

HIT THE BAR!



November 2024

£1

CALLING CARLISLE

A London branch of the Carlisle United Supporters' Club has recently been formed, and we have been asked to mention that it has the full backing of the parent branch in Carlisle. The secretary, who will be pleased to enrol new members, is Mr. Michael Houghton of 138 Ifield Road, London, S.W.10.

Mr. Mike Voke of Wickham Road, Haverhill, Cambs. CB23 9JH



- 50 years of the London Branch celebrated
- Photos and memories from branch members
- 24/25 FA Cup run: All the matches and goals

FIXTURES 24/25

NOVEMBER

6 Bromley A

23 Doncaster Rovers H

30 Crewe Alexandra H

DECEMBER

7 Newport County A

14 Chesterfield H

21 Port Vale A

26 Morecambe H

29 Accrington Stanley H

JANUARY

1 Crewe Alexandra A

4 Tranmere Rovers A

11 Milton Keynes Dons H

18 Bradford City H

25 Fleetwood Town A

28 Notts County A

FEBRUARY

1 Swindon Town H

8 Grimsby Town A

15 Colchester United H

22 Gillingham H

MARCH

1 Barrow A

4 Walsall H

8 Harrogate Town A

15 A.F.C. Wimbledon H

22 Bromley H

29 Doncaster Rovers A

APRIL

1 Chesterfield A

5 Newport County H

12 Morecambe A

18 Port Vale H

21 Accrington Stanley A

26 Cheltenham Town A

MAY

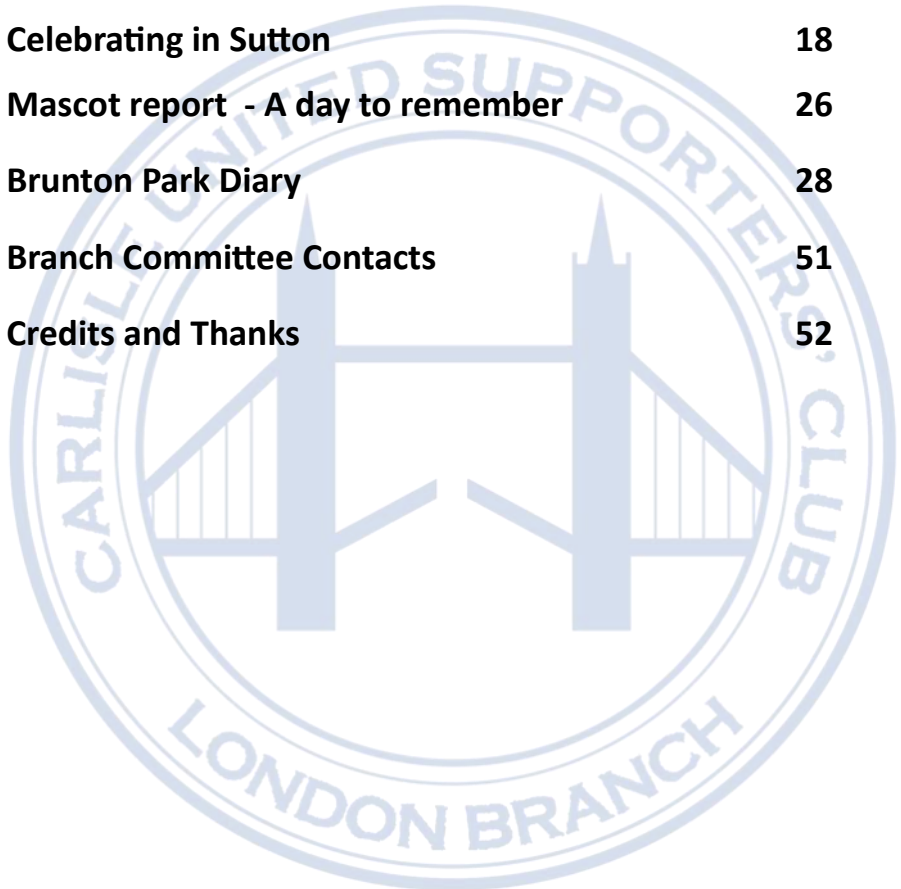
3 Salford City H

The London Branch owns 2 season tickets for the Paddock terrace at Brunton Park. As a member, each ticket is available to you for a cost of just £10 - compared to £20 in advance and £24 on the day.

To use a ticket/s, contact Linda McLoughlin seasontickets@cusclb.com 2 weeks in advance. Preference will be given to those who haven't used them ever before and then to those who haven't used them in the current season.

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EDITORS BLEAT



Welcome to HTB! 335.

A rather hefty HTB this time as it reports on our celebration of 50 years of the London Branch in Sutton. Inevitably this followed a dismal performance at AFC Wimbledon. Let's hope the dramatic end to the game at Salford marks the start of the journey back to being a confident, competent team.

I hope that the report of the evening at Sutton Cricket Club and the photos (that have been shared by various members, for which my thanks) that accompany the report serve to remind you of what a great, positive vibe there was in the room despite the events of the afternoon. It was my great pleasure to introduce and talk to each of our guests. It was particularly interesting to hear of the role that Jimmy Glass now has at Wimborne Town and Jabo Ibhere's thoughts on what a player wants from a state of the art training set up. I'm sure Tom and Tom II were taking notes. If it's any measure of the success of the evening, all the guests stayed much longer than they had indicated they were able to, so either the food & drink or the company were good—hopefully both.

As we reported last HTB, Ruth & Pad Vamadevan are now Mascot Coordinators and have done great work in lining up mascots for every away game this season! See pages 26 & 27 for pictures of our recent mascots.

In the next HTB! I will be featuring some of the many photos and memories that you've sent in of branch events and branch members over the past 50 years. Keep them coming, you simply can't have too many pictures of men in pubs wearing ill-fitting replica kit.

Up the Blues!
John B

NOTES FROM THE CHAIR



“I am ridiculously optimistic every August – certain that this will be our season and then hugely disappointed if we perform poorly in the first few games and even more so if our position at the end of October is at the lower end of the table.”.

That’s what I wrote in my column in the last HTB at the beginning of August. On the pitch, in my head, my worst prediction was mid-table but I fully expected to be in the play offs or even in the automatic places.

I hadn’t contemplated how awful it could turn out even when other, better, football brains than me (Howard, Mike), gave me warnings after some

awful performances pre-season.

I have been putting off writing this column until today (the day of the Salford match) because there is so much positivity around the club and so much, understandable, ire about the performances on the pitch.

Last week I was heartened by our resolute performance against Wigan getting to 105 minutes without a goal against but still looked unlikely to score. **Today we got our first win in 7 weeks since Swindon!** While the first half today was a little weak, we dominated the second half and could have scored more with the chances we had. It really feels like the long-awaited upward climb begins. Here’s hoping.

Meanwhile in the London Branch, we had our 50th anniversary celebration on the evening of our 4-1 drubbing against Wimbledon. I can’t remember another LB event that has had so many hurdles to overcome from worries about international weekends to floods to hurricanes. Member, Martin, arrived spitting with fury and misery after the match and 2 hours later said that it was one of the best days he had had with the branch.

To get the full support of the entire Piatak family and Nigel Clibbens and then to hear them on Radio Cumbria a few days later singing our praises was a pleasure.

The support from **John Halpin, Jimmy Glass and Jabo Ibhere** was fantastic and it was a pleasure to receive thank you messages from them and an agreement to attend our events in the future.

The Piataks made sure to get full contact details from all 3 ex-players. **Jon Colman** is well liked by LB members and rightly so on his display on the night. Founder member, Dave Spencer, was a little thrown to be asked to chat and did well (in fact he enjoyed his night so much he is coming to the summer trip for the first time in his 50 years of membership). I also loved the irreverence of Founder Member and ex- Treasurer, Richard Wood, who gave a vote of support for the Piataks as long as they kicked out half the squad.

Simon Hindley missed the match as he had to prepare for the music slot. Simon and Frank Beattie got the graveyard slot with many leaving to catch trains as they were playing BUT those that heard them loved the great way they finished a fantastic event.

I want to give a very special thank you to John Bowman for not only being an excellent MC for the evening but man-

aging to keep to a timetable with so many fascinating guests. Simon Clarkson for arranging an excellent venue, buffet and arranging Jimmy Glass and lots of other support. Andy Hall, who sadly couldn't make it on the day due to work, for a brilliant set of videos that I have had lots of people asking for copies – having seen others doing this, I know how long Andy must have spent to put the videos together and his delivery of the old Carlisle film was incredible.

Andy also managed the arrangements with Jabo and John and promoted the event. Terry McCarthy managed the whole booking, payment and attendance process with his usual aplomb. Mike Carruthers and Peter Smithson, standing back from the limelight as usual, were rocks throughout.

