

FROM SHEFFIELD WITH LOVE

**CELEBRATING 150 YEARS OF SHEFFIELD FC,
THE WORLD'S OLDEST FOOTBALL CLUB**

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BRENDAN MURPHY



Fro

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Dedication

For Sebastian

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FOREWORD BY GEOFF THOMSON

As a Sheffield man, I'm delighted to see my hometown get the recognition it deserves for its role in the history of football. Sheffield FC is indisputably the oldest football club in the world, recognised as such by the Football Association and FIFA. The formation of the club played a crucial part in the early development of England's national sport – now without doubt the world's favourite game.

Sheffield FC was formed in 1857, pre-dating the FA by six years. The club is still going strong today, playing in the Northern Counties East League's Premier Division and taking part in the FA Cup and the FA Vase. I remember well the club reaching the FA Vase Final in 1977, drawing 1-1 with Billericay before a 14,000 crowd at Wembley and then losing the replay at Nottingham Forest. The city's professional clubs, Wednesday and United, have also made significant contributions to football over the years. I have been FA Chairman since 1999, having served on the FA Council for 27 years, initially representing Sheffield & Hallamshire. I have also had periods as chairman and secretary of the Sheffield & Hallamshire FA.

I am therefore delighted to congratulate Sheffield FC on their 150th anniversary and to see this book recognising this achievement and the city's unique contribution to football and sport in general.

Geoff Thompson OBE
Chairman of the Football Association
Vice-President FIFA

FOREWORD BY RICHARD CABORN

I think that every football fan born in Sheffield and those who have chosen to live here are rightly proud that they share their home with Sheffield FC – the world’s oldest football club – and with the birthplace of football itself. For I believe that the beautiful game was born, like me, in Sheffield.

The recent rise in profile of Sheffield FC means that there can be few genuine fans of the game that are unaware of the club’s unique position in the history of the game. By reading this book however I certainly learnt a deal about the early years and development of our national sport and the part that the city of Sheffield played. It is a fascinating read.

Congratulations to the author and to Sheffield FC on their 150th anniversary and long may they prosper.

The Rt. Hon Richard Caborn MP
Member of Parliament for Sheffield Central

PREAMBLE

'When we went downstairs, we were presented to Mr Skimpole, who was standing before the fire telling Richard how fond he used to be, in his school-time, of football.'

Excerpt from *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens, 1853.

I LOVE FOOTBALL like a brother... though, in a way, it is my brother, born in Sheffield as I was. Yes, Sheffield is the cradle of association football and what follows is a potted history of its birth. Although I regularly wander to other places, other sports, Sheffield and football remain central to the story. I hope such inclusiveness emphasises rather than diminishes what I believe is the city's crucial contribution to world sport.

Living in Melbourne, as I now do, surrounded by sports-mad Aussies, it is easy to forget that we Poms are also mad for it and that my hometown thrives on sport. It is home to the English Institute of Sport, the World Snooker Championship, the English Open Squash Championship, the National Rounders Association and – till 2007 – the British Open Show Jumping Championship. It held the XVth World Student Games in 1991 and was the first National City of Sport in 1995.

The Hallam FM Arena is home to both the Sheffield Steelers, one of the countries leading ice hockey teams – five times championship winners in thirteen seasons – and the Westfield Sharks basketball side, national champions four times in their thirteen year history. IceSheffield, a venue with two Olympic-size ice rinks, is home to four ice hockey teams while Ponds Forge Sporting Centre has an Olympic-sized pool and is home to both the Hatters – who have dominated women's basketball since 1991 – and to the British diving team; many British Olympic swimmers have also made Sheffield their home. There is a rugby league side, Sheffield Eagles, giant-killing winners of the 1998 Challenge Cup final when they overpowered Wigan, and two

union sides, the Tigers and Sheffield RUFC. Owlerton Stadium is home to both greyhound racing and the local speedway team, Sheffield Tigers, who have won the Premier League. Largely thanks to Irish-born trainer Brendan Ingle MBE, the city's recent world boxing champions have included Johnny Nelson, Clinton Woods, Naseem Hamed, Paul 'Silky' Jones and Herol 'Bomber' Graham.

