

**FRANK
FEARLESS
AND BACK
WITH ALL
YOUR OLD
FAVES...**



SUMMERTIME SPECIAL

NEW YORK * OSLO * SYDNEY * WHITEFIELD



EDITORIAL

The Only City 'Zine to Come From Manchester!

There's a brilliant clip of John Lennon and Yoko Ono wandering through New York's Central Park.

A young lad on a basketball court, scarcely able to believe his luck, breaks off from his friends to speak to Lennon through the fence, asking among other things: "When are The Beatles getting back together?"

"Tomorrow," was the succinct reply.

It has been like that for me over these last 17 years, fielding similar questions about *Bert Trautmann's Helmet*... When's it out? Is it still going? Stick this in your magazine etc.

By chance I met a man called Howard in the pub earlier in the year and he asked me the usual questions. Now I don't know what it was about this, the millionth conversation on the subject, but I got thinking... Maybe we could have one last run around the block for old times' sake? Get the band back together again?

And here we are! Most people are still around, I'm pleased to say, as you will see. Sadly, Steve Kay and Stephen Hewitt are no longer with us. Steve was a lovely man who'd do anything for you. He had a big send-off at The Etihad in 2009,

fittingly. Stephen Hewitt – once described by Bibby as "The Frank Zappa of fanzines" – also shuffled off his mortal coil not long after. Some of his antics and pictures used to amuse and terrify me with equal measure, especially when Francis Lee complained that one of Stephen's masterpieces had offended his wife!

My parents have also died in the intervening years; my mum last year, which came as a great shock to all of us. And my dad in 2013. I'd last spoken to him on my way to Wembley for that infamous Cup Final against Wigan. It was a grim day all round and I never spoke to him again. When his belongings were returned to me I found an old photograph that I had not seen for many years – a photograph he was proud of and had been in and out of his wallet many times since it was taken in the late 1940s at St Kentigern's Club (*see below*). My dad wasn't a City fan, but used to go to Maine Road and sneak in at three-quarter time with his cousins who lived nearby. Although he had no affinity with City he was in awe of Frank Swift and our patron, the late, great Bert Trautmann. I don't recall

him ever being in awe of anyone else ever other than these two goalkeeping legends. He was proud of this photograph he had taken with Swifty all those years ago.

The end of the fanzine came with the end of Maine Road in 2003 – it provided a natural break. Producing a fanzine on a regular basis is a thankless and unrelenting task and takes up an inestimable amount of time. Kudos to Dave Wallace & Co. who've kept theirs going for 32 years - an astonishing achievement!

I wondered what I was going to do when I'd finished. I don't think I've stopped since. One of the things I got involved in was local politics and I was elected on to Bury Council on two occasions. This isn't the place to go into politics but when I think back to the time when fanzines were starting up in the late 1980s, some of them partly in response to Thatcher and the hapless Sports Minister Colin Moynihan declaring war not only on the working class but on the football-going working class, I don't recall ordinary people on the



COVER STORY: A now familiar celebratory scene at The Etihad South aka Wembley.

Kippax being as glib with their support for the Tories or their mistrust of the Labour Party as they have been in recent years!

Maine Road is now remembered in sepia tones within a golden frame. No-one fondly recalls the hole in the Kippax roof or the time just 3,007 turned up for the Auto Wind-screen Trophy match against Mansfield, the regular 'Swales Out' demos or the equally regular ticket office fiascos and yet all of these things are as much a part of our collective DNA as the days of Bell, Lee and Summerbee, the 5-1 wins against Charlton and the rags, or the 10-1.

I'll make no apologies for the nostalgic tone of this one-off issue. It wasn't intentional. I had a few bits and bobs knocking about and chucked them all in – like a stew the night before payday. Contributors took a welcomed but similar line.

We've had a ball in the last ten years - way beyond our wildest dreams. Worthy and I used to discuss the idea of Bill Gates coming in and turning our fortunes around in a way Lee hadn't been able to. Fast forward a bit and for Bill Gates read Sheik Mansour. And what a journey it's been! Trips to Colchester and Macclesfield, Wycombe and York have now been supplanted by breaks in Amsterdam and Barcelona, Cologne and Turin. Stellar players and trophies galore have arrived. I'd have been happy with winning the League Cup. Now we more or less own it. I don't think I ever considered seeing us winning the League. Now we're disappointed when we don't win it! The FA Cup has proved slightly more elusive, as touched upon above, while the Charity Shield is regarded almost as a formality and Wembley a home from home. We have an incredible record there over the last decade, winning the majority of our games regardless of opposition.

There was also *that* Semi against the rags and "the Agüero moment" - the goal heard around the world! When time stood still... for minutes. Days even. And the rest of the week

actually, as I remember little about most of it! And then there was last season's historic quadruple. It's funny that fans of the 'istree clubs don't regard the Charity Shield as a

We've had a ball in the last ten years - way beyond our wildest dreams.

trophy yet their own clubs list it among their honours. Who cares? Well, not the media. Perversely, what had previously been regarded as an "impossible task" by Alex Ferguson barely raised a murmur in the media. There were no BBC Specials, no swathes of forest felled for the avalanche of books; there wasn't even a *MUEN* special edition as far as I can tell, although no-one would have noticed.

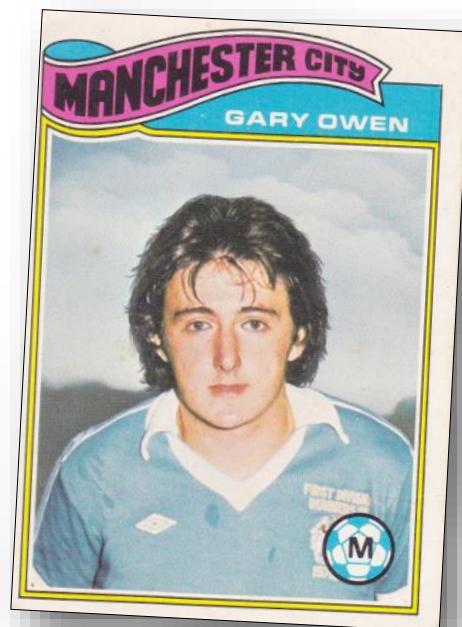
One of the reasons I started the fanzine in 1989 was because we barely got a mention in the *MUEN* and when we did it was usually something brief or negative. Or both. Although the rag has upped its game regarding City, it is still as poor as the rest of the national media. We've been largely ignored in favour of Liverpool and criticised by everyone from the BBC and BT Sport to *The S*n* and Sky Sports. It's as if we've now come full circle.

There's a story that when City won the League in 1968, the *MUEN* had lined up two front pages for *The Pink Final*, as either us or the rags could have won it. The editor was a rag and with only minutes to go and City winning at Newcastle and the rags unexpectedly losing at home to Sunderland, the presses were ready to roll but he wouldn't give the green light, insisting: "The lads can still do it..." They didn't. We did. Old habits die hard!

For most of the years I'd been watching City, the best we ever managed was runners-up to Liverpool, in my first season:

1976/77. It was such an achievement we had it embroidered on our shirts for the whole of the following season (see the Gary Owen card, below)! For years after we never even got close. Coming behind them this year is hugely disappointing. The season should have been declared null and void but there was too much money involved and the feeling among Liverpool's many friends in the game and in the media seemed to be to give it to them one way or another.

With no fans in our hermetically-sealed stadia, one positive aspect of 'Operation Give Them The Trophy' has been the exposure given by clubs and players alike to Black Lives Matter. Much of this one-off issue of *THRA* has been finished for a few weeks now and I apologise for not giving this campaign the space it deserves. But I am pleased and proud that, although the thoroughly modern, Etihad-based Manchester City Football Club may have changed in many ways from the quaintly old-fashioned Manchester City Football Club that used to nestle in the bosom of Moss Side, at its centre sits the same beating heart still: a club that welcomes players and supporters from across the world, regardless of ethnicity, gender or religion, and with big names like Raheem Sterling and Pep Guardiola prepared to speak out about and against inequality and racism. Long may that continue.



A WORTHY JOURNEY HOME FROM HOME

Forget the playing fields of Eton as a doe-eyed Worthy looks eagerly to the future whilst shedding a slight tear over old ground...

The 5-1 - "There were Manchester United fans sitting there... they've gone home!"



As a master of a statement of the bleedin' obvious, one of my dad's favourite sayings was: "If things don't change, they'll stay as they are." It's been 17 years since we were decanted from our beloved Maine Road to our new estate within the promised land of Eastlands (aka The City of Manchester Stadium or 'The Etihad'). In that time, a lot of things have changed – but have they changed for the better?

I've often heard it said that had City not been already located at the new ground, then our current owners would have looked elsewhere and another club would have benefitted from their wise investment and unique expertise. That being the case, is it safe to say that the move to East Manchester has been a great – if not instant – success? Granted, the tragic circumstances of Covid 19 have facilitated an unlikely protraction of time, but the bottom line is that it is now two years and counting since a team other than Manchester City last won a domestic trophy in England. The glittering silverware which eluded the club for that infamous 35-year period between 1976 and 2011 has since sailed up the Manchester Ship Canal within the hold of our

Tenuous link with the article as Worthy goes behind enemy lines via the Bridgewater Canal!



majestic galleon with Captain Kompany strutting proudly on the deck waving a two-fingered salute in the direction of the decrepit structure that is Old Scaffold.

In order for the club to build and grow, moving away from Maine Road was essential. When Eastlands was opened as an athletics stadium for the Commonwealth games in 2002, I was lucky enough to attend what turned out to be the main medal-winning night for the mixed English team of men and women who were running around, jumping up and

down and chucking stuff to greater effect than most of the other teams clad in their multi-coloured vests. Great if you like that sort of thing - which I must confess I did just that once in a lifetime - although I did find the quality of the stadium of some concern. Perhaps, through a lack of imagination, I was unable to picture what it would look when finished and wasn't overly impressed with the 38,000 capacity arrangement. In fact, I was quite worried that the eventual outcome would be a massive let down. However, when we eventually arrived for the footy, the track and temporary stand had

disappeared and 'The City of Manchester Stadium' had been brought up to a pioneering standard that was way beyond the calibre of any new ground that had been built for the clubs that had already migrated from their old haunts to pastures new .

It was 27 years and counting since City had last won a trophy by the time the club had left Moss Side and arrived at our shiny new home in East Manchester in 2003. It would be a further five years before our glorious transformation would begin. When we first took up residence, the stadium had a capacity of 48,000 when we took on and beat Barcelona 2-1 in the first ever fixture at the new ground. A nice start, but real success was to prove illusive as we meandered from one season to the next in what proved to be those early years of dullard football. However and despite the inauspicious beginning of eight barren seasons, only once did the crowd average dip below 40,000, in 2006/07. This was hardly surprising given that Stuart Pearce's team

failed to score a single home league goal from New Year's Day to the end of that season and somehow still managed to stay up!

The following season, 2007/08, saw the dawn of a new era under new owner Thaksin Shinawatra, a man who was followed around with a soundtrack of St Trinian's 'Flash Harry' spiv music wherever he went. All looked rosy for a while, as hope sprang eternal. Unfortunately, the affable Sven Goran Eriksson and his team flattered to deceive and the cupboard remained bare as our lofty aspirations began to drop off like the rusting components of the 'B of the Bang' sculpture, then located just outside the Stadium.

It wasn't until 2008/09 when the current owners took over and blessed us with a sustained period of unprecedented success on the field. This in turn led to the growth of the club in literal terms, both in respect of the size of the stadium and in numbers of supporters. Last season's 54,130 average is the club's highest so far and points the

way to an eventual extension of the stadium, most recently projected to house a 63,000 capacity. But it will take time to build up support of that magnitude. Unfortunately, and despite my personal baby boom of doubling my number through procreation, the long-term failures of the past have restricted the numbers of new recruits to the ranks. The 35-year stretch of failure no doubt took its toll on popularity as lost generations of potential young City fans went elsewhere. However, if the recent on-field success continues – and there is no reason to think otherwise – then the club, the support and its stadium will continue to increase in size. If the South Stand ever gets to mirror the extension at the North end, it will be amongst the best in the Europe, which is certainly something to look forward to.

While it is indisputable that the facilities at our new ground are cutting edge, with state-of-the-art-opulence in abundance for those that can afford it, it is often levelled at clubs in general that today's



Getting ready for the first Premier League kick-off against Portsmouth, 23 August, 2003.

prices have driven the working classes away from the game. City's admission prices have indeed continued to rise, but if you want to watch the best players in the world, doesn't it follow that such a privilege will not be on the cheap? The club has tried to reduce the cost of Cup tickets, but is perhaps somewhat blighted by its own success. The frequency of Cup games has undoubtedly become a financial burden, but this has to be taken into account and put into perspective. City's fans were recently pilloried in the press for a gate of 'only' 39,223 against Fulham in the FA Cup. Given that the 23 were the whole of the away section, in my eyes that was a brilliant attendance for a live-on-BBC Sunday afternoon tie which

soon unravelled into the expected formality. Those journos that said otherwise have their own self-serving, biased anti-City agenda, based on envy and protection of the old guard.

With regards to the League, today's Etihad season tickets cater for a wide range of incomes. Those on a tighter budget or latecomers to the party are shifted up into the higher seats behind the South Stand goal, thus having to make do with a less attractive view. This is not an improvement, particularly when compared to the older days of the hallowed Kippax Terrace. Maine Road was one of the few grounds where the main terrace was located on the side of the pitch, thus offering an idyllic,

panoramic view from the wings. If you got through the turnstiles early enough, you paid your 30p and took your point of view, depending on where you chose to stand - a great way to get your preferred view of the game without having to pay top dollar to do so.

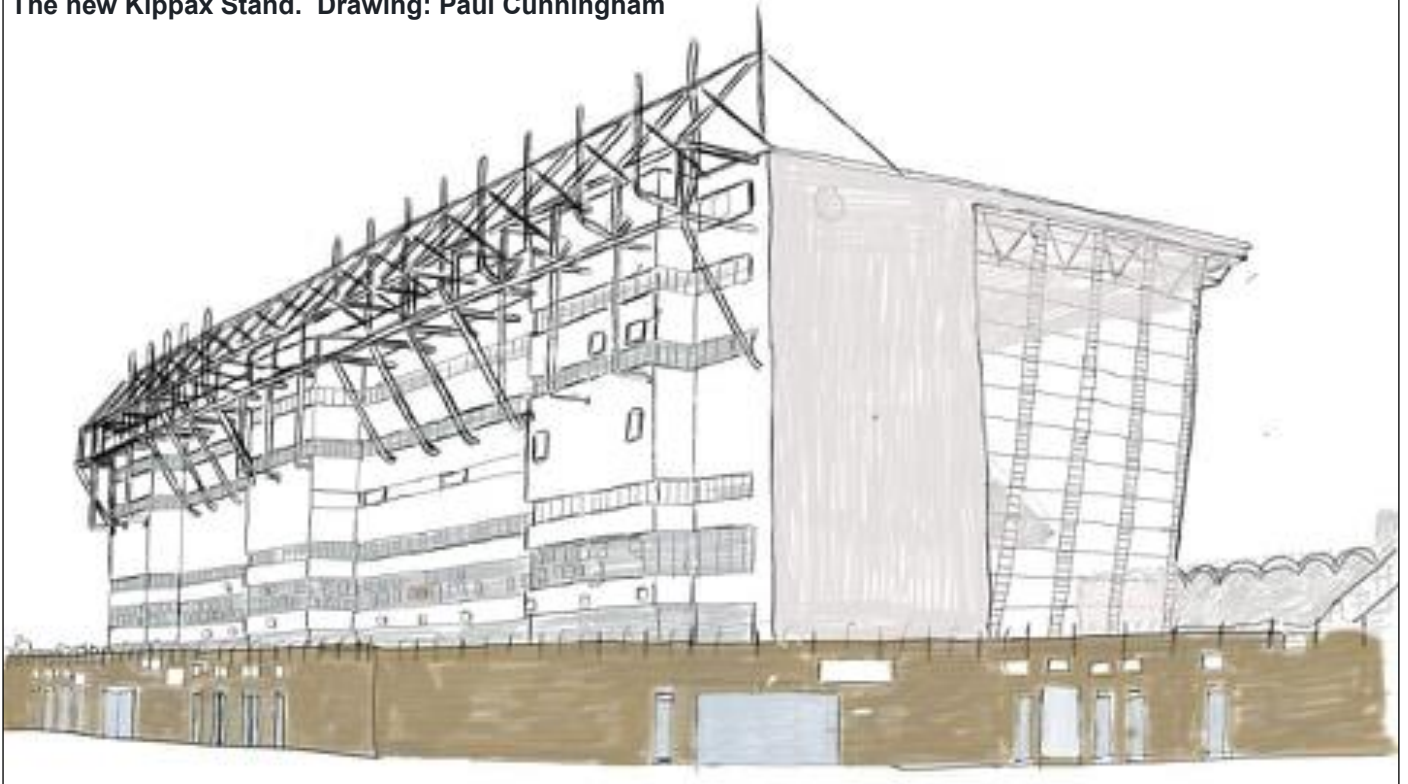
It is a time-honoured tradition that the older generation advises the up-and-coming young whippersnappers that everything was 'much better in my day' – especially in footballing times, when men were men and diving was restricted to the local swimming baths. Indeed there were many personal aspects where the Maine Road experience was superior than of the present, such as the unfussy team strips (that lasted more than five minutes before a new one came along), the proliferation and choice of boozers located near the ground, the camaraderie on the terraces, the feeling of belonging and the convenience of a matchday programme that didn't weigh as heavily as a telephone directory strapped to a brick. A pre-match pint or six in Moss Side then a stroll or stagger to an after-match Vindaloo on the curry mile in Rusholme was also a favourable post-match ritual.

As a man of a certain age, Maine Road will always retain such personal memories that have literally dictated the path of my modest life. From the age of six, I watched 35 successive seasons in M14 cheering on the Blues. So ingrained are those images, I can close my eyes and find my way through the turnstile, onto the concourse and the short walk up the crumbling steps to my favourite spot on the Kippax. Or up the grey concrete stairwell to my seat in the rebuilt Kippax Stand. It was heart-wrenching to leave a place where I - and countless others - had literally grown up. Like a schoolboy whose eyes are drawn to the empty desk where his first love once sat, I still drive along Princess Road and through Moss Side on my way to The Etihad and I can't prevent my gaze from shifting beyond the empty space on Bowes Street where the old bus depot once

B Of The Beginning Of The End.



The new Kippax Stand. Drawing: Paul Cunningham



stood - to the vacant skyline that was once occupied by the towering floodlights or the top of the new Kippax Stand.

Back in the day, Maine Road was a place where it was acceptable for working class men to exercise their bi-weekly frustrations and let off steam by screaming abuse at the players or beating the crap out of rival supporters before and after the match. A time when players could be covered in so much mud by the end of the game that it was often difficult to distinguish which team they actually played for!

My own sky blue tinted, romantic visions are of a young boy perched on my usual barrier on the Kippax with my now departed dad's steadying hands clamped to my waist or in later years, standing in the usual spot just under the roof near 'Windy Corner' before disappearing into the surrounding ale houses to celebrate, commiserate or remonstrate with my like-minded mates, depending on the result. Of course the latter option remains available with City's 'new' ground being within a good walking distance of the City Centre and so long as I'm surrounded by my longstanding pals and with easy

access to my favourite tippie... well, what's the problem?

Nobody loved Maine Road more than me. Like many others it will always be ingrained within my heart and soul. Therefore, it feels like I'm being a traitor by stating that while the old ground was a brilliant place to be - particularly in the late 1960s and the majority of the '70s - it was well past its sell by

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date by the time we left. Let's be honest, Maine Road's day had been and gone. For some of us of a certain age, perhaps the magic of football has faded in tandem with our youth - although not for me, I hasten to add. My younger days might be consigned to begrudging images on fading

Polaroid pictures jammed into an old Timpson's shoe box, but my appetite for the game has been thoroughly rejuvenated.

