

FROM RONNIE RADFORD TO ROGER OSBORNE

WHEN THE FA CUP *REALLY* MATTERED

VOLUME 2 - THE 1970s



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Introduction

THE FA Cup is a shadow of its former self and especially so the FA Cup Final. It used to be a showpiece, a truly glamorous event that transcended football and stopped the nation in its tracks. It wasn't just another game. It was the biggest occasion of the domestic sporting calendar.

This book articulates this magic through the eyes of fans who were lucky to attend these famous matches which are etched in the memories of football supporters all over the globe.

It begins with the epic 1970 Chelsea v Leeds FA Cup Final, two matches which encapsulated the true drama of the competition. This book is about the 1970s, which was a particularly magical decade for the cup when the wonderful 'David and Goliath' stories that were part of the fabric of the competition at last spread to the final itself.

Though the First Division at that time was usually fought out between Liverpool, Derby County, Nottingham Forest, Leeds United and Arsenal, for some reasons none of these top clubs were able to assert a stranglehold on the FA Cup, allowing less fashionable teams like Sunderland, Southampton, West Ham United and Ipswich Town their moment in the limelight and their fans a journey of unimaginable joy.

The stories of these successes are known by most football fans everywhere. For instance, they know that, in 1973, Sunderland produced one of the greatest shocks in FA Cup football when a goal from Ian Porterfield was enough to beat Don Revie's mighty Leeds side, or that, three years on, a late goal from Bobby Stokes gave Southampton victory over Manchester United.

INTRODUCTION

But, what aren't known are the stories of the fans who were at these games. Fans who went to extraordinary lengths to get tickets for the greatest match on football's calendar, fans who defied the Football Association's unfair ticket allocation policy to watch their team at Wembley.

Mixed with news reports of the day, the television programmes that people were watching and the pop songs they were humming, this book portrays the sights and sounds of a time when the FA Cup Final was a truly unique and momentous event, watched on television not just by football fans but even by millions of people professing no love of the beautiful game. A time when the nation really did stop for a football match.

Hundreds of fans from the clubs who played in the FA Cup Final during this golden period have recounted their personal stories for this book.

They share their reaction to victory or defeat. What *did* those Sunderland or Southampton fans actually feel like when those goals went in?

What *were* Arsenal fans thinking when Charlie George's 1971 screamer hit the back of the net to clinch the double?

Because, after all, the FA Cup was, ultimately, not about the players, the managers or the dignitaries who attended, it was about the ordinary fan. The fan who followed his or her club through the good times and bad times and everything in between. For many of those fans, a Wembley FA Cup Final was the pinnacle of their football-supporting life. And many of them are able to recall it as if it were yesterday.

As Tottenham legend Danny Blanchflower once said of the FA Cup Final, 'The dream is not for the player, it is for the fan... the lover of the game who doesn't really know what it is like out there and never will know. It is the fan's day.'

In the 1980s and 1990s three factors conspired to change the complexion of the FA Cup. In the early 1980s, terrestrial television companies began tentatively screening live league and cup football matches at weekends. Then the arrival of satellite television resulted in several live matches a week, removing

much of the gloss and glamour from those extremely rare matches broadcast live during the 1960s and 70s, of which the FA Cup Final was the jewel in the crown.

Then came the Premier League, which made the rich clubs richer. Winning the Premier League became the ultimate achievement and, for the big clubs, eroded their interest in winning the FA Cup, rendering it a 'nice-to-have' rather than a 'must-have'.

Before long, the top clubs were resting players for FA Cup matches, bleeding youngsters or giving disgruntled reserves a run. This pattern reached its peak in 1999/2000 when Manchester United did not take part in the competition at all. It was the clearest signal yet that the cup was not what it was.

This book takes us back to a period of tight shorts, mutton-chop sideburns and giant-killing, played out against a backdrop of economic gloom, industrial turmoil and some great (and not so great) music and television.

A MOST DESERVING CAUSE

Chelsea v Leeds United

Saturday 11 April 1970

EVERY morning at 4.30am, an alarm sounds in a terraced house in Hemsworth, West Yorkshire, and a young man rouses himself from his slumber, rubs his eyes, and prepares to go to work. While the rest of his neighbourhood sleeps, he slaps some tepid water on his face before leaving his home to catch a bus to South Kirkby Colliery, part of the Barnsley Area of the National Coal Board. He arrives at the pit at 5.25am, at the same time as hundreds of miners and support workers, and clocks on, ready for his 5.30am shift. It is March 1970. Les Wake is 17 years old and an apprentice electrician. These facts are incidental. The most important thing in this young man's life is Leeds United Football Club.

Les is the kind of person who forms the bedrock of any club's support. Fiercely loyal, unwavering and prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to watch the team they love. He has seen Leeds play an impressive 49 times during 1969/70, 28 at Elland Road and 21 away. This takes some doing. Midweek away games all over the country mean Les has to call in regular favours from his boss at the pit to let him go. But, wherever he goes – Derby, Ipswich, Southampton, or London – he has to be back in time to report for his shift at 5.30am the next morning. This is a young man who, more than most, deserves to see his

team on the biggest stage of them all. He is not alone. Les sees hundreds of other similar devotees on the coaches that leave Elland Road. This Leeds side – unpopular elsewhere – inspire utter devotion from their hardcore fans, but such is the FA's absurd ticket allocation policy, many of these fans are set to miss the biggest match of the season. However, Les is different. He is a determined young man and adamant that he is not going to be one of them when his team meet Chelsea in the upcoming 1970 FA Cup Final.

Carole Parkhouse comes from a very different background to Les. She is a 15-year-old pupil at a private convent school, St Philomena's, in Carshalton, Surrey, her Welsh father being a successful small businessman. Like Les though, she is a Leeds nut. Carole got the Leeds bug in 1965. Then, knowing nothing whatsoever about football previously, she went on a day trip to London. It just happened to be FA Cup Final day as well, with Leeds playing Liverpool.

She recalls, 'I was ten at the time and totally oblivious to football, I knew nothing about it. But I remember I was agog watching all the cars and buses going past with scarves and banners on them. It really fascinated me and my dad had to explain what it was all about.'

Carole remembers being particularly struck by a Mini passing them with a life-size model of the hugely popular, hard and talented Leeds and Scotland midfielder Bobby Collins on top of it. All this razzmatazz and colour intrigued young Carole. She says, 'I asked my dad about all of the fans and came to the conclusion that, well, we must be Leeds fans too, because we come from Leeds. But dad was Welsh and rugby mad. He later became chairman of Wakefield Rugby Union Club and he wasn't interested in football at all.' There was no turning back for Carole. She had 'got it'.

