



In conversation with

# DAVE GITTINGS

## Stepping back in Stockley time

It's a cold February morning, but Dave is out with the team doing a fine job pruning hedges at The Square.

Taking him away from his job for half an hour leads to a history tour of Stockley Park. At 32 years, the Park is the oldest business park in the UK, and throughout its time, Dave has been here as a valued member of the landscaping team.

Stockley Park was a wasteland, used as a tip and around the area were fields and fields (yes... fields!) of fruit and vegetables being grown for the markets in and around London. With the proximity of the canal, the produce was carried in to the city by barge. Between 4 The Square and 5 The Square was the Willow Horses Timber Yard, where timber was transported from the area by canal barge.

Another mark to the busy life centred around the canal is the lake adjacent to 1 The Square. This was originally linked to the canal and was used as an area to sink old barges. They were directed into this area before having a hole drilled to the bottom.

"They're what's left of the old manor house", says Dave, pointing to some Yew Trees behind 4 The Square. Also in close proximity were 12 cottages, owned by a Mrs Benbow, a strong willed lady who refused to move out of her own cottage even though it was crumbling around her, "we put planks of wood up to help keep the cottage from falling".

When asking Dave about what he and his community thought when being told the wasteland was being developed into a business park, he remembered they all thought it was going to be private housing... remember, Stockley Park was first of its kind and the country was not used to seeing large business communities. Majority of the many trees at Stockley were planted by Dave as well as the hedges, but these came with a surprise. The hedges were imported in from Italy and along with them came a family of Italian Voles! "They were cute, until one tried to nip me".

Post WWII, with excess amount of soldier equipment, a pit was dug close to where The Management Centre is now. In this pit went old boots, uniforms and satchels which had been used during the war. These were found when the area was being developed. Dave remembers the pit went down at least 100 metres.

Our walk only took in half the Park but a wealth of knowledge was shared by Dave. Stories of his past and that of the area now known as Stockley Park. So what does Dave enjoy doing when he's finished his work for the day? "Gardening!".

Dave hard at work on the grounds



'My friend would bring his speed boat and race in the big lake where 5 Longwalk is now'

