

# READING REFEREE

**Editor - Brian Palmer**

**February/March 1997**

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**Volume XL No 4**

## *Editorial*

Have you been following the minnows in the FA and Coca Cola Cups? I have for a variety of reasons. As a youth I watched mainly lower division football (because it happened to be there and there was no TV) and, like many people, I tend to side with the underdogs.

Although I had to admire the progress of Woking and Wrexham and the others who did brilliantly well this season, my real interest was in Stockport County, the team I supported in my youth, as I lived close to Edgeley Park. Of course I was delighted they have got so far (now out of the FA Cup and just lost the 1st leg of the semi-final of the Coca Cola Cup to Middlesbrough).

Two things were outstanding for me. First, how much higher the standard of the football was, compared with what I used to watch. And, perhaps more importantly, how narrow the gap was between Stockport, funded on a shoe-string, and their various opponents who cost millions in transfer fees. More proof, if any was needed, that the money dimension in the Football League is unreal.

And money looks likely to rob us of our football and other sport on terrestrial TV. Surely this is a place where a government - whichever - should introduce legislation to make sure we are not all forced to buy satellite or cable.

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## **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

### **January**

A wintry night and barely 40 members present. The business was appropriately brief too.

The Treasurer reported a final figure of £605 profit from the Christmas Draw and there were congratulations all round.

Cliff Watkins was able to report membership of 128 and the likelihood of breaking 130 even at this stage. What was perhaps not stressed enough was that this against a local and national background of seriously *declining* membership figures.

The new training course had started with 19 candidates, including 9 youths and only one female, Numbers might well increase.

The report from Ken Clarke, who organises the mentorship scheme, was worrying in an unexpected way. He has mentors at the ready, but from the

last course only one newly qualified member is both refereeing and wishes to have a mentor.

[Is it our sales pitch, or are so few actually taking up the whistle? One out of 20+ does seem too few. Ed]

Peter Pittaway reported that the Sunday League is again going to try to 'fast-track' promising young referees (in consultation with the RA) (It was also reported that Keith Simmonds of the Sunday League was absent from the meeting because he had just been involved in a car accident. It was thought that his injuries were not too serious but involved whiplash. Best wishes would be conveyed).

Vice-President John 'Bunny' Waters and his wife were congratulated on their Golden Wedding anniversary, celebrated just before Christmas.

The second half had been planned as a training session run by our own training team. Unfortunately both John Moore and Malcolm Garstang had been sent away on business with just enough notice for alternative plans to be made. Brian Palmer had organised a group discussion session

Members were formed into three groups of about ten, each including a cross-section of experience. Just two topics proved quite enough to fill the time available;

- 1 What advice would you give a beginner referee before his/her real game?
- 2 It is rumoured that the International Board will modify the Laws this summer to exclude *all* passing back to the goalkeeper.
  - a) Would you be happy with such a change? Why?
  - b) Are there any other changes to Law you would give higher priority to?

It was gratifying that everyone became thoroughly involved, certainly in part thanks to the 'group leaders/facilitators - Martin Albury, Peter

Pittaway and Brian Wratten. There was plenty of toing and froing during the discussions, but perhaps surprising consensus at the end.

The nervousness of that first game seemed to be clear in the memory of even our oldest members. The emphasis had to be on positive support and simple clear and brief advice. Everyone had assumed the question was about *oral advice* from a referee colleague probably on the day of the match. Although the order varied from group to group, the essential points were: preparation

confidence (e.g. appearance/whistle/firm handshake)

application of Laws (e.g. be honest/unafraid/take care with advantage)

control (e.g. be cautious about advantage)

enjoyment

One group added for the adviser: be at the game, give some support.

In the reporting back, discussion developed about whether or not the teams should be told that it was the referee's first game. Andy Awberry revealed that in his Reading Football League capacity he had done this, inspired by the number of very young referees doing men's games. It had worked in every case. He had not told the referee in advance what he was doing. Some members remained sceptical.

The second topic also indicated a good deal of agreement, perhaps more surprisingly. especially given the ambiguity in the question. The consensus was that the Law on passing to the goalkeeper is working well as it stands. The occasional foul-ups with the defence and keeper add a bit of interest and we were reminded that the referee has always had the power to stop any nonsense and time-wasting. The need to keep the goalkeeper involved was mentioned (by ex-keepers one suspects). One or two members would even have gone back to the previous situation but they were a tiny minority, Ray.

