

BIG DUNCAN



THE WHITE PELE



LE ROI



THE UNITED TRINITY



SIR MATT



THE FLOWERS OF MANCHESTER



CAPTAIN MARVEL



THE WELSH WIZARD



VIVA RONALDO



SIR ALEX



BECKS



NEWTON HEATH



20LEGEND



KEANO

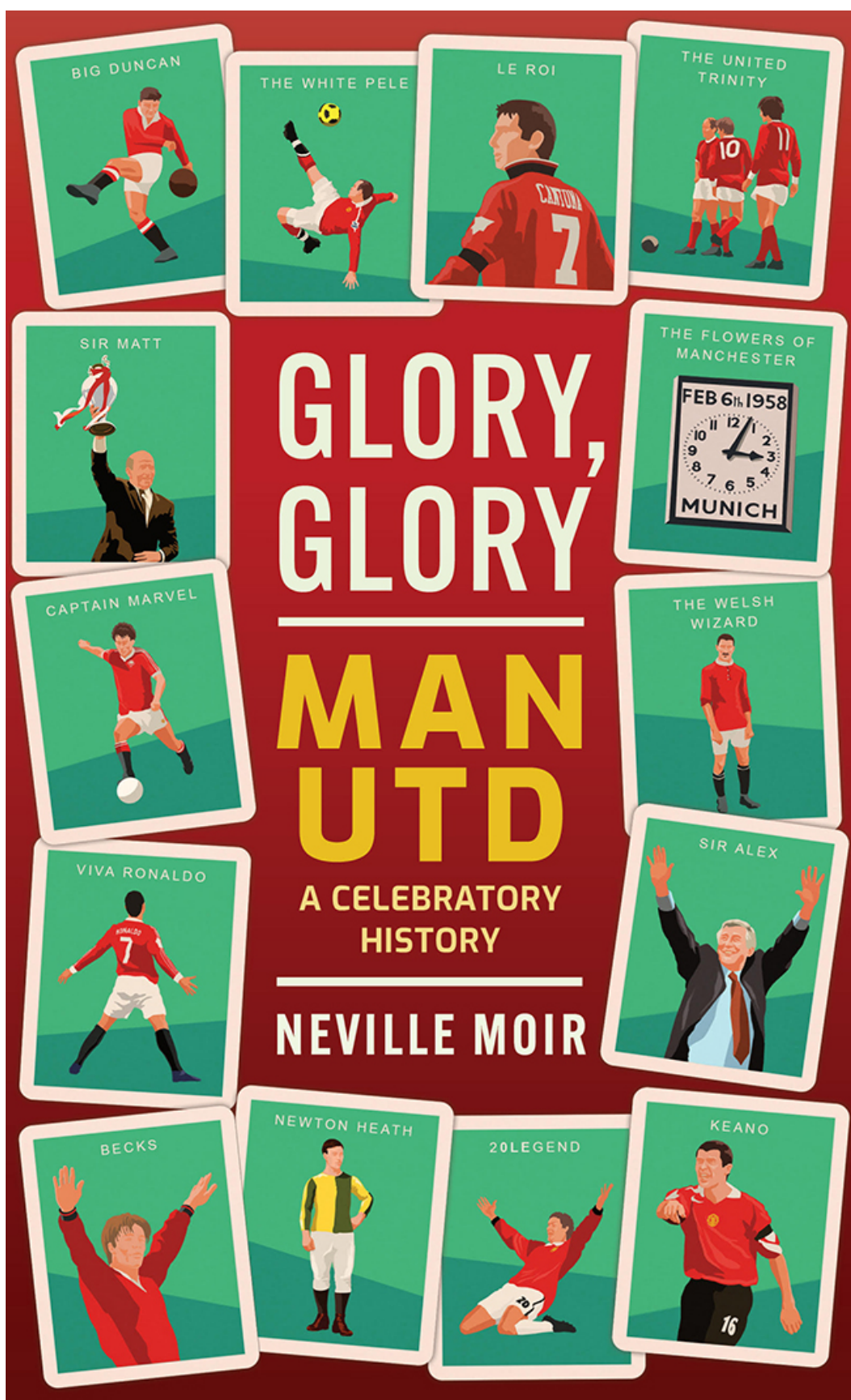


GLORY, GLORY

MAN UTD

A CELEBRATORY
HISTORY

NEVILLE MOIR



**GLORY,
GLORY
MAN
UTD**

GLORY, GLORY MAN UTD

A CELEBRATORY HISTORY

NEVILLE MOIR

POLARIS
PUBLISHING

This edition first published in 2022 by

POLARIS PUBLISHING LTD
c/o Aberdeen Considine
2nd Floor, Elder House
Multrees Walk
Edinburgh, EH1 3DX

Distributed by
Birlinn Limited

www.polarispublishing.com

Text copyright © Neville Moir, 2022

ISBN: 9781913538644
eBook ISBN: 9781913538651

THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL PRODUCT

The right of Neville Moir to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form, or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the express written permission of the publisher.

The views expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions or policies of Polaris Publishing Ltd (Company No. SC401508) (Polaris), nor those of any persons, organisations or commercial partners connected with the same (Connected Persons). Any opinions, advice, statements, services, offers, or other information or content expressed by third parties are not those of Polaris or any Connected Persons but those of the third parties. For the avoidance of doubt, neither Polaris nor any Connected Persons assume any responsibility or duty of care whether contractual, delictual or on any other basis towards any person in respect of any such matter and accept no liability for any loss or damage caused by any such matter in this book.

Every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and obtain their permission for the use of copyright material. The publisher apologises for any errors or omissions and would be grateful if notified of any corrections that should be incorporated in future reprints or editions of this book.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available on request from the British Library.

