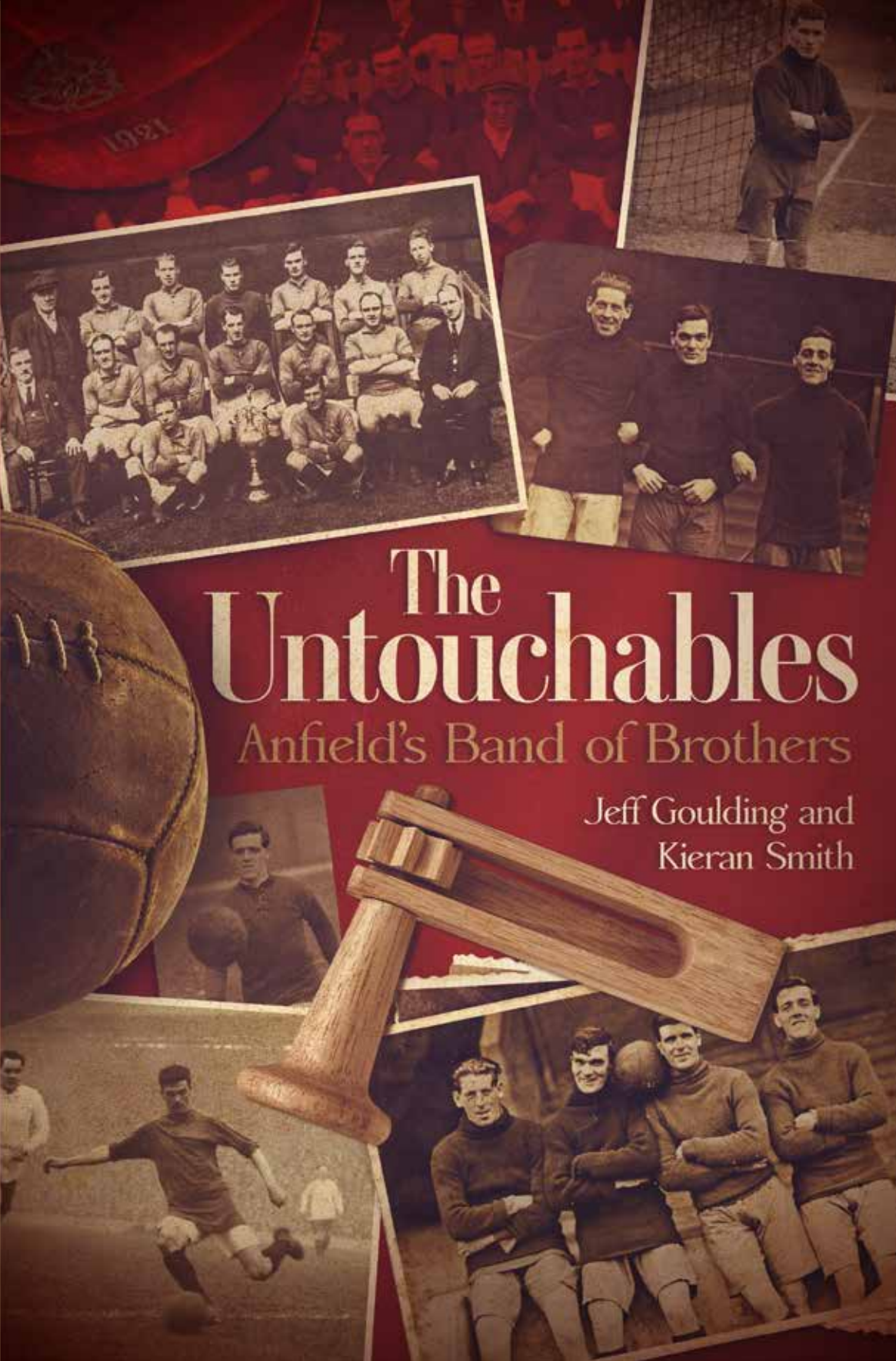

The Untouchables

Anfield's Band of Brothers

Jeff Goulding and
Kieran Smith

The Untouchables

Anfield's Band of Brothers

Jeff Gouding & Kieran Smith

pitch

Contents

Part One

Origin Story: Three Boys, Their Club and Their City

1

Football and the City

THIS IS the story of three working-class lads – Walter Wadsworth, Tom Bromilow and Danny Shone – born in 19th-century Liverpool near the dawn of a new millennium and who would grow up to conquer English football. Remarkably their birth and coming of age stories ran in tandem with the club they came to serve with such distinction.

