



THE
HAMLETTER
The Official
Newsletter of Dulwich
Hamlet Supporters' Trust
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CHAIR'S MESSAGE –
EDDIE MURASZKO

Welcome to the latest edition of the Hamletter. Looking back, 2007 was a year of considerable change. On the pitch we started the year at the top of league, playing some remarkably entertaining football and expecting to finish in the play-offs at least. A year later, Chris Dickson has progressed at Charlton/ Gillingham and most of the rest of the team have departed, as has manager Wayne Burnett. Also, off the pitch, Martin Eede resigned as chairman - incidentally, we wish Martin all the best in his recovery from his recent illness.

Despite all this, we start 2008 with club seemingly in good shape. Behind the scenes the ownership change at last appears to be officially going through and Jack Payne has taken over as chairman. Also, of course we have a new manager in Craig Edwards, and a largely new team who have become very hard to beat and risen into the play-off places. There is an extensive interview with Craig in this newsletter which we hope you enjoy.

For the Trust, the highlights of 2007 were the successful conclusion of our campaign to obtain designation of the ground as 'Other Open Space' and the Community Day in April. The Board has been reviewing our aims and activities in the light of this and the fact that the club has taken on running the 'shop'. The conclusions are set out over the page. The main consequence is that in recognition of the current level of activity **the Trust Board has decided that next year's membership fee will be extended to cover two years.**

Finally, although seems there is no current 'crisis' at the club, there are uncertainties ahead and the Trust still has an important role to play. Any new ideas, contributions and - vitally - assistance in the form of individuals wishing to help/join the Board would be most welcome.

Eddie

TRUST BEGIN LOCAL
PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY

Earlier this season, the Trust decided to trial some initiatives to directly raise the level of attendances at Champion Hill. This is because the best way of ensuring the long term future of the club in the area is to have as large a fan base locally as possible.

Average home gates were constant at around the 250 mark for the three seasons 2003-2006 (after excluding AFC Wimbledon's visit), and then went up to 323 last year on the back of the successful start to the campaign. However, the high level of population change locally over recent years suggests that this could be improved upon as the profile of the club locally is still low.

To that end the Trust are paying for adverts publicising forthcoming fixtures each month in a local magazine 'SE22' which is distributed free to nearly 5,000 households in the area. The eye-catching adverts have been professionally designed by Suzanne, a Hamlet fan. The Trust also contributes a section of the latest club news and has tried to 'de-mystify' the club - for example by explaining the level at which the club plays in the pyramid structure.

Additionally details of each fixture are posted on a local community internet forum in the week preceding the match.

Initial results seem to be encouraging. Comparing attendances with that for the fixture against the same opposition last year - which is the best comparison when played on the same day of the week - some attendances (e.g. against Croydon Athletic and Cray) are more than 25% higher. Hopefully with the visits of clubs such as Dover and Tooting yet to come, the end of season overall average will be higher than 06-07 despite the absence of Maidstone and Hastings which were large gates last year. We'll keep you posted.

DULWICH HAMLET SUPPORTERS' TRUST REVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS & FUTURE ACTIVITY

In late December the DHST Board reviewed what has been achieved and discussed our activities going forward.

Looking back at our 4 years of existence, **the Trust has achieved the following:**

- a successful campaign of lobbying and publicity, including the production of consultation documents which resulted this year in **the designation of Champion Hill as Other Open Space ('OOS')** - the first time there has been any form of 'protection' on the future use of the ground;
- raised over **£10,000 through the 100 club lottery** with the aim of investing it in the club in return for shares;
- started a **merchandising operation for supporters**, ordering and selling club memorabilia through a shop manned by Trust members;
- held **two successful Community Days in 2005 and 2007** building links with schools and raising the club's profile;
- secured **representation on the club's Football Committee**;
- started a **local advertising promotion campaign** to raise attendances and local awareness;
- organised a **Fan's Forum each season** where the Manager and others can be quizzed by supporters;
- published a **regular newsletter** including interviews with club officials;
- created and maintained a **website**.

