



Review of 1909/10 – Part 1 – Slippery slope



The 1909/10 squad Back row: Chapman (trainer), Affleck, Hogg, Bromage, Naisby, Morris, Dougal, McGowan, Thrupp (assistant trainer). Middle row: Beren, McAllister, White, Frank Scott-Walford (manager), Watson, Gemmell, Croot. Front row: Hamilton, Burnett, Halligan, Roberts, Mulholland, Bridgett

After the initial rush of expectancy and excitement following the appointment of a new man at the helm in 1908, the season that followed for Leeds City ended disappointingly.

Incoming manager Frank Scott-Walford had brought great hope to Elland Road, along with a clutch of recruits from the Southern League. They promised much in the early weeks, even flirting with the top of the table after four games, but by the end of the campaign City had taken several steps backwards.

They matched 1908's 12th place finish but much of the football the team played was a pale reflection of the players' potential and there was dissatisfaction all round. The board of directors glared balefully at the record £1,200 loss that the club posted and put Scott-Walford on notice that improvement was essential rather than an optional extra.

Determined to address the team's deficiencies, the manager set about ringing the changes and there were a great number of comings and goings during the summer of 1909. With funds so tight, Scott-Walford took the low budget approach after splashing the cash a year earlier and he spent the summer checking out the talent in Ireland. He returned to Yorkshire with two 21-year-old forwards, Tommy 'Steve' Mulholland and Billy Halligan, and was to be a regular visitor to the Emerald Isle over the next few seasons as he mined a cheap seam of talent.

The manager signed a number of other promising players, such as half-back Haydn Price from Wrexham, the holder of five Welsh caps from his time with Aston Villa. He was joined by his

countryman, winger Hugh Roberts from Southport Central, veteran Stoke outside-left Harold Bridgett, Chester's amateur winger Colin Stockton, Newark centre-half James Horsley and three young Scots, Hugh Beren, George Affleck and Edward Hamilton.

The signature of goalkeeper Tony Hogg from Walker-on-Tyne Church Lads Brigade in April prompted this endorsement in the Leeds Mercury from the Reverend A G Wardroper, the vicar in the player's home town: "Hogg has had a trial at Elland Road, and gave great satisfaction. He is only just over 18 years of age, but his height and activity should help him as a clever custodian. The Walker Church Lads Brigade has won every league or cup it entered for and this last season Hogg only let 17 shots past him in 28 league games. The team had 142 goals to its credit, and won every match but one. We congratulate the directors and Mr Scott-Walford on getting Hogg."

On the way out were Scott-Walford's signings of twelve months earlier, John Hamilton, Richard Guy (neither of whom had really made the grade in their season at Elland Road) and Tom Rodger (who had promised much in his early months but faded badly after Christmas). He also released three seasoned campaigners, full-back David Murray and wing-halves Charles Morgan and Jimmy Kennedy.



Southport Central winger Hugh Roberts was one of a clutch of newcomers for the new season

As City and the rest of the country's clubs made their preparations for the 1909/10 campaign, events were overshadowed by the dispute that exploded between the football authorities and increasingly restive players.

Tim Hill writing in *A Photographic History of English Football*: "Burgeoning interest inevitably meant that football was no longer simply sport and entertainment but also big business. Some of the top clubs started to show extremely healthy balance sheets, and it wasn't long before players began to demand a bigger slice of the cake. In April 1901 a new maximum wage of £4 a week was introduced. This compared favourably with other skilled tradesmen of the day (Four pounds a week was twice what a works foreman took home and nearly four times the average wage of a farm labourer), but players began to recognise their worth and started to express dissatisfaction. Matters came to a head in 1907 with the formation of a Players' Union. The League and FA were worried about players becoming organised, possibly even affiliating to the Trades Union movement. They threatened to impose a ban on players who took up union membership. Manchester United star Billy Meredith was one of a vociferous group unwilling to be browbeaten. While many players lost their nerve and fell into line, Meredith led a group of players who threatened to withdraw all their labour. Prior to the 1909/10 season they began training independently under the banner of The Outcasts."

The main drivers of the revolt were the Lancashire clubs' players - as late as Monday 30 August, a week prior to the season's opening games, the local papers were full of news from across the Pennines. A meeting in Manchester the previous evening drew about two hundred players to it, with representatives from all of the county's League clubs, except Blackburn Rovers, Preston North End and Blackpool. As the Yorkshire Post noted, "A resolution espousing loyalty to the Union was carried without the slightest opposition. Only two men did not vote in favour of it, and they explained that they had promised not to pledge themselves until a full meeting of the clubs they represented had been held. An official statement was made that the Tottenham, Chelsea and Fulham players had agreed to support the Union and a paper was produced on which the majority of the Aston Villa and West Bromwich Albion men had signed a pledge of support."

