



## BOOK EXTRACT

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## Nice One Cyril

Brian's honeymoon period with Darlington was soon to come to an abrupt end. Cyril Knowles was appointed manager after a successful career with Tottenham Hotspur and England had come to an end.

Cyril played 39 games for Middlesbrough before being signed by Bill Nicholson at Spurs. He would make more than 400 appearances in a wonderful career that attracted four England caps, three more than his boss Nicholson. Cyril would have attracted more international honours had it not been for the outstanding form of Leeds United's Terry Cooper.

Although Brian Honour was on the team photograph for the 1983-84 season, his days were numbered.

However, he did manage a few games. In the first leg of the Milk Cup at Halifax Town, Brian slotted home a goal to give the Quakers a narrow lead to take back to Feethams. He was Man of the Match in a few more games, including the FA Cup second round 2-0 victory at Altringham. In the Associate Members Cup at Mansfield, Brian scored twice when Darlington beat the home side 3-1. Journalist John Dean awarded the Honour Man of the Match with a mark of 9/10.

Cyril Knowles, however, was a member of the old school who seemed to think that to be a good professional you needed to be at least 6 foot and over 12 stones and with the speed of Shergar.

Brian may well have been able to keep up with the famous racehorse in his prime, but he was never going to be 6 foot or weigh more than 11 stone, even when he reached retirement.

Big Cyril pulled no punches. He told Brian, "I am going to have to let you go. I want big strong lads and you are just too small."

The sentiments from Aston Villa had come back to haunt Brian, and he realised that it was no good arguing with Mr Knowles.

Had Cyril Knowles' opinion been accepted as universal, then around the grounds of England and Scotland we might never have seen such players as Billy Bremner (5 foot 5), Jimmy 'Jinky' Johnstone (5 foot 4) and the comparative giant Johnny Giles (5 foot 7) all of whom were vertically challenged, but proved the critics wrong. Bremner was rejected by both Arsenal and Chelsea for being too small but, as we all know, his career took off at both Leeds United and Scotland. 'Jinky' went on to become a legend in his own lifetime at Celtic. And Johnny Giles played for Leeds United almost 400 times to add to his 100 for Manchester United and, with 59 caps for the Republic of Ireland, he was also a legend. All three players received international

recognition.

But not so for Brian. He was demoralised.

In the summer of 1984, having just become engaged to be married on the back of what Brian and Janet thought was a promising career with Darlington, their dream was shattered. Brian was out of work and on the dole, a single lad living at home back in Horden with his widowed mother, and his wedding plans were put on hold.

Brian was certainly not in the mood for singing 'Nice One Cyril'.

In the village all talk focused on the National Union of Mineworkers headed by Arthur Scargill, who was taking on Prime Minister Maggie Thatcher. The starting point of the dispute was more than 100 miles away in Barnsley, where the NCB had announced it was closing Cortonwood Colliery.

It was a strike that would divide communities, set brother against brother, father against son and eventually lead to the demise of the coal industry.

Brian has never been political. He did not go with his mates, the miners, to the picket line, but instead gave what financial help he could to support the fight against the Tory government. It wasn't much.

There wasn't a picket line most days at Horden because it is was a 'wet pit' and essential staff had to go underground to keep the pumps working. Everyone hoped that when the Government had been defeated and the miners strike was over, jobs would once again be available. When the men walked out on 5th March 1984, little did the miners realise that it would be more than a year before they would return. These were hard times for the miners, really hard times.

There had been strikes before, but in 1984 the miners' union led by Arthur Scargill dug in for a lengthy and bitter battle. In the end, however, the biggest losers were the miners and their families. Typically the pit villages of Horden, Blackhall and Easington bore the brunt in County Durham.

The 1974 miners strike had brought down the Edward Heath Government, but five years into her reign as Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, the 'Iron Lady' was not going to lose. She had made sure that the power stations had stockpiled coal. This time she said the miners were not going to hold the country to ransom. The lady may not have been for turning, but she had certainly planned to make sure she held most of the cards. The deck was stacked in her favour and she made the miners and their families suffer.

Soup kitchens were set up in Brian's home village and many pubs in mining areas allowed miners credit until they themselves were forced to close. Butchers, grocers and other business did the same.

It was hard, but Scargill was as hard as the Yorkshire coal he once mined. In a ballot the union had voted that, unless a colliery was closed on the grounds that the coal was exhausted, they would strike. The National Executive tried to get a debate going to overturn the 1981 resolution, but Arthur Scargill overruled the motion.

Pickets were dispatched to collieries all around the country to ask men to stay away from work and support the strike. Nottingham was a particular target for Scargill's Yorkshire colleagues, but in the north in Durham it divided communities and in some cases entire families.

An old Tory ploy was working - divide and rule.

Police were drafted in to maintain order. In some mining areas, young men had chosen to join the police force or the Army rather than go down the pit. They were thus forced to face their brothers who had gone down the pit across the picket line. Some families even 20 years later remain divided. It was a bitter, bitter struggle.

Confrontation, soup kitchens, families going cold and no end in sight was the scenario our young professional Brian faced.

Maggie Thatcher may have put thousands of Yorkshire miners and their colleagues in the Durham coalfield out of work, but it was a Yorkshireman in the form of Cyril Knowles that had pushed Brian onto the dole queue.

Lesser men might have hung up their boots right there and then. But I think it was another Tory leader, Winston Churchill, who once said, "It's not the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog." Brian Honour may have only stood at five feet seven inches, but this little chunk of Horden granite had the tenacity of a pit bull terrier and the resolve to match.

They say revenge is a dish best served cold, and it would be five long years before Brian would have an opportunity to test that theory. But when he did, it would be a sweet, sweet taste.