

Professional Football and its Supporters in Lancashire, circa 1946-1985

**Gavin Mellor
Department of Historical and Critical Studies**

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Abstract

The academic study of Association Football and other sports is now regularly regarded as a valid and essential part of disciplines including psychology, history, philosophy, geography and sociology. The sociology and social history of Association Football in England for the period after the Second World War has, until recently, been dominated by the study of hooliganism and the recent commercialisation of the game. This has left a significant gap in the historiography of English football, particularly in terms of supporters' changing relationships with clubs in the period from 1946 onwards.

This project has four principal aims. These are to assess the social make-up of post-war football crowds in Lancashire; to analyse the fall in attendances that occurred at most Lancashire football clubs in the post-war period; to assess the developing relationship between football and social identity in post-war Lancashire; and to evaluate attempts to reconnect football clubs with football communities from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. The project is focused on Lancashire as this region provides an exceptionally good context for analysing post-war football supporters, containing both declining town-based clubs such as Preston North End and Blackpool, and big-city teams such as Liverpool and Manchester United. It centres on the period from circa 1946 to 1985 as most professional football clubs returned to normality after wartime dislocation in 1946, whilst the game underwent a number of fundamental changes after the Bradford City fire, Heysel Stadium disaster and other incidents that occurred in 1985.

Through documentary analysis, the evaluation of socio-economic statistics, oral history interviews, and sociological debates concerning the respective influences of structure and agency on historical developments, the project produced a number of important conclusions. It was found that football crowds in the immediate post-war period were probably more heterogeneous than has previously been thought in terms of class, gender and geographical origins. It was also discovered that a variety of socio-economic influences including increasing affluence and consumption, rising marriage rates, geographical movement, increasing home ownership, and rising unemployment all acted as important factors in determining the frequency of people's football attendance in Lancashire at various points between 1946 and 1985.

The project also found that football clubs were central agencies in producing feelings of local and regional identity in Lancashire in the 1940s and 1950s. However, it was noted that people came to construct their social and sporting identities differently from the early 1960s onwards with the result that a bifurcation occurred between many football clubs and football communities. In the final section of the project, the successes and failures of responses to this situation are judged by studying formal football and community initiatives and changes in football fan culture in Lancashire in the 1980s. These developments are used to partly explain how certain Lancashire football clubs and football communities came to be connected once more in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Dedicated to the memory of my Grandmother

Edna Mellor (1926-2002)

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Chapter One - Introduction

Association Football in Lancashire: Neglected Topics and Areas of Debate.

1.1: Association Football, Social Sciences and the Humanities

During the last two decades, shifts in certain academic prejudices have helped validate sport as a topic of legitimate and ‘serious’ investigation.¹ In overcoming what James Walvin described as “that deep and abiding intellectual suspicion which is so commonly manifested towards the very concept of sports history or sports sociology”,² the academic study of sport is now frequently regarded as a valid and essential part of disciplines including psychology, history, philosophy, geography and sociology.³ However, in acknowledging the limited heritage of the academic study of sport, it is important to note that the work of sports-related disciplines has only just begun, and that many areas of study, not to mention entire sports, are as yet under-developed or completely untouched.

In British sports studies, the most well researched and documented sport is Association Football. From the pioneering work of James Walvin and Eric Dunning⁴ to the recent studies of Dave Russell, Richard Giulianotti and others,⁵ academics from a wide variety of disciplines have cultivated a large and growing literature concerning the ‘birth’ of the Association game and its subsequent development. On football’s early years, authors including Mason, Vamplew, Tischler and Dunning have charted the

growth of the game between 1863 and 1914, linking the character of early English football to the nature of late Victorian and Edwardian society.⁶ On the inter-war period, Fishwick and Jones have sought to explain how football was influenced by the shifting economic and social circumstances of the period 1918-39, paying particular attention to factors including geography, crowd size, commercialisation and the growth of media influence.⁷ Finally, authors including Critcher, Wagg, Bale, King and Russell have analysed the main developments of English football since 1945, often paying close attention to 'structural factors' that are employed to explain the game's marked and prolonged decline from the 1950s and its more recent re-birth.⁸ These authors have successfully established the academic credibility of football research, and have reinforced the status of sport studies as an important sub-discipline of English social history, sociology and social geography.

- Despite the fine scholarship that undoubtedly contributed to academic studies of English football over the past 30 years, large gaps still remain in the socio-historical analysis of the game. This is especially true of English football's recent social history. Scholarly work on the period after 1945 has until recently been dominated by sociologists and cultural anthropologists who have tended to concentrate on the limited issues of football hooliganism and the effects of the recent commercialisation of the game. Whilst the importance of these two issues cannot be denied, together they have tended to preclude sustained investigation into other areas of football's post-war development, leaving further research needed to develop a fuller understanding of the social significance of the English professional game.

One area of research into post Second World War football that is particularly underdeveloped is the analysis of football supporters and their changing relationship with the game. Save for those analyses that are concerned with the development of football 'hooligan' cultures, or those that have analysed the effect of football's increasing commercialisation on working-class supporters in the 1990s, little work has been conducted on 'everyday' post-war football fans: those who made up the vast majority of crowds.⁹ The lack of reliable data on who attended English football matches in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s means that little analysis has been conducted on this vital area of research, and the reasons why people chose to attend football matches in the post-war period have largely not been debated. This has left many assumptions on post-war English football crowds unchallenged, and the character and nature of post-war football support in England often asserted rather than proved.

- ♦ The lack of sociological and historical research on English football fans in the post-war period is most surprising when one considers the fundamental changes that occurred in patterns of support for English football from the early 1950s to the mid-1980s. As a number of authors have noted, this period was exemplified by a vast decline in attendances for most English football clubs, and some writers have made limited attempts to uncover the sporting and social processes that served to redefine post-war football fans' relationships with the game. During the 1948-49 English football season, attendances reached their all-time peak in the context of a heightened desire for entertainment in the immediate post Second World War period when an aggregate total of 41,271,424 people attended matches.¹⁰ From this somewhat artificial peak, attendances began a long and accentuated decline, a trend intensified through the early 1950s and continuing despite periodic recoveries until an all-time low of 16,488,577

was reached in the 1985-86 season.¹¹ This experience was not only confined to football. Aggregate attendances at English County Championship cricket matches declined from over 2,000,000 in the late 1940s to 160,000 in 1980,¹² whilst rugby league attendances fell from a record aggregate of 4,950,000 in 1949-50 to just under 2,000,000 by 1963-64.¹³ With this in mind, a small number of academic and non-academic writers have questioned why so many people abandoned English football and other sports in the forty-or-so years following the immediate post-war period, and what social and sporting processes occurred, for some sports, to reverse that trend. However, the general level of debate on the topic has been disappointing. Authors have paid scant attention to the exact chronology of change, have made little attempt to identify the social basis of English football support, and have made only minimal efforts to contextualise changes within wider shifts in English social life. This has left a significant gap in the historiography of English Association Football in the post-war

• period.

1.2: The Aims of the Project

The character and development of English football support in the post-war period is both a neglected area of research and an important one. Not only does it touch on the phenomenon of crowd decline that bewildered journalists, a government enquiry, the Football Association and the Football League over a forty year period, but it also strikes at fundamental issues such as the historical social structure of English football crowds and the reasons behind people's football attendance. To begin to address these issues, this project has four principal, connected aims that will be outlined in turn. When reading these aims, it should be noted that they will be investigated in this

project solely in relation to the county of Lancashire, rather than England as a whole. The reasons for concentrating the analysis on this particular geographical context will be explained later.

The first aim of the study is to examine the social structure of football crowds in Lancashire in the post-war period. Far too often, historians of football have employed common sense notions of working-class men closing front doors at twenty-to-three and walking to matches as facts in the place of serious detailed research. The level of research carried out on the social structure of football crowds in the immediate post-war period is so low in fact that few authors even bother to declare their beliefs on the matter. However, it is instructive to note that Walvin's assessment of the subject is defined by references to dockers and factory workers, and that Wagg in his study of the reasons for declining crowds in the post-war period expresses the belief that

- football crowds in the late 1940s and 1950s were made up exclusively of working men that hailed from communities immediately adjacent to football stadiums.¹⁴ To question work of this type, this project will present a detailed body of analysis on the nature of football crowds in the post-war era, with particular attention being paid to class, gender and locality. As no official records exist on this topic for this period, a variety of methods have been employed to achieve at least a reliable impression of who was attending post-war football matches. Whatever the limitations of this research, though, it will help to undermine the more stereotypical notions of who attended English football matches from the 1940s onwards.

The second aim of the project is to analyse the reasons behind the aforementioned decline in attendances that befell football in Lancashire and elsewhere between the late

1940s and 1985. To do this, evidence of sporting and social change in post-war England will be employed to investigate those developments that encouraged fewer and fewer people to attend the matches of their local football clubs as the post-war period progressed. Football-specific issues that are considered include stadium facilities, crowd disorder, player-supporter relations, and changing standards of play and sportsmanship within the game. Social factors that are of particular interest include changes in living standards, the role of television, developments in public and private transportation, changes in housing quality and patterns of home ownership, the emergence of youth culture, and the role of gender relations in restructuring public and private leisure. The project will also assess the place of football in the lives of those who stopped attending matches in the period under study.

The third aim of the project is to investigate, at a new level of empirical and theoretical detail, the developing post-war relationship between football and social identity. In recent years, a growing number of academics have begun to analyse the links between sport and people's sense of belonging to communities and regions. In terms of football, a number of studies have been conducted on the role of football clubs in providing people with feelings of community pride and identity, and many authors have agreed that one of the principal functions of the football club in the twentieth century was to provide collective representation for its supporters. Authors including Hill, Holt, Mason and Bale have all addressed the role of football clubs in contributing to an individual's sense of identity and belonging, paying particular attention to the role of the sport in creating geographical community ties.¹⁵ Holt has stated that:

As the scale of the industrial city outstripped the capacity of individuals to encompass it, the fact of being a [football] supporter offered a sense of place, of belonging and of meaning that could never come from the formal expression of citizenship through the municipal ballot box ... merely watching the game brought a new kind of solidarity and sociability".¹⁶

In this short passage, Holt encapsulates the nature of the present debate concerning football and locality; namely, that football clubs should be addressed as sites for the creation and representation of regional or local identities. Bale has written that, "it is through the mass cultural form of sport that strong positive identification with locality, region and nation is perhaps best generated".¹⁷ To back this suggestion up, he contends that sports teams' positions as representations of clearly defined "segmental units", mark them out as ideal vehicles for the illustration of local pride. He states that in most instances communities have few common goals, only seldom fighting wars or finding themselves faced with common crises. In order to engender local pride, it is suggested that sports serve to create a form of local solidarity, where "functionally bonded units such as cities can [occasionally] unite as wholes".¹⁸ With a general lack of peacetime occasions on which the citizens of any collective can congregate and express mutual identification, Bale concludes that sport provides one of the principal media through which people develop and express "intense identification" with their given locality.¹⁹

Through their assessments of football and social identity, Hill, Holt, Mason, Bale and others have begun a discussion that is vital for understanding why people supported football clubs in England in the twentieth century, and why they eventually came to abandon the game in increasing numbers from the early 1950s onwards. However, the work of these authors can only provide limited help as, firstly, much of it is

concentrated solely on the first half of the twentieth century, and, secondly, it is often restricted to debating sport and identity for the working classes and, more particularly, the working classes who hail from the immediate locale of football clubs. This has precluded a discussion about the changing relationship between football and identity in the post Second World War period, and has not offered room to debate the links between football and identity for the middle classes and those people who have long travelled to watch football teams to which they have no immediate geographical connection. If these deficiencies are not addressed, our understanding of the relationship between sport and social identity will remain a partial one; underdeveloped and unable to account for all those disparate groups that have historically made up football crowds. This project will begin the process of eliminating some of these knowledge gaps and will develop the sport and identity debate in a new direction.

- The final aim of the project is to analyse the relationship between football and its supporters in the early and mid-1980s. In this period, a number of community-based initiatives were developed around English football that aimed to tackle the problems that had beset the game in previous years. This project will evaluate the success of these initiatives, and also judge the role that supporters themselves had in creating positive movements and proposals that helped connect local football clubs and supporters once more. Particular attention will be paid to official football and community schemes that emerged in England from the late 1970s, and football supporter 'fanzines' (fan magazines) that were published from the mid-1980s.

In addition to outlining the central aims of this project, it is also worth explaining what the study is *not* designed to address. First, it should be stated that the project is

confined to discussing football in the period between circa 1946 and 1985 and is not a complete post-war history of English football. This period has been chosen because most professional football clubs returned to normality after wartime dislocation in 1946, whilst the game underwent a number of fundamental changes after the Bradford City fire, Heysel Stadium disaster and other incidents that occurred in 1985. The project is also not a study of professional football *per se* in Lancashire in the post-war period, and, therefore, will not contain significant sections of historical detail on the playing performances or individual fates of clubs in that period. Nor is this project a discussion of football hooliganism, although, as an important trend in supporters' changing interpretations of football, a rise in 'aggressive' forms of fandom will be discussed in the project. Finally, the study is not concerned with supporters of semi-professional or amateur football in the post-war period. This is not because these fans are unimportant. Rather, it is because the richest forms of evidence that are available on post-war football supporters are concentrated around the professional game. The important questions that are raised by the popularity of semi-professional and amateur football in the post-war period are deserving of academic attention and should form the basis of another project.

1.3 Lancashire and the North West of England

This project could have focused on the whole of English football in the period between 1946 and 1985. However, with the aim of providing a detailed analysis of one specific, important region in the history of English football, the project is focused entirely on Lancashire. This region provides an exceptionally good context for analysing post-war football supporters, containing football clubs of varying size and rates of success. For

the purposes of this project, Lancashire is defined according to its pre-1974 administrative boundary and, therefore, includes the metropolitan boroughs of Merseyside and Greater Manchester (see Figure 1.1).²⁰



Figure 1.1: The County of Lancashire pre-1974

Occasional comments are also made during the project on the rest of the North West region, namely on Cumbria and Cheshire. However, these are restricted for reasons that will be outlined below. Not all teams from Lancashire receive the same level of analysis in the project: some are hardly mentioned at all. This is not because the clubs that are mentioned are inherently more important than others. Rather, it is because

some teams illuminate the discussions contained in the project better than others, and, therefore, are afforded more attention. Also, where the same historical processes occurred at a number of clubs in Lancashire in the post-war period, a case study on one example is usually offered, rather than a section on every club affected.

To provide clarity and historical context for this project, it is important to outline briefly some key information on Lancashire and the historical development and importance of Association Football in the county prior to the post Second World War period. It is also worth spending a small amount of time discussing why Lancashire was chosen for this project and not the broader North West of England.

The decision for this project to focus on the development of Association Football in Lancashire in the post-war period was taken for two central reasons. The first reason is

- based on the socio-economic character of pre- and post-war Lancashire *vis-à-vis* the rest of the North West region, whilst the second reason draws on the central historical role that Lancashire played in the development of professional Association Football in England at the end of the nineteenth century. Let us now consider these two issues in turn.

This project could have focused its analysis on the whole of the North West of England. However, many definitions and interpretations of what constitutes the North West of England exist, including those that contend that the old counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland together constitute one cohesive region. Indeed, in 1994 the Government Offices for the Regions established a North West region that extended “from the Cheshire plain to the Scottish border”: a region that,

under the terms of the 2002 White Paper *Your Region, Your Choice*, will be used should regional government ever emerge in England.²¹ Because of this lack of clarity on what precisely constitutes the North West, it was decided that this project's attempts to understand the development of Association Football in one specific social, economic and political culture would be better concentrated on the more manageable county of Lancashire than on the relatively disparate and amorphous North West. In other words, it was felt that if the case studies and comparisons made in this project were to prove useful, it was important to study a relatively cohesive region that is constituted from places which contain a number of essential similarities.

To qualify the suggestion that Lancashire has historically constituted a relatively cohesive region it is important to outline briefly the economic and social history of the county. From the late eighteenth century onwards, the key to Lancashire's economic development and burgeoning economic identity was, of course, factory-based textile manufacturing.²² For hundreds of years, a domestic textile industry had existed in Lancashire, but in the late eighteenth century the development of mechanised spinning and weaving and the adoption of a factory system based on water and later steam power established the county as a world leader in textile manufacturing.²³ Lancashire's position on top of one of Britain's major coalfields aided this industrial development, as did the county's access to materials and world markets via the great port of Liverpool.²⁴ By the middle of the nineteenth century, Lancashire's symbiotic textile and mining industries were established as the leaders of the county's economic culture and helped shape the way that the county's people thought about themselves and how other people thought about the county.

Textile and mining industries were undoubtedly central to the economic fortunes of Lancashire by the middle of the nineteenth century. However, it would be incorrect to present the county as being completely dominated by these two industries and ignore other important economic developments in Lancashire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Manchester developed a diverse employment structure during the nineteenth century including craft, professional, commercial, chemical and other occupations.²⁵ Areas such as Widnes and St. Helens based their economic activities on the chemical, glass and soap industries, and Liverpool, of course, continued to support its economy through maritime interests. Also, in the north and other parts of the county, agriculture remained centrally important to the local economy.²⁶ For these reasons, it is important to present Lancashire not as a totally homogenous economic entity, but as a county that was heavily influenced by textile and, to a lesser extent, coal industries, whilst containing important centres of diverse economic activity.

The early and rapid economic growth that occurred in Lancashire in the nineteenth century was supported by and reflected in population developments in the county during that period. Not only did the population of the county rise dramatically during the 1800s, but the general urbanisation of people to the towns and cities again added to the relatively cohesive character of the county. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the number of people living in towns in Lancashire increased by four times to over one million, and by the 1851 Census two thirds of the county's population lived in towns or cities.²⁷ The process progressed in the second half of the nineteenth century as people continued moving to the, amongst other places, new cotton and colliery towns, as well as to the new suburbs that were developing in the county's major metropolitan centres.

In the twentieth century, and particularly in the post Second World War period, nationwide social and economic change in Britain undermined many of the commonalities that previously helped define Lancashire as a relatively cohesive county. The decline of the cotton and coal industries that began in the inter-war period and accelerated after the Second World War damaged the shared industrial and social fabric that many Lancastrians had experienced in the previous period.²⁸ In 1921, 600,000 people were employed in textiles in Lancashire and Cheshire, but by 1971 that figure had dropped to 152,000.²⁹ However, the disintegration of the county's shared economic base and associated common ways of living does not cause problems for this project's desire to analyse football in a relatively cohesive social, economic and political context. Rather, the fact that the county of Lancashire and its people underwent such radical social and economic change in the post-war period from a relatively stable beginning in 1946 adds another shared experience for Lancastrian people that the project can usefully investigate within the context of football.

The second reason for concentrating this project's analysis on Lancashire rather than the broader North West is based on the county's central role in the historical development of Association Football. Lancashire had a greater role to play in the early development of Association Football than Cheshire, Westmorland and Cumberland, and this accorded Lancashire football teams with a special 'cultural capital' within the English game. Indeed, most historians agree that English professional football *per se* developed first in Lancashire, specifically around the 'triangle' formed by the cotton towns of Bolton, Blackburn and Darwen.³⁰ Professional football teams emerged first in this area of Lancashire in the early-1880s, but Cheshire did not develop professional

teams until the 1890s, and Cumberland did not get representation in the professional Football League until the inter-war period. Moreover, football teams in the North West that lie outside of Lancashire have, for the majority of their history, been relatively unsuccessful and poorly supported. This does not make these teams unworthy of study. However, as this project is designed to analyse the development of teams that have broadly the same genesis and were affected by similar socio-economic developments in the post-war period, it is clearly logical to concentrate analysis on Lancashire.

As professional football clubs developed first in Lancashire around the textile districts of Bolton, Blackburn and Darwen, so the development of the professional game in the county continued to flourish in areas of similar industrial character during the remainder of the nineteenth century. To explain why this happened, and what this means for the focus of this project, it is worth now considering briefly the history of football in Lancashire between the 1880s and the start of the Second World War. Such an exercise will help identify the importance of football within the cultures and communities of Lancashire by the end of the inter-war period, and explain why the game in the region is particularly deserving of the analysis that it receives in this project.

1.4 The Historical Importance of Lancashire in the Development of Association Football

Lancashire is of central importance in the historical development of Association Football.³¹ Whilst the Association game itself was formed principally from the raw

materials of 'folk' football³² in the public schools and universities of the South, professional football emerged in the late nineteenth century largely as a result of socio-economic changes in the North of England.³³ In areas such as Sheffield, Derby, Nottingham, the Potteries, Birmingham, and, above all, the textile areas of Lancashire, people of all classes embraced football in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, enabling the game to develop many of the professional organisational structures that remain today.³⁴

Immediately after the creation of the London-based and Southern-dominated Football Association in 1863, administrative power and playing dominance within Association Football clearly lay in the South of England. However, led by the successes of teams such as Darwen FC, Blackburn Rovers and Blackburn Olympic, teams from Lancashire started to meet, and in many cases surpass, Southern playing standards by the late 1870s and early 1880s.³⁵ This process could be seen most clearly in the FA Cup: a national knockout competition participated in by Football Association member clubs. In 1882, Blackburn Rovers became the first Northern, working-class team to win through to the FA Cup Final, losing by one goal to the Old Etonians at the Oval in London. A year later, Blackburn Olympic succeeded where their near-neighbours failed and won the FA Cup, again against the Old Etonians. After 1883, the FA Cup returned to the South of England on only two occasions until 1930. This represented a significant shift in the national football balance of power, and established Northern, and particularly Lancastrian, football teams as England's finest.

It was not only in terms of playing success that football in Lancashire came to establish new standards in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As stated above, the

very idea of football as a professional, spectator sport emerged principally in Lancashire and associated regions in the 1870s and 1880s. In the early 1880s, record national crowds for football matches were regularly set in Lancashire at clubs such as Blackburn Rovers, and in the same period gate-money started to be collected by Lancashire clubs to fund, amongst other things, the wages of players.³⁶ Indeed, it was in Lancashire that Association Football's first significant crisis over professionalism and the payment of players emerged in 1884 when Preston North End played Upton Park, a Southern team of amateurs, in the FA Cup. After the match, Upton Park complained to the FA that Preston North End had used professionals. While the charge was never proven, the FA did find Preston guilty of importing players from other regions and locating for them well paid jobs.³⁷ Preston may have been found guilty of this offence, but they were by no means the only Lancashire club importing and paying players, by whatever means, in the 1880s. After the FA had decided to introduce a residency qualification for football players in 1884, it was estimated that 55 Scots were playing for eleven Lancashire clubs during that year.³⁸

The development of Association Football as a professional, spectator sport in Lancashire occurred as a result of a number of socio-economic developments in the region during the late Victorian period. Central among these were processes that facilitated the dissemination of football to the largest possible constituency in the region. Football could not have developed as strongly in Lancashire as it did in the 1870s and 1880s had it not been for the region's strong communications network, particularly in terms of the emergence of a rail network.³⁹ Moreover, as Russell, Mason, Vamplew and Lewis have pointed out, if the Saturday half-holiday had not been granted so early and to so many people in Lancashire in the 1870s, it is difficult to

imagine that the region would have developed such as strong sport and leisure culture.⁴⁰ In textile Lancashire in particular, large sections of the male workforce were able to enjoy the Saturday half-holiday by 1874, thereby affording them time to develop new interests and leisure pursuits. That the same people benefited from a rise in real wages of one third in the last quarter of the nineteenth century further enhanced their ability to consume and participate in new pastimes including, of course, Association Football.⁴¹

The reasons why Association Football became such a strong focus for popular, particularly male, leisure in Lancashire in the late Victorian period are difficult to identify and have been the focus of much debate amongst social historians. Many early histories of football suggested that the game was effectively brought to the Lancashire working class by sections of the middle and upper class “anxious to provide useful, directed recreations in order to occupy the new blocks of leisure time that might otherwise be filled in less ‘suitable’ ways”.⁴² Historians writing from this perspective have asserted the place of football in the ‘rational recreation’ movement that developed in England from the 1820s and 1830s, and the role of ‘muscular Christians’ in the early promotion of football amongst the working classes.⁴³ However, a less ‘top-down’ interpretation of the spread of football in Lancashire has also been proposed by a number of authors. Holt, for instance, has importantly underlined the similarities between popular ‘street football’ in the North in the early 1800s and the Association game that followed.⁴⁴ Similarly, Russell has noted that Association Football was for the Victorian working class a “novelty which was at least rooted in a pastime that they could relate to”. Russell goes on to assert that football provided “a new topic of conversation in the traditional meeting places of pub and street, ... an opportunity for

modest gambling, ... and the expression of loyalty to street, neighbourhood and town”: all traits of working-class culture in Lancashire that were relatively long-standing.⁴⁵

Whatever the reasons for football’s popularity in Lancashire in the late Victorian period, by 1888 the strength of the game in the region was such that it could contribute six teams to the new twelve team Football League (the other six coming from the Midlands). The League itself was a Lancashire organisation, establishing its offices in Preston from 1902 and maintaining a presence in the region until the present day.⁴⁶

When the League began to expand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Lancashire continued to contribute a significant number of member teams, with 12 of the 40 Football League clubs coming from the county by 1914. These clubs, and other Lancashire clubs that had been members of the Football League between 1888 and

- ♦ 1914, are represented in Table 1.1.

	Joined Football League	Left Football League
Accrington	1888	1893
Blackburn Rovers	1888	
Bolton Wanderers	1888	
Burnley	1888	
Everton	1888	
Preston North End	1888	
Darwen	1891	1899
Bootle	1892	1893
Manchester City	1892	
Manchester United	1892	
Liverpool	1893	
Bury	1894	
Blackpool	1896	
New Brighton Tower	1898	
Oldham Athletic	1907	

Table 1.1: Lancashire Football League Clubs – 1888-1914.⁴⁷

In addition to being numerically significant in the Football League, a small number of teams from Lancashire were among some of the most successful in the country up to 1914. The first League Champions were Preston North End in 1888, and from that time teams from Lancashire won the Football League Championship and the FA Cup on seven and nine occasions respectively before the start of the First World War.

In the inter-war and immediate post Second World War periods, Lancashire continued to contribute a large number of teams to the Football League. Between 1921 and 1939, Lancashire clubs constituted around a quarter of Football League membership, made up of the teams outlined in Table 1.1 and a number of new additions that are listed in Table 1.2.

	Joined Football League	Left Football League
Accrington Stanley	1921	1962
Barrow	1921	1972
Nelson	1921	1931
Rochdale	1921	
Southport	1921	1978
Tranmere Rovers	1921	
Wigan Borough	1921	1931
New Brighton	1923	1951

Table 1.2: New Lancashire Football League Clubs – 1921-51.⁴⁸

The largest expansion of Lancashire teams in the Football League in the inter-war period occurred in 1921 when seven clubs joined as founder members of the Third Division North. For many of these teams, the 1920s and 1930s were difficult times both on the field of play and in terms of their financial viability. Often, Lancashire football clubs, unlike, for instance, their North East colleagues, had to compete against the popularity of rugby league and a plurality of near football neighbours, making it difficult to draw large committed support.⁴⁹ This was reflected in the failure of teams

such as Wigan Borough to stay in the Football League, and the inability of many Lancashire teams to move beyond the Third Division North.⁵⁰

A further problem faced by Lancashire football teams in the 1920s and 1930s was the economic depression that the region, and indeed the nation, faced in the period. The rise in unemployment that accompanied the depression led to reduced attendances for most Lancashire teams and made new Football League clubs vulnerable to failure. However, even in this difficult economic climate, the established clubs of Lancashire continued to perform well in League and Cup competitions. Although some historians have chosen to represent the 1920s and the 1930s as a period of Southern domination in football,⁵¹ both the Football League Championship and the FA Cup went to Lancashire on seven occasions between 1920 and 1939.⁵² The most successful Lancashire clubs in this period were Liverpool and Everton who won two and three League Championships respectively. Attendances at the more established clubs were also relatively buoyant despite the prevailing economic conditions, with Manchester City, for instance, setting a record attendance of 84,569 for a Football League ground against Stoke City in the 5th Round of the FA Cup in March 1934: a record that still stands today. Even teams such as Blackburn Rovers attracted occasional crowds of over 36,000 in the early 1930s, despite a local unemployment rate of 32 percent.⁵³

The fact that football supporters in Lancashire continued to support their teams in such large numbers in the economically depressed 1920s and 1930s is evidence of the importance of football in the lives of Lancastrians by the beginning of the Second World War. Writing on the appetite for football that existed in working-class communities across England by the late 1930s, Jones stated that:

Football was an organic part of the working-class community: grounds were built where the supporters lived ... among the factories and the workers' houses; and players, managers and occasionally even directors came from the same social class as the supporters, with similar experiences and ideas about life. Cultural attachments to a football team assured a nucleus of committed support, especially in densely populated areas with few counter attractions.⁵⁴

The communities and geographical areas that Jones describes here are recognisably those of the North of England, including Lancashire. He, and other writers such as Fishwick, Holt, Hill, Mason and Russell, have rightly identified the central link between football, community and identity in Lancashire by the late 1930s, and how football had become a central, defining element of the region's culture.⁵⁵ Fishwick has claimed that "not to have a view on the local team, or not to have been to the most recent local derby, would often have marked out a man" in the 1930s, while Holt states that concern with and knowledge of the local football club in the inter-war period enabled people to culturally express their collective, geographical identities at a time when towns and cities were becoming too large to 'naturally' connect with. It is this process that established football in Lancashire as a central, vibrant part of local culture by the start of the Second World War, and, in terms of this project, makes the development of football in the region in the post-war period a matter of great interest and historical concern.

1.5: Outline of the Project

In line with the aims and parameters set out in this introduction, this project is structured into a number of themed, interlinked chapters. The chapter that follows this introduction outlines the methodology of the project and explains the range of sources

that were utilised to gather pertinent historical information. It also identifies the central theoretical theme for the project; namely a discussion about the influence of 'structure' and 'agency' in the development of historical change. The third chapter of the project outlines the social composition of football crowds in Lancashire in the period between the late 1940s and early 1960s in an attempt to bring detailed analysis to a discussion that has been left unattended by social historians for too long. Analysis centres on the class composition of football supporters, the question of how many women attended matches, and the geographical catchment areas from which clubs could expect to draw supporters.

In Chapter Four an analysis of the rise and fall of football attendances in Lancashire is presented. To complement this, the explanations of contemporary experts, social historians and sociologists are detailed to identify the present level of explanatory debate in the area. Chapter Five evaluates these arguments, and, specifically, analyses how various macro social and economic factors influenced football attendances in Lancashire during the post-war period. This information is complemented by a discussion of oral history evidence from Lancashire football fans who supported the game in the post-war period, and an evaluation of how their relationships with their clubs developed in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Chapters Six and Seven of the project analyse the links between football and social identity through the post-war period, both at a local and a regional level. Chapter Six centres on the period up to the early 1960s, and evaluates the notion of 'football communities' and how they were produced and re-produced in Lancashire. Chapter Seven considers the period from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, and charts the

decline of many Lancashire football communities and evaluates the reasons for their demise. Chapter Seven also analyses the decline of 'regional' identities felt around football in Lancashire from the early 1960s, and explains the development of 'one-club parochialism' in the region.

The penultimate chapter of the project considers the redevelopment of football in Lancashire from the early 1980s. This is done with reference to major initiatives from football clubs, the Government and the football authorities, and by analysing fan-based initiatives that were designed, either formally or informally, to reproduce a sense of community and commitment around football clubs in Lancashire. In the final, concluding chapter of the project, tentative statements on the present state of football and football communities in Lancashire are made, along with recommendations for future work that needs to be conducted on football in the Lancashire region and beyond.

¹ See Hill, J., 'British Sports History: A Post-Modern Future?' *Journal of Sports History*, 23 (1), 1996 pp. 1-19.

² Walvin, J., 'Sport, Social History and the Historian', *British Journal of Sports History*, 1 (1), 1984, p. 5.

³ Bale J., 'The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sport', *Progress in Human Geography*, 12, 1988, p. 507.

⁴ Walvin, J., *The People's Game* (2nd ed.) (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1994); Dunning E & Sheard K., *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players* (Oxford, 1979).

⁵ Russell, D., *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997); Giulianotti, R., *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁶ See, for instance, Mason, T., *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980); Vamplew, W., *Pay Up and Play the Game* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Tischler, S., *Footballers and Businessmen. The Origins of Professional Soccer in England* (New York, 1981); and Dunning, E. & Sheard, K., *Barbarians, Gentlemen and Players*.

⁷ Fishwick, N., *English Football and Society 1910-50* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Jones, S. G., 'The Economic Aspects of Association Football In England 1918-39'. *British Journal of Sports History*, 1 (3), 1984, pp. 286-299.

⁸ See, for instance, Critcher, C., 'Football Since the War', in Clarke J., Critcher, C. & Johnson R., *Working Class Culture - Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1979); Wagg, S., *The Football World: a Contemporary Social History* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1984); Bale, J., *Sport, Space and the City* (London: Routledge, 1993); Russell, *Football and the English*; King, A., *The End of the Terraces* (revised edition) (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 2002).

⁹ This point is also made in Hill, J., *Sport, Leisure and Culture in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002), p. 29.

♦ ¹⁰ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 102.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹² Williams, J., 'Cricket' in Mason, T., *Sport in Britain: A Social History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 121.

¹³ Russell, D., *Football and the English*, p. 134.

¹⁴ Walvin, *The People's Game*, p. 156; Wagg, *The Football World*, p. 206.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Hill, J., 'Rite of Spring: Cup Finals and Community in the North of England'. In Williams, J. & Hill, J., *Sport and Identity in the North of England*. (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996); Holt, R., *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989); Mason, T., 'Stanley Matthews', in Holt, R. (ed.), *Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); Bale, 'The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sport', pp. 507-524.

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- ¹⁶ Holt, R., 'Working-Class Football and the City: The Problem of Continuity', *British Journal of Sports History*, 3, 1, 1986, p. 15.
- ¹⁷ Bale, 'The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sport', p. 513.
- ¹⁸ Dunning, E., 'Social Bonding and the Socio-genesis of Violence', in Tomlinson, A. (ed.), *The Sociological Study of Sport; Configurational and Interpretative Studies* (Brighton: Brighton Polytechnic, 1981), p. 26.
- ¹⁹ Bale, 'The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sport', p. 513.
- ²⁰ See Phillips, C.B., & Smith, J.H., *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 370-373.
- ²¹ Thanks to Dave Russell for pointing this out. See also, Castells, L., & Walton, J. K., 'Contrasting Identities: North-West England and the Basque Country, 1840-1936', in Royle, E., (ed) *Issues of Regional Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 44-81.
- ²² For a full discussion of the development of Lancashire see; Phillips, C. B., & Smith, J. H., *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994); and Smith, D. *The North West* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969); Timmins, G., *Made in Lancashire: A History of Regional Industrialisation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Walton, J. K., *A Social History of Lancashire, 1558-1939* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987)
- ²³ Smith, *The North West*, pp. 20-21.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21
- ²⁵ For a full history of Manchester see Kidd, A., *Manchester* (2nd ed.) (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996).
- ²⁶ Walton, J.K. 'The North West', in Thompson, F.M.L (ed.) *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Volume I: Regions and Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 355-357.
- ²⁷ Smith, *The North West*, p. 23.
- ²⁸ Phillips and Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire*, p. 302. For an extended discussion of the decline of the Lancashire textile industry, see Singleton, J., *Lancashire on the Scrapheap: The Cotton Industry, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)

²⁹ Ibid., p. 316.

³⁰ See, Lewis, R., *The Development of Professional Football in Lancashire, 1870-1914* (University of Lancaster: Ph.D. Thesis, 1993), chapters 2 and 3 and Lewis, R., 'The Genesis of Professional Football: Bolton – Blackpool – Blackburn – Darwen, the Centre of Innovation, 1878-1885', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 14, 1, 1997. For a dissenting view see Taylor, M., 'Little Englanders: Tradition, Identity and Professional Football in Lancashire, 1880-1930', in Gehrman, S. (ed.) *Football and Regional Identity in Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

³¹ For a full discussion of the early development of football in Lancashire see, Lewis, 'The Genesis of Professional Football' and Lewis, *The Development of Professional Football in Lancashire*.

³² For the most recent discussion of this process, see Harvey, A., *The Evolution of British Football* (London: Frank Cass, forthcoming).

³³ See Dunning, E., (ed.) *The Sociology of Sport: a Selection of Readings* (London, 1971); Holt, R., *Sport and the British*; Mason, *Association Football and English Society*; Russell, *Football and the English*; Tischler, *Footballers and Businessmen*; Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game*; Wagg, *The Football World: a Contemporary Social History*; Walvin, *The People's Game* (2nd ed.).

♦ ³⁴ Mason, T., 'Football, Sport of the North?', Williams, J., & Hill, J., *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. 45.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 42-45.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 44.

³⁹ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 13; Mason, *Association Football and the English*, pp. 2-3; Vamplew, *Pay Up and Play the Game*, p. 51; Lewis, *The Development of Professional Football in Lancashire*, chapters 2 & 3.

⁴¹ Russell, *Football and the English*, pp. 13-14.

⁴² Ibid., p. 15. See also, Wagg, *The Football World*, p. 4.

⁴³ See Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 159-179.

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- ⁴⁵ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 17.
- ⁴⁶ Mason, 'Football, Sport of the North?', p. 46.
- ⁴⁷ This table is taken from Russell, D., 'Football and Society in Lancashire, 1919-39', *Lancashire Labour History*, 24, 1999/2000, p. 4. Crewe Alexandra, Blackpool and Stockport County left the Football League for spells during this period, but returned.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 4. Tranmere Rovers have been included as a Lancashire football club in this project because of their strong historical relationship with football in Liverpool.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 4-5.
- ⁵⁰ Wigan Borough resigned from the Football League halfway through the 1931-32 season £20,000 in debt. See Russell, 'Football and Society in Lancashire', p. 10.
- ⁵¹ See, for instance, Fishwick, *English Football and Society, 1910-1950*, pp. 26-27; Jones, 'The Economic Aspects of Association Football in England 1918-39', p. 287.
- ⁵² Russell, 'Football and Society in Lancashire', p. 5.
- ⁵³ Ibid., p. 7 & 9.
- ⁵⁴ Jones, 'The Economic Aspects of Association Football In England', p. 288
- ◆ ⁵⁵ Fishwick, *English Football and Society, 1910-1950*; Holt., *Sport and the British*; Hill, 'Rite of Spring'; Mason, 'Sport of the North?'; Russell, 'Football and Society in Lancashire'.

Chapter Two

Methodology

2.1: Introduction

This chapter outlines the basic methodology of this project and details the major information sources that have been employed to gather empirical data on football in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985. To contextualise the project's methodology, comments are made on the longstanding split between history and sociology in the study of sport and how this has been expressed in historians' under-use of theory and sociologists' rejection of empirical evidence and historical context. To move beyond this dichotomy, comments are made on the sociology of Norbert Elias and how his theory of 'figurations' involves a constant interplay between theory and evidence.

- This chapter also contains comments on the structure versus agency debate that has traditionally beset sociological studies of sport and other social phenomena. Again, the sociology of Elias is identified as a potential way forward in this argument as, it is proposed, the concept of figuration enables academics to formulate studies that consider both the influence of society on people's behaviour and people's own power to determine their actions, beliefs and interests.

2.2: History and Sociology: Theory and Evidence

This project is primarily historical in nature. Its first aim, therefore, is to satisfy the academic criteria set forth by the discipline of social history with regard to the collection of empirical data. However, the project is also informed by literature and

debates from disciplines including sociology, social geography and economics and as a result contains comments on the place of history within the social sciences and vice versa. If the approach developed within this project is successful, it should avoid the problems posed both by atheoretical history and ahistorical sociology and provide a lucid and useful account of the developing relationship between football clubs and their supporters between 1946 and 1985.

The tension between history and sociology or, better put, the tension between theory and evidence is well established and frequently commented upon. Whilst some historians have questioned the utility of theory for their investigations, sociologists such as Goudsblom have suggested that “the divorce of history and sociology is detrimental to both”.¹ This position is adopted for this project. In line with the analysis of Maguire, the imposition of “grand theories” on to evidence and the use of “abstracted empiricism” are avoided throughout, and instead an approach is developed that recognises that theory formation and empirical enquiry are interwoven, indivisible and interlinked.² As Maguire himself puts it, “there is a need to avoid what Thompson has called the ‘poverty of theory’ but also what Elias sees as ‘empty empiricism’”.³

The desire to ensure that this project adheres to a level of theoretical coherence does not mean that it is punctuated by frequent theoretical reflections and debates. Rather, the work presented here is simply underpinned by a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions that determine the way in which evidence is presented and reported upon. Central among these is the sociology of Norbert Elias and his understanding of figurational or process sociology.⁴ The central organising principle

of figurational sociology is the concept of figuration itself. In criticising the *homo clausus* concept of human beings so common in much sociology, Elias argued that it is not fruitful to view the 'individual' and 'society' as two independent objects of investigation. Rather, he suggested that through the concept of figuration, we can understand that individuals can never exist outside of society and that societies cannot exist without their constituent parts (individuals). In this sense, Elias asked that sociologists view societies as large, complex figurations of interdependent individuals, and not in reified terms exemplified by notions of independent 'social forces' determining human behaviour. The complexity of these figurations also led Elias to assert that the multitude of people and actions involved in social developments usually results in that development being 'blind' and unintended. He contended that figurations are continually in development and that the unintended consequences of people's actions are usually more influential in long-term developments than the intentions of single actors. This led Elias to assert that figurations should always be studied developmentally (historically) and that sociologists should continually be cognisant of temporal variations. He claimed that this would overcome the common sociological problem of 'process reduction', or the presentation of dynamic processes in static or isolated terms. Finally, Elias asserted that power should never be conceived as a zero-sum equation but, rather, should be envisaged in terms of relative balances that are in a state of flux.

In terms of the use of Elias's theories within this project, it should be stated that figurational sociology is employed here as a sensitising concept that provides a structure into which empirical data can be placed. The project does not attempt to prove Elias's theory of figurations to be an ontologically correct assessment of social

relationships but, instead, employs the model as an effective way of directing research to important questions. Elias's theories aid the appraisal of the relationship between football clubs and their supporters, help structure the project's approach to the influence of macro socio-economic changes on football attendances, and in association with Elias's connected concept of 'social habitus', help provide an understanding of social influences on personal and sporting identities.⁵

2.3: The Structure and Agency Debate

The area of this project to which Elias's work has contributed most is undoubtedly in providing an understanding and appraisal of the influence (or not) of macro socio-economic changes on people's propensity to watch football matches in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985. Theoretical clarity on this issue is vital, as a level of confusion has historically exemplified traditional sociological debates over the influence of 'social structures' (such as socio-economic change) on people's behaviour. Supporters of functionalism and other forms of structuralism have long posited that society should be viewed as independent of individuals and that social structures such as the economy constrain or limit the forms of action and meaning that people create. They suggest that sociology should analyse society according to the rules adhered to in the natural sciences, and claim that laws of behaviour and interaction can be established for social structures (or 'social facts' as Durkheim termed them) that enable predictive theories to be established. They leave little room for the role of human agency or personal choice in determining people's behaviour, instead viewing people as dupes of the social system or as simple "bearers of [the system's] demands and requirements".⁶

In comparison to structuralists, 'interpretative' schools of sociology, including ethnomethodology and phenomenology, reject the existence of pre-existing social structures and place the individual at the centre of their analysis. It is their contention that the subjective personal experiences of individuals and the meanings that their activities have for them are the most important things for sociologists to study. They do not recognise social facts or social forces and posit that 'subjectivism' (as opposed to structuralist 'objectivism') and 'humanism' (people being the centre of analysis) are the basis of sociological endeavour. The central concepts of interpretative sociology are human agency and the concomitant belief that social developments occur because of the actions and wishes of individuals who act according to their own wants and needs, and not because of structures imposed from without.

These two schools of sociological thought have created a division in the discipline of sociology that continues to influence debates on ontology, epistemology and methodology. Simply put, they are reflective of the false and unhelpful dualisms that have beset sociology and have led it into destructive and unnecessary infighting. These dualisms can be summarised as follows:

Structuralism	Interpretative
Structure	Action
Objectivism	Subjectivism
Macro	Micro
Society	Individual
Institutional Analysis	Interpretative Analysis

Table 2.1: Dualisms in Social Theory.⁷

To overcome the dualisms endemic in sociology it is helpful to consider the work of Elias and his theory of figuration. It is not claimed here that Elias has ‘solved’ the great dualisms of sociology. Indeed, significant criticisms of Elias’s work exist and will be mentioned later. Rather, Elias provides a starting point for overcoming the structure/agency debate in sociology and offers an ontological model that allows (what would traditionally be called) macro and micro level analyses to inform each other within the same studies.

As stated earlier, Elias’s critique of dualisms within sociology began with his rejection of the *homo clausus* concept of the individual as being self-contained and closed off from society. To replace this view, which for Elias dated back to fourteenth and fifteenth century Renaissance thinking, the concept of *homines aperti* was introduced along with the contention that individuals are “bound together in mutual interdependence in the historical processes that give rise to specific figurations”.⁸ Elias did not simply state that macro and micro levels of society exist and have equal influence on people’s behaviour. Nor did he contend that the concept of figuration bridged the gap between macro and micro sections of society. Rather, he stated that

the concept of figuration was able to explain both the influence of social relations on people's behaviour and the personal agency that people routinely bring to their life choices. The key concept in this formulation was interdependence as it explained both the social relationships (no matter how abstract) in which people are involved and the influences on people's social habituses that inform their personal decisions. The concept of interdependence enabled Elias to develop a sociology that was neither deterministic nor overly subjective, and helped him demonstrate how social relations both constrain and enable people in all their social actions.

Criticisms of Elias's work abound in sociology, particularly in terms of his application of figurational sociology in his study of the civilising process. With specific reference to Elias's critique of dualisms within sociology, Layder has stated that Elias overestimates the degree to which structuralists such as Parsons symbolically obliterated personal agency in their formulations and, more importantly for present purposes, underestimates the level of independence that people can have from social relationships. In analysis of the concepts of figuration and interdependence, Layder claims that for Elias individuals are "virtually dissolved into social processes", leaving little room for personal agency that does not emanate from the social interdependencies under review. In contrast to this, Layder states:

The fact that we are always and everywhere enmeshed in social relationships with others should not lead us to undervalue the levels of *independence* we exhibit from them at the same time.⁹

Whilst it is difficult to know how an individual can exhibit independence from social relations in which they are "always and everywhere enmeshed", Layder's criticisms do address the important issue of whether Elias's sociology really represents the

constraining and enabling properties of social relations, or whether Elias simply developed a new form of structuralism and gave it another name. It is the case that human agency is not always clearly visible in the sociology of Elias because of its strong emphasis on social interdependencies. However, figurational sociology, whilst asserting the social nature of personality and habitus, does highlight the choices and power that people bring to everyday relations and importantly places 'real people' back at the centre of sociological analysis instead of 'social structures'.

In terms of this project, this debate on dualisms, structure and agency, and figurations is important for a number of reasons. Primarily, it provides the justification for the project's broad methodology, based as it is on macro quantitative research (analysis of socio-economic influences on people's football attendance) and micro qualitative research (interviews with fans to investigate the reasons for their attendance and/or non-attendance). In order to structure the project effectively, the results of these investigations are presented separately. However, this does not mean that the issues discussed in this chapter are forgotten and, for instance, a self-contained macro analysis of the influence of economic affluence on people's propensity to attend football will be presented. Rather, the macro and micro debates presented in the forthcoming chapters will constantly address each other and the same issues and, in the case of macro debates, will be grounded in the real affects that changing social relations had on people's social identities, personalities and habituses in the forty years following the Second World War. Continual theoretical reflections on how evidence being presented accords with figurational sociology will not be a feature of the project. Instead, the evidence and final argument of this project should be judged

against the reflections presented in this chapter and in terms of whether a high level of coherence is maintained throughout.

2.4: Data and Information Sources

A number of sources have been employed to collect empirical data for this project. These include newspapers, magazines and other printed primary sources, official socio-economic statistics, official football statistics and oral history interviews. This multi-layered approach is necessary, firstly, because the project includes so many disparate areas of research and, secondly, because so little secondary literature or official reports exist on football for the post-war period. In relation to the structure and agency debate discussed above, some of these methods sit uneasily together in terms of the philosophical debate about the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research but, ultimately, they should be judged on the quality of material that they deliver.

Historians of sport have long identified the depth of local sports coverage provided in the written media as an invaluable source.¹⁰ Whether charting the fifty-year playing record of a given club, or attempting to reconstruct the historical importance of football within a certain community, the level of detail offered by journalistic publications has often proved to be unrivalled. The diary-like properties of newspapers in particular have lent themselves excellently to long-term studies of football; charting in detail the game's major developments and, often unintentionally, its place within wider society.

To exploit the benefits of the printed media for historical sports research, analysis of a number of newspapers, magazines, football fanzines and journals published between 1946 and the late 1980s has been conducted. These include the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*, the *Lancashire Evening Gazette*, the *Burnley Express and Burnley News*, the *Cumberland Evening News*, the *Liverpool Echo*, the *Liverpool Daily Post*, the *Manchester Evening News*, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, the *Bolton Evening News*, *Northern Football* magazine, the *FA News*, the *FA Bulletin*, the *FA Yearbook*, and various Lancashire football fanzines. I have studied entire runs of *Northern Football*, the *FA News*, the *FA Bulletin* and the *FA Yearbook*, and have closely analysed selected years of Lancashire daily press.¹¹ The research carried out proved to be of tremendous use. Not only did it provide data on the social structure of football crowds between 1946 and 1985, but it also provided insights into the opinions of journalists and the general public held on football in different historical eras. The project has, of course, noted the limitations of journalistic publications as historical sources. The selectivity and bias that is inevitable in their creation means that one cannot report their claims without close critical analysis. However, the opinions that contribute to the written media are in many ways what this project has investigated and not some hoped for reflection of 'reality'. This is particularly true of the research undertaken on the role of local newspapers in the creation of local identities.

To complement information gleaned from research into the written media, a review of official reports conducted into football between 1946 and 1985 was also conducted. Reports that were considered include two conducted by Political and Economic Planning in 1951 and 1966 respectively, and two produced under the leadership of Sir

Norman Chester: the first by the Department of Education and Science in 1968 and the second by the Football League in 1983.¹² These have proved to be excellent sources for identifying the perception of problems within football during different periods and how contemporary experts envisaged solving football's ills. Sports Council reports into the successes and failures of Football and the Community Schemes in the late 1970s and early 1980s have also been consulted. As with the written media, all official reports that have been utilised in this project have not been employed as unbiased accounts of football's recent history but, rather, have been used because of the very opinion and conjecture on which they are based. The opinions of experts on football's deepening crisis between 1946 and 1985 hold just as much importance for the social historian of football as do the so-called reality of events.

To ascertain the exact nature of post-war attendance change at football matches in Lancashire, official Football League gate-books held at the Football League's headquarters in Lytham St. Annes were consulted for the period between 1946 and 1985.¹ Raw attendance figures were entered on to a computer spreadsheet and average seasonal attendances were calculated for all Lancashire. This study was undertaken to understand the exact chronology of attendance change and how that change differed from club to club.

To understand the influence of socio-economic change on attendance levels at post-war football matches in Lancashire, the project draws on a range of official socio-economic statistics including those that cover income, consumption, unemployment, housing and population change.¹⁴ The political ends that these official statistics serve obviously limit their use as unbiased representations of reality as, indeed, do the

ceaselessly changing manner in which they are compiled. The fact that these statistics are not usually presented by region also limits their applicability to this study. However, the statistics that are available have served well in presenting a general and, where possible, specific picture of socio-economic change in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985.

2.5: Oral History – Opportunities and Problems

To provide a counterweight and supplement to the quantitative statistics employed in this project, qualitative evidence on how Lancashire football supporters interpreted their own changing fandom in the post-war period has also been sought. To provide this evidence, interviews were held with a number of post-war football supporters from Lancashire, some of whom were still attending games and others who had stopped attending matches many years ago, to appraise their experiences of football between 1946 and 1985. These interviews have been invaluable, not only in assessing why certain fans stopped attending matches in the post-war period, but also in understanding why people continued to attend and why fans start attending matches in the first place. The interviews were also useful for understanding how football fans have historically viewed their relationship with clubs and players and how those relationships developed over time.

To gather interview data, adverts for interviews were placed in a number of local newspapers in Lancashire for people who had attended matches regularly in the area between 1946 and 1985. From the replies received, the first twenty were selected (see appendix for biographies of respondents) and the respondents were interviewed using

a loose, flexible and unstructured interview technique.¹⁵ The questions asked were deliberately wide and unrestrictive and were often asked in a different order to that written down. This gave the interviews a degree of direction, but also provided respondents with plenty of freedom to talk about the issues that they felt to be important. This approach also helped in the structuring and organisation of data once it was gathered.

With the exception of one interviewee, all oral history respondents were interviewed in their own homes over a period of between one and three hours. Interviews were taped using a conventional tape recorder and later transcribed. All respondents stated that they were happy to be named in the research, mainly because of its uncontroversial nature. The vast majority of interviews were entirely relaxed and informal affairs. Some respondents had written notes on topics that they wanted to discuss prior to interview, and a small number did appear rather over-formal in the early minutes of the interview. However, once interviews developed into flowing conversations, as they invariably did, respondents tended to relax and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to recall their formative years as football supporters.

The unstructured approach to gathering oral data that was adopted for this project is well established, but not without its problems or critics. Opponents of oral history have questioned the validity of oral recollections of past events, and others still have asked whether transcriptions of oral interviews can ever represent the true content of conversations between interviewer and interviewee. These are legitimate concerns and demand consideration by anybody employing oral history methods. Indeed, it is

true that one cannot guarantee the accuracy of details given by a respondent in the course of an oral history interview. One must consider the failings of human memory, the tendency of people to post-rationalise and to impose narrative structures on unconnected events, the self-serving motives of certain interviewees, and power relationships that inevitably exist between interviewer and interviewee. Furthermore, when one produces a written version of an oral history interview, it must be conceded that there are frequently differences between the spoken and the written word, and that inaccuracies of meaning can be produced during this process. People rarely speak in complete sentences when they are interviewed and they regularly repeat themselves and leave things out. They talk without recognisable syntax and sometimes move out of chronological sequence. They sometimes use unrecognisable words and forget names. This clearly limits the uses of oral history evidence and makes it far from unproblematic to use.

The limitations of oral history methods do not invalidate them as important tools for historical research. The problems that historians face when employing oral testimony are different, but no less insurmountable, than the problems faced with many 'traditional' historical methods. As with all sources employed for this project, the limitations of oral history methods have, wherever possible, been taken into consideration. Oral data has frequently been checked against other sources to ensure the highest level of accuracy: where this has not been possible, each issue has been treated on its own merit. Transcriptions of interviews have been written to reflect the implicit and explicit meanings conveyed by interviewees, and the context of interviewees' comments have always been taken into consideration. This has ensured that the most accurate reflection of interviewees' recollections on their experiences as

football fans in Lancashire in the post-war period has been produced throughout this project.

As oral history data gathered for this project was collected with a high level of care and awareness of the method's weaknesses, information addressing a variety of issues was unearthed. In addition to providing information on their personal experiences of supporting post-war football clubs in Lancashire, many interviewees also succeeded in providing information on more 'quantitative' aspects of the project. In particular, respondents provided excellent information on the social structure of football crowds in Lancashire in the post-war period and also commented on issues such as the number of fans that attended 'away' matches before mass car ownership. The odd startling piece of information was also thrown up during interviews, such as the Tranmere fan who recalled that Everton Football Club ran supporters' buses to Everton games from Tranmere Rovers' car park on *Tranmere's match days* during the 1950s.¹⁶ As stated, these 'facts' have not been treated in isolation and have, wherever possible, been checked to see if they accord with other information on football in Lancashire in the post-war period. Where this has been the case, oral history evidence has provided a layer of depth to this project that would otherwise have been absent.

2.6: Conclusion

From the information provided above, it is clear that this project is informed by an eclectic and broad range of data sources that are influenced by both quantitative and qualitative research traditions. Whilst this mix of approaches may be viewed as problematic within classical sociology, the theoretical framework adopted for this

project allows for the consideration of a range of factors on people's behaviour and choices. It is crucial, therefore, that 'structural' or meta-influences on people's behaviour are investigated in this project through an analysis of social statistics, but also that people's own mindsets and individual views of the world are considered through interviews and oral history. Only by adopting this holistic approach can a fully rounded picture of the reasons for the decline of football attendances in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985 be provided.

¹ Goudsblom, J., *Sociology in the Balance: A Critical Essay* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 136.

² Maguire, J., 'Common Ground? Links Between Sports History, Sports Geography and the Sociology of Sport', *Sporting Traditions*, 12, 1, 1995, p. 11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ The following account of Elias's sociology is taken from various sections of Elias, N., *What is Sociology* (London: Hutchinson, 1978).

⁵ See Mennell, S., *Norbert Elias: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 30 & 96.

⁶ Layder, D., *Understanding Social Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p. 128.

Ibid., p. 131.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹¹ See, for instance, the use of newspaper evidence in Mason's groundbreaking study of early English football: Mason, T., *Association Football and English Society: 1863-1915* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

¹¹ I gained access to the *FA News*, the *FA Bulletin* and the *FA Yearbook* with the kind permission of the Football League. I gained access to *Northern Football* with the kind permission of Mrs. J. Palin. Newspapers were studied in a variety of public libraries. The years selected for each newspaper were sometimes random, but usually related to exceptional events, such as promotion, relegation or an appearance in a Cup Final, that were occurring at football clubs that were covered by each individual paper.

¹² Political and Economic Planning, *The Football Industry*, Planning, XVII, 324, (London: 1951); PEP, *English Professional Football*, Planning Report Vol. XXXII. NO. 496 (London: 1966); Department of Education and Science, *Report of the Committee on Football* (London: HMSO, 1968); Football League, *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Structure and Finance* (Lytham St. Annes, 1983).

