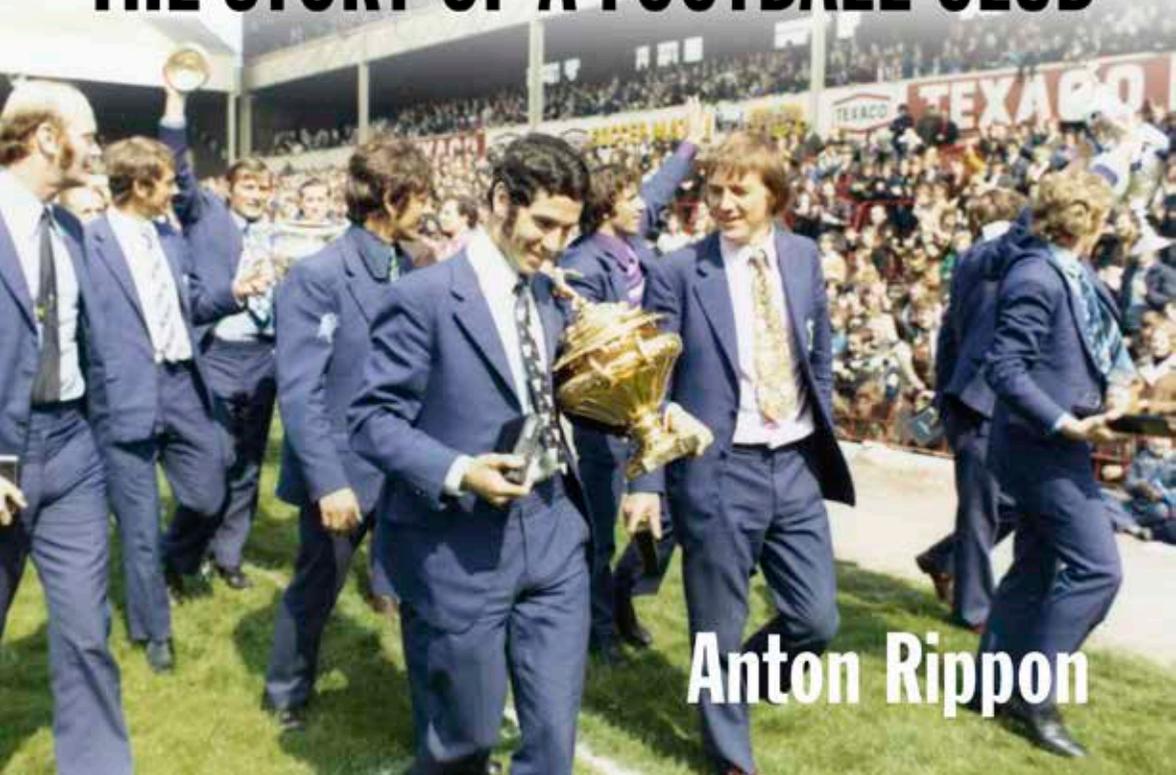




DERBY COUNTY

THE STORY OF A FOOTBALL CLUB



Anton Rippon

Contents

Introduction	6
Acknowledgements	8
Football in a Higher Order	9
Ups and Downs	25
Enter Mr Jobey	37
The Penalty of War	47
Grateful To Be Playing Again	57
That Man Was Harry Storer	64
A Younger Man is Needed	71
“Brilliant ... that was Cloughie”	77
Mackay’s Champions	93
“Good Luck – Whoever You Are”	100
“Just Wring Out My Shirt”	112
The Bald Eagle	130
Managers’ Merry-go-Round	139
An Unexpected Promotion	147
A Man Named Clough	154

Introduction

IT WAS 20 December 1952 – my eighth birthday – when my father came home at lunchtime from the *Long Eaton Advertiser* and, as the fish and chips were being plated up, announced that we were going to the match. He'd already taken me to several reserve-team matches, but this was my big-time debut. That afternoon, Derby County faced Bolton Wanderers in the First Division. "Nat Lofthouse is playing for Bolton; it should be a good game," the old man told me as we finished our treacle tart and custard. The walk to the Baseball Ground was always the same: along Gerard Street, across Burton Road and up Mount Street, then Normanton Road, Harriet Street, through the Arboretum, left into Rosehill Street, down Malcolm Street (where householders stored bicycles for 3d for the afternoon) and into Colombo Street which led straight to the turnstiles for the Osmaston End of the Popular Side.

Just to confuse me, on the way was Molineux Street: I wondered if that was where Wolves played. Some years earlier, before I'd ever seen a live football match, I'd also been confused by a photograph that I'd seen in the *Empire News*. The caption said that it showed Chelsea playing at Stamford Bridge. But there was no sign of a bridge. Similarly, when I read that Fulham played at Craven Cottage, I'd conjured up an image of players weaving their way gently through a crowd of genteel ladies taking tea and cucumber sandwiches on a lawn. Anywhere that boasted a cottage seemed a strange place to play football.

Confusions aside, if the walk was the same as the one we took to watch reserve-team matches, the attendance was much bigger. The Rams Reserves would attract perhaps, 2,000 spectators to the Baseball Ground; on this day, as it turned out, there would be almost 13,000. That might still seem a small crowd by today's standards, but in 1952 Derby County were struggling, and this was the last shopping Saturday before Christmas.

