

I first started collecting non-League programmes in the days they were called amateur programmes, which was probably a more apt description. My club Bromley's was typical. It featured the overpowering smell of freshly Xeroxed pages which were mainly filled with words from our autocratic chairman, complaining about the most recent heavy loss being down to inept officials and his useless manager. If there was any room left by the time he calmed down, the teams would be listed alongside an out-of-date league table.

Another feature of the amateur programme was the cover illustration, presumably done by a close relative of the chairman. My favourite of these was the one used by Thame United in the mid-1970s which depicted what appeared to be a lifeless footballer wearing slippers, drifting through space. The drawing demonstrated an impressive disregard for the rules of perspective and human physiology, which was also present in another illustration further on in the programme. This one showed a silhouette of a man dancing with a three-spined alien, although I suspect it was meant to be a glamorous, sophisticated woman.

It was the adverts that I looked forward to most. The more desperate the advertiser was to link his business to football, the better. "Score with us!!" screamed W Batten, Coal and Coke Merchant's advert in the Sutton United programme, which was also home to "Let Sutton keep out the goals - let



ANGLIAN windows keep out the draughts and cold". "Be top of the league with Crossways Garage" was such a favourite that it proudly appeared in the Halstead Town programme for several seasons running. Surely the most tortuous contribution was reserved for visitors to Ilford FC, who must have been tempted by Pro-Spec Car Parts' headline of "The best substitutions you can make". It went on to say: "If any British or foreign car sustains an injury, you can always rely on AC Delco parts as replacement. They're available for very reasonable transfer fees."

And then there were the strange, incomprehensible adverts. In 1971, Bromley played at St Albans City twice, once in the Isthmian League and once in the Amateur Cup. On both occasions, the oddest half page in the history of football programmes appeared on the back cover. In capital letters (always a red flag) and headed FOUL AND FREE FLIGHTS, there followed around 200 words - mostly beginning with the letter "F". It began "AAH FORTOV BOY FARZINGZ OV FANATICKLE

## The more desperate the advertiser was to link his business to football, the better

FANZ FREWART ARR FIFEFULL 'FOO-ER' FRATERNI-EE" and ended "FOROUGHLY FULFILL THEIR FAVOURITE FUNCTIONS FAST". It appears to be advertising electrical goods but there is no way of telling for certain.

Only marginally more coherent was another one from Halstead Town, showing a series of seemingly meaningless hieroglyphics, followed by the words "When it comes to transport phone the people who make sense". That's Colne Cargo, in case you were wondering. The bizarre thing was that, with the possible exception of the last two examples, these adverts actually worked. Well, they did on me. On my 15th birthday I insisted on being taken to the Khush Bhag restaurant, whose name was in prime location on the front of Bromley's programme. I was seduced by the promise of "India. Land of tradition. Splendour. Sophistication. Exotic Food". I recently counted the number of Bromley FC adverts I ended up buying from and the total was 11 - including a scooter from Kent Scooter Mart and quite a few cakes of quality and distinction from SA Wood (Confectioners) Ltd.

These adverts have all but disappeared from today's non-League programmes. The kind of small businesses that filled the pages 40 years ago have been largely replaced by corporations. In Bromley's case, the likes of JD Sports, Blue Square and Specsavers have full page presences, reflecting the changes on the high street in that time. Even the handful of local restaurants and car dealers - once the mainstays of amateur programmes - that still advertise are often part

of a chain. Digital photography seems to have put an end to illustrations and production values, once pleasingly non-existent, are the equal of any advert in a Premier League "matchday magazine".

The modern non-League programme is a reflection of the professionalism that now exists in the lower tiers of English football. With weekly wage bills of £5,000 and more (as opposed to a few quid stuffed in the star "amateur" player's boot), sponsorship is vital. If a part of the price is slick full-colour adverts taking the place of contrived football-related puns and rubbish illustrations, then that's something I'm happy to live with. I just miss them, that's all.

# Marketing matters

Non-League programmes used to offer local companies a way to reach customers, with varying degrees of success

By DAVE ROBERTS

**Thame United Football Club**  
WINDMILL ROAD THAME 1350 & 4475

Dinners  
Dances  
Cabarets  
Bingo  
Weddings

In fact all kinds of entertainment  
...and private functions covered too

**THAME UNITED Football Club**  
Founded 1883 Affiliated to Oun F.A.  
Members of the Rothmans Hellenic League  
Ground: Windmill Road Tel. Thame 2017

**THAME UNITED**  
SUNDAY, 6th JUNE, 1976 Kick-off 6.30 p.m.  
AJAX (Holland) 30p  
Admission by Programme

**FOULS & FREE FIGHTS**  
AMERFOR BOY FARZINGZ OV FANATICKLE FANZ FR WAKE AND FIFEFULL  
"FOODER" FRATERNITY AT FORTHWYLING FR M. NEEBIEKKE FRUIT  
THODER FUNCHER FORCHENNE OV FIVER DOGKANI. FISHKIZ. FORT  
EBOC  
MIL FREEZE. FIFEDIC. FAN HENES. FIKKA. FIVEBERNIZ. PAPPEN  
FRINPS. FIVELOW. FICARAHORZ AN FERRAY. JOE. FALKE FIVIER  
FENNE. FILLING. MURDER. FANOP. FIV. BNOO. THAT THE "KORERD  
"FREE FIGHTS AND FIGHTS" ARE, IN FACT, CRIMINABLE BAZAARS (ETES  
AT WHICH ONE-KICKERIN. BIKKANS (FOULS) ARE GIVEN AWAY AS PRIZES  
FOR DRESSING THE "CORRECT" NUMBER OF PIBLES ON A FARKER'S SHIR  
OR TWO.

FORTUNATELY THE 24 THOUSILL FANS OF FRIENDLY & FIER BISHING  
MERTAYLORANDCOMPANY. FROM PARAGLIDELY FAR AND NEER HEADING  
MURRELY HAD A MONTASTY OF, AND BEEN FRIGHTENED BY A MUR  
PAPERS AND FLOODING, AND IN ASHY HINDLES - WHO SHALL  
OR FRIGHTLY FIGHTS, OVERHEM... WHO HAVE FEELTY MILED  
THEMSELVES IN THEIR FRINGS BET IN FANTASIMALLY FORMAL FAMILY  
FAMINS, TO FOLLOW THE HERBERT ADIERS TO THE FIFTHED OF FLY  
FAYOR ANDCOMPANY WHO, WITHOT FISS, TEAR. PIAPK OF TURY  
REALLY DO KNOW HOW TO HURGERELY FILL. THEIR FAVORITE FINE  
THIS' FAST. NAMEY BIVING YOU OF WITH YOUK DILY OFR FOR TOOT-  
KAND. HILL. RECORD IN AYVE. KANOGKAM. TAP. RECOLOR IN MLEAT  
HATYUO.

KING. CALL OR WRIT: P.F. AND 411 PHILIP TAYLOR & COMPANY OF 1, LONDON  
ROAD, ST. ALBANS - ALL VANS GO DAILY FROM 5c. 480m 27115.

FANKS WERRY MUCH

**Anglian WINDOWS**  
Let SUTTON Keep out the goals - Let Anglian WINDOWS  
keep out the draughts and colds with their  
LOW COST WINDOWS & PATIO SLIDING DOORS  
144 MERTON HALL ROAD - S.W.19  
Telephone: 542 3511 or 546 4813 Ext. 2