

**File:** BMD Doug Draper.mp3

**Duration:** 1:05:06

**Date:** 09/08/2016

**Typist:** 708

START AUDIO

Doug Draper: My name is Doug Draper. I'm 81-years-old.

I was born in the Old Town, so I'm probably one of the original...

Well, not the original, but...

Interviewer: Close to?

Doug Draper: An official Stevenage resident.

I've followed the football club ever since I was about seven, when I first went down to the Old London Road ground with my father. Then, later on, we were accompanied by my brother, who was a bit younger than me.

Most of my memories go back to the Old Town football ground, which is no longer there and which is now under the Leisure Centre.

I've had a look around on the internet and in various places, and I've found that the history of the Old Town Football Club has almost been obliterated, which frustrates me somewhat because I think that that's where football really started.

Okay, it's nice to have a team like we've got now, but not a great deal of thought goes into what was here before the New Town.

Interviewer: I don't know that I can entirely do the maths here.

The Old Town Football Club: that's the original Stevenage Town - is that right?

Doug Draper: The old Stevenage Town Football Club was originally founded before the Second World War, and they used to play on a ground off what is now Fairview Road, in the Fishers Green area.

It was actually called the New Town Football Club.

When Stevenage started to develop before the Second World War, a lot of building and development work went on in the area and a lot of properties along Fairview Road were built by the railway.

The railway had expanded. The railway built a load of properties along Fairview Road.

The first football club that I could find any record of was called Stevenage New Town Football Club.

That, to me, is one of my tricky pub quiz questions.

When I say to people, "Where was the first Stevenage New Town Club?" they always say, "The one we've got now."

This first football team went right back before the First World War.

How they actually moved from there to the ground on the Old London Road, I don't know.

I started to go to the London Road ground with my father when I was about seven or eight, so that would be about 1937 or 1938.

Interviewer: They were playing, at that time, on the London Road ground?

Doug Draper: They were playing on the London Road ground, yes.

Interviewer: Tell me what that ground was like.  
What do you remember about it?

Doug Draper: I can remember it very vividly.

I sometimes think that I should try and draw it. I can see it exactly as it was.

It was at the southern end of the London Road, near Six Hills. It had a wooden stand, similar to what they built in those days.

They were all pretty well the same construction - probably about 12 rows of seats, a wooden top, and a totally wooden construction.

On the left-hand side, they had a little tea hut in the corner, and at that time, on the opposite side of the pitch, which was quite open, backing onto the railway.

Subsequent to that, they put in a covered stand, which was made out of old Anderson shelters all along the railway side of the ground.

It was fairly basic and fairly sparse, but had quite good crowds considering the size of the Old Town.

Interviewer: Do you remember what league that was?  
What kinds of clubs would they be playing?  
You said you went to your first game. Do you remember who it was?

Doug Draper: Good Lord, no. I was about seven or eight then.  
I suppose it would have been before the Second World War or even in the early part of the Second World War.  
We used to play local sides - basically, like Ware, St Albans and Hemel Hempstead. They were all in the county area.

Interviewer: That's very local, yes.

Doug Draper: It was what I would describe as, really, Herts football.  
I don't know what they'd call it in the County League now, but it was that sort of football. It was all 'local rivalry'.  
There's a guy in the Old Town...  
[Chandlers 0:05:56], who used to run coaches. It was a private, one-off company.

He used to run the coaches for the Football Club.

We used to get on the coaches outside the CIU Club in the Old Town.

None of the trips were more than, probably, about an hour at the most, but they were wonderful old days and it was all local rivalry.

Interviewer: What's the CIU Club?

Sorry, what's that?

Doug Draper: The CIU Club was originally called the Working Men's Club. It's opposite the White Barn in the Old Town.

That used to be the meeting point for all the supporters, because with the New Town not being there then, the CIU Club used to basically be the home of most of the supporters.

I've got stuck now.

Interviewer: Well, you were talking about that supporters would come together there, and you'd be going off to trips to the other clubs when you were playing away.

Doug Draper: Yes.

I've tried to look through my memorabilia and I cannot find anything. It's so frustrating. I cannot find anything about the original Old Town Football Club.

I've looked on the web and it seems to have been totally lost, which is really annoying because I talk to guys at matches now and there are lots of guys still around at my age who were around in the Old London Road ground days.

It's a little bit frustrating that with the coming of the New Town, the Old Town Football Club seems to have been not erased but totally forgotten.

That's where a lot of my Football Club memories and my enthusiasm for the Football Club started.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the players for that original..?

