

HIT THE BAR!

Issue 311

May 2020

£1



COVID 19 SPECIAL

- World without Football
- Keep the Faith
- The 40 club experience
- Brunton Park Diary
- Funding Update
- Branch XI match report
- In off the post
- Knowing our Place
- Join the London Branch
- My first game

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JOIN THE LONDON BRANCH TODAY!

Hit the Bar! is for Carlisle United supporters living in exile.

Join the Carlisle United Supporters Club London Branch. You'll get your personal copy of HTB! along with details of pre-match meeting places, branch events in and around London and tickets for the big games like the unforgettable League Cup tie at Anfield (below). You can also sign up to Virtual Hit the Bar! the London Branch's invaluable weekly email bulletin.

Visit: www.carlislelondonbranch.org for details

Join: online at www.carlislelondonbranch.org/join/online/

Contact: Peter Smithson, Great Gable, Sheephouse Road, Maidenhead, SL6 8HB or call 07979 700 275



EDITOR'S BLEAT



Welcome to HTB! 311

This edition of Hit the Bar! is dedicated to all the players and staff of Carlisle United and to CUFC fans wherever you are.

Whatever happens over the coming months, these are going to be perilous times for professional football and for lower league clubs in particular.

This HTB has the normal updates and news, with a Brunton Diary to take us to what looks like being the end of the 19/20 season and a report of an excellent match against Cambridge United supporters back in February before the world changed. We also have some more reflective contributions—clearly a product of the long hours of COVID 19 lockdown.

The thread through all of this is the importance of CUFC to the lives of many people, some of whom really do have better things to do with their time and money. The reports of enjoyed away victories, tours of Brunton Park, great pubs, football matches against supporters of the clubs and the work Simon and Terry are doing in Carlisle to help re-focus and re-unite supporters there, show the breadth and value of the London Branch and of being a member of it.

Of course all this means nothing without a football team to follow and so the London Branch stand ready to help the football club get back to business whenever that day is. Whenever and wherever it is, its going to be an emotional day and yet another Carlisle United 'I was there' moment.

Stay safe, Up the Blues ! **John B**

Our resident cartoonist Jason 'Jugsy' Casey shares his lockdown strategy with us.



Say 'how do' to Maya Gaffney, pictured here blissfully unaware that dad Jim is already looking forward to taking her to her first game. London Branch advice to Jim and all new parents is to forget a teddy bear and buy her/him a cuddly fox—you can't beat early imprinting.



Keep the Faith



I would open by saying welcome to the most bizarre issue of *Hit The Bar!* ever published but I think we all know that probably wouldn't be true. It is certainly the most bizarre set of circumstances that an issue of this fanzine has been published into in its near 46 year history though - who could have predicted this would be the context right now as we leafed through issue 310 and who knows quite what football and life in general will look like by the time issue 312 goes to print.

I hope that this finds you, your family and your friends well at this time. It is a challenging time right now for all

of us and football is no exception, but what it has reminded us is how much of a football family we all are and I know we're all missing the community that comes with Saturday 3pm on the terraces.

We're delighted to be able to make this issue available free of charge to all United fans online and I hope you'll enjoy it. We can't quite replace that feeling of the net rippling at the Warwick Road End but what we can promise is one of the oldest fanzines in the country - written by the fans and for the fans.

The London Branch has been running for nearly 46 years now and whilst the capital city appears in our name and much of the administration of the Branch is done out of London we are an organisation for all exiled fans of Carlisle United no matter where they are located. **We have members not just across London and the south east but across the UK and indeed the world.** The Branch's much joked about "Hertfordshire Twig", of which I'm a proud part, is joined by other notable concentrations of members in both Staffordshire and Carlisle itself to name just a couple.

Enough about the Branch though and on to matters at hand. As I was pack-

aging up one of the few remaining Jimmy Glass t-shirts to pop in the post recently it occurred to me that it's been a year since we celebrated the 20th anniversary of possibly the greatest goal of all time. How time flies. We were delighted to be able to make a donation of £600 from sales of the t-shirts to the MNDA in memory of Tony Hopper earlier this season and the remainder of the proceeds are set aside to contribute to the refurbishments in the new Glass Bar at Brunton Park, although there's no doubt there will be bigger matters facing the club over the coming months and perhaps even years.

Speaking of time moving quickly it feels such a long time ago that we are at Cambridge United earlier this year helping one of our members, **Craig Milne, celebrate completing the 92 grounds. An amazing feat and you can hear Craig's story in his own words later on in this issue.**

Also contained in this issue is a summary of some of the projects the Branch has donated funds towards at the Club this season. **As a Branch we exist to support both our members and the Club in whatever way we can and right now it feels like that will be more important than ever.**

It's no secret that the current situation will pose a threat to the very existence of football clubs across the UK, including our own. As a Branch committee we are keeping in close contact

as the situation develops and stand ready to make available the resources of the Branch in any way possible should it be needed. Likewise I know we all as individual fans will support the club where we can as and when the rallying cry goes out - from donating ticket refunds from the end of this season to pre-buying season tickets for next to buying merchandise to making sure we take up iFollow subscriptions when the action resumes to much more besides, I know everyone will be keen, where able, to do their bit to support the club.

In terms of the Branch community, Simon Clarkson has spoken about his experiences keeping in touch with members over recent weeks and how it has actually enabled him to have more meaningful and in depth conversations with members than the usual passing "hello" in a pre-match pub and I think that's something we've all seen of late. Whether you're a member or not please don't hesitate to get in touch: information@cusclub.com.

As a Branch we need to move with the times and we will be looking at some of the fundamentals over the coming months, with Dave Brown spearheading a strategic review into our activities, structure and future direction. We'll be looking to involve members in the review and hear views not just of current members but prospective members to find out what is im-

portant to you and what you want from being a part of the Branch.

Whilst there are so many things I think we do well in the Branch and that we should be proud of, I have no doubt there will be plenty of recommendations and potential changes arising from the review. We should be open about the direction it takes us, whilst keeping in mind the core aim of the Branch of bringing fans together in support of our club.

And with that I'll leave things there for this issue. I normally close with a comment around looking forward to seeing you on a touchline or terrace in the near future. Obviously it will be some time before we are able to freely mingle in a pre-match pub or in the Paddock once again, but we will appreciate it all the more once we are able to again. And whilst it's unclear when, we will be back there at some point and here's to raising that first pre-match pint once more. In the mean time, I hope you enjoy this issue of Hit The Bar!

Keep the faith, and stay safe,
Jamie

Virtual Hit the Bar!

Remember, for details of all forthcoming games, travel plans and meeting places, make sure you are getting the Virtual Hit the Bar! Email.

It's part of the London Branch membership package. It's the electronic companion to the HTB! Magazine.

Sent to members each week, it contains links to media articles and videos about Carlisle United and many other items of interest to the exiled Cumbrian and those who can only wish to have been born in Cumbria.



virtual

Hit The Bar!

**WE ARE CUMBRINIANS AND PROUD
SUPPORTING CARLISLE UNITED FROM AFAR FOR OVER 40 YEARS**

In off the Post!

editor@cusclb.com



Sir, It has been a pleasure for old stagers like myself to see the London Branch adapt so successfully to the changing demands of the 21st century.

In recent years the branch has greatly reduced its carbon footprint with many members opting to travel by train and bus from London. Meeting places are usually within walking distance of away stadiums and the pubs selected usually sell a wide range of plant based beverages and vegetarian meals.

It is to be hoped that the increasing use of air travel for the summer trip in recent times might be reduced by the selection of UK based destinations some of which, such as Bournemouth, are well suited to accommodate the age profile of branch members, with most hotels equipped with defibrillators, Zimmer frames and mobility scooters

It has been particularly touching in recent times to see the branch evolve into a support group for elderly homosexual men and LGBT issues are always a lively topic of debate at the monthly branch meetings.

I look forward to some exciting new initiatives which I understand will be coming our way soon.

Kind Regards,

Lord Gammon of Diversityshire

Family motto "Publish and be Damned"

'40 CLUB' EXPERIENCES

There are 45 members of the London Branch 40 Club with each member contributing £5 per month. In December and July we hold bumper draws when the standard monthly prizes of 1) a meal for 2 in Foxys plus match tickets and 2) £30 cash, are each won twice. Ad hoc additional prizes are added to these bumper draws and one off prizes are included in other monthly draws.

