

University of Warwick institutional repository: <http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap>

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick**

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/2825>

This thesis is made available online and is protected by original copyright.

Please scroll down to view the document itself.

Please refer to the repository record for this item for information to help you to cite it. Our policy information is available from the repository home page.

**POPULAR GAMBLING AND ENGLISH CULTURE, c.1845 to 1961.**

**Mark Clapson**

**Submitted for the degree of  
Ph.D in Social History at  
the University of Warwick.**

**June, 1989.**

## Synopsis

The years 1853 to 1960 constituted a period of prohibition for off-course cash betting on horses. Despite this, and in the face of a vocal anti-gambling lobby, the working-class flutter flourished as the basis of a commercialised betting market. Over this period, gambling changed from the informal wagering between friends and associates which characterised pre-industrial society, to the commercialised forms, supplied by bookmakers and leisure entrepreneurs, in which, ostensibly, the punters were mere passive consumers. By 1939, the three most popular forms of gambling were off-course betting on horses, the football pools, and betting at greyhound tracks. Beyond this was a hinterland of friendly but competitive petty gaming with coins and cards, and on local sports, which remained relatively untouched by commercialisation.

A study of popular gambling tells us much about the relationship of the state to working-class recreation, and about the nature of working-class recreation itself. The unifying theme of this thesis is that the predominant forms of betting which had developed by 1960 were a testament to the moderation and self-determination of working-class leisure. Betting had become central to a shared national culture which defined itself only apolitically in class terms, and more in terms of 'sportsman' or punter versus 'faddist.' Those who berated gambling were un-English. The law was ignored by those who enjoyed, as they saw it, a harmless flutter. The state eventually came round to this viewpoint.

## **Abbreviations**

*B.O.H.P.*: Bolton Oral History Project.

*H.C. Debs.*: House of Commons Debates (Hansard).

*H.L. Debs.*: House of Lords Debates (Hansard).

*L.B.O.*: Licensed Betting Office.

*M.O.*: Mass Observation.

*P.P.*: Parliamentary Papers.

*R.C.*: Royal Commission, Parliament.

*S.C.*: Select Committee, Parliament.

*Q.U.*: Questionnaire (Writer's Oral Project.)



## **Acknowledgements**

I am very grateful to the archivists and staff of the Bolton, Liverpool and Manchester local history libraries, the B.B.C. Data Archive in Reading, the British Library, The Jewish Museum in Manchester, the Manchester Tape Studies Collection at Manchester Polytechnic, the Mass Observation archive at the University of Sussex, the Metropolitan Police archive in Brixton, the Newspaper Library at Colindale, and the Police Museum in Newton Street, Manchester.

I would like to thank Tony Mason for his comments on and criticisms of earlier drafts of the thesis, and also for his patience. Caroline Brooks, James Kilmartin and John Mason have also been very helpful. Ian Bridgeman, Carl Chinn, Clive Emsley and Tony Lane have lent me some useful oral sources.

Finally I would like to thank those people who replied to my request for information in the local and national press. Whether or not I have used their testimonies below, I am especially grateful to all of them.

## Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction: Setting the Scene</i>	1
<i>Chapter 2: Gambling, Culture and Economy in Victorian and Edwardian England</i>	18
<i>Chapter 3: Street Betting in Lancashire, c.1906 to 1961</i>	64
<i>Chapter 4: The Off-Course Ready-Money Bookmaker: A Social Profile</i>	91
<i>Chapter 5: Informal and Uncommercialised Betting and Gaming: An Exploration</i>	127
<i>Chapter 6: From Flapping Tracks to the Electric Hare: The Development of Greyhound Racing in England, c. 1890 to 1960</i>	156
<i>Chapter 7: Horse Racing and On-Course Betting in Lancashire, c. 1840 to 1961</i>	180
<i>Chapter 8: Football Coupon Betting and the Rise of the Football Pools, c.1890 to 1960</i>	213
<i>Chapter 9: Legalisation and its Antecedents, 1918 to 1961</i>	249
<i>Chapter 10: Conclusion</i>	279
Appendix of Illustrations	285
Bibliography	295

## CHAPTER 1: Setting the Scene

### Definitions

The great eighteenth-century lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, rarely pulled his punches when defining the words he included in his *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). He had no noun for 'gamble' but 'Gambler' was 'a cant word' for gamester, a 'knave whose practice it is to invite the unwary to game and cheat them.'<sup>1</sup> 'Canting' language was the slang of the poor. As a twentieth-century edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, the verb did not make its appearance in the language until the second half of the eighteenth century, before which 'gambler' was a slang term for a fraudulent gamester, a sharper, or one who played for excessive stakes.<sup>2</sup> 'To game', the more established and commonly used sporting verb, was expressed by Johnson as 'to play wantonly and extravagantly for money.' 'Gaming' was the term used for roulette and for rouge et noir, baccarat, chemin de fer and other card games played by the wealthy in clubs and salons whose social *cachet* and high entrance fees precluded the hoi polloi. Amongst the poor it meant coin and card gaming in the 'gambling hells' of the nineteenth century, or out-of-doors in pitch and toss schools and other gaming assemblies. In Johnson's time the verbs 'to bet' and 'to wager' meant the same thing and were less disreputable than the newer verb 'to gamble.' They expressed more dispassionately the riskiness inherent in the staking of money on the outcome of an event riven with contingencies. 'To wager' -a derivation of the German word 'waegen', meaning to venture- was 'to lay; to pledge as a bet; to pledge upon some casualty or performance.' 'Gambling' then was a newer pejorative term for gaming and wagering. In England, it was associated with the lower-class. Moreover, the element of cheating

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1983 edition (first published in 1755). There are no page numbers.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1961 edition, p. 35.

which Johnson pointed to illustrated that gambling was an illegitimate means of acquiring money. By the end of the nineteenth century gambling, for those critical of it, was the sin of the 'leisure class', those of all social strata who repudiated hard work for a life of laziness and indulgence. Thus Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist and another writer who did not pull his punches, saw the irrationality and opportunism of gambling as a 'subsidiary trait of the barbarian temperament', a block to the progress of society.<sup>3</sup> This, perhaps, was the clearest secular statement of the anti-gambling position.

'Punter', a more familiar word today than bettor, seems to have entered the language in the later nineteenth century, as an alteration in meaning from its original designation as an auction bidder. It came to mean 'an outsider betting on horses in a small way.' 'Punt' was occasionally also used for 'poona', one pound.<sup>4</sup>

#### The State of the Art

Histories of gambling in England are few and far between, and what there is falls mostly into the camps of popular journalism, fond antiquarianism or alarmist tract. The latter usually provide a potted history of gambling which rests on the perception, be it 1898, 1927, or 1950, that gambling is becoming ever more popular and its attendant dangers ever more widespread and unmanageable.<sup>5</sup> Journalistic histories of betting and gambling, whilst often entertaining and informative, tend to concentrate on 'great men' or the infamous rogues and scandals of low-life. There is little or no attempt to relate changes in the organisation and extent of betting and gambling to broader economic and cultural developments.

---

<sup>3</sup> Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York, 1963, p. 183 (first published 1899).

<sup>4</sup> Eric Partridge (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Historical Slang*, 1988, p. 734.

<sup>5</sup> John Ashton, *A History of Gambling in England*, 1898. Canon Peter Green, *Betting and Gambling*, 1927 especially Chapter 2, 'Social Evils Due to Gambling.' E. Benson Perkins, *Gambling in English Life*, 1950. Perkins was Chairman of the Churches Committee on Gambling in the 1940's. For an insightful journalistic treatment of gambling see Alan Wykes, *Gambling*, 1964. Popular histories of horse racing and its associated betting include Micheal Wynn Jones, *The Derby*, 1979. See also any books from the John Freeman Fairfax Blakeborough or R.S. Surtees libraries.



The serious historical study of betting and gambling and its relationship to society is relatively recent, one which developed out of the concerns of modern social history. These concerns may be broadly summarised as the impact of the commercialisation of leisure on older 'traditional' pre-industrial recreations and the relationship of different social classes and groups to this massive, ongoing transition. Historians have sought to ascertain how far this commercialisation changed the nature of pre-industrial recreations; at what level these earlier 'traditional' forms survived; what were the different uses of leisure between classes and why certain sections of the middle class sought to convert both the indulgent gentry above them and the indigent masses below to a more rational, that is restrained and cerebral, way of passing time not spent at work.<sup>6</sup> Outside of the physical arenas of sport, the commonplace activities of drink, sex and gambling constituted an 'unholy trinity'<sup>7</sup> in the eyes of the professional and religious promoters of rational recreation. These popularly-practised activities threatened the virtues of hard work and self-help promoted by Samuel Smiles and other Victorian moral propagandists. Too much alcoholic consumption led to drunken violence and to the neglect of personal and family health. Too much sex, especially in public, posed a threat to propriety and spread nasty diseases. And too much gambling, especially amongst the poor, was indicative of a something-for-nothing attitude which usually resulted in ruin for the punters.

A number of historians have examined the changes in the nature of sport and popular amusements from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries.<sup>8</sup> The social implications of alcoholic consumption and sex practices since the beginning of the modern period have been the subject of some

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class In Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*, 1978. Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, 1980-1840*, 1980.

<sup>7</sup> This is Wray Vamplew's term. See *Pay Up and Play the Game*, 1988, p. 47. This book is an economic, not social, history of professional sport in the late Victorian and Edwardian years.

<sup>8</sup> See for example James Walvin, *Leisure and Society, 1830-1950*, 1978. Wray Vamplew, *ibid.*

sensitive and insightful historical enquiries.<sup>9</sup> These books have described the moral campaigns against these morally dubious and allegedly physically damaging activities, and the significance both in public and in private, of illicit or socially acceptable sex, and the (not always unrelated) imbibing of beer and spirits. Yet the serious historiography of betting and gambling in England remains sporadic. It is confined to a number of scholarly if rather speculative essays,<sup>10</sup> to chapters in books or theses which are concerned primarily with the history of sport,<sup>11</sup> with local histories of the workingclass<sup>12</sup> and with interpretations of working-class culture and its relationship to other classes.<sup>13</sup>

Both Ross McKibbin's and James Mott's work helped to establish a social history of gambling since the Victorian years. McKibbin primarily examines illegal off-course ready-money betting on horses and argues that the growth of commercialised betting from the 1880's, a time of relative working-class prosperity, reflected its importance as a means of intellectual and rational expression amongst working-class punters. A wager enabled those who could not afford shares and who had had a limited formal education to study the form of a horse or greyhound in past races, to predict its likeliness of winning, and to back up their considered opinion with a small investment which carried a measure of hope. Mott's longer time span, roughly from the 1820's to the inter-war years, looks at the democratisation of

---

9 Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 1971. A.E. Dingle, *The Campaign for Prohibition in Victorian England*, New Jersey, 1980. On sex see John Gillis, *For Better or Worse*, 1986.

10 Ross McKibbin, 'Working-Class Gambling in Britain, 1880 - 1939', *Past and Present*, No 82, 1979, pp. 147-78. James Mott, *Popular Gambling from the Collapse of the State Lotteries to the Rise of the Football Pools*, Paper given at the Society for the Study of Labour History Conference on Working-Class Leisure, 1975. See also James Mott, 'Miners, Weavers and Pigeon Racing', in M. Smith et al, *Leisure and Society in Britain*, 1973.

11 On the historical relationship of gambling to sport in modern Britain see Tony Mason, *Sport in Britain*, 1988, pp. 59-68. On betting and horse racing see Wray Vamplew, *The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing*, 1976; On football coupon betting see Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863 - 1915*, 1980, pp. 187-195.

12 Carl Chinn, *Social Aspects of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, in the Twentieth Century*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Birmingham, 1987; Chapter Eight, 'Cultural Dissension: Gambling', pp. 140-153. Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London, Campbell Road, Islington*, 1985.

13 G.S. Jones, 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870 - 1914: Notes on the Re-Making of a Working-Class', in *Languages of Class*, 1983. Standisch Meacham, *A Life Apart: The English Working Class, 1890-1914*, 1977.

betting from the state lotteries of the first half of the nineteenth century, through the rise of mass bookmaking and betting in the second half of the century to the upsurge of the football pools after 1918. Mott interprets organised betting with bookmakers, betting on whippet and pigeon races and the more spontaneous coin and card gaming as a subcultural recreation whose communality and excitement was impervious to the legal and moral campaign of the religious and professional middle class. The commercialisation of betting and the continuing adaptation of informal wagering on animal sports were important 'bottom upwards' determinants of betting forms in the twentieth century.

David Dixon's study of the National Anti-Gambling League's agitation for the 1906 Street Betting Act looks in detail at the worries of anti-gamblers and their attempt to outlaw the betting of all classes in the later nineteenth century. In the event the wagering and gaming of the wealthy remained untouched and the 1906 Act reinforced an unequal and inoperable law. But Dixon, as he admits, is concerned with 'other groups images of working-class betting' rather than betting and gambling itself. He argues that there is 'a great need for in-depth local studies' of the subject.<sup>14</sup>

The county chosen by the writer for this local study is largely, but by no means exclusively, Lancashire, and within Lancashire the focus falls mostly upon the urban centres of Manchester, Liverpool and Bolton, important centres of the industrial revolution from the 1780's. Liverpool, with a population of 700,000 by 1914, was a thriving mercantile city with a large, impoverished waterside casual labour force. Manchester, a city of similar size, and the smaller town of Bolton (population 180,000 in 1914) just north of it, were major manufacturing centres based largely on textiles and to a lesser

---

<sup>14</sup> David Dixon, 'The Street Betting Act of 1906 as an Attack on Working-Class Culture', in A. Tomlinson (ed.), *Leisure and Social Control*, 1981. Dixon has made a number of other important studies of the laws on betting and gambling. These are: 'Class Law: The Street Betting Act of 1906', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 8, 1980; *The State and Gambling: Developments in the Legal Control of Gambling in England, 1867 - 1923*, Hull, 1981; *Illegal Gambling and Histories of Policing in Britain*, Hull, 1984.



extent machine engineering.<sup>15</sup> These differences in size of population and of economic base were accompanied by local customs which differed from place to place. This, for example, is evident in the variations in the organisation of off-course street betting between Manchester and Liverpool and other areas which had evolved by the eve of the first world war, and in the levels of police intervention in these areas over time. There was not one 'Lancashire way' of betting.

But in general, as Peter Bailey has argued, the parameters of industrial society were drawn earlier in Lancashire and its class relations anticipated many social changes which were to come later to other parts of Britain. It enables us 'to capture the essentials of the common experience of leisure in urban and metropolitan England'<sup>16</sup> during the period under study.

Yet Lancashire has special claims to fame in a history of popular gambling. In horse racing, the Grand National steeplechase has been held at Aintree in Liverpool since 1839, and along with the Manchester Races, was one of the first gate-money meetings to be established in the early-Victorian years. Football coupon betting was mostly a Lancashire phenomenon at first and the largest pools firms have been established there, in Liverpool, since the 1920's. Whippet coursing and racing, too, was especially prominent in the North West, and the first enclosed meetings took place on the land of the Blundells on the mosses at Ince and on the Earl of Sefton's estate at Altcar, both near Liverpool, from the 1870's. Moreover, White City, in Manchester, first played host to the mechanical hare in 1926. This speedy but insentient creature, propelled around the track by an electric running rail, signified more than just an elevation of the sport from the cruelty of live bait: it also ushered in American-style stadia and a 'night-out' at the dogs which peaked in popularity during the 1930's and '40's.

Amongst others, observers of street and social life, and social workers,

---

<sup>15</sup> John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History*, 1987, pp. 218-9.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Bailey, *op cit*, p. 7.



were aware of this prominence of gambling in working-class Lancashire. As a reporter for the *Porcupine* journal, Hugh Shimmin in the 1850's and 1860's recorded some fascinating episodes of gambling and low-life. The Pilgrim Trust too highlighted the prominence of betting and gambling within the pattern of proletarian recreation on Merseyside, and Mass Observation, who went to Bolton in the 1930's to carry out their detailed surveys of working-class life, have provided historians with a great deal of primary data as well as published work on betting in that town.<sup>17</sup> In the post war years sociologists at the University of Liverpool, such as John Barron Mays and Madelaine Kerr, continued the tradition of observing the lives of the local working class, and they saw more than a little betting and gambling.

It comes as no surprise then, to find that the anti-gambling campaign was particularly strong in the North-West during the Victorian, Edwardian and inter-war years. The Anglican and Nonconformist Protestant churches were a strong local presence and provided many of the pamphleteers, preachers, petitioners and press articles against betting and gambling throughout the period under study. For example, Canon Green of Salford was the staunchest and most prodigious campaigner against the problem in the first forty years of the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

There is thus a fund of contemporary evidence on betting and gaming and the opposition to it in Lancashire. Yet more national primary sources exist which also enable us to understand the social experience of and official attitudes toward gambling elsewhere. Social surveys for other parts of Britain, for example Henry Mayhew's *Morning Chronicle* survey of London in the 1850's and Charles Booth's seventeen volume *Life and Labour of the People*

---

<sup>17</sup> Hugh Shimmin, *Liverpool Life: It's Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes*, 1856. The Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*, 1938. Mass Observation (M.O.), *First Year's Work*, 1939. M.O., *The Pub and the People*, 1941. The Mass Observation archive is kept at the University of Sussex library.

<sup>18</sup> C.E.B. Russell, 'Gambling and Aids to Gambling', *Economic Review*, Vol. X, 1900; *Manchester Boys: Sketches of Manchester Lads at Work and Play*, 1905; *Social Problems of the North*, 1913. Canon Green was a great contributor to the *Manchester Guardian* and other newspapers, and wrote a number of anti-gambling works, most notably, *Betting and Gambling*, 1927.

*in London*, the last edition of which was published in 1902, provide many interesting glimpses of both gaming and street betting and tell us much about the perceptions of Victorian social investigators and reformers.

The parliamentary debates which preceded prohibitive or permissive pieces of gambling legislation provide detailed if sometimes discursive intelligence on changing government perceptions of the betting problem. As well as telling us much about the individual preferences of politicians, the point of view of different constituency interest-groups was often articulated by M.P.'s in the Commons. In the Upper House a number of their Lordships had a lineal association with the equally unelected ruling elites of horse racing, the Jockey Club and the National Hunt Committee. Sporting gentlemen were also members of the greyhound racing fraternity and, from the 1920's, sat with businessmen and bookmakers on the boards of the newly formed dog racing companies. A number of peers, however, provided nonconformist or paternalistic support for the Act of 1906 which they felt would protect the people from an epidemic of betting.

The most important official materials are the eight great parliamentary enquiries into betting and gambling since 1844. This rises to nine if we include the Select Committee on Premium Bonds in 1917-18. The two enquiries of 1844, of 1901 and 1902, of 1923, of 1932-33, 1949-51 and 1976-78 contain the statements of various pro-betting interests both individual and organisational, of bookmakers, of anti-gambling campaigners, of sporting bodies such as the Jockey Club and National Hunt Committee in horse racing, of the Football Association and Football League with regard to coupon betting, and of the greyhound racing companies and their detractors. Police spokesmen for the major urban constabularies were called upon, and the considered opinion of magistrates and of government lawyers, and Home Office notaries provided a great deal of invaluable factual information. Yet in the period under study not one ready-money punter was called upon to put the client's point of

view. As Ross McKibbin has argued, much of the evidence of the those witnesses representing an economic interest or moral viewpoint is often 'tendentious and inaccurate' but if used with care it 'can be very fruitful.'<sup>19</sup>

This observation applies with equal accuracy to oral testimony and autobiographies. Much of what is said or was written down is often coloured by a rosy nostalgia or a tendency to relate, either consciously and unconsciously, present day concerns and attitudes to past events. Moreover, exaggeration or a well-intentioned bid to tell the historian what he wants to hear can creep into the proceedings. Yet the historian is ultimately responsible for how the data is used, and an otherwise carefully researched piece can buckle dangerously close to anecdotalism by carelessly deploying a gobbet or two of the spoken word without a proper contextualisation of the speakers and their experiences. But in general, oral testimony and autobiography have provided valuable information where manuscript or published sources are lacking. For this reason, the writer has undertaken a modest oral project, carried out in the Spring of 1985, containing fourteen tape-recorded testimonies and over sixty written remembrances of betting and gaming in the form of letters and simple, general questionnaires. The nature of information in the letters was, beyond the call for information on street betting and gaming, determined by the respondents themselves. They wrote what they remembered as significant or amusing. The interviews were largely informal questionings about the organisation of street betting and the role of the bookmaker and his runners within it. Questions on gaming (pitch and toss and card games, etc) were bids to find out the differences in such amusements from town to town or region to region, and to learn about the role they played in the day-to-day recreation of the punters. This is not intended to be a representative cohort of punters and ex-bookies, as patterns of organised ready-money betting, and, especially, the plethora of gaming

---

<sup>19</sup> Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, p. 147.



activities, varied in innumerable formations from place to place. Hence, existing archives of oral testimonies and the sizeable and growing number of autobiographies, drawn from all walks of life, have also been mined to give an idea of the diversity of gambling forms in different parts of England.<sup>20</sup> Existing oral and autobiographical sources offer much that is detailed and significant about betting and gaming and the world of the sports described below. Some of the most revealing anecdotes and reminiscences were those unsolicited by historians, and given by the interviewee as meaningful illustrations of his or her or other people's lives. This point is especially germane to autobiography, where the writers explore the making of their own life through a subjective chronology of important experiences and episodes. However, when using oral and autobiographical evidence one must be conscious of Passerini's warning: it is a bigger methodological limitation in itself to interpret a particular interviewee as representative of one stratum than to admit to the limitations of generalising from the experience of the individual to the social process, from the local to the national.<sup>21</sup> Such links have to be made of course, but we should never assume that the testimonies of one or two respondents give us a true picture of the entire social reality.

The raw materials of the Mass Observation (M.O.) archive have contributed much to the discussion on street betting and informal betting in chapters three, four and five respectively. Before M.O. became a market research organisation in the late 1940's, its instigators, Tom Harrison and Charles Madge, and the various observers who have left us their manuscripts of life in Bolton (Worktown), provided a sensitive, if sometimes romanticised,

---

<sup>20</sup> The autobiographies are given throughout the text. The other collections of oral data used are Jim Power and others' *Bolton Oral History Project*, at Bolton Local History Library, Bill Williams', Audrey Linkman, Dermott Healy and others' *Manchester Tape Studies Collection* at Manchester Polytechnic, Bill Williams and others' *Manchester Jewish Museum Tape Collection* at Cheetham Hill, Elizabeth Roberts' *North West Oral History Project* at Lancaster University and Paul Thompson and Thea Vigne's *Edwardians* archive at Essex University. The writer is also grateful to Ian Bridgeman, Carl Chinn, Clive Emsley, Tony Lane and Tony Mason for lending or notifying him of individual testimonies and autobiographies.

<sup>21</sup> Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 10.

picture of life in an industrial town.

Another major collective contemporary source is that of newspapers, journals and periodicals of all persuasions, be they national, local, serious, tabloid, sporting, political, trade-based, religious, satirical, sociological or economic. The local press, not surprisingly, provides a great deal of detailed information on betting and gaming cases in various areas, and, like the national press, was often a forum where pro- or anti-betting interests fought their corner in letters or articles. Few writers, even in the more staid periodicals and magazines, could resist humorous or fearful exclamations when writing about gambling. For example, well-meaning observers in journals of social analysis often brought a moral slant to their work which rendered otherwise insightful pieces gloomy and pessimistic.<sup>22</sup>

Statistical or economic estimates of betting and gaming cannot really be viewed as objective until the inter war years and afterwards. With the exception of the few articles in the *Economist* or in statistical journals, the exaggerated guesses of anti-gambling interests held sway over these more dispassionate estimations. The police and judicial statistics contain all sorts of problems. As McKibbin notes, they are a better reflection of the extent of police activity than of the extent of the subject under study.<sup>23</sup> Peaks and troughs in the numbers of arrests for 'Betting and Gaming' under the Betting Houses Act of 1853, or for 'Gaming &c.' under the Vagrancy Acts, were often the result of little pogroms against the problem, or the whims of different Chief Constables over time and from place to place. Changes in compilation also affect the reliability of the statistics. However, the Annual Reports of the Chief Constables of Bolton, Liverpool and Manchester have provided some useful insights into police perceptions of the problem of gambling.

Novels or short stories about gambling tell us as much about the

---

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Charles Dimont, 'Going to the Dogs', *New Statesman and Nation*, November 30th, 1946, pp. 395-396. Dimont felt, as non-gambler, that he was the only one who had enjoyed himself at the dogs.

<sup>23</sup> Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, p. 151.

author's concerns as gambling itself. Different writers had particular bees in their bonnets and employed gambling as a literary device to get their meanings over to the reader. In *Esther Waters* (1894), the author George Moore's portrayal of the tension in a woman's love for two men, a member of the Plymouth Brethren and a bookmaker, illustrated his concern for the dangers of heavy betting and the limitations of religion when it was up against a more flamboyant world. In *Daniel Deronda* (1876) George Eliot uses a game of casino roulette as a literary device intended to establish the social artifice and financial vulnerabilities in the life of a wealthy merchant's daughter. *Brighton Rock* (1938), Graham Greene's inter-war novel about protection rackets and racetrack violence, was also a criticism of the Catholic Church for creating a sexually repressed gangster who took out his frustrations on minor bookmakers.

In the same way that no historian can develop his or her arguments in isolation from the work of others, nor can the discipline of history (or any other discipline for that matter) ignore other investigations into the subject. Large and growing bodies of sociological studies, concerned with the relation of gambling to the social structure, and psychological considerations of the individual and gambling, must be acknowledged.

Psychological analyses are important in their own right but are largely irrelevant to a history of popular gambling in England. The biggest methodological problem is that psycho-analyses of gamblers rest upon an unverifiable so therefore non-falsifiable argument that relates gambling to neuroses quietly and unconsciously simmering away since childhood. These are apparently suddenly unleashed in an uncontrollable and sustained urge to place money on events with uncertain outcomes. The classic core text of this approach, Sigmund Freud's *Dostoyevsky and Parricide*<sup>24</sup>, interpreted the Russian author's gambling addiction as a symptom of transmuted

---

<sup>24</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, edited by John Strachey, Vol. 21, 1974, pp. 190-4.



masturbatory tendencies and of the secret wish to kill his father. These urges were guiltily suppressed at the time of the mother's unspoken refusal to initiate her son painlessly into the joys of sex. But as Kline has argued, the 'passion for gambling related to masturbation conflicts' hypothesis is 'a somewhat wild assertion based on a small number of case studies.'<sup>25</sup> Moreover as John Cohen (a behavioural psychologist) has written, in criticism of a psycho-analysis of gambling, anyone who gambles and uses scatological terms in their vocabulary is open to the charge of being a neurotic who bets as 'an unsuccessful defence against an underlying anal-fixation.'<sup>26</sup> This, apparently, also results from an unsatisfactory sexual development in which to go through the excitement of the win or loss of the gamble is to experience vicarious orgasm or a disappointing climax. Without a sizeable number of contemporary testimonies from anal or oedipal punters<sup>27</sup> a psycho-history of gambling is nigh impossible.

The second major problem for a psycho-history of popular gambling is that pscho-analyses are only concerned with compulsive or pathological gamblers. How can the regular but controlled or occasional betting of the vast majority of punters, for example the ten million people who were filling-in a football pools coupon by the 1940's, and who showed no visible signs of psychosis, be explained? Moreover, in the 1950's thirty eight per cent of women betted on the pools, and about half of the female population like a flutter on the big races, yet most psycho-analyses are silent on the issue of female gambling. A social history must avoid such lacunae.

The sociology of betting and gambling relates gambling either to the social structure as a whole or to particular social groups. American output has been prolific in both respects. In relation to gambling and capitalist society

---

<sup>25</sup> Paul Kline, *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory*, 1972, p. 264. On Eysencks' criticism of Freud see H. Eysenck, *The Uses and Abuses of Psychology*, 1953, *passim*.

<sup>26</sup> Quote from John Halliday and Peter Fuller, *The Psychology of Gambling*, 1974, in John Cohen, 'Oedipus at Odds On', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 18th October, 1974, p. 1151.

<sup>27</sup> Jack Dowle gives the case of Stefan Zweig, in 'Gambling and the Gamblers', in U201, *Risk*, Volume 2, p. 42. U201 is an Open University course.

the contributions of Herbert Bloch and E.C. Devereaux have viewed gambling as a structural-functional response to American capitalism, an activity which enabled people from all social strata to speculate for gain. The critics attacked gambling as an unethical representation of the spirit of enterprise and money-making. It was thus a convenient scapegoat for the contradictions and shortcomings of Protestant American society based upon business activity and the diligence and effort required for its success.<sup>28</sup> Most American sociological studies are phenomenological and ethnographic; that is, they accept things as they are and assess their significance in the socio-economic life of distinct ethnic groups or classes. A number of such approaches have provided some useful insights and inter-cultural comparisons.<sup>29</sup>

The major British sociological study of the relationship of gambling to society in general is D.M. Downes et al's *Gambling, Work and Leisure: A Study Across Three Areas* (1976). Like so many other sociologies, it is crippled by a rigid application of discreet causal models which render it a suggestive rather than conclusive book in its attempt to explain why different classes gamble as they do. Their statistical work was more fruitful. They found, in the mid-1970's at least, that men gambled more than women, that younger men tended to bet more frequently than their elders, and that the regularly employed working class betted more regularly and in consistently higher sums than the poor.<sup>30</sup> These are useful findings and, given the unscientific basis and the scaremongering of most statistics before the post-war years, they can be compared to earlier findings, such as the *Social Survey of Betting Habits in*

---

28 H.A. Bloch, 'The Sociology of Gambling', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1951. E.C. Devereaux, 'Gambling', in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, 1968, pp. 53-61.

29 Robert Perrucci, 'The Neighbourhood "Bookmaker": Entrepreneur and Mobility and Mobility Model.', in P.Meadows (ed.) *Urbanism, Urbanisation and Change: Comparative Perspectives*, Reading, Massachusetts, 1969. R.D. Herman, *Gamblers and Gambling*, 1976. Ned Polsky, *Hustlers, Beats and Others*, 1971. W. Foot Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 1981, (first published 1943). I.K. Zola, 'Observations on Gambling in a Lower Class Setting', *Social Problems*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1963, pp. 353-361.

30 D. M. Downes. *Gambling, Work and Leisure: A study Across Three Areas*, 1976, pp. 89-95.



*Britain*, 1951. Post-war statistics help to support broad, careful *post hoc* arguments about the incidence of gambling in various social strata.

But all of these approaches and comparisons, used eclectically, do not by themselves constitute an over-arching synthesis which explains why, and in what ways, the popular gambling forms in Britain developed between the mid nineteenth- and mid-twentieth centuries. The broad contention here is that during the second half of the nineteenth century, as betting and gaming evolved from an informal pre-industrial sporting and betting culture into a mass commercialised gambling market increasingly based upon bookmakers and the sporting press, a 'traditional' sporting culture of the 'free-born Englishman' was absorbed into this growing market. Despite the claims of irrationality and wastefulness made against them, most punters participated in this culture of betting and gambling with an outlook based on a complex system of beliefs and underpinned by self-restraint and moderation.

The structure of the thesis is determined both by chronology and theme. Chapter two establishes a general frame of reference for the subsequent chapters by describing the social, economic and moral issues which arose in the development of mass betting and bookmaking between the early Victorian years and 1906. Gambling may be as old as money, but the development and establishment of a capitalist social system whose wealth depended upon investment and speculation raised important ethical questions about what D.H. Lawrence called 'filthy lucre'.<sup>31</sup> Something-for-nothing was filthy lucre. By courting risk for the chance of financial gain gambling reflected yet was seen as inimical to the legitimate economy. The moral and legislative attacks upon gambling coincided with the commercialisation of betting and the unstoppable rise of a national betting market based upon bookmakers and supplied with betting information by the

---

<sup>31</sup> D.H. Lawrence, 'The Rocking Horse Winner', In *Love Among the Haystacks*, 1986, p83 (first published 1926). I am grateful to Ann Bullman for this reference.

sporting and tipster press which burgeoned from the late Victorian years. The informal and illegal economy of gambling was thus inextricably linked with the commercialisation of leisure. It paralleled capitalist economic development but was not respectable or bourgeois.

Chapter three examines the social organisation of off-course betting between the 1906 Street Betting Act and legalisation in 1961. The willingness of punters to defy the law and their reasons for enjoying a gamble are assessed. The bookmaker was of course central to the network of street betting and the development of street bookmaking, the role of bookmakers in the social and economic life of the working class, and the evolution of bookmaking as a profession is described in some detail in chapter four.

Chapter five explores the non-commercialised side of gaming, that is, the use of coins, cards, crown and anchor boards and local sports as media for friendly or informal wagering in which people betted with each other, not through a bookie. The sports discussed here are pigeon racing and bowling in Lancashire from the 1890's, when they were becoming increasingly popular sports amongst the urban working class.

Chapter six looks at the development of whippet racing from the later nineteenth century to the commercial venues of the greyhound tracks introduced from 1926. Like horse racing, coursing and dog racing had long been a sport associated with betting and the patronage of the local gentry but greyhound racing never achieved the social acceptability accorded to the turf. 'The track' was mainly a locus of the urban working class, and greyhound stadia were associated with an unprincipled commercial relationship with mass betting. As we will see in chapter seven, horse racing and betting were bread and butter to each other, but the development of the national racing calendar from the Victorian years, and the cultural weight of tradition associated with 'a day at the races', came together easily to render horse racing the heart of the national sporting and betting culture.

The idea of fixed-odds coupons or of football competitions for prizes had been kicked-off by bookmakers and the sporting press in the 1880's and '90's. The development of football coupon betting from the 1890's to the rise of Littlewoods and other large 'pools' firms between the wars is examined in chapter eight.

Chapter nine assesses the reasons for legalisation of off-course ready-money betting in 1960. It is argued that changes in governmental attitudes to lotteries, and the introduction of the Premium Bonds in 1956, signified a wider liberalisation in British society which ended a century of unworkable and class-biased legislation.

Chapter ten, in conclusion, engages with those theories which argue that recreation since the industrial revolution has become 'pacified' by the commercialisation and increasing individualisation of society and somehow separated from the economic and political concerns in people's lives. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a more realistic understanding of popular leisure.



## Chapter 2: Gambling, Culture and Economy in Victorian and Edwardian England.

This chapter argues that the prohibition of lotteries in 1823 anticipated subsequent legislative attempts to reduce the incidence and socio-economic effects of gambling. These Acts, passed in 1845 and 1853 respectively, and followed up in the 1870's and in 1906, are discussed as significant attempts by a politically ascendent reforming middle class to modify the gaming of the aristocracy, who set a bad example, and to curtail the gambling of the working class, who were in danger of impoverishment. However, the absorption of the earlier, permissive, cross-class 'sporting' culture into the ideology of the betting market, and the rising expectations of an increasingly though by no means uniformly wealthy working class, defeated the intentions of an ill-conceived law.

### Lotteries and the Antecedents of Prohibition

State lotteries existed in Britain from 1569 to 1826.<sup>1</sup> They were set up to finance public works schemes. A bridge across the Thames, the British Museum and the campaign against Napoleon all received financial assistance from state lotteries. As T. R. Gourvish has argued, lotteries were a useful source of income generation for the Exchequer. The tickets, issued by Licenced Lottery Office Keepers, were aimed at the wealthy property-owning classes. A lottery ticket cost £16 during the French Wars.<sup>2</sup>

But the lotteries generated a great deal interest amongst the lower orders, a development which greatly worried the Whig governments of the 1780's onwards. Acts in 1787 and 1802, for example, were intended to curb the growing purchase of 'illegal insurances' and 'little goes' amongst poorer people who speculated that a little outlay could result in a spectacular

---

<sup>1</sup> *Royal Commission on Gambling*, 1978, Vol. 1, paras. 12.9 - 12.35, pp. 164-171.

<sup>2</sup> T.R. Gourvish, *The Government and the Business of Gambling: State Lotteries in Britain, 1750-1826*. A paper given at the Institute of Historical Research, February 23rd, 1989.

repayment. In defiance of the intention of government, the poor pooled their pennies to purchase collective shares in a lottery ticket. The 'incorrigible propensity' for the lower orders to invest in lottery tickets against the wishes of government was in unwitting anticipation of later legislation.

The Whig government established a Select Committee on Lotteries in 1808 to ascertain 'how far the Evils attending Lotteries have been remedied by the laws passed respecting the same.'<sup>3</sup> The witnesses to the commission were comprised of Lottery Office keepers, local magistrates, officers of police in London, and lawyers. What was illegal was the subcultural network of 'middle men', the enterprising publicans, gin shop owners, chandlers, milkmen who served milk to servants 'and took their money for insurances' and the 'Morocco Men' who set themselves up as agents for the distribution of tickets and took insurances from house-to-house and in 'the shops of common barbers' in London and the major cities in England.<sup>4</sup> As well as servants, mechanics, servants, 'inferior tradesmen' and 'people from workhouses' were amongst those buying tickets.<sup>5</sup> The middle man went to the legitimate Office Keeper with 'one or more numbers of Lottery Tickets' and paid over a premium to insure against those numbers coming up blank on the ten days of the draw.<sup>6</sup>

It was clear that where the lower and middling classes were prevented from participation in a form of speculation (or gambling) on lotteries enjoyed by the rich they evolved their own schemes in order to have a chance of winning some money. This disregard for the law led to further attempts to contain the problem, but also to a realisation that the state itself was in large part to blame for the growth of speculative insurances amongst the poor. The second report of the Select Committee argued that if the

---

<sup>3</sup> *Select Committee on Lotteries*, 1808, First Report, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Second Report, Testimony of James Bligh, Officer of Police at Westminster, Appendix A., pp. 41-43. Morocco men were named after the leather covers of their ledger books.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, Second Report, p. 67, the testimony of Mr. Shewell, a Government Lottery Contractor.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 31-32, the testimony of Richard Bannister, a Lottery Office Keeper.

government was to extract revenue from the 'pecuniary resource' of a lottery, 'a spirit of adventure must be excited amongst the community' which militated against a spirit of hard work and encouraged sharp and criminal practice:

by the effects of the Lotteries, even under its present restrictions, idleness, dissipation and poverty are increased, the most sacred and confidential trusts are betrayed, domestic comfort is destroyed, madness often created, crimes, subjecting the perpetrators of them to the punishment of death, are committed, and even suicide itself is produced.<sup>7</sup>

In the same terms as Adam Smith the committee felt that 'delusive dreams of sudden and enormous wealth' led only to ruin, and argued that the social costs could 'only be done away with by the suppression of the cause from which they are derived.'<sup>8</sup>

The financial demands of the French Wars were probably the key reason for the continuance of the lotteries. From 1821, however, Lord Liverpool's government was supported in large part by the reformists known as 'liberal Tories'. As Beales points out, it is often difficult to know what the differences were between old style Whiggery and the new Toryism. The major parliamentary spokesmen of the latter creed were Wilberforce, Canning, Sir Samuel Whitbread (ex-chariman of the Lottery Committee of 1808) and Sir Samuel Romilly. They possessed a paternalistic willingness 'to take up certain proposals of reform' but also promoted the principles of *laissez faire* and the Smithite notion of a self-regulating economy.<sup>9</sup> Whitbread, Wilberforce and Romilly campaigned against the lotteries as 'a monopolistic device of a mercantilist regime (disappearing) along with Speenhamland and wage regulation.'<sup>10</sup> The lottery, whose revenue was decreasing anyway, was

---

<sup>7</sup> *S.C. 1808*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p.12. In *The Wealth of Nations*, 1982 (first published 1776), Smith argued that a lottery overvalued the 'vain hope of gaining some of the great prizes' and undervalued the 'the chance of loss.' (p. 210).

<sup>9</sup> D.E.D. Beales, *The Political Parties of the Nineteenth Century*, 1971, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> James Mott, *Popular Gambling from the Collapse of the State Lotteries to the Rise of the Football Pools*, 1975, p. 2.



accordingly abolished in 1823. The last draw took place in 1826.

But publicans and others of an entrepreneurial outlook amongst the working class continued to offer small lotteries, in the form of sweepstakes, to their customers and locals. Mass Observation, for example, observed this during the 1930's.<sup>11</sup> The number of small sweeps got up in pubs, clubs and workplaces was innumerable (as they are today) but they illustrated that as the campaign against gambling was getting off the ground, the lineage of clandestine and collective betting easily adapted to meet the new circumstances of prohibition.

#### Sidestake Wagering, Popular Recreation and Prohibition

Gambling, as a pecuniary accompaniment to sporting and recreational activities, was endemic to the leisure culture of eighteenth century England. In spite of Puritan opposition to gaming both during and after the Commonwealth of 1640-88, it had continued as an essential aspect of both plebian and patrician, lower class and noble, recreation. The combat sports of pugilism (more commonly known as 'prize fighting') and wrestling, the 'cruel sports' of cock fighting, dog fighting and bull and bear baiting, athletic sports (most commonly foot racing or 'pedestrianism') cricket and of course horse racing were all important events in the popular holiday calendar, and they were heavily associated with wagering.<sup>12</sup>

A predilection for patronising animal sports and prize-fighting in the less respectable public houses and in the countryside also made up part of the leisure of the bohemian wealthy. 'The sporting gentleman', wrote Brailsford, 'was the trainer, the matchmaker, the gambler.'<sup>13</sup> The links between the landed class and the rural and urban poor were thus strongly rooted by the early nineteenth century. Publicans and inn-keepers especially were central

---

<sup>11</sup> M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 1, File D.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Poole, *Leisure in Bolton 1750-1900*, Unpublished Dissertation, 1981, the University of Lancaster, pp 19-22, pp. 28-30.

<sup>13</sup> Dennis Brailsford, *Sport and Society: From Elizabeth to Anne*, 1969, p. 216.

to the organisation of these sports. They, also, often trained and fed the prizefighters or the beasts for sport.

By the time Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837, fighting was inextricably associated with aristocratic patronage and the rakish behaviour of gentlemen of leisure. William Hazlitt, for example, the radical essayist and journalist, provided a vivid contemporary description of a prize fight in Hungerford, Berkshire, in 1821, and the genteel followers of it. Indeed, one of the pugilists, the unfortunate 'Gas Man', said he had lost 3000 guineas which was promised him by different gentlemen if he had won.<sup>14</sup> Over twenty years later, in the famous fight between 'Bendigo' and Ben Gaunt, both 'roughs' and 'swells' travelled to Buckinghamshire (now by railway, rather than on foot and by coach as had Hazlitt on his sixty mile jaunt from London to West Berkshire) to cheer on the boxers and bet amongst themselves, and no doubt with any bookmakers present, on the anticipated result.<sup>15</sup> The fight, which took place in defiance of the local magistracy - derided as 'maw worms' by the fight goers - was a bloody affair both within the ring and outside it. If Tennyson's poetic fears are to be believed, that 'the poor in a loomp is bad', we should remember that in such riotous gatherings the gentry, in the form of club 'swells' and young 'bloods' from university, were heavily represented.

It was to satisfy the hedonism and the interest in such sports of the aristocracy that the sporting press had its origins. The columns of those 'papers dedicated to the pursuit of the 'fancy' were full of news and sometimes scandal to do with 'The Ring'. *Bell's Life in London*, for example, which began in 1822 under the proprietorship of the sporting journalist Pierce Egan, was pre-occupied with the affair of 'Ned Neal and Young Dutch Sam' in January 1830 and the 'unmanly and ungenerous imputations' which the supporters of each pugilist were hurling at each other. The acrimony was such that, even *Bell's Life*, whose sales depended on its largely aristocratic

---

<sup>14</sup> William Hazlitt, 'The Fight', in *Selected Writings*, 1985, pp. 78-97 (first published 1821).

<sup>15</sup> Kellow Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld*, 1982, pp. 313-30.



readership, felt it could be excused for 'advising those gentlemen who have been in the habit of indulging in secret slander (that they) cannot expect countenance among the honest circles of the family of John Bull'.<sup>16</sup> This was the disreputable 'un-English' side of the Fancy.

But what was the 'fancy', and who followed it? Hazlitts' account of the fight is revealing for its celebration of the 'FANCY', which was synonymous with the prize ring (or 'P.R.' as it was also known) and with most sports of a pre-industrial origin. For Hazlitt, who insisted in writing the word in bold letters, the FANCY was indicative of something vital and brave, an essence in which the elitist and rational detractors of it were lacking:

Ye who despise the FANCY, do something to shew as much pluck, or as much self-possession as this, before you assume a superiority which you have never given a single proof of by any one action in the whole course of your lives!<sup>17</sup>

Attempting to define the Fancy is not easy. For the bettor, it would appear to be an inclination towards an object, animal or sports-person which gave expression to his or her aesthetic longings. Doctor Johnson, for example, gave eight definitions of the word 'Fancy' in his Dictionary of 1754. Here are three most relevant to a sporting and betting culture:

An opinion bred rather by the imagination than the reason.  
Inclination; liking; fondness.  
Something that pleases or entertains.<sup>18</sup>

This orientation did not need to be grounded in logic or reason, as this would tend to detract from the intuitive basis of the attraction. Mott argues that as the nineteenth century wore on the disreputable tenor of the Fancy as the 'ton of low life' declined, giving way to the liking for pigeons, flowers and other more gentle hobbies associated with the working class.<sup>19</sup> As we will see later, new journals which self consciously used the language of the fancy were published in the Edwardian years. Moreover, Charles Booths' survey of

---

<sup>16</sup> *Bells Life in London*, January 17th 1830, p3; January 24th, 1840, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> William Hazlitt, *op cit*, p. 321.

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Johnson, *op cit*.

<sup>19</sup> James Mott, *op cit*, pp. 19-21 Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 1980, pp. 111-113.

the religiosity of Londoners in the 1890's indicated that the gambling component of the fancy and its associated paraphernalia still lent colour to the streets of the capital:

Passing along Bethnal Green Road in an omnibus, coming home on Sunday morning after attending service further East, I stumbled on the 'Fancy Market' of Sclater Street at its height...I got off the 'bus and walked among them, listened to the harangues of the bookies, bought a racing tip for 3d, and watched a corn cutter operate on the foot of a young man laid out on the box of his vehicle, while all around were the buyers and sellers of dogs, pigeons and other pets...'20

The popular phrase 'to fancy' a horse or a greyhound or a football team, as a precursive phase of the bet, has long been a feature of common speech, perhaps dating from the decline of the Prize Ring and cruel animal sports since the mid Victorian era. Since then it has attached itself to these other, ascendant forms of mass betting.

Pedestrianism, running or walking fast in a variety of ways determined by local custom, was also associated with the fancy, and was an important vehicle for both aristocratic and lower class wagering. Since the late seventeenth century publicans -or victuallers- had been of central importance in organising not just indoor but also outdoor games, exciting spectacles of competition in which sports such as foot racing, prize fighting, dog fighting and ratting were the major attractions. The pub was central to the social network of both rural and urban lower class recreation<sup>21</sup> and was an obvious place to lay and collect bets. In both prize fighting and running the competitors would issue challenges and provide the opportunity for wagering amongst the supporters;

William Green, better known by the name of Butcher Bill, is anxious to have another shy with the Ferryman, his late antagonist, for from £5 to £10 a side. The money is ready at the Crown Inn, Bolton, whenever the Ferryman thinks proper to accept the offer.

James Knowles, of Denton will run Dennersley of Houghton

---

20 Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Third Series, *Religious Influences*, Vol 2, 1902, p. 246.

21 Wray Vamplew, *Pay Up and Pay the Game*, 1988, pp. 21-43.

Green 150 yards a side. The money is ready at Samuel Halbinson's, Jolly Hatters, Denton.'<sup>22</sup>

Prize fighters and runners were almost always from the ranks of the poor, a characteristic which remained constant from the early years of the nineteenth century to the early years of the twentieth. Ben Hart, a famous Lancashire runner, was a handloom weaver in the 1820's and 30's concentrated on running to compensate for the decline of his trade.'<sup>23</sup> An article in *Chambers Edinburgh Journal* in 1851 noted the declining influence of the leisured gentleman:

In pedestrianism... we occasionally hear of a gentleman whose emulation compels to a contest, which they may spice with a bet of 100 guineas or so; but the competitors in most instances where money passes are poor men, who literally walk or run for their bread; the match is generally concocted by a tavern keeper who plans it so as to make it a matter of business.<sup>24</sup>

With the decline of pedestrianism and prize fighting, and the rise of professional boxing in the late nineteenth century, bookmakers and other working-class entrepreneurs took over the role of sponsor and trainer of the boxers from the sporting gentlemen. In matters of dress and self presentation, a point to be illustrated above, the bookmakers were inclined to emulate those whom they succeeded.

Moreover, as late as the 1930's, bookmakers such as Jack Hamer were still accepting bets on local footraces in Bolton<sup>25</sup> but by this time, however, the direct involvement of the local gentry had gone, and that form of wagering appropriate to the eighteenth- and earlier nineteenth centuries had been marginalized by the growth of bookmaking. Sidestake wagering was increasingly associated with gentler local sports such as pigeon racing and bowls, and with the more informal and spontaneous games such as pitch and

---

<sup>22</sup> *Bells Life in London*, Jan 5 1840 p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Poole, *op cit*, p. 21.

<sup>24</sup> 'Chambers Edinburgh Journal', 1851, in John Ashton, *A History of Gambling in England*, 1898, pp. 209-10.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Hamer, born Bolton, 1921. He was Jack Hamer's son, and he became a bookmaker himself after 1945. Tape 1, Side 1 of writer's oral project.



toss and a wide variety of coin, card and other pastimes which may be included in the category of 'non-commercialised' leisure (This is the subject matter for chapter five). This fundamental change in the nature of betting, and the wider social and economic transformation of leisure which it represented, is most clearly exemplified in the 'Sport of Kings', horse racing, discussed more fully in chapter seven.

Throughout the eighteenth century horse racing was increasingly associated with the gentry rather than royalty, 'the Kings themselves not playing a major part in its government.'<sup>26</sup> The Jockey Club, founded in 1751 to control the sport, was composed almost entirely of aristocratic and military gentlemen, a class domination which has remained largely intact, despite implication in a number of frauds and scandals to do with gambling, until the present day.<sup>27</sup>

It was convenient to point the finger at the 'democratization' of betting, as this served to legitimate aristocratic gaming. Thus disrepute was seen to proceed from, rather than to preface, mass betting. Benjamin Disraeli viewed the spread of bookmaking and betting amongst the lower classes as the pollution of a once noble activity. In *Sybil* (1845), his literary paean to a new England revitalized under the political rule of a stronger 'traditional' Tory aristocracy, he juxtaposed an ugly portrayal of 'Hump Chippendale' the hunch-backed 'keeper of a second rate gaming house' with 'Captain Spruce' a 'debonair personage' who took bets for the wealthy at Newmarket and in the salons of Pall Mall. Whereas Spruce was a man of 'gentle failings', Hump Chippendale was a 'democratic leg, who loved to fleece a noble, and thought that all men were born equal; a consoling creed that was a hedge for his hump.'<sup>28</sup> Disraeli's caricature emphasised that as bookmaking became an increasingly lower class occupation, so it became less

---

<sup>26</sup> Dennis Brailsford, *op cit*, p. 213.

<sup>27</sup> See Roger Mortimer, *The Jockey Club*, 1958, *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil*, p. 6, 1986, (first published 1845).

respectable, not only for bourgeois critics of gambling but for those who considered betting to be a rightful part of their leisure.

Most landed witnesses to the Select Committee of 1844 had a vested interest in arguing along such lines. In the face of the criticism from the reformed House of Commons they felt the need to distinguish between their own legitimate gambling and that of the poorer classes. Admiral Rous, the leading Steward of the Jockey Club, argued that 'the poor should be protected; but I would let a rich man ruin himself if he pleases.'<sup>29</sup> Rous would 'do everything in (his) power to destroy common gaming houses'. Such paternalism was in keeping with the spirit of the subsequent legislation.

Yet the distinction between the less reputable gambling of the lower class and that of the rich found only limited sympathy with the recently reformed House of Commons. It is not really surprising that the gambling of rich and poor came under attack from an ascendent reforming middle class at this time. For critics of gambling the demoralization of the Turf and the association of betting with cruel and violent sports was the more noticeable symptom of an irrational and unimproving leisure activity. The ideology of the reforming middle class has been described as resting upon the Protestant work ethic, that is, upon the individual and social virtues of the prudential, the rational and the improving. These were values which were necessary for the accumulation of capital, essential as a route to social mobility when other means were lacking. Perkin, purposefully exaggerating the virtuous self-characterization and critical perceptions of the middle class, argues that 'Aristocracy and working class were united in their drunkenness, profanness, sexual indulgence, gambling and love of cruel sports.'<sup>30</sup>

In relation to drink, Brian Harrison goes so far as to claim that an elite was 'insulated from temptation' by the 1870's whilst an intemperate working

---

<sup>29</sup> *S.C. 1844*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 2857, p. 184.

<sup>30</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 1978, p. 277.

class drank on regardless.<sup>31</sup> A strong parallel was working itself out with regard to gambling by the early Victorian period, although the debate over betting was sharpened by the fundamental contradictions of bourgeois economic ideology. As Devereaux, an American sociologist, argues, gambling raised a number of ideological problems for the instigators and major beneficiaries of the capitalist economic system. This is evident in the fact that the 1845 Bill to amend the Law concerning Games and Wagers was the sixth Bill on gambling to be debated in the newly reformed Parliament between 1835 and 1845.

The Act of 1845 was a direct product of the two Parliamentary Enquiries into gambling that had reported the previous year. It gave expression to the intention that 'henceforth the law shall take no cognizance of wagers':

all contracts or agreements, whether by parole or in writing, by way of gaming or wagering, shall be null and void; and that no suit shall be brought or maintained in any Court of Law or Equity for recovering any sum of money or valuable thing alleged to be won upon any wager...<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to the prohibitive tenets of the subsequent Act of 1853 the legislation of 1845 was a clear statement of the economics and morality of laissez faire. On one level, the removal of the State from juridical matters concerning gambling was a clear expression of classical economics:

...nobody now disputes the opinion of Adam Smith that government ought not to pretend to watch over the economy of private people, and to restrain their expense by Sumptuary Laws; but if they look well after their own expenses they may safely trust the people with theirs.<sup>33</sup>

Morally, the Act was designed to remove the Victorian legal process from the dirty business of the settlement of gambling debts. In simple terms, if someone was foolish enough to gamble they could suffer the consequences themselves and leave the state out of it.

---

<sup>31</sup> Brian Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*, 1971, p. 318.

<sup>32</sup> Bill, (As Amended by the Committee) 'Intituled An Act to Amend the Law Concerning Games and Wagers' *P.P. 1844, III, (219)*, p. 8, Clause 17.

<sup>33</sup> *S.C. 1844*, Report, p. iv.



The 1845 Act was a re-statement of the principle which had led to the abolition of the lotteries in the 1820's. Gambling, with its reliance upon risk; with the return of capital based upon contingency only, subverted the meritocratic principles of the Puritan work ethic, in which capital was earned by hard work, talent and deferred gratification. It also undermined the principles underpinning the social progress of the middle class. The language of the Report of the 1844 *Select Committee on Gaming* illustrates this, with 'prudence' 'providence' and their oppositional categories well to the fore. As Devereaux points out, the 'quasi utilitarian' character of gambling appears 'to make a mockery of the legitimate economy' as it distributes rewards purely on the basis of chance rather than effort and merit.<sup>34</sup> Hence a number of witnesses to the Select Committee distinguished between legitimate speculation on the Stock Exchange and that which was, in essence, merely gambling. 'Time bargains, for example, were not 'bona fide' because no stock was transferred between speculator and stockbroker:

*Lord Palmerston, Chairman of the Committee:* A time bargain is in the nature of a bet upon what will be the price of stocks at a given day?

*D.W. Harvey, Commissioner of the City Police Force:* It is only a bet in the speculators own mind. A. buys a given quantity of stock for the next account day; and if the price is higher of course he takes the difference, if it is lower, he pays it.<sup>35</sup>

This problem of gambling in stocks was by no means new to the early Victorian period. 'Stock jobbing', which was the cause of the infamous South Sea Bubble fiasco in 1720, entailed the excessive wholesaling of securities on the Stock Exchange. Remuneration-or profit- was determined by the difference between the price at which the jobber bought and sold stocks. This activity often led to the excessive and unscrupulous buying-up of stocks in order to secure maximum and often exclusive income from the selling price. When the 'bubble' burst, and hundreds of speculators were ruined, 'An Act to

---

<sup>34</sup> E.C. Devereaux, 'Gambling', in the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, 1968, p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> S.C., 1844, Minutes of Evidence, para. 869 p. 75.

prevent the infamous Practice of Stock Jobbing' was passed. This was designed to prevent a repetition of such events but, over a century later, the Act was 'habitually, and even daily, broken.'<sup>36</sup>

Deals of this sort were derided as 'gambling' for two reasons. Firstly, the excessive wholesaling of stocks was fraught with economic and social dangers: what if the bottom fell out of the market? This was not calculated investment but unexpurgated risk, and whole fortunes could be lost, bringing ruin on families. Secondly, there was no socio-economic advantage to such transactions except to the pockets of the broker and his client. It was not a socially beneficial investment, not a utilitarian use of capital.

It was widely believed that a campaign against gambling and the principle of gambling would remove ethically similar speculation from the Stock Exchange and set a good example to the poor. This is what John Carroll has referred to as the 'purification of capital'.<sup>37</sup> The acquisition of property was only legitimate if, as anti gambling campaigners later argued, it was based upon deferred gratification and the application of effort and skill. E.B. Perkins, for example, a prominent antagonist of gambling in the twentieth century, was concerned to distinguish between 'the destructive spirit of gambling' in commerce and proper commerce. The former impoverished all but the unprincipled, whilst considered investment increased wealth for all. He felt that the Manchester Cotton Exchange and the London Stock Exchange should take steps to get rid of their most unprincipled 'stock-jobbers.'<sup>38</sup>

The sociologists Otto Newman and E.C. Devereaux have seen gambling as a scapegoat for the moral contradiction inherent in the capitalist application of the Protestant ethic. It mirrored the ruthless competitiveness, materialism and pursuit of individual gain.<sup>39</sup> These were the central tenets of Bentham's rational man who acted according to his own economic self-

---

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, para. 2562, p. 168.

<sup>37</sup> John Carroll, *Breakout From the Crystal Palace*, 1974, pp. 158-159.

<sup>38</sup> E.B. Perkins, *The Problem of Gambling*, 1919, p. 65.

<sup>39</sup> Otto Newman, *Gambling, Hazard and Reward*, 1972. E.C. Devereaux, *op cit.*, pp. 56-58.



interest; they constituted the institutionalised ethos of a society whose wealth was based upon the entrepreneurial effort to create wealth. Gambling thus exposed the raw nerve of the profit motive, which was obviously based on the speculative pursuit of individual gain. It was the unacceptable face of capitalism. As a legal commentator argued to the Select Committee, 'a great deal of the *gambling* in the Stock Exchange would cease if the Act which prevents persons being obliged to pay their losses occasioned by speculation were repealed.'<sup>40</sup> In other words, if the State were to remove the legal rights which enabled the successful party to push for debt recovery from the loser, the incentive to bet might be reduced.

This was the substance and intention of the 1845 Act. It was an attempt to encourage, firstly, landed gentlemen to use their money more wisely, and secondly and more generally, to foster a more rational and principled form of speculation than gambling. Yet, over sixteen years later, the radical liberal press was concerned with the continued prevalence of betting in stocks and shares. *The Porcupine*, for example, a satirical weekly in Liverpool, mocked the attempts of the establishment to try to stamp out gambling, and highlighted the fact that gambling was rife within the establishment itself, both amongst the local aristocracy and the capitalist class whose wealth was based upon the Stock Exchange. *The Porcupine* pointed up the hypocrisy of many of those in the ruling class in this respect. In so doing it also satirized the more famous London journal, *Punch*:

First of all, Porcupine and his devoted myrmidons made a swoop upon a large house in the neighbourhood of the Huyton station, which has been a notorious betting house this ever so long. Here Porcupine found a large company assembled, and, ransacking the library, he discovered plenty of betting lists, with the names of all manner of horses inscribed thereon. Porcupine ordered the whole company into custody. Especially gratifying will it be to the public to learn that an old and hardened offender, indeed the chief of the whole betting gang of Liverpool and Lancashire generally, is now safely lodged in Walton gaol. This person, by name Geoffrey Stanley, alias Derby, bounced and blustered

---

<sup>40</sup> *S.C. 1844*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 593, p46.

a good deal at first. 'Do you know who I am?', he fiercely demanded. 'Rather' was our temperate reply. 'I'm Derby!' said he 'And I'm Porcupine!' we rejoined. 'I am a peer of the realm!' he blustered. 'Sorry to hear it,' we observed 'but its all the same to Porcupine. If you are a peer, you must have helped to pass the act 16th and 17th Victoria, chapter 119, section 3, so admirably expounded by brother Raffles, and you know what it is to occupy or use a house for the purpose of betting. This is a land of equality, where that which is sauce for the rowdy goose is considered equally appropriate seasoning for the genteel gander.'<sup>41</sup>

The article went on to inveigh against the 'betting booking -gambling of all descriptions arranged and prepared in the most open and flatigious manner' at the Liverpool Business Exchange where 'our merchant princes' were caught betting.

The Act of 1845, and the early Victorian campaign to clean up the process of capital accumulation, could not of course remove the speculative component from financial investment and the risks associated with it. Naked competition for raw materials in order to satisfy the demands of an expanding market for finished goods did not lend itself to cooperation between companies and planned provision which alone could reduce the inherent dangers in investment upon the future prices of a commodity. In the language of the sporting world 'sharp practice' helped people to profit unilaterally in these circumstances. This problem was particularly acute in Lancashire where the growth of the local economy were based in large part on the fortunes of the textile industry. As *The Porcupine* and writers to other journals of the liberal conscience wrote, the Exchange in Liverpool was the arena for greed in the speculation on 'futures', the projected future prices of cotton and other goods. The English system of investment by options (choices) did not include delivery of the goods or products. This meant that financiers and merchants could place their money heavily on one commodity by purchasing large amounts of it, force its price up, and then cream off the profit in the form of interest paid on shares by the wholesale selling of their

---

<sup>41</sup> *The Porcupine*, May 17th, 1862, pp. 49-50.

share-options. They then re-invested elsewhere. As with 'time-bargains', no goods was delivered. It was an artificial investment which flung capital this way and that, a market manipulation in which the wealthier operators were out to make a fast buck. As W.E.Bear, an American economist noted, in both England and America many of the smaller businesses lost out on investment and many were broken by the rapid fluctuations in prices which artificially inflated or depressed the market:

...the essence of the system, which is the great evil of it, is this - that those who engage in it, while nominally trading in commodities, in ninety nine cases out of a hundred are simply betting upon future prices. If they did this in the ordinary gambling 'hells' it might not matter to those who are interested in the commodities concerned; but the mischief is that this betting is carried on in the name of business in the ordinary markets, and that it completely controls the price quotations issued. This is the case in all the great markets of the United States and in Liverpool, and these markets to a great extent rule the prices of cotton and grain in the whole world.<sup>42</sup>

*The Porcupine* frequently 'had occasion to denounce the prevalence of gambling in the cotton market in Liverpool' and attacked the 'culpable laxity of the rules' governing transactions on the 'Change.<sup>43</sup> So, in its intention to persuade the ruling class to desist from gambling, and in seeking to remove gambling from the process of capital accumulation, the Act of 1845 failed miserably.

We should thus treat with some caution the view that the 1845 Act caused 'the withdrawal of the upper class from popular forms of gambling in preference for the Stock Exchange.'<sup>44</sup> This view requires some clarification. Firstly, chapters six and seven will illustrate that the aristocratic patronage and control of coursing and horse racing continued to legitimate the sport well into the twentieth century, and the aristocracy continued to bet on this sport.

---

<sup>42</sup> W.E. Bear, 'Market Gambling' *Contemporary Review* Vol LXV, June 1894, pp. 781-794. George Elliot saw no difference between the results of such activity and pure gambling. In an acerbic passage she wrote that 'in gambling, for example, whether of the business or holiday sort, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others is a reformed character.' *Daniel Deronda*, 1988, p125, (first published 1876).

<sup>43</sup> *The Porcupine*, March 27th 1875, 'Stock Exchange Gambling', pp. 819-820.

<sup>44</sup> D.M. Downes et al, *op cit*, p. 36..



Secondly, and more importantly, it should be emphasized that the 1845 Act, the 1853 Betting Houses Act and all subsequent gambling legislation left the facilities for the gaming of the wealthy largely intact. As the Attorney General, addressing Parliament before the passage of the 1853 Betting Houses Act argued, 'The difficulty in legislating upon this subject' was to refrain from 'interfering with that description of Betting which had so long existed at Tattersalls and elsewhere.'<sup>45</sup> With the rise of street betting and bookmaking, the epoch of the great gaming salons of the wealthy described by Disraeli and Thackeray was drawing to an end, but this did not spell the end of aristocratic participation in popular gambling.

The 1853 Betting Houses Act was specifically intended to eradicate the 'new form of betting' in which the owner of a betting house 'held a bag against all comers.' This was, at its most fundamental, the distinction between the older 'traditional' sidestake wagering, and ready money betting with a bookmaker, the basis of mass betting. The Act of 1853 made it an offence to *resort* to any place or person for the purposes of betting and bookmaking.<sup>46</sup>

The distinction between 'common' gaming houses and the aristocratic variety was based upon a compound of impulses -moral, social and economic- which, considered collectively, concluded that whilst most of the wealthier sections of the population could afford to gamble, the working class was not so well-endowed with cash or common sense. The Attorney General, introducing the Betting Houses Bill to Parliament, stated that:

The mischief arising from the existence of these betting shops was perfectly notorious. Servants, apprentices, and workmen, induced by the temptation of receiving a large sum for a small one, took their few shillings to these places and the first effect of their losing was to tempt them to go on spending their money, in the hope of retrieving their losses, and for this purpose it not infrequently happened that they were drawn into robbing their masters and employers.<sup>47</sup>

Many of the 'attendant vices' of popular gambling, which would later

---

<sup>45</sup> *HC Debs*, July 11th, 1853, col. 87.

<sup>46</sup> A Bill (&c.) for the Suppression of Betting Houses, &c., *P.P. 1852-3, I. (761)*, p. 135.

<sup>47</sup> *HC Debs*, July 11th, 1853, cols. 87-88.

become abiding concerns in the anti gambling literature of the twentieth century, most notably the corruption of the young, the relationship of gambling to the criminal subculture of the towns and cities, and the consequent swelling of the prison population, were pointed out to the House of Commons prior to the passage of the bill.

The 1853 Act gave expression to the desire to stop the ascendancy of bookmakers and betting houses, yet it was both too late, and too flawed, to be successful. The cultural weight of a betting and 'sporting' culture and its spreading transformation was developing on too large a scale and at too great a momentum to be contained. In the event, it merely illegalised the activity, and in so doing was directly responsible for the clandestine yet diaphanous veil which was thrown over ready money betting for over a century.

#### Betting Shops, Bookmakers and Mass Gambling

Vamplew is only partly right when he says that 'the general effect of the 1853 Act was to shift the locus of working-class betting from the public house to the street.'<sup>48</sup> That cash betting shops were flourishing in Manchester during the 1860's is evident from the pages of the local press. The liberal journal *The Free Lance* explained the disguise, locality, and clientele of 'list houses' to its middle class readership:

The 'list houses' as they are called are to be found in Thomas-street, Turner-street and their purlieus. They may be known by the swarm of clerks, operatives, stable-men, soldiers and even women that pass in and out in an unceasing stream. As far as outward signs are concerned...betting might be the last thing in life they knew of or cared about 'John Smith, cigar maker' or 'James Robinson-chops and steaks always ready' are the lying legends inscribed on their doors and windows, though an enquiry with a view to chops or cigars would meet with no very satisfactory answer. Generally the 'house' is a hutch about as big as a bathroom, with a wooden partition dividing the bookmaker from his customers. On the outside of the partition hang the cards of the different, with the odds 'marked in plain figures' as the drapers say. Around these cards flock eager crowds who look with hungry eyes upon

---

<sup>48</sup> Wray Vamplew, *The Turf*, 1976, p. 205.

the enticing figures with the meagre hope of finding a shade better price than at any of the adjoining establishments.<sup>49</sup>

In Liverpool, less than three years after the passage of the 1853 Act, Hugh Shimmin found a list house in the back of a public house in Liverpool.<sup>50</sup>

The earliest listings of racing intelligence were pinned up by legs in hotels and inns in the race towns at the time of race meetings. Bookies running list houses merely developed this practice. Pages from newspapers took the place of these lists from the 1850's, a process speeded up following the advent of the sporting press and starting price information and results in the local and national press from the 1870's and '80's. Liverpool and Manchester were different to London, where the unsightly spectacle of bookmakers pinning their lists to trees in Hyde Park was a more visible sign of the unforeseen failures of the Act.<sup>51</sup> Off-course ready-money betting in London developed more literally in the street than in Manchester and Liverpool during the later nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Thus the growth of mass betting took place varied from region to region and took place both indoors and out.

But what of the bookmakers and of bookmaking? When did bookmaking begin, and how did it spread to become the basis of mass betting?

It was the sporting gentleman who provided the original model for the bookmaker, as one who had enough capital to lay odds, take bets and pay out any winnings due. The idea of making a book of tickets or receipts in order to bet with more than one person probably began in gaming salons of the wealthy, most notably 'White's famous betting book' which was started in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>52</sup> This concept was emulated and adapted by

---

<sup>49</sup> *The Free Lance*, 'Apropos of the Derby', May 25th, 1887, p. 179. In 1852 Dickens had pointed to the tobacconists in London which were really betting shops: *Household Words*, 'Betting Shops', No. 118, June 26th, 1852, pp. 333-4.

<sup>50</sup> Hugh Shimmin, *op cit*, 1856, pp. 98-99.

<sup>51</sup> B.S. Perry, *Betting and Bookmaking*, Unpublished dissertation, Havering Technical College, 1973, pp. 3-5. Copy in possession of writer.

<sup>52</sup> Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, *The Encyclopedia of London*, 1986, p. 961.



the Morocco Men mentioned above and, most pertinently, by the earliest on course bookmakers, the 'legs', a vocational title which developed from the pejorative 'blackleg'. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) attributed a servile connotation to the noun 'leg' as involving 'an act of obeisance', someone who bent the knee to authority. Two of his definitions of 'black' were 'cloudy of countenance' and 'horrible, wicked, atrocious'.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps those who sought to make books for the wealthy at horse racecourses and in gaming salons were perceived in this light by the more self-consciously honourable gentlemen who liked to bet amongst themselves. Contemporary patrons of the 'fancy', such as the sporting journalist John Bee, in his *Dictionary of Sportsman's Slang*, provided an intriguing definition:

*Legs* i.e., blacklegs. The monosyllable is, however, most elegant, as it leaves something to be guessed at. They are well-dressed, sometimes well-educated, sharpers at gambling-houses or race-courses, &c; but legs appear at private parties, frequently assuming much of the surface of gentility.<sup>54</sup>

The historian of bookmaking, Charles Sidney, suggests also that the disreputable origins of the term 'leg' may have stemmed from the actions of regular turf 'sharpers' who 'ran away' when they could not pay.<sup>55</sup> Either way, the birth of the bookmaking profession, like gambling, was associated with a measure of dishonour.

Charles Sidney attributes the form of early mass betting to one William ('The Leviathan') Davies. Davies was 'the undisputed leader of the Ring' from the 1840's, but, more importantly,

(He) extended the idea of paid-on bets to off-course betting for, as well as his appearances at the Races and at the Corner, Mr. Davies had lists posted in at least two establishments. He would lay the odds from half a sovereign to half a plum(50p to £50,000) etc'.<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Samuel Johnson, *op cit*.

<sup>54</sup> John Bee, *Sportsmans' Slang: A new Dictionary of Terms Used in the Affairs of the Turf, the Ring the Chase, and the Cockpit*, (etc. etc.), 1825, pp. 111-112. See also R. Longrigg, *The Turf*, 1975, Text accompanying plates 141, 142 and 143.

<sup>55</sup> Charles Sidney, *The Art of Legging*, 1977, p. 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid* p. 52.

