

Peter Boizot



Few hockey clubs can regard themselves as fortunate as Hampstead & Westminster Hockey Club to have included in its membership one so influential and generous as Peter Boizot MBE, for whom hockey remains his prime sporting love.

Peter joined Hampstead Hockey Club in 1967 after an initial warm welcome received from the Club's Secretary Colin Greenhalgh, a point frequently mentioned by Peter as a defining moment. He had a remarkable life and career. What follows is a brief summary that might not achieve justice in explaining its depth and laying markers towards his influence on the Club.

Peter James Boizot was born on 16 November 1929 in Walton to the north of Peterborough City Centre. He spent his early years in Peterborough. When aged three the family moved to Stilton, five miles to the south but then returned to All Saints Road. A pupil at St Mark's School in Gladstone Street, he later became head pupil at King's School. He won a choral scholarship having been reluctant to audition but following his acceptance as member of the Peterborough Cathedral choir, he was awarded a full scholarship. He later went on to achieve an honours degree in History from St Catharine's College, Cambridge in 1953.

Peter became a vegetarian whilst on summer holiday in Scotland in 1934 and this was to have a lasting effect on his life. In 1948, his headmaster dispatched him, aged 18, on a three-month foreign exchange programme to experience life with the Uzielli de Mari family, in Forte dei Marmi near Pisa in Tuscany (but also with a substantial home in Firenze). Giovanni Uzielli de Mari was an Admiral in the Italian Navy and wanted someone to teach English to his young family.

This was where Peter first encountered pizza. He would go to watch Benito, a highly skilled *pizzaiola* tossing pizzas into the air and wearing a distinctive black and white horizontally striped shirt. However, Peter never tasted a pizza prepared by Benito, for that would have been an affront to the family, who being aware of Peter's enjoyment at watching a pizzaiola in action, arranged for pizza to be served at home as a surprise at a party held on his departure. This party kick started Peter's lifelong love for pizza and his connection to Italy. For Peter, "to eat a pizza with mozzarella with tomato on a pastry base with an olive or two" was ideal.



Peter had to postpone taking up a place offered at Cambridge University because of National Service. After training, he went by boat to Africa aged 19 and joined the Royal Artillery and the Royal Army Service Corps in Egypt. He then enrolled at the University with a Choral Exhibition.

After finishing his studies, Peter became a salesman for Tiger Toys, selling wooden animal toys throughout the UK. On his travels, he was introduced in the London Docks to Nigel Parkinson, who also hailed from Peterborough. He was the captain of the MV *Yarvic* and offered Peter a job as a deck hand. There was a crew of 10, whose job was to deliver goods from the British Embassy to Paris and to collect Pan books for the return leg. The ship sailed for France every fortnight.

These trips to Paris had two marked effects on Peter's life (and possibly a third). In Paris he encountered some of the greatest jazz musicians in the world playing at cafés and restaurants all over the city (and particularly the German quarter). And Paris was the first place where he found pizza readily available and where pizza restaurants were commonplace, again especially in the German quarter. It was here that he felt his dream of opening a pizza restaurant was born.

In Paris, he set out to buy a clarinet, never before having mastered the playing of an instrument. He was taken aback at the price at which they were sold at *La Maison de Musique* and explained that he could only afford half the cost. To his surprise, the shop owner was prepared to wait for payment of the other half until Peter had it to hand and let him take the clarinet away. He later suspected that the generosity shown by the shop owner that day inspired much of his later philanthropy.

When Nigel Parkinson fell ill, Mrs Parkinson asked Peter to skipper the *Yarvic* after only six months' experience, which he did but after a few months, he decided that travel other than at sea was more his *métier* and he resigned.

For 10 years Peter then spent time in Europe, for Nestlé's publicity department in Switzerland and in the news photo department of Associated Press in Rome, combining work as a journalist with selling souvenirs and postcards in the evenings to tourists from a barrow in St Peter's in Vincoli Square. He then worked for Associated Book Distributors, based in Chicago but working from Frankfurt, selling and distributing encyclopaedias and knowledge books to forces personnel in US Army bases.

After a business trip to the headquarters in Chicago, Peter concluded that he could use to better effect the skills he had worked upon in these various jobs and venture out on his own. But in 1964 his father died and he returned to the UK.

Returning to London, Peter based himself in Soho and was frustrated that he was unable to find any restaurants that served pizza. He decided to solve the problem by opening his own that he

would strive to make authentic. He was introduced to Renée Brittain, some 20 years his senior, who owned a number of restaurants in the Canary Islands and she eventually challenged him to open a restaurant of his own.

