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Interviewer: So my name's Joshua Adams and I'm recording for Eastside Community Heritage on the Stadium Stories project, do you want to maybe introduce yourself for the sake of the tape?

Interviewee: Oh so my name's Peter Bell, I'm the club secretary of the East Ham working men's social club.

Interviewer: And when were you born?

Interviewee: I was born in 1950 in Manor Park which is probably a stone's throw from here.

Interviewer: Do you remember which hospital you were born in? Hospital.

Interviewee: I'm not sure, umm, I don't know, I don't even know whether the hospitals probably still there now anyway. (laughs)

Interviewer: Probably that's the case, so I thought we could probably start with your grandparents, what do you know about your grandparents.

Interviewee: Well both sets of grandparents, erm, my dad's family are all like east enders, they all come from the East Ham area, my grandfather was a hairdresser and all my grandfather's brothers were in the same trade. My grandfather and his brother had a hairdressers just er er, two minutes away from East ham station, on the hill, my mothers, my mother's family my grandparents on my mother's side are all new market people all in the racing game, my mother's brothers all erm, jockeys, my grandfather on my mother's side was a jump jockey and erm my uncle, my uncle Bill, he was the travelling head lad for a quite a famous erm, err, trainer at the time a fella called Bernard van Cutsem, one of his horses Park Top came second at the Arc de Triumph and err as a kid in the school holidays I used to go down there and used to ride err ride out on a lot of err race horses I loved, loved every minute of it.

Interviewer: Quite interesting take since your family is very East End based but they weren't involved in the docks or any of the local industries um in in the East End.

Interviewee: Well my dad was erm, was erm an accountant who would do, he started out as urm, he worked in an um in a local Woolworths and he became the store manager, particularly, mainly to do the accounts side of it and err he ended up the last job he had for quite a number of years he was the wages manager in Plessey's in Ilford.

Interviewer: So were based in Ilford as well actually, um can you tell us anything about Plessey's at all?

Interviewee: Plessey's was erm, a big erm err TV place they made televisions and err all the stuff that's related to that, my mum was erm like an erm a stay at home mum really but as we got older she was able to do a little bit of shift work, she worked for a game, local place a

little sweet shops, a er sweets factory called Trebors that was on Katherine Rd, on the corner of Katherine road but the buildings still there, I think its err they've turned into housing or (inaudible) now, but the building itself is still there.

Interviewer: Did your mum ever share any memories of working at Trebors with you at all?

Interviewee: Yeah it was great, the best part of it was she used to bring a lot of stuff home from err, so we were always err we always had err bowls of sweets in the house.

Interviewer: What kind of sweets did they?

Interviewee: All like boiled sweets and you know all that sort of stuff you know.

Interviewer: So have your parents and your grandparents always lived in the East End of London?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, never moved out, never ever moved out, erm we were born in err I say I was born in Manor park, as far as the, er, then we moved to erm, err Forest Gate we lived literally a five minute walk from Wanstead flats you know and that was a great childhood, fantastic childhood, we were always over Wanstead flats school holidays it's a really strange scene because I can remember in comparison to how things are with kids nowadays erm there was all of, there was, I come from erm, I've got erm two brothers and a sister, erm, we had loads of friends in the area and we'd always used to like erm we would be out all the time on our bikes you know and er my mum would say so and so on and she would say right she used to parcel us up some sandwiches and a drink and err she'd say right go on off you go and make sure you come back when it gets dark, you know you can imagine people you know doing that with their kids now but we did what all kids did we rode bikes we climbed trees, erm and um my mum always said make sure you bring home some raspberries off the bushes used to make a raspberry tart or something, and erm, something like that you know it was great, great childhood marvellous.

Interviewer: Do you think growing up then was a lot different from growing up now?

Interviewee: Oh yeah absolutely, I think kids have got such a rough ride now, you know with this, all err (inaudible) its all new new technology with mobile phones and stuff like that, internet, its fantastic I know but its got its bad side, we were never exposed to anything like that.

Interviewer: So growing up then um what was your family home like?

Interviewee: We lived in a err, we lived in a err three bedroom council flat, and there was only sort of four of us, plus my mum and dad, err and we lived in a three bedroom council flat and we did have an house when we lived to, when we moved to er Forest Gate, but we finished we finished living up living in Green street in our sort of early teens, erm which is literally a stone's throw from the old Boleyn ground erm but again it was like fabulous it was, you know, you look at people in council flats now and they look awful and terrible we had a, we had a great time, it was erm, there was always, there was always laughter in our house, you know always it was a total joy. Erm, yeah it was great.

Interviewer: Was it very traditional East End household in terms of what you ate?

Interviewee: Definitely, yeah yeah we had like all the neighbours erm you know my mum had to go out or go to work, she'd said like you can go next door with whoever until I get back and that sort of stuff you know, erm, yeah it was good, it was fanta-ll I had, I had a marvellous upbringing marvellous, I mean we were very poor we didn't have money or anything like that you know and as a kid there was um, there was a erm you know in Green Street, when we lived in Green Street in the flat in Green Street there was a rag man, a rag shop down the err, its called, um can't remember the name of the shop now but my mum used to bag up a load of old clothes and rags and stick em in a big bag and she'd say run down the rag man you'd get a couple of bob for it, like you know. (laughs) There was no such thing as takeaways or anything like you know that but we were fed, we were fed really well I was always, we had porridge for breakfast, we had like err my mum was always baking she was making cakes for us, we had like stews, proper stews, meat pies you know, good Eng, good food, none of the junk kids eat now.

Interviewer: So whereabouts did your mum go shopping then? For all these?

