

PAGE FROM THE PAST : SEASON 1947-48

THE first part of Chelsea's second post-war League season was chiefly concerned with the Tommy Lawton transfer saga. His name was linked with numerous clubs before he finally departed for Notts County and out of First Division football when he was still the best centre-forward in England. Finding a replacement occupied many months. Ken Armstrong made a flying start, but it soon became apparent that this outstanding wing-half was merely a respectable emergency centre-forward. Other candidates had considerably less success than Armstrong and by the second Saturday in March only two points separated Chelsea from Huddersfield Town in 21st position in the table. However, seven points obtained from the next four games dispelled relegation fears.

Tommy Walker, Len Goulden and, more occasionally, Jimmy Bowie showed their crafts, and it was their personalities and skills that attracted such large crowds down the Fulham Road—a then record 996,000 flocked through the turnstiles for the twenty-one home games. Thirteen fewer goals were conceded than in the previous season.

Armstrong developed into a strong, resourceful defender; John Harris had an outstanding season at centre-half; and Danny Winter and Syd Bathgate were the regular full-backs. At Easter the arrival of Billy Hughes from Luton Town helped to stabilise things at the back, and behind everyone that still-loyal servant Harry Medhurst played many distinguished games in goal.

New faces in addition to Armstrong and Hughes were Benny Jones, Bill Dickson (later to become an Irish International), Peter Pickering, Jack Saunders and, most vital of all, Roy Bentley from Newcastle. Looking back, it is surprising to realise that Bentley made little immediate impact. His first game was at inside-left at home to Huddersfield in January.

By the end of the season he had scored only three goals in fourteen League games, and an "experiment" to try him at centre-

forward was not repeated—an interesting decision in the light of his later achievements in this position. In fact, a fortnight after this venture, another centre-forward in the person of Hugh Billington from Luton Town arrived to try to fill the "Lawton gap".

Eighteenth was Chelsea's final League placing—a drop of three places from the previous season. In the F.A. Cup a 5-0 win over Barrow in the third round was followed by defeat against Manchester City, 2-0 at Maine Road. The goals came in the extra time that this season was played in the first game, by request of the Government in an effort to reduce workers' absenteeism caused by attendance at replays. Floodlit football was, of course, still some way off.

In a season which saw Arsenal bring the Championship to London and Manchester United win one of the finest post-war Wembley Cup Finals against Blackpool, perhaps not the least significant and far-reaching event for Chelsea came with the founding of the first ever Youth side, under the name Tudor Rose. "Large streams from little fountains flow . . . full oaks from little acorns grow."

HOW THEY FINISHED IN 1947-48

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal	42	23	13	6	81	32	59
Manchester United	42	19	14	9	81	48	52
Burnley	42	20	12	10	56	43	52
Derby County	42	19	12	11	77	57	50
Wolverhampton W.	42	19	9	14	83	70	47
Aston Villa	42	19	9	14	65	57	47
Preston N.E.	42	20	7	15	67	68	47
Portsmouth	42	19	7	16	68	50	45
Blackpool	42	17	10	15	57	41	44
Manchester City	42	15	15	15	52	47	42
Liverpool	42	16	10	16	65	61	42
Sheffield United	42	16	10	16	65	70	42
Charlton Athletic	42	17	6	19	57	66	40
Everton	42	17	6	19	52	66	40
Stoke City	42	14	10	18	41	55	38
Middlesbrough	42	14	9	19	71	73	37
Bolton Wanderers	42	16	5	21	46	58	37
Chelsea	42	14	9	19	53	71	37
Huddersfield	42	12	12	18	51	60	36
Sunderland	42	13	10	19	56	67	36
Blackburn Rovers	42	11	10	21	54	72	32
Grimsby Town	42	8	6	28	45	111	22