

By Ken Rogers

GOODISON IN ITS GLORY . . .

Goodison Park has been more than a field of dreams for me. I was brought up in Everton from where I could hear the roar from our historic stadium calling me on matchdays. I was a toddler when, at the start of the 1952/53 season, my father took me to my first game... carrying me over a turnstile into the Bullens Road stand.

After a short fan apprenticeship in the caged-in Goodison Boys' Pen, I achieved my boyhood dream to stand among the Gwladys Street faithful, singing our classic battle hymn, 'We hate Bill Shankly and we hate St John and most of all we hate big Ron'. The absolute irony came when I took my first job as a 19-year-old trainee journalist with the former Liverpool Weekly News. One of my first tasks was to ghost write the regular column of the aforementioned 'Rowdy Yeats'!

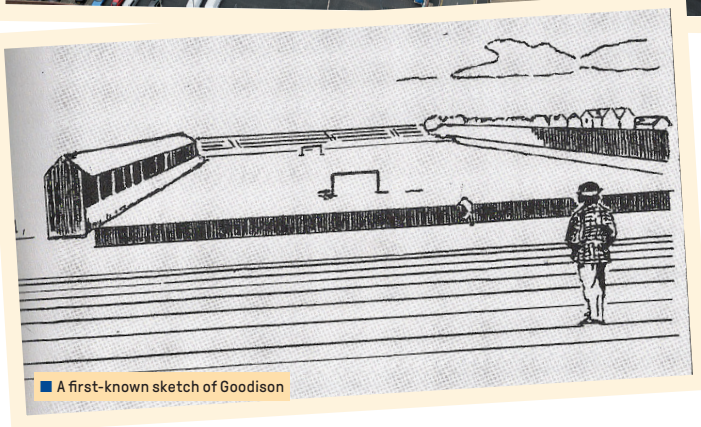
I would soon join the Echo, covering Howard and Colin's glorious 1980s with an opportunity to interview all the legends of yesteryear, culminating in the Club asking me to write the 1992 official centenary history of our stadium, *Goodison Glory*.

While researching in an Echo basement storage facility, I opened a draw and pulled out a very rough artist's sketch of the new Goodison Park which had been published in the *Football Echo* on 13 August 1892. Fittingly, it was a view from the Street End terrace. What a find!

Meanwhile, there used to be a large walk-in safe at the back of the Goodison Road main entrance. I asked if I could look inside to possibly further support my book research. In a dark corner, covered in dust, I discovered a treasure that, in a football sense, was the equivalent of archaeologist Howard Carter peeking into Tutankhamun's Egyptian tomb and being urged by his financial backer Lord Caernarvon to described what



■ Goodison Park today



■ A first-known sketch of Goodison

he could see. 'Wonderful things', said Carter.

I possibly uttered something similar, having discovered 29 hand-written volumes containing EFC Board minutes from 1887 to 1964. I was allowed to take them home and, for safety, slept with them under my bed for weeks while transcribing their contents. Naturally, they included the inside story of the 1892 building of Goodison. These

journals are now a key part of the Everton Collection, having been gradually lost at one stage and then brilliantly recovered by Everton FC Heritage Society founder David France.

Now a new stadium story is about to unfold, but each and every one of us will never forget our personal memories of the Grand Old Lady. Let's revel in all things Goodison while we still can. COYB!

