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Title -The Development of the Football Pools in Britain during the Inter-War Years, 1918-1939, with particular reference to Littlewoods.

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## Glossary

FA – Football Association.

FL – Football League.

FPPA – Football Pools Promoters' Association.

NAGL – National Anti-Gambling League.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

People have always gambled- the rich often through boredom and the poor for financial gain – on horses, dogs, cock fighting, bear baiting, hare coursing, pedestrianism, bare knuckle fighting, cards, boxing, coin throwing and dice.<sup>1</sup> In the inter-war period of the twentieth century an entirely new type of national gambling option developed - the football pools. The growth of the football pools during the inter-war years was phenomenal. In 1923 it was a localized product, based around town and regional newspapers, by the late 1930s eight to ten million adults participated weekly to attempt to win life-changing amounts of money. This was now a new dynamic industry that employed tens of thousands of urban workers, mostly women. The aim of this study is to assess how this transformation came about and the role of the structural developments and broader changes in British society during this period and the specific entrepreneurial expertise of a small number of pools promoters, particularly the Moores brothers who controlled Littlewoods. It is clear that the growth of the pools and, specifically Littlewoods, was due to a combination of structural factors – changes and expansion in leisure, the growth of football, the influence of the press and the wireless and the reduction in power of the disparate elements of the anti-gambling movement. Littlewoods rose to pre-eminence due to the astute nature of the Moores brothers who introduced a modernist outlook to their business with advertising and promotional techniques, created an imagined community and introduced Taylorist and Fordist management structures. The epitome of the growth and development of the pools industry was in the core clash known as the Pools War in 1936. This conflict pitched the younger, modernist pools promoters against the older, conservative anti-gambling elements and the result of this standoff shaped the development of the pools for a considerable period up to and after World War Two.

### Leisure

The inter-war period was one of considerable change to working-class leisure, though the changes were, mainly, in two related areas – the increase in the amount of leisure time and changes to how the working-class utilized their leisure time. There was an increase in leisure time due to a general shorter working week and an increase in living standards for those in constant employment.<sup>2</sup> The major factors in reducing the average working hours were the movement to the eight-hour day, trade union agitation and the legislative directives of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pugh, M. (2008). *'We Danced All Night.'* *A Social History of Britain Between the Wars.* London: Random House, p.297.

<sup>2</sup> Stevenson, J. (1990). *British Society 1914-1945.* London: Penguin, p.400.

Shop Act of 1934 and the Factories Act of 1937.<sup>3</sup> In general terms the average working week reduced from fifty-four hours before World War One to around forty-eight hours.<sup>4</sup> The driving force for change in how leisure time was spent were technological developments and the rise of commercialism and the growth of the football pools is a clear example of this. These two main factors drove down the costs of leisure for working-class people, which meant they could experience new activities that had been out of their reach in the pre-war period. The technological and commercial developments had an important symbiotic relationship with one another and this acted as a catalyst for change in the short period of the inter-war years. The developments led to an increasing democratization and homogeneity of working-class leisure, as more individuals were able to partake in similar experiences. Fundamentally, working-class people from Aberdeen to Plymouth often watched the same films in their local cinema, listened to the same programmes on the wireless and completed the same football pools coupon.<sup>5</sup> This was the creation, through mass communication, of a collective culture which produced common identities and reference points.<sup>6</sup>

Other important factors impacted on changes to leisure in the inter-war period. Amongst these were demographic changes which increased leisure time – smaller families, an expansion in life expectancy after retirement and, unfortunately, for many the enforced leisure as a result of unemployment. Working-class behaviour also changed with a reduction in alcohol consumption and restricted pub opening hours meant that there was a drop in absolute terms of expenditure on drink of over a third during the inter-war years. Clearly with these changes, in mostly male behaviour, there was time and money released for other activities.<sup>7</sup>

Further developments in leisure were the increased range of options that were relatively cheap and widely available – cinema, the wireless, organized professional sports, greyhound racing, day trips, smoking, cycling, a week's annual holiday, speedway, pigeon racing, gramophones, newspapers and magazines, motorcycles and the football pools.<sup>8</sup> A new democratization and improved technology brought about new and differing behaviours. For

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<sup>3</sup> Bourke, J. (1994). *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity*. London: Routledge, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, S.G. (1986). *Workers at Play. A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918-1939*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p.15.

<sup>5</sup> Bourke, J. *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960*, p.187.

<sup>6</sup> Jones, S.G. (1988). *Sport, Politics and the Working-Class. Organized Labour and Sport in Inter-War Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.66.

<sup>7</sup> Stevenson, J. *British Society 1914-1945*, p.383.

<sup>8</sup> Bourke, J. *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960*, p.81.

example, there was an increase in access to leisure for women. Four important areas of increased female leisure participation were cinema attendance, dancing, listening to the wireless and the football pools.

Perhaps the single most important development in leisure during this period was the technological advancement and expansion of the wireless. The explosion of wireless ownership changed the course of entertainment and education, as it brought all aspects of society into people's homes.<sup>9</sup> The power of the wireless was considerable as a medium of instant communication and entertainment which during the inter-war period brought almost everyone within its reach.<sup>10</sup> In 1922 there were 35,000 wireless licences issued but by the end of the 1930s there were almost nine million licences issued, to become in the words of AJP Taylor 'the one universal feature' of the period, one which added greatly to the appeal of the football pools.<sup>11</sup>

### Primary Sources

The major primary source used for this research into the growth of the pools in the inter-war period is the Littlewoods Archive held at the National Football Archive in Preston. This specific archive has never been utilized for research purposes and is not catalogued at all, so I have developed my own referencing system for it. Littlewoods developed during the inter-war period from a business with three original shareholders passing out coupons before matches in 1923 to a multi-million-pound organisation with around eight million weekly punters and employing thousands of people across Merseyside and specifically at their state of the art headquarters at Edge Hill, Liverpool, which was completed in 1936.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this study is to explain how this vast expansion happened by using the Littlewoods archive. The archive consists of clean, complete series of coupons from the period, several dozen photographs of pools winners and employees at Edge Hill, the *Littlewoods Review* - an in-house magazine produced by and for Littlewoods staff and multiple copies of *Littlewoods Sports Log*, an eight-page magazine that was distributed to punters free with their weekly coupon, termed a corporate tipping sheet by Clapson.<sup>13</sup> These sources form the basis of my

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<sup>9</sup> Walvin, J. (1978). *Leisure and Society 1830-1950*. London: Longman, p.140.

<sup>10</sup> Pegg, M. (1983). *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939*. Beckenham: Croom Helm, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, A.J.P. (1965). *English History 1914-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.307.

<sup>12</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. *Littlewoods Review*.

<sup>13</sup> Clapson, M. (1992). *A Bit of a Flutter. Popular Gambling and English Society c. 1823-1961*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.179.

analysis of how the self-proclaimed world's largest pools promoter grew and functioned during this twenty-year period.

A further area of primary source material are the numerous novels, travelogues and social commentaries of the inter-war period that have gambling or the football pools as a plot line or are mentioned as an aspect of working-class leisure. A clear and consistent theme during this period was the presence of gambling, both legal and illegal, in contemporary art and commentary. The inter-war period saw a number of social investigations into British society and were of two distinct types – the specific observations and writings of a novelist travelling throughout Britain and social research projects, usually in a fixed geographical location. The social commentaries were epitomized by George Orwell in *The Road to Wigan Pier* and J.B. Priestley in *English Journey*. The most wide-ranging and famous of the social research projects were those of *Mass Observation*, developed by Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings and based in Worktown (Bolton) and the work of the popular academic John Hilton in his works *Why I Go in For the Pools by Tom, Dick and Harry* and *Rich Man, Poor Man*. Gambling was a consistent point in all these works and though the writers and analysts came to differing conclusions, it is the undeniable presence of gambling, specifically horse and greyhound racing and the football pools, which emphasize the importance of this leisure activity in the lives of the inter-war urban working-class.

These sources of evidence emerge in George Orwell's travelogue where he famously is utterly perplexed that no-one he encounters in Yorkshire appears to be interested in the political crisis of Nazi Germany entering the demilitarized zone in the Rhineland in 1936. All their energies are taken up in following the latest developments in the short-lived Pools War, which Orwell's assessment of says more about Orwell, a man who volunteered and fought on the side of the POUM in the Spanish Civil War, rather than the priorities of the regional working and unemployed individuals he meets. Priestley had a more relaxed and, perhaps, balanced view, as he spent far more of his life amongst those people who were likely to indulge in working-class culture, such as the football pools, rather than the self-defined lower-upper-middle class old Etonian Orwell. Priestley's *English Journey* focused on three England's, the third of which was based on modernity, with an increase in leisure and standardisation and exemplified through mass motor travel, American celebrities, football pools, suburban bungalows, factories that resembled exhibition halls, Woolworth's, hiking and dirt track racing. Priestley recognized and stressed the democratizing process of the new England which presented the culture as equally accessible on the same terms to those who



could pay into the rock bottom prices.<sup>14</sup> Priestley argued that betting, old and new, was a fundamental part of male working-class culture. He stated that the core attraction of gambling was to add extra money and excitement for a man whose life was miserably drab and of a confined existence.<sup>15</sup> Priestley utilized a term for leisure changes in inter-war Britain, which he specified as ‘modern England is rapidly Blackpooling itself.’<sup>16</sup> This term meant the new leisure options Priestley identified, including developments in gambling, and his emphasis on their democratic access with no or little distinction in class terms.<sup>17</sup>

Mass Observation also provided a detailed, almost scientific, reflection on working-class leisure and the pools. The instigators and driving force were three young, left-wing intellectuals – Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings – who wanted to focus their anthropological skills on the urban, working-classes of northern England. These privileged men were aware of their political and social isolation and the genuine ignorance of the living and working conditions of the majority of people.<sup>18</sup> The original concept of *Mass Observation* was outlined in a manifesto printed in the politically left leaning *New Statesman* magazine, in January 1937, and was entitled *Anthropology at Home*.<sup>19</sup> The *Mass Observation* project settled itself in Worktown (Bolton) and set about their task of observing, recording, commenting and analysing on all aspects of working-class life in that specific town. The basis of their approach was to pick topics that were previously seen as irrelevant to social research. Examples of which are the significance of the dirty joke, the behaviour of people at war memorials, the gestures of motorists and the anthropology of the football pools.<sup>20</sup> From the start of the social research project the football pools were interpreted as an important part in the leisure of the working-class in Worktown. A major motivation of this focus on the pools was explained by Tom Harrisson in *The Pub and The People*. He saw their work as a process to inform and educate the powerful in society about the lives of those they legislated on.<sup>21</sup> He cites, as an example of this ignorance, the 1932-33 Royal Commission on Gambling, who called almost a hundred witnesses from a wide range of interested organisations, but did not call a single ordinary punter.<sup>22</sup> Harrisson interpreted the conclusions of this commission

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<sup>14</sup> Baxendale, J. (2007). *Priestley's England. J.B. Priestley and English Culture*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.112.

<sup>15</sup> Priestley, J.B. (1934). *English Journey*. New York: Harpers and Brothers, p.263.

<sup>16</sup> Priestley. *English Journey*, p.320.

<sup>17</sup> Priestley. *English Journey*, p.320.

<sup>18</sup> Hall, D. (2015). *Worktown*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p.30.

<sup>19</sup> Hall. *Worktown*, p.36.

<sup>20</sup> Hall. *Worktown*, p.36.

<sup>21</sup> Harrisson, T. (1987). *The Pub and the People*. London: Crissell, p.259.

<sup>22</sup> Harrisson. *The Pub and the People*, p.259.

as fundamentally invalid, as they had no social understanding of what they were concluding.<sup>23</sup>

In the division between tradition and modernity the Mass Observation project, along with the football pools, were sympathetic to the aspects of modernity in inter-war Britain, which included a Woolworth's shopping and Penguin book buying modern mass society.<sup>24</sup> Mass Observation utilized the sociological theory of Functionalism, which focused on the belief that the different elements within a society act in a functional manner, and where everything functions as a part of a larger and consistent whole.<sup>25</sup> In order to understand how these elements within a society are interconnected it is necessary to be an insider to the culture of a society and hence the need for an anthropologist to live and work as one of the people being observed and studied.<sup>26</sup>

Mass Observation identified the senior managers of the pools companies as representatives of a new, modernist grouping, with themselves as leaders – Cecil Moores as *The Chief* and Vernon Sangster as *The Governor* and the pools punters as Littlewoods Loyalists. Mass Observation also concluded that this new grouping was based on modernist techniques and a distinct language style that was juxtaposed against the language used in traditional power groupings such as the House of Commons.<sup>27</sup> In more specific terms Mass Observation directly covered the role that the football pools held in Worktown's working-class culture. The pools held a presence as essential as smoking and swearing when working in the factories and was concluded to have changed everyday life in the non-conformist north.<sup>28</sup> The most important factor in the development of this uniformity were the modernist advertising techniques which created the new, clean image of gambling and retained punters once they engaged. The regularity of relatively small wins were an important feature of the pools and Mass Observation concluded that it was not the enticement of a huge, life changing amount of money that attracted punters to play the pools, but the small regular wins by friends, neighbours, colleagues and workmates that was a crucial spur in retaining involvement and, also, staying with the same pools company.<sup>29</sup> Though the promotional and advertising techniques were vitally important to the pools rapid expansion during the inter-war period a

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<sup>23</sup> Harrison. *The Pub and the People*, p.259.

<sup>24</sup> Hubble, N. (2010). *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, p.5.

<sup>25</sup> Hubble. *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*, p.56.

<sup>26</sup> Hubble. *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*, p.56.

<sup>27</sup> Hubble. *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*, p.156.

<sup>28</sup> Hubble. *Mass Observation and Everyday Life*, p.140.

<sup>29</sup> Hall. *Mass Observation*. Worktown, Box 2, File F.

process, an equal level of promotion, took place in the pub, shop and workplace through face to face conversation. An important development that was noted by Mass Observation was the manner in which the pools shaped the weekly social pattern of the urban working class, with a Thursday night assessed as the most popular night when the weekly coupon was completed.<sup>30</sup> The dreary winter weeks were concluded to have a new pattern, with coupon completion on Thursday, match results on Saturday and the potential dividend interest on Monday and then the process of discussion and selection for next weekend's matches began all over again.<sup>31</sup>

John Hilton was a Cambridge academic with a populist<sup>32</sup> touch. He regularly presented programmes on the expanding wireless network which focussed on contemporary social issues. An area he covered on many occasions was gambling and particularly the football pools. The huge response by listeners to one programme investigating why people played the pools led to the publication of *Why I Go In For The Pools* by Tom, Dick and Harry. Hilton concluded and was struck by the fact that many respondents focussed on acquiring singular material items and making specific changes to their lives. These were often based around the new material and technological possessions of the mass consumer society. Clear examples were a gramophone, a wireless, a holiday and a larger house with an improved scullery.<sup>33</sup> The respondents did not envisage that pool winnings were to be spent on spectacular or unfamiliar items outside the narrow confines of the daily experience of the inter-war urban working class.<sup>34</sup>

In a follow up title from 1944 *Rich Man, Poor Man*, Hilton addressed the social impact of the pools and the drive behind its rapid expansion. John Hilton, though not a supporter of the football pools, interprets its success as due to the extremely limited options for the working class to obtain a lump sum of money to genuinely change their lives and that the pools provided a form of financial redistribution in the manner of an irrational windfall.<sup>35</sup>

There were other cultural avenues, such as novels, where inter-war gambling was central to the work. The main characters involved in the gambling world were presented in these works in universally negative terms. It was this negative cultural representation which the pools

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<sup>30</sup> Hall. *Worktown*, p.233.

<sup>31</sup> Hall. *Worktown*, p.233.

<sup>32</sup> Hilton, J. (1940). *Why I Go in For the Pools*. London: Allen & Unwin.

<sup>33</sup> McKibbin, R. (1998). *Classes and Cultures in England 1918-1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.375.

<sup>34</sup> McKibbin. *Classes and Cultures in England 1918-1951*, p.375.

<sup>35</sup> Hilton, J. (1944). *Rich Man, Poor Man*. London: George Allen & Unwin, p.166.

companies were keen to distance themselves from. Most cultural representations of gambling were focused on the more high-profile elements, such as street gambling and horse racing. Prominent examples of this wholly negative representation in novels were *Brighton Rock* by Graham Greene<sup>36</sup>, *Love on the Dole* by Walter Greenwood<sup>37</sup> and *Shabby Tiger* by Howard Spring.<sup>38</sup> These novels connected gangsterism, extortion and sexual exploitation as strong elements within the gambling world. One of the few direct cultural representations of the football pools was in a 1932 film entitled *The Last Coupon* starring Leslie Fuller, which was a light-hearted comedy without the social commentary of *Love on the Dole* or *Brighton Rock*. The film is one of a total non-controversial manner which could have been written and distributed by the Football Pools Promoters' Association (FPPA) itself, in its presentation of the pools as a fun activity with no criminal undertones or connections with gangsterism. Further inter-war contemporaries who commented, and in some cases, assessed on the general growth of the pools and the widespread existence of gambling amongst the working-class were B.S. Rowntree, Robert Graves, Malcolm Muggeridge and A.J. Cronin.