Designed and typeset by Polaris Publishing, Edinburgh
Printed in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

CONTENTS

PREFACE

In the Beginning: Newton Heath

Major and the Captain

A Brief History of Club Mascots

Mangnall and Meredith

Running Riot in Budapest

Up for the Cup

Stronger United

Old Trafford

The Nearest Run Thing

Into the Lions' Den

Holding the Fort

United's School of Excellence

The Whole Kit and Caboodle

The Managers

Naming United

Headhunting Busby

The Cup That Cheers

The Long Climb to the Top

The Class of '52

How Good Was Duncan Edwards?

Busby's Treble Chance

'The Greatest Game Ever Seen'

Remembering Munich

What's in a Name? The Origin of the Red Devils

Harry Gregg, History Man

Jimmy Murphy, First Aide
It Takes Two (or More)
The King of the Stretford End
A Knight to Remember
Springwatch
A Star Is Born
Where They Were on 31 July 1966
The Rule of Three
It's a Wonderful World
Sir Matt Busby
Six of the Best
Talking Reds
'MacChester United'
Past His Best
George Best
Not Too Good to Go Down
Buchan's *Thirty-nine Steps*
The Doc
The Quiet Man
Captain Marvel to the Rescue
Leading Men
The Foreign Legion
The 1985 FA Cup
The Longest Winning Streak
Robins, the Boy Wonder, Saves the Day
Vital Spark
David Beckham's Schooldays
The Class of '92
United Artists: On Screens Great and Small
Bruce Rises to the Challenge
Cantona Kicks Ass
Les Bons Mots du Roi

Mind Games
The Super-Sub Surfaces
Giggs' Wonder Goal
'Football, bloody hell!'
And the Award Goes to . . .
Peter the Great
Keane as Mustard
The Comeback Kings
Champions League, You're Having a Laugh
The Game's Afoot
King Edwards
Jumping for Joy
Sliding Doors Moment Number 1
The Battle of the Buffet
Well Re(a)d: United on the Printed Page
The United Stakes
From Show Pony to Thoroughbred
The Magnificent Sevens
Crowning Glories: United Hairstyles Through the Years
Best of British
The Final Straw
Tallest, Oldest, Longest
Cult Heroes XI
Wayne's Worldie
Red Carpet Reds
Keeping Up Appearances
Dream Volley
Sir Alex Ferguson
Busby v. Ferguson
Songs of Praise
The Cruellest Month
Sliding Doors Moment Number 2