It had been only seven years since the Rams had won the FA Cup at Wembley in the first post-war Final, but that fine team had gradually

INTRODUCTION

broken up and, despite twice breaking the British transfer record in the late 1940s, in the first year of Queen Elizabeth II's reign the team had dropped down the First Division table. The previous season the Rams had just about managed to stave off relegation and, by this December day, they had won only four matches of this campaign. I'd had my ears filled with tales of Raich Carter and Peter Doherty, and before them the likes of Sammy Crooks, Jack Barker and Dally Duncan. It was the memories of these names that now sustained supporters in such bleak times.

I'd like to say that I recall all the details of that match against Bolton but, of course, I was far too young to appreciate the game or the style of the players. I remember that Reg Harrison and the burly Jack Stamps, both of whom had gained Cup winners' medals with Derby at Wembley were playing because my father had pointed them out. And Bert Mozley, who had played for England in the Rams' better days, was at right-back. Another former England player, Jack Lee, was at centre-forward and scored a goal as Derby won 4-3. It was probably a real thriller; alas, I can't remember. Just as, although I can say that I saw Nat Lofthouse play, to be honest, I have no recollection of him. My only clear memory of that chilly afternoon is the smell: a heady aroma of Brylcreem and cigarette smoke.

Years later, through working with BBC Radio Derby, I would become good friends with Messrs Harrison, Stamps and Mozley. Jack and Norah Stamps would invite us to their golden wedding party, while Bert and Jean Mozley would one day show us round the beautiful Canadian city of Victoria. They had emigrated in 1955. I would also manage to play against Jack and Reg in a couple of charity matches. All that, though, was a long way in the future and at full-time I couldn't have imagined any of it as we shuffled out of the ground and along Cambridge Street (we always took a slightly different route home), stamping the life back into our frozen feet, everyone around us buzzing at an unexpected Derby victory. Six days later we were back for a Boxing Day game against Portsmouth. Again, Derby won, this time by 3-0, and I began to wonder why everyone was worrying. It was, however, just a blip; by the end of the season the Rams were rock bottom of the table and relegated to play in the Second Division for the first time in almost 30 years. For an eight-year-old boy, though, it was the beginning of a lifelong passion. Derby County became a central part of my life. Then one day, I decided to find out how it all began.

**Anton Rippon,
Derby, September 2013**

Football in a Higher Order

IT WAS the early autumn of 1884. Queen Victoria was monarch of an empire upon which the sun famously never set, Gladstone was her Prime Minister, and in Derby a man called Francis Ley was celebrating the tenth anniversary of the malleable castings company that he had founded on Osmaston Road. Thanks to its transformation from market town to hotbed of heavy industry, some 85,000 souls lived in Derby, almost triple the number when Victoria ascended the throne 47 years earlier. Most of the newcomers lived in terraced houses in Litchurch, New Normanton, Pear Tree and Rose Hill, areas expanding to accommodate those working long hours in the factories and foundries of the new age. Their jobs were arduous, dirty, often dangerous.

If there was an inclination for leisure, there was little time for it. Certainly, few wandered down to the County Ground on Nottingham Road. If sport was an interest, workers in the heavy industries were unlikely to spend their few free hours watching a cricket team that lost every match. In 1884, Derbyshire CCC couldn't manage even one draw. Off the field, matters were equally desperate. Derbyshire cricket has seldom been anything but cash-strapped. But in the year in which Sophie Tucker was born and John Wisden died, it faced disaster. Could the club continue? The question haunted officials.

The same could not be said for Association Football. Right across Britain, the fledgling sport – goal-nets and penalty-kicks were still years away, even pitch markings weren't as we know them today – was booming. In the FA Cup, now in its 13th season, Derby Midland, drawn from the town's railway works, reached the third round. Another Derbyshire club, Staveley, went further before losing to that year's winners, Blackburn

Rovers. In March 1884 the first-ever Derbyshire Cup Final was staged at the County Ground. Midland and Staveley attracted 7,000 spectators – “the largest attendance ever seen at a football match in Derby”. Cricket officials looked on in disbelief and envy. If only their game could attract such numbers ...

One keen supporter of the Midland team was William Morley, a young clerk at the railway works. His father, William senior, a member of Derbyshire CCC’s committee, lived at the smart end of town, in a large villa near the Arboretum, England’s first public park. The younger Morley had already suggested forming a senior football club for the town. Once those eager football supporters overwhelmed the County Ground, Morley senior took no further persuading. A meeting was held at the Bell Hotel in Sadler Gate. The following day, the announcement in the *Derby Daily Telegraph* was simple enough: “The Derbyshire County Cricket Club has decided on the formation of a football club under Association Rules and desires to render football worthy of the patronage blessed upon it by the public by endeavouring to arrange matches with first-class clubs which will enable the public to witness matches in a higher order than have hitherto been played in Derby.”

