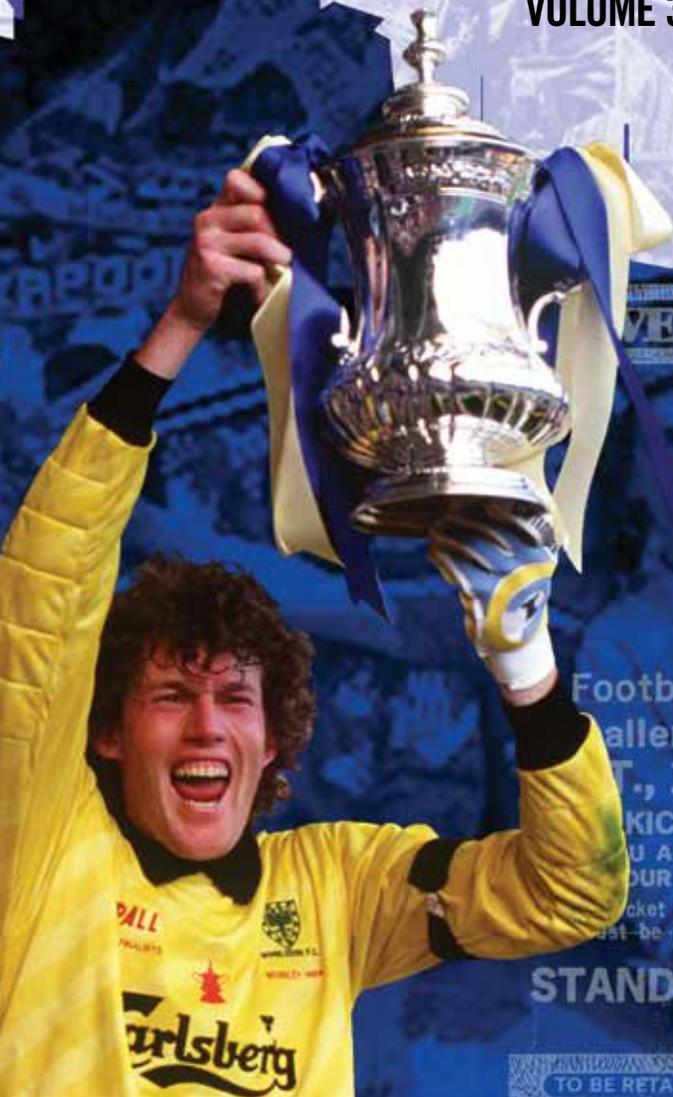


FROM RICKY VILLA

TO DAVE BEASANT

WHEN THE FA CUP *REALLY* MATTERED
VOLUME 3 - THE 1980s



WEMBLEY STADIUM

Football Association
Challenge Cup Final Tie
T., 16 MAY, 1987

KICK-OFF 3.00p.m.
YOU ARE ADVISED TO TAKE UP
YOUR POSITION BY 2.30p.m.

1. This counter-
ticket is not transferable. 2. This counter-
ticket must be retained for at least 6 months.

STANDING £6.00

Matthew Eastley

TO BE RETAINED

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TO DAVE BEASANT**
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VOLUME 3 - THE 1980s

Matthew Eastley



Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Foreword	8
Introduction	11
Arsenal v West Ham United	
Saturday 10 May 1980	15
Manchester City v Tottenham Hotspur	
Saturday 9 May and Thursday 14 May 1981.	45
Queens Park Rangers v Tottenham Hotspur	
Saturday 22 May and Thursday 27 May 1982	77
Brighton & Hove Albion v Manchester United	
Saturday 21 May and Thursday 26 May 1983	105
Everton v Watford	
Saturday 19 May 1984.	143
Everton v Manchester United	
Saturday 18 May 1985.	168
Everton v Liverpool	
Saturday 10 May 1986.	200
Coventry City v Tottenham Hotspur	
Saturday 16 May 1987.	229
Liverpool v Wimbledon	
Saturday 14 May 1988.	271
Everton v Liverpool	
Saturday 20 May 1989.	316

Introduction

THIS is the third and final book about that most magnificent of competitions, the FA Cup, and specifically the FA Cup Final itself. I was moved to write these books because I was saddened and frustrated to see the gradual decline of a competition which was such a fundamental part of football's fabric. I was born in the mid-1960s and my formative years were spent sitting wide-eyed in front of the television set, with colour pictures still a novelty, watching the likes of Ian Porterfield, Bobby Stokes, Roger Osborne and Alan Sunderland carving their names into footballing history.

Despite valiant attempts in recent years to breathe life back into the competition, I believe irreparable damage was done, chiefly during the 1990s, when it was mismanaged, under-marketed and devalued.

It's fair to say that the media landscape has changed dramatically over the last quarter of a century. The FA Cup Final enjoyed its heyday when live broadcasting was comparatively rare. Apart from the FA Cup Final, the only live football matches shown were the England v Scotland Home International clashes, World Cup games and the occasional match such as England's showdown against Poland in October 1973, which required complex negotiations on behalf of the broadcasters to screen.

So the FA Cup Final was truly special and we all sat down and watched it. From the moment coverage started in the late morning, we would be glued to the build-up, enjoying traditional quirks like *Cup Final Mastermind*, *Cup Final It's a*

Knockout, interviews from the teams' hotels, cameras on the coach and more interviews as the teams strolled on the pitch in their specially-tailored suits. We hummed along with 'Abide With Me' and smiled at pun-laden banners like 'Osborne Takes the Biscuit' or 'Channon Strikes More Times Than British Leyland'.

Whether you were lucky enough to be there or watching at home, it was a yearly ritual that transcended football. I heard on countless occasions people say they did not like football but they always watched the FA Cup Final. My granddads both used to wear a suit on cup final day because it felt special, different and important.

I believe the 1980s represented the last great decade of the competition and that the dramatic Wimbledon v Liverpool final of 1988 is the last great classic of that era.

There have been some excellent matches since of course but a number of factors had already begun to conspire which diminished the competition – and particularly the final.

The establishment of the Premier League, in 1992, is of crucial importance. It brought with it unprecedented financial rewards. Live matches became the norm, accompanied by clever, intense marketing (which some might say equated to ludicrous hype), which helped establish the Premier League as the only show in town. Whereas in the 1970s we had, at most, two or three live matches during an entire season, by the 1990s, that number was regularly being shown in a single week.

It's also important to say that, over the preceding decades, no team had been able to exert a stranglehold on the competition so we were able to enjoy a whole host a so-called smaller clubs competing and, in several cases, actually winning, at Wembley.

Sadly, that largely disappeared in the 1990s and 2000s and a predictable succession of winners – for me a series of uninteresting finals involving Chelsea, Manchester United, Liverpool and Arsenal, all merge into one – did not help.

The competition began to lose its romance. Winning the cup final became a 'nice-to-have', not a 'must-have'.

INTRODUCTION

As Mike Collett says in his indispensable *The Complete Record of the FA Cup*, it is wrong to suggest there was ever some kind of 'golden age'. The top teams of the day frequently did reach the FA Cup Final but there was a perception that the competition was more open and the victories of clubs like Sunderland, Southampton, West Ham, Ipswich, Coventry and Wimbledon prove that.

Of course, there have been victories by so-called, less fashionable clubs in the new millennium and I take absolutely nothing away from the achievements of the likes of Portsmouth and Wigan Athletic for winning the competition and teams like Millwall, Cardiff, Stoke and Hull for reaching the final.