They lived in a city that had come to dominate world trade, making great strides in public health and the arts, but which was also a place of staggering contrasts. A time traveller visiting Liverpool during this period would marvel at the immense wealth and Victorian splendour of the city centre and port, while being staggered by the unrelenting poverty and disease of its court housing.

Liverpool, a hotbed of political struggle and rising trade union activity, was also at the centre of resistance to Britain's colonial rule in Ireland. With such a large population of Irish immigrants of both republican and unionist traditions living in close quarters, tensions would often boil over, and the city's leaders were frequently on alert for weapons and explosives, which were smuggled into its port from activists in the United States.

Against that backdrop, the emergence of a sport that would later become synonymous with the people who inhabit the banks of the Mersey seems a trivial affair. However, as we will see, the game would have the power to lift the citizens of the city from their day-to-day struggles and elevate them and their teams on to the national stage.

Walter was born in 1890, Tom arrived in 1894 and Danny in 1899. And, while football was certainly not the game we enjoy today, it was at least played under a unified code of rules. Its development into what is now the nation's favourite sport was a rocky one – at least initially – and those rules and codes took time to settle down. Indeed, even the idea that the working classes should be involved at all had initially been a controversial one in the early days of the Football Association.

Our trio were born within a couple of miles of each other: Walter in Bootle, Tom in Kirkdale and Danny in the Edge Hill area. They each grew up in Liverpool's densely populated urban sprawl. The city had already enjoyed a century of unparalleled growth that saw the creation of a stock exchange located in an area behind the Town Hall, and the population would rise almost eight-fold from around 85,000 in 1791 to around 662,000 by the advent of the 20th century. It would continue to expand in the early years of the new millennium also.

A search through the photographic archives reveals yet more evidence of the contrasting fortunes of the city's people. Gaze upon the postcards of scenes from Lime Street, Bold Street and the area around Water Street, and we see elegantly clad ladies with parasols in hand and voluminous hats atop their heads. They often have children in tow who are equally well dressed. Gentlemen in suits, with pocket watches attached to their waistcoats and all manner of headgear on their heads, can be seen frozen in motion, perhaps scurrying to meetings or heading for boats moored at the waterfront, while others appear still, pipes of tobacco in hand, watching the world go by.

Then there are the grim portraits of squalor and want, with shoeless children roaming the cobbled streets in front of court housing, which was no more than a collection of hovels crammed into alleyways in the poorer districts of Liverpool. You see their mothers' gaunt expressions staring into the lens. Those images don't convey the smells or feel the hunger their bellies must have felt, but they do reveal that not everybody shared in the prosperity the city's port and their toil generated.

Rare film footage can be found. Two Blackburn-based film makers, Mitchell and Kenyon, regularly set up their cameras in Liverpool, filming its people at work or at the match. Their subjects would attend

screenings at the city's St George's Hall, hopeful of seeing themselves on the screen. Some of these movies survive, and they reveal images of dockers clocking off from work. We see men and boys on the Kop. All of them are in their best clothes, and it seems that Kopites at the turn of the century would never be seen without a hat to cover their heads. Strikingly there are no scarves or rosettes either; such things would be reserved for cup competition.

In one film, as the camera pans along the crowd at Anfield, we see that the children are the forefront, eager to get their faces captured. Their cheeky grins are instantly recognisable, and you can imagine their journeys to the ground. Perhaps they paid to get in; perhaps they used their ingenuity to good effect and were enjoying the occasion for free. Then we notice one kid, a mischievous glint in his eye as he holds out his right hand to the filmographer and produces a gesture that seems to imitate masturbation. Though the film is grainy and monochrome, and this child is of another age, his irreverence would be right at home at any football ground in the 21st century.

An examination of contemporaneous speeches and the memoirs of notable figures from the period create a picture of a city in the throes of 100 years of continuous expansion, from a tiny hamlet on the banks of the Mersey to a port of global significance dubbed 'second city of the Empire'.

In 1791, Thomas Erskine, the 1st Baron Erskine, wrote, 'That immense City which stands like another Venice upon the water … where there are riches overflowing and everything which can delight a man who wishes to see the prosperity of a great community and a great empire … This quondam village, now fit to be the proud capital of any empire in the world, has started up like an enchanted palace even in the memory of living men.'

