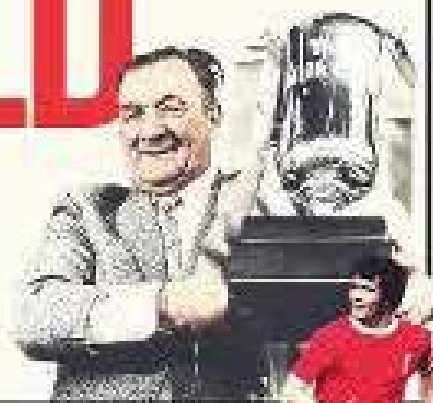
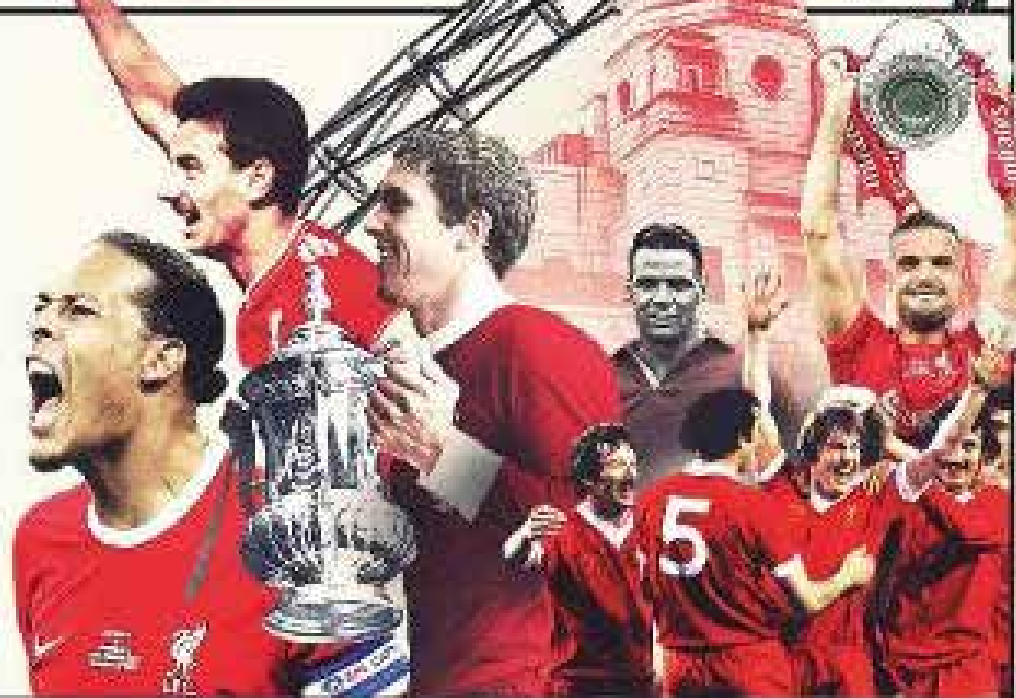


# ANFIELD SOUTH



**75** YEARS OF  
LIVERPOOL AT  
WEMBLEY



B R I A N   B A R W I C K   O B E

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BRIAN BARWICK OBE



# Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	8
Foreword . . . . .	11
Introduction . . . . .	13
1. 1950s: Liddellpool's Wembley Damp Debut! . . .	19
2. 1960s: And the Queen Wore Red! . . . . .	33
3. 1970s: Just the Ticket ... Again and Again! . . .	49
4. 1980s: Home from Home . . . . .	74
5. 1990s: And Then the Cupboard Was ...? . . .	108
6. The Noughties: Out with the Old, in with the New. . . . .	129
7. The 2010s: Back in the Old Routine . . . . .	157
8. The 2020s ... Will Play Chelsea!. . . . .	188
9. Memories, Matches ... and Magic! . . . . .	215
10. Facts and Figures: The Story So Far . . . . .	234

## Chapter 1

# 1950s: Liddellpool's Wembley Damp Debut!

AS THE country entered a new post-war decade, the after-effects of six years of traumatic conflict still hung heavily over the nation's population.