For me, however, the gloss went from the final many years previously. It was unthinkable that I would ever miss the FA Cup Final and, for every match between 1971, when I was five, and 1996, when I was 30, I could tell you exactly where I was and who I was with. It gets more difficult after that because, to my great regret, the FA Cup Final is now just another game.

One last thing is that I have never been to the FA Cup Final. Like millions of youngsters I sometimes dreamed of scoring the winner at Wembley. I thought if players like Ian Porterfield, Alan Taylor, Bobby Stokes and Roger Osborne could do it, then so could I.

I could play a bit but it was never going to happen. The next best thing for me was to see my team (FA Cup winners in 1947) play in the final. That has not happened either and, realistically, does not look very likely.

This project started when I began talking to a Chelsea fan who had been at the classic 1970 final and replay. His eyes lit up as he remembered the time. He could remember what life was like, what he was wearing, what songs were in the charts and what was in the news. He could recall minor details of the day, getting to the ground, seemingly trivial incidents and snatches of conversation that were still fresh after 40 years. That fascinated me and I found myself searching for more memories. Over the last six years, I have encountered in the region of

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700 football fans all over the globe who have attended FA Cup Finals since 1960 and they, like that Chelsea fan, can recall it as though it was yesterday.

This then, is the 1980s and I hope you will enjoy this final trip down memory lane to a time when the FA Cup Final was still the only show in town.

THE NAME IS BONDS...BILLY BONDS

Arsenal v West Ham United

Saturday 10 May 1980

IT was like something from David Attenborough's *Life on Earth* where a bullying predator such as a lion or cheetah takes out some docile, defenceless quarry like a zebra or an antelope from behind. On second thoughts, it was more like a thin, correction-fluid white Ronald McDonald impersonator spoiling a party for a cherubic-faced nine-year-old boy. In reality, it was a lanky, ginger-haired pantomime villain called Willie Young, Arsenal's centre-half, mercilessly tripping West Ham's Paul Allen, the nation's darling, on the biggest footballing stage of them all.

More than 30 years on, it remains the defining moment of the 1980 FA Cup Final along with a headed goal by a footballing genius who never headed...



Billy Bonds is the sort of name you don't hear anymore. It carries a *Boy's Own* quality with something of the *Roy of the Rovers* about it. It's a uniquely British moniker and, for West Ham fans, the name – and indeed the man himself – sums up everything they love about their team. Bonds was whole-hearted, passionate and fiery. Though born south of the river

and originally a Charlton player, Bonds, or 'Bonzo', has West Ham running through his veins.

On 22 April 1980, the Hammers played Birmingham City at Upton Park in the Second Division, as the second tier of English football was then known. Relegated two years previously, they still had an outside chance of promotion back to the First Division but there was a buzz of excitement around the Boleyn for a very different reason. A week earlier, they had beaten First Division Everton at Elland Road in a dramatic FA Cup semi-final replay to secure a place in the 1980 FA Cup Final. Subsequently, the East End had gone cup mad.

That night in London E13, you'd think some players might have had Wembley on their minds. But Billy Bonds was cut from different cloth. He was a 110-per-center, every game. In the Birmingham City side that night was Colin Todd, a world-class defender and hard as nails himself. With those two on the field, anything could happen.

Watching from the famous 'Chicken Run' stand that night was 24-year-old Hammers fan Peter Hamersley, a veteran of the 1975 FA Cup win over Fulham and already in possession of a Wembley ticket.

The date was an extremely significant and poignant one for him, as he recalls, 'Tuesday, 22 April 1980 was the five-year anniversary to the day that my younger brother, Derek, had passed away. He died at about 8.30pm in the London Hospital. It's a date and time that lives with me forever. On this fifth anniversary, and just as we approached 8.30pm, "Bonzo" went into a full-blooded tackle with Colin Todd.

'They went in hard and fair but perhaps the roar of 37,000 people sent a rush of blood to their heads as they clashed.'

With the ball stuck between them, Bonds and Todd started kicking out. After the ball had gone, they were still kicking and then began full-on fighting roared on by the crowd. "Bonzo" was trapped,' says Peter, 'and Todd was on his knees throwing punches into his face. Knowing how hard Billy was, I was stunned to see him take so many unopposed hits. Other

players quickly separated them but, once he was on his feet, “Bonzo” went at Todd as if it was a boxing match. For a while there was a free-for-all and, when it was over, there was no option for the ref but to send Bonds and Todd off.’ To the stunned dismay of the Boleyn faithful, it meant Bonds would miss the FA Cup Final.

It was an incident that has stayed with Peter, ‘I’d followed the legend that was Billy Bonds since 1967. He was a truly hard man. But seeing someone get the better of him was a strange feeling. It felt like I’d seen my big brother get beaten up. I was saddened – but then reality dawned on me and I remembered Derek, my real brother, and the significance of that moment in time.’



In the years following their 1975 FA Cup success, West Ham had fallen into decline. Despite reaching the European Cup Winners’ Cup Final of 1976, their form dipped sharply and after 20 successive seasons in the top flight, they were relegated in 1978. But, as Peter recalls, this was not the end of the world, ‘We held on to quality players and, under John Lyall, a strong squad was assembled for the 1979/80 season. Despite not making it back in the first season, I felt it was only a matter of time. You could see it in the way the team played.

‘We had been strengthened with the purchase of big Phil Parkes in goal, in my opinion, our greatest ever goalkeeper. Expert penalty-taker Ray “Tonka” Stewart was at right-back and at left-back was the veteran Frank Lampard. Strong, sturdy and reliable, Frank would have made a great captain for the Hammers were it not for the man playing alongside him, Billy Bonds. Alongside Bonzo was the rising talent of Alvin Martin, a tall centre-half who earned the nickname “Stretch”.

‘Our midfield had the perfect combination required to play the football we were famous for. The star role was given to Trevor Brooking. Referred to as “Geno”, short for genius, he was style, elegance and skill, an all-around magician.

‘The other midfield star was young Alan Devonshire. A bargain buy from Southall, “Dev” was approaching his zenith. He was fast, skilful and very hard to dispossess.

‘To complement Brooking and Devonshire, we had two workhorses in Geoff Pike and Paul Allen. “Pikey” was an energetic, physical player with a fair shot on him. Paul “Ollie” Allen was competitive and full of running.

‘Up front, we relied on the experience of journeymen David Cross and Stuart Pearson. Both had seen better days, Pearson at Manchester United and Cross at a host of other clubs in the top leagues. The combination was a good recipe though.’



In 1980, Gary Lawrence from Chelmsford was 17. A regular at Upton Park since 1972, he recalls the heady intoxication of West Ham home games during this period. ‘My teenage years were turbulent,’ he remembers, ‘but I could go to West Ham and forget about everything else. I’ve tried to explain to younger people what it was like then and why I lived for it. The tingle of excitement as you pushed through the turnstile and caught the whiff of mud, hot dogs and peanuts has never left me.

‘I always arrived early and the sense of anticipation as the clock ticked slowly round was palpable. There was no warm-up on the pitch then and the first sight of a claret and blue shirt was when the players emerged from the tunnel to a crescendo of noise. No amount of carefully-crafted big screen video packaging can ever come close to matching that. This was the Saturday world I lived for.’



The 1980s begin with the first national steel strike since 1926 but this does not stop British Steel announcing it will axe 11,287 jobs in Wales by the end of March. And in Kenya, naturalist Joy Adams, author of *Born Free* is killed, apparently by a lion. Pink Floyd are top of the charts with ‘Another Brick in The Wall’. The Roger Waters-penned number, taken from the album *The*

Wall is helped to the summit by a memorable animated video where a teacher is seen putting his pupils through a mincer. As the new decade starts, FA chiefs hope to see an end to the crowd violence and racist chanting which has blighted the game. But there is a long way to go. In a report in the *Daily Express*, a reporter still feels the need to describe QPR's Bob Hazell as 'the coloured centre-half'.