The invitation to suggest Law changes with a higher priority produced both expected and not so expected results. The 10-yard sanction was

strongly advocated, though some would use it more widely than others. There was disagreement about what happens from 5 yards outside the penalty area - some would have a penalty, others would not. The 'sin bin' had support, especially from Peter Pittaway who had used it effectively in local games in Germany.

Other suggestions:

that for 'general bad language' i.e. bad language not directed at anybody we should use a *yellow* card.

that deliberate obstruction should be a penal offence

that offside should be possible only in the last 18 or 25 yds (and there should be a line right across to indicate the area).

Interestingly, the same thing is behind all these suggestions: at present the Laws do not in certain areas, make the punishment fit the crime. The yellow card for dissent applies only to one person and is a form of delayed sanction. And equating foul language with serious foul play does not make much sense in the eyes of the players (and, one suspects, of the referees).

Although only one group mentioned it, we all agreed that the section of Law relating to studs should be reinstated.

[And it wasn't Martin Shearn's group either! Ed]

## **February**

Good to see some 50 members present - our best turn-out for some months. The opening good news was that Dermot Gallagher had agreed to be our Guest Speaker for the March meeting, as Ray Payne will not be available. Graham Poll will speak at the October meeting next season.

A request for referees next September has been received (in good time!) from Woodley Town Council. A boy's and girl's pre-season 6-a-side tournament. Get in touch with them if you are interested.

The committee has negotiated a cut-price deal for physiotherapy (on average half-price) with Loddon Physiotherapy Clinic. The price is based on the assumption that members will use the service in numbers.

Brian Wratten spoke of the revision of the society's rules and asked members to consider the proposals in detail and provide feedback to the Committee well in advance of the AGM in May. The intention was to bring the rules up-to-date - not to make any fundamental changes to our practices.

A letter had been received from Keith Simmonds. He is making progress after his car accident but is not yet able to drive. He hopes to be at the March meeting.

Dave Jeanes said the Reading Football League is concerned that late starts are not being reported by all referees. Two names have been handed to our Chairman for follow-up if they are members.

Peter Pittaway reported the same problem with Sunday League referees. He stressed how the League is trying to help us. One club has recently been expelled and two fined £200 each for indiscipline. He also mentioned that the maximum possible fine is £2,500!

Membership is assumed closed at 131.

The training course is almost concluded and 23 candidates are expected to take the exam.

Life Member George Mills announced the new arrangements for the Royals' Cup this year. It will be run from 28 April to 14 May. It will start this year on a league basis before the semi-finals. There will be three matches of 40 minutes per evening from 6-15 p.m. George proposed that officials should work in teams of three (offers invited but not all Class 1's!), and take the three games: one middle and two lines each. Members agreed. Semi-finals will be 60 minutes and the final a full 90. Active members are urged to contact George to have the rare opportunity of officiating at Elm Park, including this year a middle for all who take part.

### PROBLEM SPOT

Martin Shearn shared two of his recent problems.

A forward was running on to a loose ball some 35 yards from the opponents' goal. He pushed the ball towards the corner of the penalty box with only the goalkeeper to beat. The keeper tried to make a genuine tackle but was just too late and took the player. Direct free kick and what else?

Second incident. The goalkeeper and a defender were on the goal line. Ball kicked towards goal, hits the defender on the thigh and he then handles it deliberately. In Martin's view the ball would not have gone into the net after hitting the defender's thigh. Penalty and what else?

Martin confessed that after consulting the Chart later, he thought he had probably got both wrong. He cautioned the goalkeeper in the first incident because, in his view, the tackle was 'genuine', neither reckless nor 'professional'. It appears from **LOAF Law XII 13** p.40 that the keeper should nevertheless have been sent off.

He sent off the player on the line but should have cautioned him: he should only have been sent off if he had denied a goal . . . (**LOAF Law XII 14**,

p.40), but Martin believed he had not. [Martin made it all explicit in his report and thinks (hopes) the County FA may downgrade the offence. How refreshing to have a self-critical and honest colleague. Ed]

The second half was given over to the County RA Training Team for their presentation on 'Lining'.

