

# EDITORIAL

## Why what went up must now come down!

It was ironic that Charlton should have announced further plans to extend Valley capacity in the summer in the very week that their policy for selling FA Cup tickets was called into question.

Members and season-ticket holders were understandably aggrieved at the prospect of missing the Blackburn game and with hindsight the club was at fault for not publishing at least preliminary arrangements in the third round programme.

Fundamentally, however, the problem remains one of accommodation, not administration. There are far too many Charlton fans for the available number of seats.

Fortunately, help is at hand. The builders are contracted to complete the east stand in time for the Southend game on April 2nd, and there are high hopes that they may make the Wolves fixture a week earlier.

The question then will not be who gets the tickets, but how much they pay. And it is a subject on which we at VOTV have firm views. Let us say at the outset, however, that the vibes from The Valley are very positive.

Despite the findings of the club's questionnaire, which found three-quarters of respondents satisfied or pleased with Valley pricing, everyone knows that there is a problem.

In any case, 82 per cent of people completing the survey were season-ticket holders, whose satisfaction was never in doubt. They are not the immediate concern.

For it is obvious that on matchday prices Charlton have been over-charging in comparison with other League clubs since December 1992, albeit for understandable and commercially sound reasons.

The attendances this season make a formidable financial case for the directors. But with 11,000 home seats suddenly up for grabs - more if the likely away contingent makes it possible to split the south stand - a review is urgently required.

We all know of fans forced to limit their attendance by the £12 minimum for non-members, and the casuals deterred before they even reach Floyd Road.

The board's task is to bring regular visits to The Valley back within reach of the former and increase the appeal to the latter to the point where they give us a go, without in the process slashing their existing revenue.

This will be a considerable balancing act, and it may even be impossible in the short term.

Continued over page

## Voice of The Valley

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Please indicate if you do not want letters considered for Echoes Across The Valley.

Backnumbers are available as follows: 5-8, 10, 12-14 @ 50p, 15-45 @ £1. The compilation *No Place Like Home* includes VOTV1 and a selection from issues 2-4. Please add postage and make cheques payable to VOTV. A range of recent backnumbers is also available each matchday in the CASC cabin, next to the club shop.

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**Anthony Bristowe's** 1950 history of the club is also available a 68-page reprint, price £3.50 plus 50p postage. Cheques payable to CASC.

**Next VOICE: February 22nd**





*Cover story: the roof starts to appear on The Valley's new east. But how much will the seats cost?*

However, even a temporary fall-off in gate revenue would be worthwhile if it was followed by a long-term increase in hard-core support.

The first priority must be cheaper seats in the Covered End. We would like to see a flat rate of £8, but realistically the club is going to want to charge away supporters a minimum of £10 - already a cut of £2 - and could not easily justify the differentiation with the other end.

Our proposal, therefore, is for an £8 rate for members and £10 for non-members, with the proviso that the membership charge should be slashed from £15 to a token amount. In our view, the existing revenue from the latter would be more than replaced through the turnstiles. And the more members there are, the more supporters the club can target by direct mail.

It has been suggested that prices for wing seats could be lower and certainly the view from blocks C and D is much better than that from A, B, E and F. But the former are currently solidly booked by season-ticket holders anyway and it must be doubtful if price differentiation could be enforced.

The same reservations apply to the situation in the east. But maybe fans in the front rows should receive a discount on wet afternoons!

Pricing here is further complicated by the fact that it must remain tied to the west, an inferior stand which will presumably only retain its appeal to those using the hospitality areas or into brown-nosing with the directors, although relative ease of admission might be

another factor.

Here we would suggest pricing might hinge on the level of football on offer. In the Premiership the club might just get away with £11 for members and £13 for non-members, providing it also offered attractive season-ticket rates and the cheaper option behind the north goal. Or it could opt for £10 and £12 for less attractive opponents and £12 and £15 for the elite.

In the First Division, we think £10 and £12 would be the appropriate mark as standard. And if the Covered End was still selling out, we'd want the spare seats in the south made available to Charlton fans whenever possible.

These price cuts would amount to up to 20 per cent on matchday admissions and would hopefully be matched by a corresponding increase in gates, remembering that Charlton fans who pay on the day are presently only half the total of home supporters. Hence a rise of 600 customers would be about par. Relative team performance, of course, might well make direct comparisons difficult to draw.

And apart from standard pricing, the club needs to be far more imaginative in attracting people to The Valley, both from the local area and further afield. CASC will endeavour to play a full part in this aspect, in particular.

What is certain is that prices must come down. We hope - and believe - that the directors understand that.



# Fans reject squad numbers

**Rick Everitt offers his own instant analysis of Charlton's recent fact-finding questionnaire**

Steve Dixon's recent questionnaire was a good test of Charlton fans' commitment to the cause. It ran to no less than 64 questions and came just two and a half years after the previous one, published in a free VOTV. Yet the size of the response was remarkably similar, around about the thousand mark.

From a statistical point of view, that's a hefty sample and not one to be taken lightly. But first a VOTV health warning. This is a sample of people who already attend The Valley, 62 per cent of them season-ticket holders and 48 per cent VIPs. So on issues like pricing, their views may not be representative of those held by people on the margins whom the club desperately needs to attract.

That said, the survey found a fairly high level of satisfaction with things like cost, turnstiles and customer service.

As last time, the sample broke down 87 per cent male and 13 per cent female and found a big proportion, 73 per cent against 59 per cent before, in white-collar jobs. Neither has the age profile shifted dramatically, with almost half aged 35-54.

Only 27 per cent came from SE London postal districts, although Bexley borough accounts for another quarter of all supporters and neighbouring Bromley about an eighth.

Just as the previous survey found, there is an unexpected concentration in Orpington, which alone accounts for four per cent of all supporters.

It would be surprising if the profile of the crowd had changed much over the last three years, so the real interest in this survey from the average fan's point of view lies in the questions of policy. And there were some interesting responses.

Tradition certainly rules. White away shirts (55%) walked off with the highly political kit question, effectively flattening an attempt to reintroduce alternative shades.

Changing the club badge, an idea mooted by Dixon himself, was hammered off the agenda by 81 per cent, while "Addicks" was the clear leader as the preferred nickname with 42 per cent.

"Reds" came second with 25 per cent, "Robins" third with 17 per cent and "Valiants" trailed in last with 16 per cent. So let's get rid of the others once and for all!

The Valley was preferred to Welling as a reserve venue by 73 per cent to 19 per cent, although I wonder what the verdict would be

among people who actually attend regularly. Rather different, I guess.

And 42 per cent are in favour of the Anglo-Italian Cup, with 54 per cent against. Before Steve Sunderland hails that as a vote of confidence, I ought to say that in 1991 49 per cent wanted to stay in the ZDS Cup and only 34 per cent wanted out. So the AIC is actually less popular than the nonsense that preceded it. Work that one out!

The squad number system got a big thumbs down, with 66 per cent saying no thanks and 19 per cent wanting to keep it but start from a 1-11 base in August. Only 13 per cent like things as they are.

Sixty per cent wanted police replaced by trained stewards at The Valley, but many specified that this did not apply to matches against Millwall!

Post VIP, support for a share issue had declined from 63 per cent in 1991 to 46 per cent this time, which probably just means that some people feel they've put enough money into the club already.