Doug Draper: Oh, I do, yes.

Not in any particular order.

We had a guy in goal called Hunt. I can't remember his Christian name.

We had [D Fulbig 0:08:27], Arthur Bloxham, Alan Jackson, who used to play at centre half...

Alan Jackson was probably one of the finest centre halves that you could find in the Home Counties.

Lummy Taylor, Taffy Rogers...

I've mention Dave Bloxham, haven't I?

Interviewer: Yes.

Doug Draper: He came from Hatfield.

A guy who played centre forward named Chapman.

Not a very good centre forward.

Lummy Taylor and Taffy Rogers were two superb wingers in that level of football.

We had some wonderful nights there in the old Amateur Cup.

We had Pegasus that we played. We played Corinthian Casuals.

These were when they were really powerful. They went on to win the Amateur Cup, Pegasus and Corinthian Casuals, so to actually get them down at London Road was quite a draw.

I can't remember the scores exactly. I know they beat us, but not by much.

We had some wonderful games down there also when we were in the Southern League.

For instance, John Charles, the old Welsh international footballer...

Interviewer: Oh, yes, a fabulous player.

Doug Draper: I think he played for Merthyr.

Yes, I think it was Merthyr who he was playing...

When he came out of the Italian football, he went into Non-League, playing for Merthyr.

I remember John Charles playing there.

Even in that humble background, we've seen some pretty good players down there.

Interviewer: Yes, I'll bet.

Doug Draper: The old enemy was Hitchin, because Hitchin was the better side in North Herts. They were our arch-enemies.

We never got to play them because they were in a league higher than us, but we always had this resentment against Hitchin. Football clubs do rival one another, so everybody hated Hitchin.

We played them once or twice in cup games, but they inevitably beat us.

There was a fair degree of rivalry between the two sides.

The other sides we used to have ding-dong matches with were Ware...

St Albans were always a little bit better than us. They had a better pitch.

Hitchin had a better pitch.

We were the poor relations way back in the pre-Second World War days.

Interviewer: That was very much the old time.

Were they playing in the red and white?

Doug Draper: Yes, they were always known as the 'Stripes'.

I remember that, at every game, they used to play 'If I Were a Blackbird' by Ronnie Ronalde.



Now, the crowd used to start singing.

I went online yesterday to try and see if I could get a copy of a CD. You can get it online, on an iPod, but I haven't got an iPod.

I played it, and what I did was that I copied off the words. I was trying to get a CD of it.

It was the Club's theme tune. They put it on at every match and everybody used to start whistling and singing it, because it was one of those songs where the guy started whistling like a blackbird and then he started singing.

All the crowd joined in. I can't describe it, but it was something special. It was the Club's song.

When I talk to people now and say, "Can you remember what the song was that they always used to play at the Old London Road ground?" nobody knows, so it's a good pub quiz question.

Interviewer: They would actually have to do the whistling as well as the singing?

Doug Draper: Ooh, yes. Yes, everybody joined in.

Interviewer: That must have been some sound.

Doug Draper: I suppose it was quite comical.

Interviewer: I'm going to ask you a rude question.

Can you do the whistle for me?

Do you remember it?

Can you do the song?

Doug Draper: I can't remember all the words, but it used to go, "If I were a blackbird, I'll whistle and sing. Da-da-da-da-da that my true love can bring."

I've lost the words, but it's available on the...

Interviewer: On the net?

Doug Draper: On the net. Oh, yes.

Interviewer: Yes, okay.

Yes, it's just interesting to hear the tune and stuff.

You were saying that you'd get quite a good crowd.

Everybody was nearly all men?

Doug Draper: I would say, "Yes."

I can't remember a significant number of women. No.

They obviously were there, but it was mainly males.

When you look back, it's very difficult to put a number on it, but I would think that they were probably only in the order of 300 or 400 at the most, which was relatively poor.

In relationship to the size of the Old Town, it was quite good.

Interviewer: It's not bad, is it?

Doug Draper: The same ratio doesn't exist today, which really frustrates me.

When I look at the size of the New Town and the poor attendance we get, it really frustrates me.

I don't think this football club is done justice by the crowd.

In relationship to the size of the Old Town and the Old London Road Football Club, the ratio of people was much greater attending those matches than now with the New Town.

Interviewer: Yes, I get it.

Has that been true throughout the whole period, do you think, of the New Town?

Doug Draper: Yes.

When we were in the Southern League playing on the Old Town ground, we used to get some terrific crowds.

