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Interviewer

Interviewee

So my name is Joshua Adams and I'm recording for Eastside Community Heritage on the Stadium of Stories project. Do you maybe just want to introduce yourself for the sake of the recording?

Yes, my name is Anthony John Hellier, most er people connected with West Ham and know me as John Hellier, and er I'm the club historian, I took over in 1992... er when my father died as sort of club historian, writing in the programme, I've been associated with my father for many years er 'cos we had been er printing the programme for West Ham and my Father was the programme editor from about 1946 to 1983 or so... erm and he basically designed and wrote it and er got it approved by the club, so that's our sort of er... er how I came to be er club historian.

Hmm, so you're just saying there as well about your grandparents and their link.

Yeah my great Grandfather was a er er brass founder in the Thames Iron Works in the 1890s, er when Thames Iron Works football club was formed in 1895, er he was er one of the people who was on the... er initial stages of sort of a founding committee er he had played football erm around the area for a local er church side and other football teams in 1895 he was 35 years old and they and he sort of from what I understand had a type of role whereby he knew a lot of the local players in the area so when Thames Iron Works started up he was er, they played various teams and er he knew quite a lot of the players so he was able to give some background history on what sort of er players that er where in the opposition as far as I understand... and er then in roundabout 1900 he started up a printing business and er started printing progra... er started printing different things for er West Ham United when that was formed in 1900 er sort of Thames Iron Works were the... a football club were the predecessors of er West Ham United football club... and there from erm 1900 when West Ham was formed er he er was er associated with the club in various ways, used to help out from what I understand selling things like lottery tickets and erm for the club er to er make erm money for them and er also he er, this was all in his spare time, and also he used to work on match days at erm er erm the ground er from what I understand and doing things like turnstile operator or something like that, and then he had two sons erm my Grandfather errr erm Frederick Samuel and er his brother erm er who was always known as Uncle Harry erm Henry William Hellier and er then my Father erm... er... joined the family business as well and... er... worked er in the printing works and er with his uncle and his Father, and then erm... er I joined the firm in er in the 1960s after about 1965/66 after going to London College of Printing for two years doing a course on printing, previously I had been born in 1945 in East Ham Memorial Hospital and er we lived for the first six years of my life with my grandparents in Ranelagh Road, East Ham before we moved to Upminster Bridge erm where I live with my erm Mother and Father and then we moved to another address in Upminster and er... er so and mine, the family's been associated with West Ham United right from the earliest days.

Hmm, so you just mentioning the Thames Iron Works just for the sake of the recording can you explain a bit about who they are?

Yeah, Thames Iron Works, er was a er, it was a large ship-building and engineering company which was situated down at er Canning Town, Silver Town, erm in the 1800s, a about in the... mid to late 1850s, err there was a lot of er ship yards on the Thames and it ended up that the Thames Iron Works ship-building and engineering company was the last one finally, there was an amalgamation of a couple of shipyards er and er engineering works, and if you stood on er Canning Town flyover now and look to where the O2 Arena is all the land where the O2 Arena is and the top of Bow Creek and er Leamouth Road, Orchard Wharf that was all where their offices and er, erm the factory, the foundry, the engineering works also the shipyards, er they launched the boats into the top of Bow Creek off of slipways and then fitted them out in Bow Creek before er sailing and erm they were also er a big engineering company, they did the erm original iron work for er, held up the roof at Fenchurch Street Station when that was first built they did all the iron work for Thames erm... er for London Bridge and er they did a lot of iron work all over the world, they built also the ships for, in all together something like 850 odd, 860 ships for er not only the British Navy, er there's a famous boat called The Warrior which is in erm Portsmouth dockyard which they built, they built another boat which was called The Thunderer which when it was launched in the early 1900s was the biggest er British warship that had ever been built, er they built various other boats er for the British Navy but they also built boats for er erm the American Navy, Brazil er Portugal, Spain, Denmark, Germany and er they were a big international company, at one time they employed something like 6000 erm people down at Canning Town, Silver Town in their works.

Hmm, so how did that kind of um, come to the stage where West Ham Football Club were created?

Well in er in er 1895 the man who was running the company a man called Arnold Frank Hills er he er was of erm he'd sort of inherited the er finally inherited the Thames Iron Works shipbuilding and engineering company from er from his Father who had been one of the original er directors and various other people er and in the sort of 18... er 80s 1890s erm Arnold Arnold Hills became the er managing director of the whole conglomeration basically and in 1895 er he was a very er typical Victorian gentleman, a philanthropist, he also was a vegetarian he believed in erm living a healthy lifestyle... er because of his background he had been to erm Harrow School er public school he'd then gone to Oxford University where he was a double blue in sport and er then he joined the erm the family business erm... a roundabout er the 1880s, er erm and he erm said to in 1885 er 1895 sorry he said to the people who the senior managers who ran the different departments that er he wanted them to start up various sporting activities and societies of different things for the employees of the company er for their recreational activities er down in Silver Town, Canning Town during the 1800s were very deprived depressed area er there was erm not er really any green spaces there was no recreational activities and so he said he wanted people to start up different activities and they started up a football team which were called Thames Iron Works Football Club but they also had things like athletics clubs, tennis, cricket er rowing, cycling anything to do with sport, but they also had other things like erm, er brass band societies, choral societies, drama societies, and they even had a temperance society and all a lot of these were started up around about 1895, er most successful of them all was Thames Iron Works

Football Club, and er they erm became the dominant er football club in the area between 1895 and 1900.

Mmm, so why did they have this kind of, um, belief that his workers should be living a healthy lifestyle and should be involved in sports?

Well he'd been, yeah he'd been er as err... a very good amateur sportsman in his time, he'd er, as I said he was a double blue at Oxford in sport, er but he'd also er played as er er an amateur for England against Scotland at football at international level, he'd also been a er, the English mile and three mile champion at athletics in his time and he believed in er healthy lifestyle, erm 'cos he was also a vegetarian but not just that but er a healthy lifestyle, er for his workers was a good thing for the workers, good for the company and good for morale and er so that's basically why he started up all these er things and erm er I suppose er typical er... Victorian philanthropist erm and er business man, not knowing anything of his employees but thinking of er the company and erm everybody sort of working there as er erm er lived a good life as such, erm which was very difficult obviously around the time, the Victorian times, so...

Do you think it was er difficult or, you know, um... position that er a lot of workers had or a lot of managers had during the time, erm to take a sort of healthy, healthy living sort of approach with their workers? Was that commonplace or?

Well, well er, I mean to say erm the Victorians were er er a fantastic people as such, I mean to say when you think of some of the things that were invented in Victorian times and how they managed to er become or make Britain one of the greatest powers in the whole of the world during the er, through the 1800s er into the early 1900s, erm it er, yeah they believed in a sort of a, a healthy lifestyle they believed in um erm hardwork and erm hardwork got its rewards in many ways and erm also er if you had a healthy mind and a healthy body you, you know it er made, made a big difference as far as they was concerned, erm...

So where... sorry, where did West Ham Football Club go after their then after the...

