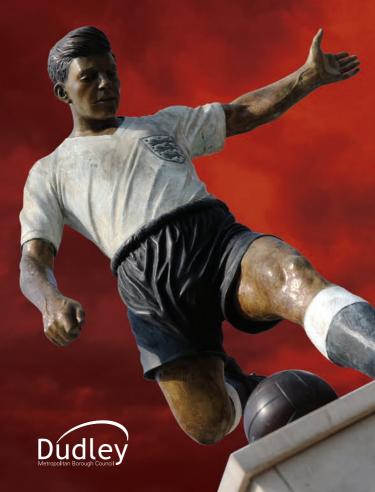
A tribute to Duncan Edwards

"the greatest player I have ever played with and possibly the most skilful player I have ever seen" Sir Bobby Charlton



Prologue

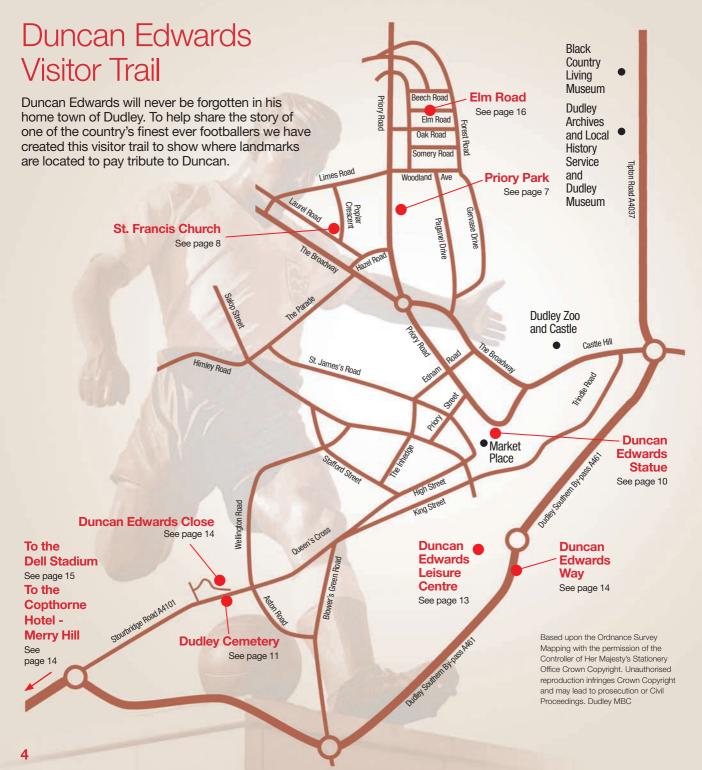
Sir Bobby Charlton described Duncan Edwards as, "The greatest player I have ever played with and possibly the most skilful player I have ever seen. He was the only player who made me feel inadequate. He was proud and passionate about Dudley, I know because I spent a lot of time with him over the years and he never stopped talking about Dudley, his background and the Black Country. His death was the biggest single tragedy ever to happen to Manchester United and English football."

Introduction

England and Manchester United football legend Duncan Edwards was born on Thursday 1 October 1936 in Dudley, located in the heart of the Black Country.

He played as the big number six, was 5' 10" tall, weighed just under 13 stone and earned the nickname 'The Tank', due to his imposing physique. A versatile player, he performed as a wing half but could also play centre half, centre forward and inside forward, depending upon the team's needs.

Duncan was one of the 'Busby Babes', the young Manchester United team formed under manager Matt Busby in the late 1940s. Tragically, aged just 21 years of age, he was one of the eight players who lost their lives due to the Munich Air Disaster on Thursday 6 February 1958. He died 15 days later (Friday 21 February) from the injuries sustained during the crash in the Rechts de Isar Hospital in Munich.

