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We are Tamworth From the Lamb



A brief history of
Tamworth Football Club

Written by and for the fans

Printed in 2011 this book forms part of a multifaceted project which would not have happened had it not been for two reasons.

The Tamworth FC Supporters Club Heritage Project team



There has been an active group of supporters of Tamworth FC since the early days of the club. Through various fundraising initiatives the current Supporters Club, formed in 1995, has helped, and continue to help, fund projects at TFC with the only remit being that it will help or benefit the club and fans away from the field of play.

With other non football based projects happening in Tamworth at a time when football at the highest levels was (and still is) moving seemingly ever further away from its' grassroots, the 75th anniversary of TFC in 2008 provided an ideal chance to highlight the history and exploits of the most popular sporting club in the town in a unique manner.

Thanks to the efforts of previous generations of townsfolk all the playing statistics were available – painstakingly compiled by Club statistician Bob Cooper – while local archives provided a wealth of unearthed or long forgotten information about the club. But it needed an extra ingredient, involvement from the people of Tamworth and those who had contributed to or just simply experienced the on-going story.

Funding for the project was awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a separate 'arm' of the supporters club was created to comply with the HLF's strict application requirements which meant that none of the money received for the project could be used for any means other than telling the rollercoaster story of Tamworth; the football club and people. While the funding received formed an integral part of the project the main aim was to involve the local community as much as possible and engage them in their own history.

The project team would therefore like to thank the people of Tamworth and beyond for embracing the project, its' aims, requests for help and, subsequently, for the numerous contributions.

For more information on our project and the complete statistical history of The Lambs please visit our website www.tamworthfcheritage.co.uk



The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

The HLF sustains and transforms a wide

range of heritage through innovative investment in projects with a lasting impact on people and places. As the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, with around £255million a year to invest in new projects and a considerable body of knowledge and evaluation over 15 years, they are also a leading advocate for the value of heritage to modern life. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, they invest in every part of our heritage. HLF has supported more than 30,000 projects allocating £4.5billion across the UK.

The HLF is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF) which was given the responsibility of distributing a share of money raised through the National Lottery for Good Causes, to heritage across the UK, in 1994. They are a non-departmental public body accountable to Parliament via the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

For further details on this, and a link to the separate work of the NHMF, please visit their website www.hlf.org.uk.

Pictures on front cover:

Top: 1934–35 team

Bottom: 2002–03 league champions

Right: Harry Godfrey

FOREWORD

I am honoured to have been asked to write a welcome for this book about our football club.

Harry Godfrey regularly warned anyone who would listen that large amounts of the club's history would be lost if it wasn't recorded, and although he never got around to writing the book he eagerly spoke about I am sure

It wasn't long before I ventured beyond turnstiles and into the football ground.

Almost 25 years later, when I had established my own business on the Glascote Road I was encouraged to make the step from the terraces into the boardroom and then in the early 1990's the chairman at the time proposed that I should be given the honorary title of President of the football club. It was an honour which I found hard to refuse and a position I have been told I cannot step down from!



Len (right) and Bob Cooper pictured with the Southern League Premier Division Trophy in 2003

Two decades have passed since I took on the role and the club continues to go from strength to strength hitting previously unthought-of heights along with the occasional lows that are an inevitable part of the life of a fan and a football club.

So, as you turn the pages and relive nearly eighty years of the club I am sure that this book will ignite many a

he would have given this project his whole hearted approval, if not actually contributed large sections of it without a second's thought.

There are people alive today who can still remember the club's first season at The Jolly Sailor ground although a lot of the faces that have graced the terraces and the field of play are now sadly no longer with us but it is heartening to know that they have all been remembered in some way, large or small, by the group of fans who have worked on this book almost eight decades since the first thoughts of forming Tamworth Football Club were printed in the Tamworth Herald.

After growing up in Barrow and then serving as an engineer in the Second World War I met my wife, Edna while we were stationed near Evesham and we moved to the Tamworth area once our service ended. I had family living near The Lamb Inn and was puzzled why it was so hard to get down the road at certain times of the week.

seemingly forgotten memory, whilst also sparking a new desire to continue experiencing everything that goes with being part of the large, extended family, as it did in me all those years ago.

But Tamworth FC is not just about the game of Association Football. It is impossible to recall all the names and faces of supporters, players and club officials that I have met, chatted to and in a large number of cases become close friends with over the years as the reach of the football club extends well beyond the perimeters of the pitch. I cannot think of another area of life that gives us the opportunity to meet so many people and create many lasting memories that will stay with me, and I hope you, forever.

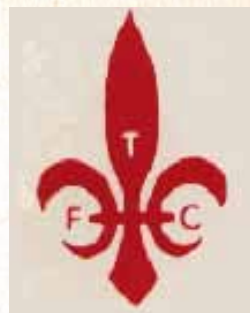
Len Gendle

President

Examples of Tamworth FC kit and programmes indicate that the club did not initially have any formal badge but as the years passed and fabrics and embroidery techniques became more advanced a couple of designs incorporating a Lamb – chosen to reflect the club's nickname – appeared on kits in the 1950s.



On July 01 1966 a 'Fleur-de-Lys' was presented to the club by the Mayor of Tamworth, Councillor W.F.T Willcocks at a Civic Reception, given in honour of the team's successes in the 1965–66 season. This comes from the Tamworth Borough Council coat of arms granted in 1965 (reproduced with thanks, near right), and was adapted to incorporate the club's initials (far right).



Prior to the 1988–89 season Pete Young, club secretary at the time, re-designed the badge after first gaining approval from the council to reproduce certain aspects of the coat of arms within the new design.



The gold on blue 'Saltire in Chief' comes from the arms of the Kingdom of Mercia.

When Offa came to the throne of Mercia in 757 AD, he built a palace in Tamworth, his chief residence.



Strictly speaking, this ornament should be spoken of as the Stafford Knot, rather than the commonly used Staffordshire Knot as it was a badge of the Stafford Family and as such it is linked definitely to the Borough of Stafford. Nevertheless it is included in the design as acknowledgement of the club proudly representing the County.



The horizontal band, known as The Fess of Vair or Fesse Vair, comes from the arms of the Marmion family, Lords of Tamworth from 1014 – 1291.



Tamworth Castle is overlain by a pair of crossed swords which symbolises the 'Champion of England'; the office held by the Marmions during the period 1101–1291.

A TEAM IS BORN

The history of Tamworth Football Club started in April 1933 when Michael Flowers, a London businessman, moved to the area. Concerned that his new home town did not have a senior football team, Mr Flowers wrote to the editor of the Tamworth Herald. On Saturday April 29 1933, the following letter (right) was published

On Saturday April 29 1933, the following was published:

One week later, Mr Flowers had another letter published:

"Sir, may I take this opportunity of thanking those who have responded to my letter regarding Tamworth and a Combination Football Club, which you kindly published in the 'Herald' last week?

"No time has been wasted and a ground has been secured which will hold a 5,000 gate if required. A public meeting is being held on Wednesday next 10th inst at the Jolly Sailor Hotel, Tamworth, at 7pm sharp. Mr W Redfern has kindly consented to act as Chairman.

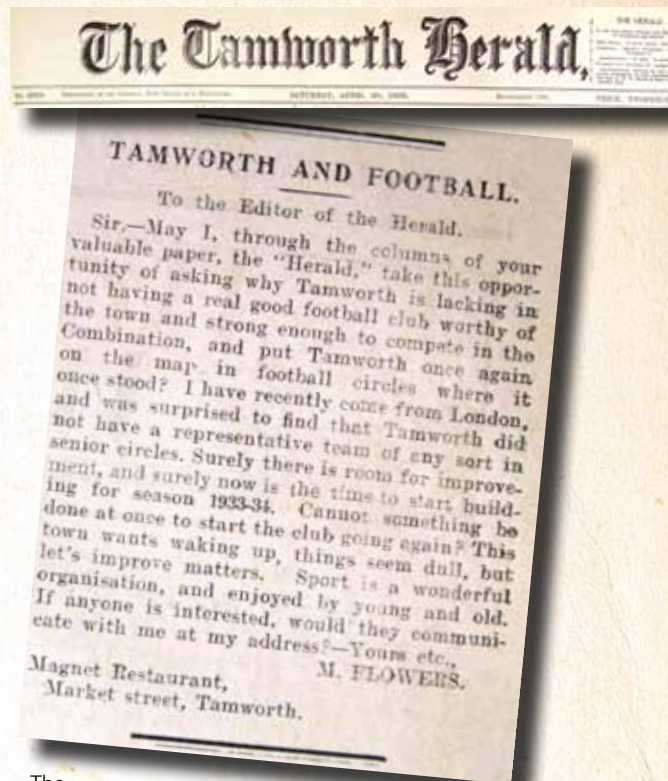
"It is proposed to enter one team in the Birmingham Combination and a reserve team in the Tamworth and Trent Valley League.

"Anyone who is interested in this movement to once again place Tamworth in senior football circles is asked to attend this meeting,

*"Yours etc, M Flowers,
Magnet Restaurant, Market Street"*

The meeting was very well-attended and the first officers and Committee were elected. They were Chairman Mr W Redfern, Secretary Mr M Flowers, Treasurer Mr S Baker, and the committee consisting of Messrs Cuffe, Wragg, Tomson, Reeves, Jones, White and Whittle. The Supporters Club Committee was then elected with the principal Officers being Mr Harold Thompson (Secretary) and Mr Frank Hill (Treasurer).

At a second public meeting, at the Town Hall on Thursday May 18, Mr Flowers said he had high hopes of getting former Blackburn Rovers player Sid Puddefoot, who had twice been capped for England, to play for the club.



The question of a ground was discussed but as the managing director of Ind Coope, the owners of the Jolly Sailor ground, was on holiday and the facilities at the Lamb Inn were not up to the required standard, the Mayor Mr G H Jones, who was presiding, ruled that it was a matter for the new committee to decide.

The meeting then elected Mr Jones as president of the club, Mr Flowers as secretary and Mr C Malkin as treasurer with Messrs Wragg, Dawson, Whittle, Rammell, Godfrey, Baker, Spencer, Ramsell, Bird and Wardingley making up the committee.

Supporters' Club secretary Mr Thompson said the subscription would be 3s per member and Mr T Bird suggested they get 1,000 members and collect 1s from each of them each week for ten weeks. This would give the club £500 to start.

A GROUND IS FOUND

The first official committee meeting of the new Tamworth FC was held at the Magnet on Monday May 22 1933. Mick Flowers opened with an urgent appeal to all local tradesmen for financial support to enable the club to go forward on a sound basis and on strict business lines.

A discussion of where the team would play home games proved inconclusive so the meeting moved on to the appointment of a player-manager. Although Sid Puddefoot had attended the meeting to agree terms and Mick Flowers said he thought these were 'quite reasonable,' the committee voted 9-1 not to engage a player-manager on grounds of cost.

At an emergency meeting on Thursday May 25, the debate about a home ground was finally resolved. Mr Flowers said the Castle ground may become available for 1934-5, but not the coming season so the committee were left with a straight choice. Mr Flowers urged them to think not just about the pitch but also the headquarters, dressing-room facilities, position of the ground to help the trade in the town, wet weather and floods, covering etc. After an hour's discussion, a vote was taken which went 5-4 in favour of the Jolly Sailor.

This resulted in the resignation of Mr Malkin and in a letter to the Herald on Saturday June 3, he outlined his strong objections.

"In the opinion of many football enthusiasts who are keen to see Tamworth FC in existence, The Lamb Inn ground is the finest in the district," he wrote. "It never gets flooded, drains very quickly and needs very little improvement to bring it up to the standard of a first-class ground.

"The only drawback at the moment is the lack of baths and dressing accommodation, which Messrs Eadies have

promised to have rectified and put in hand immediately in the event of the club having its headquarters at the Lamb Inn. There is plenty of accommodation for supporters and a car park capable of holding 100 cars.

"With the greatest respect to those who favour the Jolly Sailor ground, I do not think that both grounds have received the consideration to which they are entitled and if the proposed new club is to be made a success, the first thing the committee have to do is to get the best ground in the district."

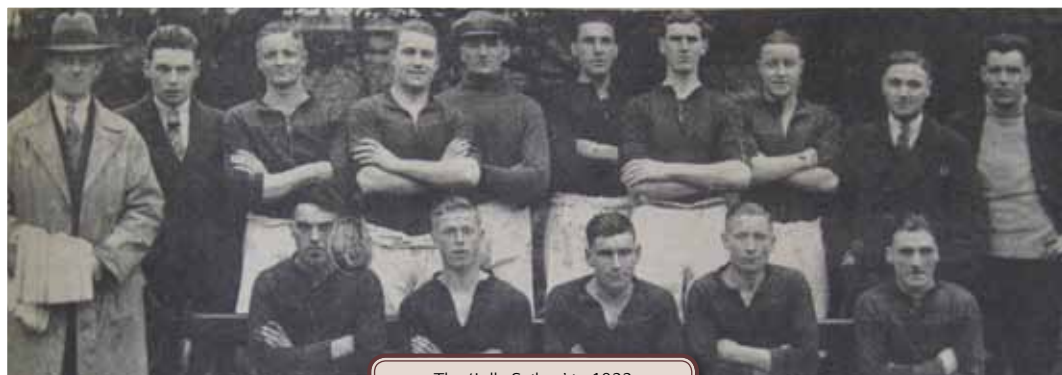
On Saturday June 17 1933, the club were elected into the Birmingham Combination for 1933-34 after which the committee decided to have a reserve team in the first division of the Tamworth & Trent Valley League. The first team would also compete in the Birmingham Senior Cup and the Atherstone Nursing Cup with the reserves entering the Birmingham Junior Cup, the Fazeley Charity Cup, the Polesworth Nursing Cup, the Wilnecote Charity Cup, the Tamworth Charity Cup and the Bolehall and Glascote Nursing Cup.

At a meeting at the Magnet on July 5 1933, it was agreed that the club colours would be black jerseys, red sleeves, black cuffs and white knickers. The meeting was told that a number of good amateur players had signified that they would sign for the club and it was hoped that they would put pen to paper shortly.

A representative of the supporters club said their members were working very hard on the ground and they were confident that they would have the pitch in good playing order for the opening league match on August 26.

However, the fledgling club was dealt a blow on July 17 when Mr Flowers tendered his resignation as secretary, just ten weeks after his first letter to the Herald.

The rumour mill produced many reasons for his decision but it was generally felt that Mr Flowers had been opposed to the committee ever since they rejected Sid Puddefoot as player-manager.



The 'Jolly Sailors' in 1933

With the season fast-approaching, assistant secretary Mr J Rammell was promoted to secretary and set about signing several players: A G Harrison, a half-back from Stafford; H S Thorpe, a half-back from Polesworth Rangers; Syd Jones, an inside-forward from Gresley Rovers; T and J Bettaney, both full-backs signed from Leek; T A Alcock, a centre-forward from Leek and H Pickford, a centre-forward who

played for Burslem Port Vale and had scored 42 goals for Congleton Town in the previous season.

Having learnt that their first league match would be at home to Darlaston on Saturday August 26 1933, the club staged trials at the Jolly Sailor ground on the previous two Saturdays.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN

More than 1,500 spectators attended the opening fixture at the Jolly Sailor on 26 August 1933. On the morning of the game, Mick Flowers wrote to the Herald congratulating everyone who went to the game for their support of the club and urging them to encourage the team all they could. "Remember, one cannot always win and that is the time encouragement is most needed," he said.

That first game finished 3-0 with goals from Pearson, Stanford and Elland but the first season was always going to be a struggle and the team finished in a disappointing 16th place, just avoiding re-election after a record of P34 W8 D4 L22 F77 A112 Pts 20. However, the lowest point may have come on February 8 1934 when a commission of the Birmingham County Football Association met at the George Inn, Tamworth, to discuss events after the final of the Tamworth Charity Cup, between Tamworth and West Bromwich Colts at the Jolly Sailor on January 27.

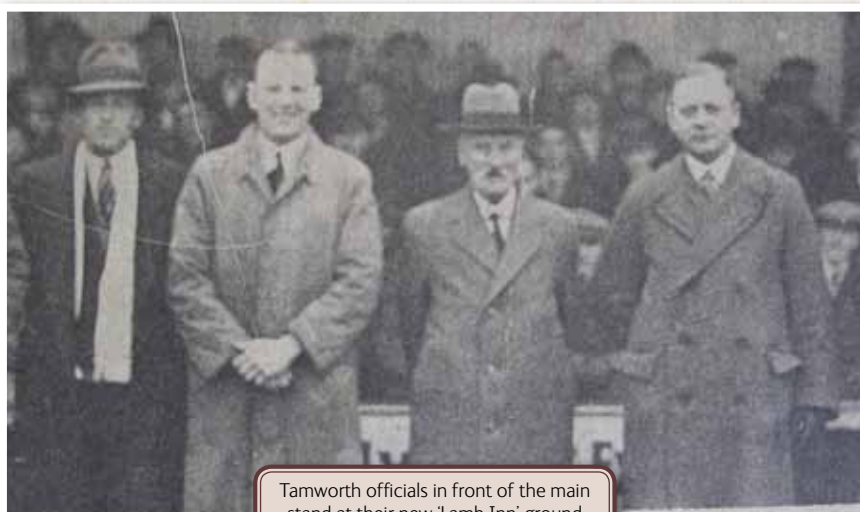
A spectator who struck the referee at the end of the game and another who used obscene language to a linesman

were warned off all grounds under the jurisdiction of the Football Association. The club were ordered to publish notices in prominent places on the ground, warning persons against misconduct, while they also had to provide a private entrance for players and officials, which must be fenced off. The club was also ordered to pay 10s 6d towards the cost of the commission.