The figures that we were really interested in, however, was the best source of information about the club. Last time VOTV topped the poll, with the Mercury second and the programme a long, long way behind.

Not surprisingly, Dixon has managed to reverse that trend. Since the survey was distributed in the programme, it is guaranteed one hundred per cent reach, which isn't true of any other medium. However, the result obviously also reflects a huge qualitative leap.

Direct comparisons are difficult to make, because RTM and others were not in the original survey, which also allowed two ranked preferences, against three unranked this time.

However, the programme was included by 79 per cent, the Mercury by 53 per cent, VOTV by 39 per cent and RTM by 34 per cent. Clubcall rated 22 per cent and teletext 16 per cent, but the SLP (6%), Kent Messenger group (5%), the Kentish Times (4%) and the Evening Standard (4%) all did badly and "finished behind phoning the club/ word of mouth" (14%).

The Mercury climbed to 67 per cent when more distant fans are excluded and, presumably, if you took the casual fans into account would be the clear leader. VOTV rises to 47 per cent when local supporters are taken out and 51 per cent among 26-44 year olds.

RTM also reached 44 per cent in the transmission area, while Kent Today's score improved, predictably enough, as the sample stretched into Kent.



# New plans to raise the roof

**Rick Everitt reports on a scheme that could boost Valley capacity to about 18,000 in the long term**

With the east stand rapidly taking shape, Charlton have turned their attention to the other side of the pitch and announced plans to reshape the west stand during the summer.

It emerged before Christmas that the temporary seating was set to be replaced with a permanent steel and concrete platform, allowing some facilities to be accommodated underneath it and releasing some of the portable buildings.

In the short term, these are likely to be limited to toilets and refreshment bars, with the existing hospitality and office accommodation remaining in place. But Charlton director Martin Simons told VOTV that this would still amount to a saving of £130,000 on the annual rent for the seats and cabins.

This would go a long way towards bridging the gap between the expected Football Trust grant of £5-600,000 (the balance of their £2m entitlement after the east stand) and the projected cost of £780,000.

There will also be a new directors' box with its own dedicated access and a sponsors seating area. Stand capacity would rise to approximately 3,000, which would lift the ground limit to around 15,000, although east stand capacity now appears to have fallen to about 5,800.

More interesting, perhaps, was the news that the

club is looking to replace the propped roof with a cantilever structure at a future date, with an extension back and along the pitch.

No additional grant funding would be available for this under the present set-up, so it is bound to be contingent on the kind of increase in attendances that will only follow promotion.

Nonetheless, it is good to know that the club is not reconciled to retaining the propped roof indefinitely. It was much improved by the work carried out last summer, but it still isn't good enough to meet modern requirements.

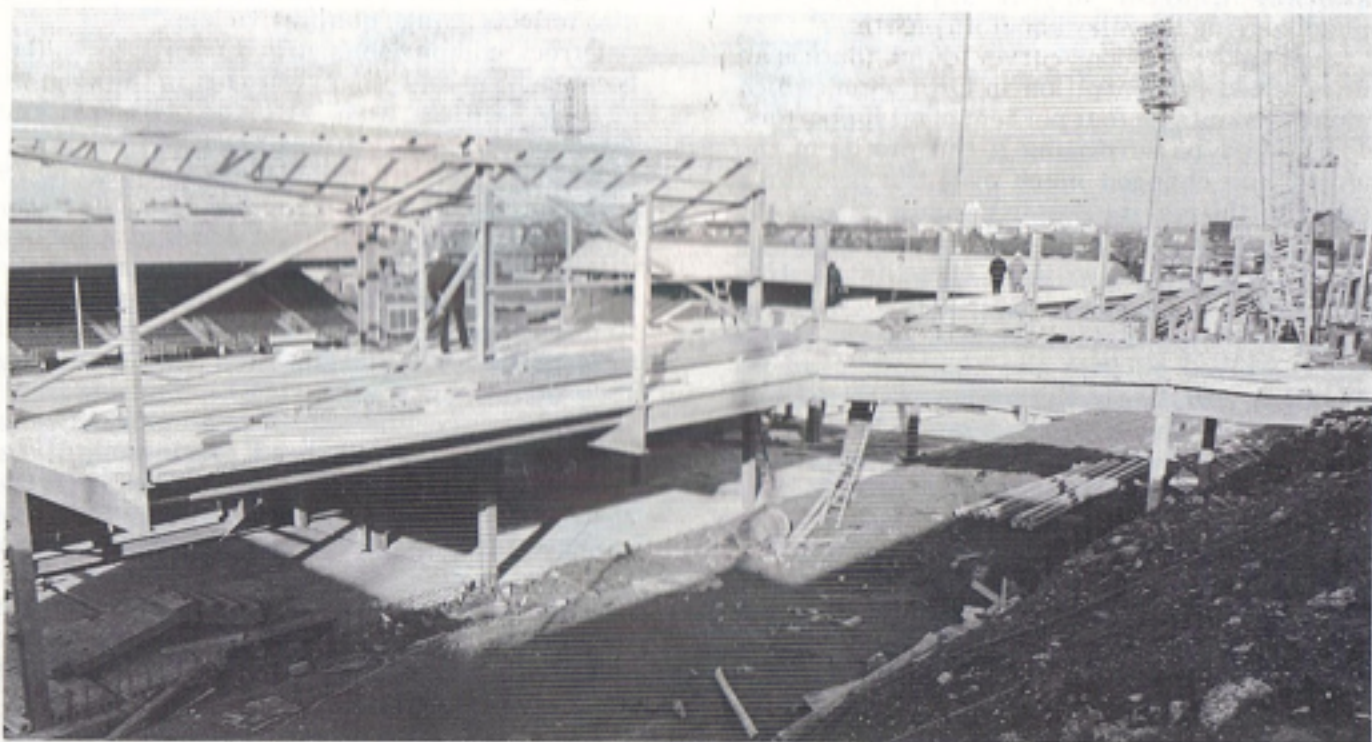
The extended roof would cover the area presently occupied by the dressing rooms and would provide space for these, the offices and hospitality units to be incorporated.

Simons suggested, however, that due to the excessive cost of the hospitality unit, in particular, its inclusion under the stand remains a priority and this might well precede the enlargement of capacity on the west side to the projected 6,000 plus.

Back on the east flank, concrete terracing on which the seats will be installed is complete and work has been continuing on the roof this week. The high-level access ramp to the Bartram Gate, which will provide wheelchair access and emergency egress is in place.

Mowlem are contracted to complete work in time for the Southend game on April 2nd, although the club remains hopeful that the stand will actually be ready for the Wolves match a week earlier.

Wolves seem likely to be able to fill the south stand and since by that stage Charlton will presumably be either in or out of the promotion



*Walk this way: the high-level emergency exit from the stand, which will double as a disabled entrance*



**Shining example: the striking new 9,000-seater stand at Leicester City's Filbert Street ground**

picture, we would then have the appetising possibility of selling out the east stand on its debut.

The fact that unless Charlton revise the present plan for admission arrangements many of the home supporters will probably not get into the stand until half-time is another matter!