Interviewer: In Green Street, there was quite, believe it or not, Green Street and East Ham and um there were really both quite nice shopping areas, you know, they had the market rule the market is still there the Queens Road area, but East Ham was quite thriving you know, erm, which is totally different to how it is now, you know, sad, really sad how it's all turned out.

Interviewer: So in terms of your parents or indeed your grandparents obviously they were born, raised and lived in you know the East End obviously all of their life, during the wars obviously the East End was quite heavily bombed, did your parents or grandparents share any stories with you about the war at all?

Interviewee: Yeah, we had loads of them, you know I mean like, especially my grandmother you know on my dad's side, she lived in Ranley Rd in East Ham. Wonderful lady, wonderful wonderful lady we had stores, stories like er, er she used to tell me, she used to say when your dad was young erm, all the boys they used to like nick all the lead off the roofs and stuff like that you know, yeah but it was erm, everybody was in the same sort of situation, you really didn't have, very rarely came across anybody with money you know, like moneyed people you know everyone was in the same sort of boat really, you know.

Interviewer: So when you were growing up what was your childhood like?

Interviewee: It was fantastic, as I say we had erm, we were always out we were never in, but when we were in we had parties and erm, you know we had my parents and my aunts and uncles always used to go out together err, they used to sit us out outside the pub literally do that you know, and like err come out every sort of three quarters of an hour make sure was was alright, give us a lemonade or a bag of crisps and some like and just say sit there and behave yourselves, you know err but we had erm as I say we had I had a great, well I've still got a great family big family you know, big East End family and erm great times, fabulous times, and it wasn't generated by money.

Interviewer: Yeah, so it was like pure happiness I suppose

Interviewee: Yeah yeah, we were the first kids in our street to have like a television, because my dad as I said worked for Plesseys and erm that was in the 50s early 50s and err people used to look out into our window, and we had, we had a television and nobody had a television everybody would listen to radio and all that sort of stuff, and um we probably had the first colour television as well where it wasn't a colour television what it was it was a black and white TV but they, they used to put these plastic screens on them and it was blue on the top, sort of a sandy colour in the middle you know and err green at the bottom so when you used to watch a western on the TV in black and white it would like it was in colour, an um but you literally had all the kids outside we had a few kids round like you know? Our house was always busy there was always people in our, always, always people in, in, our house. Um yeah good. It was great.

Interviewer: What sort of things were you watching on TV?

Interviewee: I can't umm, we had umm, I can remember as a child, watching Noddy and big ears, oh I don't know I can't recall all of them Sooty and all the little kids programs, err, used to run home from school and watch what was on, all the nice kids programs like you know.

Interviewer: Did you ever play any games inside the house? Or outside the house?

Interviewee: Oh yeah, yeah everything, everything, we was always, we were always, we all got on, always been a very close family you know, always. Loads of friends, loads of cousins, you know that sort of thing.

Interviewer: So in terms of schooling, what was the first school that you went to?

Interviewee: Erm, I've got to think back now, I went to erm, Monagor road school I think it was, er that was my junior school, erm (pause) my first junior school, er was the avenue school in Manor Park. Then when, when we moved over to East Ham it was Monagor road school, and from there I went to Sandringham road school, which is still there Sandringham road school and that is off the Kathrine Rd on Sandringham road that was um an all boys school. You know.

Interviewer: How did you find school?]

Interviewee: Erm, yeah it was ok, I mean, I don't know any, I don't, I can't recall any, any of us liking school it was very disciplined.

Interviewer: Yeah

Very disciplined, you know. Nothing again like you get now. You know, you sat there and um you did what you were told, you weren't allowed to voice an opinion about anything you know and just how to get on with your work and many a time you'd have a teacher come round and be behind you and slap you around the back of your head and all that sort of stuff, quite strict, quite strict, but again, great fantastic.

Interviewer: Did you have any favourite subjects at school?

Interviewee: English, was my, was my subject, I loved English, wasn't too good at maths. I always say I learned more when I left school than I ever did when I was at school you know, and I tell you there's something strange, was like erm, 19, I left school in 1965 I was 15 years of age, I supposed to stay on for another year but um I didn't really want to I wanted to get out to work quite you know, plus the fact, I wanted to contribute to the family, to, to, give my mum a bit of extra money you know but tell ya a funny thing was like erm 1964, I think, yeah 1964 stroke 5 we had two new boys and they were black, you know, and they was George and Leroy Scott, and everybody stared at them because nobody ever saw anybody nobody ever saw a black kid, it was really strange, and not in a nasty way I don't mean it like a horrible way because they were great, they were nice boys you know but nobody had ever seen a black boy (laughs) and it was just weird like everybody kept looking at them, and er, yeah, to move forward about five years ago I happened to be walking down Barking road and I head this fella shout out err "Peter Bell!" And I looked around it was this black guy you know, and I said George Scott and I hadn't seen him for all those years, you know, and he said to me you know like I'm 66 now, so I would've been 61 at the time or 62 and he said like you just don't look any different (laughs) and he didn't either to be honest with ya, and it's really weird, and funnily enough he ended up living just a few doors away from me you know when I moved to, when I was married and moved, and bought a house in um in Beckells road which (inaudible) in in East Ham. You know? And strange enough he moved three doors along from me.

Interviewer: That was a bit of a coincidence wasn't it?

Interviewee: Yeah yeah, what a coincidence yeah.

Interviewer: So you just mentioned about seeing two black children at school for the first time, obviously that's kind of indignant of a wider change that's occurring in East Ham, the east end sorry at the moment, how big is this change from when you were growing up in the East End to now?

Interviewee: Oh it's, like just incredible, I mean you would never ever, have expected anything in that in that, massive change, never expected anything like that, never. You know, I mean you know, I know its I mean in this area it's just incredible its its like to the scale of being frightening the way I see it.

