



## Review of 1911/12 – Part 2 – The end for Scott-Walford

Leeds City began 1912 facing a very real threat of having to seek re-election to the Football League. Though there were six teams below them in the rankings, the Peacocks enjoyed only a meagre points advantage over them. They had just six victories from their 21 games and the worst defensive record in the division, having conceded 44 goals. The gloom was lifted a little by a 3-1 victory against Nottingham Forest on 30 December, but the future was not bright, especially considering the parlous state of the club's financial affairs.



Frank Scott-Walford and his players pose during preparations for the FA Cup-tie against Glossop in January 1912

City kicked off the New Year with a daunting challenge, at Stamford Bridge, home of championship-chasing Chelsea. Leeds were not fancied to gain even a point, but they gave a good account of themselves and the Yorkshire Post rated them as “distinctly the better side for the greater part of the first half”. It was only down to Billy McLeod's lack of sharpness that they were not ahead at the break, but the 0-0 scoreline was encouraging.

The Londoners roused themselves after the resumption, though their opening goal was fortunate. City skipper Tom Morris headed clear only for the ball to strike Joe Moran and rebound into the Leeds net. Chelsea moved into a three goal lead, before the Citizens fought back, netting twice through McLeod and Mick Foley. That was as good as it got, and Chelsea netted a fourth to emerge clear winners.

The following week brought the excitement of an FA Cup-tie against Glossop. The visitors' party made their way to the ground in a fleet of cabs after arriving in Leeds by train and centre-forward William Berwick twisted an ankle disembarking on arrival at Elland Road. He had to be replaced by Herbert, with the veteran amateur Herbert Stapley moving to centre.

Undeterred, Glossop took the game to City early on and the game was played out in the Leeds half for the first fifteen minutes. In that time Scottish international Tom Fitchie saw his shot strike the angle of post and crossbar. City opened the scoring from their first real attack with twenty minutes gone as Hugh Roberts headed home a cross from Fred Croot.

Tom Mulholland's fierce shot rattled the crossbar just before half time, Croot later hit the post and Glossop's Stapley was denied by the bar after virtually the last kick of the contest, but Roberts' goal was the only one that counted and City had won a first round tie for the second time in their brief history.

The Leeds public flocked to see the game, with 21,000 excited spectators paying gate receipts of £570 for the privilege. Flaneur wrote in the Leeds Mercury: “It was shown on Saturday that the Leeds public need only the smallest encouragement to rally round the club ... Is not this more than sufficient proof that first class soccer would be supported splendidly in Leeds?”

Centre-forward Billy McLeod had not played well and his form was at a low ebb. The Mercury’s Flaneur opined, “There was one distinct weakness in the Leeds City team. McLeod, who, on his day, is as classy a player as the club possesses, was unaccountably off colour. He lacked fire and determination, he was neither a leader of forwards nor a good distributor of the ball, and he was very easily dispossessed.”

The centre-forward received support by way of a fan’s letter printed in the Yorkshire Evening Post. “He is by far the best centre Leeds City have had, and he has more brains and ability than any other individual in the team ... The fault is with the half-backs, who cannot hold the opposing forwards sufficiently to be able to give a centre-forward the chance he reasonably expects. Again, the inside men are small, and cannot rush any opposing backs. This makes it all the harder for the pivot of the front line to get through. My advice to Leeds City spectators is to give up laying the blame upon McLeod for missing opportunities which he never gets, and to digest the fact that in the centre-forward they have a class man.”

There was some truth in the letter, but McLeod was unquestionably out of form and after playing in the home defeat against Clapton Orient, he missed 6 of the next seven fixtures, declaring himself unfit with a groin strain. In his absence, Mick Foley filled the void energetically, if none too artistically. The Yorkshire Post described him as “a somewhat unskilled hustler” and reported after a win at Grimsby on 23 January: “Foley, if not showing special talent as a distributor of the ball, certainly exhibited a pleasing disposition to shoot for goal whenever a chance presented itself.”



Centre-forward Billy McLeod, pictured in January 1912, was criticised for a lack of form

City were unlucky to lose to Clapton, for whom goalkeeper Hugall gave a memorable display. The Yorkshire Post: “Probably the City have never had so much of the play in any match and finished on the losing side.” Flaneur wrote in the Mercury of “a young man in a purple jersey, who seemed all arms, and who could anticipate anything. No matter how the ball came to Hugall, high or low, straight or from an acute angle, he stopped it and cleared, and he wound up a wonderful afternoon’s work by saving a penalty kick from the foot of the usually certain Croot.”