Rookie Rewrites the Record Books
The Special One
Ideal Homes: Footballers' Mansions
Striking Similarities
Shaw's Manc Redemption
We'll Make It Our Business
Making a Difference: The Charitable Work of United Stars
Way to Go, Ole
The Return of the Magnificent Seven
Fantastic Fans
Back to the Future
Restoring English Pride
Statzone: Pole Position in the Premiership
Statzone: The Trophy Cabinet
Statzone: Top Ten Goal Scorers
Statzone: Biggest Wins in Major Competitions
Statzone: Breaking the Bank
Statzone: Once in Every Lifetime
Statzone: Record Appearances
How Many Uniteds?

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

United will always be United. To me, they are still the best, and whatever disappointments they're having at the moment, don't worry – they'll bounce back. They always do.

Roy Keane

PREFACE

Growing up in Belfast in the sixties, many of my schoolmates were supporters of Manchester United, the team that our local hero, George Best, played for. My grandfather, a player in his day, was also a fan. I had no specific allegiance back in the sixties and seventies; I just loved English football, brimming with brilliant teams battling each other for league and FA Cup glory. But then I moved to Scotland to escape the Troubles and to study. The local broadcasters limited coverage of English football to a five-minute slot at the end of their programmes, so if I wanted my football fix, I would have to become acquainted with the likes of Rangers, Celtic, Hibs and, er, Morton.

Scottish football induced a culture shock: the sport was a game played at 100mph in a country whose media was obsessed by the Old Firm duopoly, until along came a cocky young manager determined to shake things up. Alex Ferguson's Aberdeen piqued my interest. He was a managerial genius, rubbing the Old Firm's noses in the dirt while winning trophies both at home and in Europe. When, in November 1986, Fergie moved south to Old Trafford, we all wondered what he might go on to achieve. From that point on, I became a devoted United supporter.

It needed a fair amount of patience in the early Ferguson years; there was precious little to cheer. Then Fergie's side began to click into gear. First, there was the 1990 FA Cup win; that was quickly followed by a thrilling victory in the Cup Winners' Cup final. Of course, in the classic story arc, our heroes have to suffer a setback before they can finally triumph. On New Year's Day, 1992 – a new year that was meant to bring the long-awaited league title – United were beaten 4–1 at home by Queens Park Rangers. That wasn't supposed to happen. Nor were Leeds supposed to snatch the title in a disastrous end to the season.

Adversity puts iron in the soul, though. How can you fully appreciate the good times if you haven't tasted the bad? The collapse at the end of the 1991/92 season continued into the autumn, until, with the stroke of a pen, everything changed.

Eric Cantona signed.

The following two decades were glorious as United swept all before them. Fergie's teams rose to every challenge: Arsenal's Invincibles, Chelski, the nouveau riche Manchester City, all were brushed aside and the Champions League was won. It was doubles and trebles all round. In the post-Ferguson era, we have had to view games from behind the couch as often as on it, but it's all but impossible to avert the eyes (the latter half of the 2021/22 season was an extremely difficult watch).

In the spring of 2020, as lockdown was imposed, I took early retirement. Looking for something to do in confinement, I decided to write a book. I was going to write a celebratory book about the Red Devils. One, I hope, that is affectionate without being so adulatory as to bore the pants off readers. There are a few conceits, a few literary references (I did work in the publishing business for many decades) and digressions into the lighter side of the football circus. Mostly, I wanted to pick out the key moments, the big players, the great managers, the owners and the crunch games that have forged United's unique identity.

In the course of researching this book I have become increasingly fascinated by the history of the club. It's hard to believe how humble its beginnings were and, apart from a flourish in the early part of the 20th century, how it struggled to achieve its benefactor John Henry Davies' grand ambitions until after the Second World War. Indeed, at times it was a battle for survival; bankruptcy was a real danger in the Depression years. Thereafter, as I learned more about the Busby era, my admiration grew. The Busby Babes were a phenomenon; the Munich air disaster was traumatic; and the reconstruction of the team to win two Division One titles and the European Cup was heroic. The following quarter of a century lacked the glory of Busby's reign but was rarely dull. Busby's ethos of playing entertaining, attacking football – the 'United Way' – had taken root and was now in the club's DNA, and it has

carried on right through to the current era when the ‘cultural reboot’ was made under Ole Gunnar Solskjær’s watch.

