

IT'S MICK NOT MIKE

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF MICK DUXBURY



BY MICK DUXBURY
WITH WAYNE BARTON

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Natural Progression

NATURAL progression. It's a phrase that I thought and talked a lot about when deciding to write my story and when I actually started putting it in to words. It summarises much of my early development and movement into the sport with which I would become most recognised.

I was always for the outdoors; you could always find me playing out, whether it was playing football, other sports, or just as kids mucking around. We lived on a terraced street with a close neighbourhood and any free time would be spent going out with my mates. Not that I wanted to be away from my family. I suppose I had your normal upbringing, there was a lot of love and affection in the family, but I was always one to be playing outside, especially in the summer holidays. First thing, it'd be 'what are you doing today?' and the answer was 'going out!' You'd call on someone and get three or four of you in a group. We'd go all around but there was one place we'd gravitate to more often than others and that was 'the Square'. Its posh name was 'Nelson Square', but it was only a piece of waste ground, so I don't know why it had a posh name as such! It was surrounded by fencing but there was just enough of a gap to squeeze between or slide underneath it to get in.

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There, we'd just have a game of footy, play cowboys and indians, cops and robbers or other games that had less politically correct titles which seemed harmless when you were kids but not the kind of things you'd want to repeat in this day and age. We'd go scrambling on our bikes, go down the river to try and catch some sticklebacks, climbing trees... really, just the typical things you would expect of any normal boy, the kind of things you would hope that one can experience.

Dad worked down the pit at Huncoat Colliery which sadly closed down in 1968 in the Bevan Closures. Mum had a few jobs but the one I remember most was when she worked at a local factory called Rist Wires which had a predominantly female workforce; of a morning, dad would be up and out early, mum would get me and my older sister, Anne, ready for school and then get ready for work herself. Six years after me, our younger sister Louise came along, too. We were able to just walk around to our local junior school which was only three or four streets away. It was Sacred Heart Primary, situated in an old Victorian building which has since been knocked down and replaced by a newer school adjacent to it.

We had a good childhood, there was always food on the table and clothes on our backs. We managed to go away on day trips to the coast on a Sunday, or down the Ribble Valley where we'd take a picnic. I think, as much as anything, it was good for mum and dad to get out and do something and forget about work for a few hours, but we certainly appreciated the value of how hard they worked.

I grew up in Accrington on Russia Street – my mum and dad still live in the same house today. We lived halfway down the street and Philip Riley lived half a dozen doors down from us; Philip was about a week older than me. His nickname was Dylan after the rabbit in the children's TV programme Magic Roundabout. Down the street from us both was Steven

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Preston... his nickname was Fred, though I can't tell you why that was the case! Mine was Dux, for obvious reasons, although I'm sure I was called worse.

That was the core of our group, though there were a few more who would hang around with us. I didn't have an older brother but Philip did, called Steven, and Steven had one called Martin. There would always be someone to knock around with in a group... we'd get into scrapes, nothing crazy or in any trouble that would get the police involved. Sometimes there'd be fights with other gangs of lads, that sort of thing, but it wasn't ever anything serious. Not like it could have been anyway, as we never travelled too far – everything was centred around your two or three streets or on to the Square. We had a fairly big family – I had a cousin, Tony, who had emigrated to Canada but came back at the age of seven or eight. I'd go up on my bike to see them on a Sunday morning, and we'd go and see my grandma and granddad on my dad's side quite regularly as they only lived three or four streets away. We had a bit of a scam going on – if there was an ice cream van, we'd get money from grandma to get one, and then leg it around to our house and do the same to mum and dad as well! I don't think they cottoned on – sorry!

One day we went up to the Square and there was a post with a notice on, informing us that as from such and such a date, there would be work starting on building a new sports centre on the wasteland. I think 99 per cent of the community rejoiced, but us as kids were gutted that our play area was being taken away! Work commenced, and I was in secondary school by this stage; I went to school in Blackburn, and Steven went to school in Accrington, so I didn't see too much of the group I grew up with when we were kids. In fact, it could well have been around the time that I joined United.

