

“Roll Over, Beethoven”

Chapter 7: swinging London

Back in London in the summer of 1965 I stayed with friends in Battersea and went round to the local labour exchange to see what I could find. “Warehouseman/driver, £12 a week”, though less than half what I’d been getting at the *Mail*, sounded possible as a temporary job, and I started work at Mason & Richards, a confectionery and tobacco wholesalers in Battersea Park road. Alas, I was never asked to do any driving and I was a bit shocked to find that a fellow warehouseman, older than me and married with two children, was only getting £11.10s; he’d been hired some time before. There was no trade union. The one perk was that we could buy our cigarettes at wholesale prices.

Top-up jobs I did that year included market research interviewing and waiting in an Earls Court restaurant. The restaurant was called the Ouzel Galley after a mythical Irish trading ship and was owned by upper-crust people with estates in Scotland. They supplied the restaurant with venison which, roasted and served with redcurrant sauce, was our signature dish. “Would you recommend the venison?” I was often asked, and I always unhesitatingly said yes until the moment when, to my horror, I spotted that the mashed potato served with it came out of a packet. Still, nobody ever complained about the mash or the venison.

Sixties food in London could be a bit like that – mixed. Outside Soho, which had some excellent Italian restaurants serving the kind of food you’d get in Italy, there wasn’t much to tickle the taste-buds. One exception, Carrier’s in Camden Passage, Islington, was a showcase for the American gourmet and food writer Robert Carrier who reportedly sold 10 million copies of his first book, *Great Dishes of the World*. But as time passed and *nouvelle cuisine* became fashionable, foodies recoiled from the excesses of his culinary style which was not chips but cream with everything. Even his vegetables couldn’t escape a rich garnish.

Still if Paris was the place to be in 1960, London (restaurants apart) had clearly overtaken it five years later. Well before *Time* magazine’s “Swinging London” issue pronounced in 1966 that “as never before in modern times, London is switched on”, two other American journalists were enthusiastically on message. John Crosby told *Daily Telegraph* readers in April 1965 that London was “the most exciting city in the world”, while the editor of *Vogue*, Diana Vreeland, declared it “the most swinging city in the world at this moment”.

Just as the British pop/rock bands were beginning to command the international music scene, the world of fashion had acquired an English accent, as when David Bailey snapped Jean Shrimpton in a Mary Quant mini-dress, the cover pic for the first newspaper colour supplement*. And the dominant spoken accent – not only in fashion and pop but in film and theatre – seemed to be less and less RP or comic-cockney à la Dick Van Dyke and more and more working-class authentic: Bermondsey (Michael Caine), Salford (Albert Finney) or scouse (Rita Tushingham).

**Sunday Times*, 4 February 1962

London was the magnet – for the musicians and the fans. Led by the Beatles, who started their recording career in EMI’s Abbey Road studios in St John’s Wood in 1962, the bands (or groups as

they were known then) from northern cities like Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle came down to London to record – and stayed to party when they weren't touring. For fans from London and the Home Counties, who were now mostly sharp-suited Mods, the West End clubs were a regular weekend destination. Pop musicians and fans could get very close to one another in clubs like the Flamingo, the 100 Club and The Marquee – or in the *Ready, Steady, Go!* studio.

RSG!, which went out on Friday evenings from August 1963 to December 1966, was the coolest thing. Thought up by Rediffusion TV entertainment boss Elkan Allan, it recreated the style of a disco and deliberately put the dancing fans within touching distance of performers. The show was shot in a small studio in Kingsway, central London, where the cameras moved about constantly and often caught other cameras moving. The dancers, selected from local clubs for their style and precision, showed viewers the latest moves – and the latest Mod fashions.

Dusty Springfield introduced the first shows and then in 1964 came the Queen of the Mods, Cathy McGowan. She was a 19-year-old typist from Streatham who'd worked in the fashion department of *Woman's Own* magazine having answered the programme's ad for "a typical teenager". She talked south London plain not posh, stumbled over her words, often asked the stars silly questions – but she was one of our own and she dressed (and made herself up) on trend with great success. Fashion luminaries-to-be like Anna Wintour, a future *Vogue* editor, and the original super-model Twiggy were fans, as were we all (but she did say some naff things, like disrespecting the godfather of soul, James Brown*). Meanwhile the BBC's rather staid answer to *RSG!* – *Top of the Pops* – which started recording in Manchester in 1964 inevitably moved down to London two years later. That was where it was happening, man.