When I say 300 to 400, for Southern League matches, we would probably get 1,500 or so.

When Merthyr came and John Charles was playing, the ground was actually packed.

In relationship to the size of the town and the support, it was much better then than it is now.

Interviewer: This may sound like an odd question, but what did people do in the Old Town, then?

What was your dad doing as a job?

Doug Draper: My dad was a bricklayer.

My mother obviously stayed at home because women didn't necessarily go to work then, but my father was a bricklayer.

I went to the local school at Letchmore Road until I was 14, and then I went onto the Railway.

I worked on the Railway as an apprentice electrician then or the equivalent of that.

Then, I went on to do electrical signal installations.

I lost touch with Stevenage Football for two years when I was in the Forces. I went into National Service in 1948 to 1950 for two years.

The main employer in Stevenage was the ESA - the Educational Supply Association. They used to make school furniture.

They had Vincent HRD, motorcycle manufacturers, and George W King's, which was really heavy engineering.

Apart from that, they were the only three employers, really.

Interviewer: I see.

It was quite a small place - three or so big employers and that was it?

Doug Draper: Yes, but, relatively speaking, I suppose there was quite a lot of work about compared to the size of the town.

Interviewer: You said that you lost touch when you went into National Service.

Do you remember if they were still playing during the war at all?

Doug Draper: Oh, yes.

Interviewer: They played on?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: Still the same sorts of rivalries and so forth?

Doug Draper: Yes.

When the war started, I was only about 9 or 10, so, being relatively young, my parents really sheltered me from the effects of the war.

What with the rationing and whatever, myself and my brother never felt that we were deprived, although my parents may well have been going to lots of trouble to...

Interviewer: Yes, of course. To keep that up, as it were?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Although the football kept going.

Interviewer: That was a good thing to have and to be doing?

What can you tell me, then, about when the New Town arrived?

The New Town: it was just after the war, wasn't it, when they started building it?

Doug Draper: Yes.

I can't remember precisely what the year was, but I think the New Town probably started roughly around the 1950s, when they started building in earnest in the Bedwell area.

Lots of small football clubs sprung up in the New Town, so they've got quite an abundance of little local clubs, but that hasn't manifested itself into a crowd at the Boro.

Interviewer: I suppose you've got a lot of new people coming in with the New Town, and most of them are coming out of London - is that right?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think it's because they didn't associate with the Boro as a team or that they wanted their own teams as to why they didn't come to the Club?

Doug Draper: I suppose the answer to that is, "Yes and no."

When they first arrived in the New Town, they certainly had loyalty to London clubs, and it was relatively easy then to get to matches in London.

I'm an Arsenal fan as well, and I used to go to Highbury regularly with my girlfriend, and then subsequently my wife.

We'd go to Highbury and it was easy to get in. You'd catch your train to Finsbury Park. You could there an hour before the game and you could get a good seat, so getting access to London clubs was relatively easy.

I suspect that a lot of people that came to the New Town also still had this affinity to their local area.

I can't see that now.

When I go for a drink with mates and we're talking football, there are guys that stand there who are Manchester United fans.

I cannot imagine anybody, really, who is born in this part of the world being a Manchester United fan unless they're a glory hunter.

Interviewer: Yes, I see what you mean. (Laughter)

Doug Draper: It's this association with something that's not natural.

Therefore, when you look at the New Town, I think that we're probably about the third or fourth generation New Town people now.

This connection with London, in actually going to the grounds, ought to have slowed down or stopped. I can't still wrap my mind around the fact that they do not turn up here.

Interviewer: Yes. No, I see what you mean.

We're on the London Road ground.

When did they move to Broadhall for the first time?

That's in the 1960s, isn't it?

Is that right?

Doug Draper: Sadly, I cannot remember the Old Town ground going.

I can only imagine that what happened was that the Broadhall ground developed and opened, and the Old ground went into decline.

The thing that really frustrates me is that I cannot remember the going of the Old ground. I can remember them building the Leisure Centre, which was right on top of it, but I can't actually remember them desecrating that wonderful spot.

Interviewer: Right. I see what you're saying.



Doug Draper: Well, it was in the 1950s and 1960s or something like that.

Interviewer: Just as a matter of interest, what was the quality of the pitch like at the Old Town ground?

Do you remember?

Doug Draper: The quality of the pitch?

Interviewer: I'll tell you the reason.

I was going to ask you about the quality of the Broadhall one in a moment, because I've heard that that wasn't so good.