Back at her convent, while other girls read *Bunty* or *Jackie*, or pored over pictures of the Small Faces, Love Affair, the Herd or Scott Walker, Carole spent hours reading *Charles Buchan's Football Monthly* or *Goal!* from cover to cover. This newly-found

obsession could only be fed by a visit to Elland Road. Though Mr Parkhouse was more interested in fly-halves than centre-halves and lock-forwards than inside-forwards, Carole nagged, pleaded and cajoled in her quest to get there.

‘At last, he relented,’ she recalls, ‘and so, for Christmas 1968, he finally took me. I think he thought I would hate it. Unfortunately for him, we beat Burnley 6-1 and I was even more hooked than ever. Plus, now I knew my way to the ground and so would be able to make my own way there from now on.’

Once there, Carole found a team that was about to reach their full potential. Managed by Middlesbrough-born Don Revie, who took over a struggling side in 1961, they were now vying with the two Manchester and two Liverpool clubs to be the dominant force in English football.

But while United, City, Everton and Liverpool had plenty of friends throughout football, Leeds did not. Come 1970 they are unloved by the footballing public for their perceived win-at-all-costs attitude and an approach to games which opposing teams and supporters view as ruthless and intimidating. Yet they are unquestionably a great side, masterminded by the tough-tackling, creative genius Johnny Giles and the inspirational captaincy of the pint-sized, fiery Scot, Billy Bremner. They mix muscle with skill and a streetwise know-how, which can infuriate, but is undeniably effective. For fans like Carole and Les Wake they are qualities that inspire complete and utter devotion.

By comparison, Chelsea are seen as flamboyant artisans. They are the club that became most closely associated with the 1960s cultural revolution, which, in England, had London as its epicentre. Just a stone’s throw from Stamford Bridge is the King’s Road, the hangout of dandies, aesthetes and luvvies, a clutch of whom inevitably find themselves drawn to Stamford Bridge.

They are there for the big games: United, Liverpool, Spurs and Arsenal. Most true Chelsea fans, the working-class hardcore that gathers in the Shed, despise these fans. Fans like 15-year-old

skinhead John Foley. Originally from Mile End, East London, John lives in Chingford and attends the Sir George Monoux School in Walthamstow. He is Chelsea through and through and a Shed regular. Each home game he jostles for a spot to watch his heroes: Osgood, Hudson, Cooke and Harris, sporting the famous blue shorts and shirts with the white lion clutching the staff of the Abbot of Westminster on the left breast.

John recalls, 'I used to wear a checked Ben Sherman shirt, white Sta-Prest trousers covered in Chelsea graffiti and, my pride and joy, which were my Dr Martens. I was very much into the skinhead clothes and music. As well as Ben Shermans, I liked Brutus shirts and Levis, with the regulation quarter of an inch turn-ups. When I wasn't wearing my Dr Martens I wore a classy pair of brogues and a Crombie overcoat with matching top pocket handkerchief and socks, often of a very garish colour.'

When John was getting ready to go to Stamford Bridge for the third round of the FA Cup against Birmingham City, the weather was cold and wet and, instead of his smart Crombie, he wore an old, dark raincoat. After Chelsea brushed the Blues aside 3-0, John decided the raincoat was lucky and pledged to wear it to every FA Cup game until Chelsea lost.

Except they didn't lose. In the fourth round they beat Burnley 3-1 at Turf Moor, after a 2-2 draw at Stamford Bridge. John wore the raincoat again to Selhurst Park, where Chelsea really turned it on to beat Crystal Palace 4-1. Then it was another London derby in the sixth round, when Chelsea made the short trip to Queens Park Rangers and, in a brilliant game, won 4-2. The raincoat is working its magic. Chelsea are in the semi-final.

Meanwhile the draw has worked in Leeds's favour. A 2-1 victory at Elland Road over Swansea City in the third round then saw them travel south to Surrey and earn a 6-0 victory at Isthmian League side Sutton United, at the delightfully named Gander Green Lane, in front of a record 14,000 crowd. Naturally Les Wake was there and so too was Carole Parkhouse. It was almost like a home game for her.

She recalls, 'The nuns at my convent were very sweet and trusting. I told them my dad had got me a ticket, although he hadn't. Luckily they didn't ask to see it. But I went down to the ground and managed to get one.'

Then, Mansfield Town were seen off 2-0 at Elland Road in the fifth round before a trip to Wiltshire at the quarter-final stage saw Leeds beat Swindon Town 2-0 at the County Ground.

So to the semi-finals, which brought together two giants of the game. Leeds against their hated rivals Manchester United. Fifty-five thousand watched a goalless draw at Hillsborough and then almost 8,000 extra fans crammed into Villa Park for the replay, which was also goalless.

Just two days later the sides – now thoroughly sick of the sight of one another – reconvened at Bolton Wanderers' Burnden Park, where a solitary goal from Billy Bremner finally separated them and meant Leeds were going to Wembley.

Chelsea's task was comparatively simple. They beat Watford – conquerors of Liverpool in the sixth round – 5-1 at Tottenham. The die has been cast – it is to be Chelsea v Leeds at Wembley stadium. And now the scramble for tickets will begin in earnest.

Most games at Elland Road during 1969/70 have attracted around 40,000 fans. So when the FA allocates Leeds a total of just 16,000 tickets, of which 12,000 automatically go to season ticket holders, it means there will be less than 4,000 for the so-called 'ordinary' fans. This includes hundreds, possibly thousands of hard-working fans, like Les Wake, who have followed the club the length and breadth of the country.

The unfair allocation process means thousands of fans are going to be bitterly disappointed. But Les, who has spent a considerable chunk of his apprentice's wages following the team, is determined not to be one of them. He says, 'As soon as we'd beaten United in the semis, tickets went on sale to season ticket holders who, at that time, were just limited to people in the main stand seats. Next in line were token holders and, finally, any remaining tickets would be made available to the general public.'

The crucial token system, which would be Les's passport to Wembley, worked like this: every Leeds home match programme during the season carried a token, which fans had to cut out and paste on to a special sheet provided by the club. This, coupled with the front of any away match programme, made up the necessary number of tokens needed to qualify for a Wembley ticket.

