



# Shaun Keogh

## Cottage pie

**D**ue to printer's error, we had far more copies of the last edition of MSS than was needed, so at Fulham I rounded up Steve '32 inch waist' Smith, Tim Spafford and Andrew. We positioned ourselves at the away turnstiles as people were going in, handing them a FREE pie and a FREE magazine. Most of the recipient's eyes glazed over – "what? FREE? No, come here, here's a quid, get yourself a cup of tea. And a f\*\*\*\*\*g haircut, hippie".

The three of us kept dashing for replenishments back to where we had left the pies and mags with Tim, who we had fore-armed with a baseball bat. We explained to an ashen-faced Tim that this was to fend off Phil Stamp, just in case he got a whiff of the pies from the changing room.

Using the 'fat bastard' ploy, Steve Smith approached one of the coppers who were eyeing us suspiciously, to explain what we were doing. The PC replied that it was no problem, but could Steve approach a nearby colleague who the officer pointed out, (who was HUGE) and offer him a pie, saying that he looked like he could do with one. Fearlessly, Smith obliged. The guy was too gobsmacked to respond verbally.

He took the pie though.

While I was handing out my allocation of freebies, a couple of watching policemen got curious and asked if they could have a pie and a mag. I laughed and said "Oh no, it's just for the Boro fans" and one of the coppers, pointing to his colleague said in a familiar accent "Hey, mate, the pie is for him, I just want the magazine – I'm from Stockton."

**T**he FA Cup victory against Manchester United was a landmark for the club on many levels. I was fresh at my desk the following Monday at the crack of noon, and as usual, broke the day in with some fine Earl Grey tea, buttered toast, kippers and a newspaper brought to me by my Ukrainian work experience house girl.

Oh all right, I made up the bit about the kippers.

The landmark in question is that the Boro featured on *The Times* letters

## t-shirts

£10 each

(inc post & packing). Cheques made payable to MSS. XL and medium in royal blue, ash grey or white. State your second choice of colour, with your name, address and a contact phone number or email address (in case we run out of the size/colour you want). Send to Shaun Keogh, Two Brewers, Mill End, Herts SG9 0RW.



### Heaven-sent victory

From the Reverend R. A. Morris

Sir, You suggested (Sports Daily, January 26) that Middlesbrough needed "a miracle" to beat Manchester United in their FA Cup match.

May we now assume that future reporting of the team's matches will be in the hands of your Religious Affairs Correspondent?

Yours etc,  
RAY MORRIS,  
3 Medina Gardens,  
Middlesbrough TS5 8BN.  
[raykate@themorrisres.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:raykate@themorrisres.freereserve.co.uk)  
January 27.

page. I doubt that this has happened before, even on the occasion that Steve Smith made it to his seat before kick-off. Mind you, if I may digress, his punctuality is getting better. Maybe it's because he is about seven bags of shi... sorry, seven bags of sugar – lighter than he was a year ago. And food poisoning gets such a bad press; e-coli has its good points, you know.

Anyway, the writer of the letter, a Reverend Morris, has a point. Introducing religious terms into a football piece leaves the door open for the opposite to be done. What if Reverend Morris and his colleagues started using footballing terms to explain The Bible? Perhaps it would work something like this (Note: there is much in the following that will mean nothing to

under 35s, or those who have not seen the *Life Of Brian* or indeed those who were brought up under a rock):

"Well, Mary and Joseph were away from home. They were a bit reluctant to go into the Shed, in case they got their head kicked in by passing Chelsea fans, sorry, Roman Centurions so once they saw the stable and got in there, we bought on the boy Jesus as an extra man. (By the way, this story is sponsored by Virgin.)

He's got a lovely first touch that boy, my leprosy cleared up in a few days; however, Herod, who is a representative of the opposing side, got a bit of the hump early doors about the halo. Where the boy Jesus got that, I don't know; probably stole it from Gary Lineker.

The night before the final big match, Jesus and his posse – he's a bit posh, so he calls them his 'disciples' – they went out and had a few bottles of 'vino de communion' and a bite to eat. No seafood though. They've all had enough of bread and fish at the moment.

They wanted a band to play for them, and they thought about booking The Rolling Stones; but Mick & Co were too old even then. And, I tell ya, it's a good job they didn't book the Stones. It would sound stupid if the evening had become known as 'The Rolling Stones Supper' wouldn't it? I mean, that sounds like a beggars banquet. It was real good of James Last to come all the way from Germany. It was even better that he went back, mind...