Doug Draper: If you talk about the quality of the pitch of the Old London Road ground, I would say that it was 7 out of 10, because, at that time, football pitches were all much of a muchness.

It didn't get flooded and it didn't get any of the problems that football pitches get now, so it was always a good playing surface, even in the winter.

Interviewer: My understanding is that the Broadhall one wasn't always a good surface. Is that right?

Doug Draper: It's been a joke in the past.

It's gone from being a beach...

I can remember it when it was so waterlogged that they covered it with sand, so it was like playing on a beach. Then, it got flooded.

Over the course of time, they've had various drainage systems which have and haven't worked.

In the early days we were here, the pitch was a nightmare.

Interviewer: Could that actually help the side, because they would know the conditions better than the other team?

Doug Draper: Yes, I suppose you could say it was...

In the local press at the time, they were taking the Mickey that we were playing on a beach, and it could not have been helpful to the other sides.

First of all, it was muddy and all soggy. Then, they put sand on it.

The whole surface area was basically covered in sand, so, yes, it must have been beneficial to us.

Interviewer: Yes, at least you'd know how to adapt to it.

Tell me a bit about you at that time, Doug.

You did your two years in National Service. Was that the Army?

What were you in?

Doug Draper: I was in the Royal Signals.

In the two years I was in the Forces, I had quite a good time, really. I didn't want to go into the Forces, but when I look back, I think that that was probably the finest thing that could have happened to me for two years.

I did three months' training at Catterick as a radio mechanic. I got posted to Cyprus.

No, first of all, I got posted to Salonica in Northern Greece. I was part of a Signals squadron attached to the Herts and Beds.

I then got posted to Cyprus. I had a spell in Egypt along the Canal Zone at Fanara and at Fayid.

I suppose, when I look at my two years in the Forces, it was very good. I wasn't anywhere long enough to get bored, and I probably had six, seven, eight or nine months travelling around the world. It was very good.

Interviewer: No, it sounds like a good move.

Then, you came back to Stevenage?

Doug Draper: I came back to Stevenage and I resumed the job I had on the Railway.

I then moved to another appointment on the Railway where I was the Chief Electrical Installer doing the installation of electrical signalling, point signalling and that sort of thing.

It was after the war when they started to reinvest in the Railway. Everything on the Railway had run down during the war, and they went into a massive, great electrification with signalling, electrical points, and that sort of thing.

I spent about six or seven years doing that, and I used to work between Hitchin and Huntingdon.

Then, I left there and I went to Fleming Instruments in Stevenage, doing electronic wiring.

I went from there to ICL, and I spent 38 years at ICL.

I started off doing prototype development work there and then I went into the Design office, doing electronic design.

Then, I finished up as the Worldwide Service Manager being responsible for all the maintenance and support of products that ICL put out around the world, which involved being involved at the design stage and looking at what was required to maintain the product in respect of spares, test equipment, software support, and all that sort of thing.

I was making sure that support facilities were mirrored out all around the world.

We'd develop one of these parlour workshop arrangements, and then we'd mirror that out to Australia, South Africa and Germany. It was that sort of thing. It was a very interesting job.

Interviewer: Yes, so you made a long career, all based around Stevenage?

Doug Draper: Yes, I did, actually.

Interviewer: I'm just wondering:

Were you able, all throughout that, to maintain going regularly to watch the football or did you have periods where it was more or less?

Doug Draper: Yes, there was, actually.

I had a break of about 8 to 10 years when I had to go and work at Kidsgrove, but I came back again.

Yes, I was fortunate all the time that this was going on. In fact, there were various reorganisations in ICL, but they all were somewhere else in the country.

I was actually based all the time at Stevenage.

Interviewer: That was very fortunate.

Doug Draper: Yes, it was rather.

Interviewer: There's so much history with the team that we could go over, because you've obviously seen so much.

What I want is for you to tell me the bits that you really enjoyed, because you'll have seen the team come from the team that was playing quite low down the leagues to where it is today, and it's not been a one-way ride. It's been up and down.

Doug Draper: Ooh, no, no, no.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that and how you've experienced it.

Doug Draper: Since they've left the London Road ground, they've been reformed in various guises from Stevenage Athletic to all sorts of fascinations.

A bit that stuck out in my memory was the wealthy guy from Bournemouth, who was either the owner or got hold of the Club. This was the guy that ploughed the pitch up.

Interviewer: Okay, this was the famous..?

Doug Draper: He put us out of business. I can't remember his name.

That was an outstanding highlight.