Yet even this remarkable vision of 18th-century Liverpool would soon be surpassed. Soon, some 40 per cent of the world's trade would pass through the city's port, leading to a growth in its network of docks and flooding it with people from all over Europe and across the globe. Trade in cotton, sugar, tobacco and shamefully slaves from Africa fuelled the explosion in wealth and funded the expansion of the city and the growth of its great works of architecture.

In 1846, shortly after the onset of the great famine in Ireland, which saw some half a million Irish people pass through the city, many of them settling in the Scotland Road area, Prince Albert – who had been invited to the city to open its magnificent Albert Dock – would address Liverpool dignitaries assembled at a huge banquet in the Town Hall, telling them, 'I have heard of the greatness of Liverpool, but the reality far surpasses my expectation.'

And, by 1886, an article published in the *Illustrated London News*, dated 15 May 1886, proclaimed, 'Liverpool … has become a wonder of the world. It is the New York of Europe, a world city rather than merely British provincial.'

However, such expansion would impact on the fabric of the place and on the lives of both the rich and the poor, though for very different reasons. Consider this statement from a book entitled *Reminiscences of a Liverpool Ship Owner*, a collection of essays written by William B. Forwood between 1870 and 1917: 'Speed is the criterion aimed at, calling for constant and strenuous work.'

Forwood goes on to mourn the loss of his leisurely strolls down to the waterfront, where he would survey his ships and the sailors at work, before returning to his office to ruminate about the great issues of the day. The author had lived through the demise of the sailing ships that once filled the Mersey until 1860, when they began a steady decline only to be replaced by the great steamships. They must have been a magnificent sight on the Mersey, at least far more romantic than their iron and steel counterparts.

Modernisation of course meant an increase in trade as transatlantic journey time was cut and capacity to transport goods from across the globe increased. Soon the city's ship owners and council leaders would see their coffers swell but work on the docks would become grim and brutal, particularly for stevedores and porters, with some suggesting that few men could endure it for more than five years.

Another curse of work on the docks was its virtually unregulated nature, with shipping companies concerned primarily with profit. The safety of the men who stood in line, hoping to be picked for a day's labour, was of little interest. Work was often long and arduous and hazardous in the dark warehouses and on the dockside. Accidents and

even fatalities were commonplace. However, increasing industrial action over working conditions and casualisation, coupled with the activities of prominent reformers such as William and Eleanor Rathbone, meant that by the time Walter Wadsworth had found a position on the docks, work would have been less precarious and better rewarded than in the latter years of the 19th century.

The lives of Walter, Tom Bromilow – who would briefly become a shipping clerk – and the parents of Danny Shone, who owned a corner grocery store in the Edge Hill area, were shaped by the ebb and flow of business at the port. Though not employed on the waterfront, the Shones, and their customers, would benefit from the increasing availability of goods shipped from across the world.

Life for many in the city had for many years been tough. Liverpool, granted city status in 1880, had been home to diseases such as typhus and cholera, with the latter having led to riots in the 1830s. The seemingly continual presence of disease in its centre would push many wealthy merchants out to suburbs, like Anfield. It would also mean that Liverpool became a focus for medicine and advances in public health, with the city employing the country's first medical officer of health, Dr William Henry Duncan.

Duncan's work promoting the link between poverty and the spread of disease throughout the 1830s, led to the Liverpool Sanitary Act in 1846. The Act was sponsored by Liverpool's local government and led to improvements in the health of the city's population.

Additionally, Liverpool's growing wealth led to works of great architecture which continue to inspire and surprise visitors today. The city's leaders and business community were ambitious, clearly seeing theirs as a world city on a par with London, Paris and New York.

To the Victorians, the second half of the 19th century was marked by the relentless march of progress. They were proud of what they saw as their benevolence towards the poorer sections of society, pointing to improvements in the living conditions of ordinary citizens during the period.

Such observations are inevitably subjective and must be judged in the context of the era. Here we return to the prolific writings of Forwood, this time drawing upon his *Recollections of a Busy Life*, written between

1860 and 1910. In it, he points to the paving of streets, great sewer works, the building of libraries and parks, washhouses and public baths and workmen's cottages, as well as the closure of 25 per cent of the city's pubs, an act designed to curb 'the curse of drink', as evidence that the lives of its citizens were getting better.