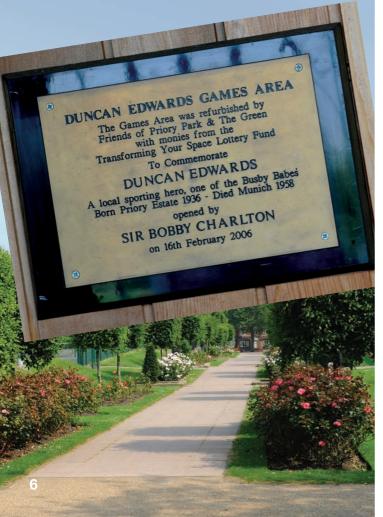


Duncan Edwards Visitor Trail

Priory Park, Dudley

In 2006, the games area of Priory Park was refurbished by the Friends of Priory Park and The Green was restored using monies from the Transforming Your Space Lottery Fund in commemoration of our local sporting hero, Duncan Edwards.

It was officially opened on 16 February 2006 by Sir Bobby Charlton.

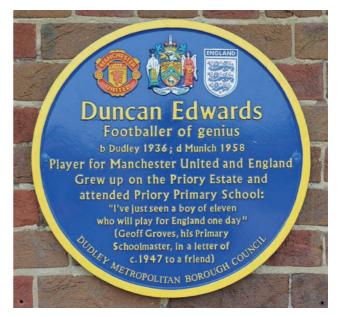


Blue Plaque in Priory Park, Dudley

Priory Park is the location of the Blue Plaque which was unveiled by Sir Bobby Charlton on 1 October 2016, as a tribute to his Manchester United friend and hero. This date was selected as it would be have been Duncan's 80th birthday.

Priory Park (DY1 4AZ) is popular with the local community for leisure use. It is a historic location, complete with a ruined priory, and was where Duncan honed his football skills during kickabouts with pals near to his childhood home on the Priory Estate.

On 1 October, crowds watched the unveiling of the plaque, complete with 12 members of his family, who remembered this local hero and his contribution to the beautiful game.



Later that day, a charity gala night was held at Brierley Hill Civic Hall to celebrate Duncan's 80th birthday. Unfortunately Bobby Charlton was unable to attend the event, but he wrote the following tribute to be read at the event: "To me, Duncan has always been the epitome of football".

St. Francis Church, Dudley

By visiting St. Francis Church, the parish church for the Priory Estate, Dudley, you will be greeted by a visual treat. Installed in the church you will find a beautiful stained glass window, designed by Francis Skeat, depicting Duncan Edwards.

Matt Busby unveiled the window on Sunday 27 August 1961, and he was quoted as saying, "There will only be one Duncan Edwards and any boy who strives to emulate Duncan, or take him as his model, won't go far wrong.

"I unveil these windows on behalf of Manchester United, in memory of this truly amazing boy who, apart from being a great footballer, devoted his life to sport and all the worthwhile things in life. These windows should keep alive his name forever, and they will shine always as monuments and examples to the youth of Dudley and the youth of England."

In the Assisi Chapel of St. Francis Church you will find two stained glass windows, where you will see the coat of arms of Manchester United, Munich and of Brentford and Crystal Palace football clubs. You will also see a tiny wren to mark the contribution of the local bowling club.







In both windows you will see depictions of Duncan Edwards, one in his Manchester United kit and the other in a white England shirt.

You will find St. Francis Church on Laurel Road, Dudley DY1 3EZ.

If you wish to visit, please email cofedudley@ gmail.com to make an appointment.

Car parking is available at the rear of the building.

For more information visit http://cofedudley.weebly.com/contact.html

Duncan Edwards Statue Dudley Town Centre

In October 1999 a commemorative statue, created by sculptor James Butler, was unveiled in Dudley town centre's historic Market Place.

It was commissioned by Dudley Council as a tribute to the footballing legend and was unveiled by Duncan's mother, Sarah Anne Edwards, and Sir Bobby Charlton.

In 2015, Dudley town centre underwent major regeneration. This was seen as an opportunity to relocate the statue to a more prominent position within the Market Place, erect a new plinth, and include further inscription. On 1 October a rededication service was held, attended by members of Duncan Edwards' family, the mayor of Dudley, other dignitaries and a large crowd of spectators.