As time went on and I got older, I became increasingly frustrated with the club and the repeated failures on the pitch. We all know who the great players were at Maine Road, but all too often, and particularly towards the end of our tenure, they were the exception rather than the rule. In order for the club to be finally successful something had to change and, as far as I was concerned, happily it did. I hated losing, I still do, and therefore I do not yearn for the 'good old days' in the lower Leagues. I've got that T-shirt that's gone musty up in the loft and I don't want to wear it again (besides the smell, it probably wouldn't fit). It is easy to say that 'football was better in my day' - but such a statement would be patently untrue. It is no disrespect to the teams of yesteryear - but the football the Blues have played under Pep's tutelage is undoubtedly the best that has ever been witnessed by our supporters and arguably any other connoisseurs of English football.

The muddy pitches of the '70s do indeed bring back happy memories,

but today's all-year-round snooker table playing surfaces are far more conducive to the glorious, free-flowing football we have become so accustomed to. Mud was a great leveller, particularly in the early Rounds of the FA Cup. But when you have a superior team, why on earth would you want to play on a pitch that aids inferior opposition? I've seen enough Cup disasters on poxy little grounds with swampy pitches to last a lifetime, thank you very much. Today's flawless surfaces allow the beautiful game to blossom. If this is at the expense of a sprinkle of romance – then so be it. I have absolutely no doubt that given the opportunity, Colin Bell would have been remembered with even greater reverence if we had been able to watch him on the evergreen carpets of today rather than the pitches of yesterday which were free of divots only at the start of the season.

I've read and respect those from an earlier age who have often commented on social media that they miss Maine Road and would go back at the drop of a hat. Today's matchday package is indeed a far cry from the old days in pretty much

every aspect of the event. The Maine Road experience was certainly a different, less contrived event than today's affair. But like watching a beloved relative in the final stages of decline, so Maine Road was left to degenerate into a stadium that bore little resemblance to its glorious state-of-the-art arrival in 1923. By the

Mud was a great leveller, particularly in the early Rounds of the FA Cup.

time we left in 2003 Maine Road was totally unfit for purpose. The replacement of the old Scoreboard End with the North Stand was an undoubted improvement in 1972, but the rot began when the old Platt Lane End was replaced in 1993 by the B&Q Stand which confirmed the short-sightedness of the club's owners; quite literally with regard to that of the

architects. The Kippax was the soul of the club and Maine Road was never quite the same once the 27,000 capacity terrace was demolished in 1994 and rebuilt in 1995 with an impressive all-seater structure that bore no resemblance to the rest of the ground. Maine Road had become a disparate mixture of stands located within an area that was neither adequate nor practicable for growth.

Life in the '60s and '70s bears little resemblance to today's computer chip existence and rather than playing on their mobile phones throughout the game, back then every youngster in the ground was glued to the proceedings on the pitch. There were no peripheral distractions. The football was everything. When the Kippax was a standing terrace the atmosphere generated could be incredible, but contrary to urban myth, Maine Road was not rocking every game, as no ground ever was. The percentage of games where the volume was turned up was indeed greater at Maine Road than The Etihad, but the new stadium has certainly had its moments.



Colin Bell in action on a muddy Maine Road pitch against Wigan in the FA Cup on 2 January 1971.

The Scandinavian Branch of the Supporters Club pay a visit to see the new Stadium starting to take shape.



While we've all been staying in developing square eyes during lockdown, Sky showed the eighth anniversary of Sergio's last-gasp winner against QPR. It is safe to say that for all the accumulated glory achieved in its 80-year history, Maine Road never witnessed such a moment or such scenes of unbridled joy when Sergio's winner went in. However, when you think about it, Maine Road certainly played its part in the extreme emotions demonstrated by one and all that day. Perhaps The Etihad should be embraced as an extension of Maine Road, rather than being viewed as its replacement?

For better or for worse, like time, progress cannot be halted and the club will always be in a state of transition. The old ground is long gone and it would be interesting to know the percentage of our current match-going supporters that ever actually attended a game in Moss Side? My guestimate would be maybe 60% tops? Those that hadn't will include anyone under the age of

17 and a significant number who were not taken to Maine Road in their infancy in order to justifiably say that they had been there. Together with older and newer supporters who never got to experience the delights of M14 7WN, The Etihad is their home sweet home. Here their memories of City have been exclusively generated, and like mine will undoubtedly ferment like a fine wine. These are their 'good old days.' Therefore, for the more mature supporter, is hankering back to those good old days with a yearning to be back at Maine Road simply a forlorn wish to be younger once more?

It is a genuine pity that younger fans have missed out on standing on a packed Kippax terrace and being literally swept off their feet when the ball hit the back of the net. But in all probability, it is only a matter of time before such 'safe standing' is brought back. The vast majority of away supporters already stand up throughout a game in their

visitors' sections up and down the country, so what is the problem? Sooner or later a Government will have the courage to stick its head above the parapet of Hillsborough and bring back standing in the far safer format than the current practice of lurching in between shin cutting plastic seats when a goal goes in. When that happens I have no doubt that the phenomenal atmosphere generated on the old terraces can be rekindled – even in these sanitised times - where drinking a pint in view of the pitch is forbidden and getting out of your seat to make an impassioned plea is enough to illicit a disapproving frown from the less animated patrons of today's game. Having said that, while watching a higher calibre of player, these days I am mostly able to sit back, relax(!) and watch the match from my comfortable seat without feeling the need to get up and shout and bawl at players whose lack of ability used to make my blood boil. In fact, the majority of any personal annoyance these days centres around having to listen to those who do get out of their

It's not a valid excuse to blame all-seater stadia as the sole reason for the lack of noise.



seats and presume to offer their 'superior knowledge' of the game to the best coach in the world and his world class players.

In keeping with my inexorable descent into old fartism, a part of me feels that I've suffered enough sore throats in cheering on the team. However, I still contribute with enthusiasm where possible, but like everyone else, perhaps I could do more? The 1894 Group have done some sterling work in trying to generate colour and atmosphere into the ground: particularly on European nights where a helping hand is needed as virtually every club that visits The Etihad in the Champions League does so with support that is more animated and noisier than ours. It is an embarrassing state of affairs and it is up to all of us to do something about it. To me it's not a valid excuse to blame all-seater stadia as the sole reason for the lack of noise.

The recent move from the

Vicente Calderón Stadium to the wonderfully named 'Wanda Metropolitano' doesn't appear to have diminished Atletico Madrid's fervent atmosphere and certain games have proved that The

The 1894 Group have done some sterling work in trying to generate colour and atmosphere.

Etihad can also be a cauldron of noise. The key is when you feel part of something that is helping the team win, you take a greater ownership of the victory. Perhaps that is why away games are so much more satisfying? Maybe we had to get more involved at Maine Road because our backs were all

too frequently up against the wall, particularly in the '90s. Is it that apathy has crept in at today's home games or could it be that the passion of our working class support has been somewhat diluted by the transformation of the club?

The Etihad Stadium is not the exclusive haven of working class males and to its credit, it never has been. For better or for worse it is a modern stadium where all are welcome to come and cheer on the mighty Blues to continued success... and long may it continue. I'm happy at The Etihad and wouldn't have it any other way. If the price of success is a patient endurance of half 'n' half scarf-wearing, day-tripping, football tourists with their unfamiliar faces who wait until the game has kicked off before barging past and stepping on the toes of grumpy old stalwarts without apology while in pursuit of their one-off seat that is usually located in the opposite stand... then I am happy to

bear such a small cost.

Before I ascend to the great stadium in the sky, I still want to see City win as many trophies and become as big a club as is possible. I will never tire of such aspirations. As my time advances, I'm more than happy to see out my twilight years in the middle of the top tier of the Colin Bell Stand where I can sit back and enjoy watching some of the best footballers the world has to offer. I for one have never been happier. In the last nine years we have accumulated a trophy collection that is already beginning to eclipse the domestic haul that was achieved back at Moss Side. In 80 years at Maine Road we won two championships, three FA Cups two League Cups and the European Cup Winners' Cup. At The Etihad we've won four Championships, two FA Cups and five League Cups. In all first team games at Maine Road our record was P:1753 W:960 D:394 L:399 F:3300 A:2052 which when compared to our 17-year record at

The Etihad will remain unknown until somebody other than me {*Or me! – Ed.*} can actually be bothered to try and work it out - although it is probably safe to say that even accounting for the dour times under Stuart Pearce, our goals scored per game ratio is probably well-up on Maine Road thanks to Pep and the chaps.

So in moving across the City, has the heart been ripped out of the club or has the heart been resuscitated? Without the timely intervention and investment of Sheikh Mansour and the Abu Dhabi United Group it is hard to even contemplate where the club would be today. Without sounding too sycophantic, the potential that we all knew was there has finally been realised by the greatest owners on the planet. But it's not just the barren wastelands of East Manchester that have been developed. Moss Side has also benefitted from new housing in the area and while the local pubs have

suffered and ultimately disappeared, at least the many local residents that found Maine Road an annoying inconvenience have now been placated.

I do miss Maine Road and all that went with it, but I wouldn't go back tomorrow (and not just because we are still in lockdown and there isn't much to see there anyway). We have all moved on. Our little ol' Manchester City is now a global brand with followers all over the world and as far as I'm concerned, the shift from Maine Road to The Etihad has been for the better. Many of my sky blue dreams have now been fulfilled, aside from winning the Champions League - although this is surely only a matter of time? I for one can't wait for that to happen so that we can all give a cheery two-fingered sky blue salute in the direction of the duplicitous and corrupt b@stards that are UEFA.

The future is bright, the future is City!



FOCUS ON MARK

Match Worn City Shirt Collector

FULL NAME: Mark McCarthy

BIRTHPLACE: Northampton

BIRTHDATE: 1974

HEIGHT: 6'3

WEIGHT: 13st

PREVIOUS CLUBS: Olney
Town, MK City, Newport Pagnell

CAR: Audi

FAVOURITE PLAYER: David
Silva

FAVOURITE OTHER TEAM:
West Ham United

**MOST DIFFICULT
OPPONENT:** Marco Gabbiadini -
Northampton

MOST MEMORABLE MATCH:
Spurs A - 4-3 FA Cup comeback

BIGGEST THRILL: Birth of my
children

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT:
VAR!

BEST COUNTRY VISITED:
Turkey

FAVOURITE FOOD: Chilli

FAVOURITE TV SHOWS:
*Match Of The Day, Only Fools &
Horses*

FAVOURITE SINGER: Elvis
Presley

FAVOURITE ACTOR: Robert
DeNiro

**BIGGEST DRAG IN
FOOTBALL:** Kick-off times

PERSONAL AMBITION: To own
the 1989 Umbro yellow away shirt
(Now achieved! - Ed.)

**WHICH PERSON IN THE
WORLD WOULD YOU MOST
LIKE TO MEET?** Muhammad Ali

[https://www.facebook.com/groups/
manchestercitymatchshirts](https://www.facebook.com/groups/manchestercitymatchshirts)



THE FOOTBALL LEAGUE CUP, DENNIS AND I

The Ed catches up with his boyhood hero...



The phone only rings out a couple of times before it is answered. The voice, an unmistakable Geordie accent booms: "Is that the famous Noel Bayley?"

He always says that.

"It is," I reply, "but I'll never be as famous as you Dennis!"

I always say that too, for it is he: my boyhood hero, one Dennis Tueart.

Even though Dennis and I have met and spoken on a number of occasions - sometimes by design,

sometimes by accident - he remains in the eye of my mind a blur of blue - a deeper blue than today - and white, all adidas boots and sock tags, airborne yet somehow parallel to the Wembley turf, three Newcastle defenders in attendance, statue-like, on that grey Saturday afternoon on the penultimate day of February 1976 - a Leap Year.

It is an iconic image of a Wembley winner - as much a credit to the skill of the photographer in the days before digital, as to that of the athlete who prompted that click of the shutter-button.

I wasn't there that day but nevertheless it is an image seared into the collective memory, an image every middle-aged City fan is familiar with and, I dare say, a few more younger ones. I myself was nine years old then. I remember being out playing but went home in time for the half-time report on the big match from Wembley on a day when the ordinary League programme ran its normal course around the Football League Cup Final. Soon after, a few minutes into the second half, came that golden moment, which was captured forever on a long-playing record... in the days before digital!

On another grey afternoon, some months later, I made my own City debut, against Newcastle at Maine Road: a largely forgettable goalless draw, punctuated only by Joe Corrigan trying gamely to catch a black labrador that had run into the pitch. Dennis was featured on the programme cover but alas, the magic didn't come that day.

The game was televised the following day as so often happened in the days before digital but, unlike the League Cup Final, there was nothing to see, so much so that it has never troubled the YouTube uploaders! And after 1976 came, well... precisely nothing for decades!

Well, that's not quite true, there were relegations and promotions galore (five as I recall - of each!), a Full Members' Cup Final, a third-tier play-off win and a League Championship (nee Second Division) success. You can throw in an FA Youth Cup win in 1986 and an unlikely Joan Gamper Trophy win at Barcelona in 2009 when Martin Petrov scored the only goal; he was so far away from where we were sitting that he may as well have been in another town.

Two years later an FA Cup win started a ball rolling that has never stopped. The rest of the decade saw another FA Cup, four Premier Leagues and five League Cups. But for all the euphoria of that first trophy in 35 years, the Sergio Agüero goal

that was heard around the world a year later and the subsequent Charity Shield triumph, the League Cup win in 2014 was a personal highlight.

While Manuel Pellegrini's first season in England saw him win both the Premier League and the League Cup, the Manager of the Year award undeservedly went to Brendan Rogers. It was ever thus. And while the second Premier League crown that followed in short order was never going to measure up to that

cataclysmic Agüero moment of 2012, the League Cup success after a 3-1 win over Sunderland was a welcomed novelty for the younger generations. But for me it squared a circle in that not only had we finally won back the same trophy from all those years before when I was a boy, but we had also won all three domestic honours (four if you count the Charity Shield) in three years! And to think, we did what Alex Ferguson once described as an "impossible task"

and won the lot last season!

So, never underestimate the League Cup. It may lack the beauty, grandeur and history of the FA Cup but it is there to win and is still, in my opinion, worth winning. Plus the Final often throws up a better game than its FA Cup counterpart nowadays, even if there has never been another moment as endearing and as enduring as that legendary Dennis Tueart overhead kick all those years ago. I'll never be as famous as him!

THE ROVERS RETURN



Ten City players who left the club only to return later...

1. Billy Meredith
2. Denis Law
3. Malcolm Allison (*far right*)
4. Kenny Clements
5. Dennis Tueart
6. Asa Hartford (*second right*)
7. Peter Barnes
8. Ray Ranson
9. Ian Bishop
10. Paul Dickov

FLASHES FROM THE ARCHIVES OF OBLIVION

This cartoon from famed British cartoonist Tom Webster dates back to City's 1-0 FA Cup defeat at Spurs on 12 January 1935.

This is an original pencil drawing on paper. Contact The Ed if you are interested in buying it.

TOTTENHAM
HOTSPUR
V
MANCHESTER
CITY
ONE OF THE
BEST CUP TIES
WE HAVE EVER PLAYED IN-



IT WAS
SO
THRILLING
THAT
ALTHOUGH
WE SAT IN
THE STAND
WE OFTEN



HELPED BOTH SIDES
WITH A SLIGHT KICK
NOW AND AGAIN.

ALTHOUGH
NATURALLY
EMOTIONAL
WE HAD
COMMAND OF
THE SITUATION
RIGHT FROM
THE BEGINNING.
SITTING NEXT



TO A LADY
WE HAD



HE WAS BEATEN WITH A SHOULDER
CHARGE IN THE FIRST 5 MINUTES.

IT WAS
ALL SO
EXCITING THAT
IT STILL
LEAVES US
A BIT SHAKY
AND THIS
IS THE
BEST WE



CAN DO WITH THE GOAL THAT WON THE MATCH.

WE WERE
NOT THE
ONLY ONES
TO SUFFER.

MR. ARTHUR
TURNER THE
TOTTENHAM
SECRETARY TO
OUR KNOWLEDGE
AND PERFECT COUNT



LIT HIS PIPE
678 TIMES AND THE
TOBACCO WAS STILL
DAMP AT THE FINISH.

AS WE SAID BEFORE
AND MAY DO ANOTHER TIME
IT WAS A HOUSING STRUGGLE
AND BEING VERY LIMP AT
THE FINISH IT
TOOK THE
CHELSEA
RESULT TO
GET US
STRAIGHT
AGAIN TO



WHAT!

I KNOW I SHOULDN'T, BUT I REALLY ENJOYED THAT!

Dave Pimlott looks at the difficult relationship we have with the people at the other end of the East Lancs Road...

"It meant nothing, it meant everything, it's really such a shame it's so hard to explain to you." The Courteeners, That Kiss, 2008.

A number of City fans I know are gifted enough to drink themselves to a point of catatonia where they have lost the magic trio of their phone, keys and wallet as well as the control of a number of key bodily functions, one of their shoes, their mates and even forgotten their own name and address, yet at the cusp of finally folding into a crumpled wreck under a skip they can still recite the following two passages of commentary:

1 - *"It's not over until the final whistle and City here looking for an*

opening... it's Dickov again! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!!!!"

2 - *"It's finished at Sunderland. Manchester United have done all they can, that Rooney goal was enough for the three points, Manchester City are still alive here. Balotelli.... AGÜEROOOOOOOO!!! I SWEAR YOU'LL NEVER SEE ANYTHING LIKE THIS EVER AGAIN!"*

I have heard both pieces of commentary recited to absolute precision in such circumstances with absolute attention to detail, including clinically accurate nuances and accompanying crowd roar of appropriate volume. In the interests of health and safety, may I point out that this is a rare skill

which should only be attempted by practised experts of suitable experience, dexterity and bladder capacity. I too have eulogised both moments to an extent and frequency they have possibly cost me some friendships. *"It's something unpredictable, but in the end it's right."* And yes, we had the time of our lives.

In my rarely sought-after opinion, the two separate moments eclipse all others as I enter my fifth decade with at least one of my eyes always trained on City fortunes: come rain, come shine, come pandemic. This is, of course, a subjective view. Your own treasured nugget might be the 10-1, the 6-1, the 5-1, St James' Park '68, Trevor Morley at Bradford,

Close but no cigar. Mike Doyle can only watch as another chance is thwarted at Anfield on 12 January 1971.



Shaun Goater at Blackburn, Yaya v Stoke, Neil Young v Leicester, it might be Bert Trautmann winning the Cup with a broken neck in 1956, it might be Watford losing it with broken hearts in 2019. We're all curators of our own personalised inner City museums. It's the privilege of the individual to exhibit the artefacts within them as one sees fit.

2012 and 1999 are points in City's history as geologically divided as the age of superfast broadband and the Triassic Period, yet the link between the two is inextricable. The unmitigated joy borne of the last-ditch goals in both of those games atoned for the crimes against morale that we have suffered across the years. I forgive York 2 City 1. I will forget City 1 Wycombe Wanderers 2. In fact City, I will thank you for inflicting such agonies upon me, for teaching me the value of hope against the amorality of entitlement and unwarranted expectation. Had I not been made to sleep rough in such footballing straw, what would the wonder of silk bed sheets ever mean to me? The luxury would mean nothing, and so it means everything. You were a fine guardian, City. Cruel at times, but for my greater good. You brought me up well.

Paul Dickov's equaliser at Wembley in 1999 and Agüero's winner in 2012 were moments of utter salvation, like being dragged free from quicksand by a twitching little finger. I covet those moments with the same affection I have for the completion of the Treble. City playing keep-ball at 6-0 made me feel like a greedy prince, gorging myself to both gout and morbid obesity on fine meats and champagne while the starving peasants fought over rotten potatoes at the palace gates. I loved it quite shamelessly; sporting clean sweeps are rarities and unlikely to trigger moments of inward reflection – but I did wonder in the aftermath, would the Treble have read even better had it come via an injury time winner, barely an inch across the line?

