

## 10 FAVOURITE FOOTBAL POEMS

### THE FOOTBALLER'S PRAYER

Our team  
Which art eleven  
Hallowed be thy game  
Our match be won  
Their score be none  
On turf as we score at least seven  
Give us today no daily red ... card  
And forgive us our lost passes  
As we forgive those  
Who lose passes against us  
Lead us not into retaliation  
And deliver us from penalties  
For three is the kick off  
The power and scorer  
For ever and ever  
Full time

*One of my favourites – the third line came from a headline in The Lancashire Evening Post about our vicar – Mr Alloway – who was a referee / linesman as well as being a village vicar. It's a poem that stood me in good stead on many occasions.*

## **THE GOALIE WITH EXPANDING HANDS**

Any crosses, any shots  
I will simply stop the lot  
I am always in demand  
The goalie with expanding hands

Volleys, blasters, scissor kicks  
I am safe between the sticks  
All attacks I will withstand  
The goalie with expanding hands

Free kicks or a penalty  
No-one ever scores past me  
Strong and bold and safe I'll stand  
The goalie with expanding hands

Let their strikers be immense  
I'm the last line of defence  
Alert, on duty, all posts manned  
The goalie with expanding hands

Palms as long as arms expand  
Thumbs and fingers ready fanned  
You may as well shoot in the stand  
Not a chance! Understand?  
Number one in all the land  
Superhuman, super-spanned  
In control and in command  
I'm the man, I'm the man  
The one and only goalie ... with my expanding hands

*A poem I'd almost forgotten about until Korby Paul did a fantastic illustration for it in John Foster's Football Poems ( OUP ). Then it was read out on Match Of The Day by Brad Friedl!*

## **WE BELIEVE IN FOOTBALL**

FOOTBALL – WE LIVE IT  
FOOTBALL – WE LOVE IT  
FOOTBALL – WE BREATHE IT  
WE BELIEVE IN FOOTBALL

A ninety minute drama  
Each story yet untold  
The tension, twists and turns  
We watch it all unfold  
The heroes and the villains  
The tears and the laughter  
But no-one guarantees  
A happy ever after

The past is always with us  
Those ties we cannot sever  
The triumphs and the tragedies  
That bring us all together  
The legacy of legends  
Both on and off the pitch  
We all know our history  
Munich, Hillsborough, Sixty Six

The deftness and the touches  
The balance and control  
Telepathic vision  
The special wonder goal  
The something out of nothings  
These mesmerising tricks  
We practise in the playground  
What's perfect on the pitch

Artisans and artists  
Creative and instinctive  
Old masters and young mavericks  
Style and poise distinctive  
Admired time and time again  
We marvel at the art of it  
Each picture tells a story  
So glad we are a part of it

We believe in hope  
We believe in dreams  
Anything is possible  
The future yet unseen  
On any given match day  
Eleven vee eleven  
We could punch above our weight  
Be in football heaven

Be it baggy shirts and brylcreem  
A mullet or moustache  
Football equals stylishness  
Each little touch of class  
This game that we call beautiful  
The craft, technique and guile  
Whatever the result  
Let's win or lose in style

The passion on the pitch  
The passion in the stands  
The importance of our earnestness  
Right across this land  
Nine, nineteen or ninety nine  
We still have that dream  
To score the winning goal  
For our favourite football team

FOOTBALL - WE LIVE IT  
FOOTBALL - WE LOVE IT  
FOOTBALL - WE BREATHE IT  
WE BELIEVE IN FOOTBALL

*A poem I wrote especially for the opening of the National Football Museum in Manchester.*

## **BLESSED IS THE PEOPLE'S CLUB**

Blessed are the tea makers  
Burger fryers, meat pie bakers  
Turn-style turners, ticket takers  
All the movers, all the shakers  
Blessed are the boot scrapers  
The ones who push the mowers  
Water sprinklers, grass growers  
The ones who keep the pitches clean  
The ones who paint the white on green  
Those who serve in canteens  
All of those who work unseen  
All the ladies, all the fellas  
Toffee girls and programme sellers  
The ones who are the central hub  
Blessed is the People's Club

Blessed are the traffic directors  
Litter pickers, rubbish collectors  
All the stewards who respect us  
All the high viz jacket wearers  
All the information sharers  
Those who lay the tables  
Those connecting cables  
Those who help the ones who help the ones  
Who are less abled  
Those who show us to our seats  
Those who make our day complete  
Those who sell the snacks we eat  
Those who cook, then serve the grub  
Blessed is the People's Club

Blessed are the ones whose work  
Is to brush away the dirt  
The ones who wash and press the shirts  
Those who brave the post match fumes  
Just to mop the changing rooms  
The ones who iron corner flags  
And unfold all the netting  
The ones who paint the goal posts white  
Paint the stands and mend the seats  
All the others we're forgetting  
Remember them and so we should  
We'd all do it if we could  
Blessed is the People's Club