The third round of the FA Cup takes place on 5 January with West Ham drawn away to Ron Atkinson's West Bromwich Albion. Peter Hamersley was there and saw a brilliant display by Phil Parkes earn a replay. 'We then tore into the Baggies under the lights at the Boleyn in the replay,' says Peter. An injury to ex-Albion striker David Cross sees Geoff Pike start up front. He performs brilliantly and scores a superb 52nd-minute goal to seal a 2-1 win for the Londoners and a tie at near neighbours Orient.

Before the Orient game, West Ham beat Preston 2-0 at Upton Park in a bread-and-butter league match. The fixture is significant though for an incident where Alvin Martin accidentally kicks Billy Bonds in the head. The day before the tie at Brisbane Road, Bonds's face is a mess, a mass of blood and stitches. Many players would have cried off, but not Bonds. The day before the game he tells reporters, 'I want to play. The eyebrow should be okay unless I catch an elbow. But the other wound is a problem. It's right where I have to head the ball.'

Needless to say, when the Hammers' coach pulls up outside Brisbane Road, Bonds is on it. He's playing, although Brooking and Cross are sidelined.

Peter Hamersley recalls, 'Brisbane Road was full of West Ham fans, and although we won 3-2, there were a couple of scares.' Typically, the heavily-bandaged Bonds doesn't hold back and earns a booking.

Even players like Bonds though are fallible and the injury keeps him out for the next seven games. It coincides with a poor run that sees West Ham fall away in the league. But the cup run continues. Swansea, managed by John Toshack, bring

a large, fervent following to Upton Park but are no match for the Hammers who win 2-0.

With New Muzik's 'Living By Numbers' in the charts, the numbers in the famous velvet bag give West Ham another home draw in round six, this time against Ron Saunders's fast-improving Aston Villa, a side only 12 months off a stunning league championship win. West Ham are still rank outsiders at 16-1 to lift the cup.

Peter says, 'By now, cup fever had really hit the East End. The club slowly woke up to the possibility of reaching our second FA Cup Final in five years but, once again, put no system in place to reward loyal supporters with a ticket.'

The sixth-round tie against Villa is a classic. A chilly Saturday, one of those late winter/early spring days that England does so well, creating night on perfect conditions for football and Upton Park is bulging at the seams. With the turf starting to cut up in time-honoured fashion, Trevor Brooking is at his unplayable best.

'It was a great atmosphere matched by a tense hard game where we gave as good as we got,' says Peter, who was there with friends Gary Jackson and Mark Aldridge. Brilliant as West Ham were that day, they couldn't unlock the Villa defence and a midweek replay at Villa Park beckoned.

Then, with five minutes remaining and Upton Park reaching boiling point, there comes a dramatic moment. Brooking floats in an outswinging corner and, inexplicably, Villa centre-back Ken McNaught raises his arm and pushes the ball off the top of Alvin Martin's head. Though McNaught pleads innocence, Accrington referee David Richardson immediately points to the spot.

Peter says, 'Our penalty-taker was Ray "Tonka" Stewart. We had signed him from Dundee United and he had been an instant success. He was a superb spot-kick taker with several techniques. I hadn't seen him miss.

'Thirty thousand of us held our breath as "Tonka" lined up the kick. He must have been under a lot of pressure but he

thumped it past Jimmy Rimmer and sent us into the semi-finals. A line was drawn in the sand – cup fever well and truly set in.' It sets up a semi-final clash with Gordon Lee's Everton.



When Stewart's penalty hit the net, sending Upton Park into delirium, Gary Lawrence was dancing round a small transistor radio with some mates in Chelmsford town centre. 'My life was in turmoil and the excitement of the cup was my only refuge,' he says. 'I'd had a major falling out with my mum and stepdad and left home. Friends of my mum called Glenda and Malcolm took me in. I was skint and unsure of what lay ahead. I had part-time jobs as a waiter and a breakfast chef and could just about afford a fortnightly trip to Upton Park. But the extra cup games were a problem and I had no money for that Villa tie.'



Easter 1980. The Jam are at number one with the double A-sided 'Going Underground/Dreams of Children'. Inspired partly by the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in December and Paul Weller's fears concerning nuclear war, 'Going Underground' is a mature and thought-provoking song which belies the writer's 22 years. Meanwhile, Spaniard Severiano Ballesteros becomes the youngest golfer to win the Masters and, in a sinister sign of things to come, Argentina is reported to be increasing links with the Falkland Islands. And it's the final curtain for the master of suspense, Alfred Hitchcock. The film director dies, aged 80.

For West Ham fans, there is the small matter of an FA Cup semi-final to occupy their minds. In Manor Park, east London, Peter Hamersley and his mates set off for Birmingham in Gary Jackson's yellow Ford Escort Mexico. It was a warm and sunny spring day as the lads took their places on the massive Holte End.

Peter recalls, 'Semi-finals can be dull affairs. Certainly this was the case when West Ham played Ipswich at the same ground five years earlier. My own life at that stage reflected

the same mood as my younger brother Derek who was clinging on to dear life as he fought courageously against cancer. Sadly he had lost that battle. But here I was again with Derek on my mind, at the same scene five years on. Over that time, life had moved on and regenerated itself in the same way as the warm fresh winds did on that spring day.'

It's a beast of a game and the following day, in the *Sunday Express*, reporter Alan Hoby writes, 'This was not so much a semi-final than a 90-minute explosion. I have never seen a Cup game to match it for drama and excitement.'

An even first half exploded into life five minutes before the break when Everton's Brian Kidd dispatched a hotly-disputed penalty past Phil Parkes. Kidd then turned villain in the second half when he clashed with Ray Stewart and was given his marching orders by Carlisle referee Colin Seel. Peter recalls, 'We got back in the game with a Stuart Pearson goal and were then unlucky as the ref disallowed a perfectly good goal by Paul Allen.' The game finishes 1-1, setting up a replay at Elland Road, a venue which, geographically, benefits Everton.

'I was working in the Civil Service with Mark and Gary,' says Peter. 'I use the term "working" loosely as it was more like a social club in our Poplar office. Getting Wednesday afternoon off for the replay in Leeds was no problem.'

'I had a lovely, white, 1973 Morris Oxford. It was old-fashioned, but immaculate. We got to Leeds in plenty of time and parked within 15 minutes of Elland Road.'

It's a tight, entertaining game but, after 90 minutes, goalless. Football fans round the country tune into that night's specially-extended *Sportsnight* with its dramatic signature tune, penned by Tony Hatch and presented by the bespectacled Harry Carpenter. From Elland Road, commentator Barry Davies strains to get his voice heard over a febrile crowd.

Four minutes into extra time, Brooking breaks out of Everton's half and, with that all-important, trademark quick glance up, releases Devonshire on the left flank. He plays a beautiful ball with the outside of his right foot to Stuart Pearson

on the edge of the box. The former Manchester United man plays a deft one-two back to Devonshire and suddenly the Everton defence is gaping wide. ‘He’s in the gap,’ screams Davies as Devonshire collects the ball and, shrugging off a crude challenge from Billy Wright, enters the area. ‘Can he put it in? He can!’ It’s a great goal by the midfielder who is in the form of his life.

‘It was a brilliant goal,’ says Peter. ‘The place erupted. We went mad. We had to try to hold on as the tension grew and grew.’

