

# Early Football Professionalism in Sheffield



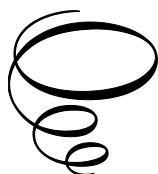
# Early Football Professionalism in Sheffield:

*Following the Money*

By

Graham Curry

**Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing**



Early Football Professionalism in Sheffield: Following the Money

By Graham Curry

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2023 by Graham Curry

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-1277-0

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-1277-1

# CONTENTS

<i>List of tables</i> .....	vi
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	vii
<i>Introduction</i> .....	1
Chapter 1 .....	11
The origins of football in Sheffield	
Chapter 2 .....	34
Early clubs and cups	
Chapter 3 .....	60
Peter Andrews: relocation or importation?	
Chapter 4 .....	75
James Joseph Lang: the first professional?	
Chapter 5 .....	95
Jack Hunter, George Wilson and others: the loss of local talent	
Chapter 6 .....	124
Billy Mosforth and home comforts	
Chapter 7 .....	139
Degrading the game: the story of the Sheffield Zulus	
Appendix 1 .....	156
Extant games played by James Joseph Lang: 1873 to 1885	
Appendix 2 .....	164
Extant games played by Peter Andrews: 1873 to 1882	
Appendix 3 .....	171
List of Zulu fixtures with results and line ups where available	

## LIST OF TABLES

1.1 *Footballing encounters in the Sheffield area (1 January 1850 to 29 March 1862)*

1.2 *Ties and results for the Youdan Cup, 1867*

1.3 *Ties and results for the Cromwell Cup, 1868*

3.1 *Football matches played by Peter Andrews, 1 October 1876 to 31 December 1876*

5.1 *Sheffield FA Challenge Cup results, 1876-7*

5.2 *Finals played by Heeley FC, 1876 to 1886*

5.3 *Extant list of 'teams' represented by John 'Jack' Hunter before his move to Blackburn (21)*

6.1 *Matches played by Billy Mosforth, 6 March 1882 to 15 March 1882*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Judy Wright for proof reading.

Andy Mitchell for his much-appreciated advice and suggestions on all things connected with Scottish football history.

Tony Collins, Keri Griffiths, Dominic Malcolm, Kevin Neill, Tony Scholes, Maxine Tivey. Eric Dunning.





## INTRODUCTION

The development of football was complex, with modern forms developing in Britain from existing mob/folk games. The latter were loosely organised local contests between teams of often unequal size, which were traditionally played on holidays such as Shrove Tuesday, New Year's Day or Easter Monday. Most historians of association football would not claim the sport to be a direct descendant of a handling, mauling form of mob/folk football, such as the one still being played in the early twenty-first century at Ashbourne in Derbyshire. This remains a distant cousin. A closer progenitor existed in the kicking games in Penistone and Thurlstone in South Yorkshire and, additionally, the match which took place in February 1827 near Derby, which was seemingly a curtain raiser to that year's Derby street football, the version being significantly described as 'kick-ball'.<sup>1</sup> Types of football existed in most countries, *la soule* is an example in France, but it would be in England where the game first blossomed into a modern sport. Local forms brought by the boys to the melting pot of England's leading public schools were codified and, as a consequence, 'civilised'<sup>2</sup> by the boys, with those former pupils of the major boarding institutions of Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Westminster and Winchester being ultimately the most influential. Indeed, of the nine Clarendon Schools of 1864, only two, St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors', were not boarding establishments. It is significant that neither of these schools played a part in the development of the modern games of football. Only serving local boys as day pupils, they did not belong to the stimulating melting pot of ideas from various towns and regions across the country which made up the intake of the high profile boarding establishments and, therefore, inspired little debate on the furtherance of rules for the game. Subsequently, the former public schoolboys of the seven boarding institutions debated the primacies of their football games at university, especially Cambridge, polarising opinion between kicking and dribbling or handling and carrying codes. However, their distinctive forms were not diffused from either the schools or the universities directly into wider society. Rather, former public schoolboys and university men made their preferences clear when they joined or re-joined local communities where football was ripe to adopt its modern form. This swift transformation of mob/folk forms to rational modes of play was enacted with minimal encouragement, as local populations were clearly

cognisant of some form of the game. Boys at local grammar schools, best described as the educational stratum of society just beneath the public schools, also engaged in football and, in some areas, notably Sheffield, were largely responsible for the creation of their own subculture. This group represented what might be termed a local sporting or footballing élite.

Club football began in Sheffield with the formation of Sheffield FC in 1857, though there were soon similar processes taking place elsewhere in England, especially in and around London. In 1863, a number of metropolitan clubs came together to form the Football Association and, although this organisation struggled initially for widespread recognition, it was, with hindsight, destined to become a focal point for footballers, not only in the capital, but also, eventually, as the national governing body for the sport. It was, however, in Sheffield where the first significant modern footballing subculture would be established by the beginning of the 1860s, but, although footballers from the South Yorkshire region were highly influential in football's progress, the city was only rarely promoted in preference to London as becoming the centre of affairs in England. Association football, or soccer as it is also known, began, therefore, at the early meetings of the FA in the latter part of 1863. Exactly when is open to debate, but it was most likely at the fifth meeting of that body on Tuesday 1 December 1863, when laws relating to running with the ball in hand and over-physical play, that is, the act of hacking or deliberately kicking an opponent whether in possession of the ball or not, were expunged. Since then, the association game has developed further and, although its traditional form remains as a game of eleven-a-side, other varieties have appeared, most notably, beach soccer, futsal, five-a-side and walking football. Interestingly, this process has also taken place in other football forms, where rugby has produced 'Sevens', American Football has created Arena Football and Gaelic and Australian Football teams have opposed each other in a hybrid game known as International Rules. Although it is clear that varieties such as American, Australian, Gaelic and Canadian were created and refined in their country of origin, there is a good deal of evidence to suggest that they owed much of their structure, ways of playing and laws to mob/folk forms of already existing, modern forms of the game, both kicking and handling codes, in England.