Arsenal fans old enough to remember must class the 1989 title victory as their greatest, the last night of the season when they faced Liverpool at Anfield, live as it was on ITV. The mathematics were protracted. A draw would see Liverpool retain the title. Even a 1-0 defeat would crown them as Champions on equal points, but with a goal difference of +38 against Arsenal's +36. Three minutes into injury time and that was the very scenario. I remember Steve McMahon (who would move to City a couple of years later) manically stomping around like a cat on a hot tin pitch mouthing "one minute, one minute!" to the skies, jabbing a single digit upwards to emphasise the point, as much to himself as to anyone else. Liverpool in the '80s didn't screw up. They held out for their 0-0 or their 1-0 as required and usually, when they played us, their 3-0 or their 4-0. Arsenal needed an escape to match anything James Bond could muster.

There were about 30 seconds left of McMahon's minute when a punt up the field found Michael Thomas charging in on goal. This was not in the script. He played a one-two off a defender's back and dinked it past the onrushing Grobbelaar.

Liverpool 0 Arsenal 2

Scenes! Scenes like I'd never seen on television in the Anfield away end. Scenes like I'd never seen in the Anfield *home* end. Arsenal lifted the trophy not even on goal difference but on *goals scored*, 73 to Liverpool's 65. For the last 40 minutes, the final whistle had been closing in on Arsenal like Goldfinger's burning laser on Sean Connery's testicles. It made the miracle of 2012 seem like a canter.

Most fans aged 30 and above of Western Samoan, Maltese and Cornish origin will point to Solksjaer's winner in the Nou Camp as their finest last-minute moment. I guess Wigan supporters will gaze fondly through the steam

from their pies to the image of Callum McManaman's stoppage time header against us in 2013 as theirs, and fair enough if they do. It's all about the timing. It's the plot's final twist. The last minute equaliser or winner is the toothpick you hide under your tongue and spit into your palm, to pick the lock of your handcuffs open and defuse the timebomb before the counter hits zero. It's James Bond football, not John Bond football.

As 17 year olds Andy Stott, Mark Matthews and I cadged a free lift to Anfield on a frozen 24 November 1990 afternoon, picked up by a friend of Mark's dad outside Dillons Newsagents in Flixton. 1990 was a great time to be alive for the local football and music fan. Northside's *Shall We Take A Trip* and *Moody Places* had been selected for *Granada Soccer Night's* theme; the former had been frowned upon as it was *suspected* that the lyrics celebrated the recreational use of hallucinogens. *Suspected!* Suspected, perhaps using the same painstaking analytical process used to identify that 'Sweaty Betty' in fact alluded to the readily available short-term relationships offered by a generously proportioned lady who worked at a waste water treatment plant. I had given up my Sunday paper round at Dillons earlier that year having gradually found that the 7am wake up calls and an increasing fondness for Holt's bitter at 79 pence a pint didn't mix.

"Left it late, didn't you Dave?" was the repeated observation of the manager as my attendance times drifted more towards 8.30 from 7.30 to begin distributing the preferred political propaganda of the Flixtonian tabloid rustlers.

I couldn't recall a trip to Liverpool for any reason previously, the nearest I had been was to watch Altrincham lose 3-0 at Runcorn a couple of years earlier. We had only seen the City of Liverpool through the prism of popular culture. Merseyside was trophies - be they lifted by Alan Hansen or Kevin

Ratcliffe, it was music - The Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, it was comedy both anarchic and dark - George 'Wellies' Roper, Stan Boardman, Ken Dodd, *Bread*, *Boys From The Blackstuff*, *Help!* and *Scully*. Television had turned it into a city that celebrated, sang, joked, hustled its way to a living and dwelt on unachievable dreams.

Liverpool was also poverty. There could be no doubt Liverpool the city had suffered woefully through its "managed decline" under Margaret Thatcher as released in Government documents courtesy of the 30-year rule in 2011, when senior Tory ministers were revealed to have urged their leaders not to spend money on its "stony ground." You will find few Liverpool supporters celebrating the fact that Liverpool FC's founding father, John Houlding, was a Conservative Lord Mayor of Liverpool who founded the new club after evicting its tenant, Everton, after they refused to pay increased rents at Anfield in 1892. Liverpool's ambition led them to buy up entire streets around the ground in the 1990s and sought compulsory purchase orders on the homes of resistant residents, sending those prices to ridiculous lows with "managed decline." It was a reminder that Liverpool FC wasn't quite the philanthropic supernova their supporters would have you believe.

The City of Liverpool did not

suffer alone during arguably its greatest footballing period. Mining and countless areas of manufacturing across the country died awful deaths throughout the 1980s, ask anyone who worked for Manchester Steel if they think only Liverpool had it bad. Boarded up factories and padlocked gates were synonymous with every city's industrial landscape, not just in the opening titles to Alan Bleasdale's screenplays. *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*'s thrust was based on the same theme of genuine civic desperation and the fight to escape paucity. But while the contrast of Liverpool's economy to the success of its football teams in the 1980s could not have been more stark, the parallels of Manchester's economy to the success of its football teams in the 1980s could not have been more aligned. United were mired in mediocrity and following City was like waiting for a bus. You'd wait for one trophy and none would come along all at once.

The Liverpool team of the 1987 - 1990 period was without doubt their best that I can remember, even compared to today. They had fought back from the crippling defeat in the last minute to Arsenal to reclaim their title and had won 11 of their opening 12 games of the new campaign, which included a Peter Beardsley hat-trick in a 4-0 win over United. Their 1987/88 title victory bore many of the Centurions' 2017/18 hallmarks of

gilt-edged invincibility and they were nailed-on favourites for both the League and their game against us. We had made a fair start in our first season back in the top flight in 1989/90, eventually securing survival with reasonable comfort. After a prolonged flirtation with the bottom three that had seen Mel Machin kicked out of the hotseat in the deep midwinter, 14th spot was palatable.

It was unusual to be in a place I'd only seen on the television before. I realised as the mercury dipped to freezing point I had misjudged the weather badly, in my sweatshirt with maroon City shirt beneath that I swapped around as soon as we were safely through the turnstile. There was a mysterious otherworld cadence to the vibe around Anfield that I couldn't pinpoint. Was it the different fonts of the street signs, the more historic era of architecture, brickwork and gable ends on houses and shops, like watching an old black and white film digitally tinted with 1960s vintage colour? Was it as simple as the absence of familiarity in the narrow streets that bore little difference to the independent observer from Moss Side? We had been warned of a sharp reception from the natives, mostly by United fans who'd been here and done that. But there were no smoke flares and glass reception for City in 1990. We were the other lot, the harmless softies with a mutual contempt for United. We were a bits and pieces



Another futile half kicks off at Anfield on 9 September 2000.

side who would do the decent thing and simply roll over to be crushed like sacrificial butterflies as the Champions continued their inexorable march to a 19th title, surely?

Throughout the whole of the 1980s football had been a theatre of terrible violence and, occasionally, of tragic death. The individual Liverpool supporter of the day, however, seemed a far more objective orator than some of the court jesters you might find yourself embroiled in debate with now. This has coincided almost precisely with the onset of City's success and the resentment of its means, not just from Liverpool supporters but anyone with a Twitter account. I don't know about you but I'm long past being lectured by fans of Chelsea (Abramovich), Liverpool (Littlewoods), United (John Henry Davies, James Gibson, Sky) about the success that comes with outside backing. Far beyond the curvature of recent history there was a world of no internet at all, and maybe that was a better time. The only outlets for protest and triumph were the postbags and the radio phone-ins, and the quality of discourse seems to have suffered for social media's meteoric spread. I have long grown weary of arguing the toss with people in Winnipeg or Shepherd's Bush with 16 followers and an avatar of Alexander Arnold or Marcus Rashford. You know the kind, the ones with names like themselves @anfieldrock_01 or @cockneytreble99. The kind who end every Tweet with lol and laughing emojis like chimpanzees, discharging their tepid diarrhoea into their own hands before applauding their own self-declared comedic brilliance.

I would have taken 2-0, 3-1, even 3-0 in November 1990. Anything but an embarrassment would have been a fair return on the £9.00 ticket in the Anfield Road end, the multi-coloured seated stand that from a distance resembled a giant Fisher Price xylophone. Liverpool had Steve Nicol (an unsung hero for them in

my view), Steve McMahon, Ian Rush, John Barnes, Peter Beardsley and Ronnie Whelan. There was more silverware in their dressing room than Kendal's cutlery department. City had Gary Megson, formerly of Everton, new player-coach Peter Reid, formerly of Everton, Alan Harper, formerly of Everton, Adrian Heath, a man who could miss a bus from six yards, formerly of Everton and Mark Ward - formerly of West Ham, in the future to be of Everton and HMP Kirkham. Howard Kendall had just walked out on us for his 'wife' Everton. 'KENDALL ROBBED MAVIS AND DEREK' was one of the best banners at Maine Road in the aftermath, following the week that the Wiltons of *Coronation Street* were burgled almost as badly as we were.

City hadn't read the script. At kick-off a half-time score of 0-0 would have been the cue to pop champagne corks. Liverpool admittedly went close a few times, we had bargained for that, what we hadn't expected was a series of chances going begging for us at The Kop end and a feeling that if we were to take anything home with us, we'd probably missed the chance, particularly with Liverpool attacking The Kop, as always, in the second half. The Kop was still standing but had noticeably been pared back with the front row no longer a sea of heads peeping over the top of the trench. As I imagined, it was still in fine voice, right up until the moment Ronnie Whelan hacked down Mark Ward on the edge of the six yard box and the referee said *penalty!* It was like someone had hit the mute button. An hour earlier even the possibility of such wonder was uncharted territory.

There have been many penalties in City v Liverpool clashes down the years. Nicolas Anelka's 13 years later is probably the most memorable, Jan Molby's two at Maine Road - which I remonstrated at length about in *Electric Blue* later that very season

- are among the least. Penalties in our favour against Liverpool were rare birds indeed. Penalties at Anfield were like dodos

Bang! Bruce Grobbelaar pawed at the mist. Liverpool 0 City 1. Tattoo it on your soul.

Niall Quinn should have had a hat-trick in the moments before Mark Ward's penalty. City's team, a fair chunk of whom had been cut loose by an Everton side that had finished sixth the previous season, had Liverpool chasing blue shadows. Nobody believed what they saw, surely such visions were impossible without the mind-altering alchemy referenced to by Northside? Was that a unicorn flying over the Mersey we could see? The air dipped further towards freezing. I had no coat but I didn't care. The City end on the left hand side of the Anfield Road end was hot and bouncing. It might as well have been August.

Liverpool hadn't become serial Champions by writing off bad days at the office before clocking-out time. Wave after wave of attacks rained in on the City goal, crosses were hacked away, shots were blocked on the line. We were going to do it, we were actually going to do it. We nursed visions of famous headlines, of bragging rights for weeks - right up until the 82nd minute when a bit of ping-pong at The Kop end finished with a Rush header from close range past Andy Dibble.

Liverpool 1 City 1

This draw would feel like a defeat.

With four minutes remaining, Ian Brightwell's hack to nowhere, reminiscent of myself on our Sunday morning kick-arounds, fell to supersub Ronny Rosenthal. Rosenthal chased it down and from a tight angle lobbed over the outrushing Dibble. From our lilac seats in the Anfield Road end it was going over, it was going over. It was going over and over Andy Dibble's head and over the line to nestle in The Kop end goal. Merseyside

erupted. They were never walking alone, and how foolish, how childishly naive we were to have expected anything else but another late, late show?

Liverpool 2 City 1

Robbery in the dark. This defeat would feel like a defeat.

I'd rather we'd lost 6-0, as indeed we obliged to do five seasons later, rather a clinical hammering than have the prize money waved under our noses only to be snatched away like a mugging in an alleyway on the corner of home. The cold suddenly bit me under the collar of my maroon away shirt, one of the first City tops that came with the Brother logo without having to pay extra for the privilege of advertising their knitting machines.

Injury time ticked on, there'd be The Roebuck Hotel's Holt's beer to savour an hour or so later on home turf, there'd be the chippy on the way home after chucking out time. It wasn't all that bad, was it? Really? Clive Allen was hacked down as the referee checked the clock. Grobbelaar fingertipped Ward's free kick over the bar. That was it. That was surely it, unless the corner brought the miracle. Ward crossed in from the right-hand flag to shrieking whistles onto the head of Niall Quinn. Somebody pulled the plug in The Kop a second time.

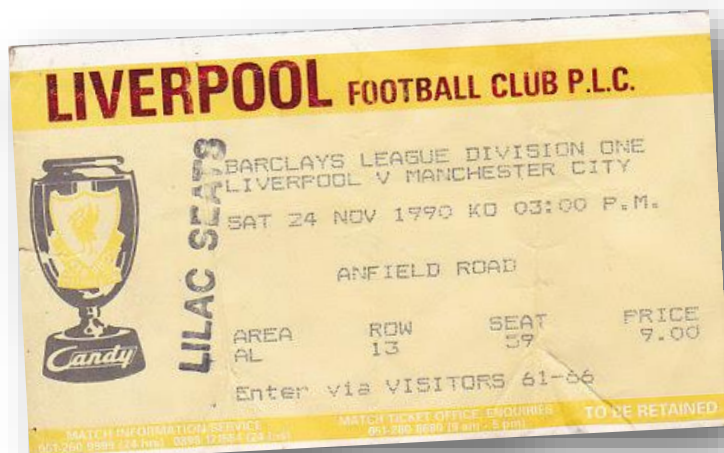
"YEAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!!!"

Liverpool 2 City 2

This draw would feel better than a win.

Over to Clive Tyldesley in the commentary box. *"Quinn's header... it's in! Niall Quinn has saved it! Sixty seconds of stoppage time played, and Niall Quinn has equalised for Manchester City! Seven games without a goal for the big man, and gloriously with that crashing header, which give Manchester City no more than they deserve from this match!"*

George Harrison's guitar gently wept. George 'Wellies' Roper and Stan Boardman cracked jokes but nobody laughed. Ken Dodd's tickling stick snapped in half. Yosser Hughes' wall fell down. Shady deals fell through in *Bread* and *Help!* and Scully threw a full can of paint over a grinning Kenny Dalglish. City had 'Liverpooled' Liverpool. Of course when the trophies were dished out in May, City's point meant nothing. At the



time it meant everything.

"We love you City, we do, we love you City, we do, we love you City, we do, oh City we love you!" We should have won. We were cock-a-hoop over a draw snatched from the jaws of victory that had almost been chewed to defeat, and that tells you much of the expectations of a Blue in the 1980s and 1990s. Niall's equaliser should have been his fourth of the game, and realistically these days we'd be furious to throw away two points this way. We knew we shouldn't, but we enjoyed it. This had been the most memorable last-minute finish since Steve Redmond's header against Oxford United two years before completed a recovery from 89th minute 0-1 to 90th minute victory, sending Brian Horton down the Maine Road tunnel to trash the dressing room door and take nothing back down the motorway but a repair bill.

The maroon City top was swapped back under my sweatshirt. My fingers were as blue as the shirts. There were remarks

and backchat as we poured ebulliently from the Anfield Road end to the car of Mark's dad's mate and a strange, disbelieving silence on the journey back to Dillons newsagents in Flixton. The shop was about to close as I rushed in to snap up one of the last copies of the *Pink Final*.

"Left it late, didn't you Dave?" said the manager, my old paper round boss. I'll never know if he was referring to my last minute visit to pick up the paper or Niall's last minute header. Either way he was right.

Liverpool never recovered from the 2-2 draw that season. They won only four of their next 12 games and Arsenal clawed back the deficit and clawed back the title. Eight years later we celebrated Shaun Goater's 94th minute equaliser in the Second Division against Notts County with similar aplomb. Liverpool were used to, and expected, far better things, but it has taken 30 years (as of May this year) to credibly lay claim to the English title - during which time the three teenagers in the lilac seats have gone from underage drinkers to greying grown-ups with nervous eyes fixed on approaching 50th birthdays. Did Niall Quinn rock their foundations so much that day that it activated so many years of relative domestic doldrums?

The three of us were captured for a split second at the foot of the screen that night on the highlights show, as the travelling Blues saluted the great escape of 1990. *"Oh City we love you! We love you City, we do..."* Peter Reid gushed praise during his post match interview. Under the circumstances he could be forgiven for his slip of the tongue as he completed his summing up. "I've got everything but er... admiration for the lads," he said.

He meant nothing. He said everything. *"It's really such a shame it's so hard to explain to you."*

QUOTE - UNQUOTE

How the big names greeted the news that the Helmet was riding out again...

**RHUBARB!
RHUBARB!**

Eric Sykes

***Nay, I didnae think
I'd be seeing that
again in ma lifetime.***

Sir Alex Ferguson

**OH NO.
NOT
THEM
AGAIN!**

Francis Lee

**TOTALLY
SURREAL!**

Salvador Dalí

**Far
out
Man!**

Keith Richards

**This is why I
invested in
City in the
first place.**

Sheikh Mansour

***Piffle-paffle...
er, um, er...
wiffle-waffle...
{something in
Latin}... spiffing.***

Boris Johnson

**Aye, it ruined ma career. I
willnae be able to sleep noo.**

Slippery Jim Leighton

Splitter!

The People's Front of Judea

JAMES LAWTON'S 'FOREVER BOYS'

Peter Brophy takes a look at one of the best City books to have been published in the last few years...

There can be few surer signs that a club is deep in crisis than when the directors approach their local rivals on the quiet asking for a groundshare with a view to a subsequent merger. This, though, was the nightmare situation for Manchester City during the spring of 1965. United decided they had nothing to gain by engaging with the disaster unfolding across town so, with the nuclear option of eventually ceasing to exist as an independent entity thus off the table, City's board instead took the usual course of action in dire circumstances: they changed the manager.

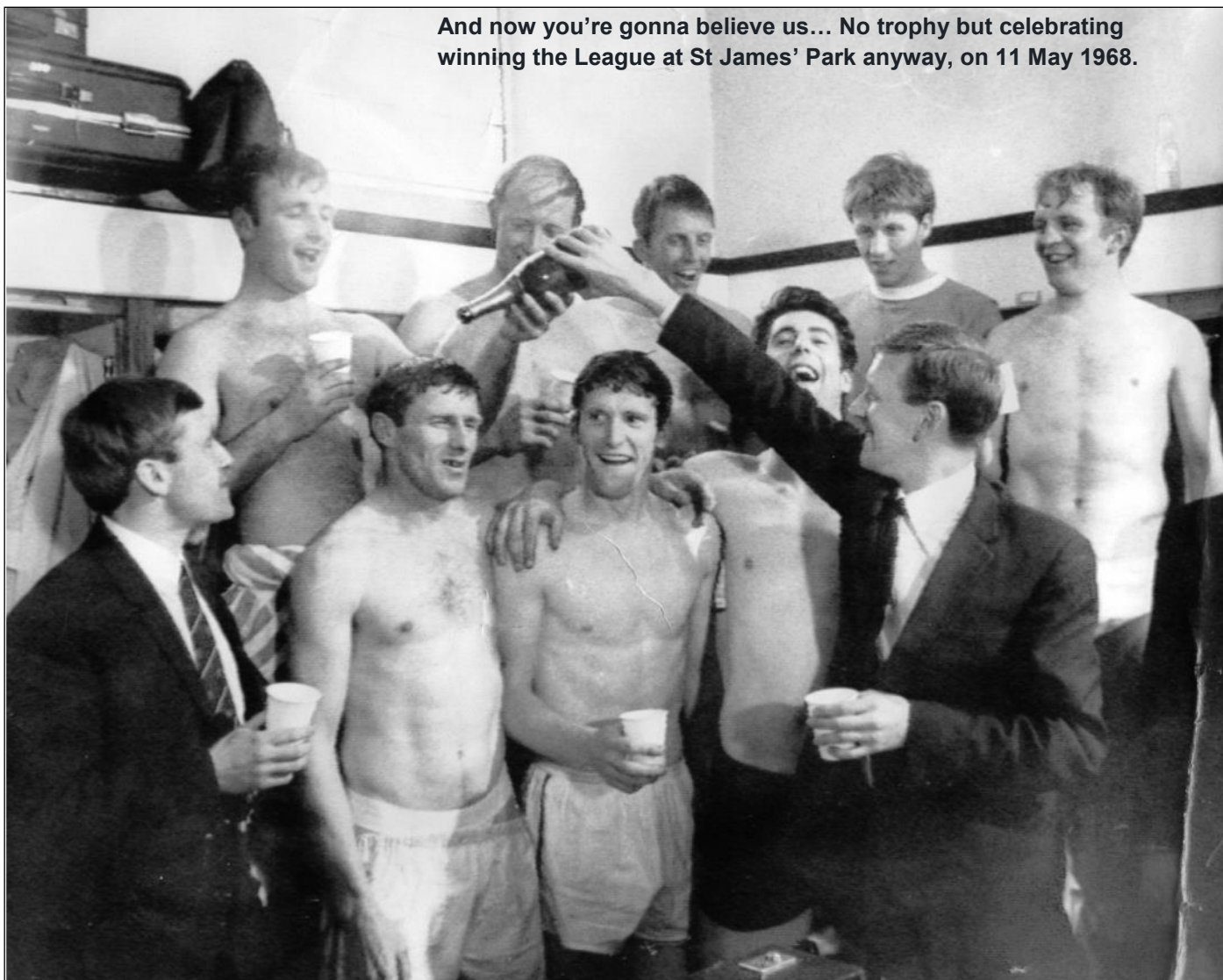
The moribund club was immediately transformed. Promotion was sealed the following season and two years later City became champions of England. By the summer of 1970, both domestic cups and the European Cup-Winners' Cup had followed. The story of how this ascent was achieved and much more is told in the late James Lawton's beautifully crafted *Forever Boys: The Days of Citizens and Heroes*, published in 2015. It's essential reading, not only for City fans but also others.

