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BY MARK HYDE



WEALDSTONE 2021-22

Written in Stone

Well that was an eventful 18 months! To some the simple pleasure of an afternoon watching live football is a mystery. To others (us), I think it is true, importance for people's well being and mental health has been brought sharply into focus during the pandemic. If you are joining us today for the first time in a while or for the first time ever take the time to catch up with old friends or make some new ones. As supporters we are an eclectic bunch drawn from far and wide, of all ages, of many races and nationalities and from all backgrounds. Support one another, support the team and respect other

people's personal space and views.

A personal thanks to our Board of Directors and all our staff, volunteers and supporters who worked so hard over the pandemic to not only do the correct thing for the integrity of the club but to also ensure that we had a Wealdstone FC to come back to this season.

We are obviously far from back to normality and still need your help where possible, either as a volunteer, a sponsor or via the 2021/22 StoneShare initiative detailed within these pages.

Mark

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StoneShare! 2021/22

Last year, 'stoneShare! contributed significantly to the club maintaining its National League status, enabling signings to strengthen the squad prior to relegation being nullified and subsequently allowing the club to furlough some higher cost players while bringing in lower cost loan players, some of whom were identified as targets for this season.

Prudent management of the money raised also allowed some to be ring-fenced, to be available as pre-season started this year, allowing Stuart and Matt to identify and sign a couple of key players early without impacting the club's very stretched finances.

Now, as the season approaches it is time for 'stoneShare! to launch for 2021-22 so that the club can make funds available to the Management Team should we need to strengthen in the early stages of the season (as other clubs release players) and in the lead up to the mid-season transfer window when additional loan players will become available. There may also be an opportunity to sign one or two more players that are trialing with the club before the current transfer window closes at the end of the month. (At National League level we are prevented from signing players from the divisions above outside of these windows).

Exactly as before, your donations to 'stoneShare!, in multiples of £5, paid weekly, monthly or as a lump sum, will directly help the playing budget and one share in Wealdstone FC (2000) Limited while be issued for each £5 donated. It is your chance to be directly involved in the team's performances and to own a part of Wealdstone FC.

Help us maintain our status in the National League and build a team we can be proud of in what will be a very tough season.

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WEALDSTONE

FOOTBALL CLUB SEASON 2021/2022

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1997 / 1998 Isthmian League Division 2 (3rd)
1998 / 1999 Isthmian League Division 1 (3rd, annulled)
2003 / 2004 Isthmian League Premier Division

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Shares in excess of 10% are
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GROUND REGULATIONS

People are only allowed entry to The Vale on match days subject to the following rules and regulations:

1) The club reserves the right to eject from the ground any person who is considered to have committed any of the following acts:

- Entering the ground through any means other than through the turnstiles or entrances
- Entering the field of play before, during or after a game without prior authorisation
- Being drunk, or under the influence of alcohol or drugs - Using violence of any nature
- Carrying items which may be considered a danger to others, including cans, bottles, or glasses containing alcoholic beverages
- Throwing any article onto the field of play - Climbing floodlight pylons, fences, stands or any structure or building
- Using obscene or bad language likely to cause offence to others - Hitting the side or back panels of the Bulls stand

2) No spectator ball games.

3) The consumption of alcoholic drinks is permitted INSIDE the social club bar, garden and boardroom areas.

4) Vehicles parked on the Grosvenor Vale site are at the owners' risk.

5) Wealdstone Football Club supports the FA's campaign on pyrotechnics (e.g. flares and smoke bombs). Any misuse of such items in and around the Ground will result in those responsible being asked to leave the ground and, in line with football authority guidance, may result in a report to the Police, potential prosecution and a ban from the Club of up to three years.

BY STUART MAYNARD

WEALDSTONE 2021-22

From the Gaffer

Good afternoon to you all and a warm welcome to Woking FC

After what has been a long wait, today sees us finally at the first game of our second National League season and even more importantly we can share it with you our fans.

Words can't describe last season, it just wasn't the same for anybody and hopefully we never have to go through that again. Football without fans will never be the same and we need to make sure we relish every moment of this campaign now we are all back together.

Our pre season has gone well and a lot of hard work has gone into it from us as a management team, the players and everyone behind the scenes at the club. The programme was put together to give the squad some real tests and we've come through every one of them with good results. Pre season was paramount for us with the limited time during the season we have to work on things compared to the rest of the teams in the league and we feel like we've got exactly what we needed out of this limited contact time so we're looking forward to getting the season going now. We finished pre season unbeaten and got better and better with every game, so hopefully we take that momentum into this game, and the season as a whole.

Today will be tough, Woking have strengthened a lot since we last played them, but then so have we. With good resources, a good and experienced management team and having moved to a full time setup this season there is no doubt Woking will have the expectation of a top



half finish. The reality is there won't be any easy games in this league, so we need to take each game as it comes and make sure we are as prepared as well as we can be.

We need you our supporters to be your normal selves today and make the atmosphere as hostile as possible from minute one. We want The Vale to be a fortress this season and we need everyone in it together to make that happen. The players voiced how much they missed the fans last season, so hopefully with this place rocking come 3pm, we can deliver a performance that gives the fans something to sing about.

Stuart

BY DOMINIC WHYLEY



NOTES FROM THE BOARDROOM

Dominic updates us on the season ahead on behalf of our Board of Directors

Welcome. To me this is our first real game at NL level since promotion. Whilst last season had some highlights, a few on the pitch, being live on BT Sport twice, in general it was incredibly tough for everyone throughout the club.

Winning promotion to the National League last May was an incredible achievement and a welcome return to this level of football for the club. However, had a

non-footballing board considered the merits of accepting promotion in the midst of a global pandemic given the huge investment required in the stadium and the uncertainty over revenue, there would be a genuine argument that we weren't ready. Of

course, football being football, and the whole ethos/ of sport being that you should grasp the opportunity to test yourself at the highest level and do everything you can to be competitive, it was never really a debate.

As has been said numerous times, the fact that we're here today in front on fans is down to so many people. The financial contribution from supporters was unsurpassed in our history and whilst the investment felt hollow given the lack

of fans and ultimately, no relegation, believe me, the impact it had on our survival was absolutely invaluable. StoneShare has relaunched this season to help support the budget and put the best quality side we can on the pitch for us all to enjoy. Thank you to Roger Slater and Jeremy Albert for all their work on this over the past 18 months and through the years.

Money aside, preparing a stadium that achieved

the required grading for National League football wouldn't have been possible without the effort and dedication of everyone who contributed, most notably Nick Symmons. Nick standing down from the Board is a massive loss to the club and his contribution



to achieving the ground grading was truly phenomenal, the club owes a huge debt of gratitude to Nick across many, many years.

We thank all our sponsors who have renewed and all our new sponsors, your support is hugely appreciated and we hope you enjoy a long association with the club. We're working on creating more space for sponsors and hospitality and hope to have that available in the coming weeks. We welcome anyone who wants to sponsor a game, donate a match ball or players kit and

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Paul Rumens has done a great job generating income from match sponsors in very testing conditions.

Darren Linden has joined the Board, which is a great addition and combines impressive business experience with a long-standing love and understanding of the club. Darren's already making a big difference working with Chris Woods and the returning Dan Finill in our media team and in lots of other areas too. Harvey Hicks has also joined us as general manager and hopefully he'll get a chance to meet more of our fan base over the coming weeks.

The start of the season is always exciting, how will the new players do, what will be achieved in the league and the cups, what will the memorable games be, so much to look forward to. Stuart and Matt have worked incredibly hard and astutely to assemble the squad we have today with the limited resources we have available, and it's been a positive pre-season campaign leading into today's big opener. For a variety of unavoidable reasons, pre-season has been disappointing financially with no eye-catching games or big revenue generators however we move on and continue to do everything we can to generate the income needed to compete at this level. It was however great to be able to give Jonathan North a proper send off after his fantastic contribution to the club over 10 years +.

Today see's us wearing our new Kelme kit for the first time, in what is a really progressive deal for the club and we hope for a long and fruitful partnership together. Buying replica shirts and the other high quality Wealdstone merchandise produced by Kelme further benefits the club so give the new gear a try if you can.

Today also sees the start of our initiative to give away, 500 free season tickets and scarves to supporters under the age of 16, along with the chance to win one of 40 replica first team kits. Growing our fan base and ensuring that we're an affordable, welcoming place for families to watch football is an important part of what we want to stand for as a club. Huge thanks to Lawrence Rand for sponsoring this scheme, Kelme and Kaizem for assisting with the price of kits and season tickets.

Hopefully today brings a record league crowd for the club at The Vale, please stay safe and respect fellow fans as we continue to deal with the impacts of Covid. Get behind the team, few of the current squad have experienced the Wealdstone crowd home or away and it will make a difference over the season as we embark on what will inevitably be a tough campaign.

Thanks as always for your support & Up The Stones!!!

Dom

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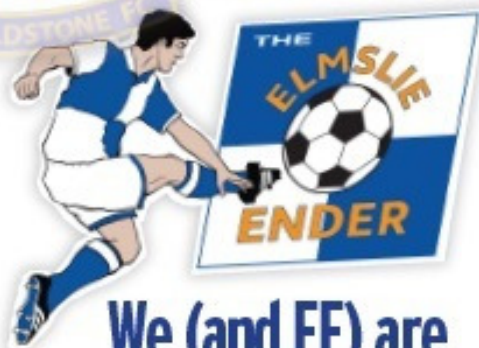
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BY SUDHIR RAWAL



The Elmslie Ender



We (and EE) are back, finally and properly



Manager Eddie Presland describes them as "the greatest pack the stands behind the goal Wealdstone are attacking. I Doug Avent captured them in celebration mood before the fin

After eighteen months or so of behind closed doors or limited capacity matches. Away fans back too, very importantly, as we, as Stones, can live and breathe our return back to the Conference, whatever the final outcome at the end of May.

Since the season ended, I have managed to see the FA Cup final, Champions League final, a couple of blast game and a test match at Lord's, and only at the home of cricket was the stadium full to capacity and how fantastic it was too. Just being sat cheek by jowl, masks a distant memory as no one could be bothered to wear them, many glasses of Pimm's downed with the ubiquitous picnic hamper was just wonderful. The cricket was meh, but the feeling of normality was surging through. Today at the Vale we get a proper Conference match experience after 33 years. It should be a decent crowd, last time we played Woking at the Vale, it was over thirteen hundred on a midweek night, but there is this unknown about how big it will be. It is difficult to see what the trend in the professional leagues is, as it seems a little variable. There is a body of thought that people will be desperate to return to sport having missed out for those Covid lockdown months and crowds will be surging back at maybe even higher levels than before; but equally, there will be people

who are concerned at being close to others, whether they have been vaccinated or not. The other major factor could be whether people will have lost the habit of going to football after those months away. Researchers from University College London in 2009 examined the new habits of 96 people over the space of 12 weeks and found that the average time it takes for a new habit to stick or to lose an old one is around 66 days, so around nine weeks or two months. The habit of not going to a game could well have been broken for some after all this time. You would hope that we have people chomping at the bit to get to a match. When I am writing this article, Woking have sold just under half of their allocation but with a week to go, you'd assume they will sell out, though some on their forum were suggesting they should have a much bigger allocation than originally given.

Talking of allocations, just over the horizon, we have the looming colossus of Southend United at the Vale. The seashiders have sold over 1,200 tickets for their match at Kings Lynn this weekend and there is much talk about how many tickets we will allocate to them, especially with their relative proximity to the capital. The club have a balancing act. Maximise revenue

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Supporters in the Southern League. They are the faithful who many of them have travelled to every away match this season, and game of the season on Saturday evenings.

campaign and not knowing what loans may come in the next week, it does seem that we are missing a bruiser in midfield in the same vein as Godfrey Poku and another forward, but we obviously operate with a limited budget. Last time I will mention that this season, honest. It is what it is but cannot be used as an excuse.

