



In Memoriam

by Anthony Tuck

I will never forget where I was nor what I was doing thirty-nine years ago on 6th February 1958.

On that fateful, bleak winter morning, I was a sixteen year old boy entrant signalman in the Royal Navy based at HMS Ganges, the 'stone frigate' training ship at Shotley, Suffolk.

Classmate Fred Shaw and I had 'colours' duty at 0800. As we reported to the guardhouse to collect the White Ensign and prepare for the ceremony, the duty Royal Marine bugler, listening to the radio news, told us, "The plane bringing the Manchester United team home has crashed in Munich!"

The news sent a shock wave round Ganges.

United

In those days football supporters were far less tribal than they are today. We stood on the terraces together and however partisan about our own team - I supported Spurs - we still admired the skills of the opposing team's players, especially the fabled 'Busby Babes.'

The newspaper pictures of the plane crash were horrifying - television, in those days,

hadn't dented sensibilities. Five of the team killed outright, the grim picture of poor Matt Busby suffering terrible injuries, desperately fighting for his life in an oxygen tent.

Reading that my personal idol club Captain Roger Byrne was found laid on the tarmac still immaculate in his team blazer looking as if he had simply gone to sleep, I desperately fought back my tears. It seemed unmanly for me, a young naval rating, to cry. Then I saw our instructor, Chief Yeoman Alfred 'Nobby' Clark BEM DSM - he had had been decorated with the Distinguished Service Medal during WWII - with unashamed tears in his eyes.

Heroes Return

When Harry Gregg and Bill Foulkes, both unscathed and hailed as heroes for their rescue efforts in the crash, returned to England by ferry via the Hook of Holland, they landed at Parkstone Quay, Harwich directly across the river from Shotley.

I walked down to the foreshore to see the ferry arrive. Despite the dark and the bitter cold Siberian wind blow-

ing off the rivers Stour and Orwell, it seemed as if all Ganges was lined up to watch. None of us could have possibly caught a glimpse of Gregg or Foulkes, but we turned out to pay our respects to them both and to the team, especially those who had died.

Whenever the anniversary of the tragedy comes round, I still remember the sense of universal shock at Ganges on hearing the news and how deeply it affected us all.

I remember how truly privileged I am to have seen that wonderful team of young men play. Those who died and those who thankfully survived and overcame their injuries and played again to great success, Dennis Viollet and Bobby Charlton who has become English soccer's greatest ambassador.

I remember how it was the first time in my young life that I saw a grown man - a war hero - weep and realise that it was alright for me to.

I still unashamedly shed a tear in the undying memory of those marvelous young footballers whose lives were so prematurely snuffed out.

My eyes are misting over as I type.

LETTERS

Dear Sir,
Those who shop at Sainsbury in Muswell Hill walk in from a clean street and pass well stocked and well kept flower beds. The pedestrian crossings are contoured with good grip approach paving.

By contrast those who shop at East Finchley do not have any of these things. The former grass area opposite the Bald Faced Stag now has three concrete sections of mains water, or mains sewage pipes standing on end and filled with earth. There are a few tired looking daffodils.

Outside the Post Office empty flower beds with only a single forlorn rose bush in one. There is a recently erected cylindrical advertising monstrosity outside Budgens.

Worst of all are the pigeons. Their droppings are offensive: Pedestrians are likely to slip on the mess. They are also likely to tread the droppings into Budgens, with its open food counters.

Why can not Barnet Council take action to restore East Finchley to its former pleasant atmosphere instead of allowing it to degenerate further unto an unhygienic slum!!

Jack Davey
Abbots Gardens, N2.

Editors Comment: We wholeheartedly agree with you, Sir. The Archer team has felt so strongly in the past on the shocking state of East Finchley's "heart" that we have campaigned to have it cleaned up, pigeons removed, flowerbeds replanted - or give up and have it renamed "Pigeon Corner"! Your letter has inspired us to kick start the campaign again and we will be giving you a call.

Dear Sir
Re: Parking in East Finchley.

Last week residents parking notices appeared on the end of several roads nearby. One appeared on the Fortis Green end of Park Hall Road.

For the last twenty five years we have parked our car in Park Hall Road because we live on the side of Fortis Green which does not have a drive way in the front of the house.

So I rang the council to see how I got one of the required parking permits. I was told I did not need one. When I explained about the notices which said I did, I was told we would be informed when they were ready to use them.

Is it another case of the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing.

G. Wallace
Fortis Green, N2

