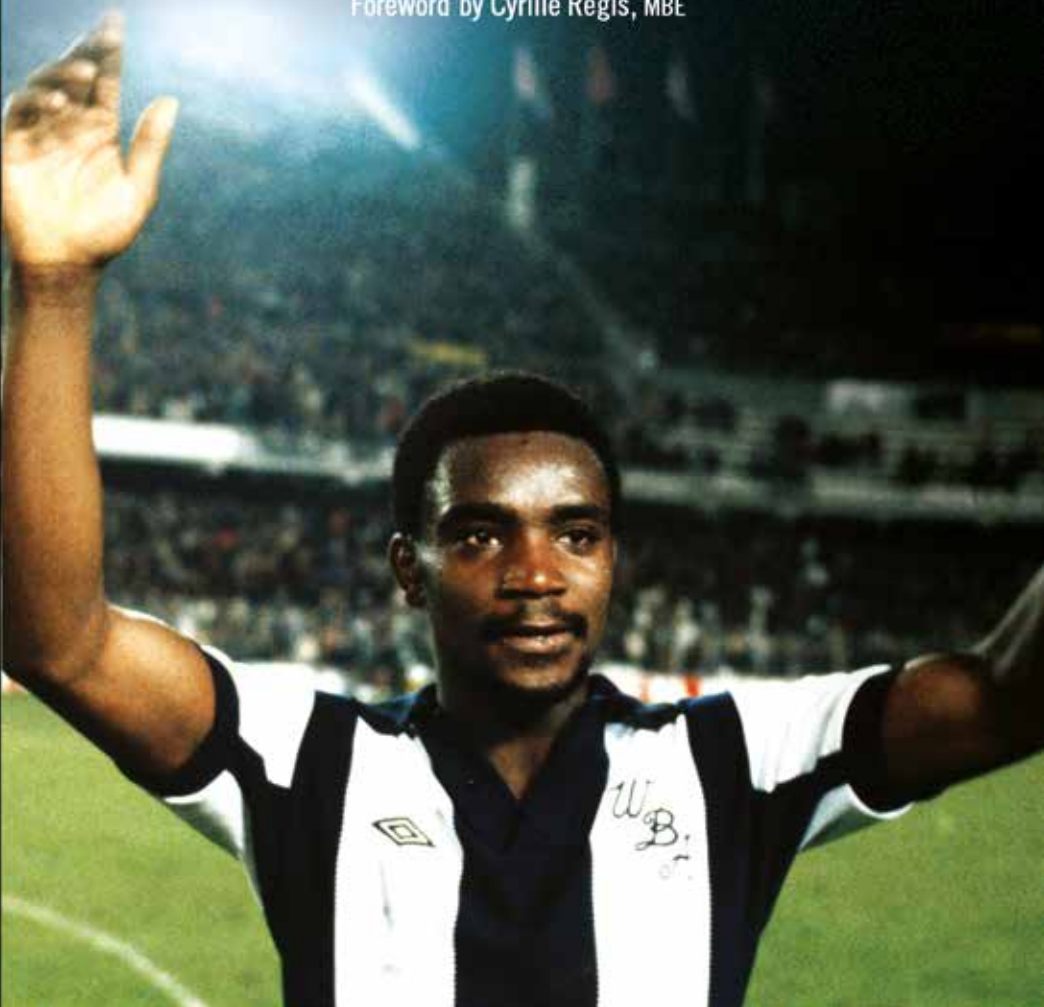


# BAGGIES ABROAD

The Complete Record of  
West Bromwich Albion's Global Travels

**Tony Matthews**

Foreword by Cyrille Regis, MBE



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# INTRODUCTION

West Bromwich Albion Football Club – players, secretary-manager, trainers, doctors, directors and possibly a few supporters – first ventured away from the British mainland in April 1893, taking the relatively short trip over to Ireland to play two friendly matches, both of which were unfortunately lost!

Since then the Baggies have visited over 40 different countries, covering virtually all four points of the globe. Some of the trips have been long and arduous but exciting, some have been short and sweet, others boring and several competitive, with activity in the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, European Cup Winners' Cup, UEFA Cup and the Anglo-Italian Cup, as well as in pre-arranged club tournaments including ones on the Isle of Man, in Spain, in Sweden, over in the USA and also in the former Yugoslavia.

While compiling this latest book on the Baggies – my very first, entitled *Albion At War*, was written and published way back in 1975 – I have once again had to check through piles of newspaper cuttings, some loose but many in scrapbooks, thumbed the pages of scores of magazines and matchday programmes, checked various dates, attendances, stats and facts twice over in some cases, thumbed through quite a number of reference books and, I must admit, the old internet has also been used quite a lot; I've even had to re-check my past entries!