All the above, plus the other committee members and lots of others showed the London Branch at its best. If I have missed thanking anyone, please accept my apologies – it was all a bit busy, but I loved it.

Other London Branch activities continued throughout the huge amount of work for the 50th – with meeting pubs, tickets, travel, watching matches together on Sky, HTB, VHTB every week, X (twitter), donations and sponsorship, Goal of the Month for the academy and

lots more.

ONE PS. We are looking for a new treasurer as Andrew Dobinson is stepping down after 12 years next July after doing an amazing job. If you are interested, contact Dave Brown, Chairman@cusclb.com

Here's to a great season from now on – full of fun and success.

Branch Sponsorship and Funding

We were quick this season to continue with our regular sponsorships of £500 to the Ladies team and, also, sponsoring a player for £780 – Jack Ellis. Paul Watson and John Notman were at the team photo shoot to be photographed with Jack.

We also bought 2 season tickets for the Paddock for £721. This helps to provide income for the club in the close season. Members can use these season tickets once or twice a season for a charge of £10 compared to a normal ticket price of £23 on the day. Email Linda McLoughlin for details of how to book them seasontickets@cusclb.com.

We made a couple of ad hoc donations – first £50 to Telford United when their pitch was flooded at the same time as Wimbledon – Wimbledon had over £100,000 on their crowdfunding and had a major contractor provide all the

equipment and their personnel free of charge, Telford only had £1800 on their crowdfunding at the time. [Telford Flood Appeal](#)

Another of the ad hoc fundings was to the Team Thompson appeal (£25). Ex-Carlisle player Joe Thompson has had cancer return for the third time. Keith Curle and other ex- teammates walked 21 miles to raise funds for Joe – who also made the walk. Mike Carruthers felt this was a cause we should support, and the committee readily agreed.

This season we have been organising the mascots for all away games. We are giving each mascot a “goody bag” of a Carlisle United draw bag and inside an autograph book, pens, stickers etc.). Children who are mascots often become fans for life. The cost of the bags for the season is approximately £300. This season the away match mascots are almost all fully booked but contact Ruth Vamadevan mascots@cusclb.com for details of any remaining dates and to ensure that your children or grandchildren get their places booked for next season.

The club were looking to generate a good crowd for the Harrogate game and asked businesses to provide donations to pay for tickets for people who would

like to be there but would not be in a position to pay for tickets. The branch made a donation of £250 that was used by the Carlisle United Community Sports Trust to distribute tickets to the 21 Huntley Avenue Short Breaks Children's Home. The CUCST do an amazing job supporting disadvantaged people (young and old) all over Cumbria. See their face book site https://www.facebook.com/cufccst/?locale=en_GB

Our 7475 shirt is also generating further support for the CUCST at £2.50 per shirt sold – this will generate £600 for the CST once all the shirts are sold so buy yours now at the Blues Store <https://bluesstore.co.uk/>

The 40 club delivers income of over £2,000 every season which is used for projects which benefit club and youth projects. We will be looking at various

options to help the academy. The 40 club costs £5 per month and every month the winner receives 2 tickets for Foxy's and the match while 2nd place receives £30 cash. Most months there is a 3rd prize of a book or shirt. Other prizes include a boardroom visit or an away director's experience. To get more details or to join 40club@cusclub.com

Remember it is **your** money that we are spending supporting **our club** so feel free to tell us what you think about what we are supporting and your alternative ideas.



KEEP THE FAITH



A lot has happened since the last edition of HtB in late August, but not many points accumulated - in fact a meagre 5 points from 12 matches at the time of writing. We've seen a manager and 4 coaches dismissed, 6 new coaches appointed, 1 of whom left after less than a month, a new Sporting Director accepting the job then changing his mind and then, finally, a new Sporting Director appointed. We've also recruited 2 players and, on top of all the injuries we've had, lost another 2 players out for the rest of the season. More about that later. Oh, and of course the most uplifting event

during this period was the London Branch's 50th Anniversary dinner. After watching possibly the worst performance of the season at Wimbledon, the mood was transformed by a wonderful evening of celebration.

It's now a month on from that evening and things are looking worse on the pitch with us 4 points off safety. We're all massively grateful to the Piataks for taking on Carlisle United and therefore safeguarding the club for the foreseeable future. In particular their commitment to a community approach in running the club and their injection of large amounts of cash into its infrastructure is laudable. However, I think they've shown some naivety in running the actual football side.

I thought the sacking of Simmo was premature having asked him to rebuild the squad over the summer. A lot of signings were made, including signing 3 midfield players in the final week or so of the transfer window who'd not even had time to bed in. The season had barely got going and Simmo deserved at least 10 games to show that the team could progress.

Then there was the appointment (or non-appointment as it turns out) of

the Sporting Director. It looks as though they were well and truly stitched up by, as it was widely reported, Liam Sweeting (below) from MK Dons. It



appears that he managed to get an improved contract from his employers out of his verbal acceptance of the Carlisle job. **There's not a lot of integrity left in football.** It left Carlisle looking for a Director of Sport after their new Chief Coach had joined the club. Tom Piatak had said they wanted it the other way

round.

That brings us to the appointment of Chief Coach Mike Williamson. This came with a quote from Tom Piatak which gave an indication of what they were looking for. *"And when I say style of play, I'm talking about being aggressive, dominating, imposing your will, front foot forward, playing without fear."* The owners were clearly impressed by the style of play that MK Dons displayed in despatching the Blues 3-0 in one of the games that sealed Simmo's fate.

I have to say that I was pleased with the appointment and, despite MK Don's poor start to the season, thought it was a bit of a coup. As last season went on I increasingly thought that Simmo's adherence to a particular way of playing and his preference for workmanlike,



functional players over more mercurial talent meant that we were being outplayed in midfield by most of the teams we were up against. We lacked the skill and movement to play through and around the opposition. Having said that, I was more optimistic about how we'd fare in League 2 after our recruitment during the summer. In particular I thought Charlie Wyke could have been productive if our 2 new wingbacks lived up to their early promise and got plenty of crosses into the box. The late signing of three midfielders also gave the option to play differently.

So what's gone wrong? It could be the players aren't good enough. We've certainly been badly underperforming. The Xg stats show that if we'd capitalised on our opportunities and not gifted so many goals to the opposition we'd



be mid table. Especially culpable has

been poor Harry Lewis whose Opta goalkeeping stats show that he should have conceded 10 fewer goals this season than he actually has. That could have been a few more points! **After Gabe Breeze's performance against Wigan, he has to be between the sticks for the next few league games at least.**

Another problem has been the change of playing style. It's not unusual for a new manager to want to tweak the way a team plays but there are likely to be problems with the players adjusting when the change is so fundamental as switching from playing long to playing out from the back. It's all very well to want a particular playing philosophy for the club, but to implement it part way through the season when the players have been recruited with a completely different formation and style of play in mind may not be the best timing.

It's clear from the results that, so far, it hasn't worked. We haven't been able to pass our way through and round the opposition. Far too much of our ball possession, which has been at a much higher level than recent seasons, is in our own half. We need players who can naturally play a fast 'pass and move' type of game or ones who can easily adjust to playing it.

Playing long with big players up front and attacking wing backs is the way

Simmo wanted to play. As I said above, he signed players to do that.

The question is whether we have the players who can adapt to playing out from the back. I was optimistic to start with but the results haven't improved. One of the main problems though must be losing so many of our players through injury and the resulting lack of continuity in the team.

Being able to put out a consistent team is important in getting them to gel, particularly when you want the team to adapt to a new way of playing. Last season was bad for injuries but this season's been worse. I don't think it's been considered enough in apportioning blame for our current situation.

On the Carlisle Social it was almost dismissed as significant because all teams have more injuries nowadays, including in the Premier League. **I decided to check it out when I heard that because we had 11 injured players at that point. It turns out the average number of injuries in the Prem was 4.2 per club for the same weekend.** Our situation is exceptional. We've had 19 players injured this season and have already used 27 players in league games. **We now have a squad of 33 professionals which, if they were all fit, is way too big.** To hear in the last week that 2 more players are out for the rest of the

season was depressing news.

If we can stabilise the injury situation and get players back in a more settled team then we'll have a decent chance.

After the Cheltenham defeat the calls for Williamson to go intensified and I have to confess to joining in myself with an intemperate outburst on the branch's WhatsApp group when I said Williamson should be sacked and replaced by Pete Wild. Football fans can be very fickle! (In mitigation I'd been out for my birthday and I'd had a few lemonades!)

The rational view of course is that he has to be given a chance to turn around our fortunes. We'd all like to see the team playing free flowing, passing football to win games. Brunton Park is made for it with its good surface and big pitch. But it has to happen soon. Survival in the Football League is more important than playing free flowing football.

