

# HAVE THEY FORGOTTEN BOLTON?

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On 9 March 1946 Bolton Wanderers were hosting Stoke City in the second-leg of a Football Association Cup Sixth Round tie. Shortly before the 3.00pm kick-off, a section of the densely packed crowd on the terraces in the north west corner of Burnden Park swayed uncontrollably, two crush barriers collapsed and many spectators fell forward on top of those in front of them. Under the pile of humanity, thirty three people asphyxiated and around them hundreds of others were injured.

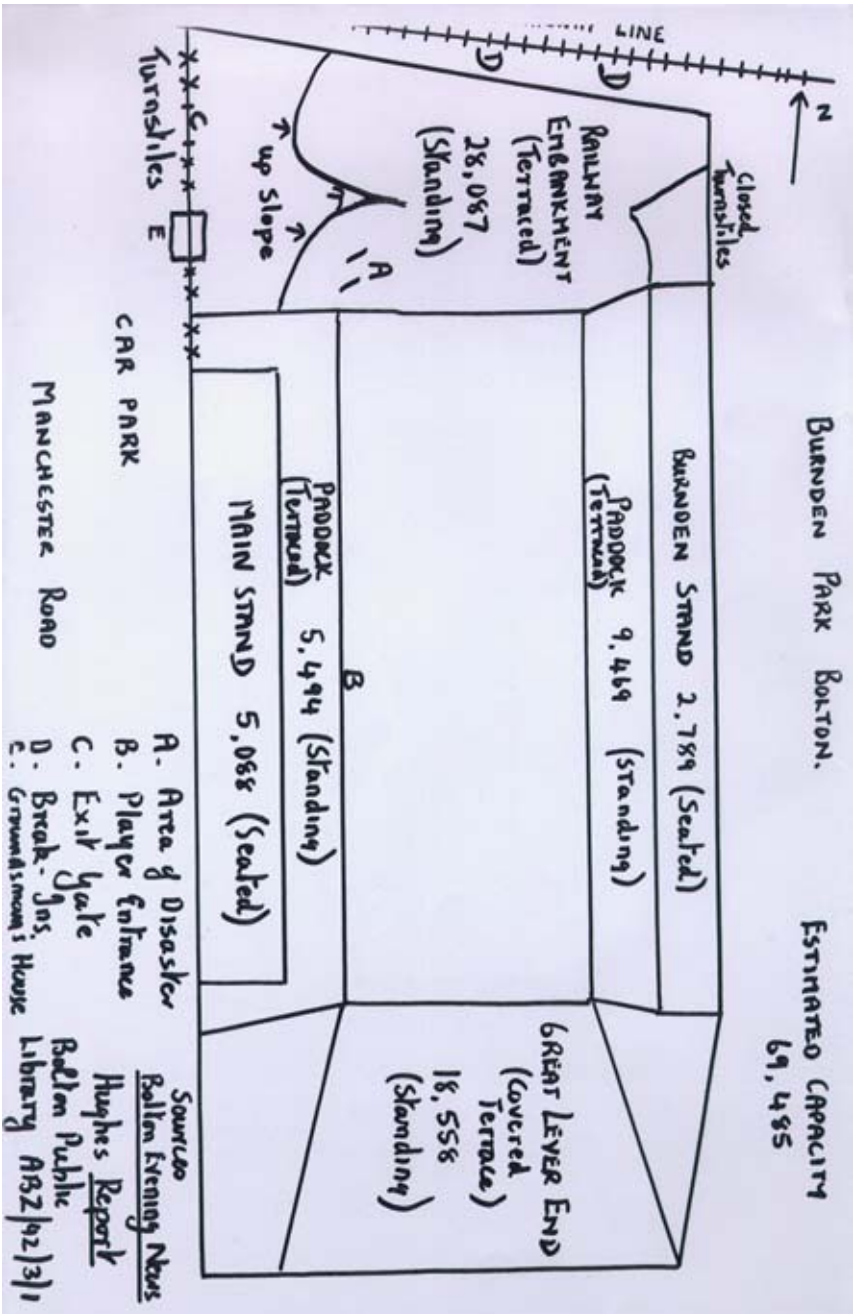
What caused this disaster? Who was to blame? These are the most obvious questions raised over any major disaster. In seeking to answer these questions regarding the events of 9 March 1946, two broader lines of inquiry are opened up. The first concerns the development of public policy in response to the disaster. The second is directed toward an understanding of the variety of attitudes, official and popular, that established the parameters within which such policy developed. This article will pursue both themes in a manner which recognizes that they are interconnected and cannot be dealt with in any strictly sequential and distinct order.

Initially, official responses to the disaster, those of local and national governments, the club and the football authorities, were formally appropriate. On 22 March a public enquiry headed by Justice R Moelwyn Hughes was appointed by Home Secretary James Chuter Ede. Its formal report was dated 25 May.<sup>1</sup> In addition to identifying a number of causes contributing to the disaster, the Report made recommendations designed to prevent similar occurrences at other sports grounds. The Mayor of Bolton organized a relief fund for the assistance of dependents of the victims and this closed at the end of August 1946 having reached the sum of £52,000.<sup>2</sup> In addition to making donations to this fund, various con-

cerned groups, such as the Football Association and the Football League, promised co-operation in seeking to prevent repetition of such a disaster. In a similar vein, the Home Office began to compile information relevant to possible safety legislation.<sup>3</sup> In short, there was every public appearance of a prompt, efficient, but also compassionate official response to the disaster. There was a distinct absence of acrimony or finger-pointing among the various official bodies as they responded to the disaster. This solidarity encompassed the club, the police, the football authorities and the government. All committed themselves to the avoidance of any repetition.

However, from the outset, the unified and sanitized official response, though not abruptly abandoned, overlapped with a more partial interpretation of the 'Bolton disaster', an interpretation that drew upon class prejudices from which some members of the Labour Government were by no means immune. Over time, resulting explanations for the events of 9 March served to shape policies that represented an abandonment of initial 'good intentions.' Perhaps more surprisingly, there were popular attitudes that facilitated such abandonment. The influence of both popular and official attitudes will hopefully become apparent in the course of this article.

Before further elaborating on the various attitudes that shaped policy it is necessary to outline the circumstances that resulted in thirty three deaths. The record attendance at Burnden Park had been 69,912 established on 18 February 1933.<sup>4</sup> The previous highest for the 1945-46 season had been 43,000. The turnstile count on 9 March was approximately 65,000 with some 2,000 gaining illegal entry and an estimated 15,000 turned away when the gates were closed.<sup>5</sup> The relevance of such numbers to the disaster has to be understood in the context of three complicating factors. First, the Ministry of Supply had requisitioned the Burnden Stand as storage space during the War and the facility had not yet been returned to its normal usage. The Stand with its 2,789 seats was not available for spectators. Secondly the turnstiles at the east end of the Railway Embankment which adjoined that stand had been closed since 1940.<sup>6</sup> Thus all the 28,000+ Embankment spectators had to enter from the Manchester Road (west) end. Thirdly, the 9,000 who held tickets to the paddock in front of the Burnden Stand had to be admitted through the entrances to the Main Stand paddock and then escorted by police around the north end of the playing



surface to their assigned area. They were thus using entrances immediately adjacent to the turnstiles admitting the Embankment spectators. The combination of a bigger than expected crowd, and the numbers obliged to come in at the north-west corner led to acute congestion inside the ground and outside where much of the space between the turnstiles and the main road was used as a car park. Ultimately, the turnstiles in this area were closed. Subsequent to that action, an undetermined number of spectators gained improper entry by one of three means. Some simply climbed over the turnstiles, others climbed up onto the railway line atop the embankment and broke into the ground by removing sections of fencing, and yet others entered by way of an exit gate opened from the inside by a spectator seeking escape for himself and his son from the intensifying crush.