Duncan Edwards Grave

If you wish to visit Duncan Edward's grave you will need to travel to Dudley Cemetery, Stourbridge Road, Queen's Cross, Dudley DY1 2DA (access is via the junction of Tanfield Road and Clee Road). The cemetery is open from 9am to 4.30pm, seven days a week (for more information visit www.dudley.gov.uk and search Dudley Cemetery).

You will find the grave in section C, flat 722.

The beautiful 6ft high black headstone is clearly inscribed in gold lettering with a dedication to Duncan Edwards. You will usually find a fresh bunch of red and white flowers filling a black granite vase and another granite vase in the shape of a football.





His grave is still a pilgrimage site for many football supporters, who visit to pay their respects throughout the year.

To find the grave, enter the cemetery through the gates and walk straight up the main drive, heading towards the lodge building. Take the first path on the left and continue straight on. Now take the next path on the left, which will lead you down a sloping path. On the right hand side of this path you will see a water tap - Duncan Edwards' grave is located directly behind.

Duncan shares the grave with his sister, Carol Anne, who sadly died aged only 14 weeks. His parents, Gladstone and Sarah Anne had no other children.

Duncan's father died in 1978 and his mother died in 2003. They are buried together, ten graves down on the right.

Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre

Constitution Hill, Dudley DY2 8PA Tel: 01384 812800 (option 1)

The Duncan Edwards Leisure Centre, named after the borough's most famous sporting son, is the first leisure centre to be built in a generation. Opened in January 2022, this £18 million state of the art leisure centre allows visitors to access a 25 metre, eight-lane swimming pool and teaching pool with spectator area. There's also a four-court sports hall suitable for indoor football, badminton and more.

The complex includes a new gym and fitness suite, two exercise studios offering a wide range of programmes as well as a state-of-the-art immersive cycle studio - the first in the Black Country.

People can use the new power-assisted gym equipment, which will be particularly beneficial for people recovering from injury, those living with long-term health conditions or people with limited mobility.

There's a soft play area, café, party room and sauna.

uncan Edward

Leisure Centre

www.dudley.gov.uk/things-to-do/leisure-centres/ duncan-edwards-leisure-centre/

Duncan Edwards Way

In 2008, Dudley's Southern Bypass was renamed Duncan Edwards Way, in tribute to the great footballer.

Car parking is available on Flood Street car park, just on the outskirts of Dudley town centre to enable you to view the sign on foot.

Duncan Edwards Close

In 1993, a cul-de-sac was named Duncan Edwards Close on a housing association development, opposite the cemetery. If you wish to visit, you will find it just off the main Stourbridge Road.

The Copthorne Hotel Merry Hill -Dudley

The Copthorne Hotel Merry Hill - Dudley, near The Waterfront in Brierley Hill, has a permanent Duncan Edwards tribute room for hire, dedicated to the memory of Duncan Edwards. Inside the room features memorabilia and photographs. To enquire about hiring the Duncan Edwards tribute room visit www.millenniumhotels.com/en/dudley/ copthorne-hotel-merry-hill-dudley/

The Copthorne Hotel - Merry Hill also hosts a Duncan Edwards tribute dinner, details are available at http://duncanedwardstribute.com/ about/



The Dell Stadium

Bryce Road, Brierley Hill DY5 4NE Tel: 01384 812942

A plaque is located inside the Dell Stadium in honour of Dudley's most famous footballing son. The football pitch at the Bryce Road site has been officially declared The Duncan Edwards Peace Field.

The field is twinned with designated play areas at Flanders Peace Field, in Messine, Belgium, the site of the Christmas truces in 1914 during the First World War.

In the week leading up to Christmas 1914, German, British and allied soldiers stopped fighting to sing festive songs. On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, some ventured into no man's land to exchange gifts and to play games of football.

The plaque says, "All games and sports on this Peace Field will be played in the spirit of the Christmas truces. Lest we forget."

A partnership has also been formed with three other Peace Field projects in the UK in honour of footballing icons - George Best (Belfast), Denis Law (Aberdeen) and Sir Tom Finney (Preston).

https://www.dudley.gov.uk/things-to-do/leisure-centres/dell

Early days in Dudley

Duncan was born in Holly Hall, Dudley, at Malvern Crescent, and was the first child of Gladstone and Sarah Anne Edwards. He was the only child to survive to adulthood as his younger sister, Carol Anne, sadly died in 1947.