The other outstanding features: well, I don't know what ones I'm allowed to say without being sued.

The Victor Green era was interesting.

Interviewer: Tell me what happened, if you can, without being...

Doug Draper: Well, what seemed to happen was that the Football Club was going along very nicely. It was run by a local committee of people that everybody knew, so it was chugging along very nicely.

Along came this guy, Victor Green, who, somehow or other, magically told them that he could take them somewhere else.

Basically, what we did was that we gave the Football Club to him.

We gave the Football Club away.

Over the course of the few years he was here, we had the Newcastle experience. We played Newcastle.

The Club should have been making lots of money. Shortly after the Newcastle matches, the word went around that we were financially struggling. Then, suddenly, Victor Green disappeared.

Interviewer: Not good.

Doug Draper: The Club subsequently didn't seem to have much money. One always looks back and says, "Well, where did all the money go?"

Interviewer: Okay, we'll avoid saying the obvious thing, then. (Laughter)

Doug Draper: You can edit this bit out afterwards.

One of the things that stands out in my mind about the Victor Green era...

The Supporters' Club have always given to annual donations to the Football Club because it's in our founding documents.

I remember, one year, the Supporter's Club bought the Club a minibus so that the youngsters and the Reserves could go around in this minibus as a form of transportation.

They made a big presentation on the pitch, handed over the keys, and everybody was quite happy.

When Victor Green left, somebody said, "Well, at least we've got the minibus."

They said, "No, no, no, no, no, the minibus is only rented."

We went from a situation where the Supporters' Club thought they had bought it to, suddenly, where it was a rental job.

It was funny.

Interviewer: Yes, dodgy, by the sound of it.

Doug Draper: That seems, to me, to sum up the whole of his time at the Club.

Interviewer: Tell me about that Supporters' Club, though.

Have you been involved in that a long time?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: Who's in there? How does it work?

I've got the bit about it making some money for the Club, but who are the people who are involved?

Doug Draper: Way back in the London Road days, we used to have a supporters' club and we used to have some very good functions.



We used to have annual meetings, Christmas dinners and that sort of thing, and they were held at either the CIU Club in the Old Town or at the ESA Pavilion.

Subsequent to that, the Supporters' Club, as it is now, has always revolved around several key figures.

One of my old working colleagues is Mervyn Stokes-Geddes, and Mervyn has been associated with the Supporters' Association as Secretary and in various other roles for 30 years or more.

John Carroll, a very loyal Football Club man, runs the transportation.

John has been doing the transport - away coaches and that sort of thing - for as long as I can remember.

Who else?

Interviewer: The principle sorts of things you would do would be having functions, going to matches, and also organising trips to matches for the away matches?

Doug Draper: John Carroll steadfastly organises all the away trips.

Sometimes, when we've not been doing very well, you think, "Nobody will want to go and watch away and watch us because we're so bad this week," but John manages to fill the coaches up.

When we played Newcastle, I think John organised something like 50 to 60 coaches, apart from other transportation arrangements.

At one time, we were going to organise some trains, but I think he organised about 60 coaches to go to the Newcastle game.

When we've had games at Wembley, he's done that as well with Chambers Coaches.

They have always seemed to serve us very well, Chambers Coaches. It's a good company, that. It's looked after the Football Club.

John Carroll has worked very, very hard for the Football Club, and so has Mervyn Stokes-Geddes.

The other guy, whose name I've forgotten at the moment, is the guy that does the public address system.

It's gone. It will come back to me.

Interviewer: You also went on the away trips, did you?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: Which are the good away trips to go on?

Which grounds did you enjoy or which games have you enjoyed doing?

Doug Draper: Well, if I go back to the Old London Road era, we always had ding-dong games against St Albans.

We had some interesting games against Enfield, because Enfield were a big club then.

Enfield used to get support in the thousands, so to go to Enfield was something special.

We've had some real needle matches against Enfield.

Enfield seem to have declined off the face off the map now, but there was St Albans, Enfield and Ware.

There were difficult games at Ware.

We had a few cup games against Hitchin, which they inevitably won.

The St Albans and Enfield games were always something to look forward to.

Interviewer: As in the 'tasty' ones, as they say?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: I want to ask you about one thing before I go on to that.

About the 1970s.

I understand that Stevenage had Alan Gilzean had as a manager for a while.

Is that right?

Doug Draper: Yes, Alan Gilzean.

Interviewer: Tell me about that. Can you remember?

Doug Draper: I can, but he doesn't leave me with a lasting memory.  
No, I can't...

