

“THE AUTHOR KNOWS HIS STUFF.  
EVEN FOOTBALL HISTORY BUFFS SHOULD DISCOVER SOMETHING.”

*When Saturday Comes*

Morecambe



LANCASHIRE

Fleetwood



# TURF WARS



A FOOTBALL HISTORY

Blackpool



Preston



Blackburn



Burnley



Accrington



Rochdale



Wigan



Bolton



Bury



Oldham



Liverpool



Man City



Everton



Man United



STEVE TONGUE



LANCASHIRE  
**TURF  
WARS**  
A FOOTBALL HISTORY

STEVE TONGUE



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## Chapter 1

# Beyond Cottonopolis (1860–87)

*Central Lancashire, the first northern football powerhouse, initially around Turton, Darwen, Bolton, Blackburn and Accrington; Manchester, a huge cotton centre but still a rugby city; Darwen, the first to make an impact in early FA Cups, quickly followed by Blackburn rivals Olympic and Rovers as supremacy of the southern amateurs is quashed; accusations of payments to players unconvincingly denied before professionalism legalised in 1885; early days of Everton, Bootle and Manchester clubs before Football League begins.*

**M**ODERN northern powerhouses they may be, but when Lancashire first began to rewrite the story of football in England, Manchester and Merseyside were a footnote so small as to be barely legible.

There can be no doubt as to the importance of both centres in commercial terms to the cotton industry that thrived from the mid-19th century. Manchester, with its 100 mills and more rejoiced in the title of ‘Cottonopolis’ and has been described as ‘the workshop of England’ and ‘the world’s first industrial city’; it had been linked to the port of Liverpool by rail from as early as 1830 largely to service that industry.

Yet despite the two areas having large populations of mainly working-class employees, football did not take off to any significant degree as it was already doing in other provincial centres like Sheffield and Nottingham. In 1875, with the London-based Football Association (FA) already a dozen years old and the FA Cup four years into its existence, *Athletic News*, newly created in Manchester, was bemoaning the fact that no clubs of significance existed in its home city. When the Lancashire FA (LFA) was founded in 1878 there was not a single Manchester representative among the 28 clubs; a Manchester FA did not emerge until six years afterwards, and as late as 1886, the LFA informed Everton, the best team on Merseyside, and founder members of the Liverpool FA (1882) that they were not considered good enough for the Lancashire Senior Cup and had to play in the Junior Cup.

It was further north that football first flourished, above all in a tight little line running roughly down the A666 the dozen miles from Blackburn to Bolton via Darwen and Turton, around which so many of those 28 teams were clustered. As the Bolton historians Peter Swain and Robert Lewis have put it, 'The cradle of Association football in the North West of England centred on Bolton, Darwen and Blackburn, with Turton FC being the centre of innovation in the diffusion of the game. Manchester was a rugby city until the late 1880s and early 1890s.'

Manchester Football Club, founded in 1860, was of the rugby variety; records of games for the Manchester team Hulme Athenaeum exist from 1865 to about 1873, although it is unclear which of the many variations of rules of that time they were using.

The FA may have been founded with the principal aim of 'settling a code of rules for the regulation of the game' but even **Turton**, established eight years later in December 1871, were still accepting handling as late as 1873 in the sense of outfield players catching the ball and claiming a 'mark'. That was one of the Harrow Rules adopted by the club's founder, headmaster and Old Harrovian, John Kay, from his *alma mater*. At least tripping, pushing and the hacking or 'shinning' beloved of the Blackheath contingent who had broken away from the FA a decade earlier to play rugby, were no longer part of the game.

In 1872 Turton played both Brookhouse Mills (from Blackburn) and Darwen under a mixture of Harrow and association rules and



in August two years later they formally agreed association rules with no handling; it cost them a few members who wanted to play catch and left to join the rugby code, with clubs like the already established Preston Grasshoppers.

The name of Turton lives on to this day in the West Lancashire League, and the original ground at Tower Street in Chapeltown is still used by Old Boltonians, the old boys of Bolton School, giving it claims to be one the very oldest in continuous use anywhere.

Turton were a force until the early 1880s; in 1879 they began competing in the FA Cup for a run of four seasons, twice reaching the third round but losing in the last of those campaigns in the first round to Hurst (now Ashton United), one of the clubs finally emerging around Manchester. From then on they began to drop into the lower ranks, winning the Lancashire Junior Cup four times between 1900 and 1905.

The club also supplied Lancashire football with one of its most influential figures. John Bentley, son of a Chapeltown grocer, went on from his days as the club captain to become president of the Football League, having enjoyed considerable power in recommending which clubs should join the inaugural competition in 1888.

In September 1877 *Athletic News* wrote that while rugby was still dominant in the county, there were ‘indications that the “dribbling” sport is making an unmistakable headway’.

Twelve months later, establishing a Lancashire FA proved the point, and the list of clubs enrolling as founders illustrates where the greatest enthusiasm for the sport lay. The key meetings were held in South Turton and then Darwen, and the 28 who signed up, paying just over ten shillings (50p) each were: Astley Bridge, Blackburn Rovers, Blackburn Christ Church, Livesey United (Blackburn), Blackburn Park Road, Blackburn St George’s, Blackburn St Mark’s, Bolton Emmanuel, Bolton North End, Bolton Wanderers, Bolton St George’s, Bolton Rovers, Bolton St Paul’s, Church, Cloughfold, Darwen, Lower Darwen, Darwen Grasshoppers, Darwen Rangers, Darwen Lower Chapel, Darwen St James, Eagley, Enfield, Great Lever, Haslingden Rangers, Haslingden Grane, Myrtle Grove and Turton.

No Manchester, no Merseyside; but 28 leading teams drawn exclusively from Blackburn, Bolton, Darwen, Church (near

Accrington), Haslingden and Rawtenstall. There was not more than 15 miles between any of them, which helped build local rivalries at a time when transport was improving and players and spectators alike were looking for relief from grim hours in the dark satanic cotton mills.

For some time the greatest of these rivalries would be between the neighbouring towns of Blackburn and Darwen, only four miles apart, which produced the finalists in the first Lancashire Senior Cup of 1879/80 from 40 entries, and before long had helped change the face of football forever.

\* \* \* \* \*

Of the six different clubs from **Darwen** among the LFA's founding members, the one that became the most famous was that which simply bore the name of the town and would carry it far and wide. The local cricket club dated as far back as 1845 and a football version started in early 1872 with a match against Brookhouse Mills (who won it 3-1) and then Turton. The following year the cricket and football clubs amalgamated at the Barley Bank ground in the middle of town.

As the number of clubs proliferated, the most ambitious of them began to desire not just local turf wars but more widespread battles and also the sort of competitive football which had begun in England on 11 November 1871 with the first four matches ever played in the FA Cup; effectively a Home Counties competition that admitted only two of its original 15 entries from north of Hertfordshire.

One of them, Donington School from Lincolnshire, scratched without playing a match. The other, significantly, came from as far away as Scotland, where Queen's Park (founded 1867) were first and foremost among the growing number of clubs and supplied all 11 players for the world's first international match, against England in Glasgow on 30 November 1872.

Difficulties with dates and the cost of travel meant that Queen's regularly withdrew, even when once given a bye to the semi-final, but relationships with northern clubs in England were easier to forge. On New Year's Day 1876, for instance, Partick (not Partick Thistle, who succeeded them) played at Darwen, emphasising the difference in class between the two by winning 7-0 and then 5-0 in

a return game the following year. The link was William Kirkham, who played for both teams and may inadvertently have helped bring about the whole controversy surrounding professionalism; of which much more shortly.

It was not uncommon for players to appear for more than one team and it was a Darwen man, John Lewis, who proved instrumental in setting up the club that would become their greatest rivals. **Blackburn Rovers** may sound like the cloth-cap working class rivals to the southern toffs dominating English football's early years – providing every FA Cup finalist for the competition's first dozen seasons – but that was not the case. The meeting at the St Ledger Hotel in the town on 5 November 1875 featured well-educated and well-connected folk like Lewis and his fellow founder Arthur Constantine. There were a number of Old Malvernians in the club and Cambridge Blue was chosen for the quartered shirts, the first match being a 1-1 draw at Church on 11 December 1875, with both Lewis and Constantine in the side.