Brian Richards was the presenter and his actors were Dennis Capel, John Oxley, Dave Thomas and Kevin Turnbull. [Bill Chamberlain, the County Training Officer was present but not involved - he claimed to be 'assessing'. Nice one Bill. Ed]

Brian opened with what he called non-match issues. These were summarised as:

**Before Match Day:** Open and close dates; confirm appointments; check: League Handbook, travel route, time of arrival. Attitude.

**Pre-match:** Kit; flags; travel; report to club; check club flags; seniority; 4th official; listen to instructions; team work: 100% co-operation; 'assist', not 'insist'.

**Post-match:** Honest appraisal of all three performances; submit disciplinary reports; support referee at all times.

That was the 'theory'. The action was fast and furious. Six very short and very fast scenarios purporting to take place as a match progressed. The linesman was unbelievable and the referee not much better. If they could get it wrong they did. Our problem for us was remembering all that was wrong. And yet the actual errors were true-to-life. [I even had to admit once losing my flag off its stick. Ed]. On reflection, between us, I think we spotted just about everything.

Brian concluded by drawing together the issues from the various playlets and some points about the referee's instructions which together form a



good aide-memoire: [Copy available from the Secretary if you missed the meeting. Ed]

An instructive and enjoyable 'second half' with everyone fully involved.

### **SUNDAY MORNING AT LOTHAIR - No.24**

by Vic Bush (writing in the South Bedfordshire *Whistle*)

It was a dry sunny morning with a clear sky, but beyond the central hedge over in the 'back field' the wind was coming out of the North-West like an express train, and cold enough to take your ears off.

The pitch I was at, this bitter wind was blowing virtually straight down the pitch end to end, and at times it was a struggle to stand up, so must have been most difficult to try and play football. Accordingly the game was being played almost totally at one end, and most of the time I watched, 21 players were in one half, the lone goal-keeper standing well out of his penalty-area in the other, with scant chance of even getting a kick.

The other keeper was constantly in action, either making desperate saves, or going a 100 yards or more to retrieve the ball after a shot had whistled past. His goal-kicks were getting progressively weaker, and his bright idea of trundling the ball along the ground to a team member just outside the penalty-area was soon thwarted by an attacker taking up a tight marking position on that defender. Eventually another member of his team decided to show the goalie how it should be done, and took the next goal-kick, in the normal manner. Up, up, went the ball, to about the edge of the penalty-area, where a gust caught it and it hung there, then another blast and the ball literally 'flew' back, and over the crossbar.

Much shouting and claiming then ensued - I fancied it was a corner, but thought a quick look at Law XVI would be helpful, but upon looking it up when I got home, found that this situation hadn't been envisaged. So over to the referee, who understandably caught unaware was hopelessly placed to see where the ball was when it started on its 'return' journey. His decision was a goal-kick, thus indicating the ball hadn't cleared the penalty area; but still much rumpus, and I doubt if many of the players had appreciated this.

[But what if the ball had clearly left the penalty area? Ed]

## **STICKS AND STONES MAY BREAK MY BONES**

### **Names hurt as well, says Dick Sawdon Smith**

Do you remember that old saying that we were taught in our schooldays, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me'?. The idea of course was to encourage us to ignore name calling and not be provoked by taunts. But the saying is wrong. There is no doubt that being called names does hurt, no matter how much we try to ignore it. Name calling can then lead to retaliatory action which cannot in itself be defended.

One clear example, if we are to believe what we are told, is the clash between Peter Schmeichel, the Manchester United goalkeeper and Arsenal's Ian Wright at Highbury. We don't know exactly what was said, or whether there was any racial intent behind it, but what does seem certain is that there was name calling. Language was used that was felt to be abusive by at least one of the protagonists. Most people were surprised that the resulting retaliation by Wright, an horrendous two footed lunge, didn't see him leaving the game early.

This type of behaviour emphasises in my mind the danger of foul and abusive language on the football field. There are those, including some referees, who feel that the clause in Law 12 banning foul and abusive, is out of date. A throw back to when football, was seen to be a gentleman's sport. Everyone swears today, it is only industrial language we are told.