They made a wide search for inspiration and eventually discovered the *Hostaria Romana* in Dean Street that sold pizza, though not on a par with those of Italian provenance that Peter had experienced. The owner explained that it was impossible to cook a decent pizza in England because to do so needed a special oven. This galvanised Peter and started his search. It led him to Rome and a meeting with Signor Notaro, a manufacturer of ovens, who agreed, for £600 to send it to England along with an Italian chef to work it.

The other essential ingredient was real mozzarella. Shipping from Italy every week in the 1960s was unrealistic. Peter visited Carnevale in North London, the capital's only mozzarella producer and agreed a deal for exclusive supply for his restaurant. The mozzarella factory was owned by Margaret Zampi, widow of the late film director Mario Zampi, who several years before his death had unsuccessfully tried to launch a pizza restaurant, named PizzaExpress, on Wardour Street.

Apparently Zampi found that film stars and their ilk craved more luxurious food and simple pizza was ahead of his time. Eventually Zampi caved in, undertook an expensive refurbishment, changed the name to *The Romanella* and began offering standard Italian fare. Despite initial success, The Romanella fell on hard times following Zampi's death and was on the verge of liquidation.

Peter saw it as an opportunity, however. He borrowed £100 from Renée and made an offer to acquire the ailing company from the widow, who agreed sell Peter the shares of PizzaExpress Limited including the name for £10 but, at the time, with the significant burden of repaying £14,000 to creditors. In a decision that he was later at least partly to reverse, Peter decided there was no need for the plush decor of The Romanella in a modern pizzeria and set about ripping it all out.

However, with insufficient resources, it proved a frustrating and turbulent process. To make matters worse, Peter's new one tonne Italian oven arrived from Europe. It was never going to fit through the front door, which forced them to knock down a side wall to accommodate it. Gino Plato, his Italian manager left, not having anticipated a requirement for manual labour. Then his imported *pizzaiolo*, Gianni Giochi, handed in his notice. Peter was fortunate to find chef, Rino Silvestri, from Naples, willing to step into the breach.

Thus, on 29 March 1965, PizzaExpress was born. Following advice from Gianni whenever a new pizzeria is opened, by tradition it should give away pizza without charge and this was taken up and remained customary throughout Peter's ownership. Its pizza was met with some caution. Takings on the first day amount to £3. At first, Pizza Express charged two shillings (10p) per slice of pizza, served on disposable plates with plastic cutlery and accompanied by coffee in paper cups. Plastic cutlery soon gave way to stainless steel when the hot cheese began to melt the implements.

Peter soon recognized that his idea of pizza was not properly understood by the people of Soho. He had started by cutting large pizzas into eight slices and giving them away on grease-proof paper through the front window but when the charge of two shillings applied, business began to wane.

Peter rejected calls by onlookers and well-meaning advisers to supplement his menu with more familiar British favourites. He opened before lunch and, if there were customers, did not close until 4.00 – 5.00am, picking up trade from late night drinkers. But later he was persuaded by

Ronald Simson, a friend from Cambridge and a City banker, to whom Peter had turned for investment, to move slightly upmarket.

For the redesign, Peter turned to Italian designer Enzo Apicella, who later worked on 85 PizzaExpress restaurants and was responsible for the internal lay outs and the "PizzaPizzaPizza" window and awning pattern. A wine menu, dining tables and simple but attractive furnishings were introduced - the first restaurant was to resemble the format recognised today. And within three or four months, the relaunched Pizza Express was bringing in a healthy £2,000 to £3,000 a week in sales.

In addition, Peter approached the manufacturer of Peroni beers in Naples and asked them to allow him to sell *Nastro Azzurro* in his restaurant. His efforts to obtain an exclusivity arrangement were unsuccessful, in spite of a trip to Naples and a few days in Capri until the dispute that led to a factory lock-out was ended.

However, whilst on that trip, Peter experienced a different kind when in collision with a young girl, who happened to be the daughter of the head of the Frescobaldi family. The Marchesi di Frescobaldi had exported wine to the Court of King Henry VIII. Not long after this encounter, a deal was struck to import Frescobaldi wine to Pizza Express.



A second restaurant followed 18 months later in a former dairy factory on Bloomsbury's Coptic Street next to the British Museum. Enzo again designed it with a remit to replicate the aura of the first PizzaExpress but with a completely unique design and decor. The Coptic Street restaurant was the first to feature original artwork on the walls and live jazz, something which, along with the deliberate sourcing of unusual and unique buildings, set PizzaExpress and its restaurants aside.

