



# NEWS & Photos

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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE

**T**HE recent unveiling of a fabulous statue to Canning Town born, Jack Leslie, a prolific striker for Plymouth Argyle in the 1920s and 30s, brought a lasting testimony to a great man.

Above all it righted a wrong by the FA who, in 1925, selected him to play for England, only to rescind the request when seeing the colour of his skin. A posthumous England cap - Jack passed away in 1988 - has also been presented to the Leslie family.

A lot of dedicated people from Jack's family, Plymouth Argyle and the wider world, have worked tirelessly and selflessly to ensure Jack's legacy is cast in bronze for time immemorial. Special mention should be given to Campaign organisers Greg Foxsmith and Matt Tiller. Forward thinkers unravelling the mistakes of the narrow minded.

While Jack's story is very much one with its roots in the soil of Plymouth's Home Park - he made 401 appearances, scoring 146 goals - there is a strong West Ham footnote to his life's story.

After Jack Leslie hung up his boots at Home Park in the 1930s, he returned to Canning Town and resumed his trade as a boiler maker. The precise details of how and when he landed the job of 'Boot Boy' at Upton Park are a little vague. However, it was Ron Greenwood who gave him the job, once again highlighting the innate inclusive spirit of West Ham's most successful manager. Ron's son Neil Greenwood underlines the sentiment; "Dad was like that. He would have made the hire based on merit and nothing else."

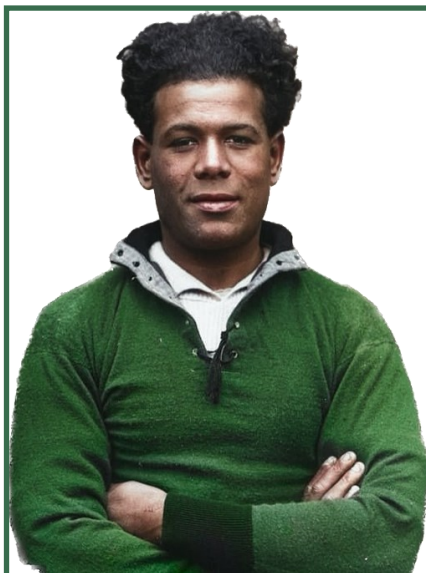
I decided to discover more about Jack's time at West Ham and spoke with several players and staff from his time at the Club. The result provides a small Claret and Blue full stop to a story that is simultaneously heart breaking and heart warming.

There is a wonderful YouTube clip of Jack's last day at West Ham. John Lyall pays a special tribute to the man in the West Ham dressing room with the entire first team in attendance. Search for '*Jack Leslie West Ham*'.

Enjoy the recollections set down here. They provide another layer of depth to Jack's story, a life well-lived. Continue to rest in peace Jack. Your legacy has been handled beautifully by those you touched in life.

Thank you.

## JACK LESLIE



Jack Leslie - Plymouth Argyle's Captain and 146 goal striker, fourth on their all time list of goal kings. His strike partner, Sam Black, is top of the charts on 184 - The glory years!



for Plymouth Argyle in the 1920s

Jack's predatory instinct on high alert



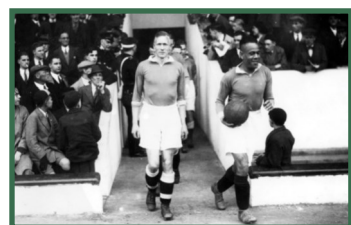
Putting in the hard yards



Jack Leslie's legacy secured in bronze. Present at the unveiling were his granddaughters Lesley Hiscott, Lyn Davies and Gill Carter



Fit, athletic, and prolific - what every fan likes to see in a striker



Leading out the Pilgrims

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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE

BY STEVE BACON

### WEST HAM PHOTOGRAPHER WHO TOOK THAT PHOTO

He was such a nice old boy. On non-matchdays I'd sometimes pop in to see him and have a nice cuppa. He was a very self-effacing man.

I didn't know anything about his career in football and assumed that both Ron Greenwood and John Lyall knew a lot more. I just enjoyed his company. Having a cup of tea with Jack was time well spent.

