



ISSUE 8 - SEASON 2016/17
WEST BROMWICH ALBION LONDON SUPPORTERS CLUB

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN,

Since being elected Chairman, I have identified a number of ambitions - or challenges - for the branch over the next year. In short my key aims are to:

- get branch numbers beyond 100;
- find ways to reach out to all 'hidden' Baggies' people in London and the South East (and even further afield);

- investigate ways we can engage and recruit a new generation of (younger) London Baggies;
- use club funds wisely but spend in ways which enhance our 'name', grow the club and which benefit or give something back to the membership for their enduring support;
- review the London Supporters' Club's constitution - dusty and dull but necessary;
- enliven the branch and branch meetings including developing a better social aspect to the club and building on our successful publicising of the branch through Twitter and Baggie Shorts.
- have some fun. Heaven knows with some of the football last year, many games were - to say the least - a little tortuous to watch and enjoy so we deserve to have some fulfilment.

Finally, part of the enjoyment of being a London Baggie comes through the camaraderie and friendships built up while travelling and supporting the Albion and the gallows humour we have to employ to make it a little more bearable in the darkest times. To that end we need to ensure that we continue to be welcoming to new and younger members.

Thanks for taking the time to read my message, and I truly hope you will support my aims and objectives during my term as Chairman and I hope that I prove to be worthy of the role.

Come on you Baggies!

Steve Watts

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF THE DEDICATED FOOTBALL OFFICER (DFO) AKA 'HOOLIGAN FINDER'

The DFO is the main link between the police and the football club and will often deal with more than football matches like attending Supporters Trust meetings and safety table top exercises and also Safety Advisory Groups (SAG), these are run by the Local Authority and certain statutory bodies are required to attend.

The Baggies DFO is PC Martin Portman. At the start of each week during the season Martin assesses how the previous weekends fixtures have gone and deals with any issues raised to or by the Police Match Commander or by the football club. Police Match Commanders are of at least the rank of Chief Inspector and are nationally accredited allowing them to take control of football fixtures amongst other things.

Martin will also check that any persons arrested have been processed correctly and, if applicable, submit the necessary paperwork to the court for the application of a Football Banning Order (FBO).

Martin is supported at games by 'Spotters', who are the police officers you see wearing yellow and blue reflective jackets. They gather information and act as a community liaison officer offering reassurance to supporters. Any incidents involving fans need to be recorded and Martin is required to report any significant issues during a match to the United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU); this is a government funded department that was formed following serious disorder at several football tournaments involving English fans abroad.

Martin will speak several times to his counterpart from the team we are playing during the week of the game. For home games

he will seek information on ticket sales, travelling supporter coach numbers and any that are likely to be of interest to the police. For away games he provides the same information. The most up to date information is presented to the Match Commander so they can do a final assessment and adjust resourcing if they need to.

Match day comes and for a home fixture Martin will start about 8am for a 3pm kick off. First things first, he gets the kettle on ready for the boss to arrive then it is a phone call to the football club to make sure everything is okay and the game is still going ahead. Then it's a call to British Transport Police to see if the trains are running on time, to find out how many resources they are committing to fixture and to establish if any fans are already travelling.

The phone then starts to ring and it is the inevitable call from an officer panicking because the police van has broken down or someone has gone sick, then it is the catering man delivering the sandwich pack ups for staff committed to the football operation, they have to be fed as we never know what is going to happen and if they will get the opportunity to have a meal break.

10 O'clock comes and it is time for the Police Command briefing, which includes Martin and the Spotters. They discuss the latest information and how they are going to police the game.

11 O'clock and the away Spotters arrive and are deployed with the home Spotters, it is also the start of the main briefing for the police resources where they are given the objectives for the day, their deployments and informed of the dress code.

By midday all the officers are deployed and Martin along with the Match commander will make their way to the ground where they have a briefing with the club safety officer and head stewards. Soon information is coming in of where the away fans are drinking and the Spotters will go and monitor to see if any known troublemakers are in attendance.