My contention is different. I believe that foul and abusive language can so easily lead to physical retaliation. I recall many years ago refereeing a cup match, when two players went down in a tackle. I stopped the play and was just in time to prevent the offending player landing a right uppercut on his opponent's chin. "What do you think you are doing?" I shouted at the player. The player replied, "He called me a .... (one of those particularly nasty four letter words). Now, although I had never refereed this team before, I did happen to know this players background. He had a heavy physical job in industry. Tough and rough he may have been, but he was offended by a choice bit of 'industrial language'.

Now I'm not so unrealistic to suggest that every time a swear-word is uttered, you dismiss the offender from the field of play. What I do believe is that foul

language should be attacked as soon as it starts, even if in itself it is not abusive. My personal method is to shout "Language" at the player in a loud voice. The reaction from players varies of course. Some simply say "Sorry ref". Others protest that they were only shouting at their team mates, or expressing frustration with themselves. I tell them that swearing on the football field is an offence no matter who it is aimed at. This usually stops or at least stems the flow. I have to admit that in the days when I sometimes refereed semi-professionals, or ex-professionals, it was much more difficult. They seemed to think that it was an acceptable part of the game. I have sympathy for League referees.

Nothing, however, will shake my belief that if we as referees allow foul language to go unchecked, then it will develop and players are much more likely to use abusive language to their own team, their opponents, even to you as referee. Names do hurt, foul and abusive language does hurt, and can so easily lead to physical retaliation in one way or another. Not sticks and stones, but kicks and punches.

## **YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED**

### **RED CARD FOR REF**

A football referee has been banned for 28 days after admitting bringing the game into disrepute by swearing at a player. John Coleman, 35, of Portsmouth, swore at a Colden Common defender who disputed a throw-in during a Hampshire Cup match.

*(The Times, 15/1/97)*

## **'BLADED BOOTS'**

I keep reading very positive reports about the (relatively) new 'bladed' boots. Any of our members wearing them and, more importantly for me, willing to write/chat to me about the experience? Good news seems to be so rare I like to pass it on whenever possible.

### **WHEN DID YOU LAST SEE A GOOD REFEREE?**

asks John Fry (writing in *Whistle Stop*, the North Devon RA magazine))

If your answer to the above is not when you looked in the mirror whilst shaving this morning, it means one of two things. Either you are growing a beard or you lack confidence in yourself.

Confidence comes over to the players even before the match commences. From arrival on the ground to your checking the colours of teams, to enquiring who the substitutes are, collecting the team-sheets, to going out checking the playing surface along with the flags, goal-nets and markings.

Confidence should not be confused with arrogance, but that first whistle tells the captains, players, managers and assessors - 'This guy means business'. If all these things are done with confidence then we shall all see a good referee on the day!

### **'I DIDN'T HEAR THE WHISTLE REF. HONEST!'**

It was early in my second season that I received the appointment to referee St Barnabus Deaf and Dumb Institute FC in the Dulwich Amateur League. To be fair, I did not give the appointment any undue consideration, thinking that as I was refereeing in a 'normal' league, then the team comprised people who worked at the Institute.

The game was played at a local park which had a tea bar attached to the dressing rooms. When I arrived, being a nice day, many people were sitting around the tea area but, instead of talking, they were communicating by sign language and it was at this time I realised that I was refereeing a team of deaf and dumb players against a team of 'normal' players. There were two games at the park and I was lucky that the other referee had previously refereed St Barnabus. Realising that I'd never refereed a deaf and dumb team, he explained that I needed to use a flag to control the deaf and dumb team, and a whistle for the other team. Every time I wanted to stop play I had to wave the flag and blow the whistle. Above all, he said, treat the St Barnabus players exactly as I would any other player as they

knew what they were doing and could lip-read better than many normal players could hear.

To begin with, it was a nightmare. I forgot to wave the flag and only whistled or only flagged but never whistled. I think on one occasion I got so confused I blew the flag. However, as the game wore on I got the hang of it and by the end I was quite competent. The game was quite straightforward and the only real disciplinary problems I had were early on. Despite my waving the flag, some St Barnabus players continued to tackle and caught players from the other team who had stopped, late. When I spoke to them about it, they would indicate they were deaf and hadn't realised the game had stopped. Bearing in mind what I had been told by my colleague, I simply told them that there was no excuse and if they continued I would take disciplinary action. With this problem sorted out, the game continued uneventfully.