I've battled on regardless and as always, I must say I have loved every minute of it as memories from the past all came flooding back as I relived those trips to a freezing Utrecht in Holland for Albion's first-ever 'European' game; flying to Turkey when we had to change grounds and travel an extra few hundred miles before taking on Galatasaray; going to a tense and nervy Bucharest in Romania; sailing across the Channel to Bruges in Belgium where many Albion fans had to literally run away from rampaging home supporters; travelling, as a co-commentator, behind the Berlin Wall to Carl Zeiss Jena in the then East Germany, taking with me the chairman of the Australian branch of the WBA Supporters' Club, Brian Williams; taking a journey to Belgrade before the troubles in Yugoslavia where I also assisted as a summariser on a West Midlands radio station with the BBC's Tim Russon; venturing over to Valencia

in Spain, where I saw one of Albion's finest-ever away performances; revisiting Switzerland to see the Baggies play FC Zürich when manager Ronnie Allen gave me 200 club pennants to hand out to young Swiss supporters; going to Ireland with Johnny Giles and his team, where I had the pleasure of meeting ex-Albion centre-half Jack Vernon; having a short stay in Rome for an Anglo-Italian Cup game; being invited by the then club secretary Alan Everiss to Sweden in the early 1970s; and flying with the team to Denmark. Wonderful times, never to be forgotten – despite some poor results!

Trying to find enough stats and facts to cover each and every game played by Albion abroad, overseas in a foreign country if you like, spanning a period of more than 120 years, from 1893, wasn't easy, especially from times gone by.

But in the end I think I have done a pretty good job, with the help of many fans, even ex-players. And you will notice that I have chosen to make match 'reports' (if the action has merited it) much longer than others.

However, I am certain that there will be a few people around and about who will contact me asking (a) Why didn't you mention this, that and the other? (b) Did you know this happened in that game? and (c) You forgot to say who was injured, dropped, booked, substituted in a specific friendly.

I started asking for information, through various channels, when I commenced typing up the manuscript for this book over 18 months ago, so all I can say, is why contact me now after the pages have gone to print!

Here is the full list of the 44 countries (including republics, islands, states and territories) Albion have visited and played a football match in or on away from the British mainland:

Abu Dhabi (1980), Argentina (1966), Austria (1961, 2013 and 2015), Bahrain (1980), Belgium (1946, 1954, 1968 and 1974), Brazil (1966), Canada (1959, 1969 and 1981), China (1978), Croatia (2007 and 2009), Cyprus (1982), Denmark (a joint record eight times, in 1909, 1979, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2012), East Germany (1979), Germany (2008), Gibraltar (1992), Greece (2010), Holland (1964, 1966, 1972, 1982, 1983 and 2010), Hong Kong (1978 and 1984), Hungary (2013), Isle of Man (1996), Italy (1967, 1970, 1971, 1980, 1993 and 1995), Kenya (1968), Kuwait (1981), Luxembourg

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(1946), Northern Ireland (1893), Norway (1969), Peru (1966), Portugal (1978, 1987 and 2005), The Republic of Ireland (1932, 1953, 1975, 1989, 1990 and 2013), Romania (1968), Saudi Arabia (1977), Slovenia (2007 and 2009), Spain (also on a record eight occasions, in 1958, 1971, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1982 and 2005), Sweden (five trips in 1909, 1972, 1981, 1984 and 2012), Switzerland (1981), Syria (1978), Tanzania (1968), Tunisia (1985), Turkey (1978), United Arab Emirates (1980), Uganda (1968), Uruguay (1966), USA (eight visits: 1959, 1965, 1969, 1981, 1990, 2011, 2014 and 2015), USSR/Russia (1957) and Yugoslavia (1972, 1979 and 1980).

Albion's best overseas win is 15-0 in Canada in 1959; their heaviest defeat, 6-1 in America in 1989.

Albion have played out a 5-5 draw, been involved in several high-scoring matches and have competed against some of the biggest and best clubs in the world, among them (in A-Z order): Ajax Amsterdam, Alkmaar, RSC Anderlecht, AS Roma, Athletic Bilbao, Benfica, Bologna, Borussia Mönchengladbach, Brugge, Carl Zeiss Jena, Clube de Flamengo (Brazil), Dinamo Bucharest, Dukla Prague, Dynamo Tbilisi, Espanyol, FC Copenhagen, FC Mechelen, FF Malmo, Ferencvaros, Feyenoord, Fiorentina, Galatasaray, FC Zürich, Hajduk Split, Hannover 96, Honved (Puskas and Co.), Inter Milan, Napoli, Olympiakos, Real Madrid, Red Star Belgrade, Sevilla, Sporting Lisbon, Valencia and Zenit Leningrad.

The Baggies have also played against several international XIs, doing well the majority of the time. And among their opponents in this field have been teams representing Belgium, China, Denmark, Hong Kong, Kenya, Norway Under-23s, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Tunisia, Uganda and Uruguay.

