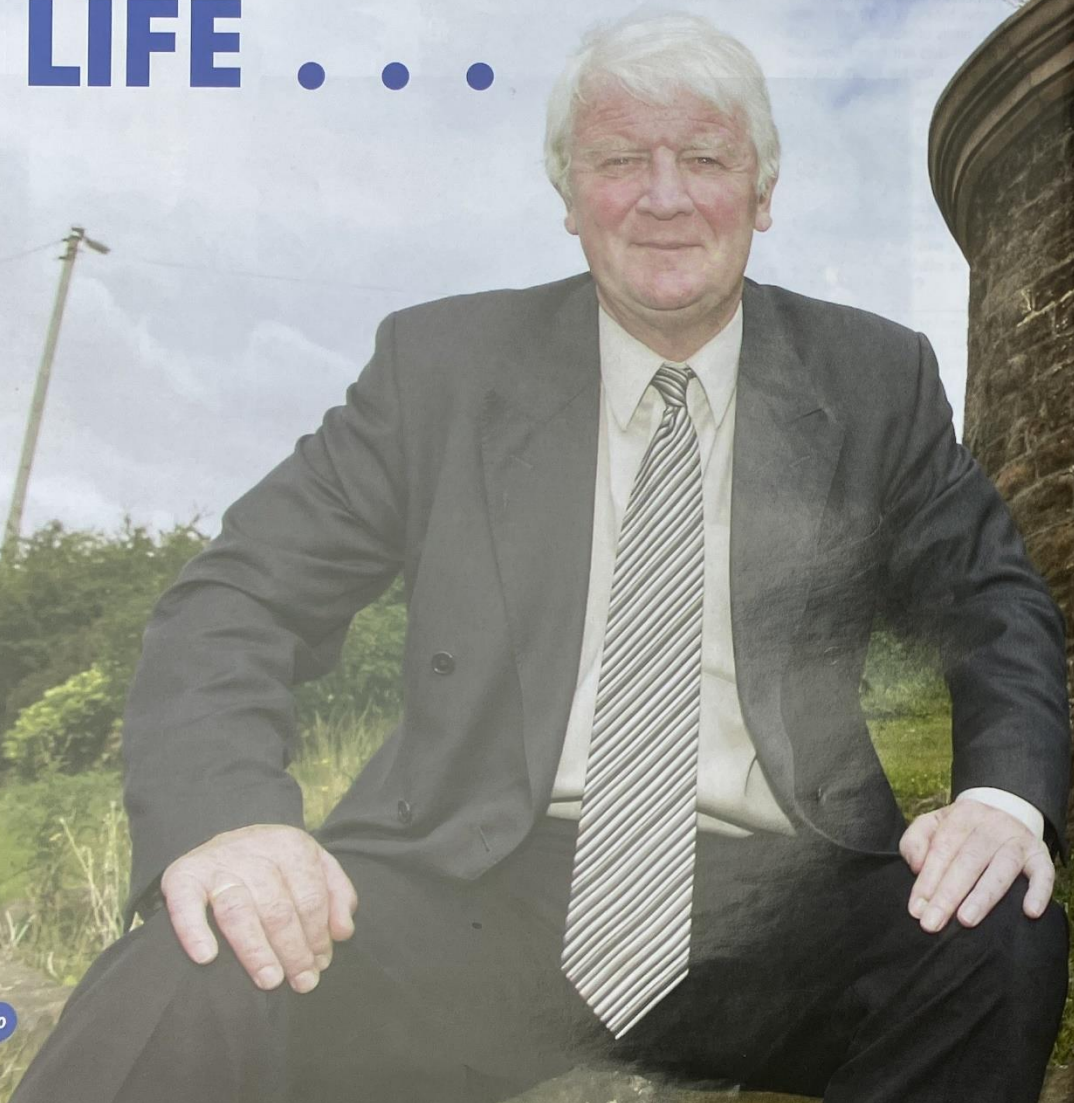


DOING THE **WALK OF** EVERTON **LIFE . . .**



125TH
ANNIVERSARY
1878 EVERTON FOOTBALL CLUB 2003

We're a grand old club and in our 125th anniversary season, it's only fitting that we retrace the famous city landmarks that have made Everton the club we know and love today. From the tower to Stanley Park and even Anfield - visiting the odd historic pub along the way - with Goodison, of course, the final destination. The Evertonian's **KEN ROGERS** recruited Goodison legend **BRIAN LABONE** to join him for this unique 'Walk of Fame' . . .

