

**File:** BMD Keith Glazebrook.mp3

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Helen: Could you please state your name for me.

Keith Glazebrook: Keith Glazebrook.

Helen: Your role at the club.

Keith Glazebrook: I currently assist with hospitality in the board room. That's hosting VIPs and visiting dignitaries to the club, on a match day.

Helen: Brilliant. Do you have any other previous roles at the club before that?

Keith Glazebrook: My contact with the club goes back, as a Stevenage lad born and bred, coming to the ground as early as the early mid-60s when playing in the Southern League. Monday night was always favourite, Eastern Professional Floodlit Competition. Monday night after school was always favourite for several of us from school to come. Various names, Tommy Watson, Ray Freeman, Chandler, Mills, Peacock, Hiner, Pratt, to name but a

few of the team at that time, excellent team, very much early days of semi-professional football, but very much an amateur run side.

I then come back involved in the club; I was a career police officer. When they joined the conference at the end of the '93/'94 season I was the local police commander, and then assisted in terms of the ground inspection, and some subsequent training of early day stewards. Anything like training had never been known here at the football club before.

Then when I retired from the police in 2000 I was the safety officer here, from 2000 to 2005. Then of course latterly I moved on to work at Wembley, as a stadium safety manager there. I now, at the request of the club, have returned to assist with the board room and I've been doing that now for three years.

Helen: Brilliant. Is there any particular role out of all the ones you've had that you enjoyed the most, or are they all particularly...?

Keith Glazebrook: As a local lad and being involved with the local team that's always exciting, and someone who used to play park football here in Stevenage up until the ripe old age of 45. Of course I knew a lot of the people in the town both at a dignitary level as well as working level colleagues, friends, who have grown up throughout the town, many of whom had a following of football and so therefore shared my interest. I often see them here on match days.

Go back to when we first went into the conference. Stevenage was the first club, in Hertfordshire, that had ever been in the conference. That was a big test for us as a local police force.

We didn't know what to expect. The club didn't know what to expect which is why then, as the local police commander, I often used to come up in uniform with several officers. Phil Wallace would love this today but we never charged the club then, because we were helping and supporting the club go through those early faltering steps.

Helen: Did you ever have any trouble at matches?

Keith Glazebrook: No. It's fair to say the crowds at that time were fairly low. Low I'd say probably just over the thousand or so, 1,500 but the Chairman then that would have been Victor Green bless him, yes Mr Green, who like most chairmen wanted to do a lot perhaps on a shoestring budget, but I have to say with full and frank exchanges then we steered the club forward in a very professional way. If nothing else Victor Green was very, very good with staff. Always very appreciative of what people did for him.

Helen: Because there were a lot of volunteers then weren't there and there still are some?

Keith Glazebrook: When I came upon the club stewarding as such was just done by supporters turning up with colours on, which in this current day of the professional standing of stewards was laughable, and even then was questionable. So we held several sessions down at the local police station, and took several stewards down there. To try and give them some training and some thought towards what they should be doing on a match day.

Keith Berners who was to become or was the Chairman of the Supporters' Association, he was probably the match day co-ordinator at that time. I remember taking him over to Watford Football Club, in Vicarage Road, just to give him some view of a higher league football operation. I think it's fair to say it was a learning curve for him. I remember his jaw dropping even as we walked in the gates. Keith and I have remained friends to this day. So that was early conference days really.

Then I suppose my next involvement is the safety officer. I retired from the police. The club heard of my retirement, knew of my presence in the town and my interest in the club, and I got offered the opportunity of actually coming into the club carrying out another function. The lad who was then the safety officer, Dave Robertson, I had actually served with as a police officer. It's fair to say he was attracted to the golf course on a Saturday afternoon, and I think increasingly did not want to be here. So therefore as he left then I took over from him in 2000.

Helen: What did that involve that role?

Keith Glazebrook: The role of a safety officer, it's a statutory appointment which the football club has to have under the ground licence, which is issued under a piece of legislation which is called the Safety of Sports Grounds Act, which is administered by Hertfordshire County Council and to this day has so administered. That's an extensive document with various appendices and details, and criteria. It was my responsibility to ensure the football club adhered to all the principles and rules held within that.

On a match day that culminated in me running an operation from the control room, as does Steve Fanthorpe the current safety officer now, basically controlling and orchestrating the

actions of stewards, St John's Ambulance, and on the bigger occasions the police as well, or working with the police.

