

By Rob Sawyer

TED AND ALAN STOREY: GUARDIANS OF THE GOODISON GRASS

We'll say farewell to Goodison Park at the end of this season – 132 years after it was constructed. Incredibly, for more than EIGHTY of those years much of the responsibility for keeping the famous playing surface in top-top condition lay with the same family.

Ulverston-born Ted Storey joined Everton after leaving school in April 1902 and would serve on the club's groundstaff for more than 50 years. He was promoted to Head Groundsman in 1941, a post he held until his retirement just shy of 20 years later, nine years before his death. During his employment he lived on Gwladys Street and then Goodison Avenue. The Second World War necessitated him being on a roster of Club employees tasked with looking out for incendiary bombs dropping on the stadium. Like all groundsmen of that era, he'd still battle the elements and the wear and tear of regular fixtures to keep the pitch in the best possible condition

When Ted hung up his groundsman's coat, he had a ready-made replacement in his son, Alan, who was born in 1923. Becoming a groundsman at one of Britain's premier sporting stadiums was not in Alan's career plans. However, having served on Lancaster bombers in 106 Squadron of RAF Bomber Command, he could not face returning to life in an accountancy office after being demobbed.

Therefore, he leapt at the chance to join the Goodison office staff before moving over to the groundstaff where he received expert tutelage from his father.

Alan would develop a long-standing working relationship with Dougie Rose, who was responsible for Bellefield but also assisted at Goodison Park. Alan had a wide oversight of the stadium on matchdays – he liaised with the police commander and managed the



■ Alan at the Park End in the 1970s



■ Ted Storey and his wife

stewards and gatemen, overseeing the counting and auditing of the cash takings through the turnstiles. The counting room was located on the corner of Gwladys Street and Bullens Road, so Alan had precious little time to take in the action on the pitch.

Alan's loyalty and skill were recognised on several occasions by the Club. A Rotary watch was presented by the directors to mark 25 years of service and on his retirement in 1988, 41

years of dedication to the Blues was marked with a celebratory dinner in the Sponsors' Lounge at Goodison. Sir Philip Carter presented him with a VHS video recorder (NEC, naturally) as a retirement gift! But Alan could not be parted from Goodison that easily and he assisted until just two years before his passing in July 2000.

Sincere thanks to Rob Jones, Ken Jones and Ian Clayton for their help with this article.