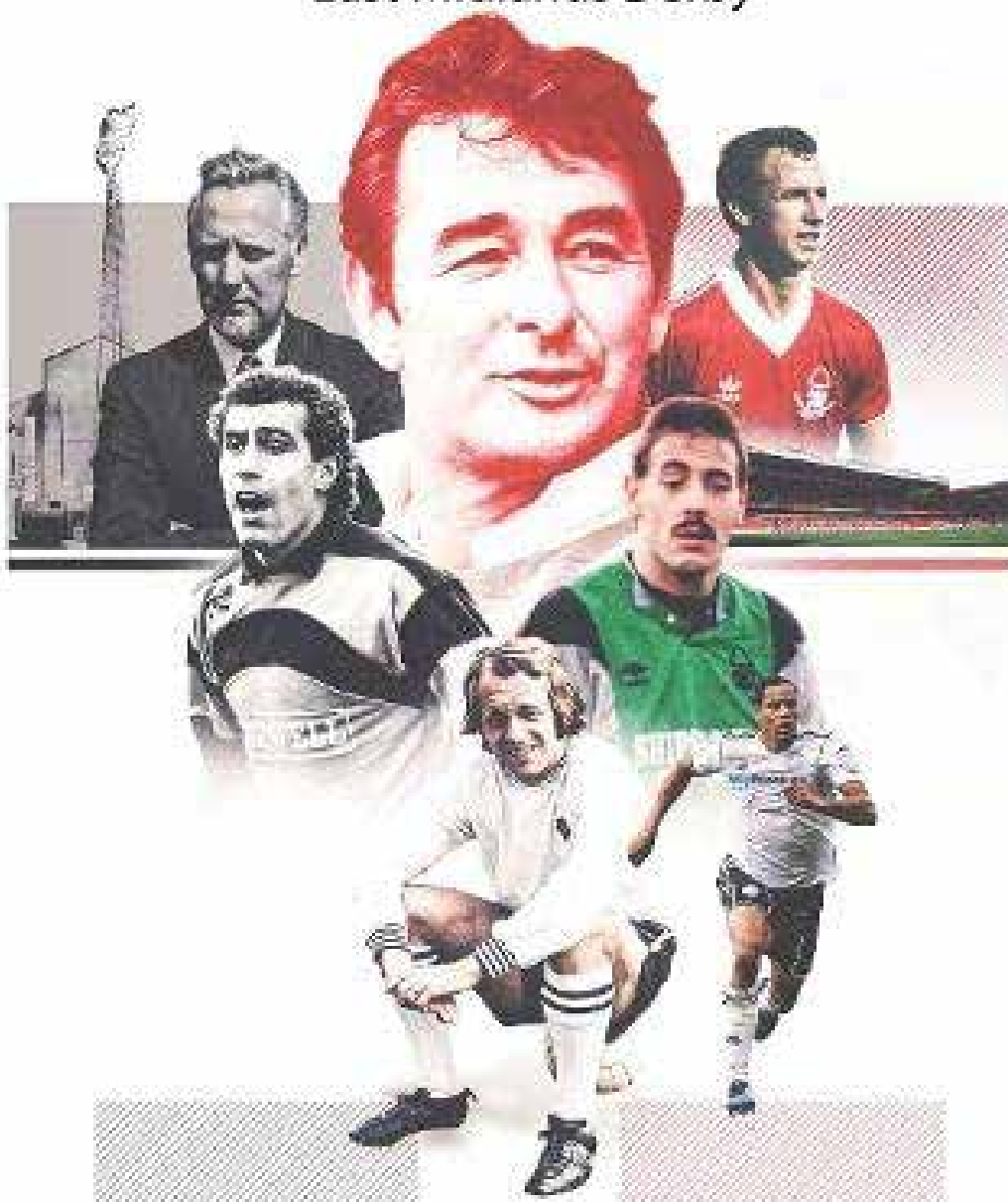


David Marples

REDS & RAMS

The Story of the
East Midlands Derby



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Railways and Robin Hood

NOTTINGHAM AND Derby are locked in a perpetual struggle to assert authority, dominance and, ultimately, the cultural and moral high ground over the other.