As construction began on the Square there were lots of earth-moving machines, diggers, JCBs and the like. I don't

think there was the same kind of security as you would find nowadays; one evening, Steven went up there by himself (I think), got into the site and climbed into one of the diggers. It turned over on him and tragically killed him – I was a couple of years older than him, so he must have only been 13 or 14 at the time. He was such a lovely lad – never the brightest, but he'd do anything for you and was always laughing and joking and being a bit mischievous. Maybe mischievous is the wrong word, as he was just being a normal lad. The story goes further, however.

The Hyndburn Sports Centre was opened by David Lloyd in 1976 and since then, my wife Karen has worked there in a part-time job – in fact, that's where I met her – and our two sons worked there as leisure assistants. We've always, then, had such a connection with the place, and although Karen and I knew about the history, the boys never did.

One night, Ashley, our eldest son, came home and we were sat having a chat around the table and the conversation, as it does, got to work. Ashley was telling us that he'd seen 'the ghost' again. We asked what he was on about, so he said that there was talk of a ghost there and it was well known that it would pop up every now and again. There was a cafe up above the swimming pool, sort of like a viewing area, and Ashley said that the last people in the centre when it was empty would see a young lad up there. Or, when they'd go to the table tennis area and clear the tables away, turn the lights off and lock the door, the lights would come back on. It was a regular occurrence and there'd often be sightings. As you would, I felt it was strange and asked Ashley if he'd ever seen the ghost, and he hadn't, though he'd been in places in the centre and it'd not felt right. At the same time, Karen and I looked at each other, both with the same question in the back of our minds. 'Have you given the ghost a name?' I asked. The reply came, 'Fred'! The hairs on my neck still go up thinking about it!

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So, apparently, the ghost is meant to be that of Steven... there are sightings of him in the sauna area, too, which is the site of where the digger was when he attempted to climb in it. I have to be honest and say that I haven't seen it, or been up there at a time when I might have. I'm not sure I'd want to!

To pick up some pocket money I'd help our local milkman, Tony. He would come around on his milk float and we just got to know him over the years. I'd jump on outside the house and then help him with one or two bottles down the road, and run back up... eventually, I was allowed to do a few streets. It went from that to six streets, then half the round, then I'd do the full round. I'd go up to Tony and Margaret's (his partner) for breakfast and then do the milk round. At times I was able to do it and fit it around school. Thinking about it now, the athletic nature of jumping up and down on the float, the sprinting to put the bottles down, all helped to prepare me for my sporting lifestyle. Dylan joined in too, so it became competitive.

I remember once, Tony was yelling at us to get going. He started the float and I jumped on, Dylan jumped on but could only grab on by his hands. I cringe when I think about recounting this story based on what is accepted these days but there was Dylan, being dragged along and holding on... he climbed on and we laughed and joked about it. It's unbelievable to think about what might have happened.

The friendship between ours and Tony's family continued to last; we chose Tony to be godfather to the kids and Margaret is godmother to one of them. Sadly Tony died a few years ago in his mid-60s from a rare form of motor neurone disease that affects something like one in a million; Marg still lives round the corner from us and we see her often and their children Joanne and Michael. Margaret and Tony were part of my testimonial committee, too. It might be that when I retire I'll take up the milk round again – funnily enough, after I went to

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Hong Kong in the 1990s and came back to England looking for something to do, I did the milk round for a month!

I did it from 5am to 8am, and then when I managed to get a job teaching, for the first week I did my notice – I continued to do the round and then went straight to school. I was Ernie, the fastest milk cart in the west!

Dad was into his sports so it was always going to be the case that I was too. He loved it – he loved his football, from either playing for the colliery teams, or going to watch Burnley play in the old First Division. He was also a boxer, only on a local basis, but it was something he really loved. I grew to love it too, and we'd sometimes spar just for fun at home. I'd never go to see him fight, though. It was just something he did, I can't remember him coming back with any cuts or bruises.

The one injury I do remember him picking up was through a work accident; one of the areas he was working in collapsed and he got some shrapnel in his eye. There was a knock on the door and mum answered to the news dad was in hospital. He was in there for a long time with a patch over his eye and we went as often as we could despite mum not driving. He was okay after that, thankfully, but his eye was never the same though he wasn't blinded. I don't think he boxed after that. Mum was into her sports, too, she played netball, but when we kids came along, she didn't have the same time for it.

