JIMMY MONTGOMERY BEM

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Some rambling thoughts inspired by a childhood hero.
Category: Observations

If truth be told, I'm not a great one for the trappings of the British establishment. The whole honours system and such like rather passes me by; it just doesn't seemÂ relevant to the world that I live in. However, every now and then, I come across someone winning some honour or other which brings a big smile to my face.

This week, Monty, James Montgomery was awarded a British Empire Medal. I'm not sure what a British Empire Medal is or what you do with one, but I do know who Monty is! Jimmy Monty was the Sunderland goal-keeper while I was growing up. By many reckonings, he was the best keeper never to be capped for England. In the 1973 cup-final, he pulled off one of the greatest double saves that you are ever likely to see (and we went on to win).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZmFoo4payA

One Saturday evening in the late 1960s, our family were visiting Seaburn beach in Sunderland, when we saw Monty and some of his friends playing crazy-golf (football players lived lives of wild excess in those days). I ran to the car and found a scrap of paper and a pen and joined the queue of small boys collecting autographs. I don't know what happened to the scrap of paper, but I distinctly remember Monty being polite and patient despite the fact that we must have ruined his quiet evening. I also remember that he spoke just like me; he was a Sunderland lad, with a local accent.

I don't have a deep or meaningful comment to make on this. I'm glad Monty got his award, he was an important figure in my childhood and a thoroughly nice bloke. I'm also just a little sad that the days when local football clubs had local players and truly represented their areas have vanished. No doubt the Premier League is a much better spectacle than the old first division, but I find it hard to care as much as I once did.

I'm just getting old.