If that was the low point of that first campaign, the high point must surely have been the club's first trophy success. On May 5 1934, Tamworth FC won its' first silverware, defeating Atherstone 5-0 in the final of the Atherstone Nursing Cup; the Tamworth goalscorers were Sheppard (2), Jones, F Whitehouse, Lillicrap (og).

At the end of that first season, thoughts turned again to a new ground. Club officials had asked the Town Council about getting the Castle Grounds but had been rejected, the provisions of a Ministry grant to improve the Castle Grounds' facilities making it impossible to close them to the public for home games.

Approaches to the Midland Red bus company for the sub-letting of their ground had failed, so the club were left with the choice of staying at the Jolly Sailor or moving to The Lamb. When the price of renting The Lamb proved lower, the club were on the move after just one season.



Tamworth officials in front of the main stand at their new 'Lamb Inn' ground

WE ARE TAMWORTH, FROM THE LAMB

The first competitive match at Tamworth FC's new home was on August 25 1934 when the Lambs defeated Birmingham Trams 3-0 in a Birmingham Combination match with Higgins, Haines and Jones finding the net.

The Tamworth side, selected by committee, was Darby; J Whitehouse, Latham; Johnson, Read, Boynton; Higgins, Morgan, Haines, Jones, Sheppard.

Tamworth's second season proved much more fruitful than their first. They finished sixth in the league, playing 32 matches, winning 16, drawing five and losing 11. They scored 88 goals, conceded 58 and won 37 points.

It was a daunting schedule, too; An end-of-season fixture pile-up saw four games in five days, losing 3-2 at Cheltenham before beating the Robins 6-1 at The Lamb, then winning 2-1 at Atherstone Town and 2-0 at Halesowen.

Gradually, Tamworth's on-field fortunes were

improving; they finished fifth in the Combination in both 1935-36 and 1936-37 and saw their first player break into the Football League when outside-right Higgins was signed by Fulham. Tipped by many to go all the way, he was sadly killed in action with the Royal Air Force during World War II.

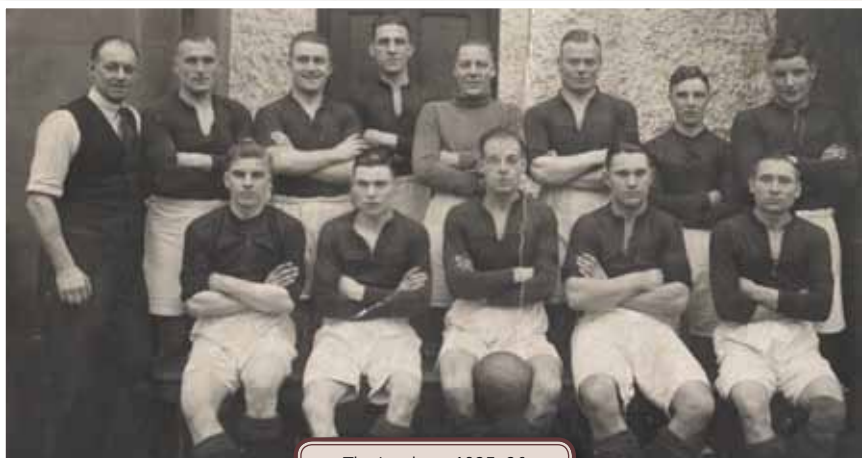
However, it was during 1936-37 that the club's finances took a severe downturn. Falling gates meant that debt taken on to fund ground improvements could no longer be afforded. Chairman Harry Godfrey appealed for help and warned supporters that breaking point was closer

than many realised. He said running a club of Tamworth's calibre cost over £40 a fortnight, which did not cover repayments on any debt owed on the stand.

An appeal was made for prominent townspeople to become vice-presidents and help raise money for the club. Thought was given to abolishing the reserve team, which was costing £1 a week to run, but this was rejected because of the quality of players it was producing for the first team.

Nevertheless, first-team gates continued to fall and on Saturday December 19 1936, just 1,167 attended the league game against Birmingham A. Receipts of £28 10s were the lowest yet and the committee was forced to cut the club's playing strength, with the remaining players agreeing to a 12.5 per cent pay cut.

The club even turned to Fulham, in the hope that the Londoners would make a donation in the light of their signing of Higgins. However, numerous pleas for financial help were rejected. Inevitably, the reserve team was disbanded.




The Lambs in 1935-36


During these early years at The Lamb the 'squad' sizes were generally small and the team selection an almost predictable one from week to week. If a player impressed at the start of the season, he generally got to keep his place for the remainder of it; if not, a handful of appearances was probably no more than he could hope for.


But of all those who were selected to play in the club's colours, including virtual ever-presents Frank and James Whitehouse, Ivor Crowhurst, Jack Smith, George Burton, Albert Read, one man stood out perhaps more than any other if only for his goal scoring exploits...


THE FIRST LAMBS LEGEND



CARD NUMBER 01



**PERCY
VIALS**

FORWARD



DEBUT	1934
APPEARANCES	148
GOALS/CLEAN SHEETS	184
SEASONS WITH CLUB	5
CLUB HONOURS	2

Percy's arrival at Tamworth was front page news in The Tamworth Herald in 1934. An accomplished all-round athlete, he joined Leicester City at 15 and Bristol City two years later before signing for The Lambs from Atherstone. One of Tamworth's most prolific strikers ever, he averages more than a goal a game.

www.tamworthfcheritage.co.uk

Born in 1908, Percy enjoyed a footballing career of more than 20 years, starting at Leicester as a youngster before joining Bristol City at 15. He rejoined Leicester City two years later and whilst playing football in London a clash with an opposition player saw Percy lose a kidney.

When he signed for Tamworth, from Atherstone, it was front page news and he went on to become one of the all time top goalscorers with a remarkable record.

He made his Tamworth debut on 20 October 1934 scoring a brace in his second match before going on to play in 184 games, scoring 148 goals along the way, including a double hat-trick in the club's record 14-4 victory over Holbrook Institute in the Bass Charity Vase.

After the match against Dudley on 19 January 1935 in which he scored in the 1-4 defeat, Percy was branded

a 'dirty player' by the local Mayor after a stray shot injured the face of one of the Dudley players. This was not a comment on his playing style he had heard before, or after.

On another trip to play a team in the Birmingham area, shortly after marrying Elizabeth, the newly-weds missed the train home and had to book into a hotel. Percy claimed the cost for the impromptu overnight stay back as expenses from the Football Club but was told in no uncertain terms that "We'll pay it this time, but don't let it happen again. You are not still on honeymoon!!"

Percy was not allowed to sign up for national service during the war, and when he and Elizabeth had a second child in 1940, Pat, Percy was asked to make the choice, if required, of 'who to save' should the need arise during Elizabeth's a troublesome home birth. Both mother and baby survived and Pat thinks this is why he stopped playing football – to put his family first.

Illness forced Percy in and out of hospital for the next seven or eight years and in the early 1950s he returned to The Lamb as a guest at a charity match. Pat remembers walking down the touchline with her mum and dad while the crowd joked "get your boots on, Percy, we need you!" – he was a well liked and respected man.

A few short years later, he was invited to speak at a football club dinner at the

Castle Hotel but was terrified.

Pat, by then a teenager, remembers her father did a good job with the speech but a humble and placid man, he rarely spoke with his family about his impressive footballing career.

Percy died aged 75 and is buried in Hinckley with his wife, who had passed away eight years earlier.

VILLA TO THE RESCUE

Early in the 1937–38 season, financial help came when Aston Villa signed a young Billy Goffin after just a handful of impressive appearances but it was not the last the club or town would see of 'Cowboy' Billy.

At the end of a campaign when the Lambs once again improved on the field, finishing fourth in the Birmingham Combination, Financial Secretary Mr C J Barratt told supporters that the cheque for £160 10s received from Villa Park had been the difference between profit and loss.

In the following season, the last before World War II, things were painfully similar – a strong fifth-place finish and grim financial returns. With gates continually falling, not even a generous £50 donation from Villa could stave off an overall loss of £20 10s 10d. Although gross gate receipts had risen, attendances were down and club officials decided to act. At a public meeting at the Assembly Rooms on Friday July 21 1939, Harry Godfrey called for more help from supporters to work on the ground during the season: "As it is, eight or nine have been doing everything – running the buffet, selling programmes, doing gate duty. The committee never have a chance of watching home games," he complained.

The meeting was urged to consider the formation of a Supporters' Club to help with work on the ground and to raise money for Tamworth FC. Representatives of the SC's at Stourbridge and Banbury Spencer were present and explained how their groups had made the difference for both clubs.

The appeal was a success and by the end of August 1939, the new supporters' club had raised £70 17s 7d. With Mr Deans, of Stoneware (1928) Ltd, making a matching donation, Tamworth FC began the 1939–40 campaign not only debt-free, but also with a substantial balance in the bank.

Of course, the 1939–40 season came to a halt after just two games due to the outbreak of World War II on September 03, 1939. A 3–2 win at Bromsgrove on August 26 and a 1–0 win at Gloucester were expunged from the books and the Birmingham Combination postponed until further notice.

Junior clubs in the Midlands, like their professional counterparts, were keen to play football in some form, but it was impossible for most leagues to carry on as many clubs were situated in evacuated areas. The only alternative was to play friendlies with clubs in non-evacuated or so-called 'free' areas. The first of these saw Tamworth win 5–4 at home to Stourbridge on October 7 1939. The team that day was: Crowhurst, E Burton, Cooper, J Smith, Cornell, Mills, White, Read, Womwell, Burton, Goffin.



The final team photo
before WWII

A FRESH START

Following the end of the war Tamworth FC regrouped and arranged practice matches to get a squad of players together for the coming 1945–46 season and on August 18 and the following Saturday afternoon, trials were held between teams of Red and Blue jerseyed opponents at the Lamb Inn ground.

As to be expected the names that featured in these games bore little resemblance to the sides that had been unable to play more than a couple of matches some seven years earlier although the Herald did report that 'several promising players' were apparently 'on view'.

However, once the season proper got underway it was a totally different kettle of fish and the side won just three of their first twenty matches. Invariably goals rained in past 'keepers Chard, Swinnerton or King and although the side did manage to find the back of the net with surprising regularity, the opposition almost always managed to do it more often. Only Birmingham City Transport, whose ground is now lost under Aston University, performed worse.

The side finished the season second from bottom and to further compound the misery, lost to Atherstone in a replay of the Tamworth Hospital Cup at Sheepy Road by two goals without reply.

The following season was one of different fortunes as the side looked to have turned the corner. Put simply, losing was replaced by winning and the team started to feature names of players who would go on to become synonymous with Tamworth FC for many years to come as the likes of Vin Wood, Charlie Craven – who had once played for Manchester United, Harold Pegg and a returning Ivor Crowhurst brought a turn in the club's fortunes as revenge was won against the Adders in a reverse of the previous years' Hospital Cup replay at Sheepy Road.

In February of 1947 the Birmingham Combination's £2 wage cap for players was considered to be unfair and the league committee were forced to reconsider a few weeks later following protests from member clubs. Meanwhile, the club pulled in a healthy profit of £306 which was thanks in no small part to a generous £500 donation from the Supporters Club over the season. At the presentation night at the Masonic Rooms on Lichfield Street, Tamworth youngsters who it was hoped would become the stars of the future were given the possibility of joining a third team.

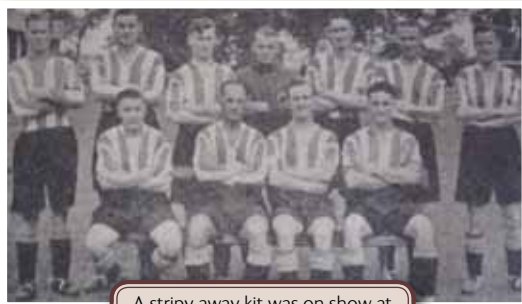
Close season activities included the provision of additional cover on the 'popular side' of the ground and the club secured a lease on The Lamb ground for seven years with the Supporters Club rendering signal service by guaranteeing the rent over this period, a gesture



The new-look post-war Lambs' side in 1946–47

ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

By comparison, the next campaign was even better, with Tamworth finishing fourth, four places higher than before. Towards the end of the season, on April 3 1948, a record attendance of 4,920 was set when Atherstone visited the Lamb and were defeated by a solitary Bright goal.

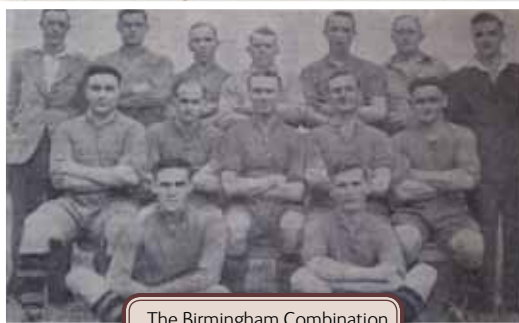


A stripy away kit was on show at Sheepy Road in August 1947

One player of particular note, Bill Ealing, was smashing the goals in for the reserves as well as the first team and chairman Harry Godfrey reported a tidy profit again. It was down on the previous season mainly due to the club building the off field facilities slowly but surely while also investing in necessary equipment such as an expensive new motor mower.

The end of the decade came and no sooner had the 1949–50 season started than Peter Hilton transferred to West Bromwich Albion and a little later Bill Ealing made a similar move to Blackburn for a club record fee of £750.

Over the next few seasons the team performed similarly reasonably well and somehow managed an appearance



The Birmingham Combination side in 1949–50

in the Worcestershire Senior Cup final against Atherstone but gates started to slip and the club was forced to increase admission and cut wages to try and keep an even keel. Notable news included Alan Godderidge transferring to Swansea City in August 1951 and the Supporters Club installing a new loudspeaker system the following season.



Welcome back for Billy' from Les Rowley (Chairman) and Bert Reeves (Trainer)

Billy Goffin made his return to the club as player manager in 1955 and local lad and former Atherstone and now Tamworth player, Peter Weir, departed to embark upon on a football league career with Cardiff City. In the programme dated February 25 1956 his move is quite rightly applauded, but the local nature of the club continued as Bosh Whitehouse joined up with Dennis Hughes and both players hit a hat-trick to see Kidderminster Harriers off by 6 – 2.

Goffin, Weir, Wood, Smith, Whitehouse, Hughes, Des Lewis, Charlie Coggins, Ron Dodd, Maurice Turner and Vernon Chapman formed the backbone of the side which won the club's first-ever promotion in 1955–56 to Birmingham Division 1 and for their efforts the team were presented with commemorative clocks and plaques.

Unfortunately Burton Albion prevented a second piece of silverware as they lifted the Staffs Senior Cup at their



We're going up – the 1955–56 team

ON THE UP

Goffin's reign continued the next season as the club finished in a very respectable third place. They would have taken the title had they not been beaten by the first- and second-placed teams, Walsall Reserves and Bromsgrove Rovers. Bosh Whitehouse hit 30 goals, Ron Dodd got 20 and Goffin chipped in with a very healthy 19.

However the next season was a different story. The campaign got off to a stuttering start and never really recovered. The Lambs played their first ever match under floodlights in the December at Bromsgrove, but this failed to bring a spark to the side and so in February 1958 Goffin, now also a collector for the East Midlands Electricity Board, sought the backing of the committee to drop the manager part of his player-manager role and Vernon Chapman, with over 200 appearances to his name for the club stepped up as the new PM while Des Lewis continued to add to his 220 appearances in goal and Charlie Coggins was made captain.

For the next few seasons under Chapman, the club never really ignited itself and despite a memorable 3-1 Birmingham Senior Cup Final win over Rugby Town at Nuneaton at the end of the 1960-61 season he resigned and Chairman Harry Godfrey told the local press that the club would "Carry on as we did before we had a manager. The committee will pick the team and sign new players."



1960-61 team with Billy Goffin

Another resignation came shortly after when Ken Mugleston stepped down as president due to ill health allowing Charles Tomlinson who had connections to the club right from the initial meetings in 1933, to accept his new role at the club.

Goffin continued playing until the end of the 1960-61 season and his replacement, Peter Weir, returned to the side and netted eight goals in the final eight games.

'Cowboy' Billy was honoured with a benefit match against Aston Villa at The Lamb and the 1200 strong crowd smothered him and star Johnny Dixon in adoration.

