

Cambridge Fans United



"Uniting Our Community"



AMBER NEWS

Special 'Festive' Edition

2025





Opening Resolutions,

"If you care about something enough, you'll find a way to make it happen."

RT Bennett

It's a bit early still for New Year's resolutions but not too early to think about January. The window that is. Neil Harris has been giving it plenty of thought and has no doubt asked Santa for a proven goalscorer to ensure getting the points that a very talented team so clearly deserve. We've played pretty well all season but put ourselves under pressure time and again by not taking the chances we've been creating. We are in the top six but would be comfortably in the automatic promotion spots if we'd picked up the points we deserved. Admittedly, we have been deprived of the services of Kouassi, Appere and Lavery at various points, as well as McLoughlin, Ball and Morrison but it's scoring goals which has presented the biggest problem. Of course every football team is always looking for natural goalscorers but if we could find one, what a difference it would make. We have Bradshaw and McConnell as very useful back up players and George, should I say Glenn, Hoddle, is going to be some player. We look better with Bennett and Jobe in the team too- so, all we want for Christmas is a big centre forward and a goalscorer. Not much to ask is it? The performance at Fulham showed that we belong higher up but we should be aiming at three points each time, not one.

There have been some excellent performances lately. The storming come back against Crewe showed character and resilience. That game also showed that Ben Knight has huge pedigree. Similarly, away draws at Salford, Stockport and Milton Keynes showed that we can match very good teams and keep clean sheets. The game at Stockport, which put us in the third round, showed that we are now better equipped for League One than we were last season. We might well have won at Milton Keynes and they are one of the favourites to win this league. Turning draws into wins will take us where we ought to be and I'm sure that we need fear no one.

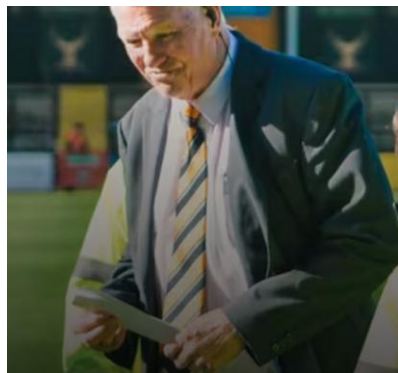


The appointment of an Independent Regulator is an exciting one and the example Sheffield Wednesday has already shown that his organisation have teeth. Poor and inadequate owners can now be obliged to sell up. That's a real positive and it's a great pity that it's taken so long for the legitimate aspirations of fans to be properly protected. No doubt the "Big" clubs will remain obstructive but I have the impression that regulation will have a profoundly good effect on the game and protect its future very well. Our own Shadow Board will continue to evolve and, in time, win the confidence of fans and Board alike.

The news on the stadium was a disappointment but we have to remember that we were lucky to get it back at all and that circumstances can change very quickly. The current economic situation is pretty stagnant and it's obviously not the right time for

such huge investment. The dream is far from dead. In the end it may be more economic to move elsewhere but like many fans of my age I have a powerful emotional attachment to the Abbey Stadium. At least we know now that fans would be consulted over such an emotive issue, not just informed, as we were in the dark days of 2005, when it was assumed, and said, that fans were too stupid to understand the arguments for a new ground.

As I write, we are looking forward to the game against Accrington Stanley, who almost



disappeared once but wouldn't die. Football clubs are too important to just vanish, aren't they? Then we have two tough away games at Gillingham and Chesterfield and both clubs know that they will be facing a resilient and rejuvenated United side. One that is being watched by huge and expectant crowds.

Finally, and sadly, the United family have lost two stalwarts, Dean Parmenter, a young stalwart, well known in the NRE and a very passionate fan, and Andy Pickard, a kind and thoroughly well-loved member of staff. They were remembered very movingly before and during the Crewe game. For a time they became part of our lives. They deserved that and none of us could ask for more.

Cambridge United FC

Press Release

A message from Paul Barry on behalf of the Owners and Board

Dear all,

A third of the way through the season, I wanted to update you on a number of important matters. There has been a lot of change on the football side over recent months. We all started this season with a healthy dose of realism that it would take time - and likely several transfer windows - before we see the full benefits of those changes. That said, we are confident that we can stay competitive this season in what is a tough but very finely balanced league. It has been great to have such a strong home record, matched by brilliant attendances at the Cledara Abbey Stadium, but we all know we need to be better away from home, hopefully starting tomorrow at Barrow. I spent the morning at the training ground last week, so I know just how hard Neil, Bonz, and all the staff and players are working to push us forward. Thank you, as ever, for your brilliant backing. It matters a huge amount to everyone and will continue to be very important over the coming months. As you all know, three years ago we bought the Cledara Abbey Stadium back. It was arguably the most important development for the club this century, as it placed our future squarely back in our own hands. Investment in our infrastructure has been long overdue and, after the training ground, we have prioritised

plans to redevelop the Abbey over the last 18 months, devoting significant time and money to the project. We have looked at multiple plans and options for potential redevelopment, alongside the detailed practicalities of delivery and, of course, the funding and future return on investment that would make any economic model viable.



Last week we concluded that, as things stand, the cost-benefit equation does not currently make it feasible. Put simply, the potential future upside of a partially improved Cledara Abbey would not justify the tens of millions of investment required, and it would end up being a

significant cost and long-term financial burden to the club. On the latest model, for example, it would take over 20 years before there would be any return, and even then, the projections are necessarily uncertain. Taking all this into account, we taken the decision to 'put our foot on the ball' and take stock. We all love the Abbey. It is full of memories and is the only place we have ever known as home. We also know that this could be a generational moment for Cambridge as a city, following the important Government announcement last month, and that Cambridge will grow and change significantly over the coming decades. As one of the biggest civic organisations in the city, we want the football club to be an active partner in those discussions and help ensure that sport, culture, and entertainment are at their heart. I am grateful to the Board for all their hard work over recent months in deepening these networks with civic leaders, and it is great that United for Cambridge will be launched in January, bringing the club and Foundation much closer together and providing a way for new partners to support the great work of the Foundation. Ownership of the Cledara Abbey Stadium means we are fully in charge of our destiny. The Abbey will remain our home for the foreseeable future, and we can always revisit redevelopment plans at any point should we choose. Equally, as owners and board members who are custodians of the club for current and future generations, we should also be open-minded about potential relocation. There is nothing on the table and nothing imminent, but I wanted

to share our current thinking at the earliest possible opportunity. Rest assured, Mark and I remain as ambitious as ever for Cambridge United, but unsurprisingly the financial landscape is not getting any easier. Our collective losses and investment into infrastructure since Covid total over £20 million, and inflation and cost pressures in the lower leagues remain high as more funding comes into them from



ambitious owners. It is becoming increasingly clear that we need to find another minority owner who can share the financial load and help us drive the club forward. Finding the right person who shares our values and ambitions may take time, but we know there is huge interest in Cambridge. It is a world city, a global brand, the birthplace of football, and a city with an incredible past and exciting future. We want to

ensure Cambridge United is an even bigger part of it. Finally, I would like to pay my respects to our Safety Officer, Andy Pickard, who sadly passed away last week - a great man and a great servant of the Club who embodied everything we stand for. He will be missed by all of us at Cambridge United.

