The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk

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So if you wouldn't mind just your em name

Right, hi, good morning my name is Andrew Larkin erm I am going to be sixty years of age later this year

Right what's your date of birth, Andrew

XX XX 1957

Right, brilliant, thanks. So maybe we should just start with the history of your Grandfather

Well my Grandfather was Jimmy Ruffell, who played for West Ham erm in the 1920s and the 1930s erm he was fortunate enough to play in the 1923 Cup Final which was the first Wembley Cup Final erm known as the White Horse Final – does that mean anything to you?

No tell me about the White Horse Final

Well erm Ok so Wembley Stadium had just been built and erm it was the first ever game played there

Right

Erm – fantastic and because of XXXX stadium they didn't quite know how the ticket sales were gonna go so they didn't have any advanced tickets – it was just people turn up and you pay on the gate and then you go and they – the estimates of how many people turned up –

bear in mind I think at the time it held a hundred and twenty thousand people they think at least double that amount turned up and tried to get in

Do you know how much the tickets cost?

Oh I don't know – I don't know – pennies probably weren't they – pennies erm and it was pandemonium – people climbed over the barriers, over the walls and what have you and erm covered the pitch – the pitch was absolutely covered in fans and erm so if I can say it from my Grandfather's view point – he said that they were all down below in the er er changing rooms and they you know the opinion of both teams was that there is no way we can play a game of football here but King Edward the fifth was there to formally open the er er stadium and he sent an emissary down to the teams and said, 'Look you've got to play a game here' because they were concerned - they'd be a riot – you can imagine – you know two hundred, three hundred thousand people – they'd be a riot erm and erm so the word from the King was, 'Play a game, keep everybody happy, everyone will go home and then we can arrange it again properly' you know I think the words were somewhere along the lines were that 'The FA will arrange something properly.' So they did, they went out there the players they they spent hours – they had several er police horses going round clearing the players off of the pitch but because the pitch was all black and white the horse that stands out in all those pictures is the white horse

Ah

Yeah and that's why it's called the White Horse Final and there's a statue up at Wembley Stadium of this White Horse so they cleared all the people just back to the touch line so it was like a football match at Hackney marshes because people are standing on the touch line

Right

And they played a game and my Grandfather said it was er ridiculous because he was on the wing – which is the edge of the pitch and he said these horses had been walking round and it was just all ploughed up it was like a field it was just ridiculous - anyway West Ham are playing Bolton Wanderers, and Bolton Wanderers won and they got given the Cup and they took it back to Bolton and that was the last that was ever said about the replay

[laughs]

Erm so that's the story of the 23 so here, you can't see it on your Dictaphone but I have erm a menu from the post match banquet

Wow

How about that

Wow

I'd like to know if there's anymore of those in existence I shouldn't have thought there probably are

That's amazing – how did you get all of this ***(03:59)***

(07:03)

He played for erm so many years that he retired, I think '38, '39 – just before the er Second World War broke out and erm he played more games than any other West Ham player at that time until Bobby Moore

Right

The famous Bobby Moore – I'm sure you've heard of **[laughs]**

Yeah **[laughs]**

Beat his then standing er er record

He looks quite slight in comparison to Bobby Moore

Oh he was yeah he was quite a small, fast winger erm so Bobby Moore passed his record number of games for West Ham in 1973

Right

Erm that record's now been passed by other players – I think Billy Bonds now holds the record but yeah that was quite a big thing for Bobby Moore to pass his and they did this special thing on the pitch – you can see that picture there – there, in the middle of the pitch er before the game erm and I was there and the crowd was fantastic towards him – gave him a big cheer when he went out and erm that there mounted in that is er the programme for that day with pictures of them both and they both signed on their pictures which is rather nice isn't it so after the game they had a big sort of presentation back in the Board Room and the family were invited there but I was at the game but I wasn't invited to that. I think my parents, because I was fifteen

Right

My parents thought this spotty little boy would be an embarrassment we don't want him there

[laughs]

So I was left in the care of one of my Father's friends watching the game because all the family were in the special box and all the rest of it um – if that dog

