

# The Kop: Liverpool's Twelfth Man

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## About the Book

The Spion Kop is one of the most famous, emotive and atmospheric vantage points in all of sport. The one-time terracing that could 'suck the ball into the net' - in Bill Shankly's home of more than 25,000 swaying, singing, standing Kopites, it's now seated and can hold merely half of that number, but as the European triumph of the 2004-5 season proved, its magic still remains.

In this fully revised and updated edition, Stephen F Kelly uses eyewitness testimonies from Kopites, policemen, cleaners and referees as well as newspaper reports and the recollections of players and managers to trace the history of this amazing and fascinating stand - each anecdote wonderfully evoking the spirit of the changing times the Kop has experienced.

Stirring, emotional and marvellously readable, *The Kop* is a must for any Liverpool fan and anyone interested in what it means to be a supporter of any football club.

*Also by Stephen F Kelly in Virgin Books*  
SHANKLY: IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT  
GÉRARD HOULLIER: THE BIOGRAPHY

# The Kop

Liverpool's Twelfth Man

Stephen F Kelly



This book is dedicated to Scallies,  
Scouser Tommies and Kopites  
wherever they may be.

# INTRODUCTION

Even when empty and glimpsed in the dazzle of a summer's day it is an awesome prospect. But gleamed through the haze of the floodlights and the swirling cigarette smoke of a misty European evening, it is a truly breathtaking sight. There was a time on the old Kop when 25,000 bawling, chanting, dancing, cavorting fans, could be seen tumbling one way and then crashing another in a rough old sea of a crowd. And the noise, the sheer noise of it all, was almost enough to lift the roof off.

Now that the capacity is just 12,000 seated fans it might not be quite the same, but on European evenings, especially those of the 2004-05 season when Liverpool stormed triumphantly towards European Cup glory, it can be every bit as passionate, noisy and dramatic.

This is the Anfield Kop, renowned throughout the world of football. If not the largest single stand in British football, it is surely the most exhilarating, the most intimidating, the most frightening. Little wonder visiting teams have taken the field with terror in their eyes, no surprise opposing goalkeepers have been seen to shake. The former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly claimed it was Liverpool's twelfth man and worth a goal start; few would disagree with him.

It was, and still is, to the Liverpool fan a cathedral, a place of worship, and after Hillsborough, a shrine. The building itself was always impressive, its roof a mighty steel frame hanging dauntingly over the heads of 25,000 spectators, held up by just a handful of stanchions. The steps, and there were precisely one hundred of them, seemed to stretch upwards forever. Even from the outside it looked dramatic,

angles here, angles there thrusting out over the Walton Breck Road, cream-painted pillars, fancy red bricks and even windows. Today, it is not perhaps as awesome as it once was. Rather it is streamlined, modern and utilitarian. And with no stanchions, pillars, and with 12,409 seats it is a comfortable stand affording a splendid view of the game.

But despite all the changes, it is the people who have made the Kop the envy of world football, those who have stood or sat on it over the years, sometimes crushed together in a frenzy of excitement or jumping up as a corner swings into the penalty area. Without them the Kop is simply a spectacular piece of civil engineering. With them it is something else, a community, a congregation, a culture.

In the South African province of Natal, some miles inland from Durban and close to Ladysmith, there is a small hill known locally as Spion Kop. The South Africans sometimes even spell it Spionekop or Speonkop and usually pronounce it 'Spee-on Kop'. The name would almost certainly never have travelled much beyond Durban and would unquestionably never have become part of football's vocabulary had it not been for a fearful battle that took place there on 24 January 1900. The Battle of Spion Kop, seen for just a day or so as a 'famous victory', to quote the *Manchester Guardian*, soon went down in history as the most mismanaged battle of the entire Boer War and one of the most disastrous in the history of the British military. It was a scandal that was conveniently swept under the carpet.

The British had rightly spotted the Boers' position on Spion Kop, yet there was never any strategic reason why they should attack them. When asked why he had ordered the assault on Spion Kop, General Buller answered like some Alpinist climber, 'because it is there'. He was then asked what they should do when it was captured. Buller considered for a moment then replied 'Stay there'. The



seeds for disaster had been sown. But the most appalling mistake was the military's lack of geographical knowledge. No balloon had been sent up to examine the Kop, nor were any local guides consulted. It was to prove the most calamitous mistake of all.

