

## **A Sporting Monument for Development and Peace**

Dear Friends,

Welcome to *banksofengland.org* the official website of the Gordon Banks Monument Project.

Gordon Banks was my boyhood hero and gave me my fondest memory of my father. In 1970, just a few weeks after making 'That Save' from Pelé in the Mexico World Cup, he arrived in Ireland with his Stoke City team-mates for a pre-season friendly. The prospect of seeing my hero from the terraces was, for me, one of the most exciting moments of my life. However, on the day of the game my father hid my giant 500-page Gordon Banks scrapbook in the boot of his car and, with the help of the Stoke City and Northern Ireland International, Alex Elder, arranged for me to meet my English hero.

Banks was then a global sporting icon. But there was no aloofness. I will never forget the graciousness and courtesy he showed to my parents and me. Later, when the Irish 'Troubles' intensified, the memory of Banks' kindness to my parents, was a major influence in my decision not to opt for violence.

Thirty-five years later I met him again through the kindness of the legendary Stoke City and Republic of Ireland International, Terry Conroy. Before travelling from Ireland to meet Banksy, one friend worried that now, as an adult, I might be disappointed. I wasn't. I discovered the same decency, kind-heartedness and courtesy I had encountered in 1970 as a schoolboy. It was also the beginning of a wonderful and unique friendship with my boyhood hero and his family.

Today I am determined, with the help of the Gordon Banks Monument Committee, to create what we hope will be the greatest sporting monument in the world. It will also be the first monument in the western world to a goalkeeper. Through it we celebrate the Anglo-Irish Peace Process and highlight with the United Nations how Sport can be a powerful contributor to World Development and Peace. My motivation is entirely one of gratitude to an Englishman who filled my boyhood with so much hope and imagination and who was a very positive and powerful role model.

It has been a privilege to work on this project with the legendry Stoke City and Irish International, Terry Conroy. In turn, Terry and I have been privileged to work with the Staffordshire artist, Andrew Edwards of Creative County Studios, undoubtedly one of the finest sculptors on these islands and a national treasure waiting to be recognised. Andrew Edwards is a visionary artist who desires to contribute towards the regeneration of Stoke and Staffordshire.

With the World's greatest footballer, Pelé, due to come to Stoke for the unveiling on 12 July 2008, accompanied by one of my other heroes, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, we hope we can create a day that truly profiles Stoke and Staffordshire in the most positive way.

In addition to working with Terry Conroy and Andrew Edwards, I wish to thank Robert Ffello MP (Stoke-on-Trent South), Gordon Banks MP (Ochil and South Perthshire), David Brownsword and Mike Finnigan, all of whom have given us great encouragement in seeing this project advance.

For this project to succeed we need help. We especially need Stoke and Staffordshire people and institutions to put wind in our sails with enthusiasm, self-belief and a new found confidence that is a sign of intent for the renewal and regeneration of an area that has such a rich and important legacy.

When we stand alongside the great Pelé and Archbishop Tutu on Saturday 12 July 2008, we will know we have been creators of something noble and important in remembering a supreme athlete and a wonderful Englishman. A player all England can be proud of, not just for his sporting achievements, but primarily because Gordon Banks is a wonderful human being.

Thank you.

Don Mullan  
Chairman  
The Gordon Banks Monument Committee