On the last year, the 14 first and second prizes were almost completely different winners. The ad hoc prizes included replica shirts, home and away Boardroom and media experience days.

Most of the prizes are provided free by Carlisle United that meant that £2000 has been donated from the 40 Club to CUFC every season since its inception in 2014. These donations have been used to improve disabled facilities at Brunton Park and purchase equipment for the Academy teams.

Two lucky winners tell us the story of their day out at Brunton Park.

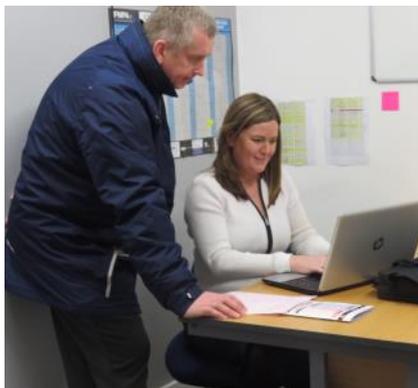
GARETH HAYES' EXPERIENCE

Carlisle v Morecambe

Gareth recounts his 40 club experience, on February 22nd which was a gift from long-time member of the London Branch of the Supporter's

Club, Dave 'Daggers' Dagnall who very sadly passed away in April this year.

Preconceptions of media low effort, high reward, were quickly dispelled as I learned that it's not a one-day-a-week lazy life of luxury for CUFC's **Andy and Amy**. I arrived at BP just after one o'clock to be met by a twitchy Andy who was twirling around the inner sanctum of corridors beneath the old stand. Not only had the recent storms killed off the scoreboard but the tannoy system had also failed. And Andy had spent the last couple of days



putting together a rather special tribute to recently departed Harry Gregg.

Andy multi-tasked as he took me to the referee's room to witness the two captains hand in their team sheets, and the subsequent photocopying and distribution. After a quick tour and a photoshoot on the pitch we were in

the Media Room in the East Stand. Chums from radio and press mingled and chewed the fat over pies and strong coffee; then complimented me on the special biscuits I'd brought from Appleby's Bakery.



I'd chosen the Morecambe game because of its derby-ish rivalry. Turning out to be down-in-the-basement battle, the game summed up United's typical topsy-turvy approach to ninety minutes where they have either thrown away games or clawed things back against the odds. Thankfully this was the latter.



From two-nil down to draw two-two, while not a classic, this was still edge of the seat entertainment. Throughout all of the wind-blown action, Andy and Amy focused on wordsmithing the action on their numerous laptops, whilst still hollering partisan calls for Cumbrian commitment and cheer.

A great day out. Thanks Andy. Thanks Amy. And thanks London Branch!



STEVE COLLINS AND IAN KELLIT'S 40 CLUB EXPERIENCE

Saturday 7 March 2020

CARLISLE v COLCHESTER UNITED

My friend Ian Kellitt won the 40 Club monthly draw and invited me to join him for lunch and a game at Brunton Park. I must admit I had never seen Carlisle play and apart from Ian, only knew one other supporter, Andy Magee, who came to my school in Peterborough almost 50 years ago.

We repaired to the Cross Keys in Canonbie the night before the Colchester game where Stan , the landlord and keen supporter, brought me up to date on all things Carlisle United. Stan incidentally ,has a fine collection of framed shirts of Carlisle Utd , Gretna FC, Annan FC and Canonbie FC in the bar and the beer is good. Stan confirmed the Club is on the way back after the heady days of the old Division 1 and the disappointment of non-league football. There is general approval for Paul Simpson's work in guiding United back to the League 2004-05 acknowledged by his elevation to Coach of the England U 20 side. Simpson of course led Carlisle to double-promotion.

The current themes are transition , focus on youth , improving the squad on limited means and hoping new Head Coach Chris Beech gets the Club back on track.

So we caught the bus to Carlisle and

were decanted amicably by the driver near the train station. The station and former steam engine shed at Kingmoor (code 12A) are very evocative for train-spotters and I wished I had visited in 1968.

One smiling policeman and happy people drinking coffee on the picturesque station suggested little trouble was expected from the visitors from Colchester.

After an easy stroll past neat houses to Brunton Park, we went into the Players and Officials Entrance. A large bottle of hand sanitizer greeted us and all visitors were asked to clean their hands. This really felt like the moment Covid-19 virus had left the pages of the newspapers and entered our world.

Manager Beech bounded into the building and hailed all of us waiting in



line for the stadium tour led by **Adrian Bell**.

There is very little Adrian doesn't know about United and he was very welcoming and informative. The tour took in the Board and Trophy room, the Medical room and the Home and Away dressing rooms.

We were amazed how small the players shirts were and how the size of the



dugout . It was explained that the 4th Official is little more than a punchbag for Managers. Apparently, Managers are far politer when the 4th Official is female.

At lunch we decided to have the roast beef rather than the vegetarian option and two pints of John Smith.

modern shin pad has evolved to the size of a G-string. **We were asked not to photograph any material on the white board in case any tactical information fell into the hands of the visitors.**

The tour took us down the Players Tunnel when I jumped up and touched CUFC's equivalent sign to 'THIS IS ANFIELD'. Ian decided to sit and reflect on life from the Home team

We enjoyed a further couple of pints at half time and two delicious mini meat pies at full time.

The atmosphere slowly built as the tables filled . One stag party was in full flow on an adjacent table with the soon to be betrothed clad in an Olga the Fox suit for the day.

Three tie wearing Colchester United officials slipped quietly onto the table

next to ours. We noticed their sharp haircuts suggesting they and their Club, on the verge of a play-off place, meant business.

The game began with a couple of early incursions down the Carlisle right which spelt danger. Keeper Collin made a couple of sharp saves auguring well for my choice as MOM . **In the flicker of an eye, United were 2 down to a faster and taller Colchester side .** At times the away team seemed embarrassed by their lead.

The Jones boys , Anderton and the Centre Backs were able to compete physically but never sufficiently to build a platform from which to attack the visitors. There were too many long aerial balls to nobody simply to relieve pressure. United were lightweight in several positions and extra helpings of dinner and weight training look called for. Adding South American skills may have to wait until the base has been built.

The 3rd goal which came after half time, was caused by slack marking as well as poor positioning by my choice as MOM. Thereafter, the game continued to its conclusion but at least the visitors didn't run amok. There was evidence of frustration -one or two lads flirting with the teapot pose, so it was a positive thing the visitors didn't score again.

The home crowd bore the loss stoically and it is clear the side is in transition. We saw enough to predict United would sort things out and beat New-

port County in the next game which I'm delighted to say, they did.

For United to become promotion candidates next year, more player reduction and reinforcement are probably needed. The onus must be on searching relentlessly for young talent able to compete in a physical division and keeping players until the Club can sell them on for decent money.

Thinking strategically, the club could try to play open , attacking football; keeping the ball on the ground, adding width and spending holidays talent spotting in Latin American countries.

Be ready to innovate and always remember **YOU WERE THE FIRST TO INTRODUCE HAND SANITIZER.**

I hope Ian will invite me to assess progress at another game next season when I hope United will be challenging for promotion. Also, those mini-meat pies weren't half bad!

Steve Collins



BRANCH FUNDING UPDATE



The COVID lockdown at Carlisle came the day before the new players tunnel cover was due to be delivered and means that it will be a while before we see our proud logo displayed at Brunton Park.

We still plan to approve a donation from our ring-fenced funds for disabled support. This will enable **professional plans to be drawn up for a series of improvements to the facilities for home and away disabled supporters at Brunton Park.** This has been requested by CUSG and is a good example of seed funding, as it will trigger a fundraising campaign with all

CUFC supporters groups with the aim of getting the disabled facilities at the club to a high standard for a lower league club, rather than the embarrassing situation we had earlier in the season.

It is worth remembering what we have delivered already this season and what we have committed to deliver when it becomes possible to carry it out. These initiatives are funded by your membership fees and support of fundraising initiatives including the 40 club, and the sale of Jimmy Glass tee shirts and beer.