The two footballers weren't the only players that were swamped in a sea of adoring faces around this time, as for two consecutive seasons capacity crowds of around 5,000 packed into The Lamb to watch a Showbiz XI lead out by model Yana and featuring the likes of Sean Connery, Tommy Steele, Billy Wright and Des O' Connor play a Ley Miners Welfare side raising money for charity

New boss Eddie Holding stayed with the club for just over two dozen games before the Committee regained control



Stars shone on Lamb in the 1960s

of the on-the-field affairs, as well as those off them and that's the way it stayed for the next five seasons.

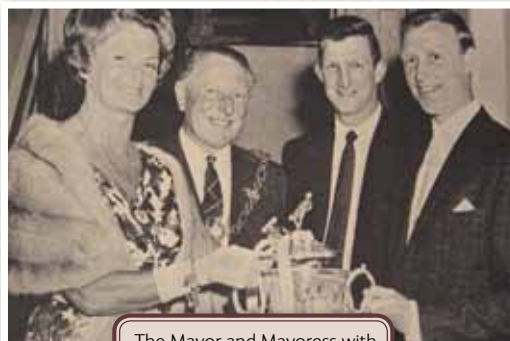
During this time, the club enjoyed their most purple of purple patches to date. The 1963-64 campaign was particularly good, with a 21-game run of consecutive wins in league matches which, unsurprisingly, helped bring the top spot in the West Midlands League, a 6-2 aggregate victory over Brierley Hill Alliance in the Staffordshire Senior Cup final and a runners-up spot in the Birmingham Senior Cup, courtesy of a narrow 2-3 defeat by Kidderminster Harriers in the final at Dudley.



Club captain Ron Sims and the whole of Tamworth got used to the winning feeling

THE SHINING LIGHT OF SUCCESS

Although there was no league title in 1964-65, the trophy cabinet swelled once again with a League Cup victory over Lower Gornal Athletic and the squad slowly started to take on a whole new look mixing some of the old stars with



The Mayor and Mayoress with John Bayliss and Ron Sims

those of the future. Goalkeepers Mick Cashmore, Ian Leckie and John Crosby replaced Des Lewis after almost a decade between the posts. Alan Allsopp and Roy Bache battled it out for a shirt. Roy Boonham and Ron Sims marshalled alongside Charlie Coggins, while Dennis Smith and his young namesake Graham played behind John Bayliss. Dave Seedhouse and Tommy Morrow. Little could they or the fans know that everything would click into place over the next 57 games as the team, in a new scarlet strip bought by the supporters club, won every competition they entered except the FA Cup. Bayliss, meanwhile, recorded a post-war club record of 55 goals for the season.

The Mayor and Mayoress, Mr and Mrs Willcocks, accompanied by Supporters Club Chairman Arthur Beasley, had been at the final match of the season to watch the Lambs face Bilston and win the two legged Birmingham



Supporters also enjoyed the taste of success

Senior Cup Final on aggregate and was quoted as saying how surprised he was that so few people of Tamworth came to watch a team of this standard. The gate was 1,400.

Such was the buzz around the football club following their fantastic campaign that some of it was bound to have rubbed off on anyone that passed through The Lamb ground. It was seen as such a great honour to play for the club at this time that when Mayor Willcocks presented the club with a new badge those that wore it, be they players or officials, pledged to do so with pride.

With the team proudly sporting the new crest on their shirts, Ray Boonham's brother Dave became the Lambs' first substitute on the opening day of the 1966-67 season and once again it proved to be a season to remember. A defence of the Birmingham Senior Cup fell at the first hurdle, while that of the Staffs Senior Cup failed at the final one, but a first ever FA Cup First Round appearance was rewarded with a memorable away trip to League side Gillingham which unfortunately ended in a 1-4 defeat in front of over 8,000 spectators.

It sounds like an obvious solution, but grounds up and down the land were erecting floodlights so that evening matches could take place on dark winter evenings and thanks in no small part to the weekly 'home bingo' competition, this



Mayor Councillor Doctor Phillip Barford and Mr Harry Godfrey flick the switch

happened at The Lamb, too. There was less than £300 in the bank initially, but over two successful seasons £16,000 was raised and £5,000 of this was spent on ten new floodlights, coming all the way from Scarborough FC and Gillingham made a return journey to The Lamb for an all-ticket official switch-on.



WHAT WILL TO-MORROW BRING?

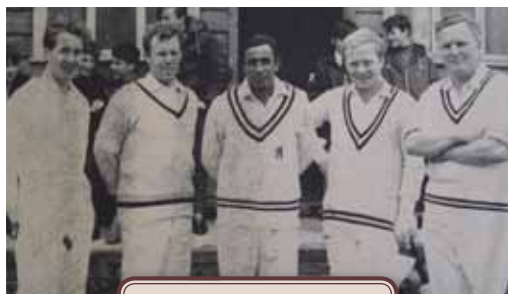


Hughie Morrow

The good times continued with Hughie Morrow's first full season in charge of the team and between February 14 1968 and October 19 1969, a 30-match unbeaten run was completed. For finishing second by an average of 0.029 of a goal, Tamworth were

awarded the Keys Cup and a Birmingham Senior Cup victory came the following season as realistic ambitions of bigger and better things all round emerged as the home bingo continued to make record profits.

Charles Tomlinson retired around this time while Billy Wright spoke at the club's dinner and with some of the Lambs team also local, or in the case of Ian Hall - Derbyshire county cricketers, it was no surprise that friendly games against Tamworth CC were arranged. The footballers were a fair match for their opponents in whites in the field, but Bill Jones, Jim Ballard and Dave Mountford did the damage with the ball at the Fazeley Road cricket ground on more than one occasion, just a 'six' away from the old Jolly Sailor pitch.



Football v Cricket

1969-70 brought more FA Cup success with a famous victory over Third Division title-chasers Torquay at The Lamb. The visitors had the better of the early play and took a 20th-minute lead through John Rudge, but the feeling was that they were too calm about the game. Not many in the 4,080 crowd gave Tamworth a chance but, making use of a stiff wind, the home side kept hammering the Torquay area and, when Ray Holmes collided with the Torquay 'keeper, he got to his feet quickest to touch the ball into the net. Four minutes later, from an Ian Hall corner, Graham Jessop scored his 25th goal of the season and Dennis Smith could have increased the lead from the penalty spot but goalkeeper Andy Donnelly was equal to it. While Morrow and his team celebrated, Torquay were kept locked in the dressing room for a long time.



Fans on the pitch v Torquay

With Ray Holmes breaking Bayliss' recent goal record, things were improving all the time although a return to Gillingham in the Second Round saw the Gills hit a resounding six at Priestfield Stadium.

A marathon run in the FA Trophy ended with a replay trip to high flying non-leaguers Scarborough in the Quarter Finals while, the following season, a similarly lengthy run' lengthy run in FA Cup brought its rewards once again with a trip to Birmingham City's St. Andrew's ground to face Nuneaton Borough in a third replay. This was won but a replay trip to league side York City ended in a heavy defeat.

The Lambs clinched the West Midlands Premier League title at the start of the Seventies and despite winning ten of the opening 13 games, Hughie Morrow was sacked and eventually replaced by Tony Foster and assistant Sid Hall who guided the club to the league title and the Camkin Cup.

Off the field, the club and supporters converted the clothing mill works canteen into a social club and enjoyed many, many hours of pre and post match frivolity. All was fairly rosy off the pitch but on it, things would soon change as the club elected to move into the Southern League.

THANKS TAM'UTH

By John Wragg

It's May 3rd 1961.

It was a warm end-of-season night when I made my debut at The Lamb. I was just 12, with a lifetime in front of me

I don't quite know why we did it, my mates and me, but we got on the 798 Midland Red bus from Piccadilly, near Kingsbury, and went to watch Tamworth play Aston Villa in Billy Goffin's testimonial.

Luckily one of us knew where the ground was and we got off at the right stop at Kettlebrook and walked in the Meadow Street end. I don't think there were even any turnstiles, just a bloke who you gave your money to, you

your face, with a big net, looked like about a dozen tennis nets stitched together, high up above you to stop the ball booming back out into Meadow Street.

Four years later and I was down the Lamb again, this time reporting on Tamworth for the Tamworth Herald, taking over the sports editor's job from Dave Grice, a family friend who also lived in Piccadilly for a while.

And I learned my job at the Lamb. Whatever I've done in my journalistic career since, the World Cup semi-final of 1990 when England lost on penalties, Aston Villa winning the League and European Cup – yes it's that long a career – Brian Clough, five Olympic Games, all of it is based on covering Tamworth.

In one resounding Staffs Senior Cup victory, I could have sworn John "Donkey" Bayliss got a particular goal. But no, the Sports Argus had given it to Charlie Coggins, and they had proper reporters, so they must be right. So, next Friday I blasted it in the Herald: and "Coggins Scores First Goal Since Year Dot" was the general sense of the headline.

The following Saturday, Tamworth were home again and when Donkey scored, Charlie, in his own goalmouth uninvolved in the action, looked around, suddenly charged towards me, sitting on the front bench in the main stand and screamed, arms wide, "I've scored!!"

An embarrassing lesson? Yes.

Always trust your own judgement? Definitely.

I was there the season Tamworth won everything they entered (except the FA Cup), the West Midland League, League Cup, Birmingham Senior Cup and Staffs Senior Cup and presented Graham Jessop with his player of the season award.

I was there when Tamworth beat Torquay in the FA Cup in November 1969, the first time they'd ever knocked out a League side. I did the Herald pull-out Cup Special for that and am chuffed to see that Card No 10 in the excellent Lambs Legend series is a photo of the immortal Graham Jessop that I staged with the photographer at the Lamb one day especially for that issue.

That game kicked my career on as well. As I now know, when a non-League club is on a Cup run the nationals always seek out the local reporter to pick his brains and nick his stories.

One of them, Pete Ingall of the Daily Mirror, was so grateful he told me a job was going on the Birmingham Post sports desk. And he put a word in that got me the job.



Billy, in suit and tie, and Villa star Johnny Dixon sign autographs for adoring fans

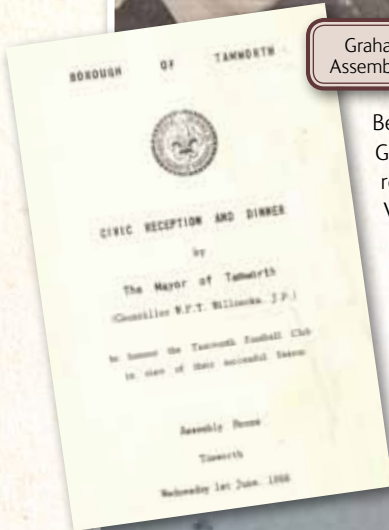
got a ticket, and walked in. Through a flimsy gate, I think.

And the goalposts were right in front of you. I remember that. No messing around at the Lamb. You were straight into the ground, in





Graham Jessop and John at the Assembly Rooms on 01 June, 1966



Before Tamworth played Gillingham in the next round, they trained at Villa Park and I was in the dressing room with the players when Walsall's manager, Bill Moore, brought in to give a low-down on Gillingham, began his analysis.

He asked, just checking really, "There's no reporters in here is there?" Ronnie Sims (what a classy player he was) said no, nudging me to keep quiet at the same time, and Bill Moore then launched into a general tirade of "Kick 'em before they can start playing". But in language from a far from respectable version of the English dictionary.

I went to Tamworth's home games with my dad, parked my white Morris 1100-bought off Alan Carter and it turned into a rust-bucket inside a fortnight - behind the dressing rooms!

My dad, a big mate of Des Lewis', went and stood in the Hut End and I worked from the pavilion in the corner near the Castle End goal where you

were warm and dry and could see at least three quarters of the game.

I moonlighted and 'ran copy', walked up and down to the phone box in Kettlebrook, to dictate match reports to the Argus and other evening papers for the Herald's chief reporter David Moore (Moore of Tamworth, I remember the catchline to this day) which was his way of making an extra few quid.

Not a lot of it came my way I seem to recall. But I loved it, lived it and learned from it.



Tamworth 2 - 1 Torquay

THE LIGHTS START TO FLICKER

And so life began in the Southern League Division 1 North with much trepidation about playing at a level of football that was deemed to be generally better and one that would definitely attract the crowds.

Player of the Year, Gary Brown, was raring to go but boss Foster had quit within moments of the season ending so Harold Cox returned in a chief coach role with Ron Sims his able assistant in readiness for the club's debut season in uncharted waters.

The club paired up with Sunday League side Zodiac, but soon the whole of Tamworth FC underwent an unexplained paradigm shift and for the rest of the decade while the intentions, ambitions and the majority of the people involved were all still there, the fans almost disappeared overnight and it led to unforetold problems.

John 'Monty' Moreton's unregistered appearance in the opening game of the season saw the club fined and by the start of September the headline "Tamworth: Future in Jeopardy" was emblazoned across the back page of the Herald. Gates were slipping slowly but surely and Gary Brown cracked an ankle bone, keeping him out of the side for a prolonged period.



Tommy Morrow (left)
in action

At the end of September the front page headline 'Tamworth FC: on the edge of a cliff' brought a stark reminder as to the frailties of the club with Harry Godfrey admitting that £12,000 had been transferred

from capital reserve to keep the club afloat. Wages were 50% higher than income and for the rest of the season regular pleas for help appeared in the press.

Ray Holmes was put up for sale and eventually sold and fans started to express their fears both verbally and in print. The home gates were better than a number of fellow Southern League clubs, so why were their beloved team suddenly apparently and obviously overstretching themselves?



The Mill Disco was a very popular place

As if to answer these questions quickly, a special general meeting was held in December 1972 where six directors resigned along with the club secretary, leaving Harry, Len and A. Dean as the remaining board members. The wage bill was also slashed in two and more amateur players were sought. One such player, Gilbert Starkey, continued to play for The Leys on a Sunday.

Hamels Mill, on Bolebridge Street, burnt down soon after and although in no way connected to the downward spiral at the football club, it almost felt as though it was.

New faces were soon in the boardroom with local estate agent Michael Tonge and solicitor Bob Whitehead joining Godfrey and Gendle to put the club back on track whilst iterating to the town that they would only get a team as good as the support.

Local bookmaker Alan Webb came on board in March 1973 and Holmes and Brown got representative honours for the County against a Scottish FA side which gave the club a much needed lift.

But, for the first time, a successful Atherstone side took over the back page of the Tamworth Herald and this relegated The Lambs, or Town as they often were 'incorrectly' referred, to a 'left inside' position.

But there was more to worry about than just form and the construction of a proposed 'non-spherical-shaped' road as inflation and VAT reared their heads to the country as a whole.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

The club had lost just £7,608, a substantial loss, but also substantially less than the previous year and with the board all re-elected, a 25 mile sponsored walk brought £500 into the coffers. Harold Cox was optimistically looking to finish 1973-74 in the top six after a second-from-bottom finish in the first Southern League campaign.

Ray Holmes was bought and brought back to The Lamb thanks to the generosity of both the fans and Rodek Sports and he had an instant impact by scoring one and setting up the other two goals in a 3-0 win over Witney Town.

A new national 'spot the ball' competition was also launched that would help the club raise funds but the introduction of the three-day working week and restrictions on the use of electricity meant games were invariably played on Saturdays and Sundays and the team would be vastly under strength as a lot of the players had to work instead of play.

Attendances continued to drop and Cox quit, making way for ex-Wales and Derby County star Terry Hennessey along with new director John Sturdey. Hennessey made wholesale changes to the team, playing reserves to fill the gaps but hardworking SC Chairman Clive Tomlinson was adamant in the press that "If anyone can get the club back on its feet, it's Terry". He, like many others who helped the club through these dark times behind the scenes,

continues to be a part of the football club to this day and many of these people, without whom there would be no Tamworth FC as we know it, are now Vice Presidents.

Hennessey turned down a move to a Third Division side as his new club entered their 'Worst Ever Crisis' and gates fell even further. The situation was described by the auditor as 'financially precarious' but the directors vowed to work hard to get the club out of the red and into the black, electing to stay in the Southern League for another season. Meanwhile on the field, the impressive 16-year-old Steve Fox netted for the first team then immediately signed for Birmingham City.

Hennessey quit in November 1974 so reserve-team boss Gordon Dougall started a two-and-a-half season tenancy which brought a brief turn around in league fortunes and Peter King became the first (and to date, only) goalkeeper to score a goal in a 7-0 thrashing of Merthyr Tydfil, albeit from the penalty spot. The rejuvenated side lost just three of their league games from mid-December and finished a creditable eighth despite money worries continuing and the Supporters Club funding all the team coaches to away games.

A 1975 pre-season trip to Bideford raised everyone's spirits and nearly 2,000 locals watched a Tamworth FC cricket match on Saunton beach before the hardcore of 350-400 home fans enjoyed a good start to the season although the football apparently wasn't much to write home (or away) about.

Ian Hall, who had been enticed back to the club, finally hung up his boots at 35 while local lad and soon to be Tamworth player of the year Barry Barnes was signed by Birmingham City and it was announced that 1976-77 would be Dave Seedhouse's benefit season.