Interviewer: This was at the low time, wasn't it, just leading into when the pitch got dug up and everything?

Doug Draper: Yes.  
I would say, in my mind, that it was just a passing phase. He didn't do anything that suddenly jumps out.  
The guy that I thought did a great deal to actually motivate Stevenage in a low time was Graham Roberts.  
Graham Roberts used to play for Tottenham and he was a Scottish international.

Interviewer: Yes, I remember him.

Doug Draper: We were having a really rough time when Graham Roberts came to play for us.  
He didn't play for us for very long, but he certainly put some backbone into the team.  
It's from that point that I think we actually turned the corner and we started to move out of the lower half of the league.  
That's one of the highlights, when he turned up.

He didn't stay long, but he certainly helped turn the team around.

Interviewer: If we move forward from then, we get on to the Newcastle game then, I guess.

I'm guessing you were there.

Doug Draper: I was there at both of them.

Interviewer: Tell me a bit about the first one - the one here.

Doug Draper: The one here?

Interviewer: Yes.

Doug Draper: Well, there was a great amount of ill-feeling before the match.

The attitude from Newcastle seemed to be that we were too small for them to actually turn up and play us, because we were just Stevenage.

There seemed to be an effort to get us to go and play at St James' Park.

That was declined. They didn't like it much.

I think I remember them coming down here to inspect the ground.

Their manager at the time is now the manager of Liverpool.

Interviewer: Dalglish?

Doug Draper: Dalglish, yes.

Dalglish made derogatory remarks about our facilities.

At the scoreboard end, we actually put up a massive amount of temporary seating. I can't remember what the crowd was, but the ground was full.

I thought we did very well.

Shearer, who had just been out injured: suddenly, that was his returning match when we played them. He came on in the second half and he scored a very good goal at the near post at the Broadhall Way end.

A very good goal.

I think the whole attitude of Newcastle was pretty negative towards us. I have not liked Alan Shearer from that moment onwards because, after the game, there were lots of little kids trying to get programmes signed, and he just brushed them aside with absolute arrogance and contempt.

I had no concern about the guy prior to that, but he was so arrogant that I went off him immediately after that.

Interviewer: Yes, I can imagine.

What about at the level of the fans?

Did you have much interaction between yourselves and the Newcastle fans?

I've heard that the ground and the town were...

Obviously, a lot of fans came down, didn't they?

Doug Draper: Oh, yes.

I think they came down by train. I don't know much about their arrangements, but I'm sure they came down by train.

The town was really buzzing for days and days and days before the match. There was a lot of activity in the town with people trying to sell shirts and flags.

Yes, there was a really good buzz.

Interviewer: What about the replay?

You went up for the replay?

Doug Draper: You've no doubt heard about the replay.

All the reports afterwards say that we lost 2-1, but all the pictures show that the ball never went over the line for the second goal.

Mark Smith, I think, cleared the ball.

To be honest, I was at the other end of the ground, so I couldn't see clearly, but when I look back at all the images in the paper and the simulation of, "Did it or didn't it cross the line?" most of the press said it didn't.

That was it.

I wasn't impressed with St James' Park. I didn't think they accommodated us very well.

They put us all in one corner of the ground. I think there were about 3,000 or 4,000. I can't remember, but they put us all in one corner of the ground.

They had an attitude. There were some youngsters trying to put a banner up at the back of the stand, and, as they were trying to put this banner up, you got stewards coming along pulling it down.

It didn't seem to me that the 'big club versus the little club' attitude was very pleasant.

They started off with an attitude from when the draw was made, and I detected this attitude right through into the replay at St James' Park.

They weren't very accommodating.

Interviewer: This must have made 2010 a very nice moment for you, then, when you had them down again and put them away?

Doug Draper: Oh, yes. Yes, that was handsome. That was really well worth waiting for.

Really worth waiting for.

Interviewer: Can you tell me any more about that day?

Can you remember it?

Doug Draper: Oh, yes. They were demolished.

There were a lot of expectation on that day.



To be absolutely honest, most people thought that we would probably do well to hang on and not get thumped, but we actually set about them in such a way that they seemed to be...

Well, I wouldn't say, "petrified".

They seemed to be stunned.

When we scored first, they seemed to be mesmerised.

We got to 2-1.

No, it was 2-2, I think.

I'm trying to think of who scored their goal.

The troublemaker.

Interviewer: It covers a lot of people, doesn't it? (Laughter)

Doug Draper: Anyway, they got back to 2-1.

Interviewer: Oh, was it Barton?