*"When he came here he was hailed as the great James Brown – and the show was awful." Quoted by Cliff White, *Let It Rock*, August 1975. Actually it wasn't awful, it was authentic JB: Cathy just didn't get it.

The key to *RSG!*'s success was identification with, and response to, the audience. For example, the programme's slogan "The weekend starts here" wasn't thought up in a marketing meeting but was said to have been adopted from a fan's comment. Apparently, after the pilot programme Keith Fordyce, the middle-aged, avuncular DJ who helped to launch *RSG!*, approached a group of Mods from out of town and said: "So, you chaps have come all the way from Sheffield on a Tuesday no less. I expect you'll be eager to get back to work, what with the weekend coming up and all." And one of them replied: "Are you kidding, mate? The weekend starts here."

If TV provided a showcase for the musicians, it was the new pirate radio stations that dominated the everyday life of pop music fans: they now had transistor radios so they could listen wherever they went. Radio Caroline started broadcasting all-day pop radio off the Essex coast in early 1964, followed by various others, notably Radio London. Backed by Texas money and run by an American advertising man, "Wonderful Radio London" had a particularly powerful transmitter and a polished, professional style; they claimed 10 million listeners by 1966 and unlike their rivals they made a profit.

But the British establishment, notably Aunty BBC, which had created the pirate opportunity in the first place by playing hardly any current pop music on radio, was not pleased by this threat to its monopoly so the Labour government made the whole thing illegal. They passed the Marine

Broadcasting Offences Act* in August 1967 (which was supposed to be “the summer of love” when San Francisco replaced London as the world’s trendiest city). Then in September came the BBC’s launch of its own pop station, Radio One, which employed the ex- pirate DJs in an attempt to recreate their style, mood and atmosphere.

*Anthony Wedgwood Benn, as he still was, had led the campaign against the pirates as Postmaster-General in charge of broadcasting; but he managed to avoid being identified as the villain who killed them off by changing jobs and becoming Minister of Technology before 1967.

My view of all this came via my glamorous actress girlfriend Hazel, who I’d met in Manchester and who, like me, was less than 100% obsessed by, and so dedicated to, building a career. After drama school Hazel had appeared in rep and one or two TV plays but she didn’t see acting as the only thing in life. She got an admin job in Radio London’s Mayfair offices and together we moved to a flat in Noel Road, Islington. We lived for the best part of a year at no 93 in a newly converted ground-floor flat a few doors away from the Island Queen, a traditional pub that was destined to be gentrified – as was the street and the whole area.

In 1965 Noel Road was one of those London streets in transition: a bus driver could live next door to an architect. I learnt this through doing interviews for a market research company who were insistent on finding interviewees with the right social profile. But one thing Hazel and I didn’t know was that the gay playwright Joe Orton and his companion Kenneth Halliwell were living at the other end of Noel Road (no 25) and had been for some time. A year after Hazel and I left Noel Road an angry, jealous Halliwell clubbed Orton to death in August 1967. So much for “the summer of love”.

A lot of the time Hazel and I listened loyally to Radio London but for an hour or so every evening there was only one option for really hip Londoners (and people like us who weren’t really as hip as all that but prided ourselves on our good taste). On the ultra-mainstream station Radio 390, which was otherwise devoted to “easy listening” and featured housewives’ choices like “Eve, the Woman’s Magazine of the Air”, a DJ called Mike Raven played the raucous black pop music otherwise known as r ‘n’ b. It was the real thing – rock, soul, blues and occasionally reggae.

As well as the curiously mainstream context of Radio 390 there was the paradox of the man himself: Raven, who introduced the records smoothly and knowledgeably in a posh but entirely natural-sounding accent, was born Austin Churton Fairman to affluent parents in 1924; after Aldenham public school, he went to, and ran away from, Magdalen College, Oxford, to join the Ballet Rambert; married a Republican refugee from the Spanish Civil War, made religious TV programmes, appeared in horror films...his exotic life-story goes on from there: he was a one-off.

