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So my name's 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 tape?

Yeah my name is David Wood

And how do you spell that?

W-O -- D-A-V-I-D W-O-O-D

And when were you born?

XX XX 1964.

And whereabouts where you born?

Er born in Aberdeen.

So I thought we can maybe start by talking about your grandparent. Erm whereabouts are your grandparents from?

Er, that's an interesting one because er, my grandfather on one side erm was Norwegian, Erm and the grandfather on the other side, er came from Aberdeen but he, on my mother's side, he died in 1933 at the age of 33 when he was lost overboard in a ship.

Mm

and me other one who was a cantankerous old bugger erm dug a hole a year before I was born, to plant some potatoes, fell in it, fell in it, nobody knew he was in there and actually nobody knew he was dead as well. So I didn't actually know either of err my grandfathers. Grandparents, err Grandmother on one side, was err worked in like XXX (01:15) but she was a widow with five kids err under five err in the 1930's when there was no social benefits.

Mm

Er, grandmother on the other side erm worked in the cotton mills.

Yeah

So erm, doing that kind of thing and bringing up five kids.

So how come your grandfather came over from Norway?

'Cos Norway's actually closer to London than it is from the Aberdeen and there isn't- there's quite a bit of migration. So-

Is there any particular reason why?

Ahh- I dunno. Probably just came over with fishing boats or something like that or for some reason or another just decided to come to Scotland.

Have your other grandparents always lived in Aberdeen or they moved?-

They always lived in Aberdeen, but my dad- on my dad's side, my dad was the only one that was left in Aberdeen. All the rest of them moved away.

Yeah, so what about your parents then? Are your parents from Aberdeen?

Yes

Both of them?

Yup

When were they born?

Er 1926 for my father and 1928 for my mother. She's still going along strong, eighty seven years old. Erm, She can't probably remember what she had for her dinner but she can remember what happened to her eight years ago.

Yeah

She still living on her own, my dad's been dead since 1988.

Mm, so what did your parents do for a living?

Er, my father was, well, actually that's a good question. My father was erm, he actually worked repairing busses, in the bus garage but he also had another job, 'cos he was really really heavily involved in amateur football as a referee and then later on as erm like secretary organiser of the Aberdeenshire Amateur Football Organisation. Erm and my mother was basically did various things in her life, erm she was the XXX (03:04) at the school which is, I don't know if that's a Scottish thing or not. Which is erm – ye- the best when you leave the school. And left the school at umm, but she'd to leave the school at 14 'cos she should have gone onto the high school which was the next school up but erm she's to leave because basically her mother had to put her to work because her mother was a widow and erm there wasn't state benefits, it was during the war. She- and they couldn't afford the uniform to go to the school. Erm so she trained as a tailor er but then later in life got involved in local government and was a councillor for twenty-five years.

Hmm

So really, did that as a full time job.

Yeah. You just mentioned the war there, did your parents ever share any war stories with you?

My dad wouldn't speak about it, never took his medals.

Mm

Because he didn't go there to win medals, he went there to kinda- to beat the Nazi's – was what he said and then, and then he would just shut up and, was not interested in it. He had come from quite a left wing family and they weren't – he was actually quite a pacifist but he had to go and do, he said he just went and did it because you had to go and do it. But he didn't want to do it.

Seems like quite a common theme actually for erm peoples parents not to talk about the war at all even if they served.

Mm.

You also mentioned as well there about your father being involved in the football association. Do you wanna expand a bit?-

Oh well yeah, he just took- he was a football referee and when he started refereeing, I think it was 2000 and when he stopped refereeing, he started getting involved in some sort of administration of the football. Or you go play golf and he was not particularly a good golfer so erm he went and got involved in an amateur football association and ran that for about thirty years. Umm it got bigger and bigger and bigger, I think there was a hundred and twenty teams he was administrating.

mm

Umm at the end became a life member Scottish football association – recognised him that way erm and probably just did too much ‘cos he was trying to do a full time job at the same time as that.

Mm

And took XXX (05:06:06) and passed away.

So who did your father support then?

Err Aberdeen. That’s how he met my mother.

Mm, so your mum’s a football fan?

Yeah- They- he met my mum in er about 1949 or something like that when they were with a football match ticket, they were on a supporters bus together to go to a football match to watch Aberdeen.

Did your father every play football at all?

Not particularly well, bit like me. But erm,

(laughs)

but erm,no erm bit enthusias- enthusiastic both of us for the game.

mm. So how about yourself then, erm, whereabouts did you grow up?

I grew up in Abderdeen. Erm left school at sixteen. Went to work in a post office.

mm

Er ‘cos in that days it was er seen as a – the aspiration was to get a job for life it wasn’t you can actually do it. And you aspire to get a job for life. I always remember when I

turned around and said erm I got a job in a post office; my gran turned around and said 'you've got a job there for life son, that's fine'. And that was the aspiration at the time.

Mm

And I stayed there, how many years? About – it was, quite, it was quite weird 'cos I- in the 80's when business did more money and things (laughs) and there was definitely opportunities available. I got the opportunity to take what they call a career break, which meant that you actually could take time off from work and go and do something else. Erm, but you only had to work for them a certain amount of time and things like that. During that particular year, so I took the time to go and get a degree at Uni.

Mm

Which I should have done when I left school but I didn't. I didn't have the opportunity at the time so (clears throat) I went and got- I went and got my degree but it was- I was quite lucky because I just need to phone them up and say erm right I'm finished at uni, I'm ready to come back and I went just got back into work like it was on the Saturday, you finish uni on the Friday and you just go in on the Saturday. I wasn't paid anything like casual rates or anything like that, I was paid like at like erm normal postman's rates so I was getting a decent –for –like- you're only at uni eight months a year, so for four months of the year, I was making a decent salary and not paying any tax on it. And 'cos – and at that time you did get grants as well so I was doing that – financially it was good, erm and then got my degree and then I went back into post office and the deal as if they give me this career break then you need to work for them for like five years more afterwards but they just gave me a promotion.

Yup, so just tell as well, that you grew up in Aberdeen erm what was Aberdeen like to grow up in? What did you do as a child or as a teenager?

Umm.. just normal kinda stuff, I mean we weren't particularly affluent so – but when everybody else around about is not particularly affluent, you don't even particularly notice. (laughs) so- 'cos everybody's poor then you've just got the same standard that you go for.

Yeah

Umm, I dunno, I just did normal stuff. Just... er describing what I did, just did normal stuff.

Mm

Erm, erm just went football and you know err just normal, normal kinda, it's a difficult

question' cos I just didn't

Yeah

do anything out of the ordinary.

Was there any special moments in terms of maybe, erm gigs you went to or or anything like that?

Er from my childhood? Can't really think 'cos it was a happy time but there wasn't nothing outstanding particularly happened. Erm... no I really.. Sorry.

That's fine. Did you ever play any sports or anything? Or?

Played about football but I was like more clubman (Train passes) of the year, rather than player of the year.

yeah

You know?

Erm, I was there to make up the numbers most likely you know but er (laughs)

Whereabouts did you play?

Just in XXX support pitches and just XXX (09:07) School and things like that.

So, did you ever go to any games to watch Aberdeen or?-

Yeah, yeah but then I went a lot to amateur football as well 'cos you know because my mum had a rule that if my dad was going to football, he had to take me with him. So you know I was about fourteen until I realised, 'till I was about fourteen I thought that everyday XXX there was a football match up on side (laughs). It was like a part of the entertainment you know. So you know, I've always went along erm and if, if he was referring or if he was just going to the game then he'd take me with him like on a Saturday and stuff like that.

Do you prefer amateur football or professional football?

(Pause) that's a bit, erm, (Train passes) that's an interesting question 'cos it's like. I quite like - amateur footballs good 'cos everybody can go and watch it, enjoy it and things like that but at the end of the day – If I can give it you in this example, erm, of I've been watching West Ham all last season, been really really good. Some really good football I watch but erm for the last game of the season erm, I went up to Scotland and

the game was on the Sunday, So I went to see Aberdeen then and it was pretty dry (laughs)

Mm

It was, the standard was, you know what I mean. It was the standard that was like pretty, pretty, not... it was just different and I didn't realise how different the standard was- it was 'cos it was just a reflection on like – one week I'd been watching premier league and then the next week I was watching Scottish premier league and you know it was chalk and cheese.

