



Notts County Supporters Trust

Newsletter

April 2004

Down but not out

As the season draws to a close, it looks increasingly likely that it will end in relegation. The disappointment of failing to escape the clutches of the bottom four should however be dissipated by what has been achieved – our club being saved from possible extinction – and the positive influence new manager Gary Mills has had both on and off the field. I have met Gary on a number of occasions and he has never failed to impress. He comes across as a manager with vision and drive, a refreshing approach to the young players where 'if you are good enough you are old enough' and a no-nonsense attitude where those not committed to Notts County Football Club will be shown the door. It is these attributes, which will stand the club in good stead, and I think we can look to the future with confidence.

Of course only six months ago the club was in perilous waters heading for the rocks, and it is thanks to the efforts of the Blenheim Consortium (including the Supporters' Trust), Nottingham City and County Councils, and football fans up and down the country, that Notts County has been steered towards calmer waters. When the takeover was finally completed on 3rd December, our efforts brought us great dividends as the members of the Blenheim Consortium could see that we were a professionally run organisation that has the club's best interests at heart.

Collectively, as supporters we are now closer to the Board of Directors than ever before. We are fortunate to have Steve Thompson as our Trust rep, someone who puts a massive amount of time and effort into helping run the club, while at the same time truly representing the supporters' interests.

Notts County Supporters Trust is committed to the principle of supporter representation, and

communication with our members and the entire NCFC fan base is essential. Over the course of the last twelve months, we have produced several newsletters, sent out dozens of e-mail updates to members, whilst supporters can also find out the latest Trust information on our website: www.nottscotrust.org.uk. We have also had a column in the match day programme, and Trust representatives can be found in the Meadow before and after home games if you have any issues you wish to raise.

NCST is also dedicated to strengthening the links between Notts County Football Club and the community which it serves. Recently the Trust organised a County in the Community event at Meadow Lane, inviting over one hundred local sports clubs and community groups, where these kinds of issues were discussed (see report elsewhere in this newsletter).

I believe we have a real opportunity now to make the Supporters' Trust stronger. Part of this must be to speak to all supporters and try to increase our membership. You can help this by telling fellow fans and friends what the Trust does and encouraging them to join. You can also help by getting involved. The future success of the Trust depends on the help we are given by volunteers, whether it is giving up a couple of hours on a match day to help with a bucket collection, hand out newsletters, sell raffle tickets or assisting at a Trust event.

I am ready for the challenge ahead and I know that I can count on your support to help turn our football club into the success story we all want it to be.

U Pies!

David Hindley (Chair)

Mills joins Trust

As the Trust celebrates its first anniversary, manager Gary Mills has shown his commitment to the organisation by becoming a member.

NCST was officially formed on 4th April 2003. One year later, Trust members collectively own a major stake in Notts County Football Club and fans have played an enormous part in helping to ensure we still have a team to support for the foreseeable future.


David Hindley commented: "It's been an incredible and emotional twelve months, especially when you think we very nearly lost our football club. Every single Trust member can be proud of what we have achieved in the past twelve months. But the job is far from over and we still have an enormous amount of work to do to repair the damage to our club and to re-build for the future".

"It's fantastic that Gary Mills has joined the Supporters Trust. His commitment to Notts County is incredible and his membership will be a major boost to us as we move towards trying to achieve our main aims for the coming year".

Notts County manager Gary Mills said: "It's an honour to be asked to join the Trust as I'm a fan as well as the Manager. I care deeply about this Club and I'm glad to be a part of something that helps to secure its future".

Keri Usherwood (Vice-Chair)





Quiz 2

Tuesday 6th April saw the second Pie Quiz of the new millennium. We didn't have the forecast of heavy snow against us this time, but the powers that be at UEFA conspired to pair two of the lesser teams that made it to the Quarter Finals of the Champion's League. Some worthy commentators have speculated that the draw fell favourably for UEFA and seemed to have guaranteed the 'biggest' clubs reached the finals, but I suspect something even more cunning than that. My theory is that UEFA, knowing full well that the draw of the Pie Quiz's rubbish prizes is nigh on irresistible, conspired directly with whatever has-been who pulled out the balls from the velvet bag this year to ensure a plum all-English tie.

Anyway, stupid conspiracy theories aside, I thought The Pie Quiz went very well. The actual evening is a bit of blur, I was drinking my third pint of Rock bitter when the doors opened at 19:30 (I blame Dr Dave for this, he is a very bad influence). I do remember Mr Westby demonstrating how to do a Fosbury Flop in slow motion at one point, which was very funny. Looking back on the scores I see that the Natrass family won the overall prize, but I think every team went away with something. Special mention must go to that staunch Trust supporter, Jo Douglas, whose team fought bravely throughout the evening, but were just piped to the title in the last round. Everyone had a good time, which is the main thing; in addition, the Trust made a bit of money and the club made a profit over the bar and on the food.

Special thanks must go to Steve Westby, who did a cracking job with the compering, the questions, the PA (without Steve's quest for perfection we'd have all had to gather round the front) and, most importantly, the beer. Thanks to Erica, Rebekah, Kristy and Donna, it can't be easy being associated with Trust Board members.