The Peacocks thoroughly merited their 2-1 victory at Grimsby, but were hammered 4-1 at Bristol City a week later, with three of the goals coming in the first 20 minutes.

The setback was poor preparation for the FA Cup clash with First Division West Bromwich Albion on 3 February. Another 20,000-plus crowd was on hand to see the Peacocks substantiate the popular theory that they raised their game against high class opposition.

The pitch was covered with a foot of snow in the days before the tie, but a multitude of men were set to work on shovelling clear to ensure that the money spinning contest went ahead. The move paid off and City banked gate receipts of £666.

The game was played in a driving snowstorm, but there was no danger of abandonment as two well-matched teams battled for supremacy. It was nip and tuck throughout.

Albion played against the storm in the first half and had a golden opportunity to take the lead in the opening minutes when a penalty was awarded against George Affleck for handball. Goalkeeper Hubert Pearson was entrusted with the spot kick, but he had to dash back smartly to his station when his shot struck the post.

City could not capitalise on their reprieve. They were regularly on the attack with Hugh Roberts in splendid form on the right wing, supplying a string of promising centres, but none could be converted. Roberts was guilty of a cardinal miss himself when he slammed a shot high over the bar with only the keeper to beat.

City had the advantage after the break, though Albion enjoyed the clearer opportunities. There were no goals and the game seemed to be drifting towards a replay.

However, Albion scored a controversial winner in the closing seconds. Leeds lost possession on the left and West Bromwich winger Claude Jephcott beat Alec Creighton to send in a cross from the byline. Centre-forward Sid Bowser controlled the ball and forced it home from close range.

There was considerable dispute about the legitimacy of the goal, with home crowd and players equally vocal in their protests. They argued on a variety of grounds, claiming offside, accusing Bowser of hands as he controlled Jephcott's centre, and asserting that Reinhardt had scooped the ball round the post the ball before it crossed the goal line.



Leeds players in training for their FA Cup clash with West Bromwich Albion January 1912 - Chris Kelly swings the clubs, watched by Tony Hogg and Joe Enright

The referee, L F James of Birkenhead, consulted the linesman before awarding the goal, to the frustration of City players and fans.

Flaneur in the Mercury: "So open to question was the deciding point that one can understand the disappointment of the home partisans. Yet there was no justification for hooting Mr James and there was no sense in the conduct of several hundred people who declined to leave the ground until appealed to by Mr Scott-Walford. The game was handled very well, indeed, and we must give the referee credit for an honest decision on a point of which he was in a much better position to judge than were the majority of those who hooted him as he left the field.

"There was more class to the work of the visitors, who placed the ball with greater accuracy than their opponents, and showed just sufficient superiority in method to suggest that they would have won nicely in normal conditions of ground and weather. In the prevailing conditions they attempted, in my judgement, rather too much close passing, whereas the Leeds City men swung the ball well out and played with great dash and fire.

"But the home team lacked coolness in front of goal; they were deficient in that extra bit of class that makes the difference between winning and losing matches. Roberts in the first half and Enright in the second each had a magnificent chance to score at close range, with the defence well beaten, but each man shot wildly high above the bar. The chance that came to Roberts was so excellent that he could have dribbled the ball in or placed it just where he pleased had he been content to merely beat the goalkeeper rather than anxious to burst the net."

Two Mulholland goals brought a victory in the local derby at Huddersfield on 10 February and

Enright scored the only goal against Blackpool a week later to lift City seven points clear of the re-election positions. The Peacocks' position was improving, but all the teams below them had games in hand and when City lost 2-1 at bottom club Glossop on 24 February, the alarm bells started ringing.

City were one of three clubs on 21 points, and the four points above them separated another six clubs. Glossop and Gainsborough looked dead and buried with 15 and 14 points respectively, but the number of games played was of greatest concern, with Leeds having played more than any of their rivals.

City could only draw 0-0 at home to Hull City on 2 March and lost the next three games on the bounce. The second of those saw the team plumbing new depths with a 7-2 reverse at Fulham on 23 March. The 1-0 defeat at home to Derby a week later saw City drop into the bottom two.