Away from The Lamb, construction started on Ankerside, Songs of Praise came 'live' from St. Editha's Church and a new Tamworth junior side was formed, linked to the newly expanded Belgrave area of the rejuvenated and growing town.



Tamworth players and officials soak up the sun during their weekend trip to Devon. Pictured left to right, back row: Ron Sims (trainer), Bob Whitehead (director), Martin Dixon, Brian Bates, Peter King, John Sturdey (director). Front row: Dave Seedhouse, Barry Barnes, John Flannagan, Ian Hall, Len Harris.

The squad relax in Devon



The 1974-75 team



Action at The Lamb from the 1978-79 season when Burton Albion and Enderby Town were the visitors.

NOT THE WINNING TICKET

Once again, a 'Survival Warning' was issued, requiring a minimum of £200 a week income as the leanest period of the club's history continued. Harry Godfrey stepped into the role of President for the second time in his 40+ year involvement with the club as Michael Tonge took over as Chairman issuing a plea to the town for support.

Unfortunately Seedhouse broke his leg in two places during a game at Racing Club Warwick effectively ending his playing career after nearly 900 appearances so didn't get to play in the all-stars benefit match with Jasper Carrott.

Players agreed to play for nothing and a warrant was issued against the club for unpaid rates – just one of many outstanding debts – as the town geared itself up to welcome hundreds of new residents to a new development in Stonydelph.

Misery continued as an all-time low attendance of 167 was recorded against Dunstable. The team thumped Gloucester 8–2 but were then well and truly beaten 1–7 by Cambridge and star players such as Nigel Bunt and John Flannagan understandably left the club in search of better remuneration.

The Reliant Motor Company then strenuously denied rumours that they were involved in a rescue bid to save the club, although it was later revealed that the Reliant Sports and Social Club had been approached to share the facilities at The Lamb in a bid to try and bring new fans in from around the town.

Unsurprisingly, with all the uncertainty flying around another meeting was called as it was feared the club would fold but money was found, or at least promised, and new boss Dave Robinson turned things around a little over the next two seasons.

Harry Godfrey's passing was mourned by the club in November 1977 while the threat of 'his' clubs' demise still hung over The Lamb. But it was fought against strongly with Brian Hilton appointed as Commercial manager and a new lottery was launched. With the involvement of Tamworth Sports Council it proved so successful there were realistic ambitions that it would raise enough money to help fund a new multipurpose sports stadium, located off Marlborough Way within a few short years which would house not

only Tamworth FC, but also Tamworth Athletics Club and other sporting organisations.

Over 1 million 25p tickets were sold and the council, football club, local groups and most importantly the Sports Council were able to save and invest £200,000 in realising the stadium dream, whilst also utilising some of the profits however they saw fit.

The club initially received 13.25% of the money taken and this was doubled to 26.5% with the agreement of the council to help the club survive in the short term, but with a lot of other income also being ploughed straight into the project a further loan of £10,000 was requested and granted, out of the stadium fund pot, to help keep the club afloat.

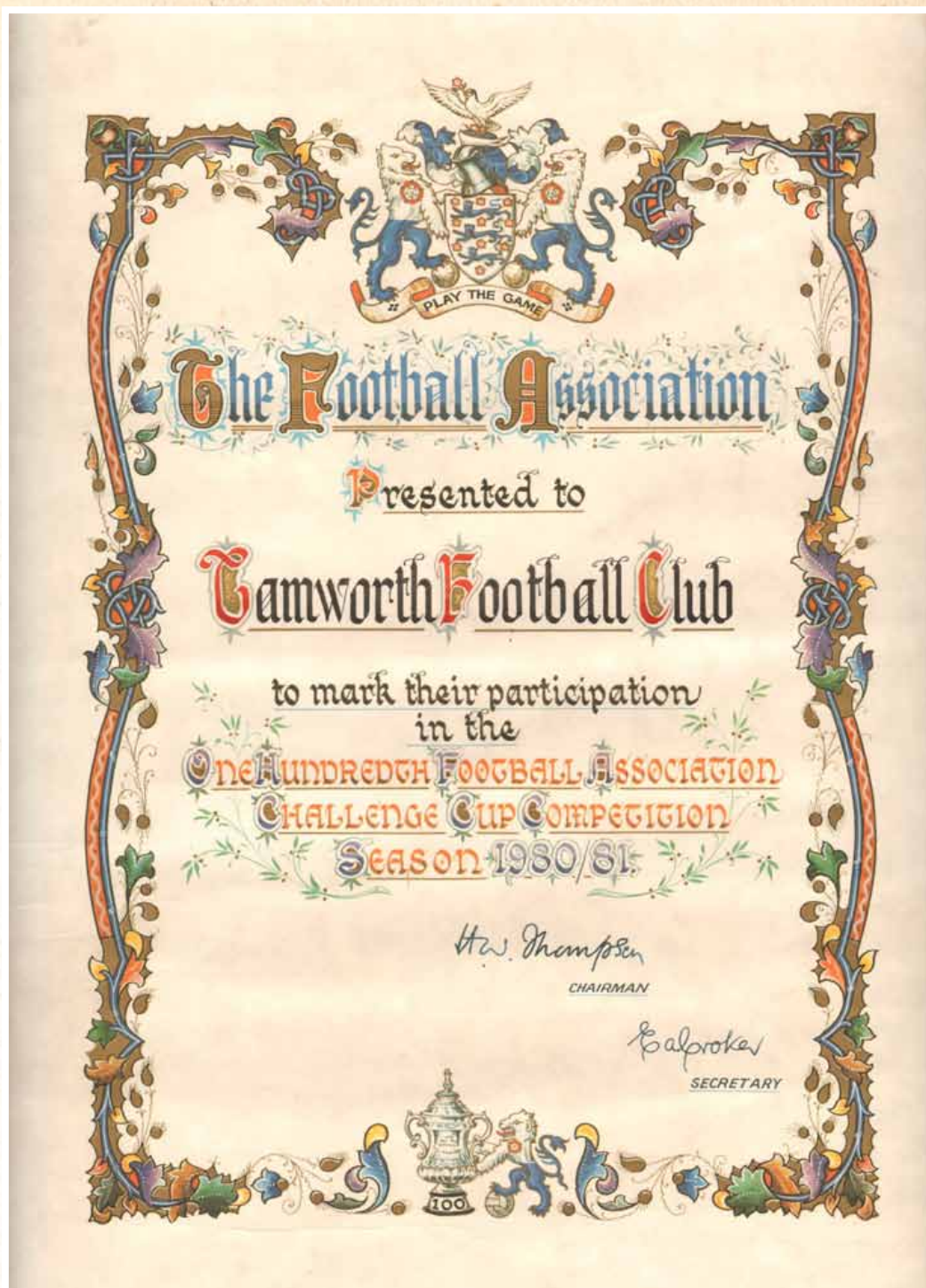
The aim was to move into the stadium in the 1981–82 season a full year after the Athletics club but this didn't happen as although the stadium was built and the Athletics club eventually moved in to run a couple of race meetings with the facilities unfinished, the Northern Premier League requirements could not be met and the football club needed £80,000 to build turnstiles and accommodation for fans and officials and erect suitable floodlights.

With the Football Club's balance sheet in the red and unable to generate the required capital quickly enough, the directors pulled out of the agreement with the council and both went on to run separate lottery competitions in the town, which meant the income was vastly reduced and a move to the stadium now a mere pipe dream.

Ultimately, after a period of immense frustration, the football club was left with no option but to stay at The Lamb with the stadium, which the efforts of football club staff, supporters and town had helped fund, agonisingly out of reach.



Harry Godfrey



OUT OF THE FRYING PAN...

By Richard Whitehead

It was not an experience I would recommend, but it was nevertheless a memorable one. The unique sensation of having rust-infused, rain water drip down the back of your neck is not easily forgotten and just typing the words now, at a distance of more than 30 years, has brought the icy horror of it flooding back.



Richard circa 1980

If you watched Tamworth at the Lamb in the late Seventies or early Eighties – at least from the main stand or the covered terrace opposite – then shaking rust from your hair (I still had some then) was central to the experience.

Every sliced clearance or hopelessly misplaced pass that found its way on to either roof brought down a shower of rust on those below. If it was accompanied by rain on the corrugated sheeting that had long since given up on its main purpose, then you would get wet as well.

Decay was everywhere at Tamworth in those days, on and off the pitch.

You may discover differently elsewhere in this book, but I'd risk a small wager that the darkest hours in the history of my home-town football club were in the years when I covered the team for the Herald.

The reorganisation of non-league football that followed the creation of the Alliance Premier League in 1979–80 cast Tamworth adrift in unfamiliar, hostile seas. In the Northern Premier League (NPL) familiar foes were missing from the fixture list – Burton Albion offered the only derby and there were names such as Frickley Athletic, Marine and Goole Town. And where exactly was Netherfield?

It did not help that the town had turned its back on the club and that there was no money or ideas in the boardroom.

Watching the players emerge to a scratchy recording of the Match of the Day theme before an indifferent 200 or so hardy souls would have been funny were it not so tragic.

Still, I was achieving my childhood dream of becoming a football reporter, so I was pretty much immune to bathos. Not that this was an easy introduction to the job. Relations between the club and the paper were strained to put it mildly and I and my equally fresh-faced colleague Rob Sly, who shared the reporting duties, were caught in the crossfire of an extended exchange of mutual antipathy between the club directors and Bill Jones, the sports editor.

Tamworth finished bottom of the Northern Premier League in 79–80 and the arrangement whereby Rob and I shared alternate home matches became a victim of office politics. They were bottom again the following year but hit the giddy heights of 19th in 81–82 and there was a slightly more upbeat atmosphere about the place when I returned to the Lamb – as sports editor by now – in 1982–83.

But it was clear that the club was still helplessly out of its depth in the NPL and after four tortured seasons there was a sensible retreat for the calmer waters of the Midland Division of the Southern League.

Sadly, it turned out that the Northern Premier horror had been a mere trailer for the gore fest to follow. This time the money really had run out and after the sacking of Harry Shepherd as manager just before Christmas, poor Barry Meads inherited an impossible situation.

An ever-changing cast of callow recruits were routinely thrashed and it became obvious that another new start would be needed, this time in the West Midlands League, and that now it must be accompanied by new faces in the boardroom. Fortunately, and only just in time, both these things and more happened.

But by this time I'd gone. Seduced by the lure of evening newspaper journalism, I joined the Burton Mail in March, 1984. I was a distant observer at the rebirth of Tamworth Football Club and the exhilarating reconnection with the town that eventually led – via Wembley – to non-league football's top table.



TFC in 1979–80

GREY SKIES OVER THE LAMB

If the 1970s were a difficult time for the club then, stadium problems aside but obviously not unrelated to goings-on on the field, the first few years of the 80s were simply unbearable for fans, officials and anyone connected to The Lamb ground meaning that the club's 50th anniversary slipped past almost unnoticed.

No matter how hard the team tried, all their determination



A storm was brewing

and loyalty to the cause went largely unrecognised by the opposition sides who took great delight in preventing Tamworth from winning 134 of 168 NPL games between August 1979 and May 1983.

Attending matches was not so much of the chore, it was the actual watching of them that was a definite labour of love. The small number of fans at each game did lend

itself to a sense of camaraderie on the terraces but simple distractions were sought to help ease the pain of another defeat and the seemingly endless variety of food on offer from the mobile burger van proved to be a very popular one!

Despite finishing each of the five seasons bottom or nearly bottom of the league, the club was not relegated but was successfully re-elected to suffer another season travelling up the country or in the case of the 1983-84 season down it, after moving back 'across' to the Southern Midland division where only three more games were won all season.

Three appointed managers; Alan Fogarty, Alan Hampton and Harry Shepherd shared the majority of the games between them with Barry Meads stepping in as caretaker boss for the final few months.

With sometimes less than 100 fans coming through The Lamb turnstiles a record low attendance of just 81 watched the NPL match against Gainsborough. This was 'beaten' by two when Bridgwater Town visited The Lamb in October 1983, and almost as if with a wicked sense of irony the team managed to grind out wins for both of these games, the Bridgwater victory coming thanks to a solitary strike from Jimmy Dainty.

Then, in the summer of 1984 as 'Careless Whisper', 'Relax' and 'Agadoo' topped the charts, a revolution happened. Fans revolted against the board and issued a 'Get Out' ultimatum in a public display that was more out of worry than anger and this resulted in the resignation of almost everyone connected with the club at a high level.

The gaping hole this created was filled almost as quickly as it had taken the club to be set up some half a century earlier and formed the foundations of a 'new look' Lamb which continues to the present day.



VIVE LA REVOLUTION!



Bob Andrews

Current Lambs chairman Bob Andrews has been involved with Tamworth and its Football Club for a long time. He played at The Lamb as a young man whilst also enjoying a successful speed boat career.

Bob set up business in the town in 1978 and

Nautic Steels continues to grow and be successful. It is a major reason why he continues to enjoy his position at the club which he has held since the early 1990s.

However, it was ex-player John 'Donkey' Bayliss who was the main instigator in three local businessmen taking over the running of the club in June 1984.

It all began with a phone call from John who contacted Bob and Dave Baxter and invited them both down to 'The Fox' pub at Hopwas for a meeting to talk about the football club and its problems. He asked if they would be interested in taking over the club – John had enjoyed great success as a player while Dave was a great supporter.

The club was in a mess both on and off the field after relegation and with low crowds and had debts here, there and everywhere. So, the three had a very open discussion and Dave and Bob decided to join John and take over the club. They all put in a sum of money to pay off the known debts soon finding out that there were some they did not know about at the time which also had to be paid over the next few months.

A regular in the Fox at the time was Pete Young who had just given up his job at Aston Villa and so was well known to John. He offered to run the off-the-field side of the club on a part-time basis while another ex-Tamworth player, Dave Seedhouse, was approached to take over as manager with Pete Nicholls as his assistant. Between them, they assembled a bunch of local lads and the team started to do well.

Knowing the club was now in good hands both on the field and off it the three would meet to sort out the financial issues that faced them and when Graham Smith took over as manager in February 1987 players were enticed from outside the Tamworth area and things started to go from good to even better...



SOMETHING TELLS US WE'RE INTO SOMETHING GOOD

Following the takeover of the club, fortunes started to



TFC in 1984-85

change, if only slowly at first.

In a new league and with lots of new grounds and teams to visit fans started travelling around almost in convoy to watch their side play in the West Midlands Premier causing a more close-knit community feel to become evident at a previously barren Lamb.

It was a far cry from the disjointed, hefty and sometimes expensive journeys which the Northern Premier or Southern League had brought upon the club. On one occasion on a trip to play Lancaster City at The Giant Axe, the team arrived but agreed to cancel the game following a heavy downpour. 200 hot meat pies were ready for consumption though and they didn't all go to waste!

Back then, the previous season's league placing determined the following season's cup competition – FA Vase or FA Trophy – and so narrow defeat by Grantham shelved the club's involvement in the FA Trophy for a few years and the team debuted in the FA Vase in 1985-86 reaching the

fifth round but falling to Halesowen at the Lamb in front of almost 2000 fans.

The average home attendance remained at around 350, but this was tremendous support compared with the rest of the sides in the league who sometimes struggled to reach 50 at home, and the Lambs fans usually made up most of that number anyway as both the players and supporters started to make their presence felt around the league and more specifically, the Midlands.

Things were now definitely on the up on the field, although spare a thought for goal-getter Billy Livingstone. The scorer of one of the two goals that helped the Lambs defeat the Adders at Nuneaton's Manor Park in the West

Midlands League Cup final, he broke his leg and never played for Tamworth again. Meanwhile Andy Maddocks netted 41 times but the side could only manage a mid table position.

The 1986-87 season saw the league position improved upon yet again but travelling distances wasn't the side's thing and the only long-haul trip of the season, to Rossendale in the fifth round of the FA Vase, brought a 1-0 defeat.

A change in management then saw one Smith replaced another in the February of 1987 when former Lamb, Adders player and more recently Dudley Town boss Graham Smith was appointed by Chairman John 'Donkey' Bayliss. The club was starting to do extremely well off the field and the board thought it was time they repaid the fans' loyalty by trying to bring some success on it. So after a cup match at Halesowen, Roger Smith was told the bad news and Graham Smith's first game was at home to Chasetown in the Banks's West Midland League. The last five games of the season definitely sowed the seeds for the next one as a massive 34 goals for were recorded as against just three against – including two astonishing 10-1 home victories against Brereton Social and Blakenall.

Bobby Atkins, Andy Maddocks and new signing Carl Rathbone battled it out under the watchful eye of new boss, Smith to claim the crown of top scorer in 1987/88 and Atkins did pip them to the post, but only by the odd one or two as the three shared a combined total of 90

CONSISTENCY, COLCHESTER AND CUPS

Then, the first real success in the FA Cup for well almost two decades was rewarded when an impressive 4th round home win over Wealdstone heralded a first-round trip to Colchester United which ended, again, unfortunately, in predictable defeat. However, one 21 year old ex-Piccadilly defender Steve Cartwright earned himself a dream four-figure move to 'The U's' the following season after being spotted by manager and former Lambs player Roger Brown, although it was to last only a dozen games before he came back to The Lamb for the same fee.

