

THE STORY OF '73-74'

by tim parks

Stones' first-ever promotion.. and it happened 50 years ago



Champagne for the Stones! ... and richly deserved it is too after the side had wrapped up their 73-74 title with five games to spare... and winning the title by a mammoth ELEVEN points from Bath City

Wealdstone clinch title with tremendous win at Gravesend

By ELEANOR

WEALDSTONE clinched the football title of their county last night with a superb victory over Gravesend in a match which was the most exciting of the season. The victory was secured by a tremendous goal by Peter Walker in the 85th minute of the match.

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All the reports, all the drama from an epic season



REWIND SPECIAL >>>>

It happened 50 years ago

part one: pre-season 1973

THERE are quite a few of us old codgers whose passion for the club was ignited in 1973-74 when the newly semi-professional Stones exploded onto the Southern League scene.

And because it was such a sensational time to be a Stones fan we thought we'd share with you the week-in, week-out dramas of that seminal season.

Promotion meant as much then as it did five decades later as our club reached the giddy heights of the National League by winning the NL South. More, in a way, as we were able to fully celebrate the title triumph without the desperate interruption of the Covid 19 pandemic

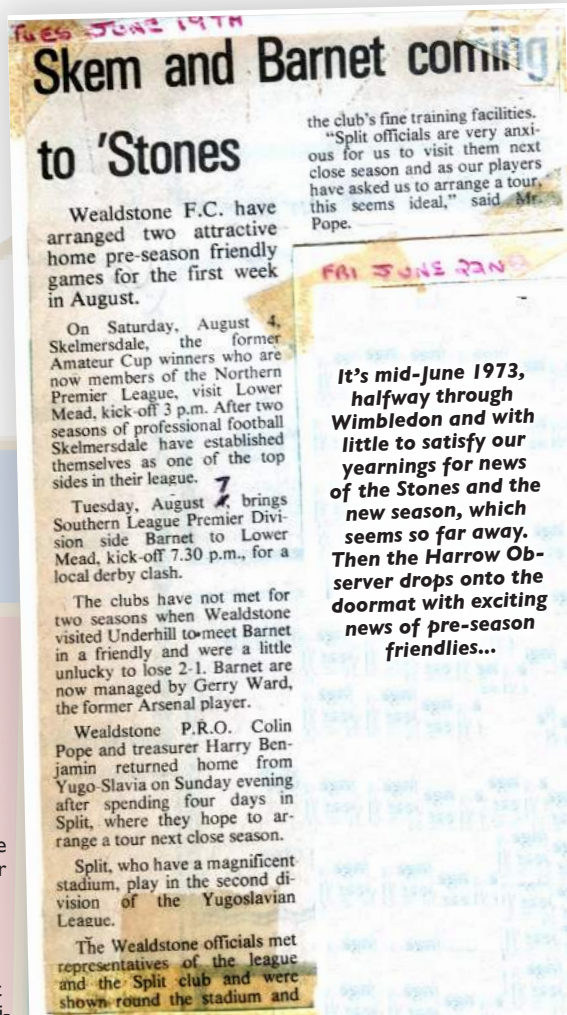
So sit back, put your feet up and enjoy (or in some cases, relive) the brilliance of that season fifty years ago as the Stones claimed their place in the top non-League division in the country...

Until going pro in 1971 the club had spent 73 years slowly gaining a reputation as one of the leading amateur clubs in the country. Yet in all that time the club had only won two major trophies... lifting the London-based Athenian League title in 1952 and then the nationally-acclaimed FA Amateur Cup in 1966. But we had never come close to winning the Isthmian League (arguably the strongest amateur league in the country) and after a distinctly lacklustre 1970-71 season decided to follow Wimbledon and Barnet into the Southern League ranks.

Both those clubs had been elevated to the SL Premier Division in the 1960s but the Stones first had to punch their way out of the regional First Division. We finished midway in the Div One North that first season, and then eighth in 72-73 as the club adjusted to life amongst the flotsam and jetsam of the professional ranks.

Some of our players were pretty good; some pretty bad; we had a few genuine stars like winger Terry Dyson (now in his late 30s) who had won the double with Spurs in 1961 and even a cameo by ex-England skipper Johnny Haynes in 1973.

But, like today the real gems were the youngsters who hadn't quite made it in the Football League ranks for multifarious reasons: like striker George Duck who had convinced himself he wouldn't make it at Tottenham, Willie Watson who was the archetypal rogue at West Ham and released after one too



many misdemeanours, and Willie's mate Ray Fulton who had woefully underachieved at both the Hammers and Leyton Orient.

Convincing these kids that they could still have a career outside the League was Wealdstone's ace in the pack: Manager Sid Prosser who had previously worked his magic at Isthmian big hitters St Albans City. He was remorselessly charming and also persuaded seasoned League professionals like Eric Burgess (ex Colchester) and rugged scottish centre back John McCormick (playing in Division One for Crystal Palace only six months earlier) to sign for the Stones.

As a 16 year old I was hungry for the pre-season

by tim parks

news delivered every Friday morning in the form of the Harrow Observer. These days, newspapers are sadly a dying media but five decades ago they contained everything we needed to know. Maybe immediacy was lacking but those broadsheet sports pages were lapped up before school every week. And in them were contained the spicy gossip about my beloved Stones... potential new signings, pre-season friendlies on the horizon, the early-season Southern League opponents lying in wait and, above all, the distinctive verbiage of one Phil Sugden, the Harrow Observer Sports Editor.

He was outspoken, frequently mistake-ridden, prone to irrelevance and often three sheets to the wind, but always readable.

In the next couple of friendly programmes we'll be reprinting more of the 'Harry O' pages (see teaser below).

Compared to the 2020s, life in the mid-70s was far more low key but perhaps all the more anticipatory because of that.



Chris Kinnear and Bill Byrne go pro, now wait for the offers

By Phil Sugden

CHRIS KINNEAR, Wealdstone's 26-year-old back-four or midfield player, one of the most exciting youngsters to emerge in the Southern League last season, signed professional forms for the Lower Mead club on Wednesday evening.

And Bill Byrne, the big 'Stones striker who put flutters into the hearts of defences for the latter end of last season with fantastic displays — including 18 goals — is expected to sign as a professional tonight (Friday).

These signings give Wealdstone a full professional squad but also make me suspicious that big transfer deals are looming ahead.

It is no secret that both players have been systematically and regularly watched by leading league clubs.

Kinnear, who joined Wealdstone as a former apprentice at Charlton, has attracted the attention of several First Division clubs including Tottenham and Everton.

I understand Everton have asked 'Stones to allow Kinnear to go to Goodison Park for trials during August and if he shows what is expected they will offer him terms.

It is no secret that Everton admired Kinnear for much of last season, that 'Spurs, Luton and Orient took more than one look at this very likeable boy who learned his football as a schoolboy and as a youth, and that he has been admired by other clubs.

Billy Byrne joined 'Stones from Ilford, the Isthmian League side, two seasons ago, and since then has been under constant surveillance by league clubs.

He played in several games for West Ham and was selected for Middlesex Wanderers' tour of the Far East last season where he met with considerable success.

He made a hesitant start to last season but then burst into the second half with a remarkable run of scoring and high rating performances. The big fellow suddenly and in top form, started knocking in the goals and rebuilt the understanding which had worked so successfully with leading striker George Duck the previous season.

Simply, the conclusion is that some of these very good Wealdstone players are wanted by league clubs — and there is



Chris Kinnear



Bill Byrne

nothing surprising about that. Big clubs are more and more tending to look at the non-league set-ups for up and coming players — and Wealdstone have one or two.

Everyone locally will be sorry if players of the calibre of Kinnear and Byrne move on — or if someone snaps up George Duck.

But it must be remembered — football is business. Wealdstone P. R. O. Colin Pope said on Wednesday: "We

have no intention of losing either Kinnear or Byrne, or indeed any member of our squad. We have ambitious plans and these would not be served by getting rid of our valuable assets. "Luckily, we have a tremendous team spirit and it is a safe bet that none of our 16 players would want to leave, anyway."

The following week our local paper carried confirmation of the pro signings of Chris Kinnear and Billy Byrne... big news as big centre-forward Byrne (an amateur) was being chased by several clubs, as was right-back/midfielder Kinnear who had been highly rated by Charlton. Stones' current links with the Addicks were being formulated 50 years ago! Kinnear, 19 (a bit younger than the reported 26 years) was with the Stones for just three years but made almost 200 appearances. Bill wore the blue shirt for five years but retired ridiculously early in 1977 at the age of 26

It happened 50 years ago

part two: pre-season 1973

This season we'll be reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' first league title in 22 years and its very first as a professional club.

In those days (we were in the Southern League Division One South, which was two levels below the Football League, theoretically) the competitive season didn't begin until mid-August and at this stage we had just the distant few pre-season friendlies to look forward to. The first one of those wasn't until August 4!

In the meantime we had the trusty Harry O to bring us news of summer activity at Lower Mead Stadium (our old ground in central Harrow)... the

most remarkable of which was the breaking story of our new striker John Smith being lured to kick goals in gridiron football in New England. He'd been spotted the previous summer by an American football coach while helping out at a soccer camp.

By Phil Sugden

In May 1973 the 22 year-old Smith (just about to get married) received a letter asking him for trial with the Patriots, and on his first day the club were playing a 'friendly' scrimmage match when their No.1 kicker got injured. Smith was called on, kicked the goal and became the first-ever player to score points in gridiron before he'd actually watched a full game!

In our interview five years ago (featured on the opposite page) Smith admitted that he

didn't have a clue about the game or its rules. But he went on to become the Patriots go-to kicker for a full ten years, earning himself a small fortune and fame as the club ended its Super Bowl drought.

Ask any American football fan of a certain age and they will recall his controversial winning kick in the snow 40 years ago when a path to the ball was illegally cleared, and then when he was about to kick a goal for the Patriots live on Monday night TV when John Lennon's murder in New York was announced. That was December 8, 1980. For many, Lennon and John Smith are inextricably linked.

£12,000 U.S.A. contract for 'Stones' Smith?

By Phil Sugden

John Smith, Wealdstone F.C.'s talented striker left for Philadelphia this week for further trials with the city's American grid-iron football team.

Smith, who had trials with the club early in May, is wanted as a kicker — the man who trots onto the field to take place-kicks — and having succeeded or failed runs off again.

If his trials are successful he will be offered a fantastic contract worth £12,000 to play for Philadelphia from now until mid December.

Smith, formerly with Winchester before joining 'Stones' towards the end of last season, was recently married and, as he told Wealdstone P.R.O. Colin Pope this week, could not reject such a contract if he receives a firm offer.

In any event Smith, who has a B.A. degree, will not be lost to Wealdstone.

The current position is that if he does not sign for the American club he will be back in this country and available to play for the Lower Mead club by the end of August.

It's mid-July 1973, and the Harrow Observer brings surprising news of our young striker John Smith who had only signed a few weeks before the end of the previous season. His successful trial in America football launched a stellar career with the New England Patriots in gridiron

STONES

WEALDSTONE v BATH CITY REWIND SPECIAL

The strange story of how the night of John Lennon's murder, the making of a New England Patriots legend, gridiron history & Wealdstone Football Club are interwoven..

TIM PARKS reveals the intriguing tale of JOHN SMITH...

Saturday April 14 1973, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 1 Winchester City 0

WEAALDSTONE FC and American football — gridiron — are not often mentioned in the same breath but this game at Lower Mead almost 45 years ago saw the two mighty codes joined at the hip by the mention of one man: John Smith.

Who? What? A brand of bitter? A labour politician? No, my friends. John Smith was a centre-forward who turned up on the Winchester team bus that spring afternoon in Harrow and put in motion a chain of events that was

to lead to the emergence of the New England Patriots as a major player in the NFL... and cement his own place in the history of a game watched by millions of Americans.

How come? Well, you may have heard of the Patriots. They won three Super Bowls in four years in the early 2000s, and became the first team to reach ten Super Bowls in February this year - only to lose to the

Philadelphia Eagles. They are the Barcelona of American football. But for 20 years, the Patriots were an under-achieving, middle-ranking NFL Eastern Division team with no hope of Super Bowl glory and with only one player holding a place in the American consciousness — John Smith.

And yes, it all began at Lower Mead in April 1973.

Let me take you back to a con-

CONTINUED OVERPAGE



▲ **MASTER OF BOTH CODES** John Smith juggles a football with young fan at the height of his fame in the US



Five years ago we carried a four-page special on the story of John Smith, pictured below at the London Eye where we had tracked him down. He is now 73 years old



▲ **THE SNOW PLOUGH**, driven by a prison inmate on work release, controversially clears a way for Smith to kick his famous points in the winter of 1982

Above: His career was also marked with controversy with his famous 'kick in the snow' in 1982

STONES

WEALDSTONE v BATH CITY REWINDSPECIAL

TRUSTY LEFT FOOT Dead-eye Smith shows the form that made such him a hit for the Patriots

Columbia University. "He said, 'you should have a go at kicking.' Smith recalled, "I didn't know what American football was. I knew it was a game that my first thought was, 'what the hell does a kicker do?'"

"He asked me if I could stop in Newark (New Jersey) and kick a few balls for a friend of his. I did. I kicked some and went home. A little while later I got a letter from the Jets, but I was playing amateur soccer and I told them that I was finishing college and I want to play soccer."

The following May (a few weeks after playing for the Stones) he received a phone call from an American lad who said there was a plane ticket waiting for me for a tryout with the New England Patriots.

"So there I was, 22 years old and about to get married, but they told me they would send a 'superman' over. I was hoping it was a 'Hall of Fame' game looking for it. I was hoping to go to San Francisco

"It was the first time I'd lined up for a kickoff with live people in front of me and this linebacker was yelling all sorts of abuse towards me and my mother," he said. "By the time I kicked the ball, I forgot about kicking it clean out of the end zone. I was just watching the linebacker. I barely touched the 20-yard line."

"Part of the opposition linebacker's job was to try to put off the kicker, especially if he was a rookie."

Smith laughs when he thinks about his first pre-season game. He became the first-ever player in the history of American football to play in a game before he'd even watched one!

"It was a 'Hall of Fame' game looking for it. I was hoping to go to San Francisco



▲ **TRUSTY LEFT FOOT** Dead-eye Smith shows the form that made such him a hit for the Patriots

Lower Mead to the rescue

Wealdstone to share ground with Borough?

By Phil Sugden

Harrow Borough, who will be without their Earlsmead Stadium pitch until early in the New Year, are likely to have the hand of friendship extended to them by their near neighbours Wealdstone F.C. next week.

I understand a specially appointed sub-committee under the chairmanship of Wealdstone P.R.O. Colin Pope will on Monday evening meet to consider the possibility of Borough sharing the Lower Mead ground until Earlsmead can again be used.

Borough officials have been invited to attend the meeting and will outline their difficulties which have been brought about by the relaying of their playing area, part of the £190,000 plan for the erection of a new sports complex at Earlsmead.

Harrow officials have been told by the contractors that there is no chance of the pitch being ready for use before the end of the year.

The Athenian League club had planned to play all their scheduled home matches away and I understand the league was prepared to accede to such a request but, of course, such a move would mean a loss of support.

Doubtless Borough feel that by playing their home games at Lower Mead they would not only retain their home supporters but perhaps pick up a few Wealdstone followers now that the Southern League side has no reserve team.

And there is no doubt in my mind that Wealdstone officials

hard core who go to the Stadium every week and do not travel to away matches.

Both sides stand to gain a few supporters one way or the other.

And if Wealdstone's recently announced plan for a public bar beneath the stand by the start of the season comes about, there could be additional financial gain apart from the rental the Harrow club will pay for use of the pitch and amenities.

Both sides are playing the subject a little carefully at the moment, with guarded statements. Figures are not being quoted but both sides have now told me that they will meet on Monday.

GOOD RELATIONS

Said Mr Pope: "We have good relations with Harrow Borough and visited them to play a pre-season friendly last year. We appreciate their current problems and would like to help."

Mr Connolly, Borough Press Officer, who is quite a frequent visitor to Lower Mead for midweek games with his own club is not playing kind. "It is good of Wealdstone to try and help us. This could be a temporary move if value is both clubs."

REWIND SPECIAL >>>>

by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part three: pre-season 1973

This season we'll be reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' first league title in 22 years and its very first as a professional club.

I think the first signs of excitement about the new season - as a fan just turned 16 - came with the arrival of the Harrow Observer on the Friday morning before the first pre-season friendly. It was Friday August 4 1973.

Two weeks earlier the paper had printed a tantalising tale under the headline "Stones seek a First Division centre half"... without naming names, our problem position seemed likely to be solved with the acquisition of an experienced player from FIVE levels higher! And now suddenly it was announced, after 14 days of waiting: John McCormick, the rugged Scots centreback who had won promotion to the top flight with Crystal Palace in 1969, and was a virtual ever-present as the South Londoners cemented themselves in midtable.

This was amazing! As an occasional Chelsea fan in the early 70s (thanks to a season-ticket-holding Uncle



who was often away on business) I had seen the 6ft 2in McCormick subduing Osgood and Hutchinson, while Match of the Day featured his duels with the likes of Martin Chivers (Spurs), John Radford (Arsenal) and Alan Clarke (Leeds). I'd even seen him score for Palace against FA Cup-holders Chelsea in the third round just two years earlier! It was like the current-day Stones signing Conor Coady, James Tarkowski or Sven Botmen... truly amazing.

The Harry O story (right) got McCormick's age wrong: He was 36 rather than 31, which explains why Palace were prepared to let him go with the defender preparing for life after full-time football running a pub.

So was he decent? You bet he was!

The previous season had seen Stones finish eighth in the SL Div One South, scoring goals for fun but also >>

Top picture: McCormick tackles George Best in a Palace shirt v Man Utd in 1972 while (left) he fends off Tottenham's Chivers in front of a packed White Hart Lane the same season



Manager Sid Prosser gets his man

John McCormick signs after first saying 'no'

By Phil Sugden

CRYSTAL Palace centre-half John McCormick, who last week rejected terms offered by Wealdstone because of travelling difficulties, changed his mind this week and signed a one-year contract with the Lower Mead Club on Tuesday evening.

McCormick arrived at the ground with Wealdstone manager Sid Prosser shortly after tea-time on Tuesday and had further discussions with club officials Harry Benjamin and Colin Pope.

An hour later Scottish-born McCormick said he was impressed with the Wealdstone set-up, had changed his mind and immediately signed.

The signing of the 31-year-old Scot, who made a dozen appearances in the Palace First Division side last season, is Wealdstone's biggest scoop since they turned professional two years ago.

A jubilant Mr. Prosser said later: "I am really enthusiastic about getting John. We have a really good squad now and you can quote me as being optimistic."

That, from the dour Mr. Prosser, who is never given to making any statement which might be considered rash, is really something.

McCormick plays against Skelmersdale in the pre-season friendly at Lower Mead Stadium on Saturday.

Mr. Prosser, who last week signed Chic Brodie, the former Brentford goalkeeper, and John Henderson, a striker from Bletchley on a month's trial, added another trialist to his squad on Tuesday when he gave a month's chance to midfielder man John Barnes.

Barnes was an apprentice professional with West Ham last season, but has been released by the First Division club.

First news that Wealdstone were hoping to sign McCormick was given in the Observer on July 20 when we announced: "Now Stones seek a First Division centre-half" and in our stop press news revealed that the player was training with the Wealdstone squad.

Last week, when it was stated that the player would not sign because of travelling difficulties, I revealed that after a conversation with another Crystal Palace player I had reason to believe McCormick might change his mind.

WITH some 18 players fighting for places in the Wealdstone squad, it will be very much a new look side which runs out to face Skelmersdale in the first pre-season friendly at Lower Mead on Saturday.

Of last season's regulars, centre-half Paul Doherty and left-back Eddie Presland are not included on the team-list, but could be brought on in the second half. Club captain Eric Burgess is on holiday and is not available.

Also on holiday is new goalkeeper Chic Brodie, so Roy McKenzie, signed late last season will continue.

Big signing John McCormick is in the back-four with John Watson, Ray Fulton (new man from Orient) and Chris Kinnear.

A wealth of talent is available for the midfield places and the manager will select from Terry Dyson, Paul Fairclough, Jim Godfrey and newcomer John Barnes.

There is also competition for places for the front runners with George Duck, Bill Byrne and Alick Brown facing a challenge from trialist John Henderson from Bletchley.

With the possibility of John Smith returning soon from America, Wealdstone would appear to have the best balanced side since they turned professional.

A good start is tremendously important and there is no doubt club officials are looking forward to a highly successful season.

Eighteen players fight for places in 'Stones' squad

Terry Dyson, Wealdstone's popular midfield star, became a proud father for the third time when his wife, Kay, gave birth to an 8 lb. 9 oz. boy, Mark, last week. The Dysons, who live in Farrow Road, Kenton, have two other sons, Neill (5) and Harry (3).

Henderson signs

John Henderson, the former Bletchley and Bedford winger who gave an impressive performance in Wealdstone's pre-season friendly against Skelmersdale on Saturday after being signed on a month's trial, signed a full contract for 'Stones on Monday.



>> leaking them like an old sieve. It wasn't unusual to see us win successive games at home 5-1, 4-0 and 4-2 while losing 5-0, 4-1 and 3-0 away from home against very modest opposition.

McCormick, as expected, solidified that porous back four alongside fellow wily old campaigner Eric Burgess (Ex Colchester) and went on to play 110 games in two and a half seasons, scoring four goals. He was famously tough; forced off at half time in the FA Cup game at Third Division Aldershot in November 1975 with the score goalless, it ended up 4-3 to the Shots. He then broke a leg in a game at Dover in February 1976 which ended his career... though of course he wanted to carry on.

He died at age 80 in Glasgow, a Palace and Wealdstone immortal.

REWIND SPECIAL >>>>

by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

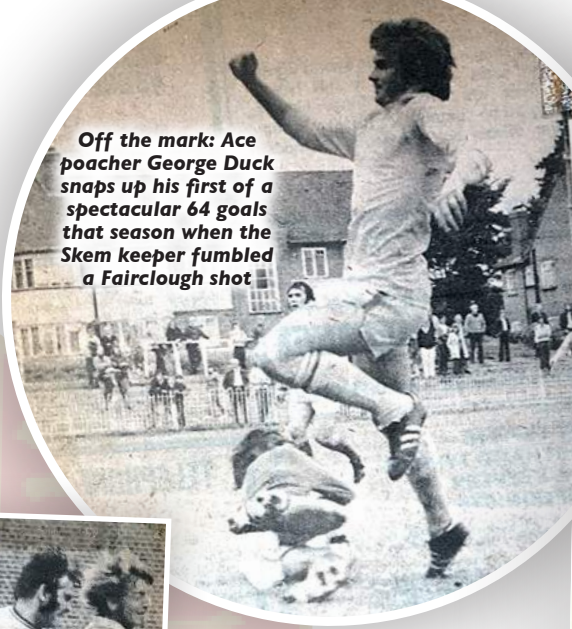
part four: pre-season 1973

This season we'll be reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' first league title in 22 years and its very first as a professional club.

The long wait was over! After weeks of scouring the Harry O for news of signings, this was the first chance to see newcomers John McCormick, Ray Fulton and John Henderson in action and all three were to play a pivotal part in the success of this, and the next few seasons.

To get Amateur Cup kings Skelmersdale to travel down from Manchester for a friendly was quite a coup, and 541 turned up at Lower Mead to watch - a decent number and a decent game. Apologies for the Sellotape markings which make it hard to read the match report (opposite page)... blame young Mike Pullin, keeper of the scrapbook, for his schoolboyish enthusiasm!

At the end of this season, in the Supporters Club vote for Player of the Season I opted for former Crystal Palace



Off the mark: Ace poacher George Duck snaps up his first of a spectacular 64 goals that season when the Skem keeper fumbled a Fairclough shot



Seventies haircuts and tight shorts: action from the Skelmersdale game with Paul Fairclough (below left) and Bill Byrne (right) taking on the visiting defence



star McCormick as the strengthened defence was the one key improvement on the previous season. But many voted for fellow newbie Johnny Henderson (left) and he actually won it!

But how did we all ignore the claims of goalscorer extraordinaire George Duck? Despite hitting over 60 goals in 73-74 and a total of 250 for the club over seven seasons, he never once received the supporters' Jock Law Trophy. A strange omission, but George now receives the adulation of generations of fans as a club ambassador.