In truth, incoming manager Joe Mercer was nobody's idea of a saviour. Admittedly, he was a

genial man who was an acknowledged great in the English football pantheon. This pedigree, however, owed mainly to a storied playing career in the colours of Everton, Arsenal and England. As a manager, his CV was rather chequered. While he hadn't been without success, he'd suffered relegation in both his previous posts, at Sheffield United and Aston Villa.

It also wasn't long since Villa had unceremoniously dumped him while he was on sick leave having suffered a minor stroke. City fans doubted the ability of a convalescent manager to undertake the daunting task of reviving the club, while it was

And now you're gonna believe us... No trophy but celebrating winning the League at St James' Park anyway, on 11 May 1968.



hard to see a stint at Maine Road as anything but a likely pitfall for a man whose health dictated an overriding need to avoid stress.

Mercer was shrewd enough to know that he'd be physically unable to step on the training pitch with the players on a daily basis. Thus, he recruited an assistant suited to this task and the selection of Malcolm Allison proved a masterstroke. It's Allison, a man who doesn't tread the line between genius and madness so much as vault maniacally from one side to the other, who occupies centre stage in Lawton's tale. In addition to being the inspiration for a series of improbable but riotous anecdotes, he provides the implacable confidence and innovative tactical know-how that inspire the team to its successes.

Lawton later collaborated on Allison's autobiography, having previously for several years been the ghost-writer of the City coach's riveting column in the *Daily Express*. Together, they produced copy that was in turns insightful, entertaining, provocative, eccentric and educational – often showing all these qualities in the same piece a few hundred words long. Such privileged access for the author lies at the heart of the book's greatest strength.

He's both an insider and an outsider; a part of, yet apart from the action he describes. The received wisdom would be that a reporter shouldn't insert himself into the story and there's a sound reason for that, but this is much more than reporting. The story encompasses not only the boys and what they achieve, but also his chronicling of them and it.

He visits each of the surviving members of the team in turn, with the memories of each, based on their differing experiences, illuminating a range of aspects of their shared achievements. He's trusted by them, so that they speak to him with candour, but he's capable of distancing himself and setting their comments in context, too. This shifting of perspective

means that he offers a comprehensively rounded and authoritative account, with a sweep and ambition reminiscent of a classic novel.

Thus, we learn how Allison's coaching in particular inspires a core group of players he inherited – notably Glyn Pardoe, Mike Doyle, Alan Oakes and Neil Young – to heights which few had previously thought them capable (least of all they themselves). Youth products such as Corrigan and Booth emerge to become a part of the group, while Freddie Hill and Wyn Davies arrive after long and distinguished careers elsewhere.

The coach has Book doctor his birth certificate to alleviate potential concerns of City's directors.

The star names in the side, meanwhile, are more expensive acquisitions. Nonetheless, Mike Summerbee, Colin Bell and Francis Lee all join from Second Division clubs, as does veteran full-back Tony Book, the captain. As the team wins a string of trophies, these men achieve prominent individual honours, the first three representing England while the fourth is named joint Footballer of the Year. The success is achieved through a high-octane and relentlessly attacking style that Lawton refers to as "football of almost heart-breaking ambition".

There's entertaining Allison skulduggery involved in a couple of the purchases. The coach has Book doctor his birth certificate to alleviate potential concerns of City's directors over the age of their new defender, and loudly decries Bell's abilities when sitting with

other scouts who are also assessing the then-Bury midfielder. Whether or not this is decisive, none of the other interested parties makes an acceptable bid before cash-strapped City have cobbled together sufficient funds to do a deal.

The boys all accept that Allison's coaching transformed them as footballers and invigorated the team as a whole, but the above examples of his larger-than-life personality illustrate why he's the book's dominant presence. Nonetheless, his flaws aren't whitewashed. His son is an interviewee, and though proud of his father's achievements he doesn't stint from highlighting serious shortcomings as a family man.

Throughout the account, Lawton's admiration, both for Allison (in a footballing if not a familial context) and for the boys, shines through. The occasional digressions that take in figures he's reported on in his illustrious career, from Wayne Rooney to Mike Tyson, don't detract from but rather enhance the main thrust of the narrative. It says much for the way he feels about them that the author can cite a litany of great names and events he's covered over several decades, yet looks on this team with the greatest affection at the end of that period.

Not that it's all wine and roses, for a pall of regret hangs over much of the text. Some individual tales are tinged with sadness, most notably goalkeeper Ken Mulhearn's. He signs from Stockport during the Title-winning season to understudy Harry Dowd but is immediately thrown into the fray when Dowd breaks a finger. Mulhearn does well enough to keep his place and play 33 League games in picking up a Championship medal, but he's consigned to the reserves early in the next campaign after his error sees City eliminated from the European Cup by Fenerbahçe. As Joe Corrigan comes through the ranks, this demotion becomes permanent and eventually Mulhearn departs for Shrewsbury.

Despite leaving the Shropshire

outfit as a club legend a decade on, the player never quite recovered from his rejection at Maine Road. He expresses palpable sorrow at having been cast aside into a relative backwater while his former team-mates continued to win trophies and feature in the top-flight limelight. It's not quite equivalent to working as a provincial civil servant while your former bandmates conquer the world but it's nonetheless a fair distance down the track to Pete Best territory and the author handles the material with sympathetic sensitivity.

Moreover, even though the book chronicles much triumph for the group, the sense seeps through that the boys view themselves as underachievers. After all, in the summer of 1970, Bill Shankly predicted that City, along with Don Revie's Leeds, would dominate the new decade. However, at Maine Road, such pre-eminence never occurred; the next trophy would be won by a remodelled side, with Book as manager, only in 1976. As they look back, the boys are united in frustration that their success faded so quickly.

A further rather mournful strand derives from the fact that, while the title may proclaim them forever boys, they really no longer are in any sense other than fans' memories of them. As they talk about the present, it becomes evident that they, and Lawton himself, are old men now with all the resultant ravages of advanced years. It's particularly moving to read of Wyn Davies, an old-school centre-forward who in his day ceded no quarter to the most fearsome of

the era's hard-man defenders, now suffering anxiety at the prospect of a trip to his local shops.

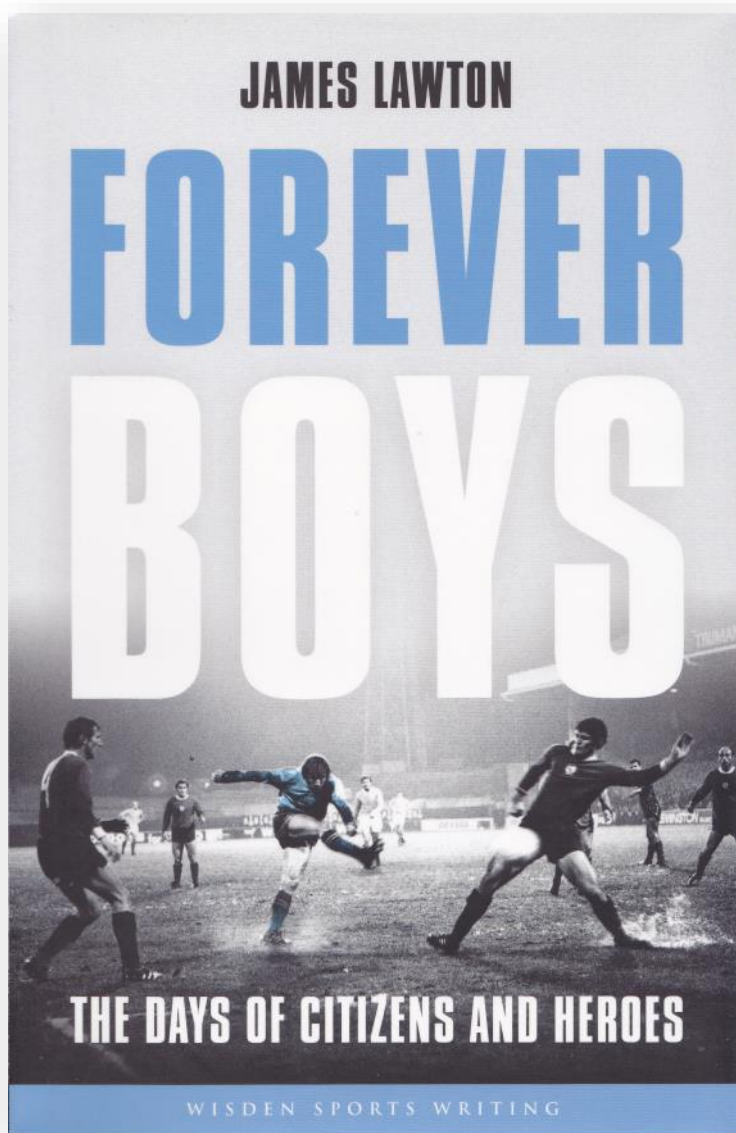
More melancholy surrounds the estrangement of relationships between some of the great figures in the group, a reminder that even the closest individual bonds can diminish or fracture notwithstanding the strength of the collective ties.

his life that the two never actually had a cross word. In contrast, many years later, Bell and Lee, the two most feted players (at least in the sense of full England caps), would fall out when Bell was dismissed as a youth coach during Lee's tenure as chairman. The comments of both to Lawton make clear that, while enormous professional respect remains, there can never be a personal rapprochement between them.

Nonetheless, while there's so much to praise in the book, there's also the odd gripe (we're City fans, after all). For this reader, some of the lengthier sentences left me slightly breathless and wishing an editor had made judicious revisions. And the format occasionally means that the content can be repetitive – not least when many of the boys cite the signing of Rodney Marsh in 1972, after which they faltered in the championship run-in, as the end of their era. We understood this was a prevalent view among them long before it was asserted for the fifth time.

These, though, are minor quibbles. Lawton embarked on this

assignment having been fired by the Independent, the project in effect representing an anguished howl proclaiming his continued professional value following the sting of rejection. He succeeds handsomely, producing a work that, in turns, is glorious, uplifting, elegiac, bittersweet, and amusing – one that stands as a fitting tribute to Allison, Mercer, the boys and himself. From *cri de coeur* to *tour de force*, it's a rather beautiful achievement.



This first occurs in the form of a distancing between Mercer and Allison, who find themselves backing opposite sides in a boardroom takeover battle; the former is first marginalised, then departs after the team misses a glorious opportunity to land another league title.

At least Mercer and Allison were back on warm terms for many years before the former's death in 1990, and Mercer asserted late in

MONOCHROME MOMENTS

A look at the work of photographer Iain S P Reid and a request from journalist Paul Sorene...

"In the '70s, in Britain, if you were going to do serious photography, you were obliged to work in black-and-white. Colour was the palette of commercial photography and snapshot photography." – Martin Parr

Many of the late Iain SP Reid's monochrome photographs of ordinary people doing ordinary things in a bygone age – namely the 1970s – seem quite extraordinary now. They can be viewed through the misty-eyed lens of this, another century with some incredulity, especially for those too young to remember the days when flares and bovver boots, enormous collars and equally enormous hair were the rule rather than the exception.

Iain has captured beautifully the spirit of those times with some gritty,

photographs of people going about their business: be it anglers with their prized catches, men at work, men and women on parade or in the park, and people enjoying hobbies and holidays. Iain left a fascinating compendium of snapshots from a bygone era, prompting the inevitable questions of who, what, when and where? But as football fans, it is to the photographs of youngsters watching City or United that we are naturally drawn.

Working with Iain's brother Douglas Reid, Paul Sorene is asking the public for help in tracing the photographs' subjects for inclusion in a book, saying: "The plan is to find the people in the photos; see if they want to tell their stories and photograph them in the same place."

A big project but a worthwhile one nonetheless and Steve Worthington, has already identified his younger self in one photograph, although he has no recollection of it being taken in the days when cameras were still a rarity, saying: "My inclusion in this picture not only brought initial amazement, but also sent my imagination racing..."

Worthy can be seen here (far right) at the foot of the steps at the rear of 'Windy Corner,' between the old Kippax and North Stands. The date and the opposition are unknown – as are the names of the other two lads in the photograph. Thus far...

Photographs can be viewed at: <https://www.facebook.com/IainSPReid/> and can be purchased from: <https://flashbakshop.com/collections/all/iain-s-p-reid>



THE KYLE WALKER INTERVIEW

The City & England full-back was good enough to give us some of his time. Josh Langton met up with him...



Josh: Growing up in Sheffield were you a Blade or an Owl?

Kyle: I was a big Sheff. United fan.

J: Can you remember your first game? Any recollections of who you went to see?

K: I remember seeing a game against Birmingham City and me and my granddad - who passed away and who took me to the games - got chased down an alleyway by the police horses. That's my first real recollection. I think I must have been round about eight. My grandad got me a season ticket and he was the one who first introduced me to going to Bramall Lane and watching them in the stands.

J: Was that Tony Currie?

K: No, Brian Deane. I'm not that old!

J: What was your route into

football? Through school?

K: In the area where I grew up there wasn't really much to do. It was mainly a council estate, playing on the streets. And as boys living probably a stone's throw from Bramall Lane, the first thing was football. So I kind of grew up going to different schemes and different playgroups, but playing football mainly on the council estate where I lived. There was a Football Unites, Racism Divides camp that they used to do on a Saturday. I went to that and a guy was there from Sheffield United, who was a scout. I was six and he said: "If you want to come and play for Sheffield United..." I had to wait a little bit until I turned seven and then my mum took me and the rest is history.

J: Did you start as a defender?

K: No, I started as a centre-forward. I had to sign my scholarship for Sheffield United at 15, leaving school, as a centre-forward. I was too small, too skinny, so they shoved me at the back and luckily, I blossomed, and went in to full-back at 17, 18. That was at Sheffield.

J: And then you got your break at Tottenham?

K: Yeah, well I played at Northampton. Played 11 games at Northampton, came back to Sheffield United for five games and then got a transfer to Tottenham.

J: How was that?

K: It was good. Obviously, it was a big shock getting a move. When I went to Northampton I was very lucky because Sheffield United let me go and train with them Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and then I just

travelled down there Thursday, Friday to play Saturday. So I was very lucky in that sense and I'd never been out of Sheffield, apart from on the coach or whatever. So, it was a big shock going down to London then and experience the 'London lifestyle' – as they call it, The Big Smoke. But it took a while to get used to, probably a year, and I think it helped me going back to Sheffield on loan and spending the next season at QPR and Aston Villa, which helped me feel into London a little bit more. And as soon as I came back from Aston Villa I'd kind of got used to living outside of Sheffield and I put football first rather than going back and seeing my friends really.

J: Any particularly fond memories of your time at Tottenham?

K: I've got a lot. I feel – I've always said it before in other interviews – but I owe them a lot because they were the first Premier League club that believed in me. They bought me and Kyle Naughton for a big fee. Well, back in those days.

J: What was the fee?

K: I think it was an £8 million combination between both of us - for me, who'd already played five games in the Championship, and Naughts, who'd played the season. He was the big chunk of it. You know, they still put their trust in me. So I've got a lot of fond memories... Scoring the winner in the North London Derby. At the time I didn't know how much it meant, but as soon as I'd scored it I seemed to be like a hero overnight. It was definitely a big moment, I think, in my career.

J: Most fans put you at legend status when you score against the enemy.

K: Yes. Definitely.

J: And then you went on to play for England. Was that at Tottenham?

K: No, I got my first call-up at Aston Villa actually, when I was there under Gerard Houllier. I don't think I

actually came on. I know I made my debut against Spain but I wasn't too sure if it was at Aston Villa I was playing at or my parent club. But making my debut for England at 20 – I think I was – was a dream come true. I never thought in a million years I'd ever play at Wembley or at that level, so to finally do it was a big achievement for myself, my family and everyone who supported me on that journey to where I got to.

J: Is going into that atmosphere at the England camp completely different to a League team? Or is it similar?

K: Now, no. Now no, the culture's changed drastically. The gaffer there, Gareth [Southgate], I think he's done a fantastic job on and off the field, that people probably hear about but don't see. When I first went there Capello was the manager. He was very strict. I think it was more the Italian way and the personnel that were in the squad were experienced, world class, big names. So, going in there... I think there was only me and Jack Wilshere at the time in the England team, at that age, who had come through the youth team together. So it was a big change and a big shock for me, thinking well, how come the lads aren't going into each other's rooms? Why is there no banter flying around? Because obviously, they're competing against each other week by week; you could see – not the divide – but it wasn't like club football.

J: Was that the World Cup where Capello had everyone on lockdown?

K: I missed the tournament due to injury. I broke my toe actually. I don't know if I would have gone or not. I broke my toe which ruled me out of it. Now it's like club football. Everyone's in each other's rooms, but I think because we're all relatively the same age and we've grown up with each other it's a lot different.

J: Playing for England, who's

been your toughest opponent?

K: Toughest opponent? It's funny because I've played him recently, now I'm a little bit more experienced. But back when I first played him, Konoplyanka for Ukraine was probably my toughest international opponent.

J: Last questions about England. Are you disappointed that the Euros have been put back a year?

K: Yep.

J: Being a year older and with quite a few young players coming along in your position, do you think Gareth Southgate will take you, as an older head?

K: I don't know. It's hard, obviously. You don't know: injuries, form. I think you have to be picked for England on form. So, if I'm playing well and the legs are still moving as I want them to be – obviously I'll be 31 then – I'd love to do another tournament, be in the squad and fight for a starting place. I'm up for the challenge and feel my experience can be a plus for the squad. I'd have loved it to have been this season but due to unfortunate circumstances it's not happened and we have to put safety first. But I'd have loved to have been there this season. For the boys that have been to a tournament, it's fantastic and something you can look back on.

J: We'll see if that happens.

K: Hopefully.

J: Going on to City, how did the interest from City materialise? What were your initial thoughts when they came in for you?

K: It wasn't a step down from Tottenham, so when I first got here I was kind of thinking: is it the right thing? Is it not the right thing? At Tottenham we did well, challenging for the Title with Leicester and then Chelsea, so we finished above City two years running. So for Tottenham I didn't know if it was the right thing, but for my family coming up North and obviously Pep being here and the players he was telling me he

Kyle catches up with some light reading!



was going to bring in, I thought it had to be the right move because the signings he was hoping to sign thankfully he got. And just working underneath him, along with the likes of Alvez and Laum who he's worked with: two completely different players, but I think if I could take from both of their games I think that would probably be the complete right-back.