The family later moved to the Priory Estate, living in Elm Road. From 1941 to 1948 he attended Priory Primary School and from 1948 to 1952 Wolverhampton Street Secondary School.

He enjoyed playing football for both his own school and Dudley Schools, Worcester County XI and the England Under 14 team.

Duncan signed as an amateur with Manchester United on 2 June 1952 and turned professional on 1 October 1953. He made his debut for the first team on 4 April 1953 against Cardiff City.



Standing out from the crowd at school

By the time Duncan was playing for his junior school his footballing skill was already being noticed. Geoff Groves, a schoolmaster for Priory Primary School, watching the 11-year old noted, "The youngster told all the other 21 players what to do and where to go and that included the referee and linesmen." He later wrote to a friend, "I have just seen a boy of 11 who will one day play for England." How right he was!

Two years later, Duncan wrote an essay at school musing about 'playing at Wembley'. It was the same year he found himself standing on the hallowed turf, wearing a white England shirt, playing against Wales in a school boy international game at that very venue.

It was at that opening game, in April 1951, that his skill with the ball and footwork was noticed. He dazzled everyone, with one talent scout even remarking "By God, they've got a good 'un there!".



The 'Busby Babes'

At the age of only 14, Duncan was regarded as such a talent that a Manchester United scout recommended Matt Busby, the manager and future mentor of Duncan, go to Dudley to watch the boy's talent for himself.

Busby followed this advice, and the club watched him develop for two years. Once the decision had been made to sign him, club coach, Bert Whalley, famously drove through the night to get to Duncan's house for sunrise to ensure he signed the contract with the Old Trafford outfit as soon as possible.

The name, Duncan Edwards, will forever be associated with Manchester United and the 'Busby Babes'. The 'babes' was a concept developed by Matt Busby in the late 1940s when the club was badly in debt and unable to afford 'expensive' players. The idea, developed together with the club's assistant manager, Jimmy Murphy, was to implement a radical youth policy to grow their own young players. This was seen as a way to create the stars of the future. Duncan was pivotal in this youth scheme and his worth was proved when he made his debut for the first team on 4 April 1953, at only 16 years old. They played Cardiff City who won 4-1.

Three and a half years later, Duncan celebrated his 100th appearance for United and the 'Busby Babes'. The legend which took the footballing world by storm was gradually growing and consolidating.

Key milestones include:

- Signed as an amateur for Manchester United on 2 June 1952
- Signed professional forms for Manchester United on 1 October 1953
- League debut (against Cardiff City) 4 April 1953
- FA Cup debut (against Burnley) 9 January 1954
- European Cup debut (against Anderlecht) 26 September 1956
- International debut (against Scotland) 2 April 1955
- Total League appearances 151 (scoring 20 goals)
- International appearances 18 (scoring 5 goals)



Munich Air Disaster 1958

The United players had become international stars and with that celebrity they had begun to travel around the world, playing before thousands of adoring fans.

The fortunes of the club were riding high and in February 1958 they played in Yugoslavia against Red Star Belgrade. It was a hard fought game and they forced a 3-3 draw for the second year running. This result saw them winning their way into the semi-final of the European Cup on aggregate.

They had a return flight, via Munich, to Manchester on Thursday 6 February. The British European Airways Elizabethan aircraft landed to refuel shortly after 2.17pm, local time.

The weather was appalling, the snow-covered runway had only just opened and it was sleeting heavily. Just 40 seconds into take-off the pilot shut down the throttle and braked. It was announced that because of a technical fault the aircraft would be returning to the terminal. Later, a second attempt was also aborted and the aircraft returned to the terminal - the players assumed the flight would be cancelled and rescheduled for the following day.

Duncan sent a telegram to Mrs Dorman, his landlady in Stretford, Manchester, telling her, "All flights cancelled - flying tomorrow." To everyone's astonishment, passengers were recalled and the aircraft travelled down the runway for the third time at 3.04pm that fateful afternoon.