This season looks like being the most difficult in Conference history, with some of the money being spent by the Belts eye-watering. Chesterfield, who furloughed players last winter, have just spent a big six figure fee for Kabongo Tshimanga from Boreham Wood on a three-year deal. Stockport and the Hollywooders from Wales are spending big bucks, let alone Notts County and the two relegated sides in Southend and Grimsby. Scary stuff for them, as only two can go up with a salary cap coming down the line. Financial sanity has been ditched. Then you see that we are only one of three part-time teams, with Woking now moving up to full time having had investment from across the water. Our near neighbours at PEPF have awoken from their slumber and will not be the basket case that they were for most of last season, so finishing fourth from bottom is going to be much harder than it was even last year. But I think we are in a much better shape this season than we were last time around.

Some of you will have seen that we have a new Podcast, Stonecast, that started airing in the summer. No 3 should have dropped on the day before today's game. It was a gap in what we do and now a common way for fans to air their views, an audio fanzine in affect. The first one was something we were happy with bearing in mind we didn't have a clue and recorded it in the cavern like acoustics of the boardroom. The second one was a big improvement as we were more relaxed and had moved to the manager's office. The core team is Tim Parks, Jez Albert, Mark Hyde, Paul Franklin and me,

with Micky Kane doing the clever techie bits. To cover absentees, we have added Adam Hills and Dave Reader to the team and have just recorded a special focusing on a younger cohort of Tom Marshall, Rob Platt, Akhil Rawal and Leo Werin, all sons on long terms fans that have been going since they were knee-high to a grasshopper. Downloads have actually blown us away in their number and from across the globe too. Have a listen, they have been great fun to record and it is totally independent. Keep an eye out on social media platforms @stonecast85.

but also ensuring the match goes ahead without any health and safety issues, ensuring there aren't any wrong enders nor giving up home advantage. You can already see the Belts moaning about ticket allocations given to them by traditional non-league clubs. Those of my generation will remember that the largest league gate since Wealdstone turning professional is 3,400 verses Wimbledon at Lower Mead in the mid-seventies. Could we come close to this figure especially as it will be the biggest game in London that day? Would be heady stuff but also a logistical nightmare for the club, but these were the days we clamoured for, dreamed about, when back in Ryman League division three.

I have checked into a couple of friendlies and it is clear that we have put together a much better squad than last season. I think we all knew that what happened last summer wasn't fit for purpose and the new players seem more suited and have much more experience of this level. The squad also appears to be stronger in terms of dealing with the physicality of the Conference too. A week out from the start of the

'It is clear that we have put together a much better squad than last season'

BY TIM PARKS



R.I.P Eddie

A tribute to Eddie Presland, the former Stones player and manager who died earlier this month

It's a proud moment to be asked to be best man at a friend's wedding. And when the groom is the only man in history to score a hat-trick in a World Cup Final it's a pretty fine accolade.

Yet Eddie Presland, who died on August 1 at the age of 78, was the last person to brag about famous friends, even if it's Sir Geoff Hurst. Or the fact that he scored from 25 yards on his debut for West Ham in a 2-1 win over Liverpool in 1964.

"He was just a wonderful football man, a humble football man and I'm truly indebted to him for creating some of my best moments in the game" said an emotional George Duck last week.

Wealdstone goalscoring legend George (with 250 goals in a seven-year spell between 1972-79) grew close to Presland when the Essex boy picked him up in Edmonton twice a week to drive to training and matches at the Stones.

"I was living in Tottenham and loved travelling in with Eddie" says George. "He picked me up at the Regal Cinema, Edmonton, on the North Circular and the next hour was spent in conversation... mostly Eddie talking, I have to say, and I was in



awe of his footballing stories and the advice he gave. I was in my early 20s and Eddie was nearly 30. He'd played in the First Division for West Ham in the mid-1960s, and then got Crystal Palace promoted from Division One in 1969, and then gone on to play for Colchester and then in South Africa.

"Physically he was a big fella, 6ft 3 or 4, but he was in the West Ham mould as a touch player. He looked like a centre-half but (and he wouldn't mind me saying this) he wasn't great in the air. He'd say he was 6ft 3 and jumped like he was 4ft 6!"

"And when he stopped playing, and became a manager, he did me the greatest favour".

Eddie's first managerial job was with the Stones - Sid Prosser shocked everyone at the club by resigning just as the blues were poised to win promotion to the Southern League Premier Division in March 1974, and Presland was a popular choice to take his first steps in management, alongside Wealdstone teammate Terry Dyson, the ex-Spurs double-winner.

However, both Eddie and Terry were sacked within two years as Stones struggled to stay in the Southern Prem, which was the foremost league outside the pro ranks in the 1970s.

Presland moved on to take over as boss of Dagenham (no addendum clubs in those days!) and he quickly tried to woo George over to play for the Dagers when he heard that the prolific striker wanted to leave Lower Mead in 1979.

"Eddie heard that I would be available and he phoned me the day after Dagenham had been knocked out of the FA Trophy in the semi-final at Kettering. He was hurting at that defeat and I'll never forget what he said: "George, with you in

George (far left) celebrates winning the FA Trophy with boss Eddie Presland (far right)



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Eddie (far right) stands next to star striker George Duck as Stones line up at Lower Mead at the end of the 73-74 Southern League title winning season

the team we'll win the FA Trophy at Wembley next year. I'm convinced of it".

George went straight into the Daggers starting XI and, despite initially struggling for goals in his partnership with Ricky Kidd, everything turned out hunky dory and, of course, the east Londoners ended up at Wembley to face Northern giants Mossley the following May. And George headed the opening goal in a 2-1 win for the Daggers.

"My time at Wealdstone was the best, but that day at Wembley will never be forgotten" says George. "And of course, it was Eddie's faith in me that made it possible. We didn't use words like 'love' in those days but yes, I loved the man for what he did for my career and to create those special memories".

Sadly, Eddie was sacked by Dagenham shortly afterwards when club legend Ted Hardy became available and George eventually moved on (boo hiss!) to play for Harrow Borough in that club's peak years.

Eddie was by now manager at Hendon, and he persuaded George to play for the Greens in what was the striker's last career move. A bad facial injury effectively ended his career; Eddie was sacked again but still contacted George after he had become installed as Dulwich Hamlet manager.

"Then came the famous line" laughed George. "Eddie called and asked me for one last hurrah, to go and play for him at Dulwich and I had to say 'haven't you got the message yet Eddie?'"

"He'd been sacked three times while I played for him!"

But Eddie Presland's time in football was far from over. His deep well of football knowledge was tapped into as a

scout for new talent by Ipswich, West Ham and Spurs. He was on the same wavelength as the Tottenham boss Martin Jol and is credited with unearthing the talents of Gareth Bale and Luca Modric.

"I remember Eddie telling me about Modric" says George. "He would travel all over Europe, particularly Spain and eastern Europe and this one time he'd been to watch a certain player. But Eddie was captivated by this little fellow who wasn't one anyone's radar - Luca Modric. He just asked who the small, slight midfielder was and made out he wasn't interested... a few weeks later Eddie made contact and Spurs had signed a gem".

Eddie Presland must have wondered what he'd stumbled into when he made his debut for Wealdstone at the age of 27 in November 1971. We were in our first season of semi-pro football and Alan Humphries' side were a rosey old collection of ex-pros and young amateurs not quite up to the mark. In his first game the Stones were humiliated 5-0 at home by Stourbridge (admittedly one of the best teams in the Southern League Div One North), and in his second we lost 2-1 at Dunstable who were one of the weakest teams in the division.

But he soon established himself as a talented full-back with a penchant for long-range shooting. Those present will never forget his wonderful 25-yarder that knocked Wimbledon out of the Trophy in 1974 - and the blast that sunk Barnet in the London Challenge Cup earlier that season.

In those pre-You Tube days we had no idea that this elegant full-back had scored on his West Ham debut, or been a first-class cricketer for Essex in his early 20s. Or that he had been Sir Geoff Hurst's best man.

"I've got aches and pains from playing but, honestly, I wouldn't change anything. I think most footballers would say the same thing" says George Duck. "But it knocked me sideways when

Eddie told me had inoperable cancer. He phoned me in May and I said 'Alright Ed?' and he just laughed and said 'No, not really' and then told me all about it."

Eddie had sold up in Cranham, in Essex - where he'd always lived - to move up to the North-East with his wife Celia to be near his son, Neil, and grandchild. And he died in hospital in Newcastle at the age of 78.

But he will never be forgotten. R.I.P Eddie, a proper football man.



Eddie (right) challenges the keeper with George Duck in the 73-74 season

BY DON CROSS



AND TONY PLATT

R.I.P Kat Kelly

Remembering Brian 'Kat' Kelly, one of the great larger-than-life characters on the terraces.. and also a great teammate for members of the WFC supporters' football team of the 1980s



Kat Kelly (far left) features in his 'favourite picture of all time' as SFC Wealdstone celebrate their first-ever League trophy in May 1983 at Lower Mead

Kat sadly passed away on 8th August. He had been following Wealdstone FC for almost 50 years, since the mid 70s and was a founder member of the Supporters Club football team in 1978. At that time he would regularly travel to away games with Dylan Cross, Justin O'Brien and Chris Jefferson (CJ). One notable trip to Yeovil resulted in them returning home with three match balls that had been kicked over the stand behind the goal and each time one of them would pop them in the boot of the car.

He had infectious laugh, or cackle, that was somewhere between Mutley and a sub machine gun - but whenever people tried to mimic it, he would reply with a straight face and say 'I don't laugh like that'. But he did!

In the early days of SFC Wealdstone the late Kev Bright used to organise training at RAF Northolt. This would last for a couple of hours before we all retired to the RAF Corporals Club until the early hours. Kat would often play draughts with the RAF lads,

where each piece was a half pint of beer and when you took a piece you downed the contents. It was a game he took to quite readily.

Footballing-wise he was a hard tackling and solid central midfielder, a bit of an enforcer and protector on the pitch and fiercely loyal and protective of his team mates. His sheer presence inspired confidence in the younger players.

He had various running battles on the pitch over the seasons, but one in particular was with a player we nicknamed Gloria - one of those players who liked dishing it out to the small players but whined to the ref every time he got tackled.

After snidely giving a young Trevor 'Wisp' Davies a few naughty challenges Kat stepped in and left Gloria on the floor... a few words were exchanged and the phrase 'I'll see you after the game' was uttered. They met in the changing room showers and Gloria was left licking his wounds. Maybe he had bitten off more than he could chew.

One thing he did perfect, that



only the great Johan Cruyff managed in the game was a turn that beat defenders every time. Whilst the Ajax master mesmerised his opponent with a silky effortless movement, Kats turn was designed to baffle and confuse not only his opponent but himself and anyone watching. The Kat Kelly Turn required the whole diameter of the center circle to execute!

Being a social animal, Kat persuaded all and sundry to enjoy the numerous activities he organised. Whether it was under the banner of his famed promotional company 'Kat Kelly Presents' (which included an Elmslie Tavern Caribbean night and sets from the "alleged" world renowned Caribbean entertainer 'Emperor Smokey') or more adult events, such as Steve 'Hughie' Marshall's 30th birthday at his brother Mick's pub - where he surprised Hughie with a couple of exotic dancers who provided an interesting range of entertainment. I can see Kat laughing now at Hughie's face, with tears rolling down his cheeks.

For his 40th, Kat ran a party bus to the away game at Canvey Island, a 51-seater packed with his mates from Wealdstone and the Norfolk Arms and others he'd gathered up along the way. As you can imagine, a few beverages were consumed and the antics earned the bus a police escort off the island. The Police instructed the driver to pull up a mile or so from the ground and wait a while before the escort arrived.

