

25 YEARS SINCE AYRESOME'S FINAL SEASON

# Sharing memories of Boro's former *stomping ground*

WHEN Middlesbrough travelled to Luton Town on August 2 to kick off the 2019-20 Football League season, the match also marked the first time the two teams had met since 1995 in the last league match at Ayresome Park.

Here, as part of a new feature marking the 25th anniversary of Ayresome's final season - and one which we'd love Remember When readers to contribute to - Manchester Metropolitan University historian and Boro fan DR TOSH WARWICK looks back to the famous old ground's early days...

It is quite fitting that Middlesbrough kicked off the new season against Luton Town on the 25th anniversary of Ayresome Park's last season. The Hatters were the opponents at the last ever league match held at Boro's home of 92 years, with John Hendrie getting a brace in a 2-1 victory on April 30, 1995, which would ultimately seal promotion and ensure the Riverside era kicked off in the FA Carling Premiership.

As we look to celebrate the heritage of Ayresome Park during the anniversary year by reaching out to individuals and organisations keen to participate in exploring the memorabilia, memories and matches associated with the long-lost ground, research to date has revealed some of the fascinating historic material in local collections relating to the venue's early days.

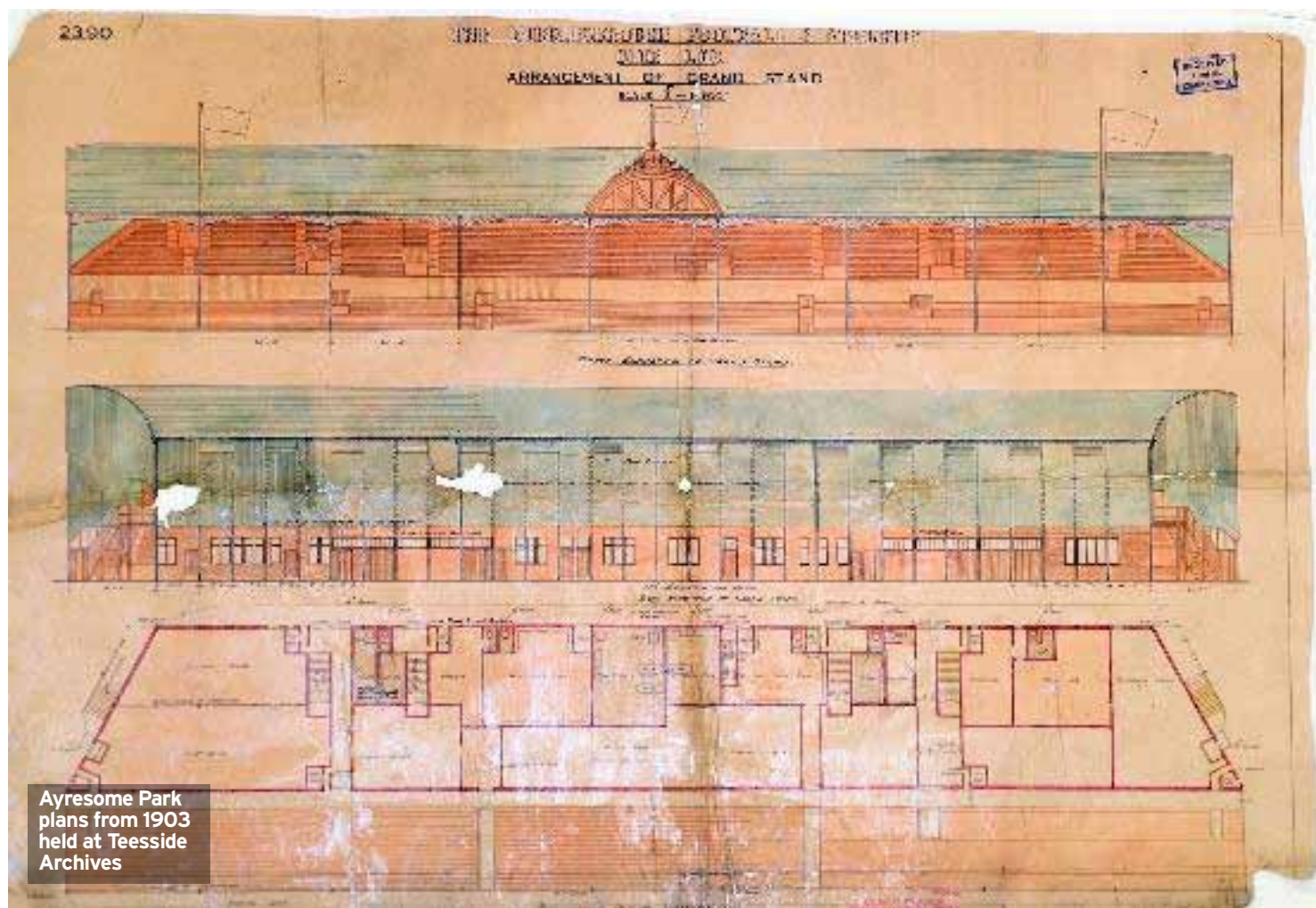
In particular, material held in Teesside Archives allows us to not only see the original plans of famed football stadium architect Archibald Leitch, but also to hear accounts of those who were there for Ayresome's early days - including the first league match.

