

**Shrewsbury House Club  
Liverpool**

**The Football Story  
Part 2 – 1970s to present day**



*The magnificent Royal occasion when we opened the new Centre. With the Princess are Donald Wright, then Headmaster and great supporter of the club, and Roger Sainsbury, who, as Missioner, lived the whole project from dream to reality.*

## 1970s The Fearnsey Years by Jim Fearnsey

We lived in Liverpool's North End, with Kirkdale as our close neighbours to the North and 'Scottie Road' and the Vauxhall area to the West. It was early 1970s and 'Tie A Yellow Ribbon' was at number one. We played football on a Sunday afternoon in the playground of St. Peter's School in Sackville Street close to Great Homer Street. This playground, which measured about forty yards by forty yards, would have two ten-a-side teams of real rivalry. Let's not forget there were no shirts of the same colour or bibs so teams would all be in their own clothes, with trainers, shoes or boots and no referee. Yet players were able to identify who was on their side. The teams changed from week to week and were normally the same lads just selected into different sides.



St Peters School playground

A few years later, the playground became the exact location of the Shrewsbury House Youth Club and St Peters Church - the Shrewsbury House BOYS CLUB as it was originally.



St Peters School playground with Mazzini maisonettes in the background

I watched the new Shrewsbury House and St Peters building during its construction from across the road in the high-rise Mazzini House maisonettes where I lived. It was formally opened by H.R.H the Princess Anne. I remember a red carpet being rolled out for the Royal visitor which promptly went missing before the arrival of the Princess, only to appear some weeks later adorning the hall and stairs of a four-bedroom council house in nearby Dorrington Street.

I visited the new Shewsy building shortly after the opening and talked with the then new youth leader, an enthusiastic young man named John Hutchison who had ideas and a vision. I liked John but I could see his job wasn't going to be easy. John wasn't a Scouser!! I shouldn't have worried, John was accepted into the club and neighbourhood because of his honesty and total commitment.

## The 'new' Old Boys

John 'Hutch' and I discussed the fact that although the youth club football teams had picked up, there was no Old Boys (OB) team which had disbanded a few years earlier probably due to the disruption of the move from the club premises at Portland Place to the new location on Langrove Street. I expressed my interest in the possibility of the Old Boys side being reformed. John was all in favour and enthusiastic to get the project up and running. In the years past, the Old Boys team had played in the Liverpool League so we decided to try to get back into what was the best and toughest league that a club could play in without having their own football ground with enclosed facilities. The Liverpool League always had teams applying to join and new teams had to be voted in.



We attended the Liverpool League AGM at the Swan Hotel London Road. We applied and it went to the vote and we were accepted, with cheers of welcome back. Unfortunately, we had to begin our campaign in the third division, but we were in and ready to go. We purchased a second hand footie strip from a local pub team, the Farmers Arms in Roscommon St - the same black and white stripes made famous by Newcastle United. A football pitch was sorted at Walton Hall Park and we were ready to go.

## In the First Division

The first season we won the Third division without losing a game and the next season in division 2 again saw us win Division 2 and so be promoted to where we really wanted to be, in the First Division with the likes of Bronte, Thirlmere, Stanley House, Halewood Labour, Anfield OB, Edge Hill, Speke, The Florrie, Wavertree Labour. These were just some of the really good sides at that time on the Liverpool scene. We were very fortunate in that we had really talented players, some of who were also playing at a high level on Sundays. At that time the Liverpool Sunday League Premier Division boasted national status with teams like of the Lobster, Dingle Rail, Fantail, Eagle - all winners of that prestigious Football Association National Sunday Cup. We had also built up a great feeder for the Old Boys, with the Club's under 18s leading the way in their own league and ready to promote themselves and pushing the Old Boys first team for places.

We started our season in the top division of the Liverpool League very well. But this was much tougher and a defeat to Anfield OB at Breckside, in only the first month of the season, was a moment of concern and we knew this division was going to be hard going. At Christmas, we were joint top of the league with Halewood Labour and by the end of March, having been held by Bronte FC and Thirlmere, we were a point behind Stanley House.