¹³ The Football League moved its headquarters to Preston in the course of this project. The gate-books now reside in the National Football Museum, Deepdale, Preston.

¹⁴ These statistics have been located in a variety of sources. The most notable have been HMSO publications including *Social Trends* and the *General Household Survey*.

¹⁵ On different methods for collecting oral history evidence see Counce, S., *Oral History and the Local Historian* (London: Longman, 1994); Howarth, K., *Oral History* (London: Sutton Publishing, 1999); Perks, R., & Thompson, A. (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1997); Ritche, D., *Doing Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994).

¹⁶ Interview with J. Miller, November 17th 1997.

Chapter Three

The Composition of Post-War Football Crowds in Lancashire

3.1: Introduction

The question of who attended English Association Football matches in the post-war period is one of the most under-researched areas of the sport and needs to be assessed before any analysis of the changing relationship between football clubs and their supporters in Lancashire can be conducted.¹ To begin this process, this chapter presents a study of the diversity of football crowds in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period. Employing evidence from local newspapers and oral history interviews, it investigates the class and gender background of football supporters and assesses the size of supporter catchment areas from which football clubs could expect to draw.

Evidence presented in this chapter is restricted largely to the period between 1946 and the early 1960s. This is deliberate as the chapter is designed to help in the analysis of two main types of studies. The first of these are those studies that employ increasing post-war working-class affluence to understand falling attendances at post-war English football matches. To evaluate these studies (see Chapter Five) it is vital that levels of working-class support for football in Lancashire in the 1950s and 1960s can be assessed. The second type of study to be analysed are those that evaluate links between football and community in the immediate post-war period, but concentrate solely on men from the immediate locale of football clubs. Again, to assess these studies empirically (see Chapter Six), it is vital to know what the gender and

geographical make-up of football crowds was in the 1950s and 1960s in order that generalisations made in established studies can be judged and possibly reappraised.

3.2: Football Supporters and Class

The virtual absence of reliable empirical data on the social structure of English football crowds for any period of the game's history before the 1980s has meant that very few studies have ever been conducted on the subject. However, a small number of crowd analyses have been attempted as part of more general surveys of the English game. In both Tony Mason's overview of English football between 1863 and 1915² and Nicholas Fishwick's analysis of the game in the inter-war period,³ it is concluded that respectable working-class males were the dominant social group in English football crowds: "decent workaday folk", as Fishwick terms them, enjoying "the winter pastime of millions".⁴ Other groups of supporters are noted by both authors, as indicated by Mason's statement that the decline in middle-class support during his period was not "absolute",⁵ and Fishwick's claim that "contingents ... of women and middle-class supporters" existed during the inter-war period.⁶ However, the overriding impression provided is that English football was largely the preserve of respectable working-class males by the end of the inter-war period.

English football crowds after the Second World War have received few such specific analyses. Even in general histories of English football and sport more generally, most authors have been unwilling to address the issue of who attended English football matches in the late 1940s and 1950s, leaving instead a vacuum into which received wisdoms and unfounded impressions have been allowed to step.⁷ Those who have

addressed the issue have tended to assume the almost exclusively working-class nature of football crowds in this period, particularly when discussing the changes in English football support that supposedly took place during the late 1960s and 1970s. For instance, in his study of English football after the Second World War, Critcher presumes the working-class nature of post-war football crowds with no supporting evidence at all.⁶ Whilst it is not the aim here to dispute the predominance of working-class football supporters in post-war football crowds, the actual level of their support needs to be assessed, as does the prevalence of other social classes in Lancashire football crowds.

The photograph presented below is of Preston North End's Deepdale ground on a match day in 1939. Although the picture was taken in the inter-war period, one can suggest that it is relevant to the study of English football crowds in the late 1940s and 1950s and constitutes an important piece of evidence for refuting the supposed social homogeneity of football crowds during that period.



Figure 3.1. Preston North End's Deepdale Ground, 1939.⁹

From the photograph above, it can be observed that Preston North End had a large car-owning support in the period immediately prior to the Second World War. The number of cars and vans in the picture, coupled with the very existence of a large car park at Deepdale and the sponsorship of the West Stand by a car dealer testify to this. In assessing the class structure of football crowds in Lancashire in the late 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, the importance of this evidence is apparent when one considers the patterns of car-ownership that existed in Britain during the same period. In 1939, under two million car licences were held in Great Britain, a figure that did not rise significantly until the mid-1950s.¹⁰ Furthermore, in urban, industrial parts of Lancashire rates of car ownership remained relatively low until the 1970s, as evidenced by the fact that the car ownership rate per head of population in Liverpool in 1966 was only 0.09.¹¹ These pieces of evidence together imply that the *vast majority* of car owners in Lancashire in the years immediately prior to and after the Second World War were from the commercial, professional and lower middle classes. Indeed, in Sean O'Connell's study of pre-1939 car owners, one in eight is said to have

been from the working class, one in seven from the lower middle class, and four in seven from the professional or commercial middle class.¹² If this was the case, then the photograph above can be interpreted as an indication that Preston North End had a number of middle-class fans in the late 1930s. There is no reason to believe that they were particularly atypical in this respect, nor that their support altered markedly in the post-war period. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that football clubs' supporters in Lancashire in the late 1940s and 1950s were to some degree socially heterogeneous, and that middle-class fans may have formed a larger section of post-war English football crowds than has previously been thought.

This photographic testimony to car ownership among football fans in Lancashire in the late 1930s is supported by evidence that relates directly to the immediate post-war period. Newspaper reports on football matches in Lancashire in the late 1940s and 1950s regularly included remarks attesting to the existence of a notable number of car-owners among post-war football supporters. For the Preston North End versus Blackburn Rovers match in 1946, for instance, a special report conducted on the travelling Blackburn Rovers support by the *Lancashire Daily Post* describes a journalist having to turn back from Blackburn Road in Preston because of the "advancing mechanised column" of cars.¹³ Similarly, in a description of Preston North End's away following in 1947, the same newspaper mentions a "steady stream of cars" among the modes of transport used by fans to travel to the game.¹⁴ Outside Preston, the *Lancashire Daily Post* noted in 1947 that "several hundred private cars" set out from Burnley to carry supporters to Wembley for the team's Cup Final appearance of that year,¹⁵ while in 1953, a letter in the *Bolton Evening News* called for increased traffic control to be introduced in the town for Bolton's home matches.¹⁶

This evidence of class diversity across post-war football fans is supported by a letter that appeared in the *Bolton Evening News* in January 1953 on the issue of overcrowding at Burnden Park. A controversy over access to Bolton's ground had been present for some weeks in the letters' page of the newspaper, centring particularly on crowd control measures at Cup games. By the end of January, the argument led one reader to write to the paper to complain about the attitude of so-called "snob spectators" who, he claimed, should watch local football if they didn't enjoy the crowds at first-class matches.¹⁷ Sentiment of this kind could indicate that football crowds were not only socially varied in the immediate post-war period, but also that they occasionally contained a level of class conflict.

Evidence of the class diversity of football crowds in Lancashire in the late 1940s and 1950s also came from the oral history interviews. One Preston North End fan stated that post-war crowds at Deepdale were made up of "professional people" as well as "the traditional cloth-cap Lancashireman",¹⁸ while a Manchester United fan commented that Old Trafford was "a place to be seen" for the local industrial and commercial hierarchy in the immediate post-war era.¹⁹ In particular, he stated that a season ticket in the stand at Old Trafford during the 1960s and 1970s was a sign of some status, and that much kudos could be gained locally from owning one. Other respondents also recalled 'affluent' people attending football matches in the post-war period, and again commented that the better off would tend to congregate mainly, though not exclusively, in the seated areas.²⁰ One Manchester City supporter stated that at his club "the main stand used to be occupied by fur coats and gentlemen in

bowler hats and overcoats”,²¹ whilst another City supporter similarly claimed that “wealthy people were main stand people” and that:

They would buy season tickets; season tickets were available, but only in the main stand. Wealthy folk would have season tickets year in year out. Quite a lot of wealthy people used to be keen City supporters.²²

Taken together, the above evidence suggests that notable numbers of individuals from the professional, commercial and lower middle class attended football matches in Lancashire in the immediate post-war era. This is not to say that middle-class people were *particularly* numerous in their attendance or even that they supported their respective clubs regularly; evidence of this kind simply indicates that some middle-class people attended some football matches some of the time. However, the very fact that affluent people are identified in photographic evidence and match reports and are remembered by oral history interviewees testifies to their existence, and offers an important corrective to those historians who tend to regard football crowds in the late 1940s and early 1950s as indistinguishable, homogenous masses.

3.3: Football Supporters and Gender

In common with analyses of the class origins of post-war football supporters, there are virtually no sustained studies concerned with how many women regularly attended football matches in the 1950s and beyond. To compound this problem, newspaper evidence on this issue appears to be very limited and oral history respondents are ambiguous and inconclusive. This means that conclusions drawn in this chapter on the gender make-up of post-war football crowds in Lancashire are cautious and tentative and need to be compared with other pieces of evidence when they become available.

It certainly appears that women did attend football matches in Lancashire in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and sometimes in quite significant numbers. If newspaper reports from the period are consulted, comments about female supporters can occasionally be located, particularly in reports on Cup-ties and other important matches. In the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* in 1948, a series of newspaper reports on the large levels of support that Manchester United and Manchester City were drawing frequently mentioned the high number of women that were present in crowds. For a Manchester City match versus Barnsley in January 1948, the newspaper commented that “there were early prospects of at least a 50,000 crowd, which included an unusually large number of women, mostly from Barnsley”.²³ Similarly, in commenting on the queue that formed at Blackpool FC for tickets for their FA Cup fourth round match with Chester in the same year, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* stated that:

Women with shopping baskets and prams joined large queues outside Blackpool Football Club’s ground to-day when the sale of tickets for the game with Chester began.²⁴

Elsewhere in the region, similar tales were told. For the 1953 Cup Final between Bolton Wanderers and Blackpool FC, the *Lancashire Evening Post* noted that “women and girls” present among the crowd for the match had “wrapped themselves in giant scarves”.²⁵ Earlier in the same season, the *Bolton Evening News* attempted to analyse why women were present in Cup crowds in such high numbers and explained that women were more likely to take an interest in Cup-ties than normal League matches:

A Cup-tie is different from any other type of match in that the football atmosphere pervades the whole town. Women who at no other time show any interest in football were as persistent as men in their inquiries about the fate of the match.²⁶

The *Bolton Evening News's* contention that women were occasional supporters of football with little interest in the weekly successes and failures of their team was not shared in all reports on post-war female football fans in Lancashire. On the occasion of the 1947 FA Cup Final, the *Northern Daily Telegraph* drew attention to the large number of women that had travelled from Burnley for the match, concentrating on one particular group:

At Euston, drinking tea, were four women – “call us lassies from Lancashire” – who have been Burnley supporters since 1921. ... With them was 15-year-old Dorothy Cowell of Padiham who has followed every match of her favourite team.²⁷

This report not only confirmed the presence of female Burnley supporters at the 1947 Cup Final, but also asserted the longevity of their support for the east Lancashire team. For the *Northern Daily Telegraph*, these women were not fair-weather Burnley supporters drawn to London by the glamour of a Cup Final, but rather were committed fans who saw themselves as permanent members of the supporters' community of Burnley FC.

It is almost impossible to safely judge whether the *Northern Daily Telegraph* or the *Bolton Evening News* were correct in their assessment of the frequency of women's support for football in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period. It may be the case that women's support for football, although always present, became more visible during high profile matches because the Lancashire press employed the presence of

female fans as a convenient journalistic device to show how the *whole* community was behind local teams during particularly important matches. Reporting of this kind was common not only around Cup-ties, but also during any significant success that a team enjoyed. When Burnley FC won the Division One League Championship in 1960, the *Burnley Express and Burnley News* stressed to its readers how the whole town had turned out to hail the team's achievement:

The assembly that had gathered to acclaim its heroes was one which was representative of all the townsfolk. There were excited children, masses of teenagers (most of them sporting claret and blue favours and scarves), mothers with babies in arms, the older stalwarts 'from the terraces', and the very aged and infirm.²⁸

By reporting the reception of the team in this way, the Burnley press may have been overstressing the 'unusual' presence of women in the context of supporting and celebrating football. If this was the case, this would mean that women did commonly attend football matches in the post-war period, and would indicate that women were a more significant presence in post-war football crowds than the press would have the public believe.

Oral evidence on the presence of women in post-war football crowds is even more ambiguous than information drawn from the local press. One respondent asserted that "very, very, very few women attended matches" in the 1950s²⁹, whilst another stated that "there weren't as many [women in football crowds] as there are today". The same respondent went on to state that only "a sprinkling of women would be in the main stand" at the club that he supported, and that he was unaware of women who attended matches regularly.³⁰ Contrary to this, however, other respondents stated that they clearly remembered women attending matches in significant numbers in the 1940s,

1950s, and 1960s. One claimed that “some women, quite a few women” attended the matches of his club,³¹ whilst a female respondent noted that she was “under the impression that there were other women there [at matches in the 1960s] and I don’t think people found it unusual”. The same respondent also noted the interest that football generated at the girls school that she attended in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Asked if her friends at school were interested in football, the respondent stated:

Yes some of them. Because I went to a Preston school, they were mostly Preston North End supporters. But because it had a boarding facility there were a few girls from outside the area, from the North East and Cumbria, and most of them had a passing allegiance even if they weren’t regular attenders. They had an interest in football and they used to talk about the results even if they didn’t take an active interest and attend matches.³²

This respondent’s recollections of high levels of schoolgirl interest in football in the early 1960s may be explained by an apparent upturn in young, female attention on the game at the time. A number of respondents claimed that more women attended football matches in the 1960s than in the previous decade. One respondent suggested that “females in the crowd increased [at Manchester United] after the 1966 George Best era” and that “most of the women came in the 1960s”,³³ whilst another, more chauvinistic, fan stated that he thought:

Slightly more screaming women started going to Old Trafford after Munich when there was like a sympathy thing ... After that the teeny-bopper heroes started to come, like George Best, and then it wasn’t just women that came it was silly-little girls taking up valuable terracing space.

If large groups of young girls did start attending matches together in the 1960s, they were not necessarily representative of the traditional nature of women’s football

attendance. It appears that women most frequently attended post-war football matches with boyfriends or husbands, unless the women were of school age. The local Lancashire press did occasionally comment on groups of young girls who would attend matches together, but for other age groups reports tended to indicate that their attendance was with a male companion. For the 1953 FA Cup Final, the *Lancashire Evening Post* stated that most women who travelled to the Final were with male partners and even went on to claim that “among the many women who travelled to London were some who will spend the day shopping in the West End while their husbands watch the Final”.³⁴ In the same season, the *Bolton Evening News* told the story of “one rather nice looking wife in the Burnden Paddock” who told other supporters before the start of a Cup-tie that her husband had promised to take her to Wembley that year if Bolton reached the Final. The report continued, “‘E’h missus, shouted an experienced veteran of Burnden, ‘yo needn’t start saving up yet’”.³⁵ Five years later in explaining a crowd disturbance at Manchester’s Victoria railway station, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* interviewed Miss Lorna Black of Burnage who, it assured readers, had attended Manchester United’s match that day with her boyfriend.³⁶

These press comments, intentionally or otherwise, helped secure the sense that football was a man’s game and that if women wished to attend matches, then they should do so on men’s terms. This sentiment was also reflected in oral history recollections. One respondent explicitly stated that “women would very rarely go [to matches] on their own, it was mainly with husbands and boyfriends”,³⁷ whilst another recalled that he “had a girlfriend and she used to go in the late ‘50s and ‘60s. She was there for every home game, but she’d only come with me”.³⁸

By being linked to men's football attendance, it is notable that a number of oral history respondents claimed that their wives or partners ceased to attend football matches after marriage and/or children. When asked if his wife had continued going to matches after they had become married, one respondent stated:

For a very short period. When the children came along, you know, she didn't go. She's very interested even now to the degree that she'll listen to the radio every week to the commentary.³⁹

This indicates that, in accordance with feminist critiques of sport and physical activity, it is women who most frequently sacrifice their involvement in sport when they emerge from adolescence, even when they retain an interest in the activity.

From oral history evidence, it appears that women's attendance at football matches in the post-war period may not have always been particularly well received by males in the crowd in Lancashire, even if a male partner accompanied them. One male Manchester City oral history respondent stated that:

I once knew a bloke who had taken his girlfriend to Maine Road ... and he must have said something to this bloke [who was swearing], and the bloke said to him, 'I come here to enjoy myself, and if you bring her she goes up there', and he pointed to the stand. That was the attitude generally. Either they accepted the fact that bad language would be heard or they just didn't go.⁴⁰

Other respondents explicitly stated their objections to women's attendance at football matches. One claimed that at Old Trafford in the 1960s "there were women there who shouldn't have been. They didn't appreciate the atmosphere. They should have been

at home bloody knitting".⁴¹ Another, in recollection of women attending matches in the late 1940s, stated,

I do remember at the '48 Cup Final, there was a women who turned round that day and asked 'who is Stanley Matthews?'. Well, I mean it was ridiculous. Dyed in the wool supporters would have known. So some women were there, but they annoyed you to a degree.⁴²

Other male respondents were less critical in their recollections of women's attendance at football matches in the 1950s and 1960s. One claimed that men were very understanding of women's attendance at football matches in the immediate post-war period and would temper their behaviour in the stadium as a result:

If you took your girlfriend along to Maine Road or Old Trafford, and there was a bit of bloodying. There was never much effin' and jeffin', but there was a lot of bloodying and bugging, and whoever said it would turn around and say, 'sorry love, I'll wash my mouth out', they would apologies for saying it.⁴³

In agreement with this evidence, another respondent refuted the impression of women not being accepted at post-war football matches. When asked whether her attendance at Bolton Wanderers in the early 1960s raised comments from others in the crowd she stated:

No, no ... nobody bothered. You never got this, you know, 'women don't know anything about football' thing. We did quite well really, didn't get any rude remarks.⁴⁴

When faced with contradictory evidence such as this, one can probably do no more than posit that women's attendance at post-war football in Lancashire commonly met with different reactions depending upon which team was being supported and in which area of the ground the women were situated. However, from the evidence

presented above tentative statements on the attendance of women at post-war football matches in Lancashire can be formulated, and conclusions drawn that women attended football matches in notable numbers in the 1950s and 1960s and probably quite frequently.

3.4: Catchment Areas and ‘Super-Clubs’

In addition to the assumption of class and gender homogeneity in English football crowds in the immediate post-war era, it has been common for historians of football to suppose a geographical homogeneity among the supporters of football clubs in that period. In academic discussions about the historical relationship between football clubs and local identities, debate has often been conducted entirely in terms of the residents of the towns or cities from which football clubs take their names, thereby ignoring the very notion that notable numbers of people from outside those areas could have supported the game.⁴⁵ But, as with the class and gender assumptions already discussed, how does this presumption of geographical exclusivity relate to the reality of post-war football crowds, and how does it stand up to close historical scrutiny?

There may be little reason to doubt that the majority of English football supporters in the late 1940s and 1950s came from the town or city in which their team played. However, there is evidence to suggest that divergence from this ‘ideal-type’ may have been greater than has previously been considered. In descriptions of football crowds given in the local Lancashire press throughout the immediate post-war period, supporters from a variety of locational backgrounds were often referred to, suggesting

that some football clubs at least were anything but a preserve for working-men of the immediate locale. For the local derby between Preston North End and Blackburn Rovers in December 1946, for instance, the *Lancashire Daily Post* claimed that ticket applications had come in from as far away as Kendal in the Lake District,⁴⁶ whilst in a description of a lock-out at a match between Preston North End and Middlesbrough in January 1947, the same newspaper stated that “the most disappointed people were visitors from Lancaster, Morecambe and other towns” (see Figure 3.2).⁴⁷



Figure 3.2: Sketch Map of the North West of England.

Evidence of geographical variation among football supporters in Lancashire was particularly strong in the east of the county. In 1953, the *Bolton Evening News* noted that a “football special train” had run from Barrow and district to both Preston and Burnley for a Cup-tie weekend.⁴⁸ Seven years later, the *Burnley Express and Burnley News* stated explicitly that “critics may be surprised to learn how popular Burnley

[FC] are in places outside Lancashire”,⁴⁹ whilst in March of the same year, the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* noted that a football special for the Blackburn versus Burnley Cup match had picked up at all stations from Skipton in west Yorkshire.⁵⁰ For the same match, the Blackburn paper also stated that enquires for tickets had come in “not only from east Lancashire, but from all parts of the county, from the Fylde [Lancashire Lancashire] to Manchester and Liverpool”.⁵¹ and for Blackburn Rovers’ next Cup match in March 1960 it claimed that people from towns such as Leyland had queued for tickets.⁵²

It is interesting to note that much of the newspaper evidence that exists on the issue of locality comes from match reports on FA Cup-ties and other ‘big’ or ‘glamorous’ games. Whilst this may be due to the fact that newspapers in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s devoted more space to describing football crowds at significant games, it may also indicate that football crowds were more geographically varied at Cup-ties; not least because fans from across the region would regularly seek out glamorous matches to watch. In February 1962, an article hinting at this process appeared in the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph*. It stated that Blackburn Rovers were hoping for a 30,000 crowd for their forthcoming Cup-tie with Middlesbrough at Ewood Park, despite the fact that Burnley were playing Everton 10 miles away and Manchester United were playing Sheffield United.⁵³ This indicates a belief that competing, attractive matches in the region could negatively influence the level of support for some teams, particularly if those teams were not generally successful.

Despite a concentration on ‘big’ matches, there is also evidence of geographical variation in post-war football crowds in Lancashire at less important games. This

evidence comes mainly from oral history interviewees. One respondent recalled large numbers of people regularly attending Preston North End's home games from as far away as Southport in the 1950s.⁵⁴ whilst an Everton supporter claimed that people from Blackburn and even Dublin travelled regularly to Goodison Park in this period.⁵⁵ The same also appears to be true of Burnley. One Burnley supporter remembered the club drawing regular support from areas such as Todmorden, Rawtenstall, Haslingden and Accrington in the 1950s and 1960s, and claimed that the club had a large following in Skipton and other areas of west Yorkshire.⁵⁶

Evidence of Lancashire football clubs drawing regular support from outside their immediate locale is also present in newspaper reports. By 1968, one Liverpool-based Everton supporter was moved to write to the *Liverpool Echo* in appreciation of the efforts of one group of Everton fans who lived outside of Merseyside:

Sir, I would like to express my thanks at the way Everton supporters from North Wales have turned up at each match, despite the bus strike, to see their team. I think it is marvellous to see so many coaches from all over Wales coming to Goodison Park, even sometimes for night matches.⁵⁷

From this letter it is clear that Everton were drawing fans from outside Liverpool not only for important Cup matches, but also for normal League affairs. When combined with the oral history evidence presented above, this letter could indicate that Everton were not alone in drawing this kind of support and that many teams from across the region enjoyed regular out of town support at their home matches.

At this point, it is important to note that those teams in Lancashire that appear to have had the most geographically varied support in the immediate post-war period were

those positioned in relative isolation from other successful Football League clubs. Towns such as Burnley and Preston have large areas to the east and north respectively which have no indigenous top class football clubs, and it is these areas that seem to have provided the majority of their 'out of town' fans. This may explain why teams such as Bolton Wanderers appear to have been much less successful in drawing crowds from outside their immediate locale in the same period. Indeed, even when Bolton ruled in 1953 that ticket applications for their FA Cup Final versus Blackpool would not be considered from people who lived outside the town and the immediate surrounding villages, the *Bolton Evening News* only published one letter of complaint.⁵⁸ The fact that this letter came from Adlington indicates that the club did not consider their area of support to stretch much beyond ten miles from Burnden Park.

Despite the clear advantages that geographically isolated football clubs had in drawing fans from outside their immediate locale, this did not stop some clubs in Lancashire from attracting fans from towns that contained their own professional football clubs, sometimes with devastating consequences. This process is probably best shown in relation to Accrington Stanley. In the months preceding their eventual resignation from the Football League in March 1962, the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* frequently commented that Accrington's attendance problems were a result of their close proximity to Blackburn and Burnley. In January 1962, the paper reported that Accrington were seeking to change the date of a match due to take place on Saturday February 17th to the previous night to avoid a clash with a potential Cup-tie between Burnley and Blackburn.⁵⁹ In fact, the paper reported that if the League refused this request, the club could anticipate a record low crowd for a first-class

match at Peel Park. Furthermore, after the club finally resigned from the League in March 1962, the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* reported that Mr. A.K. Boydell, Accrington's Borough Treasurer, had stated that the primary factor in the club's demise was the nearness of Blackburn and Burnley. He is quoted as saying that, "no other Football League club in the whole of the Fourth Division had such competition from neighbouring clubs".⁶⁰ He may have been correct, but throughout the post-war period Lancashire teams such as Tranmere Rovers, Stockport County and, more latterly, Preston North End, Blackpool, Bolton Wanderers and others continually struggled to maintain good attendances in the face of competition from neighbouring, larger clubs.

To explain the development of out of town football supporters in Lancashire in the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, it is important to note that post-war Lancashire had excellent and affordable rail communications that easily allowed the transfer of fans across the region.⁶¹ It is also important to note that coach excursions from small towns and rural areas in Lancashire were frequently run to the region's larger football clubs on match days in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.⁶² This indicates that many football clubs in the county were readily accessible places in the immediate post-war period, and that people from beyond the towns and suburbs could, if they wished, regularly gain access to matches in the major urban areas.

If good transport links within Lancashire facilitated the transfer of people to football matches across the region, what actually influenced people's decisions to become regular supporters for teams to which they had no immediate geographical connection? To answer this question, it is instructive to consider Martin Johnes' study

of football in south Wales in the inter-war period, and, in particular, his analysis of why football fans from outside the large metropolitan areas of Wales chose to become supporters of Swansea Town and Cardiff City in the 1920s and 1930s.⁶³ Johnes suggests that cities such as Cardiff and Swansea were the focus of economic activity in Wales in the inter-war period, and that their economic eminence saw them develop into 'region capitals' on which many small towns were dependent for employment and entertainment. Also, Johnes notes that many small towns in south Wales in the 1920s and 1930s lacked strong local identities and were consequently dependent on their larger neighbours for their culture and civic image. From this information, Johnes concludes that, whilst other factors such as footballing success were important in determining the breadth of support enjoyed by football clubs in south Wales in the 1920s and 1930s, the social, economic and cultural relationships between cities such as Cardiff and their smaller neighbours were crucial in encouraging people from wide geographic areas to support the region's major metropolitan football clubs.

If Johnes' analysis is applied to Lancashire in the post-war era, it can be suggested that football clubs such as Preston North End and Burnley drew the broad geographical base of fans they did, not simply because of their playing success in the period, but also because of the cultural and economic importance of the towns in which they played. Before the acceleration of the decline of the cotton industry in the 1960s, Lancashire towns including Preston and Burnley were still centres of economic activity within Lancashire, providing the basis of work for people from across the region. Furthermore, in accordance with their economic strength, many of the large cotton towns had distinct civic cultures in the period which some of the smaller towns lacked. For these reasons, it is probable that people from the small towns and villages

of Lancashire supported the major towns' football clubs, firstly, because of their economic dependence on the main urban areas, and, secondly, because of their desire to associate themselves with large civic centres' cultural identities.

A socio-economic approach to interpreting people's choice of football club can be used to understand how football supporters who resided in counties adjacent to Lancashire in the post-war period came to support particular football clubs. If football fans from Cumberland are addressed, a close reading of the region's press in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s indicates how a number of football supporters from towns such as Carlisle came to support football clubs, not from their southern neighbours in Lancashire, but instead from their eastern neighbours in the North East of England. It was with the North East that the people of Cumberland, particularly north Cumberland, had good cultural and communication links in the immediate post-war period and this undoubtedly influenced their choice of football team. Let us consider this closely.

The sporting profile of Cumberland in the immediate post-war period was similar to Lancashire and Cheshire with football and rugby league central to the county's interests. However, according to the *Cumberland Evening News*, rugby league was the pre-eminent sport in the county in the 1950s and many football fans only gave "fair weather support" to local soccer teams.⁶⁴ This left Cumberland football supporters who wished to consume top-level soccer without local teams to support, leaving them free instead to transfer their football allegiances to teams from outside their county.

In line with the successes that many Lancashire football clubs enjoyed in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, one may reasonably expect that football supporters from Cumberland would have wished to support teams such as Preston North End, Burnley and Blackpool in the immediate post-war period. This does not appear to have been the case, however, as the Cumberland press concentrated its football coverage not on Lancashire, but on the North East. The *Sports Special* section of the *Cumberland Evening News* routinely contained match reports on Middlesbrough FC, Newcastle United and Sunderland AFC in the 1950s, but rarely mentioned Lancashire teams. Moreover, when Newcastle United appeared in the FA Cup Final in 1952, the *Cumberland Evening News* printed a lengthy article on Newcastle United fans from Carlisle who travelled to London for the match:

In addition to the private parties who journeyed from Carlisle to London for the Cup Final, 73 Carlisle people went by midnight train last night. These included the Mayor of Carlisle, Mr G.H. Routledge O.B.E., and Mr George Bowman.⁶⁵

The fact that this article draws attention to the presence of Carlisle dignitaries at the 1952 Cup Final indicates the strength of support for Newcastle United in Carlisle in the immediate post-war period. When Preston North End won through to the FA Cup Final in 1954, the *Cumberland Evening News* did state that the people of Cumberland would be happy if Preston won the Cup. However, there was no comparable sense of local involvement in the event as there was when Newcastle United appeared in 1952, nor for that matter when the same team appeared in the Final in the previous year in 1951. During that year, a great local controversy was described in the *Cumberland Evening News* when it was announced that people in Workington would not be able to see the Cup Final live on television. The newspaper reported that people in that region

received their television pictures from a transmitter in Scotland, and that the Scottish FA had decided not to show the match as it clashed with their domestic League football.⁶⁶

If attention is now returned to discussing the selection of football clubs by supporters in Lancashire, in addition to considerations such as communications, transport and socio-economic factors, the development of post-war out of town football supporters also needs to be placed in the region's sporting context. For instance, it should be noted that at least one football club, Preston North End, had a deliberate policy in the immediate post-war period of developing connections with towns throughout Lancashire region in an attempt to expand a limited 'natural' support base. Evidence of this comes from an article that appeared in the *Lancashire Evening Post* in January 1954 on the issue of football fans from outside Preston attending North End's matches only to be disappointed by the non-appearance of club favourite Tom Finney. In the article, football correspondent Walter Pilkington hints that Preston North End had a clear goal from the inter-war period onwards of garnering support for the team to the north of the River Ribble. He states that club president 'Jim' Taylor "broke away from the parochial atmosphere which pervades most provincial clubs [and] set out to attract custom from towns as far afield as Lancaster, Morecambe, Kendal and Barrow", and asserts that Jim Taylor was:

Far seeing enough to realise that a club such as Preston could not hope to flourish on gates from 12,000 and 15,000, this figure being based on 10 per cent of the locality's population. He wanted at least another 10,000 people at Deepdale for every home League match, so he and his colleagues on the directorate went in for glamour.⁶⁷

Although Pilkington does not make clear exactly how this policy was implemented, or, indeed, what constituted “glamour”, one can identify from his account how people to the north of Preston may have been encouraged to identify with Preston North End, especially with so few League clubs in the area.⁶⁸

If Pilkington’s account of the ambitions of Preston North End’s directorate is accepted, a number of potentially fundamental problems arise for traditional understandings of football supporters in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Most centrally, it opens up the possibility of Preston North End being viewed as a ‘proto-super club’ with world-class players drawing support not only from the town, but from all over the region. The model of discriminating consumers attending football matches, not because it is their ‘birthright’, but because they want to be entertained is usually associated with football in the late twentieth century. However, in the aforementioned article, Walter Pilkington asserts unequivocally that people attending Preston’s matches from outside the area during this period were there for one thing and one thing only; to see the talents of Tom Finney. For this, he describes their attendance as “patronage rather than support”, evoking the image of a passive theatre audience. “Are they really supporters of the football club”, he asks, “or football lovers drawn by a box office magnet, namely Finney?”

To assume that these supporters felt no emotional attachment to Preston North End, however, may be to misunderstand the nature of their support. If it is asserted, *pace* Pilkington, that individuals from outside Preston had the capability and willingness to be ardent supporters of the club in the 1950s, then a number of potentially important questions are raised, not least for traditional understandings of football and

community. As stated above, a great deal of the academic work conducted on the topic of football and community has tended to emphasise the geographical homogeneity of football clubs' support. If it can be shown that certain football clubs have long drawn emotionally committed support from outside their immediate locale, then it must be concluded that this work is partial and incomplete, and has tended to confuse the specifics of 'football communities' or 'football sub-cultures' with the more general communities of towns and cities. By giving the impression that issues of football and community and football and locality relate only to people who live in the immediate locale of football clubs, one must conclude that this work has ignored an important section of the football supporting public, and that further work is needed to understand the relationship between football and locality for these more geographically disparate groups.

3.5: Conclusion

This chapter has sought to delineate the social, economic and geographical make-up of football crowds in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period. To this end, it has argued that in the 1950s and 1960s working-class males from the immediate locale of football clubs were the dominant group in Lancashire football crowds. However, as an important corrective to many existing studies of post-war English football crowds, notable numbers of middle-class supporters, women, and people who travelled long distances to watch post-war football in Lancashire have also been identified. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, this evidence is vital for appraising studies of post-war working-class affluence as an influence on football attendance and analyses of the links between post-war football clubs and communities.

¹ See Walton for a discussion of existing work on English football crowds. Most of the work so far conducted has tended to concentrate on crowd size. Those that have attempted to study crowd composition have mainly been concerned with the pre-First World War or inter-war periods. Walton, J.K., 'Reconstructing Crowds: The Rise of Association Football as a Spectator Sport in San Sebastian, 1915-32', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15, 1, 1998, pp. 27-53. For a discussion of post-war football crowds see, Mellor, G., 'The Social and Geographical Make Up of Football Crowds in Lancashire, 1946-62', *The Sports Historian*, 19, 2, 1999.

² Mason, T., *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915* (Brighton: Havester Press, 1980), pp. 138-167.

³ Fishwick, N., *English Football and Society, 1910-1950* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 48-67.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁵ Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915*, p. 157. Mason also states in his analysis of pre-1914 football crowds in Liverpool that they had a "fair sprinkling of what might be termed lower-middle-class" people in them. See Mason, T., 'The Blues and the Reds', *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 134, 1998, p. 120.

⁶ Fishwick, *English Football and Society, 1910-1950*, p. 58.

⁷ This is true of both Walvin, J., *The People's Game* (2nd ed) (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1994), and Holt, R., *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1989).

⁸ Critcher, C., 'Football Since the War', in Clarke J., Critcher C. & Johnson R., *Working Class Culture - Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1979), pp. 168-173.

⁹ This photograph has been reproduced with the kind permission of the *Lancashire Evening Post*.

¹⁰ Mogridge, M.J.H., *The Car Market* (London: Pion Limited, 1983), p. 89; Marwick, A., *British Society Since 1945* (3rd edn.) (London: Penguin Books Ltd. 1996) pp. 32-33.

¹¹ Anderson, B.L. & Stoney, P.L.M., *Commerce, Industry and Transport: Studies in Economic Change on Merseyside* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1983), p. 189.

¹² O'Connell, S., *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender and Motoring, 1896-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998) pp. 19-38. Also see Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, p. 61.

¹³ *Lancashire Daily Post* (hereafter *LDP*), December 7th 1946, p. 4.

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- ¹⁴ *LDP*, January 1st 1947, p. 6.
- ¹⁵ *LDP*, April 25th 1947, p. 6.
- ¹⁶ *Bolton Evening News* (hereafter *BEN*), January 30th 1953, p. 6.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ¹⁸ Interview with T. Woods, November 7th 1997.
- ¹⁹ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ²⁰ Differential pricing arrangements applied not only between seating and standing areas but also between different standing parts. Touchline enclosures were usually more expensive than the areas behind the goal. It is probable that the vast majority of middle-class people who stood at football matches in the post-war period watched from the more expensive areas as they could have afforded a better and covered view.
- ²¹ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.
- ²² Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ²³ *Manchester Evening Chronicle* (hereafter *MEC*), January 10th 1948, p. 8.
- ²⁴ *MEC*, January 15th 1948, p. 1.
- ²⁵ *Lancashire Evening Post* (hereafter *LEP*), May 22nd 1953, p. 1.
- ²⁶ *BEN*, January 10th 1953, p. 1.
- ²⁷ *Northern Daily Telegraph* (hereafter *NDT*), April 26th 1947, p. 1.
- ²⁸ *Burnley Express and Burnley News* (hereafter *BEBN*), May 14th 1960, p. 1.
- ²⁹ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ³⁰ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ³¹ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ³² Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ³³ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ³⁴ *LEP*, May 2nd 1953, p. 6.
- ³⁵ *BEN*, January 16th 1953, p. 7.
- ³⁶ *MEC*, January 4th 1958, pp. 1-2.
- ³⁷ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ³⁸ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ³⁹ Interview with B. Isherwood, November 5th 1997.

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- ⁴⁰ Interview with A. McKenna, November 13th 1997.
- ⁴¹ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ⁴² Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁴³ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.
- ⁴⁴ Interview with J. Palin, November 3rd 1997.
- ⁴⁵ This criticism can be made of John Bale's work on football and locality and Richard Holt's discussion of spectating and civic pride. See Bale, J., 'The Place of 'Place' in Cultural Studies of Sport', *Progress in Human Geography*, 12, 1988, pp. 513-516, and Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 166-175.
- ⁴⁶ *LDP*, December 1st 1946, p. 4.
- ⁴⁷ *LDP*, January 30th 1947, p. 4.
- ⁴⁸ *BEN*, January 29th 1953, p. 6.
- ⁴⁹ *BEBN*, April 30th 1960, p. 20.
- ⁵⁰ *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* (hereafter *BET*), March 16th 1960, p. 1.
- ⁵¹ *BET*, March 9th 1960, p. 1.
- ⁵² *BET*, March 22nd 1960, p. 1.
- ⁵³ *BET*, February 8th 1962, p. 12.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with T. Woods, November 7th 1997.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with J. Miller, November 17th 1997.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with W. Monk, October 28th 1997.
- ⁵⁷ *Liverpool Echo* (hereafter *LE*) (*Football Echo*), May 18th 1968, p. 3.
- ⁵⁸ *BEN*, April 2nd 1953, p. 3.
- ⁵⁹ *BET*, January 31st 1962, p. 12.
- ⁶⁰ *BET*, March 7th 1962, p. 8.
- ⁶¹ For a history of the development of railways in Lancashire, see, Walton, J. K., *Lancashire: A Social History. 1558-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), p. 219.
- ⁶² A number of oral history interviewees testified to using coach excursions to out of town matches in the immediate post-war period.
- ⁶³ Johnes, M., *That Other Game: A Social History of Soccer in South Wales, c.1906-1939* (University of Wales Cardiff: Ph.D. Thesis, 1999).

⁶⁴ *Cumberland Evening News* (hereafter CEN), May 1st 1954, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *CEN*, May 3rd 1952, p. 1.

⁶⁶ *CEN*, May 4th 1951, p. 6.

⁶⁷ *LEP*, January 23rd 1954, p. 7.

⁶⁸ The only League clubs to the north of Preston in this period were Carlisle United, Workington (after 1951), and Barrow. All these clubs spent the immediate post-war era in the Third Division North.

Chapter Four

Changes in Football Attendances in Lancashire, 1946-1985

4.1: Introduction

One of the principal aims of this project is to investigate the changes in attendances that occurred at football clubs in Lancashire between the late-1940s and the mid-1980s. To achieve this task, this chapter begins by detailing the initial post-war boom in football attendances that most Lancashire football clubs enjoyed in the late 1940s. This is followed by an account of attendance decline at football clubs across Lancashire between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s, and a consideration of different rates of change within the region. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with existing analyses of post-war attendance decline across English football. The thoughts of contemporary commentators, journalists and official investigators are outlined, as are more recent studies undertaken by social historians, sociologists, economist and social geographers. The applicability of these studies to explaining attendance decline at football in Lancashire is judged in the next chapter.

4.2: The Post-War Attendance Boom at Lancashire Football Clubs

The majority of this chapter will focus on the overall decline in football attendances that occurred in Lancashire from the mid-1950s onwards. Prior to this being presented, however, it is important to provide a descriptive note on the exceptional levels of football attendance that were recorded in Lancashire and beyond in the immediate post-war period. This fact, of course, has been commented on many times

in historical studies of English football, yet it is interesting to note the comments of the local Lancashire press as unprecedented levels of attendance became evident in the period. From the first weekend of the 1946-47 season, match reports were regularly prefaced with some mention of the 'football boom' that was drawing noticeably more people to games than in 1939. By the first week of September, statistical comparisons were already being made with pre-war attendance levels. The *Lancashire Daily Post* commented that "nearly a million" had been drawn to the forty-three League games played on the second weekend of the 1946-47 season, "a third more than the total attendance at the corresponding matches on August 26th 1939".¹ By October of that season, the surprise and delight at this boom was still evident enough for special reports to be made on attendances, not only in Lancashire, but also throughout the country. On October 14th 1946, the *Lancashire Daily Post* stated that "huge crowds" had turned out for the previous Saturday's football matches. They noted that: "Gates were closed at Highbury and West Ham. Fulham had their biggest attendance of the season, York a record crowd, and Cardiff's 50,000 recalled the Welsh club's First Division days".²

The post-war football attendance boom appears to have been particularly apparent in matches of added significance such as local 'derbies'. For a match between Preston North End and Blackpool in mid-October 1946, the *Lancashire Daily Post* reported that:

Never before in the long, keen and friendly association of Preston North End and Blackpool has there been such tremendous interest as was shown for this match at Deepdale. When the gates were opened at 1.30, queues of people were waiting and half an hour before the game started a number of entrances had been closed.³

Similarly, when Preston played Blackburn Rovers in early December 1946, a special report entitled "How the crowds got to, and into, Deepdale", described interest in the match as "tremendous".⁴ It mentioned that extra men were on duty from the Borough Police for the match, and that considerable trouble ensued when supporters became unsure of which turnstiles to use. Crowd problems seemed to have become so bad, in fact, that the article ended with a call for Preston North End to increase their levels of stewarding and crowd control.

The not insubstantial problems caused by the number of supporters attending football matches in the immediate post-war period have generally been under-represented in general histories of post-war football in England.⁵ Many football grounds were built to accommodate much smaller numbers of spectators than they were accepting in the late 1940s, with many clubs appearing unable to manage the number of people gaining entry into matches. In a report on the England versus Ireland match held in Belfast during late September 1946, the *Lancashire Daily Post* claimed that:

Well over 50,000 thronged the ground and swarmed over the fences. Loud speakers announced that the game would not restart until everyone was off the enclosure and back on the terraces. An official announcement stated that if any people were still on the running track or playing pitch in another 3 minutes they would have to be removed from the ground. Slowly the crowd went back.⁶

In a similar report from the *Liverpool Echo* in February 1947, one Everton support expressed his worries over the overcrowding that had occurred at a recent League match:

This letter should voice the opinion of thousands of fans who had the misfortune to visit Goodison for the inter-League game on Wednesday

when scenes of the wildest disorder occurred with thousands of people struggling for admission right up to half-time and after. [The Everton Directors] should give a thought to the man who makes the game possible, the 'bob' spectator and offer him proper facilities for comfortable admission.

By the mid-1950s, when some of the excesses of late 1940s attendances were being tempered, similar problems of overcrowding were still taking place. In a letter to the *Lancashire Evening Post* concerning the crowd conditions at Preston North End's FA Cup semi-final match at Maine Road in April 1954, 'Never Again' of Fulwood, Preston described the crowd conditions:

I was one of several hundred people who arrived about 2.30 p.m. The scene which confronted me was little short of a nightmare, and after having one narrow escape from being crushed to death in an attempt to get into a position where I could see, I fought my way out and left the enclosure altogether ... People were fainting and begging to be allowed to get out ... Scores of people who managed to get out before the end in a very distressed condition were heard to say 'never again'.⁸

In explanation of the conditions endured by supporters at the match, the author of the letter goes on to assert that: "The comfort of the spectator is a minor consideration. 'Pack 'em in and count the cash' seems to be the idea to-day".⁹

A further example of overcrowding in Lancashire football stadiums in the 1950s is provided by the *Bolton Evening News*. After Bolton Wanderers' FA Cup semi-final match versus Everton, again at Manchester City's Maine Road stadium, one supporter was moved to write:

Sir, if Maine Road is considered a suitable ground for a Cup semi-final, then I suggest Burnden Park is more suited to stage a Cup Final. Five minutes after kick off, our party was more relieved to be able to fight a way out to join the other thousands wandering outside the ground without

a hope of seeing the game. A more disgraceful scene would be hard to imagine.¹⁰

Of course, the scenes of chaos reported by Bolton Wanderers' supporters at Maine Road would have been keenly felt as the club had been witness to a crush at their Burnden Park ground only seven years earlier in 1946. On the occasion of a FA Cup Sixth Round match versus Stoke City in March of that year, 33 people were crushed and many more were injured as two barriers collapsed and hundreds of people fell on each other.¹¹ On that occasion, it was estimated that 65,000 people officially made their way through the turnstiles of the stadium, with 2,000 gaining entrance illegally and a further 15,000 people being turned away. A Government enquiry into stadium safety was ordered in the wake of the Burnden Park tragedy, but whilst similar large-scale fatal crushes did not occur in Britain again until the 1970s (at Hampden Park), and in England until the late 1980s (at Hillsborough), clearly the comfort of spectators at English football matches continued to be compromised long into the 1950s and beyond.

4.3: The Rise and Fall of Football Attendances in Lancashire

The information presented above is important as it indicates that attendances enjoyed by English football clubs between 1946 and 1949 were unprecedented and never likely to be sustained. However, the pattern of attendance decline that occurred for Lancashire football clubs from the 1950s onwards did not result only from interest in football reverting to its natural equilibrium after a reduction in the desire for post-war entertainment. The fall in attendances felt at Lancashire football clubs eventually took their crowd figures below levels enjoyed in the inter-war period; an indication that a

real and significant reduction in interest in football was occurring in the post-war period.

Let us now consider the falls in attendance that occurred at post-war football clubs in Lancashire from the early 1950s onwards. From the all-time peak of 41,271,424 for the season 1948-49,¹² the aggregate attendance at English Football League matches began a long and accentuated decline, a trend intensified through the early 1950s and continuing despite periodic recoveries until an all-time low of 16,488,577 was reached for the season 1985-86.¹³ This trend was reflected in Lancashire where total attendances fell from a high of 9,190,222 in 1947-48 to a low of 3,548,719 in 1983-84: a decline of 61.4 percent.¹⁴ In terms of the exact chronology of post-war declining support for football in Lancashire, it can be stated that attendances rose in the immediate post-war period, fell from the early 1950s, rose briefly during the early and late 1960s, fell, with occasional recoveries, in the 1970s, and fell heavily from the late 1970s to the mid 1980s (see Figure 4.1).

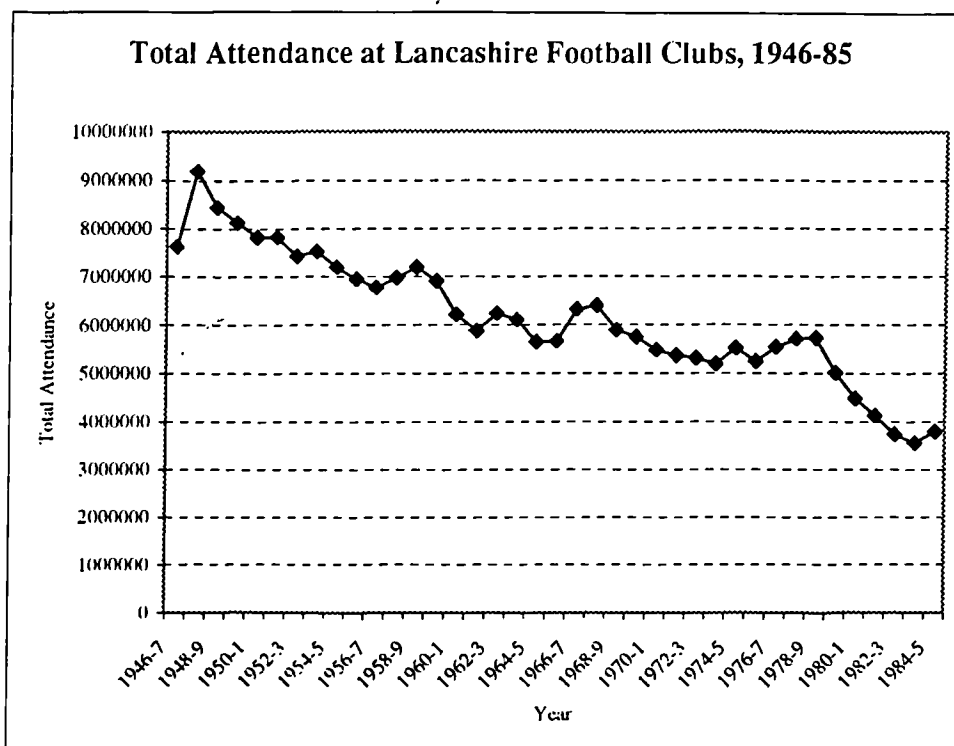


Figure 4.1.

Throughout the post-war period, many Lancashire clubs found themselves in an unfortunate spiral of ever decreasing attendances and declining playing success, leading in some cases to near or actual ruin. Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter Three, Accrington Stanley were forced to resign from the Football League during the 1961-62 season after completing only 33 fixtures. They did continue for a short time in the Lancashire Combination League but folded in 1965-66. Other Lancashire clubs to leave the League during this period were New Brighton (1950-51), Southport (1977-78), and Barrow (1971-72). However, not every club in Lancashire endured the same level of post-war decline in support. In fact, a fairly clear pattern emerged throughout much of the post-war era with some clubs in higher Divisions maintaining respectable attendances, whilst those at the bottom incurred nearly unsustainable losses (see Table 4.1).

Football Club	% Change in Av. Attendance between 1946-47 and 1985-86
Blackburn Rovers	-77.9
Blackpool	-79.0
Bolton Wanderers	-83.1
Burnley	-87.6
Bury	-80.4
Everton	-21.1
Liverpool	-22.9
Manchester City	-38.3
Manchester United	+5.4
Oldham Athletic	-57.2
Preston N.E.	-86.9
Rochdale	-76.4
Tranmere Rovers	-80.6

Table 4.1: Percentage change in average attendance for Lancashire Football Clubs between 1946-47 and 1985-86.¹⁵

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that every club in Lancashire but one suffered a significant decline in attendance in the period between the mid-1940s and the mid-1980s. The club that proved an exception was Manchester United. If one compares the average attendance for Manchester United home matches in the 1946-47 season (43,945) with the figure for the 1985-86 season (46,321), it can be seen that the club actually enjoyed a small rise of 5.4 percent in their attendance between the two dates. However, Manchester United must be viewed as an exception rather than a rule. Even

successful city clubs such as Liverpool and Everton incurred losses over the period 1946-86, with both clubs' average seasonal attendance falling by over 20 percent (see Figure 4.2).¹⁶

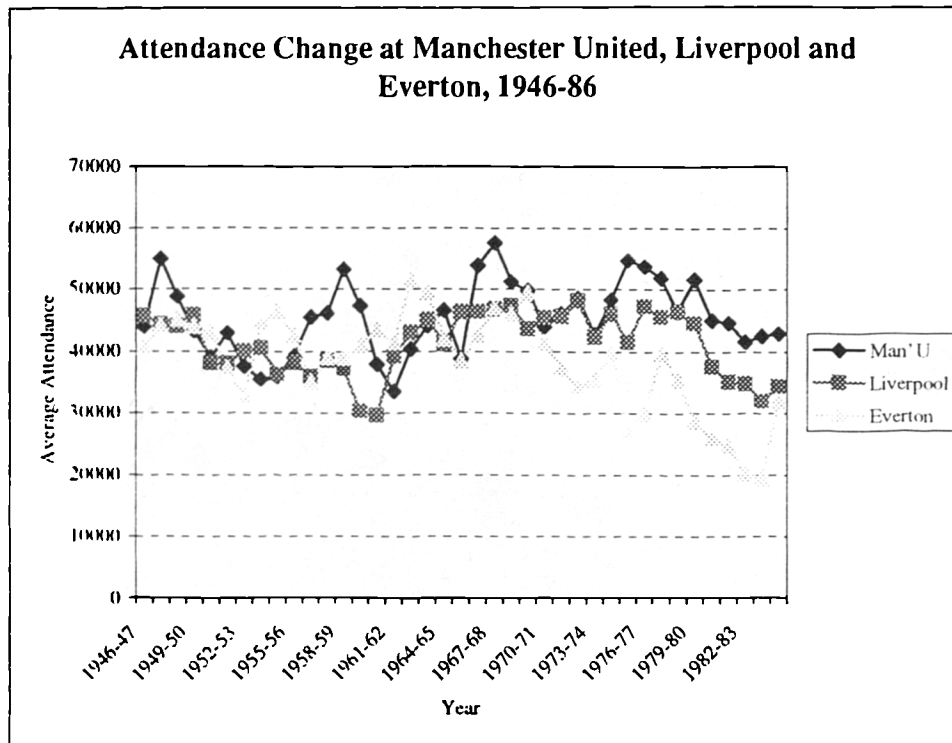


Figure 4.2.

The losses in attendance that were endured by Liverpool and Everton in the post-war period, whilst significant, do not compare with the losses endured elsewhere in the region. Manchester City, the only other major city football club in Lancashire, endured a loss of nearly 40 percent in the period. However, every other football club in the region lost at least 50 percent of their average seasonal support between the mid-1940s and the mid-1980s, and many teams suffered losses of 70 percent or more. The most interesting examples here are the once-successful, town-based Lancashire football clubs such as Preston North End, Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers. Between

1946 and 1986, these clubs found themselves entwined in a spiral of heavily falling attendances and declining playing success. In 1946-47, Preston North End, Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers all played their football in the First Division of the Football League with average attendances of 26,649, 21,552 and 28,692 respectively. However, by 1985-86 both Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers had fallen to the Third Division with average attendances of 4,536 (Blackpool) and 4,847 (Bolton), whilst Preston North End had dropped to the Fourth Division with an average attendance of 3,502. If one considers that Preston North End, Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers all incurred losses of support of over 79 percent in this period, then the relatively modest attendance declines endured by large city-based clubs such as Liverpool, Everton and Manchester City can be placed into perspective (see Figure 4.3).

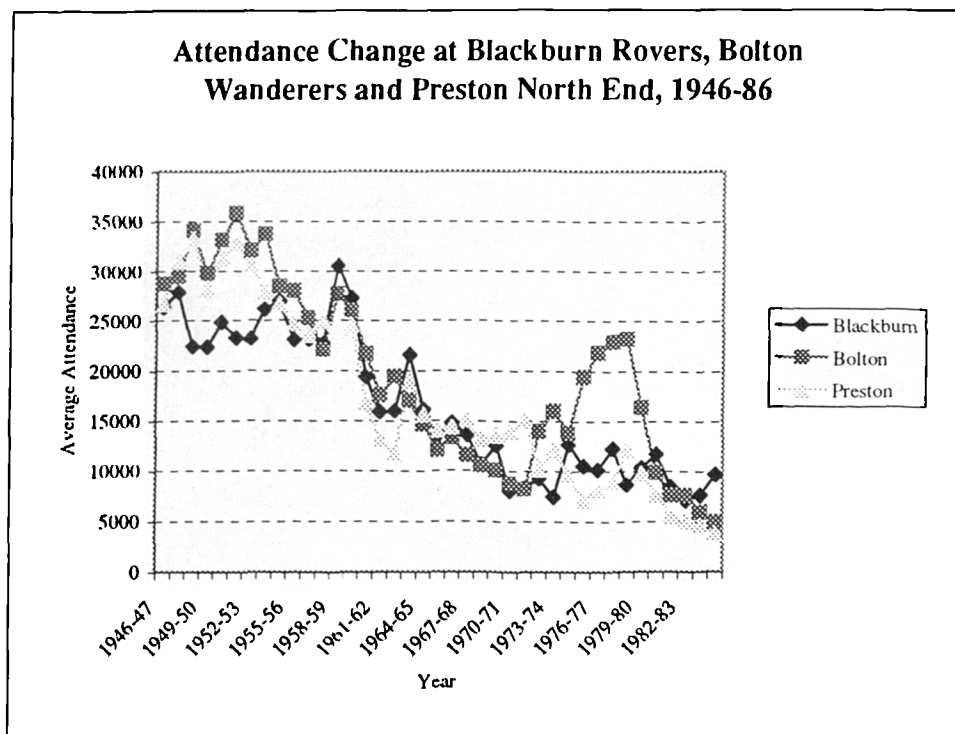


Figure 4.3.

From the tables and figures above, it is clear that in Lancashire larger, more successful big-city clubs had a better record of maintaining respectable attendances in the post-war period. From this, it would be easy to dismiss a detailed analysis of post-war attendance decline in the region and conclude that attendances maintained a fairly stable pattern of being linked to playing success between the mid-1940s and mid-1980s. However, it must be remembered that attendances unequivocally declined for every football club but one in Lancashire between 1946 and 1986, and that, if close attention is paid to changes at individual clubs, it can be seen that attendances were not always linked to results on the field of play. To give one example, Preston North End played their football in the Second Division of the Football League in both 1949-50 and 1978-79 with similar degrees of success.¹⁷ However, whilst their average attendance in 1950 was 28,164, it had dropped by 57 percent by 1979 to 12,117. This is not an isolated case, and similar figures can be given for most of the town-based football clubs in Lancashire. It is, therefore, important that a full analysis of all factors that influenced post-war football attendances in Lancashire, be they sporting, social or economic, is considered to determine the relative importance of each factor to the overall trend of decline. To start this process, the following section will evaluate the various existing arguments that have been put forward to explain the post-war decline in support for English football and begin the process of assessing their applicability to the context of Lancashire. This will be done, firstly, with reference to contemporary analyses of attendance decline produced by journalists, commentators and official reporters on the post-war game, and, secondly, by evaluating the proposals of social historians and sociologists on why English football attendances declined so rapidly in the post-war period.

