

Association Football (Soccer) Sites

London, England

SCOTT A.G.M. CRAWFORD
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION
EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION PREMIER LEAGUE HALL OF FAME, County Hall, London. Open every day (except Christmas) from 10 AM to 6 PM. <http://www.hall-of-fame.co.uk>

WEMBLEY STADIUM, Wembley Park, London (*under reconstruction*).

CHRISTIE'S, 21-25 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1SX, United Kingdom.

Early September 1999 seemed a most appropriate time to scour and scout London in a search of worthwhile venues to complement traditional research on the country's national fascination with football (association football or soccer). Let there be no mistake about it—despite England's affectionate embrace of sports such as cricket, rugby, and track and field, it is football that is the country's national pastime. No better illustration of the national, and at the same time regional, appeal of the game can be found than to savor the daily newspapers of 3 September 1999. On that day Newcastle United, a team that had been buffeted by a succession of defeats under the erratic guidance of soccer icon Ruud Gullit, announced that 66-year-old Bobby Robson was to be installed as the team's sixth manager at the end of a stormy decade of staccato leadership. Here is how Bryon Butler profiled Robson and Newcastle in a *Daily Telegraph* essay:

[Robson] takes over a club who have not won the championship since the birth-year of talking movies, a closed society which has crises where others do not even have situations and a high church whose disciples know for certain that it was no coincidence that the world was created in the shape of a foot-

ball... He was born... in County Durham, the son of a Methodist miner who missed only one shift in 51 years down the pit. He understands the torment of the Toon Army [Newcastle's fanatical supporters] and, without a trace of a smile, still talks about bleeding black and white [Newcastle's team colors] when he is cut. Geordieland's [Newcastle's environs] latest Messiah has been a long time in the making...

The FA Premier League Hall of Fame opened its doors in June 1999, and unashamedly set out to model itself as more American than European in nature and philosophy. Primarily it sets out to be an enjoyable tourist attraction. As a worthwhile learning center for the football fan or writer or researcher, it offers an uneven kaleidoscope of visual and written materials, ranging from the truly banal to a series of theme rooms that are intelligently packaged and adequately address issues concerning the development and formation of football

For the first-time visitor the effect can be overwhelming: too much noise, abrupt transitions from incident to era and back again, an overabundance of material—be it fine print and captions or football memorabilia—and an annoying, repeated device of several television screens trying simultaneously to catch and hold viewer attention. I visited the Hall of Fame a second time and I was glad I did so. My followup tour was more enjoyable, and I recommend it to sport historians if for no reason other than it may suggest fresh approaches for topical research and/or interdisciplinary papers. As with most halls of fame, visitors move from room to room or, in this case section to section, of a network of connecting exhibition rooms. The early part of the Hall of Fame is devoted to the medieval roots of the game, the split between rugby football and association football, the evolution of the game's rules, and the founding fathers of the game and the events at the Freemason Tavern in Great Queen Street on 26 October 1863 that led to the foundation of the Football Association. There are illuminating panels on the history of the ball itself and on the evolution of the modern soccer boot (shoe). Despite the caption's distinct "Trivial Pursuits" flavor, it is fascinating to read of Stanley Matthews being so intrigued by the lightweight shoes worn by the Brazilians at the 1950 World Cup that he brought a pair home to England. He worked out a deal with the Co-operative Wholesale Society that if they manufactured a similar product he would wear them in return for a weekly retainer of £20. By 1958 half a million pairs of these football boots had been sold!

Following the Hall of Fame's treatment of the development of soccer in the nineteenth century, various wall panels present issues such as early spectators, the relationship of football and the popular press, colonization, and the 1904 origin of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in Paris. The Hall of Fame's presentation of football during World War I is a high point. The decor, lighting, posters, and costuming dramatically transport the visitor to the trench territories of the Somme in the summer of 1916. A detailed account is given of a Captain W.P. Nevill, commander of the 8th East Surrey. He supplied his four platoons with footballs to motivate his men for the "Big Push" of 1 July. The prize was to go to the platoon who made the greatest territorial advance. One platoon inscribed their ball "The Great European Cup Final: East Surreys v Bavarians." At zero hour Captain Nevill kicked off. The slaughter was immense; Nevill was killed, but the prize was awarded. One of the first Hall of Fame inscriptions is penned by

George Orwell. Writing of football he observed, “I loathed the game... [it] is a species of fighting.”

