

COLIN CAMERON

Charlton's history man

LEWIS COACHES reminds us of the debt we will always owe our legendary club statistician and historian

As a youth I played for a football team that was invited to The Valley as guests of Charlton. The match in question was a London Challenge Cup reserve game against Crystal Palace. We were lucky enough to have as our guide that evening Eddie Firmani, Charlton manager at the time.

In September 1968 the inner workings of the club took place under the old west stand and the entrance would be marshalled by a commissioner on matchdays. We ended up in the oak-panelled boardroom of Michael Gliksten, then the owner of the club.

We watched the game from the wooden seats of the old stand and the events of that evening I have never seen repeated. The tannoy announcer would give the scorers' name every time a goal was scored. Three times Paul Went's name was announced. He was Charlton's centre-half and would sometimes play as an emergency centre-forward. Unfortunately for him, however, it was an own goal every time.

Charlton lost 3-0 and it would not be until several years later that I was given Colin Cameron's version of events re this match.

Although of course I knew of him earlier, I got to know Colin well in the early 2000s, along with his close friend Alan Honey. My wife and I would see them on a Saturday evening in a local hostelry. The stories they told were always very interesting and

sometimes an eye-opener.

A chief executive of Charlton once said: "I am not too interested in the history of the club."

It's just as well that Colin never took that attitude! It had always been an interest in his life – collecting statistics and historical facts about Charlton. But how did he gather all his information, given that without today's technology everything had to be written on paper or typed and filed away by hand?

One way was that Morley Farror, the historian before Colin, kindly passed on all his documents and files, so he could carry on with his work. The files needed much updating and working on. But it was another step forward in gathering more information about the club. This added on to Colin's own facts and figures, for which he was most grateful.

Even more importantly, a lucky break occurred when Rodney Stone was appointed general manager of the club. Colin had several conversations with Stone and eventually he was granted access to the

records and accounts of the football club. The only downside to this being, Colin didn't appreciate the scale of the task. Colin's best friend, Alan, was then brought into the equation and together they set about the job that lay in front of them.

Stone took the pair of them into the oak-panelled board room, which was Gliksten's domain. As you would expect from a timber merchant, the boardroom had been immaculately lined out, not only with excellent oak panelling, but also with lead-stained windows that were set extremely close to the ceiling, so nobody could look out, let alone in.

This also didn't allow much light into the room. That was just as well, because had Colin and Alan seen the piles of documents which were stacked up around the room they would no doubt have run a mile. Stone had given them access to these documents, which included players' contracts, minutes of board meetings and gatebook receipts and attendances on the understanding that none



Busman's holiday: Alan Honey and Colin Cameron on the steps of the Football League in Lytham

of it left the boardroom.

After a few hours it became apparent that there was so much to go through that Colin and Alan had to persuade Stone to grant them permission to take the documents away so they could photocopy them and study them more closely. Their power of persuasion must have been immense, as he agreed to this and even helped them put the documents into Colin's car.

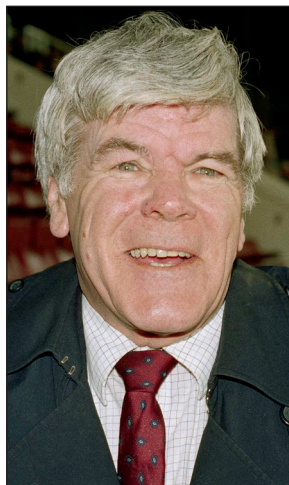
That itself was quite a task, because the board room was set up at the end of a long corridor, beneath the stand. Luckily Colin's car was parked up against the back door.

The suspension of Colin's sandy-coloured Rover must have been working overtime that day, as they managed to fill the car with all the documents and then returned back to Colin's home.

Over the next days and weeks Colin would be photocopying the documents while working at Extel and Alan would be helping him by sharing the task at the *Financial Times*, where he worked. Eventually all the documents were photocopied and the originals were returned to the Charlton boardroom.

Without any doubt, had Colin and Alan not carried out this work a lot of Charlton's history would have been lost forever. It was during this period that Colin started writing for the Charlton programme, using his knowledge on the subjects of history and statistics. His first article appeared on October 19th, 1974, in the programme against Chesterfield. At this stage, his surname was misspelled as "Cymeron", but three days later it was corrected in the programme against Watford.

Colin's next thought was to see if he could gain access to the records held by the Football League at Lytham St Anne's, so that he could cross-reference those he now had in his possession. Permission was



On his way home: Cameron at Upton Park in September 1992

granted by the Football League. So he dispatched Alan Honey and his wife Margaret on a week's "working holiday", and they started to carry out the task on Colin's behalf. Of course this could not be done in that first week alone. But it enabled them to continue their research into Charlton's history.

The next few years would see both Colin and Alan travelling back to the Football League headquarters to gain more information needed about Charlton. They would take up rooms at the Bedford Hotel, which was only a few steps away from the Football League headquarters. Quite often managers and players of different clubs would be staying at this hotel, having been called up for disciplinary actions, so they got to speak to them as well.

In fact, Colin not only gathered information about Charlton, but also had permission to look at the records of all the other London football league clubs. He could have written a book about all London derbies that had taken place. Unfortunately, he never found the time, but all the information

was filed on his computer and is now with the Charlton museum.

So, although Went's name was announced three times as goalscorer that evening in 1968, in Colin's first email to ourselves, he gave us details of that match. It turns out that Went was credited with the first two goals for Palace, but the third goal was judged to be entering the goal without his assistance.

This is what Colin sent us:

"30th September 1968 at The Valley (London Challenge Cup (1st Round)) – 1,258 (Receipts £147 14s. 6d. (incl. £8 5s. car park) before expenses £28 4s.)

Charlton Athletic 0: Hayward, Smith, Burkett, Booth (Warman in 2nd half), Went, Hall, Hince, Stenson, Gilchrist, Bolland, Mullen. Sub. Warman.

Crystal Palace 3 (Paul Went 2 o.g., Vansittart): Parsons, Presland, Bannister, Dawkins, McCormick, Blyth, Payne, Cook, Tomkins, Vansittart, Taylor. Sub. Harland.

Referee: J.S. Marshall (Kent). Linesmen: E.A. Bowers (Kent), D.A. Green (Kent). Injured: Dennis Booth carried off in second half with an ankle injury."

Colin is missed by so many people, not only because of the friendships he developed but also because of his outstanding knowledge of Charlton.

I tip my hat to you, Guv'nor!

Colin Cameron died on Christmas Day, 2012, aged 76. He published *The Valiant 500* in 1991 and *Home & Away with Charlton Athletic 1920-92* the following year. The latter was republished in a new, extended edition in 2003. In 2015 the media suite at The Valley was renamed in his honour.

