

THE GATE FOLD

MEMORIES OF THE MOST HORRID WANDS MATCHDAY PROGRAMME DESIGN EVER!

It is quite common knowledge now that one of my efforts won the Wirral Award for the Wanderers way back in the 1978/79 season when they were competing in the Kent League. However, had I relied on what, in my opinion, was the worst layout ever known of a Wands matchday programme—the gate fold—then I know with absolute certainty that the award would have gone to anywhere except Cray Wanderers FC.

I 'inherited' the job of programme editor from my predecessor, former Club secretary Micky Hunt, when I was asked to serve on the management committee in 1974. Micky had produced the programmes since joining the Club along with John Biddle and the rest of the 279 *Chislehurst* set-up in 1972. I believe that editing and printing the programmes wasn't one of his great loves, and I had happened to come along at the right time. In those days, the process of getting programmes to the turnstiles in time for the supporters to start arriving was much more laborious than it is today. Wax stencils had to be 'cut' on an old typewriter (no computers in those days!) before being transferred to an old duplicator and then run off manually by cranking a handle that looked like something older supporters may remember needed to be used to start a Morris Minor on bitterly cold days!

The first duplicator I used was the Club's old 'Roneo'. It had seen better days and, although I frequently had the repair man out to look at it, he finally told me to sell it for scrap as nothing more could be done for it. In those days, I was still 'young, free and single' (oh, yes I was!) and living at home with my parents somewhere between Orpington and Petts Wood, and when they heard that I had to get rid of the monster of a machine they were as pleased as punch because it meant that they would at last get their dining room back (I had commandeered the room and turned it into my 'office' in order to produce the programmes). Unfortunately for them, they hadn't reckoned on the Club the acquiring a 'Gestetner' replacement duplicator the week after the Club had got shot of the 'Roneo'!

My first season for editing matchday programmes was 1974-75. Aside from the frighteningly large duplicator and typewriter, I was handed box upon box of programme 'blanks' - flatpacked sheets of amber paper with advertisements pre-printed on them in black, which had to be first duplicated on and then manipulated into gate

folds. As it turned out, the folding was not the problem, as I managed to coerce my sister and my dad into helping 'pour gratis' (*for free*)! What was the biggest sod of all was getting the typewritten bits lined up on the pages, especially as the flatpacked sheets were longer than the space allowed to type on the stencils. Many of you can probably work out now why I am bald—it is because I frequently pulled my hair out trying to get everything to fit onto these confounded gate folds with very little success. To say that my first season in charge of the programme editing was a nightmare is one helluva understatement. The only thing that ever lined up were the team sheets, and that was only because they were always in the middle of the programme. If I wanted to print fixtures and results, I had to go sparingly on the club notes. If I had loads to say in the club notes, the league table had to suffer. Sometimes I was up until four o'clock in the morning of the match just finishing off. It was a combination of useless duplicating machine and ill-designed programme blanks. But somehow I always managed to get the programmes to the ground in time for the 'rush'.

Greg (Mann) obviously doesn't know how well off he is in these enlightened times. Yes, his matchday programmes are veritable works of art, but I just wonder how he would get on today if the dreaded gate fold programmes were to be reintroduced? It's an interesting matter to get sidetracked onto. Okay, so the very subject maybe does conjure up the anorak in some of us, but equally don't you also secretly yearn to know?

Well, for a start, most of the informative stuff would have to go. Not enough pages in the old design, you see. Then he would have to curtail the club notes. Jerry's Jovial Jottings would have to be blue pencilled (that's editor-speak for getting rid) and Pete's 'Looking Back In Amber' would stand no chance, unless it is introduced onto a separate sheet to be inserted into the gate fold. There would be no appearance records, the fixtures/results would have to be cut into bite-size segments and none of us would learn of the history of visiting clubs. In fact, there would be very little to read over a cup of boiling hot Bovril at half time.

Thank goodness, then, that the gate fold was disposed of rather rapidly. When my opinion was asked about the 'new' design of the matchday programmes all those many eons ago, my retort was 'anything but what we've got now [i.e. then]. However, this was in response to the fact that *every week* I had complained to Micky Hunt and the then chairman, John Stone, that the gate folds had to go. And, fortunately, both men listened. Then, lo! A new life burst forth and from the ashes rose the A5 booklet shape that we now all

know and love, albeit that it was in its formative years when I started experimenting with it. At first, the idea was to base it on the format immediately prior to the gate fold, which meant a single A4 (or it may have been quarto) sheet folded in half. But then, revenue was a major contributory factor; the Club needed to generate a modest income from getting local traders to advertise in the programme—especially as there was strictly no sponsorship allowed at Cray's level in those dark times.

By and by, John Darrington (then Club treasurer) had a super idea. He found an old 1950s programme that had been produced by Mick Slater and which contained a number of pages, mostly holding advertising. Yet the idea was there, and all we had to do was devise a design that incorporated advertising but allowed me to include items the the 'big clubs' had it their matchday programmes. Somewhere now shrouded in mystery, we came up with the idea of the glossy amber covers showing the crest on the front and the two inside covers sporting the advertisements. I then had carte-blanche to add whatever I felt was appropriate to the 'innards' of the programme, but still using the duplicator and stencils. At long last, the gate fold was banished, and the birth of the magazine-style was complete. The rest, as 'they' say (whoever 'they' are), is history.

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