Les and his mates were relaxed and confident they would be going to Wembley. 'We were all happy as we fell easily into this category and had all the necessary tokens,' he says. 'It was just a case of waiting for the season ticket holders to buy theirs and then we could get ours.' So Leeds put the tickets on sale and before anyone can say 'Peter Lorimer' 12,000 of them are snapped up by season ticket holders. 'At least that's what the club told us,' says Les, wryly.

News then leaks out that a hefty 3,500 have been distributed among players, club officials and staff. Les was aghast, as were thousands like him. He says, 'What this meant is that there were a mere 500 or so left for the token holders, who could prove that they were the "real" fans.' Suddenly panic set in among the Leeds hardcore. Thousands of regular away-travelling fans, previously convinced they easily qualified to get a ticket, were now horrified they were going to miss out on seeing a match they had every right to attend.

It was the talk of the city. Who was going to get the remaining 500 tickets? Les says, 'My mates and I decided we needed to queue all through the night if we were going to stand any chance at all of getting a Wembley ticket. Again I had to skip off work early so that we could get in the queue by around mid-afternoon. When we got there we were devastated to see that the queues were already building and, within an hour, the queue stretched from the ticket windows through the car park and into Elland Road itself.'

The mood was tense and threatened to turn nasty as more and more people turned up. Les recalls, 'There was a lot of pushing and shoving as late arrivals tried to jump the queue.'

With the situation threatening to boil over, the police decided to lock the car park gates with the queuing fans inside. Then, at last, came some official news, which brought huge smiles to the faces of Les and his mates. 'We were told that there were about 300 of us in the car park and that there were about 500 tickets left,' he says. 'It was going to be tight, but at least we were in. I felt for those people who had been locked out.'

There was a party atmosphere in the car park as the fans started planning their trips to Wembley. Les remembers that night as if it were yesterday, 'The footballs came out and we played in that car park for most of the night to really get us in the mood.'

Dawn breaks over Leeds and, at Elland Road, the expectant fans, who have waited all night, look forward to their prize and some blissful kip back home. They smile and give the thumbs-up sign to the TV cameras and photographers who have arrived. Several are wearing Celtic scarves, which have been swapped after the first leg of the European Cup semi-final the week before. In the ticket office, the staff take a deep breath and get ready to dispense the last of the tickets. There is a cheer from the crowd as the shutters are pulled up. It is 9am.

Cheering as loudly as anyone is Les, who can barely contain himself. One of the 500 tickets will shortly be his. He says, 'When the office opened I was really excited because I was near the front of the queue and I was going to watch Leeds in the FA Cup Final.'

The first lucky recipients get their tickets and pose for the cameras. Les quite fancies his picture in the paper or his face on the TV. But then something happens. There are groans, then swearing, and then anger. The ticket windows, open for less than ten minutes, are starting to close.

'Then the truth came out,' says Les. 'It turns out there were less than 100 tickets left. People began throwing things at the windows and the police had to move in.' It is like a bad dream, but soon the reality dawns. All the tickets have gone. Les feels sick. Les thinks back upon the season. Week-in, week-out at Elland Road, the away trips to Sutton, Southampton and

Ipswich, the midweek away trips to Highbury, Turf Moor, the Baseball Ground and Upton Park. The late nights, the early starts down the colliery. It all seemed grossly unfair.

‘We were totally devastated and angry,’ Les continues, ‘especially after seeing every game and queuing all through the night. We had been lied to and shunned by our own club.’

Sniffing a good story, the press move in. Les appears on national television explaining what the club has told them. ‘Everyone else backed up what I said,’ Les remembers. ‘This meant that the truth was now on national television, which would bring to light the plight of true fans to the FA and the clubs themselves.’

Les can still remember the utter devastation and sense of injustice he felt on that cold April morning. He recalls looking around the car park. Most of the distraught faces were familiar. Many of them, like him, have spent their hard-earned cash following the club around the country. Many of them have become friends. Les says, ‘There was one girl called Christine who could not stop crying when she was interviewed. I tried my best to console her, but she broke down uncontrollably in front of the cameras.’

Carole Parkhouse has not queued through the night – perhaps understandably she hasn’t been allowed to but her best friend Margaret did so on her behalf. She says, ‘Margaret was quite near the front of the queue and she didn’t get one either. Word spread like wildfire that only a couple of hundred tickets were actually sold to Leeds fans at the ticket office that day. There was lots of controversy. Everyone was asking where all the tickets had gone.’

Then the scandal took a somewhat sinister turn. It may have been sour grapes or it may have been anger, but soon rumours were circulating around West Yorkshire that some of the Leeds players have been spotted in and around the city doing business with ticket touts. Chairman Percy Woodward promises an inquiry if any evidence is produced to show that any of his players are profiteering.

Les, meanwhile, is inconsolable. The 17-year-old trudges home, his eyes welling up with tears, feeling cheated and robbed. Maybe as he makes his way back home the 18 miles to his house at Hemsworth he can hear a Stevie Wonder song that is in the charts, 'Never Had a Dream Come True'. In the song, from the *Signed, Sealed and Delivered* album, Stevie Wonder sings, 'I never, never had a dream come true. Without you, the world out there is painted shades of blue.'

Other songs dominating the charts at that time may also reflect Les's mood. The first is 'Wandrin' Star', from the hit movie *Paint Your Wagon*, and features the almost comical, gravelly tones of Lee Marvin. It has been displaced at the summit by Simon and Garfunkel's epic 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. For Les, Simon's words and Garfunkel's superb delivery are extremely poignant, 'When you're weary, feelin' small. When tears are in your eyes, I will dry them all.'

'I just went home totally gutted and went straight to bed,' Les says. 'When my dad, Ken, came home from work he couldn't believe it when I told him I didn't get a ticket. We were both so angry.' One of Leeds United's most loyal and devoted fans was going to miss the FA Cup Final. The ticket that by rights should have been his, has been allocated to someone surely less deserving.

How many times have we heard about the 'hallowed' Wembley turf? Players would wax lyrical about its 'bowling green-like' quality and eulogise about the lush, smooth surface, which afforded wonderful, free-flowing football. Such pitches need a bit of tender, loving care. Probably the absolute last thing it needs is dozens of agile horses cantering all over it, jumping and landing, rooting their hooves in the turf as they change direction. But, amazingly, this was precisely what happened at Wembley stadium in the summers of 1968 and 1969, when the Royal International Horse Show was staged there.

To the dismay of football lovers everywhere, a huge tent was erected in the middle of the pitch, fences were built and the galloping horses proceeded to tear the Wembley pitch to shreds.