Expansion followed steadily and then rapidly throughout the '70s, '80s and early '90s through traditional roll-out and, briefly, a franchising model, as the country quickly developed a hunger for pizza.

Peter invented the Pizza Veneziana, which was introduced into the pizza menu with a surcharge for the *Venice in Peril Fund*. This has contributed over £1 million to the fund. The idea for the Veneziana pizza and the *Venice in Peril Fund* was suggested by Princess Alexandra. The initiative has been recognised by the Italian Government, which awarded Peter the *Cavaliere Ufficiale* and *Al Merito della Repubblica Italiana* awards. In Britain, it was also recognised by the *Bolla Award* for the Briton considered to have done most for Venice.

By 1992, when there was more competition and in a tough economic climate, with the company short of cash, Peter decided to sell up. David Page did not want to become a franchisee for a large corporation and decided to engineer his own bid for Pizza Express, which was on the market for £13 million, by reversing into a listed shell company called Star Computers. It was sitting on £2 million and had two young directors, Luke Johnson and Hugh Osmond, both described by Peter as "fellow trailblazers in the making".

Relations between the founder and the new broom were not as good as they could be. Luke Johnson's preoccupation was to meet the demands of investors and the City now that the

company had gone public. It was as if some of the charm had gone and, with the relocation of the company headquarters from Soho to the less compelling surroundings of Kensal Rise, there grew a body of opinion that there was no-one on hand with a paternal eye to nurture tradition.

However, the company expanded rapidly after flotation. Going public meant that branches opened almost everywhere (except Peterborough). More efficient management led to a sharp rise in profits from £1.4m in 1993 to £10.2m in 1996. Peter did not begrudge Luke Johnson and his colleagues their success, saying publicly that he felt that he reached a proverbial brick wall and that it was time to withdraw.

Peter then continued his other business interests under the flag of the Peter Boizot Group. These included the Great Northern Hotel in Peterborough, Kettner's restaurant in Soho and the well-known jazz venue, Pizza on the Park, in Knightsbridge. As a jazz devotee, Peter set up the Soho Jazz Festival and brought music into the Pizza Express network. This tradition spawned the Pizza Express Jazz Club that produced its own newsletter and music listings. His other achievements include founding the Soho Jazz Festival, becoming chairman of the Westminster Chamber of Commerce and being appointed as Deputy Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire.

Peter decided to return to his roots and to invest in his home town, in the hope of "restoring it to the glories of its youth". He was assisted in this by Rosemary Warne, whose friendly demeanour, according to Peter, "belayed a sense of authority that followed her days of the Army and as a teacher". She had experience as a charity administrator and events organiser. Their first joint task had been the acquisition of the Great Northern Hotel. (Rosemary went on later to produce a weekly Newsletter for the Club in the late 1990's).

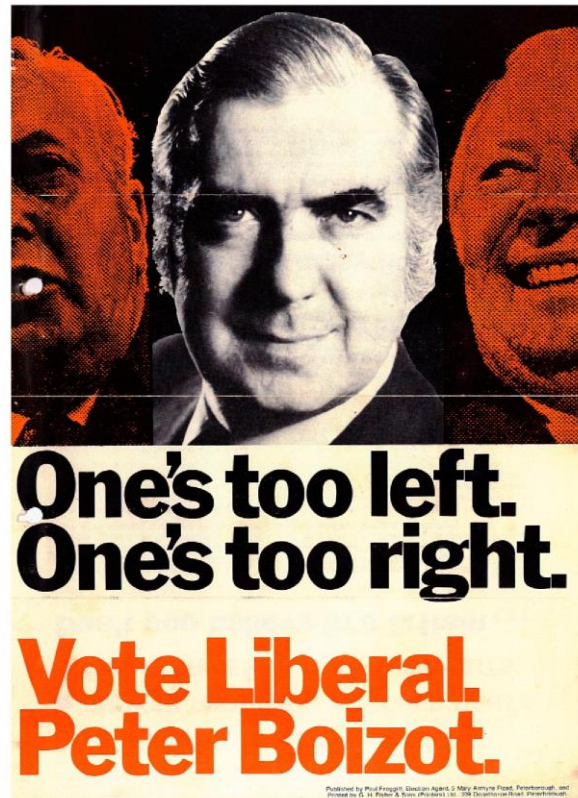
In addition to the Great Northern Hotel, in 1996 he purchased the former Odeon cinema on Broadway. The cinema was in disrepair following its closure in 1991 but Peter invested £9 million to restore the venue and provide a city centre entertainment complex. The Odeon was renamed the Broadway and opened to the public in June 2001.