Consumption of alcohol was a subject of great concern in Victorian Britain. And as we will see, their attempts to control and reduce its consumption in the latter half of the 19th century, driven by the growing temperance movement, would play a key role in the formation of Liverpool Football Club.

Forwood, who also served as mayor of Liverpool twice, could call upon the words of Professor Ramsay Muir, who in his *A History of Liverpool*, published in 1907, asserts, 'Thus, on all sides, and in many further modes the city government has, during the last 30 years especially, undertaken a responsibility for the health and happiness of its citizens.'

It is undeniably true that the lives of working people in Liverpool at the turn of the century saw some improvements, especially when judged against what went before. However, it is also clear that many workers felt that the immense wealth that their labours produced was not being shared equally. The prevalence of campaigns, strikes and other protests is evidence of this. Demands for reductions in the working week, aid for the unemployed, an end to casual labour and improvements in pay, were common features of labour relations and influenced political thinking greatly.

Indeed, the National Union of Dock Labourers in Great Britain and Ireland, which was formed in 1889, was so popular that by 1890 it had 34 branches in the city and would move its headquarters to Liverpool.

In 1890 stevedores and dockers in London and Liverpool struck for pay and better working conditions, with historians describing their struggle as having 'all the hallmarks of a labour war'.

The simmering tensions among the Liverpool working class and their employers, particularly on the waterfront and in the transport industry, would continue to boil over throughout the early decades of the 20th century, leading to improvements in working conditions and pay which

would create new opportunities for leisure for working people and for football.

All of this is of interest to us, not least because we know that Walter Wadsworth would find employment as a stevedore in the early part of the 20th century. Had it not been for these movements he may never have found the free time to become a footballer. However, they are also important factors in the evolution and development of the sport on Merseyside.

Up until the late 1880s, football was played by the wealthy and professional classes, mostly for their own amusement. It was centred around public schools like Rugby and Eton. The game was played under varying codes and rules, such as the Sheffield rules or the Cambridge rules. Eventually these codes would settle into the sports we now call rugby and football. But in the early years, teams negotiating matches with rivals would often haggle over which rules they would observe. What seems to have mattered most to these early proponents was getting a game; the rules mattered far less.

Eventually the Football Association would be formed in 1863 and the movement towards a unified set of codes that would lead to the creation of the version of football we love today would be agreed. It is therefore important to understand that the game our heroes fell in love with and played with such distinction was in its infancy at the time of their birth.

Furthermore, the sport had been far from a working-class endeavour during its formative years. The wealthy classes who had come to dominate it in the mid-19th century had resisted professionalisation, fearing that 'working men, uneducated in the art of the game' would get to take part.

However, those issues were largely settled by the time Walter and Tom began playing football at school and were probably unknown to Danny's generation. At the point where all three had seriously taken up the sport, it was becoming an increasingly professional affair, meaning that lads like Walter, Tom and Danny could realistically imagine making a living, albeit a modest one by today's standards.

The football movement in Liverpool, like in other areas, was driven by churches of many denominations, with the local clergy establishing clubs to provide a healthy outlet for people, and to promote exercise, particularly during the winter months. In 1878 a team would be founded

by Methodist clergy at a chapel on Breckfield Road North. Initially known as St Domingo FC, it would be renamed Everton Football Club just a year later. They originally played on Stanley Park before later moving to a field off Anfield Road. Around the same time, a team known as Bootle St Johns AFC came into being. They played their fixtures at Hawthorne Road. These two clubs would play the first 'Merseyside derby' more than a decade before Walter, Tom and Danny were born.

In 1888, Everton would become founder members of the Football League and would go on to win the championship of England in 1891. Bootle AFC were less fortunate. Denied entry to the Football League (as only one team from each city was allowed), they would go on to help found the Football Alliance, which eventually became the Second Division of the Football League in 1892 before resigning a year later due to financial difficulties.

By this stage, Everton had fractured in two, ostensibly after a row over the rent paid on the land owned by John Houlding, the then-president of the board. This story is widely known among supporters of Liverpool and Everton on Merseyside today, with Reds occasionally singing 'you should have paid the rent' at derby matches. For their part, Blues will point to the fact that Liverpool's founding father was a Tory to mock their counterparts.

However, the origins of the split are more complicated than that, and had their roots in politics, religion and the growing temperance movement as much as business issues. Houlding, who owned a brewery and many public houses in the area, was also elected as Conservative representative for the Everton ward and later became mayor of Liverpool in 1897. He was a member of the Orange Order and a prominent Freemason, belonging to several lodges.

