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Bob Edwards: Bob Edwards, supporter

Interviewer: So would you like to say when you first became a supporter, when you first came across Stevenage Football Club?

Bob Edwards: The first time I ever went to a Stevenage Town game was in 1959. We'd just moved here from London and my brother and I didn't have anything to do. I think it must have been something like that on a Saturday and were- well, you didn't need to be escorted anywhere then. You just went.

And we went to the old ground on the old A1. And that was the first time. I went there a few times and I can remember it was right by the railway line but who we played, I do not know. I can't remember any of the games or any of the teams we played against there.

Interviewer: How did you get there? Did you walk or cycle or...?

Bob Edwards: I should think that we cycled. I can't remember but that's the only thing I can think of then, that we must have cycled.

Interviewer: Can you remember the crowds or what it was like being here?

Bob Edwards: No. All I can remember, it reminded me of almost like a park pitch with just a few railings and a bit of iron work thrown up around the sides.

But the one thing I do remember, there was an old wooden stand and it was made out of – well I thought at the time – railway sleepers. When the new ground opened here, that was moved from the old ground and positioned behind the goal on the north terrace. So that was the one connection that I can remember between the old ground and this one.

Interviewer: And did you go on supporting Stevenage from then onwards or did you return to be a supporter again later?

Bob Edwards: I still went occasionally to the old ground. When they moved here, I started to come more often because then I was a teenager and a friend from school used to come here as well so then we used to come in quite a lot in the early '60s and yes, so then it was hooked on Stevenage town.

Interviewer: So what did it mean to be “Hooked on Stevenage town”?

Bob Edwards: I suppose it's you organise your weeks and your social activities around the football. “When is the football on?” so “Right we're going to the football” then other days we go and

do other things do it was always that football came first. Well, it still does.

Interviewer: And did you do away-? When you were a teenager, did you go to the away games as well?

Bob Edwards: Yes. Funnily, I've brought a load of programmes downstairs. I mean some of them were mine, some of them my brother's but we used to go away, where did we go away? Hinckley? I can't remember, going to Dover, Barnet a few times and once when we went to Barnet, we went on the player's coach.

Because in those days it really was easier to speak to the players. It's more of that, like you're friends and that. We used to go in the players' coach because there wasn't really many supporters going really.

And a couple of times we went there and the players got us in for nothing by carrying the kit bags in.

Interviewer: So what was it like being on the player's coach?

Bob Edwards: Well, I think we used to try and get to the back of the coach and that's all I can really remember of actually being on the coach, but yes. And it was always better that way.

Yes, and I can remember going to Dover. I two friends in, two good friends, that we met at the town and they decided to hitchhike to Dover and we'd had a bet that the supporter's coach would get there the following day before they could

hitchhike there. And lo and behold, when we got to the ground at Dover, we went running up to the ground and there they were, sitting on the steps already.

So yes, we used to go to a few away ones even then, even when it was Stevenage town. But the one thing that I can really – and I was thinking about this during the week that – probably the best memory that I have of Stevenage town when it was here at Broadhall Way were the evening games.

I don't know if anyone else has commented on that but there was always a special atmosphere for games under floodlights then. And for some reason, we always seemed to use to get bigger gates then during the week than we did at the weekends.

Whether that's true or not, I don't know, it was just my perception at the time and yet now, with the borough, during the week, the gates ____ [0:04:34] incredibly. Just ready to see that- Monday night football it was as well. So all home games were Monday nights then.

Why? I haven't got a clue.

Interviewer: What was the special atmosphere? Can you put your finger on it?

Bob Edwards: No, it was just- I mean, even now, I like football in the evenings, when it's that sort of November or December sort of misty night and a bit of a chill in the air and get a cup of tea and keep yourself warm and that and I always loved those evenings and I can always remember then that those sort of

games always reminded me that... Well, I suppose you only remember the bits you want to remember.

But it always seemed the way that the evening games, it was just a sort of a bit of a crackle in the air, almost electric.

Interviewer: You mentioned going with friends.

Bob Edwards: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you meet the same people each time at the ground or meet new people?

Bob Edwards: I always used to go with the school friends then and one of my friends used to live just 100 yards from the ground so we always met at his house and just walked our way here. Yes.