No –I've got a dog myself – I'm fine

I'm just worried about all this claws walking about er

No no don't worry at all – I've got a dog

So where was I – yes so I'm watching the game and this is February, 1973, I did er look it up before you came – just to get the day right, February 1973, we were playing West Bromwich Albion erm which was a pretty normal game – wasn't anything special as a game it just happened to be the occasion when Bobby Moore beat – so it gets to ten minutes before the end of the game and my dad's friend, who I always called, Uncle Charlie, didn't think it was right that I hadn't been invited into this post match shindig so he says, 'Come with me Andrew,' now honestly I did not know what I was doing, where I was going, and he he knew everybody at West Ham and he took me took through some corridors and down staircases and – I didn't know where we were going – and we kept going down in these narrow stair cases and we finished up in the tunnel next to the pitch, that's the tunnel where the players come off the pitch, and by now, by the time we got down there the game's almost finished and its gone into injury time and it's one-one, OK, and West Ham XXXX, back in those days they didn't use to play a lot of erm injury time not like they do now it's not all formalised with a ball going out with the minutes on – just whatever the ref thought he should add on – and this referee plays an awful lot of injury time and West Ham score the winning goal in that injury time and then the referee blew his final whistle. So the players then all troop off and I'm stood in the tunnel and it's not very big and

[laughs]

XXXX for a fifteen year old boy this was fantastic and two things struck me, stay with me, number one – those players were all exhausted and they were covered in sweat – I've never been so close to footballers as they're coming off the pitch and this is the back in the days when there's only one substitute so you know pretty much the players that started played the whole thing and they were covered in sweat and they were all exhausted but the other thing was the West Bromwich Albion captain, who was a player called John, John Wile W I L E, and he was a really hard man, he was on top of the referee, as they were coming off, and he was in his ear, using the most awful language – I was shocked

Yeah

That a footballer would be talking to the referee in such terms using the f-word, 'Why did you play all that effing injury time – you know he was really furious with him and I was quite shocked they were really very, very close to me so that's the other thing that stayed with me so anyway, players go off, next thing I know my uncle Charlie has got Ron Greenwood who is the West Ham manager, introduced me to him and Ron Greenwood says "oh pardon me Andrew" and he then takes me back up some of these staircases and we arrive in the boardroom where this champagne da di da's going on, and my parents turn around my mum was in her best fair coat and she turn round and she, I'd walked in with Ron Greenwood and it was just amazing, that's my abiding, best memory ever of Upton Park and I don't think too many people can match that really and you know I met everybody in there and um, and it was just such a fantastic thing for a young boy to be in amongst them.

Yeah it must have been completely amazing, did er, did, I was just thinking did your grandfather play solely for West Ham?

Yeah he actually did, at the end of his career, he did actually go to Aldershot, and I think he played two games for there and he did a really bad knee injury which put him out for the rest of that season and then the second world war broke out.

Oh right, then it changed, and did he have memory of that, was bobby moore, did he become, a kind of, a figure your father followed, your grandfather followed with interest?

Well yeah I wouldn't say they were friends or anything like that no, um absolutely not no, but of course yes, I mean particularly from my father, was such a big thing because West Ham, you know have never been the biggest team in England, you know, erm, but for West Ham in 1966 to have the England captain was really something, and erm, there was a lot of family pride attached to that and then we had the two players who scored the goals in the world cup final as well.

Did you grandfather over the years did his attitude to football change?

No he always loved football, but he always thought that it was better back in his day, which they would do wouldn't, he always thought it was much harder.

Like a golden era of football?

Erm, well yeah maybe, maybe, but I think everyone always looks upon their own era as being the best, but he always thought that he could, he could have done what he did in his era in Bobby Moore's era for instance. He thought he could have been just as good.

Right so, when when, if, so as a professional, was a professional football? Do you know anything about his training, how that would work?

Well yeah, I don't' think the training was as formalized as it is now, I think it was more based on fitness rather than ball skills, I think they used to do a lot of running based on stamina, erm, and its not something he ever spoke about to me actually but I have read about it back in those days, some of the trainers didn't like the players to have too much of the ball when they practice it, because the thinking was they wanted the players to appreciate the ball when they got it in the actual game, which is bizarre isn't it just bizarre cos, so they didn't practice ball skills and there wasn't much of the trickery that there is now.

So can you tell me your fist, match can you remember which was your first match?

Oh no I don't remember

Right do you know who you went with?