So far this season your support has enabled us to :

- Be the major contributor to the **new home disabled shelter**
- Provide **memorabilia for the new Sunset Lounge**
- Commit funds from the sale of Jimmy Glass tee shirts and beer to refurb **the new Glass Bar** in tribute to Jimmy (by the way Jimmy asked for 12 bottles of beer to be delivered to his Dad and insisted on making a contribution)
- Sponsor two Carlisle United ladies games**
- Pay for a camera, pole and associated costs** to help with coaching at the club especially for academy and youth players
- Deliver mini goals to the academy**
- Donate £650 to the MND charity** in memory of Tony Hopper
- Purchase 2 season tickets for use by members** (already used by over 25 members)
- Sponsor Keighran Kerr and Gethin Jones.**

Simon Clarkson and Terry McCarthy, are the branch representatives on CUSG, organised a whole series of initiatives including two Fans Forums and ‘A Night with Jimmy Glass’ as well as managing the Sunset suite memorabilia and shirt displays in the East Stand.

Please do get in touch with **Simon Clarkson** chair@cusclb.com or myself if you have any comments or suggestions for projects and initiatives which can be supported by use of our funds.

David Brown

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DAVE BROWN SHARES SOME OF HIS FAVOURITE FOOTBALL QUOTES:

"I would not be bothered if we lost every game as long as we won the league."

Mark Viduka

"Alex Ferguson is the best manager I've ever had at this level. Well, he's the only manager I've actually had at this level. But he's the best manager I've ever had."

David Beckham

"If you don't believe you can win, there is no point in getting out of bed at the end of the day."

Neville Southall

"I've had 14 bookings this season - 8 of which were my fault, but 7 of which were disputable."

Paul Gascoigne

THE MATCH THAT TIME FORGOT?

FOOTBALL LEAGUE CUP 2ND
ROUND:

CARLISLE UNITED 2 MANCHESTER
CITY 1

rekindled of one of the classic Brunton Park Cup games.

My first thought was that this game must have occurred during one of City's slumps (they had spent three seasons in

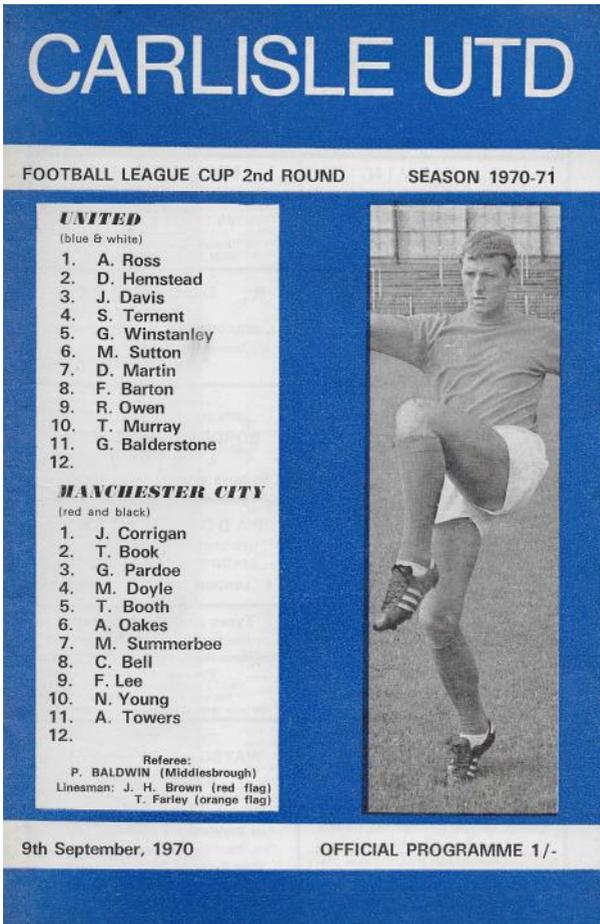
the old second division during the 1960's). But no, this was the revered team of Lee, Bell and Summerbee, all of whom were in the side that played in this game. **The City side included six current or future England internationals** – Joe Corrigan, Mike Doyle, Tony Towers, Francis Lee, Colin Bell and Mike Summerbee - and were managed by Joe Mercer and Malcolm Allison.

The 1967-68 season had seen the start of a very successful period for Manchester City:

- 1968 League Champions;
- 1969 F.A. Cup Winners;
- 1970 League Cup Winners;
- 1970 European Cup-Winners' Cup Winners.

T

his period, through to 1976, was described as the "glory years".



Glancing through some of my old programmes recently my memory was

With 5 League games of the 1970-71 season played Carlisle were in 12th position in the (old) Division 2.

Whilst I can remember standing in the Scratching Shed (long since replaced by the East Stand) and a cracking mid-week Cup atmosphere with almost 18,000 fans in the ground, I confess that I cannot recall the details of the game. **It was reported that Carlisle dominated the game with Chris Balderstone, Frank Barton and Michael Sutton outstanding in midfield.** The opening goal was scored by Dennis Martin. Francis Lee equalised for City and the winning goal came from Bob Hatton.

Starting line-ups – Carlisle: A. Ross, D. Hemstead, J. Davis, S. Ternent, G. Winstanley, M. Sutton, D. Martin, F. Barton, R. Owen, R. Hatton, C. Balderstone. Sub: T. Murray.

Man. City: J. Corrigan, T. Book, G. Pardoe, M. Doyle, T. Booth, A. Oakes, M. Summerbee, C. Bell, F. Lee, N. Young, A. Towers. Sub: I. Bowyer.

At the time of writing – the 4th week of the Covid-19 lockdown – the game and result sounds like fantasy football. But no, this match really happened!

Richard Perry.

NOT THE MAN CITY MATCH, BUT IT'S AN EXCUSE TO HAVE PICTURE OF THE GREAT BOBBY OWEN IN HIS PRIME.



Brunton Park Diary 2019/20



*Probably the greatest goal
of all time*

Mike Kilner takes us into lockdown with what increasingly looks like the story of how the 2019/20 season ended.

WELL, AT LEAST WE'RE NOW UNBEATEN IN 8 WEEKS....

Feb 4th (Tue)

CUFC RESERVES 1 FLEETWOOD RESERVES 2 – CENTRAL LEAGUE CUP

Omari Patrick scored and made a good impression on his first United outing but it wasn't enough to send them finishing any higher than runners-up to Wigan at the end of the group stages and therefore out of this year's competition. Patrick ran on and opening up his body, finished confidently on 29 minutes after the Blues had gone behind early doors. New loan keeper Marcus Dewhurst was also given his first outing, coming on in the second half for Gray. Scougall went down on five minutes after a heavy challenge and had to be substituted shortly after-

wards in the one injury concern coming out from the game.

United XI: Gray (Dewhurst 46), Lightfoot, Iredale, Hunt, Mellish, Lightfoot, Birch, Scougall (Walton 12), Charters, Olomola (Wilson 90), Patrick (Leslie 81).

Feb 5th (Wed)

Leeds United feeder club CUFC announce the next crop of talented Cumbrians to be offered one-year senior contracts by the club in the hope of playing a handful of games for the Blues before joining McCarron and Galloway at Elland Road. **All four are Carlisle-born and are defenders Charlie Barnes and Charlie Birch, midfielder/defender Liam Lightfoot and central defender Tom Wilson.** A decision on fellow youth teamers Jamie Armstrong and Kyle Soper will come later.

Thomas the (shot-like-a) Traction Engine is up for January's League Two Player of the Month Award.

Feb 6th (Thu)

The owners' dreams of turning United into a top 10 club finally reaches fulfilment. On the day that Bury AFC apply to join the North West Counties League, fans web site 'Against League 3' publishes its 2019 best and worst 10 football

ham (Lemsagam), 4) Man Utd (Glazers), 3) Newcastle (Ashley), 2) Macclesfield (Alkadhi), 1) Chesterfield (Allen)
*no longer owner

One typical comment was:

"Lethargic, boring, unambitious, tight fisted, not open to listen to fans – terri-



club owners based on an annual survey conducted with the help of 3,000 supporters across 141 different clubs. The 'best' category has no surprises with Luton Town, Leicester City and Accrington Stanley in ascending order at the top of the tree. The infamous three pick up a total score of 12.74 out of 100.