England cricket captain, Michael Vaughan was raised (and lives) in Sheffield as was David Sherwood – the Davis Cup tennis player – and his Olympic-medal winning parents, Sheila and John. James Toseland the 2004 World Superbike champion hails from the city as do Steve Peat – the 2002 Mountain Bike World Cup champion – and two times cycling Commonwealth gold medallist Malcolm Elliot.

Yet still there is Joe Simpson, mountaineer and author of *Touching the Void*, and the rock climber Ben Moon; the country's best climbers gravitate to Sheffield, lured by limestone and Peak. Sheffield-born football legends include Derek Dooley and Gordon Banks, while Geoff Thompson, chairman of the FA and vice-president of FIFA, calls it home. Sebastian Coe, another old boy, won two Olympic gold medals and set eight world records, including the 800 metres in 1981 which remained unbeaten for 16 years. More recently he has gained fame as being the man who secured the London bid for the 2012 Summer Olympics. The UK's largest athletics stadium at Don Valley hosts regular international meetings, while waiting for its next homegrown hero, in addition to the annual BritBowl, the British version of the Superbowl. The city is currently contemplating a bid to host the 2014 or 2018 Commonwealth Games. Oh, and there are two professional football teams.

Sport has permeated the business sector with growth industries in sports engineering and medicine and the development of a world-leading sports industry cluster including innovative research carried out at the Sheffield Centre of Sports Medicine, Centre for Sport and Exercise Science, Sports and Leisure Industry Research Centres and the Sports Engineering Research Group. It has even infiltrated politics: the Labour government's

Preamble

former sports minister, Richard Caborn, is a Sheffielder and Lord Sebastian Coe is a former Conservative MP.

The city is also studded with sporting venues to serve its citizens, including fifteen golf courses and Europe's largest artificial ski resort, while just outside lies the sublime Peak District National Park. Every week tens of thousands flock here to walk, hike, cycle, swim, ride, run, fell run, ramble, scramble, orienteer, boulder, climb, abseil, mountaineer, hang-glide, pot-hole, cave, canoe, sail, windsurf and fish. It really is a sporting nirvana... if you can stand the cold. The combination of the city's venues and parklands and the Peak District just about caters for every conceivable sport... except perhaps surfing.

So here is how it first started one hundred and fifty years ago. The following is not meant to be a sobering sociopolitical history of football or of sport in general – I leave that to the professionals – though for those interested, there is sports-polemic aplenty out there. Rather, it is intended to be a celebratory romp through the early years of football; a fans-eye view if you will. I apologise in advance for the somewhat tangential text but make no apology for its actual content. Originally, the appendices and footnotes, the roots and leaves of this book, took on a life of their own and just grew and grew. I have lovingly pruned them back and subsumed much of their trimmings into the body of the work.

Brendan Murphy
Melbourne, January 2007

Chapter 1

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

He rolleth under foot as doth a ball

The Knight's Tale from the *Canterbury Tales*
by Geoffrey Chaucer c: 1390

FOOTBALL IN SOME shape or form has existed in England for at least eight hundred years; its hazy origins may even extend back to the Roman occupation. For most of that time it differed markedly from today's moderns: Association, Rugby, Australian Rules, Gridiron and Gaelic. Shared elements include two sides, two halves and a ball, but it was a mob affair, usually played between large numbers of men, who would fight for a makeshift ball, often running from one end of a town to the other. The first reference in British literature to ball playing comes from the *Historia Britonum*. Believed to have been originally written around 820AD, it was an attempt by the original author (generally, though controversially, attributed to Nennius, a Welsh monk) to collate whatever disparate sources were available into a chronological narrative of Britain.

The questionable original sources and the numerous additions and revisions it underwent over centuries raise questions as to the validity of its contents. Nevertheless, it has remained important due its numerous Arthurian legends. One such story concerns King Vortigern, the fifth century warlord responsible for allowing the Anglo-Saxons in as mercenaries, only to see them turn coat and overrun the country, condemning him to the title of most hated man in Britain. It tells of how he was counseled to find a boy immaculately born whose sacrifice would enable a citadel to be built. He duly summoned and sent

out his men to scour the lands. They searched fruitlessly until they came upon Glywysing (now Glamorgan) 'where a party of boys was playing at ball', one of whom was the boy in question. If the text is to be believed this occurred sometime around 425-466 AD, the years when Vortigern could have reigned.