Thanks to the Trust Board members who scored, collected money and/or

gave away spot prizes, the evening wouldn't work without you. Last but not least, thanks to those companies that have supported us, Nottingham Brewery (brewer of fine ales), the Vat and Fiddle (purveyor of fine ales), SGB, K. Marshall and the Sports Service at Nottinghamshire County Council.

Prizes

If you have anything lying around at home that you think we could use as a prize for one of our events, please bring it in. We will find a good use for it and make sure that it benefits your Trust.

Phil Marshall

Black and White Pages

Do you run your own business? Are you a plumber, taxi driver, shop owner or accountant? Would you like other Notts' fans to know what products and services you offer? Well, next season the Trust will be producing a directory of members' products and services (Black and White Pages, do you see?) which will be distributed free of charge to all members. Even better, we will not charge you to have your name listed in the directory. That's right, we will not charge you a penny to list your company; we're not using this as a money raiser, it's purely a service to our members. If you would like to be listed, please send the contact details for your company, a brief description of the products or services you offer and your Trust membership number and we will ensure that those details appear in the first Black and White Pages.

E-mail:
membership@nottscotrust.org.uk

Notts win FA Cup!

It's the 31st March 1894 and the 37,000 crowd at Goodison Park, are settling down to watch the Cup Final, Notts County versus Bolton Wanderers.

It had been an interesting competition, which had included Preston beating Reading 18-0 on a pitch that was nothing more than a quagmire. The

secret of Preston's success was later revealed to be that they had hammered hob nails out through the soles of their boots to give them better grip!

Bolton started as the favourites - they were third bottom in the First Division whilst the Magpies were heading for third from top in Division Two. Never before or since has an underdog dominated a final in the way that Notts proceeded to do. It was just on 18 minutes when Arthur Watson beat Sutcliffe from close range to give Notts their first goal. 11 minutes later it was Jimmy Logan's turn when he was left unmarked to score Notts' second. Bolton started the second half as the better side, but time and again were stopped in their tracks by the Notts defence before they got sight of George Toone's goal. It was the 67th minute when Jimmy Logan scored again and just 3 minutes later when he became only the second player in history to score a hat trick in an FA Cup Final.

In the last twenty minutes Notts took their foot off the pedal (do some things ever change?), but heck they were 4-0 up. Three minutes from time George Toone came out of his goal to meet a challenge from Bolton only to slip in the mud and Jim Cassidy scored what must have been one of the easiest cup final goals of all time. Still, Notts won by 4-1 and their supporters were ecstatic.

It is said that afterwards the Bolton dressing room resembled a battlefield dressing station. One player was swathed in bandages, another bleeding from a head wound, a third barely able to walk and a fourth being violently sick. To be fair to Notts, only the head wound was picked up during the game, the rest brought their problems with them.

Notts came home to a hero's welcome, they were the first club from outside the top flight to win the Cup and although they reached the semi-final in 1922, the rest of their cup history is best left for the statisticians.

Carole Stapleton



Notts Board Strengthened

The Trust Board has been bolstered by the addition of three new members, bringing us up to our full compliment of fourteen. This is the culmination of a lengthy process, which began with a letter that accompanied the January newsletter asking all adult members to put themselves forward for co-option. Previously such requests had fallen like the proverbial damp squib. This time round the level of interest was extremely encouraging with a total of 9 responses from members both in and out of Nottingham. Subsequently, a co-option sub-committee was hastily organised, charged with gathering CVs, and having interviews (well, informal chats) with the interested parties over the period of 3-4 weeks. The sub-committee then reported back to the Trust Board who decided upon the three members described below (in no particular order):

First off, is Ken Carter who some of you may already know from his involvement in the 'gang of four', which helped raise £60,000 for the Trust at the Dinner-Auction. Ken is in his forth decade of supporting Notts and professionally, he works for an American software company. He lives in West Bridgford with his three boys and long-suffering partner Beatrice. In Ken's words "I have been amazed at how far the Trust has come in such a short space of time. We've only scratched the surface so far and that's the exciting part – there is so much more we can achieve".

Second up, is another familiar face Cheryl Thompson. Work-wise she holds a project management position in the Health Service. Cheryl has been watching the Magpies for around thirty years, following in the footsteps of her father who was born at number 9 Meadow Lane. Cheryl was an integral member of the working group that led to the establishment of the Trust over a year ago, and after moving back to the midlands, has been keen to return to a more active role.

Last, but by no means least, is Alan Scott. Alan has considerable experience as a Management Consultant and has been a Notts County supporter since making his first visit to Meadow Lane in 1949 by his

father to see Tommy Lawton. He currently attends all home and many away games and is a season-ticket holder in the Jimmy Sirrell Stand.

Such was the calibre of the candidates, that it was no easy decision selecting Ken, Cheryl and Alan whose skills, expertise and enthusiasm will be a valuable addition to the Trust Board. This can only bode well for the future of the Notts County Supporters' Trust, and it is hoped that those who missed out will consider standing for election at the next AGM.

David Hindley

www.nottscotrust.org.uk

The Supporters' Trust website has undergone a number of improvements over the past months and is regularly updated with news and information, including press releases and details of forthcoming Trust events. Worryingly, if you mistakenly press the 'gallery' link, you are bombarded with a load of images featuring members of the Trust board. But there is lots of useful stuff too. You can access an array of Trust documents, including our constitution, board membership policy, and copies of past newsletters.

