

**File: BMD Mick Ward**

**Duration: 0:17:56**

**Date: 11/08/2016**

**Typist: 830**

START AUDIO

Interviewer: Could you please state your name for me, and your role at the club?

Mick Ward: Yes, it's Mick Ward and I used to play from about 1958 until 1963.

Interviewer: So what position did you play?

Mick Ward: I started off at right-half and finished up at centre-half.

Interviewer: Is there a particular game that you remember precisely?

Mick Ward: I remember the games one season against Hitchin, who were our local rivals. Hitchin were in a higher league than us so we always expected a tough game.

The first game started in very wet conditions. We'd been playing about half an hour with the score 1-1 and there was an absolute downpour.

And the referee took us off the pitch and in the end had to abandon the game.

The replay was on the following Wednesday afternoon. It was an FA cup qualifying match, and we – Stevenage – lost 4-3. Which was disappointing because we were winning 2-0 at one stage and 3-1 at a later stage.

But Hitchin's fitness was superior to ours, and in the end they came through.

Interviewer: Are there any games you remember where you won and the atmosphere was really good?

Mick Ward: Yes. We won the Delphin League Cup, I think it was in 1960/61.

We were quite lowly in the league. We were four from bottom in the league. And in the semi-final we played the team that were top. We were quite expected to lose, but we won that, and we won the final over at - we played at Aylesbury - 3-1.

Which was on a cup final day, actually. We played in the evening. We went to their club in the afternoon and watched the cup final, and then we played in the evening and we won 3-1.

Which was a surprise to most people.

Interviewer: Who was the manager at that time?

Mick Ward: The manager at that time was Tom Ince and he was assisted by Len Bayliss, who was the trainer and... Yes.

Interviewer: How did you find them? Were they good at what they did?

Mick Ward: Yes. Very good. Very good. Len was a real motivator. He really got behind you. If you made mistakes you knew it.  
Tom was quite relaxed but very good and very knowledgeable.

Interviewer: Do you feel that they contributed to the success of the team?

Mick Ward: Oh, indeed. Yes, definitely.

With Tom's tactics, and he seemed to have an eye to moving players.

I mean, for example he moved me from right-half to centre-half, which worked very well.

He moved the centre-half up to centre forward and he scored loads of goals, and I did quite well at centre-half, so again, that was- it worked well.

Interviewer: Was that your best position, you feel?

Mick Ward: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: I realise that the ground used to be really bad at one point. Do you remember experiencing that?

Mick Ward: Yes. I played most of the time up on the old London Road ground and I played for one season here, at Broadhall Way. Because it was a new pitch, the flints kept coming up and every week players had to go to Lister hospital to be sewn up. In fact, it got so bad that the league stopped Stevenage playing here, and we played matches away from home or we played from George V playing fields.

Interviewer: Do you feel that was quite a big problem for the team?

Mick Ward: It was. Yes, it was a big problem, because you didn't have that home feel. And especially when you played on King George's, which was an open recreation ground...

Interviewer: Did you have supporters following you back then? Quite a lot of fans?

Mick Ward: Not so many. Especially when we were not on the ground. People didn't want to travel to various places.

Interviewer: So they didn't come to the away games as much.

Mick Ward: Only the very keen.

Interviewer: The very keen.

Do you remember any particular game where someone scored a really brilliant goal? Any tactics, or anything like that?

Mick Ward: I can't remember any really good goals.

I can remember losing 10-0.

Interviewer: Oh no. Where was that?

Mick Ward: That was at Wokingham. They had a lot of – because it's quite near Windsor – they had a lot of Italian waiters from Windsor Castle. And they were very... it would be nothing these days, but in those days, they were all into this shirt tugging and ankle tapping. Which now is common place, but in those days was not at all. And it was the most uncomfortable game.

Interviewer: Oh, no.

Looking at the pitch now compared to back then, would you say it's changed a lot?

Mick Ward: There is absolutely no comparison. I mean, it looks like a billiard table now.

Female: What is this bit? Is the expensive stuff? This isn't the expensive stand is it?

Interviewer: I'm not sure.

Mick Ward: Yes.

Interviewer: I think so, yes.

Is there anything that you remember, really a strong memory that you have of an enjoyable game or an enjoyable time after winning a game?

Mick Ward: I think the most satisfaction that I got from the games was in the games against Hitchin, because although I said about us losing in the FA qualifying rounds, about two weeks later we got drawn together again in the Harts Senior Cup, and we beat them 3-1.

So I think that gave me more satisfaction than most, because of the local rivalry.

Interviewer: What was the atmosphere like at that game?

Mick Ward: It was quite electric, actually. I enjoyed it because when I played in youth football, I played for a Hitchin team.

Interviewer: Oh, right.

Mick Ward: And playing for Hitchin at that time were some of the players I played with. So I actually got a lot of satisfaction.

Interviewer: It was good to beat them, right?

Mick Ward: Yes.

Interviewer: Did you celebrate afterwards?

Mick Ward: No, not really. We did have a celebration when we won the Delphin League Cup. Because our president at the time was a chap called Bill Smith and he was the landlord of the White Hart in the Old Town, and he laid-on a supper and a drink and we all went back down there. And yes, that was a good evening.

Interviewer: So how long did you play for the club?

Mick Ward: I played for about five seasons. I think it was. From '58-63.

Interviewer: Did you have to have a job as well? Did they pay you at that point?

Mick Ward: Officially you weren't paid. In those days it was supposedly amateur football. But we did get, what they call, boot money.

