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Interviewer Joshua Adams

Interviewee Don Adams

So my names Joshua Adams and I'm recording for Eastside Community Heritage on the Stadium of Stories project. Could you maybe just introduce yourself for the sake of the tape?

Yep, my names Don Adams, erm I was born in 1949, I'm now 66 years old erm I was born and brought up in Custom House E16, erm. My grandparent were both from East London, erm, my parents moved into the top floor of the house that my grandparents were tenants of in Cundy Road, Custom House. Erm, so we had the three upstairs rooms in the house, erm, we being my mother and father, myself and two brothers. Er, so the family home was a bit cramped and somewhat basic, but, if that's the way you, you know, the life your introduced to, it seems perfectly normal. And a lot of other people in the area lived in exactly the same way. Erm proportionately, probably more so in the earlier years. Three weren't many families that occupied a whole house on their own. Erm, a lot of the houses were either split between upstairs and downstairs or one or possibly two of the rooms upstairs were used by a relative or, some- somebody who was renting the rooms from the tenants. Erm, the two local schools that I went to, erm, first of all from the age of 5 to 11 I went to Rosetta Road infant and junior school, which I understand is still there, erm, at the age of 11 I went to Shipman Road Secondary Modern School, which has since been demolished. Erm from there I went to what called a College of Further Education for 2 years which was in North Street Plaistow. Erm… My first f- my first jobs were working in accounts departments of different companies. First one, that was at the Barbican, er, I went from there to a central heating firm at Trinity Church. I think I did 6 years there, and then I went to a, a big factory at North Woolwich called STC, er still working in accounts departments. Got married for the first time while I was still working there, er and My wife and I had a mortgage on a house in Oakfield Road which is just of Cathrine Road in East Ham. Erm we lived there for 6 years and then moved to Wellington Road in East Ham. Erm, by which time I had started working at the British Museum in 1977 initially in the security department, then in 2002 I transferred into what was then the new events department, erm. When British Library moved out of the Bloomsbury site the centre of the museum was redeveloped into a wide open public space, but they retained the round reading room in the middle of that space. Erm and they quick- very quickly realised that the space lended itself to corporate events and functions. Erm there wasn't a department in the museum to cover that. SO it was a new department that I went into as the logistics manager erm, and that was from 2002 until, 2008. Erm, I then moved job again within the museum. I was the full time PCS Union Rep in the museum until the end of 2010, when, because of a change of circumstances in the, in the museum erm, I was offered an early retirement and redundancy package which erm, came into force at the end of 2010, erm, but then I'd remarried and was living in a flat on Longbridge Road, erm, at the junction which is locally known as Faircross, opposite Barking Bus Garage. Erm, in, a year later in 2011, er, my wife and I moved into this property on Rushgreen Road, the following year I had a fall, and sustained quite a serious knee injury, that progressively meant that I was less

mobile, erm, couldn't do simple things like going out and doing gardening. Wasn't mixing socially, wasn't going out very much. Erm… and then at the beginning of last year in January 2015 I was looking at Facebook one day and saw an ad from a charity called Friends of the Elderly who were looking for people to take part in a program at West Ham Football Ground, erm [cough]. Friends of the Elderly and West Ham Foundation were running a joint program for people over 60 that had followed and supported West Ham. So I applied to go on that, went to a launch event and was one of 16 people selected to do the 5 week program. Erm that included having guest speakers that were ex-players, we did stadium tours, we went to the training ground, the Chadwell Heath, met the manager and some players there, took part in walking football, erm. I was asked by Friends of the Elderly and the Foundation if I would do a couple of photo shoots for them, erm and film an interview promoting Walking Football. Since then, erm I was asked to be a speaker at the second 5 week program that was run at West Ham, but also at programs that were held at Redding Football Club and Brentwood…

Um. So just to go back there a little bit,

Yep

About your grandparents, what were their

[cough]

What were their names?

Erm, my grandfather was Charlie or Charles Adams, and my grandmother was Em- Emily, er sorry Emma, erm. They had 10 children, 6 sons and 4 daughters. Erm, my father was the second eldest son.

Um. What were their, what were their jobs?

Er, my grandfather worked in the Royal Docks, erm, cos had a couple of accidents while he was working, erm, so he was actually blind in both eyes, erm. My father never worked in the docks, erm. Immediately before the war he was in the merchant navy, erm, once the war started he transferred into the royal navy, when he came out of the navy he worked for the co-op bakery that used to be at Stratford. He did some work as a publican, then he became a bus conductor based at West Ham bus garage, er until he retired.

Did your father share any stories of his time in the navy?

Erm, it was something he very rarely spoke about. I know er during the war he did, one of his trips was to Australia on a vessel called the Jarvis Bay, erm… when he was there he was diagnosed with a gum disorder which meant that they had to take all his teeth out, so he wasn't fit for the return journey. On the return journey the Jarvis Bay was sunk. He was grateful for having bad teeth. Erm, there's actually a connection to that in 1974, while I was still working at STC I belonged to the darts team there and we used as our base a pub called The Kings Arms in Woolwich. In 1974 The Kings Arms was blown up by an IRA bomb that was thrown through the window, erm, I wasn't there that night 'cos I'd got a toothache.

Coincidence.

Yes, so. Erm, you know, two generations and we've both got problems without teeth to thank for still being around. Yeah that was, quite an emotional time because I, although I wasn't there on the night I was in Woolwich with erm, the woman who was to become my first wife. Erm, I'd gone over there, but made a late decision not to go to the pub, erm, the person that was killed in that bombing was the guy that I used to sit next to in work and obviously, you know, a lot of close friends sustained quite serious injuries. So er, it was quite an emotional time.

Was there a specific reason why the IRA targeted that-?

Because it was opposite the army barracks.

Oh, right. So they were probably hoping that military personnel would be in.

Yes, yeah, erm. Yeah, so… Going back to my father, having been, you know, not been a victim of the boat sinking on its return journey from Australia, erm, another journey that it did was to Bermuda and he had although the families haven't got it now, he had a cup that he won, erm, as the Bermuda darts champion. So again, darts must run in the family.

Must do. Do you think the war affected your father at all?

Not noticeably. Erm, from when I was very young, I could only have been 6 or 7, I can remember my grandmother saying one day how grateful she was, that shed got 6 sons, 2 served in the navy, 2 in the air force, and 2 in the army, and all 6 of her sons had come home after the war without physical injury. Erm, and the number of people that she knew that obviously nationally, that parents with only one child, or erm women that had got young children whose husbands never came home, and yet all 6 of her sons went to war and all came home.

Yeah. Quite a lucky thing really isn't it?

Yeah.

So what did your mum do?

My [cough], sorry, my mum didn't work until, erm, us 3 sons were sort of in our early teens, erm an she did shop work locally in shops on Prince Regents Lane. Erm, there was a shoe shop near Cundy Road where she worked, erm, and then, there was a, a double fronted er grocers and butchers shop on the corner of Churchill Road called Hammonds, I know the building is still there, but it's a family run business and she worked for them for quite a few years.

Um. So I thought we could maybe talk about your time growing up as well. What was the area like that you grew up in?

Erm, the simple answer is it was a, a, a typical East End area of the time.