Regrettably, due to the constraints of book production, there has to be a limit to the length of this book. There are omissions of which I am only too aware: the likes of George Mutch, Charlie Mitten, Eddie Colman and many cup finals, and I would have liked to have written more about the present-day side – Bruno and de Gea et al. But I wanted to weave my book around the main historical events, and it is hard to write about the immediate past without the help of historical perspective.

The United story is an inspiring one. In 2022, 144 years after its foundation, the club is at another crossroads, but thanks to the constant devotion and vigilance of its supporters, the traditions set by Busby and Ferguson will be honoured – the gold standard for future managers to match.

Neville Moir
August 2022



IN THE BEGINNING

Newton Heath

In 1878, the dining room committee of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway decided something had to be done about the moral and physical well-being of their employees. The august group – which listed amongst its vice-presidents a future editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, C.P. Scott and a future prime minister in A.J. Balfour – decided to form football and cricket teams as a way of distracting the men from the sin of alcohol. The two recreations were considered to be more gentlemanly than rugby, the more popular game of the time.

The cricket team has faded into obscurity, but the football team proved more enduring. The club was based at the Carriage & Works Department depot at Newton Heath, and took the name Newton Heath L&YR Football Club. Early opponents included another railway team made up of employees from the department known as Newton Heath Locomotive.

The team, affectionately known as the Heathens, played on a pitch at North Road in Monsall, in a pit of Victorian industrial pollution between railway tracks on one side and the steel and chemical works on the other. The changing rooms were half a mile away at the Three Crowns pub in Oldham Road.

To begin with, the Heathens made do with local competition in friendlies and in the Lancashire Cup and Manchester and District Challenge Cups, winning on four occasions in the 1880s. Their first venture into national competition came in the 1886 FA Cup when they were unceremoniously dumped out after a 7–2 thrashing by Blackburn Olympic.

In their non-league days, the team wore the colours of the railway company – green and gold halves – a strip revived as the third-choice kit for the 1992/93 centenary season. Although as often as not, Newton Heath played in colours nearer to the present-day Tottenham Hotspur side – white shirts with dark blue knickerbockers – the iconic green and gold was worn for a total of six seasons.

The club was ambitious. Although the Football Association's ban on professionalism was not lifted until 1885, the club was able to attract talent by offering players employment at the railway works. Newton Heath were able to recruit from far and wide, from Scotland and, in particular, a crop of Welsh internationals including Jack Powell and the Doughty brothers.

Association football was fast becoming a major spectator sport, drawing increasingly large crowds, and the bigger clubs agreed, in 1888, to set up a league of teams with a scheduled fixture list of home and away games. The Heathens were keen to be part of the action, but it took until 1892 – after a couple of years in the Football Combination and the short-lived Football Alliance – before the Football League expanded to form a Second Division to which Newton Heath were admitted.

In their efforts to win admission, Newton Heath built two new stands at North Road, which in turn led to a falling-out with the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company; they refused to pay for the building costs and the club were then evicted from the site. Ties were cut, and the club left Newton Heath to strike out on its own, setting up as a limited company and moving to a new ground at Bank Street, some three miles away in Clayton, in 1893.

The Bank Street pitch was notorious; it was a blasted heath. In March 1895, when Walsall Town Swifts turned up at the ground they were greeted by what they regarded as a 'toxic waste dump'. Only taking the field after lodging a formal complaint about the pitch to the referee, they were beaten 14–0. However, the Football League ruled in favour of Walsall, and the match was ordered to be replayed, though the result was not much better for the visitors second time round; this time they lost 9–0.

