

TEACHER INFORMATION

Rotherham United Football Stadium

Millmoor Ground (Old Site - Capacity 8,300, built in 1907)

Ken Booth took ownership of Millmoor in return for clearing £3m of debt. The pitch is one of the smallest pitches in the country at only 115 x 75 yards (even smaller than the famous Highbury pitch).



For the 2008-09 season Rotherham are playing at the Don Valley Stadium (capacity 25,000) in nearby Sheffield following a breakdown in talks with the landlords of Millmoor, who have threatened court action in order to retain certain privileges should the club be sold to new owners. This has led to the club deciding that they can no longer play at their historic home ground. The club aim to be playing at a new community stadium in the near future.

History

Rotherham Town struggled to find a ground in the late 1880s. Originally starting life at Clifton Lane in 1882,¹ the club moved to Cocker's Field then to the West End Ground in Wellgate. Town eventually made it back to Clifton Lane where in 1887 a 500 capacity stand was erected. Difficulties with the tenancy agreement from the Cricket Club meant that Town again had to move in 1891 to Clifton Grove. An open stand was erected at the Middle Road End. The club became a limited company and Rotherham Town Football and Athletic Club Limited financed the move and cleared the debt of £247.² In 1891-92, gate receipts totalled £270, leading to an overall profit of £158.³ However, four years later the company was dissolved, in part due to the ground expenses totalling £173 9s 3d.⁴ By 1895-96 the landlord at Clifton Grove was owed rent and at the end of the season *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* reported that the club's finances were 'on the wrong side by £400-£500'.⁵ Professional football had returned to the town by the turn of the century through both Rotherham Club and Thornhill United. In 1903 Rotherham Athletic Club Limited was formed through the sale of £3,200 shares at £1 each to buy the Clifton Lane ground. The ground was leased to Rotherham Club for £80 per year and to the cricket club for £50 per year for twenty-one years.⁶

In 1907 Rotherham County were forced to move from their Red House ground, home of the club since Thornhill United began playing there in 1882,⁷ as it did not meet the requirements for cup-ties, and according to *The Rotherham Advertiser*, had one touchline ten yards longer than the other.⁸ A lease of seven years at £40 per annum was obtained for Millmoor from the Midland Railway Company. The club had to ask for voluntary help to turn the site into a football ground. One benefactor was the Midland Iron Company, which gave the club bricks and mortar to build the stands in return for tipping rights at 3d per load. The President of the club, John J Roper allowed a tradesman free advertising on the hoardings provided he found the timber to build the ground.⁹ *The Rotherham Advertiser* reported that over the next few years the ground 'assumed a more acceptable appearance' and by 1913 was 'a paragon of what a football enclosure should be'.¹⁰ With a balance sheet showing only £8811, the club had relied on voluntary workers building the stands in the evenings after finishing their jobs for the day. The donations made to the club by local entrepreneurs indicate that the

¹ Inglis, *Football Grounds of Britain*, 315.

² G. Somerton, *Now We Are United: The Official History of Rotherham United*, Middlesex, 1995, 7.

³ Tinkler, *Football in Rotherham*, 5-7.

⁴ Gummer, *Reminiscences of Rotherham*, 137-8.

⁵ 'The Football and Cricket World' in *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 11th May 1896, p3.

⁶ Tinkler, *Football in Rotherham*, 13.

⁷ Inglis, *Football Grounds of Britain*, 315.

⁸ 'A Local Football Retrospect' in *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 23rd February 1935.

⁹ *The Athletics News* 3rd February 1919 in Somerton & Robinson, *Images of Sport*, 40.

¹⁰ *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 12th July 1913, p15.

¹¹ *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 12th July 1913, p15.

football club was a source of civic pride in Rotherham. WH Baker donated a flagstaff, GA Price donated the club flag, WE Nellar donated paint and the company John Baker and Sons gave the club dressing room doors and window frames from old cottages that had been demolished in the New York area of Rotherham.¹² The refreshment room was managed voluntarily and made a yearly profit of £60.¹³ The Rotherham Advertiser estimated that the value of the voluntary work that accounted for the building of Millmoor would have been worth around £1000,¹⁴ although there is no evidence given to support this figure. Similarly, the costs of maintaining the Clifton Lane ground proved too high for Rotherham Town and a Voluntary Committee was set up to provide help.¹⁵

Research and information by Garry Newton, sports historian and Rotherham United fan

¹² 'A Local Football Retrospect' in *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 23rd February 1935.

¹³ *The Athletics News* 3rd February 1919 in Somerton & Robinson, *Images of Sport*, 40.

¹⁴ *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 12th July 1913, p15.

¹⁵ *The Rotherham Advertiser*, 20th July 1912, p15.