

McIlmoyle – The Legend Of Brunton Park

By Gordon L Routledge

ISBN 1904147070

Arthuret Publishers 2004. £16.50

Available on-line:

www.bookscumbria.com

This book was actually published in 2004, but only came to my attention by chance recently. I figured that there must be quite a few Boro fans out there who are unaware of this enjoyable book about a player who made a huge impact in his short time at Ayresome Park.

Hugh McIlmoyle was brought to Ayresome by manager Stan Anderson seven weeks into season 1969-70 when the team were struggling in mid-table after not being out of the top six all through the previous season.

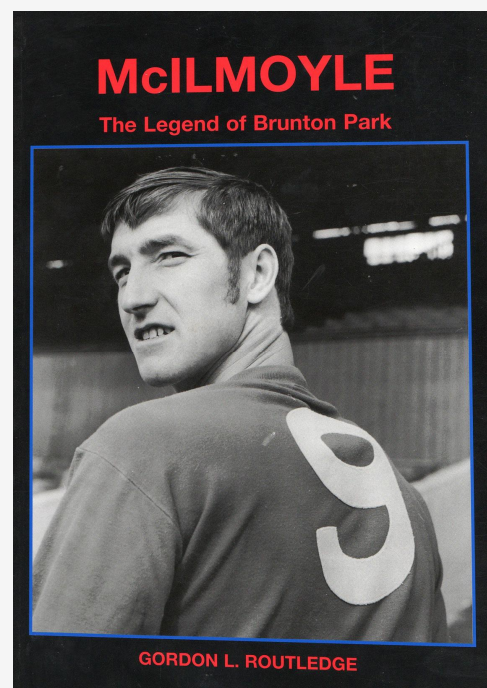
Anderson recognised that Boro were too reliant on goal machine John Hickton and that McIlmoyle, who had been instrumental in Carlisle's 3-0 drubbing of Boro the previous season, could be a tremendous asset, especially with his magnificent power and skill in the air.

McIlmoyle made an inauspicious debut for the Boro in a Second Division match at Blackpool in September 1969, taking his customary number nine shirt from the grasping hands of the previous user, Stan Webb.

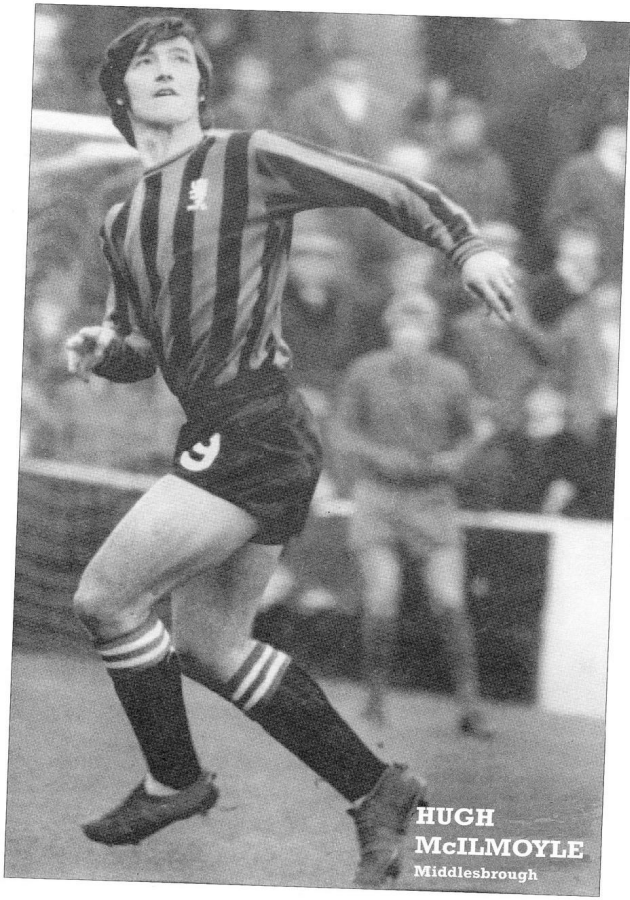
Unfortunately, Hugh and his family did not settle on Teesside, and at the end of the following season he was on his way to Preston, his seventh club.

However, heroes can be made in a moment. Even though McIlmoyle was always popular with the Ayresome crowd, his iconic status was achieved in a 6-2 win against Queens Park Rangers in September 1970, forever after referred to as "The McIlmoyle Match," such was his domination of Boro's fight back from 0-2 down within 15 minutes.

