



Managers – Frank Scott-Walford (1908-12)

Frank Scott-Walford was the man that the Leeds City directors turned to when Gilbert Gillies tendered his resignation as secretary-manager in 1908. He had done enough during his three years in charge of Southern League Brighton and Hove Albion to convince City's board that he could get the club promoted to the top flight.

There was wide interest in the position at Elland Road when it became available, but Scott-Walford was the directors' unanimous choice and they quickly entered into discussions to agree terms, delighted with their selection. It was a clear endorsement of the man's charismatic appeal and standing in the game.

Scott-Walford always cut something of a flamboyant figure, with his extravagant waxed moustache and penchant for sporting buttonholes, straw boaters, bowler hats, caps and plus fours. But he was no one dimensional dandy and there was enough substance to a man well schooled in football matters to give real hope he could lead City into the Promised Land of the First Division.

Frank Scott-Walford was born in Perry Barr, Birmingham, around 1866, and trained as an engineer, giving his profession in the 1901 Census as a fitter. He was always a keen follower of football, joining Tottenham as an amateur goalkeeper in the late 1880s. He went on to become the club's first registered professional and also worked for them in an administrative capacity.

Scott-Walford later played for London Caledonians, Lincoln, Small Heath (later Birmingham) and Aston Villa. After leaving Villa he appealed successfully to the Football Association for reinstatement as an amateur. His real aptitude, however, always lay in management and administration, and he is credited with the formation of the Enfield and District League. He was an experienced referee, officiating at a number of Southern League matches, and in September 1900 took charge of a benefit match between Spurs and Millwall. He also enjoyed cricket and cycling.

In March 1905, Scott-Walford was appointed manager of Brighton and Hove Albion on a five-year contract. He replaced John Jackson, who had formed the club in 1901, when they were admitted to



The unmistakable Frank Scott-Walford

the Second Division of the Southern League. Within two months of Scott-Walford's arrival at the Goldstone Ground, all but three of the players had departed the club, giving the newcomer the not inconsiderable task of having to build a side from scratch. He managed to do so in double quick time, enabling the club to start the 1905/06 season, but he had to pay a high price.

Desperate times call for desperate measures and Scott-Walford trawled far and wide for new men. He was accused of approaching players at other clubs before their contracts had expired, and an FA Council was appointed to hear the outcome of an investigation into a series of irregularities. Twelve months later, on 2 April 1906, the Council found him guilty as charged and announced that he would be suspended from management from 16 April until 1 August that year.

Scott-Walford inspired Albion to some decent performances during his time at the helm. In his first season, though they finished in the bottom four, they beat Swindon Town 3-0 in the FA Cup. The following season they improved massively, finishing third in the League. In 1908 they were back in the lower reaches of the table, but had a spectacular 1-0 victory at First Division Preston North End in the FA Cup before losing to Liverpool after a replay.

When Gilbert Gillies resigned as secretary-manager of Leeds City in February 1908, Scott-Walford was one of 90 applicants for the vacant post. He was the successful candidate and happily accepted the offer of the job when it was made on 25 March, though he still had two years left to serve on his contract at Brighton. The City directors entered into discussions with the Sussex club's board to arrange his release but negotiations were protracted. Albion were reluctant to allow him to leave, and fought hard to keep him. In the end they accepted the inevitable and promised that when they could arrange a replacement, Scott-Walford would be allowed to join City.

Former Middlesbrough and Crystal Palace manager John Robson, who was later in charge of Manchester United, eventually took over at the Goldstone and Scott-Walford took up his post at Elland Road on 1 April. The Yorkshire Post reported, "His work with the Brighton and Hove Albion club in the last three years has been marked by signal success and it is with great regret that the directors and supporters of that club are parting with his services."

Flaneur wrote in the Leeds Mercury on 30 March after Leeds lost to Oldham: "It will be for the new secretary-manager, Mr Scott-Walford, to so remodel the team that next season the City record shall be more worthy of the support the club already receives. Mr Gillies showed, when he was appointed to the position, that it was possible for an association manager of experience to build up a good side. Perhaps if the purchase of players had throughout been left entirely to him Leeds City would have had an equally good side today. Mr Scott-Walford may be given more freedom in the matter of team building than Mr Gillies was permitted, and, if so, Leeds City should rise out of the ruck at the bottom of the table next season. It is too much to suggest that the club will this year attain even the moderate position held twelve months ago, when, though they were below their three Yorkshire rivals, they occupied tenth place in the League table."

When Scott-Walford arrived, City were in a perilous position, fifteenth in the table and only six points clear of the bottom two, requiring four points from as many games to secure their Second Division status. They earned a point at Clapton Orient on April 4 but it was a further two weeks



Frank Scott-Walford shakes hands with one of the Leeds City players after their opening day success against Tottenham at the start of 1908/09

before they got their first win, by 3-0 at Elland Road against Stockport County. Safety was secured the next day with the 3-1 defeat of Cup finalists Wolves, prompting the Yorkshire Post to crow that "Leeds were on the up grade".