The story of early football in Sheffield is worthy of study *per se*, but there are several reasons why such an investigation would be of sociological value. This type of analysis presents a valuable medium for casting light on four inter-related areas:

- the development of the British class structure and the relationships between the members of the various social strata of mid-to-late Victorian Britain;
- the diffusion of and innovation in a sports form;
- an illustration of the figurational perspective of power as a structural characteristic of all human relationships;
- the trend towards growing seriousness in sport and the monetisation of the game of association football.

Initially, events in and around the city were under the aegis of the upper middle class members of Sheffield FC, who comprised both the players and administrators of early Sheffield clubs. Eventually, as the game spread and more working class players became involved - partly because of various working practices such as an acceptance in the city that Monday might be regarded as a 'day off' - attitudes to participation changed; one of these new approaches in terms of football being the almost tacit tolerance, albeit covert at first, of payment, at least remuneration for wages lost, for playing. This book attempts to examine that process and 'drill down' deeply into its rise within football in the city.

### **Academic literature on early Sheffield football**

Several books and parts of books have already begun to scratch the surface of the subject. Early examples include Richard Sparling's *Romance of the Wednesday* (1926) and Percy Young's *Football in Sheffield* (1962). Sparling examined some early history, but never attempted serious analysis, tending to concentrate on the Sheffield Wednesday club. Young's is a curate's egg, providing some excellent data, but also making several unexpected mistakes including the erroneous identification of an influential individual at a local school, together with the incorrect scoreline for a Sheffield versus London representative match. Tracts celebrating anniversaries of Sheffield Football Club and Hallam FC have amounted to three accounts - Curry, Goodman and Hutton (2007); Walters (1957); Steele (1986) - while Adrian Harvey, in his *Football: the First Hundred Years: the Untold Story* (2005), devoted a chapter to the discussion of the subject and the acceptable suggestion that the footballers of the city be accorded far more credit for their role in the early development of the game. In more recent years, Martin Westby (2017) produced a well-researched offering concerning the formation of early clubs in Britain, concentrating on Sheffield-based organisations, of which there were many.

## Norbert Elias and figurational sociology

This book is underpinned by the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias, though leans largely on the ideas of Eric Dunning surrounding the development of professionalisation in English rugby and association football. Elias's ideas can play an enormous part in any analysis of the game's development and often provide an inspiring and incredibly helpful technical model, which can be employed in one's research and writing.<sup>3</sup> In particular, his constant urging for sociologists 'to use a combination of theory-based reasoning and empirical observation in which neither is allowed to become dominant', seems to be a helpful paradigm to follow.<sup>4</sup> His central ideas might be summed up as follows:

human individuals and the societies they form are best be understood as long term processes;

the processes undergone by societies have tended up to now, especially in the longer term, to be mainly 'blind' in the sense of being the outcome of the largely unintended consequences of the aggregates of multiple individual acts;

power is a universal property of human relations at all levels of social integration and is, arguably and certainly in this text, the most important aspect;

sociologists should see as their primary concern the accumulation of bodies of reliable knowledge, by means of what Elias called 'a detour *via* detachment' - in layman's terms, objectivity;

Elias's theory of 'civilising processes' constitutes what he called a 'central theory', and it is important to note that Elias did not use the concept or theory of 'civilising processes' in a moral or evaluative way, enclosing the word 'civilisation' and its derivatives such as 'civilised' and 'civilising' in inverted commas in order to signal this. 'Civilising process' was for him a technical term. He did not intend to suggest by it that people who can be shown to stand at a more advanced level in a 'civilising process' than some others are in any meaningful sense 'better than' or 'morally superior' to people in the past. Rather, by 'civilising process', Elias referred to a long term decrease in violence and aggression within societies.

Although Elias has come to be recognised as one of the most important sociologists of the twentieth century, he only occasionally wrote on sport (although compared to other notable sociologists - perhaps with the exception of Pierre Bourdieu - he actually wrote a good deal). However, his most respected student, Eric Dunning, filled the gap. Dunning himself was one of the founding fathers of the sub-discipline known as the sociology of sport, where his passions were football and cricket, though he worked mostly on the former. He developed a theory of status rivalry between the public schools of Eton and Rugby, expressed specifically in their juxtaposed football forms. Dunning believed that the two varieties were positioned towards opposite ends of a football spectrum, with Etonians stressing kicking, limiting the use of the hands and scoring under the crossbar, while Rugbeians championed handling and carrying, almost boundless use of the hands and scoring over the crossbar. With Ken Sheard, he produced the incomparable *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*, a work which dealt with the sociological study of the early development of rugby football. The book was published in 1979, re-published in 2005 and, in 2015, Graham Curry and Eric Dunning delivered a similar tome, but concentrated on the association game, encompassing the best aspects of Elias's theoretical/empirical approach to historical sociology.

### **Theorising on football professionalism**

Of all the theories and hypotheses surrounding the advent of professionalism in association football, Eric Dunning and Ken Sheard's explanation appears to have the most credibility.<sup>5</sup> Writing in *Barbarians*, Dunning and Sheard believed that soccer was, at least in its early years, influenced by former pupils of more upper class, even aristocratic, establishments such as Eton College, Harrow School, Winchester, Westminster, Shrewsbury and Charterhouse, institutions recognised as 'great' schools by the Clarendon Report of 1864, but also advocates of kicking and dribbling styles of football. The schools operated with a high degree of autonomy, as they do today, and this independence led to rivalry between and innovation in the various establishments. This situation continued, to a large extent, at the FA, where former public school men such as Charles Alcock, an Old Harrovian, along with Arthur, Lord Kinnaird and Major Francis Marindin, both Old Etonians, ruled the roost. Although they were not present in overwhelming numbers at the early meetings of the FA - the involvement of too many former public schoolboys would have almost certainly ended in rancour over a rigid adherence to their school's particular form of football - they held the most senior positions in the organisation and would have believed that

