Praise for *The Lost Shankly Boy*

A gripping story of a young man's quest to become a professional footballer, his fightback from a series of challenges – including a hair-raising brush with death in South Africa - and ultimately of a bond between player and manager that has spanned a lifetime. All of it told with an easy-going style that at times takes you closer to the history of the Shankly era than ever before.

Dave Usher, The Liverpool Way

An honest tale of the beginnings of the Shankly era at Liverpool, seen through the eyes of a talented yet humble boy. A brilliantly told story, with a stellar cast, yet the real star is George Scott and the impact that his short career at Liverpool had on the rest of his life. Jeff Goulding manages to encapsulate George Scott's incredible story and transport you so vividly into the fabled boot room, that you can smell the dubbin on the boots.

Stuart Horsfield, These Football Times

Parts of his book will make you howl with laughter while others will have you reaching for a box of tissues to mop up the tears. We can only be thankful that the 'Lost Shankly Boy' was eventually found and encouraged to tell us all about his amazing journey.

Christopher Wood, LFC History

George Scott was a Liverpool player for five years, but his extraordinary story shows how Bill Shankly managed his entire career.

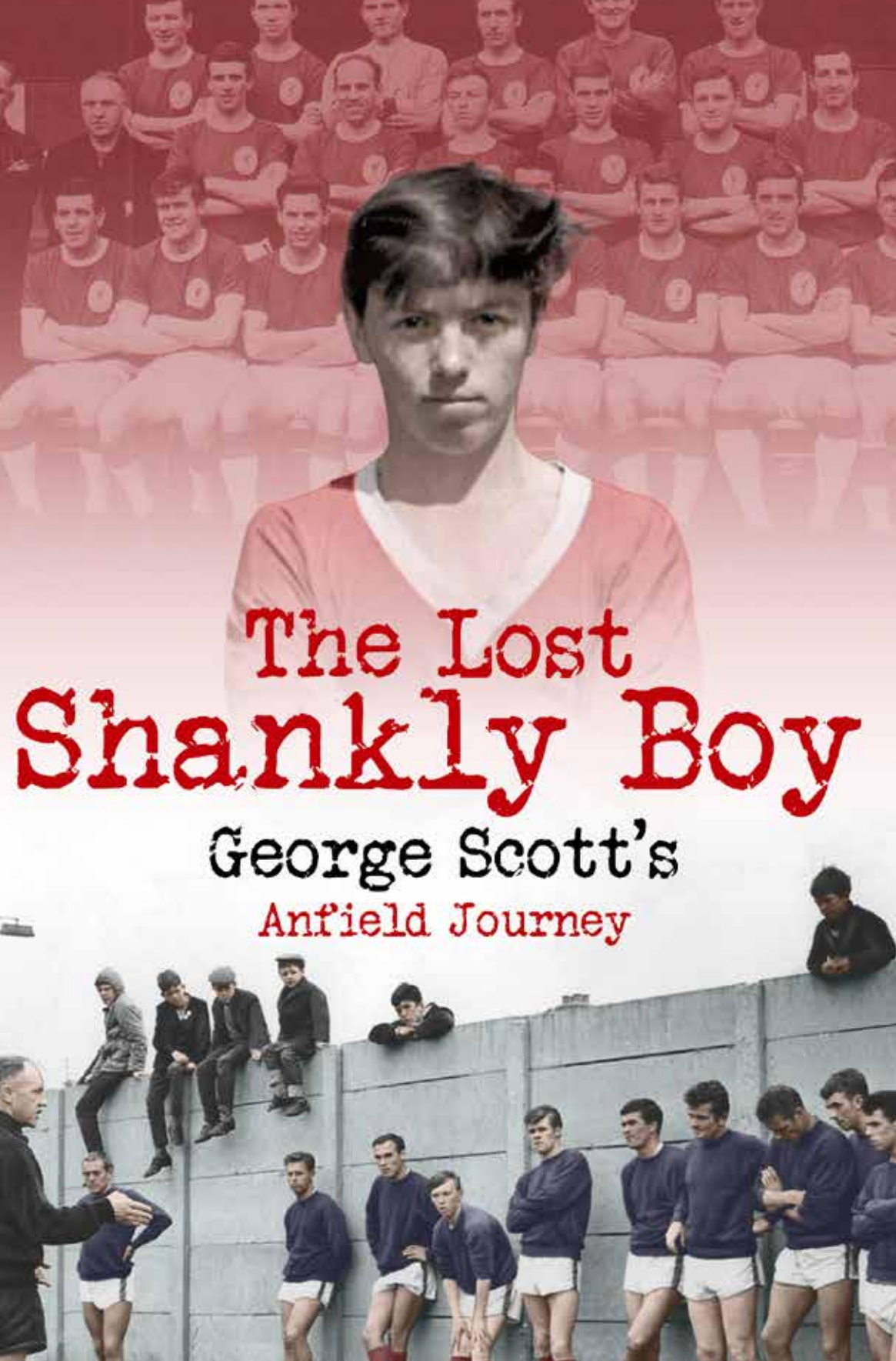
Chris McLoughlin, Senior Writer, Reach Sport