This view is based upon the apocryphal and anecdotal evidence of *Bell's Life*, or the *Illustrated London News* and other high life periodicals of the early Victorian years, and tends towards the 'great man' interpretation of history rather than the identification of social processes and economic change. As Sidney himself points out, 'list houses', set up by gambling entrepreneurs some thirty years or so before Davies and Gully came on the scene, had 'inaugurated' off course betting, but, he argues, it was 'the Leviathan's modus operandi (which) opened the racing game for all to play.'<sup>57</sup>

The identity of the first instigator or instigators of list houses will probably remain a mystery. Although John Gully and his like were the most famous and wealthiest of earliest legs, to attribute to them the initiation of mass betting is to understate the influence of wider technological, economic and social changes. The consolidation of the racing calendar in the 1830's '40's and '50's, as well as the establishment of a Northern Football League later in the century provided the basis for regular mass betting and bookmaking. And from the 1840's the electric telegraph facilitated the transmission of results from racecourse to betting outlets, although the cost of such a piece of equipment would have precluded the mass of small-scale and fledgling bookies. At the outset of the bookmaking industry, such machinery would have been used for the purposes of the credit offices, of which two of the first and largest were Valentine and Wrights' and Topping and Topping of London, both established in the 1860's. In the North West, credit firms such as Shepherd and Son were established in Blackpool in 1876, William Vincent of Manchester in 1886, Arthur Magnus of Manchester was established sometime in the 1870's and Tom Gibbons, also of Manchester, in about 1886. These firms announced to their customers, through advertisements in the sporting press and by circulars, that 'the settlement of bets would be governed by the S.P. returns

---

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*

published in the *Sporting Life*.<sup>58</sup> This clientele was composed of those who, like the bookmakers themselves, emulated the ethos and lifestyle of the sporting gentry. As Itskovitz points out, there is very little information on the clientele of middle-class betting, yet while he is undoubtedly correct that far fewer 'ethnographic excursions into middle class life'<sup>59</sup> exist as sources for the historian, a number of sporting and 'low-life' autobiographies provide revealing glimpses of the credit-punter. They were most likely to be drawn from the small tradesmen, the shopocracy and the wealthier clerks.<sup>60</sup> Credit Commission Agents or Turf Accountants advertising in trade directories from the 1920's addressed themselves to householders. It is reasonable to suggest, especially as gambling debts could not be legally recovered, that a sizeable regular wage and an address in a respectable suburban or artisan district would have been required for a bookmaker to extend trust and credit.

The growing working-class betting market was supplied by working-class bookmakers. John Benson, discussing the informal economy of the nineteenth century working class and 'penny capitalism', argues that 'most bookmakers probably began their careers by organising sweepstakes on the big races like the Oaks or the Derby, going on perhaps to run a regular 'book' during their lunch hour.'<sup>61</sup> Despite the lack of contemporary evidence for this, oral testimony for the twentieth century strongly supports this speculation. Moreover the salient aspects of penny capitalism, most particularly the control by the petty entrepreneur 'over the use to which his capital and labour was put' was especially applicable to bookmakers. The aspiring bookie needed to scratch up enough venture capital, choose a site, and compete in the local market with other like-minded entrepreneurs. Finally, it is reasonable to

---

58 B.S. Perry, *op cit* p. 4. The *Sporting Chronicle*, April 22nd 1926, p. 1, contains advertisements for some of these firms, whose advertisements are also in that paper from the 1870's.

59 David C. Itskovitz, 'Victorian Bookmakers and their Customers', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1988, p. 25.

60 For example Dyke Wilkinson, a comfortably-off jewellery manufacturer of Birmingham in the mid 1840's, who eventually became a bookie, used to bet on- and off-course with a credit commission agent. *A Wasted Life*, 1902, pp. 32-36.

61 John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists*, 1983, p. 75.



speculate that the growing number of working-class bookies from the 1870's and '80's may in part have been an economic response to unemployment during these years, despite a real increase in the standard of living of most working-class people, especially those in regular industrial employment. The market -the punters- was underpinned by falling costs-of-living and higher wages during the period in which, as some historians have argued, the 'traditional' working class at last settled down in towns and cities.<sup>62</sup> As in the 1920's and '30's, the informal economy expanded as the national economy contracted,<sup>63</sup> and the making of books, or working full or part time as a bookies agent, was a means of making a living.

Despite the alleged prominence of the 'Leviathans' or 'Captain Spruce's' at the mid-point of the nineteenth century, it was the 'Hump Chippendales', who, with or without a physical defect, were of increasing historical significance from that time. The *Free Lance* appropriated the terms 'commission agent' and 'bookmaker' for those who operated only amongst the wealthy. This was in tawdry contradistinction to the poorer counterpart in a list house:

We have no hesitation in saying that there are hundreds of thousands of people in the habit of backing horses at list-houses who would not know a trustworthy layer of odds if they saw him and who would not bet at all if it were not for the facilities afforded them by list houses. <sup>64</sup>

In the eyes of the traditional aristocrat and professional middle classes, the common bookmaker was to blame for the growth of betting amongst the poor despite the intentions of the legislation.

The invective directed at the poorer bookmakers thus castigated them metaphorically as both parasitical and predatory, as 'the spider catching the fly' or 'the Betting Harpies of Williamson Square'.<sup>65</sup> These accusations of

---

<sup>62</sup> E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, 1979, pp. 162-3.

<sup>63</sup> On the relationship of 'informal economy' to the so-called legitimate economy see R.E. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*, 1983, *passim*.

<sup>64</sup> *The Free Lance*, Feb. 22nd 1868, p. 59.

<sup>65</sup> *The Free Lance*, May 25th, 1887, p. 179. *The Porcupine*, March 10th, 1877, p. 790.

rapaciousness or parasitism against the bookmaker were matched by the portrayal of the punters as gullible victims, spending precious money on bets instead of bread. The attitudes of the punters to the bookmaker, and the moderation of most punters in the size and occurrence of their bets, are explored in depth in chapters three and four.

The life of the bookmakers was made considerably easier from the 1870's with the rise of the sporting press and newspapers publishing starting price odds. *The Sporting Chronicle*, begun by Edward Hulton in Manchester in 1871, signalled the start of a flood of sporting 'papers and tipping and coupon-competition sheets from the 1880s. The odds at which a punter laid his bets were thus no longer determined between him and the bookie, unless expressly desired, but by the published figures in the press. There was now a national average to the odds rather than the levels determined by the financial capacity of the bookies. These were collated from the odds set by the on-course bookmakers in the Ring, which had been telegraphed to the 'papers. This made it easier for the bookmaker to convince the punter that the odds were fair. As the Report in 1902 of the Select Committee of the House of Lords argued, rejecting the proposal from the National Anti Gambling League to abolish sporting intelligence in newspapers, 'the chief results of such prohibition would be to facilitate and encourage dishonesty among bookmakers.'<sup>66</sup>

The second major result of the early seventies' legislation was to begin the trickle abroad of wealthier bookmakers who decided to move their offices to the continent, mainly Holland, Belgium and France. Sending cheques through the post was not illegal, but the sending of advertisements inducing people to bet was an offence since the Betting Houses Act of 1874, a point reaffirmed by the Street Betting Act of 1906.<sup>67</sup> The advertisements for the bookmaker Arthur Magnus, Plate 2 of the Appendix, tell their own story.

---

<sup>66</sup> S.C. 1902, Report, para. 7, p. 449.

<sup>67</sup> J.M. Chenery, *The Law and Practice of Betting and Bookmaking*, 1963, p. 15.

The problems of the national legislation were compounded by local by-laws against obstruction, passed in haste from the 1870's as a means of shoring up the gaps in the national legislation, and in part as a response to criticisms of the visibility of betting in the streets from the local press. These laws varied in scope and sentence from borough to borough. Taken as a whole, the laws over gambling were 'lacking in principle, confused and inconsistent' (and) 'the powers of the police' were 'inadequate to check the practice.'<sup>68</sup>

Moreover -the final insult- those bookmakers who were caught and successfully prosecuted could usually afford to pay their fines. As John Hawker, the Secretary of the National Anti-Gambling League told the Select Committee in 1901, one Blackpool bookmaker, gave change from his fine, asking the magistrate to put it in the poor box.'<sup>69</sup>

For those who opposed gambling, then, there was an urgent need for the legislation to be made more strongly effective. The local press in Liverpool and Manchester stressed this during the 1860's and '70's, calling upon the police authorities to halt 'the betting nuisance' or 'the betting pest'. In a series of five articles in the 1870's, *The Porcupine* alleged complicity as well as unwillingness on the part of the police authorities:

Who has authorised the men on duty to permit the daily crowds to gather and hang about in Williamson Square? When we consider that energetic action can render the mere existence of the greater number of bookmakers difficult and precarious in the extreme, we feel that these are questions which, being neither unfair or unreasonable, should be very easily answered; and we base our right to ask them upon the fact that this betting nuisance is one of the crying sins of our town, and that being allowedly such it is nevertheless permitted to exist in quiet comfort under the very wing of the law.'<sup>70</sup>

To some extent calls for action against betting in the newspapers may have prompted police action, reflected in surges in the statistics, but the incidence

---

<sup>68</sup> *S.C. (Lords), 1902*, Report, para. 20, p. 457.

<sup>69</sup> *S.C. 1901* pp. 356-7.

<sup>70</sup> *The Porcupine*, March 10, 1877, p. 790.



and visibility of street betting was an unavoidable result of the anti gambling legislation. Occasionally, too, the efforts of the Watch Committee and of local magistrates proved counter-productive. As *The Porcupine* and other self-proclaimed organs of respectable public opinion were well aware, a spate of arrests against bookmakers running subterranean clubs in the early 1870's merely caused them to come out on to the streets in greater numbers, defying the law in order to attract customers.<sup>71</sup>

The fear that gambling was increasing in volume and social significance was heightened by the sense of self doubt which afflicted late Victorian and Edwardian society. In the absence of adequate statistical measurements of gambling activity at and from this time, panicky impressionistic estimates overstated the problem and its effects. Canon Green said that industrial production was brought down by 20 per cent due to talk and tardiness caused by gambling.<sup>72</sup> It was estimated after World War One that 80 per cent of the working class gambled regularly on horses, a figure which, if more recent and more scientific estimates are applied retrospectively, exaggerated reality by at least 30 per cent.<sup>73</sup>

Such accusations were stimulated by a deeper pessimism about the condition of England, and more particularly about the working class, at the turn of the century. This pessimism, in turn, was heightened by the tension in the ideology of the burgeoning social sciences, which has since been termed the 'nature versus nurture' debate. On the one hand vice was seen as proof of the innate incapacity and hereditary inferiority of the poor, a crude interpretation of Darwin's arguments about the survival of the most able and the fittest. Yet on the other, following the writings of Herbert Spencer, it was diagnosed as a behavioural symptom of people who were living in a decaying or hostile environment. It took until the 1920's

---

<sup>71</sup> *The Porcupine*, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *S.C.*, 1923, Minutes of Evidence, para. 601, p. 396.

<sup>73</sup> E.B. Perkins, *R.C.*, 1932-33, Minutes of Evidence, p175, cited in Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, p. 154.

for this position to be used to analyse gambling as a delinquent habit resulting from environmental deprivation. It was particularly applied to working-class youth. Cyril Burt, the criminal psychologist, argued that gambling, one of the 'grosser forms of relaxation to which the young lad takes', varied in extent from place to place but 'it was commonest in working-class areas where there are mews, culs-de-sacs, and secluded tenement staircases' where the habit was carried on unseen. The lads learned to bet from the facilities offered by bookies and their agents in shops, and inherited the inclination from their parents, who often used their children as messengers to carry betting slips. Betting was not an hereditary characteristic of the poor, then, but one central to a culture of poverty transmitted from generation to generation and encouraged by the nooks and crannies of deprived areas. Burt's solution was close and continuous surveillance for the very young, and fines for those over sixteen years of age backed up with supervision.<sup>74</sup>

Closely related to this debate was the place of gambling in the debate over the deserving and undeserving poor. Those who would not work and who lived a life of leisure were viewed by a number of late Victorian and Edwardian social reformers as a threat both to themselves and to the morality and resources of the poor. Octavia Hill, the *doyen* of the Charity Organisation Society saw gambling as a vice of those who undermined their own lives and spoiled things for others. In her discussion on the influence on character of model dwellings in the 1880's and '90's, she attacked gambling on the stairs as a habit of the vicious and drunken people who degraded tenement blocks and made intolerable the life of 'decent, hard working families.'<sup>75</sup> Beatrice Potter also saw gambling as unrespectable and uneconomic, and she allied it firmly with the lumpen and the incapable. Of those who were mentally and physically unsuited to work she wrote:

---

<sup>74</sup> Cyril Burt, *The Young Delinquent*, Volume 1, 1945, pp150-51; p. 241 (first published 1925).

<sup>75</sup> Octavia Hill, *Blocks of Model Dwellings, Influence on Character*, In Charles Booth, *op cit*, 'Poverty', Volume 2, p. 265-66.

Their passion is gambling. Sections of them are hereditary casuals; a larger portion drift from other trades. They have a constitutional hatred to regularity and forethought, and a need for paltry excitement. They are late-risers, sharp-witted talkers, and (they) have that agreeable tolerance for their own and each other's vices which seems characteristic of a purely leisure class.

Despite the social tolerance of these leisured casuals, they were 'parasites eating the life out of the working class, demoralising and discrediting it.'<sup>76</sup>

For the Protestant sects, however, gambling discredited and demoralised the whole nation. This was the position of the National Anti-Gambling League, formed in 1889 from a coalition of nonconformist churches. It was the vanguard of the campaign against the evil of gambling.

#### The National Anti-Gambling League and the Campaign against Gambling before 1914

The National Anti-Gambling League pulled no punches when describing the consequences of gambling:

Nothing less than the reformation of England as regards the particular vice against which our efforts are aimed lies before us. There is humiliation in the thought that the chosen Anglo Saxon race, foremost in the civilisation and government of the world, is first also in the great sin of Gambling.<sup>77</sup>

The alarmism and evangelism of the League was evident not just in words but in actions. In 1894 the League stated that it had

laboured quietly for five years in spreading the light and striving by literature, public meetings, sermons, and lectures to awaken the public conscience to the accumulating danger attendant upon the enormous increases amongst all classes of Betting and Gambling in this country.<sup>78</sup>

After the example of the temperance campaign, congregations at churches and chapels, for example, at the Central Methodist Hall in Oldham Street, Manchester, were encouraged to sign the pledge against gambling.<sup>79</sup> The Nonconformist churches provided the most enthusiastic campaigners against

---

<sup>76</sup> Beatrice Potter, *The Docks*, in Booth, *ibid.*, 'Poverty', Volume 4, , pp. 31-32.

<sup>77</sup> *Bulletin* of N.A.G.L., Vol 1, No. 7 1893, p1.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, Vol 1, No 8, 1894, p. 77.

<sup>79</sup> A photocopy of this Pledge was supplied by Manchester Local History Library. It is Plate 1 in the Appendix.



gambling in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gambling was viewed as both cause and symptom of irreligion and attendant cultural degeneration. The League also published a Bulletin twice a year, propagating and quoting from the more influential tomes on the ills of gambling, reproducing the more tragic or shocking reports on the subject from the local and national press, and warning of worse to come in editorials and articles on all aspects of the vice. The anti gambling views of labour leaders such as Ramsey MacDonald and John Burns, both Nonconformists were featured regularly in the Bulletin to support the campaign amongst the working class. The chief result of this was that labour leaders earned the pejorative title of 'faddist' from the sporting press. Such derision had hitherto been reserved for the rational and campaigning middle class critic of popular habits. Some went further, accusing labour leaders of class betrayal. Thus Lord Turnour, keen to make political capital out of Labour M.P.'s support for the Street Betting Bill argued that

the day was not far distant when they would go before their constituents, and the latter, if they had a grain of courage in them, would want to know if they had sent them to parliament to pass one law for the rich and another for the poor.<sup>80</sup>

Whilst Nonconformity underpinned the critique of gambling from the Left, the concern of labour leaders for the leisure preferences of the poor stemmed from a socialist desire to secure the spiritual as well as the material ascendancy of the working class. The title and argument of John Burn's Clarion tract -*Brains Better Than Bets or Beer* - suggests this. Burns addressed himself specifically to an upper working-class artisanal audience whom he felt shared his repugnance at the economic harm working people did to themselves by betting.<sup>81</sup> The abolition of betting was but one feature of the moral and physical impoverishment of the poor under capitalism.

---

<sup>80</sup> *The Times* Nov. 14. 1906, p. 4, col. c.

<sup>81</sup> John Burns, *Brains Better than Bets or Beer*, Clarion Tracts, 1902. See also Will Crooks, *Working Men and Gambling*, Social Tracts for the Times, 1906.

Moreover, as Stephen Jones and Ross McKibbin have argued, gambling, with its emphasis upon spectacular individual gain, was antithetical to the co-operative and collective ideals of British socialism.<sup>82</sup> For Ramsey MacDonald, betting was a class disease, one which had 'spread downwards from the idle rich to the hard working poor'. In proposing this 'law of imitation', in fact, MacDonald was merely putting a socialist variant upon critical analyses of the spread of gambling.<sup>83</sup> As David Dixon has detailed, the earliest phase of the N.A.G.L.'s campaign had been aimed at the wealthiest punters as a means of beginning the whole process of total abolition.<sup>84</sup>

In addition to this and the afore-mentioned activities, the N.A.G.L. engaged directly with the authorities on a number of other levels. Their Honorary Secretary, John Hawke, appeared as a Witness on both Parliamentary Enquiries in 1901 and 1902 to make the case for greater prohibition.

They were particularly active in the North-West, the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch being supported by liberal papers' such as the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Manchester Evening News*, and after 1900 by tireless campaigners such as Canon Green and C.E.B. Russell. The N.A.G.L. petitioned Watch Committee's and Chief Constables suggesting the police be availed of further powers to enforce the by-laws against betting. The Minutes of the Watch Committee for Manchester in 1902, contain the text of one such letter and the reply of Chief Constable Robert Peacock,

recommending that a letter be sent to the Anti Gambling League stating that the Corporation of Manchester already possesses substantially similar powers to those suggested in their letter and that the Committee consequently see no

---

<sup>82</sup> Stephen G. Jones, *The British Labour Movement and Working Class leisure, 1918-1939*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Manchester, 1981, pp. 218-228. Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, pp. 172-3; p. 176.

<sup>83</sup> Ramsey MacDonald, 'Gambling and Citizenship', in B.S.Rowntree (ed.), *Betting and Gambling: A National Evil*, p. 120.

<sup>84</sup> David Dixon, Class Law: 'The Street Betting Act of 1906', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 8, 1980, pp. 103-9.

necessity to ask for additional powers.<sup>85</sup>

But to the Parliamentary Committee of that year Peacock's emphasis was a little less sure:

*Earl of Durham:* Do you find the by-law is not quite efficacious? *Robert Peacock:* The by-law is really for obstruction, and there must be three persons assembled together.

*Earl of Durham:* If one of these persons were a bookmaker and the other two backers, could the backers be fined as well as the bookmaker? *Peacock:* We have not proceeded against the backers; we only proceed against the bookmaker.<sup>86</sup>

It is not inconceivable that the N.A.G.L. were perceived by Peacock, who was strongly against working-class betting, as noisome, more a hindrance than a help in the control of gambling, whereas a Parliamentary enquiry was an opportunity to persuade the highest in the land. Peacock's testimony to the 1902 Committee was similar in a significant respect with that of other police witnesses to this and other Parliamentary Enquiries. He emphasised the difficulties the police faced in enacting the legislation, that is, in arranging and carrying out successful raids on the bookmakers. This was severely hampered by the lack of co-operation from the public due to the unpopularity of the laws. There was a subsequent call from the police, which Peacock favoured, for greater or more stringently defined powers.<sup>87</sup>

The Street Betting Act of 1906 thus intended to standardise the laws against gambling in an attempt to control the increasing incidence and significance of popular betting. It was a product of a moral panic and the incipient bias of the 1853 Act. In so doing it elicited strong criticisms at this 'monstrous sample of class legislation' from 'sporting' and gambling interests and ensured that betting would remain a political issue.

The accusation of 'one law for the rich and one law for the poor' was

---

<sup>85</sup> Watch Committee Minutes, 4.12.1902. My italics. These Minutes are held at the Police Museum, Newton Street, Manchester.

<sup>86</sup> *S.C. 1902*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 152-3, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Peacock gave testimony to three Parliamentary Enquiries concerning working class betting, to wit the 1902, 1918 S.C. on Premium Bond and S.C. 1923 on Betting Duty.



a convenient one on which to mobilise support against the Street Betting Act. Organised opposition was orchestrated largely by the sporting press, most particularly by the *Sporting Chronicle* and *The Sporting Life*. The National Sporting League was formed in 1902, under the aegis of the *Life* to argue for the legalization of betting without the introduction of a betting tax.

The League was composed largely of bookmakers and proprietors and employees of the sporting press. They received a sympathetic ear from a number of M.P.'s, mostly Tory, but also the maverick Liberal Horatio Bottomley, M.P. for Hackney South. The League held public meetings, often 'largely-attended', up and down the country and, not unlike their opposition, they engaged with the powers-that-be by petitioning Parliament and corresponding with Police Corporations. Thus Peacock had also to refuse a request by the National Sporting League to be allowed to petition against the Act from a table outside the infirmary gates.<sup>88</sup>

The title 'sporting', as with the sporting press, was an attempt to legitimate pro-gambling interests in the eyes of the public, and coloured the rhetoric of its spokesmen. T.H.Dey, for example, a wealthy bookmaker operating from Holland, who was also a local government councillor (in Hackney, London,) was perhaps the keenest proponent of the sporting and betting ethos, and he was strongly opposed to the intervention of 'faddists' into the time honoured rights of sportsmen.<sup>89</sup>

Yet the League's ideology was not based simply on the defence of gambling interests. Its spokesmen, more particularly the journalists and owners of the sporting press, were upset at the decline of the earlier class coalition of aristocrat and serf, whom they thought had thronged and betted around the racecourses of Merrie England. The outspoken tipster-gossip 'Kettledrum', of the *Sporting Chronicle*, in reality the papers' owner Edward Hulton until the early twentieth century, was a prominent example. This was Tory populism, a

---

<sup>88</sup> Watch Committee Minutes, Manchester, 1906. Letter dated October 27th, 1906.

<sup>89</sup> See *Betting in Excelsis*, 1908, *passim*, for a virulent attack on Lord Davey and the faddists.

cross-class opportunism and individualism. It defined itself against these puffed-up puritans. Both the Anti-Gambling League and the Humanitarian League were attacked in this way. Thus the tipster 'Augur' wrote of

an intense feeling of detestation at the inroads faddists are being allowed to make upon the sacred liberties of the people...It cannot be too frequently iterated that it is a class legislation of the most baneful kind...the action of each class is harmless we insist, but if the promoters of the Davey Bill are earnest in their assurance that betting is harmful, why confine themselves to putting it down among working men only?<sup>90</sup>

Augur himself provided the explanation for this as one of 'the line of least resistance' taken by anti gamblers and politicians who knew they could never stop the betting of the rich and powerful.

If betting was a symptom of the sickening 'condition of England', so too was the 'cheap and sensational press' problem which worried liberals like C.F.G. Masterman attacked. From the 1880's, a flurry of tipping sheets and cheap papers offering football competitions and other coupon-based games for money appeared on the market. As Lady Bell lamented, the 'crusade' against gambling 'encounters as ardent a propaganda in favour of it, in which a far greater number are engaged than on the other side.'<sup>91</sup> In common with the N.A.G.L. Masterman accused these papers of exploiting the 'excitements of gambling and adventure' and of directing the thoughts of the multitude 'away from consideration of any rational or serious universe'.<sup>92</sup> Whether the punters were as irrational and mindless as this view suggests is to be discussed in the following chapter. Now, we will examine the rise of the sporting and tipster press.

### The Growth of the Sporting and Tipster Press

Before the mid-nineteenth century the sporting press served a largely upper middle class and aristocratic constituency, based upon gaming and the field sports of hunting, shooting and fishing. Papers such as *Bell's Life in London*,

---

<sup>90</sup> *Sporting Life*, Oct. 10th 1906 p. 4

<sup>91</sup> Lady Bell, *At the Works*, 1985, p266. (first published 1907).

<sup>92</sup> C.F.G. Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 1909, p. 83.

begun in 1822 under the original proprietorship of the journalist Pierce Egan, and *The Sporting Magazine* and *The Sporting Times*, were respectable and trustworthy enough to be recognised as mediators in gaming and sporting disputes. They also passed judgement over problems arising over the 'specs', or lotteries before their abolition in the 1823. But as James Greenwood complained during the 1860's,

a quarter of a century since pugilism was the main feature of the sporting press, now it is horseracing, not for its own sake but for the convenient peg it affords to have a bet on. <sup>93</sup>

*The Sporting Life*, established in 1851, gave more space to horse racing than other genteel pursuits. It changed from a weekly to a daily in 1883 to capitalise on the upswell of betting. It incorporated *Bell's Life* in 1886, illustrating the continuation yet attenuation of the genteel culture of gambling in sporting coverage. Its contents were a colourful mixture of betting intelligence and details of both gate money and country horse-race meetings. It also provided news on coursing, as well as athletics and field sports.

*The Sporting Chronicle*, published from 1871 by The Hulton Press of Withy Grove, Manchester, was the first major new sporting newspaper to be established during the growth of off course betting. Its contents were based upon betting and racing information for all course, track and field events associated with gambling.

The history of the sporting press proper has been described elsewhere.<sup>94</sup> The sporting press had long possessed tipsters, a fact lamented by Greenwood in 1861. But these tips were offered as friendly advice within a column of gossip redolent with the language of the fancy. 'Augur' of *The Sporting Life* and 'Kettledrum' of the *Sporting Chronicle* were in this mode rather than the 'I gotta 'orse' brashness of the *nouvelle école*. Their columns

---

<sup>93</sup> James Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London*, 1984, (first published 1861) pp. 244-5.

<sup>94</sup> Tony Mason, 'Sporting News, 1860-1914', in M. Harris and A. Lee (eds), *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries*, 1986, pp. 168-86.



were prefaced by a bantering report of owners, trainers, jockeys, turf and weather conditions at races, and reports of meetings held the previous day or weekend before they offered their considered prognoses. Relatively little is known about the new wave of the tipster and coupon press, its promoters and its effect upon the nature of betting coverage in general.

The rise of bookmaking and the betting market was a magnet for those who felt they could make money out of the demand for betting intelligence. The tipsters who surfaced on the racecourses were only a fraction of a growing number of 'advertising tipsters' who appeared in the sporting and more down-market local newspapers. The *Manchester Free Lance* pointed to the social results of this transformation in the press.

'Unfortunate young men', particularly clerks and assistants, were 'fleeced' by the turf 'prophets':

...it is noticeable that a certain description of advertisement pushes itself into greater prominence in the local and general press, which distinctively relates to sports and which emanates from the prophet of the period.<sup>95</sup>

The Parliamentary enquiries into gambling in the early twentieth century identified the major cause of the spread of illegal cash betting as 'largely due to the great facilities afforded by the Press and to the inducements to bet offered by means of Bookmakers circulars and Tipsters Advertisements.'<sup>96</sup> For Liverpool, the social statistician A.J. Robertson observed that bookmakers and tipsters were usually behind those papers 'comprising the sporting and betting interest.'<sup>97</sup> To this, we should also add what might be termed 'adventurer-printers' who, big or small, made forays into the tipping and coupon-paper market.

The catalogue of the newspaper archive at Colindale is a very general guide but it does appear that these various entrepreneurs decided to

---

<sup>95</sup> *Free Lance*, May 20th 1871 pp. 155-156.

<sup>96</sup> *S.C. 1902*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 5, p. 449.

<sup>97</sup> A.J. Robertson, 'Football Betting', *Transactions of the Liverpool Economic and Statistical Society*, 1907, p. 3.

provide their own sporting sheets from the 1890's. It is extremely difficult to quantify accurately the growth and extent of this press except to say that it burgeoned in all the larger urban centres of Britain from the 1880's. *Willings's Press Guide* and the *London Newspaper Directory* do not list some of the more short lived publications, especially in the earliest upswell of the tipster press, which found their way into the newspaper archive. A few titles will illustrate this. *The Winner*, for example, was the ultimate of such ephemera, a London daily which started and finished in June 1900. It was a two or four sided buff coloured fly sheet measuring less than five inches wide and just over 10 inches deep. It offered tips and racing gossip by its publisher, the tipster 'Binocular', whose suggested powers of long-sightedness evidently did not extend into newspaper proprietorship. *Turf Tips and Bookmakers' Crack-Ups*, owned and edited by 'The Turf "Dapster"', an otherwise anonymous London tipster, managed a three month duration, March to May, in 1890. The title of this sheet echoes a common claim of tipsters: that it is possible to win a few shillings or pounds off the bookie, and be as shrewd as he is. (Today, *Braddocks' Guide to Horse Race Selection* (1987) makes the same claim.<sup>98</sup>) A London paper, weekly at one penny, it is not in *Willings's*. *Turf Snips*, which lasted from March 1891 to November 1898 was published by E.R. Swindells of Manchester. According to *Slater's Directory of Manchester, Salford and Suburban* between 1894 and 1898 Swindells was a 'letterpress printer' in Withy Grove and resident at Larch Street. By 1898, and the end of *Turf Snips*, he now worked from Fountain Street and had decamped to the superior residential area of Lime Street, Urmston, south-west of Salford. He probably felt he had prospered from his little venture into tipping.

Between 1890 and 1914 there were an increasing number of football coupon 'papers jostling for the attentions of the punting public. The coupon press is also impossible to quantify accurately. The role of such papers in the

---

<sup>98</sup> *Braddocks Guide to Horse Race Selection*, 1987. In the preface he writes of punters and bookmakers 'Never have so many owed so much to so few.'

evolution of football betting is discussed in chapter eight, but they were just as ephemeral as tipping sheets. As the aforementioned A.J. Robertson noted, many of these were merely fronts for the coupon inside.<sup>99</sup> For example, the one-penny *Football Program and Weekly Calendar*, edited by the Manchester tipster 'Umpire' contained 'Coupons on Second and Third Pages of cover' with a list of fixtures of both football and rugby matches. The readers were invited to predict the winning teams of twelve matches in both sports. Three pounds was paid for the highest number of correct predictions. If a draw was predicted the punter was asked to write 'DRAW' This paper lasted from October 1890 to February 1891. *The Sports Review* (The Blue 'Un), a London 'paper, was also coupon sheet. Like its competitors it offered racing intelligence, tips, football gossip, anecdotes, jokes, and advertisements for various bookies and tipsters. It lasted from March to August 1900.

Like all sports, football had always provided a convenient and exciting medium for betting. Yet with the establishment of local leagues and regular match fixtures from the 1850's the opportunity arose for systematic fixed odds betting on a number of matches. This was fortuitous for bookmakers, as the duration of the football season from early Autumn to Spring filled the gap left by the closing of the flat racing season between November and March. Hence bookmakers and tipsters saw an opportunity for trade in a previously slack time. This they exploited in two ways; either by the distribution of loose coupons in the streets or by the publication of football coupons unconvincingly dressed up as sporting newspapers. Two points of clarification must be made, however. Firstly, as A.J. Robertson observed, bookmakers and tipsters themselves were often the proprietors of many 'papers comprising the sporting and betting press.<sup>100</sup> This threw into sharp relief the symbiotic relationship between the growth of sport and gambling in the late Victorian

---

<sup>99</sup> A.J. Robertson, *ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>100</sup> A.J. Robertson, *ibid*, pp. 3-4. Football coupon betting and its place in the evolution of the football pools is discussed in chapter eight.



and Edwardian years. Secondly, before the First World War coupon betting was as much linked with horse racing as football. For example, one of the most famous 'papers offering 'skill' competitions at the turn of the century was *Sporting Luck*, a London weekly owned by the enterprising Stoddart family. *Sporting Luck's* 'Racing Skill Competitions' were involved in the important legal test case successfully brought by the National Anti-Gambling League in 1900. Proprietors of such 'papers emphasised the application of skill and judgement, rather than a reliance upon pure luck, which kept gambling competitions on the right side of the law. The League's victory brought some sympathy for Mrs. Ava Jane Stoddart from the *Times* leader in November of that year over inconsistencies in the interpretation of the Lottery Acts. As Stoddart herself argued, a case brought against her by the N.A.G.L. in 1895 had found in her favour, so she continued on the same footing.<sup>101</sup>

The downfall of *Sporting Luck* lay in the weekly offer of one free coupon to predict the winning horse in a forthcoming race, followed by a charge of one penny for subsequent coupons used in the 'paper. The free coupon was taken to infringe the law by inducing people to participate in a lottery. The issue of skill did not count in this case.<sup>102</sup>

The Stoddart's could, however, also rely on the profits of *Football Record* in the North West and its football competition before the war. By 1914 and the demise of *Sporting Luck* that 'paper was no longer offering its own competition but ran advertisements for racing coupons issued by a British bookmaker living in Switzerland, one of many who took themselves abroad to be able to accept cash as well as credit bets through the post.<sup>103</sup>

The N.A.G.L. was prepared to extend its campaign to the enforced opening of mail addressed to advertising tipsters and to newspapers offering coupon competitions which might contravene the Lottery Acts. In a House of

---

101 *The Times*, Nov. 23rd 1900, given in *Sporting Luck*, Nov. 30th 1900, p. 3.

102 *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 111 p. 10.

103 See any edition of *Sporting Luck* January to March 1914.

Lords debate in 1901 Viscount Peel questioned the principle and practicality of this suggestion:

Do I understand you to seriously suggest as a remedy that the Government of the day should authorise the Postmaster-General to open letters which are sealed or fastened because you have reason to suspect that these letters contain advertising tips? Do you think that is a practicable remedy?

*John Hawke:* Our suggestion has only gone so far as where, in the case of, say Stoddart and one or two others, the Post Office receives tens of thousands of registered letters -they are not always registered, but a great number of them are registered- addressed to persons who they know, or could have no difficulty in finding out, are betting agents.

*Peel:* But they would have to open them first, would they not?

*Hawke:* They would have to open one or two of them.<sup>104</sup>

The problem of censorship was at issue here. As the Marquis of Salisbury stated in a House of Lords debate upon Public Betting: it was impossible to 'stop newspapers from giving information upon a thing which is a matter of public interest-namely, the state of the odds on various races. I cannot conceive a state of society in which that kind of censorship of the press would be tolerated.'<sup>105</sup> Neither the banning of s.p. odds or the opening of post was acted upon. Yet the practice by the Postmaster General of opening packages under warrant from the Home Office, to monitor breaches of the Lottery Acts, was contemplated during the Irish Hospital Sweepstake question, promoted by the Irish Hospitals Trust Ltd, of Dublin, from the late 1920's.<sup>106</sup>

In the wake of the *Sporting Luck* case prosecutions followed for many 'papers offering racing or football competitions or any gambling game based purely on chance. *Pearson's Weekly* for instance, and *The Sun* (Chairman, Horatio Bottomley) suffered fines. In the half-penny *Sun* the readers were invited to search for the winning 'sun spots' contained in a limited number of newspapers each day. *The Sun* was fined £25 plus costs for promoting a lottery.<sup>107</sup> *John Bull*, which was taken over by Bottomley from 1906, became

---

<sup>104</sup> *S.C. 1902, Minutes of Evidence*, paras. 102-3, p. 363.

<sup>105</sup> *H.L. Debs.*, 20 May 1901 cols. 553-554.

<sup>106</sup> *S.C. on Lotteries and Betting, 1932-33*, Minutes of Evidence para. 54, p.6.

<sup>107</sup> *Bolton Evening News*, June 7th 1901, p.3.

his mouthpiece not just for the legalisation of off course ready money betting but also for the promotion of 'skill', that is, gambling competitions such as 'Bullets' where the readers had to invent witty sentences from suggested clues. *John Bull* was to subsequently be prosecuted a number of times for its so-called 'skill' competitions. Bottomley, like many bookmakers, took his competition address to Switzerland to defeat the legislation.<sup>108</sup>

Bottomley was a big fish in the sea of the tipster and coupon press. Most of the smaller operators could not achieve the circulation to enable them to meet costs and to continue for more than a few months, or at best a few years. The rapid demise of most of these papers was not so much a result of the actions of the Anti Gambling League as of the intense competitiveness of the market. It may also be argued that punters who wanted to fill in a coupon trusted their money papers with a longer history and a greater likelihood of paying-up. The more enduring papers such as *Sporting Luck* were killed off by the First World War and never regained a toe in the market.

Some of the papers offering tipsters and coupons which lasted a year or more do find their way into *Willings*. *The Sporting Truth and Dramatic Record* (London), April 1889 to December 1900, was a poor copy of the *Era* and other metropolitan leisure life journals, a typical edition contained advertisements for tipsters, tips, racing information, 'Music Hall Gossip', articles on 'The Fancy', 'Guides to the Turf' and short stories of mystery and derring-do. This was printed and published by the proprietor, Fred Hennings, of Covent Garden. *Lotinga's Weekly* ran from March 1910 to July 1914, when it was killed off by probably by the racing restrictions imposed during the early years of the war. Lotinga had been the tipster 'Larry Lynx' in *John Bull* before his vicious row with that paper's proprietor Horatio Bottomley. Two other tipsters who published their own sheets at the turn of the century were Tom Diamond of Glasgow and Jimmie Glover of Leeds. They could claim with

---

<sup>108</sup> Julian Symons, *Horatio Bottomley*, 1955, p. 141.



some honesty that they were party to stable information as they were friends of the trainer John McGuigan. McGuigan argued that none of the 'flotsam and jetsam', the 'so called tipsters', made 'the same personal efforts to obtain information' as Glover and Diamond.<sup>109</sup>

Bookmakers published tipping and coupon sheets to make money and as a means of self publicity. T.H. Dey's friend and rival bookmaker Bob Siever ran *The Winning Post* in London from 1892 to 1894. Dey himself advertised in this and a number of sporting papers before establishing his own sheet, *The Turf Pioneer*, which lasted only a few months in 1894. It was aimed at the working-class starting-price cash betting market. Along with his 's.p. connection', his credit customers and his postal trade based abroad Dey also financed 'a small sporting newspaper called the *Turf Pioneer* but it never achieved a large circulation, and it, with other similar ventures, soon expired.<sup>110</sup>

Most did. If monied backers such as Dey and Siever could not stretch their papers' life beyond a few months or years it was unlikely that gambits with less venture capital behind them could do better. The publication of starting prices, tips and coupon competitions in the local and national dailies and wrecked the chances of most.

Yet sometimes more than simply honest competition damaged the chances of the small fledgling efforts. One North West tipping sheet was born out of an industrial dispute between the printers and ownership of the Hulton Press. The tipster W.G. Campbell, who was 'Galliard' of the *Sunday Chronicle* and 'Carlton' of the *Manchester Daily Dispatch*, both Hulton 'papers, appears to have set up his own tipping sheet *Racing Shares* partly in response to his class conscious identification with the Printers' Typographical Association who were engaged in a dispute with Hulton over pay and working conditions. Campbell's *Racing Shares* was destroyed by this strike. In the *Evening*

---

<sup>109</sup> John McGuigan, *A Trainers Memories*. (ed.) J. Fairfax Blakeborough, 1946, p. 158.

<sup>110</sup> T.H. Dey, *Leaves From a Bookmakers' Book*, 1931, pp. 26-7.

*Newspaper*, the paper brought out independently by the strikers using the National Labour Press, Campbell explained to his readers the reasons for a suspension in publication:

Owing to the dispute at present prevailing between the masters and men of the printing industry in Lancashire and Cheshire, the editor of this go-ahead sporting sheet was with the utmost reluctance, compelled to suspend publication last week. Meanwhile, arrangements have been satisfactorily fixed up with a well known printing firm paying the full rate of wages and the paper will appear as usual tomorrow, when the programmes to be decided at Alexandra Park, Warwick, Ayr, Yarmouth, and Windsor will be thoroughly dealt with.<sup>111</sup>

The striking printers themselves were shrewd enough to appreciate the addition to sales that betting intelligence offered. The first edition on August 31st 1920 promised its readers that tomorrow it was to publish 'a first edition giving a program of the races for the day. This will be on sale in the street at 10.30.' They soon introduced their own tipster 'Master Herbert.' But the fate of both *Racing Shares* and the *Evening Paper* illustrated that Hulton and the established press could wield power and influence enough to cripple the upstart opposition. Extel decided not to transmit any information to the National Labour Press, and in so doing incurred the following analysis of the situation from the striking printers:

Arrangements were made yesterday by the Manager of the National Labour Press with the Manchester Representative of the Press Association and Exchange Telegraph Company's joint service for a general news service and racing and sports results. Tonight we are informed, not altogether to our surprise, that no news from this source will be supplied to us. It is a move that might have been predicted with certainty, but at least we made the attempt to obtain news. It is another example of the power of capitalism, organised to break every attempt made to invade what it presumes to call its prerogatives. It is a further illustration of the forces against which struggle has to be made to break that tremendous power of organised capitalism which strives to keep people in economic bondage.<sup>112</sup>

Such bitterness in the light of what was in effect censorship -the restriction of access to the news facilities of Extel- was also frustrated by the difficulty of

---

<sup>111</sup> *The Evening Newspaper*, Sept. 10th 1920, p. 2.

<sup>112</sup> *The Evening Newspaper*, Sept. 2nd 1920 p. 1.

entering a local and sporting press dominated by Hulton.

In 1891 Seton-Churchill accused newspapers with tipsters of promoting 'lies of the most barefaced character.'<sup>113</sup> This view of the tipster-as-liar found strong support within the anti gambling movement. 'Mr. Tipster and his dupes' was a common enough theme, and some thirty years after Churchill E.B. Perkins derided 'the bad English covering an utterly stupid pretence at knowledge' which characterised the tipster press.<sup>114</sup>

The failure of tipsters themselves to make a fortune out of their inside knowledge did not bother the owners of ordinary newspapers, who began to offer their own tipsters alongside the provision of coupon competitions and racing and sporting intelligence. This process began during the 1890's and was speeded up during the 1920's during the circulation war between the popular newspapers. The instigation of greyhound stadia and the growth of the football pools were visible signs that the gambling market was flourishing. For example, the *Daily Mirror* did not contain a tipster in its early years, although it did run a 'Bridge Day by Day' competition for leather bound card cases containing cards, marking cards and the various accoutrements of bridge. But the *Mirror* introduced the tipsters 'Newsboy' and 'Bouverie' during the 1920's, and the prize competition 'Crosswords', with its skill element of word play, for an entry of 6d and prizes of £2,500. In 1900 the racing reportage of the *Daily Mail* was a rather staid and restrained affair, with only a few small column inches on racing news: the weather, 'Official Scratchings', 'Latest London Prices'. By the late 1920's the tipster-gossip Robin Goodfellow (in reality Captain Eric Rickman), 'Yeoman's Gossip', and 'Dalrymple' were all offering tips and advice. The *Mail* was also offering 'Crosswords' prize competitions of between £500 and £2,500. The *Daily Sketch* took no chances. Its first edition in March 1909 offered tips from the inside knowledge of 'Gimcrack'. By 1930 it had introduced 'Fairwords' and 'Crosswords', with

---

<sup>113</sup> H. Seton Churchill, *Betting and Gambling*, 1894, pp. 119-120.

<sup>114</sup> E.B. Perkins. *The Problem of Gambling*, 1919, p77.



entry of 6d and 1.5d respectively, for prizes of £250 and £100. Even labour newspapers felt compelled to add tipsters and coupon competitions. As Stephen Jones points out, the communist *Daily Worker* had tried to do without tips as it did not want to perpetuate a 'gigantic swindle' on the working class. It stopped them in 1930 but they were back again by 1934.<sup>115</sup> The names of these tipsters spoke of inside information from the sporting world of the turf or reflected the names of successful horses.

The *News of the World* had no competitions in the early years of this century but by the early 1920's it offered readers skill-based 'Crosswords' prizes or 'Fashion' competitions for potential rewards of £2,000 or £2,500 respectively. Coupon entry was 1.5d. Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*'s contained the tipsters 'Scout' and 'Bendex' by 1932. Their coupon competitions upped the winnings from goods items such as margarine and cigarettes to £2,000 which could be won in the 'St. Leger Contest' in the Autumn of 1932. Horatio Bottomley's *John Bull* -he took over the editorship in 1906- was a prime mover in providing gambling competitions.<sup>116</sup>

Some newspapers, for example the *Manchester Evening News*, owned by the nonconformist Russell Allen, who gave evidence to the Select Committee of 1902, resisted the spreading of tips, even though they offered starting prices and racing news. This lent an extra dimension to the local rivalry between papers. This rivalry was echoed in the readership and distribution of Manchester's newspapers. In the early years of this century, Nellie Bark's father, a newsagent and Methodist strongly opposed to betting, only stocked the *News*:

there was warfare between the two -my father and my uncle- because one was an *Evening News* agent and one was an *Evening Chronicle* agent. And you were supposed, if you were an *Evening News* agent, far superior to an *Evening Chronicle* agent, because they did a lot of betting and horse racing and the *Evening News* didn't.<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Stephen Jones, *op cit*, p. 266.

<sup>116</sup> Julian Symons, *op cit*, 1955. Chapter 11: 'Sweepstakes and Lotteries', pp. 137 -60.

<sup>117</sup> Nellie Bark, File No. 045, p. 13, University of Essex Oral Archive.

This was the gist of Russell Allen's view to the Royal Commission, yet the *News* had introduced the tipster 'Rataplan' by 1914. But Hulton was the major purveyor of betting news in Manchester. The N.A.G.L. singled out the *Midday Chronicle*, the morning edition of the *Manchester Evening Chronicle* for 'special mention' to the 1932-33 Royal Commission. This came out in fact at 6 a.m. and again at 1 p.m., earning itself the colloquial title of the 'One o'clock'.<sup>118</sup>

Like other sporting papers and local newspapers offering racing results, it was sold in the streets by newspaper boys. Selling the sporting papers was probably one of their first jobs as they entered the labour market, and for C.E.B. Russell it was a potentially dangerous introduction into the world of betting.<sup>119</sup>

The *Manchester Evening Chronicle* was the most prolific of the more popular local newspapers who began to offer buff and other coloured editions containing purely sporting and betting information, tips, gossip, the past form of horses, and the results of all sporting events. It also offered the 'St. Leger' and 'Brighton Autumn Cup' competitions in September 1932, for prizes of £1,500 and £150 respectively. Canon Green of Salford was not far wrong when he argued to the 1923 *Select Committee on Betting Duty* that 'half the evening papers in the North of England would have to close down if it were not for their betting editions.'<sup>120</sup>

The economist Guy Chapman's discussion of the rise of the sporting press was not wholly accurate when he argued that the *Sporting Clipper* began the 'long line' of 'Ajax' and other tipsters.<sup>121</sup> The infusion of, firstly, advertising tipsters into the local papers in the mid nineteenth century and, later, the flood of tipping sheets and coupon papers offered by tipsters,

---

<sup>118</sup> *S.C. 1902*, Minutes of Evidence, testimony of Russell Allen, paras. 1587-88, p. 74. *R.C. 1932-33*, Appendix by N.A.G.L. pp. 196-8.

<sup>119</sup> C.E.B. Russell, *Manchester Boys*, Manchester 1985, p. 14, (first published 1905). See Plate 3 of the appendix for a photograph of newspapers boys..

<sup>120</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 6800 p. 396.

<sup>121</sup> Guy Chapman, *Culture and Survival*, 1940, p. 115.

bookies and other entrepreneurs were the broader origins of this phenomenon. But in general, the popular press, both local and national, had incorporated tipsters and coupon competitions by or during the 1920's. This was, in a sense, both the apogee and nadir of the tipster and coupon press.

### Conclusion

From the early Victorian years betting and gambling was designated as both a moral and social problem. Morally, it offended the legitimate processes of money making and the acquisition of property. Socially, it was felt that whilst the rich might still be allowed to bet privately with luxuries, the poor could not be allowed to endanger their own economic interests, nor to cause a public nuisance, by betting away their scarce resources in cheap gambling houses. The Acts of 1845 and 1853, taken together, attempted to institutionalise this *status quo*. But they were passed at an inopportune moment in the history of mass betting, and all they produced was a widespread evasion of the law and the subsequent growth of an anti-gambling lobby. This failure of intention became increasingly exposed as the commercialised mass gambling market flourished. An extended and transmuted 'sporting' interest - the sporting press and the bookmakers - provided the facilities for this market and supplied its most vociferous spokesmen. The voice of the punters, however, was evident in actions rather than words. They signalled their disapproval of the laws by continuing to bet regardless of police intervention. The social network which made this possible is the subject of the next chapter.



## Chapter 3: Street Betting in Lancashire, c.1906-1961.

### Introduction

This chapter is divided into three areas. Firstly, the day-to-day activity of illegal off-course cash betting following the 1906 Act, and the cooperative communal network which made this possible, is described. This entails a brief examination of the position of the street bookmaker within this network, although a more detailed study of off-course ready-money bookmakers is reserved for the next chapter.

Secondly, the role and position of the bookmakers' agents, the runners, is discussed within the network of street betting. The economic motives for becoming runners or look-outs is assessed as part of a wider analysis of the relationship between the informal-illegal betting market and the local economy.

Finally, the punters are examined in relation to the following questions: what sections of the working class betted most regularly on horses? What were their reasons for betting, their criticisms of the gambling laws and their attitude to the street bookmakers and his runners? 'The moral economy of the punter', it is argued, is not an irrational but an explicable mosaic of beliefs and strategies which take their rationale from the social and economic circumstances of the working class in the bigger Lancashire towns.

### The Social Network of Organised Street Betting

'Street Betting' was a blanket term for an activity which took place furtively in working-class districts. Not just the street and the street corners, but also homes, alleyways ('entries', 'jiggers' or 'ginnels') backyards, wastegrounds, railway arches, municipal parks, shops, public houses, working men's clubs, mills and other workplaces were all locales where bets could be collected and paid-out.

The illegal network of street betting and the system developed between bookmakers and the punters for 'getting bets on' came into full existence after the mid 1850's, the legislative reasons for which were described in the previous chapter. This was made up of the street bookmaker (colloquially known as the 'bookie'), his agents (the 'runners', touts and look-outs) and the punters. The betting transaction between the punter and the bookie took place in a number of ways, and varied according to local custom and the size of the bookies' operations. People would either take their bets directly to the bookmaker or his runner, who usually operated from a nearby house, or the bookie's runners would come and collect bets from the pubs, clubs, houses and workplaces on behalf of the bookmaker. The bookmaker often had an agent at the works who would collect the bets and hand them to the bookie or his runner at dinnertime. The Report of the *Select Committee* of 1923 argued that there was 'scarcely a works in the country employing more than twenty workmen where there (was) not a bookmaker's agent.'<sup>1</sup> This caused particular concern in the North West, an area suffering from increasing international competition from the late nineteenth century. Gambling at work was identified as an exacerbating factor -if not a major cause- of the economic problems of Edwardian and inter-war Britain discussed in the previous chapter. Fears over lost production, and the related concern for the physical and mental well-being of Lancashire's industrial working class, was an important contemporary issue. As the *Manchester Guardian* put it, everyone who knows the life of the towns and of the mills and factories outside them, to go no further, knows that absorption in betting to the exclusion or dwarfing of other interests, has become an endemic disease eating into the vitals of English people as the murrain eats into the life of the cattle of Cheshire.'<sup>2</sup> Such fears endured amongst the more committed anti-gamblers. Canon Green, uncritically basing his testimony on information

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Select Committee on Betting Duty, 1923*, Chaired by Charles Cautley, p. xii.

<sup>2</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, June 9th, 1924, p. 6.

supplied to him by employers, informed the 1923 Select Committee that it was common for workmen in Lancashire to ignore their work and talk of gambling, some even 'deliberately setting their machine tools 1/64th of an inch from the job so that they can talk gambling and there was no chance of a mistake whilst they debated.'<sup>3</sup>

Small shops, such as barbers' shops, newsagents and grocers acted as agents for the bookmaker. And publicans would also, despite the possibility of losing a licence, allow agents to collect and pay out bets in their saloon bars or tap rooms. Canon Green stated that the police knew of only six public houses in Salford in the early 1920's 'where betting was not prevalent' and, because one licensed victualler refused to have betting on his premises, 'the man failed.'<sup>4</sup>

Some parents allowed their children to take bets to the bookie or his runner, an aspect which worried many social workers and anti-gambling campaigners, both of whom were concerned that the habit of betting was being learned amongst the young by example and encouragement.<sup>5</sup>

In the late nineteenth century and during the first forty years of the twentieth, the smallest-scale bookies or those just starting out, usually did business from a street pitch, in an entry or semi-conspicuous spot where 'he would make it known he would take bets'.<sup>6</sup> In the North West, however, most appear to have worked from the front or back room of a house in a working-class district. Some of these were dressed up as a Commission Agent's Office kept ostensibly for credit betting, but even the largest credit bookmakers ran an illicit under-trade in ready-money betting, which was often more lucrative than the legal side and the foundation of their wealth.

Most bookies' establishments were surreptitiously guarded by look-outs

---

3 *S.C. 1923*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 6769, pp. 393-4.

4 *Ibid*, para.6770, p. 394.

5 C.E.B. Russell, *op cit*, 1980, p113. (first published 1913). Liverpool Council of Voluntary Aid, 1926. *Report on Betting in Liverpool*, p. 5.

6 Charles Sidney, *op cit*, 1976, p. 77.



or 'dogger-outs', (in Liverpool this was often called 'keeping nicks' or 'dousing'), who warned by signalling of potential police raids. Many houses, as we will see, were customised, or adapted to allow bets to be slipped quickly and quietly through a back window or a special flap.

From before the First World War to the 1930's the stake money and the form of the bets varied from one penny, tu`penny and thru`penny singles, doubles and trebles to bets for sixpence, a shilling, half-a-crown (2/6d) and sometimes above this. From oral testimonies for Lancashire the most popular bets seem to have been thru`penny and sixpenny singles doubles and trebles.<sup>7</sup> This does not contradict the evidence, in the form of betting slips seized by the police, which were presented by the police to the parliamentary enquiries of the inter war years.<sup>8</sup> The size of the stakes were in large part determined by the levels of income, but in the poorer areas of Lancashire amounts larger than this would have been beyond the economic means of the majority of working-class punters who betted on a regular or semi-regular basis.

The stake money itself was wrapped up in little slips of paper bearing a *nom de plume* to guarantee anonymity to the punter in the event of a police raid. *Nom de plumes*, like nicknames, often reflected a physical or occupational feature of the punter, for example 'Vick' the root of the surname Vickerman.<sup>9</sup> The police, however, almost always aimed at the bookmaker or his agent; in Lancashire at least, apprehensions of punters rarely occurred. As we will see, these raids were often arranged between the police and the bookmakers but genuine raids did occur. The following newspaper report illustrates the nature and extent of street bookmaking in a working-class suburb of Liverpool in 1915, and the difficulties involved in the operation of a

---

<sup>7</sup> Writer's Oral Project: C.E. Jeffrey, born Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire, 1915; QU. A.S. McKensie, born Salford, Lancashire, 1932; QU. Stephen Hamer, born Bolton, 1921. Tape 1, Side 1.

<sup>8</sup> The Chief Constable of Liverpool told the *S.C.* 1923 that most bets were from six pence to two shillings and sixpence. Minutes of Evidence, paras 768-71, pp. 38-39.

<sup>9</sup> Writer's oral project: Mrs. M. Vickerman, born Huddersfield, Yorkshire, 1918; QU.

genuine raid:

Considerable interest centred on a case at Bootle Police Court yesterday, in which Arthur Clarke was charged on warrant under the Betting Acts, with keeping a house, 176 Wadham Road, Bootle, of which he was both owner and occupier, for the purposes on October 27th and other dates. A crowd of people, including many women, assembled in the precincts of the court during the hearing.

The distressing feature of the case was that children, aged from six years upwards, had been engaged in the nefarious business carried on by defendant. Defendant had been engaged in betting at his house for a considerable time, but the premises were so well guarded by scouts that it was only the other day that Det. Serg. Bell, in company with Det's Higgins and Rushton, effected an entrance. The house had a back entrance, approached by a passage, and the procedure had been for people making bets to enter by the rear and hand in bets to defendant through a window which had been raised 18 inches.

In consequence of complaints, the police kept the house under observation on October 27th and '28th. During the four hours 11a.m. to 3p.m. on the former date, the following persons entered and left by the back way: 139 men, 85 women, 44 children total 268, many of them carrying slips of paper in their hands. By the front door, during the same hours 18 men, 10 women and 3 young girls and 3 young boys (aged between 10-14) entered.

When the house was searched, 732 betting slips relating to the previous day were discovered. These slips represented 1,741 bets, amounting to £244 12s., the items ranging from 3d to £6. (Bench fined defendant £100 and £4 costs).<sup>10</sup>

A number of oral respondents have provided similar accounts of street betting at a nearby bookie's house. Walter McCarthy, speaking of Hulme, Manchester in the 1930's, said that bookmakers 'all lived in the houses and betted from the houses'. His description was similar to Alex McKensie of Salford who remembered:

The 'office' was in the rear room of a terraced house in each case, complete with a telephone and 'blower'...A simple cover over a back yard led to a door with a "window" cut in, this window was just a hole with a removable shutter/cover and it had a small shelf on the inside. Bets were placed by knocking on the shelter if not open, and handing in the bet through the opening... look-outs ('dogger outs') were placed at strategic points to warn of police activities, these were usually assisted by enthusiastic local youngsters. The bookie usually had a 'mug' whose main job was to be caught by the

---

<sup>10</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 5th November, 1915, p. 3

police with nominal evidence only...'<sup>11</sup>

Jack Hamer, a large-scale bookmaker in Bolton from the end of the First World War also operated from a house.

The Report of the Select Committee of 1923 provided a general description of street betting. Bookmakers 'doing a fair business' it argued, employed a number of runners who would 'perambulate certain particular streets or places in a town on race days at certain particular times, say between 11a.m. and 1.30p.m.'<sup>12</sup> Joe McCormick, speaking of Gerards Bridge, St. Helens, talking of the time from 1925 onwards, gave a less prosaic description of this arrangement:

one of the favourite places for bookies' meeting was a Saturday afternoon in the old market. They'd an old open market and you'd get four or five bookies' runners there, an' you knew same as Featherstone was tekin' for 'Spec Appleton', Sid Mappy (Mapston) was tekin' for Bob Collins, such a body was tekin' for 'Arry Ormshaw, see. An' you'd go to 'im dependin' on which bookie you wanted to place your bets with, and then 'e'd say "well I'll see you in the market tonight if you've anythin' to come back". Now you knew which pub he'd be in for payin' out, so you'd just go down to the pub if you'd any winnings due.<sup>13</sup>

Oral evidence for other parts of England illustrates that the street betting arrangement varied from place to place. How strongly such local and regional differences were drawn, however, it is impossible to tell with any precision. A number of important determining factors will have been in play. The size and nature of the local betting market, and its relationship to the economic fortunes of the legitimate formal economy of the region, affected the numbers, the economic capacity and the longevity of gambling speculators. The longer bookmakers lasted, perhaps, and the more money they made, the more likely they were to consolidate their market and set up business at home or from the home of an agent. The wealthier ones, like Sam

---

<sup>11</sup> Writer's Oral Project: Walter McCarthy, born Hulme, Manchester, 1919 Tape 6, Side 1. Alex McKensie, *op cit.* See also Richard Heaton *Salford, My Home Town*, Manchester 1983, p. 10 for a similar set-up.

<sup>12</sup> *S.C. 1923*, Report, p. xiii.

<sup>13</sup> Writer's oral project: Joe McCormick, born St. Helens, Lancashire, 1923, Tape 6, Side 2.



Grundy in *Love on the Dole*, often took advantage of their success and moved out to posher parts of the town or city.

The organisation of street betting probably changed little from the later nineteenth century to 1961, although this question merits further research, perhaps on the use of cars or motorbikes by runners as motor vehicles became more common. We will now look at runners.

### The Runners

For those punters who were unable to take their bets directly to the bookmaker or his office, the runner was the vital link. As well as receiving bets from an outdoor pitch in entries or alleyways, the runner would 'run' round to the pubs and workplaces within the bookmakers' area. Dinner-time, before the afternoon's racing, was when most transactions took place, as a worker for Mass Observation noted:

Midday, vault. The bookies runner comes in and has argument with the landlady about her yesterday's doubles. Betting slips and newspapers are produced. She then makes bets on day's races. The runner has a gill of mild.<sup>14</sup>

Tom Marston, of Whittle-le-Woods near Chorley, had a round of pubs from which he had to collect the bets in time for the 'off':

Every pub in this village...the people used to hand the bets to the landlord, and I used to peddle in on me bike to see the right amount were backed, peddle off to the next pub and take the bets for 'em because there was no other way to get their bets on..<sup>15</sup>

The workplace was central to dinner-time betting and running. Gambling at work, whether office or machine-shop, mine or mill, reflected the dovetailing of work and leisure in a working-class community, and the runner made this possible in many cases. Tom Marston again:

The working man used to take his paper to work, go in the bog where the boss couldn't see him, stick his horses out, write it out, bring it to me and then I would put it in me clock-I got it up at 2 o' clock in time for the first race- come 'ome,

---

<sup>14</sup> M.O., *The Pub and the People*, Welwyn Garden City, 1970, p. 263 (first published 1943)

<sup>15</sup> In Mark Clapson, *The Social Significance of Working-Class Gambling in Lancashire, 1900-39*. Unpublished M.A. dissertation, 1983, University of Lancaster, p. 21.

pick the bets up off the wife, go down to the bookie's, hand the money up straight off, then come back and pay everybody out next day.<sup>16</sup>

Joe McCormick recalled the runners near Pilkingtons glass works in St. Helens, between the wars and after:

In fact the runner nearest to us was just outside of Pilkington's Lodge, only about 25 yards from the lodge. And you'd see 'em streaming out at 12 o'clock, going into the back yard, and he used to set it out like a bank window-you used to slip your bets under.<sup>17</sup>

Many bookmakers had agents in factories who whilst employed there would take bets for the bookie or his runner. This was usually accomplished, certainly from the 1920's, by the use of the clock bag, a piece of equipment designed to eliminate cheating and ensure the safe facilitation of the bets to the bookmaker before the race. The clock bag was a canvas bag attached to an automatic clock which operated a time lock at the mouth of the bag. This clock was set to close the bag at the exact time of the first race of the day, when it would then snap shut and receive no more bets. The runner -in theory- could receive no more bets. The bookmaker had the key.<sup>18</sup> The runner deposited the bag with the bookie as soon as possible after the race had started. Some runners assisted in the reckoning up or settling of the bets. Paying out took place that evening or the next day. Runners sometimes kept the names of the punters in a little notebook or diary, or if it was only a small round, committed the names of the punters and their *nom de plumes* to memory. A good memory was a qualification for the job.

Observers for M.O., along with a number of respondents, not just ex-bookies and their relatives, have said that the bookmakers and their agents participated in the social and economic life of the community. The runner often devolved these extra-bookmaking activities, lending money, allowing bets 'on the strap' (on credit) and paying out towards charities, raffles,

---

<sup>16</sup> Clapson, *ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>17</sup> Joe McCormick, *op cit*.

<sup>18</sup> See Plate 2 in the Appendix.

community trips and such events. For example, Joe Kinsella, remembering the Scotland Road area of Liverpool from the 1930's wrote that runners 'were genial characters who were to the forefront in helping people out in less fortunate circumstances.' Joe McCormick said the bookie and his runners were

...very generous. Well, even the bookies runner would lend a person a couple of quid to buy a rabbit and a cabbage for their Sunday dinner.'<sup>19</sup>

Such generosity and geniality were of course not based purely on reciprocity. The runner also needed to maintain his standing with the punters in the neighbourhood. This was the instrumentality of familiarity. One Bethnal Green runner in the 1930's accepted payments of fish and fruit from the local market porters instead of the stake money proper. These were punters who already owed for strap bets and as he told his sister, 'If I don't do it, May, they're gonna go to somebody else then I'll never get my twenty (pounds) back.'<sup>20</sup>

The runner was probably under some compulsion or incentive from the bookmaker not to lose any trade, and these informal activities reflected this. The giving of the stake money to the runner illustrated the *quid pro quo* involved and perhaps an appreciation of the runners economic situation, of his unemployment or irregular earnings.

Mass Observations' emphasis on the popularity of the runner was at odds with that given by Robert Roberts for Edwardian Salford who writes that runners were perceived to be 'at the bottom of the social pyramid' along with 'idlers, part-time beggars and petty thieves...'<sup>21</sup> Yet it might be argued that Roberts over-emphasises the lowly disreputable character of the runner, as of the bookmaker, a result of the influence of his shopkeeper mothers' didacticism and emphasis on self-improvement. The distaste he held for gambling was strongly in evidence in both *The Classic Slum* and *A Ragged*

---

<sup>19</sup> Writer's Oral Project: Joe Kinsella, born Liverpool, 1923; QU. Joe McCormick, *op cit*.

<sup>20</sup> Writer's Oral Project: May Smith, born 1913, Bethnal Green, London, Tape 7, Side 1.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, 1983, p. 21.



*Schooling*. But most people probably felt the runner was doing a good job.

How far people were prepared to relax notions of respectability when economic circumstances became difficult is no easy matter to assess. For most punters the runner was of the same class and economic circumstances as they, but had hit upon bad times. Many punters became runners in periods of irregular employment or unemployment, and were thus usually supplementing poor relief or, from 1929, the Public Assistance allowance. The Pilgrim Trust emphasised this for Liverpool between the wars. George Hewins - 'The Dillen' - ran bets for 'Brummagen Richard' in Stratford-Upon-Avon in the 1930's whilst unemployed. A number of ex-punters had become runners for the same reason during the 1920's and '30's.<sup>22</sup> Some had had relatives who were runners for a while.<sup>23</sup> Tom Marston was probably an exception to the rule, as he left work at a local mill to become a full-time runner for a Chorley bookmaker in the 1950's. In the years of full employment after the war, the number of full time runners may have increased, especially if the job offered greater money than more orthodox employment.

A hard working runner with a big round could probably earn a substantial amount outside of formal employment. The runner was not usually paid a set wage but was paid on a piece rate system. He took a commission of one shilling and sixpence in the pound for bets collected.<sup>24</sup> This was consistent from the 1920's through to the 1950's. There were exceptions, however. E.W. Bakke, an American social observer of inter-war Britain, found one runner who was paid £12 a week by his employer.<sup>25</sup>

The bookies' runner and the bookie, but more usually the 'dummy' or

---

22 The Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*, 1938, p. 157. Angela Hewins (ed.), *The Dillen: Memories of a Man of Stratford Upon Avon*, Oxford, 1983, p. 173. Writer's Oral Project: Harry Blankley, born Nottingham, 1899, Tape 10, Side 1.

23 Joe McCormick's uncle was a runner. See also K. Armstrong's oral history of the 1930's Depression in the North East, *Hello, Are You Working*, 1977, testimony of Connie Lewcock, p. 47.

24 Stephen Hamer, *op cit*. Harry Blankley, *op cit*. William Beesley, a street bookmaker from Plaistow, East London, told the Royal Commission of 1949-51 that commission for runners had been one shilling and sixpence in the pound since the 1930's, Minutes of Evidence, para. 1155, p. 81

25 E. Wight Bakke, *The Unemployed Man*, 1933, p. 199.

'mug' were the targets for the police strategy against betting. The punter was rarely 'nabbed'. The bookie, furthermore, always paid the fine, which from 1906 was £20 for a first offence, £50 for a second offence and £100 and/or 3 months gaol for a third and repeated offences. Repeated arrest were probably bad for trade. This was where the 'mug' came in. He was usually unemployed or a pensioner whom the bookie had offered a financial reward to stand in for the runner to be arrested. This was probably a welcome windfall, in which economic considerations outweighed those accompanying the probable lack of respectability which having a criminal record would cause.

A runner who was arrested in a genuine raid usually lost his job, as the bookmaker wanted to be rid of an employee who was known to the police. This was evident in the following exchange between Dennis Parkes and Ted Jones:

*Dennis:* If you was a regular runner an' you got pinched you nearly always lost your job didn't you Ted?

*Ted:* Oh yeah, no 'e wouldn't put 'im up twice.<sup>26</sup>

If a genuine police raid occurred runners would, of course, try to escape. In this they often received help from the locals. For Middlesbrough in 1906, Lady Bell noted that a policeman might watch 'as much as he likes' but 'most of the cottages have back doors and a way out into a back street, and nothing is easier than to go in at one door and out at the other.'<sup>27</sup> A Salford woman gave a vivid account of how this happened:

...they had what they called a runner, that was all mi father could do, well they were lookin' out for the police, 'cos the police were on every so often, they'd all shout 'Charlie they're here', well everybody opened their doors then and whoever was the runner like he shouted to the other fella to come in, so they had an idea when they were coming...I were only a little kid, soon as they said they were coming everybody opened their doors and the runner ran through and you locked your gate, and they ran through to the house

---

<sup>26</sup> Writer's oral project: Dennis Parkes and Ted Jones (an interview which took place in Dennis's fishmonger shop, May, 1985. Dennis Parkes, born Harbourn, Birmingham, 1930. A bookmaker's son. Ted Jones, born Handsworth, Birmingham, 1907, a punter. Tape 5, Side 1.

<sup>27</sup> Lady Bell, *At the Works*, 1985, p. 255, (first published 1907).

on the other side.<sup>28</sup>

Runners tried to destroy the evidence too. Flushing slips down the toilet or eating the slips have been testified to.<sup>29</sup>

Another activity in which runners and punters cooperated was in fiddling the bookie. The most common way, perhaps, was the example given by Joe McCormick:

The main rule was if you had a friend, a settler; well, that friend he would slip you a bet in when he was settlin' and he'd write you a couple of winners in and put your *nom de plume* on. And then next time he could put you in a couple and put another *nom de plume* on.<sup>30</sup>

If runners were caught they were probably sacked and subsequently blacked by the local bookmaking fraternity. How liable they were to violent recrimination is a difficult matter to assess.

Despite such fiddles, a basic honesty was required of the runner (as of the bookmaker) by the punter. A runner who 'welshed' was unlikely to be trusted again with the bets. This ostensible hypocrisy over fiddling is explicable only by further examination of the personal and family economies and morality of working-class betters. This may be termed the 'moral economy' of the punter.

#### The Moral Economy of the Punter

The fiddle against the bookmaker by both runners and punters stemmed from a realistic appraisal that the odds favoured the bookmaker, and that consequently he could afford to pay out in fair bets or foul. He was collecting many stakes and deducting expenses and winnings from them. Apart from a string of favourites coming home first, the bookie was likely to make a profit of some sort from each race (see chapter four, below) As Joe McCormick put it, 'we always used to say, "tek it off them as 'ave it"'<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> *Bolton Oral History Project*, Bolton Local History Library, Tape Transcript No. 157a

<sup>29</sup> Harry Blankley, *op cit*; Dennis Parkes and Ted Jones, *op cit*.

<sup>30</sup> Joe McCormick, *ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Joe McCormick, *ibid*.



Oral evidence contains a number of anecdotes which highlight the ever present willingness of the punters to 'do' the bookie, and also of the runners to fiddle him if they felt they could get away with it. A fiddle was basically a bet on a horse or dog which had already won. As well as tricks with runners, pigeons or the telephone could be used to transmit the names of the winners to punters immediately after the race, so that a safe 'bet' could be made. For example, Walter McCarthy answering the question 'Can you remember when they first set up White City or Belle Vue?', a question intended to elicit his memories of the first big greyhound meetings, answered:

Yeah, oh I could tell you a tale about that, yeah. When they first started at White City, the only bookie in that area of Manchester -Alf Birds- was the only bookie with a 'phone. So we'd send a chap to White City dogs with a basket to put the pigeons in. You could get a bet on at the bookies' up to the second race, so we had a lad at White City first race, a five dog race, you'd have five dogs written out; the dog'd'd won, on the pigeon and away, the name of the winner, and the pigeon loft was right near the bookies', so we'd wait for this pigeon comin' in and if we got it down right away we'd get the first winner. But he got wise to that of course.<sup>32</sup>

Bookmakers knew they were going to be fiddled from time to time. As Stephen Hamer, a bookies' son in Bolton who became one himself in the 1950's, put it, 'It was catch as catch can. If they could do you they would. To them you were fair game, the bookie were fair game.'<sup>33</sup>

The appreciation of the punters that the odds favoured the bookie was given little or no recognition by anti-gambling propagandists who portrayed the punters as unsuspecting prey to the bookmakers' intentions. Both the study of the past form and the deployment of various superstitious devices were attempts by the backer to try, as far as possible, to eliminate risk from the bet.

The fiddle against the bookmaker was justified not only by the realisation of the bookmakers' financial superiority. It was, especially for the poorer punter, a minor aspect of a wider strategy of 'getting by', one of many

---

<sup>32</sup> Walter McCarthy, *op cit.*

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Hamer, *op cit.*

'bits on the side' which were seized when available. To explore this further, a class analysis of the punters is necessary.

