



**Colin (right) with 70s team-mate and pal Paul Fletcher at the 'Bob Lord of Burnley' book launch**

I bumped into Colin Waldron, former captain in the Seventies, in Burnley last August on the Saturday that we drew 3–3 with Blackpool. After a brief chat, I asked him whether he would be up for an interview for STWHA. He agreed and gave me his number for this to be arranged.

We met in Costa Coffee in the town centre in October for what was to be a very revealing interview. After buying Colin a drink, and asking him to sign my 'Legends of Burnley' book, authored by Mike Jackman, I started the interview by showing him the match day programme for the 17th January 1976, Burnley versus Derby County, a 1–2 home defeat, my first ever game on Turf Moor. Colin remembered it well, for just before the game Keith Newton was honoured for reaching 500 League games in his whole career with Blackburn, Everton, and Burnley.

To start the ball rolling, I asked him what he thought of Burnley Football Club now having recently been relegated from the Premier League? Colin felt we were relegated because we had too many players that were not up to standard, mentioning Chris Wood, finding it unbelievable that Newcastle should buy him. This led me to ask him whether he goes to watch many games now at Turf Moor. Colin replied very rarely, but he did go on the recent Stoke game (1–1) and left early because he thought it so poor a game! Colin went on to mention that he finds it incredible that with VAR in the modern game, refereeing decisions can still be wrong.

Then I asked him about his early life. He was born in Bristol in 1948, but at a very young age the

family moved to Oldham. Colin went on to say that he played for Oldham schoolboys, and wrote to Oldham Athletic for a trial but got no reply. He also wrote to Bury, who gave him a chance, and it was at Bury that he played for the reserves to learn his trade in the very competitive Central League. Former Claret, Les Shannon, was the manager he recounted. At 18, he made his first team debut for Bury at Ewood Park against Blackburn Rovers. Colin went on to explain that Les Shannon was an excellent first manager to have, and like Tommy Docherty who he would encounter later, was excellent at instilling you with confidence.

In the summer of 1966, aged just 19, Chelsea came in for him. He explained that he was 'lost in London' although he boarded with a lovely couple, Mr and Mrs Eden, who were Fulham fans. He played a handful of games in a 'team of stars' including Bonetti, Osgood, Hollins, Cooke, Harris, and Tambling. After just one season, in the summer of 1967, Burnley came in for him. Colin went on to say that, pardon the pun, it came 'out of the blue'.

Colin recollected that he immediately felt at 'home' at Burnley, and he went back to living at home with his parents in Oldham. His first game was away to Southampton, a 2–2 draw in October 1967. With many senior players being released or sold, and youngsters being promoted to the first team from the successful 1968 FA Youth Cup winning team, Colin found himself being made captain at the age of just 20.

I went on to ask Colin, what stood out for him in his time at Turf Moor? Without hesitation he mentioned the 1972/73 team that won the Second Division title, and reminded me that the last game of that season was away at Preston, when a point was needed to win the League, and he scored with a 30 yard shot with his weaker left foot to secure a 1–1 draw and the title.

From here I asked Colin why Burnley had got relegated from the First Division in 1975/76 and then went on to struggle in the late seventies. He said that we sold too many players like Nulty, Dobson, Kindon and Thomas, and did not replace them with similar, quality players. Losing Frank Casper to injury was a monumental blow to the club, he added. Colin then blamed Bob Lord for the sacking of Jimmy Adamson after the FA Cup defeat at Blackpool in January 1976, believing that Adamson might have kept the team in the First Division. The appointment of Joe Brown as manager was a mistake, he thought, and was seen by the players as a panic measure.

At the end of that season, Colin explained that Tommy Docherty took him to Manchester United. He had kept in touch with Docherty, who was his manager at Chelsea, but was signed on as a squad player and so only played a few games for United. Wanting regular first team football, in the summer of 1977 Colin got in touch with Jimmy Adamson, who was now manager of Sunderland. With best friend Doug Collins and Michael Docherty already at Sunderland, Colin went on to say that he jumped at the chance to go to Sunderland and play for Adamson once more. He enjoyed his time in the North East, and lived near the-then ground Roker Park, on the sea front. However, it was not a successful campaign for the Wearsiders, and they were relegated at the end of the season.

It was in the summer of 1978 that Colin went to play in America. He recounted that he loved the life in America and went first to Tulsa Roughnecks. Later, he explained, he went to play for Philadelphia Fury and Atlanta Chiefs. Colin recounted that he played against some of the world's greatest players, such as Best, Muller, Pele, Cruyff, Beckenbauer, and Krol. To be on the same pitch as these superstars will always be with me, Colin enthused. Yet in 1980, he was yearning to come

back home to England. He joined Rochdale briefly, but after experiencing the good life in the USA he decided at the age of just 32 to retire.

What made playing football for Rochdale such a dispiriting experience, he recalled, was that you had to train in your own kit, and also you had to wash your match day kit! By this time he had bought a betting shop in Nelson. Initially things went well, but due to difficulties with the Inland Revenue, the business failed.

Before ending the interview, I asked Colin which was his favourite ground. Old Trafford, he answered, straight away. Colin explained that it was always full, and he had the experience of being a home player and a visiting player there. He recalled a 3–3 draw there in April 1974, when playing for Burnley. To end the interview I asked him who were the best Burnley players he played with? He replied: Paul Fletcher and Frank Casper.

Colin still lives in the Burnley area, and has family living nearby. His son, Nick, is a Maths lecturer at Burnley College. He still meets up with former players Jim Thompson, Brian Flynn and Paul Fletcher in town for a coffee and chat on a regular basis. He is one of a number of players that remain in the Burnley area long after their playing careers finished at the club.