## mss at the Charlton's Champions book launch...

## Those were the days...

## by Shaun Keogh

AAAH, NOSTALGIA. It's not what it used to be. Still, a quiet amble along the well worn path of Jack Charlton's promotion winning squad is fine by me, because, this was indeed my time. A time of wide lapel shirts and Roy Wood records: a time of Raleigh Choppers and pathetic fumbling with your girlfriend's clothing in the park. A time when my sixth year of going to watch the Boro was rewarded big time. It is difficult to put into words exactly what it meant to me. living as I was then in Stevenage. (Where just like Gazza, I too have slumped in a drunken stupor onto the floor of the railway station - if you've ever been to Stevenage you'll know that this is the only condition to be in to ease your entrance into this place that John Cooper-Clarke famously labelled 'Chickentown').

It was okay for you lot who still lived in the Boro up to 1974 - you could cry on each other's shoulders in previous years as poor old Stan Anderson's team missed out yet again. I had to put up with an unbelievable amount of stick from all the Chelsea, Arsenal, Spurs and, of course, Manchester United fans that formed the core of football 'experts' in my school. It wasn't as if I could be called a glory seeker - my colours had been on the mast since we moved to Chickentown in 1972.

The euphoria was unbelievable - this holy grail of promotion actually being achieved gave me the feeling that Neil Armstrong must have felt when he walked on the moon and was not immediately liquidised by a team of crack Vogon stormtroopers from the planet Tharg.

The only way that the feeling could have been better is if it had happened a

the manuscript, and hey presto, a guaranteed stocking filler/top up birthday present for the young, and (it must be said), mostly old. The book is basically a game by game account of the season, with most of it I presume lifted from Cliff Mitchell's *Gazette* match reports of the day. The match details are interspersed with interviews conducted with the main players and Jack Charlton. There is plenty of trivia in-between, a rake of photographs, some of which I'd certainly never seen before, and enough statistics to keep Paul Readman quiet for ooh... a couple of minutes, for sure.

This is an easy to read look back on what was an historic season for the Boro. These days, younger fans take promotion back into the Premier League for granted every time Boro get relegated. This was Boro's first promotion for 38 long years. Just think about that. There were some people who went to their graves never having seen a Boro side promoted. Gordon Cox's book is very well

## "This was Boro's first promotion for 38 years, Just think about that..."

couple of years earlier. By 1974 I had developed an all consuming interest in the opposite sex, and added to that, football was not very cool in those days. It would have been perfect if only promotion could have been achieved before my hormones kicked in, because then I would have believed that this really was absolutely the best feeling in the whole entire complete universe. So, a splendid idea sprang to the mind of John Wilson, the man who originally conceived this work; why not put a special 25th anniversary book together documenting that fantastic season?

Gordon Cox comes on board to write



researched, and the acknowledgement section at the front is interesting not for who he mentions, more for who he does not mention. It seems that there was no assistance at all from MFC.

However, maybe he didn't tell them he was doing it in case they rushed into print before him with an 'official' version. The book was launched at a gala dinner at the Ladle in Acklam on May 8th, to which I was privileged to be invited. Most of the squad were there, and after the dinner ended, we all went back to the Blue Bell where, clearly everybody had a raging thirst. The Dinner was attended by 310 people, and £2,500 was raised on the night for Willie Maddren's MND Fund.

■ Charltons' Champions by Gordon Cox £12.99. Published by Juniper Publishing, Liverpool. ISBN 0-9528-6223-9.

Left: The Boro team of 1974 line up for the cameras. Now then, let's see how many you recognise... there's Jim Platt next to John Hickton... Spike on the front row...