Derby boasts of its status as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, thus precipitating Nottingham's booming lace market. It developed its reputation for engineering excellence by establishing itself at the heart of the British railways system, then carried this high on its shoulders into the 20th century with Rolls-Royce and Bombardier maintaining this fine tradition. It is the home of Joseph Strutt, the revolutionary ideas of Erasmus Darwin, the altruism of Florence Nightingale, the art and vision of Joseph Wright and Joseph Pickford and the famous nails of Belper. It is the self-styled underdog of middle England.

Nottingham was not immune to the industrial era factories but forged its reputation on rebellion, or at least, being the centre and home for those who wished to kick and push at the boundaries. The most famous of these types is Robin Hood, the socialist sympathising rebel who made it his business to get right up the noses of the ruling gentry by redistributing wealth from rich to poor.

Nottingham Castle, home of Robin Hood's antagonist the Sheriff of Nottingham, was the focal point for the beginning of the English Civil War in August 1642 and was soon commandeered by the Roundheads who opposed Charles I. The king came to Nottingham Castle and raised his royal standard to demonstrate his authority, thus setting off a chain of events that effectively started the civil war. The castle repeatedly came under attack from forces loyal to the king but remained in rebel hands until the end of the war in 1646 when Charles surrendered at Southwell, Nottinghamshire.

In his revolutionary footsteps followed the Luddites: not the backward and resistant-to-change conservatives they are often made out to be but the protectors of artisan craftsmanship. The trailblazing Eric Irons, fighting for justice and equality by becoming the first black magistrate in England and Helen Watts, founder of the Women's Freedom league, both found a home in Nottingham. Writers Alan Sillitoe and D.H. Lawrence challenged traditions by telling the stories of the children of the Industrial Revolution – the angry young men of the working class.

Derby and Nottingham: similar but different. Made of the same cloth but cut, styled and modelled into different garments. Yet for all this, they remain tethered to each other, persistently agitating to define themselves as distant and different to the other while forever remaining a mere 16 miles from each other. Served by different rivers but appropriately linked by Brian Clough Way, they are two teenage brothers kicking and screaming at each other, desperately wanting to assert their independence while refusing to acknowledge their many similarities. To understand their differences

in spite of their close geographical proximity, we need to understand how each evolved, what ties and binds them and what powers each to define the other as just that – ‘other’.

* * *

Derby expanded rapidly once the kindling of the Industrial Revolution started smouldering. Having visited Piedmont in Italy in 1717 and returned armed with knowledge of Italian silk-throwing machines, John Lombe established Lombe’s Mill by the side of the River Derwent in the middle of Derby. Soon afterwards, hosiery became big business thanks to Jedediah Strutt’s Derby Rib Attachment, which enabled mass production of stockings. When Strutt paid off his previous partners in 1762, he teamed up with a prominent hosier and spinner from Nottingham called Samuel Need and established Need, Strutt and Woollatt – a successful and prosperous partnership. The Nottingham connection continued when Messrs Wright, bankers of Nottingham, pointed Richard Arkwright in the direction of Strutt and Need to obtain finance for his revolutionary cotton-spinning mill, the first of which opened in Nottingham in 1770. A year later, the three combined to build the world’s first commercially successful water-powered, cotton-spinning mill in Cromford, Derbyshire. The Industrial Revolution gathered pace as mills sprung up around the county, most notably in Belper where the North Mill still stands today. It was one of the world’s first fireproof buildings owing to Strutt’s use of cast iron instead of timber for the internal structure.

Nottingham got busy too. Arkwright established a cotton mill in Hockley in 1768, leading to the development

of terraced housing for its workers. Lace production started with William Lee and was enhanced by John Heathcote and John Levers, developing lace into a major international export over the coming years. But the working class of Nottingham wanted a different type of revolution. Taking their cue from the Luddites, named after Ned Ludd, a young apprentice who was rumoured to have wrecked a textile apparatus in 1779, the first major Luddite riot broke out in Arnold, Nottingham in 1881. Mills were set alight and factory equipment destroyed as an expression of frustration at the increasingly challenging working conditions in the factories and mills, but perhaps more significantly as a protest against the rising popularity of automated textile equipment, replacing an artisan skill and leaving the door wide open to cheaper and unskilled workers.