Thank you again for all your support. United in Endeavour,

Paul



So After 20 Games...

CUFC season 2025/6 is almost half way through, and we have just taken a point away at MK Dons for the first time ever!

We have now played 20 league games this season and have 31 points, which averages at 1.55 per game, and if we continued at the same rate that would put us on 71 points by the end of the season. Compared to the last time I worked it out (which was after 13 games and 1.5 points per match) we have improved a tiny bit, but we are still just outside the play-offs.

League 2 is very tight this year with only 10 points separating second from 14th. Walsall continue to be top, so our match at the Abbey on New Years Day will be an interesting one to watch. It means a couple of wins and you are near the top, but after today's draw we drop from 6th to 9th place!

The consensus on social media seems to be that we need a striker or two in the January transfer window. It is hard not to agree with that when we make chances but don't take them. The problem is that January is a very difficult time to find strikers, let alone good ones that we can afford. The most likely outcome is a young player from a team in a league or 2 above us, another Kwesi Appiah would be nice! I'm sure Bonz and his team have tabs on a number of suitable candidates.

Bromley continue to be the team most wouldn't expect to be near the top, at the other end Newport are a few points adrift, Bristol Rovers have had a terrible run since beating us and are currently in the other relegation place. I expect changing their manager will bring a change of fortune.



Our recent home match against Chesterfield was unusual, not for conceding an added time equaliser, but because there were no bookings in the match. I can't remember the last time I saw a match without a card of some sort being shown. CUFC are towards the bottom of the disciplinary table with 35 bookings and 1 red card, Gillingham top that table with 52 and 3 respectively.

Walsall and Grimsby have least bookings (31), and with 4 Barrow have most red cards so far.

We end the year with 2 away games (Gillingham on Boxing day and Chesterfield on the 29th December). No trains on Boxing day, and I am told that if you let the train take the strain to get to Chesterfield you may have to wait to the next day for a return!

Using the Away Travel coach (supported by CFU and organised by Gina) is a great way to follow the U's away and avoid travel problems. For most games the size of the coach required can be changed a few days before to be the most cost effective for the journey, why pay for a big coach if a small one will do, and of course is cheaper! For the Christmas period making changes will be difficult, and arranging an additional coach may be impossible, so if you are thinking of using Away Travel please book early.



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all,

Terry Wilby



A poem about cancer, something which has affected many of us and many of those dear to us.

The Thief in the Night

You whisper our own mortality
Into our Ear
While shredding our defences
Like a coward
Using stealth
And betraying our beliefs in fairness

And justice
Your dark shadow betrays our friends
Undermines the healthy and the indifferent
Attacks the best of us
And the worst
Without favour or remorse.

You are the sneak thief
Which cons our bodies
Into fighting with themselves
And reduces those who love us
To despair.
You lurk inside us all
Waiting to escape,
To spread your poison
And steal our dreams.

And sometimes
You cannot break us
Or take what isn't yours.
Sometimes you are thwarted
By the visionaries
The big hearted
And those who won't go quietly.

We've got your number,
One day the nightmare will end,
The unnatural pestilence
And destruction of lives
Will be but a footnote in the History books.
Andrew Stephen



"The other thing we have to do is get some people that are able to listen to the people who want to talk"

- John Taylor

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#kickthehabit

The advertisement features a photograph of John Taylor, a man in a dark jacket, pointing towards the camera. In the background, a football pitch and a goal are visible, with a 'sky bet' advertisement on the goalpost. The GamCare logo is in the bottom left corner.

Hi Andrew,

We haven't really discussed the matter, but we share a considerable amount of Cambridge heritage.

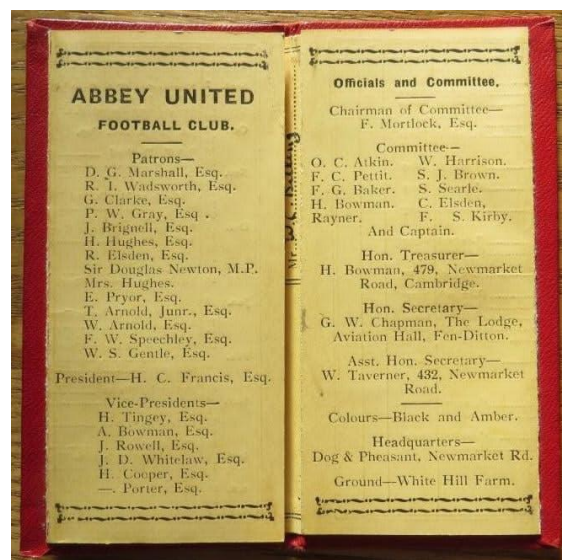
I never lived in Cambridge, until I went to Trinity College in 1966, but my father's family were long established in the town.

My father grew up living on the Gasworks which were on Newmarket Road, only a decent goal kick away from the Abbey Stadium.

My son, Jamie, uncovered the attached. I am virtually certain that my grandfather, Arthur Bowman is here listed as a Vice President of the club and his brother Herbert, my great uncle, was the long standing Hon. Treasurer. There are at least two pictures of Herbert on the 100 Years of coconuts website. He looks the image of Arthur.

Arthur married Clara Reynolds of the famous 'Reynolds the Rock Kings' dynasty...HQ a sweet shop on Newmarket Road...at the Abbey Church on Boxing Day 1902.

Peter Bowman



2013-14 Squad

It will be a real pleasure to see this squad inducted into our Hall of Fame during the home game against Accrington. They got us back into the league after nine long years of exile. After losing a couple of play off finals at Wembley, it was great to see us win there twice in the same season, particularly the second





time! I'm sure that our heroes will get a wonderful reception when they come onto the field at half time. Christmas is a time for celebration after all.

