The Making of Association Football

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Two Decades Which Created the Modern Game

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Graham Curry

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Eric Dunning.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is concerned with the 'making' of association football, the central intention being to concentrate on the kicking and dribbling variety which, after 1863, would become soccer. Eric Dunning first suggested this as a way of approaching the subject as long ago as 1970 in his edited book *The Sociology of Sport: a Selection of Readings*.[1] The expression moves decisively away from treating football's development as an invention, the latter being sociologically implausible. The use of the verb 'make' implies that the process was long-term and involved multiple human interactions. It may be somewhat controversial to claim that the modern game was 'made' by 1877. However, although some would offer dates later than the concluding years of the 1870s as the time when the game truly came of age, the hypothesis of this book is that, from the maelstrom of the mob/folk matrix, pub-related challenges, public schools, universities and early clubs, the men who developed the association form of football had, by then, set in place a series of principles by which it would be played. Gone were the twin beasts of hacking and carrying, though handling would remain on the fringes and is illustrated today in the throw-in and the use made of the hands by the goalkeeper, as soccer placed itself in the position to represent the majority of footballers in England who were convinced that it should be a game played primarily with the feet. Indeed, to illustrate this, it is worth pointing out that of the seven boarding establishments investigated by the Clarendon Commission in 1864, only one, Rugby School, was a proponent of a handling and carrying form. Furthermore, there must have been a recognition that the very name, *foot*ball, was indicative of a game primarily played with the feet. In the wider society, too, there were two varieties of football: the mob/folk game exemplified by the Ashbourne Shrove Tuesday romp, full of handling and grappling with only a modicum of feet being employed; the other, the small-sided kicking and dribbling forms played in diverse parts of the country and best illustrated by events in Penistone and Thurlstone, where players insisted on playing '*foot*-ball' and not '*hand*-ball'.

By 1877, a governing body for soccer had been in existence for fourteen years, a national cup competition had begun six years previously, international matches had been played and examples of professionalism had surfaced.

The concept of being 'made' signifies that a structure and a philosophy had been established, which confirmed to all interested parties that participants in association football had noted the dichotomy of feet and hands, coming down firmly in favour of the former. This was not about social class, as, by 1877, the game remained a bastion of the upper middle stratum of society and it was they who created the association form; it was more about how football was to be played, regardless of social standing. It was not about cultural meaning, but more about the crux of the game: feet not hands. But, ultimately, it was concerned with power, illustrating the triumph of a ruling social elite, based around the dominant major London public schools of Eton, Harrow and, to a lesser extent, Westminster and Charterhouse, involved in a battle of status rivalry with the emerging bourgeois Rugby School and ambitious local elites educated at grammar schools for control of a recreational activity of growing importance.

The aim of this book is, therefore, to establish when, where and how the association variety first developed, which will require investigations over a prolonged period of time. For, although soccer did not 'officially' appear until late 1863, it had been 'in the making' for centuries. It is the aim of the author to show that actions primarily in England, between the years 1857 and 1877 effectively 'made' the sport of association football. However, this introduction will also include a passing attempt to provide the reader with a short history of the game prior to 1857. Furthermore, in order to 'set the scene', there will also be a discussion of debates in the football history community over the past two decades, when academics have vigorously contested the early development of the game regarding who was responsible for its creation. Let us begin with an examination of football's initial years.

The early history of football

Modern forms of football were developed in Britain from existing mob/folk games. The latter were loosely organised local contests between teams of often unequal size which were traditionally played on holidays such as Shrove Tuesday, New Year's Day or Easter Monday. This is not to suggest that soccer would claim as its direct antecedent a handling, mauling form such as the one still being played at Ashbourne in Derbyshire. This remains a distant cousin, while a closer progenitor existed in the aforementioned kicking games in Penistone and Thurlstone and also the match which took place in February 1827 near Derby, which was seemingly a curtain raiser to that year's Derby street football, the version being described as 'kick-ball'.[2] Versions of football existed in most countries, *la soule* is an example in

France, but it would be in England where the game first blossomed into a modern, rational sport. Local forms brought to England's leading public schools were codified and 'civilised' by the boys, with those pupils from the major boarding institutions of Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Westminster and Winchester being ultimately the most influential.[3] However, their distinctive games were not diffused directly into the wider society. Rather, former public schoolboys made their preferences clear when they joined or re-joined communities where football was beginning to take on its modern form. Boys at local grammar schools, best described as the educational stratum of society just beneath the public schools, also engaged in football and, in some areas, notably Sheffield, were largely responsible for the creation of the subculture and the diffusion of the sport. This group represented what might be termed as a local sporting elite.