Once again though, a long trip north had got the better of the side in the FA Vase. Ferens Park, the home of Durham City was the venue and Tamworth fans were met off the coaches amid a heavy-handed police presence and marched straight into the ground. The game itself was marred by biased refereeing, red cards, penalties and alleged racist comments were heard towards Lambs players. It was one of those days where the whole club felt totally let down and

cheated and many thought that the Wembley chance had gone forever.

However, it didn't take long for the smiles to return, and in the final league game Perry Blewitt secured a 1-0 win over Gresley Rovers at their tight Moat Street ground and promotion to the Southern League was secured.

A fortnight later, police helicopters watched on as The Lambs fans clambered to any possible vantage point at Tividale's packed out ground to watch their side win the West Midlands League Cup final by thrashing Malvern 5-0.

Not only were the fans starting to create a massive family atmosphere but the players, too, were sticking with the club and a number of them joined the 200 club. After joining from Blakenall in 1985 Corrigan 'Cozza' Lockett won supporter's player of the year in his first season and went on to pass the milestone.

Bobby Atkins was crowned with the same honour the season after and passed the 200 mark as well, as did Martin Myers who would go on to sign for Telford United for a club record fee in 1990.

Club Captain Andy Foote notched up 100 appearances as did goal machine Mark Stanton. Meanwhile Ron Sims continued his involvement, as trainer, and many believe his influence, as much as that of Smith or assistant boss Lionel Martin, was one of the reasons that the club hit an all-time high in 1988-1989.



Andy Foote and Steve Cartwright
lift the League Shield

MY TAMWORTH



When one day I look back on my career in journalism, the decade or so I spent covering Tamworth FC home and away will probably be the happiest of my memories. It was a fantastic time and I was privileged to be reporting at the club at what I believe

to be the most interesting period in its long, proud history. Now ensconced in the leafy south west I work in the wonderful city of Bath but my heart is never far away from The Lamb.

As a Tamworthian, I grew up being aware of Tamworth FC but having no particular burning ambition to watch them. My main interest was in reading about them on the back page of the Tamworth Herald and it was the words of the then sports editor – the late, great Bob Paterson – that inspired me to take an interest in the club and also to want to be a journalist.

I first remember watching Tamworth at the age of about 12 when my friend Gary Preece and I decided to go to The Lamb on a Saturday afternoon because we had absolutely nothing else to do. We sneaked in for free and watched the then struggling Tamworth FC do what they did week in week out at this time – getting beaten in depressing circumstances. I don't remember too much about that game but I do know a seed was planted and along with other friends we started to go quite regularly, particularly to Monday night matches under the floodlights which had a particular appeal.

Within two or three years I was proudly calling myself a fan and not only attending games but selling programmes and raffle tickets. At this stage Tamworth were still struggling with gates of often less than 100 but I really felt the club had potential and a love affair that never ended had begun within me.

If I fast forward then another five years I began writing match reports for the Herald while I was a news journalist there and then when I became a sports editor at the paper at the age of 21, the club became the main part of my working week. I was in that rare, privileged position of being paid to attend my team's football matches and I felt very honoured to do so.

My main aim at this time was to try and use the enthusiasm I felt to encourage others to start following the club and my back pages tended to include regular rallying calls for the town to get behind the club that bore its name. Of course nothing I could do would help unless the team on the pitch was getting results and soon after Dave Seedhouse and Peter Nichols took control of the managerial reins and



John Bayliss, Bob Andrews, Dave Baxter and Peter Young took over the off-the-field activities, the world began to open up for Tamworth FC.

From gates of barely three figures, the team went to having a regular following of a thousand at every match in a remarkably short time and throughout the 80's and early 90's the club grew to be one of the most respected and feared in the whole of non-league football. It also had a reputation for having passionate, enthusiastic and very humorous supporters which made every match at home and away a joy – unless you were the opposition, of course!

I am sure many people will have the same great memories of the time as I do – epic games at Durham, North Ferriby, Colchester and of course Wembley – but my happiest reminiscences about this period are more about the people on and off the pitch who made Tamworth FC such a special place to be.

I revered the flamboyant, stylish and frequently brilliant striker Russell Gordon but I also was privileged to be able to write about other wonderful footballers (and great characters) like Andy Foote, Mark Stanton, Bobby Atkins, Martin Myers, Ian and Shane Ward, Dennis Mulholland, Ian Bennett, Martin Finn, Mark Smith, Donny Gethfield, Jon Howard, Andy Maddocks, Carl Rathbone, Steve Eccleston, Steve Cartwright, David Foy, Gary Smith, Dale Belford, Matt Whitehead, Corrigan Lockett, Martin Devaney and many, many more. People may note that these players are largely from the period of manager Graham Smith and that is no coincidence – it is because I believe that was truly THE golden period for Tamworth FC (although I also do have as soft spot for the charismatic Les Green who also managed the club during my tenure as sports editor).

Off the field Tamworth FC has also had many local characters who I admired and respected – all the people mentioned above who took over in 1984 plus Clive Tomlinson, Ron Sims, Degsy Bond, John and Tom Bird, Russ Moore, Len Gendle, Buster Belford, Andy Farrington, Rod Hadley, Brian Whitehouse, Mark Maybury et al. Perhaps most of all I salute the truly remarkable Bob Cooper who lived and breathed Tamworth FC through all the good and bad times and who I thought of most of on the day I saw my Tamworth FC at Wembley!



The 'Tamworth Herald Vase Dream '89' book, written by Sam

CUP

FA Cup:

3rd Round Proper: 2005–06, 2006–07
2nd Round Proper: 1969–70, 2010–11

FA Trophy: Runners-up: 2002–03

FA Vase: Winners: 1988–89

Staffordshire Senior Cup:

Winners: 1958–59, 1963–64, 1965–66,
2001–02

Runners-up: 1955–56, 1964–65,
1966–67, 1970–71, 1997–98,
1999–2000

Birmingham Senior Cup:

Winners: 1960–61, 1965–66, 1968–69

Runners-up: 1936–37, 1963–64,
1999–2000

Camkin Cup: Winners: 1971–72

Runners-up: 1970–71

West Midlands League Cup:

Winners: 1964–65, 1965–66, 1971–72,
1985–86, 1987–88

Runners-Up: 1970–71

Bass Charity Vase: Winner: 1936–37

Tamworth Hospital Cup: Winners:
1946–47

Runner-up: 1945–46

Tamworth Charity Cup: Runner-up:
1933–34

Midland Floodlit Cup: Runners-Up:
1972–73

Harry Godfrey Trophy:

Winners: 1993–94, 1996–97

Runners-up: 1983–84, 1992–93

Shared: 1984–85



DIGITAL COPY

LEAGUE

Football Conference North:

Winners: 2008–09

Southern League Premier:

Winners: 2002–03

Runners Up: 2001–02

Southern League Midland:

Winners: 1996–97

West Midlands Premier League:

Winners: 1965–66, 1971–72,
1987–88

West Midlands Regional League:

Winners: 1963–64

Birmingham League Division 2:

Winners: 1955–56

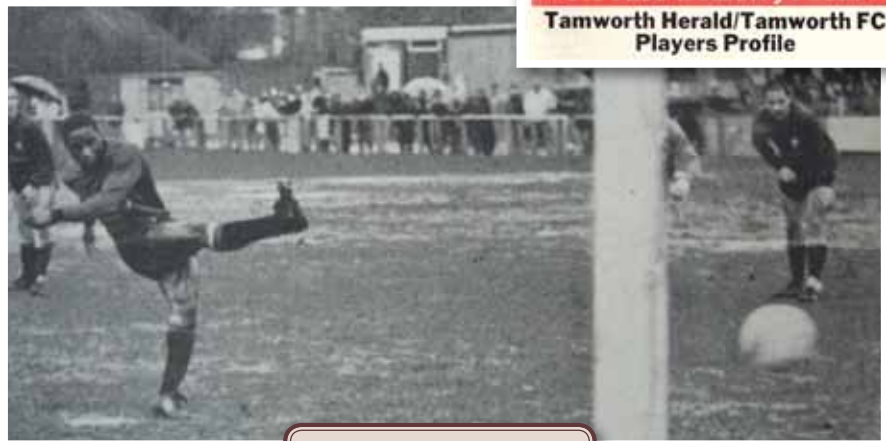
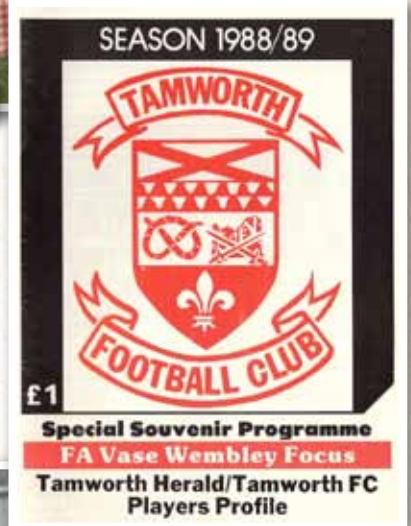




One successful season deserves another



A bargain at just £22



Myers misses in the Potteries

A DREAM BECOMES A REALITY

The 1988–1989 season started and ended with a win. And anyone who followed the side with just a passing interest at the start of the season would have their heroes' names tripping off their tongues by the end of it and can probably still name at least a dozen players without taking a breath.

The list would almost definitely include: Sean Hemming, Danny McCormack, Mark Bromley, Bobby Atkins, Andy Foote, Micky George, Martin Finn, Mark Stanton, Russell Gordon, Martin Devaney, Paul Heaton, Carl Rathbone, Corrigan Lockett and Martin Myers. One name was yet to appear on the teamsheet and he shall remain nameless for the time being but we will encounter him as we near the final pages of this book.

The Lambs were exempt from the first round of the FA Vase and so started, at Bridgnorth of the Southern League, in Round Two as one of the favourites to make it all the way to the Twin Towers. Yet it was the hosts who scored first and once again, it looked as if the dream was over as quickly as it had started.

But an inspired comeback, due in no small part to the efforts of McCormack, brought goals from Stanton and Gordon and a 2–1 win.



Smiles ahead of the 1st leg v North Ferriby

Gordon was on target again at Gresley in the third round with two extra-time goals to take the side to Ilkeston Town for a game which was marred by the behaviour of a section of the home crowd, who seemed to have no

respect for their own fans, let alone the travelling faithful or the game going on in front of them.

Just a short distance from the City's old Victoria Ground league home where Stanley Matthews once graced the field, Myers missed a penalty and was sent off but substitute Gordon limped on to the field, scored the winner and then limped off again.

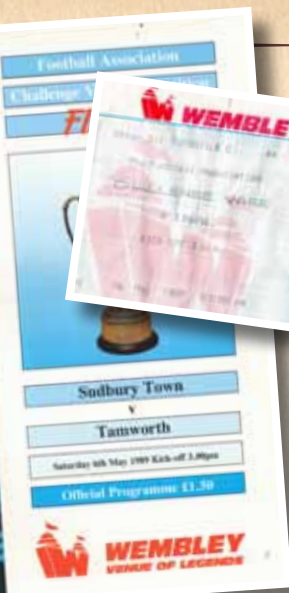


Celebrations on Humberside

Vase fever started to grow as Wisbech headed to The Lamb for the quarter final tie which kept Lambs fans on edge. Atkins eventually snatched the solitary winning goal three minutes from time in front of a packed house which was even more packed when North Ferriby came to town in the semi final first leg.

But the home crowd were left shocked and shattered as their beloved Tamworth fell by the odd goal in three meaning a nervous seven day wait for the return leg on Humberside.

For Tamworth fans of all ages, this was a game not to be missed and if it was played today, no doubt things would be done differently. Vast numbers of fans travelled without tickets but still somehow got into the game and although there was no hint of an ending on the scale of the horrific scenes that would shock the footballing world at Hillsborough a fortnight later, recollections of a vastly over populated temporary terrace that would rock and sway with every kick of the ball showed how differently things were done back then. For the record, Ian Moores struck for the Lambs and Stanton came off the bench to hit two goals and secure aggregate victory by the narrowest possible margin.

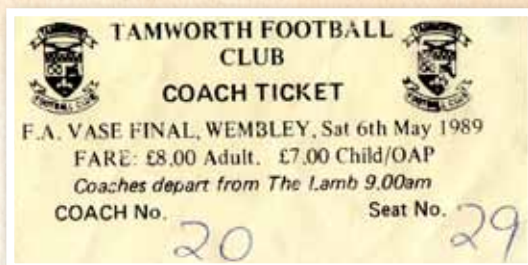
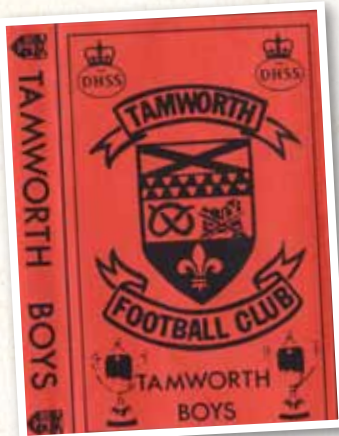


HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO, HERE WE GO!

With a Wembley-themed song by local band DHSS to inspire them and after an extended appearance on regional TV wishing the lads the best of luck, a large proportion of Tamworth headed firstly to The Lamb and then, by whatever means available, to Wembley. The date was Saturday May 6 1989, a day forever ingrained in the brains of fans who were there at the time.

Sometimes it is easy to forget there are two teams in a final, especially if your team wins but as hundreds of cars, coaches and the obligatory train traveller or two made their way from Tamworth, they did exactly the same from Sudbury.

The Suffolk side from the Priors Stadium were just as worthy finalists as The Lambs and had received the support of the late Sir Bobby Robson, who was then England manager but who had won the FA Cup with Ipswich Town on the same day 11 years previously. There was no question of underestimation as the yellow



mixed with the red in the pubs and streets en route to the famous Twin Towers and everyone eventually met up again at the end of Wembley Way in nervous anticipation.

A record crowd for a Vase Final was set that day and after 120 minutes of football the 1-1 score-line was met by the near 27,000 crowd with relief more than disappointment. No one wanted to go home a loser after such a fantastic occasion. Dave Hubbick's first half header was countered by Martin Devaney's side footed slot into the far corner, which created one of the most stunning images of Tamworth FC history, and although the sending off of Sudbury full back Mike Henry could have forged a gap between the sides and helped produce a winner, there was no separating the two at the final whistle. In amongst the teams during the post-match photographs, Tamworth goalkeeper Dale Belford removed his shirt to reveal the message: "This one's for Cameron" – his young son who would one day follow in his footsteps and play for The Lambs before enjoying a successful League career.

On their return to Staffordshire, the team enjoyed a parade through the town and reception at the Castle Grounds where thousands of fans cheered on their heroes. But the side had to do it all again at Peterborough on the Wednesday evening and this meant those who wanted to travel had to hastily book time off work or even arrange to leave school early for an 'emergency dentist' appointment.



All together now



A NIGHT OF PURE MAGIC

Bosses and headmasters did indeed allow their staff or pupils a bit of leeway for the once in a lifetime experience of seeing their local team in a major, or rather MASSIVE cup final replay and, in some lucky cases, this meant that the MDs and teachers got to go too!

What a night there was in store for those that were able to make the trip to London Road, home of 'The Posh', as on a balmy Wednesday evening they saw a dazzling display of Tamworth's footballing skills in a match where all the dreams of The Lambs came dramatically and magically true.

Like the fans who arrived at the ground to see a mass of fellow supporters slowly filling the terraces

and seats, Sudbury were simply over-whelmed by a Tamworth side for whom, virtually everything went right on the night.

Their approach work was first class, their skills were at a premium and their finishing as deadly as it had been throughout the season.

Without McCormack, Rathbone, and for most of the game, Gordon, Tamworth might have struggled but they found an inner strength and sense of purpose which saw them go on to win the Vase with an authority that neither side managed to produce in the first meeting at Wembley.

Pete Young, quoted in the Tamworth Herald review of the time put it down to a piece of 'pre-match hokum' by McCormack and Foote which relaxed the players so much that when they ran onto the field, their nerves had vanished and this may have been the case, but the fans didn't have this privilege in the tight ground.

Many thought that the official attendance of 11,201 was higher than announced as kick off had to be delayed by a few minutes and after what seemed like an eternity the game got underway. After riding an initial flurry of pressure, the Lambs took the lead in front of the Sudbury

fans through Ian Moores' perfectly-directed header from Russell Gordon's sublime cross but Gordon was stretchered off before Myers was brought down and a penalty awarded. Moores crashed the ball high and wide and after experiencing that shock, the Tamworth faithful held their breath then let it go in a collective sigh of relief after the break when Sudbury repeated the feat, leaving Tamworth in control.

Stanton quickly extended the lead, just four minutes after



Bobby Atkins takes the FA Vase from Pat Jennings

the penalty miss, with a fine header from Lockett's ball in and Myers hit the post as the clock ran down, but it was not the end of the action as with four minutes to go Stanton slammed home his second and the team's third goal of the evening.