Newton Heath's first season in the Football League was pretty inauspicious. Despite being given a place in the top division, the Heathens faced immediate relegation after finishing second from bottom. They only survived the drop by

winning a 'test match' or play-off against the Second Division champions, Small Heath. The following year, there was to be no reprieve and Newton Heath suffered their first relegation.

The initial share flotation of the new limited company hadn't been a great success, and throughout the 1890s the club were dogged by financial problems. The cost of the new ground and the wages of the playing staff were heavy burdens to bear. The team languished in the Second Division for the remainder of the century. What was needed was a bit of good fortune – and that came in the early years of the new century through the unlikely agency of a St Bernard called Major.



MAJOR AND THE CAPTAIN

The Creation of Manchester United

There are differing accounts of how Harry Stafford, Newton Heath's captain, and the brewing magnate John Henry Davies (better known as J.H. Davies) met, but their encounter was crucial to the survival and future success of the club.

Harold 'Harry' Stafford joined Newton Heath from Crewe Alexandra in 1896, quickly becoming a regular in the first team and making the right-back berth his own. Following the departure of Caesar Jenkyns to Walsall, he was made captain, a position he held for the following six seasons in one of the most taxing periods in the club's history (not that they would have paid much to the Inland Revenue). The move from North Road to Bank Street had proved costly, and the expense of paying professional wages placed a strain on Newton Heath's meagre funds. They had become a selling club in a vain attempt at balancing the books.

Davies was a wealthy Manchester businessman with interests in brewing, pubs and off-licences. From relatively humble stock, Davies' fortune was due in some degree to his own efforts and in no small part to marrying into money; his wife Amy was the ward and niece of Sir Henry Tate, the sugar baron. Tate had been generous with his wealth, supporting a number of good causes and sports in the Manchester area.

So parlous were the finances of Newton Heath at the beginning of the new century that the club had been served with a winding-up order. As well as captaining the team, Stafford was an energetic fundraiser for the club. He and his pet St Bernard, 'Major' (the definite article is sometimes used to preface the

dog's rank but is anything but definite; most histories list him as just plain 'Major'), toured the local pubs seeking donations. Major even appears in a team photograph with a collecting box under his chin where you might normally expect to see a brandy barrel; either way, first aid was urgently needed.

Following a predictably unsuccessful four-day bazaar to raise funds at St James' Hall in February 1901 – the event was actually loss-making – Major went missing. The timeline of events that followed is difficult to plot as there are so many varying accounts. One version has it that Major wandered into a pub just off Oxford Street leased from Davies. Once Davies saw the dog, he thought he had the ideal birthday present for his 12-year-old daughter, Elsie. However, shortly afterwards, Davies spotted an advertisement placed by Stafford in the lost and found section of the *Manchester Evening News* and the Heathens' captain was duly reunited with his beloved pet.

Davies offered to buy Major, and although Stafford initially refused to sell, after much negotiation he eventually relented. Shrewd businessman that he was, and impressed by Stafford's enthusiasm, Davies could see that the Heathens' skipper was a popular character in north Manchester, and in July 1901 Stafford became landlord of one of Davies' establishments, the Bridge Inn, in Ancoats. The men became firm friends.

Meanwhile, at Bank Street, the club's finances continued to dwindle. In January 1902, Newton Heath was served with another winding up-order. Despite the best efforts of Stafford, his team-mates and supporters, with debts in excess of £2,600, the club seemed doomed. The situation was so parlous that Stafford had to go door-to-door raising a collection of £80 to cover the cost of the team's travel to Bristol to fulfil a league fixture. But Stafford had been working hard behind the scenes; the captain was on manoeuvres.

In March 1902, Stafford took to the stage at the New Islington Hall during a supporters' meeting to announce that he and four local businessmen, including Davies, were each investing £200 (some reports put the figure at £500) – sufficient funds to save the club. A new committee was formed with Davies as president, and Stafford and secretary James West in charge of football affairs. This made Stafford de facto club captain, co-manager and a director. As a board member he had no option but to revert to amateur status.