For sport historians, the material on the “Women’s Game” is itself worth the price of admission, and contrasting women’s soccer in England and the United States during this century would make for an admirable and long-overdue journal paper. On 26 December 1920 at Goodison Park in Liverpool, a crowd of 53,000 watched Dick Kerr’s Ladies play against St. Helen’s Ladies. By 1997, 1,700 English clubs had 34,000 playing members. The impact of Title IX in America underscores just how critical mandated federal and national policies are in furthering athletic opportunities for disadvantaged or minority sports groups. This Hall of Fame, however, fails to indicate how England’s national women’s soccer team has fared in previous world competitions.

Another high point is the Hall of Fame’s extensive coverage of Wembley’s first-ever FA Cup Final on 28 April 1923. Huge crowds could not be contained and the pitch was engulfed by spectators. The Hall of Fame archival film shows the quite magical arrival of policeman G.A. Scorey on his grey (not white) horse “Billy”. What became known as “The White Horse Final” between West Ham and Bolton Wanderers finally was able to begin because of the extraordinary presence and impact of Scorey and “Billy” as, patiently, they brought back order into a sea of chaos and bedlam. No incident better encapsulates the theatrical ethos of sport—and football.

The Hall of Fame presents a commendably thorough examination of the founding of radio broadcasts—from 1927 to 1939 wireless licenses went from two to seven million—as it discusses the manner in which, early on, listeners were directed to follow the game on special cards marked with numbers. The British Broadcasting Corporation was convinced that without these visualization cards listeners would become confused and disoriented as they listened to football broadcasts.

While, in general, the Hall of Fame overdoes the use of film and video material for the 1970s 1980s, and 1990s, the black and white “Movietone” news film footage of football in the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s is superb. The color film of England’s 4-2 overtime win at Wembley in 1966 World Cup Final over West Germany is also a glorious vignette.

On 6 February, 1958, at Munich, Germany, an aeroplane carrying the Manchester United football team crashed. Eight players died, as did three staff members and eight journalists. The Hall of Fame caption sums up what this tragedy meant for Manchester United’s unique place in England’s collective consciousness.

The press reported the loss not only of great footballers but also of young men.

To this day, many see this huge loss and the nation’s sorrow as the seed from which the club’s enormous, nation wide support has grown.

The modern soccer period, while it opens promisingly with a display focusing on the abolition of the maximum wage and the successes enjoyed by manager Bill Shankly and his Liverpool teams, quickly deteriorates into a morass of minutiae with exhibits on star players, championship teams, and dynasties. The notion of the globalization of football and the fall of international barriers so that European players live and play in England, and vice versa, is poorly articulated. Surely a Hall of Fame such as this could have addressed the career of the amazing Welshman John Charles (6 feet 2 inches and 14 stone), who was

transferred (contract sold) from Leeds United to Juventus (Torino, Italy) in 1957. He scored 93 goals in 155 Serie A league games and contributed vitally to winning three championships and two Italian Cups in a five-year spell. But, much more than that, he became beloved by Juventus fans. In many respects he was Europe's first multinational player. Finally, the pioneering role of Viva at Nottingham Forest—on November, 1978, he became the first player of color to represent England—is superficially mentioned but essentially ignored in terms of discussion or commentary. As of late 1999, for example, of the two million people living in the United Kingdom who originated from the Asian sub-continent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, etc.), none has made it into top-flight soccer.

The nadir of the Hall of Fame is a bizarre room in which life-size replicas of inductees are awkwardly posed, no more than third-rate imitations of the celebrated waxworks at Madame Tussaud's. Current or recent stellar players such as Ruud Gullit, Alan Shearer, Eric Cantona, and Peter Schmeichel may very well deserve such enshrinement, but the absence of historically great players is baffling and destroys the credibility of this Hall of Fame as a place which honors the game's most dominant players. The Premier League Hall of Fame would do well to study the integrity of American Hall of Fame induction processes such as Cooperstown (baseball), Canton (American football), and Indianapolis (Indy 500).

While the Premier League Hall of Fame is at best an uneven unraveling of the intricate social history of football, it does contain some gems. As has been noted the material on World War I, the "White Horse Final," and women's football is particularly good, and in a 120-seat auditorium visitors can follow the challenges facing a young boy in a documentary film entitled "Hope and Glory". The soccer apprentice achieves the dream of every young player and graduates from street footballer to professional sportsman.