It is profoundly to be hoped that we do not have to endure an afternoon of complete and utter chaos before the club addresses this problem. But don't bet on it!

If the builders do make it for Wolves, we have only four more, relatively unattractive League games to suffer the indignity of the present limitations - Grimsby, Sunderland, Watford and Bristol City.

On the other hand, we'd have the possibility of five-figure gates for Wolves, Southend, Nottingham Forest and Middlesbrough, all of whom ought to bring a substantial visiting contingent. (Well,



Middlesbrough ARE a big club, aren't they?)

Providing Charlton remain in promotion contention, only the penultimate Valley fixture, against Peterborough, seems likely to fall below the present capacity. And by then things could have reached the stage at which Charlton fans will turn out regardless of the opposition.

## Christmas sell-outs boost Valley average

Two sell-out crowds over Christmas surprised Charlton officials, especially in the wake of the Southend debacle, and lifted the club's average for the season to a healthy 7,679.

They came hard on the heels of the disappointing 6,869 for Pompey, a figure probably depressed by the torrential rain. Chris Parkes reported virtually zero ticket sales on the day.

Tranmere has been the only other game to see substantial numbers of empty seats, in part attributable to the limited number able to travel from Birkenhead in midweek.

It's worth recording that if Tranmere remains Charlton's lowest League attendance, it will represent the highest bottom crowd of the season since 1975/76 (York: 6,916).

And an indication of the extent to which gates are climbing comes from comparison with the last full season at The Valley (1984/85), when no less than SEVENTEEN of the 21 games attracted crowds smaller than 6,639.

### How attendances compare 1991-94

		93/94	92/93	91/92
Birmingham City	**92.5%	7,788	*4,445	
Tranmere Rovers	**78.9%	6,639	8,337	*7,645
Bolton Wanderers	**89.5%	7,531		
Millwall	**99.1%	<b>8,344</b>	*7,527	*8,177
Crystal Palace	95.0%	7,903		
Leicester City	99.3%	8,254	*4,107	*15,357
Oxford Utd	93.9%	7,811	7,287	*4,101
Derby County	97.7%	8,123	7,802	*6,602
Notts County	85.1%	7,078	<b>8,337</b>	
Luton Town	89.9%	7,570	*6,302	
Portsmouth	82.6%	6,869	8,337	*5,707
Stoke City	99.2%	<b>8,250</b>		
West Brom	99.5%	<b>8,272</b>		
Barnsley	87.6%	7,286	6,370	*4,581
<b>Average</b>	<b>92.2%</b>	<b>7,694</b>	<b>6,885</b>	<b>7,453</b>

**Bold:** all tickets sold, but some unclaimed *Italic:* live TV  
\* At Upton Park \*\* Based on 8,416 capacity



# New boys hold the financial key

As Charlton's share issue begins to take off, Rick Everitt has a long, hard look at the club's books

Charlton's share issue enters its crucial second month with its success still very much in the balance.

By the middle of this week it was nearing the £450,000 mark, although that included £100,000 put in by the biggest existing shareholder, Richard Murray, when the total failed to reach the underwritten £400,000 by Wednesday, January 19th. However, it is understood that the four directors involved have waived their underwriting commission.

Even if no more money came in, the club would still have to pay out at least £66,000 of the cash on fees for the professional work involved in making the issue. These charges rise as more money comes in.

With £500,000 to find on the east stand, the board is likely to judge the scheme on whether it breaks through the £1m mark by the end of the offer period, February 25th.

And that is likely to hinge on whether or not any prospective directors come forward at the £250,000 level. Discussions have been going on, but so far it's understood the total includes just one £75,000 associate director.

Simple mathematics dictated that the top end investors would make or break the scheme

and that remains the case, although it's probably fair to say the club is slightly disappointed by the general response so far. Of course, they didn't help themselves by launching it in Christmas week, the delay a consequence of some last-minute fine-tuning.

The big surprise was the decision to put The Valley - owned separately from the football club through Charlton Holdings Limited - on the table.

That meant creating a new company, Charlton Athletic PLC, which would retain the division of the assets to protect the ground in the event of the football company going bust, but give fans part-ownership that precious asset, too.

Other surprises included the decision to put £1.75m-worth of shares up for grabs, which if fully taken up would put 26 per cent of the club in new hands, and news about the ownership of the training ground.

Although there was initial confusion about this - even among the directors! - it eventually transpired that Charlton Holdings had agreed to buy Mike Norris's former half of the Sparrows Lane site for £135,000, with the payment deferred for up to five years.

The other half is held in trust by the family of chairman Roger Alwen and the football club has a ten-year lease at £25,000 per annum, commencing October 1993. The accounts revealed that Alwen is also paid a salary of £24,000 in respect of his work as chief executive.

As expected, the chairman's shareholding has fallen below that of his deputies Murray and Martin Simons, with Mike Stevens closing fast and both Richard Collins and Derek Ufton taking shares for the first time recently.

At the time of the issue's launch, the holdings stood at:

Richard Murray	1.39m	27.7%
Martin Simons	1.32m	26.1%
Roger Alwen	1.20m	23.9%
Mike Stevens	1.03m	20.6%
Richard Collins	0.08m	1.5%
Derek Ufton	0.01m	0.2%

Collins shareholding appears to derive almost entirely from work done on The Valley by the Kennedy Woodward Partnership, the Valley architects in which he is a senior partner. The club incurred £354,000 on expenditure with the firm in the year

*Services rendered: Richard Collins has joined the ranks of the shareholders*

ending 1993, which included the return to The Valley.

And the huge burden that placed on the club is underlined by the £4.1m cost of refurbishing the ground in that year alone.

That sum dwarfs the £1.1m VIP receipts, which are revealed to have been diminished by £100,000 at the hands of the Customs and Excise as VAT. Unless an appeal is successful, the club could lose another £48,000 on top of that.

But if returning was expensive, the necessity of doing so is underlined by the record after-tax loss of £980,000 in 1992, the full season spent at Upton Park. The football company lost another £601,000 in the year to 1993.

That left the club a frightening £4.7m in the red, but £4.5m of debt has been wiped away by the directors converting their outstanding loans to shares in preparation for the issue.

What the balance sheet doesn't show is the £3m valuation of the current squad - whose registrations revert to the League in the event of the club going bust. And both Football Trust and other grants, plus the VIP money, which together represent £1.8m, are treated as deferred income and released into the profit and loss account over time.

The club's wage bill has risen every year since relegation to the current division, reaching £1.8m in 1993. That compares with match receipts of only £1.1m and income earned by the commercial department which had declined from £138,000 in 1990 to £63,000 in the year of the return to The Valley.

The major factor must be the loss of the Woolwich Building Society as sponsor, although that does not seem to explain why only £80,000 was generated in the year to 1992.

Another alarming slump came in programme profitability, where the sharp improvement in editorial quality has coincided with a steady decline in income generated. The two aren't necessarily related, since the most money is to be made from large print runs, not good housekeeping. A crowd limit of 8,300 at The Valley effectively makes big profits impossible.

Among deals involving the directors, Simons' key role in financing the acquisition of the ground is confirmed in the shape of a £1.25m loan from his company Plexford Limited, for which he received £86,000 interest in 1993. Charlton Holdings granted Charlton (1984) Limited a 20-year lease which restricts use of the site to relevant activity.