So what do you think the Scottish premier league than? Do you think the, obviously XXX (10:35) has left the couple of years ago-

XXX (10:57) yeah so Aberdeen would stop being second would start being third probably, erm, erm I don't know, I don't know. It's, it's just a different league and it doesn't have the money.

Mm

It doesn't have the money or the crowds) to be really attracting them. I mean the XXX been 16,000. Aberdeen had 16,000 at the European game last Thursday over XXX (11:17) which is good, it's good for the you know, but it's different for the ... you're not even, you're not even comparing oranges and apples, you're just, you're comparing oranges and a post box.

Yeah

So it's two completely different things you know, whether its –whether it should be like the erm, often think that they- maybe the like professional clubs in England should maybe think of using, using the Scottish clubs as some sort of XXX (11:53) for, for bring on younger players or young people coming back from injury and things like that you know. But then the problem you got is that if you're not like the kinda, if you're not like the kinda erm the history of it – as long as the Scottish Football Association that get a seat on the board XXX (12:13) the rules and XXX (12:14) because it was like Scotland got, Scotland always got a seat because we like invented the game.

Yeah

So erm, and if you – So the Scottish football association, you know you've got somebody from like somewhere like XXX (12:28) they're not gonna give that up. Not for the good of the game.

Mm

'cos they got too much stability.

Yeah, there was even talks a couple of years ago wasn't there about Rangers and Celtic,

mm

joining the premier league in England?

I don't think – I really don't think, they'd be more likely to play in the championships.

(Laughs)

I don't think their standards good enough, really, I don't think they've got the standard and probably Celtic at the moment, probably got the crowd?XXX (12:55) to do but whether they could get the financial backing from, I don't know.

Might have to get bought over,

Yup

Yea, like a lot of them. So do you have any special memories then? From watching Aberdeen play?

Oh yeah! Oh yeah, erm well it was XXX(13:12) 'cos it was like, erm, if you can remember. You XXX remember but, if you remember but in the 1980's Aberdeen won the European cup, Fergie was the manager before he went to Man United. It was you know, the unbeatable team. It was, you know the one league after league and cup after cup and -

XXXX wasn't it? (13:30)

Yes, yeah yeah, yeah yeah so you know and, and then you know and then he went – Abd- Fergie left Aberdeen and then went to – So I mean it was a, it was quite a time, quite a time. I – I would have been about what, seventeen, eighteen years old, just and that was, that was, so it was a good time to be an Aberdeen football fan.

Yeah, do you have any particular matches that you, that you've liked over the years watching Aberdeen?

Well, cup finals are always favourite ones but I could not really think of ones I'd find that particularly- 'cos I'm usually, usually a bit drunk you know (laughs) but I do remember like er you know erm, there were some happy times going to watch XXX (14:16) and things like that. And you know heading down to Glasgow and then, and

then back in the day you got like a XXX(14:24) as well which is always about fun as well so you'd maybe, I remember leaving work one time and (clears throat) erm and going straight down to er erm, you know leaving work going to Glasgow, erm, watch the football, getting back in the car, driving back to Aberdeen, getting in at one in the morning and getting up at five to go to work.

mm

yeah, which yeah, good fun when you're – can do it when you're young but wh-I wouldn't think about doing it now (Laughs) have to get the day off. (Laughs)

So what's the, what's the Aberdeen stadium like then?

Well, yeah they've been there since 1903 so but they try to do it up, it was the first XXX (15:00) stadium in Britain.

Mm

Erm, which was quite an achievement. Erm, it's never had the greatest atmosphere so they are in the process of looking to redevelop it and move to brand new stadium out of town. Erm, there's a few nimby's that are against it but the majority of the people kinda for it you know. But it's, it's a mixture of old and new 'cos they've got some new stands in there as well, they've got the main stands, quite old, you know. So, so a little bit like Boleyn. You know, because they got mixture of old and new but yeah they won't be keeping much of it when it goes 'cos it's kinda just yeah, it's just getting a bit past its sell by date I suppose.

So do you have any favourite footballers who have played for Aberdeen over the years?

Not really, just the, the dream squad of the, of the hay days which was you the likes of Willie Miller you know and Joe Harper, err you know, name them all of but you know, just a, there was a dream team at the time and they were quite good and they became legends and they were legends in their own time you know but not particularly, I've never been one to kinda goes for a particular player, and say oh I really like him, or I really really like him cos you know I think when you come to football the clubs are bigger than that so it's, you know they're all part of- they should all be part of the team, so it's the team you support not the actual players.

Mm, do you remember what it was like when Sir Alex Ferguson left Aberdeen?

oh gutting, yeah it was devastating and I think, I can't remember, somebody, the week before and I do remember this, the week before somebody had been (Coughs) pushing for like contract negotiations you know, maybe with a hundred pounds a week or something like that. Umm and and umm and he'd spoken about club loyalty- that you

should be loyal to the club erm 'cos again the- if you like the contract negotiations sparked public – so it was in the local paper you know, headline news and erm, you know but , you're speaking about a place where you know, car hits lamppost was heading news, (Laughs)

Mm

erm, and the following week he left to go to Man U, which, you know it did feel a bit like a betrayal but I mean, he can –he can be forgiven for that

Mm

I mean the man's still got the common touch, I was actually at a wedding last weekend and the groom who was at the wedding, Somebody I used to work with and he's err, he's a deputy head teacher and err Alex Ferguson's three boys came through his school and he got married for second time as I said last weekend and somebody got in contact with Alex Ferguson and he sent them a card, writing in his own hand. So you know he's special... but these characters are going to of football now.

Yeah

I always that say that

(coughs)

for a premier league football manage now, you're six games away from a sack.

yeah

and it's, if you're no use six years, XXX (18:25) six games you're out.

Mm

And they've got, they've got enough money to kinda afford just to pay you off and say just on your way, we'll bring somebody else in.

Yeah, it certainly took Fergie a number- well it took him a number of years...

yeah but nobody get that opportunity anymore, it's like, you know Arsene Wenger, you know, he's, he's, I think he's the last of them, you know . He's the last of the, of the if you like the long stagers? (18:53). And poor Louis Van Gaal he won the FA cup then got the bullet the following day, it's disgusting (laughs)

I actually quite liked him as a manager-

yeah, well nah yeah, people in the media didn't like this player but but I think he was in there for a, it was a long time you know, it was a long year he was playing, give him a couple of years to establish myself and then yada yada yada ya (19:21) and then he won the FA cup XXX (19:24) it's disgusting.

I think footballs in general got that problem. XXX (19:30), I think if he was given like a five or six year contract or something at the time and he didn't last very long.

No, 'cos he got, 'cos you need to get this instant result which you know, what's his name, it's gone now umm I can't stand the man, erm with Chelsea erm he'll do, They'll do a really really well next season but do not as well the following season, he'll get the XXX for one season (19:57)

Mm

because, he can do the short term stuff but he can't do the long term stuff and that's the way it's going now.

So what do you think it is about Scottish football managers that make them so successful, 'cos there's been a XXX (20:11) of them over the years, hasn't there?

That's really not so much in recent times, erm (pause) I don't know, I think it's maybe (Coughs) I think we're kinda, well we're good at... it's not just, I don't, I think it's just management in football, I think it's just management in general erm and I think that maybe, because of where a lot of them came from, like, if you like working class but XXX had the common touch and they-they recognised how... how-when to kick and when to cuddle and who to kick and who to cuddle 'cos you know – I think that's the sign of a good manager. If you know who to kick and who to cuddle and when's the opportune moment to do that and just the motivating to get the best out of – to get the best out of what they've got you know.

Mm do you think, Aberdeen's got a big football culture or not... in the city?

(Exhales) that's ... (Exhales) not particularly no. No-yes.. n.o. they've got their hard core XXX (21:24) supporters they'll get week in, week out. Erm I think there's other places that's got more of a football culture but they maybe got less of everything else.

Mm

I mean, you know I know, like from like your way, Sunderland fans are fanatical, I visit Sunderland, my god there's nothing else.

Mm

I've never see- been in a place like it in my life.

You know I've never XXX (21:30) to be honest.

(Laughs)

My god, my god it was just like, you know, you know your somewhere, you're in the pub- I went in the pub and took A pint of Guinness and the girl said, this was only, you know not last season, the season before. Just a pint of Guinness, she said £1.95, I said no, a pint of Guinness and she went year, £1.95...

Yeah, I always have this story of (coughs) people down in London as well, they seem usually kind of quite shocked by drink prices in general I think.