Times were tough, families were still mourning the tragic loss of loved ones, rationing was slowly being phased out but was still holding back choice and quantity, and people were struggling to settle back into their old way of life.

In February 1950, Labour, under Clement Attlee, won a second term of government but with a slim majority of just five seats – in stark contrast to the 146-seat majority that he gained previously. A clear sign of the public's disaffection with how things were going.

On a lighter note, the new decade was about to launch some cultural innovations that would go some way to giving people a route back to normality. On BBC Radio, such an important element of British social life back then, *Educating Archie*, the adventures of a naughty young schoolboy – incredibly, a ventriloquist's dummy(!) – became a smash hit and gave some upcoming stars, like future comic genius Tony Hancock, a chance to shine. In 1950, BBC Radio also ran a pilot episode of an agricultural soap opera, *The Archers*. The series proper began the following year and still has a following in its millions to this day.

*The Eagle* comic first appeared, featuring Dan Dare and Captain Pugwash, and the first broadcast of the popular pre-school children's programme *Andy Pandy* enchanted youngsters for many decades that followed – including this author! Pantomimes popped up all over the country and, in Liverpool, well-loved comedian Frankie Howerd starred as Simple Simon in *Puss in Boots*.

Meanwhile, at the busy Liverpool docks, the Overhead Railway, first installed in 1893 and the world's first electrically operated railway, was still in operation before being closed later in the decade.

In sport, the first Formula 1 Grand Prix was held at Silverstone. Freebooter would win the Grand National, and in June the first World Cup since 1938 was staged in Brazil – the hosts ultimately beaten by Uruguay in the final. The England national team competed for the first time – and they suffered a humiliating loss to the United States in Belo Horizonte en route to an early exit from the competition.

Football in England had got back underway in 1945/46, with a truncated league programme and an FA Cup competition won by Derby County in a 4-1 win over Charlton Athletic.

In the first full season after the end of the war, Liverpool won the First Division title for the fifth time, the previous successes being in 1900/01, 1905/06, 1921/22 and 1922/23. In a tight finish, Liverpool headed Manchester United and Wolverhampton Wanderers, and were under the control of ex-West Ham United defender George Kay, who had captained the London side in the famous 1923 FA Cup Final. 'He was the Shankly of his day. He ate, slept and lived for one thing only – football,' Reds forward Cyril Done opined on his boss.

Kay's total commitment to the cause also led him down a path of ill health. He was respected by his players and his

managerial peers as a man who embraced innovation and portrayed a refreshing humane side to his nature. He had been open to ideas like taking his team over to the USA during the close season in 1946 to make sure they were able to eat nourishing food, including huge steaks, maple syrup and fresh orange juice, ahead of a long league campaign in still-rationed England.

Liverpool's final game of the 1946/47 season at Molineux was a 2-1 win for the Reds, but their championship win wasn't secured until a fortnight later when Sheffield United's win over Stoke City confirmed Liverpool's place at the top of the First Division. It could have been the double for the Reds that season because they reached the semi-final of the FA Cup before going out in a replay to Burnley.

Five league titles but no FA Cup. Back then, the FA Cup Final was still the biggest deal – the one football match that brought the whole nation together. And Liverpool were about to have another chance of winning it – and with their star player leading the charge.

Billy Liddell is a genuine all-time Liverpool great. He sits comfortably alongside the likes of Sir Kenny Dalglish and Steven Gerrard. And it is only the fact that he played his football over 70 years ago – and footage of his remarkable ability is sparse and that many who enjoyed watching him are no longer with us – that probably denies him the completely comparative level of respect. I started watching Liverpool in the 1961/62 season – one year after Billy played his final game for the Reds – completing an outstanding record of 534 games and 228 goals. Those statistics only tell half of the story.

Born in Dunfermline in Scotland, Liddell played for the Fifeshire junior club, Lochgelly Violet, before signing for Liverpool in 1939, only for the war to prevent him taking his place in the First Division. Liddell played in most of

the Regional League matches during the early 1940s before joining the RAF, serving in Europe and Canada, and turning out for its wartime team, Bomber Command.