### **Officialdom Interprets**

In the days immediately following the disaster, representatives of 'officialdom' were in no doubt as to the primary target of blame. Before the official inquiry had been appointed, let alone made its report, officials issued public statements indicting elements of the crowd, specifically those who had entered the ground illegally. Within 48 hours of the disaster, both the Chief Constable of Bolton, W J Howard, and the manager/secretary of the Wanderers, Walter Rowley, had issued statements to the press. Rowley, on behalf of the club's directors, expressed amazement at "the steps taken by the crowd to get inside the ground. Holes have been torn in the fencing at the top of the embankment in almost every conceivable place". The Chief Constable was even more direct in laying blame. "There was no disorder ... among those who gained entry in a legitimate manner. The trouble began when hundreds of people broke down the fences on the railway embankment". Town and railway police had been "overwhelmed by the thousands of people rushing to the fence." Once these intruders were in the ground they "created pressure by surging forward with the result that two of the crush barriers collapsed". Influenced by these statements, the *Times* headed its report, "Enclosure stormed by Crowd", and attributed the disaster "to crowds who were disappointed when the gates were shut, making an unauthorised entry to the popular embankment from a railway line."<sup>7</sup>

On March 11 Home Secretary James Chuter Ede faced a number of questions in the House of Commons. Most of his answers were appropriate

and even-handed, offering sympathy for the families of the deceased, expressing confidence in police action and promising consideration of future measures when all the evidence was available. However, at one point he clearly aligned himself with Howard and Rowley when he expressed the hope “that spectators who unfortunately find themselves debarred from getting in, would exercise some sense of the sportsmanship they expect from players on the field”.<sup>8</sup> When Chuter Ede again answered questions in the House on March 21, it was one of his questioners, Sir Jocelyn Lucas, who gave the most forthright expression to the ‘official’ interpretation. Not only did he assume that a crowd incursion was the singular cause of the disaster, but he also called for punishment of those responsible. He asked the Home Secretary

what efforts are being made to discover the ringleaders of those who pulled up the boundary fence at the Bolton cup-tie, thereby causing death and injury to numerous spectators; and if prosecutions for manslaughter are being considered.

Ede gave a non-committal answer without challenging Lucas’ primary contention.<sup>9</sup>

Some comment in the local press similarly laid blame on the crowd. ‘Olympian’ who was the *Bolton Evening News*’ main sports columnist referred to an “ugly break-in of spectators”. The main editorial column of the paper took the ‘official’ position much further viewing the crowd’s behaviour as symptomatic of broader social changes arising from the War. The illegal entry

has a clear relation to the increasing violence that great crowds of people are ready to use nowadays. The crowd is a lower organism than the individual, and in many ways the most frightening aspect of all this business is the sub-human vitality that seems to have possessed Saturday’s concourse. The war has seen a fall in these mob standards and so with a great deal more money to spend and a sense of responsibility in inverse ratio, these mob elements are liable to do great damage. On Saturday for example, apart from illegal breaking and entering they were guilty of wilful destruction of property in their frenzy to catch a glimpse of the match. Some of them did not even hesitate to interfere with the working of the

railways by clinging on to signal posts. Obviously, if the public interests are to be the first consideration, then it is unsafe to let such people loose. A stricter control will have to be organised to protect the community as a whole.<sup>10</sup>

The ‘official’ interpretation altered little over time. In evidence given before the Hughes Inquiry in late March 1946, Howard and Rowley stayed close to the statements they had made in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Howard continued to insist that the cause was, “clearly”, people climbing over the embankment from the railway line. In what was obviously an attempt to distance himself further from any responsibility, he denied that any of his police officers were stationed on the railway line above the Embankment.<sup>11</sup> Although Justice Hughes was clearly not convinced as to all the details given by Howard and Rowley, his questioning did not significantly shift them from their original explanations. Their position was certainly accepted by the Bolton solicitors, Rogers and Rogers, who had been retained by the Football Association. In their report of the Enquiry proceedings submitted to the Association, they drew attention to the illegal entry at a number of places which created pressure, “from three different directions, with the result that two barriers fell and the injuries and deaths occurred”.<sup>12</sup>

In fact, in his report Justice Hughes described the invasion over the fencing at the back of the Railway Embankment as “irrelevant” to the disaster because, given the configuration of the terracing, it would not have brought any pressure onto the section where the barriers collapsed and the fatalities occurred. However, he did judge that the additional 200-300 spectators who gained illegal (unpaid) entry through an opened gate near the boys/forces turnstile did “contribute materially” to crowd congestion on the terraces above the north-west corner, though even this was not a “major factor” in causing the disaster.<sup>13</sup> While in these specific terms Hughes was minimising the relationship between illegal entry and the disaster, his generalized conclusion that “the disaster was unique”, being “the first example in the history of football following of serious casualties inflicted by a crowd upon itself” made it possible for the myth of crowd self-destruction involving illegal and/or irresponsible behaviour to survive. A full two years after the disaster, in a Cabinet Committee discussion of possible legislation, A.V. Alexander spoke of the difficulty of giving

“protection against trespassers who had been the cause of the disaster at Bolton and were the most likely cause of future accidents”.<sup>14</sup> The persistence of such an interpretation played a significant role in shaping official action/inaction in response to the disaster.

In explaining the disaster, Hughes laid primary emphasis on the fact that a much larger than expected crowd gathered at Burnden Park. Further, there was only a slow recognition that the Railway Embankment was at or beyond capacity and then poor liaison between police inside and outside the ground and between police and club checkers resulted in delays in closing the turnstiles. Though there was some inference in these findings of police and club responsibility they remained just that, inferences, and, in broad terms, both authorities were relieved of any major direct implication in the disaster. The ambiguities in the Hughes’ Report indirectly served to sustain two patterns of thought in the minds of the officials involved. One was a generalized suspicion, even despair, of the behaviours of the rougher, less respectable, elements within the working class, a feeling which extended even into the ranks of the Labour government.<sup>15</sup> The other was to evade responsibility from fear of legal proceedings by dependents of the deceased. Both attitudes thus sustained were to be of relevance in the aftermath of the disaster. However, before pursuing the official responses further, it is necessary, particularly because of the ambiguities in the Hughes Report, to look more closely not only at the specific circumstances of the disaster on which Hughes focussed, but also the broader context.

### **Reasonable Expectations?**

In his Report, Hughes judged that club officials “made a reasonable forecast of 50,000, reasonable in the sense that they had no grounds to anticipate numbers greater or even approaching the maximum which had previously been admitted”.<sup>16</sup> Hughes gave no indication as to how he arrived at this judgement. However a supportive statistical case could be made on the basis of the gates attracted to Bolton’s home games in the previous rounds of the competition.<sup>17</sup> On 5 January when Blackburn Rovers were the visitors the crowd was reported to be “over 26,000.”<sup>18</sup> The 26 January match against Liverpool drew a crowd of 39,682, “the best

since pre-war days”.<sup>19</sup> When Middlesborough were beaten on 9 February, 43,553 were in attendance.<sup>20</sup> On the basis of such numbers, an anticipation of 50,000 was indeed reasonable. However, there were a range of broader circumstances which might equally reasonably have led Rowley to have anticipated a larger crowd and thus be responsible for taking appropriate measures. Such circumstances existed nationally and locally and related not only to the size of the crowd but also to the condition of the facilities within which spectators were to be accommodated.

Cup games generated enthusiasm and large crowds.<sup>21</sup> As many grounds were, for one reason or another, in disrepair, large turnouts had raised safety fears from early in the year. In mid-January both West Ham United and Derby County requested permission to play in mid-week when smaller crowds would present less of a problem than if the game was played on a Saturday. The anxiety at West Ham was particularly stimulated by problems that occurred during an earlier game with Arsenal.<sup>22</sup> Ultimately, Derby County made their game all-ticket as a means of limiting the size of the crowd.<sup>23</sup> In fact, of the fourth round Cup matches played on 27 January, the most problems occurred at Bramall Lane, home of Sheffield United who were playing Stoke City, a team which included the most celebrated player of the era, Stanley Matthews. Men and boys were seen “hanging perilously from blitzed walls and stripped girders and scrambling over flimsy roof-tops”. Problems were compounded when some spectators broke in on one side of the ground. The *Daily Herald* columnist who observed these happenings warned of “the increasing risk of serious trouble”, and urged that all future cup-ties be all-ticket as “some form of strict control appears to be necessary until bomb-damaged grounds can be repaired or until sufficient police officers are available”.<sup>24</sup>