Well my dad took me, well my first game, cos he, just to get me sort of broken into it, he took me into a second team game. Which at the time was still played at Upton Park and erm, there was still a few thousand people there, you know, it wasn't by any means full or even half full but to see the second team play was still a bit of an event you know there would still be quite a few maybe two or three thousand people turned up for it, erm, so that was my first game, and then, my early games it was the early 60s, just won the FA cup, we won the FA cup in 64. I remember some of the players, johnny Byrne was still playing erm, 64, cup winning side that was pretty much all there, lots of Bs lots of the players surnames started with B, there was John Bonds there was Bovington there was Boyce, Graybrook waso n the wing, Johny Burne was at centre-froward, Burcket Jack Burckett erm, I can't think of em all, but coming back to, when we won the FA cup in 64, so there's the banquet menu, from the 64 cup

winning side, so I've got the 23 one and the 64 that was the first cup final we got to since that one.

Bit of a wait isn't it? (laughs)

We've had a similar wait, the last one was 1980. Um so my grandfather was invited by the club to attend, and that was his, that was on his place setting and he put his initials there and look at this look I've got.

Oh wow

All the players have signed the back of it.

Oh that is just amazing

Which is just again how many of those are in existence? I wonder, and what I particularly love is that Bobby Moore signed it there, but his pens run out so he's signed it again there. So I've got two Bobby Moore's

Aboslutely amazing, and that's the, that's the road to it, wow.

Its actually quite a nice sort of thing its got colour photos of the team, management team and what have ya and to have those signatures.

That's amazing, that's absolutely amazing. So your own history, where did you grow up then.

I was born in Chigwell and I've always grown up in that area, the area Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill, erm and then epping, so slowly moving out.

And what did your parents do?

My father owned shops, sweet shops, Larkins was a fairly famous peanut roaster, manufacturer, used to import the basic product from Africa or wherever they were grown and then they just, err, be roasted there was a factory at Barking where they used to make those and they were sold at the ground.

Where they the ones in the shell?

Yeah, so they would be in a little paper bag and the peanuts were in the shells, at the end of every West Ham game, the terraces were covered in peanut shells and the paper bag, so Larkins peanuts so that's a bit of a connection to West Ham also, um and yes, so they did that but they also had shops, so, that's what they, they had a line of shops down the Barking road along the East End.

Right, and did your mum work?

Er, yeah, she, secretarial sort of office work.

And was she a Londoner as well?

Oh yeah, oh well, cos of course she was born in Becontree, and they moved to Barking, and erm, lived at Barking, Salsbury avenue Barking for the whole time that papa played for West Ham which was a long time. Um, and she actually one of the things she used to say was a big Odeon in Barking and they used to have talent shows on there, like the sort of x-factor now, but you know, before the days of television there would be the local talent show, and my grandfather would be invited as one of the judges as a local celebrity yeah. (laugh) so my mum used to like that because then we would get free tickets to go and watch the films.

And do you know how they met your parents?

No I don't actually, no. I think my dad probably liked my mum because he was, you know. (laughs) daughter of the famous footballer down the road. I dunno how they met no

And he was a keen West Ham supporter was he. He didn't have to pretend to sort of..

No no, all my family, all of the men have always been West Ham fans, absolutely, yes I mean they live my dad and his family lived in err, Barking road, opposite Barking park. No not barking road, Lonbridge road opposite Barking park and salsbury avenue is just a few streets behind.

So what, what, growing up when did you get your first season ticket for West Ham?

Well my dad used to get tickets, I don't know if I'm supposed to say this it might be illegal, my dad used to get tickets again from Charlie smiths from my uncle Charlie who's the one who took me down all the back, he used to get, erm, a season ticket which was one of the players wives tickets. So the players were all given extra, cos back in the day the season ticket was like a book and it was numbered, you had this little book about that sort of size four inches by three inches and they were all numbered, and when you turned up at the game there would be a sign there saying that today's game is number 32 and you would tear up number 32 give it to the chap at the turnstile and then you would go. But the players all got

given so many books for their families which they would sell, some of them, well they might keep one for their wives or whatever and Charlie smith used to get one of these. My dad, well one for him and one for my dad and as a young boy would go up to the turnstile and my dad would give ticket number 32 but he would, I would actually be in the turnstile gate with him, give the gatesman half a crown and then we would both go through the turnstile together.

Do you remember where you sat?

Yeah it was, it was in the, it was in the main stand and it was erm, to the sort of right hand side so towards the old south bank thing. Does that mean anything to you probably not but it will do to the, it was quite a good seat but I always remember my dad would be saying behave yourelf because that's Martin Peters' wife, that's Bobby Moore's wife, behave yourself.