He was demobbed just a few weeks into the 1946/47 season and made 34 appearances for a Liverpool team that went on to lift the championship. He was a winger who could play on either flank or lead the line as a free-scoring centre-forward or inside-forward. He even shored up the defence during one stint as a full-back. Such was his influence on his team-mates and the club's performances that the side was soon being dubbed 'Liddellpool'. He carried the side through a disappointing period in the 1950s, which included a stint in the Second Division. And the Kop loved him for it. As did his team-mates.

'Billy was so strong he was unbelievable,' said the late Bob Paisley. 'He would always battle, challenge and show tenacity.' Fellow Liverpool legend Ian Callaghan who made his debut in place of his boyhood hero, Billy Liddell, said, 'When I was a youngster Billy was my hero. I was just so absolutely impressed by him ... by his speed and how hard he hit a ball. Dear me! He looked so big, and he had a pair of legs on him like I don't know what!'

A proud Scotsman with nearly 30 caps, Liddell was recognised as an awesome talent. When the selectors chose their Great Britain representative sides against the Rest of Europe in front of 137,000 spectators at Hampden Park in 1947, and in Belfast in 1955, he was one of only two men to be included in both line-ups. The other? Stanley Matthews. That past master of the written word, Geoffrey Green, described Liddell thus: 'Billy Liddell was the greatest gentleman the game has ever known.'

Billy Liddell, 'Our Billy' as the Kop would chant, was a truly special player and a truly special person. Amazingly, he put together a remarkable career that, because of his part-

time accountancy job, was restricted to him being able to train only twice a week! In 1950, Billy and his Liverpool team-mates had their eyes on the big prize, the FA Cup, and a trip to Wembley Stadium.

Liverpool's FA Cup journey started with a third-round replay over Blackburn Rovers, then they disposed of Exeter City, though not without a struggle. A tough fifth-round tie at Stockport County was won by the odd goal of three, and Blackpool were beaten at Anfield in the competition's quarter-final.

Everton had also progressed to the last four, as had Chelsea and Arsenal. Potential for the first all-Merseyside FA Cup Final were dashed when the near-neighbours were drawn together. The semi-final took place at Maine Road on the same Saturday as the Grand National at Aintree. It was only the second time the two senior Merseyside clubs had met at the penultimate stage of the FA Cup, the previous occasion being in 1906, when Everton won and went on to win the final itself.

As Freebooter won the nation's favourite horse race, Liverpool took the honours at Maine Road in front of over 72,000 fans, with goals from wing-half Bob Paisley and a 62nd-minute clincher from Billy Liddell. Liverpool fans were cock-a-hoop and, in author Peter Kenny Jones's fascinating book on *Liddell at One Hundred*, he revived a song sung by the Reds' fans to the tune of '(Put Another Nickel In) Music, Music, Music'.

*Put another record on, Liverpool two and  
Everton none,  
All we want is a cup final to Wembley  
Wembley, Wembley,  
Albert scoring goals galore,  
Billy Liddell scoring more,*



*All we want is a cup final ticket to Wembley  
Wembley, Wembley.  
When we all go to Wembley,  
You'll find the Everton team turning green, with  
Envy that cannot be seen,  
So, give three cheers for the good old reds,  
They made the blues forget their heads.  
We will bring the cup home soon from Wembley,  
Wembley, Wembley.*

Liverpool's semi-final win set up an FA Cup Final against Arsenal, who had beaten Chelsea after a replay – and Liverpool were entitled to feel confident about the forthcoming tussle, having won both of that season's league encounters against the Gunners – 2-0 at Anfield, with a brace of Liddell goals, and 2-1 at Highbury through two goals from Albert Stubbins. In the five-week gap between the semi-finals and the FA Cup Final itself, both teams' league form tapered off, as was often the case.

One oddity in the build-up to the final was that the Arsenal captain, Joe Mercer, was allowed to train at Melwood, Liverpool's training ground. Mercer lived on the Wirral and was a well-loved football figure. He gained permission to train in the afternoon after the Liverpool players had gone through their paces in the morning.

The countdown to the 1950 FA Cup Final was underway.