George's book captures every emotion. You will laugh and you will cry as his story, so brilliantly written, takes you from humble beginnings to the heart of Liverpool's rise to world fame, both culturally and on the football field. It is a pleasure to read as George's inspirational story unfolds. Bill Shankly insisted on working with people of good character. This book illustrates why George Scott was part of Shanks' Red Revolution.

Kieran Smith, Liverpool FC Historical Group

The George Scott story fills in the gap between what life was like for the men who became legends and those who didn't quite make it. It illuminates what the life of reserve players was like and how they had to cope with life after Liverpool.

John Pearman, Red All Over the Land



The Lost Shankly Boy

George Scott's Anfield Journey

Contents

Chapter One

Life in Aberdeen and the Call of Anfield

THE JANUARY cold wrapped itself around me and despite my coat being buttoned up to my neck, its icy fingers reached inside and caused me to shiver. At my side on the platform of Aberdeen Station – or the Joint as I remember calling it back in 1960 – stood my grandfather, Bill. I was just 15 years of age, with a small brown suitcase in one hand and a £20 note in my pocket (a king's ransom back then). Ahead of me was 353 miles of train track and, ultimately, Anfield and Bill Shankly.

I had already undergone a successful week-long trial at Liverpool a few weeks earlier. To be honest, I had never heard of the place, much less the team, before my trial. Liverpool Football Club sat in the Second Division. Though I had long dreamed of being a professional footballer, Anfield wasn't on my radar.

My long-held ambition had been to play for my local club, Aberdeen. As the fates would eventually decree, I would get my wish. But there was a fair bit of adventure to be had before

then. Most of my childhood, for as far back as I can remember, involved playing football.

I had grown up in the romantically named China Cottage, situated on the shore of Aberdeen Harbour. An old Aberdonian, returning from a trip to the Far East had named it, along with the house next door (Putong Cottage). I lived with my mum, Agnes Fiddes, and my grandparents.

My mother had been just eight years old at the start of the great depression of the 1930s. She lived with her parents, Bill and Jean, in that rented two-room flat until 1950.

During the war, German planes would brave the anti-aircraft guns of the Torry Battery, which was situated opposite the entrance to the harbour just around the Bay of Nigg, less than a mile from China Cottage, as they flew over to drop bombs on the shipyards and the city beyond.

Today, the remains of the battery fort are still there. It's a tourist destination now and visitors can pose next to the remains of the battery barracks or photograph the schools of dolphins swimming close to the breakwater.

I still recall my grandad Bill's portrait, hanging on the wall above the bed. I can still see him, resplendent in the uniform of the Seaforth Highlanders, his red-and-white checked hat perched on his head. He had served with distinction in the First World War, surviving a bullet from a German sniper and suffering from gas inhalation in the trenches.

During the Second World War, he worked in the Hall, Russell and John Lewis shipyards on the Aberdeen docks as a plater and welder. He once told me of how, during one shift, he had gone for a break across the road to the little café. As he sat there, drinking tea, a German bomb hit the yard where

he had been working only moments before, killing many of his workmates.

It no doubt would have devastated him, and who knows what guilt he felt at surviving such a horrible tragedy, while others perished through sheer chance. Nevertheless, his stoicism shone through as he would relive the story for me. 'Never worry during your life George, it is all to do with destiny. If your time is up your time is up.' I realise now that I took those words to heart, and they have guided me for much of my life.

Despite the beautiful location, at the bottom of St Fitticks Road overlooking the Bay of Nigg and Aberdeen Harbour, living conditions were so hard for my grandparents and my mum. Their cottage faced out towards the often-stormy North Sea and the winters were cold and harsh.

Post-war austerity meant money would be scarce and people learned quickly that unless they rallied together as a community, life would be grim. That created a great sense of camaraderie and formed the basis of my philosophy on life as I grew up.

