

LAURIE CRAKER's troubled pre-season build-up has run into fresh problems with the surprise departure of goalkeeper Kevin Ward.

Ward became the latest senior player to depart the Playing Fields when he signed up with former club Uxbridge last week.

Now Saints boss Craker is desperately searching for a replacement with the new season just around the corner.

"Good keepers are difficult to come by at the moment," he commented on Sunday. "All the decent ones are on contract."

Craker had been interested in Wycombe Wanderers stalwart Gary Lester and was at Bisham Abbey on Saturday where Blues played their opening pre-season friendly against Staines. But Lester appears set to join Wokingham, leaving Craker to search elsewhere.

"I've got a young lad in the squad who shows promise but I need an experienced keeper."

Ward missed the first part of last season through injury and was then unable to recapture his place in the senior side. He was only recalled when Steve King tragically died during a league match against Horsham.

Despite Saints' promotion to division one last term, Ward has elected to replace Roger Nicholls at Uxbridge after two years with the Bucks club.

There was good news for Chalfont last week when Charlie Flaherty joined from Wembley. The ex-Slough and Windsor midfielder is a useful addition to Craker's squad.

Craker, who has lost forward trio John Regan, Steve Church and Martin Stone over the past few weeks, believes he has solved his striking problem with the acquisition of Theo Edgar from Ruislip Town and former Ruislip Manor man Mike Davies.