This just happened to be right outside a hardware store, which was just like the one in Open All Hours - and with perfect timing Canvey Island's answer to Arkwright was packing up his street display and putting his items back inside. Every time he picked up an incinerator or a rotary washing line someone would jump off the coach, grab an item and bring it on the coach. This continued for a short while until the Police escort following the coach requested all items be returned. On arrival back at the Elmslie Tavern Kat proceeded to sweep the floor with an industrial sized broom. We have no idea where it came from, honest.

His local was the Norfolk Arms in North Wembley and he would often turn up at Stones games with various acquaintances he may have known for hours or years - Kat could persuade them to come along to games, home or away.

The pub meant a lot to him: he was in there once and a fire had started in the cellar. All customers were asked to evacuate, so being the hero he was, he obeyed instructions went outside opened the cellar trap door and threw a couple of pints on the blaze then walked back in to the bar.

Working as a sales rep for DAB (Dortmund Actien Brauerei), he used to park his van in the Lower Mead car park and we would sample the products after the game. Who else could organise free booze for his mates at football other than Kat? The other thing he arranged through his contacts with DAB was a football tour to Cologne in Germany with SFC Wealdstone and a team from France, followed by a meal at the Brewery and entertainment, thus proving he could indeed organise a party up in a brewery.

Kat had Diabetes and in recent years suffered with his mobility due to a neurological illness and a subsequent broken hip after a fall at home. Throughout these challenges he remained positive and optimistic. His sense of fun and humour never deserted him and was always (literally) on hand with a joke or remark to have his audience in stitches, often when it was needed most.

He had recently been so excited about his acquisition of a top of the range mobility scooter he knew he could get out and about again, down to his local Community Centre. Another thing Kat organised was to set up a bar in the residence he was in at Mill End. Upon identifying an empty room it was swiftly converted into a little bar where he put on streams of Wealdstone games and other sports for his fellow residents.

He had a real enthusiasm for life and bringing enjoyment and laughter to others. He was a loyal and much loved friend and supporter of our football club. Literally every memory of Brian is one of laughter and friendship. Through the tears we raise a glass and a smile for Brian 'Kat' Kelly.



Half-time team talk at an SFC Wealdstone Sunday League game: Left to right, Steve Marshall, Justin O'Brien (James Bartrick behind) Paul Williams, Kat, and Tim Parks

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BY TIM PARKS



THE BIG STONES INTERVIEW

Jack Cook

Introducing giant centre-back Jack for his league debut... against his old club. Awks!

It's funny how often quirks of fate, or personal contacts come to determine how a player comes to join a club... or doesn't.

In Jack Cook's case the go-between was his girlfriend's mother, and her friend who knows our Chairman's wife!

"It's a funny one" laughed our new 6ft 4in centre-back signing from Woking, who was just wondering at the end of last season how he was going to break it to the Surrey club that he didn't want to turn fully-professional like his team-mates.

27-year-old Jack is a bit of a high-flier with Nike, working to recruit young footballers to the brand and building quite a reputation.

"I've been in this role for a year, and four years in total and I really enjoy it" he explained. "Basically I talk to young teenagers, 13-14 year-olds in the big club academies - and with England - and recruit them to represent Nike. They get all the boots and equipment they need and in return we get the publicity.

"There is a proper career path with the company and that was why I didn't want to go full-time when Woking announced at the end of last season that they were going to adopt a fully-pro model. I just couldn't be available for training during the day and Dowse (Alan Dowson, the Cards' manager) was pretty firm that it was going to be full-time or nothing. I didn't really have an option!"

It was obvious last season that the Stones needed a big, commanding centre-back and Jack fits the bill. "Stuart Maynard got in touch at the



Jack in pre-season action for the Stones and (left) tending off the powerful Isaac Success in the Woking-Watford game two years ago



end of the season but really it was my girlfriend Mary Loveday's mum who brokered the deal!" he revealed.

"Her friend is pals with Wealdstone chairman Rory Fitzgerald's wife, and between them they got me talking to Rory. That was how it happened, and I'm very glad it did as I've always been impressed by the way the Stones play. It suits my own game and I'm loving playing as a centre-back now having spent most of my time at Woking as a right back, or even a wing back.

"This way I can go forwards or backwards and dictate the play.. I've had more touches per



WEALDSTONE 2021-22

game this pre-season that in probably the whole of last season when I was at Woking!"

Jack has been the dominant force in a back three with another new capture, Nike Tavares (ex Crystal Palace), and Stones skipper Jerome Okimo who appears like a man refreshed after a torrid end to last season.

"I think Nik's enjoying it as much as I am" says Jack. "He's only really played as a full-back before but now you can see how strong and quick he is. And he reads the danger really well. We had a few dodgy moments as we learned each other's game in the early friendlies, but now, with Jerome, I think we're really confident about the season ahead. The draw at Colchester gave everyone a lift, going to a League two club and controlling the game

"Defensively we're very sound and we've also got Jack Cawley and Connor Stevens to come in".

Jack was brought up in Stoke Newington, North London (where he still lives, now in his own flat with Primary School teacher girlfriend Mary) but he didn't take the traditional path into the game through a pro club academy. Instead, he was spotted while playing at Brighton University.

"I had been at Charlton Athletic very briefly as a kid, but it was while playing for the Uni team that Worthing got in touch and asked me to play in the Ryman League. I then had a trial at Aldershot, which came to nothing, but out of that came an offer from Hampton & Richmond.... Dowse was in charge there and I ended up signing for

Woking after he had

moved to Kingfield as manager. "Oh, I also played a some games for Cockfosters in the Spartan South Midlands League Division Two!" Jack recalls.

"Living in North London as a teenager, around the time that I started at Uni and having no transport, I was a bit limited to the Piccaddilly Line and Cockfosters was the last stop!"

So with that rich history, you must have played against the Stones at least a couple of times?

"Ha, yes I have but never very successfully" he admitted. "I was Player of the Season at Woking in 2018-19, the year they were promoted back to the National League, but Wealdstone did the double over Woking (1-0 at Grosvenor Vale and 2-0 at Kingfield) and I think I played in both. I certainly played in the Play-off semi-final at the end of that season when we came from behind to beat the Stones 3-2... that was probably the most dramatic game I ever played in though I'm sure it rankles with Stones fans.

"I also played in the final game last season, when Wealdstone came to Woking and beat us 4-2. Some of the football that Stu and Matty's side played that afternoon was brilliant so it was great to find out that the club wanted to sign me".

Jack also played his part in Woking's impressive FA Cup run that 2018-19 season, which ended in a narrow 2-0 defeat to Premier League Watford at Kingfield in the the Third Round. Jack had a rare old battle with Isaac Success (pictured far left) and the Cards held their own until Watford made a couple of late substitutions and one of them, Troy Deeney, got the decisive opening goal.

"But I have great memories of the FA Cup run that season" said Jack. "The win at Swindon Town in the Second Round is right up there in my all-time favourite football moments. It would be amazing to have a Cup run with Wealdstone".

The irony of facing his old team-mates in the opening game this afternoon is not lost of the giant centre-back, but at least he has our other new capture from the Cards - Charlie Cooper - to share the catcalls from the visiting fans.

"Charlie is a real powerhouse of a midfielder" says Jack of the 24-year ex-Halifax and Forest Green youngster. "Charlie's dad Mark is an ex-pro and manager, and his grandad won the World Cup with England. My family are all unknowns!"

Only for the moment, Jack...



Jack (centre) in a Woking shirt and challenging for the ball with Riley Harbottle and Jerome Okimo in the game at the end of last season.

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Whereabouts do you live, Lee? South Ruislip
Have you always lived in that area? Yes, since I was a child.

When was your first Stones game? We came to the first game of the 2018-19 season, against Weston-super-Mare (won 4-1) and we've had so many great memories since - the players speak to us and other fans and it's also been great getting to know fellow supporters

Who first brought you along to a game? I used to come down here when it was Ruislip Manor's ground - local people were talking about the football and also how much fun it is.

What were your first impressions of the club? We loved it from the moment we came here - we have loved everything about it!

What's the most memorable game you've EVER seen? When we beat Bath 7-0 in the promotion season two years ago - that was the best day of my life. Me and my children Daisy and Will, who also come to the games, were so happy.

Your favourite away Wealdstone trip? Weymouth was the best, two years ago even though we were in a bad car crash just five minutes away from the ground. Everyone was so thoughtful as well, and asking all of us if we were alright. And we won the game 4-3!

What level of football do you prefer? We prefer Na-

tional League because of Wealdstone. Everything about the club is great: the players and the supporters create a great atmosphere here.

How big a part of your life is the game? It's everything. My family is always talking about Wealdstone and keeping others up to date about what's going on at the club.

How do you fit watching football in with your family/working life? We put the games straight into our calendars and see how we can work around it to see as many games as we can.

Are your kids as keen on watching the Stones as you are? Yes they love Wealdstone too... it's everything to them. My son Will tells a lot of people from school - and people outside of school - about how good it is and many of his friends and the other players in his football team come along to games.

Who are the best Wealdstone players you've ever seen? Could you name a best-ever Stones side? Not a team, but some of our best players are Connor Stevens, Jerome Okimo, Dan Wishart and Danny Parish.

What do you think of the bars and catering at the Vale? We also love the bar and the catering and I know the staff there - I'm always happy to help out if needed. I also help at the club organising the mascots and ball





Lee is pictured at the Chesham friendly, and (below left) with her son Will and daughter Daisy

boys.

Do you visit the Megastore? Yes, Will is always in there and comes back with things. They also are very friendly there too.

Do you think Stones can aspire to playing in the EFL? Yes, totally
Would you travel to away games by coach if the club provided them? Yes of course that would be a great atmosphere and I think the club should run coaches to more away games than they currently do.

How did you and your family cope football-wise with last season's Covid restrictions? It was very hard as we missed our football so much and all the players, staff and the fans as it didn't feel the same not being in the ground to socialise. We watched all of the games home and away on the live streams - and although it was good we would much have preferred to have been there.

What was the first live stream game you saw last season? The first game of the season at Yeovil, the 2-2 draw.

Finally, where do you think Wealdstone FC will be in the year 2025? We would love to be in a higher league but sometimes these things are a long process.

As long as we have our Wealdstone family we'll be happy.

WEALDSTONE 2021-22

'Have I seen Wealdstone before? The game two years ago was amazing'

THE AWAY END: NICKY DONAGHEY



Nicky (left) and daughter Hannah at a Cards game

Name and age? Nicky, sixties
Which has been the most enjoyable era of watching Woking In your opinion? The cup successes in the 90s will be hard to beat. The last promotion to the national league gave us some great away day memories

Are you excited by the prospect of the club becoming full time?

Yes - hopefully it will allow us to compete with the other teams in the league on a more equal playing field, and will change our 'underdog' mentality.

Is it sustainable? Hopefully this time it will be

How many fans do you think Woking will bring to the Vale this afternoon? As many as we are allowed - there's so much excitement for the first competitive match post-covid.

Have you been to a Wealdstone game before? Yes. One of the most memorable matches in our recent history - the conference south play off semi-final two years ago. A match Woking fans will never forget, an amazing game.

What was your experience of football watching last season? The clubs did a great job of providing live streams for most matches, but with nothing to play for by the end of the season I think it was hard for players and fans to follow with that much interest.

Are you comfortable returning to a stadium with fans? Yes, I think clubs have taken precautions to keep fans safe.

Do you think the Cards will be able to mount a promotion challenge this season? What about the new signings?

I'm not sure that promotion is realistic this season but the new signings are exciting and there is a positive feeling around the club.

Is Jack Cook a loss? Jack has been great for us for the last few seasons but it's understandable that he couldn't make the jump to full time football. We'll miss his long throws!

Who do you imagine will fill the play-off places this season and why? And who will win the NL? Torquay and Stockport are the ones to watch!

Finally... where will Woking FC be in five years time?

National league to championship in five seasons :)

THE AWAY END 2: JONATHAN WOOLEY

40 years a Woking fan... and on the anniversary the opposing keeper that day was in the hospitality lounge!