The top 10 worst owners from 10 up to 1 were voted as:

10) Hull City (Allam Family), 9) Charlton (Duchatelet*), **8) Carlisle Utd (Jenkins/Nixon/Pattinson)**, 7) Kidderminster (Gordon*), 6) Coventry (SISU), 5) Old-

ble owners overseeing a very bleak period for Carlisle. Lost belief in them a long time ago. No ambition. Lost the fans and the club. 10 years of failure. Whatever Jenkins' faults, he is further utterly hamstrung by people who have, by complete and utter fluke, found themselves in charge of a football team. John Nixon and folk like him are an issue that is sadly repeated at many football teams, and the fact he has found himself a cushy EFL position with free cup final tickets and Portugal golfing holidays means he will never, ever give up



the position he paid £1 for ten years ago until it's time to leave in a wooden box. Whether he will outlive the club is another matter."

And that was just from one of the other Directors at the club. Perhaps. Allegedly.

Feb 7th (Fri)

Without his regular fix of ninety minutes on a ploughed field since the Boom and Bust of Bury, former Blue Tom Miller finally finds another club as he joins Jim Bentley-managed National League AFC Fylde until the end of the season.

It's the Director Fans Forum so let's just leave it with the favourite comment from the night:

Steve P: "What would you have done differently if you'd been running the club?"

Fan: "I'd have got rid of you two for a start."

Feb 8th (Sat)

CUFC 1 SWINDON TOWN 1

Instead of being run-ragged by a visiting triumvirate strike-force of Hope, Yates and Doyle, United rolled their sleeves up and gave the division's pacesetters a run for their money. Al-

ready missing Kayode with hamstring-twang, the blow of a goal behind and McKirdy's shins being given the rough-house treatment might have seen this side fold only a few months' ago. The two centre backs were excellent, Webster looking like a different player under Beech. Hayden celebrated the announcement of a child on its way

CUFC 0 CHELTENHAM TOWN 1

United paid the price for too many errors, especially in promising positions, while a physical Cheltenham managed the difficult conditions better. The cause was not helped by some poor officiating including a potentially offside decision for the winner from the veteran Reid. Despite his assailant



(queue ball stuffed under the shirt) with a well-directed equaliser from Watt's corner.

*Player Ratings: Collin 6.21, G Jones 6.71, Anderton 6.71, Webster 7.29, Hayden 7.64, M Jones 6.86, Watt 6.86, Guy 6.79, McKirdy 5.71, Thomas 6.50, Alessandra 6.21 Subs: Bridge 6.29, Charters 6.25, Patrick 6.71

Feb 11th (Tue)

not even picking up a card, Callum Guy came off worse in a tackle and will now miss the remainder of the season after the quack deemed an operation the better bet in order for Guy to be 100% for next season.

*Player Ratings: Collin 5.25, G Jones 6.88, Anderton 6.00, Webster 7.00, Hayden 7.13, M Jones 6.63, Watt 7.50, Guy 6.63, Thomas 4.88, Alessandra 6.38, Patrick 6.00 Subs: Loft 3.00, Iredale 6.67

Feb 13th (Thu)

For reasons left unembellished, cheeky, chirpy goalkeeper coach Craig Wight leaves the club.

Feb 14th (Fri)

CUFC YOUTH 5 PORT VALE YOUTH 0

A storming win for the baby Blues, Day with two and Barnes with the other

ite, the other being the latest windy deluge to hit the UK.

An early warning from Nadders saw him beat Collin but strike the post before born again midfield maestro Mellish missed the first of what seemed like 20 personal chances. Thomas was in his element, a twisty-turny pain in the rear for the Crawley defence all afternoon. Collin saved well



before half-time and then Day completing a grab for the match ball after the break with Chikukwa wrapping it up.

Feb 15th (Sat)

CRAWLEY TOWN 0 CUFC 0

United were able to deal with the twin high-speed threats of Ashley and Dennis, one being the former fan's favour-

from Nadders early in the second half while the advancing Mellish met Thomas' pull-back only to see an unbelievable block on the line deny him a goal.

No Player Ratings: Collin, G Jones, Anderson, Webster, Hayden, Mellish, M Jones, Watt, Thomas, Alessandra, Patrick

Feb 16th (Sun)

Former manager Harry Gregg sadly passes away at the age of 87. Despite an unhappy period at the helm of the good ship Carlisle in the mid-80s, he played a part in a near-successful dramatic rescue act from tier two the season before when brought in by Bob Stokoe. Gregg was also behind establishing the Centre of Excellence concept at the club during his time there. If only Jim Tolmie hadn't.....anyway. Unfortunately the boo boys won in the end with the team slowly sliding towards the league's tier four basement. He was of course better remembered as real-life hero, instrumental in saving a number of team mates from the Munich air crash disaster.

Feb 19th (Wed)

Liam McCarron makes his Scotland under-19 debut in their 1-0 friendly win against the Czech Republic.

Feb 22nd (Sat)

CUFC 2 MORECAMBE 2

United's woeful home record against the Shrimpers showed no sign of ending, certainly in the first 45 minutes when old boy Stockton tormented his former employees with a goal and a hand in the other to make it 2-0. It was very much a case of Oooo-mari as Patrick exceptional first touch and finish from Webster's fine diagonal pass gave the Blues a foothold into the match they barely deserved on half-time and then Hayden buried a header in front of the Warwick following another precision corner from Watt. Neither side could create a clear-cut chance in the remaining 25 minutes as the game drifted to a draw.

*Player Ratings: Collin 4.00, G Jones 6.00, Anderton 5.08, Webster 4.42, Hayden 6.58, M Jones 5.92, Watt 6.75,



Mellish 5.83, Thomas 4.17, Alessandra 5.08, Patrick 5.67 Subs: McKirdy 5.40, Bridge 4.60

Feb 24th (Mon)

With Collin's form wobbly than a Mr Jelly in recent weeks, former Rochdale keeper coach Steve Collis agrees to remain with United for the rest of the season after filling in following Craig Wight's sudden departure.

Feb 26th (Wed)

**SUNDERLAND RESERVES XI 5 CUFC
RESERVES XI 2 - CLOSED DOORS
FRIENDLY**

Lofty scored one and helped force the own-goal opener in an otherwise bit of a drubbing for a young reserve team bounce game. Sunderland fielded a number of senior, first-team squad players including Will Grigg, Kyle Lafferty and Antoine Semenyo, all three of whom were amongst their five scorers.

The Blues gave a run out to ex-Manchester City, Blackburn and Wolves trialist Callum Harris, having trained with the squad for the past few weeks. The 24-year-old was most recently with Spanish third-tier side Real Burgos. Does that come with fries and ketchup?

Feb 27th (Thu)

A Fans' Forum is organised for Friday 20 March with Beech, Skelton and Holdsworth in the hot seat ahead of the 'Beech Boys' Leyton Orient game.

Feb 28th (Fri)

Back-up keeper **Louis Gray** joins National League North outfit Chester on a month's loan. The promotion chasers are having a fine season with legends Danny Livesey and Simon Grand in their ranks, not to mention forgotten man George Glendon.

Feb 29th (Sat)

TINPOT CUFC 1 CUFC 2

A happy hunting ground in recent years, the Blues' trip to the Abbey Stadium yielded a deserved three points while surely dispelling any remaining relegation fears. Alessandra pounced on a loose ball in the box to drill his first United goal gleefully for a 27-minute lead. Anderton's happy habit of popping up in the right place at the right time made it 2-0 in the 73rd minute. From there you thought we could make it 3 or 4 however, another old boy in the shape of Reggie Lambe made it a strangely uncomfortable last 10 minutes after what had gone on before it.

*Player Ratings: Collin 6.50, G Jones 7.25, Anderton 6.75, Webster 7.50, Hayden 7.50, M Jones 7.00, Watt 6.50, Mellish 6.25, Alessandra 7.25, Patrick 7.25, McKirdy 6.00.