The damage to the pitch greatly affected the 1969 League Cup Final between Arsenal and Swindon and, to a lesser extent, the same year's FA Cup Final between Manchester City and Leicester. It will now have an enormous influence on the 1970 FA Cup Final.

In the week leading up to the final, both sides have injury worries. Chelsea's midfield wonder-kid Alan Hudson is sweating on a place after tearing ankle ligaments against West Bromwich Albion. The highly rated 18-year-old schemer joins Ron Harris (hamstring) on the treatment table. Chelsea trainer Harry Medhurst says of Hudson, 'The trouble with these injuries is that they sometimes take a long time to mend. If there is no swelling when the plaster comes off he may well be able to start a little training.'

Compared with Leeds right-back Paul Reaney, both Hudson and Harris are lucky. Reaney, 25, lies in a London hospital, with a broken leg, after colliding with West Ham's Keith Miller at Upton Park nine days before the final.

Remembering the tackle, Reaney says, 'There was just one thought in my head. Bang...there goes everything.' The injury means the classy and bang-in-form man has no chance of playing in the cup final, and, perhaps worst of all, no chance of going to the forthcoming World Cup in Mexico.

Reaney says, 'Every footballer's dream is to play in an FA Cup Final. And Mexico – well, that is out of this world. Now, after being virtually about to run on to the field for both, it's all gone.' But he adds, charitably, 'But Keith must feel no blame. It was a complete accident.' Striker Mick Jones and hard-man stopper Norman Hunter are also injury worries for the Yorkshire side.

The tabloids are full of stories about the match and the players. In a regular slot in the *Daily Mirror*, charmingly called 'The Wembley Birds', Frances Bonetti, wife of Chelsea keeper Peter, tells a reporter who asks if she is looking forward to the final, 'I'd much sooner just walk around the local shops. But I can't very well do that, can I? But I am terribly nervous.'

'I've become superstitious and always wear a charm bracelet Peter gave me. I never leave it off on cup days. The only time I did, we were half way to White Hart Lane for the semi-final against Watford. Peter made me turn back and get it.'

On the Saturday before Wembley, Alan Hudson says the next 48 hours will be crucial if he is to play, telling reporters he will do anything to be running out against Leeds in a week's time. The countdown is on. Fans and players alike are getting nervous. But thousands of fans still don't have a ticket.

On the Thursday before the final, the newspapers are full of a ticketing scandal which doubtless holds the answer as to where the tickets that should have been claimed by people like Les Wake and his mates have gone.

'BIG PROBE INTO CUP TICKETS RACKET', screams the front page of one of that morning's newspapers. The story reads, 'Cup Final tickets stamped in the name of Leeds United were being sold by touts on London's black market yesterday. Last night Leeds promised a full-scale probe into how the touts got their tickets.'

Chairman Percy Woodward said, 'If we find out that a player is involved he will be in very serious trouble indeed. If we discover it is a season ticket holder who sold these tickets, he will immediately cease to be a season ticket holder at our Elland Road ground and he will never again be allowed to have one.'

Back in Hemsworth, Les and his mates read the papers with growing anger, seething at the unfairness of it all. They just want to watch their team at Wembley. That evening they make a decision. By hook or by crook, they are going to make it to the final. This means travelling to Wembley and paying over the odds for a ticket, if they can find one that is. That night Les looks at his bedroom wall: the poster of the 1968/69 championship-winning team, the rosette and scarf. Nothing is going to stop him from seeing his side in the most famous domestic football match in the world.

The preparations continue and Leeds stage a behind-closed-doors practice match as they push Norman Hunter and Mick

Jones through final fitness tests. For Chelsea, Harris and Hudson are both looking likely starters.

Hudson's 19-year-old squeeze Maureen O'Doherty is the latest girl to be featured in 'The Wembley Birds'. She says, 'I just know Alan will be fit in time. I have thought so ever since he was injured.' Maureen, a model, spends endless days filling up hot- and cold-water baths to treat her loved one's ankle. Asked about 'sharing' the heart-throb with his legions of female admirers, Maureen says, 'It's hard to accept. I must admit I get jealous sometimes. You should see some of the letters he gets!'

Meanwhile, Don Revie's wife Elsie says she is hoping to see more of her husband once the cup final is safely secured and tells the papers, 'It will be nice to make his acquaintance again. I have almost forgotten what he looks like as he has been so busy with football.'

However Elsie, a schoolteacher, knows all about a footballer's life. Her father and uncle were both professionals. Now she admits she is looking forward to relaxing with her husband with a trip to Mexico to watch England in that summer's World Cup, with the FA Cup under their belts.

But that was later. For now, Elsie is hunting for a new car. So she heads for the Regent Street area of Leeds, where there are several dealerships to choose from. On such things fate is decided. Mrs Revie finds herself at Arnold G. Wilson, which sells upmarket British Leyland vehicles, as well as Aston Martins. She scans the cars on the forecourt. The showroom manager hovers, but respectfully keeps his distance.

Like Les, Carole Parkhouse is just one of thousands of Leeds fans plunged into the depths of depression. She has resigned herself to watching the FA Cup Final at home and is deciding which TV channel is likely to provide the better coverage. She is in her bedroom silently bemoaning the fact that she won't be there in person when she hears the shrill, mechanical ring of the family telephone. It is her dad. She gets to the phone and she and her father make small talk. But Carole thinks he sounds odd, as though he is concealing something.

She takes up the story, ‘Suddenly, dad asked – as a joke I thought – if I wanted to go to the cup final. I told him not to mess around but then he told me he wasn’t joking.’ It turns out the man loitering dutifully at the car showroom was Carole’s dad and he has managed to sell Elsie Revie a brand new car. Perhaps because of the excellent service he’s provided, he has been rewarded with a cup final ticket.

‘Unfortunately, I don’t know what car Mrs Revie bought, but I imagine it was an upmarket Rover, rather than an Aston Martin,’ remembers Carole. No matter. She is going to Wembley. Her eyes well up with tears of joy.

On the day before the final, Chelsea also get dragged into the ticketing scandal with tickets issued to followers of the London side freely available on London’s black market at an astronomical £15 for a 25 shilling seat. FA secretary Denis Follows orders an inquiry, while Chelsea club secretary John Battersby says, ‘We go to a lot of time and trouble to stop the tickets from reaching the touts.’

For skinhead John Foley, our 15-year-old Chelsea fan, getting tickets has been routine. ‘I got my ticket through the post,’ he says. ‘I sent in all the vouchers from every home game programme. They used to cancel the vouchers later so that you couldn’t just buy a programme weeks after to try and get one.’