Notwithstanding the book's problems it does establish that ball games were played prior to the Norman (and possibly Anglo-Saxon) invasion. Additionally, although it does not establish the type of ball game played, it was a game involving a group of boys, so a form of football cannot be excluded. Incidentally, the tale ended happily. The boy, Ambrosius, revealed his magic powers to the king, showing him two fighting 'vermes' (or dragons) the red one representing the Britons, the white one, the Saxons.

Against the odds, the weaker red dragon overcame the white dragon, just as, explained Ambrosius, the Britons would vanquish the Saxon scourge. Rather than being sacrificed Ambrosius was given a large chunk of what is now Wales and the country later adopted a red dragon passant on a white and green background as its symbol; it belatedly became the national flag in 1959.

Vermes can also be translated as badger, though perhaps a badger rampant did not strike the required tone for this fiery race. Ambrosius was later identified by the twelfth century Arthurian writer, Geoffrey of Monmouth, as Merlin, which means, wonderfully, that the first ever recorded game of ball in Britain was played by a wizard! Football really is the stuff of legends. Myth also has it that Merlin was responsible for the construction of Stonehenge. Temple? Observatory? Sundial? Barrow? Nonsense it is Britain's first national football stadium – and they were ancient goalposts.

The earliest known description of football in England was by William FitzStephen in 1173. He was one of Saint Thomas A' Becket's chaplains and claimed to be one of the three clerics who did not desert the Archbishop when he was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. His subsequent biography of Becket (1118-70) included a long and rather incongruous preface on London life that included mention of youths 'playing with the ball in wide open spaces'. He also went on to comment on a

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Shrove Tuesday match played by much of the city's youths on a large, flat patch of land, just outside of the city; the game appears well-established, sufficiently so for FitzStephen to forego a description:

'After lunch all the youth of the city go out into the fields to take part in the famous game of ball. The students of each school have their own ball; the workers from each city craft are also carrying their balls. Older citizens, fathers, and wealthy citizens come on horseback to watch their juniors competing, and to relive their own youth vicariously: you can see their inner passions aroused as they watch the action and get caught up in the fun being had by the carefree adolescents.'

An annual Royal Shrovetide football match is believed to have been played at Ashbourne in Derbyshire (just south of Sheffield) since the 12th century and probably gives the greatest insight into football's ancient past. It is played on Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, reflecting the ancient, festival spirit of these Holy Days. Two teams, the Up'Ards and Down'Ards (born, respectively, north and south of the river that bisects the town) try to move a ball from a plinth in the town's centre to one of two opposing goalposts, set in the river, three miles apart. The game is started or 'turned up' by a dignitary – the 'turner upper' – who gets to keep the ball if neither team scores. The teams are made up of dozens of people who move the large, hand-painted ball through the town, en-masse in 'hugs', which are similar to scrums.

The ball can be carried, thrown or kicked but is 'goaled' by tapping it three times against the post which signals the end of the game for that day. The earliest existing account of the Ashbourne game is supplied by Charles Cotton, author of the famous fishing manual, *The Compleat Angler*, in 1683; local records, documenting its medieval origins were lost in a fire in the 1890s. It did not earn the prefix 'Royal' till 1928 when the Prince of Wales (the future King Edward VIII) 'turned up' the game; the current Prince of Wales was turner upper in 2003. Shrovetide football historian, Francis Peabody Magoun, in his

History of Football: From the Beginnings to 1871 (1938) disputes the medieval genesis of Shrovetide football claiming it as a much younger sport. He cited Chester, Corfe Castle, (immortalized as Kirrin Castle in Enid Blyton's Famous Five books) and Glasgow as the first recorded venues, as late as the sixteenth century. His argument does not stand if FitzStephen or the good burghers of Ashbourne are to be believed.

Similar rough and tumble games were played nationwide and not just at Shrovetide, but such were their popularity and perceived loutishness that serial attempts were made to ban football completely; not for nothing was it dubbed 'mob' football. From a young age football appears to have been ruled out of contention as the 'Sport of Kings' with monarchs sticking the boot in, seemingly from the whistle. Edward II banned it from being played in London in 1314:

'forasmuch as there is great noise in the city caused by hustling over large balls... from which many evils might arise which God forbid: we command and forbid on behalf of the king, on pain of imprisonment such game to be used in the city in future.'

