

CELEBRATING THE FORMER PLAYERS WE LOST IN 2025 - Part 1

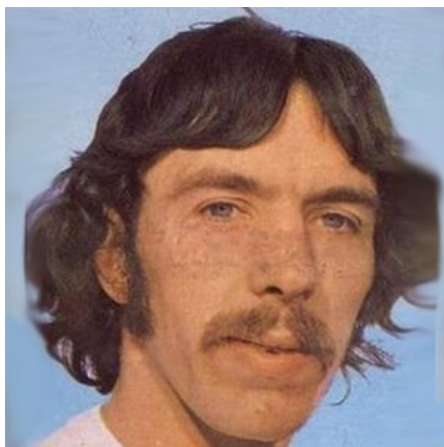
KENNY WILSON

15 September 1946 - 17 January 2025

Kenny Wilson arrived at Brunton Park from Dumbarton in late September 1972, and he came with a fearsome record as a goalscorer. The previous season he had netted a club record 43 times to help propel The Sons to the Scottish Division 2 title and with-it promotion to the top tier for the first time in 50 years. The campaign before he'd scored 40 goals.

He was a player with an excellent reputation north of the border as the Blues had witness first hand only six weeks earlier when they had journeyed to Dumbarton's Boghead ground for their final pre-season game. Dennis Martin opened the scoring and Bobby Owen closed it, but in between the Scottish underdogs had scored three, the last of which was a superbly taken glancing header by local lad, Wilson.

Alan Ashman was impressed with what he saw and so began a six



week pursuit of the 26 year old.

Dumbarton rejected an initial offer of £25,000 and negotiations dragged on until, finally, a figure of £40,000 was agreed upon. With Carlisle languishing near the foot of the table and goalscoring an issue, Ashman was keen to have the striker on board for the following Tuesday's visit of Blackpool (ironically, the Seasiders' manager, Bob Stokoe had also wanted to sign Wilson but was unable to match the Blues' offer!).

So it was that on the Saturday, whilst Ashman was taking his team down to Preston the club

Secretary, David Dent, was heading across the border to Dumbartonshire to sign the player only a matter of hours after Wilson's final appearance against Aberdeen.

His United debut ended in defeat with Carlisle old boy, Frank Barton, grabbing the winner for Blackpool. Reporter Ivor Broadis wrote of the strikers first showing, "new boy Wilson had a quiet match but he'll need much better service than he got here to bring some bite to the home front line."

Whether it was a lack of service or a gulf in class between the respective Division Twos, the Scot struggled to make an impression and quickly found himself left out of the starting XI. His only goal for the club came in his eighth match, a 6-1 crushing of Preston North End on Boxing Day.

He played in all four of United's FA Cup ties against Huddersfield Town, Sheffield United and Arsenal and his last game was against Millwall on the final day of the season.

Wilson was loaned out to both York City and Workington early the following season before being released and moving back over the border to Hamilton Academicals. He ended his career in Australia.

Wilson was a familiar face at Dumbarton and would attend games with the rest of the 1971/72 championship winning squad and was always pleased to share memories and take photos with supporters. He was then inducted into the Dumbarton FC Hall of Fame in 2022.

BARRY HARTLE

8 August 1939 - 29 January 2025

Barry Hartle was a Salfordian, born less than a month before the start of the Second World War. He attended Salford Grammar School where he excelled at football and in 1956 he signed for 4th Division Watford after they spotted him playing football on a public park.



BARRY HARTLE

The Hornets' manager, Neal McBain, said of the youngster, "Jimmy Greaves is a great youngster but in 17 year-old Barry Hartle we have a lad who will be just as good - or better".

Hartle was four years at Vicarage Road and helped his club to a first ever promotion in 1960 with half a dozen goals from 34 appearances. His display against Second Division Sheffield United in the FA Cup piqued the Yorkshire club's interest in the young Inside Left, and in June they got his signature for £5,000.

Bramhall Lane was home to Hartle for six years. He made only three appearances in his first season as a Blade as the club were promoted

to Division One and reached the FA Cup semi-final. He went on to make a further 96 appearances, all in Division One, scoring 16 goals, but increasingly he was pushed into the background. He wanted regular first team football and when Carlisle came in with a £15,000 offer in the summer of 1966, he jumped at the opportunity of signing.

Ironically, in the same month he joined the Cumbrians, the player he'd been compared with earlier in his career, Jimmy Greaves, found himself on the outer of England's World Cup winning team.

Hartle settled into the #11 shirt from the opening game of the 1966/67 season. He helped the team into the League Cup 5th Round, defeating Tranmere Rovers, Southampton and Blackburn Rovers before coming undone at Queens Park Rangers.