Valley developers Kier are the club's other chief creditor, with £823,000 outstanding to them for work on refurbishing the ground at year end 1993. The debt is being repaid on an interest-free basis at £200,000 a year, although interest becomes payable if Charlton default at any time.

On a lighter note, Stevens' American Nameplate Company provided £34,000-worth of signs and nameplates in the 12 months to 1993.





# Airman Brown's Diary

## SIZE MATTERS

Take a good look at the Charlton team picture reproduced in the share prospectus and subsequent home programme for the West Brom match. Notice anything odd? Well, some of the Viglen logos are smaller than others. It seems that in the rush to get their new sponsor's name on the shirts for the Luton away game, someone failed to realise the maximum size of shirt advertising allowed had changed significantly since the Woolwich logo was last incorporated.

## NO COMMENT

Another puzzling development from the commercial department has been the use of quotes from Clubcall in the advert on the back of the Mercury. One could understand this ploy if the sentence quoted was perceptive or especially meaningful, but instead they appear to be selected for the quality of being trite or banal, such as "I was very happy to score a goal, hopefully I'll get another one soon". Is the person responsible trying to promote Charlton Clubcall or sabotage it?

## VERY MUCH SO

Kevin Nolan took similar exception to Alan Pardew's remark on RTM to the effect that he had been "disappointed" by Burnley. We all know what Alan meant, but as Kevin pointed out he personally was absolutely delighted by them. He'd only have been disappointed if they'd won.

*Do YOU have information for Airman Brown?*

*Don't delay, contact him today at PO Box 387, London SE9 6EH.*



## WINNING TRIO

My favourite recent comment, however, was that attributed to Alan McLeary in the Burnley programme to the effect that "it is good to see the three South London clubs doing so well." Good? What's good about it?

## LOSS LEADER

Careful study of the share prospectus has led a number of supporters to enquire after the health of the club shop, which was carrying an extraordinary £53,000 of stock at the end of the last financial year. Indeed, the difficulty of identifying its profit level among the mass of figures led one fan to raise the question with director Richard Murray at the January meeting of the Medway Addicks. Whereupon Murray imparted the extraordinary news that once its shared overheads are taken into account, the shop "does not make money".

As in any business, there must be a large doubt over such a venture if it makes no positive contribution to overall finances. If the board is unable to think of a change which would improve the shop's viability, Airman Brown is only too willing to be of service. Why not close it down altogether and rent the premises out as an enlarged office for CASC?

## BARGAIN BUY

One thing that you will find in the club shop which is value for money, however, is Anthony Bristowe's 1950 club history, which incidentally sold 250 copies in Bexleyheath WH Smith's during December. Voice subscriber EAG Wilson writes from Hereford to point out just what good value this publication is. At £3.50 it has increased in price 20 times over the years from the original 3s6d. A pint of beer, over the same span, has rocketed by between 50 and 70 times. I wonder how much replica kit, if available, would have been in 1950!

*Required reading: LWT's Jim Rosenthal gets our slant on the station's Tranmere obsession, at the Back to The Valley dinner*







*Sign here: a starstruck George Best gets Scott Minto's autograph at the Back to The Valley nosh-up*

## TRAVEL BLUES

The third round FA Cup draw is a time of excitement for some and apprehension for others. CASC travel organiser Wendy Perfect worked out from Crystal Palace's appearance out of the bag as number ten that Charlton would be drawn as nine. She was therefore horrified when the dreaded digit emerged as visitors to St James Park, Newcastle. Hours of work organising dozens of coaches loomed. But relief was at hand. For happily she had forgotten Coventry City. Charlton were number eight.

## YOU'VE BEEN FRAMED

Similarly, her husband Steve did not enjoy the auction conducted by Steve Sunderland during that evening's Back to The Valley anniversary bash at the Swallow Hotel, Bexleyheath. Despite the former assuming statuesque immobility, Sunderland repeatedly announced that Perfect had offered increasingly large amounts for a framed picture of The Valley. Eventually, the mystery was solved. The bidder was in fact Charlton auditor Peter Tegg. Meanwhile, the saga of the picture continued later that evening, when the normally graceful Ben Tegg managed to tread on it, breaking the glass.

## WRONG NUMBERS

However, Airman Brown did enjoy Sunderland's mid-evening announcement to the 300-strong audience at the dinner that he had just received the official attendance from club secretary Chris Parkes. "It's eleven!" he reported.

## PALACE MALICE

Dear me, the Palace chappies over at Eagle Eye seemed to be a bit excited. A recent issue devoted two pages and a slice of editorial to putting us straight over the rivalry business. There isn't any between us, apparently. Definitely not. No way. Over and over again.

Mind you, we're a drab, uninteresting side, we've all got dodgy haircuts, our colours are "uninspired" (!), our name is dull and we come from a "dull part of London". You can't quarrel with that, can you? After all, what's the royal and historic maritime borough of Greenwich got to compare with the err... the pubs in South Norwood and... err... that big IKEA in Croydon. No, if you want rivalry, Brighton's the place to go. After all, lads, no danger of losing to them.

But there's more. Editor John Ellis writes: "Charlton are just annoying, a bit like one of those small excuses for a dog. The sort that just get in your way and on your nerves, jumping up for attention or making out they are bigger than they really are."

Apparently, our entire catchment area features on the back of our match ticket (a good joke that, I have to admit, all the better for being so wide of the mark. How's their Canterbury branch doing?). And what about a decent lie to finish off. Yes, why not. According to David Mearns, "Charlton raised their prices for the big club visitors when Palace went to The Valley and we reduced ours for the minnows" when the Addicks visited Selhurst. Sorry, David, but that's what we charged for Barnsley, too.



## Welcome, BBC TV. But where were you for Burnley?

Copy of letter sent to the BBC's Desmond Lynam:

Dear Mr LYNAM,

We are writing to you on the issue of fair media coverage of football. We are both loyal supporters of Charlton Athletic, and on Saturday, January 8th, were more than dismayed to find on Football Focus and then later on Match of the Day no coverage whatsoever of Charlton's third round match against Burnley.

We appreciate that the third round included many interesting ties, but thought that a rematch of the 1947 Cup Final between the above sides deserved at least a mention in the preview. Every other match seemed to fit nicely into a category upon which the BBC's football sage, Alan Hansen, could express his wisdom and opinion.

The greatest disappointment, however, fell after the above mentioned game, which, in case you are not aware, was won by Charlton 3-0.

Charlton displayed probably the most professional performance of the day, with the higher division side confidently dispatching their lower division opponents.

Match of the Day, hosted by yourself that evening, merited that this professional performance (taking our bias into consideration) was not even worthy of a mention. Okay, so your cameras were not there - fair enough, but at least mention the result.

Charlton supporters have become very much hardened by the way the football media treats their beloved local team. We are aware that, apart from our football, there is nothing they would find particularly appealing about the club.

We are aware that we haven't got a particularly witty or quoteworthy manager (Birmingham, Sheffield United), or an ex-superstar footballer as boss (Newcastle, Spurs and perhaps even Brighton). Neither have we players of the notoriety of Aldridge, Collymore, Bull, Gabbiadini or Speedie, nor a chequebook-wielding benefactor.