Legends Tour

On the 9th of January a veterans five a side team are setting off to Cottbus in Germany to take on some strong sides in a tournament there. They will be coached by Shaggy and the team will

feature the guile of Wes Hoolihan and Danny Potter, the tough tackling of Andy Duncan, Ian Miller and Warren Goodhind and the trickery of Omer Riza and Dave Kitson. They were always a credit to this wonderful club and I'm sure they will be on their latest tour.

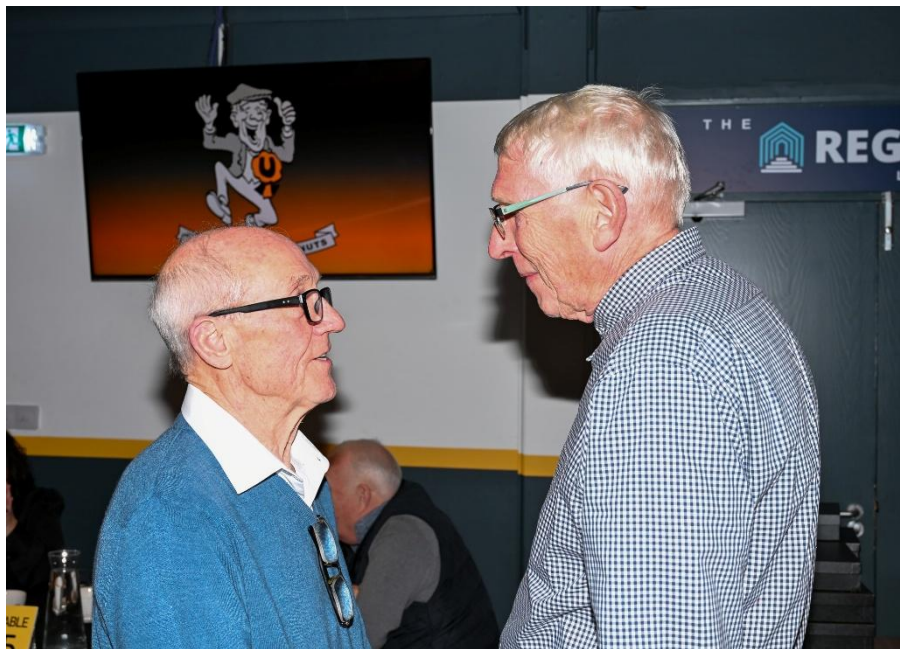


Hall Of Fame, November 20th

These evenings are always a real pleasure. I spent the evening comparing notes with my brother Richard and trying to sound as if I knew what I was talking about to Steve Fallon. As usual he was great company and happy to exchange views about our greatest ever centre halves. He ,of course ,is right up there with the very best of them.

For those of us for whom devotion to a club is for life, it is a particular delight to see players from long ago, like Rodney Slack and Bryan Boggis. It seems shocking that they could ever have grown old. Rodney was the first keeper I saw when I began coming as a regular in the late sixties-and what a keeper he was. I never saw Bryan Boggis play for United but saw him turn out for Wisbech Town as player manager. He was still quite a player then. It was wonderful to see them get a rousing reception when they were inducted into the Hall of Fame. Naturally, everyone got a very good hand, including Mark Bonner, Jamie Murray Phil Chapple and the relatives of Tom Youngs. For me, the highlight of the evening was the induction of former Chairman Dave Doggett, who did so much for the club before and after we got back into the League. He once called me into a disciplinary meeting , having suggested that I was a "Grandad

hooligan”, something I am reminded of to this day. We got on well though and I was very sad when it all went sour and he left under quite a cloud. The reasons for it aren’t worth getting into after all these years . What matters is that Dave has been recognised for his contribution which made a huge difference to us all. Dave Kitson once told me that he turned down the chance to be in Reading’s Hall of Fame because it hadn’t been a special time for him there. He had much more of a bond with our club and the fans here- and it showed. Being in our Hall of Fame means being inducted into a kind of extended family-which is what real clubs are. Fans aren’t fools. They know who their heroes are , and if their heroes are lucky, they know it too. It was good to see our friend Colin Proctor there too. Has there ever been a more passionate or loyal supporter of Cambridge United? I doubt it.



Why do we have a Foundation at United?

The Strength of a Club is its fans. A strong club is at the Heart of its Community

“The Essence of Life is to serve others and do good.”
Aristotle



At the heart of the decision to create what was then the Community Trust was one Jez George, a man whose reputation amongst Cambridge fans is mixed to say the least. Significantly, since leaving United under something of a cloud, he has been at Lincoln City where he is highly regarded as a man with a brilliant eye for rising talent on the field and for leaders off it. He is a football man who would probably admit that he had no real head for business but very good instincts when it

came to the performance of footballers. He was manager at United for a while and came to us, initially, with the complete youth set up which he had been running very successfully at Cambridge City. Jez became concerned that the financial situation at our club might not be able to afford a youth team in the future. Indeed the overall



picture of the club's sustainability was worrying to a number of people. He believed that if a charitable trust were formed, in the case of bankruptcy, the club would survive in some form or other, where it would be able to regather its strength. In 2010, when the decision was made, Jez ran CRC and Football in the Community. A charitable Trust could devote its income to the youth team, which was also our reserve team at that time. It could not be used to plug gaps elsewhere in the club. While United were trying to create a sustainable football club, there was also a very clear desire to support Cambridge residents and to enhance their lives.

Cambridge is the most unequal city in the UK. It is not simply a matter of Town and Gown. Housing is ferociously expensive, while many residents are trapped in poverty. Barnwell is clearly a very deprived area, with a range of needs and an obvious lack of resources. Cambridge United were one of the first football clubs anywhere to recognise its responsibility to its community and to address issues of inequality and poor life chances. Once United climbed, somewhat unexpectedly into the Football League, the Trust became more affordable. By 2014 it paid for the Youth system and in turn sold the right to run Football in the Community to the football club as a business. This brought the Trust a measure of independence. £30,000 a year meant that it was possible to establish policies and to employ staff too. Although our return to the Football League was almost unexpected, it did mean that for the first time, The Trust was clearly affordable to the extent that salaries could be paid. Graham Daniels was Chairman of the Trust from its inception and Phil Mullen and Simon Wall were the first people to be paid to do any of its work. Jez is a local man who cared about the local community and wanted an organisation which was not simply bound to football in the community but able to become involved in welfare issues, encouraging diversity, educational provision for apprentice footballers, many of whom would never become professionals. Most football clubs at that time made no provision for educating or otherwise looking after young players who were often brutally discarded when it became clear that they weren't going to have a career in the professional game.