**Bottom of Division Two – 30 March 1912**

<i>Pos</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>Pts</i>
<b>13th Birmingham</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>14th Blackpool</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>15th Stockport County</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>16th Huddersfield Town</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>17th Bristol City</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>18th Glossop</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>19th Leeds City</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>20th Gainsborough T</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>19</b>

On a positive note, Joe Moran and Joe Enright were called up by the Irish selectors for the game with Scotland on 16 March. They cemented their selection during a friendly against Linfield in Belfast at the start of the month in a 2-2 draw. The directors were unanimous in their decision to release the two players for the international. In their absence, City lost 2-1 at home to Bradford Park Avenue in a bad tempered game that was peppered by fouls and watched by two antagonistic sets of supporters.

The club's dismal financial situation mirrored the onfield chaos.

Secretary-manager Frank Scott-Walford had to vehemently deny newspaper reports that City intended to sell gifted Welsh winger Hugh Roberts. Nothing came of the rumours, but it was clear that the directors desperately needed to raise funds to cover the club's operating expenses.

Flaneur in the Mercury: "Mr Scott-Walford has a great deal of faith in the future of his young men, whom he regards as likely to develop into a very fine side, and of whose general conduct he speaks in the warmest terms ... The spade work that is being done at Elland Road cannot be of any real value if so soon as a player begins to stand out above his fellows he is lost to the club because the City cannot afford to refuse tempting offers. The necessity of parting with promising players, and the inability of the club to purchase good men, are discouraging features ... and it may be some years yet ere the Leeds public have the luxury of First Division football, for which they are already ripe."



Star Welsh winger Hugh Roberts was in fine form all season and it was rumoured that City were going to cash in by selling him

After the draw with Hull at the start of March, news broke that Scott-Walford had reached the end of his tether. On 27 February he informed the board of his intention to resign, writing as follows: "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.

“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 31<sup>st</sup>, 1912.

“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 31<sup>st</sup> next.”

The last sentence hinted that the letter might have been a ploy to persuade the board to repay him, but if that was the case it backfired. None of the directors deigned to discuss the matter with Scott-Walford and the next he knew was that the club had advertised in the Athletic News for someone to replace him as team manager.

At a board meeting at the end of January, Scott-Walford had been instructed to prepare the details of a financial reconstruction scheme. Following his resignation, he became persona non grata at the club and was never asked to submit his scheme.

At the beginning of April Scott-Walford was reported to have been appointed as secretary of Nottingham Forest, but the deal fell through and he eventually re-emerged as manager at Southern League Coventry City a year later.

By the end of March it was clear that Leeds City had reached crisis point, with the bank’s decision to call in the club’s £8,000 overdraft the catalyst. Chairman Norris Hepworth appointed a Receiver to handle the club’s affairs. Solicitor R Agar Chadwick issued a letter on the 27<sup>th</sup> saying that the accountant Tom Coombs, of King Street, Leeds, would henceforth manage the club’s financial affairs.

The Yorkshire Post reported as follows: “At the commencement of the present football season it was stated that the indebtedness of the club to Mr Norris Hepworth, the chairman, was £10,733, and that the club’s total indebtedness to all sources at that date was £13,297. At a special general meeting of the shareholders, held just after the season commenced, the directors submitted a scheme which aimed at the liquidation of the whole of the club’s indebtedness by an appeal for fresh capital. New proposals were advanced by the shareholders, however, and a small committee of shareholders was appointed to confer with the directors on the matter, but apparently no substantial result has been forthcoming from the movement. Mr Hepworth is still the principal creditor of the club, and holds the bulk of the debentures.”

Alf Masser, who had been installed by the shareholders as a director following the previous



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

discussions, called a public meeting on the evening of Thursday 11 April at the Grand Central Hotel in Leeds to consider the reconstruction scheme. Masser chaired the meeting, saying that the large number of attendees had confirmed “that there was a great and genuine demand for first class Association football in Leeds and that they were not going to allow themselves to go under without a very great effort. “(Hear, hear.) Masser revealed Norris Hepworth’s asking price for the transfer of his interest in the club.

The Leeds Mercury: “Mr Hepworth had sunk in the club from £14,000 to £15,000. That amount would include the sum of money which would be necessary to clear the club at the present moment from all debt. Mr Hepworth had offered to him to transfer his interest if he found a gentleman with £7,000. He had hoped to be able to tell them that night that he had found such a gentleman. He had been in touch with two or three gentlemen, and the most he could tell them was that they were all nibbling, but he had not yet had a genuine bite.