Hopefully we can do both.

Ken Hullock

50 YEARS OF THE LONDON BRANCH

The Carlisle United Supporters' Club London Branch was founded on 16th November 1974 on the evening following our game against QPR when Carlisle were in the First Division of the Football League. Its birthplace was the Finborough Arms in Earls Court, now a trendy bar with a theatre in the room where we first met.

In this edition of Hit the Bar! we tell the story of the foundation of the branch and then focus on the memorable evening in Sutton on October 12th, which followed the very forgettable match at Wimbledon that afternoon.

In the next HTB we'll have more memories and photos from branch members, reflecting the breadth of branch activities over the last 50 years. With predictable logic, we start with the story of the foundation of the branch during that remarkable season in the sun: 1974/75.



LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING

It was at the inaugural meeting in the Finborough Arms that the first committee was formed – Mike Houghton, Chris Wilkinson, Dave Steele and Malcolm Fawcett. Dave Leigh joined soon afterwards.

Malcolm Fawcett now lives in USA and shares his memories of those beginnings: *“The club was the idea of Mike Houghton, a Whitehaven lad, who shared a flat with three Newcastle supporters and was sick of hearing about the Toon, so decided to start a Carlisle London Branch by placing an ad in the Spurs programme when we visited White Hart Lane.*

*55 people turned up to the first meeting at the Finborough Arms in Earls Court after the QPR game and a committee was formed of **Mike Houghton, Chairman; Chris Wilkinson, Secretary; Myself, Treasurer and someone who will remain nameless as Travel Secretary** - we think he got lost on his way home because we never saw him again.”*

In fairness that Travel Secretary was David Steele who moved back to Carlisle and became the unofficial historian for the club writing in the programme for decades. David described the first night as everyone drifting away leaving 4 of them to form the committee – nothings changed there then

Continuing with Malcolm:

“In the beginning, we used to meet every Thursday night in the same pub as the Newcastle Supporters' Club London Branch, and then all go for a curry afterwards. It was tough to get through Fridays at work.

The London Branch became trunkless when the Carlisle United Supporters' Club folded in Carlisle and for several years, we were the only official supporters' club recognized by Carlisle United.

At one time we were down to just 36 members, and only two people, me and Howard (Atkinson), turned up at the weekly meeting. *We made a lot of changes over the next few years and gradually grew the membership. I never wanted to be on my own with Howard again....*

Our smallest issue of Hit the Bar was two handwritten photocopied pages, our largest was 96 printed pages.

*I just want to thank every single person who has ever served on the committee, everyone who has turned up to a London Branch event, and everyone who has forked over their annual subscription, as without your enthusiasm, time and effort, we wouldn't have managed to last for 50 minutes never mind thrive for 50 years. **I'll be toasting you all with a pint in Houston!**”*

Following the message from Malcolm, we then received a message from David Steele, the erstwhile Travel Secretary who said:

"In truth, I did not have a lot of involvement with the branch after those very early days and in any case, I left London early in 1976 though I now wish I had been a bit more active. Nevertheless, I am glad that I attended that first meeting and to be present at the creation. That the branch has survived for so long is a tribute to very many people who have in various ways kept the faith through thick and thin with thin all too often the prevailing state. No glory hunter ever chose to support Carlisle United but we are all of us proud to be Cumbrians, winners of first prize in the lottery of life".

David Steele, Carlisle

MEMORIES FROM BRANCH MEMBERS

We asked branch members to share their memories of their life and times as members of the London Branch and also to share any photos that wouldn't result in legal action against the branch or those involved.

First to respond was Steve Kilner, twin brother of Mike 'Brunton Diary' Kilner, so if nothing else, these pictures may also help you to tell them apart at future matches. "As a London Branch member since 1986 (when Carlisle United were mostly terrible and embarking on a relegation odyssey) through to the present day (when Carlisle United are mostly terrible and continuing on a relegation odyssey) I feel duty bound to provide some photos from my extensive archives.

Turns out, these archives aren't as extensive as I thought they would be. My hey-decade as a LB member was around 1990 through to 2001, the year when I moved to Staffordshire and finally escaped the clutches of having to do anything for the London Branch. Those heady days as Editor of Hit the Bar in the mid-90s and journeys with my brother and Ian Jardine into London for darts and pool matches seem a long time ago.

The London Branch has always been a great "social club" with fun and camara-

derie aplenty. For some, unfathomable reason, we had to spoil this by also making numerous journeys to football matches. In the early days it was to places like Macclesfield in the FA Cup (losing 4-2 after being 2-0 up), Bristol Rovers (postponed by the time we got there) and occasional special journeys to Carlisle for a home game against Gillingham (losing 4-2 after being 2-0 up). Such camaraderie. Such fun. **Anyone complaining about our current predicament truly cannot have followed Carlisle United in the 86-87 and 87-88 seasons.**

The 90s witnessed some feast to offset the famine but it was still a rollercoaster, albeit one that stopped off at Wembley (twice) and brought us some longed-for silverware or, in the case of the Auto-Windscreen Shield, a child's novelty wood-work project.

Of course, what this does mean is that a lot of the photos I have were from the pre-digital age when you had to take this odd thing called "a roll of film" to a chemist who would develop the photos and, three weeks later, hand them back to you, each containing a handy sticker on the front with "lighting not good", "sorry, underdeveloped" or "we'll be notifying the police" on them. This means I don't have as many photos as I would like, as they've probably ended up in a photo album, in a loft, back at my parent's house in Hatfield or in a case file with Hertfordshire police.

I've attached the few digital ones that I do have, they capture a little bit of the flavour of the time. A lot of fun. A lot of camaraderie. The football club will always have its ups and downs but one thing that is constant and consistent are our brilliant supporters, never better exemplified than through the work of the London Branch. Here's to the next 50 years.

Steve Kilner



1992 Mike Kilner, Jugsy, Mike Driver, Me, Alistair Blackett. Pretty sure this was a London Branch meeting or even AGM at some pub in London.

1995 Post-match title celebrations at Colchester.



1996 Andy Harrison, Dave Croxford, don't know, Me, Howard Atkinson, Paul Irving – can't remember which game.

CELEBRATING IN SUTTON (BUT NOT AT WIMBLEDON)



Three parts of the day on October 12th in South London, pretty much encapsulated what the London Branch is all about and why over 300 relatively sane people are members of a supporters club for a team based 320 miles north of London. The first two parts of the day followed a familiar pattern. Having spotted the team bus questionably parked at their hotel, I joined branch members at the Castle in Tooting High Street, once again packed with Carlisle fans. It rained just as we were travelling



to the AFC Wimbledon stadium and the Carlisle United team failed again on the pitch.

The third part of the day—the long-planned celebration of 50 years of the London Branch took place at Sutton Cricket Club, a venue which has hosted branch members pre-match prior to

games at Gander Green Lane in recent years. In his Chairman's Notes, Dave Brown shares some the anxieties and challenges the committee faced in organising the event, showing what a true team effort it was. In this section we focus on the night itself and chance it gave for members of all ages to listen to some key figures in Carlisle United's past, present (and future) and then to mingle and chat with them.

Our first guests were Tom and Patty Piatak, who had brought along support in the form of Jenna, Nick, Alice and Tom II along with their guests from Visit Jacksonville who were 'in town' to see the Jacksonville Jaguars at Tottenham the following day.



Tom re-iterated their long term commitment to the club and the community and updated us on developments at Brunton Park and the Sheepmount. Despite a busy schedule the next day, the whole family then stayed long into the evening giving members a chance to share their stories of matches won and lost. **Hard to believe that it's barely a year since they took over.**



Tom and Patty were followed by **John Halpin, Jabo Ibhre, Jon Colman, Jimmy Glass, and Nigel Clibbens**. Each guest chatted to us for around 15-20 minutes and all stayed to chat and have photos taken by and with branch members. Much of the chat with **Jimmy Glass** focused on his illustrious career as a striker – for the London Branch and we'll feature that in the next HTB.



Jabo shared some fascinating perspectives about his time at United and what players need in the club environment to perform to their best. He inevitably proved to be a popular target for photos and stayed and chatted much longer than he'd planned.



John Halpin reflected on his long career as a player, having signed for us October 1984. His first game was against Huddersfield Town. We lost 1-0 and Sam Allardyce was playing for Huddersfield. Hung up his boots in 1991. From early 1990's John headed the Football in the Community Scheme which evolved into the Community Sports Trust, and he had led to spells as a coach, assistant manager and manager. In November 2022 he was presented with a Professional Footballers Association Trophy to mark his 38 years of service to club and community and of course has 'Halpy's' bar named in his honour.