Manager Tony Pulis took his squad off on a couple of pre-season trips in July 2015... first to Austria (one game played against Red Bull Salzburg) and then across to the USA (three matches fulfilled against Orlando City, Charleston Battery and Richmond Kickers).

They say that men (and indeed women) join the Navy to see the world. Footballers don't do too bad globe-trotting either. And there is no doubt, that the Baggies will jet off again to play many more matches abroad in the years to come, accompanied as always by their travelling band of ardent and dedicated supporters.

# IRELAND

## April 1893

The first ever 'overseas' tour made by West Bromwich Albion was to Ireland in April 1893 – just after they had ended their seasonal Football League programme with a six-match unbeaten run, comprising four wins and two draws.

They played two friendly matches on the Emerald Isle in 48 hours, losing them both.

The club's official party, comprising three committee members, the team's trainer, the 12 players and an official reporter (William Jephcott), departed from the town's Spon Lane railway station to Holyhead on Sunday 23 April. Then it was across the Irish Sea by ferry to Dublin for a 7am arrival on the Monday. Three and a half hours later, following a train journey north, the Albion party arrived safe and sound, albeit somewhat tired, in Belfast.

After a sightseeing trip around the city, Albion made their way to the Linfield Athletic ground for the first game which was scheduled to kick off at 6.30pm.

With all women (young and old) given free admission, it was reported that the attendance was 'the best ever' for a Linfield home match, certainly in excess of 2,000. In fact, many were hoping to see three of Albion's Irish-born players in action – left-back Bob Crone and left-half Jack Taggart, both ex-Belfast Distillery stars and winger Willie McCabe, formerly of Ulster, plus Jack 'Baldy' Reynolds who had also played for Distillery. But only Taggart and Reynolds travelled. McCabe was sidelined through injury while Crone had been suspended by the Irish FA for two years! Arthur Dexter, a trialist from Oldbury Town, deputised for Crone.

### **24 April 1893**

#### **Linfield Athletic 3 Albion 1**

Albion, who began the game positively, suffered a body blow before half-time – being reduced to ten men when top goalscorer Tom Pearson hobbled off with a leg injury. After this setback, it was a case of keeping the score down to a minimum, and to a certain degree Albion did just that. But in the end the Irish team



proved far too strong and scored through Pat McErlean (2) and John Peden, who would go on to play for Newton Heath (now Manchester United) and Sheffield United and win 24 caps for Ireland. Willie Groves, with a scrambled effort from Billy Bassett's cross, replied for Albion.

The Albion team, for this historic first game 'abroad' was: Joe Reader; Charlie Perry, Arthur Dexter; Jack Reynolds, Tom Perry, Jack Taggart; Billy Bassett, Roddy McLeod, Willie Groves, Tom Pearson and Alf Geddes.



Albion's second tour game at the same venue, was against an Irish League team, playing under the name of Ulsterville Rangers. Albion recruited a local-born forward, A. Keble, as a replacement for the injured Pearson. The kick-off for this game was two hours earlier, at 4.30pm, and the home team, which included seven Linfield players, six of whom had lined up against Albion 24 hours earlier, was to take on the Scottish League the following weekend. So it was to be a tough encounter for the Baggies.



### **25 April 1893** **Ulsterville Rangers 1 Albion 0**

Unfortunately Albion – unchanged except for Keble replacing Pearson at inside-left – again failed to deliver. They were sluggish and at times looked disinterested, and only some fine saves by goalkeeper Joe Reader kept them in the game. Full-backs Charlie Perry and Dexter were completely out of sorts, Jack 'Baldy' Reynolds was well below par and Keble was, according to the club's official reporter Jephcott, 'Of no service whatsoever... being perfectly useless.' Substitute 'Ching' Morrison (who had played for Linfield against the Baggies 24 hours earlier) scored the only goal of the game with a close-range header in the second half. The attendance was once again estimated at 2,000.

The Ulsterville Rangers line-up was effectively a League of Ireland Select XI.



The Albion party began its return journey to the UK directly after the second game, travelling across the Irish Sea on the *Princess of Wales* liner to Fleetwood, arriving around 6am on the Wednesday. Five hours later the party was back in West Bromwich and then on the Thursday, Albion played rivals Wolves in an away friendly, winning 4-2.

En route to Ireland, Albion's fiery centre-forward Henry Boyd, who was not selected for either game, had a dispute with the Black Country's world champion spring jumper Joe Darby from Windmill End, Netherton, who was accompanying the party ahead of a public appearance at the Belfast Alhambra. It is reported that 'blows were exchanged' and as a result, a summons against Boyd was issued at the West Bromwich Police Court on the Monday (24 April).

After returning from Ireland, Boyd failed to turn up at court and as a result, a warrant for his arrest was subsequently issued. Albion immediately placed him on the transfer list. In fact, Boyd 'disappeared' but later returned to league football with Woolwich Arsenal (1894) and went on to play for Manchester United and Falkirk.