At the final whistle, and despite the best intentions and efforts of the Peterborough stewards the pitch turned from green to red and eventually, captain Atkins lifted the trophy and the celebrations began.

Opposing fans eventually streamed back through the turnstiles and swapped scarves and hats and stories and cheered each other's coaches off on their long journey's home in a headlight bathed convoy that snaked all the way back to either Suffolk or Staffordshire. It is an image that is forever ingrained into the memories of fans, from both sides.

The weekend after the victory, a procession through Tamworth was hastily organised and it was testament to the town's enthusiasm for their team's success, that the heroes received a similar reception as they had the previous weekend, only this time with the Vase proudly on display.

SUPER SUB

by **Martin Warrillow**

I felt a bit of a fraud when agreeing to contribute to this book as well as help edit it. You see, unlike my esteemed fellow journalists, I never reported on the Lambs in a regular professional capacity and from 1986–1990, I was the 'Super-Sub'.

First off the bench, always likely to do a good job for the boss, capable of finding the net at crucial times – but never going to win a regular starting berth while the star centre-forward was banging in 25 goals a season.

My five years on the Herald coincided with Sam Holliday's

Fresh out of journalism college, I had joined the Herald the day before. I knew no-one in Tamworth, I barely had anywhere to sleep, I just about knew the whereabouts of the toilets and the coffee machine in the office.

Yet on that Tuesday afternoon, the sports editor, a young man called Holliday with a spectacular peroxide blond hairdo, invited me to join him and his mates at The Lamb that night.

I wasn't new to non-league football, but my hometown team Kidderminster Harriers had left the West Midlands League behind some years earlier, so this was something new and I loved it; pouring rain, a howling gale, two inches of mud surrounding the odd blade of grass and 354 freezing punters scattered around the ground, sitting on



TFC in 1986–87

finest hours covering Tamworth as sports editor of the Herald; The FA Cup runs, Southern League championship victories and, of course, the FA Vase triumph in 1989.

Eventually, like all the best super-subs, I moved on in search of regular action.

"The boy wants to write about football and I can't stand in his way," the editor probably didn't say as he agreed to my transfer request.

Nevertheless, those five years gave me a love for the Lambs that has never gone away and apart from two years in the early-1990s when I covered Sutton Coldfield Town, I have been a regular supporter from behind the away dugout ever since.

That love began on a wet Tuesday night in March 1986.

wooden benches or standing in the downpour behind the goals or in a corrugated iron shed.

The Lambs lost 3–1 that night but looking back at the XI who started the game, I see names that became legends in the club's history; Kendall; Lockett, the Ward brothers; Atkins; Maddocks.

Mark Kendall – a goalkeeper who could best be described as 'chunky' but who always gave his all and was revered by supporters.

Corrigan 'Cozza' Lockett – a chirpy character, a thoroughly good full-back and one of the FA Vase heroes of three years later.

Ian and Shane Ward – silky midfielders whose biggest travelling-fan was their mum and who regularly defied the

ugly stain of racism at a time when it was still a sickening feature of non-league football crowds.

Bobby Atkins – the man who lifted the Vase at Peterborough – say no more.

Andy Maddocks – rightly voted a Lambs Legend after 103 goals in 160 games and in my view one of the club's top four strikers during my time.

That's where it began for me and although I still count myself as a Lambs fan through and through, my remit here is those five years I spent working in Sam's shadow.

Most weeks, I was his driver, using a battered A-Z to find God-forsaken grounds in the Black Country where

of Worcester and three passengers and I attempted to change the wheel while rain soaked us. Sam, in the manner befitting a 25-goal striker, merely directed operations.

I did get my moments in the spotlight and the finest was the Vase final. Sam watched from the bench with the management. Myself and callow news reporter Sean Atkins had the thrill of taking our seats in the press box where they had televisions by every seat and proper half-time refreshments. When Martin Devaney scored, we leapt in the air in a manner which would almost certainly have us thrown out these days.

The best drive of all, of course, was the trip back from Peterborough. My passengers were the friends I had first



Fans of all ages joined in the celebrations

the Tamworth travelling support would usually double and often triple the gate and certainly quadruple the bar takings.

The Cup runs took us further, to grounds like Wisbech, Kings Lynn and North Ferriby via a nerve-testing drive over the Humber Bridge. North Ferriby is the only time I ever remember us ringing the local radio station's post-match phone-in to celebrate the result, back in the days when mobile phones were the size of bricks and not everyone had one.

There were days when I shouldn't have been the driver, like the return from Malvern Town during which I drove over a broken manhole cover on a roundabout in the middle

met on that night in 1986 and I vaguely remember us all joining the late-night (and early-morning) celebrations in the clubhouse on our return.

These days, I leave the journeys to a younger, fitter generation who I am sure feel the thrill that we did. But 25 years on, I would still rather watch my football standing up in a corrugated tin shed than sitting in a soul-less multi-million-pound stadium.

For a recent birthday, my wife paid for me to have a Tamworth FC tattoo on my upper arm. It will be a permanent reminder of all those car journeys, of all those God-forsaken grounds, of all those great games – and of those five years I spent trying to break into the first team.

A GOOD GROUNDING FOR THE FUTURE

After missing out on promotion on goal difference, the season following the Vase success didn't quite live up to expectations. The backbone of the squad continued to rack up the appearances, with numerous players hitting 100, 150, 200 and even 250-game tallies, but the side had to settle for fourth place in the league. Elsewhere in the club, the youth squad under the guidance of Paul Wood were performing excellently and one of his players, Paul Devlin, would go on to much bigger things.

Boss Graham Smith passed his double century of games at the helm and the 1990-91 season started with six straight wins – a club record. Mark Stanton hit the 100th goal of his career in an incident-packed game at Malvern and the first Supporters football match, away from home against a pub side in King's Lynn, ended in heavy defeat but started a devotion to the club from a whole new angle for many fans, before TFC hit the nation's TV screens once again.



TFC in 1990-91

Although the big boys in the Premier League did not yet have a licence to print money and satellite TV was still in its infancy, football on TV was becoming big business. Tamworth would have a long wait for a full game to be shown on TV, but the TV cameras did come in October 1990 when the BBC brought their media crews along to witness the FA Cup 3rd Qualifying Round match between The Lambs and Redditch United.

A view of the town, thoughts on Robert Peel and a visit to The Lamb Inn ran alongside an interview with a moustachioed Bob Andrews and highlights of the match went out to the nation as 1682 fans and the players and officials all set their videos hoping to catch more than a passing glimpse of themselves under a grainy pause button.

Victory meant the road to Wembley continued and a draw against

local rival Burton Albion at Eton Park brought over 2,500 fans down for a Tuesday night replay as Russell Gordon and Steve Eccleston made it all square before Roy Green headed Tamworth into the next round in extra time.

And so to the next round and with the BBC cameras watching again, Whitley Bay travelled from the North East and ended The Lambs' hopes of league opposition in the next round by four goals to six but a brace from Mark Smith did allow a young Trevor Brooking to pick his goals as 'best of the day' for Des Lynam on Match of the Day that night.



There was also good news on the ground front as the brewery which owned The Lamb gave the club an option on purchasing the land.

Fans celebrated with a mad fancy dress day at Redditch and in January 1991 a man with big ideas came into the boardroom. That man, Malcolm Jones, replaced John Bayliss as chairman four months later and announced a ground purchase scheme but there was disappointment all round as the side missed out on a possible second placed promotion spot by losing to Hednesford on the final day of the season.

OURS FOR THE TAKING

Graham Smith departed in the close season and Ron Bradbury took over but failed to set the club alight although a memorable trip to Boston United in the FA Cup brought the 'big guns' back to The Lamb where Roy Green once again took the headlines guiding the Lambs to a 1-0 win. The fourth round tie against Bromsgrove Rovers though was instantly forgettable and FA Cup glory was not forthcoming for a second season running.

In December of that year Jones announced that, although a quarter of a million pounds was required to purchase the land at Kettlebrook off brewery Bass M&B, the ground was 'ours' and a new chapter of the club was just starting. And so a group of fundraising fans and officials started holding events and promoting a 'Mega Raffle' which would see one lucky person win a brand new car.



The fundraising committee brought everyone together

Manager Sammy Chung came and went as the brewery extended the time period in which the land could be bought and the first stage of the plan, the purchase of The Lamb Inn, was completed but it ultimately proved to act as its death knell.

In January 1993 The Ground Purchasing Scheme got its official launch and over the course of the next 12 months well over £10,000 was raised by the efforts of all involved which was a sterling effort, but a long way from the required total.

Paul Wood took charge of the side and oversaw the first contest for the Harry Godfrey Trophy against Atherstone United for almost a decade, while in honour of the passing of a longstanding supporter, the Arthur Frost (Senior) Clubman of the Year award was born.

Also doing their bit to aid the ground unding scheme were

a group of fans who started to produce a regular fanzine entitled '4 Bleats to The Baah'. It ran for many seasons and was sometimes feared, in case you were the target of a joke, but generally it was revered and eagerly anticipated by all on the terraces for its' mickey-taking and straight talking approach to club life.

The 1993-94 season brought change to the boardroom.

After Jones had survived an attempted ousting he then stepped down from his post allowing Bob Andrews to step up and bring a new guiding hand to the club some 10 years or so after he, Dave Seedhouse and Dave Baxter saved it from almost certain death.



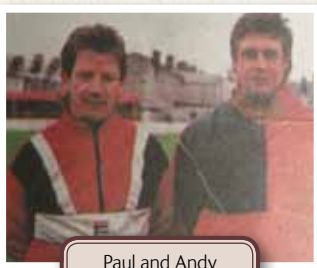
A fanzine to be proud of

After a pre-season friendly defeat to Sudbury Town and a shocking display at Lowestoft in the FA Cup where the only good thing to come out of the day was the football game on Great Yarmouth beach and fruit pies in the tea hut the team started to find their feet and recorded two spectacular victories. The first was a 9-2 win over Bilston Town at The Lamb and then a club record was set by Peter McBean who became the first player to score five times away from home in an 11-2 demolition of Armitage '90'.

At the end of what everyone agreed was a traumatic season for the club, Bob Andrews announced that, unlike the announcement by his predecessor, the ground definitely was now 'ours' as an agreement had been struck that would see The Lamb purchased by the Borough Council and leased back to the club over a period of time that would extend past the lives of even the youngest fans.

HENDRIE'S HEROES

Although only a pre-season friendly, the match against Aston Villa at the start of 1994-95 saw a memorable ten goals although home 'keeper Matt Whitehead quickly wanted to forget the nine that flew past him and new boss Les Green watched his side's form rise and fall like a tempestuous sea. Fans got their wish of being able to sing 'So here it is, Merry Chris Moss' from the terraces over the festive period but the jollity quickly came to an end following a defeat by Bridgnorth and eventually, in February, ex-Birmingham City player and former Redditch manager Paul Hendrie took over from Green.



Paul and Andy

His impact was almost instant and the fastest recorded club hat-trick occurred in front of just 329 supporters at Armitage when Julian Alsop put the ball into the net three times inside 140 seconds.

As the team continued to provide the results the supporters sought, the fans responded with a strange new confidence at away games and a trip to Buckingham saw them take over the local pub and bring the main road to a standstill as hundreds of fans, many in fancy dress descended on the unsuspecting club.

However, dreams of promotion to the Southern League Premier Division were destroyed at Ilkeston. Alsop scored after just eight minutes but the Robins went on to net seven in reply and eventually ensure that the home side

finished one point ahead of The Lambs who finished in third place.

The following season, local interest came to the fore in the FA Cup when Bolehall Swifts were drawn out of the hat in the first Qualifying Round and a narrow victory saw the Lambs through at Rene Road. As the season continued Hendrie's men looked to be going generally in the right direction including a heroic nine-man, single-goal, win away at Rothwell Town thanks to an Andy Canning strike six minutes from time. But rather than push the side on to the championship spot a ten-game losing streak started and the season ended with a feeling of 'what might have been' thanks in no small part to a disastrous March.

There was to be no such repeat the following season though, and as the Christmas period came into view, Tamworth proudly sat sixteen points clear at the top of the table in seemingly unstoppable form and all the excitement on the terraces was backed up by reassurance from the board that 'should the league be won, the ground would be ready'.

A shock exit from the Staffs Senior Cup in front of an unexpected 2,500 crowd at Keys Park Hednesford did not trip up the club's ambition in the league or off the field and ambitious plans for a new all seater stand were unveiled along with other required ground improvements, including removal of the grass bank and the dubious toilet facilities at the Castle End of the pitch.

The team went to The Hawthorns and defeated a West Bromwich Albion side in the Birmingham Senior Cup semi-final, then drubbed a cocksure Stafford Rangers 5-0 to secure the trophy. Extra silverware was added courtesy of a 3-0 win in the Harry Godfrey Trophy. But Burton Albion secured the Senior Cup after extra time at The Lamb in a game that saw three sendings off and nine bookings.



Time to Celebrate

CUP THRILLS AND LEAGUE SPILLS

The first season in the Southern League Premier Division was a struggle on the field although a memorable first goal of the season by Gary Smith did bring a victory almost as far from Tamworth as the league would allow as an injury time winner brought three points back from Sittingbourne and positive moves were being made as the club looked to become a limited company, with shareholders taking a stake in the club.

Paul Hendrie and Andy Dwyer continued to try and push the club up the table for the next two or three seasons and although this had not been achieved by the time the duo departed in January 2001 there had been many memorable games along the way.

Tamworth's run to the Second Round Proper in the FA Cup in the 60s was one that every manager since had tried to emulate and in November 1999 the club reached the First Round Proper of the competition for the first time since 1990. After taking the game to Exeter City at The Lamb, some bad timekeeping by the officials was blamed for the need for a long replay trip and while Gary Smith's goal was the best of the evening in Devon, the home side won the replay by a resounding 4-1 margin.

The following season, Hendrie and the fans made their way for the first time to the affectionately-titled 'Theatre of Chips' (Scarborough's McCain Stadium) for the first time in three decades to take on a high flying Scarborough side and no one thought that Tamworth would come back with anything but a defeat. However, fans packed into the away end and David Foy's freekick curled sublimely into the goal to set up another 1st Round tie against league opposition – this time Bury.

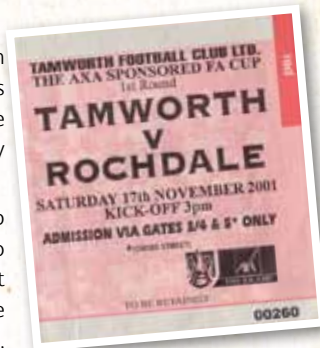
The striking duo of Mark Hallam and Warren Haughton was by now well established and there was no surprise when

they both ripped the net in front of a packed out Lamb, but once again a replay was required and despite 'Wozza' giving the Lambs the lead, the home side snuck victory in extra time,



the closest the club had come to a second round place for 30 years.

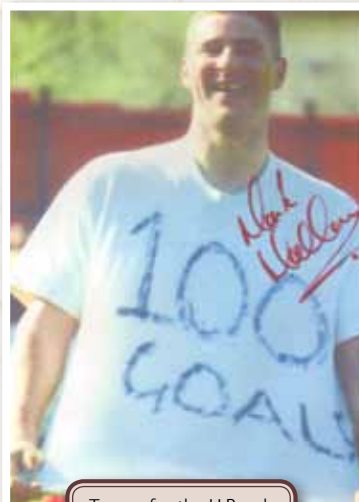
And so into the new millennia and with the team faltering, the club looked for a new direction and found it in former European Cup winner Gary Mills and his assistant Darron Gee. The duo were immediately embraced by the fans and succeeded in turning a relegation dog fight into a mid table finish in just a few months.



By the time the 2001-02 season started the whole Lamb was buzzing once again and FA Cup glory was on the cards as Rochdale visited Staffordshire. Once again though, a late goal away from home ended dreams of a second round tie in a replay defeat.

'H bomb' Hallam struck his 100th career goal in under 190 appearances and as the season drew nearer to the end promotion was a distinct possibility. However, any fan with anything resembling a passing interest in the club around this time will be able to recount the devastating heartbreak on the final day as a brace from Darren Roberts and a single strike from Steve Walsh were not enough to seal

the second place spot. Silverware did make its way to The Lamb though as the Staffordshire Senior Cup returned to the club for the first time since 1965-66 but boss Mills moved on to pastures new and fans feared.



Ton up for the H Bomb



Hallam and Haughton

LUCKY ME?

by Rob Tanner

Former Tamworth Herald editor Sam Holliday once told me that I was the luckiest Herald sports editor ever to cover Tamworth FC. Coming from a man who followed the Lambs to Wembley, the club's greatest ever moment, I found it hard to believe. However, my eight years at the helm was probably the most eventful period in the club's history.

There was everything; managerial departures, last day promotion heartaches followed by title victories, there were the highs of FA Cup runs and an FA Trophy final, and the lows of a player scandal that threatened to rip the club in half. There was never a dull moment at The Lamb.

