



Welcoming Our Worldwide Wombles!

- We're absolutely delighted to welcome Dons from all over the globe for today's game as part of our Worldwide Wombles Weekend. A total of 24 countries are represented this afternoon, spanning five continents.
- Here they tell us their very own Wimbledon stories...

The Basque Boys

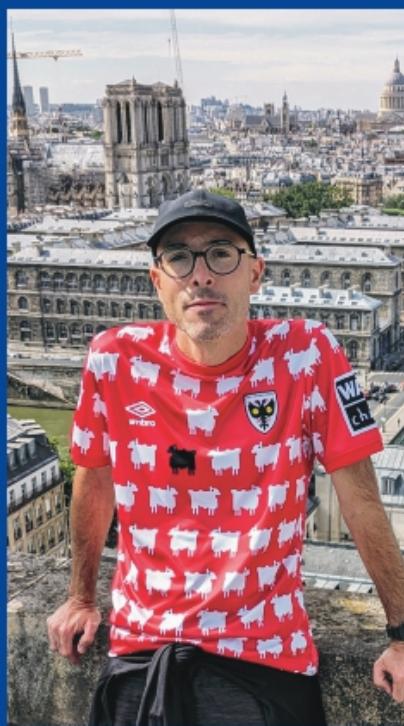
What is your name and where are you from?

My name is Josu Gil and I am from Bilbao (Basque Country). Nowadays I live in Madrid.



How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

When I watched the Premier League in the 90's, I remember supporting Wimbledon FC because of its unique style of play (and the echoes of the Crazy Gang). Anyway, it was in the 2010's when I found out about AFC Wimbledon and fell in love immediately with the Club. For a club of the size of Wimbledon, remaining



fan-owned and competing in the English Football League is a huge success and a very inspiring story for any football fan. I became a Dons Trust Member in 2016 and hope to remain a member for many years to come.

What is your favourite memory of following the Club?

The great escape in the 2018/19 season. It was incredible not being relegated when we were 10 points from safety at a certain point of the season.

What does the Club mean to you?

I would say it's one of the last "emotional" links I have with professional football nowadays.

Chicago Crew

What is your name and where are you from?

Joe Lezan – St Charles IL (outside of Chicago).

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I've been supporting the Club since September 2024.

What is your favourite memory of following the Club?

We were in London in September 2024 for an NFL game at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. The day before we were looking to attend a match nearby and were lucky to find

tickets to AFC Wimbledon vs Milton Keynes. We started off the morning at the Leather Bottle Pub before walking in the rain down to Plough Lane. When we got there, we were surprised to find out that our seats were right in the middle of where the home supporters sat.

We did not realize the history of the Club nor the intense rivalry with MK. We quickly got caught up in everything and enjoyed every minute of it. We also quickly made friends in the stands. They explained the history of the Club, why they hated the MK, why they were chanting what they were chanting, etc... The result of the match was AFC Wimbledon shutting out MK 3-0. We were caught up in the excitement and continued the victory celebration at the Phoenix Pub

where we ended up sharing a few pints with the same group we were talking to in the stands. Oh, and they introduced us to John Green and we talked with him for a bit. It was an amazing day and it made me want to keep following the Club after we got home to Chicago.

What does the Club mean to you?

It's refreshing to support a club where there is no animosity between the fanbase and the team itself. In Chicago that definitely exists across multiple sports. I think supporting a smaller club that doesn't have the resources of a Premier League team is more rewarding and I look forward to following AFC Wimbledon this season and in the future.





Paralimni Pair

What is your name and where are you from?

Howard and Helen Stevens. Originally both from Morden but moved to Paralimni, on sunny Cyprus' South East coast in 2010.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I, Helen, have been a fan/supporter since the late 60's, when my Dad took me as a child to Plough Lane. My husband, Howard, previously an avid Fulham fan, started supporting them in early 90's. Mainly due to my nagging and our daughter, Kimberly, going to training camps in the school holidays. She later had trials for Wimbledon Ladies but unfortunately broke her ankle whilst participating.

What is your favourite memory of following the Club?

My favourite memory was going into Wimbledon on the night we won the (1988) FA Cup. The pubs famously ran dry! The following day outside the Town Hall was amazing, seeing Dave Beasant lift the cup, with my Mum

and Auntie. I also remember celebrating my 40th birthday, with tickets to the game vs Aston Villa at Selhurst Park and we had admission to The Crystals Players' Lounge.



Howard's favourite memory is getting back into the Football League in the play-off final vs Luton at The Etihad culminating in a penalty shootout. Seb's saves and Kedwell's penalty.

What does the Club mean to you?

The Club means so much to us, even though we are far away, we still feel a part of our local club. Often being mentioned on Radio WDON by Mike T during the game and then meeting him when we were at the match (vs Gillingham) on 30 December 2024, having just flown in from Cyprus that very day.



Finland Friends

What is your name and where are you from?

My name is Pasi Lehtonen, and I am a Dons supporter from Salo, Southwest Finland, where I have lived most of my life. Just lately,



I have relocated to Linköping, Sweden to continue my working career here.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I started to follow Wimbledon FC in the early 1980's. I don't really remember what was the real reason that time, maybe I am just sort of a football romantic not to follow the big clubs. My first live match was 1994 at Selhurst Park vs Leeds when Peter Fear scored his debut goal for the Dons. I managed to attend around five matches in the Premier League before the year 2002 and the FA panel's disaster vote. So, I think following and supporting AFC Wimbledon is a natural continuum to this history.

What does the Club mean to you?

