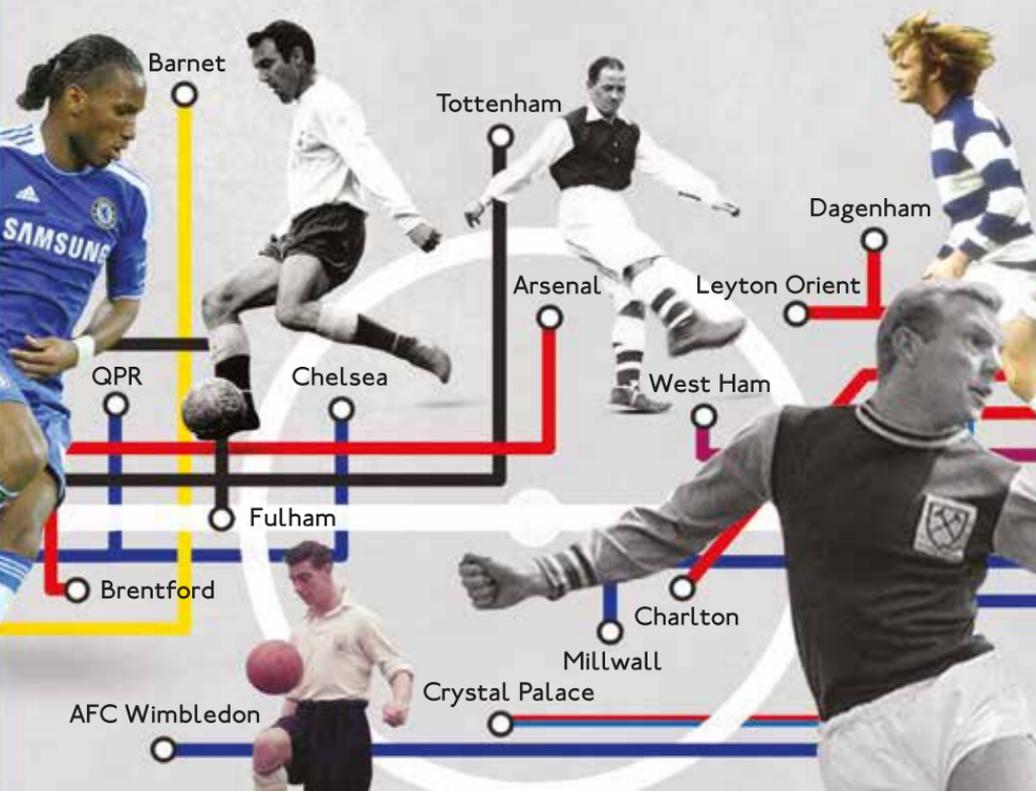


STEVE TONGUE

TURF WARS

A HISTORY OF
LONDON FOOTBALL



Barnet

Tottenham

Dagenham

Arsenal

Leyton Orient

QPR

Chelsea

West Ham

Fulham

Millwall

Charlton

Crystal Palace

AFC Wimbledon

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Introduction

FEW cities in the world have as many professional football clubs as London and it is fair to say that none have the history or variety of clubs and characters explored in these pages; from Wanderers to AFC Wimbledon; from Charles Alcock and Lord Kinnaird, through Herbert Chapman and Bill Nicholson to Jimmy Greaves and Bobby Moore, Mohamed Al-Fayed and Roman Abramovich.

The Football Association – the first of its kind anywhere – and with it the FA Cup were founded in the capital, and Wanderers, originally based at Snaresbrook, dominated the competition's early years.

In the transition to professionalism, the North and Midlands monopolised the first four decades of league football, before three clubs in particular began to challenge them. By 1910 Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur were in the top division together and established as London's big three – just like 100 years later. That trio have all now won a major European trophy, along with West Ham United, forever blowing bubbles and hoping to make the big three into a quartet.

Although the hierarchy has changed surprisingly little, others have had their moments, often prolonged ones. As the Appendix shows, seven different clubs have finished a season as London's top team, including Brentford and Charlton Athletic. Fulham, Millwall and QPR have competed in

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Europe. All of those, and even ‘little’ Leyton Orient, played in the top division, as, of course, did Wimbledon, only nine extraordinary years after joining the Football League.

The downside of this variety is the struggle to prosper or even survive in such a crowded field. Every London league club without exception has suffered serious financial problems at one time or another, often leading to the necessity to defend or expand their own territory.

So the turf wars began early. Chelsea were only founded because Fulham declined to move into the new Stamford Bridge stadium, the so-called Pensioners immediately upsetting other clubs like Tottenham by leaping straight into the Football League.

Most famously, Woolwich Arsenal, the capital’s first professional club, decided the district on the south bank of the Thames bearing their name could no longer support them. Having failed to interest Fulham in a ground-share or merger, they upped sticks from south London to north, enabling Charlton to flourish in a manner they might not otherwise have done, but infuriating Tottenham and the perennially struggling Orient.

‘You cannot “franchise” a football club,’ wrote an aggrieved Arsenal follower in the local paper, unknowingly adopting a phrase that Wimbledon supporters would come to curse 90 years later.

Yet owners have always been open to considering new alliances. QPR proposed merging with Brentford (Chapter 5), then faced a hostile takeover-merger from Fulham (Chapter 6). Charlton and Wimbledon were forced to leave home, the latter permanently, only to spawn a new club progressing equally fast through the leagues.

Despite the pressures and problems that allowed only a short life for the ill-starred Thames FC (Chapter 3), most of the established professional clubs, and many in the local non-leagues, are now well into their second century.

TURF WARS

This is their story, and that of many others great and small. After 40-odd years chronicling their daily deeds as a journalist, it has been a hugely enjoyable task to write it.