21 Everton professionals joined the Players' Union, and all of Manchester City's players did the same after previously being thought to be loyal to the FA. 27 Manchester United players were suspended because of their allegiance to the Union and there were fears that virtually the entire programme of opening day fixtures would be called off.

There was less of an appetite for industrial action in Yorkshire, with only Bradford City players throwing their weight behind the Union, and it was reported that Leeds City's players "have decided unanimously that their interests can best be served by having nothing to do with the Players' Union."

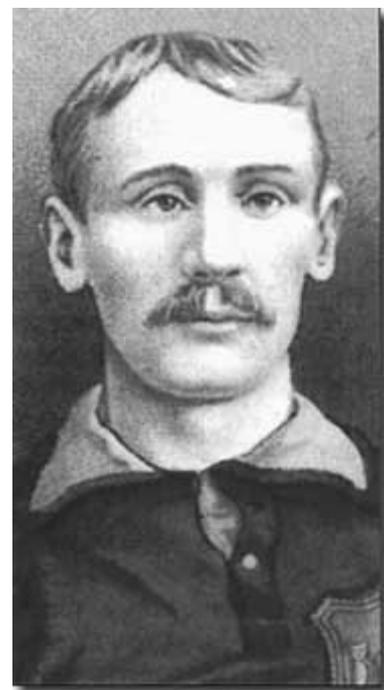
In the end, a deal was struck between the warring parties and the maximum wage was increased to £5 a week.

As the dust settled on the affair, the Peacocks entertained Lincoln City at Elland Road in their opening game on Wednesday, September 1. Colin Stockton, Tom Mulholland and Billy Halligan all debuted in the Leeds attack. Popular custodian Harry Bromage was recalled at the expense of Tom Naisby while John Watson and John White continued the full-back partnership that had operated so successfully throughout 1908/09. The half-back line of Tom McAllister, Tom Morris and Stan Cubberley that had bonded formidably as a unit over the spring remained in situ, while the reliable Jimmy Gemmell and Fred Croot retained their places in attack.

The Citizens blended well from the off, despite slippery conditions following a heavy storm in the half hour before the game commenced. The visitors included only four players, full-back Wilson, half-backs Nesbit and Fraser and left winger Grundy, who had been in the team the previous season, and they struggled to gel as "they showed little combination, much steadiness and practically no resolution" according to Flaneur in the Leeds Mercury. He went on, "Leeds City had three new men on view, Halligan, Mulholland and Stockton. The Irishmen got well on to their game in the second half, and the whole team improved very greatly as the game progressed. They were much less troubled by the difficulties of the ground than their opponents, and, getting a two-goal lead in the first half, both successful shots being put in by Gemmell, they played through the second period with plenty of confidence and much better combination.

"The visitors made a spurt or two at the close, but they were kept out fairly easily by Watson and White, and by Bromage, who was very sound in goal. The defence was, indeed, quite good, and the attack was always more dangerous and finished than that of the opposition. The half-backs, especially Cubberley, were rather shaky at the outset, but they soon pulled themselves together, and both in attack and defence they acquitted themselves well. But Cubberley, Morris and McAllister are well known at Elland Road and chief interest was centred in the play of the new forwards. Stockton was rather disappointing, but the Irish couple came on splendidly in the second half and Halligan's two goals were very cleverly scored. The fifth goal was put through by Morris from a free kick.

"Satisfactory as the new Irish forwards played, the star of the line was Gemmell, who commenced well, and kept up his form throughout. Croot was just the Croot of old at outside-left and, with an improvement on the other wing and match practice, Leeds City should be quite a useful Second



Popular keeper Harry Bromage was recalled to the side for the start of the season, displacing Tom Naisby

League side.”

It was a wonderful start for the Citizens and Scott-Walford was content to send out an unchanged eleven for a Yorkshire derby three days later at Hull. Unfortunately, they were roundly trounced, lucky to escape with a 3-1 defeat. Only the goalkeeper emerged with credit, as recorded by Olympian in the Mercury: “That the number of goals was kept so low as three was to the credit of one man alone, Bromage. He put forth a wonderfully cool saving exhibition, especially in the second half, when he was kept fully employed.”