United were also flying in the league and they travelled to leaders Coventry at the end of February lying in fourth place, but the game proved to be Hartle's last of the season. A first half injury saw him replaced at half-time by Hughie Neil.

Unable, when fit, to break back into the team, Hartle became in-



creasingly unsettled and Ashman agreed to his transfer request, finally moving the following September.

He was sold to Stockport County at a time when Jimmy Meadows was their manager, and he was successfully converted to a full-back. On the day of a game at Southport he got married in the morning and pulled on the #3 shirt for 3 o'clock.

Released by Stockport in 1970 Barry spent a season with Oldham Athletic before being signed by Southport Manager Jimmy Meadows for a second time in July 1971. Meadows initially intended to play him at full-back. However, he resumed playing on the left wing where he gave some sparkling performances.

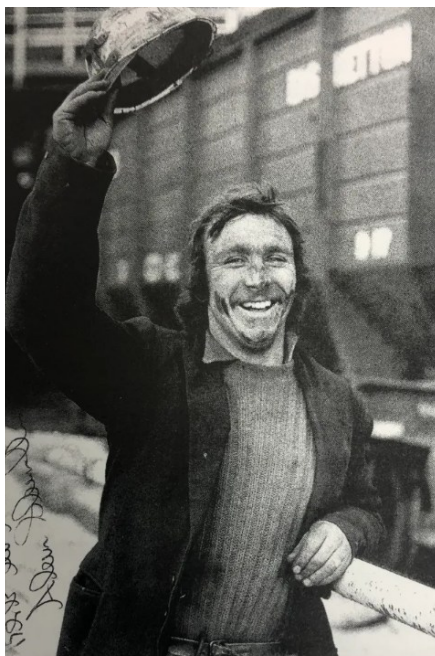
Hartle ended his career in non-League football.

Settling in Stockport after having called time on his career, Hartle spent time working as a postman before becoming a taxi driver.

ALAN SHOULDER

4 February 1953 – 2 February 2025

Alan Shoulder was a late bloomer. The diminutive #10 had risen to



fame alongside his Blyth Spartans teammates in the club's fairytale journey to the FA Cup 5th Round in 1978. He'd been signed from Bishop Auckland only in December 1977 and Blyth were already seven games into their cup run. Shoulder made his cup debut for the Northern League club in the 3rd Round match against Enfield, and his 72nd minutes header was enough to separate the two teams, and seal a historic place in the Fourth Round.

The draw wasn't kind to Blyth as they were paired away to Stoke City. The Potters overcame an early Spartans score to lead 2-1 late

in the game before a late Shoulder assist for Carney drew the game level. With the game well into injury time Terry Johnson fired home the winner to silence 25 thousand home fans.

Next up was a trip to Wrexham in the last 16 of the competition - they were the first non-league club to achieve that feat in 29 years. Terry Johnson again gave the underdogs the lead, which they held onto until injury time, when referee Alf Grey incorrectly gave the Welsh club a corner from which they equalised with mere seconds left.

The replay was played at Newcastle's St James's Park in front of 42,000 spectators. Sadly, Blyth's dreams ended that night, but Shoulder had attracted a number of suitor clubs, the Magpies included, and he became increasingly unsettled at his new club. The following November it appeared that a move to fellow Northern League club Spenny-moor was on the cards, but discussions fell through.

Blyth suffered a first round FA Cup exit to York City after extra time, despite Shoulders two goals haul in a lost cause

Finally, in early December, football

giants Newcastle United finally came calling, but negotiations didn't go smoothly. Newcastle manager, Bill McGarry, wanted to partner Shoulder alongside Peter Withe that coming weekend, but the striker failed to turn up to a meeting with McGarry in Newcas-



tle city centre to seal the transfer.

Instead, as told by a family member to the local press, Shoulder, a miner at Horden Colliery, had "gone to work to seek some advice from his boss." He was already 26 years old and was worried that his professional football career would be over in a couple of years, and he "does not relish the prospect of having to start all over again when he is, say, 32."

Whatever it was that Shoulder's boss said, 48 hours later the for-

ward had swapped the coal face for a Division 2 promotion race. A further 48 hours later he partnered Peter Withe in a 2-0 home win against Stoke City, and his debut was reported thus in the Sunday Sun; "Fresh from non-league football, he was in no way overawed by the occasion and, indeed, he looked the most dangerous of Newcastle's frontrunners, indeed it was a Shoulder shot, only parried by the Stoke keeper, that Withe pounced on to slam home."

Shoulder opened his goal scoring account the following week at Craven Cottage and he ended the season with 11 goals from 24 appearances.