But the Hammers can’t hold on because, with just seven minutes of extra time remaining, another great goal breaks their hearts. Wright appears on the right flank and whips in a superb low cross. It takes a great striker to beat Phil Parkes to that sort of ball but Everton centre-forward Bob Latchford gets his head to the cross and the ball flashes into the net, right in front of Peter Hamersley. With the big terrace divided down the middle between fans, the Londoners are stunned as Latchford clambers up the fence to celebrate with the Evertonians.

There is another dramatic twist in this extraordinary semi-final and it comes from a most unlikely source. Three minutes are left on the clock. The Everton fans are bellowing, ‘Sing when you’re winning, you only sing when you’re winning.’ Brooking takes a throw, gives it to Pike who gives it back. Switching to his left foot, the consistently brilliant Brooking launches the ball into the box where it is met by David Cross who nods it towards the penalty spot where a white-shirted man is waiting.

To this day, no West Ham fan knows what Frank Lampard was doing in the centre-forward position that night in Leeds but he was and, launching his body at the ball, he heads it past a horrified Martin Hodge in the Everton goal. Unbelievable drama as Peter Hamersley remembers, ‘It went in and brought the house down. There was uproar. The moment you realise the ball is in is so hard to describe. You are up from your seat. You know it is a goal in the last moments of a cup semi-final. Someone asks, “Who’s scored?” “Frank” comes the incredible

reply! You are up, you are jumping, you are hugging, you are screaming.'

Thirty-five years on, it is Lampard's celebration which is lodged in the memory. Socks round his ankles, sidestepping the attentions of delirious team-mates, he darts towards the corner flag.

'I didn't see what happened,' says Peter. 'I saw Frank and the players running over to the corner, but thought he was celebrating with the fans. It's now legendary that he ran and danced around the corner flag in his celebration jig.'

Moments later referee Seel blows his whistle for full time. An old boy behind Peter and his mates loses his teeth in the mayhem, 'He leaned forward to retrieve them cheering a very gummy, "By Jove we've done it" without his gnashers in,' says Peter.

'The four of us hugged and jumped and danced. At the time, UB40 were telling us we were "King" – at West Ham in April 1980, that's certainly what we were.'



The 1970s had been a strange decade for Arsenal. It started with the momentous double in 1971 but, after finishing league runners-up in 1973, their form slumped and the years between 1974 and 1977 are ones most Gooners of a certain age try their best to forget. This was the period, however, when Alan Budgen, born in Stoke Newington in 1963, started going regularly with a group of friends who lived in the same block of flats.

'Supporting Arsenal during those days was no joyride,' says Alan. 'The team struggled badly and were often closer to the bottom of the table than the top. However, towards the end of the decade, we suddenly became a decent cup team.'

'I left school in 1979 aged 16 and joined London Transport. Early in 1980, a lad called John Wardle joined.' It was not long before Alan and John discovered a common bond, 'We both supported "The Arsenal",' says Alan.



Arsenal's 1980 FA Cup run starts ignominiously at Ninian Park where, without the Irish trio Liam Brady, Sammy Nelson and David O'Leary, they barely manage to contain Richie Morgan's Cardiff City. Two goals from 1979 hero Alan Sunderland see the Gunners stutter to a 2-1 replay win at Highbury the following Tuesday night.

Goals from Sammy Nelson and Brian Talbot then account for Alan Mullery's Brighton at Highbury in round four before an equaliser from future West Ham boss Sam Allardyce cancels out a Frank Stapleton opener to secure a draw for Bolton Wanderers in the mud at Burnden Park in round five. But the Gunners make no mistake in the replay with two goals from Sunderland and another from Stapleton confirming what one report describes as 'a 3-0 massacre'.

So to round six and a tough-looking tie against Graham Taylor's up-and-coming Watford. It is the Hornets who are the better side in the first half before a half-time roasting from Terry Neill and assistant Don Howe stings the Gunners into action. Another two goals from Frank Stapleton eventually give Arsenal a 2-1 win.

The win sets up a semi-final against Bob Paisley's mighty Liverpool, who had not conceded a goal on their seemingly inexorable march to cup glory. It proves an epic, the longest semi-final in the history of the competition. A 0-0 draw at Hillsborough is followed by two one-all draws at Villa Park. It takes a change of venue to unlock the sides. A 13th-minute Brian Talbot header finally settles things at Coventry's Highfield Road, in the third replay. Arsenal become the first side since Blackburn Rovers in 1886 to reach three successive FA Cup finals and, in so doing, ruin Liverpool's hopes of doing the Double.

The semi-final was a draining, energy-sapping saga in a protracted, tiring season for the Gunners who played an astonishing 19 matches between 1 March and 1 May, including two double-headed European Cup Winners' Cup ties against IFK Gothenburg and Juventus. In the latter, a Paul Vaessen

header had given the Gunners a shock win in Italy after a 1-1 draw at Highbury to set up a final against Valencia. It means Arsenal have to travel to the Heysel Stadium in Brussels just four days after their FA Cup Final date against West Ham.



After beating Everton in that supercharged replay at Elland Road, West Ham still had the best part of a month to win promotion but – like 1975 – there was a prevailing sense the cup was their priority. How times change...

Peter Hamersley recalls the clamour for tickets and the shambles that ensued. 'In typical West Ham fashion, there was chaos,' he says. 'Having won the replay on 16 April, it was too late to give out any vouchers for that big promotion clash against Birmingham on 22 April.'

The Birmingham game proves a triple disappointment for the 37,000 West Ham fans present under the lights at the Boleyn Ground. Firstly, no cup final vouchers are given out. Secondly, a 2-1 defeat means their challenge for promotion is effectively over. Thirdly – and perhaps worst of all – Bonds's dismissal looks certain to rule him out of Wembley.

When Shrewsbury Town visit on 26 April, only 19,000 turn up and, wouldn't you just know it, vouchers are given out to everyone, even Shrewsbury fans. But there's a crucial caveat. To apply for a cup final ticket you also needed to have collected a voucher from the game against Fulham on 22 March. Crucially, Gary Lawrence had been at that game *and* had a voucher bearing the letter H.

He remembers, 'It seemed incredible that this might open the door to something as magical as an FA Cup Final. That Sunday, my mate Ian and I were on the first train out of Chelmsford. It was odd to be at the Boleyn Ground at 8am on a Sunday morning but there were already several hundred people queuing along Green Street.

'The queue snaked up the stairs of the West Stand into an office and, as it came closer, my heart rate increased until

it sounded like a tin can in a tumble dryer. Every fibre of my being was tensed against the cry of, "Sorry son, sold out." A ticket was £6, more than I'd ever paid to go to anything, but it still seemed cheap. I was about six places from the window, my pound notes balled in my hand, damp with sweat. And then, there we were, handing over the money and receiving the tickets. It all seemed too easy.

'I put the ticket down my Y-fronts. Well, it seemed sensible. On the way home we planned our cup final day. It still seemed incredible and we hugged each other with the joy of it. It didn't matter we were playing the cup holders or that our league season had petered out. We were going to the FA Cup Final.'



One week before Wembley, Terry Neill's Arsenal win 1-0 at Coventry and then, on Bank Holiday Monday, play out a 0-0 draw with Nottingham Forest at Highbury. Pat Rice and Alan Sunderland are rested and Neill's only headache for Saturday is whether to play Sammy Nelson or 21-year-old John Devine at left-back. Devine gets the gig and says, 'Having played through the Liverpool saga and two games against Juventus, I know I can cope with the final.'