He also scored a superb headed goal against the then mighty West Ham in an FA Cup 3rd round game in January 1969. West Ham trotted out all the skills that day, and fielded 1966 World Cup Winners Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters. A 2-1 win on a frozen Ayresome pitch saw Second Division Boro on their way to the 6th round of the FA Cup for the first time since 1947.



This book covers McIlmoyle's life from his youth in Port Glasgow through his playing career which included three spells at Carlisle as well as taking in Leicester City, Rotherham, Wolves, Bristol City, Boro, Preston and Morton. The fact that the author is a Carlisle fan is reflected in the text (not to mention the title) but this is not to the detriment of sections concerning Hugh's other clubs; indeed McIlmoyle's time at Boro is covered in some detail.

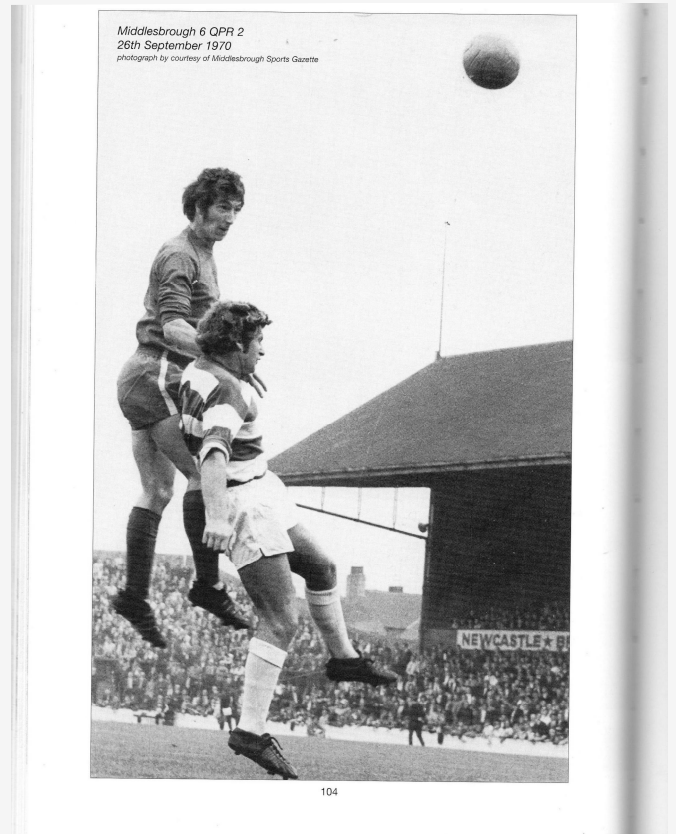


The author has kept personal narrative to a minimum, favouring the question and answer style favoured by many fanzine writers. This makes it the type of book where you could open it at virtually any page and pick up the story within a few sentences.

When talking about his time at the Boro, Hugh's recollections of events are not always accurate. Now, it would be unfair to criticise McIlmoyle for having the odd memory lapse - he is 66 years old now and played nearly 500 games as a pro, for goodness sake - but there are some sections where the author could have checked the accuracy of Hugh's recollections.

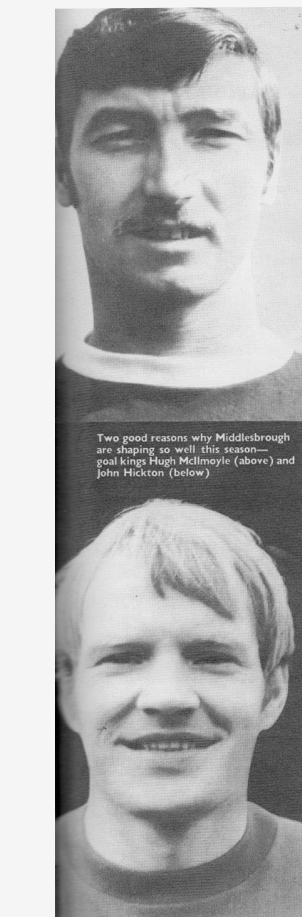
For example, he gets details mixed up regarding the epic FA Cup encounters with Manchester United in 1970 and 1971, and refers to the FA Cup match against West Ham referred to above as a League game.

This is something the author could have ironed out by cross referencing, but with a book covering such a long period of time and so many clubs, this would have taken a huge amount of time. Even though this inattention to detail is, on the one hand understandable, having spotted several errors in the Boro text that jumped off the page, it made this writer wonder how many there are in the text concerning Hughie's other clubs.



and match day programme cuttings from throughout his career, including his appearance for Leicester City at the age of 21 in the 1961 FA Cup final.