A year after buying the Odeon, as a life-long fan of Peterborough Football Club, Peter bought the then struggling club in 1997 and became its owner and chairman. For six years he invested in the club and ensured its survival that included an appearance at Wembley.

In addition, Peter invested in Gaston's restaurant in Peterborough (named after his father) and his own art gallery, both within the Broadway complex, and the *Miss Pears* wine bar on Cumbergate. Peter also supported the Flag Fen Bronze Age centre and set up the Peterborough Arts Trust.

In 2000, he was conferred with an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the Chancellor of Loughborough University in recognition of his success in business and of his wider contributions to Peterborough.

Peter was a long serving Honorary President of the Peterborough Liberal Democrats. He held a position on the Executive of the local party. He was twice a parliamentary candidate for the party, both times in Peterborough. He had been approached first to stand on the General Election of 1974. The incumbent MP was the Conservative Party's Hamar Nicholls, who had held the seat since 1950. He had served as a minister under Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan from 1955 until 1965. However, the seat was one of the most marginal in the country after his win in 1966 with a majority of only three votes over the Labour Party candidate. He has held on in 1970.



Peter agreed to stand and took a one month's sabbatical from Pizza Express in order to contest the seat. He won 20% of the vote, polling 10,772 votes but Harmer Nicholls held again, this time by a majority of 22, with 20,353 votes against 20,331 cast for Michael Ward of the Labour Party. Peter's participation (and the number of votes secured) incurred the wrath of the local Labour Party for having split the opposition vote in a tight race.

Given the absence of an overall majority in Parliament, with Labour having 301 seats against the Conservatives' 297 and with 32 other MPs, a further General Election was called in October 1974. Peter said that the criticism that his standing had split the vote in favour of the Conservative Party candidate invigorated him to stand again in October. On this occasion, he took just a fortnight away from work. He detected a sense of weariness in the campaign, this being the second in eight months, rather than the customary five years, at the most. His time Michael Ward ousted the sitting MP with a majority of 1,848 for the Labour Party.

Alongside his business ventures, Peter donated substantial sums of money to a range of good causes of which those with a Peterborough connection regularly top the list. In 1992, he formed the Peter Boizot Foundation to benefit charitable purposes, institutions and foundations. The Foundation donated at least £1 million in each of its first four years to various charities, including the Fenland Archaeological Trust, The King's School, the Peterborough Cathedral Trust and Westgate at Risk and to national charities such as ChildLine, Barnado's and the Royal Academy of Arts.

Peter wanted to see Frith Street, outside Ronnie Scott's jazz club, pedestrianised. Westminster City Council claimed that it could not afford the necessary £100,000, so Peter took up the task himself. Taking as its model the arrangement for Venice, for each Bellini cocktail and St Paul's Pizza (so called after an earlier effort to raise cash for St Paul's Church in Knightsbridge) sold in Kettner's 25 pence was raised for the Soho Community Environment Fund.

In 1994, Peter set up a glossy monthly magazine, *Boz*, adopting his nickname. It was designed to promote the interests of the Peter Boizot Group and was in particular a portal for Kettner's, the Great Northern Hotel and Pizza on the Park but it also concentrated upon the preservation of Soho and included areas dear to him, such as art, hockey, food, much jazz; and columns from friends, such as the mouth-organist Larry Adler and the critic, Sheridan Morley. PB Publications was widened to include the monthly magazine for hockey, *Hockey Sport*, (formerly *Hockey Digest*) under the editorship of Peter Luck, who was also provided office accommodation in Kettner's that Peter had retained.

Not all local ventures proved successful. One involved bottled water. Peter ordered 100,000 bottles of sparkling water from Westwood Farm, Bretton Gate in Peterborough under the name *Pierre Boizeau*. It did not sell well.

Peter's association with Hampstead Hockey Club as it was in those days began with a very positive response from Colin Greenhalgh, then its General Secretary and Club stalwart. Peter was elected as a member on 3 March 1967.

On 7 February 1969, he was nominated to serve on the Club's Committee and was elected at the AGM held on 27 March 1969. He was immediately active in seeking an alternative pitch for first team matches and reported that he believed a pitch might be available at the Chelsea Barracks, which he pursued until it was denied him.

The following events over a seven-year period demonstrate perhaps in greater detail, compared with the remainder of this account, the contributions made by Peter in different capacities and in sufficient quantity to illustrate the extent of his commitment. It also helps to show what he was willing to do, which did not significantly diminish throughout his membership.