#### Secondary Sources/ Historiography

There has been considerable research into the history of leisure, the social theory of leisure and into football and some of this has focussed upon the history of gambling. The history of leisure, in particular, has produced detailed research on betting and gambling. There is considerable debate about what gambling on sport represents, why it occurred and its impact on those who gambled and society in more general terms. S.G. Jones argues that gambling on sport in the inter-war period was a diversion from working-class political awareness and action, whereas in Andrew Davies' study of working-class culture in Manchester and Salford between 1900-1939, he concludes that 'popular sports were all closely bound to gambling'.<sup>39</sup> Gambling continued among the urban working-class, but changed its form from animal fighting and localized betting to the new developments of greyhound racing in newly constructed stadiums and the national football pools in the 1920s. John Benson<sup>40</sup> argues, in a similar vein, that it was the more efficient architecture and organisational structures of sport-increase in accessibility and technological proliferation which acted as catalysts to an increase in and changing approach to leisure, which was often homebased. Tony Collins in, a

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<sup>36</sup> Greene, G. (1938). *Brighton Rock*. London: William Heinemann.

<sup>37</sup> Greenwood, W. (1933). *Love on the Dole*. London: Jonathon Cape.

<sup>38</sup> Spring, H. (1934). *Shabby Tiger*. London: Fairwater.

<sup>39</sup> Davies, A. (1991). The Police and the People. Gambling in Salford 1900-1939. *Historical Journal*. 34, p.89.

<sup>40</sup> Benson, J. (1994). *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain 1880-1980*. Harlow: Longman.

more recent book, *Sport in the Capitalist Society. A Short History*<sup>41</sup> argues that development in the area of technology, such as ‘action shots’ and ‘close-up’s’ were crucial in increasing interest in football and these new options are regularly present in *Littlewoods Sports Log*, the free magazine distributed with coupons, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between the sport and the pools industry.

Recent historians have, therefore, seen gambling in sport as having a number of differing roles and consequences. Further, Brad Beaven<sup>42</sup> interprets the increase of formal gambling around football, in the form of the pools, as being part of a wave of new commercial leisure developments which moved the majority of the male working-class away from the concept of rational recreation, which was previously dictated to them by the middle-class and religious figures of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and manifested itself in the influence of specific groups such as the National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL).

In the early works of football historians there was a focus on the areas of the origins of the game and the period of codification by the public schools and the presence and changing role of hooliganism. The level of assessment on football gambling and the pools, by the original group of academic football historians has been very limited. Tony Mason, *Sport in Britain*<sup>43</sup> and James Walvin in *The People’s Game*<sup>44</sup> briefly cover the development of the pools within chapters on commercialism in the game and barely touch on the complexities of the relationship between football and gambling. A more recent work by football historian Matthew Taylor, *The Leaguers*<sup>45</sup>, introduces a more in-depth assessment of this relationship and the development of commercialism in the game which, through technological advancements such as the wireless, increased the attraction and involvement of the new industry of the pools and the weekly participation of millions of punters.

The major academic or pseudo-academic commentators on working-class gambling in the inter-war period are Ross McKibbin, Keith Laybourn, Wray Vamplew, Carl Chinn, Mike Huggins, Mark Clapson, Graham Sharpe, David Dixon and Andrew Davies, who offer varying interpretations. The seminal article by Ross McKibbin *Working-Class Gambling in*

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<sup>41</sup> Collins, T. (2013). *Sport in Capitalist Society. A Short History*. Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>42</sup> Beaven, B. (2005). *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>43</sup> Mason, T. (1988). *Sport in Britain*. London: Faber & Faber.

<sup>44</sup> Walvin, J. (1994). *The People’s Game*. London: Mainstream.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, M. (2005). *The Leaguers. The Making of Professional Football in England 1900-1939*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

*Britain 1880-1939* on the development of working-class gambling was an early enquiry into this social leisure activity.<sup>46</sup> He focussed on the impact of betting on the finances within working-class households. Laybourn treats betting on the pools within the context of multiple developments in working-class gambling, particularly the rapid development of urban-based greyhound racing, with its explosive growth during the inter-war period<sup>47</sup>. Sharpe is not academic in style, and at the time of writing *Gambling on Goals. A Century of Football Betting* was a publicity officer for William Hill, one of the largest bookmakers in the United Kingdom.<sup>48</sup> Sharpe, unsurprisingly, takes a very pro-gambling stance and constantly accused important organisations in the process of gambling's development in the inter-war period of hypocrisy. Clapson in *A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society 1823-1961* interprets the development and growth of the football pools within the longer-term passage of the increased acceptability of formal working-class gambling.<sup>49</sup> He further argues that for the vast majority of punters gambling was an enjoyable pastime that was affordable and brought some excitement and intellectual stimulation to often dreary and exhausting working lives of those in the towns and cities. The analysis of some writers, specifically Chinn and Vamplew are on other aspects of working-class gambling, not on the football pools. Chinn focuses exclusively on the development and role of bookmaking and bookmakers in *Better Betting with a Decent Feller*, which revisions bookmakers as providing a vital social service.<sup>50</sup> Vamplew covers another specific area of gambling, namely horse racing and its associated betting structure.<sup>51</sup>

The growth and development of the pools in the inter-war period was a prime example of the changing face of working-class leisure with particular reference to the tensions between rational recreation and the democratization of leisure. The concept of rational recreation had developed in the nineteenth century and was, fundamentally, concerned with specific groups in society attempting to dictate to other groups how they should spend their leisure time. The dictating groups were usually middle-class, non-conformists and working-class socialists and some trade union activists. Their aim was to focus the habits and minds of the general, often urban, working class to elevate them in areas such as political activism, mental recreation,

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<sup>46</sup> McKibbin, R. (1979). 'Working-Class Gambling in Britain 1880-1939'. *Past and Present*. 82. pp.147-178.

<sup>47</sup> Laybourn, K. (2007). *Working-Class Gambling in Britain c.1906-1960s. The Stages of the Political Debate*. Lampeter: Mellen Press.

<sup>48</sup> Sharpe, G. (1997). *Gambling on Goals. A Century of Football Betting*. Edinburgh: Mainstream.

<sup>49</sup> Clapson, M. (1992). *A Bit of a Flutter. Popular Gambling and English Society c.1823-1961*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

<sup>50</sup> Chinn, C. (2004). *Better Betting with a Decent Feller. A Social History of Bookmaking*. London: Aurum.

<sup>51</sup> Vamplew, W. (1976). *The Turf. A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing*. London: Allen Lane.

budgeting, money management and reducing money and time spent, particularly, on alcohol and gambling and, perceived widespread irreligiosity.<sup>52</sup> Rational recreation was a headline for actions, rather than a specific and organized movement. This was reinforced through national legislation in the middle of the nineteenth century, such as the Museum Act of 1845 and the Libraries Act of 1850, which clearly aimed at providing alternative and rational leisure forms.<sup>53</sup> In the later nineteenth century there was a gradual increase in working-class leisure time and the industrial proletariat were often pushed by employers into leisure activities that were defined as acceptable and educational. Amongst these options were municipal parks, brass bands, choral societies, public libraries and organized, codified modern sports.<sup>54</sup> These alternatives were designed to supplant the perceived immoral forms, most importantly, gambling and drinking.

The language and ideology of rational recreation persisted into the twentieth century. However, there had always been a clash between the dictators of leisure and those who were dictated to. Cross identifies that the religious underpinnings of rational recreation were eroded from around 1900.<sup>55</sup> There was a move towards a consumer culture with a move away from a production-based economy that required thrift and self-control to slowly give way to a more sophisticated bureaucratic and consumer economy that demanded a more co-operative and spend free attitude.<sup>56</sup>

After the First World War and the large-scale increase in adult suffrage, the process of working-class democratizing their leisure increased, with more of an emphasis on enjoyment, entertainment and commercialism, which manifested itself in such high-profile leisure options as football, cinema and the football pools. Peter Beck argues that both Hobsbawm and Steadman Jones identified a uniform and distinctive pattern of British working-class culture during the inter-war period. This was characterized by men who ‘ate fish and chips, wore a flat cap, watched association football, gambled on horses and took a holiday to Blackpool’.<sup>57</sup> This assessment of male working-class culture during the inter-war period

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<sup>52</sup> Hill, J. (2010). ‘What Shall We Do with Them When They’re Not Working’ in Brett Bebbler *Leisure and Cultural Conflict in Twentieth Century Britain*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.22.

<sup>53</sup> Clarke, J. and Critcher, C. (1985). *The Devil Makes Work. Leisure in Capitalist Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, p.58.

<sup>54</sup> Beck, P. (2009). Leisure and Sport in Britain 1900-1939 in Chris Wrigley. *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, p.457.

<sup>55</sup> Cross, G. (1990). *A Social History of Leisure since 1600*. Pennsylvania: Venture, p.193.

<sup>56</sup> Cross. *A Social History of Leisure since 1600*, p.193.

<sup>57</sup> Beck. Leisure and Sport in Britain 1900-1939 in Wrigley. *A Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain*, p.457.

clearly includes several aspects that were examples of democratic leisure and entertainment, but none could be placed under a heading of rational and educational recreation.

The growth of the democratic activity of the football pools in the inter-war period was only one aspect of the growth of entertainment, leisure and enjoyment by the newly enfranchised millions. There was also a sharp rise in the sale of cosmetics, furnishings, household gadgets, fashions and motor vehicles.<sup>58</sup> The widespread prevalence and the increase of new forms of gambling strongly suggests that the traditional and long-standing desire for excitement in leisure had not been 'civilized' by the rational recreationists.<sup>59</sup> The commercial-based leisure, not the recreation organized by political parties, religious groups or trade unions dominated workers free time.<sup>60</sup> Rogan Taylor argues that there was an innate clash between political groups theoretical approach and the leisure pursuits of the general populace. He states that football's close links with gambling, drinking and group violence distanced it from workers political organisations and trade unions and their aim to provide rational recreation alternatives. The Marxist-oriented criticisms of such activities as sport and gambling focused on the role it served to distract the proletariat from more important political and social responsibilities.<sup>61</sup>

By the inter-war period the wide range of new leisure activities and the adaptation of older forms of leisure - organised spectator sports, betting and drinking had meant that effectively the leisure interests of the enfranchised majority prevailed, as they activated their democratic choices over the dictates of specific religious and political groups and individuals. The latter nineteenth-century expression 'pleasure seeker' had been utilized by rational recreationists as a pejorative term to describe the working class, who seemed more interested in enjoyment through leisure than being drawn to and guided into more serious areas such as civilization and political salvation.<sup>62</sup> However, by the inter-war period the negative connotations of this term reduced and had come to mean and simply as it stated – leisure for the majority was to give pleasure and nothing more or less than that.

In terms of specific work on or connected to the larger pools companies – Littlewoods, Vernons, Shermans and Zettlers – there are very few publications. These are Leonard Gribble

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<sup>58</sup> Jones. *Working Class Sport in Manchester between the Wars* in Holt *Sport and the Working-Classes in Modern Britain*, p.67.

<sup>59</sup> Cross. *A Social History of Leisure since 1600*, p.202.

<sup>60</sup> Cross. *A Social History of Leisure since 1600*, p.204.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor, R. (1992). *Football and its Fans. Supporters and their Relations with the Game, 1885-1985*.

Leicester: Leicester University Press, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> Beaven. *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*, p.9.



*Inside Littlewoods*<sup>63</sup>, Norman Price *How to Become a Millionaire*<sup>64</sup>, Phil Reed *Football and Fortunes: The Inside Story of Littlewoods Football Pools 1923-2003*<sup>65</sup> and a biography of Sir John Moores, the founder and driving force behind Littlewoods, by Barbara Clegg and entitled *The Man Who Made Littlewoods: The Story of John Moores*.<sup>66</sup> Gribble was a thriller writer whose most notable work was *The Arsenal Football Stadium Mystery*. He writes in an Americanized style, reporting a single-day visit he made to the Littlewoods Edge Hill complex immediately after World War Two. This was a highly controlled visit which he reported in a breathless and idiosyncratic style. In connection with this is the booklet *How to be Millionaire* which was a collection of interviews given by the Moores brothers in 1955, who look back on the earlier part of their careers. John Moores was a reticent individual when talking about himself. He declared this was because he was a naturally shy man, but he was also a highly intelligent individual who used such opportunities to communicate a controlled view of his life and his business and the impact and motivations of Littlewoods. Reed's work covers 1923 to 1940 in the first section only and was a book specifically commissioned by the Littlewoods Company in 2003 as a celebration piece. This secondary source must be taken with extreme caution as it is a hagiography of Littlewoods and the Moores brothers. There are useful parts, such as the numerical growth of the company, the relationship with pools winners and the formal checking and investigation process, but very little is assessed in a critical manner. A similar conclusion is drawn for Clegg's biography. Large sections of *How to Become a Millionaire* are repeated in unacknowledged plagiarism.<sup>67</sup> This book is for the general reader and not a critical work analysing the long and complex career of one of Britain's premier businessmen for the period of 1925 to 1985. An example of the limited reach of this work is the fact that it does not have a list of any references to any other related works. These four, specific works repeatedly emphasize that the success of Littlewoods was mostly due to the intelligence and drive of the Moores brothers. In a primary assessment, though these were clearly contributory factors, there were wider, structural social themes which were important, particularly the generational and belief system clash with the football authorities and the National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL) and the utilization of

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<sup>63</sup> Gribble, L. (c.1950). *Inside Littlewoods*. London: Axtell.

<sup>64</sup> Price, N. (1955). *How to Become A Millionaire by John and Cecil Moores*. Liverpool: Empire News.

<sup>65</sup> Reed, P. (2003). *Football & Fortunes. The Inside Story of Littlewoods Football Pools, 1923-2003*. Liverpool: Brahn.

<sup>66</sup> Clegg, B. (1993). *The Man Who Made Littlewoods. The Story of John Moores*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

<sup>67</sup> Clegg, B. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.25.

modernist business techniques – advertising, Taylorism, Fordism and the introduction of new technology.

### Argument

The argument presented here is that, despite the changing environment of the times, the Moores brothers, who controlled Littlewoods were highly intelligent and astute businessmen who utilized multiple business techniques, notably Taylorism and Fordism, in the expansion of Littlewoods. They were keen to develop promotional techniques which paradoxically connected the pools with celebrity, modernity and tradition. They strongly promoted that the pools punters were in a club and sports organisation and that the integrity and fairness of Littlewoods was absolute. There are repeated assessments by their employees in the *Littlewoods Review* and Phil Reed's book *Football and Fortunes*, that they were a positive employer to work for, as they paid well and offered other advantages to employees such as health care and multiple social activities and clubs.<sup>68</sup> An immediate example of their astuteness and being individuals who utilized modern technology was their dealing with the Football League authorities in the run up to and during the defined Pools War of 1936. The age and background of men such as Charles Sutcliffe were no match for John and Cecil Moores who outmanoeuvred the League through lobbying, utilizing modern technology and what may be termed real world experience to defeat the authorities in a relatively short period of time, and allowed he and his firm to dominate betting on the football pools.

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<sup>68</sup> Reed, P. (2003). *Football and Fortunes. The Inside Story of Littlewoods Football Pools, 1923-2003*. Liverpool: Brahn.

## Chapter 2

### The Emergence of Football promoted by the Press and the Wireless, but opposed by the forces of Anti-Gambling.

There were a number of specific structural factors that were crucial to the inception and growth of the football pools in the inter-war period. In addition to the previously mentioned increase in leisure time and expenditure for large numbers of working-class adults, these were the expansion of professional football and associated gambling options, the increased coverage of football in the national and local press and the new, national media of the wireless. These three main agencies of communication provided the positive superstructure on which the pools grew and without the developments in these three areas there would not have been the structure on which the pools itself could develop and grow. In contrast to these factors which enabled growth of the football pools were those who lined up to stop this new form of gambling. These were the existing and contemporary legislative framework, the NAGL and prominent individuals who took a strong anti-gambling stance in different social areas during the inter-war period. One core target of the anti-gambling lobby was the growth of the football pools.

### Football

The rapid expansion of the Football League in the immediate post-Great War period provided the necessary number of weekly matches required for the breadth of the football pools coupons to develop. Newspaper coupon and fixed-odds betting on football had existed since the 1880s, in a similar vein to the much larger amounts gambled on horse racing. The instigation of a national football coupon betting structure was a logical extension of these previous systems. The broadening interest and coverage of football matches, clubs and players in the press created a cyclical catalyst for interest in this relatively new national sport. A follower of football in Portsmouth could read match reports or transfer news of Liverpool versus Newcastle United, on a daily basis, on an equal footing to their own town team. This level of coverage was further enhanced by the new presence and vast expansion of the wireless in the 1920s and 1930s.

The game of association football had changed dramatically in the late nineteenth century, from the massed, chaotic folk game that had existed for centuries, to an ordered and regulated sport with defined parameters. The geographical focus of this newer sport, in Britain, were the urban areas of Glasgow, Yorkshire and the North-West and Midlands of England. As the

game moved away from its public-school roots and into its professional phase during the 1870s and 1880s the majority of players and spectators became working men. However, the administration and control of the game, through the two major bodies of the Football Association (FA) and the Football League (FL) remained very much in the hands of amateur gentlemen and the followers of non-conformist religions.