So, onto the match. Jesus had to go in goal for a while, and played really well, a ball came in from the right, and oh yes!

Jesus saves! He wouldn't go near the 'D' of the penalty area though, says it made His halo look insignificant.

The boy Jesus is naturally laid-back, preferring the anonymity of the wing where He can hand out copies of The Watchtower to the crowd; The poor lad was distracted and says He never saw the cross coming, so they just nailed Him. The crowd were baying for his blood, and we all thought it was curtains for the boy.

Anyway, He resurrected His career over the Easter period, and now His fans....well, they treat Him like a bloody Deity. I keep saying, Brian, He's not Kieron Dyer, He's a very naughty boy."

I was on the tiny Channel Island of Alderney (three miles by one mile at its widest point) during part of January. The island has 2,000 inhabitants, and among them, I spotted a bloke, across a bar, wearing a Boro shirt. I was far too full of vodka to stand, let alone go over and talk, but I was assured he was a local. I have been privileged to travel a lot in the past year, and it is amazing the places where you see Boro shirts. It makes you wonder how many of the people around you are Boro fans, but just not wearing a shirt? Perhaps we should all have "MUG" tattooed across our foreheads. No, hang on a bit – that'll confuse us with the fans of Hear'say. Both of them.

**B**oro fans who learned the art of shouting and swearing at the players and storming from the ground promising "never EVER to return and watch this shite" during the years 1962-65, will remember the name Mel Nurse. (I am too young to remember, so I don't know if he was ever accorded the honour of having his name lengthened to "Oh no, not "f\*\*\*\*\*g Mel Nurse again").

Mel, a centre half, played 124 games for the Boro and was team captain for a while, before moving onto Swindon in September 1965.

Born in Swansea, Mel started and finished his career with his home town club. He clearly invested his £8 per week wages wisely like his mam told him, as he is now a very wealthy businessman, based – that's right – in Swansea.

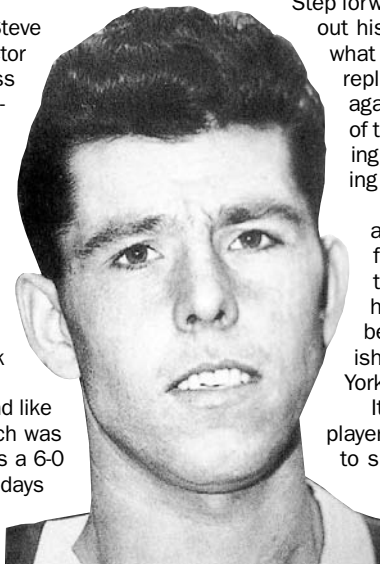
Like many lower league clubs, Swansea have had a few dodgy owners over the years, and Mel has been on the board for a while, trying to keep the club going, notwithstanding massive debts. A short while ago, he suddenly resigned from the board, and bought the clubs' debt of £801,000, making it payable to him by Australian Tony Petty, the then owner of Swansea FC. Not a lot compared to the £16m or so that Everton owe, but a substantial sum all the same.

Since then, Mel and a consortium of businessmen and fans have purchased the club. Mel has made it clear that financial assistance from others will be needed to put the club back on a firm footing, but at least the people of Swansea now feel that they have their club back, and it is in the hands of people who care.

It is a similar story to how our own Steve Gibson climbed the greasy pole from director to chairman in a game of boardroom chess with fellow directors such as Mike McCullagh and Alf Duffield. Although Gibson did not buy all of the clubs £2m debt, he formed a consortium of himself, ICI, Scottish and Newcastle Breweries and Middlesbrough council to do so.

The main difference is that Mel Nurse is 65 years old this year, whereas Gibson was about 14. He used to go to board meetings wearing short trousers with a catapult hanging out the back pocket. Honest.

I just hope Mel's venture does not end like his Boro career did. His last game, (which was his replacement Dickie Rooks debut) was a 6-0 hammering at Huddersfield. Literally two days later, he was off to Swindon, probably to smarten the place up ready for Arthur Horsfield's arrival four years later.