As kick off approaches Police are deployed to watch as both sets of fans as they approach the ground. If everything goes according to plan and there are no issues, officers will meet fans at the stadium to ensure they are all well behaved.

Kick off arrives and it is chance for the officers to get a bit of a break but not for Martin who constantly keeps an eye on what is going on elsewhere which could affected the policing operation at the end of the game. Spotters continue to provide live time updates which allow the Police commander to make informed decisions.

The game is over and everyone starts to leave the ground. Police are present to prevent fans coming into direct contact with each other whilst others are in the town centre waiting their arrival. Some decide to go into a pub for a drink and watch the evening kick off whilst others just simply go home.

By about 6pm police resources start to stand down. Martin will be left on to book any video footage in and quickly scan the information from the Spotters to see if anything needs to go the UKFPU that night. By about 8 O'clock Martin generally goes home, even for a relatively straight forward game it will always be a 12 hour day.



Martin Portman with Sgt Richard Noone from Thames Valley Police and our own Adrian Chiles at the Reading game last season.

MATCH REPORT

LEICESTER 1 - 2 WEST BROMWICH ALBION

PAUL PROBYN REPORTS:

Leicester has become my first choice away fixture, in the absence of trips to the likes of Newcastle and Norwich. It's only an hour or so from London, we have a good record there (six wins and two draws in our last eight visits), and the atmosphere is better than almost anywhere else in the Premiership, outside local derbies. So, despite a 7 AM flight that morning from Hamburg, where SV had lost 5-2 to Borussia Dortmund the previous afternoon, I arrived at St Pancras looking forward eagerly to the day ahead.

We were a select band: why only seven of us for an outing against the Champions of England? And lucky to be even seven, as Glenn Hess struggled to find his way to the East Midlands platform despite texting Max several times for directions. It must be old age, a condition that is prevalent among London Baggies - we could boast four senior railcards on this trip, although it didn't prevent the usual mix of juvenile humour and infantile behaviour. We had to rely on Nik Solomos, the only one too young to remember the days in League One, to maintain a degree of decorum.

The creatively named "The Pub" where we drank on previous trips had closed - permanently, not just to avoid our visit - so we found ourselves lunching in the crowded Bowling Green.

The North London derby was on TV, and the controversial Kevin Wimmer own goal sparked heated exchanges about the intricacies of the off-side law between London Baggies and a former Arsenal youth team player.

Fortunately Albion did not need any dodgy goals of their own to send the Foxes to their first home defeat in 20 games. And for once this wasn't one of those heroic backs to the wall, nick a goal on the counter, affairs.

Over the 90 minutes we were the better team, with Brunt and Morrison, restored to midfield in place of Chadli and McClean, making much of the difference. We had the better of an unexceptional first half, which resulted in Vardy coming on as a half-time sub, an apparent sign that Leicester were going to take the second half seriously instead of seeing the Premier League as an unwanted interlude between Champions League ties. However, it was Albion who took the lead in the 52nd minute, when Morrison flashed home a header from a cross by eventual man of the match, Matt Phillips.

Not for the first time, we were still celebrating the goal when Leicester drew level. Islam Slimani, a former Albion target, rose above our defence, and his excellent header made it 1-1. Most of us were wondering whether we would hold out for the point but, for all their faults, this Albion team keeps going. Nobody epitomises that more than Matt Phillips, who makes up in work-rate what he lacks in quality. It was Phillips who was on hand in the 72nd minute to outpace Leicester's lumbering centre-backs after a horrendous mistake from (England star) Danny Drinkwater.

It wasn't clear whether it was a back pass or just a hopelessly mis-controlled ball, but Phillips was on to it in a flash and dinked it over the despairing Ron-Robert (thanks for the name, mum and dad) Zieler. It rolled agonizingly (for Leicester) into the net, sparking off paroxysms of joy among the travelling faithful.

In last season's game, when the points were in the balance,

Leicester subjected Albion to onslaught after onslaught, but this time we saw out the remaining period without undue alarm.

The whole team had given everything in a disciplined performance, although the quality of the overall display highlighted our weak spots, such as Rondon, who worked tirelessly but to little effect as the ball bounced off him more often than he managed to hold on to it.