At 7.30 p.m. on 23 January, the assault began. Over 1,500 men - mainly from the Lancashire Fusiliers, the Royal Lancasters and the South Lancshires - began the steady march towards the foothills of Spion Kop. No machine guns were taken; the order was simply 'fixed bayonets'. At 11 p.m. they reached the foothills and slowly began to climb through the mist and drizzle. Early the next morning they encountered their first Boers and after a brief skirmish the Boers fled. The army, believing that they had taken Spion Kop, sent three cheers to the men below and began to dig in. The trenches they dug were to become their graves. As dawn broke and the mist cleared they realised with horror that beyond Spion Kop lay the further and higher ridges of Aloe Knoll and Twin Peaks where the Boers waited peering down their gun sights. The British army was stranded. They had dug themselves into a death trap. In the torrid heat of the next day, without food, water and running out of ammunition, the brave lads of Lancashire fought heroically until the generals back at camp began to realise their error and called for a withdrawal. By then the damage had been done: 383 British soldiers were dead, over a thousand had been wounded and 303 were missing, presumed held prisoner. The Boers suffered between 350 and 800 fatalities. Although the death toll was to pale into insignificance compared to the later losses in the First World War, at the time it seemed - and indeed was - an appalling loss of life. The brief celebrations of the press soon gave way to horror as more accurate telegrams reached Fleet Street. The nation was appalled and the Battle of Spion Kop was to remain in British memories for some years.

Six years later, as Liverpool clinched their second league championship, the directors of the club - led by its redoubtable chairman John Houlding and secretary John McKenna - decided that Liverpool FC - and its ever growing number of supporters - was deserving of a more stately home. It was therefore decided to reconstruct Anfield with a variety of new facilities, including a new terracing at the Walton Breck Road end of the ground to replace the simple terracing and stand that already existed behind the goal. In late May work began on constructing a high banking with wooden steps. Crush barriers were also erected - though there were surprisingly few. It was a grand scheme and more than enough to impress the papers. 'Liverpool, having provided themselves with an up-to-date enclosure, now possess a home worthy of their title as league champions,' commented the most famous sports newspaper in the country, *The Athletic News*, adding that 'when completed, the Liverpool ground will be equal to anything in the country both as regards size, convenience and equipment.'

The new stadium was designed by that noted architect of football grounds Archibald Leitch and erected by Messrs E. F. Blakeley and Company of Vauxhall Ironworks, Liverpool. The *Liverpool Echo* was also full of praise and reproduced a sketch by Leitch detailing the finished product. 'People who have not been permitted to view the ground except from the top of passing tramcars,' commented the *Echo* 'have marvelled and expressed astonishment seeing the rise of the Oakfield Road embankment.' Of course, strictly speaking, it was not in Oakfield Road at all but in the Walton Breck Road. The terrace was said to have 132 steps - though in 1993 the author counted only 100 - and it was reckoned there was space for 20,000 spectators, bringing the overall capacity of Anfield up to 60,000. The pitch was also raised by five feet and a paddock constructed all around the ground.

As the 1906/07 season kicked off, the Kop took its place in football mythology. Elsewhere in Liverpool the TUC was about to begin its annual conference at St George's Hall, while George Lashwood and the Vaudeville Beau Brummel, Leo Stormont, were playing at the Empire. Further afield, Yorkshire were taking on the MCC in one of the concluding games of the cricket season and there were riots in St Petersburg. But back in Liverpool the city was basking in a heatwave that had struck the nation. All week temperatures had hovered in the high eighties and on Saturday 1 September 1906, as the new football season began, the temperature in Liverpool hit a staggering 124 degrees. All over the country games were halted as players collapsed and there was some doubt around Anfield that the game would even kick off. But kick off they did, even if the referee was so concerned that the half time interval had to be extended while the players recovered. Rarely, if ever, can Anfield or the Kop have basked in such a heat. Nobody made any mention of what it must have been like on the crowded Kop that day, but just over 30,000 turned up for the occasion, a useful increase on the kind of gate Anfield had been pulling the previous season. It was even more impressive considering the opponents that day were the distinctly unglamorous Stoke City, who would spend the season propping up the rest of the division. The Kop must have sizzled.

Within twenty minutes of the kick off, the Kop experienced its first explosion of noise as Joe Hewitt swept Liverpool into the lead. Unfortunately, that goal did not usher in another successful season. Though they were the defending champions who could boast players of the calibre of Sam Hardy, Alex Raisbeck, Sam Raybould and Jack Cox - some of the greatest names in the club's history - they would eventually lose almost as many encounters at home as they won, and finish the season in fifteenth spot.

