

Interviewee: Paul Stedman  
Born: Essex, 1956  
Father's occupation: Ford Motors factory  
Mother's occupation: Housewife  
Date of interview: 9.3.2020  
Location of interview: Griffin Park  
Interviewer: Fiona Gilchrist  
Summary: Ioana Constantinescu

This interview highlights details about the ABeeC and Bees United campaigns and changes that have occurred over the years as a long term supporter.

The first game Paul attended at Brentford was a friendly in 1965. Local friends went along and he's been going ever since. Paul's family have a strong tradition of Brentford support.

Paul talks about the club's financial crisis in 1967 and the possible takeover bid by QPR. This shaped him as a supporter.

Paul compares the "miserable experience" that attending games used to be, such as a lot of men swearing, but "still came back", to today: "These days it's a pleasure" and we're "living in the golden age now". There are better players.

Paul will be sad to see Griffin Park go and feels that the match day experience is not so good now due to health and safety rules. Back in the day someone threw a dead grenade onto the pitch at the goal keeper. That "couldn't happen now"!

On how people view his support for Brentford Paul sates that "people think I'm eccentric to support Brentford" and question his sanity.

He steers clear of the stadium food except perhaps during midweek he might have the occasional hotdog.

Paul talks about club rivalries and thinks that a lot of fans believe Fulham is the biggest rival but for him, rivalry is anything to do with QPR for whom he has a strong dislike.

He feels that there's something special about Tuesday night floodlit games and his most memorable away game experience was to Workington when they set off to the Lake District at midnight. it was "a thoroughly miserable day out", but the best away game was when Brentford beat Fulham 4-1.

Paul talks at length about the QPR takeover when he got involved in a lot of off the pitch campaigning and eventually becoming the co-ordinator of the BIAS group. He was involved in the opposition to the Woking move and had a hand made coffin built which was taken to a Woking game which they also boycotted.

He formed the ABeeC campaign using Charlton Athletic's campaign as a blueprint.

Candidates were put into council wards during the local elections and the candidate in Brentford got 1000 votes. When the vote was announced "it was like being on the terraces". This changed the Council's view of the club and the club gained political support and eventually ownership of the land. Planning permission was passed in 2013 for a new stadium to be built.

Bees United brought expertise to the campaign process, in securing the FC at Griffin Park whilst getting the land at Lionel Road.

Paul enjoys the football more now he's no longer involved in all the campaigning. He talks about what it was like to be a fan then and now, relating how the 1970s was not the best experience for football as he was beaten up, but due to gentrification this no longer happens.

Paul says that some of his friends have experienced racism, but feels the whole issue is better now than it was.

He's not in favour of all seating and talks about proper stadium management.

He'd be pleased to get the move over with, "will shed a little tear" at leaving Griffin Park, but reckons its day has gone.

Paul's proudest moment was the night of the election campaign and the last two or three years have seen a couple of highs. Brentford is "a part of me" and he "can't imagine life without it".

Paul describes a 2013 campaign which encouraged supporters to intimidate the council by holding up "YES" posters in council meetings. He says that the Bees United Campaign was an "incredible struggle". he was on the board in 2006/7 and had to prove that the club could run. They had to cut back on players to pay bills. Matthew Benham was only beginning to get involved then.

Asked what Martin Allen was like as a boss he replies "a forceful personality"