When United returned to the League there was no obvious sign of a financial crisis on the horizon but by the end of our first season it was known within the club that we faced problems which might have threatened its very survival.



Jez raised money for the Foundation through a series of sponsored walks but raising money for the club seemed to be much more problematic. I remember asking Steve Chamberlain, the club's finance officer, some questions about the financial stability of the club at a Shareholders' Meeting. There were many things which he didn't appear to know. Later an acrimonious row broke out in the Board Room. Dave Doggett, the Chairman and Jez George in particular had a huge falling out. It was not the first time but, during a previous time of conflict, Dave appointed Jez as CEO as an act of reconciliation. It was not a good move. Jez lacked the skill set for that particular role and, ultimately he and Dave left the club. It's often forgotten what Jez did for the Trust



and what Dave did for the club. I can't help wishing that other solutions couldn't be found. Dave arrived at the club at just the right time and played a leading role in putting a wonderful club back where it belonged. Football can be a cruel game but for me, Dave will always be up there with Reg Smart, Bill Leivers, John Docherty and John Beck as people who helped United to become a club that has always been famous beyond its size and status and challenged the very best clubs at times.

Almost at the same time, Mark Bonner stepped up to running the Youth Academy. He had 3 months to make a case for funding

from the Football League after our promotion. He worked night and day to get it, a portent of his ability, values and work ethic. We are so lucky to have him back.

In 2015 Trust partnered with Cambridgeshire FA and started delivering Disability sessions, led by Phil Mullen, a man I came to know very well during my years of playing Walking Football with veterans. This meant that any number of people who were disadvantaged, disabled, homeless, unemployed or elderly were able to take part in football sessions which they hadn't done for years. Put simply, Phil did more for people who felt forgotten, alienated or lacking in purpose than any other individual I've met. I hadn't expected to play football again at any level. When I did, I met people with learning difficulties, Alzheimer's, Depression and many kinds of emotional difficulties. Some told me that they had contemplated suicide before coming to the sessions and feeling part of things again and feeling that they mattered. To help people feel like this is a special gift and it taught me that we all need to feel that we belong, that we matter and that we are valued. I hope that Society will wake up to that simple fact as ideas of community are seemingly undermined by technology and the race to be successful.



When Astra Zeneca joined the Trust as a community partner, the Trust was able to run sessions in primary schools of a programme now known as Active Science, devised by teachers and scientists, to help children meet the needs of the National Curriculum. It is linked to sports and encourages scientists of the future. It has been delivered to thousands of schoolchildren across the city and is still being delivered today. Many classes are able to enjoy a session at the Astra Zeneca Discovery Centre on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.

Following the introduction of Walking Football sessions for the over fifties,, Premier League Kicks sessions, which give young people between the ages of 8-18 open access to free football were introduced. These involve 100 young people a week and ensures that they have something positive to do in the evenings rather than falling into some of the less desirable habits often produced by boredom and a lack of purpose and achievement.



In 2018 the trust became involved in secondary schools, promoting talking about mental health problems as a means of addressing them effectively. The project involved pupils between the ages of 12-14 and won the EFL community project of the year award. Those working for community well-being obviously need to be aware of problems facing today's youngsters as we try to build a more compassionate and open society.

Possibly the Trust's finest hour was during the Pandemic , which involved the isolation of families and individuals. A phonenumber was set up to offer support and reassurance to those who needed it most. A lot of the Trust's work was moved online while vital services continued to operate in very difficult circumstances. 1,100 meals were delivered to families facing food insecurity in collaboration with the city council, local schools, restaurants and Cambridge Sustainable Food.

Older residents were kept connected by socially distanced chats at garden gates and the delivery of a monthly community activity pack. This involved over a hundred visits. Educational initiatives were transferred online. Some children were encouraged to write match reports, developing literacy and encouraging creativity. The Trust worked closely with schools to deliver educational activity packs. It's easily forgotten that even now many families don't have access to the latest technology. Many of those families are those in greatest need of help and support. Fitness programmes including a family friendly work out were conducted in virtual circumstances in an endless effort to keep as many people as possible active and connected. Mark Bonner, amongst others, made many phone calls to elderly and isolated people , showing a real sense of care for the community and the real values



of a football club which go beyond what happens on the field. People talk glibly about the power of sport to transform lives. During this period of crisis which created anxiety in the most confident of people, we saw a level of care and planned intervention which all United fans can be proud of. It is no surprise that the Abbey Stadium was visited by Prince William to publicise his drive for better mental health, the Heads Up campaign



or that Ian Darler's experience, described so poignantly in his book, *Life's A Pitch*, has led the club to run sessions which bring people together and promote good mental health through talk and friendship.

The Trust learned a great deal during the pandemic and consequently set up the Forever United programme to keep people connected, particularly those most at risk from isolation. It offers many activities including well-being walks, afternoon teas, community cafes and strength and balance classes. When I began watching football regularly, I never dreamed that such things would be thought of let alone taken on by football clubs. The fact that my club was in the vanguard makes me

immeasurably proud.

2020 saw the first official strategy launched, called "At the heart of the community". A more strategic approach to encouraging the development of friendships within the community and encouraging people to develop greater motivation in their own lives meant a much more effective level of support.

One thing I have watched grow is the ever popular Seniors Lunch which combines good food provided cheaply, friendship and entertainment. When I first knew of it, Dave Doggett, David Chartres and Colin Proctor were at the heart of it. Dave was a gifted Bingo caller who was a natural charmer and entertainer. He worked in the ticket office, the club shop and wherever needed. Colin was United through and through too. He ran the Vice President's Club for a while and helped build a high quality extension to the Dublin Suite. David was involved at the club in various capacities too. Most importantly, they cared about the community and the people in it. Dave came to my mother's birthday party and sang to her, making her day. All three were loved by the elderly regulars who Dave once referred to as "The toughest audience outside Las Vegas."



As the Trust morphed into the Foundation, it took on increasing responsibility for such sessions. I have become very familiar with the double act of Simon Wall and Jake Potts serving meals and making each person attending the sessions, often over 100, feel welcome and important. Director Eddie Clarke and his wife Ruth are often present and twice Mark Green, our co-owner, has been seen serving meals and talking amicably to as many people as they can. My mother is in the later stages of

Alzheimer's and her behaviour can be quite challenging but she has always been treated with great kindness by those who run Seniors Lunch. Not many clubs run sessions like these and I am delighted to see it flourish. Simon and Jake do a brilliant job and many people have good cause to be grateful to them.