That weekend there's high tension in and out of the sporting arena. At the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, Canadian Cliff Thorburn goes head-to-head with the crowd-pleasing Ulsterman Alex Higgins in a terrifically close World Snooker Championship Final. With the match reaching its climax on Bank Holiday Monday, television pictures are suddenly interrupted. The BBC takes the snooker off the air to bring live coverage of the SAS storming the Iranian Embassy in South Kensington. Thorburn eventually wins the match by 18 frames to 16.

Then West Ham fans everywhere breathe more easily when the talismanic Bonds is cleared to play in the final. A three-man FA commission, chaired by West Bromwich Albion's Bert Millichip, shows compassion with Millichip saying, 'If we had

penalised Bonds with a one-match suspension, and that match was the FA Cup Final, then the punishment would have far outweighed the crime.'

'I thought I'd blown it,' says Bonds. 'I am a very relieved man.' It's a major boost for Lyall's men.

Gary Lawrence describes Bonds as 'the epitome of a lionheart'. He adds, 'Tall, strong, fearless, and capable of playing in most positions outside the forward line, Bonzo was a West Ham living legend.'

Peter Hamersley remembers, 'As soon as we knew we were playing Arsenal in the final, a song started doing the rounds. It went, "Billy bites yer bum and he bites yer arse 'n all, Arse 'n all, Arse 'n all." It was sung constantly.'

Going into the final, West Ham regain some form, winning 2-0 at Bristol Rovers, a result which pleases manager Lyall. 'We played some great stuff on a difficult pitch,' he says. The Hammers follow this with a 4-1 win on the Monday over already-relegated Charlton. With several players rested by Lyall, goals from Pike, Nick Morgan, Cross and the inevitable penalty from Ray Stewart put the Upton Park crowd in the mood and leave the boss a happy man. 'We couldn't have had a better preparation for the final,' he says.

Peter Hamersley recalls the atmosphere in West Ham territory in the days before Wembley. 'East London turned claret and blue,' he says. 'Posters adorned front windows all around the streets of Newham. At my mum's in East Ham they had pictures, flags, rosettes and banners proudly displayed across the big bay window downstairs. Everywhere you'd see the same.'

'Gary, Mark and I took the week off and played golf every day. We bought cup final replica Admiral shirts which were white with light blue trimmings and claret Admiral logos along the collar and short sleeves. It was one of the best weeks of our life.'

And then a buzz begins to start around Hammers midfielder Paul Allen who has fought himself into contention for a start,

particularly with Patsy Holland struggling to stave off a niggling injury. On cup final day, Allen would be 17 years and 256 days old, 99 days younger than Preston's Howard Kendall when he played against West Ham in the 1964 FA Cup Final.

Two days before Wembley, Lyall makes the big call. Allen will play and he's given the crucial job of marking Arsenal's brilliant string-puller, Liam Brady. Lyall tells reporters he has no qualms about playing the youngster saying, 'We're not concerned about Paul's youth. He enjoys a battle and won't let us down.'

West Ham fan Gary Lawrence had tried in vain to patch things up with his mum in the week leading up to the final but there was too much anger on both sides and, anyway, he was enjoying life in his new surroundings. 'Look what had happened since I'd left home,' he says. 'West Ham had got into a cup final. Life seemed more exciting out in the world. The night before Wembley, a friend had a party near Witham, in Essex. It seemed everyone there was an Arsenal fan. All night I heard how Brady and Rix would tear us apart leaving Stapleton and Sunderland to tap in the goals. I said, "Yeah, we'll see" and I meant it. I really thought we would win.'

An omen Gary clung to was that he was exactly the same age as Paul Allen. 'I felt we were facing our destiny together,' he says, 'and kept repeating this irrelevant fact, ever more loudly as I drank more beer. It was long before midnight that I was clutching at the toilet bowl wishing the room would settle down to a steady 700 revolutions per minute.'

Generally speaking, on the eve of only the third all-London final to date, Hammers fans the world over were in buoyant mood as Peter Hamersley recalls, 'We had no fear. We were not expected to win and, as long as we did not disgrace ourselves and get thrashed, we could not lose either.' If West Ham did win, they would become the lowest-placed club to win the trophy since Wolves in 1908.

Yet something added a little spice to the occasion, supplied by a certain Brian Clough. Writing in the *Daily Express*, Clough

lambasted West Ham for apparently sacrificing promotion to the First Division to reach Wembley. But the legendary Forest boss reserved special criticism for the hugely talented and greatly respected midfield general Trevor Brooking. Borrowing a phrase used to describe Muhammad Ali, he said the brilliant playmaker ‘floated like a butterfly...and stung like one’.



The big day dawns and it is sunny and hot. Coverage starts at 8.10am on BBC Radio 2 with Tony Lewis, as the two teams breakfast in their rooms. At 10am Pete Murray introduces a cup final special. After *Sesame Street* and a Tarzan film, ITV begins its coverage at 11.15am with Ian St John presenting *On The Ball*. After an hors d'oeuvre including *The Banana Splits*, *Champion the Wonder Horse* and *Zorro*, the BBC starts its coverage at 11.30am with John Cleese, Mike Yarwood and John Bird as special cup final guests.

In Manor Park, London E12, Peter Hamersley is joined by his friend Gary and they drive to Wembley in Gary's Escort, parking some distance from the ground. ‘Along the way more and more West Ham fans were heading for Wembley stadium. It gave us a great feeling of pride,’ recalls Peter.

Meanwhile, following the party, Gary Lawrence wakes with the hangover from hell, ‘I was woken on the greatest day of my short, thus far uneventful, life with my mouth feeling like I'd eaten the contents of a litter tray. My mate Ian had sprayed a pair of jeans claret and blue, one leg in each colour. I was wearing a 1970s, pre-branding Bukta away top, the light blue shirt with two claret hoops. I only started to feel human as we were dropped at Chelmsford station.’

At 12.15pm David Coleman meets the managers John Lyall and Terry Neill on the BBC and this ten-minute programme is followed by supporters' *Mastermind* presented by Des Lynam. At 12.30pm, the Arsenal team coach leaves its hotel.

All the while, the fans continue their journeys to Wembley. Gary Lawrence recalls, ‘The Tube was packed tight with sweaty

men singing “She wore, she wore, she wore a claret ribbon”. I had never felt so elated. I remember the Met line Tube rounding the corner and approaching the venue of legends. It was a glorious sunny day, the sky was cloudless, perfect cup final weather and, as the train rattled past a line of grimy old factories and warehouses, the landscape opened up and there, against the azure horizon, was Wembley.’

Peter Hamersley shared Gary’s excitement, ‘It’s hard to describe the feeling of anticipation as you walk down Wembley Way with your eyes fixed on those towers. We just knew this was our moment in time.’

Peter arrives around 1pm and there are already long queues to get in. ‘We were at the opposite end to 1975,’ he says. ‘The Arsenal fans seemed so far away.’

Arsenal fans Alan Budgen and John Wardle are on their way too. ‘Neither of us was old enough to drink so we got to Wembley early,’ says Alan. ‘Most of Wembley for the average fan was terracing so the earlier you arrived the better position you got.’

Just after 1.40pm the teams arrive and head for the pitch where the BBC’s Bob Wilson is waiting. West Ham are wearing fawn suits and Arsenal a more sober dark grey. Today, foreign accents are the norm for players in big English games but Wilson’s 1980 interviews are like a dialectal study of the British Isles. The Lancastrian notes of David Cross, the clipped Yorkshire tones of Stuart Pearson, the Ulster/London hybrid of Pat Rice, the Tayside inflections of Ray Stewart, Liam Brady’s Dublin brogue, Brian Talbot’s Suffolk burr and the almost squeaky Cockney of young Paul Allen.