Helen: So it's quite a big job then.

Keith Glazebrook: Well it's a huge job really. It's a huge responsibility. I can remember pre-season friendlies here, particularly with Arsenal and Tottenham, where the ground was absolutely bulging. It's a full capacity crowd. It tests the amenities of a ground that was trying to fast grow to deal with such capacities.

Helen: Do you remember when the pitch was in really bad condition?

Keith Glazebrook: There was a celebrated occasion and I forget the details of the history. That was someone falling out with the club and I remember they put actually a JCB through it, digging a ditch through it. That goes way back when but I look out on the grass today and John Ryder, the groundsman, does a fantastic job with it. I have to say visitors who come to the boardroom regularly congratulate us a) on the stadium in itself but more so on the playing surface.

In fairness to the Chairman I think reasonable investment or good investment has been made on the pitch, in the closed season, and I think it's now really reaping dividends. John as true to a groundsman I think he would prefer if nobody ever played football on his grass, because he'd want to keep it looking in pristine condition, but he and his team of lads they work very, very hard behind the scenes. Coming in very, very

early on match days to present the pitch as it often is in such a pristine condition.

Helen: So your role after being safety officer.

Keith Glazebrook: Can I just reminisce on the only one streaker we've ever had here was on my watch, fortunately or unfortunately. We were playing Morecambe, second leg of an FA trophy game. We were at least one nil up from the away leg at Morecambe. This was the second home leg. I think we were then comfortably in the lead three one or something of that order.

Then to my complete aghast and surprise there was this rather large gentleman, to say the least, who presented himself stark naked just inside the goal line on the southern end of the pitch. I think it's useful to say and note at this stage that the game was not disrupted. I'm not so sure the referee saw too much of the incident. Suffice to say it was sufficient for me and many of the crowd to see it and him. I can only but admire his guts and determination in being naked, straddled the metal perimeter fence to get back into and amongst his colleagues, safely as he thought, in the South Stand.

Helen: Is there a procedure for dealing with that kind of thing?

Keith Glazebrook: Well there is and I'm sure many people listening to this will have witnessed various different people coming onto pitches, and terrible ways in which both the police and stewards chase after them. Thankfully he saw fit, after his brief appearance on the pitch, to immediately retreat back into the South Stand. He

immediately went back right up amongst his friends. They were quite densely populated. I think there were three to four hundred of their supporters. Generally well-mannered and good humoured I have to say that, as all Morecambe supporters were. I watched him, we didn't have CCTV at that time, avidly, get dressed. He was then in the middle of the stadium.

Then surprise, surprise which is probably where he was sitting and then he came towards the West Stand, the main stand here, towards my control room, and ended up standing with people fully two blocks away from where he was originally seen to go into the crowd.

I guided my steward supervisor down to go and have a word with him. Now initially the gentleman's reply was, "It wasn't me." Until such time as I told him that we had him on camera, which was a bit of a fib really because we didn't. He immediately admitted his part in it. I have to say given the overall manner of the crowd, his demeanour, yes, it was questionable. We actually had a word in his ear and we cautioned him regarding his behaviour. So I suppose in terms of events that was probably the most significant on the pitch.

Hosting events here, I've been very proud to be the safety officer where we've hosted age group internationals here. Certainly the Czech Republic and America come to mind. On one occasion we held the Ladies Community Shield here. So obviously the club was held in quite high regard, as far as organising events go, by the FA. They were quite memorable events.

Helen I suppose I could take you back to probably the first large task I was given, as safety officer here in 2000, when the football club wanted to host a firework display. I don't think they'd ever done it before, certainly to not any degree in terms

of planning. I ended up being in contact with the local fire brigade, sorry governmental department responsible then for such displays. It went off quite well but it was the first serious test for me as safety officer, under Phil Wallace as the Chairman. It went off very well. The only reason it's never been repeated is because of the building programme, which has subsequently taken place within the ground.

Other memorable milestones, the building of the South Stand during a season, that must be five or six years old now. Losing one end of your ground, which hosts the away team, was I have to say a test to say the least. I certainly remember hosting Doncaster Rovers fans, which to be kind to them they were certainly robust at least. We had to host them on the north end of the ground which is traditionally a home supporter area, which really was not suitable but then we had of all the alternatives it was probably the best alternative. It certainly tested both police and stewards alike.