The movement took hold and unrest spread throughout England, weakening the economy over the next two years. It was a turbulent time as Napoleon was nipping at Empire's heels and across the Atlantic, President James Madison signed into law a declaration of war as the United States sought to rid itself of its British ties. Civil unrest reached a crescendo when the army was deployed to quell the riots. Some were hanged, others sent to Australia and the rebellion dissipated. Yet the Luddites' point remained: the workers powering the Industrial Revolution would not go cheaply into the night and both Nottingham and Derby were at the heart of the rise of workers' rights. Derby provided the work; Nottingham defended their rights.

The people of Nottingham had developed a taste for rebellion now. The Whig Party sought to introduce a Reform Bill to ensure constituencies better reflected their

growing population, yet the Duke of Newcastle sought to oppose it. All hell broke loose, and the citizens of Nottingham rioted, setting fire to his residence on the site of the castle. It was a constitutional crisis, prompting the resignation of prime minister Charles Grey and a period of political upheaval. Britain was on the brink of full-blown revolution. Riots occurred in Derby, too, reminding us that our two protagonists in this tale haven't always been on the opposite ends of the scale; they are cut from the same textile or lace cloth.

Despite this upheaval, life and the Industrial Revolution continued apace, shaping and defining each. In 1836, Derby elected Joseph Strutt mayor and, three years later, Nottingham opened its first railway station on the west side of Carrington Street on 20 May. Naturally, a station requires a service and a destination and, on 4 June, the Midlands Counties Railway opened the first railway service between Nottingham and Derby. They were now bound together. The first public train left for Derby at precisely 12.30pm on the opening day and took 40 minutes to get there, stopping once to take on water. A year later, the Midland Counties Railway merged with the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway to form Midland Railway and it established headquarters in Derby, meaning that the town was effectively the centre of the British rail industry. Its population boomed from 14,000 in 1801 to 48,000 in 1850 and a further staggering growth to 118,000 by 1901. The railways had most certainly got Derby on the move.

The big bang of the first organised football league emerged from the silk mills of Derbyshire and the lace factories of Nottingham, providing each area with a growing

population, eager to indulge in some well-earned leisure activities. At first stumbling from a Victorian sporting soup before clambering into existence and the solid ground of the Football League, it was from the cricket, racecourse, baseball and shinney fields that Nottingham Forest and Derby County were born, emerging from a series of meetings held in smoky, wood-panelled rooms.

Everything was in place: the working classes were gathered together in rapidly expanding towns, while the railways were starting to link these provincial out posts together. In addition, the proletariat required some kind of release from all those long and hard hours labouring in a mill or factory – a reason to shout or cheer, a receptacle for that simmering anger at their working conditions. There was a gap in the market.

In 1846, those boffins at Trinity College, Cambridge, made an initial attempt to formulate some sort of rules to codify the rather wild and erratic game that had existed in many different guises depending on which part of the country a ball was kicked on to a field. The concept stalled as rugby still ruled among the elite of Eton, Winchester and Shrewsbury. The idea was not dead, though, and those up north had not only the determination to get some rules in place but also the teams to put them into practice. This was football only: no concessions to the notion of picking the ball up or any such nonsense. Thus, Sheffield FC and Hallam got down to the business of playing the first football match under such rules. These were football clubs too – not an offshoot of a cricket or shinney or baseball club, but pure football. Somewhat poetically, this game took place amid a snowstorm on Boxing Day in 1860 on the east bank of the

River Sheaf. Sheffield FC beat Hallam 2-0 and football – as we know it – was born, alive and very much kicking.

From that moment, things moved fast. The boffins, specifically J.C. Thring, went back to the drawing board and came up with some revised laws in 1862 that everyone could get onboard with. These were published with the title *The Simplest Game* and would lead to the birth of the Football Association.

In Nottingham, the young men of the lace industry, although happily indulging in shinney – a form of hockey, its winter cousin known as bandy – were becoming better disposed towards football. Yet although industry and especially lace had brought jobs and a degree of prosperity to the city, it wasn't a case of it being a utopian haven. Work was hard, poorly paid and life was short. Although the population was only 80,000, the place was hugely overcrowded, especially around the Narrow Marsh area. One government official even went as far as calling it the worst town in England. Gangs roamed the streets looking to take advantage of the poor and dispossessed, perhaps the most infamous being the Nottingham Lambs who followed and supported the legendary local boxer William 'Bendigo' Thompson. After winning the heavyweight championship of England, Bendigo slipped into alcoholism and in the 1860s joined his former supporters in drunken rampages, resulting in imprisonment before sobered up and turned his life around.