Steve Tongue
London SE7
2016

Note 1: For the purposes of the book, 'London' has been defined as the 33 Greater London boroughs. So Barnet, Brentford and Dagenham & Redbridge are all featured, despite having postal addresses in Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Essex respectively; whereas (apologies) Watford are not.

Note 2: Attendance figures, featured copiously and often quoted from the outstanding series of Breedon books (see Select Bibliography), were mostly estimates until the 1925/26 season. Where the two clubs disagree on a figure, I have used the home team's as being the more reliable.

Chapter 1

Early days (1863-1899)

FA founded in 1863 after Blackheath lead the breakaway from football to rugby, crying 'hacking is the true football game'; Wanderers, originally based at Snaresbrook, win first FA Cup at Kennington Oval; Football League begins in 1888 after professionalism is legalised, with no southern clubs until Woolwich Arsenal join Division Two five years later; early days of Millwall, Tottenham Hotspur, West Ham, Fulham, Brentford, QPR, Orient, Barnet and Wimbledon, under various names.

IF LONDON was central to the development of English football, in holding the meeting at which the Football Association was founded in 1863, its involvement in what modern educationalists would call key stage two – when the Football League began on a supposedly national basis – was surprisingly slow.

But first things first. Central London it was that staged that first meeting at the Freemason's Tavern in Great Queen Street, Holborn on 26 October 1863. A number of letters to publications like *Bell's Life*, *The Field*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* had suggested that the many different rules practised locally by the

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public schools in particular needed sorting out. Were handling and/or running with the ball to be allowed? And hacking at shins? Should the updated Cambridge (University) rules of 1863 be adopted? A letter published in *The Times* earlier that month, signed by an Old Etonian calling himself 'Etonensis' and calling a meeting, had the desired effect, although with a rather different cast list to the one he had expected.

The public schools and universities more or less ignored the invitation. Of the dozen or so men who turned up in Great Queen Street, almost all were from clubs and schools in the London area: Barnes, Blackheath, Crusaders, Forest (later to become Wanderers), NN (No Names) Club (Kilburn), the original Crystal Palace, War Office (later Civil Service), Kensington School, Surbiton and two other Blackheath schools Perceval House and Blackheath Proprietary School.

There were observers from Sheffield FC (acknowledged with their formation in 1857 to be the oldest club in the world, despite a counter-claim by Cambridge University), and from just one leading public school (Charterhouse, based at the time near Smithfield). The historic motion proposed by Ebenezer Morley of Barnes was passed: '...that it is advisable that a football association should be formed for the purpose of settling a code of rules for the regulation of the game of football'.

Arthur Pember of Kilburn was named president, Morley was secretary and the subscription was one guinea a head. Charterhouse declined to join in and so did Sheffield, who did not initially appear to fancy such a London-based project but joined at the fourth meeting in November.

The football historian Dr Graham Curry says: 'It was almost certainly because the FA was seen by them, and most others, as being an association of London clubs. For many years, reports in Sheffield newspapers referred to the FA as the London Football Association. As time went on, it became clear that the FA was or would be the national governing body.'

It soon became clear that ideas about 'football' still differed. The secretary of Sheffield FC wrote that the proposed rules

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allowing handling and hacking were ‘directly opposed to football, the latter especially being more like wrestling. I cannot see any science in taking a run-kick at a player at the risk of laming him for life’.

At that fourth meeting, on 24 November, which followed a trial match at Cambridge four days earlier, delegates were still narrowly voting in favour of handling. But early in December, the Blackheath representative Francis Campbell found less support for his contention that ‘hacking is the true football’ and by the end of the year the three SE3 clubs had left in a huff. A Rugby Football Union would follow in 1871, with Blackheath to the fore, and claiming, like Sheffield FC, to be the oldest of their particular type in England.

With the rules clarified and Charles Alcock, an old Harrovian who had moved from the North East to Chingford at an early age, becoming a hugely influential figure as FA secretary from 1870, thoughts increasingly turned to competition. The following year, Alcock instigated a knockout tournament to be called the Football Association Challenge Cup Competition.

It was a chaotic start as clubs dropped in and out, but in the end London provided eight of the 12 contestants in Barnes, Civil Service, Clapham Rovers, Crystal Palace, Hitchin, Hampstead Heathens, Upton Park and Wanderers. Queen’s Park, the bold adventurers from Glasgow, who had to scratch in the semi-final because they could not afford another trip to London, and Donington School from Spalding were the only entrants from outside the Home Counties.

The Wanderers, essentially composed of old Harrovians like Alcock, had emerged from the Forest club on the borders of Snaresbrook and Leytonstone (where Forest School remains). As the name implied, they tried to operate by avoiding the expense of a permanent ground but by the end of the 1860s were mostly to be found playing at Kennington Oval.

A successful season of friendly matches in 1870/71 set them up to become the first FA Cup winners, albeit after reaching the final with two walkovers, a draw against Crystal Palace – both

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teams going through to the semi-final – and a solitary victory by 3-1 against Clapham Rovers.

History was theirs, however, when the final was won 1-0 against Royal Engineers, the Sappers from Chatham (who still play under their original name). According to *The Sporting Life* report of the match, these were ‘certainly the two most powerful organisations supporting Association Rules’. Alfred Stair from Upton Park refereed and a crowd of 2,000, each paying one shilling (5p), was present at the Oval. The scorer was one Morton Betts, playing under the pseudonym A.H. Chequer. (He was a member of Harrow Chequers, a team who had scratched in the first round, and possibly, therefore, the most famous ringer in the history of football).

The ubiquitous Alcock had a goal disallowed but captained the winning team on the ground they were conveniently familiar with, where he had even become secretary of Surrey County Cricket Club.