In a female-dominated household it has to be said that Saturday afternoons with my dad were special – even with more girls than boys, I think they often got a bit annoyed with us as we would do what dad wanted to do most of the time. We'd spend much of the time together, though, taking in as much football as possible. Burnley on a Saturday afternoon, but also the youth team games and reserve games as well. I can remember being there for a midweek game when Manchester United came to Turf Moor, I think it must have been around 1970 as I'm sure

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it was the first year I was in secondary school. Their fans took over the entire ground, and I think United won 1-0.

As well as supporting Burnley I know dad really enjoyed it when he got to see the best teams and the top players and at the time there was no reason to think Burnley couldn't have been part of that. They were dubbed 'The Team of the Seventies' at the time although it never really turned out that way. They had players like Ralph Coates and Martin Dobson, good players, and Burnley got as far as the FA Cup semi-final in 1974 when they played against Newcastle, but sadly they were beaten by a brace of goals from Malcolm Macdonald. I remember going to Hillsborough to be there for that great occasion; it was enjoyable watching them, and though they'd never quite reach the potential they were tipped for or the greatness they'd experienced when I was just an infant and they won the league in 1960, it was always entertaining at Turf Moor.

It seems funny to suggest it now but at the time it was Burnley or Blackburn as your local team, and Blackburn were struggling, so Burnley were the more attractive choice. It helped that they had glamorous European nights welcoming the likes of Napoli, especially in those early days of continental competition. I know I did go to some of them, but it was at an age where I was too young to recall any memories to share, sadly.

Likewise, I was too young to remember the 1960 Burnley team but just old enough to remember the World Cup Final in 1966. FA Cup Final day was always a day where the women would leave the house to do the shopping and dad and I would sit in all day and watch the game and the build-up on television, but on the day of the World Cup Final, we all sat inside to watch England play Germany. It is such a vivid memory; nowadays I don't scream and shout at the television when I'm watching a game but certainly on that particular day I did, especially

when Germany scored late on to send it into extra time. 'Offside ref!' – you're just claiming anything, aren't you! The celebrations afterwards, when Geoff Hurst scored that hat-trick goal to secure the greatest moment in English football history, were memorable. I was Geoff, on the cobbled streets outside afterwards. There was a schoolhouse across the road and it had been built on a slope so there was just enough of a wall to make a goal from. A natural goal for us to go outside and play football with, if there were ten minutes to spare to have a quick kickabout before our tea was ready.

That was the case with much of my early life, every spare minute spent doing something active. When you're young, you go out and play around in your gangs, and then as you get a bit older you do something a bit more productive and organised. I was always running, climbing and jumping around; if there was a tree to be climbed or something to be collected from up high I was always the one to be doing it. Around this time I passed my 11 plus which gave me the opportunity to go to St Mary's College in Blackburn. It was a school with a wonderful reputation both on and off the sports field. There were plenty of opportunities to participate in as many sports as I could, with the guidance of the PE teacher Mr Duckworth who was really into his sports, be it swimming, athletics or football. I'd always played football, even in primary school, and managed to be selected for the Accrington town team which was really good. I can still remember some of my team-mates from that time and I do see them around town still.

At St Mary's, I recall we had the traditional sports days at the end of the year which were held in Witton Park in Blackburn which is a well-known local place for hosting sports. I was into my hurdling, long jump, cross country... well, I wasn't overly keen on cross country running, but it was something that I was naturally good at. Through winning school events, I was asked

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to represent Blackburn at cross country – the one thing I never did quite get the hang of was playing cricket. I played it, but never at a level that would be considered competitive. I'm not quite sure I ever got the hang of the technique required. My parents were happy for me to do whatever I wanted on that side of things (as long as it was within reason) and being so young I never really considered that there was any pressure on me, even when representing the town.

I was always nervous. At school, you always knew who you were playing with or competing against but when you're up for your town it's a whole new group of children you don't know; in a way, I think that may have helped me and stood me in good stead for later on. It wasn't a hindrance for me; and meeting new people, particularly for the first few times, isn't always easy for me, so having had the experience to get used to it from an early age was something that can only have helped. The discipline itself – the physical and mental preparation for the event – was second nature to me, it was the social integration I would always find harder.

Yet pressure was something that wasn't applied to me, or it certainly wasn't something I personally felt. You would hear stories through the grapevine about local players or athletes that you would find yourself up against, 'he's been at such and such a club', but dad would always say to me that reputations count for nothing. 'Kick him and he'll scream, cut him and he'll bleed,' those kind of things to put it across that you weren't up against anything supernatural, and it helped prepare me and take it in my stride. It might be true to suggest that to other players and teams, those kind of things were being said about me, but that wasn't something I thought about or realised at the time.

