

**The Transformation
of Elite-Level
Association
Football in England,
1970 to the present**

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PhD Thesis

Queen Mary University of London

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to provide the first academic account and analysis of the vast changes that took place in English professional football at the top level from 1970 to the present day. It examines the factors that drove those changes both within football and more broadly in English society during this period. The primary sources utilised for this study include newspapers, reports from government inquiries, football fan magazines, memoirs, and oral histories, inter alia.

This thesis is organised into five main chapters, along with an introduction and conclusion. In the introduction, the historiography of modern English football is dissected in order to contextualise my dissertation in terms of the existing literature. The first chapter explores the theme of football in decline from 1970 to the mid-1980s – diminishing crowds and attempts to reverse that trend, poor grounds, and increasing hooliganism. The second chapter examines the seminal event of the Hillsborough disaster, including the attitude of the police and press towards fans, the Taylor Report and the rebuilding of football stadia. The third looks at the Premiership, examining the reasons for its formation and its impact on the game, such as changes in supporter experience. The fourth chapter assesses the internationalisation of the game, in the era of the Bosman Ruling, as players were drawn to play in England not only from the continent but from around the world. The fifth chapter examines the advent of foreign ownership of English football clubs, assessing both its positive and negative consequences. All of these developments are anchored in a discussion of the broader social, economic, and political changes in modern Britain - including Thatcherism and the dominance of free-market economics, consumerism, and shifts in youth culture – that help to explain the salient changes in English football.

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List of abbreviations

AFC	Association Football Club
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BSB	British Satellite Broadcasting
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
DIC	Dubai International Capital
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
EGM	Extraordinary General Meeting
FA	Football Association
FC	Football Club
FIFA	Federation of International Football Associations
FSA	Football Supporters Association
IMUSA	Independent Manchester United Supporters Association
ITV	Independent Television
NFL	National Football League*
NTST	Northampton Town Supporters Trust
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
PLC	Public Limited Company
PFA	Professional Footballers Association
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UK	United Kingdom
WSC	When Saturday Comes

* This is the league for American Football

Introduction

In the 1970s, a fan would attend an elite professional game of football in England, paying less than £1 to pass through a turnstile and stand on the terraces to watch the team. The terrace itself might have a roof, but often it did not, and in this case the supporter would be exposed to all the elements the British winter might bring. Little had changed by 1983, bar inflationary increases in admission price, and the American journalist Bill Buford describes his experience of standing on the terraces at two games in that year, the first a visit to White Hart Lane to watch Tottenham Hotspur:

I do remember that we were late and that it took twenty minutes of pushing, grabbing squeezing, groaning, inching, striving, wrestling before finally securing our place, a tiny expanse of cold concrete step, crushed between a number of lads – how else to describe them? – ten years younger than me and five stone heavier whose passion for expression seldom went beyond the simple yet effectively direct (and often repeated) phrase: ‘you fuckin’ bastard.’¹

The second was a visit to Stamford Bridge to watch Chelsea:

I entered ... and emerged from the turnstile to find people everywhere, on the steps, sitting atop fences, on posts, suspended from bits of architecture ... I joined the mob pushing its way through for a place from which to watch the match. Except that there was no place. There was a movable crush ... I couldn’t move left or right, let alone turn around and walk back the way I came. There was only one direction: forward. For some reason, there was an advantage, an advantage worth defending, in being one step ahead of wherever it was that you happened to be. And that was where everybody was trying to go.²

¹ Bill Buford, *Among The Thugs* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1991), p.16.

² *Ibid.*, pp.17-18.

He summarizes with a sense of incredulity:

It appeared that, in exchange for a few pounds, you received one hour and forty-five minutes characterized by the greatest possible exposure to the worst possible weather, the greatest number of people in the smallest possible space and the greatest number of obstacles – unreliable transport, no parking, an intensely dangerous crush at the only exit, a repellent polio pond to pee into ... to keep you from ever attending a match again. And yet, here they all were, having their Saturday.³

By 1970, most of the players in the team were on a good wage by the standards of the day, but their earnings were no higher than those of some of the more affluent fans sat in the seats in the main stand. The players on view were usually English, or at least British, and many in the home team may have come from the local area. If players moved from one club to another they signed for a transfer fee that was usually a five figure number. A top player might command a fee in excess of £100,000, but the first £250,000 player was still four years in the future.

There were three domestic competitions, namely the League, the FA Cup and the League Cup. The League was divided into four divisions – as one might expect, First, Second, Third, and Fourth. The FA Cup enjoyed equal ‘parity and esteem’ with the League, but arguably the FA Cup final itself carried a greater sense of occasion, being held at Wembley on the last day of the domestic season. The FA Cup final was the only domestic game broadcast live on television. Fans who wished to see football on television had to be content with the two main ‘highlights’ packages on offer – the BBC’s *Match of the Day* or ITV’s *The Big Match*. The League Cup meanwhile was the third competition and had only been

³ Ibid., p.19.

in existence since the 1960/1961 season, with finals at Wembley only from 1967 onwards. The sociologist Gareth Hopkins argues that the League Cup was introduced by the League to challenge the position in power of the FA, and therefore had importance from that point of view.⁴ The team that finished top of the League were League Champions and as such entered the European Cup. This was a knock-out competition between the champions of European countries, culminating in a match between the two finalists that took place just after the end of the domestic season. The teams that finished just below the League Champions entered the UEFA Cup and the FA Cup winners entered the Cup Winners Cup.

The supporter was usually a man. Women did attend football matches, but they were a small minority in what was largely a male preserve. Sports sociologist David Goldblatt, in *The Game Of Our Lives*, states that ‘although there was a female presence in football crowds, somewhere between 5 and 10 per cent of the audience, they are almost absent from the collective historical memory.’⁵ The man was almost always white and from a working-class background. The cheap admission price meant that football provided regular entertainment that was within his financial means. There was also the ‘aggro’. Soccer hooliganism had appeared and taken a hold during the course of the 1960s. Groups of young men fought each other on the basis of club loyalty, sometimes around the ground or travelling to or from the game, but often inside the ground itself. It became a matter of ‘kudos’ on the hooligan grapevine for a group of visiting fans to ‘take’ an end. That meant invading an area occupied by the home supporters, driving them out and maintaining a hold on the

⁴ Gareth Hopkins, ‘The Football Association v. The Football League: using the Football League Cup as a window for exploration’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 13, No. 1, January 2012, pp.19-29.

⁵ David Goldblatt, *The Game Of Our Lives: the meaning and making of English football*, (London: Penguin, 2014), p.281.

territory. This did not happen at every match, and most games passed off peacefully, but it was a regular enough occurrence for it to be a matter of concern.

To sum up, then, football in 1970 was working-class, male, and often violent. Forward to 2017. The fan attending a match now sits because the ground is all-seater. For this reason, and because there is a far better standard of organisation, he has a far greater degree of comfort than his predecessor decades earlier. It may well be a new stadium, the old one having been demolished. If this has not happened and the football ground is on the same site, it will be unrecognisable from that which stood there in 1970. It is likely that he will have paid for his ticket online in advance, and will have paid anything from £20 to £65 for his ticket, depending on the level of football he is watching and where he chooses to sit in the stadium. The team he watches could well include a majority of players from overseas, from other European nations, or from further afield in South America, Africa, Asia, or Oceania. The players will be earning more in one week than he earns in a year, and at the highest level considerably more. Those who transfer between clubs do so for tens of millions at the elite level, and for at least a six figure sum further down. A four tier league structure remains, but the top division is called the Premier League and the divisions below, in descending order, are the Championship, League One and League Two. The FA Cup seems to be a second priority to the Premier League, and the League Cup is called something different (at present it is the **EFL** Cup). The fan can view live football on any day of the week on satellite television, with some Premier League games scheduled for Saturday evenings, Monday nights, and Sunday afternoons with staggered kick-off times. There are also European Champions League games on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, and Europa League games on Thursday evenings. To view all of this he may pay a subscription fee to Sky or BT Sport, or he may choose to watch the game on television in

his local pub, as has become popular. The top four teams enter the Champions League. The three finishing just below enter the Europa League. There is no Cup Winners Cup.

The Premier League would grow from its inception as a breakaway league into a Premiership that was largely predictable due to the disparity in resources between the top clubs who were in receipt of money from the Champions League, the middle clubs, and the strugglers – effectively three divisions within one. However, in 2015/2016, there would come an exception that would prove this rule. In 2014/2015, their first season back in the Premiership, Leicester City struggled, spending 140 days at the bottom of the table, until an impressive run of seven wins in nine games saw them avoid relegation.⁶ During the summer manager Nigel Pearson was replaced by Claudio Ranieri, the former Chelsea manager. Leicester started the new season displaying the good form with which they had finished the old one. When Leicester went top of the table in January, they stayed there.⁷ The title was finally clinched on 2 May when their nearest rivals, Tottenham Hotspur, only managed a 2-2 draw away to Chelsea, making it impossible for them to catch Leicester's point tally. Leicester had started the season as 5000-1 outsiders in the bookmakers.⁸ What made their feat so remarkable was that they had achieved their success with only a fraction of the expenditure of their big-name rivals, as the table below shows. As Gordon Rayner and Oliver Brown put it in *The Daily Telegraph*: 'Leicester City won the Premier League with a team of rejects, retreads and nobodies assembled at a cost of ... less than a quarter

⁶ John Percy, 'Ranieri: I Am So Proud – This Is An Amazing Feeling', *The Daily Telegraph*, Sport p. 2.

⁷ 'Title Deeds: How The Foxes' Tale Unfolded', *The Daily Telegraph*, Sport souvenir supplement, pp.2-7.

⁸ Daniel Binns, 'Zeroes To Heroes', *Metro*, 3 May 2016.

the value of other title challengers.⁹ Ranieri achieved success by moulding his players into a team rather than a collection of individual stars.

Table 1. *Leicester City's Premiership winning team 2015/2016*

Player	Position	Signed	Selling club	Cost
M. Albrighton	Midfield	May 2014	Aston Villa	Free
R. De Laet	Defender	May 2012	Manchester United	undiscl.
D. Drinkwater	Midfield	Jan 2012	Manchester United	undiscl.
N. Dyer	Midfield	-----	Swansea City (loan)	-----
C. Fuchs	Defender	Jun 2015	FC Schalke 04	Free
D. Gray	Forward	Jan 2016	Birmingham City	£3.5m
R. Huth	Defender	Jun 2015	Stoke City	£3m
Kante	Midfield	Aug 2015	SM Caen	£5.6m
A. King	Midfield	Jan 2007	-----	trainee
R. Mahrez	Midfield	Jan 2014	Le Havre AC	£0.56m
W. Morgan	Defender	Jan 2012	Nottingham Forest	undiscl.
S. Okazaki	Forward	Jul 2015	FSV Mainz 05	£7m
J. Schlupp	Midfield	Jul 2010	-----	trainee
K. Schmeichel	Goal	Jun 2011	Leeds United	undiscl.
D. Simpson	Defender	Aug 2014	Queen's Park Rangers	undiscl.
L. Ulloa	Forward	Jul 2014	Brighton & Hove Albion	£8m
J. Vardy	Forward	May 2012	Fleetwood Town	£1m

Source: www.soccerbase.com/team/team.sd?season_id=1527&teamTabs=transfers last

accessed 10 May 2016.

It should be noted, however, that Leicester's achievement was assisted by certain other factors. They suffered no long-term injuries to key players and, perhaps most importantly, the teams who would normally be expected to do well had a disappointing season, almost without exception. Chelsea's start was so poor they spent the early part of the season nearer the bottom of the table than the top of it; Manchester United still seemed to be coming to

⁹ Gordon Rayner and Oliver Brown, 'Rhapsody In Blue On Leicester's Night Fantastic', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 May 2016.

terms with their post-Alex Ferguson era; Liverpool were sufficiently disappointing to feel the need to dispense with manager Brendan Rodgers and replace him with Jurgen Klopp. None of this, however, should detract from what was a remarkable achievement, but the sociologist Stephen Wagg sounds a note of caution about the Premier League in general: ‘the Premier League is no lovelier for Leicester’s winning of it. It is still and will remain the rigged one arm bandit that it always has been.’¹⁰

To return to our notional fan, in 2017 it is much more likely that ‘he’ might be a ‘she’. There are far more women at football matches than before. Exactly how many is hard to quantify, and it is a statistic that will vary from area to area and from club to club. It is certainly true that clubs have tried to attract women and families. One of the big successes in recent years has been the growth in women’s football, so the popularity of the game is manifesting itself in this manner. Ethnically, there has been less change. The number of black fans still make up a very small percentage of the overall crowd, even in areas with a large black population, and Asian fans are even rarer. As for the ‘aggro’, he will not see any. What little there is will take place away from the ground and involve far fewer numbers.

It is, therefore, something of an understatement to say that football has been transformed. The changes are wide and include most aspects of the game - fan experience, organisational format, media coverage, commercialisation, international make-up of the teams, and club ownership. The purpose of this thesis is to chart these changes, and consider what factors

¹⁰ Stephen Wagg, ‘Under No Illusions’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 352, June 2016, pp.20-21.

were driving them, together with the debates regarding the necessity or otherwise of these developments.

This is the story of football in England and the changes that have taken place in the game from the 1970s to the present. It is a topic that is central to the history of English popular culture in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, and it also speaks to the evolving character of English society in that period. This is not about which team won which trophy in which season, except where such facts illustrate a wider point, but about the changes in the game's consumption and experience by supporters, who have themselves changed during the period. The topic is contemporary by nature and raises a number of issues. These include how the nature of English football has changed and in what way these developments have manifested themselves. In turn this also raises the question of how and to what extent these changes reflect wider society, and indeed the extent to which changes in football have impacted on wider society, in a symbiotic relationship. As the nation's most popular sport, the story of football is significant to millions, and reaches beyond them to society as a whole. It is not a total history. The subject of corruption in football has been avoided because it lends little to this particular study, nor is it a study of iconic individuals, except where the fame of a particular player is so great it impacts on wider societal trends. Likewise, the study is of English football, so there is very little reference to the game in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. For reasons of space and focus, I have also confined my study to analysis of the game's elite: the higher levels of domestic football.

As a new generation of academics promote the idea that sport and its history are worthy of study, it is important to consider the literature that currently exists regarding football during the period in question. Some of this has been produced by serious-minded journalists and carries a polemical edge. The journalist David Conn, in *The Football Business*, looks at the Premiership and condemns its formation as being motivated by the greed of a few directors and owners, at the expense of ordinary fans. Its formation, he argues, was also a consequence of the growing dominance of a handful of big clubs over the rest. Those clubs sought an ever-increasing percentage of the revenue from television broadcasting deals. The arrival of satellite broadcasting meant that there was a new competitor, effectively breaking the cartel enjoyed by the BBC and ITV. The Premiership breakaway could not have happened, Conn argues, without the rivalry between football's governing bodies. When the League produced its proposal for power-sharing, the FA interpreted it as a threat, and in response suggested a Premier League under its own authority, separate to that of the League. According to Conn, the FA betrayed its own ethos as custodians of the game by backing its formation.¹¹ As will be discussed, there is much to commend Conn's thesis, but his focus is limited to the framework of football's organisational structure and revenues from television broadcasters, merchandising, and the cost to supporters. To fully understand the changes to English football at the highest level, one needs to take a wider focus.

The sociologist Anthony King, in *The End of the Terraces*, takes a different view from Conn as he maintains that the formation of the Premiership was necessary as football had to adapt to new political and economic realities brought about by free-market principles.¹²

¹¹ David Conn, *The Football Business* (Edinburgh: Mainstream 2002 reprint), pp.151-152.

¹² Anthony King, *The End Of The Terraces: the transformation of English football in the 1990s* (Leicester: Leicester 2002 revised paperback edition), pp. 67-68.

He goes on to argue that ‘the increased revenue and its new redistribution to the top clubs in the Premier League has facilitated the transformation of football’ and ‘improved the cultural position of the game,’ pointing out that this money has ‘financed the building of new stadia and has enabled these clubs to attract top overseas players who have improved the standard of the League.’¹³ Although challenging Conn’s fundamental argument, King stays within the same points of reference, namely that of the Premiership and its consumption.

Other works, such as those by historians James Walvin and Matthew Taylor, entitled *The People’s Game* and *The Association Game* respectively, provide a longer narrative and analysis of the history of English football since its origins, and as such, are necessarily brief when dealing with the more recent period. In his epilogue, Taylor highlights a paradox in that football’s boom has also given rise to pessimism over the growing inequalities between the top clubs and the rest, the shift from sport to business, which manifests itself in the escalation in players’ wages, meaning that top footballers are both celebrated and derided, and the view that as a result of the shift from sport to business some traditional fans are being excluded.¹⁴

John Samuels, professor in business finance, focusses in *The Beautiful Game Is Over*, not on the Premiership but on globalisation and the concentration of power into the hands of only those who have a lot of money.¹⁵ He argues that this is largely predictable, and is ‘the

¹³ Ibid., p.68.

¹⁴ Matthew Taylor, *The Association Game: a history of British football* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), pp.426-428.

¹⁵ John Samuels, *The Beautiful Game Is Over: the globalisation of football* (Brighton: Book Guild, 2008), p.287.

result of the globalisation of the football business and the impact of free market forces.’¹⁶ The game is not in good health, he states, because most Premiership games are not of a high standard and the performance of the national team is mediocre. Despite this, fans are being ‘brainwashed’ by the media telling them that the Premier League is the best in the world, and that England have a chance of winning international tournaments.¹⁷ The game, according to Samuels, has become dominated by a handful of clubs, leaving all the others with only a miniscule chance of success, while the sport as a whole has drifted away from its base in local communities towards being a brand of TV entertainment.¹⁸

Goldblatt’s *The Game Of Our Lives* is incisive and brings together many aspects of the modern game, but the tone is sociological rather than historical. The work is organised thematically. The chapters commence with the new football economy, likening it to the private housing market and speculative property development.¹⁹ Other chapters deal with: the experience of going to a match, an observational journey around England taking in football clubs in relation to their economic, occupational, and cultural surroundings; the game as experienced by black players; shortcomings in the game’s governance; and the role of women in football and women’s football. He concludes by examining the glaring difference in financial resources – the ‘opulence and squalor’ – between the Premier League and the game at the grassroots level of schools and youth football, but he makes the observation that the difference within football is trifling when compared to ‘the fabric of everyday life’ where the ‘consequences are altogether harsher.’²⁰ Goldblatt presents a broad

¹⁶ Ibid., p.1.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.2.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.1, pp. 14-15.

¹⁹ Goldblatt, *Game Of Our Lives*, p.1.

²⁰ Ibid., p.302.

picture because he incorporates wider sociological observation into certain themes currently of interest within English football.

Thus it can be seen that most of the existing works either focus on specific aspects within the area of research, or cover a longer, more diffuse, chronological period. They do not cover comprehensively the broad topic of social and cultural change in the game between 1970 and the contemporary era. Certain topics within the thesis have been covered in academic journals. Good examples of these are Dilwyn Porter's article on decline and 'declinism', research by Gary Armstrong on 'The Blades', a gang of Sheffield United hooligans, and Alan Tomlinson's work on the rivalry between the FA and the League, to name just three.²¹ Porter also co-wrote, with Scott Newton, *Modernization Frustrated: the politics of industrial decline in Britain since 1900*.²² Articles published in academic journals detail certain topics which are very specific within the overall theme, but as such provide quality sources to detail these themes or support an argument. The most commonly used are *Soccer & Society*, *Sport in History*, and the *International Journal of the History of Sport*. The contemporary nature of the subject means that it is a process still under way, rather than one that can be boxed into the past. Trends such as increasing revenue from satellite television broadcasters, the international movement of players, and the number of clubs in foreign ownership, could well continue to develop into the future.

²¹ Dilwyn Porter, "'Your Boys Took One Hell Of A Beating!': English Football And British Decline, c.1950-80", in eds. Adrian Smith and Dilwyn Porter, *Sport And National Identity In The Post-War World* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 31-51; Gary Armstrong, 'False Leeds: The Construction Of Hooligan Confrontations', in eds. Richard Giulianotti and John Williams, *Game Without Frontiers: football, identity and modernity*, (Aldershot: Arena, 1994), pp. 299-325; Alan Tomlinson, 'North And South: The Rivalry Of The Football League And The Football Association', in eds. John Williams and Stephen Wagg, *British Football And Social Change: Getting Into Europe* (Leicester: Leicester, 1991), pp.25-47.

²² Scott Newton and Dilwyn Porter, *Modernization Frustrated: the politics of industrial decline in Britain since 1900* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988).

The purpose of this thesis is to offer the first comprehensive academic analysis of the recent transformation of English football. The changes in the game's organisational format, most notably the establishment of the Premiership, need to be considered alongside the development of football stadia, and the evolution of the European club competitions. These processes need to be considered individually, but they occurred simultaneously, and their impact was collective. They paved the way for an influx of foreign players into English football in a process of internationalisation which led in turn to a greater number of clubs in foreign ownership. Together, they brought about a revolution in the nature of England's most popular sport.

This thesis is therefore about change, and that is the reason for the chronological boundaries I have chosen. As the 1970s dawned, the game had changed little in essence since the First World War. By 1914 most clubs owned the grounds that would be their home for the rest of the century. Once the League expanded from two to four divisions at the start of the 1920s, the only change was the scrapping of regionalisation in the lower divisions in 1958. Attendances may have fluctuated: for example the late 1940s saw bumper crowds followed by a slow decline, but in broad terms a fan in 1970 experienced a game that had changed little since that witnessed by his grandfather's generation fifty years earlier. There were two important exceptions to this statement. The first concerned the growth of the football pools, which became very important in the 1930s, and familiarised millions with the game, even if they were not regular football fans. Secondly, media coverage - radio, and then television - had begun to influence the game. On top of this, there were other portents of greater change, with the abolition of the maximum wage in 1961, the end of the 'retain and transfer' system, whereby a player could be retained by a club against his wishes, two years later, and England hosting - and winning - the World Cup in 1966, which helped increase interest

in the game. The following decades would see a revolution in football, driven by internal and external factors, and the purpose of this thesis is to examine this seismic shift, and to set it in a broader context by considering how changes in football reflected changes in, and had an impact on, wider society.

The themes to be examined will be football's decline and renewal, the rebuilding of stadia following the Taylor Report, the changes in organisational format including the creation of the Premiership and the Champions League, the greater international movement of players following the Bosman Ruling, and the shift to club ownership by wealthy foreign businessmen. Running throughout are the associated topics of the evolving media coverage of football and the game's commercialisation. Necessarily the primary sources used for this research include newspapers, mainly the broadsheets of *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* and their Sunday equivalents *The Sunday Times*, *The Sunday Telegraph*, and *The Observer*. Newspapers are a very helpful source for this topic because they report details within hours of a game or an event happening, and therefore relate all the information in a contemporary context. At times it has been necessary to include sources from the tabloid newspapers. As well as the infamous allegations published in *The Sun* about Liverpool fans a few days after the Hillsborough disaster, which in themselves demonstrated adequately the certain prejudices held about football supporters, the use of the tabloid press gives us an angle that is direct, outspoken and succinct. Their use also broadens the source base. They have been used to relate opinions on television deal negotiations, to graphically paint certain incidents of hooliganism, and detail the poor treatment of clubs by foreign owners. The fact that many clubs simply did not bother to keep information such as accounts or player registrations beyond their legal requirements and obligations to the Football Association means that for many years there was an absence

of formal club archives. As an example of football clubs' attitude towards such things, Irving Scholar says that when he took over Tottenham Hotspur, 'in a wander through the West Stand I found long side areas that had been left unfinished, and in an unused office numerous Spurs trophies and cups stuffed into a cubby-hole.'²³ Spurs were not the only club with such a lackadaisical attitude. John Williams, in an article on Liverpool, commented that 'archaic administrative and ownership arrangements for football clubs ... actually characterized much of the first 100 years of professional football in England.'²⁴ The historian Martin Johnes points out that, 'most sporting organisations are very "present-centred" so record keeping is poor or even non-existent, especially amongst smaller clubs. Moreover, professional sports organizations can be suspicious of outsiders and reluctant to grant access to researchers. Nor do they always value or understand what they do hold and many historians have heard tales of clubs throwing away records in tidy-ups or to make space.'²⁵

This makes research dependent on newspapers and magazines. In accessing these I have used the British Library Newspaper Archive at Colindale, and the British Library Newsroom at St. Pancras. The British Library also provided access to editions of certain 'fanzines', such as the national *When Saturday Comes*, and individual club fanzines *The Peterborough Effect* (Peterborough United), *Voice Of The Valley* (Charlton Athletic), and *A Kick Up The Rs* (Queen's Park Rangers). The National Archives at Kew provided details of Cabinet discussions regarding outbreaks of hooliganism, and also access to the Popplewell Report into the Bradford Fire of 1985. I also conducted interviews to gain oral

²³ Irving Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors: dreams and nightmares at Spurs* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1992), p.45.

²⁴ John Williams, 'Walking Alone Together The Liverpool Way: fan culture and 'clueless' Yanks', *Soccer & Society*, vol. 13, No. 3, May 2012, p.430.

²⁵ Martin Johnes, 'Archives And Historians Of Sport', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, vol. 32, No. 15, 2015, p.1785.

history sources. As examples of these, I spoke to the sports consultant Alex Fynn, the academic Rogan Taylor, and former hooligan Patrick Slaughter. Autobiographies have also provided useful primary source material, such as Greg Dyke's *Inside Story*, Dick Knight's *Madman*, and Irving Scholar's *Behind Closed Doors*. Those from players include Stanley Matthews' *The Way It Was*, John Barnes' *The Autobiography* and Garry Nelson's *Left Foot Forward*.

Footballers' autobiographies can, however, be problematic for use as a historic source. Most of them are 'ghost-written', which calls into question whether one is reading the player's opinion or the writer's. Joyce Woolridge puts it thus: 'with this in mind, historians of football have mainly been concerned with questions of referentiality – whether these autobiographies reflect the genuine thoughts of the protagonist or have been attributed to him by his amanuensis.'²⁶ She also points out that the footballer's autobiography sits within a literary inheritance of 'lost souls and their redemption,' breaking down into 'apprenticeship, triumph over adversity and stability and growth.'²⁷ They conform to a set pattern which is just like most autobiographies of people from all walks of life. Other problems are that a player may use his autobiography to justify his actions at a controversial incident. There is nothing wrong with that, but as historians we always need to take into account the views of others who were involved and may have a completely different interpretation of what happened. He is also writing for a particular audience, be they the fans of his club or football supporters in general, and in so doing he may conform to what he thinks is expected of him to say. As Matthew Taylor eloquently puts it: 'in its disregard

²⁶ Joyce Woolridge, 'These Sporting Lives: football autobiographies 1945-1980', *Sport in History*, vol. 28, No. 4, December 2008, p.622.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.623.

for chronology, its selections, omissions, enhancements, and silences, its lack of confidentiality, its literary construction, and its very subjectivity, autobiography has ... come to be regarded as an imperfect source.’²⁸ He does argue, however, that ‘it is high time that historians took it seriously as a topic for study in its own right.’²⁹

Regarding the many hooligan memoirs that have been published, the legal scholar Steve Redhead, in his article reviewing five of the most prominent ones, comments that a criticism of the sociology of fan culture is that it often descends into ‘uncritical journalism, and has neglected sociological theory’, creating a widespread ‘false populism.’³⁰ He goes on to say, ‘they are often formularized and written in deliberately ‘trashy’ formats. Quotations and conversations are seemingly made up at will.’³¹ This is problematic for anyone wishing to gain an accurate historical or sociological picture.

Setting autobiography into a broader context, the genre of autobiography has been ‘a publishing phenomenon in the latter part of the twentieth and the early years of the twenty-first centuries.’³² Its growth in football, which began in the late 1980s, has coincided with, and has occurred partly because of, the revival in the game’s popularity. It can also be seen as part of the game’s realignment as it became less working-class and more middle-class.

²⁸ Matthew Taylor, ‘From Source To Subject: sport, history, and autobiography’, *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 35, no. 3, autumn 2008, p.470.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.486.

³⁰ Steve Redhead, ‘Hit And Tell: a review essay on the soccer hooligan memoir’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, Autumn 2004, p.395.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.396.

³² This was pointed out by Stephen Hopkins in his work on the Protestant working-class in Northern Ireland. Stephen Hopkins, ‘A Weapon In The Struggle? Loyalist Paramilitarism And The Politics Of Auto/Biography In Contemporary Northern Ireland’, in Mervyn Busted, Frank Neal and Jonathan Tonge (eds.), *Irish Protestant Identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

In the first chapter, I will look at the decline football experienced in the 1970s and early 1980s. The main cause for concern was dwindling crowds, which meant falling income, and various attempts to reverse this situation. These efforts were hampered by internal strife, both between the big clubs and the small clubs and between the two football authorities, and the cumbersome constitution of the FA made agreement on any change impossible. There was also the issue of hooliganism that presented the game in a bad light and raised policing costs. The situation culminated with the crisis of 1985, which saw three major riots and two disasters, a ban from Europe, no football on television, and the lowest crowds ever.

The situation started to revive as the 1980s drew to a close. However, the worst disaster was still to come. The Hillsborough disaster is covered in the second chapter, with a narrative of events, and consideration of the cause and the apportionment of blame for the tragedy. The Taylor Report and reports from more recent investigations as sources are utilised. The chapter continues with the rebuilding of football grounds as clubs sought to implement Taylor's recommendations. The relocation of some football grounds is considered in a wider context, along with the broader cultural shift brought by all-seater grounds. The third chapter then examines the formation of the Premiership, and the factors that drove the breakaway. These included strife between the two football authorities, and the desire of the biggest clubs to gain greater income from any television deals. The chapter also considers the legal wrangling between the League and the FA, and the shift in supporter experience as the Premiership became closely allied to Sky television. It details the revival of interest in football as, assisted by Sky, football became fashionable again in the mid-1990s.

The fourth chapter looks at the international movement of players following the Bosman Ruling. This outlines the reasons why players were attracted from overseas, and the changes in training practices that this brought. This included such things as dietary regimes, as pioneered by Arsene Wenger at Arsenal. The fifth and final chapter looks at the rise of foreign ownership of football clubs especially following Roman Abramovich's purchase of Chelsea. It considers both the positive and negative aspects of the experience of this foreign ownership, and analyses the motives behind the acquisition of clubs by billionaires from overseas, and the elevation of foreign ownership into a major theme in its own right.

These five chapters follow a chronological sequence, but inevitably there is a certain amount of overlap between them as the broad themes impact on each other to a greater or lesser degree throughout. The topics of media coverage and commercialisation run in a vein throughout this entire study. The processes detailed in the work are also considered in a broader context in terms of how they reflected wider changes. Some of these were within the field of sport, but others were reflective of major cultural, social, and political developments. The growing importance of business in football, for instance, needs to be seen in the context of the shift towards the free market economy and individualism as promoted by the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. In order to do this, it is necessary to assess whether change in football can be related to wider trends. As well as the broad shift from a community focus to a business focus within the UK, the period has seen the growth of a globalised world economy, of which the City of London is an integral part. There has also been the strengthening of celebrity culture, fuelled by business and media. This is best represented in football by David Beckham. The study of iconic

individuals, however, is not a core element of this thesis, but the subject is broached because it reflects wider trends. There has also been the advent of satellite television broadcasting, which has been very important for football. All of these factors have impacted on football, and need to be explored when detailing the history and development of the modern game.

Chapter One

Football in decline

*'All we're going by - a good game of football,
a good punch up and a good piss up,
that's all about Millwall'*

- 'Harry the dog', BBC *Panorama* (1977)³³

Somewhere, in a place called Utopia, is a football stadium which is covered all round, is all seated, and has a sheltered picnic area. Families go there on a Sunday afternoon with their best clothes on and watch the game in reverential silence. These are matches in which nothing happens: nobody kicks each other or swears ... every week the stadium is packed and there is no booing [or] fighting ... when a goal is scored a polite ripple of applause breaks out. This is the Utopia of politicians who know virtually nothing about football and still less about football fans

- Colin Ward, football fan and author³⁴

³³ Panorama - Millwall 1977.avi, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKoYjOGozXQ>, youtube, last accessed, 16 March 2016.

³⁴ Colin Ward, *Steaming In: journal of a football fan* (London: Sportspages, 1990 reprint), p.6.

Introduction: decline and perceptions of decline

The period covered by this opening chapter was one that saw mounting problems for English football, both at international level and in the domestic game. As far as the national team was concerned, there was a decline in achievements on the pitch following the World Cup victory in 1966. In the domestic game, the era saw declining attendances, which in turn led to dwindling revenues for football clubs who struggled to make ends meet with falling income but mounting wage bills. There was also the problem of hooliganism. There was no clear solution to these problems and the domestic game became bogged down by internal strife between the two governing bodies, the interests of individual clubs and broader strategies, and between the handful of big clubs and the smaller clubs which made up the majority of the League. All of this was played out against a backdrop of national problems as the outlook for football mirrored a sense of decline in the country.

In 1970, England as World Cup holders began the defence of their trophy. The finals, which were held in Mexico, saw England in the same group as Brazil, the eventual winners. England lost 1-0 to Brazil but finished second in their group and progressed to the quarter-finals, where they surrendered a two goal lead to lose 3-2 to West Germany. The England team included the core of the team that had won the World Cup four years earlier strengthened by some excellent new players.³⁵ The team that defended the trophy in 1970 was arguably better than that which famously won it in 1966, and Matthew Taylor states that 'for a short time, certainly, England did possess one of the strongest sides in world football'.³⁶

³⁵ Chris Nawrat and Steve Hutchings, *The Sunday Times Illustrated History of Football*, (London: Hamlyn, 1995 reprint), pp.160-161.

³⁶ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.291.

The success of 1966 has, however, been interpreted in different ways. On the one hand, it provided a welcome boost and could be related to notions of modernisation and economic renewal, incorporating technological change and innovation as espoused by Harold Wilson's Labour Government. On the other, short-term success, in football and in politics, served to cover up the lack of significant structural change. English football was temporarily elevated to supreme status, but beneath this façade was a league system that was dated and cumbersome, coaching methods that were out of kilter with the rest of the world, and there was too much reliance on English virtues of speed, strength, and character.³⁷ In short, England's victory obscured problems within the game and therefore made failure in the future more likely as English football was encouraged to stick stubbornly to its own game. This view revealed a level of isolationism which concerned no less a man than Sir Stanley Matthews, who wrote 'the people who ran our game regarded anything new with suspicion ... the hierarchy in English football clung on to the old methods, still believing we were the football masters of the world ... they had their heads in the sand'.³⁸

The FA with its apparent air of superiority were clearly behind the times. They were slow to realise the growing importance of Europe. To set it into a broader context, the post-war travel boom, which was assisted by people having more leisure time available, had led to travel firms offering cheap package deals to working class British families. Holiday destinations extended to European resorts as a result.³⁹ Also, on 1 January 1973, Edward Heath's Conservative Government took Britain into the European Economic Community

³⁷ Ibid. p.290.

³⁸ Stanley Matthews, *The Way It Was: my autobiography* (London: Headline, 2001 paperback edition), p.336.

³⁹ <http://www.thomascook.com/about-us/thomas-cook-history>, last accessed 24 May 2016.

(later the European Union). Therefore people began to think more in terms of a European context, rather than simply a British one. Steadily, albeit very slowly, Europe was drawing closer together. The FA with its air of detachment was not adapting to the times.

England's success in winning the World Cup had also raised expectations, which made subsequent disappointments harder to bear. The cultural historian Neil Ewen pointed out that the victory of 1966 'represents a key marker of ambivalence in English football history: a victory to be savoured and celebrated as the pinnacle of achievement, for sure, but at the same time a reminder of England's lack of success since.'⁴⁰ King points out that the poor performance of the England team is down to 'a highly distinct decentralized, liberal, anti-authoritarian regulatory culture.'⁴¹ Failure to qualify for the World Cup finals in both 1974 and 1978 served as evidence that insularity was damaging England's prospects. This lack of success can also be seen in the context of a wider perception of decline in terms of the way British people were starting to see themselves. The political theorist Andrew Gamble identifies a 'hundred years decline' which began in about 1880.⁴² From the late 1940s onwards the decolonisation of the British Empire had left the feeling that Britain was now a fading power. As Dean Acheson famously commented in his West Point speech on 5 December 1962, Britain had 'lost an empire and not yet found a role'.⁴³ This sense of identity crisis was compounded by the worsening economic situation. After Harold Macmillan's famous comment in 1957 that 'most of our people have never had it so good', there was continuity from MacMillan to Wilson – the two Harolds - because they both

⁴⁰ Neil Ewen, 'John Terry And The Predicament Of Englishness: ambivalence and nostalgia in the Premier League era', *Sport in History*, vol. 33, no. 4, December 2013, p.469.

⁴¹ Anthony King, 'Why England Fails', *Sport in Society*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2014, p. 251.

⁴² Andrew Gamble, *Britain In Decline* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985 [1st edition 1981]), pp. 3-44.

⁴³ www.academicroom/article/dean-acheson-and-special-relationship-west-pint-speech-december-1962 last accessed 4 June 2016.

oversaw inflation pushed by rising wages. In the 1960s Wilson's government had to battle to contain the economic crisis this was causing. The early 1970s saw industrial strife with miners' strikes, power cuts, a three-day week imposed on British industry, civil unrest in Northern Ireland, and terrorist attacks by the IRA.⁴⁴ All of these contributed towards a feeling of doom and despondency, and it can be seen that by the mid-1970s the sense of decline in football ran in tandem with the wider downward trend. As Dilwyn Porter put it, 'English people who lived through or were born into the post-war era became accustomed to the idea that they belonged to an old country that had seen better days'.⁴⁵ He goes on to point out that this view permeated discussions on football:

Much of the discussion relating to football seemed to give currency to the idea that to be English in the third quarter of the twentieth century was to belong to a once great nation that was incapable of living up to its past or competing effectively with its principal rivals. In this way, it will be suggested, English football and those who reported on it or interpreted it for public consumption, contributed to the prolonged angst about British decline and to the sense of crisis that it engendered.⁴⁶

Declining Attendances and Attempts to Recover Lost Income

After enjoying booming attendances in the immediate post-war years, the total number of people attending Football League games shrunk from a record 41,271,414 during the 1948/1949 season to just 16,488,577 during the 1985/1986 season – a reduction of over sixty per cent.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Peter Clarke, *Hope And Glory: Britain 1900-1990* (London: Penguin, 1997 edition), pp. 333-341.

⁴⁵ Porter, 'Your Boys Took One Hell Of A Beating!':, in eds. Smith and Porter, *Sport And National Identity*, p.32.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* p.35.

⁴⁷ Eds. Glenda Rollin and Jack Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009* (London: Headline, 2008), p.593. See Fig. 1 on p.5.

Table 2. *Football League attendances 1948/1949 to 1985/1986*

Season	First Division	Second Division	Third Div. (South)	Third Div. (North)	Total
1948/49	17,914,667	11,353,237	6,998,429	5,005,081	41,271,414
1949/50	17,278,625	11,694,158	7,104,155	4,440,927	40,517,865
1950/51	16,679,454	10,780,580	7,367,884	4,757,109	39,584,967
1951/52	16,110,322	11,066,189	6,958,927	4,880,428	39,015,866
1952/53	16,050,278	9,686,654	6,704,299	4,708,735	37,194,966
1953/54	16,154,915	9,510,053	6,311,508	4,198,114	36,174,590
1954/55	15,087,221	8,988,794	5,996,017	4,051,071	34,133,103
1955/56	14,108,961	9,080,002	5,692,479	4,269,367	33,150,809
1956/57	13,803,037	8,718,162	5,622,189	4,601,017	32,744,405
1957/58	14,468,652	8,663,712	6,097,183	4,332,661	33,562,208

1958 – regional Third Divisions abolished. New Third and Fourth Divisions

Season	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Total
1958/59	14,727,691	8,641,997	5,946,600	4,276,697	33,610,985
1959/60	14,391,227	8,399,627	5,739,707	4,008,050	32,538,611
1960/61	12,926,948	7,033,936	4,784,256	3,874,614	28,619,754
1961/62	12,061,194	7,453,089	5,199,106	3,266,513	27,979,902
1962/63	12,490,239	7,792,770	5,341,362	3,261,481	28,885,852
1963/64	12,486,626	7,594,158	5,419,157	3,035,081	28,535,022
1964/65	12,708,752	6,984,104	4,436,245	3,512,067	27,641,168
1965/66	12,480,644	6,914,757	4,779,150	3,032,429	27,206,980
1966/67	14,242,957	7,253,819	4,421,172	2,984,648	28,902,596
1967/68	15,289,410	7,450,410	4,013,087	3,354,391	30,107,298
1968/69	14,584,851	7,382,390	4,339,656	3,075,275	29,382,172
1969/70	14,868,754	7,581,728	4,223,761	2,926,729	29,600,972
1970/71	13,954,337	7,098,265	4,377,213	2,764,331	28,194,146
1971/72	14,484,603	6,769,308	4,697,392	2,749,426	28,700,729
1972/73	13,998,154	5,631,730	3,737,252	2,081,506	25,448,652
1973/74	13,070,991	6,326,108	3,421,624	2,163,480	24,982,203
1974/75	12,613,178	6,955,970	4,086,145	1,992,684	25,577,977
1975/76	13,089,861	5,798,405	3,948,449	2,059,338	24,896,053
1976/77	13,647,585	6,250,597	4,152,218	2,132,400	26,182,800
1977/78	13,255,677	6,474,763	3,332,042	2,330,390	25,392,872
1978/79	12,704,549	6,153,223	3,374,558	2,308,297	24,540,627
1979/80	12,163,002	6,112,025	3,999,328	2,349,620	24,623,975
1980/81	11,392,894	5,175,442	3,637,854	1,701,579	21,907,569
1981/82	10,420,793	4,750,463	2,836,915	1,998,790	20,006,961
1982/83	9,295,613	4,974,937	2,943,568	1,552,040	18,766,158
1983/84	8,711,448	5,359,757	2,729,942	1,557,484	18,358,631
1984/85	9,761,404	4,030,823	2,667,008	1,390,600	17,849,835
1985/86	9,037,854	3,551,968	2,490,481	1,408,274	16,488,577

Source: Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.593.

In an age when almost all of any club's income came from the fan paying on the turnstile, the serious implications of this are obvious. However, within this trend there are two points that need to be made. Firstly, the decline was not uniform because after England's World Cup success of 1966 attendances increased towards the end of the decade only to resume the downward trend in the early 1970s. Secondly, the decline was not evenly spread across the divisions. It was the smaller clubs in the Third and Fourth Divisions that bore the brunt. Between 1960 and 1974 First Division games saw a decline of eleven per cent, Second Division games saw a decline of twenty-seven per cent, Third Division games forty-two per cent, and Fourth Division games forty-nine per cent.⁴⁸ Therefore it can be seen that in addition to an overall decline there was a drift from small town clubs to big city ones. John Bale points out that following the abolition of the maximum wage in 1961 the clubs in large cities with their bigger crowds bringing larger revenues could meet the newly increasing wage demands and attract better players. This trend occurred at the same time as wider changes such as increased motor car ownership and the construction of dual carriageways and motorways. Those wishing to attend football matches could circumvent smaller local clubs and head to the cities to watch bigger clubs with famous players. Using Lancashire as an example, in a trend well under way by 1970, there was an overall decline in football attendance but of these the proportion of those attending the big clubs rose dramatically.⁴⁹ The economist Peter J. Sloane points out that 'the opening of a new motorway in Lancashire in 1973 coincided with a significant change in the pattern of attendances at soccer matches among the 10 Lancashire Football League clubs'. Thus it can be seen that while crowds

⁴⁸ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.38.

⁴⁹ John Bale, *Sports Geography* (London: E. & F.N. Spon, 1989), pp.93-96.

reduced slowly at Everton, Liverpool, and Manchester United, they slumped alarmingly at Bury, Rochdale, and Southport.⁵⁰

There were a number of attempts to reverse this decline and to bridge the financial gap that it caused. As early as 1963 the Football League had introduced the 'Pattern for Football' in an attempt to streamline the League and increase public interest. Its proposal of reorganising the League into five divisions of twenty clubs each with four promoted and relegated at the end of each season and moving the League Cup to the beginning of the season in a bid to increase the number of meaningful games was rejected by the clubs.⁵¹ The Political and Economic Planning (PEP) Report of 1966 highlighted poor ground facilities and the absence of market research and the rudimentary nature of advertising and public relations. The Chester Report of 1968 continued in a similar vein and was dismissed.⁵² As the *Sunday Times Illustrated History of Football* puts it, 'the Government commissioned Norman Chester and a group of football experts to produce a report on the future of English football. Not surprisingly, its visionary recommendations were largely ignored by the League and the FA'.⁵³ This was probably because change would be hard to implement in practical terms and there would be opposition from the League clubs. Thus it can be seen that before 1970 there was an awareness among some of the need to introduce the changes that would bring crowds back and raise revenue but any proposals ran into problems when agreement from the League clubs was sought, either due to stubbornness or insufficient visible incentives.

⁵⁰ Peter J. Sloane, *Sport In The Market?: the economic causes and consequences of 'the Packer revolution'* (London: IEA, 1980), p.27.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Association Game*, pp.269-270.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.266, p.270.

⁵³ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.145.

This pattern continued. The Commission on Industrial Relations Report (1974) met with a similar response but the problems facing football were getting worse rather than going away. On 11 August 1980 the Secretaries, Coaches, and Managers Association published ‘Soccer – The Fight For Survival. A Blueprint For The Future’. Two days of talks were held in October between the football authorities and the club chairmen and an extraordinary general meeting was planned for the following February. By this time, many of the proposals had been rejected, such as reducing the size of the top two divisions and regionalising the Third and Fourth, along with reducing the size of the majority needed to take decisions. Some progress was made in that clubs agreed to award three points for a win, a decision clearly aimed at making games more entertaining in a bid to win back crowds. This came into effect from 1981/1982 onwards. They also decided to allow a limited number of games on a Friday evening or a Sunday. However, the bulk of the report was dismissed as, unsurprisingly, chairmen were more concerned with the interests of their own club than what was good for the game as a whole.⁵⁴ The journalists of the day made their feelings clear. Harry Solomon commented in the *Sunday Times* after another disappointing result for England, ‘if there is any possibility of further change taking place, I suggest three main lines should be followed: re-organisation of the league system, improved facilities for spectators, and stricter control of play’.⁵⁵ Stuart Jones stated in *The Times*:

The Football League yesterday decided to reject major surgery and recommend instead a minor operation. The management committee produced a 12-point plan that leaves the first and second divisions intact, rearranges the anatomy of the third and fourth divisions, and prescribes a healthy kick upstairs for clubs outside the League. Top players will therefore continue to be involved in between 60 and 70 matches, the England manager will go on dealing with internationals who are tired or injured or

⁵⁴ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.236.

⁵⁵ Harry Solomon, ‘How To Save Soccer’, *Sunday Times*, 14 June 1981.

both and gates will carry on falling as the pressure of fixture congestion continues to inhibit the pacemakers. For the thinnest of financial excuses, the heart of the matter has been ignored.’⁵⁶

The plan to rearrange the Third and Fourth Divisions was deemed in an editorial as ‘a sensible suggestion, as far as it goes. But it is totally irrelevant to the real crisis which faces English football, both at national and international level.’⁵⁷

The end result of these proposals and discussions was the decision to hold an enquiry into the structure of the League’s competitions. This was led by Sir Norman Chester, whose talents lay in the field of public service and administration. Chester had produced the 1968 Report that had met with little positive response. This special committee of enquiry had the task of reviewing the structure of the League Championship and Cup competitions and to ‘make recommendations as to its future viability’.⁵⁸ Donald Saunders, in *The Daily Telegraph*, commented drily, ‘Sir Norman Chester has been given the thankless task of trying to guide League football out of its present economic difficulties, which might never have arisen had his eminently sensible report been accepted 14 years ago’.⁵⁹ Any changes to the League structure needed the approval of a three-quarters majority and David Lacey, in *The Guardian*, pointed out that ‘most clubs are so hard-pressed financially that they simply cannot countenance any changes which would reduce their fixture lists’.⁶⁰ This was the main reason why the clubs seemed so resistant to change.

⁵⁶ Stuart Jones, ‘League Want To Shake Up Lower Divisions’, *The Times*, 26 September 1981.

⁵⁷ ‘Too Much Football’, *The Times*, 26 September 1981.

⁵⁸ Donald Saunders, ‘League Recall Chester To Make Another Report’, *Daily Telegraph*, 19 October 1982.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ David Lacey, ‘League Go Back To Chester’, *The Guardian*, 19 October 1982.

The Report was completed in March 1983 and it included proposals to reduce the size of the First Division by increasing the size of the Second and amalgamating the Third and Fourth Divisions into four regional sections. It also proposed to change the League's constitution so only a three-fifths majority was needed for change instead of three-quarters. One proposal which had serious implications for the future was the plan to allow home clubs to keep all gate receipts.⁶¹ This was a move which clearly benefitted the big clubs at the expense of the small ones, and Conn describes it as 'the first step towards the bigger clubs' total financial dominance over the smaller clubs.'⁶² It was at this time that there was the first serious threat of a breakaway. The growing power of a handful of big clubs, strengthened in the knowledge that they drew an increasing proportion of attendances and potential television viewers, would eventually result in the formation of the Premier League, which will be discussed in more detail in later chapters.

Another important change introduced by the Report was the proposal to allow the clubs most frequently shown on television to keep a larger share of the money. This also benefitted the big clubs. John Smith, the Liverpool chairman, was one of the members of the committee that produced the Report and he attached particular importance to the proposals regarding the redistribution of gate receipts and income from television appearances. He commented, 'this is the first time, in the League's history, that there has been a departure from the principle of equal distribution'.⁶³

⁶¹ Donald Saunders, 'Last Chance For Clubs To Come To Terms With Reality', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 March 1983.

⁶² Conn, *Football Business*, p.144.

⁶³ Donald Saunders, 'Last Chance For Clubs To Come To Terms With Reality', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 March 1983.

The clubs in the Third and Fourth Divisions were unhappy with many of the proposals. Dr. Clifford Grossmark, Gillingham chairman and representative for the bottom two divisions, said bitterly, 'they are trying to impose things on us against our will, trying to take away some of our hard-won power and trying to drive us into oblivion. But we will not let them get away with it. We told the Chester Committee that we didn't want regionalised leagues, but they are trying to push them through anyway.'⁶⁴

On 26 April the League chairmen met and rejected most of the Report. All of the proposals regarding restructuring were dismissed almost unanimously. As Stuart Jones put it in *The Times*, 'it seems that sense, for the fifth time in the last two decades, has been overwhelmed by the alarming weight of the chairman's self-interest'.⁶⁵ As a sop to the big clubs who had threatened to break away and form a 'Super League' the proposal that home clubs should keep all gate receipts and those covered most frequently on television should receive a larger share of the proceeds was agreed on. It was also agreed to reduce the majority vote needed to implement change, not from three-quarters to three-fifths but down to two-thirds, subject to the agreement of the League's annual general meeting.⁶⁶

Having rejected most of the Report, the League saw attendances continue to decline. The loss of revenue that this caused could be partly addressed by raising admission prices, and this happened, but there was a limit to how much prices could be increased, especially bearing in mind that the reduction was most severe in the lowest divisions, where crowds were already being lost to the big clubs, as has been described. The only other possibility

⁶⁴ Stuart Jones, 'Fractional Differences The Test For Chester', *The Times*, 29 March 1983.

⁶⁵ Stuart Jones, 'League Chairmen Play A Defensive Formation To Defeat Chester', *The Times*, 27 April 1983.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

was to raise money by other means and this brought forward the issue of sponsorship. Opportunities to raise revenue by advertising and sponsorship had been largely ignored until the late 1970s, and, bar the traditional advertising hoardings around the pitch and the odd advert in the match programme, such opportunities had largely been under-exploited.

It was non-League Kettering Town who, as early as 1976, pioneered sponsorship on shirts. The plan was simple. A business could have their logo displayed on the front of the players' shirts with the result that the club would receive an agreed sum and the business would get the high-profile advertising that this brought. The deal negotiated between Kettering Town and Kettering Tyres was worth £2,500. Former Wolverhampton Wanderers player and Kettering chief executive Derek Dougan later wrote, 'I was gratified to be able to report such a successful commercial move on behalf of the club.'⁶⁷ He went on to sum up the mood of the times:

I knew how sports in other countries had benefitted from sponsorship schemes, while deep-seated puritanism and suspicion had prevented similar schemes being embraced in Britain. Diehards were still insisting that commerce and sport should not mix, that if sport became dependent on commercial involvements it would lose its independence. My own view was that if it remained aloof and tried to 'go it alone' it would lose more than its independence. It would lose its lifeblood.⁶⁸

At Kettering, Dougan introduced shirt-sponsorship tastefully, so the players did not appear to be running sandwichboard men and the deal would not be accompanied by anything that would dominate or distract from the normal activities of the ground. However, the FA were unimpressed. Dougan and club chairman John Nash were summoned to a disciplinary

⁶⁷ Derek Dougan, *How Not To Run Football* (Wolverhampton: All Seasons, 1981), p.46.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p.47.

hearing. Dougan points out that the FA rules did not specifically state that a sponsor's name could not be worn on a shirt. Even so, the FA ordered them not to do it again.⁶⁹ 'What angered me', recalled Dougan, 'was that here were the top people in the FA unable or unwilling to grasp the fact that little clubs had to help themselves. They did not understand that they as leaders of a big 'international club' ought to assist, not hinder, the small fry who belonged to it.'⁷⁰

Kettering Town's experience did not prevent the idea catching on. The following year Queen's Park Rangers followed suit, and by the end of the decade shirt sponsorship had become a major issue. So successful were the deals that in 1981 Arsenal announced a three-year deal with JVC, the electronics manufacturer, for £500,000. Liverpool and Manchester United gained similar sized deals with their respective sponsors and other clubs secured their own smaller deals.⁷¹

The sums involved would continue to increase. In 2000 Manchester United, for example, would sign a deal with the mobile phone giant Vodafone worth £30 million over four seasons.⁷² Sponsorship seemed set to expand more widely to include other things when Coventry City planned a deal with Talbot, the motor car manufacturer, in 1980 for £250,000, which would have resulted in the club changing its name to 'Coventry-Talbot'. The FA stepped in, however, and scuppered the plan.⁷³

⁶⁹ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.203.

⁷⁰ Dougan, *How Not To Run Football*, p.49.

⁷¹ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.266.

⁷² Alan Nixon, 'United Get Shirt Shift', *Daily Mirror*, 12 February 2000. Fig.3 on p.35 shows how much each top division club could gain in shirt sponsorship deals by the end of the millennium.

⁷³ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.266.

Table 3. *Premiership club shirt sponsorship deals during 1999/2000*

Club	Sponsor	Fee per annum (in millions)	Season deal commenced
Arsenal	Sega	£3.3	1999/2000
Aston Villa	LDV	£0.8	1998/1999
Bradford City	JCT600	£0.3	1998/1999
Chelsea	Autoglass	£1.1	1997/1998
Coventry City	Subaru-Isuzu	£0.7	1997/1998
Derby County	ED5	£0.7	1997/1998
Everton	One 2 One	£0.7	1997/1998
Leeds United	Packard Bell	£2.0	1996/1997
Leicester City	Walkers Crisps	£0.5	1999/2000
Liverpool	Carlsberg	£1.0	1998/1999
Manchester United	Sharp	£1.3	1996/1997
Middlesbrough	BT Cellnet	£0.3	1995/1996
Newcastle United	Newcastle Breweries	£1.0	1999/2000
Sheffield Wednesday	Sanderson	£0.5	1994/1995
Southampton	Friends Provident	£0.5	1999/2000
Sunderland	Reg Vardy	£0.5	1999/2000
Tottenham Hotspur	Holsten	£1.3	1999/2000
Watford	Phones 4 U	£0.5	1999/2000
West Ham United	Dr. Martens	£1.0	1998/1999
Wimbledon	Tiny	£0.3	1999/2000

Source: Alan Nixon, 'United Get Shirt Shrift', *Daily Mirror*, 12 February 2000.

Sponsorship remained a thorny issue. Any club appearing on television was not allowed to display a sponsor's name or logo.⁷⁴ The background behind the opposition to shirt sponsorship was based on traditional notions that sport and commerce should not mix, and the view that gate money was the only appropriate source of revenue for a Football League club.⁷⁵ In this context, gate money had to be protected from other sources that could come in and influence the game. There was also the potential for new forms of revenue to focus mainly on the big clubs to the detriment of the smaller ones, and therefore threaten the

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.50.

League as a corporate body.⁷⁶ Sceptics feared that sponsors would only be interested in televised coverage and therefore only wish to make deals with the clubs that appeared on television most frequently. The sponsors' clamour for television coverage also impacted on the concern that already existed about television's potential damage to attendances, because it reinforced the view that lost income was not being adequately replaced by revenue from sponsorship.⁷⁷

But sponsorship was here to stay, and despite the arguments surrounding whether or not teams would be allowed to display their sponsors' logos on television, the idea soon expanded to be taken up by competitions. In 1982 the League signed a £2 million deal over four years with the National Dairy Council resulting in the League Cup becoming the Milk Cup.⁷⁸ This would be the first of seven name changes undergone by the competition over the next thirty years as a result of different sponsorship deals, and some would argue that this has been a contributory factor in diminishing the importance of the competition.⁷⁹ The Football League would acquire its own sponsor, the Japanese camera and business equipment company Canon UK Ltd., in a three-year deal worth £3.2 million. The deal commenced in 1983/1984 and the Football League became the Canon League as a result.⁸⁰

Regarding shirt sponsorship and its appearance on television, the FA and the Football League were eventually forced to capitulate. In 1983, the big clubs threatened to sign an

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.51.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.267; Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.245.