Each major public school adopted its own unique code[4] of football, with the boys from those institutions championing their variety with great vigour, utterly convinced that theirs was the best example of the game. The first extant codification, expressing the laws in written form, of football in those establishments took place at Rugby School in 1845. Producing written rules was significant. It enabled the game to be spread more easily and reliably than by word of mouth and it provided the laws, the lawmakers and their institutions with added prestige. Additionally, codification bestowed upon those laws a rational importance beyond the rough and tumble of Shrovetide or the parochial working class football often based around public houses and went some way to legitimising the practice as more socially acceptable. Not only did public schoolboys add more than a modicum of organisation to the game, their actions were a useful illustration of the western European 'civilising process' advocated by Norbert Elias. This involved a reduction in physical violence within football and became a feature of public school games when compared with previous varieties. It was also indicative of a move towards more peaceful ways of resolving disputes in the wider society. As an unintended consequence of the Rugby codification, the boys at Eton College, who regarded themselves and still do as being foremost in the public school community, feeling somewhat indignant at the issuing of such a document by the boys of what they believed to be a relatively unimportant educational institution, responded by codifying the Field Game, one of their two forms of football, the other being the Wall Game, just two years later, in 1847. Eric Dunning has characterised this as a prime example of status rivalry between two public schools, a process which took place quite regularly in nineteenth century England, as rising middle class establishments such as Rugby mimicked but also challenged the existing

hierarchy represented by the likes of Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Shrewsbury, Westminster, and Winchester. This process took place in many areas of life, not simply football. Yet, the Eton Field Game, primarily kicking and minimal handling, could be said to be a proto-soccer variety of the sport. Indeed, if placed on a continuum of public school football varieties, the Field Game would be towards the end which stressed kicking, dribbling and minimal handling, with Rugby towards the opposite extremity. The boys at the school were an early part of the process of football development which involved a competitive struggle between, not only individual public schools, but also those who preferred football games which were basically kicking and dribbling forms to those who favoured handling and carrying. This struggle is, of course, still taking place today, as various football varieties compete for adherents in the form of players and spectators on a global scale.

When the game was carried from the public schools, it found its way to England's two universities, Cambridge and Oxford. Far more evidence has been discovered of its existence at the former and, on five separate occasions, from 1840 to 1863, students and academics there created compromise codes to enable keen participants to play the game with and against others from diverse footballing backgrounds. There is strong evidence of an attempt to form a football club at Cambridge and to codify a set of common rules between 1837 and 1842, with Edgar William Montagu, an Old Salopian who attended Gonville and Caius College at the time,[5] taking a leading part in this process. Unfortunately copies of these rules have not survived. Four further attempts to establish a compromise code at Cambridge University were attempted. These took place in 1846 under the direction of two more former pupils of Shrewsbury School, John Charles (JC) Thring and Henry De Winton; again two years later, in 1848, with Henry Charles Malden, an undergraduate at Trinity College, to the fore; in 1856, when a disparate committee of ten drafted a set of laws and, finally, and perhaps most significantly because of the use made of them by the nascent FA, in 1863 by a group still committed to a kicking and dribbling form. Towards the end of that year, footballers in and around London debated the urgent need for a national set of laws, which would enable teams to play each other with more regularity and without the need for endless wrangling over the code to be used. A meeting was called to find a solution to this problem and the organisation known as the Football Association was formed.

The real key to the early development of the game was the influence of former pupils from the major public schools. While the boys had been at their own individual institutions, they codified, rationalised and even 'civilised' the game. But, at that point, they had little impact on the wider society and only when they had left their schools would they influence football's development. The significance of the schools lay in the fact that those institutions produced individuals and groups who were the most powerful in terms of their social standing in the football figuration when the game began to prosper on a national and, in time, international level from around the early 1870s. Recently, evidence has been discovered of a relatively flourishing footballing subculture based around public houses and wagering, though it should be emphasised that, in due course, this group had relatively little influence when compared to that exerted by ex-public schoolboys and even local educational elites. Nevertheless, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the discovery of these data has done much to stimulate the study of the early years of the game and, with that in mind, it would appear productive to examine briefly the present position of these important deliberations.

The early development of modern football and the recent 'origins debate'

It seems imperative that an assessment of the present position of what was originally but erroneously termed the 'origins of football debate' should take place in this introduction, as it represents an important part of efforts by a number of academics to understand the various processes involved in the early game. It was Eric Dunning, as long ago as 2001, who first questioned Adrian Harvey's new data challenging the role of former public schoolboys in football's early development and his call for more recognition of footballers in Sheffield.[6] Dunning consistently advocated the primacy of the public schools in this regard, together with the link between older football forms and the modern game. He also felt that Harvey was perhaps over-stating his argument by claiming that Sheffield rather than London might have provided the home for the national body of the game. Harvey's contribution had been preceded by John Goulstone's work,[7] which also sought to diminish the part played by former public schoolboys, but, with Goulstone's efforts being much less widely read, there was little opportunity for further deliberations within academic circles. It should also be noted that the title, 'origins of football', is probably at best misleading and, at worst, incorrect, as it suggests the existence of an exact starting point and almost certainly results in chasing a chimera. A more suitable description would be

'the early development of modern football', suggesting a long-term process and not one involving a single act as an improbable beginning. The debate has extended to other cultures, most notably Australia, the United States and Germany, but this offering will content itself with an analysis of events in the United Kingdom.