Unsurprisingly, the cricket club wanted to call their football section “Derbyshire County”. Equally unsurprisingly, the Derbyshire Football Association, formed a year earlier, ruled that only it could field a team under the county banner. So, Derby County it was. The football team’s colours were those of the cricket club – amber, chocolate and pale blue – and the first player was another son of William Morley, Haydn of that ilk, a 23-year-old trainee solicitor who had been playing at full-back for Derby Midland (he was good enough to captain Sheffield Wednesday in the 1890 FA Cup Final). That the second player enlisted – outside-right George Bakewell – was the star of the Derby Midland team signalled the new club’s desire to be the best in the district, an ambition that fuelled resentment from other local clubs who began to see their leading players courted by the upstarts at Derby County. When Darley Dale lent the new club their star man, half-back Ernest Hickenbottom (the spelling of whose name caused the local press great difficulty) it was in the naïve belief that it would be simply to give him experience for Darley Dale’s greater benefit. They were soon disabused of that notion.

Samuel Richardson, honorary secretary of the football club, assistant secretary of the cricket club and its first-ever captain, would make an

early stab at bringing to Derby County the sort of notoriety for which the Rams – as they would eventually become known – would occasionally become infamous. In February 1890, Richardson, then 46, was the target of a stormy annual meeting of the cricket club at which he was accused – by none other than the club’s Australian Test star, “Demon” Spofforth – of embezzling funds.

He admitted it. In fact, he had been steadily siphoning off money for 10 years, and not just from the cricket club but from the football club, too. With his wife and several of his six daughters – and £1,000 of the club’s money – Richardson fled to Spain, opened a tailor’s shop (he’d run a similar business at 40 Babington Lane), obtained the patronage of King Alfonso, and lived to the ripe old age of 93.

But this was all in the future. The football club had yet to play its first match. This was arranged for Saturday, 13 September 1884, at the Woodside ground of Great Lever FC, in the Farnworth district of Bolton. Great Lever had a decent team that included a centre-forward called John Goodall. One day, Derby County and John Goodall would enjoy a much happier relationship than on that early autumn afternoon. Goodall, making his debut in English football, scored five times, Derby conceded six altogether, didn’t manage to find the net (of course, there wasn’t one anyway) and trooped back to Bolton railway station, their tails well and truly between their legs. It was a shock. This was only a friendly match, but the Derby team wasn’t a bad one. The goalkeeper, Borrowash-born Leonard Gillett, was an Oxford Blue who, three years earlier, had helped Old Carthusians win the FA Cup. The forward line contained Benjamin Ward Spilsbury, Findern-born, Repton-educated and a Cambridge Blue who, in less than six months’ time, would play for England.

Two weeks later Derby County faced a potentially bigger test: a home friendly against Blackburn Olympic, recent winners of the FA Cup. Around 1,500 people had watched the match at Great Lever. The attendance for Derby County’s first home game wasn’t recorded, but we do know that men paid a minimum of an old sixpence (the club later reduced that by half) and ladies were admitted free of charge. Entrance was through gates near the Derby Canal bridge on Nottingham Road. The visitors arrived in Derby at 1.08pm and were conveyed from the Midland railway station to the ground by horse-drawn brake.

Within five minutes of the kick-off, Derby County scored their first-ever goal, an honour that fell to the 20-year-old Spilsbury. Olympic drew

Fledgling Rams pass their FA Cup test

THE visit of Aston Villa to the County Ground for a second-round FA Cup-tie in November 1885 was a massive test for the fledgling Derby County. With plenty of Cup experience – they were to win the trophy two years later – Villa fielded two England internationals in Arthur Brown and Howard Vaughton.

In the previous round the Rams had splashed their way to a 3-0 win over Birmingham St George's on a waterlogged County Ground pitch. Now they faced Villa, who had beaten Derby 4-2 in a friendly earlier in the season.

On an overcast day that threatened rain, the extra accommodation that had been erected at the County Ground was well patronised. The pitch was greasy and Derby defended the Nottingham Road goal; Villa had their backs to the Rifle Range end.

In fact, the game should have been played at Perry Barr. Villa had been drawn at home but, for a financial consideration, had agreed to switch the game to Derby in the belief that they would still win easily. How wrong they were.

Evans and Spilsbury both tested Hobson in the Villa goal, and “Jammer” Smith missed a glorious opportunity to put the home side in front. A few minutes later, however, Smith made amends, hammering a shot through the posts. The ball sailed on for over 100 yards before it was retrieved; goal-nets would not be introduced into football until 1891.

Villa came more into the game in the second half, but it was Derby who scored the second goal of the game. Lewis Cooper swung over a left-wing corner, Spilsbury touched it on, and Evans scrambled the ball over the line.

The main threat to the Rams' progress now was the gathering gloom. More than a few cup games had been abandoned with only minutes to play, but fortunately the daylight held and Derby were through, 2-0.

It was a famous victory. At the final whistle, hats and umbrellas were thrown into the air.

One of the heroes had been goalkeeper Walter Luntley. The *Derby Daily Telegraph* commented: “Luntley served his side splendidly between the posts, evincing coolness and judgement. Evans played a dashing game at centre-forward, and Smith and Cooper fairly dogged the Aston backs. Spilsbury was occasionally brilliant, but not constantly so. Of the back divisions, Wharmby, Morley and Williamson worked extremely hard.”

