

AN ORAL HISTORY OF BRENTFORD FOOTBALL CLUB

INTERVIEWEE:	Sav Kyriacou
DATE OF BIRTH	1962, Camden Town
PARENTS' OCCUPATIONS	Father: cook Mother: seamstress
INTERVIEW LOCATION	Griffin Park, Brentford
DATE OF INTERVIEW	28 th February 2020
INTERVIEWER:	Bradley Lopez
SUMMARISER:	Celia Holman

Sav became a fan 1971-72 when Brentford were doing well in Division 4. He recalls the patronising responses when people learnt he was a Brentford fan - "poor, little Brentford". He observed that it's "always been like that." His cousin and brother were both Fulham fans, and his best friend was a QPR fan, so his support of Brentford was partly to be "awkward". Living in North London, Sav didn't attend many matches as a youth.

Match-day atmosphere when first came - bigger Royal Oak end, much deeper New Road. Games were inevitably half empty and it felt "a little bit dangerous" as Sav wasn't there with a big group of friends. It was also "a little bit seedy". His match-day routine has changed over the years as he has met more people: in the early days, it was a quick drink, the game and then go. Now it's a couple of hours in the pub before (and sometimes after!) the match.

Structural changes to Griffin Park - been "quite dramatic", but he still always stands (Royal Oak, Ealing Road, New Road), but with a cover now "so don't get drenched all the time" - "as long as I can stand, I'm happy."

Funny incidents: "Chomp incidents" - throwing chocolate bars on to the pitch when a player scores, and holding up 50p coins to Barnet fans, as at one point the club was for sale for 50p. Various characters: the "push-up Brentford man" who shouts push-up Brentford throughout the game. There is also someone with a waistcoat with loads of badges on and a hand-knitted Brentford jumper. Loads of "characters who stand out and don't mind standing out."

Chants: (1) the Danny Boxall chant (1999), to the tune of The Flintstones cartoon:
*Boxall, Danny Boxall, he's the best full back in history
From some town in Ireland, he took us out Division 3*

(2) The Dutchman came up with the Martin Rowland song to the tune of Rawhide:
*Rowlands, Rowlands, Rowlands, we've got Martin Rowland
He's got Tony Folan out wide.
He runs through the middle, he passes and he dribbles
Cos he wears his Brentford badge with pride
Rowlands!!*

Turned out to be a "complete lie" as Rowlands was a QPR fan all along.

Rivalries: "tend to be cyclical" i.e. depending on who playing at the time. 1970s was Watford. Switched to Fulham later on. QPR been rivals since 1967 "when they tried that

takeover thing” but haven’t played them for long periods of time. Fulham and QPR being played now.

Away days: “cheese boat to Charlton”. Loads of snow. Got on at Kew Bridge. 10 minutes later heard that the match had been called off - but they carried on with the cruise going all the way to the Thames Barrier and then back to Waterloo.

Various other boat journeys (“they tend to stick in the mind”): the “onion barge” and a very long boat journey all the way to Southend Pier, only to be met by a police escort.

Re the QPR takeover - you didn’t really hear much news at the time as a fan. People got interested in history around the centenary of the club - and stories started to be heard and ‘passed down’ to subsequent generations of fans.

David Webb: “I loved the team he built” but “when he started to asset strip the club, it was really painful”. He felt “let down.” He thinks he “threw” the play-off game Wembley which then allowed him to take control of the club.

BIAS - set up by Paul Ridley and Dave Lane. Sav helped by sending out faxes at his office - but that was all!

Ron Noades - bought some fantastic players and then “we twigged he was ladening us up with debt” that he thought the club could pay back with increased gate, TV money and transfer money. At its peak, the club was £10m in debt “and we were very close to going bust”

ABC campaign - Ron Noades planned to pay off debts by selling off the ground (with a view to building a new one) and move to Woking. “He had a bit of previous” at another club. ABC campaign wanted legal protection from the council that Griffin Park could only be built on with housing if we were building another ground in the borough. Fans stood in the local elections - and one won (in the Brentford Ward). Other local councillors then realised how important it was to local people.

Bees United - formed to take control of the club after Ron Noades. Bees United took over the guarantees on the debt that had been accumulated. Lots of fundraising was needed and they were successful as “people genuinely cared about the club”.

Beesotted (fanzine): Sav started writing articles and seeing them printed was very exciting. He was “accepted into the group and made such brilliant friends” “who want to be there.” Been with them for over 25 years. They do stuff outside of football, too.

Racism/homophobia - away match at Fulham in the mid ‘80s. Some Brentford fans were making monkey chants at their own players - felt “terrible”, it was “just awful” and he stopped going to matches for a while. “Luckily, it got better”. Now “you don’t get any of that.”

Move to Lionel Road - knows that he will miss the terraces. “I’m not going to be happy with that.” Sav acknowledges, though, that Griffin Park has “had its day”. He appreciates the “original features” of Griffin Park but looks forward to the new toilets.

Being a Brentford supporter has meant “being slightly different, slightly alternative” - and that is what you are if you support Brentford.