So the wives were present in those years?

Yeah, they might not have gone to ever game

So the atmosphere, first of all what can you remember being your most memorable match then that you might have seen.

The most memorable match and you've probably heard this from a lot of people was the Einracht Frankfurt game have you heard that people said that to you

No (laughs)

So West Ham in 1975 won the FA cup so the following year we went into the European Cup Winners cup, so ever team put their version of the FA cup winners would go into this European wide competition, and West Ham had won it in 1975 it was the biggest thing that we've ever won, we move on 10 years we won the FA cup again we're in this competition we're in the semi final and we're playing the German team Eintracht Frankfurt and we played the first leg out there which we lost 2-1 but that wasn't too bad cos you played at their ground then you played at our ground and then you put the two scores together, so to just go out there and lose by one goal wasn't too bad. So we bring them back here and we've got to win by two goals yeah, and erm, just fantastic, best game I've ever been to, we beat them, can't remember if it was 3-1 or 3-0. I think it was 3-1 which put us through, because it was again this is back in the days were a lot of people would pay on the turnstile and the official attendance, the most you could get into the old Upton park was 42,000 right, well there must have been 50,000 in there that day. I've been to games where there was 42,000 but that night there were far more, far more, because people were just paying the gate man to push them in, and you were stood, you were stood like that you were so pressed together you couldn't put your hands in your pockets and get a you know anything it was just ridiculous but the atmosphere was fantastic, yeah, and it is widely spoken of as the best game.

Can you talk me through just a bit of the arc of that game then? What was so memorable about it?

Well,

Who was playing?

You wanna know the team? (laughs)

Yeah if you can remember it

Mervin Day was in goal, fullbacks John McDowell and Frank Lampard Snr, central defence Billy Bonds and Tommy Taylor, erm, midfield Graham Padden, Trevor Brooking, Sir Trevor, erm, on the wing was Pat Holland, up front Keith Robson and erm, Billy Jennings, that's probably 11 might have left one out but that's not a bad attempt is it?

That's quite a team innit

Um and sorry how did the game go you were saying, so we were 2-1 down, the Germans brought quite a few Germans over so there was quite a lot of singing backwards and forwards and the atmosphere was fantastic, how did the game go? Was it 0-0 at half time, I think it was 0-0 at half time and second half Trevor Brooking scores with a header, that's right it was a header Trevor Brooking scores, so it was now 2-2 overall, and then Keith Robson scored a fantastic shot in the top corner then were 2 nil up so we were now ahead, um and Trevor Brooking scored the third one so we were now 3-0 up plaing sailing fantastic, and then the bloody Germans go and score so its 3-1 and with the away goals rule do you understand that?

No, can you explain that?

If the two scores over the two games are level, right, the team that scores the most number of away goals will go through.

Right, its harder to score away

So we're now 3-1 up, having lost 2-1 over there, so if the Germans score and make it 3-2 the overall scores would now be level but they would be going through because they've got two away goals.

Right

So the last few minutes was a bit tense, cos the Germans just absolutely piled on the attack, I remember one shot hit Tommy Taylor on the line, in his stomach and the Germans all said it hit his hand big argument about that, but we managed to hold on, so we got through to the final, which of course we lost, we don't talk about that game (laughs) we don't talk about that.

The thing is about being a West Ham supporter that there is a particular type of person, do you think?

Yeah, particularly back in the day, err a lot of people from the docks, and err from the London docks and there was a place, there was a part of the ground called the chicken run have you heard about that? It was back in the day it was a picture then of my grandfather playing, that's him jumping up there with the goalkeeper and that big of, that small turn over there is the old chicken.

Theres no seating there was there?

No, that was all terracing, then in 19 or whenever, end of the 60s they actually put seating above that so they built a whole new stand but they kept, pretty much that amount of standing and then they put seats above it, behind and above but there was still that bit of standing there and the atmosphere there was like second to none, it was the real hard-core.

Right, did you ever sit in there? Did you go?

Oh yeah yeah, I was standing there when this, Eintracht Frankfurt game because the whole family wanted to go and my dad only had a couple of tickets and much as he tried to get other tickets people were scattered around in seats that he could get hold of and I had to stand up there, cos by this time I had you know, a teenager and that's what you want to do is stand up. There was no hooliganism there, that would be more the sort of middle aged fans would stand there and you would get fantastic banter erm, just funny things said from the crowd to the players cos you were very very close, fantastic erm atmosphere cos this is when the time I'm talking about was 70s there was a bit of hooliganism going on. That would be more the North Bank which is behind one of the goals

How did the fans, sort of, dyou know generally? What was their reaction to the hooliganism which was going on? Did they see them as fans as well? Do you know?