It's why I could identify with and be inspired by the likes of Bill Shankly, whose entire ethos was based on these principles. There are no hardships so great that can't be faced, when everyone works together for the greater good.

Throughout all that hardship, I was spoiled rotten by my mum and my grandparents. I idolised them. And, although we lacked the material things that we take for granted today, I never felt deprived.

A great motivator for my mum and her parents, I think, was a desire to compensate for the fact that I never knew my

father, who had died in Normandy during the war. My mum had been only 16 when war was declared. She was academically bright but the conflagration in Europe would cost her the remainder of her education.

With many of the men off to fight, she and others like her would have to find work to support their families and the community. She started work as a box maker in Fiddes's Ltd in Torry, making the boxes for ammunition, which was being shipped to the forces.

It was there that she met my father, George Edward Brown Scott. They soon fell in love, working side by side at the factory, and were married at the start of 1944. The pair were just 20 years old.

Sadly, it would prove to be a short-lived marriage. My dad was called up to join the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders and was killed in France in August 1944, just three months before I was born in October.

One day he was just a young boy who fell in love with my mother and was looking to enjoy a happy future life building a family together, then a few weeks later he was being trained to use a rifle and preparing to kill or be killed. Sadly, his fate was to be the latter.

To me, he was, and always will be, a hero. He gave his life in the service of his country. His sacrifice meant that we could be free. His spirit and his name live on through me and his two grandsons, my sons, Gavin and Craig, and his four great-grandsons: Callum, Cameron, Charlie and James.

I would later discover, from the mother of a fellow soldier, that my father had volunteered for the mission that cost him his life. He died when the boat they were in was hit by a shell

as they crossed a small river. My dad was thrown overboard, but despite trying valiantly to get hold of his hand, the lad couldn't hold on and my poor father slipped beneath the waves. His body was eventually recovered, and he is buried in a beautifully maintained war grave near Bayeux in Normandy.

We still have a letter he wrote to my Aunt Lena (his sister) from France, just two days before he was killed. Strangely, I can see something of myself in his words.

He spoke of his love of home, and of music and how he was missing my mother. He valued family life in Aberdeen more than any medal. However, his reassurances that he would be home 'in no time at all' were the most poignant.

I would visit his grave, on the 50th anniversary of D-Day, with my two sons. I recall being struck by the fact that none of the boys lying in those graves were over 21 years of age.

It also made me reflect on how tough life would have been for my mother, widowed so soon after her wedding. Then having to bring up a young child during the most difficult of times. She once told me that as others danced in the streets on VE Day at the end of the war, for her it felt like the saddest day of her life. Her husband wouldn't be returning home.

After the war, life somehow went on. Despite the rationing and other privations, Mum and her sister Lizzie would go to dances and all the usual places where young people meet. It was at one of these social events that she met Johnny Braik, a wonderful man with whom she was destined to enjoy a long and very happy marriage. They would remain together for 41 years until his passing in 1991.

I would have been just four years old when they got together. It would have doubtless been a challenge, especially

listening to me yelling, 'You're not my father,' at every attempt of his to verbally discipline me. I'll always be grateful that he didn't give up on me, and he and my mum were married within a year of their meeting.

Their marriage was to be blessed with the birth of two sons, my brothers Ian and Alan. Ian was born in December 1950 and Alan in April 1952. I was delighted that I would no longer be an only child.

The greatest tribute I could pay Johnny was that never once throughout his life did he ever treat me as anything other than his own son. He loved the three of us equally, and we felt the same way.

Ian, Alan and I grew up as the closest of brothers, and we still are to this day. I remember how thrilled my mum was the first time she heard me shout to Johnny, when I was seven years old, 'Can I go out to play now Dad?'

I'll always treasure the memory of my own father, who like so many other young men made the supreme sacrifice in the service of his country, but Johnny became the only father I ever really knew. And, in the years ahead I grew to love and respect him. He was a wonderful father to myself and my two brothers.

Johnny had been called up at the outbreak of war and served in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. He was captured in the first year of the war. He once told me of a terrifying brush with death when, along with a group of his comrades, he was lined up against a wall at machine-gunpoint. Fearing the end was at hand, and watching his short life flash before his eyes, he prepared for death. Then, miraculously, a German officer barked a command and the guns were lowered.

They were asked to empty their carbine rifles, and the Germans examined the bullets. They were looking for 'dum dums' (these were bullets which had the pointed front removed, ensuring they would inflict terrible wounds, even if the victim survived). Fortunately for Johnny and his mates, they had none and they were spared summary execution.

