

18) TWTD Issue 72, May 2004: "Archaeological dig at Clockton Park"

Contributed by Daniel Harvey And James Powell
Monday, 24 May 2004

Malcolm Baggio has been at work with his football flymo, cutting down the overgrown news lawn and putting the cuttings in a big bag at the bottom of his garden. Now here he is with his ramblings compost to fertilise your mind with the latest from Clockton Park.

Raydon Athletic's season was thrown into turmoil in February when archaeologists were given the go-ahead to conduct a dig at their Clockton Park Ground.

Permission was given for the dig to take place after a local dog unearthed a human bone whilst scrapping around in the hedge beside the pitch in a feeble attempt to bury a turd. The dog's owner, local resident Hamish Cumberland told Those Were The Days, "It was unbelievable. My dog Cecil had just had a dump in the hedge and the next thing I know there's a human bone covered in faeces flying past my face. It was a bit of a shock."

Mr Cumberland notified the authorities and further bones were found close to the surface along with a series of interesting artefacts. These included an ancient whisk, a set of hard carved latex plinths and an old cog. An old Raydon club pennant from the 1940's was also unearthed from the era when the club were known as Raydon Cobblers Rugby Football Club.

Raydon manager Roland Peters was furious at the situation. He faxed Those Were The Days the following press statement:

"This is bloody ridiculous. That bloody prat who told the bloody police about that bloody bone has bugged up our whole bloody season!"

Shortly afterwards, Peters set fire to Hamish Cumberland's garden shed in a calculated fit of anger. Unfortunately the fire spread to the adjoining land - Roland Peter's own garden - destroying the large summer house that Peters had built for his wife only last year to make up for an affair he had had with her sister.

Within a couple of days, a 25 strong team of archaeologists converged on the site and started painstakingly and tentatively digging up the Raydon pitch and surrounding area with spoons. Dozens of items were discovered dating back hundreds of years as it materialised the pitch was located on the site of a Roman marzipan refinery. One of the most interesting discoveries though was that of a human tooth dating back to the mid-1970's. Raydon manager Roland Peters suggested that tooth belonged to former Sporting Bentley striker Charlie Booper who lost four teeth in a mid-match scuffle with Raydon legend, the late Pete Clockton. Apparently Clockton struck Booper so hard in the face that three of Booper's teeth became embedded in his knuckles. The whereabouts of the fourth had been a mystery until now.

A nostalgic Raydon manager Roland Peters, who played in that very match, decided to track down Booper in order to return the tooth. Having been unsuccessful despite exploring various avenues - the local phone book, a five minute search on the internet after a heavy night's drinking and a tiny tiny little advert in the parish magazine - he contacted ITV's Surprise Surprise to enlist their help. The programme's researchers located Booper living in the middle of the Amazonian Rainforest teaching members of a local tribe to play the harpsichord. Peters was flown out with a film crew and after a two-week trek he was reunited with Booper.

The show will be aired in the autumn and is worth watching, if only to see Peter's face when Booper failed to recognise him or recall losing his tooth, or indeed ever playing football for Sporting Bentley. Since returning home, Peters has remembered he was thinking of an ex-player called Charlie Looper, who now lives in the same road as him and who was pleased to have his tooth returned in a reunion which took place behind closed doors.

Peters returned from his trip to South America with Raydon's imminent home match against Bayern Copdock looming but no pitch to play on. Rather than concede home advantage the decision was taken to play the match on the local primary school playground. With the playground only about a quarter of the size of a football pitch, it was agreed with Copdock and the league to play a five-a-side match instead. It was also discovered on the morning of the game that there was no pitch markings on the playground so Lionel Stubbs haphazardly scrawled some vague markings on the tarmac with chalk.

In another oversight, Raydon manager Roland Peters forgot to tell the players that the match would be a five-a-side affair and 14 players turned up. He duly named a starting five of Buffalo(G), Crankleshank, Diffydale, McManahammond and Funtingdale naming the other nine players as substitutes of which he could only use three. No thought was given to the duration of the match either and the referee kicked off the usual 45 minutes each way contest. The opening was played at a typically frantic five-a-side pace with Raydon's superior pedigree shining through. They stormed into a seven goal lead with McManahammond notching all the goals. However the match quickly deteriorated into a lazy stroll for both sets of players as they became completely drained of energy having started at such a high tempo.

The teams just about managed to make it to half time whereupon both managers made all three substitutions. Peters brought on Mnunga, Kilkorkey and Slipper for Crankleshank, McManahammond and Diffydale and the new look team made a positive start to the second half. Mnunga quickly side-footed home an eighth before Kilkorkey made it 9-0 with a spectacular diving header. However, he had to be helped off the pitch immediately afterwards due to severe grazing on his brow, nose, chin, chest, stomach, thighs, knees and shins. The school caretaker was called upon to blast Kilkorkey's skin off the tarmac with an industrial power hose before play could continue. With Peters having made all his substitutions Raydon had to battle on with four men. To make matters worse, Funtingdale made it 10-0 soon afterwards with another diving header which left him looking like an extra from Silence of the Lambs. Funtingdale joined Kilkorkey on the touchline to be administered some painful application of Dettol by physio Lionel Stubbs. Despite the 10-0 advantage, Raydon faced the remaining 40 minutes with three men against the five of Copdock.

The Copdock players had mocked Raydon keeper Ian Buffalo at the start of the match as he appeared from the changing rooms with five-inch-thick strips of foam padding strapped to his arms and legs. But the medicine was soon on the other foot as the padding helped Buffalo to bounce and roll around on the jagged surface like a pig in shit. He had an answer to everything Copdock threw at him and set a new world record for the 'most shots on target yet no goal let in', making 231 saves. An off-duty Carling Opta Statistician who happened to be at the game casually observed that of the last 40 minutes of the match Buffalo spent an amazing 6.34 minutes in mid air(1). Result 10-0 to Raydon.

Since the Copdock match Raydon have come to an agreement with neighbours Wenham Wanderers to use their pitch until the archaeological dig is complete. The site has now been announced as the country's third most important historical find, and the complete skeleton of two octopuses(2) mating have been unearthed as well as the remains of a previously undiscovered extinct species of sabre-toothed poultry.

The hole where the pitch used to be is now two hundred feet deep, but archaeologists promise to have the ground back to normal for the traditional players v wives pre-season friendly.

Some good did come from the pitch destruction. The club decided to sell off small pieces of turf(3) at £5 a time to raise money for the Daphne Cumbers's Foundation For Dandruff and Flaky Scalps. So far £40 has been raised but don't worry - there are still over 9,000 pieces of turf(3) left so if you want some, just pop along Wenham Wanderers ground on match days and have a word with Roland Peters. The turf is being stored in Peters's living room after his loft and upstairs floor collapsed under the weight, burying his wife up to the neck and inflicting multiple injuries upon her person whilst she was on the phone, organising a builder to repair her summer house.

Footnotes

(1) Not consecutively.

(2) Alright then, octopi, pendantic f***witts!(4)

(3) Please note that, due to the lack of grass, only 12% of the turf available can actually be legally described as 'turf' for the purposes of this sale. The other 87% are more accurately described as 'sandy mud'. Furthermore, around 1% contains dog excrement. Therefore when you purchase a piece of 'turf' you will be asked to sign legal disclaimer waiving your right of redress.

(4) Actually the correct term is 'octopodes'. Check the following if you don't believe me:

<http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/faq/aboutgrammar/plurals> - so swivel on that in your pipe and smoke it!!