Lewis, born in 1855, is such a significant figure that when his grave was discovered in Blackburn Municipal Cemetery in 2008 and refurbished, the club agreed to maintain it from then on. As the son of a Methodist preacher, he was a churchgoer and campaigner against the demon drink; but he loved football. His playing career having been ended by a skating accident, he took up refereeing with such success that he was in charge of three FA Cup finals in four years from 1895–98. In all, Lewis was reckoned to have officiated in more than 1,000 games and given all his match fees to charity.

Having retired and become something of a football missionary in South Africa and Australia, he was still called on to take charge of the Olympic Games final of 1908 and then, aged 65, in 1920. When he sent off a Czech player in the latter match against host country Belgium, the rest of the team left the pitch in disgust and Lewis was forced to abandon proceedings before Belgium were awarded the gold medal.

Back to November 1876, when **Darwen**, undismayed by their second heavy defeat against Partick, overcame Blackburn Rovers 4-0, one of the results that encouraged them to enter the FA Cup the following season.

A small piece of history was made when they were drawn against fellow debutants Manchester FC from Eccles, enabling Darwen to stage the county's first FA Cup tie. The visitors were handicapped by two players arriving late and John Lewis – still playing for Darwen despite having co-founded the Rovers – scored an early goal before they made it on to the pitch. His team added two more and went on to face one of the few other northern sides among the cup's 40 entries that year, Sheffield. It proved to be a controversial tie in which the Lancastrians protested that the home team's only goal was offside, failed to convince the referee and walked off. An official protest to the FA failed and Sheffield were awarded the tie.

That was one of only two games Darwen lost in a highly successful season, leading the local paper to predict with heady optimism that with a bit of practice in the summer they would next season have a team to meet the famous Wanderers (who had just completed a hat-trick of FA Cup wins) in the final. Darwen would not go quite that far but would cause a stir way beyond the county borders and offer an early indication of the way the wind was blowing and how the times were changing in a momentous season for football.

After a difficult summer of industrial unrest and riots as employers attempted to cut piece-rates for weavers, football resumed to cheer up the town with the arrival of forward Jimmy Love and then full-back Fergie Suter, two Scots who would become known as the first of the professionals outraging the establishment by infiltrating English football. Both had appeared before in Lancashire, playing for Partick in their New Year's Day game against Darwen in 1878 (losing 3-2) and the following day against Blackburn Rovers, a 2-1 defeat that inaugurated the Alexandra Meadows ground.

Right-back Suter then appeared for Turton when they won the Turton Challenge Cup that year, and according to a club history was paid out of the winnings. He was originally a Glaswegian stonemason, though how much stone he ever cut in Lancashire is unclear. Respected journalist J.J. Catton wrote some years later that 'members of the club contributed a little each week to keep him in necessaries'.

October 1878 was a notable month in which the LFA began to function, with Darwen's Tom Hindle as its secretary, and a floodlit

game was played at Barley Bank between Darwen and Blackburn XI, only the second anywhere.

Meanwhile Darwen went into their FA Cup campaign on the back of a 6-2 win over Accrington in which Suter made an impressive debut. After a walkover in the first round when Manchester's Birch scratched, they were held to a goalless draw at home by Eagleley, from near Bolton, but won the replay 4-1 with Love scoring at least two goals; some reports gave him a hat-trick.

After losing the now traditional New Year's Day fixture against Partick 7-0, with Suter and Love in opposition to their brother and cousin respectively, Darwen now found their horizons growing even broader with a long trip down south for the third round to play the modestly named and apparently short-lived Remnants, who were based in Slough. The *Darwen News* launched a campaign to fund the train fares and an overnight stay but they still turned out in cast-off kit for a game refereed by none other than Charles Alcock, the FA secretary and founder of the competition.

At 2-2, Darwen having twice been behind, the home side agreed to an extra half-hour in which Jimmy Love got the winner. It was gleefully celebrated but meant another expensive trip, because all ties from the quarter-final onwards were played at that time at Kennington Oval; something that would change as a result of Darwen's exploits.

The opponents would now be the Old Etonians, beaten finalists in 1875 and 1876, who had knocked out the mighty Wanderers 7-2. For the game on 13 February 1879 England test cricketer Alfred Lyttleton was unavailable but fellow committee member Lord Kinnaird was one of four internationals in the side captained by Francis Marindin, FA president, founder of the Royal Engineers and a full-back for them in two of the first three FA Cup finals, but now playing in goal. Alcock was again referee, thus ensuring that many of the leading FA bigwigs of the day were present to see what would become one of the competition's most significant early matches.

Playing with a strong wind, the Old Boys soon went 3-0 up and by half-time led 5-1, future England centre-forward Harry Goodhart completing a hat-trick. An own goal then gave some encouragement to Darwen and to general astonishment the Etonians wilted. Love headed in for 5-3, an anonymous scorer in a

scrimmage made it 5-4 and with five minutes remaining Love went through to equalise. Marindin, no doubt as bewildered as anyone by this turnaround, declined to play extra time.

Unable to replay in London the following day because of a LFA match, Darwen offered their opponents a substantial sum of £40 to play at Barley Bank. They refused, handing over £15 towards expenses, to which the FA added £10. So three weeks after the original game, an unchanged Darwen team headed back down south, seen off by 300 well-wishers at the station. Twice they went behind, only to earn another draw (the names of the scorers are disputed) and another refusal by the home side to risk either extra time or an away replay.

For the third game the following Saturday, Darwen travelled overnight after working all day. Trailing 3-1 at the interval despite Suter's goal, weariness overtook them in a 6-2 defeat, Tommy Marshall also scoring for the visitors. Old Etonians went on to beat Nottingham Forest in the semi-final, then Clapham Rovers 1-0 in the final, taking the trophy for the first time.

The southern amateurs had won the day but as a breed they were worried. Questions were being asked about what finance some of these northern players were receiving and within a day of the first Oval match, Old Harrovians were reported in the Darwen press to have tabled a motion for the FA's annual general meeting effectively proposing that only amateurs should be allowed to play in the FA Cup and that clubs should not be allowed to import outsiders specifically for cup games.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sport in general was wrestling with these questions. Rugby league's split from rugby union was not far off and cricket had long paid some of its players while maintaining a rigid distinction between so-called 'gentlemen' and players that somehow lasted until the 1960s. In fact Tommy Marshall, a Darwen scorer at The Oval, was a professional sprinter and team-mate Ralph Crookes was a paid cricketer.

Further financial controversy soon followed. On Easter Saturday, **Blackburn Rovers** won 2-1 at Darwen, believed to be the latter's first defeat by any Lancashire side. Now the rivalry was really on, heightened when the *Darwen News* concluded its

report by stating baldly that Hugh McIntyre, Rovers's Scottish half-back and captain, 'is engaged as professional'. The Rovers secretary issued a furious denial at this 'very nasty slur' and McIntyre had a letter published in *Athletic News* the following year emphatically denying it and claiming he had only ever received 'my bare railway expenses' and a gold watch with chain as an unexpected gift.

Yet on Easter Monday, two days after defeat by Rovers, Darwen played Blackburn Olympic and used the £40 gate money as a benefit for their players. A benefit match was one way of rewarding them and not just for long service. Later that month Darwen played at Turton watched by 2,000 paying spectators as a benefit for Love (whose last game it proved to be) and Suter, who would cause further uproar with his next move.

In November 1879 Rovers entered the FA Cup for the first time and to their delight knocked out Darwen in the second round before going down 6-0 to Nottingham Forest. Revenge was extracted 12 months later with a 3-0 Darwen victory in the first Lancashire Senior Cup Final, by which time Suter had switched to Rovers.

Cynicism is hardly required to imagine that financial inducement was involved. From then on he was well looked after, as he admitted in a newspaper interview some years after retirement, 'We had no settled wage, but it was understood that we interviewed the treasurer as occasion arose. Possibly we should go three weeks without anything, and then ask for £10. We never had any difficulty.'

His defection further strained relations between the two clubs and during a friendly in his first season a clash with Marshall prompted Darwen supporters in a Blackburn crowd estimated at 10,000 to invade the pitch, some kicking out at Suter, which caused the match to be abandoned. The Rovers secretary wrote to his opposite number cancelling the return fixture in February because of Darwen's 'disgraceful and ungentlemanly' behaviour; both clubs were expelled from the Lancashire Senior Cup and for a time Rovers even resigned from the LFA, clubs then being asked not to arrange matches with them.

The FA in London could not resist using the incident as an example of money being the root of footballing evil, claiming that 'the gate' had become all-important and that 'the subject of professional players will require the earnest attention of those on

whom devolves the management of Association football'. It would occupy those good people for some time to come.