Interviewer: And where did you stand? Was there a regular place?

Bob Edwards: There used to be an old stand where this main stand is now. It was just a brick-built thing with seating at the back and a small amount of terrace at the front and we used to stand down the front, on the left.

And I can remember, one time, we used to sneak in for nothing so I shouldn't (Laughter). Well, suppose the ___[0:06:04] mine now, but there never used to be any actual barrier son the gate, so if you got down here early enough, you could walk in

and hide until the game started.

But that meant you needed to be in here about two or three hours before the game started.

Interviewer: And where did you hide?

Bob Edwards: Oh just anywhere around the ground. You could either go in ditches or fences. Because at one end of the ground, at the ____ [0:06:28] end, I'm pointing here, there's not good, me pointing with that thing, is it?

Yes, there was a big bank, a grassy bank at one end which – you wouldn't be allowed now – but we used to hide behind there.

Interviewer: Any were there particular players you liked or followed?

Bob Edwards: The ones I can remember from the Stevenage town days were obviously [Dickie England 0:06:51], Tommy Watson, [Terry Ince], affectionately known as “Dobbin” because he wasn't the quickest player around. In fact he was very slow, completely opposite to Tommy Watson.

And Ray Freeman in mid-field. Big centre-half. John- I can't think of his Surname now, and the goalkeeper, Peacock. But they, I suppose, they were the players that I can really remember reasonably well.

But I think “Oh Sean Brook-”, not Sean Brooks, Brooks. He

used to play for Tottenham and he came here, I can't- his son is Sean Brooks now but, Johnny Brooks, that's it. That's right, he was someone in the latter days of his football career but he was really good. When he came here, he was a class above everyone else so he was really good, yes.

Interviewer: There we are. So shall I, going on from there, have you always lived in Stevenage?

Bob Edwards: No, we moved out from London in 1959 and of course-

Interviewer: But since then you've supported?

Bob Edwards: Yes.

Interviewer: You've lived here and supported the team.

Bob Edwards: I've always – well, nearly always now – I did have a spell probably in the late '70s, early '80s where I didn't go to football but I haven't just been to Stevenage, I have been to other grounds in the meantime, but it's always Stevenage that calls me back.

So I suppose when my friends started to get old – well, we all got older together I suppose – but you start wandering off, doing other things that there isn't the pull to come down here on your own or... It's easier to come down here with friends or people you know.

So as my family started to grow up, then I started to come back with them as well.

Interviewer: So is there something about a- it's a family connection, is it, for you?

Bob Edwards: Nowadays, it definitely is. It definitely is. I mean, I think this bit about footballers and managers and owners are only here temporarily, the supporters will always be here. They might own it but it's our club and we'll always be here.

And I think what it is, is once it's in your blood it's always in your blood. I mean, you've got a job to not look at the results for the teams that you've always followed. So yes.

Even if we moved away now, I mean I'd still be back most weekends for the game. In fact, when we looked at moving now, we said "My stipulation is that it needs to be on the East Coast Mainline.

Interviewer: So if we go through, we stopped at about the '60s or so.

Bob Edwards: Yes, the late '60s and early '70s. And then we, Stevenage Athletic then, I only ever came a very few times then. It was, I suppose, the era when football was falling out of fashion with all the trouble and everything. I mean, I can remember problems here as well.

Interviewer: Oh right. What sort of problems?

Bob Edwards: Fighting. In the grounds, especially- from my recollection, it used to be at the [Roebuck 0:10:40] _____. Not a great deal, but I can remember when it was teams like Barnet that used to come here and I can remember going to Barnet and there have been problems and to try and avoid them it's- well, I suppose you can if you-

But yes, and that started to, that era, when there were big problems in football, all over the country and it just seemed to spill out here as well and I can definitely recall that, quite a few occasions.

Interviewer: Was there anything in particular about Barnet?

Bob Edwards: Well, I think because they were always reasonably close rivals. Although I don't think we were very often in the same league, but it must have been when we got to the South League Premiere that we played Barnet a few times, but that always seemed to evoke a few, sort of... Well, bring out the worst in people.

Interviewer: So is that just to do with people fighting in the stands or outside?