The AGM on 27 March 1968 had left open the nomination and election of a captain of the 6th XI, as it had been agreed by the Committee that 6th XI was going to have a nucleus of Veterans that season. At a Committee meeting on 1 July 1969, it was finally agreed that the Club would experiment with nucleus of Veterans during the forthcoming season but that the team should continue to be known as the 6th XI at this stage. Peter accepted the captaincy, However, at the next meeting, it was reported that he was reluctant to be captain if this might upset previous officers of the Club. He was prevailed upon to continue, with Bob Tom remaining his vice-captain.

In January 1970, it was reported that an unusual and unscheduled Selection Committee meeting of the 6th XI had taken place between Alan Kurtz (the Teams Secretary) and Peter in Zurich Airport.

In February 1970, Selection Committee meetings were being hosted by Peter. On 21 February, the 5th XI, in which Peter was then playing, held a Pizza Party as that team's function at the Clubhouse, with the pizza being made professionally and with free wine.

And in early March 1970, the 6th XI club function was being organised by Peter too, a so-called *Gentleman's Smoker*, a stag concert with some professional acts but with an invitation for any club member willing to do a *party piece* to participate. This was held at the Café Royal and led by Leslie Sarony. Peter was eager that it be fully attended, by encouraging anyone who was male and reasonably respectable. He hoped that it would be a useful extension to the day's internationals at Lord's against Spain that day at which the Club had hired its usual box,

In January 1971, the Committee agreed that it would be beneficial to appoint a House Member to be responsible for liaison with the Hornsey Club on all matters relating to Clubhouse facilities and organisation of social functions and the like. It was agreed to approach Peter to take up this

office, which he had accepted, as was later reported to the Committee meeting of 4 February 1971. At that meeting, Peter was once more nominated for captaincy of the Veterans XI.

At the AGM 1 April 1971, it was reported that Peter Boizot was successfully turning the 6th XI into the intended type of team and it was generally being called the Veterans XI. Early into the next season, Peter agreed to discuss with Fred Brasier of the Hornsey Club the possibility of obtaining more than one bar extension each month. The Club Minutes record that “the indefatigable Mr Boizot kindly agreed to investigate various legal positions with an agile lawyer he regularly instructs”.

In November 1972, two members reported that a number of members felt that the first social event of the season should not be a stag night and that a number reckoned such events ought to be abolished. This was evidence of a change of heart. Peter had always embraced the concept of a Gentleman’s Evening, as mentioned earlier and in July of that year had approached by the Committee with a view to organising yet another *Smoking Concert*. In September, it was recorded that Peter had “valiantly agreed to grapple with the delicate points involved in another Gentlemen’s Smoker”

In February 1973, the Committee agreed that the state of the Clubhouse was a cause for concern. Peter had agreed to obtain professional advice with a view towards submitting a detailed scheme to put to the Hornsey Club for some refurbishment. Within a month, he had formed a working party for the preparation of a draft scheme. It was agreed that the working party should limit thinking to the Clubhouse environment. Peter had also supplied gratuitously a weather-proof plastic board emblazoned with Club colours to display at the entrance to the ground at Hornsey, for which generosity he was warmly thanked.

In May 1973, the working party had supplied the Committee with plans and a summary of refurbishment proposals for the Clubhouse that had been prepared by Mike Sadler-Forster and without a budget or client instruction. Whilst they provided a rather radical re-organisation of facilities, the proposals required no substantial structural alterations. Peter agreed to submit the plans and proposals to Reg Claridge, the Secretary of the Hornsey Club, coupled with notification that the Club would not commit financially until a long awaited Tenancy Agreement had been signed.

In July 1973, the Club was suffering from a rather drastic cash flow deficit and concluded that there was little alternative but to seek a bank overdraft, for which a guarantor would be required. Peter agreed that he would cover the whole of the liability personally, which the Committee felt was excessively generous and could not be accepted by him exclusively. Later it was agreed that Stan Elgar and Kip Stafford, the President would also provide guarantees.

At the start of the next season in October 1973, there had been problems over the regular issue of the Club’s Bulletin. The Committee, nonetheless, felt that a Weekly Bulletin was still desirable and (at “his generous invitation”) an attempt would be made to produce it at Peter premises in Wardour Street. Peter and a band of helpers had also redecorated the changing rooms at the Hornsey Club to good effect. As a result the Club’s Secretary agreed to write to the Hornsey Club regarding “the generally filthy state of the Clubhouse”, the clearing of the perimeter drain and the replacement of the netting at the foot of the first pitch.

In January 1974, Peter was organising a 6th XI party to see a performance of *Dandy Dick* at the Garrick Theatre, to see team member John Faulkner (aka Richard Denning) in the cast of actors.

