

Words: Ken Rogers

Blues bring home the Barcelona Cup



Our world-class 'Everton Collection' has many treasures, but its importance goes far beyond items like medals and international caps.

The Board minute books, 29 volumes from 1887 to 1964, offer a fly-on-the-wall insight into life inside Everton's corridors of power during some of the most historic moments in our history. Towards the end of the 1923/24 campaign, for example, and under the simple header 'Continental Tour', legendary Chairman Will Cuff revealed a guarantee of £1,000 – then a considerable sum – to play three summer matches at Barcelona's Les Corts stadium (now the Nou Camp), which had opened just two years earlier.

The itinerary was two games against the famous Spanish hosts and a final fixture against the club we welcome to Goodison Park today – Newcastle United. The trip committed Everton to two close-season weeks in Spain which, with breaks in London and Paris, would take four days by train, Channel ferry and train again.

Everton defender Duggie Livingstone, later a successful Newcastle manager, penned a tour diary for the *Liverpool Echo* and revealed how every player was violently sea sick during the Channel crossing before recovering with a day's sightseeing in Paris.

Livingstone was an interesting character who also manager Sparta Rotterdam, the Republic of Ireland and Belgium!

After a 2-1 opening tour victory over Barcelona, the players had a five-day break and were entertained



Everton tour party to Barcelona, 1924

royally, sailing on the Barca chairman's luxury yacht, bizarrely attending a poultry exhibition, visiting a local bull ring and then experiencing the spectacular Montserrat with its mountain-top cathedral.

Cuff must have smiled. He had been balancing Barcelona's initial £1,000 revenue offer against Thomas Cook's estimated travel costs of £31 per head for the large travelling party of players and officials. A follow-up board meeting revealed how our wily chairman kept his summer tour options open by exploring an alternative offer to play three games against Danish opposition in Copenhagen. Barcelona was clearly the preferred option, though.

As it turned out, Everton secured an additional £200 from Barca and so arguably the most complicated and eventful end of season tour in Club history unfolded in May 1924. The Blues lost the second game against the hosts before beating Newcastle 2-1 to claim



Barcelona Cup Trophy

the Barcelona Cup that remains one of the Everton Collection's real gems. You can view it by appointment at the Liverpool Record Office while those board minute books can be viewed online at evertoncollection.org.uk

Images courtesy of the Everton Collection