EVERTON TOWER

SANDON PUB

STANLEY PARK

GOODISON

ST. DOMINGO'S

ANFIELD

WINSLOW PUB



Evertonians regularly sing a famous battle hymn... IF YOU KNOW YOUR HISTORY. When that song reverberates around Goodison Park, it reminds us all that the Mersey Blues have a past that is a source of genuine pride.

Everton were founder members of the Football League in 1888. The club has played more seasons in English football's top flight than any of their famous rivals. Last season, of course, was the 100th.

Goodison Park itself, built in 1892, was arguably the country's first purpose built football stadium. The media of the day described it as being "on a scale resembling that of some of the great American baseball stadiums." Another report stated: "It appears to be one of the finest and most complete grounds in the kingdom."

Indeed, when the old Main Stand was built in 1909, the newspapers of the day declared: "Visitors will be astonished at the immensity of the new double decker structure."

Goodison was one of the wonders of the football world at that time and was actually given a royal stamp of approval. King George V and Queen Mary paid a visit in 1913. The stadium thus became the first Football League ground to be toured by a reigning monarch.

Again, if you know your history you will be aware that the first trainers' dugouts were introduced at Goodison in the Thirties. It was certainly one of the first grounds to install underoil heating with electrical wiring in place under the pitch as early as May, 1958. This was subsequently replaced by a more modern system of heated pipes.

Goodison Park actually staged an FA Cup Final (Notts County v Bolton) in 1894. This is how highly it was rated by the authorities. Of course, it staged famous World Cup games featuring the likes of Brazil and Portugal in 1966 - the glorious

international days of Pele and Eusebio.

I could go on listing these Goodison milestones and firsts. The stadium we know today has begun to be overshadowed by some of its modern rivals, but that famous song highlights the fact that fans continue to look on this historic venue with a real warmth and a fondness that makes it so very special.

And so as Everton celebrate another special year, this season marking the club's 125th anniversary, I felt that it might be time to go on an Everton "Walk of Fame" - a history trail encompassing key sites that lock in with the Blues' famous past. And so I

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invited one of Everton's greatest ever players, former skipper Brian Labone, to join me on my journey back in time, visiting some of the sites that have played a major part in Everton's history.

We spent three hours criss-crossing a piece of football territory that possibly covers no more than four square miles, but which is rich in football heritage. Along the way, we met Evertonians and Liverpoolians alike - not least because part of the journey took in Anfield which was actually Everton's home before George Mahon inspired the famous

move to Goodison.

It was a day I will never forget, especially because that great Evertonian ambassador Labone is magnificent company in any situation and full of stories about the era he remembers with most fondness - the Sensational Sixties and early Seventies. He is also extremely knowledgeable about the club in general.

Our starting point was the tower on Everton Brow that adorns the club crest. We sought out the sites of the famous Toffee Shop and also the Queens Head Hotel in Village Street where Everton adopted its name after initially starting as St. Domingo's.

We moved on to find out exactly where St. Domingo's itself actually stood and then visited the Sandon Hotel, Everton's headquarters when the club played at Anfield. Labby even ventured behind the Kop - the day before the derby! Well, it was once hallowed ground - for Evertonians!!

But the call of Goodison Park itself was too great for this True Blue. We headed across the park towards his spiritual home, but not without stopping at the site of Everton's original pitch in Stanley Park. I'm delighted to take you with us on our football journey back in time.