Yeah, but it was just, it was just I mean my god, XXX (22:26) and I think you know, that's what I mean by, places have got a big football culture because they've got nothing else. Erm and Aberdeen's been, you know had its peaks and XXX (22:38) but its been pretty affluent. There was granite yards and then, and they kind of died off and there's always been the fishing and that died off and then the, the oil came along you know so there's always been other things to keep the people... if you like, they've got other things to keep themselves occupied and because it's quite an affluent area, erm rather than just focused on – and not like a fact- not like huge huge huge huge factories, where the only outlet? You're getting's a Saturday afternoon for two hours.

Yeah, so just moving back on yourself there, erm what schools did you go to?

Erm, I went to grammar school erm which I hated every minute of it because it just, XXX (23:22) 'cos I've passed the exam and done very well. (Laughs) erm and I hated every minute of it and basically rebelled from about fourteen and wasn't sitting any exams. They were telling me about exams I could've set and things like that. Erm but I did well at Maths which is kinda good in the career (Laughs) I followed but that was only because I liked the teacher. Erm, but erm yeah so Aberdeen grammar school, erm hated it because tis got a uniform and hated it, hated the – there was no football, it was rugby

mm

and –but I guess when my parents were XXX (23:50) it was the right thing to do, because it was like, it was an opportunity that they got.

Yeah, do you remember the sort of things that you did after school at all?

Get out of the place as quickly as possible 'cos I just didn't- didn't fit in with the people

that were there (Laughs)

Mm

I just wanted to go play with me mates (Laughs)

Was it the teachers that you didn't like, or the subjects?

The whole thing, the whole culture of the place. It was still corporal punishment and erm looking back on it; I was just the wrong fit. Because I didn't fall into their kinda, if you like, you know... erm it just didn't suit me, and now that I've worked in education for like twelve years I understand that bit. Certain places, the- you know, the ethos and the culture of the place just doesn't suit with a person. No, just didn't suit me at all, that's why I had to go and get me education out XXX (24:51)

Yeah, so what did you do after school then in terms of jobs?

Erm, a bit of post office when I was sixteen. Erm and did that until I was... forty-eight, forty-nine. So erm and started off as a postman (External noise) and passed the test and became a postman ...

Shall I shut the door? (25:15)

Yeah sure,

Just think, you don't want that in your microphone do you?

(Laughs)

(door shuts)

erm postman and then erm, worked my way up and got, you know driver and all that, lots and lots and lots of – and that time you used to do double shifts and ghost shifts and things like that you- you're actually paid for your five o clock in the morning, ten o clock at night, but you weren't there from five o clock in the morning 'till ten at night. But you ghosted from about seven at night, you didn't ghost in until about seven in the morning.

So what's it like working for the royal mail then?

It was good at the time, it was good fun, it was good fun. A lot, a lot of fun, a lot of laughs because it was like, erm, (Sighs) it was- it was, I quite enjoyed it, I quite enjoyed it. It just, erm, you know – getting the mail delivered was like second bit, it was- yeah

yeah we get on with that, and that just kind of happened. But there was a good lot of comradery and things like that and it was a good system, it was really quite funny

Mm

Just lots and lots and lots of laughs and then I went to uni, come back, of course I became an inspector. So er, so but, that was just abit of time that they stopped all the overtime I thought I need to make money some way or another, you know so (laughs)

Mm

So erm and I came back and got promoted. Erm and ran four or five sorting offices

Yeah.

Erm, and then, and then erm, got right up to erm a XXX (26:59) that had erm about five million items coming in every morning.

Mm

and all sorted by hand, and then delivered it and then they send five million the next day, so I got 150 posties working for me.

Yeah

So it was quite a big operation

Mm,

and then, I got an opportunity that I couldn't refuse, they said, if you leave we'll pay you some money. So I said let's do it. And I was really really lucky 'cos it was 2007 so, yeah, 2006, 2007 and erm I walked out the post office on Christmas eve and walked into school on the 7th January, 'cos I just went along and basically said to them that erm, I kind of interviewed them (Laughs) and said you've got XXX (27:44) my skill sets. My skill set matches what you want. But erm, but it was quite interesting 'cos when the deputy head after my interview, erm, that was interviewing, so he says to me, he says yeah, I know you're face he says. Your dad wouldn't happen to be Jack Wood that ran the amateur football? And I went yeah it was. (Laughs). And he said XXX (28:12) So whether that had influence or not I don't know.

Mm, It's all about connections isn't it.

Well it is isn't it, you know, you know, we're still quite- we're still friends and that. There was a person I was doing- up to Scotland, his wedding last week. So you know,

still keeping in touch yeah so.

So when you were working for the royal mail, what would a typical day be like?

When I was a postie or when I was running the place? Which one? Or both?

Both

Both, all right okay. Well we used to drift in about six, erm (Laughs) drift in, (Laughs) sort a delivery, take it out and then erm that was your over time you see so erm, and then take it out on delivery and then probably not really bother with the second delivery, you go and have a nap somewhere (Laughs)

(Laughs)

And then erm, your shift started at one o'clock proper and it was like erm, but then you need to go and have your lunch and then go out and do some collections, emptying the pillar boxes but erm, but the last collection was 5:15, erm in the afternoon. And it was, certainly 5:15 so you couldn't open a box before 5:15. All pretty good at that actually, Erm, erm so you don't open your boxes and then take it back to the sorting office but the quicker you go back to the sorting office the better because erm didn't matter what time you got back, you weren't due upstairs to sort the outgoing mail until 7 o'clock. So the time between you getting back to the sorting office and dropping of your van and your collection and erm, 7 o'clock erm was XXX(29:56) to that exercise to see how many pints you could get over your neck in the pub (Laughs) before, before 7 o'clock. So erm, so if you can imagine there must've been all these red vans XXX Aberdeen (30:07) mental people (laughs) emptying pillar boxes 'cos you- you get back as quick as you can. Trying to get back for like 6 o'clock, so it would give you a good hour in the pub. XXX (30:25) 9 o'clock and then 9 o'clock dispatched like it was supposed to, yeah ... not saying it wouldn't be the right destinations (laughs) but who knows. Erm so that was like a typical day, but that was a typical day 'cause it was like different stuff that you did, it was just different stuff. Erm, erm and then, as I say, I come back and started of promotions -got promotions so I started off as a, if you like assistant inspector, which is like working under somebody else in, delivery office, just you know, first thing you had to do was see how many staff you'd have off sick and then cover their deliveries

Mm

One way or another and then just basically get the mail in. Erm and I moved from that after about four or five years, I moved so that erm I was round the XXX (31:17) offices and the, and the erm, I was around the XXX offices in, which was right in the highlands if you like. You know so there may be two or three postmen, right in the back office of the post office. So they were supervised by the postmaster that sold stamps and I just

went around and kinda sorted stuff out from them and tried to bring them into the nineteenth century and some into the twentieth century just to...(Laughs)

(Laughs)

Erm, erm. I tell a story about it, I go and, one office had two postmen in it and they actually worked in this woman's... A room in this woman's house. And erm right in the country side and there both had XXX (32:00) and one wouldn't speak to the other because one had a hundred calls and the other had ninety nine and he didn't think it was fair...that guy was (32:07) one more.

Yeah

yeah, it's just crazy how some people work

Mm

and then from there, I moved to a place called Banchory, which is in the erm, in XXX (32:180) side, erm worked in there. Erm, erm and that was, had about, had like the village itself had about maybe twelve thousand population but the actual area you cover was like 200 square miles so it was like kinda, so it was, so it was erm, (train passes) so it was like two hundred square miles erm which was, which was erm, so it was all, the rural area as well and I won an award there while I was there for, I had the best lot of sorting office in XXX (33.01.5) and I made the the magazine for the, the royal mail staff magazine. I made the, I became the centre fold in that,

Mm

which was quite exciting, you know, yeah

Was it not framed?

No, no....I don't really keep stuff. Erm, so yeah, erm I won out of, no I didn't win it, my posties they got surveyed and they said you know, cos I was a fabulous boss apparently

(Laughs)

erm, that, the one before was an arsehole so that was probably why (Laughs) so that was a reflection on you know, just how to treat people you know what I mean.

yup,

and then er, I ended up getting seconded out of there for like six months to, to er headquarters in Rugby. So er, I kinda redesigned the, the delivery office managers role,

took away a lot of admin task to actually give them actually management stuff to do kinda so that they could be strategic management, managers and planners which was quite interesting so, you know, one thing led to another and then went back into the city, the biggest sorting office in the city and worked there for about four, five years as well. But I just kept sacking people and they kept...

