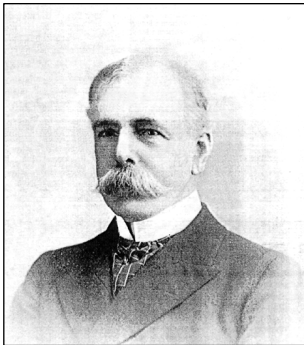


HARROW SCHOOL - CRADLE OF THE F.A. CUP

When Portsmouth defeated Everton in last year's F.A. Cup Final it was fitting that the match was played at the wonderful, new Wembley Stadium. Wembley is not only the 'home' of soccer but is within view of the birth place of the F.A. Cup - Harrow School. Harrow's inter- house competition and Old Harrovians played a dominant role in shaping the game in its formative years.

No official organisation of football existed until the formation of the F.A. in 1863. One of its earliest tasks was to establish a set of common rules and those governing the game as played at Harrow formed the basis of the original 14 rules. These rules are little different from those which govern Harrow football today and the first eight remain the basis of the present Rugby Union rules.



The first 'official' football match was London v Sheffield on 31 March 1866. During the match C.W. Alcock (OH) had the distinction of being the first player ruled offside in an official FA. fixture. Despite this, Alcock (Druries 1855-59) joined the F.A. Committee and in 1870, at the age of 28, became F.A. Secretary. He quickly organised the first 'international' at the Oval on 19th November 1870. England beat a team of Scotsmen resident in London (including W.H. Gladstone, the P.M.'s son). Although selected, Alcock did not play but W.P. Crake (West Acre 1866) represented England.

Alcock's finest achievement was in persuading the F.A. in 1871 to establish a knock out cup competition. A cup was purchased for £20, 15 clubs entered and the competition was based on the Harrow House competition - the winning side effectively being the Cock House.

Fittingly, OH's were to play a great part in that first final played on 16th March 1872 in front of 2,000 on a pitch devoid of crossbars, goal nets, centre-circle, halfway line and free-kicks. Royal Engineers lost 1-0 to Wanderers, captained by Alcock, and containing three other OH's: Crake, who had played in that first international, M.P. Betts (HM's 1862-65) and R.C. Welch (Home Boarders 1864-71). Alcock became the first player to have a goal disallowed (for hands) in a cup final and Betts scored the winning goal.

The following year Wanderers retained the cup in a unique final, the only one in which the holders were exempt until the final, giving the trophy its official title - the F.A. Challenge Cup. Oxford University won the qualifying competition, 'challenged' Wanderers and lost 2-0. The only OH in the Wanderers side was Welch but Oxford University contained two: C.J. Longman (The Park 1864-70) and W.B. Paton (Rendalls 1866-72).

Wanderers made history in 1886, 1887 and 1888 when they won three successive finals and won the cup outright. Although no OH played in the side, Alcock was still Wanderers' Secretary and in this role he returned the cup to himself, as F.A. Secretary, on condition that it could never be won outright again.

The last OH to play in a cup final was A.F. Hills (Rendalls 1871-76) who played for the losing Oxford University side in 1877. However, C.W. Alcock refereed both the 1875 and 1879 finals. In 1994 David Elleray, the current House Master of Alcock's old House, Druries, refereed the Manchester United v Chelsea FA Cup final. To many that was a fitting reminder of Harrow's long and intimate association with the world's premier cup competition - The Football Association Challenge Cup.

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