

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Today's visit of West Ham United brings together two of the seven Premier League teams that don't take their name from the town or city they're located in. However, Tottenham, Arsenal, Fulham, Aston Villa and Crystal Palace all retain a fierce pride in their roots, as, of course, do the Toffees and the Hammers.

West Ham were founded in 1895 as Thames Ironworks, taking their present name in 1900. We began life in 1878 when a team from St Domingo Methodist New Connexion Chapel in Everton began kicking a ball about in Stanley Park before formally claiming the name of their famous district a year later.

How this process unfolded is intriguing. Clearly, the St Domingo amateurs realised they might be in at the start of something big when their committee called a special meeting in November 1879 at their Queen's Head Hotel headquarters in Everton Village. Club secretary John W. Clarke, son of the pub's landlord, might have scribbled down 'New name decision?' on a pad prior to the gathering.

What were the naming options? Did anyone suggest Liverpool FC that night? Surely not! But we'll never know! Or how about Anfield FC? After all, the Club's first pitch was in the south-east corner of Stanley Park on that district's border. Less, obvious would have been Walton FC with its own park border.

In reality, only one name carried any weight. Links with the Breckfield Road North Chapel were still powerful and the Club had an obvious meeting place at the Queen's Head where their secretary lived. I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall when the name change vote was taken.

The St Domingo players, now starring for Everton Football Club, could not have truly imagined what lay ahead and the

battle hymns that would emerge using the EVERTON title they had now invested in. However, I'm sure they toasted their new name with genuine excitement.

Remarkably, I was able to reach out and touch those ambitious club pioneers in 2015 when I organised an archaeological dig on the historic site of the former Queen's Head. Working with National Museums Liverpool's lead archaeologists Dr Mark Adams and Liz Stewart, the Everton FC Heritage Society and the Friends of Everton Park, we unearthed the front parlour of the pub where the St Domingo committee held their defining name change meeting, the birthplace of big-time football on Merseyside.

Our most intriguing find was a Victorian stoneware inkwell. As Dr Adams remarked: "It would be great to think that we discovered the ink container used to write the words EVERTON FC for the first time."

What a thought...