Instead, they faced a long march to a prisoner-of-war camp, where he would see out the remainder of the war. There he faced forced labour in the salt mines. Conditions were awful and he suffered terrible hunger at times, but told me that in time he developed reasonably good relations with his captors, even learning to speak some German and to play the harmonica.

These two men, my father and stepfather, were the benchmark for me growing up. I always felt that if I could be as good a man as they were, if I could show the same level of commitment to anything I tried throughout my life, then that would be very much an objective to aspire to.

As a child, growing up in the district of Torry, overlooking Aberdeen Harbour, there was plenty to keep me entertained and out of mischief. I would fish from the harbour wall and watch as, on the fourth Monday of every month, the fishing trawlers left the harbour in unison, bound for the North Sea fishing grounds. This was Aberdeen's major industry, its bread and butter. I can remember standing on Banana Pier or Skates Nose Pier, waving to the crews as they sailed away. These are happy memories.

These trawlermen were a hardy breed. Many times, especially in the winter, the waves would hit the breakwater at the exit from the harbour and bounce high over the lighthouse.

They were the bravest of men, risking their lives to put bread on the table for their families. Their wages were determined by the size of their catch and how much it sold for at Aberdeen Fish Market.

After my mother remarried, we moved out of China Cottage, with its picturesque views over Aberdeen Harbour and the Bay of Nigg, and into Aberdeen city centre and 85 Spring Garden. It was a less than glamorous tenement building, shared by five families.

I would still go back to see my beloved grandparents in China Cottage by the sea. I also had many friends in that part of the city and some of my earliest memories of playing football stem from these times. We would go around to the salmon fishing depot round the bay and 'borrow' some of their fishing nets in order to fashion football goals in the field opposite my grandparents' house. There, we would play football all day long.

My first representative match came when I was selected for the St Paul Street Primary School team, at the age of eight. I was the youngest in the team, with most of the other lads being around ten years old.

The game was against the best team in the league, Woodside Primary School, and they had a fearsome reputation. They played in white and were known as 'The Ghosties'. The venue was Links Field and the scoreline was a very unflattering 16-1 to Woodside, not that I told my parents that. When they asked me how I had got on, I said we had won 2-1 and that I scored the winning goal. They were so thrilled for me, until the true score appeared in the school football results section of the evening sports paper, the *Green Final*. I was grounded for two days for lying.

Little did they know what a miserable experience the game had been. The teacher had told me to stay out wide on the wing, which I had hated. It was so lonely out there in the cold, with no one passing the ball to me. Not the most auspicious of beginnings.

Somehow, I soldiered on though, and my Uncle Pat became the first to notice my football ability. He knew I was really determined to eventually play professionally and would use it to keep me in line. I remember my mum would plead with me every day to eat the crusts on my bread, something I steadfastly refused to do. With rationing still in effect after the war, people of my mother's generation abhorred waste.

One day, I recall my mother was telling me off as I was about to leave the house. I had left behind a pile of uneaten crusts on my plate. Uncle Pat quickly interjected. His tone was serious and stern.

'George, son, if you don't eat your bread crusts you will never be a footballer.' That was all the convincing I needed, and I gobbled up every crumb on that plate.

In 1956 my mum and Johnny moved to a new three-bedroom council house in the suburb of Mastrick on the outskirts of the city. To my parents, and to us kids too, it was like winning the football pools. It had a lounge and a kitchen downstairs and upstairs was the sheer luxury of three bedrooms, a bathroom and a toilet. It was also a corner plot and had a large garden area, which Johnny loved. In no time he had it immaculate and even grew vegetables in it.

Things were beginning to improve as the country was being rebuilt and with it came improvements in our quality of life. My first experience of this came one day, when I got off

the bus from school and immediately noticed a metal object attached to the chimney of our house. Bemused, I walked through the door and into the living room and was amazed to see in the corner what looked like a cupboard with a round screen on it. It was, of course, a television and the programme showing was *Six Five Special*, hosted by Pete Murray.

I sat there, transfixed, watching one show after another; *Juke Box Jury* and *Drumbeat* are two that come to mind from that period. Though the pictures were grainy black and white, I was amazed that we now had a television in our house.

The only other one I had seen up until then was at my Uncle Bob and Auntie Betty's house. They had won on the football pools and immediately rushed out and bought one. I recall the whole family congregating at their house, whenever there was a major programme on.