On 26 April 1902, the club announced the change of name to Manchester United Football Club. On the same day, Stafford captained Newton Heath in their last ever game, a 2–1 win in the Manchester Senior Cup final against Manchester City at Hyde Road. It was his only winners' medal in his time at Bank Street. Both on and off the field, the captain had won the day.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CLUB MASCOTS

Michael the Bank Street Canary

During the 1890s, readers of Newton Heath FC's matchday programmes may have seen advertisements to hear 'Michael the Bank Street Canary sing' for a nominal fee. However, Michael was neither able to sing, nor was he a canary. In truth, Michael was a goose and an unwitting participant in the money-making schemes that the club were using during their early financial difficulties.

Major the Dog (1902–06)

Major was the prized St Bernard of Newton Heath's club captain, Harry Stafford, and was well known to Mancunian pub-goers for accompanying his owner with a collection box on his collar looking to raise much-needed funds for the cash-strapped club. Then, famously, the dog became the unlikely broker of football's deal of the century as he was traded to brewing magnate J.H. Davies, who wanted to gift him to his daughter as a birthday present in return for investment in the club.

Davies rang the changes when he took charge: a new name, a new kit and a new mascot in the shape of Major.

Billy the Goat (1906–09)

Following the retirement of Major, the club decided to adopt a new mascot. Half-back Charlie Roberts had recently been given a goat by

The Bensons, a theatre company. Like Major before him, Billy was also paraded around the ground before home matches.

However, it was Billy's taste for alcohol that would be his undoing. No party was complete without Billy, and the bearded ruminant would often accompany the players to a local hostelry for post-match refreshments. After the 1909 FA Cup final, Billy took part in the celebrations with the players, but, unfortunately, he consumed too much champagne and died of alcohol poisoning soon after. It would be nice to think he died happy.

Billy's preserved head may be seen on display in the Manchester United Museum.

'Hoppy' Thorne the One-legged Wonder (late 1930s to late 1940s)

William 'Hoppy' Thorne was a British soldier during the First World War. He lost a leg in combat and was marked as an invalid on his return to Britain. He managed to find work at Old Trafford, sweeping up after home matches and operating the scoreboard at reserve team matches. It was Hoppy's pre-match entertainments that made him a local celebrity. Before home matches, he would strip off his clothes, down to his running gear, and hop or run around the pitch, depending on whether he'd attached his false leg or not.

However, Hoppy's tenure as club mascot came to an end towards the end of the 1940s after a rift formed between him and the club when they failed to give him tickets for the Reds' 1948 visit to Wembley.

Jack Irons

John Thomas 'Jack' Irons was the mascot from the late 1940s for around 15 years. He would parade around the pitch in a red-and-white dinner suit before kick-off, holding a red-and-white umbrella while

signing autographs and greeting the fans, and even tossing the coin for the kick-off on occasion.

Irons retired in 1963 but made a one-match comeback for the 1968 European Cup final. While others had occasional spells under the umbrella, the practice of the friendly mascot had to be abandoned due to the rise of football hooliganism.

Fred the Red

Since the early 1990s, the Manchester United mascot has been Fred the Red, in the form of a Red Devil as a tribute to the team's nickname. Wearing the number 55 on his replica shirt, Fred was voted the most popular mascot by *Match* magazine in 2011 and achieved internet notoriety after taunting Leeds United fans in a pre-season (un)friendly in 2019 – after abuse and beer were thrown at him by opposing fans.



MANGNALL AND MEREDITH

The Making of Manchester United

LEAGUE CHAMPIONS 1907/08

April 1902 was a new dawn in Manchester, a fresh start for the struggling football club rescued by local brewing magnate J.H. Davies, who, with three other investors, had bailed out the near-bankrupt Newton Heath. The club was rebranded as Manchester United and given a new look, the old colours of white and blue (the cheapest money could buy) making way for bold red shirts and white shorts.

The 1902/03 season was eagerly anticipated with 15,000 fans turning up to Bank Street to see the opening game of the season – an improvement of 750% on Newton Heath's last game. But, as the old saying goes, Rome wasn't built in a day. Taking United from the Second Division to championship winners would take time, money, the recruitment of talent and a bit of luck.

