

The Back Page



Epic

DECLARATION OF INTENT? 18-MONTH DEAL FOR STRIKER
PLUS:

WHAT ARE THEY NOW? THE 49 SITES FOR A GROUND IN 1990
STONES WOMEN EDGE DERBY – ALEX'S CORNER
THE STEVE WATT COLUMN – NON-LEAGUE ROUND-UP
BRENTWOOD FRIENDLY PREVIEW – THE STONES QUIZ

The Back Page is a new, independent news resource covering Maidstone United.

The team is a mixture of professional journalists, experienced amateurs and aspiring newcomers. We aim to offer previews, reports, features, rumours and more.

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From 1990: a map of 49 sites considered for a stadium in Maidstone

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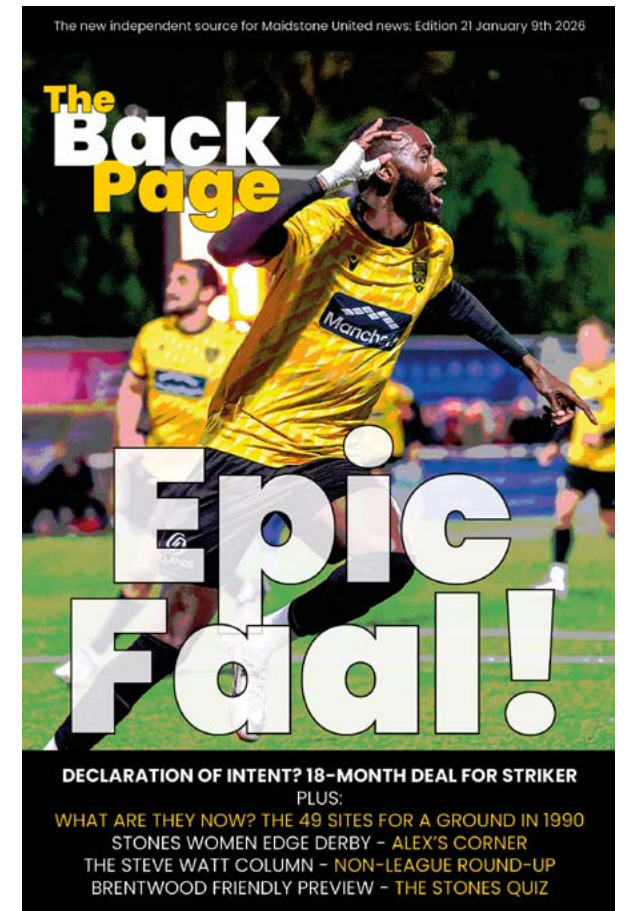
Chippenham nearly stun Worthing, Aldershot get new owner

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Mo Faal, common sense and giving home managers a chance

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Ahead of Brentwood, we look at classic Maidstone friendlies



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What are they now?

This week's image is a snapshot of another era, a time when building a football stadium in Maidstone seemed almost impossible, for a multitude of reasons. In 1990 the club produced a brochure called "A Moving Story," detailing the lengths they'd gone to to find somewhere to play, after selling London Road.

Some of these sites seemed absurd, at least at the time. West Malling airfield was eight miles away. Three were in open countryside at the top of the north downs and two were in the grounds of Linton Park.

One of the more advanced plans was for the area between Allington and Hermitage Lane, but the club were told they'd have to pay not far off £1 million to get the railway bridge on the A20 widened due to the anticipated traffic increase.

Almost all of these sites have now been developed and traffic has multiplied but the bridge remains as narrow as it was in the 90s.

In fact, of the 49 sites considered, only a fraction remain untouched, chiefly the furthest from the town. The reason most of these potential venues were so remote was because the club needed room for the additional businesses that were by then crucial to its plans.

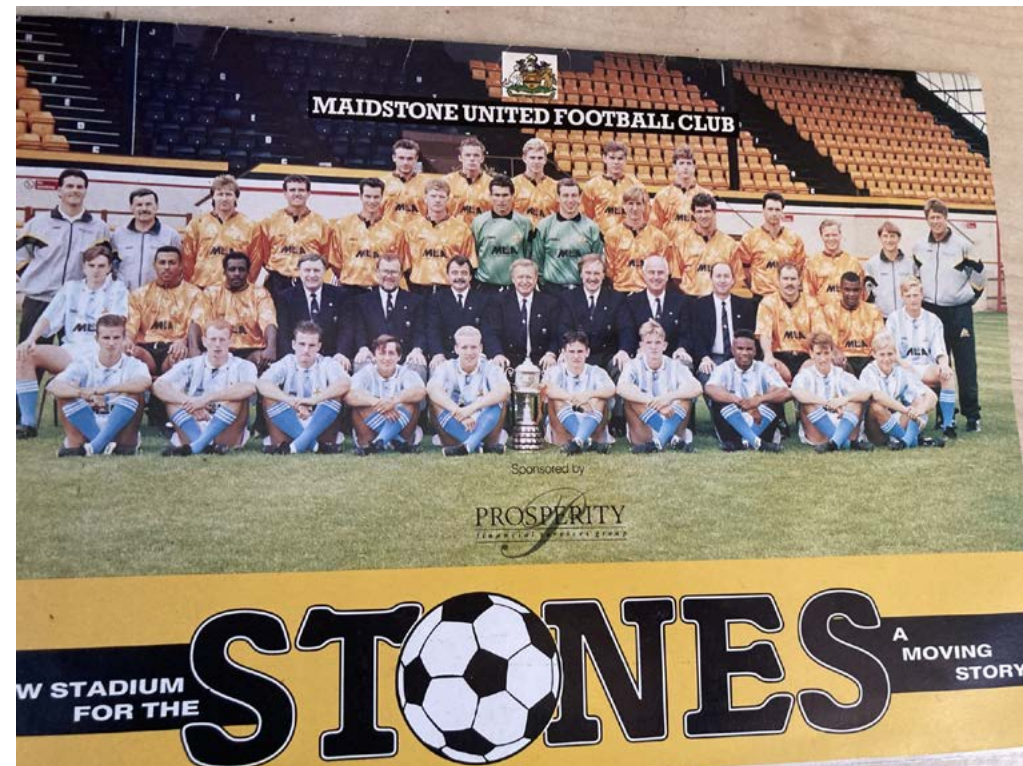
"It's a shame it took 22 years to come off, but that's about par for this town: look at The Mote now..."