All-in-all he was four seasons at St James's Park, making 99+8 league appearances, and scoring 35 goals. His final season, 1981/82, was a disappointment with a mere three starts and no goals, so it was that in the summer of 1982 newly promoted Carlisle acquired the striker on a free transfer. The Blues manager, Bob Stokoe, believed that the Geordie would be the ideal foil for Malcolm Poskett. The North Easterner rapidly became a terrace favourite at Brunton Park.

He debuted at the Baseball Ground in the famous 3-0 victory

against Derby County, contributing a brace of goals in the 19th and 84th minutes. Shoulder had bagged nine goals by the time his former club, Newcastle, came to Brunton Park at the back end of end November. Stokoe appointed him captain for the day, and he responded with a whole-hearted display, although it was midfielder Russ Coughlin who inspired Carlisle with a Man of the Match display to defeat a visiting team containing the likes of Chris Waddle, Terry McDermott, David McCreery and Imre Varadi.

The return fixture was on New Years Day before a crowd of 28,578. Kevin Keegan gave Newcastle an early lead only for Shoul-



der to grab a controversial equaliser on the half hour mark; Newcastle claimed that in the build up Paul Bannon had handled the ball. Bannon himself gave United the lead in the 46th minute, and they looked comfortable until Dave Rushbury was dismissed for a second yellow on the hour. Within minutes Keegan levelled and it

took an almighty defensive effort for Carlisle to close the game out at 2 apiece.

Shoulder finished the 1982/83 season with 21 goals from an ever present 42 games. The following season opened poorly for Carlisle with no wins from the first four games, but from then on results picked up to the extent that by mid-March the club was in 3rd position, and ahead of the likes of Newcastle United, Manchester City and Leeds United. Shoulder had contributed nine goals in that run, including a penalty in memorable 3-1 Christmas time win over the Black and Whites!

However, just when it looked like United were heading towards a serious tilt at promotion back to the top tier, the wheels fell off, and the final ten games were winless, including a 1-5 humbling at St James' Park.

His third and final season at Brunton Park saw the team finish a creditable sixteenth, but for the player the goals dried up - only three scored - and he was sent off for the first time in his career; he punched Middlesbrough's Tony McAndrew in the 96th minute of a 0-3 home defeat.

Shoulder signed for Hartlepool

United in the summer of 1985 where he remained for three years. He then played and managed on the non-League circuit whilst working in his family's business.

Over 300 games played and almost one hundred goals scored! His boss at the mine gave him some good advice.

LES O'NEILL

4 December 1943 - 26 November 2025

Les was born in Hartford just outside Blyth in 1943. After leaving school he went to work down the local coal mine and played part-



time football for Blyth Spartans in the North Eastern league. He was a player of promise and Newcastle United became interested in signing him, and so it was that in early 1962 he joined the club's youth team. He was able to leave his job in the pits and become a full time footballer and he was a member of the club's FA Youth Cup Final winning team of that year when, alongside the likes of Bob Moncur and Alan Suddick the youngsters defeated their counterparts from Wolverhampton.

Eighteen months later, after a couple of close calls, O'Neill finally broke into Newcastle's first team,

but it was a debut to forget as they lost 5-2 at Portsmouth. Despite the result the midfielder was singled out for praise in the local press, with journalists agreeing he was one for the future.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out like that and just when it looked that O'Neill was going to break into Newcastle's first team squad, injury struck. It was an injury to his ankle ligaments in a practice game that was to see him out of the game and in an operating theatre and later, the treatment room for almost a year. He battled back to full fitness but he knew his days Newcastle we're over and so in

THEY AIM TO MAKE UNITED GREAT



F.A. Youth Cup winners. Top (left to right): Mr. E. Hughes (who has recruited many of the Ns), Clive Chapman, Dave Turner, Dave Craig, Stan Craig, George Watken, Mattie Gowland, Alan Wilkinson (has not played since injured in Youth Cup), Mr. B. Craig (team coach). Front row: John Markie, Alan Suddick, Mr. Joe Harvey, Colin Clish, Bob Moncur, Les O'Neill.

February 1965 he joined Darlington. He quickly became a fan favourite and he enjoyed four good years at Feethams Crescent, a period that included winning promotion to the Third Division in 1967. When, three years later the Quakers were relegated, Bradford



City came in for the midfielder and paid £8,000 for him to move to Valley Parade and back into the Third Division. All told O'Neill played 178+2 times for Darlington scoring 35 goals.

O'Neill was at Bradford for just over two years, making just under 100 league appearances and scoring 17 goals. His last appearance

for Bradford was on the final day of the 1971-72 season, a 0-1 loss at Mansfield Town in front of 4,200 spectators. A week later he signed for Carlisle for £6,000 and his debut for the Blues couldn't have been more different from his last appearance for the Bantams; it was as a late first half substitute for Dennis Martin in United's famous 3-2 victory against AS Roma in the Olympic Stadium, Rome in the Anglo-Italian Cup. Three days later there was a second appearance from the bench in the win at Catanzaro.

