

## Don't tell your mother

Barry Kilby

### Barry recalls his first Burnley away game

My dad and I boarded the first coach in the queue just outside Turf Moor. There was an unusual quietness from the Burnley fans waiting to take the journey down to Birmingham for the away game at Aston Villa. Earlier in that week there had been an explosion at Hapton Pit on the outskirts of town, killing 16 people. The disaster had been covered on the national news and in newspapers, putting Burnley in the spotlight. The coverage somehow reinforced the view that here was a place from where time had moved on and what had happened was really something that belonged in the past. Although the football club, fighting at the top of the First Division, gave the town a high profile and contradicted the old industrial town conception, the pit disaster was an unwelcome reminder of past times. On top of that, 16 local lads had died and the pain went right through the community.



**A press photo of the immediate aftermath of the 1962 Hapton pit disaster**

Anyway it was Saturday, the Clarets were playing away, the coach set off and we were on our way. I sat with my Dad's mates and as the coach travelled towards Birmingham the cloud lifted a little and the usual banter, fuelled a little by alcohol, started to take effect. I probably looked a little out of step in my school blazer and cap, but the lads didn't seem to mind and in no way did they alter their raucous behaviour for Roy's kid of 12.

A couple of hours down the road we landed at Villa Park and poured out of the coach, ready to give the backing the team needed to win. We had tickets for the main stand unlike many of the Clarets supporters, most of whom went off to the terracing behind the goals. Inside the stadium my Dad bought some pies and pints of beer waiting for the time to reach three o'clock.

It was obvious that our small group were vastly outnumbered by the Villa fans but that wasn't going to affect our group's loud support. Conversation did drift to the disaster followed by a short

silence, before picking up the prospects for the game. There was to be an official minute's silence before the kick off, which all thought was a commendable gesture. Quarter of an hour to go we climbed the stairs to our seats, the teams came out, and stood facing each other ready for the minute's silence. The referee blew his whistle and the silence began. What happened next needs some explanation.

There was at the time an advert on television concerning bottles of Mackeson stout. The bottles were all lined up in a row and then suddenly someone shouted "Mackeson" and bottles all started to shake. So, halfway through the minute's silence a gentleman with a Villa scarf on shouted out the word "Mackeson" thinking that it was funny to replicate the advert with people standing silently in line. Some of the crowd thought it was funny – but not my Dad. Something snapped in his head at the disrespect for the dead and injured of the previous day. The Villa fan who shouted the insult was about six rows down from us. My Dad left his seat and ran down to the person and started to remonstrate with him. The Villa fan pushed him away, my Dad pushed him back and then they started throwing blows at each other as the crowd around them separated and dived for cover. The stewards ran down and grabbed them both and the Villa fan shouted in no uncertain terms that he had done nothing and my Dad had left his seat and started the whole episode. Perhaps noting my Dad's Burnley scarf, the stewards said, "Right you, out!" and started to escort him up the steps to the exit. As they came level where we had been sitting my Dad said, "Wait a minute, that's my boy." "Right," a steward said "you're both out!" and taking me by my arm took me down the steps to the turnstile and out of the ground.

It was 3pm and the game was just about to begin. What were we to do? We started to walk round the ground listening to the crowds' moans and cheers. My Dad said nothing! Obviously shook up by the incident, he just looked into space trying figure out what was happening. We thought that we heard some muted cheers a couple of times. Had the Clarets scored?

At last 4.45pm came and the crowd started to pour out of the stadium. We had by then migrated to the coach and the first Burnley fans started to land back. How did we go on, what was the score? The Burnley fans looked at us puzzled. Can you not count, Roy? We won of course, 3–2. My Dad clapped and cheered. You see I had a bit of trouble he added, er, me and Barry got chucked out before the start. The fans collapsed into uncontrollable laughter and told everyone boarding the coach who followed suit.

The journey back to Burnley was vociferous with cans of beer being drunk at great speed. As we approached Burnley, one particularly good friend of my Dad came and sat across from us.

"Tell you what, Roy."

"What?"

"I reckon your lad's just broken a world record."

"What?"

"The youngest person ever to be ejected from a football ground, especially before the match even started!"

The coach again erupted into laughter. We reached Burnley, said our goodbyes and Dad started to drive us home. "Tell you what, son, don't mention what happened to your mum, she wouldn't understand." "Okay, Dad. Do you really think I hold the world record for being the youngest person ever to be thrown out of a football ground?" "I think you are, son, but keep it quiet." "Oh, okay then. Who do we play next week?"