In the next round, Derby lost 4-2 to Small Heath Alliance – the club later to become Birmingham City – at Coventry Road. On that occasion Spilsbury was a marked man, Small Heath making sure that he had little room to manoeuvre whenever he received the ball.

Disappointing though that defeat was, Derby's victory over Aston Villa in the previous round had been hugely significant. The Rams would now have no difficulty in arranging a top-class fixture list of friendly matches to boost their coffers.

level but Spilsbury restored Derby's lead. In the second half, Olympic equalised again and then went ahead. Derby scored a third, only for Olympic to go 4-3 in front. It was a thrilling game and it might have ended in a draw. With 10 minutes to play, the splendidly named John Barrington Trapnell Chevalier, a Repton School master and veteran of no less than four FA Cup Finals for Old Etonians, accepted a pass from the more prosaically named "Jammer" Smith and sent in a booming shot that crashed against the Olympic crossbar before rebounding almost halfway down the pitch – quite a feat with that heavy leather ox-bladder football. Nine years earlier, it wouldn't have happened: until 1875 there was no crossbar, just tape. Then an argument would have ensued.

Thus was the measure of the early Derby County: hoary sons of the soil (or, more likely, heavy industry); middle-class clerks; and posh toffs like Chevalier, who, a year later, inherited the family property in Suffolk and established himself as a fruit grower, cider maker and top breeder of Red Poll pedigree cattle. He became a JP and president of the Suffolk Chamber of Agriculture. Alas, there is no record of what happened to "Jammer" Smith.

On the murky day of 8 November 1884, Derby County played their first ever FA Cup match, against Walsall Town.

Paying spectators packed around the County Ground touchline, a handful of privileged officials stood on the steps of the football pavilion (actually the back of the cricket pavilion), and everyone craned their necks for a glimpse of the action. The home side included Derbyshire cricketer Frank Sugg, who was also a fine centre-forward or centre-half (in those days the centre-half was a genuine member of the half-back line, a vital link between attack and defence). Derby won the toss and played with the wind in their favour – and when the wind whipped across the barren Racecourse and through the County Ground, that was a distinct advantage – but fell a goal behind after 20 minutes, were 2-0 down at half-time, and ended up losing 7-0. Sugg, who started the game injured, was virtually a passenger for the entire 90 minutes, and without Spilsbury and Chevalier, Derby had been no match for their more experienced opponents.

Yet by the end of their first season Derby County could look back with some satisfaction. The new club had played 34 matches, of which they had won 14 and drawn nine. It wasn't a bad start.

A Fixity of Fixtures

Football supporters agreed – friendly games lacked the competitive spice that laced cup matches. Aston Villa committeeman William McGregor had the answer: “a fixity of fixtures” with competitive football guaranteed every week. In March 1888 he called a meeting at Anderton’s Hotel in London’s Fleet Street to discuss the formation of a league. At a subsequent meeting, at the Royal Hotel, Manchester, the following month, the Football League was formed. It has never been called the English League since McGregor always hoped that Scottish clubs would join.

So, on 8 September 1888, 12 clubs from the Midlands and North played the world’s first set of league football fixtures. For that historic first day of the Football League those fixtures sent Derby County to Pikes Lane, Bolton. They travelled by train – without the invention of the railway there could never have been a nationwide league – and it was running late, so the match against Bolton Wanderers kicked off half an hour after the scheduled start.

Derby County made the worst possible start to their Football League career. James Kenyon “Kenny” Davenport scored for Wanderers after only two minutes – thus, it is believed, making him scorer of the first-ever Football League goal, despite the late kick-off – and after a quarter of an hour the Rams were 3-0 down. Yet by half-time they had drawn level, and when the referee sounded his whistle for full-time, they were 6-3 winners. Lewis Cooper, Lol Plackett and George Bakewell, all Derbyshire men, had scored their goals “with an ease seldom witnessed”. The 5,000-strong crowd booed Bolton off the field. Alas, it was to be Derby’s only win in the first half of a season that included seven consecutive defeats and brought about a “meeting of indignation” at the Athenaeum Rooms in Victoria Street where there were calls for the football club to be separated from the “doomed” cricket club. When the season ended with a 3-0 defeat at Blackburn, the Rams – we shall call them that from now on – became one of the four clubs obliged to seek re-election to the new Football League. All survived.

In the summer of 1889 the Rams made two major signings – brothers who could not have been more different. John Goodall was gentle and genial. Although born in London, he spoke with a thick Scottish accent because he had been raised in Ayrshire; his father was a corporal in the Scottish Fusiliers. That the Rams had managed to engage the services

of such a high-profile footballer was quite remarkable, so remarkable in fact that on the day he signed, the Derby secretary went around the town pasting up notices announcing the fact. John Goodall was already an England centre-forward. He had been capped while helping Preston win the Football League championship (without losing a game) and lift the FA Cup (without conceding a goal).