Mar 3rd (Tue)

United physio Neil ‘Dolly’ Dalton decides to call an end to his incredible 28-years of senior service (and 34-year association) with the club, taking up a new challenge while still assisting on



the appointment of a new physio and his/her starting period. Ironically mentioned only a few weeks earlier, Dolly was one of lucky few in the new Centre of Excellence’s original intake following its introduction under the gaze of Harry Gregg in 1986.

Mar 7th (Sat)

CUFC 0 COLCHESTER UTD 3

What a difference one season makes, smashing four past the Essex boys one year and then being humbled and dis-

mantled by the same opposition just over 12 months later. Alessandra and Mellish had half-chances towards the game’s denouement as the visitors visibly relaxed and were just about hanging on and competing before the first flew past Collin on 41 minutes. That then started an avalanche of chances and inevitably, goals, the next 30 minutes bad enough to leave any previously sane Carlisle fan either seeking solace from a bottle or possibly looking up the number of the nearest shrink.....

*Player Ratings: Collin 2.67, G Jones 4.67, Anderton 5.00, Hunt 4.00, Hayden 6.33, M Jones 4.33, Watt 3.67, Mellish 3.67, Alessandra 3.67, Patrick 3.67, McKirdy 3.33

Mar 10th (Tue)

CUFC 2 NEWPORT COUNTY 0

Inspired by Jack Bridge’s best performance of the season in a new attacking role, Carlisle finally came out of the traps quickly, took the game by the scruff of the neck and never let go. The front three gelled well together while with some relief from watchers, Hunt showed enough at the back to suggest the trauma he suffered against Colchester was a mere blip.

Patrick opened the fun, heading home yet another Watt corner. The lead was stretched from the spot courtesy of

Kayode's cool penalty after good work by **break**.
Bridge and the result seemed never in doubt once Ryan Inniss was probably harshly on the end of a red card just before the Bovril. Alessandra twice, Watt and Mike Jones and all had great chances to improve the goal difference in the second half while Patrick must be wondering how a clear handball from his attempt on goal was turned down by the errant officials.

*Player Ratings: Collin 7.00, G Jones 7.00, Anderton 7.25, Hunt 6.75, Hayden 8.25, Watt 6.75, M Jones 6.50, Bridge 7.25, Patrick 7.50, Alessandra 6.75, Kayode 7.75. Sub: Thomas 7.00

Mar 12th (Thu)

In one of the final transfers of the current season, Stockport County announce their intention to never challenge for or seek a return to the Football League by paying an undisclosed fee for Richie Bennett from Port Vale (count the money quick and run boys before they check the warranty). The only man in football to stand at six-foot-four and end up no higher than that when 'jumping', will be with County until the end of 2021/22.

Mar 14th (Sat)

GRIMSBY TOWN P-P CUFC

Football in the UK is suspended until at least 3rd April (and we know how that turned out) following the Covid-19 out-

Apr 1st (Wed)

The long wait is finally over as Philip Day's Edinburgh Woollen Mill completes its takeover of Carlisle United with Storey Homes amongst a local consortium of other backers. The new shareholder portfolio is made up of EWM 65%, Storey/Business Consortium 25% and Andrew Jenkins 10%.

Apr 2nd (Thurs)

HTB readers check the date on the last diary entry and inwardly curse Mike Kilner.

Apr 27th (Mon)

With financial belts being increasingly tightened, Colchester are one of the first to show their hand by releasing four players ahead of their June contract expiry date. Amongst them is former loan midfielder Brandon Comley.

Out-of-contract **Gethin Jones** is supposedly on the radar of Sunderland according to the rumour mill.

*Player Ratings are calculated as an average of fans' views from the TheCumbrians.net main forum (<http://www.thecumbrians.net/index.php/forum/main-forum>)

Mike Kilner

Locked-down HTB editor John Bowman recounts how he first became infected with 'CUFC1921'.

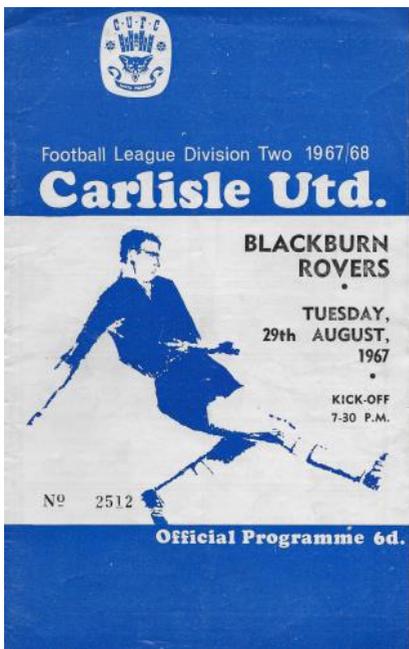
It was 29th August 1967. My father parked in Rickerby Park, we walked over the 'Spenny Bridge' and I entered the ground through the juniors turnstile at the Waterworks End, gaining my first view of the 'hallowed turf'. We then walked around to what would become my regular spot at the front of the Scratching Shed. The terracing at that time was railway sleepers and power station ash while the post and rail fence had chestnut paling attached.

We won 1-0 and the attendance was 11,668. Dad had forgotten to invent



the mobile phone, so no pictorial evidence exists, but I reckon I've spotted us, in our usual place, in some of the excellent photos printed by the News & Star in recent months. I do recall being confused by the crowd calling a dark haired midfielder 'Baldy' when the obvious baldie was the number 6, Peter Garbutt. Behind us in the Scratching Shed used to stand an older chap, referred to as 'The Voice'. Well-dressed and well-spoken he'd intermittently boom out perfectly enunciated encouragements such as *'Do come along Carlisle, time to score a goal before half time'*.

From then on I went to most home games until I left Carlisle in 1976, heading for Bristol Poly and my four-year extra-marital affair with Bristol City, who were about to enjoy their first season in the First Division, with a team whose make up and ethos was comfortably similar to Carlisle's early 1970's team.



BRANCH TEAM FAILS CAMBRIDGE EXAM

Jason Casey (front row, second from left) reports that the London Branch XI put up a gutsy fight against Cambridge in blustery conditions.

The 1st half saw wave after wave of Cambridge attacks which big Dave and Ralph did well to repel and the agile acrobatics of Chris were there when they failed. It was not all one way. **Carlisle did get a disallowed goal** which was knocked in by Joseph after Ash had knocked it past the 'keeper & sent it goal bound following good wing play by Dom. Not sure who was offside. The inevitable Cambridge goal came from a

headed corner. Jugsy found himself marking the much taller no. 24 who connected well and Chris had no chance to stop the onion bag bulging; 1-0.

The 2nd half started in similar vein and the wind changed to cross the pitch making control and sturdiness a much needed ability the majority of both players lacked. Counter attacking Carlisle moved the ball out left, **Dom cut inside and chipped to Lucas on his favoured left and the 12 year old made no mistake in blasting an equaliser 1-1.** As more passes became hit or



miss the more robust Cambridge players seemed to grow and control the



game. **Soon they were 4-1 up.**

A deflected shot started a mini rout.

Jugsy had an effort from inside his own half bounced into the Cams keepers hands as the wind changed again and Carlisle, with youth on their side had their own spell.

Chris Tembey hit a smacker that was well saved. There was then a mini revival... **Firstly Tom stayed up after a corner and smashed home** from just inside the box and then **14 year old Joe**



topped a fine performance with a nice close range finish into the roof of the net via the crossbar making it just 4-3 to the hosts.

Fullbacks Dobbo and Steve defied their ages by continuing to press on the wings. Ralph made more timely interceptions as Carlisle held on. **There was no equaliser to be found but heads**

held high to fight again.



Jugsys' Ratings:

Chris N 9, Dobbo 7.5, Tom 8, Dave 8.5, Ralph 8, Steve 7, Jugsy 7, Dom 7.5, Chris T 8, Lucas 7.5, Ash 7, Joe 8.

A WORLD WITHOUT FOOTBALL AND PUBS

A world without football and pubs is not one that I can imagine many people would want to live in. It seems such a long time ago now since I experienced the pleasures of a live match day.

I'm definitely suffering from withdrawal symptoms, as I'm sure all fellow Blues supporters are. The option of replayed games on telly comes nowhere near meeting the need for football, especially as almost all of it is re-showing relatively recent Premier League or Champions League games. Although this may meet some people's

tute for Match of the Day - I'll have to settle for fond memories instead. These have been boosted by CUFC and BBC Radio Cumbria showing us what we've been missing, with memorable goals and commentary from past games.