So I was only too pleased to see the completion of the away stand, on the southern end of the ground, and I have to say look forward to probably the renovation, or perhaps whatever they're going to do with the north end of the ground, which is now the oldest part of the ground and probably is overdue for renovation.

Helen: Are they planning to do that soon?

Keith Glazebrook: My understanding is it's certainly in the Chairman's line of sight for future development. Other significant occurrences, the Woking rivalry; the rivalry that this football club has had with Woking did cause one or two slight problems, when the two fans came together. Unfortunately I remember one Tuesday



evening, a game under floodlights, ironically one of our home stewards was dealing with a dispute between home and away fans, and was quite seriously assaulted. The irony being it wasn't the Woking fan it was a Stevenage fan, which was unfortunate and disappointing.

The rivalry probably stems back from the ability that Woking had, whenever we met them in the FA trophy or the FA Cup, just to knock us out and to beat us. I remember certainly an FA Cup replay at Vicarage Road when I went. Again it wasn't big margins and that increased the frustration. I assume the rivalry came from that, but unfortunately in the manner in which it was carried forward, almost part of folklore here, I'm sure people started chanting the hatred Woking song and probably had no idea as to why they did.

It was one of the games of the season where probably staff and I were more on their metal than at any other time, albeit we didn't have any serious incidents. Damage, yes. A bit of coin throwing, yes, but we moved through that. Of course Woking now sit in the non-league, and of course we're in the higher echelons of League Division One.

The last reminiscence perhaps Helen is an evening game, under the floodlights again, the day the floodlights went out. I think we were playing Hayes. I think we were beating them well. I think we were about three nil, three one up. It was a rainy evening, dismal, made all the more dismal for me certainly when half their floodlights went out. So we didn't have full power failure, but we certainly had a much reduced floodlight capacity.

Of course in such occasions the referee, the first person he wants to speak to is the safety officer. It came at the half time interval which was useful, because at least it gave us quarter of an hour. He was gracious enough to give us that plus a few

minutes beyond that, bearing in mind players were getting cold or cooling down too quickly. He had their welfare to consider. Unfortunately it wasn't to be that we were to restore the floodlights that night despite the protestations of the Chairman, and his frustrations, because it was a time when we needed the points as we ever do. Then the game was to be abandoned. I have to say in the recollection of games here, certainly my time, it was the only game I've ever known to be abandoned.

Lastly, Helen, is now time in the board room. With my previous contacts with the club and after Jim Briscoe my forbearer, who sadly suffered from a stroke, and Lloyd his son who is equally involved now with the club, and has been so now for some time, brings him still along to match days to this day, but Jim was no longer able to carry out the hosting function he was doing in the board room.

So must be three years ago now at least the club asked me if I would come and assist in the board room, in a voluntary capacity, which I'm quite happy to do unless of course I'm working at Wembley. If I'm working at Wembley that has my first call as it will do this next Saturday, on November the fifth, when we've got some rugby there. Unfortunately I'll miss the home game against Sheffield United.

The board room is very interesting not least of which the people that we have through there. I know the Chairman very well, our Chief Executive and Directors. I know them very, very well and they know me. I know the stadium, how it operates, and I know all of the support staff around, including the girls who run the hospitality boxes, who work very, very hard on a match day, and of course assist us on a match day with the board room and also, since we've been in the football league, the dining room facility where guests are dined before a match.

I suppose the interesting thing is the number of guests that we've had from a variety of fields. If you look to government, obviously the local MP Stephen McPartland, then before him you had Barbara Follett and her author husband Ken Follett. Recently, when Sheffield Wednesday came here, we had Roy Hattersley who's now Lord Roy Hattersley. From the sporting world Sir Geoff Hurst came when the community team were launching their project, working with McDonalds, of football in the community. David Pleat the ex-Spurs manager. He's a regular visitor here, often scouting, very pleasant, very nice chap. Just last Saturday John Motson, who's just celebrated 40 years in football, his football commentary. He's actually a fairly local resident in Hertfordshire, living over near Hemel Hempstead.

Helen: So does he support this team?

Keith Glazebrook: Well he doesn't funnily enough. We're one of his two local teams. I guess Hemel Hempstead is equal distance between Watford and Stevenage, but this is the first time he'd ever visited Stevenage. He happened to be at Huddersfield Town a few weeks ago when he bumped into Bob Makin, the Chief Executive, and Phil Wallace, the Chairman, and through a conversation; last Saturday he didn't have a game, that's 22<sup>nd</sup> October, to commentary on. In fact he was commentating on the Queens Park Rangers/Chelsea game the following day, so he saw an opportunity to come. What a gentleman. What a lovely man. What an encyclopaedic knowledge of football that he has, but it was a joy to have him in the board room.