As John Goodall was putting his name to a Derby County contract, his brother, Archie, was trying his best to get out of having done the same. Thanks to the peripatetic nature of their father's profession, Archie Goodall was born in Belfast and would one day play his international football for Ireland, once the Irish FA had lifted its ban on non-resident players representing the Emerald Isle. He was a rumbustuous character. A Derby solicitor had arranged for the Goodalls to sign for the Rams, but while John quickly scotched the rumour that he would pull out of the agreement, Archie said that he had changed his mind. Although he had started 1888-89 with Preston, Archie had moved to Aston Villa – the first-ever Football League transfer to take place during a season – and now he wanted to remain with Villa. Only when he was told that if he reneged then he would be banned altogether for two seasons did he reluctantly change his mind.

Derby County were to have their hands full with Archie Goodall. He was up before the magistrates for punching a spectator who had barracked him. On one occasion he walked off the pitch after 90 minutes of an end-of-season United Counties League championship decider against West Brom. Extra-time was to be played but Archie claimed that his season's contract had ended. If Derby wanted him for another 30 minutes then they would have to pay him extra. They refused and carried on with 10 men. He also left them with 10 men for a league game at Preston, at the last minute refusing to travel because his wife was ill. When he wasn't playing football, Archie busied himself in the backyard of his house in Wolfa Street, building a large iron hoop. That summer he toured Europe and America with a strongman act, part of which involved him "walking" around the hoop. Once he made the 650-mile round trip from Derby to Kilmarnock riding a bay cob, completing the entire journey there and back in five days. What would be the commercial value of such a character today?

On 19 March 1892, the Rams couldn't have the County Ground because of a race meeting. Step forward Francis Ley, the man we met

at the beginning of this story. He allowed the use of his works sports ground in the Pear Tree district of the town. The players had mixed feelings: the turf was much better at the County Ground, where the replay of the 1886 FA Cup Final had been staged, but the facilities at Ley's 12-acre sports ground were better. The Leys' ground was quite a complex – football, cricket and other sports were played there – but it was one corner that staged the Rams' game against Sunderland. On a business trip to the USA, Ley had been fascinated by the game of baseball. On his return to Derby he set about constructing a baseball diamond and outfield on his sports ground. It was here that Derby County's first home game away from the County Ground took place. Football at a baseball ground – surely not?

The Twisting Tormentor

On 3 September 1892, the Rams met Stoke – they didn't add "City" for another 33 years – at the Victoria Ground. And William Parker, Derby County's first paid secretary, had a red face, a very red face. The 39-year-old accountant had offices at 4 Amen Alley, a quaint little street in the shadow of All Saints' Church that, in 1927, would become Derby Cathedral. The house itself is long gone, cars now parked where once Parker pored over the early balance sheets of Derby County. In 1892, it was more a case of William Parker picking his way through horse droppings. And on this September day he was really was in a mess. He had been a day late in registering three of Derby's professional players, Ernest Hickinbottom, outside-right Sam Mills and inside-forward Jimmy McLachlan. Into their places stepped Harry Garden, Fred Ekins, and an 18-year-old called Stephen Bloomer. More than 1,000 travelling Derby fans wondered who the pale, young lad was. So did the local Stoke newspaper reporter. The only journalist covering the match, he recognised hardly any of the visiting players, and when he telegraphed back his report that Derby County had won 3-1, he credited two of their goals to Johnny McMillan. But it was the new boy, Steve Bloomer, who had scored them.

The debutant had been understandably nervous. But when no less a star than John Goodall urged: "Go on yourself, lad, and shoot," well, what else could he do? The *Derby Daily Telegraph* commented: "Young Bloomer ought to be heard of again in the first team and if he continues to improve as he has done hitherto, then he will make one of the finest forwards in Association Football." Quite how the writer knew that if he

hadn't been at the game, I don't know. Presumably he had spoken to one or more of Bloomer's teammates, or maybe he had seen the youngster before. Whatever, more prophetic words have surely never been written about a young footballer. Bloomer's goals had come three minutes into the start of each half. They would be the first of 332 that he would score for Derby County. No player in the club's history has ever got near that number. And no player ever will.

In one game for Derby Swifts, Bloomer scored 14 goals. In March 1891, just after his 17th birthday, Derby Midland signed him on. Later that year Midland folded and the Rams absorbed the railway club and all its assets as Derby County and Derbyshire CCC finally went their separate ways. One such asset, almost certainly the most valuable, was Steve Bloomer. He joined Derby County as an amateur in June that year, and in his first game scored four times against Darley Dale. The following April he signed professional forms – 7s 6d (38p) per week. “I signed up for that figure meek as a lamb,” he wrote years later. The lamb was to grow into arguably the greatest ever Ram.

On 21 January 1893, Bloomer made his first appearance in the FA Cup. Nearly 3,000 of the 20,000 crowd at Olive Grove, Sheffield, had travelled from Derby. John Goodall scored first against The Wednesday, then Bloomer made it 2-0. But the home team fought back, the game went into extra-time and The Wednesday found the winner. The Rams heard that one of the home players had not been properly registered. They protested, and a rematch was set for the County Ground nine days later. John Goodall scored the only goal of that game but then The Wednesday protested that Bloomer had signed professional forms for another club before joining the Rams. The young lad had fought off all representations from Burton United before unwittingly putting his signature to a signing-on form when he thought he was merely giving his autograph. The FA accepted that he had been tricked but still ordered a third match to be played, back at Olive Grove. This time the result stood: The Wednesday 4, Derby County 2.