4.4: Contemporary Analyses of English Football Attendance Decline: 1946-85

In the midst of overall declining post-war football attendances at English football, and a growing sense of economic turmoil at many League clubs, it hardly surprising that contemporary journals and other print media frequently commented on what they described as the crisis facing the English national game. From FA and Football League publications of the 1950s, to official reports of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, anxiety about falling crowds at English football matches was expressed from almost the moment that decline became discernible. In these publications a whole host of reasons were offered for the phenomena, some considered and based on detailed research, others somewhat less so. In order to assess the validity of these arguments, a number of specific explanations will be considered, laying the basis for comparison with their more recent, academic counterparts.

A large number of contemporary hypotheses were offered in explanation of declining post-war support for English football. The greater proportion of these were concerned with football specific or 'supply-side' considerations such as falling standards of play, increases in gamesmanship, hooliganism, and the generally poor facilities on offer at English football grounds.¹⁸ For certain quarters, this concentration on the game itself was not surprising. In being concerned with what 'football' could do to bring back its supporters, it was almost inevitable that the game's journals and official reports would be largely concerned with factors within their control. However, a narrow, sporting focus was not always maintained and opinions on social or 'demand-side' issues were occasionally offered. It is worth considering these in detail as, in many cases, they

formed the basis for academic studies of attendance decline at post-war English football that were conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.

In February 1956, Cyril Hughes, writing for the *FA Bulletin* on crowds in the immediate post-war period stated that: “times have changed ... [football] customers have many more distractions and commitments, and are much harder to please”.¹⁹ This statement encapsulates the classic demand-side argument offered for why people stopped attending football matches in the post-war era. It was proposed that a number of social changes took place soon after the war that fundamentally altered the nature of people’s leisure time and, by consequence, turned them away from attending football matches. A clear example of this logic is provided by J.P.W Mallalieu. Writing in the *FA News* in 1962 he stated that:

It was all right in the ‘thirties when so many men had little else to do except watch football on one Saturday afternoon a fortnight, when wives were glad to get out their man out of the house and when no one had heard of the Hungarians or Real Madrid ... But now most men work all week; and at the weekend, they have gardens, cars or the television. Their wives, lonely during weekdays want to be with their husbands at weekends.²⁰

This point was also echoed in 1973 when the *FA Yearbook* asserted that:

It is more necessary than ever to sell the game because the higher standard of living gives people a wider choice of leisure-time activities. The family car makes a trip to the seaside or the country feasible on a Saturday, fishing, boating and camping have gained in popularity, and the long weekend is used for going away.²¹

Analyses such as these indicate that the FA understood declining support for English football not only as a sporting issue, but also as a product of wider social change. They were not alone. Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, sporadic official

reports were conducted into the issue of football's falling crowds, all offering particular attention to shifting social processes. The first of these appeared in 1966.²² Undertaken by Political and Economic Planning (PEP), *English Professional Football* is described by its authors as an attempt to delineate the changes needed in English football to reverse the decline that had been evident since the Second World War.²³ Despite developing a wide scope to consider all aspects of the English game, a considerable amount of the report is concerned with football's finances, an issue inextricably linked to attendance figures. The contentions of this and other post-war reports into English football are worth attending to in some detail.

In identifying the substantial losses endured by English football since the Second World War, a noticeable section of PEP's report is given over to identifying social reasons why people stopped attending English football in the post-war era. Of these, a rise in real incomes in England during the period 1945-64 is presented as absolutely central. Indeed, for every one percent rise in consumer expenditure, PEP claim there to have been a one percent fall in Football League attendances.²⁴ To explain this correlation, it is asserted that increased personal wealth led to the availability of new leisure activities, thereby reducing the public's propensity to attend football. Rising car ownership is identified as one example of how increased real wages enabled people to diversify their use of leisure time. As evidence of this, PEP point to a rise in activities of a 'participant' nature, including sports such as golf and yachting, and interests like photography. They conclude that the post-war period saw new and alternative leisure pursuits being provided and consumed, "acting as a pull away from the conventional Saturday afternoon soccer match".²⁵

As a further social influence on support for English football, the PEP report also addressed changing work patterns and the altering nature of the weekend. They assert that:

[During the] nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Saturday afternoons were the focal point of a working class weekend, and matches were conveniently timed to cater for men who had not long left work.²⁶

With the advent of the five-day week, it is proposed that, for many, the beginning of the weekend shifted to Friday night, so situating football matches in the middle of the weekend rather than at the beginning. The importance of this is explained by the alleged negative influence of women on football attendance. PEP assert that, with their menfolk at home, women found themselves in a strong position to persuade their husbands not to attend football.²⁷ This, coupled with increases in the availability of new leisure activities, is employed by PEP to argue that the typical working-class weekend of the 1960s was substantially different from its counterpart in the 1940s.

Issues such as the changing nature of working-class leisure time are also addressed in the *Report of the Committee on Football*, conducted by the Department of Education and Science in 1968.²⁸ With a similar remit to the PEP report, the Chester Report, as it came to be known, again devotes a marked amount of space to attempting to explain the issue of declining attendance at English football matches.²⁹ Whilst a fair degree of replication is inevitable between the two reports, the Chester Report does identify a number of important issues untouched by PEP. Foremost amongst these is the notion that locality, or the sense of locality, had been disrupted in the post-war era, thereby displacing people's identifications and associations with local football teams. They claim this to have happened in two ways. Firstly, movement to newly

built post-war suburbs and municipal housing estates is identified as a crucial way in which people were physically transferred away from the inner-city locations of local football clubs. Secondly, greater access to television and travel in the post-war era is marked in the report as an important influence in the “standardisation of national life” in which a sense of local identity is effectively eroded.³⁰ With these factors in mind, the Chester Report asserts that declining attendance for certain local football clubs was attributable to the loss of a local support base, undermined by a mix of geographical movement and nationally available media.

With further reference to post-war social change, the Chester Report also suggests that declining support for English football could be ascribed to people’s increasing “standards of cleanliness and comfort”.³¹ The report notes that many English football stadia were built before the standards of comfort expected in the late 1960s had become commonplace, often leaving facilities on offer woefully short of acceptable norms. To illustrate this, attention is drawn to a National Opinion Poll conducted in December 1966 in which a high proportion of football supporters gave cold and wet weather and a lack of seating, covered stands and good toilet facilities as their main reasons for not attending matches more often.³² The report concludes that if football clubs wished to increase their crowds to anything like their post-war levels, then significant attempts were needed to improve facilities to the standards expected by the English public.

In 1982, a second Chester Report was commissioned, this time by the Football League, to update and develop further the analysis offered in 1968.³³ With terms of reference to “review the structure of the League’s championship and cup

competitions and to make recommendations as to future viability”, it is inevitable that the greater proportion of the report was to be concerned with structural aspects of football and variables under the Football League’s control. However, like its predecessor, the Second Chester Report devotes a considerable amount of space to the issue of declining football crowds, again employing aspects of social change to facilitate its analysis. Many of the issues covered in the previous report were again present in 1983. However, the level of detail in the second report is considerably higher, and factors hitherto unconsidered did gain consideration.

Of the new factors discussed in the Second Chester Report, considerable attention is turned to the issue of population trends. The report asserts that the typical audience for English football rose in the post-war era, noting that the amount of men aged 16-44 in the British population increased by 10 percent.³⁴ With this being so, it is recognised that, other things being equal, football attendances should have risen in the post-war era. However, the report notes that post-war increases in population were not spread evenly over the country, with considerable outward migration taking place from the old densely populated areas that are the traditional homes of football clubs.³⁵ It is pointed out that, between 1961 and 1980, 315,000 people moved out of Lancashire and 208,000 out of the North. Similarly, it is stated that the population of the principal cities in the Metropolitan Counties fell by 8.4 percent between 1961 and 1971 and by 10 percent between 1971 and 1981. From this evidence, the report suggests that long established League clubs in the traditional homes of football found themselves having to contend with adverse population trends. It is asserted that people had moved too far away from football clubs in the 1960s and 1970s to attend

games regularly or that they came to find it too difficult to travel to town centres on Saturdays to attend games.

Of the other issues considered by the 1983 Chester Report, a good deal of attention is afforded to the influence of television on football crowds. The impact of the media on people's sense of locality had already been discussed in the 1968 Chester Report. However, the 1983 version goes further by analysing television as a competitor for leisure time.³⁶ The wide range of entertainment offered on television, consumed with little or no effort on the part of the viewer, is identified as a crucially important factor in declining football crowds. On the issue of football on television, the report asserts that:

Nowadays the viewer can watch the highlights of five or six games on a Saturday and Sunday, and around Saturday mid-day watch the goals scored at some interesting games. One can watch an international or important European cup tie on many a Tuesday or Wednesday evening, [and] during last summer one could watch one or more World Cup matches most days for some four weeks.³⁷

It is concluded that television in general, and football on television in particular, unquestionably contributed to the post-war fall in support for English football. With the media concentrating on a few nationally successful 'super' clubs, it is asserted that this negative influence had been most keenly felt at the lower end of the Football League. The report declares that television "must account in some part for the gap which has opened up between the small number of glamorous national clubs and the more 'local' clubs".³⁸

In being conducted in 1982, it is not surprising to find that the second Chester Report directs considerable attention to the loss of support sustained by football in the early 1980s.³⁹ To explain the particularly pronounced falls sustained in this period, the report employs two accompaniments of economic recession: rising unemployment and falling real wages. With unemployment more than doubling between the mid-1970s and early 1980s, and particularly severe losses occurring in the industrial areas of the North and Midlands, the Chester Report states that football supporters incurred considerable losses in their spending power during this period, undermining their ability to attend football matches regularly. The report does note that football support is likely to have continued falling during this period regardless of extraordinary economic conditions. Nevertheless, it is concluded that a substantial part of the loss endured between 1980 and 1983 is unequivocally attributable to economic decline.⁴⁰

Of the other analyses proposed in the Second Chester Report to explain attendance decline in the late 1970s and early 1980s, most centred on hooliganism. By the mid-1970s, the British written press was certain that increased hooliganism was central to the declining number of people who were attending games across the country and the Second Chester Report echoed their analysis closely. Indeed, by drawing on a number of Market Research studies conducted on English football in the early 1980s, the Report asserts unequivocally that “crowd violence, including bad language” was a major factor in people not attending football matches.⁴¹ They go on to state that parents in particular did not want children to attend football matches because of the violence commonly associated with football. Interestingly, the Second Chester Report contends that violence associated with English football in the early 1980s was much more ‘perceived’ than ‘real’, but also accepts that this mattered little in terms of the

reaction that it was likely to produce in terms of reduced football attendances. For the Second Chester Report the problem was clear: Football League clubs had an image problem in being associated with violence and hooliganism and need to act quickly to reverse this perception.

4.5: Academic Studies of Attendance Decline in English Football, 1946-1985.

In the introduction to this project, it was stated that English socio-historical and sociological studies of post-war Association Football have largely been dominated by a concentration on hooliganism and the commercialisation of the national game. Despite this, however, a small number of social historians have identified the shifting post-war relationship between football clubs and their supporters as the central area that should demand most attention in studies of the game. Most notably, a number of academics have sought to uncover the sporting and social processes that served to redefine post-war football fans' relationships with the game, paying special attention to the overall downturn in English football support that occurred between the early 1950s and the mid 1980s.

The issue of attendance decline at post-war English football matches has developed into an area of contentious debate for academics from a number of related disciplines. Not only does it address, as mentioned previously, a phenomenon that bewildered journalists, a government enquiry, the Football Association and the Football League over a forty year period, but it also strikes at fundamental issues such as the historical social structure of English football crowds and the reasons behind people's football attendance. However, despite a number of attempts at investigating the problem, the

general level of debate on the topic has been disappointing. Authors have paid scant attention to the exact chronology of change, have made little attempt to identify the social basis of English football support, and have made only minimal efforts to contextualise changes within wider shifts in English social life. Of those authors who have approached the subject, most have done so through the two broad approaches adopted by contemporary analyses. The first, smaller group have tended to attribute the problem to football-specific supply-side problems, such as the decline of playing standards in football, hooliganism, and changing relations between football clubs and their supporters.⁴² The second have addressed the issue through more demand-side criteria, suggesting that social and economic changes to the English working classes during the late 1950s and 1960s undermined the hold that football had previously held over the masses. It is worth attending to these two schools of thought in some detail in order to ascertain the level of current debate and the strengths and weaknesses of the two positions.

4.6: Football-Specific Factors in the Decline of Post-War English Football Attendances.

Studies of post-war declining attendances at English football matches that have concentrated on football-specific reasons have often been concerned with the declining quality of the game. However, these studies have not been without serious criticism. With reference to authors who contend that declining post-war football attendances resulted from, among other things, the lack of skill in the modern game, a rise in gamesmanship and a rise in defensive football,⁴³ Russell has asserted that definitive statements have not always been backed up by evidence. In consideration

of the supposed rise in post-war defensive football, Russell notes that the amount of goals scored during the boom years of the 1940s was actually at its lowest since 1925, whilst the amount of goals scored in the 1950s rose as attendances fell.⁴⁴ In short, Russell concludes that claims that discriminating post-war football customers decided to boycott football until it was played in a more attacking manner simply fail to hold up to scrutiny.

Another favoured focus of supply-side analyses of declining post-war football attendances is hooliganism. Numerous academic studies have asserted that as violence became more of a problem in post-war English football, large numbers of people became disillusioned with the prospect of watching a game in an overtly hostile atmosphere and decided to stay away.⁴⁵ As with changes in the quality of post-war football, however, evidence for this suggestion is far from clear and the links are not straightforward. As Russell notes, seasons such as 1967-68 saw both rising attendances and increased reporting of hooliganism, with clubs such as Manchester United developing particularly notorious reputations for hooliganism.⁴⁶ However, a number of authors state that there can be little doubt that the potential of hooliganism, coupled with the racism and sexism that often accompanied football from the 1970s, certainly had some detrimental influence on levels of support for football. Oral evidence provided by Canter *et al.* notes that a fear of football hooliganism was one of the central reasons why people stopped attending football matches from the 1970s.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Russell claims it to be no coincidence that football attendances began to rise after 1986 when at least the appearance of hooliganism seemed to be receding.⁴⁸ He concludes that, “from the early 1970s, in the context of increasing

choices on offer away from the football ground, hooliganism, as both myth and reality, was a highly damaging phenomenon”.⁴⁹

One other key football-related factor that has been analysed in terms of declining attendances at post-war English football is the contention that since the end of the Second World War a selection of changes have occurred in football which have succeeded in distancing fans from the game. For instance, authors such as Taylor, Clarke, Critcher and Bale⁵⁰ have drawn out ways in which they suggest working-class spectators have become detached from post-war football: a detachment that led to both the game’s mass abandonment and hooliganism. From being a game watched from the terraces by men who ‘lived and breathed’ their respective teams, Taylor *et al.* suggest that the partisanship of football was replaced in the post-war period by such creations as watching the ‘spectacle’ from a seat in a glass-fronted box. Bale states that:

Such an *embourgeoisment* of football also manifests itself in the emergence of *nouveaux riches* “superstars”, the more sophisticated and discerning spectator (“no longer the traditional cloth-cap figure” but “a passive, selective consumer”), and the “expert” media analyst. In short, a former working-class pastime is becoming increasingly interpreted as a middle-class leisure activity.⁵¹

It should be noted, of course, that evidence of the relationship between class and football in the pre-1914 and inter-war periods undermines much of the romanticism of Bale’s analysis. However, many authors still contend that post-war shifts in the relationship between football and its fans have occurred. To draw this process out, it is instructive to note the actual ties that exist between football clubs and those who support them. For instance, if one considers the financial relationship that existed between football and its fans in, say, the inter-war period, then it is clear that a strong

financial chain of interdependence was present, making clubs often heavily dependent on paying supporters at the turnstile. However, if one reflects on the recently acquired financial relationships that certain post-war football clubs have developed with television and commercial institutions,⁵² it is obvious that the strength of the financial links between football clubs and their supporters has diminished. To put this another way, it can be stated that the post-war football interdependency chain has lengthened, with the result that supporters no longer maintain a financial centrality. Whether this process has led to a fall in attendances is not straightforward. However, it is important to note that the altering financial post-war relationship between football and its fans has been utilised by a number of authors to explain why so many supporters stopped attending English football matches between the 1950s and the 1980s.

The process of fans becoming distanced from football clubs in the post-war period has also been identified by academics in other studies of attendance decline. For instance, some have noted that the increased dependence of post-war football on television coverage has had a profound affect on the ways in which fans actually watch football matches: many opting to 'passively' consume games from the comfort of their own homes rather than attend matches personally. This development has been employed by Critcher to explain processes through which fans have become increasingly discriminatory in the matches that they choose to view or attend.⁵³ In being presented with a choice of teams to watch through television coverage, Critcher argues that links between football clubs and their supporters have been disrupted with the result that some fans have chosen to exercise their much vaunted consumer sovereignty and reject local clubs. In this type of analysis, it is concluded that the links between local football teams and the people who reside in their direct proximity

has been undermined, and that this has resulted in inevitable declines in attendances for many football clubs.

In the analysis of the bifurcation of local communities and football clubs, much interest has been focused on the rise of so-called big-city teams. Spurred on by such factors as media concentration on a few select clubs, a number of authors, including Russell, Connell and Walker, have turned attention to the increasing post-war dominance of football teams emanating from cities with large populations.⁵⁴ For instance, Russell has noted that only two towns with populations below 300,000 won the First Division Championship between 1962 and 1995,⁵⁵ whilst Walker has studied the process by which big city teams generate higher attendances.⁵⁶ From these studies, a number of fundamental questions emerge about the relationship between football, place and locality. If football has traditionally been understood as a site for the expression of local identity, then what does the increasing dominance of a few big city teams mean? Did post-war football develop into a sport to be watched largely as dispassionate entertainment, or is the expression of local identity still central to the game's culture? These questions are of central importance to understanding the relationship between football clubs and their supporters and as yet are not fully understood. They will be returned to in this project in Chapters Six and Seven.

4.7: 'Demand-Side' Arguments for Declining Interest in Post-War English Football

In contrast to supply-side studies of falling support for post-war English football, others have concentrated on demand for football in the period and the influence that

social (as opposed to sporting) change had on the size of post-war football crowds. The most dominant type of these studies have unquestionably been those that address the so-called post-war 'affluent society'. Bird, for example, identified post-war football as an inferior good in consumers' expenditure and drew attention to the fact that attendances at football matches in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s fell as real incomes rose.⁵⁷ Similarly, Critcher has contended that falling gates at post-war football matches represented a shift in class aspiration, stating that "once football was the opium of the masses. No longer".⁵⁸ Wagg sums the argument up when writing of working-class life in the 1960s that:

Many of the younger skilled workers and their families were happily ensconced on new estates, invariably owning their own homes, taking no special pride in their labour but living instead for leisure time, home and family. These were the new 'privatised' workers, thoroughly attuned to consumerism and with less taste for the all-male activities that had dominated out of work hours for previous generations of working men, and they were in all probability the main social group to desert League football in the 1960s. Saturday afternoon was more likely to find them taking their children to the zoo, helping their wives wheel large trolleys round the local supermarket, or dozing in front of the television. They now saw football ... from the point of view of a consumer - only if it was good ... would it tempt them away from home and family for the afternoon.⁵⁹

Through studies of this type, it is argued that as people came to enjoy a better home environment during the post-war period they also developed a concomitant degree of commitment to their individualised private spheres. Moreover, it is argued that increased post-war ownership of consumer durables such as televisions and motor cars provided people with new forms of entertainment, thereby lessening the draw of football and providing a direct and detrimental influence on Football League attendances. As Critcher concludes, "H.P., the weekend family car, bingo and the rest" made the mediocrity of football harder to sell.⁶⁰

To develop the analysis of the affect of increasing domesticity on post-war football attendances, a number of authors have questioned the influence of post-war gender relations on the size of football crowds. Walvin, among others, has suggested that a powerful influence on post-war football attendances came from:

Changes in female expectations and demands ... In the changing climate of a prospering Britain, more and more men were no longer able, as their forebears had been, simply to do as they wished. Many took heed of their womenfolk's interests; many wanted to spend their free time in the company of their spouses and companions.⁶¹

With the number of married men increasing in the immediate post-war period,⁶² it certainly seems plausible that the relationship between a large number of men and women may have become increasingly reciprocal. In continually being in close proximity to their wives, whilst also utilising their new found affluence and leisure time, it does not appear unreasonable that post-war male leisure time may have undergone something of a restructuring. However, Russell has noted that the post-war period may have seen little more than a transferring of male energies from the public to the private sphere, stating that post-war developments in male leisure simply saw the "hi-fi and wall papering ... competing with or replacing tales of dipping volleys and chipped free kicks as the symbols of the distinctiveness and specialness of male culture".⁶³ In other words, far from abandoning a unique gender-based leisure culture, Russell suggests that the social developments of the post-war era led to a reappraisal rather than a relinquishing of male leisure time.

If we return to economic influences on post-war football attendances, some alternative and contradictory analyses of the economic landscape of post-war England

have been highlighted by a number of authors when analysing developments in the relationship between football clubs and their supporters. For instance, in analysis of the 1950s and 1960s, Russell claims that many people never had it “particularly good”, and goes on to state that many may have stopped attending football matches through a simple inability to meet the game’s rising admission prices. Indeed, with regard to the large losses in support that football incurred during the late 1970s and early 1980s, a period which could hardly be described as affluent, Russell asserts that rising unemployment and therefore *decreasing* affluence must be regarded as the central factor in declining attendances. He states that, “the decline of English manufacturing industry meant deprivation in leisure as much as in many other areas of ... [unemployed people’s] lives”.⁶⁴ Russell is not alone in making this assessment. Walvin, Critcher and others who have studied English football attendances in the 1970s and 1980s have all strongly concluded that unemployment was the pre-eminent factor in negatively affecting people’s willingness to attend matches.⁶⁵ In this they have much in common with the conclusions outlined in the previous section from the contemporary observers and report writers that analysed English football crowds in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

4.8: Conclusion – Evaluation of Theories and Existing Approaches

From the details provided above, it is clear that the relationship between football attendance and social, economic and sporting change in post-war period is far from straightforward. There are many contending positions in the debate and, unfortunately, a lack of empirically-based studies on which to make sound judgements. However, existing debates and theories are important as they provide a

basis on which to conduct future analysis. Admittedly, much of the work conducted so far on, for instance, the relationship between affluence and football attendance has tended to be based on supposition and has often lacked detail and precision. Indeed, in all areas of this debate, little sustained research has been undertaken and little consideration has been given to the innumerable individual decisions that led to an overall attendance decline at English football. The conclusions offered by supply-siders have up to now often smacked of post-rationalisation and have tended to lack important supporting evidence, whilst high levels of generality and the absence of solid empirical data have frequently marked demand-siders' arguments. These failings should not, however, preclude one from utilising existing studies to underpin future, detailed, empirical work.

To redress the problems and shortcomings of existing studies of post-war football attendance decline, the following chapter takes the main areas of investigation employed by the studies outlined above and tests them in the context of Lancashire. A number of areas are accorded particular attention. Firstly, and with specific reference to the period between the late 1940s and the mid-1970s, the influence of increasing post-war affluence and consumption on football attendances is judged to identify whether this particular socio-economic trend encouraged Lancashire football fans to attend games less frequently. Secondly, other socio-economic influences on supporters' attendance at games between the end of the Second World War and the mid-1970s are judged, with reference to population trends and changes in marriage rates in the period.

For the period between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, attention is turned to unemployment in Lancashire and whether that had a significant influence on people's willingness and ability to attend football matches in the region. This, and indeed all areas of investigation, is dealt with not only at a macro socio-economic level, but also at a micro level with reference to oral history interviews that were conducted with football supporters who attended games less frequently as the post-war period progressed. This approach enables the following chapter to be a uniquely detailed analysis of the reasons behind people's abandonment of football in post-war Lancashire. It also sets up a discussion of football fans' changing relationships with their football clubs in Chapters Six and Seven.

¹ *Lancashire Daily Post* (hereafter *LDP*), September 2nd 1946, p 4. Comparisons between attendances in August 1939 and August/September 1946 were particularly useful as the fixture list drawn up for the 1939-40 season was used for the first season after the war.

² *LDP*, October 14th 1946, p 4.

³ *LDP*, October 13th 1946, p 4.

⁴ *LDP*, December 7th 1946, p 4.

⁵ For a discussion of overcrowding in English football grounds in the inter-war and immediate post-war periods see, Walton, J.K., 'Football, Fainting and Fatalities: The Problems of Crowd Safety in England, 1923-1951', *History Today*, forthcoming.

⁶ *LDP*, September 27th 1946, p 4.

⁷ *Liverpool Echo* (hereafter *LE*) (*Football Echo*), February 22nd 1947, p. 3.

⁸ *Lancashire Evening Post* (hereafter *LEP*), April 1st 1954, p 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p 3.

¹⁰ *Bolton Evening News* (hereafter *BEN*), March 24th 1953, p. 3.

¹¹ For a full discussion of the Burnden Park disaster see: Baker, N. 'Have they Forgotten Bolton?', *The Sports Historian*, 18, 1, 1998.

¹² Russell, D., *Football and the English* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), p. 102.

¹³ Ibid., p. 140. All attendances figures presented throughout this project relate to Football League matches unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴ These calculations are based on a sum of the total attendances of every Football League club in Lancashire and Cheshire in the period under consideration. Comparisons between years are not always valid as the number of Lancashire clubs playing in the Football League fluctuated from a high of 19 between 1946-47 and 1950-51, to a low of 17 from 1962-63.

¹⁵ The table only relates to Football League clubs from Lancashire that were members of the Football League for the entire period under consideration.

¹⁶ Liverpool's average attendances: 1946-47 = 45,732, 1985-86 = 35,271. Everton's average attendances: 1946-47 = 40,854, 1985-86 = 32,227.

¹⁷ Preston North End finished sixth in Division Two in 1949-50 and seventh in 1978-79.

¹⁸ For an example of this see 'Falling Attendances' in the *FA Bulletin*, February 1956. It is stated here that prices and playing standards are central to the recent fall in attendances, something which, it is argued, may be off-set by the introduction of floodlit matches. Similar arguments are also given in 'Points of View', *FA News*, May 1962 and 'A Season of Declining Interest', *FA Yearbook*, 1973-4.

¹⁹ Hughes, C., 'Falling Attendances', *FA Bulletin*, February 1956, p. 339.

²⁰ Mallalieu, J. P. W., 'Point of View', *FA News*, May 1962, p. 336.

²¹ *FA Yearbook*, '1972-73 A Season of Declining Interest', 1973-74, pp. 66-68.

²² A previous PEP report entitled *The Football Industry* had been conducted in 1951. However, due to its early appearance, it concerned itself little with the issue of declining attendance figures.

²³ Political and Economic Planning, *English Professional Football*, Planning Report Vol. XXXII, NO. 496 (London: 1966)

²⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 110.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁸ Department of Education and Science, *Report of the Committee on Football* (London: HMSO, 1968).

²⁹ The document came to known as the Chester Report because of its chairing by Sir Norman Chester.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 42.

³¹ Ibid., p. 41.

³² Ibid., p. 41. Reference for the poll is given as, *English Professional Football*, National Opinion Polls, Ltd.

³³ Football League, *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Structure and Finance* (Lytham St. Annes, 1983).

³⁴ Figure given is a comparison between 1951 and 1971 levels. Ibid., p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁶ This debate was far new, raging in the pages of FA publications from at least 1947. See 'Television' in *FA Bulletin*, September 1947. Other examples of early articles addressing the influence of television on football attendance are 'Televised Football - A Boon or a Menace', *FA Yearbook*, 1951-52, and 'Stadia for the TV Age', *FA Yearbook*, 1957-58.

³⁷ Football League *Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Structure and Finance*, p. 6.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

⁴² This school of thought, although present in academic studies, is most commonly found in journalistic publications such as newspapers, magazines and official football journals.

⁴³ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 103.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 103.

⁴⁵ Canter, D. et al., *Football in its Place: an Environmental Psychology of Football Grounds* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 31

⁴⁶ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 144.

⁴⁷ Canter et al., *Football in its Place*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 145.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 145.

⁵⁰ See, for instance, Taylor, L, 'Football Mad: a Speculative Sociology of Football Hooliganism', in Dunning, E. (ed.), *The Sociology of Sport: a Selection of Readings* (London, 1971); Clarke, J., 'Football and Working-Class Fans: Tradition and Change', in Ingham, R. (ed.), *Football Hooliganism: the Wider Context* (London, 1978); Critcher, C., 'Football Since the War', in Clarke J., Critcher C. & Johnson R., *Working Class Culture - Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchinson Education,

1979); and Bale, J., 'From Ashington to Abingdon? Some Regional Changes in Post-War British Professional Soccer', *Explorations in Football Culture, Proceedings of a Workshop of the British Sociological Association/Leisure Studies*, 1982, pp. 73-94.

⁵¹ Bale, 'From Ashington to Abingdon?', p. 75.

⁵² See, for instance, Whannel, G., 'The Unholy Alliance: Notes on Television and the Remaking of British Sport 1965-85', *Leisure Studies*, 5, 1986, pp. 129-145.

⁵³ See, for instance, Critcher, 'Football Since the War'.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 151 and Connell, J., 'Football and Regional Decline: Some Reflections', *Geography*, 70, 1985, p. 240.

⁵⁵ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 128.

⁵⁶ Walker, B., 'The Demand for Professional League Football and the Success of Football League Teams: Some City Side Effects', *Urban Studies*, 23, 1986, p. 218.

⁵⁷ Bird, P., 'The Demand For League Football', *Applied Economics*, 14, 1982, pp. 648-649.

⁵⁸ Critcher, 'Football Since the War', p. 169.

⁵⁹ Wagg, S., *The Football World: a Contemporary Social History* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1984) p. 206.

⁶⁰ Critcher, 'Football Since the War', p. 169.

⁶¹ Walvin, J., *The People's Game* (2nd edition) (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1994), p. 166

⁶² Royle, E., 'Trends in Post-War British Social History', in Obelkevich, J. & Catterall, P., *Understanding Post-War British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 10.

⁶³ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 105.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁶⁵ See, Walvin, *The People's Game*, and Critcher, 'Football Since the War'.

Chapter Five

Analysing Football Attendance Change in Lancashire, 1946-85

5.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, a number of explanations of attendance decline at post-war English football were introduced. In this chapter, the applicability of these theories to post-war attendance change in Lancashire is assessed through an analysis of social, economic and sporting change in the region between 1946 and 1985. To analyse social and economic change, a detailed investigation of key social statistics pertaining to affluence, consumption, housing, population and unemployment is presented. Then, where appropriate, statistical analyses of the relationship between key indicators of socio-economic change and football attendances are outlined to identify all possible correlations. This presents a clear quantitative study of the reasons behind declining attendances at football matches in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985 and offers detail to a debate that has frequently been conducted at a high level of generality.

In line with comments made in the second chapter of this study, quantitative analysis presented in this chapter is complemented by qualitative evidence. This information centres on oral history interviews that were conducted with post-war football supporters in Lancashire in the autumn of 1997. Centrally, the interviews were designed to analyse how football supporters themselves believe that socio-economic change and post-war developments within football affected their propensity to attend football matches from the 1950s onwards. It is vital that this section is presented in order that the full range of reasons that encouraged people to stop attending post-war

football matches in Lancashire can be accounted for. It is also vital for qualitative data to be offered as it enables us to remember that people are not controlled by reified social forces, but make decisions based on their own cognisance of the world around them.

Before commencing the analytical section of this chapter, it is worth pointing out what it is not designed to address. The chapter is not designed to explain every fluctuation of support at every football club in Lancashire in the post-war period. Most football clubs' attendances in the post-war period continued to be driven by 'traditional' variables that had always influenced support for teams, such as playing success, the weather, the popularity of certain players, and other transient factors. Rather, this chapter is focused on explaining and evaluating the medium and long-term trends of decline in support for football in Lancashire that were identified in the previous chapter. Most of what follows, therefore, concentrates necessarily on social and economic change and long-term trends within football, rather than on season-by-season successes and failures of individual teams.

5.2: Social Influences on Football Attendance, 1946-1975

In this section, a detailed analysis of post-war social statistics will be presented in order to delineate the exact chronology of British social change between 1945 and the mid-1970s, and to evaluate the utility of the theories outlined in the previous chapter in explaining declining attendances at Lancashire football clubs in the first thirty years after the Second World War. Whilst some of the statistics studied will be of a national nature, wherever possible, they will be related to the specific case of

Lancashire, thereby providing social data able to facilitate an analysis of the attendance figures presented in Chapter Four. From here, a number of conclusions will be drawn on the effectiveness of 'affluence' and other socio-economic factors as explanations of declining support for post-war football in Lancashire.

Before beginning an analysis of post-war affluence in the post-war period, it is important to note the basis on which theories of an inverse relationship between affluence and post-war football attendance have been predicated. Those studies that have asserted that growing post-war affluence made people increasingly unwilling to attend English football matches have, implicitly or explicitly, focused their analysis on one group: the working class. They have concentrated on that group for two principal reasons. Firstly, and as explained in Chapter Three, it has traditionally been assumed that the main constituents of football crowds in England in the post-war period were from the unskilled and skilled working classes. Secondly, most of the sociological and social historical work that has been conducted on the effects of post-war affluence has focused on the working class as it is within this group that the most observable social changes occurred in the 1950s and 1960s. From the evidence presented in this project, it is clear that post-war football crowds in Lancashire were not simply working-class in constitution, but also had significant membership from the middle class. It is, therefore, important to remember that work presented in this chapter on the relationship between increasing affluence/consumption and decreasing football attendances is focused specifically on economically mobile working-class football supporters in post-war Lancashire, and not all football fans in the region *per se*.

Throughout most of the post-war period it certainly appears that affluence among the working classes in Britain was on the increase. Save for a short period in the mid-1970s, between 1948 and 1979 earnings consistently rose faster than inflation, leading to an overall increase in 'real' wages. Between 1948 and 1958, real wages rose by nearly a fifth, and between 1958 and 1968 the rise was just under a third.¹ This displays that individuals on the whole had considerably more income at their disposal in the early 1970s than they did in the immediate post-war period (see Figure 5.1).

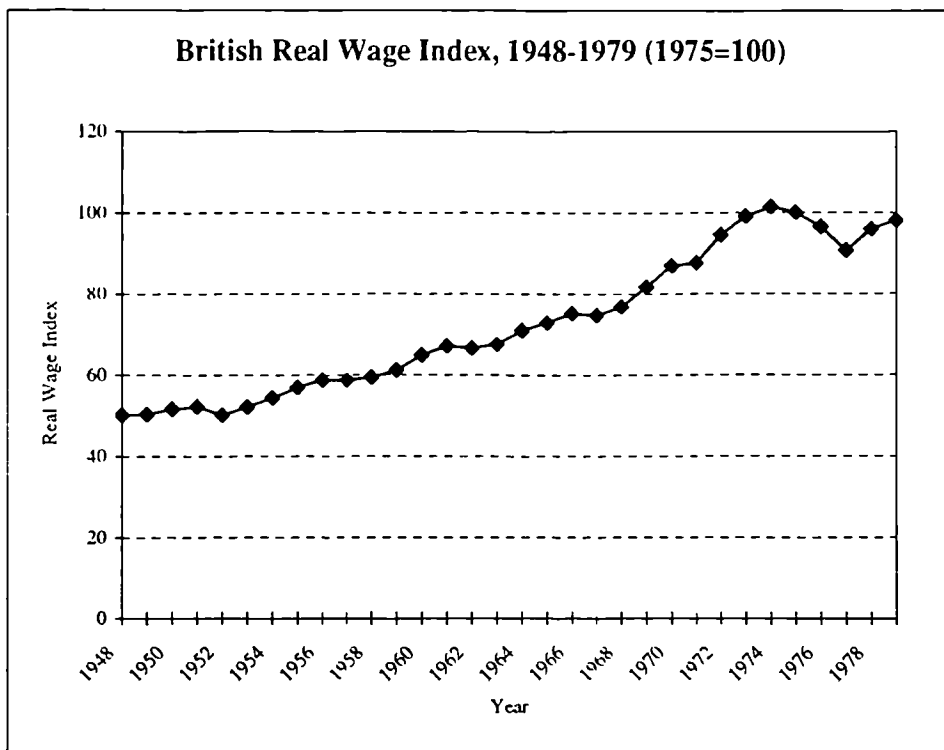


Figure 5.1.

A rise in personal wealth in Britain can also be identified in post-war patterns of consumption. If one addresses total consumer expenditure (at constant prices) in the

1950 and 1960s, it can be seen that the amount of money spent by British people between 1955 and 1969 increased by 41.2 percent (see Figure 5.2).²

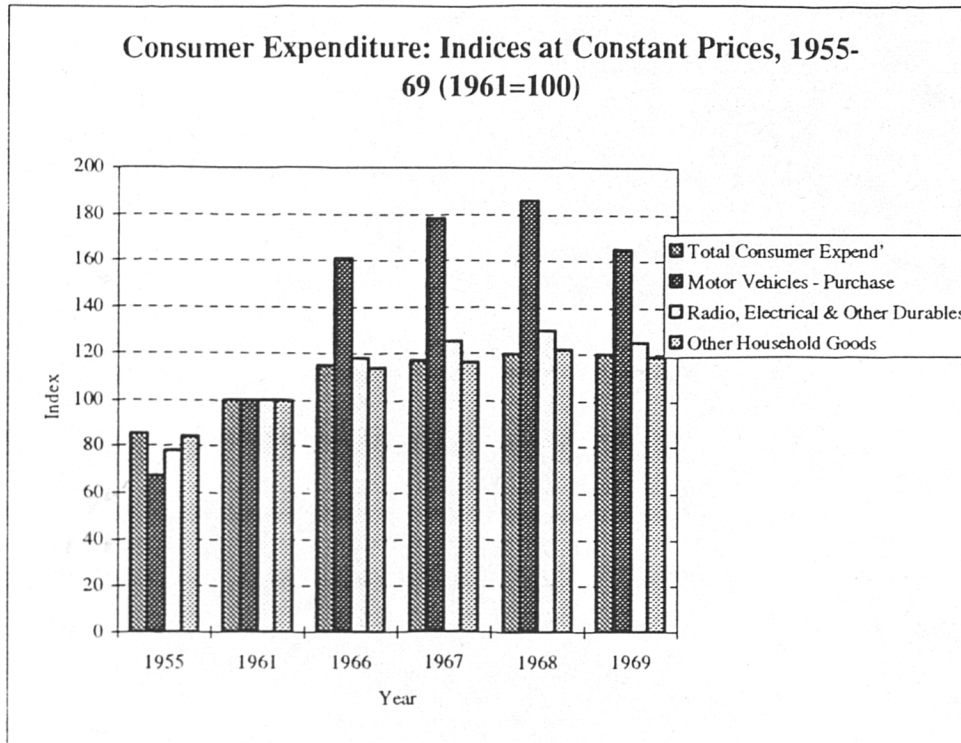


Figure 5.2.

This rise includes a 60.3 percent rise in the amount spent on radio, electrical and other durables, a 41.7 percent rise in the amount spent on other household goods, and a striking 146.3 percent rise in expenditure on motor vehicles.³ All this suggests that in the first two decades after the Second World War, Britain was characterised by rising wages and new and hitherto inexperienced levels of consumerism.

If particular attention is paid to expenditure on televisions and motor vehicles, it can be noted that ownership of these goods rose considerably throughout the post-war period. The number of cars registered in Britain increased by 133 percent between

1949 and 1959, with a further rise of 126.1 percent occurring between 1959 and 1969 (see Figure 5.3).⁴

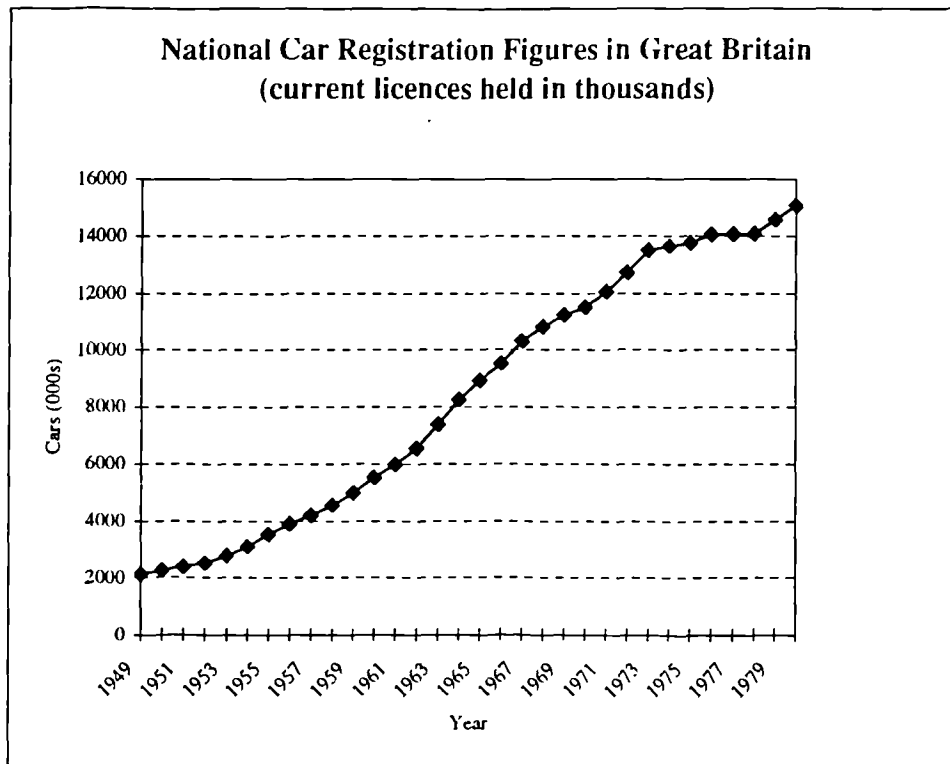


Figure 5.3.

Even more remarkably, the number of households owning a television in Britain rose by over 5,000 percent between 1949 and 1959, continuing to increase, if less dramatically so, by 44.4 percent between 1959 and 1969 (see Figure 5.4).⁵

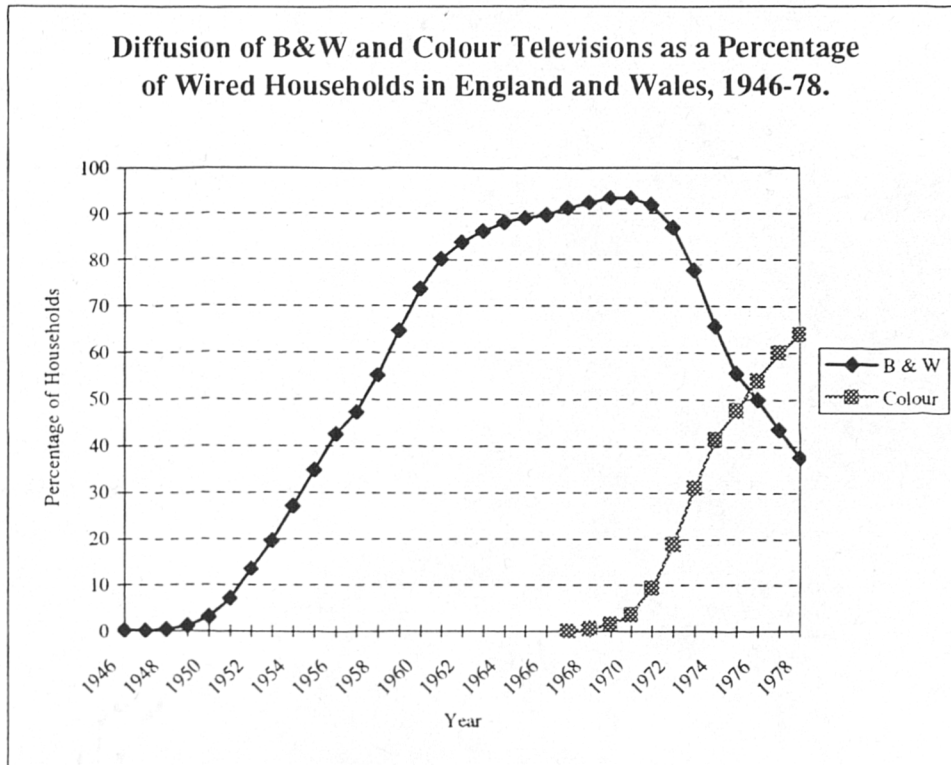


Figure 5.4.

As predicted by current theories of post-war attendance decline at English football, then, it certainly appears that affluence and consumption were rising in England from the late 1940s onwards. However, the simple fact that affluence and consumption were increasing does not mean that they were necessarily significant factors in attendance decline at English football in general, or at football in Lancashire in particular. One way of approaching this issue is to look at statistical correlations between the evidence presented above and changes in attendances at Lancashire football clubs in the post-war period. This can be done, at a very basic level, by using a Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient to assess the negative relationship between increasing affluence and consumption in post-war England and falls in football attendance in Lancashire.⁶ Whilst this exercise necessarily requires the comparison of national affluence and consumption trends with regional football

attendance patterns, it may help identify how significant affluence and consumption were in producing attendance change at Lancashire football clubs from the late 1940s onwards.

If the relationship between increasing real wages and falling football attendances in Lancashire is judged first, it can be shown that a very strong relationship between increasing affluence and decreasing attendances in the region existed between 1948 and 1979. Using the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient method, an inverse relationship between affluence and attendance of -0.91 can be identified ($Rho = -0.91$; $p < 0.05$). A similar correlation can be identified between consumption and attendance. An inverse relationship between car ownership and football attendance in Lancashire of -0.91 can be identified for the period between 1949 and 1980 ($Rho = -0.91$; $p < 0.05$), and an even more impressive inverse relationship of -0.93 ($Rho = -0.93$; $p < 0.05$) can be identified between ownership of black and white television sets and football attendance between 1948 and 1971 (after which ownership of colour sets became more prevalent). This evidence would indicate, at a surface level at least, that a strong negative correlation between affluence/consumption and football attendance existed in Lancashire in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

Compelling as this evidence is, if one moves beyond broad statistics and breaks down the exact chronology of rises in affluence and consumption in post-war England further, some doubt can be raised about the exact level of influence that affluence and the purchase consumer durables had on post-war support for football in Lancashire. For both car and television ownership, it must be noted that widespread take up of these goods did not become truly prevalent until the mid-to-late 1950s; some years

after attendance decline had set in for a number of football clubs in Lancashire. In 1953, less than a fifth of wired households owned a television set in Britain, a number that did not reach 50 percent until 1958.⁷ As for motor vehicles, significant rises from pre-war levels of car ownership did not begin until 1955 when a 13.7 percent rise occurred on the previous year's level.⁸ If one considers that take up of these goods is likely to have been even slower amongst the working classes in, amongst other areas, Lancashire, then one can assert that consumer durables did not have a predominant influence on attendance at football matches in Lancashire until at least the late 1950s.

If one looks at the specific nature of the economic landscape of Lancashire in the post-war period, again it becomes more difficult to assert the unambiguous relationship between increasing affluence/consumption and declining football attendances that is implied by statistical evidence. Whilst it may be true that many areas of Lancashire enjoyed significant economic growth in the two decades after the Second World War, it must also be noted that in the same period certain sections of the region found themselves in marked decline. In terms of economic growth, engineering, food, drink, tobacco and other industries served the 2.5 million people of Greater Manchester well in the first two decades after the Second World War, and on Merseyside, the various vehicle factories at Ellesmere Port (Vauxhall), Halewood (Ford), and other places were providing good employment and high wages by the late 1960s.⁹ This growth was reinforced by the paper industry in Warrington, Wigan and Ellesmere Port, investment by the chemical industry in Tranmere, Stanlow, Ellesmere Port and Runcorn, and jobs created by power generation in Fiddler's Ferry, Capenhurst, Risley and Daresbury.¹⁰ However, with most of this industrial development taking place along the Mersey corridor, the rest of Lancashire found it

difficult to attract new industries to replace its losses in cotton and coal. In Central Lancashire, despite successes in the north of the region with new industries providing vehicles, aircraft, electric locomotives, ordnance and atomic energy, by 1969 “the transition from cotton and coal was as yet incomplete”.¹¹ The story was even worse for north-east Lancashire. The area had suffered greatly during the depression of the 1930s, and the draining away of textile jobs continued in the post-war period. New industries were introduced under Development Area status in the 1950s but did little to stem the tide of decline.¹² By 1969, it could be concluded that north-east Lancashire “was the most economically deprived sub-region of the north-west”.¹³

Let us consider the case of north-east Lancashire in some detail. With a high degree of specialisation in the area and its strong links to the textile industry, the region was particularly vulnerable when the decline of cotton manufacturing occurred. The loss of 35,000 jobs in textiles between 1953 and 1967 in the area left only 45,000 textile jobs in the whole of north-east Lancashire by the end of the 1960s: less than one third of the peak figure of half a century before.¹⁴ By 1969, the total employed population of the region stood at 200,000, having fallen by 10,000 since the early 1950s.

The reason why north-east Lancashire was largely unable to replace the job losses endured in textiles in the 1950s and 1960s was because it did not enjoy the industrial diversification that areas such as Greater Manchester and Central Lancashire developed in the same period. During the post-war textile boom, little consideration was given to diversification in the north-east of the region, but the collapse of textiles in subsequent years did lead to the creation of the North East Lancashire Development Area in 1953 that covered the fine-weaving area of Burnley, Padiham,

Nelson and Colne. Government assistance continued until 1960, but its impact was limited in the face of the area's economic crisis. Ten firms did move into the area between 1953 and 1960. However, by the end of the 1960s only 5,600 jobs had been created by these firms and only three of the new projects were significant in size: Mullard at Simonstone and Belling and Michelin at Heasandford, Burnley. By the beginning of the 1970s, the economic landscape of north-east Lancashire had been marked by 20 years of almost continual decline, and high unemployment was only avoided through large-scale outward population migration (which will be commented upon later).

In terms of football attendances, it would be an overstatement to suggest that the economic plight of north-east Lancashire in the 1950s and 1960s was the *only* influence on declining football attendances in the region during that period. However, it is notable that between 1955 and 1965 Blackburn Rovers endured a decline in average seasonal attendance of 40.2 percent (albeit with fluctuations brought about by relative playing success in the middle part of the period) without suffering any particular downturn in playing fortunes (see Figure 5.5).

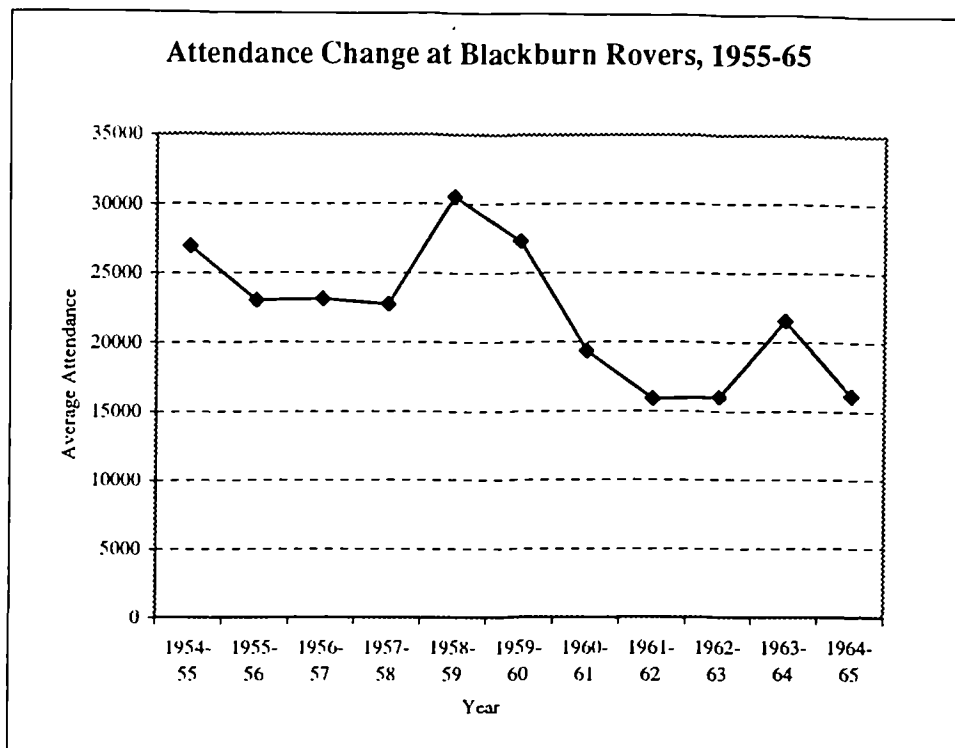


Figure 5.5

Similarly, Burnley lost 37.3 percent of their average seasonal support in the same period (albeit, again, with fluctuations resulting from playing success), despite beginning and finishing the decade in the First Division (see Figure 5.6).

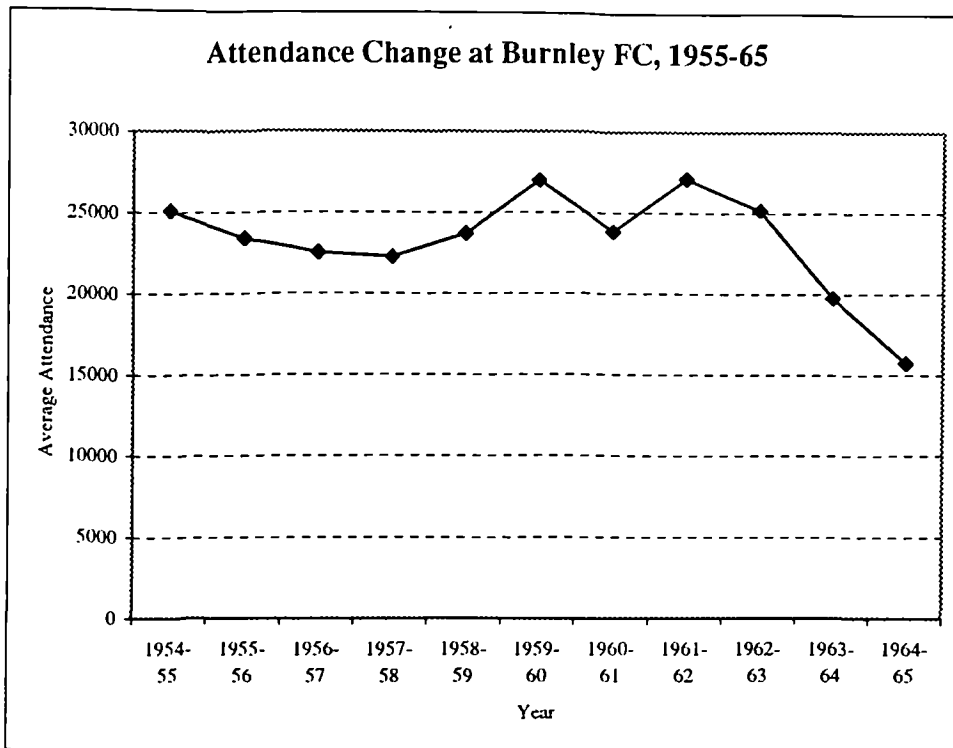


Figure 5.6

The early 1960s was, of course, also the period in which north-east Lancashire club Accrington Stanley went out of the Football League, unable to meet their playing commitments during the 1961-62 season. From 1955 until their eventual demise, the club suffered a decline in average attendance of 72.5 percent; from a high of 9,766 in the 1954-55 season to a low of 2,688 in their final season (see Figure 5.7).

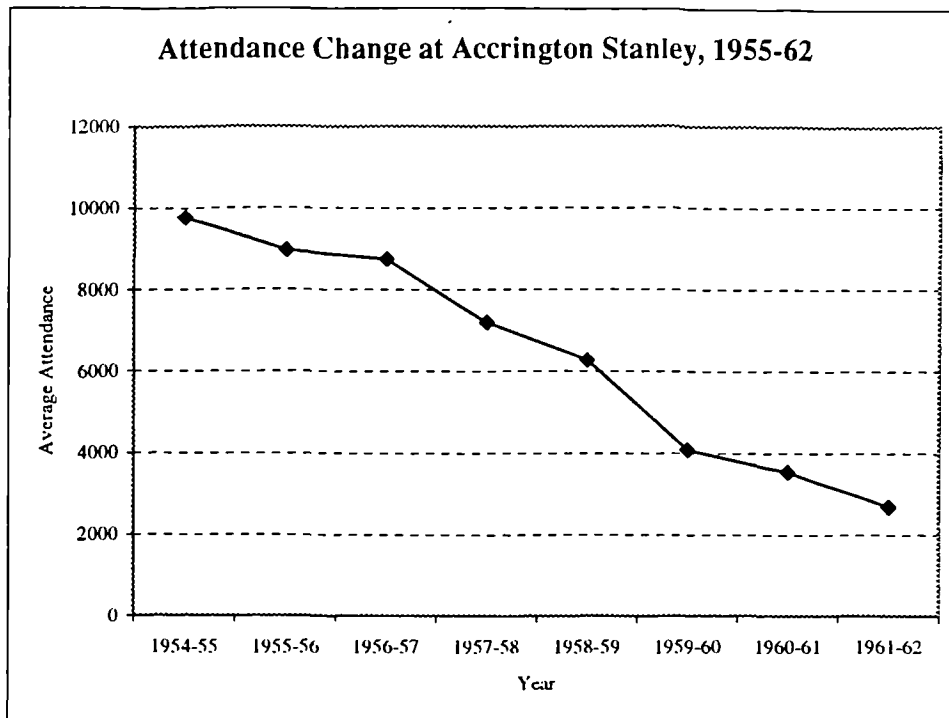


Figure 5.7.

From this evidence, one can conclude that local economic decline and associated problems such as falling affluence are likely to have played a part in the attendance declines felt at football clubs in north-east Lancashire in the 1960s.

