

## A Short Autobiography – Part Three

Parramatta Road is one of the busiest roads in the Southern Hemisphere. Every morning of every working day, thousands of cars are sucked along its arteries into the heart of Sydney, then pumped back again at five o'clock westward to the suburbs. On the way, they pass through a little faceless place called Homebush, just another milk-bar stop on this great highway to nowhere. Here, you are deep in used-car-yard country. They run bumper to bumper, both sides of the road. By early 1977, this was the rung we had reached, renting half a house from a second hand car dealer, commuting to a reasonable job in the city, feeling like two lumps of coal from a Yorkshire pit in Australia's eyeball. But we weren't two anymore, we had a son now, and no matter where we spent the rest of our lives, our ties with Australia were cemented forever.

NOVEMBER 1977. We were going home again! It didn't seem possible but at the time it was the thing we wanted to do most. We'd booked the flight, paid the fare, written home. I'll never forget the letters that came back, I've kept them to this day.

'Am happiest kid in Sheffield' wrote my little brother. Well, he was little five years ago. It was only a holiday but we weren't sure why. The things we had in England had taken a lifetime to build and would be there forever. The things we had in Australia were stored in a friend's garage and if we weren't back in three months he'd hock the lot.

Those three months come back to me now in a series of images; joyful, boisterous, ecstatic, sober, thoughtful, despairing. That first unbelievable moment when you walk up the path it seemed you would never walk again. A face appears at the window, it becomes a reflection of your own unbridled and boundless joy and you're in the arms of a brother you hardly know. Sheffield had changed too, they'd knocked down our chippie on Rushby Street and flattened row upon row of terraced houses where all our boyhood enemies used to live. Sutherland Road baths had gone. Bus shelters stood redundantly awaiting customers amidst heaps of bricks and splintered timber, yet we still loved it, we loved it all the more. We walked up Osgathorpe Road and looked across the park at the lights of Firvale, the very spot where we'd stood five years before and said to each other "Lets go to Australia"