Award-winning local journalist, Jon Colman talked to us as a fellow fan and shared his personal memories of ‘that first match’ with his late father that probably put a tear in a few eyes.



Nigel Clibbens talked about the financial challenges facing EFL teams and confirmed that he's still having those weird dreams where Carlisle United are bought by American owners who with mere months of arriving sort out the EWM debt, get on with major ground improvements and start work on a proper training facility.



During the evening a tired and emotional Jason 'Jugsy' Casey was called to the stage to be presented with a photo-cushion to mark his retirement as Mascot Co-ordinator after many years of tireless work. Thanks Jugsy!



The evening ended with two long-standing branch members, **Richard Wood** and **Dave Spencer** sharing some memories of their early days as branch members.

This was followed by the musical stylings of **Simon Hindley** and **Frank Beattie** which brought the evening to a close.



A Day to Remember

London Branch Mascots at our away games

Thanks for all the feedback from our London Branch mascots at recent away games, here are selection of comments and photos from mascots (and mums and dads) about their experiences.

8 year-old **Jessie Bushnell was our mascot at Gillingham** and mum Linsey was delighted with the mascot experience. *"The staff were great, Jessie got to walk with Jon Mellish and used the autograph book inside the goody bag to good effect."*



Pictured left is **Parker Harrison**, Mum Sam said; *"I just wanted to say thank you again for making Parker's day at MK Dons. He enjoyed it (minus the result) and said that "it was awesome".*

A huge thank you to the London branch for the excellent goodie bag. We met Keith before the game and had some of the sweets for half time treats.

We started with a tour of the ground and then he got to play in the young Dons area. Playing table tennis with the Dons fans. We then got to go pitch side and watch the teams warm up. Had a chat with Simmo and a high 5 from the players on the way back in.

Walking out with Charlie was his highlight of the day and despite the result we had a great day. Thank you all again for giving Parker the incredible opportunity and memories he will remember forever"



Thank you for having **Ayda** (pictured left with Charlie Wyke) as mascot at the match on Saturday at Bradford City. She really enjoyed the experience and it will be a day she'll always remember, walking our team out, meeting the team etc.



Brunel (and myself if honest) had a truly memorable experience at Swindon. He was buzzing throughout the match and must have told all of his Under 9s teammates plus their parents about his mascot experience this morning". Brunel's dad Mike Rowland. Brunel is pictured above in the pre-kick-off line up.

ex-

Rowan Collier was our mascot at AFC Wimbledon



Brunton Park Diary

2024/25

"OWN THE NORTHATIONAL LEAGUE"

Aug 10th (Sat)

Veteran former frontman **Lewis Ales-Ales-sandra** joins North West Counties Premier Division side Bury from Hyde United.

Aug 12th (Mon)

United's ex, non-playing gloveman **Dean Bouzanis** links up with Stevenage on loan from Reading until January. The Aussie joined United in January 2014 but was kept out of the side by the likes of little-known youngster **Jordan Pickford**..... whatever happened to him?

Aug 13th (Tue)

CUFC (0) 0 STOKE CITY (0) 2 – CARABAO CUP 1ST ROUND

A young Potters side found an extra gear in the second half to send United spinning out of the League Cup with a familiar early exit. The visitor's Sidibe hit the bar in an even first half while Wyke steered a Neal ball just wide. A headed goal from slack marking gave them the lead just after the restart, which was almost extended with another strike against Lewis' bar. Back came

the Blues, Neal had a shot saved and then Mellish struck the post from close in. Taking heed of the warning, sub Tezgel beat the offside trap to loop one in from a through ball.

CUFC*: Lewis 6, Hayden 5, Thomas 5, Mellish 6, Barclay 5, **Davies 7**, Ellis 6, Neal 6, Vela 6, Wyke 5, Adu-Adjei 5.
Subs: Williams 6, Armstrong 6

Aug 14th (Wed)

Although every chance of being a little in-joke given our previous recruitment under Abbott, the latest rumour is that United have enquired about out-of-favour former Blue **Alex Gilliead**. The former loanee didn't even make Graham Alexander's nine-man bench for Bradford's Fizzy Cup first round tie and rejected an offer to move to an unnamed club last week.

Aug 17th (Sat)

CUFC YTH (1) 3 SALFORD YTH (1) 2

Having fallen behind on the half hour, parity was restored when Lowes' blocked effort fell to the feet of Murray who fired it into the bottom corner. The visitors soon restored their lead and

only a great save from Randall prevented it being 1-3. In a crazy finale, a long ball over the top wasn't dealt with and Mason nudged his man off the ball to finish in the 96th minute. With the last move of the game, Murray picks up the loose ball in the box, shifts it onto his left and buries it for a remarkable win.

CUFC: Randall, Chapman, Hodgson, Porter, Nicholson, Atkinson, Fitzpatrick, Lowes, O'Donoghue, Murray, Hopper.

CUFC (1) 1 BARROW (0) 0

The county's bragging rights remained where they should be as **Adu-Adjei** opened his senior account with a well-taken goal. Davies, Hayden and Thomas were amongst the others taking plaudits in a solid, workmanlike performance where effort made up for flair, pace and creativity. The Blues never do things the easy way and the sight - or profanity-filled shock for some of us - at seeing the ball in United's net with almost the last touch of the game quickly turned to joy at seeing the referee's assistant with his flag raised. Old boy Farman played his part too, waving Adu-Adjei's angled shot past him after the on-loan youngster had pounced on a left sideline slip by a Barrow defender.

CUFC*: Lewis 6, Hayden 7, Thomas 7, Mellish 6, Davies 7, Williams 6, Barclay

6, Neal 7, Vela 6, Wyke 6, **Adu-Adjei 8**. Subs: Lavelle 7, Ellis 6, Kelly 6

Aug 20th (Tue)

Following a spell training with them, **Beer Machine** is given a short-term deal with the Monkey Hangers in the National League as he bids to resurrect his career following the ACL injury suffered with Blackpool.

Aug 21st (Wed)

20-year-old Bournemouth midfielder **Dominic Sadi** joins the Blues on a season-long loan. Described as a forward-thinking creative player with an eye for goal, Dom is a good friend of current cherry Adu-Adjei and has made four first-team appearances for his parent club including coming off the bench during a 3-0 win over Brighton & Hove Albion in the Premier League. A Board-level friendship involving Tom Piatek and his Bournemouth counterpart have apparently helped get both deals over the line.

Mad dog **Richard Keogh** takes over the reigns as interim head coach at Blackpool following the sacking of Neil Critchley.

Aug 23rd (Fri)

Popular ex-midfield talisman **Jamie Devitt** is appointed as Professional Devel-

opment Phase Assistant Coach at United, working closely with and assisting Academy manager Steven Rudd and youth team gaffer Mark Birch. Devitt recently completed his UEFA B Coaching Badge and Talent Identification Level 2 award.

Terrace song legend **Terry Ablade** joins Partick Thistle on a season-long loan from Fulham, the speedster having recovered from the injuries that plagued his time with the Blues last season. Former loan defender, the bench splintering **Duncan Idehen**, signs a 2-year deal with League of Ireland Premier Division club Derry City.

Aug 24th (Sat)

CUFC YTH (2) 4 ACCRINGTON YTH (1) 1 – YOUTH ALLIANCE CUP

An excellent performance with O'Donoghue running through and sliding the ball past the advancing keeper on the angle following a comedy defensive mix up. The youngsters were pegged back but went in ahead at the break as Hopper pinged a great left footed strike from outside of the box into the top corner. Two of the highly rated under 16's, Smith and Penny, completed the scoring with both already signed up as trainees for next season to avoid other clubs poaching them.

MK FRANCHISE (2) 3 CUFC (0) 0

Where to start, the Barclay midfield experiment? Williams and Mellish being constantly overrun and bypassed down the left flank? The almost non-existent forward threat until Sadi entered the game and showed what could be done with a football. United's attempt at the beautiful game, certainly in the first half, was at times as empty and soulless and the home stadium. **What turned out in the end to be opposition gaffer Mike Williamson's job interview with the Piataks was the equivalent of an open goal, such was the space afforded to MK time and again.** The cap the day off, Kelly's Weetabix calves lasted a full 12 minutes before unravelling once more. The diagnosis is another 12 weeks or so on the physio couch.

CUFC*: Lewis 5, Hayden 5, Lavelle 5, Mellish 4, Davies 5, Williams 4, Barclay 4, Neal 4, Vela 4, Wyke 4, Adu-Adjei 5. Subs: **Sadi 6**, Armstrong 5, Ellis 6

Aug 27th (Tue)

29-year-old Northern Ireland winger **Jordan Jones** finally gives into United's and Wyke's eyelash fluttering and wooing, penning a three-year deal. Jones had recently been linked with League One teams including Exeter City and had turned down overseas clubs with the deal on and off for several weeks. His CV includes a three-year spell at

Kilmarnock, two years with Rangers and a loan at Sunderland before joining Wigan in 2021. Jones was released at the end of last season, only to rejoin the Latics on a short term deal ahead of the new campaign.