This was also the year that the Riot Act was literally read in Nottingham on 26 June owing to riots in the Market Square after a rally by Liberals Samuel Morley and Charles Paget descended into scuffles. Despite this, the impressive

and imposing Theatre Royal was built at the top of Market Street in 1865.

Over in Derby, Midland Railway, now one of the largest railway companies in Britain and the town's largest employer, purchased the beautiful red-brick Midland Hotel and Posting House, built in 1841 to reflect the meeting of three important railway lines in Derby: the Midland Counties from Leicester and Nottingham, the Birmingham and Derby Junction from Birmingham and the north Midland from Leeds. Its function from here on was solely to cater for the increasing number of travellers via rail to and through Derby, following in the footsteps of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert who stayed there overnight while travelling back from Balmoral Castle to Osborne House in the Isle of Wight. The importance of Derby in terms of Midland Railway was illustrated by the distance from Derby becoming the measurement of the Midland Railway Empire in the form of mileposts across the network which recorded the distance from Derby station. The first of these can still be seen at the end of Derby station platform and it is marked D 0, meaning 0 miles from Derby.

All the while, football was growing. On 2 January 1865, Sheffield FC played their first fixture outside South Yorkshire, in Nottingham. Notts County had formed in 1862 and they fancied trying their hands – or feet – at this increasingly popular sport. So, in 1865, just a few months after Robert E. Lee surrendered the last major Confederate army to Ulysses S. Grant, signalling the end of the America Civil War, a group of young sportsmen in Nottingham formally switched from shinney to football and Forest Football Club came into being. This was formally marked

by a meeting at the Clinton Arms in Sherwood Street. It was another two years before shinney was dropped as an activity of the club and Nottingham was added to the name, thus amending it to Nottingham Forest Football Club. A plaque commemorating the birth of Nottingham Forest now hangs proudly on the walls of this pub. One of the founders, William Brown, was tasked with purchasing red-coloured shirts, along with matching caps and tassels. Inspired by Giuseppe Garibaldi, who successfully led a revolt against the Spanish Bourbon rulers in southern Italy and; in doing so, unified the country by championing nationalism, freedom and romance, the embryonic football club was swept up in the popularity of this figure of radicalism and like the biscuit, honoured him by wearing not just any old red, but Garibaldi red.

Like many football clubs emerging at this time, Forest Football Club evolved from a wider sports club yet shinney was a most unusual sport from which a football club emerge from. In its preview of the 1898 FA Cup Final, *Sporting Life* praised Nottingham and its sporting history, ‘Certainly, they have always had leather chasers amongst them, but they have always devoted a great deal of attention to athletics and even to cricket. The club was the outcome of the enthusiastic love of all sport which is inherent in the bosoms of all Nottingham people, and in the days when the old dribbling games was played, a section of the members fancied the new style football, and the team was got together.’ It all seems quite simple really: they loved sport, they loved football, they formed a football club.

Within a year, on 22 March 1866, Forest played their first game against, naturally, Notts County, at The Forest, now

known as the Recreation Ground and site of the renowned Goose Fair. After all, 'It was necessary that the Notts club [Notts County], an even still older organisation, should be met and a decision come as to which was the champion.' It turns out that the upstarts of Forest were to be the new champions as the 'Foresters won a goal to nil'. In fairness, the veracity of this scoreline is debatable: it is rumoured that Forest might have played with 17 players. But this was a very sound start, even if the next five years or so would be spent scouring the area for meaningful opposition beyond local cup competitions. Not even the oldest football competition in the world – the FA Cup – had been born yet. That was still five years away. A picture painted by John Holland, *Nottingham Races*, depicting scenes on The Forest in 1865, pays attention to the boisterous antics of the crowd in which skirmishes have broken out and the police are making arrests. It is not documented whether Forest and Notts supporters clashed and brawled during the original game played at the same venue, but one suspects probably not.

