

Shaun Keogh



You missed a great night

My sincere thanks and appreciation go to all MSSers and their guests who helped to make the Boro Ball such a cracking night. The whole evening was run by myself and three others, whose sterling voluntary assistance meant that everybody else could simply relax and enjoy themselves. Therefore, my thanks go to Tim Spafford and Peter Warren for manning the door, and to Gerard Walker for selling a huge amount of raffle tickets.

The evening was sponsored for the fourth consecutive year by the Evening Gazette and Newboulds Pies; their support is very much appreciated. In addition, Boro TV supplied us with a huge amount of raffle prizes.

Last but by no means least, MFC supplied us with some excellent raffle prizes in the form of signed shirts, books and a matchball. Dave Allan, Boro's communications officer was very patient in acceding to my specific requests.

Our special guest, Willie Whigham, did not look to be in very good health so we owe him our thanks for making the effort to come down from Scotland with his brother-in-law. I left them in the capable hands of Rob Nichols from FMTM when I departed, as they were staying at the same hotel as him and looked like they were in for a bit of a drinking session.

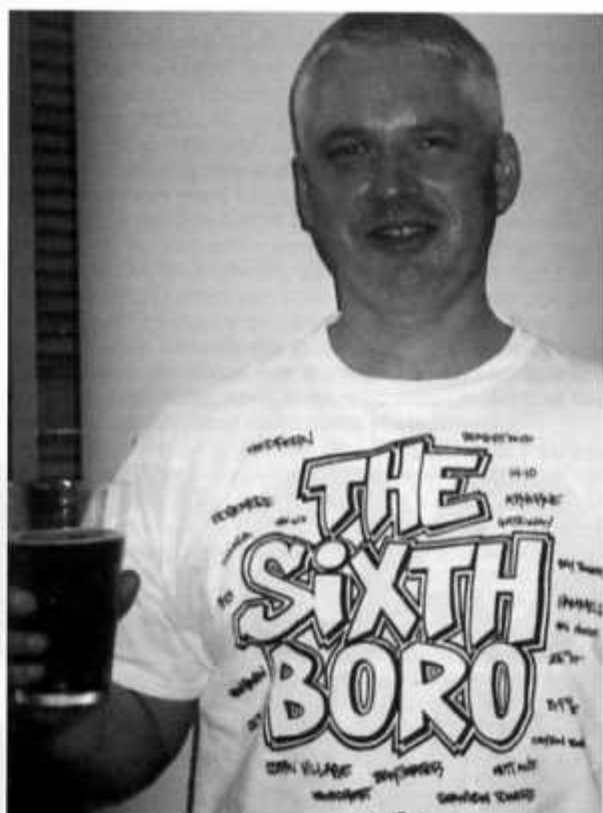
On texting Rob the day after to check that everybody got back to the hotel safely, his reply gave me a chuckle. He said that he got them back to the Hotel eventually, but his biggest problem was "extracting the Scotsmen from the bar."

The out of court settlement that was agreed between MFC and Liverpool in early March over the Christian Ziege affair rather took the wind out of my sails. As mentioned in the last issue of *mss*, I was preparing a piece detailing the whole saga, in anticipation of Boro winning a substantial payout and making an announcement of the fact.

Both clubs' issued statements recently simply saying that agreement had been reached, and that neither club would be making any further comment on the matter. It is anybody's guess as to the detail of the settlement, but my view is that the Boro won that substantial settlement, but that the terms of it forbids them from announcing it and shaming Liverpool.

Steve Gibson was contemptuous of Liverpool Football Club during our meeting, which resulted in the piece in the last edition of *mss*. Ironically, the meeting took place a couple of hours before the Boro played Liverpool at the Riverside earlier this season; Gibson described the Merseyside club as "a disgrace." Describing the tension between the clubs at that time he continued: "There will be no representation from Liverpool in our boardroom today, (although) we always invite them. When (the Boro) are at Liverpool, I boldly walk into their boardroom and shake everyone's hand." After a slight pause he adds tellingly: "I'd rather smack him on the nose, (Rick) Parry, but you need some dignity in the game." Rick Parry is the Chief Executive of Liverpool Football Club and in his former role as Chief Executive of the Premier League was involved in drawing up the rules to which all Premier League clubs must adhere. There is clearly no love lost here as Gibson continues: "He is the author of the rules, he understands the rules and he continues to break them."

Pictures by Paul Thompson and Shaun Keogh



Boro fans will remember that the issue behind this dispute is that MFC claimed an illegal approach to Ziege by Liverpool, and that the consequences of the subsequent transfer of Ziege were costly to MFC, for which they should be recompensed. The whole affair certainly blew Bryan Robson's plans out of the water. When this writer interviewed Robson in MSS 131 at the end of 2000, he said that he was still looking for a left-sided midfielder to replace Ziege, who had departed in the previous August. We all know now that Robson never did find that player.

Gibson's view on the whole affair is that this is not the first time that Liverpool have acted in such a way: "Look at Liverpool's conduct with (Dietmar) Hamman when he went from Newcastle; the way that they (Liverpool) were involved with Leeds (and the transfer of) Harry Kewell; the way that they dealt with Everton and Nick Barmby. Then I see (Gerard) Houllier have the bare faced cheek to complain about a newspaper report that Chelsea were interested in Steven Gerrard. Talk about double standards. The (Premier League) clubs' are governed by the rules of the Premier League and the Chairman's Charter, and (it)is only Liverpool that I would claim act outside of those rules. That's why we want to stuff it right up them both on and off the pitch."

Compelling stuff. I wondered how much money Boro had spent so far on this case? "Not a penny," replied Gibson. I comment that this, on its own must be very satisfying; with a grin he replies "Yeah, we're having fun." So Liverpool are out of pocket? "We know that we have cost Liverpool a huge amount of money, because up until now (22 November 2003) out of the five court skirmishes we have had, (Boro) have won four, and

Above: Ex-Boro player in the late 1960s David Chadwick; a 'Boro' fan from Queens in New York

lost one, but we won that one back on appeal. I am looking forward to seeing Mr Parry and Mr Houllier in the witness box under cross examination by a QC; it will be pure theatre. All we can do is tell the truth. I know that Liverpool have not been honest; they have not been truthful."

It's been one hell of a time for Gibson since 29th February. The Carling Cup, a UEFA place, the freedom of the Boro being bestowed by Middlesbrough Council and (as it looks from where I am) 'stuffing it up' Liverpool.

I bet he can't wait to walk into their boardroom and shake their hands with a dignified grin when Boro play at Anfield on 1st May.

The week after the Boro Ball I visited the USA, and arranged to meet up for a few beers with David Chadwick while in Nashville. Chaddy was keen to get his hands on some UK soccer magazines and anything connected with the Boro, so as well as some Boro match-day programmes and a few copies of *FourFourTwo*, I gave him the recent *mss* which featured the interview with his former manager at the Boro, Stan Anderson.

After a few days in Nashville, I headed for Wyoming, to point my snowboard down the extremely challenging mountain at Jackson Hole. This necessitated a change of aeroplane at Denver, where I spotted the chap in the picture. I was intrigued at what "The Sixth Boro" was, so I decided to approach and ask. It turns out that it relates to Queens, which is the sixth Borough of New York, which is where Paul Morin (pictured) is from. ■