Yeah, obviously no one encouraged it at all, of course you wouldn't encourage it, but you would always see the opposition hooligans as being worse than your own hooligans if you see what I mean, erm, but there was definitely a period when West Hams hooliganism was was really bad actually. But they wouldn't cause trouble at Upton Park there was this famous firm called the ICF, have you heard of them?

Yeah, yeah

That ICF means the inter city firm, because they would, they wouldn't travel to away grounds on the standard football trains which were specially put on, they got these inter city tickets which were more expensive and they used to dress quite smart and they called themselves the inter city firm and they didn't travel with the average West Ham fans but when they got to where they were going to then they would cause havoc.

Hmm, it's interesting because it's quite menacing isn't it, like you know, calculated sort of.

Yeah, you know, never a part of that, this is what I've this is what I've heard, but you know that was the big social problem during the 70s wasn't it, don't want to talk about that too much. Do ya, (laughter) cos you can get quite deep then, social issues.

I think football was a kind of well, I don't know I suppose, it kind of was like a kind of tinder box for all that going on at the time. So when the, your, so when you were, going back to your history then, so after, where did you go to school?

Err, Chigwell school which is a private school, quite quite a good school really, I've got really happy memories of er being there, most of my best friends still now came from those days.

Right, and what did you do after school?

Police, 32 and a half years in the met police and I left 3 years ago.

So that's interesting, very interesting, so how did you end up, did you go to uni?

Yeah I did yeah, I worked for Lesneys, little match box cars, and they went bust and they closed the factory down at Hackney Wick where I worked a junior, an industrial engineer was the title.

So what did you study at university?

History, so that was no good at all (laughs) in Lesney match box cars was it, and not terribly useful for the police either really but just had a great interest in history.

And was that in London?

Nope it was in Wales, um, Lampeter, don't know if you know it, its one of the smallest ones, nice.

So then you came and worked in Lesleys and then

and then they closed down and I was like what am I gonna do now? And I was always hankering for err the police, but I always felt that it was a very serious job and if you were going to into it you were going to have to go into it long term you know was a sort of job for life you had to commit to it and I thought I'd give it a job.

Right and how was your entry into that? How did you get into the police?

Err well, I applied and I had to go through this very stern interview with this board of very stern looking sort of old army colonel types, and erm, yeah got through that and had to go to Hendon for four months I think was the training up there, from there I got posted to Bethnal green police station which was really tough, certainly back in cos it was 81 that I joined, and erm, served at several east London stations and policed many west ham games (laughs).

(laughter) Yeah, you had your back has to be turned towards the crowd.

Yeah I made sure I always, what the old timers used to say to me was watch the goal, and then soon as the goal and then turn around and look at me, but I always remember actually at Upton park, I was quite the young constable at the time and me and my mate wereu p at the north bank and we got told by the sergeant I want you two guys to get down to the south bank, which was the other end of the pitch so we got to walk down, we got to walk down actually right down there where that, where that line is there, we had to walk down that touchline in between the fans and the other end of the pitch, games going on behind us as up and the ball was being kicked and its hit my mate right in the back, cos he's got his back turned, hit him in the back knocked him over and of course the hats the helmets come off and of course the fans thought that was the best thing ever, hilarious, because everyone wants to see a policeman come to grief don't they? It wasn't me it was my mate Steve well that's one of my memories of policing at Upton park.

Right so with the, I mean the police force what, that must have started off at a particular what the 1980s, that must have been a big change in social attitudes towards the police.

Amazingly so, yeah I mean in that 30 years, yeah, I had to go up north to police the miners dispute and all of that, and then there was the erm, Wapping newspaper dispute which was very closely after the miners

So how, were you in uniform for all of these, that was like riot, riot police and

Well yeah, I didn't do that for that long, it wasn't quite so formalized then, it was you know we need to send up all of these blokes up to deal with all of this and it was only after that really that they started to pay what you now call riot police.

So you started, how I mean, what's the career pathway through the service

Well I didn't rise that highly, but I got to sergeant, I got to sergeant after 10 years and then stayed there for the rest of my time, because I enjoyed it really, and now I look back and think, I could have gone higher actually but

The role of sergeant is, is what do you, is it in charge of a group of mean.