The contributors

Goulstone and Harvey appeared to have been carrying out separate research into similar archive sources, more particularly *Bell's Life in London*, finding brief mentions of games of football, challenges between groups of men largely based on public houses, usually hidden at the bottom of a page in that sporting broadsheet. Harvey published the article 'Football's Missing Link' in 1999, and also conducted research in the Sheffield Archives, where he studied the records of Sheffield Football Club.[8] From the latter investigation, he penned 'An Epoch in the Annals of National Sport', published in 2001, which rightly re-assessed the role of Sheffield's footballers and administrators in the early development of the game, concluding that they had failed to receive sufficient credit for their part in the game's initial story. However, 'Missing Link' was to prove to be the more controversial, for it was here that Harvey introduced examples of football outside the public schools, particularly in Sheffield, calling into question the significance of former public schoolboys in football's development.

Although the term did not exist at this juncture, it was first coined by Matthew Taylor in his 2008 book, *The Association Game*, Adrian Harvey was the first widely recognised example of a football 'revisionist' regarding the game's early history. In his reply to 'Epoch', Dunning contested some of the assertions made by Harvey, 'kicking off' two decades of robust thrust and counter-thrust between academics in the field.[9] Dunning felt that the strengths of Harvey's case were twofold: the revealing, original data on football outside the public schools and his attempt to demonstrate that more attention should have been paid by historians to the vibrant Sheffield footballing subculture. However, the weaknesses, at least for figurational sociologists, fell into two categories. Historians should be beware of overplaying Sheffield's importance, displaying it as a shining beacon of invention, compromise and proselytisation when compared with the staid, ineffective FA. There is also little mileage in excluding *all* public school influence from the Sheffield game. This misleadingly represents an absolute, which is sociologically implausible as footballers in Sheffield would, at the very least, have been aware of developments in public schools

and, therefore, this conscious knowledge would have informed decisions on their favoured recreation.

Eric Dunning and Graham Curry have consistently supported what has become known as the 'orthodox' position in terms of football's early development. Dunning's initial writings were based on original research in public schools with additional reference to existing secondary source studies available at the time.[10] These included books by 'old-school' football historians such as Morris Marples, Percy Young and Geoffrey Green.[11] While it would be easy to dismiss such texts as being trite, unintentionally biased or even incorrect, a good deal of what they produced formed the basis for football studies over many years. History has been a little unfair on this group, who were simply following contemporary accounts of the virtual disappearance of folk forms of football during the nineteenth century by the likes of Joseph Strutt and William Hone.[12] Additionally, they were, at that time, unaware of the existence of the organised working class subculture unearthed by Goulstone and Harvey. But perhaps the greatest flaw of this 'old school' method was the over-generalised nature of their conclusions on the early years of football, where they assumed that the diffusion of the game was governed by a 'one size fits all' approach, leading to the assumption that each area of the country was influenced by former public schoolboys returning home and spreading an 'Old Boy' gospel of muscular Christianity, fair play and a newly 'civilised' form of football. Dunning and Ken Sheard's ground-breaking study, *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*, continued in an 'orthodox' theme, while Graham Curry and Dunning's *Association Football* was, fundamentally, '*Barbarians* revisited', though following the soccer rather than rugby tangent after 1863.

Curry and Dunning stressed four points in their writings:

- Firstly, that there exists a direct link between mob/folk games of football and the modern form and that these varieties represent the antecedents of soccer and all other varieties of modern football. They are effectively part of the same long-term process. If there is no link, then where and how did the game first develop?
- Secondly, they suggested the hypothesis that as well as former public schoolboys and lower class groups, a local sporting elite, educated at a town or city's grammar school, often played a major part in the spread of the game.

- Thirdly, that the actual amount of data discovered and presented by Goulstone, Harvey and subsequent revisionists, is relatively weak, with challenges for matches issued in the press often not taking place and, given the time span involved, the data amounted to very few actual examples. Goulstone mentions 44 in 281 years, while Harvey notes 28 in 29 years.[13]
- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, in conversation, Eric Dunning would continually stress the importance of power in sociological enquiry. The lower class groups and individuals identified by revisionists had little influence on the key discussions, decisions and, ultimately, outcomes in the early decades of football's story. In short, the game was largely 'made' by former public schoolboys and, to a lesser degree by members of the various local sporting elites, both groups exerting a disproportionate influence on events. Indeed, Eliasian sociologists accept and champion the fact that multiple interdependencies exist by which everyone in a particular society, or, in fact, in various societies, can have an impact on sociological processes. All are important, but some are more important than others.

Over the ensuing years, various footballing academics became involved in the debate. Peter Swain's writings strongly featured lists of law-breaking by Victorian football players in small groups, making use of recently released digitised newspaper archives. However, although the activities listed were indicative of football being played in various communities, the games cited were usually low-key pursuits. Ultimately, two footballing lads involved in a kickabout would have exerted less power on football's debates than former participants in the Field Game as played at Eton College.[14] Gavin Kitching's interventions have been infrequent, though his main thrust has been to offer an alternative way of viewing the early game; that is, rather than examining the rules or laws of football, academics should analyse playing styles.[15] The problem with stressing this aspect is that rules/laws dictate ways of playing. An obvious example is that if a kicking variety of the game adopts a strict offside law, then it will be a mainly dribbling form as there is no option for a forward pass. But, more importantly, any analysis of lawmaking reaches into men's minds and, if the use of the feet over the hands is emphasised, then those particular framers of rules might be placed in the proto-soccer camp of the football dichotomy of the mid-nineteenth century. Tony Collins has contributed several articles and, more recently, a whole book on the subject.[16] He has positioned himself between the two paradigms, being mildly critical of both in the process. The weakest aspect

of his writing is his suggestion that there is no direct link from the violent and sometimes ritualistic mob and folk forms of the game to existing modern varieties.[17] Collins seems to reject a developmental, sociological process which strongly indicates a linear progression.