Mm

erm, you would sack somebody and then they would kind of, you know, it was only XXX (34:26) life so it basically available, so (Laughs) you would get rid of somebody and they would be replaced by somebody who was erm, equally the same level you know and just, erm

So you worked for the royal mail for, quite a number of years,

yeah yeah,

erm, have you recognised any sort of changes, to the royal mail?

I didn't like where it was going and that was the reason that I got out. Erm I got the opportunity and I really didn't like where it was going. I didn't like the, er you know. I would have been so unhappy working for it as a private company and 'cos they're just looking for profit then. And it's, you know, erm 'cos I always, always thought that XXX (35:12) management was found there

Mm

and you know when you're dealing with people all the time you know you're, you're kinda, you've gotta kinda think about things and think about who they affect and their lives. I speak about sacking people and dismissing people which I had to do but didn't like doing it.

mm

and all the, you know the things you pick up in your life and it was like the erm, when I went with training for you know, for your dismissal process they called it, er you know, the man turned around and said it was the first the first thing he said on the first day of work was, if you like dismissing people, you should be here. If you enjoy it, its not for you, you shouldn't be doing it. Its people who don't enjoy it, but , see the bigger picture and they XXX got to say, well you crossed that line, you gotta go you know

So you went to university as well

yeah

erm, what was your time like at university?

It was different because I was, bit different; I was a lot older when I went. Erm, erm I was a bit older when I went, it was a bit erm, I, I came with a bit more life experience if you like. You know so. I didn't come straight from school. Erm, I'll be quite honest with you the worst people I've gotta deal with, at school are the teachers that have left school, gone to uni, left uni, come back to school and knowing nothing else.

Mm

'cos they've got absolutely, you know, I mean I often wonder how they manage to find their way to work, I really do.

(Laughs)

(Laughs) you know, erm because they've got no life experience and no kinda you know what I mean

Yeah

Erm so it's like kinda you know, but it was, I was there, I was there for a purpose and and I really wanted to succeed. But it was like a little bit erm (Coughs) a little bit erm, erm, but I think I was abit different to some of the, if you like the tutors and lecturers and that because I remember I wrote an essay and I got like sixty-five or something on it and I wasn't very happy and so I went and knocked on the lecturers door and said (Laughs) 'What's this?' You know, I think, and he actually told me, he said what would you think it deserves. And I said at least a seventy-five, he just changed it (Laughs) and, and then I honestly think that because the lecturers were used to dealing with, if you like youths or kids or whatever you want to call them, just come from school, erm I think they were kinds erm kinda used to that and they weren't used to being challenged and were kinda taken aback when somebody came and said I'm not having that. You know

yeah (pause) so what did you study at university?

I did public policy management, which was kinda, you had to kinda of do a degree that was kinda, if you like, related to the, the industry. You know what I mean so it was like a, you know you have to do something that would be, kinda erm, it must be about, when did I go to uni? 1989, 99, erm so it was, you know privatisation... around there was not on the cards at the time so you know. it was kinda you know, so er you know because you had to apply for the career break, what they did was just that they did not pay you but they paid your pension...what they paid every week while you were at uni but as soon as they came back again they just started you on the payroll again.

yeah, so how long were you at university for?

Er, four years, because I did one year at an adult education thing that I got through my union

Mm

and then that gave me the qualification to go to uni and then I did my four years at uni, er three years at uni, sorry.

yeah, so what happened after university then?

XXX(39:04) (Laughs) finished it, graduated and went back to the.. back to post office.

Mm

then went back as a postman because you had to wait until there was like a ..

yeah

a vacancy then you had to apply for it, which was fair comment. Even though they spent all that year I Investing this money in me, you still had to wait until there was a vacancy came up and then you had to apply same as anybody else.

Mm, do you want to maybe talk about your current job now?

Mhm, (pause) err, yeah. Well, it's just a different, well if I go back just one step

yep

so I left, erm, I left royal mail, started off in a school. It's just; I was the first – if you like, post holder erm as a business manager in a school in Scotland 'cos it were just changing the manager structure within the school. Erm so it was quite interesting 'cos I kind of designed the job myself erm, and then, I did, I stayed there for about five years, just after –over five years and then I decided that erm I wanted to move and I wanted to try London and that was, I'd always erm, id always kinda had a (train runs) erm a id always said I gotta go and work in London even though I work in post offices or I might go and work in London someday 'cos erm, London, London post office was different from provincial post offices. They still call it that, you got London, you got provinces. Erm, erm id always say I gotta go work in London and then er one of my close friends got diagnosed terminally ill and that just gave me the boot in the arse that I needed to say let's give it a go. So I applied for a couple of schools XXX (40:51) and I got interviewed, had three interviews and got a job here.

Mm

Erm, which was, which was, which was kinda good and it kinda worked too because I really like where I'm at, I like what I'm doing, I'm like- I like the, the ethos In the school, I get along with the head teacher erm and it's a lot, a lot different to what I was doing. Erm because basically it's a voluntary aided school which means that you're responsible for everything, you pay the bills, you pay the electric bills, you pay the you know.

Yeah

and I look after the canteen or look after the, erm facilities, I look after the sports stuff, I manage the office...you name it.

Mm

Head teacher says I'm here to make you're the kids get the education, you're here to make sure they can open the door so...

yeah, so what prompted that shift then from working in the royal mail to working in the school?

Just, I was looking back, I was getting, I was getting that.. there was certain, if you like policy things that they were coming out with like how they would expect you to treat your staff that were casual XXX (41:59) like either, erm, erm it was just getting to the stage, it was just like a, you know, you're not aware of where you're going next, you know they were trying all these different ideas but weren't particularly thinking it through the consequences of the, the ideas and things like that. Erm so I went from there to erm, so then, that was the reason for kinda moving and then) as per usual they were looking for XXX (42:31:0) as well, so, they wanted to reduce, you know they – I was an expensive employee. I had long holidays, I worked my way up and XXX (42:41) if you like and things like that so you know I was expensive so they just, they put in the thing for redundancy and I just went yeah. Put my name in for it and lo and behold they said do you really want to go? 'cos I was well known you know. quite, if you like, a lot of better character as well so somebody that kinda stood up and erm said yeah yeah, and as I say when I got the opportunity I just, I went for interview at the beginning of December and being known I was being made redundant in London and also getting made redundant until March (laughs) because I, had so much holiday accrued and things like that.

Mm

and I walked out at Christmas Eve and walked into school at the start, start of the new

year.

So how did you find the move then, down to London?

it was interesting, yeah yeah.yeah yeah. It was interesting erm, erm yeah it was an exciting time as well 'cos I moved in with a partner that I had at the time as well which was kind of good. Erm, so it kinda was, it was like setting up post in Walthamstow and different, getting a lot of kick out of red busses and things like that and that kind of thing. You know I'd been to London lots and lots and lots of times before, so it wasn't like new new new you know erm, 'cos I had family who live here anyway erm but it was, it was something that were kinda, something new that was kinda erm, it was good, it was good and it was just a different kinda. The school I was at before erm was a different kinda school. 94% of kids were, went onto sixth form. 90% of them were erm would be going to university, where its completely different the place I'm at now. Erm and you know (coughs) the one im at now 'got like 10% white British but – doesn't bother me but erm and its, you know it's different it's a big melting pot of cultures and things which is really quite interesting and you know and I like the diversity.

Mm, so when you very first moved to London, you moved to Walthamstow?

To Walthamstow, yup yup, I was there for a couple of years.

Mm, whereabouts in Walthamstow did you live?

Erm, beside James street Station, which-

I just live around the corner

oh right okay

I live on Edward Road.

Oh right, I lived in, erm what do you call, I forgotten the address now XXX road (45:03)

yup

yeah, so yeah it was alright. It was, it was erm XXX (45:11) up there which was, it was alright, it was alright. Bit, it was like, had that student house if you like, which, probably bit old for ... XXX (45:24)when you're renting. What I did was, I had a house in Scotland which I kept on for a year and rented it out so... just to see how things went you know.

Mm

and then after I sold that, I was able to get somewhere else.

So you moved from Walthamstow to Stratford?

to here, yup yeah yeah. XXX (45:40) (laughs)

I found it abit confusing actually finding, was looking for – (Laughs)

(laughs) everybody says that

So obviously you're a West Ham supporter as well

all my life actually.

