers. Interesting features both internal and external, for those who like that sort of thing.

If you prefer a city centre pub, I suggest a short stroll or tram ride from the station to West Street. Turn left immediately after the tram stop and walk down the slight incline, past the Forum cafe-bar on the left and Devonshire Green (with its skateboarding area) on the right to the **Devonshire Cat** (49 Wellington Street). This is a fairly new development, in an area of student accommodation. There is a large variety of real ales on offer, plus continental lagers on draught and in bottle. Meals are available and not unreasonably priced. The ground is about the same distance (though in a different direction) as from the two pubs previously mentioned.

You might also like to try the **Bath Hotel** (Victoria Street), a favourite of mine. This is a few minutes from the same tram stop, turn left just after the Weatherspoon pub, The Swim Inn. The Bath has won a Camra award for its carefully restored 1930s interior and is also situated within easy walking distance of the ground, though I would allow a little longer than from the others mentioned.

Will Larter

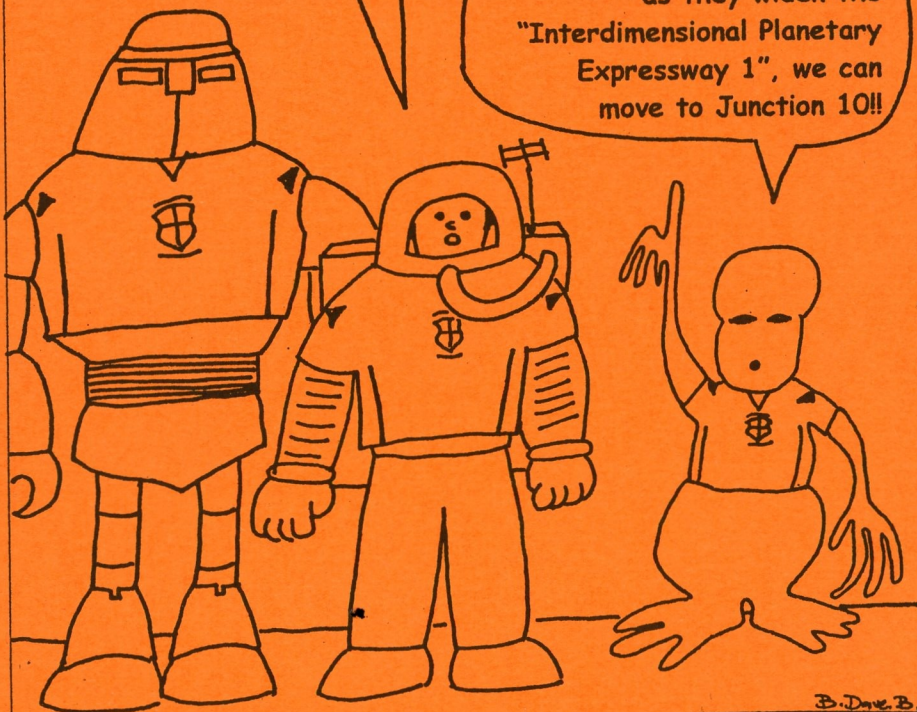
THE FUTURE

THE YEAR – 2105

KENILWORTH ROAD 200 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

I cannot believe, after all these years, we are still stuck at Kenilworth Road!

Yes, but apparently, as soon as they widen the "Interdimensional Planetary Expressway 1", we can move to Junction 10!!



B. Dave B.