Aug 30th (Fri)

SHREWSBURY YTH (1) 1 CUFC YTH (0) 0

A game of few chances and incidents, judging by its absence from all streams and socials.

CUFC XI: Randall (GK), Chapman, Hodgson, Allan, Fitzpatrick, Atkinson, Hopper, Lowes, Lambert, Skinner, Hetherington.

One of the more unusual signings on transfer deadline day sees 28-year-old **Harrison Biggins** join the Blues from Shrewsbury Town on a season-long loan. The box-to-box midfielder had only joined the Shrews in the summer on a two-year deal following a productive spell at Doncaster Rovers where Donny went from relegation candidates to the League Two play-offs in the space of a few months. Did he forget the boss's birthday? Biggins' past history includes Fleetwood followed by a long loan spell with Barrow, but we'll try not to hold that against him.

Another player on the move in the

search of more playing time is the human riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma, **Dan Butterworth**, as he hops down to Swindon Town on a two-year deal. One minute sublime, the next frustrating, the 24-year-old midfielder made only four short appearances from the bench this season after 12 starts, four goals and a bunch more sub outings in League One last season.

Several old boys also make deadline day moves. Keeper **Shamal George** joins Wycombe on a permanent deal from Scottish Championship side Livingston after 80 appearances north of the wall. The end destination for the previously linked **Alex Gilliead** is Shrewsbury Town, having been released by Brat-fud City. Bolton Wanderers' Jack Iredale will soon be Scottish Premiership Hibernian's Jack Iredale as departs on a two-year deal. Former red card magnet **Hayden White** leaves Ebbsfleet United to join American second tier side Indy Eleven and no, they have nothing to do with The Smiths or the Arctic Monkeys.

Aug 31st (Sat)

CUFC (1) 1 TRANMERE ROVERS (2) 2

Or call it Carlisle Utd 1 Omari Patrick 2, such was the influence of our former Wembley scorer on the match's outcome, the one bit of quality on the pitch to separate the two sides. While

he left the pitch to warm applause at the end, the greeting for Simmo and his team at the final whistle wasn't far from the polar opposite. Debutant Jones had showed glimpses of his ability in the first half before his influence faded after the break while Davies scored his first for the Blues to equalise Patrick's opening strike, the wing-back timing his run into the box to perfection to calmly finish. United's flow wasn't helped by another in-game injury, this time to Hayden's noggin after a clash of heads.

CUFC*: Lewis 5, Hayden 5, Thomas 5, Mellish 5, **Davies 6**, Williams 5, Neal 4, Vela 4, Jones 5, Wyke 4, Adu-Adjei 5.
Subs: Barclay 5, Sadi 5

Within a few hours of the game, the Club announces that **Simmo Snr and Jnr, Skelton and Barr** are all checking into Hotel Du One with the academy coaching trio of **Mark Birch, Steven Rudd and Jamie** Devitt in caretaker charge with immediate effect. There hadn't been a hint of quitting during his post-match media duties with the conclusion that any 'mutuality' was largely one-sided.

Sep 2nd (Mon)

Rehab coach **Geoff Haugh's** departure from the club is also confirmed, this time on his own terms.

Big Tom reveals his recruitment plans will include a sporting director and a head coach, ideally in that order, rather than just one manager. The early names to be suggested for the coaching role include former Preston North End, Plymouth Argyle and Bury boss Ryan Lowe, the current Gateshead manager Rob Elliot, ex-Barrow boss Pete Wild and the renowned Wycombe Wanderers and QPR hairdresser Gareth Ainsworth.

With his memories of battling for the number 9 shirt at United alongside the Rush-like Tristran Abrahams and Sam Fishburn aka, 'The Geordie Haaland' still fresh, ex-loan striker **Brad Young** is probably pinching himself at the prospect of a similar challenge as the New Saints FC man moves to Saudi Pro League side Al-Orobah in a \$250,000 deal with potential future add-ons, a record transfer fee received by a club in Welsh domestic football.

Sep 3rd (Tue)

CUFC YTH (0) 3 PNE YTH (1) 2 – YOUTH ALLIANCE CUP GROUP STAGE

A brilliant second-half display from Birch's Bairns gave United all three points, all the better with several familiar names missing after being called up for the first team Trophy clash that evening. Unlucky to be one down at the

break after Lambert had a goal-bound effort cleared off the line, United drew level after a deep cross was headed back across the box by Lambert to Penney, who volleyed home from close range to equalise. Lowes capitalised on a defensive mix up to make it 2-1 and almost added another when some superb play led to him crashing a piledriver against the bar and out to safety. Chapman soon made it 3-1 however, picking up the rebound after yet another winning attempt at the crossbar challenge, this time from Mason. PNE pulled one back with ten left on the clock for 3-2 before heroics from young stopper Casey Sillitoe, pushing away a penalty that had given just before the end.

CUFC XI: Sillitoe, Chapman, Hodgson (45' Hatton), Porter, Nicholson (77' Cairns), Penney, Hopper (63' Towers), Lowes, Lambert (63' Bell), Rigby, Ma-

CUFC XI (0) 1 NOTTINGHAM FOREST 'B' (1) 2 – BRISTOL STREET MOTORS TROPHY

The makeshift Blues featuring several youngsters gave a good account of themselves and could count themselves unlucky to lose to a last-minute strike. Practically one of the senior players, Sadi was involved in much of our better work and had Forest chasing shadows

at time. Hetherington made hopefully his first start of many while there were good minutes for Fitzpatrick and O'Donoghue, on top of Allen who came off the bench to score. Harper and McGeouch also had useful run outs on their return from injury. To damn the competition further however, it's later revealed that Adu-Adjei picked up a knee injury during the game that will keep him out for the next 6-8 weeks.

CUFC XI: Breeze, Ellis, Harper (Williams 46), Lavelle (Allan 83), Mellish, McGeouch (O'Donoghue 46), Neal, Sadi, Hetherington (Fitzpatrick 78), Adu-Adjei, Armstrong.

Mellish and Breeze are shortlisted in the NW Footy Awards, the former for the region's League One player of the season award for 2023/24 and the stopper for the Rising Star award, where he'll be up against Jarrad Branthwaite. The winners are crowned November 25.

Former chest-beating loan star **Dynel Simeu** finally has a club, even if it's agreeing to be paid in farm vegetables and livestock run-off after completing a move to Albanian side KF Teuta.

Sep 6th (Fri)

The Central League Cup draw throws the Blues into Group 1 with Barrow,

Blackburn, Burnley and Morecambe.

Sep 7th (Sat)

CUFC YTH (0) 0 STOCKPORT COUNTY YTH (1) 2

No details were given for this game.

BRADFORD CITY (1) 2 CUFC (0) 1

Looks at checklist. Big away following (1,756) tick. More disappointing in-game injuries for the Blues (Williams and Thomas) tick. Another defeat helped by at least one defensive blooper, tick, tick, tick. Cook profited from some poor play from Mellish for their first with both teams then going close in an end to end first half. Wyke somehow hit the post from a Davies pass on the restart before home flapper Walker somehow spilled Neal's lobbed shot into his own net. There for the taking, it was unfortunately Brat-fud taking the spoils as Cook's powered header allowed him to match Patrick and be the second old boy to bag a pair against his former club.

CUFC*: Lewis 6, Davies 6, Williams n/a, Thomas 6, Mellish 4, Neal 5, Vela 5, Biggins 6, Jones 6, **Sadi 6**, Wyke 4. Subs: Lavelle 5, Harper 6.

19-year-old former midfielder **Ryan Carr** goes out on loan to table-topping National League side Gateshead from Ipswich Town while penalty area leg-

dangling **Josh Emmanuel** becomes the second ex-United player to join Donny after signing on a short-term deal.

Sep 10th (Tue)

MORECAMBE YTH (0) 2 CUFC YTH (2) 3 – YOUTH ALLIANCE CUP GROUP STAGE

Another excellent Cup performance from the nippers with goals from Hopper and O'Donoghue in addition to an own goal to open our scoring.

CUFC: Sillitoe, Chapman, Hodgson, Porter, Nicholson, Penney, Rigby, Skinner, O'Donoghue, Lambert, Hopper.

Third-year youth scholars **Jake Allan** and **Aran Fitzpatrick** join the Jameaters on work-experience loan deals until 31 December.

Sep 12th (Thu)

Recently booted Miller **Leam Richardson** is suddenly one of the front runners for the new coach. Richardson was named the 2021–22 EFL League One Manager of the Season after leading Wigan to the League One title.