I refereed St Barnabus on many occasions and only once remember having a difficult situation. Playing centre half for St Barnabus was an Adonis, over six feet tall and broad shouldered. St Barnabus were defending a corner and I was on the goal line. As the ball came across, the centre half met it on the penalty spot and kicked it clear. However, in doing so he was caught by a very late and very hard tackle from behind by the centre forward. In pure frustration, the centre half turned and, grabbing the centre forward by the throat with one hand, lifted him a few inches off the ground and pulled his arm back as if to hit him. Everybody, including me, just froze and I had visions of the centre forward's head ending up in the back of the net. Then, with a loud grunt, the centre half dropped the centre forward. The centre forward was like a punch-drunk boxer, his legs had gone rubbery and he was unable to take any further part in the match. I restarted with a free kick to St Barnabus but did nothing else, although perhaps I would these days.

I enjoyed refereeing St Barnabus; another part of my early learning curve.

Tony Murphy (writing in the Basingstoke *Bleep*)

**CAN YOU BELIEVE THIS?**

**COLOUR BLIND**

In their 0-1 home defeat in the FA Cup by Luton Town in November, Torquay used two sets of colours, blue and yellow stripes in the first half and blue and white in the second. Their players thought the first combination was too similar to Town's black and red.

[Seen in the South Bedfordshire *Whistler*, so it must be true! Ed]

### **MESSAGE FOR OXFORDSHIRE REFEREES**

John Abrams, Referees' General Secretary of the Oxfordshire FA, writes to inform us that our former member Stewart Mills has been replaced on the Referees' Committee by *John Chappell, Macney Lane, Brightwell cum Sotwell OX10 0SH*. Those of us north of the Thames are encouraged to contact him with any queries etc.

### **WHAT WOULD YOU DO NEXT?**

In a cup game on a local park, extra time has been played and numerous kicks have been taken in the ensuing penalty competition. The teams are still level when daylight suddenly deteriorates and it is obvious that kicks cannot fairly be continued.

What action do you, the referee, take?

(Solution on page .)

[Thanks again to The South Bedfordshire *Whistler*]

### **YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE WHITE LACES BUT . . . .**

By nature, most referees are assessors. No, I don't mean that we all take on the formal responsibilities of an Assessor. Yet we certainly look at

each other, both on and off the field, and make observations - mostly silent ones - on performances. Hopefully, with every game, we each make an assessment of ourselves.

Like most referees, I take a pride in my appearance as a referee. I'm a great believer that the referee should set a good example and being smart and tidy is something that goes with the job. Moreover, I always look forward to the opportunity of working with other referees who share these standards.

Occasionally, however, I come across the referee who - in my assessment - completely fails to measure up to the standards of turnout that most of us take for granted. I cannot help but feel a sense of disappointment when I see him, since I think that he is letting down his fellow referees. My feelings grow stronger when I discover myself having to work with one of these individuals for I cannot help but regard his slovenly appearance as an insult to me and the other match official.

I felt particularly aggrieved a few weeks ago when my co-assistant referee, having arrived some 10 minutes before kick-off time, produced a pair of mud-caked boots and proudly informed us that he hadn't had time to clean them. I might have been prepared to accept his excuse if he come straight from another game. Yet it was clear that he hadn't, for the mud which encased his boots was completely dry. Upon my enquiry as to when he'd had his previous game, he unrepentantly admitted that it had been several days earlier!

Perhaps it's because I find that the majority of referees do take a pride in their appearance - despite the fact that we all come in different shapes and sizes - that I tend to remember instances like this. Of course, I'm not suggesting that we all need to be attired in the latest creations from Umbro's referee fashion designers. Far from it! All I ask is that those who put on a referee's uniform should wear it with pride and accord it the respect it deserves. I certainly prefer working with those referees who do their best to look the part. and who, perhaps, take out the brushes to give their boots an extra shine before going onto the field. I assess them highly, knowing that they care about themselves - and the chances are that they will care equally about the game.

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### **THREE'S A CROWD . . . .**

It is often said that things happen in threes. I've experienced this phenomenon myself. The most recent occurrence which springs to mind was visiting three separate fields on three consecutive weeks and finding three different errors in the markings.