their backgrounds gave them the power to impose footballing opinions in important debates. It almost certainly meant that those individuals and groups at the apex of the association game felt far more socially secure than their middle class, provincial counterparts such as John Charles Clegg in Sheffield and Charles Crump in Birmingham. The societal gap between individuals at the FA and the working class was so great that the former rarely felt threatened, apart from on the field of play, by any growing incursion into their leisure space. This argument effectively suggests why provincial associations such as Sheffield and Birmingham were so reluctant to accept payment for playing, positioned, as they were, closer in social terms to working class participants in their particular area. This proximity in economic power meant that the likes of Clegg and Crump were more likely to feel threatened in a way that Alcock, Kinnaird and Marindin never did. It was also significant that southern amateurs, at least until the advent of the FA Cup, had rarely played with or against anyone from a lower social class and had not, therefore, been challenged either on or off the field of play in terms of values and behaviour differing markedly from their own. This situation was in direct contrast to the Rugby Football Union, which was administered by men who had attended far more middle class public schools such as Rugby School itself. They inhabited social strata similar to Clegg and Crump and, in 1895, would reject the notion of payment for playing.

There are two further explanations which are worth recording. Firstly, football had cricket as an *in situ* model of how to 'control' professional players. Indeed, Charles Alcock was secretary of Surrey County Cricket Club from 1872 to 1907 and would have been aware of the successes and pitfalls. However, football professionalism was on a much grander scale and, far from being controlled largely from the outset by more upper class administrators, the crisis created had been initiated by groups in East Lancashire who, to a certain extent, were involved in actively setting the agenda. Secondly, Dunning and Sheard also contended that

The crisis over the legitimacy of professionalism in soccer came to a head in the middle 1880s, [which] meant that it took place towards the end of the thirty year period of relatively harmonious class relations...By contrast, the crisis over professionalism in Rugby erupted in the early 1890s, i.e. at a time when class conflict was mounting owing, on the one hand, to the maturation of the long-term changes taking place in the structure and social composition of the ruling class and, on the other, of the dawning realisation by the working class of their latent power.<sup>6</sup>

Dunning and Sheard argued that industrial relations in the 1880s were, compared to the mid-1890s when the rugby split occurred, fairly amicable and, with class conflict much more overt during the latter decade, acquiescence in sport to an emerging working class may well have been construed as a step too far. However, more in-depth study reveals that there were contradictions involved in this reasoning. While 1884 saw the extension of the working class male franchise, the same decade was noted for the growth of 'new unionism', organisations who fought for better pay and the furtherance of the Saturday half-day. The 1890s were a time of great confidence in a well-established Empire dominated by naval power, but, at the same time, the suffragists, predecessors of the suffragettes, were campaigning responsibly, though determinedly, for the right of women to vote.<sup>7</sup> Tony Collins points out that the broader social context is important for understanding why it was easier for the FA to accept professionalism. He continues, 'As the debate on professionalism in rugby grew in the late 1880s there was always a consciousness of the rising tide of working-class self-confidence, most obviously in the creation of unskilled unions from 1888 and the formation of the Independent Labour Party in 1893. None of this happened in the early 1880s which meant accepting professionalism in football didn't carry the same implications'.<sup>8</sup> The wider perspective is certainly helpful, but the examples given above present contradictions in terms of opinion regarding the political situation in the 1880s. There is, therefore, ample scope for further debate.

Dunning and Sheard additionally noted that before the 1880s, the amateur ethos existed merely as an embryonic ideal. They expanded by saying,

It was...an amorphous, loosely articulated set of values regarding the functions of sport and the standards believed necessary for their realisation. However, with threat posed by incipient professionalisation in the North, the amateur ethos began to crystallise as a highly specific, elaborate and articulate ideology...It became...a 'collective representation', an ideational product developed by members of one collectivity in opposition to the ideas and actions of the members of another.<sup>9</sup>

Dunning and Sheard believed that, for the public school élite, sport had to involve the following three attributes:

- (1) pursuit of the activity as an 'end in itself', i.e. simply for the pleasure afforded, with a corresponding downgrading of achievement striving, training and specialisation;

(2) self-restraint and, above all, the masking of enthusiasm in victory and disappointment in defeat;

(3) the norm of 'fair play', i.e. the normative equalisation of game-chances between contending sides, coupled with a stress on voluntary compliance with the rules and a chivalrous attitude of 'friendly rivalry' towards opponents.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, Dunning and Sheard noted the growing seriousness of sport in mid-to-late Victorian Britain, leading to an intensification of competition, of which the introduction of the FA Cup, international matches and the Football League competition were significant parts. This increase in achievement orientation was fuelled by the fact that the players were not now simply taking part for themselves, an upper class tendency growing from the maxim of 'football for its own sake' eschewing any extrinsic rewards, but were representatives of local communities or sets of 'supporters'. They also argued convincingly that this escalation, together with a trend towards sport becoming more culturally central has led to 'a real increase in violence on and off the field of play'.<sup>11</sup>

\*\*\*

Over the past two decades, academic, sociological/historical writing on football has blossomed, mainly on the back of the debate over the game's early development led by Eric Dunning, Tony Collins, Adrian Harvey and Graham Curry.<sup>12</sup> This book adds to that debate, providing more information on early professionalism. Secondly, professional football in England has always been linked to the importation of players from other regions - largely, Scotland - to East Lancashire by the likes of Preston North End, Bolton Wanderers, Burnley and many others. However, the first stages of importation took place in Sheffield. This trend has been touched on in articles on the subject, but has never been subjected to in-depth study in a book-length manuscript.