Unfortunately, before the 1940's no objective quantitative study of the class basis nor of the size of the punting public was undertaken. The Parliamentary Enquiries of 1902, 1923 and 1932-3 were convinced that the increase in betting was located within 'the artisan and working classes' but, short of the 'scarifying figures'<sup>34</sup> of the anti-gambling league, there was no comparative examination of those most likely to bet within this broad strata.

Mass Observations' *Mass Gambling*, completed in 1947, tends to support the view that the incidence of betting did not vary greatly within the working class. From a sample of 1,600 people, Mass Observation give the following breakdown:

*Most Frequent Gamblers on Horses are:*  
 Unskilled Workers-38 per cent  
 Administrative Grades-37 per cent  
 Skilled Workers-34 per cent  
*Least Frequent are:*  
 Clerical Workers-26 per cent  
 Retired and Unoccupied-15 and 26 per cent'.<sup>35</sup>

It should be remembered that by this time 'skilled worker' was replacing 'artisan' as a general occupational description. Mass Observation also gave the results of the occupational differences in the amount staked:

Skilled workers average substantially higher stakes on dogs and a somewhat higher stake on horses than unskilled, (13/8d against 9/3; 5/10d against 4/11;), but their average stake on pools is the same.

Mass Observation also found that the poorest gambled least frequently and for the smallest amounts. In common with M.O., the *Social Survey of Betting* found in 1951 that 44 per cent of their sample of over 2,900 punters betted on horses. They noted that the average stake for ready-money punters was eight shillings compared to the £3.10s. of credit punters. They found a small majority of punters were middle-aged and middle-waged, but few bet more than £40

---

<sup>34</sup> This is Geoffrey Gorer's phrase. He was a social anthropologist. See 'British Life: It's a Gamble', in R.D. Herman, (ed.), *Gambling*, 1967, p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> M.O., *Mass Gambling*, 1947, p. 32.

per year, less than £1 (twenty two shillings) a week. Most bet 'comparatively small sums.'<sup>36</sup>

Working-class gambling was thus conducted in a more moderate fashion than the accusations levelled against it. Canon Green, the *doyen* of the anti-gambling lobby in the inter war years, told the Select Committee of 1923 that one million 'cases of demoralisation' resulted from betting, a view treated with some caution by the questioner.<sup>37</sup> Except in extreme pathological cases, no causal link between gambling and poverty was ever established. Pauperism was more likely to result from low wages and inadequate poor relief. As Rowntree illustrated, people were on the poverty line before expenditure took place. For a family of five in Lancashire in the mid 1930's, unemployment benefit amounted to 33s. a week, a quarter of which went on rent.<sup>38</sup> This automatically placed them below Rowntree's 'minimum standard' of 35s. –*after rent was paid*- required for the purchase of the necessaries of life: an adequate diet and good clothing. As the poorest regulated their betting in such circumstances, and given that most bets were between a penny and two and sixpence, the role of gambling when compared to deficient income was negligible.

Gambling appeared reckless and improvident, yet as Orwell argued in *The Road to Wigan Pier* during the 1930's, it allowed people to buy a bit of hope, and a chance win could proffer a temporary profusion of nice things. Thus Joseph Toole, who grew up in Edwardian Salford and later became a socialist and the mayor of Manchester, remembered that a big win by his father gave new clothes to the whole family and a trip to Blackpool, the first time he had seen the sea. Harry Hardcastle, in *Love on the Dole*, bought clothes and went to the seaside as well.<sup>39</sup> Gambling winnings provided in

---

<sup>36</sup> W.F.F.Kemsley and D.Ginsburg, *Betting in Britain*, 1951, pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>37</sup> *S.C. 1923*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 6824-5, p. 398.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Constantine, *Unemployment in Britain Between the Wars*, 1980, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph ('Joe') Toole, *Fighting Through Life*, 1935, p. 56; Walter Greenwood, *Love on the Dole*, 1983, p. 119 (first published 1933).



one instant what months or years of saving were aimed at. It was a realistic economic response to the negligible opportunities for saving, which was a problem for both the poorest and those in regular but low paid work.

Gambling and the Culture of Poverty in the North West Since the 1900's

The nature of working-class leisure before the Second World War was very different from that of the 1950's and since, when higher incomes for most working people led to a growth of consumer spending upon T.V. sets, cars and a wide range of household labour-saving devices which increased the quantity and quality of non-work hours.<sup>40</sup> A number of social observers stressed the problems of monotony and lack of stimuli which confronted the poorest and unemployed.<sup>41</sup> This was most intense for the long-term unemployed with whom the Pilgrim Trust were so concerned, and for women cooped up at home all day. The study of form and the anticipation of the results were an inexpensive use of time, and the means for this were available in the form of a cheap and accessible sporting, local and national press, all of which carried racing intelligence. As Lady Bell noted, betting on horses was a way of introducing anticipation and hope into the long days.<sup>42</sup> After placing a bet a period of expectation followed until the results were out.

Moreover, as McKibbin notes, the Pilgrim Trust emphasised the 'intellectual' importance of studying the past form (performance) of horses and football teams. This exercise was an attempt to reduce the element of chance from the bet, a view which casts a shadow of doubt on J.A. Hobson's definition of gambling as involving the abandonment of reason. This was often a collective as well as an individual pursuit, involving much discussion and argument.<sup>43</sup> The 'Turf Ready Reckoners' (listed in the British Library Catalogue) also aided the mathematical calculation of odds and potential

---

40 A.H. Halsey, *Trends in British Society Since 1900*, 1974, p. 552. The percentage of homes with T.V. sets rose from 0.2 in 1947 to 81.8 per cent by 1960.

41 Lady Bell, *op cit*, p. 258; The Pilgrim Trust, *op cit*, pp. 98-100.

42 Lady Bell, *ibid*.

43 The Pilgrim Trust, *op cit*; Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, p. 169.

winnings from stake sizes.

Whether individually or collectively, the perusal of form and placing of bets was not merely a male activity. During the Edwardian years and into the 1920's, many middle-class contemporaries were convinced that this door-to-door touting of bookies and their runners -the 'back door tout'- was a major cause of 'the extraordinary increase of gambling amongst women' which 'with the extension of street betting and the emancipation of the sex has steadily increased in the last half century.'<sup>44</sup> George Duckworth, a social investigator for Charles Booth's survey of London, made the more specific claim that betting amongst women was 'an invention of the last two years: comes of greater freedom and saving power.'<sup>45</sup> Perhaps Duckworth felt that gambling and saving were compatible for women. The Liverpool Council for Voluntary Aid, as its name suggests a non-paid body of middle-class social workers, estimated that in one poor district of Merseyside in the 1920's 'between 50 and 70 per cent of the women have the betting habit', and like Duckworth, they blamed the door-to-door tout or runner.<sup>46</sup> The frequency of this habit is unknown, however. The sociologist Bernice Martin remembers more occasional betting amongst her female neighbours in Lancashire:

In the 1940's and 1950's virtually every housewife I knew put a little bet on the Derby and the Grand National through the (illegal) street bookies and their runners, even though regular betting would have ruined a woman's claim to respectability.<sup>47</sup>

The *Social Survey of Betting* published in 1951 confirmed that women during the 1940's and early 1950's liked a little flutter on the big races of the year. The Derby, betted upon by thirty one per cent (478 women) of the female sample was the most popular race, followed by the Grand National at twenty-five per cent (or 325 women), and dropping to eleven per cent (216) for the

---

<sup>44</sup> Peter Green, *Betting and Gambling*, 1927, p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> George Duckworth, *Drink, Gambling, Housing, (&c.)*. University of London, Senate House Library Reference: MS 797/ii/32/4. Duckworth's notes are part of the Booth Correspondence held at this library.

<sup>46</sup> L.C.V.A., *op cit*, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Bernice Martin, *A Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change*, 1981, p. 73.

Cesarewitch, and less for other major races.<sup>48</sup>

It is important to stress that these figures are all we have in the statistics of women's betting during the years of prohibition. The dangers of misrepresenting the incidence of gambling in an earlier period by inferring from these statistics are obvious, but it may be argued that it was probably only the poorest women, where notions of respectability mattered less than the desire to win a few bob, who were out on the streets meeting the bookie or buying the tipping sheets.

This fear of female gambling was also to some extent heightened by worries that a mother, like the landed gentry to the plebians, might set a bad example to her offspring. For Canon Green, a betting woman was 'worse than a betting man' because of her alleged neglect of her children who, it was feared, would learn by bad example. J.M. Hogge, a leading light in the anti-gambling movement, argued that female gambling 'threatened the home'. Only a resuscitation of the ideals of home life could 'scotch the evil' amongst women who were, presumably, welshing on idealised notions of domesticity.<sup>49</sup>

Yet the underlying cause, as with unemployment, was monotony and the desire to get more fun out of time: the consequent need to fill the day with hope and expectation. For Lady Bell, gambling amongst housewives was 'horribly undesirable' yet explicable by their 'sordid daily life' to which gambling contributed 'constant moments of alternating hope fear and wonder...'<sup>50</sup> Bell's argument applied with equal force to the unemployed man. The psychological role of gambling as a source of hope and tension release was compounded, for many of the poor, by its economic dimension; that is, gambling was one of many strategies for 'getting by' in adversity.<sup>51</sup>

---

48 W.F.F. Kemsley and D. Ginsburg, *op cit*, p17.

49 J.M. Hogge, 'Gambling Among Women', in B.S. Rowntree, *op cit*, p82.

50 Lady Bell, *op cit*, p. 258.

51 The Pilgrim Trust, *op cit*, pp. 98-100; p. 157. R.E. Pahl, *Divisions of Labour*, 1984, pp. 86-113, esp. p. 92.



When an income was too low and intermittent to leave any or hardly any disposable income, gambling was a more realistic and certainly a more enjoyable use of money than saving, but it did not always compromise it. Charles Booth, for late nineteenth century London, emphasised the difficulties of conserving money in the uncertain environment of dockland in East and South London.<sup>52</sup> He described the communal thrift and loan clubs, the 'Christmas clubs' or 'publican's thrift', to which a minority of casuals contributed on a regular or semi regular basis depending on income, and which paid back the money before Christmas or at holiday times.

In Lancashire, too, in the 1920's and 1930's, many of those on similarly precarious incomes saved in small collective self-help schemes known colloquially as 'diddlums' or 'tontines'. These were perhaps run by a local publican or matriarch who assumed responsibility for them. Diddlums were so called because the person running it might 'diddle off' with the money before the Christmas holiday.<sup>53</sup> In Bolton in 1938, Mass Observation noted that 'diddlum clubs' had recently declined in popularity since a number of cases of treasurers doing such 'moonflight flits.'<sup>54</sup> The 'tontine' was a similar arrangement, the name and principle of which was derived from an insurance system based upon share investment which had been popular in the eighteenth century.

Such clubs were useful to pay into and draw out of throughout the year, and along with pawning helped people to get by within a cycle of debt and occasional credit. They were a symptom of the poorest areas where, as Melanie Tebbut has written, the insecurity of economic circumstances led to a 'distinct outlook' in which the need for bridging credit and its provision by local traders was central. This was especially true of more settled communities, 'where credit dependence mitigated against mobility and

---

<sup>52</sup> Charles Booth, 'Life and Labour of the People in London', *Poverty*, Vol. 1, 1889, pp. 43 and 111.

<sup>53</sup> Bob Edwards, oral testimony in Tony Lane's oral project on the street life of Liverpool since the 1900's, Department of Sociology, University of Liverpool.

<sup>54</sup> M.O. archive, 'Moneysworth' Box 48, File F, p. 22.

reinforced relations with local traders, including the pawnbroker.<sup>55</sup> Including, too, the bookmaker, who allowed bets on credit ('strap bets') and who often lent money to their regular punters in times of hardship. The prominence of these savings schemes and credit arrangements illustrates that gambling did not preclude saving within the 'distinct outlook' of the poor. It has been argued that gambling for poor casuals was a 'more congenial form of self-help than saving' but this perhaps polarises the issue too much.<sup>56</sup> The significance of the realisation that gambling and saving could coexist rather than remain mutually exclusive is discussed in the conclusion.

It was the sheer visibility of gambling in Liverpool upon which contemporaries fastened. Thus the Pilgrim Trust observed:

this picture of the environment of the Liverpool unemployed would not be complete without the mention of one *which seemed more conspicuous in Liverpool than anywhere else*. It is the all-pervading atmosphere of football pools, greyhounds and horses. This has become such an important environmental factor that, for the individual unemployed it is an effort to develop interests unconnected with them.<sup>57</sup>

We must be careful here to distinguish between expenditure and activity. We saw earlier that most frequent gambling for higher stakes was amongst the more regularly employed strata of the working class. What was different about the gambling of the poor and the casually employed was its sporadic quality, and its appeal as a source of extra or alternative work outside of formal employment:

Some have tried running 'books' of their own, a more risky undertaking than the taking of betting slips for established firms, by which means, to judge from the sample, a substantial number of men supplement their unemployment allowance.<sup>58</sup>

As this quote implies, larger bookmakers and the growing pools firms all provided opportunities for part-time work. Young boys, let alone anybody

---

<sup>55</sup> Melanie Tebbutt, *op cit*, p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Richards, Introduction to James Greenwood's *The Seven Curses of London*, Oxford, 1981, p. xii.

<sup>57</sup> The Pilgrim Trust, *op cit*, p. 98. My italics.

<sup>58</sup> The Pilgrim Trust, *op cit*, p. 157.

willing to work for a few shillings were employed by pools' firms in their early years to distribute fixed odds coupons outside football grounds in Liverpool and Manchester, as we will see in chapter eight. For many of the unemployed gambling offered a low paid and precarious source of casual work as much as it offered opportunities for leisure.

The casual sector of Liverpool was larger than in other Lancashire towns, and this explained the greater concern about gambling and gambling-related activities there between the wars. The Pilgrim Trust's observation was a mixture of impressionism and enquiry, but it was not based on a proper quantitative assessment. Whilst we can accept that gambling engaged the poor to a level which went beyond the client-relationship of regular better-off punters, turnover was not necessarily higher in and around the Dock Road of Liverpool than it was in an artisanal road in Bolton or Manchester. It simply appeared that way. John Barron Mays' social investigation into juvenile delinquency in Liverpool found clusters of men awaiting 'the payout from the bookies after the results become known.' But as Mays pointed out in the mid-1950's, 'only a minority back horses regularly' as most betting was on the pools, whether individually or collectively.<sup>59</sup> For Mays, in fact, gambling was not a symptom of excess or of juvenile delinquency at all, but was part of a leisure pattern inherited from parents.

This brings us back to the fiddle. It is against this wider struggle for personal and familial economic survival that the fiddles against the bookmaker by the poorest of the punters and the runners must be set, and the relationship of the bookie to his runners and punters understood.

Successful fiddles were probably few and far between, and their incidence is difficult to assess, but they provided both economic reward and satisfaction for those who 'pulled it off'. Whilst the bookie was often popular (a term with many layers of meaning) he had in a very real sense purchased a

---

<sup>59</sup> John Barron Mays, *Growing Up in the City*, 1956, p. 72.



greater income and better standard of living from the hard earned precious pennies of his class contemporaries. As Robert Roberts' mother told him when he complained that their family did not receive coal in bags: 'We'll get coal in bags when we get cash in bags. I'm not the bookies' wife.'<sup>60</sup>

Economic considerations over-rode moral ones for the majority of punters and many runners. The illicit income supplied by running when receiving unemployment allowance, and the fiddles against the bookie, reflected this. So too, perhaps, did an acceptance of the offer to become a 'mug' for a few shillings. But fiddling could never become commonplace. Both the bookmaker and his client needed the confidence in each other to enable the relationship to continue from day-to-day. The fiddle, if undetected, was the surest way of winning a bet. But people chose other means, too.

#### Superstition and Gambling

The insecurity of working-class life in the poorer areas was conducive to a fatalistic attitude to life, and the belief in luck. Superstition, with its pre-scientific belief system, was a strong component in the world view of many people. It was an ideological outlook and practice intended to mitigate the worst environmental and personal contingencies. A number of cultural commentators locate the propensity to gamble within this pattern of beliefs:

It is characteristic of working-class culture to surround activities which involve taking risks with protective ritual practices -not just gambling but everything from the most trivial domestic superstitions (touching wood to make sure the cake rises) to the taboos which attend chronically dangerous occupations...these are framing devices in a culture of boundary and control.<sup>61</sup>

Mass observation, Hoggart and others noted the widespread cultural paraphernalia of such superstition, which was both product and perpetuator of it: for example, horoscopes in newspapers, *Old Moore's Almanack*, fortune

---

<sup>60</sup> Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, Manchester, 1976, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup> Bernice Martin, *op cit*, pp. 73-4.

telling gypsies at the seaside and the devices marketed to eliminate chance from the pools. These were 'constantly urged by the press, pools and music hall.<sup>62</sup> They were also a feature of the tipping and form publications. For example, *Ariels' Astronomy Applied to Horse Racing* (1919) or Star Faith's *Planetary Influences on Racing* (1925) spoke to the mystical side of the punter's minds. It is difficult to know what the readership of these works was, but their existence allows us to include mystical and superstitious considerations in McKibbin's view of betting as a rational intellectualised activity. Superstitions were by no means pointless. One ex-punter remembered his mother's regular approach:

Joe: I've took bets up for me mother when I was seven and eight. An' me mother 'ad a superstition which lots of punters did. Me mother'd only write 'er bet on tea paper -that's what you got your quarter pound of tea in- an' she'd only write 'er bets on tea paper. She said it was lucky.<sup>63</sup>

The use of such 'framing' devices was, as with the study of form, an attempt to reduce the element of risk, to impose an intangible yet from the punters' point of view efficacious 'will' on the bet. Anthropologists have noted this use of charms in other cultures.<sup>64</sup> In *Esther Waters*, George Moore linked gambling behaviour with fatalism. Both bookies and backers believed in omens, and a bet was only made if luck was 'in'. Moore emphasised the hopelessness of gambling for the poor within a sympathetic portraiture of the reasons as to why they gambled. Towards the end of the book, a horse race allegorically determines whether William Latch, a bookmaker, will live or die. Fate, not medicine or alcohol abuse, decides his end.

The 'fancy' too, was built into the ostensibly non-rational determination of betting choice. To 'fancy' a horse after studying its form is common speech, but it speaks of predilection and symbolises an 'expressive' component in the punters world view rather than a functional one. That is, it is

---

<sup>62</sup> M.O. archive, 'Moneysworth', Box 48, File F, p. 22.

<sup>63</sup> Joe McCormick, *op cit*.

<sup>64</sup> George J. McCall, Symbiosis: 'The Case of Hoodoo and the Number's Racket', *Social Problems*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1963.

a sub-rational investment based upon a fatalistic belief system as opposed to a purely scientific exercise. Punters knew, in the last analysis, that the results were not predictable and so deployed a whole range of superstitious devices to try to 'frame' the result. Keith Thomas's concluding statement is especially true of the superstitious outlook and of gambling itself in areas of pervasive inequality and economic hardship:

If magic is to be defined as the employment of ineffective techniques to allay anxiety when effective ones are not available, then we must recognise that no society will ever be free from it.<sup>65</sup>

Within the moral economy of the punter, the belief in luck was a comfort, yet its deployment was an impotent way of improving one's chances in the bet. Recourse to luck, however, as with recourse to the hopes provided by gambling, was common where the usual routes to comfort and success, such as a steady job or educational qualifications, were lacking. These were habits which resulted from a culture which was grounded in economic hardship.

Yet this culture was ostensibly under attack by a class-discriminatory law which, on top of all the other depredations facing the inhabitants of working-class areas, raised the spectre of police intervention into an activity seen by its practitioners as harmless. The effect of this, as we will now see, was to keep class perceptions alive without leading to any politicisation of leisure.

#### The Law and the Police: What did the Punters think?

In his various articles David Dixon rightly stresses that the 1906 Act had important consequences for working-class conceptions of the law. But the Act should be interpreted within the wider context of the wider legislation against gambling -the Vagrancy Acts- which the police were much more likely to deploy against the *punters* than the Street Betting Act. In organised street betting, arrest and punishment were almost wholly reserved for the bookie and his paid agents. For working-class gamblers, the direct

---

<sup>65</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1978, p. 800.



experience of forceful arrest during a raid and of a subsequent court appearance resulted from informal coin and card games like pitch and toss and pontoon, not organised street betting. This is dealt with more fully in chapter five.

This is to clarify the experience of the Act from the punters viewpoint; it is not intended to deny that it was an inconvenience nor that it was perceived as unjust. As Hoggart noted in the 1950's:

Yet there exists, with some reason, a feeling among working-class people that they are often at a disadvantage, that the law is in some things readier against them than against others. Their street corner betting, it is often remarked, is a risky business. If they ran an account with a 'Commission Agent' it would not be.<sup>66</sup>

Like Hoggart, sociologists of the 1950's and 1960's and historians since were concerned with the nature of working-class consciousness and political behaviour. They attempted to tease it out from the social and economic experience of working-class people. Bott, for example, argued that 'the ingredients, the raw materials of class ideology are located in the individual's various primary social experiences, rather than in his position in a socio-economic category'.<sup>67</sup>

The Street Betting Act and the nature of the police intervention which it engendered convinced most punters of its farcical, corrupting and biased nature. Here are four examples to illustrate this:

I am convinced from what I heard and saw that police activity was known in advance of it occurring; on too many occasions the bookie had ample evidence to remove proper evidence and set up the "Mugs" with nominal paraphernalia only.

It was all a farce really. The bookies were never licensed but the police gave them written permission.

*How do you think that people felt about the gambling laws?*  
 Joe: Well, the gambling laws...they'd nothing against the police really but the gambling laws and the by-laws and that was made by people with money, masons and the Pilkington family; they was all magistrates and freemasons and all kind

---

<sup>66</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 1957, p. 73.

<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth Bott, *Family and Social Network*, 1957, p. 163.

o' things...They run the town'.

*Ted:* Its because the big'uns could bet all day in their clubs y'see, and the working man couldn't 'ave a bet. It's racial discrimination...workers and masters. <sup>68</sup>

The consequences of the Act were to reinforce in punters' minds a sub-political class-conspiracy view of society which underpinned Hoggart's 'Us and Them' dichotomy. Police-bookmaker collusion was viewed as a necessary but unjust symptom of a bad law: the bookies profited, the police profited, and the punter was insulated from the harsh edge of the law.

For the police, collusion was a rewarding but necessary aspect of the containment strategy they adopted, a strategy which reflected the punters' disdain for the Act. It was accepted that gambling went on and, with the exception of one or two naive or officious Chief Constables, a tokenistic system was evolved in which pre-arranged arrests were designed to satisfy the sterner moral arbiters of the local Watch Committees. As the Chief Constable of Liverpool argued to the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1923, he found the law 'exceedingly difficult to administer':

The practical result of its inconsistency is that there is one law for the well-to-do who can bet on credit, and another law for the poorer classes who can only indulge in ready-money betting. Owing to that inconsistency, the law is a most unpopular one and, in marked contrast to the offences against other statutes...in betting cases the police very little information or assistance from the public.<sup>69</sup>

Police activity was constrained on the one level by a realisation that the law was socially flawed and, consequently, that a collective moral consensus existed which did not regard gambling as wrong. The class bias in the laws heightened the perceptions of both police and punter in this respect.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the punters' criticisms of the Street Betting laws were not drawn along party political lines. The issue was couched at the level of the Free-Born Englishman versus 'faddist' intervention rather than on a Labour-Tory divide. One irate punter, offended by the

---

<sup>68</sup> Alex McKensie, *op cit*; Richard Heaton, *op cit*, p. 10; Joe McCormick, *op cit*; Ted Jones, *op cit*.  
<sup>69</sup> David Dixon, *Illegal Gambling and Histories of Policing in Britain*, Hull, 1984, pp. 63-72.

proposal in 1936 to abolish the football pools, interpreted this as a wider attack on gambling and the amusements of the working class. His rhetoric, in the form of a letter to the *Liverpool Daily Post* was that of the sporting, not of the political, press:

Sir; this country contains a small section of folk who are happiest when they are trying to interfere with the liberties of a free people. They revel in shouting out 'you can't do that 'ere' more especially in connection with having a glass of beer or putting a shilling on a horse...The latest attempt at interference is in respect of football pools. (signed) Freedom.<sup>70</sup>

The 'small section of folk' castigated here could no doubt include the Nonconformist working-class, politicians of all parties, and the clerics who denounced gambling from the pulpit and the press.

Yet the punters carried on regardless of the law and the anti-gambling lobby. The well-known farce of the police-bookmaker relationship helped to insulate the betting network from the law and from its critics and to line a few pockets into the bargain. The role of the bookmaker in street betting, and his relationship both with his punters and the police, is the subject of the next chapter. The attitude of the punters to the introduction of Licensed Betting Offices in 1961 is discussed in chapter nine.

---

<sup>70</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, Feb. 26th, 1936, p. 4.



## Chapter 4: The Off-Course Ready-Money Bookmaker: A Social Profile

### Introduction

As the pivotal figure in off-course ready-money betting, the bookmaker alone aggregated a multiple of small stake monies from which he paid out winnings, laid odds, paid employees and kept the unsuccessful bets. So for those strongly critical of gambling the bookmaker was maligned as a cunning parasite who promoted the unproductive and unethical world of betting.

The development of the occupation of bookmaking up to the early years of the twentieth century led to the formation of three classes of off-course bookie: the small elite of legal-credit bookies, those with both a cash and credit trade, and the smallest ready-money street bookies. This chapter argues that the social activities of street bookmakers, the collective response of bookmakers to what they interpreted as legislative attacks on off-course betting, and their strategy towards police intervention, meant the majority of bookies who accepted illegal ready-money bets managed their businesses 'with an almost absolute impunity.'<sup>1</sup>

### The Development of Bookmaking from 1850

After 1853, the terms 'Credit Commission Agent', 'Turf Accountant' and 'Bookmaker' began to replace 'list house' as the description for betting establishments, although 'list house' was still used pejoratively by the press in their complaints over the spread of common ready-money betting houses. Like list house, the phrase 'betting shop' denoted the illegal and unrespectable side of off-course betting whilst the credit 'commission agent' was 'less vulgar'.<sup>2</sup>

Until the late Edwardian years when bookmakers begin to appear in the local trade directories, it is difficult to assess the extent of the growth of the

---

<sup>1</sup> C.E.B. Russell, 'Gambling and Aids to Gambling', *Economic Review*, Vol. X, 1900, p. 489..

<sup>2</sup> *Free Lance*, May 27th, 1867, pp. 181-2.

occupation, especially the smallest ready-money practitioners. Only the wealthiest advertised regularly in the sporting press from the 1870`s. But, from the late Edwardian years, perhaps as a result of the legislation of 1906, the compilers were more aware of bookmakers, and `Bookmakers' or `Turf Commission Agents' begin to creep in to the directories from this time. The legislation of course enabled credit businesses to advertise, and the directories also list those bookies who operated both a legal and an ostensibly hidden illegal trade from the same premises. Jack Hamer, for example, appears in Tillotson`s Bolton Directory from the 1920`s. The Directories for Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool give a graphic general illustration of the continued rise of street bookmaking despite the 1906 Act and the apparant unawareness of the compilers that many credit businesses were a front for the more remunerative ready-money side. From a five `Turf Commission Agents' in 1922 there were twenty one in the Bolton Directory by 1927. And in Liverpool the numbers rose dramatically from two in 1923 to one hundred and fifty nine by 1927. An important factor to be taken into account for Liverpool is the rise in the number of bookmakers offering fixed-odds football coupons. After the 1920 Ready-Money Betting Act a credit postal arrangement between bookie and punter was perfectly legal, and many of those appearing in Kelly`s Directory as `Turf Commission Agents' were almost solely football betting bookies. Littlewoods and Vernon`s are the obvious cases in point here.<sup>3</sup>

But the major reason for the apparent profusion of bookmakers in the directories from 1926 was the clause in Winston Churchill`s Finance Act, which required all bookmakers to hold a licence and pay betting duty. As will soon be discussed, the legislation with regard to betting was ill-thought out, very reluctantly recieved by bookies and punters, and had soon proved to be unworkable.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Tillotson's Bolton Trades Directory 1922*, p. 640; *1932*, p. 754. *Kelly's Liverpool Trades Directory, 1923*, p. 1699; *1930*, pp. 1917-8.

There was thus an established pattern of working from a house or an under-cover betting shop in the metropolitan areas of the North West. Again, a telephone and a credit licence were the nominal features 'hiding' a ready-money trade from the already knowing public and police. Absent from the directories were the innumerable barbers, shopkeepers and smallest scale local street bookies who took bets for a regular clientele of punters with whom they were familiar. Their scale and illegality precluded them from compilation for the directories. For these reasons, the directories do not provide more than a superficial, generalised and jerky picture of the growth of street betting from the time of the First World War. But the unwitting testimony of the compilers of these directories is that in the listing of nominally credit bookmakers they also reflected and advertised the continued growth of illegal cash bookmaking.

But what exactly was bookmaking and who were the bookmakers? Bookmaking, as literature written by and for the trade makes clear, is the making of a book containing the record of a number of bets. This book contains the names of the punters and descriptions of the bets in terms of the amount staked upon a horse, athlete or any sporting event for which the bookmaker was willing to accept bets.

Bookmakers have continuously emphasised the mathematical skill involved in this, and the difficulty of making a continuous profit from the aggregation of a number of bets. So in opposition to the proposed betting duty a Leeds credit bookmaker and President of the Northern Bookmakers and Backers Racecourse Protection Association argued:

It depends on a man's ability what he makes; there is no fixed rate of profit...One man might show a profit of 3 per cent or 4 per cent or even 5 per cent on his transactions.<sup>4</sup>

The settling of bets involved the computation of the stake monies and the payment of winnings from these. Settling became very complex when applied to large 'accumulator' bets, so called because a winning stake was then

---

<sup>4</sup> S.C. 1923, Minutes of Evidence, George Yates paras. 8311-8318.



risked on a string of horses in subsequent races. The most simple accumulator bets are doubles and trebles, involving two or three races respectively. Some exotic names have been given to complex accumulator combinations.<sup>5</sup>

It is strongly argued here that the view of a clear-cut dichotomy between legal-credit and illegal and less respectable cash bookmakers, stressed by the largest bookmakers, is misleading, as it fails to encompass the huge middle strata of combined credit and cash bookmakers.<sup>6</sup> This state of affairs slowly dawned on the Parliamentary Enquiries in their questioning of bookmaker witnesses:

*Charles Cautley, Chairman-* We have been told there are some men who do both credit betting and street bookmaking, but they are very few ?

*Alfred Tyler-* Yes they are.

*You agree to that ?*

Yes. I know quite a lot who do that. I know quite a lot of credit men who have agents in the streets.

*Well, it is not so few as we have been led to understand.*

No.<sup>7</sup>

There are many oral examples to support this. The bookie, while ostensibly operating a legal business, employed large numbers of men as bookies runners. As we will see, Jack Hamer and Mass Observation's 'Humpty Dumpty', were both credit and ready-money bookies. The membership of trade organisations such as the National Sporting League and the Bookmakers and Backers Protection Association clearly showed that many bookmakers did protest too loudly in distinguishing between themselves and illegal ready-money operators.

Autobiographies of bookmakers clearly indicate that most of them, big or small, were involved in illegal cash betting. Sometimes the cash-credit link extended abroad. T.H.Dey, the London bookmaker, (who also had an office in Middelburg, Holland), built up a 'flourishing cash connection' in the streets

---

<sup>5</sup> R.A. Wooley, *op cit.*, pp. 6-10: 'Roll-Up' bets, 'Union Jack' bets, 'Yankee' bets, &c.

<sup>6</sup> Walter John Randall, the founder member in 1918 of the Turf Guardian Society thought that a number of members of this organisation were also 'interested' in street betting, but he gave no further details to the 1923 enquiry: Minutes of Evidence, para. 3289, p. 191.

<sup>7</sup> **S.C. 1923**, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 4725-4727, p. 250.

of London as well as accepting ready-money by post at his Dutch base. He was one of many such bookmakers who advertised their willingness in the sporting press to accept both postal-order and cash bets by mail, incurring the wrath of the law, and decamping overseas. The advertisements for Arthur Magnus of Manchester in 1906 tell their own story (see Plate 2 in the Photographic Appendix).

We need to know more about who the bookies' were and how they got started. The following examples, culled largely from autobiographical and oral evidence, provide some important clues but they may not be typical of all bookmakers, big, middling or small, who began laying odds for a living. In the mid-Victorian years, Dyke Wilkinson, an owner of a small and profitable jewellery manufactory in Birmingham, began on-course bookmaking at Walsall Races as an extension of his compulsive gambling and his affection for the spectacle of the races.<sup>8</sup> After some mishaps he expanded his operations to an on- and off-course credit and ready-money trade before, as he saw it, learning from the error of his ways. Dey, who became a wealthy bookie, had begun his career as a bookmakers' clerk before poaching some of his employers' clients and setting up business himself during the 1890's.<sup>9</sup> His friend and associate, Bob Siever, was a gentleman of the London leisure class in the Edwardian years who made a book for his wealthy friends.<sup>10</sup> Sid Oxenham, a large Northern bookmaker between the wars and up to the early 1960's, had been an officer in the Transport Corps in the Indian Army during the Great War, who was granted a bookmaking licence by the top military brass of the Royal Calcutta Turf Club to lay at such major racing centres of Calcutta, Lahore and Rangoon. He made enough money to purchase ailing commission agents businesses in Doncaster and later Blackpool on his return to England in the early 1920's. He was also an owner of racehorses.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Dyke Wilkinson, *A Wasted Life*, 1902, pp. 60 *et seq.*

<sup>9</sup> T.H. Dey, *Leaves from a Bookmaker's Book*, 1931, pp. 18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Keith Middlemas, *The Pursuit of Leisure*, 1977, p. 141.

<sup>11</sup> *The Licensed Bookmaker*, February 1963, p. 10.

But the vast undermass of street bookies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had greater handicaps to overcome. There is little documentary evidence on this. As Benson points out, 'penny capitalists' rarely kept records, and those which 'are probably even more untypical than those rescued from larger business enterprises.'<sup>12</sup> This is particularly true of street bookmakers. The problem was compounded by the illegality of off-course ready-money betting, and the unwillingness of bookmakers to keep records which could have been used as evidence against them in a court.

Oral evidence for the twentieth century confirms Benson's suggestion that many bookmakers started out from the security of a regular job, often by organising sweeps or running small books for their workmates during the lunch hour before racing began. Others, for example costermongers, began from the pattern of deficit and surfeit of irregular labour, using any extra capital they possessed to take a few small bets amongst friends in the street or at a racecourse or to hold the bank in card and coin games.<sup>13</sup> In closer-knit communities, many kept their original occupation whilst running a book for their friends and workmates. A miner from County Durham recalled that all the bookies he knew 'were miners, and they worked foreshift 12 midnight until 8 a.m. so that they could take the bets through the day.'<sup>14</sup> The occupational community of mining was probably conducive to such an arrangement.<sup>15</sup> Shopkeepers, moreover, were well placed both socially and economically in working-class areas either to accept bets for other bookmakers or to run their own profitable sideline in bookmaking. In Southampton from the late 1940's a fish and chip shop owner ran a lucrative local trade in bookmaking, both jobs prompting such jokes as 'the shop for a win or a plaiice':

---

<sup>12</sup> John Benson, *op cit.*, 1983, p. 2

<sup>13</sup> On costermongers making books at the races, see *Frasers Magazine*, Vol. xvi, July, 1877, p. 80. See also chapter seven, below. See also Jerry White, *The Worst Street in North London*, 1985, on the street croupier Pongo Saunders, p. 86.

<sup>14</sup> Writer's oral project: A. Simpson, born County Durham. 1918. QU.

<sup>15</sup> Norman Dennis et al *Coal Is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community*, 1969, pp. 148-9; pp. 158-62.



My father operated from his shop; people brought their bets to him, no runners as such. He and my grandmother (another shop a mile or so away) worked together - more so when our shop was sold and we moved in with granny.<sup>16</sup>

Many witnesses informed the Parliamentary Enquiries from 1901 of shopkeepers, and barbers especially, running their own small book for their regular customers.

Jack Hamer, who became a successful local bookmaker in Bolton from the early 1920`s, had also begun from the stability of a regular job:

Up to 1910, 1912 he was a window cleaner on the railways. He started with virtually nothing and he started with what they called a `penny book.` That consisted of a penny win, a penny double, and you could of course have a bet on footrunning in those days too. They had pigeon racing for a penny double, a threepenny double, a penny treble on a horse, a pigeon.<sup>17</sup>

A practising bookmaker in 1967, commenting on the ease with which people could set up as a bookie due to the 1960 Act, told the journalist Alan Wykes in his general survey of gambling:

It wasn't that easy when I started in 1929. I had been working as a plumbers` mate and I was getting nowhere fast. Then I had a real stroke of luck: A relative died and left me a small legacy. I say `small' but it was a fortune then -£500 (about \$1400) I`d always been keen on horse racing and seized the chance to to start my own bookie business.<sup>18</sup>

In London in 1903 Christopher Fisher, an Irish compositor, left his trade to begin bookmaking in Clerkenwell with his unemployed brother. They initially relied upon the capital he had saved from his work in the printing industry. Before being questioned by the Parliamentary Enquiry into the Duties of the Metropolitan police in 1908 as to `arrests by arrangement' between police and bookmakers, Fisher, when asked about his route into bookmaking, obviously viewed it as a legitimate capitalist enterprise:

*Sir David Brynmor Jones, K.C., M.P:* Had you fallen on bad times as compositor?

*Fisher:* No, it was like speculation. People have various ways of speculating their money. Some men might speculate on the

---

<sup>16</sup> Writer's oral project: Cynthia Millward, born Southampton, 1937. QU.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Hamer, *op cit*.

<sup>18</sup> Alan Wykes, *Gambling*, 1964, p. 272

Stock Exchange, and others would speculate in business, but I speculated in bookmaking.<sup>19</sup>

Unemployment and redundancy led a number of working-class self-helpers to begin bookmaking, and financial promise often triumphed over artisanal notions of respectability, as the following exchange between Dennis Parkes (a bookmakers' son), Ted Jones (a punter) and the writer illustrates:

Dennis:...he`d been a toolmaker. He was trained as a toolmaker during the First World War and then after the war when there was a lot of unemployment he took up betting.

*Can you tell me how he started it off? Where he got his capital from?*

Dennis:Oh I couldn`t tell you that...

Ted: He didn`t have no money to start with, 'e took a chance.'

Dennis: I should say that; he wouldn`t`ve `ad any capital. His father turned him out of the house I know that for indulging in betting but after a few weeks he took him back and they used his house as a base.<sup>20</sup>

As Chinn notes, the occupation of bookmaking was egalitarian in the sense that no qualifications were needed in order to enter it.<sup>21</sup> But this should be qualified by the consideration that the more money an aspiring bookmaker possessed, the better were his chances of making even more . A run of wins by the favourites, that is those horses where the odds are shorter because they have been heavily backed, could seriously deplete a bookmakers' capital by the demand on his outgoings. For Barnsley in the post war years one punter remembered that poorer bookmakers were more vulnerable in this situation: 'The smaller bookies used to dread the Royal Ascot meeting with such long prices in the betting. A lucky punter with a few pounds could put them out of business.' This sort of ruin almost happened to 'old Watkins' in *Esther Waters*.<sup>22</sup> The risk factor worked both ways of course. T.H.Dey remembered his early days as a bookmaker:

Bookmaking is not necessarily the goldmine that many people appear to imagine, and it is like most other businesses.

---

<sup>19</sup> *Royal Commission on the Duties of the Metropolitan Police*, 1908, para. 43219, p. 985.

<sup>20</sup> Dennis Parkes and Ted Jones, *op cit*.

<sup>21</sup> Carl Chinn, *op cit*, p. 146.

<sup>22</sup> Writer's oral project: Leonard Taylor, born Barnsley, 1925, QU. George Moore, *Esther Waters*, 1985, p. 65. (first published 1895).

One must work hard, overcome difficulties, surmount obstacles, and gradually build up a connection, a banking account, and gain experience in this, one's own *metier*.

I plodded along for some time, and the first tangible success I had was when Jeddah won the Derby at 100 to 1. Although I only won a few hundred pounds, it was a lot to me then, and gave me heart to launch out still further.<sup>23</sup>

Another important consideration for a would-be bookie was the nature and extent of the established local trade. At the outset the new bookie did not possess the support of, and often rivalled, the network of existing bookmakers. They helped each other by accepting bets which were 'laid-off', that is, devolved by one bookie to another to offload some of the expense in the event of a pay-out. Christopher Fisher, for example, who set up on another bookie's pitch 'without any communication with any other bookmaker' could not engage in laying-off.<sup>24</sup> This problem must have confronted all those beginning in bookmaking for the first time and with no connections in the trade. The wealthier local bookies may have refused to accept lay-off bets from the smaller operators, confirming and perpetuating their lower economic status. More directly, the established bookmakers and the bigger operators were in a favourable position in the struggle to offer the most attractive odds to the punters. Most bookmakers had a top limit as to what they would offer, which varied according to their personal wealth and. For the Scotland Road, in Liverpool during the 1930's, Joe Kinsella stated that the 'maximum one could win regardless of the amount staked was usually around £3.10.0.<sup>25</sup> A Glasgow bookmaker, James Croll, told the 1923 enquiry that he originally had a ceiling of £5, but as he grew more successful he offered, in competition, winnings of 200 to 1, that was, about £10 for a penny bet.<sup>26</sup> But the most effective way of dealing with competition and of preventing a hopeful bookmaker from getting a grip on the local market was through violence or the threat of it.

---

<sup>23</sup> T.H. Dey, *op cit*, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> R.C. 1908, para. 45247 p. 987.

<sup>25</sup> Joe Kinsella, *op cit*.

<sup>26</sup> S.C. 1923, paras 4852-4853 p. 286.



The gang warfare of the 1920`s was in large part based on the struggle to monopolise pitches both on and off the racecourse. The intimidation of bookies and their agents took the form of `protection rackets`, which meant, in the same way as for the mob in Prohibition America, that a bookie was blackmailed into paying for his own protection against his aggressors. If he refused to pay he was beaten up or cut up or worse. One bookmaker talking of the difficulties of starting out on the courses stated that `in addition to the running expenses (which included clerk`s fees and their fares) there was the protection money you had to pay too if you didn`t want to be beaten up and have your stand wrecked.` He also remembered an associate who `got beaten up for not going into a protection racket.`<sup>27</sup>

A popular literary insight into racetrack violence is given in *Brighton Rock*, Graham Greene's 1930's novel about the small-time criminal fraternity in Brighton. This was made subsequently into a film by the Boulting Brothers in 1947.<sup>28</sup> Here, the link between bookmaking and protection was clearly drawn. The psychopathic and sexually frustrated teenage gang leader `Pinky` (played by Richard Attenborough in the film) manipulates a protection racket by carving up rival bookies and touts. During the 1920's one of Arthur Harding's many illegal and violent occupations was to defend Hymie Davis `the big Aldgate bookmaker` from the notorious Italian mob the Darby-Sabini gang.<sup>29</sup> In Sheffield during the 1930`s a number of bookmakers involved in organising the highly profitable pitch and toss rings employed henchmen not only to keep watch for the police but also to intimidate and assault other bookies.<sup>30</sup>

There were probably regional variations in the extent of violence between bookmakers, consequent upon the tenacity of the local criminal

---

<sup>27</sup> Alan Wykes, *op cit*, p. 272.

<sup>28</sup> See *Halliwells' Film Guide*.

<sup>29</sup> Raphael Samuel, (ed.), *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding*, 1981, pp. 184-85.

<sup>30</sup> J.P. Bean, *The Sheffield Gang Wars*, 1981, *passim*.

subculture and its relationship with bookmakers and organised illegal betting. This link was a product of the criminalisation of ready-money betting and bookmaking. As the Rothschild Commission noted in 1978, bookmakers lived at the edge of the law or beyond it, and were thus 'prey to protection rackets and gang violence.'<sup>31</sup>

It can be argued that during the era of race course violence in the 1920`s, those bookies who frequented the racecourses or lived in race towns were more likely to suffer intimidation than smaller informal bookmakers who worked from a barbers` or other shop and kept a small and self-contained local trade away from the courses. Glasgow, Birmingham, Sheffield and London were perhaps the more notorious cities for gang violence before the second war.

There is little doubt that many aspiring bookmakers were forced to pay protection or suffer the consequences. Oral testimony, however, is rather unyielding here. Bookmakers speaking of the problem were reticent or unknowing, and few punters possessed a detailed knowledge of the criminal subculture which had pervaded the ready-money betting network. Violence or the threat of it no doubt discouraged many would-be bookies.

Once established, bookmakers often passed on their business to son or another member of the family. Oral and autobiographical evidence for the Twentieth century confirms the view of a recent anonymous but 'established bookmaker' that bookmaking was often an hereditary occupation:

The art of modern bookmaking is usually passed on from father to son, uncle to nephew, and it is very rare for an 'outsider' to break into the trade.<sup>32</sup>

In the late 1930`s a witness to Mass Observation noted 'you`ll often find where the sons a bookie the father was a bookie before him.' After the second war Steven Hamer, following a spell as a jockey, took over the father`s business

---

<sup>31</sup> *R.C. 1976-78*, Report, Vol. 1, p. 24, para 6.2.

<sup>32</sup> R.A. Wooley, *op cit*, foreword by 'An Established Bookmaker', p1. M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 1, File D.

with his brother. In Birmingham, Dennis Parkes' brother took over his father's trade during the 1960's. The hereditary dimension reflected two family-based economic strategies. Firstly, that bookmaking had demonstrated its security and profitability over other local occupations, and that the son was better off as a bookie. Secondly, the inheritance of the trade was the strongest expression of the wider family involvement in the enterprise. As an activity central to the informal economy and the leisure culture of the poorer working-class communities, it was inevitable that the wives and children would become involved in the day to day acceptance and settling of bets. A number of punters and ex-bookies testified to this. For example Cynthia Millward, whose widowed bookmaker father also ran a fish and chip shop in Southampton during the 1940's and '50's remembered that she and her grandmother helped their father in the collection and settling of bets, as did Jack Hamers' wife in Bolton during the 1920's and '30's.<sup>33</sup>

Relatives provided the bookie with cheap, often free and presumably agreeable and trustworthy labour. Wives, parents and children were not as demanding as a formally employed set of workers, and shared an obvious interest in the success of the family economy. This helped to keep costs down for the bookie especially in difficult times such as the initial 'venture' phase into bookmaking or the suspension of the racing calendar due to wartime or bad weather. A spectacular example was that of John Moores who, with a few telegraphists went on to establish the Littlewoods pools empire. In the early 1920's Moores relied on his wife to help check the coupons off, that is, to ascertain which if any of the coupons had the correct forecast for the weeks match results.<sup>34</sup> Moores and his associates, moreover, relied upon the help of a few small boys' to distribute these coupons outside Manchester's two football grounds. This was a further use of cheap labour, but no doubt the cash in hand was extremely welcome to the lads.

---

<sup>33</sup> Cynthia Millward, *op cit.* Stephen Hamer, *op cit.*

<sup>34</sup> In Woodrow Wyatt *Distinguished for Talent*, 1962, pp. 233-236.



The employment of runners, settlers, and coupon distributors from the informal local and familial network was necessary to the bookmakers' business, but it also offered relatively well paid part-time work to many unemployed or casually-employed people. The willingness of some unemployed people or pensioners to be mugs during the debacle of a police 'raid' was another example of this. In this sense the bookie acted as a benefactor to some of his regular locals, although his relationship to the punters was not just economic. David Itskovitz, in a recent article on Victorian bookmakers and bettors, fails to penetrate this relationship, arguing, in a footnote, that bookmakers could achieve a measure of 'status' with their customers.<sup>35</sup> But what sort of status was it? And how far did the unflattering and predatory image of the bookmaker promoted by the anti-gambling lobby reflect the bookmakers' role in working-class life?

#### The Street Bookmaker: Image and Reality

Between the 1850`s and the 1950`s the street bookmaker underwent a three-fold transition in his social image and acceptability in the eyes of the respectable middle class. From the gentlemanly leg of Disraeli`s man of 'gentle failings', who could be trusted to mediate in sporting disputes, he had become, by the time of Booth and Rowntree`s poverty surveys, a low life wastrel and parasite. By the end of the 1930's he was a likeable if still untrustworthy spiv.

In the 1890's and 1900's, the N.A.G.L. cast the bookmaker as the villain of the betting world, and social critics and reformers viewed him as a miserable symptom of the pauperised residuum, the hard core of the casually employed, unemployed and unemployable. He lived in the same dangerous and unrespectable shadows as

the battered figures who slouch through the streets, and play the beggar or the bully, or help to foul the record of the unemployed; these are the worst class of corner man who

---

<sup>35</sup> David C. Itskovitz, *op cit*, p. 12.

hang round the doors of public-houses, the young men who spring forward on any chance to earn a copper, the ready materials for disorder when occasion serves. They render no useful service, they create no wealth: more often they destroy it.<sup>36</sup>

For those concerned with the welfare of the poor, bookmakers were seen as parasitical, a drain on the local and family economy. The School Board Visitors who supplied much of the detailed observations for Booth's survey, provided one of the few contemporary descriptions of a (failing) bookmaker in London. Allocated to social class 'A', Booth's lowest class of the 'vicious and semi criminal', he was taken to court for neglecting the education of his four children (note his pseudo-genteel appearance):

This man describes himself sometimes as a billiard marker and sometimes as a traveller. He goes out dressed up with gold albert etc while his wife and children are in rags. The children were locked up in a room and when summoned the man said they were in the country whereas he had them shut in the room as they were not fit to be seen.<sup>37</sup>

Katherine Woodward's despairing autobiographical description of *Jipping Street*, an Edwardian London slum, also saw women and the young as the tragic victims of the bookmaker. In *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* the socialist author Robert Tressell lumped commission agents under the category of those doing work necessary for the 'imbecile system'.<sup>38</sup> But by the late 1940's and early 1950's, the dominant image of the bookie had changed to one of a likeable if ultimately still untrustworthy spiv. This characterisation was given popular expression in novels. Sam Grundy in Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole* is the most famous street bookmaker in modern English literature. A loud, flashy and calculating figure, his sexual and financial intentions were a good deal less than honest. As Steven Constantine has illustrated, Greenwood hoped to shock his largely middle-class readership into a

---

<sup>36</sup> Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London*, First Series, 'Poverty', Vol. 1, p. 38

<sup>37</sup> *Poverty* notebook B50, 44, p. 160. These notebooks are held as part of the Booth Collection at the British Library of Political Science, Portugal Street, London

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen Woodward, *Jipping Street*, 1983, p. 108 (first published 1928); Robert Tressell, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, 1983, p. 268 (first published in the 1900's)

reforming social consciousness by the use of such literary techniques.<sup>39</sup> Whilst Greenwood was careful to describe the attractions of betting for the poor, with its hope of a lot of money for a little outlay, Grundy's ultimate sexual victory over a long-resistant Sally, and the death of her socialist lover Larry Meath, was a pessimistic allegory illustrating the triumph of necessity over conviction.<sup>40</sup> Greenwood also hinted at local corruption between bookies and the Salford police. Grundy was able to secure the recruitment of the local thug Ned Narkey to the police, as well as of Sal's father and brother to jobs in the municipal bus service.

Other perceptive accounts are to be found in the works of less well known writers. Mark Benney's autobiographical *Low Company* describes both the 'slick' young Jewish bookmakers with whom his mother was acquainted and one of his 'uncles' -Uncle Fred' whose 'dimples were glowing with satisfaction' as he tried his chances at taking bets in the pubs and clubs of West London in the early 1920's.<sup>41</sup> Micheal Arlen, in his modernist romance, *The Green Hat* (1924), described the London street bookmaker as

a hearty looking man in a brown bowler hat, who with one hand would write interminably in a small book, while with the other he dealt with passing men in slips of paper known to the law as 'betting slips'. As partner to the hearty-looking man (was) a tall, wizened man who wore a check cap and had hair growing out of his ears. This man would stand at one end of the lane and now and then say, 'Oi!' When he had said 'Oi!' he would light a cigarette, while the hearty looking man would run heavily round our end of the lane, for 'Oi!' meant that the law was after him.<sup>42</sup>

Newspaper cartoonists in both the local and national press liked to caricature the bookmaker as hearty and plump or lean and dapper, varying between the shrewd and the dishonest. In post war English cinema, this image was to

---

39 Steven Constantine, 'Love on the Dole and its Reception in the 1930's', *Literature and History*, 8.1, 1982, pp. 243-5

40 Roger Webster, 'Love on the Dole and the Aesthetic of Contradiction', in Jeremy (ed.), *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, 1984, p. 58.

41 Mark Benney, *Low Company*, 1983, pp. 1 and 70. (first published in 1936)

42 Micheal Arlen, *The Green Hat*, 1924, pp. 1-2. See the potted biography of Arlen by Harry Keyishian in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 36, 'British Novelists, 1890-1929: Modernists', pp. 11-14.



be found in films such as *The Blue Lamp* (1949), *Passport to Pimlico* (1949) and -the best known of all- George Cole as 'Flash 'arry', in *The Belles of St. Trinians* (1954).<sup>43</sup>

Cartoons in the local and national press, too, from the 1920`s and `30`s, of which Tom Webster`s in the *Daily Mail* became the most famous, lampooned the bookie as an untrustworthy self-interested figure, perhaps with secretive business and political connections.<sup>44</sup> The appearance of the bookie in Webster's cartoons, draped in a tasteless tartan suit, bedecked with jewellery, wearing spats on his feet and a billycock or tiffer perched on top of his leering countenance, emphasised his *nouveau riche* disdain for restraint and his basic sharkishness. In part, this latter image has coloured oral memories of of the street bookie and his runners since. It is a nostalgic repercussion of the austerity of the war and its aftermath which the spivvy types helped to liven up, although this view of the bookie as a local 'wide boy', with all its favourable and unfavourable connotations, was probably held by many working-class punters from the late nineteenth century.

In short, critical attitudes from above to the bookmaker have reflected wider developments in the growth and social acceptability of working-class betting. As mass ready-money betting displaced upper-class wagering it was viewed as a sickness of democracy and utilitarianism, a dangerous and wasteful mass vice. But the grudging accomodation of street betting by government, police and social reformers during between the wars and especially in the post-war years had forged a similar accomodation of bookmaking.

It was thus as the central and by no means inconspicuous figure in the illegal network of street betting that the bookmaker was singled out for severe condemnation by critics of gambling. Bookmaking was castigated as resting parasitically upon the unproductive activity of betting. It did not create

---

<sup>43</sup> See *Halliwel's Film Guide* on these films.

<sup>44</sup> See Appendix, Plate 4.

wealth but drained it into undeserving pockets. The bookie was thus portrayed metaphorically and somewhat contradictorily as both predator and parasite. For Canon Horsley they were 'bloodsucking parasites who live by the victimisation of the unthinking'.<sup>45</sup> Such parasitism did not only drain the punters. Green argued, basing his unscientific calculations on the worried statements to him of a few Northern industrialists, that by 1927 bookmakers were 'taking out of the national pocket each year a sum of not less than £170,000,000 for which they make no useful return of any sort.'<sup>46</sup>

This High-Church Anglican view, as with Nonconformist criticisms, was sharply echoed in the criticisms of bookmaking from the more puritannical wing of the labour movement. They decried the whole culture of racing and betting as atavistic and, worse, a flagrant symbol of the unjust class system and the maldistribution of wealth. Within this scenario, bookmakers grew undeservedly fat. Thus in 1925 the organ of the I.L.P. in the North West, *Labour's Northern Voice*, characterised bookmakers unfavourably with the industrial labourer as

those gentleman who wax in their opulence and corpulence and are daily seen strutting forth, if they are not driving, to obtain a breath of fresh air after a hard day's work at the blast furnace.<sup>47</sup>

The pervasiveness of this stereotype by the end of the inter war years is clearly evident in Mass Observation's study of betting in Bolton. The witness provided a striking example of a particularly 'large' bookie who frequented the pubs of the town:

Robert Ashworth, otherwise known as Humpty Dumpty, and resides at Radcliffe. This man employs about 170 runners in Bolton and district but has no particular pub where he stays for a considerable time. This is a man of medium height, thick set, rather corpulent with thick gold chain very prominent; he also has the usual cigar and a very prominent display of gold rings on his fingers: I personally have counted as many as 6 rings on both hands and when he is drinking usually rest one

---

<sup>45</sup> Canon Horsley, *How Criminals Are Made and Prevented*, 1913, pp. 168-9.

<sup>46</sup> Canon Green, *op cit*, p. 28.

<sup>47</sup> *Labour's Northern Voice*, July 10th, 1925, p. 5.

hand on the counter to display the same.<sup>48</sup>

Whilst revealing in many ways, there are a number of shortcomings with a stereotype such as this. Mass Observations' eye for the colour and vitality of working-class life precluded them from similar appraisals of the many smaller scale and less obvious street bookies. Such portrayals also excluded female bookies. There were far fewer women than men engaged in the occupation, a reflection of the lesser participation of women in betting generally.

However, in Bolton during the late 1930's Mass Observation noted a 'shopkeeper' whose confectionary and cigarette shop was merely a front for an under-the-counter trade in illegal betting. Subsequent oral research has shown the owner to be one Bella Thomason.<sup>49</sup> The number of female bookmakers compared to their male counterparts is difficult to ascertain, especially given their rarity in oral testimony. But women could get to the top of the bookmaking business. Mrs. Rebecca Birne, of Holloway in London, began as a credit commission agent in 1912. Her career ran until the 1950's when her son Ben, a jockey, took the business over.<sup>50</sup> From the 1920's Ladbroke's employed 'the chic Mrs. Helen Vernet' as a racecourse bookmaker. She is alleged to have been the first lady bookie to appear 'on the rails', that is, in the 'coveted position between Tattersalls and the Members Enclosure.' Vernet was the inheritor of a small fortune of £8,000 at her father's death which she squandered on betting, yet it ultimately provided her with an *entree* into the society of wealthy bookmakers.<sup>51</sup>

It is difficult to assess how far the lack of respectability which regular female punters brought upon themselves was also the lot of the female

---

48 M.O. Archive, 'Worktown', Box 1, File D, dated 25/7/37. This M.S. was the basis of *The Pub and the People's* section on bookies. As Tom Harrison wrote, in methodological self-criticism, 'it is easy, as does the writer of our report, (to) exaggerate the importance of the bookie as a pub figure', p. 265. Humpty Dumpty's name was changed to 'Nero' in this book.

49 Carl Chinn, *The Working Class Bookmaker: Myth and Reality*, paper given at the University of Birmingham, January 31st, 1989, p. 7. I am very grateful to Carl Chinn for allowing me to use this piece of information. His major oral study of bookmaking is to be published in 1991.

50 *The Licensed Bookmaker*, February, 1963, p. 26.

51 Richard Kaye, *A History of Ladbroke's*, 1969, p. 43.



bookie, whether small scale or rich. But no doubt the more money they made the more respect they earned from male bookies and the sporting fraternity.

But the local profile of Mass Observation's 'Nero' in inter war Bolton was shared by other large scale street bookies. The *Bolton Oral History Project* contains the testimony of Stephen Hamer, the son of a colourful bookie Jack Hamer, who worked successfully at his trade from the end of the First World War to his death in 1940. He became a prominent local figure, and was wealthy by the standards of his peers. By the end of the 1920's Hamer was operating from numbers 1, 2 and 3 Reservoir Street, two houses being given over to both his credit and ready-money business. As well as this property his capital included a number of cars and 18 racehorses. His son Stephen, who became a bookie himself after a spell as a jockey, remembered:

We had the only house in the street with hot water, a bath, electric light, two telephones, and an Extel ticker tape that gave you all the racing results.<sup>52</sup>

Jack Hamer was a well known local figure. He commissioned two war memorials for Bolton after 1918 and counted amongst his friends Steve Donaghue (the jockey) and Gracie Fields, whose father, incidentally, was a part time bookie.<sup>53</sup> Like a number of his fellow bookmakers he had a nickname 'your 'owd favourite star' and he and his runners frequently toured the pubs in his district, standing rounds and buying cigarettes for the regular punters.

Hamer's activities reflected a two fold strategy: on one level they were informal advertising, an attempt to maintain a local prominence and sustain trade in the face of rivals. It appears that most smaller bookies kept to their own patch and regular customers, but as an old punter in Bolton remembered of his neighbourhood:

...there were two bookies, one lived in Rothwell Street, Jack Donnelly, and the other was Jack Hamer in Reservoir Street about three hundred yards away, and there was competition

---

<sup>52</sup> Stephen Hamer, *op cit*.

<sup>53</sup> Gracie Fields, *Sing As We Go*, 1960, p. 15.

you know.<sup>54</sup>

The biggest local bookmakers had more money to engage in bigger, more public displays of charity and sponsorship as a means of advertising. During World War Two a number of North Western bookies formed the Northern Sportsmen's Charity Committee to raise money for local hospitals. This was in part achieved through the sponsorship of boxing matches at Belle Vue. Gus Demmy, a leading light in bookmakers' organisations locally, was the main matchmaker for the 1940's in Manchester.<sup>55</sup>

But alongside the competitiveness of these extra bookmaking activities the bookie engaged in a wider pattern of give-and-take with his punters. A number of people have testified to the social dimensions of street bookmaking. For example, Joe Kinsella, a teenager of the Scotland Road area of Liverpool in the 1930`s ,remembered:

The bookie was usually the genial type and in the local pub at night would stand most of the punters a pint. We always found that any of the local families who ran into financial difficulties with bereavement, weddings etc would be helped by the bookie or/and the runner and they would always contribute a tenner (a hell of an amount in those days) towards the kid`s christmas party.<sup>56</sup>

As the Chief Constable of Manchester told the 1932-33 Royal Commission,

`the bookmaker is fairly honest with whom he deals':

In fact I believe they are rather good to some of the poorer people round about them. I have had several instances where they have paid rent for people in difficulties and have paid their doctor`s bills.<sup>57</sup>

This was true not only of the North West. W.A.Hardy, a punter, writing of Stratford, East London, remembered:

The `Honest Joe' name came from some of the bookmakers well at least in London who I knew, would always give the kids outings to the seaside, and lend or give the mothers a pound if down and out, as there was a lot of poverty about 1920`s

---

<sup>54</sup> *Bolton Oral History Project*, Tape Catalogue No. 43, Ref. Ab/L55/A/052. Born 1904, Bolton.

<sup>55</sup> *The Pencil*, Vol. 1, No. 1, May 1946, p. 41.

<sup>56</sup> Writer's oral project: Joe Kinsella, born Liverpool, 1923. QU.

<sup>57</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 736 p. 59

and 1930`s.<sup>58</sup>

Furthermore, punters were occasionally allowed to bet `on tick'. A number of respondents referred to `strap bets'. Ted Jones of Birmingham remembered that `every bookie had a slate for what you called strap bets.'<sup>59</sup>

Honesty -ostensibly- was clearly the best policy in a bookmaker's relationship with his punters. In its Report, The Select Committee of 1923 recognised the `scrupulous honesty' of a bookmaker with his regular punters.<sup>60</sup> This was a more enlightened appraisal of the bookmaker than previous enquiries had allowed.

The bookie and his agent participated in the social life of the community in other ways, such as arranging pub sports such as domino sweeps and bowling handicaps, trips to the seaside for the children and giving conspicuously to charity.

The intention of such generosity and conspicuous consumption was to create an air of opulence and financial reliability: bookies needed to demonstrate their willingness and capacity to pay out winnings. Trust was essential in a context where no redress could be sought through the courts. Moreover, along with the nickname, such activities were an implicit public relations exercise which emphasised his local familiarity and cultivated his customers.

This wider involvement in the social and economic life of the neighbourhood was designed to temper the basic economic relationship between bookies and punters. He had to be seen to be putting something back into the community beyond his purely economic role as a taker of bets and layer of odds. In the poorest areas especially, the bookmaker had in one sense climbed up to a relatively comfortable standard of living on the scarce resources of the working class. His small generousities were an attempt to

---

58 Writer's oral project: W.A. Hardy, letter.

59 Ted Jones, *op cit*.

60 *S.C. 1923*, Report, p. xiii.



legitimate this economic superiority and to minimise tensions that might exist between the punters and the bookie. As we saw in the previous chapter, punters would fiddle the bookie if they thought they could get away with it, a clear illustration of the qualified nature of a bookies' popularity. The bookie could afford it, and it was perhaps only in the smallest and most informal arrangements that the opportunities or the willingness to fiddle were minimal.

But the fiddle by both employees and customers of the bookie was indicative of a combination of resentment and envy felt by the less well-off. In the moral economy of the punter this could tessellate with a certain amount of respect and admiration for the bookies' entrepreneurial verve and elevated social position. A striking cultural comparison is afforded by the American sociologist Robert Perruci in his study of the neighbourhood bookmaker in New York during the 1940's and 50's. Perruci had the benefit of an early interactionist phase as a runner for the bookie in a numbers racket, the off-course equivalent of street betting in the U.S.A. He emphasises the 'group response of envy' to the bookmakers' success and wealth and the subsequent compulsion felt by the bookies he knew to delicately negotiate this by fulfilling obligations 'outside the betting context':

At the same time that he is expected to validate his success, he must be careful not to overdo it. Thus he is expected to be a 'good spender' while not appearing over-prosperous to customers who have themselves sustained considerable losses; he must be understanding to his losing customers by extending betting credit, while not becoming a target for all would-be borrowers; and he must exhibit his proficiency in his field while not boasting and offending customers.<sup>61</sup>

In Britain too, a bookie was viewed with a mixture of favourable and unfavourable sentiments.

A note of qualification should be added here, however. Underneath these more visible bookmakers were the poorer operators who, with a small regular clientele, did not always need or feel obliged to engage in the social

---

<sup>61</sup> Robert Perucci, 'The Neighbourhood Bookmaker', in Paul Meadows and Ephraim Mizruchi (eds), *Urbanism, Urbanisation and Change: Comparative Perspectives*, N.Y., 1968, pp. 307-8.

and economic gestures of the more successful bookies. One punter described street bookmakers in County Durham from the 1930`s to 1960 as `mostly grumpy people, they did not like to lose money.' And for Peckham, London, between the wars, Clarence Malster, also a punter, stated `Most street bookmakers did not give anything (money) away - but on the whole they were decent folk.'<sup>62</sup> Not surprisingly perhaps, the less successful bookmakers felt less compulsion to validate their social standing.

The sources of resentment are more tangible than those which led to admiration. Here, the nature of the legislation itself and of limited working-class access to avenues of self-advancement were the most significant. The social standing of the bookmaker was underpinned, certainly before 1960, by a closely-knit communal network which was designed to insulate the working-class flutter from a biased and farcical law. As the lynchpin of this set up, the bookmaker symbolised the refusal to accept the stipulations of this law. Moreover, in both his his social activities and mannerisms he represented a set of values which were inimicable to the `faddist' or puritannical middle-class moralists pontificating against betting from the pulpit or in the press. We must not forget that he also paid winnings, too. Those anti-gambling commentators who inveighed against bookmakers as rapacious devourers of their gullible punters failed to understand that the bookmaker was the crucial part of a camaraderie of illicit betting which his informal gestures and his role as a local employer of part-time runners and touts served to underline. This was the emphasis of Otto Newman`s rather romanticised view of the bookie and his punters:

Before 1960 the bookies' wealth and success were regarded as objects of communal pride, and his ability to triumphantly defy the law served as comforting evidence of the asinine witlessness and egotistical corruption of the mighty and

---

<sup>62</sup> Writer's oral project: A. Simpson, born Co. Durham, 1918. QU. Clarence Malster, born Walworth, London, 1919. QU.

powerful.<sup>63</sup>

The mode of dress of many of the larger bookmakers such as Nero or Hamer, and their visibility in the pubs also illustrated a desire to be a local celebrity, to be thought of as 'a bit of a character'. Whilst this came with the job in the senses previously described, street bookmaking, like the amateur boxing which bookmakers often sponsored, also offered a wholly working-class route to parochial fame and influence. As Perrucci noted for the States, up to the 1940`s sociological work on achievement motivation had viewed its subjects through a middle-class prism. It `did not allow for the possibility that the boy (might) want to become "the best crapshooter on the block" rather than a doctor or lawyer...'<sup>64</sup> The `small-time' American bookie or policy agent was an entrepreneur within a lower-class system of values. Similarly in Britain his upward mobility was contained both by the assumptions of bourgeois culture above and the economic capacity of his regular punters. Within the day-to-day semi-conspiracy of street betting, then, the bookmaker represented the collective short-term economic aspirations of the working-class subculture of gambling. In a life of restricted educational opportunities, still very much in existence in the 1950`s and `60`s,<sup>65</sup> and in areas of relatively low paid occupations and of intermittent work or unemployment, the culture of gambling offered an easier route to money and local status than more routine jobs at the mill or on the docks.

The romantic view of the bookmaker not only obscured the complexity of his relationship with his punters, it also saw bookmaker-police relationships as one of simple counter-warfare. Thus John Martin, a social investigator on the *New Survey of London Life and Labour* (1935) wrote of the bookie:

For one thing, a halo of romance enveloped him. Here was

---

<sup>63</sup> Otto Newman, *op cit*, in G.B. Harris, *Street Betting in the Twentieth Century: It's Social Significance in the Working Class Community*, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, Uni. of Lancaster, 1978, p. 31.

<sup>64</sup> Robert Perrucci, *op cit*, p. 303

<sup>65</sup> Brian Jackson and Dennis Marsden, *Education and the Working Class*, 1976, pp. 247-50 (first published 1962)



one who was engaged in a perpetual and stimulating warfare with authority.<sup>66</sup>

But this was only a part of the overall picture.

Bookmakers and Police: A Compromise of Convenience

Harry Daley, the gay London policeman, described police and bookmaker collusion in the 1920`s and `30`s as `a matter of bribery and negotiation` encompassing the whole force. On his Hammersmith beat, there were five street bookmakers `each paying daily half crowns to the constable and goodness knows what to the higher ranks`<sup>67</sup>

Daley`s and other police autobiographies testify to the widely-known farce of police-bookmaker relations, an arrangement varying from a `blind eye` to the payment of bribes in return for inaction or the forewarning of a raid. John Thompson's experience of such collusion as a young constable in London jaundiced his memory of the force:

I recall as a young P.C. in the late 40s being posted to a beat with a betting pitch thereon. One day I stood on the pitch and brought the business to a halt. The second day the bookmakers henchman approached me to tell me he was reporting me. The third day a very senior officer came by in a car, a most unusual occurrence! The two plain clothes officers turned up, one a D.S., to accuse me of preventing them performing their duty. The frighteners were put on me. The next day I was removed from the beat and put on one where I could do `no harm`. for month`s if there was an unpleasant duty going I got it.<sup>68</sup>

Official and autobiographical testimony from the police illustrates the longevity of such arrangements, and its extent up and down the ranks of the police force. The Memorandum of the Chief Constable`s Association to the 1949-51 Royal Commission indirectly supports John Thompson`s retrospective claim:

There is no doubt that a uniformed police officer standing on a recognised street betting pitch can be a very considerable inconvenience to a street bookmaker and to his clients, and it

---

<sup>66</sup> *New Survey of London Life and Labour*, Vol. 4, 1935, p. 275.

<sup>67</sup> *This Small Cloud*, (m.s. version, copy in possession of Clive Emsley, Open University), p. 162.

<sup>68</sup> Writer's oral project: John Thompson, letter. Subsequently interviewed by writer. Born Cymbran, Wales, 1928. Tape 8, Side 1.

would be profitable for a bookmaker to pay several pounds a week to an officer to keep away from his pitch during racing hours.

We have no evidence to show whether police officers have succumbed to this temptation or not but the fact remains that such a possible source of corruption is there and we Chief Constables would like to see it removed.<sup>69</sup>

The implication being that Chief Constables were above such corruption.

Moreover a number of cases of policeman caught in liason with bookmakers had been reported since 1900, and police witnesses chose to ignore these.

For example, The Royal Commission on the Duties of the Metropolitan Police (1908) was concerned with the phenomenon of 'arrests by arrangement', which led to the dismissal of a constable from the City police force.<sup>70</sup>

For the provinces the levels of complicity were much the same, and punters were aware of it. Their perceptions of police-bookmaker arrangements varied from 'a nod and a wink when a raid was about to take place'<sup>71</sup> to an appreciation of a wider secretive network involving the wealthiest local bookies:

Joe: The bookie knew well...the bookies runner he never disclosed who he was running for otherwise there could have been a big upset in the town 'oh this mason employing about fifteen bookies runners'

*So a lot of bookies were masons were they?*

Joe: Oh yes, yeah. They was all monied people.<sup>72</sup>

The problem of freemasonry as a conduit of corruption between the criminal fraternity and the police has been opened up to a limited extent by investigative journalists writing of events in the 1950s and 1960's.<sup>73</sup> The significance here is that, whether it was the policing of street betting or pornography rackets, the justification provided by the police for collusion was its usefulness in identifying and monitoring the key offenders. But this *modus operandi* provided more than a basis for a strategy of containment: it lined

---

69 *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 28-29, p. 372.

