

A black and white close-up portrait of Alan Foggon, a man with dark hair and a slight smile, wearing a checkered shirt. The word 'ala' is written in large, white, outlined letters in the top right corner.

ala

At the end of 1972, Stan Anderson sent £10,000 and unsettled Boro striker Johnny Vincent to Cardiff in a risky exchange for a talented, but overweight and out of form attacking midfielder. From 1973 to 1975, Alan Foggon was one of the shining lights of Jack Charlton's Boro team; a player who had incredible turn of speed and a fierce shot. A lengthy career beckoned, following a transfer to Manchester United – but then....? His Boro days apart, Alan Foggon always seemed to be in the wrong place at the time.

an foggon

by **Shaun Keogh**

You had six years from the age of 15 at Newcastle United - who were your boyhood footballing heroes?

I was born at West Pelton, so Newcastle were always going to be my team. I wasn't really that into football in a big way until I was about 12 or 13. The people I remember most from that time were Bob Moncur, John McGrath and Stan Anderson.

Did Newcastle spot you or did you ask them for a trial?

They spotted me when I was at school, so from then on I trained at Newcastle every Tuesday and Thursday night for two years prior to being signed as apprentice. I left school on the Friday and started as apprentice on the Monday under the then manager, Joe Harvey.

The highlight of your career there must have been the 1969 Fairs Cup campaign? (The forerunner of the UEFA Cup, Newcastle beat Ujpest Dozsa of Hungary in the final)

Yeah, I came on as a sub in both legs of the final and scored the winning goal in the second leg. (At the age of 19).

That goal was a bit special wasn't it? Did you realise at the time just how special that whole era was for you?

(Laughs) Yeah, a bit of a belter! I haven't seen it for a while, but someone must have it on video somewhere! I made my debut in the league at Arsenal the previous season (1968) but didn't get back in until just before the 2nd round of the Fairs Cup. When you're so young, as I was, you don't appreciate what you've actually done. It's only now in later years that I appreciate how big a thing the Fairs Cup win was for the club and the supporters, because basically since then Newcastle haven't won anything.

Who were your role models during your apprenticeship and the following formative years at Newcastle?

Frank Clark looked after me, so did Bob Moncur, who I still see quite regularly.

Can you remember anything about your time with England Youth?

I played a friendly game and then we played in a tournament - I think it was in Nice - against a load of Eastern Bloc countries. I don't remember too much more about it to be honest.

After nearly six years at Newcastle, and at a time when you should have been coming to your peak, you went down the leagues to Cardiff - how did that come about?

I didn't want to leave Newcastle, but what with having success early, I tapered off a bit. It's like Ryan Giggs - I'm not comparing me with him but he had a bad time and a lot of players do, but you've got to weather through and come out the other end. Joe Harvey decided to let me go probably because I wasn't playing very well; he'd already signed Malcolm MacDonald, Jimmy Smith and Terry Hibbitt, so I think my days were numbered anyway.

We came back from a friendly away from home which I played in where (Malcolm) Mc-



By
IS
DAVID SMITH

▶ Donald made his debut, and Joe Harvey called me in and said 'Cardiff have made an offer for you, do you want to go?' Cardiff had finished 3rd in the old Second Division the previous two years, and I thought well, it's not a bad move. I went to see their manager Jimmy Scoular, (ex-Portsmouth, Newcastle and Bradford P.A. player who died after a long illness the week after this interview took place) and did the deal. Newcastle never put me on the transfer list or anything, but Joe (Harvey) decided to let me go, so I went. Unfortunately, things went from bad to worse once I'd got to Cardiff. The trouble was that after I had a bad time at Newcastle, I thought I could regain my form at Cardiff, but I had an even worse time there. I was playing terrible and putting on weight. I was in the bottom of the trough after being on such a high from the early success at Newcastle; I was also a bit homesick because I'd never been away from home before.

Don't get me wrong, I loved Cardiff - it's a great place to live - but I had no excuses, I just wasn't playing well. In the reserves down there it was just like playing in a Sunday morning league (laughs); just terrible. I got disinterested and let myself go a bit.

Did Cardiff put you on the transfer list?