When the scale of the Woodcut Farm Development was unveiled it provoked a horrified reaction, but it was an idea that was years ahead of its time: Milton Keynes followed a similar blueprint when they annexed Wimbledon and when David Folb was holding talks to take over Maidstone in 2010, he planned to rent existing areas of the Gallagher Stadium site to shops and fund the team through the rent.

You can read the full story about what happened in [Exodus](#), but what could have been a football stadium and leisure park is now an industrial estate.

I feel ambivalent about this, because it was one of the very worst of the 49 sites and it's extremely rare for stadia built so far from their town centres to succeed. For every Amex, built on countryside four miles from the centre of Brighton, there's a Homelands, or a Bishop's Stortford.

The happy ending is that out of all 49 sites, number 42, listed only as the Army Barracks, was not only the best, it was the best by almost every possible measurement. It's a shame it took 22 years to come off, but that's about par for this town: look at The Mote now...



"A Moving Story"

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1) Woodcut Farm: Now a gruesome industrial estate: way beyond the worst nightmares of the NIMBYs who sank the football ground.</p> <p>2) Hermitage Lane: South east of Barming Station, this land is being turned into a housing estate as we speak.</p> <p>3) Hermitage Lane: North west of Barming Station. Still some woodland here, between Quarry Wood and new housing.</p> <p>4) Hermitage Lane: Opposite the hospital, now a housing estate.</p> <p>5) Bunyards Farm: A housing estate.</p> <p>6) Allington Quarry: A tip.</p> <p>7) North of Cobtree Park: Way out of town, still somehow unspoiled.</p> <p>8) Culand Pit: Near Burham. Very much still a pit and very much a pit that remains a shit location for a football ground.</p> <p>9) Beulah Wood: More of a field than a wood, but as yet unscathed.</p> <p>10) Kent County Showground: Another terrible idea, although having hosted the War & Peace festival for years it would at least be ideal for dealing with the kind of away fans who make Enoch Powell look like Gandhi. (E.g. the recent Boxing Day goon squad).</p> <p>11) Newnham Court</p> | <p>12) Newnham Court</p> <p>13) Gidds Pond Farm: All now part of the concrete corridor that flanks the M20.</p> <p>14) Langley Park Farm</p> <p>15) Sutton Road</p> <p>16) Brishing Lane: All way out in the sticks at the time, now barely outside the urban area. Sutton Road was first considered back in the 1970s.</p> <p>17) Walnut Tree Farm: More like a concrete farm now.</p> <p>18) Sandling Road: One of the better sites in theory – in practice it was sunk by local residents. The allotments it would have been built on are still there.</p> <p>19) West Malling Airfield: Now consumed by Kings Hill, which has its own (<i>woefully underused, according to Alan Thatcher</i>) sports village, where the Stones have trained in recent years. Had the space needed but was just too far from the town.</p> <p>20) 20-20 Estate. Very much an industrial estate.</p> <p>21) Rowe Place Farm Still a farm. Still a batshit location for a football ground.</p> <p>22) Pratling Street. Still fields, on the very edge of an industrial estate.</p> <p>23) Sandell Perkins: Now Travis Perkins, two miles downstream from JWW.</p> |
|---|--|

24) Aylesford Sports Field: Now Aylesford Rugby club and next door to the Gallagher Group, which would have been convenient.

25) Sandhole, Snodland: Way out of town, but a possible location for a sports hub. Larkfield & New Hythe want to move here.

26) Cornwallis Estate: Literally someone's back garden. Someone very rich's back garden.

27) Springfield: Alongside 18, the closest to the present site. Would have been ok. Now housing.

28) Crossington Field: Terrible. Near the Blue Bell Hill transmitter and the M2. Still a field and woodland.

29) 100 Acre Field: As with 3, turning into a housing estate right now.

30) D Field: Somewhat incredibly, still woodland, right by junction 5.

31) Preston Hall: Seemed unlikely at the time, but now full of unaffordable housing.

32) Leybourne Grange: Halfway to Sevenoaks. No longer much of a grange, as you'll see if you look south when driving along the M20.

33) Blue Bell Hill: Now "Big Motoring World". Still in 01634-land. Still closer to the centres of Chatham, Rochester and Gillingham than Maidstone.

34) Cobtree Park: Once a zoo. Still a park.

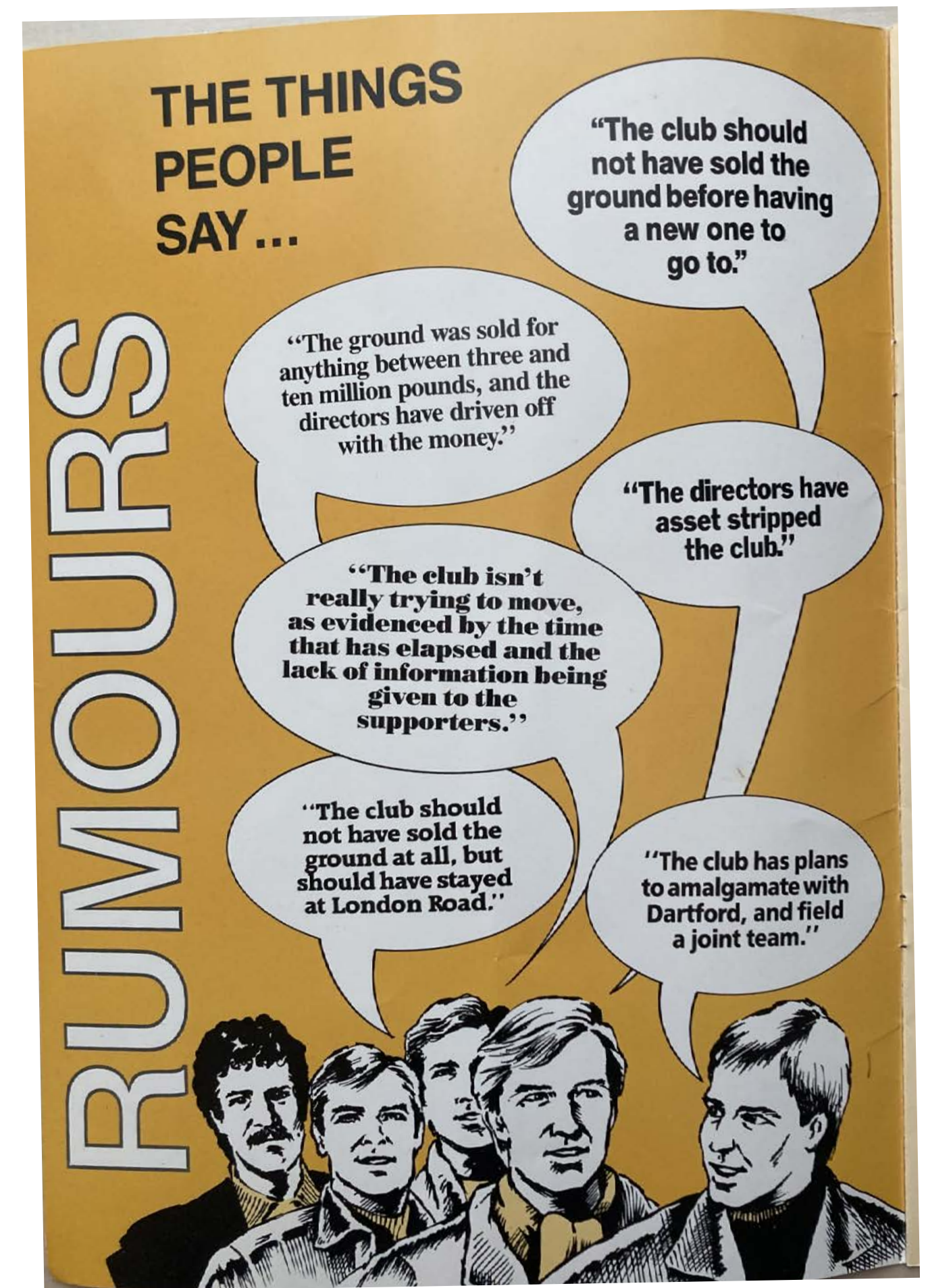
35) Horish Wood, Detling: Then owned by the notorious farmer Hughie Bachelor, who wasn't averse to using a bulldozer when he felt it necessary. Still a field.