70 *RC. 1908*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 47995-8; paras. 48039-52, pp. 988-9.

71 Alex McKensie, *op cit*.

72 Joe McCormick, *op cit*.

73 S. Knight *The Brotherhood*, 1985, pp. 75-79. B.Cox, J.Shirley and M.Short *The Fall of Scotland Yard*, 1977, *passim*.

pockets and enabled illegal activities to continue under a token surveillance. John Thompson's determination to 'play it by the book' temporarily threw this arrangement into confusion. Perhaps his D.I. and the bookmaker were fearful lest a lucrative fiddle and convenient policing policy were lost. Moreover, his sense of foul play is understandable, as the problem of high-ranking masons in the police has been a long-standing grievance in the police force.<sup>74</sup> In Liverpool, before the Police Strike of 1919, the resentment of lower rank policemen over advancement in the force by social connections and 'the widespread and pernicious influence of freemasonry in the police force' has been noted.

But many smaller bookies however were often exempt from convenient arrangements such as this, and were therefore the targets of police activity. In response to the question 'Do you think the police were often in league with the bookie and his runners?' one punter replied:

Yes and no. They were in league with the bigger type of bookie who could well afford to grease the local superintendents palm and this had to be returned by informing the bookie when a 'raid' was due so that they'd be absent when the 'black maria' arrived.

The smaller bookie with half a dozen 'runners' or so had their fair share of arrests and fines.<sup>75</sup>

In general however, the relationship between bookmakers and police was one which recognised the compulsions on each other and which provided a semblance of police activity to the local magistracy and the Watch Committee. The forewarning of most raids meant that few bookmakers and their agents were arrested regularly, and 'mugs' or dummies could easily be recruited from the local unemployed or pensioners to stand in for the regular runners to enable the business to run smoothly. The structure of police-bookmaker relations were designed on the basis of mutual convenience and blunted the edge of the betting laws. They were a necessary part of a

---

<sup>74</sup> Ron Bean, 'Police Unrest, Unionization and the 1919 Strike in Liverpool', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, 1980, p. 640

<sup>75</sup> Joe Kinsella, *op cit*.



bookmaker's strategy of survival, and a logical outcome of a law that bookmaker organisations had implacably opposed since before 1906.

'The Trades Unions of the Bookmakers': Bookmakers and their Attitude to Legislation 1906 - 1960

It was not surprising that bookmakers and the sporting press were joined in fighting legislation designed to curtail the facilitation of betting information and to eradicate off-course ready-money betting. Their opposition was focused by the N.A.G.L. and brought together by the formation of trade organisations of which the National Sporting League (N.S.L.), formed with the support of *The Sporting Life* in 1900, was the first occupational statement of bookmakers, both cash and credit.<sup>76</sup> The National Turf Protection Society, which substituted 'turf' for bookmakers in its title, was set up in 1902 by a large London bookmaker, A. Harrison Ford. It eventually brought out a journal, *The Penciller*, in 1946, which was formed to take-on the tote, as we will see in chapter seven, and which reflected other forces making for occupational togetherness. It published lists of defaulters or suspected defaulters and criticised the law for discriminating against bookmaking as a job.

In short, these organisations, comprised of the larger local bookmakers, opposed the taxation of betting and argued for the licensing of their members as the only effective way to keep out the lesser street bookies, prevent welshing, and to regulate off-course ready-money betting. A number of prominent bookmakers also wished to remove the stipulations of the law with regard to the recovery of betting debts. They argued that defaulting punters went free because bookies could not seek redress in court. Bookmakers sought the same professional status and contractual obligations 'as a tradesman and his customers...'<sup>77</sup>

Both prohibitive legislation and criticism of bookmaking promoted an emphasis upon the professional self-definition of bookmakers and their shared

---

<sup>76</sup> S.C. 1923, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 8588-8593 p492. See also Vamplew, *op cit*, pp. 218.

<sup>77</sup> W.J. Randall in the *Sporting Life*, September 21st 1904, p. 3

'sporting allegiances' with the punter. T.H. Dey argued that betting was a profession 'in the ordinary acceptation of the term' because it called for 'a certain amount of skill in its operation.'<sup>78</sup> For Dey, bookmaking was the occupational expression of the sporting culture of the free-born Englishman.

The strategy of the National Sporting League was to both confront and disarm critics of gambling. 'Sport', as noted in chapter two, was used in lieu of the word 'gambling' to legitimate the subject. Its declared aims were to 'protect all kinds of sport' from 'faddists in and out of parliament', to modify 'the laws which seriously interfere with sport', to secure at both Municipal and National Elections 'candidates sympathetic to the League' and 'to prevent by all legitimate means betting amongst women and children.'<sup>79</sup>

These candidates included Horatio Bottomley, the 'maverick' Liberal M.P for Hackney and a client of T.H. Dey, a bookmaker and Conservative local councillor in the same borough, who were outspoken critics of the 1906 Act and its 'faddist' perpetrators. C.F.G. Masterman, the Liberal M.P. and social journalist painted a withering portrait of the N.S.L. and the street bookmakers, emphasizing their political conservatism and economic self-interest. At the Peckham Bye election of 1908

long lines of street bookmakers in tall white hats and genial, vacant or bibulous faces, inquired of the passing mob why they should not be allowed to bet in the streets if they wished. And every public house became a Tory Committee room, with all its windows plastered with Tory bills and carttons, and the evidence of a brisk trade and many conversions within its walls.<sup>80</sup>

If any dominant political ethos can be attributed to bookmakers and their organisations it was, as Masterman observed, conservative. For Hulme, Manchester, a bookmakers' son remembered:

My father was a strong Tory, and I'm still a Tory. He used to impress upon us as kids 'money makes money son. If you've got no money, you'll never have any. If you've got it, you can

---

<sup>78</sup> T.H. Dey, *Betting in Excelsis*, 1908, pp. 17-18.

<sup>79</sup> *S.C. 1923*, para. 8446, p. 484.

<sup>80</sup> C.F.G Masterman, *The Condition of England*, 1909, p. 101.

make it.<sup>81</sup>

And Cynthia Millward remembered of her bookmaker grandmother that she was 'true blue -president of the local conservatives'. This was the conservatism of the small self-employed businessmen (and women) who viewed legislation and taxation as obstacles to economic well being and advancement. This was sharply evident in the controversy over the Betting Duty of 1926, first mooted in 1923, against which the bookies' organisations campaigned.

David Dixon has argued convincingly that the 1923 Select Committee on Betting Duty signified a major change in governmental attitudes towards the administrative regulation of working-class gambling.<sup>82</sup> Bookmaker's evidence was treated more receptively than in previous parliamentary enquiries, and the Church's accusation that a betting tax was state complicity in an immoral act was rejected as exaggerated and inappropriate, as were many of their quantitative claims over the spread of gambling. The Chairman of the Committee Charles Cautley argued that prohibition should be replaced by 'a reasonably controlled system of betting. .. It is a pure luxury and a fitting subject for taxation unless there are strong reasons for allowing this luxury to escape.'<sup>83</sup> Cautley still reflected the view of the professional middle class when he described betting as 'unproductive' and 'a useless thing except in so far as it gives pleasurable excitement for some and for others an escape from the monotony of their daily work.'

As Christopher Hood illustrates, the failure to successfully implement the betting duty proposed by the Cautley Commission was a product of, firstly, the ill-thought-out and flawed structure of the plan and secondly, by the tactics adopted by the bookmakers to avoid payment of taxation.<sup>84</sup>

---

81 *Lifetimes: A Couple from Manchester*, Manchester, 1975, (Manchester Polytechnic), p. 18

82 David Dixon, *op cit*, pp. 54-58.

83 *S.C. 1923*, para. 29 p. xi and para. 34, p. 42.

84 Christopher Hood, *The Limits of Administration*, 1976, Chapter Ten 'Taxing the Gambler', pp. 169-189.



Winston Churchill's first big mistake was to estimate that of all bets placed with bookmakers about 85 per cent of the total value were credit stakes. He thus grossly underestimated his potential claw-back and incurred the wrath of bookmakers who were wholly or partly credit-based. They were forced to buy a £10 licence and register as a bookmaker with Customs and Excise, the government department responsible for the administration and collection of the tax. The surge in numbers of bookmaker outlets advertising in the trade directories was an unforeseen product of this registration. As the failure of the tax to achieve its estimated revenue became increasingly apparent, Customs and Excise tried in a number of successful cases to force the larger street bookies to pay tax on what was an illegal activity. But these were a few fish hooked in a sea of legal uncertainty and tax evasion. Street bookies, as larger credit bookmakers repeatedly pointed out to the authorities, were breaking the law. A few complainants, of whom T.H. Dey was one, had both a cash and credit trade and were thus breaking the law themselves. It is not inconceivable that one easy tactic of avoidance for this sizeable middle strata was to increase the volume of their ready-money trade by converting credit into cash bets. It was easy to forget to register such bets, and the memory of the runner was useful in this connection. Bookmakers who ran clubs also found it relatively easier to avoid the tax by claiming that the bets were made privately rather than between bookmaker and bettor. This was more effective in gentlemen's clubs in the West End of London than working-class social clubs in the North, but it `sprang a serious leak in the tax in 1928.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the fraternal emphasis between bookmaker and punter implied in the titles of the trade organisations - the National *Sporting* League, the Bookmakers and Backers Protection Association - the bookmakers themselves were quick to off-load the payment of tax onto the punters, an

---

<sup>85</sup> Hood, *ibid.*, p. 172.

act perhaps not viewed as particularly sporting by their customers. The Turf Guardian Society, formed at the end of the Great War to ally bookmaking interests with those of the Turf, was central to the formation of the Sports Defence Committee which met at the Victoria Club and other genteel haunts of London bookmakers. Its secretary, W.J. Randall, argued that as things stood the bookmaker could only hope to achieve a 1.5 per cent profit on his turnover so any taxation would force him to 'pass the tax onto his clients.'<sup>86</sup> Thus, with the tax rate at 6 per cent, the managing directorate of Ladbrokes, a leading firm of credit bookmakers, charged their clients 3.5 per cent upon gross winnings and 3.5 per cent 'upon the stakes invested to produce those winnings'.<sup>87</sup> How many wealthier credit punters switched to ready-money bookies or to a cash arrangement with their bookie cannot be estimated with any certainty.

As Hood shows, a more technical problem arose in the taxation of different types of bets. 'Accumulator' bets, where the successful winnings from the stake on the first horse were placed on a horse in one or more subsequent races were treated as single 'taxable transactions'. However, 'any to come' bets where a fixed portion of the winnings is kept and the rest placed as a stake on a subsequent race or races were treated as two or more taxable bets. This kept 'gritting up the administrative machine' argues Hood.

The receipts from the betting duty in 1926 were less than £3 million, whereas £6 million had been predicted by the Treasury. This dropped sharply, despite cuts in the tax rate to tempt people to pay it, until abolition in 1929 by a Labour Government whom the bookmakers had lobbied following the active support given to Labour in the election of that year. Labour, like the anti-gambling lobby, felt it was immoral to tax an unethical habit such as gambling.<sup>88</sup> This may be seen as one of the tactics used by the bookmakers

---

<sup>86</sup> *The Times*, 21st March 1926, p. 17, col. e

<sup>87</sup> *The Times*, 7th Sept. 1926 p. 14, col. f

<sup>88</sup> C. Hood, *op cit*, p. 179

to defend their interest. As Churchill lamented, he had been defeated by the 'volatile and elusive character of the betting population, and the precarious conditions in which they disport themselves.'<sup>89</sup>

Such elusiveness contributed to the view of the bookmaker, especially the smaller illegal street bookie, as a 'fly boy', quick and cunning. The sharp and sometimes shabby finery of the bookmakers dress noted by Booth and others during the nineteenth century, the watch chain, suit and so on, came to signify less a parasitism but a rather dishonest and untrustworthy character, although he was, as noted above, often a role-model in working-class communities. The bookmakers' trade organisations were aware of the negative implications of this spivvy image. As Mr. D.B. Summers told the Willink Commission in 1950, most people misunderstood the bookie:

Unfortunately, through Tom Webster and people like that, everyone visualises the bookmaker with a watch chain, large cigars and diamonds, etc. This is merely his stockin trade. No-one wants to bet with a seedy bookmaker, therefore he has got to look well dressed. Bookmaking is like any other profession: if you work hard at it you will make a living at it, but I cannot recall, and none of my colleagues can recall, any bookmaker dying and leaving a fortune compatible with those made much more easily in industry.<sup>90</sup>

By the early 1950's the N.B.P.A. claimed to represent 95 per cent of all full time organised bookmakers, the composition of which was as follows:

Racecourse Bookmakers only	521 <sup>91</sup>
Dog Track Bookmakers only	516
Bookmakers at S.P. Office Only	1,605
Those who were all three above	262
Racecourse and Dog Track only	606
Racecourse and S.P. Office only	255
Dog Track and S.P. Office only	238
Ex-Bookmakers still in N.B.P.A.	699
Total	4,702

Many credit bookmakers, including those with a sizeable under trade in cash betting were in the B.P.A., but their submission to the Enquiry made a virtue of ignoring the great number of smaller operators who were credit in title only,

---

<sup>89</sup> *H.C. Debs*, 15th April 1928, col. 49

<sup>90</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, p. 363.

<sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, 1951 Appendix, p. 116.



and the innumerable amount of street bookmakers. Prior to the introduction of betting shops many street bookmakers formed themselves into an organisation to legalise the status quo rather than introduce retail outlets. Planning controls limited the locality of shops and this threatened to shift many bookmakers away from their immediate local clientele. The Street Bookmakers Federation was made up of bookmakers from all over England and Wales, and they felt that bookies with pitches in industrial areas and those who lost their workplace runners faced a loss of trade:

Many of our street bookies have pitches near factories, and the only premises they could get which would be suitable for a betting shop would probably be about one or two miles away.<sup>92</sup>

They were also fearful that the largest local chains of bookmakers would end up dominating the market by squeezing the small street bookmakers out. The S.B.F. claimed that a racket had already developed in areas where illegal betting outlets were operating whereby a small bookmaker looking for a potential site for his business was being charged extortionate rents or purchase charges from the bookmaker owners in those areas.

The small bookmaker lobby found a number of M.P.'s willing to put its case in Parliament, of whom Bob Mellish, Labour M.P. for Bermondsey was the most forceful. He was in opposition to the broad cross-party agreement that legal ready-money betting should take place in betting shops. Mellish, in common with a number of Scottish M.P.'s and Members from the North of England, observed that 'street betting' meant 'street' more literally in the South and in London than further North. As noted, in Lancashire (and this appears germane for the Midlands too) most bookies worked from their house, and sent runners out to local workplaces. In Scotland, moreover, as is illustrated in chapter nine, fully fledged betting shops operating in defiance of the law were common in the working-class areas of the large towns and cities.

Mellish, with qualified support from Reginald Paget, Labour M.P. for

---

<sup>92</sup> *Sporting Chronicle*, 17th December 1959, p. 4

Northampton, proposed to legalise the existing structure of ready-money betting as this was more sensitive to regional variations. He argued that each bookie should be licensed and each runner should be registered by his employer, to whom he was accountable. He admitted he was speaking on behalf of the smallest street bookies and their punters when he counterposed the conviviality of the existing set-up with the bleak 'dash into the shop, give him my bet, and dash out' system proposed.<sup>93</sup> Mellish viewed the bookie as one of the traditional 'characters' of Cockney London, whose social standing had rendered them popular and trustworthy and thus deserving of legal recognition:

What kind of people are these street bookmakers? In my constituency, in dockland, we have a number of them along the waterfront. They have been there for years. In fact, if they were new boys they would be treated with grave suspicion. They are men who down the years have earned the respect of dockworkers and factory workers because they are certain that if they win - I gather that the docker occasionally wins - they will get their winnings paid on the dot. In fact they are - I say this frankly and sincerely to the House - very honourable men. There is nothing shady about the sort of fellow I am talking about, who has been there for a great number of years.<sup>94</sup>

In common with the 'respectable organisations of bookmakers' he wanted to 'keep the spiv out' and to end a century of class biased legislation. Both problems could only be achieved by legalising street bookmaking.

Ultimately, Mellish and Paget and those who would legalise street betting were out of touch with a House which sought to introduce a simple if rather grudging structure of shops. They voted against the Act, but were in a minority of 44 as against 250 odd in favour.

In May 1961 the Betting and Gaming Act introduced the Licensed Betting Office onto the main shopping streets of Britain. The social network which had developed since 1853 to enable people to get their bets on was in effect vapourised, although the runner was legalised to enable workers to get

---

<sup>93</sup> *H.C. Debs*, 17th November, 1959, Cols. 1050, 1106

<sup>94</sup> *ibid*, col. 1046

their bets on during the day. But the runner was increasingly less needed throughout the 1960`s as the number of betting shops grew and people preferred to put their bets on themselves.

The street bookmaker was technically abolished in 1961, and was forced to give up or to go into a betting shop, known officially as a Licensed Betting Office. How many gave up or faded away is impossible to tell. There were about 13,340 betting shops in 1962. The larger bookmakers, as we will see in chapter nine, had little to fear from L.B.O's.

### Conclusion

The street bookmaker was at the centre of the commercialisation of illegal ready-money betting. In enabling punters to bet at starting-price odds he both served and promoted the market for small stake wagering. He was, on the whole, popular, but this popularity was qualified for punters by a consideration that the odds usually favoured he who aggregated the bets. Bookmakers would, of course, take bets on anything, but a number of more informal gaming pursuits persisted which remained largely immune from the attentions of bookmakers. This subject is examined in the next chapter.



## Chapter 5: Informal and Uncommercialised Betting and Gaming: An Exploration.

### Introduction

Beyond the development of commercialised mass betting from the later nineteenth century there remained a myriad of more informal gambling activities mostly, but not always, free from the intervention of bookmakers and other entrepreneurs. Coin and card gaming were part of a tradition of lower-class gaming going back to the eighteenth century. And the sports of bowls and pigeon racing developed rapidly from the 1880's and 1890's. This is also true of whippet racing, discussed in the next chapter. Gambling was central to these activities, and determined their organisation. Yet a number of historians and sociologists, concerned at the destruction of what they view as essential, indigenous, self-generated working-class recreation by the mechanised work process and the campaign for rational recreation, have miskewed the real nature of working-class leisure.<sup>1</sup> Clarke and Critcher, for example, fail to penetrate the subculture of informal gambling in their discussion of working-class leisure since that time, dismissing it as part of a street based culture 'only partially visible to the historian.'<sup>2</sup> Chris Rojek presents a similar picture, viewing leisure as 'pacified', largely from forces from above.<sup>3</sup> This view obscures more than it reveals.

### Coin Gaming

Gambling with coins must be as old as gambling and the coinage. Its popularity in pre-industrial Britain has been noted by a number of authors and it was made punishable under the Vagrancy Acts from the reign of Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup> These have been applied against *al fresco* betting and gaming since, as

---

1 See John Clarke and Chas Critcher *The Devil Makes Work* (1985); Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 1980; Chris Rojek, *Capitalism and Leisure Theory*, 1985.

2 John Clarke and Chas Critcher, *ibid*, p. 68

3 Chris Rojek, *ibid*, p. 29.

4 A.B. Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland*, N.Y., 1964, Vol 2, pp. 43-44.

against drunkenness and begging and other nuisances in the streets or external locales such as wastelands or underneath railway arches. The Annual Reports of the Chief Constables of Bolton, Liverpool and Manchester to their respective Watch Committees seem to imply that from the later nineteenth century to the 1950's the police rounded up considerably more coin- and card- gamblers each year than bookmakers or their runners. Yet it appears that the charge for 'Gaming &c.' under the Vagrancy Acts was also used to nab bookies and their runners, so we will never know just how many people were caught gaming in the streets.

Concern at the social inconvenience of betting amongst the poor had been given a greater urgency and new moral direction with the rise to economic and political power of the commercial and industrial middle class during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The disapproval of coin gaming as a wasteful vice of the lower orders was evident in the engravings of the artist William Hogarth (1697-1764). Hogarth satirised the vices and affectations of English society in his series of engravings *Industry and Idleness*. The disrespect for others which he felt that gambling implied was expressed in the picture of the *Idle Apprentices* tossing with coins on a gravestone during holy service.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst gambling in general was associated as a sin of selfishness, coin gaming was increasingly associated with the male poor, especially the young. To the 1844 *Select Committee on Gambling* a number of magistrates and police witnesses pointed to the association of boys and young working men with coin and card gaming, especially 'boys of loose habits and irregular propensities.'<sup>6</sup>

During the 1850's and '60's social investigators into London's poor and criminal population emphasised the popularity of coin and card gaming amongst the casually employed, most notably the costermongers or barrow

---

<sup>5</sup> See James Mott, *op cit*, 1975, p. 3, for a discussion of this engraving.

<sup>6</sup> *SC 1844*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 838 p. 73.

boys who sold fruit and vegetables, fish, meat and pies in the streets of the capital. Gambling was an exciting if precarious way to spend the time when selling was slack. It threw into relief the 'easy come easy go' fortunes of the casual labour market. Henry Mayhew, for example, argued:

If a costermonger has an hour to spare his first thought is to gamble away the time. He does not care what he plays for so long as he can have a chance of winning something...Nothing will damp his ardour for gambling, the most continuing ill-fortune making him even more reckless than if he were the luckiest man alive.<sup>7</sup>

Mayhew was of course concerned lest a persistent young gambler already earning an unreliable living from his barrow should squander his precious pennies rather than eat or keep warm. Social workers and people concerned with the well-being of youth have long since shared this concern. C.E.B Russell in Edwardian Manchester, Cyril Burt, the L.C.C. criminologist between the wars, John Barron Mays, a social reformer and sociologist in Liverpool during the 1950's and '60's sought to understand the appeal of gambling for the young and in Russell and Burt's case to warn of its dangers.<sup>8</sup> Russell and Burt were particularly concerned that gambling provided the young with an introduction to criminal behaviour.

But such paternalistic concern was the soft side of a desire for social control and reflected as much a fear at the social consequences of a distinct and alienated culture of the young poor as a need for benevolent intervention into the way the young spent their money in their spare time. As John Gillis, Paul Thompson and Geoffrey Pearson have observed, contemporary middle-class social reformers were fearful at the rise of juvenile delinquency as the worst edge of an increasingly dissolute and independent layer of young working-class people.<sup>9</sup> Russell's missionary work with the 'street

---

<sup>7</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) Vol. 1, pp. 16-17.

<sup>8</sup> C.E.B. Russell, *Manchester Boys: Sketches of Manchester Boys at Work and Play*, 1905, p. 14.; Cyril Burt, *The Young Delinquent*, 1941, pp. 24-25; John Barron Mays, *Growing Up in the City*, 1956, pp. 72-73, pp. 189-201.

<sup>9</sup> John Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England', *Past and Present*, No. 67, 1975, pp. 96-126. Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians*, 1984, pp. 215-7.



arabs' and 'loafers' -themselves terms which reflect a view of an alien culture adrift from respectable society - emphasised the centrality of gambling to this pattern of drift and disaffection. Pitch and toss and other forms of gaming in the streets were symptoms of a wider crisis of morality amongst the young, evincing a contempt for authority and a lack of self concern. This view became a 'moral panic', an easy scapegoat to explain the British economic failure brought on by successful competition from overseas, and part of the sense of cultural degeneration which the Edwardian middle class feared. <sup>10</sup>

Concern with gambling and the young emanated from the interface of two problems of social control, and the recognition during the nineteenth century of the law's failure to prevent this conjunction. The problem for magistrates was not simply one of the interpretation of the Acts but was more a result of the widespread and sporadic nature of gaming amongst the poor. The police found it difficult to keep street gaming under adequate suppression, and police raids were often the result of a complaint or tip-off by an irate or concerned member of the public:

*Thos. J.Hall, Chief Magistrate at Bow Street:* Under the Vagrant Act boys are very frequently taken up for playing at pitch-and-toss with pennies or half-pennies, such cases are considered by some magistrates as not within the Act; others think differently and punish the offenders... I ought perhaps to state that such cases have been generally brought before me through the interference of persons who being obstructed in the streets by children playing at pitch-and-toss or other games of chance, have required the police to take them into custody and convey them before a magistrate; the parties so charging have very seldom appeared to support the complaint, but have left it to the policeman to support what he saw

*Mr.Hawes:* The Vagrant Act is an Act which confers very extraordinary powers on justices? *Halt:* Very great indeed.<sup>11</sup>

Those convicted for the first time could be fined a few shillings, with subsequent convictions threatening larger fines or the spectre of hard labour for three calendar months. Somebody caught playing pitch and toss was very much at the mercy of the individual inclinations of the magistrate. It can

---

<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, , 1983, pp. 196 *et seq.*

<sup>11</sup> *S.C. 1844*, Minutes of Evidence paras.119-201, pp. 18-19.

be argued, however, that the young, as with most people caught gaming in the streets, were faced with a less generous dispensation from the 1880's for two main reasons. Firstly, as David Jones argues, there was a general trend toward more punitive sentences for young people charged with petty stealing and other crimes against property in the second half of the nineteenth century as the facilities for summary jurisdiction were tightened up and expanded by the Justice Act of 1855 and later by the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1879.<sup>12</sup> More important, however, were the campaigns against gambling in general in the local press from the 1880's which perhaps stimulated police activity. Yet in general it is nigh-impossible to assess the incidence or growth of coin-gaming (and card gaming) because police activity could in no way reflect all the gaming going on in and out of doors.

Whilst the relationship of young children to gambling had long been a source of concern, this was sharpened as gambling was seen to increase during the later nineteenth century. Magistrates in the North West usually fined offenders for street gaming as the twentieth century approached. For example, in the Bolton Court Registers by 1900 most lads or young men caught gaming were fined 2/- for a first offence, and this rose for subsequent convictions to 2/6, 5/-, 7/6 or seven days imprisonment. The unlucky Samuel Mayoh of Church Avenue, who was arrested twice in July 1901 for 'playing by way of gaming with coins at a game of chance known as Tossing', was fined 2/- for his first offence. For the second he was given the choice of paying a 5/- fine or going to prison for a week.<sup>14</sup> This was no doubt a considerable blow to the household economy. Elizabeth Clapson -nee Neville- remembered her uncle Billy, who lived with her family, was caught by the police playing pitch and toss in Jubilee Square, Reading, during the First World war:

And if they was trying to catch 'em gamblin' they used to

---

<sup>12</sup> David Jones, *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain*, 1982, p. 136

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Humphries, *Hooligans or Rebels*, 1981, *passim*

<sup>14</sup> *Register of the Court of Summary Jurisdiction*, Bolton, 1900-1930. Earlier records were destroyed in 1941 as paper salvage for the war effort.

come up in plain clothes...You used to get fined about five shillin`s then, that was a lot of money them days, five shillin`s. My dad used to go to work for about two pound a week, `od carryin`, labourin` an` that.<sup>15</sup>

Apprehension took the form of sudden police raids. Robert Roberts described the physical violence of one such episode, and thought it left youngsters with a suspicion of authority which stayed with them all their lives and shaped the attitude `of a whole working-class generation toward civil authority,`.<sup>16</sup>

Girls and women were virtually excluded from the actual playing of the games. They either watched the gaming or performed the role of scout or look-out. This spectatorial and sentinel position reflected their exclusion from and perhaps disinclination towards boisterous street games involving money. Such games were probably regarded by the participants as manly pursuits, part of a peer group culture based on risk and bravado. Rudyard Kipling pointed to this in his paeon to the fearless:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings,  
And risk it in one turn of pitch and toss,  
And lose and start again at your beginnings,  
And never breathe a word about your loss,

‘You’ll be a Man my son.’ Jerry White has argued that gaming assemblies were part of a gender-based learning process, and proving one`s manliness helped to compensate for the lack of a steady job and the humiliations and deprivations associated with poverty.<sup>17</sup> Such games also offered intensely charged bursts of excitement in an otherwise monotonous and drab environment.

Yet excessive displays of manliness or indulgence in such gatherings could have tragic effects for the wives and children of the punter. Sheila Hackett, of Leigh in Lancashire, remembered the worry and despair caused by her fathers` heavy gaming at a local organised pitch and toss school:

---

<sup>15</sup> Taped interview with Mrs E. Clapson, the writers` grandmother. Tape in possession of writer.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, 1983, p. 162. Plate 5 In the Appendix gives a vivid picture of a police raid (of a crown and anchor school).

<sup>17</sup> J. White, *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington Between the Wars*, 1985, p. 186



There was a so called 'top field' at the end of our street which was the beginning of the meadows I suppose. In this field was 'The Hollow'. Thinking about it now, it must have seemed like the Mafia H.Q. when I was 9 years old. No one dare set foot there. My mother used to go on about 'pitch and toss' and various card games to my father and once reported the 'Hollow' to our local police station. This, in turn, made more upset in our family as the gamblers took it out on my father for his wife 'shopping' them. If my father had a good day in the 'Hollow' he would not go to work the next day. If he had a bad day in the Hollow then he would take it out on my Mother, Brother and myself. Many's the time we have trudged through the streets looking for lodgings.<sup>18</sup>

Similar examples abounded in anti gambling literature and were fuel for claims as to the misery gambling caused for the poor. It is impossible to say with any exactitude such how many such cases existed, but also impossible to deny their occurrence. An historian should be more sensitive than contemporary anti gamblers, however, to the difference between moderate and excessive gambling and the exaggeration of social reality which can occur by an over concentration on the latter.<sup>19</sup>

But what was 'pitch and toss'? How was it and other coin games played? A.B.Gomme, an historian of traditional games and pastimes provides an account of an elaborate game of 'pitch and toss' played in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with lead 'pitchers', that is, tokens with heads on one side and tails on the other. These were tossed up into the air and combinations of upward facing sides were guessed at by the players.<sup>20</sup> This was but one variation of a game which took many forms according to region and local custom. In London during the 1840's a magistrate described a game of pitch and toss thus:

a hole is made in the ground, or some object is placed there, and the players pitch at same with pence or halfpence; he who pitches nearest the hole or object is entitled to the first

---

<sup>18</sup> Writers oral project: Sheila Hackett, letter.

<sup>19</sup> The problem of extreme gambling has been brought out more clearly since the mid-1960's with the work of the Churches Council on Gambling, and particularly of the Reverend Gordon Moody. He was instrumental in establishing a British 'Gambler's Anonymous' on the American model, and in promoting debate and facilities to solve the problem. See Moody G.E., *The Facts About the Money Factories*, 1972, pp. 9-12; Churches Council on Gambling, *The Social Control of Gambling*, 1974, *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> A.B. Gomme, *op cit*.

toss into the air of all the pence played with and claims every piece of money which falls with head uppermost; he who pitched second best has the second toss and so on till all the players have successively tossed, or the money is exhausted. Sometimes, young boys play for cakes, but generally for money.<sup>21</sup>

Oral testimony for the twentieth century illustrates the great local diversity of coin games. 'Nudgers' or 'nudges', for example, seems to have been peculiar to Manchester, particularly Hulme, as the local name for the game of 'fives'. William Logan, the son of a docker, remembered the game clearly from his boyhood in the late 1920's and '30's:

And what you used to do was you'd get five coins, old English pennies, the big pennies. They would toss them up on the thumb and finger of the left hand if you were so left handed, and you would catch them in your right hand. So you toss up five pennies, and you've got five pennies in your fist in the other hand. Now, then you would turn your fist over so that your knuckles were down to the floor and you'd got five pennies in your hand. You would then open your left hand and people would bet on the amount of heads that you had showing when you opened your fist, the five coins.'<sup>22</sup>

Nudgers was very popular amongst the lads and men of Hulme and the Golden Eagle public house on Stretford Road was probably nicknamed 'the Nudger' due to the incidence of the game in its vicinity.<sup>23</sup>

'Pitch in the Scrapper' was played in the North East, the scrapper being the metal channel in the footpath to take away water from the guttering pipe:

It was about one inch wide about two inches deep. The idea was to stand about ten feet away, pitch your pennies and get as many as you can in the grate.<sup>24</sup>

'Shaking in the hat', played in Boston, Lincolnshire, and the rural East Midlands, was an indoor or under-cover game. Coins were placed in a hat and then everyone in turn would shake the hat and turn it over on a flat surface, preferably a hessian sack to stop the coins rolling. The winner had the most

---

21 *S.C. 1844*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 203. p. 19.

22 Writer's oral project: William Logan, born Hulme, Manchester, 1922. Tape 9, Side 1.

23 Bob Potts, *The Old Pubs of Hulme, Manchester*, Manchester, 1983, p. 18.

24 Writers' oral project: S. Lemlin, letter.

heads facing upwards and took all the coins.<sup>25</sup>

'Heads and tails' was probably the simplest form of tossing played with one or more coins. These were tossed into the air and the players predicted how many would land facing heads or tails up. <sup>26</sup>

Pitch and toss gained a greater notoreity during the inter war years because, as the most common form of coin gaming, it was used by bookmakers and other petty entrepreneurs to make money. Bookmaker rivalry over organised pitch and toss rings in Sheffield led to the infamous gang wars in that city, and pitch and toss gatherings in Glasgow, then and since, have been the scene for some vicious fighting between gangs of henchmen hired by bookmakers to protect or expand their grip over the proceedings.<sup>27</sup>

Not all bookmaker involvement led to violence of course. Bert Williamson remembered that local bookies organised surreptitious games on the beach at Seaforth, near Bootle, on Sunday mornings involving just a lookout, the punters, and a predetermined strategy of 'mingling' with others on the beach if a police presence was signalled. Peter McCready's description of pitch and toss in Birkenhead throws into relief the internal organisation and customary features of the more spontaneous ,informal game:

Someone would place a certain amount of money on the ground and invite anyone to bet against him tossing two coins in the air and landing on the ground with the two heads facing up. First of all two men or young schoolchildren would be posted as lookouts, this was known as being on DOUSE as in SCOUSE or keeping nicks. Then somebody would be selected to pick up, his job was to make sure the money was covered by the right amount and who had struck a bet, it was usually done by the local HARD CASES so there would be no cheating going on. Whoever had put the money on the ground then placed two coins on the palm of his hand tail side up and toss them above his head, if he didn't throw them high enough anyone who had put a bet on could stick a hand or foot out before they hit the ground and shout 'BAR THEM' they were then tossed up again. If they landed with two heads facing up he won, if they landed two tails up he

---

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, G. Rayner, letter.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, Clarence Malster, *op cit*. Peter McCready, for Liverpool between the wars, letter.

<sup>27</sup>. See J.P. Bean, *The Sheffield Gang Wars*, Sheffield, 1980, *passim*.



lost, if they landed one head and one tail, known as 'TWO ONES' they had to be tossed again. If the TOSSER won he would give the picker-up a small amount of his winnings and a coin or two to the lads on 'NICKS'.<sup>28</sup>

Similar examples are to be found for other parts of England. Not just local bookies but others simply making a book between friends and workmates would attempt to make a profit from these informal pitch and toss gatherings. This economic adventurism often took the form of some ingenious fiddles on the part of the widest of those involved. Emery cloths were used to indiscernably rub away the edges of coins to bias their weight in favour of one side of the coin. Bert Williamson of Bootle, serving his apprenticeship as a lathe operator during the thirties, made double headed pennies on his lathe, using them to help his chances of winning, or selling them for fourpence to friends and workmates who would put their legitimate pennies on the floor and invite others to gamble with them. Skill was often an essential factor in the enactment of a fiddle. An experienced 'tossman'

could send up his pennies looking for all the world as though they were spinning rapidly (as they were supposed to). In fact they were 'butterflying', wiggling rapidly, and landing exactly as the tossman wanted them to. This was usually done when the tossing school was held on soft ground; when done in the street with coins landing on cobbles there was no way of knowing how the coins would stop.<sup>29</sup>

The identification of a certain naivety amongst some of the locals was important to the success of this minor confidence trick:

If there were people who you knew didn't play a lot you could use your double headed pennies -you couldn't lose. 'Cos when you tossed them up they either came down what they called two 'ones', a tail and a head, or two 'heads', 'cos one had to be heads anyway, so that you couldn't lose.<sup>30</sup>

Bert would only pull this trick four or five times, before it became too suspicious, then he would start an argument and slip the coin into his pocket whilst the others were distracted. As with fiddles against the bookmaker,

---

<sup>28</sup> Writer's oral project: Bert Williamson, born Liverpool, 1920. Tape 11, Side 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, Paul Morrell, Leeds, letter.

<sup>30</sup> Bert Williamson, *op cit*.

one's own economic problems and insecurities were amenable to a 'catch as catch can' attitude, central to the moral economy of the punter discussed in chapter four. All forms of gaming were open to this type of adventurism.

#### Cards, Dice, and Other Instruments of Gaming

Unlike coin games, card games for money have been played by all social classes except for those who object to gambling on ethical grounds. Different social groupings have however played different games, and used different places to play them in. The size of stakes involved has also reflected differing levels of wealth.

During the early nineteenth century gaming salons for the wealthy offered such card games as hazard, *chemin de fer* and whist as well as roulette, *rouge et noir*, backgammon and other games of skill and chance. White's Club, established in the 1690's in St. James's Street, London, and Brooks's Club, founded during the high days of Regency gaming in 1754, also of St. James Street, were notorious as the ruinous gambling dens of the landed upper class.<sup>31</sup> As evidence by the proprietor to the 1844 Enquiry revealed, Crockfords, begun in 1828 by an ex-military horse trainer, was perhaps symptomatic of both the established culture of gentlemanly gaming and the slow infusion of respectable prominent legs (William Spruce's) into these sumptuously appointed salons. Besides the dealing of cards and the spinning of the wheel, the acceptance of bets on horse races and other competitions from the wealthy patrons was commonplace. Crockfords was held to be responsible for an upsurge of gaming amongst the young gentlemen of the metropolis, an impression perhaps justified by Crockford's unwillingness to divulge details of the extent of betting on his premises to the Select Committee on Gaming in 1844.<sup>30</sup>

Yet the Committee of 1844 was more concerned with the rise of 'common gaming houses', as locales for the sins of the multitude, than with

---

<sup>31</sup> See Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert, *op cit.*, 1987, pp. 961 and 98 respectively.

the excesses of an elite. These establishments, run *in situ* by public house owners, coffee shop owners, cigar shop proprietors and others central to local social life, allowed card playing, bagatelle, quits, backgammon, dice and a variety of 'other instruments of gaming.'<sup>31</sup> Gustave Dore's print *Thieves Gambling* captures the sense of sleaze, gullibility and sharp practice which respectable people attributed to the 'gambling hells' of the poor.

There were however problems of definition as to what constituted a 'common gaming house'. The Senior Criminal Law Commissioner informed the Committee that he did not consider a cigar shop, a public house or 'a house in which billiards are played' came under the description of a common gaming house where 'anybody may enter for gaming.'<sup>32</sup>

Of particular concern to the Committee, enlightened by the Jockey Club to the increased prevalence of defaulting on the Turf, were the social consequences resulting from the use of deceit in gaming, such as false dice, false roulette wheels and card sharpening. A Superintendent of Police for London drew the distinction between the harmlessness of gamesters 'playing amongst themselves' and the dangers 'when two or three sharpers get among them':

(They) drain them of everything they have for the maintenance of their families for the week, and their children have to go the next week to beg for their maintenance, and their wives have come to me and stated that their husbands had been locked up in the station house after earning so much, and that they had not a halfpenny for their maintenance.<sup>33</sup>

Social investigators were mindful that fiddlers not only operated on their own gambling groups but also 'those strangers who may have the misfortune to be in their company.' Mayhew warned his readers of the the criminal elements - the 'magsmen' and 'sharper'- who perpetrated frauds on unsuspecting passers-by using not only cards but also skittles and the 'thimble and pea trick', whereby the pea, instead of remaining under one of the thimbles which

---

<sup>32</sup> *S.C 1844*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 82-88, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, para. 427, pp. 35-36.



the sharper moved about on the table or floor was 'secreted under the thumb nail of the sharp.'<sup>35</sup> Sharpers were part of the sub-class of travelling poor and seasonally employed labourers who went to race meetings to whistle-up a few shillings. Gipsies exhibiting cocoanut shies (whom Charles Hindley, a self-confessed member of 'the fraternity' of 'cheap jacks', called 'Romanees') were typical of the peripatetic existence of this group of marginals. For London in the 1880's Charles Booth noted that people who sought work at the racecourses lived in the Dark Blue and Black streets, the lowest streets of the very poor and the 'vicious semi-criminal.'<sup>36</sup>

Sharppers had to work in groups. Hindley remembered such gangs. They travelled to race meetings and country fairs as far apart as Manchester and Maidstone:

In my young days there used to travel about in gangs like men of business a lot of people called 'nobbler' who used to work the 'thimble and pea rig' and go 'buzzing', that is, picking pockets assisted by some small boys.

To look respectable they would dress like county farmers in brown top boots and breeches.<sup>37</sup>

'Three Up' or 'Five Up', betting on which downturned cards would be turned upwards was also common, and 'Find the Lady' (the Queen) was a favourite trick, the sharpeners shuffling the cards and playing amongst themselves before inviting whom Mayhew called some 'simpleton in the crowd' to bet on where the card was hidden in the hand. The card had been removed from the pack by sleight of hand. These tricks were often pulled on trains against racegoers. . In Lancashire County Court in March, 1901 four 'Sharppers in a railway carriage' of 'no fixed abode' were, with the full support of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company, sentenced to one month hard labour each for playing a game of chance in a public place:

---

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Peter Quennell (ed.), *Mayhews' London*, 1983, pp. 330-4. Quote p 334. Variations of this trick are a stock in trade of television magicians today.

<sup>36</sup> L.S.E., Coll U: B45, *Poverty* Notebook, Windsor Road, Hackney, pp. 152-9.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Hindley, *The Life and Adventures of a Cheap Jack*, 1876, p. 192; pp. 192-7.

In a way well known to the Magistrates, several passengers were beguiled into the affair. When Jones was searched, four 'flash notes' were found in his possession, Jeffries had also four 'flash notes' and three cards and a pocket book which contained four other 'flash notes', and Geary had six playing cards and three blank cards. The railway company felt very strongly in the matter that this class of passenger could not be stopped travelling. It interfered with the comfort of the passengers and it was a danger and a disgrace to the travelling class at large. <sup>38</sup>

A few days later in Bolton four 'sharpers in a railway carriage' at Westhoughton were given three months hard labour each for playing a game of chance in public and stealing £7 by deception. <sup>39</sup> Mass Observation, in 1947, found that card sharpers and makeshift gaming booths were still part of the post feudal fun of the fair, as we will see in chapter seven.

Newspaper reports and court records for Bolton and Manchester, for example, illustrate that from 1900 to the 1930's pontoon, banker, brag and whist were the most common activities for which punters were prosecuted. As with coin gaming, women and girls were virtually absent from this activity. Oral evidence and the Mass Observation material also illustrates the popularity in pubs of shove'apenny boards, dominoes, darts, dice games, billiards and quoits. Indoors, especially in public houses, sidestake wagering on cards, crown and anchor, dominoes, darts and a variety of pub sports was a significant social activity in a culture of relaxation and communality.<sup>40</sup> As well as allowing gaming on their premises, many publicans introduced slot machines. A little aside on such machines is relevant here. Concern over the relation of the young to these devices was evident during the Great War when Birkenhead Education Committee issued a warning to parents and guardians about children spending pocket money on these machines and

---

<sup>38</sup> *Bolton Evening News* 7th March 1901, p. 3 'The Three Card Trick: Card Sharpers in a Railway Carriage'

<sup>39</sup> *ibid* 11th March 1901, p. 3 'Card Sharpers Sent Down'.

<sup>40</sup> M.O., archive, Worktown, Box 1, File D. See also the 'Pub Compilation Tapes', Manchester Tape Studies Collection, at Manchester Polytechnic. On the conviction of a publican for allowing card playing for money see *Liverpool Daily Post*, 30th November 1915, p. 3.

consequently being induced to gamble.<sup>41</sup>

Slot machines were, increasingly during the inter-war years, imported from the U.S.A. by owners of amusement arcades, such as those in Blackpool owned by the Amusement Caterers Association. Mass Observation noted that Blackpool's arcades were popular with all ages of holiday makers, but especially the young. Machines such as 'Allwin' or the Little Stockbroker were exciting and noisy and the odd lucky penny could produce a gush of many coppers. But the nature of the machines and the Amusement With Prizes legislation restricted payouts to sums which added up to less than the amount a machine took in a given period.<sup>42</sup> More research is needed on the slots, especially how young people played with them up to 1960. In short, though, publicans probably got slot machines off the ground.

Publicans also organised sweepstakes -minor lotteries on major horse races- and the police in many areas were reluctant to raid or prohibit these gatherings. Police intervention in gatherings held behind closed doors where games of chance were played for money was also difficult. Offenders would protest that they were playing for love rather than cash. John Monk, as a detective superintendant in London's East End during the early years of this century, had to confront this and other problems in attempting to raid and prosecute the instigators of gambling clubs and the various 'dens of infamy' which went on in, amongst other places, the back of a restaurant, lodging houses and model dwellings. Moreover, under the Betting Act, 1874, warrants for searching premises also had to be applied for, and as Monk laments 'it was weeks before I could find my man and execute the warrant.' He was also warned by a magistrate for illegal entry. This state of affairs led to an unwillingness on the part of many police chiefs to plan raids and prosecute offenders. Magistrates, who found difficulty in interpreting the laws themselves,

---

<sup>41</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 15th Sept., 1915, p. 3 'Child Gamblers'.

<sup>42</sup> See the testimony of Amusement Caterers' Association to the *R.C. 1949-51*, paras. 5778-81; paras. 5873-7, pp. 391-2. On Blackpool, see M.O., 'Moneysworth', Box 48, File F.



were aware of the problems facing the police. Sir Laurence Dunne, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate told the Royal Commission of 1949-51 that

there is no doubt that bridge, if played for money stakes, is an illegal game. But the whole position is absolutely anomalous, because people realise that is the position and so they do not enforce what has been really approved as the law.<sup>43</sup>

As noted above, cards were the most cross-class of gaming activities, although the location of the game, whether in a club or at home, and the game itself, reflected snobbery. For the inter war years Graves and Hodge pointed out, with their tongues partly in their cheeks, the changing class alignments attached to a game of cards, and the increasing popularity of bridge with the upper middle classes. The lower middle class 'continued to play the less skilful whist...'<sup>44</sup>

Card playing has long been a feature of a more privatised leisure at home or in clubs, not just for the rich but by those patronised by an ethnically separate or status-conscious membership. Beatrice Potter, describing the assimilation into London's Jewish community of a Polish 'greener' (a recent immigrant) noted that he soon became 'an habitue of gambling club.'<sup>45</sup> In Manchester, Benny Weingard emphasised the social function of card gambling amongst the poorer Jews of Choir Street. His parents

used to like a social evening, a card evening. They used to start after two, after dinner, until about twelve o'clock at night. You couldn't get a meal, it was only two up two down, they was playing cards.<sup>46</sup>

Amongst the wealthier local Jews, Mrs. Gaster, who later married Neville Laski, remembered that she and her husband played bridge, and joined a tennis club in Palatine Road, Parris Wood. She emphasises the social network of the sephardic Jews in Manchester, who, from an Iberian mercantile background,

---

<sup>43</sup> *The Memoirs of John Monk, Chief Inspector Metropolitan Police; 1859-1946* p. 112. (m.s. edited by the author's son in the possession of Clive Emsley, History Dept., The Open University.) *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 2475, p. 181.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend*, 1985, pp. 233-4.

<sup>45</sup> Beatrice Potter 'The Jewish Community', in C. Booth, *op cit*, p. 583.

<sup>46</sup> Ben Weingard Tape J253, Side 2. *Manchester Jewish Museum Tape Studies Collection*, Cheetham Hill Road.

felt socially superior to the Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe. The increasing popularity of Bridge which Graves and Hodge pointed to was also a feature of Jewish social life and class distinctions. The membership of the club was predominantly sephardic. Parties held there would begin with dinner or an expensive buffet supper and end with bridge. Bridge evenings were also held at friend's houses.<sup>47</sup>

Betting on cards, as with coins and crown and anchor, was also an exciting way to kill boredom in total situations of enforced or inescapable captivity where the phrase 'leisure time' has little relevance. Soldiers based at barracks or in Prisoner of War camps during the first and second world wars have testified to the distracting and escapist appeal of gambling in these most uncertain circumstances. Such gaming was probably common where there was little or no access to bookmakers. It was against Queen's (or King's) Regulations, however. In the three years 1888-90, out of thirty N.C.O.'s tried by Court Martial for allowing or participating in gambling, twenty three soldiers, mostly corporals, were reduced to the ranks, and six sergeants were demoted to corporal. Only one man, a sergeant, was let-off for previous good conduct.<sup>48</sup> 'Housey housey', now more commonly known as bingo, appears to have originated amongst soldiers sent to fight in the First World War. Harry Blankley, who was a private based at Catterick Bridge Barracks prior to his departure for France, remembered the exploitation of the game by the corporal and sergeant who organised it:

Well we used to go in the canteen at night and they'd run what's called bingo now. Well, we called it 'housey housey' but the trouble was there was these old soldiers, and we youngsters, and they'd got their own mates calling out 'bingo' and the cards was never checked so you never knew. It was all a dead twist and that was beer money for them...

If you started to try any business you found yourself a real

---

<sup>47</sup> Mrs. Neville Laski (nee Gaster) Tape J144, Tape 1, Side 1..See also testimony of Rosie Levy, Tape 164, Tape 1, Side 2, on the Didsbury Country Club, run by and for wealthy Jews.

<sup>48</sup> *Return of N.C.O.'s Court Martialled for Allowing Gambling and Cards*, 1888-90, P.P., 1892, Vol. L., 269.

mug -they'd pick you up and mug ya.<sup>49</sup>

Every so often, Harry remembered, they would let someone win to keep up the pretence of fair play. Illegality was as much a breeding ground for corruption in high places in the army as well as amongst the civilian betting fraternity. Sergeants also took advantage of card games:

And then at night in the hut we used to play at brag and that. And then when lights were out we used to have candles and if the orderly sergeant came in we'd drop a blanket over there and into bed quick. But they began to rumble that, and all they did they just picked up all the cash that was in the kitty and walked out. We couldn't do anything about it.<sup>50</sup>

'Crown and Anchor' was another popular gambling game amongst the soldiers, and were usually organised by the more economically adventurous individuals, or what Harry Blankley called the 'spivvy types.' It was played by betting on whether the crowns or anchors on the die would land face up on a makeshift board or cloth marked out with the same. Mrs. Baxter, the daughter of a Bradford bookmaker, remembered that her father had made money from a Crown and Anchor board at camp in Ypres. Mick Burke, from Ancoats in Manchester, was also at Ypres. Like an organiser of a pitch and toss or card game at home, Burke saw an opportunity for a few extra shillings in this game:

In the summer of 1918 I found myself in a place called Trescault, where there were a lot of Australian troops. I were a bit in credit so we clubbed together to start a Crown and Anchor board. The aussies loved it and we were having a burster- we lived like lords for a short time. People were asking for our rations because we could afford to dine in the local estaminets.<sup>51</sup>

Anti gamblers such as E.B. Perkins were concerned at the indiscipline and crisis of morale amongst soldiers which they feared might result if the gambling

---

49 Writers' oral project: Harry Blankley, born Nottingham, 1899. Tape 10, Side 1. Histories of the camps and trenches point to the role of gambling, and the popularity of brag, nap, whist, poker, crown and anchor, etc. See for example, Lyn MacDonald, *They Called it Passchendaele*, 1983, pp. 75 and 148, John Ellis, *Eye Deep in Hell*, 1976, p. 151. Jeremy Seabrook, *Working-Class Childhood*, 1982, pp92-93.

50 Harry Blankley, *op cit*. Whilst incarcerated in an Italian P.O.W. camp in World War Two, the author and journalist Eric Newby noticed that class distinctions amongst the soldiers were clearly reflected in the separate baccarat tables and exclusive bookmaking amongst the 'temporarily expatriate members of White's Club' which went on over running races. *Love and War in the Apennines*, 1983, p. 43

51 Mick Burke, *Ancoats Lad*, 1984, p. 38.



fever got a hold amongst the lower ranks. E.A. Burrows, an army chaplain, was aware of the extent of housey housey amongst the ranks, but viewed it as useful in preventing more virulent forms of gambling spreading amongst the soldiers:

Gambling proper is a punishable offence in the Army, but every one knows that it is extremely prevalent, that officers cannot normally take action to stop it amongst their men because the latter know that it is equally prevalent amongst the officers, and that the new game called 'House' which is gambling but does not officially count as such is actually encouraged as preventative of worse evils, and may be seen (and heard) being played in the open all evening in almost any camp you enter in France.<sup>52</sup>

This was the long-standing message of the Anti Gambling League: if superiors did not set a good example, they had no moral basis on which to attack the betting of others.

Like the routine of barracks and the oppressive regime of P.O.W. camps, prison conditions are conducive to a need to ameliorate enforced boredom through the risk and excitement of betting. A recent report of the Prison Governors Association has pointed to the widespread habits of betting for currency such as drink and drugs.<sup>53</sup> Beneath the excitement gambling offers in such circumstances is an economic function: if free from corruption, betting serves as an egalitarian system for the random distribution of scarce valuable items in an illicit and informal market. All are equal on the throw of a dice or the dealing of the cards.

Yet if forms of gambling served to differentiate between social groups, a noticeable distinction arose between those who played with cards and those who did not. In common with other forms of gambling, opposition stemmed from a didactic distaste for the selfishness and the riskiness of all betting, most sharply from religious nonconformists or practicing Anglicans. Oral history archives, for example, Elizabeth Roberts' *North West Regional Project*, contain

---

<sup>52</sup> In E.B. Perkins, *op cit*, 1919, p. 143.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Bellringer, 'Gambling and Crime: A Prison Perspective', *Society for the Study of Gambling*, Newsletter, No. 8, 1986, pp. 9-12.

other examples for the early twentieth century. Mrs. H.2.B's family of Hindpool, were Methodists. Her father, a manager of a bakers' shop, was a staunch believer and she 'never saw playing cards until I was grown up.' Another womans' father, a foreman in a brass finishing shop in Barrow, played cards but never for money, as gambling 'was wrong and he wouldn't have anything like that...Dad used to wear a medal, Church of England Temperence Society.'<sup>54</sup> Moreover, labour spokesman appealed directly to the self-improving values of the labour aristocracy as part of their campaign to denigrate gambling and minimise its hold upon working-class life.<sup>55</sup> But the over-concentration upon a vocal minority of labour aristocrats may serve to obfuscate the shared assumptions and patterns of belief between rough and respectable. We saw in the previous chapter that skilled workers made up a third or so of working-class punters in the first half of the twentieth century. The playing of cards at home may well have been viewed as a legitimate source of relaxation for this group.

It may, therefore, be possible to exaggerate the antipathy towards card playing amongst some of the nonconformist church members too. Clive Field's sample survey of 106 English Methodists, analysing retrospective attitudes towards leisure, found that whilst 74 per cent spurned dancing as 'next to the devil', and 47 per cent opposed the consumption of alcoholic beverages, only 25 per cent personally prohibited gambling, and only 15 per cent opposed card playing.<sup>56</sup> There is a problem with this finding, as many may have wagered for sweets or buttons only, but it is significant that card playing was viewed as less morally corrupting than dance or drink, and were prepared to have a flutter. This point was not lost on anti gambling campaigners. Canon Green, for example, castigated his fellow churchmen

---

<sup>54</sup> *North West Regional Project*, University of Lancaster, transcripts for 'Working Class Barrow and Lancaster, 1880 - 1930'. (1982) Mrs H.2.B., p. 87; Mrs. M10.B., pp. 14-16.

<sup>55</sup> John Burns, *op cit*, 1907.

<sup>56</sup> Clive Field, 'A Sociological Profile of English Methodism, 1900-1932'. *Oral History*, Vol.4, No. 1 1976.

and women for failing to understand the principle that *any* gambling was wrong:

...Christian people should keep their own hands clean in this matter. People often say, 'I don't see that it would make all that difference if I did refuse to play cards for money' or 'I don't see that having a small bet now and again does much harm.' But here we touch on one of the fundamentals of morals. Kant said: 'Act only on such a maxim as thou canst will to be a universal law', and his rule sounds musty and dull enough the first time one hears it in a lecture hall. Here we see its meaning.<sup>57</sup>

This uncompromising view was ignored by a great deal of Nonconformists, and the use of raffles and lotteries by nonconformist churches to raise funds was pointed to with satisfaction by pro-betting interests as proof of the widespread appeal of gambling.

It is impossible to quantify the amount of card betting and gaming which occurred in pubs and clubs or at home, but suffice it to say that it was perceived as a pleasant way to pass the time, with or without financial stakes, by many people. It was a more indoor game than coin gaming and the various local sports which were vehicles for informal sidestake betting amongst those of a shared enthusiasm, or 'fancy'.

#### Local Sports and Sidestake Betting

Informal local sports may be defined for the purposes of this section as those competitive activities organised collectively amongst friends, neighbours and peers on a non-commercialised basis. Two such sports, pigeon racing and bowls, were popular in Lancashire as media for betting until recent years, although pigeon racing has lost the following it once possessed. Although pedestrianism and prize fighting declined throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, pigeon racing like whippet racing were both established as hobbies amongst the urban working class, outlets for friendly rivalry, for the individual pursuit of the perfection of an animal's performance, and for petty

---

<sup>57</sup> Canon Green. *op cit*, pp. 82-83



wagering.<sup>58</sup> Bowling, increasingly associated with gambling since the Restoration, was less associated with the patronage of the wealthy classes from the early eighteenth century.<sup>59</sup> It was a respectable local sport amongst the lower middle and working classes by the twentieth century.

### Pigeon Racing

Pigeon racing was of two types. Short distance racing was highly localised and communal, and more heavily associated with gambling than the more respectable sport of long-distance. In Lancashire there was thus a clear status division between the labour-aristocratic long-distance flying clubs, often based at hotels, and the short-distance clubs run, as we will soon see, from pubs. The City of Liverpool Flying Club, formed in 1894, met at a hotel in Lime Street. Manchester Flying Club met at the Castle Hotel, Tyldesley. Long distance flying was particularly popular amongst the artisans and lower middle classes of the North West. Of about 140 Homing Pigeon Clubs and Federation in England and Wales, all formed in the last two decades of the nineteenth century or in the 1900's, thirty five were based in Lancashire and Cheshire. The *Homing Pigeon Annual* advertised 'squeakers' from the largest lofts for ten shillings or more, and there are many photos of superior artisans standing proudly in collar and tie by their own lofts in spacious gardens. Entry fees were five shillings per race and an annual subscription of ten shillings and sixpence was required to preclude the unrespectable. As Tom Southworth, Secretary of the Blackpool Long Distance Flying Union told *The Homing Pigeon Annual*, every member of his club paid their subscription by cheque, 'evidence of the superior class of men who now compose the fancy'.<sup>60</sup> This, of course, echoed sharply the distinction between more respectable credit bettors and the lower class street cash punters. The columnist 'Flying Beauty'

---

<sup>58</sup> James Mott, *op cit*, pp. 19-25; see also 'Miners, Weavers and Pigeon Racing', in S. Smith et al., *Leisure and Society in Britain*, 1973, pp. 86-98.

<sup>59</sup> Dennis Brailsford, *op cit*, pp. 212-3

<sup>60</sup> 'The Bird of Holy Writ and Ancient Times', *The Homing Pigeon Annual*, 1906, p. 9

was keen to emphasise the rational and improving qualities of this 'upper branch' of the fancy and to distinguish it from the inferior branch associated with low-life activities:

We are classed with the men who go about from pillar to post with a significant dirty bag or basket on pigeon flying bent, and who spend most of the rest of their time in low pothouses, gambling, practices which are most abhorrent to the real fancier.<sup>61</sup>

Pigeon racing in the poorer areas was certainly more rough-and-ready. Booth's survey of East London in the 1880's mentions the Sunday morning bird market at Sclater Street in Whitechapel in the heart of the old weaving district of Shoreditch. It was frequented by the 'sporting set' of the East End. For those in Booth's 'mixed' or poor streets there were no large gardens or airy lofts. From the window of a railway carriage passing over a viaduct above 'two-storied London' one could see 'small rough-roofed erections' for the pigeons in the little yards and gardens of the workers cottages.<sup>62</sup> Anywhere such as a small back yard or garden where a loft could safely be looked-after was suitable for keeping pigeons.

As McKibbin argues, pigeon breeding and racing, as with dogs, was a shared enthusiasm, a hobby which provided 'acceptable competitiveness' to lives often constrained by poverty, a mechanised work routine and '(less certainly) by the demands of group loyalties.' Pigeon breeding was also a private hobby, expressing both the shared and individual excitements of the 'fancy' in an urban environment.<sup>63</sup>

It is difficult to know whether the status distinctions between long- and short-distance racing were still so pronounced by the 1930's. Mass Observation's study of pubs in Bolton between the wars noted that short-distance pigeon clubs still met in the tap room or the rooms above pubs. The biggest local bet was the annual sweep, 'the most important and elaborately

---

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Charles Booth, *Ibid.*, 'Poverty', Vol. 1, 1889, p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Ross McKibbin, 'Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History*, 1983, p. 144.

organised race' where members could bet in cash or in kind. As one fancier told the observer:

I have seen the landlord of the R-- Tavern have a side bet of 100 black puddings. This is of course in addition to the money bets that have been wagered over a course of several weeks... I have seen side bets of sacks of potatoes, a sack of corn, flour, case of oranges, joints of beef, legs of pork etc...

64

These side bets are a good example of the random distribution of 'treats' amongst the fanciers. The usual formalities and expense of purchasing such goods from tradesmen were subsumed to the vagaries of a race. Most clubs were organised on the pool system, with stake monies put in the kitty to be paid out as winnings or expenses after the race. As Mott argues, the 'pool' system reflected the solidarities of mining areas and was as much a product of bird racing as the *pari mutuel* in horses or football betting. Yet pigeons were also popular for betting amongst agricultural labourers. Harry Blankley's brother in law was a 'pigeon fancier' in a society operated by the farm labourers and local workmen in Boston, Lincolnshire between the wars:

...he was a pigeon fancier and there was big races. Well they put so much in a pool, every entrant put and it went into a pool.

*Was this called a pigeon pool?*

A pigeon pool. The first pigeon home scooped the pool. But there was no bookie betting as you understand it. It was just amongst their own pigeon societies. Their entrant was charged so much and that went into the pool. And there was so much taken out for expenses...<sup>65</sup>

In rural districts bookmaker involvement was of course restricted, and the more collective betting on pigeons perhaps reflected this.

In a race the pigeons were set off at the same time from their respective lofts on the moors or nearby fields, and timed by using a clock bag under the jurisdiction of an umpire. Of the clock-bag, Walter McCarthy of Hulme explained that 'the pigeon fanciers used to have 'em -you clocked the pigeons time coming in.<sup>66</sup> The clock bag may well have its origins as a device

---

64 M.O. archive, Worktown Box 1, File D.

65 Harry Blankley, *op cit*.

66 Writers oral project: Walter McCarthy, born Hulme, Manchester, 1919. Tape 6, Side 1.



for fair play in the pigeon pools.

The sociability and excitement of pigeon racing was the preserve of men. Where pigeon racing and betting takes place today, such as the high rise estates of Glasgow, women are 'united in their total contempt for playing the doos.'<sup>67</sup> Pigeon fancying was and is a association based on the largely male environment of pub and club.

Both fanciers and Mass Observers were agreed that pigeon racing was declining in popularity between the wars. The Secretary of the local Short Distance Union blamed 'circumstances over which we have no control' namely 'bad trade and depression.' One collier, when asked if the local pigeon club was still in existence replied

Nor, they are broken up, what wi' one thing un another, un't pubs not doin so well, thee get short o' money, un this started 'em falling out among themselves.<sup>68</sup>

Peter Jackson, the observer, argued that changing social habits and leisure preferences were also responsible for the demise of bird betting:

The decline is correlated with the decline of all the local forms of culture that are skilled, active and communal in favour of newer and passive forms of leisure activity.<sup>69</sup>

Pigeon racing, like pedestrianism, still continued but was marginalised by the alternative betting attractions of greyhound racing and football pools. The growth of more family oriented leisure was signalled by the spread of radio sets into nine million homes by 1939. Whippet racing among miners, as will be illustrated in chapter six, was affected directly by such economic and social pressures. Bowling, however, a gentle and communal local sport, was growing in popularity between the wars.

### Bowling and Betting Since the 1920's

Like pigeon racing bowling was associated with the pub but was not of it.

---

<sup>67</sup> Ian Sutherland, 'Playing the Doos', *New Socialist*, No. 20, October 1984. See also Jeremy Seabrook, *Unemployment*, St. Albans, 1984, p. 43.

<sup>68</sup> M.O. archive, *Worktown*, Box 1, File D.

<sup>69</sup> M.O. *ibid*. The observer was Peter Jackson.

Bowls clubs were formed during the 1880's to the 1900's. Most greens in Lancashire used for both amateur and professional bowls were next to a public house or hotel, often within its grounds. The English Bowling Association, with W.G. Grace as President, was formed in 1903. Unlike pigeon and whippet racing, a small number of women participated as players, mostly in works or church teams. The bigger 'crown green' games were sponsored by local companies such as the breweries and textile and engineering firms. These greens were so called because they were raised to a point in the middle of the green. The smaller flat green matches were held not just in pubs but also in parks such as Leverhulme Park in Bolton. The Mass Observation archive contains some detailed descriptions of the smaller matches between church school teams and works based teams, such as St. Andrews versus St. Georges Road Congregational women, and Barlow and Jones Ladies versus Moss Bank Ladies held at Moss Bank Park. Admission to these smaller flat green games was usually free or a couple of pence if held for charity. Gambling was slight or non-existent, it appears. Crown green bowls were the medium for betting amongst the spectators.<sup>70</sup> This was similar to the distinction between long- and short-distance pigeon racing.

Professional bowling was (and is) controlled in Lancashire by the Lancashire Professional Bowling Association. By the late 1940's the county possessed forty five crown greens. The nature and extent of bowling on these greens was confused by the 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act which outlawed betting on athletic 'tracks' as opposed to horse- and dog- racing stadia. As the Chief Constable's Association of England and Wales told the 1949-51 Royal Commission 'it is not known if the intention of the Betting and Lotteries Act, 1934, was that bowling greens should be accepted as tracks' although the police treated them as such. This rendered the Professional Bowling Association liable to prosecution for allowing betting at athletic 'and other

---

<sup>70</sup> M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 2, File c, Follo lxxix on Bowls. See also Phil Pilley, *The Story of Bowls*, 1982, on which, with M.O., the factual background of this section is based.

sporting events.' if the requirements of the legislation were not observed:

The organisers, players and bookmakers move from green to green all the year round and give notice to the police as required by the (1934 Act), limiting the matches to eight on any one green in a year.<sup>71</sup>

But oral evidence illustrates that the status of these 'bookmakers' is more intriguing than this quote suggests. Mr. Powers' father, a supervisor at Singer Sewing Machines in Halifax, travelled regularly to Bolton in the 1930's to make books on Crown Green matches:

They bet amongst themselves, there was no such thing as bookmakers. Y'see, as the game fluctuated, say one fellow went for or five in front 'e would then be about about six to four on like, and you'd have to lay six pound to win four, or thirty pound to win twenty. (There) was lots of very big money bets in them days.<sup>72</sup>

The more respectable image of bowling lent itself to the patronage of local shopkeepers and tradesmen, who probably made the largest bets. John Sommerfield, a founder of Mass Observation, has left a vivid account of a match he saw which supports Mr. Powers' recollections. The match was a Crown Green Infirmity Handicap between Barnes of Horwich and Molyneaux, a Wigan champion, in July 1938. On some old wooden boards at the ground was chalked '41 Up. Admission 6d. No Betting:'

Man in front, at edge of green, immediately calls out 'six to four, six to four', then 'I'll tak fourteen bob to 8'. Another man says 'George Barnes can't win this game' Chap at edge now says 'I'll tak 5 to ', another '10 bob to 8'. Man Passing 'Ten bob to nowt'. Around the stand this calling of odds goes on all the time, not steadily but being taken up by several chaps, and then dying away again. *However, no one did any actual betting.*<sup>73</sup>

In much the same way as pub-pals or workmates made little books for friends to have a bet, so a member or members of the local club laid odds and accepted bets on the results on the results of matches in progress.<sup>74</sup> The club committee, or 'panel', were the regulatory body for this set up:

It was a gambling game as was instigated by themselves...a

---

71 *R.C. 1949-51*. Minutes of Evidence, para. 19, p. 373.

72 Writers oral project: Mr. Power, Tape 3, Side 1.

73 M.O. *Worktown*, Box 1, folio lxix 'Bowls 4'.



committee to see as it weren't unfair, and there was no people taking a dive and that sort of thing. It was kind of run for the benefit of people who were interested in having a gamble.<sup>74</sup>

All of this was a careful negotiation of the anti gambling laws. The L.P.B.A. argued to the Royal Commission that no bookmakers were allowed onto their greens, although they admitted this principle was probably broken from time to time. The M.O. material contains an example of bookies' runners at a match, but they were there ostensibly to take bets on horses. It is not inconceivable that someone slipped them a bet on the bowling match as well. It might further be ventured that the quiet genteel self-image of bowling was inimical to the presence of street bookies and their runners in large numbers. For its followers it provided ample and safe opportunities for friendly side betting.

### Conclusion

All of these games and hobbies, coins, cards, crown and anchor, pigeon racing and bowling constituted a vast hinterland of informal and sociable betting which remained almost wholly untouched by capitalist social relations. Oral history and the M.O. archive have provided the major sources for a detailed analysis of this nebulous and complex area. As Stuart Hall has argued, leisure has provided a more negotiable space for class expression than the more restricted and formalised work situation.<sup>75</sup> This has led to an inventiveness which has to a significant extent qualitatively fashioned the historical development of mass gambling. Such recreational forms reflected a desire to spend time out of working hours in communal pursuits given an exciting edge by betting. In an age of increasing diversity in leisure provision, the fancy and betting adapted to the more gentle pursuits of pigeon racing and bowling. Moreover, as we will see in the following chapter, it altered the nature of whippet racing.

---

<sup>74</sup> Mr. Power, *op cit*.

<sup>75</sup> In Tony Bennett, (ed.) *Culture, Ideology and Social Process*, 1983, p. 67.

So we must qualify this view that the working class were increasingly consumers rather than makers of their own leisure from the late nineteenth century. The propensity for individual and collective self-expression is obscured from such a perspective. This point is also true of greyhound racing, in which a number of pessimistic claims have been made about the punters. As we will now see, like pigeon racing, this was a sport of the fancy which was organised from above and below and was based upon betting. However, the sheer popularity of the dogs led to a greater capitalisation of the sport which eventually tarnished its image.

## Chapter 6: From Flapping Tracks to the Electric Hare: The Development of Greyhound Racing in England, c.1890 to 1960

### Introduction

Whippet racing was thrust into unrespectability in the eyes of the reforming middle class during the nineteenth century. It had developed out of the cruel rural sports of hare and rabbit coursing, and their persistence into the twentieth century still drew passionate criticisms from the Humanitarian League and reforming groups before 1914. Like pigeon racing, it was a sport of the fancy which became increasingly identified with the urban working class, and with gambling, from the 1890's. Critics castigated whippet racing as an activity fit only to draw money from the pockets of the poor.

Commercialised greyhound racing, introduced in 1926, has thus been viewed as the least respectable of organised sports, a product of its unrespectable origins and the widely held view of the corruption resulting from its close relationship with mass betting. Within this frame, its audience has been characterised as *lumpen*, spendthrift, even 'unhappy', in short, as 'going to the dogs' in the literal and metaphorical senses of the term.<sup>1</sup>

This alleged vacuousness and pathos of punters at the dog track thus provides ideal ground to test the historical view that working-class recreation has undergone a qualitative decline from pre-industrial boisterousness to a passivity wrought by the campaign for rational recreation and commercialisation. Two major questions will be addressed in this chapter. Firstly, does the evolution of dog racing and betting in Lancashire present a picture largely devoid of action from below? Secondly, what were the dog-breeders and punters' attitudes to greyhound racing and betting after the introduction of electric stadia in 1926 through to 1960.?

---

<sup>1</sup> F. Zweig, *The British Worker*, 1948, p. 143; Charles Dimont, 'Going to the Dogs' *New Statesmen and Nation*, Nov. 30th 1946, pp. 395-6. As a non-gambler, Dimont felt he was the only one who had enjoyed himself.