While happenings in London or Sheffield may “reasonably” have escaped the attention of Manager/Secretary Rowley, he could not have missed the situation which developed when his own team visited Middlesborough on 13 February. A record crowd of 51,612 included “hundreds sitting on the roof of a shelter behind one of the goals”. Furthermore, “Ambulance men were busy from an early stage treating minor casualties and police shouted periodic warnings by microphone to people on the shelter roof”. Such a large crowd assembled even though the match was played in mid-week and some local firms had threatened discipline against absentees.<sup>25</sup> On

Saturday 2 March, the *Bolton Evening News* carried an article by ‘Olympian’ under the headline “Bigger Football Grounds Needed”. He observed that

The boom in football has surprised everybody engaged in it. The trouble of clubs left in the FA Cup competition is to find accommodation for all who wish to see the games. Today the four grounds where cup-ties were staged were not big enough to house all who wanted to be present. Grounds large enough for ordinary purposes are altogether too small when interest in the great knock-out competition reaches fever point. Bolton Wanderers’ continued cup success has served to show local people what a business it is to secure tickets for an important FA Cup-tie.<sup>26</sup>

That the club was indeed anticipating a need for more spectator accommodation was evident when it was reported on Tuesday 5 March that officials had “made urgent representations, but without success, for the release of the stand accommodation which would have given them another 2,800 seats”.<sup>27</sup> The following day the club announced that all tickets for the Main Stand and the Burnden Paddock had been sold. However, Rowley was anxious to emphasize that it was an “erroneous impression”, that the game was all-ticket. Under a headline, “Plenty of Room for Spectators Without Tickets,” Olympian spread the club’s message that “most of the ground would be available for spectators paying at the turnstiles”.<sup>28</sup> On the eve of the match itself, Olympian, claiming to be responding to specific enquiries, gave assurances that there would be room for upwards of 50,000 passing through the turnstiles. However, there would probably be “that number anxious to get inside the enclosure”. When added to the approximately 14,000 tickets sold, the columnist’s estimate of turnstile admissions would produce an aggregate attendance of 64,000, well in excess of Rowley’s “reasonable” anticipation and significantly closer to the numbers who actually came to Burnden Park on the 9th. One reason for Olympian’s high estimates was his expressed conviction that there would be “a big gathering of football fans from all over Lancashire and further afield”.<sup>29</sup> This anticipation touches on one of several indications that an extraordinary large crowd could be expected; indications that Rowley did not take into consideration or deliberately chose to ignore. In fairness to the Bolton manager, it should be pointed out that he was by no means the

first club official to underestimate match attendance. There was a history of such errors going back into the nineteenth century, the best known of which concerned the first Wembley Cup Final in 1923.<sup>30</sup>

By this advanced stage of the FA Cup competition, Bolton was the only one of the many clubs in the densely populated area of south Lancashire still in contention.<sup>31</sup> That the game did indeed attract spectators from a wide area might be inferred from the fact that only seven of the thirty three who died lived in Bolton itself.<sup>32</sup> That Saturday 9 March was a sunny early spring day probably contributed to the size of the crowd seeking admission. While this could not be accounted for in club planning, another contributory factor could have been. There is little doubt that, in modern parlance, Stanley Matthews was the football super-star of the era. The pressure put on the crowd capacity at Bramall Lane, Sheffield, in late January when Matthews and Stoke City were the visitors should have acted as a forceful hint to Rowley that the 7,000 that he estimated the star attraction would add to the gate should be increased.<sup>33</sup> That Bolton had won the first leg of the tie at Stoke on March 2 might also have been considered as providing a boost to attendance.

### **Counting Heads**

While the question of overall attendance was of some relevance to the disaster, more directly pertinent was the capacity of the Railway Embankment and the numbers seeking admission to it.

Procedures for determining when specific sections of the ground had reached capacity could be described, at best, as imprecise. Mechanical counters were in place at every turnstile but their function was the assessment of admissions for the purposes of the entertainment tax. The counters were sealed and only collected after the match. There was no immediately accessible means for maintaining a running count of admissions either in aggregate or by individual enclosure or turnstile. Assessment of when capacity was being approached was the responsibility of the head checker, a club employee who, in Rowley's opinion, was "very reliable in the judgement of crowds".<sup>34</sup> When the crisis was developing on

the Railway Embankment and an individual police officer went in search of the head checker, he finally located him under the main stand, a position from which it would be very difficult to bring his judgement to bear.<sup>35</sup> In any case the visual method of determining when the capacity of an enclosure was reached had to be imprecise. At the Enquiry, one police inspector testified that he had observed sections of the crowd on the Railway Embankment swaying back and forth but he claimed this was not necessarily a cause for alarm, “as a swaying crowd usually righted itself”.<sup>36</sup> The judgement as to the point at which swaying became dangerous and thus indicated that capacity was being approached, was at best vague.

In ironic contrast to the vagaries of estimating crowd size in practice, there existed some very precise theoretical formulae. Various modes of calculation were explained at the Enquiry. None were particularly generous to the individual spectator, one allowing one and two-thirds sq. feet per person, another fifteen linear inches of terracing. The Bolton Borough Surveyor believed neither “would cause danger, but might cause discomfort”. At no point in the presentation of these calculations was any consideration given as to whether or not members of such a capacity crowd could actually see the game.<sup>37</sup>

### **Crowd Control and Ground Conditions**

The case can be made that Hughes was being generous to Rowley in not criticizing him for the failure to anticipate a crowd considerably larger than 50,000. However, while contentious, the issue of anticipated attendance could be viewed as moot in regard to preparations for the game by the club and the police. Rowley testified that, in his request for police assistance, he did not specify any particular number of officers to be in attendance. He merely suggested to the police authorities that they “bring as many as you like as long as you have comfort and there is safety for us”.<sup>38</sup> Although no officials provided the Enquiry with details as to the disposition of the one hundred plus policemen attending, there was at least one assertion published in the local press that the majority were assigned to traffic control, not crowd control.<sup>39</sup> As was its usual practice, the club employed eleven civilian stewards for duty on 9 March. However, they were exclusively assigned to the stands, essentially acting as ushers. In

subsequent discussion of the disaster there was frequent expression of a belief that a loudspeaker system would have helped in crowd control. In fact, the club directors had given lengthy consideration to such an installation. Equipment had been ordered but it was not in place in time for the 9 March game.<sup>40</sup>

Though considerable attention was given in the Enquiry to questions regarding the anticipated size of the crowd and calculations of attendance on match day, there was little attention to either in relation to the condition of the ground itself. Rowley claimed to have made a visual inspection of the ground on the Thursday and Friday prior to the game and found nothing wrong. The thoroughness of his inspection was not questioned even though later investigation showed that the metal tubing at the base of the collapsed crush barriers had rusted to as little as 1/3rd of its original thickness.<sup>41</sup> The fact that admission to the Railway Embankment could be made only from one end was given merely passing mention at the Enquiry, even though it was of obvious relevance to the capacity of the enclosure and the safety/comfort of the spectators in that area. Similarly disregarded was the complication introduced by the need to escort 9,000 spectators from their point of entry at the north-west corner to their places on the east side of the ground in front of the Burnden Stand. Conditions underfoot on the Railway Embankment were completely ignored in the Report, even though they could be very muddy and potentially affect crowd stability. One correspondent to the local newspaper reported having arrived early at the ground accompanied by his wife and taken up position near one of the barriers that subsequently collapsed. Fortunately for them they had moved away, “as it was so muddy”.<sup>42</sup>

### **Beyond Control: the Good and the Bad**

It is possible to detect an element of casualness in the approach of the authorities toward crowd control and crowd safety. Deliberately or not, those same authorities, through their public statements, provided some justification for their attitudes. This rested on a view of crowd behaviour that accepted it as essentially beyond control. The authorities had a bifurcated view of the crowd whose one face was orderly, loyal and supportive and whose other visage was violent, disorderly, irrational and untrustworthy. The approved ‘normal’ spectators would submissively

accept inferior, even dangerous, accommodations and their restrained behaviours would minimize risks to themselves and, less directly, the authorities. When things went wrong then it was the other, aberrant, face of the crowd that was to blame. The football crowd incorporated characteristics of both the respectable and the rough working classes, the one lauded by their ‘superiors’, the other reviled. To a degree, this enabled the authorities to rationalize their indifference toward the responsible majority by way of the disorderly, uncontrollable minority. The despair of the authorities over crowd behaviour, a recognition that it was beyond official control, is evidenced in contemporary discussion of the Bolton disaster.

