



British Politics Review

Journal of the British Politics Society, Norway

Volume 8 | No. 2 | Spring 2013



The beautiful game

Football in British politics and society

CONTRIBUTORS

Stephen Barber • Alasdair McKillop • Geoff Pearson
• Arve Hjelseth • Jan Erik Mustad • Lin Åm Fuglestad
Stephen Jenkins • Knut Øystein Høvik

British Politics Review
Volume 8 / No. 2 / Spring 2013
ISSN 1890-4505

British Politics Review is a quarterly journal issued by the British Politics Society, Norway. With contributions from academic and journalistic sources, the *British Politics Review* is aimed at everyone with a general interest in political developments in Britain.

British Politics Society, Norway is politically neutral and has no collective agenda apart from raising the interest and knowledge of British politics among the informed Norwegian public.

Editorial team

Øivind Bratberg [Editor]
Kristin M. Haugevik [Associate Editor]
Atle L. Wold
Jannike Elmbloom Berger

Postal address

P.O. Box 6 Blindern
N-0313 Oslo, Norway

Email

mail@britishpoliticssociety.no

Website

www.britishpoliticssociety.no

Print

Repsentralen, Oslo, Norway

Cover photo

England celebrate at Wembley Stadium following the 4-2 win over West Germany in the World Cup final of 1966, which gave the nation its only gold medal in a World Cup. [Published under Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic Licence].

Manuscripts

Within a relatively broad framework, *British Politics Review* welcomes articles on British politics and society, preferably related to the thematic area set for each issue (announced in the previous issue and on our website). Please contact the editors at mail@britishpoliticssociety.no

Subscriptions

100 NOK pr year
Please contact us at
mail@britishpoliticssociety.no

Editorial Football's wider role

"We are the best in the world! We are the best in the world! We have beaten England 2-1 in football!! It is completely unbelievable! We have beaten England! England, birthplace of giants. Lord Nelson, Lord Beaverbrook, Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Clement Attlee, Henry Cooper, Lady Diana--we have beaten them all. We have beaten them all. Maggie Thatcher can you hear me? Maggie Thatcher, I have a message for you in the middle of the election campaign. I have a message for you: We have knocked England out of the football World Cup. Maggie Thatcher, as they say in your language in the boxing bars around Madison Square Garden in New York: Your boys took a hell of a beating! Your boys took a hell of a beating!"

This famous tirade (here in translated form) was uttered by Norwegian football-commentator Bjørge Lillelien on Norwegian TV on 9 September 1981, after Norway had sensationally beaten England in a World Cup qualifying match in Oslo. The words speak for themselves. Not only does Lillelien's oratory serve to illustrate the grandiose position that football has always had in Norwegian society, but it also says something universal about the asymmetry in the relationship between Britain and Norway at the time. In football as well as in politics, Britain was a giant and a world player, while Norway in both respects was a small power. The fact that the commentary has been listed several times by British newspapers as one of the greatest pieces of sports commentary ever could perhaps also be seen to illustrate some of the warmth in the relationship between the two countries - good friends can afford friendly competition.

Today, football is one of the key dimensions of Britain and Norway's relationship. A simple illustration is this: *British Politics Review* has never before received so many requests about an upcoming issue. One of the consequences of this is that we for the first time publish a special 20-page edition of the journal.

Øivind Bratberg and Kristin M. Haugevik (editors)

Contents

Kicked in touch? Football as a proxy for political authenticity <i>Stephen Barber</i>	pp. 3-5	The white game? <i>Arve Hjelseth</i>	pp. 12-13
Rangers, Scotland and Unionism <i>Alasdair McKillop</i>	pp. 6-7	Why football and not sports 'hooliganism'? <i>Geoff Pearson</i>	pp. 14-15
George Best: Northern Ireland's paradoxical peacemaker <i>Knut Øystein Høvik</i>	p. 8	Professional football and the First World War <i>Stephen Jenkins</i>	pp. 16-18
'Us' versus 'Them': Football supporters and cultural identity <i>Jan Erik Mustad and Lin Åm Fuglestad</i>	pp. 9-11	Hillsborough Report: Prime Minister's statement 12 Sep 2012	pp. 19-20

Kicked in touch: football as a proxy for authenticity

By Stephen Barber

There have long been props in British political life. Think of Harold Wilson smoking a man of the people pipe (he preferred cigars in private) or Margaret Thatcher being interviewed doing the washing up (misleadingly comparing a household budget to the economy). But since New Labour unleashed its media machine on the country, football support has become the shortcut of choice to authenticity.



*Dr Stephen Barber is Reader in Public Policy at London South Bank University, Fellow of the Global Policy Institute and author of the book **Tragedy of Riches**. He is also a regular television and radio commentator on policy and economy issues.*

And while its power might lie in an appeal to voters' tribal instincts, it can be observed that it coincides with a trend towards a political class holding the great offices of state; professional and youthful politicians, untroubled by conventional careers, who can claim ever decreasing kinship with the typical voter. As part of the armoury of their appeal at the ballot box, claimed support for a football team is a powerful way to demonstrate a politician really is in touch with ordinary people. To understand why being a committed supporter has become such a prerequisite for political authenticity, it is necessary to analyse how Tony Blair and New Labour used football as a metaphor for modernisation and normality. This article makes the case, however, that the reason David Cameron has struggled to repeat the trick is not so much because of implausibility but because he has failed to appreciate just how ingrained football was into the electoral message and ultimate appeal of Blair at a time when the game was undergoing a popular revolution.

The Key is Authenticity, if you can Fake That.... During the 2010 general election campaign, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg let it be known that he enjoys the Channel 4 programme *Come Dine With Me*, a show which throws strangers together as they take turns to host a dinner party. David Cameron, it seems was a big fan of the quaint detective drama *Midsomer Murders* while Gordon Brown rarely missed *X-Factor*. For a time in 2008 it was near impossible to

find a politician who did not listen to the Arctic Monkeys and most like to be photographed on a bicycle or jogging. Ed Miliband's 'secret vice' is *Desperate Housewives* he told the *Mirror* in an interview shortly after he was elected leader, a fact rather overshadowed by the (more believable) revelation that he can do a Rubik's Cube in 30 seconds. Such glib shortcuts to authenticity, then, do not always go smoothly. Number 10 was forced to issue a statement clarifying that Prime Minister Gordon Brown 'likes anything with a bit of chocolate on it' after he appeared unable to name his favourite biscuit when questioned by a MumsNet reporter; such was Labour's problem in presenting their rather abnormal leader as normal.

Research has shown just how this communication of politicians' "personal qualities" has increased. Ana Inés Langer for instance has charted the proportion of news articles which refer to the personal lives of leaders and shows how they rocketed in the 1990s: a symptom, she argues, of the "Blair effect". It is instructive that this phenomenon has coincided with a professionalization of front line politics where the pool from which leaders are drawn is increasingly shallow. A typical career runs as follows: PPE at Oxford into bag carrying for an MP or 'special adviser' to a Minister, selection for a seat, election to Parliament while still in the 20s and rapid promotion without the time even for an apprenticeship on the back benches. This is hardly the life experience of a normal person, cosseted as it is in the unreal world of the political elite. But without recognisable vocational careers and executive experience supporting electoral bids, appeal rests with their purported normality.

One can be sceptical about the veracity of the messages deployed. There is an instructive literature on overload, notably produced by David Laughrin, which shows just how little leisure time modern politicians enjoy. And the evidence speaks for itself. In one now famous cynical episode, Tony Blair asked about his favourite food told a reporter in trendy Islington that it was polenta while separately boasting that it was fish and chips to the local paper in his Northern constituency.



Get it, son. Tony Blair, the then Leader of the Labour Party, takes part in a football-heading contest with Kevin Keegan in Brighton, 1995. Photo: Neil Munns / PA

It is not all football, then, is the observation. Politicians construct a host of interests designed to make them appear 'normal'. But these pop culture shortcuts to authenticity can be said to be rather superficial, disposable and forgettable in comparison to the political requirement to support a football team. And while few politicians would now dare to concede the beautiful game bores them to tears, none has used football quite like Tony Blair. To understand today's connection between football support and democratic politics one has to understand the exploitation by New Labour.

New Labour's Coming Home. In the build up to the 1997 general election, the Labour party built a media machine more powerful than any seen in Britain before or since. With its rapid response unit and single-minded pursuit of the message, it managed and manipulated the news cycle to electorally devastating effect. And football was an early triumph, helped enormously by the fact that their young leader could boast a bit of ball coordination. At the 1995 Labour Conference Blair competently headed the ball back and forth with Kevin Keegan. The images said so much of Blair - energetic, vibrant, in touch - by comparison with the now jaded Conservative government led by John Major. After all, the passion and oomph of football make for great political images; something which cannot be said for slumping in front of the television to watch *Midsomer*.

But it did not end there for New Labour. Football was modernising in the mid 1990s, just like politics. It had put behind it the dark days of the 1980s when Britain became known for hooliganism and (separately) the lasting political image was of the Hillsborough tragedy. New stadia, new money, new international players and a new premier league, football had entered a new era. It was a metaphor for New Labour and combined with that expert media management, the sport was a resource to be exploited by Blair like no other British party leader before him (or since).

