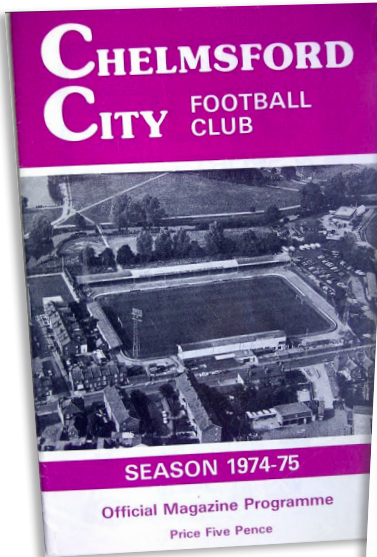


The whole flavour of the 1970s summed up by the classic at Chelmsford City, 40 years ago



Saturday January 4 1975, Southern League Premier Division: Chelmsford City 3 Wealdstone 3

Ah, the glorious seventies! The new-ness, the excitement, the cut-and-thrust football on boggy pitches!

This was when I was a teenage schoolboy, as enthralled by the game and my club as the bright-eyed youngsters you see around The Vale these days.

I just couldn't wait for the next instalment of the Wealdstone FC story... The one where a famous old amateur club had turned semi-pro; struggled for a couple of seasons; then won the league by a street and were now imposed a brand of cavalier football on the big boys of the Southern League Prem.

And big boys they were - from the parochial Isthmian League days, we were now visiting big provincial towns (Yeovil, Cambridge,

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Manager

SID PROSSER

Writes . . .

Each game is as important as any other, but it would be surprising if I didn't have a special pre-match feeling about this, the second visit of the season from Wealdstone, my former club.

We managed to beat them 2-0 in the Southern League Cup back in October, and I dare say their players will be doubly keen to reverse that result this time.

One important change in the Wealdstone line-up since then is the inclusion of Adrian Eglite, a 27-year-old Dutch striker whom I tried to bring to Chelmsford a few months ago.

Unfortunately his work and home is in the London area and he preferred to join Wealdstone. You may well have noticed that his name has featured on their scoring lists on a number of occasions since then.

Eglite actually played for Ajax a few seasons ago, before moving to this country. He has become quite a personality at Wealdstone by all accounts and with George Duck, top scorer in the Southern League last season, has formed a strong striking partnership.

Without wishing to tempt fate, though, our defence has been coping fairly well in recent matches, and although there are still some people who seem very difficult to convince, surely our results during December speak for themselves.

If the side could maintain this sort of form, the prospects for the second half of the season appear brighter. It is going to be a hard battle but the determination is there and the players are as keen to see the position improved.

Unfortunately one or two injuries have upset things in the last two or three games, and just at a time when it would probably have been helpful to keep a settled team, changes have needed to be made.

Nevertheless the whole beauty of the squad system is that players who have missed a few matches come back in really full of enthusiasm and eager to justify themselves and to do well enough to stay in the side.

Competition within the side is healthy and a challenge sorts the strong from the weak. The same applies to our League position. Bit by bit it is being improved, and obviously nobody would be happier if it is two points better off by tonight!

Chelmsford's ex-Stones boss's column in the programme that day..

Nuneaton, Kettering, Maidstone, Burton, Telford, Grantham, Dover, Tonbridge etc) plus powerful London-based clubs like Wimbledon and Barnet.

Chelmsford most definitely belonged in the former category. They had won the Southern League just two years before but were remarkably passed over for election to the football league... the Football League chairmen instead choosing to vote for Hereford United on the back of their memorable FA Cup run that year. Saying that Chelmsford were choked is an understatement.

The Claret's' crowds were a bit smaller than the Bulls' (around 2,000 compared to 3,000 plus) but there was similar potential in the Essex capital.

Thus it was that the Stones arrived at Chelmsford's big old New Whittle Street ground early in the new year 1975, exactly 40 years ago. In fact we had already met City for a Southern League Cup match in October, a rather low-key affair that Chelmsford won 2-0, but for me it was a first visit to NWS and I was mightily impressed. The cavernous main stand and barrel-roofed construction on the opposite terrace (see cover of the programme on previous page) was filled by a noisy 1,800 crowd, including some 250 Stones fans, including three supporters coaches) Our anticipation was before kick-off was immense.