The need to review our activities was driven by three principle changes - the end of our successful campaign on ground designation, the taking over of merchandising operations by the club itself, and the reduction in active Board members to four people. The Board considered a range of options, but felt that although it seems there may be no immediate 'crisis' at the club there are enough uncertainties about the future to warrant our continued efforts, namely:

- the uncertainty about the club's long term ownership and financial state;
- the fact that the ground lease expires within the next five years;
- the uncertainty about ground-sharing etc with Fisher Athletic.

On a more positive note we believe we can continue to build on the Trust's previous efforts and experience to generally help secure the future of the club and its supporters.

Therefore, going forward, the **Trust plans to undertake the following:**

- hold a **Community Day** on a bi-annual basis (next one in 2009) dependent on grant funding and securing volunteers to assist with planning;
- continue with (and possibly expand) **local advertising** and promotion of the club and its fixtures;
- publish a **Newsletter** (3/4 times a year as now) and maintain the **website**;
- hold a **Fans' Forum** each season with the aim of setting one up in early 2009;
- continue to be represented on the club's **Football Committee**;
- continue to operate the **100 Club** to grow the funds for the club's future (see below).

We will also aim to **explore possible grant awards** that may be available for minor ground improvements etc.

As a result of no longer having to campaign on the ground designation issue, nor operate the club shop, the Board decided that for **the next round of membership renewals (which are due from 1st February 2008), the membership fee would remain £10 (£5 Juniors), but would be extended to cover two years, i.e. memberships will last until 31st January 2010.** The Board believes this is a fair recognition of the current changed circumstances, and also hopes that it will encourage members to re-join.

One or two fans have queried the fact that the 100 Club is continuing to operate and grow rather than simply passing the money on to the club. The Trust's position is that we are prepared to invest money in return for shares in the club, or some other form of meaningful influence for supporters. In February 2007 the club claimed that it urgently needed money to improve the ground and as a result a proposal was put together that the club be offered a £7,500, two year interest-free loan which could be repayable by money or shares. This was approved almost unanimously amongst 100 club members and was put to the club. No response was received to the Trust's offer, and the necessary ground requirements were met anyway. The other complication about investing the 100 club money in the ground is the uncertainty of the future position on the lease and Fisher ground-sharing. Therefore although we remain open to discussions on the subject, the approach adopted last February remains the settled position for now. The longer the fund goes on growing the bigger the potential future investment may be. We will obviously continue to test that 100 club members are content with this position from time to time.

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Interview with Craig Edwards, First Team Manager

To start with, can take us through your playing and managerial career?

Well, I started as a junior at Arsenal until I was 16, and was offered an apprenticeship at West Brom, but I didn't really fancy moving to Birmingham so I didn't go. I went to Leytonstone in the Isthmian Premier League, but then after I realised I wasn't going to make it as a pro, I didn't play for about eight or nine years. But I came back, playing at Barkingside, Leyton, Walthamstow Pennant which became Waltham Forest. That's when I tore a cruciate. Although that ended my non league playing career, I do still play and was a member of the Waltham Forest over 35's team that won the Umbro National Cup at Rushden and Diamonds last season, finishing top scorer too.

Anyway, I was offered the job of reserve team coach at Collier Row, and started taking coaching courses and then did junior coaching at Charlton, Orient and Southend where we won the under 19 national cup. That was a fantastic team and a number of them went on to do very well at professional and non-league levels. While I did these jobs I was always also working at non-league level, and I finally got my first senior coaching role back at Barkingside. They hadn't won anything in their 99 year history. Then in their centenary year we won the London Spartan League and London Senior Cup. We won the South Midlands League the following year. The next season we joined Barking who were bottom of the league at the time and finished 6th. We got them promoted the following year.