Without Suter, **Darwen** still achieved the longest FA Cup run in their history that season, with big wins over Brigg Town, Sheffield FC, The Wednesday and then Romford (15-0), scoring 33 goals in the process, to earn a return to Kennington Oval and a semi-final against Old Carthusians. Darwen took the lead through Marshall but had their protests about two disputed goals ruled out by Marindin, the Royal Engineers full-back/goalkeeper-turned-referee, and were beaten 4-1 by the eventual cup winners.

They would remain a strong cup team at least until the Football League began but by the start of the 1880s another local rival had emerged in the Lancashire town that would soon provide FA Cup finalists for no fewer than five successive seasons.

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**Blackburn Olympic**, flying then dying within a dozen years, were the town's real working-class club, backed by local foundry owner Sydney Yates. In February 1878 clubs called Black Star, based at Mill Hill, and James Street joined up under the new name chosen by captain James Edmondson. Early that month the first game brought a 2-0 win over St John's at the home of Blackburn Cricket Club. Successful from the start, they won their first trophy in a local knockout competition organised by Livesey United.

The first derby against Rovers took place in February 1879, Olympic's 3-1 away win shocking their more established neighbours in what the local *Times* newspaper called 'one of the fastest and finest games ever played in Blackburn'. Olympic, the reporter suggested, were already 'one of the best if not the best in town'. A 0-0 draw that April suggested the pair were well matched, though not yet as strong as the Darwen of Love and Suter, who spoil the season's record of one previous defeat in 15 games by drubbing them 8-2 and 3-1.

Darwen's efforts against the Old Etonians that winter inspired the Blackburn clubs too and encouraged other employers like Yates to become football benefactors. From the second full season of 1879/80 they played at a ground popularly known after the pub next door as the Hole 'i' th' Wall, where conditions were often poor, opponents finding the going difficult in clinging mud. That season



Olympic suffered an 8-2 defeat away to Rovers (after leading 2-0) but won 1-0 at home only a fortnight later. In January a 2-1 win over Darwen showed their potential, maintained in starting the following season with wins of 8-0, 9-1 and 12-0 before a lively FA Cup debut against Sheffield FC at Bramall Lane, lost 5-4.

Derbies with **Blackburn Rovers** could depend on the respective strength of teams put out; Rovers won all three meetings in 1880/81 and the first four the season after, offset by Olympic's success in defending the Blackburn Association Trophy. A further guide to the respective strength of the two teams – and Darwen's too – was that in October 1881 Olympic lost 3-1 in the FA Cup to Darwen, who then saw off Accrington and Turton with similar scorelines but found Rovers too good on the way to the first of four finals in five years.

Blackburn had been honoured in February 1881 when the first England home game to be staged outside London was played at Alexandra Meadows, where some 4,000 turned up to see Wales win 1-0. By the following season four of the town's teams were competing in the FA Cup. Newcomers Blackburn Law, a team of law students, lost to Bootle at the same first round stage as Olympic's defeat by Darwen but Rovers pulled off a series of local triumphs against Blackburn Park Road (9-1), Bolton Wanderers (6-2) and Darwen (5-1) to reach the quarter-final. Wednesbury Old Athletic, who had knocked out Aston Villa, were seen off 3-1 before a semi-final against The Wednesday that went to a replay; Suter and his fellow Scottish import Jimmy Douglas then got on the scoresheet in a 5-1 romp.

Before the final against Old Etonians, Rovers were unbeaten in all friendlies that season and won the Lancashire Senior Cup (beating Accrington at Turf Moor) but disappointment awaited at the Oval, where England international Reginald Macauley scored the only goal early on. The *Preston Herald* said of Rovers in a report of some 4,000 words, 'The form they displayed during the play thoroughly justified their reputation and the interest they have evoked,' adding that 'the occasion was indeed an important one in football annals'.

Neither the paper nor anyone else could have realised how much so, although the signs were growing. Lord Kinnaird in his eighth final may have celebrated victory with a headstand but

northern clubs were now turning football on its head. A further example came in the same month as the FA Cup final, when the England trial match at Bolton became southern public school 'Probables' v northern 'Improbables' who included five Olympic players and forced a 4-4 draw.

Only once more in FA Cup history would any of the southern amateurs reach the final and when Old Etonians did so the following year, **Olympic** took Blackburn's revenge.

With former England captain Jack Hunter signed from Sheffield as player-coach, they went into the most memorable season in their short history as holders of the East Lancashire Charity Cup, having defeated Rovers in the final. When the FA Cup came along in November, Rovers lasted only two rounds, thrashing Blackpool St John's 11-1 but losing 1-0 at Darwen, who then lost a replay to Church. Olympic, favoured with a home draw in every round, twice scored eight in beating Accrington, Lower Darwen, Darwen Ramblers, Church and the Welsh Cup holders Druids to reach the semi-final.

Amusingly, the *Blackburn Times* forecast their demise before almost every round. 'Too much to prophesy any further victories for Olympic' was a typical prediction for the Church match, despite a 5-2 victory over them in a Christmas Day friendly. The tie finished 2-0 to Olympic.

Pessimism before the semi-final at Whalley Range, Manchester against Old Carthusians was perhaps understandable. There was still a belief in some quarters in the superiority of the old boys teams (not least among those teams themselves) and the Charterhouse chaps were the holders, who had won their five ties in defence of the trophy by 27 goals to seven, with a number of players from the previous year's victory over Old Etonians.

The forward-thinking Hunter now instigated a plan that would become a cliché of cup football for decades to come: a training trip to the seaside. Yates paid £100 towards costs of the week in Blackpool while supporters chipped in and employers, more surprisingly, were persuaded to allow the players time off in the interests of prestige to the town.

Preparation began each day at 6am with two raw eggs and a walk along the sands. The team ate well but kept in shape, and arranged two matches against local opposition on the South Shore

pitch. Then on Saturday they took the train to Manchester, and hansom cabs to the ground. The majority of the crowd, defying an unseasonal snowfall, were backing Olympic, who shocked the opposition with the force of their play, creating chance after chance and taking two of them by half-time. In the second half they added two more for an emphatic 4-0 win and arrived back home to be greeted by cheering crowds and celebrations all over town; Rovers had beaten Bolton the same afternoon to reach the Lancashire Senior Cup Final.

Ahead of the final against Old Etonians, who had beaten Notts County in their semi-final, another Blackpool trip was arranged, this one over Easter weekend. It went well but could unfashionable Olympic avenge Rovers and overcome the toffs? 'A stupendous task,' as the ever pessimistic *Blackburn Times* put it. The Old Boys team showed only one change from the previous year, with five English internationals plus Scotland's Kinnaird as captain, and a top scorer in Goodhart, who amassed almost 30 FA Cup goals over half a dozen seasons.

Of the 8,000 crowd those reckoned to have made the trip from Lancashire numbered around 700, who saw Goodhart score with a fierce low shot, but forwards John Yates and Alf Matthews hit the bar and post respectively; and after seeing off a flurry at the start of the second half Olympic began to dominate. To Lancastrian roars George Wilson fed Matthews for an equaliser. The Etonians looked wearier and were reduced to ten men by an injury to England forward Arthur Dunn (who has had the national Old Boys cup competition named after him from 1903 to the present day).

They were unable to avoid extra time as they once had against Darwen, and it was no surprise given the run of the play and the respective fitness levels when Jimmy Costley (described in most contemporary reports as W. Crossley) took Tom Dewhurst's pass and scored the winner. In a new development the trophy was handed over on the day. FA president Major Marindin, not refereeing this time, gave it to skipper and full-back Sam Warburton, a plumber by trade, and handed a gold medal to every member of the winning team.

News of the result, relayed to the offices of the *Blackburn Standard* on Church Street, was received, the paper reported, 'with great incredulity'. On the same day Rovers beat Darwen 3-2 for

the second of their four successive Lancashire Senior Cup wins (1882–85). The tide had turned. Football would never be the same again.

**FA Cup Final 1883: Blackburn Olympic 2 Old Etonians 1**

**Blackburn Olympic:** Hacking; Ward, Warburton, Gibson, Astley, Hunter, Dewhurst, Matthews, Wilson, Costley, Yates.

**Old Etonians:** Rawlinson; French, de Paravicini, Kinnaird, Foley, Dunn, Bainbridge, Chevallier, Anderson, Goodhart, Macauley.

\* \* \* \* \*

Press comment even suggested that the north and midlands might now get a fairer crack of the footballing whip in terms of respect, international recognition and committee representation. The FA and the southern amateurs nevertheless remained suspicious, with some justification, of the effect money was having.