It formed part of the 'biopic' party election broadcast where Blair confided to camera that his

ambition as a child had been to play for Newcastle United and how he tried to persuade his (Tory) "dad" to help him get a trial: "he never did". It goes on with the personal narrative of his "generation trying to get to a different type of politics" overlaid with images of track-suited Blair playing the game itself. And with denim wearing, guitar playing, Galaxy driving brand driven reminders that Tony was indeed a man of the people, football secured its place in delivering an important part of the political message. Aping the Euro '96 chart topping theme, it allowed Blair to make the claim in a speech ahead of the 1997 poll that "Labour has come home to you. So come home to us. Labour's coming home. Seventeen years of hurt. Never stopped us dreaming. Labour's coming home".

This was perhaps cleverer than retrospect affords. Football players have remained distinctly working class for a century and little has really changed (when 40% of the population goes to university, think how many have degrees). But support has become much more middle class since 'modernisation' in the 1990s. Emmonn Walsh cites Nick Hornby's *Fever Pitch* at least reflecting a generation coming to professional affluence in the 1990s, whose formative memories had been the 1966 World Cup. Indeed, these were sort of voters which New Labour successfully attracted and perhaps included a much less class conscious Britain; the very 'classless society' which John Major identified but ultimately failed to energise.

But more than this, the breakaway from the Football League in 1992 very much reflected the Thatcherite mission to tear down protectionism and opened up the game to the ravages of the world. No longer were there equal votes for unequal success or redistribution of income. In came market forces and upward mobility of a few self-made men, personified by Alan Sugar and Greg Dyke. And behind the modernisation were Rupert Murdoch and the emergence of Sky Broadcasting. For Blair, this association showed just how much Labour had now embraced the free market, self-regulatory model generally and at a time when it made sense to ordinary supporters.



Shoot-out. Prime Minister David Cameron of the United Kingdom, President Barack Obama, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, President François Hollande of France and others watch the overtime shootout of the Chelsea vs. Bayern Munich Champions League final, during the G8 Summit at Camp David, Maryland, 19 May 19, 2012.
Official White House Photo by Pete Souza

The Governing Body. The football theme continued into government; though usually deployed to distract attention from a more serious political issue. As Prime Minister, Blair appeared on the BBC's Football Focus in 2005 just as he faced Parliamentary rebellion over his government's controversial 90 day detention plans. During the 2006 European Leaders' Summit, Number 10 briefed journalists repeatedly that Blair was searching for a screen to watch the World Cup rather than concentrating on salvaging the collapsed (and unpopular) EU Constitution. And as the feud between Prime Minister and Chancellor Brown became so intense that it could no longer be hidden from the public, it was football which was chosen to present an image of harmony. The cameras were invited in to film Tony and Gordon watching the match together in Downing Street, each sipping a cold beer. It was not forgotten under the premiership of Brown either, with the football press invited to Downing Street early on, though by this time Labour had lost its edge in media management. The BBC it seems turned down an offer in 2010 from this Raith Rovers fan to appear as a Match of the Day 2 pundit. Nevertheless, there is a lasting football legacy, now considered as the shortcut to political normality. The question is why has David Cameron been unable to capitalise his own support for the game?

David Cameron in the Second Division? It is a near prerequisite of today's politics for leaders to declare support for a football team and David Cameron has proved no exception in his attempt to use the sport as a proxy for authenticity. Indeed, he has a nice claim to evidence his Aston Villa fandom: his uncle, Sir William Dugdale, was Chairman of the club 1975-82. Cameron has been photographed jogging in a Villa top emblazoned with his name; he took his son to Loftus Road to watch them play QPR conveniently coinciding with the 2011 Labour Conference; he invited Football Focus to Downing Street to discuss England's bid to host the 2018 World Cup. Despite taking these leaves from the Blair play book, Cameron has never really been successful in using football to convince voters that he is one of them. And it is not simply because some find it difficult to believe (he 'admitted' to the Commons shortly after his election in 2001 that he was not a football fan). Rather it is because he has not appreciated the sheer effort that went into the New Labour message and the context.

Cameron's Achilles' heal is that he is seen as out of touch; a privileged 'posh boy' as even one of his back benchers described him. It would be easy to conclude that this 'Bullington Boy' image is the reason that his football support has fallen flat. So-called 'heir to Blair' he partially detoxified the Conservative party but his modernisation remained superficial and simply did not reflect the root and branch conversion of New Labour. The Cameroons have perhaps failed to appreciate just how committed New Labour's architects were to the message of modernisation. However it might appear, football was

not casually thrown about in the hope of making their leader look a bit normal. It was deployed deliberately, consistently and with precision at a time when the game itself was experiencing a popular revolution.

As with other concepts embraced by New Labour, it turns out that football's modernisation was built on flawed thinking. Overstretched clubs, bankruptcies and dubious overseas funding mean that the Premier League today has become a toxic brand while there is weak governance at the FA. An image of a political leader with an arm around a club chairman is unlikely to engender kudos with real fans (and voters). The sport, with its great wealth, 'overpaid stars', personal and financial scandals does not offer convenient metaphors at a time of public spending cuts and austerity. Indeed, one might argue that a key reason that Cameron has failed to capitalise of the game's common appeal is that football itself is now out of touch; representing that which went wrong with the political embrace of neo-liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s. But while Cameron can only make limited use of sporting clichés to demonstrate he is a man of the people, there are surely avenues for football to once again reflect the political climate. His cherished 'big society' for instance offers the tangible appeal of returning clubs to communities and to represent social values beyond the financial. Unfortunately for the government, big society is neither widely understood nor has it gained real traction since 2010 and the coalition's media machine is decidedly substandard when compared to that of its predecessor.

Because support is just scattered about today without a strategic message, partially explains why football is proving no more powerful than *Midsomer Murders* as a shortcut to political authenticity for the Prime Minister or any of the current crop. For New Labour, the game represented the important political message of modernisation and celebrated free markets at an electorally critical time just as much as it illustrated Blair's supposed normality. While party leaders continue to be drawn from a narrow political elite, flippant claims to football fandom seem here to stay. But if the game reflects the evolving political climate there will be opportunities once again to associate it with emerging policy ambitions and represent a powerful proxy for authenticity.

Further reading:

- Ana Inés Langer (2010): 'The politicization of private persona: exceptional leaders or the new rule? The case of the United Kingdom and the Blair effect', *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 15 (Jan.): 60-76.
- David Laughrin (2009): 'Swimming for their lives—waving or drowning? A review of the evidence of ministerial overload and of potential remedies for it', *The Political Quarterly* 80: 339-50.
- Emmonn Walsh (2012): 'Fever pitch and the rise of middle class football', *BBC News Magazine*, 5/3/12.

Has nationalism transformed Glasgow's football rivalry?

By Alasdair McKillop

The Rangers-Celtic rivalry is one of the fiercest and best known in world football. It has maintained this position in recent decades despite a collapse in the standing of Scotland's club and national sides. Like all great sporting rivalries, its intensity is derived from a number of longstanding and somewhat stereotypical sources, some of which are more mythical than real. The stereotypical Rangers fan is supposed to be a Protestant and a supporter of the maintenance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and, importantly, Northern Ireland. His Celtic equivalent would be a Catholic, most likely of Irish descent, and someone who favours the cause of Irish nationalism, possibly even the more extreme expressions of Irish republicanism. The extent to which these accurately describe the average fan of either club in 21st century Scotland is open to challenge but they still have prominence in the popular imagination and the rivalry is dependent on each side believing the worst about the other. The fact that the two clubs share the same city and are the most successful in the history of Scottish football also adds to the antagonism for which the 'Old Firm' rivalry is renowned.



*Alasdair McKillop is an independent author based in Edinburgh. He holds an MA in History and Politics and a MSc in Scottish History from the University of Edinburgh. McKillop is the co-editor of *Follow We Will: The Fall and Rise of Rangers*, forthcoming at Luath Press.*

In recent years, the relationship between Rangers and Celtic has undergone significant and arguably unprecedented changes. Since the advent of devolution in Scotland, sectarianism has become a far more prominent issue and one that has attracted much media and political attention. Popular accounts have blamed the Old Firm for the continuation of the hostility between Protestants and Catholics, despite academic work which would counsel against inflating the importance of sectarianism and viewing it through the prism of the Old Firm rivalry. Moreover, fans have been challenged about the ways they give expression to the politically and religiously tinted cultures surrounding both Rangers and Celtic. In 2011, the SNP majority government in the Scottish Parliament passed the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act (which came into effect in March 2012). The legislative process was contested and opposition to the bill was voiced not just by fans but by church leaders and members of other political parties. Both Rangers and Celtic fans opposed the bill in a number of ways, from chants and banners at football matches, protest marches and in person before the Justice Committee of the Scottish Parliament. Shared opposition to the bill might have offered a platform for mutual co-operation. But further reconciliation was hindered by the reaction to the financial collapse of Rangers, one of the results of which

was to eliminate Old Firm matches from the Scottish football calendar for the first time in over a century.