The book is very extensively illustrated with many fine action pictures (including a well known one of Hugh looking smart in Boro's finest ever away strip – the black and blue stripes) as well as press and match day programme cuttings from throughout his career, including his appearance for Leicester City at the age of 21 in the 1961 FA Cup final. The book is worth most of the cover price for the pictures and cuttings alone



Two good reasons why Middlesbrough are shaping so well this season—goal kings Hugh McIlmoyle (above) and John Hickton (below)

Why he had to leave the club who didn't want to lose him

HUGH McILMOYLE was transferred from Carlisle to Middlesbrough last week for £55,000. On the surface, a move as straightforward as that sentence. In fact, a move he didn't want and the selling club didn't want. So the question is: Why did it take place? The answer is a revealing insight into football economics.

McIlmoyle started last season when Carlisle were languishing in the lower divisions. Middlesbrough, however, had just won the First Division. The manager, Stan Anderson, was very popular here and I'm very glad to see him go. But it's a fact of football life that money matters and having an amount like this gives us the chance to trade in the transfer

The danger from Boro's elusive Hugh McIlmoyle

ON the day Carlisle sold Hughie McIlmoyle to Middlesbrough, they played Blackburn Rovers in the League Cup. For 45 minutes, it appeared to the Brunton Park fans that not only a centre-forward, but the team's morale as well, had moved to Teesside.

Happily for Carlisle, manager Bob Stokoe was able to sort things out at half-time and they recovered to beat Blackburn and march on to the League Cup semi-final.

Happily for Middlesbrough, McIlmoyle's aura of confidence is infectious. Unhappily perhaps for Cardiff on Saturday's Cup-tie.

Victory by four clear goals over Bolton on October 11 began a spell in which Boro gathered 16 points from nine games, a run which ended when Carlisle won at Ayresome Park on Boxing Day, just, perhaps, to demonstrate that you can sell a star and still have the last laugh.

ON THE FRINGE

Boro's gallop added a new factor to the already confused situation at the top of Division Two. "We are not in the promotion struggle yet," says their manager Stan Anderson, realistically.

"But I have the feeling that other teams are beginning to keep an eye on us." They certainly will after that great Third Round Cup success over West Ham—the first game they played after that Carlisle defeat.

The arrival of McIlmoyle has obviously had a great deal to do with Boro's recent good form—with promise of being the North-East standard bearer in the Cup this year. A specialist striker for most of his career, Hugh now displays his mature skills as much in midfield as in the opposition's penalty area.

"I think it was Bob Stokoe at Carlisle who first realised he could move around and create and still be dangerous," says Anderson. "This is a better role for him. He is such an elusive player—he comes back so deep to look for the ball, then moves up to create danger."

With his deceptive speed and intelligent use of the ball, McIlmoyle puzzles the best defenders, but Anderson is quick to point out that his team is no one-man band.

"With a lot of sides in this Division, you can think of two strikers at the most and say to the defence, 'Cut them out and we're all right,' he says.

"We have four who have proved they can stick the ball in the net, Hickton, Laidlaw and Downing as well as McIlmoyle. However well Hugh is playing, he would not be getting far if there weren't ten others doing their jobs."

John Hickton, the big ex-Sheffield Wednesday striker—how they could use him now at goal-starved Hillsborough—has that extra bit of space in which to operate.

Nine goals in the nine games before Boxing Day showed that, if McIlmoyle was creating the spaces, Hickton was exploiting them.

TWO CRACKERS

Anderson sees the manner in which Hickton is accepting his chances as an illustration of the confidence which has developed throughout the team.

With most of the top teams still to visit Ayresome Park, always a tough fixture on anybody's list, Middlesbrough are obviously going to have a big say in the final shape of the table.

If Boro themselves return to the First Division after a 16-year absence, the £55,000 that induced Carlisle to part with McIlmoyle is going to look a pretty shrewd investment.

Certainly it should pay off in the Cup. After West Ham, Cardiff hold no terrors for them at Ayresome Park this weekend.



Hugh scoring for Boro v Swindon Town

McILMOYLE A PLAYER OF ELEGANT TALENTS

MIDDLESBROUGH really belong in the First Division. So say many Soccer fans in the North-East—and also one of the men dedicated to putting the Ayresome club back in the big time—ace centre-forward Hugh McIlmoyle.

Colourful McIlmoyle was the centre of controversy that raged in Carlisle and Middlesbrough, when he left the Cumbrian club in September for £55,000. Carlisle manager Bob Stokoe was criticised for selling his star asset, and 'Boro boss Stan Anderson was not congratulated for paying that sum for a player in the late stages of his career.

It was McIlmoyle who shot holes in the arguments as he proceeded to carve out the gaps in opposing defences.