Flight ZU609 crashed only 54 seconds after take-off, killing 21 people instantly. Two people, including Duncan, died later from their injuries - bringing the total up to 23, including eight journalists and three club staff.

The flight had a total of 44 passengers onboard, 17 of whom were Manchester United players. Only 21 people survived the flight.

Duncan laid to rest in Dudley

On Saturday 22 February 1958 a special BEA flight flew Duncan's body from Munich to London. He was then transported the rest of the journey, back to Dudley, by road.

On Wednesday 26 February 1958 he was buried in Dudley Cemetery at 2.30pm. More than 2,000 people gathered outside the church, over 300 wreaths and floral tributes from all over Europe were received and more than 50,000 people stood in silence outside the cemetery and lined the streets to show their respect. A fitting tribute 'to the lad from Elm Road on the Priory Estate.'

Frank Taylor OBE (the only pressman to survive the disaster) wrote in his book 'The Day a Team Died' (published in 1983) that Duncan had been given a presentation gold watch by Real Madrid and he had been wearing it that time of the crash. In hospital he had shouted for this missing watch. They searched the wreckage of the airliner and found a battered wristwatch which they brought back and placed on his wrist, which "made the big fellow happy". He didn't shout for it again, but kept asking Jim Murphy, the Assistant Manager for Manchester United, "What time is the kick-off against Wolves, Jim? I mustn't miss that game." The Wolves match was subsequently postponed for ten weeks.

Outside football

Outside football, Duncan Edwards was a very private individual who was almost shy and retiring. He was teetotal and had many interests, including fishing, playing cards and visiting the cinema. He became Lance Corporal Edwards D. 23145376 when he served in the army undertaking his two years of national service.



Duncan was a trailblazer, being one of the first footballers to earn money by endorsing products, including Dextrosol glucose tablets. This promotional work enabled him to supplement his wage of $\pounds15$ per week during the season and $\pounds12$ per week during the non-playing months.

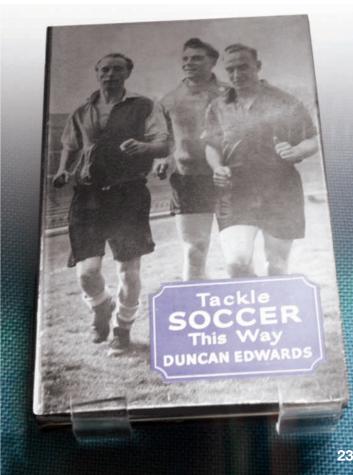
Only a few days before he travelled to Belgrade, the manuscript for his book 'Tackle Soccer This Way' was delivered to his publishers and was later printed word for word - proving he was a wordsmith as well as a footballer.

The book was published shortly after his death, with the approval of his family. It was republished in 2009 after being out of print for many years.

Just days before Duncan flew to Munich he became engaged to his fiancée, Molly Leach, who he met around 12 months before at a social event at Manchester Airport Hotel. They were introduced by mutual friends. Molly lived in Sale, Cheshire, and worked for the textile machine makers, Cook & Co Ltd, located in Altrincham.

It is likely they were going to get married after Duncan had completed his next busy football season, had he survived

Molly was just 22 at the time of his death. She moved to Weston-Super-Mare to live with her brother and eventually married a semiprofessional footballer, giving birth to two daughters. She kept touch with her heritage, visiting Manchester twice a year to see family and friends, but she would never discuss the Munich Air Disaster, or the loss of her beloved fiancé, Duncan. She eventually emigrated to America and died in September 2004.



Comments from fellow footballers

There are many complimentary comments made by fellow footballers and we would like to share a few.

Terry Venables claimed that, had he lived, it would have been Edwards, and not Bobby Moore, who would have lifted the World Cup trophy in 1966 as England captain.

Tommy Docherty stated, "There is no doubt in my mind that Duncan would have become the greatest player ever. Not just in British football, with United and England, but the best in the world. George Best was something special, as was Pelé and Maradona, but in my mind Duncan was much better in terms of all-round ability and skill."