Bob Edwards: No, no. Behind the goals, yes. Because there was never any segregation. Well, there hasn't been here until a few years ago, I suppose. But yes.

Around that time, as I was getting older, friends were doing other things so stopped coming for a while and that was all around the time of when it was Stevenage Athletic.

Interviewer: So what brought you back?

Bob Edwards: My family really. I mean, I always wanted to keep coming back down here, but when you've got a really young family, we can't do it at the weekends anyway. But having two boys, that was easy. That was easy, "Come on son, I'll take you to see a game of football".

Interviewer: And what did they make of it?

Bob Edwards: Great. My eldest one loved it from the off. That was when he was about- how old must he have been then? Six or seven? Yes, so that was about 1986, 1987 and we used to come occasionally. Then we started to come more regularly as he got to nine or ten.

Then my youngest lad is three years younger, he started coming as well then and that's it, it just became every weekend was football weekend.

When we used to come here, I only used to come to the home games, but my eldest son, when he was 11, he used to go away on the coach with a friend, everywhere. [Merthyr Tydfil 0:13:11], anywhere like that, they used to go everywhere on the coach. So yes, it's a real family thing and although one of

my sons has now moved away to London, he still comes here a bit.

But the first topic of conversation isn't "How is the family?" it's "How are we getting on? How are we doing?" So definitely, it's the family.

Interviewer: Because you said earlier, it was like something in your blood?

Bob Edwards: Well that's right and once you start supporting a team, yes, it's difficult to- I mean, I could never go and support Luton, even though when we first moved to the town and we played for a local football team, "Roebuck Rovers" I think it was, the team, they used to do these trips to-

I can remember going with them to Tottenham to do a grand tour and I think I arranged the trip- oh, no, no, no. It was a bus that used to run here from Stevenage to Luton for all their home games and we went once, heaven forbid, but that was the time when it was Stevenage Town and I still preferred coming here then.

But why would I go up-? Luton. No, I just- horrible. Horrible, horrible, horrible.

Interviewer: Because for you it seems that the football club and living in Stevenage are all tied up together.

Bob Edwards: Absolutely. It's part of the community. Well, it's probably not just Stevenage, I'm sure that it's the case with other clubs, but

I think with a small club, which Stevenage was then, it really is our club.

I felt then that when I came down here, that because it was that small that I was a big part of it. I mean now, it's changed significantly but back then, I think everybody is the same. If it's your local club, then you almost own it, in a way. Whereas if it was a big club, Arsenal, Manchester United or Chelsea, you can't really be a part of. You can be part of the support, but you can't really feel as though you own the club.

I mean, not many people run around the corner from Arsenal and go to Arsenal, whereas here, I've always lived, I suppose, I'm less than a mile away from the ground now. Not that I've moved just to be closer to the ground, but I used to be [Valleyway 0:15:48] for oh, a long, long time.

Yes, so wherever I've been in Stevenage, I used to just think I'll never be more than a mile or a mile and a half away from the ground and that was just pure coincidence.

Interviewer: So you hinted a bit earlier that you thought the experience of being a supporter has changed over time?

Bob Edwards: Definitely.

Interviewer: Can you perhaps say a little bit about the comparison between then and well, say, in the 1970s or '80s and now-? Well, when did you-? You started to come back to football after the problems, you must have come back in the '80s was it?

Bob Edwards: Yes, in the middle '80s, late '80s.

Interviewer: So were the late '80s very different from when you first came in the '60s?

Bob Edwards: Yes. When I first came in the '60s, well it wasn't cloth, cap and all that, but it was very much really, it was still the working man's game. The people who came here, like I said, the evening games are the ones I enjoyed, it was people used to come here after work. It was almost the relaxation from work and things like that.

Whereas now, I think it's significantly different, even here at a club of this size and stature because I mean, I know the way that the club wants to go now, which is the corporate way, because there is more money in it for the club, which makes sense, but back then in the '60s and the very early '70s, it really was about the people.

The reason for the football club was to provide entertainment.

Interviewer: So how does that make it different now for supporters in terms of what happens when you come to the club or what you feel about the club?