The impact of the debate

There appear to be three areas where the debate has made the greatest impact. Firstly, revisionists have added to the body of knowledge regarding football with the discovery of matches or instances of the game taking place outside the public school context. That Goulstone in *Football's Secret History* and Harvey in *Football: The First Hundred Years* present certain irrefutable pieces of evidence is beyond dispute. Furthermore, there can be no doubt that the original evidence which has been produced and offered for examination by Goulstone and Harvey is more than valuable, perhaps even groundbreaking.

There remains a distinct realisation that something more than former public schoolboy stimulation was responsible for the rapid rise of football in the pantheon of preferred sporting activities in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The game clearly already held a foothold in lower class society in a more regular form than the set piece mob/folk games conducted on festival days. This deep consciousness almost certainly added to any encouragement provided by returning or incumbent old boys and, although former public schoolboys coming home and teaching the local working class how to play football may smack of the partially discredited orthodox history of the game, it *did* happen to a considerable degree and is exhibited most frequently in local studies based around North East England, London, Nottinghamshire, South Derbyshire, Shrewsbury and Lincolnshire.[18] This is not to place the former public schoolboys on a footballing pedestal, whereby they were condescendingly instructing locals in a game with which the latter were unfamiliar. However, football *had* been moved on in the major public schools and the version that former public schoolboys were attempting to inculcate *was* more rational, more organised and more 'civilised', in that it was safer and less physical so could be played more regularly, though not an entirely new sport. The latter point may explain why versions of the game spread so quickly in the 1860s and 1870s.

Secondly, the contribution of Sheffield players and administrators has been underplayed by historians of previous eras. This oversight has been redressed and credit apportioned accordingly, though it appears important,

at this juncture, not to overemphasise their role. That the Sheffield footballing subculture represented one *almost* denuded of public school influence is highly significant and worthy of in-depth study. The fact that widespread club football first began in the city is, of course, also significant and several writers have tackled the difficult task of searching for reasons to explain this particular phenomenon.[19]

Thirdly, the over-generalised conclusions of latter-day football historians have been found wanting and largely been replaced by locally based studies which note the subtle levels of differing agencies of diffusion in various localities. A further word of caution should be added, however. Scholars should not 'throw the baby out with the bath water' and reject every suggestion presented by the likes of Morris Marples, Percy Young and Geoffrey Green. Their championing of former public schoolboys in this process is basically correct, though their degrees of influence varied from place to place. Yet, despite this, the way forward at present undoubtedly involves research based around such local models.

Local studies

Following the acceptance that the spread of early football usually differed in diverse regions, cities or towns, over the past decade scholars have concentrated on studying specific localities in order to tease out the exact people responsible for the game's initial diffusion. Graham Curry has produced a range of articles studying local early development of football in a number of contrasting areas. His conclusions are as follows:

- In Nottinghamshire there existed a high degree of former public schoolboy influence especially in the forming of Notts. County, while, conversely, members of the local sporting elite from Nottingham High School were involved with the founding of Nottingham Forest.[20]
- Another local sporting elite from Derby Grammar School developed a highly structured, early footballing subculture in South Derbyshire which pre-dated club formation in the city of Derby itself.[21]
- In London, largely because of the close proximity of four major public schools, Eton, Harrow, Charterhouse and Westminster, the early footballing subculture was overwhelmingly and perhaps predictably influenced by old boys from those institutions. However, support for their former school's football forms held back games between clubs in the metropolis.[22]

- Around Shrewsbury and Shropshire, both former public schoolboys from Shrewsbury School and a prominent local sporting elite aided diffusion in the area. In football's early days, players from the region were conspicuous in their involvement in developing the game on a national as well as local level.[23]
- Early football in the city of Lincoln was dominated by former public schoolboys who developed a rather physical form of the game, while smaller market towns such as Louth depended on local sporting elites from existing grammar schools.[24]
- Working with Kevin Neill and Eric Dunning, Curry found that there were three main strands of diffusion through which the game developed in and around Sheffield.[25] These were, firstly, the kicking and dribbling preferences of the former pupils of Sheffield Collegiate School, one of which, Nathaniel Creswick, became a co-founder of Sheffield FC, the first club side; the minimal though existing influence from the major public schools, with whom members of Sheffield FC communicated; and, finally, individuals from the Penistone/Thurlstone region to the north of the city. The latter appeared to be the most interesting, as there were three significant individuals from that area, John Shaw, John Marsh and John Dransfield, who played fundamental roles in Sheffield football between 1860 and 1880.