Hazel had a friend called Tina who was desperate to meet Paul Jones, r ‘n’ b and blues singer, actor and later presenter of *The Blues Show* on Radio 2. “Ah,” I said, “I can help you there because I know Paul – or rather I used to know him when he was a student called Paul Pond.” He ran away from Jesus College, Oxford, to join Manfred Mann and sing songs like *5-4-3-2-1*, which for a time introduced *Ready, Steady, Go!* I managed to find out where the Manfreds were rehearsing or recording (I think it was at the 100 Club) and star-struck Tina got her result. Paul didn’t seem to be missing the English degree course he’d left behind: the adulation, and probably more, of his female fans saw to that.

Another friend of Hazel's was a male ex-drama student who was living with an older man, a BBC news reader and continuity announcer. They invited us to their Blackheath flat for dinner, cooked and served by Hazel's friend – it was my first social meeting with a gay couple. Gay sex between men was still illegal then; not until 1967 did the Sexual Offences Act decriminalise sex between men in England and Wales. Other overdue 1960s reforms were the legalisation of abortion, the relaxation of the divorce laws, the end of theatre censorship and the abolition of the death penalty. Readers may conclude that the "Swinging Sixties" started out as the dark ages. And even after 1967 gay young men under 21 and their partners were still liable to be persecuted and prosecuted.

If anything, the Blackheath gay couple seemed to have more sharply defined roles than Hazel and I had: we were for that time comparatively liberated. I did far more of the food shopping than she did for the simple reason that my working day as a schoolteacher ended much earlier than hers. I'd go round Chapel Market when I got back to Islington after work. It's true that Hazel was in charge of the all-important laundry and ironing – but we did share the cooking and cleaning.

Some of the stallholders in Chapel Market were distinctly unwoke. Once, keen to observe the anti-apartheid boycott of South African fruit, I checked the provenance of the oranges. "I don't buy South African," I explained earnestly. The reply was a shock – "Well, I quite understand, guv. You don't know who's handled them." Cowardice, I'm afraid, stopped me putting him right.

As Hazel went west to work in Mayfair I went the other way – to the east end of London as a supply teacher. For the 1965 autumn term I wore a tracksuit and worked in the PE department at Stepney Green boys' comprehensive school. Both the headmaster and the head of PE were impressive enthusiasts for the comprehensive revolution which was getting underway.

The PE man had a long-term plan to introduce rugby – for two reasons, both of which made sense. First, pragmatically, you could get 30 boys on the field at a time rather than 22 for football. Second, it was obvious to anyone who bothered to look that the trapping, heading and dribbling skills of football were beyond the reach of many boys as they grew into and past puberty; in spite of being fans of the professional game they were all too often "slow and clumsy" as players on the field (which is what the prep school master in charge of football had written about me as a 13-year-old left-back). Football played properly is for those who have what the TV pundits nowadays call "quality" – ie skill, talent, magic even, which most people do not have – whereas junior rugby gives boys (and nowadays girls as well) of all shapes and sizes much more of a chance to learn drills, combine as a team and enjoy the experience of an energetic physical contact sport.

But football dominated then and the Stepney Green boys, one age group at a time, were transported by coach out to the playing fields of Fairlop in Essex, a journey that took half an hour each way – so an hour's coach travel for, at the very most, two hours of activity. But there was some excellent – enthusiastic and expert – coaching for the boys. It was led by the West Ham player (and later manager) John Lyall who'd turned to coaching in his 20s having had to give up playing because of a knee injury.

I didn't make much of a contribution to the football, except to act as a minder on the coach journeys, but it was a different story with basketball. I'd played at school and I was sent on a weekend training course to brush up on rules, tactics and coaching tips so I could referee and

supervise properly. Whenever possible in PE lessons the boys played basketball and keen ones were allowed to use the gym for unsupervised practice during the lunch break.

All went well at Stepney Green until...on one otherwise ordinary day I walked in to end the practice session as usual since the gym had to be locked before afternoon classes. For no discernible reason one of the boys hurled the basketball he was holding so that it hit me on the arm and knocked the cigarette out of my hand (that's right: I was smoking in the gym, as you did virtually everywhere in those days). It was from close range and clearly deliberate. Without pausing to think I aimed a cuff in his direction – not a punch, you understand, but a cuff with the open hand. The boy dodged and then punched me full in the face with a straight left (fortunately not a very hard one and I did jerk my head back when I saw it coming). This time I did pause to think. "Right, we're going to the headmaster," I said and we went.