Hallelujah, the dream of owning a standalone training ground complex becomes one step closer with agreement reached with the council over an initial 5-year lease for the upper area of the Sheepmount facility. Two training pitches will be immediately installed

with more developments to hopefully follow as and when the lease is mutually extended. Part of the sweetener includes a £50,000 capital investment to go into local grassroots football across the city over the next few years.

It's goodbye sofa, hello Sofia as 33-year-old ex-United and Leeds loan defender **Liam Cooper** packs his bags for CSKA Sofia after agreeing a two-year deal with the Bulgarian side.

Sep 14th (Sat)

CUFC (1) 2 FLEETWOOD TOWN (2) 3

United had almost written the perfect script, Wyke scoring twice either side of half-time including a penalty to haul Fleetwood back in from an early 2-0 lead. Frustrating their home fans again, the defence failed to pick up an unmarked man on the penalty spot to apply the finish and make it five league defeats from the last six. The Mellish midfield experiment needs to be permanently binned, it just isn't working; his partnership with McGeouch was like pairing red wine with a bag of fish and chips. Throw in the Carabao and the Mickey Mouse Trophy games and the 7 defeats from 8 has never happened in the entire Blues history since joining the league in 1928.

CUFC*: Lewis 5, Davies 4, Harper 4,

Lavelle 4, Hayden 4, McGeouch 5, Biggins 5, Mellish 4, Jones 5, Sadi 4, **Wyke**
6. Subs: Armstrong 5, Vela 5

Beech-balling down the local Fylde promenade is former gaffer **Chris Beech**, paying the price for a poor start to the season alongside assistant ex-skipper Nick Anderton.

Sep 17th (Tue)

The current Franchise FC team of boss **Mike Williamson** and sporting string-puller **Liam Sweeting** emerge as the likely candidates to lead United into a new era. Williamson had a successful spell at Gateshead before being lured to the land of plastic cows last autumn. Sweeting has brought in some serious £10m-plus transfer loot in recent seasons including the sales of Scott Twine, Harry Darling, Matt O'Riley, Max Dean and Rhys Healey.

Sep 18th (Wed)

While the Williamson deal appears a cert once the compo has been agreed, it's widely reported that Sweeting and his technicalour turncoat, has used United's interest to secure a new and improved deal at Franchise FC. Williamson is confirmed the next day with his baggage, sorry, backroom team of **Ian Watson, Chris Bell and Carl Magnay** in tow. Pledging to bring "intensity and



Mike Williamson contains his excitement as Luke Armstrong puts the Blues further ahead at Swindon.



excitement” to United’s game, promising to also “get fans off their seats” may require some thought given the number heading straight for the exits before the last knockings for several months now. Watson has a background in strength and conditioning and general coaching, Bell in physiotherapy and psychology and Magnay in structure and possession.

Sep 21st (Sat)

WALSALL YTH (2) 3 CUFC YTH (0) 1

An early goal from the hosts and a penalty on the stroke of half-time sees Walsall take a 2-0 lead at the break, one that the Blues were unable to claw back despite a goal from Hopper, who followed up a saved penalty by scoring the rebound.

CUFC: Randall (GK), Rigby, Chapman, Porter, Nicholson, Atkinson, Hopper, Lowes, Lambert, Skinner, Mason

MAGIC ROUNDABOUT (0) 0 MAGIC CARLISLE (1) 2

Despite the current predicament, fans are reminded that last season, Doncaster were languishing 22nd at the beginning of February, 20th at the beginning of March, and 16th at the beginning of April..... and still made the end of season play-offs. Keeping those hopes alive, Magic Mike’s managerial career at

United got off to a dream start in front of a loud and vociferous away following. The steer towards a possession-dominated style was immediately apparent, if not entirely successful, forgivable in the context of barely a full day’s training under the new team. A couple of early home half-chances, an injury-led change to the far-side flag waver and suddenly the Blues were away. Previously bereft members of the team led by Harry Lewis and with Armstrong and Lavelle not far behind him, immediately found a new lease of life. Harper’s pinpoint corner to the bulldozing bonce of **Lavelle** gave a deserved half-time lead, one that should have been extended by Mellish from a similar delivery. The big man’s restitution after the break was perfect, knocking back an important header to Sadi whose scuffed shot was finished on the angle with aplomb by **Armstrong**; a little moment amongst the many others where you realised why Wrexham were previously willing to pay a cool half-million new notes for his signature early last season. In an otherwise quiet afternoon, former misfit Dan Butterworth hit the post late on and blasted a better chance into the home stand behind Lewis.

CUFC*: Lewis 8, Davies 6, Harper 7, **Lavelle** 8, Barclay 6, Mellish 7, McGeouch 7, Biggins 7, Jones 6, Arm-

strong 8, Wyke 6. Subs: Vela 6, Sadi 6.

Sep 23rd (Mon)

Exciting CUFC Academy prospect **Josh Wade** is called up to the next England U15 training camp.

Sep 24th (Tue)

CUFC XI (0) 0 BLACKBURN ROVERS XI (2) 5 – CENTRAL LEAGUE CUP

A not unexpected result as a young United side featuring two first-year scholars including one returning from injury, and several second years and young pros, were well beaten by their far more experienced opponents that included the likes of Todd Cantwell and Kyle McFadzean with Cozier-Duberry scoring a hat-trick for the visitors.

CUFC XI: Breeze, Chapman, Fitzpatrick (Robinson 70), Ellis (Skinner 70), Atkinson, Nicholson, O'Donoghue, Neal, Dudik (Hetherington 65), Lowes, Hopper (Mason 83).

Sep 27th (Fri)

Former loan striker **Jack Stretton** joins National League side Oldham Athletic until January 5. He'll be fighting super Joey Garner for pitch time, Stretton looking to get first team football following his comeback from last season's anterior cruciate knee ligament knock.

Reggie Lambe is on the run again, the ex-winger leaving NL side Braintree Town for National League North club Needham Market.

Sep 28th (Sat)

CUFC (2) 2 GRIMSBY TOWN (1) 3

A few sleepless nights for the crowd at this one, the credit in the bank and forward momentum from the win at Swindon squandered in 45 bemusing, wayward second-half minutes. How a team of eleven professionals can go from play-off outsiders (with a fair tailwind) to looking over their shoulder again in such a short time is surely one for the psychoanalysts. The warning sign over the nervousness of our defending was perhaps there when a simple through ball had given the fish filleters a foothold in the game after our early opener from **Lavelle's** header. Even after we had restored the lead through **Sadi's** fine finish against a replacement keeper between the sticks so young he would have otherwise probably played that morning in a school match, the expected bombardment didn't materialise as we barely troubled their backline the remainder of the afternoon. In the end, the final minute winning header that sent the away travellers home happy in their trawlers seemed inevitable.

CUFC*: Lewis 6, Davies 6, Harper 6,



Lavelle gets a hug for his goal and Sadi added a second, but yet another defeat for the Blues at Brunton Park

Lavelle 7, Barclay 5, Vela 6, Biggins 6, Jones 5, **Sadi 7**, Armstrong 5, Wyke 5.

Current goalkeeping coach **Glen Johnson** announces his departure from the Blues with Mikey expected to bring his previous coach at Franchise FC

Sep 29th (Sun)

Former fans favourite and midfield general **Jason Kennedy**, now at Redcar Athletic, calls an end to his playing career at 38.

Oct 1st (Tue)

CUFC (0) 0 NOTTS COUNTY (2) 2

The hangover from Saturday's second half continued, a disjointed, poor start punished twice by a confident County side denied from the services of big names Jodi Jones and David McGoldrick. It took only 10 minutes to be opened up by pure route one, a straightforward goal kick missed by Thomas and allowing Jatta to run through and chip Lewis. Comedic. County kept their foot on the neck of the Cumbrians, a simple deep cross allowed to find a free opponent with their header back into the danger area smashed home. Perhaps out of gas from their first-half press, the visitors stepped off the pedal after the restart and United were genuinely unfortunate not to at least give the crowd something to cheer. Biggins, Harper and a

rapidly improving Jones went near with attempts, Wyke had a solid penalty shout ignored and headed a Harper cross just wide, Harper crashed a volley from another Jones cross against the bar and Biggins, Neal and Jones again were denied on the line, Bass having the game of his life in the County goal.

CUFC*: Lewis 5, Davies 5, Harper 6, Thomas 4, Lavelle 5, Mellish 6, Vela 5, Biggins 6, Jones 6, Sadi 5, Armstrong 5.
Subs: Wyke 6, **Neal 7**

We're going to need a bigger dug-out as new goalkeeping coach **Tom Weal** and head of performance **Toby Frost** are announced as joining the Blues from, well, just have a guess! 34-year-old Weal had a spell at Norwich City as a sports development officer then goalkeeping development centre lead coach before joining Huddersfield Town as academy goalkeeping coach. After a spell in Nottingham Forest's academy, he returned to Norwich as head of academy goalkeeping in 2018 before a move to Notts County and finally Franchise FC. 27-year-old Frost has had physical performance coach roles at London Broncos and Leicester City.