36) Eccles: (Then owned by Blue Circle.) Still a football pitch – Gillingham used to train here.

37) Birling: Now home of the Spiderhall Fishing Club. Then another absurdly remote suggestion.

38) Leybourne Lakes. Now a Truman Show-like development.

39) Linton Fire Station. Now Boughton Monchelsea Primary School.



90s-style propaganda, issued by the club.

40) Police HQ. Would have been handy when Cardiff visited. Kent Police actually played here in the Kent League until the mid 1990s.

41) Harbourland, Boxley: Still farmland.

42) Army Barracks, Sandling Road: Now The Gallagher Stadium.

43) Boarley Farm: Well out of town and subsequently bisected by the High Speed rail link.

44) Reeds: A long way out of town again, albeit in an area where we traditionally had a lot of supporters. Now a gigantic industrial zone

45) Mote Park: Not as far-fetched an idea as it sounded at the time. The

consensus was that MBC would never grant permission for a stadium there, but some thought bringing football to the Mote could make it viable. The site remains a testimony to the damage done by snobbery, self-interest and poisonous internal politics.

46) Hermitage Farm: West of Barming Station. Still a farm, the last rural enclave on the town's western fringes.

47) West Malling Hermitage: Evolving into a housing estate.

48) South of Howard Drive: Then known as the Reservoir Field, now you've guessed it, a housing estate.

49) East Snodland: Now under a by-pass.



Maddie Dale toys with her opponent



Ellie Hinkley finds the back of the net with a classic poacher's goal.

Hinkley points Stones to victory in derby

By John Tully

The Stones' return to action after a three-week break saw them inflict a narrow defeat on Kings Hill on Sunday.

On a cold but sunny afternoon, the Stones started brightly and could have scored with their first attack but for a good save from the opposition keeper.

In their next attack they came close again when Millie Waud hit the crossbar from very close range following one of several dangerous corners from Kylie Manktelow. The half continued with the Stones pressing hard but failing to find the cohesion that would create clear cut chances.

This was as much down to a strong Kings Hill defence who performed very admirably throughout the whole match and in particular in the first half.

MAIDSTONE UNITED 1
Hinkley 45
KINGS HILL 0

Maidstone were defensively marshalled by the excellent Georgia Pearch and they had control of the midfield thanks to the strong trio of skipper Annie White, the tenacious Kady Wilkinson and skilful Kylie.

Just as a blank first half was looming the Stones scored in the last minute of the half.

From another terrific Kylie corner Pearch got her head to the ball at the far post and directed it into the middle of the six-yard box, where close to the goal line Ellie Hinkley showed her goal-poacher's instinct to divert the ball past the keeper. A one goal lead at the break was well deserved by the Stones.

The second half saw the pattern of play like the first with the Stones having much of the ball and looking comfortable defensively.

All the substitutes were used in the second half with no adverse effect on the Stones' dominance, although very few clear-cut chances were created. Kings Hill did rally towards the close of the match as they created their best chances but these were dealt with by the Stones and Cara Davies in goal was not troubled greatly.

Overall, a competent Stones display although they will hope to increase their chance creation with slicker passing and movement generally; this will come with regular matches again.

The game ended at 1-0 with the Stones' reward being a home quarter-final tie against Chatham Development on February 1st. Next week the Stones host Margate in a league match.



What actually happens on a Sponsor Day?

By Alex Del-Valle

I only sponsored my first Maidstone player last season, and what a pick I made! Temi Eweka went on to win Manager's player of the season after an impressive season with the Stones – one that earned him a move a step up to Eastleigh. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience and meeting Temi face-to-face on a few occasions and that's why, at the start of this season, I felt like doing it all again.

My pick this year was Deon Moore, our number nine. There was no real thought behind it, other than I liked what I saw from him in pre-season. Catching up with him at the player sponsor day just after Christmas really did make me feel good about my choice – he's a top guy.

The player sponsor day is where all sponsors are invited to meet their player in person and this also involves watching a first-team training session. I accepted my invitation and braved the cold conditions down at the Gallagher.



George and Alex in The Spitfire Lounge

"Harness took a knock but was fine and it provided some entertainment as George went in goal – he did a pretty solid job."

I was greeted by Ian Tucker, who walked me to the Spitfire Lounge, where tea and coffee were on offer (as well as a dozen varieties of biscuits and cake) and was taken to the stands to observe the first team session where an 11 vs. 11 was taking place – to confirm, Mo Faal wasn't training with the first team at this point!

It was a competitive game for a training session, which is always pleasing to see. They then moved into smaller side games where first choice keeper Nathan Harness actually took a knock and had to go in early.

This was not something anyone wanted to see the day before a big away trip to then-league leaders Hornchurch, but he was obviously fine in the end. It did provide some entertainment as George Elokobi himself went in goal and did a pretty solid job.