Do you wanna maybe describe what a typical East End area is?

Erm, terraced housing, erm, my grandparents oved into the house in Cundy Road when it was brand new. I've only recently learned that prior to I think 1949 there was no such thing as council housing as we understand it. Erm, the properties were originally owned by Whitbread Brewery and there was a pub called The Prince of Wales on the corner which was a Whitbread Pub. So they were tenants of Whitbread to start with, and then erm, the properties came under the umbrella of the local council. Erm, I believe it would have been about 1912 when they moved into the property, erm they'd previously been living in a, another house in Royal Road which was just the other side, it was to the east of Prince Regents Lane, probably only 5 minutes' walk from Cundy Road. Erm, the house was basically 3 up and 3 down. Although never used, very rarely used conventionally as a 3 up 3 down. Erm, there was a kitchen and a scullery, er an outside toilet, no hot running water. The three upstairs rooms that we had erm, as myself and my two brothers started getting a bit older, the, what would have been the front bedroom that looked down into Cundy Road, erm, there were three single beds in that room, and not much room for anything else. I think there was a chest of drawers and a big old fashioned, er, dark wood wardrobe. But it was like walking up and down between lines of beds. My bed was on the furthest side of the room, so I, I had no choice but to walk up and down between beds. Erm, what would have been the middle bedroom, smallest room upstairs was my parents' bedroom. The back room covered everything else. It, it was the, what you would call the sitting room or the lounge, it was the kitchen, it, itt ws everything. Erm [cough]. When you walked into th-, that was the room that was immediately at the top of the stairs at the back of the house. As you walked into the room behind the door was a gas cooker and next to that going into the corner was the built in Welsh dresser. Erm, there was a drop leaf table under the single window, and then in the next corner there was a butler sink, which is the one cold tap [cough]. You then had the chimney breast and originally the whole chimney breast was taken up by a very large and very old range fire. It was half fire and half oven with two top plates on top. Erm I never remember the oven being used as such because we had the gas cooker. Erm, on the wall opposite the window which would have been immediately to your left as you walked into the room there was one wooden straight backed chair, erm… I've forgotten the name of what you called them… ch

It's not to worry if you can't

It's just a standard piece of furniture. Erm that was opposite the window, and then in the, in the far corner was my father's arm chair. That was, his arm chair was the only comfortable chair in the room, the others were all wooden straight backed chars. Erm

Were you allowed to use it?

If he wasn't there, and as long as you were out of it if you heard him coming up the stairs, you knew it was time to get out, but erm, and obviously with 3 of us vying for it, you either took turns or had to be first in, so

Yeah

Erm, my 2 brothers, my eldest brother, erm, was born in 1947 so he's two years older than me, erm my younger brother was born in 1950, erm [cough] he died of a heart Attack about 8 years ago.

So what did your other brother, what did he do for a living?

Erm, my eldest brother, sort of blazed a trail in some respects; he went to Shipman Road Secondary Modern School erm and went to the same college of further education that I went to. When he left he went into erm, working for insurance companies. Erm… moved erm, from job to job over the years but always stayed in insurance, erm, probably round about 1990, erm, he was working just off Fenchurch Street but living at Laindon, er and his company asked him to relocate to the new premises that it had acquired in Ipswich so him and his wife and his son moved from Laindon to a village Gislingham which is a few miles outside Ipswich where he still lives.

Umm. Do you have any fond memories of living in your family home at all?

Yeah, I mean it was always- looking back on it it always felt safe and secure erm, all families have ups and downs but, you know, it was a nice environment to brought up in. Erm grandparents lived downstairs, erm, my mother originally came from Northolt which in those days was in Middlesex, its referred to as west London these days, erm… when she was born and grew up Northolt was essentially a rural area, it was mainly farms, erm, her father worked er, on two local farms but the family lived in one of two cottages that are in effect on the village green, they- and the cottages are still there. Erm, she had 3 brothers, erm, first met my father, a friend of hers, erm, during the war, young women used to write as pen pal to people serving in the armed forces, erm and a friend of hers had been writing to somebody for some time, said to my mum, you know, the person I am writing to has got a friend, why don't you write to him? That guy was my father [both laugh]. Erm, because technically, erm, when they married he was still serving, he hadn't been demobbed so they got married by what was called a special license, erm, so she was plucked from sort of, rural life in Middlesex into the polar opposite which was terraced houses in East London.

Quite a change.

Yes. Erm. I never once heard her sort of complain or, you know said ohh, you know, [putting on a voice] I wish I was still in Northolt, [normal voice] or never complained about living in East London. I suppose to a certain extent she had to adjust and be accepted by the local people because she was very much an outsider coming into a completely different area.

Yeah

But she was, she was obviously a determined woman… and it a lot of ways I suppose she sort of stood up for herself. But er, given the circumstances of where and how we were living and the fact, obviously at one point she had three sons under the age of 5, erm, looked after us, brought us up, gave us a good grounding.

A lot of hard work.

Yes.

So, when you were living in your family home, what did say you and your brothers get up to for fun or recreation?

Erm, to a great extent we had, because my brother was two years older, so he had his own circle of friends, erm, a group of boys that I used to sort of nock around with, most of them

stayed friends from sort of, when I first met them at school, erm, until I would have certainly been in my middle to late 20s. Erm, you know, like most friends, people get married, they move out of the area and you lose touch with them. Erm, probably our, our sort of joint interest would have been football, erm, if we weren't playing football during the school holidays we were playing cricket.

Um. Did you ever listen to the radio or-?

Erm

Board games?

Yeah, I can't remember us having a television probably until I was about 5 or 6 years old, so the radio was the form of entertainment in the household. Erm, sort of memories of listening to programs like the Archers and Navy Luck and round the Bend. It was, it was always a house rule that on Saturday afternoons, my father used to do football pools, and so when it came to that time on a Saturday afternoon when they were announcing the results there was absolute silence in the room cos everybody knew, you know, you didn't make a sound until the football results had finished.

Umm. Was there a lot of shouting at some point s during the football results?

Erm there was only one occasion, particular occasion that I can remember. Erm on the Thursday evening my father was, compiling his form ready for the collector to come round, my eldest brother kept pestering him that he wanted to have some input into it or so, erm, my father gave him a duplicate copy, so my brother made his selections. The following Saturday my father checked his coupon an as usual probably only got one or two draws where he was looking for eight. My brother insisted that his form should be checked and he'd got the eight draws for the jackpot.

What happened to the winnings?

There were no winnings 'cos my father was just humouring him and saying oh you can fill out the form. Erm, of course e my brother wanted, for days and days afterwards wanted to know how much he'd won and my father was trying to think of ways of telling him

Um

that he hadn't actually won anything!

Do you remember how he broke the news?

Erm. I don't remember being in the room, but it was probably my mother that broke the news as she would have done it a little bit more gently and er subtly [laughs] than my father would.

Must have been disappointing for your brother.

Yes.

Hasn't won all that money.

Yeah.