On 6 March 1974, Peter found that he had to resign from the Committee owing to his political activities touched upon earlier, though he had said that he would continue to play for the 6th XI

“when circumstances allowed it”. He would happily act as a vice captain to assist Ron Hart “in maintaining the Veterans’ spirit”

In as early as August 1974 Peter was again involved and agreed to allow the Selection Committee to meet at Pizza Express in Wardour Street. He further agreed to give access to his photocopier - but not unrestricted access to telephones. It was appreciated that the facilities ought not to be taken for granted or abused, given the extent of the generosity behind the gesture. The situation gave no immediate impression of improvement for the next season, when in July 1975 it was agreed that the Bulletin would be produced weekly until Christmas and then reviewed. It was hoped that the captains’ reports could be included without requiring the Secretary to summarise their contents in his composition. The Meeting expressed its gratitude to Peter for the continued use of his photocopying facilities and trusted that they would remain available for the 1975-76 season.

In March 1975, Peter had won the first prize in a 200 Draw at the Club and immediately agreed to pass this sum back to the Club. It became the *Boizot Fund*. It was suggested that this should be placed in a separate account from which accrued interest would be used to fund overseas tours. At the AGM held in May 1975, at the East India Sports Club, this was slightly modified to provide that Fund should be set aside for sponsoring players from Hampstead who take part in foreign competition.

In November 1975, the quality of teas was again a cause for concern. Peter had offered to arrange the catering, stating that it would be essential for the caterers to be flexible enough to accept cancellations at fairly short notice.

In January 1976, the Club was exploring the possible amalgamation with the Hornsey Club. It was agreed that it would be more appropriate if such a meeting could be convened *off-site* and Peter was asked if the meeting could be held at the Pizza Express premises in Wardour Street and this took place there on 24 February 1976.

The AGM on 22 April 1976 was also held at Pizza Express in Wardour Street, when amongst other things, it was noted that any proposal for setting the annual subscription for next year might well become redundant if amalgamation proceeded, as such a decision would fall to be determined by the Hornsey Club. At that AGM, the Woodpecker Tankard was presented to Peter, who promised that he “would continue to attempt to entertain the members of the Club in whatever way he could”.

Peter supported the hosting of Veterans’ hockey events at Hornsey at the time of the 1986 World Cup hockey event convened in London and contributed financially in many ways to minor improvements to the pavilion and the Club for that event.

Peter also played a significant part in the decision whether to invest further in pitch improvements at Hornsey in the late 1970’s or, once the opportunity had arisen, to consider a move to Paddington Recreation Ground, given his knowledge and experience of dealings with Westminster City Council.

After the move to Paddington and his encouragement to the Club to change its name to Hampstead and Westminster Hockey Club, he again demonstrated a greater vision for the Club and backed that by action. He remained influential in many aspects of the Club’s future direction.


He continued his role as President and sat on the General Committee. He promoted an extension of club Vice Presidents. He supported the call for a paid Administrator to run club affairs and continued to strive for the supply of hockey to ordinary members who might not attain the

heights of the Club's top-ranking teams. He sponsored the Club for a few seasons through Peroni and *Nastro Azzurro* before this was instead applied to the London League as a whole.

HAMPSTEAD & WESTMINSTER HOCKEY CLUB
President Peter Boizot MBE

Ground
Paddington Recreation Ground
Maida Vale
London W9 1PD
071 798 3642

Clubhouse
Paddington Sports Club
Castellain Road
London W9 1HQ
071 286 8448



Please reply to
 Secretary
John Grierson
Bloomsbury Square
London WC1B 5JH
(h) 071 831 4622
(o) 071 436 9867

Centenary Chairman
Stanley Elgar
4 High Street
Stock, Essex CM4 9BA
(h) 0277 840421

FOUNDED 1894 CENTENARY 1994

6 January 1994

Dear Old Member

I hope you will not mind this late invitation, but should you be footloose and fancy free on Sunday 9 January, may I invite you to come along and watch your old first XI play against Peterborough, (your Presidents home town) and then cheer the Ladies in the HA Cup against Kettering, and then give even more and much needed support to the Supervets playing against the Southgate Veterans on the adjacent pitch.

The games are at 11 am and 1 pm, and will be followed by a light liquid lunch in the Club House.

Best Wishes for a Happy and Prosperous Centenary Year.

Yours ever

Peter Boizot

He continued to make premises and facilities available for selectin meetings and the production and distribution of team sheets. A highlight of the start of a new season would soon become New Members Drinks evenings at Kettner's, for which he supplied a considerable subsidy.