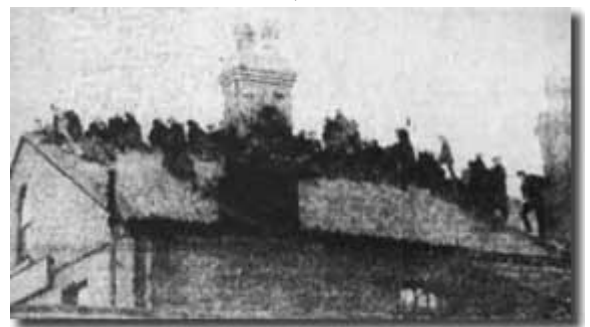
“He could offer to any such purchaser a team of players who had been valued at from £3,500 to £4,000. The stands and ground equipment had been valued at £4,000, so that he was able to offer in bona fide cash value £8,000 for the £7,000 he was asking. In addition, he wanted £3,000 from the old shareholders and the public, and with that sum of money he was certain the future welfare and success of the club was assured.”

The Elland Road ground was not actually owned by Hepworth, but he had an option to purchase it and was willing to transfer that right to the club. The purchase price had been set at £4,500 and it was proposed that if the deal proceeded £3,500 would be left on mortgage until the club’s financial position had started to improve. It was promised that if the £3,000 sought from shareholders was forthcoming, it would be made available for the purchase of new players.

It was proposed that the company would be refloated with a total capital of £10,000, the first £3,000 to be issued initially at a purchase price of 5s each with the rest to follow as circumstances required.

Receiver Tom Coombs was present and moved that, “This meeting heartily endorses the scheme of reconstruction put forward by Mr Masser, and pledges itself by all means in its power to assist in raising the necessary funds to place the club in a sound financial condition.” This motion was carried unanimously and a number of committees, divided across the wards of Leeds, were appointed to raise the required funds.

It was clear that the management of the club had improved little since Masser had criticised it so strongly in 1910/11. Nothing could have provided more tangible evidence than the appalling scenes witnessed at Elland Road when the ground was chosen to host the FA Cup replay between Bradford City and Barnsley on 18 March.



Spectators crowd onto the roof of the Peacock Hotel to watch the FA Cup replay between Barnsley and Bradford City in March 1912

In March 1910, the Football Association had agreed to stage the Barnsley-Everton Cup semi final at Elland Road and the event had been spoiled by inept administration. Chaotic scenes resulted from overcrowding and thousands more were locked outside.

City officials had claimed before that game that the stadium could comfortably house 50,000 spectators. The gates were closed an hour before kick off with less than 40,000 inside.

It was now accepted that the Elland Road enclosure could only accommodate a crowd of 40,000. It seemed foolhardy therefore for City directors to agree to the staging of a major derby which was bound to attract an enormous crowd. As Yorkist noted in the Leeds Mercury: “When the teams met at Barnsley there was a crowd of about 25,000, and when they were at Bradford close on 40,000 people saw the match. These figures were easily beaten yesterday, and had the ground been big enough there is not the least doubt that the attendance would have reached 70,000. Nobody could dream that the opening of the gates two hours before the start was not early enough, but within an hour the ground was packed and there were still thousands of people clamouring for admission.”

When it became clear that demand for admission far exceeded the capacity, ground officials again decided to lock the turnstiles, denying thousands the opportunity to witness what was expected to be a thrilling encounter. Frustrated by the move, a furious mob stormed the Elland Road end of the ground and forced their way in. Tragedy could have resulted as those already inside were forced forward by the rush, pouring over the rails and onto the pitch. They swarmed across the playing area and assumed possession of the main stand with its empty seats, awaiting the arrival of spectators with reservations. The police were helpless in the face of the mass hysteria and could not prevent the theft of a cash box containing more than £100. Three thieves were detained and were convicted at Leeds Town Hall later in the week.



Mounted police struggle to keep the crowd off the Elland Road pitch in the FA Cup replay between Barnsley and Bradford City in March 1912

Yorkist takes up the story: “Hundreds of venturesome enthusiasts crowded the housetops overlooking the ground, and others had the temerity to climb onto the roof of the Leeds City secretary’s office, and they refused to be moved. The scene inside the enclosure itself was one which will never be forgotten by all who witnessed it, and many will have wounds and bruises to remind them of it.

“It seemed impossible that the crowd could be kept off the field of play, though mounted officers were doing all in their power to press the people back over the touchlines ... Naturally there were numerous cases of fainting owing to the crush, and before the game started there was a pitiful procession of fainting and injured unfortunates carried across the ground to be treated by the ambulance men underneath the chief stand. This continued practically all through the game, but it is pleasing to record that there was no serious mishap to any of the spectators, all of them being afterwards able to proceed home.