Well the fact of er this Thames Iron Works Football Club was founded in 1895 and as I said they became the dominant er er football club in the area and the way they became the dominant football club in the area was because the er the managers who ran the er football club erm they went to different parts of the country especially the North East of England and Scotland where there was shipyards, heavy engineering works, foundries er places like that in the North of England erm and they erm invited er a lot of the people who worked in the shipyards and in the heavy engineering business and the foundries up there to come down to London and er work for Thames Iron Work shipbuilding and engineering company during the week for which they were paid, er a wage obviously and then if they played football for erm er Thames Iron Works Football Club they also got paid for playing football, a lot of the people in er the North East of England and Scotland because of the physical erm things they had, the attributes through working in the shipyards and the heavy engineering, the works made them physically fit, a lot of them were very good footballers as well, because football had taken off during the 1880s. 1890s in a lot of places and down in erm er the south as well, and er by inviting them er down these good footballers coupled with the people that they attracted from the London area, erm Thames Iron Works Football Club became the dominant football club in the whole of the area. Now the idea of being paid to play sport was totally

against all the ideals of Arnold Hills, as er he'd been an amateur er sportsman all his life, and er as I said he was English mile and three mile champion as errrr in er athletics in England as an amateur, he played amateur football for England, he played all his football as an amateur, any sport he did as an amateur, and the idea being paid to play sport was totally against all his ideals and principles, and so in 1900 er he said to the people running the football club, look if you want to run a professional football club is obviously the way that you are going by attracting all the best players and paying them wages, er because by roundabout 1900 basically there were a lot of er the footballers just played football for wages, they didn't even er work during the week because they were better paid, and so er he said if you want to start a professional football club as the way it's going, er you er ought to er I think you ought to start up under a different entity and that's how in 1900 they formed erm West Ham United Football Club from basically erm the Thames Iron Works Football Club which er then sort of reverted back to being, being an amateur, more of an amateur football club, erm West Ham United became er, the er professional football club. Now Arnold Hills didn't sort of divorce himself totally from the whole new project because he bought shares in the company 'cos they had to start a limited liability company called West Ham United Football Company Ltd, and er he bought shares in that to make sure that they had a sound financial basis, and **he also allowed them to use totally free of rent, er a magnificent stadium that he had built in 1897 in Canning Town, called the Memorial Grounds, and er this was a fantastic stadium, it had a bank cycle track, er which was said to be one of the best in the whole of, not just in London, but in the whole of er England, and in the middle of that was a football pitch erm, and round it were stands, and er, not only for seating but for standing, er and on the site as well there were cricket pitches, tennis courts, there was also a swimming pool, other activities for recreation for the employees of the Thames Iron Works shipbuilding and engineering company, and he said that the football club, the new football club could use that for as long as they wanted totally free of rent which they did for a number of years, and er before they then er moved to er the Boleyn Ground at Green Street.**

Mmm, so, were a lot of the players then from the North East and Scotland so there wasn't that many players from East London?

No, well it was quite a lot of, still a another, a number of players, er from er around the London area cos as they gradually er as Thames Iron Works Football Club gradually got to er, er erm more successful they did attract better players from the London area, so you did get er there were obviously a number of large teams in er, in the London area, erm and er at the time in, in the late er 1890s, and er erm... some of them came from good players from Kent, and er as I say the London area, er there were people like, clubs like the Coal Stream Guards, I think it was and the Grenadiers and they had good teams, there was other teams like Sheppey and people like that and they all had good players and and erm because er... erm Thames Iron Works were attracting these good players erm they had good players not only from as I say the North East of England and Scotland but also from er from the London area and er the surrounding counties, in in near, er Canning Town, East London etc. So...

Do you know what a typical wage would have been for these...?

Not offhand no, no I don't erm I, I don't dunno it's er it obviously meant that erm those that worked in the shipyards and the engineering works and other occupations like that they er ended up with getting basically two wages er, one from working like that and one from playing in the football team, but it did get by basically ermm the last few years like the

1898,99, er 1900, er there were as I say players who just played football, er so they must have er had a, quite a decent living wage, er as such.

Yeah, and you said the move to the Boleyn Ground, do you maybe want to give us a history of why it's called the Boleyn Ground and the history revolving that?

Erm... is a lovely story erm... it's a lot of err, how true it is it's difficult to say, but it is said that er King Henry VIII er the one who had six wives of course, er courted Anne Boleyn in the grounds of Green Street House, now Green Street House was a erm a er large Tudor house er which er occupied the site which was to part, which was to become West Ham United's football ground, er, the Green Street House was built between about 1520 and er 1550 so it took some 30 years to build erm and er in the grounds of Green Street House there was this large tower, castellated castle tower, er which you would have seen in the Middle Ages, and erm er all the er Green Street House had this these grounds and this erm there was a large wall that ran down one side which was the boundary wall and inside that was this castellated castle, erm which was became known as the Boleyn Tower or the Boleyn Castle because of this lovely story of the association between Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, now Henry VIII er knew Anne Boleyn for just three short years between erm 1533 to 1536 erm er there was a famous film called Anne of a Thousand Days many years ago that told the story of their life together during that period, before of course in er 1536 he er sent her off to the Tower of London, chopped her head off, and er she just became er one of his six wives, erm but this lovely story of them meeting er said to be meeting at the Grounds of Green Street House has dominated the whole of the area, the tower became known as the Boleyn Tower, the Boleyn Castle as I said and when football was first played in the er, the 1880s, 1890s erm at the Boleyn Stadium the Boleyn Ground, erm... er before West Ham even got there er the ground became known as the Boleyn Ground, the Boleyn Stadium because of this story and this tower, which was about something like 80 to 100 feet high so it dominated the whole of the area and so the ground erm, the pitch erm which had been basically the vegetable patch, the kitchen garden for Green Street House all over the years erm they just sort of rolled it flat and turned it into a football pitch, er football had been played there as I say in the 1880, 1890s by a number of teams and then um, er West Ham er sort of er took er took over the ground and er with the help of er one of the directors of another club erm, called, one I think one of the clubs was the Castle Swifts and er they sort of took on er West Ham took on some of the players from Castle Swifts erm sides and er that's how West Ham's association with the Boleyn Ground started in 1904.

Hmm, so was the Boleyn Ground, um just like you were talking about there, was that a developed area then or was it just...?

Well between er all the er, er by then it had become developed yeah, I mean to say, at the time of when um Green Street House had been originally built in the 1500s between as I said 1520, 1550, all the area around where the Green Street House was er being built was all basically park land, it was open woods and er, er it is also said all over that erm Henry VIII hunted er, in those areas, erm y'know through the woods and er, parklands that er were that part of er, of er East London as such, er was the edge of as you came out of London, erm there was a forest up at Forest Gate and parklands down round er where Upton Park is now, and erm, it is also said that erm, how the Isle of Dogs got its name at one time I think there was an association that the kings of England often had there, er kennels or their dog, where they kept their dogs hunting, dogs down on the Isle of Dogs, erm that's how some say how it

also got its name. And so in the 1500s er it was all open parkland, and erm Green Street House was built there and er then over the next sort of 400 years it gradually other er parts er houses were built and erm, as London expanded. And then the railway line came through which also er helped the expansion of er the East End of London and going outwards.