⁷⁹ After becoming the Milk Cup in 1982, the League Cup would go on to become the Littlewoods Cup (1986), the Rumbelows League Cup (1990), the Coca-Cola Cup (1992), the Worthington Cup (1998), the Carling Cup (2003), and the Capital One Cup (2012). Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.596.

⁸⁰ Eds. Charles Sampson and Albert Sewell, *News Of The World Football Annual 1983/84* (London: Invincible, 1983), p.2.

independent television contract away from the Football League, if the League did not approve shirt sponsorship. Bearing in mind that almost all of the television revenue was based on the attraction of these clubs, the League conceded that shirt advertising would be allowed 'to the extent of 16 square inches for each name or logo, which can be of any shape; no letter may be higher than two inches'.⁸¹ Once this had been established, and sponsors knew their brand would be displayed on television, the sums secured by clubs in sponsorship deals continued to grow. Arsenal's deal with JVC has been referred to above. By the end of the millennium they had secured a deal with Sega for a figure more than six times the amount, and other clubs enjoyed similar growth in their sponsorship deals.⁸²

Tottenham Hotspur pioneered another way of raising revenue. Irving Scholar, who gained control of the club towards the end of 1982, has revealed that 'at the time of the takeover there was some trepidation about the financial state of the company, and it transpired that we had inherited the biggest debt in football: over £5.5 million.'⁸³ This was a huge sum at the time and Scholar faced the massive task of getting the club back on a sound financial footing. He continues:

The answer, when it came, was blindingly simple. Why not float Tottenham Hotspur on the Stock Exchange? ... The Exchange had every type of company from ball-bearing manufacturers to insurance, and the leisure sector was a particular favourite for investors. At that time in the early Eighties the financial markets were quite buoyant ... and there seemed to be a lot of new money in the City. I believed that some of it must be prepared to come into football.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Kenneth Gosling, 'League Agree To Live Soccer', *The Times*, 16 July 1983.

⁸² Stephen Dobson and John Goddard, *The Economics of Football* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2001), p.88.

⁸³ Scholar, *Behind Closed Door*, p.45.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* pp.45-46.

Thus, on 13 October 1983, Tottenham Hotspur became the first English football club to be launched in the City. The venture was successful in that it did what it was intended to do as Tottenham's debts were wiped out.⁸⁵ As Scholar says:

In pure financial terms it was a success. The shares were over-subscribed three and a half times, and the £5 million we were seeking was in the bank ... but although the shares, which were sold at £1 each, started trading at £1.08, a number of professionals who expected a quick killing sold off immediately, and forced the price down to around 90p. Three and a half years would go by before the shares rose above the issue price.⁸⁶

This was because the short-term success of the launch was followed by the long-term problems it brought. The City put pressure on Spurs to become a broadly based leisure company to attract investors, whereas Scholar regarded the club's assets as more important than its dividend payouts.⁸⁷ Also, the possibility of failing to reach the profit forecast in the first year resulted in the players' share of television income from UEFA Cup games being withheld, which sparked internal strife involving the Professional Footballers Association (PFA) at the highest level.⁸⁸ As a result of Tottenham's experience, it would be six years before another club – Millwall – became a PLC.⁸⁹ The floating of a football club on the stock market raised issues regarding who the club was primarily answerable to. Was it the fans who turned up to watch the team week in and week out, or its shareholders in the business world of the City, who invested but whose only motive was profit? The match results of any club listed as a PLC had wider implications in that a run of good results could

⁸⁵ Michael Clark, 'Spurs Tackle The Market', *The Times*, 14 October 1983.

⁸⁶ Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp.48-49.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.49.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.49-51.

⁸⁹ Millwall, valued at £13 million, planned to place 20 million shares at 20p each on the market. The club was floated on 16 October 1989. Stephen Leather, 'Millwall Scores £13m On Exchange', *The Times*, 13 September 1989; Louise Taylor, 'Millwall Shares Survive Stock Market Slump', *The Times*, 17 October 1989.

boost investment but a sequence of bad results could cause a club's share price to slump, thus adding extra pressure on the manager and the players.

The Spurs flotation also needs to be seen in a broader context because the 1980s would gradually see a much closer relationship developing between football and business than had previously been the case. In 1982 the FA rescinded the regulation limiting shareholders' dividends to 7.5 per cent. This rule had been designed to protect clubs from exploitative owners who were concerned only with a club's profits, and it demonstrated that the football authorities saw the clubs as organisations that existed for the benefit of the public rather than as profit-making commodities.⁹⁰ However, with football facing increasingly severe financial difficulties it was a rule which deterred some of those successful entrepreneurs who could help clubs in dire straits. The rule's removal also meant that money could be made from clubs and this paved the way for a new wave of directors who had a completely different ethos to those previously in charge. As well as Scholar at Tottenham, there was David Dein at Arsenal, Ken Bates at Chelsea, and Martin Edwards at Manchester United. The mood of benevolent paternalism where the local businessman ran a football club for the good of the community was disappearing to be replaced by something that was altogether different. As King puts it, 'the pursuit of profit through the commodification of football was the distinguishing feature of the new directors and marked them out from their predecessors.'⁹¹ These men rejected the traditional view of a football club being run as a public utility, and instead saw it *primarily* as a business.⁹²

⁹⁰ King, *End of the Terraces*, p.124.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Taylor, *Association Game*, p.342.

This is an area where changes in football mirrored greatly the developments that were taking place in wider society. The free market philosophy of Margaret Thatcher's Government was being applied to public utilities and in areas of the public sector hitherto untouched by the cut and thrust of business. This approach may have failed to penetrate the FA's headquarters at Lancaster Gate, but it can be seen that individual football clubs were starting to change and the 'new directors' taking charge at some of the top ones were simply a product of the times. This represented an important shift. Where once football clubs had been community-based sporting institutions, they were becoming businesses where the main aim was to make profit.

The role of television and the impact of negotiations on broadcasting deals

In 1964, the BBC launched its own weekly highlights programme *Match of the Day*. Four years later ITV followed with its own regional highlights programmes. These programmes formed the staple diet of football coverage throughout the 1970s.⁹³ The presence of regular football highlights programmes on television had the positive effect that the sport was promoted and even the casual observer could become familiar with the most successful teams and the names of the best players. However, it also had the negative effect that less committed fans might be content to stay at home in the comfort of their living rooms rather than brave wet and windy terraces on a cold winter's afternoon. As we have seen above, attendances provided virtually all of football's income and there was already concern about those attendances diminishing. These circumstances would form the basis for tough negotiations on broadcasting rights as football sought compensation for what it saw as television's role in falling gates.

⁹³ Dobson and Goddard, *Economics of Football*, pp.80-81.

Television brought with it a new phenomenon: the football player as a celebrity. The first example of this kind was George Best, the Manchester United and Northern Ireland player. Firstly, his ability was exceptional. As the sports sociologist Alan Bairner comments, Best ‘was a footballing genius. Even the most blinkered fans of other English clubs would find it difficult to deny that Best was one of the most talented performers of all time.’⁹⁴ There had of course been famous footballers before – Johnny Haynes and Stanley Matthews spring to mind immediately – but George Best was a new phenomenon in that he was the first football *star*. The new level of media interest brought by television combined with increased wages led to new heights of public attention and adoration. Best went to discos and dressed like a mod, giving him an appeal that was seen as fashionable. Best’s popularity coincided with wider social trends. As well as the growth of television, there was a young generation with interests that were different to their parents. They had disposable income that could be spent on the latest fashions and on pop music. Thus Best’s fame emerged within a new and growing type of popular culture. He incorporated the worlds of fashion, pop music, sport, and show business.⁹⁵ As an example, his dazzling performance against Benfica in Lisbon in 1965 as Manchester United won 5-1 earned him the nickname ‘El Beatle’.⁹⁶ By 1970 most British households had a television, and thus it can be seen that football had appeared in the nation’s living rooms, and the footballer as a star created by television had arrived.

The sums paid to football in return for broadcasting rights, however, were meagre. This was because the BBC and ITV operated what amounted to an informal cartel. As evidence

⁹⁴ Alan Bairner, ‘Where Did It All Go Right?: George Best, Manchester United, and Northern Ireland’, in David L. Andrews (ed.), *Manchester United: a thematic study* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p.143.

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Association Game*, pp. 278-279.

⁹⁶ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.132.

of this, Scholar asked Greg Dyke, the chairman of ITV Sport, ‘what I want to know is, is there a cartel between the BBC and ITV?’ Dyke replied ‘yes, there has been a cartel in existence’.⁹⁷ Dyke recalls the same conversation, which took place at the first meeting between the heads of ITV Sport and the chairmen of the big football clubs: ‘Irving Scholar describes the turning point at this first meeting as the moment I admitted that I thought that there had been a cartel between ITV and BBC to keep the price paid for televised football artificially low’.⁹⁸

With coverage of the domestic game limited to packaged highlights, the only live football on television was the FA Cup final, the Charity Shield, and some England international games. Television companies sought to broadcast League games live and the football authorities continued to be wary of the potential damage that live televised football might have on attendances. In February 1983 an offer of £5.3 million to broadcast games for two seasons was unanimously rejected by the chairmen of the Football League clubs.⁹⁹ When the sides met again in April the BBC and ITV refused to increase their offer but indicated that they would be prepared to reconsider their position on the previously non-negotiable ban on shirt advertising. A concession in this area would greatly benefit the big clubs because they could increase their sponsorship revenues substantially if they could display logos on television. In the meantime, Telejector, a video company who proposed to screen live games in pubs, were awaiting the outcome, and Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur threatened to do their own deal if no agreement was reached with television.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors*, p.121.

⁹⁸ Greg Dyke, *Inside Story* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005 edition), p.227.

⁹⁹ Stuart Jones, ‘League Chairmen Reject TV Offer’, *The Times*, 25 February 1983.

¹⁰⁰ Peter Ball, ‘TV Talks Go Into Extra Time’, *The Times*, 9 April 1983.

Eventually, on 15 July, agreement was reached. The negotiations were described by John Bromley, head of the Independent Television Sports Committee, as ‘probably the longest and toughest negotiations in the history of British sport’.¹⁰¹ For the first time ever, there would be live coverage of League football. Ten First Division games would be broadcast per season for two seasons, five live on Friday nights by the BBC, five live on Sunday afternoons by ITV. Television would not pay a penny more than the original offer, but had granted the concession that shirt advertising was to be permitted, providing logos were limited in size.¹⁰² This agreement paved the way for the future in a number of ways. Firstly, shirt sponsorship was accepted and would go on to be normal practice. Secondly, live televised football, especially on Sunday afternoons, began and would in time become part of British culture. Thirdly, the big clubs’ threat of doing their own television deal would occur a number of times and one day pave the way for the Premier League. From this point onwards the subjects of television broadcasting deals and the threat of a breakaway league would be closely linked. The origins of the game we know today can largely be traced back to this deal.

The fact that a deal had been reached without football receiving more than the original offer brought this stern rebuke from Terry McNeill in *News Of The World*:

The chairmen have been outsmarted by Jonathan Martin of the BBC and John Bromley of ITV, who have got exactly what they want without offering a penny more. They merely threatened to keep the game off the box, and the League caved in as we knew they would because of the £3 million deal they were negotiating with sponsors Canon. What sort of brains can condone flogging 10 live games a season the day before or

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Gosling, ‘League Agree To Live Soccer’, *The Times*, 16 July 1983.

¹⁰² Eds. Sampson and Sewell, *News Of The World Football Annual 1983/84*, p.2.

after a full League programme when the game is losing at least a million fans a year?¹⁰³

Scholar summarised adequately the concern about live football

I was personally very nervous about live television, because I felt sure that it was going to have a marked effect on gates. Why should people pay substantial amounts of money and endure the hassles that going to a match entails, when they could sit in the comfort of their own armchair at home and watch the match effectively for free, as they had already paid their licence fee?¹⁰⁴

It was Scholar's club, Tottenham Hotspur, which, in October, hosted the first ever League game to be broadcast live when they faced Nottingham Forest.

Subsequently, when the original deal was due to expire the television companies offered an increased amount but wished to expand live coverage from five games each to eight games each per season.¹⁰⁵ This offer formed the basis for heated negotiations at the Great Western Hotel in Paddington on 14 February 1985. The joint ITV and BBC offer was for a four-year deal commencing at £3.8 million in the first season, and then rising by 6 per cent in the second year, 6 per cent in the third year, and then by 8 per cent in the fourth year, for broadcasting rights to sixteen League games, both Milk Cup semi-finals, and the Milk Cup final, together with an option for regional live games. The offer was rejected on the basis

¹⁰³ Terry McNeill, 'Soccer's Sell-out', *News Of The World*, 17 July 1983.

¹⁰⁴ Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp.124-125.

¹⁰⁵ Stuart Jones, 'TV's £3.8 Million Offer Put On Ice As Chairmen Call For Extra Time', *The Times*, 18 January 1985.

that no more than ten live games a season should be sold, and that football was under-selling itself.¹⁰⁶

By the end of the season no agreement had been reached and football was in a state of crisis following three major incidents of crowd trouble and disasters at Bradford and Heysel. The crisis of 1985 will be related in more detail below. According to King, ‘some of the failure to agree terms was due to the fact that the television companies did not want to cover football in the same year as the disasters, since they did not want to be associated with a sport whose public image was so thoroughly tarnished.’¹⁰⁷ The sides met in August and again failed to reach agreement. According to Graham Kelly, the League Secretary, the difficulty was not money but the split between live broadcast and recorded highlights and the level of television exposure.¹⁰⁸

Therefore the 1985/1986 season got under way with no football on television whatsoever. Talks held during the autumn again failed to reach agreement,¹⁰⁹ but in December a settlement was finally reached on a £1.3 million deal for BBC and ITV to share six live matches, the Milk Cup semi-finals and the Milk Cup final and recorded highlights from a maximum of twenty other games. This arrangement commenced in January 1986 and ran until the end of the season.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp.126-128.

¹⁰⁷ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.60.

¹⁰⁸ ‘League Turn Down Television Plans’, *The Times*, 13 August 1985.

¹⁰⁹ Stuart Jones, ‘No Television Games Likely This Season After Talks Break Up In Bitterness’, *The Times*, 2 November 1985; Stuart Jones, ‘Television Breakdown Is Complete As The Two Sides Stand Their Ground’, *The Times*, 6 December 1985.

¹¹⁰ John Goodbody, ‘Football Back On Television’, *The Times*, 21 December 1985.

By that stage, football's popularity and reputation had sunk to its lowest point. In a broader sense, football seemed out of kilter with the political drift of the times. Football clubs were community-based institutions that had been run in a spirit that was benevolent and paternalistic, and for forty years this mood had been within the framework of a broad post-war consensus. Such notions did not sit well with the business ethos that was gaining prominence at the time. Conn puts it with characteristic directness: 'football had no place. There was no economically productive purpose to it.'¹¹¹

In the meantime, the subject of a possible breakaway was aired again. The big clubs were now without European football due to the ban following the disaster at Heysel (see below p.73), and there was no television deal, which meant no money from live broadcasts or highlights, and this also affected opportunities for sponsorship income. In September 1985 representatives of the so-called 'Big Five' – Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur – together with representatives from Manchester City, Newcastle United, and Southampton, met secretly in Manchester to discuss the possibility of 'withdrawing from the League and persuading other crowd-pulling clubs to join them in reforming directly under the FA.'¹¹² One top club official was reported as saying, 'the mind boggles at the marketing possibilities of a small group. We have no option but to do it, and there is no better time. It is not a question of greed. Unless we do it, we may all go down.'¹¹³ The Football League Management Committee responded by asking the club chairmen to reconsider implementing the Chester Report, which they had rejected two-and-a-half years earlier.¹¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, any moves towards a breakaway were opposed by the clubs in

¹¹¹ Conn, *Football Business*, p.115.

¹¹² Charles Burgess, 'No Legal Bar To Super League Plan', *The Guardian*, 2 October 1985.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Stuart Jones, 'The Body Is Prepared For Surgery', *The Times*, 16 October 1985; Donald Saunders, 'Elite To Take On Small Fry', *Daily Telegraph*, 16 October 1985.

the Third and Fourth Divisions. They were also opposed by the Professional Footballers' Association.¹¹⁵

With the big clubs desperate to make up the shortfall in revenue due to the loss of European games and television income, the PFA and the lower division clubs were fearful of being cut adrift by any potential breakaway, because it raised the possibility of some clubs going out of business and some lower division players having to go part-time. Gordon Taylor, the secretary of the PFA, claimed that the union would block any move, through the courts if necessary.¹¹⁶ He also pointed out that any changes would need the backing of the PFA membership, and that would not be forthcoming. Ian Jones, the Doncaster Rovers chairman and representative for the Third and Fourth Division clubs on the management committee, stated that the clubs he represented should make their own decision as to whether or not they went part-time and that nothing should be imposed on them.¹¹⁷ The fact that the issue was being discussed at all indicates the financial plight facing football. Declining attendances had long been a worry, but dwindling gate money was exacerbated by the lack of revenue due to the European ban and the TV dispute, causing the top clubs to seek desperate measures. The small clubs, who stood to lose even more if the breakaway went ahead, were desperately hanging on to what they had. This dire situation would not have developed without the tragedy at Heysel.

A compromise was eventually reached when it was suggested that the First Division be reduced from twenty-two to twenty clubs over two seasons. This was to be achieved by

¹¹⁵ Charles Burgess, 'PFA Spearhead The Fight Back', *The Guardian*, 14 November 1985.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

relegating three clubs, but only promoting two from the Second Division, with a series of play-off matches between the club finishing fourth from bottom in the First Division and those finishing third, fourth, and fifth in the Second Division. The winners of the play-offs would play in the First Division. If the play-offs proved to be successful it was suggested that they become a permanent fixture at the end of each season. This was decided with the help of an agreement to redistribute wealth from sponsors and television. The First Division clubs would receive fifty per cent, the Second Division clubs twenty-five per cent, and the Third and Fourth Division clubs would receive twenty-five per cent between them.¹¹⁸ These proposals formed part of a 'Ten Point Plan', together with the decision to reduce the levy on gates for redistribution across the League down from 4 per cent to 3 per cent, and to reform the League Management Committee.¹¹⁹ The Plan was endorsed at the League's Annual General Meeting held at Heathrow in April 1986, and would become known as the 'Heathrow Agreement'.¹²⁰

The new television deal struck in the summer of 1986 was worth £6.2 million to televise fourteen live games per season, the latter to be shared equally between the BBC and ITV, together with the two semi-finals and the final of what was now the Littlewoods Challenge Cup. There would also be recorded highlights from League and Littlewoods Challenge Cup games. The sum was less than before, but this was because of 'the Football League's weakened bargaining position [following the events of 1985] and their need to attract new sponsors'.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Stuart Jones, 'Clubs And Players Back Blueprint To Save League From Breakdown', *The Times*, 19 December 1985.

¹¹⁹ Stuart Jones, 'Clubs Bow To The Big Five', *The Times*, 29 April 1986.

¹²⁰ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.61.

¹²¹ John Goodbody, 'Switching On To A New Deal', *The Times*, 4 June 1986.

By the time this deal neared its expiry in 1988 satellite broadcasting had arrived, and there was a new bidder in the shape of British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB). This new arrival made its intentions clear by offering a deal said to be worth £200 million for ten years and proposing the formation of a new joint company incorporating itself and the two football authorities.¹²² Dyke, on behalf of ITV Sport, later reported, ‘I decided my job was to try to derail the process and pinch these live football rights from BSB.’¹²³ Together with Trevor East, the Deputy Head of Sport at Thames Television, he approached the Big Five and offered them a minimum of £1 million a year each for the exclusive right to broadcast their home games. This was far more than they had received in the past. The Football League remained at liberty to sell the rights for the remaining clubs, but without the Big Five included, those rights would be worth much less.¹²⁴ Then the Big Five recruited five more clubs – Aston Villa, Newcastle United, Nottingham Forest, Sheffield Wednesday, and West Ham United – to form the ‘Big Ten of 1988’. While these clubs conducted their own talks with ITV, the Football League Management Committee voted in favour of the package offered by BSB, who were now allied to the BBC, worth a guaranteed minimum of £11 million a year. The Committee also proposed new regulations to limit the danger of the League breaking up. In the meantime, Dyke offered a deal from the ITV companies worth £52 million over four years.¹²⁵ He puts subsequent events thus: ‘threatened with a rebellion by the top ten clubs in the First Division, the Football League folded and opened negotiations with ITV.’¹²⁶

¹²² *The Times*, ‘Football’s Glittering Prizes’, 14 May 1988.

¹²³ Dyke, *Inside Story*, p.226.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.227.

¹²⁵ Raymond Snoddy, ‘Football TV Deal Approved’, *Financial Times*, 16 July 1988.

¹²⁶ Dyke, *Inside Story*, p.228.

The next twist in the saga was that the BBC and BSB decided to withdraw their bid, criticising the way in which the big clubs had gone about their negotiations. Although the threat of a breakaway was thwarted, those clubs had remained committed to ITV, provoking Bob Hunter, the NOW Channel Managing Director, to complain on behalf of BBC/BSB about ‘the attitude of a few of the First Division to go for a short-term gain’¹²⁷ and that ‘the Football League has been caught up in a last-ditch attempt by the ITV companies to play King Canute and try to hold back the introduction of new TV services.’¹²⁸

Dyke got his way and the ITV deal eventually agreed by the Football League was for four years at £11 million per season, rising with inflation, to be divided between the clubs. It was also agreed that distribution should be skewed even further in favour of the First Division clubs, who would now receive 75 per cent of the cash. The Second Division clubs would receive 12.5 per cent, and the remaining 12.5 per cent would be shared between the Third and Fourth Division clubs.¹²⁹

Although BSB’s bid failed it was important in that it brought an end to the unofficial cartel that had existed between the BBC and ITV up to this point. The 1988 negotiations were even more important as far as the future of the League was concerned. As King puts it, ‘the importance of the 1988 television deal lies in the fact that its outcome was informed by the growing dominance of the Big Five and reinforced that dominance, improving the Big

¹²⁷ Peter Ball, ‘Clubs Are Left With An Option Of One’, *The Times*, 3 August 1988.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Joel Kibazo, ‘ITV Deal On Soccer Coverage Approved’, *Financial Times*, 9 August 1988.

Five's political economic position yet further and thereby precipitating the eventual move to the Premier League.'¹³⁰

Hooliganism

While the periodic negotiations for television broadcasting rights increasingly threatened the unity of the League against a backdrop of declining attendances, football had other major problems. The subject of hooliganism has been researched by Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams of the Sir Norman Chester Football Research Centre at Leicester University. They dispel the myth that hooliganism was a product of the 1960s by giving evidence to show that 'misconduct and disorderliness by spectators were regular accompaniments of United Kingdom soccer in the two decades before the First World War.'¹³¹ Between the wars, football grounds came to be seen as 'orderly and respectable places that were relatively safe',¹³² thus indicating a decline in disorderliness. After the Second World War attendances reached unprecedented levels, as we have seen, but despite the bumper crowds there were very few incidents that gave rise to concern. The problem then re-emerged later on. Taylor describes their findings as 'a U-shaped curve, with considerable violence before the First World War, which then fell between the wars and in the immediate post-war years before a steady rise from the mid-1950s and a more rapid increase after the mid-1960s.'¹³³ However, the 'Leicester school' have received criticism for adapting their findings simply to fit the views of Norbert Elias in that the fall and rise of hooliganism matches trends in a broader and longer-term 'civilising process' punctuated

¹³⁰ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.64.

¹³¹ Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy and John Williams, *The Roots Of Football Hooliganism: an historical and sociological study* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), p.53.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p.101.

¹³³ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.312.

by 'decivilising spurts'. Elias's figurational sociology has itself been criticised for failing to provide a genuine theory, offering merely a 'medley of untestable and descriptive generalisations.'¹³⁴

The point needs to be made that when football violence re-emerged, although the phenomenon was not new, it was new to contemporaries. It was also much worse. As Walvin points out: 'what happened from the 1960s onwards was utterly different in substance and scale from anything the game had experienced before. To argue otherwise is to misconstrue both the present and the past.'¹³⁵ In the late 1950s, and even more so in the late 1960s, there were few fans alive who could remember the game before 1914. It was also in a completely new context. That context was in relation to growing concern about the behaviour of working-class youth due to the emergence of the 'teddy boys' and later on the 'mods' and the 'rockers'. It was also related to gloom about Britain's declining position in the world, a point underlined in football by Hungary's famous 6-3 victory over England at Wembley in 1953, and in international politics by the Suez crisis of 1956.¹³⁶ Early on, the 'overall tone in which the disorderliness of football spectators was reported was reassuring and the language far from alarmist'.¹³⁷ During the 1960s this changed and football hooliganism began to be seen as a major social problem in its own right. It was during this decade that the regular televising of football began, as we have seen, and in the build up to hosting the 1966 World Cup finals, the English football authorities, faced with declining crowds, became increasingly concerned about the image of the game. From this point onwards it became a 'self-perpetuating social problem with the actions of the youths

¹³⁴ Richard Giulianotti, *Football: a sociology of the global game* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp.46-47.

¹³⁵ James Walvin, *The Only Game: football in our times* (London: Pearson, 2001), p.154.

¹³⁶ Dunning, Murphy, and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, p.138.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.141.

and (mainly) young men who were centrally involved and the media and official reactions to what they did feeding each other in a vicious spiral.’¹³⁸ Given this shift in emphasis by the media, identifying an exact date for the re-emergence of football violence is difficult. As early as 1956 Everton fans caused a lot of damage to a train returning to Liverpool from Manchester after watching their team play Manchester City. Both Everton and Liverpool fans were involved in train-wrecking exploits during the 1960s in what probably constituted ‘the first emergence of football hooliganism as a regular phenomenon in one of its recognisably modern forms.’¹³⁹ In December 1963 Everton faced Rangers in an unofficial ‘championship of Britain’ match, and the fighting outside the ground was, according to Dunning, Murphy, and Williams, ‘the first time in England after the Second World War that a confrontation between fan groups was widely reported.’¹⁴⁰ Dick Knight, who went on to become chairman of Brighton and Hove Albion, relates an incident he witnessed at a game between West Ham United and Everton in 1963:

It was one of the first examples of football hooliganism. West Ham got a disputed penalty near the end of a fifth round FA Cup tie against Everton and an Evertonian kid ran on from behind the other goal. He had a banner that he brandished like a spear and ran the length of the pitch towards the referee, naked to the waist. Eventually the stewards and police caught him and he went off to the cheers of the Everton fans, and the next day his picture was all over the Sunday papers, effectively glorifying him. Other kids started to copy him, the media reported it, and the whole thing became the catalyst for hooliganism, which began to spread like wildfire over the next two or three years.¹⁴¹

Dunning *et al* state that during the 1966/1967 season, the ‘ends’ became established. Young men and groups of lads from local estates and suburbs congregated on an area of terracing

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.142.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.143.

¹⁴¹ Dick Knight, *Madman: from the gutter to the stars* (Kingston: Vision Sports, 2013), pp.22-23.

and new forms of singing and chanting emerged at around this time and this had the effect of dissuading older supporters from standing among them. From this point on ‘the favoured positions – on the ‘home’ terraces slightly above and behind the goal – increasingly became the preserve of those young fans who were identified by the media and the game’s administrators as the chief perpetrators of football hooliganism.’¹⁴² Colin Ward, in one of the first autobiographies of its kind, describes the phenomenon: ‘every football ground had a popular end, and home fans would try to prevent rival fans entering it. If some did get through, then a punch-up usually ensued. Thus a new phrase entered the hooligans’ vocabulary: “taking an end”. If you got in and held your ground, you had “taken” the end.’¹⁴³

Cass Pennant was a member of the gang of West Ham United fans known as the Inter City Firm. He describes the experience for an away fan ‘taking an end’:

The plods [police] think we’re home fans, which is cool. Up the concrete stairs leading from the side of their covered end ... you come in from the side ... a roar goes up and it’s kicking off behind the goal right in the middle of their end. The home lot have either spotted us first or our main faces have kicked off, knowing the rest of us are on the way ... these are terrifying minutes ... if ever that part of the ground is successfully invaded and run by visiting fans, it’s regarded as the ultimate defeat for home fans ... it means suffering total humiliation.¹⁴⁴

The response of the police and the football clubs to the rising violence was to introduce segregation. If rival fans were going to fight it made sense to keep them apart. A barrier

¹⁴² Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, p.166.

¹⁴³ Ward, *Steaming In*, p.8.

¹⁴⁴ Cass Pennant, *Congratulations You Have Just Met The I. C. F.* (London: John Blake, 2003 paperback edition), pp. 24-25.

could be created either by using police officers or erecting a fence. However, the police were misguided because this failed to provide any noticeable improvement and had a number of unintended consequences. Firstly, it marked home and away areas with greater clarity than the hooligans or other young fans could have managed; secondly, it helped reinforce the hooligans' solidarity; thirdly, it provided a challenge in that it almost invited violation by those wishing to fight; fourthly, the increased numbers of police required to enforce segregation had the effect of making fans seek confrontation with rival fans either outside or in places away from the grounds altogether, such as at railway stations.¹⁴⁵

Violent behaviour was not confined to domestic games. English clubs who went abroad to play in the European competitions were followed by some who inflicted their activities overseas. As examples of this, Manchester United fans rioted in Ostend in 1974; Tottenham Hotspur fans were involved in major disturbances in Rotterdam during their UEFA Cup tie with Feyenoord, both outside and inside the stadium; following the 1975 European Cup final, when Leeds United lost to Bayern Munich, Leeds fans fought on the streets of Paris, leading to UEFA banning Leeds from European competition for four seasons; and crowd disturbances in Saint-Etienne in 1977 led to Manchester United being expelled from the European Cup-Winners' Cup.¹⁴⁶

As far as fashion is concerned, in the late 1960s the skinhead style became popular among football hooligans, and with it the 'traditional concerns of the rough working class – their violent masculinity, their community loyalty and collective solidarity, their violent

¹⁴⁵ Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, p.168.

¹⁴⁶ David Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: a global history of football* (London: Penguin, 2007 edition), p.550.

opposition to outsiders and any males who looked ‘odd’.¹⁴⁷ However, fashions changed as time progressed. Hunter Davies spent the 1971/1972 season with Tottenham Hotspur and his observations were published in *The Glory Game*. He noted:

As a species, they used to be called skinheads, and still are by the press, but that term was already about a year out of date. Almost all of them had long hair and many could have passed for hippies, except for their big heavy boots ... they called themselves Smooths, if they called themselves anything. There was none of the uniformity of the previous season, when they all had Doc Martin [sic] boots and dark blue Crombie overcoats and very short hair, though there were remnants of the old style here and there.¹⁴⁸

Tottenham’s first game during the 1971/1972 season was away to Wolverhampton Wanderers. Before the game Davies was on the pitch with the players near the players’ tunnel, when ‘three cops appeared from the ground, dragging a Spurs supporter, his face streaming with blood. There was still an hour to go but the fighting had already started between the rival supporters.’¹⁴⁹

As the 1970s advanced, so did racism. The views of the Far Right crept into youth culture during the skinhead revival in the punk era and in turn, fed into the culture and hooliganism.

Pennant states:

when the skinhead revival returned to the terraces in the late Seventies, with its sinister Far Right connections, the new racists immediately targeted the emergence of the professional black football player ... the sight of National Front and British Movement members standing outside the ground handing out their filth-peddling newspapers, like *Bulldog*, gave the press all the ammunition they needed [to present the East End in a

¹⁴⁷ Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, pp.169–170.

¹⁴⁸ Hunter Davies, *The Glory Game* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2007 reprint), pp.113-114.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.61.

bad light]. The interior of the ground, particularly the Lower West Side, was the focal point for 'Sieg Heil!' chanting. This was also the area from which bananas, aimed at black players on rival teams, were chucked.¹⁵⁰

Nick Hornby, in *Fever Pitch*, describes his disgust at the reaction of a section of Liverpool fans to the appearance of John Barnes in their team:

we could see quite clearly, as the teams warmed up before the kick-off, that banana after banana was being hurled from the away supporters' enclosure. The bananas were designed to announce ...that there was a monkey on the pitch; and as the Liverpool fans have never bothered to bring bananas to previous Arsenal matches, even though we have always had at least one black player in the side since the turn of the decade, one can only presume that John Barnes was the monkey to whom they were referring ... those who have seen John Barnes, this beautiful, elegant man, play football, or give an interview, or even simply walk out on to a pitch, and have stood next to the grunting, overweight orang-utans who do things like throw bananas and make monkey noises, will appreciate the dazzling irony of all this.¹⁵¹

As evidence that racism emerged among young football fans in the late 1970s, Pennant, a black man himself, states that, despite their notoriety in other areas, the members of the Inter City Firm were not racist. He states his dislike of mixing racism or any other political viewpoint with football, remembering that 'the only thing that mattered was your loyalty to West Ham; the only colours that mattered were claret and blue; the only rule that mattered was you don't fucking run.'¹⁵²

Greater organisation by the police and by the clubs in their attempts to prevent violence led to higher levels of strategy and planning by those fans who wished to continue to fight. It

¹⁵⁰ Pennant, *I. C. F.*, pp. 376-377.

¹⁵¹ Nick Hornby, *Fever Pitch* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1994 edition), pp.188-189.

¹⁵² Pennant, *I. C. F.*, p.377. The word 'run' in this context means running away from opposition supporters rather than standing your ground.

was in this context that organised gangs started to emerge. To cite some examples, as well as the Inter City Firm, there were the Service Crew at Leeds United, the Bushwackers at Millwall, the Gooners at Arsenal, and the Headhunters at Chelsea.¹⁵³ However, research by Gary Armstrong into the activities of the Blades, a gang of Sheffield United fans, found less organisation but more fluidity based around groups of friends and acquaintances.¹⁵⁴

A BBC *Panorama* documentary programme broadcast in 1977 reported on hooligan activity by Millwall fans. They found three main groups, named 'The Half-Way Line', 'Treatment', and 'F Troop'. The 'Half-Way Line' were the youngest. They were aged about twelve or thirteen and the name came from where they stood in the ground, a fact that also suggests too much emphasis can be placed on the importance of 'ends'. The BBC report observed: 'when it comes to aggro, they imitate their elders.' Of 'Treatment' the report says: 'although one of Millwall's heavy mobs, Treatment don't pick fights, but are always there when they happen.' 'F Troop', on the other hand, were described as the 'real nutters'. They 'go looking for fights and are seldom disappointed.' As an example of one of 'F Troop's' activities, footage focussed on one Saturday when Millwall were playing away to Sunderland. 'Treatment' made the long trip up to the game, but 'F Troop', instead of travelling to the match, went to Charlton Athletic's game against Tottenham Hotspur to fight Spurs fans, and 'give them a taste of what they'll get when they come down here [to Millwall's ground].'¹⁵⁵ 'Treatment' were very distinctive because they wore surgical

¹⁵³ Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, pp.179-180.

¹⁵⁴ Gary Armstrong, *Football Hooligans: knowing the score* (Oxford: Berg, 1998), p.306.

¹⁵⁵ *Panorama – Millwall 1977*.avi, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKoYjOGOzXQ>, youtube, last accessed 16 March 2016.

masks. These came from one of their number who worked as a hospital porter.¹⁵⁶ Here, then, we can see a clear hierarchy within the subculture around one club.

Who were the hooligans? What were their backgrounds? The first question is easier to answer than the second. They were invariably male, and usually in their late teens or early twenties. As far as background is concerned, research by Dunning, Murphy and Williams found that the overwhelming majority of football hooligans worked in manual occupations, and of those less than a fifth were skilled. They concluded that most football hooligans came from the lower levels of the working-class, but those who were unemployed were in the minority.¹⁵⁷

Colin Ward offers an explanation as to why young men became hooligans: ‘there are certain events and experiences that make everyday, mundane existence seem tolerable and worthwhile. For thousands of football fans, myself included, it was the terraces. It became our life, for some the sole reason for existence.’¹⁵⁸ Patrick Slaughter is a Leeds United fan and former hooligan. He said, ‘it’s just great fun ... you’re a kid, you’re running around and the sirens are going and the glass is going through. Every so often, you get into a bit of this and a bit of that. It’s just like mad, and you get back into the pub or on the train, gassing [talking about what had happened].’¹⁵⁹ Thus it is fair to say that, for people like Slaughter, hooligan activity brought excitement and relieved the boredom of everyday life. To them, it was a way of letting off steam.

¹⁵⁶ Lee Cook, interview with the author, London, 17 May 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, pp.189-190.

¹⁵⁸ Ward, *Steaming In*, p.5.

¹⁵⁹ Patrick Slaughter, interview with the author, London, 12 April 2015.

Slaughter also gave an indication of the occupational background of those Leeds fans he knew who were involved: ‘in Yorkshire when the miner’s strike’s going on, unemployment’s absolutely massive ... hardly any of us had any jobs; if you had a job it was some sort of government scheme where you got paid £20 a week’.¹⁶⁰ In that case, how did they fund their activities?:

shoplifting. We were absolutely brilliant at shoplifting ... we started off in Manchester or Liverpool, because at the time designer wear, all everyone wanted to buy, was very hard to get. It’s not like these days. So we’d go to Manchester, go to Liverpool, go to London, then we started getting more adventurous – Cologne, Paris, Milan – and we’d just ransack Armani shops, Valentino shops, then bring the gear back and sell it on match days before the match in the pubs.¹⁶¹

So it is clear that some hooligans on low incomes funded their football by criminal activity. But not all were poor, and some did not fit this stereotype or assumption, as is revealed by the police undercover operation into the Chelsea Headhunters, which resulted in the arrest of a number of alleged ringleaders. Among them were Steve Hickmott and Terry Last. It is hard to imagine anyone less like a hooligan than Last. He was short, slim, and worked as a filing clerk with a law firm. His other activities included bird watching and playing chess.¹⁶² It can be seen that among the hooligans there were a minority who did respectable jobs and earned good salaries, whose background was clearly more middle-class than working-class, but even so they still wanted the excitement on offer. The class, occupation and financial resources of these young men is also a subject that would have varied from area to area, and therefore from club to club.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Nick Lowles and Andy Nicholls, *Hooligans: the A-L of Britain's football hooligan gangs* (Preston: Milo, 2007 edition), pp. 248-249.

The greater levels of policing and better police organisation that were needed to deal with the problem gave rise to a change in fashion. By the mid-1980s the skinhead and the long-haired fashions of the 1970s had given way to the 'casual' appearance. Gone were the shaved heads, bovver boots, and donkey jackets, to be replaced by expensive sweaters with designer labels, neat shoes, and jewellery. This suggested that hooligans came not from deprived backgrounds, but from a semi-affluent environment. However, this view overlooks the fact that some fans attached enough importance to their football-related activities to forego other pleasures, and as stated above, some of their income came from the 'hidden economy' of petty crime.¹⁶³

The subject of hooliganism has been set into a broader context by the historian Arthur Marwick:

What was happening was that the old reference points by which individuals and groups measured their behaviour, by which their behaviour was constrained, had drastically changed. Society had been more unified under policies that deliberately sought to avoid unemployment and to sustain social benefits, policies which recognised the place of trade unions in society, and policies that upheld tolerance and civilized behaviour as important values. Football hooligans at home saw themselves as fighting for their own particular community; football hooligans abroad, ironically, saw themselves as demonstrating British might. All this was, however distortedly, in keeping with the values of the aggressive market-place and the Falklands War. There were no longer national communal values to which all but the most desperate and alienated subscribed. Loyalty was now to the individual peer group.¹⁶⁴

Over two decades the hooligan phenomenon in its modern form metamorphosed from uncoordinated and disparate incidents of violence or vandalism in its early days to become something that was altogether more organised and formidable. Firstly, segregation had the effect of polarising hostility. Secondly, fans involved in hooligan activities adapted their

¹⁶³ Dunning, Murphy and Williams, *Football Hooliganism*, pp.190-191.

¹⁶⁴ Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 1996 [1st edition, 1982]), p.351.

routines and fashions, sometimes consolidating into gangs, in order to thwart attempts by the police and the football authorities to detect and stop them. Then certain events towards the end of the 1984/1985 season elevated the problem to the level of a national news item, and then on to one of international crisis. It is to this we turn next.

The crisis of 1985

On 4 March Chelsea faced Sunderland in the second leg of the Milk Cup semi-final. The first leg at Roker Park had resulted in a 2-0 win for Sunderland, which meant that in their home leg at Stamford Bridge, Chelsea had to win by three clear goals to guarantee progress to the final at Wembley. However, midway through the second half, Sunderland's Clive Walker equalised to make the score 2-2, effectively putting the tie beyond Chelsea. This prompted an outbreak of violence from many of the Chelsea fans, leading to one news reporter commenting that it was 'one of British football's blackest nights.'¹⁶⁵ Tony Brown is a Chelsea fan who was at the game. He recalls that there was already some bad blood from the first leg:

I also went to the first leg at Roker Park, our coaches were parked on the sea front and, by the time we got back to them after the game, most had their windows smashed in. There had been trouble at the away game, although there were upwards of 7,000 Chelsea who had travelled up to the North East ... after the game, fed up with having lost ... and being kept in, the Chelsea fans broke open one of the exit gates and charged out looking for any Sunderland fans they could find. Thankfully, I just made my way back to the coaches and avoided the trouble. I heard later from lads who had gone looking for Sunderland fans that they attacked a couple of pubs with Sunderland fans barricaded inside. As I recall there were stories in the press the next day about a few Chelsea fans being beaten up and hospitalised and this may have increased the tensions and possible revenge-seeking on the night of the return fixture.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ www.youtube.com ITN News 5.45pm, 5 March 1985.

¹⁶⁶ Tony Brown, interview with the author, email, 22 February 2016.

Of the second leg at Stamford Bridge he says:

Before the game Chelsea had tried to attack the Sunderland fans who were being marched to the ground from where their coaches were parked, police horses managed to keep the rival fans apart (with difficulty!) ... there were a few Sunderland fans in the West Stand ... but there was no segregation as such from the rest of the stand which was all Chelsea and a few of them got a slap when Sunderland scored. There had been a number of incidents during the game where both sets of supporters had exchanged missiles (coins and broken concrete from the terrace) but, arguably the incident that stands out was when Clive Walker (then playing for Sunderland) broke through on goal. One Chelsea supporter made it on to the pitch being chased by at least four police officers. A mounted officer then rode onto the pitch to apprehend the fan and, if my memory isn't mistaken, you had the sight of Clive Walker through on goal, five people and a mounted officer all on the pitch at the same time (as well as the rest of the players!). Walker scored which led to more Chelsea fans getting on the pitch with charges made by mounted police to try to clear the pitch. There was even a horse on the pitch when Sunderland scored their third. At the end of the game more Chelsea invaded the pitch and charged up to the Sunderland fans penned in the North Stand terraces, cue more missiles, police charges, the wooden parts of the benches ripped up to make missiles to throw at the police, Sunderland trying to break out of their section, all in all just pure mayhem!¹⁶⁷

Video footage shows fans running across the pitch, one of them brandishing a chair, and on the far side seats were ripped out and hurled at police. It took mounted police to clear the pitch. In all, there were 104 arrests and forty were injured, including twenty police officers.¹⁶⁸ Ted Croker, the FA Secretary, was at the game and commented on the news that he felt sorry for the clubs, and regarding the hooligans he said 'they call themselves supporters but they are the last people the clubs want'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ ITN News 5.45pm, 5 March 1985, youtube, www.youtube.com [last accessed 3 November 2014]

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

Only nine days later, on 13 March, Luton Town hosted Millwall for an FA Cup quarter-final match. The game was held up for twenty-five minutes as Millwall fans ripped up seats to use as missiles, invaded the pitch and battled with around 200 police officers. The game resumed and Luton won 1-0 but there were similar scenes after the final whistle, both at the ground and in the town. Descriptions of these were published in graphic detail in the *Daily Mirror*:

Hundreds of soccer savages ran riot at an FA Cup tie last night. They halted the match then rampaged through a town in some of the worst football violence Britain has ever seen. Thirty-one policemen were injured in the clashes at the match between Luton and Millwall ... after the game the thugs charged through the town smashing the windows of shops and houses ... before the kick-off hundreds of Millwall supporters smashed down turnstiles to get into the ground ... they scaled eight-foot fences at the end of the packed Luton ground to attack rival fans. Then they charged across the pitch, trampling over advertising hoardings and ripping up seats in the stands.¹⁷⁰

Lee Cook is a Millwall fan and former hooligan who was at the game. He told me that alcohol was a large factor in the fans' behaviour:

It's ten thousand drunken lunatics there, really. They [the police] didn't expect it. They expected about five thousand and ten thousand turned up. You could pay anywhere in the ground, plus it was a night game. We all had the day off, so we were on the piss from eleven o'clock all the way through, like seven or eight o'clock at night, all steaming, ain't we? About ten thousand drunks there, and all, that didn't help much. The police were outnumbered, police couldn't cope with nothing [sic], inside the ground, outside the ground.¹⁷¹

An anonymous Millwall fan recalls:

¹⁷⁰ Harry Harris and Paul Smith, 'Soccer Hell Breaks Loose', *Daily Mirror*, 14 March 1985.

¹⁷¹ Lee Cook, interview with the author, London, 17 May 2015.

By 5.00pm pubs and newsagents around the town were having their windows smashed as the police struggled to cope. The firm just ransacked the bars and shops in the town centre, and looted them ... we were herded into [the ground] about an hour before kick-off. It was already getting really packed ... ten minutes later, the home fans started goading us ... hundreds of us scaled the fences in front of the stand and rushed down the pitch towards the Luton supporters ... we made a serious run at them. They made a serious run away from us. A hail of bottles, cans, nails and coins saw them fleeing up the terraces ... now it was getting dangerous. More spilled on to the pitch behind the goal and we ran into the Bobbers Stand where a group of Luton were. Again they ran.¹⁷²

Of the events during the match, the same fan recalls: ‘after only 14 minutes, the game was halted as we began to riot again. After 15 minutes, we invaded the pitch. We were having running battles with the police. This went on for almost half an hour before calm was restored.’¹⁷³ There was trouble again after the game: ‘we made for the Bobbers Stand again and started to rip out seats as fences were torn down. The seats were thrown onto the pitch at the police. They fell back, regrouped, then charged in waves, batons drawn ... the back and forth continued for some time.’¹⁷⁴

The Luton v. Millwall match was televised live. This magnified the impact of the scenes described. As Nawrat and Hutchings comment, ‘nearly all of the television audience had probably never seen anything like it before.’¹⁷⁵ One person clearly not impressed was Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She summoned representatives from the football authorities to a meeting at Downing Street to discuss the problem. It was at this meeting that Croker came out with his infamous remark that ‘these people are society’s problem and we don’t want

¹⁷² Andrew Woods, *No-one Likes Us, We Don't Care: true stories from Millwall, Britain's most notorious football hooligans* (London: John Blake, 2011), pp.70-71.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁵ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.264.

your hooligans at our sport.’¹⁷⁶ Such complacency was unlikely to lead to any progress with a premier already dubbed the ‘Iron Lady’, and she and her government soon passed a bill banning the sale of alcohol in football grounds and set about devising a national identity card scheme for football supporters.¹⁷⁷ As far as Luton Town were concerned, they responded by banning away fans from their Kenilworth Road ground.¹⁷⁸

On the final day of the season, Birmingham City were playing at home to Leeds United.

Slaughter was at the game. He recalls:

Arsenal are going to Villa ... so we’ve had it with Arsenal straight away ... we’re now about 1,000-handed ... it’s all going off everywhere, then Birmingham, the Zulus, would come round the corner and then we just fought all the way down to St. Andrews. Then outside St. Andrews there’s a big dusty car park. Somebody’s discovered a football so we got 500-a-side in each, playing football, waiting for the Zulus to walk through. Every time the Zulus walked through, we’re straight into them. It’s just getting madder and madder and madder, then it’s time to go in. Basically, we’re straight through, appear to be taking the wall down ... so there’s no conventional Leeds fans ... but they’re all scarfers. We’re wearing shirts, all casuals. We’re at the front, they’re at the back ... there’s a snack shed, terrified, wrongly positioned, gets ransacked. All the scarfers are throwing pies, crisps ... so the game starts. I think one Birmingham fan went on the pitch, and our lot have gone straight over, then the police come on. I remember, it’s absolutely classic, it came over the PA system, the announcer, ‘can the police who are looking at the Leeds fans, please turn behind. You are now being attacked by the Birmingham fans.’ So they’re looking behind and the Birmingham fans are coming straight on, and it’s all going off ... then the older Leeds fans suddenly decided ‘we can’t accept this rubbish’ ... the scarfers, wearing colours and that, they start singing, ‘you’re the scum of Elland Road’, which is bizarre because they were the ones who started the whole thing [trouble at Leeds games in the 1960s] so we’ve gone back in and we’ve started a fight with them! And then Birmingham come back on the pitch, we’ve gone back on the pitch and we all start fighting ... just a mad, crazy day.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Patrick Slaughter, interview with the author, London, 12 April 2015. The word ‘scarfers’ refers to a slightly older generation of football fans who wore their club’s colours, such as scarfs. The ‘casuals’ of the mid-1980s did not do so.

Nick Lowles and Andy Nicholls describe the same episode in their work on hooliganism:

Hundreds of Leeds fans poured onto the pitch. As police, including sixteen mounted officers, tried to chase visiting fans back, they faces a hail of bricks, bottles, planks of wood. Then, from behind them, Birmingham fans streamed forward, hoping to clash with their Leeds rivals. A dozen red distress flares were fired into police lines as home fans from two other stands joined the fray.¹⁸⁰

There is video footage of the ground after the final whistle. Birmingham supporters repeatedly try to invade the pitch in an attempt to get at their rivals and are driven back by mounted police each time. The aim of the police is to keep the rival fans apart. At the opposite end of the ground, the Leeds fans remain on the terrace but both sets of fans are hurling missiles at the police and the thin blue line of police in front of the visiting fans has to stand well back because of this. A voice on the tannoy repeatedly asks the home supporters to leave the ground and go home, but to no avail. Towards the end of the footage it can be seen that all the advertisement hoardings lining the pitch at the Birmingham end of the ground have disappeared, many of them torn up and used as missiles.¹⁸¹ The extent of the violence can be seen in the statistics. There were ninety-six police officers injured, along with more than eighty spectators and 125 arrests.¹⁸²

Fifteen-year-old Ian Hambridge was attending his first football match. He had gone to the game with three friends. Half an hour after the final whistle a wall collapsed due to pressure

¹⁸⁰ Lowles and Nicholls, *Hooligans*, p.81.

¹⁸¹ Football Hooligans – Birmingham City V Leeds United 1985, youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F4RPI_Aa9g, last accessed 3 November 2014.

¹⁸² William Daniels, 'Teenage Victim Of Terror', *The Mirror*, 13 May 1985.

on it from the Leeds fans.¹⁸³ Masonry fell on to parked cars and injured some supporters. One of those injured was Hambridge. He was rushed to hospital but died the following day. His distraught mother said: 'I feel guilty because I gave Ian the money to go to the match. He just wanted a day out with his friends.'¹⁸⁴ The tragedy in the West Midlands, however, was overshadowed by the disaster that had unfolded simultaneously in West Yorkshire.

Bradford City had secured promotion to the Second Division. For the last game of the season they were playing at home against Lincoln City. Thousands of supporters and locals packed in to their Valley Parade ground to enjoy the carnival atmosphere and celebrate the team's achievement. Just before half-time, with Bradford leading 1-0, a fire appeared in the main stand running along the side of the pitch. On the video footage, the commentator says, 'there appears to be a fire in the stand. That looks very nasty.' It spread with great speed. The players left the pitch and supporters rushed to leave the stand, clambering out over the front. After only a minute half the pitch was engulfed in smoke and after three minutes the entire stand was ablaze, thick plumes of black smoke ascending hundreds of feet into the Yorkshire sky. Towards the end of the footage a man rushed out from the stand, his clothes on fire. The commentator exclaimed, 'Look at that! The poor man. This is human tragedy.' Police and other supporters rushed to his aid and put the flames out. The commentator summarized, 'ten minutes ago we were looking at a football game. Now I see a sad and tragic sight.'¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Dave Horridge,, 'They Must Be Banned', *The Mirror*, 13 May 1985.

¹⁸⁴ William Daniels, 'Teenage Victim Of Terror', *The Mirror*, 13 May 1985.

¹⁸⁵ Bradford City Football Club Stadion Feuer/Fire! May 11th 1985, youtube, https://youtube.com/watch?v=TJ_vG4cHRKU last accessed 3 November 2014.

In all, fifty-six died as a result of the Bradford fire and hundreds of others needed treatment for burns. If the recent events at Chelsea, Luton, and Birmingham had highlighted the scourge of hooliganism, then the fire at Bradford underlined the dilapidated state of many football grounds. As Nawrat and Hutchings put it, 'if hooliganism was the most visible blot on football's tattered reputation, the state of our stadiums was the other. Many were antiquated, decaying and unsafe.'¹⁸⁶ The government commissioned Justice Oliver Popplewell to lead an inquiry into the fire.

There is a postscript to the Bradford Fire. Martin Fletcher was a 12-year-old boy who survived the blaze but lost his brother, father, uncle and grandfather in the disaster. In 2015, just before the thirtieth anniversary of the tragedy, he published *56: the story of the Bradford Fire*. In it he challenges the established view that the fire was started accidentally by a carelessly discarded match or a cigarette end. He points to the short space of time between the disaster and the inquiry opening, which was just thirteen working days after the forensic search of the site was completed. In addition, he notes the haste with which the inquiry was finished (just five and a half working days) and Popplewell's determination not to apportion blame to any one person, maintaining that the issue of criminal negligence was not in his remit.¹⁸⁷ There is further concern regarding Bradford City chairman Stafford Heginbotham. This includes his denial, proved untrue, that the club had ever received a letter from West Yorkshire County Council raising concern about combustible material under the stand, and various other lies, contradictions and inconsistencies that remained unchallenged.¹⁸⁸ Most alarming of all is the fact that in the eighteen years between 1967

¹⁸⁶ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.266.

¹⁸⁷ Martin Fletcher, *56: the story of the Bradford Fire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p.149, pp.100-101, p.151.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.168-173.

and 1985, there had been fires at the premises of at least nine companies owned or co-owned by Heginbotham. Fletcher comments, ‘could any man really be as unlucky as Heginbotham had been?’¹⁸⁹ In the process the Bradford chairman had picked up £2.74 million in insurance claims (£27 million in 2015 terms).¹⁹⁰

Given the speed with which the inquiry was begun and completed, the possibility of government collusion to avoid criminal proceedings against Heginbotham could be suggested. It is more likely, however, that the government, led by a prime minister who did not like football in the first place, had become thoroughly exasperated with the problems that the game was creating. The insistence that there would be one inquiry to cover the events at Bradford and Birmingham, though they were completely different in nature, is evidence of this. They were in no mood to spend more time and public money than the minimum they could get away with.

The fact that there would be only one inquiry merged the issues of safety and control into one, which had the effect of advancing the disciplinarian argument. Regarding the two issues of safety and control, King comments:

There can be no doubt that the two issues are closely interrelated at a football ground, as a poorly controlled or violent crowd is necessarily dangerous and, therefore, a threat to public safety. Yet, as the fire at Bradford demonstrated, the issues could be quite separate, where a perfectly well-behaved crowd might be in a situation of danger because of the negligent management of the ground.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p.206.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., pp.200-205.

¹⁹¹ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.80.

The authoritarian nature of the inquiry also fitted in with the context of the times. Public order and the enforcement of the law had become the subject of debate between the main political parties, fed not only by trouble at football matches but also by the recent year-long miners' strike with its much-publicized confrontations between the police and striking miners.¹⁹²

Then, on 29 May, Liverpool faced Juventus in the final of the European Cup. For seven of the previous eight seasons the European Cup had been won by an English team, and on four of those occasions it had been Liverpool.¹⁹³ Hoping to see their team continue this dominance, Liverpool fans made their way to Brussels for the game, which was to be played in the Heysel stadium. As two authorities put it, 'just as we were about to enjoy the summit of European football the game reached its nadir.'¹⁹⁴ According to the *Daily Express*, trouble started in the afternoon when a jewellers' shop was smashed up and looted, and then there was a running battle between English fans and the police.¹⁹⁵ Once inside the stadium, trouble began with bottles, flagpoles, and bricks flying between the rival groups of supporters. When the riot police tried to intervene, they too came under a barrage of missiles.¹⁹⁶ There was an issue regarding segregation, as there was only a nine foot wire mesh fence. Liverpool fan Peter Keatley said, 'it was only flimsy wire fencing. I wouldn't put that sort of thing up in my back garden. It just went down under the sheer weight of people.'¹⁹⁷ Also, many Italian fans had easily acquired tickets for the Z section of terracing,

¹⁹² Mihir Bose, *Game Changer: how the English Premier League came to dominate the world* (London: Marshall Cavendish, 2012), p.43.

¹⁹³ These English winners were – 1977 and 1978 Liverpool; 1979 and 1980 Nottingham Forest; 1981 Liverpool; 1982 Aston Villa; 1984 Liverpool. Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.792.

¹⁹⁴ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.268.