### Hare Coursing and Whippet Racing in Lancashire before 1926

The pre-industrial sport of hare coursing continued to thrive in Lancashire, at the Waterloo Cup, established at Altcar near Liverpool in 1836, and at other meetings at Hoskayne, Downsholland, Kirkby, Simonswood, Tarbock, Aintree, Blackpool, Haydock Park, Southport and Lytham. These sites had long been meeting places for other cruel sports and for horse racing.<sup>2</sup> A cast list of the main breeders of the hounds and sponsors of the prizes illustrates its landed pedigree but also the increasing involvement of the *nouveau riche* during the Victorian years. The Altcar Club and the smaller Ridgeway Club of Lytham were patronised by the Earls of Derby and Sefton, and the Duke of Hamilton was equally prominent in the owning and backing of dogs. The Blundell's of Ince, a sporting family of the Catholic gentry, established the South Lancashire meeting on their land. In the 1930's Major C. Blundell was still a prominent owner of dogs and horses.<sup>3</sup> Local millowners, merchants, magistrates and even the Town Clerk of Bolton were members of hare coursing clubs, often allowing meetings in their lands away from major urban centres.<sup>4</sup> By the turn of the century Lancashire had established itself as a major arena for the national sport of coursing. Trainers, owners and course officials were based locally for most meetings but were drawn from far and wide at the biggest events.<sup>5</sup> This relationship between local elites, both rural and urban persisted into the inter war years, although by then it had become infused with bookmakers, licensees and others prominent within the sporting parameters of working-class culture. They saw that much money could be made from gambling, and they were instrumental in encouraging both the 'whippeting revival' in Lancashire and Yorkshire in the 1920's and investing in the electric stadia.

---

2 *The Victoria County History of Lancashire*, Vol. 2, 1966, 'Coursing', by Harold Brocklehurst, pp. 472-76.

3 J. Fairfax-Blakeborough, *The Turf Who's Who*, 1932, p. 45

4 *Victoria County History*, *op cit*

5 J.W. Bourne, *The Greyhound Record*, 1900-07, Vol. 1, 1901, p. 141; pp. 144-49.

An unfavourable account in 1911 of a Waterloo Cup meeting illustrates the similarity of hare coursing to whippet racing, and its obvious attraction for punters and, increasingly, for bookies:

A shout from the crowd, growing every moment more excited as the short drama is about to begin, proclaims the fact that the hare is in the battle ground, and is about to meet his Waterloo. And higher still, and louder than all, the raucous cry of the bookmaker, 'Take 7 to 2' 'Take 2 to 1' rises shrill in the air.

All this time a couple of greyhounds are held tight by a slipper in a box, open on two sides, in the middle of the field. As soon as the hare is beaten past the slippers' box the greyhounds tug and strain at the leash, almost dragging the slipper with them. When the hare has had about fifty yards start the hounds are released and off they dash together.<sup>6</sup>

The first dog to catch the hare and rip it to shreds was the winner, with prize money and trophy going to the lucky owner.

It is clear from the sporting press that the Earl of Sefton and Lord Derby were still major sponsors of the Waterloo Cup and the various lesser cups and plates. Here, as with gambling activities in general, 'sport' and the language of the fancy was preferred by its practitioners to more politically sensitive words such as betting and gambling. Lady Florence Dixie was attacking violence when she castigated 'The Horrors of Sport'.<sup>7</sup>

Rabbit coursing persisted on a smaller scale, and was distinctly working class. It appears that bookmakers were a growing presence at coursing events during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Here too, the disgust of the Humanitarian League at the sacrifice of animals for a flutter was unmitigated. More than just a blood-crazed whippet had its eye on the stricken rabbit:

Seldom do the dogs kill them outright. Sometimes their legs and ears are bitten, their skin torn away, and even their bowels torn out. Sometimes too, the 'starter' or 'referee' will poke out an eye with his finger or stick a pin in it, so as to blind the animal on one side and cause it to run towards the side of

---

<sup>6</sup> Letter from John Gulland of the N.A.G.L. In *The Humanitarian* Vol V. No.109, March 1911. This was the Journal of the Humanitarian League, a society concerned to abolish, amongst other things, blood sports and the death penalty.

<sup>7</sup> Lady Florence Dixie, 'The Horrors of Sport', in H.S. Salt, (ed.), *The Cruelties of Civilisation*, Vol 2, 1897.

the dog which the bookmaker wishes to win.<sup>8</sup>

At which point whippet racing *per se* developed out of coursing it is difficult to say with certainty. Yet the prevalence of whippet racing with an artificial quarry in the North West was established by 1900. Working-class autobiographies and oral testimonies show it to have been especially common amongst the more tightly knit mining communities of Lancashire and Yorkshire. Like the pigeon pools the training of the animals, the informal competitiveness, and the pooling of the stakes for the prize money depended upon a local familiarity and trust, or a camaraderie located in a shared enthusiasm for sporting and betting. This rested upon a different social network in London, where in streets resembling the socio-economic character of 'Campbell Bunk', economic individualism was a more common response to the variegated economic fortunes of the local economy. For example, a 'Dog Fancier' living with his wife and three children in two rooms at No. 31 Parker Street, Finsbury, London, during the 1880's, cut a rather selfish figure in the eyes of a School Board Visitors, a profession upon whom Charles Booth relied for much of his information. In Class 'A', he lived in a street of 'the semi criminal class, people who don't get an honest living':

Sometimes keeps a dog or two here but probably has a place elsewhere- belongs to the betting class and hardly makes his living by this trade- dresses well, neglects his wife and family who seem very poor.<sup>9</sup>

The alleged association with crime elicited little sympathy from Booth for the expressive function and the social role of the fancy in the life of this man.

The poor and unemployed in all parts of Britain kept dogs as an interest and a medium for sociable betting. Mick Burke, of Ancoats in Manchester remembered:

The colliers at Bradford Pit were great fellows for whippet racing and used to go on the fields up Ten Acres Lane. They

---

<sup>8</sup> R.H.Dude, 'Rabbit Coursing: An Appeal to Working Men'. In H.S.Salt, *ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> L.S.E. Coll: B54; Parker Street, Hackney, p. 23. The Booth manuscripts for *Life and Labour of the People in London* are held at the British Library of Political and Economic Science, L.S.E. For a discussion of economic individualism amongst the poor see Jerry White, *op cit, passim*.



would throw some kind of ball, slip the dog, and time how long it took the dog to catch the quarry. A good slipper would throw the dog about twenty yards -that was the art of the game.<sup>10</sup>

The chasing of live bait was increasingly replaced not so much by the throwing of a ball as the flapping of an old rag about 200 yards from where the slipper held the dogs. This set-up could be more elaborate however. Steven Hamer, a bookies son in Bolton during the 1930's remembered that a bicycle with the tyre of the back wheel removed was jacked up off the ground. Attached to this was a long rope with artificial bait at the end:

They used a cord you see, it were wrapped round and the bloke on the bike would peddle away like 'ell with the wheel going round pulling this piece of fluffy wool. It could be a cushion, could be anything. Greyhounds would chase it, dogs give chase, and you can imagine as it came round all the dogs like. Now of course they have the electric running rail. I'm talking about the old flaps, what we called the flaps.<sup>11</sup>

Pegs were placed in the ground to give the rope a centrifugal force and create a circular route. Later a jacked up motor car was used on the same principle.

Flapping tracks were lower class. They originated in the hiatus between the slow decline of coursing and the introduction of the floodlit electric circuit. Held on moorlands or nearby fields, they were a fundamental part of the evolution of dog racing in Britain and its adaption to the interstices available in built-up areas.

They were also a focus for the continuation of the fancy. As Mott notes, the training of a lean fast dog was central to 'the proletarian and perpetual approach to a constantly divine ideal'<sup>12</sup> Working men kept dogs and trained them for local dog derbies and weekend runs. A succesful and well groomed dog must have been a source of great pride for its trainer.

The dogs were fed on the more proteinous food eaten by the owners'

---

10 M. Burke, *Ancoats Lad*, Manchester, 1985, p. 23. .See also Charles Forman, *Industrial Town*, 1979, pp. 193-6.

11 Steven Hamer, *op cit*.

12 J. Mott, *op cit*, p. 23.

family, a diet which was eased off as training became more intensive and fat was turned into lean tissue and muscle. A heavy dog was at an obvious weight disadvantage. A sheep's head or pig's trotters, perhaps donated by the local butcher or stolen as well as bought cheaply, were boiled in an old vat or gas boiler in the back yard. Raw eggs, sherry and port were typical of the high-protein foods fed to the whippet during training.<sup>13</sup> It was a humorous observation amongst the locals, rather than a complaint, that 'the dogs were often better fed than the owners', although anti-gambling campaigners misunderstood and exaggerated the cost of feeding and clothing a dog. In 1907 Hogge argued that from a train passing through 'many a mining village'

you can see the whippet, carefully clothed, trotting at his master's feet into a cottage, the annual rent of which could be covered by the sale of the dog.<sup>14</sup>

But the dog offered the owner a chance to make money in a more ongoing, and rewarding way. An alliance with the local bookie or spiv taking the bets for the race was the basis for this, and the growing influence of bookmakers in whippet racing was accompanied by the growing influence of 'the fiddle.' Here as with other forms of betting, the fiddle was a useful means to an end.

This was called 'stopping' the dog. One miner relates:

You housed the dogs in the back yard, and that was a bit rough, but I won a few races and got myself a few quid. I started buying them cheap and selling them dear. There were no prizes you won with your own dog - it was all the money you put on it. You stop your dog for three or four weeks until it's lost a few times and all the public think it's no good. Then you race it at 6-1 or 8-1 and it comes in. How do you stop it back? I'm not giving you that - a bit too dear.<sup>15</sup>

But these secrets have been revealed by others, especially those with an eye for a fiddle. Bert Williamson, for example, remembered the dog races on a Sunday morning at Seaforth, near Liverpool, during the 1930's and '40's.:

---

<sup>13</sup> C. Forman *op cit*; M. Burke, *op cit*.

<sup>14</sup> J.M. Hogge, *The Facts of Gambling*, 1907, p18.

<sup>15</sup> C. Forman, *op cit*, 'A Miner from Ashton' pp. 193-6.

the owners of `em were often tampered by bookies, or asked by bookies to feed sausages to them and things like that to stop them up so that they wouldn't win. And consequently the bookie won because the punters were having their money on the favourite dog.

*They'd been nobbled?*

Thats right yes. Consequently the bookie would give the owner enough money to get his beer anyway, and he wasn't worried whether the dog won or lost and he'd back on what he thought was the second dog maybe.<sup>16</sup>

Giving a dog toffee or tripe to slow were other ways of slowing it down.

The dishonest nature of much whippet racing was carried over into the commercialised greyhound racing tracks of 1926, as we will soon see. The more informal smaller meetings still continued and 'flapping tracks' became a general label for such races and the smaller, commercially-run courses outside the jurisdiction of the National Greyhound Racing Society (N.G.R.S.). These were operated by the individual companies under the auspices of the British Greyhound Tracks Control Society (B.G.T.C.S.) formed in 1932, five years after the establishment of the N.G.R.A. The B.G.T.C.S. later became the Provincial Greyhound Tracks Central Office (P.G.T.C.O.).

The N.G.R.S. and the B.G.T.C.A. were comprised mostly of wealthy local bookmakers, public house licencees, businessmen and the sporting gentry.<sup>17</sup> Graves and Hodge clearly brought out the social linkages between the Waterloo Cup, 'patronised by the highest sporting society' and the new stadiums. The commercial acumen of the landed and business sporting elites had not failed during the years after the Armistice, when it was obvious to anyone who read a serious sporting paper that a 'boom' in whippet racing was taking place. It had been boosted by a sense of release after the Armistice but was enabled by a fall in working hours from an average of 55 to 48 per week between 1914 and the early 1920's. Real wages increased by 20 per cent for those in full-time industrial employment over these years.<sup>18</sup> The

---

<sup>16</sup> Bert Williamson, *op cit*.

<sup>17</sup> Registration Certificates under Companies Act, 1928, of N.G.R.S., Bolton Greyhound Racing Company, Manchester Greyhound Racing Company, and Middlesborough Greyhound Racing Company. These are held at Companies House.

<sup>18</sup> Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, 1965, pp. 304-5.



American sociologist Whiting Williams observed the prominence of greyhound racing in the 'destructive trio' of bad housing, booze and bookies in 1921. He gave a lively description of a flapping race near a crowded town:

Nearly two-score bookies are displaying their wager-boards and shouting 'Two-to-one on the Blue! Two-to-one on the Blue! while men and boys rush up with their wagers of a 'bob' or a 'quid'. When the starters' whistle sounds the holders or 'slippers' each with his dog, take their places at the upper end of the string runways, each of these being about three feet in width. Then the 'runners out' endeavour to fix the attention of the held but howling, barking shrieking and squirming canine contestant upon the towel in their hands. Waving it wildly and shouting and whistling madly, these runners-out back off down the one-hundred and ninety yards to the finish line. (The dogs were released with a shout or a bang and raced towards the towels of the runners-out) Down surges the crowd in glee whilst, with impassive faces, the bookies hand-out the winnings from their money satchels.<sup>19</sup>

In the North West, *The Sporting Chronicle* began to sponsor its own Manchester handicap during the mid 1920's.<sup>20</sup>

Thus Major L. Lynne Dixon, Colonel A.C. Critchley and C.A. Munn, an American businessman, established a new large stadium on the site of a whippeting track outside Belle Vue Gardens in Manchester. Munn, Critchley and others made up the Directors of the track, Dixon became the Racing Director and Critchley was also allotted to (or allotted himself) the position of Judge. A trainer, L.O. Brown, became Assistant Racing Director. The official trainers for the course were also appointed from the local coursing and social circle of the directors. Local kennels and coursing meetings were visited to tempt owners to race for the bigger prize monies and in the better facilities than could be offered by flapping tracks. Races were both flat and hurdle. Dixon, Brown and Critchley drew up the rules of the stadium for racing, judging and betting. No external monitoring was allowed until the legal introduction of the totalisator in 1934.

By 1927 Critchley and his landed peers had established tracks at

---

<sup>19</sup> Whiting Williams. *Full Up and Fed-Up: The Workers' Mind in Crowded Britain*, New York, 1921, pp. 166-67.

<sup>20</sup> *Sporting Chronicle* 19th May, 1926, p. 3 'Record Whippet Racing.' *ibid*, 19th April, 1926, p. 5.

White City and Harringay in London at Hall Green in Birmingham and at Marine Gardens and Powderhall in Edinburgh. The tracks were run under the auspices of the conglomerate Greyhound Racing Association Trust, Ltd., registered as a company in 1927 with a share issue totalling £990,442. The offices were in Pall Mall, London, and its directors were Critchley, Lieutenant-Colonel Moore-Brabazon, Munn, and F.S. Gentle <sup>21</sup>

The Belle Vue track at Manchester, owned by the N.G.R.S., and originally a site of zoological gardens, was thus the first in a rapid spread of similarly-sized or smaller-scale ventures all over the country. By the time the Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting had reported in 1933, over 220 dog tracks were operating, almost all of them in or close by a town or city. Seventy seven of these were licensed by the N.G.R.S.<sup>22</sup> At these tracks alone, attendances rose from over five and a half million in 1927 to almost eighteen million by 1931. London accounted for over eight and a half million of these attendances during the early 1930's, Manchester took 1,708,430 in 1931, and Glasgow 2,037,350. (These figures are rounded off to nearest nought). This total figure was only half of the 38 million attendances by 1936, the peak of greyhound racing's popularity. Manchester possessed three tracks by 1930, at Belle Vue, White City, owned by the National Greyhound Racing Association, (the first and one of the largest companies in the N.G.R.S.) and The Albion Ground, Salford, opposite Castle Irwell racecourse, a B.G.T.C.A. stadium. This ground was controlled by Albion Greyhound, Ltd, who ran another stadium in Glasgow. The Chairman was H.B. Hobson and the Directors, based in Holborn, were Lieutenant-Colonel E.C. Mears, J. Shaw, M.D., and J.A.C. Keeves. In Liverpool, the Breck Park track at Anfield was a more local affair, established by three wealthy Merseyside dog-owners H. Hellos, W.F. Champion and W.F. Welberry.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> *The Greyhound Racing Share Guide*, 1932, p. 17

<sup>22</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 92-94 pp. 24-25.

<sup>23</sup> *The Greyhound Racing Share Guide*, 1932, p. 19.

Admission prices varied according to the size and facilities of the tracks. By the 1940's the N.G.R.S. had divided its stadia into four groups: Groups: *Group A* consisted of three tracks in the metropolitan area with average attendances of 3,500 to 18,000 for evening meetings. *Group B* was three provincial tracks with average attendances of over 5,000 per meeting. *Group C* was the 29 provincial tracks with attendances between 2,000 and 5,000, and *Group D*, 30 provincial tracks whose evening attendances averaged below 2,000. The largest concentrations of provincial tracks were at Glasgow (5), Newcastle (4), Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester (3 each), and Bristol, Norwich and Sheffield (2 each). Most of the rest of the N.G.R.S. tracks were in the larger towns and middling cities such as Cardiff, Coventry, Derby, Leeds and Leicester.<sup>24</sup> The P.G.T.C.O. had a similar structure. The largest tracks charged 2s. 3d. for entry in the late 1940's, the middling tracks charged 1s. 6d. and the smallest tracks, the flaps, presumably to cover costs, asked for 2s 6d to 3s.<sup>25</sup>

The instigation of the N.G.R.A. tracks stimulated many smaller companies to follow their example, largely made up of bookmakers, licensees and businessmen. Those at Raikes Park, Bolton and Stanley Park in Liverpool were typical of these. Bob Sinclair, a Bolton bookie, defeated Jack Hamer in the competition for a major stake in the capital of the business, and Hamer chose to drop out completely.<sup>26</sup>

In 1932 companies such as the Bolton Greyhound Racing Society and Stanley Park Greyhound Racing Company merged with others, mostly from the North West, to form part of the B.G.T.C.A. Ltd. The B.G.T.C.A. held eleven tracks at Blackpool, Bolton, Bradford, Brixton (London), Gosforth (Newcastle), Hackney Wick (London), Rochdale, at Stanley Park and White City in

---

<sup>24</sup> 1949-51, p. 26, para. 95.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, para. p. 281.

<sup>26</sup> S. Hamer, *op cit.* On the Bolton track see Jim Power, *Aspects of Working Class Leisure in the Depression Years: Bolton in the 1930's*, Unpublished M.A. Dissertation, University of Warwick, 1980, pp. 42-45.



Liverpool, Salford and Willenhall, Staffs. 27

The new stadia were of course magnets to local bookmakers. As one bookie at a dog track had explained to Whiting Williams:

We can't lose. The figures will get 'em, bound to, if they keep at it long enough...And I've got a boy who 'as more of a 'ead for figures than I 'ave. 'E'll be a wonder at this business.<sup>28</sup>

In Manchester and Salford, from the 1920's, bookmakers such as W. Ainsworth, Gus Demmy, Ted Kenny, and J. Ord all took bets at the tracks, and probably visited other local tracks, as did Jack Hamer of Bolton.<sup>29</sup> By the early 1930's they had come together to form the Manchester Greyhound Bookmaker Protection Association, and adjunct of the N.B.P.A. As we will see below, their major aim was oppose the introduction of the tote (which was illegal on dog tracks before 1934) and the managements which introduced this.

By the mid 1930's the three tier structure of greyhound racing was established. At the top were the N.G.R.A tracks, owned, licensed and controlled by that company, and regulated by the N.G.R.C. In the middle were the majority of tracks monitored by the P.G.T.C.O., whose tracks were licensed by the Local Government Authority to operate on certain days of the year. Beneath these were a large number of smaller more informal meetings, the truest continuation of the flapping tradition, often organised by the smaller bookies for sidestake betting between the owners and interested locals. From the 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act, the result of the deliberations of the Committee, a bookie or any promoter simply had to advise the police of their intention to hold an event, of which eight per licensing year were allowed on any one spot. These were mockingly referred to as 'eight day meetings' because, as with bowls, the intentions of the legislation were easily avoided. In a bid to impress the Willink enquiry the P.G.T.C.O. derided the standards and facilities of these smaller meetings, and pointed to the tactics used by the

---

27 *R.C. 1932-33*, para. 1 of evidence of B.G.T.C.S. Ltd p. 354.

28 Whiting Williams, *op cit*, p. 168.

29 *The Licensed Bookmaker*, February 1963, p. 10; Stephen Hamer, *op cit*.

promoters:

They can, therefore, run during June and July for 16 meetings during a summer season. They can move their pitch to another corner of the same field or to a neighbouring field and run two more series of eight meetings in May and August, etc. They can charge the bookies what they please. The hare is usually attached to a cord wound on a drum fitted to the rear wheel of a motor car, the cord being led round bottles stuck in the ground to act as pulleys. They are not training tracks and the uneven surface tends to damage the dogs' feet in a way that does not occur on a proper track. <sup>30</sup>

The apparent popularity of flapping tracks into the post war years was competition for the larger companies, limited to 104 race days per year, who could not circumvent the legislation because their races were held in fixed stadia. Moreover, the installation of totes at these tracks was supervised by qualified accountants and mechanics appointed by the local authority. A six per cent deduction was levied by government which, it was pointed out by the N.G.R.S., was cunningly avoided by bookmakers on the eight day tracks.<sup>31</sup> But criticisms of a different type and from a different quarter was levelled at the companies themselves.

The instigation of large tracks was accompanied by worries at the effects these gambling venues would have on the general increase of gambling. The young were considered to be especially vulnerable to the temptations of the dogs. After the establishment of Raikes Park by a consortium of bookmakers and licensees 'Old Boltonian', the moral voice of the *Bolton Evening News* derided the claims of greyhound racing to the status of a sport, was fearful of its effects upon the young, lamented the aesthetic emptiness of the punters, and was critical of the disregard for the work ethic which all gambling implied:

The popularity of the electric greyhound coursing raises in thoughtful minds the question of gambling and its effects on the public, especially the rising generation.

For there can be no doubt that the whole business is chiefly a matter of gambling. As those who attend horse races have no interest in the animals, no eye for the power

---

<sup>30</sup> *R.C., 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 11 p. 279.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, para. 18, p. 252.

and prowess of the steeds or the beauty of their motion, but are only concerned about the money they may win or lose, so those who 'go to the dogs' don't care a fig about the greyhounds or their lithe elegance...The lure of the gambler is the hope of getting 'summat fer nowt' as we say in Lancashire'<sup>32</sup>

E.B. Perkins was equally sure that greyhound racing was not a sport. He argued that none of the companies had attempted to run the dogs without betting 'as they were challenged to do.'<sup>33</sup> The posthumous appearance of 'Mick the Miller', a famous greyhound stuffed, pickled and presented for the public in the Natural Science Museum at Kensington during the 1950's perhaps indicates that many punters did build up an affection for successful dogs, and appreciated their athleticism.

The response of the promoters to such criticisms, articulated to the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1932-33 by the largely landed and military spokesmen of the N.G.R.S., aroused sarcastic disbelief from the more sceptical members of the committee. In answer to the accusations against organised greyhound racing Lord Askwith, A.C.Critchley *et al* argued

that national thrift had increased in districts where greyhound racing was specially established.

So far from having any demoralising effects (it has) reduced betting in the streets and workshops, and no social ill effects can be traceable to it.

It was further claimed that greyhound racing had reduced reliance on pawnbrokers, reduced drunkenness and cultivated good behaviour in crowds.<sup>34</sup>

Sir David Owen, the questioner, said he had 'listened with very great interest to the elegant advocacy of greyhound racing' and was 'beginning to think it was going to be a great factor in the social amelioration of the people...' He concluded, in line with the thrust of anti-gambling campaigners, that the statements of the N.G.R.S were 'propaganda and partisan', an advocacy of business interests only. Owen was also unimpressed at the

---

<sup>32</sup> *Bolton Evening News* 7th January 1928, p. 2; See Jim Power, *op cit*.

<sup>33</sup> E. B. Perkins, *Gambling in English Life*, pp. 21-2.

<sup>34</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, para. 11, pp. 109-110.



claim of the National Greyhound Racing Club to be the equivalent of the Jockey Club in dog racing. He saw the N.G.R.C. as too financially involved to be unbiased in arbitration: 'The Jockey Club is not financially involved in anything? - Lord Loch: Nor are the members of the Club.'<sup>35</sup>

The implication was simply that the control of betting practices and licensing of tracks was based upon commercial considerations rather than honourable ones. Hugh Dalton, the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1947, took this view in his decision to increase the levy from six per cent to ten per cent for the proprietors of dog race totalisators. During his budget proposals he told the House of Commons that he did

not propose to levy a duty of this kind on the horse totes (which) operate on quite a different basis. They are owned by the Racecourse Betting Control Board and are not run as the dog totes are, for private profit - a very important distinction. The amount, about 10 per cent., which they already deduct from the sums staked, is devoted, after of expenses, to the improvement of horse breeding; and I am advised by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture that horses are good exports.<sup>36</sup>

The spokesmen for the greyhound associations argued to the Willink enquiry that money which passed through the tote did not fall into the pockets of management but subsidised the poorer owners and trainers, and contributed to the upkeep of kennels and to the payment of veterinary fees. Thus most money bets re-circulated to the ongoing benefit of dog racing. The P.G.T.C.O. argued that the relation between owners and tracks represented 'the most truly sporting side of the whole greyhound racing industry'.<sup>37</sup> They shared the view of the N.G.R.S. who pointed out to the Willink Commission that bets on the tote at dog tracks had dropped off since the increase of the tax. They denigrated the 'injustice of placing this penal taxation on the greyhound totalisator and allowing the horse racing totalisator to go untaxed...'<sup>38</sup>

Resentment at this financial discrimination and the view of the

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, para. 1688, p. 122.

<sup>36</sup> *H.C. Debs*, 12th Nov. 1947, col 406.

<sup>37</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, para. 21, p. 252.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, paras. 25 and 28, p. 253.

greyhound authorities as a second class jockey club to a second class sport was most clearly manifested during the course of enquiries of the Willink Commission in 1949-50. Lord Brabazon of Tara, a member of the G.R.A. interrupted questions put to other members of the group by the Chairman of the enquiry Henry Willink. Brabazon was 'distressed' by Willink's suggestion that in introducing the totalisator at dog tracks before the passage of the 1934 Act the companies associated with the N.G.R.S. had been operating 'outside the intentions of Parliament'.<sup>39</sup> The tote had really only been intended for horse racing since the Act of 1928 but a number of dog-track owners introduced the tote at their tracks to compete with on-track bookmakers and to secure extra revenue for the sport by deducting money from the pool. A number of cases brought by anti-gambling campaigners and the local licensing authority had proved inconclusive, but the case brought by the Leeds bookmaker Irving Shuttleworth against Leeds Greyhound Racing Company had outlawed the use of totes at dog tracks in 1933 found against the Company under the terms of the 1928 Act.<sup>40</sup> A High Court action soon afterwards reversed the decision - grist to the mill of the greyhound racing companies- and the legislation the following year was a further attempt to erase the inconsistencies of the law by allowing the totalisator to operate on all non-athletic tracks for 104 days in a licensing year.<sup>41</sup> But Willink was right when he argued that the Government had originally intended totes for horse-racing only.

As Shuttleworth's action showed, the early introduction of the tote on greyhound courses had met with opposition from many bookmakers, both part time on-track bookies and also local ready-money bookmakers, concerned at the financial losses that would result if punters began to bet with the tote instead of them. It is perhaps ironic that a number of

---

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, paras. 416061, p. 301.

<sup>40</sup> *The Licenced Bookmaker*, April 1963, p. 20

<sup>41</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*. See memo by the P.G.T.C.O., para. 279.

bookmakers on the greyhound racing company executive must have realised that rivalry would result amongst their local competitors. The Turf Guardian Society and other bookmakers organisations told Parliament whenever they got the chance that the tote was unfair competition. In the event they need not have worried: the tote has never taken much more than a quarter of all on-course betting in general and was taking only a seventh in the early 1930's,<sup>42</sup> although it was, in fact, for reasons made clear below, more popular with the punters on dog tracks than at horse races.

The totalisator machine itself was a rudimentary affair to begin with, being usually a hand worked affair issuing tickets -receipts- to the value of the bets staked. At the bigger tracks buildings were erected to dispense the tickets from windows. They constituted a visible and permanent threat to the bookmakers. The profits from the tote went into the facilities and the management of the greyhound tracks. The owners of the dogs gained no direct financial assistance from the tote. This was part of a wider set of complaints emanating from the breeders and owners of the hounds against the organisation of the industry.

#### Owners, Breeders and Punters.

Of all the social groups involved in greyhound racing after 1926 perhaps least is known of the constituency of owners and breeders and their relationship to both bookmakers and the track companies. There has long been a strong interlocking between owners and breeders, as most who kept dogs usually owned and bred them. In general, smaller breeders have remained associated with the smallest informal meetings and 'flapping tacks', which is today used as a generic label for all tracks outside the jurisdiction of the N.G.R.S. The Parliamentary enquiries with regard to dog racing contain sadly

---

42 A.P.L. Gordon, 'The Statistics of Totalisator Betting', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 94, 1931, p. 31. A.W. Peterson, 'The Statistics of Gambling', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 2, 1952, p. 205



little detail on owners and breeders and their status within the industry. Yet one N.G.R.S. official, described not his own courses but the smaller unlicensed tracks as

one man businesses which meet the local sporting need of owner-trainers (miners for example) and the attendance at these courses may be anything from 150 to 1,000.<sup>43</sup>

Anybody with a inclination for the 'fancy' could own and train a dog. In both mining and non-mining areas bookies and publicans have often been popular and well known owners of dogs. J.N.Browne, the spokesman for the B.G.T.C.A. told the 1949-51 Enquiry that approximately 18-19,000 dogs ran at their tracks, owned by about 13,000 enthusiasts of the sport. These were ineligible to run at N.G.R.S. tracks.

The smaller flaps were more closely-knit occasions than larger more heavily capitalised affairs, and most betting was with local bookmakers rather than the tote, therefore less money could accrue directly to the track promoters through this mechanism. Browne admitted that 'the smaller racecourses cannot afford, and are not indeed expected, to give sufficient prize money to recompense the owner.'<sup>44</sup> As a general rule, the smaller breeders remained associated with the smaller tracks.

The owners at the N.G.R.S. tracks were also drawn from the followers of the fancy, but from the sporting press, especially the greyhound racing papers which surfaced during the 1930's and 1940's, from the *Greyhound Stud Book* (which began in 1882) and from popular literature written about greyhound racing it is noticeable that company directors -many bookmakers and licensees- businessmen from all areas of commerce, and a decreasing but by no means inconsiderable number of genteel owners, many with a career in the army behind them ran their hounds at the biggest tracks.<sup>45</sup> Instead of raising the dog in a back yard these wealthier owners invested in kennels and

---

<sup>43</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. p. 254.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, para. 61, p. 285.

<sup>45</sup> *The Greyhound Racing Stud Book*, at N.G.R.S. Offices, Newmarket. See also Roy Genders, *The Encyclopedia of Greyhound Racing*, 1985, *passim*.

paid professional breeders to nurture the dogs. The link between the Irish Stud and the English greyhound establishment is based here, with many leading N.G.R.S. members importing the cream of the Irish breeds. 'Mick the Miller' was raised by a Catholic priest and a kennel owner in Killough, County Offally, before his purchase by Mrs. Arundel Kempton and his successes on the British circuit in the 1940's. Despite this, and with a similar strategy to the Jockey Club to secure greater finance and respectability for the sport, leading N.G.R.S. officials argued that British greyhounds were the world's finest, a lineage that could be mutilated by higher taxes on profit and the subsequent limitations on reinvestment:<sup>46</sup>

At the level of the larger tracks however, both P.G.T.C.O. and N.G.R.C., the vast bulk of owners had no financial investment in the fixed capital of greyhound racing. Their only capital investment was their dog which they entered for the racing. This relationship between the owners and the tracks was the basis of the sport. In 1978 the Rothschild Commission noted that greyhound racing was still more tightly organised than horse racing, with greater control from the top, which rendered the owners more dependent upon the tracks.<sup>47</sup> In horse racing, owners and breeders have helped to control the sport through access to the Jockey Club, whilst the N.G.R.C. and the P.G.T.C.O. have remained almost exclusively composed of company directors and officials. Thus to Parliamentary Enquiries the N.G.R.C. has given evidence on behalf of all concerned with greyhound racing, claiming to represent the Stewards -whom they appointed- the companies, the breeders, owners and trainers.<sup>48</sup>

The closely knit business connections and oligarchic structure of greyhound racing, the self regulatory nature of the sport from above, and the strong association with betting from the earliest days of the sport has made

---

46 *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 8, p. 259.

47 *R.C. 1976-8*, Report, Vol 1, para 10.9, p. 108.

48 *ibid*, para. 2, p. 259.

the sport liable to accusations of illicit pre-arrangements in the results of races between owners and bookmakers. The track companies played down the significance of fiddling and argued that they possessed powers enough to stamp the problem out.<sup>49</sup> How far such corruption took place it is impossible to say, but from the point of view of many punters it was more than occasional. This involved not just the doping and 'stopping' of dogs but in the substitution of dogs, just before a race, without prior notification. Honest owners were aware of the damage which malpractice did to the image of the sport. 'Bywayman' of the *Greyhound Owner and Breeder* blamed laxity of management at the bigger tracks and anticipated, wrongly, that the Willink Commission would alter the law 'to have (the dogs) identified in a national registry' to prevent fiddling.<sup>50</sup> But Bywayman also articulated a general feeling of resentment on behalf of those owners who were excluded from the management and the profits of the sport. He blamed excessive capitalisation and authoritarian practices for giving an image of an 'insiders sport' which was not truly competitive. Critchley, Cairns and others, he wrote 'had a powerful influence' on greyhound racing 'mainly, I am sorry to say, in it's direction as a big-money producing racket':

Their ideas and efficiency worked wonders on the rapid installation of of excellent stadiums and running tracks. But at the same time they had too much influence in the handling of the sport. It would have been better had they leased their tracks to groups of sportsmen, owners and trainers etc, who would have preserved the elements of true competition, national competition.<sup>51</sup>

A famous doping scandal occurred in 1946 when a number of dogs at a London track were fed with fish containing just enough chloretone, an alcohol based sedative, to slow the dogs down without physical symptoms.<sup>52</sup> Of the eighty-seven people over the age of twenty in 1951 who gambled in Rowntree and Laver's survey, seven (a little over six per cent) stated that they

---

<sup>49</sup> R.C. 1932-3, Minutes of Evidence, para. 20, p. 110.

<sup>50</sup> *The Greyhound Owner and Open Race Digest*, 1950, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>52</sup> Godfrey James, *London: The Western Reaches*, 1950, pp. 203-4.



did not go to the dogs because of this taint of corruption. For one punter it was 'no good' unless you were 'in the know', three stated it 'too crooked', and others described dog racing as a 'swindle, 'not honest' and 'corrupt.'<sup>53</sup>

This helps to explain the greater popularity of the tote over bookmakers at the tracks by the early 1950's. The tote, monitored externally by the R.B.C.B. could not form corrupt acquaintances with unscrupulous owners and bookies. Thus Kemsley and Ginsberg found that fifty one per cent of their sample (forty three) made bets with the tote only, twenty five per cent (twenty one punters) with bookies only, and twenty four per cent betted with both. But at horse races forty six per cent preferred bookmakers to the twenty eight per cent who betted with the tote only.<sup>54</sup>

Just as 1918 had boosted the popularity of greyhound racing, so the sport received a shot in the paw after 1945. Racing had been restricted to Saturday afternoons for most of the war, but was allowed also on Bank Holidays after 1942. The economic effects of war and rationing contributed to this short-lived surge. Greyhound totalisators took £200,000,000 in 1946, but this dropped to only £72,000,000 by 1950 and to £62,000,000 by 1960.

Attendances fell from 6,329,834 at the large tracks in 1946 to 3,820,413 by 1950.<sup>55</sup> The introduction of the Licenced Betting Offices in 1961 provided an alternative means for town and city punters to bet regularly, and this did much damage to the popularity of the tracks from this time.<sup>56</sup>

For the urban working class the greyhound stadium offered closer access to legal on-course betting than the more rural locations of horse racing. As Downes et al have argued, the short intensive thrill of five or more thirty second races during an evening was an exciting diversion for many working-class people, as licensed greyhound stadia were the only urban

---

53 B.S. Rowntree and R. Lavers, *English Life and Leisure*, 1951, pp. 7, 17, 30, 47, 90, 97, 99, 105.

54 W.F.F. Kemsley and D. Ginsburg, *The Social Survey of Betting in Britain*, 1951, pp. 20 and 27.

55 *R.C. 1949-51*, Report, p. 151. Also see reference below.

56 *R.C. 1976-8*, Report, Vol. 1, paras. 10.6-7, pp. 106-7.

environments where on-track betting was legal.<sup>57</sup>

Mass Observation provided a detailed analysis of the audience at the dog track after in the 1940's, and this was given indirect support by Rowntree's survey of English leisure habits a few years later. The audience ranged from groups of young people of both sexes, enjoying the evening out and a few bets, to families, groups of married women out for a flutter, and the more regular and habitual punters, both working and middle class. M.O. described Roy G., an ex-R.A.F. officer who betted heavily and was 'perfectly miserable' if he had no money to go to a race meeting.<sup>58</sup> M.O. felt that the dog track was the arena 'most likely to lead to excess.' As Ferdinand Zweig, a sociologist of contemporary leisure and working-class lifestyles, argued in 1948:

Then there are the unhappy types, of which many examples may be found among the working classes. They rarely bet on football, and not so often on horses; they are found mostly at dog races. Gambling has taken such a hold of them that they can no longer control it. Some married men keep their families short and some single men literally starve themselves in order to gratify their passion for betting.<sup>59</sup>

The appearance of families at the course was a sinister omen for magistrates concerned at the effects of betting on the young. G. M. Chapman was concerned that greyhound racing encouraged 'gambling amongst men, women and children especially among the humbler class:'

Anyone may enter the ground for greyhound racing, and many thousands of youths under twenty one, and even children, flock there to taste for the first time the fruits of gambling.<sup>60</sup>

A number of people who were lads at the time remembered the appeal of the greyhound stadium. A typical weekend for one Jewish lad of 18 years featured the billiard hall and then the Salford Albion track on a Friday night. Saturday evening was much the same but was followed often by an all-night cards session. Sunday was a cards or coin gaming day.<sup>61</sup> Like the role of pool

---

<sup>57</sup> D.M. Downes et al, *op cit*, pp. 140-147.

<sup>58</sup> Rowntree and lavers, *op cit*, p. 114.

<sup>59</sup> F. Zweig, *op cit*, p. 142.

<sup>60</sup> C. M. Chapman, *From the Bench*, 1938, p. 176.

<sup>61</sup> Jewish Museum, Manchester: Myer (Martin) Bobker Tape J43 Tape 1, Side 2.

halls and policy rackets in the bachelor culture of young American men discussed by Whyte and Polsky, the dog track was part of a pattern of gambling transmitted from generation to generation but central to the transient independence of the young single male.<sup>62</sup> Some learned the thrills of gambling even earlier. William Logan, as a boy in Hulme in the late 1930's, went to one of Manchester's tracks almost every night of opening:

I used to get in for nothing because you'd ask somebody to take you in, the guys if you were their son or whatever, when you got in the other side under the turnstile you said thank you and I went my merry way. You could have a little bet for a shilling, play the Tote or...

*Even at this very young age?*

Yeah, I mean you might get the odd bookie give you the looks 'give me that money' or 'who you with' or 'you kidding', but they'd take the bet.<sup>63</sup>

William got money for betting from doing odd jobs, selling back jam-jars or fruit and so on.

Under the 1934 Act persons under school leaving age were not allowed in, even if accompanied by adults. The Town Clerk of Liverpool, quoting Section 15 of the Act, told the Willink Enquiry that

If on any track any bookmaker or commission agent has any betting transaction with a person apparently under or known to him to be under the age of 18 years then there is an offence.<sup>64</sup>

The view of the dog tracks as a dangerous temptation to the young, to the naive or unhappy, and as excuses for heavy betting, was the most pervasive theme of the sociological or journalistic investigation into the phenomenon of dog racing and betting. It does not really reflect the diversity of the entire crowd at the track, nor does it allow for any variation of betting strategies beyond a rather Pavlovian view of the punter.

One factor which writers in the 1930's and 1940's could not have been aware of, moreover, was that the post war years would prove greyhound

---

<sup>62</sup> William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, 1981, pp. 140-2.

On pool see Ned Polsky, *Hustlers, Beats and Others*, 1974, pp. 15-42.

<sup>63</sup> Writers' oral project: William Logan, born Hulme Manchester, 1923, Tape 8, Side 2.

<sup>64</sup> *R.C.*, 1949-51, para. 6001, p. 412.



racing to possess a novelty value which could not maintain the sport in the face of growing consumer choice during the years of prosperity of the 1950's and 60's. The slow but significant long term decline in greyhound racing from its peak in the immediate post-war years suggests that, for many punters in the adverse circumstances of rationing, and during the 1930's when stadiums were a relatively new and technologically advanced betting environments, the sport was a novelty for many more occasional punters and so could not compete effectively with the rise of alternative attractions for spending money. Moreover, the introduction of a betting tax on tote turnover only at the dogs in 1947, and the fuel crisis of that year helped to initiate this process. The regular demands on electricity which the lighting, the tote and the electric hare made from over 200 tracks, two days a week, was considered to be more costly by the government than the needs of football and horse racing, daylight sports. Football and horse racing suffered modifications of the normal schedules but greyhound racing was shut down for six weeks in the winter of 1947-8. The sport was also limited to regular specified days until July 1949, 'with various local authority areas (joining) together to ensure racing was not held on different days in adjoining regions.'<sup>65</sup> The return to normality of the racing calendar and the football league soon after the fuel crisis was over provided more accessible opportunities for regular betting than the restrictions on dog racing. How important a factor the payment of tax on tote bets was it is difficult to say but a bet with a bookie off the course did not involve this expenditure.

### Conclusion

In general terms then, the peak of popularity in on-track dog racing could not be sustained beyond the two years between V.E. Day and the Fuel Crisis, when it was a cheap and accessible form of on-track betting. A number of

---

<sup>65</sup> F.J. Underhill, Sec. of N.G.R.S., Society for the *Study of Gambling Newsletter*, No. 8, May, 1986, p. 6.

punters, aware of the disreputable side of dog racing, were perhaps attracted by the more steady football pools and bookmakers. The rise of the pools themselves signifies perhaps the development of more privatised and domesticated preference for gambling amongst punters who betted regularly in small amounts. The largest organised greyhound tracks have increasingly since the 1950's become locales for the residuum of greyhound betting enthusiasts and a more occasional punting public made up of the young working class and working-class families.<sup>66</sup> One problem with both official and newspaper reporting on the sport is simply that the punters were never given a chance to express themselves, therefore little has been recorded on punters' attitudes beyond the more democratic surveys of M.O. and Rowntree and Laver's 1951 study. But it remains to be proved whether or not the punters at dog tracks really were unhappier than regular punters at horse races. Moral disapproval at greyhound betting probably precluded a hard look at all the faces in the stands, the awareness of many punters of the fiddles involved, or an appreciation of the sociability of a night at the dogs for many couples or groups.

One arena, however, where the happiness of the punters has never been doubted is the horse race. The increasing dependency of the sport on mass betting from the middle of the nineteenth century, with its attendant army of bookmakers and tipsters, produced fear and loathing at the alleged denigration of a 'traditional' sport from turf traditionalists. But, as we will now see, the centrality of horse racing to the sporting and betting culture of the nation has lent it a cachet and a corresponding cash-input from the government of which the promoters of greyhound racing could only dream.

---

<sup>66</sup> Downes et al. *op cit*, pp. 139-49.

## Chapter 7: Horse Racing and On-Course Betting in Lancashire c. 1840 -1961.

### Introduction

Following the 1853 Act, horse races were the only sporting events where ready-money betting was legal, until the introduction of commercialised greyhound racing in 1926. From its alleged origins as the 'sport of kings' to the sport of 'kings, bums and businessmen'<sup>1</sup> (not forgetting working-class punters) horse racing has maintained a prestigious status central to a shared national culture of sport and betting. The relationship of horse racing to mass betting deserves an historical study which synthesises the cultural and economic significance of the sport as the pivot of mass betting.

Firstly, then, the development of horse racing from informal free access meetings to capitalized gate-money events is described, with special focus on Aintree at Liverpool and Castle Irwell in Manchester. Both courses established entrance fees in the 1840's. They were under Jockey Club and National Hunt Committee Rules, as they ran flat races and steeplechases, although Aintree is most famous for the Grand National Steeplechase, established there in 1839.

Secondly, the structure of on-course betting is examined. Until 1928, the bookmaker was the sole aggregator of bets at the course but the introduction of the totalisator in 1928, a form of pool betting, removed this monopoly and presented the punters with a new mode of betting. The aims of the Jockey Club and the racing companies in establishing 'the tote' are given, and the attitudes of the bookmakers and punters are discussed.

Finally it will be argued that the contribution of horse racing and the 'sporting' ethos to the cultural weight of tradition in England, actively promoted by 'turfites', has largely insulated horse racing from the effects of criticism, and drawn money from governments into the bargain. As many popular histories of the turf enthuse, horse racing forms the evocative and

---

<sup>1</sup> John McDonald in R.D. Herman (ed) *op cit*, 1963, pp. 53-66.



romanticised dimension of the 'sportsman's' historic right to a flutter.

Lancashire Racecourses and Mass Betting Since 1850.

Manchester Central Library contains a 'Book Rarity' collection of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth century race programmes for Lancashire and Cheshire.<sup>2</sup> The locations for these races, such as Heaton Park and Kersaal Moor near Manchester, or Knutsford in Cheshire, were in the countryside. Meetings took on a seasonal regularity, and were held during Whit Weeks, and Autumn and Spring. The origins of horse racing in field chases and hunting, and the patronage of the local aristocracy in terms of jockeyship, horse ownership, the provision of training facilities and land for the use of racing is clearly evident in these programmes. At the Heaton Park steeplechase meeting in 1834, for example, the horses were 'to be ridden by Gentlemen Members of the Racing or Fox Hunting Club' for two major trophies, 'The Stanley Stakes' of 10 sovereigns and the Heaton Park Stakes of 25 sovereigns. Prizes were got up between the contestants and sponsored by wealthy peers such as Lord Stanley, Lord Derby and others. The races were one and a half miles long, the horses were three year olds, and carried weights of between 9st. 7lbs. and 10st. 5lbs. Prominent amongst the owners were Lord Stanley, Lord Derby, Lord Wilton, Lord Grosvenor and a host of other gentlemen including Sir. T. Stanley, Major Power and Captain (later Colonel) Byng. This aristocratic and military influence was clearly evident in the composition of the Jockey Club, the unelected ruling body of the sport, which was established around 1750.

The aristocratic control of the Jockey Club threw into sharp relief their domination of the sport. It is not surprising then that a few members of this sporting elite, although they were fond of gambling, were eager to stamp out any corruption it might cause. Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815,

---

<sup>2</sup> A volume of these programmes is available on special request from the Local History Library in Manchester.

the 'hallowed Turf', a symbol of a free and fair England, had been upset by a series of swindles and frauds which culminated in the *débat* of the 1844 Derby, when older horses masqueraded as two-year olds, and a jockey pulled up his own mount in favour of the horse he had backed to win.<sup>3</sup> The 'demoralization of the Turf' had set in by the time Parliament was considering legal measures against gambling. Admiral Henry John Rous, the leading member of the Jockey Club by the early 1840's, was called upon to give evidence on behalf of that body before the Select Committee of 1844, a precedent followed by all Parliamentary Enquiries into gambling since. Like his predecessor, Lord George Bentinck, Rous was a product of the aristocratic pedigree required for such an esteemed position, yet he was less given to the gaming excesses of Bentinck and other Jockey Club members. Rous engaged in a prolonged campaign to rid the Turf of corruption, which, unlike Disraeli, he was more inclined to view as much as the sick symptom of the vices of the wealthy as of the growth of mass betting. But, as illustrated in Chapter Two, he was unwilling to curtail the wagering of the class to which he belonged.<sup>4</sup>

Some wealthy beneficiaries of commerce, whose 'sporting' inclinations differentiated them from their more nonconformist peers, wanted to buy themselves into this culture. A number of untitled names also appear on the racing programmes before 1850. These reflected not only the contribution of both local small holders who kept a nag or two in the paddock for racing, but the increasing influence of industrial and commercial money. Thomas Houldsworth, for example, 'the founder of a great cotton business', had been racing horses since the end of the French Wars in 1815.<sup>5</sup> He was one of the first in a long and growing line of businessmen who also sought to participate in horse racing by owning and running horses. Some famous

---

<sup>3</sup> Wray Vamplew, *The Turf*, 1976, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> *S.C. 1844*, Report, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>5</sup> See Heaton Park programme, as above.

examples since have been the banking Rothschild family from the late nineteenth century, Edward Hulton, the Manchester newspaper publisher from the 1900's, and the Aga Khan. This fusion between old and new wealth was to become instrumental in changing the actuarial basis of the sport by the establishment of gate-money meetings in Lancashire which came to largely replace open meetings such as Kersaal Moor and Heaton Park throughout the rest of the century. The Heaton Park meeting in fact left its original location in 1838 for Maghull near Liverpool, where a local licensee with the support of local landowners had established a course during the 1830's. In 1839 these races were taken over and moved to Aintree by an alliance of the gentry and mercantile racing enthusiasts known as the 'Aintree Syndicate'. The total capital in shares of this, the first proprietary racecourse company, were £1000, owned by Lord Stanley, Sir. T.M. Stanley and, from what *The Porcupine* called the 'merchant prince' class of Liverpool, the Blundells and the Hornby family. The Earls of Sefton, Derby, Eglinton and Winton, Lord Grosvenor, Lord George Bentinck, a leading member of the Jockey Club, Lord Stanley, Sir John Gerard, Sir. T.Massey-Stanley, Mr. E.G. Hornby and others made up the Race Committee, which was responsible for the proceedings on race days. The directors of the company were drawn from these two groups and managed the course and its finances.<sup>6</sup>

The prominence of the local and national aristocracy is marked, and eminent Turfites such as Bentinck and Grosvenor illustrate the role of horse racing in maintaining the national cohesion of the landed class. Elite sociability in horse racing was interlocked with elite business cooperation.<sup>7</sup> The sporting sections of the middle class illustrated their willingness to participate in this established landed pattern of recreation. Horses were an extension of

---

<sup>6</sup> E.C. Midwinter, 'The First Grand National', in *Old Liverpool* pp. 40-52, 1971. *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, Vol.2, 1966, 'Steeplechasing', Arthur Willoughby-Osborne, p. 480.

<sup>7</sup> M.Filby, *The Sociology of Horse Racing*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Warwick, 1984, pp. 26-36. T.H. Breen, 'Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling Among the Gentry of Virginia', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 34, 1977, *passim*.



their financial and competitive acumen, and a key to social status.<sup>8</sup>

From the outset the races at Aintree established themselves as the most exciting and enjoyable event of the years' racing calendar. The first horse to win the new race was named, appropriately, 'Lottery', as the uniquely high, wide and difficult fences tend to reduce the likelihood of favourites' coming home first. This makes the race, traditionally, 'anybody's race.'

In the days leading up to the race the racing correspondents of the *Times* noted the early and 'immense number of arrivals'. Every room at the Adelphi Hotel was engaged a fortnight before the races, and most of the smaller hotels were full. Many Legs had ensconced themselves in these rooms where they pinned up the lists which offered their odds and prices.<sup>9</sup>

Despite its wealthy instigators and evident popularity, the Syndicate ran into difficulties in attracting enough capital to render the Liverpool Races commercially viable. They ran the Liverpool Steeplechase as a glorified open access country meeting, and the money for prizes and costs came from within the enterprise itself rather than from an external source from which it was possible to mobilise capital. It was left to the handicapper E.H. Topham, who took over the reins of the business in the early 1840's, to put the course on a more entrepreneurial and business-like basis. He did this with the help of most of the existing executive and, more pertinently, the establishment of a local railway network which enabled a racegoing public to come from farther afield than previously. Topham handicapped the race by grading the horses due to their ostensible merits and renamed it the 'Grand National Steeplechase'. He set about the task of ensuring that the course was better laid out.

The course established at Aintree was over two and a half miles long with fifteen fences, some of them formidable obstacles for the less

---

<sup>8</sup> T.H. Breen, *passim*.

<sup>9</sup> *The Times*, 26th March 1839, p. 7, col. c.; 28th March, p6, col. a.

experienced jockeys and horses. The horses ran the length of the course twice.

At Manchester Races, gate money was introduced at the new Castle Irwell course in 1847. This was on the land of a Salford Colliery Proprietor who had married money in Miss Frances Fitzgerald, daughter of a wealthy and entrepreneurial local landowner. A twenty four year lease was granted. The establishment of Manchester Racecourse Company owed less to aristocratic influence than the Aintree. The composition of the company executive was made up largely of small local landowners.<sup>10</sup>

The success of Manchester Racecourse Company was evident in its subsequent ability to overcome obstacles. Due to religious objections to the renewal of the lease for Castle Irwell in the early 1870's, the course was established at New Barns in Salford. It appears that the nonconformist son of the Purcell's refused to allow racing on his land because of its heavy association with betting.<sup>11</sup> The course was moved back to Castle Irwell from New Barns in 1902, when the Manchester Ship Canal Company bought the land to extend their operations thorough Salford. The Company was re-registered in that year. By now, the composition of the executive is clearer. The leading businessman was John E. Davies of Sale, Cheshire, who gave his occupation as 'Gentleman'. So too did Assheton Bennett of Maida Vale, London, Robert Booth of Middleton, Lancs and John Crawford and Walter Beckton, both of Manchester. The only exception was James Whitaker of Salford who was an 'Innkeeper'.<sup>12</sup>

The dominance of 'gentleman-businessmen' on the Executive was matched by the seigneurial role of the gentry in course administration. The Earls of Sefton and Derby were prominent as Jockey Club Stewards at the

---

10 Caroline Ramsden, *Farewell Manchester*, 1965, pp. 12-13. Ramsden was the daughter of a company director. The company file of Manchester Racecourse Co. at Companies House only dates from 1902; (Company no. 74933).

11 Caroline Ramsden, *ibid.*

12 Company File of Registration documents of Manchester Racecourse Co., 1902 -1963, when the course closed.

course, and the Earl of Sefton represented the National Hunt Committee at steeplechases.<sup>13</sup> By the end of the First World War Edward Hulton, the newspaper publisher, had moved in as a director and large shareholder, and a local solicitor took over as secretary on Davies' death. The Salford colliery proprietor Joseph Ramsden, an enthusiastic owner of horses, also became a director during the Edwardian years.

John Edward Davies, with Lord Leigh, was also instrumental in the establishment of Haydock Park racecourse in 1888, at Newton-le-Willows, Cheshire, halfway between Manchester and Liverpool. By 1922, a local colliery proprietor and Wine Merchant were director and secretary respectively.<sup>14</sup>

But Manchester was the biggest of the two courses. The railways helped to transport over 70,000 people to the opening of the new course at Castle Irwell in 1902.<sup>15</sup> It possessed 'step stands' to accommodate 12,000, held 29,000 in the rings (the betting and spectator enclosures) and catered for almost thirty thousand more in the Grandstand and at trackside. Twenty turnstiles clicked the punters through at admission prices which reflected their varying levels of wealth and social esteem. Admission to Tattersall's was three times the entry price of the Silver Ring, and ten times that of the Cheap Ring.<sup>16</sup> The more expensive the admission price, the better the view. The Company executive answered complaints from spectators on this to the effect that 'they cannot all be directly opposite the winning post.'<sup>17</sup>

Gate-money meetings altered both the scale and facilities and hence the tenor of horse race meetings. As Guy Chapman argued, admission fees enabled not just better facilities but larger prizes. Caroline Ramsden, daughter

---

<sup>13</sup> Caroline Ramsden, *op cit.*

<sup>14</sup> Company File Haydock Park Racecourse Company. Held at Companies House. (Company no. 56182).

<sup>15</sup> *Manchester Evening Chronicle*, 29th March, 1902, p3.

<sup>16</sup> Souvenir of Grand Opening of Castle Irwell, Manchester Racecourse Co., 1902. Held at Manchester Local History Library.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 12.



of Joseph Ramsden, wrote with pride in her autobiographical history that the course was more popular and successful than older established meetings:

The Lancashire Plate, a seven furlong weight-for-age race for two year olds and upwards with £11,000 added, was run at the September Meeting from 1888 to 1893 and was, at the time, the most valuable race in England. The Derby of 1888 was worth only £3,675 and the St. Leger £4,350.<sup>18</sup>

The Company itself, in its Souvenir for the opening meeting in 1902 also made much of the increasing capital and modernisation of horse racing:

...one of many instances that could be adduced of the manner in which the Company has marched with the times is the fact that this year another 500 sovereigns has been added to the value of the Manchester Cup.<sup>19</sup>

It was this attitude that of which Lord Cadogan, a landed aficionado of what he termed 'old fashioned meetings' was so critical. In 1885, as part of an attack on the self-appointed and self-perpetuating power of the Jockey Club, he also lamented the corrupt and utilitarian 'state of the turf':

Owners of horses are no longer satisfied with the prices offered for competition at old fashioned meetings, and the stakes must therefore be increased to thousands where hundreds used to attract large fields of horses.<sup>20</sup>

Gate-money meetings were the centre of the 'revolution' upon which the character and organisation of horse racing turned. This of course echoes the complaint of Bywayman on behalf of the less cash-inspired greyhound owners and breeders who wished for a less capitalised, more participative sport.

There was a clear split amongst horse racing elites, which has never been fully resolved, between the traditionalists and those of a more professional and entrepreneurial outlook.<sup>21</sup> Those who viewed mass gambling as a crude modern imposition into the sport have sought to legitimise the sport by emphasising bloodstock breeding and the pursuit of equine perfection. This was Lord Astor's position in the 1950's in the run-up to the Peppiatt Committee's Report on horse racing. Betting was a 'necessary evil' for Astor,

---

<sup>18</sup> Guy Chapman, *Culture and Survival*, 1938, p. 113. Caroline Ramsden, *op cit*, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Manchester Racecourse Souvenir, 1902*, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Lord Cadogan, 'The State of the Turf', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol xxxvii, 1885, p. 109.

<sup>21</sup> This question is dealt with later in the chapter.

a Labour peer. He wanted to get rid of bookmakers and introduce a totally tote-based funding. Those who gave more fulsome support to gambling pointed to its traditional symbiosis with horse racing and the financial contribution that all betting made to the sport.

The traditionalists were particularly concerned at the effect of betting on the nature of racing itself. The weight-for-age races, the 'best class of racing' designed to ensure good breeding and healthy animals were increasingly less common than 'the second class of racing' -handicaps- in which the weights to be carried by each horse (the jockey) were 'arbitrarily appointed' by the handicapper, a course official. Some fifty years later, the trainer John McGuigan complained at the *ad hoc* and inconsistent handicaps applied to the same horses at different courses.<sup>22</sup> Handicapping affected the considered 'form' of the horse, and was associated with the increase in betting, but the instigation of a 'third class of race', as Cadogan saw it, artificially inflated the number of races to enable more betting to take place than previously. The 'selling-plate' race was seen as the most deplorable symptom of the commercialisation of horse racing and its increasing dependence on mass betting.

The appearance of the urban hordes at these meetings signalled not just the growing evil of betting but also the break up of a friendly parochialism which allegedly found its truest expression in an older rustic context. A problem of social control accompanied the race goers as the trains and charabancs disgorged them at Epsom or Aintree. The gate, or sometimes the turnstile, allowed onto the course a motley crew of bookmakers and betters which disfigured racing. Even *The Porcupine*, no admirer of betting, gave space to a nostalgic description of a 'run out to Aintree' in 1862:

Leaving the open fields after the great race, and making across the course in the region of the tents and stands, all the repulsive and disreputable features of the racing ground are met with. The class of people has changed. You don't hear

---

<sup>22</sup> J. McGuigan, *A Trainers Memories* (ed.) J. Fairfax Blakeborough, 1946, pp. 101-2.

the truly joyous laugh, you don't meet with much heartiness. Men rush wildly about looking for 'sweep holders'. Some are eagerly in search of their debtors, others are as eagerly trying to avoid their creditors, and on many faces despondency casts a shadow.<sup>23</sup>

On the course as off it, the bookmaker was in the van of this transformation. This was not surprising, as he was allowed onto the course to take cash bets. But, until the 1928 and 1934 Acts which standardised the arrangements for on-course betting, the bookmakers were not allowed to stand still at any particular point to receive bets. In so doing he constituted a 'place' to which, people resorted and caused an obstruction under the terms of the 1853 Act and the 1879 Racecourse Act. This was probably what Cadogan was attacking when he called for an extension of powers to destroy on-course ready-money bookmaking. It was, he wrote,

an undeniable fact that ready-money betting encourages and fosters the most objectionable class of backers and layers, and lies at the root of all the widespread evils which we now have to deplore. If the reader will look at the army of betting men plying their ready-money trade inside and outside the enclosures at any race meeting, clad in coats of many colours, openly displaying the paraphernalia of their calling, and defying the regulations under which they are permitted to pollute the racecourses with their presence, he will be able to estimate the enormous importance of the change which would be effected if the authorities would energetically endeavour to put down so crying an evil.<sup>24</sup>

Some twenty years earlier, Admiral Henry Rous, then Chairman of the Jockey Club, derided not only bookmakers but also 'the swarm of locusts' which were invading the turf. They were more commonly known as 'welshers' and 'levanters', a despicable sub-class of opportunists who had grown up in the slipstream of the growth of bookmaking. In any disputes arising over betting - this was usually when the bookmaker refused to pay winnings<sup>25</sup> - the Tattersalls Committee, also an aristocratic body, acted as the adjudicating wing of the Jockey Club.

Jeremy Crump has suggested that any violence arising from defaulting

---

<sup>23</sup> *The Porcupine*, 15th March 1862, p. 283.

<sup>24</sup> Lord Cadogan, *op cit*, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 9745, p. 67.



episodes in the second half of the nineteenth century was usually dealt with leniently by the magistracy in Leicester.<sup>26</sup> This may have varied according to the class of the defaulter. One gambit worth further research is that defaulters at gate-money courses were treated more harshly by the local magistrates than those at country meets. Some magistrates might have owned horses themselves, and wished to keep the image of racing clean.

On-course bookmakers themselves, despite their role in altering the nature of betting, were not immune to the nostalgia for the old races. For Dyke Wilkinson, there had even been a better class of 'old fashioned welshers' who were 'endurable parasites' applying 'simple methods.' They had been supplanted by the new 'brutal school' of welshers who went about their business 'in whole battalions', terrorising the 'lawful authorities' inside and outside the Rings.<sup>27</sup>

By the late nineteenth, the defaulters, thieves, sharpers and others who came to the races for extra-betting purposes were known to the police under the criminal category of 'racecourse thieves.' For Detective Jerome Caminada, of the Manchester force, they were recruited from 'the gutter children, who can be seen in the streets of all our large towns, selling newspapers, matches and other small articles.'<sup>28</sup>

Tipsters at the courses were usually from a similar background. For the twentieth century, some flamboyant examples are recorded photographically, such as 'The Black Tipster', a 'Turf Advisor' who dressed in a tatty policeman's uniform.<sup>29</sup> 'Prince Monolulu' was famous between the wars, and the apochryphal cry of 'I gotta 'orse' is attributed to him.<sup>30</sup> Both black, they may have been excluded from more regular employment by racial

---

26 J. Crump, 'The Great Carnival of the Year: The Leicester Races in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archeological and Historical Society*, Vol. lvi, 1983, p. 65.

27 Dyke Wilkinson, *Rough Roads*, 1912, p. 260.

28 Jerome Caminada, *25 Years of Detective Life (in Victorian Manchester)*, Vol 2, 1983, p. 7 (first published 1893).

29 George Chandler, *Victorian and Edwardian Liverpool and the North West from old Photographs*, 1972, plate 114.

30 Mark Benney, *Low Company*, 1981, pp. 107-8 (first published 1936).

discrimination. Mark Benney was probably more typical of the poorest tipsters, trying his hand at a pretence of inside knowledge at Epsom in between spells of employment, not all of it legal.<sup>31</sup> The most successful tipsters, it appears, were privy to 'inside information' from jockeys and trainers such as John McGuigan, a trainer whose tipster friends sold their information on fly-sheets for a few pence at racecourses.<sup>32</sup>

Tipsters, with their 'excessively questionable' occupation were vilified by anti-gambling commentators. James Runciman, for example, attacked the basic dishonesty of tipsters as a particularly unprincipled strain in the disease of horse race betting.<sup>33</sup> The *modus operandi* of the tipster was described by M.O. in 1947:

'Its a sure thing mate, only a bob, there`s three horses, all sure things, for a bob.'

A young man of twenty fishes out a shilling, passes it over and the tipster opens his race card and points to three horses marked with 'X' He is short, ferrety, and wears a cap and a long raincoat. 'Thses are the horses, got your card?' The young man produces his race card. 'Here`s a pencil, now mark them off.'

The young man obeys, hands back the pencil, and the tipster disappears into the crowd. He is seen later talking and whispering to an old man with a large white moustache.<sup>34</sup>

In reality, tipsters had little influence on the formation of odds and starting prices. It is conceivable, but unlikely, that enough punters acted on their advice to alter the odds given by bookmakers. This advice probably varied from tipster to tipster too. The bookmakers in the Rings, acting on the bets placed, were the key figures in the determination and alteration of starting price odds in ante-post betting.

The laying of odds began with bookies in the Rings, and the instantaneous transmission of these to off-course bookmakers began with the telegraph in the mid-Victorian years. This was later speeded up by the use of the telephone to get on-course information from the rings to off-course

---

31 Benney, *ibid.*

32 McGuigan, *op cit.*, pp. 157-8.

33 J. Runciman, 'The Ethics of the Turf' *Contemporary Review*, Vol. LV. 1889 pp.603-621.

34 M.O. *Mass Gambling*, 1947, p. 175.

bookmakers. At the racecourse a secretive form of what George Orwell might have termed 'tradespeak' had evolved as part of a mode of communication known as 'tic-tac', a semiotic language for those 'in the know', that is, bookmakers and the clerks and tic-tac men they employed. A clerk often tic-tacted for a bookie as well. The system worked in the following way: a horse which was heavily backed by punters would have its price odds, that is the price of winnings offered in return for the stake, reduced by the bookmaker in order to minimise outlay should it win. The most heavily backed horse was the 'favourite'. An example of short odds is 2 to 1, where the punter would receive £2 for £1 staked. An example of long odds is 33 to 1. Many an aspirant bookmaker suffered a run of favourites 'coming in' first. A horse which he ignored or backed only slightly, perhaps because it was the first time the horse had run, or it was ridden by an apprentice jockey, had its odds lengthened in order to tempt punters to put their money on this unlikely winner. The bookmaker expected them to lose their money, and made a considerable profit if they won, as he did not have to pay out on the favourite. There was an onus upon the bookmakers pocket to thus make the odds on unfancied horses as attractive as possible to the punter.

The tic-tac was employed by the racecourse bookmaker to keep him informed of the latest betting on each horse by a complex set of signals. (The origins of tic tac are discussed below). The bookmakers in the Rings constantly chalked their changing prices up on the boards and it was important for all bookmakers, who were competing with each other, to have quick access to the prices others were offering. The clerk took the information down on a 'twist card', so-called because the numbers were twisted round as they were written down to mislead punters who might see the information and act upon it. The clerk also recorded details of bets made and winnings paid.

From the 1870's the Exchange Telegraph Company based their transmission service on this system of relaying starting prices at the course. An



Extel employee on the floor of the Ring signalled the latest information to another Extel worker on the Grandstand. This was then taken down onto a twist card and telegraphed to the London Office of the Exchange Telegraph Company. This in turn was telegraphed to sub offices in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow. It was then relayed to all subscribing bookmakers who rented the 'Extel' ticker tape machine.

Steven Hamer, who clerked and tic-taced for other bookies before becoming a bookmaker himself in the 1950's, recalled that a crafty tic tac could, in arrangement with his employer, signal false odds and set up a run of bookmakers offering false prices above, and therefore less attractive than, those which the offending bookie was chalking up. This was a way of rigging the market at the course. It obviously affected the starting price odds of certain horses. Yet it was insignificant in comparison to the still prevalent practice of larger off-course bookmaking firms who 'blow' money onto the racecourse to change the odds on heavily backed horses.<sup>35</sup>

The nature of tic-tac shows it to be a subcultural equivalent of the way in which stocks and share prices were transmitted across the floor of the Stock Exchange. Stephen Hamer described numbers in tic-tac largely as reversals of proper spellings or obvious syllabic derivations::

One = 'Uptie'  
 Two = 'Owt'  
 Three = 'Earth' or 'Carpet'  
 Four = 'Ruof'  
 Five = 'Evif'  
 Six = 'X's'  
 Seven = 'Neves'  
 Eight = 'Th!'  
 Nine = 'Enin'  
 Ten = 'Net'<sup>36</sup>

Some examples of tic-tac signals clearly show that when the movements were quickly carried out the majority of punters would have experienced difficulty

---

<sup>35</sup> This discussion is based on R.A. Wooley, *The Comprehensive Guide to Betting and Bookmaking*, Sheffield, 1976; J.M. Scott, *Extel 100, A Centenary History of the Electric Telegraph Company*, 1972, and Stephen Hamer, *op cit*.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Hamer, *op cit*.

in understanding them. Like the twist cards the aim was to deny first hand knowledge to the clientele. Here are some examples:

- 'Evens' was indicated by the movement of two fingers of both hands up and down. This was mouthed as 'yours to mine'
- 5 to 4 was given by moving the right hand down to the left wrist ('on the wrist')
- 6 to 4 was signalled by moving the right hand to the left elbow ('half arm')
- 7 to 4 was shown by moving the right hand to the left shoulder ('neves to rouf')<sup>37</sup>

A photograph of a tic-tac man, from the *Picture Post* of May 1948 is Plate 7 in the appendix. The language of tic tac owed much to the 'back-slang' of the costermongers in London and other large cities. Mayhew mentioned the game of 'Ehrt pu', ('Three Up') for 'yenap rouf' or 'exes' or a 'top of reeb,' which was common amongst the young poor in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> In 1877 the sporting correspondent of *Fraser's Magazine* observed that the 'inhabitants' of the courses 'speak a language of their own', and he pointed out that many on-course bookmakers had once been costermongers. This explained their 'occasional rudeness' and the use of 'horrid oaths.'<sup>39</sup> C.E.B. Russell for Edwardian Manchester observed that a number of lads who earned their living in the streets tended to frequent racecourses locally.<sup>40</sup> The osmosis between the language of racecourse gambling and the subcultural *patois* of the poor was -and is- also evident in the use of rhyming slang to describe the characters and components of racing and betting. Rhyming slang is a unique linguistic invention of the Cockneys of East London, and has long been more commonly used at southern racecourses than in the North and Midlands. 'Pink lint' for example, rhymes with 'skint', and is used to describe a penniless punter. 'Joe Rooks' are

---

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Hamer, *op cit.* R.A. Wooley, *op cit.* pp. 126-33.

<sup>38</sup> Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol.1, 1861, pp. 13 and 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, Vol xvi, 1877, p. 80.

<sup>40</sup> C.E.B. Russell, *Manchester Boys*, p. 14, Manchester 1985, (first published 1905).

the bookmakers' books, 'Holy Ghost' refers to the finishing post and 'nanny goat' to the tote.<sup>41</sup> This last example illustrates that this is an evolving and easily adaptive language, as the tote was not introduced until 1928.

The linguist Lesley Milroy, discussing the concept of a 'speech community' argues, to the surprise of nobody, that 'marginals' share a different language which is expressive of different values and economic strategies 'from those found in the mainstream of upwardly mobile industrial society...'<sup>42</sup> For social commentators such as Runciman, then, this linguistic code, when spoken in sentences littered freely with blasphemies and four-letter words, must have appeared not simply foul but also difficult to penetrate and comprehend. It was the discourse of a potentially threatening underclass.

The racecourse was an obvious magnet for the casually employed who could peddle tips or try their hand at bookmaking. But meetings also provided intensive bursts of work for the more established working-class traders or inn-keepers who accommodated the travellers, be they punters or the jockeys, trainers and stable lads and others prominent in the organisation of the Turf. Jack Preston's widowed mother, for example, supplemented a meagre family income by working in the catering section at Castle Irwell during race meetings. After 1919 the family moved to Great Cheetham Street West, near to the racecourse, where his mother began to board members of the racing fraternity:

It was hard work looking after the needs of those people, but when the going got tough my two sisters and sometimes my niece would lend a hand. Sometimes we all worked round the clock.