J: Is he a hard taskmaster?

K: Yeah, definitely. Day in, day out. Today, it's sweltering out there and we're running around doing tactics and it's hot. You're running, you're sweating and you're having to think because he demands and you should demand from yourself 100% each and every game.

J: You made a comment on Twitter about City fans?

K: Yep.

J: I'm a City fan. Where were we when we were...?

K: Yep.

J: That's probably a banter comment and I think footballers should be allowed to have that banter with fans, but some fans get too precious.

K: Looking back on it now it's funny how you never know what's around the corner in football. I think that was back in 2012. I can even tell you where I was in my living room when I was writing that because I was getting a lot of abuse from the City fans. But again, should have I bit back? No, I shouldn't have, because it's come back to bite me now a little bit. But do I regret what I'm saying and, like you just said

about the bit of banter you should be able to have with other sets of fans... As a professional athlete or role model you know that there's a line and you shouldn't cross that, but I think you should have a little bit of banter.

J: I think players take enough stick.

K: Yeah, but I was probably naïve and I didn't know the history behind the club and what the fans have been through. And from the outside looking in you kind of just thought: oh my gosh, all these fans have turned up now when really they've been there through thick and thin, ups and downs.

J: That's right. And we'll still be there.

K: Yeah.

J: You've been involved with City's most successful period, over the last two or three seasons. What stands out most?

K: For me, last season. I didn't think I'd top the first season, of the hundred points. We ran away with it. And it got too easy. We'd turn up and we kind of thought we've won, and we normally did. Last season, from being where we were, to how it finished, going on and winning four titles... we conquered England last season, dominated it.

J: It's never been done before.

K: No, no. It was incredible. The first one was great, fantastic. I got my first Premier League but to do it back-to-back and how we did it, I think last season was extra-special.

J: I don't think we got the credit for that.

K: No, definitely not. No.

J: In '81 Spurs ruined the FA Cup dreams of a lot of lads my age. And over the years we've been involved in some great games with Tottenham. How did you and the team feel in the last minute of the Champions League game with the VAR decision?

K: I can't explain the feeling. I

dropped to the floor. I can remember dropping to my knees and thinking: no, we haven't done this. Seriously, have we just pulled this back? I was so confident going into the game. Obviously, they had the lead from the new Tottenham Hotspur stadium and rightly so, and we missed a penalty!

J: Is the Champions League the big deal the press make it out to be?

K: I think definitely now, with what we have achieved. With what we've achieved I think it would be a shame if we didn't go and get the Champions League. I think with the team that we've got and with the manager we've got and what we've achieved over the last two seasons, I think it would be a shame if we didn't go and do something in the Champions League. It's the hardest competition with the teams they get in there and we have to be on our 'A game,' but hopefully we can go and do something special this season.

J: Talking of the Champions League... very quickly, going in goal against Atalanta?

K: I think I scored, assisted and went in net at the San Siro in the same week! So if there's anyone who's going to do it, it's normally the class clown and that's me! But I was just thankful that I kept the ball out of the back of the net.

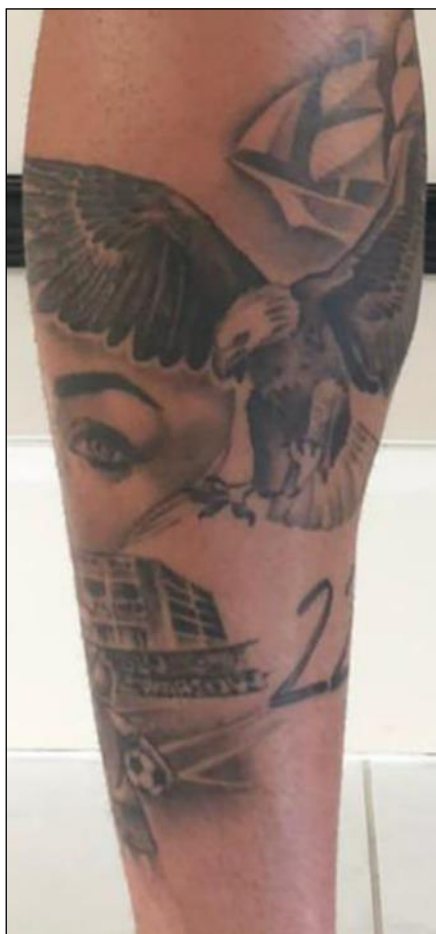
J: Genuinely, what's the banter like in the squad... you being a Yorkshire lad? I was born in Lancashire. Is that lost on a lot of players with it being a global game?

K: Yeah, I think with the dressing room, obviously we've got people from everywhere in the world so the banter from that side of it is not there but me and John [Stones], being Yorkshire lads, we try to keep the banter flowing but sometimes language does get in the way of things.

J: I'm asking for a friend... what is it about footballers and tattoos?

K: I don't know. If you said to me

now: would you have any tattoos? Looking back to when I first had mine I'd say no. Just because it's a stereotype of footballers and tattoos. But I can assure you that all of my tattoos aren't just to fill up my body. They do mean something



to me. Even with this – my leg – it's football clubs I've been at, so I've even got the eagle with the ship here and Tottenham's cockerel. They're all things that mean things to me.

J: Three or four quick things then... How do you feel about Project Restart, playing behind closed doors?

Obviously, for the fans it's terrible. It's something that we, as players, miss when we're having bad games; the fans are behind us and they can cheer us on. They are the extra man. Without the fans football is nothing but it had to be done, I feel. For the country and definitely for us, as football people.

J: Is it strange?

K: It is strange. It is. I think it's going to be like this for a while until

it's safe. I think it's the right way. We don't want a 'spike' again when all of a sudden no-one's allowed to leave the house. And you want to keep it as peaceful as it can be. But listen, we've played two games, got two wins and two clean sheets. Hopefully we can keep going like this.

J: Last two questions. Any hobbies outside of football, any thoughts of what you might do after the game? Or do you want to stay in the game?

K: I don't know. I've done a little bit of punditry. I kind of enjoy it. I feel I've got too much energy to stay in the house. Obviously playing golf is going to be fantastic. It's a cliché when footballers say they're going to retire and they're going to play golf. I think I'd like to keep in football. I don't think I could become a coach to younger age groups because I've seen players not make it and the coaches having to tell them they're not going to make it. It's not a nice thing. I was nearly going to be one of them. I think I've still got four years left at City and I'll just play until my legs can't carry me any more.

J: Final question... We're all aware of the Black Lives Matter movement and we all support it. Is there anything in particular that you would like to see in football for the better? What would that be?

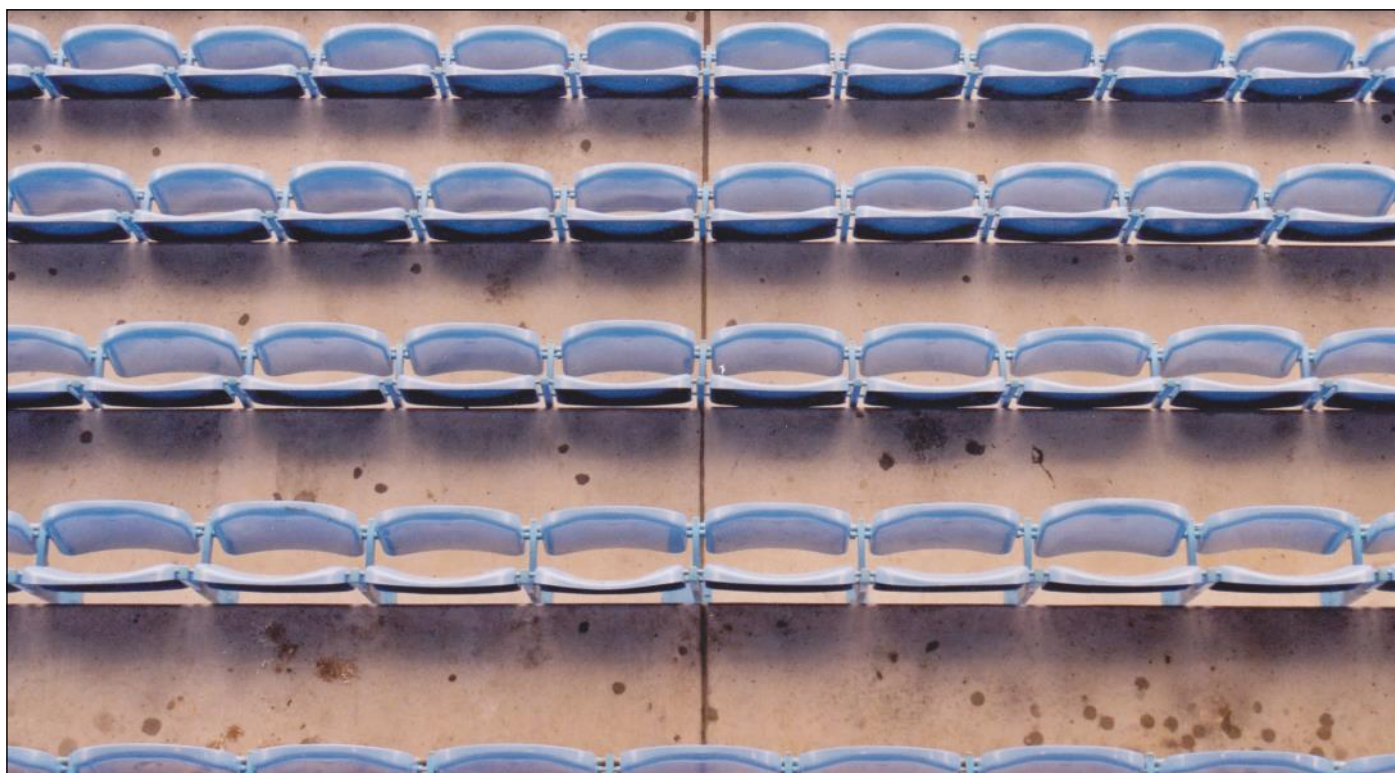
K: I think it's so hard when people ask questions on race or religion. It's very difficult for someone to provide a solution to it. I just think it's so difficult, but for me it's black lives matter, white lives matter, it's everyone's lives matter. If what sadly happened to George Floyd happened to someone from another race I think everyone would still push for this in the same way; everyone is entitled to a life and a happy life, not being discriminated against because of colour, sexuality or anything like that.

J: Thank you Kyle.

K: Thank you.

A FAIR RESULT?

Roger Burrows looks at the Premier League's decision to carry on playing games behind closed doors...



By the time you read this, the restarted season will be back in full swing, and so we will better understand how it has panned out playing behind closed doors. It seems that the desire to fulfil TV contracts outweighs any safety concerns and most importantly, the feelings of the supporters.

Manchester City have been very fair in refunding season card and match ticket holders or offering them credits for next season. I personally have taken the money as I'm not so sure how I will feel when spectators are allowed back in whatever form the game takes. I also know of fans who have decided that the contempt the Premier League has shown for them is the final straw, and they won't be returning to the ground.

Listening to the BBC talking up the return of the Premier League it made it appear all football fans are delighted with the restart. This is

patently not the case. A recent *Guardian* piece reflected that fans' representatives at 75% of clubs in the Premier League thought it was wrong to restart the season. Indeed, of my match-going friends, the vast majority have said they've not really missed the football other than the social aspect before and after the game. We miss the pub!

The problems created are manifold, including injuries to players, financial difficulties for football clubs, sporting integrity and the technical problems of ironing out anomalies. So let's examine them further.

In England, the professional Leagues are all tied together by promotion and relegation, and yet we have a situation where some of those leagues have aborted the season early. We now find that clubs such as Tranmere Rovers have been relegated with many games still to play (more than enough for them to reach safety).

And how was that reached? Well, the EFL put different methods of calculating the final table to a vote. What a surprise that a majority voted for a system that kept them safe. The three clubs at the bottom who went down were obviously outvoted. It is farcical that the futures of football clubs can be put in danger on the back of an 'I'm alright Jack' vote. This can only lead to legal processes and is highly unsatisfactory.

At the top end of the table, a similarly contrived method was utilised to decide which clubs made the play-offs. In the past, we have decried the play-offs when a team that finishes sixth can hit form at the right time of the season and be promoted above a team that has outperformed them for many months. This season, though, we now have a new anomaly. Had the season been played to a conclusion, a club that is currently in the play-offs might never have even reached them but still be promoted.

In the Championship, clubs have now had to cut their costs to survive. Luton Town sacked their manager, Graeme Jones, to get him and his staff off the wage bill. Charlton Athletic are trying to renegotiate and extend contracts to the point where manager Lee Bowyer, in an interview with 5 Live, said that he wasn't sure which players he would have available to pick from. Add in the complicated loan system and it's easy to see that cash-strapped clubs are almost certainly at a competitive disadvantage. Again, Charlton have lost out as influential striker Lyle Taylor does not want to get injured and scupper a big move now he is out of contract. And he isn't the only one. This not only damages Charlton's chances, but by definition makes it an easier task for any team who play The Addicks.

As we look at the Premier League, there are so many unsatisfactory components to the restart. The whole idea of playing behind closed doors changes the dynamic of the game. In Germany, where, heaven knows, the games look like testimonials and the locals call them 'ghost games,' home wins have reduced from 43% to 22%. Home teams have scored fewer goals, down from 1.75 per game to just 1.28. The away teams' win ratio has increased from 35% to 48%. In Estonia, just over 30% of games have resulted in a home win, and in the Czech Republic, it's been less than a third. Analysis of football games played in empty stadia encompassing 191 games since 1945 showed that overall home wins

was down from 46% to 36%.

Interestingly, the officiating of a game alters, with no home crowd baying for decisions and pressurising the referee. One prominent referee described how the emotion was lost from the game. Now this might lead to more fair decisions you could argue, but when this changes three quarters of the way through a season, it then becomes unfair. Away teams receive 0.5 yellow cards less per game without a crowd. Away teams miss less penalties without a crowd. And most surprisingly, less injury time is added on without a crowd.

With the break in play of three months, the natural rhythm of the season is lost. In Germany, Borussia Mönchengladbach were riding high in the table. After the restart, they couldn't buy a win. At the foot of the table, Wolfsburg were in deep trouble but have managed to escape with a change of form.

We look into the EFL, and a club like Wigan, who were near the top of the form table, but still in relegation difficulties, may find all the momentum they gained grinds to a halt.

There are concerns about player safety and muscle injuries as they embark on an incredibly busy schedule of games. To counter this, there will now be nine players on the substitute bench and two extra substitutions will be permitted in the game. Again, this can only benefit clubs with more

quality and depth to their squads as opposed to clubs with smaller budgets. Again you may feel this is a good rule change, but when it is enacted during the season, how can a fair outcome be reached? How do you justify moving the goalposts?

So now we have established that the present set-up helps reduce the home advantage and also that it favours clubs who have spent more on their squads. Let's take a look at the fixture list. Manchester City have six home games left; Aston Villa have six home games left in their desperate quest to retain their Premier League status. A third of their home games will be played with them losing that advantage.

Meanwhile Brighton & Hove Albion have visits to come from Arsenal, United, Liverpool and City. Now that the pendulum has swung to the away side with better squads and quality players, has any chance of a win spurred on by a partisan crowd disappeared completely? Is this to their advantage or disadvantage? Albion may have lost those games anyway, so have they received an advantage in playing more 'winnable' ties when they were roared on by their supporters? We'll never know.

In the meantime the players have embarked on 13 months of football from mid-June to the end of the postponed Euros next summer. There is no word of the domestic cup competitions being missed nor a reduction of international fixtures, and Champion's League and Europa League competitions will run as normal. The only break for an English-based player is for a fortnight in February. Beyond the Premier League, the FA Cup will be played to a conclusion this summer. Not forgetting the joy our 2011 trophy drought-ending win brought us, nor taking it for granted, does anybody care who wins? And we still face the bizarre prospect of the Semi-Finals being played in an empty Wembley Stadium. You have to wonder why we are bothering.

Even more baffling, the transfer



window opens for business in July, and yet the Champions League will not have been restarted. Can new players play? What if you lose members of your current squad? What happens to the squad list that was produced in January? Are absent players allowed to be replaced? And if so, it could end up with the strange situation where a player who lined up for Real Madrid in our first leg in February could play for Manchester City in the second leg (or heaven forbid a City player could be facing us to complete the fixture).

So why are we doing this? We have to fulfil our side of the bargain to the paymasters from when we sold our soul to the devil of television. Sky, BT and the others want their football (as do the sponsors and the advertisers). But even this should not have been an insurmountable problem. An offer of increased games in 2020/21 or improved access by the football clubs could surely have been negotiated to keep the media happy. Keep in mind that neither Sky nor BT will want to damage the brand of the Premier League when they hang so many of their subscriptions on the back of television rights. Premier League football saved Sky from bankruptcy in 1992 and has been their flagship ever since. It is inconceivable they would kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

And so a method of getting football back on the gogglebox has been cooked up with all its difficulties, unfairness, danger and lack of morals. Now let's say a second wave of Covid-19 strikes the UK (which is far from unlikely). Where does that leave us then? The relegation issues will be voted on. The legal processes will begin. But hey, Liverpool will get their Title.

The only viable option was to wrap up the season, declare it null and void, and start again once the crowd was allowed back to make the match the experience we've all loved so much for all these years.

POETRY CORNER

Win Or Lose from Andy Sewina

Good old VAR.

Saturday Sunday Monday blues

Home away win or lose

*Now everybody's singing the
Corona blues*

*And all they watch is the Six
O'clock news*

*The Subbuteo cardboard cut-
out fans*

*Behind closed doors in the
empty stands*

*For the first time in ninety-
seven years*

*We've not heard the Kippax
cheer*

Home away win or lose

Come on City you Super Blues

*Now even if the pub has got no
beer*

*There's still something for City
to cheer*

*We're the only team to lift a cup
this year*

*We're the only team to lift a cup
this year.*

Good Old VAR by Marvin Cheeseman

*Kiss the badge, reel away
Start the countdown to dismay
Something took your goal away
Good old VAR*

*What a pity, what a shame
They've analysed each single
frame
It's cost you yet another game
Good old VAR*

*The outcome is beyond belief
Feel the pain, the woe, the grief
Klopp has bared his dazzling
teeth
Good old VAR*

*The anguish, how we could have
cried
The letter of the law applied
An index fingernail offside
Good old VAR*

*This system cannot get it wrong
And though resentment's very
strong
Just suck it up and move along
Good old VAR*

*If ifs and ands were pots and
pans
The anger of the outraged fans
Such foul language from the
stands
Good old VAR*

*VAR VAR...
Oh so close but no cigar
So near... and yet so far.*



FLASHES FROM THE **EXTRA** ARCHIVES OF OBLIVION



The way we were... 30 years ago! Left to right: The Ed, Frank Newton, Peter Gregory, Mike Kelly, Wayne Norris, Danny Wallace and Tony Seal.

THE ECSTASY AND THE AGONY

Paul Billinge looks back at last season's seismic Champions League contest against Spurs...



It was The Ed who initially suggested writing a piece on the second-leg last season's epic encounter with Spurs in the Champions League quarter-final. Easy, I (naively) thought. One of the most dramatic City games in recent memory, packed full of goals, incident, marginal VAR decisions, iconic images and, finally, the cruellest of twists. This one would write itself...

Yet it was only when I sat down to collect my thoughts that I realised how much of the match I had forgotten. The goals, the scorers, the drama; all part of a strange, muddled miasma. This set me thinking... how had my recollections of this most seismic of Champions League contests become so dulled so quickly? Were the effects of age and years of drinking supermarket-grade lager finally catching up with me? Was it the inevitable consequence of wasting my undergraduate years viewing obscure, grainy 1950s black and white videos during what Bibby would (quite rightly) refer to as: "that pointless film watching course"? Or

was it more a case of wilful amnesia? The id part of my brain filing these cruel memories of 17 April 2019 in the murkiest depths of my unconscious mind - never again to be revisited - alongside those most painful recollections of broken bones, teenage heartaches and the entirety of the 2006/07 season. Cue a frantic search for some tip-top internet material that would re-arouse my dulled senses... and after that was done, I watched an extended highlights package of the game.