AUG 9TH 1973 FRIENDLY
George Duck straight off the mark

Promise of newcomers means problems for Wealdstone's manager

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 1, Skelmersdale 0

GEORGE DUCK picked up the threads of last season, when he so nearly set up a new Wealdstone scoring record, by notching the winner in the 36th minute of this highly entertaining pre-season friendly at Lower Mead on Saturday, but important as was his contribution — to give 'Stones sweet revenge for an Amateur Cup defeat at the hands of Skem, a few seasons ago — the main interest was centred on Wealdstone's newcomers.

Happily, one can record it was a most satisfying afternoon from that point of view, and a display which to my mind augurs well for the coming season. It can be argued that pre-season friendlies do not reveal all, but Skem are a hard side to beat and that Wealdstone had 75 per cent of the play in achieving their success, says much.

Four 'Stones five new signings were on show, the absentee being goalkeeper Chick Brodie who had booked his holiday before signing for the club.

The four who played all emerged with credit and although two of them, John Henderson, from Bletchley, and John Barnes, a former apprentice pro from West Ham, are on trial, one suspects they did more than enough to make manager Sid Prosser start thinking about offering them contracts.

This might prove something of an embarrassment, for it would mean a pool of 18 players and one doubts if he is thinking of more than 15. All eyes, of course, were on former Crystal Palace centre-half John McCormick and most of the 541 paying guests — goodly attendance for August 4 when so many are on holiday — departed more than happy about the safety of this position.

McCormick did little wrong and a great deal right, much of which was highly polished. His vast experience was always evident and will be of great value to those around him. Generally his tackling was strong, occasionally block-busting but scrupulously fair, and he found time and energy to move upfield whenever a corner or a free-kick offered him the slightest opportunity to show his prowess in the air.

He kicked cleanly and some of his first-time volleying away from the edge of the box completely shattered Skelmersdale's attempted build-up.

All-in-all one can only believe this is an excellent signing by manager Sid Prosser.

Next newcomer to impress was undoubtedly young full-back Ray Fulton, from Orient. Indeed, I and doubtless many others, are still wondering how he came to be released by the Second Division side.

His positional sense was excellent, his interceptions keen, quick and intelligent, and more often than not his clean clearness set attacks going. He might be one real mistake. He played the 90 minutes — and recovered quickly. He will bring much needed mobility to a Wealdstone back four, which has too often been hesitant last season.

John Barnes, who manager Prosser signed on a month's trial last week from West Ham, pleased me as much as anyone until he was replaced by Jim Godfrey in the second half.

This teenager, compact, built and strong with it, displayed a tremendous workrate, used the ball with great skill for one so young, and generally looked the type of midfielder player who could do 'Stones a lot of good.

Finally to newcomer number four, John Henderson, on trial from Bletchley. This 25-year-old has quite a lot of experience having played 30-odd games for Bedford, the Southern Premier side before moving to Bletchley. That he arrived at Lower Mead at all is I understand, due to a contractual misunderstanding with the North Bucks side.

In the event I, for one, am happy to see him there and shall be surprised if he does not stay. Fast, tricky but usually direct, he was always in the game, looking for the ball and showing a great appetite for the job in hand.

He was desperately unlucky not to score with a power drive which pounded the crossbar and constantly drew applause for his reading of the game. I shall be surprised if he is not offered terms.

INTELLIGENT

Of last season's brigade, most did well and none more so than Wealdstone's "Peter Pan", Terry Dyson. The little man has lost none of his love for the game or his dynamic energy during the close season. He still gives some 100 minutes' work in 90, still chats with everyone willing to listen, he is referee, linesman or spectator, and can still inspire his colleagues, to great heights. Long may he go on.

In the back four, Chris Kinnear was quietly but most effectively efficient — a player who will continue to improve.

John Watson had a splendid first half but then blotted his copybook when involved in a stupid incident with a Skem player, which in a competitive match must have resulted in him being sent off.

That splendid referee Clive White, from Harrow, recently appointed to the full list, was obviously unwilling to take the strongest possible action in a friendly, but Watson, already under a two-match suspension when the season proper starts, must learn to control his temper.

Paul ("Cyril") Fairclough had another good game in midfield, particularly during the first period, and the Roxeth Manor P.E. master will be hard to dislodge from the side.

Roy McKenzie kept a clean sheet in goal but occasionally rough hearts to mouths when a little uncertain in his handling.

He will have to work hard to overcome Brodie's "talking over the job."

Up front, those terrible twins, George Duck and Bill Byrne, were quickly back to their double act without, perhaps, showing their full potential. Aliver-the-less, Byrne's neat head flicks might have brought him a couple of goals and Duck was unlucky not to get his second near the end when he took careful aim only to be thwarted by a fine save.

Alick Brown and Godfrey, who came on for Henderson and Barnes, both did enough to show they will be fighting for their places.

SUPERB

That Wealdstone scored only one was very largely due to the superb goalkeeping of John Fitton, who has been on Liverpool's books. This agile, acrobatic goalkeeper had a game to be remembered and well deserved the ovation he received at the end of hisilities.

But for him the score would have been four, although he was splendidly supported by right-back Dave Berry, a bearded giant who got through a great deal of work.

The only goal came after 36 minutes. Fitton had by then made three splendid saves from the rampant Wealdstone forwards but when Fairclough completed a fine run on the right the Skem goalkeeper could only parry a power-drive and Duck, of course, was on hand to finish the job.

Just about the nearest Skem got to an equaliser was when Kinnear cleared off the line from the clever Atherton, with McKenzie stranded.

Stones run into injuries

Wealdstone will delay selection of their side to meet Barnet, the Premier Southern League team, in a pre-season friendly at Lower Mead tonight (Tuesday), 7.30 p.m., because of injuries to several players. Chris Kinnear, John Barnes, George Duck and John Henderson all sustained knocks on Saturday, the more serious being Kinnear and Duck, but all may be fit. Chick Brodie is still on holiday, but will be back for Saturday's opening Southern League game. Roy McKenzie continues in goal tonight.

Alick Brown and Jim Godfrey, who went on as substitutes on Saturday, will probably get a full game tonight.

Barnet field an interesting side which includes such old favourites as ex-Arsenal goalkeeper John McClelland, one-time Enfield star Tony Turley and new signings V. Moss and B. Silkman.

Barnet side is McClelland; Lye, Thom, Ferry, Embrey; Plume, Turley, Eason; Moss, Silkman, Bibby, Sub: George. Referee is Mr. P. Taylor, of Greenford.

Paul Doherty, Wealdstone's amateur centre-half appeared for Walthamstow Avenue, in a pre-season friendly on Saturday. Manager Sid Prosser gave Doherty permission to play for the amateur side to give him match practice. He is registered as a Wealdstone player.

Former Wealdstone midfielder Dave Cockell is joining Staines Town as a permit player.

Wealdstone's home friendly game with Isthmian League club Leytonstone will be played on Tuesday, August 14, at Lower Mead Stadium (kick-off 7.30 p.m.) not on Monday August 13, as originally stated.

The Harrow Observer goes into overdrive in the wake of the opening friendly: a 1-0 win over redoubted Lancashire side Skelmersdale. 'Skem' had made their name five years earlier in the FA Amateur Cup, knocking out holders Wealdstone and going on to reach the final at Wembley where they drew 0-0 with Enfield in front of 75,000. The London side won the replay at Maine Road, Manchester, 3-0 in front of a heaving 55,000 crowd

After it was very much Fitton repelling the advancing Wealdstone armada, and doing so with considerable success.

By then we had seen enough to at least give us hope for good things for which we may be duly thankful.

Wealdstone: McKenzie; Watson, Fulton, Kinnear, McCormick; Barnes, Fairclough, Byrne; Duck, Henderson, Dyson. Subs: Brown, Godfrey, Prelland.

REWIND SPECIAL >>>>

by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part five: stones 2 minehead 1

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

I was just a spotty teenager in those days, living a rather less informed life than the media-saturated youngsters today... our only form of communication was the local paper (the Harrow Observer) and the match programme... and I loved them both! Which is probably why I became a print journalist and still have an unhealthy obsession with our printed matchday prog.

This weekend 50 years ago had me just as excited as the current season, as the Stones had won 2-1 on the first day (see the parallels?) and were now facing the dangerous Minehead side in our first home game. There was the small matter of a 4-2 friendly defeat to the amateurs of Leytonstone in midweek but happily that wasn't replicated on our trip to Eastleigh last Saturday.

The Stones' first Southern League Div One South game was a trip to Hampshire to face Salisbury City on August 11th on their notoriously-sloping pitch. "Close to 150 fans made the trip" according to the Minehead editorial and although that doesn't sound

many today, the supporters club were running three or four coaches to every away game by the end of the season as the Stones homed in on the league title.

So was I at Salisbury? Er, I'm afraid not as the habit of travelling to away games for this 15 year-old didn't kick in until a few months later. Instead, I was reduced to scouring the small print of the Sunday Express's 'Non-League football results' and praying



Above: Bill Byrne (dark shirt, centre) comes close to turning in this cross from Terry Dyson in the first half of the Minehead game with George Duck (No. 10) also lurking. We like to eulogise about our old Lower Mead ground but our current groundsman Adam Rowland would be horrified by the scrubby turf and long grass around the goalposts!

that the smudge on 'Salisbury 1 Wealdstone 2' was not concealing a zero in the away goals column... it was not until the midweek Harrow Observer dropped onto our doormat on Tuesday morning that the result was officially confirmed. A bit different to the live stream or constant Twitter updates that keep us informed about every moment at every level of football these days.

Our big No.9 Bill Byrne had scored the first goal at Salisbury, with the winner half-volleyed in with some panache by John Barnes on his Stones debut. No, not THAT John Barnes... this one was a former West Ham youngster who arrived on the recommendation of our East London contingent (Willie Watson and Ray Fulton). Unfortunately Barnes played just three games before getting crocked. And he never pulled on the blue shirt again.

But back to Minehead. The Somerset side had a smattering of very good ex-pros from Bristol and Exeter and in fact finished as runners-up in the Southern League Prem just three years later, after winning promotion. Then came the plummet and they are now playing in the Somerset Senior League or suchlike.

They certainly gave us a good run for our money on this sunny afternoon 50 years ago - and when their giant centre-back Bob Boyd blammed in a 25-yard freekick for 1-1 it seemed we'd end up frustrated. But then (and it's amazing how you remember things a half century later when now you forget where you've just left your glasses) Bill Byrne turned in a Watson cross and the referee disallowed the goal for a penalty kick! How outraged were we! Happily, George Duck stepped up and drilled in the first of his 19 spot-kick goals that season and we'd won. Happy days :)



Below: Our new capture from Crystal Palace, the 36-year-old John McCormick (No.5) shows his aerial power

Two more for George Duck

Barometer is set fair as 'Stones win again

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 2, Minehead 1

THE LOWER MEAD barometer is set fair, it could be said after Wealdstone chalked up their second successive Southern League victory against Minehead, those tough protagonists from Somerset, on Saturday.

It could be argued that 'Stones' might have won more convincingly; that they created a lot more chances than they appeared likely to accept on the day, and that would be true.

I do not think for one moment that this side has shown anything like its true potential so far. There is still occasional hesitancy in defence, odd lapses of concentration in the middle and certainly the **Duck-Byrne** partnership is not yet at its very best.

But anyone who has watched this rebuilt Wealdstone team in games so far played this season, must be purring like a contented cat in anticipation. There is so much ability evident that one can only believe that any time now, in any game to come in the very near future, some unfortunate side will meet 'Stones in full cry' — and when that happens someone is likely to be on the receiving end of an almighty hiding.

Minehead, of course, were in the promotion race for much of last season and on the form displayed in this game they will be thereabouts again this campaign. They are a tough, give no quarter outfit — and by that I do not mean they are over-hard. Robust, yes. In fact they often tackled in this game with biting ferocity, but the majority of their work was scrupulously fair. I like most other people, would rather see a rugged but well timed tackle from the front than a sneaky effort from the back which at best can only result in a free-kick. The West Country side have made only a few changes from last season and their greatest acquisition is certainly former Bristol Rovers striker Bobbie Jones.

LATE CHANGE

A veteran of some 400 Football League games and the scorer of 101 goals for the Bristol side, he is a true professional. Wearing the number six shirt he sometimes looked almost innocuous in midfield — until he burst into attack with devastating speed. He will confuse many defences and certainly had Wealdstone's back-four worried on a few occasions. Wealdstone were forced to make a late change when John Barnes reported unfit and Terry

ROUSING START

Wealdstone made their usual rousing start, threatening to sweep the opposition off the park. Clausen was forced to floor Byrne and the resultant free-kick went through three sets of legs before being cleared. Dyson, swept aside all defenders in a sweet run and his pin-point cross was booked just over by Byrne. Minutes later a shrewd cross by Duck saw

SUPERB SAVE

Barnes twice saved superbly when first Duck and then Byrne soared to Dyson crosses, but the winning goal ultimately came from the penalty spot after 70 minutes.

Watson, out on the right and running into the box, was fouled and although Byrne flicked the cross in, referee Hazzard had blown for a penalty and **Duck** made no mistake with a power drive.

So two more well-earned points for 'Stones and all the signs that there could be many more come.

Dyson, swept aside all defenders in a sweet run and his pin-point cross was booked just over by Byrne. Minutes later a shrewd cross by Duck saw Henderson ghost into an unmarked position and head inches over.

Dyson was brought into his usual energetic self, running himself to a near standstill and causing considerable consternation with his inswinging corners. As Minehead's agile goalkeeper Ian Barnes commented after the game: "Terry's inswingers get everybody on edge". Roy McCormick returned to Wealdstone's goal after Chic Brodie's none too happy debut the previous Tuesday, and gave a sound performance, handling safely and coming off his line well. He will be a difficult one to displace for he appears to be gaining in confidence with every match.

One suspected there were subtle changes in the back four and it may be that manager Sid Prosser has decided on a policy of adopting tactics to suit the play of John McCormick, rather than asking the former Palace player to fit in with existing style. In any event, no complaints. Apart from a couple of lapses the defence was solid enough. Fairclough, Watson and Dyson were all energetic and often produced thoughtful, constructive football in midfield, although of course a change must be made in this department for the next couple of matches as Watson is under suspension for two league games from Monday.

As I have said, the front men have yet to show all their potential but these are early days and Henderson, Byrne and Duck did more than enough to raise hopes of better things to come.

Watson, out on the right and running into the box, was fouled and although Byrne flicked the cross in, referee Hazzard had blown for a penalty and **Duck** made no mistake with a power drive.

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Dyson, swept aside all defenders in a sweet run and his pin-point cross was booked just over by Byrne. Minutes later a shrewd cross by Duck saw Henderson ghost into an unmarked position and head inches over.

REWIND SPECIAL >>>>

by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part six: stones pull off a whopping 8-2 two-legged beating of Bletchley!

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Tuesday August 28, 1973: A pretty routine trip up to Buckinghamshire to play Bletchley Town in the second leg of the Southern League Cup first round. Yet there is always something that sticks in the memory and on this occasion it's the home side's lanky No.9 John Weekes who sparked the cry of "Bletchley lay-off!" to be bellowed from the Lower Mead terraces for the best part of the next decade. For Bletchley were pretty awful, and probably the hapless striker was the worst in their modest ranks.

The Stones had won the first leg of this tie 4-1 at Lower Mead with ace marksman George Duck notching a hat-trick (including one penalty) - and the difference between Duck and Weekes was painfully obvious. George would be strolling around, controlling passes and laying them off, imperious on the ground and in the



air while poor Mr Weekes achieved his moment of 'fame' by moving to flick the ball on from a long ball up the channel... and succeeding in heading the ball out of the ground in the direction of the Hindes Road Chest Clinic. This provoked much hilarity amongst the Elmslie Enders - but not as much as seven days later when he performed the same trick at Bletchley's Manor Field in the second leg. He looked on, crestfallen, as the ball looped over the stand and the delirious cry 'Bletchley lay-off' punctured the air.

Only three years before, Weekes had scored the equaliser for little Leighton Town as the Spartan

CONTINUED ON OPPOSITE PAGE >>

'Stones give Bletchley a football lesson

Bletchley 1, Wealdstone 4

WEALDSTONE supporters who made the trip to Bletchley for this Southern League Cup return match on Tuesday (and there were scores of them) must have returned home intensely proud.

With a stunning display of attacking soccer — one veteran supporter thought it the best performance by a Wealdstone team for many years — Bletchley were pulverised by a four goal avalanche in the space of 20 minutes in the first half and Wealdstone won by an incredible 8-2 margin. They had won the first leg 4-1.

So complete was Wealdstone's first half dominance that Bletchley, themselves fresh from coming from behind to beat Bedworth last Saturday, must have thought that the 'Stones had 14 men on the park.

The manner in which victory was achieved was a sheer delight to watch. Intelligent running off the ball, adroit use of the open space, and precision passing had the Bletchley crowd applauding, and by half-time it had become exhibition stuff.

Yet this, on paper, was not by any means the strongest Wealdstone side — a very good argument against the protagonist for the squad system, which Wealdstone are now operating.

Both John McCormick (injured leg) and Bill Byrne (strained shoulder ligaments) were late non-starters and Eric Burgess made his first appearance of the season in the No. 5 shirt. Terry Dyson was recalled in the middle, Alick Brown and John Henderson joining George Duck up front.

One of the supreme architects of Wealdstone's victory was Jim Godfrey, who had his best game so far — and crowned it with a very well-taken goal to make it 4-0.

DUCK AGAIN

Nothing was seen of Bletchley's attack in the first half, and Wealdstone went ahead after 20 minutes. Godfrey did the spadework and Henderson, a former Bletchley player coolly beat Wells. Four minutes later Bailey pulled a Dyson cross down with his hands, and Duck hit an immaculate penalty.

Some seven minutes later, after both Fulton and Kinnear had had tremendous shots finger-tipped over the bar, Henderson beat Wells to the ball and slid the ball just inside the post, and just before half-time Godfrey moved in quickly from the right flank and although awkwardly angled, hit a first-timer, which left Wells flat-footed.

With an aggregate lead of — Wealdstone came out for the second half obviously under orders to do nothing which might precipitate an injury, in view of Saturday's FA Cup game against Marlow.



Jim Godfrey — best game for Wealdstone

The result was that Bletchley came far more into the game and some heavy pressure was finally rewarded when Brodie, in the Wealdstone goal, had a mysterious penalty given against him, and Boyd got one back.

COMPOSED

Brodie made a spectacular flying save from Gibbs and then pushed a hot one from Weeks over the bar as Bletchley made the running, but the composure of Wealdstone's back four eventually took over and with Fulton and Dyson showing rare affinity, Wells was again a busy man.

A cunning header from Duck scraped a post, and Brown was clawed down inside the box after 80 minutes but a free-kick awarded on the line.

Bletchley, unfortunately, resorted to near-naked aggression in the tackle towards the end, and Duck and Henderson in particular were the victims; so much so that for his own sake, Henderson was brought off for the final eight minutes, being replaced by Barnes.

Manager Sid Prosser obviously felt discretion was the better part of valour as referee Mr. Bant was sorely in danger of losing what little grip he had.

Wealdstone: Brodie; Presland, Fulton, Kinnear, E. Burgess; Fairclough, Godfrey, Dyson; Duck, Brown, Henderson, Sub: Barnes.

League Div One side had held the Stones to a 1-1 draw in the FA Cup in that Bedfordshire Town... and then Leighton 'giant-killed' our Isthmian League side with a 1-0 win in the replay.

But now the boot was on the other foot. Stones had won their first three competitive games and as the Harry O report (left) shows, were in a rich vein of form. The chief tormentor of the home side was their former winger John Henderson - who went on to score twice as Stones racked up a 4-0 lead within 20 minutes of the first half as Bletchley were left chasing shadows. Or, hacking at shadows more accurately as they savagely tried to stem the flow of goals with 'Johnny H' the main target. Fifty years ago and you rarely see a Bletchley Lay-off these days...more's the pity!

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REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part seven: why canterbury tales became my least favourite text in the painful world of a-levels

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday September 8 1973, Southern League Div One South: Canterbury City 3 Wealdstone 0 I WAS literally one week into the lower sixth at school and trying to decipher the almost-impenetrable 14th century works of Chaucer.

How ironic then that my team were facing a trip to Canterbury, subject of his famous Tales, that weekend. If Chaucer was eminently put-downable, I was riveted by our start in the Southern League Division One South and spent much of the Eng Lit lessons

gazing out of the classroom window dreaming of the mazy runs of Johnny Henderson and the sublime finishing of George Duck.

Surely the unbeaten start to the season would continue as we travelled down into Kent to face perennial strugglers Canterbury? Three coachloads of supporters were in happy anticipation of a win to follow the beatings of Salisbury, Minehead and Bexley in the league, and Bletchley (twice) in the Southern League Cup and Marlow in the FA Cup. Who could stop us?

Well the completely unlikely answer to that came in the form of well-respected ex-League goalkeeper Chic Brodie, who had signed as cover for Roy Mackenzie - and was fully expected to replace the affable keeper.

Brodie had pedigree, listing Manchester City, Wolves and Brentford on his CV - but he also had a pedigree chum....

There had been much merriment two years before when Chic, playing in goal for the Bees at Colchester, went to gather a back pass and was struck by a small dog that had encroached on the pitch and was chasing the ball.

Brodie went down in a heap, much to the glee of ITV's Brian Moore on the following day's 'Big Match' programme, which had shown highlights of the game. But it was no laughing matter for the goalkeeper, whose professional career



The strange case of Chic Brodie and the dangerous dog: stills from the ITV coverage at Layer Road in 1971 show the dog chasing down a back pass before colliding with the unfortunate keeper



ended right there.

The knee injury put him out for months; Brentford ended his contract; and he was next seen playing for Margate as they crashed out of the FA Cup 11-0 to Bournemouth. Ted MacDougall (later to play for Man Utd) scored NINE goals that day and, again, Chic's canine incident was brought up on the telly.

Not funny. And certainly not funny when, two years later he was playing for us! Small boys behind the goal at Canterbury were heard to bark unkindly at Brodie, and that can't have helped his confidence when he trotted down the tunnel at White Hart Lane two days later to face an impressive Tottenham line-up in the London Challenge Cup... in what proved to be his final game. Barry Daines in the Spurs goal was imperious form as the Stones were

A sad from Canterbury

Brodie slips twice and 'Stones crash to defeat

Canterbury City 3, Wealdstone 0

The perils of adopting a squad system (when 16 or 17 players all have to be kept in competitive trim, resulting in fairly frequent team changes irrespective of results) was dramatically highlighted on Saturday when Wealdstone's run of five successive victories was shattered.

Shattered, let it be said, by a team of limited skills who had little in the way of football to offer, and who will surely finish well in the bottom half of the table.

Wealdstone lost this match at 2-30 pm when the team sheet was put up. McKenzie, generally regarded as number one goalkeeper was replaced by Chic Brodie, and the former Brentford man, signed during the close season from Margate, gave away the first two goals and showed an astonishing display of hesitancy.

One could be forgiven for believing that he was a youngster, new to senior football, rather than Armstrong in the Canterbury goal. Hapless Chic seemed mesmerised, and his penchant for leaving his line could have been even more heavily punished.

To be fair, equal blame for the first goal must be shared with the defence but the second, when he raced out, then stopped and was caught in no-man's land, was exclusively a goalkeeping error. Stones were completely demoralised.

Yet the ridiculous part was that just one Wealdstone goal in the first half must surely have led to an avalanche. Kicking up the slope against a stiff wind, their football was good, and Canterbury's attacks (perhaps five in the half) were confined to punts up the middle and hard but ineffective running.

Two chances, both by Godfrey, should have put the issue beyond doubt by half-time, but each time his header scraped the wrong side of the post, and then Henderson fell over when in full flight and with only Armstrong to beat.

But the fact is that Weald-

stone were "phyched" out of the points. Canterbury were continually penalised for fouls in the first-half, played it very physical indeed and some of the Stones players were taking hard knocks.

In the second half, instead of continuing to meet force with skill, they played it Canterbury's way, started to dish it out themselves, lost their cool in the process, and found the Kent side better at the hard stuff than they were.

Thus Canterbury (admittedly playing better in this half) got on top yet a goal looked a long way off until the 16th minute when too much cleverness in defence allowed Gemmell to slip the ball wide of a stranded Brodie, and 10 minutes later Wiltshire made it two and could hardly believe such goalkeeping generosity.