One of the people at the first league match against Sunderland on September 12, 1903 (Boro had contested a friendly with Glasgow Celtic earlier that month) was fruit shop owner George Guymer, born 1895 in Glebe Street, Middlesbrough, whose recording is one of over 700 oral histories held in the collections.

In the recording, George recalls life in Victorian and Edwardian Middlesbrough, serving overseas with the Army during the First World War, surviving malaria and serving in the Home Guard.

His memories provide some insights into the football club's move from the Linthorpe Road Ground, living near to Ayresome and some early Boro stars.

He said: "The first match we played was with Sunderland at Ayresome Park, and it was threepence, threepence! It was very handy and if I hadn't enough money to go in, I used to



Ayresome Park plans from 1903 held at Teesside Archives



The home of Middlesbrough F.C. is demolished following the club's move to their new stadium on 27th August 1996



Souvenir team photo from the official opening of Ayresome Park on Saturday, September 12, 1903. Photo: Teesside Archives





Ayresome Park, the home of Middlesbrough F.C is demolished following the club's move to their new stadium

wait till 10 minutes before time when they used to open the gates, and see the last 10 minutes of the match.

"Most times there was a boys' part were we could go, and I followed them ever since. I've had a season ticket - even when I went to live in Scarborough, I came to Middlesbrough for the football matches after I retired."

Other early 20th century Boro memories in the collections include Jack Taylor, born in 1912, who recounts walking with friends along the Black Path from Redcar to Ayresome Park, as well as Jack Evans, who lived in nearby Clive Road. The latter describes the experience of living near the ground on matchday as "heavenly".

Jack Evans remembers going in the wooden stand - transferred from the Linthorpe Road Ground - seeing world record signing Alf Common play, and general memories of going to the match.

He said: "You used to go there, and you could go there as a family, and you could stand there and have a joke".

The oral histories provide an insight into a world of lost memories and it is clear that, just like many supporters who head to the Riverside over a century later, the fans who trudged along the Black Path and packed into Ayresome Park loved the ground and the experience it brought.

During the course of this season as we explore Ayresome Park's history, hopefully more fascinating stories and the connections people feel will be uncovered.

■ Anyone interested in sharing memories of Ayresome Park, or who would like to learn more about plans to celebrate the old ground's heritage, can email Tosh at [t.warwick@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:t.warwick@mmu.ac.uk), or send your memories directly to Remember When (see page 2).



Middlesbrough 2-1 Luton Town, League Division One match at Ayresome Park, Sunday 30th April 1995. The last match played at Ayresome Park. Farewell to Ayresome Park. Players celebrating after scoring goal