As I said, we start at that most significant of Everton landmarks, the lock-up Tower that has stood on that steep piece of land between Shaw Street and Everton Brow since 1787.

Incredibly, Labby tells me that this is the first time he has ever been right up close, even though he travelled past it every day of his young life en-route to Collegiate, the

High School he attended from the age of eleven and a great landmark in its own right.

In the first instance we struggle to gain access to the site from the Shaw Street side and can only stare through the iron railings.

A hastily built and less than attractive fence denies access to the long flight of steps that run up alongside the Tower which I knew as "Prince Rupert's Castle" as a kid - having been brought up just a stone's throw away on one of those steep streets sweeping down between St. Domingo Road and Netherfield Road.

I tell Brian the legend of the Tower, as I was told it as a young kid in Everton. As a boy, I was informed that the tower, close to the highest vantage point in the city, was the area from which Prince Rupert looked down on Liverpool during England's Civil War. Of course, only part of this was true.

Prince Rupert did take the city with his Royalist army and almost certainly viewed the challenge from Everton Ridge, but this was in 1644. The Tower wasn't built until 1787. As boys in Everton we were also told that a secret staircase lay below the Tower, leading to a tunnel whose entrance was on the banks of the River Mersey. I was told Prince Rupert used this as an escape route.

Again, it's a nice romantic thought, but not true. Rupert - having claimed Lincoln and Stockport and then slaughtered the inhabitants of Bolton, continued his march to Liverpool and he stormed and claimed the city on June 11 that year. No need for a secret staircase and an escape route to the river. Most of Lancashire was now under the Prince's control although his forces would ultimately be defeated.



That's the history out of the way. Brian and myself have a battle on our own hands - to reach the Tower itself which stands just a few yards away and actually has a solid floor. Definitely no secret steps. We have to drive about a mile and circle round, approaching it from the Everton Road side.

Finally, we are up alongside its sandstone walls. "It's the nearest I've ever been to it," says Brian. I went to the Collegiate for five years and only passed it on the bus."

We read the sign on the front of the tower. It declares: "Built in 1787 as a lock-up. The oldest surviving building in Everton, to the west end of Everton Village on the brow of the hill."

Brian is clearly delighted to be able to touch and feel the stone. He said: "Everton Football Club didn't come into existence until

100 years after the tower was built. The conical roof is a famous landmark."

He then breaks into a huge smile. "That's conical," he says. "Not conical!"

He kisses the badge on the plaque that highlights EFC's famous link with the tower. Brian is a massive Evertonian and his pride at having captained the club he supported as a boy to FA Cup and Championship honours is all too clear.

Everyone knows that the former England star is also a great joker. He roared with laughter and said: "If the Tower was still being used as a lock-up, me and Bails (John Bailey) would have been in it a few times."

Brian reflects that this area is also where John was brought up. He looks again at the plaque and reads aloud the club's proud motto: 'Nil Satis Nisi Optimum.' He translates: 'Only The Best Is Good Enough.'

He says: "I always write those latin words when I sign my autograph these days. It will tell you what the badge and Everton means to me. We remain a great club. Yes, we have slipped a little in modern times, but our Mr Moyes is giving us all renewed

hope."

Brian emphasises how important the Tower and the badge is to the club. He said: "Our ground is not actually in Everton. It is in Wallon, Liverpool L4. Therefore, it is the link with the past. The building also towers over Liverpool from its high vantage point. That's also symbolic for me."

Of course, Everton ridge and the surrounding area was once home to over 100,000 people. The community was broken up in the Sixties with families moved to all corners of the city as part of the so-called slum clearance programme. There is a lot of greenery about these days with Everton Park traversing the whole ridge and sweeping down as far as Great Homer Street, but it's a desolate site in some respects.

We look around and try to imagine those steep streets with their back-to-back terrace houses - a real football stronghold as well as an historic part of our great city.