I distinctly remember marching down the middle of the road to the stadium, from where the coaches had parked, in a gang of 50 blue-scarved youths bellowing out the songs of the day. We felt we owned Chelmsford. Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough! Thankfully nobody did - we were all mouth and flared trousers.

But we were very proud of our team, who'd made a brilliant fist (so far) of their first season in non-League's top tier.

From the
PRESS BOX

by *Martin Rogers*
(ESSEX CHRONICLE SERIES)

All prudent managers and players look no further than the next game ahead. Which means that the talk for weeks has been of League points, the necessity to climb the Southern League table, and targets for the end of the year, etc.

Today's visit from Wealdstone is another important one in the context of providing City with an opportunity to improve upon their Premier Division placing — and if they can reproduce the form which brought a 2-0 Southern League Cup win over Sid Prosser's old team back in October, then there should be some happy smiles in New Whittle Street this evening.

Then the attention inevitably turns to next Saturday's visit from Ilford —not the bread-and-butter of League fare but the possible champagne of Cup glory. For the FA Challenge Trophy remains one impressive target which City will be eager to aim for in 1975.

Since the Trophy was inaugurated in 1969 the lure of reaching Wembley has succoured and sustained many non-league clubs. Chelmsford have been just 90 minutes away from those famed twin towers, but these days nobody much likes to remember the semi-final exit against Telford that April almost five years ago.

I was reminded of it when Geoff Walker, the then City manager, was spotted here at the Stadium at the last home match. It was a source of bitter disappointment to Geoff that his team didn't fare better and contrived to lose to a side which had been whacked 5-0 in an earlier League visit to Chelmsford.

Nevertheless it was almost something very special for City that year, and in spite of the many disappointments which have attended the present campaign, with such a lean start to the League campaign and more recently the FA Cup exit, it could all happen again.

I dare say that a successful Trophy run going through to Wembley instead of faltering along the way would do more than enough to eradicate the disenchantment over seeing City below halfway in the League table, as is the present position.

The prospect of something out of the ordinary, the chance of meeting different teams and maybe going all the way through to the final of a competition which was, after all, created with the Chelmsfords of this world in mind, is an appealing one.

The public support would certainly rally and respond to such a run and the interest thus generated would do a lot to improve gates, balance the books, and restore the sort of faith and forward feeling of not so distant memory.

In other words, enjoy yourselves today, and then be prepared to bring the world and his wife to next Saturday's game. To suggest that it is a vital cup tie does not over-state the case.

An interesting article in the programme that day by a local journal, underlining the point that the FA Trophy was a big deal even for leading non-League lights like Chelmsford. A bit different from the attitude displayed by some Conference Premier clubs today....

..... We were in the top six, crowds were averaging 1,500 and there had been close to 4,000 inside Lower Mead three days earlier for a fabulous 1-0 win over league leaders Wimbledon. We were on an absolute high.

..... There was also the added twist of Chelmsford's manager being Sid Prosser, who had been largely responsible for turning the Stones into a winning machine two years earlier - before suddenly upping

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Wealdstone deserved to win

Two from George Duck mean yet another point

By Colin Pope

Chelmsford City 3, Wealdstone 3

FOLLOWING their victory over Wimbledon on New Year's Day — victors at Burnley in the EA Cup three days later — Wealdstone extended their unbeaten run to five matches at New Writtle Street on Saturday, when they outplayed former manager Sid Prosser's outfit for long spells and deserved an outright win.

The way Wealdstone started Chelmsford could well have been hammered out of sight. For the first 20 minutes this was Wealdstone reminiscent of last season's halcyon days, as the whole side blended superbly well and it looked as if Chelmsford's main hope lay in keeping the score to reasonable proportions.

Yet, incredibly, after this dazzling beginning, frustration at not scoring appeared to creep in, and slowly Chelmsford began to dominate the game. Wealdstone, after scoring first, found themselves 3-1 down at the interval, certainly a ludicrous situation...

But the second half was a different story again, and with a goal after 14 seconds of the restart Wealdstone attacked almost throughout the half and were really unlucky not to clinch both points.

Although former Stones player Eddie Dillsworth, at No. 9 for Chelmsford, and winger Campbell, between them posed the biggest threat for the Wealdstone defence, sweeper Paul Fairclough was again in dominating form, and with McCormick did a splendid job in keeping Dillsworth in check.

How good it was to see George Duck, now settled in his midfield role, turn in possibly the best performance of the season, grafting unceasingly and scoring a superb goal in his own inimitable fashion.

