

**THIS AND THAT**

**By TRUE BLUE**

## **ONE SEASON OF WONDER FOR WEST HAM UNITED**

**D**URING this season, in which we are now getting deeply involved, both Chelsea and West Ham United can each write a few lines concerning the results of the meetings between each other. A quick glance at the summary of matches given on another page provides the reason for such a start to these notes.

West Ham United have not won a League match at Stamford Bridge, but they have taken home one point. And that, as you will notice, is more than Chelsea can claim to have accomplished at Upton Park. There we have played four League games and lost them all, with the tally of goals against mounting up to thirteen.

The foregoing summary means, of course that Chelsea haven't had the Hammers in opposition as often as they have met most of the other clubs now in the First Division. Those of us who have even a passing acquaintance with the days when the Blues were in the difficult teething stage don't need to be told that the games between the two clubs might have reached a much higher number.

If the door leading into the old Southern League had been opened for Chelsea to enter, West Ham would have been on our Southern League fixture list. As events worked out, it was West Ham who joined us as members of the Football League. That brings me to an important event in the story of West Ham.

The people responsible for the running of the club knew very well that they would be for it if they left the Southern League. Nevertheless, they took the plunge, and duly got what they asked for—a fine of five hundred pounds. It can well be imagined that the West Ham folk thought—eventually—that the risk of being left high and dry was worth while.

The application for membership of the Second Division received enough support. The cheque with which the fine was paid was framed, and it can still be seen by those allowed to poke their noses into the board room at Upton Park.

### **Up the Irons!**

Let me dig a bit further back into the West Ham story. It is quite a romantic chapter. Right at the very beginning—in the nineties of the last century—a small local team called Old St. Lukes—played matches on the marshes in the Plaistow district. As near neighbours they had another ambitious junior team known as Castle Swifts.

The pair got together under the title of Thames Ironworks. In that fact, of course, is the proper answer if, today, you should hear the old-time rally call, "Up the Irons!" It isn't so much used as it was in former times.

Admitted to the Second Division of the Southern League, the home was changed to Canning Town. A couple of years later, the championship of that section having been won, the club was promoted to the higher class, and that meant the end of an era.

The net was spread for players other than those employed at the iron works. Professionals were engaged. The bottom position in the Southern League was the fate in the first season. The club was down, but certainly not out. A limited company was formed: the title was changed to West Ham United, and in 1904 another big decision was made—to move to Boleyn Castle to play on what was then described as a potato patch.

I wonder what the people who knew the place at the beginning would think of the present headquarters of the Hammers — the arena which in due course staged First Division football. Even supporters of Chelsea will notice, when they cross from west and east London later in the season, considerable difference as compared with last season. It was said, jokingly, that when the move to Boleyn Castle was made the club had enough unpaid bills to sink one of the battle-ships which the former players had helped to build.

### **A Talking Point Transfer.**

Before coming to the real highlight piece in the history of the Hammers there is a bit about the way money was raised which deserves mention. George