Very quickly from the other world of sport we had Dwayne Chambers the sprinter who has recently returned to athletics;

very, very hospitable chap, down at half time signing any number of photographs and spending time with the crowd. Who else have we had? Timmy Mallett, for those of you young enough to remember him, an absolute avid Oxford supporter. Mad as a box of frogs on TV but again what a genuine bloke. I think he found out that I actually had, in my record collection, a copy of his one and only record which was recorded under the name of Bombalurina. It was Itsy Bitsy Teeny Weeny Yellow Polka Dot Bikini. Not a record I play often and not that I tell too many people I have it in my record collection. Jim Rosenthal, sports commentator for Sky Sports, also is an avid Oxford supporter and was here on the evening that Oxford visited us in past seasons.

Talking of vinyl and record collections it was a great joy to see Mike Reid, the former Radio One DJ, avid supporter of Berry Town come to the club for the first time this season. I spent any amount of time talking to him about music and vinyl, again what a very genuine sort of person that he was. Life in the board room, very pleasant, very nice.

Helen: Certainly all the people are very nice and you get on with them.

Keith Glazebrook: Yes indeed. Our role, I have a colleague with me, Tim Hutchins from the Chamber of Commerce. He comes in and assists me. We both work voluntarily, I might add, for the club. It's just our pride a) to host people here at the football club and be part and parcel of what we hope is a very happy, enjoyable, afternoon for the people that come. It is a safety measure as well to ensure people know exactly where facilities are, what they should do. Also of course now we get fuller crowds to

ensure those that aren't meant to be sat in the directors' box aren't sitting in the directors' box, but again we've got to know the crowd who are working around us. I know many of them in any case. It's a pleasurable afternoon I have to say for both Tim and I.

Helen: Yes. So you really enjoy working here.

Keith Glazebrook: Yes I do. There's a fantastic backroom staff of people here. They're not always given the reward and acknowledgment and recognition that they should be, but a football club like this doesn't operate without them. I include that in the paid staff as well, commercial manager works very hard, Clive Abery, Roger Austin the Secretary, Bob Makin, the hardest working Chief Executive I've ever come across. Now he'll arrive in the dark and probably goes home in the dark, at this time of the year, works very, very hard.

Then you've got the ground staff, the cleaners, the people that run the refreshments outlets, and of course not to forget obviously the stewards, many of whom I trained. It's with some pleasure, I have to say, I see the current safety officer, Steven Fanthorpe, is a lad I recruited as a steward and then perhaps had the foresight to promote as a supervisor. He's doing a great job. I know it is to the frustration of the crowd to see that they are perhaps a body of jobsworths. Well that's safety. Without them and without that team then you wouldn't have the crowd here. You'd have games held behind closed doors. That's not right. So good days, enjoyable days.

Helen: So you're a fan of the team as well.

Keith Glazebrook: I am although as a safety officer you can't afford to be too much of a fan, because you have to take an impartial road in treating both sets of fans alike but as a local lad, starting from where in the mid-'60s when I was a young man, I've had some form of following and interest in the club ever since that. So if that puts me as a fan I guess it does and yes I am.

Helen: So to see them now being league one and thirteenth place is that...

Keith Glazebrook: It's great. It's very reassuring. Graham Westley's done a great job. Graham and I met again when he first came to the club and I was the safety officer. As with any relationship it needs a settling down period. We had one or two differences of opinions until I clarified certain positions of safety. Ever since that I think we've had a mutual respect for both of our roles. As long as he didn't tell me how to operate the stadium, then I would never tell him how to run his football club. I think as long as people take that forward, then I think people left alone to get on with the jobs that they're paid to do, and have the experience to do, then that will always make this a very successful club.

Helen: Brilliant. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Keith Glazebrook: No. Thanks for the opportunity Helen, having a chat. It's a joy to be involved. I look forward to Stevenage's continued development and improvement. Improvement continues both

on and off the field. It's heartening to see the football club having bought the large site down on the southern end of the town, as a training ground, which ironically is just across the road from where I live in Bragbury End, which is a joy, and just being part of the everyday events here and particularly match day events. I wish Stevenage well for the future and all those that are associated with the football club.

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