After several years of disappointing results in the lower reaches of the London League, Peter made a somewhat startling suggestion to an Annual General Meeting in 1987 that the Club ought to aim to win the London League in its centenary year. In the next season it finished in 11th place. The National League was formed in 1988 and Hampstead's attempt to be included in the top ten places to qualify had just fallen short after a promising start. Peter therefore sought the appointment of a discrete a coach for the Men's 1st XI.

This led to the retention of Greg Carr from New South Wales, who arrived in London in 1988 with his wife Tracy, who became an equally important player in the progression of the Women's section then in its relative infancy. Greg Carr was a player coach who had an enormous impact

on the Men's 1st XI that quickly rose to the higher levels of the South League, the successor to the London League at first team level. The quantum leap taken then that undoubtedly led to the Club's participation on National League hockey is regarded in no small part to the contribution by Greg. Much of this would not have been possible without Peter's support, allowing Greg additionally to visit local schools to enthuse about the sport and to assist Peter's businesses.

Peter was an advocate of European hockey well before it obtained its current focus of attention. He foresaw the creation of the European Club Championship. In the 1980s he invited Lille HC to London largely at his expense to play two games against the 1st XI by way of encouragement.

He had been significantly disappointed by the team's relegation from the National League in 1995 that, in his case, manifested itself after the 3-0 loss at home to Blueharts. He cited a lack of quality as the important factor. He therefore played a prominent part in the appointment of Rob Thompson as player coach to guide the team to win the South League in 1996 and to regain a place in the National League. He remained a spectating supporter at several away matches some distance from London. He enjoyed hosting end of season Suppers for the Men's 1st XI.

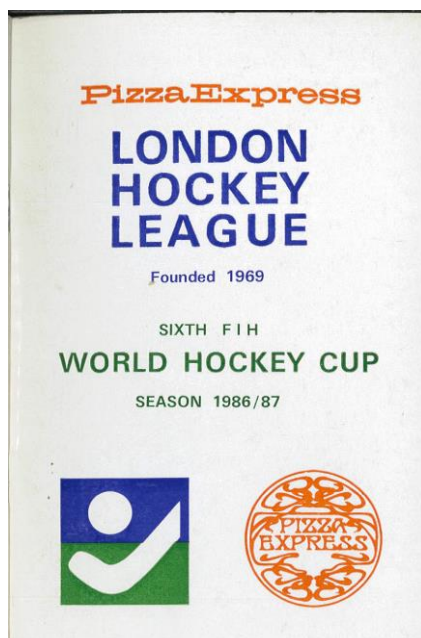
He was instrumental in persuading Westminster City Council to install a second artificial playing surface at Paddington Recreation Ground in place of a grassed football pitch and later contributed through his Foundation in excess of £118,000 to ensure that a water based pitch was laid, given that the Council's budget then only permitted a renewal of the sand-based surface. This was prior to the Club's promotion to the National League but displayed Peter's foresight, for the then coach of England and subsequently Great Britain, Barry Dancer, demanded that all Premier League games, as they later became, were to be played on water based pitches.

He later encouraged debate with the City of Westminster for the illumination of the second pitch at Paddington Recreation Ground. This was opposed by local residents and seen as virtually unachievable. But Peter was able to persuade local Councillors to obtain fuller use of its facilities and to emphasise the significant improvement in lighting design that had led to more intensity and focus and less waste of flooded light that might affect surrounding housing. This campaign was ultimately successful, albeit with the customary constraints on hours of use.

Peter also enthusiastically supported the Westminster Challenge, a pre-season tournament held at Paddington Recreation Ground that quickly became the most prominent event of its kind in England and attracted many leading clubs. He regularly offered financial and other support supplying (and presenting) the prizes. He wanted to put Hampstead and Westminster at the higher levels of the game.



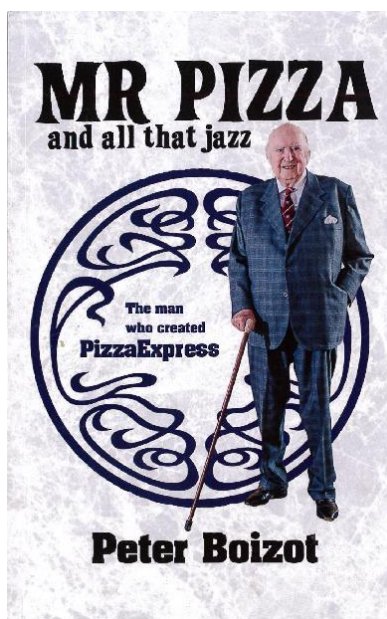
But this was not an exclusive support. He was a benefactor to both Cambridge and Oxford Universities and, in particular, to his own college, St Catherine's Cambridge. He provided sponsorship through PizzaExpress of the London League at all its levels for many seasons. He later extended it through Peroni in sponsoring the South League.