But what to name the new terracing? Nobody gave it much thought at first, but it soon became clear that the Walton Breck Bank was something of a mouthful. Then Ernest Jones, the sports editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo* came up with the novel idea of calling it Spion Kop. The phrase had apparently been used some time before to describe the terracing at Woolwich Arsenal's ground but had never stuck. Perhaps Ernest Jones had read it somewhere, perhaps it was coincidence. Whatever the explanation, his idea was seized upon and before the season was out the name Spion Kop came to take on a new meaning.

Also erected a short time later on the corner of the Kop with the Kemlyn Road was the topmast of the ship *The Great Eastern*, one of the first iron ships in the world. Launched in 1860 *The Great Eastern* had been broken up in Rock Ferry and shortly after the completion of the Kop, the topmast was floated across the Mersey and hauled up Everton Valley by a team of four horses to be erected as a flagpost. It still stands today on what is now commonly known as flagpost corner.

The Kop, like most football crowds, is a social barometer. Once the preserve of the working man, it always reflected the fortunes of working class life and culture. At the turn of the century, as the sport began to take root, it was given a timely boost by the reduction in the working week on the docks to five and a half days, freeing Saturday afternoon for the pursuit of trivial pastimes: and what could be better than a few pints and a visit to Anfield with your work mates? In the twenties and thirties when soccer emerged out of the Edwardian era as the nation's number one sport it was here that the dockers came, direct from their Saturday morning shift. And there they were; flat hats, mufflers, trilbies, even the occasional bowler and of course cigarettes, they all seemed to smoke, and those long, hollow faces. Even in

those days they were swaying, not deliberately, just moving gently under the sheer weight of the crowd.

For the next twenty years the Kop remained much as it was. Since its construction it had been open to the elements. The driving wind that swept in from the west, up the Mersey and across Stanley Park hardly made it the most popular venue for watching football. On wet days it could be as miserable and raw as the Mersey Bar itself - though on a summer's day the view across Stanley Park was said to be spectacular. Even club secretary John McKenna could appreciate that you had to be either desperately poor or deeply fanatical to pay to sit on the Kop on a wet Saturday afternoon. There was only one solution and in 1928, flush with money, the board authorised the building of a roof to protect the entire Kop. A cover was constructed that turned the ordinary cinder banking into a cathedral of sound. Mr J. Watson Cabre was the architect contracted to draw up the plans and as soon as the season drew to a close, work began in earnest to complete the job in time for the start of the new season.

'The covering of the Spion Kop,' wrote *The Athletic News* 'has been linked to the two main stands. This gives protection to over 37,000 spectators behind the goal, bringing the total covered accommodation for the ground up to 60,000.' The grandstand was also extended to hold an additional 600 seats and the Kemlyn Road stand capacity was increased by 200 spectators. There was probably no other stadium in the country where so many supporters were sheltered - at the time it was estimated that Anfield would be able to hold as many as 70,000 spectators. However its maximum capacity to this day remains the 61,905 who watched the fourth round cup game against Wolves in February 1952. Somewhere along the line someone had got their sums wrong. It is doubtful that the Kop could ever have held 37,000 - between twenty-five and twenty-seven thousand would be a more accurate guess -

which would have made the maximum capacity nearer 60,000.

On 25 August 1928 the new Kop was formally opened by John McKenna, president of the Football League and a former secretary, director and chairman of the club. There could be no more appropriate person. Spectators were urged to be in their place on the Kop by 2.45 p.m. and precisely five minutes later McKenna and a party of distinguished guests walked through the players' tunnel and across the pitch towards the Kop where they dutifully unfurled a commemorative flag.

No sooner had the flag been hoisted than the Kop had the chance to test its new acoustics. The visitors were Bury, a fair side in those days, and they were one-nil down within the first minute, or 50 seconds to be precise - debut boy Billy Millar heading in Dick Edmed's corner. On the half hour Albert Whitehurst added a second and Millar struck another with twenty minutes remaining. It was a grand and portentous start for the new Spion Kop, though Billy Millar managed only two more games before he left the club.

After the match there was further speechmaking in the boardroom. McKenna was presented with a gold cigar holder to commemorate the occasion. 'We cannot live in the past,' he proceeded to tell the guests, 'but I think the past should be an inspiration for the present. Now that the spectators are assured of their places under more comfortable conditions, I would like to give a word of advice to the directors, that is to stay their hands in the direction of further improving the ground and devote their finances, energy and intelligence to creating a team worthy of the splendid surroundings.'

There was clearly a division on the board with some directors already drawing up plans to tear down the Kemlyn Road stand and build a new double decker stand in its place. But John McKenna's wise counsel held, though perhaps for a

trifle too long, and there would be few further ground improvements for another forty years.