On the stroke of time Hare scored a splendid goal to make the scoreline a travesty of justice.

OUTSTANDING

Outstanding for Wealdstone was John McCormick but even he, with his great experience, and Ray Fulton fell into the trap of playing Canterbury at their own game. As a result,

Fulton had one of his poorer games.

Four names went into the book, Burgess and Watson for Wealdstone and Bayliss and Harrop for Canterbury, and one felt that Bayliss was lucky not to have an early bath.

Manager Sid Prosser has problems in Wealdstone's midfield, where Paul Fairclough, an ever-present so far, shows no sign of playing himself out of the doldrums.

Striker Bill Byrne is another just not doing it at present, and he may well have cause to be grateful that John Henderson started a two week suspension immediately after the Canterbury match.

Wealdstone's downfall, quite apart from anything else, stemmed from midfield, where both Godfrey and Watson struggled. The tragedy is that three coaches of Stones supporters made the trip.

Finally, the only comment on the Canterbury pitch, lumpy, barren and like a desert waste, is that one can only marvel at the tolerance of the league's Management committee.

Wealdstone: Brodie; Burgess, Fulton, Kinneer, McCormick; Godfrey, Fairclough, Watson; Byrne, Duck, Henderson. Sub: Barnes.

beaten 4-0 while Brodie was a picture of indecision as he flapped at crosses and waved at every shot that passed him.

Brodie later signed for Maid-

stone United as cover but doesn't appear to have made an appearance for them, and died from prostate cancer in 2000 at the age of 63.

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REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part eight: stones' bright start hits a wobble as 'minnows' chesham pull off an fa cup shock at lower mead

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Tuesday September 18 1973, FA Cup 1st qualifying round replay: Wealdstone 2 Chesham Utd 4

AMAZING what you can recall five decades later: Arriving at Lower Mead pretty much soaked through for this FA Cup replay under the lights, having decided to wear a new 'waterproof' jacket that patently wasn't.

The jacket was Royal Blue, which was good enough for 15-year-old me, although I was loathe to ditch the parka coat that had been a lucky omen for every other

Stones match I had seen that season - we were still unbeaten since I'd started wearing it.

After all, we were only playing 'little Chesham' who had somehow survived the battering we had given them at their own Meadow ground the previous sun-baked Saturday thanks to lashings of good fortune.

I bought my 5p match programme (pictured below), a little soggy as the constant, heavy rain slanted under the overhang of the programme booth, and read that the pitch had received "72 hours of watering to make it playable for tonight's replay, as the players are fed up with playing on rock-hard pitches".

Well it had bucketed down all afternoon - but luckily we had strikers with perfect names for such aquatic conditions like George Duck and Derek Otter (okay, I made the last one up).

It would be just typical to find that we couldn't cope with a slippery surface, after three straight wins in blazing sunshine had Stones top of the Southern League Division One South (until the surprise reversal at Canterbury which we talked about last week). Wearing my parka hadn't always been the wise choice but 15 is the age to be making such mistakes and anyway, sweat and grime is part of the charm of the teenager (I told myself).

The game kicked off in front of a decent Tuesday night



George Duck (above) and Bill Byrne past Chesham Utd keeper Coles who

(No.9) try to smuggle the ball makes an unorthodox save

crowd of 1,000. Chesham's Taylor swung in the first free kick of the night, towards the Cinema End goal the Athenian League side were attacking, but it was an easy catch for our keeper Roy Mackenzie. Well, it might have been had he been wearing those Peter Bonetti 'non-slip' gloves that were so fashionable in the game's higher reaches. The ball squirted from his grasp, ran up his arm and behind his head, and then bounced once in the proximity of the goalline, gleaming white and shimmering with collected water. Mackenzie grabbed the ball and went to play it quickly upfield, only for a furiously-flagging linesman to signal that Chesham were 1-0 up.

What? How?! This was an age when linesmen were pretty much invisible (unless they were being consulted, and becoming heroes in a World-Cup-Final-Geoff-Hurst scenario) and yet here was Mr P.B. Clarke or Mr R. Letsome (choose your anti-hero; he wasn't identified in the match report) scuppering our cup hopes as early as the fourth minute.

I'd been a die-hard Wealdstone fan for four years and already the misery of average league performances and shameful FA Cup exits

were burned on my soul.

The previous year we'd been knocked out 3-1 at Hayes, almost acceptable, but before that came horrific defeats by (then) Athenian League minnows Boreham Wood (0-2 in a home replay) preceded by Spartan League Leighton Town in 1970 (again 0-1 at home in a replay after 1-1 away).

This tie was far from over but it all seemed so horribly predictable. Wave after wave of yellow-shirted attacks (we were strangely wearing our second strip) bore down on the Chesham goal but the Buckinghamshire club were convinced that they were Stones bogey side and that 'hex' came true as we ran out of puff in the second half after George Duck had headed a beautiful equaliser.

But then, as the lamentable Phil Sugden describes in his Harry O match report (right) we simply collapsed in the face of Chesham's youthful second-half exuberance. This same Wealdstone team had walloped the much-lauded Barnet 4-1 in the London Challenge Cup only a week earlier but now those same fans were singing 'what a load of rubbish!'

Even after five decades nothing really changes....

Too many mistakes, no luck

'Stones again get F.A. Cup K.O. from amateurs

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 2, Chesham United 4

IT WAS, a Wealdstone supporter told me last Saturday morning as he prepared to travel to Chesham, a little unkind of me to bring up the unhappy subject of Borehamwood in our Saturday line-up column. It could not, he strongly asserted, happen again.

Well, I take little satisfaction from recording that it could — and did, at Lower Mead Stadium on Tuesday evening when by half-time all those appalling memories of a scoreline reading Wealdstone 0, Borehamwood 2, on the night of October 12, 1971, came flooding back. For the third season running Wealdstone crashed out of the F.A. Cup to an amateur side and in the end they were well beaten.

Let it be said right away that nothing went right for Wealdstone. Everything, but everything, flowed Chesham's way — and their officials were the first to admit the fact.

Chesham were ahead by a dubious goal after only four minutes and how a referee 10 yards from the scene can give a doubtful score on the word of a linesman 60 or so yards away, is something that only Mr. J. W. Godfrey, who was in the middle, can tell us.

Thereafter Wealdstone, attacking with frenzied, passionate desire to put matters right, had half a dozen efforts cleared from the line in the first half and three more in the second.

But a reminder to those who were bemoaning these facts long after the game. Defenders are paid (or not paid, according certain stipulations) to keep their goal intact wherever possible.

It is one of the mysteries of soccer that if a home defender clears from the line he is a hero, if a visitor performs the same honest job of work he is a villain.

Another simple fact is that goals count, near misses don't. Statistics show that in this game Chesham got the ball in the net five times (one was disallowed) and Wealdstone twice.

Something else perhaps emerged from a depressing night with rain falling steadily for most of the match. When 'Stones started the second half 2-1 down, most of the approximately 1,000 crowd expected them to take over, show professionalism and teach their visitors what football is all about.

HEADS DOWN

This they were never able to do. Too many heads had gone down and much as this may hurt manager Sid Prosser, there was not enough fight. Too many players appeared not to want the ball and too many were half a yard slower than the opposition.

Training methods, they told us before the season started, would make Wealdstone the fit-

their efficiency in defence and one or two of their back-men were lucky to escape harsher decisions than were meted out by Mr. Godfrey.

Wealdstone's tale of woe started in the fourth minute when McKenzie made a hash of Taylor's free-kick which ran up his arm and onto his shoulder before he scrambled the ball away.

Chesham appealed frantically for a goal. Mr. Godfrey consulted a far distant linesman and allowed the score. Was it a goal? From where I sat it was impossible to say.

SURVIVED

For the next 25 minutes the ball was never out of Chesham's half and seldom out of their penalty area. Time and again Wealdstone seemed certain to score, mainly through Duck, but somehow goalkeeper Cole and his men survived.

Ultimately Chesham gave away one free-kick too many. Dyson bent his cross beautifully and this time Duck's head gave Cole no chance.

Chesham survived another five minute storm but then, quite suddenly, the fire went out of Wealdstone's work and they gave away a goal.

Burgess should have cleared a through ball, McCormick could have. Both hesitated and Beaven nipped into shoot low and accurately.

Nothing to worry about said the experts. 'Stones will take over. They couldn't and didn't'.

After 61 minutes McKenzie found himself in no man's land

with Beaven and Taylor bursting through. The 'keeper hauled down Taylor and Peck stepped up to slam home the penalty.

MISSED

Two minutes later Watson completely missed his tackle, leaving Beaven to run into an acre of space and cross for Taylor to head in.

Watson was withdrawn and Fairclough went on and minutes later 'Stones were virtually down to ten men when Fulton took a nasty knock in a tackle.

Finally the home side pulled another back when after Brown had been fouled for the umpteenth time Dyson first timed Kinnear's free-kick into the net.

Hopes were raised momentarily, but the fire had gone and once more there was no way back for Wealdstone.

Perhaps the unhappiest part of the night was to hear those who had cheered so wildly when Barnet were thrashed last week, jeering and hurling that too often heard taunt — "what a load of rubbish!" — although it was just that at times.

Wealdstone: McKenzie; Watson, Fulton, Kinnear, McCormick; Burgess, Godfrey, Brown; Byrne, Cuck, Dyson, Sub. Fairclough.

Above: Phil Sugden pens a typical match report from his time at the Harrow Observer. He liked to invent a character with a strong opinion to then prove him wrong. I often now use that device myself!

REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part nine: a slow start.. and the natives were growing restless

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday September 29 1973, Southern League Div One South: Wealdstone 2 Salisbury 1
THE FANS were getting a bit restless. Admittedly, this was only the club's third season after quitting the amateur Isthmian League for the semi-professional Southern League, but

the only place to be was the SL's top tier and Stones fans were looking enviously at the strides taken by our former amateur rivals.

Barnet had quit the Athenian League in the mid-60s; Wimbledon the Isthmians at around the same time; and Maidstone United jumped ship with us Real Stones in April 1971. But Maidstone had won the Division One South the previous season. We had a better set-up than them. We had a better manager and arguably a better squad. So why were we struggling?

The season had started with six straight wins until



Dillon and Chris Jones. Inexplicably, our manager Sid Prosser opted for the calamitous Chic Brodie in goal and he was the difference between the two sides as Tottenham eased home 4-0.

So when Salisbury rolled into town on September 29 we were not in a good place. Our ace striker George Duck had broken a bone in his hand in the Spurs game (his former club, as a youngster) and we looked decidedly lightweight up front. Fortunately though...

- a) We had Bill Byrne proving a point in the No.9 shirt;
- b) We had Terry Dyson in imperious form; and
- c) Salisbury weren't very good.

We even had the luxury of a missed penalty with full-back Eddie Presland taking over duties in the absence of Duck and allowing keeper Morris to palm his fierce but rising shot onto the crossbar and over. But Eddie atoned with a crisp cross that Byrne headed in for 1-0 (pictured above) and although Taylor levelled for the Wiltshire visitors in a rare attack, Byrne landed another header to seal the points in front of an 800 crowd.

It wasn't pretty but it was much-needed after three defeats and a draw in the previous four games... and happily George Duck was back for the next game (in a light cast) at Dorchester Town for the start of an unbeaten run of 10 games.

Salisbury ended the season in 17th place out of 20 clubs and they were the ideal opposition to halt the losing run. And looking back, they were also the ideal opposition to have started the season against, having also won 2-1 at Salisbury on the opening day!

So what was the standard of the SL Div One South like, compared to 2023-24? Very patchy, but with the contribution of genuine top-flight stars like Dyson and John McCormick, often hugely entertaining. **More next time!**



Top picture: Billy Byrne rises to head Stones into the lead against Salisbury despite the challenge of centre-back Eyden and keeper Morris. Above: Star man Terry Dyson skips past defender Syrett. Left: The match programme with its bizarre artwork

London Challenge Cup, 1st Rd. 24th Sept., 1973 Kick-off 7.30 p.m.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
White Shirts, Blue Shorts

RIGHT WING	DAINES 1		LEFT WING	
KINNEAR 2	OSGOOD 5		GIBBINS 3	
NAYLOR 4	McGRATH 9		PECK 6	
NEIGHBOUR 7	CLAPTON 8	DILLON 10	JONES 11	

Referee: Mr. A. A. NATHAN, Essex
Linesmen: Mr. L. A. COTTRELL, London (Red Flag) Mr. R. R. LOGAN, Kent (Yellow Flag)

WEALDSTONE
Yellow Shirts, Yellow Shorts

LEFT WING	BRODIE 1		RIGHT WING	
DYSON 11	DUCK 10	HENDERSON 9	BROWN 8	WATSON 7
BURGESS 6	FULTON 3	McCORMICK 5	KINNEAR 4	PRESLAND 2

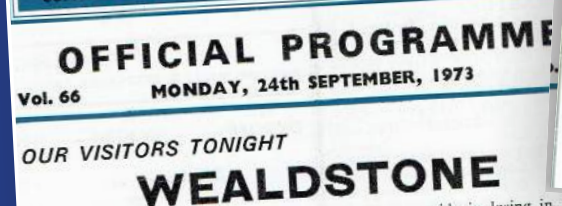
Left, and above: The Spurs programme for the Semi-final to Enfield last season. We were due to meet our Enfield neighbours on this ground, but it was agreed to play the match at Enfield Stadium.

The tie resulted in a 1-1 draw, and in the replay, also played at Enfield, we were beaten 3-2. In the earlier rounds last season we recorded home wins over Brentford (2-1) and Queen's Park Rangers (2-0). The game against Brentford was won in extra time.

We look forward to a good game this evening, and naturally hope Spurs will qualify for the next round. We feel it is time we added another Challenge Cup triumph to our record. The last time the trophy was won by Spurs was in season 1970-71. We then defeated Wimbledon on this ground by the only goal of the match, scored by Roy Woolcott.

The programme (left) shows just how strong Spurs were, fielding experienced first-teamers Barry Daines, Joe Kinnear, Keith Osgood, Terry Naylor, Jimmy Neighbour, Chris McGrath, Mike

Continued on opposite page >>>



THIS evening we turn our attentions to the London Challenge Cup, and it is our pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Wealdstone, our visitors in the first round of the competition.

Wealdstone, who compete in the First Division South of the Southern League, are one of the clubs who were called upon to play in the Preliminary Round. In that round they were at home to Barnet, also Southern Leaguers, and their 4-1 victory in that match a fortnight ago qualified them for this evening's first round tie.

The participation in the Challenge Cup of clubs from outside the Football League has become a feature of the competition in recent years. Five of the eight ties in this season's first round are between clubs in the Football League and opponents from outside.

Orient are the current holders of the Challenge Cup, but it was by only a 2-1 margin that they beat Enfield in the Final last May. And the strength of the challenge from outside the League is underlined by the fact that Orient's victims in the semi-final were Dagenham.

HARD BLOW
In fact, we sustained a hard blow

to our own pride in losing in the Semi-final to Enfield last season. We were due to meet our Enfield neighbours on this ground, but it was agreed to play the match at Enfield Stadium.

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WELCOME, TERRY

We welcome Terry Dyson, outside-left in our League and F. A. Cup-winning "double" team of 1961, back to White Hart Lane this evening as a member of the Wealdstone team. Other members of the team with Football League experience are Eric

REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part ten: stones are on a roll after our first-ever win over Bath.. a real collectors' item

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday October 20, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 3 Bath City 0

ASK our younger supporters what the name 'Bath City' evokes and they'll undoubtedly say 'the 7-0 National League South win at the Vale in 2020' ... that famous game between the table-topping Stones and second-placed City.

The game that put us back on course to win the title and was undeniably, absolutely bloody fabulous. But ask the, ahem, more mature among our fanbase and they will readily admit to decades of disaster against the West Country's non-League giants.

Two wins, ten draws and 23 defeats! That was our return in

our 35 meetings with Bath between this featured 3-0 win at Lower Mead 50 years ago, and the late, great 1-0 win at Twerton Park in December 2014 that ended literally deep oceans of desperate failure.

And even more markedly, the 1973 game at Lower Mead is the second biggest win for us over City, only trailing behind that stonking 7-0 massacre four years ago.

Even 50 years ago, though, we somehow knew that Bath were going to be our nemesis for the next 40 years. I think the feelings of inferiority stemmed from our first-ever trip to Twerton Park in August 1972, when the big old stadium buzzed with a 3,091 crowd and we finished well beaten, 3-1, in our first league game after switching across from the Division One North.

And then Bath came visiting in March that year and won 2-1 at Lower Mead. The first of many we

Above: The much-teased Bath stoops to pick up this low cross Bill Byrne and George Duck (far

thought. But as the 73-74 season kicked off Bath were floundering... and were actually BOTTOM of the table by the time this October 20th game came around, with the Stones at the opposite end of the spectrum in second place.

I remember a joyous afternoon when we really did look the part: George Duck scored twice, John Henderson ran them ragged and we had a lot of fun making fun of their beanpole 'keeper Kenny Allen.

When word got round that the teenage goalie had spent a few months behind bars for some now-long-forgotten misdemeanour the Elmslie End fans were merciless!

Lots of asking about whether he'd sewn the nets himself, and why he didn't have any arrows on his keeper's shirt, and whether he'd enjoyed porridge as his pre-match meal.... poor Allen couldn't

Left: The match programme covers for the two games between our clubs that season



City jailbird Kenny Allen with Stones' deadly duo of right) ready to pounce

help responding angrily and he was ready to fight anyone and everyone by the time the third goal flew past him.

As it turned out we should have savoured Bath's discomfort. Even Phil Sugden, in his match report (right) reckoned that Bath would soon start climbing the table, and climb it they did. With former Crystal Palace boss Bert Head taking over within weeks, City barely lost a game until the end of the season and finished as runners-up (albeit 11 points behind champions Wealdstone) by the following May.

This autumn weekend established Sid Prosser's team's credentials after the spell of three successive defeats that we covered in Part Nine of this series.

An easy 4-0 win over Hatfield Town in the FA Trophy, a 2-1 success at Dorchester in the league and a hard-fought 1-1 draw with Wimbledon in the Southern League Cup - followed by the beating of Bath - took the team's confidence to new heights and we wouldn't lose again for six games.

More next time!

Duck's two put 'Stones into second place

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 3, Bath City 0

COUNT YOUR blessings while you may! Wealdstone's supporters are probably doing that at the moment for although they are out of the FA Cup and are in danger of being removed from the Southern League Cup in the replay with Wimbledon, their chances of promotion from Division One (South) look better with every league match.

Before Saturday's home game with bottom of the table Bath City, it could have been argued that the West Country side would offer little opposition and that Wealdstone should stroll to a couple of points.

In fact, although Wealdstone won well and might have had more, Bath were a better outfit than their position suggests. They have several good ex-Football League men in their ranks, and I shall be surprised if they do not quickly climb the table.

With table leaders Waterlooville held to a draw at home and Basingstoke and Trowbridge otherwise engaged, 'Stones climbed to second place, one point behind the leaders and they must now be considered fair bets for promotion providing they maintain their enthusiasm, flair for scoring and discipline at the back.

They have won six of eight games played, knocked in 15 goals and conceded 10 and, a joy to behold, the old magic between George Duck and Bill

Kinnear had another good game, picking up most things loose at the back, although I would still like to see him in a more decisive role in midfield, and Fulton tackled tenaciously. Fairclough showed flashes of his best but has yet to recover his commanding form while Godfrey, like the curate's egg, can be very good and sometimes indifferent.

It is up front where Wealdstone has the measure of most sides. Duck and Byrne had the Bath defence completely bamboozled with some brilliant, often intricate moves, although they would be the first to admit that a lot of their success was due to some hard running and astute ball-placing by John

for his 24th goal of the season — an incredible record.

Fulton, who loves to join the attack, moved in with a soaring header just after the break which Bath 'keeper Allen did well to save, and after Bath subbed Norman for Rogers, Ryan cleared off the line from Duck.

With practically everyone seeking to give Duck his third hat-trick of the season, it was George who laid on the third with a so neat cross which Byrne gratefully and deservedly tucked away.

A solid Wealdstone performance which raises hope that promotion is now more than just a possibility.

Wealdstone: McKenzie; Burgess, Fulton, Winner; McCormick; Godfrey, Fairclough, Dyson; Byrne, Henderson, Duck. Sub: Brown.

Byrne now shows the time no longer sign "business as usual"

After Monday's fine game against Wimbledon, Byrne was still improving on Saturday — still showing signs that his trip to the States has done him good.

With these two going full pelt, well supported by the lively John Henderson and ever-green Terry Dyson, the goals must come.

Still needed, perhaps, is a little more steadiness at the back, but the front men are giving the defenders time to breathe and when the midfield players reach their peak, which they have yet to do, it should be all systems go.

With Watson out of action with a pulled groin muscle 'Stones brought in Burgess in the back four and with McCormick looking safer than in recent games, there were not too many breathtaking moments in defence.

TENACIOUS

Roy McKenzie looked confident in goal and has now found an understanding with his back line. He moves quickly off his line and is a very sure catcher of the ball. Indeed, twice on Saturday he made difficult saves look comparatively simple by moving fast when many 'keepers might have stayed at home and been beaten.

Henderson.

Bath, apart from some hard tackling by Ryan, Stacey and Gover and astute positioning by Jones had little to offer, with one exception.

Former Southampton flying winger John Sydenham always looked a danger man. He had been out of football for over a year until a few weeks ago, but he can still turn on the pace he used to show when Southampton used him as the foil to the tricky Terry Payne.

Three times he showed his obvious class — despite carrying a pound or two more than he would wish — with quick dashes down the wing before cutting inside, and once only a miraculous diving save by McKenzie prevented him from scoring.

Wealdstone's first goal came after 23 minutes when Henderson made the running, Byrne flicked on and Duck hit it with the certainty we expect of the big fellow.

Henderson so nearly made it two from an astute McCormick pass and then Duck was inches wide after more clever work by Henderson.

DUCK AGAIN

Sydenham made one fantastic burst which left 'Stones defenders gasping until McKenzie was equal to his final shot, but a minute from the break it was Duck hitting low into the net



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

part II: stones show their title credentials... to the relief of this teenage fan!

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in its long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday November 3, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 2 Poole Town 0
WE are going to cheat a little with the dates this time as we had a week off last Saturday thanks to the Stones' early removal from the FA Cup... and this epic win over title rivals Poole Town, a half century ago, was a game not to miss!

In fact we're going to cheat quite a lot as Part Eleven covers

two notable games in the 1973-74 odyssey plus the four-match Southern League Cup series against the powerful Premier Division Wimbledon side, illustrated by never-before-seen cuttings from the South London local paper's perspective.
But first: Poole Town. This game sticks out in my memory as I was a Wealdstone and QPR fan back in the early 1970s, probably seeing a dozen games at Loftus Road in this 73-74 season, though only when the Stones were away. It was a great time to watch the Rs with Stan Bowles, Gerry Francis and Dave Thomas in dazzling form in Rangers' first season back in the top division.

After a slow start they were blowing away the Arsenal, Spurs, Manchester Uniteds and Chelsea of this world and the packed School End terrace was the place to be with half a dozen of my school mates from St Nick's in Northwood (now Haydon High).

I lived in Pinner but went to school 'over the border' in Hillingdon... if I'd gone to Harrow County School no doubt it would have been Wealdstone all the way. So

Left: The match programme covers for the games that took place 50 years ago

Poole Town keeper Bill Dunbar keeps out this header from George Duck (right)...



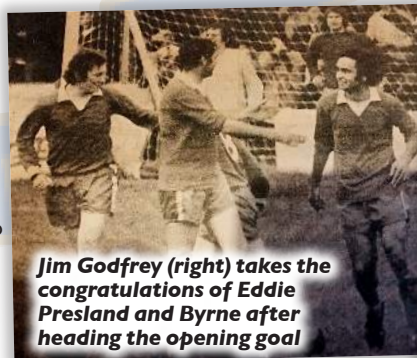
I had the best of both worlds! Even so, I was desperate to show my QPR-supporting pals that Wealdstone weren't so far off in ability. Only my mate Derek was a Stones regular and I can still remember the anticipation in the lunch queue that Friday afternoon when my friends all decided that they were going to come to the Stones game the following day as Rangers were playing at Derby County.