After the game we adjourned in high spirits to the Blue Boar, an excellent hostelry that appeared steeped in history until we learnt it had opened only eight weeks before.

The staff were more than accommodating, supplying a steady stream of pork pies and cheese rolls while we commiserated with the locals who, bizarrely, seemed indifferent to a defeat against West Brom and more interested in whether they would play Bayern Munich or Real Madrid in the Champions League last 16.

The company and hospitality were so good that Max gave us only 11 minutes for the 7 minute walk back to the station to catch the train, forgetting that several of us had left our mobility vehicles in London.

We arrived just in time, although Nick Grant probably wished we had missed the train as he spent the whole journey home in discussion with a Chelsea fan who clearly had serious "issues", besides a carrier bag full of Fosters. At one point he (the Chelsea fan, not Nick) announced he had a bomb strapped to his back, and denounced his fellow passengers as brain-dead zombies for their indifferent reaction to this. Nevertheless we arrived safely at St Pancras, with the Chelsea fan thanking Nick for the words of paternal wisdom he had offered.



GURDEV SINGH BAL

A man whose misplaced optimism about all things Albion took him to the club shop three times to get a set of headphones. We hope they don't sell contraptives on the promise they sport the club badge.

Why The Baggies?

One of my closest mates has been a Baggie since the early 70s and he even used to go in the days when Asian/Black people were too scared to go due to racism. Anyway, he took me to a game and it has been a Love Supreme since!

Halfords Lane or Brummie?

No brainer - the Halfords Lane should be knocked down and re-built - an eyesore. We (me and my two boys) sit in the Brummie, however Smethwick is now the best for atmosphere.

Worst away ground?

Vile Park - Losing there twice in a week still hurts.

Worst tat from the club shop?

Headphones - first lot (£9.99) broke, second lot (£14.99) broke, third lot (£19.99) broke - took the first two lot and got me money back - if I take the latest one's back I reckon they will ban me from the shop!

Worst away pie?

Wolves - just because it's Wolves.

Best Albion away strip?

Green & Yellow - fans crying out for it to return - I told the staff in the shop a few times.

Cyrille the King, Super Bob or Super Kev?

Defo Cyrille.

The Black Eagle or The Vine?

The Black Eagle - a proper pub.

Best ever game at The Hawthorns?

5-5 v Manchester United!

Best ever Albion chant?

"We Come Back Up Together" and "Kick The Shit Out Of Villa", but my mate who has been going longer than me said it is "Astle Is The King".

Favourite away team chant at The Hawthorns?

"We Are Spurs Of The Lane", only London team I like is Spurs, I hate Arsenal - too many family members support them.

All time Albion low?

Being out of the top division for so long, also the recent defeats at Wembley to Portsmouth and Derby - long sad journeys back up North.

Most Memorable Away Game?

Meeting Glenn and Adam in pub in Scunthorpe called The Honest Lawyer Pub before and after the game - a true friendship forged forever.

P.S. We won 3-1 that day.

A POEM BY PAUL PROBYN

Squashed cigarette butts in the filthy sink
And over here, in a fog of smoke, three men
Share smokes and jokes. The muffled roar
Announces that the teams are back.
Old men fumble ineptly with flies
Or rush away, cold hands still wet.
But we three stay, unconcerned.

Here we are men,
Important on our own terms.
Feared by many, respected by few.
We have a record known
To those in the know.
Faces like ours
Boil with grainy anger
In the bowels of YouTube
Or slowly fade away in the files
Of the West Midlands Police.

Alive then with the passion of youth
Misguided but rich with belief
And adrenaline pumping, feet running,
Fists flying, and mayhem exploding
In high streets and back streets.
Fighting for points in another league
Against the big boys, United, Chelsea, Leeds.
Where scars are medals, and jail brings honour,
And heroes never have to buy a round.

With every season a little more drains
Away: blood, virility, memory, hope.
And numbers dwindle: death, disease and poverty
Pick us off one by one, like snipers on the western front.