Houlding's rival, and the man who succeeded him as president, George Mahon, was a Liberal politician, and in terms of religious affiliation, a non-conformist Christian who attended a Methodist church in Great Homer Street. While Houlding and his supporters were unionists in relation to Anglo-Irish politics, Mahon was a supporter of the Liberal Party's Home Rule for Ireland campaign.

The issue of temperance was also a divisive one among members of the board, with several men being members of the movement. Some have

even suggested that there were objections to the club's players drinking in Houlding's pub, the Sandon, prior to games. This, it was argued, was responsible for Everton's failed defence of their 1891 title.

It is therefore likely that, rather than simply being an argument over rent, it was a combination of all these factors that contributed to the eventual breakdown and the vote in 1892 to remove Houlding as president, and move the club to an area called Mere Green Field on Goodison Road. Indeed, the dispute over finance feels more like a pretext for the split, rather than the primary cause of it. In any case, this failure by the board to hold itself together would unwittingly set in motion one of the most enduring rivalries in English football.

Houlding had now been left with a football ground but no team. Not to be outdone, together with John McKenna and William Edward Barclay, who had remained by his side after the split, he would go on to establish the city's second great football club. In doing so, he would cement his reputation as a dominant figure in the early development of the game on Merseyside.

Houlding's close alliance with Barclay and McKenna had developed over several years. Barclay was born into a middle-class family in Dublin, in 1857. His father, David, was the governor of the Malone Reformatory, an institution that provided an alternative to prison to young offenders. It was a position that would have ensured the family were comfortably off.

William took full advantage of his good start in life, achieving two university degrees – a Bachelor of Arts and one in Science – and his addresses show that he travelled extensively during his young life, making homes in Belfast, Aberdeen, Lancashire (where he married in 1878) and eventually in Liverpool.

He would marry Emily King, a Yorkshire woman, around the same time that St Domingo FC were being formed and started playing their inaugural games on Stanley Park. By now Barclay was following in his father's footsteps and was employed as the governor of an industrial school in Everton, a position he held until 1898.

His work would see him providing education, board and lodgings to poor and neglected children of the borough. He was now established in the city and clearly a man of some means, a factor that would have

placed him in the same circle as other influential men like Houlding and John McKenna.

They are most likely to have connected through their involvement in both the Orange Order and Freemasonry. Houlding and McKenna were members of several Orange lodges including Kirkdale, Anfield and Everton, while both held the rank of Grand Deacon at the West Lancashire Grand Lodge. Furthermore, all three men were active Freemasons, and members of the following lodges: Anfield, Sir Walter Raleigh, Everton, Lathom, Hamer, Lodge of Sincerity and Cecil Lodge.

The influence of Ireland and Irish culture and politics on the character of the city of Liverpool is well known, and it is not surprising that this would have stretched to the development of the city's football clubs too. Upwards of 200,000 Irish families lived in the crammed streets on the city's Scotland Road area. The thoroughfare had previously been a stagecoach route taking passengers from Lancashire to Scotland but was now home to descendants of the great famine in the mid-19th century.

This concentration of people, who came from both unionist and republican traditions, in such cramped conditions created a volatile atmosphere and contributed greatly to the area's culture, influencing the accent of Liverpool's people, and no doubt helped create the city's radical spirit. However, the tensions between those communities led to sporadic outbreaks of sectarian violence and played a role in republican campaigns on the British mainland.

This is evidenced by the Liverpool Town Hall bombing in 1903, and a further attempted bombing of the customs house, which was foiled. The perpetrators had used a pipe bomb and made an unsuccessful attempt to escape by leaping into a canal boat filled with manure. They were eventually tried and sentenced to 14 years in a penal colony.

Events like these led to serious discussions in Whitehall and consideration was given to dispatching troops to the city. Local politicians referred to these issues as 'The Fenian Troubles', which was a reference to the Irish Republican Brotherhood, whose Fenian leader Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa had been found to have shipped explosive devices described by the authorities as 'infernal machines' to Liverpool from his base in New York. They had been disguised and hidden in cement barrels.

The sense of fear and paranoia created among the city's local government and law enforcement led to an amusing incident later described in the memoirs of the lord mayor of the time. He had been sitting drinking tea in the mayor's parlour at the Town Hall when he became aware of a commotion outside. What appeared to be an angry protest was taking place. Suddenly, the window smashed and 'a large, black, ugly looking object fell on the floor opposite'.