Henderson too, had a magnificent match, and a more totally committed player it is difficult to envisage. Wherever the action is so is Henderson, but sadly his opposite number on the other flank, Adriaan Eglite, again failed to live up to his ear-



George Duck — back to his best form.

ly promise and until the last 10 minutes rarely got into the game.

Sadly he had temporarily, at any rate, lost the confidence to take on a defender and consequently his work-rate suffered alarmingly.

For once we had the mortification of seeing that fine goalkeeper John Morton responsible for Wealdstone dropping a point. Chelmsford's first goal was indisputably down to him,

and in a lot of games, he would have saved the second. Even so, he made a couple of majestic saves, arching through the air to clutch goal-worthy shots.

Constant pressure at last paid dividends for Wealdstone when they went ahead after 25 minutes, Bobby Moss — who also ran tirelessly — neatly steering Paul Fairclough's brilliantly placed free-kick from deep inside his own half on to Duck, who with the utmost grace lobbed the ball over Taylor's head from a very difficult position.

Almost immediately Chelmsford were on terms when Campbell's corner was half-heartedly pushed away by Morton and Dillsworth cracked the ball in from six yards. Five minutes later they went into the lead following a move down the left flank. Price's shot, centre being deflected over Morton via Duck. A minute earlier Morton had to make a desperate flick over the bar from a Dillsworth effort. Price hit Chelmsford's third through

match report continued overpage...

a crowd of players just before the break.

The second half opened sensationally, for Wealdstone swept straight into attack from the kick-off and a loose ball was volleyed in by Henderson from the edge of the box. Taylor parrying the ball but allowing it to slip under his body just inside the post.

This was just the tonic Wealdstone needed, and constant pressure ended with Duck shooting inches wide with Taylor well beaten before Gomersall conceded a penalty for hands after being pressurised by Henderson and Moss. Duck lashed in the penalty without any difficulty.

In a rare Chelmsford breakaway a mis-kickby Kinnear set in Kellock and Morton saved a certain goal by flinging himself at his feet for a courageous save far beyond the call of duty.

But Wealdstone finished well on top, but are far too prone to concede an infringement inside the box. Time and again, with three forwards up there, they were penalised for minor offences which let Chelmsford off the hook.

Sadly, a minor clash between Chelmsford skipper Tommy Coakley and John Henderson resulted in Henderson being booked for the third time this season, which means an automatic suspension in due course unless, of course, he wins the appeal he intends to make.

Despite dropping points they should not have done, Wealdstone will make a bid for the championships, and are very handily placed for the second half of the season. A majority of the 1,798 crowd must have left them to be one of the attractive sides in the Division.

Wealdstone: ...
near, Watson
McCormick; C
Duck; Moss

sticks to take the Clarets job with Wealdstone on the brink of the Southern League Div One South title. Eddie Presland was handed the boss's job and steered Stones over the line.... how we all wanted to prove to Prosser that he had made a mistake in thinking he was leaving for a 'bigger' club!

Thus the scene was set. And on a dank January afternoon the plot unfolded as shown by the attached Harry O report. Author Colin Pope was right; the Stones were brilliant in that first half and when George Duck put us ahead it will be one of my enduring memories of Wealdstone FC until the day I die.

The way he found the net, looping a volley over the head of helpless keeper Willie Carrick in one smooth, majestic movement left the entire crowd open-mouthed in admiration.

Chelmsford rather spoiled the moment by swarming back to taken a 3-1 lead into the break, but still all the talk at half time (even among City fans in the tea bar queue) was about Wealdstone and that sublime Duck goal.

Justice was done as we dominated the second half, levelling through a Duck penalty and a Carrick fumble from John Henderson's awkward shot.

And so the New Year began. Imperious stuff. Thrilling, ground-breaking, breathless.

In some ways the promotion last season, and our return to the Conference set-up, has echoes of that charismatic 74-75 campaign. We tailed off a bit that season, finishing eighth, but for me, at least, the memories will never dim.



We have no pictures from the game at Chelmsford, but (above) Bobby Moss just gets ahead of the Cambridge City keeper to head us into the lead in the Southern League Prem game at Lower Mead the following Saturday, at the Elmslie End. Bill Byrne (5) is the other Stone. We beat Cambridge 4-1 in front of an 1,800 crowd to move into fifth place. Right: Chelmsford boss Sid Prosser