As well as the previously cited works of Adrian Harvey and Peter Swain, several other contributors have pursued research into local footballing subcultures. Gary James' investigations into Manchester's early football have been extensive and he has also sought to find alternatives ways of approaching the debate. He suggests a framework which would allow research at macro and micro level, treading a middle ground between the two competing paradigms of orthodoxy and revisionism. Despite Manchester's predominance in English football in the early years of the twenty-first century, it was rugby football that was perceived as the conurbation's leading team sport between 1870 and 1900.[26] Martyn Cooke's work on early football in the Potteries debunks the myth of Stoke City's formation in 1863, placing the club's foundation firmly in the year 1868. Significantly, however, Old Carthusians, former pupils of Charterhouse School, were still involved in the process. In general terms, he concludes that neither the orthodox nor the revisionist interpretations of the game's origins can fully explain the region's football development.[27] Finally, Ian Denness studied the nature and extent of football in Winchester prior to the formation of the city's first soccer club in 1884, thus rectifying the

imbalance between studies of industrialised regions, of which there have been many, and the relatively neglected semi-rural areas of the south of England. His work also involved an examination of the unique version of the game which evolved at Winchester College, and an exploration of the football played by the officers and men stationed at Winchester's city centre barracks. Denness specifically noted the influence of the area's middle class on football's development.[28]

The figurational sociology of Norbert Elias

Finally, in a book underpinned by the figurational sociology of Norbert Elias, it seems apposite to trace what is meant by this approach. Briefly, those key features of the figurational approach to sociology pioneered by Elias used in the text can be summarised as follows:

(i) There is the shared conviction that human individuals and the societies they form are *processes*. That is, there is an attempt to examine the emergence of a sociological feature over a period of time, rather than rely on static elements. Figurational sociology or process sociology as it is also known, is a perfect way of studying and interpreting historical human actions and interactions.

(ii) That the processes undergone by societies have tended up to now, especially in the longer term, to be mainly 'blind' in the sense of being the largely unintended consequences of aggregates of individual acts.

(iii) That *power* is a universal property of human relations at all levels of social integration and is, arguably and certainly in this text, the most important aspect. It is not explainable solely by reference to single factors such as Karl Marx's ideas of the ownership of production or Max Weber's ideas of the control of the means of violence.

(iv) That sociologists should see as their primary concern the accumulation of bodies of reliable knowledge. Elias suggested that, in a piece of research the aim should be, first of all by means of what he called 'a detour *via* detachment', to build up as 'reality-congruent' a picture of what a process actually involves and how and why it is socially, psychologically and historically generated.

(v) That Elias's theory of 'civilising processes' constitutes what he called a 'central theory', i.e. a theory through which a variety of apparently diverse

and separate social and psychological phenomena can be meaningfully studied. Contrary to a fairly widespread misconception, Elias did not use the concept or theory of 'civilising processes' in a moral or evaluative way. He usually enclosed the word 'civilisation' and its derivatives such as 'civilised' and 'civilising' in inverted commas in order to signal this. 'Civilising process' was for him a technical term. He did not intend to suggest by it that people who can be shown to stand at a more advanced level in a 'civilising process' than some others are in any meaningful sense 'better than' or 'morally superior' to people in the past. Elias identified a long-term decrease in violence and aggression within societies. As societies became more internally pacified, so the personality and habitus structures of the majority of their peoples became more peaceful and this was reflected, among other ways, in what began around the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to be called their 'sports'. The evidence suggests that this development in terminology began to take place firstly in England. Elias showed how, in the course of a 'civilising process', overtly violent conflicts tend to be transformed into relatively peaceful struggles for status, wealth and power.

The organisation of the text

Each chapter represents a linear approach in that events over the period of the two decades which span the years 1857 to 1877 will be examined in the context of a chosen theme or location. For instance, the first section concentrates on Sheffield, as the first major footballing subculture, and follows the story of the game in and around the city until 1877. Succeeding chapters will return to earlier dates and study proceedings within a different context, during which there will, almost inevitably, be a certain degree of overlap and the occasional intended but innocent repetition. Other contextual subjects include the move towards national rules, the effectiveness of the FA, the importance of Glasgow and examples of early professionalism. Let us begin with events in Sheffield.

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Notes

[1] 'Development of Modern Football', 133.
[2] See Curry, 'Up'Ards, Down'Ards and derbies'.
[3] The author agonised a little about whether to include Shrewsbury in this list. It was something of a geographically parochial school, though boys from there did excel in classics, particularly during Samuel Butler's reign (1798-1836) as Headmaster. However, the main reason for its inclusion is that Old Salopians, in particular JC Thring, were highly influential in football's development. For an interesting discussion around the subject of which schools should be considered as 'major' institutions, see Honey, *Tom Brown's Universe*, Chapter Four. Additionally, when the Public Schools Club announced the election of a committee in *The Times* (3 February 1865), the list only included Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Westminster and Winchester.