A team

Did you have any interesting cases?

Yeah it was nothing to do with West Ham though is it, no I could sit here all day and tell you interesting policing stories, but um, yeah no, I've got lots of er very very interesting funny police stories.

Just tell us one

Oh I hadn't prepared for this! What shall I tell you about, funny one or erm?

One that comes to mind

Ok so I'm the sergeant and were at Leyton police station, and erm, terraced houses, this old boy living by himself has died all right and send two of my guys down there, and they have to break into the house and they can't get in the front door what's basically happened is they can get it open a little bit but he's died up against the front door and they can tell, and they don't want to sort of squash him you know so they called me up and said Sarge sarge come up, have a look we've got the door open two inches, oh blimey ok right, knock on the house next door there's this nice lady next door explain the situation, oh is that paul burton oh dear, can we come through and climb over your fence into his back garden, oh yes of course you can officer, so through they go and em, they call me up two minutes later, er yeah we have managed to get in and this old boy has died, he's been here quite some time smells terrible, so what you had to do then when you have a dead body you have to get the police doctor down, and I happened to know that the police doctor was at the police station just by chance dealing with something else if it's the middle of the night you have to call him out sometimes it takes ages but I know, "don't worry I'll go back to the police station get the doctor" there's this

lovely old jewish doctor, lovely lovely man um, and I'm driving him back, and I said we've actually got to go through the next door neighbours house, we're gonna climb up "I'm not doing that" sorry doctor but you've got to, so we've gone through and were now in the back garden big wooden fence there and my two guys their heads pop up and they've put hanckerchiefs yeah cos of the smell they've put hankerchiefs they've made masks and it just looks like the lone ranger and tonto, I've started laughing, and now I've got to get this quite elderly jewish doctor over this fence, and I'm trying to push him up and he's stuck half way and they're trying to pull him down the lone ranger and tonto theyre trying to pull him down the other way and he says, I'll do it from here sergeant ill declare him dead from here sergeant. You can't do that!! And I was laughing so much I started to cry, you know when you have tears when you're laughing so much, the old lady who's house we've gone through said "oh officer are you upset, about well let me make you a nice cup of tea" she thinks I'm crying cos the old boys dead! So there we are, (laugh)

Must have been a fascinating career really, how did you meet your wife then?

Well Jean is my second wife, we met em, Jean are you up there? She's not very well today, I'm going to get this all wrong and get told off, we met, I think we met 12 years ago, at a friend's Christmas eve party, so Christmas was always quite special time for us actually.

And you've got two kids

We've got, I've got two children from my first marriage, Jean has got 3 from hers so between us we've got 5 and they're all pretty erm, similar ages actually.

Nice and the West Ham supporters or?

Well my two are, but her 3, well her daughter doesn't really give a damn about football, but her two sons are big Tottenham hotspur, so that's, you know that's a bone of contention there. (laughs).

I know I've lived through that myself. (laughs). Um so going back to the West Ham sort of, story, we've talked about the best match, worst matches, how do you cope with bad matches?

Oh, you get used to that when you're a West Ham supporter, you have to, oh its just dreaful.

Do you ever walk out of a match when its sort of

Well, I wouldn't say walk out, I might leave a few minutes before the end, I've done that at the new stadium a couple of times earlier on, erm, cos the first few games at the new stadium weren't very good, I think when we lost to Southampton 3-0 I might have left a few minutes but generally speaking no, I have to stay until the end.

So the move to the new stadium did you expect it? Did you see it coming?

Yeah, they've been speaking about it for, these current owners. They spoke about it pretty much as soon as they took over didn't they cos there was this Olympic stadium being built they saw the opportunity, but even before that see the previous owner was an Icelandic chap, and he was firmly of the opinion that the Boleyn ground wasn't big enough and he was

looking at other sites, he looked at a gasworks down at Plaistow, near to West Ham station, as a big gasworks there I think he'd been there to look at that, and was looking at that as a potential site to move a club to, so I think we've known for a few years that yes it was pretty much going to happen, and then the Olympic in theory was the perfect fit wasn't it, but how long are we going to talk about that because you know, the planning for that stadium was just idiotic really, it annoys me that they got it so wrong.