I used to watch Tamworth as a kid. As a junior player, our coach was Lambs striker Andy Maddocks and after Saturday morning training sessions, we would all flock down to The Lamb to give Maddocks some friendly stick from The Shed, especially if he had run us particularly hard that morning. However, it was another Lambs centre forward who marked my first game as a reporter in style. Mark Hallam scored a hat-trick as Tamworth hammered Cambridge City and a Shed hero was born.

Twinned with Warren Houghton, the H bombers were part of a side that endeared itself to the supporters but never quite achieved the success they deserved.

With Jon Howard at the back, David Foy in midfield and Hallam and Houghton in attack, the football was amongst some of the most entertaining seen at The Lamb but, despite reaching the FA Cup first round and only going out to Neil Warnock's Bury after a brave effort in a replay at Gigg Lane, Paul Hendrie's side failed to fulfil their potential and Hendrie paid the price.

So, in came Gary Mills and that's when things really started

to get interesting. With Darron Gee as his assistant, any lingering concerns about relegation were instantly soothed and the following season Mills built a side that missed out on reaching the Conference for the first time in the club's history on a nail-biting, nerve-wracking, final-day at Folkestone. Knowing that victory would see them reach the Conference they were held against Invicta and Darren Roberts was left distraught after he missed a vital penalty that could have clinched it.

The Lambs were packed full of players with experience and goals. Tamworth reached the FA Cup first round and were again paired with Football League opposition, this time it was Rochdale who only survived by the skin of their teeth after a brave Tamworth performance at Spotland.

Worse was to come as Coventry City swooped to tempt



Mills away to become assistant manager to Gary McAllister but in Gee the Lambs didn't need to look far for the man to take them to the next level.

His side breezed to the title the following season and were favourites to complete the double when they reached the FA Trophy final at Villa Park. But what should have been the most memorable season in the club's history ended in double disappointment. Losing the Trophy final to

Burscough was certainly a blow but the national coverage that surrounded an off the field situation was, without question, the darkest period in the club's recent history.

I have always described the Lambs as a family club because the supporters are such a close-knit group and although some unwanted media coverage and national headlines threatened to cast a dark cloud over the club's finest hours this was quickly forgotten in a unified 'good riddance' to bad news befitting of the togetherness of the club as a whole.

With all hands well and truly washed of the situation, and at the end of what can easily be described as a solid and enjoyable first season visiting new places in the Conference National, Gee, obviously saddened by his decision to move

making sure Tamworth were able to compete with clubs with vastly superior budgets, but it was in the FA Cup that Cooper's reign will be best remembered.

The 2005–06 season saw Tamworth reach the FA Cup Third Round for the first time, and they did it the hard way. Cooper's Troopers went to Bournemouth and dumped them out, then showed it was no fluke by doing exactly the same in the second round at Hartlepool United. The draw for the third round sent Tamworth on their travels once again, but this time to County neighbours Stoke City and once again Tamworth were magnificent, almost snatching a late win with the Potters in a goalless draw. The Championship side didn't fancy the replay either and they just scrapped through after a dramatic penalty shoot-out.



on to pastures new left the club on a high and his playing assistant, one Mark Cooper, was given the job of taking the club forwards.

Already renowned for his countless 'put my head down and smash it' freekicks and leadership on the field he gradually swapped them for a similarly determined and passionate figure in the dugout. This also went down very well with the vociferous Shed behind him who were quickly finding their feet on many new terraces.

With his assistant Richard Dryden they did a great job in

Cooper led The Lambs to the third round again in the following season and my last game was helping the new sports editor cover the 4–1 home defeat by Norwich City, a game that was televised live on the BBC's Match of The Day, quickly being followed by the sacking of Cooper and the return of Mills.

In eight years, Tamworth FC had gone from Southern League obscurity to bask in the national spotlight, and what a roller-coaster ride it had been. I truly was the luckiest Herald sports editor ever.

TROPHY HUNTING; HAPPINESS AND HEARTBREAK

Following the final-day heartbreak suffered at the end of 2001-02 and with the unity and resolve that club now collectively felt Darron Gee, ably assisted by Dave Norton and Steve Walsh, pulled out all the stops to ensure that the league title was won in style at the second time of asking.

After an opening day victory at Havant and Waterlooille (we will return there later), seemingly unhampered by the sending off of captain Mark Cooper early in the second half, defeat at the hands of newly promoted Chippenham Town gave the Wiltshire side their first away win at their new standard of football and ended Tamworth's 21 game unbeaten home run stretching back 18 months as the campaign stuttered a little at the start.

But by the time Bath were taken to the cleaners, 6-1, at the start of October the side was well and truly in its stride notching up the wins until The Bluebirds of Chippenham visited the Lamb a few days after Christmas and stunned everyone by taking an 'easy' three points home with them.

In amongst all the excitement of the league campaign to this point, The Lambs were surprisingly knocked out of the FA Cup at the second attempt by lower league Guiseley whilst against Unibond League leaders, Accrington Stanley, everyone marvelled at the way they romped into the next round of the FA Trophy, but quickly diverted their attention back onto more important matters.

After the New Year the Trophy reared its head once again and a local derby saw Nuneaton destroyed 3-0 as Borough finished the game with 10 men and no keeper putting Tamworth firmly into the 4th Round for the first time in over three decades.

After a much enjoyed weekend trip to Weymouth, which brought home three points, Stevenage visited The Lamb and once again the side showed no fear by brushing aside the Conference side for a fifth round place.

League form continued to be unbelievable, including a 15-game unbeaten run, and 'the best team of recent times' was a comment regularly heard in The Shed and in the clubhouse as the goals and points just kept on coming.

A tricky long away trip to Margate was next up in the search for silverware though and it's a journey fans enjoyed for many more reasons than just the football; although the game itself will long be remembered for Mark Hallam's decisive second goal which saw the striker advance, in almost virtual silence, out of midfield and with no defenders around him slot home to allow the travelling faithful to erupt.

Farnborough was next up, and another team from the

TAMWORTH F.C. - F.A. TROPHY FINAL - VILLA PARK 2003



Suited and booted before the Final



A sea of red in the Trinity Road Stand

Conference faced the mighty Lambs as the volume of the whisper of 'what if' on the terraces started to increase. And it had good reason to as Tamworth went from rank outsiders to win the match to favourites to get to the final at the final whistle thanks to a 2-1 win and a two legged Semi-Final tie with Havant and Waterlooville came up slowly on the horizon.

Having sat in top spot in the league almost continuously since early December the Trophy run could have brought complacency into the camp, but it is testament to their determination that the whole club showed that it breathed a collective sigh of contented relief following a narrow 1-0 victory at Keys Park, Hednesford, a week before the Havant matches.

As it turned out local lad Scott Rickards took the headlines from both matches netting the only goal of the game at The Lamb and hitting the extra-time equaliser at West Leigh Park to take The Lambs to the final at Villa Park, but not before an impromptu celebratory sausage and chip supper was enjoyed on the journey home!

The team finished the season with two away games, but had won the league well before then and celebrated promotion in the final of three consecutive home draws. It was almost as if the club was slowing down to gear itself

up for the Final. But there was a long wait after the league season ended away at Bath and some fans tried to distract themselves / relax by booking spur of the moment holidays in warmer climes to take their minds of the impending test a fortnight later.

Unfortunately, the final didn't live up to expectations; after all, Burscough had beaten runaway Conference champions Yeovil on their way there and most agree that the little village side from West Lancashire deserved their day in the sun.



PRIDE, PASSION AND BELIEF

The team and around 500 fans arrived at Milton Road, Cambridge on Saturday April 9 2003, home of the smallest of the university city's two eponymously named footballing sides, City (rather than United), with just one goal in mind. And one goal was all it took to secure the side promotion to the Conference. The team on the day looked nervous from the first whistle but started to grow in confidence and eventually they got their just rewards when Hallam's goalbound effort was spectacularly pushed away by the home keeper and substitute Steve Evans turned home the rebound. The tannoy respectfully played 'We are The Champions' at the final whistle and the fans respectfully poured onto the pitch to celebrate with their heroes singing the praises of the club, team and chairman for as long as the home officials would allow, before everyone moved to the bar and continued in the same vein.

The scenes at Cambridge City and subsequent celebrations at The Lamb on the team's return with the Southern League Trophy to put them into the Conference were that of a club achieving a hard fought goal as a relatively medium sized team in a medium sized pond.

So, while the visit of Hereford United to The Lamb took didn't take everyone by surprise, as the fixture list had obviously been out for some time and the opening-day tie eagerly anticipated, the arrival of enough fans to pack out the Meadow Street End of the ground and a Police



presence that spilled into the car park and down Cross Street that had rarely been experienced, did. And it gave the club an idea of what life in the top flight of non league football might be all about.

It was no real surprise that the first season was a struggle. Victories came rarely but were memorable including a 2-0 stun of promotion seeking Barnet with Cooper on target twice. 'Revenge' was sought and gained at Burscough in the FA Trophy thanks to a solitary strike from Rob Warner and this was followed up with a fine afternoon's entertainment at Marlow in the next round. It looked like The Lambs would slip back out of the league but five wins in the last eight games secured their tenure for another season.

An emotional final day at Aldershot was the last one in charge for Gee and during the summer club captain Cooper was handed the reins with Richard Dryden as his assistant.

Once again the side failed to make a massive impression against the big boys, but did not take their punches lying down and managed to throw a few hefty ones of their own along the way, finishing the 2004-05 season two places higher than the previous one whilst also enjoying a brief but exciting run in the FA Cup.

Burscough were called to The Lamb for a 4th Qualifying Round tie and Cooper's boots powered them into the next round via two deadly freekicks to set up a trip to Blackpool in the 1st Qualifying Round.

In between these two games ex-West Bromwich Albion star Bob Taylor showed he had lost none of his renowned goal scoring touch by netting a hat-trick at Leigh RMI on his way to a top scoring tally of 19 for the season. But there was no such luck at Bloomfield Road and the Tangerines strolled home to a 3-0 victory under the shadow of the famous Tower. It was definitely a day for the fans more than the football.

A few weeks later and a brace from 'Super Bob' helped secure another thoroughly deserved but surprise three points at Barnet's Underhill in a 3-0 victory with the other goal coming from Tris Whitman. Three wins from the last 18 games failed to lift the side anywhere higher than their final disappointing 15th spot.



Possibly the best result ever (v Barnet)

COOPER'S TROOPERS

Then, in 2005–06 the unbelievable happened. Alongside a dreadful run in the league which saw The Lambs struggle like never before and continually drop in and out of the relegation zone the magic of the FA Cup hit the town.

A home win over Altrincham was neither expected, nor unexpected but a healthy 3–1 victory handed Cooper and his side a place in the first round proper again, this time with a long trip south to league side AFC Bournemouth.

With the Dorset club struggling to survive and money from a cup run seen as a life saver the fact that 'little' Tamworth took hundreds of fans to the game, took the seaside by storm and returned home with a place in the next round made headlines in the sports pages the following morning. Tammy The Lamb, the club's mascot was also now enjoying a run in a national arena and by the time the side ran out at Hartlepool in the next round Tammy, the fans and the side were gaining national notoriety for their passion for their club.

Jake Edwards and Matt Redmile both struck twice to send the league side packing on their own turf as Graham Ward and Kyle Storer had done in the previous round and although there was no Premiership club lying in wait in

Stadium and rejoiced in a 0–0 draw that brought City back to The Lamb.

With the TV cameras and reporters almost hanging off scaffolding around the ground Nathan Jackson silenced the Stoke fans with a first half strike but the visitors equalised with nine minutes remaining. After a stalemate in extra time Cooper left the field, having seen his side perform heroically but couldn't watch as the lottery of penalties fell against young Michael Touhy and put City through.

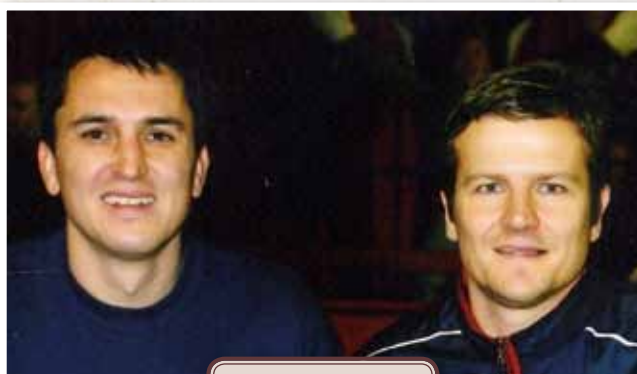


The Shed welcomes Tammy The Lamb

One point separated the side from the bottom two at the end of the season and the club lived on to fight another campaign, stuttering once again with league form even worse than the previous season.

But once again, the magic of the FA Cup found its way down Kettlebrook Road. This time around a stroll past Harrogate Town brought rewards of a trip to The Pirelli Stadium and a head to head with Burton Albion. Over 4,000 fans packed The Brewers' new home and Jon Stevenson took his side to Rushden and Diamonds in the Second Round Proper. With a possible place against a Premiership team to play for again Tamworth turned up the heat and forged a way through thanks to strikes from Steve Burton and Jon McGrath.

By the time Norwich City arrived at The Lamb, the ground had been transformed from a red fortress into one with Irish green advertising hoardings everywhere and most importantly, a BBC commentary box perched above the away end ready to broadcast the game live into millions of licence payers homes.



Richard and Mark

the previously uncharted waters of round three, a trip to Staffordshire 'rivals' Stoke City was almost as good.

A record attendance at a Tamworth match, other than a final, was set as 9,366 fans took their seats at the Britannia

THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN AND THE DEEPEST SEA

For all the successes the club had gained and worked so long and hard for during the initial pre-war years, through the 40s and 50s and after reaping the rewards during the

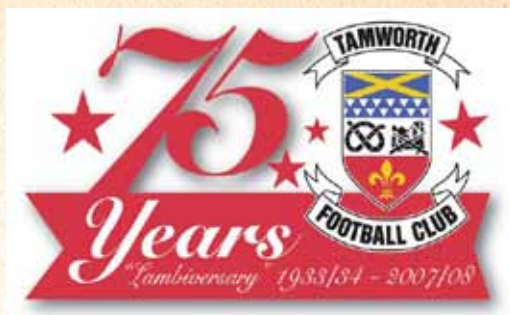


City's Dion hit a double—in the FA Cup

60s before slipping in the 70s and then looking dead in the water before being saved and virtually reborn in the 80s and 90s, this was the point that fans young and old saw as their club finally reaching the pinnacle of their achievements. Almost anyone in the world with access to satellite TV could watch 3167 vibrant fans at The Lamb and see how 'plucky' Tamworth would fare against the Canaries of Norwich City.

The odds for an upset were large but initial signs showed that it was a distinct possibility. However, by the time the fourth City goal hit the back of Jose Veiga's net, thanks to a brace each from Darren Huckerby and Dion Dublin, even the most hardy of home fans admitted defeat. But in a bid not to be totally overshadowed by their league opponents, Kyle Storer unleashed a cracking effort and made sure he grabbed at least some of the headlines the next morning.

Cooper and Dryden's cup exploits were not enough to save them from the inevitable, though. After a few more games they were replaced by a duo not unknown to The Lamb faithful.



When Mills and Gee had arrived after Paul Hendrie they had saved the club from the drop, but nothing they or probably anyone could have done could prevent it this time around. Two wins from the last ten games was definitely not enough to bridge the four-or-five point gap to safety. Despite the best efforts of Adie Smith and his hardworking teammates a distinct lack of goals meant that relegation, the first for over 20 years, gave the club a chance to take stock of the past few seasons and try again in 2007-08, the club's 75th anniversary season.

Life back in the Conference North was not what everyone expected especially when there was so much to celebrate off the field. Captain Smith's opening day brace against Burscough, as part of a sundrenched 4-2 in proved to be a false dawn and by Christmas the side was stuck in a frustrating mid table position which stayed with them to the end of the season. A decent enough home form was not reflected by an away one and so mid table was the outcome, and there were no arguments.

Hopes of a decent FA Trophy run were brought crashing down in the 4th round by Aldershot, another TV appearance



Len released the 75th anniversary balloons

ended in defeat at the hands of Burton Albion in the Setanta Shield, and defeat on the final day local derby against Nuneaton Borough at their new Liberty Way ground saw the season end on a definite downer.

BACK TO THE TOP

The team and the whole club lifted itself once again and one loss in the opening fourteen games, in all competitions, brought a smile back to everyone's faces once again as 2008–09 got underway.

Such was the determination of the club as a whole to regain their place back in the top flight that after fans enjoyed a brief trip with the squad to Northern Ireland in pre-season, when the real business got underway and the side dropped out of (in order) the Setanta Shield, Staffs Senior Cup, FA Cup, FA Trophy and Birmingham Senior Cup it simply meant that everyone could focus their attentions doubly on the task in hand. And it seemed to work, with just two games being lost in the final twenty or so.



Champagne corks popped at The Lamb

Mills took his managerial record past the 200 game mark, a feat only achieved by Graham Smith (271), Hughie Morrow (314) and Paul Hendrie (350) and the club clinched the title thanks to Nick Wright's solitary strike against Hinckley United in the penultimate game of the season.