Name and age? Jonathan Woolley, age 52.

When was your first game, and your memories of it? It was a friendly against Fulham in August 1978. My brother took me to the game along with some friends and we were hooked.

On the 40th anniversary of that game we were in the hospitality lounge, where we were presented with a replica shirt, and coincidentally on the next table was sat the Fulham goalkeeper from our first match, Doug Hatcher! Very strange.

Which has been the most enjoyable era of watching Woking in your opinion? The nineties were undoubtedly the best years, however I was at uni for most of it! I had to suffer the 80s and the drop to Isthmian division two south, but it was character building. The best memory has to be 0-3 down to Windsor in a FA Cup replay with 8 mins left, we managed to get three quick goals and win in extra time. Woking signed Windsor's best player that night within a month, Mark Biggins.

Are you excited by the prospect of the club becoming full time? The club has tried this before in 2003 and that ended with relegation in six years. It has attracted a better standard of player, and unlike before we have a great management team, so I am quietly positive.

Is it sustainable? I don't know if it is sustainable, on the surface no, the new owner must be losing money by the truckload but we will see. The new owners are successful so we have to trust that they know what they are doing, whatever that is!

How many fans do you think Woking will bring to the Vale this afternoon? I would estimate 200 - 300 Woking fans, hopefully more. It's been a while since having the chance to see a competitive away game.

Have you been to a Wealdstone game before? Yes, I first saw Wealdstone v Maidstone in 1984, a young 'Vince Jones' was playing. I then

saw the Barnet away game in May 1985 that ended 7-0 as Paul Bowgett ftd the Gola League trophy. The Stones were resting players and I was also at Wembley five days later when they beat Boston to win the FA Trophy. More recently, I sponsored the play-off semi-final in May 2019, what a memorable match that was!! I was also at your FA Cup match at Bristol Manor Farm, in October 2019, as now I live in Bristol, which finished 0-0. Ex-Card Ross Lafayette missed a penalty.

What was your experience of football watching last season? Last season I was consigned to watching step 4 and 5 local matches, rather than stream games, as there is nothing like being there. That ended at Christmas and I have been starved for 6 months. The Premier League on tv is like watching chess.

Are you comfortable returning to a stadium with fans? Extremely comfortable. I went to Coventry's first home match last week, and although I have no affinity I could not stop smiling at the fantastic atmosphere. I think we all miss it more than we realise.

Do you think the Cards will be able to mount a promotion challenge this season? What about the new signings? And is Jack Cook a big loss? I will be happy with Woking competing for the play-offs, and perhaps winning the FA Trophy again. Jack Cook is a good player if he remembers to stay goal-side of his attacker as he has limited pace.

And what about Wealdstone's chances this season? I hear Wealdstone have not managed to go full-time, therefore they may start well, and that is their main chance of getting enough points to avoid a relegation scrap. The relentless winter midweeks will be unforgiving.

Who do you imagine will fill the play off places this season? I think the play-off teams will be similar to last season. Stockport, Chesterfield, Wrexham, Notts County, Dagenham, plus two others.

Finally... where will Woking FC be in five years time? In five years I can see Woking being exactly where they are now. They have been at this level for 30 years now and it will take something extra special to get promoted unless three promotion places can relieve the log jam.



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Opposition in focus

WOKING FC

THE CARDS

Woking Football Club, known as the Cards (from the Cardinal red of the red and white halves), was formed in 1889. The Club joined the West Surrey League in 1895/96, winning the title by one point on the final day of the season. However, within 21 years of being formed, the Club was in danger of folding for financial reasons. The turning point came when, in January 1908, Woking played Bolton Wanderers in the First Round of the FA Cup, having battled through five qualifying rounds. Despite losing the away game 5-0, the Club made it into the national press. Bolton Wanderers, impressed by the minnows they had defeated, travelled to Woking for a friendly match the following season, which kept the Club solvent.

In 1911 the Club joined the Isthmian League, maintaining their place in the top division for 72 years and finishing as runners-up to Wycombe Wanderers in 1956/57. That achievement was eclipsed the following season when, in front of a 71,000 crowd, the Cards beat Ilford 3-0 in the last FA Amateur Cup Final to be televised live. Sadly, the Club then went into decline, culminating in a first-ever relegation in 1982/83. By the end of the 1984/85 season the Club had plunged to Division Two South of the Isthmian League. It was during that season that former player, Geoff Chapple, was appointed as manager. Although he was not able to save the Club from relegation, the renaissance was underway. Just missing out on promotion at the first attempt, the Club clinched the Division Two South title in 1986/87 and, after two third place finishes in Division One, they were promoted back to the Premier Division at the end of the 1989/90 season.

The next season saw the Club become part of FA Cup folklore. Entering the competition at the Fourth Qualifying Round, they beat three Conference sides to set up a Third Round tie away to West Bromwich Albion. Recovering from being a goal behind, Woking triumphed 4-2, thanks to a superb team effort and a never-to-be-forgotten hat-trick from Tim Buzaglo. To be drawn out of the hat with a home game against



Everton was beyond everyone's wildest dreams. The tie was switched to Goodison Park and, against a team packed with internationals, the sides were separated only by a solitary Kevin Sheedy goal. Over 34,000 people remained in the ground to give the players a rapturous standing ovation.

Promotion to the Conference was achieved in 1991/92. The Isthmian League title was clinched in early April, with seven games still to be played.

The FA Trophy was won in 1994, 1995 and 1997 and the Cards also achieved five successive top five finishes in the Conference, including being runners-up in 1994/95 and 1995/96.

At the end of the 1996/97 campaign, having just clinched the FA Trophy for the third time, Geoff Chapple and his coach, Colin Lippiatt, left the Club and joined Kingstonian. John McGovern, the former Derby County, Nottingham Forest and Leeds United midfielder, was appointed. Hopes were high that he would lead Woking into the League but, although the Club finished in third place, his style of play and his personality did little to endear him to the fans. A poor start to the 1998/99 campaign led to his dismissal. Brian McDermott, the former Arsenal player, joined Woking on a non-contract basis and achieved a temporary upturn in fortunes, guiding the team to a ninth place finish.

Significant events had taken place off the field. The downturn in the Club's fortunes had led to a financial crisis. With the Club

WEALDSTONE 2021-22



facing administration or worse, successful businessman and long-time fan, Chris Ingram, came to the rescue, becoming Chairman in February 2002. He continues to own the ground, with the Club enjoying a 125-year lease at a peppercorn rent, but his financial backing of the Club and involvement in its running ceased at the end of the 2010-11 season.

The Club went full-time in the summer of 2003. The fans' hopes were borne out by a much better season, with the Cards achieving a ninth place finish, having been on the fringe of the play-off places until the last few weeks. Again, only a poor finish the following season deprived the Cards of a play-off place, but a final placing of 8th with 68 points was the best achievement since 1997/98. Disappointingly, the Cards failed to mount a challenge for a play-off place in 2005/06, finishing in 11th place. 2006/07 was another season of underachieving and, despite bringing in fresh faces during the January transfer window, the Cards finished in 15th place.

The reprieve proved only temporary, with the following two seasons producing more

disappointment, culminating in the Cards' relegation in summer 2009 from the BSP after 17 years in the top flight of non-League football.

A storming end to the 2009-10 season saw the Cards clinch 5th place. Dover Athletic were beaten in the play-off semi-final but the Cards lost to Bath City in the final.

The Club went part-time in summer 2010, with Baker and Dack both being awarded new two-year contracts. But, in spite of good runs in the FA Cup and the FA Trophy, both decided to leave the Club in January 2011, with Garry Hill taking over the reins till the end of the season, with Steve Thompson as First Team Coach. A dramatic upturn in league fortunes took the Club into 5th place, but the Cards lost to Farnborough in the play-off semi-final.

The revival continued apace in the 2011-12 season, with the Cards reaching the top spot in late September and staying there throughout the campaign in spite of being pushed hard by Dartford. The BSBS title was won by nine points, with only five games lost all season.

The Cards finished in a comfortable 12th place in their first season back in the Conference Premier, playing an entertaining brand of football, and did even better the following season, ending in 9th place after showing great form in the second half of the campaign. The 2014-15 campaign saw the Club finish in a commendable 7th spot, missing a play-off place by only three points.

Garry Hill maintained his record of top-half finishes the following season as the side ended in 12th position. But the summer of 2016 saw the loss of some experienced players and the side struggled throughout the 2016-17 season, eventually averting relegation

thanks to generally improved form from the new year onwards, finishing in 18th place.

In May 2017, following an announcement that new investment would take place in the Club, Anthony Limbrick was appointed manager, with Jason Goodlife joining him as assistant manager shortly afterwards. The Club also announced that it would be moving gradually to full-time status.

2018/19 saw the Cards promoted back to the National League after beating Welling 1-0 in the play off final.

2020/21 RESULTS
(H) LOST 0-1 23RD MARCH 2021
(A) WON 4-2 29TH MAY 2021

WEALDSTONE'S RECORD v WOKING FC

P 26 W 16 D 3 L 7 F 61 A 37

Month	Comp	Score	Crowd	Log	Wind	Weather
21	WOKING	VML				
28	CHESTERFIELD	VML				
30	SOUTHEND UNITED	VML				
September						
4	DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE	VML				
11	ALTRINCHAM	VML				
14	HOTTS COUNTY	VML				
18	ALDERSHOT TOWN	VML				
25	KING'S LYNN TOWN	VML				
October						
2	TORQUAY UNITED	VML				
5	SOLIHULL MOORS	VML				
9	EASTLEIGH	VML				
16	TBD	FAC4Q				
23	Weymouth	VML				
26	GRIMSBY TOWN	VML				
November						
13	BARNET	VML				
20	Wrexham	VML				
23	Dover Athletic	VML				
27	STOCKPORT COUNTY	VML				
December						
4	Bromley	VML				
11	FC HALIFAX TOWN	VML				
18	TBD	FAT3Q				
26	MAIDENHEAD UNITED	VML				
28	Boreham Wood	VML				
January						
2	Maidenhead United	VML				
8	YEOVIL TOWN	VML				
22	Woking	VML				
25	HOTT'S COUNTY	VML				
29	Grimsby Town	VML				
February						
12	Barnet	VML				
19	WREXHAM	VML				
26	Solihull Moors	VML				
26	TORQUAY UNITED	VML				
March						
5	Eastleigh	VML				
12	WEYMOUTH	VML				
19	Stockport County	VML				
22	DOVER ATHLETIC	VML				
26	BROMLEY	VML				
April						
2	FC Halifax Town	VML				
9	CHESTERFIELD	VML				
15	Southend United	VML				
18	BOREHAM WOOD	VML				
23	Altrincham	VML				
30	DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE	VML				
May						
2	Yeovil Town	VML				
7	KING'S LYNN TOWN	VML				
15	Aldershot Town	VML				



KEY (SYMBOLS)

- = First substitution
- = Second substitution
- = Third substitution
- = Yellow Card
- = Yellow Card meaning suspension
- = Red Card
- = Straight Red Card

= Goal
 = Penalty
 (Where available, the ti
 contained within the sy
 Match date in red = Me
 Opposition in Blue = M

PRE-SEASON FRIENDLY RESULTS

17th July	Hungerford Town	A	W	2-1	Charles, Fasanmade
20th July	St Albans City	A	D	1-1	Okimo
24th July	Bedford Town	A	D	2-2	Cook, Fasanmade
27th July	Chesham United	A	W	4-1	Fasanmade, Buse, Browne, Elito
31st July	Colchester United	A	D	1-1	Umerah
10th August	Watford Under 23s	H	W	3-0	Fasanmade, Dronfield, Wishart
14th August	Hungerford Town	H	W	3-1	Umerah (2), Lewis





KEY (PLAYERS)		
Code	Name	Squad No.
BRO	— Rhys Browne	10
BUS	— Matt Buse	8
CAW	— Jack Cawley	34
CHA	— Ashley Charles	4
JCO	— Jack Cook	2
CCO	— Charlie Cooper	24
DRO	— Zach Dronfield	19
DYE	— Alex Dyer	18
ELE	— Andrew Eleftheriou	12
ELI	— Medy Elito	20
FAS	— Craig Fasanmade	7
HEA	— Eli Heam	15
LEW	— Dennon Lewis	11
MAR	— Alfie Marigliani	13
OKI	— Jerome Okimo	6
PAR	— Danny Parish	14
SHR	— Tecane Shrowder	29
STE	— Connor Stevens	5
TAV	— Nikola Tavares	17
UME	— Joshua Umerah	9
WIC	— George Wickens	1
WIS	— Daniel Wishart	13

The team order from 01 to 11 and substitutes follows the order on the team sheet supplied by the club to the competition authorities.