From the time of Olympic's seaside trips until professionalism was finally legalised two summers later, the debate about money and who was paying it to whom intensified. A year earlier, in October 1882, a *Manchester Courier* journalist who asked the LFA about players being paid was told the committee had no official knowledge of it. The word 'official' was significant. Looking back from a safer distance, players, officials and journalists were happy to recount case after case; some trifling, some not so.

Turton's James Haworth must have envied Fergie Suter his £10 every three weeks; Haworth openly told an LFA inquiry that he was on a shilling a week, which bought him 'six pints'. Olympic's Costley recounted meeting Rovers officials who promised him a share of the gate money from a game against Notts County and also said they could use their influence on the LFA and international committees to get him county and England recognition.

A Burnley official pointed out that during the club's first season, 1882/83, 'we did not pay a single player, and nobody came to see us', and it was revealed that many clubs kept duplicate books to avoid detection in any official inspection. As 'Olympian' of the *Bolton Evening News* wrote in the LFA's official history in 1928, 'Lancashire clubs came to the conclusion that it would be far better to acknowledge professional players than to encourage the deception which was rife.'

Accrington were disqualified from the FA Cup for two seasons running, in 1883 and 1884, after complaints from other teams, and Preston's chairman Major William Sudell was instrumental in bringing matters to a head during his club's first season in the competition. Accused by Upton Park of payments to players after a drawn fourth-round tie at the London club's ground in January 1884, he openly admitted as much and seemed surprised when the FA kicked North End out.

Dissent spread in Lancashire and the midlands, and nine months later an initial meeting of nine clubs in Bolton to discuss forming a breakaway professional British Association led to 60 more, spread from Sunderland to Birmingham, attending a conference in Manchester. An FA sub-committee then recommended accepting professionalism and after two meetings early in 1885 at which the necessary two-thirds majority was not achieved, a smaller meeting on 20 July voted 35-5 in favour, having been heavily influenced by such Lancashire stalwarts as John Bentley, Tom Hindle and LFA secretary Dick Gregson. The trio's only defeat was in failing to move FA headquarters to Manchester.

Illegal payments previously meant it was difficult for clubs to keep their best players. In 1883 Warburton, captain of cup-winning **Blackburn Olympic**, left for Darwen and centre-forward Wilson departed for ambitious Preston, recruiting hard under Major Sudell. Desperate to prevent further defections, holders Olympic persuaded first round opponents Darwen Ramblers to accept £10 to bring forward the game, cup-tying other players. It worked and Olympic won 5-1 to start another run which took them to the semi-final, where the draw kept them apart from their neighbours Rovers to offer the prospect of a historic all-Blackburn final.

Gate money from the cup run was more than welcome as the Hole i' th' Wall was now a 'hole i' th' stand', the grandstand having blown down in a gale; a crowd of 6,000 turned up nevertheless for a return game billed as the Championship of Great Britain against Scottish Cup holders Dumbarton; 6-1 winners on their own ground in August, the Scots left Lancashire beaten 4-3 in a thriller.

Another Scottish giant, Queen's Park, would dispute that either of those clubs were Britain's best, and now they had the chance to prove it. Seven times Scottish Cup winners in the first 11 years of the competition and conquerors of four English sides, including

Villa 6-1 in the fourth round, Queen's Park lined up against the holders Olympic for the 1884 semi-final at Trent Bridge.

A huge crowd of 16,000 – the largest ever to watch the Blackburn team at that point – spilled on to the pitch more than once and saw the Scottish amateurs open the scoring after half an hour and double the lead early in the second half. As the game wore on Olympic's best hope appeared to be an abandonment for repeated crowd incursions, which hampered their traditional wing play. After a 4-1 defeat they handed a formal protest to the referee, the ubiquitous Charles Alcock, but the margin of defeat left little room for argument and the FA predictably ruled that conditions were the same for both sides.

Notts County also failed to have their semi-final defeat overturned after claiming that **Blackburn Rovers** forward Jock Inglis, who was still working in Glasgow, was being paid to play. He was able to take his place as one of the two central attackers, although it was local man Joe Lofthouse who scored the only goal. So Rovers qualified for the first of what would be two successive finals against the same opposition – still the only time such a thing has happened.

Slowly it was dawning on London that huge crowds of provincial football fans coming up for the cup was a phenomenon they would have to get used to. The 1884 final produced a famous article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the writer's tongue not entirely in cheek, which began, 'London witnessed an incursion of northern barbarians on Saturday – hot-blooded Lancastrians, sharp of tongue, rough and ready, of uncouth garb and speech. A tribe of Sudanese Arabs let loose in the Strand would not excite more amusement or curiosity. We can only say a word to the wise: Keep away from the Oval on occasions of this sort.'

Olympic's followers the previous season, it was claimed, had drunk every railway station dry en route and worse, broke the glasses and the windows, refused to pay, and 'struck horror into the usually complacent bosoms of the presiding goddesses.'

Whether or not the Rovers had a better class of follower, press reports praised their behaviour and sympathised on account of the 'ridiculously insufficient' arrangements for controlling the first five-figure crowd for a final, estimated to be between 12,000 and 15,000. They saw the Lancashire side, with Suter one of five players

from the final two years earlier, struggle at first with the Scottish dribbling and passing but settle down and take a two-goal lead through Joe Sowerbutts and James Forrest. Shortly before half-time Queen's retrieved one goal but Rovers held on comfortably enough to keep the cup in Blackburn.

### **FA Cup Final 1884: Blackburn Rovers 2 Queen's Park 1**

**Blackburn Rovers:** Arthur; Suter, Beverley, McIntyre, Forrest, Hargreaves, Brown, Inglis, Sowerbutts, Douglas, Lofthouse.

**Queen's Park:** Gillespie; MacDonald, Arnott, Gow, Campbell, Allan, Harrower, Smith, Anderson, Watt, Christie.

Rubbing in their sense of superiority, Rovers then beat their neighbours in a replayed Lancashire Senior Cup Final. But Olympic found any hopes of revenge the following season initially thwarted when a letter was received from the Rovers secretary asking them 'to remove our name from your list of fixtures for 1884/85'. Although they refused to make their reasons public, allegations of attempted poaching had gone down badly, but with relations at an all-time low the inevitable happened: the teams, FA Cup winners for the past two seasons, were drawn against each other in the second round of the competition.

The most eagerly anticipated of all Blackburn derbies took place on 6 December at Leamington Road, Rovers' home since 1881. It was watched by some 11,000 who saw the home side fall behind 2-1 but equalise from what Olympic were convinced was an indirect free-kick. The furious visitors began to leave the field and were only reluctantly persuaded back, their mood changing from black to worse when recent signing Harry Fecitt scored the winning goal.

It proved to be the holders' most difficult tie, including the final itself. In the semi-final at Trent Bridge, Old Carthusians were brushed aside 5-1 in what proved to be the last appearance at such a late stage of the competition for any of the southern amateur clubs.

At the Oval Blackburn fielded eight of the previous year's finalists, Queen's Park six. The Glaswegians were coming to the end of their southern sojourns (they would play only two more matches in the competition after being banned by the Scottish FA from taking part) and had won only one of their matches on the

way to the final by more than a single goal. 'It can be stated without contradiction that the better side won,' reported the *Sunday Times* of the victory that Rovers earned with goals by Forrest in the first 15 minutes and new captain Brown just before the hour.

Confirmed as the leading club not only in Blackburn and the north but the whole of Britain – and it is tempting to say further afield – Rovers must soon have begun thinking of an FA Cup hat-trick in the first season of official professional football, 1885/86. After some close ties against teams like Clitheroe (2-0), Oswaldtwistle Rovers (1-0), Brentwood (3-1) and Swifts (2-1), the last side standing in their way were West Bromwich Albion, formed in 1879 and one of the strongest midlands clubs, but beaten quarter-final opponents the year before.

For the first time, the final was a goalless draw, Rovers declining to play an extra half-hour because, as the local paper reported, 'they were so unaccountably out of form' and full-back Dick Turner was suffering from a heavy ankle knock. Turner was fit for the replay a week later at Derby, where an April snowstorm threatened a postponement before Albion were beaten 2-0 with a degree of ease, the scorers being the reliable pair Sowerbutts and skipper Brown. The three-time winners were not allowed to keep the trophy but were given a silver shield instead.