So when a team such as ourselves puts in a good professional performance in a challenge cup known throughout the world, giving every single fan in the stadium at that game something to cheer about, don't you think that the rest of the nation's Match of the Day audience should at least hear the result? We do.

Please don't think we're moaning just for the sake of it. It's just that

*No sign of the BBC - perhaps they couldn't get tickets!*

the FA Cup third round gives teams like us a fair chance for a bit of your national coverage - a bit of recognition.

Everyone else seemed to get it on Saturday, but it was not to be for Charlton.

It seems that unless your centre-forward's a milkman, your manager's just resigned or your team is worth the equivalent of Van Gogh's The Flowers, then sorry but you'll have to score 20 before we'll mention you.

To rub salt into the wound, Match of the Day repeated the very same goals that had been shown on Saturday night on their Sunday programme.

This featured Sheffield United (funny manager and forward who didn't shave until their team got eliminated from last year's competition) versus Manchester United (the team that everybody loves, with the most skilful, entertaining and good-looking players in the world, who can beat anybody, except if they happen to be a bunch of part-timers from Turkey).

And why exactly did the BBC decide to show this enthralling encounter? It was a repeat of the fifth round match last year, of course. Oh, what a coincidence!

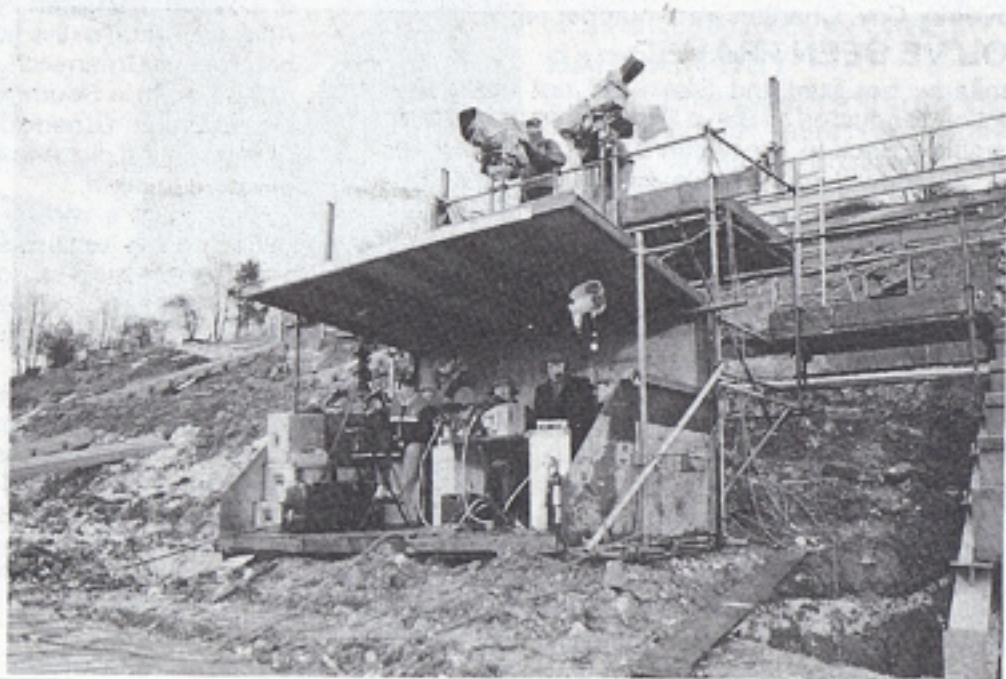
Yours, on behalf of every single disappointed Charlton fan on Saturday night,  
TIM BUSH and STEVEN DENNARD, Halfway Street, Sidcup

Dear Messrs BUSH and DENNARD,

Thank you for your letter. Apologies for not showing the match between Charlton and Burnley. We had to make choices and obviously we made the wrong one for you.

If Charlton progress much further you will no doubt see them on the box.

DES LYNAM, BBC Television





## THE AXE MAN COMETH

Readers of the local press may have seen that a rival bid has been made for the RTM radio franchise, by a consortium calling itself the Thames Radio Group. Much has been made by them of the existing station's shortcomings.

What may not have been clear to readers of the local press, however, is that the man behind the rival bid, Bob Smith, was actually in charge at RTM for much of the time it was doing so badly. Far from being a new broom, Mr Smith is actually someone swept aside to make way for the present set-up.

Of more immediate interest to Charlton fans is his interest - or lack of it - in sport. For it was Bob Smith who fell out with Steve Sunderland when the former changed the timing of the Charlton Chat programme without notice and subsequently shortened it to one hour, as well as axing the live reports from local games on Saturday afternoons.

Smith's press release for the new station promises "improved" sports coverage. His draft schedules would replace the present Saturday away commentaries with a music and scoreflashes programme ending at 5pm, cut the Friday night preview altogether and reduce the Sunday show to one hour, beginning at 5pm. He also likes rugby.

A decision on the award of the new franchise, which begins next January, is expected in March.

## AFTER HENRY

Airman Brown was intrigued to read in the December 1993 edition of Remember, Remember that his VIP contribution was "a gift, a donation". Personally, I would have thought that a ten-year season-ticket at The Valley for £1,250 was a bloody good deal, all things taken into account.

Ben Hayes, who writes what is usually the most readable column in the fanzine under the pseudonym of Henry Irving, appears a trifle confused, not least about the difference between participation and a controlling influence.

If poor Ben thought he was buying the latter with the VIP, he's clearly a little slow. Supporters voting their own representative onto the board is obviously a step forward and the fact that the scheme hasn't developed a proper structure as yet is very regrettable but not terminal. It will.

Contrary to the remarks contained in Remember, Remember, Steve Clarke continues to enjoy the full support of all the other five CASC officers and as far as I am aware the overwhelming majority of the committee. Obviously, individuals differ over tactics from time to time, but the committee is fairly unanimous in its attitude to the current board and the various directors on it.

As for Steve having "a legal duty of confidence" to the rest of the board, which prevents him reporting damning or embarrassing information to supporters, this sounds very nice but has no basis in fact... or law.

In short, much of the substance of the article in question is ill-informed rubbish.

There you are, Ben, we've mentioned your name at last. Gosh, won't you be pleased!

# Book claims to cure 92% of baldies

By SUE EVISON

IT'S the hair-raising new cure for baldness—hanging upside down for four minutes every day.

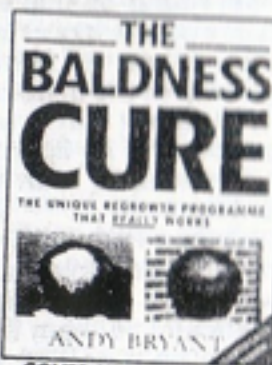
Inventor Andrew Bryant claims his method has a 92 per cent success rate—if it's combined with a healthy diet, simple exercise, more sleep and learning to relax.

And a growing army of baldies swear by it. In his book *The Baldness Cure*, psychotherapist Andrew, 36, tells how his cure centres on inverting—hanging upside down in a special machine. He says: "It's not a magic cure. It involves commitment and effort."

Andrew began researching baldness during his ten years as a City finance broker and developed a programme which he tried on himself in 1991, and then 84 men over six months.