The above evidence makes it difficult to conclude that affluence was the key factor in declining football attendances in Lancashire between 1946 and 1975. From a purely statistical analysis of the available data, a strong correlation between affluence and attendance decline clearly exists. However, a close analysis of economic change in Lancashire during the 1950s and 1960s indicates that certain sub-regions of the county were in economic decline during this period and that declining affluence and unemployment were as likely to be factors in people's non-attendance at football as were affluence and increased consumer expenditure.

If affluence does not provide an absolute answer as to why people stopped attending post-war football matches in Lancashire, it is important to consider other socio-economic factors that could have influenced this process. The first of these is housing and the related topic of population movement. Throughout the post-war period, the percentage of dwellings in Great Britain owned by their occupier increased consistently. Between 1944 and 1961 this figure rose by 66.8 percent, whilst a further increase of 32.1 percent occurred between 1961 and 1981 (see Figure 5.8).¹⁵

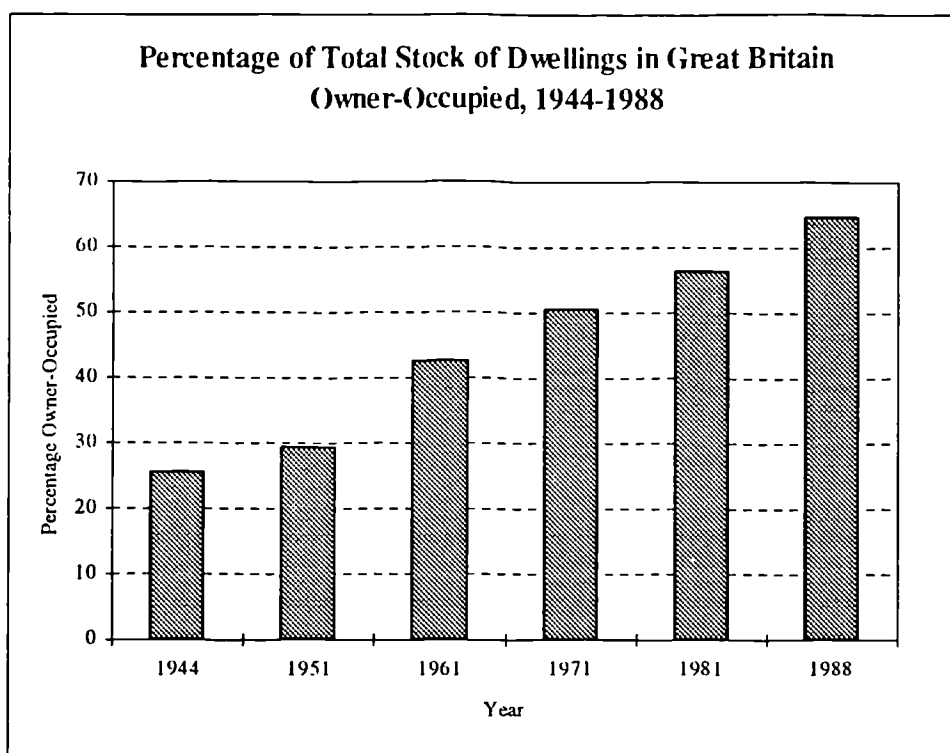


Figure 5.8.

These data indicate that, firstly, general levels of affluence in the post-war era were on the increase and, secondly, that working-class leisure in this period may have been disrupted by a new willingness to spend time developing one's newly acquired home.

As the most dramatic rise in home ownership in this period took place between 1951 and 1961,¹⁶ a period in which support for football was largely in decline, one could conclude that patterns of home ownership in the first two decades after the Second World War had a detrimental effect on people's willingness to attend football.

If broader population shifts are considered, the number of people living in England and Wales in the post-war period rose by about 25 percent.¹⁷ This suggests that the overall potential audience for English football was increasing, possibly undermining the importance of population as a factor in declining crowds. However, if one concentrates on the section of the population most closely associated with football attendance, it can be seen that shifts in population may have contributed to declining attendances more than is immediately obvious. Between 1951 and 1961, the number of males in the population of England and Wales aged between 15 and 49 fell from 10,749,000 in 1951 to 10,697,800 in 1961; a decline of 0.5 percent (see Figure 5.9).¹⁸ Whilst this decline can only be described as marginal at best, it does tie in with attendance declines at English football in the 1950s, and may have some explanatory potential for a proportion of the losses endured.

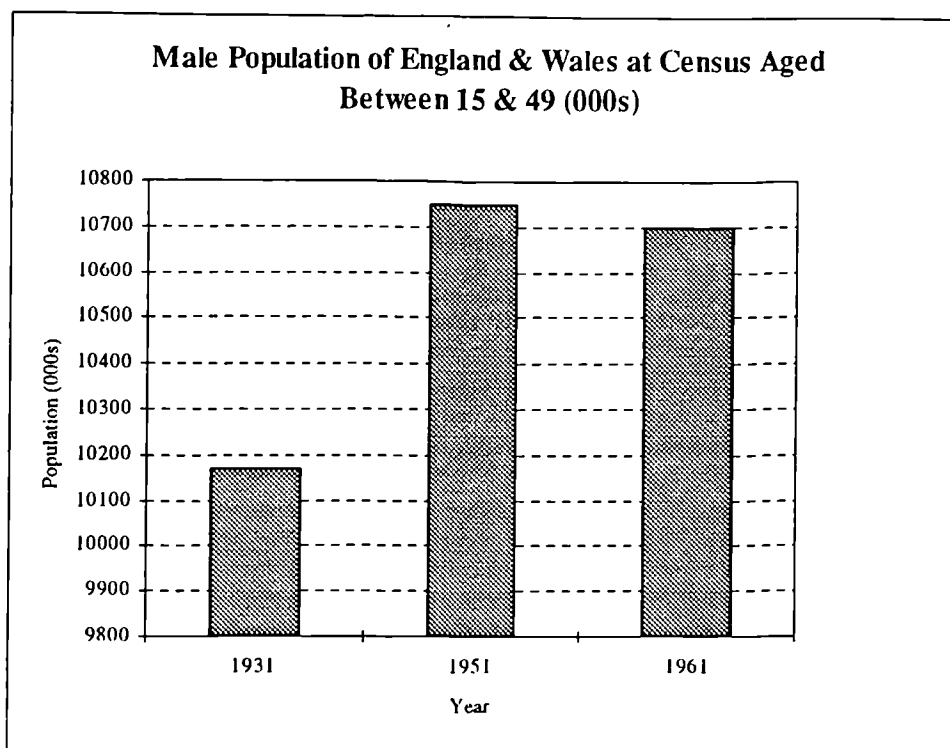


Figure 5.9.

More importantly for declining crowds in Lancashire, the population of many towns and cities in the region declined heavily in the post-war period. Between 1931 and 1971, Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Manchester, Preston and Liverpool all suffered declines in population of between 17 and 30 percent (see Figure 5.10).¹⁹

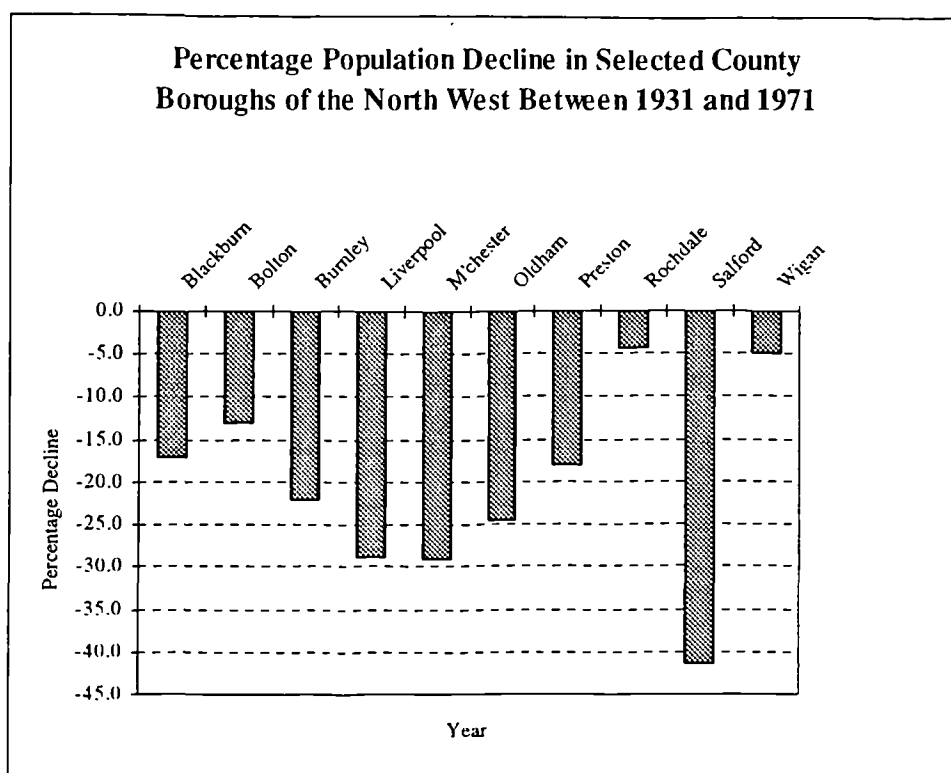


Figure 5.10.

When one considers that by 1971, Manchester, Blackburn and Bolton all had populations of between 9 and 7 percent that had been born overseas, it can be stated that migration from the towns and cities of Lancashire in the post-war period could be a strong factor in reducing crowds for Lancashire football clubs (see Figure 5.11).²⁰ This is particularly the case when one considers the possibility that out-migration from Lancashire was age specific in the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst evidence on this issue is sparse, if one proposes the probability that most of the people leaving Lancashire towns in the immediate post-war period were from the rising generation, then the long-term damage that this loss of population could do to football attendances in the region can be better understood.²¹

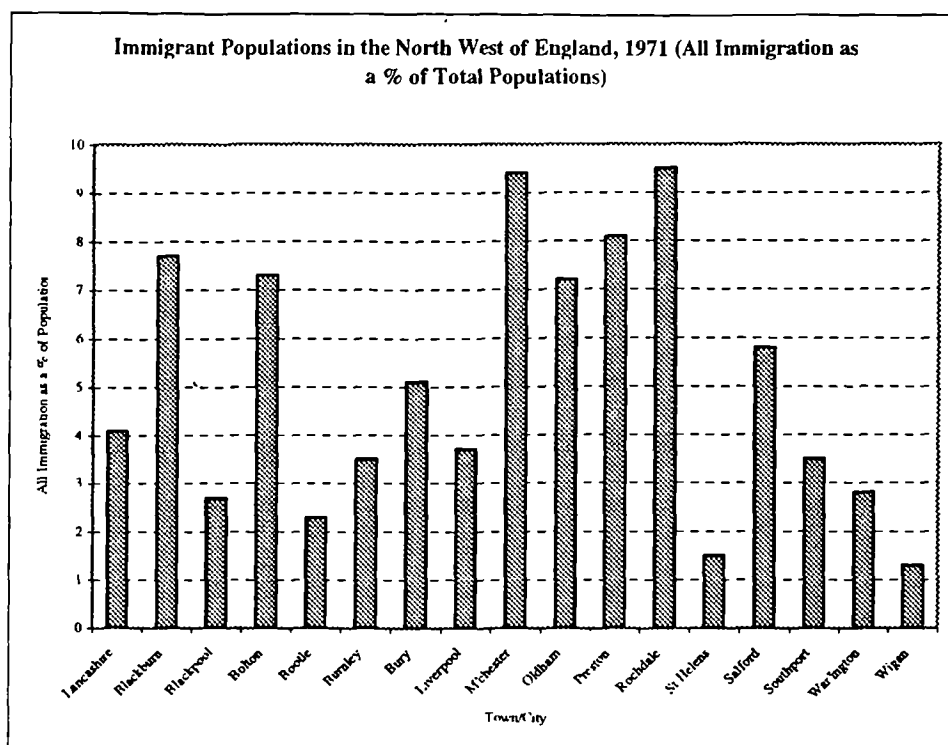


Figure 5.11.

What is certainly clear is that much of the movement from Lancashire’s major towns and cities in the 1950s and 1960s can be attributed to the substantial post-war relocation of people that took place as a result of the region’s enormous burden of bad housing. Planning for redevelopment had begun during the war, and by the mid 1960s the fruits of these studies could be seen in the “vast Diaspora” taking up their homes in new satellite and over-spill towns.²² The population of Kirkby grew from 3,210 in 1951 to 52,139 in 1961, and similar plans were conceived for, among other places, Skemmersdale, Runcorn, Warrington, Lancashire New Town (Leyland and Chorley), Ellesmere Port, Macclesfield, Widnes and Wilmslow. As clearance of slums and bad housing in the main towns and cities began, people were relocated, often miles away from their ‘homes’, disrupting “long established communities relying on strong family ties and friendship patterns”.²³

A direct link between population shifts associated with new housing developments and football attendances is difficult to assert. However, with reference to work conducted on the relationship between sport and community, it can be concluded that disruption of working-class social relations in the post-war era may have had a profound affect both physically and mentally on people's willingness to attend football matches. In being removed from the communities and locations in which they may have watched football, many members of the post-war working class simply had no option but to stop attending football, whilst others may have lost their inclination. Although it must be noted that much of this relocation did not take place until the mid-1950s, it can be concluded that mass population movement did have a detrimental affect on people's desire and ability to attend football, and could, therefore, bear some responsibility for localised post-war declining crowds.

A further factor that may help explain declining attendances at post-war English football matches is the amount of single and married men in the post-war population of Britain. In Political and Economic Plannings's 1966 report on football, it was asserted that changing working patterns had altered the structure of the weekend, leaving men under the influence of their wives on Saturdays rather than at work. The logic behind this assertion was that women have a negative influence on football attendance, particularly when finding themselves in a strong position to persuade their husbands not to attend. If this is correct, then it is vital to note that the amount of married men in the British population rose consistently in the early post-war period. Between 1931 and 1951, the number of married men in England and Wales increased by 17.8 percent, a figure that rose again slightly in the next ten years. Even more

remarkably, the number of married men aged 20-24 in the population of England and Wales rose by 71.7 percent between 1931 and 1951, and a further 30.4 percent between 1951 and 1961 (see Figure 5.12).



Figure 5.12.

These data suggest that the number of young males under the alleged 'negative' influence of their wives was rising substantially in the immediate post-war period, potentially undermining their willingness to attend football matches consistently. If this was the case, non-attendance may not have been entirely forced upon them. Academics such as Eric Dunning have stated that the balance of power between males and females was undergoing an equalising shift in this period, weakening certain men's insistence on spending their leisure time away from their wives.²⁴

In contrast to those who have suggested that increased marriage rates produced a negative influence on men's willingness to attend post-war football matches, evidence presented elsewhere in this project indicates that the negative influence of women on football attendances has been overstated. In Chapter Four it was noted how women made notable contributions to football crowds in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and that they frequently attended matches with husbands and partners. Furthermore, it was stated that women (much more than men) ceased to attend football once they were married, particularly after they had started a family. This indicates that domesticity and having children have a negative affect on both sexes' ability to attend football matches, and that increased marriage rates in the post-war period undermined football attendances, not because of women's dislike of the game, but because marriage brings increased responsibilities for both partners.

5.3: Social Influences on Football Attendance, 1975-85

The debate on the socio-economic basis of declining football attendances in Lancashire from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s is not as varied or as complicated as the debate for the previous twenty years. Save for those analysts who choose to assert the total importance of hooliganism as the cause of declining attendances from the mid-1970s, commentators who have emphasised the importance of social factors in influencing the habits of supporters have traditionally turned to unemployment as the focus of their debate. Other social influences on football attendance such as population trends, marriage rates and the role of television have received comment for this period in publications such as the Second Chester Report. However, it is instructive to note that the Second Chester Report focused on two key factors in its

analysis of attendance falls from the 1970s: rising unemployment and falling real wages. Let us now consider evidence of unemployment and declining affluence in Lancashire from the mid-1970s, and how it relates to people's propensity to watch football matches.

It is no surprise to note that the rate of unemployment in Lancashire (as part of the North West of England) did rise during the 10 years after the mid-1970s (see Figure 5.13).²⁵

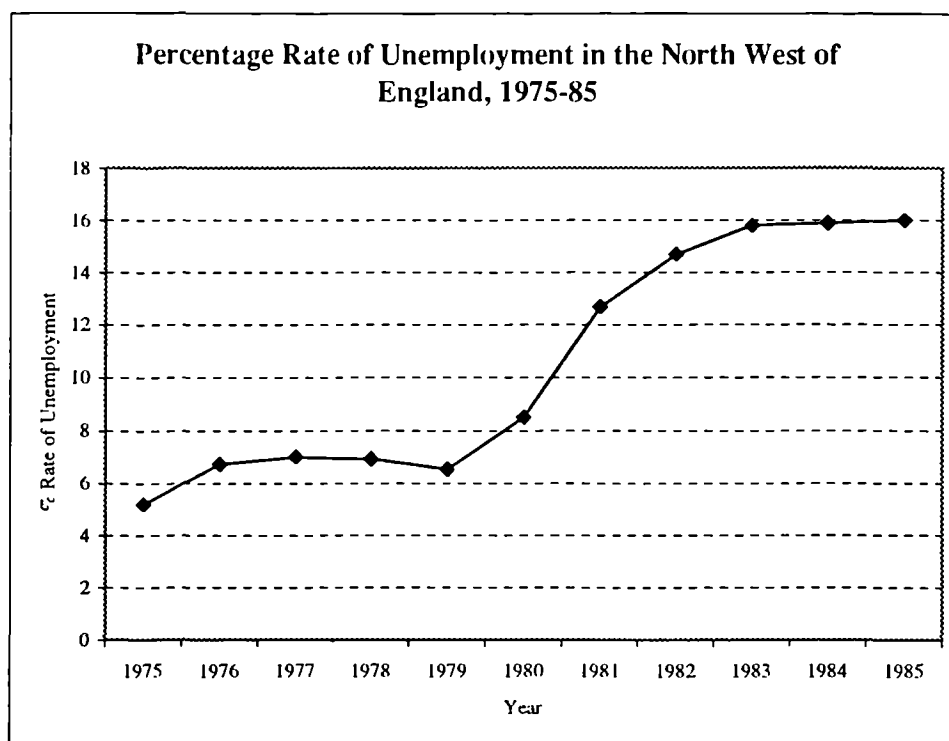


Figure 5.13.

Between 1975 and 1980 the unemployment rate in the North West increased by 63.5 percent, and from 1980 to 1985 it rose again, this time by 88 percent. By 1985, 16 percent of adults in the region were unemployed. That the majority of these were

male and from the age groups that are most likely to attend football matches indicates the problems that football clubs faced as a result of the economic plight of their most loyal constituents (see Figure 5.14).²⁶ Some unemployed fans would undoubtedly have continued to attend games during this period though sheer determination and sacrifice, but the simple hand-to-mouth realities of living without a wage would for most have precluded attendance. .

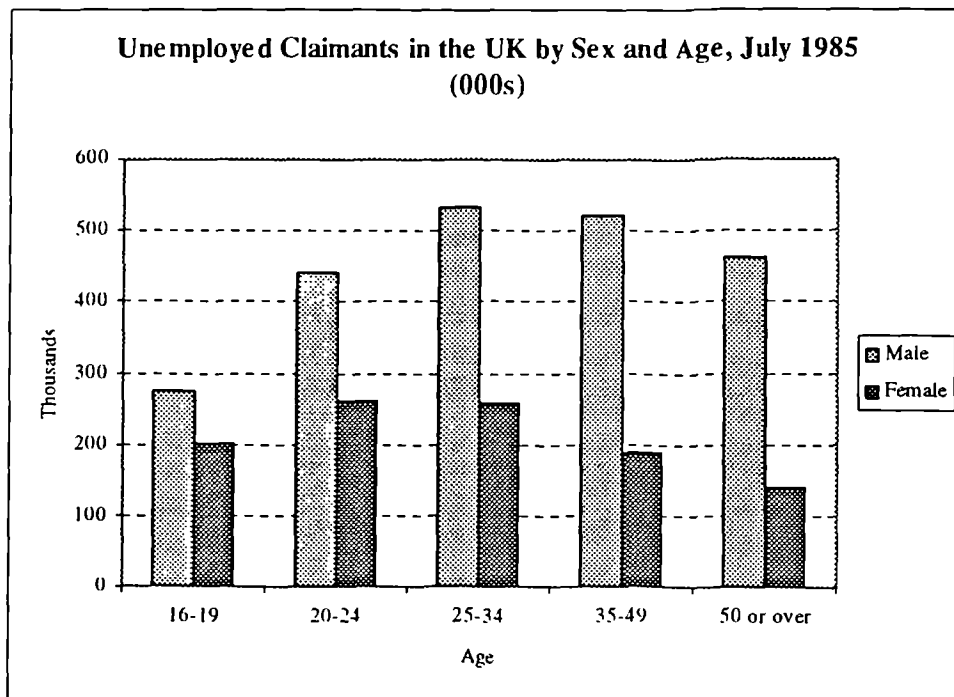


Figure 5.14.

If one studies closely attendance changes at clubs housed in areas that were particularly hard hit by unemployment in the late 1970s and early 1980s, a seemingly clear connection between unemployment rates and attendance decline can be established. The city of Liverpool was, of course, hit hard by unemployment during the 1970s and 1980s and by 1981 had an unemployment rate of 19.8 percent: an increase of 104 percent on the previous 10 years.²⁷ Even more notably, the rate of

male unemployment in Liverpool in 1981 was 24 percent, meaning that nearly one out of every four economically active males was out of work.²⁸ The effect that this had on football attendances in the city was marked. Between 1979 and 1984, Liverpool Football Club endured a decline in average attendance of 31.1 percent, despite winning the First Division Championship in 1979, 1980, 1982 and 1983. Everton were subject to an even greater average attendance fall of 45.4 percent in the same period, again despite some successes on the field of play (see Figure 5.15).

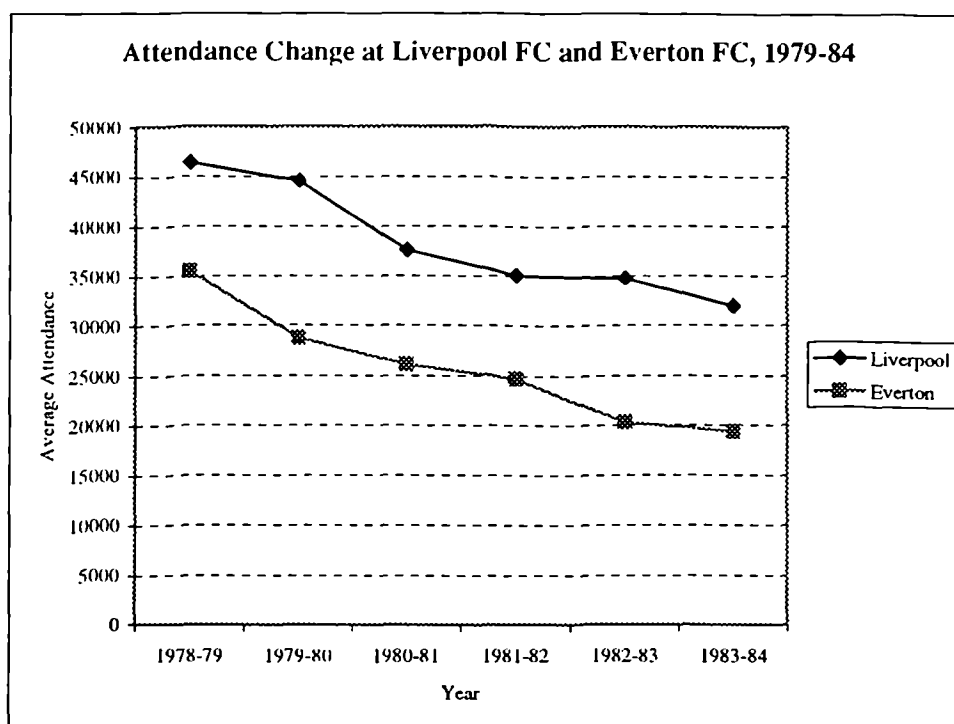


Figure 5.15

With this evidence, it can be concluded that unemployment was one of the key factors in the attendance declines endured by Liverpool and Everton in the late 1970s and early 1980s, particularly as they were so pronounced when compared with some other clubs in the region.

One other football club that endured falls in attendance in the late 1970s and early 1980s that could be associated with local economic decline is Preston North End. Preston suffered a decline in attendance of 62.3 percent between 1979 and 1984 (see Figure 5.16).

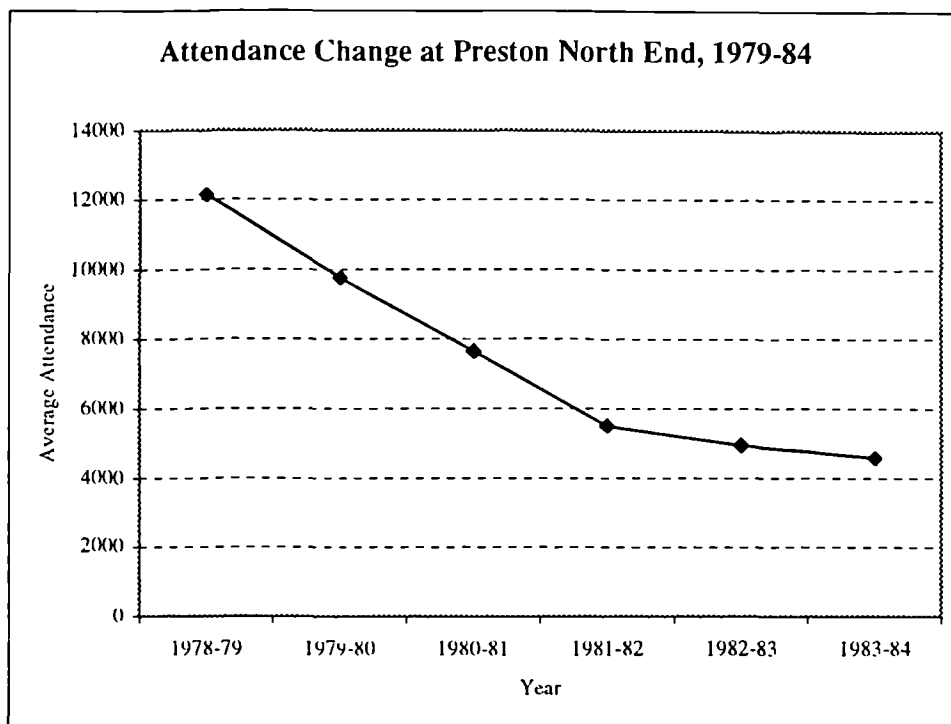


Figure 5.16

Whilst some of this reduction is undoubtedly attributable to the club's declining playing performance during this period (they were relegated from Division Two at the end of the 1980-81 season), it can also be argued that some of it resulted from the economic crisis that gripped Preston and the surrounding area, particularly in the early 1980s. In 1979-80, much of Preston's manufacturing industry disappeared, including the last large factory that survived from the cotton age: Carrington-

Viyella's textile mill at Bamber Bridge.²⁹ Even new industries that had saved the town when the textile industry had gone into decline in the post-war period were hit, with British Aerospace closing its Strand Road Works and British Leyland making 4,000 unemployed at the old Leyland Motors plants. The greatest disappointment of all, however, was the closing of the Albert Edward Dock in the town that had existed since the 1880s.³⁰ This was a significant psychological blow to industry in Preston and led to levels of unemployment in the town that had not been experienced since the 1930s. Whether Preston North End were failing on the field of play or not in the early 1980s was possibly irrelevant. Their crowds may have plummeted anyway when faced with a socio-economic context as extreme as this.

In addition to unemployment and economic decline, the Second Chester Report of 1983 suggested that declining affluence was a key factor in declining attendances at English football from the late 1970s onwards. Whilst figures for affluence for Lancashire are difficult to obtain, if national figures are compared with the Second Chester Report's contention it appears that levels of affluence in the UK during the late 1970s and 1980s were not as low as would first seem to be the case (see Figure 5.17).³¹

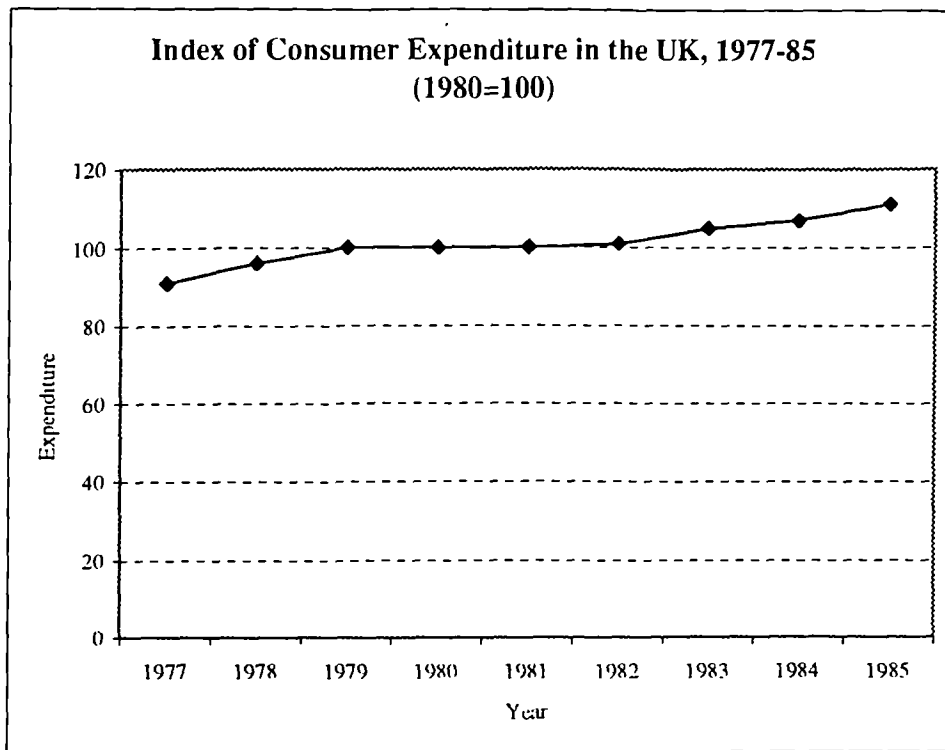


Figure 5.17.

The above graph indicates that between 1977 and 1985 consumer expenditure at constant prices in the UK rose by 22 percent. Save for a three year period of stagnant consumer spending between 1979 and 1981, growth was continual during this period which indicates that whilst the late 1970s and early 1980s were undoubtedly a difficult period for many social groups in Britain, sufficient people still had enough wealth to drive an increase in consumer spending. In relation to football attendances, this may not amount to a significant piece of evidence. After all, Lancashire football clubs' main constituents in the 1970s and 1980s were members of the working class: those who were hardest hit by the economic downturn of the period. Moreover, it is likely that consumer spending was maintained and increased in the late 1970s and early 1980s, not in urban areas of Lancashire that were contending with unemployment rates of around 16 percent, but in areas such as the South East that had

an unemployment rate of only 9.7 percent in 1985.³² Rather than being a vital piece of rebuffing evidence for arguments put forth by the Second Chester Report, then, this data simply provides an important corrective to those authors who have not paid sufficient attention to temporal and geographical variations in their analyses.

5.4: Oral History Testimony on Reasons for Declining Attendances at Lancashire Football Matches, 1946-85

Many elements of socio-economic change detailed above tend to a greater or lesser degree to support established analyses of declining attendances at English football matches in the post-war period. It is important, however, not to draw hasty conclusions from these data and to not presume the influence of reified social factors on people's willingness to attend football matches. In line with the principles of sociology expounded by the figurational school, it must be remembered that power is never a zero-sum matter and that people's agency in determining their decisions must be recognised.

The most effective way of investigating the personal decisions that contributed to the post-war attendance decline in football in Lancashire is to interview post-war football supporters themselves. To explain why they or people they knew stopped attending matches, many supporters referred to changes in personal and social circumstances that occurred from the 1960s onwards. One supporter of Manchester City stated that getting married had coincided with the end of his regular attendance at Maine Road in the late 1960s. He stated that:

Getting married made a big difference because we went to live in Wigan, which made it difficult because I didn't have a car at the time. And then the children came along and your priorities change. You can't dash off on a Saturday afternoon, it's not fair on them. In all honesty, you enjoy being with the children, or you should do.³³

The same respondent also recalled that the advent of football on television had made a marked difference to his desire to attend matches: "Once football became very popular and more football went on television", he stated, "I was less inclined to go and watch. I thought, you know, I'll go and see it next week when they're playing such and such".³⁴

Another respondent who stopped attending Liverpool matches in the same period also put his non-attendance down to a change in personal circumstances. Firstly, and in common with the respondent above, he noted that "settling down" had done much to reduce his interest in football:

It was a tremendous thrill going to Anfield when I was young, and if you arrived a bit late you could hear the crowd, and the noise was absolutely wonderful. I don't know how you would describe it, not mass hysteria, but its something like that, it was a fantastic sensation.... Once I got married and one thing and another, my wife became the all important thing.... Then we had a young daughter ... so of course she was the apple of me eye, and then me son was born. So really, at the weekend I was working, and if I had time off at the weekend I used to take them out somewhere.

This respondent also noted that just prior to his self-imposed exile from Anfield in the early 1960s, he had set up his own business and as a result lost much of his leisure time. He moved to a new home because of a rise in his income and, after number of overseas holidays, moved for a short time to Canada. This, he claimed, had broadened his outlook on life and changed the way in which he regarded football:

Through being in Canada your mind broadens out and I became interested in watching ice hockey and things like that, and football faded into the background. When I came back and Shankly came of course, well it was great, but I still didn't have the interest that I had when I was a young man.³⁵

Quite simply, this respondent claimed to have lost interest in football as his income increased, and stated that he replaced football with new leisure pursuits more befitting of his new affluent status. He also noted that, much like the previous respondent, increased coverage of football on television meant that he did not have to attend games to satisfy his reduced interest in the game. For the late 1960s and early 1970s, he stated: "Of course, I'd be watching on television too in those days. Liverpool were often on television ... because they were doing so well in all these European Cups".³⁶

These respondents were typical of a number of the interviewees who stopped attending football matches in Lancashire in the 1960s and early 1970s. Frequently, respondents asserted that marriage, the ownership of a new home, a change of job, or a move away from their home town or city precipitated a decline in their attendance at football matches in the late 1960s in particular. One Manchester United supporting respondent recalled that a temporary migration overseas during the 1970s had resulted in a terminal decline in his interest in football:

I went to Australia in '71, and I'd say when the European side started to break up I stopped going. I must have paid my last visit to Old Trafford in about 1970, '71. I went in December to Australia and when I came back two or three years later, I just didn't recognise the team or the fans ... and I never went again. The only time I've been to Old Trafford since is to watch rugby league. I listen to them on the radio a lot, and I'd sooner listen to all the comments and all that. If I watch a match on TV, I'll enjoy it, but I can soon get bored.³⁷

The same respondent also noted that many of his fellow Manchester United supporters had stopped attending matches at the same time as him, although for less discernable reasons:

You see, the blokes I went with, we went for a number of years. But, you know, I think it's like anything else, you come to another phase in your life. And, funnily enough, out of all the boys that I knew, three of them started to watch Salford [rugby league] ... My mates who stopped going and went to Salford instead, I think they just got to the same stage as what I did where they just got disillusioned. And they were United fanatics as well through all the 1950s and that. But it's just something that ticked off in all of us and we began to lose interest.³⁸

Other respondents who claimed that changes in their personal social circumstances had negatively influenced their football attendance from the 1960s were much clearer in their explanations. One stated that with hindsight he simply “didn't have time” to attend football matches as he reached his mid-30s, and that “the wife, the kids, the house, work, everything” increasingly filled the time that had been given over to supporting his football team.³⁹ Another stated, maybe more tellingly, that:

When I got my new job [in the 1960s], me and the wife could afford to do things that my Mum and Dad and her Mum and Dad could never do, you know, do up the house properly, go on holiday with the kids, that sort of thing. There just wasn't time to go to the football as much as I used to. ... Where we moved to as well, not as many fellas went to football or talked about it, so I suppose I lost a bit of interest, although I still watched the games on telly.⁴⁰

Other respondents also told similar stories. One Manchester United supporter who reflected on his reduced interest in football from the early 1980s recalled that he “was completely committed and dedicated to football after the war, but I suppose then there weren't the distractions that came along later, such as DIY, in my case Grandchildren,

and I suppose television".⁴¹ Continuing on the theme of increased television ownership from the 1960s, the same respondent also stated:

People did go to football more after the war. Because, don't forget, familiarity breeds contempt. Nowadays football's never off television, and even in the seventies the highlights of games were repeated throughout the week, whereas before you had to actually get off your backside and get on the bus and go and pay to see them if you wanted to see them, and just hope that they played well.⁴²

The idea that television and other competitors for leisure time had a detrimental effect on people's willingness to attend football matches in the 1970s and 1980s was shared by respondents who had not necessarily stopped attending matches in that period. One supporter stated that in his opinion crowds had declined because:

More attractions were probably coming in. You know, the motorcar was becoming more popular and the television. People had always regarded football as a Saturday afternoon sport, but men were probably going out more with their wives shopping.⁴³

Another respondent echoed this view and stated that people he knew had stopped attending matches regularly because:

More of them had motorcars and were able to travel and more of them were going shopping with their wives ... There was a disruption because Saturday afternoon was always football. And 5 o'clock Sports Report would come on and everybody would come together to find out who'd won, lost and drawn. And Saturday night you got a football paper, you used to go to the shops to get a football paper and that was it. Now that's gone. People are happy doing other things because they've got the choice.⁴⁴

Clearly for these respondents the era of social change and consumer choice that accompanied increasing post-war affluence was a major factor in explaining football crowd decline in Lancashire in the 1960s and 1970s.

Other respondents who had stopped attending football matches from the 1970s stated that their reduced interest in the game resulted from broadly defined 'new interests'. Two respondents explained that they had stopped attending matches regularly in the early 1980s because they had started to participate, in one way or another, in sporting activities themselves. The first explained that:

Me and my husband, we'd go to North End one week and Blackburn t'other. That tailed off at the end of the seventies, though, for one reason and another, mainly I think because we developed other interests ... My husband as an amateur [football] player started to run teams or help to run teams, and I ended up helping running teams and washing all the kit and stuff like that. Now it was usually Sunday League stuff, but eventually I think that was one of the reasons we stopped going to the professional game because we got involved in local amateur football as well. I used to be the treasurer.⁴⁵

The second respondent, a sports coach of many years, stated that he believed an increase in large numbers of people playing 'Sunday football' in Manchester from the late 1970s had certainly had an effect on football crowds in the city.⁴⁶ Whether this was the case or not is difficult to assert. Nevertheless, such a claim fits with the general feelings of other respondents that increased leisure choices in the 1970s and 1980s, however defined, negatively influenced people's propensity to attend football matches. A number of respondents clearly stated that regular attendance at football matches simply became more difficult for them as the post-war period progressed. For them, radical changes in social and economic circumstances in the 1960, 1970s and 1980s reduced their willingness or ability to matches, although most kept in touch with football through television and other media.

A large number of respondents who stopped attending football matches from the 1960s onwards noted a number of football-specific, as well as socio-economic factors, in their decision to stay at home. Some stated a perception that playing standards had declined in the 1960s, 1970 and 1980s, whilst others noted that a deterioration in relations between fans and players had occurred in the same period. Many respondents claimed that prior to the 1960s footballers were regarded as “ordinary people who had made it in life”.⁴⁷ One Manchester City fan explained fan-player relations in Manchester in the 1950s thus:

My father was a City supporter through and through, from the days when they [players] lived next door to you in a terraced house in the side streets near the ground – he was born and lived near the ground – and the players tended to be very close to the spectators in those days, earnings wise and everything.⁴⁸

Another respondent continued this theme when he claimed of players in the 1950s that:

There was the odd occasion when you would encounter these people [players]. They weren't anything as remote as they are today because they shared your background, you know, they'd perhaps worked in the local mills at some stage or other.⁴⁹

Most respondents were, in fact, replete with stories of their perceived ‘closeness’ to football players in the 1950s. Some of their claims may have been slightly embellished, but at the very least they represent a collective memory amongst Lancastrian football supporters that football players, and by implication the game itself, belonged to them more in the 1950s than later. One Manchester City fan claimed that:

In the fifties, players used to, if there was a break in the game, chat to spectators who were sat on the wall, there were no fences then. They used to chin wag with them then, because a lot of the players lived locally. A lot of the players lived in local terraced houses. They didn't live out in the exclusive places like they do now. And of course local people knew them, they'd see them in the park, or you'd see them walking round ... They were part of the community in that sense.⁵⁰

The same respondent also said of football players in the 1950s that:

They were friendly to people, and people used to chat to them. We had one or two living round here that people knew. If the game hadn't been a brilliant one when they saw them they'd have a bit of a leg-pull ... it was all good-humoured stuff.⁵¹

Another City supporter explained exactly how many footballers had lived around his Manchester home in the 1950s:

Frank Swift used to walk from Maine Road to his house. And there'd always be a group of kids there and one of the kids would be carrying his brown paper bag with his boots in it. The former manager of Liverpool, Joe Fagan, used to live just over the road here where all the football pitches are now – there used to be prefabs there and Joe lived there. The Robinsons, Peter Robinson who used to play for Manchester City and his brother Bill who played for Accrington Stanley, they lived on those prefabs over there. Anderton who scored a goal for Manchester United in the '48 Cup Final, actually lived back-to-back, his garden backed on to me here. This is where he lived on the back. They lived on the estates. You could see them in the shops and the post office.⁵²

Other respondents explained ways in which their everyday lives in the 1950s brought them into contact with football players. One Manchester United supporter who worked in Old Trafford explained how his job had enabled him to develop friendships with United players into the 1960s:

I used to deliver Corona pop to the United ground. And ... the last terraced house on the left hand side before you cross over the road to the development

office, I think her name was Mrs. Rimmer, and in the house lived Johnny Giles, and quite a few of the reserves, and I used to deliver pop there each day ... And I got friendly with them. And Nobby's [Stiles] Dad used to have a skin disease which my Dad had, same thing, and they used to go in hospital together and Nobby gave me a ticket for the '63 game against Leicester. And after the game ... I said to Nobby, what shall we do if you win? 'Come to the hotel', he said, I think it was the Savoy. So four of us, all dressed smartly, went to the Savoy hotel. And at the gate at the door I said, 'Friends of Nobby Stiles', and the concierge said 'I've heard that one before'. Fortunately for us, Nobby was coming down going to the toilet. He said, 'Hello Ken', I said, 'Hello Nobby, I can't get in'. And he was half pissed. He shouts, 'Come in', so the four of us went in and it was the after-the-match banquet.⁵³

Another respondent, also a Manchester United supporter, recalled:

We used to take them as normal lads ... When we used to go to the cricket in the post [football] season, when the [football] players were just training to get ready for the new season, I saw Duncan Edwards and lads like that all at the cricket ground. After they'd done their training they'd come to the cricket and really have a good laugh. And they were great lads, have a joke with us and talk about the cricket, you know 'he should have caught that', or whatever.⁵⁴

A number of respondents also stressed economic similarities between football players and supporters in the 1950s. One noted that, "some of the players were only on a little bit more money than people in factories so there wasn't the aura around them. You could talk to players ... they always talked. You would see them in Manchester shopping".⁵⁵ Another also claimed that "in those days they [the players] only got a couple of quid more than we got"⁵⁶, whilst another commented that he believed that players in the 1950s were "normal people" because "they lived in typical houses".⁵⁷ Continuing the same theme, a number of respondents commented on the types of transport that players used in the 1950s to express the economic proximity that they perceived to exist between players and fans. One Manchester City supporter claimed that:

I used to work on the Buses after the war, on North Western Buses, and all the United players used to get on the bus, on the bus from Piccadilly to go to Old Trafford, all the players in the fifties, I knew everyone of them ... They used to get on my bus at half past nine in the morning, go to Old Trafford. No bloody cars or anything like that in them days. They all used to get on the bus and come back home again. We used to have a laugh.⁵⁸

Another fan stated that:

The players used to be brought in by friends, neighbours, very few had their own cars. Duncan Edwards ... used to cycle to the ground – he had a bike. Joe Hayes at Maine Road used to turn up for first team games with his boots in a paper bag.⁵⁹

Claims that Duncan Edwards, the iconic hero of Manchester United's 'Busby Babes' team of the 1950s, used to travel to Old Trafford on a bicycle were made by four separate respondents as evidence of the cultural and economic simplicity of football players in the 1950s. One stated that "Duncan Edwards wasn't getting all these big cars and all that. I believe he had a bicycle did Duncan Edwards. In fact there was a bit of trouble over him, because he was pulled up by the police without lights on his bicycle in the middle of the night",⁶⁰ whilst another recalled the same story by asking "Did you know that Duncan Edwards was arrested by the police for riding his bike without lights? He was let off with a caution you know".⁶¹

Another method that respondents used for expressing their perceived economic proximity to football players in the 1950s was to talk about the economic concerns and worries that they understood players of the period to have. One respondent spoke about the market stall that Blackburn Rovers' Bryan Douglas had in Blackburn in the 1950s and 1960s to supplement his income from football,⁶² whilst a Manchester

United supporter told the story of the financial implications that he believed followed being dropped from the Old Trafford first team in the 1950s:

I always remember when United struggled for a goalkeeper, and they struggled really until Harry Gregg came along. And when they signed Harry Gregg he replaced Ray Wood. And always remember a comment when Wood knew he was going to lose his place and then the win bonuses. He said 'this is a terrible blow to me because we've just had a new carpet in the front room'.⁶³

For these supporters, it was clear that football players in the 1950s led a fairly simple and modest existence, and in some cases faced the same financial worries and concerns as the majority of ordinary supporters.

Despite the wide agreement between most respondents that a social and economic proximity existed between players and supporters in the 1950s, a small number of dissenting voices were raised during interview. One respondent stated that he wasn't aware of a "relationship" between players and fans in the 1950s and that for him:

They [the players] were just performers. We didn't know them. By that time I'd grown out of hanging round dressing room doors looking for autographs. I don't think there was a relationship. Everybody thought they were over-paid at twenty pounds a week, for one-and-a-half hours work a week. I think there's always been that working-class jealousy of players being well paid by whatever standard it was at the time, for doing something like football.⁶⁴

Another respondent also noted the ways in which, in her opinion, people overstated the closeness of their relationship with footballers. Recalling journeys to see her father's family in Stoke-on-Trent in the 1950s, she stated:

Whenever we went to see his [her Dad's] family in the Potteries they always used to talk about Stanley Matthews as though they knew him personally. My relations were in business in the Potteries, and they always talked about him

like they knew him. They'd talk about where he was socialising, and he'd been seen in such and such a pub or eating establishment. I thought for a while that they knew him but they didn't ... it puzzled me no end as a kid.⁶⁵

This respondent's recollections of relations between football supporters and players in the 1950s is possibly closer to the 'reality' of events than some of the other memories expressed above. However, the reality of player/supporter relations in the 1950s is not of central importance here. The fact that most respondents believed that they were close to players in the 1950s, both socially and economically, clearly had great resonance for their understand of the game, and helped them justify why football was so important to them in that particular decade. An example of this comes from a Manchester City supporter who stated that he felt a special affinity to the club in the 1950s because he believed that "most of the players were either local lads or came from within twenty or thirty miles [of Maine Road]".⁶⁶ This recollection of Manchester City players of the 1950s is demonstrably incorrect. However, the fact that this supporter believed that most City players in the 1950s came from the local area helped him to construct and justify his special closeness to the club for that period.

For the purposes of explaining declining post-war football attendances in Lancashire, the detail provided above is important as many respondents used such explanations to justify why their feelings towards football changed so drastically in the 1960s. After the abolition of the maximum wage in English football in 1961, many respondents claimed that they perceived players as more remote and, therefore, less appealing. One noted that after the abolition of the maximum wage:

You tended not to give them [players] as much latitude as you previously did, mainly because you thought they were leading a fairly good lifestyle. I mean, I saw players here [Tranmere] that were exceptionally good, but there was a feeling then that they didn't justify the money.⁶⁷

Another respondent stated unequivocally that the abolition of the maximum wage had seen a decline in the attractiveness of football:

I think if there was a period when football deteriorated ... it was after 1961, because the players became more remote. You had George Best who was aged probably about twenty living in a big glasshouse in Wilmslow. Now that hadn't happened before. You knew kids who played for them ... they were blokes you met and you worked with them, this type of thing, and that didn't happen anymore after that.⁶⁸

This belief that football players became both socially and economically distant after the early 1960s was shared by a number of respondents. One Manchester City supporter contrasted the 1950s and 1960s by stating:

All these young lads who came up through the ranks [in the 1950s], we had an association with them, but all the big money stars, I think they were all more aloof really. I don't see how fans who came later associated themselves with players like we did.⁶⁹

Another supporter, again from Manchester, claimed that from the 1960s "all the players moved out to Sale, Cheadle, Worsely, Chadderton ... and the association between supporters and players got thinner and thinner and thinner".⁷⁰ A Manchester United supporter provided a similar opinion by claiming that the majority of United's players moved from local estates in the 1950s to "Alderley Edge or Wilmslow, or places like that" in the 1960s.⁷¹ The perceived new physical distance between players and fans in the 1960s was of central importance to a number of respondents in their explanations of why their feelings towards football clubs changed, not least because,

for them, the change signified a disruption of the representational relationship that had previously existed between players and supporters.

It was not only the physical distance between players and supporters in the 1960s that received comment from respondents. The economic distance that grew between the two, and funded the physical move of players to the suburbs, was also remarked upon by a number of supporters. Interestingly, some supporters clearly expressed a belief that football players were right to receive higher wages in the 1960s, but were still critical of the effect that it had on the game. One stated that he “didn’t mind players getting paid [more in the 1960s]. The removal of the maximum wage was right at the time because they [the players] weren’t getting paid properly”. However, the same respondent continued by stating: “the problem was that nobody else was getting paid properly and that caused problems”.⁷² Another respondent echoed the same feelings by remarking:

I know they [players in the 1960s] needed more money and it’s only fair that they should be paid for the amount of people that they were entertaining, but it still alienated a lot of people and started a problem that we’ve still got in the game today.⁷³

This respondent clearly believed that an economic bifurcation had occurred between football players and football supporters in the 1960s, and that such a process had led to a social division that endures in the game today. This claim was repeated by a number of other supporters who expressed a belief that football “had never been the same since the ‘50s”.⁷⁴ These opinions are important, not only because they may help to explain why some people stopped attending football matches in the 1960s and beyond, but also because they accord so strongly with the analysis of football

presented by Taylor in the early 1970s.⁷⁵ Whilst Taylor's analysis of the supposed rift that occurred between football players and fans after the abolition of the maximum wage was primarily focused on explaining increases in English football hooliganism in the 1960s, it is instructive to note that a number of respondents, all of whom would not have regarded themselves as hooligans, also perceived that football players became more socially and economically remote as the 1960s progressed. As stated earlier, whether this was simply a perception or not is not of great importance: the very fact that football supporters *perceived* an increased distance between themselves and players from the early 1960s may explain for some their reduced propensity to attend football matches after that period.

The other football-related factor that a number of respondents noted in their decision to stop attending matches, particularly from the early 1970s onwards was, of course, hooliganism. One respondent stated that:

By the mid 1970s you were having a lot of this hooligan problem, so you were disinclined to go. I thought, 'well I'm not going to football to get my head knocked off, I've got a wife and three children'.⁷⁶

Other respondents also stated that hooliganism, or at least the fear of hooliganism, had negatively influenced their inclination to attend football matches from the late 1960s and early 1970s. One Manchester United supporter recalled:

The last away game [1966-67] that I went to was a mid-week night match, United vs. Everton at Goodison. George Best, Denis Law. And why it was the last away game I ever had, it just sickened me what went on. On the railway station on the way back, it was silly really, there was a lot of hatred I think. But they just lined up on the station, all the Scousers, and they threw bricks, they threw everything. And I said 'that's enough for me'. ... When it starts to effect you like that, you start to think is it worth it ... It's alright talking about

it after all these years, but at the time it was damn frightening. The bottles and bricks just rained through the train station.⁷⁷

Other respondents also recalled similar stories. Another Manchester United supporter stated that he had stopped attending matches in the 1980s after an unpleasant experience at a home match:

The last game that I attended was United vs. Liverpool 12 or 14 years ago ... but there was a bit of violence that day ... It was after the match at Warwick Road station, and they were supposed to let United fans only on the train. But the fools let Liverpool fans on before the train went away. So as a result Liverpool supporters got on the train and started trying to sling us off. I was in a bit of a daze, wrestling and one thing and another, and I thought I'll keep down out the way. But when I got up, a Liverpool supporter was trying to cut the scarf off a United fan. I thought this is going a bit far. And to be truthful I haven't gone since".⁷⁸

Even if hooliganism didn't stop respondents from attending matches altogether, it could have an effect on the amount of matches for which they were present. One supporter recalled that he stopped attending away matches in the mid-1980s "because of all the violence".⁷⁹ He went on to recall:

I remember when we [Manchester United] played West Ham in the mid-'80s, I forget which year it was. Now don't forget I'd been watching football a long time, and I sensed there was something evil in air, the hate was unbelievable ... for me by that stage the game was sick on the field and sick on the terraces.⁸⁰

Whilst this evidence is noteworthy and important, it remains difficult to measure precisely the influence of hooliganism on supporters' decisions to stop attending football matches in the late 1960s and 1970s, or to measure how important this factor was *vis-à-vis* socio-economic factors. However, it is clear from these recollections

that a number of supporters perceived football grounds to be increasingly dangerous places from the late 1960s onwards and, therefore, decided to stay at home.

One other factor relating to declining football attendances in the 1970s that respondents raised was the issue of the cost of attending football matches, and how unemployment and other changes in the economic climate made it increasingly difficult to afford to attend matches as regularly as they had done in the past. One respondent who had been made redundant on Merseyside in the late 1970s, stated that he never lost interest in football during the 1970s and 1980s, but simply could not afford to attend as frequently as he would have liked.⁸¹ Another Liverpool supporter stated that many of the men who he had attended matches with in the early 1980s stopped going because of financial problems and that, despite being able to afford to attend himself, he felt less inclined to do so.⁸² In Manchester, also, supporters recalled the economic hardship of the 1970s and 1980s and how it had negatively influenced their ability to attend football matches. One respondent stated that economic recession during that period, “killed the game for the working-class. I was working, but I couldn’t afford to go. And they’re the roots. The poor people of the city, how could they afford to go?”⁸³ Furthermore, another Manchester-based respondent admitted, “I got hit by hard-times [in the 1970s] and it was a matter of insuring my car or paying for my season ticket ... but I was still going when I could afford it”.⁸⁴ These testaments are clear evidence of the economic problems that a number of Lancashire football supporters endured during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and how they effectively ended, or at least reduced, their chances of regular football attendance.

One other factor relating to economic adversity and the cost of admission that was raised by respondents when discussing declining football attendances in Lancashire from the 1970s onward was a reduction in the amount of matches and, more importantly, the amount of teams that they could afford to watch during the decade. As will be noted in Chapter Seven, it was common in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s for football supporters in Lancashire to attend the matches of more than one club. However, for a variety of sporting and socio-economic reasons (most of which are analysed in Chapter Seven) this ceased to be the case from the 1960s onwards as fans became much more focused on supporting one club. One simple reason that respondents gave for this development was that football became more expensive during the 1970s and 1980s and that, with financial hardship and unemployment being endured by many, fans simply could not afford to attend games every week. One respondent stated of the 1960s:

You never thought about the cost of going in. It never crossed your mind. Going to a match, the price of admission was a zilch thing to consider, you never even gave it a thought. It was about one-and-three or half-a-crown or something, and of course you could just go. Now you can't go unless you've got a ticket, you can't just go to any match.... In those days you could just go, you suddenly thought, 'I think I'll go', you know, change your mind at the last minute, and the cost never entered into it.⁸⁵

The cost of attending football in England did indeed rise from the 1960s onwards. In 1960-61 the basic cost of admission to an English football ground was 2s. 6d. By 1972 this had risen to 40 pence, and by 1983 minimum admission to First Division grounds stood at between £2 and £2.50.⁸⁶ For many supporters, these price rises did not pose a great problem for their attendance. However, for the unemployed and the low paid, increased admission costs may have stopped them habitually attending the

matches of more than one club and may have precluded the casual and occasional form of football attendance outlined above.

5.5: Summary of Evidence

A great deal of in depth and often-contradictory evidence has been outlined in this chapter. In this final section, arguments and evidence will be drawn together and evaluations of major points will be presented. It is not the aim of this section to provide a small number of definitive reasons for the non-attendance of supporters at football in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985: too many factors contributed to the attendance decline to state that one, two or three reasons were the only contributing aspects worth considering. Rather, major areas of debate concerning affluence, population movement and unemployment will be evaluated to measure the role that they played in people's decisions to attend football or not in the post-war period. Reflections will also be presented on the theoretical issues originally outlined in Chapter Two to indicate how evidence detailed above informs debates around structure and agency.

To appraise whether affluence should be considered an important issue in assessments of declining support for football in Lancashire between 1946 and 1975, it must be concluded that considerable attention should be paid to geographical and temporal variations within the post-war period. It is clear that much previous work conducted on the relationship between football attendance and affluence has over-estimated the prevalence of post-war prosperity, and has ignored the exact chronology of rises in various facets of consumerism. Whilst it is perfectly possible that

increasing consumer expenditure had a significant influence on the size of football crowds in Lancashire from the late 1950s, it should be recognised that little evidence of this correlation exists for the previous period. More importantly, it should be noted that some areas of Lancashire were in clear economic difficulties for much of the period between 1946 and 1975, suffering concomitant unemployment and reductions in affluence. This indicates that a high level of care and attention must be applied to studies of football crowds and affluence in the post-war period and that many of the common assumptions employed by academics and contemporary experts need to be reappraised.