[laughs]

I'm sure he did get over it eventually but er. My first sporting interest from the age of probably about 7 years old er was boxing

Um

An my father always used to listen to the live boxing broadcasts on the radio, and I think it must have been the Christmas when I'd just turned 7, my main Christmas present was 2 pairs of boxing gloves. Having opened them and sawn what it was an, I went downstairs to my grandparents showing them my special present an my grandfather, who bearing in mind was blind in both eyes showed me how to lace up the gloves. Cos the laces came separately from the gloves. Er, an' I just stood their fascinated watching him doing it. Erm

Did your granddad box as well?

I've got no recollection that he did, erm, I know there was always interest in erm, when people like, erm, Brian London and er Henry Cooper was fighting, I was aware that my father was talking to his brothers about it when he, when we saw them. Erm, so I, I started boxing while I was at Rosetta Road Junior School, continued that when I moved to Shipman Road School, so when I was 11, which would have been 1961 erm, I was entered into the West Ham School boys boxing tournament, an' went through but eventually got beaten in the final of what was classified as the heavyweight division. Somewhere I've still got the certificate that I was given. I had to, it was the following week there was a school assembly an er I got called up onto the stage and presented with the certificate.

Um. Must have been quite proud.

Yes. Er

Where did you train? Did you go to a community hall or?

Er, it was done within the school. In those days boxing was an accepted school sport, you know

Yeah

Not like these days, no. erm you know it taught you discipline and er you know, it wasn't just about looking after yourself, it was [cough], it was quite a good grounding, and you know there wasn't a vigorous regime of fitness but we used to do warming up an' that type of thing, and obviously using medicine balls and a couple of punch bags, you know. Erm, I did for a while belong to West Ham boxing club which were based at the Black Lion Pub in Plaistow Broadway. Unfortunately I developed a problem where every time somebody hit me in the nose I would get tremendous nose bleeds, so… I was going to say my mother advised, I think she more insisted-

Yeah

That that should be the end of my boxing career. Erm, she got fed up with me coming home with all my clothes and vests and things soaked in blood. But erm, it was probably only after that where I really became interested in football, cos a couple of my friends were by then playing for the schools team, erm, so on Saturday mornings I used to go over and watch them play, erm… I think while I was at Shipman Road I played for the second team quite often, but only occasionally for the first team. Erm, af, when I was 11, 12, 13 I was never one of those, erm boys that could start running and keep running all day, you know, my stamina and fitness levels weren't of a standard to er hold a place in the school's first team, erm, when I left school one of the thin gs- when I was at the college, erm, we used to have what they called a free day on Wednesdays so we could, it was that transitional period where you changed from being a pupil to a student, and you didn't go to lessons you went to lectures.

Yep

Erm, on Wednesday we had no formal lectures [cough]. We were expected to do erm work of some kind. Working at home or in libraries, or whatever on Wednesday mornings. Wednesday afternoons we were expected erm to have so, you could do football or art or whatever, obviously gravitated towards football, erm, the second year that I was there we only lost one game all season and I scored 36 goals in that season playing from what would nowadays be called an attacking midfielder. Erm, there was one guy… who we, you know, he was our centre forward or the striker as they would be now. Erm, as I say I scored 36 goals that season he scored 39, so er [cough], the one little claim to fame that I can still hold, you know, but er

It's a lot of goals in a season though, for an attacking midfielder, 36

Yeah, we, apart from it being a particularly good team erm, our goalkeeper played regularly for Romford

Um

At weekends. Erm, an, an' it was a good mixture of- Because the people at the collage, erm, was, it was mainly made up of… people that had been to gramma schools or what used to be called tech-, er, technical sec-, technical collages, erm who hadn't passed or hadn't got sufficiently good O-Level results to go on to what they wanted to do afterwards. So they did one or two years at the college of further education just to boost up their [cough] their grades an there were a few of us like myself that, while we were at secondary school never even aspired to doing O Levels but were hoping to, you know, further, literally further our education with a view to getting better jobs. So it was a good mix of people, erm, and even though the college was based in North Street Plaistow there were people who used to come from Barking and Dagenham to that college. Erm, so, we, we did had quite a good team, cos obviously you know, there were a couple of them that played in their school teams, so they, they were a, you know, for that age, and of that level, they were, they were quite good players. Erm

Did you not continue the football after the?

I continued afterwards erm, I played for a couple of Sunday morning team, erm, one of them was based, when the Terrance Macmillan Stadium first opened, erm, because that was built partly on the recreation ground that was caught on the corner of Prince Regents Lane and the A13, erm and partly on some derelict land that lay behind that, cos obviously in those days the Newham hospital wasn't there, and the, the stadium, when the stadium opened they had a, there was a house just inside the perimeter fence of the stadium, so there was a full time, er guy that lived there, guy and his family lived there, erm an, and he did all the maintenance an erm, the running track and the actual football pitch an, an all the facilities there, he was the resident caretaker. Erm there were a group of lads that wanted to start a football team, one of them knew him, so he became our manager and the brand new Terrance Macmillan Stadium unofficially was where we did our training on Thursday nights. Obviously we… I don't know what the political circumstances if there were any behind it, but on Thursdays night the Newham Athletics club used to train there, during, the flood lights were always on, the facilities were always open, and we jsu8t sort of joined in because he was our manager.

Yeah

[coughs] Erm, we got into one cup final which was actually held at the Terrance Macmillan Stadium, I only got on as a second half substitute and we, I think we lost the final 2-1, as far as I remember, we certainly didn't win it. Anyway, erm, I then, by that time I was 19, erm and I sustained a cartilage injury in my right knee which had to be operated on, erm. I then moved to another team that did their training in the playground of Rosetta Road School, just by coincidence. Erm, played regularly for them, we the dubious distinction of playing one whole season without winning a game

[laughs]

Erm, a couple of games before the end of the season, we actually got a 1-1 draw and the whole team celebrated as if we'd won the cup final and the other team were looking at us as if we were stark raving mad. It was our one point that we won for the whole season. But er, erm [cough] so yeah, I played for them for a couple of years, erm

What position did you play in?

Erm, either right back or right side of midfield, erm… Two years into that, I got yet another cartilage injury. The first one that was on the inside of my right knee, the second one was the outside of the right knee [cough] which is a little bit more serious. It was certainly a lot more painful. Erm that effectively sort of put paid to my football playing days.

Yep

An it, an it was the same knee that back in 23012, that was the knee that took all the punishment, so

Yeah, I can certainly sympathise because I had to stop playing football because of my knees as well

Really?

Yeah. Erm, so just going back to Custom House there a little bit, erm, what was the area like? What was the community like, sometimes?