Mmm, I know it's a bit of a contentious issue as well, um, some people call it the Boleyn Ground, some people call it Upton Park, is there an official stance on that and why do people...?

No, it's known by both of those names, er the Boleyn Ground because of the fact that erm this story of er Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and the Boleyn family association with Green Street House, and er as I say, when football was first played there the ground became known as the Boleyn Ground, er the reason it's also called Upton Park is that erm, that area of er where it's situated as I said in the 1500s and Middle Ages was basically all parkland and I, from what I understand, there was sort of a village there, a hamlet that was called Upton and so it became Upton Park, er when the railway line first came through in the 1800s the station there was of course was called Upton Park the area is still known as Upton Park, and er the ground became known as Upton Park, in fact from when er West Ham first went to there in 1904 erm there er postal address has always been West Ham United Football Club, the Boleyn Ground, Green Street, Upton Park, London, E13 so actually er they get both of the names in the Boleyn Ground and Upton Park erm into the address so it's always been like that and lots of people have known it as the Boleyn Ground and lots of people have known it as Upton Park and a lot of people will know it by both of those names, erm in fact some years ago there was a West Ham fan who was on one of these quiz programmes and was answering questions on West Ham United Football Club, and er the er quizmaster asked him the question, er what is the name of West Ham United's Ground and erm this er, this er fan said "oh, it's the Boleyn Ground" and the quizmaster said "sorry that's the wrong answer it's Upton Park", and so er for some weeks afterwards erm West Ham switchboard was inundated with phone calls from people saying well I've always know it as the Boleyn Ground, others I've known it as Upton Park and others of course it's known by both those names, I think it's the only er football ground in er England that is well known by two names and er as the Boleyn Ground and Upton Park and erm we even had to go on radio and er television to explain the situation of how the ground got those two names because it became an item of interest er for everybody shall we say.

Yeah, so how has the Boleyn Ground changed over the years then? How has it developed from...?

Well it's er, when it first er erm when West Ham first went there they had sort of a, a small sta- stand end in one corner and there was just a terraced areas around, erm over the years er they er different stands were built, er there was er different sides of the ground er it had different names, there was er er er an area that was affectionately known as the chicken run and that was down er the east side the ground and er, that was just a wooden structure with a corrugated iron roof basically and it had er all down one side, er the picture this this tiered standing er under the corrugated iron roof all at different levels and erm when the fans were in there during the match and you looked across from the other side it, they all looked like, er, er chickens sitting on perches in a chicken coop and that's how it got the name of er the chicken run, er there was a terraced area at er right behind one goal called the north bank and that was all open area at one time, there was another terraced area behind the goal at the other

end of the ground er which was called the south bank and er over time those two er areas had erm roofs put over them to protect their fans during erm the winter months, obviously when it was raining and that sort of thing otherwise previously to that they'd got wet when they was watching, see if it was raining when they were watching the matches. And then down the other side er the west side er they er built er various erm stands erm er, er with standing accommodation underneath but er erm basically quite large stands and er over a number of years until er... the ground was expanded basically in the er... er... 1990s through into the 2000 when finally er because of the Hillsborough tragedy erm when nearly 100 Liverpool fans got crushed at er at er an FA cup semi-final at er Hillsborough ground, erm, then there was a big redevelopment of football grounds in the first division around the country and West Ham was no different and gradually the er the south bank was turned into a er er all seated area, er stands etc, er became when it was opened er became known as the Bobby Moore stand, then the erm, er year later in er 1995 the other end of the ground was redeveloped and er what was the north bank became another stand, erm, and then in around about 2000 er, er the old west stand was er, er gradually knocked down and er the new west stand was built which meant that the capacity of the ground was just under 35,000 all seated, so. So over the years it there had been various developments, I mean to say the previous er west stand had had various, what were known as er different blocks of erm er, where er the seating was and er, there was underneath there was terraced areas for people to stand, and um then additions were put on on that so you ended up with there was five er blocks of er seats in the ground, in the west stand, A B C D and E blocks and erm the er the sort of one, the best part to watch the match from was sort of the centre, either side of the centre line, that was called C block and er to the right hand side was B block and then A block which was er when West Ham got promoted in er, around about 19, 1958 time that was extended, and then erm, the other bits of the stand were erm, sort of erm modified until 2, 2000 when the whole lot was knocked down and this new super stand was opened shall we say.

Is there a part of the stadium which is renowned for its atmosphere as opposed to the other side?

Well, erm, er, the people who used to stand in the er, er chicken run were always felt that they er, er, they were superior shall we say to some, erm, to the north bank and the south bank, erm but, er, those in the er, east stand, in the, when the, 'cos that was always, the upper tier was always a seated area I suppose you would say they were the fans, if w-, had the, could afford to sit down in the you know, in the seats because they were more expensive than people standing where the people stood in the terraces and in the chicken run, but er, the atmosphere was basically er the ground itself, er was a tight cauldron of er the er stands and the terracing and everything was very close to the pitch, and erm it did make a big er atmosphere during er, especially during the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, er because the fans were so near to the pitch and so near to the players, so erm, er there was this great atmosphere in there, especially on cup tie matches and also er floodlit matches especially when West Ham were in Europe during the 1960s, 1970s, eh, as well as the early 80s, there was always a great atmosphere in the ground under the floodlights, and erm, just a cauldron of noise and erm fans shall we say.

Why do you think there was FA cup games and European games kind of elicited a better er atmosphere than a typical...?

Ah well it's just a I think with cup tie football has always been... erm... very close to er West Ham fans because er I suppose you would say that er, er, most of West Ham's biggest successes have been in er things like the FA cup and the European Cup, Winners Cup, and when they were in those competitions er they have obviously had relegation battles and er promotion battles, er, er they've obviously been promoted back er, what back to what was the er old first division, er on a couple of occasions and er then been relegated and then they've been promoted back to what is now become the Premiere League, and er so er, but cup tie football has always had this special thing with er West Ham fans so er, it was just er, the atmosphere that was generated by I suppose the night matches and floodlights and erm things like that.

Mmm, do you think the atmosphere has changed over the years, particularly when the stadiums all changed to all seater?