A major area of tension between these differing groups from the early 1870s onwards was gambling and betting on the results of football matches and its, perceived, impact on the integrity of the sport. The long-serving FA Secretary, Sir Frederick Wall reported his dismay at odds being quoted by bookmakers at the first FA Challenge Cup final in 1872 when the ex-public-school students of the Wanderers defeated the army officers of the Royal Engineers.<sup>69</sup> Sharpe argues that by 1877, betting on football was commonplace and had become an accepted practice.<sup>70</sup> In terms of accepted practice he is clearly siding with those who gambled, including players and match umpires. In 1889 a further important development in the relationship between football and betting took place with the introduction of football coupon betting. In the professional football heartland of Blackburn a local bookmaker launched the 'universal football programme', offering a guaranteed amount of prize money to be shared amongst winning coupons.<sup>71</sup> The expansion of football coupon betting continued with the major tool for this growth being newspapers. The growth of interest in football and football-based gambling was symbiotic.

The growth in coupon-betting between 1870 to 1915 led to an, inevitable, reaction from the staunchly anti-gambling football authorities. In 1892 the Football Association took primary steps that required clubs to take necessary action to prevent gambling by spectators and, in 1897, instigated a further ruling where bills were posted on all grounds to clearly point out the illegality of gambling within a ground.<sup>72</sup> The football authorities were forthright that their paternal position was to set the context for activities such as gambling and alcohol use, which were strictly speaking not of the game but were within its cultural environs. In 1908 the FA specifically re-defined its attitude and precepts to any form of gambling connected with football where the stress was laid on the total prohibition of betting taking place on any

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<sup>69</sup> Mason, T. (1980). *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*. Brighton: Harvester, p.179.

<sup>70</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.30.

<sup>71</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.33.

<sup>72</sup> Vamplew, W. (1988). *Pay Up and Play the Game. Professional Sport in Britain, 1875-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.274.

football ground.<sup>73</sup> Five years later, as a result of the expansion of coupon betting, the FA further tightened its anti-gambling position. A specific commission was appointed, which made two major recommendations in relation to the changing relationship and parameters of football and gambling. First, Rule 42 was amended to permanently suspend any official of an association or club, referee, linesman or player who had been proven to have taken part in coupon football betting. The second major change concerned forced alteration to players contracts to culminate in termination if a player took part in coupon football betting.<sup>74</sup> This committee was an amalgamation of FA and FL administrators with Charles Clegg and Charles Sutcliffe both heavily involved in the process. However, as Vamplew concludes, though subsequent firm action by the clubs and authorities considerably reduced the volume of ground-based betting, they could not eliminate it.<sup>75</sup> The National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL) worked in ideological tandem with the football authorities and employed a statistician, Ainslie J Robertson.

A central figure behind the growth of association football was the stalwart of football league administration, Charles Sutcliffe. He developed the logistical structure for four expansion programmes in league football, in 1898, 1905, 1919 and from 1920 to 1923. These waves of growth took football in England from its northern and midlands base to a national game of eighty-eight league clubs.<sup>76</sup> Sutcliffe guided the Football League to absorb all the leading professional clubs outside the League's previous jurisdiction. The Football League emerged as a truly national sporting body.<sup>77</sup>

The metronomic pattern of the football season was set, with matches every Saturday, from September to April, for forty weeks of the year and the seven-day repetitious cycle of post-match analysis, debate over team and player performance and then pre-match anticipation for the approaching weekend contest. The Saturday match was, for many working-class males, the focus of their leisure week. The development of ever expanding stadia and the emergence of a new football related culture had become a central characteristic ritual of professional sport in Britain.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Rous, S. (1978). *Football Worlds. A Lifetime in Sport*. London: Faber & Faber, p.78.

<sup>74</sup> Rous. *Football Worlds*, p.78.

<sup>75</sup> Vamplew. *Pay Up and Play the Game*, p.274.

<sup>76</sup> Inglis, S. (1988). *League Football and the Men Who Made It*. London: Willow, p.103.

<sup>77</sup> Inglis. *League Football and the Men Who Made It*, p.104.

<sup>78</sup> Taylor, M. (2005). *The Leaguers. The Making of Professional Football in England 1900-1939*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, Introduction xiii.

Richard Holt has emphasized this new importance of football in urban environments and its ceaseless regularity. In Britain, by 1911, there were thirty-six towns of over 100,000 people and the considerable majority already had a professional team. The club in these mostly industrial towns and cities became a focus for a newer, collective urban leisure. The rapid growth of urban centres had led to a weakening of communities previously integrated around a collection of mills or mines.<sup>79</sup> Football was, in this growth, an example of modernity. It was an expanding leisure option based around rapid urbanization and the demographic rise of the working class. An important focus of modernity is identity which becomes fixed along fundamental axes of class, gender and locality. The expansion of urban, professional football was strongly connected to other vital, practical aspects of modernity – the rise of mass media, improvements in the transport infrastructure and the creation and development of a national education programme.<sup>80</sup>

### The Press

This rapid and continued expansion in football's presence had a closely-connected and symbiotic relationship with the press – national, local and specialized.<sup>81</sup> Indeed the media, first the press and then from 1926 onwards the radio, were vital agents of change in this transformation of football into a national game of importance to people of differing geographical locations and social classes.<sup>82</sup> The impact of the press, particularly between 1880 to 1920, acted as a catalyst where individuals, mostly males, could play, watch, read about, discuss and gamble on football.<sup>83</sup> Widespread coverage of football created a vast reservoir of interested individuals who followed the game, but did not necessarily commit themselves to direct spectating.<sup>84</sup> Modern sport, specifically football, and the modern press developed together in a mutually beneficial relationship. In simple terms editors concluded that coverage of popular sports increased sales and the press provided a central source of free publicity for the game through its reportage of matches and publishing of scores.<sup>85</sup>

Mass literacy was firmly established in Britain in the second half of the nineteenth century and the press had expanded as the major media of communication amongst different classes

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<sup>79</sup> Holt, R. (1989). *Sport and the British. A Modern History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.167.

<sup>80</sup> Giulianotti, R. (1999). *Football. A Sociology of the Global Game*. Cambridge: Polity, Introduction xiii.

<sup>81</sup> Mason, T. *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, p.187.

<sup>82</sup> Fishwick, N. (1984). *English Football and Society 1910-1950*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.94.

<sup>83</sup> Fishwick. *English Football and Society 1910-1950*, Introduction ix.

<sup>84</sup> Taylor. *The Association Game*, p.145.

<sup>85</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.282.

of the urban populous.<sup>86</sup> Though football received coverage in national newspapers, the real focus of more expansive reporting was in the local press and the growth of specialized sports and football papers. The press developed a deep connection with football by placing considerable emphasis upon the evolving minutiae of a town or city team and players.<sup>87</sup> Walvin argues exclusively that most of the game's core social characteristics were strongly influenced and exaggerated by the press.<sup>88</sup> Holt forms an opposing and more sophisticated conclusion of the complex relationship between football and the press. He stresses that though the press did play an important part in popularizing and sustaining interest in spectator sport, it did not create or manufacture the rapid growth in football.<sup>89</sup> The press had a reactive rather than proactive role in football coverage and assessment. They reflected what Holt terms the 'living culture of the people'.<sup>90</sup> The local and specialist press did, simultaneously, influence opinion and reinforce existing attitudes and patterns, but it was not responsible for creating this new entertainment format and was not specifically concerned with altering the habits and loyalties of their readership base.<sup>91</sup>

In a national context there was an intense rivalry for readership in the inter-war period, particularly in the populist market. In 1920 the *Daily Mail* was the only national paper with a daily circulation of over a million copies, by the close of the inter-war period the *Daily Express* sold 2.6 million daily copies and the *Daily Herald*, *Daily Mirror* and the *Mail* all sold considerably over a million copies daily.<sup>92</sup> Reporting of sports and football, in particular, had a strong place in this intensely competitive market. The Sunday newspaper *The People* developed an anti-establishment style, projecting powerful football men such as Charles Sutcliffe in negative terms.<sup>93</sup> Taylor further argues that there was a conscious positioning of this reporting style to act as a democratic voice in opposition to a perceived cronyism of some papers, specifically *Athletic News*.<sup>94</sup> The *Daily Mirror*, after a relaunch in 1933 in which it aimed to attract a younger, working-class readership increased its sports coverage by a fifth, focusing on football.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Walvin, J. (1986). *Football and the Decline of Britain*. Basingstoke: MacMillan, p.49.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.49.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, p.49.

<sup>89</sup> Holt. *Sport and the British. A Modern History*, p.307.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p.307.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p.307.

<sup>92</sup> Fishwick. *English Football and Society.1910-1950*, p.100.

<sup>93</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.266.

<sup>94</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.266.

<sup>95</sup> Huggins, M. and Williams, J. (2006). *Sport and the English 1918-1939*. Abingdon: Routledge, p.24.

The special editions of local papers, or as they were known, football special, were cheaply produced and aimed specifically at the football enthusiast and exclusive club fan, took a foothold in most towns and cities between the 1890s and 1900s and had flourished by the 1920s.<sup>96</sup> They were often printed on coloured paper and were known as *The Green* 'Un in the Sheffield area, *The Buff* or the Manchester produced *The Pink Final*. These papers provided the required instant news of local and national competitions to fans and punters on Saturday evenings. Newspapers expanded the content and context of their coverage from just listing fixtures and results. Mason stresses that the omnipresence of football specials brought a cultural position as central as the gas lamp and the fish and chip shop.<sup>97</sup>

### Wireless/ Radio

In addition to the developments of the national and local press in the inter-war period was the introduction of a totally new medium – the wireless. The wireless became an all-powerful medium during this period, and by 1939 it brought instant communication and entertainment in the United Kingdom.<sup>98</sup> The primary establishment of radio broadcasting strongly coincided with the point where the full suffrage was conceded to all the adult populous and the creation of mass democracy.<sup>99</sup> The wireless exerted a considerable impact on life in Britain for many different groups. Indeed A.J.P. Taylor termed the wireless ‘the one universal feature of the period.’<sup>100</sup> In tandem with other forms of entertainment, the radio was central to a process of domestication in much of the nation’s leisure pursuits, by enabling millions of citizens to focus their pleasure at home.<sup>101</sup>

The growth in radio ownership and usage between 1923 to 1939 was phenomenal. Blythe denotes 1923 as the ‘wonder year’ when the wireless swept the Western world.<sup>102</sup> In 1930 three million households had a radio set and by 1939 this total had tripled.<sup>103</sup> By 1939, 75 percent of British households had a radio and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) service reached across all sections of society. With this dramatic increase in radio ownership and usage came a change in the social perspective of the country. More than any other

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<sup>96</sup> Taylor. *The Association Game*, p.146.

<sup>97</sup> Mason. *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, p.193.

<sup>98</sup> Pegg. *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939*, p.1.

<sup>99</sup> Scannel, P. and Cardiff, D. (1991). *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Volume 1, 1922-1939. Serving the Nation*. Oxford: Blackwell, p.10.

<sup>100</sup> Taylor, A.J.P. (1965). *English History 1914-1945*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.307.

<sup>101</sup> Walvin. *Football and the Decline of Britain*, p.82.

<sup>102</sup> Blythe, R. (1963). *The Age of Illusion: England in the Twenties and Thirties, 1919-1940*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, p.64.

<sup>103</sup> Scannell and Cardiff. *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Volume 1*, p.362.



specific medium, the radio acquainted people of differing classes and broad geographical dispersion with how other people across the country lived and worked.<sup>104</sup>

The core feature of the pattern of wireless programming in the UK was the national omnipresence of the BBC and the forceful personality of its first Director-General, John Reith. During the earliest days of the BBC, in the mid-1920s, the BBC's educative mandate, as directed and dictated by Reith, made it fundamentally reluctant to broadcast sport.<sup>105</sup> However, once the expansion of wireless ownership, due to lower prices and consumer credit, cascaded down from the middle class to encompass the working-class there was a redefinition of programming to include more popular and populist entertainment and sport.<sup>106</sup>

Public request and demand and the democratic process of the BBC's public service ethos led to the beginning of sports programming and from 1927 the broadcasting of live sporting events.<sup>107</sup> Prior to 1927 the Newspapers Proprietors' Association, in an anti-competition move, pressured the government that sports events commentaries were a form of direct news reporting. This policy was ended when the British Broadcasting Company became a Corporation.<sup>108</sup> The BBC developed an absolutely crucial role as the central agent of the national culture, with particular reference to the reaffirmation and sustaining of a national calendrical role.<sup>109</sup> In the inter-war period the BBC monopoly acted as a cultural window for the nation, developing a very broad base of programming—light entertainment, wide-ranging musical choices, drama, religious broadcasts, sport and the new, unifying 'national' news - to listeners from Aberdeen to Penzance.<sup>110</sup> The BBC formulated an annual reproduction of a cycle of regular, predictable and orderly progression of rituals, festivals and celebrations that set out the passage of the national year in broadcasting terms.<sup>111</sup> During the 1930s a major component of this calendar of rituals was the sporting calendar. By the mid-1930s a clearly defined roster of sporting events, split into winter and summer, became a core part of the new national broadcasting. Weekly football had a clear presence in the winter season, along with rugby, steeple-chasing, the University Boat Race, the Grand National and the FA Cup Final. The summer focused on county cricket, flat racing, test matches, the Derby, Royal Ascot and

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<sup>104</sup> Bourke. *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity*, p.187.

<sup>105</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.267.

<sup>106</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.267.

<sup>107</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.267.

<sup>108</sup> Crissell, A. (1997). *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*. Abingdon: Routledge, p.40.

<sup>109</sup> Scannell and Cardiff. *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Volume 1*, p.278.

<sup>110</sup> Robbins, K. *The British Isles. 1901-1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.112.

<sup>111</sup> Scannell and Cardiff. *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Volume 1*, p.278.

Wimbledon.<sup>112</sup> This pattern created a sport knowledgeable national community to all those ever-increasing numbers of people with access to broadcasting.

The press had covered sport in increasing levels and had set a pattern of weekly reporting that broadcasting picked up from. A particularly popular programme was the early evening Saturday bulletin which filled a void before the sports press emerged.<sup>113</sup> The process of football coverage on the radio was both revolutionary and evolutionary. There were no precedents to the live reporting and communicating of matches, results and simultaneous updates to millions of people. Broadcasting had to evolve its own structure, style and conventions.<sup>114</sup> Though the presence of football on the wireless increased dramatically from 1927 onwards there were clashes with the football authorities. The historic first radio broadcast of a soccer match was a league game between Arsenal and Sheffield United in January 1927, but in the short term this brought a negative reaction from the Football League who feared the future impact of radio and decided to ban live broadcasts.<sup>115</sup> This sanctioning of the footballing powers was short lived and by 1934 a further, new format of sports coverage had been introduced. These were the afternoons of broadcast sport. This new process of broadcasting featured episodes with shifts from one sport to another, including cricket, football, tennis and rifle shooting.

The aim of this approach was to give the listener a rounded experience of sports activity and reporting throughout the nation.<sup>116</sup> The spectacular influence of the radio into the world of sports can be illustrated by the range of new sports that were broadcast by the late 1930s, such as speedway, racing, gliding, darts, fencing and table tennis.<sup>117</sup> The reach of the wireless re-emphasized the relationship of the media and sport created by the press. This penetration of radio reached into the home environments of the most disadvantaged and isolated.<sup>118</sup> This was part of the significant change of movement away from the street-based social life to one that was located in the home.<sup>119</sup> However, the BBC and particularly the strict Presbyterian Reith allowed no direct connection with gambling. In a pattern that repeated itself, most obviously with the 1936 Pools War, the pools promoters utilized initiative and aspects of

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<sup>112</sup> Scannell and Cardiff. *A Social History of British Broadcasting. Volume 1*, p.279.

<sup>113</sup> Pegg. *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939*, p.214.

<sup>114</sup> Crissell. *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, p.20.

<sup>115</sup> Murray, B. (1996). *The World's Game: A History of Soccer*. Illinois: University of Illinois, p.70.

<sup>116</sup> Briggs, A. (1965). *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume Two. The Golden Age of the Wireless*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.119.

<sup>117</sup> Briggs. *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume Two*, p.219.

<sup>118</sup> Pegg. *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939*, p.219.

<sup>119</sup> Langhamer, C. *Women's Leisure in England 1920-60*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.189.

modernity and technology to bypass the national UK based monopoly of the BBC. The main focus of this process was the football results programming on Radio Luxembourg. This transmitted into the UK and was directly sponsored by Littlewoods Pools from 1934 onwards. Andrew Crissell argues that Radio Luxembourg was a highly professional organisation which, for purely commercial reasons, exercised little control over its own specific output and sold slots of its airtime to advertisers directly. In reality this meant that the advertisers provided the programming and set their own agendas. Radio Luxembourg obtained its revenue from the direct sale of airtime and did not spend money on providing entertainments.<sup>120</sup> The pools companies strategically utilized this promotional and advertising option from 1934 onwards and increased their share of Luxembourg programming with a strong emphasis on pure entertainment of light music and variety gramophone records.<sup>121</sup> Though Radio Luxembourg was the dominant force in continental-based programmes reaching the UK, it was not alone as Radio Normandie and Poste Parisien offered a range of options for both British listeners and the pools operators.<sup>122</sup> The central role of the wireless to so many household's leisure in the inter-war period brought other activities, such as gambling in the form of the football pools, away from the public environment and into the domestic setting.