**Mel Nurse – so famous two Spice Girls were named after him (honest!)**



**O**n 29th November I was invited to the Blue Bell Hotel to attend another former Boro players event, 'Boro Legends', organised to raise church funds by the very hospitable Blue Bell manager, Ron Darby. (I don't know why religion keeps creeping into this – let's pray it doesn't happen again. Jesus wept.)

One of the former players to appear was a Boro-born lad who, before the recent cup win against Manchester United, was the man who scored the only goal of the game (after two minutes, no less) the last time Boro beat United in a Cup tie.

Step forward Malcolm Smith, almost unrecognisable without his permed hair. One of the audience asked him what was the highlight from his time at Boro, and he replied: "Well, being a Boro lad, making my debut against Sunderland and scoring the only two goals of the game takes some beating." Lets face it, beating the mackems is much more satisfying than beating United any day.

After his storming debut, Smith was very much a bit player in Jack Charlton's squad, making 32 full appearances and a whopping 24 as substitute over four full seasons. During this time, he had short loan periods at Bury and Blackpool before spending three years at Burnley. He finished his professional career with one season at York City.

It got me thinking. I wonder how many other Boro players had a fantastic debut, but were unfortunate to suffer the ignominy of mediocrity or worse from that day forward? Now there's an idea for a future mss article.

As you can probably see from the photographs, Stuart Boam and Eric McMordie had

**Dishing out free mags and pies at Fulham, we kept dashing back to where we had left the pies with Tim; we told him the baseball bat was to fend off Phil Stamp, just in case he got a whiff of the pies from the changing room**



**Above: At the Blue Bell. John Hickton; David Mills, Gordon Jones, Alan Peacock, Malcolm Smith (at very back), Frank Spraggon, John Hickton, Stuart Boam and Eric McMordie; Stuey and Eric (all pics by Shaun)**

**Right: Shaun look-a-like Bill Gates**

heard a rumour that the alcohol was about to run out, and proceeded to do the only sensible thing. They made themselves insensible. However, they were both great fun. While Stuart Boam had the mike during the Q & A, the audience kept bursting into the old chant "Six foot two, eyes of blue, Stuey Boam is after you" joined occasionally by Boamy himself. You had to be there, but it was very funny.

Gordon Jones looked great, and is now free of the leukaemia that he suffered up until a year ago. The last time we spoke, he was about two stones lighter, but this was one occasion where it was great to see someone putting on some weight. Eric McMordie was so happy he literally fell off his stool with laughter seconds after the photographs in the bar were taken. It is so nice to see the camaraderie and pure friendship that has grown between all of these men over a period of more than 40 years.

I worked out that the group made a combined total of 2640 appearances and scored 507 goals for Boro. Most of the goals (333) came from two of the most potent goal machines that the club has ever seen – Alan Peacock and John Hickton.

In terms of appearances, Gordon Jones with 527 Boro appearances and Hickton with 473 games have made more appearances than any other living Boro player. Out of the entire group, only Malcolm Smith made less than 200 appearances in a Boro shirt. There is no doubting the credibility of this group of former players.

Alan Peacock – some of you will not have heard of him, but he played alongside Brian Clough, and he is 65 years old in October. The bastard honestly does not look a day over 40, even close-up. Like I said – bastard.

During the evening, Alan Peacock revealed that he underwent a very stringent medical when he joined Leeds from Boro.

He had arranged to meet Don Revie and Leeds trainer Les Cocker at a motorway service station

for talks, and he took his mate, Boro's Gordon Jones along with him. The talks went further than was expected, and Revie produced a contract for Peacock to sign. Alan said "What about a medical?" as he had recently been injured. So Les Cocker grabbed one of his legs and twisted it this way and that, nodded to Revie who then said to Alan "Okay, now sign." He signed.

"The thing is," Peacock added with a laugh, "he twisted the wrong bloody leg."

I know that it is documented elsewhere in this issue, but I would like to send my thanks to Newboulds and the *Evening Gazette* for their sponsorship of the MSS party this year. You wouldn't believe how much I have to grovel to these people, all for the Queen's shilling and a few lousy pies.

Actually, in fairness, the pies are great, and I don't even like pork pies. I managed to limit myself to eating just two on the way back from picking them up in Middlesbrough the day before the MSS party.

We received a great deal of publicity for the *Gazette*, Newboulds and MSS, some of which we still don't even know exactly what it was. For example, before the game, I took 100 of the pies from Kings Cross to the party venue in a cab, and the driver knew all about the pies, the party, and the Boro connection from something he had heard on the radio that morning. Oh and he had had that bird out of Emmerdale in the cab last night.