Alan Foggon's League record:

Newcastle: Signed Nov 1967

54 appearances 14 goals

Cardiff: Signed Aug 1971

14 appearances 1 goal

Boro: Signed Oct 1972

105 appearances 45 goals

Man Utd: Signed July 1976

0 appearances

Sunderland: Signed September 1976

7 appearances 0 goals

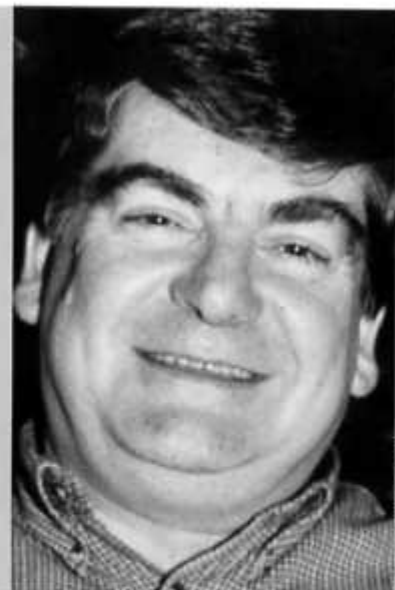
Southend: Signed June 1977

22 appearances 0 goals

Hartlepool: Signed (loan) February 1978

18 appearances 2 goals

"I fell out with Jack Charlton. He had to change the way the team played. He gave the team another option when he signed Boersma, in effect my replacement, although I don't think that arrangement worked out as Jack thought it would"



No, but I was called in by Jimmy Scoular and told that Stan Anderson had made an offer, and that I could go if I wanted to. Like a lot of people, I thought that Stan was about to achieve success for the Boro, and considering my form and fitness at the time, I was a bit touched by his faith in me. It was also a relief to be going back north for me and my wife, as we had only just got married.

At Boro, you scored on your full debut and went on to get 8 in 13 games that season (compared to 1 in a total of 14 games at Cardiff) - why did your form change so dramatically?

It only really started to happen for me at Boro after Stan resigned, because Shep started putting me in regularly and I was scoring goals. As you know, Stan wanted to play me, but I was carrying too much weight. Don't get me wrong, I was sorry to see Stan go, he's a smashing bloke. It was a real shock for all of us when he resigned.

Who were your buddies when you first joined Boro?

I roomed with Nobby Stiles, so we were quite pally.

With the departure of Stan and the arrival of Jack Charlton, how long did it take for you to feel settled at Boro?

I didn't feel really settled until Jack arrived, to be honest. All the players had a meeting when he first came and he was very frank with all of us (laughs). But he knew me from the good days when I was at Newcastle as a kid, so he knew what I could do. Because of what Jack had done as a player, everybody knew him, respected him and listened to what he said. He'd played nearly 700 games for Leeds, played for England in the World Cup, so young play-

ers are bound to listen to him. You might not agree with everything he says, mind (laughs) but you do listen. The most important thing that Jack brought to the Boro was organisation, and that was one of the reasons we had such a good defensive record under him.

What are your most unpleasant memories from your time at Boro?

The realisation that after 2 or 3 years of success at Boro, other teams had caught on how to beat our system - and the one who suffered mostly from that was me! After that, my role in the team changed. I felt I could play in other positions, but Jack disagreed. The FA Cup 6th round defeat at Birmingham (0-1) was particularly disappointing too, because we'd beaten them 3-0 twice in the league that season. But nobody played well that day. They scored from a corner with the only chance they had.

The same season, Boro were knocked out of the League Cup in the 5th round, 0-3 in a replay against Manchester United. You played in both games, but in the first game at Ayresome, the game ended 0-0 without Craggs, Murdoch or Mills. With all of them back in the team for the replay, you must have felt you had a better chance?

The thing is, we played well enough to win it at Ayresome, even without those players. That was the match we had to play in the afternoon because of the power cuts. The gate that day (36,005) was bolstered by the fact that it seemed like all of the kids in Middlesbrough had sick notes off school that afternoon!

After two seasons as an ever present, your appear-

ances tailed off dramatically in 75/6 - do you think it's fair to say that Charlton bought Boersma as a replacement for you?

Well, I fell out with Jack pre-season. He had to change the way the team played. He gave the team another option when he signed Boersma, and in effect, yes, he was my replacement, although I don't think that arrangement worked out as Jack thought it would.

Which games or moments stick in your mind as highlights of your Boro career?

Well, all of Boro's first season back in Division One was great for me because it felt like I'd come home; I'd been to all the top grounds when I was at Newcastle, so I felt I'd come full circle and showed certain people who had written me off what I was capable of.

How did you come to be playing in the North American Soccer League?

At the end of 75-76 Frank Spraggon and one or two of the other lads were contracted to play in the American league during the summer. Jack and me thought it would be a good idea for me to do it too. I've always had trouble getting fit at the beginning of the season so it made good sense. I got fixed up through an agent and went to Rochester (New Jersey). I knew it was near New York and Niagara falls, but nothing else otherwise I probably wouldn't have gone!

