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Pigeon-toed

While researching recently, I came across the record of a certain Harry Bamford. There is no Boro connection here, as Harry played only for Bristol Rovers – nearly 500 times in fact between 1946 and 1958. Then as now, footballers caused ripples of disbelief, envy and a lot of head scratching among the general public. So what did Mr Bamford do? He caused a few columns of newsprint to be written because he admitted that his silky skills were down to the fact that he practised by dribbling around his racing pigeons that he kept in his yard. Can you imagine Benito Carbone coming out with that?

Next thing we know, cash-strapped London clubs will be holding training sessions in Trafalgar Square.

I was back at my Boro residence, the Blue Bell Hotel, in March. This time, the gentleman's evening for former Boro players was attended by Arthur Horsfield, Dickie Rooks, Frank Spraggon, David Mills, David Armstrong, Mark Proctor, David Hodgson, Terry Cochrane and, in the audience, a worryingly frail-looking George Hardwick. Representing MFC were Dave Allan and website head-honcho Mike McGeary. Questionmaster was Ray Robertson, who the old gits will remember from the *Sunday Sun*. Ray had some very complimentary things to say about this magazine, which was praise indeed.

During the course of the evening, a questioner from the floor asked if any of the players could remember who was the first named substitute for the Boro. I, like many I am sure, thought "What a stupid question". Anyway, I think it was Frank Spraggon who answered (correctly) that it was 'Taffy' Orritt, back in 1965. At this point, the questioner pointed to a chap on his table and said "...correct! And here he is." To everybody's surprise, it really was Bryan 'Taffy' Orritt.

I spoke to him afterwards, and he told me that he had returned to England a couple of years ago. (He emigrated to South Africa in 1966) but that he was going back to Africa by the end of April. He agreed to an interview, which we set up for 9th April. Not a day too soon I discovered, because he told me during our subsequent meeting that he was flying out the very next day. The interview will appear in a future issue, but for the time being, Orritt is pictured below at the Blue Bell sitting in the front row on the far left, next to Frank Spraggon.

I think that the last time I went to a match on a coach was back in 1972 to Blackpool, which funny enough was David Armstrong's debut for Boro (see my interview with him on the previous pages). I was therefore not keen on going to the semi-final on the MSS coach, and boy was that a wise move judging by the foul mood everyone was in when I met them on the Old Trafford concourse. I had been in the north-west since the previous Thursday having the most fun you can have without actually laughing, so when I arrived in fine spirits at the MSS pub to find no MSSers, I was a bit surprised until I phoned Steve Smith who told me they were still on the M6.

In the circumstances, there was nothing for it but to start without them, something that Kilvo and his crew had clearly done – they started the night before. The atmosphere in this little pub was excellent; Mark Fischer and BBC Radio Cleveland were doing a live broadcast, and Kilvo was teaching a bunch of assembled youngsters a selection of 'Songs From The Holgate End (1966-74)'. It was quite something to see these young lads in total awe of this teenager in his mid-forties.

Kilvo has everything organised to emigrate to Australia, but told me that he had delayed everything until the cup run was over. All very well in practice, but I got the feeling afterwards that if the Boro had won the FA Cup, then Kilvo would have stayed to glory in the success of the club he has followed so loyally (and, it must be said, LOUDLY) for so many years.

After the match when we were saying what may be our last goodbyes, I thought back on all the years that Kilvo has followed Boro, through thick but mostly very thin and said, 'How, Kilvo, bugger off to Oz – you're a f*****g jinx, man.' ■

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Southampton Football Club, hang your heads in shame. Perhaps we should have a chant at matches to really get the message home and confound those who won't have a clue what we are on about, and won't see the joke. How about "There's only one 'O' in Boro"?



Above: Fischer does the business for BBC Radio Cleveland; while (below) Kilvo teaches the youngsters a thing or two



Back row: Rooks, Cochrane, person unknown, Hodgson, Mills, Armstrong. Front row: Orritt, Spraggon, Horsfield, Proctor