The head interviewed us separately (me first) and after describing what had happened I said at once that the cuff was a mistake, which I regretted. Nothing much happened to me, which was reasonable, I think. The boy was presumably punished in some way but I kept out of it. The lunchtime basketball sessions were cancelled, at least temporarily, and I was left wondering why the whole thing had happened: I can't remember having any previous trouble from the boy involved. It was a disillusioning experience.

As far as I knew there wasn't a single member of staff at Stepney Green who lived locally: the gentrification of the East End was years in the future. The teachers came from far and wide; Mr Naqvi, a Pakistani, commuted daily by tube from Harrow on the west side of London. He and I played poker for pennies in the lunch break with Mr Robertson, a Yorkshireman, and we met up once for a final game in the Christmas holidays.

After my autumn term was up I was sent to Glengall Grove, a mixed secondary modern on the Isle of Dogs, for the rest of the school year. This was an institution in decline, under sentence of death, waiting for the inevitable end, since comprehensivisation was the clear policy of both the local education authority* and the Labour government. I was given the class of almost-15-year-old leavers to look after and timetabled to teach them maths and English. I did my best but the kids had their eyes on the future which, as far as they could see, didn't require any more arithmetic or English grammar; as for their present, that was pretty standard, consisting of normal things like pop music, fashion and football. The boys in particular had apprenticeships, or at least jobs, to look forward to and could not be persuaded to take an interest in school work. The girls, however, would at least bring me their handwritten application letters for clerical/admin/secretarial jobs– "Please, sir, is the punctuation all right, sir?"

*the Inner London Education Authority which ran London schools from April 1965 until it was abolished in 1990.

And it was the girls – or rather half a dozen of them – who said yes to my proposal that we go and see *The Matchgirls*, a musical about the women workers' strike at the Bryant and May match factory in east London in 1888. As the drama unfolded and the evident wickedness of the rapacious owners and compliant foremen took centre stage, the girl sitting next to me couldn't contain herself. "Bleedin' cheek," she said. And she was right. I like to think that she went on to become a militant shop steward.

The kids openly expressed their football allegiances – both boys and girls brought their West Ham or Millwall scarves to school – but I don't remember any fuss about particular pop groups. Indeed it wasn't a Glengall Grove pupil but a teacher, Mrs Lopez, who was the school's most prominent pop fan. She would break into song in the staffroom, mainly her version of Ike and Tina Turner's *River Deep Mountain High*. In the Sixties pop music stopped being the preserve of teenagers; increasingly, grown-ups were fans too.

TV, radio and the discs you played on your own record-player were all very well but nothing could beat live music. In London we were spoilt: a British tour by American or local musicians usually took in at least one London venue. A few highlights: Millie "My Boy Lollipop" Jackson, the princess of reggae in the Goldhawk club, Shepherds Bush; the queen of soul, Aretha Franklin, triumphant at the Hammersmith Odeon; and the king, James Brown, in the Brixton Astoria and the Granada, East Ham...

The Brixton cinema was packed with people, almost all black, responding energetically to the music and it wasn't difficult to imagine yourself transported to the New York venue where Mr Brown had recorded his definitive album *Live at the Apollo* in October 1962, released in 1963 and sold all over black America. The concerts followed a consistent pattern: first his band would play without him, uptempo mainstream jazz mainly (these guys really were musicians); sometimes there'd be a guest singer; then after an interval Brown would take centre stage and hurl himself into his astonishing all-action singing-and-dancing act which earned him the title "the hardest-working man in show business". There was just no one like him for movement, except possibly Michael Jackson (who called Brown "my greatest inspiration"); certainly not Mick Jagger, who seemed by comparison effete, a bit of a lightweight.

The Brown voice was utterly distinctive: harsh, discordant, compelling; not smooth and syrupy-soulful in the style of Sam Cooke and Marvin Gaye but insistent, strident, powerful. And for his bands Brown always hired the best and then made them play the way he wanted. Unlike some performers (notoriously the brilliant maverick Chuck Berry, who would play with almost anyone and seemed to care mostly about the money) Brown insisted on quality. Allegedly he would fine or, at worst, fire band members who played a bum note.

In September 1968 white American bands like The Doors and Jefferson Airplane came to town and played the Roundhouse, a converted engine shed and warehouse in Camden. It was loud. As one reviewer noted, Jefferson Airplane "lost some impact because the vocals were often inaudible against the strong backing". Quite: Gracie Slick's singing was very loud though a bit forced. But "Light My Fire" by The Doors was brilliant.