Until then, though, not only were teams restricted to their locality when it came to actually playing a game, but even if they did travel further afield, the rules might well need to be negotiated before a ball was kicked in anger. Simply put, a northern club might well have played by different rules to a midlands or southern club. This needed sorting out and the launch of the FA Cup in 1871 went some way towards ironing out regional variations in the rules. Initially a purely amateur competition, the first Association Cup was contested between 16 teams from across Britain. A glance at some of the teams competing reflects football's emergence not from the belching factories populated by

the proletariat, but the educated elite: Harrow Chequers, Donington School, Reigate Priory and Civil Service indicate that the FA weren't quite ready to open it up to scruffy northern and midlands football clubs just yet. The first FA Cup was won by Wanderers, whose team was comprised of former pupils from leading public schools. They beat Royal Engineers 1-0 at Kennington Oval in front of a reported 2,000 fans. Competitive football was off and running.

In between Forest playing their first game against their city rivals and the launch of the FA Cup, the first recorded reference to the famous folk song, 'The Derby Ram', was made. This would later provide Derby County with their nickname and mascot. Llewellyn Jewitt wrote *The Ballads and Songs of Derbyshire*. In it, he stated that he thought 'The Derby Ram' had been sung for at least half a century. It has been reported that George Washington sang it to his friend's children in 1796.

All the while, football continued its evolution. Something was definitely stirring as clubs specialising solely in football continued to spring up the length and breadth of the country. Although still an amateur game, a sense of professionalism started to creep in, if not in the form of payment (although clubs did and would find a way to entice players, usually in the shape of guaranteed jobs in, for instance, a factory around the corner from the ground), but certainly in competitive spirit. Crowds gathered in increasing numbers and, where there are crowds, there is money to be made. And with competitive spirit comes a desire to be better than the other lot down the road, a factor which meant that the better players – northerners and Scots – started dominating the team lists of many clubs. And this

was all before the notion of a competitive league was even a twinkle in the eye of an administrator.

The FA Cup was a huge success and although dominated by Wanderers, Royal Engineers and Old Etonians – between them accounting for nine of the first 11 winners – its reach and popularity were growing. Even the likes of Sheffield and Notts County were invited to the party and, in 1879, Forest got their invitation. In between times, they had been busy as not only had they relocated to Trent Bridge, but also made their first major contribution to the development of football as we know it. Perhaps sick of coming home from games with bruised shins, Sam Widdowson had the simple but bright idea of cutting down a pair of cricket pads and strapping them to his shins, outside his socks. He might have looked unusual – maybe a bit daft even – but he would be the one credited with inventing shin pads. What's more, his legs were significantly less bruised.

A similar story and evolution of the game was playing out in the United States as with the end of the civil war and the American frontier experience over, the young male intellectual in an Ivy League school required a new means by which to prove this masculinity and, as in England's private schools, it was at Harvard and Yale that a game similar to but more violent and military in style with an emphasis on taking land evolved. In 1879, a former captain in the civil war, Richard Henry Pratt, founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a boarding school for Indian American children with the motto 'kill the Indian, save the man', the notion being to teach assimilation skills to the Native Americans in order to survive and thrive in the new America. With American football still in its infancy,

a teacher and dormitory master who formerly taught at an Ivy League school turned up at Carlisle and felt that playing football would toughen the students up. It caught on.

After many injuries, Pratt put a stop to this seemingly barbaric game as his intention was to civilise the students. But not to be deterred, a group went to petition Pratt to reinstate it. 'While they stood around my desk, their black eyes intensely watching me, the orator gave practically all the arguments in favour of our contending in outside football and ended up requesting the removal of the embargo,' wrote David Wallace Adams in *More than a Game: The Carlisle Indians Take to the Gridiron*. The 'Pirates' team was established and a challenge game was organised against a powerful and renowned Yale team in October 1896 at the old polo ground in New York in front of around 4,000 fans. Predictably, it was billed as a battle between the refined, civilised and best of the modern American male versus the barbaric natives. Despite a highly dubious call that went against Carlisle, they maintained their cool and, at the behest of Pratt, won the crowd's hearts and minds. The game took an evolutionary leap forward.