A self-inflicted financial crisis at Rangers resulted in the club finding itself in the Third Division of Scottish football. The political significance of Rangers' demise is that, the entry into administration and subsequently liquidation in 2012 of the company that owned Rangers coincided with an unprecedented level of speculation about the future of the United Kingdom; they were the two biggest news stories in Scotland in 2012. The election of a majority SNP government in 2011 was the catalyst for scheduling a referendum on Scotland's future within the United Kingdom. The date for the referendum has recently been announced as 18 September 2014, by which time the constitutional question will have dominated Scottish politics for three years. The bulk of Rangers fans therefore had to contend, not only, with the crisis that engulfed their football club but the prospect of the break-up of the state the majority of them identified with. The minority of fans who favour Scottish independence would have experienced contrasting emotions. The many Rangers fans from the unionist community in Northern Ireland would have experienced a different mixture of football and constitutional anxiety. The intensity of recent loyalist flag protests no doubt shifted attention back to matters closer to home but it is also possible that the Scottish question might have been a minor contributor to the disaffection which manifested itself in occasionally violent ways.

Tom Gallagher, the author of numerous academic studies on politics and religion in Scotland, has argued: 'The organised cultural Britishness which Rangers has stood for has been a huge source of frustration for the SNP, which has been blocked electorally in the club's West of Scotland heartland even as it has progressed elsewhere.' Some evidence for this might be found in the local elections of 2011 which saw Labour win a majority on Glasgow City Council despite predictions of an SNP breakthrough. He suggested the SNP government should assist Rangers in its time of need in a bid to woo sceptical fans and demonstrate that it genuinely believed in the idea of a 'social union' between an independent Scotland and the remainder of the United Kingdom. Such help was, beyond some minor platitudes, not forthcoming. There are a number of possible explanations for this. The prospect was met with opposition from those hostile to Rangers receiving any assistance and it seems unlikely that the SNP and First Minister Alex Salmond would have risked unpopularity by helping an institution with an associated political culture that was a complication on the road to independence. Furthermore, the SNP had itself, been recently responsible for casting Rangers in a problematic, even negative light, during the passage of the offensive behaviour act.

The recent crisis and straining of relations built on a longer history of unease between Rangers and dominant discourses in politics and public life. Rangers are occasionally referred to as the 'quintessentially British club' and the British and unionist iconography associated with the club and fans had put them at odds with Scottish society as nationalist sentiment and support for devolution grew in the 1980s and 1990s. Some trace this process back as far as the 1960s, when other Scottish narratives and identities started to emerge. This is all the more significant as prior to that the rise of nationalism, 'Rangers already had a long history of being regarded as a surrogate for the Scottish nation in a sporting sense.' According to, Harry Reid, the former editor of *The Herald*, 'Rangers had standards and dignity, a sense of pride and self-belief: they were a decent club representing something resolute-aye ready-in the Scottish character and their supporters were honourable people.' But the Rangers fan who said: 'I've always voted for the Conservatives. I believe they stand up for Britain better than the others. They stand up for the Ulster Unionists.' had long since found himself in a minority position. While British identity and support for the union remains a feature of Scottish society, these have become largely undemonstrative and increasingly divorced from unconditional identification with the institutions of the British state.

Predictably, bloggers and commentators with nationalist sympathies appeared to welcome Rangers' misfortune. Gerry Hassan, writing in *The Scotsman*, contended: 'football is the first arena in our public life where the fresh, cleansing air of democracy has shown itself. Over the summer, football fans across Scotland have come together, agitated, and organised and overturned the time-honoured stitch-up that would have kept a newco Rangers in the SPL.' This played on outdated but still popular notions of Rangers as 'the establishment' club, a concept that has not only class but political connotations. The same commentator also sought to link the Rangers situation to other high-profile issues. He argued: "The Murdoch [sic], referendum and Rangers examples could be joined by many others; the collusion with the banking

"The British and unionist iconography associated with the club and fans had put [Rangers] at odds with Scottish society..."

sector and courting of Fred Goodwin and others pre-crash by our entire political class.' In addition, he referred to: 'the old order of the last 30 years of British politics' collapsing with Rangers very much among the rubble. In this way, the crisis that had befallen Rangers – the quintessentially British club – was packaged up as and sold as a natural extension of the multiple crises that had afflicted the British state in recent years.

Yet it is still seemingly possible for a Rangers fan to favour Scottish independence and the Scottish undercurrents of the Rangers culture should not be overlooked. Scottish nationalist sympathies have likely always existed within the Rangers support. One Rangers fan quoted in a book by the journalist Ronnie Esplin stated: 'I vote SNP. I always have done and at the moment I think I always will. I believe in independence and if it happens, I feel people outside the UK may begin to realise that we are a nation in our own right and that we have many things to be proud of.' Such sentiment might reflect the position of those involved with the Rangers Supporters for Independence group with has been promoted by the nationalist blog

Bella Caledonia. This is might be seen as opportunistic and cynical given the blog's undisguised hostility to Rangers. Alan Bissett, a Scottish novelist and prominent supporter of the Yes Scotland campaign, has reflected on the tensions inherent within the Rangers support in his fictional work. Grappling with unionism and sectarianism, the protagonist in his most recent novel *Pack Men* gives voice to some of Bissett's own dilemmas. In an interview for the current affairs magazine *Scottish Review* he explained: 'I'm uncomfortable with unionism and that aspect of Rangers supporting and I do think to a certain extent that it is a false consciousness and that Rangers fans have been asked to identify with very, very rich people who essentially are the controlling interests of Great Britain.'

Events have conspired to seemingly place Rangers at odds with popular opinion within Scottish football. As an institution, the club's standing in society has probably never been so low. However, continuing corporate problems and the basic footballing need to return to the top both divert attention away from the prospect of Scottish independence. This would have far more significant consequences for the club and its supporters but few seem conscious of the looming danger.



The Old Firm. Celtic FC vs. Glasgow Rangers, Celtic Park, 27 April 2008.

George Best: Northern Ireland's paradoxical peacemaker

By Knut Øystein Høvik

Women and men, young and old, Catholic and Protestant, from North and South, from all layers of society and of different political convictions, they all worshipped football's first real superstar. So when news of the death of George Best broke in the early hours on 25 November 2005, his childhood home in East Belfast was quickly turned into a footballing shrine. Among the flowers, cards and football shirts laid down in front of his father's door were the scarves of Celtic and Rangers, two clubs Best never played for. This was testimony of the incredible unifying powers – even in death – of Northern Ireland's greatest ever footballer. Few people in Irish history can be said to have had the same gift of transcending all kinds of boundaries and bringing such a divided people together.



Knut Øystein Høvik is a Lecturer at the Department of Humanities, Hedmark University College.

The day he was laid to rest an estimated 100,000 mourners lined the rainswept streets of Belfast for what The Sun described as “the biggest funeral since [Princess Diana].”

It had all the appearance of a state funeral: the Parliament Buildings at Stormont were used for the ceremony, which was beamed live on a number of TV channels around the globe. Viewers witnessed the Best family saying goodbye to a son, a brother and a father. Also present were dignitaries from the footballing community and prominent guests representing political Northern Ireland, with reporters observing that sitting together were former political and paramilitary enemies Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin and David Ervine of the Progressive Unionist Party. It spoke volumes about the regard in which Best was held and how far his troubled homeland had come. McGuinness, a lifelong Manchester United fan, and his republican cronies would once have been happy to blow up Stormont for what it symbolised to most Northern Irish Catholics, but there he was, paying homage to the most famous Ulsterman of all time. As a former IRA Chief of Staff, could he possibly not have known about the threat issued by his organisation to shoot Best if he played for Manchester United away at Newcastle in 1971? Whether he did or did not, the IRA quickly came to its senses, realising that any attack on Ireland's football saint would not be welcomed among their own.

“Where did it all go wrong, George?” It is one of British football's most frequently asked questions. Psychologists and football fans alike have tried to explain the career that ended all too soon, and the party that lasted far too long. Did Britain's most infamous alcoholic really deserve such a spectacular sendoff? Convicted of driving under the influence, accused of beating his wife, involved in a series

of extramarital affairs, bankruptcy, Best could hardly be described as a role model. He was an exceptionally shy boy, who needed a football or a drink to express himself, and stood no chance of coping with the enormous pressure and superstardom that awaited him, as one scandal led to the next. So how does one explain the immense popularity of one of life's tragic heroes?

Perhaps his tremendous standing among his own was down to the fact that he never got involved in the conflict in his native country. In the words of fellow Ulsterman Seamus Heaney: “whatever you say, say nothing.” Best always kept his political and religious views to himself. More significant was undoubtedly the fact that Best escaped Belfast before The Troubles began. More or less untarnished by the brush of sectarianism, Best united Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants in a way that no other person from the province could ever hope to once battle lines had been drawn. In the late 1960s and early 70s, while some of the worst atrocities were being committed, Best the footballer gave his people something priceless: pride. For those struggling to cope with tragic events like Bloody Friday and Sunday, Best offered escapism on perfect Saturdays.

“George Best united Northern Irish Catholics and Protestants in a way that no other person from the province could ever hope to...”

There is a mural on Falls Road in nationalist West Belfast which shows United manager Matt Busby with the European Cup and George Best, the Protestant from working-class East Belfast. It has been there since before the peace process started. The absurdity of it all was perhaps best summed up by Paddy Crerand, Best's closest friend and

colleague at Old Trafford, who recalled newsreels during The Troubles showing Catholic and Protestant youths throwing bricks and Molotov cocktails at each other, many on either side wearing Manchester United tops, all of them George Best fans.