We went inside, once the training session had finished, and the players and staff soon joined us. George then

gave a speech expressing his gratitude for the support and us taking the time to come down – always a pleasure, Gaffer!

I got talking to a couple of the players and George himself. First up was the skipper Sam Corne. Asking how my Christmas was, I admitted it was much better after he grabbed the winner against Dover just a couple of days before.

Looking ahead to Hornchurch, Sam did seem quite confident. We acknowledged that all it takes is a few wins on the bounce and the season can change just like that – he would grab another goal the following evening in the Stones' eventual 2-1 win.

Deon Moore then came up to me, after taking an excessive amount of time in the shower, according to the gaffer. Straight away we got chatting about the season and how he's found playing at Maidstone. He acknowledged that the professional set-up the Stones have is definitely more suited for him – he's a player that works well with structure.

I joked with him that last year I sponsored the manager's player of the season, so the pressure was

on him to keep the streak going! He took that well and acknowledged that he'd had a bit of an up-and-down start but felt like in the previous few games, he's really clocked onto what George wants from him in games; being more direct and involved in the play. That was shown by his assist for Corne against Dover just a couple of days before.

We then went on to talk about the season outlook with George. Noting we were at exactly the halfway mark, "anything can happen" were his words.



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Lamar Reynolds scored for Enfield in their defeat against AFC Totton

More Priory Pain for Blundering Borough

By Alan Thatcher

The only NLS match to survive Tuesday's icy weather was the Sussex derby between **Eastbourne Borough** and **Horsham**.

Reece Myles-Meekums gave the Hornets the lead inside 20 minutes and Rhys Murphy made it 2-0 after three minutes of added time.

In between the two goals, Borough hit the crossbar and had an offside goal disallowed, but a resolute Horsham defence held firm.

The win propelled them back up to sixth in the table, nudging Stones down to eighth place, just outside the play-off places.

Eastbourne have been in the Conference or NLS since 2004 but with a meagre 21 points from 26 games they need a significant revival in fortunes to avoid relegation.

Only 766 fans braved the freezing conditions on a drab night that summed up the current vibe around Priory Lane.

Sol Wanjau-Smith was one of the scorers as bottom of the table **Chippenham Town** came close to recording the shock result of the season away to NSL leaders **Worthing** on Saturday.

Incredibly, Chippenham took a first half lead through Wanjau-Smith and doubled it midway through the second half when Ezio Touray took advantage of a mistake by Joel Colbran in the Worthing defence.

The Rebels mounted a fierce fightback in

the closing stages and substitute Nathan Odokonyero pulled one back with two minutes of normal time remaining.

Fortunately for Worthing, the referee allowed eight minutes of added time. In the final seconds, Colbran made up for his earlier error by forcing home the equaliser in front of 2,429 fans at Woodside Road.

That valuable goal kept Worthing one point ahead of **Weston-super-Mare**, who hammered **Farnborough** 4-1 with Luke Coulson bagging a hat-trick.

This weekend, instead of visiting the Gallagher, **Weston** will be travelling to **Grimsby Town** in the third round of the FA Cup.

Hemel Hempstead climbed above the Stones with a 1-0 win over **Dagenham and Redbridge**, with wins from **Maidenhead** (at Horsham) and **Totton** (at home to Enfield Town) keeping them within two and three points of George Elokobi's men.

Lamar Reynolds scored an equaliser for **Enfield** at Totton, but the home side won 3-2 thanks to a 92nd minute winner from Tony Lee that left the Londoners one place above **Chippenham**.

Tonbridge Angels held **Dorking Wanderers** to a 2-2 draw, with Patrick Casey once again among the scorers for the Surrey side, who are in fourth place, two points behind **Hornchurch** and one point ahead of **Torquay United**.

Slough Town climbed up to 16th place, four points clear of the relegation zone, after a 2-1 win over struggling **Eastbourne**.

Folkestone hit trouble with twin defeats

Isthmian League Premier Division leaders **Folkestone Invicta's** 12-match winning run was ended with two home defeats in the space of four days.

They crashed 2-1 to **Chatham Town** on Saturday, followed by a 1-0 reverse against **Aveley** on Tuesday.

Despite these two setbacks they are still 11 points clear of second-placed **Brentwood Town**.

The Kent derby attracted a crowd of 2,166 but the result was overshadowed by an injury to Invicta striker Ade Yusuff.

Sam Senne-Richardson and Kian Moynes scored for Chats with Ben Mason scrambling one home for Folkestone in added time.

Chats are now just three points behind Brentwood with two games in hand.

Chatham, having reached the first round of the FA Cup, are preparing to welcome National League leaders Carlisle United in the FA Trophy fourth round tomorrow instead of their scheduled league clash against Brentwood, who host Stones in a friendly.

Without star forwards Yusuff and Joe Pigott, Jay Saunders' men lacked fire power against Aveley, who continued their excellent away form with a first half winner from Ollie Peters.

Since losing 5-2 at home to Folkestone on September 15, Aveley have been unbeaten in the league with nine wins and six draws.

Dartford slipped to sixth place behind **Aveley** and **Cray Wanderers** after their home game against **Ramsgate** was postponed because of a frozen pitch.

The big battles keep coming thick and fast in this division, with **Cray** at home to **Aveley** tonight (Friday).

530 miles for nothing ... But there is a silver lining

Torquay United reckon their postponed game at **Dover Athletic** will leave them £6,000 out of pocket.

The game was called off just before midday on Saturday by Maidstone referee Joe Dann-Pye, with Torquay having travelled across country the previous day.

They will now have to repeat that 530-mile round trip for a midweek game with lower revenues forecast.

The Gulls listed the cost of coach hire, hotel accommodation and meals for the squad at around £4,000 plus VAT. The club was also due a £2,000 live TV fee from the DAZN channel.

Dover also missed out on a big payday, losing a £6,000 fee from DAZN as the home side, plus ticket sales and refreshments for around 350 away fans. (So it wasn't all bad news - ed.)

*

Stones fans who had set off for Chelmsford before the game was postponed had two options to choose from if they fancied watching a game in Essex, with Isthmian League Premier Division games taking place at **Brentwood** and nearby **Billericay**.

Second-placed **Brentwood** crashed 4-1 to **Cray Wanderers**, while **Billericay** drew a crowd of 1,381 who saw them lose 2-1 to **Hashtag United**.

Never one to shy away from promoting artificial pitches, Stones' joint owner Oliver Ash was quick to jump on Twitter as soon as the game at Chelmsford was called off.