There is less reason to exclude Winchester, as it is, after all, the oldest of the major public schools, but its football code was and is somewhat problematic. Firstly, there is much paraphernalia attached to the game, especially the two canvas screens, now netting, which stretch down the length of the pitch on either side. Secondly, as with Shrewsbury, 'tyranny of distance' raises its head again as Winchester itself lies seventy miles south west of London and hardly puts the college at the centre of affairs.
[4] Certain schools had two or more forms of football, though former pupils appear to have championed only one of those codes when the modern game began to develop from the 1850s onward.
[5] The Shrewsbury School Register notes that Montagu left in 1838, whereas Venn (1940) records that he was admitted at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge on 8 December 1837. Montagu maintained that he did not begin at Cambridge until 1838 (Letter to George Fisher, 10 June 1897; Shrewsbury School Archives, 'Montagu 3'). Even if he did begin his University career in late 1837, it seems improbable that he would have possessed sufficient influence to partake in significant football rules revision as early as that date. This evidence leads me to conclude that the first Cambridge University Football Rules should, at present, be dated tentatively as 'around 1840'.
[6] Harvey, 'Epoch', Dunning, 'Curate's Egg'.
[7] Goulstone, *Secret History*.
[8] The majority of these records were sold by the club to an unknown buyer in 2011 for almost £1 million.
[9] Dunning, 'Curate's Egg'.
[10] For example, Dunning, 'The Development of Modern Football'.
[11] Marples, *History of Football*, Young, *History of British Football*, Green, *History of the Football Association*.
[12] Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes*; Hone, *Every-Day Book*.
[13] See Curry and Dunning, 'The problem with revisionism'.

[14] Swain, ‘The Origins of Football Debate’. See also Swain’s recently published book, *The Emergence of Football*.
[15] Kitching, ‘ “Old football” ’.
[16] Collins, *How Football Began*, Collins, ‘Early Football’.
[17] Collins, ‘Early Football’, 1132.
[18] Curry, ‘Football in the capital’, Joannou and Candlish, ‘Football hotbed’, Curry, ‘Stunted growth’, Curry and Dunning, ‘The early development of the game in Nottinghamshire’, Curry, ‘Early football in and around Shrewsbury’ and Curry, ‘Early football in Lincolnshire’.
[19] Harvey, ‘Epoch’ and Curry, *Crucible*, Chapter Two.
[20] Curry and Dunning, ‘The early development of the game in Nottinghamshire’.
[21] Curry, ‘Stunted Growth’.
[22] Curry, ‘Football in the capital’.
[23] Curry, ‘Early football in and around Shrewsbury’.
[24] Curry, ‘Early football in Lincolnshire’.
[25] Neill, Curry and Dunning, ‘Three men and two villages’.
[26] James, *The Emergence of Football Cultures*.
[27] Cooke, ‘The emergence of club football in “The Potteries” ’.
[28] Denness, ‘Football in Winchester, in town and college, before 1884’.

CHAPTER 1

SHEFFIELD, 1857-1877:
THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIMACY

The use of the word 'making' to describe the process by which football developed is not a new concept. It was a favoured form often employed by Eric Dunning to explain the history of the game. The word conjures up long term practices, developments, rather than single causes, whole societal events not simply restricted to particular subcultures or strata. In terms of this text, if the central hypothesis is that association football was essentially developed between the years 1857 and 1877, then the starting point to test this theory, not prove or disprove as this would suggest conclusions have already been drawn, must be the city of Sheffield.

Sheffield and manufacturing

To gain a wider perspective on football's development in Sheffield, it may be appropriate to mention very briefly events in a broader context. There is no doubt that the city itself has earned a worldwide reputation as a place where high quality steel and cutlery are manufactured. Certainly, though production of both has significantly decreased in recent years, Sheffield was the location for momentous events such as Benjamin Huntsman creating cast steel using the crucible method in 1742 and Henry Bessemer beginning his new process of steel production, it was and still is known as the Bessemer process, around 1856, which increased quantities and also lowered costs. Part of the production of cutlery was in the hands of 'little mesters', a term virtually exclusive to Sheffield. These men originally worked individually to make an item of cutlery from beginning to end. After changes in the scale of the process, larger companies would employ them to focus on a single stage of manufacture such as forging, grinding or finishing. Working in this way may have had some effect on the development of football in Sheffield, as the 'mesters' may have possessed the ability to work more flexibly. Indeed, there is evidence that the phenomenon known as Saint Monday, where workers regarded the day after the Sabbath as a

legitimate holiday, was particularly prevalent in the city.[1] Importantly, transport by railway to and from the city for passengers and goods was revolutionised by the opening of Victoria Station in 1851. For the purposes of this book, events connected with industrial growth in the 1850s, a decade in which football in the city began to take on a more organised form, may be linked to the game's development. However, while it is necessary to place football in its broader context, it would not, in a book underpinned by figurational sociology, be possible to accept that industrial practices, as part of a broader 'revolution', would provide the single cause of the city being a centre of innovation in terms of football and the game's growth around this time. On the contrary, this represents a type of Marxist economic reductionism, leading to a hypothesis built around monocausality, and, though it is possible to accept that such events did contribute in some way to the social processes of sports diffusion and innovation, they represented but one strand of a processual impetus. Rather, it is sociologically more plausible to propose a figuration of multiple interdependencies as stressed by Norbert Elias in which all human actions have some degree of influence, though some individuals and/or groups are more influential than others.