Serious stuff, but then again serious injuries were common and, with players running around pell-mell, lethal accidents were a distinct possibility. Only a few years later a football fatality is recorded. During a 1321 football game as Canon William de Spalding kicked the ball his friend rushed him, inadvertently fell heavily against De Spalding's scabbard and mortally wounded himself, dying six days later. Poor De Spalding was suspended from his duties and needed papal dispensation from John XXII in Avignon to avoid censure.

Taking things one step further, in 1349 Edward III outlawed football and other sports nationwide because he was worried they were distracting his Black Death-depleted population from their archery practice; no small worry with Gallic eyes surveying the Cinque Ports. Likewise, Richard II in 1389 and Henry IV in 1401 attempted blanket bans on sport, while James' I and II of Scotland outlawed football there in 1424 and 1457 respectively. It is unclear how football fared under the next five English

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monarchs (Henry V and VI, Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VI) though, of them, perhaps Henry V sufficiently realised the sublimated power of the game loved by ‘the happy few’ to sanction it amongst his ‘band of brothers’, while it is rumoured that Richard III hid a ball up his tunic. There is a description of football from the end of the fifteenth century, most likely during the reign of Henry VII that suggests football had regained some acceptability. It describes a surprisingly modern game played out in a field where ‘the boundaries have been marked’:

‘the game at which they had met for common recreation is called by some the foot-ball game. It is one in which young men, in country sport, propel a huge ball not by throwing it into the air but by striking it and rolling it along the ground, and that not with their hands but with their feet... kicking in opposite directions’

The rough element had in no way been denuded though, the game ‘rarely ending but with some loss, accident, or disadvantage of the players themselves’.

The next king, Henry VIII, actually played football as a youth and is the first person on record to order a pair of football boots. Secured from the Great Wardrobe, the hand-stitched leather boots were made in 1526 by the royal cordwainer, Cornelius Johnson, for a princely four shillings and were used by Henry during a Shrovetide match. But for every king there is a cabbage. In his 1531 book *The Boke named the Governour*, dedicated to Henry, the diplomat Sir Thomas Elyot was less than generous towards football, describing it – in a vitriolic anti-sports rant – as:

‘nothing but beastly furie and extreme violence; wherof procedeth hurte, and consequently rancour and malice do remaine with them that be wounded; wherfore it is to be put in perpetuall silence’.

He may have had the King’s ear because in 1540 Henry imposed a ban. By now, however, the previously sports-mad monarch was wracked with pain from leg ulcers (probably diabetic in origin and not syphilitic as is usually assumed) and

had become a bit of a grouch. His daughter, Elizabeth I, also imposed a ban in London in 1572, such local prohibition by Good Queen Bess not preventing West Ham United from later naming their ground in honour of her mother, Anne Boleyn. By Elizabeth's reign football was so commonplace that women had begun to play; Sir Phillip Sydney, the poet and consummate courtier mentioning in his 1580 'A Dialogue Betweene two Shepherds':

'A tyme there is for all, my mother often sayes, When she, with skirts tuckt very hy, with girles at football playes'

It was also inveigling itself into the national consciousness as the winter sport; Alexander Barclay, the poet, writing of it in 1598:

'The sturdie plowman, lustie, strong, and bold, Overcometh the winter with driving the foote-ball, Forgetting labor and many a grievous fall.'

There is evidence that Elizabeth's successor, James I, initially tolerated football; certainly in 1615, during a Royal visit to Wiltshire, the locals entertained him with a football match. Unfortunately a tidal wave of fundamental Protestantism was sweeping through the country, seemingly hell-bent on washing the fun from the nation's fabric. In 1617, a local dispute between Puritans and Catholic landowners in Lancashire as to what sports could and could not be played on the Sabbath reached the King's court. James sympathized with the liberally-disposed Catholics and rather than imposing a complete prohibition, laid out which sports could (archery, dancing, vaulting) and could not (bowling, football, bear baiting) be played in Lancashire on a Sunday, in his 'Declaration to His Subjects Concerning Lawful Sports'.