¹⁹⁵ David Wooding and Steve Curry, '42 Fans Dead In Euro-cup Crowd Horror', *Daily Express*, 30 May 1985.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

which was supposedly neutral. It was into this area that Liverpool fans, in the X and Y sections of terracing, charged.¹⁹⁸ The first charge was at around 6.30pm, but it was the third charge that was to prove fatal. As Italian fans rushed to safety, an old wall collapsed and fans were either crushed or stampeded in the ensuing panic.¹⁹⁹

The final death toll was thirty-nine, with hundreds of others injured. The issue of hooliganism was now at a level of international crisis. Amid universal calls for some form of ban, FA chairman Bert Millichip together with FA Secretary Ted Croker flew back from Mexico, where they had been on tour with England, for an emergency meeting with the Prime Minister at Downing Street. Millichip was ready to persuade the FA to impose its own ban rather than wait for UEFA to do it. He said, 'it could be that we decide not to take part in European football at any level ... the scale of this tragedy in Belgium is so depressing it is beyond belief. I feel entirely helpless and completely frustrated as to what action can be taken, if indeed the game of football can survive at all.'²⁰⁰ The FA withdrew all English clubs from European competition for a year, but this was clearly seen as inadequate by UEFA, who imposed an indefinite ban, with a three-year additional ban on Liverpool when other English clubs were re-admitted.²⁰¹

The point needs to be made, however, that the Heysel stadium was woefully inadequate for a match of such importance. In the corner of Z terrace there were two adjacent walls which did not allow fans to exit safely. There was no ticket control and one of the circumstances

¹⁹⁸ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, pp.268-269.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Harry Harris, 'Out Out', *The Mirror*, 31 May 1985.

²⁰¹ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.269.

that led to the disaster was the ease with which Juventus fans acquired tickets for this section. Belgian police had clearly not researched English hooligan behaviour patterns and as a result were unprepared for trouble before the game. Fans entering the ground were not searched for weapons or alcohol, and many were drunk, and some fans who had entered the stadium were able to pass their tickets out through the fence to those waiting to enter.²⁰² Thus it can be seen that all the ingredients for a disaster were present before any trouble occurred.

The impact of Heysel was magnified further by the fact that it did not come in isolation. In just three months between the beginning of March and the end of May 1985 there had been three major outbreaks of crowd violence and two disasters involving English football fans. (This is counting the events in Brussels as a disaster - it could of course also be counted as another major outbreak of crowd violence). As the 1985/1986 season got under way, English clubs were banned from European competition, a dispute with the television companies meant that there was no live televised football whatsoever, and attendances reached an all-time low, although this last point was in line with the prevailing downward trend rather than an automatic reaction to these events. Even so, it is clear that English football was in a very bad state. Walvin puts the decline succinctly: 'in the mid-1960s football was the national game; by the mid-1980s it had become a national problem.'²⁰³ He also puts it into a broader context:

When the national game stumbled into the new 1985-6 season it did so in a miasma of political and economic confusion. The game itself had become a political football, punted hither and yon by indeterminate – and often undisciplined – teams of politicians and critics. Inevitably, former spectators stayed away in growing numbers; economic crisis hovered over the game. To make matters worse the mental insularity

²⁰² Ibid., p.268.

²⁰³ Walvin, *Only Game*, p.150.

... was now compounded by the enforced isolation from the rest of the footballing world.²⁰⁴

The seeds of revival are sown

Central to the government's plan to deal with the hooligan crisis was an identity card scheme. This was one of the proposals of the Popplewell Report, which, according to King, had a disciplinary tone largely due to the context in which it was compiled.²⁰⁵ That context was Thatcherism and the ideological commitment to a strong central state.²⁰⁶ The government ruled that all clubs should have such a scheme in place covering the majority of their home support from the beginning of the 1987/1988 season.²⁰⁷ This was to be a step on the way to a national identity card scheme, under which every supporter would have to possess a card which would be presented on entry to a football ground. In theory, with this system in place, anyone convicted of a football-related offence could easily be excluded. Marwick sets the identity card issue into a broader context: 'As was its way, the Government had identified an enemy ... indiscriminate action was being aimed at everyone interested in football, detached followers of the game as well as fanatical followers of the club.'²⁰⁸

However, the proposal was fraught with problems and brought together a wide range of opposition to it. Firstly, there was the cost. Should football clubs, many of whom were struggling financially already, be made to pay for something which was being imposed on

²⁰⁴ James Walvin, *Football And The Decline Of Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986), p.128.

²⁰⁵ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.84.

²⁰⁶ Andrew Gamble, *The Free Economy And The Strong State: the politics of Thatcherism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 1994).

²⁰⁷ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.85.

²⁰⁸ Marwick, *British Society*, p.350.

them against their will by the government? Secondly, there was the problem of practicality. It was easy to envisage a football ground at 2.50pm on a Saturday afternoon with supporters being delayed at the turnstiles because they now had to produce a membership card as well as their money for entry or a ticket. Tempers would be likely to flare and in these circumstances the existence of the scheme could create the type of problems it had been set up to prevent. Thirdly, would it actually work? Those whom the scheme was set up to exclude would soon find a way round it. Any convicted hooligan could find a friend to lend him their card, and it would take a diligent turnstile operator, in the semi-darkness of the turnstile and with a long line of people anxious to enter, to notice that the details on the card did not match that of the holder.

In response to the proposed scheme, and with other problems facing football supporters in the post-Heysel climate, the Football Supporters' Association was formed. Founded in Liverpool, the FSA became the 'independent and autonomous voice of the grassroots supporter.'²⁰⁹ It soon had the effect of getting the voice of the fans heard by the football authorities and the government, and, in tandem with this, improving the image of the football supporter. The absence of constraint gave it more relevance than the National Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, which had always in effect been controlled by the clubs.²¹⁰ The establishment of the FSA was the start of an era of greater fan democracy, as committed supporters mobilised to oppose the identity card scheme. At various clubs, groups of fans formed Independent Supporters' Associations, and they provided a voice of protest for grievances at club level, such as campaigning for the removal of an unpopular manager or opposing excessive admission price increases. In the early 1990s, the ISAs at

²⁰⁹ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.369.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Arsenal and West Ham United defeated the hated ‘bond schemes’, whereby supporters were asked to buy expensive bonds to guarantee their own season tickets for future seasons. The clubs planned to use these advance payments to fund the building of new stands.²¹¹

The breadth of opposition to the identity card scheme was pointed out by Charlton Athletic supporter Rick Everitt in 1989, who noted that: ‘the campaign against the scheme is now hotting up, with all-party MPs, the FA, League, FSA, Police Federation, and 81 League clubs ranged against the government.’²¹² Reporting on a meeting of the London branch of the FSA, Everitt related that, ‘the FSA had been unable to find a Tory MP willing to defend the scheme at the meeting, a fact which speaks volumes about the plan’s credibility.’²¹³ Under the proposals as they stood, a football ground rather than a football club would be licensed, but this created confusion where two clubs shared a ground, because both clubs would need a license (at the time Charlton were in a groundshare with Crystal Palace). The license could be revoked if a club failed to get people in on time. Given the capacity of computer systems to ‘crash’ at crucial moments, a club could find itself in trouble through no fault of its own, and Everitt pointed out that clubs would also be ‘legally responsible for failures of public transport, a thoroughly bizarre state of affairs.’²¹⁴ As far as individual fans were concerned, he went on to point out, ‘it would be a criminal offence to try and enter a ground with an invalid card. However, given the likelihood of operator error, and software/hardware failure, many innocent fans can look forward to feeling the long arm of the law on their collar.’²¹⁵

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Rick Everitt, ‘Football Says NO’, *Voice Of The Valley* No.8, New Year 1989, p.17.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., pp.17-18.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p.18.

In proposing the identity card scheme, and then showing dogged determination to stick to it in the face of all opposition, the Thatcher government achieved what no ‘firm’ or ‘crew’ could ever have done – they politicised football supporters. There was now a common enemy. Running in tandem with fan politicisation, and partly because of it, was the growth and development of the ‘fanzine’. The publication of fans’ magazines became possible due to advances in technology. By the latter half of the 1980s some fans had access to a computer and a photocopier. This enabled the print and issue of the earliest editions. The magazine *When Saturday Comes* (WSC) was the brainchild of Andy Lyons and Mike Ticher, who had met when working at a record shop in Kensington, West London. It first appeared in March 1986 and the early issues were primitive: ‘articles were typed with little or no regard for column width, headlines were letrasetted or worse, and photos plundered from books, with everything undergoing several reductions on the photocopier to make it fit, after a fashion. It wasn’t deliberately amateurish, just amateur.’²¹⁶ There were only 100 copies of the first issue and a cover price of 15p. After a positive review in *The Guardian*, fifty letters arrives at WSC the next day and a similar number the following day. Ticher later recalled, ‘we hadn’t even made any plans for a second issue, but the response to the first one made it unavoidable.’²¹⁷ The magazine continued to grow, helped crucially by the backing of *Sportspages*, a sports bookshop in Charing Cross Road, London. By the fourth issue in September 1986, the magazine had expanded to sixteen pages, and a print run of 1,700.²¹⁸ Simultaneous to the growth of *When Saturday Comes*, there were other national fanzines, and fans of various clubs up and down the country started to produce their own magazines. A more detailed examination of these will follow in the next chapter.

²¹⁶ Mike Ticher, introduction, *The 1st Eleven: When Saturday Comes issues 1-11: the half decent retrospective* (Harpenden: Queen Anne, 1992).

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

The politicisation of football supporters and the advances in technology that gave them a voice through the fanzine movement brought out into the open a type of fan that had been unnoticed during the years when all the focus was on hooliganism. Again, this development paralleled wider social and cultural changes among young people. The first visible manifestation of this trend inside football grounds occurred when Manchester City fans started to bring giant inflatable bananas to games. Fans of other clubs soon followed suit with their own equivalents. This was buffoonery, but at least it was harmless. At Goldblatt puts it:

In a final coda to a decade of turbulent change, incidences of trouble declined after Heysel. The arrival of acid house, warehouse parties and ecstasy in the late Thatcherite summer of love saw the firms and the casuals mutate into baggy-trousered, loved-up fools – a crossover with the more pacific culture of dance music reinforced by New Order, masters of the thoughtful electronic chill-out [who would be] performing the official England song for Italia '90 with John Barnes.²¹⁹

Against this backdrop, attendances started to rise. From the meagre 16.5 million who attended Football League games at its lowest point in 1985/1986, the figure rose to 17.4 million the following season, and up to 18 million the season after. The figure for 1989/1990 had risen to 19.4 million.²²⁰ Part of the reason for this growth in interest was the play-offs as a vehicle of promotion between the leagues. In this system, four teams qualify by final League position. They are paired off for the semi-finals, again according to final League position. These are played over two legs, and the two aggregate winners go through to meet in the final. The team victorious in the final plays in the higher division the following season. As stated earlier, they were brought in as a fair means of reducing the

²¹⁹ Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round*, p.553.

²²⁰ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Skysports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.593.

size of the First Division in two stages from twenty-two to twenty clubs, and commenced at the end of the 1986/1987 season.²²¹ It was already decided that if they were to prove successful they would stay. They did prove successful as they served to increase the number of meaningful games towards the end of the season, as a greater number of clubs still had a chance of promotion. Moreover, they generated interest and money in themselves through ticket sales and television coverage.

In the meantime the government proposed the national membership scheme as part of the Football Spectators' Bill. It was formally announced on 6 July 1988, to be proposed as part of the White Paper in the autumn.²²² Despite the amount of widespread opposition to it, the government seemed determined to press ahead. King points out that the scheme 'put Thatcher's focus on the control of the individual into practice.'²²³ However, there would be one unforeseen event which would not only scupper the bill, but completely change the nature of football spectating forever. It is to that episode that this thesis will now turn.

²²¹ Bryon Butler, *The Football League 1888-1988: the official illustrated history* (London: Queen Anne, 1987), p.347.

²²² King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.85.

²²³ Ibid.

Chapter Two

Hillsborough and its aftermath

We thought we were ninety minutes from Wembley.

It turned out we were five minutes from Hell

- Brian Clough, Nottingham Forest manager²²⁴

Twenty-one years have passed but I can hardly bring myself to

write or say its name – Hillsborough haunts me still

- Kenny Dalglish, Liverpool manager²²⁵

Those were the days, my friend, we took the Stretford End

- Now it's a theatre of dreams

- Chumbawamba²²⁶

²²⁴ Brian Clough, *Clough: the autobiography* (London: Corgi, 1995 edition), p.255.

²²⁵ Kenny Dalglish, *My Liverpool Home* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2010), p.218.

²²⁶ 'All Fur Coat And No Knickers', Chumbawamba, *The Boy Bands Have Won* (Leeds: No Masters, 2008)

Introduction: the significance of Hillsborough

At 3.06pm, less than seven minutes into the game, referee Ray Lewis led the players off the pitch. The teams were Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, the match an FA Cup semi-final, the venue Hillsborough. The name is now synonymous with the worst English football disaster of all time. The events of that afternoon – 15 April 1989 – and its aftermath draw our attention to the attitude of the police and the authorities towards football fans, the way in which certain sections of the press portrayed those fans, and the general view of the government towards football fans in the days of the Thatcher administration. A tragedy on one afternoon in Sheffield would mark a pivotal change in the way in which professional football was watched and consumed, and in turn bring a sea change in the attitude of the established authorities towards football spectators. Indeed, the Hillsborough disaster not only marked a major milestone, but became perhaps the most important single event driving the changes in English football.

The Hillsborough disaster had a greater impact than any previous football catastrophe, not because it was the worst, although statistically it was, but because of the context in which it occurred. Firstly, public reaction was unprecedented, largely due to BBC's *Grandstand* programme reporting live from the ground, and the vivid newspaper accounts in the days that followed. This reaction was displayed in a public outpouring of grief rarely associated with football, as Hillsborough and Liverpool's ground, known as Anfield, became makeshift shrines decked with flowers and football memorabilia laid by grieving fans and others who came to pay their respects. Secondly, the tragedy at Hillsborough also came in the wake of the football disasters at Bradford and Heysel, and a number of famous tragedies in the public and transport services during the latter half of the 1980s. Thirdly, the reaction

of the government towards football supporters was different, focussing on matters of safety rather than on attempts at the control and containment of fans that followed the events of 1985. The reaction to the events at Hillsborough was therefore different to that after the Ibrox disaster in Glasgow in 1971, where sixty-six died at the end of a game between Rangers and Celtic. Despite a government inquiry resulting in the Wheatley Report, there would be more deaths due to inadequacies and poor organisation at British football grounds in years to come. Fourthly, and most importantly, the nature of the Taylor Report that followed Hillsborough was both far-reaching and encompassing, not only addressing safety and security at football grounds, but calling into question the nature of club-fan relations and the game's governance.²²⁷

The amount of literature regarding Hillsborough is surprisingly sparse. Phil Scraton published *Hillsborough: The Truth* (1999), which has been hailed as the definitive, unique account of the disaster in which he also examines the legal arguments, the key evidence, and demonstrates the inadequacy of the law and the limited breadth of judicial discretion when applied to the case. He also co-wrote, together with Ann Jemphrey and Sheila Coleman, *No Last Rights: The Denial of Justice and the Promotion of Myth in the Aftermath of the Hillsborough Disaster*.²²⁸ Here the interpretation of events is adequately expressed in the title. Some of the football personalities present at the time have written about their memories and experience of the tragedy and its aftermath. Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish devoted a chapter to it in *My Liverpool Home*,²²⁹ and coverage was provided by Liverpool players John Barnes, in *John Barnes: the autobiography*,²³⁰ and Peter Beardsley,

²²⁷ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, pp. 338-340.

²²⁸ Phil Scraton, Ann Jemphrey and Sheila Coleman, *No Last Rights: the denial of justice and the promotion of myth in the aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Council, 1995).

²²⁹ Dalglish, *Liverpool Home*, pp. 218-229.

²³⁰ John Barnes, *The Autobiography* (London: Headline, 1999), pp. 160-177.

in *My Life Story*.²³¹ Nottingham Forest manager Brian Clough also talked about Hillsborough in *Clough: the autobiography*.²³² Aside from these, one is left with just a few pages in a number of secondary sources on the broader history of football. Matthew Taylor outlines his view on why the disaster had such a profound impact, and Anthony King sets the tragedy in its contemporary context of the disciplinary arguments of the Thatcher regime in its later years, pointing out that it was only the Taylor Report which scuppered the unpopular Football Spectators' Bill.²³³

Having summarised the sources available, we must consider the changes recommended by the Taylor Report. The most important of these was the conversion of football grounds to all-seater stadia. Yet this transformation from decrepit grounds with crumbling terraces to plush 'state of the art' stadiums needs to be seen in the broad context of change throughout sport and leisure as a whole as the industry marketed itself to a more fashion-conscious consumer society. The rebuilding of football grounds would occur simultaneously with the founding of the Premiership and the arrival of vast sums from satellite television broadcasters in lucrative deals. These changes would combine to transform the face of English football. Thus, while the Taylor Report was important, its implementation was inseparable from other changes that were transforming football at the same time.

²³¹ Peter Beardsley, *My Life Story* (London: Collins Willow, 1995), pp. 106-109.

²³² Clough, *Clough*, pp. 255-260.

²³³ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, pp. 338-340; King, *End Of The Terraces*, pp.84-86.

The Hillsborough disaster

Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough stadium lies in Owlerton, about two and a half miles north-west from Sheffield city centre.²³⁴ The name Hillsborough is the name of a neighbouring park and of the parliamentary constituency in which the stadium sits. In the post-war years the stadium regularly hosted FA Cup semi-finals and was selected to host World Cup matches in 1966, thereafter boasting its status as a 'jewel in the crown of the football world'.²³⁵ The stadium was considered to be as safe as any in existence in England in the late 1980s: 'nor does Hillsborough suffer any of the problems associated with older, less spacious grounds'.²³⁶ Sheffield-born sports reporter Paul Thompson wrote in the *Sheffield Star* the Monday after the disaster, 'Oh no ... not Hillsborough. Wednesday and their supporters are trying to come to terms with the fact that football's worse [sic] tragedy has occurred where anybody would have least expected it'.²³⁷ However, flaws at the Leppings Lane end of the ground became apparent in 1981 at an FA Cup semi-final between Tottenham Hotspur and Wolverhampton Wanderers. On that occasion there were no fatalities but thirty-eight people were injured in a crush on what was then an open terrace.²³⁸ There were no FA Cup semi-finals played at Hillsborough for six years after this, until 1987 when Hillsborough hosted the semi-final between Coventry City and Leeds United.²³⁹

As the 1988/1989 season neared its end, Liverpool could look back on two decades in which they had won the League Championship ten times, the FA Cup twice, the League Cup four

²³⁴ Hence Sheffield Wednesday's nickname of 'The Owls'.

²³⁵ Kim Fletcher, 'The Hard Lessons That Football Must Learn', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 16 April 1989.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Paul Thompson, 'Oh No, Not Hillsborough', *Sheffield Star*, 17 April 1989. Cited in Ian Taylor, 'English Football In The 1990s: Taking Hillsborough Seriously?', in eds. John Williams and Stephen Wagg, *British Football and Social Change: getting into Europe* (Leicester: Leicester, 1991), p.6.

²³⁸ HMSO: Hillsborough, *The Report Of The Hillsborough Independent Panel* (2012), p.62.

²³⁹ Ibid., p.79.

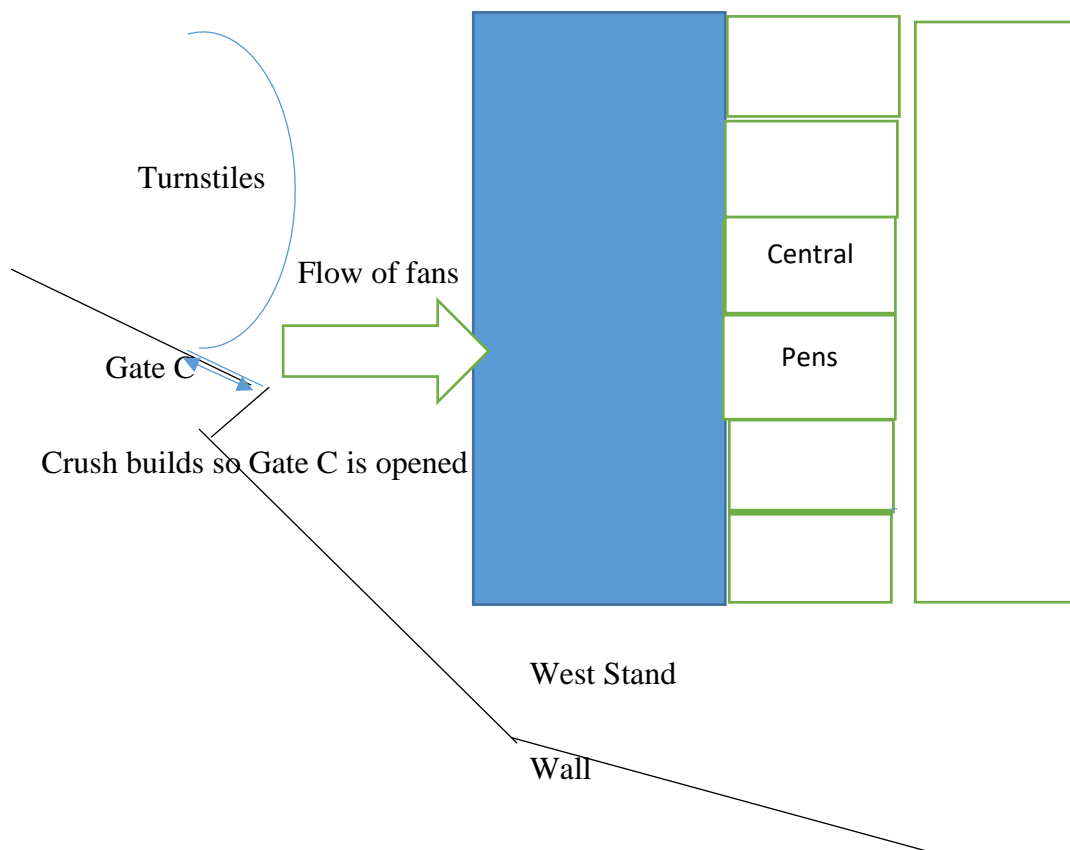
times, the European Cup four times, and the UEFA Cup twice. Nottingham Forest's achievements were less longstanding but also impressive. Under manager Brian Clough, Forest had, in the first season after winning promotion from the Second Division, won the League Championship and gone on to win the European Cup two seasons in succession. They had also won the League Cup three times.²⁴⁰ As things stood, Liverpool could repeat their feat of three seasons earlier, when they achieved a League Championship and FA Cup 'double' and become the first club to 'do the double' twice. As far as Nottingham Forest were concerned, the FA Cup was the one trophy that had eluded Clough and his team. The FA Cup semi-final between the two thus seemed nicely paired. Would it be Forest, in pursuit of that elusive trophy, or Liverpool, potentially on course for a second 'double', who walked out on to the Wembley turf a few weeks hence?

With these thoughts in mind, the two sets of fans made the short journey up the M1 or the trek across the Pennines respectively; 'the last thing on anyone's mind was danger, [it was] a beautiful spring morning'.²⁴¹ The decision to allocate Liverpool fans the West Stand at the Leppings Lane end of the ground made geographical sense – most Liverpool fans would be arriving from the West – but no practical sense because Liverpool fans were greater in number and this was the smaller end of the ground. This was the first of the logistical and planning errors that would lead to the loss of ninety-six lives. Liverpool had complained about being given the smaller end, but according to the police the decision was to do with

²⁴⁰ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History of Football*, pp. 234-235, pp. 308-309; Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.238-239, pp. 290-291.

²⁴¹ Phil Scraton, *Hillsborough: The Truth* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2000 edition), p.39.

Map 1. *The Leppings Lane end of Hillsborough*



This map shows clearly the layout of the Leppings Lane end. A crush built up outside the outer wall, defined by the black line, Gate C was opened to relieve that crush and fans, without any guidance to do otherwise, flowed through the tunnel beneath the West Stand and into the already packed Central Pens. Source: The Daily Telegraph, 17 April 1989.

crowd control, aimed at preventing the fans from meeting.²⁴² While semi-final crowds are usually well-behaved and such games are often played in a carnival atmosphere, the police

²⁴² Kim Fletcher, 'The Hard Lessons That Football Must Learn', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 16 April 1989.

‘had no interest in letting the two sets of supporters meet on the streets’.²⁴³ Thus it can be seen that from the start the emphasis was on control, rather than on safety, though of course the police argument was that control equals safety.

At Leppings Lane, six sets of wrought iron double gates led towards twenty-three turnstiles, admitting fans to the terrace, the West Stand, and the North Stand. In total there was space for 24,256 spectators. The rest of the ground, which had the capacity for a further 29,800, was fed by sixty turnstiles, more than twice the number. Also, the tightly confined area between the iron gates and the turnstiles was potentially dangerous when there was a capacity crowd, such as for an FA Cup semi-final. Fans heading for the terracing at the front of the stand passed through seven of the turnstiles, leading to an inner concourse that faced a tunnel dropping down a steep gradient, on to the terrace. It was easy to assume that this was the only entrance to the terraces, but in fact it led only to the two central pens, which were numbered pen 3 and pen 4.²⁴⁴

These shortcomings in design would not have mattered if the game had been properly policed. It should be pointed out that the same two teams had played at Hillsborough in an FA Cup semi-final the previous season and the game had passed without incident. However, the match commander in charge of policing the 1988 semi-final, the experienced Chief Superintendent Brian Mole, had been moved to other duties and the job had been given to Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield, a mere novice by comparison.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Kim Fletcher, ‘Suddenly The Huge Blue Door Was Sliding Open ...’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 April 1989.

²⁴⁴ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, pp. 45-46.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

Without adequate directions to make their way to the pens at either end of the terrace, where there was still plenty of space, fans poured into the two central pens, causing overcrowding and crushing. Taylor, in his *Interim Report*, states that ‘more fans came through the tunnel to the favoured area behind the goal. By 2.50pm these pens were already full to a degree which caused serious discomfort to many well used to enduring pressure on terraces.’²⁴⁶

As the game approached, a similar crush built up at the turnstiles just outside among fans eager to enter the ground. Taylor continues:

Meanwhile the crowd grew at the Leppings Lane entrance. As more arrived at the back the crush at the front grew worse. ... Arrivals at the back exceeded deliveries through the turnstiles, so the build-up increased ... it was clear the crowd could not pass through the turnstiles by 3pm. Police Constable Buxton radioed ... to control asking that kick-off be postponed. The suggestion was acknowledged but rejected.²⁴⁷

Superintendent Roger Marshall, although loathe to do so because it contravened basic police policy, decided to request that the exit gates be opened to relieve the crush. He radioed control but got no reply. He tried a second time, but to no avail. The third time he radioed, he added that if the gates were not opened, someone was going to be killed. In the control room sat Duckenfield and Superintendent Bernard Murray. Duckenfield had still not made a decision. Murray asked him, ‘are you going to open the gates?’ Duckenfield gave the order and Sergeant Michael Goddard radioed to Marshall ‘open the gates’.²⁴⁸ Gate C, one of the large blue gates through which fans normally leave the ground at the end of a

²⁴⁶ HMSO: *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster: Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Taylor, Interim Report*, 1989, p.11.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p.12.

match, was duly opened to relieve the pressure. South Yorkshire's Chief Constable Peter Wright later claimed at a press conference that his officers had ordered the gate to be opened 'as an emergency measure when the late arrival of 3,000 – 4,000 fans outside the ground had threatened a danger to life'. A gateman, who insisted on staying anonymous, said: 'the police opened the big gates because they thought someone might get crushed. There were several thousand people flooding through. The police said that if they hadn't opened the gate someone might have got killed. It was a free-for-all. There were thousands coming in ... it's my opinion that opening those gates caused the tragedy.'²⁴⁹

Once through the large gates these fans, without anyone to direct them otherwise, flowed 'like molten lava' towards the already packed central pens.²⁵⁰ One Liverpool fan, Kevin Chappell from Stockport, said 'it was right that there was still plenty of room at our end when the gate was opened, but the space was to the left and right on the open terracing. Instead of opening the side gates, the police opened the gate in the middle where there was no room at all'.²⁵¹

This was confirmed by Dr. Glyn Phillips from East Kilbride, who said: 'the police allowed the fans to fill the middle terracing section to the point that they were crammed in like sardines and yet the two outside portions of the terracing were left virtually empty. I stood and watched police allowing this to happen. It got to a point where they just lost control completely and lads were pushed against the fence right down by the pitch.'²⁵²The influx

²⁴⁹ Hugh McIlvenny, 'Police Gave Orders To Open Gate To Tragedy', *The Observer*, 16 April 1989.

²⁵⁰ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, p.63.

²⁵¹ Hugh McIlvenny, 'Police Gave Orders To Open Gate To Tragedy', *The Observer*, 16 April 1989.

²⁵² Ibid.

from gate C came through the tunnel with great momentum, assisted by the 1 in 6 gradient. Fans spoke of 'being swept through, feet off the ground ... the new arrivals found themselves pushed forward and the pressure became intense'.²⁵³

At 2.54pm the two teams ran out onto the pitch. As usual, the excitement this caused led to a surge in the crowd. In pen 3 many were 'acutely uncomfortable and some were in distress'.²⁵⁴ The 2012 Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel states, 'as the teams ran onto the pitch for the 3pm kick-off, the crowd cheered but already in the central pens people were screaming. Others fell silent, already unconscious.'²⁵⁵

The pressure caused the perimeter gate at the front to spring open, but this was quickly shut by a police officer, only to spring open again. 'Fans screamed at police on the perimeter track to open the small gate in each pen onto the pitch ... as fans tried to climb the overhanging perimeter fence, officers on the track pushed them back into the crowd'.²⁵⁶ Then at the perimeter gate of pen 4, an officer, now alert to the problem, opened the gate to allow fans to climb through and make their way to the side pens where there was still plenty of room. An officer at the perimeter gate of pen 3 now realised the crisis and radioed for permission to open the gate. As before, however, the senior police command seemed paralysed and proved unable to respond to the rapidly deteriorating situation. The officer received no reply, so he took the decision himself to open it.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ HMSO, *Taylor Interim Report*, p.13.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁵ HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, p.38.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ HMSO, *Taylor Interim Report*, p.13.

The game kicked off, but to escape the crush some fans attempted to climb over the radial fences out of pens 3 and 4 into pens 2 or 5. Others tried to clamber over the perimeter fence at the front, but were pushed back by those officers who still feared a pitch invasion. At 3.04pm a shot from Liverpool's Peter Beardsley struck the crossbar. There was a roar from the Liverpool fans and a surge forward. This was common among all football fans at a moment of excitement, such as the chance of a goal being scored. In pen 3, however, the force was so great that it twisted and broke two spans of a crush barrier with the result that those behind it were propelled forwards. Many fell and the involuntary rush of those behind pushed them down. The force of this crushing spread and distributed so that at the front of the pen fans were pressed even harder up against the perimeter fence and the low wall beneath it. In pen 4 no barrier was broken, but those at the front were crushed in similar fashion. Behind them, the pressure was so great a barrier bowed.²⁵⁸

Superintendent Roger Greenwood, the Ground Commander, who was not fully aware of the seriousness of the situation, thought it still 'retrievable' if those at the rear moved back. He stood on the wall beneath the fence and signalled with both hands to those behind to move back. Other officers joined him to do the same. But the fact was that the crush was so great that even fans willing to comply were unable to do so. After these fruitless gestures, he tried to radio for the match to be stopped. He received no reply so he gesticulated with his arms to the control box. Duckenfield sent Murray down to enact the agreed emergency procedure, which was to request to the linesman that the game be stopped. Before this could happen, Greenwood ran onto the pitch and asked the referee to stop the game. It was 3.06pm.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

At the front of pens 3 and 4 there was a horrendous blockage of bodies, especially by the gates. The dead, the dying, and the desperate became interwoven as those still with sufficient strength tried to clamber over those submerged in this human pile to escape through the gates and on to the pitch. By this time police officers and other fans were there to help haul them up and over. The steps to the gates became so congested with bodies, live and dead, that each had to be prised from the pile by police. At the side of the pens other fans continued to climb out and into pens 2 and 5, while at the back fans in the West Stand reached down to haul some of those trapped in pens 3 and 4 upwards to safety.²⁶⁰

Police officers had been summoned from elsewhere in the ground in response to what was thought to be a threat to public order. What they found was ‘a horrific scene of carnage and many officers were shocked into impotence by what they saw ... it was truly gruesome. The victims were blue, cyanotic, incontinent; their mouths open, vomiting; their eyes staring.’²⁶¹ A pile of dead bodies grew outside gate 3 and on the pitch the injured were laid down so attempts could be made to revive them. After the players had left the pitch, the area that had been the penalty area and out to the touchline beneath the South Stand saw small distraught clusters of fans surrounding the worst of the casualties, as rescue workers tried to administer the ‘kiss of life’, while other victims were carried away on makeshift stretchers made from advertising hoardings that had been torn down to use for the purpose.²⁶²

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.15.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Hugh McIlvenny, ‘Police Gave Orders To Open Gate To Tragedy’, *The Observer*, 16 April 1989.

One grieving father told how he fought in vain to save the lives of his two teenage daughters. Trevor Hicks, and his wife, Jenny, had taken Sarah, 19, and Victoria, 15, to the match. Sarah had turned 19 the previous Monday and the trip to Sheffield was her birthday treat. Hicks relates the story:

the girls and I got into the ground at around 2pm. They were in a different section to me. They were there in good time which meant that they were down the front and that was the problem. I could see that where the girls were was getting very crowded. I shouted to one of the senior officers that people were being crushed. I didn't get a very polite answer. The officer was dismissive of me. I saw Victoria being passed over the heads of people and over the fence and on to the pitch. I managed to get onto the pitch and there were Sarah and Victoria lying there.²⁶³

Both girls had been given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. He tried to revive Victoria in an ambulance, but to no avail. The story of the Hicks family was one of the many human tragedies played out that afternoon. The dismissive attitude of the senior police officer was indicative of the failure of the police to take supporters' concerns seriously. Hicks also commented, 'I think the police were so busy trying to prevent a pitch invasion that they didn't see what was happening.'²⁶⁴

At a press conference after the event Chief Constable Peter Wright tried to distance the police from any responsibility for the tragedy. When talking about the order to open the large gate, he commented 'at this moment there is nothing to suggest to me that the opening of the gate and the surge were not two separate incidents. There is nothing that I know that would show a connection between the two'.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ 'Father Tells How He Fought In Vain To Save His Daughters', *The Times*, 17 April 1989.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ 'Fatal Errors That Need To Be Explained', *The Observer*, 16 April 1989.

However, Liverpool fans did not see it this way. Their accounts gave two possible versions: either the police underestimated the number of people pressing to enter the stadium, or they unlocked the wrong gate to admit them.²⁶⁶ There was clearly a discrepancy between police versions and fans' accounts of what really happened. The police use of the phrase 'surge' in this context was misleading in itself. It was more like a 'vice which had been tightening for nearly half an hour'.²⁶⁷

In attendance at the game were Graham Kelly and Glen Kirton from the FA. Together with Sheffield Wednesday's club secretary Graham Mackrell they went to the control box shortly after 3.15pm. There Chief Superintendent Duckenfield told them that Liverpool fans had forced the gate.²⁶⁸ As described, this was clearly untrue because Duckenfield had himself ordered the gate to be opened, after he had been asked three times to do so by Marshall on the radio. Duckenfield's lie was both blatant and deliberate. The result of this was that Kelly repeated it, unwittingly and in good faith, to the media. Soon it was broadcast around the world that an appalling tragedy was happening and that Liverpool fans were to blame.²⁶⁹ Many observers carried the memory of Heysel, four years earlier, in their minds. The involvement of Liverpool in both episodes made for an easy elision between the two disasters – and reinforced the idea that a specific set of fans were the problem.

Over the next few hours, bodies would be cleared from the pitch and the gymnasium was used as a temporary mortuary. It was in there that the coroner, Dr. Stefan Popper, took the

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, p.64.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p.66.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

unprecedented step of authorising the taking of blood alcohol samples, and the recording of blood alcohol levels, from all of the deceased, including children. There was no medical or legal justification for this, a procedure normally reserved for drivers of trains or coaches, or pilots of aircraft. No previous disaster had resulted in this intrusive action towards its victims. The decision to take these samples and record the levels showed crass insensitivity and revealed certain prejudices and assumptions about football supporters. It also indicated that senior police officers had claimed that there were instances of drunkenness among fans.²⁷⁰ As far as alcohol consumption was concerned, of the seventy-nine victims tested, fifty-eight had consumed either no alcohol or an amount that was negligible, fifteen had consumed more than 80 milligrams per cent (the legal drink-drive limit), and only six had consumed in excess of 120 milligrams per cent.²⁷¹ The 2012 report by the Hillsborough Independent Panel would later point out that ‘the implicit and explicit use of a blood alcohol level of 80mg/100ml as a marker was unjustified. This level has relevance to the rapid response times of individuals in charge of motor vehicles, but none to people attending a leisure event.’²⁷²

Alcohol was not a factor in the disaster. Taylor made this clear in his *Interim Report*: ‘I am satisfied on the evidence ... that the great majority were not drunk or even the worse for drink ... in my view some officers, seeking to rationalise their loss of control, overestimated the drunken element in the crowd.’²⁷³ The Report by the Hillsborough Independent Panel would go further: ‘there was no evidence to support the proposition that alcohol played any part in the genesis of the disaster and it is regrettable that those in positions of responsibility

²⁷⁰ Ibid., pp.88-89.

²⁷¹ HMSO, *Taylor Interim Report* p.18.

²⁷² HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, p.15.

²⁷³ HMSO, *Taylor Interim Report* p.34.

created and promoted a portrayal of drunkenness as contributing to the occurrence of the disaster and the ensuing loss of life without substantiating evidence.²⁷⁴

The following day the front page of many Sunday papers showed horrific photographs of fans' faces, some unconscious, some screaming, crushed against the perimeter fence, one of the many fences that had been erected in football grounds all over the country to prevent pitch invasions. Meanwhile, the death toll kept rising. Figures of ninety-three, then ninety-four dead were reported, before eventually settling at ninety-five. Another fan, Tony Bland, was left in a persistent vegetative state as a result of being crushed.²⁷⁵ He could not think, speak, hear, or feel. His parents, Allan and Barbara Bland, pursued a lengthy court battle for Tony to be allowed to die in dignity. The High Court and then the Appeal Court ruled it lawful for Airedale NHS Trust to stop feeding their son, and the House of Lords gave their final ruling in February 1993 allowing feeding, hydration, and medication to be stopped.²⁷⁶ Tony Bland passed away peacefully on 3 March 1993 at Airedale General Hospital in Keighley, West Yorkshire, with his parents at his bedside, taking the final death toll of the Hillsborough disaster to ninety-six.²⁷⁷

The youngest victim was Jon-Paul Gilhooley, who was ten years old. He was the cousin of Steven Gerrard, who went on to become a famous Liverpool player and captain of the team. Gerrard has fond memories of his cousin:

I was nearly nine when Hillsborough took Jon-Paul from us. We were separated by a year and a bit in age but united in a passion for football. Jon-Paul adored Liverpool

²⁷⁴ HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, p.15.

²⁷⁵ '93 Fans Killed In FA Cup Horror', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 16 April 1989; 'Police In Open Gate Enquiry', *The Times*, 17 April 1989; Adam Fresco, 'Parents At Bedside As Bland Dies', *The Times*, 4 March 1993.

²⁷⁶ Kate Alderson, 'Hillsborough Victim Died Without Any Suffering', *The Times*, 4 March 1993.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Gleniecki, 'Hillsborough Disaster Victim Dies', *The Independent*, 4 March 1993.

with the same fervour that fills me whenever I pull on that red shirt. We were so alike. Similar Merseyside estates, similar interests. Jon-Paul joined in the kickabouts on the street outside my house in Huyton on the edge of Liverpool, proudly wearing his Liverpool strip. The club meant the world to Jon-Paul.²⁷⁸

While police accounts of the tragedy differed from what fans saw, one of the tabloid newspapers offered a particularly lurid account. On Wednesday 19 April, *The Sun*, under the headline 'The Truth' and sub headlines stating that 'some fans picked the pockets of victims', 'some fans urinated on the brave cops', and 'some fans beat up PC giving life kiss', claimed that: 'drunken Liverpool fans viciously attacked rescue workers as they tried to revive victims of the Hillsborough soccer disaster ... police officers, firemen, and ambulance crew, were punched, kicked, and urinated upon by a hooligan element in the crowd. Some thugs rifled the pockets of injured fans as they were stretched out unconscious on the pitch.'²⁷⁹

This journalism received a stern rebuke from Taylor. He stated that, 'not a single witness was called before the Inquiry to support any of those allegations although every opportunity was afforded for any of the represented parties to have any witness called whom they wished ... those who made them, and those who disseminated them, would have done better to hold their peace.'²⁸⁰

What interests us here is the portrayal of football supporters. As the 1980s drew to a terrible close, *The Sun* was able to present football fans in such a light. In this way, it reflected the

²⁷⁸ Steven Gerrard, *Gerrard: my autobiography* (London: Bantam Press, 2006), pp.3-4.

²⁷⁹ 'The Truth', *The Sun*, 19 April 1989.

²⁸⁰ HMSO, *Taylor Interim Report*, p.44.

preconceived notions about football fans clung to by the police and the authorities. During the years in which hooligans had been a problem there was a tendency by some to class all supporters as such and one can easily see this prejudice influencing such an article. Such coverage also played a role in sustaining this prejudice.

A series of mini-inquests into the deaths were held in Sheffield town hall. The issue of blood alcohol levels played a prominent part.²⁸¹ This confirmed the worst fears of the bereaved families because it fuelled the obsession with drunkenness evident in some of the tabloid newspapers. The inquests resumed in generic fashion on 19 November 1990 in Sheffield town hall. They ran to 28 March 1991 and took evidence from 230 witnesses. Immediately the coroner dropped a bombshell in announcing that no evidence would be heard concerning events after 3.15pm. His reasoning was that ‘those who died received the injuries that caused their death before 3.15pm, even if they lived beyond that time. His logic was that in each case there was no ‘intervening act’ (*novus actus interveniens*) that contributed to death.’²⁸²

The families’ counsel, Tim King, argued that there had been no ‘investigation directed to the global organisation of what happened immediately after they [the dying and the injured] were brought off the terraces’ and ‘to ignore ... concerns as to the adequacy of the attentions and the rescue efforts after 3.15’ amounted to failing to ‘investigate what could well have been a major reason for why somebody died and did not survive’.²⁸³ Therefore any evidence after that time, such as the times that ambulances arrived and the adequacy or otherwise of

²⁸¹ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, p. 140.

²⁸² HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, p.291.

²⁸³ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, p.142.

emergency provision, was inadmissible. This meant that those who died did so irrespective of the amount of medical attention received or denied, and that those who survived also did so regardless of such attention. For this reason Scraton describes the cut-off time as ‘a defiant logic which defied reason’.²⁸⁴ The Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel concluded that:

the generic stage of the inquests, concerned exclusively with ‘how’ people died, was predicated on the assumption that the cause of death was common to all. What happened beyond 3.15pm ... was considered inconsequential unless it could be demonstrated that another significant act contributed to an individual’s death ... this reasoning eliminated examination of the emergency response, of the facilities, equipment or expertise available in such an emergency and of the proposition from eye witnesses that some who died could have been saved.²⁸⁵

This meant that those concerned with rescue and administering medical treatment would not be called on to give evidence and that there would be no consideration of the circumstances surrounding each individual death, so the families would be unable to raise any questions left unanswered by the mini-inquests. Worst of all, it meant that victims were judged to have died inevitably ‘regardless of the treatment they received or deficiencies in planning which might have saved lives’.²⁸⁶

The error in imposing the 3.15pm cut-off time was underlined by the case of survivor Eddie Spearitt. Spearitt, whose son Adam died in the disaster, collapsed at 3.06pm and was admitted to Northern General Hospital at 5pm, having no recollection of what had passed in the two hours between his collapse and admission to hospital. Spearitt was crushed, lost

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p.143.

²⁸⁵ HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, pp. 298-299.

²⁸⁶ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, p.143.

consciousness, received no treatment for nearly two hours, and yet survived.²⁸⁷ His survival raises the possibility that some of those who died might have lived if they had been rescued earlier and given the right care and necessary treatment. The case of Eddie Spearitt ‘drove a horse and cart through the coroner’s decision to impose a 3.15pm cut-off on evidence heard by the inquest jury’.²⁸⁸

Having suffered tragic loss, the bereaved families had also had to endure lies by the chief police officer, the unprecedented and intrusive decision by the coroner to take blood alcohol samples from their loved ones, and gross misrepresentation and distortion of the truth in sections of the tabloid press. Now they had to face bureaucracy. The campaign to clear the names of the deceased and to get someone to take some responsibility for what had happened would continue for more than two decades. In the meantime, the key vehicle of the official response to Hillsborough was the Taylor Report.

The Taylor Report and rebuilding football stadia

On 17 April, the first working day after the disaster, it was announced that there would be an Inquiry. This would be led by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Taylor. The findings of this inquiry were detailed in an *Interim Report*, published in August 1989, and a *Final Report*, published in January 1990. The *Interim Report* was concerned mainly with exactly what happened on the day and has been quoted extensively above. The *Final Report* focussed more on recommendations for the future of the game and concerned itself with measures aimed at preventing a repeat of such a tragedy.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., pp.181-182.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p.183.

In giving evidence to the inquiry, Duckenfield was cross-examined by Mr. Benet Hytner QC regarding his lie about the gate. The cross-examination went as follows:

Q. What I want to ask you is why in deciding to suppress the truth you also decided to tell a lie about the supporters, about the Liverpool fans. Why couldn't you have simply said you did not know what happened?

A. In the crisis of the moment, sir, with all those pressures that are so evident, I can't give an honest answer other than the stress of the situation.

Q. You realise do you, that that lie for which you cannot give an explanation, has caused widespread slandering of the fans not only here but also in Europe?

A. My intention in my action, sir, was not to cause any distress.

Q. Well, in that case, this is my last question, since that was not your intention, would you now take the opportunity of publicly exonerating the fans?

A. Publicly exonerating the Liverpool supporters, sir?

Q. Yes?

A. For what exactly?

Q. For the overcrowding behind the goal at the Leppings Lane end which caused 95 deaths?

A. I am in some difficulty with that answer, sir. I would apologise for any reference with Liverpool supporters as a whole.

Q. Mr. Duckenfield, let me make it plain ... I am asking you publicly to exonerate the fans for the overcrowding in pens 3 and 4 which caused 95 deaths.

A. Yes, I publicly apologise, sir, for the inference that people caused those deaths.²⁸⁹

Here we see a definite reluctance to exonerate Liverpool supporters and even when Duckenfield is pushed into doing so, he refers to 'people' rather than specifically to 'Liverpool supporters'.

²⁸⁹ www.hillsboroughinquests.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/SWF000002050001.pdf last accessed 21 March 2016.

The recommendations of the *Final Report* turned out to be broad and insightful. Taylor said of football:

what is required is the vision and imagination to achieve a new ethos for football. Grounds should be upgraded. Attitudes should be more welcoming. The aim should be to provide more modern and comfortable accommodation, better and more varied facilities, more consultation with the supporters and more positive leadership. If such a policy is implemented it will not only improve safety. There will also be an improvement in behaviour, making crowd control easier.²⁹⁰

Taylor went on to say that ‘there is no panacea which will achieve total safety and cure all problems of behaviour and crowd control. But I am satisfied that seating does more to achieve those objectives than any other single measure.’²⁹¹

His final recommendations started with the paragraphs that would change the spectator experience of English football forever: ‘The Secretary of State should ensure that spectators are admitted only to seated accommodation.’²⁹² This was to apply from the start of the 1993/1994 season at high-risk matches, from the start of 1994/1995 for all First Division and Second Division matches, and from the start of 1999/2000 at all other grounds.²⁹³ This last point would be waived by the FA and some grounds in the League’s bottom two divisions would retain standing areas well into the new millennium. Nevertheless, at the vast majority of grounds, and certainly all the major ones, the transformation of the fan

²⁹⁰ HMSO: *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster: Inquiry by the Rt. Hon. Lord Justice Taylor, Final Report* (1990), p.12.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

²⁹² *Ibid.* p.76.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

experience from standing at old football grounds to sitting in new football stadia got under way.

A balanced assessment of the Taylor Report is given in *When Saturday Comes*. The article states that: ‘the report is a fair summary of many of the facts about safety at football grounds ... Taylor exhibits what appears to be a good grasp of the sad state of the game.’²⁹⁴ It does, however, go on to say, ‘after Chapter One the report is a mixed bag. It is good at laying out evidence and arguments but the logical progression from assessment of fact and proscription of solution is sloppy and ill conceived.’²⁹⁵ Taylor was also woefully short with his estimate regarding cost, as will be detailed further below.

The first experiment with all-seater stadia actually predated the Hillsborough disaster by eight years. In 1981, Coventry City converted their Highfield Road ground to seating only, with spectators paying for this on the day a minimum £5, which was more than twice the average admission price at the time. Attendances slumped, fans protested, and a sign addressed to chairman Jimmy Hill appeared, saying ‘COME ON, JIM. YOU SIT DOWN IF YOU WANT. WE DON’T! GIVE US THE OPTION, PLEASE.’²⁹⁶ In 1983, the club reverted to allowing standing room for 2,000.²⁹⁷ The same was tried at Queen’s Park Rangers’ Loftus Road ground with similar results.²⁹⁸ One of the arguments against all-seating was that attempts to introduce it in England had met with resistance from fans.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁴ *When Saturday Comes*, issue 37, March 1990, p.2.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Soccer ’81: Supplement to *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 15 August 1981, p.11. Cited in Stephen Wagg, *The Football World: a contemporary social history* (Brighton: Harvester, 1984), p.218.

²⁹⁷ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.13.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

However, the Hillsborough disaster now created the political will to force through major changes.

One very important issue, however, was the cost of rebuilding. The bulk of funding for ground improvements had to come from the football clubs themselves.³⁰⁰ Further revenues could be raised by the clubs from sponsorship and advertising and from television broadcasting rights. Taylor commented that television companies ‘should be expected to pay a substantial price’ and that ‘the football authorities should ensure that this valuable source of revenue is directed towards improving stadia as a high priority’.³⁰¹ The cost of providing covered seating had been investigated by the FA and their consultants produced a rough estimate (which of course had to be seen as being subject to inflation and other factors) of £30 million to install seating throughout all the grounds, and a further £100 million to provide cover for all those areas.³⁰² In order to raise additional funds, Taylor suggested the possibility of the FA persuading the Pool Promoters Association to increase their contribution to the game, through a reduction in Pool Betting Tax, and that capital allowances should be able to be claimed against tax in respect of ground improvements.³⁰³

The chancellor at the time was John Major, who would later become prime minister. He wanted to help football. He tells us:

After an inquiry, Lord Justice Taylor had recommended some very expensive safety measures which only the top clubs could comfortably afford. I decided to cut Pools

³⁰⁰ Ibid., p.19.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p.20.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

Duty by 2.5 per cent for five years, provided the £100 million reduction in taxation was passed to the Football Trust for ground improvements. I wished to promote safety as well as more comfortable, less dilapidated grounds to attract families and deter hooligans.³⁰⁴

Taylor has been criticised because his suggested methods of raising the necessary revenue were insufficient.³⁰⁵ He was also woefully short when using the FA's figures to assess the amount itself. Between 1991 and 1999, £844 million would be spent by Premiership and League clubs on improving their grounds and facilities.³⁰⁶ Even allowing for inflation, the fact that the figure is six and a half times greater than that provided by Taylor indicates that he hugely underestimated the amount. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that most of the cost of this shortfall would be passed on to the ordinary fan, because the 1990s would see a massive increase in the cost of match tickets.

Faced with the requirement to implement the Report, football clubs faced two main choices, either to rebuild their existing grounds, or to relocate to new sites and start afresh. In time, the rebuilt grounds would become unrecognisable from those that had stood largely unchanged for generations. The new grounds that were built were often on 'out-of-town' sites, away from urban centres. This was for two main reasons: firstly increased car ownership meant that fans could access these new sites more easily, and secondly, the high cost of land in town and city centres made it more economical to build new stadia some way out. Some clubs, with the help of local authorities, would move in an almost seamless transition, but for others the move would be much more problematic. In the case of Brighton

³⁰⁴ John Major, *The Autobiography* (London: HarperCollins, 2000 paperback edition), p.146.

³⁰⁵ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.102.

³⁰⁶ Dobson and Goddard, *Economics of Football*, p.69.

and Hove Albion, fourteen years would pass between the last game at the Goldstone Ground and the first game in the American Express Community Stadium.

The first League club to relocate in modern times was Scunthorpe United, who, after eighty-nine years at the Old Show Ground, moved to Glanford Park in August 1988. Fan opinion on Scunthorpe's new home varied widely. The following comment appeared in a four page insert in the Darlington fanzine *Mission Impossible*: 'I hate Scunthorpe. I hate their characterless concrete stadium'.³⁰⁷ However, a Peterborough United fan was more positive:

To be fair, for a Third or Fourth division outfit the ground and facilities are great. The playing surface is excellent, the away terraces gave a good view, the bogs [sic] are clean and the catering is average. The ground is covered on all four sides and has executive boxes incorporated in the main stand. Both stands are compact to say the least and although the home and away ends look identical, the home end may be slightly bigger. These facts alone make it far better than most of the god forsaken [sic] holes that infest the lower divisions.³⁰⁸

Vic Duke quotes this view from a Maidstone United fan: 'and so a trip to a purpose-built fridge, in the middle of nowhere, in search of an away win! I won't say too much about Scunthorpe United's 'purpose built stadium'; just put a roof on it and it would make a perfect superstore! But this is the future, like it or lump it'.³⁰⁹ With this fan's obvious dislike of the ground, there is a sense of inevitability that similar stadiums will go up in the near

³⁰⁷ Steve Raine, 'Points of Departure', *Mission Impossible*, No.16, May 1991.

³⁰⁸ 'Glandford Park – The Way Ahead?', *The Peterborough Effect*, No.6, April/May 1989, p.27. A number of other fanzines are cited in Vic Duke, 'The Drive To Modernisation And The Supermarket Imperative: Who Needs A New Football Stadium?', in eds. Richard Giulianotti and John Williams, *Game Without Frontiers: football, identity, and modernity* (Aldershot: Arena, 1994), pp.140-141.

³⁰⁹ *Golden Days* (Maidstone United fanzine No.6), cited in Duke, 'Supermarket Imperative', in eds. Giulianotti and Williams, *Game Without Frontiers*, p.141.

future. Thus it can be seen from these few examples that there was a wide difference of opinion among away fans regarding Glanford Park.

During the next four years, two more clubs would relocate – Walsall (1990) and Chester City (1992) – and their old grounds, named Fellows Park and Sealand Road respectively, would, like Scunthorpe United's old ground, be sold for the construction of supermarkets. This was what Duke termed 'the supermarket imperative.'³¹⁰ The wider social changes driving this phenomenon were, according to Duke, the growth in consumerism among those in employment and the substantial profits in the retail sector that this encouraged. This led to competition between supermarket chains for large plots of urban land.³¹¹ As some football clubs decided to build new grounds following the publication of Taylor's *Final Report* the drives for supermarket construction and for football club relocation assisted each other.

The next club to relocate to a new stadium was Millwall. Unlike the previous three examples the old ground was not sold for supermarket development but for housing construction. With the full backing of Lewisham Council, Millwall moved from The Den in Cold Blow Lane to a new site only about a quarter of a mile to the North. Millwall's new ground has passed into common parlance as 'The New Den' to avoid confusion with the old one, but the respective grounds are listed in the *Football Yearbook* as 'The Den, Cold Blow Lane', and 'The Den, Bermondsey'.³¹² Indeed, the seats in the South Stand, which is the home end of the new ground, are coloured to read 'The Den'. This gives a sense of

³¹⁰ Duke, 'Supermarket Imperative', in eds. Giulianotti and Williams, *Game Without Frontiers*, pp.129-149.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.136.

³¹² Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.266.

continuity between old and new. The ground sits close to an incinerator, and between two of the four railway lines that converge before the approach to London Bridge. It is an area of ‘new housing estates, warehousing, and industrial estates’.³¹³ However, the *Football Fan’s Guide* spoke highly of the ground itself: ‘the New Den is a striking new £16 million stadium, with excellent facilities for home and away supporters alike. The view from virtually every seat is first class and most visitors come away well impressed’.³¹⁴ However, a different view of The New Den is offered by footballer and author Garry Nelson, who described it as being ‘computer-designed, state-of-the-art and, hence, characterless ... its undeviating four-square symmetry lacks a human dimension, that sense of the past’³¹⁵

It would be unfair to single out The New Den alone, however, because Nelson’s criticisms could apply to almost all of the post-Taylor stadiums that would be built over the next few years (see Fig. 5 on p.109). Most of the stadiums lack character and individuality. That sense of local charm that existed at the old grounds has been lost. It would be possible to stand on the pitch at one of the new grounds and look around, and, aside from the club name, nickname, or initials, that are sometimes incorporated into the design of the banks of seats, you could be anywhere in the country. The writer Andrew Ward and the sports sociologist John Williams noted that ‘fans were concerned about production-line stadiums which added to clone-town feelings. Some fans saw them as part of an English trend towards placelessness’.³¹⁶

³¹³ Janet Williams and Mark Johnson, *Football Fan’s Guide* (London: CollinsWillow, 1996 edition), p.161.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ Garry Nelson, *Left Foot Forward* (London: Headline, 1996 paperback edition), pp.321-322.

³¹⁶ Andrew Ward and John Williams, *Football Nation: sixty years of the beautiful game* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010 paperback edition), p.309.