Erm, obviously because it was literally… yards away from the Royal Docks erm [cough] the docks employed the vast majority of men locally, erm, if they didn't work in the Royal Docks they would be working at Fords in Dagenham, erm, or in the… the, the line of factories that used to run from Silvertown to the north Woolwich ferry. Erm you had some big employers there. You had Johnsons paint factory, erm, you had the Tate and Lyles factory that employed a lot of people, erm, the STC factory which was the site nearest to the Woolwich Ferry, erm, which was, they, they basically they made telephone cables for what was then the GPO, erm, I don't remember, I don't remember many people from Custom House working for STC but certainly the Royal Docks, Ford, Tate and Lyles were the main employers. Erm, certainly up until the early 1960s the general perception was that if you went to one of the two local secondary schools you were essentially factory fodder, you know. You weren't going to get any qualifications, so er, doing some sort of, probably manual work, either if you, if you7 had a relative that worked in the docks then, that, that would be the first thing that you would think about doing. If you didn't have a relative in the docks then you'd be looking to Tate and Lyles or one of the other factories for a job. [cough] erm, from a very early age my, my mother always sort of said, you know, when you grow up, that's, you are going to work in an office, you're not going to do that type of work, and er, she was very keen and determined that none of her 3 sons would be doing sort of manual labouring work. The fact that I eventually worked at STC, ugh, all be it in an office capacity, and for quite a few years my youngest brother worked in Tate and Lyles, erm, although when he started work, he initially, he was the only one of the three of us that passed the 11 plus, so he went to what was then called South West Ham Technical Collage, which was then at Trinity Church, there's still a school there, I don't know whether it's an academy or something like that now, but he went there, and when he left school, he joined the civil service. Worked in the civil service for a few years. Then decided because we were getting to that era, he sort of dropped out, moved out of the family home, nobody saw or heard of him for about 2 years, until he eventually came back through the front door one day and we learnt that he'd spent most of that two years in Germany and Belgium. Nobody was ver- I don't think he ever told anybody what it was that he was doing out there, he came back… got a job with the Co-Op at Stratford erm, in there, in the accounts department… met his wife… he was- after he got married he then, you know wanted his own place, wanted to start a family, erm, so he got a job at Tate and Lyles basically cos they were paying better money than he could get anywhere else. Worked there in the offices to start with, erm an then transferred into their maintenance department. So, one of the jobs that he did, the bog hoppers that they used to, where they, they turned the raw sugar into syrup and things like that, he was working on one of the maintenance crews that when they shut one section down, the drew would go in there with basically fire hoses to wash the insides of the big cylinders down. But it paid him, you know all those, his wife always used to complain about him going home and taking his shirt off and half a pound of sugar would fall on the floor, erm, you know, but it was a means to an end that erm, you know, he could afford to start buying his own house and start a family, so you know, he did what he had to do.

Yeah. Do you think living in the East End, and like you were saying before, having that expectation to go into certain industries and certain jobs, do you think that in a way that forced a lot of people out of the East End?

I don't think, no it wouldn't be true to say it forced people out.

Or maybe like an aspirational-

Yeah, no, that's exactly the word I was going to use. I think erm, once we got into the, certainly into the middle 60s erm, peoples aspirations had changed. The area was beginning to change. Work in the docks had started drying up, erm it was about the time when, certainly rumours had started going round the docks was going to close completely, erm. We were moving into that era- I suppose it was a sort of… when everything because commercialised an you know, people who had got televisions wanted bigger televisions an, you know, Things like, com- common place things that everybody takes for granted nowadays, erm televisions, washing machines, er refrigerators virtually nobody in Custom House had a refrigerator. Very few would have had a washing machine, that, something you would recognise as a washing machine these days. Televisions I suppose by the time it got to late 50s early 60s most households would have had a television, even though some of them would have, you know, the black and white televisions, not the colour ones. I think as, as the country moved on, if you like, after the war, erm, things settled down people had more disposable income, erm parents aspirations for their children changed and developed, you know. Erm, the, the idea of you know, a safe job for life, if you like, you know, if you, if you had a job in the docks, you, you either had to acquire a couple of convictions or almost literally commit murder to lose that job, you know, erm, the same in, in many of the factories, although, obviously there was staff disciple and basic rules within a company, but you hardly ever heard of anyone getting the sack so… To some extent, I guess because like most institutions, you know the British Museum was an atypical institution. In the early days it was structured in exactly the same way as the civil service, so, office grades, you had the, the civil service grades of AEO HEO and SEO, erm, people just used to wait for somebody to die and then they would get their promotion if they waited long enough, you know. Erm, but, I, I think once it got in, the whole pace of life changed. Technology changed and people just changed with it. I don't think it was… certainly until the 1960s, mid 1960s it was very rare to hear about a family moving out of custom house. If you occasionally heard of one of my friends move from Custom House to East Ham, and they were considered to be moving up in the world. Because the fact that they were moving the East Ham it meant they had an inside toilet, it meant they had hot water on tap, you know. Erm, and of cour- that was just before the time, but running into that erm Margaret Thatcher period when people could then buy their own council houses. Erm an then real transformations started in the properties in Custom House. Because, you know individuals and families had been living in their properties for so many years, the amount of discount they could get on the market value, erm and the greater level of wages and disposable income, that meant you know, a lot of people started buying their council properties. Erm and once having bought them, they wanted to then bring them up to what was then the modern standard of er, rewiring the property, having some sort of extension built on the back of the house to accommodate a separate bathroom and toilet. Some even went as far as having central heating put in

[laughs]

Which was very revolutionary. [cough]

Times have moved on

Yeah, well, after my grandparents died, erm, we eventually took over the whole house, erm [cough. We stayed there until, 1970, the council had started a programme of demolishing the old terrace houses and started developing erm, first of all they demolished the propertied that were immediately adjacent to Prince Regents Lane and park. So you had Jersey Road and Garvary Road, they were smaller terraced houses than the one in Cundy Road, but I, they may have even been 2 bedroom properties, I don't know, but they were the first ones to be demolished. The council then redeveloped that site with blocks of flats and maisonettes [cough]. So progressively, that end of the road where, er, that end of Prince Regent Lane where Cundy Road was they gradually started moving people out into the new properties. Erm at one point where my family lived at number 19, we had no neighbours in the 2 houses to our left and 2 to the right, and I don't remember there being many houses occupied on the other side of the road. But we were eventually rehoused in a maisonette in what would have been Jersey Road. That would have been 1970. So, by which time I was 20, maybe just turned 21, would have been the first time that I'd got free access to an inside toilet with a bath with hot running water

Um

Er [cough] and the properties were built with a heating system that was, was basically hot air that was pumped into the rooms through grills just above the skirting board, so in the morning, you weren't, you know you weren't getting up on a freezing cold morning cos there were these wonderful things called time clocks where you could pre-set the heating to come on

Must've been quite a change

Yeah, erm, I mean thinking back on it now, it must have been quite a significant change for my mother as well, you know having spent all her time brining up her family and then moving to that p[property, but er, erm. When we moved into that maisonette my younger brother was already married and living away from home, my elder brother was only there for about 6 months or so, so within 6 months of moving out of Cundy Road for the first time in my life I'd got my own bedroom, which was, you know, all that space and it was all mine. I could close the door and be completely private and you know. The following year, so we'd now probably be in 1972 erm, my father died, which left just me and my mother in the property. Erm, when I subsequently got married and moved to East Ham, my mother stayed in that maisonette until she died. So, that would have been 1977. It was one of the sort of might be macabre, but I found it an interesting fact, the number of people… who'd retired but having moved from their family home to the redeveloped area significant number that died within the first year to 18 months. May have been pure coincidence, but yeah, it was almost… I sort of, it occurred to me one day that erm, virtually every week you could see 1, 2 sometimes 3 funerals within the same space of one week, and it was the same the next week and the week after. It's the fact that they've moved away, although you're only moving probably quarter of a mile, you know, er, you know,

Yeah

What bearing has got, has that got on all these people dying that weren't dying before. So. It's just one of the things that strikes you as being odd.