There would not be a fourth success in a row, however. In December 1886, after 23 unbeaten FA Cup games, a 2-0 defeat by Scottish club Renton, local rivals of Dumbarton, ended the run. It was all the more of a surprise in that this was a home game after forcing a 2-2 draw in a game played amid widespread interest at Hampden Park. The *Blackburn Standard's* long factual account of the replay barely acknowledged the historic significance of the result, commenting only that 'the Rovers showed very indifferent form in the latter half, especially the forwards'. Renton, playing their only season in the FA Cup, lost to Preston in the third round.

Overall, however, Rovers' achievement had been timely, coming as it did shortly before the idea was mooted of starting a league competition. For several years the rivalry with Olympic had been good for both, but now the success of one came at the expense of the other, all the more so once only one club per town was allowed into the Football League.



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For **Olympic**, like Darwen, professionalism brought problems and their demise was the quicker of the two. Initially players like Dewhurst, little Joe Beverley and Costley all remained loyal, Beverley refusing blandishments which reportedly included 'his wife adorned with a new dress at the expense of a noted Blackburn club'. Experienced goalkeeper Tom Hacking, a dentist, stayed amateur but Jack Southworth, converted from striker to keeper after a knee injury, took over the jersey. He became the subject of controversy when Church, beaten 4-2 in the FA Cup in October 1885, got the result annulled because a J. Southworth had played for Chester earlier in the season. Southworth claimed it was his brother James but was disbelieved and suspended for four months. After another draw the Accrington club went through with a 3-1 away win.

Contriving to lose a Lancashire Cup tie 11-2 to Bolton soon afterwards meant the rest of Olympic's season was devoted to friendlies with the exception of the East Lancashire Charity Cup, which brought another dispiriting defeat by Rovers. A small profit the previous season soon disappeared in wages and when the club reduced the money they paid to barely a fifth of what a club like Preston were offering, three key players went on strike, two of them never playing for the club again.

The same pattern kept repeating itself: early defeats in the two major cup competitions, a long diet of friendlies and modest results as players left, with only the visits of Rovers or Darwen drawing much of a crowd. In November 1887 the 5-1 FA Cup defeat by Rovers was followed by an 8-2 derby hammering at the Hole i' th' Wall and the regular Charity Cup defeat. It could still not be imagined that the season beginning 1 September 1888 would be the club's last, just as football was taking a huge step forward with Lancashire to the fore.

Passed over by the Football League's founding fathers, Olympic joined the Combination – not so much a league as a loose fixture circle – and again had no luck in the cups: expected to defeat Higher Walton in the county competition, they succumbed to a 2-1 home defeat with barely 300 people present and suffered a home defeat too in a qualifying round of the FA Cup by Oswaldtwistle.

Only four Combination games were played, Olympic not winning any of them and losing heavily to Bootle 4-0 and then 6-0 in what proved to be their last competitive fixture. From the end of January 1889, the decision was taken to dispense with professionals, using amateurs only, which helped explain the poor results from then on.

Eleven of the final 13 matches were lost, the last of them a 6-1 defeat by Everton, who had earlier signed Jimmy Costley. The last derby against Rovers was a 6-1 away defeat in which they were allowed to take all the gate money; too little too late. In August 1889 a final attempt to keep going foundered through lack of financial support, 11 years and six months after the club's foundation. Blackburn Railway Clerks took over the ground, and the innovative Jack Hunter became a trainer at Rovers.

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**Bolton Wanderers**, already mentioned in passing, had begun as Christ Church, a Sunday school team, in 1874 although as with many other clubs of the time there is some confusion over precisely which code was played; a mixture seems likely. The first opponents are believed to have been Farnworth, played at Smithfield, the club settling at Pikes Lane near the Cross Guns pub. Meeting at a succession of local hotels made them happy wanderers, adopting that name as well as that of their town from August 1877.

Peter Parkinson, a local mill manager, became an influential backer the following year when they entered the Turton Challenge Cup won by Eagley and then in 1879 the inaugural Lancashire Senior Cup, losing to Blackburn Rovers.

More accurate records are available from a Christmas defeat by Turton that year, followed by fixtures against a range of local clubs including Great Lever, Eagley, Bolton Olympic, Accrington, Blackburn Olympic and Darwen, with reasonable results.

After moving to a different Pikes Lane ground in 1881 for £35 annual rent and starting to charge for admission, Wanderers joined the trend for Scottish imports by signing full-back John Devlin (Arbroath) and centre-forward William Struthers (Rangers) but acquired Welshmen like Jimmy Trainer, later goalkeeper of Preston's 'Invincibles', after playing Druids in the FA Cup. Entering the competition for the first time in 1881/82 they beat Eagley

following a 5-5 draw before losing to Rovers in the second round, but enjoyed a good run in each of the next two seasons.

In 1882/83 Merseyside clubs Bootle and Liverpool Ramblers were beaten before three matches against Druids, who eventually came through 1-0; the following year it was the fourth round before narrow defeat by Notts County in a replay after special training at Blackpool. Perhaps success was down to new white shirts with garish red spots 'to make men appear much larger'; or perhaps not.

In between times Wanderers faced possible expulsion from the LFA as recommended by the FA in London after referee Sam Ormerod was not only 'hooted from the field' but, rather more seriously, followed from the ground and assaulted on his way to the station. Not for the first or last time the LFA backed one of their founder members against London and decided on no further action. They might have been less sympathetic had they known that an FA delegation inquiring into illegal payments were fobbed off by being presented with a false set of records immaculately written out by the club secretary.

Like many of their neighbours and rivals, Wanderers were paying players and they became among the keenest to legitimise it. It was in Bolton at the Commercial Hotel in October 1884 that Wanderers president Parkinson suggested a British FA, prompting London to grasp the nettle at last. The following year, when professionalism was finally accepted, John Bentley from Turton became club secretary and a hugely influential figure in Lancashire and then English football.

On the field, meanwhile, the club continued to make significant strides, winning the Lancashire Senior Cup for the first time in 1885/86 and following up as holders by beating Wigan 14-0.

Not that the legalisation of wages solved all disputes. For some time there were still restrictions like players having to live within a six-mile radius of the ground and Bolton were one of many caught up in these eligibility rules. In 1885/86 they benefited twice, when the FA disqualified opponents Rawtenstall and then Preston (who had beaten them), only for Wanderers themselves to be banned before the next round against Old Westminsters. Two years later there were even greater complications: having beaten Everton 1-0, Bolton had a player declared ineligible and had to play again. Two draws followed, then an Everton win after which the Merseysiders

were disqualified for the same offence. Bolton, reinstated, promptly lost 9-1 to Preston.

If that did not bode well for league football, Wanderers did at least make the cut, their cause hardly hindered by having Bentley to make their case.

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**Preston North End**, destined to become the first stars of the Football League a year after recording the largest victory in FA Cup history, did not see the light of day until after almost all those clubs they would conquer as The Invincibles.

True, the name North End had been adopted by a cricket club as early as 1867 at Moor Park in the north of the town. The first game under football rules, however, is dated no earlier than 5 October 1878, a week after the inaugural meeting of the LFA, its clubs concentrated as we have seen further to the east.

William Sudell, president of the cricket club and another benevolent mill manager, was in the team for that first game, a 1-0 defeat to Eagley. Two years later it was decided to join the county FA and change the name to the long-winded Preston Athletic Society and North End Cricket and Football Club.

A town with a population not far short of 100,000 was certainly capable of supporting a major club, although there were some understandably difficult games when taking on already renowned Lancashire clubs. The local press reported the 'first game of real importance' as being against the well-established Darwen, who won it 14-1, and an early loss to the equally experienced Blackburn Rovers was worse: 16-0. Then a first Lancashire Cup tie was lost 6-0 to Turton.

By 1882/83 Sudell, the key figure behind the scenes, had begun an ambitious and largely illegal recruiting policy, as well as effecting a tactical change from the standard 2-2-6 formation to a 2-3-5. Glaswegian James McDade became the first of many Scots to represent the club and early in 1884, as we have seen, Sudell helped change the whole face of British football with his admission following the club's fourth round FA Cup tie at Upton Park that Preston were paying players. They had earlier knocked out Great Lever (4-1) and Eagley (9-1) and following a 1-1 draw against the Londoners, with six Scots in the side, Sudell told an FA committee

that every leading northern and midlands club was breaking the rules, that professionalism was the way forward and that 'wherever there is a crowd at any sport there is professionalism'.