Blessed are the ones who cheer  
Year on year on year on year  
Those who buy their tickets weekly  
The loud, the proud, the mild, the meekly  
Those who carry on discretely  
Absolutely and completely  
Those who travel far and wide  
Wear the badge and scarf with pride  
Start off early – get back late  
The sacrifices that they make  
All the time commitment takes  
Those with every ticket stub  
Those who cheer on down the pub  
Blessed is the People's Club

Those who shout out from the stands  
Cheer, applaud and clap their hands  
Every woman, every man  
Every granddad, every gran  
Every dad and every mam  
Uncle John and Auntie Pam  
Nephews, nieces, cousins and  
Brothers, sister – all the clan  
All part of our family plan  
All the ones who understand  
All are welcome – none are snubbed  
Blessed is The People's Club

Blessed are the hallowed names  
Who walked on water, changed the games  
Hanging in the halls of fame  
Those memories relived again  
Those foundations of our past  
Built to lead and built to last  
Immortalised in history  
Spoken of in reverie  
Heroes here for you and me  
Those who toiled and gave their all  
Fought for every single ball  
Those who answered every call  
Those who always understood  
Blessed is the People's Club

Those who were just passing through  
Those who had a job to do  
Who only played a game or two  
Even they chose royal blue  
Those who played and made the grade  
Those that shine and those that fade  
Bit part extras in the shade  
Those who went and those who stayed  
Those that got to live our dreams  
Trained and managed, picked the teams  
All important in the schemes  
All the great and all the good  
Blessed is the People's Club

Everyone who plays their part  
Carries us within their heart  
In the light and in the dark  
All supporters – true and loyal  
Proud to choose the blue that's royal  
From the Chairman and the board  
To the ones who sweep the floors  
All of these – and us – and more  
Irrespective of the score  
Whether we win, lose or draw  
We all know what we're here for  
We all know our history  
Know the place where we should be  
It is you – it is me  
It is us – it is we  
When all is said and all is done  
Nil Satis Nisi Optimum  
This our home, Goodison  
A lifetime's love for everyone  
We're forever Everton  
It's the blue within our blood  
It's the team that we all love  
Friends, we are  
Friends, we are  
Friends, we are  
The People's Club

*I was asked by Dr David France to write a poem for a book launch at Liverpool Cathedral – about what it means to be an Evertonian. I didn't start off writing this poem – but that's how it ended up and it's one I'm really proud of. It got a great response and I can see the potential for it be used in a greater way too ...*

## LAST OF THE CORINTHIANS

*For Brian Labone*

First among men  
Second to no-one  
Last of the Corinthians  
Brian Labone

Captain of my chosen team  
Captain of champions  
Not a shouter, not a screamer  
But a leader by example

Noble, selfless,  
Intelligent and principled  
Last of the Corinthians  
Brian Labone

Epitome of all that's good  
Epitome of Goodison  
England white or Toffee blue  
Evertonian through and through

Respecter of all  
Respected by all  
Last of the Corinthians  
Brian Labone

As hard as they come  
But no tough man image  
Only ever booked twice  
Gentleman giant

One club man  
Royal and blue  
Last of the Corinthians  
Brian Labone

You never let us down  
Never let yourself down  
Decent and honest  
A shining example

First among men  
Second to no-one  
Last of the Corinthians  
Brian Labone

*I wrote this as a response to the death of Brian Labone – the first Everton captain I remember. The poem appeared in the match day programme and was then read out at his funeral by ex Liverpool footballer Ian Callaghan ... I don't know the chain of events that lead to that but I did meet Pat Labone at an Everton event some time later and she said "Thank you for the poem" ...*



## **EVERYDAY HERO ( For Alan Ball )**

I still can't believe the news  
The man who was perpetual motion has stopped  
The man who never said die has

My first favourite player  
The one who caused me to choose the blue of Goodison  
The royal blue, his royal blue

I cannot think of football without thinking of you  
Central to the glory that was sixty six  
One of Everton's holy trinity

Your distinctive white boots  
The one whose boots I wanted  
The one who I wanted to be

Of course I loved the power of Charlton  
Revered the skills of Best  
But also knew my limits

Instead, I aligned myself more with you  
Making the most of what I had  
And compensating the rest with effort, will and the desire to win

I never knew you, but like all our heroes on the field of dreams  
We feel like we know you all  
The men who lived out and did what we all wanted to

You have always been there  
And no, I never knew you  
But did meet you just the once  
And you did not disappoint

A laugh, a joke and a photograph  
No airs, no graces, down to earth, approachable  
A star but no star attitude  
Everything I wanted you to be

I still can't believe the news  
Impossible to think that you are gone  
But what you left us, what you gave us  
Will last a lifetime, outlive our lifetimes  
*You were one of the greats*  
You are one of the greats  
Always will be, now and forever  
Everyone will remember Alan Ball and smile

*Alan Ball was my first favourite player – even above Charlton and Best – and was the first player to have white boots. An absolute star.*

## **LEST WE FORGET**

Remember not the tragedy, the shadows of the memory,  
The sadness and the sense of waste but the one you used to be.