The planning, being what

Being in as much as there was any thought given to what were gonna do with the stadium after the games, that's where it all went wrong and bearing in mind not long before we had the Oly, the dome that was built for the 2000 millennium, that was their template for how not to do something, lets build a dome lovely for the year 2000 fireworks going off fantastic, what do we do they next day oh we haven't thought about that that was a disaster wasn't it for two or three years fortunately now it's a great success, but it took a long time to get there, and we've got exactly with the Olympic stadium, there was no thought for, what are we going to do with this thing after the games, the games are a great success, stadium works for that, fantastic, but its not a football stadium and the club have done very very well, the nation has paid for it thank you very much and to all the uk taxpayers providing us with this stadium but the club have done the best that they can with what they took over, and you know they put the seating over the track etc, there's still a bit of a gap its still not perfect but I am warming to it.

Right, what's made the change, I mean, when you're first match at the new stadium.

My first match at the new stadium I thought it was great actually, it was a European qualifier against a Romanian team who's name escapes me for the moment, it was great it was an evening game and you know very excited at the prospect of you know taking over this new stadium and its absolutely full and you know everybody was up for it, and when people started singing that first time I thought yeah wow this is great because when people start singing there the roof that they put on it now really keeps the noise in and it really is very very good actually, it's a shame that since the team haven't given us much opportunity much grounds to start singing. So the first game yeah I thought it was really really good and then its gone downhill, the next half a dozen games or so however many games it was things went downhill rapidly

What do you put that down to?

Well, we had quite a few things going on, there was, the thing the club got wrong was that they should have mixed everybody up, right, where my previous seats were, was in the family enclosure, um they've done away with that, there's no family enclosure, um they still have kids tickets, very very cheap, but you can be sitting amongst a group of not very nice people. Whereas before with the Boleyn ground cos it had been there for so many year people knew, I mean like I was saying to you back in the 70s, you would know which part of the ground you would go to, that suited you, yeah? Well there was none of that with the new ground it was pretty much everyone was put together and allowed to get on with it. That that has been a bit of a disaster but how they unpick that I dunno.

Right that's how it is at the minute.

They do need to somehow separate the families, the young children, cos I've got members of my family who would love to go with their kids, and I don't want them sitting with the people (inaudible) (laughs). That's a bit difficult really

Do you think that's one of the main sticking points then?

Well we had that but we also had the business about the a lot of people like to stand up, I don't know something its ridiculous why do you want to pay for a seat and not use it, I stand up when we score a goal, but during the game I wanna sit down. Now at the old Boleyn ground at the bobby moore end, which was the old south bank pretty much in the lower tier, in fact thinking about it all the way around the ground actually on the lower tier everybody wanted to stand up, erm, and of course the problem with standing up is that if the people in front of you stand up, you're forced to stand up yourself and so are the people behind you but that was the lay of the land really, people at the old Boleyn ground new that if you were in the lower tier you were gonna stand up, um, move that to the new ground, and you had confliction of people standing up, people weren't expecting that and plus the club were in a very sticky situation that part of the licencing was that everybody's going to sit down throughout the game so we've now go stewards going round telling people to sit down which didn't used to happen at the old Boleyn ground, so you had all that going on, and you know you had a bit of an unhappy mix really, team playing badly, standing up issue, the kids issue, something might happen with their seat too far away and so that kind of soured the atmosphere, but my experience of the last few games is that people are working it out a bit more, and a couple of wins helps um but you know I think there's all problems which we can get through, firmly of the opinion I have been all the time that, this is a good move for the club, it's the only way forward and it's the only way forward, you can't sit in the past with a small ground much as we loved it, and it only accommodated 36,000 people and if we want to get West Ham up into the top echelon and nobody really does, some people are really happy to be silly old west ham, you know mid table, relegation, you know some people quite like that, but if we wanna put West Ham in the top echelon be challenging you know be one of the biggest clubs in the country and beyond then it's a no brainer, you know move into a ground which is potentially 60,000 people um yeah its got to be the way forward.

It is quite interesting what you said about there are people who'd be happy to keep the club as a kind of you know… West Ham

Well this is what we are, we're west ham we're not Manchester united, if you wanna be Manchester United go and support Manchester United. So there is a bit there.

Its interesting, I don't know if that's typical of other clubs, but I think it is.