Steve Bloomer's first season saw the Rams finish 13th – there were 16 clubs in what was now the First Division – and his goal against the eventual champions, Sunderland's “Team, of all Talents”, earned an unexpected home point and helped towards avoiding relegation. But he was already becoming a marked young man. In October 1893, a match against Newton Heath (the club that would become Manchester United) at the County

Ground erupted into violence, and Bloomer was the main target. The Heathens' left-back John Clements, a former Notts County player, put through his own goal, and Johnny McMillan made it 2-0. Newton Heath disputed the goal and threatened to walk off. Then the visitors' defence set to. The referee's report sums it up: "Clements was cautioned several times for foully playing Bloomer, while Donaldson deliberately stabbed Leiper in the groin and thigh. Perrins deliberately kicked Archie Goodall without the slightest provocation." The Rams won 2-0. Quite how Archie Goodall reacted to being kicked is not recorded.

On 1 September 1894, Derby arrived at champions Sunderland for their first match of the season, only to learn that the appointed referee, Fred Kirkham of Preston, had missed his train. The match started with a deputy official, John Conqueror, in charge. At half-time Sunderland were winning 3-0 when Mr Kirkham arrived, out of breath and a little embarrassed. The Rams were offered the choice of restarting the game from scratch, which, not surprisingly, they elected to do. But the next first half also ended with the home side 3-0 ahead, and after playing a third "half" with a gale in their faces, Derby conceded five more goals, making it 11 on the afternoon, only eight of which counted, of course.

Whatever the ludicrous circumstances, an 8-0 opening day defeat could not be ignored. By the end of the season the Rams were forced to play a "Test Match" – a 19th-century version of the play-offs, only for bottom clubs – against Notts County. It was staged at Walnut Street (later Filbert Street; they do like their nuts in Leicester) where, five minutes from the end, the Rams were trailing 1-0 and John Goodall was limping heavily in those days when substitutes had never been considered. Goodall rallied his men: "Now then boys, there'll be no Second Division football for us!" He was correct. Jimmy Methven hammered in a free-kick from 30 yards out, the ball cannoned off the back of a Notts player who had taken evasive action, and Bloomer whacked the rebound into the net. Now it was exciting. So exciting that the daughter of a Derby director fainted and another Rams official squeezed his pocket watch so tightly that he broke it. The Rams forced three corners, one after the other. From the third, taken by John Goodall, McMillan scored the winning goal. Back in the dressing room the Derby players were ecstatic, although there were probably no high-fives. Only Archie Goodall looked unhappy: "We should have had a dollytubful," he moaned.

So it was First Division football again in 1895-96. Before the season began, Derby County became a limited liability company. And now they could use initial capital letters when referring to the Baseball Ground that was purchased from Francis Ley to become the permanent – well, for 102 years anyway – home of the Rams. The industrialist was a great benefactor. He spent £7,000 to increase the capacity of the Rams' new home from 4,000 to 20,000, and it was half-full when Sunderland were the visitors on the opening day of the season. Bloomer scored twice and Derby won 2-0. It was a great start and it got better and better. By the end of the season the Rams were runners-up to Aston Villa.

It was an FA Cup tie against Villa that had seen the Baseball Ground's capacity increased even further. The potential for a big crowd was so great that the Derby directors ordered a new stand – to be known as the Railway Stand – to be built. The attendance that day is recorded as 20,000 but it was probably more. The new stand was only half-finished and workmen had to make it secure during the game. It would take the capacity to 27,000. There was a mighty roar when the Rams ran out “as fit as fiddles and as lively as kittens” after their “special Cup training” at Ashover. Soon they were 4-0 in front – Bloomer, inevitably, had scored twice – and although Villa pulled back two goals, it was the Rams who went into the hat for the next round. In fact, they went all the way to the semi-finals before losing 2-1 to Wolves at Perry Barr.

In 1896-97 the Rams finished third, and there was another appearance in the FA Cup semi-final, this time against Everton at the Victoria Ground. Both Goodalls scored but it was the Merseysiders who went into the Final with a 3-2 victory. First Division runners-up and then third place, and consecutive FA Cup semi-finals – Derby County were becoming a football power.

Third Time Unlucky

On Saturday, 16 April 1898, thousands of football supporters from the East Midlands boarded trains for London. From Derby and from Nottingham they flooded, each paying 4s (20p) for a workman's return. Their destination was the Crystal Palace at Sydenham where they would be part of a 60,826 crowd at the FA Cup Final between the Rams and Nottingham Forest. Derby's players could look back on an Easter Monday hammering of Forest at the Baseball Ground in which Bloomer scored a hat-trick. That afternoon the Rams hit five altogether, and Forest

managed no goals at all. But several of the visitors' Cup Final line-up were watching from the stand.

As kick-off time approached at the Crystal Palace, the Rams couldn't find Archie Goodall. Steve Bloomer takes up the story: "In those days Cup Final tickets could be bought in any numbers, and Archie Goodall had speculated in them. On the day of the Final, he had a lot of tickets left on his hands. Of course, he did not wish to lose on the transaction and so, when the crowd was rolling up to the Crystal Palace, he went outside the grandstand to try to sell his tickets. We players knew where Archie had gone, but the trouble began when we were all stripped and waiting in the passage outside the room, ready to go on to the field, with no Archie Goodall." The start was delayed until Archie reappeared.