Table 4. *League Football Club relocations*

Football Club	Old Ground	New Ground	Year
Scunthorpe United	Old Show Ground	Glanford Park	1988
Walsall	Fellows Park	Bescot Stadium	1990
Chester City	Sealand Road	Deva Stadium	1992*
Millwall	The Den	The 'New' Den	1993
Northampton Town	County Ground	Sixfields Stadium	1994
Huddersfield Town	Leeds Road	Alfred McAlpine Stadium	1994
Middlesbrough	Ayresome Park	Riverside Stadium	1995
Derby County	Baseball Ground	Pride Park	1997
Sunderland	Roker Park	Stadium of Light	1997
Bolton Wanderers	Burnden Park	Reebok Stadium	1997
Stoke City	Victoria Ground	Britannia Stadium	1997
Reading	Elm Park	Madejski Stadium	1998
Southampton	The Dell	St. Mary Stadium	2001
Hull City	Boothferry Park	Kingston Communications Stadium	2002
Leicester City	Filbert Street	Walkers Stadium	2002
Manchester City	Maine Road	City of Manchester Stadium	2003
Coventry City	Highfield Road	Ricoh Arena**	2005
Swansea City	Vetch Field	Liberty Stadium	2005
Arsenal	Highbury	Emirates Stadium	2006
Doncaster Rovers	Belle Vue	Keepmoat Stadium	2007
Shrewsbury Town	Gay Meadow	New Stadium	2007
Milton Keynes Dons	National Hockey Stadium	Stadium: mk	2007
Colchester United	Layer Road	Weston Homes Community Stadium	2008
Cardiff City	Ninian Park	Cardiff City Stadium	2009
Chesterfield	Saltergate	B2net Stadium	2010
Brighton and Hove Albion	Goldstone Ground	American Express Community Stadium	2011***
Rotherham United	Millmoor	New York Stadium	2012****

Original names of new stadiums given. Some names would later change in sponsorship deals. Table includes only those clubs who were in the Premier League or Football League at the time of the move.

*Chester City entered a groundshare at Macclesfield Town's Moss Rose ground 1990-1992

**Coventry City entered a groundshare with Northampton Town between 2013 and 2015 due to a dispute with the owners of the Ricoh Arena

***Brighton and Hove Albion entered a groundshare at Gillingham's Priestfield Stadium for two seasons and then played at Withdean, an athletics stadium in Brighton, 1999-2011.

**** Rotherham United entered a groundshare for four years at the Don Valley Stadium in Sheffield

Source: www.footballgroundguide.com last accessed 17 January 2014, and eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*.

Table 5. *Stadium sponsors*

Sponsor	Club	Original/previous stadium names (if different)
American Express	Brighton and Hove Albion	
Britannia	Stoke City	
Emirates	Arsenal	
Greenhaus	Shrewsbury Town	New Meadow, then the Prostar Stadium
Ipro	Derby County	Pride Park
John Smith's	Huddersfield Town	Alfred MacAlpine Stadium, then the Galpharm Stadium
KC	Hull City	Kingston Communications Stadium
King Power	Leicester City	Walkers Stadium
Liberty	Swansea City	
Macron	Bolton Wanderers	Reebok Stadium
Proact	Chesterfield	b2net Stadium
Ricoh	Coventry City	
Weston Homes	Colchester United	

Source: www.footballgroundguide.com last accessed 17 January 2014, and various club websites.

Football clubs soon realised that one important source of revenue could be stadium sponsorship. Therefore at some clubs lucrative deals have been struck for naming rights. This means that Highbury, Burnden Park, and Highfield Road, were replaced by the Emirates Stadium, the Reebok Stadium, and the Ricoh Arena, at Arsenal, Bolton Wanderers, and Coventry City respectively. This encapsulates the shift from local ties to big business that has been experienced throughout football generally. Stadium sponsorship deals also raise the possibility that some grounds will change their names as new deals are struck. This has already happened. For example, Huddersfield Town's 'Alfred McAlpine' Stadium became the Galpharm Stadium and then the John Smith's Stadium, Manchester City's 'City of Manchester' Stadium became the Etihad Stadium, and Derby County's Pride

Park became the Ipro Stadium.³¹⁷ There is also the possibility of stadiums changing name as a result of corporate deals involving the sponsor that are unrelated to football. This happened to Chesterfield's stadium due to the acquisition of b2net by Proact, and to Hull City's when Kingston Communications became part of a larger KC group.

The Fans' Experience – Football's New Respectability?

What about the atmosphere? The first point to be made is that many football fans felt a deep affection for the old grounds, or even the part of terracing or stand where they spectated from. This was acknowledged by Taylor: 'the first [argument to retain a proportion of standing room] is an emotional one, based on a desire to retain the traditional culture derived from the close contact of the terraces. "My grandfather stood here; my father stood here with me; why shouldn't I stand here with my son?" is a commonly expressed view.'³¹⁸

He continues:

to many young men, the camaraderie of singing together, jumping up and down, responding in unison to the naming of the players, their emergence on to the pitch, the scoring of a goal, an unpopular decision – all of these are an integral part of enjoying the match. They like to be part of an amorphous seething crowd and do not wish to have each his own place in a seat.³¹⁹

Thus it can be seen, and certainly Taylor claimed, that many fans had an affinity for the terraces and a strong attachment to the grounds that they attended, sometimes with their families for generations. Some football grounds had stands or areas of terracing, usually behind one of the goals, that became famous for passionate vocal support and sheer noise – Arsenal fans had the North Bank at Highbury, Liverpool fans the (Spion) Kop at Anfield,

³¹⁷ www.footballgroundguide.com last accessed 17 January 2014. Also eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.210.

³¹⁸ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.13.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

and Manchester United fans the Stretford End at Old Trafford. Other less famous clubs had their own equivalents. At the start of a match the players would emerge from the tunnel to be hit by a wall of noise. The sound generated was what was known as ‘the atmosphere’ and many old grounds had it in abundance.

Huddersfield Town fan Steve Wilson reminisces about his club’s old ground:

Leeds Road was typically run-down ... the smallest and most distinctive stand was to be found next to Leeds Road itself. The Cowshed. So called because of the barrel-shaped iron roof above the terrace, threatening to crumble and fall for as long as I stood underneath it, and probably before. The Cowshed was the beating heart of the ground on match days. Despite being rarely full, the sound felt deafening.³²⁰

He describes the last game there: ‘The Cowshed was full and for 90 minutes the place looked like it was supposed to. Decrepit and decaying, but the home of my modest dreams.’³²¹

Because of the piecemeal way in which football grounds had been constructed, they each had their own unique characteristics. Some had stands or areas of terracing named after an adjacent road or a local benefactor, and advertisement hoardings around the pitch sometimes promoted the products of local businesses. These factors served to give each ground a flavour and feel that was local to its area. The sociologist Ian Taylor made the

³²⁰ Steve Wilson, ‘The Cowshed, Huddersfield’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 204, February 2004, p.36.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

point that the football ground was an ‘emblem of locality’.³²² As the geographer John Bale put it, ‘it is difficult to find anything other than the national sport which so readily provides a sense of place-pride. No other regularised ritual exists to project a place-name to a national audience each week.’³²³ This was particularly important in cities such as Sheffield and Liverpool where the decline of manufacturing and industry in the 1980s left a void. A focus on the local football team and its ground could go some way to filling that void and restoring a sense of civic pride.

Immediately after the disaster at Hillsborough, fans of Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, along with the fans of host club Sheffield Wednesday, and Liverpool’s neighbours and rivals Everton, came to pay their respects. As mentioned earlier, both Hillsborough and Anfield took on the role of temporary shrines as many fans came to lay flowers, wreaths, and football memorabilia such as scarves, rosettes, and football programmes.³²⁴ A similar thing would happen at West Ham United’s Upton Park ground in 1993 following the death of West Ham and England legend Bobby Moore after he lost his battle with cancer, and at Chelsea’s Stamford Bridge ground in 1996 after the death of Chelsea director Matthew Harding.³²⁵ In this context, the football ground could take on an almost religious significance and become a ‘sacred place’.³²⁶

³²² Ian Taylor, ‘English Football in the 1990s: taking Hillsborough seriously?’, in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, p.5.

³²³ John Bale, ‘Playing At Home: British Football and a sense of place’, in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, pp.135-136.

³²⁴ Ian Taylor, ‘English Football in the 1990s: taking Hillsborough seriously?’ in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, p.4.

³²⁵ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.351.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

Taylor had claimed that: ‘watching the more boisterous and demonstrative sections at all-seater grounds I have noted no absence of concerted singing, chanting, clapping, or gesticulating in unison. The communal spirit is still there and finds ready expression’.³²⁷ However, Taylor has been proved wrong on this point. With the exception of games where passions are running high, such as at a local derby or a crucial match, the new stadiums are noticeably quieter than the old football grounds were. Nelson compared Millwall’s old ground to The New Den: ‘I always quite enjoyed playing there [The Den]. The hostility of the home fans may have been total – but at least they were creating an atmosphere you could react to and play off.’³²⁸ By contrast: ‘[The New Den is] impersonal, it’s a stadium people can forget themselves in ... perhaps it is The New Den’s lack of character ... that is responsible for the disastrously low gates Millwall have experienced this season [1994/1995]’.³²⁹ Nelson is not alone in this observation. Matthew Bazell describes going to an FA Cup tie between Arsenal and Cardiff City:

When you arrive late at football matches nowadays, it can feel like you’re a latecomer to the theatre or the cinema. The row of people that you ask to get up from their seats look unhappy to have been disturbed during the performance. Once in my seat, I noticed two fans a couple of rows in front of me having a conversation about the game. They were virtually whispering and it didn’t sound anything more than a typical discussion on how the game was going. So why were they whispering? Perhaps because the modern football crowd is so quiet that they didn’t want the surrounding fans overhearing their conversation. It was so quiet that you could have heard a pin drop.³³⁰

Ed Horton, in his observations on the changes in football, comments:

³²⁷ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.13.

³²⁸ Nelson, *Left Foot Forward*, p.322.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ Matthew Bazell, *Theatre Of Silence: the lost soul of football* (Cambridge: Pegasus, 2008), p.24.

Many observers have noticed that the crowd is getting quieter. The chanting is less frequent, less wholehearted. At some grounds, the fans have even started to demand that clubs create new 'singing areas'. The very fact that they need to ask for them speaks for itself. All-seater stadia are among the reasons for the silence of the crowd. Certainly compulsory seating cramps the lungs, it dissipates the collective feeling of the crowd, it prevents its coalescence ... at Old Trafford supporters have been thrown out for having the temerity to stand up for a while and sing.³³¹

Conn describes being late for a game there: 'I'm waiting now for the first roars ... so far there's nothing ... even down Matt Busby Way ... to right under the bowels of the main stand, not a sound. There are 55,000 people sitting on the other side of the wall and you could hear a programme drop'.³³² Admittedly, Old Trafford is a rebuilt ground rather than a new one, but the criticism is still valid because the claim applies to all-seater stadia, whether it happens to be an old ground rebuilt or a new ground.

Many of Manchester United's own supporters were not happy about this lack of sound. A group called the Independent Manchester United Supporters Association complained about, among other things, the sterile atmosphere 'in the wake of the ground's redevelopment and transformation into what was, in effect, a giant, heavily policed open-air TV studio where supporters were expected to behave as though they were an invited studio audience'.³³³ This criticism is aimed at broader topics than the simple fact of sitting, such as commercialisation and media presentation, but here the seated crowd is presented as an integral part of what was a new experience.

³³¹ Ed Horton, *Moving The Goalposts: football's exploitation* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1997), p.31.

³³² Conn, *Football Business*, pp. 33-34.

³³³ Chris Horrie, *Premiership: lifting the lid on a national obsession* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2002 edition), p.242.

Another concern was the financial cost to fans of having to pay to sit rather than stand. Taylor observed that: ‘spectators do not want to pay and, it is argued, many could not pay the substantially higher price of a seat as against the cost of standing’.³³⁴ He acknowledged that clubs may well wish to charge more for seats but commented ‘it should be possible to plan a price structure which suits the cheapest seats to the pockets of those presently paying to stand. At Ibrox [Rangers’ ground], for example, seating is £6, standing £4 – not a prohibitive price or differential’.³³⁵ However, as clubs implemented the Report it soon became apparent that this suggestion was unrealistic for two main reasons: firstly, the cost of rebuilding, which Taylor had grossly underestimated; secondly, spectators having to sit meant that fewer could be admitted than if they were standing. Therefore the recommendation to plan a reasonable price structure was ignored, with the result that the 1990s, which from 1993 onwards was a time of low inflation and economic growth, saw a massive hike in the price of match tickets and admission fees. Between 1989 and 1999, the average price of an adult ticket rose from £4.03 to £17.42, an increase of 331 per cent. During the same period the rate of inflation in the economy measured by the retail price index rose by 54.8 per cent.³³⁶ The following table shows the increase in admission prices covering the six seasons between 1989/1990, the season after the Hillsborough disaster, and 1994/1995, and covers the clubs in the Premier League during the 1994/1995 season.

The two clubs with the biggest percentage increase were those that enjoyed the most success during the period, which suggests that they used that fact to pass the cost on to their fans.

Manchester United, who won the title for both of the Premiership’s first two seasons, more

³³⁴ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.13.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ These are the figures quoted by the Football Task Force, more of which in chapter 4. Richard Faulkner, ‘The Legacy Of The Football Task Force’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, p.40.

Table 6. *Increases in admission prices at clubs who were in the Premier League in 1994/1995*

Club	Average admission price 1989/1990 (£)	Average admission price 1994/1995 (£)	Percentage increase
Arsenal	6.71	11.92	77.6
Aston Villa	5.39	9.72	80.3
Blackburn Rovers	3.64	10.15	178.8
Chelsea	7.30	13.48	84.7
Coventry City	5.72	9.25	61.7
Crystal Palace	6.15	12.50	103.3
Everton	4.79	9.71	102.7
Ipswich Town	4.05	9.03	122.9
Leeds United	4.27	9.07	112.4
Leicester City	4.35	10.08	131.7
Liverpool	5.41	10.89	101.3
Manchester City	3.94	7.87	99.7
Manchester United	4.71	16.06	240.9
Newcastle United	4.50	12.48	177.3
Norwich City	5.26	9.41	78.9
Nottingham Forest	5.18	9.10	75.7
Queen's Park Rangers	5.82	9.39	61.3
Sheffield Wednesday	4.50	9.17	103.8
Southampton	4.97	11.95	140.4
Tottenham Hotspur	6.55	14.25	117.5
West Ham United	6.15	11.26	83.1
Wimbledon	5.77	9.08	57.3

Source: King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.135. King lists as his sources The Football Trust, *Digest of Football Statistics 1990/91*, London (1991), p.28 and The Football Trust, *Digest of Football Statistics 1994/95*, London (1996), p.30. I checked the British Library. I found the 1991 edition, but they do not have the 1996 edition. The figures for 1989/1990 are incorrectly listed by King as being for 1988/1989, but otherwise they are correct. In the circumstances I am relying on his accuracy for the 1994/1995 figures. King's table shows 29 clubs, and purports to show the clubs who played in the top division during the seasons in question. However, Notts County are not included although they were in the First Division for 1991/1992, and Bolton Wanderers are included, although they were not in the top division for any season during the period. For this reason I streamlined my list to show only the 22 clubs who were in the Premier League in 1994/1995.

than trebled their average admission price. Blackburn Rovers nearly trebled theirs, coinciding with their rise from obscurity to Premiership champions. Close behind Blackburn were Newcastle United, whose large increase is partly explained by the fact that they were promoted to the Premiership at the end of 1992/1993 and finished as high as third

at the first time of asking. Taking the clubs as a whole, of the twenty-two clubs listed twelve more than doubled their average admission price during the period.

This inflation continued into the new millennium. In 2002/2003, tickets to watch Arsenal ranged from £23.50 to £43.50 and in 2003/2004 from £26 to £48.³³⁷ In 2002/2003 Chelsea, along with some other Premiership clubs, categorised their prices according to the quality of opposition. A Category A match (i.e. against the best opposition), ranged from £35 to £55. The following season they operated three categories. Games against Arsenal, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur were all Category AA, and ticket prices for those games ranged from £43 to £67.³³⁸ Alan Fisher, sociologist and Tottenham Hotspur supporter, argued: 'the price alienates the traditional support at football. Football's never been purely and completely a working-class sport, but it was a working man's game, and I think that over a period of time the high prices have meant that people cannot go and see the game and now, a generation on, we're seeing youngsters who are unable to go to the game on a regular basis.'³³⁹

The social scientist Kevin Dixon, however, challenges the view that 'capitalist exploitation' is something new, because it fails to take into account 'the continuity that exists across time and space in relation to consumption.'³⁴⁰ In his view, football fans have always been consumers as part of a wider 'commercial enlightenment' from the late nineteenth century

³³⁷ Arsenal fixture lists 2002/2003 and 2003/2004. Obtained from Highbury ticket office on 17 July 2003.

³³⁸ Chelsea fixture list for 2003/2004 and verbal information obtained from Stamford Bridge ticket office on 17 July 2003.

³³⁹ Alan Fisher, interview with the author, Tonbridge, 11 June 2015.

³⁴⁰ Kevin Dixon, *Consuming Football In Late Modern Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 9.

onwards, indicating continuity rather than change. The difference is that once ‘this was minimal and concealed to the naked eye – now, in late modern life it is simply “naked”’.³⁴¹

It is worth mentioning at this point the social composition of the football crowd. There has been a drift from a working-class crowd to a middle-class one who can afford such prices, but at the same time, the crowd has got older. The teenagers of the 1970s and 1980s who paid a small amount to enter are now middle-aged adults and because of this many earn the level of salary that can accommodate the large increases in ticket price. They have grown into adulthood with the game and fewer teenagers are coming along behind them. This is an important factor that is often overlooked. Elevation in social class is hard to quantify, but it appears to have happened simultaneously with stadiums getting safer and more comfortable, which is of course a major contributory factor towards it.

The changes in football’s audience driven by such financial dynamics were also caused by other factors in this period. Indeed, the paradox is that the revival from football’s low point of the mid-1980s continued *despite* the Hillsborough disaster and its consequences. This was due partly to the achievements of the England international team in the 1990 World Cup finals, when, under Bobby Robson, they reached the semi-finals and only lost by the narrowest of margins to West Germany. England started off slowly, with draws against the Republic of Ireland and then Holland before securing a 1-0 win over Egypt for a place in the knock-out stage. In the second round England beat Belgium 1-0 in the last minute of extra time with a goal from David Platt that was set up by a Paul Gascoigne free-kick. England’s quarter-final opponents were Cameroon, who had proved the surprise team of

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

the tournament, beating holders Argentina in the opening match. Again, the game went to extra time before England won 3-2. This set up a semi-final clash against West Germany. The Germans were fortunate to take the lead when Andreas Brehme's free kick was deflected into the goal by Paul Parker. However, Parker made amends by supplying Gary Lineker with the cross from which he scored the equaliser. With no goals in extra time the game was decided on penalties, which West Germany won due to misses by Chris Waddle and Stuart Pearce.³⁴² Despite this disappointment it was England's best showing in the World Cup since winning the trophy in 1966.

England's appearance in the tournament had been marketed to an audience that was more middle-class than before. Matthew Taylor comments:

most significant was the way in which Italia '90 was represented by the media and experienced as a television event. The BBC's decision to link football with 'high' culture through use of Pavarotti's rendition of Puccini's 'Nessun dorma' aria as the theme tune of its coverage was a conscious attempt, some have argued, to appeal to those social groups who had previously shown little interest in the game.³⁴³

The official pop record for the tournament also demonstrated a shift in style and approach. The official England single was New Order's *World In Motion* and it represented a genuine breakthrough from the unfashionable 'football record'. Rather than the staple diet of records with singalong choruses released to coincide with World Cup or FA Cup final appearances, *World In Motion* merged the worlds of football and electric technopop and gained critical

³⁴² Nawrat and Hutchings, *Sunday Times Illustrated History*, pp. 310 – 311.

³⁴³ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, pp.363-364.

acclaim in so doing. The song helped take the game itself to a wider audience, making it more respectable and increasingly fashionable.³⁴⁴

The fact that England progressed as far as the semi-finals also helped to expand football's popularity to the middle classes that were deliberately being engaged by the football authorities and the media with the competition. Also assisting with this was the fact that England midfielder Paul Gascoigne, or 'Gazza' as he became commonly known, was one of the players of the tournament. Gascoigne's ability on the pitch was beyond question because he could draw on a number of different skills to create scoring opportunities for teammates or for himself. But it was more than this that turned him into a household name, and arguably the most famous footballer since George Best. He was known for his practical jokes, thus revealing the persona of a mischievous schoolboy. Irving Scholar was the chairman of Tottenham Hotspur who signed Gascoigne from Newcastle United in 1988. In his autobiography he says of him:

[He has] the instincts of a teenager who can never stop playing pranks. Bobby Robson ... called him 'daft as a brush', and Gazza responded by turning up to the next England practice match with a brush tucked under his shirt. Sometime later, when there was a great deal of Press speculation about his contract, he turned up at the training ground with a £50 note sellotaped to his forehead and trained the whole morning in that manner ... what singled out Gascoigne was that he carried on such childlike activities all the time. Bored by standing in the Tottenham reception, he would superglue all the phones together, or when he was staying at the Swallow Hotel in Hertfordshire ... he let off the fire extinguisher at 3am ... Gascoigne was twenty-one going on eleven.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ Ibid. p.366.

³⁴⁵ Scholar, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp.56-57.

He also showed his vulnerability when, after receiving a booking during the semi-final against West Germany, which meant that he could not play in the final should England reach it, tears streamed down his cheeks. His sense of humour and vulnerability were characteristics which the home audience could relate to.

The fanzine literature which commenced in 1986 with the publication of the first issue of *When Saturday Comes* continued as most clubs had fans who produced their own fans' magazine. Fanzines were unofficial and completely independent of football clubs. For that reason they were free to pass comment and opinion in a way that officially sanctioned publications could not. Therefore they were outspoken, direct and displayed robust humour. This humour is indicated by some of the titles, such as at Queen's Park Rangers, whose nickname is 'the Rs'; fans produced *A Kick Up The Rs*. At Northampton Town, whose nickname is 'The Cobblers', fans published *What A Load Of Cobblers*, and Fulham fans could not resist the title *There's Only One F In Fulham*. Some fans poked fun at their own club's misfortune, such as the Brighton and Hove Albion fans who produced *And Smith Must Score*. This was named after the commentator's words in the dying seconds of extra time in the 1983 FA Cup final between Brighton and Manchester United. With the score at 2-2, Gordon Smith, with the ball at his feet and the goal at his mercy, had a golden opportunity to win Brighton the FA Cup. He missed and Brighton lost the replay 4-0. Fanzines could also take on a political role as in some instances they became a mouthpiece for fan protest. The Charlton Athletic fanzine *Voice of the Valley* was important in the campaign to return the club to The Valley:

We have compared being at Selhurst to a prison sentence before, but there is one respect in which it is an imprecise comparison. The vast majority of prisoners do not

serve an indefinite sentence and thus are able to look forward to the day of their release. At present Charlton supporters have no such prospect and that contributes massively to their demoralisation. Secondly ... the lack of information creates the impression ... that nothing whatever is going on ... thirdly, every match we play at Selhurst Park weakens our roots in Bexley and Greenwich and diminishes the prospects for the club when it returns to the area.³⁴⁶

The previous issue had advertised for sale Official Detour T-Shirts bearing on the front the slogan 'We Couldn't Give A **** For Selhurst' and on the back 'details of the detour, listing such world-famous venues as Crystal Palace Parade, Catford Town Hall, and even The Valley, all with appropriate timings.'³⁴⁷ The April 1989 issue, when news had arrived that the club would definitely be returning to The Valley, was entitled 'Victory Issue' and included a chronology of developments in the history of the campaign.³⁴⁸

The Queen's Park Rangers fanzine *A Kick Up The R's* similarly became an important voice of protest against the planned merger of Queen's Park Rangers and Fulham in 1987:

Queen's Park Rangers it was announced would, at the end of the season, be merged with Fulham. End of story. No question. No Discussion. No arguments against. Thankfully, supporters from both clubs were not prepared to accept this so lightly, and it was their impassioned response that helped sway the decision of the Football League Management Committee not to sanction the m****r.³⁴⁹

The Fulham fanzine *There's Only One F In Fulham* played a similar role on behalf of their supporters.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁶ 'Editorial – How Much Longer?', *Voice Of The Valley*, No.10, March 1989, p2.

³⁴⁷ 'The Official Detour T-Shirt', *Voice Of The Valley*, No. 9, February 1989, p.32.

³⁴⁸ 'How The Battle Was Fought', *Voice Of The Valley*, No.11, April 1989, p.24.

³⁴⁹ 'You'll Never Walk Alone (With A M****r)', *A Kick Up The R's*, Issue 1, August/September 1987.

³⁵⁰ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.371.

It was perhaps inevitable that the fanzine culture would in turn lead to an outpouring of literature in terms of books. In 1989, *Steaming In* by Colin Ward was published. Subtitled ‘the journal of a football fan’, Ward describes his escapades following Arsenal, Chelsea and England.³⁵¹ The book is more about the ‘aggro’ than the football, but this in turn would pave the way for a number of hooligan autobiographies, such as the writings of Cass Pennant.³⁵² However, the most important book was Nick Hornby’s *Fever Pitch*. Therein Hornby describes with great clarity his obsession with Arsenal, contrasting with the mundanity of suburban life and his parents’ break-up, from the age of 11 onwards.³⁵³ As a university student at Cambridge he also describes some visits to Cambridge United.³⁵⁴ *Fever Pitch* is in parts moving and at other times funny. It became a best-seller and was made into a play and a film. According to Matthew Taylor, ‘football’s new respectability was consolidated’ by *Fever Pitch*.³⁵⁵ A blizzard of literature followed as players, managers, and media personalities connected with the game wrote autobiographies. It became acceptable for academics to study football and its wider social and cultural implications, such as the research being carried out at De Montfort University in Leicester and at the University of Liverpool. At a time of massive inflation in terms of ticket prices, this contributed to the game becoming middle-class rather than working-class.

The commonly held view is that as football became more commercial, boosted by England’s achievements in the 1990 World Cup and fresh revenues from satellite television

³⁵¹ Colin Ward, *Steaming In*, pp.44–175.

³⁵² Cass Pennant is author of *Congratulations You Have Just Met The I.C.F.* (London: John Blake, 2003) and *Cass* (London: John Blake, 2008). He also co-wrote *Want Some Aggro* (London: John Blake, 2002), *Rolling With The 6.57 Crew* (London: John Blake, 2004), *Terrace Legends* (London: John Blake, 2005), and *Good Afternoon, Gentlemen, The Name Is Bill Gardner* (London: John Blake, 2006).

³⁵³ Hornby, *Fever Pitch*, pp.9-28, 32-35, 38-46, 47-70, 73-95, 100-104, 106-109, 111-140, 141-143, 146-148, 152-153, 157-200, 204-242, and 245-247.

³⁵⁴ Hornby, *Fever Pitch*, pp.95-100, 104-106, 109-111, and 149-151.

³⁵⁵ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.364.

companies, its audience changed from predominantly working-class men to socially diverse consumers who, adorned in expensive replica football shirts, took their seats in the new all-seater stadiums. This shift from 'authentic' to 'inauthentic' is outlined by Matthew Taylor as being from 'loyal, local, and anti-commercial' to 'fickle, non-local, and consumerist'.³⁵⁶ This view is reflected as Giulianotti talks about the 'post-fan' in the new era. The 'post-fan' had a disapproving view of those who control football and were often active in the production of fanzines and the organisation of supporters' movements. Better educated than most other fans, the 'post-fan' was middle-class in background and employed in sales, marketing, the media, or similar professions. There is no suggestion that the 'post-fan' replaced the traditional fan but instead emerged alongside them.³⁵⁷

The emergence of the 'post-fan' was a phenomenon that was partly driven by advances in technology. By the end of the 1980s the computer was becoming an important part of office life and many had access to one. Therefore it was possible to print fanzines and leaflets in a way that had not happened before. Fans employed in such places who wished to air their views now had a means by which to do so. King divides the 'new consumption of football' into 'the lads', 'new football writing' and 'the new consumer fans'. He points out that the reaction of the lads, and the producers and consumers of new football writing to the developments in football during the 1990s form 'a complex and textured pattern of resistance and consent'.³⁵⁸ This statement acknowledges the paradox that fanzine writers oppose the commercialisation of football on one hand but on the other have contributed to its marketing to a wider audience themselves. Interestingly, the traditional fan and the

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p.360.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.360-361; Giulianotti, *Football*, pp.148-149.

³⁵⁸ King, *End of the Terraces*, p.190.

fanzine-writing 'post-fan' both share the view that the football fan should not be reduced to a 'customer', and the appearance of fanzines demonstrated that the nature of fan support was wider and more complex than the somewhat one-dimensional view of the free-market customer.³⁵⁹ More women started to attend football. Kirsty Stewart is a Chelsea fan. She commented on the development of 'better, safer stadiums with a less intimidating atmosphere', saying that they are 'more inviting for women and children to attend'. Do more women attend as a result? 'Most definitely', it is a more pleasant experience for women now because stadiums are 'safer and more comfortable'.³⁶⁰

The diversification of the nature of the 1990s football supporter also needs to be seen in the context of an increase in the relevance of the leisure industry as a whole. The construction of leisure centres in the 1980s encouraged people to become more conscious about health and fitness with the result that they took up sport and exercise in increasing numbers. This trend was helped by a national campaign entitled 'Ever Thought of Sport?', aimed at young people to encourage them to take up a variety of sports. The public therefore gradually became consumers of sportswear and sporting accessories as manufacturers saw a ready market that could be tapped. This led to the expansion of sports retail stores such as JD Sport and Sports Direct. Sports gear became fashionable, and this is one explanation for the growth in the popularity of the replica football shirt. The 1990s football fan was a part of, or at least influenced by, the growth of numbers participating in sport and leisure activity.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 190-191.

³⁶⁰ Kirsty Stewart, interview with the author, email, 1 April 2016.

These developments coincided with, and were partly responsible for, the large decline in the number of incidents of hooliganism at football matches. There are as many reasons for the decline in football violence as there were for the existence of the phenomenon in the first place, but let us consider briefly the main ones for its decline. Undoubtedly the arrival of all-seater stadia played a large part, as Taylor had intended that it would: 'seating has distinct advantages in achieving crowd control ... with the assistance of CCTV the police can immediately zoom in with a camera and pinpoint the seats occupied by the trouble-makers as well as the trouble-makers themselves. Moreover, if numbered tickets are issued to named purchasers, the police have a further aid to identifying miscreants.'³⁶¹

With the anonymity of standing on the terraces gone, fans had to give details of their name, and sometimes their addresses, to clubs in order to purchase tickets. Any fan with intentions of bad behaviour now realised that they could be identified much more easily. There was also a broader cultural shift at work. The revival of youth culture in the shape of mods, rockers, and skinheads, and the bank holiday battles between them, at the cusp of the 1970s and 1980s had kept youth violence, and therefore indirectly soccer hooliganism, on the media's agenda. Trouble was a fact of life for young people during those years. The early 1980s were a time of mass unemployment, especially among young people, but by the end of the decade this had improved. Gloom and despondency were replaced by a more positive atmosphere as a new generation of teenagers and young people invented 'acid house' and the whole 'rave' culture. As Steve Redhead observes:

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the football terraces, then, experienced their own 'summer of love' which had been evident earlier at clubs like Manchester's Hacienda

³⁶¹ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.12.

and London's Shoom. The carnivalesque – even surrealist – nature of transformation in football culture was first symbolised by the inflatables craze started by Manchester City fans and their blown-up bananas, and speedily followed by virtually every other club (from Oldham Athletic's yard dogs to Grimsby Town's haddocks).³⁶²

The new music scene originating in Manchester with bands such as the Stone Roses and the Happy Mondays spawned the mood to party rather than fight. The use of ecstasy was integral to this new atmosphere but as far as football was concerned some of its young followers were intent on having a party and loving each other at raves, so why fight each other at football? In an interview published in *Melody Maker* on the release of their single 'All Together Now', Peter Hooton of Liverpool band The Farm was asked if the decrease in the amount of violence at soccer matches over the last couple of seasons was a direct result of Acid House. He replied, 'Yeah, I'd say that's definitely true. It's like the way that all of the clans came together at the Happy Mondays' party the other night ... a couple of years ago there'd have been a really bad atmosphere between groups of lads from Liverpool, Manchester, London, this city, that city, but that's unthinkable now'.³⁶³ It simply became 'uncool' to be a thug.

There was a whole new fashion associated with this trend. Redhead quotes from Manchester art magazine *Avant* in their guide for 'Sensually Right On Supporters' where they distinguish between 'new wave' and 'dinosaur' fans in an ins/outs style. *Avant* suggested that the 'new wave' fan had:

³⁶² Steve Redhead, 'An Era Of The End, Or The End Of An Era?: Football and youth culture in Britain', in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, p.155.

³⁶³ Push, 'The Farm: a mission of Mersey', *Melody Maker*, 24 November 1990, p.28.

1. long centre parting or short two-dimensional (*not* skin or perm)
2. t-shirts Baggy (club shirts/slogans/James/Stone Roses/Happy Mondays etc.) *not* Lacoste, Perry, Union Jack, Gazza/England/tight fit
3. parallel jeans or frayed flares/tracksuit bottoms Baggy *not* tight fit stonewash/drainpipes
4. Puma trainers/kickers/lilac suede boots *not* brogues, Doc Martens, huge tongue trainers
5. Pin badges/bracelets/crystals *not* scarves/tattoos/Rangers hats
6. fanzines/obscure flags *not* official programmes, bricks and cans
7. cannabis *not* beer or lager
8. other team – Cameroon *not* Rangers or Celtic
9. Blue Moon/blissed up *not* Here We Go

While some of the above was localised on Manchester and with an eye on the global attention given to the ‘Madchester’ music scene at the time, it is even so a reflection of the changing nature of football and youth culture in England in the early 1990s.³⁶⁴

John Williams, however, urges that this view should be tempered. He states:

the Manchester and music thing has been important, but it has also been overplayed ... the music/rave/warehouse party scene has been important, too, for rather more prosaic reasons. The loss of Europe to English football cut into the profit around the spectator scene ... the party economy, by way of contrast, provides opportunities for making serious money for those with the street knowledge and muscle to match ... inroads by the police into some of the major hooligan firms inevitably had its effects ... ten years (or more) in prison ‘for football’ was a very serious thing to contemplate, especially when there was still plenty of action elsewhere, and without the attendant risks.³⁶⁵

The decline of hooliganism also occurred due to a number of other factors. These included high levels of circuit television surveillance combined with new all-seater stadiums,

³⁶⁴ *Avant*, no.6, September 1990. Cited in Redhead ‘Era of the End’, in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, pp.155-156. I tried to find this issue of *Avant* but it is not held by the British Library and the magazine is now defunct.

³⁶⁵ John Williams, ‘Thugs And Kisses’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 59, January 1992, pp.16-17.

meaning that any miscreant could easily be identified. Combine these factors with those mentioned by Redhead and it is easy to see why the number of incidents of hooliganism declined markedly.

Conclusion

Ian Taylor comments ‘one vital aspect of the Hillsborough disaster ... was the fact that it occurred in sequence with a series of other disasters in public facilities in Britain’.³⁶⁶ He goes on:

The list of such disasters now includes the Bradford City fire (57 deaths in May 1985), the sinking of the *Herald of Free Enterprise* ferry in Zeebrugge Harbour in 1987 (188 British passengers drowned), the fire in King’s Cross Underground Station in November 1987 (31 deaths), the explosion of the Piper Alpha oil rig in July 1988 (167 oil workers blown up or drowned), and the Southern Region rail crashes at Clapham Junction in December 1988 (35 dead) and then at Purley (2 dead, 52 injured) in March 1989.³⁶⁷

Also in 1989 forty-two were killed when a British Midland Boeing 737 crashed on to the M1 near Kegworth in Leicestershire, and in August of the same year, a few months after Hillsborough, fifty-one were drowned when the *Marchioness* pleasure cruiser sank in the Thames after being struck by the *Bowbelle* dredger. Add to this the terrorist attack that resulted in the Lockerbie plane crash in December 1988 and it would be easy to see the latter half of the 1980s as an ‘age of disasters’. Although these disasters seem unconnected when taken at face value, there were common themes among the causes. There was disregard for safety in public and private services, poor communications once tragedies

³⁶⁶ Ian Taylor, ‘English Football’, in eds. Williams and Wagg, *British Football*, p.10.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

began, staff who were either overworked or poorly trained or both, and public amenities declining due to inadequate funding.³⁶⁸ Most of these tragedies were in areas of public service and transport, and many believed that the policies of the Thatcher administration had played a part. Many public services were privatised and the ethos of business and profit was applied to them. It was possible to make money by buying shares in the newly privatised companies as public services became answerable to shareholders. In this context corners were cut with the inevitable consequence that safety was sometimes compromised.

Scraton puts it thus:

An unswerving commitment to the principles of free-market economy actively promoted a market-place unrestricted by the state and its institutions ...with instant returns on investment, risk-takers quickly becoming profit-makers ... ordinary people could live the illusion of 'share-holding' in former state-run industries ... cross-channel ferries, frantically cutting turnaround times to meet the demands of profitability ... put to sea with their bow doors open. Overcrowded commuter trains sped along under-maintained tracks, attempting to meet impossible schedules. Pleasureboats on the Thames vied for water with unsafe industrial vessels. Years of rubbish gathered beneath stands in football grounds, and escalators on the London Underground, just waiting for ignition.³⁶⁹

While the events at Hillsborough can be seen in the context of other disasters at about the same time, it is also clear that the attitude of some of the police and the authorities were indicative of a wider perception of football supporters that prevailed. The wider emphasis on control and containment, rather than on safety, was a contributory factor to the disaster. Of greater importance was the inexperience of the senior police officer in control on the day. The failure to organise properly the flow of fans to the outside pens once the central pens were full was a major factor, and this should have been organised even *before* Gate C

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p.11.

³⁶⁹ Scraton, *Hillsborough*, pp.239-240.

was opened to relieve the pressure outside. There was also a breakdown in radio contact as the situation deteriorated, and then Duckenfield's deliberate lie as he tried to pass the blame for the disaster on to Liverpool fans. In fact, the disaster was clearly more the result of Duckenfield's own inadequacies rather than any actions by Liverpool fans.

By the time of the publication of the Taylor Report, there was a drive in Europe towards all-seater stadiums for football. The preparations for the 1990 World Cup in Italy were forcing the pace of change. On 25 August 1989 the Italian Ministry of the Interior decreed that no standing would be allowed after 30 April 1990 in open air stadiums with a capacity of more than 10,000 or in covered ones with a capacity of more than 4,000.³⁷⁰ In Holland on 6 December 1989 the KNVB (the Dutch equivalent of the FA) decided with the Dutch clubs to reduce the standing capacity of football grounds by 10% each year over the next decade. Thus by the end of the 1990s football stadia in the Netherlands would be all-seater.³⁷¹ There was also a FIFA resolution, passed on 26 July 1989, that 'matches may in principle only be played in all-seater stadia' from the start of the qualifying games for the 1994 World Cup, commencing in autumn 1992, and as from 1993 'it will be the duty of the Confederations and National Associations to hold high-risk matches in their zones only in all-seater stadia.'³⁷² Looking at the dates on which these decrees and resolutions were passed it can be seen that the Hillsborough disaster was having an effect internationally as well as in England, and the pace of change, in Italy at least, was driven by the preparations for the 1990 World Cup finals. In Scotland, the all-seater stadium had already arrived. Aberdeen's ground at Pittodrie became all-seater in 1978. This was followed by Clydebank,

³⁷⁰ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.14.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² *Ibid.* pp.14-15.

and then St. Johnstone's new ground in Perth.³⁷³ Scotland had, however, experienced the Ibrox disaster in 1971, thus putting the safety of football stadiums high on the agenda as early as the 1970s. Bearing this in mind, it could be argued that all-seater stadia would eventually have arrived in any case, but it cannot be denied that the Hillsborough disaster and the Taylor Report greatly increased the impetus and urgency to reconstruct.

The recommendations of the Taylor Report revolutionised the experience of watching football in England. The all-seater stadiums that were built as a result of the Report, together with the change in organisational structure heralded by the advent of the Premier League, which will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, and the arrival of satellite television broadcasting, would transform football into a new cultural phenomenon very different from its previous incarnation. As new stadiums proved more welcoming, a wider fan base could be attracted – more middle-class, more families – and football became more fashionable in the 1990s than it had been in the 1980s. The 'post-fan' and fanzine culture that developed were part of this 'new respectability'. The growth in football's popularity was also part of the wider trend of increased focus on sport and leisure activity. There is, however, a contradiction here because at the same time there has been a growing concern about the levels of obesity among the young and the increase in diabetes among adults.

In some respects the changes in football grounds over the decades have mirrored changes in society. Most clubs had settled into a permanent home by the outbreak of the First World War, before mass ownership of the motor car. These grounds nestled in the midst of a grid of streets all lined with the terraced houses that were home to the working-class

³⁷³ Ibid. p.13.

communities from which the football clubs drew their support. Increased mobility brought by the motor car and the construction of motorways brought a drift from small town to big city clubs, thus weakening the link between the football club and the local community. Then increasing concern about the growth of hooliganism came in the context of violence between youth cultures and the growing 'generation gap'. In football this led to segregation, later enforced by fences to keep rival fans apart and off the pitch. This focus on law and order, and emphasis on crowd control at the expense of safety, permeated football. Its results were felt only too painfully at Hillsborough. Meanwhile, the high price of land in town and city centres had led to a drift of amenities to new 'out-of-town' sites as supermarkets, leisure complexes, and multiplex cinemas were all built on the periphery of urban development. Once Taylor had published his Report, it was inevitable that football grounds would join the exodus to the bypass. This turned the football club into a spectacle instead of it being part of the cultural fabric of a town or area. Bale points out that a football club is part of the community in two forms – the urban community in which the club is located and after which it is named, and the people and businesses in the immediate surroundings of the club's ground or stadium.³⁷⁴ It can also be said that the location of the new grounds, and the distance fans have to travel out from the urban centre, is another contributory factor in the decline of hooliganism.

The poignancy of Hillsborough lives on. In 2014, on the equivalent weekend of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the disaster, both FA Cup semi-finals and all Premier League and Football League matches were marked by one minute's silence as a mark of respect to the

³⁷⁴ John Bale, 'The Changing Face Of Football: Stadiums and Communities', in Jon Garland, Dominic Malcolm and Michael Rowe (eds.), *The Future Of Football?: Challenges for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Frank Cass 2000), p.91.

ninety-six victims. This was observed at six minutes past the normal scheduled kick-off times to mark the time at which the game was stopped at Hillsborough. The games kicked off at seven minutes past. On the anniversary itself a service was held at Anfield attended by tens of thousands. Scarves were laid out on the pitch to form the shape of the number 96. Across Merseyside public transport was stopped and at Liverpool Lime Street railway station a huge screen displayed photos of each of those who died. At 3.06pm across the city bells tolled ninety-six times, once for each of the victims.³⁷⁵

Two weeks earlier a new inquiry had commenced into the disaster. In September 2012 it had been announced that this inquiry was likely to be held following the verdict of ‘accidental death’ arrived at by the original inquiry.³⁷⁶ The report by the Hillsborough Independent Panel had just been published and it confirmed that ‘not only was there a delay in recognising that there were mass casualties, the major incident plan was not correctly activated and only limited parts were then put into effect. As a result, rescue and recovery efforts were affected by lack of leadership, coordination, prioritisation of casualties and equipment’.³⁷⁷ To summarise, the main reason for the disaster was ‘failure of police control’ and added that ‘multiple failures’ in other emergency services and public bodies contributed to the death toll.³⁷⁸ At the new inquiry relatives of each of the victims were asked to give details describing characteristics of their loved one in a process aimed at considering each victim as an individual human being rather than just as part of a mass defined only by a

³⁷⁵ Nicole Le Marie, ‘96 Bells ... For All Of Those We Lost’, *Metro*, 16 April 2014.

³⁷⁶ Owen Gibson and David Conn, ‘Hillsborough: The Reckoning’, *The Guardian*, 13 September 2012; Scraton, *Hillsborough*, pp.147-148.

³⁷⁷ HMSO, *Hillsborough Independent Panel Report*, p.11.

³⁷⁸ Owen Gibson and David Conn, ‘Hillsborough; The Reckoning’, *The Guardian*, 13 September 2012.

number. As an example, pen pictures of Victoria Hicks and Sarah Hicks were presented to the jury by their parents:

Ms. Hicks spoke lovingly of Victoria using a typewriter to write her own match reports, but keeping them a secret from her family ... 'we'd hear you typing away, filing the reports ... you hid the files under the bed. You never let me read them. I only did so after you died.' According to her father, Victoria, known to her parents as Vicky, had wanted to become a sports reporter. The reports were stored in a red Liverpool FC match folder.³⁷⁹

The jury at the new inquest was finally sent out to consider its verdict on 6 April 2016, more than two years after proceedings began. After 276 days of evidence, the inquests were 'by far the longest case ever heard by a jury in British legal history.'³⁸⁰ Coroner Sir John Goldring gave the jurors fourteen questions to answer, including whether or not the victims were unlawfully killed. To reach this verdict, they had to be unanimous in their view that Duckenfield had been responsible for manslaughter by gross negligence, which meant that his breach of his duty of care 'was so bad, having regard to the risk of death involved, as in your view to amount to a criminal act or omission.'³⁸¹

On 26 April, the inquest jury announced its verdict. They decreed that the ninety-six Liverpool fans had been unlawfully killed.³⁸² Equally importantly, they exonerated Liverpool fans of any blame for the tragedy.³⁸³ During the course of the inquest, Duckenfield admitted that over the years he had not been entirely honest, but now wanted

³⁷⁹ 'The Hidden Talent Of Victoria Hicks', *The Times*, 16 April 2014.

³⁸⁰ David Conn, 'After Two Years, Hillsborough Jury Is Sent Out', *The Guardian*, 7 April 2016.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² Justin Davenport, 'Hillsborough: Justice For 96', *London Evening Standard*, 26 April 2016.

³⁸³ Brian Reade, 'A Dream Come True', *Daily Mirror*, 27 April 2016.

to tell the ‘whole truth’. He admitted that, being newly promoted and inexperienced, he had made a ‘serious mistake’ in taking over responsibility for the match only fifteen days beforehand. He was, he said, ‘overcome by the enormity of the situation’, agreeing that if he had closed off access to the tunnel leading to the terrace, he could have relieved the crush outside without endangering fans in the already packed central pens. He admitted that his failure to do so was a ‘blunder of the first magnitude.’³⁸⁴ Seb Patrick, in *When Saturday Comes*, argued that, ‘an integral part of being a Liverpool supporter since 1989 ... has been the shared, burning desire to see justice done. Not just for a level of accountability to be brought against those responsible (although that’s certainly been a primary aim) but to try to dispel the awful lie that has smeared the names of the dead ever since that day.’³⁸⁵

The verdict raised the possibility of public prosecutions against certain individuals and organisations. As it was announced, the Independent Police Complaints Commission and Operation Resolve were undertaking a joint £80 million investigation to consider charges that could be as serious as manslaughter, negligence, and perverting the course of justice.

A case could yet be brought against police officers, South Yorkshire Police, the Football Association and Sheffield Wednesday FC, with the possibility of corporate charges against the stadium engineers, the ambulance service and Sheffield City Council.³⁸⁶

³⁸⁴ Gordon Rayner and Tom Morgan, ‘Police Blunders, Lies And Cover-Ups After 96 Fans Died’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27 April 2016.

³⁸⁵ Seb Patrick, ‘Universal Truth’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 352, June 2016, pp.16-17.

³⁸⁶ Rayner and Morgan, ‘Police Blunders’, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 April 2016.

Table 7. *The inquest jury's fourteen questions and verdicts*

1. Basic facts: 96 people died in the disaster YES
2. Was there an error or omission in police planning? YES
3. Was there an error or omission in policing at the turnstiles? YES
4. Was there an error by commanding officers on the terraces? YES
5. Was there an error by commander in ordering the gates to be opened? YES
6. Are you satisfied those who died were unlawfully killed? YES
7. Did fans' behaviour contribute to the dangerous situation? NO
8. Did the stadium design contribute to the disaster? YES
9. Was there an error in the stadium safety certification? YES
10. Was there an error in planning for the match by Sheffield Wednesday? YES
11. Did an error by Sheffield Wednesday on the day contribute to the danger? NO MAY an error by SWFC on the day have contributed to the danger? YES
12. Should stadium engineers have done more to advise on safety? YES
13. Was there an error in the police response after the crush developed? YES
14. Was there an error in ambulance response after the crush developed? YES

Source: *Daily Mirror*, 27 April 2016.

It had taken twenty-seven years. The original inquest jury had, in March 1991, returned a verdict of accidental death.³⁸⁷ In June 1997, Tony Blair's new Labour government ordered scrutiny of new evidence and it was found that the police had changed 164 officers' accounts before their submission to the Taylor inquiry, but Jack Straw as home secretary did not believe there was sufficient evidence for a new inquiry. The following year, the Hillsborough Family Support Group launched a private prosecution against Duckenfield and his assistant Murray. The latter was acquitted and no verdict was reached on Duckenfield. In 2009, twenty years after the disaster, Andy Burnham MP and Maria Eagle MP called for all documents relating to the disaster to be published, with the result that the Labour government, now led by Gordon Brown, launched the Hillsborough Independent

³⁸⁷ John Williams, 'Hillsborough: Ten Short Years', *When Saturday Comes*, No. 147, May 1999, p.18.

Panel. Its report was published in September 2012, resulting in the original verdict of accidental death being quashed, and the commencement of the second inquest.³⁸⁸

The Hillsborough disaster marked a watershed in the fan experience of attending football matches. The Taylor Report's recommendation of all-seater stadia introduced surroundings that are safer and cleaner, but the cost of attending football matches has risen enormously and crowds display noticeably less passion. Some of the rebuilding fits in with the broader context in that many of the new grounds have followed the trend to out-of-town sites. New grounds have coincided with the emergence of a new type of fan – educated, affluent, middle-class – as football enhanced its social status. The number of incidents of hooliganism have been greatly reduced. This 'new respectability' fits in with the broader context of increasing popularity of sports and leisure activity as society became more conscious about health and fitness, yet, paradoxically, at the same time less fit. Other factors were at work driving football's social and cultural realignment, such as the establishment of the Premiership and far greater television coverage due to satellite broadcasting and the immense wealth it provides in live coverage deals. It is to those subjects we turn in the next chapter.

³⁸⁸ David Conn, Owen Gibson and Josh Halliday, 'Verdict Brings Relief For Families And Calls For Force Chief To Quit', *The Guardian*, 27 April 2016.

Chapter Three

The Premiership

The love of money is the root of all evil

- I Timothy ch. 6 v. 10³⁸⁹

*If you were to make a list of everything that bedevils football and put them
in a pile, at the top of that pile would sit Manchester United.*

- Ed Horton, author and fanzine contributor, 1997.³⁹⁰

*As a result of the Premier League, England will never, never, never, never,
ever win the European Championships or the World Cup*

- Alex Fynn, sports consultant, 2014.³⁹¹

³⁸⁹ Holy Bible, authorised version, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to Timothy*, chapter 6, verse 10.

³⁹⁰ Horton, *Moving The Goalposts*, p.101.

³⁹¹ Alex Fynn, interview with the author, London, 31 March 2014.

Introduction

The origins of the Premiership lay in the coming together of three key phenomena. Firstly, the 1980s had seen a handful of elite clubs – the ‘Big Five’ of Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur – growing in terms of assertiveness and power. Their relationship with a network of media and commercial interests was deepening, and their aims ran counter to the ethos of power-sharing and income redistribution that had been espoused by the Football League for a century. As far as the big clubs were concerned, their smaller neighbours were holding them back and ‘restricting their potential for commercial growth’.³⁹² With English clubs still banned from European competition as a result of the Heysel stadium disaster, they were also concerned that, when readmitted, they might be unable to emulate the success enjoyed by English clubs in Europe during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Secondly, there had been various proposals over the years to amend the structure of the League. These had aimed to reverse the decline in attendances which had been apparent since the ‘bumper’ crowds of the late 1940s. By re-organising the League’s structure, so as to increase the number of meaningful games, it was hoped that attendance figures would revive. Also, by reducing the number of games played by top players it was reasoned that they would be less tired and this would give the England international team a greater chance of success in major competitions.

The final factor was the incipient power struggle that had developed between rival footballing authorities. There are two ruling bodies in England – the Football Association and the Football League. The FA was formed in 1863 as the governing body, and was

³⁹² Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.341.

responsible for the game from the grassroots level of junior, local, and county associations, up to the top professional clubs. The League was formed in 1888 and administered its own competition in accordance with, and under licence from, the FA.³⁹³ The two authorities had a different outlook and ethos. From its inception the FA aimed to establish a shared set of rules, and thus became authoritative in nature, whereas the League was simply the organiser of a competition within an expanding family. There was clearly the potential for dispute.

As the 1990s dawned, these simmering tensions, exacerbated by the other mentioned factors, would erupt into open conflict – out of which would be born a new organisational structure for domestic football at the national level. At the top of this was the Premiership, and the new format would help bring about a remarkable transformation in the culture and experience of ‘top flight’ football.

Football League versus Football Association: Debating an Organisational Format

The sequence of events that led to the Premiership breakaway commenced in October 1990 with the publication of the Football League’s document *One Game One Team One Voice*. Among its proposals was the creation of a Joint Board consisting of six members from the FA and six members from the League to run football. This proposal aimed to put an end to the historic division between the ruling bodies.³⁹⁴ The Joint Board would develop a ‘coherent and consistent set of policies ... across all issues which are of joint concern’, such as finance, commercial affairs, crowd control, and the organisation of the England team.³⁹⁵

³⁹³ Ibid., p.344.

³⁹⁴ Conn, *Football Business*, p.145.

³⁹⁵ Football League, *One Game One Team One Voice: managing football’s future*, Football League (1990), cited in Taylor, *Association Game*, p.344.

The FA responded to the League's initiative by producing its own document. Entitled *Blueprint For The Future Of Football* it was published in its final form in June 1991. Much of it was similar to the League's *One Game One Team One Voice* - so much so that Trevor Phillips, the League's commercial director, accused the FA of plagiarism.³⁹⁶ However, there was one very important difference. The *Blueprint* included the following proposal: 'that the Football Association should establish a Premier League within its own administration, that the League should be named The Football Association Premier League, [and] that the Football Association Premier League should start in the season 1992-1993'. It was also proposed that the Premier League reduce in size, losing one club per season, to consist of eighteen clubs from 1996/1997 onwards.³⁹⁷ One possible explanation of the FA's motives were suggested by a remark made by Charles Hughes, the FA's director of coaching and education, at a meeting in the office of Graham Kelly, the FA's chief executive, at Lancaster Gate on 24 January 1991. He said that 'the Football League had gone too far with its own plans, the FA could never countenance power-sharing and the time had come to sweep away the cobwebs of a hundred years. The FA would run the new League, thus marginalising the trouble-making Football League forever'.³⁹⁸ This was very important because the backing of the FA completely legitimised the new League and effectively beheaded the Football League, thus weakening its power.

Within the existing literature, opinion varies as to the impulses underlying the Premier League proposal. David Conn states that the FA seemed unable to see the broader picture.

There was the potential for a united body responsible for the game, with public money

³⁹⁶ Alan Tomlinson, 'North and South: the rivalry of the Football League and the Football Association', in *British Football and Social Change*, eds. Williams and Wagg, Leicester, p.41.

³⁹⁷ Football Association, *Blueprint For The Future Of Football*, Football Association (1991), p.31.

³⁹⁸ Alex Fynn and Lynton Guest, *Out Of Time: why football isn't working* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994 edition), p.35.

coming in for the construction of new stadiums, and cash from satellite television broadcasting, which could have been used for the benefit of the whole of football, rather than just a handful of rich clubs. But this was not the vision of the FA, who could not see any further than their squabble with the Football League. The *Blueprint* was their attempt to establish authority.³⁹⁹ James Walvin, by contrast, takes a more balanced view. He says, 'in a way, both were right. The major clubs ... could not continue to be wagged by the Lancastrian tail of the Football League. Yet, in its turn, the League was also right to persist in the defence of that broader community of footballing interests'.⁴⁰⁰

King refers to the drift from 'small town clubs' to the 'big city clubs' in terms of attendance due to increased car ownership and the construction of motorways.⁴⁰¹ Using Peter J. Sloane's example of Lancashire, where the M6 was built through the county, he gives evidence to back up this movement of spectators as a direct result of the completion of the motorway. Therefore, as overall football attendance levels declined, the reduction fell disproportionately on the small clubs. It was this that helped legitimate the demands of the big clubs for a greater share of the television revenue, because it could easily be demonstrated that they drew a greater percentage of those attending football matches.

That the big clubs received a greater share of television revenue was a trend already under way and could have been maximised, especially given the unprecedented amounts that could now be negotiated from satellite television broadcasters, without the need for a breakaway. The establishment of the Premier League was, as Hughes' remark shows, as much about establishing the supremacy of the FA over the League as it was about ensuring

³⁹⁹ Conn, *Football Business*, pp.146-150.

⁴⁰⁰ James Walvin, *The People's Game: the history of football revisited* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2000 edition), p.201.

⁴⁰¹ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.39; see also p.28.

that the big clubs received sums in keeping with their greater support base and their major contribution to the game as a whole.