The last to give it up said he couldn't stand
The nagging any longer
His missis constantly carping on about the cost
And it's her company pension anyway
That pays for all his fun.

So there's just us three now. The last of the line.
As kids we stood with our dads, watching heroes
Who wore the shirt with pride. Real men like Astle,
Hope and Bomber Brown, who sweated blood for Albion.
Not like these tossers with their stately homes,
The baby Bentleys on the drive
And tarty models by their side.

We watch the last half hour, enduring time,
And simulate euphoria when we score.
Though faith is all but lost we'll sing the psalm,
Defy death's lengthening shadow evermore.

BAD NEWS AT THE OLD DOG

TOBY GRAINGER

In an earlier edition of Baggies Shorts, we reviewed the delights of following Clapton FC (established in the same year as the Albion and based, for the past 128 years, at the Old Spotted Dog Ground in Forest Gate) plying their trade in the Essex Senior League (ESL). It's the only club in the ESL with any sizable following (most can muster no more than a dozen fans, while Clapton crowds are usually in the hundreds and often around five hundred), but the Club's Chief Executive, Vincent McBean (whose flamboyant career is well documented on the web), has decided that spectators get in the way of the efficient running of a football club.

When Mr McBean "acquired" the club in 2000 (in interesting circumstances, also documented on the web), he inherited a typical ESL crowd of about 20. Since 2010, a steadily growing group of local people has worked to develop an anti-racist, pro-local community fan-base (by, for example, holding regular collections for the local food bank). McBean has always held himself aloof from the fans and has done nothing to develop the club (unless you count the dismantling of the youth side, or the apparent hiring-out of parts of the ground as fly-tipping sites), but it was thought that the (relatively) vast amount of gate-receipt cash flowing his way would keep him happy.

But no, Vince was so unhappy that he decided, mid-season and un-announced: a) to hike the admission price (from £6 to £7 for adults and £3 to £4 (i.e. 33%) for concessions); and b) to employ SIA-badged security guards to search bags on entry (he hates the fact that nobody uses his bar and most people take a couple of cans in with them, but he never acknowledges the fact that the fans always clear up meticulously after themselves). When challenged, Vince

said that price rises had been advertised on the Club's website, but nobody ever looks at that website because it is rarely updated and never includes match results less than a few months old (and, in any case, the site did not carry any notification regarding price rises).

When he was asked if that was an appropriate way to treat people who'd spent several years investing (through the gate) in his club, he said that he'd prefer to go back to the way things were - when he could count on twenty or so old souls who could be relied upon not to make any noise. He also said that the extra revenue would be going to the players (Clapton pays nothing to its players - indeed the last manager left to become an assistant manager at another club in the ESL, because Vince wasn't paying him travelling expenses - although other clubs in the League, with no significant gate income, had been managing to play small performance fees for years). Well, that's what he told the fans.

He told the local press that the extra revenue was to pay the fines imposed by the ESL in response to the misbehaviour of fans and then proceeded to decorate this fantasy with an assertion that he had been summoned to discuss said misbehaviour with Scotland Yard. The fans simply do not believe that and have asked for a copy of the record of that meeting, by way of a Freedom of Information Request, submitted to the Metropolitan Police.

Clapton have played two home games since Vince stuck two fingers up to the fans. Both have been played out in silence, instead of the usual wall of sound, and both have been lost. The fans are there, but they won't enter the ground until Vince deigns to speak to them. Vince won't speak to them until they drop their action, so there's a stand off.

In the meantime, Clapton are flying high in the League (those two recent home defeats were in Cups) and the Clapton fans continue to strut their exuberant stuff at away games. If you would like to join them at an away game, or on the picket line at a home game, check out the fixtures on the relevant part of the FA web site:

<http://full-time.thefa.com/Index.do?league=2829940>

EPIPHANY NOW?