Bob Edwards: I was going to say "No". To say I'm a bit detached from the club is probably not right. There isn't that personal feeling that I own- the club is doing me a favour by playing here. It's almost

as if it's becoming a bit of a business now, which it probably needs to be to support the level of football that we're at.

But I feel it starts to lose something when it's like this.

Interviewer: How did you feel when the club was promoted in the most recent time?

Bob Edwards: Oh, great.

Interviewer: Can you remember, were you at the game when that became clear?

Bob Edwards: Well, we were at Kidderminster the day we won the conference, although there were a few games to go. And that was the day that – well, I didn't do it – but my son and a few of their friends dressed up in Santa Claus outfits before the game and it was just a party atmosphere, that, and so we were all on the train.

And one of the things that was still on the questions downstairs, on that video recorder, was that when we caught the train back from Birmingham to London, the name of the train was called "Mission Accomplished" and we got our picture right by the engine. So it was very good.

But yes. Oh, I think there were a lot of successes even before then. I think one of the really important ones was getting promoted to the conference because I thought then that the team that we had for that level of football was really exciting. I

think that was the Paul Fairclough era.

So that's when it really kicked off and I think Paul Fairclough really started the club on its way. And I can always remember him, at one time... I think- I'm not sure, I think it might have been the year we got promoted to the conference and he said that we've unleashed a "Sleeping tiger".

I'm sure he called it a "Sleeping tiger" at the time. Not "Sleeping Giant", "Sleeping Tiger".

Interviewer: So how did he do it? What made him such a great manager, do you think?

Bob Edwards: The club was going nowhere. Well, it was just trundling along, happy to be in the same league that it's always been in. The clubs that we used to play against when it was Stevenage Town, the likes of... Oh, Bedford Town, although they went the other way, Cambridge United, Hereford, Barnet, they were all doing well.

I can't remember when Barnet actually got promoted to the league for the first time. But they were all doing well and we were just left a long way behind. We were just going through those feeder leagues.

And when Paul Fairclough came in, he came in with – well, I presume it was – a different philosophy and he made them a more professional football team. Even though they were part-time, they started to do things in the right way and these- I can always remember him trying to do... Bringing all the proper techniques and that. The physios, the training and everything

like that.

But I must say, I think Paul Fairclough was the nicest ever manager we've ever had. What a nice man. Great.

Interviewer: How were you aware of that as a supporter?

Bob Edwards: He would always talk to you, but not "Talk to you" in terms of "Hello, how are you getting on?" he'd actually have a conversation with you. And when my son's birthday is, we had a tour of the ground and we were taken into the changing rooms with the teams in there at the time and Paul stood there talking to us and as we went, he wished us-

Oh, no. He said "I hope you enjoy the match" and it was just the way he said it. It was something "I hope you enjoy the match" or, no, "Have a good game". That's it. And I think it should have been us saying it to the team, not Paul saying it to us.

It was as though it was our game as much as his. And with people like that, well, you can't go far wrong. He was such a wonderful person and even though he went to Barnet in the end, I still forgive him, but he was great and I'm sure he's been here.

I think he came this morning as well.

Interviewer: He came.

Bob Edwards: And he deserves all the applause he can get. I couldn't have enough good words to say that about him.

Interviewer: Interestingly enough, he arrived and I was walking along with somebody else to come and interview and he stopped to talk to this person I was walking with and they had a chat and it was just really, really nice and everything you've just said really resonates about how he had time for people and just seemed genuinely pleased to see this man.

Bob Edwards: Yes. And that's probably what held him back from going even further. Too nice. Because, well, you're probably aware that a lot of the people who are the top in football aren't, shall we say, the nicest of characters. I can think of a few really horrible ones.

But yes, great. And the people he had working with him at the time as well. [Paul Peterson 0:23:29] was one of them and it was just a great combination. So yes.

Paul actually came back for a second time didn't he and that never really worked out, but no, great of- it's a pity that he didn't but a lot of time for Paul.

Interviewer: So how is the ground, looking out at it now, how has the ground changed since the time you – well, you've described some of it already – first came as a child?