As we became established many well known members of the Turf stayed with us when the meetings were on. Some would stay with us when the Haydock Park meeting was on, travelling up to the course by train the next morning.<sup>43</sup>

These informal economic links between the Preston family and the local

---

<sup>41</sup> R.A. Wooley, *op cit*, p. 127.

<sup>42</sup> Lesley Milroy, *Language and Social Networks*, 1986, p. 76.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Preston, *Memoirs of a Salford Lad*, Manchester 1985, p. 2.



racecourse enabled Jack to become friendly with many leading jockeys of the 1920's, such as Steve Donaghue, 'Brownie' Carslake and Keith Piggot, Lester Piggot's father. As a fellow working-class racing enthusiast, Mick Burke in neighbouring Manchester remembered, Tod Sloan lived in one of the 'gentry houses' in St Andrews Square. As McKibbin notes, jockeys were subject to the same hero worship as footballers today. 44

Other local traders gained work from the races, such as Emmanuel Goodman's father, who was both a tailor by trade and a heavy gambler. Goodman implies that his father, an Ashkenaze Jew from Russia, who took to wearing a morning coat suit and a 'topper' on his way to the races or the Synagogue, was Anglicised by his close association with the Turf. He did tailoring for the trainers and other workers at Castle Irwell and his gambling took him to many local racecourses. 45

For local bookmakers in or near a race town the meetings provided an opportunity to demonstrate their *largesse* amongst the working-class racegoers. At Castle Irwell local youngsters such as Maurice Levine and his pals would open the doors of the taxis in which the bookies arrived and usually receive a tip. The smaller less wealthy local bookies who did not employ a clerk could put the lads to profitable use. Maurice Levine remembered that sometime in the early 1920's as he stood outside the course

a bookmaker came out and asked me to go inside with him. Bookmakers didn't have stands as they do these days, and the cheaper bookies used to have kids holding the board on which they wrote the prices. I think this man (who came from Blackpool) was a Jewish bookmaker and I thought 'I'm quids in!' Other kids had told me they gave as much as 7/6d for working for the afternoon. Three half crowns, and it was real money in those days!46

Levine was unlucky, receiving only 2/6 for an afternoons' work. Perhaps it had been a bad afternoon for this 'cheap' bookie.

On-Course bookmakers were, as spokesmen for their organisations

---

44 Mick Burke, *op cit*, Manchester 1985, p24. Ross McKibbin, 1979, pp. 174-5.

45 Jewish Museum, Manchester: Emmanuel Goodman, Side 2, Tape 102 p21 of transcript.

46 Maurice Levine, *From Cheetham to Cordova*, 1985, p9

have made clear, made up largely of off-course bookmakers attending race meetings. But a number of solely course bookmakers, who held regular jobs outside of betting, visited local meetings to earn extra money in the cheaper rings. In the Tattersalls' Enclosure would be found the biggest bookmakers, and in the lesser rings were a combination of regular local bookmakers and the part-timers. This pattern was established by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. *Frasers' Magazine* in 1874, echoed Disraeli in dividing on-course bookmakers into patrician and plebeian camps: 'Inside the chief betting ring are to be found the Leviathans of the business; outside "Tattersall's" enclosure are to be found their parasites...'<sup>47</sup> Bookmakers, like punters, were charged admission to the different rings to accept bets. Alfred Tyler, the Honourable Secretary of the Racecourse Bookmakers Association, (R.B.A.) formed in 1903 to protect the interests of bookmakers at the racecourse both from the impending legislation and from the demands of racecourse companies and punters, told the 1923 Parliamentary Enquiry that most course bookies carried on their business all over the course. Tattersall's admission fees were 22s. 6d., considerably higher than the 6s. required for entry to the smaller rings where the working-class racegoers went.<sup>48</sup> Most bookmakers kept to a few local or regional courses:

you seldom get a North-country bookmaker coming south of the Trent. The expenses are really too great, and, in addition to that, bookmakers have connections in the particular districts where they are well known.<sup>49</sup>

Tyler reckoned that a racecourse bookmaker in the smaller rings might take, as turnover not profit, £200 per day. His view that an annual rate of profit might only amount to £44 was subject to some strident questioning by the Chairman of the Select Committee on Betting Duty (Cautley) which resulted in Tyler questioning the validity of making any estimates to begin with. He argued that most bets in the small rings were from 2/6 to 5s. The smallest bets

---

<sup>47</sup> *Frasers Magazine*, *op cit*, p. 75.

<sup>48</sup> *S.C. 1923*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 4190, p. 145.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, para. 4190, p145.

of all were taken outside the rings by the 'men who call themselves bookmakers', whom he distinguished from 'the straightforward, honourable man...' For this reason Tyler wanted a licensing system introduced to rid the Turf of undesirables.

The R.B.A. had been formed to voice any grievances of course bookmakers to the Tattersall's Committee, the wing of the Jockey Club which dealt with betting disputes. Excessive or dishonest claims by punters, the need to differentiate between regular bookmakers and those most likely to welsh or default, fiddling by clerks and tic-tacs, excessive charges for facilities by racecourse management and of course the need to collectively deal with racecourse violence were the main reasons for the formation of the R.B.A. These problems persist today.<sup>50</sup> In 1918 the Turf Guardian Society (T.G.S.) was formed for the same reasons. The leading light of this organisation was the wealthy London bookmaker William J. Randall, a friend and associate of T.H.Dey., who was also a member. Both Randall and Dey were wealthy off-course bookies concerned to identify the interests of the Turf with bookmakers. The T.G.S. was made up more of larger bookmakers than the R.B.A., as was the N.B.P.A., established in 1921 to combat the growing threat of protection rackets existing in racetowns both on and off the course between the local criminal subculture and bookmakers.<sup>51</sup> This was soon to become a federal organisation of ostensibly credit-only bookmakers.

The elitist conception of the bigger bookmakers over the smaller ones was central to their wish to improve the professional image of betting and to exclude all but wealthier bookmakers from setting up pitches at the courses. The Act of 1934 enabled this exclusion to come into operation. In collusion with the racecourse authorities the N.B.P.A and the T.G.S. arranged for allocations to favour the bigger bookmakers in these organisations. This was

---

<sup>50</sup> R.A. Wooley, *op cit*.

<sup>51</sup> For a literary portrayal of this see Graham Greene, *Brighton Rock*. Testimony of Randall to the S.C. 1923, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 3327-3333, pp. 194-5.



the complaint of Mr. V. Ross, a Middlesex racecourse bookmaker to the Willink Enquiry:

At point to point meetings a practice is in operation which is a direct infringement of Section 12 (1934). One bookmaker pays the Hunt Committee a fixed sum for the betting right and then allocates the pitches to all his followers. This causes resentment with rival bookmakers over the favoured pitches.<sup>52</sup>

He also claimed that fees and an unfair deposit were asked of smaller bookmakers in order to meet winnings in the event of a bookmakers not being able to pay out any winnings due. The larger bookies could also, of course, refuse to take bets from those who wanted to hedge part of them. Hence not just strong-arm but more subtle tactice could be used in the struggle for pitches. This was a major source of tension between bookmakers, and there is little doubt that the smaller bookies were disadvantaged in the arrangements to allocate pitches. Yet all bookmakers, from 1928, had a common interest in their opposition to the tote.

#### Bookmakers Versus the Tote

In December 1926 the stewards of the Jockey Club and the National Hunt Committee, in the light of the precedent of the imposition of betting duty, made representations to the government for a scheme to get money for horse racing. The British thoroughbred, they argued, was in peril, and they stressed the 'desirability of making betting contribute more directly not only to the sport of horse racing but also to the development of horse breeding.'<sup>53</sup> Thus most historians of turf history, echoing the claims of the Racecourse Betting Control Board established to run the tote, have argued that the tote was introduced to secure money for the assistance of horse breeding and racing. This is mostly true but a major factor in the agitation for the tote by the Jockey Club and the N.H.C. was that it would be a cleaner and more easily

---

<sup>52</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 2-3, p. 149.

<sup>53</sup> *Racecourse Betting Control Board, First Annual Report and Accounts, 1929*, P.P. 1929-30, (217), vii, p. 5.

monitored form of betting than with bookmakers, free from the possibilities of welshing with a resulting more favourable image of turf betting. A member of the National Hunt Committee, for example, argued to the 1932-33 Enquiry that the tote would remove the opportunities for fraud:

The advantages of having the 'Tote' at Hunt meetings and point to points is most marked. In the old days these meetings were the happy hunting grounds of welshers and all sorts of blackguards. The simple country people were easy prey for them. Now they can bet with all safety on the 'Tote', knowing that they will be honestly treated.<sup>54</sup>

In Europe, the predominance of bookmakers at the course was unique to Britain and the Republic of Ireland. In Eire the idea of the tote as of the betting shop was introduced in advance of Britain. In France too, the advantages of the *pari mutuel* which paid 20 per cent of the value of all stakes back into the sport of horse racing were emphasised by those concerned to promote the economic interests of horse racing in the U.K.

It was explained in the previous chapter that the principle on which the tote operated was the pooling of the stakes of all those who betted with it. The size of the pool determined the size of the odds. The tote was established only on 'approved racecourses', that is those courses approved for a certificate of licence by the Racecourse Betting Control Board. The personell of the Board was largely aristocratic, with a couple of civil servants thrown in for good measure. It was comprised of a Chairman and eleven others, of whom the Chairman himself and four members of the administration were appointed by the government, and the rest by the Jockey Club and the N.H.C.<sup>55</sup>

A government which had percieved the fiscal advantages of taxing off-course credit bets was keen to derive revenue for horse racing from the source of the tote. The anomaly of prohibition of off course ready-money betting whilst taxing the tote was not lost on anti-gambling campaigners and

---

<sup>54</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Memo. by N.H.C., para. 8, p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> *Racecourse Betting Control Board, ibid.*, p. 7.

those writers concerned with the pure amateur status of sport.<sup>56</sup>

The Board's first meeting was in September 1928 and one of its first decisions was that the work of operating the tote was to be under the auspices of the Board and not left to individual racecourse companies (except for pony courses under the jurisdiction of the Pony Club) It was agreed and met with 'the consent of the Home Secretary' that 60 per cent of the Boards' income was to be re-invested into improving and maintaining racecourses in proportion to the amounts staked with the totalisator at each meeting. 6 per cent taxation was deducted for flat meetings, monitored by the Jockey Club, and 10 per cent for National Hunt steeplechases. The Racecourse Association, a conglomerate of racecourse companies, objected to the level of taxes, as they have ever since, arguing more money should be spent on improving course facilities. But they welcomed the overall development of the tote and agreed that installation costs should be covered by the Board. Also financially attractive to the course owners, a modification of the 1879 Racecourses Act, was that they could now charge for the provision of places for bookmakers to 'stand up' on their courses, and they were given discretionary freedom to utilise any funds accruing from additional charges made of bookmakers.<sup>57</sup> This was usually five times the normal admission price.

From the outset the tote faced two major problems of acceptance. One was practical and the other was the opposition of the bookmakers. The apparatus of the tote went through an experimental phase at first as various levels of technology were introduced. The machines varied from the hand-cranked variety to, within a short space of time, the more effective electrically operated types patented by ingenious inventors and companies. The machines issued tickets which were dispensed at windows from the tote building. The first tote buildings were established at Newmarket and Carlisle in

---

<sup>56</sup> G.S. Sandiland, *Atalanta, or the Future of Sport*, 1932, p. 96.

<sup>57</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Memo. of the Racecourse Association, paras. 7-10, pp. 240-241.



July 1929. By 1931 they were installed on 108 racecourses for use at 561 race meetings. This amounted to 8,340 tote-windows nationally. During the trial and error phase the electric 'Amplion', 'Julius' and 'Lightning' machines were all subject to criticisms of slowness, and subsequently modified. All but the most rudimentary dog and horse meetings possessed electric totalisators by 1939. Due to the size of the crowd and the lack of space courses such as Liverpool, Manchester, Lingfield, Epsom and Kempton Park began with 'partial schemes' from the early 1930's. The tote here was housed in cheapskate, temporary buildings, usually in inauspicious positions. In the North West, Haydock Park was the first course to introduce the full totalisator facilities. It took £28,000 at the Autumn meetings of 1929, comprised of stakes to the average value of £1.10.<sup>58</sup>

Another problem facing the Board and Racecourse executives was bookmaker opposition. The Board argued that 'vested interests' were trying to foster a prejudice against the tote, and it certainly met with some verbal and practical opposition from bookmakers over the first few years of its life. In the long run bookmakers at horse races had little to fear from the tote. Despite an early confidence on the part of the R.B.C.B. the tote has been a disappointment. As Rothschild noted in 1978, in the period 1928-61, before the Racecourse Betting Control Board was replaced by the Horserace Betting Levy Board, the tote contributed an average of £270,000 a year to horse breeding, racecourse improvements and veterinary science. This was not as much 'as it's supporters had hoped.'<sup>59</sup> At the races, the more varied and competitive terms bookmakers could offer to punters and the lively and colourful presence of bookies within the 'traditional' culture of British racecourse betting cushioned bookies from the tote threat.

The tote also tried to tap off-course betting. This was accomplished through the company of Tote Investors' Limited, a private agency taking

---

<sup>58</sup> *Racecourse Betting Control Board, op cit*, p. 5.

<sup>59</sup> *R.C.1976-8*, Report, Vol. 1, p. 62.

credit bets. The tote odds and prices were transmitted between the course and tote offices via the 'blower', under an agreement with the London and Provincial Sporting Agency. This took about a quarter of the total pool in the 1930's.<sup>60</sup>

The tote lost out on the stakes of off-course working-class punters, who were not to be denied a flutter on this new gadgetry. The late 1920's and early 1930's saw a proliferation of the 'increasing evil' of tote clubs in the towns and cities. The Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Guy Warman, informed the House of Lords in 1932 that the unemployed were the biggest attenders and were at the most risk. Drinking, and a little flutter in a warm club, were an obvious attraction to them.

Membership of these clubs was nominal. Election was of the flimsiest, in most cases the subscription was 1s. a year...Through these clubs you get an increase in gambling, an increase in poverty in many a home, an increase of misery, an increase of the shiftlessness and restlessness which is doing harm in demoralising and degenerating our people.<sup>61</sup>

The subsequent history of the tote clubs is unclear. They probably faded out and were killed off by World War Two. After September, 1939, racing was stopped for a while, and the tote offered only a limited service on a restricted racing calendar from October of that year. Most importantly, tote offices off-course were closed down.<sup>62</sup> The war years thus gave back almost all of the trade to the bookmakers, so not surprisingly they resented the re-introduction of the tote following the demilitarisation of Aintree and the other major racecourses used as military bases during the war. As A. Harrison Ford, the founder of the National Turf Protection Society wrote in the journal of that body:

Make no mistake, the R.B.C.B. can be the means of eliminating the course bookmaker, and the re-establishment of Tote Investors' Offices all over the country could be the

---

<sup>60</sup> See for example the Annual Reports of the R.B.C.B. for 1935-6 and 1936-7, para. 21, p. 17 and para. 17, p. 10, respectively.

<sup>61</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 8th December, 1932.

<sup>62</sup> *Racecourse Betting Control Board, Annual Report, 1939-40*, (199), Vol.V, paras 5-6, p 5.

start of a campaign to sound the death knell of the Starting Price Offices, which throughout the war operated quietly and efficiently. The existence of modern, up-to-date Totalisator buildings on all racecourses, and Tote offices in all principal cities and towns, is a daily increasing threat to every bookmaker.<sup>63</sup>

But it was all this up-to-dateness and the standardisation which it implied which put punters off the tote. Totalisator betting was conducted in units of two shillings. Tickets for bets were purchased for two shillings or for a greater number of units. The dividend for the winner was winnings plus the return of the original stake money. A dividend of 2/6 corresponded with a 4 to 1 bet at a stake of 6d. with a bookmaker. The statistician A.P.L. Gordon argued that bookmaker betting was more flexible than totalisator betting, especially to the punter who 'bets habitually in large sums of money.' and thus influenced the odds in so doing. Gordon argued that

while the Totalisator is a better form of investment where outsiders are concerned, there is a distinct tendency in the bookmakers favour for the backing of popular chances.<sup>64</sup>

Thus 'a greater number of backers would be impressed with the superiority of bookmakers.' As well as 'a worse form of betting on favourites' the tote, which averaged out the odds automatically with bets placed, was less attractive for those who were seeking a price range which only the nominal and competitive allocation of odds could produce. This was evident in the following snap given by Mass Observation in 1947:

One woman, aged 40, artisan class, rocks a baby in one arm and gazes intently at the race card held in her free hand. Her husband looks over her shoulder and points with a pencil, saying 'Hot Pot that's the 'orse'. The woman replies 'No, I fancy Lombard, thats what the feller on the bus said, 'Lombard' he said. The man argues, 'I tell you, Hot Pot is favourite'. The woman mutters as the man continues 'I'll put a couple of bob on Hot Pot.' 'Put it in the tote', the woman argues. 'No the bookies give a better price'. 'Let's see', and the two of them turn and walk towards the bookies' ring where they stand for one minute watching and listening as

---

<sup>63</sup> *The Pencil*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1946, p 1.

<sup>64</sup> A.P.L. Gordon, *The Statistics of Totalisator Betting, op cit*, p. 33. In 1978, the survey of gambling literature in 1978 argued that 'totalisator betting is a less attractive form of betting' and was seen as a complementary alternative rather than a threat to bookmaker betting. D.B. Cornish, *Gambling: A Review of the Literature*, 1978, pp. 238-239.



the odds are called.<sup>65</sup>

For the punters, the bookie offered not just an ostensibly better price but more choice and participation than the tote. As the call for a tote monopoly gained ground from racing interests, most notably horse owners and those who viewed bookmakers as leeches on the sport,<sup>66</sup> this participative and colourful appeal of the bookmakers was used against the tote. Bob Mellish, for example, the Labour M.P. for Bermondsey in the 1950's, made much of this in the Parliamentary debates over the proposed nature of ready-money betting after legalisation. He was a 'Cockney' and 'deep down (he) loved a gamble.' He also loved

the fun, the odds being shouted, the excitement of running from one boomaker to another to see if better odds can be obtained, then going down to see whether one can beat the tote at the same game. It is the colour of the scene. I do not like the suggestion that there should be drab, cold-blooded figures which no-one can work out. <sup>67</sup>

Mellish and Mass Observation were describing the excitement of the bet for the punters who were at the races more for a day out in the countryside than for a sustained series of studied and earnest bets. For the majority of racegoers a flutter added to the fun rather than provided the main reason for being there.

But also present at the racecourse were 'professional punters' who made betting their principal form of income or who went to all the local meetings and all the major races in the calendar. It can be argued that the professional punter preferred the greater self determinancy of the bookie to the tote. The American sociologist Robert Herman described this more dedicated punter at the races in the U.S.A. The study of past form in the racing paper to weigh up the relative merits of the horses and their riders, the braving of all weathers and a persistent optimism in the face of repeated

---

<sup>65</sup> M.O. *Mass Gambling*, 1947, p. 175.

<sup>66</sup> Lord Astor, *H.L. Debs.*, 27th June 1956, cols 98-102.

<sup>67</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 17th November, 1959, cols. 1045 and 1050.

financial losses were central to the outlook of the persistent bettor.<sup>68</sup>

But the majority of race goers were there for the 'fun of the fair', to show off or to watch the social displays of wealth and status in the clothes and deportment of those who frequented the more expensive enclosures.<sup>69</sup> People had packed picnic lunches and took buses or trains in friendly groups. The racing was important to the day out but the ancillary attractions of the refreshment tents, the primitive roulette wheels and the usual trapping of the 'Find the Lady' shark and other gambling paraphernalia all added to the feudal ambience of the occasion. The moral economy of the punter and the 'sporting' side of the wager was happier to beat the bookie than the tote here. As Gordon noted 'a popular victory is said to be "bad for bookmakers."<sup>70</sup> The tipsters, as we saw in chapter four, played upon this theme.

The racecourse bookmaker, then, was part of a traditional day out. In this he was himself lucky because horse racing has, since the Restoration, held a privileged status as a national sport, possessing a cultural cachet which persists despite its heavy association with betting and gambling, or perhaps symbiotically with it. These has seen the sport through some crises in its image and its self-conscious emphasis on fair play, most notably the numerous gang fights and turf frauds which have been enacted since the 'demoralisation of the Turf' which had set in by the early Victorian years.

#### Horse Race Betting and Tradition

The association of horse race betting with the simple rustic pleasures of its parent sports of hunting and field racing has endured well into the twentieth century. This is most clearly in evidence in the popular race literature which has accompanied and fed the *kudos* of the sport. John Freeman Fairfax-Blakeborough, with over fifty titles to his name, was one of the most prolific

---

68 R.D. Herman, *Gamblers and Gambling*, 1976, pp. 42-58

69 See Jeremy Crump, *op cit, passim*; M.O. *Mass Gambling*, 'Race Meeting', pp. 172 *et seq*,

70 A.P.L.Gordon, *op cit*, p. 33

contributors to this romantic cult of horse racing. In *Country Life and Sport* (1926) for example, he blames the degeneration of the sport not only on mass betting but also on the creeping spread of an ugly urban landscape with its attendant class system into his Yorkshire 'Arcady' of country houses and horses. Through his nostalgic and patriotic prism his view of horse racing and his grip on past realities is coloured with fears for the well being of the rural landowner:

Let us chat with the farmer about his stock, and the squire about the sad evolution which has cast a cloud over rural England, and which is quickly banishing the old class of landowners, let us revisit old racecourses and cockpits, and see how our forebears found their pleasures in the past whilst speculating to the future for the country house class and the things which have always gone to make the joy and tradition, the music, life and poetry of rural England.<sup>71</sup>

The nostalgia for the 'ancient racecourses' and his derision of new 'meretricious' country dwellings for the '*soi disant* squirearchy' spoke of a mild form of 'cultural despair' as described by Fritz Stern for the German *mittelstand* as it faced modernity.<sup>72</sup> This was a sense of economic insecurity and social dislocation resulting from a perceived despoliation of an earthy, honest and rustic pre-industrial culture. The roots of status and of local self determination had been stronger. Horse racing was viewed as a genteel and yeoman sport which belonged to a feudal past and which was an important locus of 'tradition', yet which fitted uneasily into an urban culture. This is in contrast to the U.S.A., where the race track is one of a commercialised menu of outdoor sporting occasions held in the larger towns and cities.<sup>73</sup>

Fairfax-Blakeborough's work crystallises the retrospective pervading horse race journalism and literature. It rapidly shifts between a gung-ho enthusiasm for racing, a maudlin anecdotalism when describing turf events and characters and an unquestioning historicism. And historicism, as Patrick Wright has argued, is the plundering of the putative past for experiences and

---

71 J.F.F. Blakeborough, *Country Life and Sport*, 1926, p. 7.

72 See Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 1980.

73 R.D. Herman, *op cit*, pp. 42-58.



expressions to relieve or even denigrate the present.<sup>74</sup> Horse racing is an important component of the 'cultural presence of the past' in English society.

Yet a schizoid perspective too can be discerned in Fairfax-Blakeborough's writings. He attacks and fears 'commercial considerations', the basis of the growth of a capitalist economy and social relations, comparing it to 'an old system inspired by heart and sympathy'<sup>75</sup> But nowhere does he acknowledge the vanguard role of the landed class in the commercialisation of horse racing. Moreover, in other works he expresses admiration for the entrepreneurialism, the innovation and economic efficiency of racecourse managements in modernising racing. The Manchester Executive he describes as 'a pioneer in the dynamic changes which have taken place in connection with the national sport during the century.'<sup>76</sup> The introduction of gate money, the increase in prize monies, the staging of selling-plate races, the use of the tote and the fact that Manchester was one of the first companies to instal the photo finish camera (in 1948) are all, of course, based upon commercial considerations and the demands of the betting market. Yet they spelt the end of Cadogan's informal pastoral meetings, and have kept racing in step with technological change.

Other prominent turfites have overlaid a patriotic perspective onto the traditional culture of horse racing. Mirabel Topham, proud of her family's management of the Grand National for over a century, has located the bravado needed to get round the Aintree course within this frame:

...if one needed a subject for a tapestry depicting British characteristics of indomitable courage and dogged determination, this time honoured 'chase might well be considered.<sup>77</sup>

Ever since the 1840's, when Captain Becher scrambled himself and his horse to safety under the trample of the horses as they negotiated a particularly

---

74 Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, 1987, *passim* but especially p. 3.

75 J.F.F.Blakeborough, *op cit* p. 31.

76 J.F.F. Blakeborough, *A History of Manchester Racecourse*, Manchester 1958, pp. 7-8.

77 Mirabel Topham, 'Aintree, the Home of the Grand National', in *Liverpool and Merseyside Illustrated*, March 1961, Vol. 1, No.12, p. 30.

dangerous water jump, the 'equine epic of the Mersey' has been viewed as an arena of 'derring do' which English sporting enthusiasts hold dear. As with Fairfax Blakeborough, this has led them to turn a blind eye to the cruelties of a rustic sport, or even to celebrate it. Hence Ernest Edwards, the tipster-gossip 'Bee' in *Vernon's House Journal*, spoke out in 1939 against those who would reduce the fences to a safer size:

The Grand National has often been the subject of a *screed* by the stunting press (and) as far back as 1903 people were writing to the papers complaining of the cruelty of the Grand National, to which the late Mr. Gladstone, clerk of the course, made suitable reply, 'Cut the Aintree fences and you cut the arteries of the race.'<sup>78</sup>

The tension between Humanitarians and Grand National enthusiasts was still evident in 1957, although the language had altered. The R.S.P.C.A., felt aggrieved at being accused of 'bleating' by an irate local race fan.<sup>79</sup>

It is clear that the excitement of the action and the betting, in which outsiders had a greater chance than in most steeplechases, outweighed any criticisms of the sport for those who attended or watched the sport on their television sets from the 1950's. For 'Bee' the Grand National could and should never be changed as it was 'Grand' and 'National', the timeless qualities of pageantry. More recently a sociologist of horse racing who credits himself with 'impeccable proletarian credentials' has argued strongly that the spectacle and ambience of the races has proved 'sufficient to enable a suspension of social criticism and to sustain engagement with the sport.'<sup>80</sup>

It is not surprising that the Englishness and the rural self-identity of horse racing would fuse with the culture of sport and gambling in Britain, despite the superficial contradiction imposed by the corrosive economic demands of mass betting on the vaunted informality of a pre-industrial pursuit. The spokesmen for this sporting culture were from the world of the fancy, the

---

<sup>78</sup> Ernest Edwards, 'Bee', 'Heroic Grand National Horses' in *Vernon's House Journal* March 1939, p. 40

<sup>79</sup> *Liverpool Evening Express* 27th March, 1957, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Mike Filby *op cit*, p. iii.

bookmakers who traced a lineage from the legs of old and those involved in the reporting of racing and betting in the sporting press. Thomas Henry Dey, the wealthy credit and cash bookmaker in Edwardian and inter war London, saw betting as the quintessence of the English - *not British* - spirit of risk and adventurism. In his heavily patriotic discussion of 'The Sporting Instinct as Applied to Betting' he argued that Englishmen were the 'sole proprietors' of the sporting and risk instinct. This only belonged to foreigners by 'requisition':

Sport and the liking for Sport, and the pursuit of Sport, all are the prerogative of the native born Englishman, whose remote ancestors in the isle of Saints found in old Angle-Land (England) their Valhalla, their Stadium, in which were practiced all, or nearly all the games that the still more remote Greek played in ancient Greece, not excluding that of horse racing, 'til this very day when many of our field sports are practically the same though modified: and horse racing is one of them.

The Sporting Instinct is therefore in the blood of every Englishman, nor is it absent in the blood of Irishman, Scotsmen or Welshmen, though as a matter of historical fact it is perhaps less marked in the latter three races.<sup>81</sup>

The backer was, then, 'every inch a man who sports the Sporting Instinct': it was his birthright. Horse racing and betting were thus central to the sporting and traditional spirit of England.

Finally, it remains to emphasise that the elite who operated and governed horse racing, the aristocracy, who still largely controlled the sport through the Jockey Club and the N.H.C., did not demure from the promotion of racing as a token of Englishness and a source of national esteem. It helped to legitimate the betting, without which the sport would have perished, or at the very least shrivelled up. The Jockey Club, which has always comprised aristocratic owners of horses, has repeatedly emphasised the importance of horse breeding to the national sport and admitted that betting helped to finance it. Viscount Allendale told the Willink Commission that 'nothing like the number' who attended at the time would do so if racecourse betting was abolished. The Willink Commission had no intention of doing such a thing, and

---

<sup>81</sup> T.H. Dey, *Betting in Excelsis*, 1908, p. 23.



agreed with their sporting lordships that the horse racing industry made a prestigious contribution to the export industry.<sup>82</sup> The horse-owning but anti-gambling Labour peer Viscount Astor reluctantly saw betting as a necessary evil to a great national sport.<sup>83</sup> The tote, in this light, may be viewed figuratively as a financial buttress to the national-traditional cathedral of horse racing, a betting-based collection box. The national importance of racehorse breeding was emphasised as a continuing justification for the tote.

The Peppiatt Commission, which reported in 1960, agreed with the general view that horse racing and thoroughbred breeding were central to our glorious heritage, and thus felt that the bookmakers should pay more to support it. This was due in part to a continuing dissatisfaction with the proceeds of the tote, which turned in a mere £28.5 million in 1959 compared with an estimated £336.5 million rung-up by bookmakers.<sup>84</sup> The Horserace Betting Levy Board, set up to replace the R.B.C.B. in 1961, has taken a voluntary contribution from bookmakers since, and included a bookmaker representative on its board.<sup>85</sup>

### Conclusion

From being seen to undermine the traditional parochial nature and honourable conduct of horse racing in the mid- to later nineteenth century, mass betting became the financial mainstay of the sport and of the new sense of tradition which Mellish and others articulated by the end of our period. The bookmaking profession was seen to feed-off horse racing, but was also part of the time-honoured carnival of a day at the races. The totalisator, a modern device, had never fitted snugly into this culture, supporting a view that 'the sport of kings' is central to the self-image of an

---

<sup>82</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 889 p. 61. Report, para. 337, p. 102.

<sup>83</sup> Lord Astor, *op cit*.

<sup>84</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, debate on Lord Peppiatt's report, 23rd May, 1960, col. 39.

<sup>85</sup> *R.C. 1976-78*, Report Vol. 1, p. 72. The politics of the Horserace Betting Levy Board since 1961 are discussed in Christopher R. Hill's informative *Horse Power*, Manchester 1988, pp. 8-9; pp. 22-38.

'old' sporting and betting nation.

However, one form of pool betting which did capture the national imagination was football coupon betting, the subject of the next chapter.

## Chapter 8: Football Coupon Betting and the Rise of the Football Pools, c.1890 - 1960.

### Introduction

Before the end of the nineteenth century, coupon betting on football was an idea and an activity confined almost wholly to the North West and was promoted by the sporting and tipster press and local bookmakers there.<sup>1</sup> But by the late 1930's, football coupons were a weekly flutter for over ten million people nationally. The coupons, which were based on a number of betting combinations, were supplied by the large and growing pools firms, of which Littlewoods in Liverpool was the largest, taking one half of the total stake or 'pool' of £60 million in 1947-48.<sup>2</sup> The British football pools were the biggest privately-owned lottery in Europe.

This chapter argues that the growth of coupon betting from a regional to a national phenomenon was central to the rise of a mass commercialised betting market during the twentieth century, but although it retained its largely working-class clientele, the pools was more genuinely cross-class than off-course ready-money betting on horses or cash betting on whippets and greyhounds. It was also more likely to be attempted by women. The pools were free from the 'low life' and unethical associations of these activities and thus more acceptable to the respectable working and middle classes. For all, the prize monies offered the chance, albeit remote, to transcend the social and economic obstacles to a life free from the privations and monotony of regular work or unemployment. This chapter will discuss the commercialisation of football coupon betting in relation to these cultural factors.

### The Origins of Football Coupon Betting

---

<sup>1</sup> Tony Mason, *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915*, 1980, pp. 179-85 ; Ross McKibbin, *op cit*, 1979, pp. 147-8; For contemporary views see A.J. Robertson, *Football Betting*, 1907, *passim* and C.E.B. Russell, 'Coupon Betting: The Football Fungus' *The Spectator*, 22nd March, 1913 pp. 482-4.

<sup>2</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Memo. of Pools Promoters Association', submitted by E.Holland Hughes, Secretary to P.P.A. para. 4499, p. 335.



It was noted in chapter two that the establishment of regular match fixtures provided the opportunity for fixed-odds pre-match betting on a grand scale. The rise of the coupon press, the football competitions in local and sporting newspapers and bookmakers offering fixed-odds coupons soon gave punters the opportunity to set down their predictions of forthcoming matches. These were distributed in the streets or published in newspaper form.<sup>3</sup> The latter idea was soon to be copied and experimented with by established local and national newspapers. By 1900 at the very latest coupon betting had replaced sidestake wagering as the dominant form of betting on football.

Those concerned with betting amongst the masses were soon alert to this development, and accused the culprits of corrupting an innocent public as well as the purity of the sport of football:

The majority of football enthusiasts never stake the price of a cigar or a drink throughout the season. Recently, however, a very insidious form of gambling has made its presence known in the North of England, and unless some means can be found for stopping this undoubted evil we are afraid the future of football will be as bad as horse racing has become.

What is responsible for the introduction of this new evil, which the Football Association are powerless to overthrow? Nothing but the development of the coupon mania which, it was fondly hoped, was suppressed a short time ago. Newspapers catering for football and presenting coupons prizes value anything up to £1,000 have whetted the public appetite for an easy way of gaining wealth, and the present evil, which has developed rapidly, is the natural outcome. Bookmakers, ever ready to pick the brains of working men, do not object to pick the brains of *confreres*, and a system founded we believe by a Liverpool bookmaker, has made its appearance in every large town in Lancashire.<sup>4</sup>

This article contained a copy of a circular handed to the writer 'by a perfect stranger in a street in Wigan' which contained details of this coupon 'system'. The coupons were not distributed solely in the streets but also around the mills and workplaces, and outside football grounds, to such an extent that bookmakers were 'doing a roaring trade' amongst 'the artisans of the great engineering works in Openshaw and the dwellers in colliery districts like Wigan

---

<sup>3</sup> A.J.Robertson, *op cit*, pp. 9-10. C.E.B.Russell, *op cit*, p. 483.

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Evening News*. 20th March, 1905, p. 5

and Atherton.<sup>5</sup>

In Liverpool and Manchester respectively, the socially concerned statistician Ainslie J. Robertson and the missionary social worker C.E.B. Russell also observed the prominence of local bookmakers in the distribution of ready-money coupons. Forty two agents worked for three large bookmaking firms in Merseyside. Robertson estimated that 'perhaps 140,000 monetary deposits' -stakes- were received by the three bookmakers. Most of these were for 1/- or 2/6. Thus over £8,000 was disappearing 'into the hands of these bookmakers from their clients' of which only a small percentage went the other way.<sup>6</sup>

Other calculations were more difficult to verify, however. Robertson reckoned that by 1907 at least a quarter of a million coupons were on the market every week during the football season in Merseyside. By 1913, the *Morning Post* estimated that two million football coupons were issued every week in Britain,<sup>7</sup> a figure received with horror by anti gambling campaigners. It cannot be retrospectively verified how accurate such estimates were -it was not stated how the conclusions were arrived at. But it is interesting to note that by these calculations Merseyside alone took up one quarter of the national trade in football coupons before 1914. Social surveys since emphasised the popularity of football coupon betting there compared with the rest of Britain.<sup>8</sup> The casual sector, heavy unemployment and the resultant economic insecurities for those out of work or doing sporadic jobs were the structural reasons for this. The Pilgrim Trust noted both the promotion of coupons as well as betting itself was central to a culture of economic survival for many. The widest or more adventurous tried their luck at promoting petty examples of fixed-odds coupon betting. Bookmakers, however, had the

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> A.J. Robertson, *op cit* p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> In C.E.B. Russell, *Social Problems of the North*, 1980, p. 15. (first published 1913)

<sup>8</sup> The Liverpool Council For Voluntary Aid, *Report on Betting in Liverpool*, 1926, p. 7.; The Pilgrim Trust, *Men Without Work*, 1938, pp. 98-100.

clientele and the capital to make more of a success of it. The bigger the clientele, the greater the collective stake money and prizes that could be offered. It was not surprising that later entrepreneurs would seize upon the opportunities presented by a flourishing local market for the coupons, and a vast reserve army of residual labour with little opportunity for forceful wage bargaining.

The increasing role of bookmakers in football betting which Robertson, Russell and others noted was the transitional link between football coupon betting with newspapers and the growth of the pools firms from the 1920`s. Their system of distribution was seized upon by other speculators of which John Moores, the founder of Littlewoods, was to become the most successful. A potted `business history`, with the usual reliance upon narrative of such histories, will illustrate this.<sup>9</sup>

#### The Rise of Littlewoods

The ascendancy of Littlewoods and the role of John Moores within it is a classic `rags to riches` story which has canonised Moores as a twentieth century capitalist `distinguished for talent.` At the end of the First World War, Moores was a telegraphist in Manchester with a cable company. No doubt the volume of racing and betting intelligence he helped to transmit, and the continuing popularity of football coupon betting in the North West after 1918 opened his eyes, and those of two of his fellow telegraphists, to the possible profits that a foray into the football betting business could prove highly profitable.

The enterprise was begun in 1922 with a combined total capital of £150 and a small office in Liverpool. The early organisation of the firm was similar to the system of production and distribution hinted at by Robertson. A

---

<sup>9</sup> What follows is based upon Woodrow Wyatt, *Distinguished for Talent*, 1962, Chapter 17, pp. 233-43; the publicity brochure *Littlewoods, the Pools Firm* (c.1980-please note, there are no page numbers) and D.J. Jeremy and C.Shaw, (eds), *The Dictionary of Business Biography*, Vol.4, 1985, pp. 306-10.



printing firm was commissioned to produce 4,000 copies of their first coupon, and a leaflet distributing firm was engaged to issue them:

It transpired however that this firm was owned by a staunch Methodist who disapproved of all forms of gambling and withdrew from the contract as soon as he discovered the nature of the coupons.<sup>10</sup>

So the partners themselves had to distribute the coupons by hand which they did 'with the help of a few small boys' outside Manchester's football grounds.

The business began very slowly, takings were less than £5 for the first week. This suggests that most recipients of the coupons were wary of trusting their pennies to touts with no established reputation. 10,000 coupons were given out soon afterwards at a major match in Hull, and only one was returned. The costs of printing and distribution along with office rent and expenses led to losses of £600 by the end of the 1923-24 season. The secretary was dismissed and Moores' two partners - one of whose surname was Littlewood - quit.

At this point Moores mobilised the labour of his family, as had many struggling bookmakers before him. He had also kept his regular job as telegraphist, an important support for an aspiring entrepreneur. His wife, his sister and his brother (Cecil) worked for next to nothing, sending out and checking the coupons returned to the office. The value of the coupons - receipts - had risen to £2,000 by the end of the 1926-27 football season, from which point Moores took off into self-sustained growth as a *pari mutuel* supremo. With the increase in customers and stake money, he was able to jettison the fixed-odds basis of the coupon and offer prize monies determined not in advance by himself but by the size of the *pool* of stakes. This concept had already been applied less successfully by Jervis of Birmingham. The crucial difference between pool and fixed-odds betting is simply that in pool betting the odds cannot be known in advance, and prize monies are only determined finally once all the stakes are in. As the Rothschild Commission

---

<sup>10</sup> *Littlewoods, the Pools Firm.*

noted in 1978, the commercial operator simply 'holds the bank' whilst everybody bets against each other.<sup>11</sup> Moores and other pools promoters were simply aggregators of a multitude of stakes. This gave them a massive advantage over the local fixed-odds bookmakers whose capital paled into insignificance beside Littlewoods, Vernons (founded by Vernon Sangster) and others. The Bookmakers Protection Association, in their memorandum to the 1949-51 Royal Commission, lamented that fixed-odds betting on football

was once a substantial addition to the normal betting accepted by bookmakers, but the growth of the football pools has caused a serious diminution of the football business done at fixed odds.<sup>12</sup>

As a Littlewoods punter told Mass Observation in 1937, 'Well I think there's a chance of winning a good sum for a small investment. It is better than bookies coupons.'<sup>13</sup>

The entry for Littlewood's in *Kelly's Directory* from the 1920's to the 1940's gives a vivid impression of its growth and local presence. From one business address in 1926 there were eight by 1949, the largest of the twelve pools firms in the directory for that year.

The development of Littlewoods, as with other ascendent firms was helped along by a combination of economic and cultural factors, as well as some judicious manoeuvring by the biggest firms after 1945 to oust the smallest from the market. Economically, as the Under Secretary of State argued to the Royal Commission of 1949-51, the majority of pools firms established their headquarters in Liverpool 'where, owing to unemployment in the 1930's they were able to find a cheap and plentiful supply of cheap labour.'<sup>14</sup> This labour supply consisted largely of women who were employed on a weekly basis for the duration of the football season, or who formed part of the smaller pool of extra weekend staff brought in at weekends - 'the

---

<sup>11</sup> *R.C. 1976-78*, Report, Vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>12</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 51 p. 353.

<sup>13</sup> M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 2, 'Blair Hospital'.

<sup>14</sup> *R.C., 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 26, p. 3.

weekend staff- to assist in sorting the coupons.

In 1948 the employment breakdown of the largest firms illustrates the proportion of female to male workers. Littlewoods, with a workforce of 11,810 employed 11,004 women and 806 men. Vernons employed 614 men and 5,735 women (6,349 workers in all), and Shermans in South Wales, with a staff of 3,215 employed 2,339 men and 876 women. Copes, in London, possessed 360 women and 40 men. The total national workforce of the pools was 23,527., and men made up a little over 10 per cent of this.<sup>15</sup> Men were occasionally checkers but mainly security guards, fraud inspectors and porters. The management was mostly male, and appointed from or by the Moores family. Outside the branches there were an innumerable number of 'Littlewoods Postmen', who were employed for two days of the week delivering coupons to houses.<sup>16</sup> These postmen were displaced after 1957 by a new distribution strategy, namely the 'coupon collectors' who brought and collected coupons from door to door.

The nature of employer-worker relations in the branch workplaces is not easily assessed. No unionisation took place in Littlewoods until the late 1950`s and 1960`s when the Union of Shopworkers, Distributive and allied Workers (U.S.D.A.W.) made inroads, with the apparent blessing of John Moores. A closed shop was ratified in 1972 between U.S.D.A.W. and the Littlewoods Pools management.<sup>17</sup>

The lack of strike action or unionisation does not of course mean that a workplace is free of grievances. But seemingly, the only dispute over pay and working conditions in Liverpool took place in 1956 when the checkers at Vernons branches staged a succesful sit-down strike over the introduction of

---

<sup>15</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Ministry of Labour statistics, p. 167.

<sup>16</sup> See M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 1 for interviews with two Littlewoods postmen.

<sup>17</sup> This cursory sketch of industrial relations history at Littlewoods stems from an unrecorded conversation between the writer, Marge Carey a shop steward, and two union officials. U.S.D.A.W.'s offices in Edge Lane contain the copies of a few letters between John Moores and the union, going back to the late 1940`s. Their tone is amicable enough. The union is unwilling to release any contents for publication.



new piece rates. They felt this would mean more work for less money. The management negotiated and relented over the tannoi in a scenario that would not have been out of place in a Boulting Brothers comedy film. They were fearful lest a continued strike cause a backlog and destroy the willingness of punters to place their coupons with the firm. Such bargaining power resulted from the weekly flood of coupons and the nature of the work process which sorted them.<sup>18</sup> The women's determination to resist the new rate was underpinned by the fact that many women were the only breadwinners for their family, or made a vital extra contribution to the household economy, in an area where dockside labour and the staple industries of textile and machine tool manufacture were contracting.<sup>19</sup> But the pools industry in the North West was largely free of industrial action from the 1930's through to 1960.

Moore and his management promoted a paternalistic and populist regime, a system emulated by Vernons. Both *The Littlewood Review* and *Vernon's , Opportunity*, quarterly staff journals which ran from the 1930's, emphasised the benefits of the welfare organisations, the workers health centres and the library. More informal techniques of worker incorporation included the regular charabanc trips to the seaside -usually Blackpool-, regular beauty contests among the branch ladies, and a sports centre opened by Littlewoods in 1939. The journals were mostly addressed to what it saw as the preferences of the women. Regular features included 'Fashion and Beauty Tips', 'Weight on Your Mind' and news of weddings of women and men in the various branches. Each branch was featured in close up from time to time, and there were articles on 'Our Cleaners' and other distinct occupational groups within Littlewoods. Each edition of *Littlewoods' Journal* contained a photo of Cecil Moore and a 'Message from the Chief.' There was little substantive difference from *Opportunity*, although the latter did

---

<sup>18</sup> *The Times*, 20th August, 1956, p. 8, col. c.

<sup>19</sup> Tony Lane, *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire*, 1987, pp. 95-96.

possess a more imaginative format. Its covers, for example, instead of a showing a photo of a branch building or a beauty queen, often made artistic use of the pools coupon motif. One example is the Festival of Britain edition in the Autumn of 1951, reproduced as Plate 6 in the photographic appendix. No level of the organisation, and no branch, was consciously left out of the magazines. How far such paternalism contributed to cohesion is a debateable point.

The internal staff organisation in each branch of Littlewoods and Vernons was based on a small unit called a 'section', comprising a number of clerks. A 'group' was made up of number of sections, with a supervisor in charge of each group. Two or three groups made up a 'division', controlled by a divisional supervisor. The Branch Supervisor was responsible for all divisions and she, the P.P.A. told the R.C. of 1949-51 'will come directly under the Branch Manager, who works under strict instructions from management.'<sup>20</sup>

The system - a highly security conscious one - worked in this way: the Post Office delivered large batches of specially coded envelopes containing the coupons to each branch of Littlewoods to ensure that each branch recieved a workable amount of coupons. On receipt, every coupon was embossed as soon as it was removed from the envelope and was sorted into bundles, 'one bundle for each clerk.' At about 5p.m. every Saturday, when the results were issued, all coupons were withdrawn from the clerks and placed into security bags to be marked off on Monday, and the coupons were re-coded with a number for each clerk and the section she worked under.

On the Monday the checking took place 'in a vast room. As Mrs Wix remembers,

They had what they called a 'marking card' and this was like a card with all the teams and all the results were all down

---

<sup>20</sup> R.C. 1949-51, Memo. of P.P.A., para. 32 p. 330.

there, and they moved along and marked off...<sup>21</sup>

Women performed most of the sorting and checking of coupons as well as the supervisory duties at Littlewoods. Checkers were called 'clerks' and those that rose from the ranks could eventually take on secretarial jobs such as typing, 'graphotype operators' (who cut the coupon code markers), and 'addressograph operators'.<sup>22</sup> The Pools Promoters Association made much of the promotional ladder for women:

A large number of the female staff engaged are under 18. For such girls the pools are by no means a blind alley occupation. On the contrary, they have every prospect of a career, as there are considerable opportunities for promotion such as from Section Clerk to to Head Section Clerks to Group Supervisors; from Group Supervisors to Divisional Supervisors, and finally from Divisional Branch supervisors, quite apart from the more important executive positions which are open but which are of course comparatively limited in number.<sup>23</sup>

But until the introduction of the Australian Soccer pools in the post-war years, the checkers were employed for a season lasting but thirty eight weeks per year. Those with a more permanent administrative post were better placed to move up the ladder. Pressure of numbers ensured that most women remained as clerks, but some, such as Mrs. Wix, were promoted. At first she was employed for 12/6 per week at Littlewoods' first major branch at Whitechapel in Liverpool, from 1928 to 1940: 'I was just a general clerk I suppose you'd call it, opening post and sorting coupons, and eventually marking them on the Saturday.' By the late 1930's she was in charge of the claims department at Whitechapel. It was to this department that winning coupons were taken:

... if there weren't many winners that meant it was going to be a good dividend, so when they started marking the pools on a Saturday the first winner on any pool was sent to me, and they'd send them into my stock and once I'd found there were going to be a fair number of winners on that pool well there was no point in me holding them because the

---

21 Writer's oral project: Glenys Wix, born Liverpool, 1914, employee at Littlewood's. 1928-40. Tape 2, Side 1.

22 *Littlewoods Review*, the house magazine, contains articles on these occupations from the 1930's to the 1950's.

23 *R.C. 1949-52*, Memo. of P.P.A., para. 48 p. 381.



dividend would be fairly low so that the divi would be sent back to (the punters). But if there were one winner only or one or two winners only of course I used to investigate that coupon, making sure that it was marked in the right place and that ...what came in eventually there was a coding that you could tell.<sup>24</sup>

A security officer examined the opening stamp and the embossed code to verify the coupons` progress within the branch. These officers were mostly ex-C.I.D. personnel.<sup>25</sup> The coding was the undoing of defaulters such as Joe Henty and his `shady lady spiv' Pat Parsons (played by Greta Gynt) in *Easy Money*, a 1947 film about the popularity and appeal of the pools and the effect of a win upon four different individuals. Mr. Lee, a shrewd investigative officer (played by a young Bill Owens, who found greater fame in B.B.C. T.V.`s *Last of the Summer Wine* during the 1980's) is called to investigate the winning coupon of Parsons, a Soho nightclub singer who uses Henty, a checker at Imperial Pools, to slip the coupon in after the match results were published. Lee soon notices the wetness of the time stamp, and Henty`s section code, leads to the quiet unrelenting hounding of Henty and Parsons until Lee nabs them. As Madge Kitchener of the British Board of Film Censors wrote,

(The film) is a handsome advertisement but a healthy deterrent to would-be cheaters. But it is a very debateable point if it is advisable to thus advertise the charms of gambling on the football pools.<sup>26</sup>

The most common method of defaulting, however, was non payment for coupons. Most defaulters were blacklisted and their coupons disqualified. It is difficult to say without a hint of pre-judgement who most defaulters were, but they appear from Mrs Wix`s testimony to have lived in the poorer urban areas of inter war Britain:

Now I sorted, as far as I can remember, I sorted the non-paid coupons into towns, and into streets, and into names and it transpired that there were a lot of people who were defaulting deliberately. Certain names showed, I can`t remember exactly where, probably Belfast I seem to

---

<sup>24</sup> Mrs Wix. *op cit*.

<sup>25</sup> R.C. 1949-51, Memo. of P.P.A., para. 32, p. 330.

<sup>26</sup> *Easy Money*, Gainsborough Pictures, 1947. B.B.F.C. Scenario Reports (Extracts) p. 80a. Madge Kitchener was Lord Kitchener`s neice.

remember. And certainly parts of South Wales and parts of London, and its Peabody Buildings that sticks in mind because it was an unusual name.<sup>27</sup>

The need for all pools firms to identify defaulters was one of the reasons leading to the formation of the Pools Promoters Association in 1934. But the major purpose behind the formation of the P.P.A. was to fight the legislation proposed by the Football authorities and anti gambling M.P.'s in Parliament. The P.P.A. was in its own words a 'trade association', and as with bookmakers organisations it intended to articulate the shared economic interests of the pools firms despite the intense competitiveness of the market. 1935-6 saw the decision of the League to withhold the publication of the fixture lists until two days before the start of the matches, and the Ready-Money Football Betting Act, steered through Parliament by the Liberal M.P. R.J. Russell, who shared the F.A's and the League's desire to outlaw the pools.<sup>28</sup> But the war changed the status of the pools in the short term, and rendered them more vulnerable to political interference.

The growth of the pools companies was halted after 1939, and Littlewoods, Vernons and smaller firms combined operations under the misnomer of 'Unity Pools', encouraged by a government mindful of the economic resources Littlewoods and the biggest companies could make to war production. The smaller firms of Shermans, Copes and Socapools opted out or were shut down, and operations were concentrated at Littlewoods and Vernons' branches in Liverpool, where many of the buildings were also given over to war production. The war concentrated the reduced market for the pools in Merseyside. The annual profit of the total pools trade dropped from £22 million in 1938-9 to £6 million in 1944-5. The Post Office was unable to provide the usual extent of postal facilities, the value of Postal Orders sent dropping from £194 million in 1938-39 to £29 million in 1940-41.<sup>29</sup> The paper

---

<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Wix *op cit*.

<sup>28</sup> This is discussed below.

<sup>29</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Memo. of Postmaster General, Appendix D, p. 43.

shortage sharply affected allocations to Unity Pools, who published their coupons in the newspapers instead. This led to a number of inconclusive attempts by anti gambling clergymen to stop the pools profiteering during a time of national sacrifice, until 1945 when the Reverend John Bretherton successfully established that the pools were a prize competition and infringed the Betting and Lotteries Act of 1934.<sup>30</sup> The pools were allowed to continue their reduced coupon business by post, but the concentration of the trade on Merseyside was to place the biggest firms in a highly advantageous situation after 1945.

Yet criticism of the pools firms for profiteering during adversity did not stop with V.E. day. It was, if anything, sharpened after 1945 by the problems of labour and plant shortages during the period of reconstruction. The Minister of Labour told the House of Commons that he proposed to import 4,000 displaced persons a week from Austria and Germany and to discuss the withdrawal of mainly women workers from the pools for industrial labour. *The Times* report of the Parliamentary debate clearly illustrated the dislike many Labour M.P.s felt towards the pools as a massive gambling enterprise, and the consequent low priority they afforded to the pools as an employer of labour:

(The Minister of Labour) proposed to discuss with the organisers of the football pools what might be done by agreement and cooperation to limit the amount of manpower employed by them and to secure for them the employment of the type of labour least suited for manufacturing industry. (Ministerial cheers). He could not forecast what the results would be (Laughter). What he had in mind for the Lancashire area was that people suitable for employment industries should not be employed in the football pools. The Government had no power legislatively to tackle this at the moment but he was hopeful of some special arrangements as he had indicated. <sup>31</sup>

It was clear that any economic planning measures, short or long term, would have to negotiate the large scale problem of labour and investment in such an organisation. These were exacerbated by the abnormal demands of the

---

<sup>30</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence., para. 26,p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *The Times*, 12th March, 1947, p. 4 col. b.



post-war economy which threw into sharp relief the difficulties of programmatic planning in a capitalist economic structure. A number of Labour M.P.s thus sought to solve this problem by urging the nationalisation of the pools in order to redirect profits into reconstructing the economy.<sup>32</sup>

The most which occurred from these efforts was the levying of a 10 per cent tax, *The Pool Betting Duty*, by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton, in 1947. The pools, he argued, were of

the most formidable dimensions, (and) are now absorbing far too much labour, paper and postage. I have decided, therefore, to bring them also within the field of the new betting duty. The amounts staked with these pools (will) be subject to a tax of 10 per cent. to be deducted and paid over by the Exchequer by the pools proprietors.<sup>33</sup>

He hoped to get over £15 million per year from this source. The level of duty was in fact doubled to 20 per cent in 1948, and later raised to 30 per cent, creating revenue to the Governments' coffers worth £17,218,392 in 1951, rising to £21,078,137 in 1953.<sup>34</sup> Littlewoods and Vernons probably spoke for all pools firms when, through the Pools Promoters Association, they pointed out to the Royal Commission the unfairness of the absence of a tax on off-course ready-money bookmaking, the unfair discrimination in favour of horse race totes, and the lower level of 10 per cent on greyhound track totalisators. They pointed out that they also paid the usual tax on company profits.<sup>35</sup> This explains in part the disinclination of the individual pools companies in the P.P.A. to give direct testimony to the Royal Commission, which was under the Chairmanship of the Tory Peer Henry Willink. Only Shermans co-operated. But in general, as the economist Alex Rubner argued in 1966, the pools firms had consistently sought to avoid stating the full extent of their profit margins. This 1954 Pool Betting Act, discussed below, was an attempt to make Littlewoods and the pools companies declare their operational costs and profit levels.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 26th July, 1946 p. 8 col. a.

<sup>33</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 12th November, 1947, col. 407.

<sup>34</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 16th December, 1947, cols. 179-180.

<sup>35</sup> *R.C. 1949-51* Memo of P.P.A., paras. 47-48, p. 332.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Rubner, *The Economics of Gambling*, 1966, p. 130.

However, during the wider debate over the role of the pools in reconstructing the local economy of the North West in the 1940`s, the internal domain of the pools industry was fracturing. From 1945 a major rift occurred in the relations between the pools firms which resulted in the temporary marginalisation of the Welsh company Shermans from the centre of the football coupon business. In 1946, with the ending of Unity Pools, Littlewoods and Vernons declared their intention to operate independently, with the actuarial and practical advantage of the lion`s share of the market concentration in Liverpool. Socapools never regained a hold and died, and Shermans left the P.P.A., and began an intensive campaign against Littlewoods' and Vernon`s postal distribution. It was Shermans who introduced Australian matches to the coupons in order to maintain profits over summer when the English football season was closed. By 1949 it had increased its share as the third largest pools operator, yet it was increasingly unable to compete with the combined forces of the P.P.A. Littlewoods and Vernons could offer their clients bigger prizes, and Shermans was eventually taken over in 1962.<sup>37</sup>

Less important within this competition but more interesting was the Vernons scheme whereby, from 1958, small shopkeepers acted as sweepstake agents not simply for the sale and collection of coupons but also in filling them in on behalf of his customers. Shopkeepers, belonging to the 11,00-strong Union of Small Shopkeepers were to fill in permutation entries free of charge, any winnings to be split into units and divided amongst customers. The aim was to tempt shoppers away from the free gifts and lower prices of bigger shops. No doubt the success of this system depended upon patterns of local familiarity.<sup>38</sup>

By the late 1940`s the P.P.A. was comprised of Littlewoods, Vernon`s,

---

37 For Sherman`s version of post war events see Memo. to *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, pp. 479-481.

38 *The Times*, 28th July, 1958 p. 6 col. g and 18th August, 1958 p. 8 col. e. on Vernons;. See *Littlewoods, the Pools Firm* on coupon collectors.

Murphy`s, Strangs, Copes, I.T.P., Western Pools, Jervis, and London and Provincial Soccer Pools Ltd., an expansion of the London and Provincial Sporting Agency`s base. E.Holland Hughes, the Secretary to the P.P.A., and also Littlewood`s solicitor, told the R.C. of 1949-51 that P.P.A. firms took between eighty and ninety per cent of the national trade. A major indicator of this was the popularity of the Treble Chance coupon, introduced in 1949 for two reasons. Firstly, they were an attempt to offset a possible decline in sales following Willink's recommendation that an upper limit to winnings of £75,000 should be introduced. This was finally abandoned in 1957 when it was found that punters were going back to fixed-odds coupons. Secondly, experimentation with coupons was intended to see-off Shermans.<sup>39</sup>

On the Treble Chance the odds were longer than on simpler arrangements but the winnings far greater. Punters made eight selections per column, in one or more columns, with a cross by each match. Three points were awarded for a draw, two for an away win, and one for a home win. Eight draws hit the jackpot. The minimum stake, for one column, was 6d, and the maximum was 20/-.<sup>40</sup> The older methods of selection, owing much to their origins in the prize coupons offered by newspapers and bookies, were still popular. The `Four Homes` and `Four Aways` combinations were the most enduring of these. The `Penny Points Pool`, introduced in 1935, was based on only one stake of 1d, for which the punter forecast the results of fourteen matches with points awarded in the same way as Treble Chance. There were also the less common `Ten Results Pool` and `Eight Results Pool` in which the punters forecast the results of ten or eight matches per coupon. The more sophisticated punters preferred `Permutation Entries` or -`Formula` entries- in which the mathematical calculations for a number of matches, sometimes the whole season, were forecast. The aim was to `cover` all the possible

---

<sup>39</sup> E.Lennox Figgis, *Betting to Win*, 1974, `The Romance of the Treble Chance`, pp. 17-26. See also *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 4550, p. 337 *Littlewoods, the Pools People*.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*, para. 6 p. 325.



results by using the 1,2 or X system, '1' meaning home win, '2' an away win and '3' a draw. There was also the complicated option of a 'banker' (a certainty on which the hopeful could 'bank') as part of a strategy to cover all the 27 different ways in which three matches could be 'fully permuted'.<sup>41</sup>

The popularity of the Treble Chance coupon as opposed to these more complex ways suggests that the punters were more inclined to trust to luck than to arithmetic. The studying of past results was probably a feature of most coupon filling, however.

The Treble Chance was the latest of a number of experiments designed, in the words of the brochure celebrating fifty years of Littlewoods, 'always to provide the investor with more exciting opportunities.' For an 'investor' during the rationing and anti-climax of the early post war years, the Treble Chance offered bigger prizes and, in theory at least, more ways of winning them. The biggest dividend the Littlewoods Penny Points Pool had offered was the far from paltry £65,000 for 1d, but the first dividend of the Treble Chance was £104,417 in 1950. In 1957 a female winner was presented with a cheque for £205,235 by movie-comedian Norman Wisdom on behalf of Littlewoods. Littlewoods could offer the largest stakes because its share of the national pool was about twice that of Vernons, its nearest rival. As the P.P.A. memorandum informed the Willink Commission, over the thirty-eight weeks of the 1947-8 football season the total stakes on football pools was £60 million, of which Littlewoods took half, Vernons took a little over £15 million, Shermans £7 million and the rest was divided between the smaller companies. Littlewoods built upon this market share throughout the 1950's.

The success of the pools during the years of austerity was thus consolidated during the years of full employment after the war. The attraction of the pools lay in their spectacular promise of a massive amount of money for only a small outlay. Only this could transcend the gap between means and

---

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, para. 9, p. 324.

ends, that is, between the standard of living most punters aspired to and the limited opportunities available for its attainment. The pools offered, albeit at unfavourable odds, a solution to the problem of the 'rut', a common enough phrase for the mild case of anomie -the feeling of unfulfilment and longing resulting from the dysjunction between means and ends- which people feel in a society where income levels and access to vaunted material comforts are widely unequal. A pool win offered a way out of 'the rut he or she lives in, for which at present the only physical outlet is the week's holiday'.<sup>42</sup> The mismatch between desired ends and the means available for their attainment results in the indeterminate but nagging sense of 'anomie'. In ancient Greece this meant normlessness, but as Marco Orru has recently argued, anomie, a 'theoretically encumbered' concept, is now a wider term for the emotions associated with the realisation that life is not all it might be.<sup>43</sup>

Robert Merton's discussion of anomie as a determinant of social action defined five responses to the problem: conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. Merton covers himself well here: short of suicide there are few other responses left. Each route offered its own route to individual transcendence. The pools, based upon a regular weekly habit and, as is described below, the highly individualised belief system of the punters was, a ritualised response. When Mass Observation described the weekly 'ritual' of the pools they hinted that the pools were a substantive expression of the aspirations and values of a social grouping defined by its perceived economic insecurities. Moreover, the punters -let alone the functionalist American sociologists- took for granted what Marco Orru calls society's culturally sanctioned 'goals'.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Mass Observation, *First Years Work*, 1939, p. 88.

<sup>43</sup> Marco Orru, *Anomie: History and Meanings*, 1988, pp. 2-3 and pp. 118-146 *passim*. As Orru admits, anomie is an intangible compound of feelings which cannot be defined with one-hundred per cent accuracy.

<sup>44</sup> Marco Orru, *op cit*, p. 138. See also R.K. Merton 'Social Structure and Anomie', *American Sociological Review*, 1938, pp. 672-82 *passim*.

### The Pools Dream

By 1938 the pools, and in the North West especially Littlewoods, had such a hold on the leisure life of the working class that Mass Observation described Littlewood's clients as 'A New Social Grouping'. Many of these 'poolifes' the observers interviewed in local pubs and hospitals. The raw material in the M.O. archive at Sussex University contains a number of the manuscript recordings of these conversations, some of which were reproduced in the book *First Years Work* (1939).

Mass Observation emphasised, as did John Hilton, the popular radio sociologist, the escapist impulse behind the pools dream, and the promise of a life free from want. This was evident in answers to the question 'Why do you bet in the pools?', asked of customers in Bolton pubs during the winter of 1938. Escape from present financial circumstances was the most common desire:

-*H.Kenyon*: I'm a poor chap Peter who is out to get a bit mooar. In the present world, bar actually stealing, its t'ony road o' getting owt o' any money'

-*G.Hough*: First time I win a big prize it will be goodbye to this district. I'm after getting down to the Midlands wheer I belong, but I durn't want to go wi' nowt, dos't see. Wife has a do on all my coupons. We're partners.

-*J.Wyke*: I've not always been a lucky chap but since I've betted on Littlewood's Pool I've done very well. I've 'come up' four consecutive weeks this season, and I shall win a big sum yet. I can feel it in me., then its a nice little business for me and the wife and no more working at all hours of the day and night for me any more.

-Well if I win a decent sum of money I shall finish standing in front of the cinema trying to get people to go in. It's a lousy job.<sup>45</sup>

Dissatisfaction with pay and working conditions was common. Nurses, when asked why they did the pools replied 'I should give up nursing' and 'I am hoping to win some day a sum which will enable me to leave this rotten job.' A tailors cutter told Rowntree in the late 1940's that the pools gave him 'just a chance of getting away from this slavery...'<sup>46</sup> And for the unemployed a weekly flutter of a penny, sixpence or a shilling was manageable, and

---

<sup>45</sup> M.O. archive, Worktown Box 1. See also John Hilton, *Why I Go In For the Pools*, 1936, pp. 28-9.

<sup>46</sup> B.S. Rowntree and R. Lavers, *op cit.*, Mr.P. p. 57



provided the hope which, as Orwell and the Pilgrim Trust emphasised, was important for the psychological adjustment to joblessness, and the lowering of economic horizons:

*J.Cunnif*: Its the on`y bloody road o` gerrin owt o' some money these days. Bloody `means test' 'as put a damper on us fellows. Its so little that a fellow puts a bob on `un doesn't miss it, and if he `comes up', he needn't tell any bugger.<sup>47</sup>

The insertion of speech marks around `comes up' by the interviewer belies an over-sensitivity to working-class expression and the local dialect, lending a certain lack of extemporaneousness to the comments. But it would be inappropriate to argue that the core sentiments of these statements have been otherwise exaggerated or misrepresented.<sup>48</sup> In Liverpool during the 1950's John Barron Mays pointed to the week-to-week hold of the pools over the imagination of the working class living near the docks:

...almost everyone without exception has a stake in one or other of the football pools. Everyone is willing to chance his luck and hopes secretly that he may be the lucky one out of the many thousands of gamblers. Besides, the pools provide interest and excitement and something to look forward to and most of the dockside dwellers accept the filling up of the weekly coupons as casually and uncritically as a trip to Goodison or an evening in the corner pub.<sup>49</sup>

Other examples exist in contemporary literature which point to the hold the pools had on the imagination of poolites. For example, the South African-born writer Doris Lessing, in her search for the nature of Englishness, found a poorly paid fellow lodger in Blitz-bespoiled London who `looked forward to the pools all summer.' Rose dreamed of spending her winnings on expensive clothes, a house with a garden and a restaurant for herself and her boyfriend to run.<sup>50</sup> The pools offered poorer people a chance for self determination where the usual institutional apparatus for both individual and social actualisation was lacking or accessible only to the wealthy. Those anti-gambling campaigners who viewed appeal of the pools as a something-for-nothing gambit, and

---

47 M.O. archive, Worktown, Box 1, File D.

48 A. Calder and D. Sheridan, *Speak For Yourself* (1984). Introduction.

49 John Barron Mays, *Growing Up in the City*, 1956, p. 101.

50 Doris Lessing, *In Pursuit of the English*, 1985, pp. 98-99.

even more sensitive observers of working-class life like John Cohen, who saw the pools as part of a 'universal spivvery', failed to appreciate the differences in access to a life free from worry. This was stronger for the poor than the wealthy, for the working class than the middle class. Mass Observations' interviewees wanted to move away or to purchase material goods to embellish family life as part of their escape from a circumscribed environment. It comes as little surprise that Smith and Razzell's comparison group of eighty nine pools winners, (the earliest winner was in 1937) with unsuccessful poolites possessed bigger houses, bigger cars, more and costlier consumer durables, had more holidays and clothes, and also dabbled in investments.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, given that the pools was more of a collective family effort for many than a bet on a horse, the 'home centredness' in the spending or wishful spending of the winnings had changed little between the 1930`s and 1970. <sup>52</sup>

Abnormally harsh or uncertain circumstances heightened the sense of disorientation and under-achievement which are components of anomie. The impact of the war lent itself to a widespread feeling for compensation which the grey years of ration books and shortages did nothing to satisfy. This is an abstracted and massive problem, difficult to define and evaluate, yet it explains in no small part why the pools, as with greyhound racing, surged in popularity during the later 1940`s.

An appreciation of what people want and why they want it explains why they participate in a lottery where the odds are highly unfavourable to a big win. A lottery, at least, distributes hope in cornucopic amounts to anyone who enters it. These hopes and anticipations of a fortune have been castigated as futile by both gamblers and anti-gamblers, who have estimated that the odds are at least five million to one against. Hubert Phillips, for

---

<sup>51</sup> As one historian of football noted, rather disparagingly in 1954, the advertising literature of the pools firms appealed to 'simple people who dream of getting a car or television set, owning their own house, buying a little business or going for a holiday abroad.' Maurice Marples, *A History of Football*, 1954, p. 220.

<sup>52</sup> S. Smith and P. Razzell, *The Pools Winners*, 1975, p. 154. John Cohen, 'The Ideas of Work and Play', *British Journal of Sociology*, V, 1953, p. 318.

example (who preferred bridge), told the 1949-51 Royal Commission that the odds were so long, and the influence of skill and knowledge so negligible, that the pools were no more than a lottery, and should be subject to the Lottery Acts.<sup>53</sup> This suggestion was treated with enthusiasm by anti gambling spokesmen but the Commission preferred to accept that the skill factor kept football pools out of this category. Littlewoods and Vernons had refused to give any details of their operations and profits as companies, preferring to speak through the P.P.A., but they felt compelled to write to the Commission in reply to Phillips. They pointed to the 'perspicacity' of the punters when studying form and their ability to predict the results of matches.<sup>54</sup> Vernons said that they knew 'from correspondence with clients' that 'coupons are posted as late as possible so that due consideration can be taken of last minute changes in the composition of a team.'<sup>55</sup>

The pools companies would have been on stronger ground if they had pointed to the number of smaller payouts they made every week on the simpler coupons. As Charles Madge and Tom Harrison of M.O. wrote, 'these small wins are an important feature of Pools often ignored by opponents.'<sup>56</sup> Many people, M.O. reckoned about 85 per cent over three years, had won something, no matter how little it was. As with betting on the horses, a regular and manageable outlay led to an occasional surfeit of cash and the nice things it could buy. It was, as poolites who wrote to Hilton stressed, an investment, not just in a potential win but in hope. This temporal aspect was at its strongest between the filling-in and sending-off of the coupon, usually by Friday morning, and the anticipation of the match results on Radio Luxembourg, or from the mid 1950's, on television. This programme was sponsored by Littlewoods until the introduction of football results by the I.B.A. in

---

<sup>53</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 33, p. 546 See also *Pools and the Punter* (1955) where he argues the same case. The economist Alex Rubner agreed with him, Rubner, *op cit* pp134-5.

<sup>54</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Appendix, P.P.A. letter, pp. 570-1.

<sup>55</sup> Vernons, *ibid*, p. 571.

<sup>56</sup> M.O. *First Years Work*, 1939, p. 35



the early 1950's. Yet the B.B.C. had introduced football results on its 7 o'clock wireless bulletin in 1925 as a response 'to the numerous requests from listeners asking that this should be done.'<sup>57</sup> Perhaps Littlewood's felt that the B.B.C. audience and the tone of its programme was not as favourable to their product as would be it's own slot on commercial radio.

Luck, rather than a considered study of past and immediate performances, was probably more prominent as an approach to the filling in of the coupon. M.O. noted the paraphernalia of lucky charms used to will the gamble to success: a lucky hares foot, a wishbone from a chicken, and ivory elephant and also 'Jigu, the mystic bean of Africa' bought from the stall of a black trader in Bolton market.<sup>58</sup> Others used 'lucky numbers', such as the army pensioner who told the observer 'Ah've backed teams in a list wi' number seven (7, 17, 37,etc) -away teams this season- 'un thi aw come up. Ah geet six quid odd when that worked.'<sup>59</sup> Others have used the same set of numbers for years, based upon numbers with a personal relevance such as wedding dates of family and friends. (The writers' father uses the birthdays and door-numbers of the close family -and one random choice in the Scottish Divisions- when filling in the columns of his Treble Chance coupon each week.) During the early 1970's Razzell and Smith could argue that the belief in luck, expressed in what they termed 'anti form' systems, was central to the poolites' belief system:

The problem that they all had to face was, of course, that if they simply followed form and possibly predicted the correct results, then so would many of the other millions doing the pools that week, and the amounts paid out would therefore have been very small. To win the maximum prizes, the £750,000 wins, not only do you have to get the results right, but you have to do so when no-one else does.<sup>60</sup>

The talismanic and non-rational dimension of pools betting was not necessarily

---

<sup>57</sup> Minutes of Programme Board Meeting, 29th September, 1925. Held at the B.B.C. Written Archives Centre, Caversham Reading. I am grateful to the archivist, John Jordan, for sending me this.