Er, well er, the yes, I mean there was a lot of West Ham fans who of course erm always er, er, even in the, when it became an all seater stadium, er still, er although they had a seat to sit on, insisted on standing, er so it was er, almost like er being back on the terraces as far as that was concerned, a lot of er, lot of fans in er, the lower tiers, the Bobby Moore stand always seemed to stand, always stood erm because er that had been basically one of the terraced areas and er, a lot of er football fans, not just at West Ham but all over the country er have always hankered about going back to the idea of having terraced areas because of the atmosphere, but er, er yeah I suppose the atmosphere in the ground has changed because also the fact that er the supporters have changed over the years, I mean to say although West Ham has always been called a family club, er it's only from sort of er, the 1990s shall we say that more erm female supporters have er become associated with er with the club, there was always, there was always er ladies and women that went to football matches but er, because of er, the way football changed during the 1990s er, it became more family orientated erm, West Ham always had an area where it was parents could take their children at a cheaper rate than er, erm, than er other parts of the ground, so er, there was this generated this family atmosphere, erm which carried on from... er... West Ham's early days of being a er, owners of a family club, and which probably also came about from er the days of the Thames Iron Works because of the close association with the Thames Iron Works shipbuilding and engineering company Thames Iron Works football club and then er, what became West Ham United Football Club, very close community in the East End of London and er, during er the early 1900s through the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s, erm, it became er great family traditions of grandfathers, fathers and aunts and uncles, sons, daughters and er, boys and children, generation after generation after generation, er, if you have claret and blue in your blood, West Ham colours, it passed down the family through the family line shall we say, it was a close knit community the East End of London.

Mmm, so obviously the atmosphere in the stadium was great but what sort of songs do they sing in the stadium, obviously there's that famous song Forever Blowing Bubbles...

Yeah I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles, er, which came out around about in the 1920s and er, that's basically er, er, the theme tune er of er West Ham United, has become the theme tune, erm and it's sort of er, in many ways summed up the whole er history of West Ham United erm people dreaming and then, like the bubbles er their dreams faded and died at different times, er, er, when you thought er, after some success, ah well you know, West Ham's now on a, on a run where they're gunna be er a great side they might win the cup or something

like that and now we've got a team that maybe can do good in the league as well and in erm, sort of er, like the bubbles bursting, the bubble that was er, er all these things sort of burst as well and er, West Ham sort of slipped back into er, a period of er, er, not so much er, great football and then rose again, and er, started flying again so, it's been a, it's always a turbulent, turbulent lifestyle being a supporter of West Ham United, because you get ups and downs and er, when the ups are up you feel really great and er then er unfortunately you get downs but er West Ham always attempt to play attractive type of football and er, but er, in the past they've often got caught out, so [xxx - 41:28]

So Forever Blowing Bubbles as well, what's the, what's the origins of the, of that song?

Er, I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles basically came about in the 1920s, it was a song that was written in America by er three American songwriters and er, er, it was a success over there, it came over to er, to England in the mid to er, later 1920s and was sung in the music halls around the country not just in London but all around the country, and er became a favourite of West Ham's because of the fact that er, er there were played on, on West Ham's ground in the the 1920s, a lot of er local football er from school teams er, there were erm a number of er schools in the area that produced very good er, er, young footballers, erm sort of aged anything between 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 and er, er, perhaps not as old as 16 because school leaving age around that time, but er, erm and they used to play matches against er, in in cup competitions against different teams from er different er parts of the country er, there were erm er a headmaster who looked after all the er football erm, er from er, the team that became basically West Ham boys er, now West Ham boys team was never part of West Ham United Football Club, a lot of people think it was because it was West Ham boys and they, West Ham boys was actually pupils from the various schools and they er, the er, it was run by basically the schools er, the county borough of West Ham as it was then and the education department, they had a school sports association and the football team was called West Ham boys, and they had a headmaster whose name was Cornelius Bill, everyone knew him as Corny Bill, and erm, he er used to make up these little ditties for er the, about the different boys in the team and er, er, the parents of the boys used to er sing these ditties at er at er matches that were played around the borough, and then when they used to play these erm, the West Ham boys played against er, ah, other er, teams from even as far as afield as [xxx - 44:22] and er, you know, it was different parts of London that had different teams, county borough teams, and they used to play them at West Ham's ground on a Saturday morning, at the Boleyn Ground, and erm, they'd get something like er, anything from 5 to 10,000 er people in there, and er, a lot of them were of course the parents of the children who were er playing on the team, there was a lot of West Ham fans in amongst them as well, and they started singing this I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles because of this, there was one boy whose name was Bubbles Murray, was a very good er footballer, and he had a mass of blond curly hair, er if you ever see the er what was the Pears Soap advert erm, little boy, sitting on a chair on a stall blowing bubbles and er, became known as Bubbles Murray, blond hair, and erm, this picture was er, er, originally painted by a famous er, English artist called Millais and er, er, the boys then er, this Bubbles Murray they started singing I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles, and it erm, because of this boy being called Bubbles Murray and er, it then got taken on by the West Ham fans who were er, watching the boys teams and then when er, erm the senior, when er West Ham's reserves or first team er, were playing in the afternoon er West Ham fans started singing I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles and that's basically how from the 1920s that became the theme song of West Ham United Football Club, because it summed up so

many of the hopes and dreams of er, in the words of the fans and er, and then of course, the bubbles burst and that was what happened with West Ham, so...

Has there been any games over the years where you've kind of thought the atmosphere has been way more electric than, than a typical game?

More electric?

Yeah

Yeah, well yes, erm I mean it's a, especially when West Ham were playing in er the European Cup winners cup, but during the er, erm, they er, they basically won the European Cup winners cup, er, for the first time in 1965 and there those matches against foreign opposition, er were played er, erm that was super electric er atmosphere there also when they again qualified in er 1975, and er 1980 after FA cup final wins, er they then went back into Europe in the European Cup winners' cup and those nights were very electric if one can say against foreign opposition and erm, ah the cup ties as well, erm, er, there's many matches that is always an electrifying atmosphere when West Ham are playing Manchester United or Tottenham, Arsenal or Chelsea, sort of London derby's, anything like that, there were always er, often er, some matches more than others stood out, but er- Basically cup ties was always because er West Ham often did quite well in cup ties, er those matches, but er there was also some terrific matches of er, in league matches as well, so er. I mean as I say the final league match, er premiere league match at the end of this season when at home, when West Ham played Manchester United that was a great atmosphere in there, 'specially as West Ham came back from being 2-1 down to win 3-2 er final competitive match at the Boleyn Ground, that was er, lovely for the team to go out on a winning note, sort of closing an era of being at the Boleyn Ground, so on a win.

What were the celebrations like on the final game?

Oh yeah well, I mean, I say the er, club directors and officials had laid on a terrific, almost like a pageant I would say at the end, the end of the match and er, a lot of former players, virtually all the former players that are still alive were invited back to er take part in the pageant and there was music on there and everything, a great er, great atmosphere. Erm for the fans and er, so it was, er, a celebration in many ways of closing an era, although in many ways, for many West Ham fans of course it was a sad occasion because the Boleyn ground has, is gone. As such and er, now the new stadium over at Stratford, obviously had got many attributes so it'll make a difference and one of the biggest ones of course is the fact that West Ham will have a bigger fan base, er you know, 60, 65 thousand supporters can get into the new stadium. We're up to something like 50 thousand season ticket holders now, where, cos the previous capacity as I said earlier at er West Ham at the Boleyn Ground was just under 35 thousand, so

Um. You just mentioned there earlier as well about rivalries, er London clubs more than most seem to have a more intense rivalry than clubs around the country.