There were free festivals in London's Hyde Park from 1968. The best known was on 5 July 1969 (several weeks before the famous Woodstock festival in the United States) and featured the Rolling Stones. One of the reasons for it from the band's point of view was to introduce their new guitarist Mick Taylor who had replaced Brian Jones. Several complications here: Jones had been, effectively, the founder of the Stones; but his excessive drug use and increasingly erratic behaviour had led to the group firing him; two days before the Hyde Park concert he was found dead in his swimming pool, apparently from natural causes. In Hyde Park Jagger put on a white dress and read two stanzas of Shelley's poem *Adonais* about the death of his friend Keats – then hundreds of cabbage-white butterflies were released as a tribute to Jones. According to reports between 250,000 people and

500,000 were there – and I was certainly one of them so I can confirm several reports that the band weren't on particularly good form.

That wasn't the end of that day's entertainment, though. Lucky people who'd bought tickets (including me) just walked down the road to the Albert Hall where Chuck Berry, as usual backed by an ad hoc group of musicians, played his hits and did his signature duck walk across the stage. Dave Curtiss, one of Chuck's hastily assembled backing group, wrote later*: "It was an amazing night; tore the place to bits we did." The Who were top of the bill, and the crowd were still chanting "Chuck Berry, Chuck Berry" 20 minutes into The Who's set. Pete Townshend had to say "Look, we love Chuck Berry too, but we're on now."

*Quoted in *Purple Records 1971-1978*, Neil Priddey, Lulu Press, 2014

Chuck Berry's rocker fans threw coins as well as shouting and The Who tried to pacify them by playing the Eddie Cochran classic *Summertime Blues*. Eventually the rockers calmed down and the concert continued. Roger Daltrey said (much later*): "You couldn't have thought of two more opposed groups. Chuck Berry's audience threw coins and we smashed our guitars." Curious quote this, considering that The Who's destructive antics seemed to follow directly on from the rockers' own.

*www.royalalberthall.com

The other dominant thing at this time was football. Somewhere in the 1960s football went from being merely England's number one sport to our most important cultural event, topic of conversation, source of political metaphor – and of course winning the 1966 World Cup helped. The prime minister, Harold Wilson, contributed to this process: he was a genuine football fan, reportedly to be found in the crowd when Huddersfield Town played at home, and he recognised a scoring opportunity when one presented itself. "Have you noticed how we only win the World Cup under a Labour government?" was one of his well-rehearsed quips after 1966. (And he's still, after all these years, correct, alas.)

But Wilson was too clever by half when he trendily decided that the Beatles should be awarded MBEs in 1965 for "services to industry". First, some existing MBE-holders immediately sent back their medals in protest at this "trivialisation"; second, just four years later John Lennon insisted on sending *his* back in protest at various things. His letter to the Queen cited Britain's involvement in the Nigeria-Biafra civil war and support of the United States in Vietnam, both very good points; then he added something silly (which he later regretted) about a record of his and the pop charts.

I went to my first football match at Stamford Bridge on 20 February 1965 in the company of a Chelsea fan and saw the home side beat Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 in the fifth round of the FA Cup. But from early in the game I was lost to the Lilywhites. They had style and swagger on and off the pitch, and as the great Danny Blanchflower once put it: "The game is about glory."* They had the most interesting famous fans – from the philosopher Freddie Ayer to the satirist Peter Cook by way of the actor Warren Mitchell (who played the monstrous bigot and West Ham fan Alf Garnett in *Till Death Us Do Part*). Above all, they now had the goal-scoring maestro Jimmy Greaves, who'd started his career at Chelsea, had been bought by AC Milan – and was then brought back to England in 1961 by the Spurs manager Bill Nicholson for £99,999.

*Quoted out of context this sentence can easily be misunderstood. The full version is: “The great fallacy is that the game is first and last about winning. It is nothing of the kind. The game is about glory. It’s about doing things in style, with a flourish, about going out and beating the other lot, not waiting for them to die of boredom.” So it’s about style *and* winning, not style *instead of* winning. Over the years people, including some Spurs fans, have missed the point.