Even though funds were strictly limited, Scott-Walford was already off in pursuit of new players, signing centre-forward Adam Bowman from Brentford on the day of the Wolves match. Eleven of City's existing first team pool were released at the end of the season, and Scott-Walford sought to rebuild by recruiting from the Southern League he knew so well. Tom Rodger, Dickie Joynes, Jimmy Burnett, David Dougal and William McDonald followed their manager from Brighton to West Yorkshire during the summer. Another five men were recruited from Southern League outfits and a letter to the Leeds Mercury noted that "The men who have been got together for this season are some of the best who played in the Southern League last season, and when they are well known to each other on the field I think they will be a credit to the club." It was reported that Scott-Walford's investment that summer amounted to some £2,000.



Frank Scott-Walford is pictured bottom centre of this Yorkshire Evening Post cartoon depicting Leeds City's defeat of Tottenham on 5 September 1908

Flaneur wrote in the Leeds Mercury at the start of the 1908/09 season, "Mr Scott-Walford has been given a much freer hand than was Mr

Gillies, who has now settled down comfortably at Bradford Park Avenue, and this should be for the good of the club. Mr Gillies did admirably in the first season of the Leeds City club, and had he been permitted to continue the team building process, I do not think that the shareholders' meeting after last season and the committee of inspection would have been necessary."

City opened the campaign with a 1-0 victory against Tottenham Hotspur, prompting Flaneur to write: "Had a stranger with even the smallest knowledge of the temperament of the average football crowd dropped casually into the Elland Road ground at a quarter past five on Saturday afternoon, he would not have considered it necessary to ask which side had won. It would have been quite obvious to him, on seeing the smiling faces and great enthusiasm all around, that the home team had gained the verdict. Had he observed further that Mr Scott-Walford made a point of shaking hands with each of the Leeds City players as the teams left the field, he might have also deduced that the new manager of the club had passed through an anxious hour and a half, and was very jubilant at the result. And in both deductions he would have been correct. The new Leeds City team had justified the faith of Mr Scott-Walford in their powers by defeating the smart Tottenham Hotspur side by one goal to none, and the manager had justified his position as sole selector, in the eyes of the big crowd of nearly 20,000 people who had assembled to see this City send off.

"I know enough of the average Leeds football spectator to feel sure that had the City team suffered defeat in this first match, Mr Scott-Walford's experiment in putting practically a new side into the field would have been severely criticised. The new manager took a bold sporting chance in selecting

seven players who had previously not worn the Leeds City colours ... and the venture was justified by its success.”

In the Edwardian period, the role of secretary-manager was chiefly administrative in nature, there to act as diplomatic buffer between the directors and the players. Selection was usually left to a committee with the manager on occasion the hapless recipient of some perverse and nepotistic decisions with directors basing their views on which players they most liked rather than who would do the best job. As the Mercury reported, Scott-Walford successfully campaigned to be given sole jurisdiction over the make up of the team. It was reported that “Mr Scott-Walford knows his business and that the directors made a wise move leaving the constitution to him.”

Under the new man’s leadership, City were as high as sixth in the table by December 1908, and, after special training at Ben Rhydding near Ilkley in the New Year, they pulled off a rare win in the FA Cup at the expense of Oldham. However, the rot set in thereafter and the Peacocks trailed in a disappointing 12th by the end of the season.

Scott-Walford brought in former Brighton centre-half Tom Morris in February 1909 after being denied when he first attempted to sign him; he proved a superb buy, emphasising the manager’s eye for talent. He was often described as the best centre-half in the Second Division.

1909/10 was a real challenge. After an opening day victory by five goals against Lincoln, the season yielded only a dire struggle against the need to seek re-election. The campaign ended in turmoil when the club’s shareholders staged a revolt against the board. Scott-Walford was forced to respond to letters of complaint as irate supporters called for an urgent meeting with directors to discuss both the club’s financial difficulties and their onfield problems.



Frank Scott-Walford pictured in January 1911 with chairman Norris Hepworth, Alf Hepworth and vice chair Joe Henry

It was painfully apparent that keeping the club going was the most challenging of tasks. At an extraordinary general meeting at the beginning of September 1910, it was revealed that the bank was owed around £7,300 and there were total liabilities of £10,800. Scott-Walford frequently had to find money himself to cover the players’ wages over the summer months and he was owed £3,500 by the club.

There were accusations from shareholders that City’s directors were incompetent and too weak to hold the club’s management to account. The Leeds Mercury: “A shareholder pointed out that even the directors admitted that there had been bad management in the past, and what he wanted to know was what control the new directors would have over the management, in view of the agreement with the present manager. (Cries of ‘None whatever,’ and counter cries of ‘Order.’) Mr Masser said that ... he felt sure that the sort of men they would elect would not be the sort to be managed by anybody. The affairs of the club would be managed by a professional manager, but the business and capital of the company would be managed by the directors.”

One shareholder offered words of support for Scott-Walford, saying of the management, “They sold one man last year, and the profit on that man paid the whole salary of the manager and his clerks. At present they had a team that had cost them absolutely nothing, and they all believed they had a tip top team. They were all young players, with years of football in them, and they ought to be given a chance.”