AFC Wimbledon is an integral part of my life. I try to follow the team as closely as I can but take into account that there is also life outside of football. I have to mention here that I have attended both of the Dons successful play-off finals: 2011 vs Luton in Manchester and 2016 vs Plymouth at Wembley. Generally speaking, I try to pick one or two top home games per season to visit London and Plough Lane. On Saturdays or midweek encounters, I turn on DonsTV whenever possible to see Wimbledon play. I just love the match commentary of Mike T and Rob Cornell.

Bulgarian Brothers

What is your name and where are you from?

My name is Milen Marinov and I'm from Bulgaria.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I started supporting Wimbledon on 24.02.1990. It was the match Aston Villa and Wimbledon (0-3). Villa were top of the table competing with Liverpool for the title. I thought "if Wimbledon are able to beat a title chaser so heavily away, it is something special". And it was something special as proved on many occasions. I like the idea of an underdog fighting against giants. The efforts, the desire, the fight till death.

What does the Club mean to you?

I'm very passionate currently



and very delighted how the Club is managed and hope of this year climbing up. Being in the management board of my local football team – OFC Lokomotiv Gorna Oryahovitsa, a club in the second tier of Bulgarian football – I see great example of how the Club has to be managed and

try to implement some of best practices here. I see myself and Wimbledon as similar in terms of spirit and personality.



SweDons

What is your name and where are you from?

John Lundqvist from Stockholm, Sweden.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

Growing up me and my father watched English football on the TV every Saturday. I didn't have

a English club that I supported, my father was a Gunner but that meant nothing for me. In 2013 I was invited to a trip to London by a mutual friend to watch AFC Wimbledon and from that day I was hooked.

What does the Club mean to you?

The Club means a lot to me, I try to watch all matches on the TV and fly over three to four times each season. The hospitality from the Club and the fans and also the involvement around decision as a Dons Trust member is something that I think makes me closer to the Club.

Who are the SweDons?

Our support for Wimbledon goes back to the Wimbledon FC days – home and away trips with the boys in yellow and blue caught our love for this football club. Our older fans did the journey from Division One to the Non-League and who could have expected the trips



we've done through the league system. So many fond memories from league, cup and play-off games.

SweDons goes back to around 2006 when Henrik Persson met Pelle Blomster at a game against Slough Town at Kingsmeadow. Meeting fellow Swedish fans was big for both of us. In 2009 we started writing AFC Wimbledon articles in Swedish for a Swedish football community on the internet, and we still do!

We decided more or less to try and gather fellow Swedish fans through this community

but also Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Our group has grown throughout the years which is absolutely fantastic, passion is running high I can assure you that.

During the years we've also produced several souvenirs from t-shirts to badges. We've also made sure to always sponsor a player and this season it's Isaac Ogundere. One thing that has always been important to us is to travel to games home and away following The Dons no matter what. For many of us it's a life commitment despite us



being on the other side of the pond (The North Sea).

A big shout out to Leffe, John, Felix, Tomas, Kenta, Pelle, Linus and all the fellow Swedish Wombles that have joined us throughout the years. Also big thanks to the fans and to the Club that always have been so kind to us. Our biggest gratitude goes out to you all.

Football Italiano

What is your name and where are you from?

I am Francesco Andrea Brunale from Campobasso, Italy.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I've supported Wimbledon since 1989. When I was 14 Italian TV used to show highlights of English top-flight games and I loved how John Fashanu regularly scored goals for Wimbledon.

What does the Club mean to you?

Wimbledon is my passion and my happiness.





Californian Don

What is your name and where are you from?

My name is Tricia Garcia and I'm from California in the United States.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

This is my 11th year as a Dons supporter. I first heard the story of Wimbledon FC/AFC Wimbledon on 4 November 2013.

The strength and commitment of the community to this idea of a football team fascinated me. I thought "I've got to see what the fuss is about." Football took a hold of my heart officially when I attended my first ever match at Kingsmeadow in April 2019 and has maintained its grip ever since.

What does the Club mean to you?

The Club and this community mean so much to me. Everyone has always been so welcoming and I love

being a part of it. When my father passed, this club and this community helped me get through it. When COVID was going on, this club gave me something to look forward to and believe in and a sense of normalcy. Football and the Dons have become the second greatest love of my life (in case my husband is reading this).



Wombles Downunder

What is your name and where are you from?

My name is David Kenwery. I'm originally from Melbourne Australia but now live in Hull and London. I worked for Siemens and lived in Bangkok, Puerto Rico, NYC, Boston / Cape Cod, Denmark, Holland and Belgium.

How long have you been supporting Wimbledon and why did you first start following the Club?

I started collecting Dons programmes in 1984. When I visited Plough Lane in 1985 the Commercial Manager Eric Willcocks (a wonderful man) gave me big welcome. He introduced me to Dave Bassett and after my first match vs Blackburn Rovers, met our players in Nelsons bar and Alan Cork bought me a pint!

Eric linked me to Robert Smith and the Wombles Downunder Supporters Association (WDSA) was started in 1986 with four members including two from NZ. The highly acclaimed club newsletter has been going strong since and I have made many friends through it.

What is your favourite memory of following the Club?

WDSA fans held a cup final party in Adelaide that was mentioned numerous times on the SBS telecast in Australia. I had sent a dossier to the presenter George Donikian with details of the Dons team which he referred to, trotting out nicknames like "Lurch", "Vinnie", "Fash", "Sanch" and "Wisey" during the show.

After the win, Rob Smith was interviewed by the Sydney Morning Herald.

What does the Club mean to you?

I've proudly identified myself



as a Wimbledon fan wherever I've been around the world. Yellow and blue are the colours of my hometown AFL team, Williamstown, who I played for.

We have great players in our history such as Dickie Guy and Vinnie Jones and fantastic club identities such as Mikey T and Ivor Heller. I enjoy going to the away games, especially

up north and the banter and songs. I like to meet mates like Alf Marchetti, Marco Cura, the SweDons and many others.

