

Matt Diner looks back over a glorious century of action for Old Esthameians FC

100 not out!

Glorious generations have worn those old boys colours with pride

THE start of the new football season will see Old Esthameians Football Club celebrate their centenary.

Old E's were established in 1909 to provide opportunities to continue playing football to former pupils of East Ham Grammar School.

Originally a closed organisation the club is now open and draws its players from a number of London boroughs.

The club name was derived from the East Ham Grammar School for Boys, which moved to its present site in Sussex Road in 1952-53 and remained a Grammar school until 1971, when comprehensive education was introduced and it became Langdon School.

The club continued to play football at the school site until

Football special

2001 when it was forced to move from the site due to ongoing problems with vandalism. Following a brief period at Blake Hall Road in Wanstead, the club has now moved to Wadham Lodge Sports Centre in Walthamstow.

The club is a member of the Southern Amateur League and still fields five sides each week with an occasional veteran's game.

Old E's were initially members of the Secondary School Old Boys League and they joined the Southern Olympian League (SOL) in the late 1940's becoming one of the strongest members of the league and regularly won silverware.

Their dominance was such that in the 1963-64 season all five sides did the league and cup double. This was also the year that perhaps the most famous

of all Old Esthameians, Ronnie Boyce, scored the winner for West Ham at Wembley as they beat Preston North End 3-2.

The strength of the club was such that they applied to join the Southern Amateur League (SAL) and were eventually elected to membership in 1971.

They quickly became established in the SAL and moved through the divisions to reach the senior section in 1976. Old E's became feared throughout the SAL with few teams relishing their visit to the Sussex Road site.

Phenomenal

The 1980s were a period of phenomenal success for the club. Membership reached a peak during this time and they fielded seven teams every Saturday.

In 1980-81 a notable landmark was reached with the first team emerging as Senior Division champions. In fact, 1980-81 was a remarkable year for the club as the second team completed a memorable double, winning both the reserve team section and the AFA Intermediate Cup, the only time that this has been achieved in the clubs history.

The fourth team were also crowned as champions, whilst the sixth team finished as runners-up in their section. In addition the first, third, fifth and sixth teams all won Old



CUP THAT: Terry Boyling (above) with the Senior Trophy after their 1984 win over Old Aloysians, while (below) Alan Boyling celebrates with a trophy on a cold and wet bank holiday back in the 1980s.



Boys Cup trophies.

Further glory awaited in the 1984 as the first team reached the AFA Senior final for the first time in their history beating Old Aloysians 2-0 in the final. They repeated this success in 1986 when they again emerged victorious with a 2-1 win over Old Ignations.

E's continued to thrive despite a fire at their base at Langdon School in 1987, which destroyed their clubhouse, which wasn't rebuilt until 1990.

The early 1990s saw Old E's continue their success of the previous decade. The 1992-93 season was one of the most successful seasons in the club's history.

That season saw the second, fifth and seventh teams all emerge as champions of their sections.

It was almost a complete sweep of the Old Boys competitions with all the sides apart from the fifth team winning their competitions.

Indeed Old E's are the most successful club of all time in the Old Boys competition, winning 43 trophies to date in the history of the competition.



The second half of the 1990s saw E's start to struggle. Declining membership and problems at their base at Langdon School all took their toll. At the end of the decade E's were reduced to four sides and endured a number of fruitless seasons.

But the turn of the century saw an upturn in fortunes. In 2003-04 there was considerable success for the club, the highlight being the first team winning the senior section of the Southern Amateur League for only the second time in their history. They added the Old Boys' trophy to this in 2006-07.

The centenary season sees the club looking ahead with optimism. They have

settled into their new base in Walthamstow and continued to be a side well respected in the league.

The first team returned to the senior section of the SAL in the new season having been crowned division two champions back in May.

A number of activities are planned for the season, the first being a club day planned for September 6 at Wadham Lodge.

Three matches are taking place from 1pm - an over-25 v under-25's game, a veterans' game featuring Steve Wilks Legends XI and Danny O'Connell Super-stars XI and Old E's first team are playing Hale End.

Other activities planned are a stag supper to be held at Ilford Golf Club on November 30, a golf day at Upminster Golf Club in April and a Centenary Dinner which will take place on May 9, 2009 at the Prince Regent Hotel.

Chairman Jon Widdows said: "We are looking forward to the centenary season which we hope will see us reunited with many of our past members."



FINAL FLOURISH: Danny O'Connell lifts the AFA Senior Trophy back in 1984.



STARS OF THE FUTURE: It may be Newham under-11 cricket team, but two of the East Ham Grammar boys in the picture are stars of the future. Former Hammers star Paul Brush is second from the left on the back row, while current West Ham boss Alan Curbishley is two along from his future Hammers team-mate.