It can possibly be something you know, when you so kind of attached to a certain area.

Um

You know at that age. Any sort of change would have an impact.

I think, yeah. I think the unfortunate thing was… the time it seemed almost completely random, although, I'm sure the council had a, a plan and a theory, erm, but people that had been neighbours, almost for generations, one household would be moved and the people either side would still be there, but when they were subsequently moved, they were nowhere near their original neighbours. You just think if your moving people out of a street, if your moving people from say 15, 17, 19, 21 Cundy Road, surly logic would say you put them in a block of properties in Sark Walk, which was the name they gave to the area when Jersey Road was developed an… You know, you'd bump into somebody and they'd say, oh have you seen Mr and Mrs So-and-so, and you'd think, yeah they live way over there, but they used to live next-door to you [cough. People that were used to seeing the same faces and the same people day in day out, either didn't know where they'd been moved to, or they'd been moved to somewhere where you had to make a point of going to visit them, or them coming to visit you, whereas you used to chat on the doorstep or over the garden fence, you know, so.

So that sense of community's definitely XXX (1.05.30)

Oh yes, very much so, yeah, yeah, erm. And this sort of feeling of, the whole thing being done randomly was that, you knew people were being moved out of Cundy Road and the next turning which was Berwick Road, but when people moved into their new places their nee- their neighbours either side didn't even come from Custom House, they'd come from outside the immediate area, you know. All, all of a sudden they're living next to complete strangers

Yeah. I suppose that's kind of happened all over the East End though hasn't it?

Oh yeah, I'm sure it did, but erm, you know, you don't sort of think about it, or it doesn't strike you particularly until its actually happening to you. Erm, I mean it, in these days where, you know obviously a lot of people moved, owned their own properties, if they choose to move at some point, their moving to, they're moving to an area that they choose, erm, you know, the old adage that you can choose where you live but you can't choose your neighbours, invariable when people are viewing the property to move into, one of the considerations that you know, what are the neighbours like, do you get on with them, you know.

Yeah. Certainly. So I thought we could maybe move onto West Ham now as well.

Yeah

Urm

[coughs]

What are your first memories of West Ham football club and how did you come to support them?

Erm, phh, my first memories would be from the first match that I went to was in 1964, er couple of my friends er, and been to some games and they said you know, why don't you come along with us, and er… I, I don't think I needed much persuading but, er. I remember it being, it was a home game against Everton, we went to, we, we stood in the chicken run, we were standing outside the turnstiles, probably an hour before the turnstiles opened, you know, erm. In those days you used to, you paid at the turnstile to go in, so, as soon as we got in we used to go to the very back in the middle of the chicken run so we were looking down on the halfway line, erm.

Do you want to explain what the chicken run is, just for the sake of the tape

Erm, the chicken run is what would now be the east stand. Erm, it ran down one side of the, or one length of the pitch opposite the main stand, er, it was all terraced, or in those days, the only seats were in the main part of the main stand. Erm, it was er a terrace that ran down the length of the pitch. It had er a corrugated iron roof, hence it got the nickname of being the chicken run.

Um

… I think the sort of, looking back on it you er, you always felt safe being in there. The majority of people that would be in there, again they would work in the docks or the local factories, erm if someone went there who had got young boys with them, the boys would literally be passed down to the front, and they, sort of wooden boxes or wooden crates would appear from somewhere so the boys would stand on the crates, erm, you very, very rarely saw a woman of any age in the chicken run. Erm, any that did venture in there were usually ripe old comics being made and a lot of banter. That was one of the things that erm, that I, I always remember from those days was the, the level of banter and humour that used to bounce around during the game and the comments that were made and er. Yeah they were sort of good times because by pure coincidence I started going over there in 1964, 64 was when West Ham one the FA cup when they beat Preston, erm. I only got, I mean I got to watch that game on a black and white television at home, erm, 65 was when we won the European Cup Winners Cup Final an again somewhat fortunately it was played at Wembley, but by 1965 I was going to all the home games, and I saw all the home games in that European competition that West Ham played in. Erm and then in, the four friends that I used to go with, we were all in the same class at school and our woodwork teacher who also ran the football team, we got tickets for the final, and… he had a little very old Austin Van, we, the health and safety and road regulations would never allow these days, we climbed into the back of his van and sat on the floor of the van, erm, he drove us to somewhere near Wembley and then he got a ticket for the game as well. Erm… something which eventually led to my, sort of connection and association with friends of the elderly was erm, when I went to the launch event of what they were then calling sporting stories, erm, the table that I was sitting at, there was a reminiscing and talking about the old days, er I related a story to them, later on, somebody was saying, you know, is there anybody that would like to stand up an, tell, tell their reminiscing or a memory and, somebody from the foundation who was sitting at the table stood up and said oh, Don's got a good story to tell, an there's 60 people in this room an' they want me to stand up an [cough]. Erm, I stood up and told them the story that a couple of years before I was talking to my daughter one day and by this time was grown up herself and er, she told me that her and her brother had watched a DVD of West Ham against TSV Munich in the cup winners cup final, and I said oh what did you think of it, she said oh

it was quite a good game an, you know you could see there was a lot of atmosphere, an she said but the whole thing was spoilt by some idiot who kept ringing a bell all the way through the game. An I sort of sat there an' I said, you know who that idiot was don't you?

You?

Yes

[laughs]

Yes we, we'd left, on, on the day of the final we came out of school at the end of the day and I had, borrowed one of the school bells, when we got to Wembley Park station we ran the whole length of the, what was called Empire Way, we ran from the station to outside the stadium with me ringing the bell, which I continued to ring all the way through the game. So I said you do realise that idiot ringing the bell was your dad?

[laughs] That's quite a story

Yah

What was the atmosphere like at that game, cos obviously its quite important in West Hams history?

Tremendously, yeah, it was one of those things where I actually don't remember the journey home, erm, and it wasn't as if we were drinking all night cos we were only young lads you know, but er, it was sort of like, years later when people like, sort of, moved into the history of the club, an you know in later years you start meeting the oh were you there on that night and did you go to that game, an you think, was I, was that really me? Was I actually there? You know. At which point I can, you know, I can hear my daughter's voice saying that idiot with the bell

[Laughs]

Yeah. I think the, again, it was only something that occurred to me la- in later years, on the night of that final there was no segregation in the ground

Um, so all the fans were mixed

Erm, again most of the ground was terraces, it wasn't all seated the way it is now, erm, immediately behind us were, I don't know if they were a family or just a group of German people that before the game and half time we were chatting to them as well, their English wasn't particularly good and our German was non-existent you know, erm. I think we sort of, we swapped badges with some of them an [cough] but it was a really good, there was no animosity whatsoever it was really you know, a great evening. Erm, cos after 65 we then moved onto 66 when most people will tell you that West Ham won the world cup you know, yet again fortunately held at Wembley Stadium, erm, on the day of the final, bearing in mind we were of course playing against Germany I was in Germany. I'd gone along with erm, a youth club that I belonged to erm about 16 of us with I think it was 3 adults; erm had planned and booked a holiday in Germany moving from place to place staying in youth hostels. And

one, one of the places you didn't really want to be on the day of the world cup final against Germany was in Germany. Erm, on the morning of that day we were walking through the town, which was a place called Kempton just on the edge of the black Forrest, we were walking through he town and, we were going into different shops, and one of the group put his coat over the back of a chair in the shop. When he turned round the coat had gone and one of the shop assistants said, oh I just saw someone walk out with that, you know. The police were called, erm, he was put in the back of a police car and taken to the local police station, so the rest of us all trooped off the, the local police station, erm, while we were there, I don't know what rank this guy was, may- he may have been a sergeant or something, but he was in full uniform, got talking to us and talking about the football, and he said, where are you going to watch the game? An' we said we've got nowhere to watch the game, we're staying in a youth hostel