After that I was offered the job at Grays. They were foot of the Ryman Premier League and the first game in charge was in mid-January [2001] here at Dulwich who were also at the bottom. We won 2-1 but I can remember turning to my coaching staff and saying that this was a proper football club with a really good vibe about it. Anyway we finished 8th from bottom that year [Editor's note - Dulwich finished bottom - Grays now play in the Conference Premier Division!] and 6th the following year. But at the start of next year we had a difficult time and we resigned. It was the first time me and the lads had been out of work.

After a while, we were offered the job at Ford (who actually were playing at Barkingside) who were bottom of the Ryman Premier League. We got them up to 15th and the following year we finished 13th and made the cut into Conference South. We also got to the first round of the FA cup and got a draw at Port Vale. We were really unlucky to lose the replay, with an own goal at the end of extra time. That was undoubtedly the highlight of my career. It was a really good team, but Ford were playing so far above their level. It was really an Essex Senior League club, playing in Conference South at really big grounds with proper staffs and so on. Mind you, those clubs didn't fancy coming to our place that's for sure. Inevitably the money then dried up, so we left and they had back-to-back relegations which was sad to see [Editors note - they are now Redbridge FC, managed by Dean Holdsworth in Ryman Division 1 North].

We were offered the job at Chelmsford who were 18th at the time and got them up to 8th. The next year we had a terrible run with injuries and only finished 10th, although in the second half of the

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Craig Edwards Interview (continued)

season we had a fantastic run. Then Jeff King came in and took over. It was a real shame because it's a big club with real potential, but me and my boys were on our way out, and the supporters were just incredible in their backing for me which culminated in my final game being here against Fisher ironically.

Then Steve Brown asked me to help out at Aveley. We took them from 18th to 2nd and they started having kittens about going up. They were more worried about going up than going down. So they cut spending drastically and we walked away [Editor's note - they finished 15th].

There were no jobs coming up at all last year after Christmas, so I went for the Dover job in the summer. I was called back for a second interview, but it didn't seem to go as well as the first interview - they kept talking about the Kent football this, Kent football that, whereas I get players from wherever I want - my knowledge of Kent players isn't that great.

I told them that with the budget they were offering I'd get them promoted for sure. On that money I think my nan would have stood a chance. I said that if I didn't get them up that they wouldn't have to sack me as I'd resign for doing such a bad job. By that time I'd already heard about the Dulwich job, and I thought that would be a better job anyway, because I knew it would be easier to get the players I knew to come to Dulwich.

Anyway I came to speak to Nick [McCormack] and Jack [Payne] here at Dulwich. The interview went fantastically well and I knew it was the job I really wanted and Dover went for Andy Hessenthaler who is doing a really great job for them.

Who are the staff who have been with you through these times?

The Royal 'we' is my staff who have been so important to me over the years. My team over the years have been Paul Downes who is my assistant and Lyndon Lynch who is a coach. Lyndon because of his involvement with the English FA in many fields has had to take a back seat this season and can only occasionally make games and training. The fourth member was John Frostick but he is no longer with us.

So what are your impressions of Dulwich after the first six months or so?

Oh I love the club - it's a great place to come and work. Mind you it was hard work to win the players over. I usually arrive part way through a season and have a clear-out. I thought it would be easier in the summer, but all the players are at the clubs where they want to give it a go and don't generally want to move at that time.

Wherever I go I try to build a team spirit but the atmosphere here wasn't the best and we had our work cut out. It didn't help that we had a good pre-season which kind of kidded me about the way things were, because as soon as the first ball was kicked in anger some of our players went missing. We had some great talents, Phil Williams, Craig Braham, but we were getting smashed about and there was no character in the team when things started going wrong. One of my lowest moments in football was the defeat at Cray. We were 1-0 up and looking comfortable, but at the

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Craig Edwards Interview (continued)

half time the manager told them to get stuck into us. It really hurt when the second goal went in and I heard their centre half call out "Come on lads, they've just given up", because he was right. So that was the end of the line for a lot of players.