John, like Carole, can now start preparing for Wembley. It is only poor Les Wake who doesn’t have a ticket, but he isn’t giving up. Every possible avenue is being explored and, suddenly, a chink of light appears.

Les’s colliery has an FA-affiliated football team, which means they automatically receive two cup final tickets. The committee decides the fairest way to allocate them is to raffle them off. The trouble is there are 2,500 men at the pit.

Les says, ‘I was running out of time and I realised my chances of getting a ticket were incredibly slim. However, countless men at the colliery knew my plight and how much I wanted to be at Wembley. Many of them had been coming up to me to tap me on the shoulder to promise me the tickets should they win the

raffle, which gave me hope. I also had another possibility. My dad was a member of a local club team and they also had two tickets to raffle. Where there was hope, I was not giving up.'

The wife of Chelsea midfielder John Hollins is interviewed in the papers. 'Lovely' Linda Hollins hasn't had much time to think about the cup final because she and John are in the process of moving house. Linda says she will make sure John will spot her in the 100,000 crowd because she will wear something bright.

The last time hubby played in an FA Cup Final three years ago, Linda watched the game on television. She tells reporters, 'I didn't know John then and I can't say I even noticed him during the game. I knew nothing about football at the time...and only a little bit now. But at least I will know which team are Chelsea.'

Meanwhile there is a blow for Chelsea as Alan Hudson loses his race for fitness. He fails a 15-minute fitness test at Stamford Bridge and his ankle won't be ready. He walks once around the dog track at the stadium and then tries to jog, but can't manage it and tells Blues manager Dave Sexton, 'Sorry boss, I can't keep you waiting any longer. I'm out of the Wembley running.'

Life goes on. The Beatles have been in turmoil for some time now, the cracks showing in the warts-and-all documentary *Let It Be*, which was fraught with tension from start to finish. But now it is over. The day before the cup final, Paul McCartney announces he is quitting. In a no-holds-barred statement the 28-year-old star says, 'I have no future plans to record or appear with the Beatles again. Or to write any more music with John.'

The final straw appears to be the appointment of 'business adviser' Allen Klein, a move supported by the three other Beatles. McCartney wanted the gig to go to his father-in-law, Lee Eastman.

Chelsea announce they are treating Saturday's final as 'just another match'. The players will spend Friday night in their own beds and will report for duty only four hours before the kick-off. Manager Sexton believes the team should stick rigidly to the timetable that has taken them to Wembley.

All over the country football fans are preparing to go to the match – as many as 50,000 of them may not be fans of either Chelsea or Leeds. The clock is ticking. That Friday evening millions of Britons will be glued to the box. At 6.25pm spotty, bespectacled teenagers battle it out in *Top of the Form* with its distinctive ‘Marching Strings’ signature tune. This is followed by the latest episode from the Shiloh Ranch, in Medicine Bow, Wyoming Territory, policed by a foreman known simply as *The Virginian* and played by actor James Drury.

Next up it is Galton and Simpson’s brilliant sitcom *Steptoe and Son*, which precedes the *Dick Emery Show*, which has people all over the country adopting a silly, effeminate voice, playfully slapping their mates and saying, ‘Ooh you are awful, but I like you.’

Then it is *Miss England 1970*. Meanwhile, ITV viewers can watch *Peyton Place*, *Wheel of Fortune* with Michael Miles and *Doctor in the House*. Plenty to stay in for then.

Back in Yorkshire, there is tension in the air in the works canteen at South Kirkby Colliery as the raffle for FA Cup tickets is about to take place. Young Les Wake sits, heart pounding, praying, wishing, hoping that somehow, just somehow, his number might come up. Next best is the hope that one of the many colleagues who have promised him their ticket will win the raffle.

‘The draw takes place,’ recalls Les. ‘The winner is announced. Not surprisingly, it’s not me. Then surprise, surprise, the bloke who wins it wants to keep the tickets and sell them for a profit. Once more I was angry and devastated. Although I was very young I shouted at him across the canteen with a couple of swear words thrown in. Just about everyone in that canteen agreed with me and had a go at him as well. I was still going to Wembley to try and get a ticket from a tout, but that was no guarantee at all and I could have really done with getting a ticket through work. I was gutted again.’

It is yet another kick in the teeth for Les and there is less than 24 hours before kick-off.

As Les trudges home he thinks about his weekly wage from the pit and how much he is prepared to sacrifice if a ticket does become available. Five pounds, ten pounds, 20 pounds, surely not 25? Back home, he lays out his football clothes and prepares to go to Wembley.

He remembers, 'I always dressed the same when following Leeds, home or away – Wrangler jeans, Wrangler jacket and my favourite scarf. It's amazing how many Leeds supporters recognised me that way. After tea, my dad asked me to go to the clubrooms with him. This was very strange and unusual as I wasn't yet old enough to drink.' Les shrugs his shoulders and thinks 'why not?'

Mr Wake and his son walk to the clubroom and, when they arrive, the committee is seated around a big table. Big, bluff, imposing, red-faced Yorkshiremen, of the Fred Trueman ilk. Their expressions give nothing away. Les looks at them curiously. He thinks of trips to Portman Road, The Dell and Anfield. Nothing is said.

Then the chairman speaks, 'Are you going to Wembley, Leslie?' 'Yes, definitely, I couldn't miss this,' Les replies. The chairman looks at him. Les notices the slightest hint of a smile on his face. Is he being mocked? 'I feel for you son,' says the chairman finally. 'I know what you've been through. I take it you haven't got a ticket yet?' 'I haven't, but I will try and get one in London. That's my only hope.' Les remembers Goodison Park, Highfield Road and The Hawthorns.

There is silence, some shuffling of feet, a nervous cough from one of the other committee members. The chairman's face shows a further trace of a smile. Les looks confused. Then he says it, 'The committee has decided that, instead of raffling the cup final tickets this year, we have decided to give them to the most deserving cause.' Les gulps, wondering what is coming next.

The chairman continues, now with a full smile breaking out on his face. His next words are simply magical, 'You are that cause. Here are two tickets, young lad. Now, go and bring back that bloody cup!'

Les says, 'I was gobsmacked, speechless and dumbfounded. I looked at my dad, who was smiling at me. I just couldn't believe it.'

Les tears home with the delirious weightlessness that only such happy news can bring. No longer is it Stevie Wonder singing 'Never Had a Dream Come True'. It isn't 'Wandrin' Star' or 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. Now it is Norman Greenbaum's 'Spirit in the Sky'. It is Elvis Presley's 'The Wonder of You'. It is Free's 'Alright Now'. Perhaps, most of all, it is Ray Stevens's 'Everything is Beautiful'.