The word ‘challenge’ in the cup’s title was important, the idea being that the holders should be guaranteed a place in the following year’s final, where they would be challenged by whichever club emerged from the semi-final round. They were even given a choice of ground. Fortunately, this notion lasted no longer than the second season, in which the Wanderers won again, by 2-0, against Oxford University at Lillie Bridge in Chelsea, which Middlesex County Cricket Club had recently left. Sporting priorities of the time were demonstrated by the morning kick-off in order to avoid the Boat Race. Alcock was no longer in the side but the formidable Scot Lord Kinnaird was, scoring one of the goals in the first of his nine finals.

With Queen’s Park scratching despite being given a bye to the semi-final, the second season was even more of a Home Counties competition and remained so until the late-1870s, by which time the main provincial strongholds of Sheffield and Nottingham were represented.

Nobody managed to challenge the success of what were still essentially southern-based old boys’ teams, plus the armed forces

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and Oxbridge universities, as a list of the 20 finalists in the first ten seasons shows: Wanderers (five, all won), Royal Engineers (four), Old Etonians (four), Oxford University (four), Clapham Rovers (two), Old Carthusians (one).

The Clapham team, founded in 1869, were characteristic of the age in playing both football and rugby union, which they did on various south London commons. Apart from winning the 1880 final against Oxford, their two other claims to fame were having the scorer of the first-ever FA Cup goal (by Jarvis Kenrick against Upton Park in November 1871) and fielding the youngest player in a final, 17-year-old James Prinsep, who held that record until Millwall's Curtis Weston came on as a late substitute against Manchester United in 2004. The club were wound up during the First World War, although a modern version, wearing the same pick and grey shirts, still play in Mitcham.

Not until the 1880s would the balance of power move north – and dramatically so.

In the meantime international football arrived, conceived in London and born in Glasgow. Five unofficial matches at the Oval between English and Scottish players living in London were followed in November 1872 by the first official international in the world, a goalless draw in the Scottish capital on St Andrew's day.

Having played in all five of the unofficial games, Alcock was no doubt mortified to be injured when the big day came and had to content himself with having suggested the idea, proposed a venue (in the north of England, which was declined), insisted on 11-a-side ('more than eleven we do not care to play'), picked the England team and run the line as an 'umpire'.

Surprisingly, there was no-one in the side from The Wanderers; Oxford University being best represented with three players. Barnes, Crystal Palace and Harrow Chequers of the London clubs provided one each as well as the 1st Surrey Rifles, based at Brunswick Road, Camberwell, whose William Maynard started as one of the eight forwards and then swapped with goalkeeper Robert Barker. Alcock did play, and score, in the fourth match

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between the countries in 1875, one of two years in which he also refereed the cup final.

With the principles of the FA Cup and international football established – England also played Wales at the Oval in 1879 – the next highly significant developments concerned professionalism and the Football League.

* * * * *

The appearance of Blackburn Rovers in the 1882 cup final marked a move away from London as football's epicentre, even though they too were descended from the old boys team of a public school. John Lewis, the joint founder, was a sort of Lancastrian Alcock, who started the Lancashire FA, refereed cup finals and later served both the FA and Football League.

The northern upstarts lost their first final to Lord Kinnaird's Old Etonians, a result that *Bell's Life* snobbishly said would be 'well received in every part of the kingdom'. But Rovers' appearance showed the way the wind was blowing, as did their list of opponents: Bolton Wanderers, Darwen, Wednesbury and The Wednesday (a replayed semi-final in Huddersfield and Manchester) before coming to the Oval for the final.

The following year, local rivals Blackburn Olympic won the cup by defeating the holders 2-1 after extra time in an epoch-changing game. Only once more thereafter did any of the southern amateur sides even make the semi-final, when Old Carthusians (Charterhouse old boys) suffered an equally symbolic defeat in 1885, losing 5-0 to Blackburn Rovers at Derby. The crowd for the final had been a record 8,000, many of them down from Lancashire and described in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as 'a northern horde of uncouth garb and strong oaths'.

Olympic had caused eyebrows to be raised and questions asked when their team of factory workers and pub landlords underwent several days' special training at Blackpool. The FA had only agreed that same year that players in the semi-finals and final could even have their rail fares paid. How, it was being asked, could full-time

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workers be taking so much time off if they were not being illegally paid, or at least compensated?

The word 'shamateurism' may not have been coined for another ten years or so, but the situation was clearly similar to senior amateur football some 80 or 90 years later: everyone knew payments were made, but nobody would officially admit it.

Until the following January, that is, when somebody suddenly did in a wonderfully matter-of-fact way. That month, Preston North End came to London and drew an FA Cup fourth-round game 1-1 with Upton Park, after which the home club complained that their opponents were paying players. Preston's secretary-manager Major William Sudell, who had recruited a number of his team from Scotland, openly admitted the fact, claiming that it broke no rules. He was shocked when the FA disagreed and kicked Preston out of the competition. (Upton Park, no relation to West Ham United, lost in the next round to eventual winners Blackburn Rovers).

There was a similar complaint, with a different outcome, when Notts County, having lost the semi-final to Rovers, reported a Scottish international called John Inglis, who had joined from Glasgow Rangers. This time the FA decided that Inglis was earning a living as a mechanic in Glasgow, not as a footballer, and allowed him to play in a winning final against his fellow countrymen of Queen's Park.

But the tide could no longer be held back and Preston's determination in October to form a rival British Football Association with like-minded clubs prompted an FA sub-committee to investigate the whole subject. On 20 July 1885, they decided 'in the interests of Association Football, to legalise the employment of professional football players, but only under certain restrictions'. These were that players had to be born or to have lived for two years within six miles of their club's ground.