Fellas with a bald spot at the crown shrunk it in a month by an average of 1.5sq ins. Even Labour MP Bryan Gould says: "I've followed it and I've grown new hair." Here five men tell how Andrew's £423 programme worked for them.

*The Baldness Cure* by Andrew Bryant, published by Vermilion, costs £6.99.



COVER-UP... the book

*Where are they now (no 83) - obviously an attempt to get back in favour at Charlton by currying favour with director Richard Murray, Steve Gritt... or even Rick Everitt!*

*Copy of letter to Roger Alwen from a Millwall fan*

Dear Mr ALWEN,

I must write to you in admiration of your actions regarding violent play by footballers that is unpunished by the referee. I refer, of course, to the FA enquiry into the behaviour of Pat Van den Hauwe at a recent match.

The media reported you as saying that "this sort of thing cannot be allowed to happen" and I quite agree.

On Sunday, December 12th, I watched the televised match between Charlton and Portsmouth. Soon after the start, Carl Leaburn violently assaulted a Portsmouth player by punching him in the face, an incident not punished by the referee.

This was seen by a large television audience and commented upon by the presenter, Brian Moore. I trust you will pursue this incident with your usual vigour.

KEITH WILLIAMS, Chinbrook Road, Lee



## **ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY**

Dear VOICE,

Somehow I find myself with the awesome task of introducing thirty Hungarian English undergraduates at the University of Budapest to the subtleties and complexities of Charlton Athletic's relationship with The Valley.

This madcap scheme came about after a more traditional lecture on Hi-Tech architecture when I started chatting to my host for the day John Drew, who is on the staff in Budapest.

What began with a walk down memory lane - John claiming that as a young boy he accompanied the great Sam Bartram, matchball and all, from his sports shop into The Valley before an FA Cup tie against Tottenham - ended up with an invitation to give a lecture on February 17th.

My claims to Charlton pedigree are not of the John Drew calibre. I went to my first match with my Dad in the 1969-70 season, when Charlton scored both goals in a 1-1 draw at Vicarage Road, Peter Reeves attempted headed clearance skimming off the top of his head and past Charlie Wright.

My first home match was my birthday treat later that year, when Charlton lost to Blackpool after being two goals up.

I inherited my Charlton genes from my Dad, who was the son of the vicar of Angell Town, Brixton (St. John's, Angell Town).

Having supported Charlton from Rickmansworth, Bognor Regis, Epsom and now Hungary, where I have been living for the past five years, I'm certainly no hard-core SE7 type, especially considering Dad and I benefitted greatly from the move to Selhurst.

The haunting atmosphere of that 3-0 "home" defeat of Carlisle United in November 1985, the sheer emptiness, the bleak dogged determination of the fans and the effort of the players, will always remain a great Charlton moment. It's no coincidence that I ended up in Hungary, land of perpetual pessimism.

Thus, as one of Charlton's loyal yet not always present fans, I feel the time is right to make Hungary aware of the Battle for The Valley, to refer to the title of a fine book I once read on the topic.

Hungarian football is going through a crisis. Even the most optimistic observers are wondering whether it isn't terminal. The national team is about 50-something in the world and the fans seem more prepared to reminisce about the "match of the century" (England 3 Hungary 6, November 25th, 1953).

Last month the players concerned, including a few from England, spent three days celebrating it, when only a few days earlier

Hungary had just managed to beat Luxembourg in front of a crowd of 1,500. The Charlton spirit, loyalty to the club, the desire to play on a particular patch of turf and ability to turn dreams into reality is what is missing here.

Only one club, Ferencvaros, enjoys anything like mass support. The others pull anything between 1-7,000 for a home game. The grounds are in pitiful state, not all those in the first division even have floodlights.

During the recent bout of cold weather before the winter break, one club, Bekescsaba - currently up there with the leaders - even played their home match at a local non-league club's ground because their own pitch was frost bound.

Fans are resigned to the fare that's put in front of them; those with an ounce of common sense don't even turn up. The players are fat and lazy. They don't try because they don't have to, since the league and the fans don't demand it. Those players who have some ability, like the infamous Detari, angle at the opportunity of earning bigger bucks abroad.

The tragedy is that most people are beyond caring and if the fans don't do anything nobody will. Hopefully familiarity with the return to The Valley will provide some kind of recipe for action and possibly success. The sooner the authorities realise that it's the fans money which is paying for their three-day celebrations the better.

Fortunately, Hungary has a rich tradition of sports writing, particularly about football, and what I have written above isn't new to Hungarian ears. Hungary's "enfant terrible" of football criticism, Antal Vegh, has managed to offend all parties concerned in the running of the game.

As early as 1983, Vegh was asking: "Why is Hungarian football sick?" Come the six-nil defeat at the hands of the Soviets during the Mexico World Cup, all hell broke loose when Vegh wrote his "Gyogyit6atlan" (Terminally 6), in which he claimed that Hungarian football was sick to the very core.

Unfortunately, Vegh was unable to posit any solutions. This is where Charlton Athletic FC could prove useful, the fillip Hungarian football needs. A solution that works.

I haven't got round to writing my lecture yet, but I know that I will have little to offer that will go as far or beyond your magnum opus, apart from the occasional anecdote.

I will, of course, respect my sources at all times, so if there's a sudden demand for your expertise in Hungary over the next year, the lecture may be the reason why.

MATTHEW PALMER, Eger, Hungary

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**Battle for The Valley - only £5 from the CASC cabin at The Valley**

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## ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY

Dear VOICE,

I feel compelled to respond to the rose-tinted views expressed on Carl Leaburn in Northern Notebook (VOTV46).

It would appear that our correspondent has overlooked the fact that as leader of our attack, Leaburn's prime responsibility is to score goals!

I grant you that the lad puts himself about and works hard, but a striker he ain't. His record of goals scored is, let's face it, pathetic.

I have been a fan of Charlton for more years than I care to remember and have seen many great players leading our attack, none more so than the late Stuart Leary, both as provider and a scorer of goals.

If Charlton are to realise the ambition of promotion, they clearly need to acquire a quality striker, and one capable of 20 plus goals a season. Sadly, at present there is no such player in sight.

However, Alan and Steve have and are doing the business, so let's hope they can unearth the miracle striker we so urgently need.

**PETER CHAMPION, Lower St, Ninfield**



Dear VOICE,

I went to the Back to The Valley anniversary dinner with my husband last Sunday and very enjoyable it was too. We appreciated the hard work that went into organising the evening.

However, I did not expect to hear four-letter words from the guest speakers and I particularly felt that Mike Osman must have been short of material. Otherwise, why did he resort to long-winded lavatorial "humour" - so called - and details of his own bedroom exploits. I was not impressed. He was not a patch on Kevin Connolly last year.

There were many people sitting around me who were as uncomfortable as I was. This kind of vulgar talk should be kept for men-only gatherings.

I should have thought that Charlton Athletic, with its family image, would want guests at any future function to be able to attend knowing that there would be nothing to upset or offend them.

After all, at The Valley there are signs warning that anyone using foul and abusive language will be ejected.

**ANNE COWAN, Tintagel Road, Orpington**

*Peter Varney writes:*

Dear ANNE,

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter dated 7th December 1993 addressed to Voice of The Valley.