Then the nerves set in. What if we were rubbish? Poole Town were relegated from the SL Prem the previous season and were obviously looking to bounce straight back - Poole were second in the table while we were fourth, two points off the top but with two games in hand on leaders Waterlooville, and one point be-

hind Poole. If we lost dismally, they'd probably never come again! So imagine my joy when the full-time whistle blew at Lower Mead that late autumnal Saturday 50 years ago: Stones had turned in the best performance of the season and a lot of the football we played was reminiscent of the way England playmaker Francis and Terry Venables controlled the middle of the park for QPR. Our main men were Jim Godfrey and Paul Fairclough, who I recall spraying the ball wide to our wingers Terry Dyson and John Henderson. Fairclough, who went on to have a decent career in manage-

Continued overpage

...and then denies the flying Bill Byrne



Jim Godfrey (right) takes the congratulations of Eddie Presland and Byrne after heading the opening goal

Magnificent top of table clash

'Stones go second, now it's push for promotion

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 2, Poole Town 0

WEALDSTONE moved into second place in the Southern League Division One (South) table with a splendid and at times brilliantly contrived victory over fellow promotion challengers Poole Town, and by so doing gave promise of tremendous things to come.

The top of the table now reveals an intriguing position. Waterlooville, beaten in the week 2.0 by bottom club Bath, savaged Crawley 4-0 and remain top with 17 points from 12 games. Wealdstone are second with 15 from 10 fixtures, and Poole and Basingstoke are joint third with 14 points from 11 games.

All the numerical evidence suggests that 'Stones are at last in with a real chance and certainly their football and the manner in which they disposed of the Dorset club suggests that they really can win promotion.

This was a true team performance. Everyone in Wealdstone's side played for everyone else. In defence the covering was probably the best I have seen them produce this season. They were much more positive in the middle of the park and always thrustful, hopeful and on the mark up front.

Fittingly, a magnificent game, watched by the biggest league gate of the season — in excess of 1,200 — produced the best football with hardly a word worthy of the name and some splendid refereeing by our old friend Mr. A. S. Heselgrave, of Maidstone, who as usual displayed a fine sense of humour coupled with a lot of good commonsense.

Really, and truly, the result was rough justice for Wealdstone, for well as Poole's much vaunted side played — and it is a team which since last campaign has been considerably boosted by former league players of note — the Lower Mead lads always looked by far the better outfit.

If Wealdstone had scored five, no-one could have complained, as Poole officials agreed after the game. 'Stones were in rampant mood and if they can retain this form, particularly over the Christmas period — there are six hard games in December — I sincerely believe they will go up.

Somehow, in recent weeks, manager Sid Prosser has instilled a new sense of urgency and much more confidence. The boys are now playing the ball about apparently without fear of making mistakes.

Occasionally the watcher's heart comes into his mouth when short passes are made, but they are getting away with this gambit because everyone is watching and waiting for the half chance to gain possession.

Much confidence, I believe, has come with the return of Ray Fulton after injury. This so quick, young full-back turns defence into attack in a flick of the eyebrow. He is not afraid to take on one or two men, beat them and push telling passes to Duck, Byrne or Henderson.

John McCormick has settled and had developed a good understanding with Kinnear, who to my mind does a tremendous job as a sweeper.

Godfrey is beginning to fulfil all his promise at midfield. Fairclough is coming back into his own and Dyson remains irreplaceable.

JOY TO WATCH

Bill Byrne, in and out of late, looked much more like his old self on Saturday. He worked hard, linked up well with Duck and Henderson and some of his astute flicks were a joy to watch.

Poole owed much to Bill Dunbar, widely travelled in the Southern League but still an excellent goalkeeper. One lost count of the number of brilliant saves he made, coupled so often by swift and clever advances from his line. He was under fire for 75 per cent of the game but never lost his head.

He was under siege from the opening minutes when Byrne turned on a piece of sheer magic on the left to leave three defenders standing and send a searing cross-shot inches over.

Poole centre-back Rawlins three times was forced to stop Byrne by unorthodox methods and from the third free-kick Dunbar had the crowd roaring with a superb save from a Duck thunderbolt shot.

Poole were not without their moments and their ever dangerous strikers, Ivan Hollett and Trevor Allen, left generally to plough through on their own, twice combined for Hollett's

test the reliable McKenzie with shots.

Duck ran beautifully to a Byrne cross to power the ball over the bar and then Dyson hit a majestic shot inches wide after a quick one-two between Duck and the hard-running Henderson.

McCormick made one of his now expected runs to slam a Dyson corner into the agile Dunbar's clutching fingers and in a flurry of pre-half-time attacks both Byrne and Duck had shots cleared from the line.

A goalless first half was a poor reward for a Wealdstone side which had played some superb football.

SPECIAL

Wealdstone resumed at break-neck pace with Godfrey sending a rocket free-kick just wide and Fairclough blasting one of his specials to the far post for Dunbar to perform another miracle.

Poole took a hand as Hollett sent McKenzie flying across his line and then David Chambers executed a neat little run but shot wide with only McKenzie to beat.

Back came 'Stones and a sweet movement between Dyson and Fairclough set-up Duck, who shot low and powerfully passed the far post.

Midway through the half Wealdstone got the goal they so richly deserved. Poole conceded their seventh corner of the game and Jim Godfrey timed his jump magnificently to head Dyson's corner powerfully past Dunbar.

From the restart Godfrey tried his luck again with a snap shot which almost beat the diving Dunbar but Poole, far from finished, hit back and McKenzie had his work cut out to hold Allen's shot.

Duck headed in but the score was disallowed for pushing but eventually Wealdstone's second came when one of those pin-point Presland free-kicks was pushed home by Henderson with four minutes remaining.

REWIND SPECIAL CONTINUED

ement (notably with Stevenage and currently as the England non-League team boss) blew hot and cold but he was on fire this afternoon as I looked on, relieved!

Me and my mates went our separate ways at full time, them along the Met Line to Northwood and Eastcote and me up the Bakerloo line to Hatch End and it wasn't until Monday that I received their verdict.

"Not bad for a team a few divisions below Rangers" they reckoned.

"Actually, the first goal was a really good header"

"I didn't think the crowd would be that big, I thought it would be more like watching Ruislip Manor" said another.

"You coming to the League Cup game tomorrow night Tim?" asked Derek. "Sheffield Wednesday will be a tough one, and you're our lucky omen".

Rangers hadn't lost any of the four games I'd seen that season, so I agreed to go.... and QPR won 8-2 with a display of devastating football!

My pals were on top of the world after four successive wins in the First Division topped by the mauling of Wednesday... but as the weeks went by, leading up to Christmas, Rangers' form dipped and they were begging me to go and watch their team again.

I refused to miss a Stones match but December 22 saw us travelling to far-off Minehead with the Rs facing high-flying Newcastle. "I'll go if you all come to the Wealdstone games on Boxing Day and December 29" I told them, and the lads agreed.

Rangers duly beat Newcastle 3-2 and they kept their end of the bargain to boost the Lower Mead crowds to the 1,000 mark over Christmas 1973. And they bloody enjoyed it! More on those games to come....

Next up, on this weekend 50 years ago was Dunstable Town on November 10 for a long-forgotten FA Trophy Second Qualifying Round tie.

The Southern League Div One North whipping boys were no match for the on-song Stones and Dyson, Fairclough and an own goal settled a straightforward win in front of a 987 crowd.

...then four games against Wimbledon in the Southern Cup..weren't we sick of them?!

Thanks to Wimbledon historian Stephen Crabtree we can illustrate the Stones' four-match series against the Dons in the SL Cup second round, which stretched from **October 16 to**

November 28 1973. The 'prize' for the victors was a trip to Grantham on a Wednesday afternoon in December, kick-off 2.30pm... to be honest we weren't too bothered!

GAME ONE

Tues 16/10/73: SLC 814
Wealdstone (0) 1 Duck 47
Wimbledon (0) 1 Crosby 49

With flu victim McCreeady joining Loughlan, Rice and Marchant on the injury list, the Dons rode their luck to earn a Southern League Cup replay at Lower Mead. First Division Wealdstone, conquerors of Barnet by three clear goals in the previous round, dominated the last half hour after the sides had exchanged goals straight after the break.

Four times in the second half shots were kicked off the line or brilliantly saved by Dickie Guy as the visitors held on after on loan Aldershot man Malcolm Crosby had equalised George Duck's opener. Steve Langford and Ian Cooke made goal-line clearances and the goalkeeper pushed one header round the post and bravely took the ball of Duck's toe when he looked certain to score.

"Despite our injury problems we battled well and just about deserved the draw," Graham reckoned. "I hope it will be a different story when we get them back to Plough Lane."
Guy, Stockley, Langford, Cooke, Crosby, Brown, Bloss, Lucas, Smith, Larkin, Gadston

Wealdstone 1 Wimbledon 1
(Southern League Cup, Second Round)

IT was like a drunk staggering on the edge of a cliff—so close to smashing himself on the rocks and yet so mindless that he didn't have a care in the world.

Wimbledon were so boasted with injuries that if Wealdstone had put four goals past them it wouldn't have been less than they deserved.

To add to their cup of woe Dons had to take the field without Tommy McCreeady, Loughlan, out with torn ligaments, and John Bennett.

This should have proved too much for them considering Selwyn Rice's protracted groin injury, Andy Marchant's broken leg, Joe Gadston's five months suspension.

The Dons limped in at half time but went one down as soon as the teams emerged after the break. Fulton knocked

in a free kick from the left. Byrne headed down and Duck blasted home. Then the Dons equalised. Smith crossed, Dyson tried to control the ball and Crosby was through to pop in at the near post. In a second they should have been knocked out of the cup. In fact the brave Langford saved them with a tremendous header off the goal-line from Byrne's shot which knocked Wealdstone's poured forward back into the defence. Guy needed all his agility to push Duck's header past the post. Then Cooke came to the rescue with another goal-line save—this time from Fairclough.

Tues 06/11/73: SLCR 887

Wimbledon (1) 2 Larkin 10, Lucas 83

Wealdstone (1) 2 McCormick 31, Henderson 87

With Spurs 'double' winner Terry Dyson and former Palace man John McCormick in their side, ambitious Wealdstone were again a thorn in the Dons side. A wonder goal from young Dave Lucas scored with a powerful shot from the edge of the box after he had beaten three men having run from the half way line — put the hosts ahead in the dying stages only for Guy to spill the ball with three minutes to go allowing Henderson to equalise.

"Obviously it means some problems but I don't think we have too much on our plates at the present," chairman Beaven said when asked about a possible fixture pile up in the months ahead. "We would like to give the boys a rest, but we can't. That is the price of success."

With teenager Dave Lucas joining the club, Selwyn Rice back in training and John Loughlan reported to be close to fitness, the manager was soon to have a larger squad of players to choose from in the busy weeks ahead.

Guy, Stockley, Langford, McCreeady, Brown, Bloss, Lucas, Smith, Cooke, Larkin, Moss

GAME TWO

Tues 13/11/73: SLC 2R 824

Wealdstone (1) 3 Duck, Bryne, Presland

Wimbledon (1) 3 Moss, Rice 85, McCreeady 89

Already facing a fixture pile up, the Dons produced the result they least wanted — another draw. With five minutes to go the visitors were 3-1 down only for Selwyn Rice, playing his first competitive game of the season, and the ever-reliable McCreeady to produce the goals that took the match into extra time. Having already played five and a half hours of football the two sides would now have to battle it out again.

WEALDSTONE 3 DONS
WIMBLEDON 3
(Southern League Cup)

ANOTHER draw—and the way things are going Wimbledon and Wealdstone are destined for the Guinness Book of Records!

They have now been battling away in this Southern League Cup tie for 94 hours and face a minimum of another 90 minutes in the next replay.

Yet with five minutes to go at Wealdstone on Tuesday the Dons were 3-1 down and facing, it seemed, inevitable defeat.

Then Selwyn Rice, playing his first competitive game of the season, pulled one back and in the dying seconds Tom McCreeady equalised.

Extra time produced stalemate soccer so the tie now goes to third replay, probably the week after next.

WIMBLEDON 2 WEALDSTONE 2
(Southern League Cup, Second Round Replay)

AFTER 210 minutes Wimbledon and Wealdstone are still at it. The Dons failed to bring the week to a triumphant close because a skilful Wealdstone side refused to bow to the strength of their senior opponents.

A disappointing Tuesday evening crowd at Plough Lane just 99—saw the Dons threaten to whip Wealdstone off the map but, in the end, slip into a lethargic and carefree stride. But don't take anything away from Wealdstone—they played well, especially the big boys up front Byrne, Henderson and Duck. With ex-Spurs 'double' flyer Terry Dyson still knocking the ball around with clockwork precision there were plenty of open spaces for the Wealdstone forwards to exploit.

Yet they managed to scrape together two extremely lucky goals—both to equalise superb Wimbledon strikes.

Once again Tony McCreeady and Steve Langford played well—though there were the occasional lapses—but man of the match was full back Stan Brown who as composed a game as you could see.

Wimbledon started the game at a gallop, full of confidence after their win over Maidstone and eager to get the game out of the way.

It took them only 10 minutes to go into the lead. Graham Smith beat his man on the edge of the box, sped to the line where he chipped a fine cross to the back of the area. Andy Larkin, not the world's greatest player at shooting straight, this time made no mistake and the ball burst off his boot and into the net first time.

But with the show running so successfully something just had to go wrong—and it did. A magnificent muddle in the Dons area, with every Wimbledon defender looking at each other, enabled old John McCormick to slide in Dyson's corner in the 1st minute.

But with the show running so successfully something just had to go wrong—and it did. A magnificent muddle in the Dons area, with every Wimbledon defender looking at each other, enabled old John McCormick to slide in Dyson's corner in the 1st minute.

Wimbledon: Guy, Stockley, Langford, McCreeady, Brown, Bloss, Lucas, Smith, Cooke, Larkin, Moss, Sully, Lower.

STEVE HOWARD

GAME THREE

Tues 28/11/73: SLC 3R 373

Wimbledon (2) 3 Crosby 9, Stockley 29, Cooke 87

Wealdstone (0) 0

After seven hours of football the Southern League Cup marathon was finally settled in Wimbledon's favour. A surprisingly one sided game was effectively over by half time as goals from Crosby and Stockley put the Dons in control and with Langford giving a towering performance at the back the home goal was rarely threatened. Afterwards the manager praised the returning Selwyn Rice and Malcolm Crosby for providing the midfield platform that led to the victory.

Meanwhile Bobby Moss returned to Barnet. "He did not impress me enough to offer him a contract," Graham commented. "We will have to start looking for someone else." One man who was under consideration was Guildford's high scoring forward Tony Burge. "He would make a tremendous difference," Jack Beaven was quoted as saying before adding he would not be deterred by a transfer fee of several thousand of pounds.

The Chief Superintendent of the Norfolk Constabulary wrote to supporters' club secretary Ken Chaplin about the events at King's Lynn. "It would be remiss of me not to close by paying tribute to the attitude and behaviour of supporters from your club and the players and officials, who in my opinion were above reproach."
Guy, Stockley, Langford, McCreeady, Loughlan, Crosby, Bloss, Rice, Lucas, Cooke, Smith

GAME FOUR

WIMBLEDON 2 WEALDSTONE 2
MALCOLM CROSBY made an impressive return to the half display that saw the Dons finally through their second round Southern League cup tie after seven hours' play.

The first five Dons made no didn't meet anybody to tell him where to put the ball. Twenty minutes later Crosby appeared on a full stadium and sent a ninety-two through Stockley who beat his iron before hitting home.

Wimbledon kept up the pressure in the second half but had to wait until three minutes from the end before they scored again. Smith and Steve Langford passed one kick and Ian Cooke was up to head under the bar.

It was a fine performance after the club's previous defeat by Leyton Orient in the Dons' new home in Grimsby for their third round tie.

Tony McCreeady, Loughlan, Crosby, Bloss, Rice, Lucas, Cooke and Smith, Sully, Lower.

Other notable mentions in the side were the strong pair of Steve Langford and Graham Smith. Langford, who has played at the back admirably, had one of the best games of the season.

When the time comes for Geoff Dyson to press his claim it is going to be a difficult choice between Smith and Tommy McCreeady. Smith played admirably, but had a head in the game.

The Dons' goalkeeper was not as good as he has been in the past. He was not as good as he has been in the past.

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The four-game epic came to an end at Wimbledon on the afternoon of Wednesday, Nov 28 ...because of the fuel crisis caused by striking miners, floodlights were banned from earlier in the month making the organisation of games almost impossible!



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 12: This was a weekend to remember as Uri Geller and Andover cast a twin spell

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday November 24, Southern League Div 1 South: Wealdstone 1 Andover 5

A COUPLE of weeks ago a Chelsea side struggling for results went to Premier League table-toppers Tottenham and won 4-1. Now I'm not saying that wasn't a shock result, but Stones 1 Andover 5 half a century ago was far, far, more mind-boggling.

Andover were second-from-bottom of the table (and would finish there) while the Stones were everyone's favourites for the title and, indeed, finished the season 11 points clear at the top.

So how on earth could they lose 5-1 at home to the very ordinary Hampshire side?

Perhaps the mood was set the previous evening. Most people of my generation will remember the Friday night (November 23) when, on the David Dimbleby talk show, Uri Geller stunned the BBC audience by bending metal spoons and combs and stopping and re-starting watches... all by psychokinesis. He claimed it was the power of his mind, and we all stared at the screen eager to unveil the tricks of this magician.

There weren't any! It was a phenomenal TV programme... enough to make us Stones fans wonder if he'd interfered with force fields around Lower Mead to produce an equally gob-smacking afternoon just 17 hours later.

The Israeli's inexplicable trickery was literally the talk of Britain for weeks afterwards (although his supposed powers were the subject of ridicule in later years when, for some reason linked to Exeter City, he claimed that crystals positioned behind each goal would energise the Grecians and guarantee victory in a crucial Div Four game against Chester. Exeter lost 5-1).

But back to Andover. They arrived at Lower Mead as lambs to the slaughter, but on a heavy pitch and with a gale-force wind and the slope at their backs they shocked the Stones with four first-half goals.

The return game at Andover five months later saw the title-bound Stones win 3-0, and here Johnny Henderson (far right) flicks the ball past home keeper Smith for 2-0



Every attack at the Cinema End seemed to lead to a goal (including a bizarre headed o.g. from George Duck who was far more used to scoring at the other end). Georgie did eventually pull a goal back as we drew the second half 1-1... but it was just one of those games when you shake your head in disbelief and move on.

I looked very hard for the usual Harrow Observer match report to flesh out my memories of the match but the journalist and print unions were talking industrial action in support of the striking miners. No Harry O added to the despair.

It was a chaotic period in our country's history as Tory PM Ted Heath battled to restore order. Who recalls the 3-day week imposed on all industry to save power? The 10pm television curfew to save electricity and the frequent power cuts? The ban on floodlit football? I remember doing my O-Level revision by candle light (very Dickensian) and of course it was a nightmare to disseminate information at Wealdstone's level with precious little newspaper coverage

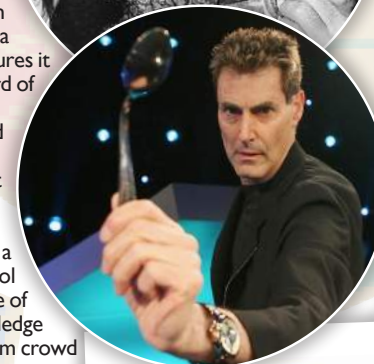
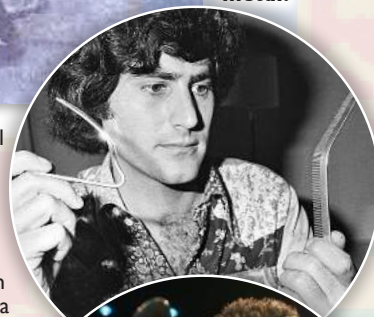
in these days before social media.

A week after this unexpected Andover setback we were due to take on Boston at Lower Mead in the FA Trophy... and when that game was iced off by a sudden drop in temperatures it was pretty much just word of mouth that passed on the news it would be replayed the following Wednesday afternoon at 2.15pm. Not the most convenient kick-off time!

I remember bunking off a Games afternoon at school to join the tiny attendance of 218, which is to my knowledge the smallest-ever first team crowd in the club's professional era. Maybe of all time!

Stones won that tie 6-1 on an eerily empty December afternoon, although the few of us made a bit of noise as Mr Duck rattled in four goals (inc two penalties) to put Boston (not Boston United, this was the Midland League side) to the sword. In fact it was a memorable Trophy run that year, but more of that story in a forthcoming programme....

Although the Harrow Observer wasn't available due to strikes, the Uxbridge Gazette (right) had its own quirky take on events. Some dispute over the crowd though. Below: The Israeli illusionist Uri Geller performs his tricks with spoons, combs and assorted bits of metal.



George Duck, Wealdstone's top scorer these past two campaigns, was watched by scouts from both Arsenal and Luton Town during the League match against Andover. Although Duck has declared he would like to remain with his present club, the fee transfer mentioned is around £25,000. Duck was a former Millwall apprentice who played five senior games for Southend United before arriving at Lower Mead.

in form

GEORGE DUCK stormed back to form with a four goal hit against Boston last Wednesday afternoon (5th) when Wealdstone smashed in a convincing 6-1 victory in the 3rd qualifying round of the F.A. Challenge Trophy. This takes them to a 1st round proper encounter in the competition against Wim-

bledon on January 12th, away from home, k.o 2 p.m. Dick Graham's men at Plough Lane will be no easy hurdle, although the teams know one another well enough after their 4 match marathon in the Southern League Cup this term.

The visit to Lower Mead by Boston F.C. from the Midland League was postponed from the previous Saturday when the pitch was hard with frost. A Wednesday afternoon start at 2 o'clock did not encourage the club to anticipate crowd marshalling would be necessary. They expected a crowd of around 200. The 319 who did make up the attendance reduced Wealdstone's loss to around £150. Talk about panic on the Stock Exchange. What about the losses of football clubs unable to remain solvent because of the ban on evening matches and flood-lighting?

Wealdstone held a 2-1 interval lead before moving onto their biggest score since turning professional. Duck hit his highest goal tally ever and Bill Byrne contributed the other 2 goals.

Two of the Duck goals came from the penalty spot after Boston handling offences. It brought his season's aggregate to 30.

Left: Although scoring an own goal balanced by one at the other end, George Duck was still an object of desire. The man himself denies that any bid was made... remarkably for a striker who scored 64 that season!



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 13: Trip to Gibraltar bonds the Stones before the hectic Xmas period

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday December 8, 1973, Southern League Division I South: Wealdstone 1 Waterlooville 1
THIS season would conclude on a high, five months later, but prior to Christmas 1973 this teenage supporter saw all the worrying signs of a repeat of the disappointing 1972-73 season.

We had lost consecutive games at Wimbledon in a Southern League Cup 3rd replay (understandable as they were a division higher), at home to strugglers Andover (5-1, definitely not understandable) and then failed to beat high-flyers Waterlooville (acceptable, I suppose). Sid Prosser's side were on course to match the previous season's eighth place... but surely we were going to do better than that?

This was a team laced with Football League exper-



ence (defenders John McCormick, ex Crystal Palace, Eddie Presland, ex West Ham and Eric Burgess, ex Colchester), plus ex Spurs double winner Terry Dyson, and with some talented youngsters who'd not quite fulfilled their promise (like Willie Watson, Ray Fulton and Chris Kinnear, all ex West Ham, and George Duck, ex Spurs).

Maybe what they needed was a bit of bonding to improve their understanding...

Well, the Stones financial director Harry Benjamin ran a travel business back in the 70s and he arranged a 4-day tour of Gibraltar in the week after the Waterlooville game. Not all the squad could travel but with a trio of Edgware Town players filling in (goalkeeper Mike Coffey, striker Mickey Ryan and midfielder Vince Summers) the Wealdstone XI beat a Gibraltar National XI 4-1 in the tidy new stadium alongside the airport with goals from Bill Byrne, Fulton, Summers and Ryan.

They flew out on the Monday, played the game on the artificial shale pitch, saw the sights on the Thursday and flew back late that night. A whistle-stop tour but a great success, as seen in the programme article (left).

Watson and Fulton were the jokers of the tour and Willie likes to tell the story (even now) of the high jinks resulting from the arrival of a plane at the neighbouring air-



Above: the quirky 73-74 programme covers for the Boston and Waterlooville games...