My last awayday was at Cambridge and it was a cracker. Not only was it a favourite pre-match pub with the usual brilliant company, but I'd also arranged to meet my second cousin Zoe there, last seen at my 60th birthday outing before the Colchester game in 2012. Zoe had moved from Colchester to



craving for the sport - unlike Mrs Brown's Boys which the Beeb schedulers must have deemed a good substi-

Cambridge and, amazingly, lives about 4 doors away from the Kingston Arms.

Proceedings were enlivened in the pub with a presentation of a team shirt to **Craig Milne (below and see the article that follows) for reaching his target of visiting all current 92 league grounds, a superb achievement.** It was then on to the Abbey Stadium (thankfully reverted to its proper name and no long-



er called the Trade Recruitment Stadium) to take up our seats behind the goal. Disappointingly, there's still a gap of about 20 metres to the pitch.

My expectations weren't great because Cambridge had a very good recent record of 13 points from their last 5 games. I'd settled for a draw away from home as I often do. **To see us play so well and pick up a 2-1 win exceeded expectations by some distance.** We were good going forward, creating a number of chances. Allesandra, with his first goal for us, and

Gethin Jones both finished clinically. Omari Patrick looked skilful and quick and Aaron Hayden was strong once again in defence. The only downside was the usual concession of a late goal to give us all the jitters, this time a good strike from former Blue Reggie Lambe. There was huge relief, as there often is, on hearing the final whistle.

Mike Carruthers suggested Zoe should come every week and then it was back to the Kingston Arms for a celebration. Some of us got a bit carried away by the celebrating. When it dawned on the stragglers (Paul Irving and myself) that we should make a move to the station, we had to 'leg it' (not easy with an arthritic hip). Hasty goodbyes at the station to Zoe, we then found out we'd cut it too fine as our train pulled out on the furthest platform. It had to be the slow train then, but we got home eventually after a very satisfying day out.

My last live game was the 2-0 victory at home to Newport County, watched on i-follow in the company of other branch members at the Civil Service Club. Of course, this was the last game before the curtain came down on the season. It was another good performance after the disappointment of the Colchester game on the Saturday before. It was a comfortable victory, as it should have been after the sending off of Inniss just before half time. Perhaps we got a bit complacent in the second half, failing to score whilst a man up and well in control. I was impressed once again with Omari Patrick who increasingly looks like a good acquisition.

What next? No one knows of course. It's already been 6 long weeks since the last match and it looks as though this is going to go on for some time yet. I'm hopeful we'll be able to start next season on time but I won't be holding my breath. I've given up, like most people I guess, on any resumption of this season. In the meantime I'll be thinking wistfully about all the cricket I'm going to miss that I was scheduled to watch and meeting friends and family down the pub. **One thing I won't be doing is watching Mrs Brown's Boys.**

Ken Hullock

WHO SCORED?

Mike Carruthers turns to literature in an attempt to fill his own empty hours>

With the lack of live football, I've found myself looking at "**The Lads In Blue - The Complete History of Carlisle Utd**".

One match I attended that I still have vivid memories of was the **Carlisle Utd v Orient league game on December 4th 1976.** I'd been looking forward to the game as Orient had in their ranks an exciting young winger called **Laurie Cunningham who was receiving rave reviews.**

On the morning of the game, it snowed heavily and I was worried that the game could be in danger. However, in those days it had to be pretty bad for a game to be postponed. As I took my place in The Warwick Rd End, the pitch was covered in snow, only the pitch markings had been cleared. It was freezing and

that only served to make the conditions even more treacherous. When the game started Laurie Cunningham was one of the few players managing to keep his balance and you could certainly see why he was attracting a lot of attention from bigger clubs.

At half time it was 0-0 but the weather was deteriorating. A thick blanket of fog rolled over the ground and, as the second half started, you could barely see the halfway line from the Warwick, trouble was Carlisle were attacking the Waterworks end.

As we were heading into the late stages of the game, there was a roar from the far end of the paddock and the Waterworks, Carlisle had scored but nobody in the Warwick Road End saw it.

Very quickly the news filtered through that George McVitie had got the goal with a header! I have since heard it said that it was the only time George scored with a header. I'm not sure if that is correct but George scoring with a header was certainly a collectors' item and I bet it rankles with him to this day that half the crowd didn't see it!

Laurie Cunningham soon moved onto West Bromwich and just over two years later on another cold December afternoon, he and Cyrille Regis were the stars of a brilliant West Bromwich side who outplayed Manchester Utd at Old Trafford winning 5 - 3 in a game that is still remembered as a classic.

Mike Carruthers

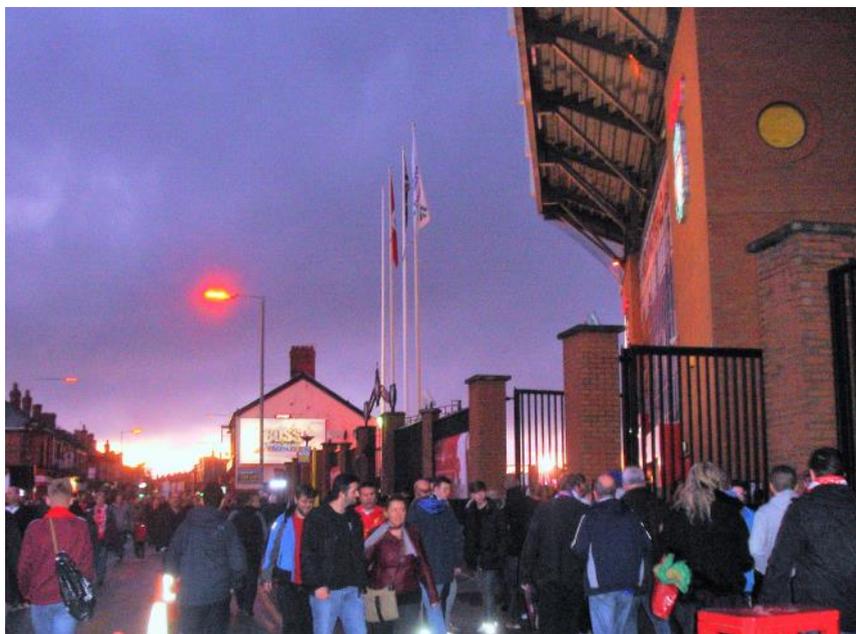
A NIGHT OUT IN LIVERPOOL.... AFTER A NIGHT OUT IN SHEPHERDS BUSH

I have friends who love Liverpool. I don't. I have a mildly mellow feeling towards them but that is it. **We had Liverpool in the League Cup and I was over the moon and booked my hotel immediately.**

The previous round we had met up in Shepherds Bush in a crap pub with zero expectations. QPR is not a nice ground and it's not in a nice place. They may have had Stan Bowles but our previous visits there were not successful despite the delightful night we spent with a very lovely individual with a really smart scarf who sat in front of us saying that she had just got a job with Newsround.

Her name was Helen Skelton, we thought she was nice but wanted to know all about her brother, Gavin. Despite that she has often supported us since then.

We weren't great in the first half but held our own. In the second half we suddenly realised that QPR were a mess and we were playing great football passing it around. We won. Only the second time we had beaten a team two divisions above us. Next morning we made huge arrangements about getting to Liverpool and staying overnight.



Nothing like **Ken Hullock, the match day organiser, who suddenly had to get tickets for loads of fans negotiating with Carlisle for getting priority. Ken did a brilliant job and 3 weeks later, I am heading up to Liverpool with the lads.** Getting to the hotel by the new docks was a little interesting when several people were trying to walk uphill, until someone pointed out that the river was downhill.

I warmed hugely to the city when I was looking for the first meeting pub, asked directions and had a guy go out of his way to take me there. Within minutes I was handed a free bowl of scouse and a decent pint. I was definitely warming to this city.

