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## SPECTATOR SPORT

### Sangfroid and Scotch eggs MICHAEL HENDERSON

*New York*

The reporter from the paper in Cumberland had called to find out how New Yorkers had coped with the blackout. But Pete Myers was interested in more pressing matters, like Carlisle United's hopes for the coming football season. Myers of Keswick, who runs a shop in the West Village called just that, coped pretty well. Manhattan's famous English grocer put on vittles for people passing by the shop in Hudson Street, and staff joined locals for an impromptu pavement feast of Scotch eggs and pork pies washed down with booze. As disasters go, the great blackout was one big doddle — though those who were trapped in lifts wouldn't want another in a hurry.

To say that Myers is one of the best-known Englishmen in the city that never sleeps is hardly over-egging the pudding. He is such a familiar figure in New York, having lived here for the past 31 years, that his eponymous shop often appears to be an unofficial consulate as much as a British

food emporium. Hudson Street, with its cosy restaurants and bars (one of them right next to his store), is one of Lower Manhattan's most attractive thoroughfares, and MoK has been part of the landscape since 1985. When you pop in you can usually hear Myers moaning about the FDA (you wouldn't believe it, they've bloody nicked my oxtail soup, the *bar-stards*), an unreliable supplier and Carlisle's fortunes, not necessarily in that order.

His Carlisle scarf hangs above the kitchen door, below a portrait of the Queen, who is one of the few British subjects to have visited New York and not popped in for a cup of tea and a pie. Myers can still recall those glorious autumnal days of 1974 when the Brunton Parkers actually topped the old First Division for a week. Now they languish at the bottom of the Third Division (the Fourth to those of us who refuse to acknowledge the existence of the Premiership), but their result still means something to the Manhattan branch of the Carlisle United Supporters Club. 'How many members have you got, Pierre? Three?' 'Four.'

He recalls the last blackout, in July 1977, with some relish. At the time he ran a bar on West 13th Street called the Bells of

Hell, a watering-hole patronised by scribblers, loafers and bohemians, and which, from time to time, put up Yosemite-bound British climbers in the basement. 'But the thing is, I had bought a gross of candles the day before, so we had a whizz-bang night. People came from miles around. I had to herd the buggers out at four o'clock in the morning.'

The Bells of Hell was a favourite haunt of British sportswriters visiting New York for big fights, although sometimes the bar-room antics were also worth writing about. One night the American pop singer Jimmy Buffett praised Myers for running a pub that had 'a great atmosphere, good air-conditioning, and not many queers', an endorsement they used, daringly, as an ad in the *Village Voice*, New York's trendy weekly! 'And you wouldn't believe it, Michael, they organised a protest march to the bar. We had transvestites dancing on the tables that night. I've never seen anything like it.'

The Carlisle defence has sometimes been suspected of fielding a few girls' blouses. The team have started the season with two more losses. Already it looks like being another hard winter in Cumberland, and the West Village.