Which is very illegal. We got £2 for a win, and a £1 for just playing.

So if we lost we got a £1.

But as I was an apprentice at the time, and was earning about £6 a week.

I know it sounds silly, but that was a lot of money to me.

Female: We could go out.

(Laughter)

Mick Ward: So that's what we got.

But no, it was supposedly all amateur, no payments.

Interviewer: So how often did you train?

Mick Ward: We trained twice a week. Tuesday evenings and Thursday evenings.

Interviewer: How long for?

Mick Ward: Probably about two hours. It would be about 7-9ish.



Interviewer: Was it quite intensive training because you only had two hours a week?

Mick Ward: Yes, I suppose it was really.

We used to train – in the early days – well, sorry, yes we used to train outside.

There used to be, in the old ground, two floodlights on the grandstand that was focused to an area in the middle where we used to do our training. And consequently got very muddy and very heavy, that area of the pitch.

Interviewer: When you said people ended up in the Lister, did that happen after training as well?

Mick Ward: No. The training, when we were on the new ground, actually took place in school gyms. But in the old ground it was outside all the time.

But when we got up here the training was, I think, at Barnwell. It was one of the schools anyway. They had a gym to train at there.

Interviewer: I know you said you brought in a lot of memorabilia.  
Do you have a lot of memories in photo form?

Mick Ward: Yes, I've got quite a few photos.

I've got some of my father back in the 1930s, and I've got ones that are mainly the cup bronze and the cup wins with Stevenage.

Interviewer: So your dad used to play for the team as well then?

Mick Ward: Yes.

Interviewer: Was it him that got you involved in playing for the team?

Mick Ward: Not really. He was always... He played, and then when I was young he was on the committee. So there was always football in the background.

It just progressed from kicking about when I was a boy to going into youth football and then just a natural progression into Stevenage really.

Interviewer: Did your dad tell you any stories about when he played football?

Mick Ward: Yes, he told me one that I can remember.

They were playing in the North Harts League, in those days and they were playing a match over at St Ippolyts and my dad had tackled or fouled one of their players and this woman spectator came running on the pitch with her umbrella and tried to hit my dad with it.

Interviewer: Was that the player's wife?

Mick Ward: I don't know. But I always remember that one.

Interviewer: So obviously there wasn't big security on the grounds in those days.

Mick Ward: No.

Female: He was only little, weren't he?

Interviewer: Was there anything else he told you about when he played at all?

Mick Ward: He did tell me- We did try to locate it but we've been unsuccessful.

When the grandstand was opened in the Old Town, in the old ground, the opening fixture was a friendly against the Grenadier Guards.

And obviously the guards were all tall, six-foot odd, and my dad, although he played centre-half, was very small for centre-half. He was about 5'8".

And at the time, one of the local papers used to carry a cartoon of one of the local games. And he told me - but as I say we've been unable to locate it - there was a cartoon the

following week of this game, that showed this great guardsman with a bearskin on and my dad running between his legs with the ball.

Interviewer: Wow.

Mick Ward: But as I say I've not been able to verify that, which is unfortunate, because that is the sort of thing I would like to have got, got copies framed and give them to my lads.

Interviewer: Do you know what newspaper at all?

Mick Ward: No. Lloyd has done some investigation to try and find it, but he's been unsuccessful.

So I just don't know the answer.

Interviewer: It sounds like quite a nice thing to have, though.

Mick Ward: It would have been a nice thing to have.

Interviewer: Yes.

So did your dad inspire you to become a footballer?

Mick Ward: He never pushed me in any way. I think it was just a natural thing. I enjoyed the playing when we were lads on the green, and then at school – we played at school.

And then I say this team from Hitchin, the manager saw me and said would I like to play, and so I just progressed from there.

Interviewer: So have you always lived in Stevenage?

Mick Ward: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the players you played with?

Mick Ward: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Are any of them really good friends with you?

Mick Ward: I would say not so much friends, but I remember the players and there were some very good players amongst them.

Interviewer: Anyone in particular?

Mick Ward: There's one player that was different was a chap called Paul [Keiss 0:15:36], who was an Hungarian refugee from the

uprising. So obviously he couldn't speak English, but he played, and he was one not of the usual mould, as it were.

Interviewer: Was there anyone else in your family who played for Stevenage?

Mick Ward: Well my dad played for Stevenage and I had two uncles who played.

One of them went on to player as goal keeper for Fulham.

Interviewer: Oh right.

Mick Ward: He was a bit unlucky because he played one game for the first team and then got injured, which unfortunately finished his playing career. So he was very unlucky.

Interviewer: So he got to Fulham and then he had the accident?

Mick Ward: Yes, that's right.

Interviewer: Ah, that's a shame.

Mick Ward: And I had another uncle on my mum's side, and he played as well for Stevenage.

Interviewer: Brilliant.

Mick Ward: Is there anything else you'd like to mention at all of your experience as a player? Do you come here as a fan now?

Interviewer: I don't come so much because I've not been that brilliant. I've got a really bad knee and I've also got a heart problem, so I don't... And it's very expensive.

The only other game that we talked about, the league cup over at Aylesbury...The only other game where we did win a trophy was the Harts Charity Shield, which we played at Hartford against Ware, which we won.

They were really the two main trophies that we won while I was playing.

Interviewer: Do you feel they were the best points of your career as a player?

Mick Ward: Yes, I think so. Obviously the two trophy wins and the Hitchin, the series of Hitchin games.

They were really enjoyable.

END AUDIO

[www.uktranscription.com](http://www.uktranscription.com)