While the first two chapters set the scene, the next four deal with the main individuals involved with football professionalism in the city; one might describe them as those who benefitted most from payment for playing. Meanwhile, the final offering deals with the 'Zulu' phenomenon, ostensibly a way of earning money developed by certain high-performing Sheffield footballers which was part of English football's move towards full-blown professionalisation. There has been a conscious decision not to include a



conclusion as each chapter has its own review. Let us begin the study by setting the scene in Sheffield.

## Bibliography

- Collins, Tony. *How Football Began: A Global History of How the World's Football Codes Were Born*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2019.
- Curry, Graham. 'Up'Ards, Down'Ards and derbies: figurational reflections on intense enmity in pre-modern English football'. *Soccer & Society*, 19, 5-6 (2018): 645-656.
- Curry, Graham and Eric. Dunning. *Association Football: A Study in Figurational Sociology*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Curry, Graham, Peter Goodman and Steve Hutton. *Sheffield Football Club: Celebrating 150 Years of the World's Oldest Football Club*. Manchester: At Heart Publications, 2007.
- Dunning, Eric and Jason Hughes. *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology: Knowledge, Interdependence, Power, Process*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Harvey, Adrian. *Football: The First Hundred Years. The Untold Story*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.
- Sparling, Richard Arthur. *The Romance of the Wednesday*. Sheffield: Leng & Co., 1926.
- Steele, John A. *The Countrymen: The Story of Hallam Football Club: The World's Second Oldest Soccer Club*. Chesterfield: Henry Boot Design and Print Ltd., 1986.
- Walters, Fred. *The History of Sheffield F.C.: The Oldest Club in the World*. Sheffield: *Sheffield Telegraph and Star*, 1957.
- Welch, Reginald Courtenay. *The Harrow School Register, 1801-1900*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1894.
- Westby, Martin. *A History of Sheffield Football, 1857-1889 '...speed, science and bottom'*. England's Oldest Football Clubs, 2017.
- Young, Percy Marshall. *Football in Sheffield*. Sheffield: Stanley Paul, 1962.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> See Curry, 'Up'Ards, Down'Ards and derbies'.

<sup>2</sup> Norbert Elias's theory of 'civilising processes' constitutes what he called a 'central theory', i.e. a theory through which a variety of apparently diverse and separate social and psychological phenomena can be meaningfully studied. Contrary to a fairly widespread misconception, Elias did not use the concept or theory of 'civilising processes' in a moral or evaluative way. As has been done here, he usually

---

enclosed the word 'civilisation' and its derivatives such as 'civilised' and 'civilising' in inverted commas in order to signal this. See the Introduction in this book for Elias's figurational approach.

<sup>3</sup> The most recent book on Elias is by Eric Dunning and Jason Hughes, entitled *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*.

<sup>4</sup> Dunning and Hughes, *Norbert Elias and Modern Sociology*, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Dunning and Sheard, *Barbarians*, 2005, 160-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 2005, 163.

<sup>7</sup> With thanks to Keri Griffiths and Maxine Tivey in the History Department of Tuxford Academy in Nottinghamshire for their valuable suggestions on this particular subject.

<sup>8</sup> Email correspondence with Tony Collins, 26 April 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Dunning and Sheard, *Barbarians*, 2005, 131.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 244.

<sup>12</sup> Curry and Dunning, *Association Football*, Collins, *How Football Began*, Harvey, *Football*,

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE ORIGINS OF FOOTBALL IN SHEFFIELD

Writing in 1986 for the introduction to *Quest for Excitement*, Norbert Elias attempted to explain why the concept of modern sport had begun in England,<sup>1</sup> a subject on which Eric Dunning expanded some thirteen years later in *Sport Matters*.<sup>2</sup> Both noted that England's 'trajectory of state formation', when compared to other emergent European powers such as Germany and Italy, was swifter and concluded earlier than their continental equivalents. The latter two nations remained divided for much longer than their English counterpart, effectively limiting them as locations for the emergence of modern sport. While France was unified at a similar time to England, the former became highly centralised and subject to governance by absolute rulers who, among other restrictions, forbade their subjects from forming associations or, as would become the norm in England, 'clubs'.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, one of the consequences of the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century had been that severe restrictions were placed on the monarchy. This was the beginning of, as Elias expressed it, a 'cycle of violence', which led directly to significant changes in the power structure of English society. Eventually, these royal constraints resulted in a high degree of autonomy for the aristocracy and gentry and, with growing security created by the stability of the English, eventually British, nation state, led to what Elias referred to as 'parliamentarisation', the settling of disputes in a peaceful manner by means of 'civilised' debate and an acceptable conclusion to the 'cycle of violence'.

Correlatively, this led to the 'sportisation' of pastimes, the first wave of which involved participants in less violent leisure pursuits. Put simplistically, team games largely replaced cruel sports involving the mistreatment of animals and, in a parallel development, existing sports became more 'civilised'. A good example of the latter is boxing, where, among other revisions, participants were matched according to weight and early gloves known as 'mufflers' were introduced. This represented a significant 'civilising spurt', with sporting change being aided by the fact that participants in sportisation were mostly those who were involved in the

process of 'parliamentarisation'. In terms of games, this process enabled codification, the production of more civilised sets of rules, which not only moulded particular sport forms, but also provided safer pastimes and, ultimately, the concept of 'fair play'.