And so to Forest's first participation in the FA Cup, shin pads and all. In the first round, they would face none other than their city rivals and promptly beat them 3-1 away from home before progressing all the way to the semi-finals, beating Old Harrovians and Oxford University, then succumbing to Old Etonians. It was a highly creditable maiden performance, one that they repeated again the very next year. Again, they faced Notts County in the first round and, again, beat them, this time 4-0 at home. They progressed against Turton, beating Blackburn Rovers 6-0

(a notable result since a period of sustained cup success lay just around the corner for Blackburn), Sheffield and enjoyed a fifth-round bye before bowing out again at the semi-final stage to Oxford University. Intriguingly, Forest were the first club to progress in the FA Cup owing to their opponents' disqualification. After a 2-2 draw at Trent Bridge, Sheffield were expecting a replay, but the FA rules dictated that a replay would only be forthcoming if the scores were still locked after extra time. Sheffield weren't having that and refused to play the extra 30 minutes. It is said that, regardless of the lack of opposition, Widdowson dribbled the ball into an empty net just to make sure. After Widdowson's shin pads, this was another first for Forest.

Despite Widdowson's smart thinking, he would not have a permanent home ground on which to parade his bruise-free shins. The Nottinghamshire Cricket Club secretary Edwin Browne took on the same role at Notts County and, in 1882, Forest lost their winter tenancy at Trent Bridge to Notts. This stoked the flames of the city rivalry, which had been simmering along quite nicely after County had dropped Forest from their fixture list, taking exception to the revolutionary associations with the Garibaldis. Forest went off to play at Parkside on Derby Road and then the Gregory Ground, while County turned professional and enjoyed big crowds at Trent Bridge. Perhaps County were still a little bitter about their FA Cup first-round defeats to their neighbours.

The FA Cup itself experienced its first shock in 1883 when the first northern team, Blackburn Olympic, lifted the trophy. They were arguably the first proletarian team to claim the cup when they beat Old Etonians after extra time

after preparing by having a pre-match holiday in Blackpool. Theirs was a team composed of machine operators, weavers and spinners and it meant a bloody nose to the toffs who had up to now dominated it. This was seismic as the cup was wrestled from the clutches of southern elite clubs and would consequently be won by northern or Midlands-based clubs up until 1901 when Tottenham Hotspur would beat Sheffield United and wrestle it back. From then on though, right up until 1936, the cup would be dominated by the north and Midlands with only Tottenham, Arsenal and Cardiff breaking the run.

The power balance in football was shifting from the wide green fields of public schools and the educated elite to the working classes as they seemed to be taking the competitive side of the game to new heights and blurring the line between amateur status and professionalism. In 1884, Preston North End were disqualified from competing after an FA committee decreed that they had been offering financial inducements to Scottish players. It is likely that Preston were not the only club to be offering such incentives as the growing popularity of the game meant bigger attendances, which meant more pressure to compete, which meant playing hard and fast with what amateur status meant when it came to improving the team.

Derby was certainly not immune to all of this excitement. The county already boasted of some kind of football game being played in Ashbourne as far back as the 12th century. The Royal Shrovetide Football Match requires one set of villagers, the Up'Ards, to get the ball to Sturston Mill, while the other set, the Down'Ards, to Clifton Mill. The game was a whole town affair, contested between Shrove Tuesday

and Ash Wednesday and was frequently violent. Such mob football evolved and branched off into various forms of modern football, such as Australian Rules, Gaelic, rugby football and public-school football. The spirit of football ran deep in Derby. Some see this as the origins of the term 'derby' to denote a game between two local teams, yet a more widely received theory is it derives from the Derby Stakes run at Epsom, or in other words, the Epsom Derby, on account of the huge popularity and interest it provoked.

The town had already had Derby Town and Derby Midland, whose formation in 1881 signalled the end of the former. But what goes around comes around and the formation of another football club posed a threat to the short but promising lifespan of Midland. In September 1884, after a meeting of Derbyshire County Cricket Club, which was on a sticky wicket and undergoing some financial issues both on and off the field, at the Bell Hotel in Sadler Gate in May, the *Derby Daily Telegraph* announced, 'The Derbyshire County Cricket Club has decided on the formation of a football club under Association Rules and desires to render football worthy of the patronage bestowed upon it by the public by endeavouring to arrange matches with first-class clubs which will enable the public to witness matches of a higher order than have hitherto been played in Derby. The subscription for the Derbyshire County Football Club is fixed at five shillings, which we think will be thought sufficiently moderate.' The popularity of football had been well and truly noted by the cricket club, especially W.M. [William] Morley, and after some tinkering with and abbreviation of the name, Derby County Football Club was born.