When I get there, we were in training camp in LA, and all the players were foreigners. They were Portuguese, Yugoslavians, but no English people, just a few American kids. And that was the team. It was terrible (laughs). The coach was Yugoslavian I think, and I was captain of a team, most of whom didn't speak English. It was all owned by an Italian guy, and in the end I fell out with him because the way it was being run was destroying the American kids, who were great.

Anyway, I was put on the 'waiver' which is like a transfer list which keeps your work visa open, otherwise you have to come home. Fortunately, Gordon Hindson (ex-Newcastle, Luton and Blackburn) was working as assistant to Bobby Thomson (ex-Wolves, Birmingham, Walsall and Luton) at Hartford, Connecticut. I grew up with Gordon in Newcastle and we were apprentices there together. He noticed I was available, then persuaded Bobby to take me on board, so it fitted in nicely. They took me on for the rest of the (American) season.

So how did you come to be a Manchester United player by the time you returned to England?

While I was at Hartford, I got a call telling me that Tommy Docherty would be in touch. I thought I was being wound up at first! Anyway, sure enough he phoned and I flew out to see him just over the border in Canada, at the Montreal Hilton. We did the deal in the early morning then had the rest of the day at the Olympics! I didn't want to leave Boro, but like I said the writing was on the wall.

So what happened then? You didn't even get to play for United before you were off to Sunderland.

After I'd been there a couple of months, United had a midweek cup game against Sunderland. I wasn't playing, but I was at the game. Anyway, after the game I was called from the players lounge to see Doc, and Bob Stokoe was in the office with him. Doc told me that Bob wanted to sign me, so we had a chat and I thought, well, this isn't a bad move for me. I still had my house in Middlesbrough but I was getting a bit unsettled living in a hotel in Manchester.

Anyway, I decided that I wanted to do it, and tried to contact my wife to see what she thought, and I just couldn't get hold of her. I had to make the decision that night, and so I stuck my neck out and signed. The first my wife knew of it was when Cliff Mitchell (Evening Gazette) called in to ask her what she thought of it. She'd always given me all the support I needed, so luckily, there was no problem.

Fair enough... but Sunderland?

Well even though I had not been at Manchester very long, Sunderland really suited me. I had a house ten miles from Roker, I knew most of the players, and Ian McFarlane (former Boro coach) was there too. I was just a squad player at United, and I had no illusions that I was anything else even when I signed. They had their



Picture: Colourpoint

team, and I was brought in as an experienced player, because they had a first team but they didn't have that many senior reserves. I didn't fall out with anyone, it just suited me at that time to move on.

Sunderland turned out to be poisoned chalice though eh?

Yeah. Stokoe signed me, then very soon afterwards resigned and Jimmy Adamson came in. He called all of the senior pros including me of course, into his office one by one and told us all that we would not ever play for him at Sunderland. Billy Hughes, Bobby Kerr, Dick Malone, Tommy Gibb and me; all of us were bombed out. We weren't even allowed to train with the kids; they trained in the morning, we trained in the afternoon, and he just totally split the club at a time when they were fighting relegation. So I was very unhappy because I'd only been there a couple of months. Adamson spoiled that club for two or

three years, and I haven't spoken to him since. Anyway, Dave Smith who was the trainer at Newcastle when I was a kid was the manager at Southend, and he made me an offer. I knew I wouldn't be playing for Sunderland under Adamson, so I was happy to go.

Had you now reached a point when you didn't know what to do next, career wise, or did you not think in those terms anyway?

Well... I'd been spoilt by the bigger crowds at my previous clubs. Southend were in the (old) Fourth Division, and I couldn't get into it... It just wasn't for me. I played most of the first half of the season. I'm not saying I didn't try, but to be honest, I felt like I was just going through the motions. Don't get me wrong, they had a canny team and got promoted behind Watford that season, but... (shrugs).

Anyway, half way through the season a loan to Hartlepool under Billy Horner came up so I came back home. George Smith (ex-Boro) was also there as well as Dick Malone and Tommy Gibb, (ex-Sunderland) so I felt quite comfortable. I played to the end of the season for them and walked out....after the last game I didn't go back at all.

But you were only 28 years old, Alan.....