- VNL = National League Premier
- FAC = FA Cup
- FAT = FA Trophy
- MSC = Middlesex Senior Cup
- ☉7 = Wind direction, Wind speed (mph)
- ☁12c = Weather, Temperature (Celsius)

...me of each event is
 ...mbol.)
 ...atch not on Saturday)
 ...atch live on BT Sport)

RESULTS 2021/2022

This season we want this results grid to tell as much of the story of each match as is possible in the space allowed. As well as who started where, and which substitute replaced which starter, we'll be showing (wherever possible) the time of each substitution, each booking, each sending off, each suspension (heaven forbid!) and each goal.

To make this work, each player will be referred to on this spread by a three-letter abbreviation, as outlined in the key above. This being the first match of the season, all we have are our pre-season results. We do, however, have this splendid squad photograph to tide you over.

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BY JONATHAN NORTH

Unforgettable memories of ten special years: I truly wish it had been even longer



Two weeks ago, our long-serving keeper Northy enjoyed a deserved testimonial. Here is his own editorial that day, for those who missed it...

Well, a testimonial. Who'd have thought it? What a way to make a man feel old!

I'm trying to imagine what 19-year-old me would have written if he were told then that he was going to spend the very best part of ten years as a Wealdstone player. One thing I do know is they'd be very different to what I'm going to write now...!

When I first turned up at the Vale for pre-season training in the summer of 2010, I wasn't entirely sure what I was letting myself in for. Released by Watford, the plan was very much to get straight back into professional football as soon as possible. That summer I'd spent some time on trial at a few clubs, but nothing had quite worked out. Bizarrely, nobody seemed to want to take a punt on a keeper who barely reached 6ft when stood on tiptoes with studs on!

Anyway, a quick call from Gordon Bartlett (the then manager) and I was on my way to Wealdstone to "keep myself ticking over until something else came up." Turns out I'm still waiting...!

Oddly I still remember my first training session well. Far from Watford's pristine pitches of London Colney, we trained on the somewhat less pristine pitches outside the ground at the Vale. GB was obviously GB while it was my first meeting with the likes of Micky, Gilly, LFM and Jason; all people who would be a massive part of the journey over

the years to come.

It would also be by my first encounter with a certain Lee Chappell... eyes well and truly opened!

I'll also never forget my first league game, away at Hastings United. I'd only joined a few weeks before and was feeling pretty cocksure of myself. A decent couple of friendlies, long hair in an Alice band, gold Nike vapours and the arrogance of youth. We swiftly went on to lose 2-0 in front of what I'd soon learn was a typically vociferous away following and it was anything but the walk in the park I thought it'd be. I sat next to Brooksy on the journey home and all he could say to me was "Bruvvvvvv."

Anyone who knows Brooksy will be able to well imagine his face as he said that... and also know that that was pretty much the extent of his vocabulary.

Away from the game though, the coach journey home is also stand out moment for me. Forget the protein shakes and pasta I'd been used to, this time it was a stop off at the nearest shop for recovery-aiding alcoholic beverages and whatever else the whip around could afford. I could get used to this, I thought, as the professional dream already began to fade.

But this is very much indicative of my early days at the club. Initially signing with a short-term view and desperate to progress; Wealdstone swiftly offered me a different perspective on football and probably one I hadn't realised I'd needed. I was lucky that that changing room when I joined was one of the best I've been in with some real football people and real Wealdstone people. Chapps, Massey, Chrissy O'Leary, Wes, Cronin, Brooksy to name a few. Football was more enjoyable than ever, training was more enjoyable than ever, journeys home from games was more enjoyable than ever. It's fair to say the Wealdstone bug had begun to hatch.

But when I look back, the special memories are really alongside the people who were on the journey with me. I've been

The glorious Trophy win at Cambridge United!



Northy's finest hour



It's Bognor at home, 0-0, in the FA Cup 4th qualifying round, November 2015, and Stones concede a penalty. But Northy guesses right (left) and saves Jason Prior's spot kick. Bogy fans are open mouthed!



An hour later, Stones are 1-0 up (Hudson-Odoi) but we concede another penalty. Northy tries to break Prior's concentration...



...and is booked to the amusement of Northy and the delight of the Bogy fans as they await the equaliser...



...but it works as Wales' No.1 plunges to his left again to deny the prolific No.9. Tom Hamblin later heads a second goal and Stones are through to the First Round!

STONE 2021-22

so lucky to play with some brilliant players and some brilliant people. Mates, not just team-mates. Mad how a journey home from Truro at 3am on a wet Tuesday night when you have to be up for work three hours later can be something you look forward to!

For me, that's what today's all about. Seeing some old faces, bringing people together, sharing stories and remembering the good times. There are too many to list but truly some of my best memories have been associated with this club. On the pitch, but also off it. In changing rooms, coaches, clubhouses across the country, Christmas parties (Amsterdam... but that's one for a few beers), Magaluf (but that's one for a few more beers) and countless more.

It's fair to say I joined Wealdstone a little lost and unsure of my next steps. During my time here, countless life milestones took place in my life away from the club, both good and bad. But Wealdstone was always a constant (as was Fingers wearing three quarter length trousers/shorts). There are too many people to thank. There are too many people to mention. There are too many people who made my time so special.

But if you're reading this, then from the bottom of my heart; thank you.

So, to go back to my question at the start. 19-year-old me probably would have said something along the lines of "Ten years?! What the hell went wrong!?"

Thirty-year-old me, however: "Ten years?! I wish it could have been longer!"

I'm truly honoured to be given a testimonial. It might sound like a throwaway comment, but I can assure you it's not. The club is only going in one direction and I'm so pleased to have been able to play a small part in that journey. Let's enjoy today and I look forward to saying hello and seeing you at the bar later.

For the lads I've played with, they'll know how rare this is.... but the first round's on me! UTS!

Northy

OVERPAGE: CRONIN'S CONTRIBUTION

BY SEAN CRONIN

Brilliant memories of playing and partying alongside Northy, and proving myself the No.1 keeper

And Northy's former team-mate Sean Cronin joined in for the testimonial programme...

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Vale. After enduring the last 18 months of lockdowns and with football behind closed doors I'm sure you're all looking forward to getting back and watching some live football, even if today is played at a near walking pace by slightly overweight, greying, middle aged blokes.

At the time of writing this I'm unable to attend. Which I'm gutted about, because it's sure to be a great occasion on and off the pitch and a chance to catch up with old teammates and share memories and a few pints.

Northy has been a fantastic servant to Wealdstone Football Club, I'm sure he had countless offers to leave over the years but he remained loyal throughout his time at Wealdstone. It's a shame his time at the club ended the way it did - but nevertheless, today is a fitting tribute to an absolute Wealdstone legend, and the second-best Welshman to have donned the gloves for the Stones!

It's just as well that Northy was offered his testimonial outside of ski season as we all know he was fond of spending many a Saturday during the season on the slopes... Not only is he a half decent GK and semi-pro skier he's also an absolute bandit on the golf course! Wes and Petty will vouch for that!

We all know what a fantastic keeper Northy is, and at times he pulled off saves that were borderline world class, the one at Bromley that Alan Palmer posts on social media about 5 times a day for instance.

But just imagine how been if he wasn't 4ft 8"!

Nevertheless I owe countless amounts of clean sheet bonuses to Northy so thanks mate. Though most of my memories of playing with Northy mainly consist of us struggling to get out of our half because he couldn't reach the half way line with his goal kicks!! you'd think with a metal rod in his leg he'd be able boom the ball!

Then there's the infamous day at Brackley. I think Northy had a migraine or was he skiing again? I can't quite remember. But the phone call came in to Gordon about Northy's unavailability but no dramas as we had a pukka reserve keeper (don't recall his name) on the coach. Halfway to Brackley this reserve keeper questioned whether it was an FA Trophy game because, if it was, then he'd played in the previous round for another club! I remember stopping at the services and Gordon calling myself, Deano and I think it was Massey over saying one of us would have to go in goal. The rest as they say is history and the day Northy was bumped down to Wales #2 GK. Although, I was disappointed not to keep my place in goal the following game after my clean sheet!

Then there was that ill fated night at Canvey, where Northy broke his leg.

As soon as it happened I recall Massey getting to him first and Northy in the agony he was in grabbing a hold of the first thing he could, unfortunately for Alan that happened to be his nuts!! It's just as well the ambulance took an age to turn up that night as it give me just about enough time to fit into Northy's skin-tight medium boy's GK jersey! (see photo above)

Northy was a fantastic goal keeper for the Stones but I'm sure all the boys would agree, more importantly he was a fantastic team-mate and is a top bloke!

SEAN



TOGETHER FOR FOOTBALL



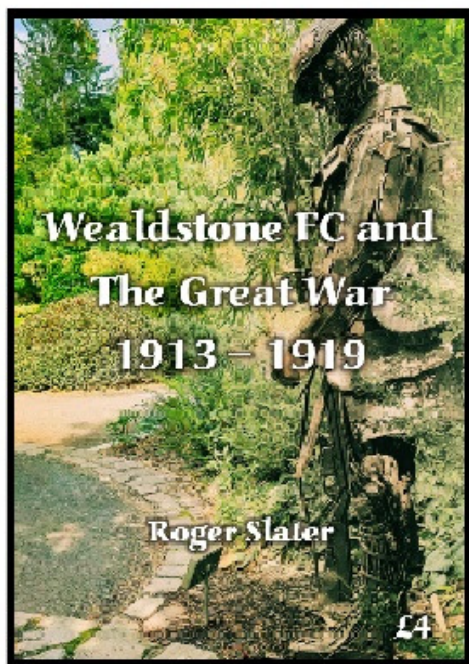
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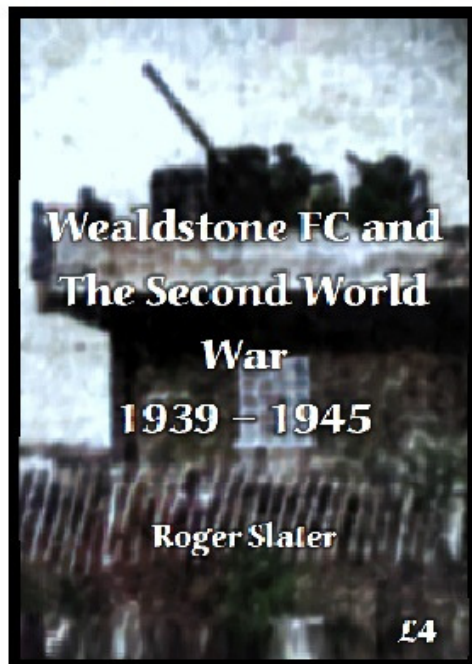
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BY MARTIN READ



The World of **Ball**

Yes, it's that inevitable post-Olympics "why doesn't football do that?" column (Redux)

It is a truth universally acknowledged that in the days following the conclusion of the Olympics some poor sap will write a piece wondering about how football might benefit from a bit of what other sports have."