Bob Edwards: Oh. Yes, because when I first came, that was- so the wooden stand on the north terrace was brought from the old ground,

there are wooden port-a-cabins that they use as changing rooms in the far corner near where the water tank is now. The far side, what is now the east terrace, there was a small old stand right in the middle which-

Oh, that was the main stand at one time, that's right. That was the main stand and it was terrible. A small amount of cover, both sides of it, was corrugated iron. Yes.

And then they built a new rain stand on this side now, on the west side. But when I look at it now, well, great. I mean, ever since we've been in the conference, I've had a season ticket except for one year.

When they finally did the ground up after we missed out on promotion the first time, they built that long terrace and there was no roof on it. Even for the first Newcastle game, there was no roof and I was fed up with it.

So one year – I can't remember which year it was now – it was the only year that I never bought a season ticket. It was my personal protest at not having a roof. I was fed up with getting wet and standing in there. But that was the only year.

Sorry, since then, I think it's a great ground because you get a good view from wherever you are. One of the few regrets, I suppose, is that you can no longer go from the east terrace to the north terrace, because a lot of the people that you meet here become friends and the more that you can get around the ground, the more people you meet, the more friends you've got.

I stand on the east terrace, I've got friends who stand on the

north terrace and now I only ever see them at occasional away games, which is a shame really.

Interviewer: I was going to ask you how changes to the ground affected the way that the supporter were and how they experience the games. That's one and you're talking about in terms of mobility.

Bob Edwards: Yes. Definitely. I mean, we always stand on the east terrace and we've met a lot of good friends through that. I mean my son's friends and my friends and you all become- because it's still a reasonably small club in the grand scheme of things, but you do meet a lot of people and you do stay good friends and you sit at home games and you get a new group of friends from away games.

Well, because if you go often enough, you see the same faces time and time again.

Interviewer: Take me through what it's like being a supporter. Do you do a lot of singing? Chanting?

Bob Edwards: Well, I probably shouldn't do. I'm probably too old for that, but I do.

Interviewer: And are they same chants? Can you remember the chants you sang when you were very young and have they changed or have they changed?

Bob Edwards: I think when I was young, they tended to be a bit more reserved and here, there wasn't anywhere near as much singing here as there is now, probably because the crowd is bigger and you've got a roof over your head.

There was a little bit of singing and chanting and that, but they were quite polite compared to some of the chants these days, especially towards the referee?

Interviewer: Is there a lot of hostility towards referees?

Bob Edwards: Well, they never give the right decisions. Well, I think that this season especially, it does seem that- when we used to play teams in the FA Cup, the big teams always seemed to get the decisions going in their favour and even now, in the last couple of weeks that the decisions just don't seem to go for us.

When we played Huddersfield the other week at Huddersfield, they should have had three red cards and even when you read their supporters website, they said "Yes, you're lucky to get away with that". And who was the other ones? Notts County, that's it.

They said they were surprised one of their players wasn't given a red card here. And yet we didn't get those sort of decisions.

So it does definitely make a difference between being a big club and a little club and we are definitely now a little fish in a big pond. When we were in the conference, it was a big fish in

a little pond, but we're definitely the other way round now.
Definitely the other way round.

Interviewer: So do you have supporter's clubs and websites and things like that, that you take part in?

Bob Edwards: Yes. Well there is a website for the fans. My son used to run that site when it first started off. Two of them used to run it and they used to- well I think it became a lot of hassle in the end because people would just go on there and be overcritical of everyone else. It's easier to give people abuse than to say "Well done" it seems.

But yes, there are club websites. Well I think it's two at the moment but I do tend to go on there and read but I don't tend to contribute these days. I contribute on the terrace.

Interviewer: So you still come every game?

Bob Edwards: Yes, every game. I wasn't sure what we were going today. I was going to [Berry 0:29:35] today but we had to leave it to the last minute so...

Interviewer: So what happened to Berry?

Bob Edwards: Well I suppose it's quite a way, there weren't many people that were going to go, if we were leaving it to the last minute, the train fares were dearer and it does get very expensive these

days, going to an away game. Mind you, coming to a home game is not cheap now.

Interviewer: People have commented on how the costs have changed.

Bob Edwards: Yes.

Interviewer: You can't remember how much it used to cost when you- well, sometimes it was free because you hid, didn't you?

Bob Edwards: Yes. Well, the programme is downstairs, I think. The programme is sixpence. Six old pence.