I have to say at the outset that the general reaction to the guest speakers has been very favourable, but I do not exercise any editorial control over their speeches (nor could I!) although I do explain the make-up of the audience, even to the extent of highlighting personalities so they can use them in their material.

I am sorry if your evening was spoilt by one or two of the jokes, but I felt that the vast majority of the material was clean and that everything possible was done to ensure this was the case.

Indeed, although I recall Mike Osman's exchange with Craig Norris about his trip to the toilet, I don't recall the references to Mike's bedroom habits or use of four-letter words.

I thought personally that Mike was very good, but obviously these things are a matter of personal preference.

The football club is, as you say, rightly proud of its family image and I would not want anything I organise to undermine that.

It is always helpful to get feedback in relation to these events and thank you for taking the time to put pen to paper. I hope you will not be deterred from attending any future such events.

**PETER VARNEY, Jackson Road, Bromley**

*Let's twist again: Carl Leaburn celebrates his FA Cup goal against Burnley*



## ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY

Dear VOICE,

The home match against Luton was a sad occasion for me. I know that we won, and the football wasn't too bad, but it was first home game since the death of my father, Roy Moore.

We left his place empty, out of respect I suppose, and as I sat in the next seat memories came flooding back.

I am sure my memories and connections with Charlton are no more special to me than anyone else's are to them, but at that match they had an added poignancy.

My father had been a Charlton supporter for 47 years. In the 50s, he played in the supporters' club football team. He wasn't a bad player, in fact while kicking a ball around outside West Brom's ground, a scout asked him to a trial for their club.

He refused. West Brom was too far away from Charlton, he didn't believe he was good enough, and, on the terraces, he had just met my mother, another supporters' club member.

They were married in 1956 at St Luke's, Charlton. "Robins' Club Romance", said the Kentish Independent. The best man and the bridesmaids were all supporters and I always remember as a child being taken to my Nan's so they could all go to The Valley.

My older brother, for some obscure reason, decided to follow West Ham, so it was left to me to join my father on the East Terrace at The Valley.

I digress from my thoughts at the Luton match. As these memories came flashing back,

it suddenly became crystal clear to me why, apart from economic reasons, people had fought so hard, and it had been so vital, for Charlton Athletic to return to The Valley.

I suddenly realised that those memories, background, my culture, were all based around CAFC at The Valley. Now we are back those memories can be preserved and I feel that, although my father is dead, part of him lives on in the atmosphere around the ground.

To be perfectly honest, it never actually bothered me having to travel to Selhurst Park. I found Upton Park more of a trauma, but then I was pregnant at the time.

No sooner had I had staggered to my feet whenever Charlton scored than everyone else had finished their celebrations and were back in their seats again!

I met my husband, Cliff, on the Sainsbury's Terrace at Selhurst Park, so it wasn't so bad over there.

But at the Luton match I suddenly felt very guilty about my lack of effort to get CAFC back to The Valley. I should have done more.

I suppose I played a small, insignificant part, speaking at the public meeting in 1990. I was unable to stand for the Valley Party as I was a Greenwich employee, but how many other people were like me? Maybe if we had all done more, Charlton could have got home earlier than December 1992.

I believe that since the return, major changes have taken place. One of the greatest achievements has been the changing attitude at the club towards supporters.

I travelled to away matches for a few years, had and have a season ticket, and bought lots of Valley Gold vouchers to use in Mothercare when I was pregnant. But whenever I have needed to deal with the club, I have left there feeling as if I have been mistaken for someone important.

I think that many people have been quite critical of the club's handling of its supporters in the past and I honestly don't know why things have

*Memories: defender Phil Chapple heads Charlton's winner against Luton*





## ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY

improved so much.

I did wonder if the employment of Steve Dixon and Roy King, two vociferous supporters, was a ploy by the club to silence some of its critics, but now I don't believe this was so.

Both men are obviously very good at their jobs. The improvement in the match programme is an indication of that.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank many people, including Charlton Athletic Football Club. Its attitude to my family, and its kindness, support and assistance over the past few months has been superb.

My father was diagnosed as suffering from a malignant brain tumour in April 1993. After major brain surgery, he was not really fit enough to attend the final home match of last season, but Steve Dixon organised a car park permit so that he could come.

Full of hope, my father renewed his season ticket this year and attended all home matches until October. By this time, he was unable to walk and was issued with a wheelchair the day before the Leicester home match.

He was desperate to attend the game, so I telephoned Charlton seeking permission to drive along Harvey Gardens and drop my father off. I spoke to Heather Alwen, who assured me that whatever we needed to get my father to the match would be provided by Charlton.

We accepted a car park permit and proposed to use our usual seats in the south stand by carrying my father down to his place. At the back of the south stand we encountered Barry Nugent, who within minutes had arranged for our transfer to the disabled area.

The following day my father collapsed and was rushed into the Brook, where they discovered the tumour had regrown and he was terminally ill, with weeks to live.

The day before the next home match versus Oxford, his doctors offered him the chance to go out for the afternoon. My father decided he wanted to go to The Valley.

I went down to Charlton and spoke to Sue Davies, then Chris Parkes. Again, the club could not do enough to help, providing car park passes and staff passes to give us access to any area of the ground.

The disabled section was full, so Chris immediately gave us tickets for the directors' box. The attitude of Charlton was that they would do everything they could to make it a special day for my father and my family.

The Oxford match was the last game my father saw. He died peacefully on November 27th.

My father had been a season-ticket holder for most of his 47 years supporting Charlton. I feel that over those two matches, Leicester and Oxford, they repaid his support in full.

I am very grateful to Charlton Athletic, and very grateful to you, Rick Everitt, for the part you played in getting Charlton back to The Valley. I know you were not the only one, but you were an instigator, someone willing to stand up, be counted and take a great deal of criticism.

My father, husband and I were there for the first match back at The Valley, but it is only now that my father is dead that I realise just what it means for Charlton to be home.

I thank you for your part in this, and I thank everyone who played a part.

JOANNA JONES (nee Moore), Fairlawn Avenue, Bexleyheath

Dear VOICE,

Are you impressed with the Charlton programme this year? I certainly am. It's a pity Peter Burrowes does not respond to your occasional barbs and send a few spears back in his column. It would be more fun. But I suppose programmes must err on the side of caution and blandness. Avoid litigation at all costs, eh?

Anyway, speaking of blandness, I enjoyed reading Steve Dixon's "Here's to the next 12 months" address in the WBA programme. How he manages to get 18 sponsor mentions plus five namings of Viglen on the same page and still sound jolly interesting is beyond me.

I know some supporters are more interested in club nitty gritty, such as why the Steve Claridge deal fell apart, but not me. For I am getting quite fascinated by marketing and Steve Dixon is becoming my distant mentor.

However, Steve does have a big problem regarding his name. Every time he uses it he gives free advertising to another famous outlet of computer hardware and electrical goods.

Poor Steve must get very frustrated by his surname. It is surely only a matter of time before we open our programmes to page 17 and find 'Marketing with Steve Viglen!' Or, even better, Steve Viglen Laidlaw-Ford!