The battle between the League and the FA was fought over the League's contentious regulation 10, which stated that if any club wished to resign from the League it had to give three years' notice. The League did not apply to the FA to alter its rules, but the League had to apply to the FA for sanction on an annual basis and received official sanction for 1989 and 1990, so the FA were aware of this rule. Regulation 10 was inconsistent with the FA's own sanction regulation 24, which stated that 'a club shall not be required to withdraw its membership of a league before 31st December in any year'. On 8 April 1991, the FA Council decided that the League's regulation 10 should be expressly disallowed for its incompatibility with FA sanction regulation 24.⁴⁰² They also added, on 22 May, the following words to their own sanction: 'any rule by which a League purports to require that a club should give more notice than the notice prescribed in this regulation shall be void'. The target of this change could scarcely have been clearer.

The League responded a month later by offering First Division clubs financial incentives to stay within the League structure; they also threatened to bring heavy compensation claims if they broke the aforementioned Regulation 10.⁴⁰³ Arthur Sandford, the League's chief executive, called into question the FA's financial projections; its failure to answer the question of how it would cover lost gate receipts resulting from fewer games; and questioned the FA's record on attracting commercial revenue.⁴⁰⁴ The FA, however, refused to enter into any discussions unless the League agreed in principle to the breakaway. This

⁴⁰² Stuart Jones, 'FA Blessing For Premier League', *The Times*, 9 April 1991.

⁴⁰³ Peter Ball, 'League Is Ready To Fight FA's Breakaway Plan', *The Times*, 10 May 1991; John Lay, 'Elite Clubs To Face Huge Fines For Breakaway', *Daily Telegraph*, 10 May 1991.

⁴⁰⁴ Russell Thomas, 'League Condemns Unworthy FA', *The Guardian*, 10 May 1991.

was unacceptable to the League. Sandford sent Kelly an open letter headed 'Consensus Not Conflict'. In it he stated the League's belief that the proposed breakaway was 'a serious threat to scores of clubs throughout the country, based on suspect and unproven financial projections, not supported by the majority of players and supporters, a real conflict of interest for the FA, and an elitist and undemocratic approach to the issues facing the future of English football.'⁴⁰⁵

The row between football's two ruling bodies ended in court. The hearing began at the Queen's Bench on 22 July. The case hinged on whether or not the League's three-year notice rule was consistent with FA regulations and annual sanctioning, and whether or not the FA as a ruling body had authority over the League. On 31 July, Mr. Justice Rose found in the FA's favour. He dismissed the League's case on three counts. He rejected the argument that the FA was subject to a judicial review, and said 'a requirement for three season's notice is inconsistent with annual sanctioning ... the League cannot enforce its regulation 10 against the clubs because to do so would be to force the clubs to accept a later contract inconsistent with their contracts with the FA and to bind clubs beyond their annual sanction period'. He also passed the comment, 'the fact that, for three years, the FA sanctioned the League despite the inconsistency of regulation 10, does not prevent the FA from insisting on compliance with its rules for the forthcoming season'.⁴⁰⁶ Rose also agreed that the FA had a right to run a league. Finally, he stated that the FA's rules took precedence over the League's rules. The practical implication of the last point was that clubs were free from the League's rule that they had to give three year's notice of resignation, which meant that the Premier League could start in the 1992/1993 season.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Peter Ball, 'FA's Reluctance To Talk Keeps League On The Offensive', *The Times*, 11 May 1991.

⁴⁰⁶ All England Law Reports 1993, vol. 2, p 851.

⁴⁰⁷ Peter Ball, 'Judge Clears the Way For The Premier League', *The Times*, 1 August 1991.

Consequently, on 16 August 1991, the 22 First Division clubs resigned *en masse* from the League, giving exactly one year's notice. The Premier League was then legally established with the signing of a founder members' agreement. However, the 18-club ideal was not mentioned. Alex Fynn and Lynton Guest state that the ideal was lost because the FA 'did not fight hard enough for it, because the bulk of the First Division clubs did not want it, and because pragmatism was always going to triumph over idealism'.⁴⁰⁸ They also made the point that the Premier League, instead of being controlled by the FA, which had obviously been the FA's intention, soon became effectively autonomous.⁴⁰⁹

All of this left the League without a functioning management committee. The plans for the breakaway were still under threat from an appeal, as the remaining League members wished to defend the three years' notice of resignation rule, and from the Professional Footballers' Association, whose chief executive Gordon Taylor stated the wish to defend the integrity of the League. Quite understandably, the players and clubs left behind feared that the breakaway league would take the lion's share of commercial revenue generated by the game at the expense of the rest, leaving a large number of clubs facing extinction. PFA chairman Brian Marwood had earlier in the week refused to rule out the possibility of a player's strike.⁴¹⁰

Without a management committee in place, the High Court appointed executors to run the Football League. On 21 August, the executors lodged an appeal against the High Court judgement allowing the FA to set up its Premier League.⁴¹¹ Then the League changed tactics and rather than forcing a long and potentially damaging appeal process, it tried to see what

⁴⁰⁸ Fynn and Guest, *Out Of Time*, p.54.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.* pp.54-55.

⁴¹⁰ Peter Ball, 'First Division Clubs To Pull Out Of The Football League', *The Times*, 17 August 1991.

⁴¹¹ John Roberts, 'Sandford's Power Left In The Balance', *The Independent*, 22 August 1991.

it could gain in terms of compensation. At the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), on 10 September, the League demanded the retention of the 'three-up, three-down' promotion and relegation system and £6 million in compensation. This was agreed to by the FA, but legally binding guarantees were not given. The meeting was adjourned until 23 September. Due to this protracted legal situation, the 1991/1992 season was now under way without the necessary annual sanction from the FA because the League's three years' notice regulation was effectively still in place.⁴¹² The FA had turned a blind eye to the season commencing unsanctioned, but they could not be expected to let this situation continue indefinitely.

At the 23 September EGM, held at the New Connaught Rooms in London, the League clubs decided to cut their legal costs and vote overwhelmingly to drop the three-year Notice regulation. This regulation had been important because, if observed, it effectively blocked the breakaway. In return for this concession the League secured three-up three-down promotion and relegation to and from the Premier League, and compensation, albeit reduced to £3 million (£2 million from the FA and £1 million from the Premier League) per year for the next five years. The League, which was now being run by an administrator because many of its personnel had gone to the Premier League, had already spent more than £1.2 million in legal fees.⁴¹³ It was forced to accept defeat.

All that remained for the League was to adjust to the changing world as best it could. There were, for example, important practicalities to be dealt with. Now the First Division had gone, the old Second Division was now de facto the Football League's top division, and it

⁴¹² Peter Ball, 'Pressure Is On FA To Change Its Stance On Guarantees', *The Times*, 11 September 1991.

⁴¹³ David Lacey, 'Clubs Vote To Dismantle Last Premier League Obstacle', *The Guardian*, 24 September 1991.

was thus renamed Division One. Likewise the Third Division became Division Two and the Fourth became Division Three. What was needed was a rebranding, for the League and its member clubs to advertise themselves as a desirable product and spectacle, but it would take a long time for this to happen. Eventually, it would include the selling of television rights to show Football League matches. Yet, even in this, the League's efforts proved far from successful. In 2002, a deal was signed with ITV Digital, but unfortunately they failed after one year and went into administration owing the Football League, and therefore the clubs, £178.5 million. The two parent companies of ITV Digital, Carlton and Granada, were taken to court as the Football League tried to recoup their money, but the High Court decided that there were no guarantees legally enforceable, because no such guarantees had been written into the final contract. Thereafter the Football League negotiated a new deal for £95 million with BSkyB for the right to show matches for a four year period: twice as long as the remaining period of the ITV Digital deal, for half the amount. The Football League clubs were furious over the League's handling of TV negotiations. Subsequently, having learned from these experiences, the Football League did achieve greater success in rebranding and marketing itself properly. In 2004, Division One was renamed the Championship, thus giving it a more appealing title. Division Two became League One and Division Three became League Two. They then managed to persuade Coca-Cola to sponsor all three divisions, and from 2006/2007 onwards 85 live games per season were shown on BSkyB.⁴¹⁴

In 1991/1992, however, all of that lay a long way in the future. For now, the League and its members seemed to face an uncertain future and they were forced to watch from the sidelines as the Premiership prepared to commence.

⁴¹⁴ Samuels, *Beautiful Game*, pp.162-164.

From scarves on the terraces to fans in the pub: the evolving fan's experience

A survey, conducted by Research Services Ltd. on behalf of the FA in 1991, questioned 1,000 adult football supporters who regularly attended games. All First Division grounds were covered, of which at the time there were twenty, but would soon return to twenty-two, and supporters were asked if they would prefer to see an eighteen-club First Division or a return to a twenty-two-club one. The result was exactly equal at forty-one per cent each. This was taken as a positive result, given the British public's tendency to be conservative and align with the *status quo*. Also, among the Big Five (Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur) fans had been shown to be in favour of the eighteen-club scenario by forty-nine per cent to thirty-four per cent.⁴¹⁵

On the other hand, the League commissioned Gallup to organise a survey of supporters' views. A total of 4,310 fans from eighty different clubs were asked about their views on the proposed breakaway. No fewer than sixty-eight per cent were against a Premier League, and only twenty-two per cent actively in favour. Even among fans of First Division clubs, sixty-six per cent were against the proposals. Among the fans of the 'Big Five' forty-six per cent were against and forty-two per cent in favour. With nearly seven out of ten fans against the proposals, Sandford pointed out that this vindicated what the League had said.⁴¹⁶ The concerns of many supporters were expressed eloquently in *When Saturday Comes*. An editorial published in June 1991 offered a detailed summary of the grievances. Firstly, there was concern over the name 'Premier League'. The editorial argues that if the FA were keen to maintain links between their new competition and the rest of the League a new name was not necessary, and points out that the name 'First Division' had not so far deterred sponsors

⁴¹⁵ Fynn and Guest, *Out Of Time*, p.51.

⁴¹⁶ *The Times*, 23 May 1991.

from giving their name to the competition.⁴¹⁷ It also called into question the notion expressed by the top clubs at the time that big clubs were ‘carrying’ the small clubs and argued on what basis a club was a ‘premier’ club. To support this argument it was pointed out that if the criterion of a premier league club was that it had been a member of the top division for a decade or more, a number of the best supported clubs in terms of attendance would fail; examples used to make this point were Chelsea, Manchester City, Leeds United, Aston Villa, Sheffield Wednesday, and Sheffield United. The editorial also pointed out that clubs only argued from their own point of view. Many involved in football would happily back a streamlined premier league if they were guaranteed a place, and only became concerned for the majority of the League members when they feared that they might be excluded.⁴¹⁸

One of the requirements included in the FA’s original *Blueprint* had been that clubs in a new premier league should have a minimum of 20,000 all-seater stadia. Supposing clubs qualified through League position, but did not have the capacity or the money available for construction of such grounds, it was asked. According to the latest statistics available, there were nineteen teams in the top two divisions who, if all standing areas were replaced with seats, would have a capacity of below 20,000. Connected to this point was the possibility that some clubs might invest a lot of money to bring their grounds up to scratch only to be relegated after one season. This, it was feared, would waste a club’s valuable resources and, most importantly for all concerned, end up threatening the existence of the system of promotion and relegation.

⁴¹⁷ Andy Lyons and Bill Brewster, ‘League Of Their Own’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 52, June 1991, pp.5-8.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.6.

On a positive note, the editorial pointed out that the idea of an eighteen-team First Division was a good one, especially if accompanied by a decrease in the smaller cup competitions, because it would be less physically demanding and the players would be allowed more time for preparation for international matches. However, it was pointed out that the appeal of a smaller First Division from the point of view of the big clubs was driven by its attractiveness to potential sponsors and for television deals. The editorial ended by pointing out that the whole premier league saga proved that the FA and the Football League were incapable of acting in unison, but seemed to be on a path towards confrontation.⁴¹⁹

The clubs most likely to be directly affected in an adverse manner by the breakaway were those that spent the 1991/1992 season struggling in the First Division, and stood to miss out on whatever income was agreed from broadcasters if they were relegated. Two such clubs were Norwich City and Notts County, so it is appropriate to look at the fanzines written by supporters of the two clubs. In the Norwich City fanzine *The Citizen* an article entitled 'The Superleague?' was written in deliberately sarcastic fashion and pointed out that it was stating the obvious to say that the clubs likely to be included were the ones most in favour, and those without a chance of being included were the ones most against. Regarding the claim that the 'superleague' would be to the severe detriment of the lower league clubs, the article warned of dwindling resources leading to smaller squads, players going part-time, dwindling crowds and ultimately some clubs going out of business. This in turn would lead to fewer opportunities for young players to get into professional football, meaning that some talented ones would miss out. As a result, there would be fewer players for the big clubs to poach, which would not be in the interests of the top clubs or the national team. It is worth mentioning that some clubs would buy from abroad, which could turn out to be just a short-

⁴¹⁹ Ibid. p.7.

term fix rather than a considered investment for the future. The article went on to argue that the standard of football in England ‘will plummet in the long term’. It concluded that the ‘superleague’ was elitist, short-sighted and likely to be ruinous on the lower placed clubs and ultimately the game itself.⁴²⁰ In the Notts County fanzine *The Wheelbarrow*, under the heading ‘The Voice Of The PFA [Professional Footballer’s Association]’, the view was expressed, directly and clearly, that the FA was trying to diminish the Football League and with it, most of the professional clubs in the country, and that the *Blueprint* was a way for the leading clubs to seize virtually all the money. The FA, it stated, had been enticed away from its main function – to look after the general welfare of the game, not the elite interests of a minority. The article finished with the point that neither the Football League nor the PFA had contributed any input to the proposed breakaway.⁴²¹

It can be seen from such fanzine articles that among those fans who regularly attended football matches, or at least among those who wrote for fans’ magazines, there were strong opinions against the breakaway. A number of valid concerns were expressed. However, what few of these fans realised, and what was unforeseeable at the time, was the way and the extent to which the broader culture of football would change with the arrival of the Premiership, particularly in terms of the way it would be experienced by the average fan.

‘The old First Division in emperor’s clothes’: The Rise of a New Elite?

It would be easy to look back and regard 15 August 1992 as the dawn of a new age in football history, but the most striking thing is not how much things had changed, but how

⁴²⁰ *The Citizen*, issue no. 11, Autumn 1991, pp.20-21.

⁴²¹ *The Wheelbarrow*, issue no. 4, October 1991, p.5.

little. Apart from the change in name, there was nothing else obvious to the fan in the street.

Chris Horrie, in *Premiership*, states:

At first it looked as if nothing much had changed. The Premier League, due to kick off in August 1992, was really just the old First Division armed with a new pay-TV deal and relieved of the burden of sharing its income with the rest of football. As far as the fans were concerned the main change was that referees and linesmen would wear green shirts instead of the traditional police-uniform black. And that, really, was it.⁴²²

After many years of discussion and argument over the size that the top division should be, it was ironic that the Premier League had twenty-two clubs, the same as the old First Division. This would not be reduced to twenty until the end of 1994/1995, another three years hence. The system of promotion and relegation from and to the division below, involving three clubs, was retained, again like the old First Division. The favourites to win the Premier League in its first season were Arsenal. They had been favourites to take the title the previous season. As Sue Mott commented in *The Sunday Times*, 'it is the old First Division in emperor's clothes. The football world as we knew it has gone ... to be replaced by one that, well, looks exactly the same'.⁴²³

The twenty-two clubs that made up the Premier League in its first season were: Arsenal, Aston Villa, Blackburn Rovers, Chelsea, Coventry City, Crystal Palace, Everton, Ipswich Town, Leeds United, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Middlesbrough, Norwich City, Nottingham Forest, Oldham Athletic, Queen's Park Rangers, Sheffield United, Sheffield Wednesday, Southampton, Tottenham Hotspur, and Wimbledon. A quick look through this list reveals a few big, successful clubs scattered among a far greater

⁴²² Horrie, *Premiership*, p.109.

⁴²³ Sue Mott, 'Just The Beginning Of A Revolution', *Sunday Times*, 16 August 1992, section 2.

number of 'also rans' including sleeping giants and small clubs who were very temporarily good enough to be in the right place at the right time, but would soon fall from grace. As Mott went on to say, 'nobody in their right mind would consider the new confection a "Super League". As long as Wimbledon and Middlesbrough and Coventry are making up the numbers, the Premier League is a mere staging post.'⁴²⁴ (The staging post to which she referred was that on the way to a European Super League involving the top English clubs, which many predicted would ultimately constitute the top tier of domestic football.)

The difference of course was money, 'sheaves, reams, and bales of lovely money'.⁴²⁵ From the outset it had been envisaged that the new Premier League would be televised - either through an improved ITV deal, or a new relationship with the BBC or a satellite television broadcaster. There was the potential for a bidding war in which the stakes could be huge and any revenues received did not have to be shared with the Football League. The existing deal between ITV and the Football League was set to expire in the summer of 1992, coinciding with the commencement of the Premier League.

The bidding to televise the new breakaway League was shrouded in controversy. In May the FA, who now administered the Premier League, invited the television companies to make secret bids for exclusive coverage. The clubs were due to vote on the deal on 23 May, but it was widely alleged that Rick Parry told Alan Sugar, who, as well as being the owner of Amstrad, was chairman of Tottenham Hotspur, that ITV had bid £262 million. BSkyB had not yet made its final bid but Sugar, who needed BSkyB to win to help sales of his satellite dishes, rang Murdoch's company urging them to 'get something down here quickly

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

to blow them out of the water'.⁴²⁶ So BSkyB, in partnership with the BBC, raised its bid to a reported £304 million and won the vote.

The way each club voted is worthy of note in itself. Six clubs voted for ITV. They were Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United – in other words the Big Five minus Tottenham Hotspur – Aston Villa, and Leeds United. There were two abstentions but fourteen clubs voted for BSkyB, which was just enough to secure the two-thirds majority needed. Sugar cast Tottenham's vote against the Big Five due to his personal interest, which he had declared. It turned out that his vote was crucial in winning BSkyB the contract.

Four of the six clubs who voted for ITV had done so because they were among the big clubs that ITV had given greater coverage to following the deal of 1988, whereas the clubs who voted against ITV and in favour of the BBC/BSkyB partnership did so because they were unhappy with this situation, which had robbed them of revenue.⁴²⁷ It therefore turned out that the favouritism shown by ITV to the big clubs in the 1988 deal played a large part in losing them the Premiership deal four years later. Thus Rupert Murdoch's Sky, in partnership with the BBC, secured exclusive coverage for the Premiership for a deal reported as £304 million. In actual fact, the real figure received by the Premiership would be closer to £191 million.⁴²⁸ According to the sports consultant and author Alex Fynn, 'there was a five year deal which went from £34 million in the first year to £39 million in the fifth year, which was around £200 million, and a BBC highlights package was added, which might have taken it up to about £220 million, but the rest was an estimate of overseas rights which never materialised. Some of it did, but not £84 million.'⁴²⁹ Even so, this was a huge

⁴²⁶ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.110; Conn, *Football Business*, p.23.

⁴²⁷ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.111; Conn, *Football Business*, p.24.

⁴²⁸ Mihir Bose, 'The Big Interview: Rick Parry', *Evening Standard*, 24 March 2011.

⁴²⁹ Alex Fynn, interview with the author, London, 31 March 2014.

increase on the deal struck in 1988. The first televised match under the new deal was Nottingham Forest v. Liverpool screened live on a Sunday afternoon.

The other reason the Premiership was awash with cash was because it was now a separate entity and therefore did not have to share its money with the seventy clubs that made up the Football League. Having fought a rearguard campaign and lost, the Football League were powerless to do anything about this once the Premier League was in operation. Faced with most of the television money going to the breakaway league, the compensation of £3 million annually, of which only £1 million came from the Premier League, was a mere drop in the ocean compared to the expected £304 million deal the Premiership had negotiated for itself with satellite television broadcasters. As Mott put it, this represented 'the unhooking of this first class footballing carriage from those awful fly-blown cattle trucks now destined to lumber along at their slower pace in the name of the Football League'.⁴³⁰ To further the analogy, it was like Thomas the Tank Engine steaming into the distance with Annie and Clarabel detached and falling further and further behind.

However, a system of parachute payments was devised to assist clubs relegated from the Premiership. This was to soften the blow of the reduced level of income upon losing Premiership status, and was to be paid for two seasons. But initially, the financial disparity between the Premier League clubs and the Football League clubs caused great concern regarding the plight of smaller clubs, some of whom were already experiencing financial difficulties. Attention was drawn to this by the plight of two clubs in particular, namely Aldershot and Maidstone United.

⁴³⁰ Mott, *Sunday Times*, 16 August 1992.

Aldershot went out of business on 25 March 1992, and were obliged to resign from the Football League. Maidstone United had their first match of the 1992/1993 season called off and were given until the following Monday to guarantee that they would be able to fulfil all of their fixtures. The club were unable to secure the necessary backing, and on 17 August 1992, resigned from the Football League.⁴³¹ It should be pointed out that neither Aldershot nor Maidstone United folded as a result of the Premier League breakaway. Aldershot went out of existence in March 1992, before the Premier League had even started, and Maidstone United did so in August, only a game into the new season. This was far too early for the Premier League to have had any impact and Maidstone had for a long time spent beyond their means. They did so initially to achieve League status, and then continued to do so to try and stay there. More than anything, the club fell victim to an unsustainable business model.

Nevertheless, what was important about the demise of Aldershot and Maidstone United was the perception rather than the fact. It was imagined that cash strapped clubs in the lower divisions would go bankrupt because the Premier League would take a greater share of football's revenue, leaving small clubs to their fate. Although both would reform and be constituted as new clubs, the death of two small clubs – one in Hampshire, one in Kent – just as the Premier League began served to increase this concern and it seemed at the time that they would be the first of many. It should be noted that later on in the 1992/1993 season, Barnet came perilously close to suffering the same fate. In June 1991, accountants Touche Ross had said that the breakaway league could cause no fewer than thirty-eight clubs to go bankrupt if revenue that had been shared throughout the League ended.⁴³² There was of

⁴³¹ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Sunday Times Illustrated History*, p.328.

⁴³² Peter Ball, 'Widespread Worry In Parliament Over Game's Future', *The Times*, 13 June 1991.

course an agreement now in place that there would be some subsidy from the FA and the Premier League, but the outlook for many clubs still seemed bleak.

Fortunately, many of the gloomy predictions that followed the extinction of Aldershot and Maidstone United proved to be unfounded. Many clubs did run into financial difficulties, and to list them all would read like a ‘who’s who’ of lower division football clubs, but they did not follow Aldershot and Maidstone into oblivion. The point should be made that in some instances clubs were very badly run, and always had been, so financial woe was not always due to the Premiership breakaway. The survival of all the clubs facing difficulties was because, as Conn puts it in *The Beautiful Game?*:

Every time a club was on the brink, with no saviour or solution apparent, somehow, with fans rallying round and local businessmen believing they could do better, clubs pulled through and survived. The League clubs have grown into a curious mixture – commercial organisations required to make money to compete, yet drawing on a deep well of support from fans who don’t see them that way at all, but believe in them as spiritual homes, community institutions, [and] havens of belonging.⁴³³

Life at the other end of football, in the new breakaway league, was not dominated by such anxieties. The Premiership in its first season was won by Manchester United. However, the season did not start well for United. They lost the opening game 2-1 away to Sheffield United, then suffered a home defeat 3-0 against Everton. The next game, also at their Old Trafford home, was against Ipswich Town and resulted in a 1-1 draw. It was not until the fourth match – away to Southampton – that United registered a win.⁴³⁴ Having finished the previous season very close to winning the old First Division, there were demands from some quarters that manager Alex Ferguson should go. But form picked up and the team

⁴³³ David Conn, *The Beautiful Game?: searching for the soul of football* (London: Yellow Jersey, 2004), p.46.

⁴³⁴ Tom Tyrrell and David Meek, *The Hamlyn Illustrated History Of Manchester United 1878-1999* (London: Hamlyn, 1999), p.196.

enjoyed a long unbeaten run from November and went top of the table in January. As the season progressed, the title race developed into a contest between Manchester United and Ron Atkinson's Aston Villa.⁴³⁵ It was United, however, who marched to the title, winning their last seven games in succession. The main factor in the vast improvement in form after a bad start was the purchase of Eric Cantona from Leeds United for a bargain £1.2 million in November. Leeds, who the previous season had been the last champions of the old First Division, slumped dramatically following the sale of Cantona and finished seventeenth, only avoiding relegation by two points. Arsenal, who had been the bookmaker's favourites, finished a disappointing tenth, but this fact was tempered by the fact that they won both the FA Cup and the Coca Cola Cup. Winning the Premiership in 1992/1993 was Manchester United's first title success since 1966/1967. The 1970s and 1980s had been dominated by their North West rivals Liverpool and during those two decades United's successes were confined to the cup competitions. However, the success of 1992/1993 was repeated the following season, and United also won the FA Cup in 1993/1994 to become only the fourth club to do 'the double' in the twentieth century.⁴³⁶ By the end of the 1999/2000 season, Manchester United had won the Premiership a total of six times.⁴³⁷

Thus it is impossible to detail the early years of the Premiership without mentioning Manchester United's dominance. It would be easy to look back in hindsight and make a connection between the two, but the fact was that under Alex Ferguson the club had slowly been building towards success and had only narrowly missed out on the title the season before the Premiership breakaway. Manchester United's success coincided with the

⁴³⁵ Horrie, *Premiership*, pp. 118-119.

⁴³⁶ The other clubs to do 'the double' in the twentieth century were Tottenham Hotspur (1960/1961), Arsenal (1970/1971), and Liverpool (1985/1986).

⁴³⁷ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.584.

establishment of the Premiership, but it did not happen *because* of it. Rather, the success of Ferguson's United was another sign of continuity.

Nevertheless, there were straws in the wind, which suggested that the face of football was changing at the top level. The Premiership, though not responsible for all of these, would exacerbate such trends. On 17 January 1991 it had been announced that Jack Walker, with the full support of the board of directors, had taken control of Blackburn Rovers.⁴³⁸ Walker, together with his brother, Fred, had built up a steel business, 'Walkersteel', and sold it to British Steel for a reported £330 million. With his wealth Jack wanted to invest in the club he had watched as a boy; he wanted to 'put something back'.⁴³⁹

In 1990/1991 Blackburn had finished nineteenth in the Second Division. With Walker's wealth they had attempted to attract some well-known players, but only David Speedie, signed for £500,000 from Liverpool, could be deemed a 'big name' signing. A poor start to the new season led to the sacking of manager Don Mackay, and, on 12 October 1991, a new management team of Kenny Dalglish, the former Liverpool legend, and Roy Harford, a respected coach and former manager of Luton Town, Fulham, and Wimbledon, was announced. With this set up in place, it was easier to attract the top players that Blackburn required. Dalglish and Harford set about building a team that could turn the season around and win Blackburn promotion. Crucially, this would be done with the deployment of Walker's financial power to construct an entirely new side. The signings included left-back Alan Wright from Blackpool (£500,000), defender Colin Hendry from Manchester City (£700,000), striker Mike Newell from Everton (£1.1 million), and midfielder Gordon Cowans from Aston Villa (£200,000). Results were transformed and Blackburn reached

⁴³⁸ Mike Jackman, *Blackburn Rovers: an illustrated history* (Derby: Breedon, 2006), p.173.

⁴³⁹ Conn, *Football Business*, pp. 72-75, p.86.

third by December. The new signings kept coming, most notably in the shape of midfielder Tim Sherwood from Norwich City (£500,000) and striker Roy Wegerle from Queen's Park Rangers (£1.1 million).⁴⁴⁰ Promotion was won at the end of the season via the play-offs, as Blackburn beat Derby County over two legs in the semi-final and Leicester City in the final at Wembley.

Thus Blackburn arrived in time to be founder members of the Premiership, complete with its lucrative Sky deal. The success that Blackburn would go on to enjoy was not a result of the Premiership breakaway, but a direct result of Walker's investment, and it can be argued that, like Manchester United, the club's experience showed continuity rather than change. Yet, although a product of these circumstances, Blackburn would come to symbolise a new era. Dalglish and Harford set about improving the team to make a serious impact in the Premiership's inaugural season. The size of Walker's wallet and the pulling power of Dalglish were adequately demonstrated when striker Alan Shearer was signed from Southampton for £3.6 million, a new British transfer record.⁴⁴¹ Unsurprisingly in the circumstances, Blackburn did well, finishing 1992/1993 in fourth position, only three points behind runners-up Aston Villa. Meanwhile the side continued to be strengthened with Graeme Le Saux arriving from Chelsea (£650,000) and Kevin Gallagher from Coventry City (£1.5 million).⁴⁴² Neither was expenditure confined to building the team. Plans were laid to turn Blackburn's ground, known as Ewood Park, into an all-seater stadium befitting a top club. It was during the 1992/1993 season that work began on this transformation.

⁴⁴⁰ Jackman, *Blackburn Rovers*, p.177.

⁴⁴¹ Nawrat and Hutchings, *Illustrated History*, p.321.

⁴⁴² Jackman, *Blackburn Rovers*, p.180.

At the same time, on the playing side the spending spree continued. Dalglish prepared for a serious assault on the title, signing utility player Paul Warhurst from Sheffield Wednesday (£2.7 million), midfielder David Batty from Leeds United (£2.75 million)⁴⁴³, and goalkeeper Tim Flowers from Southampton (£2 million). Blackburn finished the 1993/1994 season in second position, eight points behind double-winning Manchester United. In the summer of 1994 the British transfer record was smashed again when striker Chris Sutton was signed from Norwich City for £5 million. Sutton was twenty-one years old, uncapped, and had played 127 times for Norwich, scoring forty-three goals.⁴⁴⁴ He signed for a reported contract of £12,000 a week in wages.⁴⁴⁵ The rise in players' wages, along with the escalation in transfer fees, happened throughout the Premiership and was assisted by the increased revenue from the Sky television deal.

Sutton and Shearer proved a lethal strike force as the title race in 1994/1995 became a two-horse one between Blackburn and Manchester United which ran until the last day of the season. On the last day Manchester United were away to West Ham United while Blackburn travelled to Anfield to face Dalglish's former club, Liverpool. Blackburn lost 2-1, but Manchester United were held to a 1-1 draw, which meant that Blackburn had won the Premiership.⁴⁴⁶

The story of Blackburn Rovers in the early 1990s can be seen in a number of ways. On one hand, there was a touch of romance about it – an old mill town long in decline, its football team emerging from the lower reaches of the Second Division, in a decrepit, half-empty

⁴⁴³ Ibid., p.181.

⁴⁴⁴ Matt Tench, 'Blockbuster Deal That Carries An Extra Significance', *The Independent*, 16 July 1994.

⁴⁴⁵ Trevor Haylett, 'Kick-Off: Premiership Five Million Reasons For Taking A Canary Into The Goldmine', *The Independent*, 20 August 1994.

⁴⁴⁶ Jackman, *Blackburn Rovers*, pp.183-185.

ground, to become Champions playing to capacity crowds in a brand new stadium. Blackburn's Premiership title in 1995 was the club's first major trophy since 1928. They had not won the League Championship since 1914.⁴⁴⁷ On the other hand, developments at Blackburn embodied the wider cultural trends experienced throughout the Premiership. There was the shift of the football club from a civic sporting institution to a business, complete with rising prices, inflated transfer fees, and spiralling wages. Whether viewed as a positive or a negative development, the experience of Blackburn Rovers suggested that the nature of football was changing, both in terms of how it was constituted and also how it was experienced.

There was evidence early on, soon after the breakaway, that fans were disenchanted. A report, completed in December 1992 by Adrian Langford and Richard Hunt on behalf of *The Guardian* to be sold to advertising and television companies, entitled 'TV Football – Own Goals and Late Winners', was based on the views of groups of soccer viewers throughout England. In it the Premier League was condemned. According to the fans surveyed, not only was the Premier League the old product in new packaging, but it was actually getting worse. This was because good players sold to foreign clubs were not being replaced by players of the same standard from abroad; there were also still too many games; and there was great concern about the increase in price. It was found that, while fans accepted the construction of seated stadia, they believed that expensive seats in parts of football grounds that had previously been cheap represented a move by clubs to acquire a new class of customer and turn their backs on traditional fans. The overall feeling of these

⁴⁴⁷ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp. 80-81.

fans was that football was moving away from them and that changes were being implemented for monetary gain without due consideration towards them as customers.⁴⁴⁸

No-one could any longer accuse the game of being resistant to change, which had often been a fair criticism in the past. For many, too much had changed, and little of it for the better. David Lacey, in *The Guardian*, commented that ‘in the space of twelve months the Football League has been transformed from a prim dowager of 104 into a bright young thing accompanied by an elderly and disinherited aunt. To put it more bluntly, the old League has been decapitated by a Premier League carrying few thoughts in its disembodied head which do not concern money’.⁴⁴⁹ On the other hand, Tony Francis, in *The Times*, argued that the Football League was ‘antediluvian and out of step with the real commercial world’, but acknowledged that further moves towards radical change, such as a reduction to eighteen clubs in line with the original proposal, would prove problematic and therefore unlikely. The democracy within the Premier League meant that the big clubs were being held in check by the greater number of smaller clubs. There was also an even spread of attention in the terms of the satellite television deal, meaning that Oldham Athletic were due to be screened as many times as Arsenal.⁴⁵⁰ Herein lay a supreme irony.

During the early 1990s there was a transformation in the football fan ‘milieu’, which ran parallel to, and was influenced by, the modernisation of the game that was under way. Football grounds post-Taylor appeared less brutal and in this new emerging climate hooliganism became less fashionable. John Williams, the co-editor of the book *British*

⁴⁴⁸ *The Guardian*, ‘The Fan’s Verdict: Exploited, Expendable, and Extremely Fed Up’, 15 December 1992.

⁴⁴⁹ David Lacey, ‘Bright Young Thing Is Quickly Tarnished As TV Calls The Tune’, *The Guardian*, 30 December 1992.

⁴⁵⁰ Tony Francis, ‘Sharks Devoured By The Little Fish In The Murky Premier Pond’, *The Times*, 4 October 1992.

Football and Social Change, identifies a number of reasons for this. These include the Manchester music scene and the subsequent rave culture, which in turn implies the use of ecstasy and the will to ‘party’ rather than fight. He also points to police infiltration into hooligan gangs combined with the risk of long prison sentences, post-Italia ’90 optimism, and fanzines and supporters’ movements challenging hooligans’ violent and racist attitudes. He quoted the fact that arrests were down 30% in the 1990/1991 season, compared to the season before, as evidence that police forces were starting to think seriously about getting the balance right between security, safety, and customer service. This fitted in with the growing democratisation of the game as there was, paradoxically for an age that seemed to experience a triumph of the elite, a move towards greater fan representation.⁴⁵¹

There was also the impact of Sky television, which successfully marketed football to the extent that it appeared ‘trendy’. This marketing was to ensure that Sky profited on the large investment they had made in acquiring live coverage. Set into a broader context, the success of Sky conformed to the Thatcherite values of the free market – consumer choice, individualism, and enterprise – as a vehicle to promote the consumption of football.⁴⁵² Sky had gained the broadcasting rights largely because the smaller Premier League clubs remembered ITV’s elitist approach in bonding with the big clubs in the 1988 deal, and so voted for Sky, as a July 1992 editorial in *When Saturday Comes* pointed out: ‘it is particularly ironic that ITV should have failed to secure the rights to exclusive coverage of the Premier League because they played a crucial role in its creation through their elitist approach to the televising of English football over the past few years.’⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ John Williams, ‘Thugs And Kisses’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 59, January 1992, pp. 16-17.

⁴⁵² Mark Turner, ‘From Local Heroism To Global Celebrity Stardom: a critical reflection of the social, cultural and political changes in British football culture from the 1950s to the formation of the Premier League’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 15, No. 5, 2014.

⁴⁵³ ‘Sky’s the Limit’ editorial, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 65, July 1992, p.5.

The Sky deal had given football its most lucrative broadcasting settlement by a wide margin. The 1988 ITV deal, which at the time had seemed generous, was paltry compared to the sums now being paid. Such was the influx of money that it had a serious impact on the whole culture of the game. The relationship between Sky and the Premiership was mutually beneficial. Sky promoted the Premiership relentlessly, using its coverage to generate millions of subscriptions. In October 1998, Sky Digital was launched and this generated 120,000 new subscribers in the first four months.⁴⁵⁴ By the time of the changeover from analogue to digital Sky could boast about 3.5 million subscribers.⁴⁵⁵ Sam Chisholm, the managing director of Sky, said that the relationship was ‘one of the great corporate romances’. From the start, however, the arrangement had its detractors. Conn argues that the relationship was ‘more Page Three than romance’. He goes on to say:

the beautiful game, slapped all over a Murdoch medium between the adverts, hyped relentlessly, appreciated only for its surface ... spend an evening with Sky and it's as if they're trying to sell you something ... they're trying to sell you an idea, that there is nothing wrong with football having been taken off the terrestrial screen and given to them, supporters having to pay Murdoch to watch England's national game. They're trying to sell you the idea that football clubs did nothing wrong, turning the game ... into a commodity, selling it to the highest bidder.⁴⁵⁶

Not everyone sees Sky's coverage in the way that Conn does. John Motson, the BBC commentator, said that ‘whatever you think about Sky, the way they presented football was modern and fresh. Live coverage led to a wider audience overseas from which the

⁴⁵⁴ John Gapper, ‘Sky Digital Takes Lead In Battle For Viewers’, *Financial Times*, 10 February 1999.

⁴⁵⁵ Tim Burt, ‘BSkyB's Ball Finds The Target With The Premiership’, *Financial Times*, 9 August 2003. Subscription figures covering the period 1992 to 1998 have been hard to find. I have tried both the British Library and Senate House and all I could get were two *Financial Times* articles (this footnote and the previous one), neither of them giving me the information I want. Attempts to contact Sky regarding this matter have also proved fruitless. As far as profit is concerned, Conn quotes figures showing that following a £47 million loss in 1992, Sky made £62 million profit in 1993, £170 million in 1994, £237 million in 1995, £315 million in 1996 and £374 million in 1997. Regrettably none of this is footnoted, cannot be checked, and therefore needs to be treated with caution. Conn, *Football Business*, p.25.

⁴⁵⁶ Conn, *Football Business*, p.32.

Premiership benefitted and then looked at global opportunities ... Sky have turned the Premiership into a worldwide phenomenon'.⁴⁵⁷ Sky's coverage analysed the game more, giving statistics on a team's percentage of possession, the number of passes a player makes, the number of shots on target, the number of shots off target, and so on. During half-time and full-time analysis, it used computer-generated images to draw on the screen the trajectory of the ball and where players were positioned or running to. This gave greater insight into what was happening in a match.

Yet in Motson's opinion, the most significant changes were the all-seater stadiums as a result of the Hillsborough disaster leading to a new audience and families and the influx of huge money.⁴⁵⁸ As stated earlier, the Premiership marketed itself as fashionable at a time when stadiums were converting to all-seater set ups and therefore becoming more comfortable, and the success of the England team in reaching the semi-finals of Italia '90 helped to broaden football's audience. There was a resurgence of public interest in the game that could be tapped, and attendances continued to revive.

At the same time replica football shirts became a fashion accessory and replaced the scarves of the 1970s and the 'casual' look of the 1980s. This generated further income for clubs as they could be made cheaply and fans were willing to pay up to £40 each for them. Merchandising became a significant part of a football club's income. This was especially true for the big clubs, because they could attract followers throughout the country and increasingly overseas. Football supporters became harder to categorize. They were no longer simply people who attended games, but broadened to include 'viewers' in addition

⁴⁵⁷ John Motson, interview with the author, phone, 11 April 2011.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

to 'spectators'. A 'viewer' is a fan who watches on television, a 'spectator' is a fan who attends games. The revenue streams of football clubs now diversified as they found they could make larger amounts from television ratings and from memorabilia sales than had been the case in the past.⁴⁵⁹ As far as the football clubs were concerned, the growing importance of merchandise, combined with increased income from live television broadcasting rights, meant that revenue from ticket sales declined as a percentage of a club's overall income. Stephen Wagg makes the following observation regarding the way in which the outlook of many football supporters has changed in tandem with these developments: 'a large section of the football public now approach the game ... as consumers and not as members. They demand spectacle, skill, thrill, and satisfaction ... for them, football is a celebrity culture.'⁴⁶⁰

Due to the huge increase in admission prices already detailed, there was concern that football would price itself beyond the reach of its market, but this did not happen. So did fans become more affluent? Did rich fans displace poor fans? Did football ascend the social ladder? Up to a point, the answer to these questions must be 'yes', but with reservations. Firstly, many fans were never as poor as they were stereotyped. Secondly, devotion to a club was such that some would forego other pleasures and increase credit card debt just to 'be there'. Thirdly, there may have been more frequent instances of season tickets being passed around among friends than used to be the case, meaning that fewer attended all the home games, but a greater number saw a few. A season ticket holder who has to miss a game would prefer to sell a ticket on to a friend than see it wasted. The individuals making

⁴⁵⁹ 'Ten Years After' editorial, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 100, June 1995, pp.6-7.

⁴⁶⁰ Stephen Wagg, 'The Trying Game', *When Saturday Comes*, issue 204, February 2004, p.19.

up the crowd may have changed more, thus the composition of the crowd changed more from week to week than used to be the case.

If this last point is true, it is in keeping with Britain's move to longer opening hours in retailing and other service industries. Those employed in it have leisure time that is less structured, and therefore are forced to work on occasions that coincide with games. The fact that some games are played on Sunday afternoons, or any evening of the week, can be seen as part of a broader disintegration of time structure as Britain moved towards a 24 hour a day, 7 day a week culture. From 1988, pubs could open all day from Monday to Saturday, and in 1995 this was extended to include Sunday. As result of the extended hours on a Sunday, watching the live Premiership game in a pub on a Sunday afternoon rapidly passed into British culture and became an institution.

The fact that attendances held up in the 1990s as opposed to being in terminal decline up to 1985/1986, despite huge increases in the cost of watching games, can be ascribed to football's growth in popularity, which in turn was assisted by the Premiership and satellite television and their successful marketing strategy, safer and cleaner football grounds, and the point made above about season tickets being passed around groups of friends.

Growing predictability

The first Sky television deal expired in 1997. A four season deal worth £743 million was signed and as part of the deal the Premiership clubs received £125 million as it got under way.⁴⁶¹ In just five years Sky was able to offer about two and a half times the headline amount of the previous deal, which had at the time been regarded as huge. The

⁴⁶¹ Dobson and Goddard, *Economics of Football*, pp.82-83.

overwhelming success of Sky's football coverage, which had been mutually beneficial, justified this large increase. The higher placed clubs received a greater share, in addition to any sums they received from participation in the evolving Champions League. This had the effect of making the Premiership more predictable because the most successful clubs acquired greater resources with which to attract the best players and build on that success further. As the millennium approached, a duopoly developed as Arsenal and Manchester United competed for the title every season. It turned out that in five of the six seasons from 1997/1998 to 2002/2003 the top two places were occupied by the same two clubs, drawing comparisons with the Scottish Premier League, which had developed into a two-horse race between Celtic and Rangers. John Curran, Ian Jennings and John Sedgwick of the London Metropolitan University used three different indices to calculate competitive balance in the top division of English football over six decades. Having established that competitive balance is vital to retaining fans' interest and securing sponsorship, they concluded that 'competitive balance is decreasing in the top level of English football ... the top flight in English football has seen the number of competitive teams ... halve, from ten to five, over the 60 years of the dataset. This is a worrying development if competitive balance is deemed important.'⁴⁶²

The Premiership would develop into a three-tier division: at the top the best four, at the bottom the strugglers, and a broad middle band. The strugglers consisted of the bottom five or six clubs, the three to be relegated and those who just manage to avoid it, and this group would usually contain two of the three clubs promoted up to the Premiership at the end of the previous season. The remaining ten or eleven clubs formed a broad mid-table group,

⁴⁶² John Curran, Ian Jennings and John Sedgwick, 'Competitive Balance' In The Top Level Of English Football, 1948-2008: an absent principle and a forgotten ideal', *The International Journal Of The History Of Sport*, vol. 26, no. 11, September 2009, p.1744.

and the best that any of them could hope for was to finish in fifth position. The situation at the bottom of the table can be demonstrated statistically. In the ten seasons up to and including 1991/1992, of the thirty promotions to the First Division, only eight clubs were relegated after one season. In the ten seasons to 2009/2010, of the thirty promotions to the Premiership, the number of clubs relegated after just one season had risen to thirteen. Those clubs relegated from the Premiership are in receipt of parachute payments, thus giving them a huge advantage over other clubs in the Championship. It is not surprising in the circumstances that these clubs will often be promoted back up again. The potential developed for some teams to become 'yo-yo clubs'. The best example of this was West Bromwich Albion, who in the nine seasons from 2001/2002 to 2009/2010 were promoted to the Premiership four times and relegated from it three times.⁴⁶³ The reason for this level of predictability is the gulf in financial resources. The clubs promoted into the Premiership from the League generally do not have as much money to spend on players as clubs who have been in the Premiership for some time. Therefore they struggle against richer opponents.

The authors Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski argue that predictability is nothing new as certain eras in the past have seen dominant clubs. Arsenal in the 1930s, Liverpool in the late 1970s and 1980s, and Manchester United in the 1990s are good examples of this. Their argument, however, does not address the *level* of predictability. At no time before the Premiership breakaway could one confidently predict all of the top four clubs for season after season before a ball was kicked, but for five of the six seasons from 2003/2004 to 2008/2009 the top four positions were occupied by the same four clubs, namely Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and Manchester United. Kuper and Szymanski take their argument a

⁴⁶³ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.398-399.

step further by stating that fans like predictability. They use the fact that attendances declined from the late 1940s to the mid-1980s, in a less predictable age, but increased since the start of the Premiership, in a more predictable age, to back up their argument. There have, however, been other factors at work. They acknowledge that football grounds have improved, which is an important contributory factor, but fail to take into account the relentless marketing of the Premiership by Sky television. When something is marketed successfully, in time this passes into the common perception, and people then flock to it. The reason that football crowds have increased, despite escalating prices, is not because fans prefer predictability but because of a very successful marketing strategy by Sky television, who stand to gain more viewers and subscribers if the Premiership is popular.⁴⁶⁴

Andy Burnham MP was Britain's Culture Secretary in Gordon Brown's government. In 2008, he warned that the Premier League risked becoming too predictable. He told *The Guardian*, 'I keep referring to the NFL ... in the US ... they understand that equal distribution of money creates genuine competition, which is good for the League.'⁴⁶⁵ In the NFL of American Football the clubs share TV income equally, and forty per cent of each game's gate money goes to the visiting team. A slogan promoted by the League states that 'on any given Sunday any team can beat any other team.'⁴⁶⁶ The key to such equality is the college draft system. This was introduced by the NFL in 1936 and remains a major feature of American football. The draft system was designed to ensure that all teams have a fair opportunity to recruit new talent. It is held as an annual event and has changed over the years, but at present the bids to recruit are made one team at a time. The lowest placed team

⁴⁶⁴ Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski, *Why England Lose & Other Curious Football Phenomena Explained*, (London: HarperSport, 2010 paperback edition), pp.187-199.

⁴⁶⁵ David Conn, 'Football: Burnham Urges FA To Act Quickly Before Football Loses Its Core Support', *The Guardian*, 11 September 2008.

⁴⁶⁶ Kuper and Szymanski, *Why England Lose*, p.191.

starts first, and it goes in ascending order up the League with the champions last. New players to the League are not free to join any club they choose.⁴⁶⁷ This ensures competitive balance.⁴⁶⁸

As the revenue from satellite television broadcasting continued to rise, so too did players' wages. The amounts paid to their players by Blackburn, which at the time seemed extravagant, would, within a relatively short period, be superseded. Between 1992 and 1996, which includes the period of Blackburn's expenditure, wages in the Premiership rose by an average of 25 per cent a year. That rate rose to 35 per cent in 1997, and this higher rate seemed likely to continue.⁴⁶⁹ The increase was because the top clubs had more money to spend, and because the players were in a stronger bargaining position after the Bosman Ruling (more of which in the next chapter). However, there is a need to consider the broader picture rather than just that of the famous players whose wages produced sensational headlines for the sports pages of the tabloids. An article in *When Saturday Comes* gave the cautionary warning: 'when the media covers the issue of players' pay in football, accuracy is rarely at a premium. The huge sums bandied around on the back pages are often entirely speculative and must be taken with large doses of salt.'⁴⁷⁰ Bobby Barnes spent most of his playing career with West Ham United and is now Deputy Chief Executive of the Professional Footballers Association. Regarding the huge salaries that some players are reported to earn, he stated:

I think it's important to make it clear that it is only at the top level of the game. Our membership, for example, if you go down the pyramid, League One and League Two clubs ... although they might earn more than what would [be] considered to be average wages ... it's a very short career, and it's a very precarious career ... when a young

⁴⁶⁷ operations.nfl.com/the-players/the-nfl-draft/the-rules-of-the-draft, accessed 9 June 2016.

⁴⁶⁸ Samuels, *Beautiful Game*, p.65.

⁴⁶⁹ Patrick Harverson, 'Waging Wars', *When Saturday Comes*, issue 136, June 1998, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p.18.

man comes into the game at aged sixteen as a scholar he's probably given up a large part of his education so that means that effectively he's put all of his eggs into this particular basket at sixteen. By the age of twenty-one something like 85 per cent of those who come in at sixteen are permanently lost to the game. If you're fortunate enough to be one of those sixteen-year-olds who gets to twenty-one then the average career for a player may be eight, nine years, so it gives you the idea that it's a very, very difficult and precarious profession to get on with and a very, very short window to earn what you earn.⁴⁷¹

The *WSC* article backs this up: 'the oft-repeated arguments used by the players' union about short-lived careers, the risk of injuries and the lack of post-football opportunities are entirely valid ones.'⁴⁷² When seen as part of a broader picture, however, there was cause for concern because some clubs were spending as much as two-thirds, or in the case of Blackburn *all*, of their income in wages.⁴⁷³

As the Premier League received ever-increasing amounts of money, the gulf between its resources and those of the Football League grew. This situation was exacerbated by the League's failure to safeguard their interests adequately in their negotiations with ITV Digital. The two main backers, Carlton and Granada, pulled out of the 2001/2002 deal. The League had received guarantees, but they were not formalised in writing.⁴⁷⁴ This blunder cost the League, and therefore the clubs, dearly. A smaller deal was negotiated with BSkyB, but many clubs suffered hardship because they had budgeted for receiving the greater amount agreed in the original deal.⁴⁷⁵ Theo Paphitis, the Millwall chairman, summed up his anger with the League's negotiators: 'it's a billion-pound business, but if I had kebab shop I wouldn't let them run it.'⁴⁷⁶ In this instance it can be seen that the shortcomings of

⁴⁷¹ Bobby Barnes, interview with the author, London, 15 June 2015.

⁴⁷² Harverson, 'Waging Wars', *WSC*, issue 136, June 1998, p.18.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ Andy Lyons, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 185, July 2002, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁷⁵ Samuels, *Beautiful Game*, pp.163-164. See also p. 148.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.164.

the League contributed to a widening of the gap in resources between the Football League and the Premier League.

Conclusion

At the birth of the Premiership, the stakes were high, and becoming increasingly so for English football. It is this that, in part, explains the extent of the wrangling between the League and the FA. This was because of the extra revenues that could potentially be gained from satellite television broadcasters, who in turn had an important role to play due to the close relationship that had developed between the top clubs and television. In the end it was the FA's vision that triumphed: it was this that created the modern Premier League. Nevertheless, the paradox was that in practice – at least immediately - very little appeared to have changed. The differences between the Premiership and the old First Division would only start to show up as time progressed. These included spiralling transfer fees and wages, increased admission prices, and a large amount of coverage on Sky television. This last point can be linked to the broader cultural and social trends of fans watching games in pubs and an increasing number who were content to do so rather than physically attend matches. There has also been a large growth in the wearing of replica shirts as a fashion accessory. Sky's role in popularising football to this extent was crucial.

The subject of the Premiership, and the wider changes in football that occurred as a result, can elicit strong opinions, and this can be seen in some of the secondary sources. Conn accuses the top clubs of greed and apportion blame; King interprets the arrival of the Premiership as inevitable due to the trends already under way; Walvin offers a more balanced assessment; Fynn and Guest take the view that the episode was badly handled by

the FA, and the Premiership soon became autonomous in nature rather than subservient to its wishes.

It can be demonstrated that the top clubs needed to secure a greater share of revenue in order to compete for trophies and to make progress in the European competitions. However, there was a mechanism to allow for this, which had been in place since 1986 when equal distribution among all 92 League clubs ceased. This meant that revenue could have been skewed even further towards the big clubs. It did not require a breakaway league. The Premiership came about largely because the FA wanted to assert its authority over the League.

Regardless of its origins, however, it cannot be denied that the Premiership's wider cultural implications have been enormous. Football at the elite-level has been made fashionable again. Promotion of the Premiership by Sky television has been central to this as football gained wider popularity to include millions of viewers in addition to the thousands of spectators who attend games, and the resulting shift in fashion has provided clubs with income from merchandising. The Premiership has also promoted football upwards in terms of the social status of its followers at a time of disintegrating class structures. Ultimately, it has been the vehicle for the commercialisation and *embourgeoisement* of football at a national level in England.

Chapter Four

Internationalisation

*Some people say it devalues the European Cup,
but it's progress. It's the way we have to go eventually*

- Sir Bobby Charlton, Manchester United director and former player ⁴⁷⁷

*The Premier League is a honeypot for overseas players
because of the money available through television*

- Gordon Taylor, Professional Footballers Association chief executive ⁴⁷⁸

*You want to sign Carlos Kickaball and so do I.
So I'm in an auction with you and in the end I have
pissed all my money up the wall and so have you*

- Alan Sugar, entrepreneur and Tottenham Hotspur chairman ⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Sir Bobby Charlton commenting on the Champions League. Quoted in Rob Hughes, 'Slick Men Of Europe Devaluing Games Honoured Traditions', *The Times*, 10 February 1996.

⁴⁷⁸ Gordon Taylor commenting on the influx of foreign players. Quoted in Ray Ryan, '220 Players Kicked Off The Premiership Last Weekend ... Only 86 Were English', *News Of The World*, 24 August 2003.

⁴⁷⁹ Alan Sugar in a conversation with Ken Bates, the Chelsea chairman. Cited in Bose, *Game Changer*, p. 94.

Introduction

At the start of the 1990s, English clubs were readmitted to Europe following the ban resulting from the disaster at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels. The next few years would see a transformation in the format of European competition. Europe's leading clubs, in order to secure a certain number of fixtures, and, more importantly, to guarantee a certain level of revenue, pushed for a change in the way that the European competitions were organised. This was against the background of talk about the possibility of a new European 'Super League'. These circumstances resulted in the expansion of the European Cup and its transformation into the UEFA Champions League, the abolition of the Cup-Winners' Cup, and later on the conversion of the UEFA Cup into the UEFA Europa League. English clubs, who had been left behind in footballing terms because of the European ban, would, as a result of the Premiership, rise again to achieve in Europe, but much of this success would be due to the introduction of foreign players. Moreover, as European competition expanded it had the effect of diminishing the importance of the domestic cup competitions. As we have seen, it also contributed towards the Premiership becoming more predictable because the huge sums received by the top clubs from the Champions League gave them an advantage over other clubs. This contrasts with the seven seasons from 1966/1967 to 1972/1973 when the League title was won by seven different clubs – Manchester United, Manchester City, Leeds United, Everton, Arsenal, Derby County, and Liverpool.⁴⁸⁰

The latter half of the 1990s would see an influx of foreign players coming to England to play for Premiership clubs. They were able to do this as a result of the Bosman Ruling, which guaranteed players freedom of movement within EU states. They were drawn by the

⁴⁸⁰ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp. 585-586.

attractiveness of Premiership football, and, perhaps more importantly, the lucrative wages that could be earned as a result of the income football gained from satellite television broadcasting. There was concern that the arrival of so many players from overseas would hinder the prospects of local English youngsters, and this in turn would be detrimental to the performance and progress of the England team in major competitions. In time, the international flow of players into the Premiership would attract wealthy foreign owners who would take over some of the top English clubs with mixed results.

The purpose of this chapter is to chart the growth of European competition in relation to its impact on English football, to follow the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of domestic football, and to detail how these changes affected and drove the development of the game in England. Beyond this, the aim is to see how these changes fit in with wider developments in terms of English people and their perception of the continent, the relationship between Europe's nation states, and the role of England within a Europe that was drawing closer together.

Europe, Politics and Football

In order to see the relationship between English football clubs and their continental counterparts in a broader context, it is worth considering the political relationship between Britain and its European neighbours. The European Economic Community had been formed by the Treaty of Rome (1957) and was effective from the start of 1958. It comprised six member states – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Initial British scepticism subsequently gave way to an acceptance that EEC membership would be compatible with the UK's national interests. Twice during the 1960s Britain

opened negotiations to join but was rebuffed, but finally joined in January 1973, along with Denmark and the Republic of Ireland. The EEC expanded further, admitting Greece (1981) and Portugal and Spain (both 1986), before events elsewhere changed the complexion of international relations completely. Most notably, the unification of East and West Germany (1990), and the attendant collapse of the Soviet Union meant that the EEC had the potential to enlarge further as Eastern European states which had formerly been in the Soviet bloc sought to gain admittance. This would also change the map of football. Simultaneous to these changes was the proposal for a European Free Trade area in which tariff barriers would be removed to facilitate trade, coming into effect in 1992.⁴⁸¹

Stephen George points out that, according to opinion polls, the attitude of the public towards Europe gradually changed to become more pro-European. This was because of a new generation who could not remember the imperialist Britain of the past, and had only known Britain as a European partner.⁴⁸² In a wider social context, cheap airlines were opening up Europe to British holidaymakers and many were visiting continental resorts which were beyond the reach of previous generations. There has been an 'Open Skies' initiative, which is a liberalization of rules and regulations in the aviation industry. These factors helped to change the outlook of Britons towards Europe. A comparison can be drawn with football in that gradually isolationist views gave way to a perception of football in a European context. This was due to the international movement of players, the transformation of European competition, and satellite television broadcasting to a global audience.