As Gary Lawrence enters the ground, the enormity of the occasion hits him, as does his personal circumstances. ‘What had I been thinking? This was the cup final. Arsenal were really good, they were used to playing here. They’d beaten Liverpool in the semi-final. Who were we to think they could be beaten?’ he says.

‘All my life I’d watched the cup final. Even my mum watched it and I wondered if she’d be watching now and thinking about

me. She didn't even know I was there. I tried to put this out of my mind. This was the bloody cup final. Life would never be richer, more vibrant or more at the centre of things than this. Half the civilised world was tuning in and I was here.

"Abide With Me" began. I quite liked it but I was obviously the only one because everyone near me sang "Bubbles" instead.'

The atmosphere builds and the famous FA Cup Final banners are waving: 'Don't tell them your name, Pike'; 'David gets Cross with Arsenal' and the obligatory 'Brady sells more dummies than Mothercare'.

At 2.45pm, the teams emerge from the tunnel, led by the FA's Dickie Bird. On the left, Terry Neill looks dapper in a double-breasted navy blue jacket, grey slacks and red tie and handkerchief. John Lyall's beige jacket and brown flares have not aged quite so well. Both men chat amiably and share a joke as they walk on. 'Have you ever seen two managers looking more relaxed?' says commentator Brian Moore on ITV.

And then, the man himself. Billy Bonds. Such a presence in the West Ham XI.

Gary Lawrence says, 'He looked fearless. Who else would you want leading you out? And there, behind Bonds and David Cross, was Phil Parkes. What a keeper he was!' Gary recalls how you could smell Parkes's Cossack hair spray and aftershave when he was behind the goal at Upton Park.

The national anthem is drowned out by 'I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles' before the Arsenal fans make their presence felt with a chorus of the Gary Glitter-inspired 'Arsenal are back, Arsenal are back, ello, ello!' chant. The familiar Duke of Kent is introduced to the teams and when he meets the loquacious Terry Neill, Brian Moore says, 'If Terry gets going, the Duke might never get away.'

West Ham then belt out one of the old favourites from this period to their north London counterparts. 'I'm Only a Poor Little Sparrow' had been a hit for a children's choir called The Ramblers in the autumn of 1979. Saccharine and mawkish, football fans had adapted it, 'E's only a poor little Gunner, his

face is all tattered and torn. He made me feel sick, so I 'it him wiv a brick and now he don't sing any more. Oi!' sing the West Ham fans. Arsenal respond with a chant about Liam Brady who, along with Trevor Brooking is, on his day, one of the two best players on the pitch.

The experienced Cross, who played at Wembley for Norwich in the 1973 League Cup Final, has a word in the ear of the rookie Paul Allen, then referee George Courtney, the deputy head from Spennymoor, County Durham, calls Pat Rice and Billy Bonds to the centre circle for the toss and it's as you were in terms of ends.

Courtney gives a blast of a special silver whistle bought by a friend who, back in the early 60s, promised him he would buy him one if he ever refereed a cup final. At 38, he's a young ref but highly thought of.

We're off and West Ham show no signs of nerves in the early stages. Devonshire looks lively on the left. The godlike Brooking earns a ripple of applause from the adoring Hammers fans every time he touches the ball. Brian Moore comments on Graham Rix's severe haircut and the sun beats down. Cross has a speculative effort which earns the opprobrium of Brian Clough who is alongside Brian Moore. 'All that did was bring Pat Jennings into the game,' the Forest manager says critically.

Arsenal have played 66 games so far, West Ham 57 in this gruelling season. Early on Frank Lampard moves energetically out of defence and Frank Stapleton makes no effort to close him down. Is this a sign of things to come? Are Arsenal a spent force after so many games?

A banal opening ten minutes moves Moore to say that, like the all-London finals of 1967 and 1975, it is an oddly low-key affair. Yet, just as he says it, the Hammers move up a gear. Frank Lampard travels 40 yards unchallenged before his team-mate Stuart Pearson takes the ball off him. He eludes the challenge of David Price and a brilliant injection of pace takes him past Willie Young and into the box. He pulls it back and into the path of Geoff Pike who strikes it first time, forcing Jennings

into a low save. It's good football by West Ham, the best move of the game and thrills their fans massed at the other end. Just over a minute later, they will be in heaven.

Billy Bonds – who else? – robs Alan Sunderland and plays the ball to Pike who, first time, gives it to Brooking, one of those players who always seems to make *something* happen. He draws three Arsenal players – Young, Talbot and Rix – towards him and, at the last moment, slips the ball to Pearson in some space. Calling for it on the left flank is Devonshire. He feints to come inside and fools Rice and Talbot and suddenly he's at the byline.

He crosses beautifully and Jennings, at the near post, can only parry the ball which sails over Willie Young's head. For Peter Hamersley, at the other end, time seemed to stand still. 'We reared up in anticipation as the ball flashed across the goal,' he said.

The ball lands at the feet of Cross who stabs it in. This time it hits Young and rebounds to Pearson who fires it across the goal. Peter says, 'All of a sudden, someone ducked to get his head to the ball and it flew into the net. We were all up in the air realising we had scored!'

Gary Lawrence says, 'It was hard to make out what happened. The ball had pinged about and suddenly a roar lifted us off our feet. The terraces at Wembley had deep steps and we were propelled down at least two of them. It was like a tsunami of sweaty, hugging, cavorting, joy and disbelief. I was at the cup final, and West Ham were winning. We had no idea who'd scored or how. The people around us were saying Pearson had put the ball in, we didn't really care, we were one up.'

On ITV, Brian Moore gives the goal to Pearson whose name flashes up on the screen. But it isn't Pearson. It takes the slow-motion replay to reveal what was too quick for the mind and eye to process in real time. Unbelievably, it's come off the head of Trevor Brooking. It's a brilliant instinctive header because the ball was not only travelling like a rocket but also low and slightly behind him.

Peter says, 'We were up, jumping, hugging, cheering, asking "Who got it?" "Brooking – with his head!" came the reply. It was true, Brooking had scored – but with his head? It was almost unknown, despite his many attributes.' Astonishingly, it was only the third headed goal Brooking had scored in his long and illustrious career.

Gary adds, 'The scoreboard at the opposite end was the same old-fashioned affair that had once read England 3 West Germany 2 in the pictures of Geoff Hurst pile-driving home his hat-trick goal. Only now it read Arsenal 0 West Ham 1. It was several hours later, when we got back to Liverpool Street, that I discovered Brooking had scored to ram Brian Clough's pre-match criticism down his throat.'

Once the delirium settles, most West Ham fans have that peculiar feeling that all football fans will recognise: We've scored too early.

Gary takes this one step further, 'Despite the euphoria, my conviction that Arsenal would win multiplied. Surely we had simply annoyed them. Wouldn't Brady and Rix run the game from now on?'

On ITV, Clough is forced to eat his words. 'Absolutely staggering goal,' he says. 'For Trevor Brooking to be in the six-yard area, that was incredible.'

Years later, Brooking told how he was at the City Ground when he was tapped on the shoulder. He turned round to see Brian Clough who apologised for what he had said on the eve of the final. Clough had his critics but you've got to admire that gesture.

Back at Wembley, Lyall gives his players the thumbs-up. West Ham have made the perfect start and their fans start singing, 'We shall not, we shall not be moved.'

Arsenal can't get their game going at all. When they do string a couple of passes together, one man is invariably there to break things up. It's Billy Bonds. 'He's running the show,' says Clough. How thankful those West Ham fans are to the FA for giving him a reprieve.