One recent addition has been the facility to join the Trust on-line, so that you can avoid the queues at the Trust desk in the club shop and become a member from the comfort of your own home.

One other facility, which you may not know or have forgotten about, is that if you do your on-line shopping via the Trust website you can earn money for the Trust. The Trust buy.at website is a directory for on-line purchases. It costs us nothing to run, and costs you no extra to use, and all the commission received is profit for the Trust.

Retailers on the site include, Marks and Spencer, Amazon, Oddbins, Comet, Cotton Traders, MFI, Travelselect, Co-op, CDwow, Blackwell's, RAC, CIS and Carphone Warehouse.

One of the ideas underpinning the Trust website is that it should be interactive. By using the message board facility, you can post up any

questions or queries you may have for the Trust's supporter-director Steve Thompson or for the Trust board in general. You can also pass on any fundraising ideas or use the Pie Bar to discuss, well, anything you like. Junior members have even got their own section, where they can submit any ideas or questions.

So please check the Trust website for regular updates on forthcoming events, fundraising ideas and general discussion on Trust matters.

Please note that if you are a member of the Supporters Trust you can receive news updates by email. To sign up send your name and membership number to info@nottscotrust.org.uk. If you have changed your email address since joining, please also let us know the new address so we can still keep in touch.

Nigel King



Corporate member



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County in the Community

It is now widely recognised that football clubs should, and many do, make some effort to engage with their local communities. This idea is slowly gaining momentum, helped in no small part by the acknowledgement that football has tremendous potential both as a hook to attract traditionally excluded groups and as a tool to help deliver wider agendas, such as health, education and social enterprise. In the present financial climate, football clubs are also waking up to the fact that it is often the local community who are the only ones prepared to dig deep and support the club when at the lowest ebb.

The aim of County in the Community (CITC) – an evening organised by the Notts County Supporters' Trust on Thursday 8th April in the Don Masson suite at Meadow Lane – was to examine how football clubs can foster stronger relations with their local communities and discuss how stadia may be used as joined-up community spaces, drawing on a range of case studies and examples.

All of the speakers at CITC, whilst from differing perspectives, had valuable contributions to make towards the future development of football clubs and their relationships with their supporters and local communities.

First up was Brian Burgess, in his dual capacity as Community Action Network (CAN) representative and Chair of Brentford Supporters' Trust, Bees United. He started off by giving a brief summary of the situation at Brentford. Financially they are in a mess, but they are now budgeting to break even in their trading and they are building a club at the heart of the community. For those of you that have been to Griffin Park will appreciate, it is hemmed in by housing, leaving little scope for improving or extending the ground. The future of Brentford FC therefore lies in a new ground and through the influence of Bees United, the supporters' vision is for a community stadium, which would include an NHS health centre, classrooms for after school and adult education, and a range of other community facilities and activities.

Brian commented that at first the local council did not seem too keen to help, and subsequently Bees United set up their own political party, entitled ABC

(A Future for Brentford in your Community) to raise awareness of the issues facing the football club. In the last round of elections they had 14 candidates standing, attracting thousands of votes, and managed to get a councillor – Luke Kirton – elected. The council is now on board, and are working very closely on a feasibility study for a new site.

The development of a new stadium will inevitably take several years, and Brian described the kinds of short-term initiatives designed to 'sweat the assets' in the existing Griffin Park ground. These included a new 'Stripes' bar, which not only houses a variety of social events and groups e.g. a Jazz club and the local Mods and scooters club, but is also used as an after school classroom for local youngsters. They also run a nursery/crèche, which is a boon to the local community. As well as bringing the club into the community, these projects also raise much needed revenue – as Brian put it "Brentford Heart, business head and community spirit".

Brian then gave the example of Bromley by Bow church. This is a church in the East End and is flagged up a lot as an example of a community focused facility. Basically it was an empty church so the vicar started looking at what the community wanted rather than just preaching to half-a-dozen once a week. For further information, have a look at their website: <http://www.bbhc.org.uk/>.

The next speaker was Malcolm McClean, founder of Bearhunt (a management consultancy that specialises in health, sport and regeneration) and Macclesfield Town supporter (now consultant to their board of directors). Macclesfield has its ground in one of the most deprived areas of Cheshire, and shares many of the economic problems currently facing other small clubs. But instead of retreating into a defensive survival mentality, the club through Malcolm's obvious influence has sought to reach out and work more closely with its local community. The first major development was the opening in 2002 of the Silkmen's online ICT centre, which is basically an internet cafe open 12 hours a day, 6 days a week and free to the whole community. They have local colleges involved and they are running courses from the football

club. Malcolm also talked about how they contacted an internationally renowned local children's author, a BAFTA-winning animator, and a poet to run events from the ICT centre.

Malcolm then talked briefly about the second planned development – named the Cheshire Mezzanine – which is for a new £6 million multi-purpose stadium with a health zone, a gym which could be converted into a theatre, and accelerator units designed to provide premises that are a second step for new local small businesses. There will also be educational facilities to build on the success of the IT Centre.