Liverpool at that time was a very different city than it had been in 1906. Unemployment was creeping upwards, poverty was on the rise and the music halls were giving way to a new vogue - the picture house. The fortunes of Liverpool Football Club were not much richer either. After picking up two championships at the beginning of the 1920s the side had slunk into complacency. Lady Luck had taken up residence across Stanley Park where Dixie Dean had just fired in 60 league goals in one season for Everton. But there were still a few players worth paying to see each Saturday afternoon at Anfield, especially Elisha Scott, Parson Jackson and Gordon Hodgson, all favourites of the newly roofed Kopites.

The new roof also opened up the possibilities for other sporting activities and during the 1930s Anfield became a regular home for boxing. At least one world title fight - Nelson Tarleton against Freddie Miller - was held there along with numerous British and Empire championships. Professional tennis was also staged, with Fred Perry and Bill Tilden thrilling a rapturous audience. The Liverpool marathon concluded its city run with a final lap around Anfield and of course Anfield continued as a venue for the occasional international match - particularly those involving Ireland and England - as well as hosting the odd FA Cup semi-final.

By the time War broke out, the Kop had taken its place in history. Players from the thirties talked of its partisanship, its mighty roar and intimidating atmosphere. But sadly the team had never been able to capitalise on its enthusiasm. All that, however, was about to change. As peace returned so Liverpool stormed to the top of the division to clinch their fifth league title, a young Billy Liddell and a tough little half back by the name of Bob Paisley becoming the toast of the Kop. Even during the dark days of second division football in

the 1950s, the Kop was a revelation. Always hopeful, always loyal, always heaving – even when the opposition was lowly – it was a crowd that deserved better – much better. The club needed someone to galvanise the support and to turn its energy into an additional force. Shankly and the Kop would produce the synergy that would propel Liverpool to success. The best was about to happen.

During the early 1960s the Kop came into its own as the city of Liverpool became the focus of a new pop culture. The Kop was almost a pop group of its own. Each week it was packed with a swaying, singing, Cavern-stomping mob. It was an odd collection. Twenty-five thousand, mostly male, revellers getting together to live out their teenage fantasies. It was a throng of so many missed opportunities, forgotten dreams, if-only-I-had-a guitar-stories. You may not have made it to the Cavern or the Iron Door but at least you were there on the Kop. If you couldn't be a footballer or performer at the London Palladium on a Sunday night, then you could be part of the Kop. Anyone on Merseyside could pretend they were an idol and when Liverpool played at home everyone standing on the Kop became pop stars for the afternoon. You can still picture them: boys with bushy Beatle hairstyles, men in black-framed Buddy Holly glasses, lads with scarves, duffle coats, polo necked pullovers, old men with toothless smiles, open necked shirts and every one of them singing, no matter what their age, no matter what their inhibitions.

Football and pop music were the escape from the ghetto; the route to fame and fortune. During those days almost anyone with a guitar, a set of drums, a mouth organ or some maracas could climb aboard the make-it-rich bandwagon. They knew all the words, especially of the Liverpool hits – 'She Loves You', 'Anyone Who Had A Heart', 'Yellow Submarine'. If ever there was a public display of popular culture this was it. Tens of thousands of cheery voices singing 'She Loves You'. And what's more they would



all go 'Yeah, Yeah' and then add 'And with a love like that you know you should be glad *wuuuuuw*.' They even adopted one of their own pop groups' songs, 'You'll Never Walk Alone,' as their anthem and began to adapt the lyrics of other songs. 'When the Reds Go Marching In', 'You've Not Seen Nothing Like The Mighty Emlyn', 'We All Live On A Red And White Kop.' Here were 25,000 Paul McCartneys, John Lennons, Gerry Marsdens, George Harrisons, Billy J Kramers. Even Cilla and Ringo were not forgotten.

Liverpool was a city of hope once more. Jobs became more plentiful after Ford opened a plant at Halewoods and the docks were still bustling despite beginning their sad decline. And if you couldn't get a job you could always go to Frank Hussy's and buy a guitar on the never-never. And, of course, we had Bill Shankly. It wasn't long before everyone was imitating us. The Stretford Enders chanted, The North Bank sang and Roker Park roared to 'The Blaydon Races'. But they were never as witty, never as inventive, never as committed as us Scousers. And as Liverpool travelled across Europe with their fanatical following in tow, so the Europeans adopted our fanfares. Even today they sing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' in Milan.