I'm pleased with the photo I took. It captures Jack's time at West Ham. You can see just how much work there was for him to get through in between matches and training sessions. The fact that he wore a boiler suit shows how hard working and dedicated he was. It is quite something when you think about all the West Ham players' boots that he looked after during his time at the Club.

I can't remember the exact details behind the photo but I obviously had a reason to take it. I must have been asked by a newspaper to take a few shots of Jack. I vaguely remember a newspaper article about Jack in the late 1970s so it could well have been for that. He took a good picture because he had a nice smile.

The irony of course is that Jack always wore a shirt and tie but this must have been one of the few exceptions.

I was so pleased to hear about the tribute to Jack. The statue looks terrific and a lasting testimony to a lovely man.



Steve Bacon, the great preserver of West Ham in photos



With Geoff Pike, Sir Trevor Brooking, Phil Parkes and Paul Allen



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE

BY DAVID CROSS

### 1980 FA CUP WINNER

West Ham fans probably don't know the part played by Jack Leslie in our FA Cup success against Arsenal in 1980.

As most people are aware, quite a few footballers are very superstitious, and I was no exception. The boots I wore during that 1979-80 season had served me well. I'd scored 18 goals going into the Cup Final but, as May 10 approached, they were in a perilous state, with splits and holes in them. It looked like I would have to play in a new pair in the Final which was not ideal at all.

I was reluctant to have a brand new pair for the big game. Jack knew this and unbeknown to me he somehow managed to get my existing pair mended. The timing was tight and I awoke on FA Cup final day resigned to wearing new boots.

However, when I entered the Wembley dressing room my old boots were there waiting for me! Jack had arranged for them to be sent to Wembley on the morning of the match. You can imagine the lift that gave me. Everything felt just right as I took my place on the Wembley pitch. Any striker will tell you that starting a match with positive vibes is vital and thanks to Jack Leslie, I had those vibes in abundance.

I never wore those Cup winning boots again and I've still got them today. From the photos you will notice the repair work that Jack managed to have done.

The irony of the story is that the new boots, that I was reluctant to wear, were the ones I played in the following season when we won Promotion and I picked up the Golden Boot for scoring 22 goals.

Jack was a nice chap who made no fuss about cleaning and sorting out our boots every week. A humble guy who certainly played his part in our FA Cup success that year.



The greatest moment in the long career of David Cross.....Holding aloft the FA Cup in 1980



.....and the boots that made it all possible

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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY MICK McGIVEN WEST HAM PLAYER AND COACH

What more can I say that has not already been said about Jack? He was a wonderful man. Every day when I went to Upton Park he always had a smile on his face. He was a humble man, rarely talking about his career unless he was asked to.

I liked going to talk to Jack and trying to help, not that I was any good. Jack had his own way of doing things. However his face would light up whenever Plymouth Argyle was mentioned.

I recall telling Jack that I was taking a reserve team down to play at Home Park, Plymouth's ground. His face beamed! "Can you send my best wishes to..." and he'd rattle off several names that he was particularly fond of. The pure joy Jack felt when sharing them was heart warming. "I certainly will," I assured him.

We travelled to the West Country by train. At the time, Plymouth's reserves were in the Combination League. After the game I was invited into the boardroom and as soon as I mentioned Jack's name and that he had sent his best wishes, I was inundated by people asking about 'Our Jack'. "Please send him our love and affection," was the sincere request made of me. Jack meant a great deal to that Club. Still does.

We returned on the overnight train and the following day, I popped in to see Jack and told him all about the trip. His face was a picture when I recalled the people that had sent their best wishes to him.

He was a true footballing hero! Especially in Plymouth. His statue is a just testament to his ability and history at the Club he loved.

For me he was a humble, polite man who loved his football. I will never forget him.



Player



Coach



Hammer



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY RAY STEWART 1980 FA CUP WINNER

I am so pleased that you got in touch. I was telling my wife all about Jack Leslie and what he did for me and all the players at the Club.

I've got so many fond memories of Jack that it chokes me a bit to think about him, because he did so much for me.

He used to say things like; "Football is all about the three 'Gs' - Go, Goals and Guts. They will get you to where you need to be." That always stuck with me and I've even shared it with my boy, Mark.