The following year the partial ban was extended nationally in his 'Book of Sports'. Of course by banning football on Sundays and Holy days there was very little time left for poor people to play since these were the only days they had off. This was still insufficient to please the po-faced dyed-in-the-wools who never forgave James for his half-measure. Their ultra-orthodox

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cousins, the Separatists, went one step further and sailed off to colonise Massachusetts to establish the warm and fuzzy fundamentalism we all love today: no surprise that soccer never took off there. James himself was no personal fan of the game; in 1598, when he came to write his overbearing how-to-be-a-king helpful hints 'A King's Christian Dutie Towards God', for his eldest son Prince Henry, football was sent to the dugout:

'From this court I debarre all rough and violent exercises, as the foot-ball, meeter for lameing than making able the users thereof'

In turn, Charles I's attitude to the sport was no less cavalier and he re-issued the Book of Sports, severely curtailing the practice of football. Of course Oliver Cromwell, that puritanical killjoy, banned football; Parliament even going so far as to publicly burn the Book of Sports. Surprisingly Cromwell had played in his youth, throwing 'himself into a dissolute and disorderly course... famous for football, cricket, cudgelling and wrestling' and somewhat incongruously going by the name of 'royster', which means one who engages in boisterous merrymaking. Eh? What? But football bounced back, receiving royal approval by Cromwell's successor (and the man who had his decapitated head slam-dunked onto a pole for fifty years), Charles II in 1681, when he attended a match between his servants and those of the Duke of Albermarle. Early in his reign over the moon footballers came out of hiding, Samuel Pepys describing 'the street full of footballs, it being a great frost' in 1665.

Unfortunately the country's Puritan element remained, sulking and pouting, chiding and scolding and, in 1683, the pamphleteer Philip Stubbes wrote his *Anatomie of Abuses*, describing football as a 'develishe pastime' The book, which pretty much had a go at anything even remotely pleasurable that one could do in 1683 – including public dancing, wakes, astrology, church ales and that most heinous of pursuits, morris dancing – polarised opinion and he was viewed as either crackpot or moral redeemer. His description of the early game, however, is unsurpassed:

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'Lord remove these exercises from the Saboath. Any exercise which withdraweth from godliness, either upon the Saboath or any other day, is wicked and to be forbidden. Now who is so grosly blind that seeth not that these aforesaid exercises not only withdraw us from godlinesse and virtue, but also haile and allure us to wickednesse and sin? For as concerning football playing I protest unto you that it may rather be called a friendlie kinde of fyghte than a play or recreation – a bloody and murthering practice than a felowly sport or pastime. For dooth not everyone lye in waight for his adversarie, seeking to overthrow him and picke him on his nose, though it may be on hard stones, on ditch or dale, on valley or hill, or whatever place soever it be he careth not, so he have him downe; and that he can serve the most of this fashion he is counted the only fellow, and who but he? So that by this means sometimes their necks are broken, sometimes their backs, sometimes their legs, sometimes their armes, sometimes their noses gush out with blood, sometimes their eyes start out, and sometimes hurte in one place, sometimes in another. But whosoever scapeth away the best goeth not scot free, but is either forewounded, craised, or bruised, so as he dyeth of it or else scapeth very hardlie; and no mervaile, for they have the sleights to meet one betwixt two, to dash him against the hart with their elbows, to butt him under the short ribs with their griped fists, and with their knees to catch him on the hip and pick him on his neck, with such murthering devices. And hereof groweth envy, rancour, and malice, and sometimes brawling, murther, homicide, and great effusion of blood, as experience daily teacheth. Is this murthering play now an exercise for the Saboath day?'

Clearly this is more akin to mob football and rugby but there is evidence both from the description of football during Henry VII's reign and from Sydney's quote that the game had diversified and a less physical, less hands-on variation was commonly being practiced. It is probable that the game was arborising into three major forms: one mainly using the feet, another mainly the hands and the third a free-for-all using both. In 1602 Richard

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Carew described two variants of Cornish hurling, one similar to mob football, the other a stick-less variety, predominantly using the hand, less physical than mob football and with an emphasis on passing the ball:

'that he must deale no Fore-ball, viz. he may not throw it to any of his mates, standing neerer the goale, then himselfe. Lastly, in dealing the ball, if any of the other part can catch it flying between, or e're the other haue it fast, he thereby winneth the same to his side, which straightway of defendant becommeth assailant, as the other, of assailant falls to be defendant'

