

Just for a moment, can we all just stop and think? WFC will doubtless survive in Div 2 this year and will fight on.

Just.

And yet, as a 49 year old 'Orn, I feel more depressed than happy. Poor Mike Keen has died, aged 69. Mike was, by all reports, a great bloke. I have, for some years, felt guilty about following the Spring 1977 trend of wearing badges reading "ON YOUR BIKE, MIKE" and "KEEN FOR THE MOON." I also chanted "KEEN OUT" during those March and April 1977 games.

Mike Keen had a great eye for a footballer; even if he did not have the all-out attacking instincts of his successful successor, Graham Taylor. Yet Mike Keen left GT a great foundation for the promotions ahead. He had retained Kirby's purchases of Rankin and Jenkins. When Keen tried to sell the latter (Jenkins refused) he still picked him and allowed him to flourish. He gave Luther his first start. He bought Downes, Mayes, Joslyn, Garner and Pritchett; all important to Taylor's 77/78 Championship success. He liked 'good football', perhaps not a sensible strategy in the workaholic 70s. He gave the skill-twins Denis Bond and Stewart Scullion their second lives at Watford. Both were beautiful yet indolent players who could not even spell 'work rate', let alone have one. Both those artists were condemned to live in the artless 70s and they followed us, with Mike Keen at the helm, down from Div 3 to Div 4 in May 1975.

"Lemmings at Bournemouth : 4-2 loss at Dean Court" was the penultimate game's headline By Oliver Phillips in the WO as that year's relegation beckoned like an acid-queen. The subsequent Tuesdays' loss to Walsall (and the drop) proved that, for lemmings, every cliff is fatal, no matter how well you play.

In Division 4, two years later, Mike Keen's last days at Vicarage Road were epic. As a promotion bid spluttered, there was the frustrating loss at home to Brentford (with two missed penalties), which was almost made up with the *best game I have ever seen* (Doncaster at home in March '77) when we won 5-1 and played more like Brazil 1970. Then we messed everything else up and Poor Mike's last game was a 2-0 win versus Huddersfield when we were out of promotion, got two sent off and won with two bullocking goals from Keith Mercer. Mike had earlier asked Elton John's permission to take the team off the park after the second sending off, as a general protest against poor refereeing standards. Elton, correctly, said, "No." However, you can understand how Mike felt. After all, he'd been sacked as manager some hours before the game. Weirdly, after that crazy fixture, a few of us, pathetically, started chanting "KEEN IN."

According to Oliver Phillips, few characters have ever been as popular at Vicarage Road. The team even clubbed together for a farewell present, which is, it seems, very, very, unusual, telling us everything about the man.

I only met him once. I was asleep on the pavement, (yes, sorry) outside his shop in Wycombe in the summer of '78. It was 7am. I was riding my motor-cycle back from an

all-nighter in Oxford and needed to stop for a 'rest.' As I woke up, he said, evidently seeing my WFC scarf, "It's OK, mate. You're in the gutter. As a Watford fan you'd be used to that." It was said in a very friendly and engaging way. He bore no grudge.

He also had great times at QPR (before us), Wycombe Wanderers later and, of course, Luton.

I know this may feel like heresy for a Hornet, but I feel sadness not just for Mike Keen, but for Luton too. As they both move on. Remember this,

"No man is an island.....  
Ask not for whom the bell tolls,  
It tolls for thee."

Vale, Mike Keen.