Above: A match takes place in the Victoria Stadium with the brilliant backdrop of the Rock of Gibraltar. The scene in 1973 was more like below with the oval running track and the airport in the background



...while (above) everyone seems to be getting in the act with a new stadium... even with the nearby equivalent of Northolt aerodrome! Work on the intended 8,000-seat ground will cost £100m and starts later this year, ready for completion in 2030

Gibraltar Trip A Great Success

I am writing these notes flying at 35,000 feet over the Bay of Biscay at 11 p.m. on Thursday night and can report that Wealdstone's short tour to Gibraltar was an outstanding success. The party landed at Gatwick shortly before midnight and arrived back at Lower Mead at 1.30 a.m.

But first to the football. That too was a great triumph for we beat the Gibraltar F.A. National XI 4-1, in the new National Stadium leading by three goals at half-time scored by Bill Byrne, Ray Fulton and Vince Summers. It was exhibition stuff in the second half and after Gibraltar had made it 3-1 Mick Ryan got the fourth and Wealdstone then treated the crowd to a fine display of precision passing and possession football, John Watson especially delighting the crowd with a repertoire of skills he would never dare attempt in the Southern League! Perhaps the best goal was Fulton's. Ray played midfield, and scored with a mighty volley from 20 yards which never left the hard sandy pitch.

Socially, too, the trip was magnificent. Before the match both teams were presented to Mr. Horace Zammitt, the Minister of Information and Sport in the Gibraltar Government, and on Wednesday evening the Minister, with the Gibraltar F.A. gave a reception to Wealdstone in the ancient City Hall. The Minister presented every member of the Wealdstone Party with a beautiful tie, with a plaque to skipper Eric Burgess, and said Wealdstone would always be welcome in Gibraltar.

On Wednesday morning a full coach tour of the Rock was arranged, where the Barbary Apes were a great attraction, together with the famous galleries and 35 miles of tunnels carved in the Rock.

port.... apparently the floodlights had to be turned off for 30 seconds as the plane landed so as not to dazzle the pilot, and the referee blew his whistle to stop the game with the ball in the Stones' penalty box.

In the pitch blackness, Willie and Ray tiptoed up the pitch with the ball and when the lights came on were inches from the Gibraltar goalline for a tap-in!

That trip seemed to wipe out the memories of the disappointing home draw with Waterlooville who, to be fair, were three places ahead of us in the league table having played four more games.

In the continued absence of the Harrow Observer (due to the work-to-rule that was paralysing the country) I have no cuttings to corroborate the story, but according to the next week's programme the

Hampshire side's goalkeeper Dambrell was the star.

Winger Manns gave Waterlooville the lead and we huffed and puffed until George Duck levelled with his 31st goal of the season. Not bad for mid-December!

The Gibraltar trip seemed to galvanise the squad ahead of the run-in towards Christmas when we faced FIVE successive home games at Lower Mead, with just the solitary away trip to second-in-the-league Minehead on December 22.

That game falls 50 years before the arrival of Hartlepool here for our National League clash in a fortnight so I won't spoil it by revealing the score-line. But it was a cracker!



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 14: Stones chalk up a real season-defining win at Minehead pre-Xmas

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday December 22, 1973, Southern League Division 1 South: Minehead 3 Wealdstone 4

THIS Christmas period, five decades ago is one I've been dreading recounting. Not for the results - goodness no, the Stones were absolutely flying - but because there are no match reports to go on, due to industrial unrest.

It was the time of the three-day week and the unions were at loggerheads with Tory PM Ted Heath. The print unions were caught up in it too, hence the lack of the twice-weekly Harrow Observer to keep us updated on all things Wealdstone. For the teenage football fans of today that must be totally baffling. No social media? No instant gratification?

We had to wait until the appearance on Tuesdays (with the weekend match reports and Tuesday night previews) of the midweek Harry O, and then the big Friday paper with the Tuesday night happenings and the weekend match previews.

That came pretty close to bliss, as you opened up the paper and absorbed all the latest news.

A taste of Irnham Road, Minehead as Stones (in yellow) attack in January 1978, captured by a young Jon Taffel



The bearded Willie Watson is pictured with George Duck heavily marked (above) from this corner

But now not even the local newspapers were publishing! Our only source of news was the odd mention in the National Press, and the printed programme in which our 'head of communications' Colin Pope manfully tried to keep us abreast of the news. Especially with kick-off times varying from week to week depending on whether floodlights were being allowed.

In the midst of all this our beloved Stones were fighting for promotion to the Southern League Premier Division - just one rung outside the hall-lowed Football League. The programme had news of our Christmas 1973 fixtures:

Sat Dec 22 (2.15pm) v Minehead (away)

Weds Dec 26 (2.15pm) v Gravesend (home)

Tues Dec 29 (2.15pm) v Hastings Utd (home)

Tues Jan 1 (3pm) v Ashford Town (home)

Sat Jan 5 (2.15pm) v Bognor Regis (home)

A veritable feast of holiday football!

For reasons best known to themselves, Gravesend requested to play their scheduled home game on Boxing day at Lower Mead and we weren't complaining.

But before that little lot came the trip to high-fliers Minehead. Going into the game the Somerset side were top of the table on 21 points from 16 games (in the days of two points for a win) while we were second with 18 points, with three games in hand. It was going to be a crucial clash.

Back in the early 70s we were used to long away days but the trips to Bridgend and Barry (both South Wales) in 1972,

and then Bideford (Devon) in '73 all had one thing in common: We'd never won. The mould was broken this winter's afternoon in 1973, and what a game it was!

It was in my days as a part-time QPR fan and I'd watched the 3-2 win over Newcastle at Loftus Road. And in my friend's dad's car on the way back up the A40 I remember hearing, at the end of Sports Report... "And now the Southern League results, Division One... Minehead three... (oh blimey, another long distance beating) Wealdstone 4"... and then the back seat was bouncing as I celebrated an unexpected Stones-Rangers double with my mates. My time of travelling to watch our away games on the supporters' coaches was still a few months away and I'd missed a beauty!

But Nick Symmons, our ex-chairman and still a director, was

also a teenager back then and fondly remembers the adventure of trying to catch a train to this awkward awayday.

"It was the 'winter of discontent' with train strikes, miners' strikes, the three-day week and no floodlights due to the power crisis" recalls Nick.

"And the disruption on the railways meant that my train only went as far as Taunton. I was stranded and didn't think I'd make the early 2pm kick-off... then luckily I spotted a bus to Butlins at Minehead and jumped on that. The holiday camp was open over Christmas and that saved my bacon.

"And then came one of my most-favourite Wealdstone games of all time. There was a lot riding on it and we were fantastic in the early stages, taking a 3-0 lead with George Duck scoring twice and Chris Kinnear firing in the other.

"This was a bit of a theme in Wealdstone-Minehead games for, the previous season, we'd been losing 3-0 to them at Lower Mead before coming back to draw 3-3... we never thought that could happen again but Minehead staged a comeback of their own to tie the scores up at 3-3 with just moments left.

"Bill Byrne, our centre-forward, had been left out of the team for a couple of games for 'a breach of club discipline', whatever that meant, after the trip to Gibraltar but he was on the bench and he came on for Keith Bristow for one final throw of the dice from manager Sid Prosser... and it paid off! Bill scored the

last-minute winner; we took both points; we went top of the table and pretty much stayed there for the rest of the season. "

And how did Nick get home? "I can't honestly remember, but I didn't care about that very much. It was all about winning the game." **Stones' line-up at Minehead: Roy Mackenzie, Eddie Presland, John Watson, Eric Burgess, John McCormick, Chris Kinnear, Paul Fairclough, Ray Fulton, Keith Bristow, George Duck, John Henderson. Sub: Bill Byrne.**

What happened next?

WELL things were a little less complicated for the programme editor in those days with just six pages to fill but he did have three issues in the space of a week... although Boxing Day saw just a team sheet for the Gravesend game. It was a happy holiday for the treasurer, with the crowd for each game close to the 1,000 mark.

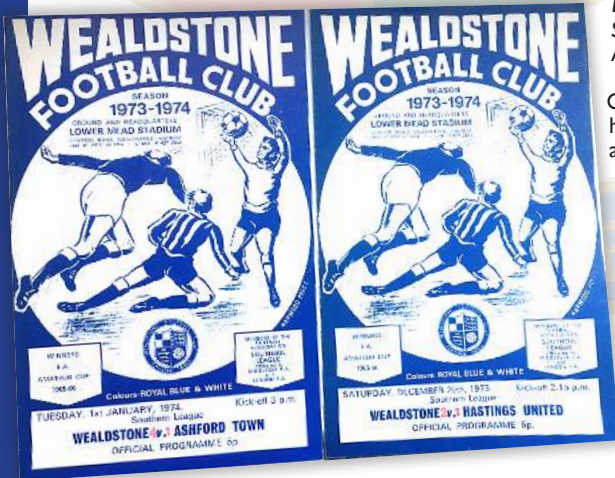
Title challengers 'Fleet were pipped 2-1 on Boxing Day, thanks to the persistence of winger Johnny Henderson (circled, below) who chased a lost cause in the dying seconds of the game at the Elmslie End, just beating the Kentish keeper to the ball and netting from an incredible angle. Amazing what lingers in the memory 30-odd years later!

What lingers in the memory of the Hastings game, just a few days later, is catching a later-than-usual 183 bus from my home in Pinner to Lower Mead. It should still have arrived with 10 minutes to spare, but every possible mishap occurred on the three-mile journey, including an accident involving a motorbike and then (as school-boy me was fretting about missing the kick-off) a little old lady actually dropping her shopping basket on a pedestrian crossing, and then spending several minutes collecting broken eggs from the roadside. The sort of thing that only happens in Carry On films!



By the time I got in the ground we were 1-0 ahead, thanks to the goal-poacher supreme George Duck. Hastings, who were also up at the top of the table, levelled before half time but we won the points when Bill Byrne lashed in the winner in front of the ecstatic Cinema End fans with 20 mins remaining.

Three days later, mid-table Ashford Town were beaten 4-1 in front of a 1,211 Lower Mead crowd (goalscorers George Duck 2 (1 pen), Billy Byrne and Henderson) and it was the perfect start to the New Year. Were Sid Prosser's side on course for the title? And could they win the FA Trophy too? **Stay tuned....**



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 15: Never on a Sunday? Stones make history.. and then giant-kill Wimbledon

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Sunday January 6 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 0 Bognor Regis Town 0

Saturday January 12 1974, FA Trophy 1st round Proper: Wimbledon 0 Wealdstone 1

THESE were extraordinary times to be watching football.

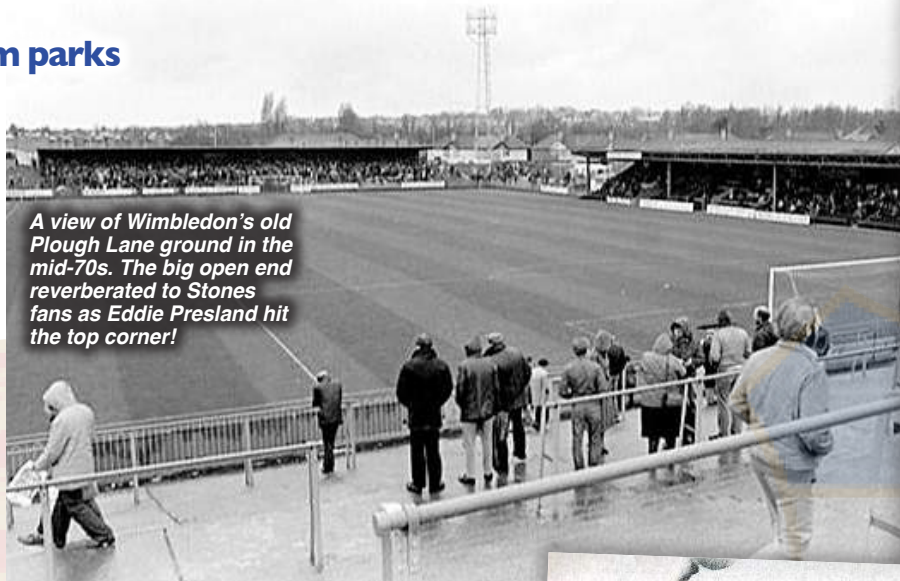
We've already discussed in previous 'episodes' the three-day working week, the industrial crisis and the constant power cuts that were just part of everyday life back in 1974... well now that all seemed to come to a head when our SL opponents Bognor announced that, due to power only being available to Sussex businesses on Saturday Jan 5th, they wouldn't be able to field a side for the game at Lower Mead.

You can imagine the club's conundrum. With flood-lighting banned (lack of energy due to the miners' strike) we did not want to re-arrange the game for a midweek date, possibly in the far-off future. Stones had three or four games still outstanding and a run in the FA Trophy would just exacerbate things.

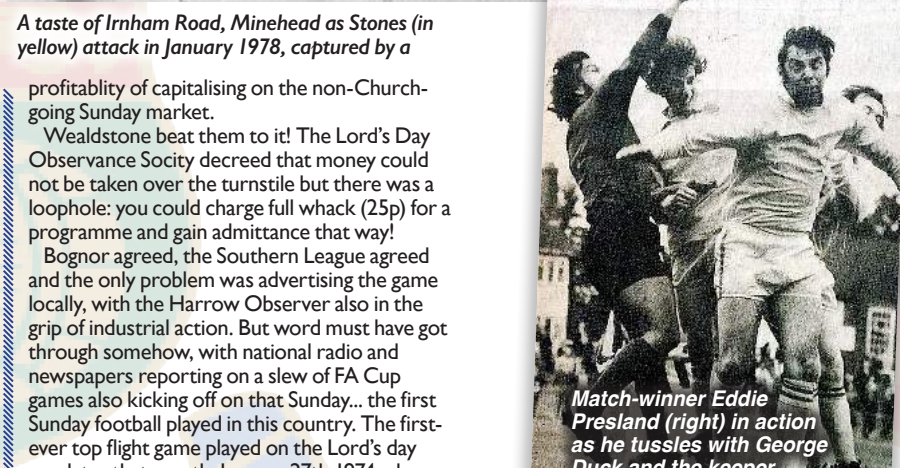
And so the club applied to play the Bognor game on a Sunday. What! Has football gone made!

We were living in less secular times and the Church considered the holy day sacrosanct. A day of rest. End of.

Yes, there was Sunday morning amateur football but the professional game had not yet discovered the



A view of Wimbledon's old Plough Lane ground in the mid-70s. The big open end reverberated to Stones fans as Eddie Presland hit the top corner!



Match-winner Eddie Presland (right) in action as he tussles with George Duck and the keeper

profitability of capitalising on the non-Church-going Sunday market.

Wealdstone beat them to it! The Lord's Day Observance Society decreed that money could not be taken over the turnstile but there was a loophole: you could charge full whack (25p) for a programme and gain admittance that way!

Bognor agreed, the Southern League agreed and the only problem was advertising the game locally, with the Harrow Observer also in the grip of industrial action. But word must have got through somehow, with national radio and newspapers reporting on a slew of FA Cup games also kicking off on that Sunday... the first Sunday football played in this country. The first-ever top flight game played on the Lord's day was later that month, January 27th 1974 when Chelsea were beaten 1-0 at Stoke City.

So how did the Harrow public take to Sunday football? Well we had 1,500 programmes printed and every one was sold as the fans flocked through the turnstiles clutching their printed progs. Maybe we should try that nowadays?

Sadly, the game was possibly the duller served up that season (nothing happened) but the Stones remained top of the table with three games in hand on their nearest rivals.

Six days later the Stones pulled off their first proper giant-killing since joining the pro ranks three years before.

I remember sitting in our front room plotting my route by underground to the FA Trophy First Round Proper game and wondering if it was

Presland's 30 yarder is Challenge Trophy ace

Wimbledon 0, Wealdstone 1

A 30-yard shot by Eddie Presland three minutes before half-time was enough to give Wealdstone victory in their fifth meeting with Wimbledon this season and a second-round place in the F.A. Challenge Trophy.

The goal spells out Wealdstone's superiority in the first half. Wimbledon came out after the interval looking determined to wipe off the deficit, but poor finishing and fine goalkeeping by Ray McKenzie kept them out. Six minutes from time Paul Fairclough, Wealdstone's substitute, went desperately near to increasing the lead.

Manager Sid Prosser's refusal to make changes in the side is paying dividends, for Wealdstone were more composed than ever before, particularly at the back, where McCormick, Presland and Burgess were towers of strength in front of the much improved McKenzie.

Watson is also finding his true form and was unlucky to be booked for what appeared to be a harmless tackle. In the middle Kinner, Dyson and Fulton combined well to keep the front runners, Duck, Byrne and Henderson, well supplied. Wealdstone got to work straight from the kick-off and had goalkeeper Guy busy clearing his line. Wing half Bloss got in the way of a goalbound shot in the 18th minute after Presland had let fly following a Dyson free-kick. Bloss took the full force of the shot and needed treatment for several minutes.

Mick Mahon, Wimbledon's new signing from Colchester, tested McKenzie with a drive and seconds later Bloss shot wide when he had only McKenzie to beat.

Byrne, playing better than ever, had a chance when Presland sent him through, but Guy got to his shot. Wealdstone continued to press and only excellent defending by Stockley, Loughlan and McCready kept them at bay.

However, their efforts were rewarded in the 42nd minute. Byrne was fouled, Fulton floated the free kick into the penalty box, McCready got his head to it, but it went to Kinner, who let it run to Presland. His first time shot from 30 yards went through a wall of defenders and into the net.

Wimbledon came out for the second half determined to wipe out the lead. Larkin, Smith and Mahon all missed chances. The home side's best chance came in the 60th minute when Smith intercepted McCormick's back

pass and beat McKenzie, but Watson cleared.

Fairclough replaced Dyson in the 75th minute. In the 85th minute Fairclough had a chance to put Wealdstone further ahead when he was set up by Byrne and Henderson, but his drive went wide with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Wimbledon threw everything into attack in the remaining minutes, but the Wealdstone defence stood firm.

Wimbledon: Guy; Stockley, Loughlan; Bloss, McCready, Langford; Mahon, Cook, Larkin, Lucas, Smith. Sub: Bryant.

Wealdstone: McKenzie; Presland, Watson, Kinner, McCormick; Burgess, Dyson (Fairclough), Fulton; Byrne, Duck, Henderson.

Two views on the win at Wimbledon... Harry O above and the South London Press below

IT wasn't a day for making comebacks. The ground was tricky, the team desperate and the manager disturbed. Added to that Wealdstone were still seething over their four lost chances in the Southern League Cup.

On the assumption that the Dons had to love one of their five encounters with the Southern League First Division leaders then they shouldn't waste too many tears over this one.

But try telling that to Dons' centre-half, Jack Bryant, and he'll reply with words not totally unfamiliar to "Kung Fu."

Making his first appearance in a Wimbledon jersey for five and a half months, he roared on to the field as substitute for Bobby Stockley with ten minutes to go.

And eight minutes later he ought to have made it a dream return — right out of the annals of "roy of the Rovers."

Mick Mahon tried a shot from the edge of the area and the ball shot off a defender and landed straight at Bryant's feet. Five yards out with only the goalkeeper to beat — it had to be a goal.

But to the accompaniment of wailing on the terraces and fainting in the directors' box, the shot left missed the ruddy thing.

"Well, at least he was up there and in the right position! That's more than can be said for the others," said manager Dick Graham graciously.

But Bryant won't forget that one in a hurry. It seems these days that the Dons are fated not to win. They've now gone nine games with only one win and the pos-

sibility of relegation is looming nervously close.

They put on so much pressure in the second half it was amazing they didn't burst with the effort. Time and again they

first one over the bar under pressure from Lucas, Phil Bloss shot narrowly wide from the second and Ian Cooke clipped the ball just over.

Then Wealdstone mounted one of their few attacks and scored. Fulton's free-kick was charged down but only as far as a full-back, Presland. The giant defender tore in at the speed of light and in a blinding flash had the ball in the back of the net from 25 yards.

The Dons came out in the second half and fought like Trojans. Twice skipper John Loughlan struck superb balls into the net and twice Wealdstone could have scored.

Graham Smith got on the end of the first cross with a diving header that McKenzie gratefully scrambled away and then before missing all the good work with a weak shot.

Earlier he had seen his deft right foot flick aim the post after some good work by Andy Larkin down the left flank.

But it just wasn't the Dons' day and with trips to Chelmsford and Barnet coming up next the outlook is wet and windy.

They finally won a corner



Bryant — terrible miss

REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 16: Stones hit a goal drought... and then the news on a dramatic Cup afternoon

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday January 19 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 0 Ramsgate 1

Saturday January 26 1974, Southern League Division One South: Waterlooville 0 Wealdstone 0

Saturday February 2 1974, FA Trophy Second Round Proper: Wealdstone 5 Hastings United 2

In every successful season comes a 'blip', and Wealdstone's came in January 1974 just after winning five games back-to-back and scoring 15 goals. Suddenly they dried up.

A 0-0 home draw with Bognor (recounted in the previous programme) was followed by blanks at home to mid-table Ramsgate (0-1) and then 0-0 at title-challengers Waterlooville. With the country still in the grip of the power crisis, and our players working haphazard hours and when factories and offices were allowed electricity, manager Sid Prosser decided to give the team an extra training session on the morning of the big FA Trophy last-32 tie against Hastings United. He had them out on the Lower Mead pitch "with special emphasis on interplay between front-runners George Duck, Bill



Just to add to the drama, Stones winger John Henderson (No.11) backheel-volleyed a crazy goal to make it 4-1 in the annihilation of Hastings! Pictures courtesy of the Harrow Observer

Byrne and John Henderson" according to the *Daily Telegraph* which ran a special article on the day of the game (see below, left).

So did it work? Blimey, did it! The *Telegraph* stated that Duck was 'drastically off form' (despite having already scored 24 league goals) and he certainly bounced back with FOUR goals in this one game, including an extraordinary hat-trick of penalties. Not only were we in the national press but dead-eyed George also got a mention on BBC1's *Grandstand* that afternoon as the scores were read out from the vidprinter!

Hastings were described as 'spoilers' by the Harry O scribe Phil Sugden and that was putting it nicely. They were hacking and pulling from the off but could



It all kicks off at Lower Mead when referee Waterman (with his linesman, above) awards the third penalty... players hound him to the touchline and then (top picture) argue with their manager after skipper John Ripley (right) led his team off the pitch



hardly dispute the first penalty after just six minutes. Duck's soaring header beat keeper Arnold and full-back Harry Cunningham scooped the ball over the Cinema End bar with his hand. George blamed his spot kick low inside Arnold's right hand post. Ten minutes later, defender Barry dragged down Duck from behind as he advanced on goal and referee Waterman had another easy decision. 2-0 with an identical Duck spot-kick. Hastings had to respond as the second half kicked off but were stopped dead in their tracks as Duck's rasping shot was blocked by the the hands of the desperate Cunningham. It would be hard to

imagine a more obvious penalty but Hastings - and particularly winger John Jefferson - argued long and loud. Referee Waterman at first booked the No.7... and then sent him off. At this point Hastings skipper John Ripley led his team off the pitch and the game seemed certain to be abandoned, until Stones boss Prosser and sub Terry Dyson talked some sense into the irate visitors!

Finally, some ten minutes after the award of the penalty, Duck stepped up to complete his spot-kick hat-trick, blasting the ball up the middle. Ironically Hastings then played their best football despite conceding a fourth to *Johnny Henderson's* extravagant backheel (see picture above). Cunningham and Jones made it 4-2 but *George Duck* then headed a marvellous fifth to spark those Wembley dreams.

Two days later, with the Trophy draw now national, we were paired with South Shields...

Southern League

PRE-MATCH TRAINING FOR WEALDSTONE

By DEREK WILD

WEALDSTONE, worried about their lack of goals in recent games, will end special pre-match training only 2 1/2 hours before the kick-off of their second round FA Challenge Trophy tie against Hastings at Lower Mead Stadium tomorrow.

Despite riding high only two points behind Poole, the Third Division (South) leaders, with four games in hand, Wealdstone have scored only once in their last four matches.

That goal came from a defender, Eddie Presland, the lanky former West Ham and Crystal Palace player, at Wimbledon in the previous round of the competition three weeks ago.