The *Football Field* newspaper, compiling a merit table based entirely on goal average, made Preston the leading Lancashire club, from Bolton Wanderers, Great Lever, Blackburn Olympic, Accrington, Blackburn Rovers, Church and Burnley.

Among the notable Scots were defender Nick Ross, given a job as a slater, and his brother Jimmy, an inside-forward. Jack Belger was the principal goalscorer for a club now threatening to become the equal of Rovers, who they beat 3-2 at Deepdale, the club's home since the start. The standard was confirmed by having the better of teams like Aston Villa (7-2 and 5-1) Notts County, The Wednesday and Wolves.

A crowd of 12,450 turned up to watch the visit of Bolton Wanderers, although with some gates much smaller, a high percentage of games were played away, as North End proved popular opponents.

In 1885/86 with professionalism now legalised they went on an astonishing run, unbeaten in more than 50 games until losing at Accrington in late April. The final record was 59 wins from 65 games and 318 goals; Jimmy Ross and centre-forward John Goodall, signed from Great Lever, both passed a half-century.

Sudell's team – he was manager in all but name – would have fancied their FA Cup chances that season but ran into trouble again: after Bolton were beaten 3-2 in the third round, the versatile Scot George Drummond was ruled ineligible and Wanderers, as mentioned above, were reinstated, only to fall foul of the regulations themselves.

It was a formidable North End team. In 1886/87 they beat Queen's Park 6-1, the heaviest defeat the Scots had suffered at the time, as well as knocking them out of the FA Cup before losing a semi-final to West Bromwich. Blackburn, still celebrating their cup hat-trick, were thrashed 6-1 and then 7-1, the latter game in the Lancashire Senior Cup, which North End went on to win for the first time, beating Witton 12-0 and then Bolton in the final.

The following season began with a 2-1 defeat away to Hibernian, the Scottish Cup holders, in a match hyped as the unofficial world championship. North End then reeled off 42 wins on the trot with

plenty of high-scoring encounters, including a new mark that remains to this day and put **Hyde FC** into the history books.

Hyde, formed in 1885, ambitiously invited Blackburn Rovers for a friendly early in the 1886/87 season and lost 8-0, which did not deter them from entering the following season's FA Cup. They received another warning about the possible quality of opposition when Bolton beat them 8-1 in a friendly, and the draw for the first round could hardly have been worse: Preston, away.

The *Preston Guardian* reporter who said he would eat his hat if Hyde won was never in any danger of indigestion. It was 12-0 by half-time and North End were sympathetic enough to allow a replacement to come on for the Hyde player who injured an arm – the first recorded FA Cup substitute.

The referee, rather than cutting short the visitors' misery, then lost track of the time and played anything between five and 15 minutes extra, during which North End took their victory margin to 26-0.

Charles Bunyan, the poor Hyde keeper, was praised for his efforts and told journalist J.J. Catton some years later that Preston might have scored 40. As it was, reporters did well to keep count of the total and scorers, crediting Jimmy Ross with eight, and Jack Gordon and Sam Thomson with five apiece. One of the many oddities of that extraordinary day in October 1887 was that Goodall, a year later the top scorer in the first Football League season, managed precisely one 26th of his team's goals.

The following day *The Times* – newspaper of record, though clearly not of records – placed the historic game only fifth in line of its 39 match reports, soberly observing, 'A most overwhelming defeat was sustained by Hyde at Preston, the North End winning by 26 goals to none'. Rossendale, beaten 11-0 at Accrington, were able to console themselves with not having suffered the worst defeat of the first round by a long way.

North End went on their merry way with a 6-0 win over Everton, who were disqualified anyway; and Bolton, who replaced them, were sent packing 9-1, Jimmy Ross adding a double hat-trick to his eight against Hyde. He finished the cup campaign with a record of 19 (plus one in the void game against Everton) that is highly unlikely ever to be broken. His goals in every round also helped Preston past Halliwell, Villa, The Wednesday and Crewe for

a first place in the final, where over-confidence may have proved their undoing. They famously requested a photograph with the trophy before kick-off against West Bromwich, the regular referee Major Marindin suggesting they might need to win it first.

Behind from the eighth minute, North End then had the better of the game for a long spell and Albion, beaten finalists for the previous two years, appealed in vain against Fred Dewhurst's equaliser seven minutes into the second half. The cup's return to Lancashire, where the Blackburn clubs had held it from 1883-86, seemed likely, but a dozen minutes from time England international George Woodhall beat Dr Robert Mills-Roberts in North End's goal and Albion had managed to avoid a hat-trick of defeats.

It was a bitter blow for a side that had played 200 games in three seasons, scoring 930 goals. They may have regarded themselves as the strongest club in the country but as the *Birmingham Daily Post* pointed out without undue bias, the 'shabby little cup' conferred on its winners 'the championship for the year of English football'.

It would, however, be the last time that claim could be made. On the eve of the final, seven clubs, including Blackburn Rovers and Burnley, met in London and invited five more – Accrington, Bolton, Derby, Everton and Preston – to join them in contesting a league competition the following season (See Chapter 2).

Preston could have had the consolation of another Lancashire Cup win but for a stubborn stance. They had beaten Accrington, their opponents in the final, twice in friendlies, but were unhappy with Blackburn as the choice of venue for the final, claiming they had been subjected to unsporting behaviour by the locals on previous visits; knocking Rovers out 4-3 in one of them. Preston simply refused to turn up and Accrington were awarded the trophy despite losing 4-0 on the day to Witton, their semi-final opponents, who had been asked to attend on the day in case North End did not. The LFA duly suspended them for the rest of the year, which could have had serious consequences for what would become the Double season; but the FA overruled them and history was eventually made. With nobody to give the second set of medals to, Witton then beat the other semi-finalists Darwen Old Wanderers 2-0 and were officially named runners-up.

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## LANCASHIRE TURF WARS

Only Preston among English league clubs can claim to have been at their present home for as long as **Burnley**, who in February 1883 accepted an invitation from the local cricket club to move to Turf Moor; all these years later fans still refer to the Cricket Field End, whichever sponsors may have adopted it.

A few months earlier Burnley Rovers had been born out of a rugby club playing at Calder Vale, playing a first competitive game in October 1882 against Astley Bridge of Bolton in the Lancashire Challenge Cup, which was lost 8-0. At Turf Moor, having already dropped the Rovers appendage, they began with a 6-3 defeat by Rawtenstall on 17 February 1883. By the following year there was a stand seating 800 and a reported 12,000 turned up for a local derby with Padiham.

The club were among those who threatened a breakaway that year and won the day. Entering the FA Cup for the first time in 1885, however, they were not allowed to field their many Scots like the outstanding Alec Brady from Renton Thistle and put out a reserve team that was beaten 11-0 by Darwen Old Wanderers.

Losing barely a quarter of their other games that season, they were gaining a reputation, as well as discovering, like Bolton, that legalisation of professionalism was far from solving all disputes. A second season in the national knockout competition ended in disqualification after a protest by Astley Bridge following the teams' two draws; and the following year the Old Wanderers, beaten 4-0 this time by Burnley's first team, were awarded a replay but scratched instead, after which Burnley lost 3-2 to Accrington.

The nickname 'Clarets' was some way off, shirts of that shade not appearing until 1910, and the club became known as the Royalites after playing host to the first member of the royal family to deem a football match worthy of their attendance. Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's son, who was in town in October 1886 to name Burnley's first hospital after his mother, turned up for the first half of the game against Bolton.

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**Accrington**, another of the Lancashire half-dozen who would make the inaugural Football League, were an entirely separate club to the better known Accrington Stanley, who were not formed until 1893.



The Old Reds were another team with connections to an existing local sports club, playing at Accrington Cricket Club's ground in Thorneyholme Road, where overseas players as distinguished as Shane Warne, Wes Hall and Bobby Simpson have all appeared as resident professionals.

Accrington played their first game against neighbouring Church on 28 September 1878 and met them again under electric lights two months later, with 3,000 in attendance. They made rapid enough progress to become second winners of the Lancashire Senior Cup in 1880/81 and the following season entered the FA Cup for what should have been a prestigious tie against Queen's Park. As usual at that time, however, the Scots scratched, and Accrington went out 3-1 at Darwen in the next round.

In the following season's competition they lost 6-3 at Blackburn Olympic before running into problems familiar to a number of other teams in the area over the issue of professionalism. They were expelled by the FA for offering an inducement to a player, but were backed up by the LFA, pointing out that a club could only face such drastic action at a special general meeting.