(inaudible talking over) West Ham supporter? (45:53)

... would always be my English team, don't know why. I think it was maybe erm, you get like little influences and if you looked at a tube map, with west ham on it. Which I didn't actually realise wasn't that west ham, was at Upton park but it was like that kind of thing erm, when I, when I was- you know, my little sister came here when she was sixteen and she had been here ever since so lots of holidays in London, lots of weekends away and if I came down, then I would try and get a match where you could actually buy a ticket when you can on the gate

mm

and you could actually go up to Upton Park and get you know, if you like, if you're a tourist in London and you wanted to go somewhere where you didn't have to walk or get lost or anything like that, you could take the tube straight to Upton Park and go and watch, go and watch it from there. And I don't know, I don't know how West Ham came about, but it might have been something to do with erm, till death us do part. The dad didn't like us watch that on the television 'cos there was too many swears in it erm, but sometimes I think you gotta watch it and you know XXX (47:01) it was always up the hammers that kind of thing so was always maybe just stuck in there you know.

Yup, so do you remember your first game then, erm watching West Ham play?

I would have been about twenty or something like that. Maybe abit older, maybe twenty two or something year, erm when I come down, when I come down for holidays it, you know to see my sister just going along, paid on, paid on the gate. There might have been the fastest division at the time who knows, I really couldn't remember and what about?

so how did you get to the game then?

Erm, well she lived in, where did she live at the time? I think she lived in err, like Muswell Hill you know. So I think, I think I must've found the way on the tube line and then taken the district line to Upton Park. But I, I don't remember a lot about it.

Mm do you have a pre match ritual at all?

Now? Yeah, everybody has I think. But that's that's going to change.

Yeah

you see erm, erm, Annie's Café over there's got just like all day breakfast. So I usually go and meet my mate that I go with and erm so off we go to Annie's and we have er set number four, which costs a fiver including a cuppa tea. Which is a full XXX (48:50) and then usually go to the black lion in Plaistow, erm, I know people through, just like a XXX (48:40) called Upton Park Life and meet some of the people from there, meet some people from Pride Irons but (sigh) they're speaking of still going to the Black Lion but, it's a nice pub and I like it but I'm not going all the way to Plaistow and come all the way back, (train passes)

yeah

that's just silly.

Mm

you know, I'm 15 minutes' walk from, from my ground now so...

its ideal isn't it?

its ideal you know, and I don't worry about public transport or anything like that.

Did you ever go to the Boleyn club or kens café or um Nathans pie and mash?

Nathans Pie and Mash, yeah yeah well you've gotta try them all out haven't you, you know what I mean and um 'cos the food in the ground was crap I don't know what's gonna be in the new place but... it can't be any worse. But yeah yeah you gotta, sometimes you gotta try Kens café or as I say, now and then, maybe if it was a late match, coming from work, we'll get some food before we go in. but you know, the black lions been my place for like last three or four years.

XXX (49:41) what would the typical atmosphere be like or-

The Black Lion?

Barking road or?

Black Lion, Black Lion's got like erm it's like, it's like, I think it must have been stables or something, you know, that's type of pub. Because you've got like a big arch that you go through and it's got like cobbles on it and it's got but you got the pub at the like at the front bit but also on match days got that big marquee that kinda they've got up all the time and they got a bar in there as well so you can actually stand and have a smoke.

Mm

and then you know, enjoyed the atmosphere before the game. And its, it's just you know totally West Ham; they're going to lose a lot of business I feel a bit sorry for them. But I feel it must be XXX (50:25) or something like that you know.

Mm

So what's the atmosphere like on Green Street then, the street opposite the stadium?

Its quite mixed, 'cos I, because its quite a heavily Asian area, I don't think they'll be missing nobody, (laughs) you know, XXXX (50:44) you just used to see some XXX (50:46 looking women ... trailing trolleys out trying to do their shopping on a Saturday afternoon when they really should have just been staying out the way (Laughs) you know.

Yup,

Erm yeah it's gonna be different. But I don't think it's a bad thing. Progress is never bad.

So obviously when u got to the stadium have u recognised any changes? Or have there been any developments to the stadium over the course of the years you've been going?

Like Boleyn?

yup, yes, it's got worse and worse and worse XXX (51:15) I mean there was nothing, I don't think they're keeping very much, it's not like you know when they demolished Highbury they kept the façade, 'cos it was worth saving, there's not very much worth saving at Boleyn you know (Laughs) you know unfortunately, but then there was flattened in the second world war and it was you know if you know the history abit it was flattened in the second world war erm, by the XXX (51:47) bombs so they put up like, structures they put up after the war was like not the best construction if you like. 'cos they didn't have the money and the materials to you know, they just kind of threw something up but then that got demolished so then the melinium stand, which became Sir Trevor Brooking and that was finished in 2000 and then you've got the Bobby

Moore finished about 1993. But I think the oldest stand in Boleyn was like 1969.

yeah

so you know, there's no way XXX (52:21) 'cos there's die hard west ham fans that you , put a rope around my neck for saying there wasn't a lot..... the history of the area but the actual stadium was a shithole.

yeah

(laughs)

I've head that comment a few times.

(laughs) yeah gotta love it, love it I mean it was (coughs) the only , the only thing I loved about it, is that because of the way the stands had been build it was, it was quite a cauldron. It was quite a cauldron because it was really, you know you were really, everybody was close to on the pitch. And it was quite er, It must have been quite an intimidating atmosphere for, for away teams to come, whether that would be replicated at the Olympic stadium I'm not too sure because its more of a modern bowl shape which is supposed what it is now a days you know.

(Voices overlap) (53:11)

very cheap so (laughs)

a lot of the fans that I've talked to, who are season ticket holders, erm all seem to have fun memories of the chicken run.

yeah, that was before my time

Yeah

But I do know where it is, I used to, where I was sitting, we sit in Bobby Moore upper which is overlooking you know what would have been the Chicken Run at the time you know, but they took it all out and put seats in. so

is there a particular part of the stadium that's best for the atmosphere at all?

Oh Bobby Moore XX (53:41) it just, I dunno (laughs) inappropriate comments. I never heard anything racist, homophobic, nothing. Never heard it in all the times I've been there. You know, but what's his name from Tottenham, erm, England guy? Oh, oh, not Keen, Kay?

Harry Kane

Harry Kane, yeah, XXX (54:15) Plastic think you know, the first time he ran up you know, who's this XXX (0:54) in the mask? Just (sigh) you know, which you know, erm, but , which were probably pretty inappropriate but still a bit, still a bit funny when you hear for the first time you know.

So what's the banter like then within the stadium, what do you talk about? Obviously, apart from shouting at the players

Shouting then applauding XXX (54:39) the referee, so you know, basically that.

So, (cough) has the atmosphere in the stadium developed at all, over the years, particularly with introduction with the XXX (54:54) stadium?

I dunno, I dunno, it's, it's I mean we've sat at the same bit for you know quite a while, you know Bobby Moore and I like that because it's like. Everybody sits down, but then I quite like that because I don't like standing all the time. Because I, I've never worked out what do you do when you get excited. 'cos when you're excited you stand up. Yeah yeah so what do you do? So... And I absolutely like to go and watch, watch a game. Not just going to shout at the opposition. Went to a Tottenham game last year and I was in the, somebody I know got another ticket you know Tottenham west ham. And it was like west ham fans were like here, so they were on, like, to my left.

Mm

And Tottenham fans were looking to the left and just shouting abuse at the west ham fans the whole game. They weren't even watching the football. That's not, why you go to football for that's... that doesn't XXX (56:02)

yeah, so obviously as well you know erm, West Ham are moving to Stratford as you know

Mm, erm, there obviously going to be a big impact upon the local community there, particularly the local business. What are your opinions on that?