We jumped in taxis to get to the ground as we wanted to soak up the atmosphere. We saw the Hillsborough memorial which was hugely moving, and the new stand being built over the old stand that was impressive. We saw the fans

Zone but we also saw the degradation around the ground. It was hard to tell which houses were lived in and which weren't. **Walking in the ground it felt like it was a home game. 6,000 Carlisle fans make a hell of a lot of noise. In fact, apart from "you will never walk again" we out sang Liverpool all night.**

Everyone knows the game and how it went. **Liverpool won, we lost but seeing Asamoah score in front of the Kop was one of my all time highlights and we got damn close on the penalties.**

Afterwards we ended up partying in Beatles Alley until way too late with quite a few people unable to get home to Manchester and Preston – I think they slept on hotel floors.

The following morning a couple of us visited the Cavern – it's not real, but go there you will love it.

Dave Brown



CRAIG MILNE COMPLETES THE '92

Having attended Brunton Park and followed the fortunes of Carlisle United since 1976 I have steadily increased the number of grounds I have visited. That first game was Carlisle United v Carlisle City in the Cumberland cup, my cousin was playing for City and I travelled with my Dad and my brother in law, a real family day out. Not that I realised at the time being 6 years old but football and family would be a constant throughout my life.



Since 2004 I've been counting the grounds visited having received as a gift the book 'The essential football fan' written by Duncan Adams, a guide to all the Premier and football league grounds for the 2004-2005 season. This is when I challenged my nephew and sons to see who could attend the most football grounds across that year. Each ground we visited we added our initials to that page in the book, across that year I achieved 27 grounds from far and wide. Some with Carlisle United, some grounds I visited because I was in the area and some I went out of my way to visit.

Fast forward to the summer of 2019 and my thoughts turned to the season ahead, looking at friendlies I saw some good opportunities to visit some new grounds and see some European teams playing in England. Having looked at tickets for those games and realising how many games I could take in before the season started took stock of my total number of grounds visited. Of the 92 grounds currently in the premier league and the football league I had visited 66 of them, that left only 24, 24!

It was only then that I realised if I did 12 a season I could have them all completed before my 50th Birthday in 2021 now that would be something special. Hang on 24, I could do that in a season I could do that this season, I went back to my summer plans for friendlies and

then started looking at the league fixtures for those grounds I hadn't visited

I started to develop a list in the notes on my phone of grounds, games and dates. Some grounds I identified 2 or 3 games I could attend on a variety of dates in case other commitments would mean I couldn't get there. Having worked my brain like a small computer calculating dates, distance and who to contact for tickets I had a final version I could run with. That was it then, the bit was between my teeth I was going to complete the 92 this season and visit all 24 grounds finishing on Good Friday at Salford City. I didn't share my target at first, just in case something went horribly wrong and it did take 2 seasons but in the back of my mind I'd committed to this season and with good Friday as a finish day I still had a few weeks to spare of the season if needed.

Right first up, New York, well the New York stadium any way and Rotherham v Leicester City, it absolutely poured down all day thankfully I found sanctuary in The county bar near the station, one down. The following weekend I managed a double header Crystal Palace v Hertha Berlin, erm it's a personal opinion but I won't be rushing back there, the ground was a mish mash of shapes and stands, the atmosphere was terrible after all I'd heard. Thankfully I was off to the Lane the next day and Spurs v Inter Milan, WOW, without doubt the best stadium I've ever visited, magnificent in every aspect. Well worth the queues at the tube station afterwards.

Hooray onto Barnsley next with Carlisle United, thank god. A fantastic ground and an excellent game for us

anyway. This early in the season to see such an outstanding effort from the players, hopes were lifted for more of this. Onto Swindon again with Carlisle, quite the trek even from Cheshire, the away fans 'bar' was something to behold, with a full rack of suits in varying sizes and a changing room to try them on, not what I was expecting.

A break from groundhopping saw my next game at Wembley with England v Bulgaria, followed the next weekend by Hull City v Wigan. Someone I work with follows Wigan and was able to get me several tickets this season, starting with today's. A cracking stadium but the same as many I was going to see this season a white framed bowl. Thankfully I got a history hit with an open day at the Carnegie Heritage centre, 2 minutes from the ground, a magnificent converted library used as a hub for the local community and visited regularly by school groups looking to find out the history of their city. I should have visited the next ground with Carlisle but I guess the journey put me off.

Bournemouth v Everton, thanks to social media I got myself on an executive minibus with an affiliated EFC supporters club. One of my first very early morning drop offs due to the 2pm kick off. 6 and a half hours down, 6 back, a great atmosphere and a beautiful day but sadly ruined by VAR.

The first of 3 visits into Wales started with Newport County a lovely town centre and a fantastic setting next to the river. A fantastic away end bar and a free ticket thanks to one of the many Carlisle United friends I have made on my travels, what more could I ask for? A visit to the Posh was up next, THE best

atmosphere I experienced this season! A very tight Lincoln City escort to the ground made quite some noise and then stood on the London road terrace with a great view of the game the home fans upped their noise to match. A lesson to be learnt here for other clubs too with plenty going on in the car park for visitors old and young. Opposite end of the country now for

Middlesbrough v West Brom where I got a sighting of the rare 'Adrian Chiles' in the away end with me, plenty of flag waving from the home fans but a bit of a flat game. This was another example of clubs going the extra mile with an outdoor bar for fans with live music and plenty of tents supporting local community groups. Thankfully half term was calling and again through the use of social media and @falconblues I travelled with Everton to Brighton, another game ruined by VAR, another one of 'those modern stadiums' in the middle of nowhere. Being on my own meant I could get into the university bar next to the ground and watched the early game before trudging down the hill and into the ground.

The youth FA cup threw up a youth game at Salford meaning I could tick it off months earlier than expected. **Being a teacher means I'm not able to play out generally speaking midweek so I missed Derby v Carlisle the other year.** I travelled with Middlesbrough this time, on a Saturday, and after speaking to the concierge at the stadium got taken in to look at the Trophy cabinet, with plenty there from some high calibre players and managers from my childhood. Up next another trip to Wembley to see the Lionesses this time v Germany in the largest attended female game

held on British soil, something I suggest will only get more popular judging by the atmosphere that night and the quality of football.

Halfway there now so popped to Brunton Park for the Cambridge game quickly followed by Luton v Wigan, Bristol Rovers v Peterborough and then Christmas. A weekend in London meant I could get to both West Ham United v Leicester and Gillingham v Rochdale.

PS: The London stadium is nothing to write home about and it was full of European visitors which were easy to identify as most of the home fans had binoculars round their necks, I laughed until I got inside and realised everyone had them.

Crewe next but that wasn't a new one however I did work out that it had been my first away ground EVER, with it being so close to home now I've been there plenty of times, not always seeing a game though due to the world's largest stand.

Onto Cardiff with Carlisle then a long journey down to Southend with Tranmere supporters club. This was when I realised all official supporters club coaches are exactly the same, food for sale, hot drinks available, everyone knows everyone and they all look after each other.

A final visit to Wales with Swansea v Wigan, that weekend was Watford Everton and what a game to see, it was even visited by Speedo Mick, who was certainly entertaining the crowd.

This is when it started to get real I had to readjust the plan after sneaking in some cup games and a couple of double

headers I could finish at Cambridge with Carlisle, CUFC v CUFC and my 50th Current ground with Carlisle. That was it now sights were set and it was out the bag. I could have it all completed by the 29th Feb.

A short visit to Wigan v Preston, Wigan's now on my most visited list after befriending a group of Wigan fans and this was an opportunity to thank them for sorting my tickets this season and Joining me up as a travel club member. Charlton v Blackburn quickly followed by Carlisle v Morecambe and the end was in sight.



I travelled to the 92nd current league club with family and we met family there. Only after a minor mishap, I forgot the tickets, so turned round on the M6 and headed back down the M56.

First we met my #footballfamily of London Branch members where I was presented with a shirt with 92 on the back now proudly hung on my wall. Then it was off to the ground. A lovely day topped off with some images pitch side and meeting the players after the game.

Finally all done, a bit of media attention thanks to Jon Colman and James Philips again co-ordinated by the London Branch.

As I look back at the league tables I seem to remember something from the journey, the game or the pub with every single one. Don't ask me any scores though as that has never stuck with me.