A football crowd often displayed contrasting personalities, and could shift very rapidly from one to the other. The culture of the terraces was for the most part festive and jovial, particularly at the “big match”. Saturday afternoon was for many the highlight of their week, their great relaxation. Even barracking of teams or individuals was often laced with humour. On 9 March, an early edition of the *Bolton Evening News*, carried a report from the ground filed just before the disaster in which it was observed that the crowd was displaying all the marks of cup-tie enthusiasm and a “spirit of great good humour”.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the atmosphere of many soccer crowds was boisterous and physical. Police escorting the occasional drunk out of the ground could become the butt of a latent anti-authoritarianism and referees were of course the frequent targets of such sentiments. The rush and crush to get out of the ground at the conclusion of a match could be physically threatening. For the most part during the 1940s, the more benign characteristics of the crowd prevailed. However boisterousness could suddenly spill over into ill-temper and even violence. A very thin line existed between the two personae of the crowd. A reporter (non-sports) from the *Bolton Evening News*, found himself, as the kick-off approached on 9 March, in a mass of people tightly jammed outside the north-west entrances to Burnden Park hoping to gain admission. The crush was such that, as early as 2.30pm persons passing in through the turnstiles were reported to be “very distressed”, and some who later broke in claimed that they were only doing so to escape the danger outside.<sup>44</sup> The reporter’s retrospective comments on the situation reflected the fine edge that existed between the two personalities of a soccer crowd. He remarked on the good humour of the crowd despite the prolonged crush outside the ground. Once

the turnstiles had been closed and some of the crowd tore down fencing in order to reach the railway embankment, “those who had breath cheered their enterprise”. Though thus expressing support for what was illegal behaviour, the majority of the excluded crowd, once the game started, dispersed relatively quietly from the area.<sup>45</sup>

A number of comments made after the disaster reflected presumptions as to the disorderly, uncontrollable aspect of crowd behaviour that in turn justified official indifference. With a week to review the causes of the disaster, Olympian estimated the capacity of Burnden Park at 70,000, “if you could get them to pack sensibly and comfortably”. The columnist also reported having heard blame for the congestion in the north-west corner of the ground placed on 2-3,000 regulars who took up their accustomed positions and would not move or let others through.<sup>46</sup> Chief Constable Howard made the same point at the Enquiry.<sup>47</sup> Manager Rowley, in explaining to the Enquiry why stewards were only assigned to the stands, suggested that it was “because it had been found that civilians in plain clothes were not taken any notice of by football crowds”.<sup>48</sup> Police officers on duty near the north-west corner reported that they got no response from the crowd when asking them to ease back. A turnstile checker who, as early as 2.20pm, was advising would-be spectators that they would not have a good view of the game got only abuse in return.<sup>49</sup>

### **Some Division in the Ranks**

Most officials shared a view of the crowd as uncooperative, if not uncontrollable. However, in the specific context of the Burnden disaster there were differences among them over questions of timing, particularly as to when the situation became dangerous in the ill-fated north-west corner. Senior officials, such as Howard and Rowley, were presumably more aware of the potential issue of legal liability and this may explain why they insisted on a timetable of events that had congestion on the Railway Embankment developing only shortly before the kick-off. Such timing tied in effectively with their emphasis on illegal entry as the primary cause of the disaster and thus served to minimize their responsibility for the conditions which had prevailed earlier and their failure to take pre-emptive action. Howard insisted that right up to kick-off time comfortable conditions existed at the east end of the Embankment, inferring that

if only the crowd had the sense to spread out the disaster could have been averted. By contrast, less senior police officers and other witnesses at the Enquiry spoke of congestion developing much earlier. By 2.30pm, 30 minutes before the kick-off, the danger of the situation inside and outside the ground was apparent and police were already bringing people off the north-west terracing onto the running track surrounding the pitch.<sup>50</sup> As Justice Hughes pointed out, the delays in reacting to this situation, particularly in closing the gates, reflected poorly on police/club liaison and was of importance in the sequence of events leading up to the disaster. However, he failed to carry these observations through to their logical conclusion that such inefficiencies were the responsibility of senior club and police officials who thus bore some liability for the disaster.

### **If Not Fan Misbehaviour?**

The timing of events as indicated by lesser officials opens the way up to explanations that do not rest predominantly on illegal crowd entry. Complaints about the club's treatment of its supporters had been aired in the local press well before 9 March.

Some of these focussed on the Wanderers' failure to open up three sides of their ground for admission at the Football League minimum of 1s6d and on the practice of raising the charge for the Burnden Paddock by 9d for FA Cup ties.<sup>51</sup> However a letter to the *News* in late January from "Take All and Give Nowt" touched on a broader range of points relevant to the events of 9 March. The writer recommended knocking down "the groundsman's house and building more and larger turnstiles, and not just for the 'Thin Man.'" He also suggested levelling the railway embankment outside the ground and not allowing cars to be parked where they narrowed access to and from turnstiles on the north-west corner.<sup>52</sup> Not suprisingly, the majority of criticism regarding conditions at the ground emerged after 9 March. Olympian, who claimed to have seen "every big crowd assembled at Burnden Park during the last fifty years," admitted that "a packed railway embankment has always given me a feeling of uneasiness." He also reported talking to spectators who believed the disaster could have been avoided had the police responded more quickly to urgings from the crowd to relieve stress by allowing people to come onto the field. Olympian's colleague, 'The Tramp', who only wrote on football, was

particularly critical of ground conditions and the attitudes of the authorities. He believed there had been near disasters in the past and recalled, “being scared stiff and we wondered for a moment if sufficient thought had been given by the clubs and the authorities to the safety of football patrons”. He urged that “the clubs likely to stage events of such public appeal must modernize their structures, accomodate their patrons in a manner planned by experts and equip themselves with every necessary form of scientific safety device”. ‘The Tramp’ extended his criticisms beyond Bolton in arguing that “Too many of our supposed first class grounds are behind the *Times*. Too many are indeed ramshackle. After six years of war and little spending too many must have deteriorated alarmingly. One sees too much timber and too little steel and concrete”. He concluded with a challenge. “Away with complacency and the attitude of mind which says, ‘You come along, we’ll pack you in’.<sup>53</sup> Somewhat the same theme was picked up in the national press. Clifford Webb of the *Daily Herald*, argued that “Plans should be in preparation now, especially in blitzed areas, for the complete remodelling of grounds. Football has outgrown the ramshackle, rusty affairs ironically named, ‘grand stands’, and the weedy, unterraced banking”.<sup>54</sup>

Such arguments had legitimacy and at the very least some of the conditions which contributed to the disaster at Bolton prevailed on many other grounds. Lesser mishaps continued to occur. Ten people were injured on 27 March when a spectator fell through the glass roof of a stand at Maine Road Manchester during an FA Cup semi-final replay.<sup>55</sup> On the same day as the Bolton disaster, a wall collapsed in Dublin at a match between Shamrock Rovers and Dundalk. As a result a number of people were injured, “three or four seriously”.<sup>56</sup> A month later, at a Rugby League match between Featherstone Rovers and Castleford, six tiers of a grand stand collapsed, seventy people fell of whom five were injured.<sup>57</sup> When Mr C N Banks, chairman of Bolton Wanderers claimed that “We have a ground equal to most football grounds as far as safety is concerned”, he may have intended to be reassuring but a very contrary interpretation could be drawn.<sup>58</sup> The depressing reality as expressed by Jonathan Taylor, representing the FA Council, was that “What happened at Bolton might just as easily happen at 20 or 30 other grounds”.<sup>59</sup> Given the circumstances of post-war austerity Britain, where supplies of almost every material were

closely controlled, it was highly unlikely that significant improvements could be effected in conditions prevailing at football grounds. This made it necessary for those administering the sport to focus on specifics rather than generally applicable conditions. Thus further motive was provided for laying the blame on unruly elements, essentially beyond reasonable control. In this way, business could continue as usual and substantive changes could be given a low priority, public statements notwithstanding.