A third media form, newsreels, led by *Pathe News*, developed during the inter-war period and reached a large, mass audience, as they were shown in cinemas. In the 1930s the boom in cinema audiences regularly watched football highlights in this format as 30 percent of newsreels were devoted to sport.<sup>123</sup> The promotion of the game was further reaching out to many who were not inclined to directly visit a match. Taylor argues that given the relatively poor quality of photo journalism during the inter-war period that it was newsreels which granted an improved opportunity for many to 'see' and experience football.<sup>124</sup>

### National Anti-Gambling League and Prominent Anti-Gamblers

It is almost a tautology to state that people have always gambled on a plethora of sports, games and activities involving human or animal competitors. However, there has always been the opposite side of the coin to those who gambled, those who were adamant that gambling should not exist in any form. The most important and influential anti-gambling organisation

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<sup>120</sup> Crissell. *An Introductory History of British Broadcasting*, p.52.

<sup>121</sup> Briggs. *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Volume Two*, p.363.

<sup>122</sup> Graves, R. (1995). *The Long Weekend. A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939*. London: Abacus, p.384.

<sup>123</sup> Fishwick, N. (1984). *English Football and Society, 1910-1950*, p.107.

<sup>124</sup> Taylor. *The Association Game. A History of British Football*, p.147.

in the United Kingdom from 1890 to 1940 was the NAGL. The NAGL was founded in 1890 by Seebohm Rowntree and through its journal the *Bulletin of the National Anti-Gambling League* it espoused its aim to reform England from the vice of gambling.<sup>125</sup> The NAGL condemned gambling as contrary to Christian values, with success built on the misery of others and as a cause of widespread poverty by wasting money that could have been spent on personal and family welfare.<sup>126</sup>

The NAGL was fundamentally a lobby organisation, dominated by the Quakers, and other Nonconformist and dissenting religions. It professed its case through its journal, pamphlets, books, lectures and the pressuring of prominent and influential individuals, such as Members of Parliament, Chief Constables and magistrates. An early success was in targeting a number of newspaper publishers, including in 1901 the Hulton Press produced *Athletic News*, for promoting football coupon competitions.<sup>127</sup> The football coupon process was declared illegal through its collection of stake money and was judged to have infringed on the 1853 Betting Houses Act.<sup>128</sup>

A driving force, both intellectually and financially, in the NAGL was Seebohm Rowntree who funded the York branch and who, in 1905, provided a collection of polemical essays which he edited, entitled *Betting and Gambling: A National Evil*. Seebohm Rowntree was a Quaker, a successful businessman from the York family of chocolate makers and a social activist. The focus of the NAGL was to initiate a change in the law so that competitions with a material element of chance were made illegal and a strict limit was to be made on prizes<sup>1</sup> offered by publications.<sup>129</sup>

Furthermore, the NAGL argued that a considerable amount of criminality, prison numbers and social ills were due to gambling.<sup>130</sup> However the influence and power of the NAGL had waned by the inter-war period from its apogee of lobby influence for the 1906 Street Betting Act. Dixon argues that post 1919 this diminished role was due to a number of factors including a need for new blood, internal disagreements and social and political changes which reduced the political power of the Liberal Party and the voice of Nonconformism.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *Bulletin of the National Anti-Gambling League*. Copies in Borthwick Institute of University of York Library.

<sup>126</sup> Huggins and Williams. *Betting, Sport and the English, 1918-1979*, p.17.

<sup>127</sup> Clapson. *A Bit of a Flutter. Popular Gambling and English Society c.1823-1961*, p.163.

<sup>128</sup> Mason. *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, p.182.

<sup>129</sup> Mason. *Association Football and English Society 1863-1915*, p.186.

<sup>130</sup> Dixon. *From Prohibition to Regulation*, p.301.

<sup>131</sup> Dixon. *From Prohibition to Regulation*, p.301.

The inter-war momentum in government, mainly by the Home Office and Chief Constables, aimed to replace prohibition with alternative forms of control to gambling.<sup>132</sup>

Though the overall power of the NAGL reduced during this period there were a number of individuals who carried the anti-gambling baton in the inter-war period. The three individuals crucial to the anti-gambling movement were Charles Sutcliffe, a leading figure in the Football League, Seebohm Rowntree and Canon Peter Green. They shared a strong and total abhorrence for gambling and in their different roles and positions they constantly attacked gambling and attempted to curtail and, fundamentally, stop its influence on British society in the inter-war period.

Charles Sutcliffe was a key figure in the development and expansion of league football from 1898 when he first joined the National Football League Committee, up to his death when Chairman in 1939. He was a devout and strict Methodist and a committed anti-gambler, who interpreted gambling, including the football pools, as an evil pastime which could destroy football. He was a workaholic on behalf of football administration and he went to considerable lengths to protect the game from any negative influence. Sutcliffe was, perhaps, the fundamental driving force in English football for forty years. He was the major architect of professional football's rapid expansion from a clique of Northern and Midlands based clubs to the truly national English body of 88 clubs across four divisions by 1923.<sup>133</sup> He was a man of strong convictions and power who espoused on a range of football related issues. Inglis notes that Sutcliffe also campaigned for the Temperance movement. Indeed, his fight against corruption was with the ardour of an evangelist.<sup>134</sup> At the top of his list was a decades-long campaign in which he argued through newspaper columns against the Players' Union and his abhorrence of any form of gambling on football.<sup>135</sup> On achieving his life-long ambition of becoming Football League Chairman, on the death of John McKenna, in 1935, he was a forceful motivation in attempting to destroy the football pools. In 1935 he initiated his first anti-pools process by forbidding clubs to put advertisements for the pools in match programmes or at their grounds.<sup>136</sup> A year later Sutcliffe initiated a nationwide attempt by football authorities to deliver a knockout blow to the pools companies with the so called

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<sup>132</sup> Laybourn, K. (2007). *Working-Class Gambling in Britain c.1906-1960s. The Stages of the Debate*. Lampeter: Mellen Press, p.73.

<sup>133</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. (2004). Volume 53. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.348.

<sup>134</sup> Inglis. *League Football and the Men Who Made It*, p.107.

<sup>135</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Volume 53, p.348.

<sup>136</sup> Clapson. *A Bit of a Flutter*, p.170.

‘Pools War’. The Pools War was a disaster for the football authorities and the anti-gambling position and, subsequently, gave the Football Pools Promoters’ Association (FPPA) a free rein to expand their business unhindered from organizational intervention up to and then after World War Two. The widespread opposition to the Football League and the Football Association actions forced a hasty climbdown by the League, which left Sutcliffe open to public approbation from which he never fully recovered.<sup>137</sup>

However, even after suffering this almost farcical defeat Sutcliffe maintained his core and absolute dislike for the pools. In August 1938, under Sutcliffe’s Chairmanship, the League rejected an offer from the FPPA of £50,000 a year towards the League’s Jubilee Fund, as it was perceived to be tainted money acquired from gambling.<sup>138</sup>

The second voice in the triumvirate of anti-gambling stalwarts in inter-war Britain was Canon Peter Green, Dean of Manchester and a high-profile figure in the urban environments of Manchester and Salford. Clapson argues that Canon Green was the premier critic of gambling during the Edwardian years and up to the 1930s.<sup>139</sup> Canon Green was strongly against all aspects of gambling, particularly high-profile elements such as urban street-based betting and horse racing. He saw this as absolutely morally repugnant and was a major source, along with alcohol, for the ills of the urban, working-class such as poverty, poor diet, wasted leisure time and irreligiosity.

The third individual who was central to shaping the anti-gambling debate was, the aforementioned, Seebohm Rowntree. Indeed, he was the most influential voice of the anti-gambling lobby stretching from 1900 to the 1950s. In his approach he differed from the other important anti-gamblers, Green and Sutcliffe, in that he conducted investigative social research to provide data which he utilized to reinforce his ideological position. The theme for Rowntree was that though gambling and drinking were the two main evils of the urban working-class, the remedy was not wholly to focus on punitive legislation but had to be seen in the larger context of social reform, particularly education.

His most important and thorough research during this period was *Poverty and Progress*, which was published in 1941, but was based on work completed in 1936. Rowntree based his

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<sup>137</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Volume 53, p.348.

<sup>138</sup> Inglis, I. (1985). *Soccer in the Dock*. London: Willow, p.111.

<sup>139</sup> Clapson, M. (1992). *Playing the System. The World of Organized Street Betting in Manchester, Salford and Bolton c. 1880 to 1939* in Davies, A. and Fielding, S. *Workers Worlds. Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford 1880-1939*. Manchester. Manchester University Press, p.158.

conclusions on an extensive house to house survey of 16,362 families in York, focusing particularly on the working-class.<sup>140</sup> In this influential social research document Rowntree included a considerable section on leisure. He saw analysis of leisure as central to a more comprehensive conclusion. Rowntree succinctly describes his opinion on this matter as ‘the way in which communities spend their leisure time is a criterion of the national character. The kind of work people do and the hour’s occupied in it are largely determined by circumstances they cannot control, but they can do what they will with their leisure hours.’<sup>141</sup>

Rowntree was mainly concerned that these new leisure opportunities made no contribution to physical, mental or spiritual development.<sup>142</sup> He took aim at cinemas and dance halls, but he regarded gambling and the new developments of greyhound racing and the football pools as ‘public enemy number one’ surpassing, in his opinion, alcohol as the most urgent social problem.<sup>143</sup> In *Poverty and Progress* Rowntree makes his contempt for the pools punters clear. He focuses judgement on the poor, who he concludes, only make a choice whether to spend their money in the pub or at home on the pools. Rowntree incorrectly concludes that the number ‘who win anything (on the pools) is infinitesimal’, whereas in reality many weeks there were large numbers of smaller winners, dependent upon results across the leagues.<sup>144</sup> Rowntree moulds the data of his extensive social research in York to fit in with his pre-conceived construct of strict anti-gambling in all forms. He decried the fact that it was the poorest who gambled the most, as a percentage of how much money they had available and this was mostly to introduce excitement into their lives, which were often dull and monotonous.<sup>145</sup>

In a similar approach to Canon Green and Reverend E Benson Perkins, Rowntree takes an absolutist view and repositions this as a norm. In a famous quote from *Poverty and Progress* Rowntree states that ‘one inveterate gambler told an investigator that he’d rather ‘have six penn’orth of hope than six penn’orth of electricity.’<sup>146</sup> Though there have always been individuals with a gambling issue or problem it is a falsity to present the anecdote of one man as a normal position from 16,000 responses in York. The overwhelming majority of pools punters did not make this choice of completing their weekly coupon over the necessities of

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<sup>140</sup> Briggs. *Social Thought and Social Action*, p.292.

<sup>141</sup> Rowntree, S. (1941). *Poverty and Progress*. London: Longmans, p.329.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, p.447.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, p.447.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, p.371.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, p.403.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, p.403.

rent, food or utilities. A second example of Rowntree utilizing a singular extreme situation was the effect the pools had, according to his wife, on one man's mental health. She is quoted as saying that her husband 'pins all his hopes on winning a pool prize and has now become so depressed that he stays in bed most of the week, just waiting for Saturday. He has no thought but for the pools, and unless he changes he will go insane.'<sup>147</sup> Despite all the rigorous research and extensive collection of sociological data throughout the city of York, at no point does Rowntree balance out these specific examples with evidence of the many individuals who filled in their coupon as an interest or hobby, staking relatively small amounts of money, which if in full-time employment could be comfortably afforded. Rowntree specifically highlights cases that are extreme and not a reflection of the average position in the extensive interviews conducted.

Though Rowntree was negative about passive leisure options increasingly holding sway over the rational recreation movement from the later nineteenth century, he did argue that part of this move to passive leisure was due to an increase in home-based leisure. In *Poverty and Progress* there are a reported 25,000 wireless sets in York so that people sit at home listening to music, variety entertainments and sport, including football results.<sup>148</sup> Rowntree and his team of researchers also developed interesting techniques to measure the practical impact of football pools in York in the late 1930s. They directly counted the number of circulars sent out to households and compared the number of postal orders sold in York during a week in the football season with totals sold in a week when there was no football.<sup>149</sup> The postal order was the manner in which working-class pools punters paid for their coupon related bets. Indeed, the postal order was commonly known as the working-class cheque. The disparities were considerable with 17,828 postal orders in October 1938, but only 5,315 in July 1938.<sup>150</sup> This suggests that about three-quarters of families in York, essentially most working-class families, were betting on the pools in a football season. There were other avenues of pools betting in York with pools clubs organized in factories, workshops and offices which indicates a social element to the pools with groups of people coming together to discuss matches, form and performances.

A major avenue for the anti-gambling movement was the law. During the first forty years of the twentieth century there were multiple new laws aimed at restricting different aspects of

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, p.404.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, p.370.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid*, p.403.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, p.403.



betting and gambling. The most important pieces of new legislation were the 1906 Street Betting Act, the 1920 Football Betting Credit Act and the 1934 Betting and Lotteries Act, which was the result of the 1932-33 Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting. Each of these laws built a new layer onto the body of anti-gambling legislation dating back to the 1853 Betting Houses Act. The aim was to squeeze betting and gambling activity by closing legal options such as street betting, which was popular in working-class urban environments and newspaper coupon betting. However, despite this broadening of anti-gambling legislation, the paradox of the 1920s and 1930s was that there was an overall expansion in gambling options, namely the football pools and greyhound racing.

The anti-gambling force of the Football Association (FA) had threatened to suspend permanently any player or official who had taken part in football coupon betting, and did so, unsuccessfully, in 1913 and then successfully in 1920 they managed to get parliament to push through a bill that forbade ready money betting on football.<sup>151</sup> The Right Honourable Hayes Fisher originally presented the bill on behalf of the FA.<sup>152</sup> There was also clear direct support in parliament for the Bill from the Arsenal chairman Sir Henry Norris.<sup>153</sup> The NAGL opposed the 1920 Ready Money Football Betting Act as they saw that it would be easily evaded and largely ineffective.<sup>154</sup> Paradoxically an act that was introduced to destroy football coupon betting led to a new structure on which the success and expansion of the football pools was built. In order to get around the specific illegality of ready money betting the pools companies simply devised a system where their clients always paid a week in arrears. They clearly marked all their coupons 'by credit only'. In the gambling world there was this endless repositioning between pro and anti-gamblers.

Legislation was introduced to make certain activities and pieces of behaviour illegal. The pro-gamblers or those involved in gambling found ways of carrying on betting and gambling that avoided attention from the criminal justice system. The 1920 Ready Money Football Betting Act was specifically developed to prevent the writing, printing, publishing and circulating in the United Kingdom of any ready money football betting.<sup>155</sup> The Act was an attack upon newspapers who ran their own coupons. If they had to rely upon credit betting then they would find it difficult to secure the money placed in comparison to the payment of ready

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<sup>151</sup> Mason. *Sport in Britain*, p.65.

<sup>152</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.42.

<sup>153</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.57.

<sup>154</sup> Dixon. *From Prohibition to Regulation*, p.166.

<sup>155</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.45.

money. The nationally publicized prosecution of the *Sheffield Telegraph*, under the 1920 Act, had the paradoxical effect of achieving its main aim of drastically reducing football coupon competitions but inadvertently boosted the clientele of pools companies who avoided the consequences of the Ready Money Football Betting Act with their credit payment structure.

The next phase in attempts to control gambling, particularly the high-profile elements, was the 1932-33 Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting. Durant confirms that the Royal Commission was formed to observe ‘in densely populated centres, particularly in poorer working-class neighbourhoods, that gambling has become a social factor which the state cannot disregard.’<sup>156</sup> He strongly concludes that the framing of the work of this commission gave the football pools a pass for continued development and growth, as legislation continued to focus on higher profile and confrontational betting.<sup>157</sup> The vehement anti-gambling voice of E Benson Perkins argued, retrospectively, in 1950, that the subsequent Betting and Lotteries Act of 1934 was limited in its approach. Perkins states it was unfortunate that this act only dealt with newspaper competitions, lotteries and on-course betting.<sup>158</sup> Benson Perkins believed that the 1934 Act should have included prohibitive restrictions on the football pools. Neither Canon Green nor Benson Perkins brought forward concrete evidence as to how filling in a pools coupon was harmful. They were individuals who did not have to live and work in the realpolitik of government legislative process, with multiple agendas and lobbyists having their input. Benson Perkins did not appear to concern himself with the issue of why and how a government would make illegal an activity that millions of enfranchised men and women partook on a weekly basis without any wide-reaching negative social impact.

By 1934 the government was bringing in revenue from taxation on the pools and the government- controlled post office enjoyed hugely increased revenues on postal orders and stamps. This was the reality for the government and the result of the Royal Commission to not recommend restrictions on the football pools is not surprising.<sup>159</sup> The 1932-33 Commission and the 1934 Act were points where prohibition moved to regulation and the waning influence of the NAGL could be interpreted more clearly. Proposals that were central to the strategy of the NAGL were not taken seriously by the Commission or in the 1934 Act. The NAGL aim of banning all betting news was compared to attempting to curb immorality

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<sup>156</sup> Durant, H. (1938). *The Problem of Leisure*. London: Routledge, p.161.