This newly formed club wasted no time in getting started and enjoyed a fast and meteoric rise, perhaps as a result of the conditions surrounding its birth. According to *Sporting Life*, 'The County was, so to speak, "born with a silver spoon in its mouth" for it was from its inception associated with the Derbyshire County Cricket Club and has valuable aid granted to it by that body. Up to the season 1895/96, the games of the club were played on a portion of the cricket ground so that there was not struggling for money for a capital ground, and as the cricket pavilion was already on the spot, there was no initial costs of stands, dressing rooms, etc. But in addition to the great advantage, the club has always had the support of well-known men of the town, including the honourable W.M. Jarvis, Mr Morley and a number of others.'

Either way, Derby got down to business. They went straight into the FA Cup, yet went out at the first round to Walsall Town, 7-0 at home in their very first competitive match. This took place at the Racecourse Ground, which is now the cricket club's County Ground, and was unsurprisingly (given its name) originally enclosed inside a racecourse, with racing ceasing in 1939. A couple of years later, the Racecourse Ground held the distinction of being the first ground to stage an FA Cup Final outside London: the 1886 final between Blackburn and West Brom, albeit it the game was a replay. This would have been mightily pleasing for the cricket committee in terms of the monetary income it generated.

With no organised league system and only a humbling FA Cup experience under their belts, it was with a certain inevitability that the first Derby County versus Nottingham

Forest game would be contested. Accordingly, the game took place amid a bit of a gale on Tuesday, 3 February 1885. Derby not only won the toss and decided to play with the strong wind behind them, but they won the game too and, handsomely, 6-1. After only ten minutes, John Barrington Trapnell Chevallier put Derby in front and it only got progressively worse for the Foresters from then on. Cooper, Smith, Hickinbottom and Chevallier again made it 5-0 by half-time. Forest improved in the second half – could they have got any worse? – but could make no real impact on the scoreline until five minutes before the end when they pulled one back. But Derby promptly went and scored another.

Forest would argue that they were missing key players in Thomas Danks and Tinsley Lindley and, furthermore, this was effectively a friendly game. Regardless, the rivalry was under way. *The Sportsman* published the teams, ‘Derby County: Hill (goal), Flower and Morley (backs), Williamson, F.H. Sugg and Kelsall (half-backs), Cooper, Bakewell, J.B.T. Chevallier, Hickinbottom and Smith (forwards). Notts Forest: Beardsley (goal), Hancock and Caborn (backs), Ward, Billyeald and Norman (half-backs), Fox, Leighton, Widdowson, Unwin and Davis (forwards).’

Although few knew it at the time, Nottingham would soon be able to console itself with the birth of the world-famous Raleigh bike, as in the spring of that same year Raleigh started advertising in the local press. The *Nottinghamshire Guardian* of 15 May 1885 printed what was possibly the first Woodhead and Angois classified advertisement. Raleigh would grow exponentially into a worldwide name over the next five years.

Undeterred by their underwhelming first appearance in the FA Cup and taking heart from their dismantling of a Forest side, Derby achieved a notable success in the cup against Aston Villa, knocking them out in the first round on 14 November 1885. Villa were a highly regarded team who would go on to take the mighty Blackburn Rovers' trophy two years later. At the final whistle, the delirious home fans invaded the pitch, high on this new elixir known to some as cup fever; Derby County had stuck a large flag in the ground and marked their arrival. Perhaps this result went some way towards Derby being invited to be part of the Football League, about which ideas were forming in Aston Villa's boardroom.

* * *

The final piece of the football jigsaw puzzle was finally found and positioned neatly into place when Villa board member William McGregor proposed some kind of organised fixture list and on 17 April 1888, the Football League was formed. As the response of those not invited, the Football Combination was created but it lacked the organisation of the Football League. Perhaps reminded of his side's humbling in the FA Cup three years previously, McGregor invited Derby County to be founder members, cementing the meteoric rise of a club in only their fourth year of existence. *Sporting Life* provided a rather more mundane reason for Derby's involvement, 'For the seasons prior to the formation of the Football League, four seasons after the foundation of the club, the success which attended the players was not any means phenomenal, but still to avoid selecting two clubs in some towns, it was found necessary to invite Derby to take place.'