Yep, that was this column, pretty much five years to the day. And yep, here we are again sifting the recently completed Olympics for innovations that could change the world of football for the better. (It was either that or spend the entire column trying to work out why it's not a 'United Kingdom' rather than 'Great Britain' team, and how Northern Ireland must feel about being left out in the whole 'Team GB' thing.)

Tokyo 2020 proved once again that John Major got at least one thing right when he tied British Olympic sports funding to the National Lottery. Ironically, while monumental odds are associated with winning said lottery, a series of ruthlessly selective processes have led to far lower odds of our boys and girls bringing home the gold, silver and bronze. Since the nadir of Atlanta 1996, every Olympics has seen the Great Britain ('psst, don't forget to add 'and Northern Ireland') and Northern Ireland team post world beating performance after world beating performance, along the way changing the public perception of British participation in the games. Since Sydney 2000, British ('psst...') and Northern Irish athletes have finished way ahead of all other European nations in the medal table. An interesting tussle vs France in 2024 awaits.

On a personal note, to see skateboarding become an Olympic sport is an astonishing milestone. My 13 year-old self remembers some city gent screaming his disapproval at all the sidewalk-surfing in Field End Road. He'd be aghast at seeing such apparently technical terms as "Stance: Goofy" appearing as a genuine information caption for a professional sport.

Good times never felt so good

Back in 2016 we discussed various ways in which football could learn from Olympic sports. Five minute suspensions instead of sendings-off; quarters rather than halves; a countdown hooter rather than added time. All plausible alternatives to the current status quo, for sure. But another sporting event this summer has served only to increase the importance, at least in this correspondent's opinion, of jettisoning penalty shoot-outs to the pit of Hades.

We shouldn't ignore the genuinely extraordinary event that was Euro 2020. England managed to break the habit of multiple generations to reach the final, a truly outstanding achievement. But nothing like enough has been said about the absolute disgrace that was Wembley's security before and during that now hastily forgotten final tie. An otherwise wonderful tournament was hijacked on the very last day by the ugliest people this country has to offer, all mobilising through an app to take over our national stadium with nary a whimper from the FA, police or others. The images were profoundly depressing; genuine fans lashing out against the thieves on Wembley's concourses only adding to the ugliness, leaving a sour taste after three weeks of ecstatic, Germany-beating progress by an England set-up that has finally got its head around how to build properly during a tournament. In true English style, as soon as the final came to its unfortunate end – I mean, rain in July, FFS - we all of us were quickly "ah well, never mind. A Qatar World Cup at Christmas, eh? We go again." Etc.

Of course, there's the small matter of the



Very much down with this sort of thing (for deciding drawn matches)

penalty shoot-out that decided affairs on that bleak evening. We could spend forever debating who stepped up and in which order, but when all is said and done it's pretty difficult to pile in on the first manager since Alf Ramsey to take us to a final.

Paying the penalty

Perhaps we would think this wouldn't we - but why? Why should ninety minutes of football be decided by such an artificial contrivance as a penalty shoot-out? Firstly, if they must happen then any shoot-out should involve all the players on the field, not just five; let all eleven on-field players step up and take responsibility. Just five? What insane logic is behind that?

While that may be fairer on the team, it's still a half-arsed solution. Instead, why can't it be the conditions on the field of play that change to hasten a genuine footballing resolution? Start extra time with two fewer players, play 15 minutes, then take another two players off the pitch for the final 15. Imagine seven players exploiting all that open space. And then consider another sport that's taken root in the Olympics, Rugby Sevens, is actually based on this concept already. In Rugby Sevens, the sheer amount of space on the pitch transforms the likelihood of players running through to score. (Remember, this is a bona fide version of the egg chasing game, not just some weird marginal alternative.)

Paying the penalty

Also, why stop there? Should there be no separating of the seven-player sides at 30 minutes, go and play a final 15 minutes with just five each.

Because why not? It takes five or more minutes after extra time to decide on who's taking the penalties, a further 10 or so for the penalties themselves - so that's a full 15 on top of the 30 of extra time in any case.

And if you must force a time at which the match has to conclude, with the match still tied after fifteen minutes of five-a-side, make it so that the

team that scores the most recent extra time goal wins the match.

Does this really sound so outlandish? I'd be keen to know why. Because ultimately, penalties is artificial while all of the above is actual football; defenders defending, strikers striking, midfielders seeking to make things happen. It's what football actually is - a team of players working together to score goals.

What it absolutely isn't is the ghoul-ish spectacle of a single teenager with the weight of fifty million eyes on him.

At the very least FIFA, UEFA, the FA or some body somewhere should experiment with this in a cup competition, much as they've previously tried out other changes to the game prior to their introduction.

So come on, let's once and for all eradicate the completely anti-sporting concept of "playing for penalties". It's surely the gold medal of good ideas.

Let's eradicate the anti-sporting concept of 'playing for penalties'

Random snippets irregularly posted @Wealdipedia

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In memory of John
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WEALDSTONE 2021-22

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"Great Hospitality, great people — a superb way to visit the Vale and watch the Stones."

— Robert Barrett,
Rolfe-East

"The parents and boys of AFC Lightning had a great day sponsoring the mighty Stones: great food, hospitality, football, a proper crowd and meeting the Ralder!

We will do it again this season!"
— Keith Davies, AFC Lightning

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New home.. but it was just the start of Stones' nightmare

Saturday August 21, 1991, Beazer Homes Southern League Premier Division: Wealdstone 2 Dartford 2

If you were a Wealdstone fan fallen into a coma 30 years ago, and re-awoken with the team in the Football Conference (aka National League) you probably wouldn't be at all surprised. You might need a shave (maybe not, if you're a woman) but you wouldn't be at all surprised. After all, three decades ago the Stones were one division lower and with equal shares in Watford's 20,000-capacity Vicarage Road stadium. Under manager Brian Hall - who had taken the club to the Conference title six years earlier - our football club was determined not to be in the Southern League Premier Division for very long.

And indeed they weren't. The nightmare had begun a year earlier when Chairman Alan Clifton sold off Wealdstone's iconic Lower Mead Stadium to meet short-term debts, and an impressive financial scam saw most of the £8m (doled out to the company who would find the club a new ground) ride off into the sunset. He exacerbated the problem by jumping at the chance to solve Watford's short-term cash flow by handing over £2m for a share in the Vicarage Road lease.

It would only have worked if the fans



flooded back in their thousands, but of course they had fallen in love with the Stones thanks largely to the tight, atmospheric Lower Mead and now took one look at the vast,

empty Vic bowl and the paucity of the football, and never returned. On the next spread there are a couple of programme pages by our own 'Elmelle Ender' correspondent Sudhir Rawal, in which he argues firstly that Vicarage Road is "great" and then very shortly afterwards declaims "actually it's a***".

The first column, which appeared in the prog just after this opening home game against Dartford, not surprisingly talked up the move and was defensive about the lack of atmosphere, but very quickly it became apparent that this was a move about as effective as the occupation of

Hopsc

A FLASH of inspiration from Mark Hopson deep into injury-time gave Wealdstone a point they scarcely deserved in their first Beazer Homes League game at Vicarage Road.

The hush surface and surroundings at the Stones' new home seemed to inspire Dartford more than it did their hosts and the visitors looked set to record a victory they deserved until Hopson, one of the few players who held his form from Saturday's encouraging performance, rattled in his third goal in two games.

As at Gloucester, Wealdstone started the better. Steve Smart's dipping volley forced the first of a couple of excellent saves from Craig Tucker and a first-time effort from Hopson flew wide of the far post.

David Gipp and Neil Cortice combined to spring the offside-

Skipper Nell Cordice (right), Tony Kelly (left) and Steve Tapley (far left) put pressure on the Darts defence at Vicarage Rd



Afghanistan by allied and American forces a decade ago. It was going nowhere, would get very messy very quickly, and end up with a tactical withdrawal at great personal cost. I honestly can't remember if I

was at this game, coming as it did when I was working silly hours for my growing family, but I did see an extraordinary 3-1 win over Trowbridge a couple of weeks later when Stones keeper Wayne Roach was bizarrely sent off early doors for a late challenge out near the corner flag.

Only a few days earlier Trowbridge had beaten Gravesend 9-1, yet even the circumstances of this rousing win with 10 men failed to excite any excitement in the echoey surroundings of The Vic, 19,600 short of capacity.

We had some decent players (even if, rather disconcertingly, members of the supporters team found themselves lining up against our star forward Mark Hopson in Marathon Sunday League Division Three action) but the season went into a tail-spin in the late autumn. Star striker Tony Kelly was in fact fined and dropped by boss Hall for picking up an injury in a Sunday match and never played for the club again - that didn't help our chances, but nobody seriously countenanced relegation until a run of one win in 11 games culminated in a horrible 4-1 home defeat by fellow strugglers Worcester City.

The Stones won four of the last six games, but the other two were defeats by rock bottom Gravesend and second-from-bottom Fisher Athletic. We finished in the final relegation place and the absurdity of paying over £30,000 for EVERY home game at Watford became a stark reality. Over page, Sudhir writes about seeing out our Wealdstone lifetimes at Vicarage Road but in

CONTINUED OVERPAGE

Hopson earns Stones a point

WEALDSTONE 2

Hopson 37,90

DARTFORD 2

Hunt 17, Barlow 52(pen)

trap but Leo Donnellan had to check as he raced into the box and his cross was cleared.

Dartford, who had mustered only one, off-target header in the opening 15 minutes, were then gifted a goal by stack marking in the 17th minute.

Paul Blade's free-kick wide on the left was flicked on by David Benstead and dropped at the feet of John HUNT, who made the most of the space he was allowed by controlling the ball before toe-poking it under the advancing David Hudson.

Hunt was to be a thorn in the side of the Stones all night but it was midfielder Jason Shaw who came within an ace of making it 2-0 minutes later, his ferocious

shot from 25 yards beating Hudson but cannoning down off the angle of post and bar.

Ivy Lowe, who once again impressed with a calm and authoritative performance, forced Tucker into a fine, full-length save with a well-struck 20-yard shot, and then saved a certain goal at the other end.

Hudson went a long way for a cross he should have left and Lowe had to hack away. The ball fell straight to Wayne Barlow and his cross to the back post found John Leslie, whose header seemed set to enter the unguarded net until Lowe dived in and headed it away.

Jim Watson then had to clear another Leslie header off the line and a stunning overhead kick from Hunt was goalbound until it cannoned to safety off Peter Bartlett's head.

Bartlett was then booked for dragging back Hunt as he burst between the Stones' centre-halves in the 35th minute.

Just as it seemed Dartford were taking total control, Wealdstone equalised in the 37th minute. Lowe carried the ball out of defence and fed Gipp inside the box. The striker pushed it back to Lowe who dummied to shoot and then burst past his marker and made for left-hand side of the box.

He booked the ball back from the by-line and HOPSON beat a line of blue shirts to stab the ball past Tucker from close range.

The second half was only seven minutes old when Hudson had a rush of blood that gave away a silly penalty and earned him a booking.

Once again it was Hunt who caused the problems, breaking free on the right-hand side of the box. As he chased the ball Hudson followed and dragged him down. It was a rash decision on the keeper's part and BARLOW stepped up to send him the wrong way.

A minute later Hunt broke

again and Lowe's lungs stopped him in his tracks. The defender was booked but the resultant free-kick came to nothing.

Rodney Richards was sent on for Gipp but Dartford remained on top. An excellent tackle by Bartlett stopped Leslie inside the box and Hudson gathered a header from Simon Quaille at the front post.

Time seemed to have run out for the Stones when they won a corner three minutes into injury-time. Lowe took the kick and it was cleared but only as far as HOPSON, who stepped past a challenge before unleashing a fine shot that flew through the crowded box and past Tucker.

WEALDSTONE: Hopson; Watson, Lowe, Tapley, Bartlett, Gordon, Hopson, Donnellan, Kelly, Gipp, Smart, Subs: Richards for Gipp after 66 mins; Goyette (not used).