The Shewsy were a talented side and one lad who stood out in particular was a certain Alex Groves, a shy lad. During the years he played for the Shewsy there was lots of interest from several professional clubs, including Liverpool FC. One game in particular at Sefton Park against Stanley House we desperately needed to win to secure our top position in the league, so on this occasion I decided to pick Alex up from his house earlier than usual. When I arrived at his house Alex informed me he didn't feel too well. 'Just bring your boots and get in the car Alex', I muttered.

I persuaded him to put the sub shirt on telling him he wouldn't need to go on and play unless somebody got injured. Only one substitute was allowed at that time. At half time and one nil down, I had a word with one of the full backs, saying that if we were still in trouble with fifteen minutes to go, he would fake injury and we could get Alex on which is exactly what happened. Albie Doran went down with cramp. Alex was standing on the touch line in a long black overcoat that we had provided for him to put on over his football strip as it was a freezing cold day - he looked like the man off the Sandeman bottle.

Alex joined the fray for the final twelve minutes of the game. We were still one goal down. After only three minutes on the pitch Alex has gone past the Stanley House centre half, out towards the left side of the eighteen-yard box before thundering a left foot shot past the keeper. We were back in the game! With about two hundred spectators scattered around the touch lines, such was the importance of the game, there was wide appreciation for the goal scorer. Now there were only minutes to avoid defeat. We were awarded a free kick five yards outside the penalty area. Our big men pushed up awaiting a cross ball but Alex was having none of it and lashed a left foot cannonball into the top corner. Someone on the touch line turned to his mate, shouting 'He's a Brazilian, that was magic'. I'll never forget that response.

We ended the season joint top with Stanley House and, although we had the best goal difference, the County FA insisted we have a play-off. The play-off at Walton Hall ended in a 0-0 draw after extra time. We were then told by the County FA that the goal difference would now kick in, so the Shewsy OB were crowned champions again.

### **Shrewsbury Villa**

At this time there were so many players at the Shewsy ready to play that Ken Wignall and Tommy Rodgers, two Club stalwarts, decided to start up another team. Rather than be reserves, the team had its own identity, going under the name 'Shrewsbury Villa'. These were exciting times and added to the intensity among players especially on training days.

### **Talented players**

As for the Old Boys, we had gone four seasons without a team finishing above us in our respective divisions. We had some amazing seasons at the Shewsy - it was an honour to be part of it - with some brilliant footballers. We've already covered Alex Groves. Roy McGaw

and his brother George were amazing players. Roy was the epitome of a centre forward. At the end of his footballing days Roy was once asked how many goals he'd scored during his playing days to which he answered a million and one and, you know, I don't think he was that far off! Kenny Fraughan (or Bim as we knew him) was a tremendous centre half and his heading ability was the best. From corner kicks against us, Kenny would instruct our goalkeeper, Stephen Carr, to 'Stay on your line. I'll win this' and, believe me, he would. Kenny contributed greatly to the team's success, going on to encourage the younger lads in later years. Chris Oliver was a tireless midfielder with a great touch. Gordon Reed, or Iron Legs as he liked to be known, and Kenny Wignall were both impetuous players which sometimes cost them. Albie Doran was quiet and quick, which are good full back credentials. Timmy Donovan had an all-round game with special tricks and a good heading ability. Steph Leahey was a fine player, very strong. Jimmy Fitz was energy personified and Tony Fitzpatrick had good spells in goal, never letting the side down, Steve Carr being the first team regular keeper and a very good one at that. George Charalambous was another talented midfielder who I thought could have gone on to higher things.

Steve Moore at centre back and Bob Hannah with his educated left foot. Albie Wignall, another solid full back, always reliable, together with Ronnie Naden who went on to captain Southport FC in later years. Paul Price had a tremendous throw in distance. Others - John Lee, Joe Sweeney, Stevie Turner, Larry Tynan. Then we brought in and signed a few lads - Micky Evans and Billy Potter joined from Wavertree. Let's not forget Davie Wilson, or Willo as he was known. He was a class act and the best amateur left back that I witnessed during my time. Willo captained the side throughout, a true leader on the field of play with a great enthusiasm for the game. Later, some were pushed out because of the feeder players from the under 18s, the likes of Ronnie Naden, Albie Wignall, Steve Turner, Garry Droan, Garry Parr, Tommy Carmichael, John Woodhouse, Colin Veitch, Carlo Muscatelli - the list goes on, so forgive me if I haven't mentioned everybody.