Jack looked after my boots as though I was a king! He was absolutely brilliant! I tried to give him a few bob but he would always kick back and say; "It's my job, Ray, I look after you. Not the other way round." He'd look after two pairs of boots for me and on matchday he'd say; "Wear these ones today, I think they've got goals in them!"

He told me about his past and how he used to play as a striker for Plymouth Argyle. It must have been tough for him playing in the 1920s. It was tough for me being a Scotsman playing in England in the 1980s!

I didn't find out until later that he'd actually been chosen to play for England and they took it back. Sad, really sad. He thought so much of John Lyall and spoke so highly of him. Jack was such an inspirational figure. He could have delivered a team talk he was that motivational.

He sat on a wooden stool in the boot room next to a wooden bench and he'd talk to anybody who passed through. He was a proper gentleman, always smartly dressed.

You meet a lot of people in life and you forget most of them but I'll always remember Jack Leslie. You cannae forget such a man!



Ray Stewart - West Ham's penalty king



West Ham's only Scot to win the FA Cup



Legend!



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY EVERALD LARONDE 1981 FA YOUTH CUP WINNING CAPTAIN

Jack was an interesting man and took his work very seriously.

A lot of us young lads liked to pop in and see him working away in the boot room. He was like a friendly granddad, kind and helpful. No edge to him at all.

None of us had any idea about his past and his legendary status at Plymouth Argyle. We certainly didn't know that he'd been selected to play for England.

Being young and mischievous I remember asking him a silly question one day;

Looking around Jack's room, I was struck by the number of players' boots he had to look after:

"How long does it take you to clean all these boots, Jack?" I asked.

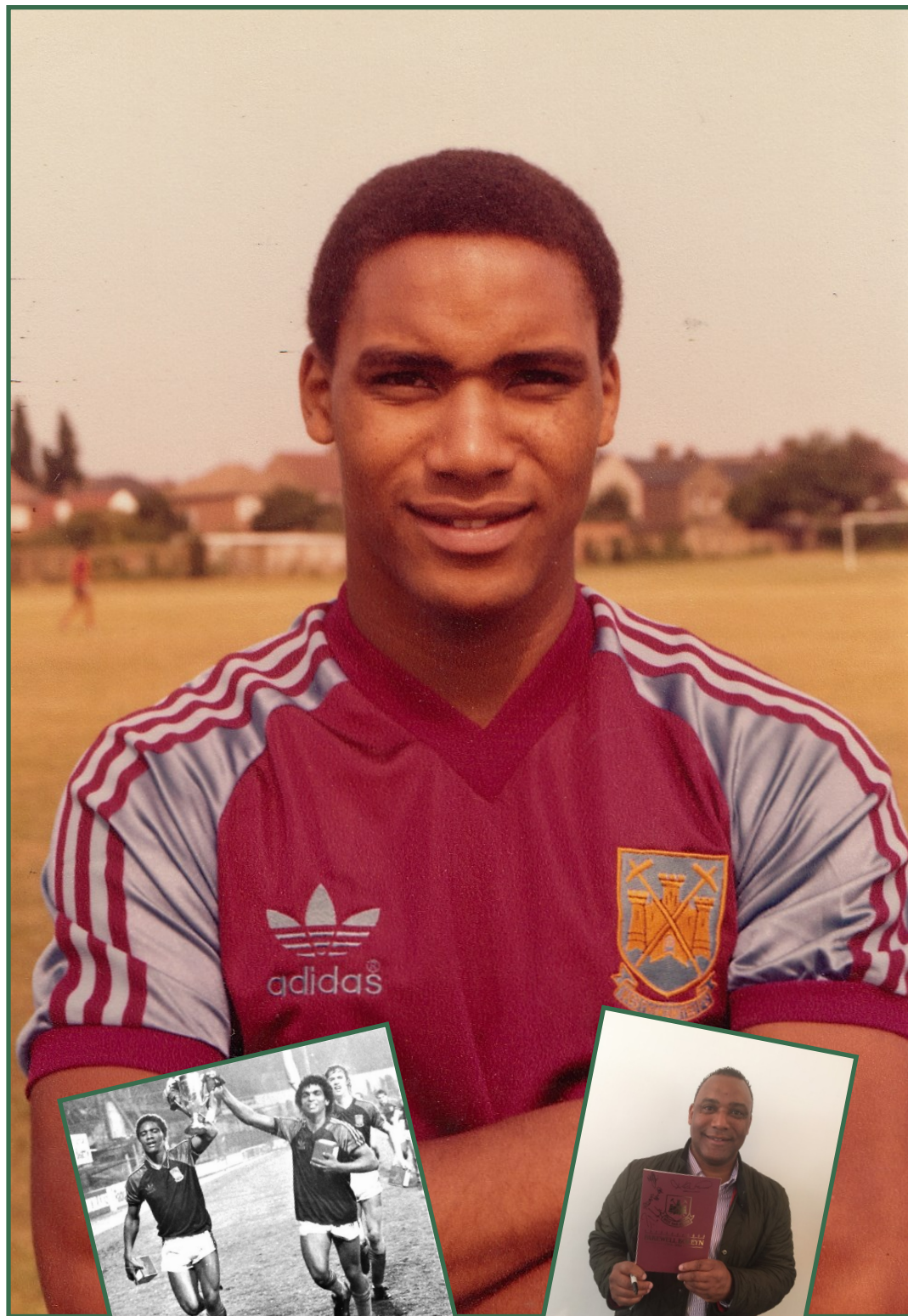
His reply has always stayed with me:

"Everald, if you ever get to my age, you will realise that it is not the time it takes to clean the boots, it is the privilege you feel and the pleasure you receive from doing it."

He genuinely loved working in that boot room and every West Ham player from that era played their football wearing boots with that magic Jack Leslie touch.

Quite a legacy when you think about it.

I was really pleased to hear about the statue. Absolutely the right thing to do.



EV

Ev with Bobby Barnes, enjoying FA Youth Cup glory!

Last night at the Boleyn



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY MARK SMITH WEST HAM LEFT BACK

I first met Jack when I joined West Ham as an apprentice in 1978. He truly was a beautiful bloke! Very lovely and very funny.

I used to love going in to see him in the boot room, and we would end up talking for ages. He had such an easy way about him.

I don't think any of us realised just how important he was as a pioneer of black footballers. I certainly had no idea about his impressive goal scoring record. But that was typical of Jack who was a very humble man.

Seeing that terrific photo of him in the boot room brought back so many special memories.

He would always tell me to make sure I enjoyed my football and try not to worry too much. As a young kid, it was so reassuring to hear his wise words.

Whenever I offered to help him clean the boots or tidy up the room, he would always say; "That's my job." Sometimes I would say it's my job as well but he genuinely loved the work he did.

Jack Leslie was a genuinely beautiful man who lifted the spirit of everyone who spent time in his company.

What a great thing for a statue to be erected in his honour.

Fully deserved!



Mark Smith in the shirt



Training at Chadwell Heath and (right) Beatles fanatic Mark with a book of West Ham memories from the John Lyall era



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE

BY CHRIS AMPOFO

### 1981 FA YOUTH CUP WINNER

Jack was a very quiet guy, an older guy who was in charge of the boots.

As an apprentice we were around Jack quite a bit. As a first year and second year apprentice I was in that boot room virtually every day. We would give those boots a quick once over but Jack was old school and he did like to put a lot of dubbing on those boots!

He was very pleasant to us and was generally a very unassuming, polite, softly spoken, guy. I never heard him raise his voice or say anything unpleasant to anyone.

When I heard about the campaign to erect a statue in his name I felt quite sad because none of us young lads knew about Jack's story.

It was only the goalkeeping coach, Ernie Gregory, who knew anything about Jack. Our youth team goalie back then was Johnny Vaughan and Ernie took him aside one day and pointed at Jack and said; "You see him? He was a very good player in his day."

Some people in the press gave the impression that Jack wasn't treated that well at West Ham because they put him in charge of the boots but it wasn't like that at all. He was highly respected and all the players really enjoyed having a chat with him.

