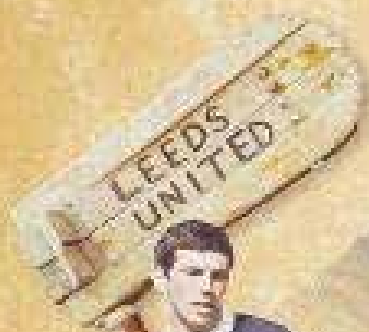


Foreword by
Ralph Ineson



**Revie's Plan for
Leeds United**

Summer of '63

Gary Edwards

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Coffins and Kippax

ON THE morning of 4 September 1961, I had held the hand of Ma so tightly, she told me many years later that she was surprised it didn't draw blood. We were walking up Well Lane in our village of Kippax for my first day at school. Well Lane is a very steep hill of maybe a quarter of a mile and near to the top there were a couple of old houses, one of which always drew me to it. At the side of the house were two or three wooden stable-type doors and inside would be an old man making coffins. For years I could never pass without looking in over the lower half of the door.

At the very top of the lane on the main road there is a pub called the White Swan and just a small way up to the left stood Kippax Mixed Infant School, built in 1868. I have vague recollections of walking through the gate, still glued to Ma, across the playground and into a foreboding building to register for my first day. I hated the smell in the place and even years later when I worked as a decorator in many schools, that smell would always evoke memories of that very first day.

History tells me that two days before I started school, Leeds United had been beaten by Rotherham United 3-1 at Elland Road, around six or seven miles from Kippax.

A couple of hours into my first day at school, Ma was making the beds upstairs when I walked into the house. 'What are you doing home?' she said. 'What's wrong?'

I told her that I had run away with my friends Steven Hill and Kathleen Richardson. All three of us were then sat at the table and given beans on toast before being marched back up Well Lane. Ma told me all of this years later and unbelievably it was she who received a scolding from the teacher. When she told the teacher that she had fed us because we had missed dinner time, she was told, coldly, 'You shouldn't have done that, not getting fed would have been their punishment.' The smell of school dinners to this day turns my stomach.

Also starting school that day was John Revis. 'I remember almost freezing to death in the outdoor toilets and us all having to defrost our bottles of milk on the old iron radiators,' said John. 'On my first day I was sat between "Banger" and Terry Dent.'

Banger, aka Barry Higgins, and Terry are two great lads but they quickly emerged as the school's 'hard boys'. Back then, of course, school beatings were commonplace and some teachers were feared more than others, one of whom was PE teacher Mr Gill, a stout, bearded man who people still talk about all these years later.

John says, 'Barry Gill regularly whacked pupils with an old plimsoll amongst other things, but he had a specially toughened plimsoll for using on Barry Higgins and Terry Dent as the ordinary one seemed to have no effect on them.'

Years later, John went on to marry Susan, the sister of my mate Steven Hill. Susan also attended this school and recalls, 'The dining room had a massive open fireplace, sometimes roaring away and other times producing a massive black cloud of smoke choking everyone after fresh coal had been poured on it. Happy days! Somehow I can't see the health

and safety regulations these days allowing that.' John has remained a Leeds United fan despite moving to Berkshire many years ago.

Both Barry and Terry went on to be brilliant rugby league players, Barry spending many years at Castleford Tigers. His key role at the club was to be sent on from the subs' bench to 'rough up' the opposing team if things weren't exactly going to plan.

On my first day at 'Big School' in 1967, I ended up in a fight with Terry. I wasn't totally unhappy when teachers broke us up.

Incidentally, it was at the very bottom of Well Lane where some years later I stole my first kiss. I can still remember who it was with, but, unfortunately, I can still also remember the overwhelming whiff of baked beans as we both puckered up. I assumed that the new light of my life had just had her tea shortly before coming to meet me.

The White Swan, which was built in 1915, became the home of a Leeds United supporters' club in 1927, serving fans around the area. One such member of this supporters' club was the man I had seen building coffins, Stan Humphreys, who worked for Albert Varley's undertakers.

On the third day of my school 'career', Leeds were beaten again, 2-0 at Norwich City. Playing at right-half for Leeds on the night of 6 September 1961 was Don Revie. But Revie was predominately an inside-right, having played previously for Leicester City, Hull City, Manchester City and then Sunderland, leaving for £12,000 to eventually arrive at Elland Road. It was at Manchester City where he developed the famous 'Revie Plan' – using deep-lying centre-forward tactics which had been originally formulated by the dominant Hungarian national team of the 1950s. The plan was pivotal in Manchester City winning the 1956 FA Cup with Revie as captain.

Revie had made his Leeds debut in a 3-2 win at home to Newcastle United on 29 November 1958 (I was two years old by then), at inside-left. A crowd of 24,000 arrived at Elland Road where Jackie Overfield, a beauty from Chris Crowe and an own goal saw United over the line, although Revie's debut was somewhat low-key. But Revie's innovation skills and foresight had already attracted the attention of many observers.

Sam Bolton had been the chairman at Leeds United since 1948 and was a fascinating character. Born and bred in Hunslet, Leeds, he played at half-back for Rothwell White Rose FC at John O'Gaunts. He supported Leeds City and then United. He served in the Coldstream Guards and the Royal Flying Corps during World War I and was also the mayor of Leeds in the mid-1960s. He became a director at Leeds United in 1945 and perhaps his most inspiring achievement was introducing Harry Reynolds to the board ten years later.

A tough Yorkshireman from Holbeck, Reynolds, born from working-class parents, rose literally through the ranks of working at every conceivable job ranging from a bakery to a fireman, to sweeping the platforms of railway stations.