It might have been a different story had young Stockton took the open goal that was presented to him in the opening quarter, but the winger was clearly struggling to come to terms with Second Division football. Billy Halligan scored again, but his effort was a mere consolation in the face of a hat trick by the Tigers’ Jack Smith. Defeat at Anlaby Road was nothing new: Leeds had yet to win there, shipping four goals in each of the previous two seasons. Managed by Ambrose Langley, the East Yorkshire team were formidable opponents, fielding two other famous Smiths in their forward line, Joe and Wallace, also boasting the talents of Alf Toward and Eddie Neve. They had come close to promotion in the spring and were to mount an even more serious challenge this season. Their display as they swept the Elland Road men aside was impressive.



Hull City's Neve prepares to take on City full-back John Watson during the clash at Anlaby Road in September - Leeds lost 3-1

A return to their home turf brought a return to winning ways as the Citizens defeated unbeaten Derby County 2-1, despite a splendid performance by keeper Harry Maskrey, who had won an England cap in 1908. Billy McLeod returned to the forward line in place of Mulholland and Haydn Price made his debut at left-half. The changes peppered up the team and both men played well as City recaptured their form.

The first half hour was evenly fought - the Rams had the best moments, but Leeds took the lead after 35 minutes, as reported in the Yorkshire Post: “A fine goal by Croot delighted the spectators. But although the outside-left scored cleverly, almost equal credit is due to McLeod for the way he engineered the opening, which gave Croot the opportunity. The centre-forward’s pass to the left was excellently judged, and the City forward’s combat with Nicholas on the goal line was worth watching. Ultimately Croot triumphed, his shot being at an acute angle.”

Seconds later, Derby equalised when inside-left Barnes beat both McAllister and Watson before firing in a long-range shot.

City had to defend in depth after the break, but gradually got back on top as Gemmell and Halligan pressed Maskrey. Leeds made their possession count and McLeod’s neat pass allowed Halligan to dash between the backs and slam the ball home to loud cheers. Harry Bromage withstood a number of hot attacks thereafter to secure the points for his team, though County were unfortunate not to force a draw on the run of play.

Sportsman in the Mercury: “In the City goal, Bromage made a number of clever saves ... Watson gave a sound and reliable display at right-back and more than once in the first half he came to the relief of his partner. Before the interval White was rather shaky, but afterwards he improved considerably, and finished well. The Welsh international, Haydn Price, made his first appearance

for City, and was quite the best man in the intermediate line. In the second half especially, his defensive work was clever while he often sent Gemmell and Croot on their way with smart passes. McAllister was only moderate, but the weak spot of the line was at centre-half, where Morris was at times extremely slow and hesitating. Forward, Croot gave a fine display at outside-left, and, playing with dash and determination, was a constant source of trouble to Barbour and Nicholas, who were more than once beaten by his speed. Halligan was rather neglected by both McLeod and Stockton, but he made the most of the few chances put in his way, and his goal was a beauty. McLeod was lacking in dash and energy, and as a distributing force he was not altogether a success. He did, however, play an excellent part in the work that led to Halligan's goal. Gemmell was very useful, but on the right wing Stockton, who is slow in getting away with the ball, was rather weak."



Fred Croot scores City's first goal in the 2-1 defeat of Derby at Elland Road on 11 September

The ineffectual display, in fact, spelt the end for Colin Stockton. He was dropped and never again featured in the first team. David Dougal was drafted back in on the right wing for the time being. With Billy McLeod giving way temporarily to Dickie Joynes, City could only manage a spiritless 0-0 draw at Stockport County. McLeod was back for the Elland Road tussle with Glossop and managed a second half goal, but City were already two-down and though they subsequently hinted that they might equalise, it was once more Harry Bromage in goal who was the star performer. On the day the Derbyshire side were by far the superior side.

Two Billy Halligan goals gave City a half time advantage a week later at Birmingham and they managed to withstand a second half assault by the Midlanders to finish with an encouraging 2-1 victory, but the team lost their way badly thereafter, struggling to cope with the prolonged absence through injury of McLeod. Halligan kept the goals flowing, and it was in defence that the Citizens were most obviously lacking.

It took a second half West Bromwich penalty to deny City a draw from a well-fought game at the Hawthorns – Bromage had once again been in splendid form, but he could not hold Leeds together single-handed and he badly needed some protection in front of him.