Yeah, I was only 28, but... (pauses)...there were two things that season that made me want to pack up. Earlier that year when I was at Southend, they drew Derby County in second or third round of the Cup. Tommy Docherty was the Derby manager by then, so this was only a year after he'd signed me for Man U. Dave Smith didn't pick me for that game, and I thought, well, just a year ago I was at Manchester United, and now I can't even get into the Southend first team. That's not a nice feeling. The other thing was that when I went to Hartlepool, we played Swansea, who were really on the up at that time. They stuffed us 8-0. (pauses)... I couldn't believe it. We were beaten 8-0. I'd never been on the end of a defeat like that, I finished the season and didn't go back.

But that was such a waste - what did you think you were going to do?

I don't know. When I packed in playing it took me two or three years to get my head around not being a pro footballer and living in the real world. It was really difficult and I don't mind admitting it. The proper friends you have help you as much as you can, but in the end you've gotta get up and do something yourself.

You must have missed it...

Oh yeah, I missed everything. You get spoilt. Even 25 years ago at Boro when there wasn't so much money around, we stayed at the Waldorf. You miss the everyday things - even turning up at the ground and seeing the lads.

Are you suffering now from the effects of old injuries/Arthritis/Rheumatism?

No. I've never had a cartilage operation, never had a break or anything. It made me realise how lucky I've been when I saw Willie Maddren recently. That's just tragic. Also, Bobby Murdoch has big problems with his knees, Spike (David Armstrong) has a bad leg; a lot of old players suffer, but I've been lucky in that department.

If you had your career again, what if anything would you do differently?

Now that's a difficult question... (pauses)... If I was to be totally honest, I'd have stayed at Newcastle for all of my career. But you go



Picture: Thanks to Alan Moody

alan foggon mss interview alan foggon

Picture: Shaun Keogh



Willie's bra

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FOR THOSE WHO don't remember him, Willie Maddren was an outstanding central defender in the Boro teams of the late 1960s to mid 1970s, including starring in Jack Charlton's all-conquering 1974 promotion side. His career was curtailed by injury in his mid-twenties but he later returned to manage the Boro in the mid-1980s under very difficult circumstances. Now he is dying of Motor Neurone Disease while still only in his late forties.

I'd have to say that Willie Maddren is the best defender I've seen play in a Boro shirt, and the best uncapped player by a long way. This book takes you through his career from playing for Boro Juniors whilst still at school to his first team debut as a substitute and his goalscoring full debut. There are detailed accounts of his playing days, particularly of the Charlton era and of his colleagues such as

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The Autobi

It's great to see Willie Maddren's story

through life making decisions, and we all make mistakes, for which you can only blame yourself. You know, I look back and think maybe I've wasted some of the talent I was given. But on the other hand, I was on the books of Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Manchester United and Sunderland - how many people can say that? No-one can take that away from me.

Do you actively support or go to watch any team these days?

I'm not that much in touch. I went to Boro's home game against Sheffield United this season. I'm fortunate that in my job, I can get in through customers if I really want to. But I wouldn't dream of phoning up any of my old clubs and saying 'I'm Alan Foggon, can I have a ticket for this or that match'. I may have come across to some people as something different in the past, but these days I'm really quite shy actually.

Is the rumour about the announcement in the *Yellow Rose* true? (Allegedly, 45 minutes before kick-off at Ayresome, an announcement came over the PA system: 'Would Alan Foggon please report to Ayresome Park immediately')

(Laughs) It wouldn't have been in the *Yellow Rose*, that was Souness's pub! It's a story that has changed with each telling. I was actually at Newport working men's club. It was a match day, but I wasn't playing or required to attend, so on these occasions, I used to go and have a game of snooker. Anyway, the sub got injured, so they needed another first team player and they knew where I was, so I got a phone call. I think that's how that one started.

Who do you rate in the current Boro line up?

Obviously Merson is a class player, and Alun Armstrong looks good. They're a good solid team, but whether they'll be a solid team in the Premier League is another matter. I think they'll have to sign some defenders. Pearson is superb but he must be feeling it now. Branca has started well but I'm not convinced he'll last.

When you attended Willie Maddren's function, had you not seen most of the people for many years, or do you still keep in touch with some?

I hadn't seen any of them for twenty odd years so it was a really cracking night; it was great to see them all again. Jack (Charlton) was the guest speaker. I'm very pally with Jack. I probably get on better with Jack than all the people I played with.

What do you think of Boro's foreign player problems of the past year or two?

Well, Robson made his choices, but you've got to say, he was unlucky; they shouldn't have been relegated. Like many people, I'd like to see more local born players, but 'foreign' players is not that new a thing. I mean, when I first got in the Newcastle team, me, Frank Clark and Pop Robson were the only English lads. All the others were Scots or Irish!

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