“For a long time it looked impossible for the game to be started. The crowd had ruined the playing pitch, which had been on the soft side, and soon became like a ploughed field. The touchlines and goal lines were obliterated, and they had to be re-marked with whitewash before play could begin. Thanks to the heroic efforts of the mounted officers the crowd were pressed back, and the game was started a few minutes late. Time after time, however, the crowd encroached over the lines and play had to be stopped until they were forced back and the lines re-marked with whitewash again.

“At half time the pent up crowd again broke loose and crowded over the playing area, and it certainly now seemed hopeless to attempt any further play, but the crowd was not bad natured, and they were forced back again, and the game was restarted. The play had to be frequently stopped, however, and eventually, five or ten minutes before time, the referee found it was hopeless to proceed, and he sounded his whistle and motioned the players to leave the field. Neither side had scored, and in the ordinary way, an extra half hour should have been played, but no more play was

attempted.

“The official return of the attendance was that 37,000 paid for admission, the turnstile receipts being £1,800. This does not include the money from the sale of tickets. It is estimated that about 30,000 people saw the match, and that the receipts will eventually amount to over £2,000.”

The money was very useful, but Leeds City took little credit from the day. Their reputation was badly damaged, and nothing could have made it clearer that the directors cared less for the safety and comfort of spectators than they did for filthy lucre. It was evident that nothing had been learned from their previous debacle.

Away from the controversy, successive home draws against Birmingham (during which George Affleck and Birmingham outside-right Hastings were dismissed) and Stockport on Good Friday and Easter Saturday (5 and 6 April) kept City in the bottom two and their visit to Cup finalists Barnsley on 11 April assumed must win status.

Billy McLeod scored two goals, his first since 6 January and Fred Croot added two penalties to secure an exciting 4-3 victory, but the points were insufficient to take City out of the re-election positions. They were locked on 26 points with Glossop and when the Derbyshire team lost 2-1 at Clapton on 13 April to leave both clubs with 3 games to play, it seemed certain that one of them would face re-election alongside doomed Gainsborough.

City had a chance to steal a march on their rivals with a match at Stockport on Monday 15 April. County themselves were not quite mathematically safe, though it would have taken an extraordinary combination of results to drag them into the mire.

City took the lead after ten minutes when McLeod, under the shadow of the bar, headed home a centre from Fred Croot as the County backs appealed vainly for offside. Rodgers equalised for Stockport within two minutes, but City were ahead again on the half hour when Mulholland scored from close range. Stockport were level again by the break.



Joe Moran puts the ball through his own net to decide this Elland Road clash with Derby in March 1912

With ten minutes remaining, County keeper McIvor parried a Roberts shot and McLeod headed City into the lead. That should really have been enough to secure the points, but Stockport were in combative form. Five minutes later they drew level for a third time when Smith equalised from a corner and the match ended 3-3.

The draw took Leeds a point clear of Glossop, but when City dropped a home point to Wolves on 20 April as Glossop hammered Bristol City 3-0, the teams were tied again on 28 points. City's inferior goal average and Glossop's game in hand gave the Derbyshire team a clear advantage.

It was no real comfort, but City had been unlucky to draw against Wolves. The Midlanders had equalised from a rare attack and Mulholland was denied by the bar three minutes from time.

Leeds now faced a crucial final game at Leicester with their very survival as a League club resting on the outcome of the match.

City set their stall out from the start and they should have scored twice within the first five minutes.

But Fosse custodian Mearns was in splendid form and proved equal to everything the Peacocks could throw at him. The Leicester eleven had no sympathy for their opponents' plight and took the lead midway through the first half.

City got a second wind after the break and were on continual attack. However, Leicester broke away to grab a second goal. Enright managed to pull one back with a fine drive and City poured forward in search of an equaliser. It was all in vain as Leicester held out to secure a 2-1 victory.

Though Glossop lost 2-0 at Birmingham that same afternoon, their goal average kept them clear of City. They had a game still to come, at Barnsley two days later, but would have had to lose by ten goals for City to avoid the re-election vote. They lost, but only by a single goal, and the 78 that City had conceded ensured it was they who had to rely on the votes of their fellow clubs to preserve their Second Division status.