Posting an hour and a half before the scheduled kick-off time, he made a cryptic comment about "natural pitches" and was disappointed the game was off because "this was perhaps a good time to face Chelmsford".

*

Aaron Blair hit the decider for **Eastleigh** as they won 2-1 away to **Boston United** in the National League on Saturday.

The wonderfully-named Greg



Sloggett gave Boston the lead before Harvey Saunders headed home the equaliser.

Blair took advantage of a mis-kick by home keeper Rhys Lovett to slot the ball into an empty net just before the hour mark.

*

Gateshead, bottom of the National League, reappointed Kent-born Rob Elliot as manager 24 hours before their 3-1 defeat at **Tamworth**, their 12th loss in a row.

Elliot replaces Alun Armstrong, who has been switched to a new role as head of football development.

Elliot was first appointed manager in October 2023 and led Gateshead to a sixth-placed finish in the National League and FA Trophy glory at Wembley.

Bizarrely, the Heed were barred from competing in the National League play-offs after failing to secure a "10-year security of tenure" of the cavernous Gateshead International Stadium (a bit like Chelmsford, Hornchurch and Enfield but much bigger).

Elliot was headhunted by Crawley Town early in the 2024-25 campaign but he lasted only five months at the Sussex club with just six wins in his 33 games in charge.

Elliot was born in Greenwich (yes, we know it's a London borough, thanks) and played for Erith Town before signing for Charlton Athletic, where he made 96 appearances before joining Newcastle United in 2011, playing 55 times for the Toon.

He also made four appearances for the Republic of Ireland.

Gateshead certainly need a safe pair of hands as they fight to avoid relegation.

(As we were finalising this edition Gateshead announced the permanent signing of Levi Amantchi.)

*

National Leaguers **Aldershot Town** have a new owner. Club director Deane Wood has taken over as chairman and owner after two key directors have resigned in what appears to be an amicable transition.

Former chairman Shahid Azeem and fellow director John Leppard are both stepping down from their roles. They have written off loans to the club and are transferring their shares to Wood at no cost.

Wood joined the board in 2018 and loaned the Shots "a substantial amount of money". These loans are also being converted into shares as part of this transition.

twitter Follow @AlanThatcherCS

Upcoming Commentaries

Torquay United (A) Sat 17 January 2026 @ 1500 – Sean Scurr & Tom Rogers

Ebbsfleet United (H) Tue 20 January 2026 @ 1945 – Darren Styles & Jon Crowther

Hemel Hempstead (H) Sat 24 January 2026 @1500 – Alan Thatcher & Alex del Valle

Ebbsfleet United (H) Tue 27 January 2026 @ 1945 – Fred Atkins & Nigel Seager

Tonbridge Angels (A) Sat 31 January 2026 @ 1500 – Chris Bechervaise & Tom Rogers

Stones Live! has been providing radio commentaries of Maidstone United matches since the 2008 -09 season, way back when the club was a fraction of the size it is now, playing to crowds of 200 in Sittingbourne. Founded by Stones fan Chris Bechervaise, its audiences grew steadily at first and then rapidly when the club returned home after the end of its 24-year exile in 2012. The Back Page editor, Fred Atkins, is a regular commentator, as are a number of this publication's contributors.

It's run by volunteer supporters who have a background in professional broadcast radio and funded independently from the football club by volunteer donations or through sponsorship and advertising. Stones Live! is a not-for-profit service and any monies raised are put back into the radio station to pay for various broadcast licences and to renew worn or broken equipment. (Such as the laptop Charlie Seaman accidentally smashed last year).



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The Back Page

Statement signings, late cancellations and managerial madness in the top flight ... it's **Steve Watt's** latest column for The Back Page.



Watt's Occurring?

A statement of intent

Mo Faal is a very good striker and he's a great signing for Maidstone. I think bringing him back is a statement of intent.

When a player like that becomes available you can imagine he'd have a lot of irons in the fire and maybe that affiliation with the club helped. He obviously had a great time there in his last spell, so you'd think that would play a part and maybe it was the deciding factor.

It's a statement of what they want to try and achieve this season: not to just make the play-offs but try to get promoted.

The relationship with the manager could be crucial. In the past I've signed players who have turned down more money to play elsewhere because of my personal relationship with them and I'm pretty sure Mo would have had some very good offers, so his bond with George may have tipped the scales.

This is why it's important to stay on good terms with people in football, because you never know when things will turn full circle. It didn't surprise me when Joe Pigott signed for Folkestone because a lot of players enjoy their time under Jay: that's why Kevin Lokko went there as well.



Deals don't always get across the line. Distraught Maidstone players after DJ Oldaker's winner for Chesterfield in 2022. Oldaker might have been playing for Maidstone if a deal hadn't fallen through.

This is quite common in non-league: when a manager gets a job you'll usually see two or three players pop up who've played for him previously.

Deals don't always go through however. When I had DJ Oldaker at Hythe he was travelling all the way from Guildford. If we had two games a week it would actually cost him money to play for us, but as he was happy he didn't mind.

That was during the 2020-21 season,

and when football at our level was abandoned due to COVID, because of my relationship with Maidstone I arranged for him to go there.

Unfortunately the deal fell through at the last minute and he ended up at Welling and then Dorking.

A couple of years later our game was called off so we went to see Maidstone v Chesterfield instead. I couldn't help think about that deal when DJ scored the winner in stoppage time ...

Strikers will have to respond

The Faal signing should provoke a response from the existing strikers, but it can go two ways: you can crumble and assume the new man is going to start every game, so what's the point?

What your manager wants to see is you take up the challenge and prove you're good enough for a starting place. As a player I always wanted us to bring the best players in because winning was my number one priority.

The last thing you want when you're challenging to win leagues or earn promotions is a squad that goes stale because there's no competition in the forward area.

"Moore, Golding and Kargbo all look good but Faal can give you something completely different..."

I think it's important to keep your strikers hungry: in other areas you wouldn't tamper so much, particularly at the back because, as I said last week, you need to know what your best back four is.

I think Moore, Golding and Kargbo all look good and they're all different players which is an added bonus, but Faal can give you something completely different.

*



George Elokobi will be hoping the signing of Mo Faal galvanises the strikers he already has in his squad

No one wants a game to be called off, but at least Chelmsford pulled the plug at midday on Saturday, before a number of fans had travelled. You need to apply common sense here, but it all depends on a league's rules.

I've had occasions when there was absolutely no chance a game was going to take place but we couldn't call it off because the league wanted a referee to conduct an inspection.

