



Naked – and None Endowed like Blackpool Tower

by Ian Whittaker

On April during Falklands' war
we went 'up North' on Easter tour.
A big tour this with two full teams,
with fleet-foot backs and forwards mean,
all bristling with controlled aggression
that would ensure ample possession.

We met at t'club on Maundy eve,
the last to arrive was Grahame Neve
though just in case, we'd reserved a place
the last minute one for 'Amazing Grace'
who always came late to avoid strife
because he never told his wife
.... that he was going. "Roy, why're you up, its half past four?"
"Go back to sleep, I'm going on tour"

M1, M6, Blackpool, Fred's mate's place
for an Easter tour an ideal base.
A dawn arrival and no sleep
and a training session on the beach. (TRUE)
We passed the day in quiet carousal
a swim, some beers, sexual arousal
And in fairground on biggest ride, held firm by mates on either side,
young Gillie eating candy floss,
restrained by mates (who didn't give a toss)
on Viking ship, shitting in his pants
as forfeit for Hornie's cruel "Dead Ants",
and when we'd finished our preparation
we took the coach in expectation
of famous win against Fleetwood.
Well we knew that we'd done all we could
... to prepare us for stern confrontation
with fisher folk from northern station.

And so it proved, Steve Ponsford roared,
they'd never seen the like of George
or Bob (the youthful Orishaguna)
who'd set off late and get there sooner
... than the ball. Much to the Fleetwood centre's consternation,
Bob was always on his station
all over him like bag of fleas, or running at with high drawn knees
and when Fleetwood supporters this espied,

our own supporters always lied
and stirred the pot with speculation
“They’re players from the FIJI nation.”
“Both internationals, don’t you know?”
And the way they played, they believed it so!

Post-match celebrations going well
the lads on form, you can always tell.
And Fleetwood’s ladies dead impressed
when Terry (our skipper) called on us to divest
for traditional Grasshopper nude half hour,
(though none endowed like Blackpool tower).
And then Vince Fewins sang t’our song
(the backing group got the chorus wrong)
but belted on without a care, “Yeah, yeah
Don’t care, yeah yeah, its so unfair!”
No! not some boring rugby song
But “Gordon’s a moron” by Jilted John.

Then further north these lads from south
for Saturday’s match at Cockermouth.
“Unfortunately named don’t you think?”
said Terry with a knowing wink
as he pondered when he’d wield his power
to strip us off for nude half hour.
But first the match, a hard fought one
our pack on top, mostly at scrum
the Cumbrians always on the rack
They hate it ‘up North’ when you shunt them back!
Will Arthur? Won’t he? Has he done enough?
Scrapper Horne, an evil sod and pretty tough!
and at tight head (of course) the late Paul Read.
Here’s to you, Paul, built for power, not speed
and behind them strong and broad of soldier
‘The Beast’ and ‘Mummy’s Little Soldier’
The flankers? They were me and Matt
At No. 8 Roy Barrett, bet you’re all surprised at that!
Behind the scrum we had Terry
then Reilly, Bob and young Foxie.
The wings were George and Mike Wildridge,
or was it Rob Jones that was on that pitch?
And at full-back an honest tryer,
our own home-grown JPR, Gary Fryer

With the game won we retired t’pub
to Vince’s song, to have some grub.
Then Terry struck and turned things sour
another Grasshopper nude half hour;
And while we all were in the buff,
the cry went up, “Retire to bus!”
And back to Blackpool at late hour
naked... and none endowed like Blackpool Tower!
No sleep on t’bus, for if you closed your eyes you might
wake up to find your shoes afloat.
Then a heavy night on t’town was spent

and weary and late to bed we went.
But on the morning early and spry
we gave the fair another try.
Then off again to Fleetwood's shore,
this was a *very* tiring tour!
Just an afternoon of sevens
of yet more rugby, more pain, "heavens".

The team, a Birtles master-stroke,
me, Hornie and at prop, no joke,
he picked Rob Jones, a big fast wing
to give the pack a bit more sting.
At scrum half, of course, he picked himself,
at out half Reilly, then Bob and George, who else?
and waiting in the wings, if need be
Roy Barrett, a grafter, and Foxie, speedy.

But best laid plans of mice and men
... came all to naught. We lost the toss, they kicked and then,
"My ball!" said I and stood my ground.
"Mine too!" thought Jones, but made no sound
... apart from the noise of the sickening blow
as his teeth met the point of my left elbow.
Poleaxed within the space of seconds
He murmured just once and some folk reckoned
... he might be dead. But they brought him round.
Into ambulance he went, Roy onto pitch did bound.

But Grasshoppers went from strength to strength
we dogged it out, then went the length,
or mauled and scragged with last ditch tackle
we lost Chris Horne but were not rattled.
... 'cause Foxie came on and began to fly
an outside break – and what a try!
From all of sixty yards, or more,
converted as well. Is he a hooker? Are you sure?
And when Romford played rough – as Essex sides can
someone sorted out Desperate Dan!
And who were the stars of the whole show?
The "**FIJIAN**" Internationals, don't you know?

Back to hotel as sevens winners
to an excellent celebration dinner.
With entertainment care of Social Sec,
Wally Wordsworth, the poet, no more, no less
and some high class, exotic and artistic dancing
that left our members standing, speechless, gasping.
And Wally indulging in nude half hour
(though not endowed like Blackpool Tower)]
performed some interesting tricks
with daffodils and lit matchsticks.
Young Don Neighbour, to assist the stripper, when called upon
Just rolled his eyes, "don't tell my mum!"
But Ian Cook outshone them all
With a performance designed to enthrall

voyeurs engaged in nude half hour
his pecker up like Blackpool Tower.

And as the Monday morning dawned
it dawned on us, we had been warned
that Monday's match was sure to be
the hardest one of all the three,
and that our three day carouse (and fornication)
was not the ideal preparation
for more stern northern confrontation
'gainst our namesakes who come from Preston,
a side filled with famous Lancastrians dour,
Wade Dooley, the actual 'Blackpool Tower',
and Dick Greenwood, plum of England's pie
before he got squash ball in t'eye!
Yes, Dick, an old ex-England skip,
and younger ones, all very fit!

But still we were not daunted, so
we vowed we'd really have a go,
picked strongest team that still could walk
and while engaged in the team talk
exhorting pack to give their all,
wond'ring if they really were that tall,
the Preston team hove into view
... and it went dark and we all knew
... they were! But still we had a go
and won fair share of ball, you know.
And when for the pushover try they went,
they soon found out we were not spent.

For our front five took all they gave,
And pushed them back again to save
... the try. And after, when we had been beaten,
Dick Greenwood offered his congratulation,
said all that season long, his pack
had never once been shunted back
... until that day. And so, to yet more post match revels,
a dance laid on, with food (and girls)
but not this time a nude half hour,
we'd seen Wade Dooley in the shower,
The "Tower", with his clothes not on,
knew where he'd got his nickname from!

Ian Whittaker – March 1999

'Fortis in Animo'