Alf Masser had indicated that "he had received assurances from responsible members of the Football League that wherever Leeds City were at the end of the season, they would be re-elected," but nothing was certain.

Indeed, before the end of April, City were forced to issue hasty and strenuous denials of a number of recent announcements. There had been claims that George Morrell of Woolwich Arsenal had been appointed to replace Frank Scott-Walford as secretary and two local worthies, Ed Wood and Samuel Samuel, had agreed to invest the £7,000 required to put the club on its feet again. Further, according to the Yorkshire Evening Post, "most of the players of the club were up in arms because of an announcement which appeared in the morning papers that only eight of their number were to be signed on for another season."



Woolwich Arsenal's Scottish manager George Morrell was strongly rumoured to be the new man at Elland Road

There had been "intelligent anticipation" about the appointment of Morrell. Hepworth confirmed that he had held discussions with him in London and that "It is a thousand to one that Mr Morrell will get the appointment. But I have practically only settled with him this morning, so that no one in Leeds had any authority for stating last night that Mr Morrell had been appointed."

It was also reported that the Receiver, Tom Coombs, had only just asked the City directors to meet him to discuss players. He wrote to them as follows, "As you are aware it is imperative and necessary that the list of players to be retained and those who are to be put on the transfer list should be made up and completed this week. I shall therefore esteem it a favour if you will be good enough to meet me at Elland Road on Friday, the 26<sup>th</sup> inst, at two o'clock, for the purpose of giving me your advice and counsel as to the players who ought to be signed on and those who ought to be placed on the transfer list. This invitation has been sent to the directors, Messrs Henry, Masser, Whiteman and Bromley and to Mr Clifford Hepworth, as Mr N R Hepworth's representative."

Coombs was angry about the release of misleading statements and claimed that they did nothing but harm at a difficult time for the club. He told the Evening Post, "Association football in Leeds ought to be successful, can be successful and will be successful. If only the public of Leeds will stand by the club and have a little patience and confidence we shall yet have a club at Elland Road capable of taking its place in the front rank of Association football."

It was confirmed that the required £7,000 had not yet been raised and that while Alf Masser had

held positive discussions with Wood and Samuel, nothing had been agreed. Speculation could only lead to delays and should be avoided at all costs.

The Evening Post profiled the supposed new City manager. “Morrell has been looked upon as almost a fixture at Woolwich, and during the four and a half years in which he has been associated with the club he has seen many exciting periods ... He had to take charge of the club when it was in a bad financial position ... Messrs Norris and Hall of Fulham came along with money and assistance, and once this was done the way was paved for Mr Morrell to build up a team. He went in mainly for young players, and was never keen on paying large transfer fees. A native of Glasgow, he was, prior to taking up the reins at Woolwich, manager for Greenock Morton, a famous Scottish club, for three and a half years. His first experience in football management, however, was as assistant to William Wilton, secretary of the Glasgow Rangers.”

Within the week, it was announced that Morrell had turned down the City post after originally indicating that he would accept. A number of friends and acquaintances had persuaded him to remain at Arsenal.

It was a sad disappointment for City, but there was soon better news. On Monday, 6 May, the Leeds Mercury reported that an appointment had finally been made. “The Leeds City club appear to have made a distinct capture in their new football manager, Mr Herbert Chapman.

“It was about a decade ago he first made the acquaintance of the Cobblers. He left there to play for the Spurs in 1904, but came back as player manager in 1907. The Cobblers were at the time in terrible straits. They were the wooden spoonists of the Southern League, and only Mr A J Darnell’s persistent pleading saved them from relegation.

“Mr Chapman was the physician called in, and he succeeded in healing their wounds. In his first year the Cobblers climbed into sixth position in the Southern League ladder. The next year they actually won championship honours. The balance sheet showed splendid gate receipts and members’ subscriptions totalled £1,855 in April 1907; in the return published for 1910/11 they aggregated £5,309, and when the complete return is issued for the past season further progress will be seen. Both the ground and the stand accommodation have been materially improved.

“Northampton folk will be sorry indeed to lose Mr Chapman, but there is not one of them who will not wish him the best of luck.”

Chapman would certainly need “the best of luck” at Leeds. He had but a couple of weeks to ensure that the City club would be able to garner sufficient votes to ensure that they remained members of the Football League. On the evidence of the disastrous season they had just experienced, retention of their status might only lead to further humiliation and Chapman had much work to do.



Northampton Town’s Herbert Chapman was finally revealed as the new City manager at the beginning of May