

Memories of Lisbon – 2005

The fourteen members of last years trip had once again negotiated a long weekend pass and were joined by Mike ‘who ate all the pies’ Garner and David ‘Sartorial’ Lumb for an early start from Manchester Airport – with the exception of Roy ‘Isn’t it’ Davies who was travelling from Malaga having been left there from last year.

After some 20 years in Table/41 Club it was quite remarkable to fall for such a simple ploy of ‘Have you got a pen?’ – ‘Good – then you are now Sergeant-at-Arms’ and thus Air-Miles started scribbling and to the sound of thirteen sighs of relief.

The flight boarded on time and ‘Are the shops open yet’ was quizzed as to the ownership of a small bag. Air-Miles finished the Telegraph Crossword just prior to take-off – much to the irritation of NK and Absolutely. ‘If I was a rich man...’ tucked into his second helping of bacon (a trend which was to continue) whilst Russell and David ‘Shades’ Kahn declined a drink having failed to understand they were complimentary.

On arrival, Jim Furbrotter was heard to ask ‘are we 15?’ and Shortly announced his defection having dispensed with his return flight ticket. Kevin ‘Starfish’ Lovett made the first of many calls home and serious questions were made concerning the directions for Amarillo. All bags collected, the group boarded the aero-bus for the trip to the VIP Eden Hotel – a former theatre – in the centre of Lisbon.

Kellets bar was quickly established across the road from the hotel and with beer flowing and the sun shining – relaxation started. Shades showed his negotiating skills by buying a €3 pair of sunglasses for €10, ‘Are the shops open yet’ made a racist impression of a peanut and Yosser queried NK’s directions that the toilets are ‘Straight down the spiral staircase’ – a line that would be used more than once over the course of the weekend. ‘Isn’t it’ – then arrived and lost no time in catching up on the beer consumed.

NK decided that the party should go to the football stadium to get the tickets re-imbursed whilst Absolutely and Shortly would attempt to get the latter a new flight ticket. Scouse git – the beer taking effect – announced no problems in selling the tickets for €60 each. Anglo-Portugese relationships took a turn for the worse when the b*****ds refused to take the tickets back (Not Club policy!!!!) and our attempts at ticket touting in a foreign language were (not surprisingly) ineffective. A decision was made to find the nearest bar and the Scouse git would return the next day and sell the tickets for €100 each.

As the second round was ordered, Invisible, Shades and Sartorial decided to return to the hotel and the Scouse – now showing extreme signs of being pissed – had their drinks as well. The journey back to the hotel was akin to a scene from Benny Hill with the chairman following any nice derrier at very close distance and it was somewhat fortuitous that a pair of white trousers got off at our stop.

The evening commenced at the new Kelletts bar and 'smart casual' took on a new definition with 'Isn't it' in a resplendent anorak and Sartorial sporting the kind a jumper only normally seen at Boxing Day football.

We travelled to the restaurant by Funicular railway which gave rise to some poor attempts at opera. The meal could be best described as adequate – summed up by Nasal sick's response to 'How is your ham and melon?' – being 'Well it's Hammy and Melonny'. The ensuing Fado 'entertainment' was not to the taste of the majority and efforts to impose Amarillo, Wild Rover or even conversation were greeted by over zealous rebukes from the proprietor sitting at the adjacent table. Anyone going to the bathroom somehow managed to go the long way round and inadvertently 'bump' into him. Starfish managing this on more than one occasion. Some of the party returned down the hill on the Funicular whilst Absolutely raced behind and much to the annoyance of those watching – reached the bottom of the hill intact.

Saturday morning commenced with an open top bus tour and Mr Furbrotter found a fellow voyeur in 'Pies' who continued to take photos of local wildlife. 'If I were a rich man', 'Are the shops open yet', Shortly and 'Isn't it' enjoyed the sheltered warmth of the front of the bus whilst the cold sea breeze froze the nuts off the rest. At the first stop a small area of grassland provided inspiration for an impromptu game of football. The silky skills of yesteryear were still evident but the rigours of exercise would provide a harsh reminder of age creeping on.

Cakes and port at Bellem were followed by the short bus journey to the Irish Bar at the docks in time to see the Welsh Rugby team win something for the first time in many years. 'Isn't it' borrowed some Oysters from the restaurant and returned them after the game. 'If I were a rich man' enjoyed a number of Southern Comforts and become increasingly incoherent. 'Absolutely' realised he was buying his own beer whilst 'Walter' was buying everyone elses.

Having got the bus to within a three minute walk to the hotel, NK was insistent that we take the 30 minute tram ride to a point 10 minutes walk from the hotel. Scouse git instructed everyone to be most careful of pickpockets on the tram – which could only be described as 'a bit bloody rich!!!'.

The evening meal was largely uneventful with some serious consideration of who or what should be placed in room 101. The resultant inhabitants included:- foreigners (except female Swedish nymphomaniacs), fado, puffs, southerners, scouse, Man Utd supporters (largely already excluded by previous items), Man Utd, pets, Allegro drivers, people wearing hats, politicians, anything to do with horses.

The younger element then went on to find live entertainment, the aged found a quiet bar and 'Isn't it' cleared the Hard Rock Café. Absolutely provided Furbrotter with some 2-dimensional entertainment.

On the Sunday morning – NK and Air Miles went to find the local Porto supporters club when the hotel concierge had promised a good sale of match tickets. The remainder went to an Irish Bar to await their return. Sadly, the selling trip proved unsuccessful, but the Scouse git – still unable to tuck his shirt in and sporting a denim jacket from his early teenage years – promised he would sell them outside the ground for at least €500 per ticket on the next day.

‘Invisible’ give a guided tour of Estoril – severely truncated by a number a weak bladders and necessity for food. Absolutely gave a graphic description of the problems encountered when bowel movements take longer than the timeswitch for the lights. ‘Are the shops open yet’ requested Brown Sauce and we all waited patiently for the restaurant manger to finally connect the television system just in time for the local basketball.

Dinner was at a restaurant recommended by Jim and the ambience seemed to offer a favourable impression. Sadly most of the menu options were unavailable, the same for the wine list and also available plates although Sartorial was brought a bucket in which something had clearly expired. Having swapped the pullover for an equally unfashionable shirt and then applied a psychedelic jacket – this throwback from the sixties then accused ‘Shops’ of being ‘Square’.

NK having been earlier called a very, nice man by the young lady at the Train Ticket desk, and somehow managed to contrive a sentence comprising the words Accountant and Integrity – failed to pour a glass of water on three occasions – due to not having removed the bottle top.

The evening concluded in an outside bar with the rain falling and the local asylum escapees providing stimulating conversation and reasoned debate. The young lady in question clutching some flowers and a hub cap (much to the excitement of Scouse git) and managing to keep the volume at just above a screech – whilst her more eloquent, soft spoken, compatriot suggested her future actions should undoubtedly involve sex and travel.

On the final morning – most went off to do shopping whilst NK, AirMiles, Yosser, Nasal Sick and Shortly once again went to the Porto office (which was shut and our contact’s phone not answering) and then back to the Stadium to a) sell the tickets and b) buy Shortly’s son a Sporting Lisbon shirt two sizes too small. Desperation and a reduced price finally managed to persuade the locals to part with some Euros and despite Scouse gits offering to sell the tickets at €1000 each – we closed at around 50% of the cost.

For the last lunch at Kellett’s bar we had the best food yet with a sizzling steak and chips before getting taxis to the airport, collecting Shortly’s new flight ticket and travelling home without incident.

The ‘Davies Pile Ring’ was formally presented to Scouse Git for a combination of bullshit and excess of everything.