Over recent years one or two people have come up to me if I've been having a drink or out in the street and they've

said, 'I thought I was a good player but then I came up against you and I'd heard all about you, they were right, I couldn't get near you, you were quicker, faster, had more skill.' It's a funny coincidence that since I've decided to write my story, I've noticed more people saying nice things. I was playing a game with the United legends team in Belfast and their manager, a lad called David Jeffrey, he's been there for about 17 years and done really well. I'm doing him a disservice – he's been the most successful manager in Linfield's history, winning 31 trophies in 17 years! That was after playing for them for ten seasons as well. He was actually an apprentice at United (I think he was from the years between Andy Ritchie coming through and Mark Hughes and Clayton Blackmore) and I hadn't seen him for years. After exchanging niceties, he said that as apprentices they were all striving to be like me, that I was always doing things right and professionally. Honestly, I'd never thought like that – it's nice to hear, but until recently, it was always me thinking that way about other people.

Whether I was talented or not is something that's for other people to judge and assess but I can certainly confirm my dedication. There are things that you learn and pick up from your footballing education but there are also personal qualities in each and every individual – something must be in there to start with.

We're all different but my upbringing is something that I feel can only have been beneficial and conducive to the career I was going to have. There was never any pressure, only encouragement, all positive things. Even when negative things happened. I didn't manage to get into England schoolboys as a kid but it was like, 'That was unlucky, but it happens, just wait for the next opportunity.' There's something in you when you're born but it has to be nurtured in the right way – and thankfully, I was raised in an environment that helped.

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Much of it, of course, is down to that natural progression. At the end of primary school I had managed to get into the Accrington under-11 town team so if things were to progress at their natural speed, I would be looking to go on to play football for my secondary school. It might surprise some who followed my career but I started off as a striker; I don't know if that's just something that the teachers did, choosing your better players to go up front... it certainly can't be said that we had a poor team, as we had a good team with good players throughout. It was a good school for football, there were one or two lads in there that went on to play professionally as well as me.

In the first year we played Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School up on a horrible pitch over in Rossendale. It was right on top of the Moors, if you kicked the ball over the edge it went for miles. We won something like 12-1 and I scored five. We were beating good teams, coming up against Manchester Grammar School, and ended up getting to the Schools Cup Final where we played at Ewood Park against Billinge School. It was so exciting in the build-up as you can imagine, a group of kids getting to play on a professional ground, but as we came out of the dressing room and on to the pitch we discovered that they'd made the pitch a lot smaller – as you'd expect they would do – and that disappointed us all, with us striving to try and score in the big professional goals. We won anyway.

They had a lad called Paul Biggins who was one of those who came with a big reputation, but funnily enough I scored a hat-trick in the 4-1 result. Mr Duckworth did a report for the school bulletins and I can remember him writing, 'Duxbury, harassed as he was by two defenders, managed to shrug them off and slide it past the keeper into the back of the net.' Funny how praise stays with you isn't it... in my opinion that's much better than being negative. They were good times, and the side that we had stayed together more or

less throughout our secondary school years, enjoying much success along the way.

There was an emphasis on sport at the school and at the end of the term, we'd be taken camping up to Ennerdale in our team. It wasn't like a pre-season but just a get-away in a semi-detached bungalow near a youth hostel up in the Lake District. We'd walk through the days in the fells and play football in the evenings; there was the Ennerdale agricultural show which included traditional lakeland sports such as fell racing and trail hounds, sports which are still thriving to this day. We were all enthusiastic to begin with but it was the hardest thing I'd ever done! There were six rosettes to be awarded; you'd run along the lake, and then up and down the fell. You're falling and sliding all over the place; it was difficult, but I managed to come sixth and be the only one from our team with a rosette. Mum's still got it to this day, but like I say, it was the most difficult physical thing I've ever been through in my life!