63-year-old ex-skipper **Paul Huntington** signs for Brat-fud City on a short-term deal.

Oct 3rd (Thu)

Midfield old-boy **Antony Sweeney** follows new manager Rob Elliot to Crawley Town from Gateshead as he takes up the position of first-team coach.

Oct 4th (Fri)

He who is 'most' Holy has a hold new meaning as ex-stopper **Tomas Holy** joins Czech club FK Baník Most-Souš, a third-tier side based in the city of Most.

Oct 5th (Sat)

COLCHESTER UTD (0) 0 CUFC (0) 0

The threadbare Blues battled hard for a point in not exactly the most enthralling 90 minutes of football. Marginally the better team in the first half, the goal threat gradually ran out of steam after the break with Lewis increasingly called into action, a reaction save from Payne's deflected shot being one highlight.

CUFC*: **Lewis 8**, Thomas 7, Lavelle 7, Mellish 6, Davies 6, Harper 6, Neal 7, Vela 6, Biggins 6, Armstrong 6, Wyke 6.
Subs: Barclay 6, Robinson 6, Sadi 6

Another one for the OAP home is ex-loanee **Kelvin Langmead**, who announces his retirement after failing to win his battle with a recurring achilles injury. His last appearance for United was over 20 years ago, his final team being Racing Club Warwick in the Northern Premier

League Division One Midlands.

Oct 7th (Mon)

Thomas is called up by Saint Lucia to lead their side in their two CONCACAF Nations League games coming up against Saint Martin, ruling him out of United's trip to AFC Wimbledon.

Bradford City continue their attempt to recreate Dad's Army by signing former midfielder **Corry Evans** on a short-term deal until January.

Oct 8th (Tue)

CUFC YTH (0) 0 BOLTON W YTH (2) 4 - YOUTH ALLIANCE CUP GROUP STAGE

Unbeaten Wanderers simply too good on the afternoon. No team details given.

CUFC XI (0) 0 WIGAN ATH XI (2) 2 - BRISTOL STREET TROPHY

A fairly meaningless event brightened by the return of both ACL-snap victim Calum Guy and hamstring-knack's Taylor Charters making a welcome return to action. Dan Hopper and fellow youth team players Hayden Atkinson and Seb Mason made their senior debuts in a very young side showing nine changes to the last league XI. There were also first starts for Freddie O'Donoghue and Anton Dudik, and call-ups for Gabe Breeze, Jack Ellis, Jack Robinson, Ben Barclay, Dominic Sadi and Sam Hetherington.

With some of the senior starters in the side having a poor night, United never truly threatened Wigan's goal.

United XI: Breeze, Ellis, Robinson (Charters 62), Barclay (Hopper 82), Mellish (Fitzpatrick 62), Atkinson, Neal (Guy 62), Sadi (Mason 82), Hetherington, O'Donoghue, Dudik.

Oct 12th (Sat)

ACCRINGTON STANLEY YTH (1) 1 CUFC YTH (1) 3

Mason, Hodgson and Skinner grabbed the goals for the Young Blues.

XI: Randall, Chapman, Fitzpatrick, Porter, Nicholson, Atkinson, Hopper, Skinner, O'Donoghue, Hetherington, Mason

AFC WIMBLEDON (3) 4 CUFC (0) 0

A sobering, south London, Jack-the-Ripper style shocker, the Cumbrians gutted and never in it from the very first minute. Whatever Travelodge or similar they were staying the night before, the many fans that went must have been justifiably wondering if the hotel fire alarm have been ringing all night from two in the morning. The Swindon win felt like half a lifetime ago with their forwards attacking at will and Stevens helping himself to a hat-trick. The welcome return of Guy and Charters to league football as second half substi-

tutes was the only positive of the day, the pair warmly applauded even before they came on and adding much needed quality to prevent the Wombles running up a cricket score.

CUFC*: Lewis 4, Barclay 3, Lavelle 3, Mellish 4, Davies 3, Harper 3, Neal 3, Vela 3, Biggins 3, Sadi 3, Wyke 3. Subs: Armstrong 4, Robinson 4, **Charters 5**, Guy 5

Oct 14th (Mon)

United discover that their FA Cup campaign for the season will end in November after being handed a home tie against cup nemesis side and previous winners Wigan Athletic in the first round.

Oct 15th (Tue)

Gateshead local **Carl Magnay** quits United after only 26 days to take up the vacant hot seat at his boyhood club. The "incredibly tough decision" quote from the departing Magnay wins the Edinburgh Fringe Festival Joke of the Year Award ahead of Peter Kay and Tim Vine.

Oct 18th (Fri)

Wondering what he's done wrong, third-year scholar **Sam Hetherington** joins fellow Blues Jake Allan and Aran Fitzpatrick on loan at the Jameaters until the end of the year. Meanwhile, United will

The Andrew Jenkins Stand is opened for business by Tom and Patty. Nigel had spent the morning blowing up the balloons before Tom demonstrated the teleport device which will allow them to beam in from Jacksonville.



travel to Altrincham in the first round of the FA Youth Cup on 31 October.

Stuff your tea rooms, the Main Stand hospitality areas are confirmed as opening for the first time in Saturday's encounter against Harrogate.

Oct 19th (Sat)

Magic/Tragic Mike's first signing is 23-year-old free agent **Tyler Burey**. The pacy former Millwall winger/ wingback was released in August by Danish club Odense Boldklub (chocolate biscuit), arrives on a short-term deal having been training with the squad. Burey has previous with the Blues having scored for the Monkey Hangers in their 2-1 win against Beech-era United.

Archie Davies could be out for the season after a scan on his shoulder reveals the need for an operation.

CUFC (1) 1 HARROGATE TOWN (1) 1

For some it was two points dropped; an improved performance with enough chances in the first half to have won the game. For others it was at best adequate and rounded off by a very poor second half that highlighted everything presently wrong, ergo, an obsession with possession stats while offering little threat.

Biggins was unlucky not to give the

Blues an early lead, hammering the bar with a well struck free kick. Harrogate's one and only clinical attack of the game inevitably ended up with Lewis picking up the ball from out of his net although for a change, United hit back straight away through Armstrong after he reacted quickly to an initial save. Despite the return of Robson from injury and the debut of Burey, the second half was a stalemate; Robson's excellent through ball to Wyke, who then found Biggins, being comfortably the best chance for the Cumbrians.

CUFC*: Lewis 6, Thomas 6, Lavelle 6, Mellish 6, Harper 7, Guy 7, **Neal 7**, Biggins 6, Sadi 7, Charters 6, Armstrong 6. Subs: Wyke 6, Burey 6, Robson 6, Robinson 6

Oct 22nd (Tue)

WALSALL (1) 3 CUFC (0) 1

The high-flying Midlanders were too quick and savvy for United, not loaded with quality but with a system in place that set traps and pressed at the right moment. One loose ball to Neal and a heavy touch later and suddenly the Cumbrians were one down early doors and forlornly chasing the game. Hayden made a return to the side, looked a long way from full fitness and was hooked at half-time. The recalled Vela wasn't much better and the benched Charters

and Sadi must have been shaking their head. By the time Mellish bundled the ball in towards the end, the match was as good as over, the Blues conceding twice more including almost inevitably, within a couple of minutes of the second period.

CUFC*: Lewis 5, Thomas 4, Lavelle 4, Hayden 5, Mellish 6, Harper 5, **Guy 6**, Neal 4, Vela 4, Biggins 4, Armstrong 4. Subs: Sadi 5, Burey 6, Robson 5, Characters 5, Barclay 5.

Oct 23rd (Wed)

CUFC YTH XI (1) 2 WORKINGTON JUNIORS (0) 0 – CUMBERLAND CUP 1ST ROUND

No dramas for the little 'uns in a game they mostly dominated. The impressive O'Donoghue sped forward from the kick-off to incredibly score after just 10 seconds. Excellent defending prevented both O'Donoghue and Hopper extending the lead before Chapman sealed the win with a drilled finish early in the second half.

CUFC XI: Sillitoe, Chapman, Hodgson, Rigby, Porter, Atkinson, Lambert, Hopper, O'Donoghue, Lowes, Mason (80' Bell)

Oct 24th (Thu)

Playing for Bournemouth's Development team in their 2-2 draw at

Swansea, **Dan Adu-Adjei** successfully gets through just over half an hour of work on his comeback from injury.