Doug Draper: Barton, yes.

Yes, Barton scored a long-range shot, which was a good goal, and it got back to 2-1. We'd probably got about 10 or 15 minutes to go then, and I thought, "Oh, dear, 2-1. Nasty."

We hung in there, and at the end, 3-1, I think, was a reasonable reflection on our performance.

Now, that's something I still think about because it says, "How can you do that against Newcastle?" and then you look at performances against other smaller teams and think, "Yuk."

That was a really tasty day, that one. I really enjoyed that.

Interviewer: I'll bet.

Thinking about the other big things that the Club has done, there was this big unbeaten run under Fairclough, wasn't there?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell me about that a bit?

Doug Draper: We were unbeatable down here for just over two seasons, and it was like a fortress.

Interviewer: How come you were so good?

Doug Draper: I can only assume it was the squad of players he'd got.

We had this attitude and I'm sure other sides came here, thinking, "Ooh, they're difficult to beat," and, therefore, maybe they were very cautious.

We got to this situation where we turned up week after week down here, thinking, "Here's another win," and it went on and on and on.

It was a magic time.

Paul Fairclough did a lot for this football club. He took us from fairly down and took us to the Conference.

We actually won the Conference and they wouldn't let us in because the ground wasn't up to the standard.

I think Victor Green took it to court to try to overrule it. There were people talking about £300,000 court costs to fight it. I don't know. Money just disappeared.

What we did do was that we subsequently made them change the rule that if you got promotion, you had until the start of the season to actually put in additional facilities to bring your ground up to the right standard.

At least we got the rules changed.

Ironically, after we won the Conference and didn't get promoted, the season but one after that, we could have won it again.

We were probably six to eight points clear of the rest of the league. We had lots of player injuries and that sort of thing, and everybody was desperate for Greenie and Fairclough to go out and get a few more players to push us over the line.

It didn't happen. Therefore, we missed getting promotion.

Macclesfield came down here and beat us 2-1 after we'd run them off the park.

Now, with six games to go, we were that close to doing it again, but there didn't seem to be any desire to actually spend any money.

Interviewer: You think the Club itself didn't really want to commit enough to..?

Doug Draper: Well, it was a little while after that Victor Green left.

Interviewer: Okay. I see where you're going.

Do you remember the game where you actually lost that unbeaten run?

It was the game against Dulwich, I think it was.

Do you recall it?

Doug Draper: No, I can't remember it, specifically.

Interviewer: It sounds like an odd question, but do you try and put games that go badly out of your mind?

Doug Draper: No.

Interviewer: Do they sit there and hurt?

Doug Draper: I try to look at all games and I don't dismiss them. I try to look at what happens in the next game to see if I can see any advancement or any improvement.

If you take this season, we've played some terrific games and lost. We've played some lousy games and lost.

I don't forget the bad games and only think about the good ones. I try to look at it over the course of the season and analyse the ups and downs.

Interviewer: In terms of where the team has been going recently, in the last year, were you at the play-off to get into..?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: That must have been an amazing feeling.

Doug Draper: Very good.

Interviewer: A vindication, I would imagine, apart from anything else.

Doug Draper: Yes.

First of all, I thought that we wouldn't make the play-offs. Then, suddenly, we started to put it together.

To actually get to the play-offs was quite amazing. I thought, "We're not going to quite make this. We're not going to quite make it," but we did.

We really climbed to the occasion, and it was terrific.

In winning the Conference and in winning the Division Two play-offs and getting into Division One, I do have this nagging suspicion and doubt in mind of, "Have we come too far too quick?"

It's nice to be in Division One, but we haven't brought the crowd with us.

I think the owner, the manager and the infrastructure are capable of doing it.

The support hasn't followed, so we're not getting any more support than we did when we were in the Conference, which is very sad.

Interviewer: Do you think there's a way forward to try and do that?

In a sense, do the Club need to do more?

Is it just an attitude in the town?

Doug Draper: I don't think it's anything to do with the Club. I think it's just an attitude to do with the Stevenage people.

They just won't get off their backsides and come and watch.

Now, what that reason is I do not know. It absolutely mystifies me.

How can you go from Non-League football to Division One in about five or six seasons and nobody is interested?

Interviewer: Yes, and you've also changed your ground a lot in that time as well, yes?

Doug Draper: Yes.

Interviewer: The ground has had a big transformation.

It would be crazy for me not to ask you, with all your years of experience:

Who are the big heroes of Stevenage?