Um

Doya' know why that is?

I s'pose it's er, er, the closeness of, and the number of clubs that are in the London area. I mean to say you can always, always say that er Arsenal, Tottenham, er we're always called THE big clubs as such, and of course Chelsea as well, and West Ham of course became, broke into that er, over a period of time, erm, and er, but there's always been rivalry 'cos of the closeness of most of the clubs to one another. I mean to say there was always a fierce rivalry as such between Arsenal and Tottenham fans, er, there's always er, erm been, er a certain amount of rivalry obviously between West Ham an Leyton Orient fans which are close, quite close together, as in distance, but of course, er, er, Leyton Orient have not always been in as much of the top flight of English football as, as West Ham. There was always a rivalry between West Ham and Millwall especially the fans there, there was almost a hatred, er, because of er, erm Millwall being sort of south of the river docklands, and West Ham being north of the river docklands as well, and er, er, there was always a fierce rivalry there, er Crystal Palace have had a checked history as far as being in various divisions but er, they likewise have had er, er, rivalry with other London clubs and so it's just a fact that I think there's so many erm clubs in the London area. Er you only talk about like Manchester, Manchester City Manchester United and well Manchester United have probably been the dominant factor in Manchester, but er Manchester City have sort of at various times been above Manchester United and you always have Liverpool and Everton in, you know in Merseyside, er fierce rivalry there as well. It's always been a fierce rivalry basically between Liverpool and Manchester United, er, you know because of the success that both of those clubs have had and so, one lot of supporters always wanna outdo another lot of supporters, and er- Oh j- it's just a passion of er football, an' just because er, really there's so many large clubs in the London area, erm its more intense I suppose in some ways.

Umm. So you were just saying there earlier as well there's been a lot of developments and changes of the stadium itself, how has Green Street and Barking Road developed over the years?

Well, its, er, East London has always been a very, [sighs] is one can say tight knit family community, and er obviously there was, during the, er right form when the docks was first er started, er w3iht all the ships comin' in er and er, is was position of er the Thames and er, er the people in, in the, basically it was white population in er East London, and its close family community, er a lot of men obviously worked in the docks at different, working in different shipping companies, or as dockers, what were known as dockers, you know, unloading the ships, loading the ships, etcetera. And erm, gradually over the years parts of er, erm East London changed with immigration erm, you know, during the 1930s there was a er, an influx of Jewish population into because of er what was, Hitler and the Germany, leading up to the Second World War and a lot of er, er, er Jewish people were, whether they came from germ any or Poland settled in the East End of London, but they mixed in with the community, gradually, and then of course during the er 19 er 60s 70s er er there were other coloured population came in from different parts, whether it was the West Indies or, er from Africa, and then of course er, perhaps in, I suppose through the 1980s and 90s a lot of people came in from er India and Pakistan and places like that, so the community's gradually changed over the years and now of course with the European Union there are, quite a big population of East Europeans in East London, er especially in round Upton Park and Canning Town and that there are a lot of Polish and other East Europeans now, er amongst the population and you notice that with the way that shops change, you know, you get a lot of small shops which are run by Asian businessmen, you get a lot of other shops that are run by Poles and perhaps Russians and Ukrainians, the restaurants, the food shops, the convenience stores are all er

gradually gone through changes and er that mirrors the population that is in the East End of London. I saw the other day that, for example in London Borough of Newham, I think they said in, there's 140 different languages spoken in schools and homes in er, in the London Borough of Newham, so that I think tells something, a story of the er, the population has gradually changed over the years. And of course that, the way the population has changed a lot of people who were born in the East End of London, even like myself, my parents er were basically East Enders but we moved out to other parts of say, into Essex as my parents did, and er my Grandfather, my Great Grandfather, er, who was the one who started up the family business, er he used to travel from er Southend on a steam train to come to work, and er, at one time. Er for the, for the business... he used to live er, basically in the East End of London and then moved down to Southend and then travelled back. My father used to travelling from Upminster, as I said I used to live in for many years in the East End of London. Er, my Grandfather, he lived in Romford. He used to travel in, as did his brother. Er, Uncle Harry, he, he lived in Romford as well, so, er, we're not, we're just one family, but there's loads and loads of families that have moved out at different times from er, from East London, even to Barking to Dagenham. Others moved into Hertfordshire, and er, all over. From places in Essex. I mean as I say there's a lot of West Ham fans that came to the Boleyn ground from places like Chelmsford and Colchester and er Greys in Essex and er, everywhere, all over, er, different, er where they'd moved their families or the children of the families had moved out gradually over the years so, er and that's how the, the one, the usual thing one family moves out of one house and another family moves in. Not, er, not necessarily of the same ethnic er, er minority or religion or whatever it might be. Er, but er, so, so gradually areas changed in times, and er, er, and the East End of London has changed, erm er. All round Upton Park has changed, so

Umm. What effect do you think leaving the Boleyn Ground's gonna have on the local business? Cos obviously there's a lot of businesses round there such as franks Caff and the pub an- and that-

Yeah, yeah. Well obviously er, er things like the Boleyn Tavern, the Boleyn, its er pub is going to er, er change as such, cos obviously there's, on match days it was always full of West Ham fans, but I do understand that they're, the people who run the er Boleyn Pub are er getting sort of coaches er, what can happen is that the fans can go to the Boleyn pub prior to the match and get on a, and have some drinks there, then they can get on the coach which will take em over to the new stadium at Stratford and then er will pick em up and bring em back to the Boleyn pub so that they can carry on drinking there after the match, so that's er, if can say that's er, an entrepreneur who runs the pub and says I've gotta find another way of keeping my customers. There's obviously pie and mash shops and other things like that and er Kens Cafe, I don't know what's happening with Kens Cafe or er the pie and mash shop, but obviously er, they might be effected obviously but er, Kens Caff is also open during the week as well. A lot of people go in there for breakfast and things like that, and I'm sure the same pie and mash shops er likewise will still attract er, people going in there but not necessarily on match days. Er as they obviously do, or have done in the past. I would assume that er some, er, er, businesses round er the area will be affected but if you go further up Green Street shall we say, up towards the station there is a lot, a different set of people who er, er basically in those shops up there that I don't think will probably be affected quite as much because of the indigenous population round that, further up Green Street and going towards Forest Gate, er. But I mean say, there's, a lot of pubs have closed anyway in the East End of London, in say there was a pub further up Green Street er, Duke of Edinburgh, which I think,

I understand that's closed, er, there's a lot, over the years, there's a lot of pubs along the Barking Road, like er, where I'm situated in er, our family business in the Barking Road. There used to be loads of pubs all the way up to, past Canning Town, up to Aldgate, a lot of those have closed, and going the other way, as you go towards Barking, a lot of small pubs and round, round different parts of the borough, you er, you see er pubs have closed because there's not so much of the, er people who're living round those areas now use pubs as used to in the 1920s, 30s, 40s and 50s and 60s shall we say. Because the, the population that used those have moved out basically and-

Yeah. Obviously the stadium as well has got a lot of history, do you think There's a- with the move to Stretford do you think there's a loss maybe in identity and heritage, since they're moving from the famous stadium to a brand new stadium where they have to create all those new memories?