Great care is also required when discussing the influence of population shifts on post-war football attendances in Lancashire. The shift that occurred in the young male population of Britain during the 1950s and 1960s is too marginal to be considered a major factor in reducing football attendances in Lancashire during this period. However, the striking falls in population that befell many of the major towns and cities of the region in the mid-1950s and 1960s are worthy of consideration and must be viewed as a major influence on football clubs' declining attendances. This is particularly the case when evidence of population shifts within Lancashire are considered alongside theoretical discussions of football and social identity (as will be presented in Chapter Seven).

Of the other population statistics considered above, those pertaining to increasing post-war marriage rates in England and Wales may offer some hint as to why football support declined in Lancashire between 1946 and 1975. As noted, the marriage rate for young males rose consistently in the post-war period, supporting those academics

and contemporary experts who have previously asserted the importance of increasing domesticity as a factor in falling football attendance. However, if one concludes that increasing marriage rates were influential in determining Lancashire supporters' propensity to attend football in the post-war period, due care and attention must be given to the theoretical basis on which this correlation is founded. It does not appear that women had a negative affect on men's football attendance during this period as many commentators have previously claimed. Rather, evidence on the social composition of football crowds and oral history evidence presented above suggests that increased domesticity had a detrimental influence on both sexes' ability to attend football matches in the post-war period, particularly for those couples that had children.

If attention is now turned to the years between 1975 and 1985, evidence presented on declining attendances in this period indicates that unemployment was a central factor in determining people's decisions to cease supporting football clubs. In areas such as Liverpool and Preston, economic conditions in the late 1970s and 1980s were simply too extreme not to have had an affect on people's ability to consume entertainment such as football. However, socio-economic factors such as unemployment were not the only influences that encouraged people to stopping attending football in Lancashire during the late 1970s and 1980s: hooliganism, or at least the perception of hooliganism, also seems to have played a significant role in encouraging people to stay away from football clubs. Oral history is particularly interesting on this issue, and indicates that people who did not lose their jobs in the late 1970s and 1980s sometimes found football-specific reasons to stop attending football in the period, even if their personal economic situation was relatively buoyant.

5.8i: Structure and Agency Revisited

The oral history evidence presented in this chapter has performed the important task of identifying how macro-social and macro-economic trends in the post-war period actually changed the ways in which people in Lancashire chose to relate to the game of football. If the socio-economic analysis presented in the first half of this chapter had been presented without the accompanying qualitative data that followed, relationships between post-war social and economic change and people's behaviour could only have been assumed rather than observed. Through the use of oral history, analysis was broken down to a new level of preciseness where the *personal choices* that Lancashire football supporters made in the face of social and economic change could be identified.

From the evidence presented above, it is clear that many oral history respondents who enjoyed an increase in personal affluence in the 1950s and 1960s did, to a greater or lesser degree, come to attend football matches less frequently. However, rather than this being an effect of a constantly predictable inverse relationship between affluence and football attendance, their decision to attend less matches often resulted from changes in their personal circumstances that, for them at least, precluded regular attendance at matches. Some respondents moved home, others felt that a greater commitment to the private sphere befitted their new status, and others still simply felt that they needed to spend more time with their wives and families as they reached their late 20s and early 30s. One respondent did feel that his previous interest in football fundamentally did not accord with his new affluent lifestyle in the 1960s, but he was the exception rather than the rule. This shows that practical considerations and

personal interpretations of social and economic developments in the post-war period were the true drivers of change in football attendances in Lancashire, not reified social forces.

The same point can be made for football supporters who stopped attending games because of sport-specific considerations in the post-war period. Supporters who felt that a bifurcation had developed between supporters and football clubs in the 1960s were making personal choices about how they felt the game should be run, and were critical about football clubs' and football players' increasing distance from their 'traditional' fan-base. Those who stopped attending matches because of their perception of hooliganism were also representative of the same process. For them, football had become a game that did not relate to their values anymore: it had become, in their interpretation at least, dangerous, overly aggressive, and representative of the worst excesses of working-class youth culture. As with the group that benefited from post-war affluence, these people made decisions to abandon football because of their interpretations of the game, not because of always predictable relationships between sporting change and social behaviour.

The observations contained in this section indicate the importance of qualitative *and* quantitative approaches in understanding behaviour change in the context of football supporting patterns in Lancashire in the post-war period. Whilst macro-level analyses provide a useful starting point for understanding people's decreasing willingness to support Lancashire football clubs from the early 1950s onwards, without close analysis of people's interpretations of their behaviour analysis would ultimately remain at the level of speculative relationships between social, economic and sporting

phenomena. This indicates the importance of analysing structure and agency *at the same time* in any study of social change, and of not simply assuming the processes through which social changes, in any context, occur.

¹ The rise between 1948-58 was 18.4%. The rise between 1958-68 was 29.5%. Figure given is manual workers' average weekly wage. Calculated from information in Madgwick, P.J. *et al.*, *Britain Since 1945* (London: Hutchinson & Co Ltd, London, 1982), table 2.2, pp. 82-3.

² HMSO, *Social Trends* (London, 1970), table 42, p. 92.

³ *Ibid.*, table 42, p. 92.

⁴ Mogridge, M.J.H., *The Car Market* (London: Pion Limited, 1983), table A2.1, p. 89.

⁵ Rise between 1949 and 1959 was 5291.6%. Bowden, S. & Offer, A., 'Household Appliances and the Use of Time: The United States and Britain Since the 1920s', *Economic History Review*, XLVII, 4, 1994, pp. 745-746.

⁶ Relationships between pertinent variables were assessed using a Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Data analysis was performed using the Microsoft Excel package.

⁷ 19.5% of wired households had televisions in 1953. By 1958 this figure had risen to 55.2%. *Ibid.*, pp. 746-746.

⁸ Mogridge, *The Car Market*, p. 89. This point is also made by Marwick, A., *British Social History Since 1945* (3rd ed.) (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1996), pp. 32-3.

⁹ Phillips, C.B. & Smith, J.H., *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 317-318.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 320.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

¹⁴ On north-east Lancashire in the 1950s and 1960s see: Smith, D., *Lancashire* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969), pp. 204-207.

¹⁵ *Housing and Construction Statistics*, Sept. Qtr, 1988, part 2, table 2, p. 83.

¹⁶ 29.5% of the housing stock was owner-occupied in 1951. This figure had risen to 42.7% by 1961.

Ibid., table 2, p. 83.

¹⁷ Figure given is a comparison of the population of England & Wales at census in 1931 and 1981.

Mitchell, B.R., *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1988* (New York: Stockton Press, 1992), p. 8.

¹⁸ Mitchell, B.R., *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 15.

¹⁹ Figures: Blackburn 17.1%, Bolton 13.0%, Burnley 22.1%, Manchester 29.1%, Preston 18.0%, Liverpool 28.7%. Calculated from Phillips & Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540*, table 5.2, p. 305.

²⁰ Source: Ibid., p. 304.

²¹ Thanks go to Professor John Walton for suggesting this point.

²² Ibid., p. 339.

²³ Ibid., p. 340.

²⁴ Dunning, E., 'Sport as a Male Preserve'. In Elias, N. & Dunning, E., *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1986).

²⁵ Source: *General Household Survey* (London: HMSO, 1986), p. 114.

²⁶ Source: *Social Trends* (London: HMSO, 1986), p. 81.

²⁷ Liverpool City Planning Department, *Census 1981: Liverpool City Key Statistics* (Liverpool: Liverpool City Planning Department, 1982), p. 30.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 32.

²⁹ Hunt, D., *The History of Preston North End Football Club: The Power, The Politics and The People* (Preston: PNE Publications, 2000), p. 240.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 241.

³¹ Source: *Social Trends*, 1986, p. 107.

³² *General Household Survey*, p. 114.

³³ Interview with A. McKenna, November 13th 1997.

³⁴ Interview with A. McKenna, November 13th 1997.

³⁵ Interview with A. Capleton, November 29th 1997.

³⁶ Interview with A. Capleton, November 29th 1997.

³⁷ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.

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- ³⁸ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ³⁹ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ⁴⁰ Interview with A. Hudson, November 8th 1997.
- ⁴¹ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁴² Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁴³ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ⁴⁴ Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ⁴⁵ Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ⁴⁶ Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ⁴⁷ Interview with J. Palin, November 3rd 1997.
- ⁴⁸ Interview with G. Gately, November 4th 1997.
- ⁴⁹ Interview with A. McKenna, November 13th 1997.
- ⁵⁰ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ⁵¹ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ⁵² Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ⁵³ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ⁵⁴ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ⁵⁶ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁵⁷ Interview with J. Palin, November 3rd 1997.
- ⁵⁸ Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ⁵⁹ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.
- ⁶⁰ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁶¹ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁶² Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ⁶³ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁶⁴ Interview with A. Hudson, November 8th 1997.
- ⁶⁵ Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ⁶⁶ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.
- ⁶⁷ Interview with J. Miller, November 17th 1997.

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- ⁶⁸ Interview with W. Monk, October 28th 1997.
- ⁶⁹ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ⁷⁰ Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ⁷¹ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ⁷² Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ⁷³ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ⁷⁴ Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ⁷⁵ Taylor, L, 'Football Mad: a Speculative Sociology of Football Hooliganism', in Dunning E (ed.) *The Sociology of Sport: a Selection of Readings* (London, 1971).
- ⁷⁶ Interview with B. Isherwood, November 5th 1997.
- ⁷⁷ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ⁷⁸ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁷⁹ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁸⁰ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ⁸¹ Interview with A. Capleton, October 29th 1997.
- ⁸² Interview with A. Hudson, November 8th 1997.
- ⁸³ Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ⁸⁴ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ⁸⁵ Interview with G. Gatley, November 4th 1997.
- ⁸⁶ See Russell, D., *Football and the English* (Preston: Carnegie, 1997), p. 186.

Chapter Six

Football, Community and Social Identity in Lancashire, 1946-1960

6.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, the influence of sporting and socio-economic change on football attendances in Lancashire in the post-war period was assessed. To extend this analysis, the following two chapters analyse the role of Lancashire football clubs in the creation of social identities and evaluate whether socio-economic change undermined football's function as a provider of social identities in the region from the 1960s onwards. This investigation is vital in terms of analysing post-war attendance decline at Lancashire football clubs as authors such as Critcher and Wagg have claimed that post-war socio-economic change diluted the social and geographic community-based ties that people had traditionally formed and reinforced through football clubs, leading to a split between football clubs and their communities and a downturn in people's propensity to attend football matches.¹

Before embarking on an analysis of the decline of identity formation through football from the 1960s, it is important to assess the social importance of football in Lancashire between 1946 and the early 1960s and to investigate whether one of the principal reasons behind people's football attendance in the region in this period was to create and reaffirm feelings of social identity and belonging. To do this, a detailed theoretical consideration of football and community is presented in this chapter, leading to a clear understanding of the role of football clubs in the creation of communal pride and civic

identities. Furthermore, an analysis of the role of the Lancashire press in the development of football clubs as civic institutions is offered, including an examination of the importance of FA Cup matches as communal events, and of football 'heroes' as repositories of local cultural values. Finally, the proposition that football clubs helped to foster *regional* as well as local identities in Lancashire in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s is debated, as is an introduction to the suggestion that the relationship between football and social identity weakened from the mid-1960s onwards.

6.2: Football, Family and Friends: Football and Community as Experienced by Oral History Respondents

The discussion of the relationship between football, community and the construction of local identity presented in this chapter will operate at a largely theoretical and structural level of analysis. This is necessary because of the difficulties of conducting grounded research on the construction of social belonging among football supporters or any other group. Simply put, it is impossible as a researcher to ask football supporters whether their attendance at football matches in Lancashire in the post-war period fulfilled a burgeoning need for belonging in the context of urban social anonymity without imposing a structure on their thinking that would not have been there previously. However, it is possible to question respondents on the habits of their football attendance in the post-war period, and to analyse whether their presence at games helped them to construct a greater sense of belonging to a 'local community' than might otherwise have been the case. Because of this, a short discussion of the lived experience of football and social identity for oral history respondents will now be

presented, before this chapter moves on to present a more traditional and 'macro' analysis of Lancashire football and the post-war development of football communities.

To analyse whether respondents' attendance at football matches in Lancashire in the post-war period provided them with feelings of social integration and belonging, a number of questions were asked about how respondents started attending football matches, who they attended matches with, and whether their experience of football throughout their supporting life produced for them familial feelings of closeness to other supporters. Through these questions, the degree to which post-war football supporters in Lancashire maintained family relations and created friendship groups around the game was assessed to investigate the lived experience of football, community and the production of social identity for post-war football supporters.

When questioned about their introduction to football in Lancashire the post-war period, most oral history respondents stressed the importance of family members in their formative years as regular supporters. Of the twenty respondents interviewed, twelve started attending matches with their fathers, two with their older brothers, one with his mother, and one with his uncle.² The other four respondents started attending with friends or work colleagues. A typical example of how supporters were introduced to football by their fathers in the immediate post-war period is provided in the following quote from a Manchester City supporter:

Well I started attending with my father of course. My father and my uncles were very keen supporters and had followed City since the early days in Hyde Road before they even went to Maine Road ... Their enthusiasm rubbed off on me I suppose and it gave us something in common. I liked going with my father

in the early days, but after the War I was old enough to go on my own or with friends.³

Another respondent explained in similar terms:

My father always used to go and watch [Manchester] City, and I'd go along with him. It was great and really exciting for a lad of my age, as I was then. But all my school friends were United, so after a while I started watching United games with them as well. I have a soft spot for City because of my father, but I suppose I became a United fan first and foremost.⁴

These respondents were typical of a number of supporters who started attending matches with family members in the 1940s, but later went on to attend matches with friends. From their recollections a clear theme emerged that, in the first instance, football attendance in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period was influenced by, and acted as an extension of, the strength of the family unit, thereby resulting in a high number of supporters who became supporters of the same teams as their fathers, uncles, and other family members. However, after leaving school many respondents started attending games with people from outside the family unit and, as can be seen above, in rare cases actually started supporting teams that were not followed by family members. This move to football supporting independence was often seen as being a significant moment in the life history of respondents as it usually coincided with their first full-time employment and the construction of associated new friendship groups.

The role of post-war football in the creation and maintenance of friendship groups inside and outside of work was a recurrent theme for respondents. Of those who attended games with work colleagues, a number of respondents explained how the structure of the working day on a Saturday in the late 1940s and 1950s influenced

whom they went to matches with and how they got there. Indeed, all of the respondents who attended matches with work colleagues in the period stated that they worked on Saturday mornings and that this dictated the routine of their attendance at Saturday afternoon matches. One supporter explained:

I worked at the railway station in Ashton at the time, and quite a number of the chaps were interested [in Manchester United] then. And the coach station, luckily, was just across road from there. So all we had to do, we could finish work say at dinner time, and just go across the road ... We'd finish work and get on the coach. Then we'd get off the coach near Warwick Road, walk up the road, and go in the nearest pub, something like the Trafford Arms, have a couple of pints, then go into the game.⁵

A similar account came from another supporter who also worked on Saturday mornings during the 1950s:

The thing was, I used to work 'til mid-day on a Saturday, so I was virtually trapped in the city. It's not as if I could go away for the day, I couldn't. I was working Saturday mornings so it seemed the simplest thing in the world to go to football in the afternoon with the men from work. We'd all jump the tram up to Maine Road and stand together. I went with that lot for years.⁶

For those supporters who did not attend football matches with work colleagues, significant friendship groups were still often formed and maintained around football. If respondents did not always travel to games with large groups of people, they frequently had friendship groups on the terraces that were sometimes maintained for years. One Manchester City supporter explained that his football friendship group was quite informal and did not really exist outside of the football stadium, but for him had formed an important and recurrent part of his life. He explained:

Where I used to stand on the Kippax [at Maine Road], people stood in the same place. You got to know them. You saw their youngsters grow up, like mine. You became almost personal friends and the only time you saw them was at football matches and you only knew their Christian names because they stood where you were. And if you were missing at any time or they were, you'd say 'is so-and-so not too well'. And everybody got to know one another and you'd see people coming in and out who you'd recognise.⁷

Another respondent explained a similar, though slightly more formal, process at Manchester United, again stressing how football formed the central theme of his specific friendship group:

When I was in my early twenties there used to be half a dozen of us that used to go [to watch Manchester United], and we used to meet in the same spot every week. That was half way up on the terracing ... and we'd always meet. They'd be six or eight of us at every home game ... Even when we played the European matches at Maine Road we'd get the coach from Eccles and it was all the same mates or people you knew.⁸

In addition to these respondents, others spoke not of the friendships that they had developed through attending football matches, but rather about the simple acquaintances that had emerged around their football supporting habits over the years. These respondents did not necessarily know the names of people who stood or sat near them at matches, and certainly did not categorise them as friends, but saw the same people at matches over a number of years and felt a certain familiarity with them. One Manchester City supporter explained that people who stood near to him at Maine Road in the 1950s became "almost like neighbours". He went on:

I've seen generations grow up at Maine Road. I've seen little lads brought in in arms ... A few years later they'll be about four feet tall and the next thing is they'll be bringing their own kids.⁹

For this respondent, the sense of community and social identity that came from being a Manchester City supporter was rooted simply in his knowledge of fellow supporters with whom he regularly shared a particular area of terracing space within Maine Road. Throughout his time as a supporter, he came to understand who attended matches together, which supporters were related to each other, and who was a regular supporter and who was not. This was enough to integrate this respondent into a football supporting community within which he felt comfortable and 'at home':

For me going to Maine Road was like going to your local [pub]. You saw the same faces, nodded to the same people and occasionally had a chat with the odd one. It wasn't like I had a lot of friends who went to City, but I always felt like I knew lots of people.¹⁰

This respondent's recollections indicate the different levels at which the lived experience of football, community and the construction of 'local' or social identity operated for football supporters in Lancashire in the post-war period. Some people went to matches with close family members and friends they had known for years. Others attended with work colleagues and people they had befriended more recently. However, for others it was simply enough to see the same faces on the terraces each week and occasionally share that recognition with a fellow fan.

Throughout this short section, similar accounts of the integration of post-war football supporters into identifiable communities have been presented from across the Lancashire region. However, it is possible that there were differences between clubs in the region in terms of the degree of communal familiarity that people on the terraces and in the stands shared with one another. One oral history respondent claimed that his experience of supporting Manchester City in the 1950s did not for him produce a great

familiarity with fellow supporters, but that when he occasionally attended games at Burnley FC with a friend he could see a real difference between the supporters of the two clubs:

I remember going to Burnley on more than one occasion and seeing the same Parson arrive 10 minutes after the start and walk along the row in front ... and he was addressing everybody like they were his flock. He was like, 'How are we all at home? How's Maisy and how's Charley?' ... Everybody knew each other at clubs like Burnley and Blackburn. You got the local vicars, the local doctors; you saw the same faces every week. They were proper Lancashire towns.¹¹

For this supporter, a key difference existed between the large, city-based football club that he supported and smaller town-based clubs in Lancashire in the late 1940s and 1950s. Although not expressed directly, this respondent hinted that the community integration that, in his opinion, existed outside of football in towns such as Blackburn afforded their supporters a greater lived experience of 'community' within the context of football simply because more people knew each other. Whether this respondent is correct or not cannot be investigated in this project: such an issue deserves more concentrated attention in specific 'ethnographic' studies of particular football clubs' supporters in the post-war period. However, for present purposes, the claim is important as it may indicate that feelings of community experienced by supporters at football matches in Lancashire in the post-war period may not have been uniform and may have differed across the region.

6.3: Football and Community

With a sense of the lived experience of football and community in Lancashire in the post-war period provided, it is now important to assess existing approaches to analysing the relationship between football and local identity, and to assess the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of existing approaches. In recent years, a growing number of sports historians and sociologists of sport have sought to uncover the links between sport and social identity. In his book *Sport in Britain* Tony Mason wrote that, “sport often contributes to an individual’s sense of identity with or belonging to a group or collectivity. It can be district, village, town, city or county. It can be class, colour or country”.¹² To explain this viewpoint, Holt has suggested in the context of the North East of England and elsewhere that, in addition to being a focus for local pride, football clubs are one of the principal modern agents through which social identities are created and reinforced.¹³ He claims that football clubs are sites of representation through which people (specifically men) are taught norms of behaviour, and that sports teams and sports ‘heroes’ have historically acted as exemplars of spirit and behaviour for the communities they represent. He suggests that sports enable communities to ‘know themselves’, and in doing so help signify what differentiates one locality, region, county, or nation from another.¹⁴

Despite the importance and excellence of the work of Holt, Mason and others on football and social identity, many of their studies have lacked theoretical cohesion and have not addressed the central question of whether supporters of football clubs can rightfully be identified as members of cohesive communities, or, indeed, how communities in the football context should actually be defined. In many historical studies of football and community, debate has often been conducted simply in terms of

the residents of towns and cities from which football clubs take their names.¹⁵ Whilst it is clear that overlap does exist between geographical communities and football communities, not least because football clubs are named after towns and cities, an over-concentration on the geographical origins of football clubs has led to a conflation of 'football communities' with the more general urban communities, and the denial of the possibility that football teams' supporters may not be members of communities as defined by traditional geographical means. Assumptions on the common class and gender origins of football communities have also been made in many studies of football and social identity, leading to an overstatement of the degree to which football communities are historically male and working-class. For a clear study of football and community in Lancashire to be presented here, it is vital that these shortcomings are rectified, and that the exact nature of communities in the context of football is clearly identified.

In order to delineate the precise historical nature of football communities, it is useful to consider existing definitions of community and their possible application to the study of football. The most common definition of community employed by historians is that associated with territory, and, in particular, the notion of individuals identifying with given streets, neighbourhoods, towns or regions. According to this understanding, communities are groups of people who live in the same geographical areas and think of themselves as 'belonging' to those places. Communities are also often said to be marked out by their members' shared sense of perspective and reliance on common beliefs, convictions and life-ordering concepts. In this way, understandings of community have often been similar to notions of class; as in the concept of the 'working-class community', and its connotations of "occupational community and

associated proletarian solidarism”.¹⁶ Small geographical locations containing one identifiable class of people are classic subjects for this model, providing well-established images of relatively undispersed people maintaining “their own codes, myths, heroes and social standards”.¹⁷

If one accepts the classic historical definition of community, it follows that supporters of Lancashire football teams in the immediate post-war period could only be considered members of cohesive communities if they lived in common territories and shared the same perspectives on life. However, as was shown in Chapter Three, a plurality of class, gender and locational backgrounds were evident among Lancashire football teams’ supporters between 1946 and the early-1960s, indicating that they did not hail from the same areas and did not possess the same social origins. If the supporters of Preston North End are recalled, it was pointed out that fans from Lancaster, Morecambe, Southport and the Lake District supported the club in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and that fans from a variety of social classes also attended the club’s games. Similarly, it was shown that Burnley Football Club drew fans from Todmorden, the Rossendale Valley, Rawtenstall, Accrington and even west Yorkshire in the same period, and, again, that supporters from across the social spectrum attended their matches. This suggests that football teams’ supporters in the immediate post-war period did not constitute classically defined communities, but were, in fact, socially and geographically disparate groups brought together by one specific activity.

If it is not possible to talk of football clubs’ supporters as communities in the classic historical sense, is it possible to do so by any other definition? In answer to this question, it is useful to consider less geographically deterministic understandings of

community than those presented above, and, in particular, the work of Benedict Anderson and his notion of “imagined communities”.¹⁸ In his work, Anderson suggests that geographically based communities should not be considered as empirically identifiable naturally existing phenomena, but, rather, should be envisaged as mythologised, imagined and, most importantly of all, socially created collectivities. Anderson claims that communities must be considered as imagined, “because the members of even the smallest ... will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion”.¹⁹ He asserts that few *a priori* criteria of locality, class or gender exist for communities, and that individuals from a variety of backgrounds are free to create, identify with, or re-develop any community they wish.²⁰

The process of creating communities for Anderson has historically been achieved through media, cultural representation and other forms of communication.²¹ Hall and Maguire have made similar points when addressing the creation of national communities.²² Hall states with reference to cultural representation in particular that national communities are principally formed through five main practices:

1. The telling of stories or histories of the nation indicating commonalities of experience, of triumph and struggle.
2. The construction of a national character in order to give a sense of timelessness to the nation independent of history.
3. The invention of new patterns of ritual, pageantry and symbolism that give collective expression to the nation, e.g. flags, heroes, national ceremonies etc.
4. The construction of foundational myths and legends that locate the nation outside history and give it a quasi-sacred character as well as a sense of originality or non-derivativeness.
5. The promotion of ideas of common breeding or even racial purity.²³

Whilst some of Hall's ideas may not be of central interest for understanding the construction of football communities (such as the promotion of ideas about racial purity), others provide a clear indication of how geographically and socially disparate people come to form identifiable communities and feelings of social belonging around a common sporting interest. The legends, stories, heroes, songs, flags and costumes that are historically associated with football clubs (and are admittedly frequently shared with local geographical communities) all help mark their supporters out as distinctive, cohesive communities that share common interests and beliefs (in the context of sport at least). This is most strongly displayed when teams gain an accepted reputation for playing football in a particular way and thereby come to represent on the field of play their club's and supporters' difference from all others. Even when this is not achieved, however, acts of cultural representation enable all football clubs to create distinct identities that form the foundations on which identifiable football communities are built.

The creation of football communities through processes of representation can also be understood by employing the work of Patrick Joyce, and his explanation of the making of social identity in industrial English working-class communities in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.²⁴ In his seminal study of this topic, Joyce analyses the processes through which language, and specifically dialect writing, helped form a shared consciousness and identity amongst specific groups in Lancashire and other northern counties in the late Victorian period. For Joyce, language and cultural representation developed in this context into the bearers of cultural values, embodying the essence of local, shared identities. Through creating and reading dialect writing, industrial communities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were, according to

Joyce, able to tell each other stories about the past that also helped to shape the present. They were able to recreate and define the values that made them different from others, and reproduce these values through cultural representation for generation after generation. In this sense, Joyce's understanding of the centrality of cultural representation to the creation of community is similar to Anderson's and Hall's work, and can also be used in the context of football to explain how particular post-war football teams and football communities created for themselves distinctive identities that enabled supporters to bind together and differentiate themselves from one another.

If the model of football community outlined above is accepted, it is clear that football clubs' supporters need not exhibit common social and geographical characteristics to qualify as communities. Rather, by 'imagining' themselves as cohesive groups and by engaging in and consuming acts of cultural representation, the supporters of football clubs can establish themselves as identifiable communities, thereby uniting people who may otherwise remain disparate. This is not to say that the imagined properties of football communities render them 'false', nor that they cannot compare to 'true communities' based around more traditional criteria of class and locality. Anderson states that *all* communities are imagined to a greater or lesser extent, and Richard Holt has claimed that, whatever the 'imagined' properties of communities in the sports context, they are still "profoundly felt and real".²⁵ Consequently, it can be asserted that feelings of community created around football clubs are not insincere or 'false' expressions of collectivity, but, rather, are genuine sentiments of union focused around one specific cultural form.

Whilst the work of Anderson, Joyce and others is useful in explaining the social, non-geographical nature of football communities, it does not explain adequately the social processes through which 'imagined' identities come to be accepted as real expressions of an individual's culture. One way forward in this area is to consider the work of Norbert Elias on national identities, and in particular his study of the formation of German national character.²⁶ In this work, Elias attempts to delineate and connect the long-term German state-formation process and developments in German national character, thereby giving a concrete sociological and historical explanation for the specifics of German national identity. In particular, by addressing the power-struggles, national achievements and national failures characteristic of German history, Elias displays how certain historical events and social relationships have come to reside in and form the collective psychological make-up of the German people.²⁷

Elias's approach to understanding social identities is instructive in that it grounds the contention that despite being social, flexible and open to change, social identities (such as football identities) are also 'felt' and 'real', and go some way to explaining an individual's behaviour. Elias suggests that if consistently and systematically instilled in individuals through training from the earliest years of childhood, attitudes and forms of behaviour can come to manifest themselves in an almost 'natural' or 'instinctive' manner. By this process, Elias claims that a level of behaviour other than that regulated by self-consciousness is established, operating in an automatic and blind sense. Elias terms these character traits *social habitus*, by which he means "that level of personality characteristics which individuals share in common with fellow members of their social group".²⁸ It is in these terms that phenomena such as common football identities can be addressed.

Elias's work is invaluable in providing the basis for understanding the construction and reproduction of football identities. The concept of habitus helps indicate why feelings of belonging to football clubs are so strong for many football fans and why people have historically carried allegiances to football clubs often for their entire lives. Furthermore, with reference to the question of whether people attended post-war football matches in Lancashire primarily for reasons of identity creation and recreation, Elias's work may help explain the motivations for supporting a football team in the region between 1946 and 1960. By growing up in specific cultures and communities that valorised football and employed sports as cornerstones of communal identities, it is possible that generations of people born in Lancashire prior to the 1960s had the importance of football placed into their habitus from a very early age and understood the link between football and collective pride almost instinctively. For these people, football attendance would rarely be about consuming entertainment. Rather, the links between football and identity that resided in their habitus were simply too pervasive to allow fundamentally alternative readings of the game to flourish.

An understanding of football attendance in the immediate post-war period based on Elias's theory of social habitus is, of course, grounded on a degree of conjecture and pure theorising. This is necessary for present purposes as it is clearly impossible to interview football fans about the formation of their social habituses and whether this influenced their football attendance in the past. If correct, however, Elias's theory of habitus suggests that football attendance in Lancashire in the post-war period was about more than simply entertainment and was grounded in a range of issues linked to community, identity and pride.

In terms of the debate on structure and agency that has run throughout this project, Elias's understanding of habitus can be viewed critically as a theory based on cultural determinism. In asserting that the culture in which one grows up comes ultimately to reside in that person's subconscious and determines their behaviour does not leave much room for considerations of human agency. This is certainly a problem for Elias's work and is also present in other theorists who have written on habitus such as Pierre Bourdieu.²⁹ However, Elias's response to this issue would be to state that cultures that reside in people's habituses are not reified 'social facts' that exist outside of human relations. Rather, he would contend that cultures only exist because of interdependencies between human beings and that, therefore, humans both determine and are determined by the cultures they create.

6.4: Local Newspapers, the Creation of Community and the FA Cup

In the section above, the central role of cultural representation in the creation and reproduction of football communities in Lancashire in the post-war period was detailed. In this section, one of the principal means by which this process actually functioned will be described, clearly indicating how cultural representation accentuated football's place in the post-war period as a focus for community bonding in Lancashire. The form of cultural representation that will be discussed is newspaper reporting that framed football teams as repositories of distinct attributes with which people from the broadly defined locality could identify. Local newspapers were central in this regard. To express the character of their local football team, the local press shaped match reports in certain directions and filled their accounts with events, values,

and myths that supposedly reflected the cultural mores of the local football community. This often included reporting clubs' histories in ways that accentuated important defining moments, and creating historical styles of play for clubs that accorded with perceived local values. By doing this, the local press helped establish football clubs as pivotal institutions for the expression of common identities, and secured sport a central role in the assertion of collective pride.

To emphasise the role of football clubs in the creation and reinforcement of civic pride, local newspapers adhered to a number of specific conventions in the early and mid-twentieth century, particularly in their reporting of local teams' important matches. These conventions included regular accounts of how football communities used 'big' games as unique occasions to express their identities, and reports of how important matches frequently drew large numbers of people into football communities, almost regardless of whether they were football supporters or not. Principal among these matches were FA Cup ties. In the reports that surrounded these occasions, the local press took particular interest in the supposed ability of football clubs to perform 'unifying functions' for their regions. They presented FA Cup ties as singly inclusive events that men and women, young and old, could enjoy, and celebrated each match in the competition as an occasion for the expression of collective pride.

The appeal of the FA Cup to football supporters in the first two decades after the Second World War was immense. More than any other competition, the FA Cup embodied hope for all football clubs, League and non-League, big and small, and presented players with the chance of glory on the national stage. Oral history respondents who spoke about the FA Cup frequently conveyed the excitement that the

competition provided them with in the aftermath of the Second World War. One supporter stated, “it was the icing on the cake, the one-off competition. It brought excitement. You finished off playing at Wembley. It was special, very special”,³⁰ whilst another commented that “the best thing about the FA Cup was the chance it gave to the underdogs ... it was something special in those days”.³¹ One other respondent explained the appeal that even the FA Cup draw had for supporters in the 1950s:

The Cup-ties were drawn at half past twelve on a Monday. You’d all be glued when the draw was taking place. It was a ritual. ‘Listen to the FA Cup – who are we going to get?’ ... It was a big day, all discussing this that and the other, all making arrangements about how to get there.³²

For this reason, local newspapers revelled in the drama and attention that the FA Cup engendered. From the early rounds onwards, they covered every aspect of their respective team’s progress in great detail, from possible opponents in the next round, to the lengthy ticket queues that inevitably formed in anticipation of each game. The competition was established as an event capable of providing considerable prestige for its winners, and local newspapers delighted in bringing its tension to an expectant audience. The *Liverpool Echo* summed up their feelings on the competition in the run-up to the third round in January 1954:

Nothing in the whole realm of sporting endeavour arouses such widespread interest and excitement as the struggle for the FA Cup. Rattles, balloons, scarves, rosettes and all the rest of the usual Cup-tie paraphernalia have been unearthed this week in readiness for tomorrow’s third round games which mark the start of the real struggle for the most glamorous of soccer honours.³³

From the *Liverpool Echo*, the message was clear: the FA Cup was the only English football competition that really mattered. It had more charisma and charm than the

League Championship, and that was reflected in the immense public interest generated by the tournament each year.

In developing such pre-eminence, the FA Cup ensured a great deal of national coverage for teams who performed well in the competition in the post-war period. Small provincial towns who would otherwise remain invisible to people from outside their immediate locale could suddenly be transmitted into the national media with an FA Cup win, finding themselves the envy of people from all over the country. For this reason, historians such as Jeff Hill have identified success in the FA Cup as much more than an opportunity to celebrate a team's victory. With the kudos that could be gleaned from an FA Cup triumph, Hill suggests that winning the Cup developed into an opportunity for the "glorification of [a] town", in which all its inhabitants (especially its more powerful ones) were afforded the opportunity of basking in reflected glory.³⁴ Winning the FA Cup became a chance to celebrate the community from which the team (supposedly) hailed, and all that community's beliefs, values and customs.

Local newspapers were key participants in this celebration of community. Not only did they report the activities that people undertook in conjunction with FA Cup-ties, but in the angles they adopted and the language they used, they also helped to *create* an understanding of the FA Cup as an occasion through which to celebrate various facets of local life. The audience that was being spoken to in these reports was, of course, the football community of the local area and not the local community *per se*. However, the local press did not make this subtle distinction and, quite rightly, probably hoped that

more people would become members of the football community during FA Cup matches anyway.

As Jeff Hill has pointed out, the local press were not simple reflectors of local life in their reporting of FA Cup ties, but were also active agents in the creation of communal feeling.³⁵ This is not to say that the press were solely responsible for developing the FA Cup as an expression of local pride, or even that local people did not originally view the event as such. Rather, it can be stated that certain forms of press coverage helped to crystallise people's perception of the competition in one specific direction, and as such helped to reinforce its representation as an issue of community concern. Claims to community during FA Cup victories were not entirely 'invented' by newspapers, but rather resulted from a series of complex negotiations between an expectant press and a willing public. In this way, local newspapers were the central form of cultural representation that enabled people to create and re-create football communities for local teams, and thereby helped hold those communities together by educating fans about the informal rules of membership.

The local Lancashire press had more opportunities than most to indulge in this process in the post-war period. Between 1946 and 1965, at least one Lancashire team made it to the FA Cup Final on fifteen occasions (on three occasions the Final was an all-Lancashire affair). Manchester United appeared in the Final four times, Blackpool three times, Burnley, Liverpool, Bolton Wanderers, Preston North End, and Manchester City twice, and Blackburn Rovers once. For all clubs, extensive coverage was provided by the local Lancashire press on the team's long journey from the third round to the Final at Wembley, intensifying as the faint hope of winning the Cup

became more and more of a possibility. The battle for Cup-tie tickets was frequently commented upon, as were the long journeys from Lancashire to matches all over the country that only the FA Cup seemed to induce. For instance, in 1947, the *Lancashire Daily Post* described Preston North End fans queuing from four o'clock in the morning for tickets for the fourth round match between Preston and Barnsley, and claimed that every available bus between Leeds and Sheffield had been reserved for Barnsley fans attempting to get to the game.³⁶ Similarly, for the fifth round match of the same year versus Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough, the *Lancashire Daily Post* claimed that 2,500 North End fans set out for the game, despite many of them only getting as far as Barnsley and the match eventually being called off because of snow.³⁷ As Lancashire teams successfully navigated each round of the competition, the extent and tone of reporting in the local press grew ever more intense, and the pride in Lancashire's football and its local communities ever more apparent.

To emphasise the link between football clubs and local football communities during FA Cup runs, the local Lancashire press often stressed the importance of collective rituals that fans undertook before and during games. This usually included references to the iconography that people employed to identify themselves as fans of certain teams, and descriptions of how these displays bound together and represented the local community. Well-established codes of dress, often based around a club's traditional colours, were usually identified for this purpose. classifying a person as a supporter of a given team and differentiating their identity from all others. For Burnley's appearance in the 1947 Cup Final, "claret and blue rosettes, bearing replicas of the Cup, and fancy headgear" were described as being *de rigueur* for the occasion,³⁸ whilst, for Preston's match with Leicester in the sixth round of the competition in

1954, a “remarkable species of morning dress” was mentioned, as were “blue and white toppers, tam o’shanters and scarves”.³⁹ In Liverpool in 1947, Birmingham City fans visiting the city for a 6th round FA Cup match with Liverpool were said by the *Liverpool Echo* to be “decorated with blue and white favours”,⁴⁰ and in 1953, the *Bolton Evening News* noted that, “bright rosettes, ribbons, knitted hats and coloured top hats were sported by the hundreds of faithful fans of the Wanderers” who travelled to the club’s FA Cup tie in Gateshead.⁴¹ In stressing the common understanding that football supporters displayed when partaking in these well-established codes of dress and behaviour, the Lancashire local press symbolically diminished the diversity of individuals present at Cup ties, and emphasised the image of unity and collectivity in the attendant crowds.

Not surprisingly, the image of collectivity expressed by the Lancashire local press around FA Cup ties was particularly evident when local teams made it to the FA Cup Final itself. Special reports were commonly conducted on the bands of supporters who travelled south for the matches, and particular interest was often reserved for the send off they received by those being left behind. In Burnley for the 1947 Final, for instance, the *Lancashire Daily Post* claimed that local people cheered on fans travelling to the Final for three hours as they were “kept agog with excitement to sounds of rattles, bells and whistles”,⁴² whilst for the 1954 Final, cheering crowds were said to have waved off Preston North End fans at the town’s railway station “in scenes reminiscent of pre-war ... times”.⁴³

Once in London, the ‘invading army’ of northern football fans were often represented as symbolically ‘occupying’ the capital, undermining the Metropolis’s hold on national

culture, and refusing to be seduced by its *savoir-faire*. Fans in extravagant costumes were quoted as saying “you’ve got to show you’re here” when asked to explain their conspicuous appearance at famous tourist attractions around the capital,⁴⁴ and the local press would commonly print various examples of the county’s dialect to emphasise the fans’ distinctiveness and identity. In describing Burnley fans’ adventures around London in 1947, phrases like, “That way, t’ Palace up theer” were relayed back to the people of Lancashire by the *Lancashire Daily Post*, as was one man’s claim that, “Ah’v left a puhnd at home wi missus so’s we can celebrate the winning of the coop”.⁴⁵ In 1953 when Bolton Wanderers and Blackpool contested the Final at Wembley, the *Bolton Evening News* pronounced that, “London belonged to them to-day”, and explain how, “thousands of [Lancastrian] fans poured into London with their team favours to the fore, and with rattles, bells and hooters working overtime”.⁴⁶ In 1960, the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* explained that with Blackburn Rovers in the Final the paper was, “Up for t’ Cup - and ready to go gay”, and stated that:

It [London] is used to Lancastrian invasions on Cup Final day ... used to rowdy rattles, the raucous roars and the roistering revellers who are ‘up for t’ Cup’. Eros is barricaded, daughters no doubt locked up, and London is in happy readiness for the milling fans of Blackburn.⁴⁷

These stories drew extensively on the well-established image of the northerner in the big city, and gently poked fun at the idea of ‘Lancashire values’ being employed in a foreign context.⁴⁸ But they also celebrated these values, and did much to assert their merit in the face of a national challenge.

In comparison to these reports, others appeared that, in addition to expressing the local and parochial nature of Cup Finals at Wembley, also noted the importance of the

competition to English national culture. However, even these reports were often marked by a local twist. A perfect example is provided by a report by the *Blackburn Evening Post* on the 1953 Cup Final between Bolton Wanderers and Blackpool. In being played in the Queen's coronation year, the whole discourse surrounding the Final was one of national, as well as local, celebration, even more than in previous years. To show that Blackpool and Bolton fans attending the Final were aware of the event's national significance, an account of one fan's costume explained how, in addition to hundreds of orange bottle tops sewn all over his suit to signify his support for Blackpool, the man also had a "neat bottle top coronation motif with the letters E.R." sewn on his back.⁴⁹ The report also stated that many supporters took time to look at the preparations along the coronation route on the morning of the Final, and that a trip to Buckingham Palace was particularly popular that year. In short, it was noted that, although Blackpool and Bolton fans were primarily in the capital to display pride in their local football teams and local cultures, some were also there to celebrate the strength of national institutions.

Representations of collectivity and community were never more visible in the FA Cup weekend than during the ritual of the local football community welcoming back its team from the Wembley Final, either with or without the trophy. From the late nineteenth century onwards, a well-established custom of people lining streets to cheer home their heroes was formed, often culminating in formal celebrations being held in the company of local dignitaries. Speeches would be made at official functions, and players would thank fans from the balconies of local buildings for their support over the preceding days. When Preston returned without the Cup from London in 1964, the *Lancashire Evening Post* delighted in reporting that 5,000 people turned out in the

town's Market Square to cheer home the returning North End team and official party.⁵⁰ "Not Conquering - But Still Heroes" was the headline, as the 'paper stated that "the entire population was there, from babes in arms to pensioners in wheelchairs". Tony Singleton, a Preston North End player and local man, was quoted as saying, "it breaks my heart that we haven't brought the Cup back, but we'll try again next year", and George Ross, another of the Preston players, was said to have told the crowd, "Being a Scotsman, I'm a foreigner among you, but I feel part of you now".⁵¹

For less successful clubs than Preston, the occasion of any creditable achievement in the FA Cup could result in similar scenes of local celebration. When non-League Wigan Athletic took First Division Newcastle United to a replay in the third round of the FA Cup in 1954, gaining a very impressive draw at St. James' Park, hysterical scenes were said to have greeted the team on their return. The *Lancashire Evening Post* stated that, "Wallgate [one of the town's railway stations] was jammed with enthusiastic supporters", and that, "the police could only maintain a semblance of order in the station booking hall with extreme difficulty".⁵² When the team were eventually knocked out of the competition in a very close return match at Springfield, the pride felt by the *Lancashire Evening Post's* match reporter was there for all to see:

At 3.42 p.m. yesterday, Wigan Athletic left this year's FA Cup competition, but there was no unobtrusive side-door business about their departure ... and forget about the 'In Memorial' notices. For the 'Latics' made their exit to a rousing fanfare of cheers from throat-sprained supporters who were delighted with the rallying powers of the Lancashire Combination side that had made Newcastle fight all the way. And, for years to come, they will still be discussing that Simpson save that so many folk - including myself - believe was over the line.⁵³

In the day after the match, the *Lancashire Evening Post* reported that Alderman John Aspinall, the Mayor of Wigan, had stated at an official reception held for the players and officials of Wigan Athletic that, “everyone in the town was proud of the team’s achievements”, and that “the keynote of success at Springfield Park ... was the unity of purpose and the desire for victory and promotion to higher status”.⁵⁴ The call to community and the (albeit overstated) image of Wigan Athletic representing all the inhabitants of the immediate locale were obviously common and important elements in all celebrations of the team’s unexpected success.

In the early years of the FA Cup, there can be little doubt that receptions for returning teams were exemplified by sincerity and a certain degree of spontaneity.⁵⁵ Away from the heavy hand of civic patronage, the sheer scale of receptions in the late nineteenth century in particular, coupled with their perceived lack of prior planning, gave them the appearance of spontaneous celebrations of a club’s achievements, rather than officially sponsored events through which to promote a town. But by the early part of the twentieth century, well-established and extremely durable codes of behaviour had been devised for these events, providing communities with clearly defined opportunities through which to express their affection for a returning team.⁵⁶ Parades would commonly end at Town Halls and other civic buildings, local dignitaries would conspicuously present eulogies to the team, and the local press would delight in publicising parade routes and estimating the numbers of people likely to turn out.⁵⁷ This is not to say that impromptu displays of affection for FA Cup teams ceased completely after the nineteenth century: the “hundreds” of people said to have gathered in Bamber Bridge, Walton-le-Dale and on London Road in Preston after North End’s semi-final win in 1954 indicate this.⁵⁸ Rather, it can be argued that the

passionate and genuine displays of collectivity associated with FA Cup matches in the late nineteenth century developed into semi-official displays of community glorification during the twentieth, propagated by a partly organising press for the benefit of an opportunistic localised elite.

It is certainly true that local hierarchies of Lancashire towns understood the importance of the FA Cup for a town's image in the post-war period. After Bolton Wanderers' defeat in the 1953 Cup Final, the Mayor of Bolton deemed that the team had, despite being beaten, played well enough to receive the following eulogy:

You fought under difficulties, played cleanly, and added lustre to this great town. I don't know what you thought to-night, as you saw even little children and old ladies in the welcoming crowd, proof of the sportsmanship that football develops, but I hope that the reception as a whole proved to you what Bolton feels. To the lads who have played in the Cup series, whether they played in the Final or not, I say 'well done'. You have spread the name of Bolton round the world and brought credit to the town.⁵⁹

From this statement it is clear that the Mayor of Bolton fully understood the role that football could play in the town's image both nationally and internationally. The *Liverpool Echo* also understood the same process in 1954 when, on the eve of non-League Wigan Athletic's third-round replay with First Division Newcastle United, it noted:

Next to the exploits of its star Rugby League side, Wigan's main claim to fame, apart from its industrial importance, has been its 'pier', that hoary standby of generations of music-hall comedians. Now the pier takes a backseat and, win or lose tomorrow, Wigan will long be remembered in soccer history for one of the biggest form upsets of all time.⁶⁰

In reporting statements of this type, it is clear that newspapers such as the *Bolton Evening News* and the *Liverpool Echo* recognised football clubs to be powerful institutions around which local football pride and local identities could be developed, and ideal vehicles for the glorification of a town's people.

To further assert the ability of FA Cup ties to foster community spirit and pride, the post-war Lancashire press also stressed the 'inclusive' nature of the competition for the people of the county. In particular, they often reported on the interest that Cup ties created among people who otherwise had no real concern for football and how football communities would extend during moments of success for certain teams. For Bolton Wanderers' semi-final match with Everton in 1953, the *Bolton Evening News* made a special effort to report the broad range of people that attended the game. They stated that:

Cloth-capped supporters, bowler hatted supporters, supporters with fancy hats - nearly all wearing rosettes and coloured scarves and many ringing their bells and whirling their rattles. Women in Sunday best, women in everyday clothes and women in fancy dress. All turned out enthusiastic, optimistic, determined to cheer the Wanderers to Wembley.⁶¹

For the *Bolton Evening News* the emotional power of the FA Cup bred community feeling and civic pride in all sections of society: male and female, rich and poor, young and old. It acted as a focus of interest for all inhabitants of the local area, thereby cutting across traditional barriers of gender, class and age.

Further representations of the 'inclusive' nature of the FA Cup were also printed in the Lancashire press during the immediate post-war period. Particular favourites in this

regard were articles on 'exiled' Lancastrians, living outside Britain, who had either travelled to see Lancashire teams appearing in Cup Finals, or, on the occasion of such events, had written to the local newspaper expressing their rejuvenated sense of community pride. Before the FA Cup Final in 1954, the *Lancashire Evening Post* declared that Preston would be receiving "world support" when they took the field at Wembley on May 1st, including that of Lance Corporals J. Yates and J. Powell, two Prestonians serving with the Middle East Land Forces, who were quoted as saying "well done" to the players of North End for "boosting the morale of Lancashire lads generally and Prestonians particularly who are serving abroad".⁶² Similarly, in 1953, the *Bolton Evening News* reported how Mr. Ted Brookes, a former resident of Walkden, had sent his best wishes to Bolton Wanderers from Australia for their forthcoming Cup tie, and reported that "Trotters" (i.e. Bolton Wanderers fans) from "all corners of the globe" were following the team's Cup run with interest. The paper went on to say that, "absence makes the heart grow fonder and nobody here will be hoping harder for the team's success than those followers who live thousands of miles away".⁶³ To reflect this point, in 1964 the *Lancashire Evening Post* featured articles on individuals from South Africa, Australia and a number of other countries who wanted to wish Preston North End well in their Final versus West Ham United, as well as the story of John Martin from America. Martin was an ex-Lancastrian who played centre half for North End in 1903-04, and was travelling to the Cup Final via a long journey on the Queen Elizabeth.⁶⁴ A belief in the link between football and an individual's sense of collective identity was made explicit through these reports, and the assertion made that success for a football club on the national stage would encourage people to identify with communities more actively than might otherwise have been the case.

6.5: Football Heroes and the Creation of Community⁶⁵

In addition to being a focus for community pride, as stated earlier, football clubs in Lancashire were also regarded as central sites for the creation and display of community identity in the immediate post-war period. In press reports and oral discourse, the region's teams were consistently described in the language of local values, and thereby developed into central repositories for the expression of communities' individual cultures. The same is also true of certain football players. A number of footballers who spent the majority, if not all, of their careers with Lancashire clubs in the post-war period, particularly if they were born in the town or city in which they played, developed into key figures in the expression of their town's or city's identity: simultaneously displaying to their local community and the rest of the world what it meant to belong to that place. In this regard, a small number of footballers developed into exemplars of spirit and behaviour for, not only the football communities that they regularly addressed, but also the broader geographical communities that they taught to 'know themselves'.

The aim of this section of the chapter is to study the extent to which this process of identity formation through football occurred in Lancashire between the end of the Second World War and the mid 1960s. To do this, evidence will be presented of how three post-war Lancashire football heroes - namely Tom Finney of Preston North End, Nat Lofthouse of Bolton Wanderers and Bryan Douglas of Blackburn Rovers - were characterised, principally in the local press, but also in popular discourse, as key representatives of local values.⁶⁶ Apart from being undoubtedly talented footballers,

Finney, Lofthouse and Douglas were all 'one-club' players who spent their entire careers with their hometown clubs. This makes them particularly suitable for this study as their links with their local football clubs and communities were absolute and unambiguous. Before embarking on a discussion of these footballers as representations of their local towns, however, it is important to establish how people from Lancashire towns were historically represented prior to and during the post-war era, and how nineteenth and twentieth century 'Lancashire values' related to more general notions of 'northernness'.

6.6: Images of Lancashire

Between the middle of the nineteenth century and the post Second World War period, a great number of novels, dialect writings, travel books and so forth were produced which attributed distinct characteristics to the people of the North of England. In *The Road to Wigan Pier* in 1937, George Orwell represented northern people as "grim, plucky, warm-hearted and democratic", and suggested that they had an innate talent for 'getting on' that Southerners lacked.⁶⁷ Earlier in Mrs Gaskell's 1855 *North and South*, Northerners were depicted, according to Dellheim, as being, "independent, practical, rough, calculating and enterprising", with "energy, ingenuity and adventurousness" as typical virtues, and "materialism, philistinism, and selfishness" as typical vices.⁶⁸ Whilst these writings, and others like them, were obviously the impressions of single individuals and not necessarily representative of lived reality, they helped form and reinforce an enduring image of the North that influenced the perception of the region into the 1950s and beyond.

Much of the writing on the North in the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused centrally on Yorkshire or Lancashire. Victorian writers who originated from the White and Red Rose counties were less interested in describing the distinctive character of the 'Northerner' than they were in debating the special qualities of their fellow county folk.⁶⁹ This meant that within the broader discussion of northern values, a series of distinctive qualities came to be attributed to Yorkshire and Lancashire people respectively. These did overlap somewhat, but they can be clearly identified. Russell has suggested that, historically, Yorkshire characteristics included such values as bluntness, competitiveness, having a dry sense of humour, being hard working, and being distinctive.⁷⁰ Similarly, Dellheim has noted that local literature in Yorkshire in the Victorian period presented Yorkshiremen as "hearty, shrewd, vigorous, manly, practical, matter-of-fact, unimaginative, progressive, and perhaps above all, independent".⁷¹ Dellheim also states that an explicit regional pride was a striking characteristic of Yorkshiremen in the county's Victorian literature, as expressed in James Burnley's 1875 statement that, "it is, no doubt, a proud thing to be able to say, 'I am an Englishman', but still prouder is the boast of the Englishman who can add, 'and a Yorkshireman'".⁷²

In Lancashire literature, many of the values attributed to Yorkshire folk were also attributed to their fellow Northerners across the Pennines. Lancashire people were depicted as "industrious, frugal, sincere, practical, persevering, and self-reliant".⁷³ They were also represented as having a "natural kindliness", and the godly values of "cleanliness, truth-telling and chastity".⁷⁴ Above all, however, the main representation of the county in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the character of the 'Lancashire lad' who was frequently employed as a literary device by local writers

in the period. He was characterised by “his deep sense of humour, his patient endurance of adversity, his life-long struggle with want, his indomitable perseverance, [and] his love of home”.⁷⁵ He was also marked out by his straight-talking honesty, and lack of ostentation.

In writing on football in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the Lancashire values outlined above were often employed to describe the style of play that one could expect football teams from the county to employ. As the birthplace of professional football, Lancashire was often represented as having provided the sport with its most virtuous characteristics: its honesty, its strong physicality, its skill, and its fairness. In describing a post Second World War Lancashire ‘derby’ match between Bolton Wanderers and Manchester City in 1961, Percy Young stated that, “those who have attended Burnden Park [home of Bolton Wanderers] have seen English football, sometimes at its best, but always with the native characteristics prominent”. He summarised the match thus:

Under scowling skies, with ancient Pacifics passing threateningly over the heads of the crowd on the railway embankment ... the two teams played a fierce scherzo over the mud. Skill was there in plenty - if only in the way that twenty-two players contrived not merely to stand but also to move with speed and manipulate the ball; but skill engaged with vigour. The tackling was of a ferocity unknown in Barcelona, but regarded as axiomatic among the devotees at Burnden.⁷⁶

The effect of this report, and others like it, on perceptions of Lancashire was to reinforce the county’s distinctive identity and separateness. For authors such as Young, Lancashire’s values were clearly visible in the county’s football teams. The style of football played in the region indicated something essential about the county’s people and their approach to life.

6.7: Lancashire Football Heroes

In addition to entire football teams being held to represent Lancashire values, post-war Lancashire football heroes such as Tom Finney, Nat Lofthouse, and Bryan Douglas were also written and spoken about in ways that inextricably linked them to the towns and county in which they played. Indeed, it can be argued that nowhere outside football were there individuals as important as Finney, Lofthouse, Douglas, and others like them in representing what it was to be from towns in Lancashire in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. They were all undoubtedly excellent footballers. Finney, in particular, was established as one of football's truly great players in his career with Preston North End: a man who, it was once said, only needed "possession of a ball to become immortal".⁷⁷ They were all regulars in the England team for much of their careers, and Finney and Lofthouse both won the distinction of being named Footballer of the Year (Finney on two occasions).⁷⁸ Yet more than this, to the supporters of Preston North End, Bolton Wanderers and Blackburn Rovers, the qualities that made, and in some cases continue to make, Finney, Lofthouse, and Douglas such figures of local pride, were not just associated with their undoubted playing skill, they were also 'one of us': local men who never moved from the area and played their entire career for local clubs. They were archetypal local heroes, men who could be represented as true servants of their people, working tirelessly for the local communities of which they were part.

The Lancashire local press was central to the creation of Finney, Lofthouse, and Douglas as local legends. Their qualities as footballers were indisputable, but in the

comment and opinion that was passed on their performances, it was the press who developed these men into peculiarly local heroes. To endear Tom Finney, Nat Lofthouse and Bryan Douglas to the Lancashire public, newspapers such as the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph*, and the *Bolton Evening News* highlighted aspects of their characters and lives that stood them out as true men of their localities. Their demeanour on and off the pitch was always reported as being exemplary, and their lack of indulgence whilst playing and overall modesty were presented as characteristics with which Lancashire communities could readily identify. For instance, the fact that Finney never stopped work as a plumber during his entire career as one of the world's finest footballers was represented as an indication of the man's humble character, and also as a show of the good sense that came from being brought up among respectable working-class people in the immediate locale. Finney became a representation of all that was deemed positive about life in Preston: an embodiment of the success of 'hard graft', who had taken his chance in the local meritocracy.

As with Tom Finney, Nat Lofthouse was also associated with hard work and traditional working-class labour during his playing career. As an apprentice footballer, Lofthouse had been employed as a coal-miner; something which, according to the writer Percy Young, endeared him to his local community as a representative of their values.⁷⁹ In the image of a miner, Lofthouse was constantly presented as a strong, brave and honest player by the local press. In a report on England's match with Italy in 1952, the *Bolton Evening News* reported on the integrity of Lofthouse's display in the face of aggressive Italian tactics by stating that he, "never gave up trying" and "kept on against a team which used the push and the pull, the tug and the nudge and the tap

and the trip throughout the 90 minutes of the game”.⁸⁰ One month later on the same England tour, Lofthouse’s performance against Austria in Vienna was to receive even greater complements, this time even in the national press. Lofthouse scored two goals in the match, a 3-2 win for England, but it was the nature of his second and decisive goal that earned special praise. With minutes of the match remaining, Lofthouse picked up the ball on the halfway line, and, employing his considerable strength, held off the Austrian defenders for fully fifty yards. As he entered the penalty area, he shot the ball into the goal, but in the process injured himself in a heavy collision with the goalkeeper. Legend has it that so hurt was he that he did not even know he had scored. The goal and the match went down in English football folklore and came to be regarded as the perfect example of Lofthouse’s uncompromising, courageous, and, above all, honest style of play. *The Times* later recalled the moment:

For anybody who has ever seen football or read football [Lofthouse] will always be known as the lion of Vienna. On May 25th, 1952, when England beat Austria in that famous old city, it was the heart of Lofthouse that won the match. The two goals, including the winner which turned the game, are only part of the story. It was his example all through the match that brought the scores of British soldiers pouring through the crowd at the end of the game to cheer him, lion-hearted, from the field.⁸¹

In presenting Lofthouse’s performance in Austria as an exemplar of his ‘lion-hearted’ character, *The Times* was able to draw on the well-established image of the hard-working Lancastrian. Lofthouse was shown to be industrious, persevering, and patient enough to endure adversity in the pursuit of ultimate glory.