Roy McGaw



Old Boot Footballer, 1910. This is George McGaw, though he often looks and plays like the legendary 'Beast of Braxell'.

Roy and George McGaw



*John Hutchison*



*Mrs. Joan Edwards*

I would like though to give particular mention to John Hutch and Joan Edwards. The Old Boys involvement was made easy due to these top people. Through the club they secured our existence financially, with pitch fees, annual subscriptions, referees' fees and so on. Also my wife Carol who laundered the team kit at the local Fred Robinson Public Wash House on St Domingo Road on a regular basis.

Thursdays: Video Showings, Hockey, Outings  
And DON'T forget the weekends away (how can anyone forget Hutchy's Farm!)

Under 16s Five-a-Side Team

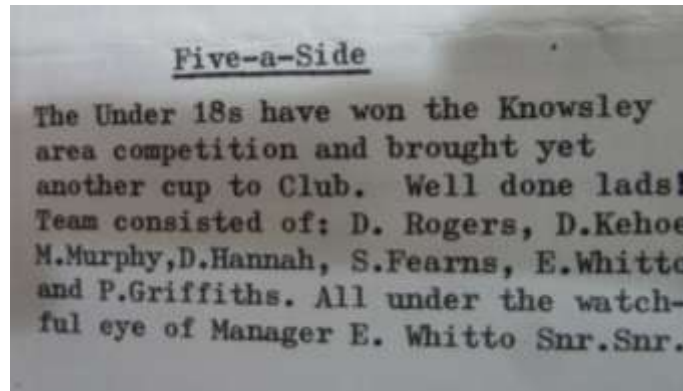
Well done the under 16s who won the North League Division, but were beaten by Unity in the Merseyside play offs for a place in the Bradford North of England Competition. Better luck next year lads.

The Team: P. Rogers, J. Gordon, N. Morgan, P. Lawrence, J. Simpson, T. Gannon (Sub.)

Under 18s Five-a-Side

The under 18s also won the North League

During my years at the Shrewsbury House OB, I was privileged to see youngsters enjoy the spirit of the club. In later years my eldest son Stephen was part of a Shrewsbury House five-a-side team that won the All England Five-A-Side title in 1983 along with Darren Hannah, Darren Rodgers, Paul Griffo and all the other lads. - so many lads came and went over the years so forgive me those I've not mentioned.



After seven years as Old Boys manager I stepped down and Timmy Donovan who played in that St Peters school yard all those years before took charge and took the Shrewsbury OB to a new level Joining the Merseyside League and going on to win the County FA Junior Cup at the Bootle FC ground an honour which sadly had always escaped the Old Boys during my years with the club.





## **Kevin Keegan's visit to the Shewsy 1981**

In his time at Hamburg, Kevin he had seen a Christian player visit inner city youth clubs in Germany. So he contacted his friend Rev Alan Godson about visiting a club in Liverpool. Alan knew the Shewsy and recommended a visit.

Kevin didn't want any advance publicity. Instead, John Hutchison shrewdly advertised a special free Senior Club night with a surprise guest. Into the Club walked Kevin Keegan! He visited the gym and played table tennis, followed by a question and answer session. The first question, from Gerard 'Acko' Atkinson was 'Are you a Christian?'. Kevin's answer was a humble 'yes'. Questions followed about his life, football, his best player (and his worst...).