<sup>157</sup> Durant. *The Problem of Leisure*, p.162.

<sup>158</sup> Benson Perkins E. (1950). *Gambling in English Life*. London: Epworth, p.23.

<sup>159</sup> Murray, B. (1996). *The World's Game. A History of Soccer*. Illinois: University of Illinois, p.81.

by suppressing news on divorces.<sup>160</sup> The desire to prohibit the football pools remained within the FA and Football League and manifested itself in the obtuse confrontation, initiated by Charles Sutcliffe in 1936, known as the 'Pools War'.

### 1936 'Pools War'

The epitome of the clash between the new, expanding gambling option of the football pools and the older, fixed view, anti-gambling lobby was the Pools War. In February 1936 the Football League, under the control of strong anti-gamblers John McKenna and Charles Sutcliffe, initiated a national confrontation with the pools promoters. The aim of the Football League and the Football Association was to smash the pools promoters and destroy their connection with the game so assiduously developed by McKenna and Sutcliffe over a forty-year period, into a national sport. The main argument for this, ultimately rash action, was to protect the pure integrity of the footballing contest from the perceived pervasive influence of gambling.

The main weapon that the Football League used in the Pools War was their copyright ownership of the fixture list. Previously in June 1934, the League committee had rejected a scheme by a Liverpool accountant to charge the pools promoters, under copyright legislation, for using the fixture list by declaring that no connection must exist between the League and gambling.<sup>161</sup> They decided, with the backing of the club boards, to cancel the existing and publicized programme and initiate a new set of fixtures. In order to suppress the pools companies these new fixtures were withheld from the clubs until two days before matches were due to be played.<sup>162</sup> This reduced timescale meant that the pools promoters did not have enough time to print and distribute their coupons to millions of customers throughout the country.<sup>163</sup> Though this drastic action clearly had the desired impact on the pools industry, it also had the rather obvious effect on other crucial areas of the football industry, namely the clubs, administrators, the press, players and supporters, who were all equally ignorant about upcoming fixtures until forty eight hours before match kick off.

The Football League were running a nationwide business in which hundreds of thousands of individuals were involved on a weekly basis and these wide-ranging participants from

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<sup>160</sup> Dixon. *From Prohibition to Regulation*, p.303.

<sup>161</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.57.

<sup>162</sup> Meirs, D. (2004). *Regulating Commercial Gambling. Past, Present and Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.318.

<sup>163</sup> Pugh. *We Danced All Night*, p.301.

Sunderland to Plymouth were being treated with fundamental contempt by the Football League hierarchy. The anger and frustration of football fans and pools participants was famously recorded by George Orwell in his 1936 social travelogue of Britain *The Road to Wigan Pier*. Orwell was an outsider to working-class life and culture and interpreted discussion and expenditure on football and the pools as a direct waste of time, money and effort. In his view this time and effort should have been focused on the development of working-class political consciousness.

McKibbin reinforces the point that the Pools War was a foolish confrontation, but more importantly he demonstrated how isolated from the popular support the game's senior administrators were.<sup>164</sup> The Pools War was, fundamentally, a clash between an elitist, non-conformist world view formed in the latter nineteenth century against the younger, modernist men, such as John and Cecil Moores at Littlewoods and Vernon Sangster at Vernons. A clear example of this is the role of the press in the Pools War. The Football League and Football Association were often brusque with Fleet Street, with a history of not explaining their decisions and actions to the national press. The Pools War only reinforced this arrogant approach and the Football League and Football Association incurred the wrath of the popular press as well as the pools promoters.<sup>165</sup> Journalists were excluded from any League committee meetings on this matter, which led to one journalist and photographer using subterfuge to try and gain information on these decisions, which affected millions of people.<sup>166</sup> Charles Sutcliffe interpreted these actions in the context of contempt and in purely negative terms, rather than appreciating that the press had a genuine duty to report this important, national story to their large readership.

The Football League claimed a copyright over the fixture list and, therefore, the pattern of football experience, but there were many actors within the football and pools worlds. The known and publicized fixture lists mapped out the week and the whole season for the fan and the pools enthusiast. It was a stimulus to conversation and provided football matches with context and meaning and was a major source of advertising revenue for clubs. The League held a paradoxical position. It was a national, public organisation, which engaged on a weekly basis with hundreds of thousands of spectators, fans, pools punters and wireless listeners through its all-encompassing programme of season long fixtures. However, in direct

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<sup>164</sup> McKibbin, R. (1998). *Classes and Cultures in England 1918-1951*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.377.

<sup>165</sup> Holt. *Sport and the British*, p.310.

<sup>166</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.265.

contrast, it was a highly secretive organisation, which was suspicious of the press and strongly reluctant to experiment with the aim of increasing revenues for its clubs, which constituted its membership.<sup>167</sup>

A major logistical problem the Football League had was retaining the level of security required for their decision to be effective in the medium term. The respected, contemporary journalist Ivan Sharpe, who was a trusted confidant of Charles Sutcliffe, described the scenario accurately when he stated that ‘fifty people could never keep a secret.’<sup>168</sup> Though the Football League committee tried to hold information back and to inform only a small coterie when required, it was still absolutely necessary to inform a select group at each club, including board members and the club secretary. In response to this drastic action, which was categorically aimed at destroying their business, the pools promoters simply picked up the phone and rang round all the football clubs.<sup>169</sup> Though the decision had been made at Football League committee level, there was not a clear unanimity amongst the breadth of league clubs. It was alleged that the national committee had broken their own rules by instigating this wide-reaching action, with reference to incorrect procedure being followed. A rebel meeting was called in Leeds on 2 March 1936 with representatives from 36 of 44 league members, to discuss the concerns of how Football League headquarters in Preston had behaved, both procedurally and practically.<sup>170</sup>

Dissension to the League’s committee was almost immediate. The leading voice of dissent was Alderman Alf Masser, who held a position on the board of Leeds United, who issued a public statement which was highly critical of the committee’s action of cancelling league fixtures.<sup>171</sup> Though Masser was the most high profile there were other major clubs who joined in the criticism – Manchester City, Sunderland, Stoke City, Blackburn Rovers, Newcastle United and Derby County, which created major problems for the League Committee. The main concern of these clubs was that Charles Sutcliffe and the Committee had breached their own rules by calling this intentionally highly disruptive action at such short notice. The technicalities related to rule 23 which specified the rules around inappropriate rearranging of fixtures that had already been agreed and by calling the original meeting at less than seven days- notice without a full agenda in advance, the Committee was

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<sup>167</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.272.

<sup>168</sup> Sharpe, I. (1954). *Forty Years in Football*. London: Sportsman’s Book Club, p.158.

<sup>169</sup> Gardiner, J. (2010). *The Thirties. An Intimate History*. London: Harper Collins, p.707.

<sup>170</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.73.

<sup>171</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.73.

alleged to have broken rule 80 too. This breach of rules re-emphasized how Charles Sutcliffe's approach was so irrational. He was a highly experienced, practising solicitor who was directly involved in the process of drawing up a great deal of the League's rules.

Given this rapid breakdown in relations within the League structure and the wall of negative feelings from supporters, clubs, players, the pools companies, pools punters and the press, the capitulation of the League Committee and the quick ending of the totally ill-conceived Pools War was inevitable. This was the only widespread confrontation between the clubs and the national League Committee in the inter-war period. It was an effectively managed campaign of collective protest led by a group of prominent clubs and highly motivated pools promoters that forced the Committee to back down so quickly.<sup>172</sup>

Dave Russell is correct when he concludes that this clash of cultures represented a considerable defeat for the non-conformists and their position as custodians of Victorian values at the hands of modernist business entrepreneurs and the weight of populism.<sup>173</sup> This theme was repeated in other areas of popular culture in the inter-war period as the elements of mass culture formed a clearer shape. The defeat of the Football League and Football Association marked in sharp terms a watershed point in the lengthy relationship between the football authorities and the rich, newly powerful and modernistic pools promoters.<sup>174</sup> Though the Pools War only lasted for two weeks in February 1936, the quick capitulation by the Football League under pressure from all sides created a situation where the pools promoters had a clear path for expansion without direct, major intervention for the foreseeable future. A path that was maximized in terms of increased numbers of pools punters and revenues up to the outbreak of World War Two in 1939.

In the immediate aftermath of the Pools War debacle there was a further episode in the ongoing battle between the pools promoters and the anti-gambling lobby. This was in the form of a Private Members Bill, proposed by the ardent anti-gambler M.P., R.J. Russell. Richard Russell introduced his bill in order to make pools betting illegal.<sup>175</sup> The passage of this bill, the arguments utilized and the result, all reinforced the desperation and isolation of the anti-gambling position by 1936.

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<sup>172</sup> Taylor. *The Leaguers*, p.73.

<sup>173</sup> Russell, D. (1997). *Football and the English. A Social History of Association Football in England 1863-1995*. Preston: Carnegie, p.106.

<sup>174</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.48.

<sup>175</sup> Sharpe. *Gambling on Goals*, p.49.

Russell had publicly stated his strict anti-gambling stance in a pamphlet entitled *The Peril of the Pools* in 1935. The pamphlet was completed from a questionnaire developed by the Methodist Temperance and Social Welfare Department and was printed for the information of social workers and speakers on gambling.<sup>176</sup> The language used was negative and highly emotive, with generalized points that are not cohesive. Russell follows the pattern of other anti-gamblers in generally stressing the ‘menace’ to the social, economic, moral and religious life of the nation of gambling, but not specifically understanding how the pools functioned.<sup>177</sup> The sweeping statements of *The Peril of the Pools* take aim at the Football Pools Promoters’ Association, football supporters, youth, women and an increase in criminality being due to the pools, with no core statistical evidence to reinforce these debatable arguments. An example of this vagary is a point made by Reverend F.E. Watson who states that ‘75 percent of spectators at a football match have gone because they entered the pools.’<sup>178</sup> Reverend Watson shows a complete non-understanding of the motivations of football supporters and the logistical practicalities of the football pools. However, later in this confusing pamphlet, this point is completely contradicted by stating that a perceived drop in football attendances was due to the rise of the pools.<sup>179</sup> Russell claimed support in his stance from Sir Frederick Wall of the FA, the Welsh Football Association, the Scottish Football Association, Tom Williams M.P., the Bishop of Southwark and the Public Morality Council, but the 1936 Bill confirmed a confused approach and a lack of unity across the anti-gambling lobby. The pools promoters utilized their huge customer base against the Bill. In the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1936 edition of *Littlewoods Sports Log* there was a prominent two-page piece entitled ‘Stop the ridiculous attack on the pools’ where Littlewoods implored its ‘enthusiasts’ to exercise their democratic right and write to their M.P. to put a stop to Russell’s Bill and its aim of curtailing ‘the personal freedom of the British citizen.’<sup>180</sup>

Russell’s Private Members Bill was crushingly defeated by a vote of 287 to 24.<sup>181</sup> The most important anti-gambling voice in the inter-war period Seebohm Rowntree was not impressed by Russell’s rushed and confusing approach and for not consulting the NAGL and he described the bill as a fiasco, which did more harm than good for the anti-gambling

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<sup>176</sup> Russell, R.J. (1935). *The Peril of the Pools*. London: Epworth, p.34.

<sup>177</sup> Russell. *Peril of the Pools*, p.1.

<sup>178</sup> Russell. *Peril of the Pools*, p.20.

<sup>179</sup> Russell. *Peril of the Pools*, p.29.

<sup>180</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 28.3.1936, p.3.

<sup>181</sup> Inglis. *League Football and the Men Who Made It*, p.157.

movement.<sup>182</sup> The juggernaut of the pools moved forward to further increase their business as the anti-gambling lobby suffered the devastating double blow of the catastrophic defeats of the Pools War and the 1936 Bill. This re-emphasized the peripheral nature of the anti-gambling movement and the democratization and centrality of the pools to millions of working-class gamblers and their supporters in the press and parliament. This position, by 1936, was further enhanced by the chaotic and poorly organized approach of both the football authorities and Russell. The further futility of attempting to stop the pools growth was repeated in 1938 when the Independent M.P. for Oxford University, A.P. Herbert also brought a bill to parliament to ban the pools. This was roundly defeated due to M.P.'s and the Home Office being fully aware of the unpopularity of such a measure.<sup>183</sup>

Structural factors were crucial in the development and expansion of the football pools in the inter-war period. The framework was created with the expansion of professional football to a wholly national sport and the symbiotic relationship of increased coverage in all formats of the press and the new, rapidly expanding media of the wireless. The increase in democratization of British society in the inter-war period led to a decrease in the dictatorial influence of the privileged anti-gambling voice of the NAGL, prominent individuals such as Seebohm Rowntree and the effectiveness of anti-gambling legislation. The epitome of the clash between the ever expanding, modernist pools promoters, led by Littlewoods and the non-conformist elite of the anti-gamblers that was the 1936 Pools War led to the humiliating defeat for the football authorities and an unfettered path of expansion for the pools industry.

### Chapter 3 – The Football Pools and Littlewoods

The pool was a gambling arrangement where the size of the prizes grew as the stakes increased. Fundamentally all the bets that were laid went into a central pool and once the promoter had taken their percentages for operating costs and profits, the remaining amount of money was then redistributed to the winners, whether this was one, single person or a larger

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<sup>182</sup> Clapson. *A Bit of a Flutter*, p.170.

<sup>183</sup> Clapson. *A Bit of a Flutter*, p.170.



number of people, depending on the results of football matches. This process led to a cycle of expansion, the larger the pool, the larger the prizes and the more attractive the option became to new punters to enter the pools and further expand the size of the overall pool of money available for prizes. The pools companies enhanced this basic absolute of the pool gambling structure with their sophisticated and targeted advertising techniques. The first successful pools company was Littlewoods and with this success and expansion other pools companies set up in competition in a quickly developing new industry – the aforementioned Vernons Pools were also established on Merseyside in 1929, Soccerpools in Leicester which was founded in 1932, Zettors in London the year after and by 1935 there was also Empire Pools in Blackpool.<sup>184</sup> In addition there was Copes founded in 1932, Shermans in Cardiff, W.S. Murphy and T. Strang both based in Edinburgh, Western Pools in Newport and I.T.P. Frederick Jervis.<sup>185</sup>

By the mid-1930s sixteen times as many adults were gambling on the weekly football pools as were watching football. This generated over £800,000 per week into the new pools companies, equating to approximately £30 million over the football season.<sup>186</sup> The pools clearly altered the dynamic of working-class betting in Britain, as it was the first opportunity that individuals had, even if it was a statistically remote one, to win a life-changing amount of money for a small stake. The tipping point of the pools to offer this opportunity was absolutely crucial in the development of the pools. The assessment of this expansion through primary and secondary sources is the core of this research, with particular reference to how the major pools companies emphasized, advertised and regularly stressed their unique product.

Another feature of the pools growth was that it was perceived by many as removed from the tainted older forms of gambling and it was anonymous. From the mid-nineteenth century a forceful anti-gambling movement had squeezed the legal gambling options in Britain. Bookmakers existed in a limbo world of engaging in a technically illegal activity, which was not enforced uniformly by the police or magistrates across the country but was often dependent upon the priorities and personalities of those involved. In comparison to the atmosphere of many bookmakers the pools were anonymous and could be and were completed in multiple environments – the home, work and the pub. Women and families

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<sup>184</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.46.

<sup>185</sup> Laybourn, Keith. *Working-Class Gambling in Britain c.1906 – 1960s*, p.152. *National Archives*, HO 45/166679.

<sup>186</sup> Walvin. *The People's Game*, p.127.

were involved and there was time to make decisions over a week rather than the daily pressure of horse racing and greyhound racing. The pools offered a respectable form of betting which came to be regarded more as a national pastime than gambling itself.<sup>187</sup> The development was partly due to the conscious decisions of the pools companies, spearheaded by Littlewoods, to market the pools as a hobby parallel to gardening and fishing, a social activity with family and friends and as part of a specific club, rather than it being placed in the context of gambling. Indeed, the pools companies were so skilled at this reinvention and marketing of their business as a rational recreation that during the 1932-33 Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting and the subsequent 1934 Act made almost no reference to the football pools.

The earliest and most successful of the football pools promoters was Littlewoods, the first pools operators to have a genuine national reach. The driving force and joint founder of Littlewoods was John Moores, who ran the pools company directly from 1923 to 1932 when he handed over control to his younger brother Cecil Moores, who was colloquially known as *The Chief*. John Moores is the single most important individual in terms of shaping the development of the football pools in the inter-war period. However, he was a man who was reticent to talk about himself or his business career and, in terms, of his direct views on Littlewoods growth in the inter-war period there are only very limited sources. Indeed Clegg describes John Moores as ‘something of an enigma, a very private man who always avoided publicity’.<sup>188</sup> The only primary source where Moores does offer personal insight are contained in a slim booklet entitled *How to Become a Millionaire*, based on a collection of articles from *Empire News* in October and November 1955.<sup>189</sup> The Moores brothers were highly skilled at presenting a specific image of themselves and managing the level of information that made itself into the public arena. This is clear in the only biography of John Moores by Clegg, this is a standard, non-academic work where Clegg develops a hagiographic approach and direct author opinion is brought forward on matters of supposition, with little basis on fact and no citing to other sources.