Team management had been left in the hands of the Heathen old boys, secretary James West and club captain Harry Stafford, until poor results led to West's resignation at the end of the season and, piling Pelion upon Ossa, both he and Stafford were investigated by the FA for financial irregularities in the affairs of Newton Heath, resulting in their both being banned from involvement in the game.

Davies lost no time in acting on a tip from the president of the Football League and appointed Ernest Mangnall, someone with proven administrative experience gained in his time at Burnley. Although given the title of club secretary, Mangnall became United's first de facto manager. Davies trusted him with a £3,000 war chest to strengthen the playing staff. He combined this

acuity with a shrewd understanding of football tactics and a fierce competitiveness.

Mangnall laid the foundations for the new side with a formidable defence featuring Harry Moger in goal and a back line of Duckworth, Roberts and Bell aka 'Ducrobel'. After narrowly missing out on two occasions, United finally won promotion to the First Division in 1906. What they now needed was a sharper cutting edge up front.

The answer came from somewhat fortuitous circumstances although Mangnall's quick thinking also played its part. In 1905, neighbours Manchester City had become embroiled in financial scandal. Several players and officials were banned for up to five years and, needing to raise funds, City planned to auction off their best players at the Queen's Hotel. But before the event took place, Mangnall swooped in and signed contracts with four lots and, in so doing, acquired a new forward line and a left-back free of charge. Their bans expiring at the end of 1906, Jimmy Bannister, Sandy Turnbull, Herbert Burgess and Billy Meredith were able to take their places in the United line-up for the first time on New Year's Day. The capacity crowd of 40,000 that packed into Bank Street cheered as Sandy Turnbull scored the decisive goal on debut.

Good though Turnbull was, Meredith was the real prize. His two nicknames, the 'Welsh Wizard' and 'Old Skinny' reveal some clues to the personality of this remarkable individual. Growing up in north Wales, he was sent to work down the pit aged 12 before a career in football saved him from a life of hard labour. He joined United at the age of 32 as a skilful right-winger. The first superstar in professional football, he was the Edwardian equivalent of David Beckham. Skilful, and possessing great control and balance, Meredith was capable of beating players and delivering crosses with pinpoint accuracy from the right wing into his strike partners. All that he lacked was a yard of pace – *pace* Becks.

United now went through the gears, winning 12 of their remaining 17 league fixtures that season, moving from fifteenth to eighth in the process. Carrying on their form into the new season, United had a blistering start, winning 13 of their first 14 league games – 1907 had been a spectacular year for Mangnall's team. While they couldn't maintain those performance levels,

they held on to win their first league title by a comfortable nine-point margin. The City refugees had bagged 44 goals between them.

It had taken just six years for the new ownership to take the club from the brink of bankruptcy to the pinnacle of English football. Cynics complained that the nouveau riche Bank Street outfit – or ‘Moneybags United’ as they were sometimes labelled – had bought the title. Such criticism unfairly belittled the parts played by Mangnall and Meredith in producing a winning formula. No matter how they had achieved their success, no one could deny that Manchester United were now a force to be reckoned with.



STATZONE

RECORD APPEARANCES

It's astonishing to think that, by the time he had retired from playing, Ryan Giggs had been involved in more than a sixth of all the games ever played by Manchester United. Most of our top ten hail from the great Busby or Ferguson eras, but hats off to Joe Spence, one of the few heroes of the bleak inter-war years.

All ten players in our chart have made more than 500 appearances for United in competitive football (the eleventh, Arthur Albiston, appeared 485 times). Competitive fixtures include league matches, FA and League Cups, UEFA competitions, Super Cup, World Club and Inter-continental Cup and FA Community or Charity Shields.

The list may have had a different composition if the playing careers of three United legends had not been interrupted by war. Jack Rowley (1937–53, 424 appearances) would be number 23 on the all-time list, Allenby Chilton (1939–55, 381 appearances), number 35, and the 'Welsh Wizard', Billy Meredith (1906–21, 335 appearances), number 48.