Bobby Robson said, "Duncan tackled you with all his weight and if you were expecting a hard tackle he didn't disappoint you! What was beyond dispute was that Duncan Edwards at the age of 21 was the finest young player in this country at that time and surely would have gone on to be one of the greatest players the world has ever seen."

Sir Bobby Charlton described Duncan Edwards as, "The greatest player I have ever played with and possibly the most skilful player I have ever seen."

Further information

Dudley Museum at the Archives

Further information on Duncan Edwards (and the Duncan Edwards temporary exhibition held from time to time) can be found at Dudley Archives and Local History Centre, Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ. Please check the opening hours before you visit. They can be contacted on 01384 812770 or by visiting www.dudley.gov.uk/archives

You can request to see numerous press cuttings featuring Duncan and there are several copies of rare books about Duncan, plus his own book of footballing hints.



A small selection of memorabilia from the Duncan Edwards collection is on loan from Manchester United and is displayed within Dudley Museum at Dudley Archives.

You can see football shirts and caps, but the items on display will be subject to change from time to time.

Dudley Museum at The Archives is open Thursday to Saturday 10am to 4pm. Free entry (please note that there may be a charge for some events). Exclusive use for schools or groups: Tuesday and Wednesday, 10am to 3pm. Pre-booking is required on 01384 812750.

www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/museums

Memorials in Manchester

The Quadrant Pub

If you are visiting Stretford, why not pop into the Quadrant Pub to view their wall-mounted memorial cabinet?

Located next to Lancashire County Cricket ground, it is in a prime location and just a ten minute walk from Old Trafford Football Ground. It is particularly popular with fans on match day. You'll find it at 67, Great Stone Road, Stretford, Manchester M32 8GR. The telephone number of the pub is 0161 881 6923.

Duncan Edwards Honoured in the Blue Plaque Scheme

In July 2011 there were two blue plaques erected in Stretford honouring two of the famous 'Busby Babes' team. Sir Bobby Charlton unveiled one for Duncan Edwards at 19 Gorse Avenue and Dickie Bird revealed one at 22 Great Stone Road for Tommy Taylor. These were both residential addresses for the individual players.

Trafford Council local studies team approved these two plaques following an application by Stretford High School teacher, Chris Hirst.

He was overseeing a Year Seven project at the school to learn about the famous team. During the investigation they found out the players lived just a short distance from the school. For more information visit www.duncan-edwards.co.uk (search blue plaque).

Manchester United Football Club and The Flowers of Manchester

The Flowers of Manchester is sung by the fans at 3.04pm annually on 6 February. This is then followed by a short period of silence in remembrance.

Further details can be found at www. theflowersofmanchester.co.uk where you can view videos and photos from previous year's gatherings.

Alternatively visit www.manutd.com or contact the club on 0161 676 7770. The club address is Manchester United, Sir Matt Busby Way, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0RA.

The New Munich Plaque

A plaque in memory of those who died was erected at Old Trafford on 25 February 1960, paid for by the club and unveiled by Matt Busby.

The original Munich plaque was placed above the old Directors Entrance (South Stand tunnel) but was too fragile to move during ground redevelopments in the mid 1970s. The club decided to keep it in its original place but it is no longer viewable as it has become part of the building work of Old Trafford. There was no damage to the original plaque.

The current plaque, which resides high up on the South Stand corner of K Stand, is actually the third one - the first one is the one which was not possible to move, the second one is in the museum at the football club and the third plaque was unveiled in 1996.

Manchester United Football Museum

Manchester United Football Museum at Manchester United Football Club Limited has a permanent exhibition dedicated to Duncan Edwards.

There are various items of memorabilia on display including medals, caps, and other items from the Manchester United collection. The museum is open seven days a week (except home match days and other event days at Old Trafford).

The museum normally opens at 9.30am. The address is Manchester United Football Club Limited, Sir Matt Busby Way, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0RA.

Information about booking tickets for the Museum & Stadium Tour can be found at **www.manutd.com** or by phoning **0161 676 7770**.

Photographs courtesy of Manchester United Football Museum.

