

# Spreading the BLUES



The official newsletter of

**SUPPORT**  
**CHESTER**

*Thinking about tomorrow, today!*

Winter 2008/9 Edition 6

# Now we are Nine – a special meeting

Chester City Supporters' Trust is holding a Special General Meeting (SGM) at the Bull & Stirrup, Northgate Street, Chester on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm, in order to make



Lee Walton (left) and Graham Ross (extreme right) of CCST meet Brian Lomax (Supporters Direct), then Culture Secretary Chris Smith and Christine Russell MP early in 2000

changes in the constitution to bring them into line with the majority of other Supporters Trusts. Chester City Supporters Trust (CCST) was founded nine years ago and was at the forefront of the initiative from Supporters Direct to give supporters of professional sports clubs a voice through democratic representation. By setting the Trust up as an Industrial and Provident Society (IPS) it provided a vehicle by which supporters could acquire a shareholding in the club and even run it themselves should circumstances permit.

Supporters Direct provided us with a template constitution which at the time suggested a minimum number of board members for each Trust. Since those early days many Trusts have found it difficult to maintain the numbers stipulated and the suggested minimum number is now smaller.

Members will be asked to vote on a number of rule changes at the SGM but we also intend to open the meeting to general questions from members about the actions and objectives of your current Board. All members will find further details enclosed with this newsletter.




Please come along and meet your Board members. You are also welcome to bring other Chester City supporters who will be able to join on the night.

## **CCST Special General Meeting**

**Bull and Stirrup, Northgate Street, Chester**  
**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2009 at 8.00pm**

**Please come along to the meeting and have your say - it's your Trust**

# Better Together

Chester City Supporters' Trust  Independent Supporters Association  Chester City Exiles  Chester City Official Supporters' Club

Our last newsletter featured a joint sponsorship venture between Chester City's different supporters' groups last season. The Trust has since invited Peter Mitchell, Chair of the ISA, to attend a CCST Board Meeting and have been in talks to see if the two groups can work more closely together. In the past few weeks, informal talks have been held between key figures in the CCST, the ISA, the Exiles and the Official Supporters Group. We will be looking to consult our own members about this via a questionnaire and hope to encourage the other fans' groups to do the same.

Our own recent history has seen several supporter groups, including the Trust, develop in response to various initiatives amongst supporters. Each has played an important role but having a number of organisations can also be confusing and dilute the influence Chester City supporters as a whole could have. Many fans have called for a working together of the different groups and even for a unified group which represents us all. It is these questions we look to explore with you and with the other groups in the coming months.

We have also been in discussions with Huddersfield Town supporters. They have recently merged their various supporters' organisations and the CCST Board members are keen to learn of their experience. The Huddersfield Town Supporters Association has been formed as an amalgamation of their official supporters club, their Supporters Trust and the Fight For Answers group.



## What is Supporters Direct?

Supporters Direct (SD) is the organisation set up to advise Trusts on how to organise and acquire a collective shareholding in their clubs on a not-for-profit basis for re-investment. It grew up out of football and the co-operative movement – where all members become joint owners for mutual benefit. Just as each Supporters Trust is an Industrial and Provident Society – a particular form of non-profit organisation – so is Supporters' Direct itself.

Chester City's was one of the earliest supporters Trusts to be formed (in 2000) and Supporters Direct provided valuable support. SD has been very helpful ever since, providing legal advice and training and – through their conferences – providing the opportunity to network with fans from a whole spectrum of clubs from Manchester to Mansfield, from Premier League to the Conference.

One of their key objectives is to promote the responsible voice of supporters in the running of sports clubs through democratic representation. This is a two way process with supporters campaigning for accountability from their club on one side and, on the other, encouraging a responsible and constructive attitude from their fellow supporters.

Other objectives emphasise the importance of strengthening links with the local community through promoting the use of the club's facilities by the local community, and creating community activities in order to cement the club's role as a focus for civic and community life. Due to its financial status a Supporters Trust is able to apply for charitable grants towards work in the community which can be mutually beneficial for the club as well.

Four League Clubs (Stockport County; Brentford; Notts. County and Exeter City) are run by the Supporters Trust where they have a majority shareholding. In some cases the Trust holds a substantial shareholding (Swansea City and Lincoln City); in other cases, where clubs are privately owned, partnerships between the club and the Trust have been possible.

Thanks to Supporters Direct, this quiet revolution in how football is run has been taking place. Find out more by visiting their website: <http://www.supporters-direct.org>

## Thanks to Kevin and Paul

It was with heavy heart that the Trust Board learned of the resignations of two of its key Board members. Kevin Jones decided to call it a day after several years' active service in which he has been the Trust's Secretary and Press Officer and has also made major contributions to running the club's official website. All of this work was undertaken in a voluntary capacity and was of the highest calibre. Sadly for us, increasing work commitments meant that Kevin could no longer keep up the tremendous sacrifice of time that his involvement with the Trust Board entailed.

