



IAN MCKECHNIE AND THOSE ORANGES



We saw some pictures posted up on social media by Ian's brother Jim so we got in touch.

Jim told us: "Ian certainly enjoyed his time at Southend, and I was lucky to visit him the two summers he was there, 1965 and 1966. I remember going on the park at Roots Hall and Ian taking shots at me in goal, I'd only be about 12 at the time, and Ian kicked one ball out of the Stadium and into the Bus Garage, I think, behind the goal. I recall meeting a lot of the players, Frank Banks, John McKinven, Bobby King, still got my autograph book somewhere.

Whether true or not, Ian could tell a good tale, but he said he scored a penalty, or two, for Southend Reserves. He later took part in the first penalty shoot-out in the Watney Cup Semi Final against Manchester United.

He started off as an outside player with Arsenal, and was converted to a goalkeeper by George Swindin (former Arsenal player and manager).

After football he had a variety of jobs, working in a sports centre in Hull, becoming a Prison Officer at Hull Jail, and he finally ended up with British Aerospace in Brough where he was in charge of coating a tiny component for a fighter jet wing - the quality control was such that his team there would be lucky if they produced six on a shift.

He worked at Hull City on Matchdays, though, at their new Stadium.

After football and, I think, before the Sports Centre job, he took up the manager's job at Nuneaton Borough and then as manager of Sligo Rovers – he briefly moved over to Sligo but after a week this too came to an end. He did say he was asked to phone the ex-Rangers player Davie Wilson, Davie was manager at Dumbarton, when Ian asked where the phone was, he was directed to a

phone box down the street ... such was Ireland, he was miffed too as somehow Aer Lingus lost his golf clubs!

After he finished at Hull City he signed for the Boston Minutemen in the USA, this was 1974 as I was visiting my sister in Long Island and I stayed with him and his family in Boston for a few days.

Ian had a tremendous left foot kick and this had been noted by the Miami Dolphins, I think, who wanted to sign him as their goal kicker, seems he just had to run onto the park and kick the ball through the posts....however the American Football had come to halt with the first-ever players strike and any idea of staying on went.

Because the Minutemen were a good team, they ended up playing more knockout rounds and by the time this finished football in England had started, he did say Mansfield had expressed interest in signing, but they had signed a keeper for the start season, with him still in Boston. When he returned, he played for Goole Town, and I believe Scarborough but not for long.

He ultimately settled in the picturesque village of Brantingham outside Beverley. I retired in 2014 and my wife and I visited him, by then he had developed Alzheimer's disease, but was still with it, though he was less interested in the old photographs I had brought down to show him.

On a nightly walk around the village in 2015 he collapsed with heart failure, he had some heart issues but nothing serious we thought.

We attended his funeral where a lot of former and current Hull City players were present, as they buried him in the graveyard several fans and his family moved forward and threw oranges on top of his coffin....this related to the time two fans at Hull met him in the street eating a Jaffa....the next home game...the two fans threw two oranges onto him.....this developed until it became a ritual and one game was delayed because of the number of oranges thrown on."

Jim also told us that, many years later, the son of one of his cousins played for Southend, Gordon Connelly. Jim's Uncle Robert had played for Port Vale in the mid 1920's and Jim mentioned that Stanley Matthews in his autobiography told how as a lad he had hero-worshipped Bob Connelly.

Andy Leeder, March 2024