In fact, if Steve had his way, the whole first-team squad would change their names by deed poll to Viglen. That would considerably improve our sponsorship deal. Sports commentators like old David Coleman, who frequently forget names, would have an easy time: "It's Viglen to Viglen, who curls the ball in for Carlo Viglen..."

This is not as far fetched as you might imagine, for all the Pakistani cricket team are called Mohammed, and I once taught a class in Gravesend where half the class were named Patel.

I do draw the line at Viglen Athletic. Steve, you have been warned!

RICHARD KEMBLE, Kingfisher Drive, Ham, Richmond, Surrey



## ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY

Dear VOICE,

I should like to thank all the people responsible for creating the fine magazine that is the VOTV. It is such a great boon for an exile here in Australia to read all the details of the team and the club.

I would also like to comment on the failure of the British teams to qualify for the finals of the World Cup in the USA.

It has always seemed strange to me that the UK is allowed to enter four provincial teams in the World Cup, yet only allowed one national team in the Olympics.

It is only a matter of time before FIFA restricts the British entry to just one side, probably for the 1998 competition in France. I could agree that the Australians need to be decolonised, but the British certainly need to be detribalised as far as sport goes.

The game needs reform: a national administration, a national league and a national team.

Anyway, off my soapbox now to say how good it feels to see Charlton at the top of the First Division and express the fond hope that they are still there at the end of the season.

**ROBERT TUCKWELL, Kambah, Canberra, Australia**

Dear VOICE,

Over the last month or so the form of Mike Salmon and Peter Garland has been sadly lacking. So isn't it time Steve and Alan introduced John Vaughan and Linvoy Primus as replacements?

On the share issue, if Charlton give the money to Steve and Alan, how about the management buying these players in the next few months?

1. Hyde (Wycombe)
2. Thackeray (Rochdale)
3. Horton (Wycombe)
4. Hopkins (Reading)
5. Tutil (York)
6. Ntarmark (Walsall)
7. Carroll (Wycombe)
8. Stuart (Rochdale)
9. Portway (Gravesend)
10. Heath (Burnley)
11. Micklewhite (Gillingham),
12. Haw (Southport)
14. Fuller (Southport)
- GK. Cooksey (Bromsgrove)

This team, I'm sure, will bring promotion in May. I would be interested to read what other supporters think.

**JONATHAN ACWORTH, Woodlands Avenue, Sidcup**

☐ I should imagine they're probably thinking the same thing as me!

Dear Mr ALWEN,

I write to express my concern regarding the sale of tickets for the fourth round FA Cup game versus either Blackburn or Portsmouth.

I phoned on Monday morning (Jan 17th) at about 10.15-10.20am to find out details of tickets for both members and season-ticket holders. I was informed that the club had sold out of all tickets bar those of season-ticket holders. Understandably, I was quite concerned. I myself am a season-ticket holder, but my brother and two friends are members. None of them have tickets for the game.

After asking some questions of a senior member of the box-office staff, I discovered that Charlton have 6,000 members (including season-ticket holders). Yet out of the 6,500-odd seats available for the home fans, 1,000 went on general sale in the south stand straight away. The remainder were divided between members and their guests.

This could mean up to 2500 members (the club's preferential customers) can't even see the team. I find this quite unbelievable. The box office staff see the problem as just to get rid of tickets a.s.a.p. as per the board's instructions. Surely this attitude is unprofessional, short-sighted and ill-fated. The fans understand the situation is not easy, but you must prioritize the needs of your customers.

I was told over the phone that I was lucky to have a ticket saved till Thursday by the box office, and that I'd left it till the last minute. How can I leave things late, when we do not even know who we're playing against yet? If that was the attitude by 10.30 on a Monday morning, how were the members treated by late Monday afternoon - still three days short of the deadline? I worry that Charlton's view as a whole is very short-sighted and that of a small club. Even with a capacity of 15,000, will the club look to get rid of tickets rather than satisfy the needs of the paying customer?

We are already treated to poor stewarding both inside and outside the ground, with heavy queueing at the north turnstiles this year (the south stand was just as bad last season!).

Please in future try to let the fans know the situation via the programme and over the tannoy at half-time. We knew there was a good chance of winning against Burnley, yet the fan is expected to make assumptions. As I write (Tuesday), 2,000 season-ticket holders have not yet applied for tickets. I think that tells us something.

Also, why not give out vouchers for big games rather than the guest system that runs at the moment? Against Burnley that might have worked, but when a more exciting contest comes along...

As a final point, the box office did say that you were running a business. I did remind them that your business is customer-based. Customers might well go elsewhere if they are treated badly. Look down the road at New Cross and see how their gates have suffered. I await your comments with interest.

**IAN KILPATRICK, Sevenoaks Road, Ightham, Sevenoaks**



## ECHOES ACROSS THE VALLEY

Dear VOICE,

I would like to raise a point about the view in certain areas of the ground.

Like yourself, Rick, I was seated in Block E in the Covered End for the Cup game against Burnley. However, while you had the good luck to move several seats along your row during the final few minutes before kick-off, I was less fortunate.

I actually prefer the view from the south stand, where I obtained seats for the Stoke game, but because of the general confusion about numbers of Burnley fans in the south stand for the Cup tie, I thought it safer to sit in the north for this game (giving the Horse and Groom a miss as well).

I had purchased seats for myself and a couple of friends for both games well before Christmas; tickets for the matches were plentiful. So off I went driving down Floyd Road with my Stoke and Burnley tickets, looking forward to the forthcoming festive football.

I had a great evening spent in the south stand watching the Addicks knock the stuffing out of Stoke, prompting eager anticipation for the Cup game.

So imagine my disappointment as I sat in my seat and looked up to admire Colin Powell's handiwork, only to be greeted by one of supporting pillars to the Covered End roof obstructing my entire view of the south goalmouth and middle of the pitch!

In the music business, tickets are sold at a discounted rate for "restricted views" such as this. I am not proposing such a drastic course of action. However, I would have thought that such seats could be flagged on the club's database? This way, supporters would at least know when they need to bring a periscope!

Of course, all of this may be academic, because I can reveal that the directors have other plans that have not been disclosed to fans. I enclose a photo displaying the final phase of The Valley's construction!

DERRICK HARRIS,  
The Green,  
Bexleyheath

Dear VOICE,

Munch . . . munch . . . munch . . . munch. This is me eating humble pie . . . mmm! It's quite nice pie this!

I am eating said pie because of the events which followed my letter in VOTV44. In this, I made several points about monetary matters, and I must apologise to the CAFC marketing department . . . oh ok, mainly to Steve Dixon!

1) Shirt sponsorship: Viglen, well done! (They must have matched my £100.)

2) Share scheme: well done again.

3) Steve Clarke: frequent column in the programme now.

4) Company finances: share prospectus details.

As this pie tastes so nice, I thought I might try for another slice. So here goes with another few suggestions:

1) Sign Alan Shearer.

2) Under soil heating / fully covered stadium

3) Carl Leaburn for England

4) Real ale in the east stand bars

Looking forward to that next slice!

H CLARK, Glen View Road, Bickley

### NEXT POST

**Keep those letters coming! Now you can fax them if you choose on 081-473 6829. We hope to bring the next Voice out for the Sunderland game, with the last date for letters being February 17th.**

## The valleys' new role



part of an ongoing programme of improvements