One by one we've been bringing in different players - some are successes, some not, that's the way of things - but now we're really hard to beat. There's a core of 14 or 15 players that I'm very happy with, although obviously we're looking to improve.

What's your managerial philosophy?

Trust the players to go out and perform. Obviously they're allowed the odd bad game, but with some players who were here you never knew what you were going to get. I need players who are 100% committed, fit athletes, and with big hearts.

They're developing as a group and understand what we're looking for. We work endlessly at pattern play, we work really hard, drilling and drilling into them what we want. The newer players are really impressed with the training sessions - and the facilities here, being floodlit, are excellent.

Every session's an education. We're always looking to improve certain areas, and that's either with the players here improving or by bringing someone in. At the moment for instance we need to score more goals from midfield. I've been offered a couple of goal-scoring midfielders but you have to balance up what you would lose from the side with what we are getting at the moment. Ideally we can work with the players we have here on improving in that area.

So we're 6th currently [on 20th Dec]. How does that compare with where you thought we'd be?

Well after the start we had I'm delighted with where we are. The main thing - whether we go up or not - is we're looking for the players we want to keep for next year. In many ways keeping this team together would be a success as we are sure to improve.

And what's your aim for the end of the season?

I'm afraid I never make that sort of prediction. I know just how quickly this game can change round and kick you in the nuts.

Which teams do you see as the main challengers and have any particularly impressed you?

I think Dover will go up and then it's four from the next eight. None of them are outstanding, although Worthing played well here, it wasn't our best day and Cray are showing consistency.

What do you think about play-offs?

I love them - they're the best thing in football. I used to hate those nothing games from February onwards. Even if you had something to play for, other teams didn't. Now the season goes right to the end and keeps everyone interested.

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Craig Edwards Interview (continued)

We've seen the articles about Shawn Beveney in the press, what would be the consequences if he did leave?

Well obviously he'd be really difficult to replace, he's an extremely good player and to some extent we've fitted the way we play around him. So if he did go, we'd have to figure the best way round it, which might mean changing the way we play a bit. We'll cross that bridge if we have to in the future.

In the long term where do you think this club can go?

This is a club that wouldn't be out of place in Conference South, and I reckon getting there in five years is a realistic aim.

Did you encourage the players to come over to the fans at the end of the games?

Initially I encouraged it, although I don't need to now. At all clubs I've had a great rapport with supporters. It first started at Barking - they are the most lunatic supporters I've known and it was a really tight-knit club. Since then I've tried to replicate that bond. When a load of people go to Horsham in the cold, it's the least you can do as a player to do your bit back and properly show your appreciation. It gets the bond between everyone going - gets them going in the same direction. Players want to have a feel good factor after the game and I think you can see what it means to the players and supporters afterwards. It helps build pride in the job.

Your track record shows you always take clubs up a level. What's the secret of your success?

Hard work. We do just work harder than other people, I reckon. I'm really single-minded in what I'm looking for. My biggest mistake was when I was at Grays when I had some money, I brought in quality players, but they weren't a team. That reminded me that I need a certain type of player. I get so many players calling to come here, because it's such a big club. But it's got to be the right move. Any person coming in has got to be a lot better than whoever they might replace. And they've all got to pitch in doing jobs and stuff whether they come from Real Madrid or Clapton. It's all about atmosphere. After the game I'm the biggest joker and will sing songs, but from 2.00 to 5.00 each Saturday it's business.

Cray was your worst moment this season, what's been the best?

Tooting. Yes, I really did enjoy that. Also the second half at Dover, because we came back after being so poor in the first half that their supporters were taking the mick out of us. We did respond properly to that albeit after such a bad display to start with.

Finally, what message would you have to the supporters?

I just hope they're enjoying themselves like we are. Win, lose or draw I would like to think that the supporters will never get less than 100% from our team. I'm really grateful how the supporters turn up in numbers, and hopefully we will give them the success they really deserve.