The midfielder had been a transfer target for many months, with the previous manager, Ian MacFarlane, a particular admirer. His failure to land O'Neill had resulted in Ray Train arriving from Walsall the previous autumn. When O'Neill signed, Big Mac had been replaced by the steady hand of Alan Ashman.

Train and O'Neill formed a tireless midfield duo on which United's successes were built. They were probably the first two names entered onto the team sheet by Ashman.

The 1972/73 season was a tough one for the club, finishing just above the drop positions. What was to happen next took the foot-

balling world by surprise and O'Neill was an integral part of what transpired.

The season started disastrously, losing 1-6 at Luton in a game that O'Neill missed. Restored to the team, he scored a brace against Notts County as the form started to improve. In November he scored a valuable winner against Bristol City, but as Christmas approached Carlisle found themselves in lowly 10th place.



From then on the team began an advance up the table driven by the tireless work of O'Neill and Train. Four wins from the last five games took them into a promotion place for the first time that season, but promotion depended on Orient

failing to defeat Aston Villa at home.

The rest, as they say, is history.

We all know the story of how United topped the entire Football League after three games and how O'Neill top the goal scoring list with three efforts from the opening two games. The national press was all over the upstart Blues and O'Neill was the focus for many articles, one such appearing in the Newcastle published Sunday Sun in August:

"Like one of football's pit ponies, Les O'Neill has spent most of his life in the bowels of the league, coming up for a glimpse of another world for cup competitions.

It was during one of Carlisle's lighter moments when players were asked to go through the strengths and weaknesses of teammates. One colleague summed up little Les thus:

Strength: heart like a pit pony

Weakness : brains like a pit pony

In the same article O'Neill had this to say: "You would think that players coming up from the 4th Division and playing in the First are some sort of freaks. But, believe me, there are some good players down there itching for the chance.

Perhaps the people who watch them lack the vision to imagine them in better company.

It's no accident that's Bill Green, Ray Train, Peter Carr and myself are in a First Division side, just bloody hard work."

O'Neill never looked out of place in the top division, but for the team it was increasingly a struggle, albeit with some shafts of light along the way, like the 3-0 thumping of Derby, and coming back from a two-goal deficit at Goodison Park to defeat Everton 3-2 with O'Neill hitting the winner. Inevitably Carlisle went down, but the proud Geordie and his teammates could be proud of their endeavours against the odds.

Back in Division 2 United struggled, finishing 19th in 1976 and 20th a year later to condemn them to relegation to Division 3. It was perhaps fitting that's O'Neill scored the club's final goal of the season, a 20th minute equaliser in a 1-1 draw at Cardiff City.

The craggy midfielder left Carlisle in the summer of 1977 and headed north to Queen of the South where he played once again alongside Chris Balderstone for a season.

On retirements he remained in Carlisle and he remained in the



hearts of all who saw him play.

Les O'Neill is a genuine Carlisle United legend.

"Les O'Neill would always stop and have a craic before the match. My favourite tale was when he got a serious leg injury days before he was due to make his debut for Newcastle at St James Park. His unusual rehabilitation included daily walks in the sea and a procedure he called 'plodging'. When we reunited the 74/75 squad for the 50th anniversary, Les was clearly popular with all the players and it was very appropriate that it was he that formally kicked off the Backing The Blues exhibition at Tullie. It was during conversation at the opening that he finally confessed that his goal at Stamford Bridge

was intended as a cross. Just to know him was a true honour."

Simon Clarkson

"Brief thing regarding O'Neill, but... I was full of pride we had him during the top-flight home game with West Ham. My mate and I spent that one in the scratching shed, partially out of daring ourselves to go close enough to the handful of unsegregated Hammers that we'd have some bragging rights at school on Monday. Into this mix came the members of some Scot-

tish rock band killing time before a gig. The Scots had wine and shared it with us. The conversation stayed mainly on O'Neill, the whole band being familiar with top end Scottish football, and amazed at how much of our forward movement came through the one player and how well he evaded West Ham's tackling and schemes to stop him. Despite the result that day it's a fond memory of one of our best at his best."

Neil Nixon

	Years		Apps	Sub	Goal
Hartle, Barry	1966-67	League	28	1	
		Cup	7		1
O'Neill, Les	1972-77	League	148	7	20
		Cup	25	4	3
Shoulder, Alan	1982-85	League	110	2	32
		Cup	10		1
Wilson, Kenny	1972-73	League	14	6	1
		Cup	3	1	

Thanks to Carlisle united and the news & star for the use of the photos for this small tribute.

Part 2 will celebrate tommy murray, joe deans, ernie bond, bobby Johnston, carlton fairweather and joe Thompson. Thank you.