DARTFORD: Tucker, Baxton, Wade, Benstead, Sawyer, Park, Purton, Shaw, Leslie, Quaille, Hunt, Subs: Smith, Smith (not used).

Referee: Mr R Purdie (Widner). Attendance: 610.

REWIND: ON THIS DAY CONTD

reality it only lasted two seasons when the crowd, which averaged around 450 (bearing in mind the widely-touted break-even figure of 1,000) dwindled to under 200 for a few of the games in the Beazer Homes League Southern Section.

Remarkably, Stones were apparently unaware of the small print that made the club liable for 50% of the stadium's mainte-

nance fees, which pretty much accounted for all our matchday income.

And so the club had to bale out of the deal, and asked Watford for a refund of the remaining 97 years of the shared lease - which chairman Jack Petchey gracefully declined. But the Hornets got a lovely new stand out of the deal, which was nice.

SO WHAT DO YOU THINK OF VICARAGE ROAD?

by Sudhir Rawal

After some very close calls over the summer, Wealdstone finally concluded the deal that saw them take up residency at Vicarage Road in the first real groundshare scheme in this country. Now for better or for worse, Vicarage Road will become home of Wealdstone Football Club for as long as all of us are around on this mortal earth or Wealdstone are no longer around at all.

I would happily admit that I looked forward to this season with less enthusiasm than any other in my previous eighteen years of supporting this club. I wasn't very encouraged returning from holiday to hear horror stories of the first match versus Barnet, effectively accusing the ground of having as much atmosphere as the moon - just like another Watford match. So it was with great trepidation that I ventured to the first League match at The Vic against Dartford . . .

The bar was the first port of call. A good start. Wipes the floor with the Elmslie Tavern. Pleasant surroundings, good furnishings but more importantly better beer and cheaper, too. For those of you who don't know where it is, it is about fifty yards down the hill from the Watford Shop on Occupation Road. The snakebites are lethal in these especially considering the extra-strong cider they use!

The biggest worry for most supporters is the loss of atmosphere in a stadium which at the moment struggles to be only 2.5% full. Watford crowds are notoriously quiet. They are not helped by having the home end uncovered but also be a superb marketing policy that has allowed them to become the premier family club. Family clubs are certainly a way of going forward, but you can hardly get a caldron of noise from such an environment.

Initially the idea of The Vic was to open up the Rookery End, a shallow but at least covered end, and the main stand. After complaints from fans at the Barnet match, the Vicarage Road End was also to be opened up via a thoroughway behind the Rous Stand seats for the Dartford match. Instead of people going to the open end, people power in a week that saw the coup in Russia fail saw fans sitting on the seats instead. By the Moor Green match, Vicarage Road End was closed and the Rous Stand seats a permanent fixture. Though the atmosphere was alright by Lower Mead standards, as a Watford fan put it there was more singing that night than from Watford the Saturday before. We've never doubted that we could make more noise than the Hornets! If people can be bother to help create some noise then despite the vastness of the ground, this place can still be made to feel just like home. As one fan said, the Rous seats are just like the old High Mead terrace at Lower Mead!

THE TIMES, a couple of weeks ago, mentioned about the Dartford match, ". . . the supporters whose robust terrace wit raised the roof of the Elmslie End at their old home at Lower Mead, were conspicuously absent from the Rookery End of the half-opened ground . . ." A little harsh I would argue. Apart from the fact that it takes a little time to get used to a new environment and more importantly that there was probably the same amount of people at the Rookery End as at the Elmslie but the former holds about three times as many people it would look rather empty. I suppose if you still want the audible abuse to come from the end, maybe the club should market loud-hallers. I hope that when segregation is necessary, that rather than give away fans part of the Rookery thus meaning transfer to the Rous Stand would be impossible that they are allocated the Vicarage Road End.

Vicarage Road will never ever replace Lower Mead in our hearts and minds, the old place, tatty as it may have become, was a very unique environment to watch football in non-league football. Yet, had we moved to a purpose built new ground the problem of small crowds in a large stadium would have still haunted us. I've been pleasantly surprised so far but only time will really tell how much at home we will really feel. When the signs go up for today's match at the corners of the ground proclaiming to the world that this isn't just the home of Watford but Wealdstone as well, we will be on the right road. But I'll tell you one thing, I don't think I'll ever get used to sitting on seats to watch football!

Historic moment as Mark Hopson, Tiv Lowe and keeper Dave Hudson lead Wealdstone out for the first league game at Vicarage



WEALDSTONE 2021-22

Your ground's too big for you: Yes, that would be hard to argue against as the Stones played out two seasons in the soulless Vic.. before the Hornets' new stands of the 21st century



VICARAGE ROAD: A BAD MOVE?

by Sudhir Rawal

Some of you might have seen last week's copy of ALL SPORT WEEKLY and, in particular, the match report of our game against Athenstone United. The main talking point from the report was not that Stones had won a decent match, but the very fact that Wealdstone were playing their home matches of Vicarage Road at all. The report continued . . . 'What are Wealdstone doing here, having paid two million pounds plus for a ground far too big for their requirements, with facilities far in excess of what they realistically require'. It continued in the same vein.

Now they are as entitled to their view as the next person, especially when the reporter has been a supporter of the club for 31 years. His views should be considered and discussed. However, what the article did not really point out was that way back in March of this year, there were very few alternatives available. Lower Mead was sold and Wealdstone had no ground to go to. Wildehead had been thrown out by a furious residents meeting and Harrow Council did not have the slightest inclination of providing Wealdstone with a suitable site within an acceptable price range. What other options were available apart from some sort of groundshare?

As the article mentions why was not a non-league alternative considered. It would be fair to say that the average supporter would have probably preferred this option but once again, there were serious problems. In the Borough of Harrow there are three other senior status clubs: Edgeway Town, Rayners Lane and Harrow Borough with Brent providing the options of Wembley and Kingsbury Town. Borough would have been the most obvious choice but their present capacity is only 4,000. The Conference requires that for admission into the League, a ground must have a capacity of 3,000 with the potential to expand to 6,000. Edgeway simply does not have that possibility for expansion as it is hemmed in on three sides by housing and the other side by a school. As anyone has experienced on derby day with say a 1,000 people in the ground, viewing from either end is not easy. Rayners Lane still have not been allowed to install floodlights by the sport loving Harrow Council, let alone have the ability to develop their site. Kingsbury Town's ample room is just enough but Brent Council will not allow permanent floodlights. They would then down after every game. Edgeway's White Lion ground has more potential but suffers from parking problems and more seriously no security over tenure. That leaves us with Wembley, Vale Farm was suspected by most as the likely resting place of Wealdstone, an eventuality that never occurred for reasons not actually ever explained. Expansion was possible here, but once over been redeveloped properly. In actual fact, there is only one ground where development was possible in the locality and that was Church Road, Hayes. It is already a good ground with ample uncovered ends, a large covered banking on the side and a biggest stand. However, it was a dissection that if Wealdstone had moved in it would have been the death nail in the coffin of the club. A good proportion of Stones support now live in Hertfordshire having moved out in that direction, very little comes from Hayes.

The simple fact is that Wealdstone are at Vicarage Road to stay for good, there was very little dissent when the move was announced. Maybe if we were playing well then it would not even be mentioned. In the ELMSLIE ENDER 'End of Season Poll' in May, when asked the question what they thought of the move, 66% replied it was 'Far from ideal but the best deal available, 23% said it was 'A very positive step' while only 11% said it was 'A potential disaster'. Most supporters accept the move, badly. Councils will continue to fall and there will be little or no atmosphere while we do not win. I have a good authority that more people are actually coming through the turnstile than last season. It is

An interesting couple of articles by Sudhir Rawal in the matchday programme - the one (left) following the Dartford game when fans were still hopeful that a decent season on the pitch could see things improve after a luke-warm start... and then (right) after a tepid 1-0 twin over Athenstone had seen a crowd of barely 400. In the next few months that would dip to an average 350 and the Stones were quickly on a slippery slope, heading to the disastrous end of the season



It's Sunday May 5th 2019, the play-off semi-final at Woking and Freddie Grant (No.3) has just

Ah, the anguish of Kingfield and that play-off years ago.. 2-0 up, 2-2 and then the 'offside'

2018-19 NATIONAL LEAGUE SOUTH PLAY-OFF SEMI-FINAL: WOKING 3 WEALDSTONE 2

Writing this very column before the Stones met Woking in August 2018 - the first league match-up between our clubs in 48 years - it was tricky to recall many memorable encounters. The odd FA Cup clash perhaps. And certainly Wealdstone's last season as amateur Isthmians when Alan Humphries' desperately mediocre side actually managed to rack up a league double against the mid-table Cards.

In fact the uninspiring 3-0 win at Lower Mead in April 1971 was the club's final match outside the professional ranks.

But as for clashes seared on the memory? This was all to change in the space of one season as the sides met in three epic encounters two and a half years ago. It was to end in unexpected drama and you could have got seriously long odds on Bobby Wilkinson's Wealdstone going all the way to meet Woking in the play-off semi-final.... for the Cards had spent all season locked in a

two-way contest for the National League South title with Torquay United, and automatic promotion, while the Stones' stuttering challenge for a play-off place seemed to have fizzled out with three defeats in four games at Torquay, Hampton and at home to Dulwich.

Our hopes had been raised by an unlikely league double over Woking - 1-0 at Grosvenor Vale on a balmy August evening thanks to Matt Lench's late penalty and then, even better, a terrific 2-0 win at a stunned Kingfield in February thanks to Tarryn Allarakhia and Dave Pratt's opportunist goals.

The Cards fans might have been forgiven for thinking that the Stones were their bogey side ... especially after just half an hour of the play-off semi final when Wealdstone led 2-0. I think both sets of fans were incredulous!

Stones had only just crept into the knockout stage on that crazy last-day win over Hemel Hempstead. At 4pm, trailing 1-0, we were 11th in the table. At 4.45pm,

after Jake Sheppard's outlandish winner, we had somehow overtaken four clubs and ended up seventh! And with an away eliminator at our own bogey side, Bath City.

Stones took 500 fans to Wiltshire on the Wednesday evening and scored an unbelievable 3-1 win to set up the big game at Kingfield the following Sunday.

And so the stage was set: A towering header from Freddie Grant and a cool finish from a corner by Connor Stevens had the 650+ Wealdstone contingent dancing in disbelief. But there was still a long hour of football to play. And while full-timers Woking had had eight days to rest and prepare for the game, Stones had half a dozen walking wounded from the battle royale at Bath - including goalkeeper Jonathan North who almost had his head taken off by a brutal challenge from home striker Ryan Brunt.

Stones management spent the four days between that win and the game at Kingfield in a desperate

WEALDSTONE 2021-22

And as for last season...

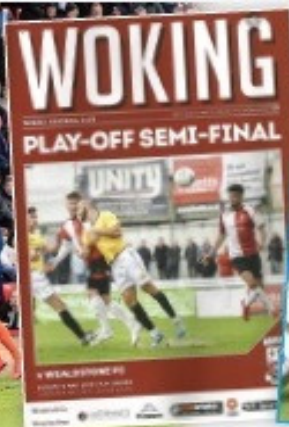
AS two of the very few part-time outfits in the National League last season, the Stones and The Cards were left looking at self-preservation once the early funding was withdrawn in the New Year.

Both teams shed and furloughed players, and both suffered a dramatic dip in form in the second half of the season as a consequence. Like Wealdstone, Woking had a very decent first half of the season and reached the FA Trophy semi-finals after putting out high-fliers Sutton and Torquay along the way - but after the 1-0 win over the Stones at Grosvenor Vale on Tuesday March 23 (Moussa Diarra heading a last-minute winner after our keeper Harry Isted had dashed, bizarrely, from his line) Woking never won another game.