### **Business as Usual**

Normalisation proceeded apace. On the Monday after the disaster when Manager Rowley was asked if a League match with Bradford scheduled for the following Wednesday at Burnden would be played, he replied “Yes, the game must go on”.<sup>60</sup> Stanley Rous, Secretary of the Football Association, when asked on Monday 11 March if the Cup semi-finals would be all-ticket, responded “We refuse to be panicked into rush decisions, We are still waiting the full facts from Bolton”. A similar question on the possible limitation of crowd size at the Semi-finals drew from Rous the somewhat heartless observation that “I should think that what happened at Bolton will restrict them”.<sup>61</sup>

The desire of the authorities to leave the events of 9 March behind them was paralleled, and to a degree facilitated, by the attitudes of followers of Bolton Wanderers and of the public in general. Two weeks after the disaster some 7,000 Bolton supporters made the journey to Birmingham for the semi-final Cup match against Charlton Athletic. A photograph of some of the “jolly supporters”, appeared under the heading “Wanderers Followers in Merry Mood”.<sup>62</sup> When the Hughes Enquiry opened on 27 March, the local press reported that there were only three people present in the gallery and took this to indicate that there was “little apparent public interest”. Of sixty four witnesses who appeared before Hughes, only three were spectators at the fatal match.<sup>63</sup> Local and national newspapers interviewed very few of the spectators. Nationally, a sustained boom in attendance that lasted through the balance of the 1940s suggests at the very least that spectators were not ‘frightened off’ by the Bolton disaster. A number of explanations can be offered for the ease with which football followers distanced themselves from the disaster. The War may have hardened people to the spectacle of mass fatalities. Apparent indifference

may also have been the product of the more general circumstances of working class life within which hardship and harm were at the same time resented and grudgingly accepted as facts of life. Even the sometimes hazardous conditions under which working people enjoyed their leisure were merely an expression of how things were, part of a natural order about which little could be done.

## **Restitution**

While there is no evidence of deliberate collusion in covering-up the causes or consequences of the Bolton disaster, it is clear that a frame of mind determined on putting the incident behind them, and shared by authorities and club supporters, was influential in shaping two particular aspects of the reaction to the events of 9 March. The first such response was in part a non-response; there was in both local and national press a general indifference toward the legal proceedings taken against Bolton Wanderers FC by dependents of the deceased. This silence applied in both the short and long-term. Of four histories of the football club written since 1960, only one makes an oblique reference, talking of the summer of 1946 when “the Directors were anxiously involved in legal consultations, their Counsel being Mr Dennis Gerrard QC”. The author had access to club records that were later destroyed in a flood.<sup>64</sup> Subsequent histories of the club do not cite such records.<sup>65</sup> In fact, legal proceedings against the Club were underway at a very early stage. Though not mentioned in the official *Report*, there were present at the Hughes Enquiry “other persons(who) represented the deceased persons and persons who had sustained injury.”<sup>66</sup>

On the day the Enquiry closed, 16 April 1946, the Bolton solicitors, Whittle, Robinson and Bailey, acting on behalf of Mrs Blackshawe of Rochdale, gave notice to Chief Constable Howard of opinion that her husband John’s death at Burnden Park had been “brought about by your negligence and/or the negligence of officers under your control”. This was followed up by a statement of intention to take action through the courts. Acting on behalf of Howard, the Bolton Town Clerk, Phillip S Rennison, replied on 23 April denying all liability.<sup>67</sup> During the summer of 1946 a number of solicitors were involved in assembling evidence to be used in liability proceedings. This activity included gaining access to the remains of the two crush barriers which had collapsed and were being held by the

police.<sup>68</sup> By September 1946, the Town Clerk was advised of “agreement entered into by Solicitors acting for other claimants that they will stay their case pending the result of the test action now being brought”. The test action was that on behalf of Mrs Blackshawe.<sup>69</sup>

Both the Football League and the Football Association soon became concerned over the disaster itself and the possible liability suits arising therefrom. On 29 April, at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Football League, the President, W C Cuff, reported that £6,500 had been raised among members for the Mayor of Bolton’s Relief Fund, but he added that “there was a possibility that writs would be issued against Bolton Wanderers Club and therefore proposed that further donations from clubs be held over pending the decision of the courts”.<sup>70</sup> In July, the Football Association Council appointed a special sub-committee, “to consider and, if necessary, to advise and decide on all matters arising in connection with the disaster”.<sup>71</sup> By the autumn, not only had the decision been made to proceed with a single test case, but confusion over whom should be the target of writs had been resolved: Bolton Wanderers FC rather than the Bolton Police. Accordingly, the Club turned to the FA and the FL for advice and aid. In October, a joint meeting of the Club, the two governing bodies and their respective legal representatives took place. The FA and the FL could give no assurances that they “would be prepared to increase the financial assistance already given to the Mayor’s Bolton Fund to relieve the suffering and hardship”.<sup>72</sup>

Possibly to avoid the publicity that court proceedings would attract, the two football authorities and the Club agreed with the claimant’s solicitors in October 1946 to adjourn the case, “pending discussions which are now proceeding”.<sup>73</sup> Such discussions continued through the winter and it was not until mid- March 1947 that terms were agreed, “in all but two or three of the outstanding claims”. The formal terms of settlement in Blackshawe’s case came to £1,655, of which £100 was for his young daughter and £34 14/- 0d for funeral expenses. As the dead man had been averaging weekly earnings of 7-9-9, the balance of the settlement amounted to approximately four years income.<sup>74</sup>

The Bolton Club had already expended some £5,500 knocking down the groundsman’s cottage, improving turnstile access and building a wall to

secure the north-west corner of Burnden Park. This outlay accounted for the profits that the Club had made during the year ending February 1946.<sup>75</sup> They were thus obliged to turn again for help to the FA and the FL. In late May 1947, the two football bodies sent out a joint letter to League clubs asking them to respond to Bolton's appeal, "for funds to cover claims against them". The total need was estimated at £25,000. The Club could raise £5,000 and each of the governing bodies agreed to add £2,000.

Member clubs were furnished with a scale of anticipated contributions based on divisional membership.<sup>76</sup> Although this was a period of record attendances at League matches and escalating transfer fees, the response to the appeal was slow. In October 1947 another joint letter was circulated to "those not yet contributing to the Bolton fund". The non-contributors must have been numerous as by that time only £8,316 13/- 5d had been received.<sup>77</sup> In the absence of club records for this period, it is not clear how Bolton Wanderers FC were able to meet the demands on them. It is also difficult to explain why the liability proceedings were not given any coverage in the press. However, it is consistent with the general desire to depict the relations of club and supporters as based on mutual interest and trust. There are also problems in attempting to deduce why the leadership of the FA and the FL were anxious to help Bolton but the individual League clubs were so reluctant. Certainly the League clubs in both their dealings with their players and with the Government over the entertainment tax displayed what might politely be termed fiscal caution. If meanness was not the primary motivation, it is difficult to offer alternative explanations.

### **To Legislate or not to Legislate?**

A different, but equally complex set of influences and circumstances surround the other post-disaster quandary. Why, in the face of the Enquiry's recommendations and after two years of deliberation, was Parliamentary legislation addressing safety issues at sports grounds abandoned?