On the first field the centre spot was not in the centre. It was 1 yard away! On the second field one of the penalty marks was 14 yards from the goal-line! On the third field the (optional) mark that should be 11 yards from the corner proved to be 10 yards from the corner! The first two fields were on our local parks. (I haven't been back to see if my observations to the groundsmen have yielded the desired results!) Field three belonged to a team which plays in the Doc Marten League.

When I mentioned the error to the groundsmen he seemed completely surprised and somewhat miffed. He told me that no-one had ever complained about it before - implying, no doubt, that referees, far senior to me had officiated there and had not seen any need to complain. In fact, I wasn't complaining. I was merely bringing it to his attention. Yet as we were already a couple of months into the season, I was surprised to hear that the error had not (apparently) been noticed. More importantly, it made me wonder just how thorough we are in our inspection of the field before a game.

We all know that the field inspection is an important part of a referee's duties. It should be conducted well before the start of the game and is a task that requires far more than just a cursory glance. Apart from satisfying himself that the condition of the field is safe for the game to be played, the referee must also be sure that the markings are correct. If they are not then he should try to rectify matters. It may be possible to make corrections on the spot. If not, at least inform the groundsmen and/or include details in the match report. Please don't just leave it for the next referee to deal with!

Brian Wratten

### **ANOTHER PROBLEM TO DEAL WITH**

In their Annual Registration letter, Oxfordshire referees have been asked to note:



Oxfordshire Football Association have received several complaints of referees, players, club officials and spectators urinating either on the pitch or within public view.

**THIS PRACTICE MUST CEASE.** Referees **WILL REPORT** players or club officers for disciplinary proceedings to OFA. Red or yellow cards **WILL NOT** be used nor will a player be prevented from playing. Identifiable club spectators will also be reported.

### **CHANGING THE LAW**

Interesting in the context of our January discussion that the *Sunday Times* has started a series on changing *the rules* (inevitably). The first football buff to be asked his views was Glenn Hoddle

*'I advocate a rule change restricting goalkeepers to the penalty area.*

There is a two-fold detrimental effect of keepers operating beyond the 18-yard line. By acting as auxiliary sweepers they allow their defenders to push up to halfway, compressing the midfield into a cluttered area. They also hinder the initiation of a proper, continental-style sweeper system. Forcing goalkeepers to stay inside their area would encourage a composed build-up and they would be more inclined to throw the ball out, rather than kick it long down the pitch. Defenders would also need to defend deeper which would leave more space for creative lay in midfield.

The goalkeeper belongs to the goal area [*sic. penalty area?* Ed] When he turns playmaker - and sometimes he is *the* playmaker - football is going backwards. (19/1/97)

### **GETTING THE PRIORITIES RIGHT . . . .**

FIFA are reported to be trying to establish a universal definition of 'own goal'. And I was spending time thinking about things, like the Laws and

new interpretations, assaults on referees, financial corruption to name but a few . . .

### **IT HAPPENED TO BARRY**

Not in any old game - in last season's County Sunday Junior Cup Final, where Barry Ford was called in to replace the injured Mike Bellman. He shares the problem with us:

Draw after extra time and so a penalty shoot-out. 4-4 after 5 each; 10-10 after 11. What next?

- 1 Do you toss up and start again?
- 2 Do you just carry on?
- 3 Can the teams change the order of kickers?

In fact the teams did just carry on as before and there was a result at 12-11.  
(Guinness Book of Records?)

[You don't restart with a new toss-up, but the teams *are* allowed to change the order if they so wish - **LOAF 1996-97, *Kicks from the Penalty Mark*** para 14, p.60]

### **SOLUTION to 'What Do You Do Next?'**

Cease the penalty kicks; 'the result shall be decided by the toss of a coin or the drawing of lots'.

(See LOAF 1996-1997, para 10, p.58).

### **FIND THE NAMES**

Another of those wonderful, computer-generated puzzles. And this time with a prize promised by the editor himself - for the lucky winner chosen by draw from all the correct solutions! (Please may we have more than two entries this time).

The square contains the names of 18 Premiership players (at the time of publication). Horizontal, vertical, diagonal; forward and reverse. Good luck!

**[Puzzle square]**

**What's Still to Come?**

**APRIL 17**

**MAY 15**

**The Annual General Meeting.**

This year a proposed revision of the rules as well as the election of officers and committee (and refreshments)

Please make a special effort to be there.