We were 12 and 13, and we had a sixth-former looking after us. The teachers would go to a pub which was about three miles away and we'd be left in this cottage with a 19-year-old and an open fire and old gas lights; there was no fridge, so we had to get milk from outside. Nobody wanted to go and get the milk, everyone was too scared! It's unbelievable; it was superb at the time but I look at it now as a teacher and think it was a disaster waiting to happen. It's funny, though, but we weren't into looking for trouble. Our idea of fun was standing books on a table to make a makeshift table tennis net and play over that, or spend money at the tuck shop which the sixth-former would be looking after. The most risky thing we did was going down to swim in the river, which even in August or September would be absolutely freezing. We do outdoor pursuits at the school where I'm now working but with the limitations and boundaries which you would expect in the modern age; you

can't help but feel some of the magic has been lost but maybe that's as much to do with nostalgia as I can certainly appreciate how dangerous it could have been!

Incidentally, talking about that Schools Cup Final match, I can also remember my very first game for the primary school team. We didn't have a pitch so we'd get taken in a minibus to play on King George's playing fields, where I had often watched my dad play. There were only a couple of pitches that were level, right by the changing rooms. The school pitch was one of the furthest away from the changing rooms, though, and the slope was quite severe – you had to be mountain goats to play on it, with one leg shorter than the other! I remember playing in red shirts with laces in and black shorts – there was a playground at the side, with railings, and we'd be expected to change there and hang our clothes on the railings. After the game, I couldn't find my trousers (I'd been wearing long shorts), and thought, 'Somebody's nicked 'em.' I was panicking, thinking that when I'd get home my mum would give me what for. It wasn't until I'd been there for a while that I realised that the shorts I was wearing were that big and baggy that I'd put them on over my school shorts! I looked like Billy Casper from *Kes* – I remember the shorts incident more than the game itself!

It was through playing for the school that I began to get attention from professional clubs; there weren't academies, or the same kind of youth set-up as it is these days. You'd either get picked up from playing trials held for local boys at the clubs or from being watched or noticed by a scout when you were playing for the school. We had some teachers involved at some of the local clubs as well, which helped some players get picked up, and you would always sort of know when scouts were coming and which club they'd be from. Personally, I never let myself think that they were coming to watch me and I think

that was for the best; knowing me, having that on my mind would affect my performance.

Regardless of my own desire to shut it out, it happened anyway, and scouts would approach dad and talk about me, asking if it'd be possible if I could go for trials. That sort of attention began to come when I was 12 or 13 and when it came to holidays, I'd go and spend a couple of days at different clubs. Burnley was one I was naturally holding out for, being my club. They also had a great reputation for developing young players and giving them a chance but the funny thing is that I never even went for a trial there. I don't even think they asked – I'm sure if dad had been asked, then I would have gone there. I went to Blackburn a few times, Rochdale a couple of times... I think the Rochdale trial came about as the scout was the dad of one of my schoolmates. Everton and Liverpool made enquiries – it was mainly the north-west clubs, though I was asked to go down to Arsenal and Norwich, too. It was just too far.

I did go down to Leeds – probably more often than any other club – they had a local club called Pudsey Juniors, a club that Leeds would pick their youth players from, and a club that I represented on a few occasions. We actually went on tour with them to Lille in northern France and with the experiences I was having there, it might have been expected that I would eventually end up at Elland Road. Leeds and Liverpool were fantastic clubs and still are, big clubs with a proud history, yet at the time I was still disappointed that Burnley hadn't yet come in for me!

Manchester United didn't really come in to the picture right until the end, funnily enough. In fact, had fate twisted a different way, I might well have ended up at one of their most hated opponents. I went to Everton for a trial and I have to say that their training facilities were beautiful, they really turned my head, but it was their cross-city rivals that made a really serious move for me.

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Myself and a lad from school named Peter Betts, a big, strong lad, were invited up to Liverpool to watch a game and offered us schoolboy terms. We both signed them at Anfield, but in order to complete the agreement, we needed our school headmaster to sign off on it. The day after, we came away and thought about it and I felt a little bit uneasy about it. The reality of moving to Liverpool and staying in digs was something I was contemplating and it wasn't a prospect I was really looking forward to (no disrespect intended to the city!). I had a few sleepless nights and I ended up speaking to Peter – it came to light that he felt the same as me, and so, encouraged by the confidence in unity, we told our parents and the headmaster that we didn't want him to sign the forms. My dad rung Liverpool to inform them of my change of heart. You never know how things might have turned out!