The advent of enclosure - the annexation in the eighteenth century of former common or individually owned land and the development of these as large tracts of countryside administered by one or more powerful landlords - tended to dull revolutionary tendencies in the rural peasantry. English gentlemen became more secure in their social relationships with the perceived lower classes, making fraternisation in a sporting context something to be relished rather than feared. Indeed, the assured social position of the English upper class created such an ease of interdependencies that the adoption and/or adaptation of rules and customs from a number of existing popular folk-games proved to be relatively straightforward. In short, the best features of aristocratic and plebeian practices were employed to produce particularly fulfilling sporting pursuits. Furthermore, as the playing of team games became more fashionable, it was acceptable for the upper class to include players from the lower strata to 'make up the numbers', an action which again emphasised confidence in their status. It would also have proved to be beneficial in many cases to select a skilful, effective participant regardless of class, as this gave a greater chance of victory. In due course, the ability and willingness of newly influential bourgeois groups to participate in these increasingly popular leisure pursuits heralded a further power shift away from the aristocracy and gentry in favour of an emerging *nouveau riche*, who were determined initially to mimic but ultimately to challenge the established order. Such rivalry represented class conflict at the higher end of the social scale. This second wave of 'sportisation' occurred in the public schools, with the pupils of Eton College representing the aristocracy, while those attending Rugby School, a relatively new institution, characterised the increasingly powerful bourgeoisie. The tensions between the boys of these two establishments - Eric Dunning has described the process as 'status rivalry' - was one of the pre-conditions for the 'sportisation' of football.

As part of this overall process, the first major footballing subculture began in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, in the latter years of the 1850s. The complex nature of the development of early football and Sheffield in particular has meant that historians of the period and the subject have attempted to test various similar hypotheses - several are listed later in this paragraph - revolving around the reasons for modern club football beginning in the city. However, it appears fair to say that they have failed, thus far, to offer an

adequate explanation. Percy Young notes how Sheffield's Collegiate School, an institution whose former pupils were to have a significant effect on football's growth in the city, was 'under the reign of Cambridge men',<sup>4</sup> John Steele writes that the first Sheffield football rules were 'based largely on those of the Harrow School and Cambridge University',<sup>5</sup> while Fred Walters and Dave Russell both mention a link with Harrow, with the latter also noting a connection with Cambridge University.<sup>6</sup> All four intimate that the influence of public schoolboys and university graduates, especially from Cambridge, on Sheffield football's development was significant, but subsequent research by Graham Curry together with Eric Dunning, and, independently, Adrian Harvey, has shown this to be largely, though not wholly, unlikely.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Harvey has redressed the balance in terms of the credit afforded to the city's footballers by previous authors<sup>8</sup> for the early development of the modern game. However, in doing so, he appears to have unwittingly over-exaggerated Sheffield's importance in this regard. His claim that Sheffield represented 'the most important football culture that existed in the entire world during the 1850s and 1860s'<sup>9</sup> may have some value, but it has unintentionally created a superlative and emotive view of what should be objective comment. Although several hypotheses exist on early Sheffield football - the amount of former public schoolboy involvement, the importance of former pupils from Sheffield Collegiate School, the influence of a mob/folk football tradition in Penistone and Thrumstone, and the existence of a thriving cricket subculture in the city - there is still room for reassessments of most, if not all, of the positions currently held, as well as the possibilities for generating new ones.

Some debate has taken place as to how much influence former public schoolboys had on early Sheffield football, but there seems to be little doubt that the 1857 Sheffield rules can be described as markedly, though perhaps not deliberately, anti-rugby in form; that is, the city's football variety restricted use of the hands and unnecessarily violent play. South Yorkshire footballers did not intentionally legislate against processes taking place at Rugby School, but they did show their preference for a kicking and dribbling code. However, it is incorrect to suggest that there existed a total lack of public school influence on the original rules. Despite the existence of the rouge, the differential scoring method employed in the Eton Field Game and explained more fully in Chapter Two, it would be misleading and erroneous to argue that former public schoolboys exerted any significant influence on early Sheffield football. Indeed, their absence was probably one of the main factors in the rapid development of modern football in the region, with participants not feeling hamstrung by their loyalty to cherished school forms. It is, therefore, correct to suggest that the Sheffield footballing

subculture beginning in the late 1850s was controlled by an upper middle class group educated locally from the stratum of English society just below those who had attended the major public schools. By the early 1860s Sheffield stood firmly in the camp of an embryonic soccer-style game and it is possible to argue that the footballers of the city had established the most important footballing subculture in England at this particular time.

A potential hypothesis for the Sheffield area points to four main strands or avenues of diffusion. Firstly, the type of football played by the boys at Sheffield Collegiate School would have been significant and they would have transferred their preferences when deciding on a code for Sheffield FC in 1857. Secondly, the officers of Sheffield FC almost certainly wrote to certain of the major public schools for their football rules or were at least familiar with elements of their codes. Thirdly, the exponents of local forms of folk or mob football - in this case those living in the nearby thriving football enclave of Thurlstone/Penistone, where a kicking and dribbling form of the game thrived - would probably have attempted to shape the final code of rules as close as possible to their liking. Finally, the existence of the already flourishing sporting form of cricket, in which so many of the future footballers were involved, was vital as a provider of men with existing administrative skills and, indeed, links to other urban sporting networks. Let us begin by attempting to record, analyse and explain events at Sheffield Collegiate School.

### **The influence of Sheffield Collegiate former pupils**

Many of the original members of Sheffield FC were former pupils of Sheffield Collegiate. Indeed, 17 of the 57 names on the first list of players had attended the school, but, while this represented only thirty per cent of the those involved, most importantly, it included Nathaniel Creswick, one of the co-founders of the club.<sup>10</sup> It is not difficult to speculate that former pupils of Collegiate, themselves representing what was accepted by many in the city as being part of the Sheffield social élite, held sway over other, less powerful, social groups in discussions regarding the form and variety of many things, plus establishing the city's preferred code of football. That the club was probably persuaded to copy the game as played at the school can be deduced not only from the fact that many of the first members of Sheffield FC had attended Collegiate, but also, and perhaps more importantly in sociological terms, because those young men thought themselves to be the most dominant in those debates. It follows that it was something resembling their preferred 'Collegiate' form that was eventually

adopted by footballers in the city. That the initial Sheffield rules were distinctly proto-soccer surely indicates that Collegiate's preference was for such a game. Two further pieces of evidence support this hypothesis. Firstly, a game played on 14 March 1863 appears initially to illustrate the division of the club at that time between old boys of Sheffield Collegiate and others educated elsewhere. The game between eleven Old Collegians and an equal number of other members of the club was played at East Bank.<sup>11</sup> The Collegians won by 'three or four goals to one', with the method of scoring used in this game - 'goals' rather than 'tries' - suggesting an embryo soccer rather than rugby form. Interestingly, this game also informs us that the Sheffield Collegiate old boys still saw their group as a separate entity and their numbers were such that they could challenge 'The Rest' by themselves. Secondly, although the form of football initially practised at Collegiate has been difficult to identify, it is probably indicative of their earlier preference for a kicking and dribbling style that in 1881 they were enthusiastically participating in the association game as part of a full fixture list, with no mention of the rugby form.<sup>12</sup>