AT 13:40 CRAIG FINALLY NAILS THAT 'I'VE DONE THE '92' POSE.

KNOWING OUR PLACE

Get your anoraks on everybody. Peter Smithson shares his analysis of the factors that answer that perennial question—what is our rightful place in the football pyramid?

By that title I mean, based on current football funding models, does Carlisle and its environs have a large enough population on which to propel United up the league pyramid?

(Spoiler alert) I have done a (very) rough analysis which leads me to the conclusion that, all other things being equal, United would struggle to re-live the ‘glory years’ of the 1960’s/70’s.

Of course, all other things are not necessarily equal, but I have little better to do in this Covid lockdown, so I will press on.

I have great admiration of the younger Carlisle United fans, and by that definition I include almost everyone under the age of 50. They have followed the club through thick and mostly thin through the last 3 – 4 decades. **I am one of those boring old flatulents who had the great fortune to begin watching United in the early/mid 1960’s when what followed was a rich decade of success that has been well chronicled.** Leaving aside the crowning glory of a season in the top division, we held our own in the old 2nd Division, now The Championship, so we felt that that was our rightful position. The club was relatively financially secure, helped to a great degree by the ongoing contribu-

tion of the Supporters Club, whose weekly draw was entered by a large proportion of the population. Think National Lottery on a Cumbrian level. On the playing front we could never afford top names, although some would go on to be so, but we had enough talent both on and off the pitch to maintain the standard we had come to expect.

So, do we have a right to expect those comparative glory days to return, or are we being unfair on the current owners and Directors if we expect any more than our current place in the 4th tier, possibly interspersed with one or two in the League One? I decided to try and answer that question from the point of view of measuring the potential of Carlisle, a city of 75,000 people, to support a modern-day Championship club.

There are a number of inescapable truisms surrounding English (and Welsh) football clubs, but I will dwell on two obvious ones that run counter to the general theme of this piece: 1) The Premier League is a law unto itself. TV rights are now so lucrative that most clubs do not require gate money to run at a healthy profit; 2) All clubs are the playthings of rich benefactors, some so bloated that they feature in Global wealth leagues. The immense prestige of participation in the Premier League also spills over into The Championship where well healed wannabes ‘invest’ in some of the traditionally bigger clubs in the hope of taking the step up. There

are occasional exceptions to the rule that a club must have an immensely rich backer to succeed, but not many.

So, the most apparent route for Carlisle to succeed is for it to become the plaything of a rich benefactor. The last single owner we had was Fred Story who, by his own admission, was more of a rugby than a football fan. With his backing United did however oversee a period relative success, including two promotions, and his assistance to club after the 2005 flood was invaluable. His subsequent gifting of the club to the rest of the Board, and eventually writing-off debts, has left the club with no option other than to try and prudently manage its way through stormy financial waters. It would be too much of a digression from my theme to vent my spleen on the various twists and turns of the club's management over the last 15 years, but **I will make an honourable exception in the case of Andrew Jenkins who both personally, and via Pioneer Foods, has quietly bankrolled United though many of the post-Story seasons without fanfare.** So, whilst we wait and dream of a rich benefactor taking over what, in the meantime, are the realities?

Given that most clubs below the Premier League depend on gate money **I decided to compare the potential gates of all clubs by comparing the populations of the cities and towns in which they are situated.** Now I know this sort of comparison is fraught with difficulties and arguments. For example: How does one account for cities with more than one club, especially London? And what about the populations of those places that surround the cities/towns in question who are close enough to be attract-

ed to support their nearest club? For Carlisle, think West Cumbria, Keswick, Wigton, Brampton, Haltwhistle, Longtown, Penrith, Alston and even Kendal.

Carlisle city has a population of 74,915 **(2017 data) and is therefore ranked 115 in England and Wales combined.** **There are, or rather should be, 92 clubs in the top 4 divisions.** For the purpose of this analysis I have restored Bury's league status, for which they may or may not be grateful! The 92 clubs are based in 74 population centres so right away we can see **there are 41 bigger cities/towns than Carlisle that do not have teams in top four leagues.** Largest among these are Warrington (172k), Slough (164k) and York (162k). At the other end of the scale is Nailsworth based Forest Green Rovers. With a capacity of 5,141 the New Lawn stadium can hold 89% of Nailsworth's population. **The equivalent of Brunton Park having a 66,500 capacity. More dreaming!**

The total population of the 74 cities and towns that contain top 4 leagues clubs is 23.6 million. This represents 40% of the total England and Wales population of 58.4 million. So, from the start my analysis is a bit short on granularity with 60% of the total population being discounted, including 100% of the Rural population. My polite answer to that is, if you are so interested in greater accuracy, feel free to do it yourselves! The less polite answer is a digital one. Even in Covid driven isolation life is too short to begin building up that extra layer of data. All conurbations are surrounded by smaller towns and villages so I believe valid conclusions can anyway be drawn from the results of this analyses.

The results of three separate analyses are shown in the tables below.

All Cities and Towns

	League	Avg. Pop.	Clubs
Prem	Premier League	380,095	20
Cham	Championship	345,924	24
Lg.1	League 1	172,453	24
Lg.2	League 2	148,267	24
			92
F'ball towns' pop.		23,601,356	40%
Eng & Wales pop		58,381,217	

Cities and Towns excl. London

	League	Avg. Pop.	Clubs
Prem	Premier League	259,351	15
Cham	Championship	241,608	19
Lg.1	League 1	147,675	23
Lg.2	League 2	122,439	23
			80
F'ball towns' pop.		14,693,438	25%
Eng & Wales pop		58,381,217	

Single Club Cities and Towns

	League	Avg. Pop.	Clubs
Prem	Premier League	233,315	9
Cham	Championship	223,194	14
Lg.1	League 1	141,390	22
Lg.2	League 2	121,708	22
			67
F'ball towns' pop.		11,012,690	19%
Eng & Wales pop		58,381,217	

In “All Cities and Towns”, where there are cities that have two or more clubs, I have divided the total population of that city by the number of clubs. So, for a city with two clubs I have assumed that half the population could potentially follow one club, and the other half of the population the other. For Birmingham I have divided the population evenly three-ways, and for London twelve-ways.

The inclusion of London puts a heavy skew on the results as each of the capital’s clubs is allotted a potential of almost ¾ Million in population, so my second “Cities and Towns” excl. London” removes the 12 London teams.

For a purer comparison of populations of cities and towns with only one club I have also produced the table headed “Single Club Cities and Towns”

Whichever table you choose to examine there is a definite link between population size and success in terms of league status. Outside of the Premier League, gate revenue is a main driver of income, and the lower the league the truer that becomes. If we only look at those towns and cities that have one club the average population (crowd

potential) for League 1 clubs is almost twice the population of Carlisle, whilst the average population for single-club cities/towns in The Championship is three-times the population of Carlisle’s.

So my answer to my own question is that, based purely on the size and population of the city and its surrounds, Carlisle United is probably if anything punching above its weight even being in League 2. Fortunately other factors come into play but United’s comparatively limited crowd-pulling potential does impose a restriction on its ambitions. Obviously a run of continued success on the pitch, driven by better coaching than we have seen for the past decade, would generate higher gates.

Hopefully Chris Beech is that man to generate that success, but it is difficult to see any step-change upwards without that virtuous circle being triggered by some initial investment in better class players. A gamble I know, and one that has to remain within the FFP rules, but for that to happen we are, in my opinion, back to dreaming of a wealthy benefactor.

Peter Smithson

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Post COVID Branch Meetings

When: Meetings will be on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm.

Who: Meetings are open to all members. Food and drink from 6:00 pm.

Where: Civil Service Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London, SW1A 2HJ.

Nearest stations: Charing Cross or Embankment.

Location info: www.civilserviceclub.co.uk

WE'LL BE BACK !



IT LOOKS AS IF SEASON 19/20 IS GOING TO BE WRITTEN OFF, SO IT'S GOING TO BE A WHILE BEFORE WE CAN SEE THIS AGAIN.

The copy deadline for HTB! 312 will be notified in a Virtual HtB over the coming weeks. In the meantime feel free to send any items, photos or articles to editor@cusclb.com.

Thank you to all contributors to this edition of Hit the Bar!

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