Interviewer: So what do you think prompted that change then?

Interviewee: I don't know, I mean, there were, I know the, erm, when the immigration started with the, probably the West Indians coming over, um going back industry was all about the jobs, bus drivers things stuff like that, everybody seemed, it seemed to be ok to be honest with you because they seemed just the same as us just with a different skin colour, you know, and erm, they wore the same clothes that we wore, they frequented pubs and stuff you know, and erm, you know they'd just intermingled and they were no different to what we were, no different but again, to move on from there what has happened especially in this borough its dreadful.

Interviewer: So where have all the traditional East End people moved to?

Interviewee: Well they've moved out obviously they've all moved out, probably not too far, probably Essex way you know, I personally live in Hornchurch myself now you know, wasn't out of choice, I did it because you know my boys education, you know and I loved it, I loved living in East Ham, you know, I was brought up in here, it was my manor, you know, and erm, I used to as a kid as I used to say we'd go down the market and all the old market traders would give us a couple of apples or whatever, and we'd spend a day there, you know, I met some, as I got older, when I was in my 20s I met some fantastic people, there's nobody as funny as the cockney you know the old fashioned cockney, stories they'd tell unbelievable funny you know real funny people, do us this, there was this little fella, older fella Micky Gevannah his name was, he lived in Kings Rd just off of Green St right right opposite the erm market, he did a bit of totting and like he worked, if he could get a couple of bob he'd work to get a couple of bob he'd work in the market but he was poor, only a little tiny fellah but funniest man in the world you know, have a conversation with him, without I'm not talking about telling jokes but he'd, he was, he lived in this little flat and it was like, erm, I used to take him round a little food sometimes it was a little tiny flat in Kings Rd and it was freezing in there like you know, and I was like "Mickey aren't you cold in here?" So I said, what sort of heating have you got in here, and he said I've got one, he had one of those sort of fires, electric fires what had the bars on em [clears throat], and I said to him I said like well that can't keep you warm, he said, well he said, the thing with it, he said it's not good really he said because yous, "I sit in front of it you know, my feet are read hot and mi bollocks are freezing!" [Laughter] Which is like, it was, (inaudible) it was just a thing to say like, it was, it was I think it's so funny, that, so funny that it's funny without meaning to be funny you know and erm, that, they were all real characters, I knew a fella called John the Burner, you know, he was, he was notorious, he was very like, umm umm always moving his hands about and all that, and he used to smoke a lot you know and he'd always have a fag and you was lucky not to get a come out with a er like a burn mark or something in your shirt you know, they all had good, we had Nobby West, one of erm, my dads old mates he was erm, yeah he had a barrow, and he used to repair peoples roofs and he used to push his barrow around like you know and did eh some slates on here and tiles an all that he used to get on the knocker what they call get on the knocker he'd go and bang people's doors you know and say you've got a couple of slates out there do you want to put em right for you you know, and he'd get up the ladder and was just, repair em only charge them a few quid, like you know and it was, in them days pushing an old barrow about (laughs) it was great, we erm, I say as the years went on I was working on the papers at the time on the erm, on the erm, started out when I when I went to work, I worked for the local paper cos my dad said it he said if you're not going to stay at school you're going to work, good work ethics in the East End, you know you didn't, nobody would ever sign on, unless it was something really really desperate you know, nobody would do that out of pride. You know, my dad said, like, so er, I finished school on the Friday and my mum and dad took me up the jobcentre, well not the jobcentre, it was I think what they called it then, but you went up and you saw somebody there and like, you just like um, they said well what are your interests and all that, how did you do at school and they interviewed me and I said well, I did so, and they said well there's a job here, at erm the Stratford express might interest ya, you know, and er I said alright ok, anyway like so, so I went up this err, for an interview at this job and I was only a skinny little kid, 15 you know, ad um, walked in there and the governor, was a fella called Harry Clarke he was the manager there and that was when it was the Stratford express was in the Stratford Broadway, and he said well look we'll take you on, you know and I started at 4 gineas a week which was guineas 4 pound 4 shillings a week, which seems a bit laughable now, but erm, err, but that was when a pint of beer was 1 and (inaudible) and stuff like that so (laughs) so it was all in

context, and erm, that's where I started my work, my working, again I had a great time, I became a proofreader a copy reader and then a proof reader and again I was made redundant there and erm, finished work on the Firday and I got er, I got offered a job on the sun on Monday so I went from Friday to Monday I worked on the Sun and I had like sort of 15 I was 22 years when they, I was 22 years of age when the Stratford express closed down, and so, that's where I ended up at the Sun, you know, and erm, fantastic, fantastic education like I said that's why I say I learned more at school, more when I left school, then when I did while I was at school, erm, marvellous education you know working in a newspaper office, erm, yeah so going back to what we were saying then I got a car and erm, erm, I used to help out Nobby out the weekend, this nobby west the err roofer erm I used to help him up and he said, now you've got a car he said put a roof rack on it he said and we'll ditch the barrow and like and so we have a bit of extra money on the side, I used to drive about and erm, perhaps nut a few tiles up for or few slates up for him and he'd repair the roofs and he'd give me a, he'd bone me a few quid, you know?

Interviewer: What sort of car did you have?

Interviewee: Hmm?

Interviewer: What sort of car did you have?

Interviewee: Car, I had erm, oh what was my first car, I can't remember what my first car was now, I know it did have this thing they called a hydro elastic suspension, (laughs).

Interviewer: Was that new back then? Was that new?