What, doing it? Doing it in Plaistow? (Sighs) I feel sorry for them, but at the same time you know, you've gotta move on. You gotta develop. My worry is, west hams got quite working class roots and its, you know, I don't know, 'cos we haven't been there yet. But what I've heard is that they're not gonna have the burger vans outside. You know, you know, you know I always like er, you were speaking about like the routine beforehand? I like going to the sweet stall and buying two bags of sweets for a pound and and buying the same two bags of sweets every game and the guy saying... you know, the guy actually knows which bags of sweets you want, because he recognises your face and erm

you know (sighs) and but what I would say is that you know, with Olympic money at least, like as part of Stratford and you know to some extent ... Forest Gate to you know there's been money that's been spent and things being done erm, that part is about it's just.. It looks drab.

yeah

it looks as if it really needs a development, you know

mm

It really really needs some- someone to kinda kick start it and maybe not in the stadium XXX (57:50) and kinda take it from there you know what I mean. So it's... (train passes) erm so you know, and I think that's maybe, that's mabe the positive to the – gotta look at green street and you know that kind of , in the area or maybe, as I said or maybe kinda-

Mm, you just mentioned there as well about West Hams working class roots obviously that goes back (coughs) to the Thames Ironworks do you think West Ham losing a sense of themselves with the move to Stratford?

No, no I think, no I think there positively trying to kinda keep that you know stimulating, keep that bit going you know the XXX (58:31) been on the news the last couple of days and they're calling it the Thames Ironworks tribute kit. So ...

So what do you think about the move to Stratford then? Is your erm pre-match ritual 'gonna change at all or you just-

Dunno, dunno XXX (58:48) for the bacon sandwich.

Mm, do you think the atmosphere at all will be affected when you go there?

Just of got to wait and see, I've never, you know I'm fifty one years and I've never moved stadiums before so (Laughs) I mean I've been at Emirates and XXX (59:08) so because it's got like the kinda erm, because it's got like the kinda erm, erm I just think it's just too big you know. I went to see the Emirates one summer just for something to do and it was like sitting and watching a XXX (59:25) match.

yeah

didn't enjoy it at all

Do you have the same seats or?

Dunno, no no, completely different and were not getting until, because they've changed the, because they've changed it from an athletics track erm, like on Thursday I'm sitting in Trevor Book and Saturday, Sunday I'm sitting in West Ham and they're season ticket seats and XXX (59:59) (train noise) gonna take a lot of getting used to, a bit different 'cos it's like you know, I knew the people ... sit at the front... I knew the people sat behind us. I knew the people sat next to us and that's all gone. They've all gone and chose different parts of the stadium and...

Yeah (coughs) at Upton Park or the Boleyn ground erm, they had, um the auction and people were buying their seats and memorabilia, did you-

Nah

partake in that?

nah, I didn't bother, I didn't, nah I didn't, seat covered In chewing guy or whatever you know what I mean

(Laughs)

that wasn't XXX (1:00:35) um no, no because its, I didn't see anything, kinda, it just kinda erm I didn't see anything, it kinda just sparked my imagination. I mean we all bought a t-shirt on the last game you know and mines is still in the plastic cos I never opened that cos I'll keep that cos that's like something you can keep but no, and I'm not one for keeping, I don't like a rubbish laying around so (Laughs)

Yeah, what did u think of the celebrations on the very last day against Manchester United?

It was good, was good, they did it well. They did it really really well. Yeah erm, it was a pity about the trouble at the beginning but actually be forgotten about but I blame the police for that 'cos they just didn't have enough officers there for the amount of people that were- that turned up.

Mm have you encountered any other trouble at the stadium?

XXX trouble (1:01:33) it was just people, it was a bit scary out 'cos it was just so many people trying to go, you know trying to going different directions and nobody kind of guiding them. It was just too many people. I've never seen anything. Normally, I, I tell I lie, there was one day, it was like a Sunday lunch time or something and there was just a crowd of twenty Millwall fans just decided to come over and look for that bother but they just got kinda surrounded by police and were just standing there shouting Millwall and we were shouting go away

Mm

You know, XXX (1:01) division rubbish (laughs)

(laughs)

You know but, you know, erm and I see the ambition, I see the ambition in the club as well. And they had to move basically because they wanted to take it to the next level and be a contender and I remember that.

Mm you just mentioned Millwall there as well and obviously lots of London clubs have lots of rivalries, aside from Millwall, who would you say are West hams biggest rivalries?

Spurs, spurs and I don't know why I don't know why.

Has there been any particular games with spurs where it's been particularly heated maybe or?

Well that game, that game where they beat us, that where they beat us was, was it, I think it was four- nil when I left I think it ended up four one.

Mm

Erm they beat us erm that was when it was Tottenham (1:03:01) couldn't take it anymore and they just left

yeah

But I didn't wear colours that day but then if you look at last season as well Tottenham's, erm XXX (1:03:13) came in and that was kinda erm, it all started to go wrong. XXX (1:03:20) Revenge is sweet isn't it?

It is, so when you watch games, do you prefer? – Again just through experience through the interviews a lot of people seem to talk about enjoying erm FA cup games particularly under the floodlights as opposed to a Saturday afternoon. Do you have a particular preference or?

Saturday 3 o clock, really like Saturday 3 o clock I hate lunch time games. I hate late games, I hate Monday games. It's just throws the routine out, you know, that's just me, it's me, I don't call myself traditional. I just like 3 o clock on Saturdays when footballs supposed to be played.

Mm, So obviously you've seen quite a few games at the Boleyn ground over the years as well, do you have any particularly memories of any favourite games you've seen?

No, not really, I mean. not really, because. Because the time I've been at London, the time I've been a season ticket holder, the majority of the time I was under XXX [1:04:17]

(laughs). He didn't really play, did he but you can't go week in week out to kinda go there you know and ups and downs and then I think last season's been fantastic

Mm what's your opinion erm on the West Ham XXX (1:04:36) 'cos a lot of people talk about... You'd rather lose and watch good football being played than win and watch poor football.

West ham play the way I like to watch football which is a person game you know, you know one of my favourite chants was you know 'play in the ground, play in the ground, West Ham United' and I love watching that and if you go back, if you go back when I, if u go back and look at the, the winning team, like the Celtic winning team that won the, first British team that won the team in 1967 played exactly the same way, it was all pass pass pass pass pass pass pass, pass, pass, pass I love it. It's my kind of football. That's what I like you know, it's XXX (1:05:17) which sometimes is affective sometimes its very you know. I might get abit..

Might get a bit power hungry

I get abit controversial when they speak about XXX 'cos I think he's a one trick pony but er (laughs)

Might be a one season wonder yet,

Who knows, who knows, if they got offered 30million for him they should have taken it that was my view, I'd say that's neither here nor there, cos the problem you've got is, and its exactly the same you'll find the next season, where that's his name from last term, I'm hopeless with names-

XXX (1:05:45) or?

No

Vardy,

Vardy, is that you saw it in the world cup, he knew what he was gotta do. 'Cos he only knew, he only knew to do one thing. Yeah so he knew what he was gotta do so they defended against him and a way to stop him from doing what he was going to do. So I think next season will be a different season for him all together

Yeah, again with XXX he was kinda put from XXX (1:06:13)

Well he was wasn't he, you know, and then he just kinda, he just wanted to hit them in the back of the net within a few kicks but you know but. Again a bit of a one trick pony

but that's just me being controversial. I quite like doing that sometimes just to wind people up

Yup

(laughs)

Has there been any particular goals you've seen? Over maybe last season or season before?

Can't remember, erm I just kinda always go from game to game to game to game you know I mean I could probably say oh I remember that things like that, some beautiful goals but erm I really don't remember. (Pause) There was one game we got robbed (laughs) we were playing and we was at home, I can't remember and we did get robbed and there a couple of goals that were knocked of site that they weren't off site at all. Erm, I can't remember, I honestly can't remember because the way my brain works ... and then move onto the next thing

So what sort of songs do you sing in the stadium? Obviously there's XXX(1:07:31) bubbles-

Oh bubbles, you've gotta sing bubbles. Bubbles, yeah, yeah

Do you know the origins of that song or?

Ehm?

Do you know what the origins are?

I know the origins yeah, yeah it's a, some kid played for them in the 1930s, called, but he didn't actually play for the, I think he just played for the youth team or something like that and some – one of the managers wanted to take along their erm took along the banter kinda to play in the middle to kinda entertain the crowd beforehand and it just kind of caught on. And I think it's one of the original, it's one of the original you know, erm, it's one of the original football songs if you like and it's, I like it but it's really really unique yeah cos its, cos its, nobody else sings it. You know you can change the words, You know, you've got XXX [1:08] you change so many times and putting in different names but you know, if you're singing Forever Blowing Bubbles, you're West Ham and that's it.

Yeah, so how do you see west ham football club moving forward then?