Close to the tower is the site of the old Everton Toffee Shop, long since gone. We stroll up Village Street, now devoid of the old houses that once ran its length and, of course, with no sign of the former Queens Head Pub where Everton FC held the meeting to change its name from St. Domingo's. He says: "The Toffees remains our nickname. In some respects, it's a bit old fashioned, but again it reinforces our links with Everton itself. We are still proud of it."

It was time to move on. We climb the hill and set off in the direction of Anfield to find the next historic stop on our trail - the site of St. Domingo's Church. These days, sheltered accommodation for the elderly occupies that corner of St. Domingo Grove at its junction with Breckfield Road North.

Brian stands proudly alongside the St. Domingo Grove Street sign for a photograph and we spot two gentlemen sitting on a bench from the accommodation itself. One is

Evertonian Ernie Wonderley. The other is Jimmy Mathews, an Irishman who formerly held a Goodison season ticket. He quickly reminds Brian that the luck of the Irish is alive and well.

Jimmy won £800 in Everton's 50-50 draw five years ago and Brian helped present him with his cheque on the pitch. Three weeks later he won again, this time £1,400. They shake hands and Jimmy rushes inside to show Brian his prized Everton programme from the day, complete with picture of Jimmy receiving his cash. He claims an autograph from Labby.

The two fans then proudly show Brian the plaque within the sheltered accommodation that was unveiled on May 5, 1988. Not only does it mark the site of the former church, but also recalls the 60th anniversary

of the 60th goal scored by the legendary William Ralph "Dixie" Dean in 1928.

You can't go on a tour in Everton and Anfield without availing yourself of refreshments in one of the locals. Thankfully, our next historic stop took in one of the most famous football pubs in Liverpool - the Sandon Hotel on Oakfield Road. This was Everton's headquarters when they played at Anfield.

The landlord at that time was "King" John Houlding, later to become Lord Mayor of Liverpool. The players paraded Everton's first ever trophy at the pub in 1884 - the Liverpool Cup. The final was a thrilling derby match between the Blues and their great Mersey rivals of the day - Bootle!

Of course, Liverpool FC did not exist at that stage. Everton changed in the Sandon and the players walked down the road to Anfield alongside the opposition. That must have been an interesting sight when games got out of hand or the Everton players disappointed their own supporters and had to trudge back to the pub amongst them!

Houlding was not just the Blues' President. He also became their Anfield landlord. It was his decision to increase the stadium rent and then try to do it again that led to the famous 1892 migration across the park to the Mere Green Field, quickly to become Goodison. Of course, this also led to the formation of another local team whose name eludes Brian as we reflect on this most significant moment in local football history.

We meet the present landlord of the Sandon - George Hindley. George deserves



a medal in his own right for saving the building from demolition at a point when it was all but falling down. As part of their "100 years Of Top Flight Football" Everton erected a Blue plaque on the outside wall last season in the presence of Labby and Graeme Sharp. It was stolen by a hit squad who we can only assume were from the other persuasion. Whoever took the Blue plaque nailed a home-made wooden replacement in its place. On it was written the following words: "This Public House was the



birthplace of bitterness. Eviction was the only answer. YPC - Citizens of Liverpool." Brian doesn't take offence. He sees it as a bit of Scouse humour and reflects that a lot of bitter must have been swilled to ease the bitterness in reverse at Houlding's Sandon in those weeks after George Mahon and Everton upped and left for Goodison. Labby would love the real plaque to be returned, simply because it highlights the importance of the Sandon as an historic football building, blue and red. Indeed, probably an Everton and Liverpool plaque should adorn that outside wall - not least to salute the work current landlord George Hindley has done in saving such a famous Victorian hostelry. You know it makes sense.

A pint downed in the Sandon, it was time to move on. Brian was now warming to our very own football tour. "I love Scouse humour," he says. "I remember after we won the FA Cup in 1966 and I was lucky enough to collect it in the Royal Box. A fan stopped me in the street. He said 'Labby, five million wouldn't buy you.' "I was just just about to say 'Thanks very much, pal,' when he added. 'And I'm one of them!'"