⁴⁸¹ Michael Chisholm, *Britain On The Edge Of Europe* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.2-5.

⁴⁸² Stephen George, *An Awkward Partner: Britain in the European Community* (Oxford: Oxford, 1994), pp.255-256.

In international politics the period from the 1960s onwards has thrown up the issue of Anglo-European relations and the extent to which England can be seen as a reluctant partner in Europe. Among some – the pro-European lobby - there was a fear of isolation, and of Britain being left behind. On the other hand, as far as the ‘Euro-sceptic’ lobby were concerned, there was concern about greater integration throughout Europe. This concern fell into two broad areas, namely the potential threat to sovereignty, and the fear that Britain could lose out economically. During the 1980s British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used the rhetoric of sovereignty to resist moves towards federalism and centralised economic, political, and social management.⁴⁸³ In the early 1980s differences arose over the scale of Britain’s contribution to the EEC budget, and when these had been resolved, the Prime Minister spent the latter half of the decade trying to resist the renewed drive towards deeper integration.⁴⁸⁴ Britain’s position regarding the European budget turned out to be a recurring theme. It was again an issue in 2005, when Britain argued that its rebate, which was about two-thirds of the difference between its contribution and its receipts, must stay until the Common Agricultural Policy was reformed.⁴⁸⁵

Where does this leave football? It is easy to draw a comparison between political isolation from Europe and isolation from the continent in football. England’s infamous defeat against Hungary at Wembley in 1953 stirred declinist fears. Many were anxious that other countries were developing styles and methods of play in advance of English football. Even England’s World Cup success in 1966 arguably turned out to be a mixed blessing in the long term in that it reinforced isolationism. It led to English football ‘sticking obstinately to its own

⁴⁸³ Ibid., p.6.

⁴⁸⁴ Eds. David Gowland and Arthur Turner, *Britain and European Integration 1945-1998: a documentary history* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.167.

⁴⁸⁵ ‘Europe: Isolation Fever: Charlemagne’, *The Economist*, vol. 377, issue 8455, December 2005.

game’, rather than adopting new coaching methods and continental styles of play, thus making subsequent failures more likely.⁴⁸⁶ This isolation only started to be reversed when lucrative deals between the Premiership and satellite television broadcasting companies created high wages and therefore attracted foreign players and managers – most notably Arsene Wenger at Arsenal where he introduced continental ideas regarding training and diet. Arsenal captain Tony Adams recalls that Wenger used a doctor who believed in ‘the importance of dietary supplements such as Creatine ... Creatine can be invaluable in physical conditioning’.⁴⁸⁷ The players were also blood-tested to ‘determine which player needed which level of vitamins’.⁴⁸⁸ Physiotherapist Gary Lewin also remembers, ‘Arsene felt that, due to the wear and tear of the season, players needed them, so you’d have Vitamin C drinks and Vitamin B tablets. Yann Rougier, a nutritionist from France, came over and did blood and hair tests to see which minerals and vitamins the players lacked.’⁴⁸⁹ The trend of continental players arriving to play in England was furthered by the Bosman Ruling of 1995, and occurred simultaneously with the closer integration of European states mentioned above.

European competition: readmission and expansion

By the time England reached the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup in Italy the prevailing view of English supporters on the continent had changed. Lennart Johansson, the UEFA president, stated that ‘English supporters are no worse than those in other countries. It is just that we have focussed on them’. On 10 July 1990, just over five years after the tragedy at Heysel, the decision was taken that English clubs should be allowed back into European

⁴⁸⁶ Matthew Taylor, *Association Game*, p.290.

⁴⁸⁷ Tony Adams, *Addicted* (London: CollinsWillow, 1999 paperback edition), p.319.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ Dennis Bergkamp, *Stillness And Speed* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014 paperback edition), p.140.

competition. This was not extended to Liverpool because it was generally regarded that Liverpool fans had been largely responsible for that disaster. The events at Heysel also helped shape the prejudices of some regarding the tragedy of Hillsborough. The ban on Liverpool was to stay in place for another season. As champions, Liverpool would have qualified for the European Cup, so for 1990/1991 there was still no English club in Europe's main cup competition.⁴⁹⁰ However, in the UEFA Cup Aston Villa entered, and in the Cup Winners' Cup Manchester United made the best possible return for English clubs by winning the trophy, beating Barcelona 2-1 in the final in Rotterdam.

In 1991 the League Champions were Arsenal, and therefore in 1991/1992 became the first English club to enter the European Cup following readmission to Europe. As it turned out, English clubs re-entered Europe just in time for the major changes that were about to take place in European club competitions, especially in the European Cup. The transformation of European competition, and in particular the replacement of the European Cup with the Champions League, was driven by internal and external factors. Internally, there was the need to secure a guaranteed level of income for Europe's big clubs, and also the need to stave off ongoing attempts at a breakaway European 'Super League'. In 1992, trading restrictions between Europe's member states were lifted, and at the start of 2002 most of them, although not Great Britain, would join the Euro, and in so doing abandon their own national currencies. Increasing integration and the growing power of Europe were reflected in the development of Europe's international football competitions. The amendments to the European Cup introduced for 1992/1993 allowed for seven new countries, of which five were admitted because of the creation of new states. The recent break-up of the Soviet

⁴⁹⁰ <http://www.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/season=1990/index.html> last accessed 20 July 2012.

Union provided new entrants in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, while the disintegration of Yugoslavia provided Slovenia. The composition of Europe was changing and these additions reflected this.

Regarding internal pressures, with a knock-out format in place a club's European campaign might only last two games, especially if drawn against strong opponents. The owners of Europe's biggest clubs, particularly Silvio Berlusconi of AC Milan, Bernard Tapie of Marseilles, and Ramon Mendoza of Real Madrid, were concerned that early elimination would mean missing out on huge potential revenues. This put UEFA under pressure to turn the knockout tournament into a league, thus guaranteeing a certain number of games for its participants. In response they agreed to turn the quarter-finals and semi-finals into two groups of four, with the winners of each group playing each other in the final. This was introduced for the 1991/1992 season, coinciding with Arsenal's appearance. The winners of the respective groups were Sampdoria and Barcelona, who met in the final, Barcelona winning 1-0 after extra time.⁴⁹¹ The decision to play the final at Wembley demonstrated further that UEFA had given a vote of confidence to the return of English football to the European fold.⁴⁹² The alteration of the quarter-finals and semi-finals into two groups, each competing in a league system, was deemed to be so successful that UEFA gave serious consideration to extending the idea to the UEFA Cup and the Cup-Winners' Cup.⁴⁹³ More importantly, it was the first step in the transformation of the European Cup into the UEFA Champions League.

⁴⁹¹ <http://www.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/season=1991/index.html> last accessed 20 July 2012.

⁴⁹² Andrew Godsell, *Europe United: a history of the European Cup/Champions League* (Cheltenham: Sportsbooks, 2005), p.137.

⁴⁹³ Christopher Davies, 'Lake's Career In Jeopardy After Further Knee Surgery', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 September 1992.

The possibility of some kind of European League had been suggested as early as August 1988 by Alex Fynn, then of Saatchi and Saatchi, in a speech given to launch the *Rothman's Football Yearbook*. Fynn's plan was for two parallel leagues, North and South, with each league consisting of nine or ten teams leaving the existing European competitions unaffected. Believing that the changes implemented in the European Cup – that of replacing the quarter-finals and semi-finals with a group system – had improved the situation but not solved the problem, Fynn produced, in December 1992, a new more radical proposal. He recalls, 'I was fortunate enough to work for an advertising agency. The client was Silvio Berlusconi. We were his agency in Italy. The chief of our talent agency rang up one day and said to me, 'I've got the job you've always wanted, please design a European Super League for Silvio Berlusconi.'⁴⁹⁴ This consisted of a pyramid structure with a premier division of ten clubs and beneath it three regional divisions of nine clubs each, with a play-off system to operate between them. This new competition would replace the European Cup and the Cup-Winners Cup, but the UEFA Cup would survive and serve as a feeder to it. This proposal, Fynn pointed out, would satisfy the requirements of giving financial security to the biggest clubs, give smaller clubs a pinnacle at which to aim, be a fair test of merit, and give fans a regular diet of top European football.⁴⁹⁵ Then three months later Johansson announced embryonic plans for a 128-club European League to replace the European Cup and the UEFA Cup.⁴⁹⁶ Regarding his own proposal, Fynn recalls, 'I did what I felt might work. In fact, the only way it worked was as a catalyst that frightened UEFA into reformulating the European Cup into the Champions League.'⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Alex Fynn, interview with the author, London, 31 March 2014.

⁴⁹⁵ Alex Fynn, 'Super League To Take Europe By Storm', *The Times*, 6 December 1992.

⁴⁹⁶ Colin Gibson, 'Johansson Offers Hint Of European League', *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 March 1993.

⁴⁹⁷ Alex Fynn, interview with the author, London, 31 March 2014.

Manchester United's Cup Winners' Cup achievement apart, the return to the fold of English clubs was usually marked by disappointing results and early elimination. This brought back concerns about the isolation of English clubs from their European neighbours in terms of style and a fear that English clubs had been left behind. Donald Saunders, writing in *The Daily Telegraph* following a disappointing night for English clubs in Europe in November 1992, asserted that 'the early dismissal of Leeds [United], Manchester United, Sheffield Wednesday, and Liverpool from the three UEFA competitions ... suggests that English football has been left behind, even by Europe's modest middle class'. He also commented that 'English soccer will regain the prestige and authority it enjoyed between Manchester United's European Cup triumph in 1968 and the 1985 Heysel disaster only when Premier League clubs plan, think, and act with the intelligence, foresight, and professionalism of their major European rivals'.⁴⁹⁸ Liverpool manager Graeme Souness, in an interview in *The Times*, slammed the English preference for what he described as 'kick-and-rush ... hoof it, back it up, and pick up the bits from the opposition's errors'.⁴⁹⁹

Initially the name 'Champions League' was used to describe only the group stage, but the names 'European Cup' and 'Champions League' would become interchangeable during the early 1990s until the latter became the norm in the middle of the decade. The final would be officially designated the UEFA Champions League final for the first time for 1995/1996. Simultaneous to this was the expansion of the competition - for 1992/1993 entry was increased to thirty-six clubs, and for 1993/1994 the preliminary round was expanded. However, in December 1993, UEFA also took the decision to introduce wider changes, and in so doing shifted the focus of the competition on to the league stage, which was doubled

⁴⁹⁸ Donald Saunders, 'Premier Fare looks Second Rate', *The Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 1992.

⁴⁹⁹ David Miller, 'Souness Passes On Defiant Warning', *The Times*, 24 October 1992.

from two to four groups. The group stage would be followed by home and away ties in the newly-restored quarter-finals and semi-finals, bringing excitement back to this stage of the competition.⁵⁰⁰ These developments were introduced for 1994/1995.

Yet the proposal for a European League would not go away. At a meeting in Geneva in February 1996 UEFA met the top European clubs. Concerned that some clubs had talked about a Super League run by themselves, UEFA offered more places, the new entrants to be included by doubling the number of clubs from eight countries including England.⁵⁰¹ Thus UEFA sparked controversy by allowing the runners-up in the leagues of the eight strongest countries to enter, and in so doing diluted the competition's nature as the preserve of champions. In the case of England this meant that Newcastle United joined Manchester United as the second English entrants. For the first time ever, one country – Germany – had three entrants, namely Bayern Munich, Bayer Leverkusen, and Borussia Dortmund, as German champions, runners-up, and reigning European Champions respectively.⁵⁰²

Even so, suggestions of a rival European league continued. A proposal, drawn up in 1998 by Media Partners, a sports marketing consultancy based in Milan, suggested that a European League of twenty-four or thirty-two clubs be established with a group of founder clubs being given permanent membership by virtue of their size and wealth. Media Partners maintained that participants could earn substantially more than clubs were receiving by competing in the Champions League.⁵⁰³ One Liverpool fan summed up adequately the

⁵⁰⁰ Godsell, *Europe United*, p.149.

⁵⁰¹ Glenn Moore, 'UEFA Acts To Frustrate Breakaway', *The Independent*, 8 February 1996.

⁵⁰² Godsell, *Europe United*, p.163.

⁵⁰³ *The Financial Times*, 'Parsifal And The Goalie', 16 May 1998.

sense of inevitability and immediacy surrounding the coming European Super League and the motives behind it:

Let's be honest from the start; it's going to happen, isn't it? The European Super League thingy will, within the next few seasons, become a fact of life. It doesn't matter what you think and it doesn't matter what I think. It doesn't even seem to matter what UEFA think. Whether it's under their auspices or not, it's going to happen ... the whole thing is driven by greed, the men doing the driving wear sharp suits. The seeds for a European Super League can be traced back to the advent of the plc. Shareholders live to maximise profitability. Football is now just another product. Marketing men will tell you that a product needs to be constantly updated to keep it fresh and appealing to the customers. However, the consumers with the financial clout are no longer you and me, coughing up our £300+ each year for a season ticket. The real guv'nors [sic] are the satellite and TV channels catering for old Armchairarse at home.⁵⁰⁴

In response to continued threats of defection, there was further expansion of the Champions League. For 1999/2000, the qualifying stage was extended from two to three rounds, and this was to be followed by a double group stage, consisting of thirty-two clubs instead of the previous twenty-four. At the start no fewer than seventy-one clubs participated and the continent's strongest countries could each now be represented by up to four clubs. The threat to UEFA had been furthered by the formation, in November 1998, of 'the G14 Group', of fourteen top European clubs, including Liverpool and Manchester United, who joined together with the aim of coordinating activities and possibly forming their own 'Super League'. Their number would later increase to eighteen, but they retained the title of 'the G14 Group'.⁵⁰⁵ The extra matches introduced to the UEFA Champions League brought in more revenue and seemed to stave off the threat of a breakaway for the time being.

⁵⁰⁴ Prometheus, 'Eurotrash', *Through The Wind And Rain*, issue 40, Autumn 1998.

⁵⁰⁵ Samuels, *Beautiful Game*, p.299. The fourteen clubs in the group were AC Milan, Ajax, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, Inter Milan, Juventus, Liverpool, Manchester United, Marseilles, Paris St. Germain, Porto, PSV Eindhoven, and Real Madrid.

The competition had, however, become too large and bloated. It had lost some of its focus and the excessive number of group matches reduced the excitement of the competition, making it boring, according to many.⁵⁰⁶ There were now 157 matches and the finalists would have to play seventeen times. In 2000/2001 Gerhard Aigner, UEFA's chief executive, was in a position of having to respond to falling television audiences throughout Europe and the fact that some of the leading clubs were playing to small crowds. He said that 'the Champions League is too long and the fixture list is saturated. We don't want people to get bored'.⁵⁰⁷ UEFA responded to these concerns by dispensing with the second group stage, replacing it with an extra knock-out round. This applied from 2003/2004 onwards.⁵⁰⁸

The UEFA Cup had begun in 1955 as the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup. The original tournament lasted for three years, with matches timed to coincide with trade fairs. For the second tournament club participation was introduced but the entrants still had to come from the cities staging trade fairs. This tournament lasted two years, after which it was held on an annual basis. The first English club to win the trophy was Leeds United, who, in 1967/1968, beat Ferencvaros over a two-legged final. This started a run of six successive seasons when English clubs won the trophy. In 1971/1972 the name of the competition was changed to the UEFA Cup in recognition of the fact that the competition was now run by UEFA, and was no longer associated with the trade fairs.⁵⁰⁹ Hunter Davies, in *The Glory Game*, said of Tottenham Hotspur in this competition in the 1971/1972 season: 'playing in Europe is both an end and a beginning for the top British clubs. It's in their minds all season, knowing that

⁵⁰⁶ Godsell, *Europe United*, p.177.

⁵⁰⁷ Jon Brodtkin, 'UEFA Fears Champions League Switch Off', *The Guardian*, 14 December 2000.

⁵⁰⁸ Godsell, *Europe United*, p.209.

⁵⁰⁹ <http://www.uefa.com/uefaeuropaleague/history/index.html> last accessed 13 February 2012

if they finish high enough in the English League, they will end up qualifying for one of the three European competitions the following season'.⁵¹⁰ The importance of the competition to the teams and fans in its early days is clear. However, in the 1990s the European Cup transformed into the Champions League, and more importantly as far as the importance of the UEFA Cup was concerned, started to admit those clubs who would previously have entered the UEFA Cup. Inevitably, the prestige of the UEFA Cup gradually slipped to that of a competition that was greatly inferior, ridiculed, and even an inconvenience. Paul Wilson, in *The Observer*, wrote that 'there is simply no point to the UEFA Cup any more'. He went on to comment that 'the UEFA Cup has been obliterated by the Champions League. A mouse crushed by an elephant would expire with more of a squeak.' He justified this view with the observation that 'it doesn't make you any money, it disrupts your whole playing week, and it seems to go on forever'.⁵¹¹

As with the Champions League the knock-out system was changed and a group stage was introduced. For the UEFA Cup this was in 2004/2005. This meant that forty entrants played four games each. The competition was renamed the UEFA Europa league from 2009/2010 and expanded to forty-eight clubs playing six matches on a home and away format similar to the Champions League.⁵¹² The Europa League's greatly inferior position to the Champions League is reinforced by the fact that some of the clubs eliminated from the Champions League enter the Europa League as a consolation. Regarding the Cup-Winners' Cup, it commenced in 1960/1961 as the competition for those teams that had won their main domestic cup competition. The first English team to win the trophy were Tottenham

⁵¹⁰ Hunter Davies, *Glory Game*, p.139.

⁵¹¹ Paul Wilson, 'Redknapp's Right: UEFA Cup Is A Total Waste Of Time', *The Observer*, 1 March 2009.

⁵¹² <http://www.uefa.com/uefaeuropaleague/history/index.html> last accessed 13 February 2012.

Hotspur, who did so in 1962/1963. As stated above, Manchester United heralded the return of English clubs to European competition following the ban resulting from the Heysel tragedy by winning the trophy in 1990/1991. But the competition was scrapped in 1999, and since then for English clubs the FA Cup winners have entered the UEFA Cup, later the Europa League, instead.

The expansion in European competition had the negative effect of diminishing the importance of some of the English domestic competitions. The Premiership, due to its revenue from and promotion by satellite television broadcasters, remained largely unscathed but both of the cup competitions were adversely affected. There were a number of reasons for this decline and although not all of the blame can be laid at the door of European competition, a significant part of it can. In order to progress in the Champions League the managers of the big clubs saved their best players so that a team fielded in the League Cup (under its various sponsorship titles) was often a weakened side. This also applied to a lesser extent in the FA Cup, especially when a big club was drawn against a small club and a weakened side could still be expected to progress to the following round. The League Cup was also affected by its numerous name changes. Sponsorship was originally introduced to help a cash-strapped game, but the number of name changes has had a detrimental effect on the perception of the standing of the competition. There have been seven, each of them sounding less important than the original one, in less than thirty years.⁵¹³

⁵¹³ The League Cup has been named the Milk Cup (from 1981/1982), the Littlewoods Cup (from 1986/1987), the Rumbelows League Cup (from 1990/1991), the Coca-Cola Cup (from 1992/1993), the Worthington Cup (from 1998/1999), the Carling Cup (from 2003/2004), and the Capital One Cup (from 2012/2013). Ed. John Anderson, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2015-2016* (London: Headline, 2015), p.570.

The reduction in the importance attached to the FA Cup has been even more acute. As with the League Cup, there have been other factors at play in addition to European competition muscling in. Firstly, as football's oldest competition the FA Cup was traditionally cherished and therefore had a greater height from which to fall. The role of the FA Cup final as the last game of the domestic season helped to preserve the sense that the FA Cup final was something special. An article by Roger Titford about the FA Cup final in *When Saturday Comes* also points out that 'the fact of being the only live, televised, domestic club football match and virtually the only one at Wembley all added to the sense that this was a game like no other, famed for its ultimate endeavour and lasting legend.'⁵¹⁴ The timing of the FA Cup final as the season's last game has altered for two reasons. Firstly, the introduction of the play-offs in 1986/1987 meant that the respective divisional play-off finals were scheduled later than the FA Cup final. Secondly, the establishment of the Premiership as a breakaway league would result in the fact that, for 2000/2001 and 2001/2002, the last day of the Premiership season was a week later than the FA Cup final, thus taking away the FA Cup final's importance as the last game of the season.⁵¹⁵ This would happen again in 2010/2011 and 2011/2012.

Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski, in *Why England Lose And Other Curious Football Phenomena Explained*, provided statistics to demonstrate a decline in interest in the FA Cup. Using crowd figures at FA Cup ties involving two teams from the same division, they demonstrated that in 1976/1977 FA Cup games attracted thirty per cent more spectators than the League fixture between the same two teams. These extra supporters were drawn

⁵¹⁴ Roger Titford, 'The Final Frontier', *When Saturday Comes*, issue 77, July 1993, p.16.

⁵¹⁵ www.statto.com/football/stats/england/premier-league last accessed 24 July 2012;
<http://www.thefa.com/TheFACup/More/PastResults> last accessed 24 July 2012.

by 'the magic of the Cup'. At the start of the 1990s, this figure dropped slightly to around twenty-five per cent, but as from the mid-1990s, by which time the UEFA Champions League was under way, this figure collapsed. In 1997/1998 FA Cup games for the first time drew fewer spectators than their League equivalents. This downward trend continued. In the 2000s FA Cup games attracted between eighty and ninety per cent of their equivalent League fixtures.⁵¹⁶ The situation was that the revival in attendances that applied to the League, and especially to the Premiership, did not filter through to the FA Cup. This, according to Kuper and Szymanski, was because of satellite television promoting the Premiership, whereas FA Cup coverage remained sparse by comparison.⁵¹⁷ However, they do not mention that the FA Cup was simply overshadowed by the expanding UEFA Champions League, with its greater level of media attention, greater potential revenue, and big European names. Jim White, in *The Daily Telegraph*, illustrates the extent to which the Champions League expansion damaged the FA Cup by comparing a Champions League game and an FA Cup replay played on the same evening:

At the precise moment on Wednesday night that 60,000 people were packing the Emirates with noisy expectation ahead of Arsenal's Champions League tie with Barcelona, 7,515 diehards were filing into the DW stadium to watch Wigan play Bolton in an FA Cup replay. There can be no sharper indication of the decline in prestige of the world's oldest football competition than the gap between these two fixtures ... at the Emirates ITV's Clive Tyldesley was polishing his superlatives for a television audience approaching 10 million to watch football as it should be played. At the DW the home club shut one of the stands leaving it an empty reproach behind the goal ... the Cup is a shrivelled parody of what it used to be ... a distant third in the concern of our more ambitious football businesses.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁶ Kuper and Szymanski, *Why England Lose*, pp. 202-203.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.206-207.

⁵¹⁸ Jim White, 'Champions League Spot For FA Cup Winners? Dream On: At Every Turn The Fortunes Of The World's Greatest Cup Is At Odds With The Premier League's Money Machine', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18 February 2011.

Ken Jones, in *The Independent*, also points the finger of blame for the FA Cup's decline in prestige at the Premiership and the Champions League, by referring to the fact that the number of viewers for the FA Cup final fell steadily, with one exception, from 14.9 million in 1991 to 6.3 million in 2002.⁵¹⁹ These two articles blame the revenue that can be gained from the Premiership and the expansion of the Champions League for the FA Cup's decline. Manchester United player Roy Keane makes this observation: 'there's no doubt that in an era when the Premiership and the Champions League have become the competitions to win, the FA Cup is nothing more than a consolation prize, an afterthought really.'⁵²⁰

Coverage also remained on the BBC for good reason. It was one of the eight sporting 'crown jewels' that, according to the Broadcasting Act 1990, could not be shown on pay-per-view channels. This ruling was extended to cover all subscription satellite channels in a 1996 Amendment.⁵²¹ If the FA Cup final was to go live and exclusively to Sky, as it could have done before the 1996 Amendment, it would have meant that eighty-five per cent of the population would have been unable to see it. Thus there was a mood to preserve live coverage of the Final as a tradition for those who could not afford to receive satellite television broadcasts.

The FA Cup was dealt a further blow in 1999/2000 when Manchester United, the holders, opted out of the competition to play at the World Club Championship in Brazil. Manchester United had just completed their unique 'treble', and, as winners of the Champions League,

⁵¹⁹ Ken Jones, 'Football: Bell Tolls For The FA Cup Final As Elitism Drives Modern Football', *The Independent*, 15 May 2003.

⁵²⁰ Roy Keane, *Keane: the autobiography* (London: Penguin, 2003), p.205.

⁵²¹ <http://hansardmillbanksystems.com/lords/1996/feb/06> last accessed 10 September 2012.

were invited to take part in FIFA's new competition. At the time the FA were bidding to host the 2006 World Cup finals in England. David Davies, executive director of the FA, asked Alec McGiven, the bid director, what it would mean to England's World Cup bid if Manchester United declined to attend the tournament in Brazil. He was told 'bad, bad news'. Supporting the competition was vital to gaining the support of FIFA, a message reinforced by FIFA executive Chuck Blazer, when he stated that 'if United didn't represent Europe in FIFA's major club competition it would be impossible for the FA even to dream of hosting 2006'.⁵²² It can be seen that the FA and Manchester United were in an impossible 'damned if we do, damned if we don't' situation. Heavily criticised for withdrawing from the FA Cup, United flew to Brazil to keep England's World Cup bid alive. Their place in the FA Cup was taken by a 'lucky loser', Darlington, who were drawn from the teams defeated in the previous round. Keane gives his view on United's position:

The truth of this affair, which caused so much controversy, was that the FA Cup had lost its relevance, certainly for me. Sure, it was a day out for our families, and everybody who worked hard behind the scenes at the club. The Wembley myth, the folklore attached to the walk out of the tunnel, the red carpet, meeting the big shots, going up to the Royal Box to receive your medal, a pat on the back from the great and the good (and hopefully the Cup), all of it was bollocks. The Premiership and the Champions League were the only trophies we were concerned about.⁵²³

It is clear, however, that opinions differ considerably. The season after Manchester United's withdrawal from the competition, Liverpool won the trophy, and Liverpool player Steven Gerrard makes the following observation:

⁵²² David Davies, *FA Confidential: sex, drugs and penalties – the inside story of English football* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009 edition), p.230.

⁵²³ Keane, *Keane*, p.219.

Some cynics were suggesting the FA Cup had lost its magic. What a joke! Try telling that to the tens of thousands of Liverpool fans who charged down the motorway to Cardiff in May 2001, singing all the way, flags and scarves streaming from windows, a Red Army on the move. Try telling that to the players, Englishmen like me, who view the famous old trophy as a Holy Grail. Our dads taught us about the Cup, sat us down on that great Saturday in May to watch, and explained that few honours can beat the man who steps up to lift the FA Cup.⁵²⁴

Even so, statistics on attendances and the fact that some of the top teams are inclined to field weakened sides in an FA Cup tie, especially if they fall just before a Champions League encounter, point to a decline in prestige. Another possible reason for the FA Cup's decline has been a reduction in the quality of the final itself. During the 1970s and 1980s, although not every final was a great game, there were several years when it was. Interest was generated by an exciting game or by an underdog triumphing over a favourite. This last point applied to finals in 1973 (Sunderland beat Leeds United), 1976 (Southampton beat Manchester United), 1978 (Ipswich Town beat Arsenal), 1980 (West Ham United beat Arsenal), 1987 (Coventry City beat Tottenham Hotspur), and 1988 (Wimbledon beat Liverpool). On the first point, the final of 1979 provided a thrilling finale (Arsenal beat Manchester United 3-2 with three of the game's five goals coming in the final minutes), and high-scoring draws in 1983 (Manchester United v. Brighton and Hove Albion) and 1990 (Manchester United v. Crystal Palace) made for entertaining games. By comparison, almost all of the FA Cup finals from 1991 onwards made for less interesting affairs with predictable outcomes. During the next two decades only the 2006 final (Liverpool v. West Ham United - West Ham as underdogs led twice before the game finished 3-3 and Liverpool won on penalties) could be described as a thrilling match. Gerrard remembers:

⁵²⁴ Gerrard, *Gerrard*, p.178.

Everyone raved about the match. The 125th FA Cup final was called the greatest ever, even ‘The Gerrard Final’! That meant the world to me. I love the FA Cup. It has taken a few knocks over recent years, and Premiership clubs are perhaps more focused these days on the Champions League, but Liverpool and West Ham put the shine back on the trophy that day in Cardiff. Good. I never knocked the FA Cup. I never underestimated its importance to fans.⁵²⁵

The 2006 final was the exception that proves the rule. In other years, there is ample evidence to suggest that the event is not as revered as it once was, and since then it has been further diminished by the decision to stage semi-finals at Wembley. The first time this happened was for practical reasons, but later on it became a regular feature. Until 1990 the semi-finals were always played at a neutral club ground - usually Villa Park (home of Aston Villa), Highbury (Arsenal), Hillsborough (Sheffield Wednesday), or Old Trafford (Manchester United). However in 1990/1991 Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur were drawn against each other, and, there being no neutral club grounds in London large enough, the semi-final was played at Wembley. Two seasons later the same happened again, and the other semi-final, between Sheffield Wednesday and Sheffield United, was also played at Wembley to avoid unfair advantage to players who had already played there come the final. Semi-finals thereafter reverted to neutral club grounds (bar one season) until the 2007/2008 season when it was decided to stage FA Cup semi-finals at Wembley permanently.

By the time Wigan Athletic beat Manchester City in the 2013 final it had been twenty-five years since the rank outsiders had lifted the trophy.⁵²⁶ While the point about finals diminishing in excitement is probably less important than the other factors previously mentioned it has nonetheless contributed towards the decline of a once great competition.

⁵²⁵ Ibid., p.391.

⁵²⁶ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.607-608. In 1995 Everton beat Manchester United in the final, but Everton, although underdogs, could hardly be described as rank outsiders.

The biggest factor in what Kuper and Szymanski term ‘the strange death of the FA Cup’ has been the expansion of European competition, and in particular the Champions League, along with the associated television coverage. The decline can also be linked to wider societal changes. Titford makes the observation that ‘there was a certain inevitability that the pre-eminence of the FA Cup final would decline as the mass society that was Britain in the post-war period fragmented into more media choice and more leisure pursuits.’⁵²⁷

The Bosman Ruling

While the European Cup was beginning to expand into the Champions League, there was a legal case being contested, the final judgement of which, in December 1995, would have far-reaching consequences as far as the international transfer of players was concerned. In 1990, Jean-Marc Bosman, a Belgian footballer registered with RC Liege but out of contract, sought a new contract with the French club US Dunkerque. The two clubs reached agreement on the terms of the player’s temporary transfer. Bosman would become a US Dunkerque player for one season in return for compensation payable on receipt of the transfer certificate from the Belgian FA. US Dunkerque were also granted an option for the player’s permanent transfer in return for a further payment. However, the contracts between Bosman and US Dunkerque and between US Dunkerque and RC Liege were both subject to the Belgian FA’s transfer certificate reaching the French Football Federation by 2 August. RC Liege doubted US Dunkerque’s ability to pay the agreed sum, so they failed to apply to the Belgian FA to issue the transfer certificate, so both contracts lapsed. Also, RC Liege suspended Bosman with the result that he was unable to play in the new season.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁷ Titford, ‘Final Frontier’, *WSC*, issue 77, July 1993.

⁵²⁸ Roger Blanpain and Rita Inston, *The Bosman Case: the end of the transfer system?* (London: Bruylants, 1996), pp. i-xiii.

Bosman responded by bringing an action before the Belgian court suing RC Liege for damages. His claim was based on two points. Firstly, he alleged that RC Liege were in breach of contract. Secondly, he called into question the legality of the transfer system. This second point involved one of the fundamental principles of European Community law, namely that of the freedom of movement of workers within its member states.⁵²⁹ The case took five years to reach its conclusion. The judgement was delivered by the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In it Advocate General Carl Otto Lenz ruled that Article 48 of the Treaty of Rome prohibited ‘a football club from being able to demand and receive payment of a sum of money when one of its players whose contract has expired is engaged by another club’. He also ruled that Article 48 prohibited ‘the access of players who are nationals of another member state to the club competitions organised by the national and international associations from being restricted’.⁵³⁰ In short, a transfer fee was not required if a player was out of contract and players were free to move between the member states of the European Union.

The possible effect of the ruling was seen in different ways. Colin Randall, in *The Daily Telegraph*, stated that the ‘multi-million pound soccer transfer market was thrown into disarray’.⁵³¹ He claimed that although the ruling only applied to clubs of different member states, the British football authorities might have to change the domestic rules to bring them in line, pointing out that the lawyers acting for Bosman believed this to be the case. There was a lot of concern about the plight of smaller clubs who depended on transfer fees

⁵²⁹ Ibid., pp. xiii-xiv.

⁵³⁰ Ibid., p.xiii

⁵³¹ Colin Randall, ‘Judges’ Ruling Leaves Soccer Transfer System In Disarray’, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December 1995.

received from selling players to bigger clubs.⁵³² However, Christopher Davies, in the same newspaper, said that, ‘it appeared that players transferring between clubs in the same country would not be eligible for a free transfer.’⁵³³ This meant that smaller clubs would still get their fee unless a player was transferred abroad. The interpretation of the ruling published in the *Daily Mirror* focussed on the amount of money that top players could receive in signing-on fees and pay increases. Using Manchester United’s Ryan Giggs as an example, it claimed that he would ‘be able to hang up his boots at the age of 30 – with up to £40 million in the bank.’⁵³⁴ The article also predicted, correctly as it turned out, that ‘the trickle of foreign imports ... into English football will now become a torrent.’⁵³⁵

The two main points of the ECJ ruling would have an impact in terms of implications for transfer fees and players’ wages, but it turned out that it would be far more important as far as the international movement of players was concerned. Players moving out of contract could demand more wages because they knew that the buying club would not have to pay a transfer fee. The clubs as employers would try to lock players into long contracts to guarantee a large transfer fee should a player wish to leave. This was a policy which was already being pursued by Tottenham Hotspur and Wimbledon. Also, contracts could be renewed before expiry to prevent a player leaving for free. However, the Bosman Ruling had only a limited impact on transfer fees because it only applied to those players who were out of contract and were nationals of an EU member state. In 1995 in England, only ten per cent of transfers involved out of contract players. Also, fears that the Bosman Ruling would

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Christopher Davies, ‘Smaller Clubs Relieved At Court’s Transfer Ruling’, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 December, 1995.

⁵³⁴ Mike Walters, ‘Fill Yer Boots!’, *Daily Mirror*, 16 December 1995.

⁵³⁵ Ibid.

have a negative effect on lower division clubs, leading to their demise or reduction to part-time status, proved to be unfounded because most of the big money transfers of English players to clubs in other member states involved players who were already playing for Premier League clubs.⁵³⁶

As far as the freedom of movement between member states was concerned, before this time UEFA had operated what was known as the ‘three plus two foreigner rule’. This stipulated that clubs could only field three foreign players plus two ‘assimilated’ players in European club competitions. An ‘assimilated’ player was one who had lived in that country for five years or one that had played in that club’s youth team.⁵³⁷ Previously there was no limit, although, as we shall see, in England there had once been an effective ban on the recruitment of non-British players, which was rescinded in 1978. The ECJ held that rules limiting the number of players from other member states whom a club can play in a match were discriminatory and thus inapplicable according to the terms of Article 48.⁵³⁸ Following the ruling, players were now free to move between states and were drawn to England by the potentially lucrative earnings available, by the reputation of the Premiership as an exciting and entertaining league, and to further their careers. The Ruling also opened opportunities for English clubs to improve their performance in European competition as they were now free to sign an unlimited number of foreign players.⁵³⁹ The journalist Joe Lovejoy said that the Bosman Ruling was probably the most important of the recent changes in English football.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁶ P. E. Morris, S. Morrow, and P.M. Spink, ‘E C Law and Professional Football: Bosman and its Implications’, *Modern Law Review* (1996), vol. 59, p.902.

⁵³⁷ Morris, Morrow, and Spink, ‘E C Law’, *Modern Law Review* (1996), vol. 59, p.894 fn 4.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.896.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.902.

⁵⁴⁰ Joe Lovejoy, interview with the author, phone, 6 September 2012.

‘Football’s Coming Home’: Euro 96 and its implications

In 1996 the European Championships were held in England. After the disappointment of failing to qualify for the 1994 World Cup finals in the United States, the fact that England was host to the next major competition gave an automatic boost of optimism and a chance to revive the international team’s fortunes after Graham Taylor’s disastrous leadership. As hosts England did not have to play through the qualifying rounds and this gave new manager Terry Venables less pressure and the opportunity to forge the players into a unit capable of making a serious impact on the competition.

Set in a broader context, the early 1990s had seen economic recession, negative equity and the repossession of homes, the Gulf War, bloodshed in Bosnia, the unpopular ‘poll tax’ or community charge, redundancy and unemployment. However, this started to change towards the middle of the decade as the economic situation improved and there was a more positive mood. This was encapsulated and reflected by ‘Britpop’ as British bands such as Blur and Oasis gained popularity. With the mood now more positive in an age called ‘Cool Britannia’, Euro 96 was something to look forward to.

There was a new generation of fans who could enjoy the facilities of the new post-Taylor stadiums and, thanks to the promotion of the Premiership by Sky television, football was now more popular than it had been for decades.⁵⁴¹ Simultaneous to this was the Fantasy Football phenomenon. This was a competition which started in the newspapers whereby

⁵⁴¹ Ward and Williams, *Football Nation*, p.312.

the entrant had an imaginary amount of money with which to pick a team. Sometimes groups of friends or work colleagues organised their own fantasy football leagues within the competition. This had the effect of giving people who do not usually attend football matches more interest in the game. To coincide with the tournament the comedians and hosts of the *Fantasy Football* television programme David Baddiel and Frank Skinner teamed up with the pop band The Lightning Seeds to record *Three Lions On A Shirt*. In so doing the worlds of pop music, television and popular culture blended in a similar way to that which had happened six years earlier for 'Italia '90' with Pavarotti's *Nessum Dorma* and New Order's *World In Motion*. The Baddiel, Skinner and the Lightning Seeds record was released and went straight to the top of the charts. It arguably eclipsed all previously released football songs in terms of its universal popularity, and its refrain of 'it's coming home, it's coming home, football's coming home' rang around stadiums during the tournament. It is also worth remembering that the new map of Europe gave some newly independent nations their first appearance in such a competition – Croatia's first since the break-up of Yugoslavia, the Czech Republic's first since the break-up of Czechoslovakia, and Russia's first since the break-up of the USSR.

England kicked off on 8 June at Wembley against Switzerland. The international team's reputation for starting major competitions slowly was in evidence again at Euro 96. The 1-1 draw against the Swiss was disappointing. England's second game was a week later against Scotland, a match that drew a lot of interest due to the history between the two countries. With England leading 1-0, David Seaman in the England goal crucially saved a penalty, then Paul Gascoigne produced one of his most memorable moments, juggling the ball over Colin Hendry before volleying into the Scotland net to make it 2-0. England's

third and final group match was against Holland on 18 June. With the knowledge that defeat would end England's involvement in the competition, the team put on one of the nation's best ever footballing performances, crushing the Dutch 4-1. Now through to the knock-out stages England faced Spain in the quarter-finals. A goalless draw resulted in a penalty shoot-out, which England won 4-2, Stuart Pearce's successful strike laying to rest the ghost of his penalty miss against West Germany at Italia 90.⁵⁴² In the semi-finals England played Germany. An early goal by Alan Shearer was cancelled out by an equaliser from Stefan Kuntz and penalties loomed again. Both teams scored all of their first five, but in the sudden death series Gareth Southgate's effort was saved resulting in England's exit from the competition.

Once again England had been glorious in defeat, reaching the semi-final of a major competition and being eliminated only by the narrowest of margins. The importance of Euro 96 was that it promoted England as a football destination. With the money that was by this time being generated by the Premiership, promotion by satellite television, and stadiums that were newly rebuilt and safer, the modern footballer could now see England as a good place to ply his trade and earn vast fortunes. The fact that England had done well in the competition meant that ambitious players knew that they had the opportunity to play alongside teammates who were good footballers and that the English game was in a healthy state. Just six months after the Bosman Ruling Euro 96 placed England firmly in the shop window as a desirable country in which to play football.

⁵⁴² Davies, *FA Confidential*, p.85, p.87, p. 91 and p.93.

England's foreign legion

As we have seen, there was an effective ban on the import of non-British players that had been in place since 1931 and this had contributed to isolationism in the English game. Although this was reversed by the Football League in 1978 the number of non-British players playing in the Football League remained very low, although it should be pointed out that many English clubs included Welsh and, in particular, Scottish players. The arrival of overseas players such as Argentinian World Cup stars Ossie Ardiles and Ricardo Villa at Tottenham Hotspur and Dutch stars Arnold Muhren and Frans Thijssen at Ipswich Town in the late 1970s might have been a foretaste of the internationalisation to come, but the total number of non-British players playing for English clubs remained small until the lucrative earnings that could be made playing in the Premiership became apparent. During 1992/1993, the Premiership's first season, there were just eleven foreign registrations with Premiership clubs. These were the Danish pair John Jensen (Arsenal) and Peter Schmeichel (Manchester United), the Swedes Anders Limpar (Arsenal) and Roland Nilsson (Sheffield Wednesday), the Frenchman Eric Cantona (Leeds United then Manchester United), the Dutch Michel Vonk (Manchester City) and Hans Segers (Wimbledon), the Russian Andrei Kanchelskis (Manchester United), the Norwegian Gunnar Halle (Oldham Athletic), and the Czechs Jan Stejskal (Queen's Park Rangers) and Ludek Miklosko (West Ham United).⁵⁴³ This figure grew from eleven in 1992/1993 to sixty-six in 1995/1996 and 166 by 1998/1999 and continued to grow. By the opening day of 2000/2001 there were over 400 non-British players in all English leagues.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴³ Joe Lovejoy, *Glory Goals and Greed: twenty years of the Premier League* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2011), pp.213-214.

⁵⁴⁴ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.396; Patrick McGovern 'Globalization Or Internationalization?: foreign footballers in the English League 1946-95', *Sociology* 36/1 (2002), pp.28-30.

This influx led to a dramatic reduction in the number of English players that were fielded as the seasons progressed. Taking the Premiership alone, at the beginning of 2003/2004 out of 220 players who kicked off the season, only eighty-six were English. This figure was down from 170 a decade earlier. In percentage terms this was a reduction from seventy per cent to thirty-nine per cent.⁵⁴⁵ There were a number of reasons behind this trend. It is certainly true that the Bosman Ruling served to increase player mobility. As we have seen, soon after the ruling Euro 96 promoted England as a destination in which to play football. The most important factor, however, was the lucrative earnings that could be made. Gordon Taylor, chief executive of the Professional Footballer's Association, was quoted as saying 'the Premier League is a honeypot for overseas players because of the money available through television'.⁵⁴⁶ It can be seen that a trend which began as a trickle in 1978 increased with the start of the Premiership in 1992 and became a torrent following the Bosman Ruling.

In July 1995, at the time that the ECJ was approaching the end of its long deliberations over Bosman, Chelsea manager Glenn Hoddle signed Ruud Gullit on a free transfer from Sampdoria. As a Dutchman who had played in Italy, Gullit proved the ideal person to lure players at bargain prices from both Holland and Italy. When Hoddle left to take over from Terry Venables as England manager after Euro 96, Gullit was promoted to manager of Chelsea. He soon signed Gianluca Vialli on a post-Bosman free transfer from Juventus. The absence of a transfer fee meant that Vialli earned a reputed £1.5 million a year. Soon West Ham United followed, signing Paulo Futre from AC Milan on a post-Bosman free transfer, paying him wages reported at over £1 million a year.⁵⁴⁷ The impact of the Bosman Ruling

⁵⁴⁵ Ray Ryan, '220 Players Kicked Off The Premiership Last Weekend ... Only 86 Were English', *News Of The World*, 24 August 2003, pp. 80-81.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81.

⁵⁴⁷ Horrie, *Premiership*, p.178.

differed from club to club. Whereas Chelsea could sign good players on free transfers paying huge salaries instead, Manchester United found that they had to offer their best players vast new salary packages and long-term contracts to prevent them from going abroad. This had the effect of almost doubling the club's wages bill. It was a similar story at Arsenal where within a year of the Bosman Ruling the wage bill leapt from £8.7 million to £13.3 million.⁵⁴⁸

While Gullit proved important in influencing foreign players to sign for Chelsea, the same could be said for Arsene Wenger at Arsenal. Wenger arrived as manager of Arsenal in September 1996 and set about building a cosmopolitan team comprised almost completely of foreign players.⁵⁴⁹ The first to arrive was Patrick Vieira, a French midfielder signed from AC Milan for £3.5 million, around whom Wenger would build his side. This signing was soon followed by another Frenchman, a young striker with great potential called Nicolas Anelka from Paris Saint-Germain for £500,000, who could play alongside Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp who had already been signed by previous manager Bruce Rioch. After finishing third in his first season, Wenger spent the summer of 1997 signing more foreign players, including French defensive midfielder Emmanuel Petit from Monaco for £2.5 million, and Dutch winger Marc Overmars from Ajax for £7 million. In his first two years at Arsenal, Wenger would go on to recruit eighteen players of whom all except one was foreign. During the same period he sold seventeen players of whom all except four were English.⁵⁵⁰ Arsenal were transformed from the 'boring, boring Arsenal' of the 1970s and 1980s into a side that by the end of the 1990s played attractive, exciting football due to the

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 178-179.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., pp.179-180.

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., p.180.

skills of foreign players. The experiences of Chelsea and Arsenal proved that an influential player or manager with extensive overseas connections could be important in recruiting foreign players and this in turn played a part in the growing internationalisation of English football.

Wenger introduced methods at Arsenal which marked a sea change in English football. His approach was completely different to what the English game had been used to. While in Japan, Wenger had ‘marvelled at the virtual absence of obesity, and concluded that rice, fish, and fermented bean products, all washed down with high-in-anti-oxidants green tea, were exactly what modern footballers needed ... he informed Arsenal’s slack-jawed players that the lager, chips, and Black Forest gâteau days were over’.⁵⁵¹ He also introduced mostly French health and wellness gurus. One was Philippe Boixel, who believed in a lateral thinking first approach to physical injury. The players were baffled. Tony Adams describes his initial reaction to Wenger: ‘what does this Frenchman know about football? He wears glasses and looks more like a schoolteacher. He’s not going to be as good as George [Graham, Arsenal’s former manager].’⁵⁵² However, Adams would go on to alter this view: ‘he has a lot of qualities, he is a thinker, a listener, and he cares a great deal about the welfare of players ... he is certainly an educated man, well qualified, and I think he knows professional footballers inside out. He can tell just by how a player runs whether he is fully fit or not.’⁵⁵³ Bergkamp confirms how much things changed under Wenger: ‘with Arsene, everything changed completely. The training, the diet, the drinking, everything.’⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ ‘Guru Of The Gunners’ PROFILE: ARSENE WENGER ‘The Football Manager Imposes Total Control On His Players – Except On The Pitch’, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 28 September 2003.

⁵⁵² Adams, *Addicted*, p.149.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.* pp.194-195.

⁵⁵⁴ Bergkamp, *Stillness*, p.138.

Arsenal started winning, convincingly and with style. Arsenal's achievement of winning the FA Cup and Premiership 'double' in 1997/1998 was a triumph of Wenger's methods.⁵⁵⁵

Arsenal were not the only club to adopt this new approach. Keane comments on his experience at Manchester United:

Now, what you eat and drink is carefully measured. Gatorade, fruit and pasta all come highly recommended. Foreign players and coaches, and the dieticians employed by all the top clubs, have convinced us of the need to look after ourselves. Speaking as a convert to this new order, I believe that the disciplines that we now follow have led to significant improvement in our fitness levels and general performance. The English game has been transformed ... for the better. No doubt about that. It scares me looking back at how we were in my early years at Old Trafford.⁵⁵⁶

He does comment nostalgically: 'we'd had a lot of fun in the drinking era and the part of me that hankered after the rowdy banter and camaraderie of the best drinking sessions missed those gloriously irresponsible nights.'⁵⁵⁷ Liverpool player Steven Gerrard echoed a similar change in approach at his club when the French Gerard Houllier took over from Roy Evans. He quotes the new management regime: 'eat what we tell you. Drink what we tell you. We want you physically ready for the first team. You are not far away.'⁵⁵⁸ He remembers, 'things moved fast. A dietician spoke to us. He checked me over and ordered me to cut out fast food. My eating habits weren't too bad before, but I knew I had to get fitter. No more burgers.'⁵⁵⁹

⁵⁵⁵ 'Guru Of The Gunners', *Sunday Telegraph*, 28 September 2003.

⁵⁵⁶ Keane, *Keane*, p.108.

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.197.

⁵⁵⁸ Gerrard, *Gerrard*, p.84.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.84-85.

Bobby Barnes, former player and Deputy Chief Executive of the Professional Footballer's Association, commented:

it's not so long ago that players would sit down at lunchtime and have a pre-match steak, and nowadays it's very much pasta-based and quick carbs and slow release carbs. In terms of the nutrition the players eat every day, a lot of clubs now – particularly the top clubs - they would insist that the players come to work in the morning, they have breakfast, the club can control what they have for breakfast, they will have lunch together, so there's far more of an input from the clubs now into the nutrition of their players, and quite rightly so ... you wouldn't buy a machine and leave it out in the rain and use dodgy oil on it, would you? That's quite a good analogy for footballers.⁵⁶⁰

He also pointed out:

it's a far more scientific business now, and it's tailored to individual players ... players now wear heart monitors when they train, clubs can have an idea of when they're reaching their maximum capacity, how far they've run, they've got statistics now that actually look at effectiveness of where they've run, what they do, so it really is a million miles away ... nowadays there's a lot more individual tailored fitness plans for players, and I think that you can see the benefits of that because players are fitter.⁵⁶¹

Thus it can be seen that there was a marked shift away from drinking and towards athleticism and continental ideas, with an approach that was more aesthetically pleasing than that seen in English football in the past. The methods introduced as part of this continental approach also had the effect of improving the perception of the football manager in the English game.

⁵⁶⁰ Bobby Barnes, interview with the author, London, 15 June 2015.

⁵⁶¹ Ibid.

Internationalisation was not confined to the big fashionable clubs. While Wenger set about moulding his Arsenal side into a sleek continental outfit, in the unlikely surroundings of Teesside the Italian Fabrizio Ravanelli and the Brazilian Juninho helped Middlesbrough reach the finals of both the Coca-Cola Cup and the FA Cup in 1996/1997. Unfortunately for Middlesbrough, these players could not prevent relegation from the Premiership. As an aside, Middlesbrough's bitter-sweet experience of reaching two cup finals and being relegated in the same season remains unique in English football. The trend of more and more foreigners playing for English clubs continued. In 2002, Fulham fielded a team including only one Englishman (Lee Clark), and towards the end of the decade, in December 2009, Portsmouth played Arsenal and out of twenty-two players on the pitch, not one of them was English.⁵⁶²

Neither was this growing trend of internationalisation limited to Europe. The development of satellite and digital television effectively globalised both the UEFA Champions League and the Premiership. Europe's top football competitions proved popular in Africa, in Australasia, and in South-East Asia. There was a desire to exploit fresh markets and Manchester United opened up megastores in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore and toured the Far East and the United States in order to establish themselves in a global marketplace.⁵⁶³ FIFA's decision to award the 1994 World Cup finals to the United States had been partly due to a desire to boost football's popularity there. The same would apply to the decision to award the 2002 finals to South Korea and Japan. Football's popularity throughout the world was increasing due to global satellite broadcasting, but there was also a keen desire

⁵⁶² Lovejoy, *Glory, Goals And Greed*, pp.213-214.

⁵⁶³ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.397.

to exploit this interest by penetrating new markets. There was an almost missionary zeal to spread the good news of ‘the beautiful game’ to the unconverted parts of the world, in a move comparable in mood to the colonizers and settlers who spread Christianity throughout the expanding British Empire in the nineteenth century.

There was of course an ulterior motive in that this expansion was due to a desire to increase profit margins. In this, the Premiership would prove to be very successful. In 2001 the sale of overseas television rights brought in £178 million but this would increase to £625 million in the deal that would be struck in 2007. Of this figure, £100 million was spent by NowTV to secure the rights for Hong Kong, £60 million by Showtime Arabia to secure the rights for the Middle East and North African markets, and £50 million by Win TV to show games in China. The potential was vast, and Premier League football was proving especially popular in Asia and the Middle East. By 2008, Premier League games were broadcast to over 600 million homes in 202 countries around the world.⁵⁶⁴ In response to this, and to increase potential yet further, in February 2008 the Premier League clubs agreed to look into the suggestion of playing an extra round of matches abroad. The suggestion of ‘the 39th game’ did not materialise, but the issue demonstrated adequately both the impact of the overseas market and the lengths to which clubs were prepared to go to maintain and increase that market. In the 2010 deal, the income from overseas television rights would more than double, from that struck in 2007, to £1.4 billion.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/sport1/hi/football/eng_prem/7232378.stm.last accessed 7 February 2008.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid.

Given the influx of foreign players, especially in the latter half of the 1990s, it is an irony that the iconic player of the age was an Englishman. David Beckham made his first appearance for Manchester United during 1992/1993, coming on as a substitute against Brighton and Hove Albion in a Coca-Cola Cup tie.⁵⁶⁶ He made no other first team appearances that season or the following one, and in 1994/1995 went on loan to Preston North End for a short time. It was during 1995/1996 that he established himself as a regular Manchester United first team player, usually playing on the right of midfield. His first England international appearance occurred in the 1996/1997 season in a World Cup qualifier against Moldova.⁵⁶⁷ Beckham's workrate was always good, but it was his ability with free-kicks that became his hallmark. Beckham perfected the skill of kicking the ball on a curved trajectory with lethal precision, thus creating good scoring opportunities for teammates and havoc among opposing defenders. This skill even gave rise to the title of a comedy-drama film – *Bend It Like Beckham*.

Beckham's rise in status as an icon coincided with a growth of interest in celebrities fuelled by media coverage and celebrity magazines. His marriage to Victoria Adams or 'Posh Spice' of the Spice Girls only served to enhance his position. Like George Best in the 1960s, David Beckham in the 1990s straddled the worlds of sport, fashion, pop music, and popular culture. Companies were keen for someone as famous as Beckham to promote their products – with Beckham as the face, 'Police' sunglasses recorded a sixty-seven per cent increase in UK sales, and after Beckham's ad campaign 'Brylcreem' recorded a fifty per cent increase in sales.⁵⁶⁸ Football's elevated status since the advent of the Premiership

⁵⁶⁶ David Beckham, *My Side* (London: CollinsWillow, 2003), p.495.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.502.

⁵⁶⁸ Peter Conrad, 'Blend It like Beckham', *The Observer Review*, 25 May 2003, p.4.

meant that a top footballer such as Beckham became seen as a marketable commodity, a role that was very lucrative to him. Between 2001 and 2003, Beckham would earn £15 million from advertising alone. The attention he received in an age of high celebrity status included the way he dressed, the names he and Victoria gave to their children, the places they went to on holiday, and where they relaxed on evenings out. For some Beckham reflected a new type of masculinity. The traditional roles of the man as the wage labourer and the woman as the domestic labourer (or housewife) had reflected a patriarchal order which was challenged as women demanded and moved towards equality inside and outside of the home.⁵⁶⁹ This emancipation inevitably called into question the role of the man and the perception of the male gender role. As a result the portrayal of men and masculinity changed to include a softening of image. Film, television and advertising depicted men holding babies or expressing emotions other than anger. Mike O'Donnell and Sue Sharpe, in *Uncertain Masculinities*, stated that 'Nineties Man' was more caring than his predecessors, and fatherhood was important.⁵⁷⁰ This reappraisal coincided with Beckham's rise to fame and he fitted the bill perfectly, a 'Nineties man' who was a loyal husband and devoted father with a classless 'new mannishness' about him. Beckham was a star at a time when masculinity was being reassessed from 'earner and grafter' to 'caring husband and father'.⁵⁷¹ The growth of Beckham's status fitted in with the increased attention given to footballers as football realigned itself into a fashionable area of interest. Also, with the amount of money now coming into football, players could achieve fame and suddenly become very wealthy at a young age. The footballer as high profile celebrity fitted in with the game's new standing and was also part of a wider cultural trend as the role of celebrity in general was enhanced. Those who achieved celebrity status increased in 2000 with the

⁵⁶⁹ Michael O'Donnell and Sue Sharpe, *Uncertain Masculinities: youth, ethnicity and class in contemporary Britain* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.99.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.114.

⁵⁷¹ Taylor, *Association Game*, pp.388-389.

advent of the reality television show *Big Brother*. This, along with a host of similar shows after it, opened up the possibility for *anyone* to become famous. You no longer had to be talented in a particular field or born into royalty to achieve this status. The tabloid press extended their publicity to expose these ‘man in the street’ or ‘woman in the street’ contestants in what was a marked cultural shift in terms of enhancing and broadening the role of celebrity.

The Football Task Force

At this time the Football Task Force was set up. The Task Force had its origins in the Labour Party’s *Charter for Football*, which was produced by Shadow Sports Minister Tom Pendry in 1996. By the latter half of the 1990s, there was in some respects a large ‘feelgood’ factor surrounding English football. The Premiership was turning out to be a huge success, attendances were up, and numerous foreign players were signing for English clubs. However, this positive mood was punctuated by bungs, bribery and misbehaviour. For example, former Nottingham Forest manager Brian Clough was being investigated by the FA for allegedly taking a bung as part of the sale of Teddy Sheringham to Tottenham Hotspur; there were allegations of match fixing surrounding Liverpool goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar; during a game at Selhurst Park Manchester United’s Eric Cantona leapt over an advertisement hoarding surrounding the pitch and attacked a Crystal Palace fan.

