

26 Sandy Mount
Bearsted
Maidstone
Kent ME14 4PJ
Tel: 07809-169993 (M)
Tel: 01622-730230 (H)

1st August 2017

To Paul, Karim, Lars and all friends at West Farleigh Sports Club and TSV Ringstedt

Ian Payne thanks you all for 41 years of great football, great fun, and great friendship

I am compelled to write to you all to say that I was flattered and honoured by the gifts bestowed upon me at the end of our presentation on Sunday. In the excitement of the moment I sadly missed out on a fantastic opportunity to thank a whole bunch of great people for the enjoyment that they have given me over the last 40 years at West Farleigh Sports Club and so this letter will hopefully also allow me to redress this missed opportunity.

Firstly I wish to congratulate Karim Habibi on not only performing a great job as Secretary throughout the footballing and cricketing seasons but also for laying on a great Tour weekend of events. The Secretarial baton has clearly been passed to somebody who undertakes his role so calmly, tirelessly and with great compassion. No doubt Karim will take the role to greater heights in the years ahead and from my perspective the WFSC Adidas Sports gear he has arranged is simply brilliant.

So what more can I say about the current Chairman Paul Baines whose words and actions in applying for my Sainthood both touched and tickled me at the same time. Yes the world is a much richer place with Champers on the scene and so much more interesting too and the application for Sainthood is typical of the man. It was Paul who introduced me to the club for which I owe him a deep debt of gratitude. He asked me casually what I was doing on a Saturday afternoon back in September 1976 and as they say the rest is history.

When I first joined the club was a little different with an old Beach hut for a changing room with no power or water and with sheep regularly on the pitch and occasionally bullocks too and so the club gained notoriety as the team that plays on a sheep field and hence the sheep in our club emblem. When I first joined we had a right winger called Ronnie Smith, an even shorter version of Mick Sands, who spent the majority of his footballing career in an offside position. We had Alan Perrett who regularly muttered as he kicked a few opponents up in the air and our right back was milkman Tony Arnold who kept us waiting at kick off as his old electric milk float could be heard struggling up Charlton Lane. It is at this time that my great friendship with Peter Baggott started whose generosity and also generosity of spirit are a beacon for all to follow. Not long after my deep long standing friendship with the ever reliable, ever supportive, ever present and ever so nice Terry Baines was kindled.

Things have changed somewhat now with the pitch in great shape thanks to the fantastic efforts put in by Paul Baines, Jack Martin and Terry Baines. There has been much debate about the size of the Elmscroft Park Stadium pitch but for me big is beautiful and if you cannot play beautiful football on it then you are just not trying hard enough Lars.

The club goes from strength to strength too and thanks must go to Paul Sands, Kevin Shilling, Andy Baker and particularly Paul Beck for driving on the youngsters, Ian Pearce and Gary French for managing the Reserves (and Gary also splendidly manages our gold reserves as Treasurer) and to Mick Sands and in particular Matt Smith who has driven First team football to another level whilst still preserving the treasured club ethos for fair play. With the likes of Ryan, Steve, Mike, Ollie, the Lowe Brothers, the two Adams and the Beck Boys the future is bright both on and off the field of play. I also have to give a big thank you to the marvellous John Gladwin for getting the Vets team to where it is today with great humour and personal sacrifice so that legends such as Dave Clarke and Martin Bromley can still be gracing the hallowed turf at

Elmscroft Park whilst also giving me the chance to catch up with the likes of Neill, Stevo, Malcy, the Nutley boys, Billsy and Northern Rock.

I was never booked or sent off in 41 years of playing for West Farleigh and two miracles fit for a Saint would be for Jake Griggs and Simon Hibbs to go just a whole season without any bookings or sendings off !. My lack of bookings did not mean I shied away from physical contact suffering a broken nose, a dislocated shoulder, a broken right wrist and a broken finger whilst playing in goal and two fractured legs, keyhole surgery on my ankle and a broken left wrist whilst also occasionally breaking into a sweat when playing out on pitch in midfield and defence. It was however a bad back that ended my footballing career and if I could offer all future players one piece of advice it is to please look after your back and don't overdo the lifting of heavy objects. So if trying to lift Timo always do it in pairs to look after your back which also provides safety in numbers should he decide to get irate Starry.

Well football brought me to West Farleigh but it is friendship and fun that has kept me here for so long. Starry and Oeli have always kept me amused and the shoes in the freezer events was a great story. How a drunk Malcy miraculously got away with pouring a pint of beer on a girls head in a nightclub on a vets tour to Brighton is perhaps another miracle and Johnny Glad doing his Freddie Mercury cameos is just the stuff of legends. There are of course many other tales to tell including the famous late night in Hamburg shed for a Barbican flat bet on which key "Back in the USSR" was in. If the younger players have as much fun as I have over the last 41 years in the next 41 years then they are all going to have a blast.

With friendships for me the Holy Trinity is Peter Baggott, Terry Baines and dear John Gladwin but I am not sure which one is the Holy Ghost. Others will of course have their own Holy Trinity and we have all been blessed with the fantastic friendship with our friends from Ringstedt and so a big debt of gratitude goes to Smithy for starting this off. It never ceases to amaze me how the likes of dearest Stoffel, Timo, Lars, Gorgen, Christoph, Quick, Jocke, Heiko, Holger, Michi and Ralph get on with the likes of me despite being one or two decades younger (than ever) but I am sure that the alcohol must be a great help. I am blessed with a strong and hopefully lifelong friendship with Jan and Sonja Von Soosten and Gill is godmother to their first baby Flynn. Sadly Jan was not on the most recent tour as Flynn was rushed to hospital to have his appendix out the day before his 8th birthday and there are of course other dear friends who were not on tour as they have sadly passed away but I am sure that Neil Crighton, Wolle Cichy and Cody Buck were with us again in spirit.

Great thanks and love must also be extended to my dear wife Gill who like all the other girls including Jenny, Geraldine, Lynn, Mel, Jennie, Sharona, Susie, Katie, Hannah, Sheila, Sarah, Hedwig, Sonja, Be, Silke, Nina, Martina, Tanja and Kerry gracefully let us boys do the football and associated socialising. We love you all girls and thanks for putting up with us all for all these years. Heaven knows you all must have the patience of saints at times !. The delightful heiresses to my fortunes and the contents of my garage and loft, Sophie and Lydia, have also played a part in my time at the club too and I am sure they along with other children on the scene then and more recently have benefitted from the experience although not perhaps always realising it at the time.

There are of course so many more to thank not least Jack and Yvonne Martin, Simon and Alison Penny, Grant Wells, Louis and Astrid Gerdes, Godders, Stephen Norman and Brian Tillott but the list goes on and on there are too many more to give a full roll call here. As stated last Sunday I believe that you can judge people by the company they keep and being in the company of the likes of Percy, Tricky, Scud, Eumel, Baino, Karim, Dom, Dave, Lars, Starry, Stoffel and Quick just tells you that the collected masses on Sunday are lovely and what a fantastic bunch of guys of all ages continue to be involved on the West Farleigh/Ringstedt tours.

To some being involved with West Farleigh is a religion but for me and Bill Shankly alike it is far more important than that.

Wishing both clubs and villages every success both on and off the field of play

Yours "faithfully" rather than sincerely on this occasion (AKA Love and Cuddles)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Starry', written over a horizontal line.