So how did all the singing start? I remember at the time pondering this question and someone gave me an answer which, thirty years later, still seems to be as good an explanation as any. My friend's theory was that it was a combination of boredom and the Beatles. Boredom, because Liverpool's success meant that everyone would be on the Kop in their place hours before kick off, the Beatles because they were the soundtrack to Liverpool life. To while away the time you read the programme but there was little else to do. And the size of the crowd meant that you were stuck in your place, unable to move. Then of course the public address system would be churning out the latest chart hits. Inevitably the Mersey groups always figured prominently and everyone knew the words. They would no doubt have

been singing the songs in their heads, so it became just a short step to then start singing them out loud. It only needed to happen once.

Of course, It wasn't the first time anyone had sung at a football ground. There had been a tradition of community singing at Anfield going back to at least the post-war years, but that was usually organised - although the anarchic element on the Kop were always likely to strike up a different number to the one the band was playing. Community singing at Wembley was also a national tradition; every football fan knew that after waving your song sheets to the TV cameras, you joined in the Cup Final hymn 'Abide with Me'. Then of course there was Cardiff Arms Park where crowd singing had been elevated to an art form and the battle hymns of 'Land of my Fathers' and 'Bread of Heaven' were always likely to bring a tear to the eye and inspire the Welsh three quarter line to even greater glory. But the Kop singing was different. It was unorganised. There was no choir master, no conductor, and the songs were the popular favourites of the time.

Groups of supporters would meet on a Saturday lunchtime in local pubs to plan the afternoon's entertainment. The Albert next door to the Kop was a regular haunt and rehearsal hall for the Kop choir and there were at least another half dozen pubs dotted around the city where the same ritual took place. Even today, if you go in prior to kick off you will be greeted with a cacophony of singing. There is even evidence of song sheets being handed out to the unofficial choir behind the Kop goal, while away trips were an ideal opportunity to invent new lyrics or new songs. The singing, Shankly and the sheer noise of the Kop were more than enough to propel Liverpool towards league, FA Cup and European glory.

In the seventies the Kop visibly changed. European football had arrived in force and the fans saw new horizons, met new supporters and learned new lessons. They had

travelled to Rome, Munich, Lisbon and St Étienne and from there they brought back both souvenirs and continental habits. A new culture was born. Suddenly banners, chequered flags and flares were the vogue. They even reflected the city's sense of humour. 'Joey [Jones] ate the frogs' legs, made the Swiss roll and now he's munching Gladbach,' read one of the wittiest banners of all. It was a small progression from the raised red and white scarves that had accompanied the singing of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. But it was the first time it had been seen on English grounds. And always it was accompanied by the noise.

But the terraces of the seventies were not always so fun loving and friendly. While the rest of the football world seemed to be engaging in hand to hand fighting, the Kop remained, as it always was, a safe haven. There were those, however, who sought a little more excitement and transferred their allegiance to the Anfield Road End where they could confront visiting supporters more easily. But on the Kop there was never any danger that war would spill over onto their territory. No visiting army would ever contemplate invading the Kop.

Then in the eighties a severe spell of football gout struck. Fat with success and over-indulged, the Kop became tired, lethargic, complacent even. Years of unrivalled success had taken their toll. It seemed they didn't need to sing any more, or, as Bill Shankly once so famously put it, 'suck the ball into the net'. It just went in automatically. The opposition arrived fully expecting to be defeated, running up the white flag even before they had appeared on the pitch. The Kop simply waited, silently, in anticipation. There were exceptions: if the visitors swept into a surprising lead, temporarily stinging the pride of players and Kopites alike, the Kop would arouse itself and bellow until the natural order was restored. But there was no doubt the atmosphere had changed.

The roots of this complacency probably stemmed from the 1978-79 season when Liverpool conceded just four league goals at Anfield. Furthermore, in the whole of the 1970s Liverpool lost just thirteen league games at Anfield. Some supporters must have stood on the Kop for years without seeing their favourites lose. In this kind of climate, it's hardly surprising that complacency crept in. I once witnessed Liverpool win 6-0 but the Kop were still complaining about missed chances. It was also a new generation who had taken their places on the Kop, the sons of the fathers who roared against Inter Milan and Celtic. But this generation had never known anything but success, never out of the top two, never a bare shelf in the trophy room. The 1950s seemed light years away. 'Liverpool in the second division once and beaten by a non-league side? Ger away, when was dat?' They still remembered Shankly but many had never even seen him.

