



Ian Cooke

A pivotal and hugely popular figure at Wimbledon in a Dons playing career spanning 14 years, culminating in three Southern League championships, two seasons of which he was club and team captain. Emmanuel School educated Ian sits proudly in second spot in both the appearances table (615) and goals scored (297) only bettered by Roy Law and Eddie Reynolds respectively. Signing professional forms in 1964 along with the rest of the Isthmian League squad, he was a regular in the Wimbledon attack in the next decade, frequently topping club scoring charts and bagged 39 in 1970/71, making him the top scorer in the entire Southern League, with his busy, clinical finishing

drawing favourable comparisons with Jimmy Greaves and being surprisingly good in the air for his five foot, seven inch size.

Perhaps his early years in the Southern League were his most prolific. In the 1965/66 season Cooke hit SW19 hat-tricks against Tonbridge in a 6-1 win, Nuneaton Borough (4-0), Corby Town (4-1) and Gravesend & Northfleet (4-1), doing even better the following year when scoring five goals in a 9-2 rout of Folkestone, four more in a 6-1 win against Corby and another treble against Bedford Town – even affording the luxury of missing penalties in both of the latter two games. The last of his twelve Dons hat-tricks came at Guildford & Dorking in September

1974 as the Batsford Boys began to gel and then dominate their peers.

Ian also had a long standing and successful day job with National Westminster Bank, enabling him to turn down offers from several other clubs and after helping to effectively run the team after the resignation of manager Dick Graham, was the senior player in 1974 when Allen Batsford and his Walton & Hersham players arrived in SW19. 'Cookie' dropped into an attacking midfield role behind newly-arrived front men Roger Connell and Kieran Somers but still contributed 26 goals and was voted Supporters Player of the Year in a memorable season where he led the Dons throughout their epic FA Cup run. Rewarded



with a testimonial against Crystal Palace, by the time Wimbledon made the Football League in 1977, he was still considered good enough to remain in the squad, but at 32, understandably couldn't commit to full-time football the club desired and played on at Slough Town – along with a number of former Dons – making 100 appearances for the Rebels from a deeper midfield position.



Always a committed Wimbledon man, Cooke quickly got behind AFC Wimbledon, later became a club director and is a regular here at home games with his wife.

So whilst Plough Lane is not new territory for Ian Cooke, he certainly deserves his moment in the spotlight today as the WOPA special guest.