Andrew Baker of the *Daily Telegraph* reported on his visit to the Hall of Fame (14 October 1999). Unquestionably he was disappointed by the exhibition. "The ancient history was interesting and imaginatively displayed, the more recent stuff soulless and dull...." His most trenchant criticism, with which I heartily agree, concerns the Hall of Fame's inability to make any sense or structure out of modern soccer. "There is not much here about the present-day game... that you cannot find on the Internet." The concept of nation and nationality never emerges despite it looming as a significant aspect of the contemporary game. What is one to make of a Rangers *v.* Celtic game in early November 1999, during which one Rangers player (of eleven) and four Celtic players were Scottish? The idea of a "majority of foreigners" playing in an Old Firm derby would have been unthinkable and impossible in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Wembley Tour was a wonderful way of exploring what is arguably the home of world football. Wembley hosted England's 1966 World Cup victory over Germany, and the event is writ large in the annals of the stadium. Indeed, the very first item to face the touring visitor is the original crossbar featured in Geoff Hurst's disputed goal. With a final crowd capacity of only 80,000, Wembley was by no means the world's premier spectator stadium. There has been considerable controversy over the reconstruction begun in September 2000, which will see Wembley lose its magical cathedral-like twin towers and re-emerge looking like some ethereal extra-terrestrial space-ship.

The delightfully hosted tour of Wembley showed the visitor executive suites, the heart of the stadium security system, and the English changing room (four Victorian baths, spartan benches, and a minute plunge pool). One heard the recorded sounds of a packed stadium while waiting to line up and walk out onto the pitch. The tour ended with visitors following the route taken by the championship teams who step up and receive their trophies and medals from her Majesty the Queen in her Royal Box. The 1998 Simon and Schuster publication *Wembley: The Greatest Stage—The Official History of 75 Years at Wembley Stadium* by T. Watt and K. Palmer is a solid piece of work and essential reading for an appreciation of the interweave of sport, spectatorship, architecture, space, nostalgia, recollection, and anecdote.

While American baseball memorabilia still sets the benchmark in terms of the cash value of sports collectibles such as Honus Wagner cigarette cards, Joe DiMaggio bats, and Mark McGwire balls, contemporary auctions are seeing British football memorabilia achieve significant sales. Auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's now have regular football sales. In 1999, for example, Christie's auctioned a collection of football programs on 4 June, and sold a variety of memorabilia (medals, shirts, international caps, decorative objects and sculpture, prints and pictures, pre-1960 match programs and autographs) on 24 September. In early December 1999, Sotheby's sold a L.S. Lowry painting entitled "Going to the Match." The price was nearly \$2.5 million. The Professional Footballer's Association, which represents players' interests within the United Kingdom, paid almost four times the pre-sale estimate and the previous record for a Lowry painting. Gordon Taylor, the chief executive of the PFA, was quoted as saying, "It is always said that there is not enough literature and art surrounding the world's greatest game so we are trying to build up a collection of memorabilia". In late September 1999 at a regional auction, not under the aegis of Christie's or Sotheby's, the red England shirt made for Bobby Moore, captain of the victorious 1966 England World Cup Team, sold for \$70,000 at auction—even though it was his spare and he never wore it.

In the world of popular culture, football continues to be of monumental importance. Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber's next major musical project is to be entitled "The Beautiful Game". In a *Daily Telegraph* interview with Richard Grooks and Vincent Kearney (12 September 1999), Lloyd-Webber described the work as based on the life of Bobby Sands, the Irish Republican Army hunger-striker, who played for the Belfast-based Star of the Sea football club as a teenager in the late 1960s. Lloyd-Webber's *The Beautiful Game* is a remarkable opportunity to "tackle issues" and explore "humanitarian matters" through "a contemporary feel and sound". *The Beautiful Game* may find itself in competition with another soccer musical. Producer Patrick Nally has announced plans to launch a song and dance spectacular, provisionally entitled *Theatre of Dreams*, in September 2000. The topic is Manchester United and the projected scenario is bounded by United's FA Cup success of 1948 and the triumph of 1968 when George Best and Bobby Charlton helped United win the European Cup. The musical will spotlight manager Sir Matt Busby's success as he built two powerful teams: one from the bleakness of the Second World War; the other from the tragedy of the 1958 air crash.

As for football's ongoing role as an extraordinarily influential element in nationhood and devolution within Great Britain, the press luxuriated in the news that in late 1999 England would take on Scotland to gain a qualifying place in the Euro 2000 football

finals. Paul Hayward of the *Daily Telegraph* (14 October 1999) used military metaphors of the Scotland/England rivalry—the oldest international football contest—and wrote of “old wars, ancient battle sites [being] invoked” and acted out against the backcloth of “the *Braveheart* myth.”