The ever-influential Alcock was all in favour, pointing out that 'professionals are a necessity to the growth of the game'. The London Football Association, founded in 1882, disagreed, which

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goes some way to explaining why for the first time the capital's football was lagging behind.

After Blackburn Olympic's success of 1883, their captain Albert Warburton said: 'The Cup is very welcome to Lancashire. It'll have a good home and it'll never go back to London.' It did so, of course, but not for another 18 years.

* * * * *

Football and its popularity were spreading fast. By 1888 a remarkable 149 clubs entered the FA Cup, necessitating regional qualifying groups. The only doubt about which region would provide the winner, however, was whether the Midlands could challenge the North's hegemony. West Bromwich Albion, finalists three years running from 1886-88, and Aston Villa (1887 winners) did so, backed up by Wolverhampton Wanderers, Small Heath Alliance (later Birmingham) and the Nottingham clubs, Forest and County.

Paying players – Blackburn Rovers' wage bill in 1885/86, the season of their third successive FA Cup win, was more than £600 – necessitated arranging more matches and, in March 1888, William McGregor, a Scottish draper who had moved from Perthshire to Birmingham and became another of the great pioneering administrators, suggested 'home and away fixtures each season' for '10 or 12 of the most prominent clubs in England'.

The name of Old Carthusians was put forward by the secretary of Bolton Wanderers but with no professional clubs yet in the South, the chosen dozen came either from the North (Accrington, Blackburn Rovers, Bolton, Burnley, Everton, Preston North End) or the Midlands (Aston Villa, Derby County, Notts County, Stoke, West Bromwich Albion and Wolverhampton Wanderers). By the turn of the century, the North was ahead of the Midlands by seven league titles to four, including the first five in a row (Preston and Sunderland two each, with one to Everton in between).

Even the FA Cup Final venue went north for a couple of years. In 1893, Surrey decided they did not want their cricket ground

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used any more so the next two finals were played at Fallowfield, Manchester, where 45,000 watched Wolves beat Everton, and then at Goodison Park, for Notts County's victory over Bolton (37,000). Those attendances were highly relevant. Half-day working on Saturday was increasingly prevalent, public transport was improving and newspapers had picked up on the growing appetite for the game.

By 1895 Charles Burgess Fry, well placed as an all-round sportsman to make a judgement, said football was replacing cricket as the national sport, so popular was it. Significantly for London, between 1881 and 1891, Leyton, Tottenham, West Ham and Willesden had the highest rates of population growth in England.

Clubs were springing up too all over the capital, where the London Playing Fields Association had been founded in 1891 to 'encourage the playing of cricket, football and other games by the clerks, working men and boys of London'. By that date too, the city had its first professional club, which would become and remain London's most famous of all.

In the meantime, southern pride was upheld to a degree by Corinthians, a unique band of brothers brought together by Pa Jackson, assistant FA secretary, who not only deplored professionalism but insisted on the highest standards of sportsmanship.

The late Bryon Butler's *The Official History of the Football Association* suggests they would have won the cup at least once had they deigned to take part in anything so vulgar (and been allowed to, since many of the players also represented other clubs). While it is dangerous to read too much into a single result, Corinthians, who could field a team full of internationals, had some outstanding ones over a span of 20-odd years: they beat 1884 Cup winners Blackburn Rovers 8-1 and Bury's 1903 FA Cup winners 10-3.

* * * * *

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Fulham, Leyton Orient, Tottenham Hotspur, QPR and Millwall can all claim earlier origins, but the club known all around the world these days as **Arsenal** would be the capital's first to turn professional and reach the Football League.

Not for some time, of course, although ambition was discernible early in the history of a club born late in 1886. Woolwich Arsenal munitions workers in nearby Dial Square (where a plaque on the new Royal Arsenal development commemorates the founding) were so enthusiastic that only ten days later Dial Square played their first match, against Eastern Wanderers on a muddy Isle of Dogs pitch, claiming a 6-0 win.

On Christmas Day, back at the Royal Oak pub by Woolwich Arsenal station, they decided that Royal Arsenal would be a less parochial name and that red should be the team colour, a couple of players having appeared for the long-established Nottingham Forest (1865). One of them, goalkeeper Fred Beardsley, managed as a favour to obtain some redcurrant shirts from his old club, the colour that would be worn 120 years later for the final season at Highbury.

Plumstead Common, a mile or so south of the factory, was the first home venue on 8 January 1887, for a 6-1 win over Erith. There would be three other grounds, the Sportsman, the Manor and Invicta, before the turn of the century.

A large workforce helped interest as well as providing a constant stream of players, and the club made rapid progress as the best in the area (Charlton Athletic, literally just up the Woolwich Road, were not formed until 1905). In 1889, they reached the semi-final of the London Senior Cup, losing 2-0 to Clapton, and later that year entered the FA Cup for the first time, immediately beating Lyndhurst 11-0. Following a 2-2 draw after extra time away to Norwich Thorpe in the next round, the Norfolk side reluctantly decided they could not travel to south-east London for a replay, so Arsenal progressed to the third qualifying round.

The home tie with Crusaders was also 2-2 after 90 minutes, but this time Arsenal scored three times in the extra half-hour.

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The cup run ended at the fourth hurdle, at home to the powerful Swifts, who fielded four internationals and won 5-1 in front of a crowd estimated at 6,000. Encouraged by this run, the team won both the Kent Senior Cup and London Charity Cup, as well as reaching the London Senior Cup Final.

In September 1890 came a move to the Invicta Ground in Plumstead High Street, which the *Kentish Independent* promised would be 'one of the finest football grounds in the south'. About 8,000 people turned up for the opening fixture against the 93rd Highlanders and the following Easter 12,000 were present for a visit from Scottish club Hearts.