A cry went up from a nearby porter, 'A bomb!' and much panic ensued. However, the offending item would comically turn out to be a pensioner's cork leg. Apparently the protest had been of a more mundane nature. The old gentleman responsible had thrown his false leg at the mayor's window in protest at the number of potholes in the city's pavements.

Nonetheless, it was Liverpool's proximity to Ireland, and the cultural impact of immigration from the nation that placed the likes of Barclay and McKenna in the orbit of Houlding. Their association would lead to Barclay becoming the first secretary of Everton Football Club during the inaugural 1888/89 Football League season. And the men played significant roles in the fortunes of both clubs.

McKenna, born in County Monaghan in 1855, is believed to have travelled to Liverpool as a youth to work in a grocery shop run by his uncle, John McArdle, at 53 Stanley Road, Kirkdale. Like Barclay, and after meeting Houlding, he would soon be invited to Anfield to watch an Everton game.

McKenna found work as a vaccination officer at the West Derby Poor Law Union and was also an enthusiastic rugby player. He had helped form a regimental rugby club before joining the West Lancashire County Rugby Football Union as a professional. No doubt this experience had caught the eye of Houlding who may well have thought McKenna's administrative skills would serve Everton well, and he would soon become a fixture on the board where he assisted with the expansion of the club.

As a result, attendances had risen to 8,000 and the team that then played in salmon pink shirts with blue shorts and socks would clinch the First Division championship in 1891. Following the split in 1892 Houlding would ask McKenna and Barclay to become joint secretaries

of his newly formed club. It is said that Barclay took on the role of secretary-manager, while McKenna focused on team affairs and on-pitch matters. However, it was John who telegraphed the Football League, asking them to admit the club to the Football League; the request was promptly turned down.

Claims that the board of the newly formed club blundered in not simultaneously applying to join the Second Division, an error often laid at the door of John McKenna, may be wide of the mark. A letter written by Barclay to *Field Sport* in June 1892, and describing himself as honorary secretary of the Liverpool Association Football Club, tells a different story, and seems to have also been Barclay's way of announcing the club to the football world: 'We have joined the Lancashire League, and have thus provided a very interesting series of fixtures for our first team. We regret that we could not see our way to make application to enter the Second Division of the league, as we felt, after very careful deliberation, that the gates would be no better than the gates drawn with Lancashire clubs, while the traveling expenses would have been very high.'

Whether this was merely a party line, masking an error on the part of McKenna, we will never know. However, it is clear from the following passage that the newly formed board of Liverpool AFC meant business, and had lofty aspirations for the future: 'We hope to meet some of the league clubs during the season, and already engagements have been made with some of the leading Scottish clubs for odd dates. Cup ties – English, Lancashire and Liverpool – will fill vacant spots, and altogether I think the "bill of fare" at Anfield will not disgrace the past.'

Working alongside McKenna, who is credited as having recruited the 'Team of Macs' – players drafted from Scottish football to make up Liverpool's first team – Barclay as honorary secretary would have certainly approved the signings of these men. In his letter to *Field Sport*, he boasts, 'As to players, the following have signed: Andrew Hannah, Renton, back; Sydney Ross, goal, Scottish League vs. Scottish Alliance; half-backs James Kelso, John Cameron and James McBride (Renton), and F. Rogers (Liverpool); forwards, Jock Smith (Sunderland), Thomas Wyllie (Everton), John Miller (Dumbarton), Andrew Kelvin (Kilmarnock), and one or two men of less repute. In addition, we shall have at least four of the best players in Scotland, with whom we are now

negotiating. Our supporters may rely on it that we shall take the field with men who can and will play football and good exhibitions of the dribbling code will be seen at Anfield.'

Scotland was regarded as the epicentre of association football, and its players were highly sought after and the subject of many scouting missions from English clubs. As we will learn, the practices employed to entice them south of the border were sometimes of dubious legality and often comical. Liverpool's hierarchy would have doubtless been confident of attracting crowds to see their new stars, a fact backed up by this passage from Barclay's letter: 'Subscribers' tickets will be ready in a few days at 7s, 6d, 15s and 21s, according to accommodation, and the prospects are very bright, and I anticipate a very satisfactory season on the old ground. Although we are the Liverpool club, all the old playing members of the old Everton, to whom Evertonians are much indebted for promoting the game in our midst, have been elected honorary life members. The plans for the dressing rooms and gymnasium are now under consideration, and visiting teams will be spared the trouble of dressing away from the ground, while our own players will not only have a clubroom, but admirable dining rooms and training quarters at the ground.