The majesty and trickery, the entertaining joy,  
The impish smile and twinkling eyes of Belfast's golden boy

The stardom and the skill, the quick and dancing feet  
Audacious with both left and right, inventive and complete

You touched our lives with magic and gave us all a dream  
You, the one we tried to be when playing for our team

A genius on the pitch, you stood above the rest  
Poetry in motion, George – you were the Best.

## **THE PRETTIEST STAR**

Playing in the school playground  
Or on the local rec' on a Saturday afternoon  
Yours was the name we echoed

The elite – Best, Charlton, Law  
But you were the one we wanted to be,  
Beating everyone – twice – then scoring spectacularly

Seemingly effortless, almost casual  
You were blessed beyond belief  
Astounding us with your endless creativity

And as your star faded more with each false dawn  
And the shadows lengthened into tragedy and parody  
The magic lost some of its sparkle and sheen

But we want to remember you  
As you were at the beginning  
Not as you were at the end

We want to remember and say  
That we truly saw one of football's greatest,  
We were there, we were part of it all

And as we see those replays once more,  
Those mazy runs, those twists and turns and tricks,  
Your magic sparkles once again

And we can indeed remember  
The brightest star,  
The god who danced among us for a while

George, you were blessed  
Your name said everything  
George – you were the Best

*These two go together – another response to the passing of a legend.*

## **THERE'S ONLY ONE SIR TOM**

One man club, one town man  
Preston's where it all began  
A stone that's thrown from Deepdale  
Could land right at his door  
Growing up in earshot  
Of that Deepdale roar  
Football on the cobbled streets  
A foretaste of the goals he'd score  
He knew his roots and never strayed  
Proud of where he's from  
Proud of Preston, Preston's prize  
There's only one Sir Tom

Example to us all  
Without or with that leather ball  
Truly he was one of us  
Yet truly one – elite  
No-one could keep up with him  
With that football at his feet  
On the pitch or off the pitch  
Modest and complete  
An ordinary hero  
Whose legacy lives on  
Proud of Preston, Preston's prize  
There's only one Sir Tom

A wonder winger blessed  
Shoulder to shoulder with the best  
In any team, in any match  
He'd be great in any age  
Never booked or sent off  
No blot upon that lily-white page  
Played the game of football  
The way that football should be played  
Gentleman and legend  
Truly loved by everyone  
Proud of Preston, Preston's prize  
There's only one Sir Tom

The Sir Tom Finney Way  
Is the way to live your every day  
Accolades from other greats  
Confirm what Preston people know  
That generous and gentleness  
Were genuine attributes and so  
The North End Star that shines so bright  
Eternal in its glow

Once he even walked on water  
Reluctant king and humble one  
Proud of Preston, Preston's pride  
The Preston Plumber may have died  
His memory lives on inside  
The hearts of those who saw him glide  
Surging, swerving, dribbling wide  
The endless crosses he supplied  
Deified yet dignified  
Preston's favourite son  
Pride of Preston, Preston's prize  
There'll only ever be the one  
Whose memory lives on so strong  
Immortalised in bronze and stone  
He is one of our own  
There's only one Sir Tom

*Tom Finney – was always a legend – especially in Preston. Still is*

## **RONNIE RADFORD**

Synonymous with the F. A. Cup  
And all that it stands for  
The patron saint of underdogs

Your name resonates hope and belief  
That on any given Saturday it can be eleven vee eleven  
And dreams do come true

It wasn't even the winning goal  
But it was the one we all remember in the mud and the rain  
All Woodstock hair and rock and roll sideburns

The goal we'd all love to score  
The shot from outside the area that flies and flies  
Into the corner sending fans and commentators crazy

Ronnie Radford, Hereford Town, nineteen seventy two  
We remember you, we salute you  
We thank you and celebrate your moment

That moment when the man in the street became legend  
Saint Ronnie Radford  
Patron saint of underdogs

*For those of us of a certain age ....*

## **WHEN THE WASP FLEW UP MY BROTHER'S SHORTS**

A family fun filled holiday  
Seaside football - match of the day  
On the beach - the score - nine nine  
When the match went into injury time  
We soon forgot our day for sports  
When the wasp flew up my brother's shorts

We misread the situation  
Thought it was his celebration  
Scoring a goal - dancing about  
The yell, the scream, the twist and shout  
We are all smiles as he cavorts  
When the wasp flew up my brother's shorts

The moves he made - we'll never forget  
The bottom wiggle and pirouette  
The somersaults and acrobatics  
A million amateur dramatics  
Out of control and out of sorts  
When the wasp flew up my brother's shorts

When the wasp flew up my brother's shorts  
His eyes bulge wide and his face distorts  
Worried where that wasp is caught  
Scared of the sting, his body contorts  
But the wasp was the one that was most distraught

Up one leg then down the other  
Relief for the wasp, relief for my brother  
Took them both a while to recover  
Panic attacks and flash back thoughts  
When the wasp flew up my brother's shorts

*A favourite performance poem for schools where they all join in with the word "shorts"*

*It's actually the same tune as John Cooper Clarke's "I Married A Monster From Outer Space" – love that poem and that rhythm is perfect for performance*