A new nation needs its heroes. Best's universal popularity must also be seen in light of his combination of talent with human flaws and vulnerability, which most people can recognize and relate to. Best may not be the ideal hero, but it is not hard to understand why Northern Irish politicians use the cult of Best for what it is worth. The South African government used the success of the Springboks during the 1995 rugby World Cup in a similar way, uniting a divided people through sports. The tourist industry also knows how to cash in on the seemingly never-ending worldwide fascination with Best. Already, Belfast City Airport is named in his honour, and his childhood home has been turned into a guesthouse. His portrait even adorns Ulster Bank's £5 note. The message seems to be that this is how Northern Ireland wants to “sell” itself to the rest of the world, with Best as its public face.

Us versus Them: Football supporters and cultural identity

By Jan Erik Mustad and Lin Åm Fuglestad

In the last few decades, academic researchers have taken an increased interest in football and its supporters. Frequently viewing these groups from within, the studies have contributed to a better understanding of how the football culture works, both as groups in their own rights and as part of society as a whole.



Jan Erik Mustad is Senior Lecturer at Agder University College, Norway, and the author of numerous books on British politics and society. He is a regular commentator in the Norwegian media.

Lin Åm Fuglestad is an English lecturer at Sygna upper secondary school in Balestrand, Norway. Her Cand. Philol. thesis "Us versus Them" (2003) forms the basis of this article.

This article takes a dual perspective on how football fans often regard themselves, both in relation to their own group and in relation to others. We bring in elusive concepts like culture and identity, while realising that we cannot do these adequate justice in just a short article. It is, however, interesting to note how the self-awareness of fans has developed in recent years and how they often legitimate their own existence using phrases such as culture and identity. This is perhaps one reason why academics devote more time and attention to these groups.

Another reason for this increased interest may be the transference of football from a game with a predominantly working-class base to a more middle-class orientation, where money and TV rights play a larger part, hence making the game and its supporters more visible to society as a whole. This does not mean that all supporters can now be categorised as middle-class, but it indicates that the game has been commercialised and moved in a direction where clubs operate more like any other business venture. Foreign ownership and fresh capital has led to inflated player salaries and dearer tickets for supporters who, on many occasions, cannot afford to pay the asking price. Clearly, the knock-on effect of this development is that the stands are filled with people with strong purchasing power, and often jetted in from overseas, taking up seats at the expense of local patriots. This has subsequently led to increasing antagonism between supporters on the one hand and clubs and their owners on the other, as supporters feel that their game is being sacrificed for economic profit, and in some cases lifted out of the local area. Clubs foster well-paid players, buy and sell players at sums earlier unheard of, and gain most of their revenues from television rights. Additionally, a substantial amount of income

is generated through the increasing consumerism that takes place at the various grounds. Fans from all over the world spend abundantly on club merchandise like shirts, flags, caps, scarves etc. Needless to say, this commercialisation widens the gap, not only between supporters and clubs, but also between the big and famous clubs like Manchester United, Manchester City, Chelsea, Liverpool, Arsenal and Tottenham, and the rest.

Some of the aspects mentioned here definitely make the football industry worthy of popular culture and social science studies, and fans are an integral part of this environment, as their sense of belonging, and their investments in the club, emotional and other, remain strong, albeit sometimes in spite of developments in the clubs.

Cultural Identity. The English writer Nick Hornby states in his famous novel *Fever Pitch* (1992) that "football is an alternative universe" (p. 135), and this suggests that football fans, those "on the inside", have a specific and unique worldview: for instance, they have their own "units of time" measured in seasons rather than calendar years, and they share experiences and values that others do not have. Hornby's novel supports the idea that fans form a separate culture, as they inhabit "a different version of the world" (p. 164), implying both the *differentness* and the *sameness* that fans share.

The term culture probably has as many definitions as there are people writing about the subject. In this article we have decided to focus on Hans Gullestrup's definition of culture, translated from *Kultur, kulturanalyse og kulturetik: Eller hvad adskiller og forener os?* (1993, p. 54)

Culture is the worldview and the values, moral laws and actual behaviour - as well as the material and non-material expressions of these - which people inherit from the previous generation; which they - possibly in an altered form - seek to transmit further to the following generation; and which in one way or another set them apart from people belonging to other cultures.

Although this definition was not written with football supporters in mind, it contains aspects that are relevant in this context. Fans share the knowledge of how the game works, its rules and tactics, its history, its heroes and villains and so on. In other words, they share a worldview, values and behaviour, setting them apart from other social groups.

An interesting and important point made in the definition is that culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. Football culture is transferred by a variety of channels, both consciously and unconsciously. Alan Edge, in *Faith of our Fathers: Football as Religion* (1997) uses the term “indoctrination”, thus demonstrating how strongly fans are influenced by parents (or other relatives), peers, surroundings and, increasingly, mass media. By observing fans around you and on TV, and by discussing and watching football with other people, you learn what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This apprenticeship, where more experienced supporters teach young ones what is expected of them as fans and members of their culture, is crucial for the young fans’ feeling of collectivism and belonging.

One way of transmitting culture is through storytelling, what we can call the oral tradition of football. It consists of passing on stories, songs, myths or legends, sharing tragedies, successes and history with the younger generation. These are important parts of the cultural heritage and help young fans to understand what it takes to be a dedicated supporter. Larry A. Samovar et al. say in *Communications Between Cultures* (1998), p. 43: “For a culture to exist and endure, it must ensure that its crucial messages and elements are passed on”.

In order to signal to the outside world which football culture you belong to, or which team you support, physical appearance very quickly gives you away. If you wear a Chelsea scarf, a Liverpool shirt or a Tottenham cap, you immediately reveal to others which cultural group you identify with and define yourself as part of. This cultural identity is formed

in relation to other groups: wearing a Tottenham cap signals that you feel “similar” to other people wearing a Tottenham cap, but you feel “different” from people wearing a Liverpool shirt. By defining criteria for group membership, we create a boundary indicating that anyone beyond it does not belong to our group. In this way, all communities draw boundaries around themselves, signifying that not everybody can participate. For someone to be inside, someone also has to be outside.

Football fans, like other cultural groups, go through two main processes of identification. On the one hand there is the internal process of negotiating your identity as a “real” fan in relation to other fans in your group; to show that you really are an insider. On the other hand there is a constant struggle for unity and inclusion, presenting an image of the group as a unified entity in relation to the outside world. As a member of a normally heterogeneous group, it is important that you give an impression of homogeneity by focusing on differences from the outside. Creating similarities within the group strengthens the “in-group” identity, which again helps to form negative stereotypes of the others. The idea of “others” being less normal than and inferior to “us” is a common notion among football supporters.

‘Us vs. them’. Football is often compared to war, and similarities to warfare are reflected in the metaphors used about the game and its players, managers and fans. The warlike nature of football is also seen in the fans’ relationship with their team. They see themselves as soldiers taking part in the battle to defend the honour of their team, and demonstrate this role by giving themselves names like the Red Army or the Toon Army.



The global game. Mural at the Pub “Chelsea Arms” in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
Photo: Sigismund von Dobschütz

Like other armies at war, football fans need enemies, and they find these primarily in competing teams and their fans. The main task of the fans is to urge their team on while at the same time intimidating the enemy, and consequently the language used is often violent, using words like "beat," "kill," "crush" and "hate." This "hatred" of the enemy is built up through war rhetoric and propaganda, maintaining and strengthening



Over here. What is sometimes referred to as *mob football* was played between neighbouring towns and villages, involving an unlimited number of players with the object of moving the ball (or other suitable object) to a geographical point within the opposite party's domain. Crowe Street, London, 1721. Artist unknown.

existing stereotypes. The enemy is highly stereotyped and portrayed as deviant, amoral, bestial and subhuman, and is through such dehumanisation made easier to hate and thus wage war against.

In the Middle Ages an early form of football was played where towns, villages or neighbourhoods would play against each other, and here the whole population would take part either as supporters or in the actual fight to bring the ball across town or into the next parish, where the goal was. This created a strong link between football teams and their surrounding community, and traces of such communal involvement can be observed in the tribalism that governs the game today among hard-core fans. Foreign owners of British clubs often underestimate the importance of these local ties, which contributes to the antagonism between these owners and their clubs' supporters.

The modern version of the game, from the middle of the 19th century, started off as quite peaceful and friendly. However, in the 1960s the competitiveness of the game increased, much due to media coverage and increasing financial interest, and as a consequence tribal boundaries reappeared. There had been banter between rival groups of fans earlier as well, but from the 60s, and increasingly in the 70s and

"Football is often compared to war, and similarities to warfare are reflected in the metaphors used about the game and its players, managers and fans. The warlike nature of football is also seen in the fans' relationship with their team."

so the tribal boundaries, the intimidating language and the stereotyped enemy images remain. Besides, maintaining an image of a deviant and despicable common enemy is an important factor in the unification of the "in-group" and is thus an integral part of the identity of fans.