He then concluded by mentioning the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, who approached Malcolm with some funding for research to develop some new ideas. His current work is developing the link between sport and health, and in particular, depression. Depression is one of the world's biggest debilitating illnesses, affecting about 5 million people a year in Britain, and being a contributing factor in the 7,000 suicides a year. Malcolm stressed that 18 to 34 year old men are the most likely to commit suicide, and that many people with depression tend to be insular and to stay at home and away from other people. It is Malcolm's belief that football – including sports psychology methods, using footballers as mentors, and the chance of temporary jobs with a football club to enable people with depression to do something different – may be the first steps to breaking that cycle.

The third speaker was Gavin Mellor from Manchester Metropolitan University, who with colleagues at Sheffield Hallam is involved in research (funded by the Football Foundation) looking at three clubs' (Sheffield United, Leeds United and Manchester City) involvement in the community. Whilst his research is by no means complete, he talked about some of his findings to-date. He started by commenting that of the three clubs Sheffield United were the only ones to develop a formal relationship with their local community, which has sought to foster a strong community-club partnership. Underpinning the partnership is the building of the Blades Enterprise Centre, which encourages business start-ups from the local area, particularly the minority ethnic community of the

neighbourhood. The centre also assists local residents to find employment, and circulates their curriculum vitas to selected local businesses. Additionally, a community hall (used by community groups at discounted rates for meetings, fundraisers, and other events) has been built as part of the development and is being leased to the Sharrow Community Forum at a peppercorn rent for the next ten years.

Gavin went on to suggest that football clubs do not see supporters as their communities and do not need their help. He also said that community responsibilities were 'hived off' and often operated at the margins of clubs' wider operations. That said, Gavin stressed that there was some positive community work going on. For example, Leeds United were running 'highachievers days' and not just initiatives targeting excluded kids, and that all three clubs depended upon their first-team footballers to attend community events to help attract youngsters.

Gavin concluded by saying that they had seen some cynical 'inclusion' publicity stunts during the course of the research, and that these had not been particularly successful because everyone sees through these pretty quickly. He then stressed that there needs to be a balance between public relations and community relations, and that within football 'the community' is still largely seen as something which is 'out there' rather than something which clubs themselves are a part of and integral to.

After the break, Graham Moran – manager of Notts County's Football in the Community programme – spoke about the evolution of the scheme since the Alan Young days when we first got involved, to the present day. I think it is fair at this juncture to comment that if you think you know what FITC does, you are probably some way short of appreciating the breadth and depth of their work. One of the underpinning messages that came out of his presentation was that the FITC team has over the years grown enormously from only 1-2 full-time staff to their current compliment of 17 and this is despite very little support from the football club. An example of this was a meeting during Albert Scardino's reign (who actually was very supportive of FITC) when one of the shareholders derided the scheme and thought the

money would be better spent on strengthening the playing squad. These sorts of comments are ill informed: FITC is registered as a charity, is independent of the football club and is self-financing. Any Notts supporter present at the CITC evening cannot have felt anything but immense pride for the work Graham and his colleagues do, as well as wondering why the football club do not do more to support and promote their excellent work.

Phil Tooley, who is the Chair of Chesterfield Football Supporters' Society (CFSS), concluded the evening. Phil began his talk by giving a brief potted history of the Spireites and in particular the actions of past owners whose mismanagement left the club in a precarious financial position and with a football ground in desperate need for redevelopment. Interestingly, Phil stated that Chesterfield is predominantly a local football club, with 85 per cent of its fan base having a Chesterfield postcode. Like Brentford, Chesterfield FC is also looking to build a new community stadium and in June 2003, an 82 per cent turnout voted 58 per cent in favour of leaving Saltergate to a purpose built ground on the outskirts of the Town at Wheeldon Mill. Whilst the plans for a new community stadium are a long way off, the supporters' trust in partnership with the football club is committed to developing stronger, permanent links with local voluntary and statutory organisations for mutual benefit. As such CFSS has launched a 'Club's the Hub' project, and set up a steering group made up of local partners and stakeholders to discuss how the football club can make an impact on other local agendas, including health, neighbourhood renewal, education and crime.

Phil went on to illustrate some of the current community work which is going on, including Chesterfield's FITC team, Sporting Futures, Read on Write Away (an after school literacy project), and Chesterfield's Sure Start Healthy Living Centre, which aims to improve the health, social care and learning opportunities for children under four and their families, young people and senior citizens. This is just the tip of the iceberg, which demonstrates that there is support for the club's desire to work co-operatively with local organisations. This is an incredible achievement when you consider that Chesterfield FC has no real facilities to speak of, and gives

some indication of what is possible when the football club recognises the mutual benefits of developing stronger links with their local community.

Overall, the residing message that came out of the evening was that football clubs are essentially community assets, which should be used for the benefit of the local community and the benefit of the club. They should strive to be open and inclusive, with a strong community focus. It is the hope of Notts County Supporters' Trust that our football club will embrace this ethos. Thank you to all the speakers for contributing to what was an inspiring and informative event, and thanks to those who attended. Plans have already begun on CITC 2 – watch this space for details.