John Lyall said it best when he explained just how everyone at West Ham was important. "If I don't turn up", he would say. "It's not a problem because Ronnie Boyce will take the team. If Ron doesn't turn up, it's not a problem because Tony Carr will take the team. But if Jack Leslie doesn't turn up, we've got a problem, because we can't play without match ready boots!"



With Tony Cottee enjoying more success, this time in a pre season Youth Team tournament abroad



With fellow Youth Cup winners, (L-R) Alan Dickens, Keith McPherson, Chris, Mark Schiavi, Everaldo Laronde and Steve Milton

Chris with the FA Youth Cup in 1981 after slaying Spurs over two legs. Only the second of three occasions that West Ham have won the trophy, the other two successes coming in 1963 and 1999.





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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE

BY PAT HOLLAND  
1975 FA CUP WINNER

Jack was respected by everyone at West Ham. He was a lovely man, easy to talk to and often with some little pearl of wisdom to share.

When Jack first came to the club to run the boot room, Albert Walker was the kit man. Now, Albert had played for West Ham in the 1930s and had good knowledge of Jack who had played up front at Plymouth Argyle in the 1920s and 30s.

Albert told me that Jack also played on the wing and that he had once been picked to play for England by the FA. We now know that the FA then changed its mind for all the wrong reasons. One of those shameful moments in football's history.

Jack was usually to be found in the boot room which was to the left of the home team dressing room. We would pass it on matchdays and Jack would often stand there to wish the players good luck as they made their way out.

Now, being a winger, I had struck up a good rapport with Jack. He would pay me particular interest. "Patsy", he would say; "Show them your heels."

On the way back to the changing room after a game, if I'd had an off day, I was usually greeted by Jack saying: "Patsy, you haven't shown them your heels."



With the FA Cup and Billy Bonds



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY GEOFF PIKE 1980 FA CUP WINNER

Jack seemed to be a permanent fixture at the Club the whole time I was there.

In my early days as an apprentice at West Ham, I had to visit the boot room most days and Jack was always there, smartly dressed, working away at those boots.

One of my jobs was to ensure that all the boots were collected after training and matchdays and taken to the boot room. Jack would then work tirelessly to get them clean and ready for their next outing.

It must have been a tedious, repetitive job but he never complained. In fact, it was quite obvious that he really enjoyed it.

He loved the game of football and was another one of those great people who added so much to that special feeling around the Club at that time.

When he did eventually retire he was in his 80s! John Lyall said a few words in honour of his service to West Ham.

People often say that I was an unsung hero but the same could be said about people like Jack Leslie, Albert Walker the kit man, and Bubbles the cook in the canteen!

I'm so happy to see a lasting tribute to Jack's playing career. I really had no idea about that side of his life.

To me he was someone I didn't want to let down and made sure I got the boots to him. He had a quiet way of letting you know if those boots hadn't arrived on time!



Geoff the apprentice



A true Hammer!



Geoff's finest moment



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## MEMORIES OF JACK LESLIE BY ROB JENKINS WEST HAM'S PHYSIO

Jack was a lovely old boy and we'd often have a chat over a cup of tea in the groundsman's room. Sometimes we'd drink something a little bit stronger!

It's strange the little things we remember. He came to me once asking me if I would help him to use the telephone because he wanted to call his daughter. Jack was from a time before telephones were in common usage and this would have been in the 1970s when people still used payphones. I thought it was strange at the time but here I am today, a little older than Jack was back then, and I haven't got a clue how to use a mobile phone or the internet or anything digital for that matter! Technology doesn't interest everybody.

Sometimes, a few of the lads would pop in and we'd chat about pretty much everything.

As young lads, you can imagine some of the questions they'd throw out there. They asked Jack if it was ok to have a drink the night before a game and he replied that a couple of beers was fine to settle the nerves and to get some sleep. Inevitably, they asked him if it was alright to have a 'bit of the other' the night before a game. Jack didn't think that was acceptable at all. "Anyway, you can always make up for it afterwards" he said, which made us all laugh!



Rob Jenkins - At his beloved Upton Park



Helping Harry Redknapp



Helping Billy Jennings



The great raconteur!