Over the last three seasons over £3,000,000 of social value has been generated by the Foundation and engages with £10,000+ Cambridge residents each year. I am glad



that the club recognises that the City it serves remains the most unequal city in the country and is devoted improving the lot of those who struggle with the cost of living, alienation, hopelessness or ageing. It is almost a crusade against unfairness. Crowds are and must become more diverse. I hope that the Foundation will build on the work begun by CFU to strengthen links with the mosque. We know that there are many reasons for the fragmentation of communities and society in

general and we must fight to regain the sense of responsibility for each other through a shared vision. The power of sport is immense. When a team are winning and being entertaining, it puts a smile on all our faces. More importantly, we need to remember that as supporters, we are also friends. Like the club, if we remain United in Endeavour, we can achieve so much more.

I included this extract from my book "The Season That Nearly Was" as a way of showing how seriously the club takes its responsibility to the community it serves. Many people in Barnwell have had their lives enriched by the Foundation which is why CFU are happy to support its work in any way we can-even if means getting wet! (Ed.)

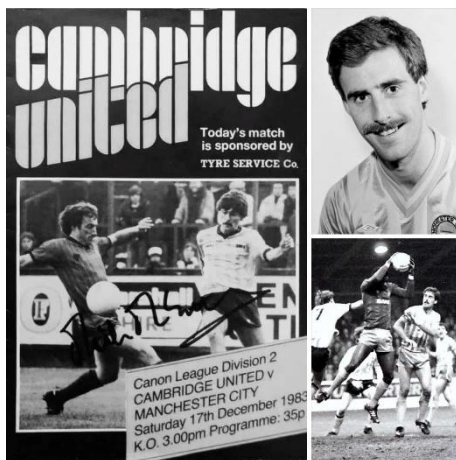


Hot off the Habbin - Barnet

"It's better to burn out, than to fade away."
Neil Young.

That was my thought at Notts County and when hearing about our performance at Shrewsbury. We have a good side this season which is fulfilling expectations at home but which seems bafflingly toothless away from home. I'm sure it's a mindset and one which may well move on after a very creditable draw away at Salford, who sit third in the table. I think we're better than we think we are and could maybe be chasing three points rather than one away from home. Our away support this season has been magnificent and made its presence felt everywhere it's gone. We wouldn't mind the odd unlucky defeat if we had a few valiant victories to enjoy too. Barnet are excellent away from home and we have been much more ourselves on our own pitch so, barring a draw, something will have to give. I fancy us, especially if we have Appere back. He is going to be some player. I hope we see Jobe and Bennett too. As far as I can see, they are two of the best players in the division. Bennett's crossing is a real threat to

teams and Jobe has class and pace. We are so much better than last season and with a bit more belief I'm sure that we will start proving it. To be better than Salford is a real measure of where we are.



We have known about Barnet for many years. Indeed we played them in the Southern League and they came to prominence under some chap called Barry Fry. Remember him? He signed a few decent players, including Jimmy Greaves, probably the greatest goalscorer of all time, Terry Mancini, Bob McNab and Marvin Hinton . They were a kind

of pre-retirement for a club but they have had great days in and out of the League. Much was promised when Edgar Davids became their player manager for a while but he didn't do very well against us and left a short while later in a bit of a sulk. Dion Dublin and George Reilly played for them for a time and the Bees have a reputation for attacking flair. I used to love going to Underhill but since 2013 they have played at the Hive which is in another Borough, much to the chagrin of a number of traditionalist Barnet fans. It's handy for the Tube but fairly featureless. Stadium design went that way for a while but fans get very attached to the grounds where they have always watched their teams-as we know ourselves. The Abbey may not be Wembley Stadium but we love it for its eccentricities and its history. The value of tradition is beyond measure.

Since 2009, we have had the better of our games. Barnet have won once and we have won 3. Today is harder to predict but may depend on which team makes the fastest start. We do seem to play much better against good footballing teams and less well against those relying on physical force and the dark arts - so I'm hoping to be entertained and satisfied. Richard Money always liked to guarantee that. Finally, Stephens On Tour are involved in sponsoring today's game so Habbin North will be a little quieter! This is to celebrate my brother Richard's 70th birthday. Real fans support their team for a lifetime and the pain and the glory are etched in their most significant memories. He is one such and there will be many of us in the ground hoping, as we always do, that today will be our day.



Up the U's!

Match Report – Barnet

“Leaders set high standards. Refuse to tolerate mediocrity or poor performance.”
Brian Tracy

Yesterday was a day for looking for consolation. My brother Richard, along with friends and family enjoyed Hospitality and a somewhat different view to what you see in Habbin North. Richard's future did not look good a couple of years ago. He was offered immunotherapy as kind of last chance saloon and is currently cancer free. It's a miracle and worthy of every kind of celebration. In that respect, the game and its result were irrelevant. A game which followed a monsoon might have been in jeopardy but for the genius which is Ian Darler. It rained throughout the game and yet the pitch seemed true and never became waterlogged. Jake Eastwood had an excellent game. Indeed he would have been my man of the match. And there you have it. We were at home and our goalkeeper was our best player. I am pleased for him as he has had his critics but clearly, despite our fine home form, this was not a game which we could claim to



have dominated. A shame since, despite the weather, we had another huge home gate and a creditable 992 Barnet fans turned up in the hope that their fine away form would continue. Not for the first time this season we began well, lost our way and then had increasing difficulty keeping the ball on the ground.

I felt that Senior could have been sent off for pulling Kouassi back. Astonishingly, the Referee saw nothing untoward. His performance and that of two linesmen who might as well have not been there showed another problem long associated with League Two. Many officials are simply not up to it. In fairness their jobs are made much more difficult by players who squeal or roll about or feign injury to hold up play. Barnet were good at that but Referee Mather

played into their hands by awarding a number of soft free kicks. In contrast he ignored a number of more serious fouls on United players including one on Bennett in the second half which really should have resulted in a penalty. The Linesman was very close to the incident and the Ref didn't even wave away the claim. Even the Barnet fans were puzzled by that one.