What can you say? We arrive at the

Kop on Anfield Road and Brian stands alongside the statue of Bill Shankly. "He was our greatest rival," says Labby, "but when I had my testimonial I can remember getting a call from Bill. He said he'd heard that I wanted the game to be against Liverpool. He confirmed the match without a second thought.

"It actually cost me the equivalent of a canteen of cutlery for each Liverpool player. Can you imagine what it costs these days to tempt a club to come for a testimonial? I will also be grateful to Shankly who was a great fella.

"I should also say that Ian Callaghan, the man who has played more games for Liverpool than any other, is my second best mate behind Westy (Gordon West) who I roomed with as a player.

"When Cally wishes me all the best before Everton play he really means it. When I wish him all the best I have my fingers crossed because he's a nicer person than me! We have a great laugh together."

Brian reveals that he actually had the chance to sign for Liverpool as a schoolboy. He says: "Phil Taylor, then the manager at Anfield, offered me the opportunity. But I wanted Everton and the club has been my life.

We quickly leave the Kop behind and head into Stanley Park where Brian stands on what was Everton's first ever pitch, now a council car park. Goodison Park is rising in the distance.

"Let's go home," he says. "If I've had my picture taken with Shanks, I'll have to equalise with a shot in front of the statue of my real hero - the great Dixie." Job done, we walk round to the Park End and make our way into the stadium proper where Labby enjoyed so much glory as a player and where he continues his royal blue impact today as one of the club's great ambassadors.

He seems to know the name of every Evertonian who comes through that Main Entrance, indeed any entrance around the ground.

"It costs nothing to say hello and share a few memories," he says. "I love the job I've got at present, meeting and greeting the fans at Goodison. I meet lots of dedicated

supporters, old faces who have been coming to the stadium for years. I try to make new fans equally welcome. I also meet many old opponents who come with the media or with the opposition. Of course, it also enables me to keep in touch with many of my old team mates. The club has a very good rapport with its former stars."

We decide to finish off in another famous football pub, this time the very Evertonian Winslow facing Goodison's main entrance. It stood on the site even before the stadium was built.

Labby says: "I know that this is the best club in the world. I feel very flattered to have been involved with Everton for so long. That people remember me is another cause for satisfaction. I just love Everton.

"It's a very generous club. You never hear an ex-player with a bad word to say about us and that says a lot.

"Of course, we need to progress and continue to move forward. That is not my job, but I have real faith in David Moyes.

"What we have got is this remarkable

loyal fan base. We get well over 30,000 fans coming to Goodison, regardless of where we are in the League. Imagine what it would be like if we could get up there again and start to win things. Our fans deserve success.

"As I said, David Moyes is getting the very best out of the team and he is heading in the right direction. As for the ground, it was once magnificent but looks a bit old fashioned by modern standards.

"However, I'm just glad that we are still at Goodison as we celebrate our 125th anniversary. I just couldn't cope with the Goodison site becoming a supermarket or whatever. This is a ground where legends have made their name - men like Dixie Dean."

We step back outside into the Goodison Road sunshine. The stadium towers above us and our journey is over.

"It's been a great day says Brian, especially now that we are home. Goodison Park? I just love the place - and what a history!"



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Labby at the Everton Tower, reading the club plaque



At the site of St. Domingo's, a plaque saluting legend Dixie



Brian outside of Everton's old headquarters - the Sandon pub



Tarmac where it all began - the original pitch in the Park



Brian with Jemma Hindley from the Sandon and Ken Rogers



A true Blue Everton pub - the Winslow in Goodison Road



Home is where the heart is - Brian at Goodison Park

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PHOTOGRAPHY: Mooney Pics,
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SUBSCRIPTIONS: 0845 143 0001

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0151 285 8462

Write to: The Evertonian, Sport Media,
PO BOX 48, Liverpool, L69 3EB

EMAIL: evertonian@sportmedia-tm.com