Depicting "them" as different from "us" is a vital element in forming an "in-group" identity. Facing a common enemy seems to be a strong unifying factor, particularly if the whole world is your enemy, as it creates an "us against the rest" situation. In order to strengthen their group identity and feeling of belonging, fans form stereotyped images of other fans, which means that the whole idea of cultural and social identity depends on how one group views the others. Hence, your identity is not only determined within the boundaries of your own group – it is constantly negotiated and renegotiated in relation to others; how you view others and how others regard you. We understand from this, that culture and identity are movable entities that change over time. Football supporters, as social groups, also change, and this is an additional reason for taking a scholarly interest in them, as they are important contributors to the general debate about cultural identity in Britain.

80s, it became more hostile and violent. In the 70s and 80s in particular, tribal warfare was a problem that tarnished the reputation of football fans, but during the 90s the game was "cleaned up," conditions for fans were improved and the violence to a great extent moved away from the stadia. However, the tribalism of these decades caused a lot of "bad blood" between fan groups, and

The white game?

By Arve Hjelseth

The face-lift which English football went through in the first half of the 1990s has been subject to extensive scrutiny and debate. What the inauguration of the Premier League in 1992 amounted to was a broadening of appeal by reorienting the sport up market. Football was intended to become a *A Brand New Ball Game*. The working-class image – not to mention that of *white trash* – was inappropriate to a Britain which had largely dismantled its industry and replaced its postwar characteristics with those of the financial economy. Football was not only expected to reflect its own contemporary era but also to attract an audience willing to pay.



Arve Hjelseth is a Senior Lecturer at the Dept for Sociology and Political Science, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and associate fellow at the Centre for Law, Society and Popular Culture, University of Westminster. He has published extensively on the sociology of sports and culture.

Roughly speaking there are two competing interpretations of the transformation of English football. Among supporters, and often underscored by writers and some researchers, the dominant narrative has been critical: football has excluded its original fans by out-pricing them and by putting constraints on their behaviour. The latter is illustrated by the ban on standing areas on the terraces of English football venues. Effectively, the ban served to marginalise a quintessential cultural practice: while football had been a catalyst for collective euphoria, the commercialised Premier League was a venue for passive consumption of entertainment.

"A visible presence in most Premier League venues, adult white men are also a characteristic feature on the terraces of the lower divisions."

It remains a common assertion that the price for modernising and raising the popularity of English football has been the marginalisation of traditional supporters. But the alternative interpretation strikes a far more positive note. For one thing, the sport has since 1990 worked consistently to quell hooliganism and violent behaviour. Football clubs have also piloted numerous campaigns against racism and homophobia. From this vantage point, the modern image of football has not been discriminatory; on the opposite, reforms have opened the doors for groups that previously felt excluded. Traditionally, English football has been dominated by a strikingly white working-class masculinity which could easily be perceived as both sexist, homophobic and mildly racist. The football audience cultivated values and practices associated

with underprivileged white men. Over the last two decades, by contrast, a lot of effort has been devoted to include women, families and ethnic minorities. The cultural change is readily noticeable also among core supporter groups, where racism has been sharply reduced though not eliminated. Moreover, research on audience culture shows that homophobia is fading as well. The bottom line of this interpretation is that although some groups may see themselves as excluded by the commercialisation of football since 1992, exclusion of a cultural kind was a more severe problem before.

These developments notwithstanding, football in England remains embedded in cultural practices and rituals which undoubtedly can be alienating to certain groups. One key transition from the 1980s is that the average ticketholder on English stadiums is older today, a fact which is evidently related to costs. But these are predominantly white men. A visible presence in most Premier League venues, adult white men are also a characteristic feature on the terraces of the lower divisions. Women are present in far smaller numbers, and fans of African or Asian ethnicity are remarkably rare, especially if we take into consideration the multi-ethnic character of English cities. All the efforts to include these groups have only led to limited change in terms of presence in stadiums.

To perceive this as a real problem could easily be overplaying the case. It should come as no surprise to sociologists that different groups divide over what leisure activities to pursue. Nevertheless, it is interesting to reflect on how English football, despite being a global, cross-class, multi-media phenomenon, still nurtures codes and practices which are intimately connected to its classic working-class image.

In their book *Soccernomics*, Simon Kuper and Stefan Szymanski show that football in England, contrary to most other countries, still recruits players from a socially limited pool. An impressive majority of players wearing the England jersey over the last years have parents from the working class. One possible explanation is found in the football culture itself. Among the many stereotypes about football players' field of interests – fast cars, night clubs, Playstation and gambling – there is certainly a grain of truth. It is easy to imagine people with other interests finding little to talk about in the boot room, and young people with intellectual credentials may opt for a different career than professional football.

Probably, such reasons were prevalent when Graeme Le Saux, a Blackburn and later Chelsea player, was harassed as gay because he had academic interests and was a keen reader of the Guardian. That abuse not only originated among spectators, but also from opposing players, brought to the limelight by Le Saux's infamous clash with Liverpool's Robbie Fowler. Football culture, on the pitch and on the terraces, is characterised by anti-intellectualism, and this is largely maintained in the modernised, globally oriented Premier League. The expectations to players and teams are still dominated by the values that constituted the working class ethos: loyalty, discipline, collective commitment and the ability to accept pain.

Despite the fact that efforts to counter racism and homophobia have been largely successful, the football ritual therefore remains a homage to the masculine community as it unfolded in the heyday of the industrial working class. Prior to the game, pubs around the stadium are dominated by white men of all ages. One could imagine that families and people of other ethnicities have other places to commune, but inside the stadium the picture is largely the same. A pre-match meeting in the pub is the occasion for easy talk among men, not only about football but about life. It illustrates an important characteristic of the football ritual: it consists of more than the game. To people that are less attracted by pub culture, it shows that knowing and loving the sport is not sufficient to enter the inside of it.

Young men often accompany their fathers and grandfathers and thus approach the ritual from an early age onwards. In some cases it is an open question whether they will maintain it as part of their own lives, especially when the team in question is in the lower divisions. But sons and grandsons have been socialised this way for ages, and football remains an important token of male community in Britain. It is a community of beer drinking rather than wine, as it has always been. And whereas verbal exchanges may be rough, bordering on vulgar, it is also an environment characterised by warmth and humour.



Emirates Stadium, the home of Arsenal FC. Opened in 2006, it exemplifies the renewal of English football: the arrival of foreign investment, improved stadium facilities, more expensive seats and attraction to the middle class: yet subscribing to a spectator culture where a lot of features remain the same.

Photo: Kieran Lynam.

What all this suggests is that football is a ritual that sustains and takes further social relations and forms of community that are stable and form and which may be alienating to outsiders. It is grounded in the notion of the glorious past of the white industrial working class, even if the audience today is differently composed in terms of class. Within the football context, men from the middle classes adopt (or return to) codes and behaviours that are otherwise remote.

It would be wrong to contend that women and ethnic minorities are excluded from English football stadiums today. On the contrary, much has been done to attract women in particular. To talk about exclusion in the strict sense is more appropriate when it comes to people on low incomes. What I have wanted to argue in this article is rather that, beyond the shift towards more tolerant attitudes on race and sexual orientation, the underlying culture of the terraces has been resilient to change. This is contrary to widely held beliefs that everything has changed. Rather, the middle class that has been lured into football stadiums have adopted existing cultural practices.

Male communities in English football stadiums had characteristics deeply embedded in the sport itself and which are understandably cherished today. Supporter culture moreover is generally historically conscious. Although renewing itself continuously and adopting international impulses to a larger degree than before, it also represents deep-seated continuity and respect for what was once known as *The People's Game*. The inherent paradox is that football terraces attract people from a broader set of backgrounds than before but who nevertheless would like to be more of the same.

Further reading:

- E. Cashmore and J. Cleland (2012): "Fans, homophobia and masculinities in association football", *British Journal of Sociology* 63 (2): 370-87.
- D. Conn (2005): *The Beautiful Game? Searching for the Soul of Football*. London: Yellow Jersey Press.
- A. King (2002): *The End of the Terraces. The Transformation of English Football in the 1990s*. Leicester University Press.
- S. Kuper and S. Szymanski (2009): *Soccernomics*. London: Nation Books.

Why football and not sports "hooliganism"?

By Geoff Pearson

One of the enduring questions about the phenomenon of football crowd disorder or 'hooliganism' is why it is that only football is afflicted by the problem and not other sports. Many of the early explanations for the causes of football hooliganism focused on the question of whether it was something in the working-class make-up of football support (in comparison to apparently more middle-class followers of sports like rugby or cricket). Other explanations suggested that it was something about the sport itself that inspired extremes of excitement and emotion that boiled over into quasi-tribal confrontation and violence.



Dr. Geoff Pearson is a Lecturer in Law at the Management School, University of Liverpool and Director of Studies for the MBA (Football Industries) programme. He is author of two books, *Football Hooliganism* (2007 with Cliff Stott) and *An Ethnography of English Football Fans* (2012).