Greaves broke most of the available goal-scoring records for club and country including number of hat-tricks (15 for Spurs, six for England) but among the Spurs faithful one of his goals stands out as his greatest. I’m afraid you can’t see it on YouTube because there were no TV cameras at White Hart Lane on 5 October 1968 when Spurs played Leicester City in a First Division league game. But if you’re lucky you’re one of the 36,622 people (or your father or grandfather is – or possibly your mother or grandmother) who were there that afternoon and are still alive to tell the tale. A fan called Gary Wright, who like me was there, once wrote on a Spurs site*:

“Pat Jennings [the Spurs goalkeeper] kicked the ball from his enormous hands to Jimmy standing on the halfway line in front of the Shelf stand. Instant control on his instep [NB: not his head] took him diagonally towards goal at the Paxton Road end. He beat the first man with his first control and accelerated past the second with a deft swivel and dip of his right shoulder. He straightened his run on goal and dragged the ball back and away from the third defender.

*www.allactionnoplots.com/2009/08/18

“The crowd were beginning to expect something special and an almost deathly silence came as they held their collective breath. By this stage Jimmy was facing the goal and he drew the next defender and put him on his backside as the next fall guy entered the frame. In a split second Jimmy slid the ball past him, and Peter Shilton [the Leicester City goalkeeper] made his move towards Jimmy’s feet. Too late – he casually slid the ball past the prone goalkeeper and it rolled into the net just inside the post.”

Spurs won the match 3-2 – and, as you might have guessed, Greaves scored the other two goals as well.

Strangely, Greaves doesn’t mention this particular goal in his autobiography*, but he does describe two other, similar ones when the *Match of the Day* cameras were present: one of his two goals in a 4-0 home win over Blackpool in 1965 and again one of his two in a 4-0 home win over Newcastle United in 1966. I didn’t see either of them but the pattern was consistent: “I picked the ball up just inside the Newcastle half and simply started running. Tackles came in but somehow I managed to avoid them and skip past the Newcastle defenders to find myself in their penalty area with only their goalkeeper Gordon Marshall to beat...” And then, as from a matador, the *coup de grâce*: “As Marshall came out I simply upped a gear, swerved away to my right and passed the ball into the empty net.”

**Greavsie, The Autobiography*, Time Warner Books, 2003

That was if you like the characteristic Greaves goal, nothing like the 30-yard thunderbolts of Bobby Charlton or the Portuguese centre forward Eusebio or Pele or Ronaldo or Shearer or Kane, but the deft feints and the neat execution, followed by the raised arm (just in case somebody in the stands hadn’t been paying attention).

Three years earlier a couple of matches between Spurs and Manchester United summed up Sixties football (and this time you certainly can see the highlights on YouTube). First at White Hart Lane on 16 October 1965 Spurs won 5-1. And two months later at Old Trafford United returned the compliment and also won 5-1. The players in those games included (for Spurs) Pat Jennings in goal, Cyril Knowles, Dave Mackay, Alan Mullery, Alan Gilzean and Jimmy Greaves*; and (for United) Nobby Stiles, Paddy Crerand and – perhaps the most famous attacking trio in English football history – George Best, Denis Law and Bobby Charlton.

*Greaves didn't play in the second match. He was suffering from hepatitis.

Two of the Spurs players were particularly celebrated. Alan Gilzean, who'd been bought from Dundee, was crowned king – weekly. “Gilzean (four times), born is the king of White Hart Lane” was the chant. His glancing headers (off a very bald head) were one of the key things Greaves fed off. Some people called them “the G-men”. Cyril Knowles, who was an attacking left-back, became a household name a bit later. In 1972 there was a TV ad for Wonderloaf, the sliced white substance, which included the phrase “Nice one, Cyril” for the baker allegedly responsible.

The slogan was irresistible: “Nice one, Cyril. Let's have another one” was the chant; it became a pop record – and in his career of 507 matches Knowles did score a few times (17).

When England won the World Cup 4-2 in July 1966 Greaves didn't play in the final – he'd lost his place (to the West Ham player Geoff Hurst) because of a leg injury inflicted by a France defender in a pool match and didn't get it back although he'd recovered. If substitutes had been allowed, as they were four years later in Mexico, Greaves would almost certainly have been used when the match went into extra time. Still, we won when it mattered for once, which was the main thing, even for Spurs supporters and Greaves fans.