The founders of Sheffield FC were the first and, for some years at least, the most influential local sporting élite. Another interesting example of the influence of a local élite could be found in Derby, where, with football in the city stymied by the controversial banning of the famous mob/folk form played there on Shrove Tuesday, it fell to enthusiasts to the east of the city, in South Derbyshire, to lead the early development of the sport in that area. Many of them had attended Derby Grammar School, which played a similar role to that of Sheffield Collegiate. However, the fact remains that, at this present time, there is still more evidence across the country of the involvement of former pupils of the major English public schools than of local sporting, indeed one might say footballing, élites in the development of the game in specific geographical areas. For instance, in London, Nottingham, the north east of England and Lincolnshire, ex-public schoolboys are to the fore in the early days of the diffusion of the game of football.<sup>13</sup> Despite this, one single explanation for diffusion does not fit every geographical area, nor, seemingly, can such an explanation be applied to the whole country.

As the sport blossomed in the wider society, the power and prestige of ex-public schoolboys generally subdued the pretensions of outsiders to influence proceedings and essentially provided the platform for the development of the modern game. Quite simply, former public schoolboys influenced the development of the modern game on a national scale far more than local élites from the provinces. The study of local sporting élites

confirms the complex development of football in England. The origins of the game were certainly influenced by this subgroup, but the story of its growth was by no means identical in each provincial city or town. One might suggest that increasingly complex 'chains of interdependency' were present but subtly different in each area. Most experienced direct or indirect public school links, local grammar school connections, 'folk' form stimuli, a mixture of two or even all three.

### **Major public school influence**

It has been noted that Nathaniel Creswick and William Prest decided to write to each major public school requesting a set of rules, though the evidence regarding how much they were utilised is sketchy. However, though public school influence was present, it was by no means direct. That is, it seems unlikely that any of the founders had been educated at or brought aspects of the game directly from one of the major schools. Doubt has been cast on the extent and importance of public school influence in Sheffield and it is difficult to refute the claim that few if any of the original members of the club had attended public schools. Despite this, the members of the club could certainly not have been classed as 'cultural dopes' in the sense that they were unaware of deliberations in other areas of the country, specifically at the major public schools. An addition to the rules made in 1861-2 may illustrate this awareness. The inclusion of a differential way of scoring, a rouge, probably indicates some form of diffusion from outside the city. The rouge has been noted in Chapter 2, but it may be productive to delve a little deeper into its background.

The rouge itself is a very 'slippery customer' and analysis must be undertaken cautiously as it emerges in several forms. It was used around this time most notably at Eton College in the Field Game, a forerunner of the association form, and its inclusion in the Sheffield rules of the early 1860s may indicate some form of diffusion from that institution. Indeed, this rule was still being used in the 1866-7 season and, as has been noted previously, decided the Youdan Cup Final, a local Sheffield competition, between Hallam and Norfolk, when the former won by no goals and two rouges to no score.<sup>14</sup> However, the use of a rouge also appears elsewhere. Canadian Football still employs it in 2023 and a single point is awarded when the ball is kicked into the endzone and the receiving team does not return it. This is somewhat similar to the American Football 'safety', which scores two rather than one point, and could be equated to an own goal in soccer. More importantly, in terms of chronology, it was also utilised at



Cheltenham College. To confuse matters further, Cheltenham's use of a rouge was only part of a complicated system of scoring, which allotted nine points to a goal kicked over a crossbar, three for a touchdown, two for a punt out and one for a rouge. Apparently, therefore, the rouge had become part of the application in certain football forms of 'minor points'. For instance, there are no minor points in soccer, as only goals count in deciding the result, whereas in both forms of rugby, scoring is not limited to a try - the equivalent of a soccer goal - and 'minor points' may be obtained through conversions and penalties. In fact, it seems logical to suggest that applying the term rouge to scoring in football seems to signify the utilisation of a 'minor point' rather than the employment of a single, unique rule. This may indicate that Sheffield's footballers were merely including their own form of 'minor point', which could have been the case, though it is significant that the terminology applied, the word rouge, was the same. The rule referring to a rouge in the 1847 Eton Field Game is similar to that in the 1862 Sheffield Rules - an attacker reaching the ball first after it has been kicked behind the goal line is awarded a rouge or extra point.<sup>15</sup> However, if the practice had been imported, the likelihood is that, as the most prestigious educational institution in the country, it would probably have arrived from Eton.<sup>16</sup> As for the lineage of the word rouge, it seems that it might be explained in one of three ways. Firstly, the use of a French word may indicate that the players involved believed that the use of such high-order vocabulary brought to their game an element of social prestige. Secondly, it may have represented a method of scoring used in an equivalent French game and had been introduced as an adoption of a sporting practice from that country. Lastly, because the term was initially associated with a particular public school practice, the word may be a throwback to the use of Norman French by the British aristocracy. There is, of course, always the possibility that the choice of word may have occurred as a combination of two or all three of these reasons.