David Hindley and Phil Marshall

Ambassadors

1500 members in a year is a fantastic achievement, but there are still more than 3000 fans that regularly attend Meadow Lane that haven't joined the Trust yet. We want every Notts fan to be in the Trust, to have a say in how the club is run and to own a share in the club. We on the Trust Board can't possibly speak to each and every Notts fan, but you can help us. You can really help the Trust to become stronger by recruiting members for us, by becoming a "Trust Ambassador." Sign up 10 new members and we'll send you an enamel badge, sign up 25 members and you'll be invited to attend a match at Meadow Lane as a guest of Trust Director, Steve Thompson.

If you want to become an Ambassador then please contact me via the Trust's mail address or via my email address listed in the Trust Directory.

Phil Marshall
Membership Recruitment Retention



Trust News

Since the last newsletter, the Trust has been busy on a number of fronts.

Below is a collection of items taken from the Trust website and the column in the match day programme over the last couple of months.

Trust helps buy Scoffham

The Trust played a significant role in bringing Steve Scoffham to Meadow Lane. Trust sponsorship to the tune of £5,000 covers the initial payment to bring the 20 year old, who is regarded as a bright prospect, to the club. Commenting in the NEP Trust Director Steve Thompson said "we decided to do it because we felt it was a community issue. It would have not been the same had the club wanted to sign a random player from Walsall, for example. But we are talking about a young Nottingham lad and Gedling with benefit too".

Trust sponsors McGoldrick

NCST is to sponsor teenage star David McGoldrick for the remainder of the 2003/04 season. The Nottingham-born schoolboy became the second youngest player to represent Notts County in the League, when he made his debut from the substitutes' bench against Swindon Town earlier this year. The 16 year old is held in high regard by the coaching staff at Meadow Lane, and his impressive performances for the youth and reserve teams are attracting interest from other clubs.

Ratification meeting

Following the meeting held at Meadow Lane on 10th March, the decision of the Trust Board to appoint Steve Thompson as the supporter director was unanimously ratified by the Trust membership. The voting was 275 for, with none against. The initial period of office will be until the next Board elections and AGM in October. Following this all elected Board members will be able to be nominated for the post of supporter director. If there is more than one candidate, a full election will be held. Their period of office will be for two years. However, the incumbent supporter director remains in office until the election is resolved.

Collection for Iran Earthquake appeal

Before the Plymouth match, the Trust held a bucket collection for those who suffered the terrible earthquake recently in Iran, which has affected over 200,000 people, with 41,000 deaths and 75,000 left homeless. The Trust was asked by Nottingham Councilor Mo Munir to support the appeal, which is backed by the Lord Mayor of Nottingham. The collection raised £452.59, which will go to help rebuild the area, including schools, houses and day care centres. When the project is completed, it will be known as the City of Nottingham Project.

Trust Forum Report

Straight after the 4-1 demolition of Blackpool, the Supporters Trust held an informal Q&A session in the Meadow. Directors Roy Parker and Steve Thompson (Trust rep) were on hand to field a range of questions on a variety of issues, along with the clubs operations manager, Mark Durkin. David Hindley and Keri Usherwood also took the stage to listen to fans' views.

The topic of marketing was raised, with questions about club merchandise, online shopping, and replica shirts. Both Steve and Roy stressed that the fans views on merchandise were vitally important and that focus groups were being formed so that supporters would have a forum to comment on the range of merchandise in the club shop and so on. Mark Durkin said that there were no plans to supply merchandise to other sports retail outlets as the clubs profit margins were reduced, but hinted that the club will be introducing online shopping in the near future so that fans can purchase items from the official website.

The clubs ticketing policy was also questioned by supporters, asking if there were any plans to introduce incentives for children to watch the Magpies. Steve responded by saying that in comparison to other football clubs, Notts County offer one of the best deals for young fans. He also said that the club would be looking at introducing an attractive package for season tickets, which would include vouchers for selected matches.

One supporter asked those present to comment on Mich Stevenson's comments in Saturdays Nottingham Evening Post about County and Forest

ground-sharing. The Trust's director dismissed the possibility of sharing with our neighbours in no uncertain terms, and stressed that the new ground lease meant that Notts County could play at Meadow Lane for the next 150 years. Representatives from the Trust also clarified a story in the NEP, stressing that the Trusts long term aim was to accumulate sufficient funds so as well as supporting the club in specific projects, it could step in if the club found itself in financial difficulty again. Roy Parker emphasised that administration had been a huge hurdle to get over, and that whilst improvements were being made, he asked fans to be patient. Future projects included getting the executive boxes which would be renamed suites ready, whilst the Meadow would be re-carpeted in the summer, along with new furnishings and Sky television in time for the European championships.

Overall, the forum offered a valuable opportunity for fans to talk to representatives of the Trust and the club and it is hoped that another forum will be planned in the near future.

Arnold Town Football Club

NCST is urging supporters to come to the aid of Arnold Town Football Club, whose future is uncertain. Despite numerous attempts, they have still not been given an answer to their application to build a new sports complex on the edge of Arnold and eviction from their present ground is imminent.

Anyone who wants to help can collect a pre printed letter from the Trust desk in the Club Shop and add your voice to those who have already written. Alternatively, you can download a copy of the letter from the Trust website.

A representative of Arnold Town tells us that our efforts are having a positive effect on the situation, watch this space for more news.