Les remembers, vividly, 'I got home, rushed in, went up to my younger brother, Eric, who was 15 at the time and had seen most of the away games as well, shook him, and screamed, 'Eric! We've got tickets!'

Les and his brother have already booked their coach to Wembley, which leaves Leeds at midnight. Wallace Arnold is the coach operator and they are universally known, in the city and surrounding area, as 'Wally's Trolleys'. There are hundreds of them setting off from Leeds to Wembley.

'When I met my mates in Leeds I did feel a bit guilty that I had a ticket and they still hadn't,' says Les, 'but they were really happy for me and they were confident that they would get tickets in London.'

The coaches lurch into life. Les sits back, closes his eyes and fingers the ticket in his breast pocket. It's his. The convoy heads for the M1 and a date with destiny.

The big day dawns. Yvonne Ormes, a 21-year-old photographic model from Nantwich, Cheshire, was crowned Miss England the previous night, beating 28 other girls for the title at the Lyceum Ballroom in London. Three hundred rioting soccer fans are thrown off a football special train at Walsall. They are thought to be Coventry City supporters returning from a match at Wolverhampton Wanderers, where their team have won 1-0 and gained entry into next season's Inter-Cities Fairs Cup. Turned off at quiet Bescot Junction the fans headed towards Walsall town centre, where terrified locals dialled 999, after which police made dozens of arrests.

A landlord in Cambridgeshire announces he will only open his pub for an hour every day and keep it secret to stop a group of 'caravan dwellers' from coming in. He says, 'Business has gone down the drain since they arrived. Many of my customers refuse to come in any more. They have been frightened off by the unruly behaviour of the newcomers. I am fed up with the whole business.'

Back at Wembley the shifty-eyed, chain-smoking touts are preparing for a decent earner. One says out of the corner of his mouth, 'We can't lose. Leeds are the team of the moment and every football fan in London is willing to pay to see Chelsea win the cup for the first time.'

But the touts will have their work cut out evading the attentions of the police. More than 700 uniformed officers will be on duty in and around Wembley, as well as scores of plain-clothed colleagues looking out for pickpockets and hooligans.

Influential right-back Ron Harris is fit to play, but it takes two crunching tackles from assistant manager Ron Suart to prove it. Suart thunders into 'Chopper' twice during a late fitness test to see if his hamstring will stand up. It does, and Harris says, 'I'm as fit as I'll ever be and looking forward to the final.'

Meanwhile Chelsea will be gobbling down rice pudding as their lunchtime dessert, not daring to break with the ritual that has served them so well, thus far. They will arrive at their Gloucester Road hotel at 11am and then sit down for a lunch of beef fillet and toast, followed by rice pudding. Hotel proprietor Edgar Bonvin says, 'It is what I call the Chelsea Special.'

Leeds manager Don Revie says, 'It will be a hard game, but I don't think it will be as close as most people think.' But Revie – a reluctant tipster at the best of times – declines to say which team will win the cup, though everyone *knows* he thinks it will be heading north. Chelsea are also quietly confident. Left back Eddie McCreadie says, 'We have the right kind of confidence, the best kind, the quiet kind.'

It is expected to be a tough game and referee Eric Jennings of Stourbridge has the unenviable task of keeping the sides at bay.

Fans are now descending on the famous old stadium. Back in Chingford, Chelsea fan John Foley carefully puts on his lucky raincoat over his Ben Sherman shirt and Sta-Prest trousers.

Leeds supporter Carole Parkhouse is travelling down to London with Gordon Hirst, the parts department manager at Arnold G. Wilson, where Elsie Revie has bought her car, and his son. Carole is probably the only person heading to Wembley also carrying a tennis racquet.

'As my school term started the following week I had to also travel with my suitcase and tennis racquet, so that they could drop me off at the station after the game and I could make my way back to the convent at Carshalton,' she explains.

On the journey down, Carole cannot stop looking at her ticket, feeling almost sick with anticipation. They park at Golders Green and catch the Tube. The tension is rising.

The 'Wally's Trolleys' have trundled down the M1, full of expectant Leeds fans, and arrived at King's Cross station at around 6am. Les Wake's mates scamper off in search of tickets, while Les and his brother Eric catch a train to visit their aunt and uncle, who live in Elstree. They feel great. The relief of having a ticket is overwhelming. Their aunt cooks Les and Eric a huge fried breakfast and then they retire for a quick, well-earned kip, safe in the knowledge that in just a few hours' time they will be there in person at one of the world's great sporting occasions.

The teams are also making their way to Wembley. Peering out of the Leeds coach windows are Billy Bremner, Johnny Giles and Jack Charlton. They look hard, determined. Chelsea appear more jovial, laughing and waving to their fans. Perhaps, as underdogs, they're more relaxed.

John Foley has made the short trip from east to north-west London and arrived early to soak up the atmosphere. His ticket is for the lower tier behind the goal, at the tunnel end. At first, the spot is not to his liking. 'I tried to get into the top tier where there was more singing going on and, being a Shed boy through and through, I felt as if most of the Shed regulars would be there. But my mates and I were turned back,' he says.

Suitably fed and watered, and still grinning like Cheshire cats, Les and Eric are taken to Stanmore Tube station by their uncle, from where they catch a train to Wembley Park. Les says, 'We had arranged to meet my mates near the Tube station. When we met them they had already managed to get tickets which was great, so we headed up Wembley Way feeling fantastic and full of anticipation.'

Carole Parkhouse is also within touching distance of the famous old stadium and says, 'I remember being so excited walking up Wembley Way that I was literally almost sick. I held on to my ticket so hard that it was creased right across.'

The players are now at Wembley and in their respective dressing rooms. The anticipation around this final is immense. There hasn't been a really good final since Everton v Sheffield Wednesday in 1966 and the public is expectant.

Now the moment Les has dreamed of is here. With his younger brother in tow, he gleefully hears the 'click/clack' of the old, cast-iron turnstile, feels the lightness of his feet as he goes up the steps and on to the big open concourse and then, taking a deep breath, walks through the aperture and on to the top of the Wembley terraces, from where he can see the pitch. The 17-year-old apprentice looks around him, breathes in the atmosphere, saying nothing. But he puffs out his chest, reflects on the last couple of weeks, exhales and murmurs two words to himself: 'Made it.'