I can remember when, in the... In the very early '70s, late '60s, very early '70s, I'm sure I remember my brother having to pay adult price and I was still getting in for a junior and I'm sure he payed some full number amount like five shillings or something. And I thought at the time that was horrendous.

But now, if you want to come down here just as a casual supporter, £17 for a ticket on the terrace does seem an awful lot. An awful lot of money. But then, for the away supporters, it's 23 or... Yes.

And we went to... Where did we go the other week? That was, oh, that's right, a lot of the away grounds are all 23 now. But we went to- where did we go? Rotherham, last year, we went and now I'm over 60, I tend to get concessions at most grounds.

We went to Rotherham, it was over 65 so I just- oh and it was no student concessions, where my son was with me. So I just walked in, asked for two concessions and they let us both in. And we did the same again at, where? Huddersfield, that's it.

So yes, there are still ways of getting in for cheaper than, shall we say, the advertised price, but it's very expensive. I suppose there is a choice between, and I know how Phil Wallace says that if we reduce the price, would we double the gain? And I know we wouldn't.

Because we went to Wimbledon the other week for the Johnstone's Paint Trophy Game. I think there were 1,400 there and they'd reduce the prices to £10 for adults and a fiver for concessions. And they'd cut the prices by half but they still only got 1,400 in so I'm sure Phil Wallace, from an economic point of view, he's right.

If they reduced entry to £10 here, you wouldn't increase the gate by a thousand. Well, you might do, but there is nothing extra in it for the club.

Interviewer: Do you think the gate is about right or needs to get- should get bigger?

Bob Edwards: Well, the number of people from each week probably needs to increase. But especially at the moment, I mean, I'm fortunate that I can afford to come and so can my sons but I know that there are quite a few people that can't afford it every week and they have to work out are they coming to this game or the following one.

Interviewer: And that's different from when you were a child or a young man, it was a different-?

Bob Edwards: Yes, you just came along. Because it was at a much lower level and the cost then, compared to what you earned, what really was – not insignificant – but it was almost pennies rather than lots of pounds of difference.

Interviewer: So we're looking out the window now, what would you say would be the highlight game that you've seen on this pitch?

Bob Edwards: On this pitch. The highlight game here. Goodness me.

I won't go for the first Newcastle one, although that was good, the second Newcastle one was better. The problem is, I suppose, I just keep going back to the really recent ones because they're against the big teams.

Sheffield, Wednesday, five-one, though that has to rank up there with some of the best. But games against Barnet and Woking here were really, really good. It would have to be a Woking.

I think the one to choose would be a Woking game when we beat them when Dobson in last minute. I can't remember the score now but it has to be a Woking game. There are so many of them. The best game, goodness me.

Cambridge United in the FA Cup before, the reply in the FA

Cup before we went to Swindon and then Newcastle, so yes. Cambridge United at home. That was an evening. That was another one under lights. In an evening, great atmosphere, always under lights is the best atmosphere.

Interviewer: So what made it a great game? Was it the atmosphere, was it the football or...?

Bob Edwards: It was a bit of everything. I think the atmosphere because it was a big crowd. Always under lights, it's always... I always love it when it's under lights. The fact that it was an FA Cup replay.

They had two red sent off, scored an own goal and one of their players we got, one who got the own goal, actually came and played for us a couple of seasons later. [Fulbeck 0:35:16] and I can't think of his name at the moment, that will come to me. I always thought he was rubbish, even when he played for us.

Yes, I think that was three-two that night and that was really good. Yes, Cambridge United at home, FA Cup.

Interviewer: And does it change the way you feel the next day, does it change your mood as to what the outcome was and what the game was like the day before?

Bob Edwards: Absolutely. Because I work away during the week, if I come here for a midweek game, I've got a 70 mile trip back to reading during the week. And if we lose, I am fuming all the way home. All the way.

If we win, great, I'll listen to the radio. If not, I have to put music on. But yes, if we win, I will go on everybody's website and read what's happening. If we lose, I won't go on to the website or listen to the radio or read the paper for another week until the next game. Absolutely not.