The club were progressing. As the same local newspaper reported: 'For the first two or three seasons the "Reds" were always classed under the heading of "medium" strength ... but the club has now grown to be one of the most formidable of those playing under the dribbling code in the south of England.'

As professionalism took off elsewhere, the best players could nevertheless be lured away and, in May 1891, the momentous decision was taken to turn pro under the name of Woolwich Arsenal – the first club in the South to do so. Knowing they would incur the wrath of the London FA and Kent FA, they resigned from both, which meant being unable to compete in any of the two bodies' local cup competitions. The club's decision may, however, have swayed the voting at the London FA's special meeting a month later, when a motion to ban any team from playing against professional teams or players was defeated by 76-67. A typical wage paid by Arsenal was £3 in winter and £2 in summer – better money than skilled workers received.

Restricted to friendlies and the FA Cup, Arsenal found any hopes of leading London's assault on the Northern and Midlands strongholds to be premature. In successive seasons, they were beaten in the first round proper of the cup, 5-1 by Small Heath and 6-0 by Sunderland, just as they had been the previous season at home to Derby County (2-1) when making their first-round debut in a competition they would have rather more success in much later on.

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It was soon clear that professionalism would be difficult to sustain on friendly matches and one cup-tie per season, not least because public transport in the area was poor. So, in February 1892, Arsenal called a meeting in Fleet Street with leading southern amateur clubs, including Ilford, Luton, Millwall, Reading, Swindon and West Herts (Watford), to discuss playing league football. Again, the London FA disapproved and 11 teams who had agreed to join a southern version of the Football League were cowed into submission.

A Southern Alliance competition had begun the previous year without completing the agreed fixtures among the seven clubs, who were Erith, Old St Stephen's, Polytechnic, Slough Town, Tottenham Hotspur, Upton Park and Windsor & Eton. Old St Stephen's, founded in Westminster but playing in Denmark Hill and Nunhead, were one of the two clubs to complete their 12 scheduled matches (Tottenham, placed third, were the other) and were declared champions, which earned them an invitation to the first Southern League campaign of 1893/94. (The Northern League, still going today, had started in 1887).

Millwall Athletic, forerunners of the present-day club, were among the prime movers of the new competition and competed in the First Division with Chatham, Clapton, Ilford, Luton Town, Reading, Royal Ordnance Factories (amateur players from the Royal Arsenal works), Southampton St Mary's and Swindon Town. In the Second Division, Old St Stephen's (who later became Shepherd's Bush, playing at Loftus Road until disbanding in 1915) were joined by Bromley, Chesham, Maidenhead, New Brompton (later Gillingham), Sheppey United and Uxbridge.

Some familiar names were therefore already emerging. **Millwall Rovers** (Millwall Athletic from 1889), like Arsenal, started as a works team, in their case in 1885 based at the Morton & Co jam factory and playing at Glengall Road (now renamed Tiller Road) on the Isle of Dogs. One of their earliest players, a right-back named Jack Graham, has been credited as the source of the expression 'keep it on the island' on account of his prodigious if not always accurate clearances.

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With a strong Scottish influence – Morton’s had begun in Aberdeen – the team had a successful playing record in a first season of friendlies. The East End Football Association began towards the end of 1886 and with it a Senior Cup in which Millwall reached the following year’s final against the Holloway-based Scottish expats club London Caledonians. It was played at the Essex County Cricket Club ground in Leyton High Road, near Leyton Orient’s present home, where Herbert Sutcliffe and Percy Holmes of Yorkshire would one day share a world-record partnership of 555.

The final was drawn 2-2, giving Millwall a share of their first trophy – for six months anyway. They kept it for longer by winning the competition for the following two years.

Equally as ambitious as Arsenal, they turned professional for the start of the Southern League in 1893 and proceeded to become the new competition’s most successful side, winning it for the first two seasons and finishing second to Southampton St Mary’s in the next one.

In that period Millwall lost only three games out of 54, starting with an unbeaten season of 12 wins and four draws to take the title by a comfortable six points from Luton Town. The team’s dominance was reflected in the number of goals scored: 68 by the champions, at an average of more than four per game, while Luton, next best, managed only 36.

With New Brompton promoted, there were 18 games the following season, when Millwall once more topped the table by six points, with Luton and Southampton again second and third. This time, 75 goals were scored.

For the first time that season, they also progressed beyond the qualifying rounds of the FA Cup before going out 3-1 to Sheffield United.

The following season, another long cup trip ended in a first-round defeat by the Football League Second Division champions Liverpool, and back down south, the league title was finally surrendered in 1895/96 by four points to the unbeaten Southampton.

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The most successful Southern League teams were by that time all professional, while the amateurs found the going harder: in the second season Ilford lost all 18 games and dropped out, and the following year Royal Ordnance, the amateurs from the Arsenal factories, folded after seven matches.

Ilford's replacements were **Tottenham Hotspur**, who grew out of the Hotspur cricket club based around two schools, St John's and Tottenham Grammar. Effectively a boys team when starting out on Tottenham Marshes in 1882 as Hotspur FC, they were assisted by the warden of Tottenham YMCA, who was elected president. The only recorded matches in the first season were defeats, by 2-0 to a team called Radicals on 30 August 1882 and by 8-1 against Latymer the following January.

Fuller records exist for the following seasons, during which new premises were found in Northumberland Park, apparently on condition that players attended church once a week. In 1884, the name Tottenham was added to the distinctive original, which stemmed from connections with local landowners the Percy family and Harry Hotspur, son of the first Earl of Northumberland.