Sometimes it's unavoidable. I was due to play for Hastings when fog rolled in and we couldn't even see the centre of the pitch from the touchline. Under

those circumstances there's nothing you can do, but in conditions like we saw last weekend, the distance the away team needs to travel should be taken into account. If, say, Maidstone were playing at Dartford, you could give that a bit longer because it's only half an hour away and teams normally like to arrive around an hour and a half before kick-off.

If, however, you need to leave at 10 a.m. an early call should be made because teams can be halfway down a motorway when they have to turn round and they still have to pay for the coach, which is a significant cost.

At last a home-grown manager gets a chance

I think it was a brave move by my old club Chelsea to appoint Liam Rosenior as a manager.

At Strasbourg he was part of the same ownership group, so Chelsea know what he's like and what kind of manager they're getting. I got the impression Enzo Maresca was very argumentative and stubborn, which might explain why he left.

Vialli was the Chelsea manager when I first signed for them and when I moved down here at the age of 16 it was Ranieri.

The club was not in a good place and there were rumours that players were going to have to leave because of the financial problems, but it changed overnight as soon as Abramovich took over.

In that era they hired massive, established names who'd won things everywhere they'd been. Now the model's changed and I think fair play.

I've been crying out for home-grown managers to be given a chance and if he was called Liam Ronaldo everybody would have been saying: 'what a great appointment'.

I don't understand why foreign managers get more opportunities in our league. If it's Pep or Klopp then fair enough because they're the best in the world, but young managers from other countries are given opportunities when British managers might be just as good. Amorim was a prime example.

He did a great job at Sporting, but

that was Sporting and a win ratio of 38 percent is unforgivable at a club like Manchester United.

I was listening to Paul Scholes and Nicky Butt on a podcast and they were saying they wish the club would speak to Roy Keane, because he would instil something in the club they seem to have lost.

Manchester United have values, standards and that seems to have gone from the club, but I played with Darren Fletcher and he is a great guy, so he might be a step in the right direction.

The best manager they've had in recent years was Ole, so it wouldn't surprise me if they go down that route because they've tried everything else.



Jack Parkinson's (very) late winner for Maidstone against Brentwood in the FA Cup 2014, the only time the teams have met in the modern era.

A trip to Hearn's Bae

By Tom Rogers

It's an unusual turn of pace this Saturday, as we travel across the Dartford Crossing again to visit Brentwood for a rare mid-season friendly.

With Weston travelling to Grimsby for the FA Cup 3rd Round (bet they were thrilled with that draw) and Chatham hosting Carlisle in the Trophy (they probably were thrilled with that draw, to be fair), both sides have been left without a competitive fixture this weekend.

Arranging a game seems like a sensible decision. Plenty of our players live north of the crossing and Brentwood also play on a 3G surface, ensuring the weather won't hinder proceedings. The Chelmsford postponement means we'd be looking at a two and a half week lay-off before heading to Torquay on the 17th, which is far from ideal as we have recently picked up some form.

Brentwood are also doing well under Keith Rowland, sitting second in the Isthmian Premier currently. Former Stone Alex Akrofi is a member of the coaching staff now and Barry Hearn is also a minority shareholder, with his firm Matchroom sponsoring their shirts.

Hearn, who previously owned Leyton Orient for close to two decades, has reportedly boosted the club's budget, which explains their promotion push to the NLS.

He also appeared on the 'Owning

Eastbourne' documentary which followed the seaside club during last season.

The series is well worth a watch, even if just to enjoy reliving how their season ended last year, but Hearn raises a few interesting points in his cameo. Football Ownership is essentially a money pit which rewards you with a few good memories along the way.

Although our current ownership is looking to move on, I'm sure they'd agree all the money spent over the years was justified when Lamar Reynolds put us ahead at Portman Road two years ago.

"Ogunleye is a stand-out. It feels only a matter of time before he moves on to a professional outfit..."

The owners may want to leave, but the signing of Mo Faal shows their ambitions and I'd expect him to feature here, if not in time for Torquay on the 17th. The rest of the team should be a strong one, with rotation throughout to ensure minutes for fringe players and those who aren't fully fit.

The likes of Hamzad Kargbo, who has struggled to get fit enough to start matches, will probably play for at least a half, whilst the usual cast of backups should get a run out.

For the hosts, there are no familiar faces in their current squad, however Danny Ogunleye is a standout.

He scored 43 times last year when they won the Isthmian North and is the current top scorer in the Isthmian Prem, having scored 14. At 23, it feels only a matter of time before he moves on to a professional outfit.

Saturday's game is the first mid-season friendly since we beat Wimbledon's Development side 2-1 back in early 2021, when the pandemic was ongoing. Other mid-season friendlies include a win at Snodland back in 2016 to inaugurate their new floodlights.

More memorably though, we held a strong Gillingham side to a scoreless draw in March 2002 up at Sittingbourne. Though this was before my time, many of you may remember a rather irate Andy Hessenthaler apparently locking his side in the dressing room to bollock them in the post-match.

If you want to go back even before Bill Williams' time, we lost 5-2 to Newcastle United in March 1907. 5,000 were in the crowd and it was a kick back for Wally Hardinge's transfer to the Northeast.

Though there isn't much on the line this Saturday and the cold will put off a few, for the sake of match sharpness it'll be a worthwhile outing.

We've faced them just once in the Gallagher era, when a late Jack Parkinson goal snatched a 2-1 win, on the day Akrofi came to Jay Saunders' attention before his move to the Stones shortly after.



THE SPITFIRE

 CounterPress®

Launching in March 2026

A new media outlet dedicated to independent coverage of Kent Cricket is coming in 2026.

The Spitfire will be run by Fred Atkins, who has followed Kent since the early 90s and has covered them for the ECB and Wisden since 2021.

Expect expert storytelling, colourful matchday writing, insightful analysis and in-depth interviews, as The Spitfire takes coverage of the club to new heights.

Everyone who signs up to the site's mailing list prior to launch will get a special discount on membership.

The site, which offers a modern reader experience and a commitment to zero intrusive advertising, will be up and running in March.

The Spitfire is the eighth county cricket outlet to be

confirmed on CounterPress ahead of the 2026 season, as part of a wide-reaching project designed to revitalise written digital coverage of our domestic summer sport.

Other outlets announced so far include The Hawk (Hampshire), The Rey (Surrey), Lanky Lanky (Lancashire), Up The Middle (Middlesex), From The Sea End (Sussex), Cider Press (Somerset) and The Chester (Durham). Further sites are still to be released.