A little while afterwards, United came in for me and made an offer. It was something I immediately felt a lot more comfortable with in myself so I was more than happy to sign schoolboy terms with them. There was still never a word of persuasion either way from my parents, who left it up to me. They might have been quite happy for me to sign for Liverpool, but by the time it came to signing for United, I think they just wanted me to sign for someone, anyone! As long as I was safe, they were happy. It was a choice entirely made by myself and I was delighted and confident that I'd made the right one. Football can be funny in the way that paths take different people; I never regretted my choice but perhaps Peter did. It was through my own disappointment at missing out with England Schoolboys that I was noticed by United in the first place, with their scouts Gordon Clayton and Norman Scholes watching on. The trials were up at Scunthorpe; there was only myself who went up from Blackburn and I travelled up with one of the teachers, who wasn't even a teacher of mine. I don't think that

would be allowed to happen nowadays! Early on the Saturday morning he picked me up at the top of our street and we went up there. I didn't play particularly well, I didn't think, so I wasn't surprised that I wasn't selected if they were just going from that particular game.

If I remember correctly, Norman and Gordon came around to our house afterwards. They must have done as we weren't on the phone to get in touch with us that way. I was banished out of the room as it was a formal meeting; kind of like when you go to a parents' meeting at school. At the end of the meeting, I was brought in and invited to the club and it went from there.

I insist that I still didn't necessarily feel any pressure. With no disrespect to the likes of Bolton or Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester United were two of the biggest clubs in the world. If I had any anxiety at all it was more to do with how I would settle into things away from football rather than on the pitch. If you could just transport me into my kit and boots and put me on the field with a ball, that would be the easy bit. Sitting in a changing room with people I didn't know, getting on a minibus with them to get to a game, that was going to be the hard part for me. United did their best to encourage social interaction, taking us for a group meal at the Cafe Royal in Manchester. That kind of thing did impress me and did help, and I moved into digs during the summer of 1976 which also encouraged me to maybe come out of my shell a little more.

Moving in to digs was a decision I did deliberate over; I eventually decided to do so, with the comfort and knowledge that I was not so far away from home. If anything went wrong, I knew I was only a bus ride from home. My digs were at 45 Lostock Road in Davyhulme near David Herd's garage, with Mrs Williams. United had just had a recruitment of new landladies and she was part of them, so myself and a Welsh lad called David Haggart were her first lodgers. Dave was a year younger than me

but was brought up on a permanent basis from Pontypridd to go to school locally as he was that highly thought of. We shared digs for the first year – Mrs Williams was a lovely lady, and David and I weren't too much of a problem for her. I'd go home quite often, catching a bus for the 45-minute journey home.

For Dave it wasn't quite that easy. There's the story at the club of Brian Greenhoff and Sammy McIlroy, and Sammy found it difficult but Brian helped him settle. I don't think I was quite as helpful as Brian was and maybe that didn't help David. Having said that, I'm not sure that it would have helped him coming back to my home, or whether that would have made it worse. We had some other Welsh lads at the club so David would mingle with them at the weekends; the club paid for them to go home once every month if they wanted to, otherwise they were expected to stay. I don't know if that was selfish on my part or whether anything I did would have really helped.

I did stay the odd time, and go out with some of the others. At first we obviously didn't know many of the kids at the club and we didn't like lounging around Mrs Williams's home so we'd get out as much as we could. Dad would keep in touch by going up to the phone box and ringing Mrs Williams's house but we would often be up the phone box ourselves for David to ring his parents or me to ring my friends. It would be a while until I met Karen, but I was still in those digs when we started seeing each other.

At night we'd go to the cinema, Stretford Sports Centre or the Garricks Head which was a nice pub near Davyhulme Golf Club. We'd never drink, it would be a blackcurrant and lemonade and a game of Space Invaders on the arcade machines. We spent a lot of time together but the worst time for David would be that time after the game on Saturday; we'd play our match, then go to Old Trafford to watch the first team, and my dad would come to the game to watch me and then watch

United with me. I'd go home with him and Dave would be left at Mrs Williams's by himself.

The house was a lovely detached house, we had plenty of room, and we'd get our breakfast and dinner which were always delicious. It was only a bus ride from Old Trafford, where Norman Davies would pick us up and drive us to The Cliff. Whereas David might have felt a substantial change in his life, for me, it was very much as I said at the start – natural progression. All I wanted to do was play the game and I was eager to get a chance to play for the biggest club in the country.