



Heaven Branch meeting

18/07/23

Attendees- Chris Waters, Joanne Youngson

Apologise - Billy Wright, Rob Mason, Chris Tague, David Newman

Agenda

Branch Update

Memorandum of Understanding

Spreading of ashes

Dedicated Memorial Day

Memorial Area

Plans going forward.

Q&A's from members

General Branch update

Joanne gave a rundown of how the branch has grown into an official group, its numbers and how it supports bereaved fans. Chris was given a pack containing leaflets and information about the branch should anyone contact the club who would benefit from us.

Memorandum of understanding (memorial area)

The club are happy with how the branch and its members maintain the area and there is no need to have this document in place now.

Q. Can we clarify what is happening with the spreading of ashes, so that we can give people the correct information?

A.

The club have no plans to bring the laying of ashes back inside the stadium as it stands. The area is becoming widely known as a place to remember loved ones, and extremely positive feedback via letters, social media, and message boards. Security staff report visitors all days of the week, meaning people are using it as a place to reflect. The number of pebbles in place and Lovebugs taken shows this is extremely popular, and people find a lot of comfort in this. Branch volunteers are litter-picking and maintaining the area. The club are happy that the branch has improved the area for fans to use as a place to lay ashes



End of year scoreboard/ Sunderland Memorial Day

Our member's families were extremely appreciative of the opportunity for the names of their loved ones to be on our scoreboard on Boxing Day, and then again at Millwall. We have messages explaining how much comfort this brought to people and how they felt it helped with the grieving process. We have members whose loved one appeared on the scoreboard and who also received applause at a game, we also have members who did not manage to have this for their loved one.

Q. Can Sunderland replica Millwall's Memorial Day?

Would the club consider an annual dedicated match in the new year dedicated to all fans lost in the previous year (Millwall do this) or a day dedicated in the new season to all lost the previous season (Derby do this)?

We feel this could save the club time responding to individual requests throughout the season and we suggested families could be offered the following for their loved one:

- Their name is displayed on the screen.
- 1-minute applause
- Name in program
- Include the visiting club's lost fans
- A song to accompany the applause (West Brom does this .. very nice!)

Joanne shared some research into how other clubs hold their memorial days and offered the support of the Heaven Branch and our members.

A.

Chris shared that the club understand how much it means to the families and friends that they are involved somehow in remembering and celebrating their loved ones. They have tried hard to support families who have reached out with requests of remembrance with applauds, scoreboard messages, signings, and meeting players. This however is not always possible and becoming very frequent so are fully behind a dedicated Memorial Day.

There are various dedicated matches scheduled throughout the season but Preston at home on 1st January 2024 could be a good option, this date has been pencilled in and Chris will confirm once signed off by wider club staff.

Q. Can we expand/extend our current memorial area?

Although the area is improved on what it was, we still feel it could be improved. While maintaining the memorial we have had over 20 families lay ashes, these are placed under the bushes at the back. It is not ideal but it means so much to people to



be as close to the stadium as possible. At our first committee meeting, it was unanimous that a priority of the branch was to expand/improve this area.

Research of what other clubs have been shared with the club.

A.

Chris agreed that with the laying of ashes no longer possible in the stadium the club would agree the memorial needs to be a fitting place, He agreed to schedule a meeting for our committee to meet with the relevant department so we can propose this to them.

Plans going forward

We are now an official group, with an earthly committee, address, and bank account, and have started applying for funding.

Heaven branch family event & bereavement group

We have plans for a monthly support/peer group as well as a family day, both are aims to bring people together who are experiencing loss. Members voted for a name and logo for our group, it will be monthly and scheduled to start in August.

The former players association are interested in supporting us with a family day, a get-together for families suitable for all ages. We will keep the club updated on our plans and Chris suggested the club will offer their support where they can.

Frequently asked questions by members.

Q. People have been stopped going to the memorial on a match day. We fully understand this is the player's car park and this is a safety issue, but can we be given times before and after the game that we can't access the memorial?

A. Chris will speak with facilities staff and security and clarify times that people cannot access the memorial area on matchdays.

Q. Although branch members keep the memorial clean and tidy there is often rubbish and dog dirt lying around. It is a particularly windy area so rubbish blows in often but there are no bins nearby. Would it be possible for a bin to be placed nearby?

A. Chris will investigate this and speak with the facilities team who maintain the stadium and its grounds.

Q. Can we still buy bricks?

A. The bricks are sold out and there is no space to have more in the way we have had them previously, there may be something similar in the future should areas that are suitable be identified.



Actions

Chris to feedback answers to questions asked, and confirm Preston as a Memorial Day as well as a possible date regarding the memorial area.