CounterPress co-founder Sam Morshead said: "The Spitfire promises to be the go-to place for proper cricket writing on events at Canterbury and Beckenham."

To register your interest visit our [website](#).

MAIDSTONE UNITED
2025/26 SQUAD

M



George
ELOKOB
Manager

1



Nathan
HARNES
Goalkeeper

13



Lenny
HOLDEN
Goalkeeper

2



David
SESAY
Defender

3



Leo
HAMBLIN
Defender

4



Lexus
BEEDEN
Defender

5



George
FOWLER
Defender

6



Thomas-James
BRAMBLE
Midfielder

7



Jephte
TANGA
Midfielder

8



Sam
CORNE
Midfielder

9



Deon
MOORE
Forward

10



John
GILBERT
Midfielder

11



Jamie
YILA
Midfielder

12



Dajon
GOLDING
Forward

15



David
AGBONTOHOMA
Defender

17



Riley
COURT
Midfielder

19



Ruben
CARVALHO
Midfielder

20



Antony
PAPADOPOULOS
Midfielder

21



Malachi
MBOGBA
Midfielder

23



Hamzad
KARGBO
Forward

24



Taylor
FORAN
Defender

30



Christopher
SWIFT
Goalkeeper

Designed by MAIDSTONE UNITED SUPPORTERS CLUB IN VIETNAM

When friendlies mattered

Please excuse the slight whiff of "everything was better in the good old days" about this headline, but mid-season friendlies are unusual and mid-season friendlies on a Saturday, like tomorrow's visit to Brentwood, are almost unprecedented. There was, however, a time when some very big-names indeed used to appear in the County Town.

1) Who said this to a Maidstone steward, after he brought a tea urn into the away dressing room at JWW after a friendly defeat in 2012? "This lot have just been beaten by a part-time team. So do you know what I want you to do with this? I want you to stick it up your arse."

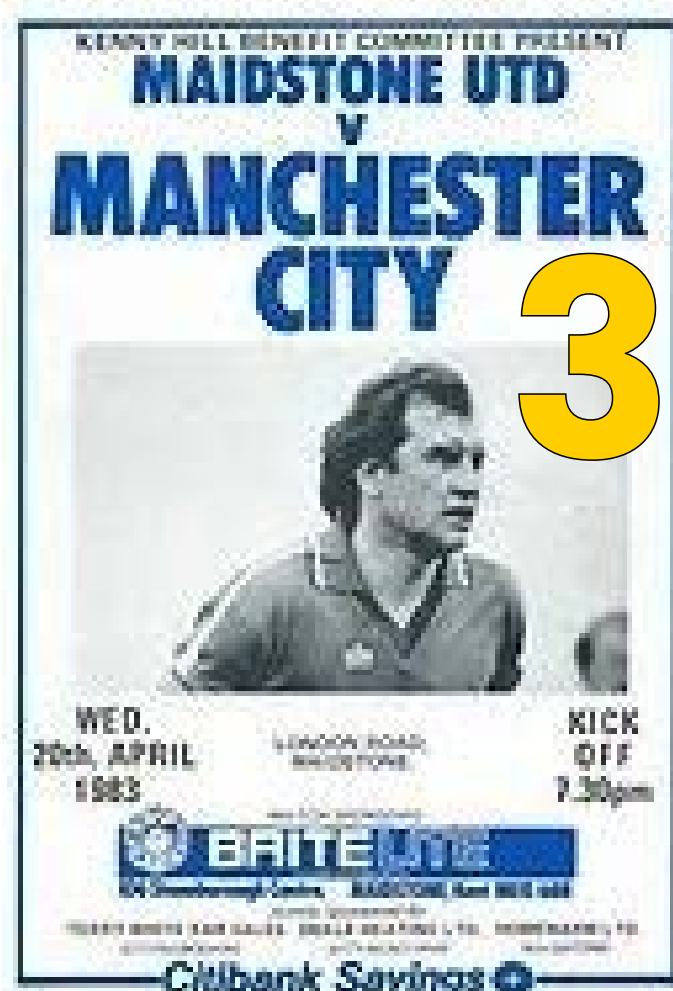
2) What was the score when Maidstone played Calais in a pre-season friendly in 2014?

3) Which local businessman scored for Manchester City in a 4-2 win over Maidstone at London Road in 1983, after buying his place in their side for Kenny Hill's testimonial with a £500 charity donation?

4) Who scored the first goal for Brighton when they beat us 5-0 in the first game at the new stadium?

5) In 1985 Tottenham sent a strong* side to London Road for which Maidstone defender's testimonial?

*Editor's note. It was Tottenham, so the term "strong" is relative here.



Follow Fred Atkins on Instagram



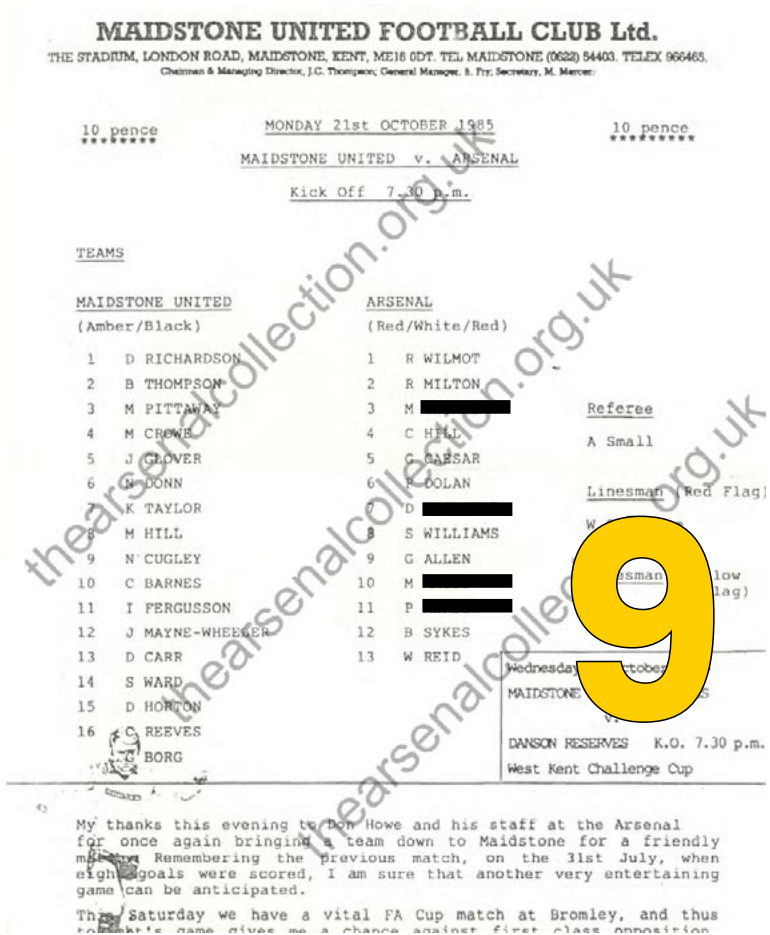
6) Crystal Palace are the only Premier League team to have sent any kind of side to JWW for a friendly. Who was their manager at the time?