Firstly, a confession: I wasn't even at The Etihad that night. At the time I was working in South India, so perhaps understandably my memories of the game are somewhat occluded by the combination of watching the match on a ropey satellite feed at 3am in a darkened room while desperately hoping that my two-year-old daughter, sleeping in the next room, would not wake up for the fifth time that night. But viewing it again now, what struck me most was how frenzied and chaotic much of the game was. Particularly

that first half when the players (with KdB as, so often, the most elegant of exceptions) appeared wired, febrile, dialled up to eleven. This frenzied atmosphere affected the players – perhaps the finest collection that I have had the privilege to watch - to the extent that at times their grasp of those most basic of football skills became momentarily elusive (it's called *defending*, Aymeric!).

Amid the slowly ratchetting tension - a forewarning of that final moment of sheer, unbridled elation followed by the bitterest of twists - it's easy to lose sight of the most obvious of facts: we scored four and won the match. Going forward, City were nothing less than superb for the first half (and for significant periods of the second too): a swarm of action, of collective, adrenaline-fuelled menace. But revisiting the game now, detached from the sheer visceral immediacy of the occasion, it's hard to escape the uncomfortable conclusion that – for all the peripheral drama – this was the most un-Pep like of performances. Being brutally honest,

perhaps it was for this reason, rather than the millimetres of a VAR call or the width of Llorente's arm/hip, that the game was so cruelly lost.

There is a persuasive school of thought that despite the meaning and importance that we ascribe to football, its tactical nuances, intricacies and power plays, it remains fundamentally a game of chaos and chance. No matter how much you invest in the best players, the best facilities, the best coaches it remains football's great and intoxicating will to screw you over when you least expect it. Now, I'll happily bore anyone for hours with my cod-intellectual opinions on why Pep Guardiola is the most progressive, thoughtful and enlightened of (yes, I'm going to say it) geniuses in modern football management.

To my mind, Pep is a man who has spent his entire managerial career railing against the footballing forces of chaos, straining every sinew of his intellectualism, his idealistic, obsessive mind finding ways to overcome – or at the very least minimise – the affect that these recurring moments of disorder can have on the collective performance of his teams. Witness the overarching philosophical manifesto (two forwards, one more defender, extra man in midfield), the guiding principle of the 'positional grid', the six-second rule and the high-press, the endless drilling of players in the pursuit of perfection. Cruyffian philosophy taken to its purest logical form.

Not for Pep the individual brilliance of the Kinkladze-esque mazy dribble and insouciant finish or the sheer visceral thrill of the Vincent Kompany 30-yard thunder-bastard. No, for him it's all about the one-meter finish in front of the open net; engineering a goalscoring position so clear, pure and unmissable that even those spiteful football gods (or Raheem Sterling's left foot) cannot exert a malevolent influence.

Yet that night was proof that, even allowing for all that practice

and pitch-perfect drilling, there are times when you just can't evade fate. In this moment even the most appealing, clear-minded approach to tactical purity fell just short. Maybe it was the occasion, the flurry of early goals, the failure to score an away goal in the first leg (which some maintain was what ultimately cost us most dearly across the tie). Whatever the reason, on that Wednesday night in mid-April we weren't quite *us*. You see it encapsulated perfectly in the last-minute ghost goal. Yes, the ball across from Sergio Agüero and the finish from Raheem (though scuffed) bear all the hallmarks of classic Guardiola-City, but the build-up - all frenetic harrying, raised feet and cruel deflections - is just not right. It's a facsimile of Pep-ball; a fugazi rather than the genuine article. The human reaction to the goal being disallowed, however, is as pure as you can get: elation followed by confusion followed by disbelief followed by anger followed sheer stomach-churning emptiness. Pep goes full *Platoon*, sinking in anguish to his knees while Mauricio Pochettino (aptly attired all in black, looking like a cross between a funeral mourner and a second-rate Mafia underboss) looks on in utter befuddlement. What the hell just happened here? Oh Poch, if only you knew...

On re-watching this game, however, another thought struck me. My emotions at the denouement, though powerful, didn't hurt as much as I had anticipated upon second viewing. At the time, I remember stumbling into bed post-match, unable to sleep. Then, the following morning, refusing to engage with work colleagues and enforcing a 24-hour media blackout (not difficult in India with the near hourly power outages), lest I be reminded of the heartache of previous night. Twelve months on, this behaviour seems utterly ridiculous and childish; even by my own high standards. And second time around? Well, that

anger and sense of injustice, it just wasn't really there...

At first, I put this ambivalence down to the complex relationship that most of us City fans continue to have with the Champions' League, UEFA and the way that our great and historic club continues to be regarded by those Gucci suits in Nyon as a parvenu, underserving of a place at the top table. But more pertinently, I came to realise that this tightest of defeats on away goals simply could not diminish the achievements, the overall magnificence of the 2018/19 season - the greatest in our club's storied history. And then something else struck me: that feeling of disappointment, ultimately displaced by resignation, was somehow comforting. It was, after all, I remembered, my default emotion during my formative years supporting City. The FA Cup Fifth Round at Notts County in 1991, Bury at home in 1998, that first 20 minutes at Edgeley Park in 1997... and yes, the 1993 FA Cup quarter-final at home to Tottenham.

In each of those games (and so many, many more in the inglorious early-to-mid 1990s), I watched City with no expectation other than to experience that old familiar metaphorical kick-in-the-teeth. If anyone could do resignation, it was City. As predictable and reassuring as a misplaced Ian Brightwell pass, a failed Rick Holden stepover, a Lee Bradbury miss, a Dunny own goal. A reminder of that inept City of the past that, a City that we should never forget or disown, but instead always cherish. So let's continue to lap up every moment of breathtakingly beautiful football that characterises PepCity 2.0, accepting that those fleeting moments of despair exist only as a reminder of just how far the club has come (and, perhaps, of what we have lost in the process).

Do you know, I think I might have finally made my peace with that Champions League quarter final... but did it *have* to be bloody Spurs!?

OTHER PEOPLE'S FANZINES

Where are they now? The question no-one's asking! The Ed catches up with some old fanzine friends...

Pat Corrigan (below left with Peter Barnes) *Chips 'n' Gravy*

- As you're probably aware, *Chips 'n' Gravy* ceased to be in 2007 - I think! Although Mike Holden wasn't involved in the last few years, I still managed to get writers through the BBC City Forum chat pages. The problem for me at the end was finding folk willing to stand outside the stadium to sell it. Hence, I had to bite the bullet and call it a day.

I'm a grandad of two girls these days! I sit a few rows behind The Ed in the East Stand and our Les went on to be a tram driver and now works as a conductor for Northern Rail!



Mike Holden (above centre) *Singing The Blues/Chips 'n' Gravy* - I went to the University of Central Lancashire in 2002 and left with a journalism degree in 2005. It was also while studying in Preston that I met my future wife Louise, who back then was a Southampton fan from rural Hampshire.

As part of her conversion, she came to live in Manchester for a couple of years before we moved to Spain in June 2008. At the time, we didn't know if it would be for a couple of years or the rest of our lives - but it

turned out to be the latter.

We married here in 2010 and now have a couple of kids, Lucas and Melissa, to complete a house full of Blues in a pueblo just outside Valencia that still plans every weekend around watching City on the box.



I still get back for home games once or twice a season, plus a Wembley trip and ideally a Euro away. It used to be twice as often - but then the kids stopped crawling and started calling the shots!

On the journalism side, my work was mainly based around football

team profiling and match analysis for the *Racing Post* and *FourFourTwo*, and I still work for the City programme doing the away team coverage on European nights (since 2008).

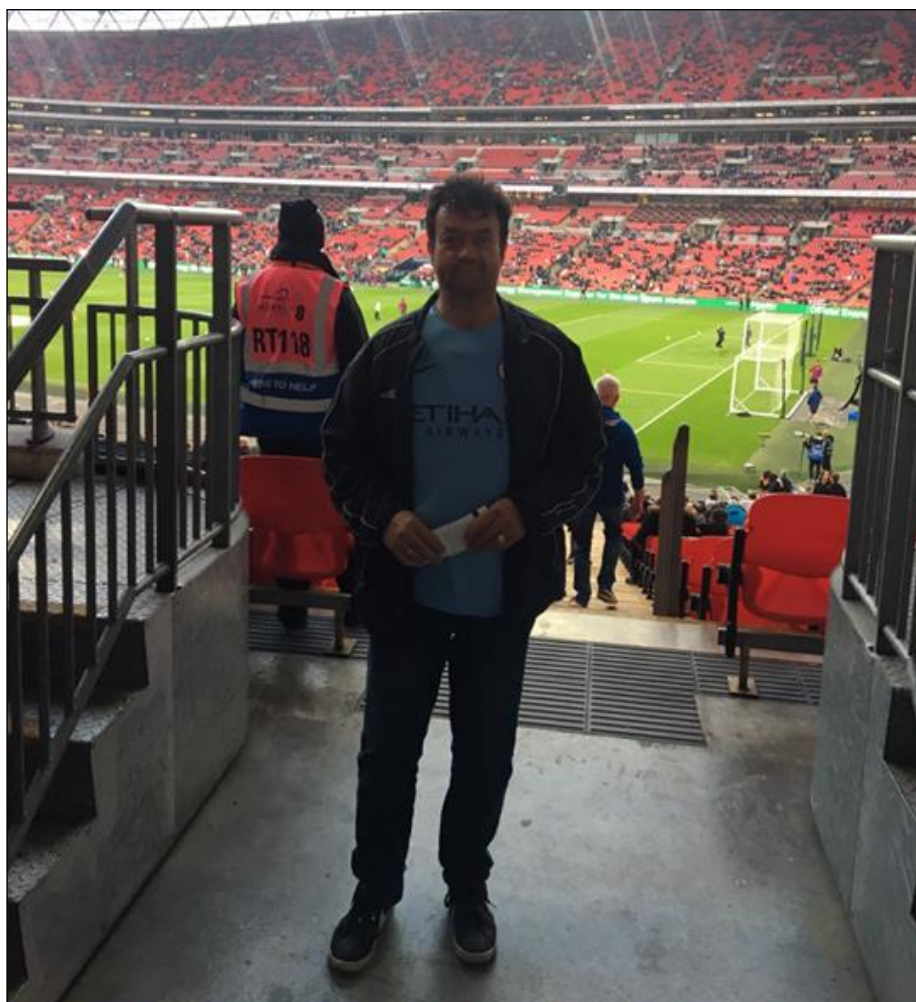
However, two years ago, I started my own business to build courses and products around psychological profiling, which mainly involves applying the Myers-Briggs typology system to football managers and their leadership styles.

James Nash (below) *Wigout!*

Creating *Wigout!* was a big solo effort but the scary part was hawking my goods outside Maine Road, to a pretty good reception thankfully. I like to tell myself the fanzine name, even as a one-off, played some small part in the departure of Peter Swales. Any sequel could have been called *Bogoff!* for his successor.

The Internet was at v0.01 and I've lurked there since, occasionally in a creative capacity. Maybe I'm a curmudgeonly bore nowadays but, with a few notable exceptions, online





fandom seems to be the provision of commercialised banter to braindead cultists. Each to their own.

Why did I dabble in fanzines, I hear you ask. Originally from Surrey, I guess I had a chip on my shoulder and wanted to prove myself as a True Blue, something more edifying than hating the rags almost as much as loving City. I've grown up somewhat subsequently. Somewhat.

Us City supporters have been wonderfully and legitimately lucky to live through golden days recently – many happy memories, grounded in what went before. The future for me is clouded by the deadening shroud of VAR, inconvenient kick-off times, rapacious and incompetent train companies and of course the pandemic. All have combined to significantly reduce my trips from That There London this past year.

Regardless, I look forward to my next game and living up to Rudyard Kipling's fabled words: "If you can enjoy a pint in the pub regardless of the result, you'll be a man, my son."

Steve Welsh (above) *Main*

Stand View - I started doing *Main Stand View* in 1991 after doing a couple of things for *King Of The Kippax*. After losing my mam in 1993 I stopped writing. On 4 March 1995 I got married to Jackie; United almost ruined the day by winning 9-0!

I saw an ad in the City v Forest programme December 1995 asking if any City fan wanted to represent the club in the London Marathon Football Challenge the year after. I did it and ran another 19 marathons up until 2003, when I had started to have knee problems, having my left knee replaced in 2017.

I am still working at Manchester University having started there in 1991. And I try and keep fit by walking the dogs to replace the running and I referee local football matches, highlights of which have been running the line at Mossley v Hyde in an FA Cup match, being a referee and a linesman at the City

of Manchester Stadium for different charity games, and being fourth official at Old Trafford for a Derby.

I am still a season ticket holder on Level 3 of the East Stand. My dad had a fatal heart attack just before the home Derby match in 2010 before the game started. I also drive a minibus to away games.

The Practitioner (below) *Five To Three*

In the mid-1970s, inspired by punk rock, many a teenager picked up a guitar and made a bloody awful racket and annoyed the hell out of the neighbourhood. In the mid-1980s, inspired by *When Saturday Comes*, many a twenty-something bought a typewriter and started bashing out football fanzines.

Five To Three was the punk rock of the fanzine scene. Brash, bawdy but beautiful, Even if I do say so myself.

Best moment of the era? Going to London in 1988 to personally deliver 500 copies of the fanzine to Sportspages and going for a drink with John Gaustad (the owner) at 11 am and him going back to the shop off his face two hours later!

We ceased in 1992 but did a one-off special for Euro 96.

What am I doing now? Annoying the hell out of a City chat forum *along* with the neighbourhood. Old habits etc. Happy days indeed.





NIJINSKY OR EL MAGO

Who's better, who's
best? I asked
Mike Billinge...



When I was contacted by The Ed (never thought I'd type that phrase again!) and informed that he was looking for articles for a mooted 'One Last Hurrah' edition of *Bert* (my description not his!), with Colin Bell versus David Silva as a suggested (but not enforced) theme for my article, I knew immediately and instinctively that comparisons of

these true City greats as footballers would be pointless. After all, we were talking different playing eras, different football worlds even, completely different physical attributes and very different footballing skill-sets (God, did I really use that phrase?). That's not to say, of course, that 'Colin the King' would have been out of time and place in the modern era. Quite the opposite, in

fact. For, as many fans of my vintage have rightly judged, Colin "had it all" - as Kevin Keegan once succinctly put it - and would have graced any era of football, the present one included. He'd be an easy fit in our current star-studded side. But truth is, meaningful attempts to make fair comparisons, purely in terms of footballing criteria, between him and our very own 'little magician' - "the best creative



"We're going up! We're going up! We're going... City's going up!" The 'King' scores the match winner and promotion clincher at Millmoor on 4 May 1966.

midfielder we've seen in this league", as Thierry Henry has admirably said of him - would be unwise, to say the least.

Of course, I could be silly (okay, I'll be silly!) and state some, tongue-in-cheek, similarities: both, for instance, were accorded esoteric - even exotic - but nevertheless apt nicknames - 'Nijinsky' and 'El Mago' respectively, by adoring fans. Both - believe it or not - sported, at some time in their City careers, Beatlesque hairstyles (I have the photos!) and, spookily, both had small moles in exactly the same spot, on the lower left chin!

But no. The old 'compare and contrast' essay couldn't work for me. Then, as I gave my brief some thought, two particular goals - and not, probably, the most obvious at that - sprung quickly to mind. Two very different goals, save for the fact they turned out to be match-winning strikes; two counties (Yorkshire and Lancashire) apart; forty-odd years apart and, seemingly, for me, (who was lucky enough to be present at both away fixtures), a lifetime apart.

The first of these goals takes me way back to Millmoor, Rotherham. 6 May 1966. I was 17 and had managed a Wednesday afternoon flyer from sixth-form with a good mate, straight into his brother's car and, school gear discarded in favour of mid-60s 'fashion' - yes, bell-bottoms (Colin Bell-bottoms?) probably, away over the Peaks and on into South Yorkshire. A quick bite to eat in a rather scruffy greasy spoon and then off down to the Railway End of the ground where away fans in those days were accommodated (anyone remember the approach down that narrow lane beside the scrapyard?). It was a tight game, decided in the second half by (you've guessed) a Colin Bell winner. A header. Not his best game, not his best goal even of that, his first season, following his transfer from Bury for the then princely - and scraped together - sum of £45,000 at the beginning of 1965. (The story of Malcolm Allison's sneaky

That wand of a left foot! Merlin weaves his magic.



outmanoeuvring of rival scouts for his signature - "he can't head it, can't pass it, he's hopeless" - has since passed into City folklore.) But it was the goal that secured us promotion, with three games still to play, back to Division One (ah, the good old days!) where we'd eventually return as Second Division Champions. It was, more importantly, the goal that cemented a personal love affair that lasts until today with a player, who, every instinct told me all those years ago, would one day be regarded as a true City great.

His City stats, impressive though they are (498 starts and three substitute appearances in all competitions - despite two long and lonely seasons spent recovering from that horrendous injury to his right knee - 153 goals, seven winners' medals to add to that Division Two 'gong' - Division One Champions, FA Cup, League Cup [2], European Cup Winners and Charity Shield [2]) just don't tell the whole story and don't do full justice to his illustrious City career. Perhaps - and especially for younger fans - the naming at the Etihad of a stand after him does.

Fast forward to Sunday, 17 October 2010. Bloomfield Road, Blackpool. At the beginning of the season the club had signalled its serious ambitions by signing Jerome Boateng, Yaya Toure, Aleks Kolarov, James Milner, Mario Balotelli and, of course, David 'El Mago' Silva. The transfer of this Spanish international - at what now, ten years on, looks an absolute snip at £24 million, from hugely in-debt Valencia - seemed to go through very smoothly, almost on the quiet. Though there were other suitors - including the Rags, inevitably - I don't think Roberto Mancini had to hoodwink rival coaches with the old (spoken in Italian, obviously) "he can't control the ball, he can't hold on to it, he can't pick a pass, he's rubbish!" shenanigans.

A train journey this time took me, now an immature, semi-retired but still, if I may say so, not unfashionably attired for his age, 61 year-old, and my daughter Em to an afternoon's footy by the seaside. (My son, Paul, at that time living and working in Moscow, was settling down to watch the game in a regularly-patronised local Sports Bar

called Metelitsa.) For us, it was a relaxed pre-match couple of pints in a pub rather than a hastily consumed burger in an insalubrious backstreet cafe, as it had been for me and my mates back in 1966.

Again, the game was a tense affair - Blackpool were certainly up for the fight - with both sides missing chances in the first half and in the initial exchanges of the second. Silva, still a bit of an unknown quantity to City fans at this early stage of the season and starting the game on the bench, came on after 65 minutes for the substituted Adebayor, with the score still at 0-0. The impact he had on the game was almost instantaneous and within a couple of minutes he had set up Carlos Tevez for the opener, the first of his two goals that day. The Seasiders (clubs had such quaint nicknames in those days!) equalised before Tevez soon restored our lead. Then came the moment. In the 90th minute, with City fans' nerves being severely tested (surely not?). Silva picked up the ball on the edge of the box. He checked, twisted and turned, left a couple of bemused defenders tied up in knots, before curling a sumptuous, left foot shot into the top right-hand corner of the net. Perhaps not his best goal (though it must be up there); not his most important goal for us and certainly not his greatest moment in a City shirt.

But for me, as with Bell's winner against the 'Millers' (quaint nickname again!) back at Millmoor all those years ago, this sublime piece of skill had kindled another enduring love affair. Both moments had sealed my unconditional love and admiration for two players who would become hugely influential icons of their respective eras and had brought joy and gratitude, on both occasions, at the thought that that these players were 'ours' and we'd be much envied by other clubs for having them.

By way of a postscript, I must add that City, typically, conceded a

second in the 93rd minute and made the dying moments of the match more uncomfortable than they should have been. No matter. That piece of Silva magic had left its indelible mark and provided a clear portent of what we were so privileged to witness over the next ten years. And, boy, did the fish and chips on the way back taste good that evening!