Er yes, well that's, that's going to be the big thing. I mean to say when er, now it's basically er, Boleyn, if it's not exactly closed now will be within virtually sort of weeks now. Er, you're talking about 19 hundred and 4 to 2 thousand and 16, you know a hundred odd years of history that er, of West Ham United being linked with the Boleyn ground and all that's gone on there, er, in that, in that period, er, there's gonna be now over at Stratford, you know, as such the history of the stadium over at Stratford was basically first started off as, you know the Olympic stadium and now, they've had other things there of course like the rugby world cups and things like that, and various other bits and pieces, is a new era for West Ham United so er, a new era in their history, so you, you know, we can look back on the past and say what happened at the Boleyn Ground but there is no longer gonna be a Boleyn Ground as such because the new stadium is not gonna be the Boleyn Ground or the Boleyn Stadium because it will have another name so er, as such its er a big part of er West Hams history, will finish, you know, this summer, erm, but a new era will start again and hopefully er, perhaps with larger attendances and er, a new atmosphere at the, at the stadium that there will be, you know a new part of history created and er, things change as we all know over time, and nothing, nothing remains for ever, er, its only like as I said earlier about fans er, there are a lot of fans who obviously will not be enamoured of leaving the Boleyn Ground because they've been associated with it for all of their lives shall we say, ands er, but then again er, as I say, times change and people move on, and I'm sure West Ham fans will adapt and er, and go to the new stadium and, obviously a lot of people are er, followers of the club and not necessarily where, where the stadium is, and because its provided by the fact that the attendance is, at the new stadium are gonna be great you know, there gonna be in the 50 thousands rather than in the 30 thousands. So-

Yeah. Do you know when the stadiums gonna get an official name, cos obviously the seasons coming to-

No I don't- All I know is, I don't know all the ins and outs of the whole, all the saga or the whole story, but er, I mean to say there's is going to be er, as far as I understand a Bobby More stand, there's gonna be a Sir Trevor Brooking stand as there is in the current , er, at the Boleyn Ground, but then I understand that 2 stands there and er they're not necessarily gonna have a name associated with er West Ham united or the past of West Ham United because er the naming rights on those and as far as I know the naming naming rights on the ground the stadium itself are to the, in the hands of not just West Ham but in the company that basically runs, has been running the Stratford er Olympic Stadium from when it was first erm, built, I

mean it's had, I've heard various names that have been associated, I always, whether it's the Legacy Stadium of the Legacy Park, then we understand it's the Queen Elizabeth stand er Park or er grounds or whatever it might be, so er I don't know, it's not something that er I've been privy to so I don't know er, obviously that's er club officials at West Ham know more about that than er most people so.

Um. Do you think the move to the new stadium will push West Ham into further success maybe?

Well, hopefully yes because erm, obviously er, with er crowds of 50 odd thousand erm maybe up into the 60 thousands, erm there will be a bigger fan base, they'll be more, if one can say money generated, so hopefully in er, by that West Ham'll be able to attract er, erm,. Er more er, if one can say better players than they are at the moment er. They've always had er,er, er, an academy that has been well known for producing a lot of good players and obviously er, er, when you produce your own players you don't have to go out and pay sort of 10s 20s 30 million pounds, er for a player that you bring in from another club. But er, I mean it's a, in many ways West Ham 've bought wisely in the last couple of seasons because we have a player, Dimitri Payet at the moment that is er, been an absolute er revelation to er West Ham fans and has now been seen in Euro 2016, what he's achieved and er, erm, er what I understand is he's signed a new contract with West Ham but they're supposed to be even teams like Real Madrid and maybe Barcelona, Manchester United are talking about Payet, you know and would buy him, you know but what price now is Payet gonna change hands for, an' that, in same way from what one understands er, er, from, er sort of the manager and the club, the club directors the owners, who, they're saying that you know, they're looking at players in a higher bracket of transfer fees and er obviously these players will want bigger wages so it's probably the only way that by moving West Ham can move up into being in a position to er attract those players to the club. Especially if they can get European football, er once again at er, at the new stadium, which of course will be one of the attractions next season, that they will be playing in Europe, so once again, so, it er, er, if you can attract er, a different quality of player obviously you've got more chance of er perhaps achieving success, but er even the success that we had in the last season with our new manager Slaven Bilić course has been a big eye opener an revelation to er, to a lot of people, and er, just shows you what can be achieved, er.

Um. So obviously the stadiums a big change and I'm aware that the badge has changed very slightly as well, erm, but the colours are remaining the same?

Yeah, yeah claret colours, claret and blue, and er, I mean say, all over, like all football clubs er different kits come out, whether its one season, once a year, or each new season, or every couple of seasons, but its always gonna be basically claret and blue.

Do you know what the origin is of the claret and blue?

Er, well there's a number of stories that- er, how it came about, er, er I, mm believe the story more that er because of Thames iron works er, Arnold Hills who as I said was the man who basically set about getting Thames Iron works football club that started, he was very er, patriotic man, because of the fact that he worked for, built ships for the British navy, the British government, and so he was a very patriotic and the union jack red white and blue, and er, the original, basically the colours of Thames Iron Works football team was they played in

a sort of er, red white and blue because of him being er, this patriotic Englishman, Victorian at that time, and er, when Thames Iron Works Football club sort of morphed into West Ham United in 19 hundred, West Ham carried on er the colour scheme. Now I know that the claret and er the light blue are not the colours necessarily of the union jack, well obviously they wear white shorts, white's in the union jack and I just think they gradually morphed the colours in and it became the colours of West Ham United, claret and light blue with white often socks or shorts or whatever. There is this other story that some people have said about that er, a man who won a set of a Aston Villa football shirts in a bet, in a race, and erm that's how the team got those colours, but er I don't know. I just believe that because of this patriotic Arnold Hills story with the union jack and the fact that he worked, built ships for the British Navy, erm and er, that's er basically how the colours basically came about.

Umm. So we talked a bit about the development of the stadium and the club itself do you maybe wanna take us through the steps of West Hams prolonged success during the 60s etcetera?

