

WYCOMBE have the best of non-league's goalkeeping talent queuing up to take over the number one jersey from the departing John Granville.

Kettering's Kevin Shoemake will start training with Blues in July, while Enfield's England international Andy Pape is eager to join.

The two keepers were both at Adams Park on Wednesday night. Shoemake, released by Kettering after a prolonged achilles injury, agreed to come on trial, while Pape was the Middlesex Wanderers' stand-by keeper.

Granville, Blues' first-choice keeper for three years, played his last game for Wycombe Wanderers in the FA Trophy Final at Wembley and has parted on good terms.

Manager Martin O'Neill praised Granville's contribution but is now stepping up his search for the quality new blood which will lift his side towards the promised land of the Football League.

"I don't mind the numbers I have here at the club," said O'Neill. "I could have 108 players here, but it's the quality that counts.

"John by his own standards has not had the season he's wanted to have. I'm always trying to improve the side, and the first place you look at is your goalkeeper."

Brian Clough always built his teams by starting at the back, buying Peter Shilton for Nottingham Forest at the end of the 1970s.

Now Wycombe are looking to secure the best back line non-league football has on offer.

Shoemake was Kettering's first choice as they shot to the top of the Conference early last season. But the 26-year-old has not returned to the

PETE LANSLEY reports

team following an operation on his achilles injury.

Now manager Peter Morris has decided to rebuild after his side failed to convert a mid-season ten-point lead at the top of the Conference into promotion.

John Reardon, Blues' assistant manager, told the Bucks Free Press Shoemake has to prove his fitness: "A fit Kevin Shoemake would be a very good keeper, and we're in the market for the best. He'll start training with us pre-season."

Pape, 29, almost joined Wycombe three years ago but renegotiated and stayed with Enfield. He was again on the transfer list 12 months ago.

With Enfield finishing runners-up in the Vauxhall League Premier Division, Pape is anxious to return to Conference football.

Winner of 15 caps, the Denham-based keeper said: "In non-league terms, the Conference is the place to play. I'm looking to move, and if a chance to move to Wycombe did arise, I'd be very interested.

"Wednesday was the first time I'd been to Adams Park and, like everybody, I was very impressed with the set up. Wycombe is buoyant, and on the rise."

Kidderminster's Paul Jones is another keeper to have impressed O'Neill this season, not least at Wembley a fortnight ago.

The Wycombe boss admits to being no goalkeeping expert: "I might have played in front of Peter Shilton and Pat Jennings, but what do I know about keepers? All I know is if he holds the ball, he's good; if he drops it, he's crap.

"I haven't seen anyone in this

league perform better than John at his very very best, up at Darlington when we won 1-0 last year. I think John's gone out on a very high note, winning the Trophy."

O'Neill added that the decision was taken before the Trophy Final.

Said Granville: "They couldn't afford to keep me on full time. I'm a bit disappointed but I've got to go with the decision.

"We parted on good terms. The team has marvellous supporters really. Winning that trophy was one of the highlights, and I hope the team continues to do well."

Granville played for Cleveland Cobras and Los Angeles Lazers in his time in America and also won 35 caps for Trinidad and Tobago. He played six Football League games for Millwall before joining Wycombe in January 1988, where he has made 172 appearances.

"I'm talking to a few League clubs, but I'd also consider going back abroad," said Granville. "Going back to America is an option."

Granville was Wycombe's only full-time professional, having joined in January 1988 with a commitment to Jim Kelman's coaching in schools.

Kelman paid tribute to the qualified coach: "John Granville was a tremendous ambassador for football in the community, waving the Wycombe flag. He was very good with children."

● A £35,000 price tag could prevent Sutton United midfielder Paul Rogers from joining Wycombe.

Rogers put in a solid performance for Middlesex Wanderers on Wednesday. O'Neill said: "Maybe the players here will improve to be good enough to pull us through. I'm looking for a bit of craft."