The FA had their revenge by throwing them out of the FA Cup in both 1883/84 and 1884/85, having won matches each time. Not surprisingly they were part of the 1884 revolt and in 1885 with professionalism legal, finally won a legitimate tie by beating Witton 5-4, then going out to Darwen Old Wanderers. In the autumn of 1887 they thrashed Rossendale 11-0 in the first round and then impressively beat Burnley 3-2 to improve their credentials as Football League applicants.

As described above (see Preston) they would also go into the league as Lancashire Senior Cup winners.

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The influence of organised religion on early Merseyside football can be seen from the list of the 12 clubs who came together to form the Liverpool FA in 1882; St Benedict's, St George's, St Mary's and St Peter's were all there. Everton had originally been called St Domingo's, after the Methodist Sunday school from which they sprang and their great rivals as the best of the crop, Bootle, were originally Bootle St John's.

The others who formed their local FA at a meeting at the Tarleton Hotel were Anfield, Birkenhead, Liverpool Ramblers (still going strong in Crosby), Liverpool Stanley, Rovers and Wirral.

**Everton** were therefore typical in their origins, from the newish church on Breckfield Road North. In 1876, seven years after the church's foundation stone was laid, a new minister, the Rev. Ben Chambers, set up a cricket team and two years later younger members expressed a desire to play football.

Keen to expand and attract non churchgoers, they soon adopted the name Everton and amid the 100 acres of Stanley Park, opened eight years earlier, played a first match under that name in December 1879, beating St Peter's 6-0 and following up by winning the return 4-0 a month later.

Later in 1880 they joined the Lancashire FA, entering its cup competition with what new research shows to have been a 1-0 defeat away to Great Lever, after which Everton successfully protested that 'the Referee was a Member of the Great Lever Club, and was therefore biased in their favour'. The LFA upheld the appeal and ordered a replay, again in Bolton, where the Merseysiders were heavily beaten. 'The Great Lever men were rather riled at having to play again, and showed their temper most unmistakably,' reported *Athletic News*.

Having begun in blue and white stripes, the club earned the nickname The Black Watch by dyeing their shirts black and adding a vivid scarlet sash; colours changed every other season in the manner of a modern club, though for less obvious reasons, and it was not until 1895 that they settled for the famous blue shirts and white shorts, albeit initially of a lighter shade.

For a couple of seasons from 1880 results were outstanding and in March 1882 the decision was taken to move from playing in a public park and changing in the Sandon Hotel to rent a field off Priory Road and charge admission. In that final season in Stanley Park, the fixture list extended further afield and results suffered in defeats by teams like Blackburn Rovers (8-0 in the Lancashire Cup), Turton (7-0), Bolton Wanderers (8-2) and Wrexham (7-3).

A first trophy, the Liverpool Cup, arrived, however, in 1883/84. Having lost to main rivals Bootle in the 1883 semi-final, Everton drubbed them 5-2 at the same stage and then beat Earlestown 1-0 in the final.

Increasing popularity and crowds meant that the owner of the new ground wanted them out, so on 27 September 1884 came a first match at Anfield Road, where Earlestown were beaten 5-0. It was owned by a friend of John Houlding, a Tory councillor, self-made man and eventual lord mayor, who owned the Sandon Hotel and would later be a key figure in the split that gave birth to Liverpool.

Signing the club's first official professionals was another statement of intent. They included full-back George Dobson (Bolton) and forward George Farmer (Oswestry), who promptly knocked in eight goals in his seven games.

The 1885/86 fixture list was the longest yet, including for the first time some renowned midlands names like Aston Villa and Derby as well as visits from Corinthians and Ulster and all the leading Lancashire sides, including Blackburn's two FA Cup-winning clubs. For four successive seasons they reached the final of the Liverpool Cup, winning three of them – perhaps insulted and inspired by the dictat that they could not enter the Lancashire Senior Cup 'until they show proof of their ability'.

In 1886 they felt strong enough for a tilt at the FA Cup itself, although the competition brought a series of mishaps, mainly over the thorny question of eligibility. Drawn against Rangers for their debut, Everton, knowing some of their players were ineligible, played what they claim was a friendly, losing 1-0, despite official FA records having it as a cup result. (The Glasgow club, in their only season in the competition, went on to a semi-final defeat by Villa).

The following season, as already recounted (see Bolton), Everton were disqualified, with seven of their team declared ineligible, though they had lost 6-0 to Preston anyway. In addition the club were suspended for the month of December 1887 and the Liverpool FA took their cup back as a further punishment. Finally, in 1888/89 the draw brought an away tie with Ulster, which Everton decided was too far to go on a day they had what was now considered a more important commitment: a Football League game – to the envious disgust of their greatest rivals, Bootle.

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It was appropriate that the first fixture played by **Bootle** was less than three miles away against Everton, whom they quickly came to challenge as the strongest team on Merseyside. Exactly like

their neighbours, Bootle owed their existence to a sports-minded clergyman, in this case the young Rev. Alfred Keely, a public school and Cambridge University man who arrived at St John's Bootle in 1879.

Not only did he turn out in goal for the team's first-ever match as Bootle St John's, a 4-0 win away to Everton in Stanley Park on 20 October 1880, but his brothers Edwin and Sam shared all four goals. The Rev. Keely then demonstrated his versatility by playing an outfield role in the first home game at their Bibbys Lane pitch and scoring twice in a 3-0 win over Birkenhead.

Ambition was high, quickly bringing entry to the Lancashire Cup, with a 3-1 defeat by the oddly named Num Nook of Accrington, as well as fixtures against Newton Heath and Blackburn Olympic.

Within 12 months, having dropped the 'St John's' suffix, the newcomers were competing in the FA Cup, several years before Everton did. On Guy Fawkes Day 1881 they defeated Blackburn Law 2-1 in the first round (as well as playing Preston in a drawn Lancashire Cup tie later the same day). The second round brought a trip to the much more established Turton and a 4-0 defeat after three players missed their train to the match.

Losses of a different sort occurred in the following summer when the Rev. Keely moved to a new parish in London and a number of former Eton and Harrow old boys left the club and formed a football section of the Liverpool Ramblers cricket club (see Non-league chapter). Results suffered for a while, not helped by Bootle's tendency to turn up, like the worst organised Sunday morning park team, a man or two short. The ground, meanwhile, had moved to Marsh Lane, where Everton were beaten on their first visit in December, losing again in Stanley Park a month later.

'Between the Bootle and Everton teams a great deal of rivalry is springing up,' reported *Athletic News* on 24 January 1883, adding that Merseyside football as a whole was benefiting. 'The dribbling rules in the Liverpool district are becoming popular. A few more games like that of Saturday are sure to infuse a lot of life in the Associationists, for a better-contested match has not been witnessed in that part of Lancashire before ... settling the matter for the present that Bootle is the best team in the district.'

The rivalry continued when the sides were drawn together in the Liverpool Cup no fewer than six seasons in succession. In

March 1883 Bootle won 3-1 and went on to win the final against Liverpool Ramblers; but Everton won for the next five seasons, including the 1886 final.

By that time the Anfield side normally had the better of the derbies, and their larger attendances had a bad effect on Bootle crowds when the clubs both played at home.

For what would turn out to be the critical season of 1887/88, the last before league football began, Bootle secured some significant new players including the Scottish international full-back Andrew Watson, son of a British Guyanese mother and believed to be the first black international footballer. Teams like Preston, Blackburn Rovers and Bolton reflected the club's growing importance by sending their strongest XIs to the Hawthorne Road ground, home since 1883.

The FA Cup brought the best run to date, beginning with a 6-0 home win over Workington. In three successive away ties Blackpool's South Shore, Higher Walton and Great Bridge Unity from Smethwick were all beaten to earn a place in the last 16 away to Old Carthusians, Unity having protested in vain that Watson and others were professionals and therefore not eligible.

At Kennington Oval, Bootle were not disgraced in a 2-0 loss. They went on to win the Liverpool Cup after Everton had beaten them in an earlier round then been expelled. The most crushing defeat, however, came with confirmation that it was their great rivals who would represent Merseyside in the new Football League competition the following season.

For Bootle (see next chapter) it would be the Combination and Football Alliance instead, until a Second Division was formed in 1892.

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Further up the coast, **Southport** began life as Southport Central with a first match in November 1881 against Bootle reserves after switching from rugby. Like Bootle, they progressed quickly enough to gain admittance to the FA Cup within a year, holding Liverpool Ramblers in October 1882 before losing the replay, and continued to enter for another three seasons.

