



WEALDSTONE v TRURO CITY WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

I played in the last game at Lower Mead but at the time I didn't appreciate the history and emotion of the occasion. Now I know what an honour it was to be involved

SAYS WAYNE ROACH



BY ROGER SLATER



New Zealander Wayne Roach joined Wealdstone (his only UK club) at the start of the 1990-91 season remaining with the club for two years, making 59 starts and three substitute appearances in all competitions. He is the founder member I suppose of the Wealdstone New Zealand Supporters Club (soon followed by Andy Hedge and more recently Chris Zoricich) and he still follows the results today from his homeland.

He's been married twice and has three children and he lives now in Pukekohe, just south of Auckland, working in International Sea and Air Freight. Wayne answers our probing questions...

YOU joined Wealdstone in August 1990, leaving at the end of 1992. What was the career before and after?

Nothing in the UK! Prior to joining Wealdstone I'd played for Auckland based teams in New Zealand, and I returned home when I left the Stones. Once again I played for local sides in the National and Regional leagues over here, finally hanging up the gloves in 2000.

WHAT brought you to Wealdstone and did you know anyone at the club when you joined?

I had always wanted to go overseas to play football, a coach of mine in NZ knew one of the Wealdstone Reserve team coaches so it was arranged from there.

But it was a time of change and turmoil at the club and quite different to what I was use to in NZ. Some things were good and some not so good as I suppose you find at every club, but it wasn't too hard to fit in. I just wanted to play!

WE seemed to use a great number of goalkeepers during that spell, though you and David Hudson shared the job in the main replacing Chris Vagg – How did you and he

handle the 'job-share'?

It was all good from my side, David was a good guy and we got on very well.

He had spent quite a number of seasons at Wimbledon FC as a full time pro in his youth so I tried to learn off him. He suffered a very bad facial injury in one of the first games he played for Wealdstone I recall and I think that knocked his confidence a lot.

LOOKING back on those two seasons, imagine you are back in the dressing room.... who are the players that stand out and why?

I honestly I think we had some very talented players then but week in week out they didn't perform to their potential. The two players that stand out most are Neil Cordice and Tiv Lowe. Neil for his attitude, conditioning and will to win whereas Tiv was a very clever player and technically very good.

STONES fans are known for "sharing their opinions" – how aware were you of that personally or when it was aimed at team-mates? How did you handle that as player?

STONES

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The fans were (and I imagine still are) fantastic! From my perspective most times they were fairly spot on. The criticisms were well deserved and I was a pretty harsh critic of my performances anyway so it never bothered me.

YOU actually played in the last two games at Lower Mead – against Cambridge in a ground charged with emotion, and ten days later in a Capital League match. What do you remember of those days?

I remember the last Cambridge game. I guess at the time I didn't appreciate the history and emotion involved for all the loyal and long-serving fans as I was just a new kid in town. Looking back now it was a real honour being involved in the match.

FROM Lower Mead to Vicarage Road – what did you and the players make of the change? Was it hard to adjust? The facilities (in particular the changing rooms, floodlighting & playing surface) at Vicarage were fantastic.....

only problem was that the opposing teams really liked it too and lifted their game accordingly! It made it hard to get results and we'd lost the atmosphere of Lower Mead....

WHAT are the best and worst memories of your time at the club?

The worst memories were the results during that period and last injury I had which led to the club letting me go and I returned to NZ soon after.

I took so many good memories away from the club to name them all... but to name a few would be friendships made that I still have, becoming a fan of Wealdstone, playing the last game at Lower Mead, helping win the Suburban League with the Reserves in 1990 with my

good mates Dave Boughton (as manager) and Miles Milton.

DO you get back to the UK at all? Would you take in a match? I only went back to England once and that was in 1998. Unfortunately time didn't permit me to take in a game, but maybe one day I'll get another chance. Next time I'll definitely take in a match....I hope The Stones are at home!

You mentioned that you follow the results on the internet - does Wealdstone get in your blood or is that just something for the fans?

For me I became a fan, I really enjoyed my time at Wealdstone,

met some fantastic people and I still want to see the Club do well.

Anything else you want to tell us? A good friend of mine who I played a lot of football with since we were eight years old ended up playing for Wealdstone around 2005.

I thought that was a great coincidence and pretty cool. His name? Chris Zoricich. When I played at Wealdstone I use to go watch him playing at Leyton Orient....

Thanks Wayne, You are close to Hedgie and Zoro – perhaps get together and watch us on Match of The Day sometime....



History! Tony Kelly scores Stones' last Beazer League home goal at Lower Mead.

MORE ACTION OFF THAN ON PITCH AS – STONES BID TAME FAREWELL

By Graham Sharpe
Wealdstone 1, Cambridge City 1

THIS was Wealdstone's last properly competitive game at Lower Mead – yes, I know they still have a Capital League fixture to play against Sutton United, but that doesn't really count as no-one cares about Capital League results.

Sadly, Wealdstone failed to win their last Lower Mead Beazer Homes fixture – in front of an 820 strong crowd – the highest of the season – but at least they avoided defeat, which had seemed the more likely outcome for most of a mediocre game.

In fact, but for the antics of the boisterous, largely good humoured crowd of dedicated Stones' followers, who were determined to turn the wake into a celebration, it would have been an eminently forgettable occasion.

But the behind the goal supporters sang endless songs and chants, some witty, some poignant, some obscene as they waited for the home side to mount any meaningful attacks.

Mark Hopson struck Stones' first aggressive

In the 63rd minute, and somewhat against the run of play, Tony Kelly grabbed the goal the Wealdstone faithful had been demanding – and he did it with some opportunism, then running to milk the applause.

Unfortunately, though, Wealdstone could not hang on to their lead and, following a double substitution, Cambridge exerted enough pressure to prise a 73rd minute equaliser by Keith Lockhart.

Tapley was booked for a foul, an announcement was made that a portable telephone had been found and handed in, then a few Stones fans invaded the pitch and soured what had been a good humoured atmosphere.

However, as the game petered out into a draw the end of an era arrived and a couple of hundred genuine fans took their time in leaving the ground which they might not be visiting again.

On a personal note, it was saddening for me to look back on over thirty

years of watching matches at Lower Mead – where I was first introduced to the Stones by John Patterson, uncle of current Supporters Club Secretary, Layne Patterson!

Brian Hall came and said exactly the right thing as the crowd grouped around the players' tunnel – "From the dressing room and the Board room, thanks for the magnificent support and now let's look forward to a bright new

future at Vicarage Road – see you all in the bar later on!"

As Chairman Alan Clifton said, "Lower Mead is dead – long live The Stones."

WEALDSTONE: Wayne Roach, Jim Watson, Steve Smart, Steve Tapley, Mark Harrison, Mark Hopson, Peter Bartlett, Tony Kelly, Barry Blackman, Neil Cordice, Subs: David Gipp, Paul Goodison.

● Wealdstone close their Beazer League programme on Saturday, with a trip to old enemies, Dover.

Graham Sharpe's report of the last game at Lower Mead... a bit of a damp squib as a match, but as an occasion it's right up there. The final paragraph is a quote from chairman Alan Clifton: 'Lower Mead is dead, Long live the Stones' which was pretty rich coming from a man who subsequently did his best to administer the last rites