Despite Samuel Widdowson having hung up his boots and now representing Forest as chairman, Forest's request in a meeting with the Football League to be included was turned down, along with The Wednesday (later Sheffield Wednesday) and Halliwell FC of Greater Manchester. With only 22 dates for fixtures, the league could only cope with 12 teams and perhaps Forest's desire to maintain strict amateur status and reject professionalism counted against them.

The FA Cup Final that year provided not only a bit of a shock, but also a neat preview of the 1898 Final, at least in terms of pre-game photographs. Going into the final, Preston were favourites but that was ended by West Bromwich Albion in front of 19,000 at the Kennington Oval. In a breathtaking exhibition of hubris, Preston manager William Suddell demanded his team's picture be taken with the cup before kick-off in order to capture their pristine white shirts. They lost 2-1. What was established for Victorian photographers was that white shirts were definitely preferable when it came to taking pictures of football teams, a custom that caused a bit of a stir when Derby and Forest would meet at the same stage ten years later.

But back to the formation of the Football League and Derby's first league game, which saw them win 6-3 at Bolton Wanderers, especially impressive since they were 3-0 down at one stage. They finished a respectable tenth in a 12-team division. This was the era of the Preston 'Invincibles' who won the title and the FA Cup and did so without losing a game. The bottom four clubs did not suffer the indignity of relegation but were all successfully re-elected to have another go the following season. Forest's invitation was presumably lost in the post.

The Football Alliance launched for 1888/89, which was a bit like the Football League but less organised. This mattered not to Derby who in their sophomore season in the Football League improved by finishing seventh, while the mighty Preston romped to the title again. They weren't quite so invincible this time, though, and lost four games while seeing their north-west rivals Blackburn Rovers reclaim their FA Cup dominance of the mid-1880s.

The summer of 1890 saw a rather curious development in the town of Derby: the arrival of a baseball pitch. Local factory owner and general businessman Francis Ley returned from the States, having had his eyes widened by baseball and set about developing a patch of land near to his foundry with the intention of not only offering his workers some recreational facilities but of developing a national league. On 3 May, Derby beat a team from Erdington, Birmingham, 23-11 to win the first game of baseball with the home plate in the corner of the Columbo Street Railway Terrace (latterly the Baseball Ground's Popside terrace) junction which became known as Catcher's Corner. Amid much controversy, Derby Baseball Club claimed to be the winners of the title on three separate occasions, yet Aston Villa strongly protested on the grounds of them playing too many Americans and of generally playing fragrant with various bylaws. Derby were stripped of their title and Villa took it from them. Perhaps more significant, though, was a young Derby striker by the name of Steve Bloomer and Forest goalkeeper Danny Allsopp on the roster for the Derby team. Bloomer would appear intermittently for the Derby baseball team, right up until 1898.

The following season was less successful as Derby County finished 11th out of 12. However, they did chalk up

the season's biggest win: a 9-0 home victory against Wolves on 10 January 1891. This was no mean feat, considering Wolves finished fourth that season.

Forest, meanwhile, maintained their reputation as pioneers after some bright spark introduced the idea of a crossbar and goal nets in a north v south game at their new home, the Town Ground. Clearly somebody got tired of having to fetch the ball every time a goal was scored and of the incessant debate about whether a shot could be deemed to be over or under. Forest too took a huge lurch towards professionalism by signing their first paid players and it showed as they hammered Clapton 14-0 in the first round of the FA Cup on 17 January 1891. Forest were on the rise as they won the final Alliance league and, along with The Wednesday and Combination winners Newton Heath (later Manchester United), joined the Football League, now the First Division. Derby improved slightly by finishing in tenth place and, perhaps more significantly, absorbed Derby Midland to become the town's sole football club. To mark this, a change of colours was adopted, when they ditched the cricket club colours of chocolate, amber and pale blue for black and white. The stage was set for regular competitive meetings between these two rivals. The crossbars were in place, shins were suitably protected and, in the event of any illnesses or injuries, a new shop opened on Pelham Street in Nottingham by the name of Boots.