Other than that, there is little worth reporting. I was delighted to see Bennett in the team but he is always better with Gibbons playing behind him so that he can be more adventurous. After all, we were at home. After a good first twenty minutes, we didn't attack much. Barnet were much the better side for the last 15 minutes of the first half and we were glad of Half Time. We had our moments in the second half, particularly through Mayor. Worryingly we lost Kouassi to what looked like a hamstring injury caused by an awkward fall. He had played well and had been a real handful. Perhaps he might have been stronger in the face of some over physical challenges, notably from Senior. Morrison, who is such a great leader on the pitch, struggled against pace and Ndlovu was able to run at our defence very effectively. How we could do with a number 9 like that! Appere looked very good when he came on but I would like to have seen him play alongside Kouassi. I would like to have seen Jobe on from the start and McConnell and Hoddle used as our midfield seemed to abandon hope. I'm not convinced that we are playing our best players or using them in their most effective roles. Kai Kai is nothing like as good now he is being played out of position to accommodate Mayor and we don't seem willing to switch our wingers around when our play has become predictable. We have three of those to cause havoc but of course we lack a cutting edge. Neil Harris has announced what most of us have been saying for a while. We need a fit number nine and a striker who delivers goals. It's not all doom and gloom of course. We have a decent team which does really well when it believes in itself but that belief evaporated visibly as it did at Shrewsbury and Notts County. Yesterday we were turgid and dull but we are in a good position which could be even better. We need some reinforcement but more than that we need more belief. The fans have it. Time for the team to play with less fear and less rigidity. We will bwe better at Barrow-won't we?



25 YEARS OF
CFU



*Hot off the Habbin - Crewe
Alexandra*

“Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence”

Helen Keller

We arrive today fresh from what can only be called a triumph in adversity at Barrow last Saturday. Most of our strikers are injured and we have been missing key midfielders too. Sometimes luck isn't on your side and sometimes you can make your own luck with resilience and determination. Belief in your own ability is vital too. The passionate 250 away fans who went North at the weekend saw a performance to warm the heart. There is much to celebrate today too. 25 years of CFU, Challenge 25 and the continuing collection for a foodbank, which shows how seriously our club takes its role at the heart of the community. We have plenty of cause for optimism today too.



Since 2016 we have played Crewe 9 times, winning six games and losing only one. Appere has returned from injury and the prodigious young talent of McConnell is beginning to make itself felt. It is unfortunate that Mpanzu is suspended for today's game, having played so well last Saturday,, but we have competition for midfield places now. Hoddle looks ready to step up too and some of the senior players will be

looking over their shoulders.

Not that we should underestimate the Railwaymen, who have real pedigree. They are scoring freely at the moment and their form is good but we fancy ourselves for promotion and will be flat out for a win. Crewe were founder members of the Football League's second division and, like us, have had their moments of glory. They have always had a reputation for attractive, free flowing football and under the management of dapper Italian Dario Gradi between 1983 and 2011, produced a string of very good young players, which was good for results and their bank balance. Gradi had the ability to produce successful teams without a big budget. To my mind that is the very definition of a successful manager. They were a pleasure to watch during those years. What a pity that those seasons were tarnished to a degree by a coach who sexually abused a number of young players before he was discovered and brought to book. Safeguarding measures would prevent such a terrible thing happening now and perhaps something good came out of all that unnecessary suffering.

The clubs have a number of players in common, notably Micky Demetriou, who is still playing for Crewe, Shilow Tracey, Jack Lancaster and some fellow named Luke Berry. Remember him? It is no coincidence perhaps that, even now, United seem to play so much better against skilled opposition. This season Fulham and Charlton Athletic would testify to that. We could predict a high scoring end to end thriller which almost guarantees a close run thing, like our home game in the 72-73 season where Brian Greenhalgh scored a winner in a 1-0 victory. It wasn't pretty but it counted. Nobody expected it then but we were promoted at the end of the season. This team have the ability to make a name for itself like some of their predecessors. As fans we have much to look forward to and, as for CFU, we will be around for another 25 years ensuring that our fans' voices are always heard.



Up the U's!

CFU-For Me, For You

For Fans, Club And Community

It seems amazing that CFU first came into existence 25 years ago, emerging from Cambridge United Supporters' Association in 1997. We were only the seventh club to get involved with Supporters' Direct as it became clearer that increasing crowds meant better provision for Diversity and bringing different community groups together for the good of the clubs themselves, for the community and to encourage financial stability. How wise that seems now, given the fate of so many clubs led almost to ruin by incompetent or over ambitious owners. Sustainability was a word yet to be used in those far off days and at that time Accrington Stanley was the only club to completely implode after years of complacency. In the early days, firefighting and crisis management were the order of the day and, as we tumbled out of the league, facing bankruptcy and oblivion, people like Nick Pomeroy, Dave Matthew Jones and others could see the folly of Directors who were unwilling to discuss what they were doing with others. Two Directors bought our ground and sold it later at a considerable profit



to themselves and Dave Kitson, our best player, was sold against his will for far less than he was worth. CFU tried to buy the ground back and, as we know, Richard Caborn saved us from the Taxman and from oblivion. We will always be grateful.

There have been other financial crises, after the collapse of ITV Digital and many years later, following some fairly unreliable accounting. On this occasion at the insistence of CFU and its

Chairman Robert Osbourn, the club underwent a fully independent audit, which established the true financial position for the first time in years. The club have been well and responsibly run ever since. It is always difficult for a fans' group when it is at odds with the club but CFU have always been fully independent and recognise that its duty is to protect the rights of fans, giving them a voice, and to support the club as fully as possible. These days we are, thankfully, crisis free and our relationship with the club is stronger and better than ever. CFU raised money for the Bridge The Gap Appeal and gave £30,000 towards the NRE Fanzone. It is involved with other fans' groups too and rightly proud of the contribution it has made to the club. Fans Elected Director Colin Proctor ran the Vice President's Club for years and even built part of the Dublin Suite himself. Dave Doggett was Chairman of the club whilst a CFU member and made a huge contribution to the club as it regained its rightful place in the league.

My predecessor as Chairman, Robert Osbourn is commemorated by events held to support the British Heart Foundation and the Cambridge United Foundation which does such good work in the community. My successor, Gina Parkin, rightly acclaimed as a Community Hero, has proved the viability of Away Travel and has helped all kinds of people to attend away games which they wouldn't have been able to otherwise. We

have organised collections, supported the poppy appeal and strengthened the club's connection with The Cambridge Mosque. We are actively involved with the Shadow Board and delighted that, as a result of our club's leading role in the Fans' Led Review, fans will always be heard and consulted fully. If a decision were ever made for the club to relocate, we know that the fanbase would be fully consulted and that the Independent Regulator exists to make sure that Heritage matters will always require the consent of fans where any change is mooted. Now we look to the future and hope to attract young fans to the work we do to support diversity, the community and the club. There is so much potential in the club and in the city and so much to build on. We have shown that being involved with your club is the best way to protect it. And we always will.