After a trip to watch Blackburn Rovers win the 1885 FA Cup Final, the northerners' blue and white halved shirts were adopted and a move followed to the Red House in Tottenham High Road, which remains part of the club's headquarters. Blackburn's colours were therefore used for the first competitive game, in the London Association Cup of 1885/86, in which St Albans were beaten 5-2 before an 8-0 drubbing from Casuals (later one half of Corinthian Casuals).

The following season brought a heavy defeat in the same competition by Upton Park, 6-0, but also a run all the way to an eventful semi-final of the East End Cup against London Caledonians. Originally, it was more of a non-event, for when their opponents failed to turn up on the appointed day, Spurs kicked off, scored and claimed to have won the match 1-0. A proper game was, however, ordered, which the Caledonians won by the same score.

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There was controversy too – why would there not be? – around the inaugural meeting with Royal Arsenal on 19 November 1887. With Tottenham 2-1 up against the team who would later become their greatest rivals, the game was abandoned 15 minutes from time because the light was deemed to be too bad to continue. The first completed match between the pair was therefore the one in Plumstead the following February, when Spurs managed to field only nine players and were drubbed 6-2.

Still playing on the marshes until 1888, they found a ground in Northumberland Park and at the end of the first season there, buoyed by a profit of £6, joined the Football Association.

A season of competitive league football in the 1892/93 Southern Alliance League added some meat to the diet of friendly matches and London Senior and Middlesex Senior Cup ties, in which they tended to be knocked out by stronger sides like Clapton and Millwall.

As we have seen in that one season of the seven-team Southern Alliance, Spurs were the only team other than the champions Old St Stephen's to complete their 12 fixtures. Playing in red shirts and blue shorts (swapped for chocolate and gold four years later), they started with a 2-1 success away to Polytechnic and finished with seven wins, two draws and three defeats for a respectable third place behind the champions and Erith.

Being snubbed when applying to join the first season of the Southern League meant it was back to four or five cup competitions plus friendly matches for the next three years. The new FA Amateur Cup was at least on the agenda, albeit with a controversial outcome.

After beating Vampires in the first round (11 November 1893), the club were found guilty of paying a financial inducement by handing over ten shillings (50p) for new boots to Ernie Payne, an outside-left from Fulham who turned up without any kit because his had mysteriously disappeared at his old club. Spurs were banned for two weeks and so had to forfeit their second-round match against Clapham Rovers. The unfortunate episode heightened the debate around professionalism, which

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the London FA was still set against. Tottenham, growing more ambitious, appointed a first professional trainer and entered the FA Cup for the first time as one of their four cup competitions, winning three qualifying rounds before succumbing to Luton Town in a replay.

In December 1895, a momentous meeting voted in favour of turning professional. In the close-season, they were disappointed to fail with an application to join the Football League but were welcomed this time into the Southern League. The vote of confidence was justified by results and a growing reputation as north London's strongest club: in successive seasons they finished fourth, third, seventh, then in 1899/1900 lost only four matches from 28 and took the title.

Southampton, before and after dropping their 'St Mary's' tag, had replaced Millwall as the dominant team in the league, winning it three times in a row from 1897-99, but they lost their crown to Spurs, whose best season yet included attracting a record gate of 18,000 against Gravesend.

It was the first campaign at the new ground that became known as White Hart Lane, although it was not in that road at all and never has been. The venue was on Tottenham High Road, behind the White Hart pub, but White Hart Lane was always further to the west, like the railway station of the same name.

Be that as it may, Spurs had arrived and were now in white shirts and navy shorts, this time as a tribute to Preston North End. A clear force in the South, they would soon make history and a national reputation, for southern sides were at last having some success in the FA Cup.

For nine years from 1889, when Chatham reached the quarter-final, not a single team south of Birmingham emulated them until Southampton did so. Spurs did it in 1899, losing 4-1 to Stoke and the next year there was at last a guarantee of a southern finalist when the Saints and **Millwall** were drawn together in the last four.

Millwall had arrived there after a stunning victory over the Football League champions to be, Aston Villa, their greatest result to date. The semi-final at Crystal Palace was a goalless draw

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notable mainly for its physicality – ‘plenty of fouls, damages to the participants therein,’ reported the *Daily Mail*.

Following the replay at Reading, deservedly won 3-0 by the Hampshire side, the same paper observed that it was just as well there were not many matches each season as ‘otherwise the mortality among footballers might be greater’.

Southampton went on to lose the final to Bury but the South’s day, and Tottenham’s, would soon come (see Chapter 2).

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Woolwich Arsenal had little joy in the Cup, suffering a dispiriting run of six successive and mostly heavy first-round defeats from 1891-96. Left stranded when the London FA continued to oppose professionalism, they found salvation in the Football League’s decision to expand its Second Division from 12 clubs to 15 for the 1893/94 season. With Accrington and Bootle dropping out, Arsenal were elected along with Liverpool, Middlesbrough Ironopolis, Newcastle United and Rotherham Town (later United).

Those names alone indicate the fearsome amount of travelling that would be involved in this great new venture. The nearest of the 14 away trips were to Burton, Lincoln, Burslem (Port Vale) and Walsall. For home games, they went back to the Manor Ground after the Invicta’s owner, thinking he was on to a good thing, demanded a hefty rent increase.

So the first Football League game played by any London club came on 2 September 1893 and was also the first contested by Newcastle, who made the long journey home satisfied with a 2-2 draw after they had been 2-0 down. Walter Shaw and Arthur Elliott were the home team’s goalscorers in front of a healthy attendance of 10,000.

The Arsenal team, in 2-3-5 formation, was: Williams; Powell, Jeffrey; Devine, Buist, Howat; Gemmell, Henderson, Shaw, Elliott, Booth.