There is, of course, one important similarity between the two players it would be remiss of me to omit: namely the way in which both conducted themselves as representatives of MCFC. Quiet, reserved and private individuals off the field, both appear to have succeeded in shunning publicity - certainly media intrusion into their lives - and have maintained, so it would seem, an unassuming, dignified and respectful manner in all they do, certainly as far their relationship with the club, the fans, the press and football in general is concerned. The (seemingly to us) self-possessed and stoical way in which each faced quite different but still agonising personal crises in their lives (Colin's career-blighting - in effect career-ending - injury and David's son Mateo's very premature and life-threatening birth) are further testimonies to shared strengths of character.

And it strikes me, just now, that their departures from the club will share a little in common, too. Colin Bell's unforgiving knee injury (yes you, Buchan!) cruelly cut short his City career. The slim hopes briefly lit by his second-half appearance after two years on the sidelines, to rapturous applause and grown men's tears, against Newcastle on Boxing Day 1977 - another moment

sealed forever in City folklore - were soon, alas, to be dashed. It cheated us of several more years of his irreplaceable services and deprived him of the magnificent Maine Road send-off he, more than anyone, deserved (you don't know how lucky you were, Yaya!). And, though we don't yet know how much of a part David Silva will play (to empty stadia) for the remainder of this uncertain, Covid-19-blasted season - his last in a City shirt - he will be denied, in so unfair and undeserved a fashion, a truly fitting end to his glittering City career. And we, his fans, will sorely miss the collective opportunity to give him the joyous (and tearful) farewell his unparalleled exploits here (14 trophies to date) so richly merit, the chance to celebrate (and briefly lament) the sad departure of another City great.

Colin Bell, as will be well known to many older Blues, once went into commercial partnership with his friend, ex-Bury colleague and then Burnley player, Colin (yes, another Colin!) Waldron, opening a restaurant, The Bell-Waldron, in Whitefield.


Now I don't know what David Silva plans to do when he eventually retires from the game he has so exquisitely graced, but I do harbour a secret and cheeky hope that he might consider a joint enterprise with his erstwhile Valencia and Spain team-mate and namesake David Villa and set up a tapas bar in Gran Canaria. And if he does, I trust he'll choose a more classy and imaginative name for this eatery than the two Colins did, missing a trick, in my opinion, all those years ago. Call it Los Dos Daves. Please, David. Do it for me.



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ONCE A BLUE, ALWAYS A BLUE

Phil McLoughlin offers an alternative view of the last decade...



Well, it's been a while. Is there anyone there? The last time I was vain enough to think that anyone was interested in the nonsense I was writing was about 20 years ago and here I go again, blinking in the light, dusting off my keyboard, definitely older but, apparently, none the wiser.

The first thing I had printed contained a confession about my reason for becoming a City fan. I passed it to The Ed on a floppy disk as he lurked in his usual spot between the Kippax and the North Stand. What's probably my last article has been transmitted electronically through the ether, I'm not sure how. But it also contains a confession and it is this: I'm not really a City fan any more. In fact, I'm not really a football fan any more. I used to live and breathe football. I was either playing it, watching it, reading about it or dreaming about it.

Back in the '70s when I were nobbut a lad, I used to see old blokes with flat caps and walking sticks like Unlucky Alf on their way in to the ground, muttering about the

current team being only half as good as the teams they grew up watching and I used to think "That'll be me one day" and I looked forward to it. Maybe not being old and talking to myself, but to have spent a lifetime supporting City. However, I didn't quite get there. Bugger! I nearly made it, though. I managed 44 years before it got too much for me, before I realised that I wasn't really involved any more and that we'd be better off apart, like Brad and Angelina or Mike and Bernie Winters. I won't go on about things being better in my day, although they were. Football was simple and was a jolly day out so long as you could evade the bovver boys and didn't mind being treated like a farmyard animal and it only really mattered to us dedicated fans. TV executives, bankers, enormously rich Arabs and girls weren't interested. There wasn't much money to be made and ladies still knew their place which wasn't bothering their menfolk on a Saturday afternoon.

Obviously, things changed with the introduction of the Premier League, for the better in relation to

stadiums and safety, but football itself started to get away from us and became an opportunity for investment rather than an opportunity for fun. I began to get fed up the season after we first won the League; maybe there was a sense of anti-climax. (How could anything match that Agüerooooo! moment?) I found that I was going to the game more from a sense of duty than because I wanted to see my heroes and by the time of the second Title win I was starting to realise what I'd only suspected until then: I was drifting away.

My wife and I didn't wait to see the presentation of that second trophy as I got fed up hanging around waiting for the officially-sanctioned podium to be erected in the centre circle and the officially-sanctioned pyrotechnics to be set up so that the players could do their obligatory bouncy dance. I wished the people around me a pleasant summer and set off without the familiar hollow, lost feeling I used to experience at the end of a season. Carol, smarter than me, threw her hand in that summer, but I battled on through the next couple of years, not

wanting to admit even to myself that I was becoming less and less interested. The realisation that the excitement had gone was gradual, it crept up on me like my wobbly belly and although a lot of it is not the fault of the club, such as bag-searches at the turnstile, things just started to mount up and get on my nerves. I was really disappointed when the words 'Football Club' were removed from the badge; I hated the match-day announcer who screamed the name of every player at top volume. I objected to being contacted for my views on my "match-day experience" which included the friendliness of the stewards and the cleanliness of the concourse. The digital flags between the seating levels at the ground made me feel sad every time I saw them, but hey, at least they don't obstruct the adverts like real flags might. By now I'd gone public with my feelings, though the people round me in the East Stand soon stopped taking any notice of my threats to turn my back on the club and after listening to my moaning and whingeing would laugh and shout "See you in a fortnight, then" as I trudged off home at the end of the match. And then laugh some more when I turned up to the next game.

Missing matches became easier, though, and I started to go to fewer and fewer, starting with European games and graduating to domestic cups; happy to watch on the telly or listen to on the radio. Once I realised that missing a home game was painless and, in some cases, such as cold, rainy nights, even better I was on a slippery slope to desertion. I even gave our League Cup Final tickets to my nephew as it felt like too much bother to go all the way to Wembley.

Pep's arrival changed my mood for a while. "We've got Guardiola... Guardiola." It was stunning, miraculous, like appointing Thor or a unicorn and I was genuinely excited to see my team play the beautiful game beautifully, which is exactly what happened. It was the best I'd

ever seen: thrilling, breath-taking stuff. I loved it, felt privileged to be there. Pep's second, Title-winning, season was the high point of my football-watching experience. The football was fantastic, the trophies started to pour in but still... something wasn't right, something had changed. I was pleased to see City win the League, of course, but what good is pleased? I'm pleased when there's curry for tea on a Friday. I'm pleased when Bob the cat throws up in next door's garden instead of ours. But surely, I should feel more than that when City win? I used to be ecstatic, thrilled and the fact that I'm not is enough for me to stop watching. I don't enjoy it any more and VAR has put the lid on it.

It emphasises to me the way in which football is becoming so caught up in its own importance that having to decide whether or not to award a goal is so vital, so critical that it can't be trusted to the referee any more; it has to be done by an expert watching the telly a hundred miles away. Its biggest fault is that it's removed the spontaneity, the rush of excitement that comes with your team scoring an important goal. It's difficult to get genuinely excited two and a half minutes after the event. Never mind the fans who don't know

whether or not to celebrate, who don't know what's going on. There's money at stake. They might as well take your mobile number and text the result the next day after the game's been properly analysed.

As far as I can see the new, updated version of football has lost its sense of humour and seems to take itself very seriously, but it seems that my idea of football being a bit of a laugh is as outdated as Winston Churchill's views on equality so perhaps I should just shut up and accept that I'm wrong. After all, my team is now one of the best in the world, we've got some brilliant players and the once-barren trophy cabinet is so full that we'll soon have to start storing cups in the Cloud.

I still want City to win every match, to be admired world-wide, but I'd also like "Typical City" to pop up every now and then just for a bit of a giggle. Maybe it's typical City to be banned from Europe just as domination beckons? That's another story, but if City are found to have lied and cheated then I think I'll abandon even feelings of goodwill towards the club. Winning at every cost was never part of the mentality of Manchester City FC when I joined up. When I finally decided that my time was at an end and I no longer felt like part of the club, I was a little



Rip it up and start again! City v Bury, 14 February 1998.

disappointed by the laid-back reaction when I called to cancel my season ticket. The actual act was easy, just a phone call, a chat and then a lad called Josh saying: "That's all done for you. Is there anything else I can help you with today?" There was no shock, no alarm going off in the back, he didn't advise me to take some time to think it over. It felt, and was, very final. I was no longer a City fan. I'd broken a promise I made to myself fifty years ago and I felt a little panicky. Had I been too hasty? Is that my first hero, Neil Young, looking down at me and sadly shaking his head? Sorry, Nelly. I thought that writing this may have helped me to identify what City or football did to alienate me; I thought that I'd get what's now known as closure, but it didn't happen until I realised that I spend a lot of my time tutting and rolling my eyes and sighing heavily not just at City, not just at the game, but at most things; I seem to be in an almost permanent state of exasperation. And lo, then the clouds did part and the scales fell from my eyes: it's not City, it's not football, it's me. I've got old and I've turned into Victor Meldrew. That hasn't altered anything, just explained it. At least I know why watching football has dropped off my list of interests, but I can't do anything about it.

Someone said that football is a young man's game and that's not me any more. Someone also said that confession is good for the soul: that it's cleansing, a release, but that's not how this feels to me. It makes me sad. I want to be a City fan; I want to be upset by a defeat, elated by a win, interested in transfers and cup draws and have an opinion about the third kit, but it's gone. Yet I've still got a City scarf that Carol knitted for me twenty-odd years ago, I've got a City badge dangling from the rear-view mirror of my car, I'm wearing an old City shirt as I sit typing this and I still detest 'Nitd, so maybe there's a bit of hope for me even now. You know what they say: "Once a Blue, Always a Blue."

LIVING IN THE PAST WITH LES

City 1 Utd 0, FA Cup Semi-Final, Wembley, 16/04/11

Gone back to the not-so-distant past for this one as I think this was a massive game in our history, and one that probably gave me as much joy and relief as some of our more-talked-about and written-about milestone games.

Our first trip to Wembley in quite some time and from our area there were numerous cars, coaches, vans, etc making their way down while the red contingent travelled in a Reliant Robin! The highlight of the journey down was the Wycombe Town Cryer shouting "Come On City!" to the approval of the locals.

The game, like most big matches, is a bit of a blur. Joe Hart proved what a great goal-keeper he was for us, Mario Balotelli and Vincent Kompany came close before Yaya pounced in the 52nd minute. From then on it was plain sailing, especially after the overrated Scholes did his usual high and late tackle and was sent off. Empty seats? I've never seen so many! We were through to our first Cup Final in 30 years and that was just the start.



ALL THOSE YEARS AGO

Phil Shakespeare takes a stroll down memory lane...



1977/78—a stellar squad but making do with balls instead of trophies.

When The Ed told me he was doing an online version of the fanzine this summer I wondered how long it had been since the paper version of the fanzine. When I was told it had been longer since the 'zine had ended, than it had actually been in existence I was amazed. I look back on those old days with much fondness and many happy memories and indeed it led me to wonder if the early days of supporting City were the best of times, despite all the success we have seen since the takeover in 2008.

How could that be the case, after being taken over by such fantastic owners who have totally transformed the club and done so much to secure our future? We couldn't have dreamt of such a golden era, with world-beating players and managers.

It led me to think that no matter how a team performs on the pitch,

often personal circumstances can dictate your enjoyment of a particular period in your club's history. The 1970s was not a particularly decade in City's history. However, I always look back to that decade with a great deal of fondness. Was it the fact that I was a teenager growing up in a great musical decade, with great friends, going to the match with family, standing on the Kippax, being introduced to beer and the Manchester nightlife, observing all the off-field goings on at City? They were certainly great times.

My parents were City fans and my first introduction to fellow City fans, apart from at school, was on a bus going home to Middleton from Manchester one Saturday afternoon. Often on a Saturday my mother would take me to Tib Street to look at the pet shops. We would travel to Manchester on the 17 bus all the way from Middleton. On the way home a group of City fans were celebrating a win and they

were singing the famous Tommy Booth song: "He's here he's there he's everywhere." However they omitted the swear word in view of the women and children on the bus, but it was a great atmosphere and the first City song I ever learnt.

Later that year - 1968 - I remember my parents taking me to my great aunt's house. She lived on Horton Road, which ran parallel to Maine Road. It was great if we went on a Saturday or a Wednesday night, when City were playing and the crowds were enormous. When I first saw the floodlights it was like something out of the *War Of The Worlds*. My great aunt's two up-two down house had a backyard and I would ask to go out and play in it so I could hear the chants coming from the ground. The place held a lot of mystery and I would yearn for the day when I could actually go and watch the team play.

At that time in the late '60s, I would sometimes be allowed to watch the team on a Sunday

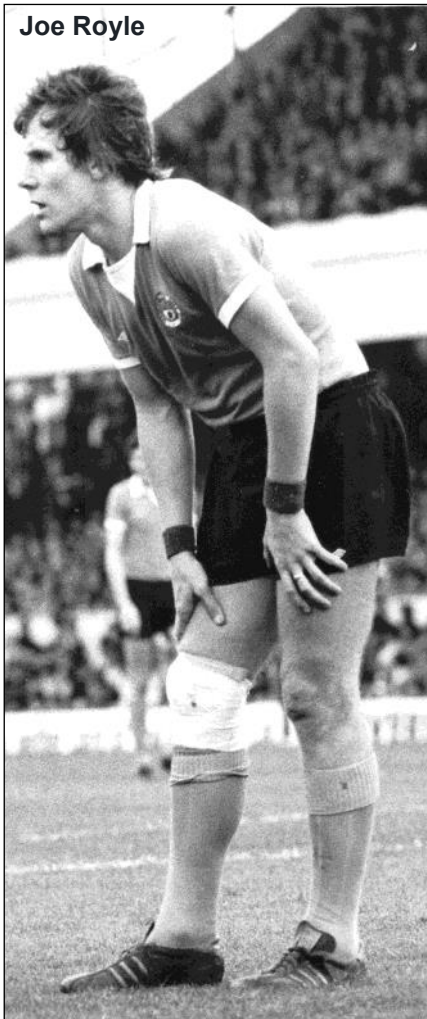
afternoon sports show. In 1968 I could see my parents' excitement as City were closing in on the Championship and upon winning it they bought all the Sunday papers so I could cut out the pictures and build a scrap album to take into school. I remember the iconic picture of Francis Lee stood with arms aloft on the wall at St James' Park as the final whistle sounded. It was a great end to the decade and further success followed with the FA and League Cups, Charity Shield and the European Cup Winners' Cup. Typical City! We should have consolidated and gone onto greater things at the start of the 1970s but it all seemed to fall apart. We made a great signing in Rodney Marsh, but then we allowed Derby County to pip us when the Title was all but ours.

The team was going through gradual change with players leaving, some of them firm favourites: Wyn Davies, Tony Towers, Francis Lee, Colin Barrett and Ian Bowyer; the latter two going on to have European success with Nottingham Forest. The great surprise was the return of old favourite Denis Law in 1973, which meant that in the 1974 League Cup Final we had the awesome front five of Summerbee, Bell, Lee, Law and Marsh. I was too young to attend but was convinced that the firepower would be too much for Wolves. How wrong I was. That day me and a group of friends had our own cup final and played a match on the local field whilst listening to the final on a wireless.

The next year my dad took me to my first match: a night game versus Arsenal and we parked at my great aunt's house on Horton Road and walked to the game through the myriad of back passages leading to Platt Lane. The smell of hot dogs and the light from the floodlights was something I would never forget. When we walked down the tunnel to enter the ground I couldn't believe how green the grass was, it was like an oasis of colour in the middle of Manchester. We took our seats on the benches behind the goals and I

looked across to the mass of people swaying in the Kippax. There was a small spotlight hanging from a stanchion and this illuminated the crowd below and the sweat/smoke rising from them; it was where I wanted to be. City won and Dennis Tueart was the star man, if I remember correctly. He was a great signing and together with Dave Watson who we signed around the same time, they were to be star men of the team for years to come. Watson for me, together with Vincent Kompany, are the best centre-halves I have ever seen at City. The header against Ipswich in 1977 was the best header I have ever seen.

Another great header of the ball, Joe Royle, signed for City on Boxing Day 1974 and I remember thinking at the time what a great signing that was, as he was one of the best prospects when he burst onto the scene at Everton. Another astute signing had been Asa



Hartford - who joined his Scottish international colleague Willie Donachie - to bolster the midfield and later, in 1977, Brian Kidd joined the club. The introduction of youngsters Kenny Clements, Peter Barnes and Gary Owen brought a comprehensive change to the team that had started the decade, with only Alan Oakes, Mike Doyle, Tommy Booth and Joe Corrigan remaining.

I got my first season ticket in 1975 with my school friend Jimmy Ho and we remained ticket holders for many years. Originally from Hong Kong, Jimmy loved his time at the multicultural setting of Maine Road; he found it welcoming and it became his second home.

1976 saw us back at Wembley in the League Cup Final and I didn't have a ticket, until my mum wrote to the Football League in Lytham and got two tickets, one of which she insisted in having. So meeting the Yellowway Coach in Middleton Gardens was quite an experience as my school mates began to take the mickey and offer me cigs and lager, much to the chagrin of my mother. It was a great day even though our tickets were for the Newcastle end, whose fans were great with us, and if you watch the match video you will see few City scarfs held high in the Geordie end celebrating when Tueart scores. That was us! A great day out and a sing-song all the way back on the coach to Middleton.

The following year saw Paul Power come through the ranks. He had a good season in 1976/77 and I felt we deserved the League that year, falling second to Liverpool. The crunch came when we only drew at home with Liverpool at Christmas and they scored after a rare slip on the ice from the ever-reliable Watson. The following year saw us sign the international Mike Channon and we were becoming quite a team, not forgetting that we had been playing for a year without the great Colin Bell following his injury.

1977/78 saw us finish in a

commendable fourth position, but the following year saw us finish a poor 15th and changes were afoot as Malcolm Allison returned and some star names were sold. However, it was the year we signed one of my favourite players ever, Kazimierz Deyna.

We began 1979 with a much changed team: a new captain Dragoslav Stepanovic while youngsters Ray Ranson, Nicky Reid, Tommy Caton, Tony Henry, Dave Bennett and Roger Palmer were all given a chance. We paid over a million pounds each for Kevin Reeves and Steve Daley and we also signed a couple of other favourites of mine, Mike Robinson and Steve MacKenzie. It was a turbulent time

and we ended up finishing 17th.

The following season - 1980/81 - was one of my favourite seasons. I had gone off to Coventry Polytechnic and ended up following City home and away for much of the time due to my new-found freedom. The replacement of Allison with John Bond and the signings of Gerry Gow, Tommy Hutchison and Bobby McDonald rescued our season and took us to the FA Cup final, where again I didn't have a ticket. Luckily, a college lecturer I had got to know called Rob managed to get me a ticket and we attended both games. We were so close in the first game and I felt MacKenzie had settled it as his shot rolled agonisingly past

the post.

As we travelled back to Coventry on the Thursday night following the defeat, little was I to know that for the next 25 years there would be no real success on the pitch. We would have the Full Members' Cup Final in 1986 and the Gillingham Play Off game in 1999 but little else to cheer us, certainly on the pitch.

Certainly during that period it was the off-the-field activities that took precedence: the campaigns for Swales Out, Lee in, Lee out, the David Makin/John Wardle takeover, the shareholding switches, the intrigue of the AGMs and of course the fanzines and the roles that they played. Meeting The Ed, together with Bibby, Worthy, Tom Ritchie and the rest we had some great times... the pre-match beers and the camaraderie. Certainly the activities off the pitch were far more enjoyable at times than those on it.