Nor were they all Liverpudlians. They came from further afield, attracted by the winning glamour and the glitz of being associated with Liverpool. The coaches rolled in from the Midlands, Yorkshire and Wales; the trains shepherded fans down from north of the border; while the planes came from Belfast, Dublin, Norway and Denmark. By 1990 it was estimated that Liverpool were drawing two thirds of their support from outside the city. Times were changing. People had shifted from the city centre to the outlying areas of Knowsley, St Helens, the Wirral, Warrington and Southport where housing and jobs were more plentiful. They were the same areas where the players lived and with it the culture was beginning to change. There was still wit but it was less pronounced, there was still enthusiasm but it was less passionate. The allegiance was to the team, not the city. Yet the trophies kept on coming. They sang their hearts out at Wembley (many times), Paris and in Rome, though it was never quite the same as it was first time round.

Then there was Heysel. Many a stalwart called a halt to their enthusiasms, ashamedly pushing a scarf and red hat to the bottom of a drawer. For a while it seemed disrespectful to sing and cheer. The silence at the first game after the disaster was frightening. And when Liverpool scored, the Kop didn't know what exactly to do. After a second's pause they roared and the recuperation was under way. That year saw them beat Everton in a Wembley Cup final to win the double - and in doing so they achieved the ultimate. It could only go downhill from there on, whispered the fanatics. But worse was to follow on a warm April day in Sheffield when many Kopites lost their lives supporting the team they loved. The popular culture of the terraces was now at an end.

The 1980s closed with Hillsborough and turned the Kop into a national shrine, a symbol for mourning. Thousands - from Princes to paupers, supporters and those who knew nothing of football - came and paid their respects. In the mild spring breeze the thunderous roar of the Kop was replaced by the crinkling sound of cellophane that wrapped so many bouquets. And the smell of cigarettes gave way to the lingering fragrance of flowers.

Half the pitch was strewn in flowers, the Kop was awash with scarves, rosettes, bobble hats and other mementoes, a parting gift from the living to their comrades of the Kop. It wasn't the first time the Kop had been a shrine. For years the ashes of the dead had been scattered on its terracing or buried in caskets behind the goal. They bury sailors at sea, why not football fans where their hearts lie? In Liverpool football is a way of life. But nobody had ever expected a tragedy quite like Hillsborough. It would leave its scars on all associated with Liverpool Football Club.

Everyone at Anfield had always been mindful of a possible accident. The disaster at Ibrox on the infamous stairway thirteen where 66 soccer fans had died, was a warning to everyone. Fearing a similar tragedy, the club decided to

rebuild the outside stairway to the Kop. It had been similar to the one at Ibrox, dropping dramatically from the roof to the Walton Breck Road below. Anyone who remembers carefully edging their feet on to it as the great crowd surged out of the Kop will testify to its danger. In that struggling mob it was quite common to be swept along, feet off the ground, and through the exit gates before your feet found dry land again. That there was never an accident was more by luck than judgement. The Safety of Sports Ground Act 1975 also brought a new wave of crush barriers as well as the new stairwell.

Then during the summer of 1987 further work was carried out in strengthening the crush barriers. A total of 750 iron rods were to be piled into the ground as part of the operation but on 6 July as they piled rod 572 into one of the concrete steps the rod suddenly disappeared. The workmen gazed down to see a gaping hole. A shaft plunged downwards to a huge hole measuring some twenty feet by fifteen feet. A sewer at the bottom of the hole had collapsed causing the downpour. The shaft had originally stretched from the sewer to a manhole cover on the Kop but as the sewer collapsed so too did the shaft.

The sewer had been built in 1860, long before a football ground had stood there. Quite how long it had been like that was anyone's guess, although when it had last been inspected four years previously there was no sign of collapse. Experts reckoned it was probably the piledriving for the new barriers which had caused the damage but there was only flimsy evidence to back their claim. Just four inches of concrete and a crumbling layer of ash were all that came between the Kop and a major disaster. The problem was rectified in record time, though Anfield was forced to postpone the debut of new signings John Barnes and Peter Beardsley.

It's impossible to forget your first encounter with the Kop of those days. For many it was a case of paying five shillings

at those old wooden doors where a million Kopites had passed before, then beginning the steep hike up the old stairway. Programme in one hand, a soaking pie in the other, you neared the top with a sense of expectation. And yet outside on the steps there was rarely any hint of noise beyond. It was not until you finally breeched that last step and gazed down before you that your heart suddenly missed its beat. This vast wave of sound, rising into the formidable echoing roof of the Kop. It was like opening the door into some Hieronymus Bosch picture. All calm, orderly and sane on one side but clamour, despair and pandemonium on the other.