It's a game of few chances. Ray Stewart spoils some excellent defensive work with a poor ball out of defence which goes straight to Graham Rix. The Doncaster-born winger tests Parkes with a powerful drive with his left peg. Then Price goes close with a shot from 20 yards after a sweet one-two with Stapleton.

But that's about it for Arsenal in the first half. As Courtney's whistle blows there's a huge cheer from the West Ham fans at the tunnel end. Clough says, 'It's a well-earned lead just because of their enthusiasm and they took the one chance that dropped to them. Having said that, I still fancy Arsenal.'

West Ham fans Peter and Gary had opposing feelings at half-time. Peter says, 'Arsenal were looking jaded, possibly due to the number of games they had played that season. Perhaps they were not prepared to put their all into this one once they fell behind.'

Gary, expertly demonstrating the twisted logic all football fans are renowned for, says, 'I was dogged by the conviction Arsenal would score as soon as proceedings restarted. But at the same time I had a feeling they wouldn't. Yet I thought even acknowledging that thought was to jinx it, which meant Arsenal would score. I did a lot of internal monologues back then!'

The teams come out for the second half. A banner in the background reads, 'The name is Bonds. Billy Bonds'. Trevor Brooking and Pat Jennings share a joke. At the other end, Arsenal fans Alan Budgen and John Wardle fear the worst. All that effort to overcome Liverpool in the semis and now they haven't really turned up.

John Lyall makes a crucial tactical switch. Stuart Pearson drops back meaning Arsenal are outnumbered in midfield. Peter Hamersley says, 'I left Cross, alone up front, and he ran his legs off, keeping the Arsenal back four occupied. Brooking was absolute class and barely put a foot wrong. He totally controlled the play.'

West Ham adopt a policy of contain and counter attack, forcing an increasingly tired Arsenal to up the pace and come at them.

Arsenal's biggest threat, unusually, comes from attacking midfielder David Price who again goes close after linking well with an out-of-sorts Frank Stapleton. Then Liam Brady finds some space and unleashes a tame shot which only finds the side-netting.

Then Phil Parkes does well to hold on to a fierce free kick from Talbot. But, as Arsenal fans Alan Budgen and John Wardle testify, there was a growing feeling among the north London masses that this wasn't going to be their day. 'We did a lot of huffing and puffing without creating much,' says Alan.

The clock ticks down, the players tire and socks are rolled around ankles.

There are moments in every FA Cup Final which stay in the minds of football fans for a lifetime and, with three minutes left, one happens.

Paul Allen, the young man who so much had been written about in the build-up, has had a solid game, doing his fair share of harassing and battling in midfield. A goal for him was unthinkable but, with the match opening up, a chance suddenly presents itself.

Alan Devonshire has the ball in his own half. Forced wide by Liam Brady he slips the ball inside to Brooking but slightly overhits it, giving Arsenal's Willie Young a chance of an interception.

But Brooking stretches every sinew and gets there just ahead of Young and, with a deft touch, get the ball to Allen who surges forward with real intent.

Tracking back is Graham Rix but he looks exhausted and Allen, red-faced from the heat, knocks it past him. Suddenly, the youngster is in on goal, 25 yards out. This is the stuff fairytales are made of and, on BBC1, John Motson is beside himself. 'Can the 17-year-old take them on?' he asks. 'He can.'

A nation holds its breath. This looks like being one of the great FA Cup Final moments – a crowning goal from the youngest player ever to appear in a Wembley final. But then,

with the goal at his mercy, a pantomime villain appears to ruin Allen's moment.

Willie Young has bounded back and callously, deliberately, takes the young man's legs away with a cynical trip.

Looking down from the terraces, Gary Lawrence could hardly believe what he'd just witnessed. 'At that moment Young was Thatcher, the Ayatollah, Jabba the Hutt and J.R. Ewing all bundled into one,' he laughs.

'But did Allen wave an imaginary red card, did he clutch at a non-existent wound? No, he shook the weasel Scottish centre-back's hand. What generosity of spirit! Whose heart couldn't be melted by such kindness? In my book that little moment of graciousness was every bit as glorious as a goal would have been.'

Peter Hamersley recalls that, so cynical was Young's foul, it would have far-reaching implications for the game itself. 'Young was booked,' he says, 'but the foul was not forgotten and became the blueprint for the sending-off offence now known as the professional foul.'

Ray Stewart's free kick is deflected for a corner which comes to nothing and there is a feeling that not just West Ham and young Paul Allen have been cheated, but also the watching public. The BBC's John Motson, renowned for his equanimity and reluctance to criticise any player, was as animated as he'd ever been. Describing Young's trip as 'a foul of the most cynical kind', he says the punishment does not fit the crime.

These days, Willie Young would have been down the tunnel faster than you could say 'chocolate and Aberdeen fish', his answer when asked what his favourite food was in *Shoot* magazine's weekly 'Focus On' slot.

On the bench, John Lyall looks unruffled though he chews his gum with aggressive intensity. 'He knows how close they are to another victory for the underdogs and a place in Europe,' says Motty.

High up in the stands, Gary Lawrence finds it unbearable. 'I had never been a shouter at matches,' he says. 'Upton Park could be an intimidating place and anyone who yelled out something

that wasn't funny or accurate was quickly put in their place by some hulking Harrington-jacketed skinhead. But, in those last few minutes, I lost all my inhibitions and began yelling at Geoff Pike to keep the ball, referee Courtney to blow his whistle and Willie Young to, well, you can imagine. There was no electronic sign telling us how much the ref would add on. The air was shrill with whistles. "Blow the whistle, just blow the fucking whistle," I screamed repeatedly at the top of my voice.'

'The holders' grip on the trophy is within seconds of being loosened,' says Motson as Courtney checks his watch for the umpteenth time.

Then, as Rix lofts a ball towards the West Ham box, Courtney does blow, sparking incredible scenes on the pitch. David Cross sinks to his knees, Ray Stewart runs with his fists in the air and Paul Allen cries tears of joy.

'East London celebrates,' says Motson as the camera pans to the claret-and-blue clad fans cavorting in the stands.

Gary Lawrence recalls, 'Brooking, Bonds and Lampard embraced. My friend Ian and I embraced. The sweaty man next to me and I embraced. "We won the cup, we won the cup, ee-aye-addio we won the cup." I'd heard that song for years on TV. Now I was singing it and beaming so hard my cheeks hurt.'

Peter Hamersley says, 'It all came out – the tension of the two semi-finals with Everton, the joy of beating Aston Villa in the quarters. There we were – the winners. We were the last men standing. It all came out in those moments of sheer football ecstasy.'

The banners sway. 'Billy Bonds eats Rice' says one, 'Devonshire is a delight' claims another. John Lyall, still chewing gum like his life depends on it, beams with delight. 'He won't know what to say,' says Clough. 'It won't sink in. It couldn't happen to a more pleasant guy. But I also know how Don Howe and Terry Neill are feeling.' The camera then picks out the permed head of the injured Patsy Holland, who is hugging Paul Allen. 'That's real team spirit and I'm not sure that Pat Holland isn't crying,' says Brian Moore.

Engulfed by well-wishers as he does so, Billy Bonds climbs the famous steps to collect the trophy. It is a sight that Gary Lawrence will never forget, 'In my mind's eye I can still see the players making their way up to the Royal Box and the flash of sunlight reflecting from the trophy as Bonzo lifted it high. I now know that flash of light was not some heavenly ray picking out our prize but the reflection from the lights of a TV camera but, at the time, it looked like God himself had shown his approval.'