Interviewee: I don't know, but there were a few cars that had it, you had to keep this, you had to keep, something something they put in it, I don't know what it was but into the suspension and like, it was an awful car, terrible car, you know, I sort of passed my driving test in the first time and I ended up with like, maybe, probably an old Ford or something like that. You know. Yeah, erm, but anyway as I say going back to Nobby West and that's why I always used to get a few quid off him because that work-ethic was instilled in him by my dad, you know, you've got to work, you've got to go to work and I've never been in in the, from 15 years of age to like er 66 now, I've never had a single day out of work, not one, so which is good you know, great.

Interviewer: Yeah so you were just mentioning there a wide variety of different people you've met in the East End, East End culture, do you think there's a worry at the moment that East End sort of ethics, and culture in itself is being lost a little bit? At the moment.

Interviewee: Well I think they've been lost for good, I don't think there's that will never ever come back, never, that will never ever come back which is like an erm terrible terrible shame, terrible shame.

Interviewer: So you were just mentioning about your job at the Sun, what was it like working there?

Interviewee: Yeah it was good, I loved it, I mean again um, very fortunate, I mean erm, I earnt good money at the Sun, I was on a pretty poor wage at the erm at the Stratford express,

stood me in good stead but went to work for the Sun, fantastic money you know and erm you know you always, I was on different, the hours were a bit awkward at time, you'd do a night shift and sometimes work until the early hours of the morning erm, but erm, yeah again I loved it, I met some fantastic people, fantastic, you know, you know, what I learnt from there you know fantastic.

Interviewer: Did you ever come across some interesting stories while working there?

Interviewee: Millions of em, they were all, how on earth, I mean there was this massive change in the printing industry when we were all made redundant, Rupert Murdoch made us all redundant, erm which, err I was um I always used to support the mineworkers when they were out on strike you know we'd go on their marches and we'd support all the print workers supported them, and in erm, given their own support and plus financially we supported them we used to go down to the mines and um the old mines that they were trying to close and we used to take food parcels down to em and that sort of stuff you know, and erm but then it happened to us, we were I remember Rupert Murdoch, we used to, they used to, we used to went out on the shop floor cos what I else to say I worked on the more office side of it you know, but we went onto the printing, we went out onto the shop floor where all the ink workers were you know and er Rupert Murdoch said he got us all together and he said like err "Were now the most um err most popular newspaper in England." He said, and "I owe that to you, all you people standing here now I couldn't have done it without ya" and about three months later he made us all redundant. He moved to Wapping and like we got involved in some terrible stuff at Wapping, it was awful because it was err, it was erm, err, again all it was was people wanted to go to work it wasn't anything to do with money or anything but it all changed it all changed it was a bad time, it was a bad time for me you know cos um, I was trying to bring up, trying to bring up, I had family then you know, and er were out of work for a long long time and it was it was bad you know, I saw some terrible things on those, you know with the police with them bringing police in from Yorkshire and all that you know it was really bad, all we wanted to do was go to work you know. Erm, but again I had a great my my my time there was fantastic I had 14, 14 years at the Sun, you know. I worked at the Stratford express for 7 years made redundant there had 14 years at the Sun got made redundant there it was great times, great times, enjoyed every minute of it, worked all of different erm, when you had days off you could go on what we would call it, we used to call it grass whereby you could go work at another paper, so I worked on virtually all the national newspapers so they needed they needed another copyreader or proof-reader whatever and they said erm, a job a shift going there so you could go and have a I'd be off, I'd have a set (inaudible) on Saturday they said well do you want to go work on the Observer you know and they get paid by them as well, so it was good, good was to earn money. I earned good money you know and I was able to like erm, look after my kids had a err, my children have been fortunate a lot more fortunate than I was anyway lets say that.

Interviewer: Yeah, so you just mentioned there as well that you got made redundant after working for those two newspapers were you involved in the unions at all? At that point?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah I was in a union called the NATSOPA , the national society of operative printers and assistants yeah, and there was another union there which SOGAT you know that was the society of graphical and allied trades. Yeah but um but a lot of educated people there.

Interviewer: What was it like being involved in those unions?

Interviewer: Well to be honest with you, looking looking back, I could probably see now erm, I mean the amount of costs there were there because as I say we were on amazing money then, you know, you probably thought perhaps we can't go on, you know but there again in saying that we made a total millionaire out of Rupert Murdoch you know and he treated his workers badly, you know. What he did was ended up bussing people in from the Midlands and stuff like that because they were cheaper trade cheaper workers you know, but you know c'est la vie.

Interviewer: So what happened then after you finished at the Sun?

Interviewee: After I finished at the Sun, well I was I did a err um I did quite a few things, I did quite a few things I erm, I did a bit of sales work, sort of bumming around really. In saying that I was only, I never had a day out of work but I did a bit of sales work, er worked for a pal of mine who was in the window game, you know so, double glazing when that was when he started to flourish like you know, and er I had to go on a training course in Norwich I was there for two weeks, and that sort of changed me really, I was always lucky enough to have been educated in different ways, either by the work I was doing or the people I met and erm, I found erm this sales course it did bring me out a little bit you know, and I used to go to people's houses and like erm tell them what they should buy, that they should buy my windows, probably sit in people's houses for 4,4,5 hours you know just get a sale and you know I remember going on this central part estate in East Ham I remember going to, my mate Lennie he had a showroom in Hornchurch and he said like we've got a job like here in Henniker Gardens, which was just, again it's just over the road here just over from the ground on the central park estate and um he said I dunno what he wants, he said I think you know, so anyway I went in there went there I took him windows (inaudible) in there and it was this Italian fella a fella called Mr Mozzi, you know lovely family, walked in and introduced myself proper Italian family, come in, you must eat with us, so I decided to sit round the table with them and I was there to sell em windows you know, and I remember I got there and it was 7 o'clock and we was still, I hadn't even mentioned anything about the windows and it was 11 o'clock now you know and then I got onto the windows and erm I measured all these windows up and it came up to 11,000 pound to do the whole house and when I told him how much the windows were this man typical Italian he threw his arms up in the air shouting a long and all around the house because I was told you know, erm, once you pitched your windows and told em what it was don't say another word until until they do you know wait until they speak first and it all went deathly quiet and then all of a sudden he stood up screaming this man, walking all around the house and his wife lovely lady and his daughter they just sat there, and she said to me "would you like a cup of tea?" and I said "yes please" he came back and he calmed down a little bit, and like erm, and er I said to him "Mr Mozzi I've noticed your car outside, you know I said that's a lovely car, what is it?" He said "It's a Mercedes, a new one" so I said "Why don't you drive a Skoda?" so he said why would "I wanna, why would I wanna drive an old thing like a Skoda?" cos they're cheaper you know, if you want a cheap window then I'll go, and erm he said "No, I don't do cheap" he said and in the end he just gave me, that man gave me and I said "I'm gonna need a deposit of ya" now he didn't know me from anybody and he gave me 5,000 pound as a deposit, (laughs) and just shows you how people are, but what he did say to me was he said look, can you do it cheaper because my brother next door wants his windows done, he said if I get him to do your windows will you do it cheaper for me? (laughs).