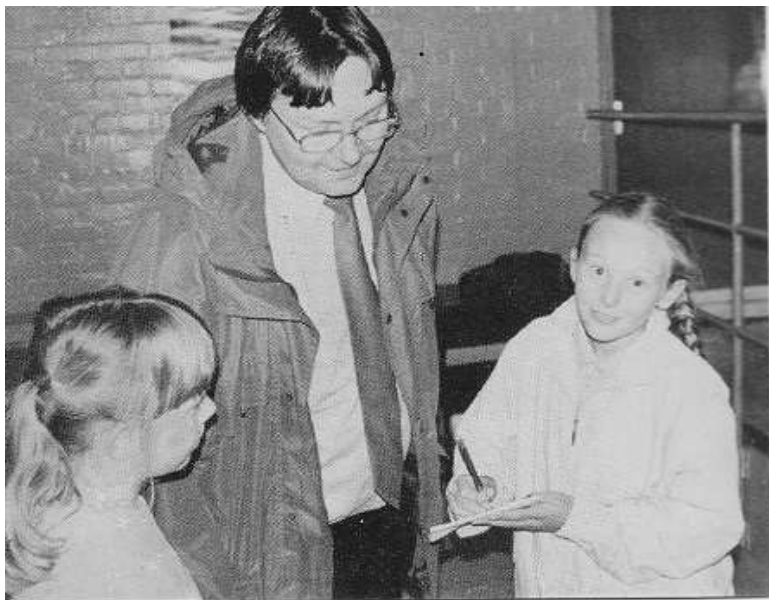
He signed autographs, wished everyone well and slipped away, having made the youngest, shyest Senior Club member feel as important as the England captain and former Liverpool star.



## Henry Corbett interviews Shewsy superstar Toni Duggan

Toni Duggan was born in Everton on July 25<sup>th</sup>1991, and became a regular member of the Shewsy Junior and Senior Clubs, then a helper. Later she was a guest star on the Shewsy hot-spot discussion groups, first with fellow Everton player Rachel Brown-Finnis and then in her own right as a player for Everton, Manchester City, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid and as an England player and England captain.

Toni started playing football in the playground of the Friary Primary School on Everton Brow and in the Shewsy gym. Aged 8, Toni played for Custy's and was the first girl to score a hat trick in the Scotland Road league and to be named player of the match.



**After signing autographs for Shewsy Junior Club members, ex-Everton player George Telfer is asked by Henry Corbett to ask a Shewsy Junior Club member for their autograph. As George agreed, a Shewsy Junior Club member is just as important to God as an ex-Everton footballer. So a young Toni Duggan signs an autograph for George... and becomes more famous than George - who loves this story!**

Toni's memories of the Shewsy as she grew up?

"I absolutely loved my time in the Shewsy, everything about the place helped in every aspect of my life - particularly my football. I was never out of the gym. Even if I was the only girl playing with all the older lads, it never phased me. I had to work harder and it taught me each time I got knocked down I had to get back up again, especially if I wanted them to let me keep joining in. It wasn't easy but I loved every minute of it. It made me stronger, faster, more determined, mentally strong. John Dumbell was a massive influence in those days, not only in the Shewsy but playing for the Stanfield and always being that person who was there for me and made me feel included with all the lads, always giving me confidence to join in and taking time to make me a better person and player. We were so lucky to have people like John around us and also an environment in the Shewsy where we felt safe and supported no matter what we wanted to do."

But it wasn't easy. Toni remembers:

"Dads would shout and be upset if I took on their son. As I got older the opponents did respect me but, when they turned up on a Saturday morning and there's just one girl playing against a group of lads, it was a shock for them".

Toni played for the Stanfield and Liverpool County Girls. The 2001-2 season was her last season in a mixed league when she helped the Stanfield become Tommy King League champions and win the Simon Rahilly Cup. The next season Toni joined Mossley Hill Girls Under 12s who won the Southport Festival of Football and were runners-up in an international tournament where Toni won player of the tournament and the Golden Boot for most goals scored in the competition. She also won the merit award for the most goals

scored for her club and she was selected to go to the Everton School of Excellence. Toni was picked as captain and the Everton team were unbeaten through the season. Aged 12 she was quoted in the Everton Telegraph: "I want to thank all who have helped me along the way: my Mum, Grandad, John Dumbell, the Shewsy, the Friary, Ronnie Pepper, Custy, Frank and Darren Jones, Colin Flood, and all the teams and managers I've played for. I'll keep on doing my best and enjoying my football."

In March 2007, aged 15, Toni came off the substitute's bench to score on her debut for England Under-17s. In the 2007-8 season, Toni was selected aged 16 for Everton Ladies (now Everton Women) and scored the winning goal against Watford Ladies to get Everton into the FA Women's Premier League Cup final which Everton won 1-0 over Arsenal.