Oct 25th (Fri)

23-year-old ex-loan Blue **Owen Windsor** moves to his twelfth club, Leek Town, which probably tells you everything you need to know about his career trajectory (Swindon Town, Southampton, Cirencester Town, West Brom, Cirencester Town (again), Taunton Town, Grimsby Town, Newport County, Carlisle United, Chippenham Town, Chester, Marine, Leek Town).

Oct 26th (Sat)

BOLTON YTH (3) 5 CUFC YTH (1) 1

A bit of a mauling at the unbeaten league leaders (at the time) with United's social media output not for the first time, going entirely silent in terms of what happened.

CUFC (0) 0 CHELTENHAM TOWN (1) 1

If this miserable defeat isn't the season's nadir, we are definitely heading for a second crash through the league trapdoor. It was hard to work out what was worse, the performance on the pitch or MW's post-match-deer-in-the-headlights Radio Cumbria interview. The simple basics were ignored and a reverse to a kick-and-hope strategy from the lowest points under the previ-

ous two regimes left home fans wondering if we could conjure up a time machine and try a different managerial approach. The team found no answer to going a goal behind when the unfortunate Lewis had a complete Weston-Super. Without ever looking like they getting out of 2nd or 3rd gear, the visitors could have been out of the sight by half-time. They had the benefit of a referee having a blinder for them, only handing a yellow to Young after he smashed into Wyke, fracturing and dislocating the skipper's ankle and ending his season in the process. Young should then have walked for cynically fouling Guy as he threatened to lead a break upfield - just ridiculous. It did at least get the blood of the crowd going, Biggins somehow failing to convert Harper's fine cross in front of the Warwick and Burey showing some promising touches and lacing in various crosses on his home debut.

CUFC*: Lewis 4, Barclay 4, Thomas 5, Lavelle 4, Harper 5, Sadi 5, Guy 6, Robson 4, Charters 4, Biggins 5, Armstrong 4. Subs: Neal 5, **Burey 6**, Mellish 5

Oct 27th (Sun)

Fresh from hanging up his boots, **Jason Kennedy** takes up the Assistant Manager role at Whitby Town, working as the right-hand man for another ex-Blue, **Gary Liddle**.

Oct 30th (Wed)

There's a positive reaction to the news that 37-year-old **Rob Clarkson** has agreed to become the Cumbrian's new Sporting Director. After a brief, early footballing career at Sunderland AFC, he went off to pursue various qualifications before coaching at their academy. He left to performance analyst at some club called Manchester City, leaving in 2017 to join Glasgow side Rangers as Head of Domestic Scouting. After five years at Ibrox, he took up the position of Talent ID Lead for the England pathway (Under-17s to Under-21s) at the FA.

Former Sheffield Wednesday midfielder and wing-back **Kadeem Harris** is revealed as training with the squad and likely to join, subject to approval. The 31-year-old free agent was most recently with Turkish side Sanliurfaspor having had other stints within Turkey and Ukraine before that. His last spell on these shores ended after 88 appearances for Wednesday in 2021 with Wycombe, Cardiff, Brentford and Barnsley amongst his previous clubs.

The open training session as part of the club's 'festival of football' amusingly begins with a fans' banner hanging up in clear view with the words "***We turn up for you - you need to turn up for us***"

painted across it.

Oct 31st (Thu)

ALTRINCHAM (0) 1 CUFC (0) 4 (AET) – FA YOUTH CUP 1ST ROUND

United narrowly avoided a giant-killing headline, leaving it until the last knockings of injury time to grab a dramatic equaliser through O'Donoghue after falling behind on 77 minutes. After that it was plain sailing, Lambert, Hopper and Rigby putting clear daylight between the two sides. United had been the better team before the goal action, passing up several good scoring opportunities although Randall had made two excellent saves himself during the tie. The hosts had battled past Warrington and Chester in the 2nd and 3rd qualifying rounds to play United, who now go on to play last season's conquerors Barnsley in the second round.

CUFC: Randall, Chapman, Hodgson (Smith 78), Penny, Porter (Bell 88), Atkinson, Hopper (Hatton 109), Skinner (Edgar 114), O'Donoghue, Lowes (Lambert 63), Rigby.

Nov 2nd (Sat)

CUFC (0) 0 WIGAN ATH (0) 2 (AET) – FA CUP 1ST ROUND

For many this was undoubtedly the performance of the season; words like fight, grit, determination, desire, disci-

pline and heart featuring as a single thread linking the post-match views. This must be the standard for the rest of the season starting with the next league game at Salford; do that any thought of relegation will surely disappear. From back to front, the ten men showed fantastic character after Robson's controversial early sending off for a 50/50 challenge that replays should as making no contact with the play-acting Sessegnon. It was about a month early for pantomime villains, but Brunton Park enjoyed one nevertheless. Breeze was outstanding in goals, Thomas a colossus in defence and the likes of Neal and Mellish covered every blade of Brunton Park. If the opposition's own highly rated keeper Sam Tickle hadn't brought his 'A' game, it could have easily been our day - with apologies to Roger Hargreaves, Mr Tickle's arms were everywhere. The returning Dan Adu-Adjei also made a huge difference, his retirement to the bench after emptying the tank had a clear impact on the threat offered against the League One side. It took late, late goals at the end of each extra-time period to separate the teams, United sorely counting the cost of the FA's ridiculous decision to extend the scrapping of all replays in every round of the competition past qualification.

CUFC*: **Breeze 8**, Thomas 8, Lavelle 7, Hayden 7, Mellish 7, Neal 7, Robson 6, Charters 6, Sadi 7, Burey 7, Adu-Adjei 6. Subs: Armstrong 6, Robinson 6, Ellis 6, Harper 7

Frustrated by his lack of game time at Oldham, ex-goal bagger **Jack Stretton** joins Woking on a one-month loan from Stockport County.

Nov 5th (Tue)

BURNLEY XI (1) 5 CUFC XI (0) 0 – CENTRAL LEAGUE CUP

With the entire senior squad involved in training drills this week and probably linked to Clarkson's new role in the club, United decided to field an under-18 team bar one, the other being third-year scholar Aran Fitzpatrick. The Claret's themselves had a young side out however the difference between an under-21 academy side that recently had Category 1 status and one by far their junior and working at Category 3 was always going to be telling. Hopper saw a shot deflected wide in a bright start, the Blues holding out for the first half-hour. A burst of 3 goals in 8 minutes after the restart put the hosts out of sight and even though a couple of red cards towards the end sent the cup-holders down to 9 men in a bad-tempered contest.

CUFC XI: Sillitoe, Chapman (Bell 54), Hopper, Porter, Fitzpatrick, Atkinson, Rigby, Skinner (Hodgson 67), O'Donoghue, Lowes, Lambert (Smith 59).

The Blues 'El Cumbrio' second round derby clash with Carlisle City in the Fred Conway Cumberland Cup is confirmed for Tuesday, November 19.

With both sides out of the FA Cup, United's League Two railway derby clash with Crewe Alexandra is sensibly brought forward from Tuesday, December 3 to Saturday, November 30 on Sky Sports+ at 12.30pm.

Nov 6th (Wed)

40-year-old former midfielder **Chris Birchall** joins the fast-track pathway organised by PGMOL for ex-players to go into refereeing.

Nov 7th (Thu)

Gavin Skelton is back in football as part of a new backroom team with the Monkey Hangers.

*Player ratings used with kind permission from [Jon Colman @News & Star](#) - see link for subscription offers and details

Nov 9th (Sat)

SALFORD CITY (0) 0—CUFC (0) 1

Finally a league win (and a clean sheet for Gabe Breeze) against the ever-popular Salford City. With 1,400 Cumbrian's drowning out the home fans, a poor game ended in delirious fashion as Ben Barclay powered home a header from a corner.





An airborne Barclay powers home his header in front of the travelling Blues



BRANCH CONTACTS

2024/25



| | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Dave Brown | Chair | chairman@cusclb.com |
| John Bowman | Vice Chair & HTB Editor | editor@cusclb.com |
| Ken Hullock | Administration Officer | administration@cusclb.com |
| Andy Hall | Information Officer | information@cusclb.com |
| Andy Hall | VHTB Editor | virtual@cusclb.com |
| Paul Irving | Social Secretary | social@cusclb.com |
| Andrew Dobinson | Treasurer | treasurer@cusclb.com |
| Terry McCarthy | Matchday Organiser | tickets@cusclb.com |
| Peter Smithson | Membership Secretary | membership@cusclb.com |
| Kris Foster | South West Group | swgroup@cusclb.com |
| Chris Tembey | Football Team Captain | football@cusclb.com |
| Ruth & Pad Vamadevan | Mascots Co-ordinators | mascots@cusclb.com |

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