Additionally, Peter as a restaurateur was eager for the Club to obtain its own clubhouse and to offer facilities to match those of other clubs with their own clubhouses and those of the area surrounding the Recreation Ground. His focus was the successful operation at the Warrington Hotel formerly owned by Gordon Ramsey and his father in law. Peter later found the Carlton Tavern on Carlton Vale on the northern edge of the Recreation Ground and acquired the leasehold interest. This became the Club's home until 2014. Peter carried out improvements to add, amongst other things, changing rooms and showers in the basement, with stairs lined in the light and dark blue colours of the Club. It was initially run and managed as part of Peter's business group but later acquired by three members of the club.

On some occasions, Peter was seen ruffling feathers. In his biography, he admits to a streak of cantankerousness. Three examples may illustrate the point. He publicly queried what he saw as the Club's lack of commitment to an expanded and more competitive London League in 1983 when results were relatively poor and the Club expressed greater support for the maintenance of the traditional block fixtures.

He also demanded that Hampstead be re-admitted to the National League after relegation in 1995, based upon our superior results of the teams that had failed to qualify. This met with rather charged resistance for several reasons. And he was possibly unaware at the time that the League was eager to reduce the size of Division Two (as it then was) and that Slough HC's resignation and withdrawal had given the League an opportunity to bring that about by what might be called natural selection. And it has to be admitted, the Club had bridges to mend with the administrators of the National League at the time.



Another frequently uttered bug bear was the National League's insistence that hot food should be served to officials and vesting teams after matches. To emphasise his resistance, he notably laid on a sophisticated cold buffet at The Carlton (said by some at the time to have resembled a small banquet) on the visit by Peterborough HC to PRG in 1998. He made the point of asking the visitors whether they were satisfied with the fare provided.

In his later years, Peter moved away from his flat in Lowndes Square and removed to his favoured Peterborough, when his business activities began to diminish in retirement. He was appointed the Club's Emeritus President in recognition of his huge contribution, to add to his retention of the Sam Taylor Award for outstanding service. He remained a supporter of the Dinners for the past members and players held towards the end of the season and continues his demand to be kept fully aware of the Club's current affairs and results.

Peter died in Peterborough on 5 December 2018.

Peterborough Cathedral was filled as hundreds of people gathered to celebrate his life at a memorial service held on 8 February 2019. The congregation came from all walks of life – business, sport, charity, politics, faith and education – and from across the country showing the impact Peter had made in so many spheres of society.

Leading the tributes was Peter's sister, Clementine Allen, who described Peter as 'a good man.' She said she was overwhelmed to see so many at the Cathedral and added, "Peter certainly didn't do grey. He knew how to blaze a trail. He knew what he wanted and he made sure he got it. He was a fantastic person with the most wonderful smile."

Mrs Allen also told the gathered congregation of Peter's love for books – and how she got the nickname 'Wendy' because of his love of the character in Peter Pan. She said, "He was a modest man. He was a good person."

Peter's friend Mike Gelardi, who worked with him at Pizza Express, spoke of Peter's generosity, with his support for causes at home, but also for the money he raised to help Venice. He said, "He was known for his support of so many causes. He raised more than £1 million for the Venice in Peril fund, and supported others here in Peterborough and elsewhere, including the upkeep of this beautiful cathedral. He had a wonderful spirit and a passion for life."

Peter's love of music, and his passion for hockey were also celebrated at the service. Pianist Anna Paola giving a special performance in his memory, while Guy Mayers told of his passion for the sport, including the time he set up a match between a Soho restaurateurs team and a 'scratch' team of his friends – and rather than serve oranges at half time, players were given champagne.

Following the service, Mayor of Peterborough Cllr Chris Ash said Peter was a remarkable man – and said the city should have a lasting tribute to his legacy. He said: "He was one of the great characters of this city. It would be nice idea to have something here to remember him by."

The Chief Executive of Peterborough FC, Bob Symns, added: "He would have loved this [service]. He was one of the original entrepreneurs. What he did for this city was phenomenal – let alone what he did for the club. He believed in the club, our academy and centre of excellence. He saved the club and made it so it could be the club today. He will be greatly missed in the city."

Memorial Service

Peter Boizot *MBE DL*

16.11.1929 - 05.12.2018