How much notice they took of the public school rules that they received is open to debate, though historians need to accept that Sheffield footballers would have been aware of developments in the public schools and, despite largely rejecting them, the mere fact that they were even vaguely familiar with football rules at some of those institutions means that there was a possibility of influence from that section of society. The use from the 1861-2 season of the rouge may have been indicative of this avenue of diffusion. There is little doubt that public school football laws were hard to understand, applying playing practices and terms not easily interpreted by those who were not former pupils. This was undoubtedly a barrier to diffusion and, ultimately, apart perhaps from the use of the rouge, although public school

influence was present in Sheffield, it was minimal and largely indirect. However, although it is possible to accept that their influence was negligible, figurational sociologists would find it hard to accept that it was wholly absent. This is because the promotion of the idea of absolutes is absent from the teachings of Norbert Elias. Sheffield's footballers were clearly aware of the codification of public school football rules and, therefore, while public school practices may not have been adopted *en bloc*, even simply by reading school football rules, as they surely did, amounts to a conscious acceptance and realisation of their existence.

### **Penistone and Thurlstone**

The activities of the footballers in Penistone and Thurlstone may provide an important clue to the origins of Sheffield's playing preferences and early rules. Penistone is a market town with a population in 2023 of just over 11000. Thurlstone is a village just west of Penistone and has approximately 1700 inhabitants. Both areas are around fifteen miles north of Sheffield and eight miles west of Barnsley. The population of Penistone stood at 703 in 1831, while that of Thurlstone numbered 1599. In 1841, Thurlstone was still larger in population than Penistone, as the latter, on a hill, struggled for a consistent water supply and Thurlstone, in the valley of the River Don, capitalised on its location by establishing mills and water-driven industry, becoming economically richer than Penistone, which relied on agriculture as the main source of income for its inhabitants. Penistone benefited from the opening of the Sheffield-Manchester railway in 1845 when the local station for the area was constructed there. The village became a busy junction, with frequent trains to and from both the aforementioned cities as well as a connection to Huddersfield. The *Post Office Directory of Yorkshire* of 1851 stresses the importance of Penistone's church and grammar school, noting them as the centre of spiritual, pastoral and academic provision within the district, while of Thurlstone, it says: 'Thurlstone is the largest and most populous township in the parish and Union of Penistone'.<sup>17</sup>

John Goulstone, in his pamphlet entitled *Football's Secret History*, notes a good deal of football-related activity around the area. He mentions William Marsh as an organiser of a match in 1844 which had links to the Horns Tavern in Penistone. Interestingly, the Sheffield Trades Directory of 1852 listed the inn as being in the charge of Abel Marsh, probably a relative. The year 1844 saw three separate challenges issued by the footballers of Thurlstone for matches against local rivals, while in 1845, a reference notes a group of Thurlstone men issuing a challenge to play opponents from

Southouse or Hepworth for a match in which they were insistent that they would only play 'a game of foot-ball and not hand-ball'.<sup>18</sup> This insistence offers further evidence explaining why Sheffield's original rules should have leaned towards a kicking form of the game. In short, it was simply another possible influence on rules diffusion. The men of Thurlstone and Penistone would undoubtedly have had at least an indirect influence on rules-related discussions in nearby Sheffield, but it is unlikely that they would have been as influential as the high status ex-pupils of Collegiate. Nevertheless, when asked for their preferences, they would no doubt have favoured kicking over handling.

However, it would be three individuals from the area who became important figures in Sheffield football around this time and it is more than likely that they brought with them their ideas on how the game should be played. The stories of John Marsh, John Ness Dransfield and John Charles Shaw are related below.

### **John Marsh - the Little Wonder**

John Marsh was born in Thurlstone in 1843 and was noted in the 1851 census as living with his family at nearby Dunford Bridge. His father, Thomas, was listed as a stonemason. We know little of John's early life but, as soon as the sport of football began to develop in the city of Sheffield, Marsh became one of the most illustrious figures in the district and, indeed, the country. What Nathaniel Creswick was to Sheffield FC, so John Marsh was to the Wednesday Football Club when that institution was founded on 4 September 1867. The club is now, of course, better known as Sheffield Wednesday. Marsh was elected as Secretary and Captain at the first meeting and remained a prominent member of the club for some years. It has often been suggested that Wednesday did not fulfil their inaugural fixture until the last day of December 1867 when they travelled to nearby Dronfield. However, new research has unearthed a match played by the club on Saturday 19 October when Marsh led his men to victory over Mechanics at Norfolk Park. He was also busy in between those dates when, on Wednesday 27 November 1867, he represented 'Town' versus 'Country' at Bramall Lane in aid of Sheffield football's accident fund (See Chapter Two). He then guided Wednesday to success in the Cromwell Cup, when they beat the Garrick club in February 1868. As discussed in Chapter Two, Oliver Cromwell, the manager of Sheffield's Theatre Royal, had donated the trophy and the competition was designed for clubs who had been in existence for less than two years. In the semi-finals Wednesday defeated Exchange while

Garrick, a team with which Cromwell himself had connections, narrowly overcame the Wellington club. Much to the instigator's disappointment Wednesday emerged winners in the final by the only goal in extra time. It was in fact a 'golden goal', that is the first scored in the additional period of play and one that ended proceedings. Marsh is celebrated in the report for 'putting his toe in with precision, celerity and force for which he is so well known'. Interestingly, when Marsh was presented with the trophy by Cromwell a month later at the Theatre Royal he is quoted by one source as being lost for words, though in a newspaper report of the ceremony the Wednesday captain is simply noted as briefly returning thanks to the benefactor.

Marsh captained the Sheffield Association representative team in the inter-association encounters with London in 1871 and Glasgow in 1874, leading them through perhaps their most successful era. One of their most notable successes came on 1 November 1873 when Marsh led Sheffield to a resounding 8-2 victory against a London side containing Charles Alcock. Like many players in those times Marsh represented a multitude of clubs. On 18 November 1873, he played for Attercliffe against an Exchange side including Jack Hunter, who would later, almost certainly as a professional, lead Blackburn Olympic to FA Cup success (See Chapter Five). A month later Marsh was back in Wednesday's colours at Rotherham.