There was never much money available to add to the playing strength and Scott-Walford had to manage on a shoe string. After his original tactic of recruiting from the Southern League, he later moved on to seeking out raw and unproven talent from Ireland; in 1909 he came up trumps by signing Billy Halligan and Tom Mulholland and in 1910 he returned with Mick Foley, Joe Enright, George Cunningham, Alec Creighton and the gifted Billy Gillespie.

Gillespie was the pick of all the signings that Scott-Walford made for Leeds. The Irishman was on the verge of joining Linfield until the City manager began discussions with him. He quickly persuaded him to turn professional and throw his lot in with the Elland Road club. Gillespie never fully realised his potential with City but became a major star when he moved on to Sheffield United.

Scott-Walford addressed his new men in the club programme for the opening game of the 1910/11 season: “Should your efforts deserve success, and it is denied you, we shall extend our sympathy, when you do badly we shall still think you have done your best.” It was a hollow promise and there was only to be more bitter disappointment; the imports were of patchy quality and generally struggled to make an impact, though a nine game unbeaten run in February and March 1911 helped City secure an eleventh place finish.

Once again, Scott-Walford spent the close season toiling in Ireland. The well of talent was starting to run dry and this time he brought back a mediocre bunch. City had a desperate 1911/12 campaign, bumping along in the lower reaches of the table. Finances continued to be difficult and just before Christmas the club sold Gillespie to Sheffield United for £400 to keep the wolves from the door. Two months later, Scott-Walford was forced to strenuously deny that Hugh Roberts would go the same way. There was little chance of any improvement on the field until the club could resolve its financial problems, and there seemed to be no light at the end of this particular tunnel.

Scott-Walford’s health was now creaking under the pressure and by the early months of 1912 he had had enough.

He wrote to vice chairman Joe Henry in February: “At the last board meeting I was instructed to prepare a scheme to continue the club, forming a minimum financial outlay to agree with the income from all sources derived in the present year’s working, and to call a special meeting of the board to present the scheme and discuss my agreement with the company, which expires on the 31st March next.

“I have prepared a scheme, and should like to discuss the same along with you and Mr Hepworth any day this week.”

The scheme was never considered and as the end of Scott-Walford’s contract neared, he wrote a letter to the directors, which was published in the local papers in March: “Gentlemen, - Re my



Scott-Walford in January 1912

agreement. After very serious consideration, and recognising the unsatisfactory financial position of the club, in fairness to myself, I think it is my duty to inform you that I find it impossible for me to conduct the affairs of the club any longer under present existing circumstances.

“As you know, I have had to meet expenses, players’ wages, etc, times without number, also to advance transfer fees, signing on fees, and summer wages during the past three years, which has been reported at directors’ meetings, and has been duly notified in the minutes.

“The strain of these worries has caused a breakdown in my health, for, as you all know, I have been ill for some considerable time. I should, therefore, feel grateful if the directors will endeavour to relieve me of the financial obligations that are due to me from the club on or before March 31st, 1912.

“I sincerely hope that you will not consider this letter in any way disrespectful to any of you. I recognise the kind courtesy and consideration I have always received from the present directors, but I feel it is a duty that I owe to my wife and family, and you will agree it is not fair that a servant of the company should be continually called upon to meet the club’s liabilities.

“I must, therefore, kindly ask you to make proper financial arrangements or relieve me of my duties as secretary and general manager of the club on March 31st next.”

If the letter was intended to get the board to pay the manager his due, it backfired. The directors took the letter as Scott-Walford’s resignation, which they accepted. Without deigning to reply, they quickly placed an advertisement for a replacement.

Nevertheless, there was no ill feeling from the club towards Scott-Walford and he was given a number of mementoes at a dinner at the Cyprus Cafe in Leeds in April. Club captain Tom Morris presented him with a large silver boat-shaped flower bowl, on which was inscribed: “Presented to Mr F Scott-Walford by the players and staff of the Leeds City Football Club, April 17th 1912.” He also received an inscribed gold medal and his wife was given a silver-mounted, oak biscuit box.

It was reported at the beginning of April that Scott-Walford had been appointed as secretary at Nottingham Forest in succession to Fred Earp. It seemed that someone had jumped the gun for Forest instead gave the job to Bob Masters.

Scott-Walford eventually resurfaced as manager of Southern League Coventry City in 1914, taking over from Robert Wallace.



The Leeds Mercury of 5 March 1912 carries the news of Frank Scott-Walford's resignation

The West Midlands club had just finished bottom of the table and were thus relegated to the Second Division. With the oncoming spectre of war in Europe, it was all Scott-Walford could do to find 11 players fit enough to take the field. Understandably, the season was a financial disaster and when business was wound up in 1915, the accounts revealed that the manager was still owed £100 in unpaid wages. This was all too familiar a tale for Scott-Walford after his ill fated days at Elland Road.

The trail of Scott-Walford's career runs cold after his departure from Coventry and nothing else is known about his football dealings.

It was unfortunate for a man who had shown himself so adept at the business of football management in earlier days that he should run aground in the financial difficulties of not one but two clubs. But he was only one of many Leeds managers who would disintegrate under the yoke of such bitter fiscal distress.