Interviewer: Hmm so that was the salesmanship kicking in.

Interviewee: And these are the things you know I say how lucky I was to get the education I did, you know and erm, and erm, so yeah I did that and I worked for the NatWest bank I worked there for a while, um I was doing reconciliation because I got to the stage with the windows I, I felt I shouldn't be doing what I was doing, I've got a bit of a conscious conscious thing right you know I thought I shouldn't be doing this so I moved on, I took a job at the NatWest bank at Aldgate and did that for a couple of years and erm, found myself at a bit of a loose end, because it was long hours it was erm unsocial you know and I used to come into this club not very often but I did you know and erm they they'd the previous secretary they'd sacked him and were looking for somebody else to take over as secretary of the East Ham Working Mens club, and someone said to me, why don't you try you know and I've said you know I don't even know what a secretary does, anyway I applied and somebody else applied as well they had two people apply for the job and found myself had a big meeting upstairs and we've got a concert hall upstairs and you had to go up there on the stage in front of all these people it was like properly like I dunno 2...200 people up there and you had to tell them why you wanted the job and I don't know why I want the job I don't know if I do want the job to be honest it wasn't like a normal interview I wasn't interviewed for it and they just said the members decide whether you get the job or not you know, so I went up and I just told them my background you know, said I know about reconciliation I know about this I know about that, I think I get on well with people that sort of stuff anyway so it come to the vote and there was um 100 and um 150 people no no there about 200 up there and 98 people voted for this other fella you know and I thought get the fuck outta there and there was about 5 spoiled papers and I won it by a single vote.

Interviewer: Single vote?

Interviewee: Yeah and I wasn't, and erm, the people, you know I mean this club is also run by a committee of men you know, its erm, you know like 12 people on the committee and we've got like a chairman a vice chairman, we've got three trustees, erm, three finance officers, and the rest are general committee and they all play a part in the running of the club like you know, and erm, I'm not the, I'm the front man really I suppose you could call it really, and er, that's how I got the job and erm, I remember (inaudible) there on my first day I came in here and they showed round here showed me round the club showed me where the cellar was, that sort of stuff and erm brought a pile of books into me and said right, there you go and stuck em in front of me and I thought you know what do I do now? You know, I don't, and erm, I just again I sort of I just spent sort of weeks going through all the all the stuff before this was people knocking on the door like from a couple of Asian fellas had an off licence I remember saying like is "Mr George there?" he was the fella who was the erm, fella who got sacked, sacked, and he said is Mr George there and I said "well no he's not", he's not here any more, he said I've got beer for him, you know, I said no we don't buy we don't do that, he said yeah Mr George buys beer of us, and he was like, so you see what was, had happened because they were in a terrible situation financially like you know, and they were robbing Peter to pay Paul when it came to bills and stuff like that and so erm, yeah, so I got I just, got through it that way, and we started to make money you know and erm, we went from I remember from going to meet one of the finance officers and like you know and I used to read out all the accounts and they said, we had about 15 grand in the bank and never been known to us and where's all this money coming from? So it was, well we're doing it the right now we're buying off proper suppliers we're doing this we're doing that you know, and so all

of a sudden I was like flavour of the month like, you know, and that's how its erm, here I am nearly 30 years on from when I first started you know.

Interviewer: So how was the working men's club set up then? How was the club set up?

Interviewee: So what it is, what it is, is erm, is erm, when you join this club, you're um you have to be proposed to the secretary by a member, so you can't just walk in here, there's no passing trade or anything like that. You have to have a membership card, er you must be and if you wanna bring a guest in, they would have to be, they would have to pay like err what we charge what we charge a pound now you know but you would be responsible for that person, which is why which makes us different from pubs whereby we don't have any trouble in here because if anybody signed anybody in who was not a member and he started any trouble then the member would forfeit his membership you know so erm, it sort of looks after, it really looks after itself you know I can't even remember really having anything seriously bad going over the thirty years I've been here

Interviewer: What would a typical week look like working here?

Interviewee: Erm, well I say, I spend a lot of my time in the office, you know I mean we've got erm, I book all the entertainment we have entertainment in here Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, erm, I'm responsible for bringing in a set of accounts every week to the committee erm we have a committee meeting every fortnight but I set up a erm, a set of accounts for anybody, we have two half yearly meetings you know where the members get involved and wanna know how the clubs doing etc erm I'm responsible for quite a lot of things in here you know when it comes to like refurbishing you know, you know can we afford it and like you know and that sort of stuff, keeping it up to date, erm, I deal with the brewers myself personally and make sure and all our suppliers you know be it gas, gas suppliers electricity suppliers err, anything that people that we buy for, buy from you know so I try, I get all the best deals I can you know and erm, you know hopefully if you know erm you know over the, over the years we've been really really successful.