Interview with Steve Scoffham

We spotted Steve Scoffham in the crowd at a recent reserve game and decided there and then to go and ask him for an interview for this newsletter. He agreed straightaway and we could have done the interview that afternoon if we had enough imagination to think of some questions. We don't, so we arranged to meet the next day after training (Steve's training, not training for Phil and Dave).

Notts County weren't the first League club to show an interest in you. Tell us about your trials at other clubs.

I had a trial at Rushden and Diamonds when I was sixteen, but it wasn't a trial like it was here. You can't do anything in a day, they don't know who you are, and you cannot express yourself in such a limited time. I was then due to have one at Nottingham Forest when I was sixteen or seventeen, but I missed it because of injury. I heard of other clubs being interested, but I only had one trial before I came to Notts County, and the rest is history. Oh, and Derby. (Your correspondents suggested that it was understandable that anyone would forget about a trial at such a small club).

At Notts I was here for a week, training everyday, just doing what I normally do now that I have signed. It is good fun, except for today.

Scoff explained prior to the interview that training that morning had not gone well, and that Gary Mills had called all the players together to give them a bollocking.

Has becoming a full-time professional footballer met your expectations?

My lifestyle has certainly changed. I now have so much free time that I don't know what to do with it. A lot of people have asked whether I will go back to doing building work in the summer – no chance. It is difficult to describe the differences from non-league to league. When you are playing non-league football, you do what you like in training, and just have a kick about. Now you have to be much more focused and the training is more structured. Since joining Notts I am certainly a lot fitter and my game has

improved 99 per cent. My first touch though is still terrible and needs a lot of work.

The thing is, when I go training I still feel nervous. If you do a bad touch the other players barrack you, which does nothing for your confidence. I have got to try and control my nerves. I am learning all the time. I don't think that some of the other players respect that it is difficult for me to get there, but when I do... I can't wait.

Can you describe a typical training session?

Get there 10.30am, and start with a warm-up. We work on loads of things: running, one-touch passing, concentrating on different skills. The exercises are normally short and sharp. We then usually finish off with an 8-a-side, which is where we failed this morning. On Fridays we focus on things like throw-ins, free kicks and corners.

Gary Mills makes the training enjoyable. You can have a bit of banter, but as soon as he thinks you are slacking off he will tell you. He doesn't care who you are, and won't hesitate to tell you what he thinks. He is a good manager – him and John Gaunt work well together.

How have you found settling in, with all the disruption (changes in coaching staff and to the playing squad) and uncertainty over who will be at the club next season?

It is weird coming into new surroundings, but the lads have made me feel welcome. I do think however, that one or two of them don't quite know how to take me because of how I have come into football. Whilst they have progressed through the traditional channels and it has taken years, I have just broken into the team and they might not be starting or failing to get into the squad.

What is your footballing philosophy?

I don't really have a philosophy. I just want to make the most of this opportunity and work hard.

We then asked Steve about what being sponsored by the Supporters'

Trust meant to him. Steve didn't really know about the Trust and we never pass on the opportunity to evangelise the message of the Trust. We explained to Steve the Trust's role in the club, and our integral role in the deal that brought him to Meadow Lane from non-league Gedling.

It's nice to know that the supporters helped to buy me. It's wicked. I didn't realise before that the fans had helped to pay the initial £5,000 signing on fee from Gedling. That is so cool.

Finally, what were you singing on your first day at training?

I sang 'wheels on the bus' under my breath and then Robbie Williams' Angels. According to the lads I was absolutely shocking. But since then – touch wood - I have not had to sing. Every Friday the players vote on who is the worst player and they have to sing. The thing was – and this is really embarrassing – we had a shooting exercise and I came last. So the first day there – a new striker – and I came last at shooting. I still get nervous. I am a bag of nerves every time I come into training.

Ricco sang Buddy Holly the other week. Dave McGoldrick he sang 'Night fever'. Do you remember Antoine Curier? He sang 'I wish you a merry Christmas' in the middle of February. We wouldn't let him sing in French and he didn't know any songs. It was really funny.

Phil Marshall and David Hindley



Membership & Renewals

The current membership expires at the end of July, so members are asked to complete the renewal/membership application on the back page of the newsletter. Please try and enrol other members of your family, friends and fellow Notts supporters to ensure that the Trust continues to grow and build on the achievements of the last twelve months.

Of course the financial plight of the football club helped swell the Trust's numbers, as fans through the Trust donated what they could afford to help us reach our £250,000 target. The club is now out of administration thanks to the investment made by the Blenheim Consortium and through more prudent management can be put on a more secure footing. Whilst fundraising is now lower down the Trust's list of priorities, it would however, be incorrect to assume that it is all plain sailing from here. The new Board of Directors is still coming to terms with the debilitating eighteen months in administration, and the constraints set by the Football League. Finances will be tight, especially if the club is relegated to the Third Division. But it is not just about the money we raise – and our membership gives significant amounts, be it attending games or purchasing club merchandise, or donating to the Trust – it is about the part that we play in the development of the future of our football club.

Supporter representation underpins the whole ethos of NCST. Through our elected representative, Steve Thompson, the Trust is now an integral part of the Board. For the first time in Notts County's 142-year history there is direct input from fans into the decision-making process, which can only make for better decisions being made, and costly mistakes being avoided. It is therefore important that we maintain and improve Trust membership in order to be seen to accurately reflect the views of as wide a cross-section of the supporter base as possible.