Well yeah, I mean say, if you start out in 19 hundred of er basically er West Ham United when they started up in 19 hundred er played in the Southern League where they took the place of Thames Iron Works Football club then it came up to the First World War and er, after the, after the first World War er, 1919, 1920 West Ham got into what was the enlarged second division of the football league, four clubs were taken in to make the league bigger. Er in 1919 and West Ham were one of those clubs and the people who ran the club at the time including the manager Sid King did a fantastic job of going round the country getting the er, votes of other football league clubs to get West Ham voted in as one of the four clubs that made the bigger league. Then of course they had success and got promoted to first division, then got relegated until 1958 er when er, they got promoted again back to the first division, and that started a period of success which went from, through the 60s into the 70s into the early 80s when they were a successful side in er cup competitions and you had FA cup final wins in 1964 and 1975, 1980, you also had er European Cup Winners Cup matches in 1965 when they won the European Cup Winners Cup in a fantastic match at er mat Wembley, when they beat the German side called TSV Munich 1860. And er then of course, er the big er, huh, I mean say West Ham fans'll tell you it wasn't England that won the World Cup in 1966 it was West Ham because Bobby Moore, Jeff Hurst, Martin Peters, three players from West Ham at that time er were in the England side, er I will say they did all the work and they had to have eight other Englishmen to make the numbers up otherwise it would've been unfair on the Germans, but you know, West Ham have had this cup tradition over the years and when they won the cup again in 1975 they then went back into Europe and got through the various rounds to about the semi-finals and then 1980, and then of course er after the 1980s and then you got to the 1990s and Bill Bonds became the manager there and her er, he er had success in getting the team back after some difficult times, back to the first division and the football league and then of course you had Harry Rednapp who later on in the 1990s erm, and he got the team into er Europe and after they finished 5th in the premiere league, er highest position they'd had, and er, they were in Europe again and then of course er, Allan Pardew and a couple of other managers have had success in getting the team to er FA cup final and things like that and promoted back into the premiere league and now of course er we have er we had Sam Allardyce who steadied the club in difficult times and I always felt did sterling work in erm making sure that West Ham stayed in the Premiere League. Then of course Slaven Bilic he's done exceptionally well so er, and er West Ham fans'll say oh er play in the style of football that er has been associated with the club from, right from the

early days. Cos even in the 1920s and 30s West Ham always played a style of football that was attractive to the fans and carried that on in the 50s and 70s and 80s, so you know, its er, er, it's been a, up and down ride over the years, but they've always er had certain er, er criteria West Ham fans that they like the team to play an attractive style of football. Er so

Um. So obviously West Ham have had some iconic players as well, Trevor Brooking and Bobby Moore, have you ever had the pleasure of meeting any of them?

Yes, yeas, yeah. I mean say er I met er, I saw Bobby Moore when he made his debut in 1958 er, er against Manchester United that was a September evening that was a fantastic er match that time. Erm you know I've met most the players, er, er, at different times because of er, being associated with the club er for many, many years erm, with my father and erm myself and sort of being over on the ground on match days, erm, the club has, I met a lot, lot of the, new players if I can say during, during the 1960s, 1970s, 80s and er 90s, I don't er really mix with much of the er, er, er players er in the erm, the last er dec- couple of decades cos although I'm club historian they have other people working with the media who er, er are closely associated with er, with the team on throughout the week and on match days, so er, I, I'm don't er necessarily meet the players as much in the last sort of 10, 15 years or so, as I used to er prior when I was er, er more involved with erm doing things er, er with, with the players, like on when we had photo shoots and things like that pre-season er I don't get involved with those things now so, somebody else does that.

Um. Have you got any fond memories of any of these players over the years?

Oh yeas, I mean I got, er, er, er I always er liked er obviously Bobby Moore I thought was one of the greatest players I ever saw er playing football, fantastic player, fantastic captain, erm, erm one of my favourite players is, was er Billy Bonds and er I still see him over at the ground and and match days and er, we will say hello to each other. Sir Trevor Brooking a lovely man, once again a fantastic player, erm, people like Brian Dearer is er, always have a laugh and a joke whenever I see him and many players er, Ray Stewart, Tony Gale all players from different eras er, er recently er doing stadium tours have been involved with er Phil Parkes and Alan Taylor and er you see, I see Tony Cottee etcetera all these players that er, erm, er have got great time for the fans as well, that's the other thing about erm, er those players as well, er, very, er, a lot of, players like er, Brian Dear came up through the youth academy and often were born round the area, you know and Harry Rednapp when he was here as a player and er then he obviously came back as a manager but er, I'd I er, one of my favourites is er undoubtedly Billy Bonds, er I think he's a, he's been a great servant to the club, great character as Sir Trevor Brooking, such nice people to talk to and got time for everybody, you know, time for the fans and er never shirk talking to fans or signing autographs and er that's what makes 'em so well loved and thought of. Alvin Martin and I say Julian Dicks is back at the club now as well, er they've always got, got time for er, er the fans and er other players like the great ones you see in their heyday, Alan Devonshire, and er the skill that a lot of these players had er.

Umm.

Do you think that because players are less localised now today's footballers are almost a different breed of footballer?

Oh yes, undoubtedly, yes, yeah, I mean to say you would turn round and say that er, erm, er the way that the premiere league changed football er meant that there are so many now foreign players are in er, English football er, and er where before you, you know you might say there was, we had at West Ham er players er from the continent and er, erm or I remember in the 1970s we had a very good player François Van der Elst came over from Belgium and er he had played for XXX (1.26.30) and er played for West Ham and was other foreign players er, basically you came from Europe and er- Tomas Repka and people like that, others and er- But now you've got sort of an even bigger influx because er, even and we've had 'em as well South American footballers you know, who have found it attractive to come over to er, er England or the European continent to play their football. Have been attracted obviously by the teams er in Europe and teams in er England because once again how the wages have changed and of course you get a lot of African players as well, talented as well, and er, er have er come over here and- So its changed yes, there is a big change in er, er from what it was say 25 years ago and and prior to that er to what, to what it is now.

So just moving on to your association with West Ham a little bit. How did you get the mantra of, of club historian? How did that come about?

Well we'd been er, as I said my great grandfather became a printer around 19 hundred and started doing the er, er printing for different, different jobs for West Ham and then round about 1920 when they got into the second division and they started printing programs and handbooks and things like that as well as doing other printing and tickets, season tickets and all that sort of thing, build up over a period of time and then 19 er 46 erm in er my father come back from er, er being in the army in the er second world war. Prior to going into the army he'd been working in the family business and then when th- th-, the war, second world war was about to start he signed up with a lot of West Ham players er into er the territorial army, and they all went off to camp together. Got pictures of my father and erm one of the other club directors of erm, erm Mr Len Cearn who er became the chairman of the club in later years, but he er, er and a lot of people from associated with West Ham United, players, and people like Len Cearn and my father all went, joined up the army together. The in 1946 erm, the er club secretary and the er manager erm Charlie Painter said to er my father would he like to start writing the program notes. It used to be a 4 page '10 by 8 sort of er program and er, they said would he take on doing that job which he did, and then er, he became basically program editor cos when the team were promoted in, er back to the first division 1958 he designed a new program cos they wanted a different type of program and er, for many years up until 1983, 84 or so we used to print or do all the printing of the programs. Then we lost that contract but my father still carried on er writing for the program and er because of his associating he er, he er, he er went and er wrote the programme more designed it and one thing and another. Then er, er as we lost the contract and then he he carried on what was club historian, people used to write in and say can you tell us about this that the other, and he used to write a history page in the program, then when he died in 1992 the then club secretary er Tom Finn said to me, well you've been doing this job with your father for many years, would you like to take over as club historian and er, start, I was writing some bits and pieces in the program m I used to write er, er a history type of page which was called err Helier's History, but I also used to write the er reports, match reports for the reserves and the youth team and keep statistics and things like that which er, I've been doing sort of since 1992, basically.

