**Secretary’s Report**

During the period since the last AGM, we have had 6 Committee meetings which were attended by an average of 7.3 Committee members. In addition a Sub-Committee met on a number of occasions to plan and implement a programme of events to celebrate the Branch’s 50th Anniversary, which was the main item on the Branch’s agenda for the season.

It has been a pleasure to welcome three new members to the Committee - Andrew Jordan, Sam Andrews and Mick Owens – and they are thanked for adding fresh input to Committee business.

Matt Woolston, Helen Wright, Karen Briggs and myself are up and for re-election at this AGM and we also need to formally approve the co-option during the season of Sam Andrews and Mick Owens to the Committee. Karen Briggs has indicated that she does not wish to stand for re-election. I would like to thank her on behalf of the Branch for her Travel Secretary efforts in a time when organised Branch travel has proved extremely difficult.

Richie Cockton, Secretary

**Membership Report**

Perhaps it is not a surprise that for the first time in a number of years I am reporting a drop in our membership. It is not a significant one - from 441 to 428 - but we accept that a growing disillusionment with the team cannot fail to affect the degree of engagement of supporters with organisations such as our own. Perhaps I am wrong because there is a constant churn of members leaving the area, or sadly dying, whilst each season also attracts new recruits as well as family additions to existing members (45 in total) and perhaps this had a greater influence last year than in the past. Whatever the reason a change of 23 in total over four years is gratifying and implies we are mostly doing things to your satisfaction and also that a huge majority remain loyal to the Branch whatever other factors may influence their decision. We remain, and continue to expect to be, one of the largest exiled supporters’ clubs in the Home Counties area.

Once more, too, members were incredibly generous in adding to their subscriptions a total of £828 in donations. Whilst we generally try to use this income for a special purpose for the benefit of every member it has also undoubtedly been a factor in being able to hold our basis fee at the same level since the 2005-06 season. We are therefore incredibly grateful to those who have underlined their support in this way.

Whilst the majority still pay their fees by cheque (which on a personal note I prefer!) there has been a further increase in the number of members now paying on line or by Standing Order. I’m not a mind reader though so it is important that the former advise me that they have paid either by returning the renewal form (which serves the dual purpose of providing a check on contact details, graduation of members to other age categories, etc.) or confirming the payment by email. Only the Treasurer knows when money appears in our bank account and so I may not be aware of renewals until he sends me a monthly summary.

Ian Todd, Enrolment Officer

**Social Reports**
The branch hosted several events in 2017 to mark our 50th anniversary.

The main event was a night in the Knight's Templar pub which included a podcast from the Wise Men Say group, food and a raffle. Approximately 100 people attended.

We also hosted a night in the Southwark Brewing Company in February where ill-fated manager David Moyes, Martin Bain and Kevin Ball all attended. We had a quiz and food.

There was an evening at the Stadium of Light on the night of our 2-2 draw with West Ham United which we organised mainly for the benefit of ex-members that have moved back to the north east.

Both the David Moyes night and the Stadium of Light night were well attended. The Stadium of Light night was particularly nice - seeing a mix of branch members old and new underlined the importance of the London Branch and the role it will always play in bringing like-minded people together.

A branch Sports Day was hosted, again at the Southwark Brewing Company. This was less well attended perhaps as the apathy around SAFC after relegation set in! A good night was had by those in attendance despite it mainly just turning into an informal pool tournament.

We have hopes to utilise social media more and build on the positives from the 50th anniversary celebrations. We want to remember that the branch is essentially a means of bringing Sunderland fans together in the capital and despite the current struggles on the pitch, and difficulties in organising travel arrangements, seeing 30 plus supporters on the train up to the Sheffield United home game a couple of weeks ago showed the rock hard spirit of our members.

2018 will hopefully be a year where we can synergise the successful sports teams and the forever loyal, match going members to create a lively, inclusive social scene within the branch.

Andy McIntosh, Social Secretary

**Sports Reports**

Branch sports teams continue to recruit new members and our teams have enjoyed fairly successful seasons this year.

**Football**

Our 6-a-side football team continues to go from strength to strength. The list of squad members currently numbers nearly 30 and the team again reached the league’s final this season. They unfortunately lost on penalties but can be proud of their efforts.

The team plays every Tuesday evening near Clapham Junction. Those wishing to play can contact Matt Woolston on 07795251880.

**Pool**

A disappointing season by the high standards they’ve set themselves in recent years.

Knocked out early in the cup by the Mags and finishing mid-table in the league they do however continue to attract a full side and have made the Brewery their home.

Anyone interested in playing should contact Jim Minton at mintonthego@googlemail.com

**Darts**

The branch darts team finished off the 2016-17 season in grand style, beating old foes Nottingham Forest 6-5 in the cup semi-final - a brilliant performance! (The final will not be played ‘til later in the year, as there are still matches yet to be played).

In the league (1st division) Leicester and Forest finished well ahead of everyone else, but we came 3rd. All in all, not a bad season and many thanks are due to all the players for their efforts.

Next season we will again be playing in the APFSCIL league, (1st division), at our home pub, The Horseshoe, 24 Clerkenwell Close, EC1, nearest tube Farringdon, with away matches played at various Central London pubs.

If anyone is interested in playing or even just supporting get in touch with Keith Adamson, tel 0207 4353164, e-mail keithgadamson@gmail.com

**Cricket**

It’s been a bit of a struggle for the cricket team this year with ringers having to fill the void left by a lack of “home-grown” mackem talent and an ever-ageing squad. The Nowton tour saw us win one and lose two games. The season ended up in deficit but there were several notable achievements including John Howey's batting and Dean Smith's all-round contribution. Other people chipped in but we really did not have enough players playing enough games to provide any stand out performances. (Apologies for any omissions.)

It became clear at Nowton that despite having toured there for over 30 years we really struggled for numbers. One option put to us was to merge with the Elephants for next year's tour. We will be discussing that more over the off-season. The current plan is to keep the non-touring team going pretty much as it is so ... ringers galore.

If you’re able to play at all next season please do get in contact with Captain John McGirr at johnmcgirr@gmail.com

**Quiz**

The quiz team continue to participate in the Home Counties Quiz League. We are also planning to have a second quiz evening with Rangers in memory of David Clarke in the next couple of months when a suitable date can be arranged. If anyone is interested in playing get in touch with Duncan Hooper, tel 01483 836102, e-mail Duncan.Hooper@kershen.fairfax.com.

**Newsletter Editor’s Report**

This season only 3 issues of Wear Down South were produced, less than the anticipated four. This was mainly due to the dire ending to the season and general apathy, not least the Editor’s own. My day job also often gets in the way and this summer has been particularly hectic.

As ever my thanks to all members who have contributed, either with much-appreciated regularity, or on a more ad hoc basis with your letters, limericks. pictures etc. It’s always a struggle to fill the pages, especially when times are hard and there’s not much to celebrate in print, but I really do enjoy receiving things.

Many thanks as ever to Catford Print, who always provide a quality service.

Eileen Sproates, Newsletter Editor