So the 14-strong Wealdstone squad will have an hour's training starting at 11 a.m. tomorrow, with particular emphasis put on their front runners, George Duck, the Southern League's

highest scorer, Bill Byrne and John Henderson. Duck has scored 24 League goals, seven more than the section's next best marksman, Terry Evans, of Trowbridge, but he has suffered a drastic loss of form over the last month. Wealdstone are determined to help him get back among the goals as soon as possible.

Wealdstone beat Hastings, who have the best defensive record in the division, 2-1 in a League match at home three weeks ago, and they are confident they can now reach the last 16 of the Challenge Trophy at the Sussex side's expense.

The squad are all fit and the side who gained a point at Waterlooville last Saturday are expected to be retained.

Hastings walk off as third penalty results in second half fracas

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 5, Hastings United 2

ONE OF THE most sensational games seen at Lower Mead for many a season saw Hastings United captain John Ripley lead the Sussex side off the field, four minutes after the interval after the club's number seven John Jefferson, had been sent off by referee D. R. Waterman, of Weybridge.

The incident occurred after Hastings full-back Harry Cunningham had handled for the second time in 48 minutes and referee Waterman had awarded a third penalty to Wealdstone — all three awards producing goals from that deadly spot-kick taker George Duck.

All three penalties were obvious, to say the least, but the third offence was the most blatant for Cunningham pulled down a Henderson shot with two hands when a goal seemed certain.

Mr. Waterman immediately pointed to the spot and the garrulous Jefferson protested overmuch. He was at once booked — the third Hastings name to go into the book — and then sent off.

For a minute or so the player refused to depart and Mr. Waterman was more than lenient with at least two other Sussex players who pushed and jostled him near the goal-line. Eventually Jefferson walked to the line and Ripley at once took his men off.

A touchline conference — heated argument — perhaps a truer version of the happening — lasted two or three minutes with Wealdstone manager Sid Prosser and substitute Terry Dyson joining those endeavouring to restore sanity.

Eventually, still protesting vigorously, Ripley took his men back on and four minutes after it all started Duck was able to blast the penalty home to establish, at that time, a 3-0 lead. Hastings, with one of the best away defensive records in the league, had conceded only 12 goals from the same number of games prior to this match.

beaten 2-1 at Lower Mead in a league game on December 29, and I cannot imagine they added many names to their fan club after this otherwise entertaining second round Challenge Trophy tie.

Allowing for the fact that Hastings played their best football after they lost Jefferson and took advantage of lapses of concentration by 'Stones' back-men to notch a couple of goals, they rarely looked like stopping the Lower Mead club's majestic advance to the last 16.

F.A. Challenge Trophy preview

Wealdstone to beat this Shields side

Wealdstone P.R.O. Colin Pope travelled to South Liverpool on Friday to see South Shields, who meet Wealdstone in the F.A. Challenge Trophy on Saturday at Lower Mead. play a Northern Premier League game.

Shields were beaten 1-0, anc Pope reports:

I saw nothing in this match at Liverpool on Saturday to even remotely suggest that Wealdstone will not reach the quarter-finals of the FA Challenge Trophy by beating South Shields at Lower Mead.

We all know that the Cup is a great leveller, but if the 'Stones can strike the form we all know they are capable of the Durham side's journey must surely be in vain.

This match certainly rose no higher than Division One (South) of the Southern League, and there was only one noteworthy player in the 22 — and that was South Shields centre-half John Peverill, signed from Darlington in the close season.

Over 6ft, with a frame to match, he dominated the middle of the park, being equally adept in the air or on the ground.

On this evidence, 'Stones path to goal must be via the wings, where Shields full-backs White or Dale were never inspiring, even though they were

full-time professionals with Hartlepoons last season.

South Shields, a full professional side composed entirely of ex-league players have scored an incredible 69 goals in 32 league matches this season, but on this game, more a sign of inferior defences rather than brilliant striking power.

Their twin strikers of Riby (ex-Middlesbrough) and Derek Corner are both over 6 ft. but never looked like scoring, and their best front runner was left-winger Ken Helsop, signed from Newcastle two seasons ago.

A small midfield trio includes Ron Young who made 210 League appearances with Hartlepoons.

Peverell, the Shields skipper, told me after the game that heavy grounds did not suit them, and blamed this for their recent loss of scoring ability.

I hate making predictions, but South Shields will have to raise their game considerably on last Saturday's form to make further progress.

Footnote: On Sunday Shields beat Buxton 1-0 at home in a Northern Premier League game. COLIN POPE

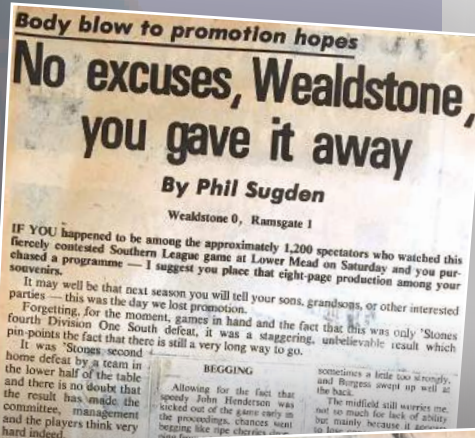
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this a good idea? Probably not, in retrospect. Colin was a lovely man, very affable but surely one of the coaching staff - or manager Sid Prosser himself - could have jumped on a train and unearthed the sort of gameplan that would have given Shields more problems than ultimately transpired? Spoiler alert!

All will be revealed in the next programme, which could, coincidentally, be for an FA Trophy quarter-final tie.

Apologies for missing Ramsgate mention... Sorry

for not giving the 1-0 home defeat by Ramsgate more than a passing mention in the previous episode of this 1973-74 story. Four successive home wins and a draw with Bognor brought 1,200 through the Lower Mead turnstiles but we hit a Kentish brick wall - and Ramsgate completed a league double having chalked up a 3-2 home win over Stones the previous September.



National League plan: just a matter of time

THINGS move slowly in the reorganisation of soccer. We must not expect too much, too soon. That is plainly the lesson to be learned from the scrapping of a National League plan for, at least, a few years.

A National League might well have taken in Hillingdon Boro and Wealdstone and both clubs were enthusiastic not so long ago. Events have changed their thoughts. The entire idea is based upon a pyramid of clubs leading to the Football League and isn't the weakness of the Football League itself the thing which holds back further progress?

Former referee, Bill Dellow, secretary of the Southern League, blames the Lytham St. Anne's men for not showing more enthusiasm. I can, however, see the point of Alan Hardaker's executive. Dellow argues that a change could have been made towards a National League for the 1974-75 season when amateurs become a thing of the past. On the other hand, there will be so much confusion and jockeying for position amongst the senior amateurs, it might well take more than another season to sort out the situation.

The plan to amalgamate Southern League clubs with Northern Premier League clubs to form a 'Fifth Division' of the Football League has its obvious attraction. The biggest is that successful clubs would be admitted to Division Four of the Football League. But, Hardaker's executive could not find it in their hearts to positively approve such a plan. They will have had two thoughts in the backs of their minds. The financial aspects from the viewpoint of the smaller clubs concerns Lytham St. Annes and the 'old boy' system amongst Football League members in voting back in the 'dead' clubs who finish

TALKING POINT

at the bottom of Division Four—or very close to it.

Sometime in the not too distant future, Hartlepool will just have to be told they can't remain in Division Four. I pick out this unfortunate club because they have applied for and won re-election on seven occasions which means that only Peterborough, Oxford United, Cambridge United and Hereford United have won Football League places since the war.

Our local clubs affected by reorganisation created by a National League will have mixed feelings. Wealdstone, not so long ago amateurs themselves, have survived in the Southern League, first in Division One (North) and now Division One (South). As things are they could well get to Premier Division status at the end of this campaign. But, they would hardly be ready for a national league, admits public relations officer, Colin Pope. 'We'd like a season or so in the Premier to find our feet', he says.

Hillingdon, on the other hand, should be racing away towards a national set-up. But, not as things stand at the moment. It is the club's worst season for years. No wonder they are silent on the prospects for the future. At the foot of the Premier Division table, Boro lack just about all the things which make a successful club. As well as success itself. Boro, thought, have the ground and the facilities to bridge the gap better, at this point of time, than Wealdstone, who wait to know if the EMI project which includes development of their ground and facilities, will get past the Borough planners.

So for very different reasons, neither of the local

Southern League sides will be crying overmuch on the delayed project for the bridge over soccer's troubled waters. And, yet, the idea has so many attractive virtues, it is my honest opinion it will not be shelved. Bill Dellow is wise to keep his committee together, the gallant band who spent seven hours typing out the rules of the new project. Disappointment there must be, especially when the Football League gave a nod of approval in principle. They will, again, I forecast when the time is ripe.

The work Mr. Dellow and his committee have done will not go to waste. The pyramid idea is the best we have had in the game at any time. It literally means there is a legitimate way to the top of the tree for EVERYONE without exception. Remember, the years it took to get agreement on substitutes and yet now, we forget a time ever existed when teams played with 10 men. Remember, the years of heart-searching on the amateur classification. We are making progress. The National League will help even if it does not come into being for a few years. Keep at the Football League Mr. Dellow. I know you'll win in the end.

I'd rather forgotten how good the Ruislip and Northwood Gazette could be occasionally. It spent most weeks applauding Hillingdon Borough and totally ignoring Wealdstone (mainly because the Stones were across the borough border in those days.) Here is an article within its sports pages from the turn of the new year 1974, and which prove to be rather prescient, although of course it took another 13 years before automatic promotion to the Football League occurred



Left: Ramsgate's Richard Bourne (No.5) is beaten by Bill Byrne but (right) there is no way through their packed defence



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 17: Fixture chaos looms as Stones chase success on League and Trophy fronts

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday February 16 1974, Southern League Division One (South): Hastings United 0 Wealdstone 0

Amid all the hoo-hah around games being called off for a waterlogged pitch at the Vale these days it's worth reminding everyone that even our spiritual home of Lower Mead was subject to the occasional postponement - and that on a surface that was three parts mud and one part grass from October onwards.

Having played a few games on there myself I can confirm that the pitch somehow always stayed firm underneath a top layer of slime. That was its default state until March, when it dried out and the three parts mud turned into three parts sand, with one part grass/dust. Makes you wonder how the Stones were allowed to play on it at all, let alone win league titles and trophies in Lower Mead's 70 years' existence!

Five decades ago, in the middle of the club's epic FA Trophy run and charge towards the Southern League



Above: the sort of wily old fox face that sadly's not in fashion any more. Pat Murray (described as 'a dressing room attendant') surveys the dodgy pitch before the postponement of the Bexley game

Prem, our fixture secretary John Ward was becoming a worried man (sounds familiar). We had fallen six games behind league leaders Waterlooville, though just three points behind (in the days of two points for a win). With the country still in the grip of a power crisis - meaning no floodlights - and midweek games having kick off at 5.30pm once the clocks had gone forward, the last thing we wanted was to lose games through rain.

So that is what of course happened, seven days

after the bad-tempered FA Trophy 2nd round win over Hastings which we highlighted in the last match programme. Stones were due to play Bexley United (nowadays known as Welling Utd) and when that was ppd we realised that our next league game (before the Trophy 3rd round tie with South Shields) was to face Hastings on their own ground!

The match report (right) shows that there was none of the three-penalties-and-a-walk-off drama that made the game at Lower Mead so memorable. And a point away from home is not to be sniffed at, as the 1970s mantra went.

So now all eyes were turned to the game against the North-Easterners from South Shields. They were competing in the semi-professional Northern Premier League, puttering along in mid-table but with a smattering of ex-Newcastle and Hartlepool players including winger Ken Hislop and 6ft 5in forward Joe Riby. They were a real unknown quantity.

On the day of the Hastings trip, Stones sent Press Officer Colin Pope up to spy on Shields as they faced South Liverpool on Merseyside. Was

Continued overpage >>>

No Battle of Hastings as 'Stones get point

Hastings 0, Wealdstone 0

With memories of a walk-off, three penalties, a sending-off and a 5-2 win for Wealdstone, when these two teams met a fortnight previously still fresh in the mind, one would have expected this encounter at the Pilot Field on Saturday to have all the ingredients of a Cup Final.

But if Hastings learned anything from the previous clash it surely was that it's the football that counts. Both teams forgot the pre-match publicity — and so did the supporters, for only 583 turned up, and 200 of those were from Wealdstone.

Both sides settled down to play football from the start. One still had the feeling that one spark could ignite the flames of the F.A. Trophy match, but fortunately this did not come.

Any point gained away from home is a good one and the one earned on Saturday keeps Wealdstone well in the promotion race. They are three points behind the leaders Waterlooville with six games in hand.

Wealdstone did most of the attacking in the first half and had several chances. But some brilliant goalkeeping by Martin Arnold kept them at bay. George Duck and Bill Byrne had chances before Jones sent Morris away, the Hastings defender shooting over.

Keith Bristowe set up Byrne, who in turn sent John Henderson through. But the speedy winger headed over. Minutes later Jones was penalised for throwing the ball at Henderson. Eddie Presland took the kick, Ray Fulton connected, but only succeeded in finding the side netting.

On the half-hour Byrne was obstructed. Fulton took the kick by pushing it to Presland, but his pile-driver scraped inches over the bar.

Hastings swung into attack and Roy MacKenzie did well to turn Kevin Barry's left footed driver round the post for a corner after he had been put through by Steve Gill. Seconds later Mick Griffiths,

Hastings' best player, fired in a long shot, but MacKenzie had it well covered. Wealdstone applied the pressure again, with Fulton and Duck setting up Henderson. But again Arnold thwarted him.

Just before the break Jefferson sent a left-footed drive over the bar. Then he put player-manager John Ripley through, but this glorious opportunity to put the home side ahead was stopped by the no-nonsense MacKenzie.

OFF THE LINE

The second half started at a hectic pace where it left off, with Hastings on the attack. Gill's long shot gave MacKenzie no trouble, but Wealdstone came under heavy pressure from the home attack, in which Ripley and Barry featured strongly.

However, Wealdstone found their feet again and fought

back. A free-kick from Presland saw Duck head narrowly wide. In the 70th minute Duck was put through by Byrne and Henderson, but again was just off target.

At the other end Jim Watson let Ripley through. Barry picked it up and shot and beat MacKenzie, but Watson redeemed himself by heading off the line.

From then on both teams played some attractive, attacking soccer and although no goals came it brought Wealdstone another valuable point.

Hastings: Arnold; Cunningham, Drake, Morris, Mackman; Jones, Jefferson, Griffiths; Barry, Gill, Ripley. Sub: Taylor.

Wealdstone: MacKenzie; Presland, Watson, Bristowe, McCormick; Fulton, Kinnear, Burgess; Byrne, Duck, Henderson. Sub: Fairclough.

JOE BRAY

The day the rains came

Fixtures pile up as games are called off

Although Wealdstone were desperately keen to play their Southern League fixture with Bexley at Lower Mead, referee G. Kinsey, from Byfleet, ruled play out of the question at 12.15 on Saturday.

Bexley, who had spent an hour on and off the telephone to Lower Mead officials, were willing to travel and delayed their departure awaiting the result of the official's fifth inspection.

After his final examination of the playing surface, when the rain was still falling, Mr. Kinsey said that too much surface water was lying in the goalmouths and on the centre of the pitch.

As Mr. Kinsey pointed out he, too, was anxious to play the game having made a two hour drive from Surrey, but he felt the conditions would be unfair to both players and spectators.

Certainly the postponement has done nothing to help Wealdstone, who still have 18 league fixtures to play with only 12 Saturdays officially scheduled before the end of the Southern League season.

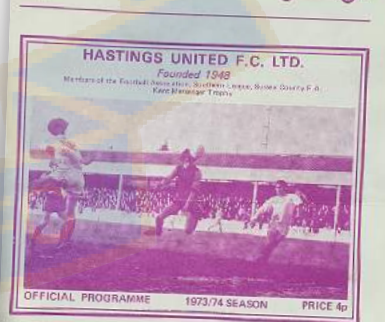
So far the league has agreed to a one week extension to the 1973/4 campaign but this will almost certainly be extended, particularly as Wealdstone are still engaged in the F. A. Trophy.

Harry O reports on the 0-0 draw, and the fixture pile-up

SOUTHERN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE (SOUTH).												
	P.	W.	D.	L.	F.	A.	Ps.	H.	A.	H.	A.	
Waterlooville	26	11	9	6	35	26	31	0-1	280	560		408
Poole Town	25	17	4	4	48	32	30	0-1	375			375
Basingstoke	23	10	8	5	38	24	28		0-0			986
WEALDSTONE	20	12	4	4	34	23	28		1-2			260
Minehead	23	9	9	5	39	31	27	0-0				
HASTINGS UNITED	26	10	6	10	23	21	26					790
Gravesend & N.	22	8	8	6	35	32	24	0-1				512
Dogmao Rogie	22	8	8	6	29	29	24	3-1				924
Bath City	23	9	5	9	26	26	23	1-0	0-2			261
Ramsgate	21	8	6	7	32	26	22	0-2				210
Bexley United	21	10	2	9	29	24	22	0-2	2-0			
Edgeford Town	18	7	7	4	30	26	21					437
Ashford Town	23	7	6	10	28	32	20	1-0	0-2			494
Trowbridge Town	20	7	5	8	30	32	19	2-0	1-2			184
Metro. Police	24	7	5	12	26	42	19		1-0			
Canterbury City	22	5	8	9	22	26	18	1-1				461
Salisbury City	24	6	6	12	27	35	18		0-1			293
Andover	21	7	3	11	25	33	17	2-1	2-0			433
Dorchester Town	23	4	9	10	25	35	17	0-0	0-0			424
Crawley Town	23	4	8	11	26	48	16	2-0	1-1			289

Up to and including Sunday, February 10th 1974.

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Above: The Hastings programme cover (not very stylish, but of its time) and left, the league table showing Stones' numerical advantage

REWIND SPECIAL continued

From previous page

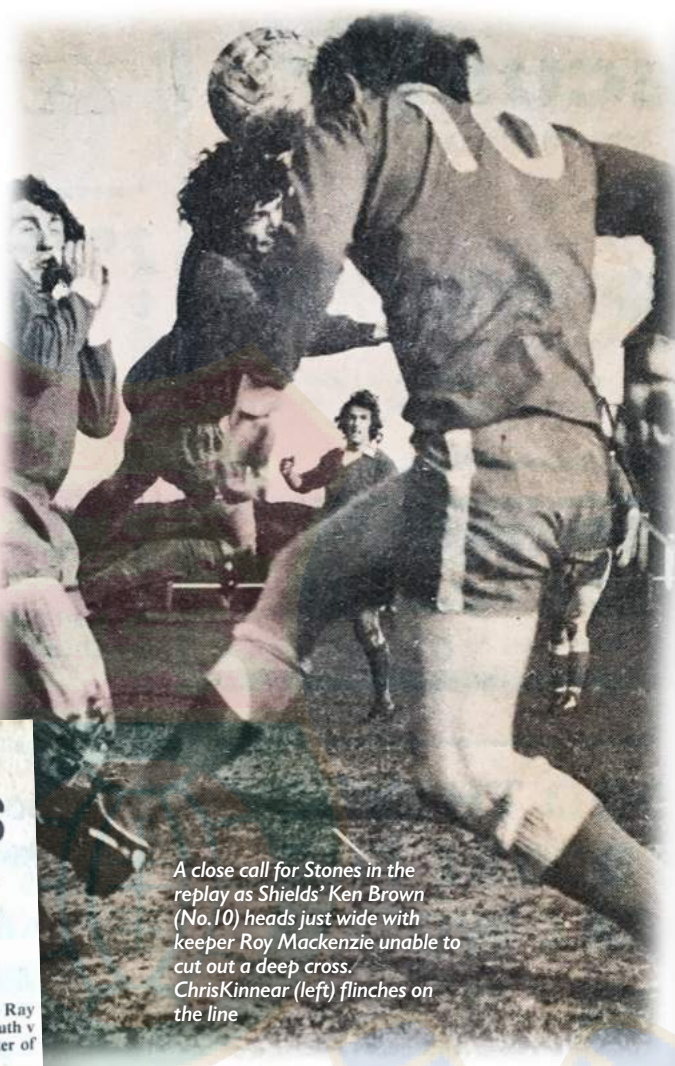
Boro) and fellow beanpole Corner proved a real handful as Shields' sole, unobtrusive tactic of striking long diagonal crosses caused some consternation.

But fortunately our keeper, Roy Mackenzie, was on his toes "and remembered his cap" according to scribe Phil Sugden, who wouldn't let it lie after Mackenzie had admitted to being blinded by the low winter sun when conceding the only goal to Ramsgate a month earlier.

Slowly Shields turned the screw, with giant defenders John Peverell (a long career in the League with Darlington) and Ron Young (200+ League apps) making it hard for Byrne, Henderson and the invisible Bristowe to feature. True, Presand blazed narrowly over and Byrne and McCormick gave the Tynesiders some scares but the game petered out leaving the impression that the replay would be very, very difficult to navigate.

And so it proved.

The 550-mile round trip had brought back warm memories of Bishop Auckland and nearby North Shields for our veteran fans but South Shields' facilities were poor - as supporters club press officer Phil Tricker lamented in his next programme notes. "There were no posters, no match programmes and no team sheets, no tannoy, no tea hut and not even any toilets!" In Shields' defence, they were leaving that



A close call for Stones in the replay as Shields' Ken Brown (No.10) heads just wide with keeper Roy Mackenzie unable to cut out a deep cross. Chris Kinnear (left) flinches on the line

So many chances, but only a draw

No Duck - so 'Stones lack power up front

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 1, South Shields 1

IT ALL LOOKED comparatively easy when John Henderson superbly headed Ray Fulton's cross into the net in the 12th minute of this F.A. Trophy third round South v North battle at Lower Mead. It was, said the Wealdstone fans behind me, a matter of how many?

When Shields' striker Parker was presented with a rather simple equaliser four minutes later there was, they said, still no danger. 'Stones had the measure of the Northern Premier League side . . . time would tell.

Well, time did tell. Shields got more into the game and although Wealdstone had by far the greater number of scoring chances they failed to force another one home. Now they must travel North for the replay next Saturday, and I would rate their chances at no more than 50-50.

It might, of course have been all so different, particularly if a tremendous, screaming half volley from Eddie Presland, late in the second half, had dipped instead of passing an inch over the bar with goalkeeper Clarke beaten.

It might have been different if White had not headed a Byrne shot off the line or if McCormick's firm header from a Fulton free-kick had gone a foot the other way.

Most of all, it might have been a different result if George Duck had been leading the home attack instead of lying in bed with an attack of influenza.

That to me, was the real "might have been". I have



Eddie Presland - powerful free-kicks missed.

peared to be surprised and so were most of the watchers.

beaten better sides this season. No one performed badly for Wealdstone but few players were in particularly sparkling form. There was no lack of effort - but too little co-ordination. Certainly they can do much better and will probably reveal their true form in the replay if Duck is restored to the front line.

Without him confidence seems to disappear. Football League referee Mr. Tom Spencer, from Swindon, had an excellent game, playing the advantage rule to considerable success and allowing the play to run freely whenever possible.

FEATURE

A notable feature of the second half was that two free-kicks were awarded to 'Stones on or about the half way line - one from which Eddie

ground at the end of the season but it must have been grim for our fans... especially as we were beaten in extra time after a needless handball from the otherwise impeccable McCormick (see match report, right).

And it got worse in the following week when the transformative Stones manager Sid Prosser announced that he was off to join Southern Prem high-fliers Chelmsford City.

On the field, we were left to "concentrate on promotion" while South Shields overcame Worcester City in their quarter-final after another replay - only to lose to fellow NPL side Morecambe in the two-legged semi-final. Morecambe went on to face Dartford in the final when, really, it should have been us...

Right: The Harry O reports on the disappointing replay defeat while (far right) it is revealed that outgoing boss Sid Prosser had recommended Eddie Presland and Terry Dyson for the job.. which is exactly what happened!

South Shields 2, Wealdstone 1 (a.e.t.)

A TRAGIC mistake by skipper John McCormick, when he needlessly conceded a penalty in the 10th minute of extra time, cost Wealdstone this FA Challenge Trophy third round replay at South Shields on Saturday and gave the Durham side a home quarter-final tie against Worcester City.

