

The Egbertian

NEWS FROM THE OLD EGBERTIAN ASSOCIATION

see our website at www.oldegbertians.co.uk



INAUGURATED 1928

Spring 2019

Editor's Comment

Welcome to the Spring Edition of EgbertNews.

I have been rather self-indulgent in this issue as much of it is about the football club for whom many of the association played.

I felt that explaining the reasons for the clubs sad demise would answer many of the frequent questions that I am being asked.

Enclosed you will find a membership application form to renew for this year. We rely on membership fees to keep the Association financially sound so your prompt renewal would be much appreciated.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Jeff Thomas

The demise of the Egbertian Football Club

by Jeff Thomas

Many of you will know that Jeff is both the Association and Football Club Secretary. Having played for the club, like many Association members have, for many years myself, I was saddened to hear of the club's troubles and I asked Jeff to write an article on where it all went wrong.

Peter Burke, Chairman.

Some of you will have been aware that the club has been on a downhill spiral for the past few seasons, and it is with a heavy heart that I have to report that for the first time the club did not enter a team into the league this season, in what would have been our 90th season in existence, which is longer than some league clubs.

Having been a committee member for 25 of those 89 seasons, including ten as Chairman, it was a bitter blow to me, as it is difficult not to feel partly responsible while the club's well-being has been on my watch. As a committee we have faced many challenges over the years, but have always managed to overcome them. As I reflect on where it has gone wrong I would conclude that it has been several factors conspiring against us in a relatively short space of time.

The irony is that it was only five seasons ago (the 2014-15 season) that we enjoyed our best season

during my time on the committee. We had six very good managers, running five league teams and a veteran team, with the knock on effect that we had never received so much money in membership and match fees. There were no



games cancelled due to lack of players which meant that we also enjoyed success on the pitch, and we were turning players away at training as we had too many attending. It was a golden season and for the first time the committee could

concentrate on moving the club forward, rather than dealing with internal issues that less able managers cause.

Traditionally it is always a struggle to find managers, and you tend to have to accept who puts their hand up to do it. This usually means that you might have four very good managers, another who is adequate but it only takes one poor manager for the committee

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

to spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the issues that he causes.

When I reflect on the club's problems, many of them relate to the difficulty in finding good managers who are keen on spending the time running a team and contacting the players, which again is ironic given the various communications channels now available to them. Indeed, gone are the days when all players had to be contacted by telephone, which when I was manager usually involved between 30-40 phone calls a week. This was in addition to having to find a referee and arranging your own post-match food – providing food for the opposition after the game has always been one of the better league requirements. Now email and WhatsApp messaging makes it all very easy to communicate with players.



Happier days. Second team promotion winners in Division Three North in 1994-1995.

Football has changed over the years with mid-week five and seven a side matches competing with traditional Saturday eleven a side matches, but two fundamental changes in our league and society have made things much more difficult for managers.

Firstly, the Amateur Football League (AFL), which was formed with the merger of the Old Boys League, which is the league that many readers would have played in, and the Southern Olympian League, which after the merger was purported to be the biggest league in Europe and was regionalised into north, south and western sections. This worked well, and in my day the furthest that we used to travel was to Old Edmontonians in Edmonton. There was the occasional long away game in the cup competitions, but these were not unwelcome as they were often played at clubs in the Southern Amateur League, who were often banks and corporate companies whose facilities and after match hospitality were superb, and a welcome departure from our usual offerings.

However, the slow decline of Saturday football has seen many AFL clubs drop teams, none more so than

in the western section and it got to a tipping point where there were insufficient teams to make the western section viable, so the western clubs joined the northern section. This had a dramatic effect on travelling distances and now involves travelling to places such as Chiswick, Aylesbury and Wembley, which, frankly speaking, players do not want to do.

Most serious footballers appreciate that the higher standard you play, the further you have to travel, although even this is now becoming a problem in the upper echelons of the AFL. However, try convincing a player to meet at 10am for a 2pm kick off in Chiswick to play a division eight game which you may subsequently lose heavily because you only have 10 ten men, because the other players do not want to play, and then try and do the same again the following week. The expression "see you next week lads" falls on deaf ears.

Secondly, and it sounds silly, but getting players to these long away games is a real problem. In my day every 18 year old had a car and the only decision was who was going to drive. Nowadays very few young club players have a car, mainly because they can't afford one, and with our catchment area being mainly Walthamstow, which while parts of the area has now become gentrified, it is still by and large a low income area so finding players with cars is difficult.

The club's fall from grace has been dramatic and, following on from our golden season, we lost our third team captain two weeks before the next season started, which as you can imagine gave very little time to find a replacement so we muddled through with a variety of captains. During that same season we were told that both our first and second team managers, who came as a pair, would be standing down at the end of that season and, with hindsight, it was remiss of us not to try and find replacements from within both teams far earlier than we did.

The lack of first team captain and how to resolve the situation approaching the 2016/17 season caused a fall out between our Chairman and Vice Chairman, which resulted in our Chairman resigning with the Vice Chairman reluctantly stepping up, but we subsequently lost the drive and determination that our former Chairman has always had. When I reflect on this period it may well be that even if our former Chairman had stayed with the club the outcome may still have been the same, but I feel sure that we would have gone down with a real fight, rather than the whimper that it turned out to be.