Yeah

Er, he went away and came back and said I've made a couple of phone calls, erm he gave us the address of er, it was sort of men's hostel in the town, erm, he'd obviously rung them up and explained our circumstances, erm, bearing in mind we were 15/ 16 years old, erm, so just after lunch we all trooped of to this working men's hostel, er, crowd of German guys obviously from all different parts of Germany itself, but they were all, all in rows in front of the television and we were sitting behind them. Just before the stat of the game 2 crates of bear were put in front of us, you know, this is a gift

Yep

Not entirely sure most of us are supposed to be drinking that amount of bear, but er. We went through the first half, got to half time, two more crates of bear, got to the final whistle and the manager of the place came over and said I think you'd better leave quietly, erm, don't worry about saying thank you to them erm. We thought right [laughs]

Yeah. I imagine

Yeah, we walked out into the street and the whole town was absolutely desert- there literally wasn't a sole anywhere. I think we saw one dog crossing the road. On the way in, we got to a main crossroads an in the middle of the crossroads on quite a high podium was, er a policeman, directing the traffic

Yeah

On the way back even he wasn't there cos, well apart from the fact there was no traffic for him to direct, erm, we didn't see a soul, until we got back to the youth hostel where we were staying. Er, made that cup final quite memorable for us, you know in a completely obscure way cos we weren't even in the country, but er, it was still a good memory that we shared on that day, you know. We were walking back through the deserted town singing any number of choruses for World Cup Willy, which was the world cup song for the time, but er.

Do not wish you were back at er, back in London watching it at Wembley or-?

Erm, strangely enough, when, we, we were at the youth club one Friday night and people were saying, you know, we're planning this trip, are you interested? Erm, that's the first time that I'd, I'd been abroad before. End of July, all seemed like a good idea. It would never occurred to any of us that that's the week when, would we be playing in the cup final, you know would we be in the world cup final anyway, erm. I don't think it, obviously everybody had been following the group stages and, quarter finals, it was only at that point, well hang on a minute, if we get into the final, we're gonna be there not here, you know. Of all the countries that we could have gone to, it just happened to be Germany, so. One of the other things that we, while we were on that trip the guy that was in charge, they decided it would be a good idea, because we were all rucksacks, it wasn't suitcases and er trolleys on wheels and that type of thing in those days, erm, they'd planned for us to walk from a place called Garmisch to Mittenwald, which is essentially in the mountains. Erm, it was interesting in one respect because just outside Garmisch is er, I think it's an Olympic, is it, a ski slope

Yeah

None of us had ever seen a ski slope before, you know. Erm, during the journey we stopped for a break, we were sort of walking up a, what was really a sort of dirt track, an unmade up road, erm the leader of the group somehow managed to lose all of pour passports out of his bag that had fell into the ravine that we were walking around. Er, when we eventually got to Munich we had to go to the embassy and get special visas and things like that to get back into the country

Yep

But a few things happened on that holiday

Yep, certainly. So just going back to West Ham there again

Yep

Erm, can you maybe describe what the stadium was like? The atmosphere at the stadium during match days?

In modern term the stadium itself was very basic, it, its er, apart from the centre of the main stand you had the directors box and associated area where there was seats. The rest of the stadium was all terraces. Erm, I can't remember again where there wasn't a really good atmosphere. Erm. Obviously West Ham being West Ham you had a good percentage of glossies, and there were 2 games, 1 was against West Brom, we were 3-0 up at half time and lost 4-3 er

[Sound of footsteps]

That's my wife coming in

Hello

Erm. It, it, there was never a time when I sort of felt intimidated or worried a bit about being three

[To wife] Hello

[sound of movement]

We would generally get there quite a time before the turnstiles opened so we'd be standing outside, people passing, or people coming up joining in the que,

Um

Conversations would start and um, erm, because of where we used to go in through, we used to go in through the turnstiles in Priory Road, so the only time we saw away supporters was when we actually got into the ground and they were always, well it was always called the north bank, erm, subsequently became known as the Trevor Brooking stand. You, you only ever saw away supporters from a distance, you know, it, an coming out we used to come out into Priory Road, walk into, we used to walk home more often than not because we'd walk into Barking Road, with the number of people it was easier and quicker to walk to the Green Gate, and once you were at the Green Gate you just turned left and walked into Prince Regents Lane

Yep

Erm,

What was the atmosphere like on Green Street?

Well, we never actually went into Green Street because our journey to the game from home, we would go to the Green Gate, an then we would turn into Barking Road, stay on Barking Road until we got to Priory Road and then we would turn left and go to the turnstiles for that side of the ground, erm. It wasn't until much later erm , as, as I got older, I married for the first time, I was doing shift work bringing up a family, so there was a period of time where I didn't go to matches, erm. An then, probably the late 90s maybe just into the year 2000, erm my daughter and I used to go to occasional matches, an then she was working as a hotel receptionist in London, erm, the beginning of 2002 I changed my job at the museum so I was no longer doing shift work, she changed her job so she was no longer doing shift work or working unsocial hours. Erm, so the early part of 2002, she said to me one day, well, from the beginning of the next season, she said, we could go to every home game, why don't we have season tickets?

Yeah

So the first season ticket that I had was for the season that started in 2002, and our seats were, in the main, the lower part of the main stand, erm, we saw a game from that stand. When, when the stand was redeveloped, erm, the first few games they only opened the upper tier of the stand cos they were still doing some work at the lower level. Er, so the first time we went into that stand we were quite near the back of that upper level. Erm, that season finished, we then went through the process of buying season tickets, so the seats that we got were in the lower section of the West Stand, halfway between he halfway line and the Trevor Brooking stand and row X, so it was a reasonable way back so that you weren't just watching the players- if your too low down you only see head and shoulders running up and down, if your too high up, you know, depending on how good your eye sight is, erm,

you, you don't get the, to me you don't get the best of views if your too high. So er, it was a sort of happy medium between the two, erm. So my daughter and I had those seats since 2002 erm

What's been your favourite game together?