They were beaten at Hereford United in the Trophy semi-final four days later, and then Won 0, Drew 2 and Lost 14 of their final sixteen National League games. The Stones fared little better, but managed to remain above the Cards in the non-relegation season (in 19th place, with Woking 20th, Barnet 21st and Dover 22nd) thanks to winning the final match of the season at Woking by 4-2.

Stuart Maynard's team had won 1, Drawn 2 and Lost 10 of their 13 games since the 1-0 defeat to Woking, but on that final day the Stones triumphed thanks to Charlee Hughes' first goal of the season, a brace from Ryan Gindoh (one a penalty) and Sonny Blue Lo-Everton's stunning strike.

More today please!



headed Stones into a 1-0 lead

semi final two winning goal

search for a keeper - and play-off rules decreed that any specialist replacement could not be brought in from a higher level. Which left the yellow jersey filled by Mark Scott, the former Slough keeper who had broken his neck in a NL South game two years earlier and was finally back playing for Chertsey Town after a long lay-off.

Did Northy's absence affect Stones chances? Well, it certainly didn't help as Woking threw everyone forward in a titanic second half. Scott was buffeted and unable to get to the corner from which Diarra headed Woking's first goal, with 20 mins to play, and he had no chance when Max Kretschmar broke Stones hearts with an 86th minute leveller from close range.

Woking had all the momentum

and extra time would have meant only one winner. But Stones were denied the chance to extend the game three minutes into injury time when a high up-and-under was nodded on to a clearly-offside Jake Hyde, who lifted the ball over the slowly-advancing Scott and into the net.

The crowd went bananas. The official (shared) attendance was 2,027 but Kingfield can seat 2,500 and pretty much every seat looked full to me. And the claim that there were less than 1,000 on the terraces was just laughable. There were over 3,000 in the ground for the play-off final the following week as Welling were beaten 1-0 on promotion assured. But that's a minor gripe and cannot disguise the pride felt by the 700 or more Stones fans who trooped along to Kingfield that afternoon, underlining our claims to be the best-supported club at that level away from home... claims backed up by the phenomenal following at Havant last season.

What a shame our fans are locked out at present. But how good will this season be?



Two views which both show Jake Hyde (circled, above left) to be offside as the ball is flicked into his path for the winning goal. Not that it ranks or anything!

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A low-angle photograph of a construction site. The sky is overcast and grey. In the foreground, a complex structure of yellow metal beams and scaffolding is visible. A concrete pillar is being lowered into place by a crane, with a white spherical weight attached to the top of the beam. The crane's cables and hook are visible at the top of the frame. The overall scene is industrial and focused on heavy construction work.

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MATCH	BALL DONORS
 WOKING Saturday 21st August Venezia National League	In memory of Kat Kelly
 SOUTHEND UNITED Monday 30th August Venezia National League	Nick Woolford Your name or business here
 ALTRINCHAM Saturday 10th September Venezia National League	In memory of Arthur Rogers Your name or business here
 ALDERSHOT TOWN Saturday 10th September Venezia National League	Your name or business here Your name or business here
 SOLHULL MOORS Tuesday 5th October Venezia National League	Barbara Robson Your name or business here
 EASTLEIGH Saturday 9th October Venezia National League	Neale Harvey & Arthur Villa Your name or business here
 GRIMSBY TOWN Tuesday 20th October Venezia National League	Your name or business here Your name or business here
 BARNET Saturday 13th November Venezia National League	Your name or business here Your name or business here

WEALDSTONE 2021-22



MATCH	BALL DONORS	
 STOCKPORT COUNTY Saturday, 27th November Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 FC HALIFAX TOWN Saturday, 19th December Vanarama National League	Tony and Peter Drew	Your name or business here
 MAIDENHEAD UNITED Sunday, 26th December Vanarama National League	In memory of Roy Couch	Your name or business here
 YEovil TOWN Saturday, 8th January Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 NOTTS COUNTY Tuesday, 29th January Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 WREXHAM Saturday, 19th February Vanarama National League	In memory of Jim Klarfeld	Your name or business here
 TORQUAY UNITED Saturday, 20th February Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 WEYMOUTH Saturday, 12th March Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 DOVER ATHLETIC Tuesday, 22nd March Vanarama National League	Barbara Robson	Your name or business here
 BROMLEY Saturday, 20th March Vanarama National League	Alan Couch	Your name or business here
 CHESTERFIELD Saturday, 1st April Vanarama National League	Mick Fishman	Your name or business here
 BOREHAM WOOD Monday, 19th April Vanarama National League	'Fans No Longer With Us' Tony Drew & Ron Moore	Your name or business here
 DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE Saturday, 30th April Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here
 KING'S LYNN TOWN Saturday, 7th May Vanarama National League	Your name or business here	Your name or business here

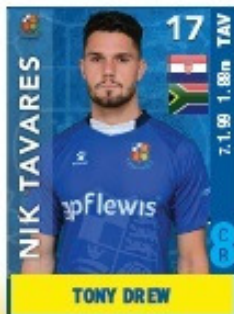
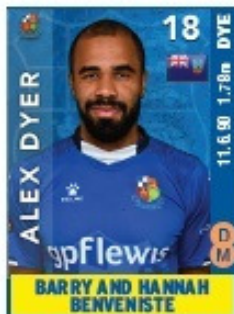
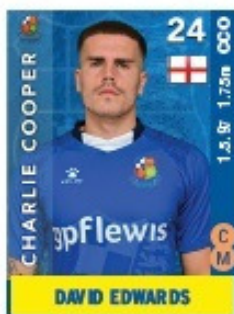
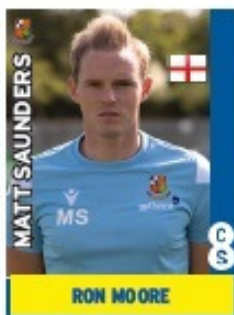
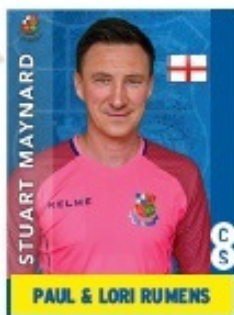
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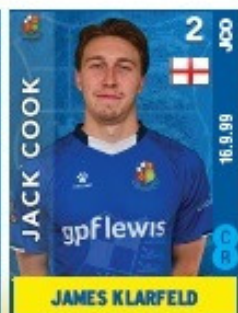
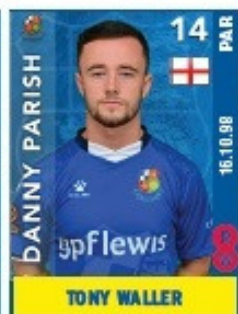
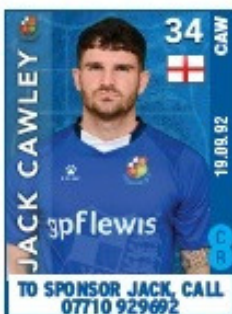
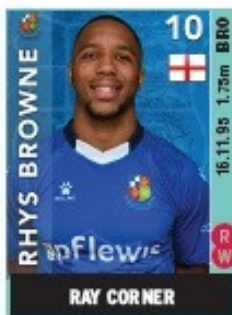
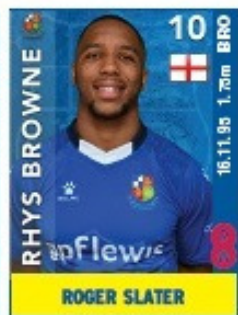
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KEY

CS = Coaching Staff
 GK = Goalkeeper
 CB = Centre Back
 RB = Right Back
 LB = Left Back
 DM = Defensive Midfield
 RM = Right Midfield
 LW = Left Winger
 RW = Right Winger
 CG = Centre Forward



WEALDSTONE 2021-22



Fixtures

WEALDSTONE 2021-22

**Saturday
28th August
3:00pm**

CHESTERFIELD (A)
www.chesterfield-fc.co.uk @ChesterfieldFC Vanarama National League



**Monday
30th August
3:00pm**



SOUTHEND UNITED (H)
Vanarama National League

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**Saturday
4th September
3:00pm**

DAGENHAM & REDBRIDGE (A)
www.daggers.co.uk @Dag_RedFC Vanarama National League



**Saturday
11th September
3:00pm**



ALTRINCHAM (H)
Vanarama National League

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**Tuesday
14th September
7:45pm**

NOTTS COUNTY (A)
www.nottscounty.fc.co.uk @Official_NCFC Vanarama National League



**Saturday
18th September
3:00pm**



ADERSHOT TOWN (H)
Vanarama National League

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**Saturday
25th September
3:00pm**

KING'S LYNN TOWN (A)
www.kltown.co.uk @OfficialKLTown Vanarama National League



Vanarama National League 2020/2021 – FINAL TABLE

	ALL					HOME					AWAY					+/-	Pts	RESULTS				
1 Torquay United	38	23	7	8	64	35	19	11	4	4	32	18	19	12	3	4	32	17	29	76	1-2	1-1
2 Sutton United	37	21	9	7	61	32	18	11	4	3	35	14	19	10	5	4	26	18	29	72	3-3	1-4
3 Stockport County	38	20	11	7	64	28	18	8	8	2	27	12	20	12	3	5	37	16	36	71	2-5	0-4
4 Hartlepool United	38	20	10	8	57	35	19	13	3	3	30	15	19	7	7	5	27	20	22	70	2-7	1-3
5 Halifax Town	38	18	8	12	60	47	19	9	4	6	32	27	19	9	4	6	28	20	13	62	1-2	1-0
6 Wrexham	37	16	10	11	52	36	18	8	6	4	24	13	19	8	4	7	28	23	16	58	4-3	1-4
7 Bromley	37	16	10	11	56	49	20	7	6	7	29	28	17	9	4	4	27	21	7	58	0-1	2-2
8 Notts County	36	16	9	11	48	37	19	10	2	7	28	18	17	6	7	4	20	19	11	57	1-2	0-3
9 Chesterfield	37	17	5	15	48	39	18	8	2	8	26	17	19	9	3	7	22	22	9	56	3-2	0-0
10 Eastleigh	37	15	11	11	41	36	19	9	6	4	21	12	18	6	5	7	20	24	5	56	0-0	0-2
11 Dagenham & Redbridge	37	15	7	15	42	44	19	8	5	6	23	21	18	7	2	9	19	23	-2	52	0-5	0-1
12 Maidenhead United	35	13	10	12	53	46	18	7	4	7	29	25	17	6	6	5	24	21	7	49	0-6	0-4
13 Boreham Wood	37	11	16	10	45	39	19	5	9	5	23	21	18	6	7	5	22	18	6	49	1-0	1-3
14 Solihull Moors	36	14	6	16	46	44	17	11	2	4	30	14	19	3	4	12	16	30	2	48	1-4	0-3
15 Aldershot Town	37	14	6	17	49	53	17	7	3	7	24	24	20	7	3	10	25	29	-4	48	3-4	0-2
16 Yeovil Town	36	14	6	16	52	57	18	9	2	7	28	23	18	5	4	9	24	34	-5	48	0-2	2-2
17 Altrincham	38	11	9	18	40	54	18	5	4	9	20	24	20	6	5	9	20	30	-14	42	1-0	0-2
18 Weymouth	36	10	6	20	41	56	19	6	2	11	22	32	17	4	4	9	19	24	-15	36	2-1	0-4
19 Wealdstone	37	9	6	22	44	87	18	7	2	9	31	41	19	2	4	13	13	46	-43	33	---	---
20 Woking	37	8	8	21	35	55	19	5	6	8	24	28	18	3	2	13	11	27	-20	32	0-1	4-2
21 King's Lynn Town	37	7	8	22	40	81	19	4	6	9	23	34	18	3	2	13	17	47	-41	29	3-1	3-2
22 Barnet	36	6	6	24	30	78	18	3	2	13	11	35	18	3	4	11	19	43	-48	24	5-1	0-0
23 Dover Athletic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	---	---

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