HRH The Duchess of Kent, clad in a fetching violet number, hands the cup to Bonds. As he raises it aloft, there is an almighty cry of triumph from the West Ham fans. Bonds is followed by Lampard, Stewart, Pike, Martin and Pearson. Then comes the player everyone wants to see, Paul Allen. The lad is blubbing like a baby. It's a photographer's dream. He continues to sob as he descends the steps. 'Well, look at this little man,' says Moore, 'and every mother will weep for him as well.'

Peter Hamersley reflects, 'The players collected their medals and headed down to start the lap of honour. The Arsenal end was almost empty. Somehow almost every player was adorned with a hat or scarf. They danced and jigged in front of us.'

'We stayed for as long as the players were still there. Eventually, they disappeared into the tunnel beneath us. Making our way out was still a joyous thing to do. It's amazing how mundane things can become so pleasurable. The slow walk down the crowded stairs was full of people singing and cheering. Time was irrelevant. The longer things took, the more we were experiencing Wembley.'

Gary Lawrence also recalls the jubilant exit, 'I remember the show shuffle into the Tube station and singing "He's only a poor little Gunner" over and over again, with our voices bouncing off the concrete walls of the underpass.'



Back in the pubs of Islington, Drayton Park and Holloway, the mood is sombre but all Arsenal fans agree the only thing

to do is put the match behind them and turn their attention to Brussels. Workmates Alan Budgen and John Wardle had already planned to make the midweek trip. Alan recalls, 'As we were leaving Wembley, we consoled ourselves with the fact we still had the Cup Winners' Cup to play for and were bound to bounce back.'

John adds, 'It was certainly not the best game I had ever seen. We never played as we knew we could. Our star player, Liam Brady, had a very quiet game and it was later revealed he wasn't fully fit. However, on the Tube journey home, we were cheered by the thought we still had an exciting cup final to come and would surely win that one.'

Because Alan and John worked in the same office they could only afford to both be absent for one day and decided to fly to Brussels and back on the same day. Alan lived in Hackney and he and his dad went to Goodmayes to pick up John before travelling to Gatwick. Neither of the lads had ever been abroad before.

'From Brussels airport we were taken by coach to the Heysel stadium,' says Alan. 'I remember thinking how poor Heysel was. The toilet facilities were incredibly basic and the steps on the terracing were covered in dusty gravel that left your shoes filthy.'

'Sadly the game was as unmemorable as the West Ham cup final and ended 0-0 after extra time and went to penalties.'

It had been an arduous season for Arsenal. Fourth in the league, runners-up in the cup and events in Brussels showed it just wasn't going to be their year. 'We lost the penalty shoot-out 5-4 with Brady missing the first and Rix the last penalty,' says Alan. It meant Arsenal finished an exhausting season with nothing.

'We felt a million miles from home and the coach journey back to Brussels airport took ages. We then sat on the runway for ages as the flight was so much later than planned thanks to extra time and penalties. Had we won we would not have cared a jot but, having lost two cup finals in four days, the plane was

drowned in silence. We eventually got home in the small hours, my dad took us home (God bless him) and the next day John and I returned to work.’



A cruel few days for Arsenal fans is in stark contrast to the jubilation of those clad in claret and blue. On the night of the cup final, Peter Hamersley and his friends went straight to the only place they wanted to be – Upton Park. ‘Just like 1975, the place was rammed,’ remembers Peter. ‘We drove around the block beeping our horns incessantly. Outside the Boleyn pub, people climbed trees, lampposts and traffic lights and drinkers spilled on to the pavement and into the road. There were so many out on the streets way into the night.’

Gary Lawrence recalls, ‘On the way out of Wembley, I’d picked up a programme left on the floor. A few hours later I sold it for £1 in The Blue Lion in Galleywood where I gazed moon-faced at a barmaid I fancied. Bolstered by a couple of pints I went to taunt an Arsenal-supporting mate and see the girl I was supposed to be going out with. She had no interest in football and even less in me as I breathed beer over her. No matter. I went home to watch *Match of the Day*.

‘For years afterwards I carried that cup final ticket in my wallet. Eventually I lost it when my wallet was stolen but I wish I still had it.’

In east London, the party continues. Peter says, ‘On Sunday morning we went back to the Barking Road to welcome the team home. Thousands of people lined the streets and by the time the open-top bus reached Stratford the crowds were twenty deep. Virtually every viewpoint along the Barking Road was taken up. People were on shop facades as “Bubbles” blared from every window.

‘The players passed proudly by, showing us the cup. Eventually the bus made it to East Ham Town Hall and we managed to see the players presented one by one from the balcony. The crowd continued to sing its Wembley songs, “Billy

Bites Yer Bum” and “He’s only a poor little Gunner/Scouser” over and over. They were two great days. It was our moment in time.’

It didn’t matter one jot that West Ham’s league campaign had petered out and they even had to travel to Roker Park for a Monday night match against Sunderland which they lost 2-0 meaning a seventh-placed finish. The failure to win promotion had long since become an irrelevance.

To this day, Arsenal fans John Wardle and Alan Budgen are still good friends. Both men still work for Transport for London. Alan lives in Leighton Buzzard, is married to Julie and they have three sons. Alan’s favourite player to don an Arsenal shirt is Patrick Vieira, with Kenny Sansom coming a very close second.

John still cannot watch *Match of the Day* when Arsenal lose. He visits the Emirates Stadium two or three times a season and has recently introduced his two young daughters to the delights of following Arsenal. His favourite player is Dennis Bergkamp.

Gary Lawrence is now editor of the *Swindon Advertiser* newspaper and two other weekly papers in Wiltshire. He lives in Oxford and has three children. He is a season ticket holder in the Bobby Moore Upper stand.

For him, the memory of that distant May afternoon is as golden and warm as ever. He remembers, ‘Things gradually improved with my mum. We slowly repaired the fractured relationship and while we are never going to be close we get on just fine.

‘I thought the FA Cup would be the start of a conveyor belt of trophies. We had a great team, a brilliant manager and the best fans in the league. Bu the intervening 34 years have brought no more silverware (I’m not going to claim the InterToto Cup) although we have had the delirium of two play-off finals. And while they bring their own reward, nothing compares to the excitement of the oldest cup competition in the world.

‘Perhaps my spectacles are a little claret-and-blue-tinted. Maybe I’m attaching too much significance to a football match.

But that time of my life could have been a traumatic one and instead I look back with nothing but fondness. Malcolm and Glenda were responsible for a huge part of that but so were those eleven heroes on a glorious afternoon at Wembley.

‘Back then the FA Cup was a huge deal. Everyone had an opinion about it. Everyone watched it. Nowadays people barely know who is playing. Back on 10 May 1980 though, this was the only game in town and we had won it.’

Life was to change dramatically for Peter Hamersley in 1980. At the end of the year he split with his girlfriend and then, in 1981, met his future wife Gail in Corfu. They married in 1984 and their first daughter Janine was born in 1987. Shortly after, the family emigrated to Perth, Western Australia where a second daughter, Laura, was born in 1991. Peter took over the running of the West Ham supporters’ club in WA – the Perth Hammers.

Peter says, ‘For West Ham fans, the period between 1963 and the end of 1981 was a golden era. Notwithstanding season 1985/86, when we came close to winning the league championship, we were always a potential trophy winner, reaching seven finals in those years, winning four of them. We almost always had a player in the England side, including the captain, and we also managed to win the World Cup in 1966 with eight reserves in the team! As I said, it was West Ham’s golden era and I am proud to say I was part of it.’