The teams emerge; both are wearing specially commissioned Wembley tracksuit tops – Chelsea's bright red and Leeds's light blue. Leeds are also wearing slightly girly red socks. The reception is rapturous and, on ITV, commentator Brian Moore says, 'And what a tremendous welcome for them – two of the greatest sides in modern British football, deserving every cheer that they get.'

After being introduced to Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret and standing to attention during the national anthem the two teams break away. Most of Chelsea's support is massed at the tunnel end, opposite their Yorkshire counterparts. The pitch

looks ominously patchy, barren and sandy in places – there is a lack of grass. It is a far cry from the lush, green turf that most football people associate with the home of English football.

Les remembers, ‘The atmosphere at the start of that match was absolutely unbelievable. We just soaked up every minute.’ At the Chelsea end, John Foley agrees, ‘It was absolutely brilliant. There were hard men all over the pitch. For us, “Chopper” Harris, Webby, Eddie Mac and Ossie. For them Bremner, Giles and Hunter.’

From the outset it is clear that the pitch is going to be an important factor. The ball is bobbling about, the bounce uneven. The mix of mud and sand will quickly sap the players’ energy. In short, the pitch is a disgrace. What also quickly becomes clear is that there is no love lost between the sides. After some tentative opening exchanges, Peter Osgood and Jack Charlton have a ‘coming together’ and square up to one another. Leeds appear to be trying to intimidate Chelsea. The Londoners are determined to give as good as they get.

Then, a quite absurd opening goal. Eddie Gray prepares to take a corner with his left foot. In the six-yard box Jackie Charlton is, as usual, making a nuisance of himself. Gray takes and Bonetti comes, but is beaten to it by Charlton, who looks like he nudges the Chelsea keeper as he does so, throwing him off balance.

Charlton’s header plops down. On the line, full-backs Harris and Eddie McCreadie both go to clear, but each take an air shot and the ball, killed by the pudding-like pitch, trickles between them and just crosses the line. Harris waves his arms back and forth as though he is trying to attract the attention of a helicopter, and cries foul, but referee Jennings gives the goal. It is first blood to the Yorkshire side. High up in the stands, the Wake brothers dance with delight and Carole Parkhouse beams with joy.

Meanwhile, behind the goal, John Foley shakes his head in disbelief. The Chelsea fans are livid. It is a goal that, in their view, reinforces all the old Leeds stereotypes. John says, ‘Bonetti

was definitely fouled and then “Chopper” and Eddie Mac were both beaten on the line by the header, because of the terrible uneven bounce of the disgraceful pitch.’

The young skinhead looks at his lucky raincoat and wills it to work its magic. And it appears to, with more help from the bumpy pitch. A speculative left-footed shot from 20 yards by Peter Houseman squirms under the body of the error-prone Gary Sprake, whose late dive looks shockingly amateur. Houseman stands stock-still, raises his right arm to the sky, revealing a huge patch of armpit sweat, and then punches the air before being submerged by team-mates. Now it is John Foley’s turn to celebrate.

‘Mick Jones falls to his knees in despair,’ says Brian Moore in the commentary box. ‘What a tragedy for Sprake.’

On the stroke of half-time, Hollins scythes down Gray, who is the one player whose skills are showing despite the awful surface. It is 1-1. The pitch is cutting up ominously. The ranks of Chelsea fans massed at the tunnel end wave their scarves frantically as the teams head for the tunnel. They think they have the beating of this fearsome Leeds side. At half-time, fags are puffed frantically; a few brave souls battle to the bar and get some more ale down them. It is tight and tense, low on quality, but high on drama.

The second half begins with a Dempsey foul on Mick Jones. ‘During half-time Mick Jones had a ten-minute rest from Dempsey, but straight away he’s letting him know that he’s here again,’ says Moore. Chelsea start better and nearly score after a terrific goalmouth scramble, but Sprake keeps them at bay. Then two of the hardest men in the British game – Ron Harris and Billy Bremner – contest a 50-50. Boy, is it an ugly confrontation.

Harris goes miles over the top, Bremner leaps to avoid the tackle and, in doing so, grabs Harris round the neck, tries to pull him down, fails and then takes a swing at him. ‘Oh, Harris and Bremner getting into a tangle there,’ says Moore, charitably.

The play moves on and the brilliant Gray mesmerises the outclassed Webb on the edge of the box, firing a great shot goalwards which Bonetti tips on to the crossbar. Leeds are getting on top. The camera stays on Gray and Moore says, 'What a tremendous afternoon this man's having. There can't be any doubt who the man of the match is, whatever the result is. It's got to be Gray.'

At the other end Houseman drags a weak shot wide, with Hutchinson screaming for the ball behind him. 'F**k me,' Hutchinson appears to say in anger after Houseman's cock-up. 'Hutchinson not at all happy with what Houseman did there,' says lip-reader Moore.

Then Bremner shows the other side of his game and creates the third goal of the final. He flights a beautiful pass over McCreadie, which frees Giles, tearing down the right. He crosses first-time, Clarke heads superbly, but the ball strikes a post with Bonetti beaten. It rebounds out and perfectly into the path of Mick Jones, who rifles in a low shot which nestles in the back of the net.

The Leeds fans go bonkers. Jones skips and jumps in delight before being caught by Charlton and Madeley. They indulge in a rather dodgy-looking *ménage à trois*. Jones escapes, blows a kiss to the Leeds fans on the Royal Box side and then claps his hands repeatedly like a seal demanding fish. There are just 12 minutes to go.

The Wake brothers, plus the thousands of other Yorkshiremen and women, now believe the cup is theirs. Few would bet against this Leeds side not lifting the cup now. It is the closing stages and the pitch resembles something between Passchendaele, the Somme and the Gobi desert – mud, sand and a little bit of grass.

The players look knackered, but Leeds are convinced the cup is theirs. Les and Eric Wake are getting ready to celebrate, Les feeling this is just reward for a season of travelling all over the country. Carole Parkhouse can't stop smiling and thanking Elsie Revie for buying that car.

Leeds hold on for another ten minutes or so. The white ribbons to adorn the cup are being prepared.

The camera pans in on a serious Don Revie, chewing gum violently. He checks his watch. There are less than three minutes to go. 'Every minute must seem like an hour to him,' says Moore. He will soon have reason to chew even harder.

Chelsea are awarded a fortuitous free kick 30 yards out, but near the far touchline. They need to make this count. Behind the goal something has come over John Foley. He feels strange, in a good way. It is something to do with that raincoat. He is already bouncing up and down as his team prepare to take the kick.