I never ceased to be excited by that moment, the anticipation, the uproar. For years I would take visiting friends and force them to briefly close their eyes as they climbed those last few steps until they reached the pinnacle and could then gaze down on the scene below. After the stairwell had been constructed a slight sense of the dramatic disappeared but it was still there in some degree, still the same echoing chamber, the same thunderous noise, rumbling everywhere, and the shrill sound of singing. The chanting rising from the belly of the Kop, LIV-ER-POOL, LIV-ER-POOL, then the raising of red and white scarves and the slow, almost mournful, drone of 'You'll Never Walk Alone', followed by a deafening roar as Liverpool appear through the tunnel and raced towards the Kop.

Like an ocean, the Kop's waves rose and then crashed. In one corner people tumbling, in the centre the crowd stumbling back to its original position, in another spot the fans spilling downwards while elsewhere the side to side swaying and toppling as they pushed to find some breathing space. It was a mass of bodies and faces that had been transformed into something else, a human sea, everyone grappling for their lives. Men could have drowned in that sea.

If the Kop had not existed, television would have created it. The two were made for each other: the ultimate combination of sight, sound and spontaneity. The visual impact was dramatic and the Kop's fame quickly spread around the world. They came from far and wide to try and understand the phenomenon. The first ever *Match of the Day* was broadcast from Anfield and back in the early 1960s Panorama produced a memorable film about the 'fun loving' Kop. Some of the finest wordsmiths tried to recapture the atmosphere. They wrote about it everywhere and over the years the Kop has spawned more than a few publications of its own. In the 1960s there was a newspaper actually called *Kop*, which was published in Bootle and is a rich vein of material for the soccer historian. Published fortnightly, it was a lively and attractive paper with the usual catalogue of player portraits, letters, match reports and analysis. There was even a Miss Kop. The publishers claimed a readership of 70,000 with subscribers dotted around the world and, judging by the letters page, it was certainly reaching exiled Kopites as far afield as Australia, America, South Africa and even one in the South Pole. It was essentially a reverential publication, and although there was occasional criticism it was met with a barrage of complaints from 'loyal Kopites' the following week. But it will always be remembered for its numerous reports of budgies and parrots that could sing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' or chant St John's name.

In the 1980s the Kop spawned another magazine, this time less precious, and a forerunner to the fanzine. *The End* caught the mood of the times, combining music with the culture of the terraces. Its originators later went on to greater fame with the pop group The Farm (who in 1995 recorded the official Everton song for the FA Cup!). The 1980s and the 1990s saw the emergence of more fanzines including *Through The Wind and Rain*, one of the most successful and readable of them all. In Norway the 4,000 strong supporters club had a glossy magazine of its own,



titled inevitably, *Kopite*, while today there is yet another publication called *The Kop* and one of the most successful websites is known as Koptalk. Another is called Red and White Kop. Scarves, banners, flags, magazines, websites; the Kop is an industry of its own.

But in 1990 came the most dramatic change of all. Lord Justice Taylor published his final report into the Hillsborough disaster, which recommended that first division grounds should become all seater stadia. There was of course an outcry. Many on the Kop argued that there had never been an accident at Anfield, that the Kop was perfectly safe and by seating it its unique atmosphere would be destroyed. There was a general feeling that had Shankly been alive he would have been the first to lie down in front of the bulldozers, but the then manager Graeme Souness said little. Like others, mindful of the Hillsborough disaster, he shrugged his shoulders and admitted that seating the Kop was inevitable. And after what had happened most Kopites felt incumbent to accept Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations out of respect for the 96 who had died. But it was not a popular decision. Couldn't there still be some 'safe' areas allotted for standing was one argument. It will only lead to higher prices was another. But there was no backing down. At least make us as proud of our new Kop as we were of the old, was the one sentiment everyone concurred with. The club agreed that they would build a totally new stand and not simply put seats on the terraces as many other clubs planned. And so as the 1993/94 season drew to an end plans for a new Kop were unveiled.

The final game in front of the old Kop took place on Saturday 30 April 1994 with Norwich City as the visitors. Before the game, past players came to pay their respects. Albert Stubbins, who had banged in many a goal in front of the Kop in those grim post war years, Roy Evans, a part of most Kop triumphs as player, coach and manager, John Toshack, another regular marksman, plus the likes of Ian

Callaghan, Steve Heighway, Tommy Smith, Billy Liddell, Emlyn Hughes, Phil Thompson, Ron Yeats, Ian St John as well as Nessie Shankly and Jessie Paisley - widows of the two greatest managers the club had ever had - were all present. The Kop celebrated, sang its repertoire, and when the game ended simply refused to go home. The players paraded in front of them, returned to their dressing room, but still the fans would not go. There were tears, and one or two fans, one dressed in his desert Scouser Tommy outfit, invaded the pitch. But the police were lenient. Eventually everyone drifted out, but it had been a full hour since the game had finished in glorious sunshine. Sadly Norwich had failed to read the script and won 1-0. Maybe the occasion had just been a little too much for the players. Nobody really cared though.