The start of the 2016/17 season saw us start with two league teams and the Veteran team, with both of our existing league teams becoming our first and second team. It was a bolt of the blue when, at one of the early season's committee meetings, the veteran

Continued from page 2

team manager announced that they had insufficient players to continue, closely followed with the same message by our second team manager, who also cited a lack of players, especially ones who wanted to travel to the away games.

I felt at this point that with a bit of effort the second team situation could have been rectified, because on paper we did have three teams worth of former players to contact, but the appetite was not really there to do so, so we lost a further two teams at a stroke, leaving our first team as our sole representative.

Losing our veteran team was the biggest surprise, as the vets have always been the mainstay of the club both in terms of committee members and finance, as they were of the age that they all pay their dues. I have always felt that even if we lost our league teams that there would always be a veteran team to carry the club on. Indeed, with hindsight had they held out for the season then many of the second team players, who were getting towards veteran team age, could have joined them.

At this point I could see very little future in the club as our remaining captain was not unreasonably

feeling disillusioned with the club, especially without the drive and enthusiasm that our former Chairman bought. Despite my expectations our sole captain fully intended to run a team for this season, but despite an excellent group of players, none of them had any money or were willing to part with it, so with the expected cost of about £3000.00 to run one team for the season, but with only a small amount of that outlay expected to be recouped from the players, he felt that it would be better to not enter a team this season after all.

Moving forward, technically the club is still in existence, despite not having any teams, as it will require an Extraordinary General Meeting to dissolve the club. The decision has been made to keep the club going for this season and for next season to see what happens, as you never know whether somebody will come out of the woodwork and wish to reform a team. We live in hope.

Thanks for reading.

Jeff Thomas

A Visit to the Rat Pack



On Saturday 12th January, sixteen of the Association went to see the *Rat Pack* production at the Queens Theatre in Hornchurch.

As I am sure many of you will know the term "Rat Pack" was coined by the media to describe the informal group of entertainers, mainly featuring Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davies Jr and Dean Martin, on the Las Vegas music scene in the 1960's.

The Rat Pack tribute act was excellent and have been performing for over twenty years in a variety of venues in this country and abroad.

We followed what was a very entertaining afternoon with a meal at the Miller and Carter restaurant in Ilford, where we were well looked after. All in all it was a thoroughly good day out which was enjoyed by one and all.

Mike Fitzgerald

Socially speaking

Further details of this year's social programme will be issued with the AGM papers, but once again we have a varied social programme lined up.

Our programme starts with a return visit for one night on Sunday 23rd June to **Stratford-upon-Avon** to enjoy the sights of the city. It was a successful trip last year and those who could not make it then have asked that the visit be repeated. However, please note that the current room rate of £119.00 will increase as demand increases so if you want to come you need to act now by contacting Peter Burke on 01580 752858. There is a 24 hour cancellation option so there is no harm in booking now. Our ever

popular **London Walk** will be in July. This has been one of our long standing events and is always popular. We then take the summer off but in September we will be visiting **Chartwell**, which was Winston Churchill's country home. The annual **Theatre Trip** will take place in October or November, depending on the Queens Theatres programme. The **Memorial Mass** will be in November with the **Christmas Social** in December.

If there are any events that you would like to see added then do let Brian Pieri know on 020 8524 0258 as we are always looking for new ideas.

Membership

Enclosed you will find your membership renewal form for 2019 which we would appreciate you returning in a timely manner to our Treasurer, Hector Watts in the addressed envelope enclosed.

We have a target membership number of 100 members which for an organisation with a dwindling pool of existing and potential members we feel is very respectable. Indeed, if everybody renewed then we would

achieve our target but unfortunately some members forget to renew which affects our membership number. Please don't be one of them!

The Association relies on its membership fees (and donations) as it is our only significant source of income. Our costs are ever rising and the membership fees pays for publications such as this and the website so your prompt payment would be very welcome.

AGM/Social

The AGM/Social will be held on Thursday May 9th at Upper Clapton Rugby Club in Thornwood, Epping. Full details will be circulated in due course.

This will be the fifth occasion that we have held an event at this excellent venue and unless something changes, I see no reason why this will not continue as it suits our needs very well.

It is an intimate venue with good bar facilities, a disabled lift and plenty of parking.

Our big concern was cost and to reduce our losses on these events we nervously introduced a £7.50 per person contribution at the last event. Happily there were no objections and numbers attending the Christmas social held up very well.

The Association still made a loss of £177.50 but the Committee deemed this to be acceptable.

If you have not been to a Association social event before then do make the effort to attend as everybody seemingly considers them to be thoroughly enjoyable.

The Old Egbertian Association

Editor
Jeff Thomas
21 Oakwood Hill
Loughton
Essex IG10 3EW
Tel: 020 8508 1376
jeffctomas@yahoo.com

Committee

President
Gerry Abbott
Tel: 020 8529 3864

Chairman
Peter Burke
Tel: 01580 752858

Secretary
Jeff Thomas
Tel: 020 8508 1376

Membership Secretary
Hector J. Watts
Tel: 020 8550 8231

Treasurer
Hector J. Watts
Tel: 020 8550 8231

Social Secretary
Brian Pieri
Tel: 020 8524 0258

Archivist
Mike Fitzgerald
Tel: 01277 823309

Committee members
Ron Fellowes
Tel: 020 8508 4724

Mike Tiernan
Tel: 020 8529 8130

Mike Jaselsky
Tel: 01992 635943

Ray Mills
Tel: 01268 710692

Published by
DTP Print Group Ltd
742 Forest Road
London
E17 3HR
Tel 020 7625 5225