Aside from watching music on our new TV, I would keep myself entertained during the long summer holidays at the Aberdeen Lads Club in the Gallowgate area. This was a wonderful boys club and there I would meet with my friends and play endless hours of indoor five-a-side football, table tennis, snooker or even the old table game of push penny.

It was a wonderful facility for us youngsters where our parents knew we were safe and enjoying ourselves. The Lads Club had two football teams for various ages between 11 and 14. They were ALC Hearts and ALC Spurs, and as I began to develop more physically, I would turn out for either of them.

Kick-off would be at 3pm on Saturday, and I would already have played twice in the morning for my school team in two different age groups. Those games started at 9.30 and then 11am. Football was becoming my life.

Some very famous players emerged from the ranks of Aberdeen Lads Club, including Denis Law and Ron Yeats, both of whom were there roughly six years ahead of me. It was a good facility and even had its own playing fields where their home games were played.

Back then, my team was Aberdeen, 'The Dons', who played at Pittodrie. A group of us would sometimes go to see them. We idolised them and, in those days, they would attract crowds of over 30,000.

There was no way we could afford to pay to get in, of course. So, we used to make our way into the ground via the gasworks at the King Street end. Once there, we would run across to the high wire fence. Then, as soon as the patrolling policemen at the top of the terrace turned their backs, we would dig under the fence and run up the embankment where we would be dragged in by the men in the crowd.

This became routine practice for me and my mates. I recall one Wednesday afternoon, in the spring of 1955, my friend George Stables and I bunked off school to see a Scottish Cup quarter-final replay with Hearts.

We had drawn the first game 1-1, and the sense of anticipation for the game was huge, with over 40,000 turning up at Pittodrie Stadium.

Unfortunately, we were nabbed by the 'Bobbies' just as we reached the crowd at the top of the embankment and couldn't take our places amongst the vast throng of spectators. We must have looked absolutely devastated, because the policemen took pity on us. And, instead of throwing us out altogether, they arranged for us to be hoisted on top of the Pie Hut, where we had the best view of the game.

The Dons ran out 2-0 winners thanks to goals from Patrick (Paddy) Buckley and Harry Yorston. Buckley was a vital part of the Aberdeen side that took the Scottish League title in 1955. He had pace in abundance and had joined Aberdeen from St Johnstone, where he had scored 104 goals in 140 games, in 1952.

The transfer fee was £7,500, of which Paddy pocketed £600. He was capped for Scotland and played in the Scottish League during what were the glory days of the mid-1950s. Sadly, his Aberdeen career was ended by a terrible knee injury in 1957, although he did unsuccessfully attempt a comeback with Inverness Caledonian in 1958.

Harry Yorston joined Aberdeen from St Clements, a local junior team, in 1946. He would go on to become one of the Dons' greatest forwards. He came from a strong footballing family, and his uncle, Benny, had been an Aberdeen legend. Harry's goals, along with Buckley's, would prove vital in the run to the championship.

Harry retired from football at the age of just 28 to take a lucrative job as a fish market porter. He worked in Aberdeen Fish Market until 1972, retiring after winning £175,000 on Littlewoods Pools.

I still have vivid memories of running around the empty terraces after watching Buckley and Yorston play and collecting empty glass beer bottles. We would make tuppence per bottle when handing them back to the local shop on Merkland Road.

Alas, the Dons crashed out of the cup in the semi-final to Clyde. Buckley had scored both goals in a 2-2 draw, but Aberdeen lost the return game 1-0. It would rob them of a possible league and cup double. Just a month

later they would be crowned league champions, pipping Celtic to the championship by three points. Buckley had been something of a hero that year, scoring 29 goals in all competitions.

The greatest dream of my young life, therefore, was to be wearing that red shirt and playing for my hometown club. I would go on to live that dream, but before I could, I would first wear the red shirt of another team. And they played their football on the banks of the River Mersey.

By the time I reached 15 years of age, I was already showing considerable talent as a schoolboy footballer. I had made a record number of appearances for the Aberdeen Schools select teams and was eventually picked for the Scottish Schoolboy trials. It looked odds-on that I would be selected for the first Home International match against Wales.

Unfortunately, I sustained an injury in the final trial and had to miss out on all three of the Home Internationals. That would prove to be the first of several disappointing injuries that undoubtedly curtailed my career. We will hear more of that later.

I was unaware at the time, but my footballing ability had been spotted by former St Mirren goalkeeper, Jim Lornie. He was now caretaker at my school but led a double life as a scout for Liverpool FC. He approached me and wanted me to travel south for a trial with the Anfield club.