After 19 minutes, Arthur Capes put Forest ahead. Twelve minutes later Bloomer equalised with a header from Leiper's free-kick – the ball bouncing off the underside of the crossbar and over the line – but Capes restored the Forest lead. In the second half Bloomer shot wide when he had only the goalkeeper to beat, and then John Goodall's shot hit the bar. With four minutes remaining, Johnny McPherson scored a third for Forest, and Lord Rosebery presented the FA Cup to the wrong side of the River Trent. Derby County supporters trudged mournfully back to the railway station.

Twelve months later, the Rams were back at the Crystal Palace. Their league season had already been a remarkable one. On a bog of a Baseball Ground pitch the Rams beat Sheffield Wednesday 9-0 (Bloomer scored six) and the following week hammered Wolves 6-2. There was a 7-1 defeat at Aston Villa, and a 5-5 draw with Everton at the Baseball Ground where Derby had trailed 5-2 with only 15 minutes to go.

Before the semi-final, the Derby directors – like most clubs the Rams still had no manager – decided to take the players to Buxton for more "special cup training" – one is tempted to ask why, if it was so special, they did not do it every week – but Archie Goodall refused to travel, claiming that "private business" rendered it necessary for him to remain in Derby. The club suspended him for "inattention to training". Against Stoke at Molineux, Archie was sorely missed and midway through the first half the Potters took the lead. Then Bloomer scored a goal of brilliant invention, back-heading a high bouncing ball as the goalkeeper rushed out to collect it. In the second half it was all Bloomer. He scored twice more to complete yet another hat-trick, and the Rams were back in the FA

Cup Final, this time facing Sheffield United who, in the other semi-final, had beaten Liverpool 1-0 at the Baseball Ground.

John Goodall, now in the veteran stage, travelled as a reserve, thus missing out on a fourth FA Cup Final. And, of course, there was no Archie, who was still in disgrace. The Rams were favourites – despite being reigning Football League champions, Sheffield United were now fourth from bottom of the First Division – and at half-time they led 1-0, through a goal from Boag. Moments into the second half, Bloomer saw his shot hit a post, and then another effort from the great Steve was blocked by the massive frame of “Fatty” Foulke, United’s 21-stone goalkeeper. Then came the turning point of the game. Wing-half Johnny May (later to join Rangers and captain Scotland) was injured. Down to 10 men, the Rams brought forward Willie MacDonald back to take May’s place but MacDonald was no defensive player. Fourteen minutes into the second half, the Blades’ captain Ernest “Nudger” Needham (who later played cricket for Derbyshire) curled over a centre from which “Cocky” Bennett levelled the scores. Bloomer wrote later: “After the subsequent reorganisation weakened our left flank, Needham recognised our plight and directed his whole attack down there ...” Now it was one-way traffic and the tastily named Beers and Almond made it 3-1 before Fred Priest added a fourth against desperately demoralised Derby.

Could the Rams make it a hat-trick of FA Cup Finals? Not immediately. The following season they went out in the first round, losing a replay 3-0 at Sunderland. The year after that Bolton knocked them out, 1-0. In the First Division in those seasons, Derby finished sixth and 12th respectively. John Goodall moved to New Brighton in the summer of 1899. Archie Goodall was still moaning, still upset about being left out of the Cup Final team, and missed the first four matches of 1899-1900 after initially refusing to re-sign. His life could have been much worse. On 7 November 1899, as the Rams set off for a First Division match at Blackburn, some of their supporters were setting off in another direction, marching from Normanton Barracks to the Midland station. They were Sherwood Foresters reservists, called up to fight in the Boer War. Over the next two days, hundreds more followed. Some would not see home again.

Steve Bloomer was also in a rare warlike mood, sent off after kicking out at Bert Sharp of Everton after being on the receiving end of some brutal tackles. Bloomer was affronted at his dismissal and submitted

Cup-tie that sent the factories quiet

WHEN Derby County entertained Portsmouth on a Wednesday afternoon in late February 1902, interest was so great that local factory owners bowed to inevitable mass absenteeism and simply closed down. The Rams' FA Cup quarter-final replay against Pompey was the talk of the town. Companies including the Midland Railway works and Handyside's foundry shut their gates at noon. And after a quick pint and a sandwich, most of their workers were hurrying to the Baseball Ground for the 2pm kick-off.

The replay was the Rams' first home game since 11 January, and despite the midweek afternoon kick-off, it attracted Derby's biggest home attendance of the season after the Boxing Day clash with Newcastle United.

The crowd of 17,836 included players from Aston Villa, Nottingham Forest and West Bromwich Albion, all of who had rushed to the Baseball Ground after training. There were few Portsmouth supporters present, though. No special trains or charabancs had been organised from the naval town.

Within eight minutes, the Rams were two goals in front. First there was what the *Derby Daily Telegraph* reporter described as "a scrimmage", from which Steve Bloomer extracted the ball and fed Warren, who hammered his shot past Irish international goalkeeper, Matt Reilly.