It wasn't until the arrival of Kevin Keegan in the early 2000s and signings such as the likes of Nicolas Anelka, Marc-Vivien Foé and Ali Benarbia were we to get excited about the team again but it didn't last as long as we hoped for. We had a brief raising of hopes with Sven who signed some good players and then we had the takeover and untold riches. They were the greatest owners we could possibly wish for and they transformed the club in terms of players, managers, training facilities and, indeed, the whole redevelopment of East Manchester.

They backed their managers, all of whom have contributed in their own particular way. I thought Mark Hughes made some very good signings - including Carlos Tevez - and he was the right man for the initial transformation. He built a very good defence with Pablo Zabaleta, Vincent Kompany, Joleen Lescott and Wayne Bridge and continued the development of Joe Hart.

Roberto Mancini was excellent too and brought us "the Agüero moment" which I don't think will ever be bettered. Mancini certainly had an

Ali Benarbia signs autographs at Mansfield on 19 July 2003.



eye for a great player and his signings of Agüero, David Silva, Yaya Touré, Jérôme Boeteng etc. were of the highest quality. Manuel Pellegrini continued this work, getting us a League and Cup double and our goalscoring was, at times, superb.

Clearly our owners wanted one of the world's best managers and they knew if they got two of his best friends in football in situ then we had a great chance of getting Pep Guardiola. With Txiki Begiristain and Ferran Soriano there, Pep would feel very comfortable and the three of them could have virtual free reign, together with Khaldoon Al Mubarak, in terms of how the club could be run.

Over the period we have had trophies galore, with more trips to Wembley than one could imagine, and it certainly has increased the cost of supporting City with all those London trips. Some of the football has been unbelievable with many

fans saying it has been the best football they have ever seen from some of the greatest players they have ever seen. Growing up in the period after the takeover must have been one of the greatest experiences ever. It certainly has been a great time and one which I have thoroughly enjoyed, but there has been something missing and I can't put my finger on it.

I still attend the games and enjoy them, although there is a feeling of expectant success compared to the unpredictability of the 1970s which was my personal golden era. Currently I attend with my disabled friend who has a parking space next to the ground and Eastlands is nearer than Maine Road for us, so we get there in no time, park right up, get a pie and await in expectation of the delights ahead. Everything is catered for in the new stadium.

Incredibly, however, I miss those bus trips from Middleton to

Piccadilly from the '70s and '80s, the walk to Aytoun Street and then the match special to Maine Road, the characters we would meet along the way and I very much miss going with my parents. The City Chippy was a must in those days, then round to the Social Club and a chat with the fanzine editors Noel and Tom before walking round the back of the North Stand and into the beloved Kippax, where you could stand wherever you wanted and meet up with old friends. The games themselves could never be predicted and I saw all manner of results.

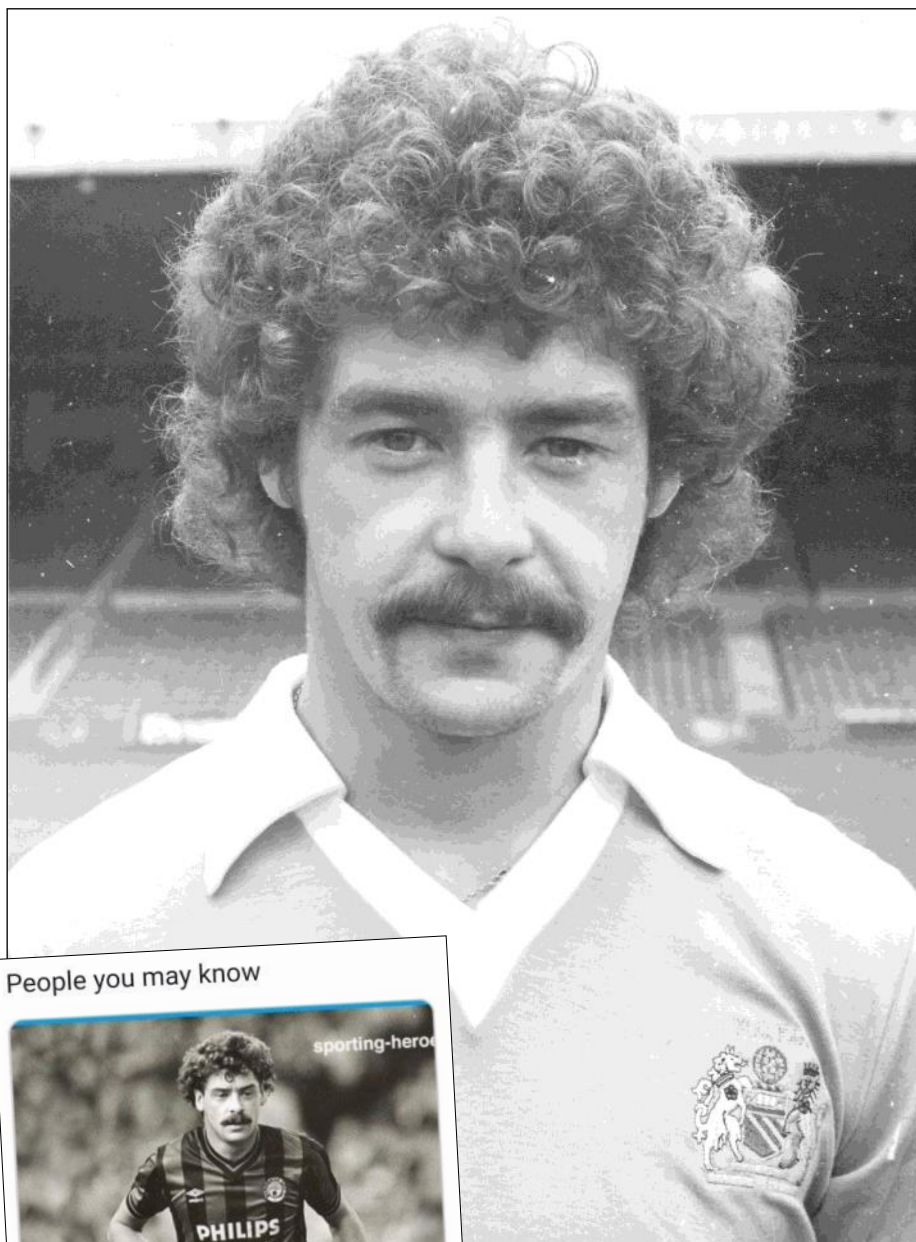
I very much appreciate our current success and the wonderful players and trophies which we currently witness, which I would never change. However, that earlier period of supporting City was such a special time for me. I met some wonderful people and have such wonderful memories. They were great times.



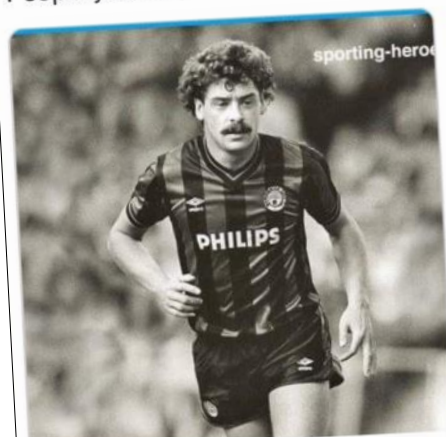
Man of the match Vincent Kompany applauds the fans after leading the team to a League Cup victory over Arsenal at Wembley, 25 February 2018.

WHERE'S KENNY?

Asks an increasingly frustrated Ed.



People you may know



Kenny Clements

3 mutual friends



Add Friend

Remove

Corrigan, Clements, Donachie, Doyle, Watson, Owen, Power, Kidd, Royle, Hartford, Tueart, sub Barnes.

I can still reel off the names after all these years. It was my first match: City 0 Newcastle 0, 6 November 1976.

All but one of those players are still alive – remarkable after all this time. Joe Corrigan is someone I have met on several occasions, and what a lovely, gentle man Big Joe – as he is known to one and all - is too.

Willie Donachie I have met several times: at The Etihad, at the baggage reclaim carousel at Faro Airport once; why, Josh and I even did an interview with him back in 1998 for *Bert Trautmann's Helmet* 19. Willie still looks

young now, even at 68!

Then there's Mike Doyle, God bless his soul. He came to the Prestwich & Whitefield Branch Meeting a few years back (who didn't!) and I met him then.

And then there's the other half of what was a formidable centre-half partnership, Dave Watson. I bumped into him once coming out of the Social Club. Or was it the Souvenir Shop? The memories fade over the years but nobody who was there will ever forget that bullet header against Ipswich back in April 1977. I know he's not so well nowadays and we wish him well but Dave is still the centre-half that I measure all other centre-halves by.

Gary Owen is another player from that team who still looks young! Gary is slightly eccentric but hilarious. I've met him once or twice over the years too.

Paul Power was a hugely underrated City player. I met Paul most recently a few years ago in a bar in Barcelona when he'd popped over from his home in the South of France to meet up with his son to go our game at the Nou Camp.

I remember being starstruck as a boy when I met Brian Kidd on the day he kicked a charity game off at my old school in Wythenshawe. He autographed my scarf – a ten-bob acquisition on a Blackpool trip – which bore the odd legend of "KIPPAX END RULES OK!" Brian didn't seem to bother anyway and happily signed. The word soon got out and for days local lads travelled for yards to behold the wondrous silken accessory.

While management didn't work out too well for Kiddo, Joe Royle fared better and we met him at the Platt Lane Complex on our then-annual Christmas outing in 1999. Joe happily posed for photos and I soon had him ladling out soup for the cover of *BTH* 31.

I came across Asa Hartford one afternoon as he was popping into the Town Hall Tavern. Had I not been going somewhere else I may well have joined him but we had a fantastic afternoon last year with Asa and some of the other ex-players at a Scandinavian Branch do in town as the photo opposite shows. For someone who was such a tenacious player, I was surprised at how quietly

spoken he was. With the benefit of hindsight it was, I think, a good thing that I'd named one of my goldfish after him when I was young.

The other was named Dennis! The unlikely friendship I have with Mr Tueart is detailed elsewhere in this issue and that other former winger, Peter Barnes. I have met on numerous occasions as, like several of the other ex-players mentioned here, he is a valued friend of the Scandinavian Branch. I also interviewed him for *BTH*.

But there is one man who has escaped me for all these years. A man who is so elusive that he could get under wallpaper, albeit wallpaper with Disney characters painted on it, and still run a driving school without anyone seeing him! Yes, people keep telling me he's always out and about or how I've only just missed the light blue pimpernel of Saddleworth. Readers, I give you Kenneth Henry Clements!

I even met his daughter on a train once, purely by chance, but that doesn't really count. Alas, Kenny remains doggedly and frustratingly aloof.

So if you do see him, tell him I'm looking for him...



Thanks to Heidi James

The Helmet Rides Again has been issued free of charge as a downloadable PDF. If you wish to support a charity in lieu of payment, please put some small change the way of the RNLI. They will be glad of it.

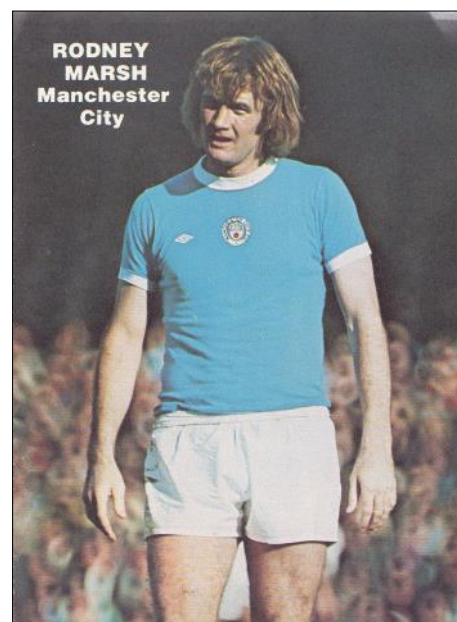
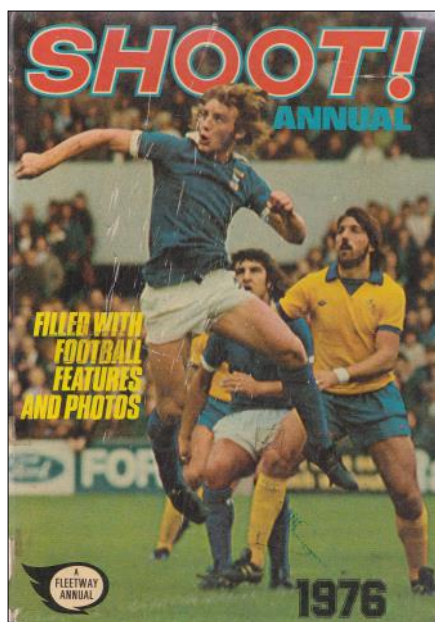
Alternatively, you may be interested to learn that many health trusts/local authorities don't provide suitcases to children in care so more often than not, they put all their worldly belongings in a bin bag as they move from one place to the next. Madlug is a certified social enterprise registered as a "Community Interest Company" that provides bags for children in care. If you wish to learn more, buy a bag or make a donation, please see: <https://www.madlug.com/>

OH RODNEY, RODNEY!

*Definitely,
Definitely*



You'll know that we love our music at Helmet House and like to think we know a thing or two about it. For all those big Oasis fans out there, if you are thinking of recreating the cover of their first album *Definitely Maybe*, apart from a half-million pound house in Didsbury you'll also need a copy of the 1976 *Shoot! Annual* for that is where the photo of Rodney Marsh propped up against the fireplace has definitely, definitely been taken from!



THAT SERGIO MOMENT

Paul Stanley on how that moment of success paid off the failure of years...



Champions shirts laid out for the players in the Town Hall the day after we won the League in 2012.

After the soul-sapping events at Wembley against Gillingham in 1999, when I had all but read myself the Last Rites before the elation of Nicky Weaver's penalty saves, I vowed I would never doubt the Blues again.

I had a mate who had left before the end of that game. He heard a cheer on Wembley Way and, assuming the Gills had got a third, plunged himself into the depressing depths of the Underground to hide from the masses and seek lonely solace in the anonymity which can shroud a lost soul in a random mix of shoppers, commuters and day trippers. As he left the Tube and went to pick up a shuttle bus he was told there was going to be a delay – more bad news! – as the drivers were all watching the penalty shoot-out. “Which game?” he asked. “The Man City v Gillingham game,” came the reply, “one of the best comebacks in history.” He didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

I could have left with him but there was a morbid fascination and obsession about staying to the end.

I had previously witnessed the relegation game against Luton in 1983 and the atmosphere was like no atmosphere I have witnessed before or since – but it was an experience worth having in the tank for future life. Other relegations were not as tense as we were always expected to go down. In the alan-ball-era-Liverpool/2-2-relegation game we needed a miracle to stay up, as we did in the Stoke/5-2 game. We’d had weeks to prepare for the trauma of the drop, but the Luton game came from nowhere. We had not been in the bottom three all season and only needed a point at home against a crap team to stay up. None of us expected it and the crowd’s reaction was volatile to say the least. So at the Gillingham game and at two down, I felt the need to see it through to the end –

maybe for closure, maybe out of despair, but certainly not out of blind optimism. As Kevin Horlock and then Paul Dickov scored and we moved into extra time (which seemed to last only five minutes) and then penalties, I wondered if cruel fate would kick us in the balls again. But Richard Edghill scored his one and only penalty for the club, Weaver did his dance and we had turned it around with the last kick. I had the same feeling before the Stoke Cup Final in 2011 after we had beaten United in the Semis. On both occasions the gods were with us and both games proved to be instrumental in the club’s recovery.

They say lightning never strikes twice in the same place. Well, in 2012 we faced QPR at home in the last game. A win and the Title was ours: in our cross-hairs and in our own hands. Anything other and we would probably be pushed back over the cliff. The game started well and we took the lead, only to end up 2-1

down despite QPR having gone down to ten men when Joey Barton's short fuse set off the self-destruct dynamite in his head. At the stroke of 90 minutes of normal time, my head was in Luton mode – we had blown it! When Edin Džeko scored, I actually started crying - it felt like the Stoke game. It was the cruellest of all disappointments. United were winning at Sunderland and we had undone all the good work of the season by being complacent. My shoulders shook with dejection and I half got up to leave. I said to my son: "Too little, too late; I was hoping for a Gillingham moment but we were so near and yet so far." He still believed though: the inexperience of youth, where optimism hasn't been chiselled away by years of let-downs and disappointment. I got up to go, but he wanted to stay, as did the rest of the family.

Then Mario Balotelli poked the ball through to Sergio Agüero and he blasted it past Paddy Kenny in the QPR net, and I went totally mental. Never have I used up so much energy and adrenalin in a goal celebration. After the final whistle I started crying again - this time they were tears of emotion. Years of following the Blues, watching under-performing rubbish in humdrum towns, going to Platt Lane to get a glimpse of the team training, hoping to see the green shoots of recovery but only seeing mediocrity. Years of watching Bobby Shinton, Colin Viljoen, Tony Cunningham, Gerry Creaney and numerous others - only remembered due to the strong emotion of anger and hatred because they had taken my teenage cash and then ruined my week. Free the 30,000, challenging Franny Lee to a 100 metre sprint on the pitch after he said he would jump off the Kippax roof if we got relegated to the third tier, Peter Swales, Colin Barlow, cups for cock-ups and Greenalls bitter in the bars – Come Armageddon Come – all memories which had helped form my gallows humour and had all made me a bitter, cynical, sarcastic bastard.

OVER THE BAR

Mike Burkey has missed having no footie or pub to go to... Or has he?

When the Ed gave me the word that the 'zine was making a comeback and that he still loved me after all these years *{I do! – Blushing Ed}*, I kind of guessed that would mean he needed another 'Over The Bar' article from me! I pondered his request for all of a milli-second before foolishly agreeing.

I say 'foolishly' because there was once a time when public houses were open to erm, the public! Writing about beer, pubs, the clientele, fights, beer-goggled induced fantasies and a whole host of other pub-related activities used to be a breeze in those halcyon days; the days of happy hours, pints of mixed, darts, pool and card games like crash, don or chase the ace.

But now, not only have half the pubs gone/closed/been demolished since my last article, but those that do remain are presently closed due to Covid-19. The beer writer's lot is not a happy one at present.

Being a p*ss-head had previously been an easy occupation and I guess if you're reading this then you too like a few scoops before the match with the lads and, of course, the post-match discussion naturally follows a similar theme. Before you know it you've supped about 12 pints! Now there's no footie to go to, there's no pubs to go to, there's no footie on the telly in the pub so that really only leaves the single option of getting a carry-out and supping it at home.

Well my friends the cataclysmic news is that I do not drink at home, never have. I find it a bizarre concept. The joy of drinking, for me, is to firstly make the effort to

go out and socialise. Then, as soon as the drinks start to flow, the magic happens – this just cannot be replicated at home, alone, with eight cans of Special Brew and a tube of Pringles.

Lots of us will be the same; drinking will have been drastically if not completely reduced and do we miss it? I can only speak for myself and say no, not really. I think this Covid business has changed something in me and made me realise the simple things in life are all that's needed. I haven't even missed City!

Now the football has about to make a comeback but we have no idea when we will be allowed to go to the match again. What's for sure though is that when we are allowed I will be there. I will also be in the pub before the match with my friends and what's the betting that you too will be in your pub with your friends?

As soon as the beer starts to flow in July and the magic happens I just know that the previous paragraph will be consigned to history!

Up the Blues!





FANX TA-RA!



Just like to thank the following cast of stars, without whom etc... Bibby, Worthy, Mike & Paul Billinge, Peter Brophy, Mike Burkey, Roger Burrows, Marvin Cheeseman, Paul Cunningham, Les Hare, Merrily Kenyon, Mike Knowles, Josh & Naomi Langton, Mark McCarthy, Phil McLoughlin, Dave Pimlott, OSC Scandinavian Branch, Andy Sewina, Phil Shakespeare, Paul Stanley, Ric Turner, Kyle Walker.

Editor: Noel Bayley

noel_bayley@yahoo.co.uk

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