John Moores was a working-class Manchester man who received little formal education and started his working life at twelve. He was a highly disciplined young man who did not drink or gamble, worked hard and was a keen autodidact. His life focus was to be a successful

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<sup>187</sup> Pugh. *We Danced All Night.*, p.301.

<sup>188</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.23.

<sup>189</sup> Price. *How to Become A Millionaire by John and Cecil Moores*.

entrepreneur and provide for his family, bringing them out of the poverty they experienced in Salford and Manchester.<sup>190</sup> Clegg interprets Moore's life as a living embodiment of Victorian self-help, and that it was primarily his personal drive that led to him developing his multi-million-pound pools industry. However, a more sophisticated and layered assessment of Moores life and career is required to explain the phenomenal success of Littlewoods pools in a period of less than fifteen years. In contradiction to Clegg's conclusion, a key to Moores and Littlewoods success was not a backwards look to the narrow Victorian values of self-help and self-advancement, but aspects of modernity. The core factors in Moores success was his ability to facilitate a move away from the stain of illegal gambling to a clean investment process of the pools, incorporating modern advertising and logistical techniques. Littlewoods utilized national reach systems such as a highly efficient postal service and the wireless. The Moores brothers also developed a conscious relationship with celebrity, they introduced modern business techniques from the United States, particularly Taylorism and Fordism and encouraged a process of democratization, stressing the rights of the pools punters to engage in their social leisure experience, without outside negative influence from the National Anti-Gambling League or the football authorities.

John Moores was a qualified telegraphist and with two work friends became interested in a football pool organized in Birmingham by a John Jervis Bernard, which had been financially unsuccessful.<sup>191</sup> Bernard based his pools concept on the French pari-mutuel system, but after printing, distributing and advertising costs he had failed to make a profit. Moores and his two friends formed the Littlewoods Company in their attempt to succeed where Bernard had failed. In February 1924 Littlewoods began their pools operation by directly distributing pools coupons outside football matches in Manchester.<sup>192</sup> The pools operated through a coupon system. The promoters distributed a coupon sheet, which was a list of all the weekly upcoming football league matches. The punter then made a selection of limited results which would be draws. Punters could have multiple attempts of predicting results and filled in the grid format of the coupon. The pool was the combined total of entrants wagers, with the promoters operating costs and profit margins deducted, which was distributed amongst the winner or winners. The fewer draws the increase in probability of a singular, huge pay out. The betting stakes or 'investments' as the pools promoters were keen to term them, were crucially paid on a credit basis, in order to avoid prosecution under the 1920 Ready Money

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<sup>190</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.22.

<sup>191</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.24.

<sup>192</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.29.

Betting Act. The result, at first, was a disaster with very low take up and considerable financial losses for three young men who had put most of their personal savings into the business venture. After several months the two other partners, Colin Askham and Bill Hughes decided their project was not going to work and agreed to sell their shares of Littlewoods to John Moores, giving him 100 percent control. Moores immediately attempted to cut all costs and increase efficiency by distributing the pools coupons himself, risking dismissal from his regular employment and by bringing his family into the business. Moores felt he could trust his family in the crucial checking process and they were effectively working for him for free. The pools expanded at a steady, but not spectacular, rate between 1924 to 1926. The complexity of the operating process led to two important factors in the expansion of the pools. First, the promoters had nothing to gain from attempting to cheat or defraud their customers and, secondly, the practical steps to attempt fixing multiple matches across the country involving dozens of players simultaneously was impossible.

The rise in this new form of gambling inevitably attracted those who were opposed to gambling and those who had to enforce anti-gambling legislation. In a move with a paradoxical and long reaching consequence, in 1926 John Moores was prosecuted for contravening the 1920 Ready Money Betting Act, which challenged the legality of the football pools business and specifically the position of stake money being paid as credit.<sup>193</sup> John and Cecil Moores were found guilty, but the decision was overturned on appeal. An important precedent had been set for the legal tightrope that the industry walked for a number of years. Of considerable value to a nascent, localized business was the large amount of free publicity the case generated. A crucial point in the court case was that the police judged Littlewoods to be run in a completely fair and scrupulous manner. This point of integrity was vital to the Moores brothers as they did everything within their power to remove the pools business away from other forms of gambling such as horse racing, or even the concept that the pools was gambling and to remove the football pools from the societal conceptions of crooked bookmakers and the highly visible criminal activity of street betting.

Integrity and the development of multiple security structures were absolutely necessary to prevent criminality and to reinforce the perceived total trustworthiness of their business. The development of new and more sophisticated security and checking structures and machines was an endless process as the pools industry grew. A specific security team of ex-police

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<sup>193</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.37.

detectives, a special relationship with the Royal Mail, time locks on reinforced delivery bags and specially built franking and stamping machines were all technological developments introduced by Littlewoods in the inter-war period and were regularly promoted in the *Littlewoods Sports Log*. John and Cecil Moores were not men who lived by Victorian values in their business. They were looking to the future and were intent on introducing and developing new technological advances and business management techniques. In the 1930s they regularly travelled to the United States to visit logistical based businesses and educate themselves on the latest business techniques and advancements. The pools was a technology-based industry, which did not produce anything concrete, but processed millions of pieces of information in a very short time window. Pools coupons were produced on a weekly basis for around forty weeks of the year and a highly developed logistical system was vital for this business to function effectively and grow.<sup>194</sup> The pools were a modern industry symptomatic of the national economic dichotomy of the inter-war period. High levels of unemployment and poverty in areas where older nineteenth century industries, such as coal mining and cotton goods were prevalent and, in contrast, economic growth in newer, cleaner industries such as motor cars and electrical goods centred on the West Midlands and the South-East of England. Littlewoods and Vernons were based on multiple sites across Merseyside which was one of the economically-depressed areas of the United Kingdom in the inter-war period and the source of unemployed labour, in the form of younger women, was a major draw which attracted the siting of these companies on Merseyside. The pools were a clean service industry which was based on logistical efficiency with no overarching ties to a specific geographical location in terms of restrictions due to a power source, raw materials or specifically skilled workforce. The football pools was, crucially, a form of betting which could be indulged in without direct fear of moral condemnation by friends, workmates or neighbours, due to its anonymity via the postal service.<sup>195</sup>

### Littlewoods

The growth of the pools was a strong example of the growth of the democracy of leisure expanding and the reduction in the influence of rational recreation. Though the promoters were often keen to point out that there was skill involved in the pools selection process, this was mainly to stymie criticism from anti-gamblers who insisted that winning lines were chosen purely on the concept of chance and luck which introduced potential issues of legal

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<sup>194</sup> *Littlewoods Complete Football Filling. 1938-39 Season*. Liverpool: J & C Littlewoods.

<sup>195</sup> Walvin, J. *Leisure and Society 1830-1950*, p.140.

consequences. The pools promoters, led by Littlewoods, grew enormously in number and scope between 1923 to 1939 and there were four main factors, which the promoters controlled, that led to their rapid expansion. These four important areas were the use of advertising and promotional literature, the treatment of staff with the instigation of modern business techniques such as Taylorism and Fordism, the importance laid on integrity and security and the developing influence and power of the Football Pools Promoters' Association (FPPA).

The steady growth of the pools in the mid-1920s was accelerated by the catalyst of the 1926 legal case against John Moores. Though there was rapid expansion between 1926 to 1932, the real impact of growth in Littlewoods pools took place once Cecil Moores took the helm. Littlewoods was originally developed by John and Cecil Moores together but, as already indicated, by 1932 John Moores had handed over control of the pools business to Cecil, so that he could concentrate on the new ventures of the Littlewoods empire; first the mail order business and then department stores. Cecil styled himself *The Chief* and it was he who brought about the absolute centrality of modern advertising techniques in order to increase the numbers of punters and the ever-expanding pool. He relied on a range of publicity options – magazines, advertising, utilizing celebrity and creating and reinventing publicity tropes, such as the genuine, valid winner who would use their winnings in a positive manner.

The Moores brothers were intelligent and innovative individuals who utilized modern advertising and promotional techniques to outmanoeuvre both their competitors and the anti-gambling movement, such as the NAGL, the hierarchy of the Football League and MP Richard Russell. An important technique that they utilized to expand their business was to establish a clear relationship with their ever-expanding customer base. John Moores was not an academically educated man but was a keen autodidact who read widely in the relatively new discipline of business management which aimed at maximizing employees potential. This new business management literature came mostly from writers in the United States and John Moores combined this reading material with regular visits to the Eastern seaboard cities of the United States. His aim, in these trips, was to visit major business concerns there and analyse their cutting-edge business management techniques and ever developing logistical systems.

The practical effectiveness of the pools companies was based on logistics. The pools promoters did not make anything tangible for they were a modern service industry of the

inter-war period that was clean and not dependent on a geographically-limited power source, raw material or a highly unionized male dominated workforce. The pools industry was, fundamentally, built on efficiently processing millions of pieces of information on a weekly cycle and then repeating this gargantuan task every seven days for approximately forty weeks of the year. The two most important elements of how the Moores brothers expanded their business were the managed and cultivated relationships with two separate groups of people – their huge and disparate customer base of punters and their thousands of employees, mostly young women, who were employed for only a few hours each week.

The singularly most important way that John and Cecil Moores achieved a positive relationship with these groups was through clear communication in the form of two magazines – *The Littlewoods Sports Log*, for punters and *The Littlewoods Review*, for staff. John Moores was highly selective about what he communicated in public environments. His biographer Clegg concludes that he was a shy man who was reticent to hold interviews and tell people about himself.<sup>196</sup> However this is a naïve view. Moores was a man who controlled the public image of both himself and his business and when he would, occasionally, talk about himself and his undoubted success he spoke only in terms of it being due to hard work and common sense, Northern values.<sup>197</sup> This is the image that he wanted people to have of him rather than a more accurate picture of a modern businessman utilizing publicity, advertising, Fordism and Taylorism as the core business techniques that drove his business forward into considerable expansion.

### Winners Photographs

A prime example of this utilizing of publicity was through the photographing and publicizing of their pools winners, often with famous celebrities of the age. A prominent example of these technique is from September 1937 where the holder of the world land speed record, Malcolm Campbell, one of the most famous people of the 1930s, presents a winner's cheque.<sup>198</sup> The photographs became a very popular and iconic representation of the pools

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<sup>196</sup> Clegg, B. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*.

<sup>197</sup> Price. *How to Become a Millionaire*, p.2.

<sup>198</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 11.9.1937. Liverpool: L & C Littlewoods, p.1

winners. A major reason why the football pools became so popular over a relatively short period of time was that they were the only legal way in which individuals, particularly from working-class backgrounds, could win a genuinely life-changing amount of money for a small and affordable original stake. This was the unique and ultimate selling point of the pools and the Moores brothers quickly realized that they needed to prominently publicize this point.

Littlewoods controlled this process with the staged setting of a public figure or popular celebrity known to working-class punters and an, obviously elated winner which was repeated time and again throughout the 1930s in the *Littlewoods Sports Log*, individual leaflets and on the coupons and publicity posters. The cheque presentation photograph was a core publicity tool for Littlewoods and the company altered its content over the inter-war period. In the earliest examples of the pools coupons from 1928 there are no pictures or advertising. The coupons are plain with just the multiple grids to complete and a personal details box and the *Littlewoods Sports Log* did not exist. By 1934 Littlewoods approach was more sophisticated and the company had more money to spend on publicity and this is when the stylized cheque presentations began. A number of earlier winners' photographs are held with the aristocracy.<sup>199</sup> However, by 1936, the general move was to hold the cheque presentation with someone more recognizable and connected to the mostly working-class football pools punters. These were mostly film stars, comedians, variety stars and in a zeitgeist connection, world record speed holders on land, sea and air. The public entertainers knew how to stage the moment in a style that Littlewoods were aiming for – entertainment and fun, in a manner which the £10,264 winning cheque presentation by the Earl and Countess of Lonsdale at Clifton House, Newmarket did not achieve.<sup>200</sup> The Earl and Countess appear distant and uninterested. Nationally famous music hall and wireless acts Flanagan and Allen<sup>201</sup>, Ivy St Helier<sup>202</sup> and Stan Lupino and Laddy Cliff<sup>203</sup> were all utilized in this role during 1936 and they all bring a much clearer entertainment position and genuine celebrity. Reed concludes that Littlewoods did understand the value of publicity from the

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<sup>199</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 6.11.1937.

<sup>200</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 6.11.1937, p.4.

<sup>201</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 3.10.1936, p.4.

<sup>202</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 13.11.1936, p.4.

<sup>203</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 20.11.1936, p.6.



beginning of their business enterprise.<sup>204</sup> The winners photograph was given increased prominence from the Flanagan and Allen picture onwards.<sup>205</sup>

Winners photographs were also utilized to further legitimize the pools by describing an individual's backstory. Littlewoods carefully constructed an image of the responsible winner who used their windfall in a positive and worthwhile manner. An early, and much used, example of this construct was the situation of Mr Edwin Dodd. In 1934 Mr Dodd, a poorly paid pottery worker from Stoke-on-Trent, won a £1000 on the Littlewoods pools. He was recovering from a serious operation and against medical advice had returned to work. His pools win was consciously presented as providing Mr Dodd and his young family with an alternative and enhanced life path. He used his money rationally and sensibly to buy a family home, a newsagent's business and gave the remainder to his family and local church.<sup>206</sup> The Moores brothers stressed that their responsibilities to their clients did not end by handing over a large cheque. From the 1930s on they offered all substantial winners a professional service to explain stocks, shares, annuities, debentures, how to buy a house or business and how to use a bank account.<sup>207</sup>

Publicity was the fuel with which Littlewoods expanded the number of pools punters and, therefore, the profits of the company. The Moores brothers and senior managers such as E Lennox Figgis utilized multiple aspects of publicity and ever developing modern techniques at their disposal. In addition to the introduction and development of the cheque presentation was the core creation and management of the *Happy Circle*.

### Happy Circle

The major development by Littlewoods in its modern publicity process was the introduction of the Happy Circle by *The Chief*, Cecil Moores. The fundamental aim of this process was to organize a club with a specific membership and to establish a clear and recognizable

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<sup>204</sup> Reed. *Football and Fortunes*, p.45.

<sup>205</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 3.10.1936, p.4.

<sup>206</sup> Reed. *Football and Fortunes*, p.46.

<sup>207</sup> Gribble. *Inside Littlewoods*, p.50.

symbol.<sup>208</sup> The Littlewoods pools senior management consistently aimed to position the pools as a hobby or interest that was part of the new democratic leisure and entertainment options of the inter-war period. In November 1938 *Littlewoods Sports Log* stressed transgenerational images of the family completing a weekly pools coupon together.<sup>209</sup> In an almost paradoxical position they aimed to present their gambling business as a rational recreation. In terms of this process there was a clear aim to remove the pools from the long-standing negative image of urban working-class gambling with its connection to illegality and a somewhat seedy image. The *Sports Log* was consistently used to re-emphasize this approach. In a January 1939 edition an article presented Littlewoods pools winners as responsible with their money. ‘John’ and ‘Mary’ discuss taking a holiday with their winnings but then a sensible approach is presented of buying a new home and an investment plan as recommended by Littlewoods to all its large winners.<sup>210</sup> The other main motivation of Cecil Moores to promote the pools as a non-gambling activity was due to the ever-vigilant approach of the anti-gambling movement.

The Happy Circle was described as a sports club which Littlewoods pools punters were invited to be a part of.<sup>211</sup> The sports club became an inextricably linked part of them gambling on the pools with Littlewoods. In launching and reiterating this club approach Littlewoods were also aiming for individuals to invest emotionally in their pools company, rather than with their direct competitors such as Vernons. The issue of integrity and trust were core promotional and operational tools for Littlewoods and these attributes were publicized within Littlewoods promotional material at almost every opportunity. The symbol of the Happy Circle and the direct messages to the Circle members by *The Chief* were crucial in setting the framework for the importance and role of the Happy Circle. In an early British example of branding the Happy Circle symbol was purposely designed and then placed on millions of Littlewoods pools coupons, copies of *Littlewoods Sports Log* and leaflets to constantly re-emphasize the trust and friendship of Littlewoods.<sup>212</sup> The Happy Circle symbol was of two stylized male hands shaking firmly with a circle around them, a double bond. The image encapsulated a number of points important to the Littlewoods business model – respect, trust

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<sup>208</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.58.

<sup>209</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 12.11.1938, p.3.

<sup>210</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 14.1.1939, p.6.

<sup>211</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 28.11.1936, p.3.