In his Report, Justice Hughes had acknowledged that Burnden Park was "typical of most home grounds of the leading football teams in the country". While recognizing that they had "Grown stage by stage from humble beginnings on sites acquired when the large gates of these days

were not anticipated”, he was aware that “It would be idle to suggest that the grounds, or large sections of them, should be rebuilt”. Thus his recommendations, which fell under five headings, focussed on making grounds “reasonably safe”. His first concern was with the examination of ground conditions and Hughes specified certain targets of attention eg. the situation and condition of entrances, protection against unauthorised entry and the means of uninterrupted movement from one part of an enclosure to another. Next, he urged more careful and scientific calculation of the capacity, not only of grounds but individual enclosures. The estimation when, on specific occasions, such capacity was being reached was a critical factor stressed by Hughes who called for the installation of mechanical means to this end. Knowledge of crowd size thus achieved should be subject to co-ordination at some central point so that police and club personnel could be deployed effectively if an emergency threatened. Finally, Hughes argued that such safety measures could only be applied with the force of legislative regulation. Hughes deemed earlier reliance on voluntarism, self-regulation by organising bodies, to be inadequate. His recommendation involved the licencing of grounds which would be dependent on periodic inspection by local authorities and mandated by Parliamentary legislation; such legislation to include provision for penalties in the event of non-compliance. While Hughes acknowledged that adherence to ground capacities might involve “loss of gate money on popular days”, he claimed to have been assured by Bolton Wanderers FC that such costs were acceptable as the price of increased safety. Further he believed he had the backing of the Football Association which would welcome the measures he had suggested.<sup>78</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster and through the summer of 1946 there were clear indications of a broad based intention to follow through on Hughes’ recommendations. The Home Secretary’s statements in the House of Commons reflect a generally positive intention. That this was more than merely a token display for public consumption is borne out by the Home Office preparation, as early as May 1946, of files on overcrowding of sports grounds.<sup>79</sup> The FA was also demonstrating its good intentions by appointing a special sub-committee on all matters relating to the disaster.<sup>80</sup> Public pressure for official action was sustained during the summer of 1946. Questions were asked in the House of Commons in early

August as to follow-up on the Hughes' recommendations, particularly in the context of the approaching 1946-47 football season. There was parallel commentary in the press.<sup>81</sup> The new season did in fact produce large crowds and reminders of the dangers involved. In early September, a capacity crowd filled Nottingham Forrest's City Ground. Police had to climb the roof of a stand to remove "a few irresponsibles", and there were complaints of inefficient handling and packing of the crowd.<sup>82</sup> As the critical rounds of the FA Cup again approached in January 1947 it was reported that clubs were "still relying on police and voluntary stewards to prevent any dangerous overcrowding."<sup>83</sup>

Even the assignment of games as all-ticket did not eliminate all problems. Queues for tickets at Stoke City's ground for an upcoming tie against Sheffield United were so large and unruly that gates were almost broken open. One observer described the crowd as acting "like a pack of wolves".<sup>84</sup> Although some clubs called upon local police to inspect grounds and more all-ticket arrangements were made, over-crowding problems continued through the 1946-47 season and beyond.<sup>85</sup>

However, by late summer 1946, the momentum behind a thorough implementation of the Hughes' Report was declining. The path back to the principles of voluntarism and away from a key element in Hughes' recommendations was opening up. Why was this so? One contributing factor was the tendency for partial solutions to become the focus of attention. One example was the Home Office's commitment from May 1946 to support club applications for licences to exceed the statutory £100 for repairs to bomb-damaged grounds, if the interests of public safety were involved. The obvious limitation was the application only to bomb-damage and not the reversal of deterioration resulting from six years or more of neglect. Furthermore there was debate over how the interests of public safety was to be defined and even whether, "the safety of the public ... would include the safety of the public attending football matches".<sup>86</sup> That such a question was raised at all reflects interestingly on the official view of soccer crowds.

Such diversions notwithstanding, the major obstacle to a thorough legislative response to Hughes' recommendations was constructed out of a mix of uncertainty on the part of government and suspicion on the part of the

football authorities and the clubs under their jurisdiction. Together they served to slow the momentum for strong legislation and then halted it completely. Chuter Ede gave signs of falling back onto a voluntarist position as early as August 1946 when, he stressed the, “individual circumstances of the grounds”, and the doubtful effectiveness of any “attempt to deal with the question centrally”. He expressed confidence that, “the clubs will take every precaution open to them”.<sup>87</sup> Though not indicative of a complete abandonment of the legislative initiative, Chuter Ede’s statements did reflect some faith in the alternative, voluntarism. Confirming this trend was Home Office approval in September 1946 of an FA circular appreciating, “the difficulty of clubs in their attempts to establish effective regulation and control over large attendances”.<sup>88</sup>

Follow-up to the Hughes recommendations proceeded slowly during the winter of 1946-47, mainly by way of correspondence between the Home Office and the Football Association. The consultative process was expanded in February 1947 when the FA circularised member clubs on a number of issues.<sup>89</sup> It was not until June 1947 that the responses were summarized in an FA minute. The majority of clubs agreed that some provision for licensing should be made and local police were preferred by most as the authority for this purpose. Beyond that, the tone of responses was tinged with negativism. Clubs emphasized the variability of local circumstances that made it impossible to draft “a set of model conditions to be universally applicable”. They argued that, “in most cases”, ground inspections and the fixing of crowd capacities were already undertaken by local police. They expressed willingness to install mechanical counters but only if they could be “proved to be efficient and reliable and not too costly.”<sup>90</sup>

In the meantime, in May 1947, the Home Office had completed the drafting of a bill establishing a licensing system which local authorities would be empowered to administer. There followed through the summer and autumn of 1947 a series of meetings and conferences mainly concerned with the technicalities of licensing and the issue of applicability to sports other than football.<sup>91</sup> It was a September conference in which Home Office officials met with “sporting interests and local authorities”, that disclosed major differences over the licencing procedure and particularly who should control it. The Home Office preferred that major local

authorities, specifically county councils, should have the licencing power. Football Association and Football League representatives feared they might show “a tendency to err on the side of excessive caution”, which would result in clubs, “being put to considerable expense and being subject to a great deal of official interference”. Clubs preferred that the licencing authority should rest with the local police but the Home Office, “would not countenance the suggestion ... on the grounds that they are not equipped for the purpose”.<sup>92</sup> Judging from the situation at Bolton, the Home Office had reason to suspect that clubs and local police had been working too closely and too comfortably together for the latter strictly to supervise the former.

Prospects for the resolution of issues raised in the autumn of 1947 were dimmed by complications arising from a number of other government actions in regard to sport. Beginning in early 1946, the government had requested that various sports authorities, including the Football Association and the Football League, should refrain from staging contests in mid-week when they might encourage industrial absenteeism and thus harm production.<sup>93</sup> More rigorous restriction of mid-week contests began in response to the economic crisis of the winter of 1946-47. The football authorities had generally been co-operative within a voluntary framework. However the policy in general, and particularly the severe restrictions on dog-racing, became targets of criticism in the press and in Parliament. Chuter Ede was the principal target of attacks, not only from the Opposition but also from within his own party. Much was made of the irony of a Labour Government repressing a working man’s sport.<sup>94</sup> A public confrontation with the administrators of what was perceived to be another working man’s sport was the last thing the Government needed. From their point of view, voluntarism had worked in restraining mid-week sports and might well work to improve the safety of sports grounds. For their part, the FA and FL believed they had escaped legislation on the mid-week issues because whenever they had been “approached by representatives of the Government every effort had been made to reach an accommodation”.<sup>95</sup>

Chuter Ede certainly did not want a confrontation but he could not afford to ignore unilaterally the recommendation for legislation contained in a report he himself had ordered. On the other hand, the volume of Parliamentary business made it difficult to schedule time for a bill on crowd safety.

Consequently, Chuter Ede took the proposed licencing legislation to a Cabinet Committee in April 1948, stressing the fact that “Potential dangers still existed at many football grounds and there would be serious criticism of the Government if they took no action to prevent a repetition of the disaster at Bolton”. Such warnings notwithstanding, Lord President, Herbert Morrison, a key figure because of his responsibility for ordering Parliamentary business, was “not convinced of the need to introduce a licencing system. Any such system would place a further burden on local authorities. Was not the risk of a serious incident small enough to be taken”. While this may well have been a realistic political judgement it was hardly a view that Morrison would have expressed in public. In committee, he was supported by Minister of Defence, A V Alexander, who, the Hughes' Report notwithstanding, drew on the theory of illegal entry as the primary cause of the Bolton disaster to question the effectiveness of possible legislation. Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, who was also responsible for the housing programme, provided further objections based on the fact that ground improvements would involve the use of materials already in short supply. As an alternative he suggested a voluntary code. Once Chuter Ede expressed optimism that the FA would co-operate in developing such a code, he was invited by the Committee to follow up on a voluntarist approach.<sup>96</sup>