GLENN HESS STUMBLES ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

It's a funny old world - ask me a few weeks ago and I was definitely in the Dave Wiltshire camp of anti-Pullis unbelievers. And then I went to Leicester and I witnessed a performance by the mighty Albion that was a joy to watch that night and again and again as I had recorded it on my TV. Hang on a licckle minute - I know we always do well away to Leicester - remember that stunning goal by Craig Beattie (yes HIM) that contributed to a 2-1 win at Filbert street all those years ago. And last season, in the midst of the best Leicester season forever and a day, we thoroughly deserved our 2-2 draw which shocked all the pundits, as they said Leicester were invincible at home.

So hang on a licckle moment Glenn - it's only Leicester.

There followed a 4-0 thrashing of Burnley - a veritable feast of attacking footie with a certain up-to-this-moment-in-time-utterly-useless-"go back to QPR you Wally" young man called Matt Phillips, who decides to become a hero, a superstar, a wing commander, et al.

Wait another licckle moment Glenn - rub your eyes and remember this is still TP!

Now to Hull away - the bottom club with a useless goals-for record so far and an open-legs policy towards goals-against - surely an away banker. Well, someone must have hit our Tone over the head because we reverted to playing defensive footie against a vastly inferior team and paid the price with a 1-1 draw.

Hang on a licckle moment Glenn - are we back to Stoke?????

So it was with a heavy heart that I ventured to the Hawthorns with a few of our faithful London Baggies to watch us take on Watford. Fielding an unchanged team, yet again our boys played some super attacking (yes that word again) football led by Wing Commander Phillips and our new hero Allan Nyom. Taking a moment to ponder here I have to concede that both of them are Pullis boys - bought by him. Is this important? I think it is. Consider - Fletch, Johnny Evans, Mc Dirty, Phillips, Nyom, Chadli and Rondon - all successes and all TP signings. McManaman (remember him?) and Gallagher - not successes at all so that's 7-2 to TP.

On to Chelski, where we were great and really unlucky to lose (actually we were unlucky not to win). A very typically Pullis performance at its very best.

So where am I in this debate? Wish I knew!!!! Certainly I feel a lot more positive about TP than I did before Leicester, but I do wish he hadn't appealed against the Palace debacle.

Where do you stand? Please let us know for the next Baggies Shorts and we will feature your responses.

Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year to you all.

AND FINALLY, LAURIE CUNNINGHAM GETS HIS BLUE PLAQUE

English Heritage have been notoriously slow in acknowledging the contribution that both footballers and members of the black and ethnic minority communities have made to the life of London and beyond. Well there is nothing like killing two birds with one stone by recognising the life of one of north London's finest, Laurie Cunningham.

The unveiling of the plaque took place on 21 September 2016 at the former family home at 73 Lancaster Road, Stroud Green, -0 which is a short walk from Finsbury Park Station. A few London Baggies were there and we have to say a big thank you to the Leyton Orient Supporters' Club, especially Steve Jenkins, who did all the lobbying and managed the social side of the event at The White Lion.



There were several ex-Orient players there, along with former Baggies Cyrille Regis and Garth Crooks. Cyrille was, as ever, in fine form, looking extremely dapper - see Nick Grant's photo. Garth was most impressed that Keith Hallam remembered the filthy lot at Stoke City from the 1960s led by our ex-Albion Maurice Setters, when Garth was in the Stoke youth setup.

We have two autographed copies of Baggies Shorts on offer. One is signed by Cyrille Regis and the other by some bloke that thinks Mozza should play for England. We asked Cyrille to sign



a second copy but he said he wanted to take it away to read. To win one of these fabulous prizes all we ask for is two lines about your favourite memory of the Atkinson years. Entries please to toby.grainger@hotmail.com, by 15th January. The best entries will appear in the next edition of Baggie Shorts.

For the record, the photos were taken by Nick Grant and the Orient players in the photo were L/R - at the back - former O's assistant manager Andy Edwards with former O's manager Andy Hessenthaler standing in front of him wearing white shirt - both were relieved of their duties a few days after this photo was taken. Next to them is Keith Curle. To the right of the girl as we look - Peter Allen, former O's captain and holder of record appearances for the Orient, Phil Hoadley and wearing the brown shirt is Terry Brisley.