Um. So how's your role developed or changed over the years?

Well, I don't write so much in the programme as I used to erm, but I still ans- have people writing in with queries, er, since sort of er whenever something comes up really associated with er history the club used the er, whether it's a radio station a television company or somebody like yourself and wanna know about the history of West Ham united er, I, I they put 'em onto me and I, er over the years I've sort of, when huh one, one example er, like er, thins thing about the Boleyn Ground and whether it's the Boleyn Ground and Upton Park, I was answering questions on that on the radio and things like that er, erm explaining that. Then er I've been doing television things as well, er, er I get er, a, when Crossrail, when they were making, started digging Crossrail they, they sunk a shaft which was basically near the isle of dogs and it had been where, where Thames Iron Works factory had been, and er they started digging up and found sort of old pieces of metal and hammers and things like that that had been in the Thames Iron Works, and so er we went over there, I went over there with our media team and we did some recording over there and then er, now that in the last few years have been, well say last few years, about 15 years or more, now I've been doing stadium tours at different times. We had a , quite a hectic period in the last season doing stadium tours and er I did quite a bit of filming with er sky sport and a couple of other television people who were doing sort of a final season, the final matches at were the Boleyn Ground so er, I do those sort of things, radio, television interviews and er talking to er journalists and other people, er about history more er, the history of West Ham United over the, over the er years, rather than er writing as much in the program. I do occasionally as I say write in the program er on history matters. So it has changed yes. But I'm always with the press on, in the media department, in the press room and press lounge on match days for many years now. Right from 92 really, erm and er, I understand that they want me to go over to Stratford and carry on doing the things that I've been doing at the Boleyn Ground, maybe= er also with the fact of doing stadium tours over there, so

So we just talked about your affiliation with West Ham, do you have any other historical interests apart from West Ham

Errrrr, not really, no. Er I always wanted to do my family history, family tree but er have never really got round to doing it. I've always been interested in history yeah, I must admit. I do like er reading history book and different things, sort of other interests.

What sparked that off, was it school?

Yeah, I think school probably was at- As I said I was born in East Ham Memorial Hospital and er lived the first 6 years of my life in er Granley Road East Ham with my grandparents and I went to St Michaels Primary School in Tilbury Road, then er we moved to Upminster and er I was at a Primary School there St Josephs in Upminster and then er after the 11 plus I came back for school, came back to er of all places Upton Park, Forest Gate cos I was at St Bonaventure's School in Forest Gate and er there I er, I was always interested in history, one of the subjects obviously at school and er always liked history and geography and er, and I used to come from school, specially when there was mid-week matches and er come to my father's office after school and printing works and he used to take me then to West Ham, and er, for, er, for the night matches obviously and then on Saturdays we used to travel up from Upminster to er, Upton Part and er, so yeah. I was associated I suppose with the History of West Ham an that was another thing that- But history has always fascinated me in many ways.

Um. So what else did you do as a child then when you were growing up? And how's the area that you have grown up in changed?

Oh well erm, I suppose, yeah, er, er. Well when you see what's happening in the East End of London now to, over the last like... 50, 70 years erm, er, prior to the second world war, and and in the period in between up to now, er, its, well its changed completely in many respects but er, how have I seen in change, well as I say I've seen all these difference, but er, dunno what to say further than that er.

Um. Did you ever play football as a child or not?

Yes, yeah. I er I did er play football erm when we lived at er Upminster I er, was in a er a local er boys team down there and er wasn't particularly er er good at at football but I did enjoy playing football, used to, did enjoy playing golf as well at one time, but haven't played golf for many years now, er, always said I'd take it up when I retire, but er, I seem to have gone past retirement age and still, still not taken it up but er [laughs]. I always enjoyed other things like fishing and things like course fishing and er, but er, yeah I er, so but always involved, so involved in West Ham on Saturdays and other times, and running the print, a family business as well, for many years erm it er didn't always get other time, other things to do. But I had different things that I like doing so-

Um. So West Ham has literally bee just your life?

Well, I wouldn't say just my life. It's been a big part there's no doubt about it but yes it has involved a big part of my life as it did my father's life for er many, many years, so, and er I suppose er our family as such have been because of our involvement with the club, and eer it has meant er, er as I say when my father was alive he used to often travel with the team, erm when they er, he travelled to America to er, all over Europe when they was playing in Europe, he travelled with the youth team and the officials there when the youth tam used to go on pre-season or inter-season tours pre-season tours to places like Holland and Germany one thing and another, and er, er, we've also met er foreign journalists when he's been to places like Finland and er Holland so. And I'm still in touch with some of those people that er I got to knoiw through my father through being associated with West Ham, so.

So obviously your father took you to your first game?

Er, yes, yes, yes

Have you ever took anyone to a West Ham game for the first time?

I took er, my wife used to come [laughs].

[laughs] Last game as well.

And I always used to come to er at one time he came e from a, used to er come along er and support the club and er er, after we got married and then of course er, erm we had children and so she wasn't able to come along on such a regular basis, so she hasn't been to football match for years and years and years. And our children have all grown up but er, er, children are not really- I have 2 daughter and a son and although they er always know because of my

association, they always say they follow West Hams results as such but they never go to matches but er, er, so yeah, a couple of the children have been in earlier years to, to er to the ground and er things like that so-

So I have one final question for you, what does West Ham mean to you? It's a broad question.

Oh, er. I suppose it means er so, many things in different ways, say the fact I've been er because of my family association being associated with the club for er you know, virtually the whole of my life, in one way or another it er, erm, I've er, often er thought of the team er and the club a bit like life in general. You have [laugh] good times and not so good times and er, like everything else sometimes you have dreams which are not always fulfilled and er being a fan of and a follower of West Ham United that sort of sums up so many things er about life and yeah, I- I suppose in many ways it means such a lot to me being in, associated with the club and having a er, the things that I've er done with the club and er been privileged to do and just being associated with it er, erm. It doesn't dominate my life such but erm, it er. My wife sometimes thinks it does so [laughs]. But there we are. Er I I I suppose, it's this old thing of you, you follow a football team and er I'm sure its perhaps the same with er lots of, lots of football fans. I suppose the difference I've had is my association has been a little bit closed to West Ham than a lot of er fans are able to be involved with as such and er. It's the old thing of I think if you have claret and blood running through your blood then its sommin' difficult to not or to stop having it running through your blood, so I suppose (I'll be er following West Ham one way or another till the day I die I suppose so that's er, I just er enjoyed it in many, many ways and er felt frustrated in some ways as well, but er, as I say, you know, when you've followed a team for, well I'm 70 now, be 71 in July so er, it's a case of er, I've seen the whole spectrum form er, you know, despair through elation with the club in many ways [laughs]

Well thankyou for being interviewed.

Thankyou

Cheers.

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