The way was now open for the adoption of a voluntary code in the face of Justice Hughes' recommendations but another seven months elapsed before the FA was in a position to circulate member clubs with the basic terms of such a code. Even then, the wording of the circular fell some way short of being forceful. It was suggested that Clubs might be prepared to give certain undertakings.<sup>97</sup> Depending on ground capacity, the code called for a range of measures which included periodic inspections, the determination of the size of crowd that could be safely accomodated, admission by ticket only when abnormally large crowds were anticipated, the installation of ‘amplifiers’ and mechanical counters, and the establishment of telephone links between each turnstile and a central control point. The Football Association urged member clubs to conform to this code on the grounds that past co-operation with the Government forestalled direct official intrusion into the affairs of the Association and its member clubs.<sup>98</sup>

It may or may not have been coincidence that this circular was distributed

shortly after the *Sunday Pictorial* of 24 October 1948 carried an article under the headline “Have They Forgotten Bolton?” Here the lack of follow-up to the Hughes Report was criticized and it was argued that conditions relevant to the Burnden disaster still applied at many grounds. Overcrowding, the admission of many who would not be able to see and the absence of “magic-eye counters” were all criticised and put down to the laziness of the clubs, “glutted with the flow of easy money”.<sup>99</sup> In fact, it was not until 29 March 1949, more than three years after the fateful cup-tie, that the Home Office was able to record the clubs’ “adoption, voluntarily, of adequate safety standards”. Even then all was not clear sailing as the FA was complaining of the difficulty in obtaining building licences to effect ground improvements.<sup>100</sup>

What general conclusions can be drawn from the confusing events of 9 March 1946 and the complex pattern of responses over the next three years? Clearly, the differing explanations for the disaster rested not only on protective self-interest but also on very distinct views of crowds and crowd behaviour. Such a variety of views were not developed entirely independently from the mind sets cultivated in a class differentiated society. Class perspectives had survived the supposedly egalitarian impacts of World War II and the election of a Labour government in 1945. They were often accompanied by strong elements of resignation, official despair over crowd behaviour as well as popular acceptance of inferior, if not dangerous, conditions which did not prevent the establishment of record attendances in the late 1940s. These attitudes created an environment within which a government, that shared with its political opponents a belief in voluntarist traditions of sports administration and was under intense pressure of legislative business, could walk, albeit slowly, away from recommended legislation. Effectively, this involved a return to the 1923 Shortt Report which, in the aftermath of the first Wembley Cup Final, had judged it “safe to leave the matter to the sport’s governing bodies.”<sup>101</sup>

### **Changing Times?**

Much was to alter in society generally as well as on the terraces of soccer grounds before the Ibrox disaster of 1971 provoked the first instalment of safety legislation. Even greater changes had occurred by the time ninety five deaths at Hillsborough in 1989 were to usher in more radical

enactments.<sup>102</sup> Yet there are elements of continuity interwoven within such a pattern of change. Aspects of the Hillsborough disaster and its aftermath provide distinct echoes of Bolton. Senior Police Officers were “defensive and evasive”, and witnesses insisted that “blame for the tragedy lay with fans”. A formal report contradicted such explanations, but those of set mind continued to condemn the fans. There was a lack of coordination of crowd control inside and outside the ground. Members of the crowd protested that, “they only care about money”, and, “they go on treating us like animals”. Simon Barnes, a *Times* columnist writing in 1989, might well have been describing Bolton forty three years earlier. “The people who died are the victims of contempt. Football supporters have long been held in total contempt: by the Government, by the police, by the football authorities and by the clubs these people support.”<sup>103</sup> There is no denying the fact that, at least in part, rigidities in official attitudes owed their survival, perhaps even their intensification, to sustained experience of the ‘Hooligan Problem.’ Yet it is equally clear that such attitudes had an ancestry that reached back into the 1940s, significantly pre-dating the emergence of ‘trouble’ on the terraces of English football grounds in the 1960s.<sup>104</sup> What had largely evaporated was the atmosphere of stoic acceptance on the part of football followers and the public in general that had made it possible for the authorities to renege on their commitment to a formal legislative response to the Bolton Disaster. For all its vulnerability to charges of sensationalism and intrusion, there is no doubt that the media played a significant role in breaking down officialdom’s capacity to insulate itself. The media’s capacity to play such a role clearly rested in part on technology; the means to project horror directly into the family home, to make it inescapable. However, one should not discount the comparable significance of a radical reduction in the trusting acceptance of authority and the fatalism with which misfortunes that befell the football follower were received. While there were still those in authority who viewed many of the populace with disdain, the public as a whole was less submissive. Because of these changes, a Conservative government in the 1990s could not, as its Labour predecessor in the late 1940s had been able to, get away with the continuing reliance on a voluntaristic safety policy.

## Notes

1. Command 6846, Sessional Papers 1945-46, Vol. X, pp. 1-12; hereafter referred to as *Report*. Justice Hughes, (1897-1955), made a QC in 1943, sat as Labour MP for Camarthen 1941-45, was Recorder of Bolton, 1946-53 and served on a number of inquiries and other government bodies 1945-51. *Who Was Who*, Vol. V, 1951- 60, (New York, Macmillan, 1961),p. 557. During five days of hearings, sixty four individuals gave evidence before Justice Hughes. In addition, he inspected the ground when empty and attended a match there. Throughout this article in using the terms 'official' and 'officialdom' I am conscious of the dangers of over- generalization. At the same time, I am trying to reflect a set of attitudes shared among many of those holding office in public and private organizations and evident in the records of such bodies. Such attitudes rested on varying degrees of disapproval of the behaviours of members of the working class who were assumed to constitute the great majority of football followers.
2. *Daily Herald*, 29 August 1946.
3. PRO/HO/45/24798.
4. *Bolton Evening News*, 16 March 1946.
5. Given the circumstances it is not surprising that estimates vary as to the numbers who came to see the game. Some such ran as high as 90,000. *Bolton Evening News*, 29 March 1946.
6. For this and other details see the attached diagram. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives Centre, ABZ/43/3/2. I have used capitalization to distinguish the Railway Embankment, the terraced enclosure at the north end of Burnden Park, from the railway embankment behind it which carried a working line.
7. *Times*, 11 March 1946, *Daily Herald*, 11 March 1946, *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946.
8. *Hansard*, 1945-46, vol.420, cols. 774-76, 11 March 1946. *Daily Herald*, 12 March 1946.
9. *Hansard*, 1945-46, vol. 420, col. 2008, 21 March 1946.
10. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946.
11. There had in fact been earlier incidents involving crowd incursions from the railway line at the top of the Embankment but it was still left to the railway police to patrol this area. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
12. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946. Football Association Reference Minute 83(a), May 1946.
13. *Report*, p.9.
14. PRO/CAB 132/9, 9 April 1948, p.6, item 6. *Report*, p.1.
15. Though the context differs, such attitudes are illustrated in my "Going to the Dogs - Hostility to Greyhound Racing in Britain: Puritanism, Socialism and Pragmatism," in *Journal of Sport History*, vol.23, No.2, 1996, pp.97-119.
16. *Report*, p.3.
17. In the 1945-46 season, each round was decided by aggregate scores of home and away matches.
18. *Bolton Evening News*, 7 January 1946.

19. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 January 1946.
20. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 February 1946.
21. The regular league schedule was still operating mainly within the regional limitations applicable during the war and experienced a mixed reception.
22. *Daily Herald*, 16 January 1946. *Evening Standard*, 29 January 1946.
23. *Daily Herald*, 17 January 1946. All-ticket arrangements were unpopular with many regular followers because they were alleged to favour the casual spectator drawn only to the big games. Furthermore, they involved the clubs in additional costs and administrative complexities. As the number of tickets to be sold was often set below ground capacity, a potential loss of revenues was also involved.
24. *Daily Herald*, 29 January 1946. He also warned against "the highly dangerous practise of rolling people down from the rear of the terraces over the packed heads of spectators."
25. *Bolton Evening News*, 11, 13 and 14 February 1946. It is not clear if the microphone was part of a loudspeaker system or merely a hand-held megaphone. The latter is the more likely.
26. *Bolton Evening News*, 2 March 1946.
27. *Bolton Evening News*, 5 March 1946. It is not possible to deduce whether the primary motive behind this request was a concern with more space in the interest of safety, or more ticketed seats from which to generate more revenue. A mix of the two is of course a possibility.
28. *Bolton Evening News*, 6 March 1946. Here the club was treading a fine line, stressing the attractiveness of the fixture while trying not to frighten potential spectators away with prospects of overcrowding or not being able to get into the game at all. This was not a wholly uncommon quandary.
29. *Bolton Evening News*, 8 March 1946.
30. Dunning, E., Murphy, P. and Williams, J., *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*, (London, Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1988), pp. 57-58.
31. *Times*, 11 March 1946.
32. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946.
33. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
34. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
35. *Report*, p.4.
36. *Bolton Evening News*, 30 March 1946.
37. *Report*, p.8. *Bolton Evening News*, 16 April 1946.
38. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
39. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946. This estimate of Bolton police presence does not include the unspecified number of railway police assigned to the line behind the Embankment. As was to be the case at Hillsborough in 1989, the precise allocation of responsibilities for crowd control and crowd safety between police and club was a contentious issue, largely because it was based on vague assumptions held by both parties.
40. Loudspeakers were installed for the 1946-47 season. *Bolton Evening News*, 8 October 1946.

41. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March and 2 April 1946. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/2.
42. *Bolton Evening News*, 15 March 1946. At most grounds concrete terracing was a thing of the future. Most steps were formed by driving a wooden facing into the earth banking.
43. *Bolton Evening News*, 9 March 1946.
44. *Bolton Evening News*, 29 March 1946.
45. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946. For a broad treatment of the culture of the terraces, see, Ingham, R., Hall, S., Clarke, J., Marsh, P. and Donovan, J., *'Football Hooliganism' the wider context*, (London, Inter-Action Inprint, 1978), pp. 40-44.
46. *Bolton Evening News*, 16 March 1946. Corner terracing was often considered to provide the best view of a match, and in this case also afforded quickest access to the exit gates at the end of the match. Here there is a hint that 'territoriality' was a factor in crowd behaviour well before it became a pronounced feature of the 'hooligan era.'
47. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
48. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
49. *Bolton Evening News*, 1 April 1946.
50. This must have further complicated the task of escorting spectators around the north end of the pitch into the Burnden Paddock. Indeed, this was stressed by one police officer at the Enquiry.
51. *Bolton Evening News*, 18 and 22 January 1946. Rowley responded by claiming that, because of payments to the FA itself, the club did not profit from a run in the Cup.
52. *Bolton Evening News*, 29 January 1946.
53. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946.
54. *Daily Herald*, 21 March 1946.
55. *Daily Herald*, 28 March 1946.
56. *Times*, 11 March 1946.
57. *Daily Herald*, 20 April 1946.
58. *Bolton Evening News*, 16 April 1946.
59. *Bolton Evening News*, 2 April 1946.
60. *Bolton Evening News*, 11 March 1946.
61. *Daily Herald*, 12 March 1946.
62. *Bolton Evening News*, 23 March 1946.
63. *Bolton Evening News*, 28 March 1946.
64. Young Percy M, *Bolton Wanderers*, (London, Stanley Paul, 1961), pp. 138-40.
65. Marland Simon, *Bolton Wanderers; One Hundred Years at Burnden Park*, (Derby, Breedon Books, 1995), pp. 73-77. Ponting, I. and Hugman, B., *The Concise Post-war History of Bolton Wanderers*, (Langport, Somerset, Repvern Press, ?), p. 9. Hayes, D., *Bolton Wanderers; an A-Z*, (Preston Palatine Books, 1994), p. 32. Inglis, S., *The Football Grounds of England and Wales*, (Willow Books, 1983), pp. 31-2 and 268-9.
66. Football Association Council Minutes, 1945-46, pp. 22-23, Reference Minute 83(a), Report re the Public Enquiry held in respect of Bolton Wanderers Football Ground Disaster on 9th March 1946. This was submitted by Russell and Russell of Bolton, solicitors acting on behalf of the FA.

67. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/1.
68. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/1, correspondence between John Chapman, solicitor of Manchester, and the Bolton Town Clerk, 27 June and 9 July 1946.
69. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/1, letter, 24 September 1946.
70. Football League Minutes, 1945-46, 29 April 1946.
71. Football Association Council Minutes, 8 July 1946.
72. Football Association Council Minutes, Finance and General Purposes Committee, 16 October 1946, item 6, (c),(ii).
73. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/1, James Chapman to Bolton Town Clerk, 22 October 1946.
74. Bolton Public Library, Local Archives, ABZ/42/3/2, letters of 13 and 27 March 1947.
75. Marland, p. 77, Young, p. 140, *Bolton Evening News*, 23 March 1946.
76. Football Association Council Minutes, Financial and General Purposes Committee, 11 April 1947, item 35 (c). Letter, 27 May 1947.
77. Football Association Council Minutes, Financial and General Purposes Committee, 13 October 1947, item 3.
78. *Report*, pp. 10-11. The underlinings are mine.
79. PRO/HO/45/24798, Minute, 13 May 1946.
80. Football Association Council Minutes, Finance and General Purposes Committee, July 1946.
81. *Hansard*, 1945-46, vol. 425, col. 113. *Times*, 2 August 1946.
82. *Daily Herald*, 6 September 1946.
83. *Daily Herald*, 11 January 1947.
84. *Daily Herald*, 3 February 1947.
85. *Daily Herald*, 3 August 1946 and 29 January 1947. *Evening Standard*, 28 August and 6 October 1948.
86. PRO/HO/45/24798, Minute, 25 May 1946. Even when given priority status, repair to bomb-damaged grounds proceeded slowly. By November 1947, licences had been issued for £42,246 worth of repairs at ten such grounds. Nearly half of that sum was applied to repairs at Old Trafford, home of Manchester United. Questions on the state of repair of grounds had been asked in the House of Commons as early as October 1945. *Hansard*, vol. 415, col. 382, 30 October 1945.
87. *Times*, 2 August 1946.
88. PRO/HO/45/24798, Minute, September 1946.
89. Football Association Council Minutes, Finance and General Purposes Committee, 10 February 1947, item 27.
90. Football Association Council Minutes, Finance and General Purposes Committee, 2 June 1947, item 40(c). In fact, although a reportedly very effective "sports crowd counting machine" was demonstrated in July 1947, clubs were slow to adopt them. Even at Bolton, it was 1950 before such devices were installed. *Daily Herald*, 17 July and 15 September 1947. Marland, p. 82.
91. PRO/HO/45/25128.
92. Football Association Council Minutes, 1947-48, Report of the Joint Standing Committee of the Football Association and the Football League, item 5. Memorandum on the Safety of Spectators, Control of Crowds, November 1948.

93. In fact, the Bolton/Stoke City match played on Saturday 9 March would otherwise have taken place in mid-week, possibly before a smaller crowd and without the accompanying tragedy.
94. See my "Going to the Dogs."
95. Football Association Council Minutes, Memorandum, November 1948.
96. PRO/CAB/132/9, Lord President's Committee, p.6, item 6, 9 April 1948. Alexander's statement is quoted above, p.8.
97. My underlining.
98. Football Association Council Minutes, Memorandum on Safety of Spectators, November 1948.
99. PRO/HO/45/25128, Minute, 24 October 1948.
100. PRO/HO/45/25128, Minute, 29 March 1949.
101. Command 2088, quoted in the 1974 Popplewell Report and, in turn, in the Taylor Report of 1990.
102. Changes included a marked drop in the average age of the occupants of the terraces. The dead at Bolton averaged 38 years of age, those at Hillsborough 24 1/2.
103. *Times*, 17 April and 5 August 1989. In the case of Hillsborough, John Castle, Conservative MP for Luton, continued to insist that "alcohol-crazed youths without tickets were one of the major causes of the problem." *The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster, 15 April 1989*: Inquiry by the Rt Hon. Lord Justice Taylor, Interim Report, HMSO, August 1989, Final Report, HMSO, January 1990. Taylor, R., Ward, A. and Newburn, T., (Eds), *The Day of the Hillsborough Disaster: a Narrative Account*, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1995). Scraton, P., Jemphrey, A. and Coleman, S., *No Last Rights: The Denial of Justice and the Promotion of Myth in the Aftermath of the Hillsborough Disaster*, (Oxford, Alden Press, 1995).
104. Without wishing to become embroiled in debates regarding its long history, I would argue that the nature and extent of violence on the terraces changed markedly in the decades after the Bolton disaster.