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After defeat the following Saturday at Notts County, less than half of that home crowd were present for a midweek fixture that brought a first win in the third game, 4-0 against Walsall Town Swifts, in which new centre-forward Joseph Heath from Wolves claimed a hat-trick.

The first of more than 200 meetings to this day with Liverpool ended in a 5-0 home defeat, the visitors showing the sort of form that would make them unbeaten Second Division champions that season as they scored five times before the interval.

A fortnight earlier, however, a record was established that remains to this day, when Ashford United from Kent were thrashed 12-0 in a first qualifying round of the FA Cup. It is still Arsenal's biggest win in the competition, as opposed to the 11-0 drubbing of Darwen in 1932 usually quoted.

Clapton were beaten 6-2 in the next round, bringing a South London derby against Millwall billed as 'the championship of the south'. Arsenal won it 2-0 and then knocked out the 2nd Scots Guards to earn a home tie in the first round proper against First Division club The Wednesday, which would end in a controversial 2-1 defeat.

The crowd could not understand why their team had been given only a free kick instead of a penalty when a Wednesday player handled in the area. Newspaper reports said the referee was pursued to the railway station by supporters who 'made their displeasure known'. So did the club, with a formal protest, all in vain. (Protests at one game the following year were more irate, when after a 1-1 draw against Burton the referee was knocked out by a spectator. The ground was closed for six weeks).

That first season finished with Arsenal ninth of the 15 teams, averaging a point a game after winning 12 and losing the same number, with four drawn. Progress for the rest of the decade was steady rather than spectacular, as the final league positions illustrate: ninth, eighth, seventh, tenth, fifth, seventh, eighth. In the best of those seasons, 1897/98, they were still eight points off promotion. Thomas Mitchell had taken over as secretary-manager for that season and may have been the first to hold that

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position, although Sam Hollis and Bill Parr appear to have had similar roles earlier in the decade. William Elcoat (not George, as he has often been called) took over from Mitchell for one season and was succeeded by Harry Bradshaw, who lasted rather longer.

One small bonus was the arrival in 1897 of Luton Town as the second southern club, but after three years they disappeared back whence they came, to be replaced by another faraway team in Blackpool. In 1900, Arsenal reported a loss of £3,400 – not all of it, presumably, in train fares.

There was serious talk about whether to go back to the Southern League, but Bradshaw insisted the club had sufficient potential to make it to the First Division. He won the day and would soon be proved right.

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By the turn of the century two more of London's current league clubs had made it as far as the Southern League First Division and one of the capital's fiercest derbies was established. As their name implies, **Thames Ironworks**, later to become West Ham United, were a works team that grew quickly under a paternalistic employer who happened to have been a former FA Cup finalist with Oxford University.

Based in Canning Town, the firm was one of London's last remaining shipbuilders. A foreman named Dave Taylor is credited with supplying the first impetus in 1895 to the chairman Arnold Hills, who saw a football team as a way of bringing management and workers closer together following a damaging strike that year.

A friendly match, the first of more than 40 in that inaugural season, on 7 September was drawn 1-1 (not 0-0 as some sources have it) against fellow factory workers of the Royal Ordnance. Within a month, the new club were competing in the FA Cup, albeit in a 5-0 defeat by Chatham.

They even staged matches against Woolwich Arsenal (3-5) and West Bromwich (2-4) under artificial lights that year at Hermit Road, the rudimentary ground taken over in the summer

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of 1895 from Old Castle Swifts, who as the works team of the Castle shipping line paying extra wages to players claimed to be the first professional club in Essex.

Hills and secretary Francis Payne became influential figures in forming a London League the following year, the Ironworks joining the First Division. Eviction from Hermit Road meant no home games could be played for several months, as the owners of a new ground in Beckton denied that permission for improvements had been given and took the club to court.

The first league match at Hermit Road on 19 September 1896 brought a 3-0 win over Vampires, which set the tone for a good first season, with the Ironworks finishing as runners-up to the 3rd Grenadier Guards. There was a good run in the London Senior Cup, though not the FA Cup – exited in an 8-0 defeat away to Sheppey United.

After one year at Browning Road in East Ham, Arthur Hills decided to finance the new Memorial Grounds in Holland Road, West Ham as a major sporting venue. West Ham historian John Powles, who specialises in Thames Ironworks and uncovered details of the court case, believes claims of a 100,000 capacity to be wildly exaggerated, with a more modest 17,000 against Tottenham in 1901 likely to have been the record football crowd there.

Hills could not be faulted for ambition and was rewarded if not with huge crowds then with results and a first championship as the team pipped Brentford to the London League title by a point, losing only one game out of 16 and even winning a couple of FA Cup ties for the first time before going out to St Albans.

Hills next agreed, a little reluctantly, to embrace professionalism and with it a place in both the higher standard Southern League and the Thames & Medway Combination for the 1898/99 season.

The Irons promptly finished top of the Southern League Second Division with a 100 per cent home record and only two away defeats early on, remaining unbeaten thereafter with 17 wins and a draw. A play-off was still necessary, against Cowes IOW in the hardly equidistant venue of Millwall: the Irons

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won 3-1 and a further promotion/relegation test match against Sheppey (1-1) became irrelevant when the First Division was expanded to accommodate both for the following season, as well as Cowes.

There was an unfortunate start to the new campaign when the club were banned by the FA for a fortnight because of financial irregularities by an agent involved in recruiting new players. The side was nevertheless strengthened, notably with three players from Tottenham and Syd King, a full-back signed from New Brompton, who would become West Ham's first and longest-serving manager. One of the many benefits of reaching the top division was that regular derbies against Millwall, previous opponents only in friendlies, were therefore established, bringing record crowds of 13,000 and 12,000 to the Memorial Grounds for first an FA Cup tie and then a league game, both won by the visitors.

