

When 300,000 went to Wembley

No one knows exactly how many people attended the first Cup final to be held at the newly built Wembley Stadium in 1923

There wasn't even very much happening in the world those days, but I do remember this damn great building that was going up.

My father, said to me "I hear there's a good game at Wembley this afternoon, let's try and get in!" He said "I haven't got a ticket but maybe we'll be able to pay at the door?"

We managed to get a train from Harrow to Wembley, and marched up that long 'Wembley Way' I think they call it now; and, when we eventually got up to a solid mass of crowd, we just couldn't get any nearer. So my dad being fairly adventurous in spirit said "Well, I haven't got a ticket, and neither have they, let's try and climb in!" So we did!

I had got separated from him and I heard a voice somewhere just behind me "Oh, there's a young lad here, let's let him in!" Another chap said "All right, pass him down the front!" So they did, and I was carried over the top of these very friendly people and deposited somewhere near the pitch.

The stands were massed, and obviously the overflow from the stands had converged on the pitch and the people were in just a horrible mess. In those days, nobody had thought about 'crowd control'. That number of people covering a football ground which everybody wanted to see, that was the point really that cleared them as much as the chap on the horse; because they all realised that if they didn't get off the pitch, there wasn't going to be a game.

My father came from Lancashire and he obviously supported Bolton, but I didn't know at the time because I couldn't know where he was. All I could see was an occasional figure floating past me.

I was left, down amongst the crowd, who were gradually wafting away, and I thought to myself "I'll never find him; I may as well stay here." And I don't know how long it was, but he eventually wandered into sight.