One year after Lofthouse’s heroics in Austria, he won the honour of being named Footballer of the Year in England. This, again, led to the player being lauded by the

local and national press for the excellence of his play, and also for his good, strong character. The *Bolton Evening News* paid tribute to him by stating that:

Nat Lofthouse's latest honour, election as Footballer of the Year by the sports writers, is perhaps the best of all he has won in 10 years professional football, because it is awarded for reasons of character as well as play. They say it was a near thing between Nat and Preston's Tom Finney: we can therefore assume that had the Bolton centre forward not built up a reputation second to none for his behaviour on the field and his deportment off it, he might just have lost the distinction for all time ... Congratulations to a real sportsman.⁸²

For the *Bolton Evening News*, it was clear that Lofthouse had won the award not for simply playing impressive football: he had been rewarded for the fine values that were common to all Boltonian folk.

In the case of Bryan Douglas, the local Lancashire press again chose to focus on his character, as well as his footballing excellence, to endear him to his local community during his career. Like Finney and Lofthouse, Douglas had grown up in the community that he was later to represent as a footballer, and this fact was often evoked in relation to the player's perceived integrity and balanced personality. For instance, in 1962 it was reported in the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* that Douglas had been playing for months under the shadow of his father's illness without informing anybody at Blackburn Rovers. Later, it was reported that Douglas had "played one of his finest games" for the club only days after his father had died.⁸³ To the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph*, Douglas's dedication to Blackburn Rovers, even during this great personal tragedy, was testament to his practical self-reliance, and his willingness to put others before himself.

In addition to his good character, Bryan Douglas was also feted by the local press for his perceived love of home during his career. In 1963, an article dedicated to the brilliance of Douglas's play appeared in the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* that stated:

Douglas, one of the supreme entertainers in the game, is an artist fit to mention in the same breadth as Stanley Matthews and Tom Finney. But Douglas stays loyal to his town team. He is still proud to be wearing the famous blue and white shirt and to know that he is the idol of hundreds of boys. There are few more unassuming players off the field, but when he gets on it there can be no mistaking his genius as a ball player and opportunist.⁸⁴

It appears that Douglas's loyalty and good character were as important as his playing ability in the eulogies that the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* paid to him.

Douglas's love of home and his continued closeness to the community in which he played his football was brought into sharp relief in the Blackburn press in 1961. Amid rumours that Douglas was about to move to an Italian club, the player wrote a response to the *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* that *par excellence* expressed his and the newspaper's desire to show him as a true 'man of Blackburn'. Under the title "Rovers the only team for me!", Douglas was reported as saying:

Let me say straight away ... I am perfectly happy at Ewood Park. I was born and brought up not a quarter of a mile from the ground, and there is only one team for me, my own team... It is no reflection on my teammates when I say that I probably feel happier than they do when we win and rather more despondent when we lose. It is only natural that I, as a Blackburn lad, should feel that way, for I have followed the Rovers since I was a little boy and it was the fulfilment of my greatest ambition when I put on the famous blue and white jersey....

What I am trying to emphasise is that though people from the south might think of Blackburn in terms of factory chimneys and smoke, I love the place and feel I would never be quite so happy and content anywhere else. That might surprise a lot of folk, but there it is. I suppose that I am a one-club man and I'm certainly not ashamed of it.... My ambitions now are to win a Cup

medal ... and League championship medal. Not for myself ... but to make up to the Blackburn supporters for their recent disappointments. It seems a long time since they had something really to shout about and they deserve it.⁸⁵

This expression of social proximity with the people of Blackburn portrayed Douglas as a familiar figure who the Blackburn supporters could know like a friend, and also an exemplar of all that was positive about the town of his birth. As a true local hero, he was simultaneously presented as an intrinsic member of the Blackburn community, whilst also being offered as a model to which the Blackburn public could only aspire.

The social closeness of Bryan Douglas to the people of Blackburn is also evident in oral testimony. To explain why Douglas never left Blackburn Rovers for a more 'glamorous' club during his career, one Blackburn fan who had since become friends with the ex-player explained that:

Dougy [Bryan Douglas] was born and bred in Blackburn; not very far from the ground ... He would never leave Blackburn. I talk to him sometimes now and I say to him, 'did you never feel like leaving Blackburn', because we lost a lot of good players in the fifties and sixties, people going to Everton and big clubs, and I said, 'do you not regret it now. And he said, 'no'.⁸⁶

Also, to explain the economic similarities between Bryan Douglas and himself when Douglas was still playing, the same fan said:

You have to remember that professional footballers were on a maximum wage then. The only time Dougy got a lot of money was the fifty quid he'd get for an international cap. He never saw it though. His wife took complete control of the money, it went straight to the bank, which he's pleased about now of course because it was the sensible thing to do ... There was no silly business about betting or spending money or things like that.⁸⁷

To this supporter, Douglas was the model of Lancashire simplicity and virtue. He was careful with money, he did not think of himself as different from the fans, and, most importantly of all, he was loyal to Blackburn Rovers.

The perceived social proximity of Bryan Douglas to Blackburn Rovers' supporters was a key aspect of his status as a distinctly local hero during his career. The same is also true of Tom Finney who, despite his excellent football career, was rarely portrayed as detached from his local community during his time as a player. This was particularly evident when Finney retired from professional football in April 1960. Quite naturally, given the enjoyment that Finney's performances for North End had given over the preceding twenty-or-so-years, news of the "peerless plumber's" retirement was met with great sadness in and around Preston and Lancashire.⁸⁸ In the way that the man's career was reviewed and evaluated in the days leading up to and after his retirement, it was evident that he had developed from being a very good footballer who just happened to play for a local team, into a legend who represented the very essence of his region with modesty, reserve and dignity. This was particularly evident in the sheer emotion that reports connected with his retirement often expressed. On the evening before his last appearance, Walter Pilkington, sports editor of the *Lancashire Evening Post*, stated that:

There will be feminine tears and a manly lump in the throat as Tom who, 99 per cent fit, will put his heel down only in some pain, strides out as a League player for North End and captain for the last time ... and when a crowd, much larger than could otherwise have been expected for a game with a relegated club chants 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow', in a spontaneous gesture of good will, Tom Finney, the man of Preston ... , will know that every word is meant sincerely.⁸⁹

In the utilisation of the player's first name and in referring to him as "the man of Preston", Pilkington portrayed Finney as a simple-living, familiar figure who Preston supporters knew like a friend, and also as an exemplar of all that was positive about the town of his birth.

The perceived lack of social distance between Finney and Preston North End fans was further represented in the ceremonies that preceded and followed his final League appearance for North End against Luton Town. The *Lancashire Evening Post* delighted in reporting that players, officials and supporters joined together to sing 'Auld Lang Syne' for Finney prior to the match, and that, after its conclusion, "Tom" had made a farewell speech to his adoring fans. The *Post* reproduced this speech nearly in full, and a section of it is worth reproducing here:

I hardly know what to say. It is a pretty sad day for me. I would like to thank you for your wonderful support I have had during the time I have played here. Also for the many wonderful tributes paid to me in letters from all over England. I would like to thank the North End directors and colleagues for making it such a wonderful time while I have been at Deepdale. It is a sad day. It is a day I will remember forever, and thank you for making it so grand.⁹⁰

For the *Lancashire Evening Post*, the sight of Finney thanking the Preston North End supporters so directly for his time at Deepdale was the perfect image of communion between player and fan; a humble, honest, decent man, unable to accept that it was he who was being thanked for the pleasure he had brought to so many supporters' lives.

The very real affection that Preston North End supporters felt towards Tom Finney was evident in the countless letters and eulogies that the *Lancashire Evening Post*

published in the weeks after his retirement.⁹¹ Whilst a variety of personal, private and sometimes idiosyncratic memories were expressed in these letters, they were all defined by their admiration for Finney's skills and character, and, in particular, their expression of his centrality to the author's life. A letter by C. Montgomery of Preston, published on the very day of Finney's final appearance, expressed perfectly the emotion that often accompanied these tributes:

Many tributes have been paid to Tom Finney. May I express one, not less sincere, from a man on the terraces of Deepdale? To thousands this news brought deep gloom. For years Tom Finney and Preston North End have been one and the same. When he was injured, spare time talk in the factories and shops was all about the Deepdale idol 'Would he be playing?'. Everyone knew we meant Finney. There was no need to name him. Thank you Tom Finney for hours of splendid entertainment. You have made our blood run quicker and our heart beat faster with nothing but pure football. There never was and never will be another star to dazzle Preston more. The thunderous cheers have never been less than your due.⁹²

The reverence with which Finney was regarded by Preston fans is also evident in oral testimony. One Preston North End fan who had attended Finney's final League game for Preston in April 1960, recalled the day by stating:

It was emotional because all the players gathered round and we sang Auld Lang Syne and I found myself starting to weep ... but I had my sunglasses on so nobody could see me, but I looked at my mate and he was weeping as well.⁹³

To indicate the perceived lack of social distance between himself and this world-class footballer, the same respondent also recalled the following story:

It was when my father died. We took him to the crematorium, and I expected that the hearse would go down Blackpool Road, but it didn't, it went down Woodplumpton Road and then it turned up Lytham Road. And as we were

passing Tom Finney's works, just under the bridge, I looked across and Tom come out t' door, and he stood, and he didn't look up, he just bowed his head. And I said to me brother, 'that were nice weren't it', he said, 'yes it were', and I said, 'if the old fella could have seen that he'd had been tickled pink', cause he were a Tom Finney fan as well.

The working-class respect, decency, and modesty encapsulated in this passage is a clear expression of the way in which Finney was presented to and understood by the Preston public. Whether he was really a humble man or not is almost unimportant. To the fans of Preston North End, Finney could be interpreted as exemplifying essential characteristics of their town, and in that way could teach them what it was to be a good Prestonian.

The centrality of Finney to the image of Preston North End in particular, and the town of Preston in general, became particularly evident in the football season that followed his retirement. A deep and pervading sense of foreboding had descended over Preston North End in the summer of 1960, and from the team's first game onwards, match reports were littered with references to the loss of the team's defining spirit. In describing Preston North End's opening match of the 1960-61 season, the *Lancashire Evening Post* declared that, "perhaps not surprisingly, in view of the retirement of Tom Finney, there were fewer at Deepdale for the season's opening match with Newcastle United than for many years",⁹⁴ going on to state that, "long-faced North End followers had their gloomy forebodings realised" by the team's 3-2 loss. Furthermore, in the large number of letters that began to appear in the *Lancashire Evening Post* within weeks of the season's start, the North End fans made it absolutely clear where they believed the root of the team's problems to lie:

I am sure that letters criticising North End will be rolling in during these disastrous days; the 'I told you so' brigade will be out in force ... In this season the club will surely throw away the First Division status Tom Finney preserved for so long.⁹⁵

The message was clear: without Finney, the team could not expect the same degree of success, and without his personality, the club somehow lack a defining centre. In the season after Finney's retirement, Preston North End's crowds declined sharply, and the team were relegated to the Second Division. They have not returned to the top flight of English football since. Whilst a number of factors other than the loss of Finney undoubtedly contributed to this decline, it was unquestionable how the *Lancashire Evening Post* and many Preston North End supporters identified the problem: without Finney's presence in the Preston North End team, the club had lost more than a very good player. For them, it had also lost the very definition of what the club symbolised, and an important representation of what it was to be a Prestonian.

6.8: Football Supporters and 'Regional' Identity

In addition to creating local identity and pride for communities, it also appears that football clubs produced regional feelings of belonging for some football supporters in the post-war period. Evidence of this group emerged from newspaper and oral history research that uncovered fans who, between 1946 and the early 1960s, regularly attended the matches of more than one club. Evidence of supporters who did this was particularly strong in oral history testimony. Many respondents recalled attending matches in which their chosen team were not playing, and some contended that they travelled regularly to watch their local rivals play. The existence of fans such as these raises a number of fundamental question about the whole nature of football supporting

in Lancashire during the post-war period, and draws attention to the fluid nature of such concepts as loyalty, rivalry and parochialism in the context of football.

To explain the type of cross-club allegiances that existed among football supporters in Lancashire during the late 1940s and 1950s, one woman oral history respondent stated:

Well what we used to do, I mean you can't afford to do it now, but we'd go to four or five matches a week [We] had a season ticket at Bolton, and Stockport used to play on a Friday night so we had a season ticket at Stockport as well. Well we reckoned if we were going to go to every match we might as well get a season ticket. So it was a season ticket at Bolton and a season ticket at Stockport, but Stockport were like the second team if you will. But if Bolton hadn't a night match during the week and North End were at home or Rovers, United, City, Bury, Blackpool, Burnley, we'd go. The only ones we didn't go to were Liverpool and Everton because we couldn't get back Any match within travelling distance that we could get to, we'd go.⁹⁶

Similarly, a Preston North End fan recalled that in the 1950s, specialist coaches were run regularly from Preston to Blackburn and Blackpool on Saturdays when Preston North End were away, so that the people of Preston could attend the matches of Blackburn Rovers and Blackpool.⁹⁷ Another stated:

At one time I used to go and watch Blackpool when they were at home, if Preston were away and Blackpool were at home. I'd go there because to be able to watch Finney one week and Matthews the next week, I mean, I don't think there are any footballers today anywhere near the standard they were.⁹⁸

Indeed, this attitude towards attending the matches of rival clubs to see their best players or the players of the opposition was common among respondents. More than one interviewee spoke specifically of attending games in the 1950s to watch Finney, Matthews, Lofthouse and others, while one Tranmere fan explained that he used to

watch Everton play because he didn't have a television and he wanted to see the best players in the country perform.⁹⁹

In contrast to this 'instrumental' approach of watching more than one club to see certain players, other respondents claimed that they did so because of their active respect and emotional attachment to a number of teams. In particular, certain respondents who watched football in the late 1940s and 1950s claimed to be less parochial in their attitude towards football than their later counterparts, and frequently referred to themselves as fans of "football in Lancashire" or "football in general".¹⁰⁰ This 'regional' attitude towards football was even evident in areas that are today exemplified by bitter rivalry. One Manchester City supporter stated that the seemingly long-standing animosity and antagonism between Manchester United and Manchester City fans was a product of recent years, and that he knew of supporters in the 1950s who had season tickets at both grounds.¹⁰¹ Another Manchester City supporter talking more generally of football in Manchester in the 1950s recalled that:

Then it didn't make any difference if you were a football supporter and you came from Manchester. If you were United you wanted United to win first and foremost, whoever they were playing, and you wanted City to be somewhere near, just below you. If you were a City supporter, you wanted City to win and United just to be perhaps two or three places below.¹⁰²

Cross-club attendance at football matches appears to have been particularly strong in Manchester in the late 1940s and early 1950s, possibly because Manchester City and Manchester United shared the Maine Road stadium in that period due to wartime damage to United's Old Trafford ground. A number of supporters regularly attended the matches of both Manchester clubs in the late 1940s and 1950s, even if they did not

actively support both City and United, whilst others went further a field to satisfy their interest in football. One respondent stated:

Yes we used to alternate; it was City at home one week and United the next. A lot of people used to go to both. I went to watch a football match, I mean when you're a football supporter in your younger days you were glad to watch a football match and although I didn't support them [United] I just enjoyed watching them. Occasionally I used to go to Stockport County, again which isn't too far from here [Burnage] ... I didn't go much beyond that in those days.¹⁰³

Another respondent, who attended football matches in Manchester regularly between 1950 and 1970, echoed this account when he recalled that, "for those twenty years I was a United fanatic, and I don't know whether I was strange or not, but I also liked Maine Road because they [Manchester City] has some great players in the '50s and '60s".¹⁰⁴ This account was further supported by another United supporter who explained that he could not decide between City and United in his early supporting career. He stated; "to be truthful, I used to watch City one week and United the next, all the home games you see. But I gradually, after a few years, seemed to swing over to United".¹⁰⁵

Cross-club support for Lancashire football clubs was strong in Manchester, but certainly not confined to the city. One Preston North end supporter claimed that he:

Used to go on't Rovers if North End were somewhere where it was too far to go ... a lot used to do it, Rovers one week, North End the other ... I used to go to Accrington a time or two as well.¹⁰⁶

In addition to this, a number of oral history respondents expressed a strong sentiment of supporting Lancashire teams against 'outside' opposition in the 1950s. One

Manchester City supporter stated that he always wanted Lancashire teams to do well, especially against “the bloody rabble in the south”,¹⁰⁷ whilst another stated that “we always supported Lancashire [against teams from elsewhere]. Whether it’d be Burnley or Preston, they all had their star players ... and you always wanted a Lancashire team to be on top”.¹⁰⁸ One final respondent also summarised his general support for, and regional pride in, football in Lancashire in the late 1940s and 1950s by stating that:

When Blackpool played Newcastle in the Cup Final [in 1951] we wanted Blackpool to win ‘cause they were from Lancashire. and Burnley [in 1947], we wanted Burnley to win because they were from Lancashire.¹⁰⁹

This oral testimony is supported by newspaper evidence. From investigating Lancashire’s local press in the late 1940s, it can be said that a ‘regional’ view of football was common in the area during the immediate post-war period, and that newspaper readers were quite often encouraged to take pride in the activities of all the region’s sports teams. In March 1948, a review of the forthcoming weekend of sport in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* highlighted this attitude perfectly when it stated:

FA Cup semi-finals ... opening of the flat racing season ... RL Cup ties ... RU County Championship final and international. These are the events that make tomorrow the greatest sports day of the year. It only needs Manchester United and Blackpool to win through to an all-Lancashire Cup final, three Red Rose clubs to reach the RL semi-finals and Lancashire to retain the RU County title to make it the greatest sports day in the history of Lancashire. Here’s hoping.¹¹⁰

The *Evening Chronicle* patently believed that their readers ‘supported’ or at least took an interest in all the region’s sports teams, and implicitly portrayed Lancashire as a county without bitter sporting partisanship.

In a similar expression of regional pride, the *Manchester Evening Chronicle's* reporting of the build up to the 1948 FA Cup Final between Manchester United and Blackpool also expressed a belief that Lancashire's football fans should 'support the county' as well as their own clubs. In the week running up to the Final, the paper published letters from the Lord Mayor of Manchester and the Mayor of Blackpool, both of which expressed their delight that the Final was an all-Lancashire affair. The Lord Mayor of Manchester stated that:

While, naturally, as a partisan, I hope the trophy will come to Manchester, nevertheless, I endorse the saying, 'may the best side win'. All Lancastrians derive much satisfaction and jubilation knowing that the Cup is certain to come to the County Palatine.¹¹¹

Similarly, the Mayor of Blackpool reflected that:

As the Mayor of Blackpool and a Lancashire man, this year's Cup final is a two-fold source of pride and joy to me. Whoever wins, I can take pride in the fact that it is an all-Lancashire final and that the Cup must come to our beloved county. May the better team win, and if that team can be Blackpool, then my pleasure in the result will also be two-fold.¹¹²

From both of these expressions, it was clear that the FA Cup of 1948 was portrayed as an important expression of Lancastrian solidarity, and an event that could be enjoyed by the county as a whole. Partisanship was presented as an acceptable expression of supporting one's team, but not at the expense of one's respect for other teams, or of one's support for the county.

To add to the sense of regionalism that existed around Lancashire football in the immediate post-war period, relations between football clubs in the region were often

reported to be exemplary by Lancashire's press. When local teams played together in derby matches, reports were written in terms of 'friendly rivalries', with an accent on hard and fair play usually being maintained throughout. Teams and, by implication, fans were shown as having mutual respect when playing each other, and a common and correct approach to playing and supporting the game.

The respect that Lancashire football supporters had for teams across the region in the 1950s was probably best shown in 1953 on the occasion of Blackpool FC's victory in the FA Cup Final against local rivals Bolton Wanderers. In the immediate aftermath of what became a legendary Final, not least because of Blackpool's late comeback to win the match 4-3 and the role of Stanley Matthews in the victory, the Lancashire press contained numerous mentions of how the people of the county displayed great pride in Blackpool's achievements, regardless of team affiliation. The *Lancashire Evening Post* claimed that the Blackpool team had been met, from Crewe onwards, by 300,000 people on their train journey back to Lancashire after the Final.¹¹³ The newspaper went on to explain that:

Well-wishers delayed [the team's] train at Crewe as the Cup was held out of the window. ... At Warrington the screech of local whistles deafened the cheers of people lining the platforms and the blaring 'congratulations to Blackpool' greeting broadcast over the station's loudspeaker. ... Wigan gave a similar warm reception to the visitors.¹¹⁴

In the most remarkable sign of regional football pride associated with the 1953 Cup Final, the *Lancashire Evening Post* claimed that as the Blackpool team reached Preston on their journey home "an estimated crowd of 5,000 waited to greet the team on the platform, the station approach and down Fishergate".¹¹⁵ As Preston North End

and Blackpool FC currently share one of the keenest and most bitter rivalries in Lancashire football, it is extraordinary to imagine football fans from Preston celebrating a Blackpool victory in such large numbers and with such enthusiasm.

6.9: Exceptions to Regional Support for Lancashire Football in the 1950s and 1960s

Whilst the dominant mode of football support in Lancashire in the 1950s and early 1960s was exemplified by respect for other teams from the region, it appears that a small number of rivalries did not exactly adhere to this approach. In the 1950s, it is evident that a small amount of parochialism and intra-regional rivalry did exist between football teams in Lancashire. Relations between Bolton Wanderers and the two main Manchester clubs, for instance, do not seem to have adhered to 'regional' principles prior to the late 1950s. In January 1953, the *Bolton Evening News* made a telling comment when, after Bolton had defeated Manchester United, it stated: "Always especially pleasing to Bolton fans, a win over one of the Manchester clubs".¹¹⁶ Similarly, by the late 1950s, relations between the east Lancashire teams of Blackburn Rovers and Burnley were more representative of the parochial, intra-town rivalries that became so commonly associated with English football from the late 1960s. In the *Burnley Express and Burnley News* in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Blackburn Rovers were routinely described as "old rivals", and when Burnley and Blackburn played each other readers would be reminded that "the rivalry is particularly keen" between the two.¹¹⁷

During the second half of the 1959-60 football season, Burnley FC and Blackburn Rovers met on two successive weeks in the League and FA Cup respectively. These events afforded the *Burnley Express and Burnley News* the opportunity to inform readers that this “double engagement with East Lancs rivals Blackburn Rovers makes [the following week] one of the keenest ... in the long histories of both”.¹¹⁸ In a season when Burnley were in a position to win the Division One League Championship and Blackburn Rovers were concentrating on the FA Cup, the *Express and News* felt it important to state before the League meeting between the two that they could not “imagine the Blue and Whites [Blackburn Rovers] having any kindly feelings towards the ambitions of Burnley, even though they meet again in the more hectic atmosphere of the FA Cup competition next Saturday”.¹¹⁹ The newspaper, in one of its most explicit statements on relations between Burnley and Blackburn, concluded its reporting on the two matches by claiming that “rivalry is too keen and prestige is at stake, even in these matches between two near towns with similar interests in industry and sport”.¹²⁰

Elsewhere in Lancashire, other exceptions to regional solidarity among football supporters existed at the Merseyside clubs of Liverpool, Everton and Tranmere. Though located in the county of Lancashire, the city of Liverpool’s sporting ties with the rest of the county appear to have been ambiguous in the late 1940s and 1950s. From a close reading of Liverpool’s local press in the years after the Second World War, it can be seen that local football journalists believed that the main sporting interests for the people of the city lay in the Liverpool area, Cheshire and north Wales, and not the rest of Lancashire. This may be nothing other than a reflection of the Liverpool newspapers’ circulation areas, but it more probably represents the long-

standing cultural bifurcation that has historically existed between Liverpool and most of its Lancashire neighbours.¹²¹

Despite the ambivalence of Liverpool towards the rest of Lancashire, it would be incorrect to assert that the city's post-war press evoked no affiliation between Merseyside and Lancashire football clubs. On the contrary, on a number of occasions football reports included unequivocal statements linking the performance of Merseyside clubs to the pride and status of Lancashire. In 1954, when Everton were knocked out of the FA Cup by Sheffield Wednesday, the *Liverpool Echo* called on Wednesday's next opponents, Bolton Wanderers, to "revenge the blow to Lancashire by succeeding at Hillsborough where Everton should have won but did not".¹²² In reporting the tie in this way, the newspaper established a clear relationship between Bolton Wanderers and Everton, and made obvious its belief that Everton should, in this context at least, be seen as a Lancashire club.

An even more notable example of the Liverpool press's willingness to display pride in football teams from across Lancashire occurred during Manchester United's successful European Cup campaign of 1968. In an article prior to the European Cup Final, the *Liverpool Echo* drew attention to the relatively successful seasons that Liverpool and Everton had enjoyed, but went on to state that:

Merseyside must hand the glory this year to Manchester. To add to United's feat in becoming the first English team to reach the Final of the European Cup there is the triumph of Manchester City and ... Joe Mercer who has steered them to the League Championship.¹²³

In addition to this benevolence towards their Lancashire neighbours, the *Liverpool Echo* was keen to associate the strength of football in Manchester in 1968 with the potential excellence of the two major teams in their own city. The newspaper drew attention to the “south-Lancashire soccer axis” in one article, and stated, with some pride, that the achievements of the Manchester teams had “left the south [of England] ... out in the cold”.¹²⁴ Clearly, it was preferable for the *Liverpool Echo* to have its neighbours from Manchester succeed on the football field than teams from outside the region.

After Manchester United’s success in the European Cup Final of 1968, the *Liverpool Echo* ran a series of articles celebrating the Manchester club’s achievement. Whilst many of these were admittedly infused with national, rather than regional, pride in what United had achieved for English football, they still serve as evidence of the removal of intense intra-regional differences during United’s moment of success. In the match report that followed the European Cup Final, the *Liverpool Echo* closed by stating:

British football can be proud of the United team who gave their all to give Matt Busby the Cup he cherishes above all else. It’s been a long, long drive for United to reach the top in Europe – no one will begrudge them being the first English club to make it.¹²⁵

This statement was an explicit assertion of the *Liverpool Echo*’s willingness to enjoy Manchester United’s success. In the articles that followed the victory, Manchester United’s victory was presented as an occasion for celebration across the country, and not least in the ‘south-Lancashire soccer axis’.

The rivalry that did exist between Lancashire football teams in the 1950s and early 1960s is probably best described by oral history respondents. A number of interviewees commented that rivalry certainly did exist between Lancashire clubs in that period, but that it was a friendly rivalry based on humour rather than hatred. A Manchester City supporter explained that, in relation to Manchester City and Manchester United:

There was a rivalry, but it wasn't the same as it is now. You'd go to Old Trafford to nag them or something like that. I knew loads of City fellas who went to Old Trafford ... they'd only go to nag them, boo them or something like that, but it was a laugh.¹²⁶

Another City supporter told a similar story when he recalled:

I went to watch United [in the 1950s], I stood on the what was to become notorious Stretford End and I used to cheer on the opposite team and there was a lot of friendly banter, no fighting no trouble.¹²⁷

Other supporters who watched football in Manchester in the 1950s and 1960s also attested to a solid but friendly rivalry between the two Manchester clubs. One stated that "there was no nastiness or fighting",¹²⁸ another that "the rivalry was pretty keen, but there wasn't anything like the bitterness that there is now",¹²⁹ whilst another confirmed that "the rivalry was still there, but it wasn't the tribal hatred that you get now, and there was certainly no violence that I was aware of".¹³⁰

A similar structure of friendly rivalries also appears to have existed elsewhere in Lancashire. On the rivalry between football clubs in east Lancashire in the 1960s, one Blackburn Rovers supporter stated:

There would be rivalry but not in a vindictive way. It's very difficult to convey the subtlety of what I'm saying. But there was always an element of humour about it somehow. It was rather like criticising your husband in public. If you do it in a humorous way, it can end up with a laugh all round, including your husband.¹³¹

The same respondent clarified her claim by comparing matches in the 1950s with more recent local derbies that she had attended:

For the most part, as I remember it [rivalry in the 1960s], it was pretty good humoured. It was very incisive and cruel, but it always had an edge of humour on it. But last year I went to a game between Preston and Blackpool. I sat in the stand and I was horrified at some of the stuff that was coming out. There were absolutely ghastly, murderous remarks about the Blackpool supporters. And it was coming from people who weren't watching the game at all. And at Blackburn I noticed the same thing this season when I went to watch the Preston, Blackburn match in the Coca-Cola Cup. And there were some Blackburn supporters behind us and they were just mouthing, I won't say obscenities because I'm not against rich language, some of it is very funny ... but murderous remarks were being shouted for no reason. And the lad who was doing it didn't even know who'd scored the goals for his own team. His pals around him had to tell him who'd scored the goals ... I can't remember encountering that when I first started going.¹³²

For this supporter and many like her, the key issue here was that rivalries between Lancashire football teams in the 1950s and 1960s were qualitatively different to their later counterparts. It was not the case that clubs did not have rivalries, but rather that those rivalries lacked any particular malice and certainly did not preclude people from admiring each other's clubs. As one respondent put it:

The rivalry between Lancashire clubs was fine. There was no unpleasantness, they appreciated each other's standards ... There was a camaraderie. People respected each other. There was more pride in Lancashire football.¹³³

6.10: Reasons for the Development of the Lancashire Regional Football Community

From the evidence above, it can be suggested that the *dominant* mode of support for football in Lancashire in the 1950s and early 1960s was exemplified by a regional mindset and a general respect, if not support, for teams from across the region. However, when dealing with an issue such as ‘regionalism’ in football, it should be noted, of course, that all evidence on the matter should be handled with great care. This is particularly true of the oral history testimony, as it is possible that some of the recollections cited above may be touched with nostalgia and the often repeated sense that football crowds were more ‘sporting’ in the immediate post-war period than they are today. Whilst this concern is accepted here, a number of respondents certainly displayed a regional pride in football in Lancashire during their interviews, and often testified to wanting all teams from the region to do well, especially against ‘southern’ opposition. As for newspaper evidence, it could be claimed that the journalists’ views presented above were exclusively their own, and in no way represented popularly held attitudes towards football in Lancashire. However, it is unlikely that so many journalists could express such similar views across a range of unconnected newspapers if they bore no relation to reality, nor that such positions could be maintained if they were untrue without some comment being passed in, for instance, newspaper letters pages.

With the existence of post-war ‘regionalism’ in Lancashire football established, it is important to explain the reasons behind its existence, not least in order that its subsequent disappearance and the rise of one-club parochialism can be evaluated. To do this, it is vital to place football supporters from the immediate post-war period in

their proper historical context. For instance, it should be noted that a *lack* of regionalism in certain circumstances among football fans in Lancashire existed in some periods prior to the late 1960s and that intense rivalries were observable between Lancashire football fans as early as the 1870s.¹³⁴ From the inter-war period onwards, however, it does appear that the culture surrounding football in Lancashire became much more receptive to the notion of respecting other people's clubs, and even the active supporting of more than one team. The reasons for this development could be linked to changes in the perception of football and football supporters in England from the inter-war period onwards, or to more fundamental social processes occurring within English culture at the time. Let us consider these two explanations in turn.

Prior to 1918, professional football had its enemies in all sections of English society, with socialists viewing it as the opiate of the people, and right-wing opponents expressing concern about the effect that its large, boisterous and occasionally violent crowds would have on public morals. From the early inter-war period onwards, however, the number of opponents that football had began to diminish, and the level of support that the game enjoyed in all sections of society began to increase. By 1939, it could be said that the English football crowd was "an embodiment of the stable, disciplined and ordered nature of English (and, indeed, British) society",¹³⁵ and that working-class football fans were good-natured people who never elevated their passion for the game to a level where it could lead to extreme partisanship and hooliganism. Working-class football fans were seen, and, it could be claimed, saw themselves, as tolerant, cheerful, sporting, well-behaved and humorous. If this was so, it is possible that the 'positive' self-image of football fans during the 1930s helped

establish an atmosphere in which it was acceptable to support more than one club or, indeed, a number of clubs from across a region.

In addition to the improving self-perception of English football fans in the 1930s, it is possible that the social and cultural organisation of working-class life in the first half of the twentieth century also enabled people to approach football through a regional mindset. For thirty-or-so years prior to the 1950s, Eric Hobsbawm has suggested that English working-class life had a certain “common style” to it that was expressed economically in terms of employment, politically in terms of political affiliation, socially in terms of living conditions, and culturally in terms of leisure time.¹³⁶ For the years directly after the Second World War, Hobsbawm claims that this “common style” intensified further as a result of Britain’s high, almost full, level of employment, the experiences of war shared by people across the country, and the new philosophy of the welfare state.¹³⁷ In terms of people’s social habituses and feelings of identity and belonging, this fact is employed to argue that the dominance of working-class commonality overrode most if not all differences between working-class communities in different geographical areas, ensuring that people’s identities as workers were their dominant ones. With specific reference to football, Hobsbawm states that fans of different football clubs within cities such as Sheffield and Nottingham were not divided by their choice of team during this period, but, rather, were brought together because of their consumption of the same leisure pursuit.¹³⁸

If Hobsbawm is correct, and most working-class people in England did share a broadly defined common existence prior to the 1960s, it can be argued that regionalism in football in Lancashire in the period was a direct product of football fans’ communal

class identities. In popularly identifying themselves as belonging to the same social group as working-class people in other towns and cities in their region, it is possible that football supporters in Lancashire in the 1940s and 1950s viewed other fans' teams as institutions to be appreciated and supported, and thereby felt it inappropriate to follow football entirely through a combative, parochial mindset. This is especially conceivable when one considers the 'respectable working-class values', such as collectivism, good manners and mutual respect, which are said to have exemplified English working-class life prior to the 1960s.¹³⁹ It should be noted, of course, that this suggestion is not without its problems, particularly when one considers that football fans in Lancashire chose only to follow teams from across their region and not further afield in the post-war period. Yet if one assumes that, due to limited national transport and communications, Lancashire working-class people's experiences were largely limited to the county in the 1940s and 1950s, it is possible that a theory of class commonality can explain why some Lancashire football supporters followed more than one team in the immediate post-war period, and why a strong regional mindset seems to have characterised football in the region prior to the 1960s.

To complement Hobsbawm's analysis, it can be stated that the economic and cultural structure of Lancashire prior to the 1960s also helped to foster intra-regional cross-community feelings. In the introduction to this project, the relatively cohesive economic structure of Lancashire from the nineteenth century until the mid-to-late twentieth century was described and is worth revisiting. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, large sections of Lancashire were dominated by two industries: cotton and coal. In the case of cotton, this meant that 620,000 people were employed in the industry in the region at its peak in the early twentieth century and that nearly

300,000 were still involved by the beginning of the 1950s.¹⁴⁰ This, along with the numbers employed in coal (50,000 in the early 1950s), helped to develop and maintain a strong sense of shared culture and experience in the region that expressed itself through a variety of means including urban living conditions, dialect, diet, humour and dress. In terms of football, it is entirely probable that the same culture also helped to create a regional view of football in Lancashire, and encouraged supporters to express a shared social habitus that resulted in respect for and interest in other fans' teams. If people in Lancashire felt that they had something fundamental in common with people in other towns and cities in the county in the 1940s and 1950s, then it is not surprising that such an affiliation was occasionally expressed through the medium of sport.

6.11: Conclusion

From the evidence contained in this chapter it is clear that a fundamental link existed between football support and the expression of social identity in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period. In the case of one-club local football support, this social identity manifested itself in displays of pride and celebration when football clubs played opposing teams, particularly when those clubs' matches enjoyed heightened importance in competitions such as the FA Cup. Single football clubs were also linked to the production of social identity in this period when their style of play and local footballing heroes were represented back to the people of Lancashire to inform them what it meant to be from various towns and cities across the region. Of course, the people that really based their social identities on the exploits of football clubs in this period were members of football communities and not members of the normal geographical communities of the town and cities of Lancashire. However, some

overlap between football communities and local communities did exist in Lancashire before the 1960s, not least because football communities regularly borrowed long-standing cultural representations and identity traits of the region to define themselves against others.

In addition to local football communities, it is also evident that a regional football mindset existed in Lancashire before 1960. This was expressed in the actions of fans who enthusiastically supported more than one club in this period and in the comments of newspapers that expressed and encouraged interest in sports teams across the region. The existence of this regional football community is important as it highlights the lack of intra-regional parochialism in Lancashire in the immediate post-war period and the shared social habituses that football fans across the region held, encouraging them to identify with like-minded people across a large geographical area.

Despite the strength of links between football and social identity in the immediate post-war period, a number of social changes occurred in Lancashire from the 1960s that led to a decline in football fans' feelings of local communality and a decline of football regionalism. It is to such issues that attention will now be turned. In the next chapter, an investigation into changes in social identity in Lancashire in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980 will be conducted, as will a study of the nature of football communities in the region in the same period. This will lead to a clear understanding of football and social collectivity for the final third of the twentieth century, and explain how so many Lancashire football clubs became divorced from their formerly 'natural' support base by the mid-1980s.

¹ See Critcher, C., 'Football Since the War', in Clarke J., Critcher C. & Johnson R., *Working Class Culture - Studies in History and Theory* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1979) & Wagg, S., *The Football World: a Contemporary Social History* (Brighton: The Havester Press Limited, 1984).

² See appendix for further details.

³ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.

⁴ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.

⁵ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.

⁶ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.

⁷ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.

⁸ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.

⁹ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.

¹⁰ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.

¹¹ Interview with G. Gately, November 4th 1997.

¹² Mason, T., *Sport in Britain* (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p.118.

¹³ See, Holt, R., 'Heroes of the North: Sport and the Shaping of Regional Identity', Hill, J. & Williams, J. (eds.), *Sport and Identity in the North of England* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996) and Holt, R., 'Football and Regional Identity in the North of England: The Legend of Jackie Milburn' in Gerhrmann, S., (ed.) *Football and Regional Identity in Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997), pp. 49-66.

¹⁴ This type of work has also been conducted in the context of the wider Europe. See, for instance, Gehrman, S., 'Football Clubs as Media Identity in an Industrial Region: "Schalke" and "Borussia" and the Ruhr Area', in Gehrman, S., *Football and Regional Identity in Europe* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 1997), pp. 81-92

¹⁵ See, for instance, Holt, R., 'Working-Class Football and the City: The Problem of Continuity', *British Journal of Sports History*, 3, 1, 1986, and Hill, J., 'Rite of Spring: Cup Finals and Community in the North of England', in Williams, J. & Hill, J., *Sport and Identity in the North of England*. (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996).

¹⁶ Devine, F., *Affluent Workers Revisited: Privatism and the Working Class* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p.1.

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- ¹⁷ Bourke, J., *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) pp.137-8.
- ¹⁸ Anderson, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (2nd ed.) (London: Verso, 1990).
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ²⁰ Anderson does identify other criteria for the successful creation of communities. These include certain developments in transport, communication systems and language. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-46.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- ²² See, for instance, Hall, S., 'The Question of Cultural Identity'. In Hall, S., Held, D. & McGrew, T. (eds), *Modernity and its Futures* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992); Maguire, J., 'Globalization, Sport and National Identities: 'The Empires Strike Back?''', *Society and Leisure*, 16 (2), 1993, pp. 293-322.
- ²³ Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', pp. 293-295.
- ²⁴ See Joyce, P., *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class: 1840-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 279-304.
- ²⁵ Holt, R., 'Sport and History: The State of the Subject in Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 7, 2, 1996, p. 244.
- ²⁶ Elias, N., *The Germans* (London: Polity Press, 1990).
- ²⁷ For more on this see, Mennell, S., *Norbert Elias: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- ²⁹ Bourdieu, P., *Distinction* (London: Routledge, 1984).
- ³⁰ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ³¹ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ³² Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ³³ *Liverpool Echo* (hereafter *LE*), January 8th 1954, p. 9.
- ³⁴ Hill, 'Rite of Spring', pp. 100-101.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- ³⁶ *Lancashire Daily Post* (hereafter *LDP*), January 23rd 1947, p. 6.
- ³⁷ *LDP*, February 12th 1947, p. 4.
- ³⁸ *LDP*, April 26th 1947, p. 1.

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- ³⁹ *Lancashire Evening Post* (hereafter *LEP*), March 13th 1954, p. 1.
- ⁴⁰ *LE*, March 1st 1947, p. 4.
- ⁴¹ *Bolton Evening News* (hereafter *BEN*), February 28th 1953, p. 1.
- ⁴² *LDP*, April 26th 1947, p. 1.
- ⁴³ *LEP*, May 1st 1954, p. 1.
- ⁴⁴ *LEP*, May 2nd 1964, p. 1.
- ⁴⁵ *LDP*, April 26th 1947, p. 1.
- ⁴⁶ *BEN*, May 2nd 1953, p. 1.
- ⁴⁷ *Blackburn Evening Telegraph* (hereafter *BET*), April 30th 1960, p. 4.
- ⁴⁸ See, Hill, 'Rite of Spring', p. 104.
- ⁴⁹ *BET*, May 2nd 1953, p. 1.
- ⁵⁰ *LEP*, May 4th, 1964, pp.4-6.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-6.
- ⁵² *LEP*, January 11th 1954, p. 2.
- ⁵³ *LEP*, January 14th 1954, p. 2.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.
- ⁵⁵ Hill traces the very first mass reception for a Cup team as occurring in 1883 after Blackburn Olympic had defeated Old Etonians in the Final at Kennington Oval, thus becoming the first provincial and professional team to win the Cup. Although public figures did become involved in the celebrations, Hill suggests that the sheer unexpected level of affection and enthusiasm created during the event and the lack of any attempt to place a civic stamp upon the proceedings gave the celebrations a true feeling of spontaneity. Hill 'Rite of Spring', p. 100-101.
- ⁵⁶ Hill claims that attempts were made to turn receptions in Bury into semi-official events as early as 1900 and 1903. Hill, 'Rite of Spring', p. 101.
- ⁵⁷ The *Lancashire Evening Post* described the route that the Preston team coach was going to take in 1954, and estimated that some 50,000 people would line the streets of the town. *LEP*, April 27th 1954, p. 5.
- ⁵⁸ *LEP*, March 29th 1954, p. 5.
- ⁵⁹ *BEN*, May 5th 1953, p. 4.

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- ⁶⁰ *LE*, January 12th 1954, p. 7.
- ⁶¹ *BEN*, March 21st 1953, p. 1.
- ⁶² *LEP (Last Football Edition)*, April 3rd 1954, p. 6.
- ⁶³ *BEN*, February 24th 1953, p. 3.
- ⁶⁴ *LEP*, April 28th 1964, p. 1.
- ⁶⁵ Much of what follows here is based on Mellor, G., 'Post-war Lancastrian Football Heroes: Finney, Lofthouse and Douglas', *Lancashire Labour History*, 24, 1999/2000.
- ⁶⁶ For information on similar processes in other areas of Britain see Johnes, M., 'Fred Keenor: A Welsh Soccer Hero', *The Sports Historian*, 18, 1, 1998, pp. 105-119; Holt, R., 'Football and Regional Identity in the North of England'; and Mason, T., 'Stanley Matthews' in Holt, R., *Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991). For an example of this process in another sport see Hill's discussion of Learie Constantine and cricket in Nelson in Hill, J., *Nelson: Politics, Economy and Community* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1997) pp. 119-126.
- ⁶⁷ Dellheim, C., 'Imagining England: Victorian Views of the North', *Northern History*, 22, 1986, pp. 216-217.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.217.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.219.
- ⁷⁰ Russell, D., 'Amateurs, Professionals and the Construction of Social Identity', *The Sports Historian*, 16, 1996.
- ⁷¹ Dellheim, 'Imagining England', p.220.
- ⁷² Burnley, J., *West Riding Sketches*, 1875, p.12, in Dellheim, 'Imagining England', p.220.
- ⁷³ Dellheim, 'Imagining England', p.221.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.221.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.221.
- ⁷⁶ Young, P., *Bolton Wanderers* (London: The Sportsmans Book Club, 1961), p. 135.
- ⁷⁷ Berry, H. & Allman, G., *Preston North End: One Hundred Years at Deepdale* (Preston: Amblers Printers, 1982), p. 171.
- ⁷⁸ Lofthouse won Footballer of the Year in 1953, Finney in 1954 and 1957.

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- ⁷⁹ Young, *Bolton Wanderers*, p. 136.
- ⁸⁰ *BEN*, May 24th 1952, p. 4.
- ⁸¹ *The Times*, January 1st 1960.
- ⁸² *BEN*, April 11th 1953, p. 3.
- ⁸³ *BET*, February 27th 1962, p. 1.
- ⁸⁴ *BET*, September 7th 1963, p. 8.
- ⁸⁵ *BET (Sports Last)*, October 9th 1961, p. 8.
- ⁸⁶ Interview with B. Isherwood, November 11th 1997
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁸ The phrase 'peerless plumber' was often used in the local Lancashire press to describe Finney. It works perfectly as a reminder to Finney's original trade before becoming a world class footballer.
- ⁸⁹ *LEP*, April 29th 1960, p. 12.
- ⁹⁰ *LEP*, May 2nd 1960, p. 5.
- ⁹¹ The *LEP* also reported that the Mayor of Preston had been inundated with calls after Finney's retirement for the town to erect a permanent testimonial to the man. *LEP*, April 27th 1960, p. 10.
- ⁹² *LEP*, April 30th 1960, p. 6.
- ⁹³ Interview with W. Horam, November 25th 1997.
- ⁹⁴ *LEP*, August 20th 1960, p. 5.
- ⁹⁵ *LEP (Last Football Edition)*, September 3rd 1960, p. 3.
- ⁹⁶ Interview with J. Palin, November 3rd 1997.
- ⁹⁷ Interview with W. Horam, November 25th 1997.
- ⁹⁸ Interview with T. Woods, November 7th 1997.
- ⁹⁹ Interview with J. Miller, November 17th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁰ For example, Interview with J. Palin, November 3rd 1997.
- ¹⁰¹ Interview with A. McKenna, November 13th 1997.
- ¹⁰² Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ¹⁰³ Interview with K. Jackson, November 11th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁴ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁵ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.

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- ¹⁰⁶ Interview with B. Thompson, November 24th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁷ Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁸ Interview with E. Hall, November 18th 1997.
- ¹⁰⁹ Interview with D. McCormack, November 21st 1997.
- ¹¹⁰ *Manchester Evening Chronicle* (hereafter *MEC*), March 12th 1948, p. 8.
- ¹¹¹ *MEC*, April 23rd 1948, p. 4.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ¹¹³ *LEP*, May 5th 1953, p. 1.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶ *BEN*, January 26th 1953, p. 5.
- ¹¹⁷ *Burnley Express and Burnley News* (hereafter *BEBN*), February 27th 1960, p. 15.
- ¹¹⁸ *BEBN*, March 5th 1960, p. 17.
- ¹¹⁹ *BEBN*, March 5th 1960, p. 19.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹²¹ See, Dellheim, 'Imagining England', p. 223.
- ¹²² *LE*, March 12th 1954, p. 14.
- ¹²³ *LE (Football Echo)*, May 11th 1968, p. 3.
- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁵ *LE*, May 29th 1968, p. 23.
- ¹²⁶ Interview with J. Hill, November 12th 1997.
- ¹²⁷ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.
- ¹²⁸ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.
- ¹²⁹ Interview with R. Haughton, November 10th 1997.
- ¹³⁰ Interview with G. Doyle, November 14th 1997.
- ¹³¹ Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ¹³² Interview with A. Smith, December 8th 1997.
- ¹³³ Interview with K. Bailey, November 11th 1997.

¹³⁴ See Lewis, R., 'Professional Football and Identity in Lancashire, 1870-1899', in Caspistegui, F.J., & Walton, J.K. (eds.), *Guerras Danzadas: Futbol e Identidades Locales y Regionales en Europa* (Pamplona: EUNSA, 2001), pp. 141-178.

¹³⁵ Russell, D., *Football and the English* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), p. 121.

¹³⁶ Hobsbawm, E., *The Forward March of Labour Halted* (London: NLB, 1981), pp. 7-8.

¹³⁷ Harrison, J.F.C., *The Common People: A History from the Norman Conquest to the Present* (Glasgow: Fontana Press, 1984), p. 378.

¹³⁸ Hobsbawm, *The Forward March of Labour Halted*, pp. 10-11.

¹³⁹ See, Richards, J., 'Football and the Crisis of National Identity', unpublished paper.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, D., *Lancashire* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969), pp. 141-145.

Chapter Seven

Football Fandom and the Decline of Communal Identities in Lancashire, 1960-1985

7.1: Introduction

From the evidence presented in the previous chapter, it is clear that observable emotional links existed between football clubs and communities in Lancashire in the 1940s and 1950s, be it at local or regional level. However, in this chapter a series of social processes are identified that undermined local and regional identities from the 1960s and concomitantly severed some of the bonds that existed between football fans and football clubs in the same period. With reference to locally based football identities, this chapter argues that this process led to two primary outcomes. Firstly, the fact that large numbers of people simply stopped attending football matches from the 1960s is identified as a result of people's increasing willingness to express their social identities in non-communal terms. Secondly, it is argued that some people remained football fans after the decline of communal identity, but with their newfound freedom transferred their football allegiances to successful football clubs whenever they wished. A case study of the development of Manchester United is presented in this context to show how this club's emergence as a 'super-club' depended on the fracturing of communal identities from the 1960s. On the issue of the declining regional football identities, social changes of the 1960s that resulted in a decline of regionalism are identified, and particular attention is paid to how this process resulted in the 'one-club' intense parochialism that is so prevalent in the game today. In

analysing developments such as these, a clear analysis of shifts in football fans' identities from the 1960s to the mid-1980s is provided, as is an evaluation of the central influence of changing identities on declining football attendances in Lancashire.

7.2: Local Identity and the Decline of Town-Based Lancashire Football Clubs.

The decline in communal identity experienced amongst post-war football fans in Lancashire manifested itself in a number of ways. Not only was it expressed in terms of *an overall decline in football attendances in the region* (as discussed in Chapter Four), but it also caused a shift of support from smaller clubs to their big-city counterparts. Drawing on studies from Sloane and Bale,¹ King notes that of the seven million people who attended football matches in Lancashire in 1951, 40 per cent watched the four biggest clubs - Manchester City, Manchester United, Everton and Liverpool.² In 1961, whilst total attendances had dropped to six million, 50 per cent of football fans were now at the big clubs, and in 1971 66 per cent of the 5.5 million football fans left attending matches in the region supported the four big clubs. With a significant reduction in feelings of local identity, football fans did not necessarily abandon football clubs as sites of leisure and entertainment, but also reappraised the meaning of being a football fan and what their consumption of the game said about themselves and their sense of identity.

The issue of football fans selecting bigger, more glamorous football clubs over their relatively unsuccessful local counterparts was certainly commented upon by oral history respondents. One Manchester based supporter stated:

You see Bury, Bolton, Stockport, they all started watching City and United. In the '40s and '50s people in those towns walked to work, bused it to work, they didn't car it to work, so they watched their own football teams.³

The same issue also received comment, and often criticism, in the press in Lancashire from the 1960s onwards. In a letter published in the *Lancashire Evening Post* in November 1978, one fan summed the argument up by stating:

It is claimed that many Prestonians travel to watch the big Liverpool and Manchester clubs and thus lessen the chances of Preston ever getting a 'big gate'. I would not dispute this. Indeed, I cannot understand the attitude of those people who say they get better 'value for money' watching a better class of soccer. I am an exiled North End supporter studying and living in Manchester, and during the last year I have become increasingly bored with watching the big names at Manchester City simply because my heart is not in it. It is, and always has been, in Preston. Now I travel 35 miles home to watch Preston rather than walk the quarter mile to Maine Road on a Saturday. ... It's time these renegade Prestonians became a little more proud of Preston North End.⁴

Similarly, the Manchester press frequently included tales of football supporters abandoning their traditional allegiances in favour of the glamour of bigger clubs in the same period. In a letter to the *Manchester Evening News* in February 1968, one Bury fan claimed that the failure of his own club to hold on to their best players, coupled with the success of Manchester United, had caused many "disappointed and frustrated" Bury fans to defect to the Old Trafford club.⁵ Other reports from the late 1960s also commented that United were drawing support from areas such as Huddersfield, Bradford and Halifax, again at the expense of local clubs.⁶ This suggests that the decline in local identity in the 1960s, coupled with the notable success of clubs such as Manchester United, Manchester City and Liverpool in the period, contributed to the widespread attendance falls that many 'smaller' clubs in Lancashire and west Yorkshire endured in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

The newspaper reports cited above reflect perfectly the commonly-held notion that as the twentieth century progressed, the close, almost familial ties that once existed between football clubs and their communities were eroded as people began to attend football matches as uncommitted 'customers', rather than as interested supporters. Whilst evidence presented elsewhere in this project indicates that football fans have long attended the matches of clubs to which they have no obvious geographical connection, there is no doubt that the decline in communal identities felt by many from the early 1960s encouraged people to view football clubs more as dispensable commodities and less as an inheritance to be endured through good times and bad. This indicates that a fundamental shift occurred in people's social habituses in Lancashire from the 1960s that encouraged a reappraisal of the ways in which football was consumed.

7.3: Embourgeoisement, the Working Classes and Declining Local Identities.

Sociologists and social historians have rarely addressed the question of what caused the erosion of communal identities in Lancashire and elsewhere in Britain from the 1960s. When it has been discussed, it has been most frequently associated with debates on affluence and its influence on declining feelings of working-class community in the post-war period. In Chapter Five, a lengthy discussion of the development of affluence amongst the post-war British working class was presented to explain reductions in support for English football from the 1950s onwards. Whilst it was concluded that increased affluence was not enjoyed by all members of the working class in Lancashire during the 1950s and 1960s, it was stated that the new and alternative forms of leisure

that affluence afforded some post-war football fans did certainly lead to their abandonment of the game. To explain the decline in communal identity felt in Lancashire from the 1960s it is important to consider again debates on post-war working-class affluence, and to evaluate sociologists' and social historians' contentions that increasing wealth encouraged working-class people to reappraise their relationship with other people in the last quarter of the twentieth century and saw them develop a much greater sense of commitment to the private, as opposed to public, sphere.

The debate on post-war affluence and its influence on the British working class is one of the most dominant topics of discussion to emerge in British post-war sociology and social history. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, proponents of the British version of the 'embourgeoisement' thesis began to surface, arguing that working-class families were adopting middle-class norms and values as they achieved high standards of living associated with post-war prosperity.⁷ Zweig stated that working-class life was moving towards "middle-class values and middle-class existence",⁸ and Goldthorpe *et al.*, whilst dismissive of the overall embourgeoisement thesis, agreed that some 'convergence' had taken place between working-class and middle-class lifestyles.⁹ Typically, these authors suggested that affluence had afforded the working class a new set of values, leading them to abandon 'traditional' pursuits. It was asserted that "working-class occupational community and associated proletarian solidarism of the first half of the twentieth century had given way to working-class instrumentalism, privatism and individualism".¹⁰

Analyses such as these have continued in contemporary social history and sociology. Authors such as Crewe and Saunders¹¹ have charted the advance of working-class privatism still further, whilst in Cultural Studies the contentions of Hoggart, Williams¹² and others still hold resonance for those studying working-class culture.¹³ In social history, Eric Hobsbawm has continually argued that ‘traditional’ working-class culture collapsed in the 1950s,¹⁴ and in general social history readers, authors such as Marwick and Harrison¹⁵ note that “no subject has received greater attention from social commentators than the new affluence of working people in the 1960s and early 1970s”.¹⁶ In short, a strong body of work has developed on the economic conditions of the working classes in post-war Britain, resulting in an almost hegemonic understanding of the social and cultural manifestations of new found post-war prosperity.

Despite the level of agreement on the existence and affects of post-war affluence on the British working classes, dissenting voices have been raised. For instance, authors such as Ichihashi and Davies¹⁷ have recently questioned whether the ‘traditional’ working class is little but a “mythologised solidaristic image of the pre-war working class”.¹⁸ Similarly, sociologists including Pahl and Macfarlane¹⁹ have suggested that working-class privatism is not unique to the post-war era, but rather a long-term feature of working-class life and aspiration. Pahl has stated that:

The ‘traditional’ working class is arguably the privatised, home-centred domestic unit based on the nuclear family, and, as the historical demographers have demonstrated, such households have a long history in pre-industrial England.²⁰

Drawing on the work of Macfarlane he continues that the:

Overall set of values concerned with homeliness, cosiness, domesticity and the belief that, if one can control just a small part of this large threatening world, then one has achieved something worthwhile ... [defines] the essence of individualism in ordinary English people.²¹

It is asserted that privatism within the working class is not a product of post-war affluence, but rather an historical reality, undermined within academic literature by the dominance of Marxist and socialist readings of class history.

