



# A Man's Game: The Origins of Manchester City Football Club

*Andrew Keenan*

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In 1879 the game of football appeared to have passed Manchester by. The city boasted more than two dozen rugby clubs and nine lacrosse clubs – but only one football side. Not surprisingly, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* concluded that “the association game has apparently no fascination in Manchester”. But a year later the Anglican parish in an industrial boom town on the edge of Manchester started a football club. The aim was to promote a “Muscular” Christianity, and to stem the flow of young men away from the Church. By 1883, as violence on Manchester's football pitches reached dangerous – even fatal – levels, that church team disbanded. But some of those young men went on to form another club, Gorton Association, that is now known round the globe as Manchester City Football Club. In *A Man's Game* author Andrew Keenan also charts the dramatic transformation of Gorton, from sleepy pasture-land in the 1840s to a bustling centre of the iron and railway industries in less than a generation. It was a world of ethnic conflict, religious infighting and labour unrest, but also one of high ideals, rising living standards and wondrous invention. Keenan also sheds new light on how football was introduced to Manchester, and why Manchester United probably have the wrong formation date. And he reveals, for the first time, the date and location of the first game of association football ever played in the city. The meticulously-researched book throws up many surprising finds, including the violent suicide of a Gorton clergyman, a transvestite sex scandal and an historic lacrosse game involving Iroquois Indians. It also solves the mystery of why Manchester City's forerunner, Gorton Association, wore a Maltese Cross on their shirts, tells the story of a women's football match that sparked riots, and reveals how the city almost hosted a rugby World Cup in 1880. For a club who have recently been accused of having “no history”, *A Man's Game* shows how Manchester City's formative years were actually interwoven with the rich and turbulent history of the world's first industrial city.

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