'In your next issue but one I hope to be in a position to give our friends a full list of our players for next season. The charge for admission to first-team matches will be 4d, and to second-team matches 3d, and only in very exceptional cases, when large guarantees are required, will 6d be charged. The ground is in better order now than it has ever been before at this season of the year, and is improving daily. We do not propose to lay the track this year, as it is too late, but a start will be made early next year.'

Clearly, Barclay and co. were ambitious men, and had every intention of matching their neighbours across the park. Their overture of honorary membership to the 'old playing members of the old Everton' seems to suggest that regardless of the acrimony of the split, good relations will have existed between at least some members of both clubs.

Despite this, it seems there was sufficient bad blood between them to ensure that the first encounter between the sides on the football field would be a feisty affair. The game took place at the end of the 1892 season, with both teams reaching the final of the Liverpool Senior Cup

at Bootle's Hawthorne Road. The game was so eagerly anticipated and so much interest was generated that it soon became clear that the turnstiles could not cope with the volume of supporters trying to get in. Conditions and queuing outside the stadium were described as 'interminable'.

The result of the game, which Liverpool won, was as fiercely contested as the fixture itself. It was claimed that a Liverpool player had handled the ball and the subsequent protest by the Everton board would delay the presentation of the trophy to the Anfield club.

Under the stewardship of McKenna and Barclay, Liverpool graduated as champions from the Lancashire League and gained promotion to the Second Division after a victorious 'test match' against a certain team called Newton Heath, who would later become Manchester United.

After Liverpool won the 1895/96 Second Division title, McKenna stepped back into the boardroom, but not before he switched the team from playing in blue and white to red shirts and black shorts. From that moment, Liverpool would be variously referred to as the 'Reds' or the 'Anfielders'.

Utilising his role behind the scenes, McKenna made one of the club's most astute and influential acquisitions – the signing of Tom Watson as first-team manager. Watson was a serial winner at Sunderland and would lead Liverpool to their first two top-tier titles in 1901 and 1906. Walter and Tom would certainly have been old enough to be aware of their city's team becoming champions of England for the first time. Danny Shone may well have rejoiced in Liverpool's second championship. However, the next time all three would experience such joy, they would be lifting the trophy themselves.

There has been much debate as to whether Barclay or McKenna was the first 'manager of Liverpool Football Club', but what seems clear is that the term 'manager' did not really apply in the latter part of the 19th century, at least not in the way we think of it.

Liverpool, like most clubs, were 'managed' by a secretary who took care of the administration side of the game, recruited players and selected the team on matchdays. It is often argued that Barclay shared the role of secretary with McKenna.

However, documents published in 1892 show that Barclay was the club's honorary secretary while McKenna is referenced as being on

the committee of directors. Barclay is also recorded as the secretary of Liverpool Football Club in the 1893/94 Football League Rule Handbook and is reported to have resigned the role in 1895 by the sports paper *Cricket and Football Field*. It seems that he was then succeeded by McKenna, who took over as secretary in 1895, and continued in the role until the appointment of Tom Watson in 1896.

'Owd Tom', as he would become known, would serve the club until his death in 1915 and had a hand in the development of several of the men who would go on to become the 'Untouchables' of the 1920s, including Walter Wadsworth. Barclay had led Liverpool from the Lancashire League to the First Division, before failing to save them from relegation in 1894. It would be McKenna who would restore their place at the top table and provide the platform for his successor Watson. As such, both men played pivotal roles in the early development of the club and paved the way for the success that followed.

By now, football had become the dominant sporting pastime in the city, overtaking cricket and certainly enjoyed by more than the game played under rugby league rules. As we will see it would soon attract the interests of youngsters Walter Wadsworth, Tom Bromilow and Danny Shone. Though we have no way of knowing for certain, it is intriguing to think that each of these boys would have followed the well-trodden paths of so many working-class lads of the period by regularly attending matches at Anfield or Goodison, and maybe both.

However, as we are about to see, their passion for the game would go beyond being mere spectators. And, though their journeys to the first team would take very different paths, the game of football would come to dominate the rest of their lives, introducing them to a succession of incredible characters and taking them to places they could never have dreamed of before.