Other authors have taken a different root to criticism. Rather than asserting the timeless nature of working-class privatism, writers such as Devine and Proctor²² have sought to question its existence at all, affirming the continuing communal nature of post-war working-class relations. Proctor states that, “whilst it might be accepted that privatisation is a recurring feature of working-class life the same can be said for communal sociability”.²³ For every case of working-class privatism found in the past, he asserts “so the possibility should not be overlooked that communal sociability might be found in other apparently unlikely locations”.²⁴ Proctor concludes that privatisation is a wholly inapt description of the social relations identified in his study of post-war working-class Coventry.²⁵

The embourgeoisement debate has also received attention in the specific context of Lancashire. In his seminal study of Blackburn in the late 1960s, Seabrook identified, amongst many other social changes, a fundamental shift in the ways in which people in the town constructed their identities according to their new affluent status. Focusing specifically on young people, Seabrook stated that teenagers’ “readiness to spend and consume” in Blackburn had created a fundamental “modification in the traditional way

of life”.²⁶ He stated that the principal concerns of young people in Blackburn in the late 1960s had shifted from ‘traditional’ matters associated with previous generations to worries over “their sexuality, their looks, their sensuality”, all of which were met by increased consumption.²⁷ As a corollary of this process, Seabrook claims that people who had reached their twenties in Blackburn had undergone “an erasure of all social attitudes and beliefs” and a general “smothering” of social identity. For these people, Seabrook concludes that, “friendships formed around motor-cars and consumer goods crowd[ed] out social anchorage and ideological awareness”.²⁸ For them, a social identity associated with place was simply not desired anymore.

Allowing for the criticisms of the embourgeoisement thesis outlined above, if one accepts the evidence provided by Seabrook about the social landscape of Blackburn in the late 1960s, the importance of the affluence debate for analysing the decline of football attendances in Lancashire from the 1960s is undeniable. By drawing attention to the influence of economic change on people’s feelings of belonging and commonality, important starting points are offered for examining shifts in social habituses in Lancashire from the 1960s: shifts that undermined the centrality of football in the creation of communal identity and pride. If, as proponents of the embourgeoisement thesis claim, affluence in the post-war era led to working-class privatism, individualism and instrumentalism, then it can be concluded that affective, community based ties sought by people through football came to be much less desired as the 1960s and 1970s progressed. If this is so, and post-war working-class people did become content to forge their social identities through new and alternative practices, then it can be stated that serious damage was done from the 1960s onwards to the emotional links that once existed between people and their local football teams.

Of course, some authors identified above would argue that the supposed community bonds expressed through football up until the 1960s have been overstated and are nostalgic, mythologised and ultimately false representations of working-class life, whilst others would contend that affective community ties in the context of football were not undermined in the post-war era, but continue to be identified in displays of support for football clubs. However, if one accepts that changes did occur in patterns of working-class bonding in the post-war era, then it can be concluded that declines in attendance that occurred at many post-war Lancashire football clubs were linked to an overall reduction in feelings of locality and community pride.

To ground this theoretical debate on the links between affluence and the decline of communal identity, let us follow Seabrook and consider briefly how affluence and associated social changes specifically undermined people's feelings of locality in Lancashire from the 1960s. The social processes that led to this shift were linked to a number of factors including the increasing geographical mobility of Lancashire people and the fracturing of the county's traditional town and city communities. These changes resulted from, among other things, increased consumption of motorcars and televisions, the vast slum clearances that occurred in most British towns and cities, and the subsequent movement of large numbers of the population to new 'overspill' towns. To take consumption first, as shown in Chapter Five, between 1955 and 1969, total consumer expenditure on motor vehicles (at constant prices) in Britain rose by 146 percent.²⁹ Similarly, the percentage of households in England and Wales that owned a television set rose from under 40 percent in 1955 to over 90 percent in 1969.³⁰ These increases in ownership had two major effects on Lancashire's population. Firstly, they led to the availability of new activities for the public by bringing greater freedom and

choice to their leisure time, and, secondly, they increased geographical mobility and access to nationally produced, privately consumed culture and media. This led, not only to the privatisation of life about which the embourgeoisement theorists have written, but also to a standardisation of life and culture for British people in the late 1960s, and to a subsequent decline in the public's feelings of local and regional difference and identity. By consuming the same nationally produced media as people all over the country, and by having easy and inexpensive access to the whole of Britain through car ownership, there was less to distinguish people from different towns, cities, and counties in Britain in late 1960s than ever before. People's frames of reference and access to cultural resources became increasingly similar as the 1960s progressed, and reliance on local and regional identities was undermined as a result.

The decline in communal identities during the late 1960s was further accelerated by changes in housing in Lancashire during that period. The types of houses that were bought and lived in during that period were not, of course, in the region's major towns and cities - the traditional homes of professional football clubs and strong shared identities - but, rather, were in the newly developed post-war overspill towns and suburbs that were largely free from civic traditions. As explained previously, much of this movement resulted from the post-war relocation that occurred because of Lancashire's enormous burden of bad housing. But despite the altruistic intentions of this move, it may have effectively destroyed the material basis on which people had developed and maintained a sense of belong to various sporting and non-sporting communities. In the context of Manchester, Kidd has noted how the post-war clearance of slums often meant the destruction of every aspect of the networks that had given physical manifestation to a sense of community. Shops, homes, jobs and

community services were all lost during slum clearances and with them people's sense of belonging to a specific geographical area.³¹ Beattie has noted how the same process in Blackburn was, in fact, met with local resistance. He states that in 1970, a public outcry "engulfed the town" as people living in areas that had been identified for future clearance expressed their desire not to have their communities destroyed and to not be "scattered to houses on various council estates or to be placed in high rise blocks of flats".³²

With these fundamental social changes occurring in Lancashire and elsewhere from the 1960s, it is not surprising that communal identities were compromised. Generations that grew up after the 1950s simply did not have access to the same locally-based socialisation as their predecessors in the immediate post-war period, with the result that their social habituses lacked a central dependence on, or need for, communal identities. By living largely privatised lives and by consuming nationally produced media and culture, people in Lancashire were more likely to feel a sense of belonging to a nebulous national community after the 1960s than a local community, and thereby were unlikely to feel great benefit from associating themselves with local institutions such as football clubs. This process was by no means absolute, and many people undoubtedly continued to feel a sense of local communal belonging in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s that expressed itself in terms of football support. But this particular form of social identity formation became weaker from the 1960s, as evidenced by football fans' increasing reluctance to support local football clubs and their growing willingness to transfer allegiances to nationally famous super-clubs whenever they wished.

7.4: The Development of Manchester United as a Super-Club

From the evidence presented above it is clear that a fundamental shift occurred in people's feelings of locality and community in Lancashire from the 1960s onwards. The football club that benefited most from this process in Lancashire in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s was undoubtedly Manchester United. Amongst the four big football clubs of Lancashire, and even in comparison to their contemporaries across Britain and Europe, United developed into a unique football club in this period. Between the mid-to-late 1960s and the mid 1980s, United garnered a regional, national and even international support, and consistently drew the highest average attendances in English football despite enduring many years of relative failure on the field of play. In fact in 1974, when United were relegated to the Second Division of the English Football League for the first time in their post-war history, the club's average home attendance remained at over 48,000. To achieve this, United needed to draw considerable numbers of fans from across Lancashire and beyond: something they could only manage by exploiting the decline in local identities and changes in 'traditional' patterns of football attendance that occurred in Britain from the 1960s. United achieved this with more success than any other football club, but not necessarily because of expert planning and business management. Rather, the club were lucky that in the mid-to-late 1960s they were fortunately placed to take advantage of football fans' increasingly malleable self identities and willingness to choose their football allegiances.

Like many successful football clubs, Manchester United have a long history of drawing support from outside their immediate locale. In the late 1950s, when the club were involved in the air disaster at Munich that killed eight of their players, the national and

international media attention that surrounded the club ensured that people from all over Lancashire and beyond wanted to see their matches.³³ However, whilst many of United's travelling fans in the 1950s were also supporters of other football clubs, from the mid-to-late 1960s onwards United, more than Manchester City, more than Everton and even more than Liverpool, attracted fans from a wide geographical area that were wholly committed to identifying themselves with the club. The central sporting factor in this development was United's prolonged period of domestic and European success in the period between 1964 and 1969. During those years, United played in one of the three European competitions in every season but one, reaching at least the semi-final stage in all but one of those years. In addition, in 1968 United became the first English club to win the European Cup when they beat the Portuguese champions Benfica at Wembley. This victory immortalised the memory of the late-1960s United team and led, in the following season, to Manchester United's and English football's then highest ever average attendance of 57,552.³⁴

Manchester United's success in the mid-to-late 1960s did not lead inevitably to a broadening of their support across Lancashire and beyond. Throughout the history of football, other teams had enjoyed periods of success without the level of benefits that United were to accrue.³⁵ Yet United's success in the late 1960s profoundly influenced the club's image and popularity and formed a secure base on which their later status as a 'super-club' was to be built. This was mainly because United's achievements afforded them the perfect opportunity to capitalise on the increase in television ownership that occurred in Britain in the 1960s as a result of increased working-class affluence. At the end of the 1960s, 93 percent of households in England and Wales owned a television set compared with only 65 percent ten years earlier. Moreover,

televised football underwent a rapid expansion in the late 1960s,³⁶ and many of United's European matches were shown live to the nation and, of course, across Lancashire. This ensured that United were perfectly placed to take advantage of the decline in local identity that occurred in Britain in the mid-to-late 1960s. By being broadcast directly into most homes in Lancashire, Manchester United were highly accessible to anybody wishing to support a football team in the region, not for traditional reasons of civic pride, but more simply for entertainment. It should also be remembered that Manchester United players Bobby Charlton and Nobby Stiles were high profile members of England's World Cup winning team of 1966, and that their association with that triumph further embellished the status of the club they played for. All of this ensured that Manchester United were almost omnipresent in the regional and national media in the late 1960s, and that they became the natural club of choice for football hungry fans across Lancashire and all over the country.

In connection with the decline in local identity in the 1960s, a further social process that should be considered in relation to Manchester United's development into a super-club is the British public's increasing desire to be associated with success during that period. In his analysis of why people from London came to support Manchester United in the late 1960s, British social historian Jeffrey Richards has stated, "the only reason can be a hunger for success that transcends local loyalty".³⁷ Richards claims that this development can be traced back to the demise of Accrington Stanley - the small Lancashire club that resigned from the Football League in 1962 because they were allegedly losing support to more glamorous clubs such as Blackburn, Burnley and United - and goes on to assert that:

Increased social mobility, the creeping Americanisation of British society and culture, the rise of aggressive individualism, the 'losers don't come to dinner' syndrome, [and] a reversal of the traditional love of the underdog ... all contributed to the erosion of civic pride and identity among the young.³⁸

Whilst Richards is not absolutely convincing about the mechanics of the growing desire for success in the late 1960s, it is almost certain that some decline in people's willingness to be associated with failure did take place during that period. This may have been a nothing more than a result of increasingly malleable self-identities in the 1960s as people were no longer so closely tied to the places in which they lived. After all, in a period of strong civic identities in football prior to the 1960s people had to put up with good times and bad times, victories and defeats, whether they liked it or not. However, in the post 1960s atmosphere of greater choice, people from Lancashire and beyond could happily transfer their footballing allegiances to victorious teams at any point, thereby increasing the potential support-base for successful teams such as Manchester United.

7.5: The Importance of Glamour for the Growth of Manchester United

For Manchester United to retain their newfound support from the late 1960s and keep attracting fans from across Lancashire and all over Britain, it was important for their new fans to forge a 'permanent' relationship with the club based on more than the enjoyment of success. The 1970s and 1980s were a time of little playing success for United, making it unlikely that the club would attract or retain many fans in the pursuit of glory during that period. However, the United team that drew so many new supporters to the club in the late 1960s were more than a successful football side: they also possessed a reputation for style and glamour which was to alter the image of the

club forever and ensure United's place as an integral part of British popular culture's most famous and influential period. This fact seems to have been vital in ensuring that United's increased popularity in the late 1960s was not merely an ephemeral response to a period of great success, but, rather, was the basis on which they could establish a permanent status as the most popular club in the country from the 1970s and beyond.

By the mid 1960s, British popular culture was the most dominant influence on Western youth styles worldwide. Led by the Beatles' conquest of the United States in 1964, and London's reputation as the "swinging" capital of the world, British youth popular culture established a position of almost total hegemony between 1964 and 1969.³⁹

Britain's youth of the time were seen as having:

Subverted all the customs and conventions of British society; they have broken the barriers of language and of class; they dress up, they make a noise, and they are rebelling against the rules governing reticence and modesty about sex.⁴⁰

In other words, they were considered to be dangerous and exciting.

The inspiration behind Britain's newfound cultural eminence in the early 1960s came predominantly from the north of England. The Beatles came from Liverpool, as did the resultant 'Merseybeat' phenomenon that influenced popular music styles throughout the world. Furthermore, the 'New Wave' style of British literature, theatre, film and television, which became so influential between the end of the 1950s and the mid 1960s, was again a largely 'northern' movement, using the region's working-class communities as its principal subject matter. Films and plays such as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *A Taste of Honey*, *This Sporting Life*, and the *Loneliness of the*

Long-Distance Runner all made the north of England fashionable to a greater or lesser extent, and in their 'angry young men' anti-establishment heroes offered protagonists that developed notoriety both at home and abroad.⁴¹

Manchester United were *par excellence* the football club which connected most closely with the burgeoning popular culture of the north of England in the early 1960s. Not only were they successful in that period, but they also had players, most notably George Best, whose dress sense, style of play and anti-establishment character matched exactly the mood of the time. When, in March 1966, the *Daily Mirror* published a front-page photo of Best in the wake of United's 5-1 victory over Benfica with the headline 'El Beate', an explicit connection between United and Britain's stylish youth culture was made.⁴² Best's personal charisma, coupled with United's attacking style of play - they won the 1967 Football League championship by scoring 84 goals when most of their rivals could only manage some twenty fewer - meant that the club were perceived as being capable of bringing excitement and romance to football grounds wherever they played.⁴³ Best was also depicted as football's 'angry young man' anti-hero: a talented, glamorous, but flawed star who produced strong emotions in all those who saw him perform.

It should be noted, of course, that the emergence of Manchester United and George Best as glamorous popular culture icons did not take place in a social vacuum. A number of factors, not least the development of a new style of popular journalism in Britain in the 1960s, were central in shaping the public's perception of United as an attractive and charismatic club. Popular British newspapers prior to the 1960s had often concentrated on public affairs as their central news-reporting concern. However,

in an increasingly competitive market, and with the cost of producing newspapers soaring, titles such as the *Daily Mirror* and the newly named *Sun* (previously the *Daily Herald*) decided that the future lay with increased coverage of sport, human interest stories and entertainment. Moreover, they decided that 'scandal' and other forms of sensationalised, glamorised reporting would ensure that circulation figures remained high. Manchester United's blend of footballing excellence and popularity, and the club's mix of glamour and controversy embodied in such players as Best, fitted popular journalism's new agenda perfectly, and guaranteed that United were never very far away from the back or front pages of most popular national dailies.

In terms of the development of Manchester United's appeal across Lancashire and beyond, the club's newsworthiness and close connection with British popular youth culture in the late 1960s were important for two principal reasons. Firstly, and in connection with the argument above, it meant that United were in a strong position to gain new fans throughout Britain, Europe and across the world because of their key association with the worldwide media phenomenon of 'swinging' Britain. Secondly, and more importantly in terms of the club's long-term status as the most popular club in Lancashire, it also ensured that United retained the image of a glamorous and exciting club long after the team had ceased to be successful in the 1970s. Even after United were relegated in 1974, the club continued to carry the colourful image that the team of the late 1960s had developed. Indeed, it would appear that United's appeal in the 1970s and 1980s remained so strong that fans of other clubs still made a special effort to see them play whenever they visited their grounds. One non-United supporting oral history respondent explained that:

Even in the 1970s you would go to see United play your club because you expected to see exciting football. In the 1960s, the reality and the expectations were the same, but in the 1970s the reality no longer met the expectations, but somehow that didn't seem to matter.⁴⁴

This statement suggests that as United entered the 1970s their reputation as a glamorous team became all-important in securing their unusually high level of support. Without the 'natural' appeal of being successful, United's off-field reputation became the only means by which they could protect their support and status of the late 1960s. Therefore, it can clearly be seen that Manchester United's unshakeable connection with glamour, drama and entertainment in the 1970s was fundamental to the development of their fan base, and ensured that the club remained the largest and most well supported in English football in a period which should have seen them in serious decline.

To speculate why Manchester United's image of glamour and excitement remained with the club in the 1970s and beyond is a difficult and inexact task. It may be the case that, even in a very short space of time, United became a focus of great nostalgia in Lancashire and beyond: a team that could be thought of as belonging to a better and more desirable age. After all, the United team of the late 1960s played in a time before the marked industrial decline of the 1970s and 1980s and the great social dislocation that came with it. They belonged to a region and a country perceived to be confident and colourful, whose football teams still proved Britain to be a significant world player. It is also possible that United's image of the late 1960s carried over into the 1970s, not for complex social reasons, but, rather, because of the simple fact that football supporters *wanted* United to be a glamorous team during the 1970s: a decade exemplified by many English football clubs' use of defensive and negative tactics.

These suggestions are starting points for discussion and most certainly not answers in themselves. If proved to be useful, however, they suggest that United retained, and even developed, their special status in football in the 1970s and 1980s, not because of any deliberate policy, but, rather, because of the serendipity of having had a successful and stylish team in a period largely regarded with fond memories by fans of English football in Lancashire, Britain and the world.

7.6: Post-War Partisanship in Football in Lancashire and the Decline of Regional Identity

If attention is now turned to regional identity in Lancashire in the post-war period, it can be noted that increased feelings of privatism and instrumentalism felt by people from the 1960s were not only expressed in terms of a reduction in locally-based football identities. Rather, a concomitant decline in regional identity also took place that was expressed in terms of a reduction in the number of people willing to support more than one football club in Lancashire, and in increased feelings of 'one-club' parochialism that defined the mode of support of football fans that remained in the region from the 1970s. Let us now consider the social and sporting basis of this decline in a regional Lancashire identity and its implications for football attendances in the county.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, open footballing rivalries between the towns and cities of Lancashire started to become much more apparent. The regional solidarity that had been evident in the habits and attitudes of post-war football supporters in Lancashire began to disappear, and attitudes such as hatred and jealousy began to be

expressed by supporters towards each other's clubs. Somewhat surprisingly, one of the earliest footballing moments that gave rise to open expression of feelings such as these was the Munich air disaster that killed a number of Manchester United players and newspaper journalists in February 1958. Although many clubs in the region expressed extreme sympathy with United in the direct wake of the tragedy, in the months that followed, more and more voices of criticism were raised about how the club and the media were dealing with the disaster. For example, in the latter months of the 1957-58 season many non-United football supporters wrote to the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* expressing concern about the media's 'overindulgent' coverage of the disaster. One letter from a Rochdale fan stated that:

I and thousands of other people who read your paper are fed up with all the bunkum that is written about Manchester United. We will grant that they have been a good team, but why not face facts ... We know you have to rely on Manchester readers for the bulk of your circulation, but people of other towns are fed up with biased reports and comments.⁴⁵

This led the *Chronicle's* sports editor, Arthur Walmsely, to state that:

Manchester, especially its soccer public and its press, is under fire from without and WITHIN. We are accused of prolonging the Manchester United agony beyond the bounds of genuine sorrow and sympathy. We are accused of an unhealthy, mass hysterical support of a football club which violates the borders of sport and trespasses on the forbidden ground of maudlin spirit. Bluntly, we are accused of making a meal of that Munich disaster by carrying it on through the present United side.⁴⁶

He defended these criticisms by stating that they were, "inspired by sour grapes and even an inverted form of envy of the tremendous loyalty displayed by the Manchester public to the United club".

The lack of regional solidarity that Manchester United received in the aftermath of the Munich disaster was further evident during the run up to the 1958 FA Cup Final, held between Bolton Wanderers and Manchester United. In the national press, Manchester United were frequently commended for their achievement of reaching the Final with a team of young and inexperienced players, and it was often commented that the Final would be an overwhelmingly emotional occasion as the victims of the air crash were remembered. The impression given, in fact, was that the entire country, and certainly the majority of Lancashire, would be supporting United in the Final in a celebration of their distinctive 'phoenix from the ashes' story.

In Bolton, however, it appears that a set of rather different sentiments were in evidence in the weeks leading up to the Final, possibly as a result of the relatively long-standing rivalry between Bolton Wanderers and the two main Manchester football clubs alluded to in Chapter Six. For a period of around three weeks, the *Bolton Evening News* never tired of printing letters that were critical of the national press coverage of the Manchester United team, and others that doubted just how 'sensational' United's feat of reaching the Final had been. One letter mocked the national press for using terms such as "magnificent, scintillating and fantastic" to describe United's Cup run,⁴⁷ while another stated that Bolton had as many problems as United in getting to the Cup Final as their crowds had dropped by 15,000 during that year.⁴⁸ Another letter showed the level of contempt shown for Manchester United by some Bolton fans when it stated:

On Cup Final day I hope that Bolton will beat Manchester United to a frazzle ... [I] shall be hoping for a blow that will shatter the prayers of the distinctly unhealthy and morbid sensation mongers whose sentimental partisanship is no

more than a wallowing in momentary misery. I am afraid they will enjoy themselves anyway. If Manchester United win, these people will be drenched in tears of joy, relief and pride. If Bolton Wanderers win, they will break into brokenhearted sobbing.⁴⁹

Another letter, written by “a supporter of Bolton Wanderers and Manchester United”, exemplified the break down in regional solidarity further by stating:

I am really disgusted with the day-by-day sentiments expressed about Manchester United by the national press. If Bolton do win the papers will say they beat a poor team, but if they lose, the Munich to Wembley team will be toasted everywhere. All I can say is: ‘Carry on Bolton and get ‘em beat. Take the Cup back to Bolton’.⁵⁰

In the days immediately preceding the Final, sentiments of this kind even took on a political dimension as Ald. J. Vickers, Leader of the Labour Party on Bolton Council, stepped into the controversy. The *Bolton Evening News* reported that Vickers had warned that the Cup Final was, “in danger of becoming an emotional spectacle as a result of the disproportionate amount of publicity given by the press to Manchester United”. To clarify his comments Vickers stated that:

I thought the public were getting tired of all the tremendous amount of publicity concerning Manchester United ... and I hoped on Saturday to see not an emotional spectacle but rather 22 fit players giving a good game of football - with the best team winning.⁵¹

At no time in the run up to the Final did the *Bolton Evening News* itself make comments which supported this line. However, it was clear that any compassion that was felt for Manchester United in Bolton in 1958 was complicated by the sporting rivalry that existed between the two clubs.

Probably the best example of a lack of regional sympathy with Manchester United in the wake of the Munich disaster came from Burnley chairman Bob Lord, and comments he made less than two weeks after the tragedy occurred. In a statement to the *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, Lord claimed that, regardless of the prevailing mood, Football League clubs should not loan players to United in the wake of the Munich tragedy, as United had “gone into the European Cup with their eyes open”, and had benefited with cash, glamour and the attraction of young players as a result.⁵² While Lord was undoubtedly something of a maverick who enjoyed upsetting other football clubs in general, and Manchester United in particular, during his reign as Burnley chairman (later in the season he was to refer to United as “Teddy Boys” after a controversial match between Burnley and United), he can also be regarded as a reflection of his time, and an extreme representation of the lack of cross-club allegiances that exemplified English football from the 1960s onwards.

In addition to the sentiments expressed in the aftermath of the Munich disaster, it appears that regional pride and cross-club allegiances in football in Lancashire began to deteriorate more generally in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1958, evidence emerged in the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* that relations between Manchester United and Manchester City supporters were deteriorating, and that violence between the fans was escalating as a result. In one incident in January of that year, it was reported that a fight had occurred at Victoria railway station in Manchester when United fans, waiting for a train to their 3rd round FA Cup tie, mistook a set of Everton supporters for City fans and attacked their train.⁵³ This incident provoked a great deal of reaction in the letters pages of the *Evening Chronicle*, some of which claimed that “men [had] fought like wildcats” during the incident.⁵⁴ Clearly, a number of social and

sporting processes were occurring that were sharpening the benign partisanship that had existed among football fans for the previous few decades.

As the 1960s came to a close, the rivalry between Manchester City and Manchester United fans appears to have intensified further. For the first time in the post-war period, the letters pages of the local press became filled with bitter exchanges over who were Manchester's premier supporters, including letters over which club had the best 'singing end' (the Stretford end versus the Kippax street terrace),⁵⁵ and others that simply proclaimed their club to be the most successful. In one example, a City fan addressed his United counterparts, and offered,

A reminder, a suggestion, and a crumb of consolation for the 'horrible people' [United fans]. Get plenty of metal polish - we don't want the Championship trophy to arrive at Maine Road tarnished. A new chant for the Stretford end next season - 'we are the runners up'. Don't worry too much about the pasting you'll get in Madrid [in the European Cup semi-final] - City will bring the European Cup to Manchester next year.⁵⁶

More seriously than this gentle teasing, however, incidents of hooliganism between City and United fans also appeared to increase as the 1960s came to an end. These became so frequent by the mid-1970s that after one particularly bad incident, churchman and City season ticket holder Canon Eric Saxon wrote to the *Manchester Evening News* explaining that he could no longer be associated with the club, and that he would not return to Maine Road until the image of football in Manchester improved.⁵⁷

A further footballing rivalry that appeared to intensify in the late 1950s and 1960s was that between Manchester and Liverpool. Although the two cities had a long history of

sometimes-bitter competition in everything from trade to culture and sport,⁵⁸ the break down in regional identity that took place during this period seems to have provided their football rivalry with a new impetus. This was perfectly exemplified in the controversy that emerged over football fans' behaviour at matches in Lancashire during the late 1950s. In 1958, when fans of Manchester United and Manchester City became involved in incidents of wide scale crowd disorder for the first time in the post-war period, a letter to the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* was quick to blame Liverpool and Everton fans for the disturbances, as it was they, it was claimed, who had started the vogue for such behaviour.⁵⁹ Furthermore, in an editorial on the growing problem of "football hooligans" in the *Evening Chronicle* in March 1958, the newspaper chose mainly to highlight the behaviour of Liverpool and Everton fans, while barely even mentioning the Manchester clubs. It stated that, "an away match by Liverpool or Everton is coming to be the signal to call out the riot squad", and claimed that, "there is drunkenness, fighting, damage to special football trains and often injuries to policemen", whenever they played.⁶⁰ The message was clear that hooliganism had started in Liverpool, and that if football fans in Manchester became involved in it, then that was Liverpool's fault as well.

In addition to newspaper arguments such as these, the footballing rivalry between Manchester and Liverpool also started to become more visible on the terraces. With the two cities both enjoying notable footballing success in the mid-to-late 1960s, the letters pages of the local Manchester press were filled with debate over which city's teams were the most successful. This even led one man to call for a "Manchester versus Merseyside" match, as he was "fed up of going to work on Monday and carrying on where we left off on Friday about which is the greatest soccer city".⁶¹

Furthermore, with the advent of 'singing ends' in football grounds in England throughout the 1960s, letters began to appear over which city had to most vocal and loyal support. One letter claimed that the Stretford enders at Old Trafford were the most vocal supporters in Lancashire, and that they were the only fans who could, "go to Anfield and out sing the croaking Kop".⁶² Another letter complained of: "Those commentators who live on the verge of hysteria and who write about the Kop as though it were a choir of angels and about the Stretford end as though it were an army of hooligans".⁶³ This indicated a belief that the exploits of Manchester United fans were receiving more than their fair share of negative coverage when compared to their near Lancashire neighbours.

The spectre of extreme parochialism and hooliganism in Lancashire football was not confined to the region's major cities in the 1960s and 1970s. Teams such as Blackpool, Bolton, Preston, Burnley and Blackburn all suffered regular incidents of violence at their games in that period, particularly when playing close neighbours. In 1974, a 14-year-old boy was stabbed at a match between Blackpool and Bolton Wanderers after a "war of words" had broken out between fans at half time in the match.⁶⁴ By 1974, incidents of hooliganism had become so frequent that a call for calm was printed in the *Lancashire Evening Post* before a match between Preston North End and Blackburn Rovers. This was a far cry from the days of coaches taking fans from Preston to Blackburn so that Preston folk could support a Lancashire team when Preston North End were away from home.

7.7: Cross-Club Support in the 1980s – A Case of Merseyside Exceptionalism

As football entered the late 1970s and early 1980s, the ‘one-team’ parochialism that developed in the 1960s continued to be the dominant mode of support in Lancashire football. Newspaper letter pages remained filled with fans’ arguments over who supported the best teams, and incidents of hooliganism continued to occur at the region’s grounds. However, the strength of one club parochialism was not even across Lancashire, and on Merseyside the local press provided consistent accounts during the early 1980s of Liverpool and Everton fans who mutually respected and, to some degree, supported each other’s teams. After Liverpool had reached the European Cup semi-final in April 1981, the *Liverpool Echo* published a letter from an Everton supporting author who stated:

I would love to set the record straight for myself and I’m sure for all good Evertonians. In the words of someone with more literary talent than myself: ‘I come to praise Liverpool, not to bury them’ ... I would like to wish this wonderful team of ambassadors to Merseyside all the luck in the world in Paris on May 27th [the European Cup final], and as a true blue Evertonian, I can honestly say that the only time I want Liverpool to lose is when they play Everton. Otherwise, more power to their mighty elbow.⁶⁵

During the same year, the *Liverpool Echo* estimated that around 7,000 fans still watched both Liverpool and Everton regularly and provided numerous accounts of the ‘friendly’, non-parochial spirit in which football on Merseyside was consumed.⁶⁶

The Liverpool press’s concentration on continuing high levels of cross-club football support in the city came into sharp focus toward the end of the 1983-84 football season. During that season, both Liverpool FC and Everton successfully qualified for the Final of the League (Milk) Cup competition, providing the first all Merseyside

Final in a major English football competition. From the moment that Liverpool and Everton won through their respective semi-finals, the *Liverpool Echo*, in its editorials and letters pages, promoted a sustained campaign to display what it saw as the unique “fine spirit ... of rivalry and comradeship” that existed between the two major Merseyside clubs.⁶⁷ In the weekend after the semi-finals, the *Football Echo* printed the following poem by a Liverpool supporter which it saw as truly representative of the spirit of football support in the city:

We all sing and shout and throw taunts at others,
But it's all in good fun 'cause we're really blood brothers.
For though we're the Reds and they all wear blue,
We're first of all Scousers and to this we are true.
The journey is over, the twin towers in sight,
They'll be tears and laughter on the way back tonight.
But somewhere in all that they'll also be pride,
As we all go home together to our Merseyside.⁶⁸

The sentiments contained in this poem were frequently attested to in the weeks running up to the Final. Indeed, after the Football League had decided that Liverpool and Everton fans should be segregated on the terraces of Wembley for the Final, numerous letters of protest were published by the *Liverpool Echo* criticising the football authorities' lack of understanding of the 'special' nature of football rivalry within Liverpool. One letter read:

I had wanted, like most others, to see the unique Merseyside Wembley football Final as a fitting spectacle and a tribute to our great city. That officialdom at Wembley should prevent the full realisation of this by segregating Liverpool and Everton supporters is further proof of how misconceived this city is judged by those who live outside it. To chop us into two halves is a mistake ... we have proved ourselves football's finest fraternity. It is expected our two teams will walk out side by side and finish side by side, so why not the supporters? So much is happening crucial to our city this year ... surely celebration, not confrontation .. should positively

show there is a magic of Merseyside as precious and unique as our undoubted individual talents.⁶⁹

A sense of shared values, vision and purpose among football fans across Merseyside is strongly evoked by this letter, as is a supposedly distinctive, non-partisan nature of football support in the region.

The distinctiveness of football supporting habits in Liverpool were represented to the people of the city in various ways in the run up to the Final. By drawing on the long established reputation of Liverpool supporters as “humorous and fair”, the *Echo* recounted numerous tales of how Liverpool and Everton fans consumed the game differently and with more sophistication than their counterparts elsewhere in Lancashire and across the country.⁷⁰ After Liverpool’s match with Benfica in the European Cup during March 1984, a sports editorial in the *Echo* went to great lengths to assert the exceptional behaviour of Liverpool supporters at the match. The editor wrote that the match was “contested in quite the most pleasant atmosphere I have encountered at a big football ground for several years”, and went on to state that:

At a time when there is so much concern generally about standards of behaviour at big sporting events, it was refreshing to note the wit, humour and sportsmanship that flourished both on and off the field ...
If this splendid example is continued at Wembley, as all Merseyside must hope it will, the district will have made a major contribution to shaking off its tarnished image.⁷¹

The concluding section of this editorial draws attention to the image difficulties that the city of Liverpool encountered in the early 1980s. After the Toxteth riots of 1981, and with unprecedented unemployment (see Chapter Five) and a concomitant rise in social deprivation and crime, the national perception of Liverpool in the 1980s was of

a city of uncontrolled chaos and decline. By 1984, this perception was made worse by the ascent to power of a radically left-wing Labour City Council who, in what they claim was an attempt to protect public jobs and services, proposed a fiscal policy that was not sanctioned by the Conservative central Government. Although highly divisive locally, popular local support for the 'illegal budget' was significant, and was displayed in a march of 20,000 people through Castle Street in the city during March 1984.⁷² This kind of action added to the national perception of Liverpool as a city out of control: an almost independent state that had become ungovernable by traditional means.

In this context, the League Cup Final of 1984 became an opportunity for the local press at least to re-assert a positive image of Liverpool to contrast with national prejudices. In the *Football Echo* during the weekend before the Final, a call to make the Final a spectacle of fair sportsmanship and Merseyside pride was published containing:

... a plea to try to recreate the Mersey sound of the Sixties. Let the sets of supporters try to out-shout each other (no abuse), put the rest of the country to shame by singing the national anthem loudly (approved words), and whatever the score at full time, keep cheering our teams to the end.⁷³

This theme of utilising the Final as an opportunity for displaying pride in and respect for the whole of Merseyside, whatever one's team allegiance, continued in the week preceding the Final. Under a headline of "Let's Make it a Day to be Proud of", a *Liverpool Echo* editorial read:

By mid day on Sunday, London will be a colourful scene of reds and blues. It will be the day when the eyes of the sporting world will be on Liverpool as the nation's number one footballing city. The two teams have a fine reputation for friendly rivalry. But the fact has to be faced that there could be incidents of provocation by supporters of other clubs who resent Merseyside's reputation and success ...

Sunday is the day when the Merseyside fan can give football a badly needed boost by showing the true spirit of the game and making this big occasion memorable as a day of enjoyment, as much as a supreme sporting event.⁷⁴

Thankfully for the *Liverpool Echo*, when the Final was eventually contested it was played and supported in such a way that it could be represented as a reflection of the exceptional sportsmanship and cross-club allegiances felt by football fans in Liverpool. Under headlines such as "Pure Magic Merseyside" and "Mersey Marvels", the *Echo* reported various stories of the kinship and common values that existed between Liverpool and Everton fans at the Final. A Chief Superintendent of Liverpool City Police was reported as saying "that the general spirit of the Final was shown by two men who I witnessed coming out of Lime Street Station at 11pm last night. Both were wearing Liverpool and Everton colours [respectively], but they both shared a taxi away and they were both very friendly".⁷⁵ Reports of the Final itself were also rich with the symbolism of football fans who were united, rather than divided, by the support of teams from the same city. The *Echo* reported that at the final whistle of the match, "both sets of fans saluted each other, chanting proudly 'Merseyside, Merseyside'",⁷⁶ while going on to state that:

Merseyside can certainly be proud of their two teams, whose spontaneous gesture to parade together around Wembley underlined that despite the intense rivalry this was the friendly Final. And the super support and behaviour of the fans, too, also helped to make the day such a success, and gave a lesson to the rest of the country that football, after all, is still a sport.⁷⁷

The sense of unity and pride in Merseyside that was evoked by this report and others in the wake of the Final was probably best represented by a photograph that appeared in the *Liverpool Echo* on the day after the Final. It showed the Liverpool and Everton teams posing together in the same group for a traditional team photograph at the conclusion of the match.⁷⁸ Implicitly, the photograph asserted the commonalities between the two teams by reducing them to one, and thereby placed pride in the geographical area of Merseyside over and above simple sporting loyalties.

As the first Final at Wembley between Liverpool and Everton had been drawn, the two teams played again for the League Cup in a replay. Despite a victory for Liverpool on this occasion, the sense of the Final being a display of cross-club support and regional pride did not disappear. An editorial in the *Liverpool Echo* on the day after the replay stated:

There were cynics who said it couldn't happen twice. That Merseyside's fine example of sportsmanship from players and fans alike in the Wembley clash could not be repeated at Maine Road. Well it was and Merseyside can be justifiably proud. We have given the whole nation a lesson in what football is all about. The Milk Cup goes to Anfield for keeps ... But in the light it might just reflect a tinge of blue.⁷⁹

From this and the reporting that surrounded the first League Cup Final, the *Liverpool Echo* clearly felt that the football players and supporters of Merseyside had displayed to the nation that football was consumed differently on Merseyside than in the rest of the country. Where football fans in Manchester, London, Birmingham and elsewhere fought and evoked hatred over intense parochial sporting rivalries, the people of Liverpool, despite, or possibly because of, their enormous social, economic and political problems, felt allegiance to the geographical region first and to their football

clubs second. In this way, the Liverpool press showed that football supporters on Merseyside in the mid-1980s had much in common with their counterparts across Lancashire in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s.

7.8: Reasons for the Breakdown of Regionalism

If football supporters on Merseyside did display regional loyalty first and football loyalties second in the early and mid-1980s, they were very much the exception rather than the rule. Through studying the press across Lancashire in the 1980s, very few references can be found to supporters following more than one club or having the active respect for other local teams that was so common in the 1940s and 1950s. The reasons behind this development are hitherto unstudied and somewhat opaque. To begin to redress this problem, it is useful to consider again the increases in affluence that occurred amongst the post-war working-class in Lancashire and the implications that this had for their feelings of collectivity at all levels. However, and in order to avoid repetition, it is also useful to consider various socio-economic changes that occurred in Lancashire from the late 1960s onwards. In particular, it is important to consider the economic restructuring of Lancashire from the 1960s and the effect that this had on people in the region. By doing this, a full account of structural influences on people's feelings of identity and belonging can be provided, along with a sound basis for analysing the link between declining regional identities and football attendance.

As stated in Chapter Six, Eric Hobsbawm has claimed that for the hundred years prior to the 1950s, English working-class life had a certain "common style" to it which was

expressed economically, in terms of employment, politically, in terms of political affiliation, socially, in terms of living conditions, and culturally, in terms of leisure time.⁸⁰ However, as the 1950s progressed, Hobsbawm suggests that this commonality began to disintegrate, slowly at first, and then with increasing rapidity, with the result that working-class people's mutual identification began to be reassessed. As the post-war migration of workers to the suburbs began and the homogeneity of working-class professions started to be undermined with the growth in white-collar employment, it is stated that two of the principal arenas for reproducing social identities were disrupted, with the effect that people began increasingly to construct personal identities on factors other than class.

With specific reference to declining feelings of regional identity in Lancashire in the 1950s and 1960s, Hobsbawm's analysis of post-war socio-economic change could explain why football fans across the region were seemingly less liable to support more than one club, watch each other's teams, and mutually respect and identify with each other after the 1960s than before. A decline in a common socio-economic identity that cut across (and beyond) Lancashire and ensured mutual understanding in people from different geographical areas may explain why one-team loyalty became so prevalent after the late 1950s, and why people's feelings of 'Lancashireness' seemingly waned. This is particularly the case when one considers declining class identities alongside other processes which, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, brought more 'conflict' and less 'consensus' to working-class life. These include increasing affluence, the continuing fall of organised religion, and a decline in 'respectable working-class values' such as collectivism, good manners and mutual respect.⁸¹

The notion that increased 'conflict' in working-class life from the 1960s onwards contributed to a decline in feelings of regional identity and mutual respect is further enhanced by a consideration of economic changes in Lancashire during that period. Between the 1930s and the early 1970s, and particularly from the mid-to-late 1950s onwards, the decline in the cotton and coal industries, and, later, heavy engineering "diluted the common vocabularies and shared experiences that had united the most populous parts of the [Lancashire] region".⁸² This meant that the shared working cultures of the disparate industrialised areas of Lancashire began to dissipate and that towns and cities that had once been friendly rivals were now fierce competitors in the battle for inward economic investment. Let us consider this more closely.

Lancashire encountered its first radical economic changes of the twentieth century in the late 1920s and 1930s. The collapse of the cotton and coal industries meant that nearly 500,000 people in Lancashire and Cheshire were unemployed in 1931, with 250,000 still out of work in 1936.⁸³ However, in the period immediately before and after the Second World War, Lancashire enjoyed a boost in economic fortunes that led to almost full employment and a concomitant sense of consensus and unity among the region's working people. First, in the pre-war and war years, Lancashire won a great number of re-armament contracts that helped secure and create a significant number of heavy engineering jobs. Second, the end of the war brought a boom in cotton manufacture and a massive demand for coal which, although not maintained for long, afforded Lancashire's staple industries a timely reprieve from the depression of the 1930s. In this climate, some common feeling of economic identity and purpose was maintained in Lancashire until the 1960s when manufacturing and extractive industries went into a second, more permanent decline.

The decline of the cotton trade, an industry that underpinned so much of Lancashire's shared culture and heritage, perhaps illustrates most strongly the effect of post-war industrial decline on the region's identity. In 1921, 600,000 people were employed in textiles in Lancashire, and in towns such as Burnley and Blackburn, around 60 percent of the population worked in the industry.⁸⁴ However, by 1971 only 152,000 people in Lancashire worked in textiles, with areas such as Oldham losing 15,000 textile jobs between 1953 and 1967 alone.⁸⁵ Whilst the demand for labour in other industries kept unemployment below four percent in Lancashire in the 1960s, the impact of the decline of the cotton industries went further than simple job figures. When the textile mills closed, a shared culture, a shared language (phrases such as 'stopped for bobbins' and 'jinny bant' disappeared from common usage), and vital components of a regional identity went with them.⁸⁶ People from large sections of Manchester, Oldham, Preston, Blackburn, Burnley and countless other places no longer had 'automatic' economic ties with each other: the common sense of identity and purpose born of working in similar industries largely disappeared.

It was not only those aspects of Lancastrian culture that were linked to the county's economic heritage that began to dissipate in the 1950s and 1960s. Nearly every social, political and cultural institution that had previously represented Lancashire as a single cultural unit went into terminal decline from the 1950s or disappeared altogether. The distinctive Lancashire diet, the county's dialect, the region's unique humour (Priestley had described the Lancashire accent as "the official accent of music hall humour" in the 1930s) and even the Lancashire cricket team (in terms of match attendance at least) were all slowly removed from the lived experience of everyday Lancastrians during the

1960s, and particularly the young. This was a result of the social processes outlined above that led to a reduction in feelings of regional identity in Lancashire in the 1950s and 1960s, and to a rise of a standardised national culture. This did not happen for everyone, as some people continued to feel strong Lancastrian identities throughout the 1960s and beyond. The enduring popularity of Lancashire comedians and television shows such as *Coronation Street* in the 1970s and 1980s testify to this. But for an increasing number of individuals, and especially the young, a fundamental shift in social habitus occurred during this period that undermined the sense of commonality that people from throughout the county had previously experienced.

In terms of football attendances in Lancashire, this decline in regional identity had a number of serious repercussions. In addition to football fans who simply abandoned the game from the 1960s, declining feelings of regional identity for many supporters in the same period also affected attendance figures because of the increasing number of people who chose only to support one club after the 1960s. This is a vital point that is yet to be made in the debate about the decline of English football crowds in the post-war period. If, as appears to be the case, some people habitually attended matches of one, two, three or even four football clubs in Lancashire in the 1940s and 1950s, it is hardly surprising that crowds fell from the 1960s after supporters increasingly abandoned their sense of regional solidarity and supported only one team. The exact reduction in support that this process produced for individual football clubs is impossible to judge. However, it is inarguable that the decline of regional identity did cause a reduction in the number of football matches that supporters were willing to attend in the second half of the twentieth century and thereby caused a decline in aggregate attendances for many clubs.

7.9: Conclusion

In this chapter, a detailed analysis of the decline of local and regional football identities in Lancashire during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has been provided. To explain this process, attention has been concentrated on macro socio-economic factors such as increasing affluence and the decline of common industries in Lancashire in the post-war period. In operating at this meta-level, this chapter has accentuated the influence of 'structural' influences on football fans' behaviour from the 1960s at the expense of an analysis of human agency. This approach has been adopted because the purpose of this chapter has been to identify a general trend of declining communal identities in the post-war Lancashire and not to concentrate on pockets of resistance where communal identities were maintained. This is not to say that communal identities in the region disappeared totally from the 1960s onwards: the (albeit smaller) numbers of people that exercised their agency and remained supporters of 'local' football clubs in this period testify to the continued existence of communal identities. Rather, the point here has been to identify a broad process of change and to analyse how socio-economic influences contributed to a shift in people's sense of themselves and who they were.

By the mid-1980s, the detrimental influence of socio-economic change on people's willingness to engage in local and regional football communities was such that a small number of clubs in Lancashire were close to bankruptcy. A whole generation had passed since the majority of people had held social habituses that encouraged strong communal identities, with the result that football clubs no longer automatically represented large numbers of people. This bifurcation of football clubs and football

communities was displayed strongly in Bury in 1985 when the football club asked Greater Manchester Council for help with their increasing debts. The council refused, stating that the club must decide whether they are “a private self perpetuating club or whether they are part of the community”. Eventually, the council informed Bury that they would help with the debts, but only if the club would make “their extensive facilities more available to the man in the street as a precondition”.⁸⁷ From this it was clear that the Greater Manchester Council no longer perceived Bury Football Club to be a central institution in the well-being of the people of the local area. They were not alone in this view of the relative value of football clubs. From the mid-1970s onwards various footballing and non-footballing bodies identified splits between football clubs and football communities to be significant social problems and proposed a number of schemes designed to re-establish a relationship that had once been taken for granted. It is to such issues that attention will now be turned. In the next chapter, official and unofficial responses to the decline of football communities in Lancashire in the mid-1980s will be considered to identify how a game that had been in decline in Lancashire for over thirty years finally came to flourish again.

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³ Interview with J. Garfield, November 14th 1997.

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⁵ *Manchester Evening News* (hereafter *MEN*), February 7th 1968, p. 7.

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- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.
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- ³³ See Mellor, G. 'The Genesis of Manchester United as a Super-Club, 1958-1968', *Soccer and Society*, 1, 2, 2000, pp. 151-166.
- ³⁴ This figure was surpassed in the 1999-2000 season when Manchester United recorded an average attendance of 57,996.
- ³⁵ For instance, Wolverhampton Wanderers won the English First Division title on three occasions between 1954 and 1959 and the FA Cup in 1960 without the upsurge in support that Manchester United enjoyed.
- ³⁶ See Russell, D., *Football and the English* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), p.184.
- ³⁷ Richards, J. 'Football and the Crisis of National Identity', unpublished paper, p.16.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.16.
- ³⁹ See Marwick, A., *The Sixties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp.455-479.
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- ⁴⁸ *BEN*, April 8th 1958, p. 4.
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- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- ⁵⁶ *MEN*, May 8th 1968, p. 14.
- ⁵⁷ *MEN*, April 1st 1974, p. 5.
- ⁵⁸ See Dellheim, 'Imagining England', p. 223.
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- ⁶³ *MEN*, April 29th 1974, p. 8.
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- ⁶⁵ *Liverpool Echo* (hereafter *LE*), April 25th 1981, p. 6.
- ⁶⁶ *LE*, January 6th 1981, p. 14.
- ⁶⁷ *LE*, February 23rd 1984, p. 6.
- ⁶⁸ *LE (Football Echo)*, February 25th 1984, p. 9.
- ⁶⁹ *LE (Football Echo)*, March 3rd 1984, p. 4.
- ⁷⁰ *LE (Football Echo)*, March 3rd 1984, p. 11.

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- ⁷¹ *LE (Football Echo)*, March 10th 1984, p. 6.
- ⁷² *LE*, March 29th 1984, pp. 1-3.
- ⁷³ *LE (Football Echo)*, March 17th 1984, p. 6.
- ⁷⁴ *LE*, March 23rd 1984, p. 6.
- ⁷⁵ *LE*, March 26th 1984, p. 1.
- ⁷⁶ *LE*, March 26th 1984, p. 8.
- ⁷⁷ *LE (Milk Cup Final Special)*, March 26th 1984, p. 14.
- ⁷⁸ See *LE (Milk Cup Final Special)*, March 26th 1984, p. 5.
- ⁷⁹ *LE*, March 29th 1984, p. 6.
- ⁸⁰ Hobshawm, E., *The Forward March of Labour Halted* (London: NLB, 1981), pp. 7-8.
- ⁸¹ Richards, 'Football and the Crisis of National Identity'.
- ⁸² Phillips C.B. & Smith, J.H., *Lancashire and Cheshire from AD 1540* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 302.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316.
- ⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- ⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- ⁸⁷ *MEN*, January 10th 1985, p. 8.

Chapter Eight

Football, Community and Social Identity in Lancashire: the 1970s and 1980s

8.1: Introduction

One of the principal aims of this study has been to detail the many social and sporting processes that contributed to an overall decline in support for football in Lancashire between 1946 and 1985. The aim of this final chapter is to analyse the responses that were fashioned to meet these sporting and social processes and to study how formal policies, the actions of football clubs, and the action of football supporters helped forge the basis for English football's revival from the mid-1980s onwards. The chapter is not an account of the many crises that blighted football in the 1980s, nor of the commercial repositioning of the game that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Rather, it concentrates on developments that occurred to make football clubs once more relevant to their communities and on the social and sporting processes that resulted not in the long-predicted death of football but in the game's rebirth. It also assesses the role of football clubs in the creation and strengthening of social identities from the mid-1980s onwards and evaluates the character and breadth of football communities in the same period.

Unlike most other areas of this project, the first half of this chapter leans heavily on the work of others. This is done to produce a clear explanation and evaluation of football and community schemes that were established at many Lancashire football

clubs from the late 1970s onwards. In particular, official evaluation reports, produced for the English Sports Council, on the earliest Football and the Community schemes are drawn upon, as are official documents from the Professional Footballers' Association on schemes in the mid-to-late 1980s, and a report by the University of Leicester that evaluated community relations at Preston North End in the mid-1980s. This reliance on others is necessary as it is now impossible to evaluate the successes and failings of schemes that ran in the late 1970s and 1980s. However, the analysis presented in the first half of this chapter is still original and vital to the overall aims of the project. Little historical analysis of football and community schemes has ever been conducted in England, and the evaluation reports that were published by the Sports Council as confidential documents in the early 1980s are a new source of information on the aims, objectives, strengths and weaknesses of early football and community initiatives.

8.2: Football and Community Schemes in the 1970s

In the previous chapter, it was noted that in the mid-1980s Bury Football Club were asked by Greater Manchester Council to forge new, more formal links with their local community in order to make the club more relevant to the people of Bury and the local area and also more worthy of public money. Bury were not the only club to consider such a course of action in this period. As early as the mid-1970s, Preston North End began offering the club's facilities to the local community on non-match days in the hope that this benevolence would attract either new fans to the club or fans who had long stopped attending matches. This resources driven initiative was followed by other football clubs in Lancashire and beyond in the mid-to-late 1970s

and was eventually to form the cornerstone of the Sports Council's 'Football and the Community' schemes that emerged in 1978. Backed by £1 million of Labour Government money, the Sports Council helped launch 39 schemes across the country: 29 at professional football clubs and 10 at professional rugby league clubs. Eight of the schemes were established in Lancashire - four at football clubs and four at rugby league clubs: the second highest regional figure after Yorkshire and Humberside.¹ Most of the money was spent on building or improving resources such as sports halls, all-weather pitches, and changing facilities that, it was hoped, would be used as much by local people as by professional players. Community 'motivators' were also employed by some clubs to go out into the community to actively encourage people to associate with their local clubs. By making football clubs more accessible in this way, it was hoped that the Football and the Community schemes would play an important role in making clubs central to community life, whilst also providing local youths with an alternative to becoming involved with football only as hooligans.

The formal concerns that formed the background to the Sports Council's Football and the Community schemes were threefold.² First, the Sports Council identified that a general lack of leisure facilities existed in many urban areas. To this end, they concluded that much greater use of existing facilities, including those owned by football clubs, needed to be made as these tended to be well maintained and conveniently located for easy access. Secondly, and for some most importantly, the Sports Council hoped that Football and the Community schemes would help address issues associated with football hooliganism. The Sports Council argued that the existence of hooliganism at football matches was at least in part a result of the

growing gap that existed between football clubs and their local communities and as a result suggested that:

The strengthening of connections between clubs and their supporters, and emphasising the mutual interdependence of successful teams and good supporters [could be highlighted by players and management] by promoting closer links between the team and its fans.³

By adopting this position, the Sports Council were intentionally or otherwise accepting the theoretical stance of sociologists such as Ian Taylor who stated that hooliganism was largely the result of the increasing alienation that many young supporters felt towards their football clubs, particularly as a consequence of professionalisation and commercialisation.⁴

The third concern that the Sports Council wished to address through the Football and the Community schemes emanated from the experience of sports clubs in the United States and Europe and specifically sought to tackle falling attendances at English football matches. In the United States in the 1970s, players had regular contractual obligations to engage in a certain amount of community involvement primarily to attract the public to matches. This use of players and ex-players as motivators for attendance was to become a central aspect of the Football and the Community schemes and, along with the provision of football club facilities for public use, was designed to attract fans back to football who had grown disillusioned with the game in the previous twenty years.

From the social and sporting contexts into which the Football and the Community schemes developed, a number of specific aims and objectives emerged that formed

the basis for evaluating the success of the schemes over the coming years. These were written for all the bodies involved in providing finance or services for the schemes (football clubs, local authorities, regional Sports Councils) and were designed to be clearly measurable. For the football clubs, five specific aims were written that were reflective of the benefits that the clubs hoped to accrue as a result of their participation in the schemes. These were:

1. The acquisition of new facilities (in the vast majority of cases)
2. Guidance, advice, facilities and finance to enable greater involvement with the local community
3. The discovery of talented young players who, through transfer fees, could produce much-needed finance for some clubs
4. Increased attendances through better and more frequent relations with the local community
5. Reductions in football-related hooliganism and violence by providing young fans with better leadership and examples through organised and controlled schemes.⁵

In addition to club-based aims and objectives, the Sports Council also formulated specific targets for 'Club Motivators' whose main purpose was to generate interest in football clubs by engaging with the local community. In the first instance, motivators, who were sometimes but not always ex-professional players, were employed to determine the needs of football clubs and the local community, stimulate interest in the football club and establish relevant contacts. From there, they were charged with persuading youngsters that football club facilities were available to them and ensuring that the overall management of facilities ran smoothly. They were not given the specific task of discouraging youngsters from involvement in football hooliganism, but many of the motivators were optimistic in the schemes' early years that their efforts would reduce incidents of football-related violence and vandalism.⁶

8.3: Evaluating Early Football and Community Schemes

Three years after the Sports Council developed the Football and the Community Schemes, Dr. Roger Ingham published an evaluation of the schemes' success in terms of their original aims and objectives. Notwithstanding this brief, Ingham did interpret the aims and objectives of the schemes with a slightly different emphasis than had been expressed in the schemes' original documentation. In particular, Ingham sought to evaluate most schemes' express aim of reaching out to 'socially deprived' young people. Many schemes had attempted to do this by encouraging informal, low-key schemes in suitable locations and/or by attempting to ensure that costs to participants were kept as low as possible. There were marked differences in the way that many of the schemes approached the issue of social deprivation, but Ingham thought that the schemes had enough in common in this respect to make this particular piece of evaluation worthwhile.

The evaluation of the Football and the Community Schemes published in 1981 was organised under a number of headings. Particular attention was paid to hours of use by the community, numbers and turnover of users, and users' involvement in sport. However, for the purposes of this study the most interesting areas of evaluation were the age and sex of users, social class, support of the professional club by users and the catchment area of users. With reference to age and sex, Ingham concluded that the Football and the Community schemes primarily catered for males over the age of 21.⁷ Whilst careful to note that none of the schemes actually precluded participation by females or people from across the age range, Ingham did conclude from this evidence that the schemes had in part satisfied their aim of attracting young men as their

principal target group. However, Ingham also noted that the schemes did not attract as many males in the 17-20 age group as they had hoped and had, therefore, failed in satisfying some sections of their remit.

With reference to social class, Ingham found it difficult to generalise about which social classes were the most populous among Football and the Community scheme users. Across all schemes, the majority of users were from the C2 and DE social categories.⁸ However, the class breakdown of the individual schemes largely depended on the social profile of the neighbourhood in which any particular scheme was located. This meant that Ingham was unable to make firm conclusions about the success of the schemes in attracting 'socially deprived' sections of the community to use their facilities. Nor was he able to assess the success of the schemes in eradicating hooliganism.

The key question of whether the Football and the Community schemes were attracting new or increased numbers of local supporters to football clubs was addressed by Ingham through his analysis of the spectating habits of scheme users and of each scheme's catchment area. Ingham concluded that more than 50 percent of users of the schemes did not regularly attend first team football matches and that only 12 percent of users attended more matches as a result of their participation in the schemes (5 percent of users actually attended fewer matches as a result of the schemes).⁹ From this he concluded that the majority of users of the schemes were not football supporters and were not likely to become so. With regard to the catchment area of schemes, Ingham concluded that many schemes had a fairly wide catchment area covering a number of towns and villages. From this he stated that potential local users

of the facilities were being forced out of the schemes because of the high usage of other participants. This, coupled with the low levels of football support evident among scheme users, was disappointing in terms of the schemes' original aims and objectives as it had been clearly stated that the schemes were in part designed to stimulate significant new levels of football support for clubs within their local communities.

Despite the disappointment that the clubs must have found with Ingham's findings on levels of support for the schemes among local people, some joy would have been located elsewhere in his report. From interviews with the users of the schemes, Ingham did suggest that users tended to have an improved attitude towards the club as a result of facilities being made available to them, and that this improvement was more marked when club staff were involved in activities.¹⁰ He also noted that, whilst few users were willing to identify themselves as football hooligans or as having been involved in incidents of football-related disorder, many did feel that increased contact with staff from a football club could have a beneficial effect on potential troublemakers.¹¹ With this Ingham concluded that many successes had been achieved during the duration of the Football and the Community schemes and that with increased funding and commitment greater successes could be produced in the future.