We'll Never Die Flag

United legend Gary Neville and supporters have helped pay for a giant flag at Manchester United Football Ground honouring the victims of the Munich Air Disaster. It features the 'Busby Babes' as they lined-up for the final time before the 1958 tragedy.

It was unveiled in the Stretford End to mark the 55th anniversary in 2013 of the disaster.

National Football Museum - Manchester

Duncan Edwards was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2002 at the National Football Museum in Manchester, the world's biggest and best football museum.

Admission is free

Donations welcome Opening hours: Wednesday-Sunday 10am-5pm **National Football Museum** Urbis Building, Cathedral Gardens, Manchester M4 3BG Tel: 0161 605 8200

Further details can be found at www.nationalfootballmuseum.com

...and then Came Munich

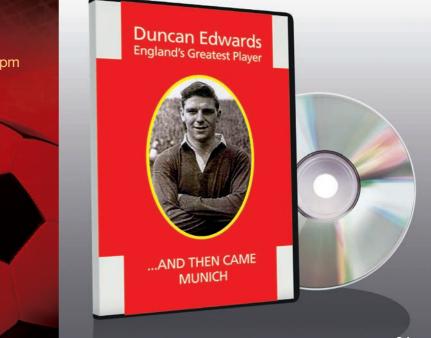
"...and then came Munich" is a 55-minute, award winning documentary about local footballing hero Duncan Edwards. Written and produced by local historian Rose Cook-Monk.

It tells the tragic story of the young Dudley lad, born in Woodside, brought up on the Priory Estate, who through his natural ability for the game of football gained the title of 'greatest footballer in the world'.

It includes interviews with his mother, childhood friends and greats of the beautiful game, including team mates Bill Foulkes and Wilf McGuiness, Scottish International Tommy Docherty and former England Manager Sir Walter Winterbottom.

This fascinating and moving documentary will show you just how great Duncan Edwards really was.

Copies are available from Rose Cook Monk on 07701 092994 or by emailing rosecook69@hotmail.co.uk



Dudley visitor information

Further information on many of the borough's visitor attractions can be found at Dudley Council Plus or by visiting **www.discoverdudley.org.uk**

On the Discover Dudley website you can find information on places to stay, things to see and do, where to eat and what's on.

Dudley Council Plus

259 Castle Street, Dudley DY1 1LQ Tel: 0300 555 2345

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 10am to 3pm

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of details included within this leaflet. This leaflet is a tribute to Duncan Edwards but is not an exhaustive account of his life or a biography.

Further information on Duncan Edwards can be found at Dudley Archives and Local History Centre as mentioned earlier in this leaflet.

Dudley Council cannot guarantee the accuracy of the details included and accepts no responsibility for this. Visitors should check details with the locations mentioned within this leaflet before travelling.

Further information is available at

http://discover.dudley.gov.uk/history-archives/duncanedwards/

or www.duncan-edwards.co.uk

Should you have any comments about this guide please email tourism@dudley.gov.uk

Acknowledgements

Various sources have been used for research purpose in the compilation of this leaflet:

Books:

- Duncan Edwards A Biography by lain McCartney and Roy Cavanagh, published by Temple Nostalgia.
- Duncan Edwards by Derek Dougan, Hugh Jamieson & Frank Taylor, published by The Duncan Edwards Sports Medicine Centre Appeal.
- Duncan Edwards Manchester United and England by Geoff Warburton, published by The Dulston Press.
- Duncan Edwards: The Full Report by Iain McCartney and also The United Tour of Manchester - Iain McCartney & Tom Clare
- White Shirt Black Country A history of Black Country footballers who played for England by Patrick Talbot 2004
- The Day a Team Died, 25 years on, Frank Taylor OBE 1983
- Duncan Edwards Tackle soccer this way, 1958
- Duncan Edwards. Manchester United and England, Geoff Warburton 1988
- The Lost Babes Manchester United and the Forgotten Victims of Munich by Jeff Connor 2006
- Duncan Edwards Black Country Boy to Red Devil by Jim Cadman & Iain McCartney

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