There was a second narrow defeat within seven days when a goal in the last minute by Oldham's Len Newton proved decisive at Boundary Park on 16 October following Halligan's 80th-minute equaliser. City had been badly handicapped by the loss of right winger Edward Hamilton at the start of the second half. It was Hamilton's first team debut after a move from Petershill in August and he badly bruised his ribs in an earlier tumble.

If City were unlucky on that occasion, the outcome was rather more clear cut a week later when they sustained a record defeat in the game against Barnsley at Elland Road.

A close contest had been expected, but Barnsley, playing with the advantage of a strong breeze in the first half, quickly dispelled that notion. After ten minutes inside-right Ernie Gadsby headed home from a corner. Seventeen minutes later, outside-left Tom Forman repeated the trick. Before the break, Gadsby notched his second after good work by Forman and George Lillycrop and the South Yorkshire outfit took their half-time refreshments leading 3-0.

Things went from bad to worse after the interval. A hard drive by Barnsley left-back Harry Ness

struck the luckless Hamilton on his right arm, badly dislocating his elbow. He had little choice but to go off and the odds were stacked heavily against the Citizens from then on. Skipper John Watson, with a startling piece of ill judgement, opted to take Hamilton's spot on the right wing and left John White to face the five rampaging Barnsley forwards on his own. Behind him, Harry Bromage performed miracles, but he could not stem the tide as Lillycrop and Harry Tufnell snatched a brace apiece to leave the final score an embarrassing 7-0.

Flaneur in the Leeds Mercury: "Barnsley ... had a day out. They were a confident, clever team in all departments and it is a long time since I have seen a side show such a remarkable understanding. The difference between the ragged work and absence of combination on the Leeds City side and the perfect rhythm of the Barnsley play was very striking ... The glory of the Barnsley team was the forward line, every member of which played delightful football. Bartrop was the only forward who failed to score, yet, if any distinction be made among the five, the outside-right was the best of all. His fast runs up the wings, the ease with which he beat Cubberley and White, and his fine centres all stamped him as a player who must have a great future.



Harry Bromage gets ready to pull off a save during the heavy defeat against Barnsley in October

"The pivot on which the Barnsley forward work depended was centre-half, where Boyle played a great game, and was well assisted by Glendinning and Utley. These men were much more than defenders; they placed the ball to their forwards with skill and judgement, and they were always capable of holding the City inside men. Soundness also marked the work of the backs, Ness and Downs, though I would suggest to this pair the inadvisability of shaking hands with each other to mark a successful clearance. The hand shaking clowning at the scoring of each goal, which is such a feature of Association football, is merely silly; when it is done by two backs in front of their own goal it becomes dangerous. Perhaps Barnsley could afford exhibition tricks on Saturday, but some day it may prove fatal.

"Seven goals to none! The thing seems incredible. Yet that was the score by which the gallant little band of footballers from the South Yorkshire town defeated 'the best team' (I am quoting from a contemporary) 'the Leeds City directors can put into the field from the material at their command.' And this crushing defeat – or shall we say slaughter? – occurred, mark you, on the Elland Road ground at the instance of a team that had never previously won on the enclosure."

The defeat came as a sore blow to City, at a time when they had just made an appeal to shareholders for additional funds as they struggled to balance the books. They stood fifteenth out of 20 teams, just two points above the bottom two. Things looked bleak, indeed.

A 5-1 thrashing at Fulham on 30 October saw the Peacocks slip further down the table and their performance was every bit as insipid as the score suggested, as confirmed by Wanderer in the Mercury: "The forwards did not seem to realise the necessity of getting away with the ball when they received it. They dallied far too much, and the consequence was that they were robbed as often as not. And they did not infuse enough dash into their play. As often as not when a half-back was about to make a pass, the forward for whom it was intended would turn his back on the goal and calmly wait for the ball, only to find that one of the Fulham defenders was round him like a flash and off with the ball. Halligan and Joynes were responsible for what little good work there was, but

they rarely gave one any hope of scoring. Perhaps the quintet did not receive enough support from the halves, who were absolutely swamped by the Fulham forwards; but still, that cannot be put forward as an excuse for their mediocre display. The City middle line was not very satisfactory, and gave the Fulham forwards far too much latitude. Cubberley was quite off his defensive game, which is usually his forte, and Beren and Morris were rarely reliable.”

City recovered some ground a week later when a goal by Halligan was enough to secure a home win against Burnley, and there was much to enjoy in the first team debuts by full-back George Affleck and centre-half James Horsley, while the return from injury of Billy McLeod for only his third start of the campaign brought fresh impetus to the attack. McLeod managed a brace a week later at home to Bradford Park Avenue, but the visitors secured the points with a 3-2 win. That game marked the start of a run of six games that saw but a single point returned. In that time, City crashed 5-0 at Wolverhampton and lost 6-2 at Leicester Fosse on 18 December. The latter reverse left City deep in trouble, with the division’s worst defensive record, having conceded 42 goals in just 17 games.

