

# MARCH 1996 — A ‘WONDER GOAL’ AND A ‘LINO’ CHANGE!

## Shillington 0-2 Milton Keynes

SHILLINGTON	
1	Craig Linney
2	Ian Temple
3	Sean Hughes
4	Joey Smith
5	Pat O’Neill
6	Dave Gormley
7	Mick Ellingham
8	Andy Conner
9	Zemma Abbey
10	Lee Withers
11	Karl Spring
12	Chris Wiles (used)
14	Kevin Hogwood
16	Tony Wilson (used)

Venue	Greenfields, Shillington
Date	Tuesday 12th March 1996
Competition	Minerva Footballs South Midlands League—Premier Division
Referee	Mr R Morris (Luton)
Attendance	Not assessed

MILTON KEYNES	
1	Kevin Marchant
2	Dave Greengrass
3	Malcolm Burgess
4	Kenny Cunniff
5	Morrell Maison
6	Gary Hutchinson
7	Jeff Adams
8	Paul Joyce
9	Bernie McConnell
10	Martin Walsh
11	Wayne Botham
12	Andy McCabe (used)
13	Jason Stevens
14	Paul Dempsey

Match Details			
33	0-1		McConnell-1
43	0-2		McConnell-2

THIS was back to the days of my two years of working in Buckinghamshire in the mid-nineties. The South Midlands League became a regular haunt in my quest to collect ‘new’ grounds. On this March evening I visited Shillington, a village in Bedfordshire and situated to the north-west of Hitchin. The home side was occupying a relegation position with the season into its latter stages.

For a village side this club had clearly done very well to keep up with ground grading and play at this level. The ground, which shared with the cricket club, had a presentable area of covered accommodation, providing spectators with both seated and standing within. The club had also put floodlighting in place at the start of this decade. This was their fiftieth anniversary year.

This match is chosen because it provided a most spectacular goal. It wasn’t a Shillington player who’d netted it though and it went to Bernie McConnell, who was the Milton Keynes FC player/manager. **McConnell** had already finished well for his first goal, but it was his second that particularly caught the eye. Receiving the ball on the edge of the centre circle, meaning he was at least 45-yards from goal, **McConnell**, out of nothing, was left a little space and took full advantage, letting fly with a powerful shot. It caught out the home keeper completely, he was just off his line and could do nothing as the ball flew past him with such velocity that it hit the net high, bounced down and cannoned up back into the roof of the net again. I’ve seen many a shot do that from the underside of the bar but not from within the netting itself.

The goal is the reason why a small village ground witnessed one of the top fifty matches seen. In fairness, not much else happened of note in the game. That goal completed a 2-0 win for the Milton Keynes team and added to the home side’s woes as they were destined to finish in a relegation position.

Incidentally, and readers may not be aware, the visiting side wasn’t the Milton Keynes Dons, who are presently an English Football League (EFL) team. It was one of many failed attempts to establish a team in the city prior to the Dons controversial move, initially as Wimbledon FC in 2003.

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On an alternative point, there was something else of significance discovered on this evening. I arrived early for the match and had a chat with the referee who told me that the gentlemen carrying the flags will no longer be known as 'linesmen' from next season. I initially thought it was a bit early for an April Fools' joke! The ref went on to explain that the term "Referee's Assistants" will be used instead, which takes account that both sexes officiate at matches. This is, of course, a term that indeed started in 1996 and remains to this day.

However, it is pleasing to say the term 'linesman' or in short, 'lino' can still be heard on touchlines today and this will continue in future. An example that one of the game's traditions (the term linesman has been in place since 1891 when umpires were replaced and the referee was given more control) remains, albeit unofficially, to this day.

So, what happened to these two teams?

Well Shillington failed to put out a team in the following season but returned to the South Midlands League fold a year later but they eventually fully disbanded in 2005.

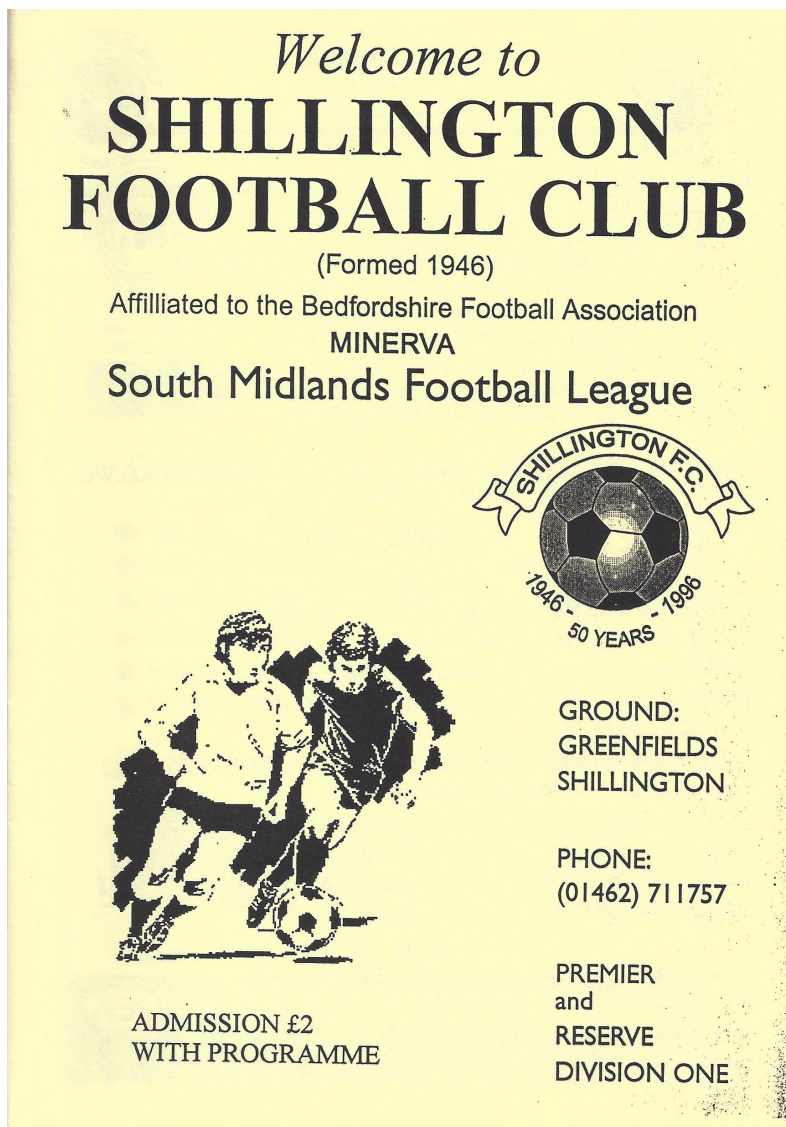
It is noted that a youth club now carries the Shillington name (and using the pitch at Greenfields) so there might be a chance of the village having an adult club once more in future.

This version of a club in Milton Keynes undertook a name change in the 1999 close season, when they became Bletchley Town but it didn't turn out well, they disbanded by December.


Clearly, it is now proven that Milton Keynes folk can embrace football, but many efforts to achieve it from grass roots faded to dust. It's a shame as Bernie McConnell's 'wonder goal' deserved a much larger audience.

The programme front cover for the game is shown.

Posted to website July 2024.




*Welcome to*  
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(Formed 1946)  
Affiliated to the Bedfordshire Football Association  
**MINERVA**  
South Midlands Football League



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