United In Endeavour,

A fuller history of CFU can be found in my book "The Season That Nearly Was", available at the CFU cabin and at the club shop.



Match Report – Crewe

Crewe's Efforts Derailed. A Match Report Of Sorts

"Your values become your destiny."
Mahatma Ghandi

People often remind me that there are more important things in life than football but we must never underestimate its power for good and its ability to give our lives colour and friendship. The game was preceded by a moment's applause joined in, enthusiastically, by all present. It didn't matter that Crewe fans didn't know Andy Pickard or Dean Parmenter or the victims of the Westminster knife attacks which claimed two innocent young lives. When it comes to it, whoever we support, real fans recognise the bond which binds us all together, the love of a team and experiences which we couldn't hope to have any other way. I've never seen a club servant mourned so clearly as Andy Pickard, a lovely, kind man, universally admired and respected. He would have been delighted, and not a little surprised, to see all the stewards and staff lined up on the touchline out of respect for him as a person.

In addition, it was a CFU Take over day at the Abbey, celebrating 25 years of CFU, an organisation instrumental in saving the club as we slipped out of the League and almost disappeared entirely. Of course there is, and has been, much more to CFU than reacting to crises and firefighting. It supports diversity and a multitude of good causes and represents the fans' voice to the club. Although we are fully independent of the club we have given it a lot of support over the years and it was good to see Alex Tunbridge give us credit for that in his programme notes. Our committee is fully elected and accountable. We know who our members are and what they think and



organisation is fully transparent. In essence we are a good model, in my opinion, for the rapidly evolving Shadow Board. I believe that in order to have credibility, we have to be able to show just how we represent fans and how we are answerable to them. At half time Brian Attmore, Dave Matthew Jones and Nick Pomeroy explained our history to Mike Barnes far more eloquently and knowledgeably than I could. Well done too to Emma Smith and Terry Wilby for their efforts in raising money during November in memory of Robert Osborn and in support of the British Heart Foundation and The Cambridge United Foundation. Together we raised over £1,000. Perhaps we should have been sponsored for shivering in our T shirts as well?!

United warmed up in CFU T shirts. Surely they would be inspired? In fact we played pretty well and created at least two chances that we should have taken. We lost Morrison to injury but it was good to see Bennett, Jobe, McConnell and Glenn Hoddle playing. The announcer did call him Glenn didn't he? The Referee wasn't awful but he did seem to miss the goalie picking up a back pass and handling outside his area. At least he was keeping up with play. Booth, the Crewe keeper, later invited his manager's scorn, having annoyed the always objectively fair Habbinites all afternoon. Brophy was playing really well. Surely he wouldn't be subbed today? Jobe and Bennett could easily have scored from his crosses. Crewe didn't look to be in it really but you always wonder what will happen if you don't take chances and allow your opponents breathing space. I was impressed with Hoddle's vision and skill. It was hard to believe that this game was his full debut. We are going to see a lot more of him. McConnell too was finding good passes and was mobile and industrious. We needed them to step up. Mpanzu



was suspended and other midfielders unavailable. There are still vacancies in the striking department. They seemed to get worse when Appere failed to appear in the second half. Surely we won't be seeing the recall of Ryan Loft? We could do with a goalscorer and a big target man. Not that I am much of a tactician.

We seemed to go to sleep a bit in the second half. We lost shape and passes went



astray. Some balls were lumped up front more in hope than expectation. Then, inevitably, Crewe scored. Even now I'm not quite sure how it happened. Our defence seemed a little sluggish let's say. The game became turgid and Booth attracted fury from the home crowd having collapsed as if shot a couple of times at least. Exasperated United forwards complained to the Ref that he was being conned. He just shook his head. Crewe's

timewasting fed United's motivation and after Ben Knight came on it was a different game. Crewe's complacency disappeared as we attacked with pace and purpose. This was a different Knight. Confident, pacey and with just a hint of swagger, he looked the player we all thought he could be. His cross was bundled in by Jobe at the second attempt and we began to believe that we would win. The momentum was all ours now. The Crewe support became silent-always a good sign. In the last minute Purrington was pulled down in the box and Booth was booked. He was partly responsible for our first goal and very lucky that he hadn't been booked for time wasting earlier. He dived the right way for the penalty but it was too powerful for him. Knight peeled away in triumph and Booth sulked. Perhaps he knew that his manager Lee Bell would not be impressed with him or his team at the end. I'm not sure that I would agree with Neil Harris that we had hundreds of chances or that it was our best performance of the season but the last ten minutes or so showed United as I love to see them, aggressive, full of purpose and determined to score. This team is full of promise.



On CFU Take over day, I wished I'd known that I could look forward to such moments in the dark days of 2005. And that one day the law would make such horrendous mismanagement impossible. It was a day to remember how far fans' groups have come and how much they can achieve.



Hot off the Habbin - Chesterfield

"I'll never play at Wembley again, unless I play at Wembley again."
Kevin Keegan

Mention the name of Chesterfield to any long term Cambridge United fan and their thoughts will immediately turn to Wembley and the 26th of May, 1990. Twenty years after playing the likes of Bedford Town and Hillingdon Borough, we were playing on the pitch where England had won a World Cup Final-at the home of English Football, under the twin towers. No one could have predicted it. Elton John had wept with emotion seeing Watford appearing in an FA Cup Final. Many of us felt the same as the U's lined up for the first ever Play Off Final. It never occurred to me that we might lose. When Dion Dublin scored the winner, it just seemed part of the script. I travelled back to Nottingham on a deathly quiet bus full of Chesterfield fans. It was years later that I started to think about how they must have felt. The higher your hopes, the greater your pain-if the dream doesn't come true after all. Anyway, it's a day and an occasion that I will remember all my life. Many of us feel the same.