A place back in the National division of Non League football was what everyone wanted, but what no one wanted to see was a quick slip back to where they'd come from. Despite indifferent form, this didn't look at all likely until the demise of Chester City robbed the Lambs of six points and thrust them down the table. But wins over promotion chasing

Oxford United, eventual Champions Stevenage Borough and a late one over ever improving AFC Wimbledon proved sufficient to keep the wolf from the door.

2010–11 got underway with Mills in charge but a tempting offer from York City drew him away and Des Lyttle, who had been with the club since the start of the 2007–08 season was given a chance to cut his teeth in his first managerial role.

FA Cup success was tasted in his second game in charge as caretaker against Crewe Alexandra, courtesy of Alex Rodman and Danny Thomas' goal apiece and almost repeated on a snowy afternoon at Brunton Park, home of Cumbrian league side Carlisle United but the scoreboard flipped like a coin and the home side squeezed through, by the odd goal in five, to the next round.

In a dramatic end to the campaign, Lyttle resigned his post with four games to go and the player who had been the

only one not wearing his shirt in the post match group team picture at Wembley some 22 years previously came out of the shadows (if he was ever in them!) to help his club survive as one of a trio of caretaker bosses. In front of Premier Sports television cameras on the final day Jake Sheridan's 76th minute goal kept the Lambs up and living to fight another day and that man, one Dale Belford, the only player in the club's history to have featured for the first team in each of four separate decades all but ignored the persistent TV reporter at the final whistle, and handed the microphone to the

swelling, chanting crowd around him for it was a day for the whole club to celebrate as one.

And so to the 2011–12 season. New manager Marcus Law is in place and will undoubtedly, and quite rightly, want to make his mark on the continuing story of The Lambs. Some will argue that it is only football at the end of the day and it matters not whether the team win, lose or draw. But to those people we would like to say that by reading this we hope it has shown that the history, life and times of the town are embedded deeply into Tamworth FC, and we'd love it if they could come and join us and be a part of it.

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VICTORIA ROAD, TAMWORTH

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TAMWORTH INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY
GRAND THEATRE
MURDER MAN
FLIRTATION WALK

PALACE
BLACK SHEEP
SHIRLEY TEMPLE
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The VILLA
news and record
3

GILLING FOOTBALL
TAMWORTH
EDITORIAL
WELCOME TO TAMWORTH
NEXT HOME FIXTURES

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TAMWORTH v BATH CITY

THE LAMBS

THE LAMBS
Saturday 2nd

the lambs
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The Lambs
Vauxhall Motors

THE LAMBS
TAMWORTH FOOTBALL CLUB
Redditch United



From the earliest to the most recent, the whole life of a club is chronicled within the pages of matchday programmes

WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

I first watched The Lambs on March 12 1983 against Macclesfield Town. There weren't many supporters in the ground but something felt right about being there and I started to attend on a regular basis. The defeat was something I was to get used to over the next few seasons!



Rod Hadley, far right with fans and officials in the early 90s

The club was on its knees, the green on the pitch was chickweed, the bar was no more the size of a large garden shed, the floodlight box was out in the open and when it rained a club official had to step onto a pallet to keep his feet dry, due to the large pool of water at the base of it. Health and safety would have had a field day back then.

I remember Brian Mason and Jim selling hot drinks from an old tin shack to make a few pennies for the club, then for many years Iris Chapman kept the Lambs fans fed and watered from the various tea bars that sprung up around the ground.

We thought that things may take a turn for the better in 1983–84, but how wrong we were! It was during this time though, that I made my first trip away from The Lamb.

On Saturday December 17 1983 I got my maps out to locate Shepshed (there were no satnavs and home computers then!) and realised that I could get there in time for the kick off. After parking up I spotted the Cooper family walking to the ground so I followed them into the small clubhouse. Standing by the bar was the then Club Chairman John Sturdey who was so surprised to see someone else from Tamworth that he bought me a pint. It was a gesture that I have never forgotten – a club

official recognising an away supporter and making them feel welcome.

Since John 'Donkey' Bayliss, Bob Andrews, Dave Baxter stepped in to take over with Dave Seedhouse the club has never looked back.

West Midland League memories are many (too many for a book of this size!) and happy ones. I was a rep and almost no club sent away travel details so I made it my mission to put precise directions in the programme as we were taking hundreds to away games. I would travel to the area and make detailed notes of pubs, post and telephone boxes etc. and all was well for a season but on a trip to Malvern I noticed that a new road had been built and I was greeted, after half time, by a number of disgruntled fans who had tried, unsuccessfully to follow my directions!

After losing the first game of the 1987–88 season at home to Oldbury United we pipped them to the title winning the last league game of the season on a Friday night at Gresley Rovers. Of the 1890 in the crowd the majority were from Tamworth and the traffic on the main road after the game was held up by fans doing the conga. All you could see was a line of red rear car lights all the way back home.

The following season's trip to Wembley was beyond the wildest dreams of any Tamworth fan who would normally stand on the railway sleepers in The Shed.

Many nights were spent in the clubhouse selling match and coach tickets and also for a special train Pete Young had organised. I was unable to travel on the Friday with the team so it was left to me and Bob Cooper to see everyone off the next day. We sent 23 coaches away from the Lamb and the clockwise side of The Egg had to be closed to get everyone on! We also spent time chasing off the unofficial merchandise sellers, only to buy their stock later when ours ran out! The replay meant a long Sunday selling tickets for Peterborough, but the result made everyone's hard work worth it in the end.

In 1997 I was honoured to take the reigns from Buster Belford as General Manager / Secretary and held the position until February 2002 when I left for pastures new. I attended matches to the end of that season as a supporter and enjoyed the trip to Folkestone even though the beer quickly turned flat on the Saturday night when we heard Kettering had won away at Tiverton to deny us promotion.

Without hesitation I accepted a request from Bob Andrews to return to the club in 2009 and FA Cup victories against Grimsby and Crewe are up there with the win against Luton Town and Dale Belford's caretaker manager victory over York City and look forward to more memorable times ahead.

Rod Hadley

TIME GENTLEMEN, PLEASE

It is a sad reflection of modern life that public houses – a vital part of local communities – are closing around us at a rate faster than they are opening and two such Tamworth pubs, intrinsically linked to the football club have vanished from the local landscape during the life time of Tamworth FC.

It is well documented that the first meeting about the formation of the new club was held at The Jolly Sailor public house and the team played their first season on a pitch located behind it.

Owned by Ind Coope the public house was, then, ideally situated for passing trade being on the corner of the Fazeley Road and the Bonehill Road on the opposite side of Lady Bridge to Tamworth Castle.

However, after the first season drew to a close Tamworth moved to their current home and became The Lambs. Over the years an ever-growing town has meant that not only has the Jolly Sailor disappeared, demolished in 2000, but the land where the team once ran out in red black and white, is now partially covered by both new houses and a dual carriageway.

Like the Jolly Sailor (left), The Lamb Inn, can clearly be



seen on maps of the town from 1932 but probably dated back a further century, and although the clothing factory that stood on the opposite side of the driveway has also long since gone, it was not until April 1995 that the last landlords, Geoff Wardell and his wife Philomena pulled the last pints in the intimate split level hostelry.

Muriel and James Colclough along with daughter Prue were the longest serving tenants (1952–1983) and before



changing facilities were available to the players within the boundaries of the ground the pub (whose rear garage once housed a temporary shower block) was the easiest and simplest option.

both before the rigour of a game and to help with winding down after a match had finished.

Unfortunately for The Lamb Inn, when the club purchased it from brewers M&B in 1992, the cost of renovation proved too much and so the wrecking ball was called in once again.

One establishment continues to do a fine trade and fans often partake of their wares just a short walking distance from the ground to this day. But it was not unknown for players in the 1960s and 70s to partake in a liquid lunch in Kettlebrook Working Mens Club only to find themselves being chased down Kettlebrook Road in readiness for kick-off, with the manager invariably baying for blood!



Refreshments on the train to Gillingham



Fans walked the A5 bypass for charity



Colourful away days



The Adders get a helping hand



Carnival day in the town

SUPPORTERS CLUB TOGETHER

There have been Supporters Clubs or Associations linked in various ways to Tamworth FC almost since the club started back in 1933. They, like the majority of Supporters Clubs throughout sport in general, continue to exist for one main reason and that is, quite simply, to support the club they are passionate about.

Supporters Clubs of their day are and will continue to be formed by people who take pride in their passion and channel it into something productive to help others. They form an intrinsic part of the life of Tamworth Football Club.

From the early days of the club at The Jolly Sailor, groups of fans gathered to help with ground works, promotion, and to raise money to help the club stay afloat financially.

After the move to The Lamb and following the Second World War when things were invariably tough for all concerned, the Supporters' Club (pictured) contributed a massive £560 throughout the 1947-48 season to give the club an annual profit of £185 11s. A rough modern

All the way through the 50s and 60s the various groups of supporters have rallied behind the club away from the field of play and as one report in the local press during this period details Supporters' Club secretaries including one from Tamworth, gathered to represent their clubs at a special conference in Brighton.



1972-3 fundraising committee

As the club entered the 'dark days' of the 70s the fans and officials continued to work tirelessly together to form a fundraising committee and help the club survive. A few of faces on the photograph above are still involved with the club to this day.

And so it continued into the 1980s and 90s with various schemes and teams of fans working with and away from the club to help raise money by promoting the opportunity to 'win a car' or a cash prize on the club's letter tote, a variant of which continues to bring a regular income stream into the club coffers some 20 plus years later..

In the late 1990s the current version of the Supporters Club was born – more fan and fun biased than financial – but quickly raised funds to help with ground improvements including a major contribution to the building of a sizeable catering facility by the clubhouse. Other projects and events followed including a helping hand to local rivals Atherstone when times were hard at Sheepy Road and complete first team training kit sponsorship a few years later.

And so it will continue, with raffles, sponsored walks, functions and charity football matches and the like, bringing together the fans of Tamworth

FC and others, alongside the people of the town; all in a bid to help improve the club which they will continue to support through thick and thin.



1947 Supporters Club

Standing: T. Parkes, E. Chapman, H. Pallett, J. Cope, R. Lees, F. Mortimer, W. Pritchard, A. Lees, F. Parnell, F. Pearson, C. Young, T. Seedhouse, L. Keen, H. Grice
Sitting: C.J. Barratt, T. Sellar, H. Godfrey (All Tamworth FC), C.H. Inskip (Chair), J. Hughes (Secretary), K. Muggleston (Treasurer and soon to be Mayor of Tamworth), W. Malkin, W. Seedhouse

day comparison of this figure is an approximate £20,000 donation to give a £7,000 profit. And this was no one off – it was a regular occurrence for a number of seasons.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book was officially launched on September 18, 2011 at a 'TFCSC Hall of Fame Evening' at the Assembly Rooms, Tamworth. The event was attended by fans, officials, players and staff of TFC from across the decades and, in total, 4000 copies were printed and given away for free.

Tamworth FC Supporters Club Heritage Project would like to thank all the fans, officials, players and staff of TFC since 1933 for their contribution to the continuing history of The Lambs and there are a number of people or organisations who the project team feel deserve a special mention of thanks.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, in particular Tismena Bashir and the staff at the Birmingham Office – we couldn't have done it without your help and guidance.

A vast amount of background research was carried out at the town's archives and we are indebted to Gary Phelps, Matt Panter, John Harper and Paul Barber at the Tamworth Herald, and the staff at Tamworth Library, Tamworth Information Centre and Tamworth Castle for their invaluable help, patience and most of all, understanding.

Photographs, scans and the like were compiled from a vast number of sources, some official, some donated or lent and some found completely by accident and those used in the book alongside the hundreds we did not have room for will be included in the project files that will be submitted to the Staffordshire County Archives.

Of those printed in this publication credit must be given as follows:

- The photographers whose work we have reproduced that were previously printed un-credited in the newspapers of the time.
- Barry Wood [p13 (showbiz XI)]
- Paul Barber [p34 (Devaney's goal at Wembley and crowd shot), p35, p36 (Stanton and Moores, Myers and Gordon), p47, p51, p58]
- Tony Adcock [p27]
- Simon Hayward [p20 (all), p34 (Wembley and the Town's welcome back), p36 (Andy Foote and The Bandstand)]
- Michael Archer [p36 (celebrations), p37]
- Dave Brown [p43 (Hallam's 100), p48 (both), p50 (Len)]
- Prue Cross [p55 (inside The Lamb Inn)]
- Ordnance Survey [p55 (extract of 1932 map of Tamworth)]
- Jean Tregaskis [p56 (SC badge)]



THANKS A MILLION (and then some)

At the end of the 2010–11 season the club had played more than 3800 competitive matches. So, with a conservative estimate of 1,000 people involved in every match (on average) it would be impossible to thank everyone who has been part of the history of TFC individually as everyone who has ever walked through the turnstiles onto the terraces, into the clubhouse, boardroom or sponsors lounge has contributed to it.

However, we would like to thank the TFC devotees who have helped work on or positively contributed to our project in any way, be it large or small: Adrian Flemming, Adrian Woods, Alan Burrows, Alan Fitzpatrick, Alan Gilbert, Alan Satchwell, Alex Woods, Amy Turner, Andy Farrington, Andy Kesterton, Ant Barlow, B. Owens, B.R. Mitchell, Barry Hilton, Barry Smith, Barry Wood, Beth Smith, Bill Cotton, Bill Vyse, Bob Andrews, Bob Cooper, Bob Vaughan, Brian Machin, Buster Belford, Carl Robinson, Caroline Kingscote, Chris Fox, Christine Kendall, Clive Tomlinson, Colin Crook, Colin Davies, Colin Hughes, Colin Huskins, Danny Baker, Dave Gould, David Archer, David Howes, David O'Neill, Degsy Bond, Denise Bennett, Derrick Purton, Derrick Statham, Don Waring, Donna Hughes, Elaine Handford, Emma Whitehouse, G. Pulcella, Garry Taylor, Gary Clay, Ged Fisher, George Greenaway, Gerald Huskins, Gill Bolton, Glenn Sayner, Gordon Stone, Graeme Phipps, Graham Owen, Guy Hopkins, H. Farnworth, H. Scarsbrook, Horace Sibley, Ian Grylls, Ian Taylor, Jack Hoey, James Randle, Janet Handford, Jase Jaratt, Jase Treadwell, Jayne Blount, Jenny Deakin, Jim Young, Joan Cumberley, Joe Perry, Joe Williamson, John Ball, John Chetwynd, John Deeming, John Harper, John Taylor, John Wragg, Jonathan Husselbee, Joyce Stone, Julie Cotterill, Julie Pegg, Juliet Taylor, Karl Eden, Kath Jay, Katie Marsh, Keith Lolley, Keith Pegg, Kelly Clayton, Ken Archer, Ken Roe, L.D. Statham, Len Gendle, Len Stone, Les Turner, Linda Clay, Linda Garner, Lisa Lewis, Louise Sheppard, Lynda Hancock, M Flanagan, M. Crow, M. Shakespeare, Malcolm Handford, Malcolm Smith, Marc Dayman, Mark Beadle, Mark Cotton, Mark Fielding, Mark Hanlon, Mark Hounsborne, Mark Maybury, Matthew Johnson, Maurice Arnold, Michael Danks, Michael Greatorex, Mick Thompson, Mrs. B. Wood, Mrs. S. Marsh, Nigel Hunt, Nigel Vaughan, Nigel Willisroft, Owen Lawrence, P. Colesbach, Pam Byrne, Pat Johnson, Paul Dolan, Paul Gallett, Paul Willetts, Pete Baker, Pete Clarke, Peter Gallett, Prue Cross, R. Leckie, Ray Hall, Ray Jay, Rich Elson, Richard Bott, Richard Bowker, Rod Hadley, Roger Brown, Roger Sayner, Roger Skidmore, Ross Walker, Roy Pope, Russell Moore, Sam Atkins, Sam Clayton, Sam Pegg, Sam Snoxall, Sarah Gilbert, Sarah Taylor, Sarah Wood, Scot Rowland, Sean Atkins, Shaun Grant, Sheelah Carpenter, Shirley Shakespeare, Simon Hayward, Stephen Hancock, Steve Helm, Steve Jones, Steve Lathbury, Steven Wood, Stewart Cotterill, Stuart Grice, Sue Brown, Thomas Hayward, Tom Cumberley, Tom Shakespeare, Tom Swindell, Tony Adcock, Tony Kingscote, Tony Lewis, Tony Reeves, Trevor Stevenson, Wal Blundell, Wayne Pell, Wendy Machin, W.T. Shakespeare.

If you would like to be involved with the ongoing maintenance of our website www.tamworthfcheritage.co.uk or help log and compile future contributions to the project as a whole, or even help with extra-preliminary preparations for a centennial celebration of The Lambs in the summer of 2033, please get in touch! e-mail us @ tfccs-heritage@hotmail.co.uk or find us on Facebook 'Tamworth F C Heritage'.

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