In fact this is not an entirely accurate starting position for debate, as crowd disorder and violence does occur in other sports. Cricket has seen frequent incidents of disorder both in England and abroad (particularly in India), as have sports like rugby league, boxing, American football and ice hockey (most notably the 2011 riot in Vancouver). Even Royal Ascot – the annual UK horse racing meeting frequented by the establishment and even the Queen – has seen sporadic incidents of violence. Indeed, the starting point for any discussion on the causes of football crowd disorder needs to be the realisation that it is not a football phenomenon but a crowd phenomenon.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that football is the sport with the reputation for disorder, and that football appears to be the only sport which has a problem with organised gangs or firms that gather with the intention of confronting firms from rival teams. Although crowd disorder and violence was a frequent feature of football matches from the birth of the professional game in the 19th century, it was only from the late 1960s (when English fans started travelling in large numbers to away matches) that football gained its reputation as being a focus for disorder. This reputation has since played a significant role in attracting those who enjoy the thrill and excitement of gang violence to football rather than to other sports - although other non-sporting activities also provide a platform for the satisfaction of these intentions.

However it is easy to overstate the relevance of organised

"hooligan" firms to the development of large scale football disorder, particularly in the United Kingdom. This overstatement is not helped by the plethora of exaggerated and sensationalised depictions of 'hooligan' culture in popular media. Although hooligan firms are active, their numbers remain relatively small (in the UK a "firm" of more than 40 individuals actively seeking to engage in violence is highly unusual) and in the UK, football intelligence units are typically able to identify and manage these groups and prevent confrontation.

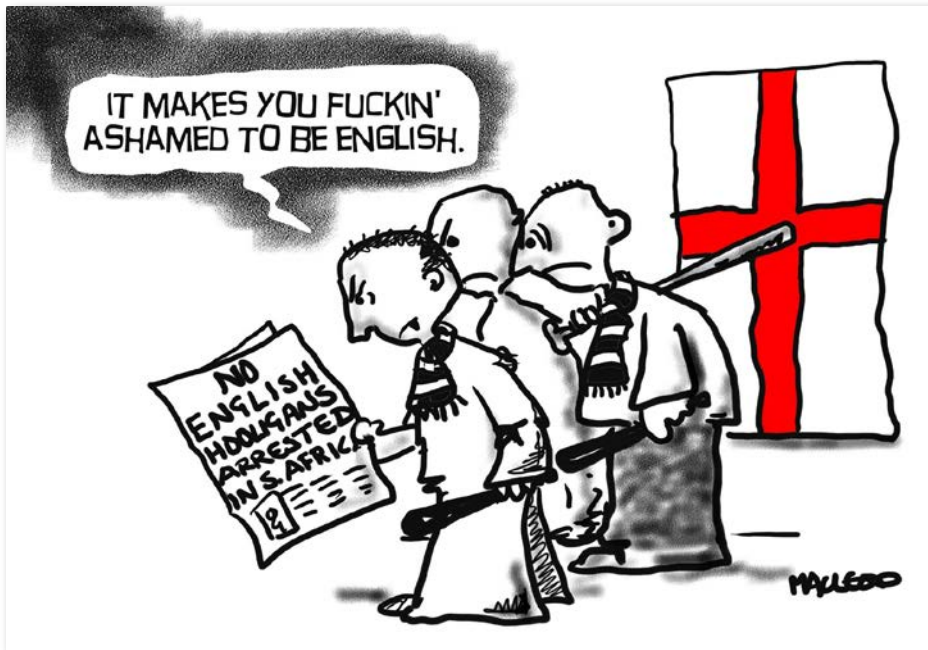
The most infamous and widespread instances of large scale football crowd disorder are almost all the result not of gangs looking for confrontation but of normal football supporters who find themselves the victims of what they perceive to be unjustifiable, indiscriminate and often aggressive policing tactics. Despite media reporting and some official claims at the time, rioting involving English fans in Marseille (France '98), Charleroi (Euro 2000), Rome (AS Roma v Manchester United, 2007) and Rangers fans in Manchester ahead of the 2008 UEFA Cup Final was not caused by "hooligans" looking for trouble. Instead it was the result of a complex set of interlinked factors that led to an escalation of small incidents and caught up ordinary fans, many of whom may have never been involved in violence before.

"[I]t was only from the late 1960s (when English fans started travelling in large numbers to away matches) that football gained its reputation as being a focus for disorder."

Research into these and other incidents by academics from the disciplines of social-psychology, sociology, criminology and socio-legal studies (as well as auto-ethnographical accounts from those caught up in such instances of disorder) has consistently implicated certain styles of policing as being the key factor in why football riots occur. "Show of force" policing involving the use of riot gear, crowd dispersal tactics and an indiscriminate approach treating the crowd as a homogenous group rather than targeting individual offenders, was

typically more likely to escalate problems. In Charleroi for example, the use of baton charges and water cannon as a response to a minor incident of disorder involving only a handful of individuals resulted in a previously peaceful crowd of England fans fighting back against the police. The most stunning statistic from the disorder that took place involving England fans in Belgium at Euro2000 was that only 3% of the 965 England fans arrested were known to the UK authorities as being "suspected troublemakers". "Friendly but firm" approaches involving officers engaging positively with fans, on the other hand, were less likely to result in public disorder even in high risk scenarios where "known hooligans" were present.

This brings us onto the second reason why football's historical reputation makes it more prone to crowd disorder than other sports. Unlike cricket, rugby league or other sports, football is less likely to be policed in the low profile, 'friendly but firm' manner that reduces the risk of public disorder. Instead many police forces are more likely to confront football



"No English Hooligans at World Cup". Posted by MacLeod Cartoons, 7 July 2010. See <http://macleodcartoons.blogspot.no/>

crowds with high profile "show of force" policing, in the mistaken view that this is likely to dissuade "hooligans" from engaging in violence. This profound misunderstanding of the nature of football crowds in fact makes disorder more likely as fans who have no intention of engaging in disorder feel that their legitimate aims, rights and freedoms are being unfairly compromised.

A final factor in why disorder and violence is more likely to occur in football crowds rather than other sports crowds comes down to the issue of crowd size, particularly in relation to visiting supporters. Football is the most popular spectator sport in the world, and draws crowds that dwarf most (although not all) other regular sporting events. Obviously the larger the crowd, the more difficult it becomes to manage and the greater the likelihood that incidents will occur that need to be policed.

"[T]he historical reputation of football crowds as being prone to 'hooliganism' has the potential to become a self-fulfilling prophecy..."

Equally significant is that in Europe in particular (with the most obvious exception of Spain), there is a culture of travelling support for away fixtures. Once again, the historical reputation of football crowds as being prone to "hooliganism" has the potential to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, because the usual policing strategy for managing large groups of rival fans is to try and segregate them spatially, both inside and – as far as is possible – outside the stadium. This has the potential to exacerbate the "us and them" rivalry between supporters of rival teams and also creates another potential flashpoint of confrontation between supporters and police, who may be perceived

to be placing unjustified and arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of movement of supporters who have not travelled with the intention of engaging in violence. Interestingly, experiments in the UK with neutral sections which mix home and away fans have met with some very positive results.

The threat posed by football crowds in terms of violence and disorder is in most cases overstated. While football's historical reputation means that some individuals do attend matches with the intention of engaging in violent confrontation, these groups are typically small and - with pro-active policing that engages with and understands fan groups – can be isolated from the main body of the support and managed quite effectively (on a match-day at least). Larger scale disorder and rioting on the other hand is usually a product of counter-productive policing methods used to try and prevent these groups engaging in disorder, which in turn draws what we might call "non hooligan" fans into conflict with the police and escalates problems far beyond anything that the hooligan groups on their own could achieve. Where football matches are policed as crowd events, employing management and policing strategies that emphasise crowd safety and the facilitation of legitimate spectator expectations (including access to alcohol and freedom to associate and create "atmosphere"), there is no reason why over time football matches should be any more prone to instances of disorder than other sports.

Further reading:

- G. Armstrong (1998): *Hooligans: Knowing the Score*. Berg.
- G. Pearson (2012): *An Ethnography of Football Fans; Cans, Cops and Carnivals*, Manchester University Press.
- C. Stott, J., Hoggett and G. Pearson (2012): 'Keeping the peace: social identity, procedural justice and the policing of football crowds', *British Journal of Criminology* 52, 2: 381-99.
- C. Stott' and G. Pearson (2007): *Football Hooliganism: Policing and the War on the English Disease*. Pennant Books.

Professional football and the First World War: The formation of the Footballers' Battalion

By Stephen Jenkins

When war was declared in the summer of 1914 there was a huge swell of patriotism felt throughout the country. It is well documented that most people thought the war would be over by Christmas, consequently it was felt that life should carry on as normal or as close to normality as possible. However, the British army was in urgent need of recruits and in the early months it relied on the campaign led, amongst others, by Lord Kitchener, famous for his poster with the word's YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU with his finger pointing directly at you.



*Stephen Jenkins is Deputy Chairman of Leyton Orient Supporters' Club. Having spent more than fifteen years researching Clapton Orient's major contribution to the Footballer's Battalion in the Great War, his work has resulted in the book **They Took The Lead** (2005) and three major trips to the Somme in 2006, 2008 and 2011 taking over five hundred people to visit the battlefields and cemeteries of northern France.*

"Kitchener's Army" was the common name for an army built up with eager and willing young men, many of whom had lied about their age and who wanted the opportunity to go on a wonderful and exciting journey to a foreign land. They were all volunteers and were formed up into battalions, each of which had men from a similar background or trade or who had come from the same town or village – these battalions were to become known as 'Pals Battalions'.