In other words, by joining the Trust you can make a difference. For the cost of less than a match day ticket, you can have a say and be a part of the Trust's 30.2 per cent 'stake' in Notts County

Football Club.

David Hindley

Trust Patrons

The fact that so many ex-players have helped the Trust over the last six months or so is living proof of the fondness they have in their hearts for Notts County. As soon as the Trust has contacted any of them, to a man all of them (well, most... -Ed) have only been too willing to help in anyway possible. Not only have they been prepared to help, but their friends within football have also been only too pleased to help as well. A great example is Craig Short. As soon we contacted him Craig went to work getting auction items from his friends: Gary Speed at Newcastle, Damien Duff at Chelsea and Andy Cole at Blackburn. Craig also donated prizes and gathered together a table of former players for the auction. He still follows the club and is keen to know how they have played and what the new players are like.

After all of his help we decided it would be a great idea to get ex-players and high profile supporters involved by asking them to be Patrons of the Trust. By accepting an invitation to become a Patron, these people will be endorsing the important part the Trust plays in the future of the club.

Craig Short knows how important the part he and the Trust have played in securing the future of the club, so much in fact that Craig has accepted a position of Trust Patron.

We are delighted to announce that the distinguished local broadcaster and journalist Colin Slater has also agreed to become a Patron of the Trust. More details of the Patrons scheme will be included in the next Trust newsletter and on the Trust website.

Ken Carter



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With 108 trusts now established, Supporters Direct is now looking beyond just the formation of trusts. It is looking at ways to reclaim the game for supporters.

Supporters Direct – the umbrella organisation for the trust movement – was formed in 1998. It converted last year into an Industrial & Provident Society and now has a democratically elected Board of Directors, which consists of 9 elected directors with 3 co-opted members. Currently one of the co-opted members is from the Football Supporters Federation and another from DCMS. The Chair is Andy Burnham MP, Labour member for Leigh, Greater Manchester who actually supports Everton but does take an interest in the fortunes of his constituency club Leigh RMI. He was a member of the Football Task Force under David Mellor.

One thing that Supporters Direct is keen to look at is the legal structure of football clubs which hasn't changed since the formation of the football league. Rule 4.1 in the Football League Rules states "*member clubs shall be companies incorporated under the Companies Acts*". This has served football well but it is somewhat inflexible and means all football clubs must strive in theory to make a profit, which is quite ironic given the current state of the game! If this rule was changed to read "*member clubs shall be corporate bodies with limited liability*" it means that different legal structures could be used to actually run a football club.

If a rule change like this could be implemented this would mean that football clubs could in the future change their status to that of an Industrial & Provident Society or Community Interest Company. Some of you may be aware that the Notts County Supporters' Trust is registered as an IPS itself and is therefore a democratic, not-for-profit organisation with specific aims and objectives as detailed in a written constitution. For those insomniacs amongst you this constitution can be found on line at www.nottscotrust.org.uk.

The second possible structure is that of the Community Interest Company (CIC). The CIC will be a new type of

company, designed for social enterprises who want to use their profits and assets for the public good. CICs will be easy to set up, with all the flexibility and certainty of the company form, but with some special features to ensure they are working for the benefit of the community. CICs will report to an independent regulator on how they are delivering for the community and how they are involving their stakeholders in their activities.

CICs will require legislation, covering a regulator, a community interest test, and community interest reports. Subject to Parliament's approval it is expected the earliest date for registering as a CIC will be early 2005.

Supporters Direct recognise that change is urgently needed in football to ensure the game survives but the way football clubs have been run in the past has meant many have been taken to the point of oblivion. Indeed some clubs have ceased to exist and others, including Notts County, have come too close for comfort. It is a credit to the current board that the financial fortunes of the Magpies have begun to be turned round. As more and more clubs become owned by their own local communities it would be beneficial if there were better economic structures to ensure they can prosper. By pushing for change SD are attempting to provide this option for football clubs as they face the challenges of the future.

Another interesting development recently has been the Treasury's stance on taxation and supporters' trusts. This has moved on since the first announcement of a review in last November's 'pre-Budget Report'. Hidden away in the Budget Report published in March, the Treasury have pledged to now seek a way for trusts to 'maximise the benefit they receive from the contributions of their members'.

To the untrained eye, a short statement in a report of this size may not seem like much, but this now means the Treasury are moving the idea to the next stage and are in continuing dialogue with SD over the best way to achieve this. The Treasury has pledged to work towards finding a way of assisting trusts to maximise the money that they receive from their members.

Trusts are technically liable for Corporation Tax on trading profits, depending on the view taken by the

Inland Revenue Tax Inspectors. SD are discussing with the Revenue the possibility of providing standard guidance to Inspectors that will mitigate this liability by ensuring that mainstream activities are not viewed as trading, and so surpluses are not classified as Trading profits liable for taxation.

Trusts are currently liable for VAT in some circumstances; some fundraising activities may attract a liability that just can't be escaped. However some – such as membership income – is being looked at as the same as membership of philanthropic or civic organisations, so those memberships would benefit from VAT exemption.