I then had to dive down the tube with the remaining 50 pies to get to the match in sarf west London, surfacing on the way at Victoria and into the nearest pub to do a pre-arranged four way interview on Radio Cleveland with Clem, Fisch and none other than Michael Newbould himself. During the course of an intense, cerebral interview, I learned that Newboulds used to supply about 10,000 pies to each match at Ayresome back in the 1950s and 1960s. If that wasn't enough, Mr Newbould thinks I look



# Shaun Keogh



more like Bill Gates (the ex-Boro player, not the geek) than Sam Fox, a name which Steve and Clare Smith have been calling me lately.

In light of this, I'm with the Smiths. I'd rather have Sam Fox to twiddle with than Bill Gates' ears.

**A**s I have mentioned a Newcastle player by name (purely, you will understand because it is the only footballers name I could think of which rhymes with 'messiah') I should mention a Sunderland one. Only this time, it is for all the right reasons.

As I am sure you are all aware, Niall Quinn has announced that he is donating all of the proceeds from his testimonial game to third world children's charities. This is a magnificent gesture from somebody who was under no obligation whatsoever to do such a thing.

As the letter writer stated, for young aspiring footballers, Niall Quinn is the sort of footballing role model who is really worthwhile. He plays for a shite team, mind.

**T**he career of former Boro defender Craig Harrison is in the balance. Harrison, a 24-year-old Gateshead lad and a product of the Boro academy, was sold to Crystal Palace by Bryan Robson in 2000 for £200,000. Curiously, the Boro figure for this transfer is £500,000. Perhaps this was based on appearances.

Last season he made 30 out of 46 league appearances. However, he also suffered a potentially fatal burst appendix. Anyway, he worked his way back to fitness. On 10th January while playing for Crystal Palace reserves, he suffered an agonising and career threatening compound leg fracture. I understand that this is a not dissimilar injury to that which finished the career of Coventry's David Busst back in 1996. We can all remember the dreadful press photographs of his lower leg snapped in two. Harrison has been told that his injury is not as bad as first thought, and that he could be back in action next season. However it will be a long, hard road to recovery.

In the course of researching this information, I came across

[www.craigharrison.fan-site.co.uk](http://www.craigharrison.fan-site.co.uk). This is what it says it is, but the lady who set it up has probably got a proper boyfriend now, because the site hasn't been updated for a year.

Best of luck, Craig, we at mss are thinking of you. Maybe some of our members will send him a card: Craig Harrison, c/o Crystal Palace Football Club, Selhurst Park, London SE25 6PU.

**O**n page 14 of MSS 135, a letter was published from MSSer Craig Moore, detailing his correspondence with Richard Whitehead, the editor of the *Times Football Handbook*, for whom I write the Boro section. Craig wrote to Richard complaining about the spelling of 'Middlesborough' in the August edition. A few days before this edition came out, Richard phoned me, in a pretty foul sounding mood, to tell me of this cock-up. It's a tribute to his professionalism that he was more annoyed about it than I ever could be. Richard asked me to not say anything to anybody to keep any damage minimal. I haven't breathed a word about it until now, and of all the e-mails that my work for the *Times Football Handbook* generates, none mentioned the mis-spelling.

But, you know, even though I am not making excuses, the guy who made that cock-up was almost certainly not a Boro fan. He never grew up scrawling the word on books, walls, pencil cases and the foreheads of vanquished enemies. However, here at MSS over the past couple of months, a match report arrived making exactly the same spelling mistake and, last season, from the same person, another match report referred to Boro's '3-5-3' formation. I always thought it was Manchester United who played with a rush goalie. (Don't worry, I won't be upsetting anybody by writing this – it wasn't from a Boro fan and we didn't print it anyway.)

It brings to mind the old joke about Peter Reid, a typewriter and the complete works of Shakespeare. ■

● **PLEASE NOTE:** The author is happy for any part of this work to be reproduced, as long as he is credited on the page as the author and is notified which publication it is to be used in. [shaunkeogh@aol.com](mailto:shaunkeogh@aol.com)

*I should get around to interviewing Hugh McClmoyle later this year. Please send me your questions. Many MSSers did this for the Bryan Robson piece, and it was very helpful to get a cross-section of questions, so please do the same for Hughie*