I told Jim that I had no thoughts of signing for anyone other than Aberdeen, who at this time had already made my parents an offer of £6 per week to sign for them as an apprentice professional. And, as my stepfather Johnny was earning just £9 per week, to provide for a family of five whilst

working for Aberdeen City Council, that seemed a hugely significant amount of money for a 15-year-old lad.

Besides, the furthest I had ever travelled from Aberdeen was the 60 miles to Dundee with my mum and brothers to visit Johnny at a Territorial Army camp. Jim was very persistent, though, and persuaded my mother to let me travel to Liverpool for a week's trial.

I thought it would be a great adventure, even though I knew nothing about Liverpool FC, who were a Second Division team in England and seemingly going nowhere. At least that's what I thought.

I did know of Bill Shankly, though. He had taken my big idol and fellow Aberdonian Denis Law from Aberdeen schools football to Huddersfield Town a few years earlier, where he had turned him into a star.

I completed the week's trial playing in a trio of games for the club's C team against Blackpool, Everton and Preston along with a lad called Gordon Wallace. That was the start of what would prove to be a lifelong friendship.

Gordon and I notched goals in all three games. Then he went back to South Wales and I got ready to return to Aberdeen. Despite a successful trial, I was still determined to sign for my hometown team.

I was called into Bill Shankly's office at the end of the week. I recall Bill was in there, sitting behind his desk. Alongside him, and standing up, was team coach, Reuben Bennett. Shankly said he wanted to sign me for Liverpool. He had been a huge admirer of Matt Busby and the young side he had constructed at Manchester United. Bill wanted to create his own 'Busby Babes', the 'Shankly Boys'.

He already had Chris Lawler and Tommy Smith, who Busby had attempted to sign earlier, and to those two he wanted to add Gordon Wallace, Bobby Graham and me. I was a little bit in awe of him, and Reuben. Nevertheless, I told them both that I was already committed to sign for Aberdeen.

I really laid it on thick, telling them both that my family, especially my grandmother, would miss me. I would be homesick. I was too young to leave home, at just 15 years of age. Bill and Reuben were having none of it. They worked really hard before letting me leave Liverpool and did everything they could to get me to sign apprentice professional forms for them.

Bill's pitch was that Reuben was from Aberdeen and so he would make sure I was looked after. He even went to the extent of promising to arrange evening classes at Childwall County College for me, so I could keep up my education. My response was that my family just wanted me to stay in Aberdeen and my grandparents would be heartbroken if I left home.

I said my grandmother in particular was very worried about me travelling all the way to Liverpool. I could see that I was getting nowhere, when in desperation I blurted out, 'My granny doesn't even know where Liverpool is.' Shankly leaned forward in his chair, elbows on the desk in front of him, hands clasped under his chin. His brow creased, and I noticed a twinkle in his eye, as he growled,

'Son, you go home and tell her that we are in the Second Division at the moment, but we will be in the First Division next season for sure. Soon, everyone will know where Liverpool is.'

Those words stirred something in me. His wit, his confidence, it was enthralling, captivating. He made such a

huge impression on me. This was no ordinary mortal. In that instant, my mind was made up. There was only one club I could join, Liverpool.

My family were stunned at my decision. I don't think they could believe that I would ever want to move so far away, at 15. Nevertheless, they supported me to make the trip.

So, just a matter of weeks later, I was standing on that frosty platform at Aberdeen station with a head full of dreams. With my stepfather working, my mother in hospital undergoing minor surgery and my brothers at school, it had been left to my grandfather Bill to see me off.

I knew it was breaking his heart, and I saw tears glistening in his eyes as he waved me off. For almost all of the 100 yards or so that the train travelled away from the station, he continued to wave to me as I frantically waved back. Then the train turned the bend and he was gone from my view. I had no idea then that this was to be our last goodbye.

Six weeks later, Bill Shankly gently broke the news to me that he had passed away having collapsed suddenly with a brain haemorrhage. I tried to act like a man in the boss's office, but the sobs were uncontrollable. My grandad's words echoed around my head:

'Never worry during your life George. It is all to do with destiny, if your time is up, your time is up.'

Sadly, only a few months later, my beloved grandmother also passed away. I think she probably died of a broken heart having lost her husband and seen her grandson leave home at such a young age, leaving her all alone in China Cottage. I carried the weight of all that back with me to Liverpool. And, I have always tried to live a life they would be proud of.