Early football activity in Sheffield

As the first modern footballing subculture, Sheffield must be the starting point. Football as a popular recreation existed before that date, but the first clubs formed specifically with the sole intention of allowing their members to play the newer forms of the game on a regular basis were founded in the city around that time. While many began in London and the surrounding area, even more were initiated in the Sheffield region. The district boasts the existence of the world's oldest recorded football club, Sheffield Football Club, founded in 1857, and by the early 1860s organised football on a limited scale was being played there. The narrative from this point is complex as, although football played in Sheffield resembled a proto-soccer variety, it was not association football. To talk of football in the late 1850s as soccer would be an anachronism, as that game did not surface until late 1863 at the early meetings of the Football Association.

The years immediately prior to the emergence of an organised footballing subculture produced references to the game in and around Sheffield which are reminiscent of activity in virtually every other area of the country (See Table 1.1). Local newspapers recorded the incidence of a sport which was played almost spontaneously, the games could not have been entirely spontaneous as forethought was required to bring a ball, at minor celebrations

in and around the city. There were ten references to football in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 1 January 1850 to 31 December 1859 and these included football at Sunday school celebrations, festivities for the workforces of Henry Wilkinson at Endcliffe Hall and John Kenyon in Hyde Park, together with two instances of prosecutions for unlawfully engaging in the game. By 1860 the first references started to appear concerning Sheffield Football Club, involving reports of organised matches against external opponents and soon other clubs, such as Hallam, York and Pitsmoor began to form.

Table 1.1: Football in the Sheffield area (1 January 1850 to 29 March 1862)

Date played	Teams	Venue	Date of report
05.06.1854	Individuals fined for playing football on the highway	Wentworth	24.06.1854
12.08.1854	Football at a presentation to Henry Wilkinson	Endcliffe Hall	19.08.1854
03.03.1855	Football being played on the approach to Victoria Station	Sheffield	24.03.1855
31.05.1856	Celebrations for workforce	Hyde Park	07.06.1856
01.06.1857	Football at Whitsuntide	Norfolk Park	06.06.1857
17.12.1860	Officers of the 58th Regiment v. Sheffield Football Club	Hillsborough	20.12.1860[2]
24.12.1860	Officers of the 58th Regiment v. The Football Club [Sheffield FC]	Hillsborough	29.12.1860
26.12.1860	Hallam and Stumperlow [sic] v. Sheffield	Sandygate	28.12.1860[3]
09.03.1861	Collegiate School v. Hallam 2nd XI	Unknown	12.03.1861[4]
16.03.1861	Sheffield v. Stumperlow [sic] and Hallam	East Bank	23.03.1861
23.11.1861	12 of Sheffield v. 18 of Norton*	East Bank	05.12.1861
26.11.1861	4th West Yorkshire Artillery Volunteers v. 1st West Yorkshire Engineer Volunteers	Hyde Park	29.11.1861
04.12.1861	3 of Sheffield v. 6 of Norton*	East Bank	05.12.1861
27.12.1861	Pitsmoor v. Engineers	Pitsmoor	28.12.1861[5]
28.12.1861	Sheffield v. Hallam	Hyde Park	30.12.1861
01.01.1862	Hallam v. Pitsmoor (14-a-side)	None given	02.01.1862[6]

13.01.1862	4th West Yorkshire Artillery Volunteers v. 1st West Yorkshire Engineer Volunteers	Endcliffe	14.01.1862
11.01.1862	Six of Norton v. Four of Sheffield*	The Oaks Park, Norton[7]	14.01.1862
18.01.1862	Sheffield v. Pitsmoor (16-a-side)	East Bank	20.01.1862
25.01.1862	Pitsmoor v. Hallam (14-a-side)	Pitsmoor	01.02.1862
27.01.1862	4 of Sheffield v. 6 of Norton*	East Bank	28.01.1862
01.02.1862	14 'Players' of Hallam v. 'Gentlemen' of Hallam*	'In front of Stumperlow [sic] Hall'	04.02.1862
15.02.1862	Pitsmoor v. York	Pitsmoor	18.02.1862[8]
04.03.1862	Sheffield v. Hallam	Newhall	05.03.1862
29.03.1862	Norton v. Hallam	The Oaks Park, Norton	01.04.1862[9]

- * Indicates number of players in each team.
- There were three more probable fixtures to add to the list. The first was York against Sheffield FC on 7 November 1861, Pitsmoor v. Sheffield on 26 December 1861and York against Pitsmoor on 6 January 1862. However, these were advertisements on the day of the match and no report exists in the press after the game had been played.
- All information gathered from the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* unless stated in an endnote.

