

Extra time left me hot under the collar

I HAVE just visited Adams Park to see the FA Challenge Trophy first round tie between Wycombe Wanderers and Salisbury. I went with some friends who came from Salisbury for a day out to see their team play.

It was a cold afternoon, but things certainly warmed up shortly after the kick-off with what looked like a very nasty fire at industrial premises close to the ground.

Obviously the emergency services and club officials must have been concerned the crowd had to pass the premises when the time came to leave the ground.

Nevertheless, there was no excuse for the officious attitude and lack of common sense on behalf of the club officials.

The manner of the announcements in the second half and at the end of the game to the effect that the crowd would be kept in for at least 20 minutes left a lot to be desired; the hectoring and aggressive delivery was more suited at times to Nuremberg in the 1930s.

Constant references to "when you are released" certainly fitted in with the style of delivery.

When the release was permitted, one of the first sections allowed out of the



Drama at Adams Park

ground were people behind the town end goal.

Adjacent to this section was the small enclosure set aside for the Salisbury supporters - some 50 people I would say.

They had a journey to make and their coach was parked very near to the ground.

The enclosure was linked by a gate to the section which was emptying and the Salisbury supporters could easily have been let out at the same time to the warmth of their coach.

Some of them were quite elderly and by this time it was extremely cold.

They then had to watch while most of the rest of the ground emptied and I

am sure only when people had to get really angry were they let out.

Incidentally, it was difficult to see what the extra half hour's detention achieved by way of increased safety as I doubt whether the situation outside the ground had changed during the time except the light by then had well and truly gone and people had to trip their way across hoses lying on the freezing ground.

It would have been nice if the person making the announcements had politely explained why the delay was necessary.

G E A Walker
Chestnut Walk
Chalfont St Peter

Emergency staff saved the day

ON Saturday afternoon the day that Wycombe Wanderers began the defence of the FA Trophy which they won so splendidly last April saw the light and dark blues once again in action and with the skills of hard training and dedication to duty the result was a victory, 2-0.

Although just along the road a similar result occurred, the residents of Sands are certainly more than grateful for the efforts of the police and fire services who tackled the factory fire next to the Adams Park football ground.

The hordes of spectators who appeared from nowhere at the first sound and sight of the fire, and who could have created chaos for the fire services were quickly controlled by the police although some difficulties were encountered by the fire vehicles despite the light blue lights being much in evidence. 1-0 to the Blues.

The fire was almost under control by the time the match next door was over, 2-0 to the good guys. The supporters who booed the police decision to keep the crowd inside Adams Park after the FA Trophy match were fortunately a minority of the crowd but thank goodness they were inside and not a risk walking past the factory when the fire broke out.

If you are wondering who the bad guys are you probably don't live in Sands!

The planners who allowed the construction of a football ground at the end of a cul-de-sac containing an industrial estate were very lucky that the above incident did not rank with the other disasters which have occurred in recent years.

The outbreak of the fire in a time span of 90 minutes either side of the event would have made the task of the police and fire services much more difficult. The streets would have been crowded with football spectators as well as the crowds drawn by the sight of the billowing black smoke.

Perhaps in the light of this incident the views of the planners and other Grandees who run our affairs may be adjusted. Hindsight may permit them to consider the pleas of many residents of Sands expressed at the beginning as not being of a Nimby nature but a belief that the siting of the football ground was wrong at that location.

R T Rundle
Sands
High Wycombe

Excellent display of crowd control

I WAS at Adams Park on Saturday when the fire broke out in an adjoining factory. I remembered Bradford and Hillsborough where major crowd control problems led to many casualties.

This was a good test for the new ground and I think the excellent performance should be placed on record. There was from the moment the referee assessed the potential danger a sense of total control with sections of the crowd being moved in an orderly manner. I think those who devised the system and those who operated it on the day should be congratulated.

No doubt someone will complain that he was late home for tea - but at least he got it!

Michael Davies
Trinity Street
Marlow