Toni represented England at Under 19, Under 20 and Under 23 levels and played in the FIFA U20 Women's World Cup in both 2008 and 2010. In 2009 Toni was named FA Women's Young Player of the Year and in 2010 played in Everton's FA Cup final 3-2 win over Arsenal. Toni's first senior England cap came on September 19th 2012 in a 3-0 win over Croatia at the Bescot Stadium, Walsall, and a year later Toni scored her first England hat-trick against Turkey. She went on to win 79 caps and score 22 goals and captained her country against Austria in 2018. She was a member of the England teams that came third in the FIFA Women's World Cup in Canada in 2015 and that won the SheBelieves Cup in Japan in 2019.



**Toni goal of the season 2014-15 for Manchester City**

At club level, Toni played for Everton, Manchester City, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, before returning to Everton for her final 2 seasons before retiring. At Manchester City she won the League Cup twice, the FA Cup and the League title. She was the first female player to win the club's goal of the season award with a wonder strike against Chelsea and played with them when they were in the Champions League for the first time.

When in July 2017 she signed for FC Barcelona Femini, she was featured on the front of the summer edition of the Everton Telegraph with the headline 'From Upper Bute Street to Barcelona' and promised "I'll definitely keep on doing my very best, enjoying the football and trying to help women's sport grow stronger." With Barcelona, Toni won the Copa de la Reina in 2018 and reached the 2019 final of the Women's Champions league. With Atletico Madrid she won the Spanish Super Cup.



**Toni playing for England at the 2017 UEFA Euros**

In July 2021 Toni returned to Everton, and in September 2022 she announced that she was pregnant, becoming the first England player to take maternity leave in the Women's Super League. Luella was born in March 2023. Toni was back in action in October 2023 for the rest of the 2023-24 season and, with her contract finishing in the summer, she announced her retirement in September 2024.

Toni reflects:

"I always knew I wanted to play football. People said I couldn't because it wasn't professional. I was always a winner and wanted to win from the first day I kicked a ball. We had to fight for everything but when I look back, the journey has just been more than I could ever have dreamed of. I loved playing for all my teams and especially playing for my country. I loved travelling with the England team and having the laughs we had. And I can walk away and say I did it my way, had fun, competed in everything and had great support."

And the Shewsy?

"It was like a big family: everyone, staff, kids, friends, families even the people from the School all supported my career, even in the early days. I couldn't wait to tell them my news in circle time whenever I was selected for trials or won a game, I felt that they were all a part of my journey and stayed a part of it until the end. Henry would update me on the club wherever I was in the world. The Shewsy will always be a part of me. Every time I walk through the doors I feel like that 10 year old kid again.

"I owe a lot to the Club and I hope it can continue to give kids the memories I have and the support I had to achieve whatever they want to. It's home, no matter how many times they paint the walls and change it around it will always be the same Shewsy I grew up in. The place I loved and the place where people do really matter.

What a fantastic career in football, winning trophies and medals, captaining her country and being a trailblazer... and it all started on the streets of Everton, in the playground at the Friary and in the Shewsy gym.



**Toni with her gift of a Teqball table for the Shewsy**

“Anything I can do for the Shewsy is a pleasure, and if I can encourage other young girls to keep going if they enjoy sport then great. It’s so much better now with women’s sport getting stronger and stronger.”

## **John Dumbell brings us up to date with Shewsy football 2005-2025**

In the football heyday, on a Saturday morning the Shewsy building would be buzzing with 4 or 5 teams gathering for games in the various age groups of the Merseyside Youth Association's League as well as usually 2 old boys' sides. It was manic and a huge logistical operation ferrying teams to all parts of the city. Producing 5 eleven a side football teams every Saturday week after week, year after year slowed down considerably from the 1990s onwards, but football has remained hugely popular in the Shewsy and still draws on the enormous talent across the area.

In May 2006 our U14s reached the national 5 a side final, at Derby County's Pride Park. Unlike Liverpool who played an FA Cup final vs West Ham on the same day, we lost a hard-fought game on the lottery that is penalties. We had some great talent in the team that day: Cody Hannon, Daniel McCarthy, Ryan Gilboy, Jack Dunn, Lewis Dunn, Ryan Shields and Ryan Duggan all excelled – and Jack Dunn went on to get his pro at Liverpool.