With the war being raged across the Channel, life indeed did carry on as usual except for the dramatic loss of manpower in commerce and industry due to the successful recruiting campaign for volunteers, and women took it upon themselves to take jobs and positions they would not have dreamt possible beforehand.

Sport was seen as an ideal way to escape the pressures and stress of war, either by playing or watching such activities as cricket, football, rugby or the like. People would still look to spend a couple of hours on Saturday afternoon with their family and friends watching their local team as they did before the outbreak of war. However, as the first Zeppelin raids made their mark on the Country with civilian casualties, some sports stadiums had huge guns installed to fend off the aerial attackers.

The Football League decided that the 1914-15 season should go ahead, despite unrest caused by a growing number of spectators who were felt increasingly

unhappy about professional footballers being paid to kick a ball around a field, whilst their family members and friends were risking their lives with many making the ultimate sacrifice. This attitude seemed to mainly originate from Scotland where a group known as 'stoppers' wanted all professional sport to be curtailed and seemed to be accentuated when the casualty lists were published in the national press.

Sir George McCrae, MP for east Edinburgh had the idea of encouraging professional footballers to consider 'joining up' to help sway public opinion, and it was not long before players from a number of Scottish clubs did just that, including thirteen from Heart of Midlothian, also footballers from Dunfermline, Falkirk, Raith Rovers and Mossend Burnvale – all of whom enlisted in the 16th Royal Scots. Many others were to follow their example.

This initiative proved to be very successful, so much so that the FA and the War Office decided to look to do the same thing in England, and consequently a special recruiting meeting was held at Fulham Town Hall on Tuesday 15 December, with a view to raising a battalion made up with footballers and club officials.

Initially only the foyer and small hall was opened for the meeting, however, so many people attended that the doors for the main hall were opened to let the masses in. At the far end up on the stage sat the following: Mr W Joynson-Hicks MP (Chairman), Mr HG Norris (Mayor of Fulham), Right Hon W Hayes-Fisher PC MP (President of Fulham FC), Right Hon Lord Kinnaird KT (President of the Football Association), Col Grantham, Capt Whiffen, Capt Wells-Holland (Clapton Orient FC), Messrs JB Skeggs (Millwall) and FJ Wall (Hon Secretary).

The hall was packed to the hilt with footballers, club officials and supporters and the atmosphere was electric. The Chairman opened proceedings with an excellent speech followed by passionate declarations and words of encouragement from several others sat along him on the stage which was met by enthusiastic applause – and, due to the excitement, at the appropriate time laughter. There was of course many moments of seriousness when it was underlined as to why the meeting had been convened and the potential consequences of volunteering to join up to serve in the Army in a time of war. This new battalion was the 17th Battalion Middlesex Regiment (1st Football) – which was to be more commonly known as "The Footballers' Battalion".

Following the speeches it then came the moment for those who wished to join up to come forward up onto the stage – the first person to step up and therefore the first person to sign up into the 17th Middlesex was Fred ‘Spider’ Parker the wing half and captain of Clapton Orient Football Club, he was then swiftly followed by Frank Buckley of Bradford City and Archie Needham of Brighton and Hove Albion. Parker was



Clapton Orient Football Club in 1913-14, the season preceding the start of the First World War. Serving in the Footballers' Battalion, three of the players were to lose their lives during the Battle of the Somme in 1916.

then followed by nine of his fellow Orient team mates. Croydon Common FC also responded well with six players and Brighton with a further three. However, despite the huge number in attendance only thirty five signed on the dotted line that day.

Undaunted, further recruiting meetings were held throughout the land with a view to establishing the Footballers' Battalion. Meanwhile Clapton Orient's chairman, Captain Henry Wells-Holland wasted little time in looking to add to the initial ten O's players that had signed up at Fulham Town Hall. It had been his intention right from the start of the war to form a platoon made up entirely of Orient footballers and now he had the opportunity to put his plan into action. Wells-Holland, aided by experienced and influential midfielder Robert Dalrymple, who had previously played for Heart of Midlothian, encouraged the remaining members of the Clapton Orient squad to sign on the dotted line, as were the Club officials. The O's were the first English football club to join up en masse with a total of forty-one Orient players, staff and supporters signing on the dotted line to serve King and Country.

"[S]traight after the match the ten players who had joined up at the first recruiting meeting, got into uniform and (probably still sweating profusely) marched around the pitch with other members of the Footballers' Battalion, in a farewell parade before going off to France."

Football, in the meantime carried on until the end of the 1914/15 season. Clapton Orient's last game that campaign was at home to Leicester Fosse on 24th April 1915. In front

of a packed house of over 20,000 spectators, not only did the Orient win the game 2-0, but straight after the match the ten players who had joined up at the first recruiting meeting, got into uniform and (probably still sweating profusely) marched around the pitch with other members of the Footballers' Battalion, in a farewell parade before going off to France.

For many this would have been the first time they would have been away from their home, family and friends, let alone finding themselves in a foreign country. They had already attended training camps at Cranleigh, Surrey and then Clipstone in Nottinghamshire but now this was the real thing.

The next few months saw the Battalion establish itself in northern France with the rest of the British Army, and it was soon apparent that a major offensive was being planned to break through the German line that stretched from the North Sea right down to the Swiss border. Three major battles were to take place on the Western Front as it was to be known – the Battle of Verdun which resulted in combined estimated figure of 700,000 dead, the Battle of the Somme with more than an estimated 1 million casualties and the Battle of Passchendaele with an estimated casualty figure of 600,000. The Footballers' Battalion were to be heavily involved in the Battle of the Somme which commenced at 7.30am on 1st July 1916 and consequently the battalion were to sustain serious losses as were so many other units on both sides.

Many stories of heroism were to be brought to light during and after the conflict - one of the most poignant tales revolved around the British company commander Captain 'Billie' Nevill of the 8th East Surreys, who decided to bring four footballs up to the front line on the first morning of the Battle of the Somme, so that they could be kicked forward towards the German lines once the whistle blew for the men to clamber out of the trenches and go over the top.

This, he thought would be a good way of distracting his men from the fear of the hail of machine gun bullets that would be coming their way. The whistle blew and Captain Nevill immediately stepped up onto the top of the trench and kicked one of the balls forward, he did so he was shot and fell dead. This did not deter his troops from their objective, they attacked the German defences and eventually achieved their objective – a football was subsequently found behind the German lines and returned to England as a trophy of their success.

Clapton Orient's contingent was, like their comrades in the 17th Middlesex, really in the thick of it during the battle. Although they were not directly involved in the opening week or so they saw heavy action during the fighting in Delville Wood or 'Devils Wood' as it was to be known by those who came to know it and fight in it!

The O's were to lose three of their players during the Battle of the Somme, Private William Jonas, a fine centre-forward who was killed in Delville Wood, Private George Scott, a man mountain of a defender who died of his wounds in a German military hospital in Le Cateau, and finally ace goal scorer Richard McFadden who was mortally wounded near Serre. McFadden was a hero - both in his civil life as well as during his military service. Before the war it was recorded how he had saved a man from a burning building and then whilst on a training run along the river Lea near to the Orient's ground, he jumped into the river to save a young boy who was drowning. His life saving exploits continued in northern France when he would keep going out into No-man's land to rescue wounded comrades – he was awarded the Military Medal for his bravery and was subsequently in line for a commission before he lost his life.

Some would say that the Orient were fortunate to only lose three of its number out of the forty one that joined up, and indeed many other clubs did lose more players but the majority of the Orient players that saw action sustained serious wounds, including the O's 'keeper Jimmy Hugall who was wounded three times - including an injury to his eye, and yet after the war he was able



The memorial unveiled in 2011 at Flers, on the Somme, to commemorate the sacrifices of Clapton Orient Football Club during the First World War.

to resume his professional football career. The general public's opinion of professional sport, particularly professional football were swayed by the formation of the 17th Middlesex – The Footballers' Battalion, but in general the idea of forming Pals' battalions was not seen as a great success, mainly due to the horrific casualty figures that caused some towns and villages to lose almost a whole generation of young men.

Clapton Orient's service and sacrifice in the Great War is just one example of how Britain responded at a time of great need - they took the lead just as Hearts did in Scotland and the O's set an example and standard for other clubs around the Country to follow. However, the Orient found life extremely hard after the war, the manager Billy Holmes died suddenly in 1922 aged only 47, with some people saying that this was due to the stress he had to contend with throughout the war

years, along with the severe decimation of the first team squad as a consequence of the Club's fine service in the Great War. And then there was the consequence of Woolwich Arsenal's move from Plumstead to Highbury in 1913 which the Club had to contend with, it left Orient struggling to survive and some would say that the Club has never recovered since.

Croydon Common - the other Club to so readily serve its Country at a time of great need was not as fortunate as the O's as it was wound up in 1917.