8.4: Football and Community Schemes in the 1980s

The successes of the Sports Council backed Football and the Community schemes of the 1970s were significant but ultimately limited. Despite Ingham's call for increased funding for the schemes and their continuation after the initial government-backed period some schemes simply disappeared after the Sports Council ceased to fund them

whilst others slipped into disarray.¹² By the mid 1980s the Sports Council were happy to pass responsibility for the schemes over to a new agency who would be charged with reinvigorating football community relations. In August 1985, Michael Burns of the Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society (FFEVTS), the educational branch of the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA), met with the Sports Council to discuss football and community schemes and possible new initiatives. In the wake of the Heysel disaster that saw 39 Juventus fans die in fighting with Liverpool supporters before the 1985 European Cup Final in Brussels, FFEVTS proposed a new scheme entitled 'Football in the Community' which they wished to launch with the financial help of the Manpower Services Commission. Approval for the scheme was granted in January 1986 when the Football in the Community pilot scheme was launched in Lancashire. The regional location for the scheme may have been chosen for no other reason than because the PFA's head office was located in Manchester, but it is interesting that this initiative came to be tested in the very region where professional football had first emerged in the late Victorian period.

The original clubs involved in the Football in the Community scheme were Bolton Wanderers, Bury, Manchester City, Manchester United, Oldham Athletic and Preston North End. All clubs shared in the original aims of the scheme that were:

1. To provide employment and training for unemployed people
2. To promote closer links between professional football clubs and the community
3. To involve minority and ethnic groups in social and recreational activities
4. To attempt to prevent acts of hooliganism and vandalism
5. To maximise the use of facilities at football clubs.¹³

These aims were significant in that, whilst being similar to the aims of the Sports Council's Football and the Community schemes, they did have a wider focus that was focused not so much on football's 'problems' (for instance the new inclusion of ethnic minorities in the schemes' remit). Furthermore, in formal terms at least, the aims of the Football in the Community schemes were not particularly concerned with increasing football attendances, although football clubs must surely have hoped for some return on this through any closer links that they achieved with the local community. Most notably, however, it is instructive that the main focus of the schemes' attention was young people, even though this was not explicitly stated in their original aims and objectives. In PFA documentation that traces the history of the Football in the Community schemes, the context into which the schemes were launched in the mid-1980s is described by Labour Sports Minister Denis Howell's hope for the original schemes of the 1970s that "football clubs should give a lead to young people and encourage them to make more positive use of their time".¹⁴ Clearly, the Football in the Community schemes, much like their predecessors, were cast in the social context of providing recreation for the 'socially deprived' and preventing young people from becoming involved in hooliganism. In this context, they can be read in classic functionalist terms as directed Government policies designed to produce integration and feelings of community where they do not otherwise exist.

The original six Football in the Community schemes are largely regarded as a success by FFEVTS, the PFA and other bodies that were involved in their provision. This is not least because of the fact that by 1987 a further ten Lancashire clubs were invited to set up schemes, whilst in 1988, with the support of a new Regional Office in Barnsley, eleven Yorkshire and Humberside clubs established projects and four were

set up in the North East. However, despite the rise in the number of schemes on offer, it is unclear how successfully clubs were meeting the schemes' original aims and objectives. One of the central aims of the early schemes' was to attempt to reduce acts of football-related hooliganism and vandalism. Whilst measurement of football disorder is traditionally difficult and imprecise, not least because of confusion over what actually constitutes football-related crime, by standard measures it appears that the Football in the Community schemes had very little impact on people's willingness to engage in disorder at football matches. In 1986-87, the season during which the Football in the Community schemes were launched, there were 5,520 arrests at English football matches (see Figure 8.1). Five years later when over 80 clubs had full Football and the Community schemes operating, the number of arrests at English football matches had dropped by only nine percent to 5,006. This hardly constitutes a significant success for the schemes and may indicate that some schemes were either not directing their attention enough to problems of disorder, or that the schemes were ill-equipped in the first place to stop young people from engaging in football-related disorder.

	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92
Div 1	2,008	2,216	2,389	1,857	1,747	2,114
Div 2	1,700	2,136	1,747	2,203	1,710	1,328
Div 3	926	866	1,225	1,151	411	1,020
Div 4	878	929	824	734	251	544
Total	5,520	6,147	6,185	5,945	4,119	5,006

Table 8.1: Arrests at English Football Matches, 1986-87 – 1991-92.¹⁵

The success of the Football in the Community schemes in meeting their other original aims and objectives is also difficult to measure with any degree of accuracy. The first aim of providing employment and training for unemployed people seems to have only been partially met as the vast majority of schemes functioned with a staff of five full-time people or less and had very little staff turnover.¹⁶ On the issue of involving minority and ethnic groups in social and recreational activities, even if this did happen it did not translate into increased football spectatorship among ethnic minorities. As late as 1993-94, the FA Premier League Carling Survey recorded that just over one percent of football fans described themselves as non-white, a very small number when compared with the fact that around one in five professional footballers in England is black and so many football clubs are now housed in stadiums based in areas of significant ethnic variation.¹⁷ Finally, on the issues of promoting closer links between professional football clubs and communities and maximising the use of club facilities, it is almost impossible to judge the success of the schemes as the former is too nebulous to measure and few records appear to have been maintained for the latter.

One area of possible success for the Football in the Community schemes appears to have been with regard to increased attendances for participating clubs. Whilst improving match attendances was not a stated aim of the schemes, it is clear that clubs which established schemes often did so in the hope that some reward in terms of gate size would follow their efforts. Attendances at English football matches from the mid-1980s onwards certainly did improve and from the all-time aggregate low of 16,448,557 in 1985-86, English football crowds began to rise year by year to reach 21,856,020 by 1994-95.¹⁸ Whether this rise can be attributed even in part to the work of Football in the Community schemes is, however, questionable. Change was

rampant in English football during the period between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, taking in everything from increased commercialism, the building of all-seater stadia and the growing influence of television, and it is difficult to associate any one factor with football's improved popularity during that period.

The difficulties in attributing the overall attendance rises in English football during the 1980s to the Football in the Community schemes should not discourage analysis of attendances during that period on a club-by-club basis. It is notable that teams such as Preston North End, one of the pioneers of formal football and community links and one of Football in the Community's most vocal advocates, sustained attendance levels well above their divisional average from the late 1980s onwards (8,496 in 1994-95 as opposed to the Third Division average of 3,700).¹⁹ As Preston were not undergoing radical commercialisation during this period, nor enjoying any prolonged period of particularly dramatic success, it is entirely possible that the club's success in developing and maintaining a high level of support was in part a result of their excellent community relations.

8.5: A Case Study of Football and Community Schemes: Preston North End

By enduring the twin burdens of falling crowds and poor playing performances in the early 1980s, Preston North End were a clear example of a football club in crisis by 1983. In that year, the *Lancashire Evening Post* declared shortly after the publication of the club's accounts that "PNE is Bust".²⁰ They were not far wrong. In December 1983 Preston's auditors asked the club's directors to consider the possibility of liquidation, and in early 1984, rejecting the auditors' advice, the PNE directors

launched a publicity campaign to raise the £250,000 that it was estimated the club needed to survive.²¹ These problems did not go unnoticed on the terraces. By March 1985 banners bearing such statements as 'Sack the Board' and 'You've Killed PNE' were regularly displayed by fans, and demonstrations of varying intensity became frequent features at home games.²²

Preston North End's immediate need in the mid-1980s was clearly financial. They had a failing team that was no longer drawing casual support (Preston were relegated to Division Four in 1985 and finished 23rd in that Division at the end of the 1985-86 season), and like so many other football clubs had lost the link with their football community that they had once taken for granted. The club's directors approached the problem in two connected ways: one designed to solve the club's immediate financial crisis; the other intended to secure the club's long-term future. The first strategy was to sell the club's facilities at Deepdale to the Town Council. This was agreed in February 1984 and provided £220,000 of much needed money for the club. The second strategy, linked to the council's purchase of the club's facilities, was to extend the club's community role within Preston and the surrounding area. As Preston had received £40,000 from the original Sport Council backed Football and the Community scheme of the 1970s, the club had previously developed a resources-driven community initiative that had resulted in a number of leisure facilities and all-weather pitches being built adjacent to the Deepdale stadium. In the mid-1980s, the plan was that the club would relay the Deepdale playing surface with artificial turf in the hope that the community would use the facility and thereby be in more frequent contact with the local football club. When the sale of the stadium to the Town Council was eventual completed in early 1984, it was agreed that the playing surface would be the

only part of the Deepdale complex that the club would still own, leaving the council to pay an annual rent of £60,000 for community use of the pitch.

Preston North End's actions in providing a 'plastic pitch' for local community use, whilst born out of financial necessity, certainly put the club at the forefront of community-based initiatives to attract fans back to football in the early 1980s. This did not mean that the club were without critics. In 1984 the Preston Ratepayers Association registered its displeasure with the Town Council's decision to buy the football club facilities at Deepdale in the *Lancashire Evening Post*:

There are more worthy causes to assist in the town ... All this nonsense of the value of a professional football team means nothing but extra police charges for prevention of violence.²³

The implication of this statement was clear. Preston North End were not viewed as a core institution that related to the well-being of the community of Preston. The club was, in fact, viewed as a costly drain on the town's scarce financial resources.

By the time that Preston North End's plastic pitch opened to the public during the 1986-87 season, North End had, of course, initiated one of the PFA's formal Football in the Community schemes. Under the leadership of Mick Baxter, Preston's scheme appears to have been a great success for the club. By November 1988, the *Sunday Express* hailed Preston North End as "the game's Angels of Virtue" because of their community work.²⁴ In the same article, Baxter stated that through the Football in the Community scheme, Preston North End "want to involve people. We want to develop their affection for the club, and show them that it is not all violence and gloom". Baxter stated that when he took up the community post with North End, children

would regularly arrive for sessions dressed in other teams' colours. By 1988, he asserted confidently, "Now the youngsters are beginning to follow Preston ... Against all the odds they have every right to feel proud again".

But how successful was the Preston North End community scheme of the mid-1980s, and how much of Preston North End's revival in support during the period can be attributed to the scheme's influence? Sixteen years after the scheme was first initiated it is difficult to assess its success with any certainty, particularly as North End did little themselves to evaluate whether they were meeting the scheme's aims and objectives at the time. However, one important piece of evidence does exist that can help determine how Preston North End supporters viewed the first Football in the Community scheme. This comes in the form of a crowd survey of Preston North End fans conducted by the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research at the University of Leicester in 1987-88.²⁵ Whilst the survey was not principally directed at the issue of Football in the Community schemes, it did seek supporters' opinions on North End's community initiatives and therefore provides a unique piece of evidence for judging whether community schemes were significant in improving relations between football clubs and football communities from the mid-1980s onwards.

Conducted via questionnaire with fans who attended a match between Preston North End and Bury in March 1987, the Sir Norman Chester crowd survey began by analysing supporters' awareness of the Football in the Community scheme which had at that stage been running for 18 months. With over 80 percent of respondents aware of the scheme, the survey went on to analyse the force of impact that supporters

thought the community initiative had produced for the football club. The results were as follows:

	Number	Percentage
Big Impact	68	24.2
Some Impact	115	40.9
Not Much Impact	20	7.1
No Impact	6	2.1
Don't Know	66	23.5
No Answer	6	2.1

Table 8.2. Supporters' Perceptions of the Force of Impact of Preston North End's Football in the Community Scheme, 1987.²⁶

The above table shows that over 65 percent of respondents viewed the impact of the Football in the Community scheme at North End as considerable, or at least noticeable. In qualitative comments gathered on the questionnaire, a similar picture emerged as fans frequently commented on the new links that they or associates had forged with the club as a result of the community initiative. One supporter from Fulwood in Preston wrote in this vein:

One can see the floodlights on most afternoons and evenings, showing that the ground is well used. Deepdale is being used all the time instead of a couple of hours a week and it gives people more of a chance to participate.²⁷

Other examples of predominantly positive views expressed by respondents are as follows:

1. "It brings the local people more into things and helps them to feel part of the club"
2. "Anything which brings club and town together is bound to be beneficial to both"
3. "Helps to bring the community closer together"
4. "People who get involved seem to feel an affinity for the club"
5. "It allows children to use the ground and respect the facilities".²⁸

Clearly, many supporters felt that the community schemes had done much to improve relations between Preston North End and its fans, and that the image of the club had improved as a result.

Despite the largely positive reaction of most North End fans to the club's community initiative, it is interesting to note that 23.5 per cent of respondents to the crowd survey were unable to judge the impact of the scheme. This, coupled with the 9 per cent who felt that the scheme had made little or no impact, means that nearly a third of supporters questioned by the survey did not respond positively when questioned on the impact of the community initiative. It is possible, then, that the scheme may not have been the unequivocal success that is sometimes assumed.

In addition to assessing the qualitative improvements in relations between Preston North End and their local community as a result of the Football in the Community initiative, the Leicester crowd survey sought to determine whether the scheme had been successful in attracting more people to attend first-team matches as spectators. The report stated that the average home crowd at Deepdale had undoubtedly improved in the two year period prior to the report, but asked the crucial question of whether this could be attributed to the community scheme. The report asked supporters if the

community scheme had led them and/or people in their family and friendship networks to attend Deepdale more regularly. They responded as follows:

	Yes	No
You	13 (4.6%)	268 (95.4%)
Child/Children	20 (7.1%)	260 (92.5%)
Friend(s)	34 (12.1%)	246 (87.5%)
Spouse/Partner	3 (1.1%)	278 (98.9%)
Other Relatives	10 (3.6%)	270 (96.1%)

Table 8.3: Has PNE's community scheme led you and/or people in your family and friendship networks to attend Deepdale more regularly?²⁹

At face value, these figures do not look encouraging as negative responses average 95 percent. However, the Leicester crowd survey asserted that careful interpretation of the figures could produce a different impression. Put simply, they contended that, taken together (i.e. treating the categories child/children, friends and relatives as singular), respondents to this question knew of 80 people who began attending matches at Deepdale or attended more frequently as a result of the community scheme. This figure was commensurate with 28 percent of the survey return and shows that the relatively small number of positive responses identified above could actually hide significant increases in Preston North End's crowds that occurred in the mid-to-late 1980s as a result of their community initiatives.

To identify why supporters felt that people were more likely to attend Preston North End's matches as a result of the club's community scheme, the Leicester survey asked respondents to elaborate on why they or people they knew had started attending games more frequently in recent seasons. A sample of the responses is as follows:

1. "It brings in more children because they feel safe in a community type crowd"
2. "My children (two girls) have been invited to the Junior Whites' Stand and enjoyed it very much. They also attend matches with me when possible"
3. "I now have a number of acquaintances with children in the scheme who have attended PNE games"
4. "My daughter has been to see PNE twice – more than at any time in her life. Friends have attended because of their relatives' involvement in the community schemes"
5. "Nephew (age seven), following a visit to his school, has now become a supporter of the club"
6. "Friends have told me that after their children have attended Deepdale through school they have started going to matches"
7. "My son was a Liverpool supporter until he started relating to PNE through the scheme"
8. "Friends who have played on the pitch are now keen to come to see first team games. A nephew is keen to attend following a three-day course and he usually persuades others to go"

The importance of these quotes for assessing the importance of Football in the Community schemes in the mid-1980s can hardly be overstated. They are clear evidence of substantial numbers of people starting to attend matches because they were influenced by community initiatives that clubs such as Preston North End initiated. It is not surprising that so many of the quotes should relate to school children and the young. Nor is it surprising that when asked to comment on the priorities for the future of football and community schemes a large number of respondents to the Leicester survey mentioned the need to cultivate young people and maintain contact with schools. In the context of rebuilding the links between football clubs and football communities, the majority of supporters obviously felt that the process needed to begin with a new generation.

The final question relating to PNE's football and community initiatives that was asked by the Leicester crowd survey related to the club's image in the local community. It inquired into the extent to which the community scheme had changed the image of the club. Because of the largely supportive comments that supporters had written in relation to the community scheme earlier in the questionnaire, the responses to this question are not surprising and simply served to confirm and clarify earlier responses:

	Number	Percentage
Improved	183	65.1
Unchanged	19	6.8
Made Worse	1	0.4
Don't Know	69	24.6
No Answer	9	3.2

Table 8.4: Respondents' perception of the effect of the football and community scheme on the image of Preston North End.³⁰

Taken together, these findings and those quoted elsewhere above testify to the successes that Preston North End's Football in the Community scheme produced from the mid-1980s. Whilst it is impossible to assert a direct relationship between the scheme and improving attendances at Deepdale in the 1980s, it is clear from the Leicester survey that the community initiative did improve relations between the football club and the local community for some and hence laid a part of the foundations for the successes that Preston North End were to enjoy, on the field and off, during the 1990s.

8.6: (Postscript) Football and Community Schemes in the 1990s

Taken in isolation, it is too easy to assert that Preston North End's experience of football and community schemes from the mid-1980s are proof of the initiatives' successes. However, it is notable that not all of the original Lancashire teams that took part in the 1986 PFA community scheme trials enjoyed a significant up-turn in playing fortunes or attendances from the late 1980s. Bury FC, for instance, continued to endure poor crowds into the 1990s, and were relegated to the lowest level of English League football in 1992 (the newly named Division Three, previously Division Four). Even allowing for examples such as this, though, evidence contained in the Leicester crowd survey of Preston fans makes it clear that Football in the Community programmes did, to some degree, enable teams such as Preston North End to redress years of failure and falling attendances through creating a positive and welcoming atmosphere at games and other scheme events. Indeed, through extending the original remit of their community initiatives, teams such as Preston have done much to improve the terrace culture at their games in the past ten years by targeting young children and women in particular for increased match attendance.³¹ As a result, the focus of the Football in the Community programme since the beginning of the 1990s has turned away from hooliganism and concentrated on producing an exciting atmosphere for people at football matches that will encourage further and increased attendance. In 1991, under a new management support framework that included The Professional Footballers' Association, The Football League and The Football Association (FA), the Football in the Community schemes developed a new set of aims and objectives that were incorporated into a new Business Plan. With increased

funding offered for the schemes by the Football Trust and new commercial sponsors such as Pizza Hut, Wagon Wheels and Adidas, it was stated that the schemes should:

1. Encourage more people (especially children) to play football
2. Encourage more people (especially children) to watch football
3. Encourage more people to become interested in and support their local football club by forging closer links between them
4. Improve the image of the game
5. Improve the atmosphere at matches
6. Improve the behaviour of players and spectators.³²

These aims and objectives are instructive. With football set free from its abject problems of the mid-1980s, the Football in the Community schemes are currently able to concentrate on taking advantage of football's new respectable, commercial popularity. As football was re-established as a truly national game in the 1990s, clubs became able again to sell themselves to their local communities, not as nuisances and harbourers of hooliganism, but rather as positive representations of local values and identities.

8.7: The Action of Fans – The Development of Football 'Fanzines'.

Football and community schemes were not the only initiatives developed in Lancashire during the 1970s and 1980s to redress years of falling football attendances in the region. The actions of remaining committed supporters at a number of clubs are also worthy of note as fans undoubtedly helped secure some League clubs from becoming entirely irrelevant to their local communities and, therefore, financially bankrupt. Earlier in this chapter, the symbolic acts of defiance that Preston North End fans engaged in when faced with the club's plight in the mid-1980s were presented as examples of the passion that remained for football during that period and of the

centrality of sport to some people's sense of identity. It is to such developments that attention will now be turned as fans' roles in the rebirth of Lancashire football in the late twentieth century are assessed.

This project has been centrally concerned with events surrounding football in Lancashire in the period up to 1985. By this year, a number of new, pro-active developments were occurring among football supporter fan groups in the region aimed at 'reclaiming' football from hooligan fans who had dominated the agenda for too long, and from official agencies who, many fans believed, could not be trusted to secure the game's advancement. The most visible representation of this new mood among football fans was the expansion of unofficial 'fanzines' (fans' magazines) at football clubs across Lancashire and elsewhere in mid-1980s that aimed to provide discussion, leadership and humour for football fans who were concerned about the problems besetting their football clubs. Some cross-club, even national, football fanzines did emerge during this period, but the vast majority were linked to single clubs.

Much has been written about the origins and motives of English football fanzines by academics and non-academics over the past fifteen years. Most studies have agreed that they grew out of out of the mould cast by music fanzines in their "refusal to be mere 'recipients' of ... culture ... [whilst contesting] the off-hand and frequently cynical way that the consumers of mass produced entertainment are manipulated for merely commercial purposes".³³ Written, as their title suggests, by fans, for fans, the original football fanzines produced in Lancashire and elsewhere were independent of their addressed club, and constantly sought to keep a critical distance between

themselves and their subject. Because of this, Jary et al. have described fanzines as sites of:

‘resistance’ in and through sport to cultural and commercial hegemony whose implications are far less ambiguous than those in connection with football hooliganism, [while being] comparable in significance – if not in kind – as an instance of cultural defence and contestation.³⁴

Whilst this may be an over-politicised view of the intentions of fanzine producers, it is clear that fanzines were expressive of the agency of football fans in Lancashire and elsewhere from the mid-1980s, and of their desire to establish a voice within the game.

As the earliest football fanzines were produced by unofficial means and in relatively low numbers, few have survived that can now be studied in terms of their genesis and intentions. However, greater numbers of fanzines from the late 1980s and early 1990s do still exist in archives and provide excellent information on what fanzines were attempting to achieve in their early years.³⁵ By the late 1980s, most football clubs in Lancashire had one, and usually more, fanzines being produced in their name. Circulation figures for these titles do not exist, but probably varied widely from title to title and club to club. Burnley Football Club had *No Nay Never*, Bolton Wanderers had *Now We Want Pele*, *Wanderers Worldwide* and the *Normid Nomad*, Liverpool had *Through the Wind and Rain*, *When Sunday Comes* and *One Minute to Go*, Manchester City had *Blue Print* and *The King of the Kippax*, and Preston North End had *The Pie Muncher*, *PNE View*, *Win on the Plastic*, *North End Melon*, *Tales from the Potting Shed*, *Sleeping Giant*, and *53 Miles West of Venus*. These were just some of the titles available to football fans across Lancashire. They varied widely in content

and presentation, some being serious and well produced, others less so. However, they did all share the common aim of providing a level of representation for their readers and of offering an alternative discourse about football fans than that being provided by mainstream media.

The early editorials and articles contained in football fanzines in Lancashire are instructive of the authors' intentions for their publications. Fan behaviour was routinely commented upon, and where acts of violence or other 'distasteful' behaviour had occurred at matches, fanzines would debate the causes and offer their interpretation of events. In December 1992, *No Nay Never*, the Burnley fanzine, stated in an editorial its concern at violence between Burnley fans and the fans of Stoke City and West Bromich Albion during that season and reminded readers:

We have proved that we are amongst the best fans in the country, so why spoil that reputation by having a go at fans of the other big clubs? Do we really want a return to the days of the 'Suicide Squad'? As I write, it's Bolton tomorrow, so let's hope that potential flashpoint passed relatively peacefully.³⁶

Similarly, during the aftermath of the Hillsborough disaster that killed 96 Liverpool fans in 1989, Liverpool FC and Manchester United fanzines regularly produced discussion pieces on the impact of the disaster on the strained relations that existed between both sets of supporters. In 1989, *When Sunday Comes* acknowledged that some Liverpool fans (and fans of other clubs) had sung offensive songs about the Munich air disaster to Manchester United fans for many years. With this, the fanzine stated:

If someone starts up with a Munich chant then surely they must know what to expect. 'One packed terrace', 'Who's that dying on the terrace?', 'Hillsborough, Hillsborough '89'. We could degenerate into the Manchester United and Liverpool sections of the Anfield Road facing each other, pointing and chanting alternatively, 'Munich', 'Hillsborough', 'Munich', 'Hillsborough'. I don't know if there are words to describe it. I certainly hope that I never have to try and find them. It is much harder to love than to hate, and it would therefore be a far greater measure of us all if we could build on the links that were formed after both disasters and then the sickness in the Liverpool/Manchester United rivalry can stop.³⁷

Liverpool FC's *One Minute to Go* addressed the same issue in 1990 when correspondence was published from a Manchester United fan concerning the behaviour of Liverpool fans at a recent match between the two teams. The letter contained strong criticism of Liverpool fans who had sung songs about the Munich disaster at the match, and congratulated "those Liverpool fans who do not sing Munich or any other related shit ... you are the ones needed in football, not the other arseholes".³⁸ That *One Minute to Go* published this letter at all indicates the fanzine's highly critical stance against the chanting of Munich songs by Liverpool fans and of aggressive, parochial fandom in general.

In addition to policing fans' behaviour at individual clubs, Lancashire football fanzines routinely criticised the running of their clubs, be it in terms of team selection or the financial management of the club. *Blue Print*, the Manchester City fanzine, strongly criticised their club's intention to sell 250,000 shares to fans during 1988 and informed fans that the shares "will be worthless" and that, as non-voting shares, they would not entitle fans to vote on important issues.³⁹ *Blue Print*, in fact, stated that the central problem with Manchester City Football Club was that the club "had no democratic channels" that would enable fans to "have some say in the running of the club which they keep afloat by putting their hard earned cash over the turnstiles".⁴⁰

Similarly, *Win on the Plastic*, the Preston North End fanzine, ceaselessly berated the Preston North End board for lacking ambition during the late 1980s and early 1990s,⁴¹ whilst *No Nay Never* of Burnley FC could hardly contain its distain for its own team during 1989. Under an article entitled “10 Things You are Unlikely to See or Hear at Turf Moor [Burnley’s home ground]”, entries including “Burnley fans singing ‘We’re proud of You’”, “An exciting game of football”, and “Burnley stringing two passes together in the opponent’s half”, were offered along with the suggestion that “Burnley being booed off” was the most likely thing that anybody would hear at the ground.⁴² This level of critique, that came close at times to distain and loathing, was representative of the distance that Lancashire football fanzines in the late 1980s placed between themselves and their clubs. By attacking perceived problems at their clubs, fanzine writers placed themselves in the role of ‘true custodians’ of their clubs’ interests. Owners, directors and players were portrayed as mere temporary representatives of the clubs; fans were represented as the foundation of football clubs’ reason for existing.

Lancashire football fanzines in the late 1980s and early 1990s were not only critical of issues that concerned their individual clubs. Occasionally, nationwide issues would surface that re-concentrated the energies of fanzine writers for a period of time. One such issue that arose in the late 1980s was the Government’s call for all football supporters to carry identification cards when attending matches. The call had arisen in the wake of the major hooligan incidents that blighted English football in the mid-1980s, but many football supporters perceived it to be a dangerous initiative that would exclude many true fans from the game. A number of Lancashire fanzines joined the campaign to repel Football ID cards, including Burnley’s *No Nay Never*

who claimed, “despite the beliefs of the media, the most dangerous threat to this beloved game of ours is not the dreaded hooligan, but the fearsome Colin Moynihan [the Conservative Government’s Sports Minister]”.⁴³ In a similar vein, Manchester City’s *Blue Print* congratulated their club in 1988 for not complying with the “Government’s ludicrously futile membership scheme” and explained methods that fans of other clubs could utilise to avoid having identification checked at games.⁴⁴ One of Manchester City’s other fanzines, *King of the Kippax*, also took up the issue and criticised the football authorities, football clubs and the Government for producing a policy that was “thought up without any fans’ involvement”.⁴⁵

Of those fanzines that did criticise the Government’s ID card scheme, many had links with the Football Supporters’ Association (FSA): a nationwide independent supporters’ group established originally in Liverpool in the aftermath of the Heysel Disaster of 1985.⁴⁶ The FSA received numerous mentions in Lancashire fanzines in the late 1980s, and occasionally would be offered space to print manifesto statements on what its central aims were. One published in Liverpool FC’s *When Sunday Comes* in 1988 began by stating:

Fans are the true sponsors of football. Yet for years we’ve been ignored by the people who control it. The FSA is changing that [as a] democratic organisation with branches and members all over the country. The aim is simple. Representation for ordinary supporters on football’s ruling bodies so you can have a say in the future of our national game.⁴⁷

The article continued and set out in detail the six main aims of the FSA. These were;

1. To gain representation for football supporters on the executive bodies that control football clubs and the game of football generally.

2. To provide an independent and democratic structure through which the views of football supporters may be channelled and articulated.
3. To promote the game of football and to promote good-will between football supporters.
4. To support and initiate campaigns on issues of concern to football supporters. Particularly to campaign for improved facilities for disabled supporters and women.
5. To carry out research into and to disseminate information on football and related issues.
6. To oppose racism, sectarianism and sexism in football.⁴⁸

It is interesting to note that many of the FSA's central aims were shared with the football and community scheme aims outlined earlier in this chapter, particularly with regard to promoting anti-discrimination policies around football. It is difficult, however, to assert that the FSA were as influential as football and community schemes in redeveloping football fan culture in England in the late 1980s, principally because their level of membership was so consistently modest.⁴⁹ The FSA did emerge as an effective voice for supporters at a national level, though, especially by representing fans through major media channels. They also set the agenda for the establishment of Independent Supporters' Associations (ISAs) at many football clubs in England, including Lancashire. These were different in membership and aims from the traditional Supporters' Clubs that existed in largely encouraging and fundraising roles at most English football clubs from the inter-war period. Instead, ISAs followed the lead set by the FSA and sought representation at the highest levels within their clubs, often through direct political action. Whilst ISAs started to emerge around English football clubs from the mid-1980s, they did not become particularly visible until the early 1990s in Lancashire, and are, therefore, outside the remit of this project.⁵⁰

If we return to fanzines, a number of Lancashire fanzines in the late 1980s were clearly influenced by the agenda of the FSA, particularly in terms of promoting a more socially inclusive vision of football. *No Nay Never*, the Burnley FC fanzine, published a review of Burnley Ladies Football Club in 1989 that was clearly designed to challenge readers' stereotypical views on the gender basis of football:

Then I spotted them, the team I'd come to see. They were there, in a half time huddle. Red legged and runny nosed, but resolute. Claret and blue shirts, the club crest on each breast. Burnley Ladies football team ... As the game restarted my delusions quickly crumbled. These girls could actually play! I was soon absorbed and found myself hollering encouragement from my precarious perch on the grassy embankment.⁵¹

The same fanzine also published a letter from a female Burnley fan who wanted to remind male readers that "us female fans go through just as much" when supporting the team. In a sarcastic rebuke to the sexism traditionally faced by women at football matches, the same woman, who had recently given birth, also stated that "I only 'get my tits out' for my daughter now".⁵²

Similar issues of gender equity were dealt with in a number of Lancashire football fanzines in the late 1980s. In 1989, Manchester City's *Blue Print* contained two articles on different aspects of women's relationship with football, the first on the women's game itself and the second on how women relate to the men's game. In the latter article, a female football fan explained:

The legendary Len Shackleton ... once wrote a chapter in a book "What the Average Director Knows about Football" and then proceeded to leave the page blank. That is what seems to us to be the normal male view of a woman's football knowledge – NOWT! For women like us who are daft enough to travel great distances every week this comes as something of an insult.⁵³

The article went on to discuss the reasons for women's attendance at Manchester City's games, rejecting the idea that it was in any way linked to romantic interest in the players. Rather, the article concluded "So why do we go? Cos we love the wretched game that's why. ... We are City fans, true City fans and any true City fan will tell you, it's the team that matters and nothing else".⁵⁴

In addition to issues of gender equity, some Lancashire fanzines addressed other areas of social inequality in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Liverpool FC's *One Minute to Go* drew attention to a forthcoming Channel 4 documentary entitled 'Great Britain United' in 1991. The documentary, the fanzine explained, aimed to expose the racism faced by English professional football players and stated:

We hope that you will all watch this programme and learn from it. There are lots of black footballers who fail to make the grade because they become intimidated by the abuse they receive every time they step on to a football field. We as true supporters need to help in the fight to stamp out racists among us and to give all footballers a chance regardless of where they come from, or the colour of their skin.⁵⁵

In addition to calls for fans to be less prejudiced when supporting their teams, a number of Lancashire fanzines also contained stern condemnation of racist chanting and behaviour by fans, particularly if it had been propagated by the supporters of opposing teams. In 1989, Liverpool FC's *When Sunday Comes* featured an article on the behaviour of Everton fans at a recent 'derby' match at Goodison Park. In the article, attention was drawn to "racist chanting [among Everton fans]... that went on after the booing of announcements about racism on the scoreboard and over the

radio”.⁵⁶ *When Sunday Comes* criticised this behaviour in the strongest terms, and cast it in the same terms as hooliganism.

The final area of social inequality that was addressed by Lancashire football fanzines in the late 1980s and early 1990s was disability. Whilst articles on the plight of disabled football fans were not particularly prevalent, Manchester City’s *Blue Print* did contain two articles on ‘Amputee Football’ in 1988. The first of these, based around a local team named the Manchester Kestrels, noted that “the primary aim of Amputee Football is to pick people up, develop an improved self-image, build confidence, and prove you can have fun in the process”.⁵⁷ The article went on to assert that the Manchester Kestrels exist “with their love of football ... to encourage others to believe in themselves and realise that the only handicap that exists is that in the mind”.⁵⁸ This radical, social interpretation of disability indicated a belief in the inclusive nature of football in Manchester, and an assertion that nobody should be excluded from local football communities regardless of any kind of ‘difference’.

The socially inclusive tone of Lancashire football fanzines in the late 1980s and early 1990s represents some of the most important work undertaken by football fans in that period to recast football in positive terms. A number of academics who have studied football fanzines in England and Scotland have been careful not to overstate their achievements, and have avoided imbuing them with sub-political intentions to which they did not aspire.⁵⁹ Even allowing for this caveat, however, from studying early Lancashire football fanzines it can be seen that they were expressive of football supporters’ agency, and clearly attempted to address many of the problems that had blighted football since the 1960s. The most telling contribution of early Lancashire

football fanzines was to indicate to readers that people of innumerable backgrounds could belong to football communities in the region and that nobody was excluded. By promoting this belief, football fanzine writers, contributors and readers from the late 1980s and early 1990s can claim some part in re-establishing football communities across Lancashire by divorcing football clubs from their previously unshakeable associations with violence and disorder.

8.8: Conclusion

By the mid-1990s, English football was unrecognisable from the game that existed ten years earlier. Attendances were rising (attendances at Football League and Premiership games rose by 25 percent between 1985-86 and 1994-95), the game had acquired a new, positive image thanks to a reduction in associations with hooliganism, and new, comfortable football stands and stadia that were emerging around the country in response to the imperatives set forth in the post-Hillsborough Taylor Report. As many of these developments coincided with an influx of television money and other forms of commercial sponsorship into the game, it is too easy to assert that English football's rebirth in the 1990s was driven primarily by financial factors. However, as this chapter has shown, much positive work was being conducted by football clubs and football fans in Lancashire from the late 1970s and early 1980s that succeeded, to a greater or lesser extent, in reconnecting football clubs with their community of fans. This work also helped to open football up to new or traditionally marginalised audiences, including women, ethnic minorities and families, and thereby began the process of redefining the social basis of football communities.

It is clearly impossible to make an absolute judgement on how successful football and community schemes and changes in football fan culture were in reconnecting football clubs to their communities in Lancashire from the 1980s. The success of football and community schemes at clubs such as Preston North End in the late 1980s, and the vibrant fanzine culture that emerged at many clubs in the region in the mid-to-late 1980s, were starting points for change and may have amounted to nothing if a radical restructuring of English football's infrastructure and finances had not occurred in the 1990s. What can be said, however, is that football and community schemes and changes in fan culture indicated that football in Lancashire had a future in the mid-1980s. They showed that enough people, be they the PFA, club administrators, or supporters, cared enough about the future of Lancashire football clubs as community organisations to try to alter the desperate state that many clubs found themselves in the mid-1980s. That clubs such as Preston North End, Burnley and Bolton Wanderers have enjoyed so much success, both on and off the field, since the mid-1980s is testament to the energy of people associated with many Lancashire football clubs, and of those clubs' enduring roles as creators and centres of community identities.

¹ The football clubs involved in the schemes in Lancashire were Manchester City, Liverpool, Stockport County and Preston North End. The rugby league clubs involved were Oldham, Leigh, Swinton and St. Helens.

² For information relating to the Football and the Community Schemes see Ingham, R., *Football and the Community Monitoring Project* (London: The Sports Council, 1979) & Ingham, R., *Football and the Community Monitoring Project (Phase II)* (London: The Sports Council, 1981).

³ Ingham, *Football and the Community Monitoring Project*, p. 2.

⁴ Taylor, I, 'Football Mad: a Speculative Sociology of Football Hooliganism', in Dunning E (ed.) *The Sociology of Sport: a Selection of Readings* (London, 1971).

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- ⁵ Ingham, *Football and the Community Monitoring Project*, pp. 20-21.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ⁷ Ingham, *Football and the Community Monitoring Project (Phase II)*, pp. 76-77.
- ⁸ The actual percentage breakdown was AB:16, C1:25, C2:39, DE:19. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ¹² Sports Council, *Football: The Club in the Community Workshop Report* (London: Sports Council, 1986), p. 81.
- ¹³ The Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society, *Football in the Community* (Manchester: PFA, 1999).
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁵ Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research, *Factsheet 1: Football and Football Hooliganism* (Leicester: Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research).
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- ¹⁸ Russell, D., *Football and the English* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), p. 225.
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- ²⁰ Hunt, D., *The History of Preston North End Football Club: The Power, The Politics and the People* (Preston: PNE Publications, 2000), p. 241.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.
- ²² *Ibid.*, p. 244-245.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 246.
- ²⁴ See *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- ²⁵ Murphy, P., Dunning, E., & Williams, J., *Preston North End Crowd Survey (Preliminary Report)* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 1988). It should be noted that a subsequent full report was never completed for this study.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 15.
- ²⁸ Ibid. p. 17.
- ²⁹ Ibid., p. 20.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 23.
- ³¹ Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 221.
- ³² The Footballers' Further Education and Vocational Training Society, *Football in the Community*.
- ³³ Jary, D. et al., 'Football Fanzines and Football Culture: A Case of Successful Cultural Contestation', *The Sociological Review*, 39, 3, 1991, p. 584.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 583.
- ³⁵ The most notable collection of football fanzines from the late 1980s and early 1990s exists at the Art and Design Library, Manchester Metropolitan University.
- ³⁶ *No Nay Never*, December 1992.
- ³⁷ *When Sunday Comes*, 6, 1989.
- ³⁸ *One Minute to Go*, 2, 1990.
- ³⁹ *Blue Print*, 2, 1988.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ See, for instance, *Win on the Plastic*, 5, 1990.
- ⁴² *No Nay Never*, 3, 1989.
- ⁴³ *No Nay Never*, 3, 1989.
- ⁴⁴ *Blue Print*, 1, 1988.
- ⁴⁵ *King of the Kippax*, 2, 1988.
- ⁴⁶ For a history of the Football Supporters' Association see, Taylor, R., *Football and its Fans: Supporters and their Relations with the Game* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992)
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- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
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- ⁵⁰ For more information on Independent Football Associations see, Nash, R., 'English Football Fan Groups in the 1990s: Class, Representation and Fan Power'. *Soccer and Society*, 2, 1, 2001, pp. 39-58.
- ⁵¹ *No Nay Never*, 3, 1989.
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⁵³ *Blue Print*, 9, 1989. For the other article on women's football in *Blue Print* during 1989 see, *Blue Print*, 7, 89.

⁵⁴ *Blue Print*, 9, 1989.

⁵⁵ *One Minute to Go*, 4, 1991.

⁵⁶ *When Sunday Comes*, 9, 1989.

⁵⁷ *Blue print*, 3, 1988.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ See Russell, *Football and the English*, p. 234.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions and Future Directions

9.1: Introduction

The following chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, a summary of findings and overall conclusions from the analysis contained in this project is presented. Particular attention is afforded to the social make-up of football crowds, issues of attendance decline, the relationship between football and social identity, and theoretical and methodological considerations. In the second half of the chapter, recommendations for future study are outlined. Further developments within the historical study of football crowds and the relationship between football and social identity are considered, as are historical studies of football and regional identity and the constitution of present-day 'football communities'. The utility of conducting future studies of football in regional contexts outside Lancashire is also commented upon.

9.2: Overall Conclusions and a Summary of Findings

In the introduction to this project, four principal aims were outlined to guide the analysis. These were to assess the social make-up of post-war football crowds in Lancashire, to analyse the fall in attendances that occurred at most Lancashire football clubs in the post-war period, to assess the developing relationship between football and social identity in post-war Lancashire, and to evaluate attempts to reconnect football clubs with football communities from the late 1970s to the mid-1980s. To

draw the project together, it is worth reflecting on these aims in turn and also considering how the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in the project facilitated its completion.

To tackle the first aim of the project, the social constitution of Lancashire football crowds between 1946 and the early 1960s was analysed. This proved a difficult task as empirical data on who was attending football matches in Lancashire in this period is sparse and often contradictory. However, through close scrutiny of press sources and oral history interviews, it was found that football crowds in the immediate post-war period were probably more heterogeneous than has previously been thought. One of the most interesting and useful findings from this analysis was that people in Lancashire were willing to support football teams from outside their immediate locale in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s. This enabled the project to offer an alternative definition of the historical make-up of football crowds, and drew attention to the distinctive characteristics of post-war football communities *vis-à-vis* their geographical counterparts.

Another central finding from the analysis of post-war football crowds in Lancashire was that they contained greater class differentiation than has previously been thought. This finding informed the analysis of the second aim of the project; namely an evaluation of why football attendances decreased for the vast majority of Lancashire football clubs between the early 1950s and the mid-1980s. By analysing existing studies of attendance falls at post-war English football clubs, it was noted that most investigations had been conducted on issues affecting working-class football fans. Whilst it was conceded that the majority of football fans were indeed from the

working classes in post-war Lancashire, the identification of a number of fans from other classes injected an important caveat into debates concerning the influence of working-class affluence, consumption and unemployment on football attendance.

When the post-war decline in Lancashire football attendances was analysed, it was found that a significant statistical relationship between increasing working-class affluence/consumption and decreasing football attendances could be observed. Oral history evidence on the period provided similar findings. Respondents frequently explained that a change in their personal circumstances associated with an upturn in personal affluence contributed to a reduction in their football attendance from the 1960s onwards. They also referred to marriage, geographical movement and home ownership as important factors in determining their football attendance, thereby underlining the importance of a variety of social and economic factors in influencing their use of leisure time. Some also referred to changes within football that negatively affected their desire to regularly support a club.

In comparison to studies of the relationship between affluence and football attendance, the project also investigated the effect that unemployment and economic restructuring had on football attendances in post-war Lancashire. For the 1950s and 1960s, it was found that some areas of Lancashire, particularly around the north-east of the county, suffered increasing unemployment and high levels of outward migration at a time when football attendances were decreasing. Similarly, for the period between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, it was found that economic conditions were so extreme in some areas of Lancashire that a number of clubs incurred declines in attendance that were even greater than those felt in the previous

period. The city of Liverpool is the most interesting example here as attendances fell so markedly at Liverpool FC and Everton FC in this period while both clubs were enjoying degrees of success.

The third aim of the project was to consider the relationship between football and social identity in Lancashire in the post-war period, and to see whether a bifurcation between football clubs and football supporters occurred after the 1960s. The centrality of football clubs in producing feelings of local and regional identity in Lancashire in the 1940s and 1950s was observed, as was a change in the ways in which people constructed their sporting identities from the early 1960s onwards. The socio-economic basis of this shift was analysed with particular reference to affluence, consumption and a strengthening national culture. By the beginning of the 1980s, it could be observed that many Lancashire football clubs no longer represented their local community in the automatic way that they previously had, and that regional identities associated with football were largely an anachronism for Lancashire football fans.

The final section of the project assessed the successes and failures of football and community initiatives and changes in football fan culture in the 1980s, particularly in terms of reconnecting football clubs with their football communities. It was observed that both developments enjoyed some joy in redefining football in Lancashire, and that both produced a more inclusive definition of the football community. The basis that these initiatives laid for the commercial repositioning of English football in the 1990s was identified, as was their contribution to increasing football attendances and a change of atmosphere at many Lancashire League grounds.

Throughout this project, a variety of methods and historical sources have been employed to inform the analysis, some quantitative in origin, some qualitative. This use of contrasting approaches has been underpinned by the epistemological assumption that if one wishes to study long-term developments, then all factors that help to produce social, economic and sporting change must be observed. It is important that, as social beings caught up in constantly fluctuating social relationships and interdependencies, influences on human behaviour are observed through macro-social developments that encourage people to act in one way or another. However, as intelligent, self-conscious and relatively autonomous individuals, it is equally important to study the personal interpretations that people bring to social relationships. This dual emphasis reminds us that people's actions are influenced by the world around them, but that always-predictable relationships between social change and people's behaviour are very rarely observable in studies of the kind conducted here. To give just example, it has been important in this project to observe the macro social and economic developments that influenced people's use of leisure time in post-war Lancashire, but also to talk to those people to understand how social and economic changes affected them *personally*.

9.3: Areas for Future Consideration

This project has identified a number of important areas of debate within the sociology and social history of post-war English football. However, due to constraints of space, not all have been fully developed. It is now worth considering briefly a number of the

topics raised by this project that deserve future consideration and further development.

The first two aims of this project dealt with the constitution of post-war football crowds in Lancashire and reasons for attendance changes in the region between the late 1940s and the mid-1980s. It is now vital that further work is conducted on the make-up of football crowds across Britain for all periods from the mid-to-late nineteenth century onwards in order that a more thorough and historically accurate account of social differentiation within football crowds can be provided. This project has shown that there is little sound historical data available on football crowds for the first eighty years of the twentieth century. Equally, however, it has also shown that through oral history evidence and the creative use of printed sources, a greater level of impressionistic, if not necessarily statistical, information on who attended English football matches during the twentieth century can be developed. In this project, crowd research was conducted on a modest scale and only in relation to Lancashire. It is now important that much larger scale studies are conducted across England, and in Scotland and Wales, to build up a body of reliable empirical data on who attended British football matches in various times and places through the game's history.

Another important aim of this project was to consider the development of social identities among football supporters in Lancashire in the post-war period. The project's identification of regional, as well as local, identities in the context of Lancashire football in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s demands that further studies of regional football are now conducted in England and elsewhere. The historiography of studies of English football and identity is dominated by analyses of local identify

formation. It is now important that areas such as the Midlands, the North East, London, and the South are investigated in the context of regional identification through football to further analyse how prevalent these feelings were across the country, and why they went into such marked decline from the 1960s onwards. Studies of the decline of regionalism in football, linked as they inevitable are with analyses of the growth of one-club parochialism, may also provide a fruitful new route into explaining the growth of football hooliganism in England from the late 1950s to the late 1980s.

This project's concern with football and social identity has frequently demanded that a clear sense of what constitutes a football community is provided. The challenge has been to develop a definition that is not too far removed from theories of geographical community (with which football communities clearly overlap), but also to construct a concept that encapsulates all the different groups that support football clubs. As this project has demonstrated that a number of Lancashire football clubs drew support from large geographical areas from at least the 1940s, it is important that further work is now conducted on the membership of football communities across England. If, as one may suspect, it is found that many English clubs have long attracted fans that have no automatic geographical qualification that permits them to become a member of a football community, then a whole new area of debate about the relationship between sport, space and place has been identified. It is essential that this is now fully researched and debated.

The redefinition of community in the context of football not only demands that new research is conducted in Britain, but also that football and community research is

taken into the international context. In Chapter Seven of this project, the development of Manchester United into a regional, national and international super-club was analysed. Questions about how the club developed their unique appeal were posed that focused on the globalisation of the club through global media and popular culture flows. What this project has not discussed, and what has yet to be questioned or analysed by sociologists or social historians, is whether global supporters of football clubs such as Manchester United constitute single, identifiable football communities. Little work has so far been conducted on whether supporters of single football clubs who live in England, Scotland, Wales, Norway, Sweden, Ireland, Japan, Indonesia and China constitute a cohesive community that are bound together by one specific interest. Nobody has questioned whether these people, who often cannot even speak each other's languages, feel that they belong psychologically to a global family of football supporters, or whether they exclude any groups from their football community, and if so, why.

These debates about the modern condition of football communities that have developed around English football clubs will inform the work that that I will personally develop in the immediate wake of this project. Through ethnographic research and documentary analysis, evaluation will be conducted on the social basis and motivations of international supporters of English Premier League clubs.¹ I will investigate whether international football supporters consume English clubs much like any other aspect of Western popular culture, including film and popular music, or whether they display the commitment and identity-based fandom that defines traditional English football support. I will also analyse whether international supporters see themselves as legitimate members of football communities, or whether

they feel excluded by those who portray them as illegitimate fans. These debates will be placed into the historical context of the development of football and community initiatives that has been charted in this project. I will question whether locally-based football and community schemes that were initiated in Lancashire in the mid-1980s are still relevant for larger English clubs, or whether clubs such as Liverpool and Manchester United should now invest their energies in creating national and global football communities required to support their increasing financial expenditure. What such a development would mean for local communities that surround football stadiums would, of course, also be central to such an analysis, as would a questioning of whether the concept of local identity, as outlined in this project, has any long-term future in English football.

¹ The first article from this study will be published in 2003. See Mellor, G., “‘They’re soccer players, not film stars’: The Contradictory Consumption of Manchester United Football Club by Japanese Supporters”, Andrews, D. (ed.), *Manchester United: An Interdisciplinary Study* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003).

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Blue Print

Normid Nomad

North End Melon

Northern Football

No Nay Never

Now We Want Pele

One Minute to Go

PNE View

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Appendix

Biographies of Oral History Respondents

K. Bailey (Born 1937)

Mr. Bailey is a Manchester United supporter who started attending games with his father in 1944. He grew up in the Northenden area of Manchester, and later moved to Old Trafford where he began work in sales. He got married in 1959 and moved to Wiltshire with his wife in 1969. He returned to the North West in 1991 when he moved to Congleton. He has never stopped attending Manchester United's matches, even when living outside of the North West, and is currently a season ticket holder and shareowner in the club.

A. Capleton (Born 1926)

Mr. Capleton is a Liverpool supporter who grew up in the Allerton area of the city. He started attending matches with his older brother in 1946 when they both returned from service in the Second World War. He moved to London for a short time in the late 1940s in search of work, but returned to Liverpool in the early 1950s. He got married in the early 1950s and moved to Canada with his wife in 1957. They returned to Merseyside in 1960 and had a son who also supports Liverpool. Mr. Capleton started a building business in the 1960s and stopped attending matches regularly in the same decade. He now lives on the Wirral.

G. Doyle (Born 1932)

Mr. Doyle is a Manchester United supporter who started attending matches in 1942 with his friends. He grew up in Salford and has worked most of his life 'in sales'. He got married in 1957 and later had three children. He stopped attending matches in the late 1980s after giving his season ticket away. He now lives in Walkden near Manchester.

J. Garfield (Born 1934)

Mr. Garfield is a Manchester City supporter who grew up in the Failsworth area of Manchester. He worked in the car industry until his retirement. He got married in 1959 to a Manchester United supporter. He started attending matches with his father. He has lived in Manchester all his life and now lives in the Middleton area of the city. He stopped attending matches in the 1980s.

G. Gately (Born 1932)

Mr. Gately is a Manchester City supporter who started attending matches with his father during the Second World War. He grew up in the Rusholme area of Manchester and sold match programmes at Maine Road as a child. After leaving school, Mr. Gately began a career in insurance; an industry from which he recently retired. He moved from Manchester to Over Houlton near Bolton in the early 1970s with his wife. He continues to live there and support Manchester City as a season ticket holder.

E. Hall (Born 1940)

Mr. Hall is a Manchester United supporter who grew up in Eccles. He started attending matches in 1950 with his father and his friends. He has worked all his life as an electrician. He got married in the 1960s and moved to Australia with his wife for a short period in the early 1970s. He moved back to the North West and settled in Bury in the mid-1970s. He has since re-married and has two daughters, neither of which has any interest in football. He stopped attending Manchester United's matches in the early 1970s and now has a keen interest in rugby league.

R. Haughton (Born 1925)

Mr. Haughton is a Manchester United supporter who grew up in East Manchester. He started attending matches in 1947 with his friends from work. He worked for British Rail until his retirement. Mr. Haughton got married in 1966 and had two daughters in the 1970s. He stopped attending matches in the mid-to-late 1980s and moved to Heaton Norris in Stockport.

J. Hill (Born 1921)

Mr. Hill is a Manchester City supporter who moved to Prestwich, Manchester from Ireland in the 1940s. He worked in Swinton, Manchester during the 1940s as a manual factory worker, and then worked driving buses across Lancashire until his retirement. Mr. Hill got married in 1947. He has two children with no interest in football. He stopped attending matches in the 1990s through ill health. Mr. Hill has spent all of the last 50 years living in Manchester. He now lives in the Newton Heath area of the city.

W. Horam (Born 1928)

Mr. Horam is a Preston North End supporter who started attending in 1938 with his father. He was born in Preston and has lived there ever since. After briefly playing as a goalkeeper in Preston North End's reserve team immediately after the Second World War, Mr. Horam forged a career as a comedian and entertainer. He got married in 1956 and has two daughters, neither of which has any interest in football. Mr. Horam supported Preston regularly until 1970, and continues to watch them "now and then". He is now retired through ill health.

A. Hudson (Born 1937)

Mr. Hudson is a Liverpool supporter who grew up in the Aigburth area of the city and started attending matches with his father. He spent his early working life employed as an office clerk, later becoming an accountant. He got married in 1959 and had two children in the 1960s. He moved to St. Helens because of work commitments in the 1960s, but later moved back to Liverpool in 1975. He stopped attending 'every' Liverpool match in the mid-to-late 1960s, but has continued to attend the club's matches occasionally. He now lives in North Liverpool.

B. Isherwood (Born 1929)

Mr. Isherwood is a Blackburn Rovers supporter who has lived all his life in Darwen. He started attending matches in 1937 with his father and his uncle. He married in the early 1950s and soon had a son who also became a keen Rovers supporter. He worked for most of his life in a wallpaper factory before being made redundant aged 52. He spent the final

10 years of his working life employed in a steel factory in the Blackburn area. He still has a season ticket at Ewood Park.

K. Jackson (Born 1931)

Mr. Jackson is a Manchester City supporter who has lived his whole life in the Burnage area of Manchester. He is a retired probation officer who is married and has three children. He started watching football in the mid-1940s with his father and his uncles. He stopped attending Manchester City matches regularly in the 1960s, but continues to be an occasional supporter to this day.

D. McCormack (Born 1932)

Mr. McCormack is a supporter of both Manchester United and Manchester City who grew up in the Withington area of Manchester. He started attending matches with his mother, who worked at the Maine Road stadium, during the Second World War. He started supporting Manchester City and Manchester United in the period after the war when both clubs were playing home matches at Maine Road. Never married, he worked as a sports coach until his retirement. He remains a resident of Withington and still occasionally attends Manchester City matches.

A. McKenna (Born 1937)

Mr. McKenna is a Manchester City supporter who started attending matches in 1947 with his older brother. He grew up in the Failsworth area of Manchester and has worked most of his life as a printer. In addition to supporting Manchester City, Mr. McKenna has in

the past also regularly attended Manchester United matches. Married with two children, neither of which have any interest in football, he is now retired and lives in Stockport.

J. Miller (Born 1942)

Mr. Miller is a Tranmere Rovers supporter who started attending matches with his uncle in 1949. He grew up in Birkenhead and has lived there throughout his life. He got married in 1965 and has worked most of his life in the management of catering. He still attends all of Tranmere's home matches and 'most' of their away matches. Mr. Miller also watched Everton FC during the 1950s.

W. Monk (Born 1926)

Mr. Monk is a Burnley supporter who started attending matches with his father in 1932. He was born in Lowerhouse (Lancashire), and after a short spell in the Army at the end of the Second World War, settled in the Queensgate area of Burnley. He was married in 1948 and had two children. He worked as a technical cost accountant until retirement. In 1967 Mr. Monk and his family moved to Clitheroe, where they have remained ever since. He still attends all of Burnley's home matches.

J. Palin (Born 1945)

Ms. Palin is a Bolton Wanderers supporter who started attending matches in 1960 "with a friend from work". She grew up in Bolton "within sight and sound of Burnden Park", but never attended matches as a child. When she became a regular Bolton supporter, she settled into a pattern of attending matches with her mother who she introduced to

football. Ms. Palin attended the matches of a number of football clubs in Lancashire in the 1960s. She worked for the Co-Op in that period and has since continued in shop work. She got married in the late 1960s, but lost her husband to illness fifteen years later. She now lives in Adlington where she continues to support Bolton Wanderers as a season ticket holder whilst looking after a number of foster children.

A. Smith (Born 1950)

Mrs. Smith is a Blackburn Rovers supporter who started attending matches with her father in 1963. She continued to attend matches with her father until 1971 when she got married to a Preston North End supporter. She has lived all her life in Bamber Bridge. She has had a number of 'office' jobs and has now returned to education. She stopped attending matches regularly in the early 1980s.

B. Thompson (Born 1934)

Mr. Thompson is a Preston North End supporter who started attending matches with his father in 1945. He has lived all his life in Bamber Bridge and worked as an electrician from the age of 15. *He got married in 1959 and has two children. In addition to supporting PNE, Mr. Thompson also attended matches in Blackpool, Blackburn and Accrington in the 1950s and 1960s. He stopped attending matches in the late 1980s.*

T. Woods (Born 1931)

Mr. Woods is a lifetime supporter of Preston North End and a more recent supporter of Bury FC who started attending North End's matches during the Second World War. He

grew up in Preston and started attending matches with his father and school friends. In 1965 Mr. Woods moved from Preston to Bury to pursue his career as a design engineer. He continued to attend Preston North End's matches immediately after his move, but after six years became interested in the fortunes of Bury FC. Mr. Woods is married with two children who have little interest in football and stood as a Labour Councillor in Bury in the 1970s and 1980s.