Phh, favourite game together?... Probably the FA, well, it would be either the FA cup final against Liverpool, which we never talk about, er, and which I've got a video of the final and I've never been able to watch it even though I was there live on the day, erm… Probably one of the rare occasions where my daughter and I have stood there and both been crying at the same time at the end of the game, so, quite an emotional day that was. Erm, [cough], course that game was played at Cardiff, erm, we'd been to Cardiff on two previous occasions, erm, when West Ham got their last promotion back into the premiere league, we were there on that day, so that was, you know, a good occasion, overall I think, for me, the evening games at Upton Park have been a lot more memorable than most of the day time ones. The atmosphere just seems to be different and more intense in evening games. Er there was one season where we played, we had to play home and away legs against Ipswich in er the playoff semi-finals, erm, and the home game against Ipswich, it, it, it was close to the atmosphere and the emotion that was at that last game at the ground against Manchester United... It was sort of cheering and the sort of rhythmic clapping that they do around the ground, started almost from the first whistle, then it was just a wall of noise for the whole game.

Do you think there's been a shift in football culture and atmosphere from when you used to go to the football matches to-

From when I first started going?

Yeah

Erm. I suppose to some extent years, I think the sort of, the basic atmosphere and the banter is probably about the same. The intensity seems to have changed more now, erm, people never used to get so wound up an' there's a lot more armchair critics around now than there used to be, erm. It's one of my worst nightmares because when you're a season ticket holder you get used to the group of people who are sitting around you, erm we go to probably about 9 away games in a season, er, we always travel up on the coach from the ground, but of course once you get into the ground of the, whether it's going to Stoke, Leicester, or wherever you might be, er, if you've got somebody who thinks they're a television pundit, or their either giving a blow by blow commentary of everything that you're watching in front of you, erm, or, they think they're the next best thing to the current manager an all their ideas are far better than, you know whether it was Sam Allardyce or Slaven Bilic, or whoever it happens to be, you know. Or they're a closet referee,

Yeah

[snorts] you know.

I think most football fans are aren't they?

Erm, you can have an opinion without trying to referee the game from the terraces. In the ear of the person immediately in front of you [laughs]

Yep

You know. Erm. Overall it's all part of the characters and personalities that go to football games I suppose and you know. I suppose it's like being, like being anywhere else. If your sitting on the underground and there's a conversat- you zone out an, you can hear it but you're not listening to it, if you know what I mean, so, you try an' do that sort of thing, erm. I can never understand that small group of people, particularly for away games when, because going to the matches isn't part of your season ticket, so you bought the ticket, you've paid whatever fare, you know by whatever means of transport you've got to the away game and you get that little group of people who their so drunk they might just have well have, be at Wimbledon watching tennis, or, Twickenham watching rugby, cos they wouldn't have a clue whether the match had started, who was winning. You know. What's the point in getting that drunk,

Um

When the only reason you're here, you would have thought, was to watch a football match.

Yeah.

Doesn't make sense.

Suppose there's a massive culture to it as well, particularly round, you know the-

[cough]

Boleyn ground, the, there's the pub on the, well there's several pubs on that one street isn't there?

Yes. Yeah, I mean you've obviously got the-

-Boleyn-

Boleyn Pub, the pub itself on the corner, erm…

Have you ever been in there?

Not on match days, but I've been in there a couple of times. Er, the pie an mash shop been into. The group that did the five week program with Friends of the Elderly and West Ham Foundation, erm, the 5th and last group meeting that we had, somebody said, well you know, we've been all through this together, everybody, why don't we, as a group all go and have pie and mash?

Umm

So a couple of weeks after that last group meeting we all met up at Nathans and had our pie and mash. While we were in there the idea went around well if there's somehow we can work it out, or erm arrangements can be made, how does everybody feel about, you know, once a month all meeting up as a group. Erm, one of the group belonged to West, er East Ham working men's cub on Boleyn, it's the next turning to Priory Road in Boleyn Road, erm, he made some enquiries there and made contacts, the bottom line is that over a year later, once a month we still meet up there. Erm, we get there at 1 o clock, cos basically that's when the place opens

Yep

An' there's hardly anybody in there. Er, Peter who's the manager is quite happy for us to go in, an we sit in a corner. Most of the time we only see about half a dozen other people anyway. Although they've got a number of rooms in there, erm, we're in what would probably be the main bar room, erm, we've got a little corner that we sit in… Obviously you know, people are buying drinks, there's a little bit of money going into his till, but it gives us somewhere, it's sort of comfortable an, convenient to meet, cos er, about half of the group come from Abby Arms, Trinity Church sort of area, bu- and the rest of us come from Romford, Dagenham, so we're kind of equally balanced either side of that central point. So you know [cough] its some respects it's a logical place for us to meet. Just as well its been very convenient, so you know.

Umm

Erm, one of the days that we did at West Ham, the main point of the day was which Barkley's digital Eagles staff, erm. We were split up into groups of how many people knew absolutely nothing about computers and had never touched one, which was the biggest group, erm, how many had got access to a computer or a laptop and had got some expertise with sending and receiving emails but not very much more, there were a few people in that group, an then erm, how many people regularly use computers, might have a twitter account or a Facebook account, there were only 3 of us. So we sat down with this guy from Barkley's erm, and he'd been given the brief to set up a Facebook page which was going to be called Sporting Stories West Ham, he said well, we need somebody to be the sort of editor, an' the other two guys said Don'll do that. Uh, thanks very much.

Yeah, quick to make that remark.

Yeah. So, because the meeting was being held in what they called the press room at West Ham, so it would be where the manager would do like his Friday interview with the press, or if they were making any sort of announcements, an' it's quite a small room but on one side of it is a sort of raised platform was a kind of wrap around desk which people would sit behind, so they got the tree of us to sit in those places, we've got a picture on our Facebook page of the three of us sitting on this desk in the press room. I say I don't, I sort of act as the unofficial editor, I don't, because it's a closed group, you know, erm, its only members of the group, their families, and just a small group of people, but, I've downloaded a lot of the pictures that were taken during that program are on there, erm. As I said pictures from when I was at Reading and Brentford… different input from different people, you know. So er, so that's still going along quite nicely [cough], but erm, well coming back to the, the West Ham side of things, I was talking to a couple of people recently, erm, when I first started going there was a character, a guy called, everybody called him Monty, no idea what the guys real name was, or

anything very much about him. On match days he would walk up and down Green Street and Barking Road dressed in an army uniform with a beret, playing a bugle. Once the turnstiles opened, apart from the, you know, they used to have a, either the police or local band walking up and down, but Monty would walk up and down the touchlines blowing his bugle, and he'd come out again at half time. The club in whatever way must have kind of adopted him, cos, you know, otherwise he would never be allowed to do what he did, but erm

Was he any good at playing?

Phh, kinda, you could make out a tune, but he couldn't hold a tune for very long most of the time. erm, And as he was walking up and down there'd be all sorts of comments an mickey taking an all that sort of thing, which he completely ignored,

Yeah

Although I never remember him being, apart from occasionally making a gesture, he never seemed to take umbrage about it, erm, and I've never met anybody that knew very much about him. Was just one of those characters that, because he was always there, an always around everyone just took it for granted that, that Monty would be there every week. But erm who he was where he came from, you know. An again it was one of those, at the time you just accept that's what happens on match days, its only years later you think, who was that guy really, and what's his story, and you know, somebody did say, he was probably somebody who had served in the second world war, erm, had got, what people were calling post-traumatic stress syndrome or something very much like it, you know, never heard a bad word said about him, or that you know he was aggressive, you know, he wasn't somebody who walked up and down the road swearing at everybody, or chasing busses or anything like that, you know, but er. Yeah its one, one of those things where you just wish you knew a little bit more than you did, you know.