Player	Dates	League	FA Cup	League Cup	EC/ECL	Other Europe	Other	Total
1 Ryan Giggs	1991-2014	672	74	41	151	5	20	963
Debut aged 17 yrs, 94 d. Honours: 13 Premier League titles; 4 FA Cup; 3 League Cup; 2 Champions League; 9 Community Shield;3 others								
2 Sir Bobby Charlton	1956-73	606	78	24	28	11	11	758
Debut aged 18 yrs, 361 d. Honours: 3 First Division titles; 1 FA Cup ; 1 European Cup; 4 Charity Shield								
3 Paul Scholes	1994-2011; 2012-3	499	49	21	130	4	15	718
Debut aged 19 yrs, 309 d. Honours: 12 Premier League titles; 3 FA Cup; 2 Champions League; 5 Charity Shield; 2 others								
4 Bill Foulkes	1952-70	67	60	3	35	17	6	688
Debut aged 19 yrs, 343 d. Honours: 4 First Division titles; 1 FA Cup; 1 European Cup; 3 Community Shield								
5 Gary Neville	1992-2011	400	47	25	115	2	13	602
Debut aged 17 yrs, 211 d. Honours: 8 Premier League titles; 3 FA Cup; 2 League Cup; 2 Champions League; 3 Community Shield								
6 Wayne Rooney	2004-17	393	40	20	88	10	8	559
Debut aged 18 yrs, 340 d. Honours: 5 Premier League titles; 1 FA Cup; 3 League Cup; 1 Champions League; 1 Europa Cup; 4 Community Shield, 1 other								
7 Alex Stepney	1966-78	433	44	35	15	8	4	539
Debut aged 23 years, 364 d. Honours: 1 First Division title; 1 FA Cup; 1 European Cup; 1 Charity Shield								
8 Tony Dunne	1960-73	414	55	21	23	17	5	535
Debut aged 19 yrs, 83 d. Honours: 2 First Division titles; 1 FA Cup; 1 European Cup; 2 Charity Shield								
9 Denis Irwin	1990-2002	368	43	31	64	11	12	529
Debut aged 24 yrs, 291 d. Honours: 7 League titles; 2 FA Cup; 1 League Cup; 1 Champions League; 4 Charity Shield; 1 UEFA Cup Winners' Cup; 2 others								
10 Joe Spence	1919-33	481	29	0	0	0	0	510
Debut aged 21 yrs, 258 days. Honours: Promotion from Second Division 1924-25								



HOW MANY UNITEDS?

People sometimes ask how many football teams there are with the United suffix. It's a popular appendage and has been around since the 19th century. But how many in the Premier League? In the Football League? In England? In the United Kingdom? The world?

Fans of teams from Newcastle, Sheffield and Leeds can all too frequently be found complaining on social media posts or in phone-ins that commentators and broadcasters refer to the 20-times-title-winning team from Old Trafford as United and their team by its city name. Do the media – mainstream or social – know something that they don't?

Well, the answer is obvious to the Old Trafford faithful who will happily remind anyone in doubt: 'There's only one United.'

And who am I to argue with them? Not me, nor the billion other fans around the planet who are enraptured by the most romantic, most stylish, most poignant, most exciting story in football.

G G M U

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There's little point in writing a book without a publisher and much gratitude goes to Peter Burns of Polaris for placing his trust in a first-time author. To my wife Judy who overcame her allergy to football to offer support and helpful suggestions. Thanks to Ilan Elkaim for the feedback he gave me, promptly answering any questions I raised. Sir Alex Ferguson's autobiography and Jim White's *Manchester United: A Biography* were invaluable, and I quarried books by Iain McCartney, Andrew Endlar, Jeff Connor, Daniel Harris, the club's official history and many others. The internet was a rich seam to mine in the form of the Premier League website, the BBC, the Sky archive, the *Guardian*, *The Times*, the *Mirror*, the brilliant 11v11 website, the mufcinfo site, the official manutd.com site, MUTV, FourFourTwo, the Bleacher report, Planet Football and Transfermarkt to name but a few.