As we fast approach the centenary commemorations of the outbreak of the Great War, the O's supporters are very much aware of the major contribution made by Clapton Orient to the Footballers' Battalion. Three trips to the Somme have been undertaken with over five hundred people paying their respects, with the most recent trip culminating with the unveiling of the O's Somme memorial in the village of Flers in northern France. A fourth trip is already booked for June 2014 with further trips envisaged for 2016 and 2018.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

Hillsborough report: Prime Minister's statement

The Hillsborough Independent Panel was established by the UK government in January 2010 to oversee the release of documents related to the 1989 Hillsborough football disaster. Its report, groundbreaking in its revelations about the event and its aftermath, was released on 12 September 2012. The article below is a transcript of Prime Minister David Cameron's statement to the House of Commons in response to the report.



To read more about the Panel and its work, see <http://hillsborough.independent.gov.uk/>

Today, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Reverend James Jones, is publishing the report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel. The disaster at the Hillsborough football stadium on 15th April 1989 was one of the greatest peacetime tragedies of the last century. Ninety-six people died as a result of a crush in the Leppings Lane Terrace at the FA Cup Semi-Final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. There was a public Inquiry at the time by Lord Justice Taylor which found – and I quote – that the main cause of the disaster was “a failure of police control.”

But the Inquiry didn't have access to all the documents that have since become available it didn't properly examine the response of the emergency services it was followed by a deeply controversial inquest and by a media version of events that sought to blame the fans. As a result, the families have not heard the truth and have not found justice. That is why the previous government – and in particular – the Rt Hon Member for Leigh was right to set up this Panel. And it is why this government insisted that no stone should be left unturned and that all papers should be made available to the Bishop of Liverpool and his team. Mr Speaker, in total over 450,000 pages of evidence have been reviewed. It was right that the families should see the report first. As a result the government has only had a very limited amount of time to study the evidence so far. But it is already very clear that many of the report's findings are deeply distressing.

There are three areas in particular. *The failure of the authorities to help protect people. The attempt to blame the fans. And the doubt cast on the original Coroner's Inquest.* Let me take each in turn.

First, there is new evidence about how the authorities failed. There is a trail of new documents which show the extent to which the safety of the crowd at Hillsborough was “compromised at every level”. The ground failed to meet minimum standards and the “deficiencies were well known”. The turnstiles were inadequate. The

ground capacity had been significantly over-calculated. The crush barriers failed to meet safety standards. There had been a crush at exactly the same match the year before. And today's report shows clearly that lessons had not been learnt. The report backs up again the key finding of the Taylor Report on police failure. But it goes further by revealing for the first time the shortcomings of the ambulance and emergency services response. The major incident plan was not fully implemented. Rescue attempts were held back by failures of leadership and co-ordination. And, significantly, new documents today show there was a delay from the emergency services when people were being crushed and killed.

Second, the families have long believed that some of the authorities attempted to create a completely unjust account of events that sought to blame the fans for what happened. Mr Speaker, the families were right. The evidence in today's report includes briefings to the media and attempts by the Police to change the record of events. Several newspapers reported false allegations that fans were drunk and violent and stole from the dead. *The Sun's* report sensationalised these allegations under a banner headline “The Truth.” This was clearly wrong and caused huge offence, distress and hurt.

News International has co-operated with the Panel and, for the first time, today's report reveals that the source for these despicable untruths was a Sheffield news agency reporting conversations with South Yorkshire Police and Irvine Patnick, the then MP for Sheffield Hallam. The report finds that this was part of police efforts – and I quote – “to develop and publicise a version of events that focused on...allegations of drunkenness, ticketlessness and violence.” In terms of changing the record of events, we already know that police reports were significantly altered but the full extent was not drawn to Lord Justice Taylor's attention.

Today's report finds that 164 statements were significantly amended – and 116 explicitly removed negative comments about the policing operation – including its lack of leadership. The report also makes important findings about particular actions taken by the police and coroner while investigating the deaths. There is new evidence which shows that police officers carried out police national computer checks on those who had died in an attempt – and I quote from the report – “to impugn the reputations of the deceased.” The Coroner took blood alcohol levels from all of the deceased including children. The Panel finds no rationale whatsoever for what it regards as an “exceptional” decision. The report states clearly that the attempt of the inquest to draw a link between blood alcohol and late arrival was “fundamentally flawed”. And that alcohol consumption was “unremarkable and not exceptional for a social or leisure occasion”.

Mr Speaker, over all these years questions have been raised about the role of the government – including whether it did enough to uncover the truth. It is certainly true that some of the language in the government papers published today was insensitive. But having been through every document – and every government document including Cabinet Minutes will be published - the Panel found no evidence of any government trying to conceal the truth.

At the time of the Taylor Report the then Prime Minister was briefed by her private secretary that the defensive and – I quote - “close to deceitful” behaviour of senior South Yorkshire officers was “depressingly familiar.” And it is clear that the then government thought it right that the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire should resign. But as the Rt Hon Member for Leigh has rightly highlighted, governments then and since have simply not done enough to challenge publicly the unjust and untrue narrative that sought to blame the fans.

Third, and perhaps most significantly of all, the Bishop of Liverpool’s report presents new evidence which casts significant doubt over the adequacy of the original inquest. The Coroner - on the advice of pathologists - believed that victims suffered traumatic asphyxia leading to unconsciousness within seconds and death within a few minutes. As a result he asserted that beyond 3.15pm there were no actions that could have changed the fate of the victims and he limited the scope of the Inquest accordingly. But by analysing post mortem reports the panel have found that 28 did not have obstruction of blood circulation and 31 had evidence of heart and lungs continuing to function after the crush. (...) And the panel states clearly that “it is highly likely that what happened to those individuals after 3.15pm was significant” in determining whether they died.

Mr Speaker, the conclusions of this report will be harrowing for many of the families affected. Anyone who has lost a child knows the pain never leaves you. But to read a report years afterwards that says – and I quote: “a swifter, more appropriate, better focused and properly equipped response had the potential to save more lives” can only add to the pain.

Mr Speaker, I want to be very clear about the view the government takes about these findings and why after 23 years this matters so much, not just for the families but for Liverpool and for our country as a whole. Mr Speaker what happened that day – and since – was wrong. It was wrong that the responsible authorities knew Hillsborough did not meet minimum safety standards and yet still allowed the

match to go ahead. It was wrong that the families have had to wait for so long – and fight so hard – just to get to the truth. And it was wrong that the police changed the records of what happened and tried to blame the fans. (...) It was also wrong that neither Lord Justice Taylor nor the Coroner looked properly at the response of the other emergency services. Again, these are dedicated people who do extraordinary things to serve the public.

But the evidence from today’s report makes very difficult reading. Mr Speaker, with the weight of the new evidence in this report, it is right for me today as Prime Minister to make a proper apology to the families of the 96 for all they have suffered over the past 23 years. Indeed, the new evidence that we are presented with today makes clear that these families have suffered a double injustice. The injustice of the appalling events - the failure of the state to protect their loved ones and the indefensible wait to get to the truth. And the injustice of the denigration of the deceased – that they were somehow at fault for their own deaths. On behalf of the Government – and indeed our country – I am profoundly sorry for this double injustice that has been left uncorrected for so long.

Mr Speaker, because of what I have described as the second injustice – the false version of events - not enough people in this country understand what the people of Merseyside have been through. This appalling death toll of so many loved ones lost was compounded by an attempt to blame the victims. A narrative about hooliganism on that day was created which led many in the country to accept that it was somehow a grey area. Today’s report is black and white. The Liverpool fans “were not the cause of the disaster”. The panel has quite simply found “no evidence” in support of allegations of “exceptional levels of drunkenness, ticketlessness or violence among Liverpool fans”; “no evidence that fans had conspired to arrive late at the stadium”; and “no evidence that they stole from the dead and dying.”

Mr Speaker, I’m sure the whole House will want to thank the Bishop of Liverpool and his panel for all the work they have done. And I am sure that all sides will join with me in paying tribute to the incredible strength and dignity of the Hillsborough families and the community which has backed them in their long search for justice. While nothing can ever bring back those who have been lost with all the documents revealed and nothing held back the families, at last, have access to the truth.

And I commend this Statement to the House.

Membership 2013

Membership in BPS is open to all individuals and institutions with an interest in British politics, society, language, and culture. As a member, you receive subscription to four editions of British Politics Review, invitation to all events organised by the society and the right to vote at our annual general meeting.

Your membership comes into force as soon as the membership fee, 100 NOK for 2013, has been registered at our account <6094.05.67788> (please make sure to mark your payment with your full name).

If you have questions about membership, please do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail
mail@britishpoliticsociety.no

Forthcoming edition of British Politics Review

Forty years after its accession to the European Community, Britain continues to be seen as *Europe’s reluctant partner*. 2013 has seen rapidly rising pressures to renegotiate or even terminate Britain’s EU membership. Prime Minister David Cameron’s long-awaited speech in January was set to quell speculations by putting forward a coherent strategy for renegotiation followed by a referendum

in 2017. However, rather than soothing the debate in Britain, the opposite development is observable, most clearly perhaps in the rise in support for the UK Independence Party (UKIP).

What makes Britain’s position exceptional in a Europe of shared challenges and threats? In the next edition of *British Politics Review* we will address Britain’s difficult

relationship with Europe, trying to disentangle what different political camps have wanted to achieve from European integration - and where they stand today.

The summer edition of British Politics Review is due to arrive in August 2013.