Interviewer: You were just mentioning there as well about how the East End's changing and people are moving out of the area, are the type of people coming in to the working mens club now changing or indeed joining?

Interviewee: Oh massively, massively, you erm, I always feel a bit strange talking this sort of thing because people tend to, you can't seem to say anything about people who've moved er emigrated into this, err, err emigrated into this (inaudible) and er taken up residence in this as I say in this country er and even in you know even in this borough and I'm cautious of what to say because whenever you say something, whenever you tend to bring up anything about immigration you're a racist, I'm never that, I've not got a racist bone in my body you know I really haven't I'm a live and let live person were all God's children and everyone's entitled to err to err have somewhere to put their head over night time, but there are times when I think the way it's been conducted is the wrong way because unfortunately a massive Asian community were moved into this borough, and changed it dramatically, really dramatically. I'm not saying it's their fault, I'm really not I don't blame them, you know because erm, I'd say they're entitled to make a living but at other people's expense and er the fact of that people losing their identity and erm having to move out move somewhere else to find it again I think that's all totally wrong.

Interviewer: What sort of challenges does the working men's club face right now?

Interviewee: Well now, with er, the worst obviously the worse one is is, some of the fact that the erm most of the Asian community are not drinkers you know, and so erm, er all the they've they've, all the people they've replaced have now gone have now moved away and so which has taken a massive amount of our trade away, erm and also obviously the scenario with our two dear friends Mr Gold and Mr Sullivan erm, with the help of the erm, Robin Williams how on earth is like err err, how on earth they gave him a knighthood god only knows but with his help and gold and Sullivan we now find ourselves in not a particularly good situation.

Interviewer: What do you think of the move from Upton Park to the stadium in Stratford on a business level and also on a community level.

Interviewee: Well, to be honest with ya, Newham is probably the most erm, erm, poorest areas in England, we've got the highest rate of erm, what do they call it erm, I can't remember what it is, highest rate of unemployment, everything, its awful its terrible, it was bad enough anyway but with West Ham going its absolutely ripped the heart and soul of this borough and I mean that, ripped the heart and soul out of this borough. Erm, traders, shopkeepers, places like ourselves, all the pubs are virtually gone now, all the pubs are virtually gone in this area, there used to be a pub on every corner, and all you've got now in this borough is chicken shops, pizza shops and bookmakers, that's about all you've got here now, you know, awful, no shopping centre, nothing.

Interviewer: Do you think there was, or was there too little consultation between like the club and the council and local businesses in the area?

Interviewee: Well you know I mean, I think the whole of it stinks, what has gone on, I mean to move a stadium, when erm, Westfield was opened at Stratford that was there jewel in the crown, you know and erm, I used to look at our local paper and get sick of seeing our Mayor in front of that, spouting on about when West Ham move to Stratford, you know and erm offering up 40 million pound to finance the deal with Gold and Sullivan, you know and I thought well if they've got 40 million pound why don't they spend it in this borough you know make it liveable you know, it was all, I think the whole thing stunk and still think it does, stinks to high heaven and still think it does.

Interviewer: Is there any way the club and the council can remedy the situation or is that sort of thing done now?

Interviewee: I don't think you've got any chance in this borough, and I really don't think there's any chance, and I really don't think there's any chance well not in my lifetime, I don't think they've got any chance whatsoever and I'm quite pleased that they're having all these problems now West Ham and I really am I don't wanna sound, its not a nice thing to say but I'm quite pleased about that, because they had the opportunity of, er, making the capacity something like 50,000 they could have filled in the corners, they could have put (inaudible) stand in there you know, but there again it would have paid for I mean you could understand them I suppose because erm, if you had to invest loads of your own money into something and somebody said well I could give you a brand new stadium for nothing what you gonna do?

I don't blame Gold and Sullivan I blame erm this borough and our Mayor and all the people involved in it, it's the best thing, I blame all them what they've done to this borough, awful.

Interviewer: Do you still get a lot of West Ham fans coming into the working mens club for matchdays?

Interviewee: Erm not really, no, no, not really no, I mean all the, all the, whatever shops were left here whatever businesses were left here like, they're all gonna go out of business, you know and they know it you know like the old pie the old east end pie and mash shop that's gonna go, you know all the pubs are virtually all gone now, you know, the old fish and chip shops and all that, they're not gonna last five minutes they can't you know and now they've got the absolute dandle audacity to increase the rates in this borough, disgusting absolutely disgusting.

Interviewer: Is there a way around this or? Can you see a way out at all or?

Interviewee: No, I don't see any way out, unless there was massive investment in this borough, but theres nothing here as I say there's nothing ehre, they've got no shopping centre, well they've got East Ham but its er (laughs) its (laughs) its nothing, theres nothing there you walk down Barking road and its like a slum, you see people begging all over the pace now with the influx of eastern Europeans as well you know theres people begging everywhere you know, terrible.

Interviewer: Do you think the atmosphere of the area is gonna change particularly with all the football fans leaving as well, and obviously the stadium is quite a focal point of the area, do you think the area is going to change?