A historically important depiction as it renders the game the first known to prohibit a forward pass. Carew goes on to describe something approximating to a modern goal:

'two bushes in the ground, some eight or ten foote asunder; and directly against them, ten or twelue score off, other twayne in like distance, which they terme their Goales'

The eighteenth century is football's Dark Age with very few literary references though in Strpye's 1720 edition of John Stow's *Survey of London* there is mention that:

'The lower classes divert themselves at football, wrestling, cudgels, nine-pins, shovelboard, cricket, stowball, ringing of bells, quoits, pitching the bar, bull and bear baitings, throwing at cocks and lying at ale-houses.'

Football was still around but was not thriving as it once had been. It was on the decline. There is no evidence of monarchical prohibition during this era, suggesting that Stubbes and his cronies had tapped into the nation's psyche, linking eternal damnation to Sunday soccer. The result appears to be a marked reduction in football, something no amount of kingly creeds had managed, testament to the power of God and the fear of man. If this is so, we will never know the resulting damage done to the evolution of the game by religious folly or contrariwise the strange game we would now be playing had it not gone into decline. Finally, in 1801, during the reign of King George III, the

voice of Joseph Strutt comes through the silence. A philanthropist and writer from Derby, Strutt wrote *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*, which chronicles the demise of football:

'Football is so called because the ball is driven about with the feet instead of the hands. It was formerly much in vogue among the common people of England, though of late years it seems to have fallen into disrepute, and is but little practised. I cannot pretend to determine at what period the game of football originated; it does not, however, to the best of my recollection, appear among the popular exercises before the reign of Edward III., and then, in 1349, it was prohibited by a public edict; not, perhaps, from any particular objection to the sport in itself, but because it co-operated, with other favourite amusements, to impede the progress of archery.

'When a match at football is made, two parties, each containing an equal number of competitors, take the field, and stand between two goals, placed at the distance of eighty or an hundred yards the one from the other. The goal is usually made with two sticks driven into the ground, about two or three feet apart. The ball, which is commonly made of a blown bladder, and cased with leather, is delivered in the midst of the ground, and the object of each party is to drive it through the goal of their antagonists, which being achieved the game is won. The abilities of the performers are best displayed in attacking and defending the goals; and hence the pastime was more frequently called a goal at football than a game at football. When the exercise becomes exceeding violent, the players kick each other's shins without the least ceremony, and some of them are overthrown at the hazard of their limbs.'

Probably in part due to its fall from favour, football was eventually deemed a nuisance rather than a national threat and the Highways Act of 1835 banned it (and tennis and cricket) from being played on public roads. The trend, however, could not be bucked by God or kings or statutes alike; football refused to lie down and its core popularity continued. It was ultimately taken up by, and evolved in, England's public schools. By the 19th

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century the game being played was a chimera of association¹ and rugby football and allowed running with the ball, scrums and hacking – a sharp kick to the shins of an opponent. Despite each institution developing its own idiosyncratic rules with considerable inter-school variation, the games being played could all be placed somewhere on a continuum that had rugby and football at either pole. Some schools, like Harrow and Eton, placed greater emphasis on the dribbling aspect of the game, while at others, including Rugby and Blackheath, the carrying game prevailed. The variations also began to become codified; Cambridge University are known to have first published in-house rules around 1839-42 though the earliest existing set of football rules was issued by Rugby School in 1845.

A set of common rules were developed by H de Winton and JC Thring at Trinity College, Cambridge University in 1848 to allow for inter-collegiate games. The rules were decided by a committee of fourteen men including representatives from Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Winchester and Trinity College. There are no known copies of this first attempt though a set of rules from 1856 survives. With myopic self-protectionism each public school stuck to its own version and no one set prevailed; visitors were expected to play by house rules. Refusing to give up, JC Thring, who had since become master at Uppingham School, further developed his rules as 'The Simplest Game' in 1862 and, in 1863, Cambridge University revised their code which then became the template for the Football Association's first attempt at their own 'Rules of the Game' later that year.