Ah, I'm hopeful that, they can get, the you know, the you know. I think they're taking the opportunity and increasing it you know and increasing the size of the stadium, more or less double of the size of the stadium 35,000 to 60,000. Erm I think what you're doing is you're erm, erm I think they making the sketches, from being, you know they want to

aspire to be in the top four, top six that kind of thing XXX (1:09) to be in the top four season, not bad, not bad score. Which I think the previous year's erm when they weren't particularly struggling and things like that in previously years, if you finished tenth, then that would be a good season.

Mm

Whereas I think what made they want to make the step change up to, to erm they want to make a step change up to be in the erm, to be in one of the better teams. You know what I mean XXX (1:09:52) spending my money a little bit you know.

Yeah

(Laughs) I know a good deal when I see one (laughs)

Mm so what are your expectations then for the next, next season?

I really don't know I really don't know and it's not I think you know with the ups and downs last season were or you know, erm and I don't know erm , and the reason I'm saying I don't know , there's too many new variables you've got XXX (1:10:22) you've got Man City, you've got .Marino, you've got man united, you've got XXX (1:10:28) gotta do something in the first half of the season, like Liverpool because if he doesn't he's six days away from the sack.

I do like him as a manager though

Yea but, but you know he hasn't done much. You know you've got, you've got XXX [1:10] it was just too many variables.

Mm what happens if next season with West Ham isn't so great? Do you think the move to the stadium would have been worth it or?

I think that,, that could go anyway, do do something with the Boleyn you know whether that was knock it down or do something with it. They got the opportunity to move in (sighs) they've said that they money that they're making with the season tickets is gonna be spent on players so they must have a decent fighting fund of that you know. But at the same time they've said to Russian oligarchs.

Yeah

Which, anybody, anybody can buy a team you know. Look at Chelsea, he just went out and you know, well kinda went wrong abit but you know, so it's, I don't know, I don't know.

I think it will be different for the players, I think the players will have to kinda you know step up to the mark. They're playing in front of 60,000 people now. That's gonna be different for them.

Do you think the stadiums gonna be filled or?

well they've sold 54,000 season tickets.

Quite a lot

So they've only got sometime like 6000 that they can, dish out to the away fans and that kind of thing you know. You know but they made it, they made it. They make it a different kind of quality product so I don't know. I don't know but they do need it. If u get beaten by the big boys you gotta kinda work with the big boys but they've also done something background stuff as well because they've taken on new erm like a new kind of media manager who used to be – you know, he was from Bournemouth and they've taken him on... can't remember his name.. But they've take him on as a kinda. So they are kinda moving on up the way but at the same time you gotta watch. You gotta kinda. I would rather they worked on it next year and they sue next year as like a consolidation year and maybe finish top six or something like that and then start of rather that kind of, if you got for the big bang it doesn't always kinda work

Do you think the atmosphere in the new stadiums going to become more family orientated at all?

I dunno,

Just one of the concerns that I've heard

I dunno, I dunno, it's kinda you know, ... be a lot more children there cos you know they've sold the season ticket at £99 so I think a lot of people will be taking kids along which is fine, which is fine. I don't know, I don't know its kinda, its gonna be a different stadium as well, when you go into like the concourse it's going to be completely open all the way around. So you can kinda, so whether it ends up that people start going in and that's like a family bit and that's like a not-so family bit and ... you know but I've never seen, in all the years I've been going there you know, you come out of, even if you go... a few away games last year and and some of the away games that we went to you know, it was, the atmosphere that we went to beforehand was absolutely amazing, just absolutely...

Mm

But there wasn't any kinda, but there wasn't – but, not , not in like, not kinda violent tension it was just people have a good time

Yeah, so you just mentioned there about away games, erm do you prefer away games or home games?

Oh I like a day out (laughs) I like a day out yeah, I like it when it's like, if it's like, like you can do it in a day from London. I wouldn't like you go up somewhere your way to Newcastle or somewhere like that 'cos it's really not really doable in a day erm you know , really disappointing that Norwich is out because, because that's a great one to go, you know you just get a train up to to Norwich and back again and erm ... weve got quite a good relationship with XXX (1:15:13) as well which is a Norwich City LGBT group, so erm , so, which is, which is quite, quite erm, so its disappointing they got relegated erm so yeah yeah. I like, I enjoy a day out and I like going somewhere that I've erm, that I've never been before. 'cos its, cos its erm you know I like going somewhere that I've never been before because it's quite, it's quite interesting as well. Where were we?

So, mentioning the Pride of Irons

Yep

How did you join that group?

Well, I just, it kinda it was kinda interesting at the time cos I had always been a, erm, a member of the gay football supporters network and erm 'cos for period of time just before I left Aberdeen I helped with the administration of the gay football team in Aberdeen, they've got, I think they've gone XXX(1:16:20) now and through that I went to a tournament in in Blackpool and erm I joined a GFSN and if you join GFSN you get life membership for like a quid. So... and I got an email through saying that they were setting up, erm a West Ham group. I didn't know anybody that was involved in it and I just thought, erm and they were looking for like people to do office bearer jobs. Say were looking for nominations for yade yade yah and I erm just put me (train passes) put me name up more for the reason sometimes these things, when they start up people don't actually put their hands up, they're kinda fall on their arse quite quickly and I just thought I can- I've got the time I can give a little bit of commitment and actually put my name forward to be the treasurer.

Mm

And the guy that was kind of co-ordinating it was through GFSN emailed me back and said we've got two nominations for treasurer but none for secretary and I said well I said if somebody's really wanting to be the treasurer let them be treasurer and I'm happy to be the secretary and take it from there you know. So, so it was really quite, quite interesting (police sirens) cos I didn't know anybody, there was a couple of people already knew each other, that kinda you know spoken before and things (train

passes)like that and suddenly I just became the secretary without actually, without an
XXX {1:17)

What sort of work do Pride of Irons do then?

We're just trying to raise, its good cos we've got, we've kinda spoken about it as a kinda erm, if you like our ethos is, what we would like to do eventually is not have to exist. Maybe it really sounds abit weird but if, if we can ensure there's no homophobia in the game. If we can get some players to actually admit that they were gay before they retired and if, if we got somebody that was like a really big name erm, the it would be easier for, you know. we had football supporters that happened to be gay, I'll always remember we went to- got invited along last year to, there was an FA cup draw and it was on the one show, can you turn up tomorrow on the BBC in a west ham top. So erm, turned up at the BBC and then we went for a drink afterwards and there was a group of people that came in and there'd ben invited a lot 'cos they were a supporters club as well. The club had just got in contact with erm with certain supporters club and say can you go along and this woman come up and start speaking and said oh who are you, said oh we're pride of irons and she said 'oh what you looking to do?' And I said well we're not actually going to throw flowers at the players. I said that's not, - I said we're football supporters that happen to be gay, that happen to you know- that happen to raise, raise our profiles. We wanted; I think we've got a few things we wanted to do. We wanted to... if people happen to be gay and want to go along, then that should be, they shouldn't be hiding that they're gay when they go to a football match and they should- if, if we can get them a bit of support and, so that they're a bit more confident in themselves and also, everybody's different and everybody's got their own if you like private life so you know. I'm more than confident being a gay man, I really like supporting west ham football and club and really like going to watch west ham and being involved and stuff like that but there's other people that may be you know that they maybe they don't want to, or cant... if you like come out to their mates at football. And if we can just do a few things, do a few social events so it's like like-minded people can meet. For example we've got the Chelsea games, the first premier league games, on the Monday night so it's on telly. So we got a pub in Limehouse that I go to, for quiz not. It's a gay pub, it's not really it's just like a pub that happens to be gay. it's not like glitter balls and tinsel it's more like, it's a pub pub and the governor there's like a big west ham fan so watch the TV together, get a sandwich, just get a social event which would be really quite nice. Erm we do the Pride events, just chatting away doing awareness as well. Erm at the same time know, you know were not gay west ham fans, we're west ham fans that happen to gay. And there is a different and we've got we've all got the same kinda you know I mean my god we live in London, its 2016 . it should be really matter but it does and to some people it does so you gotta kinda educate people.

Do you think the approach to homophobia has changed at all within football over the years?

Yeah. Yeah but I think it's changed a lot in other ways., there was times when it you

know I can remember times when if a black player come on the pitch and people actually throw bananas at them.

Mm

And that's unacceptable behaviour. And now I think its unacceptable behaviour you couldn't turn around and say poof you know.