<sup>58</sup> M.O. archive, 'Moneysworth', Box 48, File F.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, 'Worktown', Box 1.

<sup>60</sup> Smith and Razzell, *ibid*, p. 143.

inimical to the random nature of pool betting and the near impossibility of predicting how many goals 176 men in 16 teams playing in 8 out of at least 80 matches are going to score. Most punters know that the odds, at millions to 1 against, favour the pools firms and so deploy all manner of strategies to increase their chances and to individualise their bid. Apart from trusting to luck, one common technique was just to put down a cross by a team that hadn't drawn for some time. A number of pools winners complained to Razzell and Smith that the pools companies representatives had encouraged them to emphasise the skill element during the glare of publicity: it helped the companies to contest the view that the pools were not a crude lottery.<sup>61</sup>

Despite this, the marketing techniques of Littlewoods encouraged both a belief in luck and a study of past results as elements in a culture favourable to betting in general. *Littlewoods Sports Log*, which was nothing more than a corporate tipping sheet, contained horoscopes, 'Teatips' based on tea-leaf divination, and articles on forehead reading and palmistry. 'Little 'ol man o' the woods', a tipster gnome, gave 'inside information' and 'Football Facts.' It ran from 1936-39.<sup>62</sup>

As Richard Hoggart argued in 1957, sociability and friendliness were also aspects of Littlewoods promotional material.<sup>63</sup> During the 1930's, each poolite received a weekly envelope containing two coupons, one to be given to a friend or neighbour, and a copy of that week's *Sports Log*. In their literature the firm stressed the 'Littlewoods Happy Circle' and community of 'Littlewoods Loyalists' who filled in their coupons regularly. Cecil Moores - 'The Chief' - wrote of lucky winners and photographs of some of these were printed. M.O. argued that to be a 'poolite' was to participate in a peer group activity as distinctive and habitual as smoking. Non-poolites like non-smokers were outsiders, not 'sports'<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Smith and Razzell, *ibid*.

<sup>62</sup> M.O. *First Years Work*, 1939, pp. 40-41. *Littlewoods Sports Log*, 1936-39, is held at Colindale.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, 1957, p. 198.

<sup>64</sup> M.O. *First Years Work*, p. 42.

How much pressure -as opposed to willingness- caused punters to fill in a coupon is impossible to assess. The significance of the word 'sport' above suggests that the distinction between faddists and gamblers was evident in football betting too. One non-Poolite was aware of the sense of difference between him and his workmates but professed himself 'not afraid of being one of the few who is "out of it" ' during the Monday moan about the results.<sup>65</sup>

As with other forms of gambling, the moral opposition to the pools stemmed mostly from the nonconformist churches. In Bolton, for example, during the 1930`s worried local evangelists saw the rise of the pools and of gambling in general as damaging to the moral and economic well being of society as drink. To those assembled at St. George`s Congregational Chapel, Bolton, Spencer Stanley expressed his view that

Nobody except the Promoters of Pools can be other than doubly disturbed that millions of our people are spending millions of money in such a way...All of us would be glad to see the end of gambling, to see this cancer growing in the heart of the community cut right out.<sup>66</sup>

Poolites were impervious to such views, viewing them as 'narrow minded' and from 'ardent chapel people who don't approve of pleasure as most people do.'<sup>67</sup>

Yet what is significant about the constituency of poolites is that many people who objected to other forms of gambling saw the pools as harmless or not really as gambling at all. Out of 200 people over the age of twenty surveyed in *English Life and Leisure*, 29 people out of 113 (25.7 per cent) who professed not to gamble filled in a football coupon. This was true of both working and middle class, women and men. Four examples:

Mr.X, aged 28, Salesman: He does a football coupon every week but he has no real hope of winning although he clings on to the hope. Does not bet on horses or dogs.

Mr. F, a working-class man aged 32: He is opposed to gambling on religious grounds but does a football coupon every week because he does not regard that as gambling

---

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Text of speech in 'Worktown', Box 2.

<sup>67</sup> M.O. *First Years Work*, 1939, p. 43



Miss L., upper-middle-class spinster over 70: Does not gamble but oddly enough she and her companion each do a football coupon but have a rule that they must not look at the football results in the Sunday newspaper until they return from matins.

Mr. L, bus conductor, married no children, teetotal: He never bets on dogs or horses because he thinks he would be bound to lose. On the other hand he does a football pool regularly because he does not miss a few shillings a week and it gives him a chance of making a large sum he could not get in any other way.<sup>68</sup>

Size of income was only a rough guide to a propensity to do the pools. The wealthy and professionally successful have sought to make more money from a regular flutter and, as Kemsley and Ginsberg make clear, have spent bigger stakes in doing so. The present Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, as both a successful businessman and editor of the *Spectator* in the 1960`s, is one example. Whether he was still anomic or motivated by an unstinting desire for capital accumulation (or both) is open to question.<sup>69</sup> For the wealthy, a little weekly investment for a sizeable potential win took on its own rationale. The Social Survey on *Betting in Britain* (1951), commissioned to publish concurrently with the Parliamentary Enquiry, found that the upper working class and lower middle class were more likely to bet consistently over time on football than the poor, although the variation in stakes was not significantly large between occupational groupings at this part of the social scale. The most significant differences in stakes were between men and women. Their stakes were half the size of mens'.<sup>70</sup> For women, the pools were the second most popular form of regular betting. Twenty two per cent of women gambled on the big races compared with ten and a half per cent who bet solely on the pools. Kemsley and Ginsberg estimated that sixty per cent of female pools punters had begun since the war (which means that a large majority of the poolites in M.O.'s survey in the 1930's were male.) Of all female poolites in the 1950's,

---

<sup>68</sup> B.S. Rowntree and R. Lavers *op cit* pp. 4,21,37,38 respectively.

<sup>69</sup> Alan Watkins, the economist for the *Observer* today, remembered the following exchange between himself and Lawson: 'When Mr. Nigel Lawson was my editor at the *Spectator* 20 years ago, he used to do the pools every week. 'Think of the odds, Nigel,' I said. 'Think of the winnings', he replied. *Observer*, 1st November, 1987, p. 9.

<sup>70</sup> W.F.F. Kemsley and D. Ginsburg *op cit* p. 11; *R.C. 1949-51*, Report, Table 6, p. 150.

about half filled in a share of their husband's coupon and only fourteen per cent sent in an entry on a coupon shared with a friend or a workmate.

Women tended to risk lesser amounts than men, although there appears to be no data on whether this was true of women who had independent means.

Less regular pool betting was a cross-class phenomenon too. The *Social Survey* and *Downes et al* over twenty years later confirmed the 'massive stability about the prevalence of pool betting occasionally in the population as a whole.'<sup>71</sup>

A number of commentators remarked with irony that most of the people who filled in a coupon, especially women, cared little for the game of football itself, but used it only as a medium for betting. This was perhaps the mildest criticism to be made of the pools and its relationship to the sport. Since the earliest days of football betting the Football Association had warned that financial imperatives threatened to corrupt the game. But by the 1950's, the ethical objections to betting were overshadowed by economical considerations: if the pools were making so much money out of football, why was not more money being put back into the game upon which it depended?

#### The Pools and the Sport of Football

Football has been controlled by two governing bodies since the later nineteenth century, the Football League and the Football Association (F.A.) The League, based in the North West at Preston since 1888 and at Lytham St. Anne's near Blackpool since the 1950's, was originally more concerned with local administrative matters. The F.A. was the 'ultimate authority' over football, the official organisation of the sport. Under F.A. Rule 42 (later Rule 43) passed in 1907, during the surge in football coupon betting, any club official, 'referee, linesman or player proved to have taken part in coupon football betting shall be permanently suspended from taking part in football or football

---

<sup>71</sup> W.F.F. Kemsley and D. Glnsburg *op cit* p. 11; D.M. Downes et al, *op cit*, .1976, p. 104.

management.' Clubs were also required to add a clause to their Agreements With Players that such an agreement would terminate upon proof that a player had taken part in coupon betting.<sup>72</sup> In the words of Sir J. Charles Clegg, a nonconformist and the Chairman of the F.A. 'if betting gets hold of football, the game is done for.'<sup>73</sup> The problem was simple: if a player could be bought he could sell his principles of fair play. Matches could be 'arranged' to give the right results for those paying out. Money, the bane of amateurism, was the cause of corruption, and gambling was its most insidious manifestation. Anti-gambling spokesmen before the first world war vociferously denounced the football authorities for failing to reprimand players for taking part in coupon betting. Hence the F.A. commissioned an enquiry into coupon betting on football in 1913, comprised of association officials, which took evidence from directors and officials of clubs and a representative of the Association Football Players Union. The Commission exonerated the players but concluded that 'those responsible for the issue of the coupons and their agents' were 'a serious menace to the game'.<sup>74</sup> The F.A. attempted to suppress this threat by parliamentary action and in Hayes Fisher found an M.P. willing to prohibit ready-money betting on soccer. Hayes-Fisher's Bill was stopped by the extra-parliamentary demands of war but soon after the Armistice the F.A. returned to the offensive and the Ready-Money Football Betting Act, a re-statement of the 1913 proposal, was passed.

The Commission had further recommended that Clubs were to insert a clause in their Agreements with Players which necessitated the termination of any contract 'upon it being proved that a Player has taken part in Coupon Football Betting'.<sup>75</sup> It was clear that the players were seen to be in the most dangerous and vulnerable position in the relationship of the sport to betting. Thus the world of football was shaken by the episode of the rigged match

---

<sup>72</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Statement of Evidence of the F.A. para. 2, p. 430.

<sup>73</sup> In E. B. Perkins, *op cit* p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> F.A. Council Minutes 1913-14; Report of the Commission on Coupon Betting on Football.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid*.



between Everton and Manchester United in 1915 which resulted in the permanent suspension of a player.<sup>76</sup> The F.A. had proved it would not suffer any hint of corruption.

But the corruption of football by gambling was viewed as the worst symptom of a wider problem involving not just the ruination of the sport but the degradation of British civilisation in general. F.S.Jackson, the cricketer turned M.P. was one of a number of sporting notaries who warned of the grave national consequences of gambling. Speaking in support of the Ready-Money Football Betting Act of 1920 he argued:

The British nation had done more to gain her pre-eminent position by force of character than by force of arms. She had done it by honest dealing and fair play. If the gambling element really gets hold of the sport of the country they ran a great risk of ruining sport and losing altogether its use in the direction of a good influence.<sup>77</sup>

The Act of 1920 did little to rid football of ready-money betting coupons offered by bookmakers. In fact it inadvertently clarified the position with regard to credit betting which, with the bias of the previous legislation, remained legal. Bookmakers, and pools companies later, simply received the postal order or cash a week in arrears, thus ensuring that the transaction remained on a credit basis.

The F.A. and the League, concerned to extend the principle that football should be free of all betting, prohibited clubs from raising money for funds from lotteries, which was illegal anyway. This was often ignored, and increasingly so from the later 1940`s, as is described below.

At the beginning of the 1935-36 season the F.A. and the League

---

<sup>76</sup> The episode involving poor John Rutherford in 1925 is equally revealing of the F.A.'s attitude: Rutherford, an Arsenal International, was framed by an unscrupulous coupon promoter called J.A. MacWeeny who claimed that the player personally marked all coupons sent in to Turf Publishers Limited, MacWeeny's front firm. During a prolonged period of litigation, in which the F.A., led strongly by Clegg, pressed for Rutherford's permanent exclusion from the game, it emerged that MacWeeny had 'deceitfully laid a trap' in which he had gained Rutherford's signature and used his name to publicise his venture. MacWeeny died during the proceedings, and the Arsenal footballer was re-admitted to his club. *F.A. Council Minutes*, 11th January, 1926, pp. 1-3.

<sup>77</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, 29th October, 1920, p. 4.

forbade clubs to put advertisements for the pools in their programmes or at their grounds.<sup>78</sup> But more significant than this was the attempt to withhold the publication of match fixtures until two days before kick-off. The League argued that the match fixtures were the property of the League and could not be published elsewhere without permission. This was the beginning of the 'copyright' question which was not resolved until 1965.

Charles E. Sutcliffe, who became President of the League in April 1936, was greatly annoyed at the unrestricted access to the fixture lists which the pools companies possessed and sought to halt this by two tactics. Firstly he called for the scrapping of advance fixture notices, and their substitution by fixtures arranged by the League a day or two prior to kick-off. Secondly, he attempted to make the fixture lists a copyright publication of the Football League, thus prohibiting their reproduction in coupon form. Both strategies failed. Sutcliffe unfairly blamed 'the disinclination of some clubs to be troubled by the disturbance of their fixtures' and leaks 'from channels that could not be traced.' It appears that some judicious ringing-round by the pools firms and sporting newspapers had ruined this scheme within three weeks.<sup>79</sup>

But the P.P.A. was not off the blunt hook yet. The F.A. and the League Management Committee sought legal advice which confirmed that breach of copyright existed over the use of the fixtures. However, in a letter to the F.A. E. Holland Hughes, the secretary of the P.P.A. argued that there was no illegal infringement. Nevertheless, the P.P.A. offered 'an ex-gratia payment to the Football League so long as it was directed to the best interests of the sport.' As Stanley Rous argued, however, Rule 43 forbade the acceptance of this money.<sup>80</sup>

The League and the F.A.'s moves were not only impractical but deeply

---

<sup>78</sup> *F.A. Council Minutes*, 7th October, 1935.

<sup>79</sup> C.E. Sutcliffe, J.A. Brierley and F. Howarth, *The Story of the Football League*, Preston, 1938, p. 41.

<sup>80</sup> *F.A. Council Minutes*, March 22nd, 1936, Letter from Holland-Hughes to Rous.

unpopular with the punters. George Orwell, carrying out the groundwork for *The Road to Wigan Pier*, noted that Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhineland was greeted with 'hardly a flutter of interest' but the decision to withhold the publication of football fixtures to defeat the pools 'flung all Yorkshire into a storm of fury'.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, soon after this abortive episode R.J. Russell, the Liberal M.P. for Cheshire, with the full support of the football authorities, attempted to outlaw the pools as a lottery. His bill was defeated in the House of Commons by a Parliament mindful of the unpopularity of any such action. Russell was accused of being a spoilsport - the language of the anti faddist - by one irate poolite who went so far as to wish death on the M.P.<sup>82</sup>

Over the course of the next twenty or so years the various regional bodies which make up the F.A. began to speak with different voices. At a meeting of the full council in 1946 the London F.A. proposed, with an ahistorical flourish, that 'since there is no evidence that Football Pools have the slightest influence on the results of matches' it was 'reasonable'

to suggest that the appropriate Government department should devise a scheme whereby part of the proceeds of pools should form a Central Fund from which the costs of the provision of Grounds, Gymnasium, Recreation Rooms, Sports Centres and Clubs might be made.'<sup>83</sup>

This motion was defeated. It was felt to be 'inconsistent and illogical, in present circumstances to ask for a share of the proceeds'. But a potential departure from this principle was signalled in the caveat that

The Association has refrained from expressing what its attitude would be should the government decide to instigate some form of control of the Pools. In the meantime, its policy remains as complete opposition to all forms of betting on football.<sup>84</sup>

---

81 George Orwell, *The Road To Wigan Pier*, 1976, p. 80 (first published 1938). N.B.F. Fishwick, a student of Association Football, describes the decision to ban fixture lists as 'one of the biggest errors in the Football League's history.', *Association Football and English Social Life, 1910-50*, Unpub. D.Phil, Uni. of Oxford, 1985, p. 362.

82 *Liverpool Daily Post*, 24th April 1936, p. 11: 'You spoilsport! Think of the working men who give you £8 a week. A lot of us would like to see your name on the list of killed on the roads on 1st April.'

83 *R.C., 1949-51*. Minutes of Evidence, para. 10, p. 110.

84 *ibid*, paras. 11- 12, p. 110.



The nearest Parliament came to enacting any form of control over the pools was in 1954, in the attempt by Labour M.P. Frederick Mulley, of Sheffield, to get them to declare the true extent of their profits. This was the first proposed piece of legislation to result from the Willink Enquiry which had recommended, three years earlier, that the pools firms should publish accounts of turnover and profit.<sup>85</sup> As family businesses, the pools firms did not have to publish accounts, but as one newspaper put it, an industry drawing the shillings of a majority of families in the country could not 'be bracketed with a home-made bun shop'. Mulley stated that he was not anti-pools and filled in a coupon himself from time to time, but he felt that Littlewoods and other firms were in effect fiddling their clients, whom, as Littlewoods themselves emphasised, were 'investors'. Mulley argued to the House that

In the ordinary company it is the shareholder or the promoter who is entitled to what is left after the expenses of the business have been deducted from the gross receipts but, in the case of pools betting -the only case I know - it is the people who make the bets who are in the position of the shareholders of the normal company, because it is those people who are entitled to what is left after expenses and other charges have been met. For this special reason, therefore, I am asking for the investors in, or bettors on, pools to be put in the same position as the shareholder of an ordinary private company.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the efforts of the Liverpool M.P. Bessie Braddock for the Exchange constituency of the city, where Littlewoods had its main offices, to talk-out the Bill by reading long tracts from a statement of the P.P.A., the Bill received at third reading over 70 votes in favour and less than 10 against. The Pools companies threatened to take themselves off to Northern Ireland where the company laws were more lenient. Alex Rubner, like Mulley, saw this as a self-accusing gesture, and argued that it was an action consistent with the 'contempt and haughtiness' with which the P.P.A. treated requests for information from Willink and from Parliament since. Moreover, due to the loopholes in company legislation the pools successfully resisted any controls

---

<sup>85</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 29th January 1954, col. 2109.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 2112.

which might lead to the disclosure of their profit beyond turnover and prizes.<sup>87</sup> Little was said during these debates about the relation of the profits to the game of football.

The F.A. was, however, and as noted above, indirectly compromised by the actions of both League and non-League clubs who promoted unlicensed lotteries in order to raise funds, and received police warnings for infringements of the lottery laws. The F.A. Council meeting in February 1922 had been worried that 'a practice was growing of clubs and their supporters launching schemes for raising funds by sweepstakes, lotteries or other means' and warned clubs of suspension if they failed to regulate this.<sup>88</sup>

The Betting and Lotteries Act of 1934, a product of the report of the Royal Commission the previous year, enabled charities, athletic clubs and other organisations to engage in lotteries only if they registered with the local licensing authorities. Despite this, the F.A. and the League discouraged such action. But it was clear that the smaller League and non League clubs who relied upon supporters clubs and the personal generosity of chairmen found that raffles or sweepstakes were a convenient mode of money raising. *The Times* of the 1940's and '50's contains some little articles detailing warnings from the police to clubs for infringements of the Acts, that is, for failing to register with the local authority.<sup>89</sup> But the police, as is illustrated in the next chapter, were reluctant to prosecute. Not until the 1956 Small Lotteries and Gaming Act, sponsored by the Labour M.P. Ernest Davies, was the irrelevant and anomalous state of the law by legalising the use of small lotteries for charitable, sporting and other fund raising purposes cleared up. In the light of this Act, the F.A. loosened the stipulation in Rule 45 against lotteries and raffles. Supporters clubs were now free to promote such schemes, but directors, players and officials involved in the organisation of gambling or bookmaking

---

<sup>87</sup> Alex Rubner, *op cit.*, pp. 130-131. *H.C. Debs, ibid.*, cols. 2110-2114, *et seq.*

<sup>88</sup> *F.A. Council Minutes*, 18th Feb., 1957; Suspension was possible under Rule 45.

<sup>89</sup> *The Times*, 29th June, 1956, p. 3, col. g, for example.

were liable to suspension. This, of course, also meant that anybody associated with gambling would have to relinquish this link if they were to take up any direct influence in the management of football.

This general relaxation towards lotteries was part of a slow re-appraisal of the F.A.'s and the League's attitude towards gambling and the pools. The realisation of the permanence of the pools, and their apparent unwillingness to declare the true extent of their profits, and the continuing economic problems of football all conspired to force the football authorities to change their mind on copyright payments and encouraged the F.A. to push for a greater financial contribution from the Pools. The hard economic realities of deficit, especially for the smaller clubs, helped to push the F.A. and the League further down the road of expediency. The instigation in 1956 of a source of state derived revenue in the 'lottery' of Premium Bonds was perhaps viewed also as a significant change in the governments' attitude to gambling which left the F.A. and the League out of touch. The 'copyright' question was to a large extent solved in 1958 the case of the Football League versus Littlewoods Pools. Cecil Moores complained Littlewoods, as the largest firm, was being used as a test case. The outcome was successful from the League's point of view, and Littlewoods paid a six figure sum to the League.<sup>90</sup> In 1965 the Football Association took its own action by stating that the pools firms were under a 'moral obligation' to pay for the use of Challenge Cup fixture lists on its coupons. A sum of £75,000 'by agreement' was accepted by the Secretary of the P.P.A. Necessity had triumphed over conviction. Denis Follows, the Secretary of the F.A. thought the money would be put to 'good use' given the Association's deficit of £40,000 the previous year.<sup>91</sup>

The greater accommodation between the football authorities and the pools companies was thrown into relief in March 1960 when John Moores

---

<sup>90</sup> For Littlewoods' view of their contribution to football since then see *A Major Pools Initiative in Support of Football*, The Football Trust, Liverpool, 1986, passim, but especially pp. 1-2.

<sup>91</sup> *The Times*, January 26th, 1965 p. 5 col. g.



became a director of Everton Football Club. He had been a shareholder in both Liverpool F.C. and Everton for some years but was not allowed direct managerial influence because of his organising role -his directorships- in the pools and in the credit-bookmaking firm of H. Littlewoods.. He now resigned from these and he became Chairman of Everton until 1965. He also made a payment to the club of £56,000 to `enable star players to be secured.'<sup>92</sup>. Everton were interested in Denis Law at that time.

Finally, it is revealing to compare the organisation of pools betting in Britain with that of Sweden, where the failure of the state to outlaw and remove football betting led to the creation of a nationalised company in 1934. `Tipping Service Inc.' was required to donate all its profits to a government agency which supported organised sports. Two members of the board were appointed by government. Revenue to the state rose from seven million kronor in 1934-5 to 180 million kronor in 1957-8. Moreover, in a similar vein to the Labour view in Britain that lots of little winnings were more acceptable than one or two big ones, the Swedish pools have mainly paid out many winnings of a few hundred to a few thousand kronor. According to Tec, the advantages of this system have been scandal-free football betting and greater financial service to the sport, and to sport in general.<sup>93</sup> This point was not lost on Elaine Burton, the Labour member for Coventry ,in the debate over Macmillan's 1956 budget. She claimed that Swedish pools had contributed £12,000 towards the cost of sending a team to the last Winter Olympics;

Yet we still go round, cap in hand, begging for money to send out teams to every international event that comes about. That is defeatist, out of date, and out of touch with public opinion.<sup>94</sup>

How far the British football authorities in tandem with government would press

---

<sup>92</sup> Percy M. Young, *Football on Merseyside*, 1963, p. 152; D.J. Jeremy and C. Shaw, op cit, pp. 309-10; *The Times*, 22nd March, 1960, p4.

<sup>93</sup> Nechama Tec, *Gambling in Sweden*, New Jersey, 1964, pp. 3-5.

<sup>94</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 17th April 1956, col. 917.

for a similar system, perhaps even the nationalisation of the pools, is a difficult matter to assess. Equally difficult is the question of whether the English poolite would want more smaller prizes instead of the chance of the big one, and the cut on prize-size that might result from a greater input into sport. The Rothschild Commission concluded that whilst the pools should do more for football, the 'Football Trust, not the re-organisation of the industry, was the result of its conclusions. Moreover, 'the dream' of a very large prize based on the weekly stake was seen as preferable to more prizes of an 'arbitrarily selected figure.'<sup>95</sup> This was probably as true for the 1950's as the 1970's, but we have no data to substantiate this claim.

### Conclusion

The appeal of the pools to about one quarter of the population by the 1950's reveals much about the shared economic aspirations of the poolites. A pools win may have been a millions-to-one chance, but a little weekly stake was compatible with the financial opportunities open to almost everybody, and the glittering prize on offer made the pools into a giant national lottery. The government had realised by the 1930's that it could do nothing to halt the ascendancy of football coupon betting, a realisation which was confirmed by the increases in other forms of gambling such as the greyhounds and the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake, to be discussed in the next chapter. The government's major response has been taxation, an important step along the road to the legal recognition of off-course ready-money betting. But not only a lottery of the size of the pools was central to this process of liberalisation and to the realisation that there was money to be made by the state from gambling. The 'state lottery' of the Premium Bonds' was the institutionalisation of this change of attitude. This theme is the subject matter of the next chapter.

---

<sup>95</sup> *Royal Commission on Gambling* 1978, Report, Vol. 1, p. 7.

## Chapter 9: Legalisation and its Antecedents, 1918 to 1961

### Introduction

The original title of this chapter was to have been 'Lotteries, Libertarianism and Legalisation' but restraint prevailed over such journalese. Yet the first two words of this erstwhile title point directly to the major factors upon which the attitude of government to working-class gambling turned. These were, firstly, the new found willingness of the state to recognise small lotteries as legal and, on a grander scale, to raise revenue from the 'state lottery' of Premium Bonds, an idea rejected in 1918. Secondly, and concomitantly, there was sharper recognition in Parliament of the failure of paternalistic and prohibitive laws to control working-class ready-money betting. This realisation was enshrined, with a number of qualifications, in the Betting Act of 1960.

The first third of this chapter will examine the small but significant revision of the legislation in the 1956 Small Lotteries Act within the realisation that the lottery legislation, like the 1906 Street Betting Act, was unpopular, unfair and defunct. The second part of the chapter is a case study of the Premium Bonds. We saw in chapter two that government disenchantment with lotteries after 1808, leading to their abolition in 1823, anticipated the prohibitory measure of 1853. Similarly the change in government attitude to the raising of revenue from what was decried as a 'state lottery' was an important step in the revision of the gambling laws. Thus, finally, the Betting and Gaming Act of 1960 is discussed in the light of this revision. Christopher Hill's recent book<sup>1</sup> is an interesting insight into the 'horse trading' amongst vested interests and politicians prevenient to the passage of the Act but it says little of the precedents and wider cultural changes which fostered the legislation. These themes are drawn together in this penultimate chapter.

### Lotteries and Sweepstakes

---

<sup>1</sup> Christopher Hill, *Horse Power*, Manchester, 1988.



The growth and sustained popularity of newspaper coupon competitions, of the football pools, and of the Irish Hospitals Sweepstake and other lotteries between the wars had compromised and flouted the lottery acts. These had proved difficult to enact and unpopular with a public who ignored the law anyway. It was in the context of these developments that the Royal Commission into Lotteries and Gaming was appointed in 1932 to define what a lottery was at law, to ascertain its ethical basis, and to suggest clarifications in the legislation over the promotion of lotteries.

The legalisation of the tote at dog tracks, and the removal of the anomaly which existed between greyhound racing and horse racing, was the major result of its deliberations, for it did nothing to alter the legislation with regard to the pools and the ever popular Irish Hospital Sweepstake and other large lotteries promoted by private companies. As Sir Ernley Blackwell of the Home Office told the 1932 Enquiry, the lottery laws were difficult and complex, but as long as a lottery or sweepstake was properly run for public benefit and not private interest it was difficult to prosecute. It also needed to contain an element of skill.<sup>2</sup>

The Irish Hospitals Sweepstake, promoted by a bookmaker and an ex-politician residing in Dublin, was the most successful horse race lottery between the wars. At the peak of its popularity it was a regular flutter for over seven million people, that is, five million in the British Isles and the remaining two million in Eire, the U.S.A, and various Commonwealth countries. Held three times a year, the draw was itself a tourist attraction. As Graves and Hodge noted, pretty Irish nurses pulled the winning entries from a big drum at the Plaza Cinema in the Irish capital, under the watchful eye of General O'Duffy, the Commissioner of Police. Tickets were ten shillings apiece. The first draw was on the Manchester November Handicap in 1928, for a prize of £100,000.

---

<sup>2</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Minutes of Evidence, Memo. of Sir Ernley Blackwell, paras. 34-51 pp. 4-6 on skill and chance, and paras. 53-54 p. 6 on foreign lotteries.

It was later extended to the Grand National and the Derby.<sup>3</sup> The Metropolitan Police Commissioner Trevor Bigham and the Chief Constable of Manchester James Maxwell, pointed to the countless numbers of lotteries in pubs and clubs in their cities which they occasionally raided, or more usually warned the promoters, but they spoke in terms of near admiration for the Irish Hospital Sweepstake, 'the fairest ever.'<sup>4</sup> In common with the prohibitive tenets of the ready-money betting laws, the popularity of the Sweepstake posed problems for the local standing of the police. On top of this was the ethical and humanitarian viewpoint of the punters who saw their stakes as a contribution to the well being of the hospitals and of hospital care in Ireland. This was promoted as a charity as much as a business, unlike the obvious example of the pools.

Mary Stocks, of the Liverpool Council for Voluntary Aid, was concerned at the growing popularity of the I.H.S. and other, smaller, sweepstakes on Merseyside during the early 1930's. She argued that the claim hospitals wanted money from this source was bogus:

No responsible hospital authority, for instance, stepped forward to say: 'We want lotteries, we need lotteries, give us lotteries' -though others were prepared to say it in their behalf.<sup>5</sup>

Stocks perhaps underestimated the problems of the hospital services in both Britain and Eire, the underfunding from government at a time of economic austerity. Lotteries were in fact viewed by hospital spokesmen as a means of shoring up the gaps of an inadequate funding programme. A representative of the British Hospitals' Association proposed a Central Lottery Fund to mobilise the goodwill and capital of the British public. This was part of the praiseworthy voluntarist tradition of funding which shored up the gaps left by government inaction and eased people's consciences:

The generosity of the British public is wonderful, and during

---

<sup>3</sup> C. l'estrage Ewen, *Lotteries and Sweepstakes*, 1932, pp. 349-50.

<sup>4</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Minutes of Evidence, para.491, p41..

<sup>5</sup> Mary Stocks, 'Betting', *The Liverpool Quarterly*, 2, 1936, pp. 13-14.

these last difficult years they have made it quite clear that they wish for the continuation of the voluntary hospitals system. It is tolerably certain that the money required for the maintenance of the hospitals will be forthcoming but it is equally certain that, with the decline in big fortunes, the money which is required in large blocks for capital purposes will be difficult, and, indeed, almost impossible to obtain. It is this need which might well be met out of the lottery fund.<sup>6</sup>

The Irish sweepstake was a foreign lottery, promoted from abroad to solicit the stakes of British punters. The Post Office went so far as to stop packets of tickets addressed to agents for sale in this country, but the Irish Hospitals Trust received only 'nominal penalties.'<sup>7</sup> The inner sanctity of the punters' envelopes was largely respected. The Chief Constable of Manchester felt that to engage in a campaign against sellers of tickets-shopkeepers and publicans mostly- would be unrealistic and unpopular. He knew that people shared tickets, and that syndicates were formed in workplaces, so that the amounts sold were no real guide to the amount of people participating.<sup>8</sup>

William Davison, a Conservative M.P. and Magistrate, emphasised the anomalous and unpopular state of the lottery laws. He argued that in most continental countries the state or municipalities benefitted financially from the lotteries with no hint of national demoralisation towards gambling. He also resented the fact that the £3 million paid into Free State hospitals was in large part from British pockets. He felt that the law criminalised an activity which 'a large section, if not a majority of the community approves', and charged that the totalisator which drew state taxation from a pool of stakes was a precedent anyway. Davison's solution, in the form of a Bill, was an ongoing Lotteries Commission, a regulatory body set up to administer three or four big lotteries aimed at national public works schemes. Local authorities too, 'in Manchester or Liverpool or wherever', should be allowed to operate lotteries under these auspices if they wanted to. His proposal also illustrated a concern that a few massive prizes were bad, and proposed many little ones which was

---

<sup>6</sup> *R.C. 1932-33*, Memo. of British Hospital's Association, para. 11, p. 128.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, Memo. of Ernley Blackwell, para. 54, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, Memo. of William Davison, paras. 10-13, p. 52.



more fair to the generality of subscribers.<sup>9</sup> His 1933 Bill was passed, after a first reading, by the Conservative dominated National Government, but was granted 'no further facilities' in the light of more pressing economic demands. Yet it remains the closest the law had come to a major revision with regard to lotteries since the 1820's.

Thomas Levy M.P., and Honorary Secretary of the Lotteries Group, a Parliamentary lobby, agreed with Davison that 'a moderate live law' was better than a 'prohibitive dead one.' Levy distinguished between the 'small unobtrusive lottery or sweepstake and the big promotion like the Irish sweepstake, dealing in millions of pounds and offering fortunes as prizes.'<sup>10</sup> An interesting feature of most parliamentary debates on lotteries or pools, in the 1930's and the 1950's, is that small schemes were more acceptable than big ones.

The Irish Hospital Sweepstake was thus legislated against because it was too big, but also because it was foreign. The 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act prohibited the advertising of a foreign lottery in Britain and made it an offence to purchase a ticket in such a lottery. But as the Royal Commission of 1949-51 argued, this legislation was never fully implemented and only occasionally were the agents for the lottery tickets prosecuted. Purchasers - punters- were not the subject of police intervention. Anyway, the popularity of the Irish sweepstake was waning by the late 1930's and into the 1940's, a result perhaps of the law but probably more a consequence of the growth of football pools. Total receipts dropped from an average of £11,500,000 a year before 1934 to £5,000,000 a year for 1947-8.<sup>11</sup>

These basic principles, the need to clarify the law and make it more popular, and to bring the legal position of small lotteries for small prizes in line with the bigger enterprises who avoided the law with impunity, were the

---

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 5421, p. 366.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid* Memo. of Lotteries Group, para. 3, p. 372

<sup>11</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Report, paras. 135-6, p. 39.

impulses behind the Small Lotteries and Gaming Bill of 1956. The Willink Commission appointed by the post-war Labour government had offered no real guidelines for an alteration in the Lotteries legislation, viewing the *status quo* as adequate to prevent a flood of lotteries. The 1956 Bill was steered through Parliament by Ernest Davies, the Labour M.P. for Enfield, who wanted to render small lotteries for 'charitable, sporting and other purposes' immune from prosecution. The Bill, which was passed just prior to Macmillans' 'Premium Bonds budget' was given cross party support, and became known in the press as 'the Clubs Competitions Bill.' The C.I.U. and local athletics clubs were behind much of the Parliamentary lobbying for this bill.<sup>12</sup> As we saw in chapter eight, there was a touch of resentment against the lack of financial input to sports in general from the Football Pools Companies, and the wish for funding through lotteries stemmed in part from this.

The feeling against big private lotteries was stated most plainly by Somerville Hastings who declared that 'the bigger the lottery, the bigger the element of gambling, the more suspicious I become.'<sup>13</sup> There were a number of amendments based upon differing viewpoints as to what constituted an acceptable level of prize monies and promoters' expenses. The latter was eventually fixed at 10 per cent to cover the printing and issuing of tickets, and the maximum prize level was given as £750.

The Act was significant on two levels. Firstly, it repudiated the working principle of the lottery legislation since 1823, which the Willink Commission had endorsed, that small lotteries did not require any special status within the lottery legislation. Davies's bill sought to enable small lotteries to raise funds free from the fear of police intervention. Its second important feature, then, was that it democratised the lottery laws, and in this it shared the basic concern of Betting and Gaming Act of 1960.

Working mens' and other clubs soon made the most of the new

---

<sup>12</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 13th April, 1956, col. 605.

<sup>13</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 13th April, 1956, col. 574.

facilities. For example, by December 1857, sixty seven small lotteries in Bolton 'were registered under the Small Lotteries and Gaming Act, 1956'.<sup>14</sup>

But a government which thought it best not to interfere with the large private lottery of football pools was planning to introduce its own form of revenue raising containing an element of chance. This too, broke with a legislative precedent of over 130 years' standing.

#### The Premium Bonds: A Case Study

The Government, as illustrated in chapters four and nine, began to raise revenue from the betting duty and the totalisator in the late 1920's. But these Acts were not accompanied by the legalisation of ready-money betting. Thus the introduction of Premium Bonds in 1956 may be viewed as the most significant Act in a major revision of the state's attitude to gambling and to gambling legislation.

State lotteries had been illegal since 1823. The idea of introducing Premium Bonds as a means of raising revenue for government expenditure was first introduced in 1917, towards the end of the First World War. The National Government, headed by the Welsh Nonconformist David Lloyd George, was searching for a means of financing the military campaign in a conflict which had exceeded earlier predictions of its duration. The usual mechanism of taxation, augmented by the War Savings Certificates introduced in 1916, were considered an insufficient source of revenue. Hence the Select Committee on Premium Bonds was appointed, under the chairmanship of Sir Edward Coates, to 'enquire into and to report on the desirability or otherwise of raising money for the purpose of the War by the issue of Premium Bonds.'<sup>15</sup> The Committee reported early in 1918 after examining thirty five witnesses comprising a number of bankers from Britain and abroad, the Chief Constables of Liverpool and Leeds, official witnesses

---

<sup>14</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief Constable of Bolton*, 1958, p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> *S.C. 1918*, Report, p. iii.



from the Treasury, Board of Trade and Chamber of Commerce, three Labour spokesmen, leading anti-gamblers from various nonconformist churches and a couple of employers.

The working definition of Premium Bonds adopted by the Commission was that

the term Investment and Premium Bonds should mean Bonds repayable after a fixed term of years at par plus a moderate rate of compound interest, not less than the 2.5 per cent now paid on the Government Savings Bonds deposits and having the feature that a certain number should be drawn each year for payment at a premium and above the issue price, both issue and premium being paid free of tax.<sup>16</sup>

The major constituency to be tapped was the working-class small saver, the artisans and labourers who, it was felt, had been relatively enriched by the munitions work required for war. Based on an appraisal of the rather disappointing take-up of War Savings Certificates, which only offered a level of interest and return only attractive to bigger investors, the Committee felt that there was

clear proof that the weekly wage earners, especially the men, demand an investment which would appeal to them primarily in that there would be a chance of substantial increase of their capital, and that the ordinary rate of interest, amounting as it must to the small investor only to a few shillings a year, even at the rate of five per cent, is of secondary importance to them.<sup>17</sup>

It was felt that a means of revenue raising targetting the working-class saver could only be succesful if offered the chance of a spectacular instant gratification. What was not stated in Committee, yet was a logical outcome of this argument, was that for those on a low income or with an insubstantial amount of disposable money, gambling in general presented a more attractive and potentially more fruitful mode of investment than long term saving. The prize draw, which was to have been a quarterly event, implicitly directed itself to this rationale. A number of witnesses argued that saving by itself with a moderate rate of interest was not attractive to most workers. Lord

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. ii.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. iii.

Cunliffe, who had been instrumental in the establishment and administration of the War Loans Committee, argued from his research that artisans and the labouring class, especially in Lancashire and Yorkshire, were the constituency where the potential for state derived revenue had least been realised.

Cunliffe drew a distinction between this group and the larger investor who would be less attracted by the element of chance and more by the exception of income tax and super tax on his investment.<sup>18</sup>

Major Frederick John Scott, of the Ministry of Munitions, was involved in the regulation of the 20,000 War Savings Associations in the Munitions Industry which aimed to cream-off the extra earnings of the workers therein. He argued that the idea of a lottery had appealed more to workers at the Woolwich Arsenal in London than savings schemes because of the chance of a prize. But he thought that women were more content with the savings associations than men.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps this was because women, who were less inclined to gamble anyway, had less to invest on the Bonds than their male counterparts. They earned less. The average wage at Woolwich Arsenal was £5 per week and the 'experts'- the tool fitters- could earn £12 to £15 for a weeks' work. Throughout the rest of the metropolitan area and in the provinces the average weekly income for a female munitions worker was £2. 15s. In London there were between 16,000 and 18,000 women employed in munitions and this, argued Scott, 'would reduce the average.'<sup>20</sup>

The whole scheme, however, was never implemented. The Committee was mindful of the complicated precedent of previous legislation with regard to lotteries which determined that 'no issue which involves an element of chance could be made without an Act of Parliament.'<sup>21</sup> They were also unsure of the practical success -the financial return- of Premium Bonds and doubted whether the drafting of a complex piece of legislation

---

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, para. 240, p. 10; para. 252, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 520 p. 25; para. 538 p. 26

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, paras. 582-4, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, Report, piii.

was worth it. The estimated revenue, based upon the earlier findings of the Committee upon War Loans for Small Investors, was put at £80 to £100 million. More significant than this, however, was the probable outcry which would result from anti-gambling quarters if the bonds were issued. The committee thus doubted whether the amount of new money to be obtained

would justify any change of a contentious character in our financial methods (and felt that) such a proposal might cause a controversy in the country which would be most undesirable.<sup>22</sup>

The discussions in committee may be said to have hinged upon three major themes, each of which fed the unease of the Honourable Members despite a majority of witnesses who were favourable to the concept of Premium Bonds. These were, firstly, the question of national character and its expression in the means found to raise revenue. Secondly, there was a misunderstanding of working-class habits of saving and spending, based upon an alleged spendthrift attitude, from which only labour spokesmen demurred. The problem underpinning these considerations was the third and most central bone of contention: whether or not Premium Bonds were a gamble and thus a state lottery or a legitimate form of saving.

In 1956 as in 1918 these issues were central to the controversy over the issuing of Premium Bonds. Only if the Government could satisfactorily convince itself they constituted a legitimate savings scheme with which to draw upon working-class finances, could the bonds be introduced. The decline in the strength of the non-conformist opposition since 1939 was also a major change in the general attitude towards Premium Bonds. The question of national character did not go away either.

In 1918 a Swiss Banker with particular knowledge of foreign lottery schemes was asked by Sir John Fleming, of the Home Office, to expand on the reasons for the varying levels of issue and participation in Premium Bonds between countries. Fleming wanted to know why 'such a rotten country as

---

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.* para. 11, p. 5.



Turkey' had almost the same level of Bonds in circulation as Austria, 'which is one of the best.' Both countries had Bonds worth over £31,100,000. Moreover, asked Fleming 'if Germany keeps away from them, and Turkey goes in for them, do you not think it is a rather ominous thing?' Castelli cast the Germans in a rather spentrift light as a 'great borrower' of money. More pertinently, he pointed out that Germany, like Holland, Belgium, France, Italy and Switzerland, operated Bonds on a municipal level whilst Austria, Turkey, Russia, Servia and others issued Government Bonds. Thus provision of and access to Bonds was more national.<sup>23</sup>

There was little exploration of the role of revenue derived from Premium Bonds as a factor in sound finance, a way of helping to balance the Exchequers' budget. It may be argued that an imperial country with a Treasury still dominated by orthodox economic thinking felt uneasy about a scheme which it identified with its lesser continental competitors.

The question of Bonds and national character surfaced in other ways. More pragmatic economic thinkers felt that Premium Bonds would appeal to a peculiarly British sporting culture. The banker Sir Richard Vassar Smith, for example, felt that they 'might appeal to the sporting instinct in most classes and this would cause them to take up the bonds.'<sup>24</sup> Vassar Smith denied that Premium Bonds were gambling in the form of a lottery because 'no man loses his subscription'. Yet the 'sporting instinct' was the language of the fancy, the traditional aristo-plebian culture of betting and sport, and protagonists of the Bonds who sought to tap this inadvertently pointed to the real basis of the appeal of Bonds to the sporting man.

In the 1956 Parliamentary debates over Harold Macmillan's budget proposal to introduce Premium Bonds, the Latin civilisations replaced Turkey as the corrupt and impoverished yardstick by which a British scheme could be measured. The Liberal leader Jo Grimond felt that Bonds were more suitable

---

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Minutes of Evidence, paras. 967-69, p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 800 p. 35.

to Latin countries with inflationary pressures upon financial management. There they served a more urgent function as a means of fiscal derivation. C.R. Hobson, the Labour member for Keighley, was more forthright. The Government, he argued,

are reducing the country to the level of a South American Republic... I find it difficult to express my indignation. The Government started on the slippery slope of betting when they gave us prior information that they were considering the installation of betting shops. I suppose it naturally follows that they should engage in some form of national lottery.<sup>25</sup>

Cyril Osborne, the Conservative Member for Louth, pushed the focus of comparison back to Latin Europe. He implied that Premium Bonds would undermine the strength and rectitude of the British currency:

...the very word 'sterling' suggests stability and it did not seem to me right that it should be bolstered in a manner that I have always thought of as being associated with France or Italy, whose currencies are a dreadful example to us.<sup>26</sup>

It appears that those who disapproved of lotteries under the auspices of the state were prepared, in varying degrees, to resort to crude national caricatures of corruption and incompetence to bolster their case. Such cross-bench criticism did little to stem Macmillan's resolve to introduce the Bonds. In his Budget Proposals he took the opposite line to his detractors in justifying them by reference to the extant examples overseas.

It was plain, too, that the 'sporting' British public were keen on the idea of Premium Bonds and were not fearful of notions of national degradation. In 1950 Mass Observation had found that out of 2,071 people questioned 71 per cent were in favour of a national lottery.<sup>27</sup>

The second and more fundamental problem occupying the 1918 Select Committee was the relation of Premium Bonds to the working-class economy and spending habits. For example, it was argued that munitions workers especially were indulging in lavish displays of expenditure on

---

<sup>25</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 18th April, 1956, col. 1062.

<sup>26</sup> In Alex Rubner, *op cit*, p. 54.

<sup>27</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Memo. by M.O., para. 12, p. 369.

unnecessary things. This was the tenor of the Chief Constable of Manchester's testimony. Peacock claimed his views were supported by the 'protectors of the morals of Manchester' the Watch Committee.:

Even such necessaries as food and clothing are not infrequently purchased on an extravagant scale, and the expenditure on amusements is always generous, especially so in cases of licensed houses, pictures, theatres, music halls, sports, etc.<sup>28</sup>

Jewellery, expensive furs and pianos were purchased in preference to War Savings Certificates at the level of 15 shillings and 6 pence where take-up had been 'considerable but nothing like what there ought to be.' The Committee made much of a tale, verified by Peacock, of a working man 'wearing a muffler round his neck' who purchased a piano at a cost of £80 and, because it was such 'a splendid piece of furniture' bought another one for the opposite corner of the room.

A problem for those who sought to re-direct this extra disposable income into state Premium Bonds was that extravagant spending might result from a big win in the prize draw, the very principle on which the Premium Bonds were to sell themselves. Lord Cunliffe, for example, did not think that lots of moderately-sized winnings were dangerous but felt that

if a man wins a great big stake it might have a demoralising effect.

(Tyson Wilson): In the spending of it?

Well, he and his friends. It might damage a whole family.<sup>29</sup>

Labour witnesses to the 1918 Enquiry defended the right of workers to spend their surplus income as they saw fit and, more significantly, pointed out to the Select Committee that a number of working-class savings schemes were already in operation. The Parliamentary spokesman for the Co-Operative Movement viewed Premium Bonds as inimical to the working-class tradition of collective self help and as 'contrary to all the principles and practice of co-operative and working-class thrift.'<sup>30</sup> Will Thorne, of the Gasworkers Union and

---

<sup>28</sup> *S.C. 1918*, Minutes of Evidence, para. 2386, p. 94.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 279-80, p.92.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2098, p. 83.



a member of the Social Democratic Federation, who was 'not very much enamoured' of the Premium Bonds at all, argued that the working-class had little money to 'invest', and what little they had was often sucked up by the insecurities of what B.S. Rowntree and other social investigators termed the 'poverty cycle.' He claimed that the 250,000 workers he represented, whose wages ranged from 35 shillings to 50 shillings a week, had little in the way of excess income and were often confronted with contingencies and economic demands which necessitated a quicker access to savings than the Premium Bonds scheme could give. Thorne thus felt that 'it would be better if the wage earning classes, where they have a few pounds to spare', should put their money into the Post Office 'where it would be a saving to the country.'<sup>31</sup>

J.H. Thomas of the National Union of Railwaymen, pointed to the range of smaller informal savings strategies alongside the larger institutions based on working-class thrift. He saw the Bonds as unnecessary:

There are Slate Clubs, Co-Operative Societies, Employers Banking Societies, local Savings Clubs, all manner of things where a few shillings have been saved from week to week and with regard to which no temptation is required for a further inducement.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas also defended the working-class from accusations of reckless spending, arguing that the purchase of a piano and various luxury items was 'to their advantage' because it enabled workers to 'have a house which (would) be an attraction to them, and instead of deprecating that, I welcome it unhesitatingly.'<sup>33</sup>

Thorne and Thomas were quietly critical of the notion of the state aiming to solicit finance for the war from the pockets of the poor with the temptation of a gamble. Thomas felt that a few gamblers might have put a few pounds into Premium Bonds but it would not yield enough revenue 'to carry on the war for a couple of days.' In terms which anticipated Labour

---

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 1815, p. 73.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2746, p. 110.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 2749, p. 110.

criticisms of Macmillan's scheme in 1956 he argued that there was 'no half-way house between recognising a state lottery and legalising betting.'

This problem of the gambling component of Premium Bonds, or whether there was such an unethical element in the scheme at all, underpinned most considerations of their moral and actuarial basis and centred upon two key points: Firstly, that one kept one's stake so it was not a proper gamble. Moreover, interest was offered on the bonds which meant that a return on investment was guaranteed. Secondly, and counter to this, was the element of chance involved in the entering of the Bonds for a few prizes in the draws. As well as the fact of this, one lost the claim to one's interest during the period of the draw itself. This meant that interest was gambled. These two points were thus framed by the following consideration: were Premium Bonds a gamble or a form of saving or a bit of both?

Comparison with industrial insurance premiums was inevitable. Here, the worker got back the money he paid in along with a moderate level of compound interest. But the whole notion of insurance rested upon the fact that whilst the worker was saving he was also betting figuratively with the insurance company against an unknowable future and on an unknowable accident upon which the receipt of a large cash payment rested. Meanwhile the insurance companies aggregated the millions of premiums and profited by investing parts of them as loans to other companies. These were in turn justified by the anticipated fortunes of these businesses.

In 1918 the anti-gambling campaigner E.B. Perkins was pushed hard on his defence of insurance vis-a-vis Premium Bonds:

*Sir Charles Henry:* If there is not gambling (in insurance) there is a certain amount of chance? - *Perkins:* There is no possibility of anybody being a loser. Somebody is bound to benefit.  
 -May I put this to you: In this Premium Bond investment the the full capital comes back to the investor, at 2.5 per cent interest. Therefore he gets his capital back? -Yes.  
 -The man who insures through an insurance system will get his capital back? -Yes.  
 -The only difference is this, that as you correctly state, it is a gamble for half the interest? -Yes.

In the case of industrial insurance all the expenses have to be taken into consideration. Does the man get back actuarially under the mutual system the whole of his premiums? -He gets back a fair return from a commercial point of view. In (the case of Premium Bonds) he either gets a prize or he loses the whole of that special part of the interest which is involved in the lottery.<sup>34</sup>

What was not fully explored was the fact that in insurance one had to suffer physical damage or death to get the big early payment. The Premium Bonds offered this with no threat of injury. The advantage of insurance however, was that one was assured of this payment in the event of a contingency. But the bonds only offered such a payment in the event of 'coming up' in one of the regular draws. What was similar in both bonds and insurance was that the original saving or 'stake' was never itself lost.

However, the Committee felt that the element of chance was sufficient to render the enactment of Premium Bonds as a controversial break with existing legislation and to provoke an uproar from the anti-gambling lobby.

In his 1956 budget speech Harold Macmillan, the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer, had less compunction. In an important passage introducing the Premium Bonds he made much of them as an investment, as 'something completely new for the saver in Great Britain.' He denied that it was a pool or a lottery as 'the subscriber cannot lose':

The investor in the bond which I propose is saving his money. He will get it back when he wants it. But as long as he holds it saved his reward, instead of interest, is the chance of a tax-free prize.<sup>35</sup>

'Chance' and 'saving' were the key words here, as Macmillan thought chance complemented rather than compromised the savings habit. In the same mode as the 1918 Select Committee he was after the extra incomes of the working class. This could be achieved by encouraging 'the practice of saving' amongst those who 'are not attracted by the reward of interest, but

---

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 1688; paras. 1693-1696, p. 69.

<sup>35</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 17th April, 1956, col. 879.



do respond to the incentive of fortune.' The state, he argued, had 'hitherto fought shy of using chance as an incentive to save' because of the 'unreasonable fear' of moral objections raised to this principle. Unlike the Committee of 1918, he had a less powerful extra-Parliamentary anti-gambling lobby to contend with.

Within the House of Commons, however, Labour M.P.'s objected that the Premium Bonds should have been included in the proposals to legalise betting which the government had issued in April, 1956. R.J. Mellish, the Labour M.P. for Bermondsey, voiced a similar fear to Will Thorne's some thirty-eight years earlier:

Since the gambling instinct is rather prevalent, will there not be a tendency to draw money from the Post Office savings to buy the bonds in the hope of getting extra cash by way of prize money? <sup>36</sup>

This was designed to undermine MacMillans' claim that the bonds were a savings scheme. Harold Wilson, the Shadow Chancellor, could not have been more scathing of MacMillans' budget and the 'squalid raffle' of Premium Bonds:

We had a shambling, fumbling, largely irrelevant and at one point, degrading speech. The Chancellor told us that the Budget was proposed under the piercing eye of Mr. Gladstone. There was one passage that was quite obviously written under a portrait of Horatio Bottomley.<sup>37</sup>

What was absent from the protracted debate which took place over Premium Bonds was any real concern at the allegedly spendthrift habits of the working class. Unlike in 1918 there was little fear that, either with or without a sizeable prize in its pocket, the working class was a victim of its collective *penchant* for instant gratification and extravagance. The 1950's were of course a period of sustained economic growth and full employment which, unlike the more sectional opportunities offered by the First War, provided higher wages and regular work to all sections of the working class. This general

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 935.

<sup>37</sup> *H.C. Debs.*, 18th April, 1956, col. 1014.

prosperity *by itself* cannot explain the more liberal attitude by government, but it was the foundation, against the privations of the war years of 1939-45, of a largely unarticulated change of attitude towards working-class budgets. As Arthur Marwick has argued, a greater libertarianism, a tendency to trust people with their own moral and economic affairs, was abroad in the so-called post-war consensus. This implied 'the great release from from older restraints', the lifting 'of paternalistic Victorian controls' from British society.<sup>38</sup> The introduction of the Premium Bonds, rescinding the principle of the 1823 Act, the Small Lotteries Act also introduced in 1956 and the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act were all products of this liberalisation.

Moreover, as both the sociologist of gambling, W.E. Eadington, and the Royal Commission argued in its report of 1951, none of the factors which make for heavy gambling are present to any significant degree in lotteries. The level of personal participation, for example in card playing or roulette, the extent to which a punter believes he or she is exercising skill, and the vicarious pleasure of the sporting event which a bet heightens are all absent from lotteries. Moreover, the long temporal spaces between each lottery competition or Premium Bond draw counteract claims that it induces over-indulgence.<sup>39</sup> Macmillan would have strengthened his case, perhaps, if he had stressed these points.

It could be argued, however, that the Bonds, like the legalisation of betting, were a cunning conservative attempt to incorporate the working class into a more economic and selfish attitude in the face of a burgeoning welfare state. Socialist ideals of egalitarian collective provision were compared with the 'I'm all right Jack' attitude. Thus the *Tribune*, Labour's newspaper, saw the introduction of the Premium Bonds and the legalisation of ready-money betting as part of 'the Casino Society' of possessive

---

<sup>38</sup> Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, 1987, p. 16.

<sup>39</sup> In W.E. Eadington, 'Some Observations on Legalised Gambling', in W.E. Eadington (ed.), *Gambling and Society*, Illinois, 1976, pp. 54-55.

individualism: Macmillan was cast as a croupier presiding over a surging tide of self interest. He was also caricatured as a fairground barker and compared to Hughie Green, the host of a contemporary television quiz show called 'Double Your Money.' It was only a short stretch of the satirical imagination to the 'Tic Tac Mac' of Vicky's cartoons in the *London Evening Standard* prior to the 1960 Act.<sup>40</sup>

Clever and witty they may have been, but these caustic snipes did not constitute anything approaching a concerted campaign to prevent the introduction of the Bonds. The decline of the anti-gambling movement as a force in moulding public opinion was perhaps the strongest symptom of the rise of this sense of permissiveness with regard to betting. Perhaps the best measure of nonconformist opposition to the bonds were the thirty-seven Sub-Postmasters and Mistresses in England and Wales who had 'declined to handle Premium Bonds on moral grounds' in 1957.<sup>41</sup>

In the first few years following the introduction of the bonds, the amount of savings drawn by government probably justified MacMillans' hopes. In the year of November 1957 to November 1958 sales totalled £114 million, repayments added up to £2.5 million and prizes to the value of £2,060,000 were paid out. Just over £1.5 million was spent in advertising and costs, leaving the government with about £108 million to invest. But Macmillan's proud prediction that the bonds would attract the savings of the new small investor got off to a disappointing start when when it was found that ERNIE (the Electronic Random Number Indicating Equipment, housed at Lytham near Blackpool) was selecting a disproportionate number of bonds denoted with the letter 'Z', that is, bonds worth £500 each. In the House of Commons it was asked whether 'the bulk of the money put into a tax-free investment is not new savings but money which would otherwise have been put into more

---

<sup>40</sup> *Tribune*, 'The Vote for a Casino Society', 16th October 1959; *H.C. Debs.*, 18th April, 1956, col. 1082; *Evening Standard*, 5th November, 1959, p4. This cartoon is Plate 9 in the Appendix.

<sup>41</sup> *HC. Debs.*, 18th February, 1958 col. 138.



profitable enterprises and, secondly, that what the old Book said is still true, that "whosoever hath, to him it shall be given." The government was forced to agree that the richer were gaining more from the bonds but felt that 'this tendency is showing signs of falling off as more small investors get their money into the draw'.<sup>42</sup>

But whilst the Premium Bonds were in theory aimed at all classes of society, their introduction did not, as the Small Lotteries Act or the 1960 Act did, confront the unfairness of the gambling legislation. This was the major aim of R.A. Butler's Act, and those who supported his intention of legalising ready-money betting off of the racecourse.

The failure of the law to reduce working-class betting, and the compromising position in which it placed the police, had been pointed out to the Parliamentary Enquiries as far back as 1902, when the call for greater powers of surveillance and punishment had resulted in the 1906 Act. Only by 1923 had the police realised that less powers and not more would resolve their position. By the late 1940's police spokesmen were calling for the removal of the laws, seeing them as an unpopular waste of time. The Police Federation of England and Wales told the Willink Commission that otherwise innocent people were criminalised for having a flutter, and that the opportunities for corruption existed between policemen and the local bookmakers.<sup>43</sup> It was also clear that the police adhered far less to the low-life associations of working-class betting. In general, most punters and most policemen knew, as we saw in Chapter Three, that the day-to-day policing of gambling varied from pre-arranged raids as a pretence at intervention through to the farcical open secret of police acquiescence, the 'blind eye'.

Dennis Vosper, the Joint Under-Secretary of State reiterated most of

---

<sup>42</sup> *HC Debs.*, 11th December, 1957.col 1260.

<sup>43</sup> Memo. of the Police Federation of England and Wales, *R.C. 1949-51*, para. 2, p. 158: '...we have achieved nothing except perhaps the arrest and conviction of many hundreds of otherwise ordinary respectable citizens who perhaps abide by every law in the land except the Betting Act of 1906.'

these points to the House of Commons in his preface to the final reading of Butler's bill:

The object of the bill (is) not to encourage an increase in gambling, but is to revise laws which have fallen into disrepute, which are not understood by the public and which consume a great amount of police manpower in attempting to enforce them.<sup>44</sup>

This was the first major reason for the revision of the gambling legislation, what Marwick has called the sound conservative principle 'of restoring respect and credibility to the law.'<sup>45</sup>

Yet another more general change in official attitudes, registered by Willink but translated into practice by Ernest Davies and Harold Macmillan, was the realisation that Victorian paternalism was now inappropriate to a wealthier and, perhaps following on from that, a wiser working class. It was also conceded by the Willink Commission that gambling did not interfere with industrial efficiency.<sup>46</sup>

Higher wages and the more optimistic outlook of the post-war years facilitated a filtering downwards of freedoms which erased the logic of previous distinctions written into the gambling legislation. This view was most clearly stated by William Deedes, Conservative M.P. for Ashford in Kent:

Much of our former social legislation, now being repaired, reflects a state of mind which saw an obligation to protect the working class from its own excesses and follies. The law that we are replacing is typical of that. If one has a telephone one can be entrusted to bet to the limit (but) if one has to rely on a pub one cannot do so.<sup>47</sup>

Deedes saw the bill as a positive imposition of self-restraint and individual responsibility.' Yet before this new betting dispensation could be introduced a number of moral and practical objections and alternative suggestions, in the form of amendments, had to be negotiated. These fell into three broad camps. Firstly a protracted debate took place over the form that cash

---

<sup>44</sup> *HC Debs.*, 11 May, 1960, Cols. 426-7.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Marwick, *op cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>46</sup> *R.C. 1949-51*, Report, para. 169, pp. 48-9.

<sup>47</sup> *HC Debs.*, 11th November, 1959, cols. 934-5.

betting outlets should take. Some wanted to legalise the status quo, others wanted to introduce Licenced Betting Offices (LBO's). Secondly, Victorian concerns were still very much in evidence when the relationship of young people under eighteen years, and women, to gambling was discussed. Thirdly, a number of M.P.'s were fearful that the legalisation of off-course ready-money betting would lead to more protection rackets operated by local villains and bent bookmakers. The long-standing concern about the relationship of gambling to crime was still very much in evidence.

### Were Betting Shops Inevitable?

The LBO's introduced onto the streets in May 1961 were considered by a number of M.P.s, mostly Labour, to be a bad idea in principle and practice. Douglas Houghton, Labour M.P. for Sowerby, echoed Ramsey MacDonald when he argued that betting shops would be 'a reproach to our society. It shows that many of our people are bored and frustrated and do not know what to do with their lives.'<sup>48</sup> Bob Mellish, of Bermondsey, has more pragmatic objections to betting shops. Along with Reginald Paget (Labour, Northampton) he promoted the idea of legalising the existing local networks of bookies, runners, milkmen, barber's shops and punters. These were a reflection of community solidarities which had evolved according to differing patterns of work. Eric Johnson, for example, the Labour representative for Blackley in manchester, was convinced that in an industrial manufacturing area such as Trafford Park the workers would still rely on the runners to get their bets on for them.<sup>49</sup> Mellish's proposal was simply that agents and runners should become paid legitimate employees of the bookies, and that accepted places for laying and paying-out bets, such as the street and the public house, should be recognised. To support his case Mellish argued that the biggest bookmakers would monopolise off-course cash betting and that

---

<sup>48</sup> *HC Debs.*, 16th November, 1959, col. 910.,

<sup>49</sup> *HC Debs.*, 11th November 1959 col. 905.



the Conservatives, as the party of the small family business, were ignoring a major part of their natural constituency.<sup>50</sup> A few Tories were sensitive to this view. Gordon Walker pointed to the Irish experience of legalisation since 1926, where a Dublin bookmaker owned nearly half the shops in his city.<sup>51</sup> Large-scale bookmakers of course opposed the legalisation of their sprat-like counterparts. William Hill argued that Butlers' bill was 'a charter for small bookmakers' which would undermine the basis of the credit trade.<sup>52</sup> As we will soon see, the large bookmakers had nothing to fear and much to gain from the legalisation of cash betting, especially those like Hill himself who ran an under-trade in off-course ready-money betting anyway.

Mellish's pragmatism in putting forward his case also spied an opportunity to attack the betting shop proposal when the issue of women and children was addressed. He must already have known that it was common for women and teenagers to lay their own bets, as well as those of their husband's or father's, with the street bookie. But he argued that the new system would tempt the young and 'women going shopping' into the LBO. F. Harris, too, thought that young people

will be tempted to go from work in order to hang about the betting shops to put on extra bets (and) the housewife who goes shopping is almost bound to be tempted to do likewise.<sup>53</sup>

Accusations and fears about reckless or incredulous punters, once directed at the entire working class, were now reserved largely for women and, especially, the young. The government did not worry any further about housewives but it felt compelled to outlaw the employment of people under eighteen in the proposed betting shops. Paget, who thought the whole proposal for LBO's was a waste of time and money, was quick to point to

---

<sup>50</sup> *HC Debs.*, 5th May, 1960 cols. 1314 to 1399. The smaller bookies were grateful to Mellish for his efforts on their behalf. See *The Licenced Bookmaker and Betting Office Proprietor*, May, 1963, pp. 20-23, 'The Man You Have to Thank'.

<sup>51</sup> *HC Debs.*, 16th November, 1959, col. 830.

<sup>52</sup> *Sporting Life*, 16th November, 1959 pp. 1-2.

<sup>53</sup> *HC Debs.*, 5th May, 1959, cols. 1333-34.

what he saw as a double standard. Invoking the father-to-son lineage of many bookmaking families, he stated:

If we legalise in this case the use of great sums of new capital and new resources of the nation, why, on the other hand, must we say that the business is so disreputable that apprentices and young people may not be introduced to what is the living and business of their parents? That sort of idiotic hypocrisy I find it difficult to put up with.<sup>54</sup>

But such idiocy, in the form of Niall Macpherson's amendment, was quickly agreed to by the House. Also on behalf of those who had yet to reach adulthood, John M. Temple (Chester) argued for an amendment 'to preclude the possibility of slot machines being placed in and used in clubs or premises mainly or wholly used by persons under eighteen years of age.'<sup>55</sup> This also gained approval.

However, by way of modifying this debate over youth and gambling, it is worth pointing out that a number of M.P.'s were prepared to contemplate youthful betting and gambling without gloomy or pessimistic prognoses. Rees-Davies thought that a little gaming at home or children accompanying their parents to the dogs did no harm. George Wigg too, told the House what most working-class mothers and fathers had long known, that 'the business of having a little bet is not regarded as terribly evil and starts long before the age of eighteen.'<sup>56</sup> It can be argued that the hypocrisy which Wigg pointed to was ironed-out by the general sense of compromise and care which infused the parliamentary debates. A silly and biased law was to be removed and betting was to be legalised, but it was not to be encouraged. Betting and gambling were still not regarded as admirable activities in themselves. The continuing resonance of this view was not an historical consequence of the anti-gambling lobby's efforts, which had peaked in the Edwardian and inter-war years. Rather, the toleration of gambling was a necessary consequence of that libertarianism which Marwick describes and which Deedes had

---

<sup>54</sup> *HC Debs.*, 10th May, 1960, col. 214.

<sup>55</sup> *HC Debs.*, *ibid.*, Cols 254-5.

<sup>56</sup> *HC Debs.*, 18th May, 1960; col. 223, *ibid.*, col. 222-6.

articulated to Parliament. The betting shops were a logical outcome of this qualified liberalisation: *legalised* betting in such establishments could be more easily monitored than activities which took place in smoke-filled back rooms and in bars, clubs and alleyways.

During the third reading of his bill, and in the light of the foregoing discussions and amendments in the House, Butler was sensitive to the issues and problems arising from the introduction of legal outlets for ready-money betting. 'The street', he argued, 'is not the proper place in which to bet.' On a practical level it would involve licensing and registration difficulties with the local magistrates and planning authorities. More importantly, any relaxation in favour of the status quo 'would allow further solicitation to take place.' Moreover, Butler argued that 'it would (be) difficult to prevent betting with young persons about which, in my opinion, we have not heard enough in this debate today.' Butler wanted a system of LBO's, yet he accepted that they should be augmented by runners where the needs of the working population dictated.<sup>57</sup> Butlers' version won the day, and the move to legalise street bookies was defeated by 112 votes.

LBO's were introduced in May 1961. They were to be licenced by the local licensing authorities who conferred approval under guidelines laid down by the Town and Country Planning Acts of 1947 and 1959.

The interior of each office reflected the finger-wagging permissiveness underpinning the bill, an approach evident in the barbed realism of the Churches Council on Gambling. A Methodist spokesman lamented that 'all legislation to do with gambling must of necessity be a compromise',

the sort of compromise that permits the opening of a betting shop but insists that it be as cheerless and sombre as possible.<sup>58</sup>

Each office was to contain only the counter, books, slips, and the lists of

---

<sup>57</sup> *HC Debs.*, 5th May 1960, Col. 1339.

<sup>58</sup> *The Times*, 6th May 1961, p. 6, col.c. This point was made at a conference on the publication of the Churches Council on Gambling's *Gambling in Modern Society*, 1961.



starting price-odds pinned up from the racing pages. No stools and no television or radio was allowed, only the blower and a board to chalk up the changing odds. These interiors were supposed to prevent loitering. Opening hours were from early morning to 6.30 p.m. to enable bets to be made and collected outside of working hours. As the *Times* correspondent noted, shops could open as early as seven a.m.,

but most bookmakers will choose a more gentlemanly hour. Only shops near the docks or markets will put down their shutters at breakfast time. The busiest period for most of them will probably be during the luncheon break.<sup>59</sup>

Street bookmakers were given a six-month transitional period in which to re-establish their external trade in a betting shop. As stated above, runners could collect bets from workplaces or from those unable to get their bets on by themselves, but it appears that the runner declined in popularity throughout the 1960's. Many simply became clerks. One large London bookmaker who had had four runners on the street told *The Times* that they had cost him `£400 each in fines, but they took 2,000 bets a day. Now I shall use them as clerks.'<sup>60</sup> As clerks, the runners simply went behind the counter and used the skills they had learned whilst settling bets and paying out in the streets or pubs. However, the decline of the runners was probably also a result of punters' simply preferring to put their bets on themselves at lunchtimes or the day before. Runners died out for similar reasons in the Republic of Ireland from the late 1920's.<sup>61</sup>

In short, LBO's were a simplified and more informal way of betting than the street betting of the previous one-hundred-and-more years. Technically children could no longer take their parent's bets to the bookie although, as we will soon see, they continued to do so.

It is difficult to gauge the punters' opinion of all this. Memories of the introduction of LBO's in 1961 tend to point to a relief that the law had been

---

<sup>59</sup> *The Times*, 2nd May 1961, p. 7, col.d.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *HC Debs.*, 16th November, 1959, Cols. 915-916.

changed but a sense of loss for the more informal street betting. Clarence Malster of the Elephant and Castle in London missed the extra dimension of illegality and the expectation of seeing the bookie get 'nabbed' (as Robert Roberts had done), but he thought that the new law was a good one.<sup>62</sup> Joe Kinsella, of Liverpool, thought LBO's removed both sociability and privacy:

not as exciting as the old time betting as it was always considered a great thrill putting one over on the bookie (impossible now with modern technology) and a bigger thrill was putting one over on the cops. The difference now I believe is that it has become stereotyped like going to the supermarket. A lot of punters now feel that when they have a good win with many people being paid out openly too many know of this and the chance of being mugged on the way home is more apparent. In the old days the runner paid one out discreetly.<sup>63</sup>

'Mugged' came into the national vocabulary in the 1970's of course, a reminder that memories of any particular event or period are interpreted in the light of subsequent experiences. Yet a sense of loss may not only be brought on by the ageing process but by changes in society which divest people of a sense of belonging they once felt.<sup>64</sup> The end of street betting coincided with the era of comprehensive re-development of many urban working class areas in which 'Coronation Streets' of slum terraced houses were replaced by 'Ronan Points', the impersonal tower blocks which are no longer built due to the social problems associated with them. In the end of course, a complex of cultural and economic changes did more to undermine the social meshing of people in inner London or Liverpool than the ending of the runner or the pub as a place to receive bets. Butler's Act was but one of many influences, national and local, environmental and economic, shaping the pattern of working-class recreation in the post-war years. And for the punter, all these changes shaped the pattern and quality of life. How far the end of street betting contributed to this sense of loss is a difficult question to evaluate accurately.

---

<sup>62</sup> Writer's oral project: Clarence Malster *op cit*.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, Joe Kinsella, *op cit*.

<sup>64</sup> Jeremy Seabrook, *Unemployment*, St. Albans, 1981, *passim* but especially p. 81.