Who are the great players who you've seen, do you think, over that whole period?

Doug Draper: Well, if I go back to the Old London Road ground again, Alan Jackson...

Interviewer: Tell me a bit about what position he was.

Doug Draper: He was a centre half.

Interviewer: He was the centre half you were talking about, yes?

Doug Draper: He was a Stevenage lad.

I thought he was probably outstanding at centre half, certainly in North Herts.

Lummy Taylor - another Old Town player. A winger.

Bloxham. A half back.

They're the three outstanding players. I'm sure I've missed some, but they're the three outstanding players from the Old Town days.

From the Broadhall Way point of view, you've obviously got Barry Hayles.

Interviewer: What was so good about Barry Hayles?

Doug Draper: Well, Paul Fairclough found Barry Hayles, I think, playing on Hackney Marshes in some low-level league in London.

Barry was a revelation when he came here. He was a good player.

There's Martin Gittings. I think Martin was our leading goalscorer for three seasons.

Other great players?

Well, there have been quite a few.

Of late, there's Steve Morison, who came from Ware. He's done extremely well because he's now playing in the Premiership with Norwich.

Interviewer: Could you see at the time that he was here that he was that quality?

Doug Draper: No, I didn't think so.

He was one that I would have missed if I'd have been looking.

He struck me as being a little bit lazy.

He's got a little bit of an attitude. It didn't stop him scoring goals, though.



When things didn't go well for him, he didn't look as though he was 110% interested.

You can't take it away from the guy. He's done very well.

We've had quite a few players...

Some of these have been absolutely sensational. They'll all come flooding back when I leave here.

Interviewer: Yes.

Well, we've talked about a few games, but how about in terms of games that you remember that were particularly great games?

Is there anything that stands out in the memory?

Doug Draper: Great games?

I remember that we played Enfield in the FA Cup. I think it was three times that we had a go at that. I think we played there, drew; played here and drew; and then they beat us in the end.

That was a bit of a ding-dong because Enfield were a big club then.

That was way back in the London Road days.

The London Road games against Corinthian Casuals and Pegasus, because they were really big amateur clubs then. They went on to win the Amateur Cup and whatever it was called then. They went on to win that, both of them.

They were good games.

I remember the game against Merthyr when John Charles played. That was an exciting game.

After that, well, it was obviously the Newcastle ones, but the other one was when we beat Leyton Orient in the FA Cup 2-1.

Interviewer: Tell me a bit about that.

Was that here?

Doug Draper: No, that was at Leyton Orient.

That coincided with the old England goalkeeper.

Interviewer: Shilton?

Doug Draper: Shilton.

That was Shilton's 500<sup>th</sup> League game there, so they presented him with a plaque before the match.

I thought he was lucky to stay on the pitch because what he did in the second half was that he brought down Barry Hayles inside the box.

Not only was it a penalty but he should have been sent off.

Anyway, we got away with it. That was a great game.

In local rivalry, we always used to have some needle matches against Woking in the Conference. There was always this hate complex between us and Woking.

I didn't have it, but the supporters seemed to have it.

Interviewer: What caused it?

Doug Draper: I don't know whether it was because they were our closest, in distance, rivals, but the fans always used to chant, "We hate Woking."

I don't know why.

I think it was probably because Woking always had the edge on us. For, probably, quite a few seasons, they always managed to pip us. They'd always beat us by the odd goal.

There was this animosity built up against Woking. They were always tasty games to look forward to.

Any others?

Interviewer: Any outstanding moment that is set out for you, like an outstanding goal or something like that?

Doug Draper: Yes.

I suppose, if you were to ask me, my most outstanding goal was when we actually beat Swindon in the FA Cup at Swindon, when Grazioli scored the winner to make it 2-1.

It was an absolutely foul day. It rained from when I got up. It rained when we got on the coach, and it poured with rain when we were there.

Of course, they gave all the Boros the open-terrace end behind the goal.

It was actually tipping down. It really was tipping it down.

It got to 1-1, and the wind was so strong.

For instance, it was difficult to get the ball in their half. I was right behind the goal in the middle of the goal, probably about three levels down, and somebody put the ball into the Swindon penalty area. The ball went up in the air and the wind held it up.

It seemed an eternity before the ball came down, and it dropped to Grazioli. He whacked it in the net.

It was as though time stood still.

As I say, the ball went up in the air, hovered, came down, and it dropped right at his feet. Whack - in it went. A magic moment.

One of the best goals I've seen, actually.

Interviewer:           Excellent.

END AUDIO

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