Interviewee: Yeah well its sort of, I don't see they can, I don't see how they can get, they call it like multicultural and all that and they mention all this diversity and community and all that, that's all bullshit, that's all there is they're feeding its all bullshit because there is nothing like that, there's no there is no community, there is no like erm, its not multi cultural anymore its not, you'll put I mean its not a race thing but you, (coughs) er you could probably erm, well even the council has put their hands up and said its 95% Asian in this community now, you know so, the schools and everything, and another thing that a little pet thing of mine, they've sold the ground to developers Barrets to build even more homes and I think to myself where for starters where are all the kids gonna go to school? You know they've got one school over the road which is, they've got a junior school erm, over the road here and Brampton manor secondary school both absolutely heaving, you know erm where they gonna go to school, you've got the doctors you can, there's a doctors surgery over the road there, I drive here every morning I come past this doctors surgery and there's a queue as long as the milk round out there, you know and where tre they gonna seek medical attention all these new people who move into this area, where are they, where? Somebody tell me please. You know.

Interviewer: So you think the introduction of flats into the area is going to really sort of change and have an impact on the local services.

Interviewee: Oh definitely, its got to, its got to, I can't find, you know something as much as I, I can't find, I feel terrible about the fact I can't say anything I like about this borough and I've lived here I was born in here in 1950 born in here in 1950 and I can't think of one nice

thing I could and I love my childhood, my childhood a fabulous upbringing it was wonderful, you know wonderful every Sunday morning there would be a salvation army band playing every Sunday morning you know and er, I can't even think and it saddens me to say this, I can't think of anything nice about this borough, sick and tired of hearing about Stratford and how wonderful it is, and all that sick and tired of it, come here, come here and see what's happened here, you know, as I've said before you will come out of Upton Park station you would never believe you know I would love, I would love some of our politicians to spend a week in accommodation in say Green Street, and have a look what it's *really* like I would love that I would really love it.

Interviewer: Do you think there's been too much investment in Stratford and now enough around the whole borough in Newham in general?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, that's right that's where all the money's gone it's gone to Stratford, you know, yeah, and it's gone to Stratford and excuse my language fuck East Ham, you know and I've I put a load on the Mayors shoulder you know.

Interviewer: So in terms of football as well, are you a West Ham fan yourself?

Interviewee: From a boy yeah, I remember as a kid like erm, it was all terrace it was always massively packed the atmosphere unbelievable and as a kid little kid they used to pass all the little kids down the front so they could see, literally, you know? My dad would say like well there gonna put you down the front there they'll pick you up and some of them in front of them would pass you down, you know they'd pass you down to the front it was marvellous, marvellous wonderful, wonderful atmosphere you know, the place was thriving, you know there was like, it was, it was lovely erm East I mean when, I moved from Manor Park and when we said we were moving to East Ham people it was like people were saying "oh my god are ya?" you know it was like, it would be like people in East Ham now moving to Chigwell or somewhere like that you know or, um Ongar, you know something like that that was how good this borough was. You know.

Interviewer: So how did you get into football then?

Interviewee: Oh cos my dad, my dad he took, the first game we lived next door to the coach of Haverley Football club you know and erm my dad used to take me over there when Haverley played like you know and erm, but then my dad was always a West Ham man and when I was old enough he used to say right come on we're going to football and he'd take me football you know, and I loved it, loved it, you know, just loved the smell of it, burgers and everything just the smell of football. It was fantastic.

Interviewer: What was the atmosphere like on Barking Road?

Interviewee: Oh god, as it's always been, atmosphere then, is what it's always been up until the last game of the season, it was electric, unbelievable and I've unbelievable and that's something that everybody should experience that that atmosphere just once, you know when they came out onto the pitch, you know unbelievable all the banter, all the singing all the chanting you know and being at a ground when you've got literally right on top of the players it was sometimes hilarious some of the things that were said you know, and um yeah it was great it was fantastic you know.

Interviewer: So did you have a season ticket then?

Interviewee: No, I'd no, I'd my dad um, I don't know how he ever came by his tickets, my dad always had tickets you know erm, an old mate of his old Ronnia he always used to get my dad's tickets you know 9 times out of 10 he'd say like you know you come to the turnstiles and I didn't have to I never paid anyway kids kids just go on in you go like you know so we go through the turnstiles and things like that.

Interviewer: Do you remember what your first game was?

Interviewee: I don't, I can't, I can't for the life of me I can't remember what the first game was, but erm, I knew from that day one I couldn't ever support any other team, you know, I couldn't you know, no I couldn't do that.

Interviewer: So whereabouts in the stadium do you remember where you stood?

Interviewee: I don't remember, all parts really probably in the erm, it wasn't either we were on the in the erm, in the stands never in the behind the goals we never went behind the goals you know I always thought it was a better view like but the atmosphere and everywhere you went in West Ham, wherever you sat or whoever you stood it was like, and it was still up until the final game as I say it was how it always was, it was fan fabulous atmosphere, I used to love going like mid-week games under floodlights you know, you could smell, that you could just smell the the raw raw.

Interviewer: Sorry we were just talking about West Ham football club and your memories

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah it was great it was like especially in here, it was like fabulous you know marvellous er again everyone everybody on a match day was a character, old and young you know, black white whatever, you know lovely, great people, great people.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a pre match ritual at all, I know a lot of people, West Ham fans go to the pie and mash shop before a game or

Interviewee: Yea that was always a thing, they'd, they used to queue up outside the pie and mash shop, Nathans pie and mash shop right down to the Boleyn, you know believe that or not, you know, and even that queue would never, how on earth people waited all that time and they'd probably get in there at about ten to three, and had to gobble it down like, you know because again it's a ritual, or people queueing up for fish and chips or something like that you know, but this club was, we would have anything up to about 800 people in here on a match day cos we've got as I say big concert hall upstairs got the lounge bar, members bar, sports bar, you know, and er, everywhere around here everybody, you know most of the shops here you know they increase their trade you know obviously all the pubs you know, and ourselves, fantastic, fantastic.

Interviewer: Do you have any particular memories of any games that you have seen at Upton Park?