You could always do a goofle search, I suppose.

Well, yeah, the, the person I was talking to about quite recently, said well why don't you do that, there's bound to be something somewhere

Um

That'll come up about him.

I would imagine so. So I think maybe to finnish off as well, obviously West Ham are leaving the Bolyn Ground at Upton Park, or whetever you want to call it, to move to Stratford, what do you think about that?

Erm, I certainly wasn't happy about it, to start with, you know, I… in the last years or so, you know, I've met popel who have been going many more years than I have, you know… Some of em have been going, actually going to watch matches for 50 or 60 years, you know, erm. So when, when the idea was first publicised I thought why do they want to move an- In 2012 we got tickets for er, Paralympic events at the stadium. The first time I went there [cough] I went through the turnstile, an

up the pitch an got the first site of the inside of the stadium an there is no way there ever gonna be able to stage football matches in here, it just wont be right an

Um

An I've gradually sort of come rpound. Its obviouslty the economic considerations for the club and developing the club. I think, I mean the changes that they've made, I was only looking at it from the point of view of what the Stadium was like then

Yeah

As an athletics stadium. Erm, the fact that they've reconfigured the roof and the retractable seeting is going to mean that people are a lot closer to the pitch, erm, an obviously going to places like the stadium in Cardiff having been to Wembley stadium any number of times an you just think well, actually going to a big stadium's not that bad, erm, probably the only time I've been jelous of an Arsenal supporter was the first time we went to the Emmerates Stadium, erm, an it just felt so much more comfortable. Erm, instaed of having the traditional fold down plastic seats, the seats are fold down but they're a lot ticker. They're a lot more comfortable to sit on than any other ground in the country. Erm, so having been in the Emerated stadium, I sort of sat there, that Olympic stadiums not going to be so bad after all.

Um

You know. Erm, havn't had the benefit of going back there since they started doing the redevelopment, erm. I know thres, thers going to be an athletics meeting there immediately before West Hams first game. Erm,a n of course now nobodys entirely sure whether our first game there is going to be the first premier league game of the season or a Europa League game. I heard during this last week that they've now got planning permission to put the wraparound collar on the outside of the stadium. Erm I think when its sort of, when the changes are made, when the whole place is Clarat Blue erm, certainly the, the retractable seats will make a far bigger difference than reconfiguring the roof, although reconfiguring the roof I think will help a lot with the atmosphere. Erm, I was told thins morning that West Ham, they've now sold At least 52 thousnd season tickets. They, they, the original limit was 50 thousand, erm their now trying to free up potentially up to another 10 tousand. Erm… you know the place is sitting there waiting for the club and us to make new history and make new memories, an its er, you know, if, if, if 50 thousand plus season ticket holder cant generate an atmosphere, with all due respect they might as well go hom an watch Chelsea or Tot, Totenham, cos thres no atmosphere in those two grounds. Erm, there's probably a few people who would disagree with me but- I mean this now familiar chart of is this a library, you know… if totenahm or Chelsea don't score you don't hear a word from them

Um

Uh. Erm, if West Ham don't score, home or away, the fans start making their own entertainment. You get chqnting starting an, you know, different things happening that, just builds the whole thing up.

There's obviously a massive economic consideration when moving to the stadium, do you think in a sense West Ham are losing their sense of identity or-?

I don't think so at all

Moving from the area?

No. erm, West Ham are one of the very few premiere league teams, let alone teams anywhere in the country, that have got English owners, English owners that are local to the club. Erm, those two guys have put their own money in, you know, the fact thres a lot more television money, you know, advertising rights an all the rest of it, those two you know, Sullivan and Gold have been the saving grace of the club.

Um

A few years ago we could very easily have gone the way of Leads United and a lot of other clubs, er, when we were owned by the Icelandic bankers, you know. West Ham could easily have gone into administration, we could now be playing probably second division football.

Um

You know. In a stadium that's certainly showing signs of ware and tear, you know it, although I accept certainly in this last season erm, obviously they're not going to put money into, you know painting walls an' upgrading anything because they know its just throwing money away. Erm [coughs]. Fpor want of a better phrase you can see cracks appearing, you know, in the old lady or whatever you want to call it, the Bolyn ground, you know, its- I can well imagine, you know just to meet healthand safety requirments and different regualtions, if we weren't moving out of that stadium they would have had to find a considerable amount of money

Um

Just to, to keep it up to basic standards, basic standars and repairs. So you know. Why do that when we can- Manchester United did it, er Manchester City did it a few years ago, when they moved into the stadium that was built for the com- for the comenwealth games, so, erm. I don't see it, we're doing anything different from what Manchester City did.

Um. Do you think anything will happen to the local area, cos there's obviously a lot of local businesses and traders that rely-

In, in many respects, in many respects its going to be devastating for the local area. Erm, the amount of busness that must be generated locally on match days, an we talked about Nathans earlier on, you now, they're going to lose, before and after the game, there, there are ques for a hundred yards of people waiting to get in, erm. There's mthe othere businesses, you know you've got the fish and chip shop an all the other ddifferent places around there, that are obviously gonna feel a big deficit in their income. Erm, obviously the local pubs will as well, you know, the amount of trade they're going to lose. Erm, an the… the sort of locaslly famous Kens Caffe on Green Street, you know. I cant imagine

he relies on the trade that he gets on match days but it, you know its got to make a difference,a n, you know, you've, alomng Green Street itself, erm, there's the Bolyn Fish Bar, there's the erm, I think it's a Percy Ingles on the corner where you can go in an buy takeaway hot food. Erm, further along towards the

Queens Market has got a Percy Ingle in it as well

Yep, yeah. Erm, I cant imagine many West Ham fans pop into Queens Market on match days [both laugh] but er, cos further along Green Street you've got a couple of little grocers, tobacconist places where, you know you see dads with their sons, quing up in there to buy their half time snacks and drinks and things like that, you kknow, so er, I imagine it will have quite a big ypou know, economic

Impact

Yeah

Well I think we're coming towards the end of the interview now, do you have any final comments on West Ham, or anything you'd like to say?

No I think we- earlier we talked about [cough] sort of abiding memories, the one other memory that I've got is watching a game from the chicken run, an' it was a Saturday afternoon game, as far as I remember it was against Spurs. We had a big, I'm not sure if he might have been from Bermuda, big player called Clyde Best, sort of big man mountain of a player, erm, he was, wide left which put him immediately in front of the chicken run, he was just in his own half, he was just inside the halfway line, somebody played a long ball forward, Clyde set off after it

Um

Not realising that he'd been flagged offside… He got about half way from, he was half way between the half way line an' the penalty area, Martin Peters had set off after him, caught him up, jumped on his back, shouting in his ear that he was offside, and Clyde didn't even, he'd got Martin peters jumped on his back, Clyde didn't even slow down, he just kept running, until he got, an then he stood there burst out laughing, an' of course the whole crowd were joining in on it as well. It's just this mental picture of you know this great big guy running down the wing with Martin peters on his back

On his back. Yeah. Well thank you for being interviewed.

Ok thank you very much.

Thanks for sharing your stories with us as well.

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