Not that I'm a bad loser but I get so cross with some. I'm probably exactly the same as everybody else. I kick every single ball, every single ball, and I know it's difficult for the players because they can't see what's going on around but because I can see there is space to one side or a player going down one wing that they haven't seen, I get so frustrated with it all.

I want to be out there. I want to be 20 again and playing. And the referee is always wrong. We're never offside, they always are, we never commit a foul and the opposition always do. Always.

So, not that I'm biased, but yes. Yes, I suppose that the great thing about eh team now is that they share a lot of commitment. So much so, it's unbelievable. Whereas in the past, even when Graham Westley was here the first time, there has always been so much going through the motions.

It was though we'll turn out, play a game of football or if we lose, that's it. But now, no, every game they want to win. That is the real difference now and that's why they're doing so well.

Interviewer: So the type of football has changed?

Bob Edwards: The type of football has changed. When we had Mark Stimson here, that was definitely the best quality of football that we've ever played and he got us to our first FA trophy final and I was really impressed with the football that we'd played. He used to pass it around at the back and try it down one wing then come back, play it around the back, try to do it on the other wing and go through.

Great football. Great football. But not a great man. No, no morals.

But now they do play some football and they'll just try a bit of everything. They'll mix it up. They won't have a way of playing, they'll just play every way. They'll try everything.

But when Graham Westley was here the first time, probably the most miserable football that I have ever, ever seen. And funnily enough, the last season that Graham Westley was here was the only season that I've been to every game home and away.

I saw some rubbish football then. It really was rubbish. If you ever listen to this Graham, that really was rubbish.

Interviewer: Given Stevenage is a new town so it has a pretty particular history, doesn't it? Post-war history, Stevenage. I wondered, do you see any connection between the new town and the football club? Has it given it a character?

Bob Edwards: The trouble is, the connection because of the new town, is with a lot of other football clubs, especially the London ones, because they are so close. And I know clubs around

Manchester have the same problem, but it seems even more so here.

I mean, I know that because it was a new town and the football here was at a very low level, that Luton were already in the league, that there were a lot of people from this town that used to go and watch Luton and support Luton. And there was a lot. I used to go every week and there's still quite a big hangover from that.

So, even with Luton just up the road, and I know they are our long lost relatives now, being so lowly in the world of football, miles away, and I haven't been able to recover. But yes, there was almost a whole swathe of people who used to go to Luton and I know that that is still the case with their families.

It's often the case of if your parents support a club and then you go along and support the same one. Well, probably the same with my sons coming here. But I know that there are people that used to go to Luton, their sons now and their sons, still go to Luton from here. Heaven forbid.

Interviewer: Did you parents, your father, support a particular team?

Bob Edwards: Yes. My dad used to support Charlton when we used to live in London, and that was the first ground that I ever went to and now we've played Charlton this year, great. But we cycled there from where we used to live and we used to park our bikes in this lady's back garden and then go and watch the football.

I can't really remember. I can just remember standing on the

terrace but I was really looking forward to the Charlton game here because that was my dad's team. When we go there this time, after Christmas, I shall be there with my camera looking for this garden where we used to park the bikes. So I shall be there with my camera all day long, to the football, I shall be looking for a- yes.

Interviewer: Did your dad also support Stevenage when you moved here or did he stay with Charlton?

Bob Edwards: Not really. Well, he always supported Charlton. I mean we never used to go very much. We used to go occasionally with him but he came down here a few times, but not very often.

Interviewer: Do you think, suppose there is a change in the sorts of clubs they give their allegiance to?

Bob Edwards: I think, it's still definitely a father and son thing. If your dad tends to support one club, then you tend to follow them to start with but it also depends on the allegiances of your friends.

My friends, when I was growing up, I had Manchester United, Queens Park Rangers, quite a few of them supported Queens Park Ranger but a couple of them now come here. Where else did they use to go?

Tottenham. Tottenham. I didn't have any Arsenal supporting friends. Yes. But Tottenham. Because we used to come here sometimes and then we used to go to Tottenham when Stevenage weren't playing some weeks.

That must have been the very early '70s as well. Yes. I mean, it isn't just a father and son thing, it is your friends and it's the influence that they have at times.

Interviewer: Now, you were commenting a little bit earlier about the photos on the walls.