If ever there was a travesty of football justice this was it, for a reshuffled Wealdstone side had played some of their best football for weeks, and had South Shields hanging on for long periods.

But there was no argument about the penalty. A floating lob from the right, almost on the penalty spot, was pushed away by McCormick's right hand after Riby's elbow had landed in his face.

As a heartbroken McCormick said afterwards: "It was a sort of chain reaction on the spur of the moment, and I wished the ground had opened and swallowed me up." South Shields iron man, centre-back Peverell, lashed home the kick, and MacKenzie did well to get his right hand to it.

This after Wealdstone had looked likely to clinch it in extra time. A little more punch up front and they might well have done. But Wealdstone did the 200 or so magnificent supporters who made the long 600 miles round trip proud. And a daring gamble by manager Sid Prosser paid handsome dividends.

With Eddie Presland declared unfit following his knock in the first match, Chris Kinnear was pulled out of midfield to replace him at right back and Jim Godfrey was brought in after three months absence. This led to marked improvement in Wealdstone's midfield.



John McCormick - gave away penalty for Shields' extra time winner where a problem has been constant for some months.

Despite his long lay-off Godfrey's vigorous tackling and excellent distribution certainly earned him another chance, and with Fulton at showing improved form, gaps that in the past have been so evident in midfield were largely eliminated.

But it was Wealdstone's best four who really took the edge and as South Shields directed said afterwards, seldom had better footballing defences played at Simonfields. The ball was played out of defence was reminiscent of Wealdstone earlier in season.

Eric Burgess strode the like a Colossus, reaching

chance. The 6 ft. 5 ins. striker Riby was well controlled by McCormick, and he and Burgess have a rare understanding.

Before the game it was obvious that Kinnear was in for a gruelling afternoon, being matched against South Shields star striker Ken Heslop who had considerable First Division experience with Newcastle United.

Since his switch from the back four to midfield a couple of months or so ago, Chris has never shown quite the same brilliance. But at right-back on Saturday he played a noble part, and it is certainly no reflection that South Shields first goal came when he was beaten by Heslop.

In fact one can only sympathise with Mr. Prosser when he

too high, Henderson crashed the ball in following a gigantic goalmouth scramble in which at least 18 players were involved. The first anyone saw was the Shields net bulge, and Henderson besieged beneath a wave of Wealdstone players and supporters.

After 10 minutes of extra time came Peverell's penalty, and Kenny Brown, Shields' top scorer, who returned after suspension, should have increased the lead lobbing over the on-rushing MacKenzie, but over the bar.

For the final period of extra time, Dyson replaced the flagging Godfrey, and McCormick moved into the attack as the 'Stones switched to 4-2-4. For one corner, in fact, Wealdstone had all 10 outfield players in the six yards box but held by



TERRY DYSON

Wealdstone search for manager

WEALDSTONE have decided to mount a national advertising campaign to replace manager Sid Prosser who is leaving at the end of the month to join Chelmsford.

This was the outcome of a board meeting held at the Southern League First Division side's ground.

The board declined a suggestion from Prosser that former Spurs player Terry Dyson and ex-Crystal Palace star Eddie Presland would share the duties of manager.

"They often did the job very well when I was away, so I thought they were obvious choices," said Prosser.

Prosser was, however, upset about the FA Challenge Trophy defeat at South Shields on Saturday when a penalty in extra time gave the Northern side a 2-1 replay victory.

"We never looked like losing until John McCormack surprisingly handled and they scored from the spot. It was

by Evening News reporter

a tragedy for all our players and I shall be having a few strong words to say about it."

Chelmsford who are strongly pushing their claim for Football League status have decided to call off their scheduled Press conference in London today at which they intended to outline the details of their application.

It will now be held next week.

But they have not been ruled out altogether. Said Press officer Colin Pope: "The board will consider all applications including those from any of the Wealdstone players who fancy the job."

REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 18: The Trophy now gets serious as Stones take on South Shields in the last 16....

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday February 23, 1974, FA Trophy 3rd round proper: Wealdstone 1 South Shields 1

Saturday March 2, 1974, FA Trophy 3rd round proper replay: South Shields 2 Wealdstone 1

THE FA Trophy holds a special place in the heart of every Stones fan and, I confess, I'm never as excited as on the eve of a big Trophy game. Last Saturday turned out badly, but no different.

In recent years we've had semi-final appearances in 2012 and 2018, and of course even won the thing in 1985 (see another feature in this prog for the full low-down), but the first shimmer of anticipation, for me, came in February 1974



A 25-yarder from Eddie Presland fizzles just over the bar in the second half in front of a 2,000 crowd as Stones failed to find an elusive second goal



Below: Keith Bristow (8), Bill Byrne and Johnny Henderson (obscured) celebrate Henderson's goal



when South Shields came to town for this last-16 tie.

It was only our third season outside the provincial Isthmian League, and although we'd faced strong North-Eastern teams in the FA Amateur Cup in the shape of Crook Town, Bishop Auckland and North Shields in the previous decade, South Shields were a full-time pro outfit from the Northern Premier League. This was daunting.

But when this teenager woke up on the day of the game I felt strangely confident. We'd won 1-0 at Southern Prem side Wimbledon in the First Round Proper and then walloped Hastings United 5-2 in that extraordi-

nary second round tie. We had a powerful, experienced defence of John McCormick (ex Palace first team regular), Eric Burgess (ex Colchester), Eddie Presland (ex West Ham first teamer) and the young and combative Willie Watson (also ex West Ham), while ex Spurs double-winner Terry Dyson was being lauded in the Evening Standard (see article, left). In midfield we had more -ex Hammers in Ray Fulton and Chris Kinnear, and up front the towering Bill Byrne would be joined by livewire Johnny Henderson and, of course, the prolific George Duck with an amazing 44 goals to his name already that season.

Ah, hold on.

A murmur from the crowd as I was buying my programme was unsettling. And then, as the tannoy crackled into life with the team announcements, my mood deflated like the arrival of an ex-wife at a wedding.

"...and at No.10, George Duck is unwell and his place is taken by Keith Bristow". What!? George had only missed one game all season and now he was ill!

Speaking to George now, a regular at the Vale in his Stones Ambassador's role, he couldn't believe his bad luck either. "I had bronchitis and couldn't get out of bed, let alone play. I felt bad for the team and the supporters, but what could I do?"

Bristowe wasn't a bad player and had featured half a dozen times, but mainly from the bench. But he was really a midfielder and offered none of the guile, the balance, the instant goalmouth control and the metronomic finishing that had made Duck impossible to subdue that season. George would go on to net 64 times... but (and sounding churlish) when we most needed him, he wasn't there.

But there was still hope. In front of a baying 2,000+ crowd we flooded uphill towards the Elmslie End and - oh joy - took the lead when Johnny H, not known for his aerial ability, got his head to Fulton's whipped cross and the ball flew into the net off the inside of the post leaving Shields' keeper David Clark for dead.

But it didn't last long. The visitors were a controlled, experienced side and quietened the crowd with an equaliser just four minutes later through a terrific diving header from ex-Middlesbrough striker Parker. And although we had more of the game there just wasn't the fluency that had seen Stones win eight, draw four and lose just one of their previous 13 games.

Shields' 6ft 4in, gangly striker John Riby (also ex-

Continued overpage >>>>

Dyson, 38, dreams of a return to Wembley

IT IS 13 years since Terry Dyson last played at Wembley. Now at the ripe old age of 38, the former Spurs double-winning hero is just three ties away from a return visit.

The diminutive Dyson has been left out of Southern League Wealdstone's last three matches because of the heavy grounds—but he looks certain to win a recall for Saturday's FA Challenge Trophy tie against South Shields at Lower Mead.

The incentive for the winners is a place in the quarter-finals, with the chance of a dream trip to the final at Wembley on April 27 a step nearer reality.

The vast experience of Dyson, who normally operates in midfield for Wealdstone, is a key factor in the First Division (South) club's ambitious quest of the unique double of promotion and victory in the Trophy.

As Dyson is one of only two playing survivors from the Spurs team that did the League and Cup double in 1961, Cliff Jones is the other—he is qualified to give an opinion on Wealdstone's prospects.

Confident

"I never thought I'd have the chance of playing at Wembley again after all these years," said Dyson, who lives with his wife and three sons at Kenton, within sight of the famous twin towers.

"I'm enjoying my football as much as I've ever done and I reckon I've got a couple of years left. It would be great if we could get to Wembley. The lads are very confident we can do it."

"Let's face it, it's not like the FA Cup. All the teams are from our own level and I would fancy us at home against anyone. Ashford got to the semi-finals last year and almost made the final. We're certainly a better team now than they were 12 months ago."

Dyson, who left Tottenham nine years ago after winning Football League, FA Cup and European Cup Winners' Cup medals, had spells with Fulham, Colchester and Guildford before joining Wealdstone 24 years ago. Dyson, "still the fittest and

most enthusiastic player at the club," in the words of vice-chairman Colin Pope, works full-time for the Inner London Education Authority, coaching at schools in the Camden area.

"I've got my preliminary coaching badge and I'm really enjoying the work," said Dyson. "I wouldn't mind having a crack at management when my legs give out, but it would have to be a part-time job. I couldn't sit and watch other people play while my livelihood is at stake. I saw my old mate Dave Mackay recently and he said that's the hardest part of being a manager."

Dyson takes charge of boys from senior level down to nine-year-olds in his schools coaching job. "I love it and I usually join in with them, but I like playing with the nine-year-olds best, because I can outjump them for headers," quipped the 5ft. 4in. Dyson.



REWIND SPECIAL contd >>>>

from previous page

businesses were working a four-day week to conserve electricity and floodlight football was banned. This meant all games kicking off at 2pm or 3pm, even on midweek afternoons which was an interesting conundrum for those who had to sneak out of work or play truant from school to attend games.

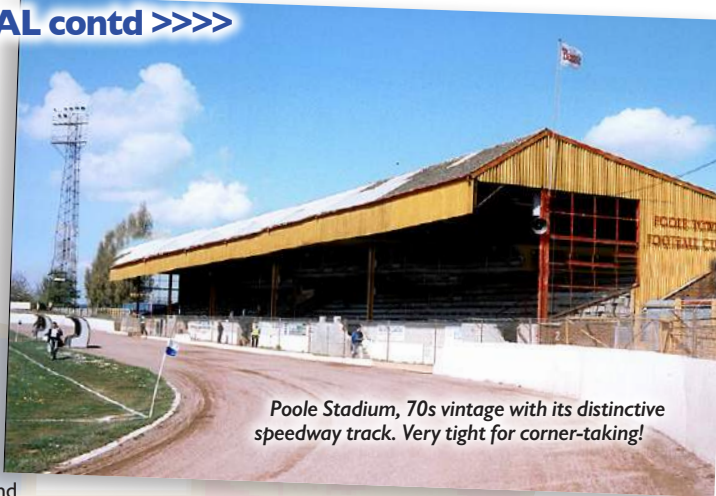
We always ran two coachloads of supporters to away games in those days and although I couldn't make the trip to Poole, Jon Taffel recalls that that game was his first-ever away trip on the coach... and with the lighter-than-usual Sunday traffic the party arrived at the South Coast around 11am.

Travel supremo Barbara Robson, the Dave Reader of her day, sanctioned a couple of hours in Bournemouth so that sleepy town was treated to the sight of a hundred or so overexcited

Stones fans trying to find something to do (apart from going to Church).

When they finally arrived in Poole, the game was a cliffhanger with the home side - still up at the top of the table while the Stones were third with games in hand - trading blows with the free-flowing blues.

George Duck and John Henderson twice put us ahead but their veteran striker Ivan Hollett levelled the scores at 2-2, before our full-back Eddie Presland popped up with a deserved winner. According to Roger Slater's book "It was Poole's first home defeat for four months and the standard of Wealdstone's play was such that at times



Poole Stadium, 70s vintage with its distinctive speedway track. Very tight for corner-taking!

the majority of the 1,100 crowd applauded their possession of the ball."

Veteran fan Mick Fishman also recalls the unexpected lunch stop in Bournemouth, and said that some of the older fans were perturbed - remembering that the coaches en route to an FA Amateur Cup game at Eastwood in the late 1960s had an unscheduled stop in Nottingham, following which the driver got completely lost and the fans ended up missing the first 15 minutes of the game. No such problems in Poole, however.

Back to 1974. Having missed the unmissable Poole trip I was determined to make the game

at Crawley just two days later. But it was going to be a surreal schoolday afternoon as the match kicked off at 5.30pm!

I actually discovered an old diary from that period just recently, and was amused to see that a week be-

fore this game I had been feverishly working out a route from my school in Northwood to Crawley's Town Mead ground in Sussex. The Green Line via Rickmansworth seemed the best bet until I found out that it was 65p each way. Extortionate!

There was nothing for it: a quick phone call to Ms Robson and I was on the supporters coach (one of two) to Crawley for just 55p return. I bunked out of school (a hockey match which led to me being dropped for the next game), got Mum's taxi to Lower Mead for the 3.30 departure ("lovely comfy coach" according to my diary) and it was a great debut trip among the friendly away fans.

My diary's match report described Town Mead as "a rather poor ground with a team to match". Ramsackle is probably the best word but I'm a sucker for stands tight behind the goals, and this was my view as George Duck stuck away his goals number 44 and 45 for the season as Crawley offered token resistance.

Bill Byrne headed the opener after 10 minutes and the rest of the afternoon passed by in a blur of contentment as we passed the ball around on Crawley's appalling playing surface. There is a webpage from which I plucked the accompanying pictures and it candidly describes the pitch as "clay, with tons of sand dumped on it each season. Many attempts were made to solve the drainage problems but none succeeded".

Crawley moved to their new stadium at the end of the 1990s and have done rather well since.



Crawley's Shed End in the 1980s for a trophy game against Wycombe. About 1,000 more than were there in 1974!

CRAWLEY TOWN v WEALDSTONE		SOUTHERN LEAGUE FIRST DIVISION (SOUTH)	
Tuesday 19th March 1974		5.30pm	
CRAWLEY TOWN (RED & BLACK)		WEALDSTONE	
1	R Collier	0-3	1 P McKonzie
2	D Haining		2 E Presland
3	I McGonagle		3 J-Watson KUNNEAL
4	P Frost		4 E Burgess
5	I Hamilton		5 J McCormick
6	V Bragg		6 C-Kinear FULTON
7	M Betchley		7 P-Fulton FAYOULGH
8	A Goodgame		8 J Godfrey
9	D Moore		9 W Byrne 17 MINS 1-0
10	B Morgan		10 G Duck 70 MINS 2-0; 80 MINS 3-0
11	N Brister		11 J-Richardson LIENPERSON
12	J Broomfield		12 P-Fairelough
Referee R F East Orpington			
Linesmen G R Rigby Sutton (Orange Flag)			
C J Kinsey Byfleet (Cerule Flag)			

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Programmes in the 1970s had rather less content than these days. Crawley's offering 50 years ago (for just 3p, admittedly) was just a folded sheet with a very exciting cover (left) and a team list (above) and, er, that was about it.

Though there was much schoolboy hilarity as John Henderson was shown as 'J Richardson' in the line-up page. "Come on Richardson, you're not yourself today" was about the extent of the humour. Who needs Michael Macintyre?

Crawley's 'popular' side of their Town Mead ground in the 1970s. Though it clearly wasn't THAT popular



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 19: It's a turning point in the league title quest as the Stones finally start scoring...

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday March 9, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 3 Bideford 1

Sunday March 17, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Poole Town 2 Wealdstone 3

Tuesday March 19, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Crawley Town 0 Wealdstone 3

It seems that every successful Wealdstone season can be traced back to one defining moment when, arguably, the fates are tipped in our direction.

Twenty years ago the Stones were going nowhere, mid-table in the Ryman Div One North when Richard Jolly's wind-assisted strike saw us win 1-0 at Heybridge Swifts and then - nine wins out of 11 games later - end up in the play-offs and eventual promotion.

Ten years ago we were chasing promotion from the Ryman Prem but successive defeats against Hampton & Richmond, and Canvey Island, saw us slip to third in the table as two games were rained off. We faced a tricky match at the Vale against Bury Town but after Scott McGleish gave us the lead in monsoon conditions the referee took the teams off and considered abandoning the match - happily he didn't; we quieted the nerves with a 3-0 win and a subsequent 11 wins and four draws in the next 15 games catapulted us to the title.

Four years ago was a bit different when we won the National League South title - it ended up a non-celebration when the Champions were decided on points-per-game dute to the Covid interruption. If there was



Bill Byrne (left) and John Henderson attack the Elmslie End against Bideford and (right) the Harry O's usual expansive report

a turning point it probably came at Havant & Waterlooville on January 18 when we convincingly beat our nearest challengers 4-2... and then a week later dismantled second-placed Bath City 7-0 here at the Vale.

And what of 1974 and Bideford, I hear you ask? Hadn't we crushed all-comers that year, eventually winning the title by 11 points?

Well yes we did. But on March 9th it was in the balance - we hadn't scored a league goal all year, apart from the 4-1 win over Ashford on New Year's Day.

Our much-vaunted Byrne-Duck-Henderson strike force had fired blanks in four successive league games when we settled for goalless draws against Hastings, Bognor and Waterlooville and a 1-0 reverse to Ramsgate.

And the previous two weeks had seen us desperately crash out of the FA Trophy in the last 16, held at home by Northern Leaguers South Shields and then losing the replay on Tyneside 2-1 after extra time.

I remember the Bideford game very clearly - especially as we'd visited North Devon on a family holiday only the previous year and I'd been intrigued that any team would travel that far to compete in Southern

League football... the town is practically in Cornwall and the journey in those pre-M4 and M5 days took about six hours in our old Austin Wolsey.

I was also apprehensive about our chances of winning the league, having slipped below Poole Town and Waterlooville in the table, but reckoned the De-

vonians would be out on their feet after that journey. And I was feeling smug when we took the lead after just two minutes through Bill Byrne. But Bideford quickly levelled, and even after a George Duck penalty had put us ahead again at the Elmslie End going into the last 15 minutes my teenage nerves were jangling as our normally-safe keeper Roy Mackenzie seemed about as confident as me, flapping at crosses and spilling the ball as the visitors looked for another equaliser.

Luckily, Bideford keeper David Lee was worse. Anything in the air was causing him palpitations and I was standing right behind the goal, jammed in against the railings as he waved a fist hopefully towards Paul Fairclough's left-wing corner. The ball wafted across from in front of the Supporters Club shop, under the shadow of the Elmslie Stand and then, wonderfully, arced over the flailing keeper and into the net at the far post. 3-1!

Was this a turning point? The Stones now had to back up that win with successive away games in strange circumstances. First up was Poole Town, memorable as it was the first ever competitive away game to be played on a Sunday. The country was gripped by the oil crisis, factories and

Continued over page >>

'Stones close the gap, but are made to fight

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 3, Bideford 1

ON PAPER this was a very good result for Wealdstone. Bideford could be among the challengers for promotion with seven games in hand over the current leaders, Poole Town. And as Poole were beaten, Waterlooville could only draw and third placed Minehead also went down, the Lower Mead club is in a very strong position.

Those are the statistics, but the facts are that Wealdstone struggled hard for much of this game, were far below what we know to be their best and again showed shocking form in the middle of the park.

All this might sort itself out if the midfield men were doing their jobs as efficiently as earlier in the season. Unhappily, they are not. Fairclough showed occasional flashes, but was never consistent.

Fulton appears to have lost his confidence and Godfrey, who was said to have performed brilliantly in his comeback game at South Shields, played ed brilliantly in his comeback game at South Shields, played in this one like a man out of touch until the latter stages.

Thanks be, the back four, generally, had another excellent game. Presland was outstanding with firm tackling, cool clearances and occasionally superb distribution. Burgess swept up with almost nonchalant ease and used the ball well and McCormick, apart from a couple of lapses, was strong in the air and on the ground.

Add to that "Mac" made three of the best scoring attempts provided by the home side, and he can be reckoned to have had a good game.

Kinnear, switched into the back-line to replace the injured Watson, had what can best be described as a sketchy game. He did much that was good and several things which were appalling and in goal MacKenzie failed to inspire the confidence of recent weeks.

One or two misjudgements brought hearts into the mouths of the 780 or so spectators who braved a bitterly cold afternoon to watch the proceedings.

It may sound childish to criticise a team which wins 3-1 against a hard tackling, but good footballing side, but anyone who is honest will admit that "Stones were too often second best."

One can only feel that with 16 hard games to come the Lower Mead club, despite a massive six games in hand on the leaders, has a great deal to do.

BAD MOMENT

McKenzie had a bad moment when Moch broke through a square defence and hammered a low drive which the keeper saved at the second attempt, but the best shot of the game came a few minutes from the break.

Duck, who had been strangely quiet, picked up a short pass on the edge of the box, ran a few yards and unleashed a tremendous drive which hit Lee's body and was frantically tremendous drive which hit Lee's body and was frantically grabbed at the second attempt. Had the shot been a foot either side of the Bideford 'keeper he would not have seen it.

Wealdstone re-opened quite brightly with Henderson providing two dazzling runs and Byrne twice earning free-kicks out on the left.

Bideford, however, were still having the better of the midfield and so it continued until the 52nd minute. Then Byrne broke on the left, from what looked to be a suspiciously off-side position. As he turned into the box he was tripped by Hillson and good referee G. M. Campbell, right on the spot, awarded a penalty.

George Duck stepped up to send the ball hard and low past Lee for his 47th goal of the season.

McCormick joined the attacking spree only to see his header cleared from the line and then in the 70th minute 'Stones clinched the game. Fairclough took one of a series of corners from the left, the suspect Lee failed to reach the ball with his attempted punch and saw Fairclough's effort swing into the net.

Minutes later Lee partially atoned with a splendid save from Fulton and Wealdstone had a let off in the dying minutes when MacKenzie made an error of judgement but the sound Presland was on hand to kick-off his goal-line.

Two points, but too many anxious moments. Wealdstone: McKenzie; Presland, Kinnear, Burgess, McCormick; Fulton, Fairclough, Godfrey, Byrne, Duck, Henderson, Sub: Bristowe.



REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 20: The country returns to normal as Eddie Presland takes over the Stones' reins

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Saturday March 23, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 4 Crawley Town 1

Wednesday March 27, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Basingstoke Town 0 Wealdstone 2

Saturday March 30, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Bath City 2 Wealdstone 0

Around this time, half a century ago, the good folk of Harrow were waking up to the idea that their local team were worth watching again.

The final few dog days of the amateur era were past; the early dog days of the semi-professional, Southern League era were also receding into the distance and after a winter of unrest Wealdstone FC were on the final straight of a title-winning season.

The country was slowly getting back to normal. The miners' strikes were winding up; we had electricity once more and, in my narrow teenage world of Wealdstone there was even the prospect of watching a game under floodlights again!

Our run in the FA Trophy and a wet winter had led to a backlog of games (all sounds rather familiar) and the Stones faced 13 games in the last five weeks of the season.

But the fans were coming back.

Our crowds at Lower Mead had stayed resolutely in the realms of 500 or 600 through the first



Bill Byrne (right) powers his header into the Crawley net for Stones fourth goal in the Southern League rout at Lower Mead

two Southern League seasons and had only started to edge over the 1,000 mark as Stones embarked on a winning run over Christmas 1973. It seemed that people still didn't wholly believe that Sid Prosser's side was the real deal until the Spring was here.

In fact, it would very soon become Eddie Presland's side as the Stones' popular fullback was named Prosser's successor within a couple of weeks of the ex-St Albans boss deciding to take up the offer of managing Southern Prem side Chelmsford City - a decision he later publicly admitted was 'a mistake'.

Over 1,100 were at Lower Mead to see Big Eddie's debut on the bench and a resounding 4-1 win over a Crawley side who'd been walloped on their own patch 3-0 only four days earlier. And then - oh glory!

- a match under the lights at Basingstoke the next Wednesday (see report below right) which turned out to be night when the blues (and our three coachlands of fans) hit the top of the Div One South table and never relinquished it.

Centre-forward Bill Byrne was almost putting George Duck in the shade at this time (as as you can outshine a man who'd end up scoring 64 goals that season) with a terrific double to win the game in Hampshire.

The following Saturday saw the Stones' final defeat of the season (a deserved 2-0) to fast-improving Bath City who would end the season as runners-up. Richard Legg and Trevor Tinson got the goals in front of a 2,000 crowd... but Presland's side put this hiccup behind them as they set on a run of EIGHT straight wins while conceding just two goals to write their names in the record books.