Being drawn away to Blackburn Rovers in the autumn of 1883 brought a not unexpected heavy defeat (7-0) but the following

season they benefited from Accrington's expulsion after losing to them and won a tie for the first time before another heavy defeat, 10-0 to Church.

After merging with the Southport Athletic Society, the club was effectively taken over in the summer of 1886 by Southport Wanderers, who then dropped the Wanderers name, before reverting to Southport Central two years later.

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By the end of the 1880s Manchester was still playing catch-up, not quite in time, unlike Merseyside, to earn a place in the first Football League. Even the County FA acknowledged in its centenary brochure of 1984 that 'in the early years of the Association, the predominant game in the Manchester area was Rugby Football'.

Records exist from 1863-73 for the **Hulme Athenaeum** club, though it is not clear which rules they were playing to. Some of the personnel then appeared with Manchester FC, founded in November 1875 and playing early games against a Liverpool students team and Northwich Victoria.

There was a significant pair of matches in December 1876 and February 1877 between Manchester and the provincial stronghold of Sheffield, the Lancashire side apparently confused in the return match by local interpretation of offside, which did not totally explain the margin of their defeat by 14 goals to nil. Later that year in November, Manchester FC became the first from the city to play in the FA Cup, losing 3-0 at Darwen.

The same year **Birch** rugby club created its own football team and then played the noted Scottish adventurers Queen's Park in April 1878, losing 6-0 in front of an estimated 2,000 spectators and entering the following season's FA Cup, only to scratch without playing a game.

Just as Ardwick/Manchester City would do six years later, Birch relaunched by incorporating the name of the city itself and styling themselves Manchester Wanderers, proving their potential by beating Blackburn Rovers; and in 1879 they merged with Manchester FC, becoming the first Mancunian club to join the LFA, whose cup competition they entered, reaching the fourth round.

In December 1883 they became the first English team to play an FA Cup tie in Scotland – losing 15-0 to Queen’s Park with no excuses this time about the offside rule or anything else.

A year before, Manchester was chosen as host for an important conference of the four home nations, which paved the way for the International Football Association Board, the sports international law-making body, to be formed two and a half years later.

**Hurst**, who would much later become Ashton United, defeated Turton in their first FA Cup tie in October 1883, then scratched before their second round tie with Irwell Springs could be replayed, but were one of four clubs from their district among the 16 who founded the Manchester County Football Association in 1884. The full list was: Manchester, Manchester Arcadians, Dalton Hall, Eccles, Greenheys, Haughton Dale, Hurst, Hurst Park Road, Hurst Brook Olympic, Hurst Clarence, Levenshulme, Newton Heath LYR, Pendleton Olympic, Thornham, West Gorton and West Manchester.

Newton Heath, beaten by Hurst in the first Manchester Senior Cup final that season, and West Gorton were the two most significant names among the 16, as supporters of Manchester City and Manchester United are likely to know.

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The rivalry between Manchester’s two most famous football clubs even extends to which existed first. Contemporary reports suggest there was quite possibly no more than a single week between their first games, in November 1880, with City’s forerunners St Mark’s ahead by seven days. What the blue portion of the city cannot dispute, however, is that **Manchester United** in their earliest incarnation made the greater impression in the first decade.

The appendage LYR of the original club stood for Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, whose employees it was in the Carriage and Wagon Works that started a team playing on North Road, Newton Heath. It is nowadays named Northampton Road, where Moston Book High School stands on the site. The pitch on the edge of a clay pit was owned by the Manchester Cathedral authorities, although it was the railway company who took the club’s rent.

The Heathens played their first recorded match, wearing the railway colours of green and gold, in a 6-0 defeat by Bolton

Wanderers reserves on 20 November. Almost a year later, on 12 November 1881, the first derby against the St Mark's (West Gorton) team that would become Manchester City took place, attracting a reported 3,000 to see the Heathens win 3-0.

As founder members of the Manchester and District FA in 1884 they entered the Challenge Cup (later Manchester Senior Cup) and over the next few years went on to demonstrate their strength as one of the city's very best clubs by reaching the final five times in the first six seasons, losing the inaugural one 3-0 to Hurst but winning the trophy in 1886 and then from 1888-90.

Once professionalism was allowed in 1885, Newton Heath took advantage not by recruiting Scots, like so many other clubs, but by engaging a number of Welshmen who were able to work for the railway. By 1888 they were fielding five Welsh internationals, including full-back and club captain Jack Powell, who became an important figure, and the Doughty brothers Jack and Roger, both signed from the Druids club.

Jack Doughty scored the club's first ever FA Cup goals when they entered the 1886/87 competition, drawing 2-2 at Fleetwood Rovers but rather perversely refusing to play extra time; as a result, the tie was awarded to their opponents.

The Heathens, miffed, did not enter for the next two years and when they did lost 6-1 at Preston, who were on their way to winning a second Football League title. Manchester, from its slow start, had ground to make up.

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**Manchester City** were another of countless clubs in Lancashire and beyond whose origins were as a church team, in their case in the West Gorton area around the Hyde Road.

In the 1870s it was a tough area with numerous local gangs, where valuable social work was done by local churches. St Mark's formed a cricket team in 1875 and five years later took up football to fill the winter months (and keep local youths out of mischief). The first-known newspaper report, from the *Gorton Reporter* says that on 13 November 1880 St Mark's (West Gorton) played the Baptist Church (Macclesfield) in 'a very pleasant and exciting game' and lost by two goals to one, James Collinge from Heywood being credited with the young team's first goal.



Collinge also scored two in achieving a first victory for the club in what has been recorded as their ninth and last game of the season, away to a depleted Stalybridge Clarence side.

For the second season, a better-quality ground than the one on Clowes Street was found at Kirkmanshulme Cricket Club near the Belle Vue Zoological Gardens for a campaign in which a dozen matches included the first derbies against Newton Heath. After their 3-0 defeat in November, St Mark's won 2-1 in the return.

Another season, another ground; variously known as Queen's Park or Clemington Park but still less than a mile from St Mark's, it became home for the 1883/84 season, when the club appear to have merged with Belle Vue Rangers under the name of West Gorton, before becoming plain Gorton. They played in an unusual kit of black shirts with a large white Maltese cross that possibly signified greater links with local masons than the Church.

Joining the Manchester & District FA brought a first match in the Challenge Cup and defeat by Dalton Hall, but Gorton were not ready for the FA Cup, which others like West Manchester, Birch, Hyde, Denton, Heywood Central and Newton Heath all entered.

Those clubs were ahead of Gorton at the time, as was emphasised by an embarrassing defeat to their greatest future rivals in the Manchester Senior Cup of 1886/87, when Newton Heath dealt out an 11-1 thrashing; still the biggest margin in any derby between the pair.

In 1887 came an important move from the latest ground on Reddish Lane and a further change of name. Ardwick was chosen because of the new district in Bennett Street off Hyde Road, close to the Manchester-Crewe railway line although still not far from St Mark's church; the waste ground formerly used for bare-knuckle and bare-chested fighting needed a summer of hard graft to make it fit for football. Some doubted whether they had achieved it and Hyde were allowed to replay a local cup tie after protesting at the state of the pitch.

There was an unfortunate beginning when opponents Salford failed to turn up for a supposedly grand opening on 10 September. So it was a week later that the ground was christened when a Denton club, Hooley Hill, won 4-2.

Blue and white stripes now replaced black shirts and with church influence diminishing, club headquarters was the Hyde

## LANCASHIRE TURF WARS

Road public house and the nickname was the Brewerymen after the support of Chester's, who helped fund a new stand holding 1,000 patrons. Like Newton Heath they were on their way but still not ready for league football at any level.

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A little further north **Bury** were founded in April 1885 at the White Horse Hotel and found a suitable venue on Gigg Lane, known as Mr Barlow's Field. Little Lever provided the first recorded opposition on 5 September 1885, with a first home game the following week when Wigan were beaten 4-3 and gate receipts were £1 16s (£1.80).

Struggling financially in early days, by 1887 they could just about afford to expend £50 on a first covered stand, which was in place in time for the visit of the mighty Blackburn Rovers for what should have been a first FA Cup tie in October that year (the previous season they had missed entry by applying too late). Knowing a number of players would be ineligible, Bury played the game without apparently admitting to spectators that it was now only a friendly. Rovers won 10-0 and Bury are officially recorded as having scratched.

The cup would bring them glory soon enough and long before Manchester's finest had had a sniff of it. But it was the revolutionary concept of league football that now demanded Lancashire's attention.