The *Charter* was therefore a response to a perceived crisis in the game and also an attempt by Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’ to get to grips with the pace of change in English football. As we have already seen the period saw a substantial increase in admission prices. There was also concern about the price of merchandising because there had been a massive hike

which appeared to exploit fans' loyalty, especially with regard to replica shirts which had become a 'must have' accessory. Meg Henderson, writing in *The Guardian*, commented:

as any parent with football-conscious children will know, replica kits have become big business and dodgy business at that. Where once it was social death to be seen in the 'wrong' jeans or trainers, these days, to wear last season's football top is to risk lifelong banishment from decent society ... football teams and sports manufacturers manipulate this with effortless cynicism.⁵⁷²

The Office of Fair Trading would later allege that football clubs, retail chains, and the shirt manufacturer Umbro were keeping the price of replica shirts artificially high by striking anti-competitive deals between themselves. Phil Evans, competition and retail spokesman for the Consumers' Association, said 'for too long the football industry has been untouched by market regulation. This [OFT action] shows the clubs are beginning to be judged on the same basis as commercial operators'.⁵⁷³ Fans continued to be excluded from representation at all levels of the game. Supporter movements were in existence at some clubs, and they sometimes mobilised as campaign groups to defend their club from bad ownership and unpopular proposals, so why not have fan representation on the board? This would have the dual effect of making supporters feel more involved and challenging the most unpopular of the decisions a board might make. As we shall see, one of the Task Force's achievements was to begin to address this. There was also concern about the increasing gap in terms of levels of income between the Premiership and the three divisions remaining in the Football League because of the disparity that was developing due to the growth in Premiership deals with satellite television broadcasters.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷² Meg Henderson, 'Parents: Offside! Why Parents Should Protest When Football Clubs Keep Changing Their Strips', *The Guardian*, 16 August 1994.

⁵⁷³ Matthew Beard, 'FAIR TRADING: Whistle Blown On Price-Fixing Of Replica Shirts', *The Independent*, 17 May 2002.

⁵⁷⁴ Adam Brown, 'Thinking the Unthinkable or Playing the Game?: the Football Task Force, New Labour and the reform of English football', in eds. Sean Hamil, Jonathan Michie, and Christine Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves: the business of football* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999), p.57.

Even so, football had become very fashionable. It was marketed by Sky in a showbiz manner, fan autobiographies became bestsellers following the huge success of Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*, and a host of celebrities presented themselves as being in some way associated with the game, such as Oasis openly displaying their support for Manchester City.⁵⁷⁵ Even politicians from across the political spectrum, such as Roy Hattersley, Tony Banks, and David Mellor, declared their lifelong attachment to football.⁵⁷⁶ In January 1995 Tony Blair, at the time leader of the Opposition, said that despite the increasing popularity of football, he was concerned at its growing commercialisation, stating that 'there is a market, certainly, but there is a community too. Football clubs are part of it'.⁵⁷⁷

It is worth considering successive prime ministers' attitude to football. In the 1980s, Thatcher had taken no interest in the game whatsoever. It was a working class institution which had given her government nothing but problems. Major, on the other hand, was more positive, being a Chelsea supporter as well as a keen cricket fan. Major describes his affection for Chelsea thus:

I saw Chelsea play for the first time in 1955, the year they won the championship. They beat Wolves 1-0 with a Peter Sillett penalty, and I was hooked for life. I have spent many happy afternoons at Stamford Bridge, and many frustrating ones as well, as Chelsea demonstrated their legendary unpredictability ... supporting Chelsea over the years has been a rollercoaster ride, but it has been a great aid in developing a philosophical view of life.⁵⁷⁸

Blair declared an interest in football and supports Newcastle United. In his autobiography he tells us of an occasion in 1995 when he met Kevin Keegan for a photo-shoot:

⁵⁷⁵ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.366.

⁵⁷⁶ Brown, 'Thinking The Unthinkable', in eds. Hamil, Michie, and Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves*, p.58.

⁵⁷⁷ Patrick Wintour, 'Blair Hits At Greed Of Clubs', *The Guardian*, 16 January 1995.

⁵⁷⁸ Major, *Autobiography*, p.21.

I had also agreed to do a photo-opportunity that morning at a school with Kevin Keegan, then manager of Newcastle United (my team) ... when Kevin said, let's do a heading session in front of the kids (and mass media) ... I said, 'Sure, fine, whatever' ... It was, of course, a monumental risk as it always is when a political leader plays sport in public. No one expects you to be brilliant, but you can't afford to be absolutely rubbish, otherwise you are plainly not fit to run a nation. This wasn't kicking the ball – quite difficult to mess up completely – but head to head. That's a very easy way to make a total idiot of yourself ... of course Kevin was such a professional and could head the ball back to where I could get it, that we did twenty-nine headers on the go, which was impressive.⁵⁷⁹

For a political party as media-sensitive as 'New Labour', the game was ripe for populist policy intervention. The *Charter for Football* included a commitment to create a Task Force drawn from 'the bodies responsible for the national game' with the remit of restructuring the FA, investigating links with television, looking at the treatment of fans and at football's finances, and 'looking to the future'.⁵⁸⁰ It was a big commitment for a party in opposition towards its future policy. This concern with the running of the national game was a contrast to the law and order agenda and hostility that had been shown towards the game in the days of the Thatcher government.

Indeed, there were some striking parallels between football and the Labour Party. Both were born towards the end of the nineteenth century, both promised a chance of escape from working-class life and hardship, both relied on the support of the masses, and, more contemporarily, both had experienced bad times in the 1980s only to re-emerge as fashionable in the 1990s. After a time at a low point, football, just like 'New Labour', came to be seen as 'cool', cosmopolitan, and modern. It should also be pointed out that both had achieved this revival by moving away from their traditional roots in local communities, by

⁵⁷⁹ Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Hutchinson, 2010), p.23.

⁵⁸⁰ Brown, 'Thinking The Unthinkable', in eds. Hamil, Michie, and Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves*, p.58.

heavy dependence on media image, and by embracing corporate business and high finance.⁵⁸¹

In 1997, three months into office, Tony Blair's newly elected Labour government set up the Football Task Force. The Minister for Sport was Tony Banks, and to lead the Task Force Banks appointed David Mellor, the former Conservative minister and host to Radio Five's football phone-in programme *606*.⁵⁸² Mellor's appointment surprised some but was indicative of the new government's aims to be inclusive and adopt a broad centrist political philosophy.⁵⁸³ To promote the Task Force, Banks and Mellor posed on the pitch at The Valley. That morning, Mellor fondly recalled the 1960s, when players travelled to matches with fans on Corporation buses, whereas now they drove to the ground in the latest Ferrari. There was the symbolism of uncontrolled fortunes. Fortunes for players were creating a huge gulf between players and fans which did not exist before. The amount of wealth, he claimed, was contaminating the game.⁵⁸⁴ Players' wages continued to rise and the annual wage bill of the twenty Premier League clubs in 2001/2002 would reach £475 million, a 780% increase since the start of the Premiership nine years earlier. By 2000, over 100 Premier League players were making a basic wage of at least £25,000 per week. Four years later, top wages would escalate to between £50,000 and £100,000 per week.⁵⁸⁵ Fans now had less in common with the players and were aware of this growing disparity, but one can understand how players were attracted from overseas when there was this potential for earnings.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid. p.59, citing M. Brown, *Chelsea Independent* (1998).

⁵⁸² Conn, *Football Business*, p.295. Also cited in Tom Bower, *Broken Dreams: vanity, greed and the souring of British football* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2003), pp. 136-137.

⁵⁸³ Brown, 'Thinking The Unthinkable', in eds. Hamil, Michie and Oughton, *A Game of Two Halves*, p.60.

⁵⁸⁴ Bower, *Broken Dreams*, p.140.

⁵⁸⁵ Taylor, *Association Game*, p.427.

The Task Force was given a specific remit. Seven areas were to be investigated, and separate reports on each were to be submitted to the Minister for Sport at the Department of Culture Media and Sport. The seven areas were racism, disabled access, supporter involvement, ticketing and pricing, merchandising, player involvement in community schemes, and the potential conflict of interest where clubs had been floated as PLCs. The first thing to note is that there were already differences between the aims that had been included in the *Charter* and the remit given to the Task Force. Commitments to restructure the FA, to investigate football's relationship with television, and to consider supporters' rights were now conspicuously absent. While commercial aspects were still included, the remit was narrower in its aims than the commitment to investigate football's finances as set out in the *Charter*.

In addition to this, the call to reopen the Hillsborough Inquiry and to consider the reintroduction of terracing had been rejected by the Home Secretary. The subject of reintroducing safe standing areas at football grounds would be raised a number of times over the next few years. In March 2001 the Football Licensing Authority produced a report on the 'kombi' seating at the Volksparkstadion, Hamburg, relating to the technical merits of convertible seating systems in use at a number of football stadia in Germany.⁵⁸⁶ But successive governments have been dismissive of the idea. In October 2003, Richard Caborn, Minister of State (Sport and Tourism), Department for Culture, Media and Sport, stated that 'the Government's position on standing at football grounds has not changed. Whatever their size, standing terraces are implicitly more dangerous to spectators than seated areas. As such, there are no plans to revise the all seater policy, which applies to all

⁵⁸⁶ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2001-12-11.22361.h> last accessed 14 June 2013

Premier and First Division [later Championship] grounds'.⁵⁸⁷ The issue was raised again nearly a decade later, in December 2012, and Hugh Robertson, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, reiterated the same viewpoint, stating that 'the football authorities, police, and those responsible for safety all continue to support the current policy and a compelling case has not been made to change this'.⁵⁸⁸

The *Charter for Football* had been concerned with structure, organisation, ownership, and control. Once Labour was in office the emphasis had shifted to achieving consensus and improving the image of the game.⁵⁸⁹ It seemed that they had talked a good game while in opposition, but now they were in government many of the original aims were either watered down or conveniently forgotten.⁵⁹⁰ This shift in emphasis is demonstrated by the Government's change of tack over two issues in particular, namely the return of terracing and BSkyB's attempt to take over Manchester United. Discussions between the Task Force and the Government were kept within strict boundaries 'which the Government deemed acceptable', and drafts of reports were checked before release. It was not prepared to enter discussions on the return of terracing for fear of upsetting its public relations image. This demonstrated that 'for New Labour, there was some very old-fashioned controlling going on'.⁵⁹¹

The possibility of BSkyB taking over Manchester United had serious implications for ownership, governance, and finance within the game. However, the Task Force made no comment against the bid to the Minister for Sport, the Secretary of State for Trade and

⁵⁸⁷ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2003-10-14.132402.h> last accessed 14 June 2013

⁵⁸⁸ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2012.12.06b.131788.h> last accessed 14 June 2013

⁵⁸⁹ Brown, 'Thinking The Unthinkable' in eds. Hamil, Michie, and Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves*, p.71.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.62.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.72-73.

Industry, the Office of Fair Trading, or the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Adam Brown, a member of the Football Task Force Working Group, argues that ‘the Task Force’s remit was inadequate as it was susceptible to interpretation and therefore to becoming a tool for certain interests, and the membership of the Task Force allowed those powerful interests in the game to dominate and effectively veto the wishes of the majority’.⁵⁹²

In the circumstances it was inevitable that the Task Force ran into problems. To start with, its budget was only £100,000, a figure ‘derisively insufficient’ for tackling football’s shortcomings.⁵⁹³ The majority on the Task Force agreed that the Premier League breakaway had sliced off too much of football’s money and there had to be a return to the days of greater redistribution of revenue. This was necessary to reverse the alienation of traditional fans by football clubs whose only concern seemed to be to maximise profits on ticket sales and merchandising, thus compelling alienated fans ‘to pay through the nose’.⁵⁹⁴ The FA and the leagues, including Football League and non-League, opposed greater redistribution. Even the Football League could not argue its own corner for fear of upsetting the Premier League clubs, whose co-operation was needed to partake in the League Cup, which was an important source of television revenue.⁵⁹⁵

Andy Burnham, the Task Force administrator, did however manage to get an agreement from the Premier League that 5% of the next television deal would be redistributed to improve grassroots football facilities, which had been neglected despite the amount of money now around at the top of the game. The pledge was finally agreed and included in

⁵⁹² Ibid., p.74

⁵⁹³ Bower, *Broken Dreams*, p.140.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 140-141.

⁵⁹⁵ Conn, *Beautiful Game?*, pp. 133-134.

the report *Investing In The Community* in January 1999.⁵⁹⁶ This funding led to the setting up of the Football Foundation. The purpose of the Football Foundation was to manage this money and administer it to the grassroots. A comparison can be made with the Football Trust, which also administers money to pay for improving facilities at grassroots level, except that the Football Trust gained its revenue from the pools companies.

The figure of 5% of the Premier League's television deal amounted to £20 million a season. This was matched by the FA and by the government from various lottery pots. The government would only agree to it if the Premier League honoured their commitment. The Premier League had informally threatened to withhold their contribution because they wanted the government to abandon the idea of appointing a regulator. The government decided to make a contribution in order to force the Premier League into doing so.⁵⁹⁷ Conn points out that the arrangement was only secured in the first place because the Premier League faced a court challenge from the Office of Fair Trading regarding the clubs' right to operate as a cartel to sell their TV rights exclusively to Sky. Burnham argued that their case would be more convincing if they were sharing their wealth with the wider amateur game.⁵⁹⁸

Another achievement of the Task Force was the establishment of Supporters Direct. This is a body backed by the government that was set up to encourage supporters to form trusts. Football Trusts involved supporters paying into a fund which could be used to give financial support to their club, to buy shares, and, if the club agreed, to elect a director onto the board. The idea came from the belief that football clubs should not be companies to be bought and

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p.134.

⁵⁹⁷ Bower, *Broken Dreams*, pp. 204-205.

⁵⁹⁸ Conn, *Beautiful Game?*, pp. 134-135.

sold by businessmen, but run by mutual bodies of supporters as sporting institutions vital to their local communities. The idea was pioneered by Brian Lomax, a Northampton Town fan and co-founder of the Northampton Town Supporters' Trust (NTST), who was himself elected on to the board of his club as Trust representative. He tells us that the NTST had been set up in January 1992 following a large public meeting held in response to a financial crisis at the club. Its two main objectives were to raise money to save the club, but not under its then regime, and to gain 'effective involvement and representation for supporters in the running of the club.'⁵⁹⁹ The issue of supporters' trusts was close to the heart of any fan disillusioned by what they perceived as greed shown by some of the Premiership clubs.⁶⁰⁰

Lomax tells us of the philosophy and aims of Supporters Direct:

The aim of Supporters Direct is to offer support, advice and information to groups of supporters who wish to play a responsible part in the life of the club they support. All models used and recommended will be based on democratic, mutual, and not-for-profit principles. Legitimate objectives will include:

Influence – the formation and running of representative bodies for supporters.

Ownership – the acquisition of shares in the football club to pool the voting power of individual supporters to further the aims and objects of the Supporters' Trust.

Representation – securing the democratic election of supporters' representatives to the Boards of Directors of individual football clubs.

By these means we hope to improve the whole of the football industry.⁶⁰¹

A general observation can be made about the intentions of those forming such groups. The social scientists Jamie Cleland and Kevin Dixon state: 'across the recent history of supporters' groups, trusts, and clubs, most have been created because of a short-term crisis at a particular club, but the longevity of them suggests some form of long-term focus,

⁵⁹⁹ Brian Lomax, 'Democracy And Fandom: Developing a Supporters' Trust at Northampton Town FC', in Jon Garland, Dominic Malcolm and Michael Rowe (eds.), *The Future Of Football?: Challenges for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), p. 80.

⁶⁰⁰ Conn, *Beautiful Game?*, p.135.

⁶⁰¹ Brian Lomax, 'Episode One: May the Force Be with You!', *Soccer & Society*, 2000, p.21.

whether that be by acquiring shares or gaining some other form of inclusion at the respective club.’⁶⁰²

Who was being greedy – the clubs, the agents, or the players? To a degree it was all three. The clubs were by this time receiving lucrative amounts from live television coverage, but that did not stop them charging double or treble the amount for tickets compared with only a few years earlier, nor did it stop them charging extortionate amounts for replica shirts. With agents, some were not above inventing a potential move or deliberately unsettling a player so he wished to move, and when a deal was struck their percentage of that players’ defence of their earnings, as stated in the previous chapter, but they continued to want more due to the ever increasing revenue that the clubs enjoyed. Was there a case for the return of a maximum wage? Possibly so, as long as it was set at a very high level because no-one wants a return to the days when players were virtual slaves. It would have brought an end to spiralling wage inflation, and freed up more money which, if the clubs were sensible, could have been used to benefit supporters. There was the danger, however, that at some clubs any extra money would simply end up in the pockets of unscrupulous owners.

Evidence that many fans wanted some direct involvement in the running of their clubs is borne out by the fact that the NTST were asked to advise and assist with the formation of other such Trusts at AFC Bournemouth, Kettering Town, Middlesbrough, and Plymouth Argyle. Hot on the heels of these, it also helped to advise groups who wished to form Trusts at Chester City, Lincoln City, and Manchester City.⁶⁰³ More recently there have been other

⁶⁰² Jamie Cleland and Kevin Dixon, ‘Black And Whiter’: The Relative Powerlessness Of ‘Active’ Supporter Organization Mobility At English Premier League Football Clubs’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 16, no. 4, 2015.

⁶⁰³ Brian Lomax, ‘Supporter Representation On The Board: the case of Northampton Town FC’ in eds. Hamil, Michie, and Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves*, p.196.

examples of clubs passing into community ownership.⁶⁰⁴ Greater fan involvement at a time when more wealth and power get concentrated into the hands of a very few clubs is one of the paradoxes of modern football. An article in *When Saturday Comes* makes the point that some clubs have survived only due to their supporters' trusts, and names Exeter City as an example. It concludes that, 'as the financial position of more clubs deteriorates, the work of fans and trusts is going to increase in importance if others are to survive.'⁶⁰⁵

On commercial issues the Task Force was less successful, however. On the price of match tickets, the cost of merchandising, and the issue of market flotations, no agreement was reached. The majority of the Task Force called for firm regulation by the FA and by the leagues, including Football League and non-League, and for a 'Football Audit Commission' to 'develop rules to steer football in the direction of more equality, better management of clubs, [and] more responsiveness to supporters and the grass-roots'.⁶⁰⁶ This idea was rejected, and the FA and the leagues called instead for an 'Independent Football Commission'. This would be funded by the football bodies themselves and rejected the notion of outside regulation. The government, unwilling to legislate or upset football's governing bodies, backed the latter.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁴ At non-League Lewes financial problems during the 2009/2010 season led to three winding-up petitions from HM Revenue and Customs in the space of four months. A group of six supporters calling themselves Rooks 125 – Rooks because The Rooks is the nickname of Lewes FC and 125 because 2010 marked the club's 125th anniversary – having witnessed the club's financial difficulties worked hard to take the club into community ownership. On 8 July 2010, Lewes were taken out of private ownership and placed into a member-based Community Benefit Society called Lewes Community Football Club, consisting of benefactors and members from the club's former Management Committee. The six members of Rooks 125 formed the inaugural Executive Board and then opened up a wider membership of LCFC to all the club's supporters in the 2011/2012 season. All board members are now elected by the whole of the ownership. The club reached its target of break-even within five years of becoming community-owned and has a solid foundation on which to build for the future. It has over 1,000 owners and a good reputation for community work.
<http://www.lewesfc.com/club/history-of-lewes-fc> last accessed 9 June 2016.

⁶⁰⁵ Ken Gall, 'Trust In Me', *When Saturday Comes*, issue 203, January 2004, p.23.

⁶⁰⁶ Conn, *Beautiful Game?*, p.136.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

An article by Steve Greenfield and Guy Osborn summarised the Task Force's achievements or otherwise. Labour's motives were not hard to detect: 'football was seen as a way of connecting with the public and this was a useful tool for New Labour to assert their populist credentials.'⁶⁰⁸ They make the point that there were differences between the original proposals of the *Charter* and the remit given to the Task Force, but there were positive aspects. It should not be forgotten that it was the first time the government had become involved in the running of the national game since the Chester Report of 1968. The introduction of the Supporters Direct initiative was good, but the Football Offences and Disorder Act (1999) and the Football Disorder Act (2000) meant that a banning order could be imposed simply on the 'reasonable suspicion' of a police officer rather than proof of a criminal conviction. To conclude, Greenfield and Osborn state:

Overall, New Labour have adopted a somewhat contradictory attitude to football during their first term, too often driven by their eagerness to provide a populist appeal both to football fans and the law-and-order brigade. On the one hand they have shown fan-friendly credentials via the DTI response to BskyB's attempted takeover of Man Utd and their support for the mutuality of ownership through Supporters Direct. On the other hand, the civil liberties of fans have been eroded by some extraordinarily rigorous provisions.⁶⁰⁹

At the end of the day, the Task Force's achievements were hampered by its lack of unity, because of football's governing bodies' unwillingness to co-operate fully, and because weakness on the part of the government meant that they did not impose the necessary legislation on those bodies to redistribute wealth, improve club management, make the game more accountable to supporters, and to make a greater contribution to assist the game at grassroots level.

⁶⁰⁸ Steve Greenfield and Guy Osborn, 'No More Playing To The Crowd', *When Saturday Comes*, issue 173, July 2001, p. 20.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p.21.

Conclusion

The internationalisation of the English game has taken place within a broader context of greater international travel due to cheap airlines, increasing global communications due to the internet, and the drawing together of the group of states that make up the European Union. This internationalisation is another area in which changes in football have reflected wider developments. They were also driven by changes within the game. This interaction between internal and external factors led to the process best described as 'internationalisation'. This is a better term than 'globalisation' for two reasons. Firstly, the term globalisation often refers to the expanding web of networks, such as media broadcasting, electronic communication, and banking, and the spread of football's popularity is different in nature because it has not been instant, as those things are. Secondly, there are still large parts of the globe, such as Australasia and the United States, where football, although growing, is still of secondary importance to other sports. One of the main factors within the game was the transformation and growth of the European Cup into the UEFA Champions League. A major driving force behind this development was the desire by the top clubs to make a certain level of money because these changes accommodated their financial ambitions while at the same time they staved off the threat of a breakaway European 'Super League'.

The arrival of many foreign players in England was driven primarily by the lucrative earnings that could be made, but the Bosman Ruling also played a part in that it made international movement easier. It should perhaps be pointed out that the Bosman Ruling would not have led to a migration of good players to England if the prospects were not attractive. We have also seen how a continental manager with good overseas connections, such as Ruud Gullit or Arsene Wenger, could play an important role in attracting top

players. The expansion of the UEFA Champions League had the effect of diminishing the importance of the domestic cup competitions and also of reducing competitiveness in the Premiership as the top clubs earned vast revenues from Champions League games televised to global audiences by satellite television broadcasters. As the 2000s progressed the clubs that finished in the Premiership's top four places became a foregone conclusion because of this.

The arrival of many foreign players had a positive effect in terms of introducing continental flair and style. However, their arrival also caused concern that they might be preventing young English players from getting adequate opportunities to develop and progress in the game. This problem was in turn detrimental to the chances of the England international team. We need at this point to remind ourselves that one of the arguments used by the FA for backing the Premiership breakaway was to improve England's chances, but the reality has been that satellite television revenues and the Bosman Ruling between them had the opposite effect as England's progress in major competitions has shown no sign of improvement and the progress of English players has been hindered. Euro 96 stands out as the last major competition in which England progressed to the semi-final stage. It was just after the Bosman Ruling and England's subsequent disappointing performances are probably not a coincidence. The Premiership, rather than being a breakaway First Division, has transmuted into a global league that happens to be played in England. This has been to the detriment of English players and the performance of the international team.

After the arrival of foreign players and the elevation of the Premiership, the Task Force was formed in an attempt to rein in football's most extravagant excesses but this was only partially successful. The appointment of Mellor to lead it reflected an inclusive mood as

Tony Blair set out on a course that could be best described as ‘Broad Centre’ in the early days of his government. However, its impact was limited by its own internal divisions, by football’s authorities being unenthusiastic about implementing some of the proposals, and the government - due to how it would be portrayed - being unwilling to introduce legislation that would force those authorities to implement those proposals. ‘New Labour’ in opposition had been very media-sensitive, but now they were in government a fear of upsetting that media now seemed to paralyse them.⁶¹⁰

Despite the appearance of so many footballers from abroad, it was an English player who was the star of the age. The rise of David Beckham as an icon coincided with the growth and changing nature of celebrity status throughout the country as celebrity gained a higher profile due to its promotion by magazines and the popular press. Beckham’s popularity also emerged at a time when perceptions of manhood and masculinity were changing and he fitted easily into a role not occupied by previous stars.

This shift was occurring at the same time as continental influences challenged previously held perceptions in other ways. In broader terms the country and its people were becoming more influenced by Europe. Due to cheap airlines, people were holidaying abroad in places that their parents had not been able to afford and they were becoming more familiar with other countries and their cultures. The nation states of Europe were drawing ever closer together as the European Union emerged from the European Economic Community and, following the demise of the Soviet bloc and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, became a larger entity with more member states, lower trade barriers, and a common currency as it drew together to become a powerful alliance in a world entering a new millennium. With

⁶¹⁰ Brown, ‘Thinking The Unthinkable’ in eds. Hamil, Michie, and Oughton, *A Game Of Two Halves?*, p.71.

the number of players and managers coming to England from the continent, there was a certain inevitability that in their wake would come businessmen from overseas who would take over English football clubs. It is to those that we turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

Foreign ownership

*I think you've got modern football,
which is the closest thing to 19th century unfettered, unregulated
capitalism we've got because not only does money dominate, money
creates power, power is centralising in the hands of the powerful and rich*

- Alan Fisher, sociologist⁶¹¹

My friend, we're richer than God

- Sheik Mansour, Manchester City owner⁶¹²

*Nobody in the world will decide for me how I run my companies ...
nobody questions my decisions in my business*

- Dr. Assem Allam, Hull City chairman⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Alan Fisher, interview with the author, Tonbridge, 11 June 2015.

⁶¹² Quote from an interview with David Conn; David Conn, *Richer Than God: Manchester City, modern football and growing up* (London: Quercus, 2013 paperback edition), p.133.

⁶¹³ Spoken in response to fans' protests against plan to change name to Hull Tigers. 'Hull City: Tigers' Chairman Dismisses Fans' Protests', www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/24920893 last accessed 12 June 2016.

Introduction

The subject of foreign ownership is part of the broader topic of club ownership, which itself has changed a good deal since the 1960s. The local businessman who ran the local football club in the 1960s with a paternalistic benevolence, while doing his own business interests no harm, did not become involved to make money out of the club. As Anthony King puts it, ‘for traditional directors, the football club was a public utility, and ... these directors did not regard the football club as an appropriate or possible site of capitalist accumulation.’⁶¹⁴ As stated earlier, the rule restricting the maximum dividend for any shareholder in a football club to 7.5 per cent was revoked in 1982 to encourage involvement by those businessmen suitably placed financially to invest in football clubs and who could assist with club finances. This led to a number of entrepreneurs establishing themselves on the boards of football clubs, hoping for a return on their shares – David Dein (Arsenal), Ken Bates (Chelsea), Martin Edwards (Manchester United), and Irving Scholar (Tottenham Hotspur) all serve as examples of this.⁶¹⁵ Thus it can be seen that traditional owners became replaced by a new generation who were more attuned to hard commerce, who saw the football club as a business. The shift in view between ‘traditional’ and ‘new’ is best captured by Arsenal chairman Peter Hill-Wood’s comments about David Dein when he became director at the club. He said, ‘some rich men like to buy fast cars, yachts and racehorses but Dein is more interested in Arsenal. I’m delighted he is, but I still think he’s crazy. To all intents and purposes, it’s dead money.’⁶¹⁶ As the 1990s progressed, the ethos of the free market economy became applied increasingly to football clubs, and, as a result, it soon turned out that Dein was not ‘crazy’.

⁶¹⁴ King, *End Of The Terraces*, p.122.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.123-124; see also pp. 39-40.

⁶¹⁶ *The Sunday Times*, 8 August 1991, cited in King, *End of the Terraces*, p.122.

The advent of the Premiership, and, more importantly, the vast fortunes from satellite television broadcasters made successful football clubs an attractive proposition for potential investors and buyers. Then the Bosman Ruling attracted foreign players, and in their wake managers who brought style and flair to the English game, most notably Arsene Wenger. It was perhaps inevitable that foreign owners would follow the players and managers for a place in the Premiership. As the game itself revived and shifted its alignment to sit closer to commercial interests, and more and more money became involved, the status of club owners increased. In the 2000s owners came from overseas to acquire a stake in what was by now a multi-million pound global industry.

There were a number of preludes to this. In 1981 the Lebanese businessman Sam Hammam took over Wimbledon for an outlay of £40,000.⁶¹⁷ Sixteen years later, in May 1997, the Egyptian businessman Mohamed Al Fayed bought Fulham for £30 million and vowed to turn them into ‘the Manchester United of the South.’⁶¹⁸ The money was to be spent on redevelopment and new players. There were grand plans to buy back the club’s Thames-side ground, Craven Cottage, and turn it into a 25,000-seater stadium and a leisure complex, complete with cinemas, coffee shops and a Harrods food hall. Al Fayed already owned Harrods, the famous West London department store.⁶¹⁹ Fulham had just been promoted from Division Three to Division Two, football’s third tier, and Al Fayed’s buying power put them in the same financial bracket as Premiership sides Blackburn Rovers, Liverpool, Manchester United and Newcastle United.⁶²⁰ In September Al Fayed appointed Kevin

⁶¹⁷ Mihir Bose, ‘Inside Sport: Hammam Cast In Villain’s Role As Dons Seek Happy Ending’, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 August 2001, www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/competition/championship/3010879 last accessed 22 November 2015.

⁶¹⁸ Tony Stenson, ‘On Me Fayed Son’, *The Mirror*, 30 May 1997.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid.

⁶²⁰ Ibid.

Keegan as Chief Operating Officer and Ray Wilkins as Team Manager in what was a clear statement of intent.⁶²¹ Keegan's involvement was a clear sign that the club were aiming for the top. Indeed, Al Fayed outlined a five year plan to get Fulham into the Premiership. During 1997/1998, a lot of money was spent on building the team, but Wilkins departed at the end of the season, leaving Keegan in sole charge. In February 1999, Keegan succeeded Glenn Hoddle as England manager and the challenge of the two jobs proved too much for one person, so Keegan quit Fulham at the end of 1998/1999, having led Fulham to the Division Two title with a record number of points.⁶²² Fulham made their way up the divisions to the Premiership, promoted as Division One champions at the end of 2000/2001.⁶²³ Al Fayed had achieved his five year plan in four years. He did not turn them into 'the Manchester United of the South', but he did achieve sustainable Premier League status as Fulham enjoyed top flight football for thirteen successive seasons, not succumbing to relegation until the end of 2013/2014.

The experience of two clubs in particular, namely Chelsea and Manchester City, shaped the unfolding of the early years of the twenty-first century. Other clubs also went through a process of acquisition by foreign owners, the exact details differing from club to club depending on the owner in question. Both the positive and the negative outcomes need to be considered, together with how the events of these years fit in to a broader picture both internally and externally to football. In order to examine the subject, let us consider the experience of a number of different clubs. We will do this in a broadly chronological order, commencing with that of Wimbledon.

⁶²¹ www.fulhamfc.com/history last accessed 11 November 2015.

⁶²² Ibid.

⁶²³ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.191.

Wimbledon, Milton Keynes Dons and AFC Wimbledon

Wimbledon were elected to the League in 1977. Under Hammam's ownership during the 1980s they made their way up the divisions by use of the long ball game, an effective offside trap, and a hard physical approach. This won few friends among football's purists but it was effective. They were promoted up to the old First Division for the 1986/1987 season. The club's proudest moment came in 1988 when, as underdogs, they won the FA Cup, beating Liverpool 1-0 in the final at Wembley.⁶²⁴ In 1991, the club moved away from its home at Plough Lane and entered a groundshare with Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park. Founder members of the Premier League a year later, Wimbledon struggled on with low crowds, largely due to the groundshare and the continuing failure to return to London SW19. In 1997 club owner Sam Hammam sold his controlling interest to two Norwegian owners, Bjorn Rune Gjelsten and Kjell Inge Rokke.⁶²⁵ Then came the proposal to relocate, not back to their old ground Plough Lane, or anywhere else in the London Borough of Merton, but to Dublin! However, the Irish Football Association blocked the move. Wimbledon were relegated from the Premiership at the end of 1999/2000 and future prospects looked bleak. By this time Hammam had sold the remainder of his shares to the Norwegians and severed his links with the club.⁶²⁶ Without income from Premiership television deals, low crowds, and no progress towards finding a proper home, the future was gloomy.

Milton Keynes is a new town more famous for its concrete cows and rock concerts at the Milton Keynes Bowl than for League football. A town that was created after the Second

⁶²⁴ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Skysports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p.608.

⁶²⁵ news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sport/football/656552.stm, last accessed 4 October 2015.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*

World War, it was unusual in that it was a large urban centre without a Football League club. In other words, there was a population in need of a League football club who were also an untapped source of revenue. Norman Miles, the leader of Milton Keynes Council, said, ‘it could be Southend or Blackpool I suppose, but as a city we would welcome a major football club.’⁶²⁷ Peter Winkelman, who, after an early career in pop music as a record company executive, became a property developer, strove to get permission for a 28,000 all-seater stadium, and entice an existing League club to it. In February 2001, Luton Town had a proposed move to Milton Keynes blocked by the League.⁶²⁸ Six months later Wimbledon applied to relocate there. Winkelman unsurprisingly welcomed Wimbledon’s application, saying ‘Milton Keynes is currently the largest urban population in Europe without a professional football team and we can offer Wimbledon the home it has been looking for since 1991.’⁶²⁹ However, the League unanimously rejected Wimbledon’s plans to relocate. David Burns, the League’s chief executive, said:

League rules clearly state that clubs should play in the conurbation from which they derive their name or are traditionally associated ... to allow this move would have created a precedent at odds with the heritage of football in this country. Our football clubs are the heart and soul of their local communities and that is something that cannot be transferred from place to place.⁶³⁰

Wimbledon fans campaigned vigorously against the proposed move but in January an FA arbitration panel ruled that the League re-examine the case.⁶³¹ Charles Koppel, who had been appointed chairman by Rokke and Gjelsten, complained that the future of Wimbledon

⁶²⁷ Kris Stewart, ‘Merton, Not Milton’, *When Saturday Comes*, issue 169, March 2001, p.14.

⁶²⁸ John Goodbody, ‘League Rejects Wimbledon’s Plan To Move’, *The Times*, 17 August 2001.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶³¹ Gary Jacob, ‘Wimbledon Plans Given Another Life’, *The Times*, 30 January 2002.

looked very bleak and the move was necessary to ensure the club's survival.⁶³² The FA appointed an independent commission to reconsider the issue. Remarkably, despite strong opposition from the League, supporters' groups, and others within the game, permission for the move was granted. Wimbledon fans vowed to fight the decision and some suggested forming a new club and starting again in non-League football.⁶³³

Matthew Breach, chairman of the Dons Trust, began watching Wimbledon in 1984. In an interview with the author he explained his feelings when the move was given approval:

for me, the real thing was just disbelief of what was happening ... it's almost disbelief when the FA commission said, 'yes, you can move.' I remember looking and thinking, 'Oh, what do I do now?' I really did think at the time, 'is that the end of bothering to go and watch football? I might mess around looking at non-League clubs for a bit because you can't go and support some-one else, it wouldn't be right.' And then, shortly after that I had the letter through from the Dons Trust saying, 'we're trying to start a new club. Rather [than] pay your season ticket there [Milton Keynes], would you put it in to us to see if we can start a new team.'⁶³⁴

The old club played their first game at the National Hockey Stadium, Milton Keynes, in September 2003. The following year the name was changed to Milton Keynes Dons. A new club was formed by Wimbledon fans unwilling to sanction the relocation. AFC Wimbledon formed in 2002 and entered the Combined Counties League straight away, making their way up the non-League football pyramid and entering the Football League in 2011, nine years after formation.

⁶³² Ibid.

⁶³³ Nick Szczepanik, 'Wimbledon Fans Plan To Fight On Over Relocation', *The Times*, 29 May 2002.

⁶³⁴ Matthew Breach, interview with the author, phone, 14 September 2015.

The move to Milton Keynes was similar to the franchise system that operates in the United States with NFL teams, who move between cities, from one state to another, and even from one side of the United States to the other, without any voices being raised in opposition. But English football is culturally different in that its football clubs are seen as part of the fabric of a town, city, or local area. They ‘belong’ there, drawing affection from supporters and local people, and become a source of civic pride when they enjoy success, such as winning a trophy or gaining promotion. As sports economist Chris Gratton said when comparing British football to American team sports: ‘there is a stronger history of community attachment to clubs in Britain that makes it much more difficult for clubs to move cities.’⁶³⁵ The proposal for Wimbledon to relocate sixty miles away up the M1 ran counter to this.

Football clubs had relocated before. Most famously, Arsenal moved a long distance within a large city - from Woolwich to Highbury - in 1913, and Millwall, after twenty-five years in which they had played at four different grounds, moved to a permanent home south of the River Thames at The Den in 1910.⁶³⁶ However, in both those cases the clubs simply moved to a different area within the same conurbation. The move from South-West London to Buckinghamshire was a vastly different proposition. The only comparable move had occurred in Scotland, when, in 1995, Meadowbank Thistle moved to Livingston and changed their name accordingly. Wimbledon fans simply had their club taken away from them, and responded by forming AFC Wimbledon. Initially, the broader implication of the move to Milton Keynes were that it could set a precedent, and that English football clubs

⁶³⁵ Chris Gratton, ‘The Peculiar Economics Of English Professional Football’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 1, ch. 1, 2000, p. 26.

⁶³⁶ Eds. Rollins and Rollins, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.60-61, pp. 266-267.

could in time end up like NFL franchises, but the Wimbledon experience proved two things. Firstly, there will be a lot of opposition to any club that tries to relocate from one area to another, and secondly, they could well lose their original fan base, which is a major business concern. The Wimbledon experience should prove a deterrent to the idea of permanent relocation being tried again.

Since the relocation Milton Keynes Dons initially played at The National Hockey Stadium. The name change from Wimbledon to Milton Keynes Dons coincided with the club finishing bottom of the table. Relegated from the second tier to the third, they struggled in League One and were relegated again at the end of 2005/2006. In League Two they reached the play-offs in the first season. The following season was the most successful as the club finished top of League Two, equalling a League record with eighteen away wins, and winning the Johnstone's Paint Trophy. The club then spent seven seasons in League One before getting promoted as runners-up at the end of 2014/2015. Their stay in the Championship, however, lasted only one season as they were relegated. Thus it can be seen that the fortunes of MK Dons have been mixed, but, most importantly, they have never come close to achieving what the old Wimbledon did.⁶³⁷

Chelsea and Roman Abramovich

On 2 July 2003 it was announced that Chelsea had been bought by a wealthy Russian buyer. The club had been saved from the brink of financial ruin, with just five days to repay a debt of £23 million when they had only £10 million in reserve, and the threat of administration

⁶³⁷ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.270-271; Ed. John Anderson, *Skysports Football Yearbook 2015-2016*, London: Headline (2015), pp.236-237; www.soccerbase.com last accessed 9 June 2016.

hung over it.⁶³⁸ The reaction to this as yet unknown buyer was mixed. Tony Banks, lifelong Chelsea fan and former Sports Minister, said to BBC Radio 5, ‘I want to know whether this individual is a fit and proper person to be taking over a club like Chelsea. I would have preferred that the takeover of Chelsea had been done after these questions were answered. A sale has been arranged to an individual we know nothing about.’⁶³⁹ However, a more positive response was also aired by Giles Smith in the *Daily Telegraph*: ‘why the long faces? ... the fear is that Abramovich’s wallet may contain dodgy money ... isn’t immediate and intense concern about the integrity of a Russian oil and aluminium magnate a little precious? ... he appears at first sight to have pretty much everything one would hope for in an incoming owner. He has youth, money, energy, money, a committed interest in sport and lots and lots of money ... and did I mention that he was a billionaire.’⁶⁴⁰

Roman Arkadyevich Abramovich was born on 24 October 1966 in Saratov, a city on the Volga. His parents died while he was in infancy, with the result that he was adopted by an uncle who was a senior official in the Soviet oil industry. He grew up with his new family in an oil-bearing region of Siberia, and went on to study at the Gubkin Oil and Gas Institute in Moscow.⁶⁴¹ He used his hometown contacts, and during the time of the transfer of power from President Mikhail Gorbachev to President Boris Yeltsin he learned how to exploit the changing laws enabling companies to trade on the huge difference between Soviet and Western prices for raw materials.⁶⁴² He made his first money in the early 1990s with a tyre business in Moscow. Becoming skilled at forming companies and dealing with cross-border

⁶³⁸ Harry Harris, ‘5 Days To Meltdown’, *Daily Star*, 3 July 2003.

⁶³⁹ Matt Barlow, ‘Give Ken The Chop – Harris’, *Daily Star*, 3 July 2003; Andrew Cave and Becky Barrow, ‘Is This Man Fit To Run My Club? Asks Banks’, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 2003.

⁶⁴⁰ Giles Smith, ‘Billionaire Buys Chelsea: What’s Wrong With That?’, *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 2003.

⁶⁴¹ James Meek, ‘From Russia With £3.4bn’, *The Guardian*, G2 magazine, 3 July 2003, p.2.

⁶⁴² *Ibid.*

trade, the number of his businesses grew and he started to operate at an international level. In the process, he teamed up with Boris Berezovsky, a trusted friend of Yeltsin.⁶⁴³ In 1995, Berezovsky persuaded Yeltsin to create a new company from some of the best parts of the old Soviet oil industry and sell it to him and Abramovich for \$110 million. It was this deal that catapulted Abramovich from successful businessman to multi-billionaire. The company was in fact worth billions, and Abramovich's hold on it grew at the expense of Berezovsky. He continued to broaden his business interests by purchasing stakes in Russian television, in Aeroflot, and in the Russian aluminium industry.⁶⁴⁴ As another example of how he was able to make a lot of money in a very short space of time, one only has to look at the case of Sibneft. When dividing up the company's \$1.1 billion profit from 2002, the board debated as to how much should be paid to shareholders and how much ploughed back in to the business. It was decided that all but \$100 million would go to shareholders. As owner of 44 per cent of the company Abramovich stood to receive \$480 million in dividends, 'from a company he did little to create.'⁶⁴⁵

As a concluding remark James Meek, in *The Guardian*, comments:

Londoners may be tempted to see Abramovich through the same distorted glass of their own preconceptions, as some street bruiser who muscled in on his billions. Yet the truth is probably more uncomfortable still; that despite page after page of unanswered questions about the origins and nature of his wealth, he cannot be pinned down as ever having done anything illegal, and that he has been able to take hundreds of millions of dollars out of Russia in full public view, with the blessing of his president.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴³ Ibid. p.3.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

Why did Abramovich buy Chelsea? They were an attractive proposition for a number of reasons. Firstly, the club's financial plight meant that they were willing to sell; secondly, they are located in affluent West London where Abramovich could buy a top property; thirdly, they had qualified for the Champions League. From his own point of view, to be the owner of a top English football club when Premiership football was rapidly becoming a global phenomenon gave him international prestige.

When he bought Chelsea for £140 million, Abramovich was the second richest man in Russia and the forty-sixth richest in the world. It remained to be seen whether or not his ownership would be a good thing for Chelsea, but it soon became clear that he was prepared to invest money in improving the team. Having made the purchase of Chelsea complete, Abramovich spent lavishly on bringing in good players. The new arrivals included Glen Johnson (£6 million from West Ham United), Wayne Bridge (£7 million from Southampton), and larger signings in Damien Duff (£17 million from Blackburn Rovers) and Juan Sebastien Veron (£15 million from Manchester United). They also looked overseas to bring Geremi from Real Madrid (£7 million), and Joe Cole followed Johnson from West Ham (£6.6 million). In the first six weeks after Abramovich had taken over, the total amount spent on players neared £60 million.⁶⁴⁷ The spending continued. The Romanian Adrian Mutu (from Parma, £15.8 million), and the Russian Alexei Smertin (from Bordeaux, £3 million) were followed by Hernan Crespo, an Argentinian striker (from Inter Milan, £18 million) at which point Chelsea became the biggest spending club in world football history.⁶⁴⁸

⁶⁴⁷ Jon Brodtkin and Michael Walker, 'Big Spenders Hit £60 Million Mark', *The Guardian*, 6 August 2003.

⁶⁴⁸ Danny Fullbrook, 'Roman Clout Of This World', *Daily Star*, 26 August 2003.

Table 8. *Abramovich's spending spree*

Date	Player	Selling club	Amount
July 2003	Glen Johnson	West Ham United	£6m
July 2003	Geremi	Real Madrid	£7m
July 2003	Wayne Bridge	Southampton	£7m
July 2003	Damien Duff	Blackburn Rovers	£17m
August 2003	Joe Cole	West Ham United	£6.6m
August 2003	Juan Veron	Manchester United	£15m
August 2003	Adrian Mutu	Parma	£15.8m
August 2003	Alexei Smerten	Bordeaux	£3m
August 2003	Hernan Crespo	Inter Milan	£18m
August 2003	Claude Makelele	Real Madrid	£16.8m
January 2004	Scott Parker	Charlton Athletic	£10m
July 2004	Mateja Kezman	PSV Eindhoven	£5.5m
July 2004	Alex	Santos	£5.7m
July 2004	Tiago	Benfica	£10m
July 2004	Petr Cech	Rennes	£9m
July 2004	Arjen Robben	PSV Eindhoven	£12m
July 2004	Paulo Ferreira	Porto	£13.2m
July 2004	Didier Drogba	Marseilles	£24m
July 2004	Ricardo Carvalho	Porto	£19.8m

Sources: Jon Brodtkin and Michael Walker, 'Big Spenders Hit £60 Million Mark', *The Guardian*, 6 August 2003; Darren Lewis, '£20 Million! Thank God For Roman's Gravy Train', *Daily Mirror*, 28 July 2004; Danny Fullbrook, 'Roman Clout Of His World', *Daily Star*, 26 August 2003;

When Abramovich took over, Chelsea had finished the previous season in fourth position. With their new talent they looked to improve on this and possibly even challenge for the title. The season 2003/2004 was when Arsenal won the Premiership without losing a single match, but finishing behind them in second place were Chelsea. Now serious contenders

for the title, Chelsea improved their chances further with another spending spree. In summer 2004, Abramovich signed Didier Drogba (£24 million from Marseille), Arjen Robben (£12 million from PSV Eindhoven), and Ricardo Carvalho and Paulo Ferreira (both from Porto, £19.8 million and £13.2 million respectively).⁶⁴⁹

Darren Lewis, in the *Daily Mirror*, claimed that Chelsea were paying over the odds for players, but Henry Winter in the *Daily Telegraph* was more positive, saying ‘Chelsea can win the Premiership, pushing Arsenal into second and keeping United third.’⁶⁵⁰ This prediction proved right. Chelsea went on to win the 2004/2005 Premiership, the club’s first title success for fifty years. The feat was repeated the following season. In 2006/2007, Chelsea finished runners-up to Manchester United, but this disappointment was tempered by the fact that they won the FA Cup (1-0 v. Manchester United) and the Carling Cup (2-1 v. Arsenal). The club would go on to win the FA Cup again in 2009, 2010 and 2012, beating Everton (2-1), Portsmouth (1-0) and Liverpool (2-1) respectively. In 2009/2010 they also won the Premier League title again, and therefore ‘the double’.

Despite their immense success in domestic competition, European trophies eluded the club for a long time, although they came agonisingly close in the 2007/2008 Champions League final against Manchester United in Moscow. After a 1-1 draw and extra time, penalties loomed. Ronaldo missed United’s third, meaning that John Terry could win Chelsea the trophy if he scored his, but he missed and Chelsea lost in the sudden death series. Four

⁶⁴⁹ Darren Lewis, ‘£20 Million! Thank God For Roman’s Gravy Train’, *Daily Mirror*, 28 July 2004.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid; Henry Winter, ‘Winter On Football ...’, *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 2004.

years later, in 2011/2012, Chelsea would win this elusive trophy, on penalties against Bayern Munich following a 1-1 draw in the final in Munich.⁶⁵¹

During the same period, however, Chelsea had nearly as many different managers as they won trophies. When Abramovich arrived with his cheque book, it was Claudio Ranieri in charge. After one season Abramovich wanted to make his own appointment and Jose Mourinho arrived. It was under Mourinho that Chelsea won the Premiership titles of 2005 and 2006. Failure to repeat the feat in 2007 meant that Mourinho was replaced by Avram Grant, and from then up to 2013, when Mourinho returned to the club, Chelsea changed managers at an average rate of one a year. The replacement of Roberto di Matteo seemed particularly harsh. Di Matteo had been placed in temporary charge of the team following the departure of Andre Villas-Boas in March 2012. Chelsea's League form had been poor, but within ten weeks di Matteo had led the team to win the FA Cup and the long-awaited Champions League, turning the confidence of the players around in the process. Yet the club refused to be drawn on giving di Matteo the job on a permanent basis.⁶⁵² The following season di Matteo became the eighth manager to lose his job in ten seasons under Abramovich.⁶⁵³

To some observers managers were being replaced too regularly and Chelsea were simply 'buying trophies'. Even so, one cannot argue with the record books regarding the number of trophies Chelsea won during this period, whatever the manner of their acquisition, and in this sense ownership by Roman Abramovich was of great benefit to the club. But when

⁶⁵¹ See Appendix A for Chelsea's full record under Abramovich.

⁶⁵² Tony Banks, 'Di Matteo Is Left To Sweat', *Daily Express*, 21 May 2012.

⁶⁵³ Paul Brown, 'How The Axe Fell', *Daily Star*, 22 November 2012.

looking at the Abramovich era in the broader context of the whole of English football, his effect was less positive. The unprecedented amount of signings he made, and in some instances for more than a player was actually worth, had the effect of continuing to drive up already inflated transfer fees. The constant sacking of managers meant that there was no continuity of plan and fed a wider perception of the team manager as an expendable commodity.

Set into a broader context, the unregulated dealing in the transfer market, of which Chelsea were at the forefront, was reflective of the wider unfettered capitalism as pursued by large corporations in the City of London. By the early 2000s, major companies operated in an international market, as of course did large football clubs by this time. Therefore global financial institutions operated outside the control of the government of any one state, and likewise the international football transfer market functioned unregulated by the football authority of any one country. There is of course no world government, but there is a world governing body for football – FIFA – but it is too weak, and has its own problems regarding allegations of corruption, to regulate the market. Thus it can be seen that when it comes to the worldwide market both state governments and national football associations have no power.

Manchester United and Malcolm Glazer

Manchester United's flotation on the London stock market in 1991 turned out to be just in time for the Premier League windfall. The tremendous success that the club enjoyed in the 1990s was at a time when football had learned how to make money, and this turned United into the world's most profitable football club, and therefore a very attractive prospect for

potential owners. In the process the club was transformed into a global corporate brand, and in a financial league of its own among English football clubs.⁶⁵⁴ In 1996/1997 Manchester United PLC's turnover amounted to nearly one-fifth of that of the whole Premier League.⁶⁵⁵ Shortly afterwards, United announced that it planned to launch its own subscription television channel, chairman Martin Edwards declaring that he would be happy for the club to leave the Premier League's satellite television deal when it expired.⁶⁵⁶ In 1998 BskyB began a bid to take it over.⁶⁵⁷ Their motives were obvious. They could acquire cheaply a club with vast wealth and a rapidly expanding global fan base.⁶⁵⁸ Unsurprisingly there was a broad range of opposition to the bid. It raised the possibility of the biggest football club in England being owned by the biggest broadcaster of live football, and therefore potential domination of coverage, and in turn sponsorship, at the expense of all the other Premiership clubs. Minister for Sport Tony Banks commented that 'the implications for commercial policy are profound.'⁶⁵⁹ The £623 million bid was eventually rejected by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission as being 'not in the public interest.'⁶⁶⁰ The club came into the ownership of the Irish racing duo J. P. McManus and John Magnier. It was the acquisition of their company Cubic Expression by Malcolm Glazer that gave him the necessary level of shareholding to take over the club quickly:

[Glazer's] annexation of Manchester United yesterday was remarkable for its speed and efficiency. Within four hours of announcing the deal to buy out United's largest shareholders, Cubic Expression ... Glazer had virtually secured the 75 per cent

⁶⁵⁴ Simon Lee, 'The BskyB Bid For Manchester United PLC', in eds. Hamil, Michie and Houghton, *A Game Of Two Halves*, p.89.

⁶⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid., pp.90-91.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p.93.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., p.95.

⁶⁶⁰ news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business, 17 March 1999, last accessed 5 July 2015.

shareholding his deal required. The old order, the plc that had run the club with increasing success for 14 years, were swept away without a fight.⁶⁶¹

Malcolm Glazer was an American who had purchased the American Football team The Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 1995. The Buccaneers had been the laughing stock of all the NFL franchises due to their poor record of results, but Glazer turned things round and in 2003 they became Super Bowl champions, beating the Oakland Raiders.⁶⁶² Glazer had initially made his money by selling watch parts at his family's store following the death of his father.⁶⁶³ He was not a lifelong sports fan and Richard Luscombe, in *The Daily Telegraph*, wrote that he was 'one of America's most ruthless and successful businessmen, a man for whom profit in the boardroom comes as a much higher priority than anything his players can achieve on the field.'⁶⁶⁴ This being the case, one can understand the validity of supporters' concerns, not only Manchester United's, but throughout the Premiership and the Football League. Henry Winter, in the same newspaper, commented:

This man will damage our national game ... those charged with protecting the well-being of English football ... will hide, shamefully, as an arch-profiteer plunges a famous sporting institution into debt, raising ticket prices, alienating fans, and ultimately threatening the stability of the Premiership by shredding the collectively negotiated television contract ... He just wants to make money, and he has realised that United can divert many of football's rich income streams into Old Trafford, and therefore his pockets, by doing their own television deal.⁶⁶⁵

If Manchester United viewed having their own television channel as a serious possibility then other big clubs could follow suit. While this possibility might provide fans with good

⁶⁶¹ Tim Rich, 'American Tycoon Seizes Control', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁶² Christopher Davies, 'Man Who Stopped The Rot For Struggling Bucs', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁶³ www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/27614216 last accessed 9 June 2016.

⁶⁶⁴ Richard Luscombe, 'Recluse Prefers Budget Air Travel', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁶⁵ Henry Winter, 'He Will Damage Our Game', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 2005.

round the clock coverage, which was especially important for clubs with a global fanbase, it also threatened the unity of the Premiership because there could be numerous different television deals rather than one collective one. There was a certain irony in that the Premiership could become threatened by the same broadcasting technology that had been its inseparable twin at its inception if its member clubs sought to go it alone.

One adviser to Malcolm Glazer and his sons – Joel, Avi, and Bryan – tried to address concerns: ‘the fans have nothing to fear. There is no radical agenda for change. Joel is very passionate about the club and about football. The Glazers think that they have a lot to contribute. They are investing a lot of their own money directly ... and they would be mad to go in and rip up the club.’⁶⁶⁶ However, the fans’ anger was justified when one considers the way in which money was raised. To make the bid the Glazers used the practice of ‘financial leverage’, which meant that the club had to carry the cost of borrowing, to the tune of at least £300 million.⁶⁶⁷ Mick Hume, writing in *The Times*, commented, ‘Glazer looks like bad news, especially if he burdens United with as much debt as Arsenal (and without a new stadium to show for it) ... United’s success since 1993 has come with the ability of the plc to exploit the commercial explosion of the Premiership. Those who live by the share price can perish by it.’⁶⁶⁸ Here we see concern, but with an acknowledgement that by floating on the stock market United had left themselves vulnerable to the possibility of such an outcome. A *Times* editorial continues in a similar vein:

[Glazer] is, however, an unknown quantity and a hard-headed businessman, not a sports sentimentalist. The method by which he proposes to acquire the club involves

⁶⁶⁶ Nils Pratley, ‘New Owners Make Like Chelsea’, *The Guardian*, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁸ Mick Hume, ‘Why Would Anyone Want To Buy The Club In This State?’, *The Times*, 13 May 2005.

a huge increase in its debts and not a lavish subsidy by the owner. This is a legitimate cause for concern. He is not another Roman Abramovich, a youthful billionaire who purchased Chelsea with the desire and the money to turn it into the best team in Europe. Mr. Glazer is not even an old-fashioned football sugar-daddy. He has, nevertheless, won playing by the rules in a game that Manchester United volunteered for. Their performance has been driven by wealth derived from a stock market flotation and an ambition to recast themselves as the biggest sporting brand in the world. United have no more right to be immune from the laws of the market than Sainsbury's or Marks & Spencer. Mr. Glazer's initiative is not, as some insist, the financial equivalent of a tackle from behind. There was an open goal, created by poor defending, and he has scored.⁶⁶⁹

Nick Towle, the chairman of Shareholders United, the group of fans who organised and co-ordinated much of the anti-Glazer campaign, was reported as saying, 'I believe as many as 20,000 fans will leave Manchester United. All the hard-core supporters will refuse to go, and then what kind of atmosphere will there be?'⁶⁷⁰ There was also the threat of forming a breakaway club. Jules Spencer, the chairman of the Independent Manchester United Supporters' Association, said, 'we will do what we said, which is up sticks and form a new club which will continue the traditions and heritage and the legacy of 125 years of Manchester United. We don't want Malcolm Glazer, we want a club run for the fans – and that is what we will do.'⁶⁷¹ These fans were as good as their word. FC United of Manchester was formed and immediately entered the North West Counties Football League Division Two. Successive promotions found them in the Northern Premier League Premier Division. In 2010/2011 FC United won their way through all the qualifying rounds and reached the Second Round of the FA Cup, knocking out Rochdale on the way. Home games were played in a groundshare with Bury at Gigg Lane, while waiting for a new stadium at Broadhurst Park in North Manchester to be completed.⁶⁷²

⁶⁶⁹ *The Times*, 'United In Fantasy', 13 May 2005.