Then Scottish centre-forward John Boag exchanged passes with Dick Wombwell, a utility forward who had been signed from Ilkeston Town. Boag took the return ball and extended the Rams' lead. After 15 minutes, Warren added a third goal for Derby, the ball slipping through Reilly's hands.

Pompey battled back to score through former Villa and England player, Steve Smith, who pounced on a loose ball to beat the gangling Jack Fryer in Derby's goal. The Rams goalkeeper, "with the sun shining brilliantly in his eyes", then saved well from Corrin and MacAuley, and also did well to stop an effort from England's Daniel Cunliffe.

The Rams resumed in the same mood. After 55 minutes Bloomer, "who had just had one of his hot cannons", beat Reilly with a left-foot shot. Then Archie Goodall let the ball run to Bloomer, who scored Derby's fifth goal to put the result apparently beyond doubt.

But there was to be a nail-biting finish. Jimmy Methven upended Smith, and Edgar Chadwick, yet another England player, scored from the penalty spot. When Cunliffe hit an unstoppable shot past Fryer, it was 5-3 but Pompey's hopes of a sensational fightback disappeared when Bloomer completed his hat-trick three minutes from time.

The semi-final, against Sheffield United, took three games to settle. Warren put the Rams in front in the first game, at The Hawthorns, before United equalised with Rams goalkeeper Fryer "more interested in appealing for offside than in stopping the ball". Wombwell got the Rams' goal in another 1-1 draw, this time at Molineux. At the City Ground, Fred Priest administered the last rites to Derby County.

four sheets of handwritten “evidence” to support his appeal. He was still suspended for a fortnight.

Derby County now had their first manager in the way that we would recognise the post today. In 1900 they appointed 39-year-old Harry Newbould, who already served as club secretary, to take charge of playing affairs. In his youth Newbould, an accountant by profession, had played outside-right for Derby St Luke’s and had also been a notable sprinter. When the Rams became a limited liability company in 1896, he was taken on as assistant secretary to W. D. “Billy” Clark. Clark also enjoyed the title of “manager” and, indeed, long-serving full-back Jimmy Methven later referred to him as “Wily Willie” because of his unorthodox way of attracting players to Derby. Newbould, though, was the first “hands-on” manager.

Until late March 1903, the Rams were contenders for the Football League championship. Then they lost 1-0 at home to Everton, a result that heralded a slide which saw Derby win only one more game – and draw only one more – to finish ninth. Towards the end of that run they had another engagement – against Bury in the FA Cup Final. The Rams had reached the Crystal Palace for the third time in five years but had picked up injuries along the way, not least to Bloomer who was suffering from an ankle so swollen it was a week before he could pull on a football boot. Against Millwall in the semi-final, winger George Davis, who would play for England the following season, was concussed after tripping on matting put down for the comfort of the linesmen. And on Easter Monday, goalkeeper Jack “String” Fryer pulled a groin muscle while stretching for a cross at Middlesbrough. At Ayresome Park the Rams finished with nine men, with Welsh international full-back Charlie Morris in goal and half-back Charlie Leckie also in the dressing room.

It was an unhappy Derby contingent that travelled by train to London on the Friday afternoon of 17 April 1903. The following morning, thousands of supporters followed them. At St Pancras station those supporters found three rooms set aside for them with 400 barrels of beer, 200 crates of bottled beer and a plentiful supply of spirits with which to slake their thirsts. Meanwhile, an eve-of-match trip to the theatre had failed to raise the spirits of the Derby team. When they returned to their hotel, goalkeeper Fryer was in obvious discomfort. That night he got little sleep, still troubled by the pain in his groin. Reserve goalkeeper Frank Davies, from Birkenhead, had yet to make a senior appearance for the

Rams but manager Harry Newbould and the directors were prepared to let him make his debut in a Cup Final. Davies even offered to let Fryer have his medal, win or lose, but the tall goalkeeper refused to give up his place. On the other hand Bloomer, worried that he might let down teammates and supporters alike, declared himself unfit.

By half-time, things had gone better than anyone in the Derby camp had dared hope. True, Bury led 1-0. But that wasn't an insurmountable deficit. The goal, though, had come because Fryer was incapacitated. Fully fit, he would probably have stopped the bouncing ball. As it was, 20 minutes into the first half a lofted effort from George Ross looped clean over Fryer's head and into the net. Bury, fielding six of the team that had won the FA Cup three years earlier, began the second half in complete control. Charlie Sager put Bury further ahead, and in trying to prevent the goal Fryer took another knock and had to leave the field. Morris went in goal again, only to see Joe Leeming chip the ball past him: 3-0. Fryer returned but within a minute Willie Wood made it 4-0. Then Jack Plant scored number five. Morris took over again, but neither he nor a fit Fryer would have stopped Bury's sixth goal from Leeming. Bury hit the woodwork twice more, and the game descended into near farce when Methven went in goal to give Morris a breather, and should have conceded a penalty after handling the ball before he had informed the referee of the change. The official, Jack Adams of Birmingham, must have felt sorry for desperate Derby and he waved play on to complete the most one-sided Final in FA Cup history. A few days later, the brilliant but troublesome Archie Goodall left for Plymouth Argyle.