\* \* \*

It is perhaps difficult for the younger generation to fully grasp the historic importance of the FA Cup as a competition, and the FA Cup Final itself as one of the most engaging and exciting highlights in the sporting calendar – the unpredictability of the early rounds, coupled with the potential of giant-killing acts by the smaller clubs, and the

replays, played within a few days of the original ties having been played.

Even the cup draw itself had radio listeners on the edge of their armchairs, as the FA bigwigs put the 'balls into the velvet bag', gave them a good shake and then pulled them out one by one to create the next round of matches in the FA Cup. It was magical stuff.

Remember, in 1950 there was the established football league programme, the First Division, the Second Division and the Third Division (North and South). There was no second professional domestic cup competition and no European football competitions.

The status of the FA Cup has been 'bumped and bashed' about in recent times – partly to help squeeze more matches from Europe's club competitions into an already hectic fixture schedule and to facilitate more international football. But let's take a trip back in time and see how the nation, relishing a little more normality in their post-war lives, were able to get their FA Cup Final 'fix' at the start of the 1950s.

The BBC first showed the FA Cup Final on its fledgling television service in 1938 when Preston North End, with wing-half and future Liverpool legend Bill Shankly in their ranks, beat Huddersfield Town 1-0 with a last-minute penalty in extra time. There were only 10,000 TV sets in the country at that time, and radio would remain the senior service for two more decades.

In the 1949/50 season, the BBC TV's grandly named 'Association Football' coverage amounted to just 14 live matches – ten matches from the Isthmian League, an England vs Italy international from Tottenham and, on the preceding Saturdays before the Arsenal vs Liverpool FA Cup Final clash, a Schoolboy International between England and Scotland, and the FA Amateur Cup Final between Bishop Auckland and Willington.

It was the 1950 FA Cup Final that started the ball rolling in terms of what was the relative worth of a big live football match with its national appeal. The facility fee paid by the BBC to the FA in respect of the 1950 FA Cup Final was little more than the princely sum of £262!

The Arsenal vs Liverpool match – north vs south – pulled an estimated television audience of one million viewers from the 350,000 homes now having a TV set to watch it on. The sets themselves had a tiny screen on which to carry the pictures. The many more without a TV set had to be more inventive – that included the late and great BBC commentator John Motson: ‘My father was a Methodist minister and, when I was five years old, he took me to a musical instrument shop in Woolwich called Drysdale’s. They had a nine-inch TV in a backstairs room and that’s where I watched the 1950 FA Cup Final.’

There was a full league programme on the day of the final, and poor attendances at first-class matches played that afternoon in the London and Birmingham area – the two regions carrying television pictures from Wembley – set a hare running. London’s first-class match attendances were down 42 per cent and Birmingham’s by 39 per cent.

In 1951, to try to stem the flow of would-be spectators turning into TV viewers, only the second half of the cup final was allowed to be shown live, but by 1953 the BBC was paying a £1,000 facility fee for full live match coverage, and the FA Cup Final stood alone in the fixture list. Even on football’s big day back in 1950, the game had no monopoly on screen time, as one of the BBC’s famous continuity presenters, Mary Malcolm, elegantly dressed, eloquently underlined just an hour before the big kick-off of Arsenal vs Liverpool:

Good afternoon. Today is cup final day, and, of course, the weather is just about as bad as it could

be. It's been raining hard all morning but in spite of everything, enthusiasm is running high as ever at Wembley.

We'll be taking you there to join the community singing ... but for now, until 2.30 Frances Perry and Fred Streeter are going to give you some hints on gardening ... First then, here is Frances Perry to talk about chrysanthemums.

Just your average FA Cup Final build-up!

On BBC Radio's Light Programme, coverage also started at 2.30pm, after an hour's worth of commentary from the MCC vs Yorkshire cricket match, followed by 30 minutes of music from the BBC's Northern Ireland Light Orchestra. Radio commentary for the big game came from the famous voices of Raymond Glendenning and Alan Clarke, with summaries from Charles Buchan and Henry Rose.

Watching it on this new-fangled TV thing or listening to it on the more familiar and respected 'sound radio', still nothing beats being at the game itself! And that privilege was afforded to a meagre 8,000 Liverpool fans – the lucky ones from the 100,000 ticket applications received by the Anfield club.