He can still recall the moment vividly, 'As soon as we won that free kick I absolutely – 100 per cent – knew that we were going to score. In fact I swear I was almost jumping up as if we had already scored because I simply *knew* it was going to be a goal. I have never had a feeling like that, before or since.'

Jennings blows his whistle. The ball is rolled to Hollins. The little schemer flights in a dangerous cross. It is a straight contest between Ian Hutchinson and Jack Charlton as to what happens next. And it's Hutchinson who steals a precious few inches to reach the ball first. He strains every sinew in his neck to direct a marvellous header past Sprake. It is a belter.

The Yorkshire side cannot believe it while, behind the goal, the Chelsea fans wave their blue and white scarves delightedly. John now lets himself go completely while, at the other end, the Leeds fans, including Les and Eric, are frozen with shattered disbelief. 'Leeds United prostrate on the deck!' screams Moore. 'Lorimer is down. Bremner is down. Jones is down.' Hutchinson isn't cursing any more. He looks delighted, but exhausted, and punches the air in delight.

Two minutes later, referee Jennings blows his whistle for the end of normal time. Leeds dominate extra time, with Gray continuing to torture the Chelsea defenders, in particular Webb, but the players are so tired that no one seems to have the energy to get a winner.

The pitch continues to cut up. Cooper goes down with cramp. Osgood sportingly does that odd thing where you grab the stricken player's boot, stretch their leg and press down. But the sides can't be separated and so, for the first time since 1912, a replay is needed. The Leeds fans feel hard done by.

Carole Parkhouse says, 'We should have won about 20-4. The pitch was appalling because of the showjumping event and the great heaps of sand everywhere slowed everyone down, except Eddie Gray. We were not happy with the 2-2 result as we completely played Chelsea off the park.'

John Foley agrees with Carole, but only up to a point. 'Yes, we were out-played, but not out-fought,' he says.

At times, this cup final was more like a war than a football match and the battles will continue long after the final whistle as the fans head home with the Chelsea fans – by virtue of their late equaliser – goading their Leeds counterparts.

John says, 'There was quite a bit of trouble, but we ran Leeds everywhere. I was on an underground train when a legendary Chelsea fan called Danny Harkins, known as "Eccles", who was our leader, punched a Leeds fan in the face and then made the Leeds fan say "thank you" for it. I have to admit that "Eccles" was almost as much of a hero to me then as Peter Osgood. There was a lot of trouble at football in those days, but when "Eccles" turned up for a game, somehow you just got a big lift and we all thought that whoever we were playing that day were the ones who were going to be on their toes.'

Convent-educated 15-year-old Carole Parkhouse steers well clear of any trouble, but extra time and the age it takes to leave Wembley means it is 8pm by the time they get back to their car. Carole then has to struggle with her suitcase and tennis racquet across London, spotting numerous fans of both clubs as she does so. What sticks in her mind is the somewhat incongruous sight of a group of fellow Leeds fans, very carefully painting a mural at Charing Cross. 'I always wondered what happened to that,' she says now. By the time she reaches Victoria station it is 9pm. 'I was already running late and then I managed to get on the

wrong train – the one to Carshalton Beeches, not Carshalton,’ she says. ‘Then I didn’t know how to get back from Carshalton Beeches to my school, so by the time I eventually made it to my school, with my Leeds scarf and my tennis racquet, it was around 10pm. It turns out the school had notified the police in Surrey and Middlesex.’

Late back for school, Carole is packed off to bed and deprived of the opportunity of watching the game again on *Match of the Day*. ‘I wasn’t actually allowed to watch it anyway,’ she remembers, ‘but I had devised a neat little system of sneaking into a classroom where they had a telly, sitting with the lights out and watching it after everyone else had gone to bed. I lived in constant fear of being caught by the caretaker but thankfully never was.’

By this time, the ‘Wally’s Trolleys’ are already on their way back up north. The mood on the coaches is somewhat flat because victory was so nearly theirs. Les and Eric Wake get some sleep, at least sound in the knowledge that they have scored a victory for the true fan.

Four decades on, Les now firmly believes the scandal surrounding the allocation of 1970 FA Cup Final tickets was instrumental in finally bringing the situation to the public’s attention. He says, ‘I am convinced that what happened had a big influence on the FA reviewing its policy and increasing the allocation of cup final tickets to the participating clubs.’

The coaches continue their journey. The talk is of the terrible pitch, how lucky Chelsea were and how superbly Eddie Gray played. From the back of the coach, a single Yorkshire voice can be heard, ‘We’ll do the southern bastards in the replay,’ it says. There are loud cheers and a deep, almost primeval chant of ‘United! [clap, clap, clap] United!’

That night, all three major channels broadcast live pictures of the take-off of Apollo 13. It has been less than a year since the momentous Apollo 11 expedition involving Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins. The success of the two previous missions has made the public comfortable, possibly

slightly blasé, but still fascinated, about the whole concept of space travel.

Millions tune in to see astronauts Lovell, Haise and Swigert blast off. All is well until, on 14 April, comes news from NASA that the mission has run into trouble – real trouble. A major technical hitch has left the astronauts effectively stranded in outer space, nearly 260,000 miles from the safety of earth. The newspapers describe it as ‘the greatest cliff-hanger the world has ever known’.

For Carole Parkhouse, the plight of the mission matches the plight of her own beloved Leeds. She says, ‘It was very odd, but I always felt some strange affinity to the astronauts, because it was all happening at the same time as the cup final. When their mission went pear-shaped I felt as though somehow it was Leeds United up there in space. Does that make sense?’

The world is gripped by a drama that even Hollywood couldn’t conceive. In the end the ingenuity of NASA technicians gets the astronauts home in one piece. An astonishing 42 million people watch them splash down on Thursday 16 April.

For a few days, the real, life-or-death drama has made everything else seem irrelevant. Then, in Britain at least, the dust settles and people remember that there is still the small matter of the 1970 FA Cup to sort out. The replay is rather inconvenient for the FA. With all minds focused on England’s summer trip to Mexico to defend the World Cup, a replay is not very desirable for anyone. Then there is *that* pitch, which has been slaughtered by all and sundry and labelled a disgrace.

Other factors also come into the equation. Leeds have a midweek return leg against Celtic to play. The England v Northern Ireland home international match is scheduled to be played at Wembley on 22 April. There is only one real option – to move the game elsewhere. The replay is scheduled for Wednesday 29 April and the whole shooting match is heading north to Old Trafford.