In 2007 the older Shewsy lads entered the national Christian league as they attempted to find their feet in the open age game. Of course, they went by the name of our neighbours at St Peter's Church. A great group of current and ex Shewsy members formed a well-balanced team who later that season went on to win the national cup at Nene Park, the then Home of Rushden and Diamonds FC.

The lads quickly outgrew the Christian league and in 2010 became West Everton Xaviers. WEX as they were known, was a joint effort and partnership between the Shewsy club, St Peters and SFX churches and the West Everton Community Council which showcased the very best of the area's footballing talent. It was led by the very committed Andrew McGregor who later went on to be a professional football agent including to the current LFC star, Curtis Jones.

WEX achieved something that had never been done before. Starting in the second division of the Liverpool Premier league (formerly Zingari) they won promotion as champions and the following season, won the Premier League at the first attempt. Local semi-pro teams started to cast an eye over many of the lads, offering pay that was too good for them to refuse. Inevitably this spelt departures and decline and in the following season the lads struggled in the league before wrapping up the club. They did however win the George Mahon cup in their last ever game.

WEX was a breakthrough to the men's game for many in the area including 16-year-old Elliott Nevitt who went on to score the winner in the FA Trophy for Warrington Ryland's live on Sky Sports TV. Elliot got a pro contract at Tranmere Rovers before moving on to Crewe Alexandra and is now playing for Gillingham.

The connection with our founding fathers, Shrewsbury School, is still as strong as ever. In 2017 we took a team of club members to Shrewsbury School to play against the 3rd form. We had warned the school that we had some very talented lads and that it would be best if we faced their 3rd form first 11. Unfortunately for them they didn't heed that advice and played a mixture of their second and third team. This led to an 11-2 thrashing, with club member Josef Rooney scoring 4 from right back! At the time Josef was on the books at Rochdale and was also a keen cricketer. The school were so impressed with Josef's all round sporting talent that a tongue in cheek comment was made about him being 'the perfect candidate for a scholarship'. Josef jumped at this idea and along with staff from club and school we pushed for the opportunity and were eventually able to offer a fully funded scholarship at the School to a Shewsy Club member - a first in our 115-year history. Josef went on to enjoy five great years at the school and we hope there will be other scholarships in the future.

Fast forward to 2023 and the Shewsy once again have an open age team, playing in the Liverpool Inclusion League every Friday evening. The team again consists of current members (aged 16+) and many ex-members up to the age of 44. In the 2 seasons so far, the lads have won 2 cups and are in pole position for a league and cup double this season. The story goes on.



**John Dumbell is current Team Leader at Shrewsbury House 2025**

## **Epilogue**

### **Rev Henry Corbett**

Football can be a beautiful game, or (hopefully, on rare occasions) a not so beautiful one. The Shewsy has always gone for the first option: a game that teaches teamwork, discipline, gives a sense of purpose, creates friendships, improves health with exercise, and wonderfully demonstrates the value of a variety of gifts. From an Albi Doran tackle to an Alex Groves nutmeg, from a flying Tony Fitz goalkeeping save to an inch-perfect Toni Duggan 25 yarder into the top corner.

Yes, it can be not so beautiful on occasions, and I'm not thinking of agonising defeats from 2-0 up at half time to a 3-2 defeat. There are sadly the shocking tackles that threaten serious injury, the insulting abuse towards a referee trying to do their job, or the unnecessary retaliations and pointless melees. Being strong and turning the other cheek when provoked or fouled is good advice for the football pitch as well as for life.

Football is a great game with many a lesson for life, and it's a game that the Shewsy has loved and been involved in throughout its history, from kickabout games in the old top gym to winning the prestigious trophies with flowing, effective, beautiful football.

We hope you have enjoyed reading some of the stories and highlights of Shewsy football, and of a Shewsy club member who became captain of England. There will be opportunities to add your own cherished memories in the future so we can continue this Football Story.

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**Henry Corbett, helper and vicar-warden at the Shewsy, 1975-76, 1978-2023, and occasional left-sided midfield player for the Shewsy Old Boys 1979-1981.**