Interviewee: Well always the London derbies, the London derbies there were always like um they were always the ones that we always wanted to beat Tottenham especially you know,

beat Tottenham, beat Arsenal, beat Chelsea you know lovely, and erm, we always seemed to lose to all the rubbish clubs and beat all the good sides, Manchester United we used to, theres plenty of games that I can remember when we bought Carlos Tevez and err he scored the winning goal for they had to we had to I think it was a midweek game as well, er, Manchester United had to beat us to win the league, Carlos Tevez scored and jumped into the crowd and it was incredible, incredible its something, as I said to you before like its something that every every man woman and child should experience that feeling, you know, yeah great.

Interviewer: Who have been some of your favourite footballers? Over the years that have played for West Ham?

Interviewee: yeah we had like well I was lucky enough to be around the Bobby Moore era, you know and erm, you know the greatest player I've ever seen Bobby Moore, I've seen em all really, all the world cup winners, Moore, Hurt and Peters you know he was the favourite of mine Geoff Hurst, was uncanny like you know him and Peters, Moore, Hurst and Peters and the ball invariably when Bobby Moore got it went out to Martin Peters sling it over and like he'd put it on Geoff Hurts head and that was it already over you know and it was great we always had you know as I said we've never won the league and we'll probably never ever win the league but you know, we played the best football, we got entertained.

Interviewer: Did you ever manage to see any of the cup finals, the FA cup finals? Or?

Interviewee: Yeah I went to the erm, the erm, the last visit to Wembley against Liverpool you know and um, it was heartbreaking because we were winning, you know and it went to extra time, yeah it was heart... um yeah Stevie, Stevie Gerrard I think it was he equalized or I know he scored the winning goal but erm, it was heartbreaking that was, that was at the Millenium stadium, yeah. Yeah great, great times.

Interviewer: So what does West Ham United mean to the local area and the East End in general?

Interviewee: Well as I say it's part of, it was always part of their lives it was part of the east enders lives West Ham round here, and you know, everybody you know, you know everybody it was part of, it was a massive part of this borough, massive, massive part. You know, everything revolving around it, all the cup games you know, everything, erm, when we, I was when we won the FA cup, the Cup Winners Cup, we used to had, I remember being on the bus on erm, following the bus when they did the their little tours, when they came back parading the trophies and all that, you know fabulous times you know, the whole of the borough came out to see em, the whole of the borough. Fabulous times.

Interviewer: Have you went to see West Ham united play recently at all?

Interviewee: yeah I I saw quite a few games, lucky enough I was able to go hospitality sort of way because you know Carlsberg were the main suppliers to West Ham and there was always hospitality for them a lot of hospitality yeah fabulous yeah.

Interviewer: So what do you think the future holds then for West Ham football club at the moment?

Interviewee: Erm, I don't know, I mean, I don't know I can't see things being too good for them, I know you've got to be patient because its early days but em, I don't know, don't know, I mean there's a lot of animosity now with erm the supporters, contrary to what Karen Brady said, I'm telling ya that the majority of our fans didn't wanna go there, and even more so now now they've been there, it's a total shambles.

Interviewer: So you've seen a shift in opinions then? Since the obviously the most recent results that's been happening at the stadium.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, it's a wonderful stadium, no denying, but its not a football stadium, never will be, you know so.

Interviewer: Do you think that West Ham football club with the move to a new stadium obviously in Stratford have lost their soul a little bit?

Interviewee: Umm, I've come across a lot of em, I still see a lot of the supporters and a lot of em are even after the few games that we've played have said they won't be renewing their season tickets and I quite believe that.

Interviewer: So I think we're coming to the end of the interview now do you have any final comments to say about the working mens club or West Ham football club?

Interviewee: Well yeah, I mean um, to say about West ham football club, I mean its been, it was always, its been great, great times for us it was and I know things move on, you know, I'm I feel a bit bitter with how it was all done, I say because there was an opportunity where they could have made the old Boleyn ground into a bigger stadium and they chose not to do that you know by moving its ripped the heart and soul of this borough, as for the club, the working men's club, this has been some of the greatest times of my life, I've come across some of the nicest people, some of the, fantastic characters and I'm I'm, I'm really, I'm really frightful about just just to tell you we have like an old ladies group that come upstairs here a couple of times a week they have their tea dances up here you know and er, should anything happen that we have to close down I wonder where they gonna go, where they gonna go these ladies their frightened to go outside their own doors now, you know and this is their own place where they come and have a little dance and a few drinks and a chat and all that sort of stuff and if this goes where they gonna go, we run all the local boxing shows here, all the local clubs, Newham, West Ham, Repton erm, Favern House we've got our own ring up and we have all the kids who have their little shows here like you know where they gonna go? Where they gonna go? Where they gonna go? There's not, there's not been enough hmm, err, from the err the likes of Robin Wales and his colleagues to sit back and think about what they've done, what they've done to this borough, for places like this, you know, should this place have to close down? You know, have they ever thought about the people that live, that still remain here, the old East End people that still remain here, or the old ladies have they ever thought about that? No they certainly haven't, everything to them is about money, and everything about, is all like err, West Hams new ground and Westfield shopping centre, Stratford this, Stratford that you know? And I was (inaudible) go back if we prepared to offer up 40 million pound to Mr Sullivan and Mr Gold out of West Ham, sure that 40 million pound would have been better spent in this borough?

Interviewer: Well thank you for being interviewed.



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Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interview Details

Name of interviewee: Peter Bell

Project:

Date of interview:

Language: English

Venue:

Name of interviewer: Joshua Adams

Length of interview:

Transcribed

Archive Ref:

The End

Interview Details

Name of interviewee:

Project:

Date of interview:

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Name of interviewer:

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