

A BEES UNITED PUBLICATION

BEES, BATTLES, BUCKETS AND BALLOT BOXES

CHAPTER 4





At the start of the 2009-10 season, Greg Dyke (right) is presented with the League 2 Champions flag for 2008-09 by David Merritt, Chairman of Bees United which was the majority owner of the club. Later in August 2009 BU members voted for a partnership with Matthew Benham.

When I became Chairman in 2006 one of the first games was when Brentford knocked Sunderland out of the FA Cup. Remember those two goals by DJ Campbell? A friend rang me up and said "Greg, leave now. Resign. It doesn't get any better". I resisted the chance to quit while I was ahead and I'm really pleased I did. We had more high points on the pitch, like our League Cup victory over Everton, but off the field it was very hard going at times.

I first went to Griffin Park when I was about 8 or 9, my older brother Ian was on Brentford's books as a junior and we went together. I've been going on and off ever since, I was once on the board of Manchester United and I regard myself as both a Manchester United and a Bees supporter.



GREG DYKE
WAS CHAIRMAN OF BRENTFORD FC
FROM 2006 TO 2013



L-R Brentford FC director Mike Power, Greg Dyke and Cliff Crown representing Matthew Benham.

These were difficult times for Brentford, money was always a problem. It was not unknown to go to board meetings and have to put in a cheque to pay the wages. I invested a hundred thousand pounds in the club when I first joined and I put in another couple of cheques along the way to get us through a month. I was at the infamous FA Cup game at Southampton when the Club executives, watching the pennies, didn't reserve enough tickets for our fans. I put my own kids in the home end and told them to sit on their hands and not give away that they were Bees fans.

CHAPTER 4 GREG DYKE

I was Chairman of the ground development committee for about five years. At that stage we were still trying to develop the stadium project with Barratt and the key issue was how many flats they could fit into the development to pay for the stadium. Later Barratt pulled out. After all in 2011 we were in the middle of one of the biggest recessions in our history. House prices went down just when we were trying to persuade developers to build hundreds of flats.

A lot of the time I thought 'this is very difficult' and I feared 'this won't happen' especially when we lost Barratt. But there were also high points when we thought 'we are going to get there'. I remember promising a meeting of Bees fans that we would be in the new stadium by 2016.

Without Matthew Benham the Lionel Road stadium wouldn't have happened. I knew of him through BBC Comic Relief because he was one of their biggest donors but I hadn't met him before. Brian Burgess helped bring Matthew into Brentford and that changed the whole game. When Matthew began to invest in the club the stadium plan was already underway and he put up the money to buy the land.

I was able to help with my contacts: we got the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown on our side and that was influential. Another time we went to see Ken Livingstone when he was Mayor of London. I knew Ken because I stood for the GLC some years earlier, I hadn't won but Ken did, he remembered that and was always helpful. At a later point we contacted his successor as Mayor, Boris Johnson, and he wrote us a helpful letter.

I said the new stadium wouldn't have happened without Matthew but that's also true of Brian Burgess. He was lovely to work with and so very committed to the club and the concept of a new stadium. In 2013 I left to become Chairman of the FA and under FA rules I couldn't have an investment in a club so I got my £100,000 back from Brentford. But I've remained a regular in the Griffin Park boardroom on match days. I think it's brilliant that the new stadium is finally happening after all these years and I've got four season tickets booked for my family and friends. So see you there.