Well there's the old fashioned football supporters and then you've got a lot of the modern supporters who've latched onto football only in the last 20 years or so who don't necessarily understand the roots of their club and football itself so, it is quite deep were not American football, we don't have these franchises which travel round these cities you know if the pick a team at random you know if such and such a (inaudible) don't make it in Cininatti they close it down and the franchise moves to Philadelphia or something, we don't do that, we have very firm roots in what we, and clubs see themselves in playing a certain way and that has to continue. You know, sort of changing with all the foreign players coming in, and globalization and all that money.

Do you think your grandfather would have supported the move. From what you knew of him.

Oh there's a question, never considered that one, I don't think you know, I often think when I go just to Stratford, Westfield and then you've got the football. My father hasn't been with us for 20 years or so, just my father would not comprehend the change that we've had its just unbelievable you know big blocks of flats on what used to be an old railway marshalling yard and this fantastic shopping centre three or four floors and then you've got West Ham there, amazing, so what my grandfather would have thought about it, I don't know actually I think he'd probably, because he wasn't a particularly ambitious man, in as much as when he stopped playing he was given the opportunity to coach in spain, and he turned them down he was very family orientated and wasn't necessarily going for the big next step, I mean he didn't win as many caps for England as he could have done because he was invited to go on tour which is what they used to do when they you know didn't qualify for world cups and European championships every two years, they used to at the end the end of the season they would have a tour and they would play Czechoslovakia and Germany and he was selected to go on this tour at the end of the season in 1930 or something or other and he said no, I've had a long season I want to spend the summer with my family and that was the end of his England career you know if you say that to England you don't get picked again and that's what's happened to him is why he didn't get as many caps as he would have done and again during the 1930s, the big team of the day was Arsenal they were as they are now but they were very big then that's when they became very big um they had a very famous Chapman, Herbert Chapman, he approached my grandfather and said I'd like you to come and play for Arsenal which was a big move and he said no thank you very much I'm very happy at West Ham and don't want to move the family to North London happy living in Barking and playing for West Ham.

Its loyalty isn't it

He stayed there yeah, so you know I've never actually thought what would my grandfather think about this and he probably would have said well we're alright where we are aren't we? (laughter) but I might be doing him a disservice I don't know

I suppose its that matchday of like walking down towards the on a satruday towards the Boleyn ground now that is no more, have you got a new ritual?

That's no more but to be honest getting to the old ground was increasingly difficult, the parking, I've always driven, the parking, Newham council made it increasingly hard to park anywhere near around the ground, because you used to be able to park pretty much anywhere and the last two or three years cos you used to be able to park pretty much anywhere, and the last two or three years they've got residents areas and bla bla bla and it was very difficult to park anywhere near the old Boleyn ground, the tube just could not cope with the people that it had then and because you couldn't park more and more people used the tube and the district line just could not cope, so it was getting very very difficult actually to access the overground and then the whole area changed er the immediate area around the Boleyn, the Asian I'm not complaining about them but they had no interest in football fans which is a shame be lovely to engage with them to get them in there but so you would you would struggle to get there and you're walking through people doing their Saturday afternoon shopping in their sari shops and what have you that have no interest in the ground and you know you would see some Asian people driving and there'd be terrified they've suddenly driven into this big mass

of football supporters where've you come from? So it was time to end, now for me particularly get the train from Epping, get to Stratford lovely, have a walk through Westfield if you like well I don't particularly like to by my wife does so much easier, the first few games because the weather was nice cos the season starts in August the park you can sit in the grass next to the canal and have a nice sandwich so in actual fact the matchday experience now is much better, inside the ground they've got far more bars open than they ever did before at the Boleyn ground you'd have to queue up for ages to get a not very nice glass of lager, now they have the catering what have you much much better.

Do you think there will be a new breed of supporters coming through? Do you think they will be less of the traditional East End?

Oh yeah yeah definite change, definite definite change, when I go to Epping station, park my car you can't park your car anywhere near Epping station because everyone's driven in from all the outlying villages in Chelmsford and what have you because they're all coming from much further out than they ever did before, but that's how societies changed hasn't it, back in my grandfathers time, people would have walked and most terraced houses are about surrounding upton park people would have walked from there, and got a bus, and they would have walked down and they would have gone to the game, now people are living out in Suffolk getting the train

Yeah I mean it is interesting what you said before about how you've moving out from sort of where you grew up to sort of further further out.

The Parish Centre, Cardinal Heenan Centre, 326 High Road, Ilford, IG1 1QP
0208 5533116 / office@ech.org.uk / www.hidden-histories.org.uk

The End

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