Bob Edwards: Yes.

Interviewer: So I wondered whether you would like to say something about the- you'll have to describe the situation that the picture is...

Bob Edwards: Well it's great pictures on the walls, all over the club now. When we walked in to do this interview, I did say that this is the Holy Grail to me. I never get invited along these illustrious corridors and there are some great pictures. The best one as you come up the stairs.

But the problem is, they're all of the same era and all of a similar theme. It's all either winning the recent FA trophy or winning the Blue Square Premiere. I haven't seen anything from when we got promoted from Old Trafford yet, but they're all from that era. There are none going back very far.

Yet there must be some great pictures. I actually brought one in, of the first Newcastle game here. But I know that there are a lot of pictures floating about that would actually show more of the history of the club rather than just the last couple of years of success.

Interviewer: And what difference would it make to you, to see those old, older pictures having up?

Bob Edwards: Nostalgia. When I look at- you see it on the web now, that you can get a lot of old pictures of grounds, the way that ____ [0:44:21] used to be. There's been quite a few recently of Scarborough because their ground is being put down.

But the old pictures evoke wonderful memories of when you used to go to some of these places. They're great. That's history. Alright, this is modern history, but it's just recent pictures.

They don't have any real character to them. I know there are some great players here, some great characters, but the pictures themselves don't have that sort of character of memories and I know that my memories go back a longer than a lot of the other people here, but as my sons get older, they start thinking back to a long way back from these.

Just pictures of the ground, how it used to be. I've seen pictures over the internet, when the ground was being built into what it is now. Great. I'd love to see things like that all over the place.

Interviewer: So who keeps the memory, the history of the club alive these days?

Bob Edwards: Who keeps the memory of the-?

Interviewer: Or who keeps the...?

Bob Edwards: Well, I suppose it's the supporters themselves. Because you just talk about it but yes, everyone has got photos of days past, but there is no proper collection them and I know we've all brought in some stuff today. But the one thing that never even occurred to me until just now, looking at these, is that we should have all brought in any old pictures that we've got, of anything.

I must have loads in the loft somewhere. Must have loads.

Interviewer: Yes. It's interesting, isn't it, when you look at an old picture, what it makes you feel when you see those old ____ [0:46:14] ground and-

Bob Edwards: It does. And even if it's a grainy old picture, I mean the quality of them, great, they're tremendous, but it's all of a similar theme and there is nothing from the past. I suppose the club only wants to go back as far Stevenage Borough. They're not bothered about Athletic and Town and going back to the 1900s, but I've seen some wonderful old pictures in the past.

Interviewer: And what does it make you feel, when you see the pictures?

Bob Edwards: What, the old ones?

Interviewer: Yes.

Bob Edwards: Oh, everyone likes- well, I especially like looking back on- I suppose you always remember the good bits about it. There are always some not very good bits but it just evokes happy memories. And I'd love to see some more variation.

Interviewer: So is there anything else that you'd like to-? Any other stories or things you'd like to say as this is part of an archive which is about keeping that history, anything else you'd like to add to it?

Bob Edwards: Only that I think, although I enjoy coming to the ground for the home games, the away games are definitely the most enjoyable in terms of you go away with friends and family especially and it is a good opportunity for family to be together. Well, for the lads in the family anyway.

Sometimes the daughters, to be together. I mean there are definitely more girls that go to football now than used to and that's great. I love to see it that it's a proper mix, it's a community. And I suppose, in a big sense, that this is still a community club, because it's not reached the dizzy heights of the premiership.

Whether we will, I don't know. Will I want them to? I don't know either. If we lost the terracing, then definitely the answer to that would be "No", I wouldn't want to go.

Interviewer: When did it change in terms of the number of women and girls coming to the game? Is that something that's happened-?

Bob Edwards: I would say in the last five years. Definitely. There is more of a... I know you get – more than – the odd rude word that's said, but it tends to be accepted in society now, but many of the girls and the women who come, they sort of accept it or just sort of block it out and actually enjoy the football. I think that probably goes hand in hand with the fact you now get girls football teams whereas you never used to have it all.

So I think it's great. I really do. I really do. That can only be good for the club and a long way to go.

END AUDIO

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