⁶⁷⁰ Daniel Taylor, 'Rebels' Plan For Mass Boycott', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2005.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷² www.fc-utd.com last accessed 9 July 2015.

The manifesto on the FC United website makes it clear where the founders felt Manchester United had gone wrong and how they aimed to run their new club. It states, ‘FC United of Manchester is a new football club founded by disaffected and disenfranchised Manchester United supporters. Our aim is to create a sustainable club for the long term which is owned and democratically run by its members, which is accessible to all the communities of Manchester, and one in which they can participate fully.’⁶⁷³ The manifesto goes on to list seven core principles. These include a Board democratically elected by the members and decisions taken on a one member, one vote basis, and pledges that the club will ‘endeavour to make admission prices as affordable as possible’, and will ‘strive wherever possible to avoid outright commercialism’ and ‘remain a non-profit organisation.’⁶⁷⁴ Board member Alison Watt said that the reasons behind FC United’s formation are ‘probably most easily described as being disillusioned with the aspects of “modern football” that have destroyed the match-going experience.’ Of the Glazer takeover, she said: ‘it was the last straw. For background, the idea of a breakaway club had been mooted during the campaign against the planned Murdoch takeover in 1999 – a breakaway obviously never happened at that point, because that takeover was defeated ... the Glazer takeover has been described as the catalyst for FC United, not the sole reason.’⁶⁷⁵

The takeover of Manchester United by Malcolm Glazer raised some new issues. Compared to Abramovich at Chelsea where, whatever the criticisms, he had invested a lot of his personal wealth into the club, Glazer took money out of Manchester United. He did so by loading the cost of his borrowing onto the club. Did this matter? It did if the cost of

⁶⁷³ Ibid., last accessed 24 July 2015.

⁶⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁵ Alison Watt, interview with the author, email, 4 December 2015.

borrowing meant that there was insufficient money to buy the players necessary to win trophies. A quick look at United's achievements since the takeover do not reveal a sudden downturn – they won the Premiership title for three consecutive seasons from 2006/2007 to 2008/2009, and also in 2010/2011 and again in 2012/2013. They also won the Champions League in 2007/2008, and finished runners-up in 2008/2009 and 2010/2011. It can, however, be argued that these successes were down to the ability of Sir Alex Ferguson as a manager rather than any investment by the board. Indeed, it is noticeable that United have fared less well since Ferguson's retirement in 2013. One is left to wonder how much could have been achieved without money being drained from the club – to truly dominate in Europe, perhaps?

Liverpool and Gillett and Hicks

On 6 February 2007 George Gillett and Tom Hicks took over Liverpool, promising to make them 'the most dominant club side in the world.'⁶⁷⁶ They had purchased a 51.6 per cent controlling interest from David Moores for £470 million, gazumping Sheik Muhammed and the royal government of Dubai. The club had also recently failed to do a deal with the prime minister of Thailand.⁶⁷⁷ The arrival of Hicks and Gillett is summed up by the journalist Brian Reade in the following terms:

Nothing in the history of this 'wonderful, storied club' (copyright Thomas Ollis Hicks) seemed as foreign as the events of 6 February 2007. One snapshot which sums up this most bizarre of afternoons came when the new American owners caressed the This Is

⁶⁷⁶ Colin Wood, 'Americans Kop Liverpool Deal', *Daily Mail*, 7 February 2007.

⁶⁷⁷ Paul Hayward, 'Through Death And Blood, The English Game Evolved To The Point Where Liverpool Could Be Fought Over By Arab Sheiks And American Billionaires', *Daily Mail*, 7 February 2007.

Anfield sign, despite being the antithesis of everything it stood for, barely able to comprehend their luck or contain their glee.⁶⁷⁸

Liverpool, according to captain Steven Gerrard, was and is ‘a compassionate club with roots that go deep in the community.’⁶⁷⁹ Of the Liverpool song ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’, he says it is ‘more than a string of words and a great tune; it is a pact between people.’⁶⁸⁰ Therefore, a sign proclaiming This Is Anfield stood for compassion throughout the surrounding community, with its togetherness and care and consideration for each other. Liverpool’s tradition of continuity in running the club can be seen by the length of tenure served by the managers that built and maintained a great team: Bill Shankly served for fifteen years (1959 -1974), then Bob Paisley for nine years (1974 – 1983). This loyalty extended to promoting from within. As an example of this, Kenny Dalglish was a great Liverpool player who went on to become manager for six years (1985-1991).⁶⁸¹ How do the Liverpool traditions of community and continuity exist in a modern game where clubs see themselves as brands in a global marketplace? The political scientist Tiest Sondaal points to Liverpool’s strategy of reconciling the global with the local, quoting Liverpool Chief Executive Rick Parry’s statement that the club’s local roots are what makes the club distinctive: ‘the brand is the successful club that cares about its roots.’⁶⁸²

The new owners said the things that the fans wanted to hear. Gillett commented, ‘this is truly the largest sport in the world and this is the most important club in the most important

⁶⁷⁸ Brian Reade, *An Epic Swindle: 44 months with a pair of cowboys* (London: Quercus, 2012 paperback edition), p.1.

⁶⁷⁹ Gerrard, *Gerrard*, p.6.

⁶⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁶⁸¹ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p. 239.

⁶⁸² Tiest Sondaal, ‘Football’s Globalization Or Globalisation? The Lessons Of Liverpool Football Club’s Evolution In The Premier League Era’, *Soccer & Society*, vol. 14, no. 4, 2013, p.496.

sport in the world – and what a privilege we have to be associated with it.’⁶⁸³ They were skilled at ‘impression management’.⁶⁸⁴ They said that meetings with manager Rafael Benitez, Gerrard and player Jamie Carragher made the pair aware of the good Liverpool traditions of continuity and the need for funds to be spent on transfers. They also promised to make a start on the proposed new 61,000-seater stadium at Stanley Park ‘within the next 60 days or so.’⁶⁸⁵ Like Malcolm Glazer, both Gillett and Hicks owned other sporting institutions. Gillett owned the Montreal Canadiens ice hockey team and Hicks owned another ice hockey team, the Dallas Stars, and the Texas Rangers baseball team.⁶⁸⁶ The early signs were good as the owners signed the prolific goalscorer Fernando Torres from Atletico Madrid for £22 million in the next transfer window.⁶⁸⁷

Things started to go wrong when it transpired that Gillett and Hicks were not true to their word over certain important issues. Despite their promises to the contrary, the two owners saddled the club with debt:

When they bought Liverpool, Hicks and Gillett explained that they were very different from the Glazers at Manchester United, promising they would use their own money to finance the deal, and not borrow against the club. Depressingly, that promise has been broken, with the pair spending the last six months attempting to arrange finance that will ultimately put Liverpool in debt to the breathtaking tune of around £600 million.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸³ Colin Wood, ‘Americans Kop Liverpool Deal’, *Daily Mail*, 7 February 2007.

⁶⁸⁴ John Williams and Stephen Hopkins, ‘“Over Here”: ‘Americanization’ And The New Politics Of Football Club Ownership – The Case Of Liverpool FC’, *Sport in Society*, vol. 14, no. 2, March 2011, p.167.

⁶⁸⁵ Colin Wood, ‘We’ll Start On New Ground In 60 Days’, *Daily Mail*, 7 February 2007.

⁶⁸⁶ Nick Harris, ‘American Owners Here To Stay As Penny Finally Drops’, *The Independent*, 7 February 2007.

⁶⁸⁷ Neil Johnston, ‘Torres Covets Hero Status’, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 2007.

⁶⁸⁸ David Maddock, ‘Mersey In Meltdown’, *Daily Mirror*, 15 January 2008.

Interest on a loan of this size would amount to about £35 - £40 million every year, and the loan itself would amount to twenty times Liverpool's operating profits. This compared to Manchester United's at eight times and Arsenal's at four times. Most importantly, as far as the fans were concerned, such levels of interest would leave no money available to buy new players.⁶⁸⁹

On top of the financial worries it also transpired that the owners had approached Jurgen Klinsmann about the role of team manager. Hicks insisted that this was done simply as 'insurance' should existing team manager Rafael Benitez decide to leave, but such a development could only undermine Benitez's position and contribute to what was becoming a war of attrition between Liverpool's owners and the team manager.⁶⁹⁰ It was Benitez who had masterminded Liverpool's Champions League success in 2005, when against AC Milan in a thrilling final Liverpool had trailed 3-0 at half-time before coming back to draw 3-3 and win the trophy on penalties. He was popular with Liverpool fans and they had already marched through the city in support of him.⁶⁹¹

With interest in the club being shown again by Dubai International Capital (DIC), who Gillett and Hicks had gazumped to buy the club eleven months earlier, Liverpool fans called on the American owners to stand down so the Emiratis could take over. In the meantime, a refinancing deal with the Royal Bank of Scotland and US bank Wachovia was being negotiated which would involve a loan of £350 million. With DIC interested in buying the

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ John Edwards, 'Benitez: I Will Not Resign', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 2008.

⁶⁹¹ Steve Rogers, 'U.S. Promises Don't Ring True', *Daily Mirror*, 15 January 2008.

club and fans protesting against the way the club was being run, Hicks adamantly refused to stand down.⁶⁹²

As well as marching in support of the manager and displaying banners during home games, Liverpool fans formed an organisation, the Spirit of Shankly - a clear reference to Bill Shankly. On 31 January 2008 around 350 fans gathered at The Sandon, Anfield, for the initial meeting. The Sandon public house already had an important place in the history of football in the city – both Liverpool and Everton were formed there. The Spirit of Shankly is a community-based body of Liverpool supporters who organise such things as cheap travel to away games, but also sometimes act as a body of protest for wider community issues. Their ultimate aim was fan ownership of the football club, and the proud declaration on the website is that the Spirit of Shankly is ‘the first football supporters union.’ Regarding the mismanagement of the club by Gillett and Hicks it declared, ‘we had to act, we had to protest, we had to do something. Spirit of Shankly was born.’⁶⁹³

Benitez had led Liverpool to another Champions League final in 2007, just months after the takeover by Gillett and Hicks. On this occasion they lost 2-1 to AC Milan in Athens.⁶⁹⁴ His popularity continued all the while Liverpool did sufficiently well to qualify for the Champions League, which they did by finishing fourth in 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. However, the following season a disappointing seventh place meant no Champions League place and the end for Benitez. He left Liverpool on 3 June 2010.

⁶⁹² David Conn, ‘Prospectors For Gold Leave Liverpool With Mountain Of Debt’, *The Guardian*, 23 January 2008.

⁶⁹³ www.spiritofshankly.com last accessed 7 September 2015.

⁶⁹⁴ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Skysports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, p. 792.

The situation off the field was worsening. On 9 September the Royal Bank of Scotland placed Liverpool's £237 million loan into its toxic assets division, making it likely that the figure would have to be repaid on expiry, which was coming up on 6 October, rather than renegotiated.⁶⁹⁵ As the deadline approached, two excellent financial offers were received, which would repay the debt and provide funds for the construction of the new stadium. Board members prepared to accept these offers which would have meant forcing the owners out. Gillett and Hicks responded by suspending two members – managing director Christian Purslow and commercial director Ian Ayre. A legal battle began as to whether or not under the Companies Act Gillett and Hicks had the right to remove Purslow and Ayre.⁶⁹⁶

In the end Liverpool struck a deal with one of the two bidders. An American outfit, New England Sports Ventures, completed a takeover worth £300 million after Gillett and Hicks were defeated in their legal battle to prevent it.⁶⁹⁷ The principal owner of NESV was John W. Henry who also owned the baseball team Boston Red Sox. He had been remarkably successful with Red Sox, buying the club in 2002, winning the World Series in 2004, and making them title contenders on an annual basis.⁶⁹⁸ However, Liverpool fans, given their recent experiences, were understandably concerned about the new owner. Robin Scott-Elliott, reporting in *The Independent*, said, 'there was a markedly cautious reaction among Liverpool supporters yesterday as news of the deal broke, with one high-profile fan saying

⁶⁹⁵ James Ducker, 'Overstaffed And Over Here: Benitez recruits fail to impress Hodgson', *The Times*, 10 September 2010.

⁶⁹⁶ Ian Herbert and Nick Harris, 'Anfield At War As Americans Make Last Bid To Keep Control', *The Independent*, 6 October 2010.

⁶⁹⁷ www.theguardian.com/football/2010/oct/15/liverpool-nesv-takeover-complete-john-henry last accessed 15 September 2015.

⁶⁹⁸ Joe Sullivan, 'Henry Has Transformed The Sox. He's Been Good News', *The Independent*, 7 October 2010.

he feared the club had jumped ‘out of the frying pan into the frying pan’.⁶⁹⁹ Yet as the seasons progressed the worst fears proved unfounded.

The takeover of Liverpool by Gillett and Hicks had a lot of similarities to that of Glazer at Manchester United. It is interesting to note their insistence that they were not like Malcolm Glazer, yet, as it turned out, they were. The principle of leveraged buyouts was bad news because it drained away money that could have been used to achieve success on the pitch. In Liverpool’s case the money could have been spent on the players necessary to win a long-awaited Premier League title, or bring back the days of dominance in Europe that the club had enjoyed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. That such poor ownership could happen to both Liverpool and Manchester United - two of the biggest and most successful clubs in the history of English football - underlines the powerlessness of the domestic game to protect itself when faced with predatory businessmen.

We can draw a comparison with the ease with which the asset-stripping of MG Rover was carried out. Four directors of Phoenix Venture Holdings paid £10 in 2000 to buy the carmaker from BMW and four years later stood to make tens of millions through special loan deals, pensions, and dividends. Far from being criticised for doing this, Trade and Industry Secretary Patricia Hewitt praised them: ‘company directors who take big risks and achieve big success deserve big rewards.’⁷⁰⁰

⁶⁹⁹ Robin Scott-Elliott, ‘Supporters Are Deeply Concerned’, *The Independent*, 7 October 2010.

⁷⁰⁰ www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/hewitt-says-the-rover-directors-accused-of-asset-stripping-deserve-big-rewards-564697.html last accessed 9 June 2016.

Manchester City, Thaksin Shinawatra, and the Abu Dhabi United Group

In June 2007, Manchester City were bought by the most controversial person ever to own an English football club. Thaksin Shinawatra, the former prime minister of Thailand, was in exile and faced a two year prison sentence if he returned to his native country, having received a conviction in his absence on a conflict of interest charge. There were also widespread allegations of corruption, which led to his conviction and the Thai Supreme Court stripping his family of the equivalent of £910 million.⁷⁰¹ Shinawatra was born in 1949 and made his money in telecommunications in the late 1980s. He formed a new political party, Thai Rak Thai, in 1998 and they swept to power in 2001. After more than five years in office Shinawatra was ousted in a coup in September 2006. More worrying than the convictions for corruption and conflict of interest was the allegation of human rights abuses. He was implicated in the deaths of 2,500 people in the so-called 'War on Drugs' in 2003.⁷⁰²

His ownership raised important issues. Should a person with such a record own a football club? Would not the good name of that club in particular, and the game itself in general, be tarnished by the involvement of such an individual? One body of opinion suggested that no club should be owned by such a man, while the opposite view was that these matters were outside football and therefore had no relevance. This holds that Shinawatra, or any other owner, stands or falls purely on what happens at the club – managerial appointments, player signings, results on the pitch, and club finances.

⁷⁰¹ www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-13891650 last accessed 25 November 2015.

⁷⁰² Ibid.

On the pitch, it has to be said that his record was reasonable. He appointed the former England manager Sven Goran-Eriksson to manage the team, and a number of signings were made, including Martin Petrov (£4.7 million from Athletic Madrid), Vedran Corluka (£8 million from Dynamo Zagreb), and Elano (£8 million from Shaktar Donetsk).⁷⁰³ City went on to finish the 2007/2008 season in ninth position, which was an improvement on the previous season's fourteenth. Yet, during the same period the club's losses nearly trebled to £32.6 million, and then they took out a £30 million loan against future television revenue.⁷⁰⁴ Still they continued to spend, bringing in the Brazilian Jo (€18 million from CSKA Moscow), Vincent Kompany (£6 million from Hamburg), and Shaun Wright-Phillips (£9 million from Chelsea). It can be seen that, despite progress on the pitch, the club's finances were in disarray. In the end, Shinawatra was forced to sell because the Thai authorities had frozen £800 million worth of his assets. He did so in September 2008 to a consortium that included the royal family of a rich Gulf state, whose investment would eclipse even that of Abramovich at Chelsea.⁷⁰⁵

Since their heyday in the late 1960s, City had long been in the shadow of their successful neighbours and rivals Manchester United. Now the club seemed certain to address this situation. Nick Clark, in *The Independent*, reported it thus:

The tiny Gulf state of Abu Dhabi launched an audacious raid on one of Britain's top football clubs yesterday in a move that will transform the shape of global football. The £210m takeover of Manchester City threatens to dethrone their closest rivals Manchester United and establish City as the biggest team in the world. The club announced that it had signed a memo of understanding with the Abu Dhabi United

⁷⁰³ www.soccerbase.com last accessed 30 November 2015.

⁷⁰⁴ Paul Kelso, *Daily Telegraph*, 10 April 2009 www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/football/teams/manchester-city/5137361; www.redcafe.net/threads/man-city-take-out-£30m-loan-against-tv-revenue.214615 last accessed 27 May 2016.

⁷⁰⁵ www.theguardian.com/football/2008/oct/08/manchestercity.premierleague last accessed 25 November 2015.

Group (ADUG), a holding company set up by Middle East investors, backed by the country's royal family.⁷⁰⁶

The Group was fronted by Sulaiman al-Fahim, who promised to invest enough to break up the 'Big Four' of Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool and Arsenal. As a statement of intent, the new owners trumped Chelsea for the signature of Real Madrid striker Robinho for a record £32.6 million.⁷⁰⁷ But the task facing the new owners was a big one. Five years earlier Abramovich had started to turn Chelsea from a good team into a great one (Chelsea had just finished fourth), but City had just finished a massive twenty-one points behind Liverpool in fourth place and thirty-two behind champions Manchester United. As recently as 2002, City had not been in the Premiership and had played the 1998/1999 season in football's third tier.⁷⁰⁸ Since regaining top division status, City had been a mid-table side and never seriously challenged for a place in the top four.

During the first transfer window after the takeover, the new owners signed goalkeeper Shay Given (£8 million from Newcastle United), left-back Wayne Bridge (£12 million from Chelsea), striker Craig Bellamy (£14 million from West Ham United), and midfielder Nigel de Jong (£16 million, rising to £18.3 million, from SV Hamburg).⁷⁰⁹ However, the 2008/2009 season saw another mid-table finish, so there was still much that needed to be done, and spent, to turn City into a successful side. During the summer the Abu Dhabi United Group set about investing more money in players to give manager Mark Hughes a chance of making a significant improvement the following season.

⁷⁰⁶ Nick Clark, 'The Deal That Transforms Football', *The Independent*, 2 September 2008.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁸ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *Sky Sports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.250-251.

⁷⁰⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, Sport, 3rd February 2009.

This spending spree began with the signing of Gareth Barry (£12 million from Aston Villa). It was followed by the purchase of Roque Santa Cruz (£17.5 million from Blackburn Rovers). Then City spent double the outlay thus far on Emmanuel Adebayor (£25 million from Arsenal) and Carlos Tevez (£30 million from Manchester United). These new players were then joined by Kolo Toure (£16 million from Arsenal) before the new season began.⁷¹⁰ With the 2009/2010 season under way and just before transfer deadline day, City bought Joleon Lescott (£24 million from Everton) to take the total spending within the previous year to over £200 million.⁷¹¹

With so many new and varied players to bond and become a successful football team, City's early season form was not good enough to justify the huge outlay, with the result that Mark Hughes was sacked in December, to be replaced by Roberto Mancini. City's form improved and they mounted a challenge for a top four place, but finished fifth due to a poor game at home to Tottenham Hotspur.⁷¹² Now at least in a position where they could challenge for a Champions League place, the squad was strengthened further to boost their chances. The summer of 2010 saw more signings. This time they looked to overseas clubs and bought Yaya Toure (£30 million from Barcelona), David Silva (£25 million from Valencia), Mario Balotelli (£23 million from Inter Milan), Aleksandar Kolarov (£17 million from Lazio), and Jerome Boateng (£11 million from SV Hamburg). They rounded off the summer with the signing of James Milner (£26 million from Aston Villa).⁷¹³

⁷¹⁰ David Anderson, 'Money Can Buy Me Love', *Daily Mirror*, 31 July 2009.

⁷¹¹ Richard Tanner, 'City Sign Lescott For £24m', *Daily Express*, 26 August 2009.

⁷¹² *The Independent*, Premier League Supplement, 14 August 2010.

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*

Table 9. *The Abu Dhabi United Group's Spending Spree*

Date	Player	Selling club	Amount
January 2009	Shay Given	Newcastle United	£7m
January 2009	Wayne Bridge	Chelsea	£12m
January 2009	Craig Bellamy	West Ham United	£14m
January 2009	Nigel de Jong	SV Hamburg	£17m
June 2009	Gareth Barry	Aston Villa	£12m
July 2009	Roque Santa Cruz	Blackburn Rovers	£17.5m
July 2009	Emmanuel Adebayor	Arsenal	£25m
July 2009	Carlos Tevez	Manchester United	£30m
July 2009	Kolo Toure	Arsenal	£16m
August 2009	Joleon Lescott	Everton	£24m
June 2010	Yaya Toure	Barcelona	£30m
July 2010	David Silva	Valencia	£25m
August 2010	Mario Balotelli	Inter Milan	£25m
August 2010	Aleksandar Kolarov	Lazio	£17m
August 2010	Jerome Boateng	SV Hamburg	£11m
August 2010	James Milner	Aston Villa	£26m
January 2011	Edin Dzeko	VfL Wolfsburg	£27m
July 2011	Sergio Aguero	Athletico Madrid	£38m

Sources: *Daily Telegraph*, Sport, 3 February 2009; Conn, *Richer Than God* pp.59-60, p.240; David Anderson, 'Money Can Buy Me Love', *Daily Mirror*, 31 July 2009; *The Independent*, Premier League Supplement, 14 August 2010; www.soccerbase.com last accessed 22 November 2015.

The 2010/2011 season saw City achieve the all-important Champions League place by finishing third. The expensive squad also put some silverware on the shelf by winning the FA Cup, beating Stoke City 1-0 in the final at Wembley. This was City's first trophy since they won the League Cup in 1976, and the first FA Cup since the great team of the late

1960s won the trophy in 1969.⁷¹⁴ Having secured a Champions League spot, the next aim was the Premiership title itself. To strengthen the squad yet further, Sergio Aguero was signed from Atletico Madrid for £38 million ready for the new season.⁷¹⁵

The last day of the 2011/2012 season saw the most thrilling climax to a title race since the start of the Premier League as City went neck and neck with neighbours and rivals Manchester United for the top spot. Before the start of play, City and United were level on points and City had a better goal difference, so a win would guarantee City the title, but anything less would mean the title going to United providing they bettered City's result. United were away to Sunderland and City were at home to Queen's Park Rangers. United's match went according to form as they took a 1-0 lead and held on to it, but City's fans went through a roller-coaster of an afternoon. QPR took a shock lead with 25 minutes remaining, which would mean the title going to United. The clock ran down and as the final whistle went at Sunderland, United fans celebrated in the knowledge that City faced a seemingly insurmountable task if they were to take the title from them. But City did just that, as Dzeko equalised and Aguero scored the winner, both goals coming deep into added time.⁷¹⁶ One Manchester City fan described his feelings thus: 'Surreal, winning the title was something I thought I would never see happen. Beating our neighbours from Trafford made it particularly special.'⁷¹⁷ This was the most thrilling climax to a title race since 1989, when, in the old First Division, Arsenal had snatched the Championship from under the noses of Liverpool by scoring a second goal at Anfield in the last minute to make it 2-0 and take the trophy back to North London.

⁷¹⁴ Eds. Rollin and Rollin, *SkySports Football Yearbook 2008-2009*, pp.250-251.

⁷¹⁵ www.soccerbase.com last accessed 22 November 2015.

⁷¹⁶ For Manchester City's full record of achievements under the Abu Dhabi United Group, see Appendix B.

⁷¹⁷ Anonymous Manchester City fan, interview with the author, email, 22 March 2016.

The Manchester City fan gave an opinion on the era of the Abu Dhabi ownership, commenting first on the positive aspects: ‘advancement to a global brand, winning trophies I didn’t even dream of happening.’⁷¹⁸ On the other hand, he had also experienced:

loss of my local football club, loss of the football club’s soul, ran by professional marketers who know little about football or football fans, [they are] not football people. [The club has] lost local fans who have turned to non-League football, replaced by day trippers. Sometimes [the] direction of the club to create a world brand has deflected from the football, the club appears more interested in making money from ‘partners’ and creating a politically correct image than producing good football. The football appears to be just an afterthought.⁷¹⁹

He also makes the observation that:

In a business world, with the substantial money invested since 2009, the return on trophies appears to have been a failure, 2013 FA Cup final a prime example, getting knocked out of domestic club competitions by lower League sides [City lost the 2013 FA Cup final to Wigan Athletic]. The club seems to think I would want to buy ‘City Football Group’ Melbourne City and New York City merchandise, why would I want to do that? – I’m from Manchester!⁷²⁰

Conclusion

Having established that foreign ownership was probable following the arrival of foreign players and foreign managers, we have seen how the experience differed greatly from club to club. For some clubs, a new foreign owner marked the start of a very successful era in the club’s history, but others were saddled with debt that had been run up in the process of the new owner buying the club. Put simply, what was good news for Chelsea and

⁷¹⁸ Ibid.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

Manchester City, in that wealthy foreign owners could invest sufficient funds to bring success, was bad news for Manchester United and Liverpool, because the owners of those clubs loaded on debts producing charges that could divert money away from bringing greater success. It would be easy to liken the experiences of Chelsea and Manchester City to that of Blackburn Rovers in the 1990s, but there was a big difference in that Sir Jack Walker, although a tax exile for many years, was a Blackburn man with local connections who had supported Blackburn as a boy. Chelsea by contrast were cherry-picked by a wealthy Russian oligarch. Before settling on Chelsea, Abramovich had looked at Manchester United, Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur.⁷²¹ Such a man can hardly be described as a fan.

Abramovich's takeover of Chelsea had the effect of elevating the subject of foreign ownership from a sideshow to a major theme in its own right. Both Chelsea and Manchester City were bought by owners with enough financial clout to create a team good enough to dominate the Premier League and be serious contenders in Europe, which was positive for those clubs but criticised by some. There have been other consequences. Two new clubs, AFC Wimbledon and FC United of Manchester, and a new supporters group, Spirit of Shankly, came into being because of the actions of foreign owners who appeared not to have the best interests of their club at heart. It is also clear that some overseas owners either fail to understand or decide to disregard the culture and tradition that surrounds football clubs. The best examples of this are Cardiff City and Hull City. Cardiff's Malaysian owners in 2012 took the decision to change the club's colours from blue to red and introduce a new club crest.⁷²² This gave rise to a bizarre situation because for more than two years a team

⁷²¹ Mihir Bose, 'Russian Faces £150m Bill To Get Ball Rolling', *Daily Telegraph*, 3 July 2003.

⁷²² *Daily Express*, 7 June 2012.

nicknamed ‘The Bluebirds’ played in red. Tim Hartley, who is on the board of Supporters Direct, commented:

Cardiff City Football Club is rebranded at the whim of an owner from its traditional blue colours to red. Now, a lot of people at the time said, ‘it’s his business, he can do what he likes with it’, and I liken football clubs to listed buildings. If you own Windsor Castle you can’t paint it red because its value is greater to society than its pure legal ownership entitlement, and that is how we see football clubs.⁷²³

Cardiff reverted to their blue strip early in 2015. In Hull City’s case, Egyptian owner Assem Allam wanted to change the club name to Hull Tigers because he believed the name was more ‘marketable’. Fans protested and in April 2014 the proposed name change was rejected by the FA Council.⁷²⁴

Hartley went on to state the position of Supporters Direct on these points:

We believe that the football authorities should make it a condition of the club’s licence, that is, ‘you won’t be a football club in the Football League unless you adhere to these rules’. So in the licence it should be that all major change to a club’s traditions, and that would include changing the playing strip, it would include changing the club’s crest, it would include changing the club’s name, the stadium’s name, and the location of the club, can only happen with proper consultation with properly established supporters’ groups.⁷²⁵

In their research into the spillover effect of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into the Premier League, the business economists Andrew Jones and Mark Cook conclude that there

⁷²³ Tim Hartley, interview with the author, phone, 21 May 2015.

⁷²⁴ <http://m.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/26960502> last accessed 5 October 2015.

⁷²⁵ Tim Hartley, interview with the author, phone, 21 May 2015.

have been improvements, such as better stadia and player quality, but the overall competitive balance in the Premier League has been reduced.⁷²⁶

To put the subject into a broader context, the foreign ownership of football clubs has occurred at the same time as greater international travel and the globalisation of markets. Some of the top Premiership clubs now market themselves overseas so it should be no surprise when a billionaire from overseas takes over an English football club. One can only conclude that their motives were to gain the prestige that comes with owning a top English club, which improves the prospects of any other business interests they may have, and not because they support or care about that club.

It is unfair and inaccurate, however, to link poor ownership exclusively with foreign owners. There have been plenty of bad British owners. As two examples, poor ownership by Bill Archer and Ken Richardson, at Brighton and Hove Albion and Doncaster Rovers respectively, in the late 1990s, drove their respective clubs to the brink of extinction. The former sold the club's ground without making adequate provision for a new one, while the latter was convicted of involvement in an arson attack on his club's ground.⁷²⁷ Thus, it is not whether an owner is British or foreign that is the issue, but whether the owner is acting in the interests of the club or not. It was the scale of investment by Abramovich in 2003, as he spent enough to create a team capable of domestic domination, that moved the issue of foreign ownership from the margins to centre stage.

⁷²⁶ Andrew Jones and Mark Cook, 'The Spillover Effect From FDI In The English Premier League', *Soccer & Society*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2015, p.132.

⁷²⁷ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/263947.stm> last accessed 30 November 2015.

Conclusion

This thesis began with the theme of decline. Throughout the 1970s, across a number of indices, football was believed to be on a downwards trajectory that ran in tandem with a declining sense of national prestige. Crowds were falling, which in turn meant less revenue taken at the turnstiles. In an age when this revenue accounted for almost all of a football club's income this was of obvious concern. The dwindling resources were stretched further by the increase in players' wages that had followed the abolition of the maximum wage in 1961. These two factors were the main causes of concern during the 1970s and early 1980s; they helped to generate a belief in the need for change. There was also concern about the international standing of the English game. Following the triumph of 1966, England, with an arguably better team, were eliminated from the World Cup by West Germany in 1970. This was followed by failure to qualify for the finals of 1974 and 1978. The style of English football was seen as isolationist, refusing to accommodate innovation in terms of style and training methods practiced elsewhere in the world. One detects in this a certain arrogance: England invented the game, so why should England adapt its methods to fall in line with other nations who had taken up the game more recently? The FA evinced an air of aloofness, and tended to regard anything new with suspicion. Also, England's success of 1966 had a paradoxical effect in that it raised expectations, and in so doing, made failure harder to stomach.

The sense of decline mirrored a national mood. Britain had ceased to be a great power and had decolonised, but it had yet to find its role in the new global picture, pulled in one direction towards the United States and in the other towards Europe. Also, the early 1970s

saw industrial strife including miners' strikes, power cuts, a three-day week imposed on British industry, civil unrest in Northern Ireland, and terrorist attacks by the IRA. The sense of decline was widespread, ingrained in the national mood, and football's downward path was part of this broad trend.

Those in charge of football were aware of the difficulties facing them, as the decision to commission a succession of reports testifies. These reports in chronological order were the 'Pattern for Football' (1963), the 'Political and Economic Planning (PEP) Report (1966), the Chester Report (1968), the Commission on Industrial Relations Report (1974), the Secretaries, Coaches, and Managers Association Report (1980), and the Chester Report (1983). The main aim running through these was to try to win back crowds and raise commerce. However, no agreement could ever be reached. Suggestions for reducing the size of the top two divisions in order to make players less tired for international duties, and regionalising the third and fourth divisions in order to reduce costs, never got off the ground because club chairmen unsurprisingly considered the interests of their own club before that of the game as a whole. They could not possibly countenance any suggestion which might reduce the number of games, and therefore the amount of income, when they were already struggling. Moreover, any move for change was obstructed by the League's constitution, which required a three-quarters majority, thus greatly reducing the chance of any progress.

Football's efforts to reverse decline were dogged at every step by the opposition there seemed to be to every suggested innovation, be it League restructuring, shirt sponsorship, stock market flotation, or the fear of the potential consequence of live television coverage. Viewed from the outside, English football seemed locked into a downward spiral from

which it was powerless to escape, due to the differing interests of those responsible for the game. As British families started to travel abroad on cheap package holidays, and Britain joined the European Economic Community in 1973, there was a sense in which the isolationist FA seemed more behind the times than ever.

There were some small changes, however, such as the decision to award three points for a win, and the moving of a limited number of fixtures to a Friday evening or a Sunday afternoon. These steps were put in place for the 1981/1982 season following the Secretaries, Coaches, and Managers Association Report. Even so, these seemed merely cosmetic compared to the major overhaul that was needed if football was to revive itself. Having rejected most of the proposals made in successive reports, chairmen saw their crowds continue to fall. One solution proffered was the idea of shirt sponsorship as a means to bridge the gap in resources. But the subject of shirt sponsorship became problematic in its own right. There was the traditional view that commerce and sport should not mix, and that a club's income should be exclusively from the paying spectator. There were also concerns that sponsorship money could influence the game in other ways. Sponsors would be bound to want to invest their money in the biggest clubs, for reasons of prestige, and, more importantly, because those were the clubs likely to be featured on television. Investment in this manner would increase the financial gulf between the top clubs and the rest and also threaten the League's unity as an organisation. These concerns did not stop sponsorship catching on and being adopted in other areas of the game, such as in the competitions themselves. For example, the League Cup became the Milk Cup in the first of many name changes dictated by successive sponsorship deals.

Looking for other ways of bridging the gap between gate money and the resources required to run a club, Irving Scholar, chairman of Tottenham Hotspur, had the idea of launching his club on the stock exchange. This fitted in with the trend towards the free market encouraged by the Thatcher government, with its promotion of business ideals. Tottenham Hotspur became a PLC in October 1983. Short-term it was a success – Spurs' debts were wiped out – but it brought long-term problems as some shareholders brought with them non-footballing ideas on how to maximise the club's profits. To some, this mattered more than results on the pitch, and was a major step in football's evolution from a sport to a business. It was also Tottenham who, in the same month, hosted the first game to be broadcast live on television. The BBC and ITV by their own admission operated what amounted to a cartel to keep the amount they paid to football low. After long negotiations, live football was agreed on, despite concerns that it would further reduce attendances. When it came to renewal, a deal could not be reached with the result that football was off television completely during the autumn of 1985.

It can be seen that the main driver of change was the need to bridge the gap in financial resources, but addressing this was difficult to achieve because of the conflicting interests of those involved in the game and a general reluctance to embrace new ideas. It was hooliganism that added a sense of desperation. The problem had blighted the game for nearly two decades, with occasional serious outbreaks on the way. Early in 1985 it reached a crisis point due to major disturbances at games between Chelsea and Sunderland, Luton Town and Millwall, and Birmingham City and Leeds United. Also, a fire at Bradford during a game between Bradford City and Lincoln City, killed fifty-six and injured hundreds more, underlining the poor condition of many football grounds. The crisis took on international proportions due to the disaster at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels, where violence between

rival fans led to the collapse of a wall and the deaths of thirty-nine people with many more injured. Therefore, within the space of three months, from the beginning of March to the end of May 1985, there had been three major riots and two disasters, raising the problem of hooliganism to one of international crisis, and highlighting the dilapidated state of many football grounds.

The Heysel disaster brought a ban from Europe which deprived the top clubs of much needed revenue, and it was in this context that they sought to acquire a larger proportion of any television deal. Thus the European ban drove the growing assertiveness of a handful of big clubs over the rest in a development that would one day lead to the formation of the Premier League. In the meantime, in the immediate post-Heysel context, the television companies drove a hard bargain on any future broadcasting deal – did they really want to be associated with a game whose reputation was so blackened? Eventually, when a deal was reached to come into effect in January 1986, it was for a fraction of the original asking price. At the same time, crowds reached an all-time low.

Yet soon the seeds of revival started to appear. The unpopularity of the Thatcher government's proposed identity card scheme had the effect of politicising supporters, and it was in this context that the Football Supporters' Association was formed. Technological advances led to the publication of supporters' magazines, known as 'fanzines'. Known for their direct humour and outspoken comment, fanzines also became important in the campaign against the common enemy in the shape of the identity card scheme. There was also wider cultural change taking place. The 'acid house' movement of 1988 led to the rave

culture with its 'baggy' fashions and the use of ecstasy and communal ethos. The result was that fighting and violence simply became unfashionable.

Attendances were rising again and it appeared that there was a revival under way. It was at this point that the Hillsborough disaster happened. The narrative of the disaster need not be repeated. Suffice to say that much of what has emerged in the reports and enquiries since has revealed certain attitudes and prejudices about football supporters that were held by the police and some sections of the media. The mindset of the police in charge was that of control, of preventing a possible outbreak of hooliganism, rather than that of ensuring public safety at a major sports event. Much of the time since has been spent trying to pin the blame on Liverpool supporters when the biggest single factor among the causes of the disaster was police error in terms of organisation and the lack of any clear directions given to fans entering the ground.

The legacy of Hillsborough proved crucial. The disaster led to the Taylor Report, which turned out to be the most far-reaching and insightful of any assessment of the national game. It was published in two parts, the *Interim Report* in August 1989, and the *Final Report* in January 1990. The former detailed exactly what happened at the disaster, the latter called for major changes: 'Grounds should be upgraded. Attitudes should be more welcoming. The aim should be to provide more modern and comfortable accommodation, better and more varied facilities', said Taylor.⁷²⁸ Most importantly, he called for football grounds to be all-seater. This led to the wholesale rebuilding of stadia, with some clubs opting to relocate to a new site and start again. Often this was a response to the cost of land in urban

⁷²⁸ HMSO, *Taylor Final Report*, p.12.

areas, and the increased use of the motor car. As other amenities, such as leisure parks, shopping centres, and multiplex cinemas, found new homes on the outskirts of towns, so did some of the new football grounds. In these instances, clubs had to lay on special bus services to ferry fans between the town or city centre and the ground.

All of this raised the issue of funding. Taylor had suggested that the costs of rebuilding should be met by cutting tax on the pools levy, but he underestimated the amount involved. As ticket prices soared in the 1990s, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that much of the cost was passed on to fans. The new grounds were safer and more comfortable, but much of the atmosphere of the old grounds was lost as stadia became noticeably quieter. The increase in ticket prices, and attempts by clubs to attract more women and families, the growth in the number of executive boxes, and the cost of merchandising – especially replica shirts, which would become a ‘must have’ item in the 1990s - all point to the game undergoing a kind of *embourgeoisement* during the course of the decade. Replica shirts matched the shift in fashion towards logoed t-shirts, and the increasing popularity of football was part of the growth in consumer culture as football changed in parallel with other areas of the leisure industry.

Despite Hillsborough, the revival in football’s fortunes continued. This was due in no small part to the performance of the England team in the 1990 World Cup finals. Little over a year after Hillsborough half the country tuned in to watch England in the semi-finals, which was the team’s best showing since 1966. ‘Gazza’ became a household name, and the sound of Pavarotti’s *Nessum Dorma* as the accompanying record confirmed that football was aiming to broaden its appeal to a middle-class audience. This trend was assisted by the

growth in football literature. Leading the way, and following on from fanzines, was Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch*, in which he detailed his experience of supporting Arsenal. In the book Hornby relates wider experiences than simply his obsession with his team. It is about the pains of growing up, finding comfort in following eleven players after a family break-up, experiences at school, dating girls, going away to university, and starting a career. The stages of his life are punctuated with references to wider fashion, culture, and national news events. It is written with wit, clarity, and honesty, and anyone can relate to it and enjoy it, football fan or not. This may explain the book's immense success. It also paved the way for many more books on football.

Simultaneous to the Taylor Report being implemented, football underwent restructuring. The formation of the Premier League had its roots in the strife that had beset the game for at least a decade. Discord had developed between a handful of big clubs, who were now in the ownership of directors motivated by business, in keeping with the growing importance of profitability during the Thatcher era. They saw themselves as the main ambassadors of the sport and therefore demanded a greater share of revenue from television broadcasting deals. In their view, the smaller clubs were dragging them down, but those clubs in turn sought to protect their own interests and the sharing ethos of the Football League assisted them in this. During the course of the 1980s the big clubs, based around the nucleus of the 'Big Five' – Arsenal, Everton, Liverpool, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur – had sought, and gained, a bigger say in the decision-making process and a larger share of television revenue. They became more closely linked with television deals and when satellite television broadcasting emerged on the scene it brought the prospect of greatly increased income. Running parallel to this was the rivalry between football's governing bodies. When the Football League produced its document *One Game One Team One Voice*

in 1990, with its call for there to be one governing body for football, this was interpreted by the Football Association as a grab for power, so it responded with its own *Blueprint For The Future Of Football*. This was the document that called for there to be a new top division of eighteen clubs under the jurisdiction of the FA, and in turn this set the process in motion for the formation of the Premier League.

Thus the creation of the Premier League was driven by the desire of the big clubs to secure a greater amount of revenue from television, in a context of rivalry between football's two governing bodies. When it started in 1992 it seemed like the old First Division under a new name, but it was vastly different in that it had broken away from the Football League and therefore did not have to share with the clubs in the other divisions. Because of a new television deal this revenue was huge in comparison to any previous agreement, and was with a satellite television broadcaster. The Premier League's formation has been interpreted in different ways. There is the Conn view that it was motivated by greed, and that the FA betrayed its own ethos as custodians of the game by backing it.⁷²⁹ On the other hand, King argues that football was simply responding to changing times in terms of the drift to a free-market economy throughout the leisure industry, and in this context the establishment of the Premier League was necessary.⁷³⁰ In a sense, they are both right. The breakaway was motivated by the desire of the big clubs to acquire a greater share of revenue, but this paralleled the broader trend as society shifted from being community-based to business-orientated.

⁷²⁹ Conn, *Football Business*, pp.151-152.

⁷³⁰ King, *End Of The Terraces*, pp.67-68.

The Premier League's impact increased over the years, influencing popular culture. Presented by Sky in a way that was new and exciting, it played a major part in reviving football's fortunes as the decade progressed. Its popularity grew and replica shirts became a fashion accessory. Pub licensing hours had been increased to cover all-day opening from 1988, extended to include Sundays from 1995, and thereafter it became commonplace to gather in the pub to watch live televised football. It proved to be a winning formula, benefitting both football and Sky television. The television deal, which initially had seemed vast, would increase greatly with every new deal that was subsequently made.

English football enjoyed massive financial expansion. The combined financial turnover of clubs in the Premier League in 1992/1993 was £170 million. In 2006/2007 this figure was £1530 million, an increase of 900%.⁷³¹ There is, however, a word of caution. Astonishing as it seems, clubs still made a loss. The pre-tax losses at Premiership clubs in 2006/2007 reached £285 million.⁷³² Clubs relied on the willingness of wealthy owners to write off losses and underwrite debt. So where is the money going? In inflated transfer fees and wages to elite players. This is what Sir Alan Sugar termed 'the prune juice effect.' Just like a laxative, no sooner do clubs receive vast amounts of money in satellite television deals, than it goes out again in transfer fees and wages.⁷³³ It may be a crude analogy, but it illustrates the point perfectly.

⁷³¹ Sean Hamil and Geoff Walters, 'Financial Performance In English Football: 'an inconvenient truth'', *Soccer & Society*, vol. 11 No. 4, July 2010, p.354.

⁷³² *Ibid.*, p.359.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, p.361.

During the 1990s there were two teams whose achievements ran parallel to, and were indicative of, a new age. Firstly, Manchester United came to dominate domestic competition under manager Alex Ferguson. United had been building towards success, and were only just pipped to the title in the last season before the breakaway. With a combination of shrewd signings, young talent, and a siege mentality nurtured by Ferguson, the club's achievements over the next two decades would eclipse even those of Liverpool in the previous age. What made United's success different was the club's acknowledgement of, and keenness to exploit, those fans who do not regularly attend games. They marketed their merchandise to those who only followed the team on Sky television. Secondly, Blackburn Rovers enjoyed great success for a short period under the chairmanship of Sir Jack Walker. With his wealth from the sale of Walkersteel, Walker invested his millions in rebuilding Blackburn's ground and building a team capable of winning the Premiership title, which they did in 1995 under Kenny Dalglish, the former Liverpool manager. In the mid-1990s Manchester United with their armchair audience, and Blackburn Rovers with their rebuilt ground and manufactured team, were a clear indication that football was changing into something that was culturally different from that which had existed before.

In 1996 England hosted the European Championships. At a time when the amount of money coming into the Premiership was making football in England an attractive proposition for any young continental player, English football had the opportunity to present itself in a positive light as the competition's games were played on the new or rebuilt grounds which were both safe and clean. Six months earlier the Bosman Ruling had decreed that any player out of contract was not tied to his club and this fundamentally changed the transfer market. Players, once out of contract, were free to move between clubs. In addition to this, European Union rules gave them the freedom to move from club to club between its member states.

The result was an influx of overseas players into the Premiership in what was effectively an internationalisation of the game. Team line-ups included names that sounded unfamiliar to the English tongue as the proportion of overseas players playing in the Premiership grew substantially.

Continental managers soon followed, and Arsene Wenger's appointment at Arsenal in September 1996 marked a watershed. He introduced methods of training and dietary regimes that had not been seen in England, filling his side with overseas players and outfit that displayed European styles and were aesthetically attractive to watch. Wenger's strategy paid off and Arsenal mounted a serious challenge to Manchester United's dominance. Around the turn of the millennium the two clubs enjoyed a duopoly which no other club could challenge.

The football historian Neil Carter has argued that the team manager was central to the transformation in football's image. He acquired a higher profile due to the increased level of media attention now focussed on the game, and became a central figure in the 'soap opera' that football had become. Yet paradoxically, his powers were reduced and his role narrowed. Whereas once he was involved in contracts and paperwork, a more continental style of management developed whereby he would simply be responsible for coaching the first team.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁴ Neil Carter, *The Football Manager: a history* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.122.

As football enjoyed a new level of popularity the one player who typified the age was David Beckham. The Manchester United and England player became an icon at a time when the traditional roles of masculinity were being challenged, and he fitted easily into the part. His marriage to Victoria Adams, one of the Spice Girls, served to widen his appeal, and his modelling of certain products helped earn him a lucrative additional income. Like George Best in the 1960s, David Beckham in the late 1990s incorporated the worlds of sport, fashion, pop music, and popular culture. His fame occurred simultaneously within the wider trend of a growing interest in celebrity culture. The fascination for well-known people, whether they be elite footballers, pop stars, or film and television personalities was fed by celebrity magazines, such as *Hello!* and *OK!* Of particular relevance to football was the rise of so-called 'lads' magazines, such as *FHM* and *Loaded*, with their promotion of sport, cars, and girls.

The process of internationalisation continued to include foreign ownership of the clubs themselves. This was not altogether a new phenomenon. Already, Sam Hamman and Mohammed Al-Fayed, at Wimbledon and Fulham respectively, had come from overseas and owned an English football club. Under Al-Fayed's ownership Fulham enjoyed thirteen successive seasons of Premiership football. However, these two examples were merely a sideshow compared to what would come later. In 2003 it was announced that a Russian billionaire, Roman Abramovich, had bought Chelsea. This was a buyout on a completely different scale. The £140 million he paid for Chelsea was relatively small change among his billions, but it was enough to rescue Chelsea from impending bankruptcy and transform them from a good side into a great one. At last, there was a club that could challenge the dominance of Arsenal and Manchester United. Within two years Chelsea had won the

Premiership and would repeat the feat the following season. For the first time an overseas owner had invested sufficient income to enable one team to dominate domestic competition.

Soon there would be further buyouts of other top clubs, but with less positive results. The American Malcolm Glazer bought Manchester United, but in a practice known as leveraging, he loaded the cost of his purchase on to the club, thus massively increasing its debts. Some fans were so angry they formed a breakaway club, FC United of Manchester. Liverpool had a similar experience when two Americans, George Gillett Jnr. and Tom Hicks, took over. Despite their assurances to the contrary, the experience was similar to that of Glazer at Manchester United as the club was loaded with debt from the cost of the buyout. It was another American, John Henry, who rescued Liverpool from the pair.

The next large takeover would be more positive. In 2008, the purchase of Manchester City by the Abu Dhabi United Group seemed set to eclipse even that of Abramovich at Chelsea. The story followed a similar path of buying up some of the best players and gradually finishing higher up the table until the title was won. The difference was that City had been taken over while at a lower status than Chelsea had been. A mid-table club, seemingly forever in the shadow of their neighbours and rivals Manchester United, sufficient funds were invested to take City to the title within four years. As with Chelsea, there was enough financial clout to build a team that could dominate domestic competition.

The arrival of players, managers, and owners from foreign countries of course paralleled the wider process of globalisation. Instant communication, globalised markets, and greater foreign travel all made the world seem smaller in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The European Union expanded significantly: the increase in the number of its member states, the relaxation of cross-border tariffs, and the introduction of the single currency have all assisted the sense that Europe had drawn closer together. British families travel on cheap flights to European destinations. Thus as business, communications and travel have taken on international proportions, so too has player movement in football, and the increased cross-border movement by players that has taken place can be seen within this broader context. They have been attracted both by the lucrative earnings that can be made and the fact that the Premiership is promoted to a global audience.

Why do wealthy foreign owners become involved? One can only conclude that it is because of the desire to become associated with something as prestigious as an English Premiership football club. The latter has become a status symbol, the ownership of which can only serve to enhance the standing of any owner in their own country. It may assist with other business interests that owner may have. It certainly does not make money in itself. In fact, to acquire a club and bring it success requires an investment of hundreds of millions. Therefore, the desire among overseas billionaires to own an English football club displays the game's transformation in image, and indicates that its prestige now operates on a global scale.

We have seen through these broad and overlapping themes, the transformation of elite-level football in England. Over the years, historians of British industrialisation have engaged in an 'evolution or revolution' debate. Such a discussion can also be applied to football. The roots of change can be traced back as far as 1961 with the abolition of the players' maximum wage. This contributed to the circumstances which would drive further change. If we are to argue that change was an evolutionary process, it took several decades to evolve into the

modern game we enjoy today. The extent of the changes that have taken place in English football, however, have been great and have also reached outside the game. What has happened is nothing short of a revolution, the epicentre of which surely occurred in the first half of the 1990s. It was during this five year period that the construction of all-seater stadiums got under way following the Taylor Report, the Premier League was formed and secured its associated satellite television deal, and the European Cup started to develop into the Champions League. These developments paved the way for greater internationalisation as the Premier League grew to occupy a global stage. As far as the fan experience is concerned, the description by Colin Ward of football in Utopia, quoted just before the first chapter, seemed absurd in the late 1980s when he wrote it, otherwise there would have been no point in saying it, but one has to conclude that by the mid-2010s, much of it rings true.⁷³⁵

A survey was conducted by Jo Welford, Borja Garcia, and Brett Smith at the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences, Loughborough University, into the opinions of football fans. Using a sample of twenty-one fans (seventeen male and four female to accurately reflect the gender imbalance that still exists) of clubs from across all four divisions, including one non-League and one from Scotland, they found that fans were not happy about certain aspects of the way that the game has developed. The main areas of dissatisfaction were financial concerns and the power held over football by the media. Sky Sports in particular was taken as a 'symbol of a disliked modernisation of the game.'⁷³⁶

⁷³⁵ Ward, *Steaming In*, p.6.

⁷³⁶ Jo Welford, Borja Garcia, and Brett Smith, 'A 'Healthy' Future? Supporters' Perceptions Of The Current State Of English Football', *Soccer & Society*, vol. 16, Nos. 2-3, 2015, p.329.

In trying to identify the biggest single factor for change, opinions differ according to context. When considering the fan experience of attending games in the modern age, the biggest single influence was the Hillsborough disaster; regarding the organisational format of the domestic game, the most important development was the foundation of the Premiership. If we are to focus on the English game in an international setting, the Bosman Ruling becomes most important; charting the game's revival to a position that is 'cool' and fashionable leads us to conclude that its promotion by satellite television played a central role. All of these developments were inter-related and often simultaneous as they impacted on each other to a greater or lesser degree. Rogan Taylor, the academic and former chairman of the FSA, gives a simple equation: 'if you want the equation for modern football, i.e. post-modern football, 1992 onwards, it's Heysel plus Hillsborough over satellite t.v. equals modern football.'⁷³⁷

Yet while there has been great change, there has been continuity too. Bar the odd miniscule change in the laws of the game, such as the introduction of 'the backpass rule' and the number of substitutions a team is allowed to make, it is still essentially the same game.⁷³⁸ The pitch markings are the same, and there are still two goals, one at each end of the pitch. There are still two teams, each with eleven players, still organised into defence, midfield, and attack, the number of players in each depending on the style the manager wishes to implement or how he aims to cope with the opposing team. Therefore the changes that have taken place in football have been in its organisation and structure, and in the area of

⁷³⁷ Rogan Taylor, interview with the author, phone, 5 October 2014.

⁷³⁸ The 'backpass rule' means that if a player kicks the ball back to the goalkeeper, the goalkeeper cannot handle the ball. The rule does not apply if he heads or chests the ball back to the goalkeeper. It was introduced in an attempt to prevent timewasting tactics and make games less boring. Regarding substitutions, for decades a team could only make one substitution, but now they can make up to three, which can be chosen from a pool of up to seven players.

consumption - how the game is experienced, witnessed, and enjoyed – and these have been seismic.

In football's revolution the old game died on the terraces at Hillsborough, to be replaced by one which, once past its fledgling stage, would be safer, enjoy wide popularity, and embrace big business to become a billion-pound global brand. But this has been achieved at a price. As the author Ian Ridley commented, 'the fan experience is so much better in many ways, but it's so much more expensive. The sad thing is, young kids are priced out of the game.'⁷³⁹ The cost has been to the ordinary supporter. In addition to the massively inflated ticket prices, today's fan has to endure numerous changes in kick-off times away from the traditional 3pm Saturday kick-off. His, or increasingly her, team can now kick off from Friday evening, through the weekend to Monday night, at a variety of times. This is at the insistence of satellite television companies. In welcoming these broadcasters and accepting their vast fortunes, English football now has to dance to their tune.

⁷³⁹ Ian Ridley, interview with the author, phone, 26 May 2015.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

Chelsea's record under Abramovich

Season	Manager	Premier League	FA Cup	League Cup	Champions League
2003/04	Ranieri	2nd	5 th round	5 th round	semi-final
2004/05	Mourinho	Winners	5 th round	Winners	semi-final
2005/06	Mourinho	Winners	semi-final	3 rd round	last 16
2006/07	Mourinho	2nd	Winners	Winners	semi-final
2007/08	Mourinho, Grant	2nd	6 th round	runners-up	runners-up
2008/09	Scolari, Hiddink	3rd	Winners	4 th round	semi-final
2009/10	Ancelotti	Winners	Winners	5 th round	last 16
2010/11	Ancelotti	2nd	4 th round	3 rd round	q-final
2011/12	Villas-Boas, di Matteo	6th	Winners	5 th round	Winners
2012/13	di Matteo, Benitez	3rd	semi-final	semi-final	didn't qualify*
2013/14	Mourinho	3rd	5 th round	5 th round	semi-final
2014/15	Mourinho	Winners	4 th round	Winners	last 16
2015/16	Mourinho, Hiddink	10th	6 th round	4 th round	last 16

Source: www.soccerbase.com last accessed 13 June 2016.

* Chelsea failed to qualify for Champions League in 2012/2013, but did win the Europa League.

APPENDIX B*Manchester City's record under the Abu Dhabi United Group*

Season	Manager	Premier League	FA Cup	League Cup	Champions League
2008/09	Hughes	10 th	3 rd round	2 nd round	didn't qualify
2009/10	Hughes, Mancini	5 th	5 th round	semi-finals	didn't qualify
2010/11	Mancini	3 rd	Winners	3 rd round	didn't qualify
2011/12	Mancini	Winners	3 rd round	semi-finals	Group Stage
2012/13	Mancini	2 nd	runners up	3 rd round	Group Stage
2013/14	Pellegrini	Winners	6 th round	Winners	last 16
2014/15	Pellegrini	2 nd	4 th round	4 th round	last 16
2015/16	Pellegrini	4 th	5 th round	Winners	semi-final

Source: www.soccerbase.com last accessed 13 June 2016.

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