SD are also pushing for the extension of the regime available to Community Amateur Sports Clubs – this would enable the Gift Aid scheme to become available to Trusts, making them a tax-efficient route for donations, and opening them up to treatment more along the lines afforded to charities.

In addition SD are pressing for Trusts to be seen as qualifying vehicles for Community Investment, which means that those who invest in them over a five year period will receive 5% of the value of that investment written off against their tax bill every year. That would add up to 25% of the initial investment.

SD is working with the Revenue to ensure that treatment of Trusts is consistent. Once that guidance is drawn up and agreed with the Inland Revenue then it will be circulated to Local Tax Inspectors and Trusts for reference.

Supporters Direct has come a long way since the first Trust was launched under its banner in 1998. There is still much more to be done but the board at SD and other bodies within football now recognise the vital role that supporters, via their Trusts, now have to play in moving the game and industry forward into the future.

Rick Keracher (Imps Trust and SD Board Member)



From the Boardroom

As the season draws to an end I cannot help but feel very disappointed that despite a tremendous effort from the directors and backroom staff it looks like Division Three is where we will start next season. By the time this article is printed it could all be over. It seems strange in a way to feel sad. If you had told me last November that the club will survive but go down I would of snapped your hand off and taken the offer. What short memories we have in football.

Rather than focus on relegation I want to discuss the positive aspects of this season. Since the takeover the club finds itself in a tight but manageable financial position. With time and good financial management the club will be strong once more. I know for a fact that most of the clubs in the Football League would love to be in our financial position. That's not to say we have lots of money to spend, we do not, but we have very little debt and nothing owing to the bank. Once we sort the playing side out we will have a realistic chance of going up the table again.

Over the summer the infrastructure of the club will start to change. The old marquee suite is having a substantial refit to create a modern venue for weddings and other functions. We want a modern venue that will attract people to the club. New carpets will also go down in the hallways and we hope to have most of the other rooms repainted. The boxes will also be open for the new season and we hope to create better access to them. They also need to be refurbished and this is being addressed. We hope businesses support us in this venture by coming back to the club and taking a box.

The Meadow club opened towards the end of the season and has been packed for each game. We have a problem with ventilation but this is being looked at and we hope to have that fixed by the first home game of next season. We are installing CCTV in the Meadow club at the request of the police and once this is done we should have no problem in obtaining a full

license from the magistrates. The Meadow club is central to our cash flow, so please support it. We will be putting in new carpets, new furnishings and opening the kitchens for next season. We will also be open for Euro 2004 (license permitting) so please come along and support it. In the near future then, we hope you can have a pint and some food in a well-ventilated Meadow club whilst watching Sky TV. Who would have thought that only a few months ago?

We are also investing in IT. We hope to have a new ticketing system in place, which will allow fans to buy over the Internet. The new system will also allow better marketing and create an Internet shop. We have to get the club moving again.

You will see a huge change on the pitch too as Gary seeks to bring in new players. We have set a budget for him and he is confident of securing players to fight for a return to Division Two as soon as possible. The directors intend to support him as much as possible but we can only do this if fans keep the faith and do what they have always done – get behind the club and use it as often as possible. Central to this is the purchase of season tickets. We need fans to buy season tickets for next season and for the first time in many years they will carry some real value. Not only will they save money on a match-by-match basis but also they will have added value with special offers throughout the season and a discount in the club shop.

Finally, I would like to thank all the fans that have endured so much recently. Together we can put this behind us and make Notts County a great club again. This is the season when your club (and it is your club if you are a member of the Trust because you own a big slice of it) really needs you. Lets support the club, go to the games, use the facilities and go forward for the first time in years.

**Steve Thompson
(Supporter Director)**

East Midlands Trusts

Under the umbrella of Supporters Direct, East Midlands Trusts is a voluntary grouping of football supporters' trusts in the East Midlands region and grew out of initial meetings between the then embryonic RamsTrust and Foxes Trust, the

Supporters' Trust of Derby County and Leicester City respectively. The intention of forming such a forum was to share best practice and learn from each other's experiences.

Other local East Midlands clubs' supporters' trusts were invited to join beginning with Notts County Supporters' Trust and EMTrusts was born.

EMTrusts is now held out as a shining example of how supporters' trusts of rival clubs can work together to help their own clubs and in the longer term, reclaim the game for the fans.

The group meets monthly, most frequently in Coalville but moves around the area and has met in Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, Kettering and Chesterfield.

Sometimes the group has a guest speaker because the message can then reach several trusts in one evening. Like-minded guests are welcome and representatives of Social Enterprise East Midlands (SEEM), Midlands Co-operative Society and the Co-operative Group Nottingham Region have attended meetings along with representatives of Supporters Direct, the Football Supporters' Federation and members of trusts in the West Midlands.

Last year the group had a training day, which was funded by the East Midlands Co-operative Education Committee, Midlands Co-operative Society's Derby Area Member Relations Committee and Supporters Direct. This was held at High Point in Leicester and we all learnt about putting co-operative principles into practice, the role of the Company Secretary and the legal responsibilities of trust board members.

Currently, trusts from Chesterfield, Derby County, Grimsby Town, Kettering Town, Leicester City, Lincoln City, Mansfield Town, Northampton Town, Notts County and Peterborough United are represented.

Elaine Dean (Chair, RamsTrust)

