

Words: Ken Rogers

The birth of sponsorship



I was asked what appeared to be a fairly straightforward Everton FC quiz question recently but failed miserably with my answer.

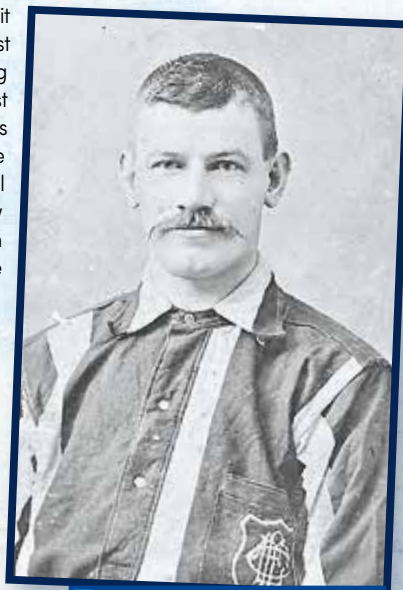
To be fair, it was a Richarlison-style curve ball, linked with the first known commercial sponsors of a Goodison Park fixture. I thought I started well by suggesting Hafnia and NEC but I wasn't even close.

Linked with today's visitors I was told that the answer had a Manchester connection and links to lifeboats, a beefy end-product and a historical light spectacular. In the end I turned to a classic source of information for the answer by viewing the comprehensive Everton Collection website. A quick search turned up a photograph of one of the gold winner's medals handed out that day.

The date was 1893 when it was 'cheers!' to... Bovril, our first match sponsors. This steaming bovine-based beverage was first introduced in 1884, four years before we became one of the founder members of the Football League. By the time the new League venture got under way in 1888, Bovril was already available in pubs, grocers and chemists throughout the North West and had begun to be sold to football fans as an antidote to bitterly cold winter afternoons across the region. With Everton an emerging household name, Bovril marketed their increasingly popular drink by linking it with a fixture at the impressive one-year-old Goodison Park on 23 November 1893.

All of this intrigued my great friend and EFC Heritage Society founder member Dr. David France as he built up the personal memorabilia treasure that we now know as the enhanced and world-class Everton Collection. David would secure one of the nine-carat gold medals received by Everton's players who triumphed 3-1 in that encounter with a Manchester & District Select XI on November 1893, the latter featuring individuals from Ardwick (Manchester City), Newton Heath (Manchester United) and Bolton Wanderers.

The match takings from the 10,000-strong crowd supported



Richard Williams, the Everton keeper in the Bovril Cup game

the National Lifeboat Institution. The game was played under 18 Wells Lights, which, as mentioned in a recent programme article, were large paraffin lamps habitually used as illumination for engineering work before the age of electric light. The medal in question was originally presented to Everton's Richard Williams and still sits in its original presentation box. It now features as one of the more unusual items in the Everton Collection which, since December 2007, has been owned by The Everton Collection Charitable Trust and housed at the Liverpool Record Office where items can be viewed via advance appointment.

View the Everton Collection at: www.evertoncollection.org.uk



The Bovril Cup medal awarded to Richard Williams (Image courtesy of Everton Collection)