To manage expectation, the club's response to such a paltry allocation of tickets was to make the ballot for these prized possessions only open to people living within 25 miles of the city. As I write, I have in front of me a used ticket from the match and if you were sitting in Wembley's North Terrace in Row 28 Seat 310, it had cost you 7s/6d in 'old money'.

\* \* \*

When asked about the most thrilling experience of his life in *Liverpool FC Wembley 1950 Players' Souvenir Brochure*, wing-half Bob Paisley would have wrong-footed everybody with his answer. 'It has nothing to do with football,' he said, 'it

was the unforgettable sight of Mount Vesuvius in eruption while stationed near Naples during the war.’

On the eve of the 1950 FA Cup Final, it was Paisley who was blowing his own top when he was controversially left out of the Liverpool team to play at Wembley, despite playing in every round up to the climax, including scoring a key goal in the semi-final. Paisley had already been a member of the Bishop Auckland side who won the 1939 FA Amateur Cup Final against Willington at Roker Park. After that match was finished, his team-mate, Laurie Wensley, who had scored a hat-trick, used the boardroom table on which to sign a contract with Sunderland – at the other end of the club’s polished table a 20-year-old Bob Paisley signed as a professional for Liverpool. Bob received a £10 signing-on fee, and his weekly pay was to be £5.

Before the year was out, the Second World War was underway, delaying Paisley’s Liverpool league debut until 1946, robbing him and many of his contemporaries of a huge slice of their professional careers. Paisley was called up in October 1939 and joined the 73rd Regiment of the Royal Artillery. He would go on to serve in Montgomery’s Eighth Army, the Desert Rats and, in 1944, when the Allies liberated Rome, Bob, with his fellow soldiers, travelled through the Eternal City aboard a tank, to the delight of the joyful civilians.

Thirty-three years later, Paisley would enjoy another major moment of his life in Rome as manager of a Liverpool team winning the European Cup for the first time. Post-war, and a title winner in 1946/47, Paisley had established himself as a hard-working, hard-tackling wing-half and had made over 125 league appearances as the club prepared for their big day at Wembley. A knee injury had prevented Paisley playing in the four league games leading up to the final but he was fit and available to play at Wembley.

George Kay, the manager, did not pick the Liverpool team for the final; it was the nine club directors who, by a slim 5-4 majority, chose Bill Jones over Paisley in the left-half berth. It was left to the manager to break the news to the heartbroken Paisley.

Paisley's name might have been in the FA Cup Final programme team line-up, but he never set foot on the pitch. Bob Paisley was devastated by the decision: 'It hit me so hard in 1950 that if a club had come in for me, and Liverpool had wanted me to go, then I would have left. But during the summer I thought about it and concluded that even if I had left, the same thing could happen somewhere else.'

Ironically, Paisley was chosen to play in Liverpool's final league game just four days after the final – and played 41 league games the following season. He retired in 1954, having played 277 games for the Merseyside club. He joined the backroom staff en route to becoming the most successful manager in British football history.

\* \* \*

Liverpool manager George Kay had served in the Royal Garrison Artillery in the First World War. That sense of military duty came to the fore as, when the Second World War broke out, he persuaded the whole of his Liverpool team to sign on for the Territorial Army. So, less than a week after playing football in that season's First Division, most Liverpool players found themselves in a different type of uniform, guarding the Mersey Tunnel!

On another occasion, Kay also had an unusual brush with a British military great, Field Marshal Montgomery of Alamein. Liverpool were playing Portsmouth at Fratton Park and George, not one to mince his words, was getting so carried away on the touchline that 'Monty', then Pompey's president, sent a policeman down to ask the Reds' boss to

curb his language. You couldn't argue with that. But George Kay did. He went round to see Monty after the game, they settled their differences, before getting on like a house on fire when discovering they were both socialists.

Sadly, in April 1950, on the way down from Liverpool to their pre-cup final headquarters, George Kay took ill and stayed in his hotel bed until the morning of the game. He insisted that he wouldn't miss Wembley, but he was far from well once there. The weeks building up to the final had taken their toll on the Liverpool boss, including the last few days of intense nervous strain before Liverpool's big day. He would resign as Liverpool manager a year later and died in April 1954.