One thing is clear: there was no active resistance to the betting shops from the punters. The Chief Constable of Liverpool, C. Martin, was able to report to the Watch Committee in 1962 that 'the majority of betting offices are well conducted.' There were, however, a number of infringements over the use of television on the premises, for advertising too loudly, and for betting with under-age persons. The latter was probably a result of a tradition of children taking bets on behalf of their fathers and mothers. A particular problem for Liverpool was pointed out to the police by irate local residents who complained that alleyways and gardens were being used as lavatories. It appears that the best laid plans for austerity did not work beyond the time it took for a few pints of beer to work their way through the body. Martin thought it 'desirable that these places should have toilets' and hoped that future legislation would be altered to provide them.<sup>65</sup> There were eighty arrests in Liverpool for the continuation of street betting from May to December 1961. The fines were then increased to finally stamp this out and 1962 saw only five arrests on this count. The Chief Constable could conclude with relief that the establishment of LBO's 'has eliminated a long-standing complaint, and with it the necessity of providing special police patrols.'<sup>66</sup> These teething troubles were short lived on Merseyside. The annual police report in Liverpool does not give the number of bookmakers' permits applied for, and the entries in the trade directory were only for the biggest or most enterprising bookies. In Bolton borough, however, 222 bookmakers permits, representing 272 shops, were in force by December 1961, and this had risen to 228 a year later.<sup>67</sup>

In Bolton the transition to LBO's threw up the same types of problems as in Liverpool, but the bookies there seemed slower to licence their offices. In 1961 there were three cases of television sets being used in betting shops,

---

<sup>65</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief Constable for Liverpool*, 1962, p. 45.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, 1963, p. 48.

<sup>67</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief Constable of Bolton*, 1962, pp. 72-73.



seven cases of unlawful advertising and thirty-three cases of resorting to unlicensed betting premises.<sup>68</sup> This figure probably includes offences committed under the 1906 Act in the run-up to May 1961. Such problems all but ceased the following year.

In Manchester between May and December 1961, there were two cases of unlicensed betting offices, fifteen cases of resorting to unlicensed betting offices, one case of allowing a betting office to be used for gaming, one case of under-age betting and one case of unlawful advertising. Fifteen persons were prosecuted for continuing street betting but '12 of these cases were in Wythenshawe where the number of licensed betting offices is small.'<sup>69</sup>

Unwittingly, perhaps, the Chief Constable also pointed to the beginnings of what was to become a major future development:

Perhaps the most startling result of the new Act has been the popularity of 'Bingo' competitions, many of them as serious business enterprises and others conducted to provide financial assistance to clubs and charitable organisations. Very few have given cause for police action.<sup>70</sup>

There were two other major consequences of the new Act, to wit, the growth of bookmaker monopolies and the new opportunity for organised crime under the permissive system ushered in from 1961.

There were about 13,340 betting shops in 1962. How many of the smaller street bookies gave up or faded away it is impossible to tell. One thing is clear: the fears of the biggest bookmakers like William Hill's or Coral's before 1961 were groundless. Between them, Ladbroke's, Coral's, Hill's and Mecca owned 0.2 per cent of all outlets in 1962. This rose to a market share of 23.9 per cent by 1977.<sup>71</sup> Smaller local chains like Stanley Racing of Liverpool also grew from this time.

But during the 1960's most people's eyes were not so much on the development of monopoly as of protection. The *New Statesman* was worried

---

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *Annual Report of the Chief Constable of Manchester*, 1962, p. 57.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>71</sup> *R.C. 1976-8*, Report, Vol. 1, p. 27.

in 1960 at what it called 'London's New Gangsters'. It pointed to the the 'reported growth of "protection rackets", a a commercial method which translates the economic ruthlessness of respectable finance into terms of physical violence as a means of keeping upstart competitors off the grass.'<sup>72</sup> Their fears that liberalisation would make this situation worse were later personified in the Kray twins of East London from the early '60's.. They 'made it plain they did not approve of rival spielers opening in their manor.'<sup>73</sup> The link between gambling and crime did not disappear as a result of Butler's Act.

### Conclusion

The Act of 1960 was only possible under the more permissive and wealthy years of the post-war period. This is not a teleological point which views the Act as an inevitable consequence of liberalisation, but the qualified liberalisation described above was needed to turn the failure of the previous legislation on its head and provide a workable system which could be monitored.. Otherwise street betting could have carried on in the terms Mellish and the small bookies desired.

Yet the key word in trying to explain the why's and the wherefore's of legalisation is 'moderation'. For most of our period most punters had been in control of their betting and even the poorest had saved when they could. This reality had been obscured by an over-concentration on the fears of the anti-gambling lobby. Only when it was realised that reasonable gambling was not damaging to one's economic self-interest could the misunderstanding and ineptitude beneath the state's provision cease. This point, and what it reveals about working-class economic attitudes, is discussed in the conclusion.

---

<sup>72</sup> *New Statesman*, 21st May, 1960, p. 742.

<sup>73</sup> Charles Kray, *Me and My Brothers*, 1988, p. 77.

## Chapter 10: Conclusion.

Some fools who are under no control, will always be found wandering away to ruin; but the greater part of that extensive department of the commonality are under some control, and the great need is that it be better organised.<sup>1</sup>

Thus Dickens called for the regulation of gambling rather than the 'legislative interference' of prohibition in 1852. He argued that parliament 'cared so little for the amusements of the people' that it failed to understand that restraint comes from below, not by decree. He was right. There is little evidence to support the view of the anti-gambling lobby that most working-class people behaved in a thoroughly uneconomic way when they gambled. We saw in chapter five that there undoubtedly were episodes of excessive gaming, and these caused much suffering and hardship to the families of those who behaved so irresponsibly. But the incidence of this problem was amplified by the anti-gambling league. During our period, gambling was regular and moderate, comprised of small stakes determined by income and framed by a system of both non-rational gestures and form-informed considerations aimed to make the bet successful. Before the 1940's the culture of poverty lent gambling an attractive, hopeful air but constrained the activity for most betters. Wealthier punters could gamble with higher stakes, a phenomenon which was generalised as the working class became relatively more prosperous during the 1950s.

Nor was gambling inimical to savings and the savings habit. On one level the language of 'investment' in the tipping sheets and in the literature of racing speculation addressed itself to a conception of the stake upon which hopes of maximisation rested. This orientation was particularly true of the football pools, as we saw in chapter eight. On a more general level, though, gambling coexisted with saving. This was true of those on a regular income but also of those in the poorest areas of England. Economic insecurity here,

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Betting Shops', *Household Words*, No. 118, 26th June, 1852, pp. 333-36; quote p. 336.



as we saw in chapter three, was offset by a range of informal savings clubs and credit schemes in which people saved what they could when they could, and drew upon this in times of greater demand on the family budget.<sup>2</sup> Even the children of the casual poor were not averse to saving if they got the chance. Thus John Barron Mays wrote of 'D', a lad from the Liverpool dockside in the mid 1950's:

His pocket money is 7s. 6d. a week and this has to cover fags, pictures, bets and club dues but he manages to save about 2s. 6d. each week towards a summer holiday at a Butlins Holiday Camp. About 6d. goes each week on horses, 6d on the pools, 6d. on the sweep. He has won the sweep twice lately and added considerably to his savings.<sup>3</sup>

His grandmother ran a tontine. It is impossible to know how much money was saved in these informal ways, just as we can never know with any accuracy the amounts staked with the street bookies, but the general realisation that gambling and saving were a feature of many people's lives was enshrined in Premium Bonds from 1956.

A study of gambling provides a number of important clues to the way in which working-class punters viewed their world as they lived from day to day. For Arthur Seaton, the hero of Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, a culture of instant gratification punctuated with strategic saving was the basis of his recreation. Yet Sillitoe also uses gambling as a metaphor for Arthur's fatalism. After all, 'a war could start tomorrow:'

With the wages you got you could save up for a motor-bike or even an old car, or you could go on a ten-day binge and get rid of all you'd saved. Because it was no use saving your money year after year. A mug's game, since the value of it got less and less and in any case you never knew when the Yanks were going to do something daft like dropping the H Bomb on Moscow. And if they did you could say ta-ta to everybody, burn your football coupons and betting-slips and ring up Billy Graham. If you believe in God, which I don't, he said to himself.<sup>4</sup>

In literary criticism, much is written on the question of how far 'realism' in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Paul Johnson, *Spending and Saving*, 1987, p. 232. Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet*, 1986, *passim* but especially p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> John Barron Mays, *Growing Up in the City*, 1956, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1983 (first published 1958), pp. 27-28.

working-class novel reflects reality or the author's subjective interpretation and portrayal of it. Yet Sillitoe's first novel does provide a number of important hints about gambling and working-class culture.<sup>5</sup> He was writing in the second-half of the 1950's when a relative affluence was taking the raw edge off poverty, even if it left many old habits and outlooks intact. Sillitoe's view of the attraction of gambling in Arthur's life is coloured by a streak of the anti-gambling viewpoint, which is in evidence when Arthur selfishly states that if he came up on the pools he would 'keep it all', burn the begging letters and settle down with fifteen cars and fifteen women. He had voted Communist at the last election, too. In Arthur Seaton, Sillitoe encapsulates, with a touch of irony, the individual aspirations, collective orientations and materialism of the post-war working-class male. He had money in his pocket and time on his side. His spending was a mixture of the 'I'm all right Jack' attitude and generosity to his kith and kin. He revelled in the male environment of pub and betting club, and he threw into relief the greater consumerism and the *que sera sera* attitude of the urban working class.

Arthur also possesses a spurious 'aristocratic connection'. He informs a tight-fisted market gardener called George in a pub one evening that Lord Earwig of the Jockey Club had phoned him up from Aintree that day to tip him about 'Last Echo' in the Grand National. George is both 'appeased and somewhat credulous' about this inside information and its esteemed origins. Sillitoe only hints at the deference to the aristocratic influence over horse racing, but this points us to an important conclusion about class relations and gambling and what Lemahieu, after J.B. Priestley, calls 'the common culture'.<sup>6</sup> The world of horse racing and betting, as we saw in chapter eight, did not lend itself to a critique of the capitalist system, but it certainly reflected the differences in wealth and power between classes and the increasing

---

<sup>5</sup> See David Craig, 'The Roots of Sillitoe's Fiction', in Jeremy Hawthorn (ed.), *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, 1984, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> D. L. Lemahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 1988, pp. 317-33.

influence of businessmen and business strategies within a framework of aristocratic control. The traditional ambience of horse racing and its aristocratic pedigree, to use Lemahieu's term, 'conveyed legitimacy' upon betting. It thus became a frame of reference which incorporated but diffused cultural and economic differences, and allowed its followers to define themselves against the calvinistic carping of unrepresentative killjoys. As the demand for and dissemination of a commercial apparatus of betting developed with the sporting press and the ticker-tape, the ethos of the fancy and its sporting hyperbole was absorbed into it. The commercialisation of betting became underpinned by a sense of tradition based upon the Englishman's right to a flutter. But, as Hobsbawm has written, traditionalism 'must not be confused with passivity', even if it does not challenge authority.<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that all of this evolved during an era of prohibition and a moral campaign against betting and gambling which was at its height between the 1880's and the inter-war years. The Acts of 1853 and 1906 made an ass of the law, but this did not translate beyond a conception akin to Hoggart's rendition of 'Us and Them.' People did not wage war upon the law, but they defied and ignored it.

For Lancashire between the Edwardian years and the eve of World War Two, Walton has described the working class as possessing an outlook 'which blended individualistic opportunism and collective material assistance' and where 'independence and deference, hard work and ostentatious leisure' were combined in economistic and sociable attitudes.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the ideology of the punters reflected both the weight of older superstitions and a belief in luck, and the more rational and literate era of mass education. Most studied the form and also went with the fancy. Street betting with bookmakers, pitch and toss and gaming, the football pools, an evening at the

---

<sup>7</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, 'The Invention of Tradition', in Eric Hobsbawm (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, 1983, pp. 266 and 307.

<sup>8</sup> John Walton, *op cit* p. 353.



greyhound track or a day at the races all expressed the shared and individual aspirations of the working class.

So how far can we agree with Cunningham's viewpoint that leisure in an industrialising society became 'tamed and legitimate because separate from other concerns of peoples lives.'<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, it was inseparable from the other concerns of their lives, and reflected the value system around which they were based. He begins his book by stating that he is one of the optimistic school of historians who, after E.P. Thompson, argue that people made their own history, and in so doing their own leisure. His pessimistic conclusion that popular recreation was 'tamed' undermines his initial position and understates the extent to which mass culture reflects bottom-upward impulses, impulses which are not essentially class-combatative.

This raises a problem for Rojek's view that leisure has been 'pacified' by the conspiracy of commercialisation, privatisation (in the sense of preferring to stay at home) and individuation. He sees this as a transition 'from the carnival to the walkman.'<sup>10</sup> His argument goes like this: in the olden days, people mocked their rulers and participated heartily in the charivari of class expression. Today, the masses sit at home and watch television, listen to a record or fill in a pools coupon. 'What would a carnival reveller make of all this?' Rojek asks. This naive historicising of pre-industrial leisure is weak enough. But, more significantly, this sort of approach loses sight of the fact that most people have had some ability to determine the the nature of their own leisure, despite significant differences in wealth and educational attainment.<sup>11</sup> Historically, this has meant that no matter how loaded the dice are in favour of economic power elites, a plurality of leisure has developed which has exasperated the proponents of rational recreation and given expression to a popular culture which is not always what some historians would have wanted

---

<sup>9</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *op cit*, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Rojek, *op cit*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Roberts, *Contemporary Society and the Growth of Leisure*, 1978, pp. 5-7.

for the people they were studying. A history of gambling reflects both the unifying and discrepant characteristics of the class structure, but not the taming of working-class recreation from above. In an unequal society, most people have a good idea of the odds facing them. They adjust their purse-strings and use their leisure accordingly.

APPENDIX OF ILLUSTRATIONS



Plate 1: The Pledge Against Gambling, signed at the Methodist Central Hall, Manchester, June 1st, 1889.

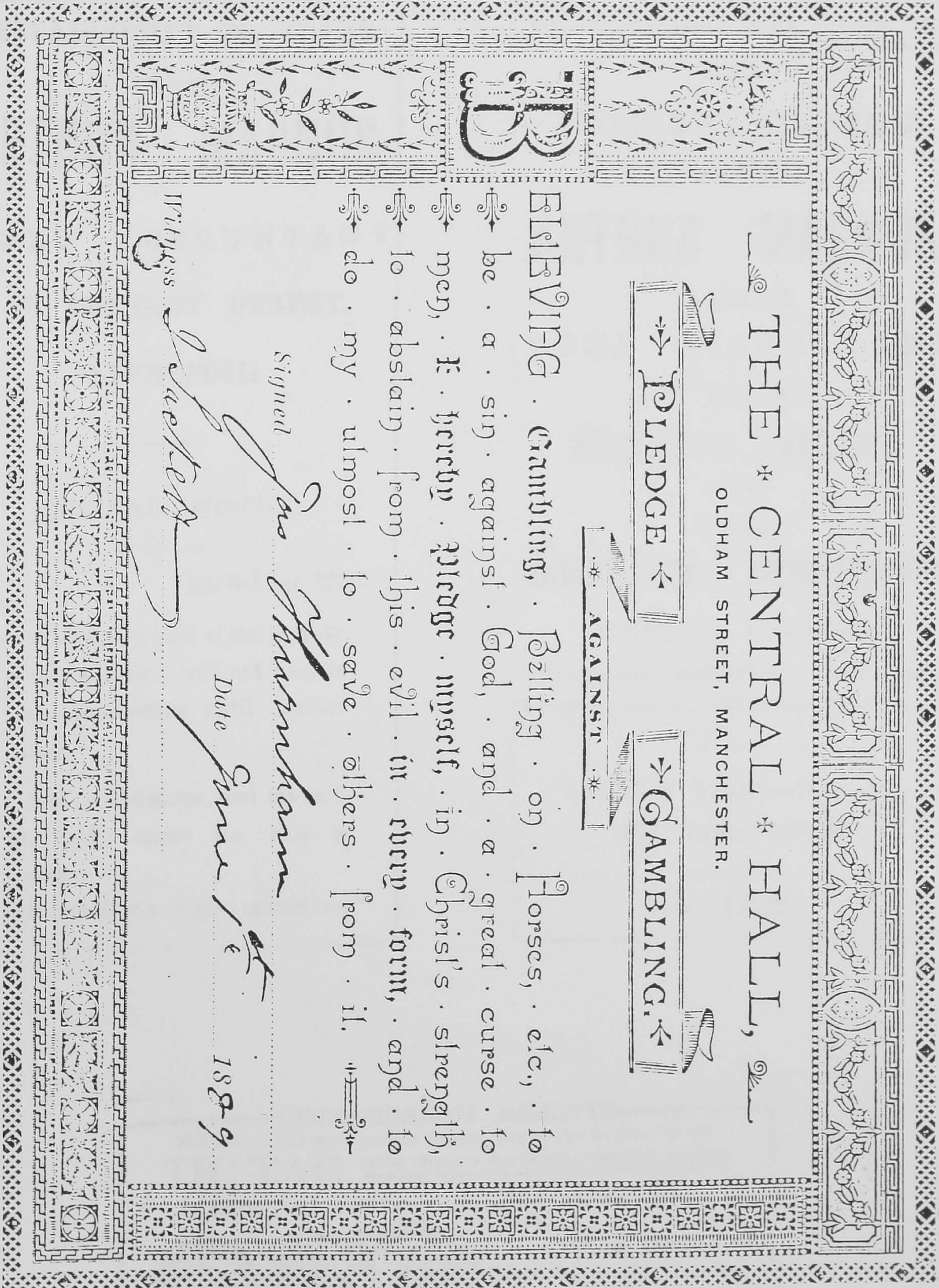




Plate 2: a) Two advertisements of Arthur Magnus, from the Sporting Life, 16th October and 3rd November, 1906.

b) Advertisement for the clock bag, any edition of the Sporting Chronicle in the early 1920's

ESTABLISHED 38 YEARS.

---

**ARTHUR MAGNUS,**

TURF ACCOUNTANT

67, STANLEY STREET,  
LIVERPOOL.

---

SPECIAL NOTICE.

---

8th October, 1906.

Pending the trial of the legality of my business I will not execute any commissions until further notice.

Any commissions sent me will be void, under the rule of racing—

"You cannot win if you cannot lose."

FOUND A RELIABLE TURF ACCOUNTANT  
—Vido P'cos.

---

ESTABLISHED 33 YEARS.

---

**ARTHUR MAGNUS,**

LARGEST  
TURF ACCOUNTANT  
IN EUROPE,  
FLUSHING, HOLLAND.

---

LETTERS:  
**ARTHUR MAGNUS,**  
FLUSHING, HOLLAND,  
WILL BE SUFFICIENT ADDRESS.  
Postage—Letters, 2d. (half-ounce). Post Cards, 1d.

---

BUSINESS TRANSACTED ALL  
THE YEAR ROUND.

---

NO LIMIT.

**COMMISSION AGENTS**

1926 brings the most perfect betting Bag of the Century in the

**TIC TAC** which gives you that security which has long been required, fitted with a real lever NON-MAGNETIC Jewelled Watch

An 8-Lever Lock SEALED Intact. Times and Seals all bets.

Sold on 7 days' approval.  
**Price £4.**

Write for our Free illustrated Catalogue

**THE RICHMOND TIME RECORDING CO.,**  
57, St. Anne Street,  
LIVERPOOL.

Phone: NORTH 421





Plate 3: Newspaper Boys with the Sporting Newspapers, London, 1899.





Plate 4: 'At the Commission Agent's Dinner', Cartoon from the Liverpool Evening Echo,

*At The Liverpool Commission Agents' Dinner—By George Green*

THESE ARE THE NICE  
KIND GENTLEMEN  
WHO GO TO THE TROUBLE  
OF MAKING A BOOK  
AND ARRANGING  
FOOTBALL TOTES  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
THE PUNTER.

THEY HAVE SUCH  
WINNING WAYS.





**PAGE  
NUMBERING  
AS ORIGINAL**



Plate 4: 'At the Commission Agent's Dinner', Cartoon from the Liverpool Evening Echo, 21st March, 1931, p6.

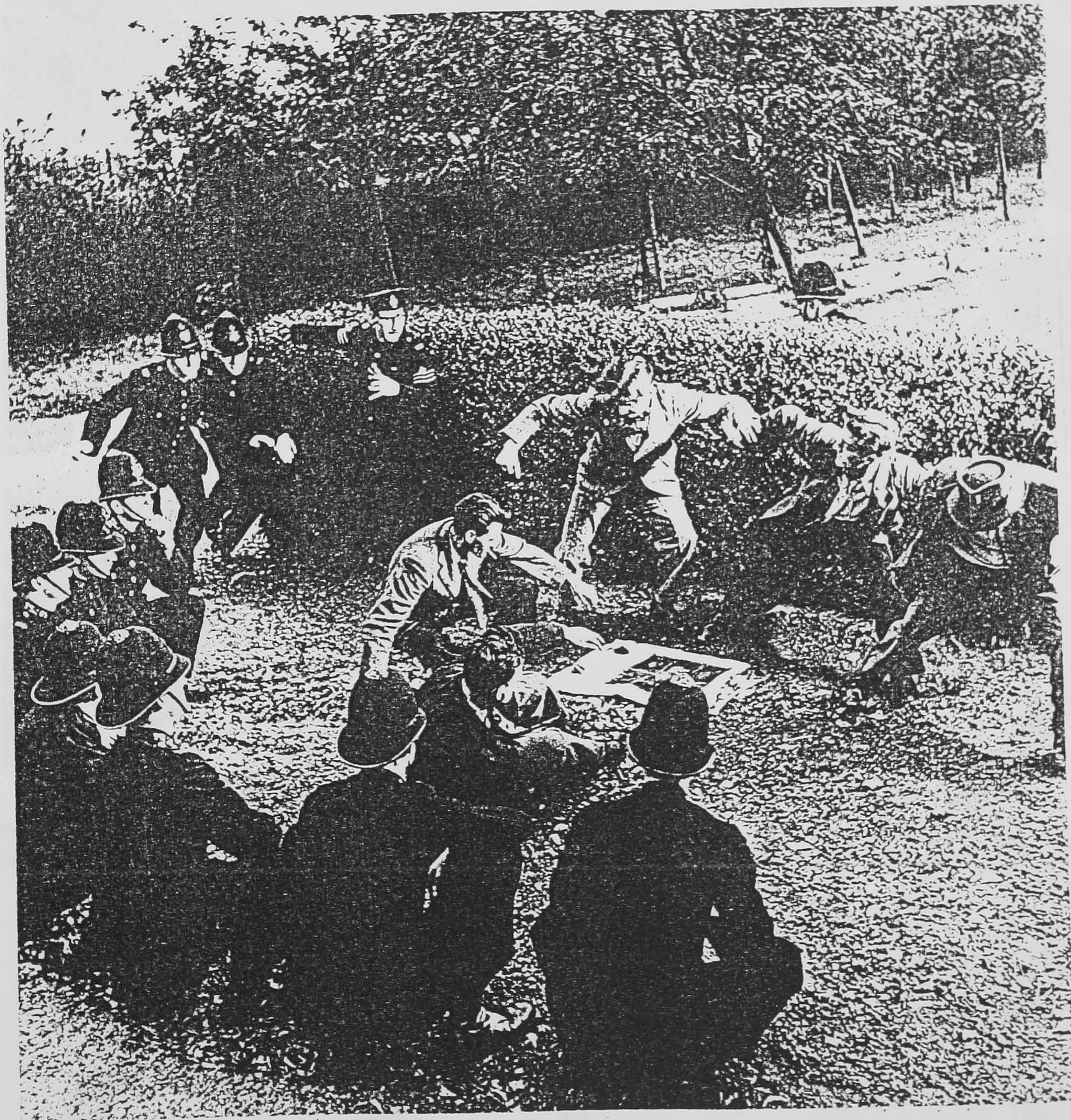
*At The Liverpool Commission Agents' Dinner—By George Green*

THESE ARE THE NICE,  
KIND GENTLEMEN  
WHO GO TO THE TROUBLE  
OF MAKING A BOOK  
AND ARRANGING  
FOOTBALL TOTES  
FOR THE BENEFIT OF  
THE PUNTER.  
THEY HAVE SUCH  
WINNING WAYS.





Plate 5: A staged raid of a Crown and Anchor school, at the training ground of the Metropolitan Police, Hendon, 1958. It gives some idea of what genuine or arranged police intervention was like.



Metropolitan Police recruits at the Training School, Hendon, watching procedure in the arrest of a "gaming school".



Plate 6: The cover of *Opportunity*, Vernon's House Journal, Festival of Britain edition, 1951.

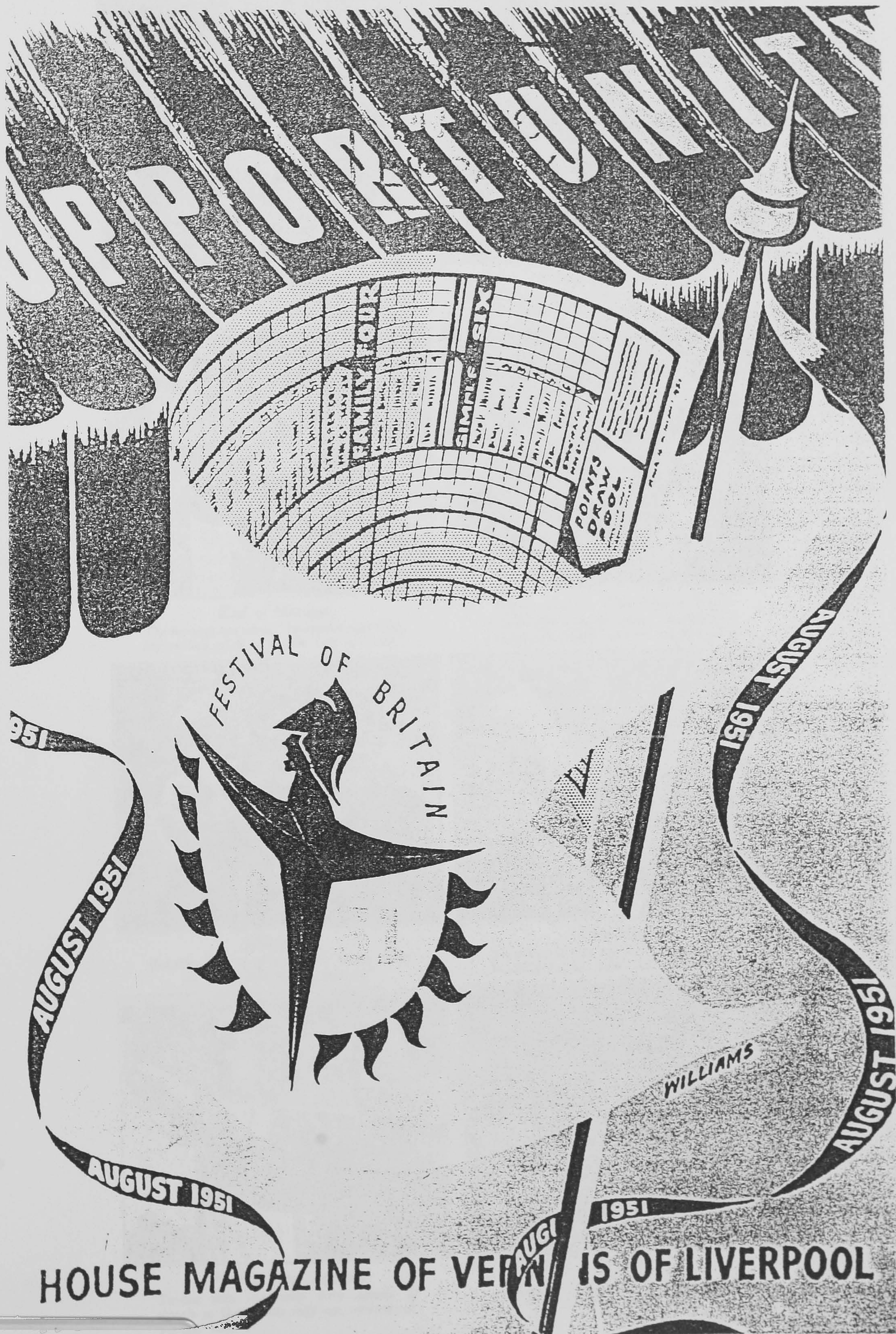
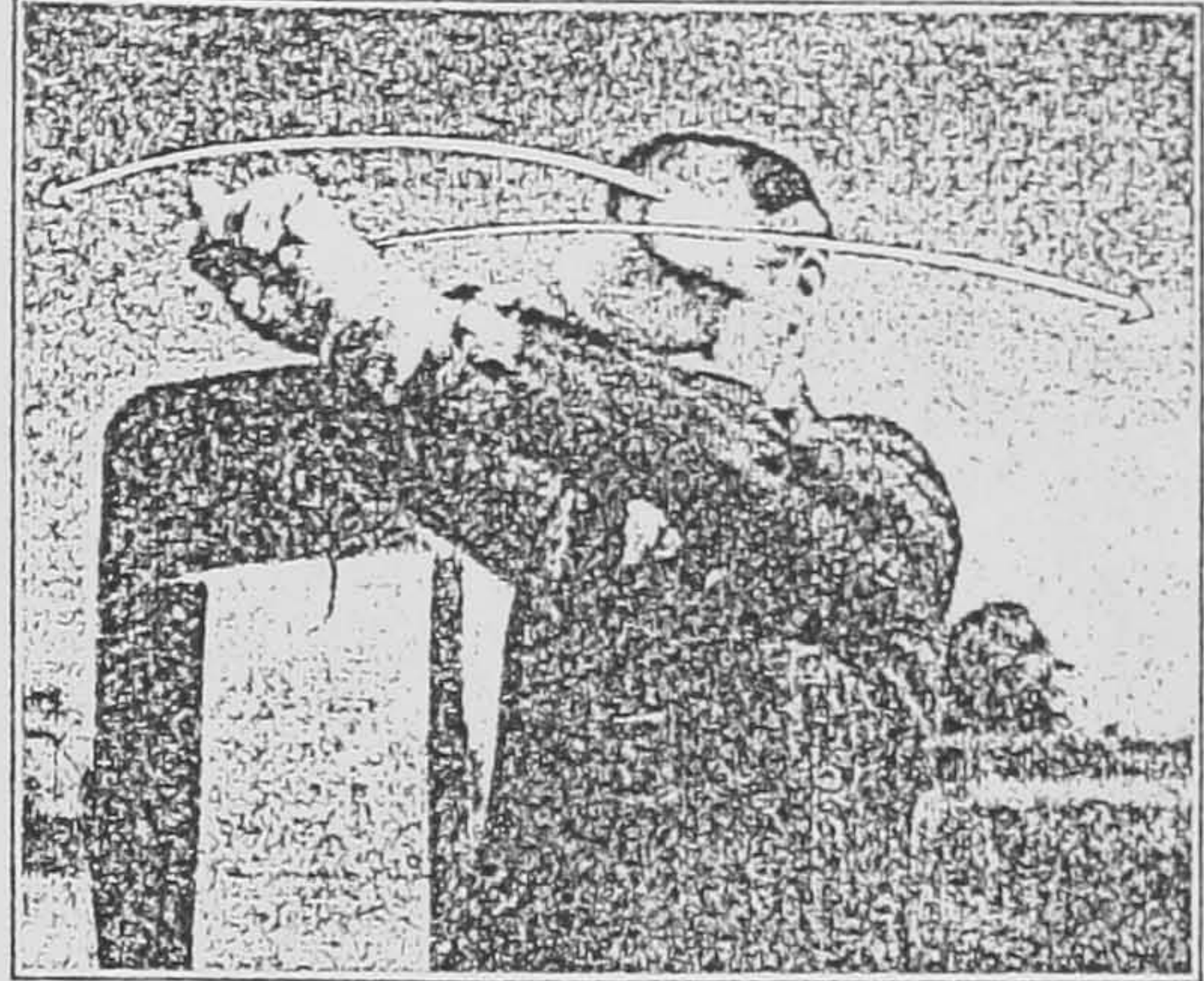




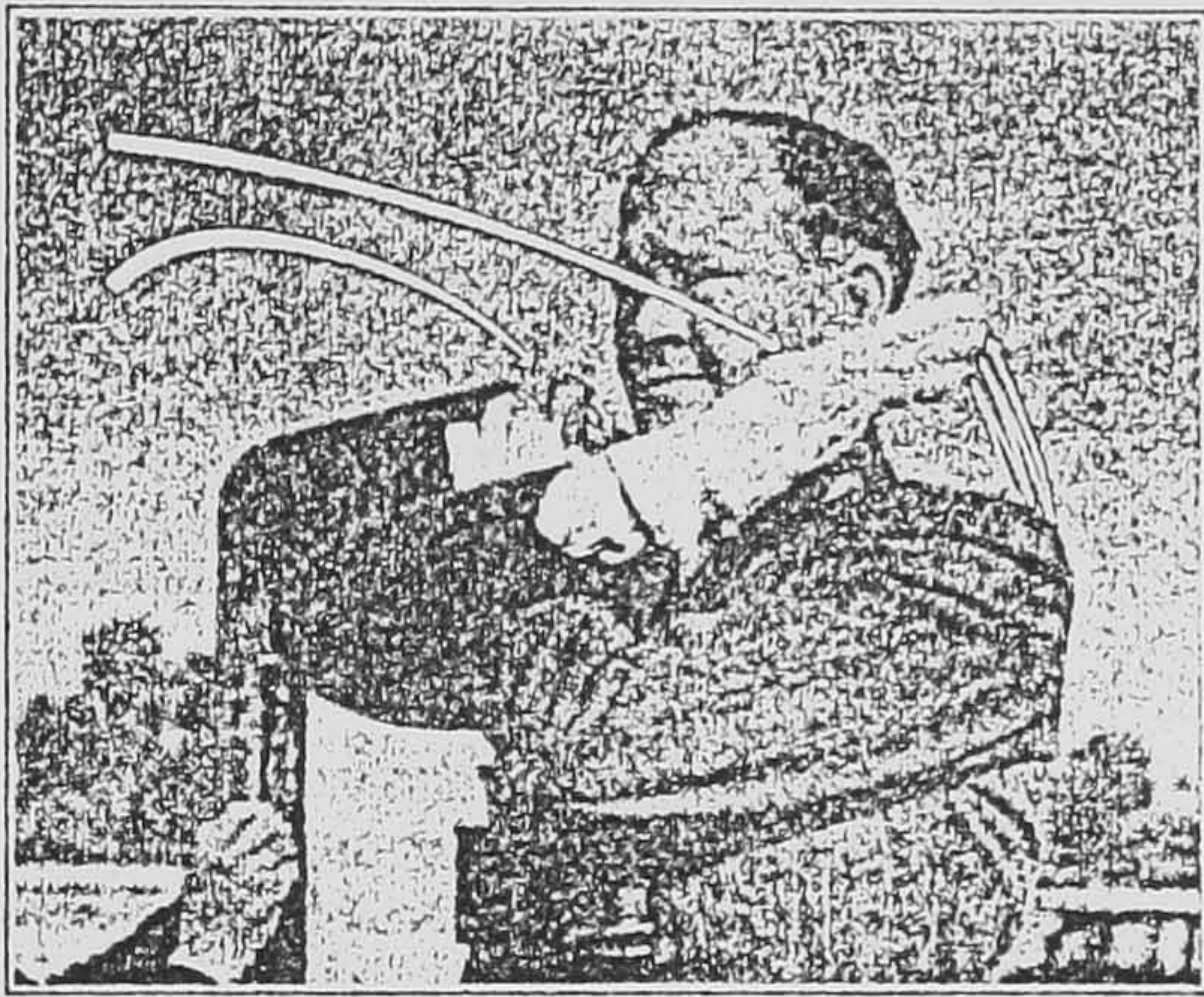
Plate 7: 'Money talks Through Tic-Tac', Picture Post, 8th May, 1948.



*'Nine to Four Against'*  
It looks like a hair-do. It has a mathematical meaning to tic-tac men.



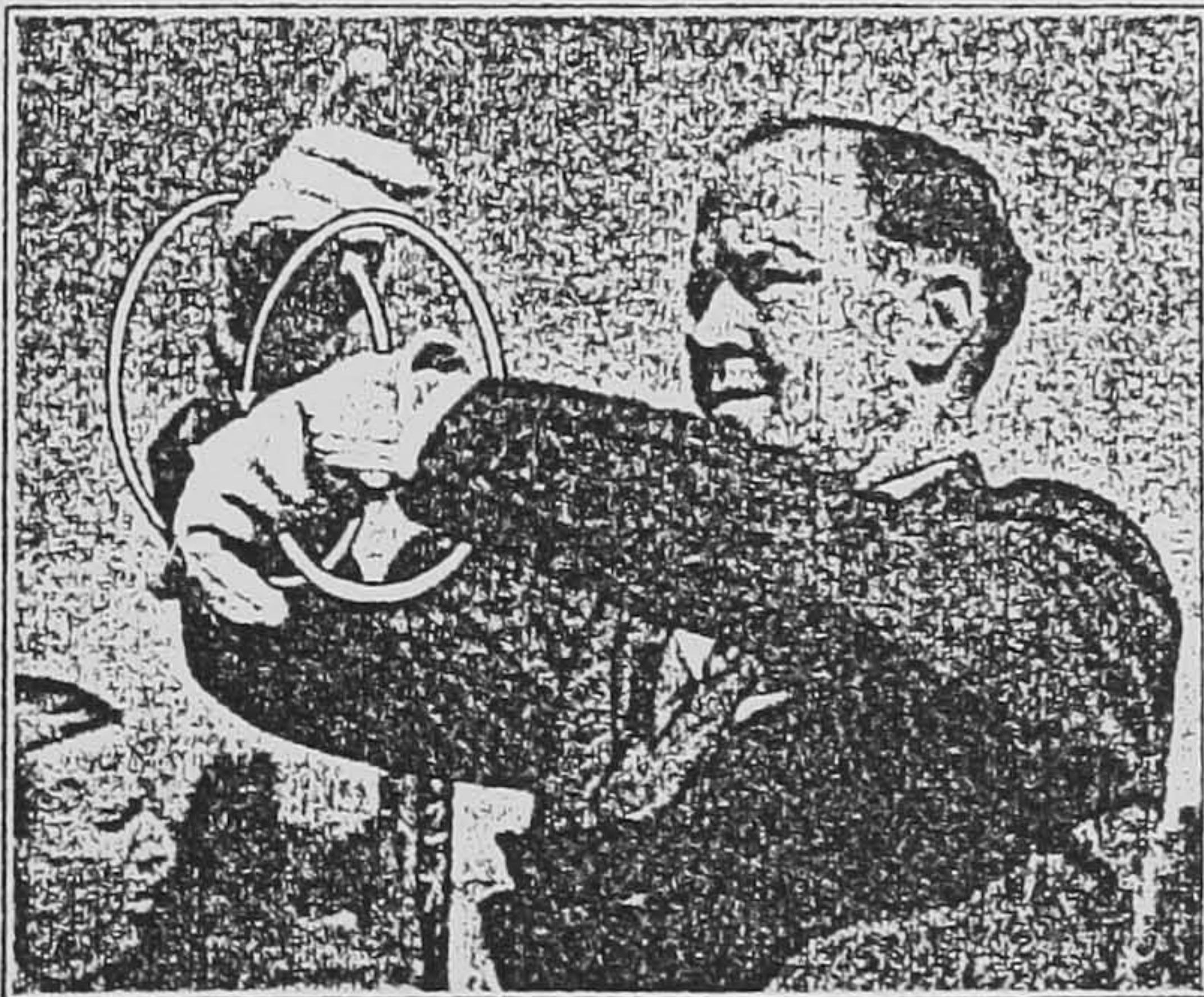
*'A Hundred Pounds'*  
The gesture that looks like a magic pass. The gesture that means £100 each time.



*End of Message*  
The message has read: "Horse Number One, lay to lose at 9 to 4, the sum of £150."



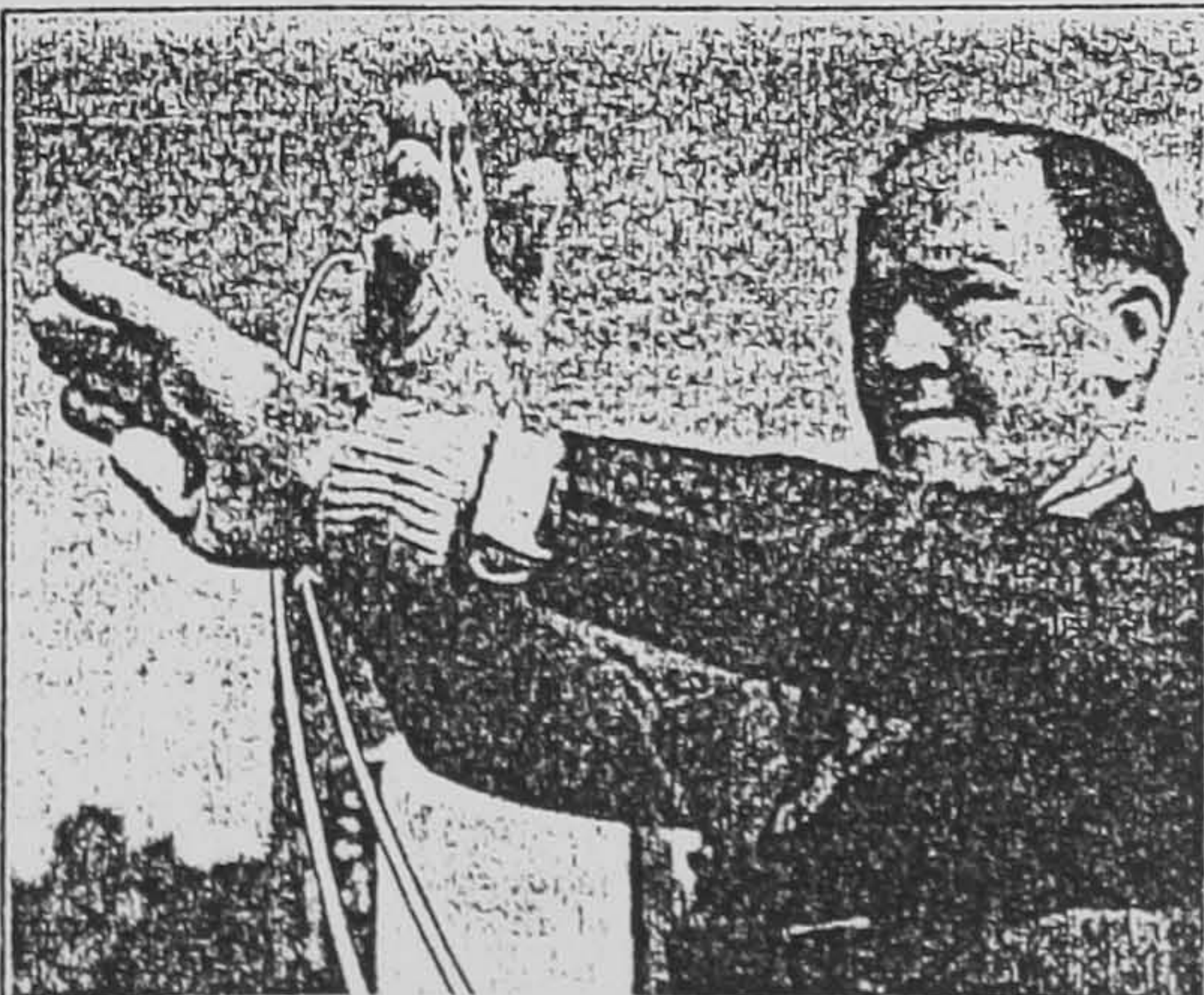
*Other Signs: 'The Figure Two'*  
It looks like a secret society countersign—it means the second horse on the race-card.



*'Odds On'*  
Rotating gesture of the hands means 'odds on' as opposed to 'odds against.'



*'Even Money'*  
Some tic-tac men signal 'even money' by a brushing motion, others use different signs.



*'Five to Four Against'*  
Tic-tac men commonly vary details of rivals may not understand.



*'Bets Off'*  
It is one of the few signals of the tic-tac man which speaks for itself.

Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men  
Tic-tac men



Plate 8: Irish Hospital Sweepstake Tickets, for the Grand National, March 27th, 1931

**C E 24409** *Irish Free State*  
**Hospitals Sweepstake**



Under the Public Charitable Hospitals (Temporary Provisions) Act, 1930  
 Conducted and managed by the Hospitals Committee, under the Chairmanship of Viscount Parnell, and the assistance of many charitable friends for the support of Charitable Hospitals in Ireland.

**THE GRAND NATIONAL**  
 TO BE RUN AT LONDON, MARCH 27th, 1931  
 Proportion of £100,000 distributed



To be drawn in public under the supervision of General O'Duffy, Commissioner of Police, I.R., at the Mansion House, Dublin, on March 27th, 1931. Results of Draw will be published in the Press. Subscribe only through a Business House, Bank, Friend, or Trusted Acquaintance, whose address and credentials are known to you.

HEADQUARTERS, HOSPITALS TRUST, LTD., 13 PARLSFORT TERRACE, DUBLIN, I.F.S.  
 PRINTED BY MESSRS. DOLLARD'S AND MESSRS. HELY'S, LTD., DUBLIN.

**DISTRIBUTION.**  
 The amount of money received from the sale of tickets, calculated under the Act, will be distributed as follows:—  
 75% after deduction thereof of the audited expenses, as sanctioned under the Act, will be distributed as Prizes.  
 The balance 25% will be paid to the Hospitals.

The amount provisionally certified by the Auditors on the day preceding the draw to be available for Prizes, if exceeding £100,000, will be divided into as many Prize Units of £100,000 as the sum admits. The remainder of the money available for Prizes will be distributed in **Ten Cash Prizes of equal amount.**  
 Each Prize Unit will be distributed in prizes as follows:

**PARTICULARS OF PRIZES.**

TO DRAWER OF WINNING HORSE	Placing of Horses conclusively	£30,000
SECOND HORSE	determined by Rules of Tattersall's	£15,000
THIRD HORSE	Committee governing wagers	£10,000
Drawers of all other Horses not declared forfeit at the First Acceptance		£35,000
100 CASH PRIZES OF £100 EACH		£10,000
		<b>£100,000</b>

If the sum available for prizes does not exceed £100,000, the entire sum will be the Prize Unit, and will be distributed in the proportion of the prizes out of the Prize Unit of £100,000. In any event, the sum of £25,000 is guaranteed as a minimum, and has been deposited at the Bank of Ireland, Dublin, in the names of the Trustees.

Prize-winners are the persons named on the Counterfoils drawn. Should the Race not take place, the Prize Money (less the Cash Prizes) will be divided equally amongst the drawers of horses; the Cash Prizes will be distributed as drawn. Prizes unclaimed within six months from the draw will become forfeit to the Hospitals.

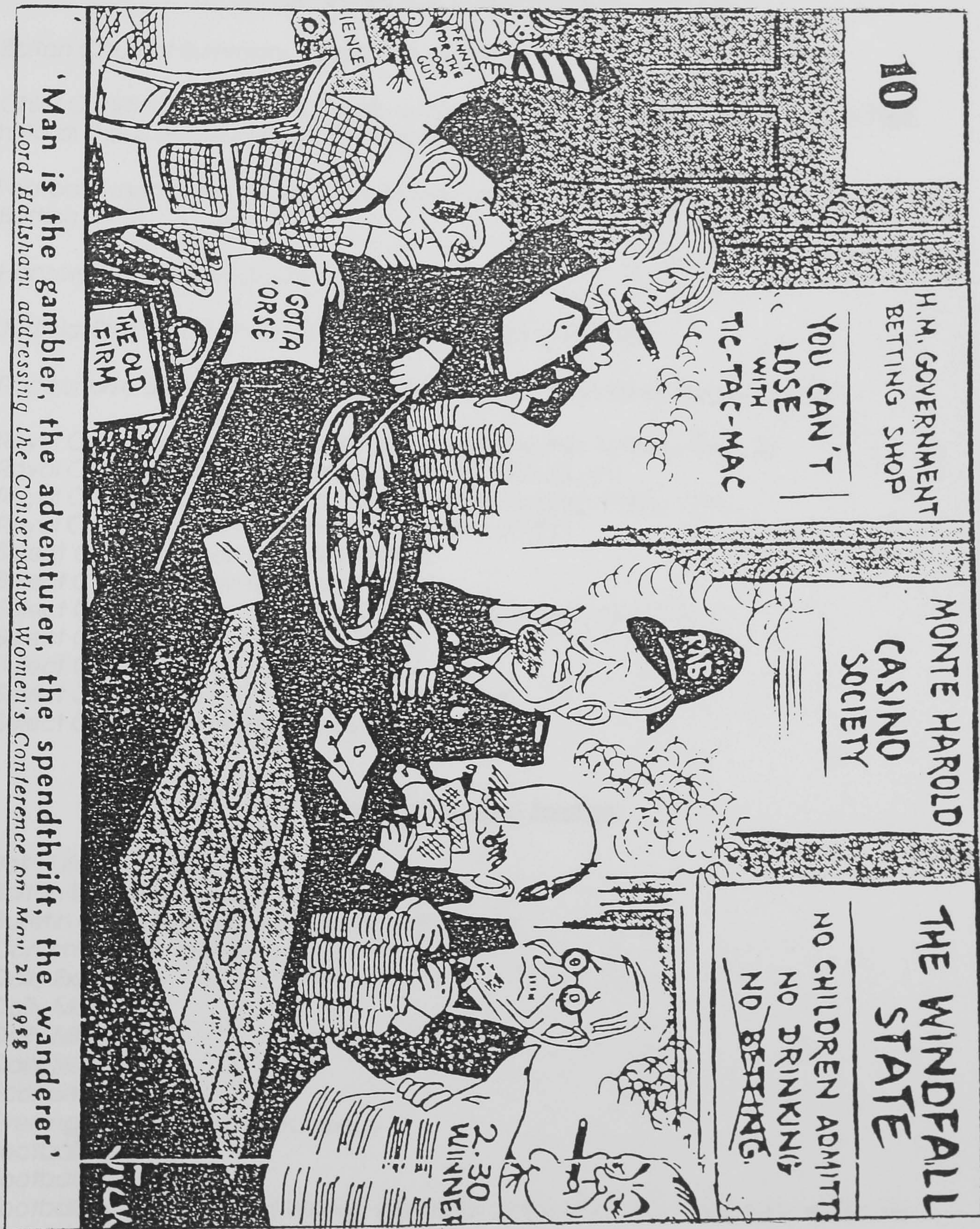
Acknowledgments of subscriptions will be sent to Sellers for issue to Subscribers. Subscribers should notify Hospitals Committee, Dublin, direct of failure to receive acknowledgment, and **IN ALL SUCH CASES THE SELLER'S NAME AND ADDRESS MUST BE QUOTED.**

Draw Lists will be posted to Sellers abroad and Particulars communicated to the Press of all countries.

PRINTED BY MESSRS. DOLLARD'S AND MESSRS. HELY'S, LTD., DUBLIN.



Plate 9: 'Tic Tac Mac', a part of the message of Vicky's cartoon, the London Evening Standard, 5th November 1959.



'Man is the gambler, the adventurer, the spendthrift, the wanderer'  
—Lord Halifax addressing the Conservative Women's Conference on May 21 1958



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(All titles published in London unless otherwise stated)

### 1) Official Reports and Government Publications

*Bolton Court of Summary Jurisdiction*, Register.

*Chief Constables of Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool*, Annual Reports 1840-1962, held at these respective local history libraries.

Football Association: *Report of the Commission of the F.A. on Football Coupon Betting*, 1913.

*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*.

*Judicial Statistics*, Annual Returns to Parliament 1895-1962.

*Racecourse Betting Control Board*, Annual Reports to Parliament, 1929-40.

*Royal Commission on the Duties of the Metropolitan Police*, 1908, L, LI.

*Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting* 1932-33, XIV.

*Royal Commission on Betting, Lotteries and Gaming*, 1949-51, VIII.

*Royal Commission on Gambling*, 1978, Cmnd 7200.

*Select Committee on Lotteries*, 1808, II.

*Select Committee on Gaming*, 1844, VI.

*Select Committee on the Laws Respecting Gaming*, 1844, VIII.

*Select Committee on Betting*, 1901, V.

*Select Committee on Betting*, 1902, V.

*Select Committee on Premium Bonds*, 1918, III.

*Select Committee on Betting Duty*, 1923, V.

### 2) Newspapers and Journals

*Bell's Life in London*

*Bolton Evening News*

*Bulletin of the National Anti-Gambling League*

*Contemporary Review*

*Daily Express*

*Daily Mail*

*Daily Mirror*

*Daily Sketch*

*Economist*

*Evening Newspaper* (Manchester)

*Football Forecast*

*Football Specialist*

*Football Programme and Weekly Calendar of the Rugby and Association Games*

*Fortnightly Review*

*Fraser's Magazine*

*Free Lance* (Manchester)

*Gore's (later Kelly's) Directory of Liverpool*

*Greyhound Owner and Open Race Digest*



*John Bull*  
*Labour's Northern Voice*  
*Littlewood's Review*  
*Littlewood's Sports Log*  
*Liverpolitan*  
*Liverpool Daily Post and Echo*  
*Liverpool Review*  
*Lotinga's Weekly*  
*Manchester Evening Chronicle*  
*Manchester Evening News*  
*Manchester Guardian*  
*New Statesman*  
*News of the World*  
*Opportunity: Vernon's House Magazine*  
*Penciller*  
*Picture Post*  
*Racing Shares*  
*Porcupine (Liverpool)*  
*Racing Calendar*  
*Slater's (later Piggot's) Directory of Manchester*  
*Sporting Chronicle*  
*Sporting Life*  
*Sporting Luck*  
*Sports Review*  
*Tillotson's Directory of Bolton*  
*Times*  
*Tribune*  
*Turf Pioneer*  
*Turf Snips*  
*Turf Tips and Bookmakers Crack-Ups*  
*Willing's Press Guide*  
*Winner*  
*Winning Post*

### **3) Oral and Autobiographical Sources**

#### **(i) Oral Collections**

*Bolton Oral History Project*, Local History Library, Bolton

*Clapson M.*, Oral project, containing fourteen spoken testimonies, twelve questionnaires, and forty-nine letters. This was carried out in the Spring of 1985.

Essex University Oral Archive.

*Manchester Jewish Museum Tape Collection*, Cheetham Hill, Manchester.

*Manchester Tape Studies Collection*, Manchester Polytechnic.

*North West Regional Project*, University of Lancaster.

The writer acknowledges the help of Tony Lane, Dept. of Sociology, University of

Liverpool, in lending him copies of the transcripts of the tapes of Bob Edwards.

**(ii) Autobiographies and Books based on Oral Testimony**

- Armstrong K., *Hello, Are You Working*, 1977.
- Benney M., *Low Company*, Sussex, 1981 (first published 1933).
- Burke M., *Ancoats Lad*, Manchester, 1985.
- Caminada J., *25 Years of Detective Life: A Fascinating Account of Crime in Victorian Manchester*, (ed. Peter Riley), 1985, (first published 1895).
- Caminada J., *25 Years of Detective Life in Victorian Manchester*, Vol. 2, (ed. Charles Horan), 1983, (first published 1895).
- Daley H., *This Small Cloud*, (manuscript version in possession of Clive Emsley, at the Open University)
- Davenport K., *My Preston Yesterdays*, Manchester, 1984.
- Davey R., *Reminiscing Around Rivelin*, Manchester, 1984.
- Dey T.H., *Leaves from a Bookmaker's Book*, 1931.
- Divall T., *Scoundrels and Scallwags (and Some Honest Men)*, 1929.
- Eccles S.S., *Turf Account*, 1986.
- Fields G., *Sing As We Go*, 1960.
- Fish A., *The Family Chatton: Recollections of Farnworth and Kearsley*, Manchester, 1983.
- Forman C. (ed.), *Industrial Town: Self-Portrait of St. Helens in the 1920's*, 1978.
- Garratt V.W., *A Man in the Street*, 1939.
- Hamer S., *The Steamer*, (unpublished manuscript, Bolton Local History Library, c.1980).
- Havern T., *Lookin' For Somethin'*, Manchester, 1984.
- Heaton R., *Salford: My Home Town*, Manchester, 1982.
- Hewins A. and Blythe, R., *The Dillen: Memories of a Man of Stratford-Upon-Avon*, Oxford, 1982.
- Hindley C., *Life and Adventures of a Cheap Jack, by One of the Fraternity*, 1876.
- Horrocks B., *Reminiscences of Bolton*, Manchester, 1984.
- Kray C., *Me and My Brothers*, 1988.
- Lee L., *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning*, 1981.
- Lessing D., *In Pursuit of the English*, 1985.
- Lifetimes: A Couple from Manchester*, Manchester, 1975.
- Monk J., *The Memoirs of John Monk: Chief Inspector of the Metropolitan Police, 1859 to 1946*, (manuscript edited by the author's son; copy in possession of Clive Emsley, Open University).
- Newby E., *Love and War in the Appenines*, 1983.
- Potts B., *The Old Pubs of Hulme*, Manchester, Manchester, 1983.
- Preston J., *Memoirs of a Salford Lad*, Manchester, 1983.
- Ramsden C., *Farewell Manchester: A History of Manchester Racecourse*, 1966.
- Roberts R., *A Ragged Schooling*, Manchester, 1976
- Roberts R., *The Classic Slum*, 1983.
- Samuel R. (ed.), *East End Underworld: Chapters in the Life of Arthur Harding*, 1981.
- Sloan T., *Tod Sloan, By Himself*, 1915.
- Smethurst T., *Reminiscences of a Bolton and Stalybridge Policeman*, Manchester, 1983.
- Toole J., *Fighting Through Life*, 1935.
- Wilkinson D., *A Wasted Life*, 1902.
- Wilkinson D., *Rough Roads*, 1912
- Woodward, K., *Jipping Street*, 1983 (first published 1928).
- Yates, A., *Arthur Yates, Gentleman Trainer and Rider*, 1924.



#### 4) Contemporary Articles, Books and Pamphlets

- Bee J., *Sportsman's Slang, &c.*, 1825.
- Blakeborough J.F.F., *A Short History of the Manchester Races*, 1958.
- Blakeborough J.F.F., *Country Life and Sport*, 1926.
- Blakeborough J.F.F., *The Turf Who's Who*, 1932.
- Booth C. (ed.), *Life and Labour of the People in London*, 1902.
- Burns J., *Brains Better than Bets or Beer*, 1902
- Burt C., *The Young Delinquent*, Vol. 1, 1945 (first published 1925).
- Cadogan Lord, 'The State of the Turf', *Fortnightly Review*, Vol. XXXVII, 1885.
- Churchill H.S., *Betting and Gambling*, 1894.
- Crooks W., *Working Men and Gambling*, 1906.
- Dey T.H. *Betting in Excelsis*, 1908.
- Dickens C., 'Betting Shops', in *Household Words*, No. 18, 26th June, 1852.
- Dickens, 'Bookmaking', in *All the Year Round*, Vol. 20, 1868.
- Egan P., *Pierce Egan's Book of Sports, and Mirror of Life &c.*, 1832.
- Gordon A.P.L., 'The Statistics of Totalisator Betting,' *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. 94, 1931.
- Green P, *Betting and Gambling*, 1927 (and 1935).
- Hilton J., *Why I Go In For The Pools*, 1936.
- Hogge J.M., *Betting and Gambling*, 1904.
- Hogge J.M., *The Facts of Gambling*, 1907.
- Horsley Canon, *How Criminals are Made and Prevented*, 1913.
- Johnson S., *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755.
- Masterman C.F.G., *The Condition of England*, 1909.
- Mayhew H., *London Labour and the London Poor*, 1861.
- Orwell G., *The Road to Wigan Pier*, 1976 (first published in 1938).
- Peterson A.W., 'The Statistics of Gambling', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 113, 1952.
- Perkins E.B., *The Problem of Gambling*, 1919.
- Perkins E.B., *Gambling in English Life*, 1950.
- Phillips H., *Pools and the Punter*, 1955.
- Robertson A.J., 'Football Betting', *Transactions of the Liverpool Economic and Statistical Society*, 1907.
- Rowntree B.S. (ed.), *Betting and Gambling: A National Evil*, 1905.
- Rowntree B.S., *Poverty: A Study of Town Life*, 1922.
- Rowntree B.S. and Lavers R., *English Life and Leisure*, 1951.
- Runciman J., 'The Ethics of the Turf', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. LV, 1899.
- Russell C.E.B., *Manchester Boys: Sketches of Manchester Lads at Work and Play*, Manchester, 1985 (first published 1905).
- Russell C.E.B., *Social Problems of the North*, 1980, (first published 1913).
- Russell C.E.B. and Rigby 'Gambling and Aids to Gambling', 1900, *Economic Review*, 1900.
- Salt H.S. (ed.), *Cruelties of Civilisation: Humanitarian Essays* (3 Vols.), 1895-98.
- Sandiland G.S., *Atalanta, Or the Future of Sport*, 1928
- Shimmin H., *Liverpool Life: It's Pleasures, Practices and Pastimes*, 1856.
- Zweig F., *The British Worker*, 1952.

#### 5) Contemporary Manuscript Collections

Booth Collection: *Poverty Notebooks*, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics.

Booth Collection, University of Liverpool Library.

The Correspondence of Charles and Mary Booth, University of London, Senate House Library.

Mass Observation Archive, University of Sussex, Brighton.

Metropolitan Police Archive, Brixton.

Watch Committee Minutes, Manchester, at the Police Museum, Newton Street, Manchester.

### 6) Secondary Works

Allum C., *The Labour Process and Trade Unionism: A Study of the Rise of Unionisation in the Bookmaking Industry*, Unpublished Thesis, University Of Warwick, 1980

Bailey P., *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885*, 1978.

Bale J., *Sport and Place: A Geography of Sport in England, Scotland and Wales*, 1982.

Bean J.P., *The Sheffield Gang Wars*, Sheffield, 1981

Bean R., 'Police Unrest, Unionisation, and the 1919 Strike in Liverpool', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 15, 1980, pp633-53.

Bennett T. (ed.), *Culture, Ideology and Social Process*, 1985.

Blakeborough J.F.F., *Northern Turf History* (3 Vols.), 1949-50.

Bloch H.A., 'The Sociology of Gambling', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 57, No. 3, 1951.

Braddock P., *Braddock's Guide to Horse Race Selection*, 1987.

Brailsford D., *Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne*, 1969.

Breen T.H. 'Horses and Gentlemen: The Cultural Significance of Gambling Among the Gentry of Virginia', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 34, 1977, pp239-257

Brocklehurst H., 'Coursing', *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, Vol. 2, 1966.

Brooke-Smith M., *The Growth and Development of Popular Entertainment in the Lancashire Cotton Towns*, Unpublished M.Litt thesis, University of Lancaster, 1970.

Callois R., *Man, Play and Games*, 1964.

Chandler G., *Victorian and Edwardian Liverpool and the North West from Old Photographs*, 1972.

Chapman G., *Culture and Survival*, 1940

Chenery J.T., *The Law and Practice of Bookmaking, Betting, Gaming and Lotteries*, 1963.

Chinn C. *Social Aspects of Sparkbrook, Birmingham, in the Twentieth Century*, Unpublished Ph.D., University of Birmingham, 1986.

Clarke J., and Critcher, C., *The Devil Makes Work: Leisure and Capitalist Society*, 1985.

Cohen J., 'The Ideas of Work and Play', *British Journal of Sociology*, V., 1953, pp

Constantine S., 'Love on the Dole and it's Reception in the 1930's', *Literature and History*,

Cornish D.B., *Gambling: A Review of the Literature*, 1978.

Cox B., Shirley J., and Short M., *The Fall of Scotland Yard*, 1977.

Craig D., 'The Roots of Sillitoe's Fiction', in Hawthorn (ed.), *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, 1984.

Crump J., 'The Great Carnival of the Year: the Leicester Races in the Nineteenth',



*Midland History Review*

Cunningham H., *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, 1980.

Dennis N., Henriques F., and Slaughter C., *Coal is Our Life*, 1969.

Devereaux E.C., 'Gambling', *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, 1968, pp53-62.

Devereaux E.C., *Gambling and the Social Structure*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1948.

Dixon D., 'Class Law: The Street Betting Act of 1906', *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, 8, 1980

Dixon D., 'Class Law: The Street Betting Act of 1906', in A. Tomlinson (ed.) *Leisure and Social Control*, Brighton, 1981.

Dixon D., *Illegal Gambling and Histories of Policing in England*, Hull, 1984.

Dixon D., *The State and Gambling: Developments in the Legal Control of Gambling in England, 1867-1923*, Hull 1981.

Dowie J., a review of 'The Turf', by Wray Vamplew, in *Economic History Review*, Vol. 30, 2, 1977.

Dowie J. et al, *Risk*, Open University Course, Number 8, 6 Booklets. See especially No. 2, 'Risk and Gambling'.

Downes D.M., Davies, B.P., David, M.E., and Stone, P., *Gambling, Work and Leisure: A Study Across Three Areas*, 1976.

Eadington W.E. (ed.), *Gambling and Society*, Las Vegas, 1975

Ellis J., *Eye Deep in Hell: Life in the Trenches 1914-18*, 1976.

Field C., 'A Sociological Profile of English Methodism', 1900-32, *Oral History*, Vol 4, No. 1, 1976.

Filby M., *The Sociology of Horse Racing*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Warwick, 1985.

Fishwick N.B.F., *Association Football and English Social Life, 1910-50*, Unpub. D.Phil. University of Oxford, 1985.

Gallagher, A.L., *The Social Control of Working-Class Leisure in Preson*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1975.

Gillis J.R., 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England, 1890-1914', *Past and Present*, No. 67, 1975, pp96-114.

Gomme A.B., *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Wales*, Vols. 1 and 2, New York, 1964.

Graves R. and Hodge A., *The Long Weekend*, 1985. (first published 1940)

Hannah W., *Darkness Visible: A Revelation and Interpretation of Freemasonry, Devon*, 1980.

Harris G.B., *Street Betting in the Twentieth Century: It's Social Significance in the Working-Class Community*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Lancaster, 1978.

Harrison B., *Drink and the Victorians*, 1971.

Harrison B., 'Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, No. 38, 1967.

Herman R.D. (ed.), *Gambling*, New York, 1967.

Herman R.D., *Gambling and Gamblers*, 1976.

Hewitt E.J., *A History of Policing in Manchester*, Manchester, 1979.

Hogan R., 'The Working Class Gamble: Frontier Class Structure and Social Control', *Research in Law, Deviance and Social Control*, Vol. 8, 1986, pp. 131-148

Hoggart R., *The Uses of Literacy*, 1968 (first published 1957)

Huizanga J., *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, 1949.

Humphries S., *Hooligans or Rebels?*, Oxford, 1981.

Jones D., *Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, 1982.

Jones G.S., *Languages of Class*, 1983

Jones M.W., *The Derby*, 1979.

- Joyce P., *Work, Society and Politics*, 1982.
- Kaye R. and Peskett, R., *The Ladbroke's Story*, 1969.
- Klein J., *Samples From English Cultures*, Vols. 1 and 2, 1965.
- Kline P., *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory*, 1972.
- Knight S., *The Brotherhood: The Secret World of the Freemasons*, 1983.
- Lemahieu D.M., *A Culture for Democracy*, Cambridge, 1988.
- Liddington J., 'Working Class Women in the North West', *Oral History*, Vol 5, No.2, 1977.
- MacDonald L., *They Called it Paschendale*, 1983.
- Mannheim, H., *Social Aspects of Crime in England Between the Wars*, 1940.
- Marples M., *A History of Football*, 1954.
- Martin B., *A Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change*, Oxford, 1981.
- Mason T., *Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915*, Brighton, 1981.
- Mason T., *Sport in Britain*, 1988.
- Mason T., 'Sporting News, 1860-1914', in Harris, M. and Lee, A., (eds) *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries*, 1986.
- Mays J.B., *Growing Up in the City: A Study of Juvenile Delinquency in an Urban Neighbourhood*, Liverpool, 1964.
- McCall G.J., 'Symbiosis: The Case of Hoodoo and the Numbers Racket', *Social Problems*, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1963.
- McCalman J., 'Class and Respectability in a Working-Class Suburb: Richmond, Virginia, Before the Great War', *Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, 1982.
- McKibbin R., 'Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950', in Winter, J., (ed.) *The Working-Class in Modern British History*, 1983.
- McKibbin R., 'Working Class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939', *Past and Present*, No. 82, 1979.
- Meacham S., *A Life Apart: The English Working-Class, 1890-1914*, 1977.
- Middleton T.M., *An Enquiry into the Use of Leisure Amongst the Working-Classes of Liverpool*, Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Liverpool, 1931.
- Miller R., *Gambling and the British Working Class*, Unpublished dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1978.
- Milroy L., *Language and Social Networks*, Oxford, 1987.
- Mortimer R., *The Jockey Club*, 1958.
- Mott, J., 'Miners, Weavers and Pigeon Racing', in Smith M., Parker, S. and Smith T., *Leisure and Society in Britain*, 1973.
- Mott J., *Popular Gambling from the Collapse of the State Lotteries to the Rise of the Football Pools*, Society for the Study of Labour History Conference 'The Working Class and Leisure', unpublished paper, 1975.
- Mowat C.L., *Britain Between the Wars*, 1968 (first published 1955)
- Munroe D.H., *The Grand National 1839-1931*, 1931
- Newman O., *Gambling, Hazard and Reward*, 1972.
- Partridge E., *The Penguin Dictionary of Historical Slang*, 1988.
- Passerini L., *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Cambridge, 1987.
- Pearson G., *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*, 1983.
- Perkins E.B., *Gambling in English Life*, 1950
- Perruci R., 'The Neighbourhood "Bookmaker": Entrepreneur and Mobility Model', in Meadows, P. (ed.), *Urbanism, Urbanisation and Change: Comparative Perspectives*, Reading, Mass., 1969, pp302-11.
- Peterson A.W., 'The Statistics of Gambling', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 1952.
- Polsky N., *Hustlers, Beats and Others*, 1971.
- Poole R., *Leisure in Bolton, 1750-1900*, 1982, unpublished essay, held at Bolton Local History Library.



- Power J., *Aspects of Working Class Leisure During the Depression Years: Bolton in the 1930's*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Warwick, 1980.
- Roberts K., *Contemporary Society and the Growth of Leisure*, 1978.
- Rojek C., *Capitalism and Leisure Theory*, 1985.
- Schur E.M. and Bedau, H.A., *Victimless Crimes: Two Sides of a Controversy*, New Jersey, 1974.
- Seabrook J., *Working Class Childhood*, 1982.
- Seabrook J., *Unemployment*, St. Albans, 1983.
- Sheen, H.E., *Canon Green: Biography of a Great Parish Priest*, 1965.
- Sidney, Charles, *The Art of Legging*, 1976.
- Smithies, E., *Crime in Wartime: A Social History of Crime in World War Two*, 1982.
- Spanier D., *Easy Money: Inside the Gambler's Mind*, 1987.
- Stafford T., *Flat Racing*, 1984.
- Stevenson J. and Cook, C., *The Slump*, 1979.
- Symons J., *Horatio Bottomley*, 1955.
- Tec N., *Gambling in Sweden*, New Jersey, 1964.
- Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 1978.
- Thompson E.P., 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, No. 50, 1971
- Thompson P., *The Edwardians: The Re-Making of British Society*, 1984.
- Thompson P., 'The War With Adults', *Oral History*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1975.
- Vamplew W., *Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain 1875-1914*, Cambridge 1988.
- Vamplew W., *The Turf*, 1976.
- Walton J., *Lancashire: A Social History*, Manchester, 1987.
- Walvin J., *Leisure and Society 1830-1950*, 1978.
- Walvin J., *The People's Game: A Social History of British Football*, 1975.
- Whannell G., *Blowing the Whistle: The Politics of Sport*, 1983.
- White J., *The Worst Street in North London: Campbell Bunk, Islington, Between the Wars*, 1985.
- Wooley R.A., *The Comprehensive Guide to Betting and Bookmaking*, Sheffield, 1976.
- Wright P., *On Living in an Old Country*, 1985.
- Wykes A., *Gambling*, 1964.

### 7)Fiction

- Arlen M., *The Green Hat*, 1924.
- Disraeli B., *Sybil*, Oxford, 1986 (first published 1845).
- Dostoyevsky F., *The Gambler*, 1982, (first published 1867).
- Eliot G., *Daniel Deronda*, 1987 (first published 1876).
- Greene G., *Brighton Rock*, 1938.
- Greenwood W., *Love on the Dole*, 1983 (first published 1933).
- Lawrence D.H., 'The Rocking-Horse Winner', in *Love Among the Haystacks*, 1985 (first published 1926)
- Moore G., *Esther Waters*, (first published 1895)
- Sillitoe A., *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1985 (first published 1958).