Yeah,

But that's know what footballs that's changed that's society has changed for the better. I think that would be you know. I think somebody once asked me what would you do, have you ever experienced homophobia at football. I said no, he said what would you do? If you did I said I'd kick their heads in so (laughs) because I'm not, if you like stereotypical gay if you like I'm just

Mm

That's nothing to do with it I'm just a burly Scotsman that would just you know, if somebody offended me in another way...,then I might, on some occasions not often but on some occasions, those occasions when you're, when the time for, there's no need for words you've just gotta take actions instead. XXX (1:23:04) so (laughs) You come from the north – (laughs)

Yeah, I know, I know it works. Erm so why do you think footballs had this problem over the years?

Well, I think its not that it was a particular erm...

Society?

it's a society as a whole and just how you, you know, you're still, not so much I would say in London, maybe not so much in Britain but if you to other countries that I supposed to be civilised like United states America you got people like you know, you know , erm you've got like, you've got these fundamentalist that kinda, and I always say to the you know, you've got fundamental Christians and things like that that kind of, are totally homophobic, that'd say what did Jesus say about homosexuality. Nothing. So, you know, there was nothing in any testament about you know, so you can park that anywhere you want. You know and I think societies changed. And society you know erm I remember when civil partnerships came in and basically most people just thought big deal, and? That's a, you know were moving on were becoming mature were becoming civilised if you like. But footballs the last, I really think footballs the last kinda cos it is a natural sport and yet we haven't got a gay professional football player

so why do you think, professional footballers? XX I think its q common theme across a lot of different sports isn't it.

I dunno, I don't know. it's when somebody eventually comes out maybe they could answer that question. 'Cos I don't understand I don't think you would make any difference to anybody., I think if it was somebody that was big then, or you know if it was somebody that couldn't be how can I put it, they couldn't be attacked or ...I mean we get the, 10% on social media that would have a go at them or something like that. But if they were such a good player, such a good player and to turn around and say by the way im gay big deal.

Mm

And I think it would be a XXX (1:25:34)

yeah

You know what I mean. (train noise) who knows, there's been rumours going around it, they've been players that have been kinda working in the FA, trying, if you like kinda, working a strategy but they maybe just decided, they maybe think their career would suffer, which I think it would

Mm

But, I don't know

Is there a network of erm, lgbt erm, supporters groups?

yes, yeah. Erm, year erm and what we do is if anyone going to away games then we've got contacts that we'll get contact and well say you want to meet up for a beer or something. Or if you got you know erm, erm you can got Canal Street Blues which are Manchester city, erm Spurs, there's a new one just started erm I can't remember the name. Erm crystal palace just got a new, just set up a LGBT group. You're getting support at times from, from the professional clubs as well. Whether they could be more supportive, I don't know. But then it's a new thing for them as well so you've just got to kind of work with them and kinda just keep them going. We've got a good support for pride from the club and you know they gave us some dress bands and stuff like that I mean we, we actually handed out 5000 stickers at pride, so, just trying to raise more awareness. At the same time, and last year did the erm, last year they did the er erm, bit a bit in the programme about it which was really quite good. They did it in a kinda, erm, what they did was they focused on they called it the, thing last year, because of XXX (1:27:27), bit in the programme called the Bol-Bolyen People. And one of our committee members has actually got a MBE for the work he's done with, with disabled people. So

they did a bit on Trevor and they did abit, leading onto that, they did abit on Pride Irons as well, raised our profile abit.

Yeah, what else would you like to see the er footballs clubs do? Not just West Ham but down the country? (coughs).

I think they should do a bit more, you know. February is LGBT history month and I think they could be doing abit more with that and kinda you know erm co-ordinating it abit. Even if they just started wearing rainbow laces in their boots which some clubs do

Mm

You know, that kinda thing

(coughs)

You know, fly the rainbow flag in February, not asking much

Mm

You know erm, I think they could be a bit, a lot abit more positive. Erm I wasn't very happen when West Ham went to North Carolina for the previous seasons to-tour, that could be seen as a little bit of naivety, erm 'cos they got some of the most retrospective erm er, retrograde laws inn America for transsexual people. Which, you know, but they did it. Erm so, you know there's certain things that they could do, there's certain things that they can't do. I think sometimes when, sometimes when I think they need to tick a box, they use us as a part of the tick box exercise but at the same time they've just been moving around a bit, you know there's lots of changes going about so once they've got settled then hopefully we'll get abit more erm, get a little more involvement with the club. One of the committee members is also part of the fans forum, and he went along to introduce himself and said what were all about and erm basically got a hearty round of applause, described it as , you know, you know when people are doing the *claps*

Yeah

They were actually you know, clapping and kinda, and you know and making them feel welcome at the fans forum so... yeah. I mean for me it was summed up in Black Lion, one night after a game, you know, he was asking was asking who,... the thing is you know it was pretty drunk at the time. And he turned around and said you might be a poof he said but you're a West Ham poof (laughs) and that's good enough for me. Well well, so that was a kind of you know, you know...

A lot of people talk about West Ham being a, a big family, a family team

Mm

erm, in your experience is that, is that true do you think?

Yes, yeah. I do feel that you know. I think, I think if you're, if you happen to be a little bit worse. I'm never that kind of way but if you happen to be bother somewhere where you or something like that and you happened to have your West Ham top on and you was at a game, you was away or anything like that. Somebody would come and, like help you home or help you, pick you up and say you alright kinda thing you know what I mean you wouldn't be left, which is, you know. I think there's abit of humanity.

Yeah

You know and that everybody is part of the family you know.

Obviously you know, societies facing a lot of different issues, erm with homophobia being, being one of them. Do you think the profile of that erm of that needs to be raised in a similar way I suppose that groups like, Give Racism the Red Card or Kick it Out have got extremely large erm profiles.

Yeah

For that issue?

Yeah, but there, but there is quite a you know, there is quite a bit of er erm, erm you know, there is quite, you know, you see the footballers support federation and pride in football you know they're kind of doing a bit of work on, on that as well. Erm which is an FA kind of sponsored thing as well and they're going some work as well on that you know and I've no doubt that they'll be something you know football against homophobia or in the programme come February. But, there's other things as well you now. It's like, you know, if you look at Newham it's like, a really large Asian population but if you go, if you go over, I don't know who's going to be in the Olympic park, but over Boleyn it was predominantly white as well. So why, so why were we not attracting Asian kinda people, to be West ham Supporters as well. And they've got to work on that aswell, so it's not just, you know. There's different minority groups and we've got to, you've got to kind of work to engage with them all.

Yeah, so how do you like to see Pride of Irons moving forward then? What work do they need to do to raise that profile?

(Sigh) I think, I think we've got a bigger engagement with the club. (Train runs) They've got to take maybe a little more on board. I mean I would be delighted... can absolutely wouldn't happen but if they could, if they could put the rainbow, you know they've got this wrap around thing that's going around it, it lights up.

Yeah

You know maybe they could put the rainbow flag on that and when we have our next club engagement meeting, because you know you've got a plan for February, now I'm gonna ask them to do it but I can't see it happening

Mm, well you never know unless you ask

Well, you, you lets not, you know, lets not have that erm you know, if you're expectations are quite low then if you achieve them then you feel better than if you've got higher expectations

Mm

Feel let down you know.

Yeah, so I think we're coming towards the end of the interview then.

Okay

Erm do you have any final questions, not finally questions, any final comments erm or anything you'd like to add.

No I just think, it's an exciting time moving forward for West Ham. Its exciting time for Newham if you like. Its exciting time for erm, should be an exciting time for the people of East End. Its, its, I'm really pleased that, that erm we're moving to the Olympic park 'cos I think, as I say, I think Boleyn was a dump. It was just, you know, it was er past its sell by date and yeah there was people crying at the last game of the season erm, there were people kind of upset and which was maybe a bit, a bit, ... you can't stop progress and it's an exciting time for the club to kind of increase themselves and because I want them to achieve erm and to increase their profile and maybe you know, maybe one day win the premier league or something like that, who knows, erm, but erm, but its, you know, exciting times and it's like, it's like you're going back to the Pride of Iron's thing as well, you've gotta, when you want to move up the game, you've gotta step up the play on all sides. So, you've got – so the clubs got to be as professional as, on all levels and that means engaging with the fans, engaging with the fans and like engaging with LGBT fans and you know they may be up there game a bit. I hope they do that kind of thing first of all.

Fingers crossed

(Laughs)



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Thank you for being interviewed

(Laughs)

[The End]

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