

Sport Christmas books

The Guardian | Thursday December 6 2007

Harry Pearson

Believe in the Sign

Mark Hodgkinson *Pomona Press*



In Hodgkinson's autobiographical account of coming of age in a scruffy northern town, Rochdale – “built to be rained upon or swathed in mist, joyous

in a sulk” – football has a major role, not in any particularly pivotal way but simply as part of the fabric of growing up. It's a deftly written, poignant and funny tale of the 1970s, an era that in retrospect seems at once more innocent and more barbarous than anything that followed. Karate classes, bootboys, bustling centre-forward Bob Mountford and other “hob-nail tin bath” players from the lower divisions flit across the pages, and the story takes a genuinely sinister twist when Rochdale becomes the focus of national attention following the murder of Leslie Molseed.