On the credit side, McLeod (5 goals in 7 games) and Halligan (11 in 17) were proving a productive combination up front, while 22-year-old Hugh Roberts seemed to have solved the difficulties at outside-right and the sturdy Affleck had become a fixture at left-back. The Scottish defender’s introduction to the first team had brought four defeats in his first five appearances, but his presence brought solidity and a no nonsense approach to the rearguard.

Elland Road had been chosen to host the amateur international between England and Ireland on 20 November, which ended in a thrilling 4-4 draw though the unfancied men from the Emerald Isle almost pulled off a breathtaking victory. The occasion was a real feather in the cap for the City board and both club and enclosure were roundly praised for their hospitality.

Flaneur marked the occasion with an article in the Leeds Mercury two days later, and used the opportunity to summarise the size of the task facing a young club with high aspirations: “The time seems to have arrived for a little plain speaking about the Leeds City Club. Little more than a month ago, Mr Joseph Henry, vice chairman of directors of the club, told a meeting of shareholders that the club had a body of young players, and that there was every prospect of success if these men could be kept together. At the time these words were uttered, Leeds City had won three matches, lost four and drawn one, with a total of seven points out of a possible 16. They had scored 12 goals to 10, and occupied eleventh position in the League table.

Bottom of Division Two – 30 October 1909

<i>Pos</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Pts</i>
12th Bradford PA	10	4	1	5	13	15	9
13th Stockport County	11	3	3	5	10	12	9
14th Oldham Athletic	9	3	2	4	11	11	8
15th Birmingham	10	2	4	4	17	19	8
16th Clapton Orient	11	3	2	6	11	19	8
17th Lincoln City	11	2	4	5	12	26	8
18th Leeds City	10	3	1	6	13	22	7
19th Gainsborough T	11	2	1	8	13	31	5
20th Grimsby Town	10	1	1	8	7	21	3



A scramble in the City area during the 5-1 defeat at Fulham at the end of October

“It may be said that a club with an overdraft of £9,000, a club seeking a public to take up nearly 3,000 additional shares – and seeking, I should imagine, without much success, though I have no information on the point – have no money wherewith to purchase players of repute. Thus are past follies coming home to roost. Much money has been spent in the past on players with indifferent qualifications; many good men have been allowed to leave Elland Road, some of them a good deal better than a number of the players on the books today; and a sum of £8,117 has been spent on the ground.



Owen heads England's first goal in the amateur international against Ireland played at Elland Road in November 1909

“The ground is a fine one; it is worthy of a replayed Cup semi final or an international match of greater public interest than the amateur event of last Saturday; but a great and well appointed ground is something of a white elephant when the team that plays upon it is of such poor class. The Leeds City directors have put the cart before the horse. They might have taken a leaf out of Bradford City’s book. The Bradford City directors built up a team first; they made a position in the world of football; and then they proceeded to improve their ground.

“This, I admit, is not constructive criticism, for the solution of the difficulty is obvious. The public are not likely to subscribe further share capital until they see that efforts are being made to remedy the weaknesses in the team; they are not likely to add largely to the club’s revenue at the gates until the team play better football and win matches. The directors must themselves find sufficient money, by hook or crook, to purchase a few players of class; they must see that the present system of chopping and changing is eliminated.”

Bottom of Division Two – 28 December 1909

<i>Pos</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Pts</i>
12th Bradford PA	19	8	2	9	28	30	18
13th Oldham Athletic	17	7	3	7	21	25	17
14th Stockport County	20	5	6	9	19	24	16
15th Clapton Orient	20	6	3	11	22	32	15
16th Leeds City	20	6	3	11	25	45	15
17th Lincoln City	18	3	7	8	20	34	13
18th Gainsborough T	20	5	3	12	21	49	13
19th Birmingham	19	3	5	11	23	44	11
20th Grimsby Town	19	3	2	14	16	43	8

Thankfully, three goals from Hugh Roberts and two from Billy McLeod secured two Elland Road victories in Christmas week and brought some optimism, but a tame goalless draw at troubled Lincoln City on December 28 showed that the Peacocks were building on shallow foundations. They entered 1910 a mere four points clear of the re-election places and facing a bleak New Year.