In recent years as new safety measures had been introduced with a reduction in numbers and increased barriers, the capacity of the Kop had already fallen to 17,000. Now it would fall even further, to around 10,000. That of course would mean reduced revenue, and as everyone suspected prices went up to compensate. The new Kop would cost £10 million, revenue the club could barely afford, and that in itself meant changes in the boardroom with David Moores coming in as a director and rich benefactor.

The club had been very insistent in its talks with the Manchester-based sports stadia architects, Atherden Fuller Leng, that they wanted the new Kop to maintain an atmosphere and acoustics similar to the old Kop. The club also wanted the new Kop Grandstand, as it was to be called, to visually fit in with the Centenary Stand which the same architects had designed some years earlier. The only other notable problem was that the planners had restricted the height of the new grandstand to be no higher than the ridge of the old Kop.

It was a tall order, but in the end the architects came up with a design that seemed to fit the bill. There would be 76 rows, providing seating for 12,390 fans. There would also be 21 turnstiles to enable fast entry and exit from the ground with drinks kiosks, food outlets, toilets, programme stands and so forth in the concourse area. The corners of the ground at the Kop end were also filled in at the same time in order to maximise seating. It was the biggest single tier structure of its kind in Britain. The cost of building the stand and the concourse areas was approximately £7 million with further money later spent on designing the museum and shop. The American burger outlet McDonalds came on board the project a little later to help finance the payment in exchange for an outlet. The job of completing the work was given to the builders Alfred McAlpine.

Days after the final match, the bulldozers moved into the Walton Breck Road and began to tear down the Kop brick by brick, terrace by terrace, until the whole end had been flattened. It was a difficult job and there was a tight schedule. The new Kop had to be ready for occupancy for the first home game of the new season. Throughout that warm summer the painstaking work of building the new Kop went on.

Ready for the start of the season, as planned, the new Kop Grandstand was greeted by cautious praise. Everyone agreed that in many ways it was better than the old Kop. For a start there were toilets, more than enough for the 12,000 fans. And there were food and drink counters where you didn't have to fight to get served. The view was also better; there were no stanchions so everyone had a perfect, clear view. And of course, there was no shoving and swaying every time the ball came anywhere near the Kop goal. Some have argued that the atmosphere isn't quite the same but then there are half the number as used to stand on the old Kop. And anyhow, the Kop in the eighties was much less noisy than in its glory years of the sixties and seventies.

Most fans were agreed that it was something to be proud of, as good a stand as any in the country - although the presence of a McDonalds at the back of the Kop did not go down so well with many fans. But there was a magnificent new souvenir shop and a museum, something the club had needed for years. The club's administrators also later moved their offices into the Kop.

Since then, the Kop has played host to the 1996 European Football championships as well as a number of international matches, plus the odd pop concert. Memories of the old Kop and what it used to be like are distant. A whole new generation of football fans has grown up sitting in the Kop with no recollections whatsoever of what it was like standing.

Yet, if anyone thought the Kop could not be as noisy as it used to be, there have been recent occasions - on great European nights especially - when the atmosphere at Anfield has excelled those memorable nights of Inter Milan and St Etienne. The Roma game, for instance, when Gerard Houllier returned to Anfield following his heart operation, was as emotional as any. And the Barcelona and Celtic games will go down among the greats. And then of course there is the 2004/2005 season when Liverpool marched majestically towards a memorable Champions league triumph. That season, the games against Olympiakos, Bayer Leverkusen, Juventus and finally Chelsea - in as dramatic a night as any Anfield has witnessed - put an end to suggestions that the Kop and Anfield had lost its voice and reputation as Liverpool's twelfth man. It was still there.

Those then are the bare details. What follows is the story of the Kop told by those who have stood and sat on it over the years, those who have faced it, those who have played in front of it, those who have earned their living through it. It is a story, not just of a steel and concrete structure, but of people and a community. The Kop is about their

reminiscences, memories, wit and songs. It is told entirely in their words. It is their community just as it is indeed Liverpool's twelfth man.



**One**

**THE STORY OF THE KOP**

*A Poor Scouser Tommy*