He says: "I soon found that Stan Anderson knew how to get the maximum benefit from me. My instructions are to hold the ball and help to create goals as well as score them."

These tactics are tailor-made for McIlmoyle's elegant talents. He believes that the old-fashioned spearhead type of leader would get nowhere against modern defences.

Hugh is well qualified to pass judgment on the changes in technique since he had his first taste of First Division football with Leicester back in 1959.

MOBILITY

He sums it up this way. "Football has stepped up tremendously in pace, and movement, during the last few seasons. A striker who just parols a small area, as many of the old centre-forwards did,

would be lost in today's game. Now, players have to be much more mobile to beat defence in depth."

On the principle that it is easier to go round an opponent, rather than through him, McIlmoyle often drifts to the wing.

McIlmoyle is happy that he is now playing the sort of role that comes naturally to him.

He points out: "I have always preferred to be part of an attack with a two-pronged spearhead. John Hickton and I work well together, and I hope we soon get the chance to go against First Division sides."

DIFFERENCE

McIlmoyle, who has also been with Rotherham, Wolves and Bristol City, reckons there is no great difference between the First and Second divisions.

"What difference there is can be bridged by a Second Division team stepping up its pace," he says. "Providing the initial talent is in the side, as it is in Middlesbrough's, the gap can be closed."

For confirmation of McIlmoyle's theory, it is not necessary to look beyond Middlesbrough's great sixth round F.A. Cup battles with Manchester United. Beaten at the second attempt, 'Boro did enough to convince the on-



HUGH McILMOYLE . . . aiming for the First Division and clashes like this one with Manchester United's Ian Ure

lookers that they were potential top-class material.

Now McIlmoyle looks for a return to the First Division either this season or next.

He insists: "We are geared for the top. It will be a tragedy if we don't make it within the next season or two."

McIlmoyle has an extra reason for wanting 'Boro to go up. "I'll get another chance to play against Liverpool's Ron Yeats. He's the best centre-half I've come up against."

500-up Jones goes for Mac

GORDON JONES, due to make his 500th appearance for Boro at Blackpool tomorrow, set the cat among the pigeons when he nominated his idea of Boro's best player over the last decade. The obvious choice seemed to be forty-goal-a-season Brian Clough, or at least Alan Peacock, the centre-forward who won England fame before he was an F.A. Cup medal for Leeds.

Educated

But 29-year-old Jones chooses neither. "In my 12 years' professional career one man stands out above the rest — Hugh McIlmoyle. I would have Hugh in my side before anyone," he said. "Even in my England Under-25 days I never played alongside anyone better."

Jones, the full-back with the most educated right foot at Middlesbrough after Jim Platt, John Craggs, Stuart Roam, Willie Maddren . . . but owner of THE best left leg in the North-East, used an expression, which is often misused — "McIlmoyle is a player's player."

Jones is so right about Mac. But all too often the "player's player" tag is another phrase for saying "He's a nice guy, but he can't really play." Although I don't agree with Jones about McIlmoyle being Boro's best player

over the last 10 years, his absence this season has a promotion.

Jones has reached a magical 500 mark at a remarkable young age. Some critics may say he has not frightened an opponent, but with his anticipation and lockey skill how many wingers have given him roasting? Also, I would like to know how many goals he has helped to create.

Jones intends to finish his career at Ayresome Park. It will be a while as I hope, but when he's gone he will surely figure his with the next player who nominates his best man? Middlesbrough.

Hartlepool are in a process of achieving something that was impossible in the turn of the year—escaping from the re-election zone.

Last December, they were at the bottom of the Fourth Division, seven points adrift Manager Len Ashurst has the courage to say the "We will still get out of trouble."

Now it's on and the fans are already flocking to Hartlepool have taken £3,000 in gate money on the last couple of home games and have at it established something concrete—they will not have to fold up through lack of finance.

Magnificent McIlmoyle

By JACKIE MILBURN

Middlesbrough 3, Swindon 0

THANKS mainly to Hugh McIlmoyle, Boro smashed their way back into the promotion race. He opened the scoring, made another

ing up, let fly with his left foot.

His shot screamed into the top corner giving Jones no chance.

Swindon with the exception of Porter were completely disoriented, and their attack was unable to stretch

Notwithstanding some poor spelling – such as "Teesside", "Dennis" Law and Tommy "Dockerty" this is an enjoyable read from beginning to end; a stroll down memory lane for those of us who remember McIlmoyle in a Boro shirt, and an educational history of an Ayresome Park icon for those who remember McIlmoyle in a Boro shirt., and an educational history of an Ayresome Park icon for those who are too young to have seen him in action.

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