<sup>212</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 12.12.1936, p.2.

and honesty. By early 1937 the Happy Circle symbol had become established and was present on a weekly basis on most Littlewoods publicity material.<sup>213</sup>

By 1936, in one of his weekly messages to the millions of Littlewoods pools punters, the pattern of *The Chief* had been clearly established. Cecil Moores addresses his ‘old friends’ followed by the revealing statement that ‘I should like, first of all, to express my sincere appreciation of the enthusiastic way in which the big army of old and valued clients have again rallied to the Littlewoods banner this season.’<sup>214</sup> The language that the Littlewoods’ senior management deliberately and repeatedly utilized in these weekly marketing campaigns was absolutely crucial in the development and expansion of the pools industry in the inter-war period. Equal in importance was the choice of words omitted in any Littlewoods publicity material. In none of the copies of coupons and *Littlewoods Sports Log* researched are there ever the use of the words ‘gambling’, ‘betting’ or ‘betting stake’. Littlewoods primary aim was to create an experience where the millions who gambled on the football pools each week, did not perceive themselves as gambling at all. The Happy Circle was described as a ‘sports club’ and a ‘fellowship’ with a ‘membership’ whereas, in reality, it was no such thing.<sup>215</sup> *The Chief* was ‘friends’ with his ‘valued clients’ rather than the more realistic position of an astute, patriarchal, self-made millionaire who worked at the pinnacle of a large-scale capitalist business.

By late 1937 the imagined community of the Happy Circle had further expanded its role to publicize celebrities who were described as being members of the Happy Circle, as they too regularly completed a Littlewoods football coupon. The aim was clear, to fuse the cache and glamour of celebrity into the fold of the Happy Circle and connect these high-achieving and high-profile individuals on a perceived, level playing field with the millions of urban working-class punters, who were the core customer base for Littlewoods. The celebrities selected for promotion as members of the Happy Circle drew from a similar pool to those who presented the winners cheques. Henry Roy<sup>216</sup> and Billy Cotton<sup>217</sup> were both famous dance band leaders, the comedian Max Miller<sup>218</sup> and Misses Elsie and Doris Waters<sup>219</sup>, described as famed variety stars, were all well-known celebrities of the late 1930s. The

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<sup>213</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 28.8.1937, p.3.

<sup>214</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 12.6.1936, p.2.

<sup>215</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 23.4.1938, p.1.

<sup>216</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 5.2.1938, p.3.

<sup>217</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 18.12.1938, p.3.

<sup>218</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 5.3.1938, p.3.

<sup>219</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 13.2.1938, p.4.

aristocratic figures used in earlier publicity documents are not present by this stage. There is a specific focus on individuals more appealing to and more likely to have relevance for urban working-class adults who would connect with these famous people through the new and popular media of the cinema and the wireless.

Perhaps the apogee of the Moores brothers' utilization of language and modernist business techniques of advertising and publicity is in a prime message written by *The Chief* in the *Littlewoods Sports Log* edition of 23 April 1938. To quote in full 'from *The Chief*' "to all members of the Happy Circle. Three more weeks to go (of the football season) and with the continued friendly co-operation of circle members we are going to see the most successful closing weeks ever recorded....I admire the splendid pull together spirit which has been so much in evidence right through the season. I know that every member of our colossal sports fellowship will join in this final drive."<sup>220</sup> This prime paragraph on page one of that particular issue of the *Littlewoods Sports Log* encapsulates precisely and thoroughly how Littlewoods dictated its public perception. The circle members are described as being part of a friendly co-operative rather than the reality of gamblers who were contributing to the expansion of a capitalist company of which *The Chief* was a senior director. The tone of a sports fellowship communicates a form of social programme driving forward into the future. *Littlewoods Sports Log* was produced in-house by J & C Moores Printing. John Moores had decided by 1928 that it was a waste of money to pay large printers bills for millions of weekly coupons and leaflets and founded their own printing firm.<sup>221</sup> In addition to costs being reduced this move gave Littlewoods senior management complete control over all printed and advertising matters relating to Littlewoods Pools.

### Security

The third major area that Littlewoods utilized in order to expand their business was security and the publicizing of their security systems for maintaining the integrity of the pools, vital to presenting the pools as not being corrupt and some form of rational recreation. Reed focuses on the importance of security in the Littlewoods pools industry. The Moores brothers held the view that the integrity of the product was of paramount importance. In addition to the calculated promotion of the pools as a clean product, distancing themselves from the illegal

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<sup>220</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 23.4.1938, p.1.

<sup>221</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.41.

world of street gambling and bookmakers, they were intent on showing their ever-growing number of punters that they could be trusted with their weekly coupons and dividends. This separation was strongly emphasized in a self-congratulatory editorial piece in the *Littlewoods Sports Log* in December 1936 – ‘Universal public confidence has made Littlewoods a household name throughout the length and breadth of the land. The reason for this colossal popularity is efficient and thoroughly dependable service.’<sup>222</sup> In addition, there was the ever-present threat from the anti-gambling lobby who were observing areas such as potential cheating and corruption as a reason to further attack the pools and, rather simplistically, include this new type of gambling with other popular formats. The aspect of security was a dual position for Littlewoods – there was the actual physical logistical security measures they introduced and regularly updated and there was the equally important, image of security that they publicized and advertised through the avenue of their own wide-reaching publications. *The Chief* regularly emphasized the security of investments, not stakes, in his missives to the millions of pools punters, as in December 1936 ‘Littlewoods have the finest and most up-to-date system and football pool organisation in the United Kingdom, and your investments are protected by scrupulous integrity and a guarantee of fair play for all.’<sup>223</sup> Littlewoods, further, termed themselves ‘Littlewoods the House of Integrity’ to impress on their punters that the overriding concern of the company was to protect their customers financial input.<sup>224</sup> Imagery was important to create this bond of trust and integrity. A prime example of this is from an issue of *Littlewoods Sports Log* in August 1936. ‘Honesty, Simplicity, Strength! There-in lies the reason for the outstanding popularity of the famous village smithy – and there-in lies the reason for the popularity of the famous Littlewoods Pools. Like the smithy’s – their business rings true!’<sup>225</sup> The Moores brothers were acutely aware that these statements had layers of interpretation to differing groups of people. A lot of gambling was illegal in 1920s and 1930s United Kingdom and, particularly, street gambling had a very negative image in the popular culture of novels, social commentaries and films. Their aim on stressing security and with this integrity and honesty, was to take practical steps to remove the connection between this illegality and tainted position away from their new, clean business. The other main group watching the growth of the pools promoters was the multi-headed anti-gambling lobby, who found no differentiation between this new form of gambling and the older forms which they

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<sup>222</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 12.12.1936, p.2.

<sup>223</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 12.12.1936, p.2.

<sup>224</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 7.3.1936, p.3.

<sup>225</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 29.8.1936, p.7.

had argued against for decades. The tightrope of legality that the pools promoters walked on in the inter-war period was never clearer than in the presentation of positive security. In the *Littlewoods Sports Log*, on a regular basis, a further example of the stress laid on security and integrity was the publishing of a pseudo accountant's certificate. This 'document' is signed by an incorporated and chartered accountant.<sup>226</sup> Littlewoods is formalizing and, making highly public, the input to their business process of valued and legal responsibilities of accountants checking financial documents.

The specific investigations department was established over a period of years from the latter 1920s onward at the direct behest of John and Cecil Moores. The Littlewoods operation had expanded so quickly since 1926 that with hundreds of thousands, and then millions, of coupons and postal orders being checked and processed within a seven-day window, a separate investigations department became inevitable. There were two main sources of potential fraud – punters and staff. A strict supervisory system was developed in each individual checking station with the aim of ruling out all opportunities for fraudulent activity by staff.<sup>227</sup> However with millions of coupons coming into the Merseyside offices there was, clearly, the potential for staff to be tempted into trying to defraud their way to a life-changing amount of money.

A celebrated incident from 1928 mentioned by Clegg, Reed and Price reinforces the argument that though John Moores was reluctant to talk about his private life, though he consistently publicized and promoted the positive aspects of his pools company. John Moores claimed he found a fraudulent coupon in a marking room of fifty young women, lying on the floor. This was a 'winning' coupon in full view that had somehow come astray from the collective tagging systems in place. On checking, Moores discovered that the coupon bore none of the specific security markings on the coupon's top left corner that would have signalled a correct passage through the internal security structure.<sup>228</sup> The important point is the communication to the public of extreme vigilance. Moores publicized that he was a present force around his staff and hands-on in the daily functioning of his expanding business. The coupon that Moores retrieved had not been near any of the checking systems and it was confirmed that one of the young, female employees had been pressurized to smuggle in a blank coupon and complete it retrospectively.<sup>229</sup> The relevance of this incident

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<sup>226</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*, 5.9.1936, p.6.

<sup>227</sup> Reed, *Football and Fortunes*, p.34.

<sup>228</sup> Reed, *Football and Fortunes*, p.34.

<sup>229</sup> Reed, *Football and Fortunes*, p.34.

is the response and how this response was made public. Littlewoods publicized this episode in order to stress that though incidents such as this could arise, the punter and anti-gambling lobby should be totally confident that they would be located and dealt with and the integrity of the product and the process remained unaffected. It was imperative that the Pools companies promoted their vigilance regularly in order to counter any claims of corruption from the NAGL or any construed contraventions of the 1920 Ready Money Betting Act.

This particular incident acted as a catalyst to John and Cecil Moores upgrading their security systems. The mail was stopped from being delivered directly to Littlewoods and they had all post sent to the postal sorting office.<sup>230</sup> At the postal depots every item was fed through a special machine, allegedly designed by Cecil Moores, which indented time, date and registration, not only onto the sealed envelope, but onto the coupon and postal order inside.<sup>231</sup> The coupons themselves were locked away in specially padlocked bags. These were specifically made for Littlewoods, reinforced bags with the neck entirely sealed in a solid steel clamp and a time lock.<sup>232</sup> Once this process was completed then the mail was collected by Littlewoods staff and the individual bag opened. In addition, Littlewoods introduced in the period up to 1940, electrified security checkpoints, guard posts and patrols. A specific investigation department was developed, where all the staff were ex-policemen, particularly detective sergeants and an inspector.<sup>233</sup> The remit of the investigation department was to focus on fraudulent claims including the original coupon and interviews and investigations of individuals in big wins to establish whether there was anything suspicious in the winning claim.

### Fordism/ Taylorism

John Moores was a particular reader of modernist business management works and focused on these important techniques which developed in the first three decades of the twentieth century – Taylorism and Fordism. Both of these influential systems originated in the United States. The primary drive for capitalist business, of which Littlewoods and other major pools promoters were core enterprises, is increased profit margins. In early twentieth century a factor in increasing profit was to increase efficiency in production. The most influential of the

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<sup>230</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.40.

<sup>231</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.40.

<sup>232</sup> Price. *How to become a Millionaire*, p.9.

<sup>233</sup> Clegg. *The Man Who Made Littlewoods*, p.40.

scientific management theorists was F.W. Taylor and the publication of his seminal work *The Principles of Scientific Management* in 1911.<sup>234</sup> Taylor's specific method was to break down the whole process of production into a series of smaller and specialized, though interconnected, tasks. In a Taylorist structure, also known as the Bedaux system, the management of any business or organisation were to assess and plan the stages of the production process and to ensure that these sub-stages were co-ordinated effectively to achieve maximum efficiency.<sup>235</sup> The practical basis of the Taylorist conclusion was formed through time and motion studies which recorded specific data aimed at calibrating average times to complete given work tasks.<sup>236</sup>

Taylorism was very much a part of the new industrial processes which dramatically increased production in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Todd comments that the mass production based on assembly line structure within huge, single spaced factories, employing large numbers of people, was a startling development of the 1930s.<sup>237</sup> The pools companies did not manufacture anything in a concrete sense, such as automobiles or the new domestic appliances. However, the effectiveness of their product was based on the ultra-efficient checking and processing of millions of pieces of information within a very tight time frame. The Moores brothers utilized these modern techniques most clearly in their specifically built headquarters at Edge Hill in Liverpool. Indeed, John Moores refers to the introduction of Taylorism directly as Cecil Moores 'life's work', where he devoted himself to consulting with time and motion engineers, experts in efficiency and psychology advisors to rule out any perceived 'waste'.<sup>238</sup> Opened in 1936, Edge Hill was a vast box, designed in order to maximize work performance, with huge internal spaces and the capability to easily alter work areas as business needs changed. The Edge Hill building epitomized the modernist approach of Littlewoods with a lack of ostentation and a functional design towering over the local area in an example of confidence in this new business.

Fordism was a more sophisticated approach than the data recording and analysis of Taylorism. Its birthplace was Henry Ford's huge manufacturing facility at Highland Park, Detroit, but it became distilled across many large-scale production and logistical sites

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<sup>234</sup> Brinkley, D. (2003). *Wheels for the World. Henry Ford, his Company and a Century of Progress*. London: Penguin, p.139.

<sup>235</sup> Rojek, C. (1995). *Decentring Leisure. Rethinking Leisure Theory*. London: Sage, p.13.

<sup>236</sup> Rojek. *Decentring Leisure*, p.13.

<sup>237</sup> Todd, S. (2015). *The People. The Rise and Fall of the Working Class*. London: John Murray, p.101.

<sup>238</sup> Price. *How to Become a Millionaire*, p.10.



throughout the western world.<sup>239</sup> The significant difference between Taylorism and Fordism was that the system which originated at Ford's envisaged and practised that both work and leisure of the employee were part of a system of management control that was comprehensive. In a Marxist analysis, Rojek interprets that the overarching aim of Fordism was to create a focused and dedicated workforce, who were also pliable.<sup>240</sup> Each worker was a unit that was trained to perform a singular specialized task within a large-scale mass system. Fordism's exponents, such as Littlewoods pools, developed their sophisticated techniques to implant a more comprehensive input of an employer into an employee's life.

The Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci concluded that the two truly original features of Fordism were the priority on higher than average wages and the involvement in workers leisure pursuits and time.<sup>241</sup> This broader outlook and involvement into workers lives, according to Gramsci, represented not only a co-ordinated attempt to create not just a type of worker, but a new type of human being.<sup>242</sup> The attempted reconstruction involved itself in educational, moral and health issues, Gramsci does not view this as a humanist project aimed at individual improvement. For Gramsci the aim of the Fordist approach was to equip workers physically and psychologically for these new production methods.<sup>243</sup> The Moores brothers stated that the introduction of canteens, welfare departments and pension schemes was a 'balancing out' for the monotony of the work foremost of the Littlewoods employees.<sup>244</sup>

Brinkley interprets the original Fordism at Ford's Highland Park in a different manner to the previously mentioned Marxists. He concludes that the fundamental idea of Fordism was that though the defined product itself may or may not be improved, it was a production system that had to be continually improved.<sup>245</sup> Fordism was a form of corporate development which progressed through an unceasing approach and focus for improvement. Fordism created an atmosphere where the real product was the continual improvement, with contributions from employees in a down-top flow of practical ideas where there were rewards for employees positive and useful contributions.<sup>246</sup> Fordism was heavily adopted and highly influential in

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<sup>239</sup> Brinkley. *Wheels for the World*, p.135.

<sup>240</sup> Rojek. *Decentring Leisure*, p.13.

<sup>241</sup> Jones, S. (2006). *Antonio Gramsci*. Abingdon: Routledge, p.112.

<sup>242</sup> Jones. *Antonio Gramsci*, p.113.

<sup>243</sup> Jones. *Antonio Gramsci*, p.113.

<sup>244</sup> Price. *How to Become a Millionaire*, p.9.

<sup>245</sup> Brinkley. *Wheels for the World*, p.141.

<sup>246</sup> Brinkley. *Wheels for the World*, p.151.

the United States in the 1920s and 1930s in business and production processes. It also achieved a concrete cultural impact in the modernist literature of the inter-war period. Fordism was the basis of the core belief system in Aldous Huxley's futurist dystopian novel *A Brave New World*. Though companies such as Littlewoods were early adopters of this process in the United Kingdom, Fordist production and management techniques were not commonplace in most European countries until post 1945.<sup>247</sup>

### Staffing and treatment of staff

A further important area of exploration in the specific success of Littlewoods is the relationship between the Moores brothers and their, mostly, part-time female workforce. Given the dependency of Littlewoods on part-time female labour, it is vital to understand how the Moores brothers established and then maintained a mutual working relationship with them, in what was an oddly run business arrangement. All capitalist businesses rely upon some type of relationship being established between the workforce and the management, for good or ill. The major primary source that is being utilized to assess this important relationship is the *Littlewoods Review*, which was a free, in-house magazine, printed on high quality paper, in an A5 format, averaging twenty-four pages and was available to all Littlewoods employees. The magazine was launched in 1936 and the first issue gives a strong impression of how senior management saw the magazine's role and purpose. The overarching framework and aims of the *Littlewoods Review* was set by the two most prominent senior managers in the pools division at the time, Cecil Moores and Mr L Brierley-Jones. Cecil Moores clearly aimed for the magazine to be a link between all sections of the organisation, describing it as 'our news magazine'<sup>248</sup> Cecil Moores further expanded how he saw the magazine's core purpose as 'to enhance harmony in all our offices and extend the happy association which exists in social activities.'<sup>249</sup> Senior manager Brierley-Jones concurred with Cecil Moores in his introductory outline for the review's central focus. 'The review will undoubtedly foster that friendly, mutually helpful spirit which I am pleased to say is such a strong keynote in all branches of our business.'<sup>250</sup> The senior managers were keen to set their agenda of this in-house magazine engendering a paternalistic approach.

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<sup>247</sup> Jones. *Antonio Gramsci*, p.116.

<sup>248</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936. Liverpool: J & C Littlewoods, p.1.

<sup>249</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.1.

<sup>250</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.5.