7) Palace initially agreed to send a first team squad but then backed out. Which of their fringe players went on to play for us?

8) Which controversial top-flight chairman said Maidstone could share their ground in London after a friendly, also in 1985?

9) Four members of the Arsenal side that won the league at Anfield in 1989 were part of a Gunners XI that lost 5-3 to Maidstone at The Athletic Ground, once again in October 1985. Can you name them? (Image via The Arsenal Collection).

10) Which future FA Cup opponent did we play in a friendly at the Gay Dawn Farm, home of Corinthian FC, before the start of the 1990-91 season, losing 1-0?



Answers to Edition 20: Chelmsford 1-2-3...10

1) City's New Writtle Street ground was demolished in 1997 and they didn't return to Chelmsford for nine years. How many grounds did they share during their exile?
Two: Maldon and Billericay.

2) The FA Trophy game between these sides in 2006 was the first time we'd met since reforming. Why was the kick-off delayed and what was the score?
The penalty spot was too close to the goal: Maidstone won 2-1 after Chelmsford missed a late penalty.

3) Which future Maidstone player/assistant-manager played in both the above game and Chelmsford's 7-0 win over us in the league the following year?
Steve Ward (for Chelmsford).

4) We didn't meet again until 2015-16, when both sides were in National South. What was the score in the August Bank Holiday game at Whatman Way and which Maidstone player missed a penalty?
Chelmsford won 1-0 after Alex Akrofi missed the chance to equalise.

5) Which Maidstone legend signed for Chelmsford ahead of the 202-21 lockdown season, at the age of 36?
Lee Worgan. They beat us 1-0 in October. Scott Rendell missed a penalty and Worgan then saved a second penalty by Justin Amaluzor. Both were in the final 10 minutes.

6) Who scored the winner in a 2-1 victory at Melbourne Park early in the 2021-22 season?
Alfie Pavey in the 86th minute. Current Chelmsford player Dom Odusanya had put us in front.

7) Who scored Maidstone's goals in the 3-1 win over Chelmsford that clinched the National South title in April of that same season? **Jack Barham, Hady Ghandour and Roarie Deacon.**

8) Who scored the only goal in our 1-0 win at Melbourne Park in 2023-24?
Levi Amantchi.

9) How many members of Chelmsford's current first-team squad have played for us?
Three: Odusanya, Barham and Paul Appiah.

10) Which current member of the Chelmsford staff played for them in both games referenced in questions 2 and 3? **Ricky Holmes (still also listed as a midfielder on their website.)**

CORRECTION: In the first edition of last week's Back Page, the answer to question 6 was wrong. In fact four Stones players were sent off in 2025: Raphe Brown at Eastbourne, Jordan Higgs at Weston, Charlie Seaman at Eastbourne in the semi-final and Hamzad Kargbo vs. Chesham.



The new independent source for Maidstone United news: Edition 21 (January 9th 2026)

New signing: Mo Mentum

Is the Faal deal just a pleasant surprise or a signal of something more?

By Fred Atkins

When he signed for us from Havant & Waterlooville during the 2023-24 season it was an unusual deal, for this level at least. Havant were tanking after a disastrous spell under Steve King and as they needed to offload players Maidstone were only paying a percentage of his wages.

He scored seven goals in 20 games, most memorably the stoppage-time winner in the play-off eliminator against Aveley and an obscene scorpion kick finish against Taunton at Gloucester.

Having once played for Bolton only to have his dream of a full-time career dashed by injury, he fully deserved a second chance at a higher level.

Crawley had just been promoted to League One under Scott Lindsey, who briefly played for Maidstone in 2005-06 under Alan Walker and Lloyd Hume. When they offered him a deal, he was only too keen to sign.

“This is a different kind of deal. Benefactors have helped us in the past. This is the first time one has been explicitly credited...”

Once an unremarkable non-league club who spent a remarkable 20 consecutive years in the old Southern Premier, Crawley reached the Football League in 2011 under the notorious Steve Evans and subsequently employed John Yems before he was sacked in 2022.

The soon-to-be-equally-notorious Yems was subsequently banned from football for three years after being found guilty of racist and discriminatory language, which included comparing Muslim players to terrorists.

Off the field things have been equally eventful. When Faal (himself a Muslim) joined Crawley, they were owned by WAGMI United,



Sorry lads. Faal after scoring for Worthing in their 2-1 win over Maidstone last January.

US crypto-investors, who took over in April 2022. They declared: “a conventional approach to ownership hasn’t worked and the club is losing hundreds of thousands of pounds while its fans suffer through year after year of uninspiring results on the pitch.”

WAGMI said they would “shake up” the status quo and their “unconventional” methods included getting rid of Faal before he’d even kicked a ball, a tawdry saga covered by The Athletic in detail [here](#).

Faal found himself at Worthing and put his hands up to apologise after scoring against us during their 2-1 win at JWW this time last year. He moved on to Waterford in the summer but when the Irish season ended in November he was released and immediately deluged with messages from fans of multiple clubs, asking him to either sign up or return.

I was told his return to Maidstone was a “done deal” back in October, but as two months ticked by I assumed this was wishful thinking.

When the 18-month deal was announced on Wednesday it was the second pleasant surprise of the season, following the signing of Taylor Foran from Bromley. But is it something more?

This is a different kind of deal, made possible by the sponsorship of Paul Beckett and Total Machining Solutions. Benefactors have assisted with signings in the past, but this is the first time one has been explicitly credited with making the deal happen. Something is definitely in the air.

*
Crawley changed hands again in July 2025. New owner Rafael Khalili promised data-driven football, fan-engagement and sustainable ambition. “I’d love to be Championship-ready” he told BBC Sussex.

Whoever does eventually take charge of Maidstone would be well advised to study what Crawley do and how they operate. Before doing exactly the opposite.

*
Steve Watt on Mo Faal – page 18.