Read on in the next home programme!

Duck passes that scoring record

Sparkling farewell for ex-boss Sid Prosser

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 4, Crawley Town 1

EVERYTHING was right and proper at Lower Mead Stadium on Saturday. The team that Prosser built said farewell to their old boss with a resounding victory and hailed a new manager Eddie Presland with a display which must have delighted him.

One hesitates to make firm predictions about the championship, or promotion, but with 13 games to play I reckon 'Stones need a maximum of 15 points — 14 would probably do. And this team is more than capable of that task.

One feels strongly for Sid Prosser at the moment. He has left for perhaps better things as team manager of Chelmsford but I, for one, after talking to him after the game, suspect that he would have loved to see the Wealdstone job through.

He takes to Chelmsford the good wishes of everyone connected with Lower Mead, the consoling fact that he will always be a welcome visitor, but perhaps the rather more disturbing thought that confident of

Poser for Presland

Wealdstone face another stiff hurdle in their fight for the Southern League Division One

second half and after four minutes came the third home goal. A really tremendous ball from Watson left Duck with an acre of space. His first powerful shot rebounded from the far upright but he was on to the ball chance like a flash and the ball was in the net before Collier

Wealdstone march to the top

Basingstoke 0, Wealdstone 2

Wealdstone moved to the top of the Southern League, Division One (South), table with a sensational victory over Basingstoke on Wednesday night, giving one of their best performances of the season.

It was a display full of character and the way in which Wealdstone's defence was superbly marshalled by John McCormick was a revelation and had the 200 Lower Mead club supporters in high spirits.

Basingstoke, who were also in the running for promotion to the Premier Division, provided stern opposition and Wealdstone were unable to stamp their authority in the first half. George Duck, 'Stones leading scorer, was viciously tackled in the 25th minute, resulting in Basingstoke's midfielder man Huxford being hooked by the referee.

Wealdstone took an unexpected lead in the 44th minute after Edwards passed back to the former Wealdstone goalkeeper, Kelvin Hopkins. The ball ran wide and Bill Byrne nipped in like a flash to screw the ball inside the post.

Wealdstone displayed all the guts in the world in the second half, playing superb football. In the 50th minute Byrne scored one of the finest Wealdstone goals for years. Jim Godfrey sent Duck away and the big striker pushed the ball wide to Byrne, who hit it on the volley from the edge of the box and it screamed under the ball before Hopkins could move a muscle.

Stones, who were overshadowed in midfield in the first half, got a grip in this department in the second with Fairclough outstanding. But the defence took the glory, all the back four men being in superb form. It was a display which Wealdstone can be proud of.

LEADING POSITIONS

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Wealdstone	26	17	5	4	49	27	39
Waterlooville	31	13	12	6	44	30	38
Poole T.	30	15	5	10	56	40	35
Hastings U.	31	14	7	10	34	26	35

WELCOME TO TWERTON PARK

TO-DAY'S MATCH

March 30th, 1974
Kick Off 3 p.m.
Southern League

WEALDSTONE

CLUB NOTES

Good afternoon everyone. On a day when the Grand National is obviously a big counter attraction, we thank you all for your support. It should be a worthwhile visit for if both sides live up to their form we should be in for a cracking game. We welcome Wealdstone who, with their own array of ex-League talent, look all set for promotion to the Premier Division, whatever the result of this game. This is only their third season in the S.L.—having spent the first in the first division north and being switched to the south section last season. We welcome their officials, players and supporters, wish them an enjoyable visit and a safe journey home.

Last term City had two splendid matches against Wealdstone, who are recognised for their fine, open football. We won 3—1 at home and completed the 'double' 2—1 away in the last match of the season which, those supporters who travel regularly, will recall was an absolutely cracking game with none of the usual end of season staleness about it. Their record this season is most impressive, with 16 wins in 25 outings and only four defeats. We know the strength of the side from the decisive 3—0 win they gained over us early in the season. But Wealdstone will find City a different kettle of fish. A much changed and rejuvenated team we have come from behind and are now challenging strongly for promotion. Last week's



CLUB DETAILS

BATH CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

5p

REWIND SPECIAL >>>> by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 2I: The final straight as the amazing Stones win five games in just 11 days...

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

Tuesday April 2, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 3 Canterbury City 1

Saturday April 6, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Andover 0 Wealdstone 3

Tuesday April 9, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Bognor Regis Town 1 Wealdstone 2

Friday April 12, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Ashford Town 0 Wealdstone 1

Saturday April 13, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 2 Dorchester Town 0

Okay, the standard of the Southern League Division One was nowhere close to the levels that Wealdstone players perform to today.

And there's no doubt that every National League player today is an athlete, whereas non-League football half a century ago had its fair share of 'journeyman' players who would get nowhere near Level Five in the mid-2020s. But revelling in the misfortunes of some of the teams who came up against the Wealdstone Class of '74 was all part of the fun.

This team had players who'd played at much higher levels very recently: skipper John McCormick, ex-Crystal Palace; Eric Burgess, ex Colchester; Terry Dyson, ex-Spurs double winner; George Duck, ex-Southend and Spurs; Ray Fulton and Willie Watson, both ex West Ham and even player-manager Eddie Presland had turned out in Division One for the Hammers and Palace.

Yet it still took deep reserves of grit and determination to come through the five games (and five



George Duck leaps to bravely head the Stones opening goal in the 3-1 defeat of Canterbury. Johnny Henderson lurks to the left!

wins) in 11 days that pretty much wrapped up the title for the Stones. Similar to this season's schedule, in fact!

And this was with a squad of just 13 players, who kicked off the spectacular winning run just three days after the rude awakening of a 2-0 defeat at Bath City (chronicled in last week's programme). The Somerset side were now managed by Bert Head, the former Crystal Palace boss and were formidable opposition - eventually finishing as runners-up to the Mighty Stones. **Canterbury** were a little less formidable.

This was the first floodlit game to be played at Lower Mead for FIVE whole months - after the miners' strike had paralysed the country over Christmas and New Year- since the Southern League Cup 3-3 draw with Wimbledon in November. And how happy must the Wealdstone treasurer have been to see 1,212 fans flood through the turnstiles. They had their money's worth as Stones pulverised the Kent side's defence (see report, right) and two goals from George Duck took him up to the 52 mark for the season.

Next up was **Andover** and I was one of the 250-odd fans to travel down to Hampshire, the Supporters Club running three coaches... much to the astonishment of the home club's officials as we pulled into the car park in that sleepy Hampshire town.

"Thizzle be our biggest gate of the season!" said one as we made our way into the quaint ground. "We had that Baaaath City here a few weeks ago and Wealdstun have brought three times as many. I'd better open the tea hut!"

Colin Pope's match report claimed it was Andover's biggest-ever crowd (some 700) and that the 'Super Stones' completely controlled the match. I remember a one-sided second half, with us 3-0 ahead, and thoughts turning to getting home in time to watch the **Eurovision Song Contest** that evening (which was quite memorable, with Abba's **Waterloo** the winning song).

The trip down to **Bognor** three days later was not for me. According to my 1974 diary I was following my 'other' team QPR as they beat

Manchester City 3-0 at Loftus Road.. but there was still a breathless mention of the Stones' 2-1 win thanks to the Harrow Observer three days later. Did we really have to wait three days to know if our team had won a crucial promotion clash?

Well, yes we did actually. I gobbled up the match report with the Stones' Press Officer Colin Pope relating the news that we'd scored twice in the last 14 minutes to deservedly win the game after Bognor had gone ahead. He wrote of his pride at the side's indomitable spirit as their magnificent, flowing football finally paid off ... leading to a pitch invasion as George Duck calmly scored the winning goal in the dying moments. Jim Godfrey had blasted in the equaliser.

Stones now faced games in successive days: a trip to face **Ashford Town** in Kent on Good Friday and then back to Lower Mead 24 hours later to face Dorchester Town. Was I at both? Er, no... shamefacedly I have to admit that the lure of QPR v Division One title-chasing Ipswich won the day over a trip to Kent. Rangers lost 1-0, I'm sad to say but the Stones WON 1-0 in another epic display of balls and bravado! The hero this time was our under-rated goalkeeper Roy Mackenzie, who "catapulted across his line" to save a last-minute penalty as Stones protected their 2-0 lead, provided also via a spot kick from (who else?) George Duck.

Dorchester should have been one game too many. My diary mentions a good win but a "rather

Superb 'Stones forge ahead after frights

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 3, Canterbury City 1.

WEALDSTONE went three points clear at the top of the Southern League Division One (South) after a most entertaining game which kept 1,212 spectators on their toes from first to last whistle at Lower Mead on Tuesday evening.

Although Canterbury are third from the foot of the division, they proved anything but easy meat for the potential champions. The Kent club, strangely, have one of the best defensive records in the league and goalkeeper Gerry Armstrong, centre-back Bob Harrop and full-back Ron Bayliss showed why.

Time and again they saved seemingly certain goals, particularly in the first half hour when 'Stones were in such rampant mood that a handful of goals seemed likely.

Thereafter the home side was less dominant for a time, not because of failures by any individual player, but purely and obviously because they were

Big George is 52 not out

George Duck's second goal in the game against Canterbury on Tuesday evening was his 52nd in all matches this season. Controversy has surrounded

clearance, on the stroke of half-time. Byrne again bemused the defence before pounding a low shot inches wide.

The Canterbury goal had some amazing escapes straight after the interval. First Housden headed off the line from Duck and then George headed Fairclough's cross onto the under side of the bar which

'Stones turn on style and power as they race on to the title

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 2, Dorchester Town 0

DORCHESTER captain Roy Gater, until recently a Bournemouth player, summed it all up after the game. "What a great side," he said of Wealdstone. "They'll more than hold their own in the Premier Division. They could have had six against us this afternoon."

Well, there's many a slip twixt cup and lip, as my dear old Cornish Grandmother used to say, but if 'Stones slip now your reporter will be the most surprised football writer in Britain.

Forget the scoreline, for as Gater said, it could have been six, and would have been but for a deal of bad luck for the home men. This was scintillating stuff and the first half pure exhibition football to delight a crowd of approximately 2,000.

If behind the goal supporters were a little premature with their con- midway into the second half when Dorchester got a little more into the game. Behind McCormick head barely inches over the angle. Fight Wealdstone corners

under-powered performance". **Under-powered?** I'm not surprised it was bloody **under-powered..** they'd just played FIVE GAMES in 11 DAYS with a 13-MAN squad for goodness sake!

Johnny Henderson and Ray Fulton scored the first half goals at the Elmslie End, which was just begin to properly gear up its act as a brilliant backdrop to the championship celebrations. Hundreds of teenage fans, festooned with flags and scarves, were making the EE their own and the sound and enthusiasm levels were cranking up with every successive home game. And it was only going to get better...



Duck is denied in the win over Dorchester

REWIND SPECIAL by tim parks

It happened 50 years ago

Part 22: The final chapter ...what a finish to a simply unforgettable season!

This season we are reliving the extraordinary campaign of fifty years ago... which ended with the Stones' very first promotion in the club's long history and our first league title in 22 years.

- Easter Monday April 15, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Gravesend 0 Wealdstone 2
- Saturday April 20, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 2 Basingstoke Town 0
- Tuesday April 23, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Metropolitan Police 0 Wealdstone 4
- Saturday April 27, Southern League Division One South: Trowbridge Town 1 Wealdstone 1
- Tuesday April 30, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 3 Bexley United 0
- Saturday May 4, 1974, Southern League Division One South: Wealdstone 3 Trowbridge Town 3

JUST thinking about the final month of that season, looking back, still makes me feel a bit giddy.

Wealdstone, my little Wealdstone, had taken the semi-pro game by storm and there was no stopping us! Admittedly, the next thought - about taking on the giants of the non-League game like Yeovil, Kettering, Wimbledon, Nuneaton, Burton Albion and Worcester City - gave this 16-year-old the heebie-jeebies but there was a long summer of day dreaming ahead.

For we had won the league with an extravagant flourish. Everywhere we went produced rich testimonials as to how good the Stones were... and our regular 250-300 away fans had the Southern League Premier League treasurers licking their lips in anticipation.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. There were still six games to navigate, though we were smug in the knowledge that just one more win was needed.

If you're a regular reader of this column you'll know that I was far



From left: Eric Burgess, Paul Fairclough, Terry Dyson, John McCormick, Chris Kinnear, John Baker and Billy Byrne. The rest of the team were still in the bath!

Champagne for the Stones! ... and richly deserved it is too after the side had wrapped up their 73-74 title with five games to spare... and winning the title by 11 points from Bath City

from a regular (in those days) at away games. I'd pick and choose my away trips, and was often swayed by what my schoolmates were doing that particular Saturday... QPR being a popular choice. It wasn't difficult to like Rangers, Stan Bowles, Gerry Francis, Dave Thomas and all, and you could get into any game (though often crammed in with 25,000) for just 50p. Entry to Wealdstone, from memory, was 30p for juniors.

So where was I on Easter Monday 1974, with Stones poised to win the title? Extraordinarily, according to my diary, I was at Hillingdon Borough with some friends to see the Southern Prem 0-0 draw against Tonbridge. Was I mad? I remember thinking that I was sussing out the opposition for next season, and that we wouldn't win at

Gravesend (who were having a decent season, 7th or 8th in the table) anyway. Surely the team would wait for the next home game against mid-table Basingstoke to lift the trophy and celebrate in front of the Elmslie End 'Kop'?

Well, you know the rest. Stones selfishly won 2-0 at Stonebridge Road and the report from Press Officer Colin Pope was positively gushing with praise when my **Harrow Observer** dropped on the doormat that following Friday.

"As the referee blew the final whistle, every one of

the Wealdstone players became buried beneath a seething mass of celebrating supporters. Denied success for many seasons, all the heartaches and disappointments of the past were dissolved as the Stones fans - the envy of every club in the league - gave vent to their feelings"

Colin, bless him, described it as perhaps the club's finest hour. And there was me, 30 miles away at a sparsely populated Leas Stadium watching a bore draw.

For the record, Bill Byrne (with a header) and will-o-the-wisp winger John Henderson crashed in the clinching second goal as Stones turned in maybe their best performance of the season... bearing in mind it was their **FIFTH GAME IN TEN DAYS!** And the club used used just 16 players all season, including back-up keeper Chic Brodie who hadn't played since September!

But I was back at Lower Mead for the Basingstoke game (with my new scarf) and ready to party in amongst the Elmslie faithful. Except that I could barely force my way in there! Where had all these people come from? **Harry O** reporter Phil Sugden estimated some 2,400 had turned up to celebrate the champions and that a battery of photographers was in attendance to welcome the team onto the pitch. Bas-



John Henderson (far left) strikes the third goal on the final day

Stones take title by 11 points

An emotional night at Lower Mead Stadium

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 3 Trowbridge Town 3

THERE WERE so many emotional moments at Lower Mead Stadium on Saturday evening that the football almost took a back seat, which was not really surprising after match time.

First came the presentation of the Jock Law player of the year trophy to John Henderson — and no one will argue with that award. Then George Duck received a magnificent silver cup from Supporters' Club president Tom Verrall for scoring 100 goals in two seasons and setting up a new club scoring record.

For good measure, Supporters' Club secretary Barbara Robson presented every member of the squad with a tankard to commemorate the winning of the Southern League championship, and skipper John McCormick gave a tankard to 78-years-old George Keep, who has not missed a game, home or away this season, or for many past.

The latter was a fine gesture from the youngsters who so vociferously support the side from the Elmslie "Kop" end of the ground.

So many presentations were made, in fact, that the tunnel from the dressing room to the pitch looked something like Piccadilly Circus in the rush hour as players dashed backwards and forward to receive various awards.

That was not the end of it all, for when the game ended we had the presentation of the Southern League, Division One (South) trophy to skipper John McCormick by league secretary Bill Dellow, and more tankards for the players as individual awards.

could have really been surprised.

Trowbridge were a far better side than their lowly league position suggested. They showed scant respect for the champions by going one up after 13 minutes when Tony Evans, a fine player and one of a pair of brothers in the side, completed a dazzling run by Harvey with a good shot.

Stung into action, 'Stones went near three times but were making the mistake of crossing high into the area where Trowbridge's tall young 'keeper Wiltshire looked safe.

There was an escape for the West Country side when Henderson was felled in the box, but referee G. Marshall (Folkestone) surprisingly ignored appeals.

goals in recent games, was on the spot to knock the ball home.

Thereafter Wealdstone became sketchy, to say the least. They lost control in midfield and became hesitant at the back and the defence was flat-footed when Patch headed a simple Trowbridge second in the 68th minute.

Barney, Trowbridge's outstanding number four, brought the save of the match from Roy MacKenzie when the 'keeper somehow turned a point blank-range over the bar, but Barney had his revenge eight minutes from time.

UNFORTUNATE

It was unfortunate that Eric Burgess was lying on the ground after a nasty collision, and...

ingstoke also sportingly lined up to clap our heroes onto the field, and then came a moment of anticipation, according to Mr Sugden, when **"skipper John McCormick and his men ran towards the Elmslie End stand and kicked gift footballs into the massed ranks of the supporters"**.

In truth, many of the cheap plastic balls sailed over the stand or were flipped around like balloons as the game commenced. Still, a nice thought.

Wealdstone won 2-0 at a canter with the only surprise that the goals came from an Eric Burgess header and one direct from a corner from the effervescent Terry Dyson. Most of the bumper crowd (myself included) were hoping that George Duck would net his 100th goal for the club - in just two seasons, mind - and I was right behind the goal as his late volley beat keeper Rafferty all ends up but smashed against the crossbar (a la Geoff Hurst in

continued overpage >>>

REWIND SPECIAL continued

the World Cup Final) and bounced down and out. This was more obviously a goal than Sir Geoff's, but referee Jack Flynn of Aylesbury just laughed and waved play on. He didn't even glance across at his (non-Russian) linesman.

Still, George only had to wait another three days for his 'ton'. I was booked on one of three coaches to Imber Court, Surrey (35p return) for the game at **Met Police** and this time it was the Fuzz officials who were left open-mouthed at the number of away fans. They were also open-mouthed as Stones raced into a 3-0 lead after just ten minutes through Duck (hurrah!) with a penalty, Bill Byrne and a comedy own goal.

By half time we'd run out of juvenile police jokes, and the Stones had run out of interest. Though John South, who'd netted the first own goal, decided to round things off with another one as the game finished 4-0 to the champions.

Trowbridge Town away was next on the agenda and I like to tell Stones' Ambassador John Morton that I chose to go and watch him play in goal in the FA Trophy Final at Wembley that day, rather than travel down to Wiltshire for the 'dead rubber'.

Though John doesn't like to be reminded that his team - Southern League Champions Dartford - were pipped 2-1 by Northern Premier League side Morecambe. That was a cracking game, and it sounds like the 1-1 draw at Trowbridge was also full of incident although best remembered for centre-back McCormick breaking his nose after a mid-air collision. And for maybe the first time that season the best players on the pitch weren't from Wealdstone, according to Colin Pope - they were Trowbridge's Evans twins,



A big crowd was at the 'Champions Homecoming' game v Basingstoke - McCormick (left), Duck, and Jim Godfrey all put pressure on keeper Rafferty's goal in the second half

Terry and Derek, who were in dazzling form both in this game and in the following week's final affair at Lower Mead. Maybe not surprisingly, both signed for the Stones that summer!

Striker Terry scored a leveller to Duck's early goal, full-back Derek subdued the unsubduable John Henderson and Stones had dropped their first point in eight games.

Normal service was resumed at Lower Mead three days later as 7th-placed **Bexley United** were dismantled 3-0 in front of 2,396 people... the biggest crowd for a floodlit home league match since Wycombe visited in the late 1960s. The incomparable Duck struck all three goals.

And finally, and finally.... a glorious end to the season in many ways, apart from the result as we faced **Trowbridge** again (and the notorious twins) the following Saturday evening, a game put back because of the FA Cup Final played that May 4 afternoon. Liverpool beat Newcastle United 3-0 at Wembley but undeniably the best game in the locality was the one that kicked off at Lower Mead at 7.30. It was an absolute belter played out in front of over 2,500. Stones were a bit lopsided due to the absence of skipper John McCormick, but went 3-1 ahead on the hour through Duck, Byrne and Henderson.... until the Evans boys started to turn it

on again. Derek was raiding up the right flank, while Terry walloped in a terrific goal to see the game finish in a 3-3 draw and write both brothers' names onto Stones manager Eddie Presland's summer 'wish list'.

Neither of the Evanses really worked out, but that's another story. This season-long tale was all about the re-emergence of Wealdstone after almost a decade in the doldrums... more testing times were to come of course, but these rich memories will stay with us forever.

And for all the brilliant, unforgettable boys of '74.

Congratulations — and celebrations — as the mighty 'Stones move on

By Phil Sugden

Wealdstone 2, Basingstoke Town 0. CONGRATULATIONS and celebrations was the tune, which greeted Wealdstone as they took the field with their manager and officials for their championship team pictures half an hour before the start of this game.

Congratulations there certainly were. A battery of photographers (where did they all come from? Usually just one is in attendance) recorded the team's triumphant entry into the arena for their faces to be recorded for posterity.

Then the team retired for their usual pre-match pep-talk and re-emerged to find the Basingstoke side lined up to applaud them as worthy Division One (South) champions.

The crowd (1,912 paid and with season ticket holders, members and guests that probably added up to some 2,400 watchers) gave them a champions welcome.

Skipper John McCormick and his merry men ran to the centre line to salute all sides of the field and then moved to the Elmslie Road end goal to pay tribute to their faithful followers by kicking gift footballs into the massed ranks. Those who were lucky enough to capture one of these balls will have a moment to pass on to their children.

nificant saves and if he was sometimes aided considerably by Lady Luck, then that was his entitlement on the day.

As he said after the game: "You need four pairs of hands and two sets of legs against these Wealdstone fellows".

A happy day was perhaps slightly tinged with sadness for leading scorer George Duck.

Big George, 56 goals in all games this season and 43 from the last campaign, needed just one to make it a ton up. He banged in shots and headers from every angle and shortly before the end beat Rafferty all ends up with a mighty shot which struck the under-side of

were at their best and how they all failed to score is a question that can only be answered by the admirable Mr. Rafferty.

The writing was on the wall for Basingstoke when Byrne characteristically burst through after five minutes and sent Rafferty hurtling across his goal to concede a corner, the first of 18 Wealdstone were to win as their opponents managed five.

In 15 minutes 'Stones were one up. Dyson's corner was headed across goal by a defender and Eric Burgess, who had moved in unmarked, was beautifully positioned to nod past Rafferty.

Wealdstone clinch title with tremendous win at Gravesend

By COLIN POPE

Gravesend 0, Wealdstone 2

SWEPT ALONG on the tumultuous tide of sheer emotion from the massed ranks of their supporters, Wealdstone turned in a performance of towering ability, a virtuoso display fit for a connoisseur at Gravesend on Monday to win in glorious style the Southern League (Div. 1 South) championship and ensure Premier Division football at Lower Mead Stadium next season.

As referee Mr. M. Jermy, of Woking, blew the final whistle, everyone of the Wealdstone players were buried beneath an avalanche of fervent supporters as the pitch became a seething mass of people. Denied success for many seasons, all the heart-aches and disappointments of the past were dissolved as Wealdstone's fans — the envy of every club in the league — gave vent to their feelings.

Long after the game had ended, players were being enticed half-naked out of the dressing room to take yet one more bow and then came Eddie Presland's turn. White-faced, and barely able to conceal his joy, big Eddie, manager for only three weeks after a splendid season among the action, was literally carried down the tunnel.

Amateur Cup victory notwithstanding, this was perhaps Wealdstone's finest hour. This is not merely a good 'Stones side, but a great one. Gravesend, themselves no mean opponents, were finally bothered, and eventually bewitched, by a performance which for sheer skill will go down as one of the finest games ever seen at Stonebridge Road.

It was all so neatly summed up in the 62nd minute by Gravesend

a better game and this was the form which took him to Japan with Middlesex Wanderers last

the opposition is a lot stronger. What is so impressive, though, is the work rate of the whole team, and the spirit with which

Press Officer Colin Pope was the voice of Wealdstone in the 70s and 80s, and he was at his best on title-winning day

Stones players are mobbed as they leave the field at the end of the Basingstoke game