Both of these senior Littlewoods figures argued that, from their perspective, Littlewoods is a positive employer where all employees are working together for some vaguely defined and described greater good.<sup>251</sup> Yet Littlewoods was not a co-operative structure, it was a hierarchical capitalist, business venture whose overriding aim was profit and for those profits to be split amongst a very small number of individuals at the top of the hierarchy. However, this is never mentioned in any of the copies of the *Littlewoods Review*. The framework of the magazine is created by senior management who confirm their need to emphasize areas such as employee harmony and the magazine stays on neutral topics such as gossip, sport, hobbies and personal and social interests. The Littlewoods hierarchy were responsible for managing a magazine which projected the view, both to its employees and the wider public, that Littlewoods cared about its workforce.

Littlewoods had a considerable female employment base and this **was** reflected from issue one of the *Review*. In issue one, the unnamed and unidentified editor **called** for staff input and comments for future editions, outlining the topics that they **wanted** covered in the magazine in the format of articles, sketches, stories and the specific items of interest and personal suggestions. Though the specific identity of the editor is unknown, there is no doubt it was a senior manager. Considerable time was required to produce each monthly edition of the magazine and this would have been taken up by a manager, rather than one of the thousands of young women who were there to specifically check coupons. Littlewoods was a highly compartmentalized and regulated business where most employees worked only in a very small and specific part of the organization. In order to edit a pan-organisational magazine the editor had to inhabit a managerial role with input into and knowledge of different parts of this rapidly expanding business. In issue one there is a focus on office gossip, personal relationships, staff appointments and staff leaving, engagements and weddings, horoscopes and personal health matters.<sup>252</sup> There is a clear focus on information and news that, in the gender specific framework of the 1930s, were of more interest to the overwhelmingly younger, female employee base. There are no articles on any areas which might have brought a more intellectual or political debate, such as union activities, specific political issues or international relations.

Throughout the earlier editions of *Littlewoods Review* there is coverage of the wide range of facilities and services available to Littlewoods employees. In volume one there were match

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<sup>251</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.1.

<sup>252</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.2.

reports and updates on the sports clubs of badminton, ladies cricket, football, golf and netball.<sup>253</sup> The full range of clubs and societies available to Littlewoods staff is expanded within the launch copy of *Littlewoods Review* to include reports and short pieces on drama, swimming, tennis, rounders, badminton, bowls and the company choir – Littlewoods Songsters. Clearly there was a large range of activities available which reinforced the senior management’s ethos that being employed by Littlewoods, even if largely part-time, was not solely about a job and earning a wage but being part of a team with a patriarchal employer who extended responsibilities into other areas. Other extensive services for Littlewoods employees included a pension scheme introduced in 1937, health clinics with qualified medical staff available free for employees, subsidized staff meals and annual events such as the company sports day at Aintree with 20,000 attendees.

Discussion did not just focus on sports and outdoor activities but on other more creative areas such as employee penned poetry and recommendation of books for staff to read under headings of non-fiction, humorous, romance, mystery and adventure.<sup>254</sup> The breadth of services available to Littlewoods’ Merseyside staff is highlighted with an article on Iris Charles, described as Littlewoods own film star, in September 1936.<sup>255</sup> A further connection with the glamour and popularity of cinema and film stars is present with a strongly recorded visit from 1930s British film star Mr George Elrick to Littlewoods and a specific, staged photograph of him surrounded by female staff with their autograph books.<sup>256</sup> The female-centric bias of Littlewoods staff is represented in articles stressing how to buy a correct wedding gift and the presence of *Feminina*, a nom de plume for an agony aunt who writes advice on relationships and life issues in a *Confidence Corner*.<sup>257</sup>

Though the overall communicated aim of the staff magazine was that it was for staff and to be created and maintained by staff, there is no real disputing that the parameters and ethos were set by the ultimate senior manager in Littlewoods Pools, Cecil Moores, *The Chief*. In each edition of the *Littlewoods Review* Cecil Moores wrote, in a premier position on page one, a short and focussed message to his staff. This replicated the role he held in his brief missive on page one of weekly copies of the *Littlewoods Sports Log* and confirmed his role as *The Chief*. In these messages Moores is intent on clearly communicating his view and to

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<sup>253</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.14-16.

<sup>254</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 1. 1.8.1936, p.24.

<sup>255</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.7.

<sup>256</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.18.

<sup>257</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.10.

shape the larger ethos and pattern of the Littlewoods empire. An example of this is from *Littlewoods Review* volume 2 where he stated ‘Every individual who plays even the smallest part in our achievement has the satisfaction of participating in a big task which is being successfully accomplished.’<sup>258</sup> Cecil Moores emphasized the need for team work and brought into prevalence the role of the most junior employee but was deliberately vague in his language by not specifying exactly what he meant by a term such as ‘big task’. Moores argued that he saw his and his brother’s company as a flat structure though in reality it was a highly structured, capitalist hierarchical business with very clear demarcation lines between employees at different levels within the organisation. There were no unions or union representation in the Littlewoods pools business of the inter-war period and neither of the Moores brothers ever commented on the potential presence or impact of unions on their workforce in this period. There was a clear breakdown of employment positions in terms of gender. In the inter-war period at Littlewoods this effectively meant that all senior positions were occupied by men and the junior management role of supervisors or ‘supers’ were heavily dominated by women. The *Littlewoods Review* confirmed this demarcation with a profile piece on all five, male, division managers and a facing piece of short pen profiles of five ‘supers’, who are all women.<sup>259</sup> The Moores brothers, especially John Moores, were extremely reluctant to promote women to middle and senior management roles. The Moores brothers were both modernists in many areas of their business practices, such as utilization of technology, advertising and implementing Taylorism and Fordism, but in terms of gender equality in the workplace they were not interested in implementing any radical or modernist decisions at all.

The gender-specific roles within Littlewoods was no more obvious than in the presence of women as pools checkers.<sup>260</sup> The role of the checker was absolutely central to the efficiency and success of the pools and involved the individual in checking a large number of pools coupons against that weekend’s football results for potential winners and that the winning coupon had been completed correctly. In all primary source photographs all the pools checkers are women. There is no evidence that a single man did this specific and vital task for Littlewoods in the inter-war period. The checkers were employed on short weekly hours and the groups of completed coupons that they checked were previously prepared in stacks at individual workstations by the much smaller teams of fulltime employees, during the course

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<sup>258</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.1.

<sup>259</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.12.

<sup>260</sup> Reed. *Football and Fortunes*, p.39.

of the week. Younger women were seen as being able to complete this boring and arduous task at a higher speed than men. Littlewoods stressed that one of the main reasons they offered social activities for their staff was to offset the monotony of this work. Cecil Moores was keen to inform pools punters of the positive manner in which he felt his staff were treated. In *Littlewoods Sports Log* in March 1937 there was a special folder of photographs of a new Littlewoods sorting depot and a letter from *The Chief* stating ‘ I know you will appreciate the amount of thought devoted to the welfare of the employees for I, personally believe the greatest efficiency can only be assumed where there is a happy and contented staff.’<sup>261</sup> The focus for Moores is the efficiency of the staff, not their general wellbeing. He is, simply, arguing that a contented staff group work efficiently and as a successful capitalist businessman that is his drive for implementing decent working conditions and support, not an overriding concern in an individual’s health and wellbeing. Littlewoods also made a point to publicize regularly that they paid above average pay rates for clerical based work.<sup>262</sup>

Cecil Moores wrote in his introductory, tone-setting message, on both the staff magazine and the free punters magazines, often in duplicitous terms. In contrast to his public statement advertising the positive conditions for Littlewoods employees, in the staff magazine *the Chief* presents the argument of the importance of the *Happy Circle* in his introductory statement ‘Our friends, the members of the sporting public, have shown their ready appreciation of our service by rallying to the Littlewoods banner in ever-increasing numbers.’<sup>263</sup> These two important streams of communication were vital for the Littlewoods senior management to shape their policies towards staff and consumers, with a primary aim of removing any controversy and association with gambling by the dual promotion of providing an important national service and the creation and expansion of the Happy Circle where pools punters became investors and friends. The Moores brothers controlled and developed their business in the inter-war period on a number of levels and one of the most important was this shaping of their workforce through the dual systems of Taylorism and Fordism, which were modern business techniques developed in the United States and which reached some newer industries in the UK in the inter-war period.

#### Football Pools Promoters’ Association

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<sup>261</sup> *Littlewoods Sports Log*. 13.3.1937, p.3.

<sup>262</sup> Reed. *Football and Fortunes*, p.34.

<sup>263</sup> *Littlewoods Review*. Volume 2. 1.9.1936, p.6.

The fifth major area which directly fuelled the development and growth of the pools industry and Littlewoods in particular, was the founding of the Football Pools Promoters' Association (FPPA). The Football Pools Promoters' Association, more commonly known as the Pools Promoters' Association, was formed in 1934 by the individual pools companies, to act as an umbrella organisation and united voice for issues that affected their business. This body presented a combined front of almost all the pools companies in the inter-war period, from the largest companies of Littlewoods and Vernons on Merseyside, Shermans of Cardiff to the smaller promoters such as W.P. Murphy, T. Strang, I.T.P. Copes, F. Jervis, London & Provincial and Western Pools.<sup>264</sup> The FPPA represented around 80 percent of pools business, in which Littlewoods had the biggest voice and most influence.

The original motivation for these business competitors to form their own trade organisation was to mutually share information on individual defaulters and bad debtors.<sup>265</sup> However, the more important role of the FPPA was to act as a national and unified lobby group which promoted the interests of their industry in the confrontations during this period with the anti-gamblers of the NAGL, the football authorities and the Member of Parliament, R.J. Russell. The other main function of the FPPA trade association was to lobby against the real or perceived possibility of a national public lottery being reintroduced to the United Kingdom, following the widespread success of the Irish national sweepstake.<sup>266</sup> A clear example of the effectiveness of the FPPA was in their dealings with the football authorities. The staunch anti-gambling polemicist E.B. Perkins drew attention to this conflict in his book *Gambling in English Life*.<sup>267</sup> In the dispute of 1936 between the football authorities and the pools promoters, the FPPA offered an annual gift of £100,000 for use of the fixture lists. Perkins interprets the response of the Football Association and the Football League from his specific standpoint stating 'It (the annual £100,000) was refused for the Association knew what a disaster it would be if they came under the control of the football pools.'<sup>268</sup> A more nuanced and accurate assessment is that the FPPA had no real interest in controlling football as they had nothing tangible to gain from that scenario. The FPPA outmanoeuvred the football authorities by offering a genuine and highly publicized, financial contribution for a service they utilized. The annual amount that was offered was actually a small percentage of their

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<sup>264</sup> Sharpe. *Century of Soccer Betting*, p.47.

<sup>265</sup> Sharpe. *Century of Soccer Betting*, p.47.

<sup>266</sup> Munting, R. (1996). *An Economic and Social History of Gambling in Britain and the USA*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.130.

<sup>267</sup> Perkins, E.B. (1950). *Gambling in English Life*. London: Epworth.

<sup>268</sup> Perkins. *Gambling in English Life*, p.67.

combined annual profits. The FPPA were in a fundamental win-win situation on this issue, which they cleverly manipulated for their own ends.

The FPPA drew up a code of conduct in which they were keen to publicize their professionalism, integrity and responsibilities. The code limited pools promoters to a 5 to 7 percent profit margin and 15 percent of revenues for expenses, including employees wages. John Hilton<sup>269</sup> and E. Benson Perkins<sup>270</sup> were contemporary inter-war social commentators who both disputed this declaration, as there was no form of independent scrutiny. However, the position of the FPPA was to communicate and publicize a national image of trust and integrity which was to be believed by the millions of weekly pools punters. Huggins concludes that the FPPA was important in their lobbying along with a groundswell of press and public opinion supporting the pools, which resulted in the government basically ignoring anti-pools legislation as a result of the 1932-33 Royal Commission.<sup>271</sup> The lack of national government action in the subsequent 1934 Act was a major success for the pools promoters and their desire for expansion and increased profits, which progressed unhindered up to the beginning of World War Two. Littlewoods had set the template for other pools promoters to follow with their constant emphasis on the pools as a harmless and enjoyable hobby and the FPPA was the united front by which such concepts were universally presented by all promoters.

The football pools was a new gambling format which exploded during the inter-war period. The driving force behind this growth was Littlewoods who relentlessly presented, marketed and manipulated their new product as fresh, clean and democratic. They walked a legal tightrope for years and consciously aimed to remove themselves from other illegal or seedy gambling forms. Littlewoods achieved their colossal expansion and dominance in this sector due to a combination of factors – they were in position first, the dynamism of the Moores brothers, the utilization of modernist publicity techniques exemplified in the concept of winner's photos and the Happy Circle, the introduction of Taylorism and Fordism in the treatment of their staff and the effective lobbying power of the FPPA, within which Littlewoods held the premier position.

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<sup>269</sup> Hilton, J. (1944). *Rich Man, Poor Man*. London: Allen & Unwin, p.126.

<sup>270</sup> Perkins. *Gambling in English Life*, p.52.

<sup>271</sup> Huggins and Williams. *Sport and the English, 1918-1939*, p.297.



## Conclusion

The rapid expansion of the football pools during the inter-war period was the result of overarching, structural factors which created a framework for an effective launch of this new industry and social phenomenon in the mid-1920s. The crucial force after 1918 was the increased democratization of society, which drove leisure expansion and the commercialization of leisure away from the later nineteenth century concept of rational recreation. The increase in professional football clubs and fixtures immediately post-World War One, the symbiotic growth in football coverage for the literate urban masses in the specialized, local and national press and the explosion in wireless ownership during the inter-war period created an environment of a national culture and timetable based around civil and sporting events whether this was weekly or annual. Football was a key part of this national timetable with its metronomic seven-day cycle during the winter months. The pools deeply mined this new higher presence and availability.

In contrast to the expanding democratization of leisure time and options was the waning of influence and control of the anti-gambling lobby -the NAGL, the identified prominent individuals and the ineffectiveness of new, specific legislation such as the 1920 Ready Money Football Betting Act. The governmental and criminal justice system was more generally interested in, to use Dixon's phrase, regulation not prohibition.<sup>272</sup> The anti-gambling lobby remained static in its actions and targets, with often individually voiced social theories and a focus on older betting formats such as horse racing and street betting, rather than the football pools. The new gambling format of the football pools grew out of the presence of football gambling from newspaper coupons, which was heavily disrupted by the 1920 Ready Money Betting Act. The pools companies, with the prototype developed by Littlewoods, astutely avoided the strictures of this Act by credit payment arrangements. Littlewoods became the market leaders in the United Kingdom football pools, both in terms of innovation, expansion and market share. Crucially they were there first and initiated their structure with no serious rivals in the development stage of the later 1920s. The perception and drive of the Moores brothers, who owned and controlled Littlewoods, was absolutely vital in the rise of the pools between the wars, which became synonymous with Littlewoods. Their innovative use of modernist advertising and publicity techniques with particular reference to important concepts of the Happy Circle, cheque presentation photographs and

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<sup>272</sup> Dixon. *From Prohibition to Regulation*.

winner's life stories all created a specific and highly managed imagined community, which Littlewoods controlled through media avenues of the *Littlewoods Sports Log* and Radio Luxembourg.

Littlewoods' absolute emphasis on integrity and security, which was regularly communicated to their customers and the perceived positive treatment of staff through the contemporary management techniques of Taylorism and Fordism, along with a leading role in the FPPA were all manipulated to create and constantly develop a very specific business model. This model was of a modern, concerned employer of the highest integrity, whose customers and staff were central to this new, exciting, clean and enjoyable democratic hobby and, which was, purposely removed from the cultural stereotypes of other forms of illegal and tainted gambling, namely street betting and horse racing. In historiographical terms the most accurate assessments of the inter-war development of the pools come from Clapson<sup>273</sup>, Beaven<sup>274</sup> and Laybourn.<sup>275</sup> Clapson in *A Bit of A Flutter*, correctly concludes that the pools, led by Littlewoods, were part of a longer-term passage of an increased acceptability of formal working-class gambling. This acceptability of the pools was designed by the pools promoters as they marketed their product as an enjoyable and stimulating, clean hobby, which could be comfortably afforded for those in employment. The pools were, as argued by Beaven, one part of a new commercialized leisure industry which fundamentally changed the pattern of leisure in the inter-war period. Indeed, as Laybourn concludes, the pools was just one of the new inter-war gambling formats for the working-class to enjoy as well as greyhound racing and the Irish Lottery.

The increase in presence and accessibility of the new gambling forms led the anti-gamblers of the NAGL, Russell and the Football League to more ill advised and desperate actions, such as the Pools War. During the Pools War conflict, the techniques available to the pools companies of national publicity and effective lobbying of their colossal support base were utilized in order to outmanoeuvre the dictatorial and antiquated football authorities. This devastating victory of the pools companies left the field for expansion open up to the outbreak of World War Two and on the re-inception of league football in 1946 the continued growth of the pools to its peak in terms of sales and presence in the 1960s and 1970s.

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<sup>273</sup> Clapson. *A Bit of a Flutter*.

<sup>274</sup> Beaven. *Leisure, Citizenship and Working-Class Men in Britain, 1850-1945*.

<sup>275</sup> Laybourn. *Working-Class Gambling in Britain, c.1906-1960s*.

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