Angels in Wanstead

Bryan Clark

"Angels? Oh God, I don't think I'm one of them!" That was the reaction from Bryan Clark when I asked to interview him for this column. Since, by definition, no human being is, I couldn't really argue. But this ex-teacher, who still teaches in science and maths privately, is a fixture in Wanstead's social scene and has been helping out with both cricket and tennis for many years.

Bryan's family moved to Wanstead in 1962. "I used to deliver papers as a young lad, and worked in local newsagents. I suppose what is weird about the way Wanstead has changed is that all the houses look the same as when I put papers in their letter boxes, but the whole High Street has changed. I only recognise Dennis's and the Fruiters. I wish I had taken photos to show how things changed from then to now." With this in mind, it's surprising that Bryan joined Linkside Tennis Club and Wanstead Cricket Club as recently as 16 years ago, when his oldest son was eight.

I was surprised that he wasn't part of the tennis committee this year (he normally is) as he still plays two or three times a week. It won't surprise those who know him to hear he's still on the bar committee or that he sometimes takes over some of the coach's duties if he's away (confusingly the tennis coach is also named Brian).

While I know from conversations over the years that Bryan does quite a bit to help out, when I asked him what he did for the tennis courts, he told me very little: "If a lump falls off a bench I might sort it out, and I do general pottering about, but nothing official." That he's waiting to repair the front of the practice wall speaks, I think, for itself.

Over the years Bryan has done a number of things for the local cricket club too. He runs the Slow Coaches and has been doing so for about four years. This is a group of people, such as coaches and others involved in the club, all aged over 20, who play cricket regularly. They play Tuesdays and Wednesdays and have a great meal after. Bryan tells me the matches are fun and, some would say, an amusing spectacle too. "I also go around winding people up so that they get teams together to play us. Manor House have started a team."

Bryan started coaching cricket around 10 years ago and has been coach and coordinator. This year, they asked him to take over the junior section. He told me that the guys who were doing it before were so brilliant at it that it is hard to feel that he can make a difference: "Len and Trevor were great and it's difficult for even a team of us to do as much for the club as they did. They did such a magic job, they are so committee and knowledgeable, it is difficult to feel that you're up to it". But I'm sure he is.

For more information on Linkside Tennis Club, visit **linksidetennis.co.uk**. For more information on Wanstead Cricket Club, visit **wanstead.hitscricket.com**.

To nominate someone for an *Angels in Wanstead* article, visit **wavidi.com/aiw** or leave a message for Carole at The Larder, 39 High Street, Wanstead.



In the 19th of a series of articles profiling Wanstead's local community heroes, photojournalist **Carole Edrich** introduces us to Bryan Clark

To advertise, please call **020 8819 6645** or visit **www.wansteadvillagedirectory.com**

Please mention the **Wanstead Village Directory** when responding to adverts