Pitsmoor Football Club

One of the most interesting clubs to be formed in the early days of Sheffield football was Pitsmoor FC. Like so many of the city's soccer institutions, the football section sprang out of an existing cricket section, beginning on 7 November 1861.[10] In that season, 1861-2, they played seven games (if we accept that the three matches noted below Table 1.1 were completed), a good number for a new club, against Sheffield FC (twice), Hallam (twice), York (twice) and Engineers, before rounding off their campaign, as was the case with most early clubs, with an athletic sports event on 7 April 1862. Four results are extant, Pitsmoor beat Engineers 1-0, lost to Hallam twice by 0-1 and 0-2 and drew with Sheffield 0-0. This is significant because, from the following season, the Pitsmoor club, probably along with Norfolk, came to be recognised as the leading team in Sheffield, at least on the field of play. They certainly recorded a good number of victories, but these are tempered somewhat when one examines their record a little more closely. Their early results, as we have seen in the beginning of this paragraph, included two reverses against Hallam. Secondly, their initial prominence probably relied upon the fact that, in four games against Sheffield during

1862-3, including two first team and two second eleven matches, they gained four victories. These successes, of course, were magnified by the fact that they had beaten Sheffield FC, who were regarded as the benchmark of football in the city. However, from early times and even in the modern era, Sheffield FC has never been thought of as a particularly successful team in terms of winning matches or trophies and Pitsmoor's triumphs, while being praiseworthy, should not be over-exaggerated. At the end of the 1862-3 season, a report in the press said that Pitsmoor had been 'very successful this season, having played thirteen matches against the best clubs in the town, and defeating all of them in one game, and some both in the first matches and the return', reflecting well on an organisation in only its second year.[11] Regrettably, in November 1866 and January 1867, the club suffered two notable defeats to Norfolk, another club vying for the title of Sheffield's leading side, the reverses denting their enviable record.[12] Although they enjoyed a particularly successful year in 1867, it is significant that they were beaten in that year in the first round of the Youdan Cup by Broomhall by two rouges to no score. *The Sportsman* was particularly unimpressed by their performance, while noting that Broomhall's victory was 'unexpected', the reporter also added that Pitsmoor's defeat was mainly attributable to their especially 'feeble' play.[13]

Some of the names linked with the early years of Pitsmoor FC are worthy of note and present a rather solid middle class representation at the club. Within the advertisement for the first athletic sports were the names of the officers and an indication of their social status. Henry Hawksley was a hatter on the High Street in the city, George Edward Swift[14] worked at John Brown's Atlas Steel and Spring Works as a steel manager, John Langley was a publican at the New Inn, Verdon Street, George Edward Cadman jointly ran the family firm of steel merchants at Canal Works, while Joseph Henry Littlewood, described as the captain, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer in early newspaper reports, was a silversmith at Henry Wilkinson's in Norfolk Street. This was the same Henry Wilkinson whose workforce enjoyed a game of football at a presentation to the firm's owner back in August 1854 (See Table 1.1). By the following season, 1867-8, the team were conspiring to lose twice to little-known Redhill and, by late 1869 they were somewhat in disarray, losing five goals to nil to Mackenzie with the report noting that 'The Pitsmoor being several players short…' were decisively beaten.[15] Finally, they had to accept that they had been superseded by younger clubs when, in losing by a single goal to Wednesday, the scoreline was not representative of Wednesday's superiority, 'from the beginning it was evident that the Pitsmoor players were over-matched'.[16] Rubbing salt into

the wound, one of their original committee men, Henry Hawksley, had jumped ship by this time to become Vice-President of both Wednesday's cricket and football sections in 1868, becoming President two years later and remaining in post for a further seventeen years.[17]

The last extant game played by the club appeared to take place on 11 March 1871, when they were narrowly defeated by Walkley by one goal to nil.[18] Despite this, for the next fifteen years the area of Pitsmoor did not lack for football teams. The following, with the name 'Pitsmoor' preceding their narrower designation, were noted as playing football games: Red Rose, Christ Church, Excelsior, Juniors, United, Standard and, finally, Albany. Additionally, a club merely using Pitsmoor as its title, made a brief appearance in the 1881-2 campaign, being recorded in the press as playing both Grimesthorpe United and All Saints.[19] Nothing else is heard of them until 1886 when the Pyebank club were allowed by the Sheffield FA to change their name to Pitsmoor FC, thus resurrecting the former organisation.[20] The reason for the alteration is not given, but there was no great geographical divide, with the two areas, or hamlets as they still were in the mid-1880s, being barely one mile apart.[21]

York Football Club

The other early club of great interest should have been York Athletic Sports and Football Club, but despite encouraging signs, the organisation led a strange existence. They suffered from being great advertisers of forthcoming matches but not energetic reporters of events. As noted below Table 1.1, two York matches went unreported and, frustratingly, there can be no certainty that those encounters actually took place. The club, named after the still existing (in 2020) York Hotel in Broomhill, Sheffield, was busy in the latter part of 1862, meeting the likes of Pitsmoor, Norton, Sheffield FC[22] and Collegiate School. They are often remembered for the fact that their first President was none other than Nathaniel Creswick, of Sheffield FC fame, leaving us to ponder whether this had been a proselytising gesture on Creswick's part or whether he and other Sheffield FC members were almost deliberately fostering another organisation against which to compete. The real problems with York FC was that they were particularly unsuccessful and gave the distinct impression of being an adjunct of Sheffield FC. When they played Sheffield FC on 15 November 1862, they fielded fourteen men against their opponents' eleven[23] and against Norton on 24 January 1863 they could only raise nine men in a twelve-a-side encounter.[24] At their athletic sports of 7 September 1863, Sheffield FC officials virtually ran the