The long-held view that football was philanthropically saved by the public school system at a time when it was dying out amongst the working classes is erroneous. Prevailing historical opinion has long held that only a mob version of football was played by the lower orders and for some reason (perhaps industrialisation reducing both leisure time and playing areas and/or increasingly effective social prohibition by the new national police force) essentially disappeared around the early 19th century. With noblesse oblige it was taken up by the higher orders and elegantly transformed from a vicious, snarling, scum-

scrum of a game into a genteel, skilful and virtuous pursuit; polished and preened and handed back to the feckless masses in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This argument has been thoroughly and stylishly dissembled by Adrian Harvey² who points out that while the sport did evolve in public schools, it did so, as mentioned, with great insularity and was neither propagated nor disseminated with any vigour. He goes on to unearth evidence of the existence of numerous working class teams playing nationwide in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Most played with sides of even numbers (usually between 6- and 20-a-side) and with rules agreed between the two sides that had no direct bearing on public school codes.

Middle class teams also existed nationally, but originated in schools and military regiments rather than from occupation or location, as was the case with working class sides. They were also freer to play on a day of their choosing unlike the working classes whose matches were often limited to public holidays or Mondays. 'Mondayitis' is nothing new; the Victorian working classes would regularly wag Mondays waggishly claiming that they were celebrating Saint Monday. It was also known as Fuddling Day since, rather than play sport, many preferred to keep drinking.

It appears then that football has been played in Britain for centuries and that it became so popular that opposing sides were often huge. It is likely to be this gargantuan aspect of the game that led to it being perceived both threat and crowd-pleaser, leading in turn to recidivistic bans and to it becoming a festival sport, watched by the masses and tolerated by the authorities. The sheer size and glamour of these games is likely to have attracted all the contemporary press but it is eminently possible that matches with far fewer participants had always been played yet gone unrecorded.

The invention of the ball is sport's equivalent of the wheel and surely whenever a ball could be fashioned, men would play with it in teams of two, irrespective of available numbers. In his book, Magoun records numerous instances of football between

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small evenly-matched sides being played at locations throughout Britain during the seventeenth century; clearly then, not mob football. Harvey develops the argument and cogently reveals that such games continued during the eighteenth century, especially in East Anglia, Lancashire and London, establishing a temporal link to the more organized team games of the first half of the nineteenth century.

In East Anglia, a particular variation of mob football known as camping was also played, which had been popular since the middle ages. To those familiar with the region this did not involve towing caravans around the Fens using Robin Reliants, rather it was a particularly violent game played with two teams of large numbers, each occupying a camp (half). The object was to drag opposing members into the home camp until their side was depleted; this could only be done if the ball was in the opponent's half, so it was important to hurl the ball back into the enemy camp as quickly as possible. If a large ball was used the game was called 'kicking camp' and the game appears to have been normally played in bare feet since if shoes were worn it was called 'savage camp'. This term clearly implies that the game was not for the faint-hearted and there is documented evidence to support this: one seventeenth century match between Norfolk and Suffolk featured more than three hundred players, nine of whom died!

According to Mrs Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* (1857), in 1750 football was played using stones in the Roses border town of Haworth, Yorkshire. This was seventy years before the Bronte sisters moved into the parsonage in 1820 and the Reverend Bronte's predecessor, who 'made good with the whip', earnestly bid to stop such devilry. In London, meanwhile, football was usually played by apprentices, forming an obvious link to FitzStephen's observation of craft workers six hundred years earlier. In conclusion, although there are no earlier records, smaller games may have always been contemporaneous with, or even predated, mob football: speculative but feasible.

Undoubtedly, football continued to be played by the common man the length and breadth of Britain and is likely to have slowly

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evolved in this setting too and probably with more homogeneity than the public school system allowed for, though admittedly with substantial local variation. Certainly, from the seventeenth century onwards, football was played with large or small numbers and it is possible that idiosyncratic rules developed depending on the size of the game with smaller games allowing for greater consistency and application of rules. The sport that was taken up by the public schools may have had less to do with the free-for-all that was mob football than with a compact, cultured, working class invention.

Footnotes

¹I apologise for anachronistically using the term 'association' as shorthand for a game where kicking was preferred to handling; the term was not used formally until the formation of the Football Association in 1863.

²*Football: The First Hundred Years – the Untold Story* (2005) by Adrian Harvey