The match, the result and Geoff Hurst's hat-trick, including the disputed third goal he scored in extra time, continue to be celebrated by those of us who were watching at the time*. My favourite tribute came just three years after the match when the TV series *Till Death Us Do Part* turned up as a film. With three West Ham players in the England team (Bobby Moore and Martin Peters were the others) Alf Garnett is of course at Wembley for the final. As the Swiss referee goes to consult his Russian (actually Azerbaijani) linesman to check whether Hurst's shot has crossed the line, the irrepressible Alf speaks for England: “Remember Stalingrad!” he shouts. And the linesman of course comes up with the right answer.

*The domestic TV audience for the final was the biggest in British TV history – well over 30 million – so if somebody old enough says they watched it they probably did. It was broadcast in black and white; colour TV (on BBC2 from 1967, BBC1 and ITV from 1969) came too late.

The downside of football was crowd trouble – or the threat of it. History records that Spurs fans were responsible for one appalling example in September 1969. After a 5-0 thrashing by Derby County at the Baseball Ground 500 hooligans on the train home smashed everything that was smashable and pulled the communication cord, stopping the train at Flitwick in Bedfordshire. When the driver refused to go on, the fans ran down the streets throwing stones, breaking windows, attacking cars...*

*described as “The Battle of Flitwick” in *State of Emergency: The Way We Were: Britain 1970-1974* by Dominic Sandbrook, Allen Lane, 2010

You would expect London derby matches to be particularly troublesome. But in the late 1960s and early 1970s I just don't remember any aggro happening around me. I went to a number of games in London, at White Hart Lane and the other big London grounds, sometimes with children – and always standing. For example, I have a clear and vivid memory of one Chelsea-Spurs match at Stamford Bridge on 14 November 1970. It was the biggest of games attracting more than 60,000 people including two small boys, my father-in-law, Richard Kisch, and me. It was memorable for all sorts of reasons, starting with the fact that it rained for about an hour before kick-off; we were standing as near to the front as we could get so the boys could see. It rained, as I remember, continuously throughout the 90 minutes which Chelsea dominated without managing to score. At that point Richard, who was inclined to impatience, said he'd had enough and fought his way out through the crowd. But he was still in the ground to hear the roar when Alan Mullery scored for Spurs in the 91st minute. He'd managed to leave, I think, by the time the second goal went in after 93 minutes, giving Spurs a 2-0 win. Not a proper fan, my father-in-law.*

* One of the boys I'd brought, though, supported Spurs from then on while his brother followed his father to Highbury, as it used to be, to support the Arsenal.

My point is: there was no crowd trouble that day. A second example – from the same season – makes the point even more emphatically. On Monday 3 May 1971 Arsenal were at White Hart Lane for the final league game of the season; sitting in second place they needed to win or draw 0-0 to be league champions ; then the following weekend (8 May) they were due to play Liverpool in the FA cup final. The league and FA cup double had been achieved precisely once in the 20th century – by Spurs in 1960-61. Now here were their historic rivals, Arsenal, on the brink of repeating the feat.

A small group of us left the *Radio Times* office in Marylebone High Street on a warm spring late afternoon and went to the ground by train arriving about an hour and a half before the 7.30pm kick-off. We managed to get in but thousands didn't. The numbers were, simply, immense. Officially, the attendance was 51,992 and a reasonable estimate of those left outside is a further 50,000, although the Arsenal website* refers to “twice that number”.

*www.arsenal.com

In the stadium it was a tight match, not particularly lively or entertaining, with everything resting on the result. Ray Kennedy scored the only goal for Arsenal three minutes from the end. At the final whistle there was pandemonium. Apart from the noise thousands of Arsenal fans invaded the pitch and ran round celebrating their greatest-ever derby win. Later the Arsenal goalkeeper Bob Wilson, who'd made several good saves, called the first part of the double “the greatest moment of my career”. But there was no fighting, no resistance from the Spurs fans who just went home.

Commentators pointed out that both the football authorities and the police had seriously miscalculated. First, the match should have been all-ticket, which would have reduced the crowds. Second, the police should have been better prepared. But the striking thing, looking back, is that the whole thing passed off so peacefully. There were apparently some arrests but not the full-scale riot that might have happened.

For me, football remains *the* spectator sport. True, the offside law can be problematic but in general the surprise visitor from Mars wouldn't need a commentator to grasp what is going on. On the other hand I'm not sure it's the sport I wish I'd been super-good at: when I interviewed Martin Peters' wife Kathy, she told me that he used to come back from matches with legs so swollen from being kicked they "looked like elephantiasis".