



## TREADING IN A GREAT GRANDFATHERS FOOTSTEPS – PAUL VALENTINE

If you have any interest in football history, are a Shrimper, or are a Spurs or Chelsea fan, or just like a good yarn with an emotional twist and the promise of a sequel, then read on.

Following one of our Former Players Club meetings we received a note of thanks from an attendee who mentioned in passing that his fellow 'class of 1964' Shrimper teammate Paul Valentine's great-grandfather played in the 1901 FA Cup final. That sounded like something worth following up on, and in the course of doing so we uncovered a real gem that no one previously knew anything about.

First, a bit of background. Back in May 2024 when we reunited eight of the former SUFC youth team players who went on a 1964 tour to Holland, Paul Valentine was unable to be there and make it nine as he lived in Tasmania. Bit of a light-weight excuse really, but anyway we did catch up with him when he visited the UK in September when he joined us at a match at Roots Hall. In those 1960's playing days Paul never actually made the first team as, just after the tour having had the news that he'd just been selected for an England youth team trial, he was hit whilst on his scooter by a motorist in West Street, Prittlewell. Though after a period in hospital he went on to captain the youth team, that piece of bad luck largely put paid to his future football dreams.

#1

**Tenure**  
1905-06  
26 Appearances  
9 Goals

**Birth**  
2 April 1875  
Ayr, Ayrshire

**Death**  
16 November 1931  
Erdington, Birmingham

**Burial**  
St Barnabas Churchyard

**David Copeland**

CHELSEA FOOTBALL CLUB

CHELSEA GRAVES SOCIETY

Paul though, as we found out, has a football pedigree. His great-grandfather was David Copeland (2 April 1875 – 16 November 1931) – Paul knew little about him as he said his grandfather was a bit of a dour Scotsman who talked very little about his family, and he has not had any contact with descendants of the Copeland family outside of those immediate to him. It was known though that David had played in the 1901 FA Cup final for Spurs and had played for Chelsea, but there are no family scrapbooks from that time to look back on, and the whereabouts of his great-grandfather's FA Cup final medal is a complete mystery.

David was a Scot who moved south from Ayr (where he played for Ayr Parkhouse) and settled first in the Birmingham area (in Walsall). He played for Walsall Town Swifts for five years before going further south to Bedminster, where he played for the local team. He then joined Spurs in 1899 when they were in the Southern League, and this is where we uncovered the first of a couple of amazing facts as David played in (and scored a hat-trick) in the first ever game at White Hart Lane,

a 4-1 win over Notts County (a picture of that match is shown here). So, already he has a special place in the hearts of all Spurs fans.

However, more was to come as, in 1901, beating some big teams on the way, Spurs made it to the FA Cup final as a non-league team, a feat that has not been repeated since nor is it ever likely to be. Oddly, David missed all of the league games in the 1900/01 campaign but played in every FA Cup game and scored en route to the final which was played in front of over 114,000 at Crystal Palace v Sheffield United. It ended 2-2, so off they all trotted to Burnden Park, then home of Bolton Wanderers, where a much smaller crowd (thanks to the railway companies refusing to lay on sufficient subsidised travel again) saw Spurs run out 3-1 winners. David played but didn't score – his teammate Sandy Brown was though amongst the scorers and became the first ever person to achieve the feat of scoring in every round netting a total of 15 times.

There is some great footage of the game online, which Paul had not seen before, and perhaps the best link to a YouTube clip about the match is the following as it contains the dulcet tones of the great John Arlott in a voice-over:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=jn71W134aoE&pp=ygULRmEgY3VwIDE5MDE%3D>

Legacy number stats from Spurs show that David was the 66th person to pull on a Tottenham Hotspur shirt (they are now at circa 900 in the current first team squad) but, after 131 appearances and 36 goals, he moved on to Chelsea to become a member of their first ever team, the initial match at Stamford Bridge being a 4-0 friendly match win against Liverpool. Keeper Bill Foulkes, renowned for filling the goal with his presence and who David had faced in that 1901 FA Cup Final, was one of his new teammates.

David scored nine times for Chelsea in 26 matches and was club captain, but then sadly he suffered a badly broken leg in a match against Leicester Fosse and thereafter first team opportunities were limited. However, the best bit of all this research is that one of his games he played to seek to get back to full fitness was on 30 January 1907 at ... Roots Hall!

So, in playing at Roots Hall some 58 years later in 1964, Paul trod in his great-grandfather's footsteps, something he was completely unaware of until we started digging. Now, of course that 1907 match was at the first Roots Hall before our club moved out to the Kursaal and then the Southend Stadium at Grainger Road before Sid started digging and we returned in 1955. Nevertheless, it is quite something to consider – and Paul now has a brand-new story or two to tell his family and friends.

David moved to Derby in 1907 and in a bid to resurrect his playing career turned out a couple of times for Glossop North End, back then a league club playing in the Second Division (they still exist – if you are ever in the area their somewhat ramshackle Surrey Street ground is worth a visit). However, that did not last long, and he then earned a living working in pubs in the Birmingham area. He was too old to serve in the First World War and sadly dropped dead from a heart attack whilst chopping wood in 1956 (he had at times journeyed out to join lumber camps in Canada to earn extra money).

David's son (Paul's Grandfather) Sam Copeland tried to enlist during WWI as a 16-year-old but got caught and was sent home before he could do any damage! He too, apparently was a good

footballer and was asked to sign for Walsall, but he thought there was too little security in the game and so he became a printer.

In unearthing some of this information we sought the help of some kind folk who run historical groups for Spurs and Chelsea, both were thrilled to learn about Paul and his links to a player who is so important to the history of their clubs and are eager to meet him. So, when Paul and his family are next in the UK, it has been agreed that a visit will be arranged to view what historical documents each of those clubs have from those times at the start of the 1900's and make a bit of a day out of it all. And maybe we might just finish the day with a walk over the turf at Roots Hall.

Andy Leeder, December 2024