Life for both clubs has been mixed since then. Like us, the Spireites have experienced financial problems and fears for the future. One Chairman spent four years in prison for serious fraud, the club experienced administration and in 2018 they lost their place



in the league. It only took them six seasons to return but three times they were involved in unsuccessful play off campaigns. We know what that kind of disappointment is like and have also tasted the fear that we might not ever regain our rightful position in the Football League. In amongst the turmoil, Chesterfield moved from their fairly primitive Saltergate home to their current modern ground, the SMH Stadium. I remember that at the

old ground you could stand in the Gents and still watch the game. I remember losing a game there when Colin Alcide and Terry Fleming were playing for us in the second John Beck era. I also remember Lionel Perez having a terrible game and muttering that he'd had too much champagne the night before. Very unusual I'm sure. When we

last played at the new stadium Harrison Dunk scored an unlikely winner in the last minute. The best kind of away victory. I'm sure we haven't been forgiven for it yet.

Over the years Chesterfield have had slightly the better of our games and draws are rare. They have had a number of players who have also played for us ;Michael Cheetham, Luke Chadwick and the enigmatic Jordan Slew amongst others. They are



known particularly for producing great Goalkeepers; Sam Hardy, Gordon Banks and Mark Kendall for example. John Vaughan and current Keeper Jake Eastwood also played for them. Some say Vaughan was better than Banks- but I wouldn't go that far! Today is a little hard to predict but we showed great character to beat Crewe, despite injuries continuing to plague us and a raft of missed chances . Morrison is out until next year but others are coming back into contention. We

are in the play off positions and I'm sure we are aiming for automatic promotion. Ben Knight has begun to show what he can do and Bennett is pure class. Whoever plays up front for us tonight, we will be a threat. I'm glad to see Chesterfield back but I guarantee that they face a tough night against a very determined team.

Hot off the Habbin – Accrington Stanley

"Fame means millions of people have the wrong idea of who you are."
Erica Jong

Sadly Accrington attracted fame for all the wrong reasons as they slithered out of the Football League in 1962 mid-season, when it was discovered that they could no longer pay their bills. This was long before the Fans' Led Review and the idea of an Independent Regulator being appointed to make sure that this kind of tragedy never befalls a club or, more importantly, its fans ever again. Since then we've seen many clubs collapse under the weight of an owner's completely unrealistic ambitions, vanity or incompetence. Bury, Darlington, Reading, Sheffield Wednesday and many other clubs, including ourselves, have flirted with extinction. Stanley could have been a wake up call but things move slowly in England, where the public good has often lagged behind the need for profit. Hopefully a more even distribution of wealth and the licensing of clubs will make a big difference and no one will ever say , "Accrington Stanley? Who are they?" or the equivalent ever again.

Ironically, when we dropped into the Conference, Accrington Stanley was the ground we most wanted to visit because of its place in football folklore. We weren't disappointed either. It is one of the friendliest places that any football fan could ever hope to visit. It's not just David Lloyd, or Bumble, who thinks that. The Crown Inn is a place where both sets of supporters can, and do, drink together and the ground is only a short stroll away. Sadly our record against them isn't great. We've won three and



lost six, although form favours us today. One of our victories came at the Abbey in 2017 when Will Norris saved two penalties to help us to a 2-1 win. Several players have turned out for both teams, including Piero Mingoia, Paul Carden, Lee McEvilly and a certain Paul Mullin.

He was a bit good. Manager John Coleman served Stanley for nine and a half years, working miracles on a tiny budget. After his demise they, like us, dropped into League Two, where they have struggled. Money is always going to be a problem for clubs at our level. Maybe that will change.

Despite relegation, our infrastructure and our first team squad is better than last year. Despite some crippling injuries we are in the top six, in the Third Round of the FA Cup and playing some good stuff. Unlike last year, we are not losing many games or conceding many goals. We are becoming more consistent and with a proven goalscorer we would be even higher up the table. We are attracting large crowds and there is a feeling of optimism and expectation about the place. It has begun to feel like a promotion season because it's clear we are a match for anyone in this division. We seem to play particularly well against the better teams because we have a lot of skill in the side. The return of key players and some astute work in the January window will help us to reach our potential. If we start taking more of our chances, no one will relish coming here, Christmas or not.



and finally....

"Miracles happen to those who believe in them."
Bernard Berenson

I was wondering about my favourite moments so far this season. Perhaps enjoying hospitality during the Harrogate game or taking part in the United in Motion challenge and the CFU Takeover day. I managed a total of 416, 565 steps in November, which



was probably good for me, even if I got a little damp at times. I was hugely encouraged by the fact that two other members of the Trust Board were defying age and pretending to be fit young athletes again. Apologies to Emma, who is considerably younger than Terry or me! Being part of a team is one of life's pleasures. Being part of the United family and of CFU has made all kinds of things possible, things that perhaps I would never have thought of otherwise. Young people are not encouraged, as we were, to be joiner- inners. I hope that can change. Our insular, device- led lives are a poor substitute for real life.

Beating Charlton Athletic and playing so well at Fulham were other highlights which showed real potential in this year's squad. If only Liam Bennett could play like that every week! It would certainly be hard to keep hold of him. Winning at Barrow was pleasing. It's a tough place to go and we were getting too many goalless draws, or looking like that's what we were playing for. It was nice to be asked to write notes on our team for the fanzine at Salford and even nicer when someone at Seniors' Lunch presented me with a copy. I have long said that the way the club supports its community is top class. The Foundation arrange plenty of events for the Barnwell public and the Seniors Lunch is my favourite. Maybe because they take such good care of my mother ,who is 93 and suffers grievously from Alzheimer's, or maybe because every now and again you see something rather wonderful happen there. At the Christmas party a group of ladies took her onto the dance floor for 20 minutes while she enjoyed music, company and memories. You can't put a price on something like that, which is why I am happy to promote the work of the Foundation and participate in initiatives like United In Motion.

Finally, as the Christmas and New Year fixtures approach, we can realistically think about promotion- a far cry from last year's preoccupations! If we do, perhaps I will have to write "The Season That Really Was" ! Currently I am about to publish my fifth book, "Under A Norfolk Sky" on Amazon. My book "The Season That Nearly Was" is still available at the CFU cabin, the club shop and on Amazon. If you haven't read it yet, you might like it. I think it explains why Cambridge United, whatever our fortunes "Are by far the greatest team the world has ever seen!"

Merry Christmas

Andrew

PS if you are still stuck for Christmas ideas, you could always buy a loved one a CFU membership. It could be the start of a beautiful relationship.



Make a difference and join CFU.
Your opinions and contributions are always gratefully received: acstephen@hotmail.com



[Deadline for next newsletter- **15th February 2026**
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