The league defeat came during a run of only one win in 15 games for the Irons, but they took some revenge in the final league game of the season, winning away 1-0 in front of 8,000. Finishing 14th out of 17 meant a test match to avoid relegation, as two other clubs had resigned, but Fulham from the Second Division were duly beaten 5-1 at the home of the champions Tottenham. Centre-forward Bill Joyce, who had just scored a hat-trick in beating the FA Cup finalists Southampton, became the hero by bagging another one. He could not have known that it would be the last match ever played by Thames Ironworks.

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Football was flourishing in the west of the capital as well as the north, east and south, with Brentford, Fulham and QPR all joining the Southern League towards the end of the 1890s.

Fulham were the first of them to be established and claim to be the oldest of the current league clubs in London with their foundation in either 1879 or 1880, one or two years before Orient, albeit, in both cases, as a cricket club. A plaque commemorating

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Fulham's birth can be found in St Andrew's Church, Greyhound Road W14, near the Queen's tennis club, for it was as Fulham St Andrew's Church Sunday School FC that they began. The first football captain was Jack Howland, an assistant supervisor of the Sunday School who organised weekly Temperance Society concerts to keep people out of the local pubs.

Playing in red and white halves, they won the West London Amateur Cup in 1887, then adopted the name of Fulham in 1888 and won the first West London League five years later.

Having played at half a dozen local grounds, they moved as early as 1896 to Craven Cottage – which therefore beats White Hart Lane (1899) as the oldest existing ground among the current league clubs – and changed from black and white stripes to red. In 1898, they turned professional in the London section of the Southern League Second Division, and after finishing tenth of the 12 clubs were runners-up to Watford the following season, leading to the unsuccessful play-off against Thames Ironworks.

Brentford joined the Southern League at exactly the same time, establishing another enduring local derby. They had been founded in 1889 at the Oxford and Cambridge pub by Kew Bridge when the Brentford rowing club voted narrowly in favour of adding football rather than rugby to their sporting repertoire.

Kew FC provided the first opposition in a 1-1 draw on 23 November 1889 and the West London Alliance (1893) and West Middlesex Senior Cup (1895) were the first major trophies. Adding the Middlesex Senior Cup and London Senior Amateur Cup brought an invitation to the Southern League for the 1898/99 season, although what was unusual was that Brentford remained amateurs for that first campaign. They finished it a commendable fourth, comfortably ahead of Shepherd's Bush and Fulham. The same year, however, Brentford were found guilty by the FA of paying their players, which as the club's website suggests was 'an act common with most leading amateur clubs in London but illegal'. Going legit by turning professional immediately followed. The ground by that time was at the Cross Roads, south Ealing

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and early kits were a colourful selection based on claret and blue hoops or stripes.

Not far away, **QPR** followed a similar sort of timeline, albeit with an earlier conversion to professionalism. Christchurch Rangers (founded 1882) amalgamated with St Jude's Institute (1884) and in 1887 changed the name to the present one. Like most other small clubs of the time, Rangers had a variety of grounds, mostly around Queens Park, Brondesbury and Kensal Rise.

In 1892, they changed colours from an Oxbridge-like light and dark blue halves to green and white hoops, and joined the West London League with Fulham, whom they beat in the final of the West London Observer Cup, retained for the following two seasons. Winning the London Cup and competing in the FA Cup for the first time in 1895 were further significant steps, followed by turning professional in 1898 and soon joining the Southern League.

Although it was a year after Brentford and Fulham, Rangers managed to be elected straight into the top division, where eighth place, a point behind Millwall, who knocked them out of the FA Cup, was a fair start. The first professional league match was a 1-0 defeat away to eventual champions Tottenham on 9 September 1899, followed a week later by victory over New Brompton.

Also very much in existence by that time were the club with the distinctive name of **Orient**, who claim 1881 as their foundation date, soon after Fulham, although they did not begin playing football formally until five or six years later. Homerton Theological College was the home of the founding fathers, who started a cricket team called Glyn (after Glyn Road, Clapton), later changed to Eagle.

Jack Dearing, a player and committee member who worked for the Orient Steam Navigation Company (later P & O), suggested Clapton Orient as a name, but the prefix was dropped in order to avoid any confusion with the established local club Clapton. To this exotic title was added a distinctive capital O on the back of their shirts (numbers being unheard of until the late 1920s). The

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team won the Clapton & District League in their second season, 1894/95, and moved into the London League Third Division two years later. Promotion quickly followed at the Whittles Athletic ground in Millfields Road, Clapton, where two railway carriages served as dressing rooms.

In June 1898, election to the top division of the London League was marked by a change of name, Clapton being incorporated after all 'with Clapton now being considered a good district socially', according to Dearing. The league by that time was being won by the reserve teams of stronger clubs like Tottenham and Millwall, whose first XIs were competing in the Southern League.

The Os would have to wait a while for their big step up. In the meantime, their first-ever London League opponents, in September 1898, were the original Barnet club, founded in 1888, although set to be disbanded and taken over only a couple of years into the new century.

Barnet, like Wimbledon (founded 1889), would remain amateurs for the first 75 years of their existence. Most of the clubs who eventually went into the making of Dagenham & Redbridge, namely Walthamstow Avenue (1900), Leytonstone (1886) and Ilford (1881), also came into existence early, as did others like Leyton (1868), Clapton (1878), Bromley (1892), Dulwich Hamlet (1893), Enfield (1893) and Hendon (1908), all of whom would contribute to London's fine record in the 81 years (1893-1974) of the FA Amateur Cup. For more on all of them, plus Cray Wanderers, who claim to be Greater London's oldest surviving club, see Interlude II. By 1900, however, it was clear that professionalism was the way forward for the most ambitious of clubs.