



By Rob Sawyer

# GOODISON AVENUE – EVERTON’S CELEBRITY STREET

During the recent World Cup finals in Qatar, the thoughts of more senior Evertonians may have turned to 1966, when Goodison Park played host to five matches, including a semi-final.

The pitch was graced by Flórián Albert, Eusébio, Garrincha, Franz Beckenbauer and, of course, the recently departed Pelé.

Although one of the country’s best-appointed stadia, some alterations were needed to bring Goodison up to the standard required. The biggest ‘casualty’ was Goodison Avenue, or half of it, to be more accurate.

Accessed off Goodison Road, to the rear of the Park End stand, the Club-owned cul-de-sac was lined by terraced houses. Typically, Everton would accommodate new signings there until such time that they obtained alternative lodgings in the area. If you’d been around in the 1930s and 1940s you could have chanced upon Dixie Dean, Billy Cook, Harry Cooke, Theo Kelly, Jackie Grant, and Tommy White going about their daily business, including making the very short commute to their place of work.

But it wasn’t just football stars and backroom staff living in the shadow of the stadium, as the Club-rented properties out to local families. Among them was Vera Hopley’s; she recalled: ‘I was born and lived at number 1 until I married at 29. I have so many good memories. When I was a little girl (in the 1930s) Jimmy Dunn lived at 10 and Dixie Dean was at 12.

‘Once, I was playing in the street – and I slipped, and a pile of coal fell on my foot. Tommy White was cycling down the road and he carried me in to my mum. She ran me along the ground in a panic and knocked on the door at the players’ entrance and asked Harry Cooke to take a look. He put me on the bed and strapped my foot up for me. Not many people can say that!’

In advance of the 1966 World Cup matches, the 1909-built Park End stand required alterations to improve access. The houses on the north side (odd numbers) of the Goodison Avenue were sacrificed – with occupants re-accommodated elsewhere. The small training ground, accessible via gates at the end of the cul-de-sac, became surplus to requirements after Bellefield was redeveloped in 1966.



By the late 1950s, players were living further out, but some Club stalwarts never left – notably Cyril Lello and Tommy Clinton. The Lellos had a visit from Howard Kendall and the Everton team in 1985, having secured the League title. The corner unit (number 2) served as a programme shop in the late 1980s.

Demolition of the remaining houses in 1993/94 was essential for the construction of the present Park End Stand. These days the turn-off from Goodison Road into the premium parking areas is the sole indication of the site that was once Everton’s ‘celebrity street.’