In 1874, he returned to his native village of Thurlstone, becoming landlord of the Crystal Palace public house in April of that year. The license had formerly been in the name of his mother, Elizabeth, though it appears that Marsh also persevered with his previous trade as an engraver. He continued to play football and became secretary and captain of the local club, which sometimes played under the title Thurlstone Crystal Palace. Their first game in October 1874 was against Wednesday, Marsh's former teammates. Probably because of a discrepancy in skill and experience, Thurlstone played with fourteen men against the visitors' eleven. There were over 500 spectators in attendance, though they might have been disappointed to see Wednesday emerge victorious by four goals to nil. However, tragedy struck when, following a fall during a game for Thurlstone Crystal Palace against Fir Vale on Saturday 22 January 1876, he sustained a broken arm which never fully mended.

Marsh travelled to either St. Bartholomew's or St. Thomas's Hospital, London - both are quoted in different sources - to have the break re-set, though this process never took place. Some re-binding work seems to have alleviated the pain, but he appears to have slipped into depression both

because of his injury and a slump in his trade, dying on 21 April 1880 aged thirty-seven. His sporting obituary appeared in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* on 23 April of that year:

The Association football players of Sheffield, London and Glasgow will learn with intense regret of the death of John Marsh, the original captain of the Sheffield team who so frequently led them on to victory. Marsh was undoubtedly one of the best captains that ever commanded a team and he was unquestionably one of the best backs of his day. In that difficult position he was one of the best judges of whether he could get to the ball before his opponent or not, and when he rushed in he never made a mistake, invariably taking the ball with him. He took in at a glance when peril threatened and brought up the requisite action in time of need. During his career as captain, Sheffield [Association representative team] won almost all before them and never, we believe, lost a match on their own ground. In business he was associated with the late lamented John Rodgers as an engraver - one of the best, if not the best, amateur bowlers in Sheffield. Both were excellent singers and, with the present writer used to sing trios at the Sheffield Wednesday Cricket and Football club dinners. Both were excellent company and we doubt if either made an enemy or lost a friend save by death. Unfortunately for Marsh he left Sheffield to take an inn at Thurlstone, near Penistone, his native village, formerly kept by his mother. Here he inaugurated a promising team of football players, but unfortunately in one of their matches he was charged and upset and had his arm broken. It was never properly set and he went to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, with the idea of having it re-broken and re-set properly, but the former operation was not gone through. Surgical contrivances were applied to the fractured arm, but without any material result. He was never quite himself again. The depression in the iron trade in the district had an influence on his spirits and this doubtless has had its influence in his premature decline. A benefit was played for him some years ago in Sheffield and realised something over forty pounds. He leaves a widow and several children not altogether, we hope, unprovided for.

### **John Ness Dransfield - the unsung catalyst<sup>19</sup>**

Dransfield was born on the 26 October 1839, the eldest son of John and Elizabeth, who were to have seven children.<sup>20</sup> He was an important figure in Penistone and appears to have been highly regarded in Sheffield and the surrounding area. His father, who was a solicitor, had chambers in the village where John Charles Shaw, later to be one of the co-founders of Hallam FC and destined to become a significant figure in Sheffield football, worked as a clerk in younger years.<sup>21</sup> Shaw, Marsh and Dransfield were baptised by the Reverend Samuel Sunderland, vicar of Penistone, who was

also Headmaster of the Free Grammar School (1837-55) in the village, which Dransfield attended. Sunderland was born in Wakefield and attended Clare College, Cambridge, close to Trinity College, a fact which is interesting as the latter establishment is regarded as a centre of sporting, particularly football, debate and diffusion. The grammar school had been built on land bequeathed in its original endowment called Kirk Flatt or the Fairfields. Part of this land was eventually given over to the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, which had started work on the line before Dransfield had been born and completed the route between Sheffield and Dunford Bridge, just west of Penistone and Thurlstone, in 1845. Because the local station was located in Penistone, the railway itself was to transform the fortunes of that village in particular, allowing it to overtake Thurlstone in prosperity and population by the 1880s. The Fairfields was a very important piece of land to the school and the boys. It was there that the cockpit for the practice of cockfighting was located. Dransfield himself could have been a participator, as he presented seven cockspurs, belonging to his uncle, to the school museum in 1913. It would probably have been in the Fairfields that Dransfield would have had his first taste of Penistone football, almost certainly a dribbling and minimal handling form of the game. Dransfield notes Shaw playing football on Fairfields opposite his father's offices, when Shaw was a clerk there.<sup>22</sup>

Dransfield's educational history is extremely interesting in terms of football as he appears to have come under the influence of and become acquainted with men who were enthusiastic to proselytise the sport. He began at Penistone Grammar School in 1847, leaving in 1852 and developed a deep fondness and regard for the institution, later in life becoming clerk to the governors. He was then placed as a boarder with his brother Thomas Henry at the nearby - nine miles distant - Grenoside Boarding School, which was under the control of a gentleman named George Rider. Dransfield names one of the other boarders there at the time as Frederick Vickers, the brother of Thomas Edward Vickers, who, alongside John Charles Shaw, was one of the co-founders of Hallam FC. Interestingly, continuing the 'Cambridge connection', Rider had been educated at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, gaining a BA in 1820.

On leaving Grenoside, Dransfield went to the Liverpool Royal Institution,<sup>23</sup> where the headmaster was the Reverend Dawson William Turner. Turner was born on 24 December 1815, educated at Rugby School and matriculated from Exeter College, Oxford in 1834. He gained a scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1836, graduating in 1838, completed his Master's in 1840 and became a Doctor of Civil Law in 1862. Turner was, reputedly, a