Talking of which, Graham Cooke was born in Kippax and now lives in Ottawa, Canada, 'My dad, Henry, was a member of the White Swan Leeds fans in the 1930s, and he even went to away games. He once met Mr Reynolds at Kippax railway station in the early 1960s. He was in Kippax on business, there was a factory near to the church and I think he was going there. My dad just saw him by chance at the station where he was working as an odd job man, and he recognised him straight away. My dad said he looked like a sergeant major and had shiny shoes. He could never remember what they talked about. "We talked about Leeds United," he would say.'

By the end of the 1950s Reynolds had ventured into the steel business, progressing quite rapidly into becoming a millionaire which was certainly to Leeds United's advantage. He was without doubt a major factor in Don Revie becoming Leeds manager and at such a pivotal time.

Reynolds, speaking in 1967, said, 'Don had no football managerial experience at all, but of course, he had a wealth of football experience and above all, he had football knowledge – in abundance.'

Reynolds had been on the board and succeeded Sam Bolton as chairman in 1961.

One image of my infant school is still carved into my memory. Periodically, a large, mysterious, murky grey caravanette-type vehicle used to appear in the playground and would park up in the far corner. It would remain there for a couple of days. It was in fact a dentist; I hated the sight of it, and John Revis reminds me that the dentist was called Atkinson – 'Butcher Atkinson'. The experience inside that caravan, with pliers, drills and maybe a hacksaw, prevented me going to a dentist after I'd left school for many years.

Meanwhile, I was oblivious of much more important activities going on at Elland Road.

In March 1961 Don Revie had walked into chairman Reynolds's office beneath the West Stand to ask for some advice. Don had seen that Bournemouth were seeking a manager. At the time, he was 34 and still operating as player-manager at Leeds but saw this vacancy on the south coast as an opportunity to become a full-time boss.

Reynolds said, 'Don saw the position at Bournemouth, who had been in the Third Division ever since their formation in 1923, as his way into football management. Bournemouth were looking for a new manager and the directors at Bournemouth asked their senior players for

recommendations. The most senior player was the Irish international goalkeeper Tommy Godwin who had been at Leicester City as a boy with Don Revie and been very impressed. Revie had a season and a half left in him as a player, so I gave him my permission to apply. But when I was writing his reference, it occurred to me that with all these recommendations, we could do with him ourselves. So I tore up the letter.'

Bournemouth's right-half Bill McGarry was eventually given the managerial role at Dean Court.

But it was this approach from Bournemouth that changed the course of history for Leeds United. Reynolds weighed up Revie as a player – and then decided to handpick him for the managerial chair, a real hot seat, in every sense of the word. Not that Leeds were bad bosses as it were, who fired every manager after a few months, but it was simply that things had run right down in terms of players, results and money. So any new manager would have a pile of problems to face.

Reynolds had come in with every intention of being a real working chairman. Of course his money was there to bolster any offers made for new players. And there was never any doubt that the new manager, untried as he was, would be given a fair crack of the whip to prove he could do the job. Revie was given a breathing space in which to find his managerial feet; he would be given time to decide upon his plans, and the cash with which to carry them out. Results would then decide whether he had succeeded or failed. It would be upon those results that Reynolds would judge his manager, but only after a fair length of testing time for Revie's policy. That's how chairman and manager worked in those days – closely and in harmony. Reynolds was certainly prepared to back his manager – and time would prove that he had handpicked a winner.

On the day of Revie's Leeds debut, in goal was Royden (Roy) Wood. I was introduced to Roy by a friend of mine, Gordon Sheppard from Kippax, around 2014. We were in a pub called the Picture House in Castleford, four miles from Kippax, availing ourselves quite happily with the 'pound a pint' on offer. Roy, around 6ft 4in tall, had a great presence about him and was a really decent bloke.

He had joined Leeds in 1952. 'I made my debut early in the 1953/54 season,' said Roy. 'It was against Derby County. We won 2-1. Leeds manager Major Frank Buckley had seen me playing for Clitheroe on a stormy, wet night and he asked me to sign for Leeds United. I couldn't believe it.'

Revie had arrived at Leeds with quite an admirable reputation. 'We were all a bit in awe of Don when he came to the club,' Roy remembered. 'He'd been at Leicester City, Hull City, Man City and Sunderland. He'd been Footballer of the Year and won the FA Cup with Man City. I remember him being a thinker, deep in thought a lot of the time, but he often looked unhappy, other players noticed it too.'

Jack Charlton had arrived at Elland Road in 1950 and made his debut in the last game of the season previous to Roy Wood's debut, but didn't break into the first team until a few years later. John Charles also played in the same side as Roy. 'Charles was one of the greatest players that there will ever be,' said Roy, 'but I often had to give him a bollocking when he'd make the odd defensive error.'

In the 1956 FA Cup Leeds played Cardiff City in the third round at Elland Road. Roy was in goal, Charles played at centre-half and Charlton was at centre-forward. 'We lost 2-1,' Roy laughed. 'And John dropped a couple of clangers, which I had a word with him about and the following season we drew Cardiff again in the same round, at home.'

Raich Carter had taken over as manager back in 1953 and for this second cup game against the Welsh side he switched Charles and Charlton, but Leeds again lost 2-1. Unbelievably, in the 1958 third round Leeds drew Cardiff yet again at Elland Road. And amazingly they lost that one too – 2-1.

But Charlton struggled in his early years and it would be a while on before he made any sort of impact. That also applied to the club as a whole.