



England amateur international Captain, Jim Lewis, introduces Field Marshal Montgomery



1952 — Jim Lewis during Walthamstow's Cup replay with Manchester United at Highbury

Because my Dad had been such a loyal Walthamstow Avenue player, I suppose it was inevitable that I would end up at the same club, so after progressing through the schoolboy set-up, I eventually broke into their first team when I was sixteen. My father, Jim Lewis (Senior), was still in the side at that stage and having such a close ally as a teammate was a unique situation. Dad was a good wing-half and won an amateur international cap. It would be fair to say, though, that my Mum was just as big an influence on my career as anyone else, she was heavily involved with Walthamstow too. I considered myself to be a straightforward player, possessing pace and the ability to score goals rather than being full of tricks and creativity, but I did have moments when I did like to dribble and take people on. In fact Tony Banks, the MP, once told me that his first memory of watching me at Stamford Bridge was taking the ball round two or three players, so perhaps some of the fans saw me in a different light to the one I did.

I was then whisked away to India with the Army to do my National Service, where I played a lot of football against some very good sides, including one very impressive outfit from Calcutta by the name of Mohan Bagan while I was over there. I remember our regiment side competing in the India Cup, which was a competition that was held in Bombay and attracted the best sides from all over the country. In one of the cup games we were playing one of the stands collapsed and the match was cancelled. There weren't any fatalities, but it was terrible to witness and a lot of people were injured - that was the last year that the competition was held.

After the Army I returned to playing for The Avenue, who seemed to be improving all the time, culminating in a great FA Cup run in 1952 where we beat Wimbledon three-nil, Watford two-one and Stockport two-one, before being pulled out of the hat with Manchester United at Old Trafford. I scored up there in a one-all draw which meant United had to come to London for a replay, but for obvious reasons the fixture was switched to Highbury so that we could get a decent sized crowd for the game. I scored another two in the replay, but unfortunately we went down five-two, although the margin could have been a lot closer because Trevor Bailey, an England cricketer at the time, missed an absolute sitter right near the end, hitting the crossbar from about a yard out.

Walthamstow used to get between seven and a half and fifteen thousand fans for the bigger games and the stadium had one large stand which also housed a ballroom, a stage, a big bar, snooker tables, and underneath that lot, a shooting range. Today, Walthamstow is sadly no more, the Greenpond Road ground has been sold off and the