Paul Reid has also resigned after an outstanding contribution over the last two and a half years as Chairman. His leadership gave the Trust a much-needed shot in the arm as he drove the vision of how the Club could work in partnership with the local community. Paul organised the Kick2Win crossbar challenge earlier this year and walked to Shrewsbury to raise funds for Chester's Centre of Excellence and the Trust's nominated charities at the time.

Both Paul and Kevin are sorely missed and will be a hard act to follow but we are working actively to recruit replacements for them to bring the board back up to strength.

## Grenville's the guest as Leeds lay the ghosts



On that occasion Grenville helped Chester to a clean sheet by turning a fierce 25 yard shot from England left back Terry Cooper over the bar. This time there were no such worries for Leeds who cruised to a 5-2 victory.

Chester's 3-0 win thirty-four years ago was achieved against the reigning League champions in an age before squad rotation was even a twinkle in a manager's eye. Leeds are now a couple of levels below their former glory but when they went in 5-1 up at half time text messages went around the Harry McNally Terrace saying that Grenville might appear for the second half – along with Trevor Storton and Jesse James, fellow heroes from that night long ago. Grenville was enjoying himself too much to put his gloves on this time...and City managed to stage a rally and reduce the deficit anyway. The Trust thanks GPS Decorators Ltd of Chester for financing the event and for their continuing support of CCST.

**TRUST PRESIDENT** Grenville Millington, pictured with Phil Sheridan (left) of GPS Decorators Limited and Tom Jones (right) of CCST, was guest of honour when City entertained Leeds in the first round of the Carling Cup in August. The tie evoked memories of arguably Chester's finest ever victory in the same competition (then the plain old League Cup) on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1974.



## Take care of it!

**CHESTER CITY SUPPORTERS TRUST** has agreed to take assignment of Paul Baker's substantial investment in Chester City Football Club Limited.

This, effectively, now means that for the foreseeable future the Trust will be a creditor of the club instead of Mr. Baker. The arrangement was agreed when Mr. Baker, a former director and main sponsor at Chester City, became involved at AFC Bournemouth. The Trust was approached as Mr. Baker wanted to find someone with whom he would be comfortable with in the management of the debt, and who had Chester City at heart.

The arrangement has not incurred any cost to the Trust and the Board has taken great care to ensure that we are exposed to no financial or legal risk by taking on the responsibility. Paul Reid, Trust Chair at the time, said "We are pleased to have been considered a safe pair of hands by Paul Baker. We have the same ideal at the end of the day.....a love for Chester City Football Club".

As part of the legal agreement involved in this assignment, the Trust was obliged to write to the Club to confirm that the debt has been reassigned. The Club has acknowledged receipt of this notice although it disputes the amount of the debt. Negotiations are currently ongoing with the club's solicitors



# Déjà Vu III



Picture: Evening Leader

It was either a huge surprise or the same old, same old, story when Mark Wright returned for the third time to manage Chester City following the departure of Simon Davies. Wright, with assistant Steve Bleasdale, earned Chester their return to the Football League by leading them to the Conference title in 2004. On the eve of their first match of the next season he resigned but returned, with Graham Barrow as assistant, after Keith Curle's sacking early in 2006 and steered Chester away from a swift return to the Conference. After a promising start to the next season Wright and Barrow were sacked after a poor run of results after Christmas – three wins in twenty matches – left City in eighteenth place. Arguably, Wright was unlucky in that four key players (Jon Walters to Ipswich; Greg Blundell to Darlington; Roberto Martinez to manage Swansea and Ashley Westwood to Swindon) left during that time and were never adequately replaced.

Wright can be relied upon to shore up the defensive qualities of a side and steady the ship. Whether he will be able to build a platform for anything more ambitious will depend upon his ability to wheel and deal in the transfer window, with players having to be moved on before new signings are made.

Let's hope it's a case of third time lucky for Wright's latest turn at the helm. The Supporters Trust wishes the management team well on their return to the Deva Stadium.

## Credit Crunch – How will it affect City?

A recent article in *When Saturday Comes* (December 2008) speculated on how the current global financial down-turn might affect football. It noted that the recession in the early eighties coincided with steep falls in attendances – though part of this could be ascribed to the hooliganism problems prevalent at the time. Crowds in Divisions Three and Four were most affected - down by an “eye-watering” 24 per cent between 1979-80 and 1981-2. Chester's own figures showed a drop from an average League attendance of 3,387 in 1979-80 to 1,881 in 1981-2 – (A fall of 55%) though this did coincide with relegation to Division Four that season. The situation got worse before it got better as in 1984, when City finished bottom of the League, average attendance was just 1,659. Two years later, when City bounced back and were promoted in 1986 under Harry McNally, attendances recovered to an average of 2,922, still not up to pre-recession levels.

## Appeal

Your Trust needs you! If you have any time to spare and wish to become more involved with the Trust then please write to us at PO Box 3170, Chester, CH4 8WP or email us at [press@supportchester.co.uk](mailto:press@supportchester.co.uk)

We want to strengthen our Board and increase our activities but we cannot do it without help!



CCST is grateful to GPS Decorators Limited of Chester for sponsoring this newsletter.