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# CROSSING

## THE PARK

The Men Who Dared to Play for Both  
**Liverpool & Everton**

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## If You Know Your History

AS MUCH as there will be a focus on individual players, it's important that the start of the story is preceded with a bit of a history lesson.

For many, the foray into the history of both clubs may not provide a tale that's completely new. Yet, in an attempt to remain as neutral as possible and perhaps provide an angle that hasn't been as heavily covered before, this history lesson will be told through the eyes (or walls) of the Sandon Hotel and Public House.

Liverpool Football Club wasn't even a twinkle in the eye of John Houlding when he helped create Everton Football Club and provide their first home at Anfield. Houlding, the original owner of the Sandon Hotel when it was built in 1870, was Lord Mayor of Liverpool and a keen investor for Everton FC. Following the rule that clubs had to play in stadiums with stands or enclosed walls, Everton had to leave Stanley Park, where they were playing for free, and search for a new home.

Houlding made his money through owning breweries and, through his contacts, he managed to agree a rental figure with a fellow brewer to play on the enclosed fields at Anfield, of course the home of Liverpool today. The ground was built up from the pocket of the brewer, and attendances were reaching around 8,000 a match for Everton.

As Everton's reputation grew, so did the Houlding fortune and he managed to purchase Anfield outright.

However, he soon wanted a larger amount of rent from the Blues due to the development he had helped finance on improving the stadium and its stands. After already feeling uneasy about the involvement of a brewer of alcohol, due to the religious roots of St Domingo FC, which then became Everton, the increased rent was enough to further worry the nearly 300 club members who held a vote on what to do next.

The members of Everton voted to leave Anfield and Houlding's control of the club, as they didn't agree with him trying to take advantage of them. The Liverpool-born businessman cut ties with Everton, so was left with a state-of-the-art stadium but no team to play in it. He tried to found Everton Athletic to spite the old tenants of the ground, but the name was rejected by the FA, so he founded Liverpool FC in June 1892.

The team in blue and white were put together within weeks. Most of the city didn't care about the new team, though, and were at Goodison Park, so fewer than 100 people watched Liverpool's first-ever match at Anfield. Houlding triumphantly kicked off the maiden match, where 11 Scottish players represented the 'Team of Macs', led by former Everton captain Andrew Hanner, who won 7-1 against Rotherham, and the rest is history.

The Sandon's complex role in this story is simply that it was owned by Lord Mayor Houlding and used as a pub, hotel and a home for the Anfield branch of the freemasons (with some branding still visible on the building today). The meeting of St Domingo's church members within the pub led to the foundation of St Domingo FC in 1878 and Houlding's involvement in their club increased from that day, up to the split in 1892.

He was president of Everton FC from 1879 when their name change came about, and there were many team

meetings held in the Sandon, as well as the pub being used as a dressing room for the Everton players. When the split between Houlding and Everton occurred, it meant that Anfield could now hold sponsorship of Holding Breweries, which helped enhance his brand and fortune.

He also used the site for Liverpool FC meetings and for their dressing room after 1892. Nine years later Liverpool were First Division champions. The Reds' (still playing in their traditional blue and white at this point) success meant that the stadium could continue to be developed and hold its own dressing room and boardrooms, so the need for the Sandon diminished.

Houlding died in 1902 and the pub changed hands, meaning the official ties to the club were cut. From then on the Sandon became a haunt for fans before and after the match for a quick pint and chat. It's a meeting point still today and to be able to say you're stood where Liverpool and Everton players used to get changed before a match is amazing. Although it's so close to the ground, the thought of 11 men trudging down the street in full kit and the sounds of studs clattering off the pavement is unbelievable and must have been a sight to behold for match goers even then.

The building went through a tough period in the 1980s, when it declined into closure and seeming demolition, which would have been a terrible end for such a historic venue for Liverpool and Everton. Thankfully Kate Stewart saved the venue in 2017 and has restored it to a place that match goers can again visit and is hugely popular on every matchday. It's deceptively big inside, with many bars and rooms and an outside area. It feels like there's always another corner or place to discover and find while you're in there.

The building was recently put up for sale and it would be a massive shame to see it changed or removed from its strong

football and drinking connections. It's safe to say, had this pub failed in the late 1800s, there may not have been the wealth for Houlding to get involved with Everton, to rent Anfield, to create Liverpool and so many other events. This could have been a one-club city and the one club may not have been that successful if it wasn't for this one pub.

There are several murals around the building today, the most recent being that of Steven Gerrard, and this again shows how the venue can move with the times and incorporate new fan ideas and traditions, keeping the venue relevant for younger supporters while respecting the great past it has.

Although you may not agree, this isn't a sales pitch for you to go and have a pint at the venue on Oakfield Road – rather a slightly different way to view the rivalry between the two clubs.

\* \* \*

So, we end with two clubs whose history is built upon a falling-out and perhaps there should then be little surprise that the rivalry between the clubs exists today. The unified Merseyside chanting period of supporter history will also be touched upon in the coming pages and chapters, as well as a possible explanation as to why relationships have changed over the years.

For now though, we can tick off several members of our double agents list by examining some of the first years of the Reds (in blue and white). Although the first match of Liverpool was a famous 'Team of Macs', in that all the players were Scottish, there were also several of them who had even more in common – they had represented Everton at Anfield beforehand too.

In the first match in the history of the Reds, there were in fact three Blues within their squad: Andrew Hannah,

Tom Wyllie and Duncan McLean. It then really depends on whether your spectacles have a red or blue tint to them, as to whether you view these players as abandoning Everton or staying loyal to John Houlding.

This seems like a good point to mention that in two home matches during the 2022/23 season, there was a questionnaire handed out to 50 Everton and 50 Liverpool fans at their respective home stadiums and this will be used later in the book. The purpose of this was to get a barometer of how supporters view each individual player and there will be some statistical analysis based on fan reactions. The reason to mention this now is that there aren't any 130-year-old Reds or Blues on Merseyside who can perhaps provide an insight into fan opinion of the time, when it came to the three players to have become the first to represent both clubs.

This doesn't make their impact on Merseyside football any less and they're all indeed trailblazers, achieving a feat that has really not been replicated in the past century and a quarter. What these men have that's also unique for them is that they never played for an Everton team at Goodison Park. With the (at the time of writing) soon departure of the Blues from their second home, they'll soon be joined by other Evertonians to have never played at Goodison Park, but their feat of representing both clubs, although only in one stadium, will surely never be beaten.