Billy Liddell said: 'If ever a man gave his life for a club, George Kay did so for Liverpool.'

\* \* \*

So to the 1950 FA Cup Final itself. As the BBC's Mary Malcolm had made clear, the big day arrived at the same time as a bout of heavy persistent rain. Twenty-four hours earlier, when the Liverpool players had visited an empty Wembley Stadium to get a feel of the famous venue, the sun had been beating down. The players had checked where their respective families would be sitting – out in the open about ten rows from the front. Perfect ... unless it rained the following afternoon that is.

As both teams' primary colours were red, the teams were asked to change. Liverpool would be playing in white shirts and black shorts and had worn those colours the previous weekend at Portsmouth, to get used to their change of strip. Arsenal wore old gold shirts with white shorts. Their line-up included the two Compton brothers, Les and the flamboyant Denis. The latter was to become a cricketing legend, while his football career came to an end through serious knee damage.

On the big day, he countered the cold and wet conditions at Wembley by knocking back a large brandy at half-time.

Pre-match, both teams had been presented to the royal guest of honour, King George VI, and, formalities over, Liverpool skipper Phil Taylor won the toss. Arsenal didn't waste any time in trying to close down the threat of the Reds' superstar, Billy Liddell. As one writer observed: 'He, Herculean in endeavour, was surrounded wherever and whenever in possession and on one occasion it took four men to prevent his escapes.'

One Arsenal player who knew first-hand the potency of Liddell was his fellow Scottish international team-mate Alex Forbes. He frequently fouled Liddell, man-marking him and obstructing him whenever possible. Much was made of Forbes's malevolent treatment of 'Our Billy', including a significantly high tackle but, after the game, Liddell typically made light of it: 'Far be it from me to impute any malicious motives to Alex. I'm absolutely sure he had none. We'd played together for Scotland and always got on extremely well.'

Arsenal won the match 2-0, both goals scored by Reg Lewis, one in each half. The official attendance for the final was 100,000 and the gate receipts £39,296. Reds full-back Ray Lambert said, 'When Lewis scored the Arsenal goals that beat us, we had defensive gaps that looked on the Wembley pitch as wide as the Mersey Tunnel.'

The newspaper headlines that evening summed it up: 'Arsenal, Well-Used to Wembley Air, Bore Too Much Power For Anfield Side'; 'FA Cup Still Eludes Liverpool After 58 Years' Play'.

Saturday evening was spent in London at a post-match banquet but there was one VIP missing – the FA Cup itself. And, perhaps a quaint reflection of the times, the Liverpool team and associates went on a coach trip to the seaside at Brighton on the Sunday.



On the Monday, they received a heroes' welcome back after arriving at Lime Street Station, welcomed by tens of thousands lining the streets, before heading off to Anfield, where a junior match was in progress. A crowd of around 30,000 gave the players and officials a fantastic reception. Then, it was to the town hall, where another 10,000 people heralded their favourites.

Billy Liddell was genuinely moved: 'Even the most hardened members of our party were really touched by this amazing expression of loyalty. All in all, it was an unforgettable and moving homecoming after the disappointment of losing at Wembley.'

And the FA Cup itself did make it to Merseyside after all, brought by Arsenal captain Joe Mercer and displayed in his family's grocery business in Wallasey!

*Added Time:*

- The Reds were relegated from the First Division in 1954. Everton were promoted in the same season from the Second Division. Kop favourite Albert Stubbins would leave Anfield in 1953 but was guaranteed legendary status for being chosen as one of the famous faces on the cover of the Beatles' iconic *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* album.
- Liverpool's record defeat is 9-1 – conceded against Birmingham City in December 1954. They suffered their most famous embarrassing loss in the FA Cup third round in January 1959 – 2-1 against non-league Worcester City. Billy Liddell remained the Kop's 'main man' throughout the decade.
- In December 1959, Bill Shankly joined the Anfield club to turn the club's miserable 50s record around – and the rest is history.