

Sunderland A.F.C. Formation – Contemporary Reports up to 1884

The following is a timeline of the existing factual information relating to the people and other entities that are relevant to the formation of Sunderland A.F.C. Unlike the anecdotal evidence referring to the 1879 formation date, this information can reasonably be taken as a matter of fact. These facts have been considered in their contemporary context and in the context of the anecdotal evidence and commented where appropriate.

The Sunderland Echo, Newcastle Journal and Athletic News newsprint excerpts are courtesy of <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>, other newspaper items have been collected from the Central Libraries at Sunderland and Newcastle.

Pre-1879: James Allan

James Allan was born on 9th October 1857 in Green Street, Ayr, Scotland, to father William (a shoemaker) and mother Hellen. These details are available from the 1911 Census return. It is universally stated that he arrived in Sunderland from Glasgow University, sometimes indicating that he was a graduate; however further investigation has unearthed a slightly different story.

There is a record of Allan enrolling for the summer term at Glasgow University in both 1877 (to study medicine) and 1878 (to study botany), but there is no indication that he was a permanent student, and no record of him graduating.

It would appear his association with Glasgow University was a temporary one only, a means of supplementing his studies whilst pursuing his chosen career, teaching. The University of Strathclyde Archives have provided a very detailed description of his successful completion of Teacher Training during the years 1876 and 1877:

“... a student called James Allan does appear in the ‘Register of Students’ Certificates’ for the Glasgow Church of Scotland Training College (archive reference: CSTC/2/3). He was born on 9th October 1857, and passed the College’s entrance examination for male candidates at Christmas 1875. The teacher training course took two years, and covered science subjects (magnetism and electricity, physiology and geology) as well as drawing. James Allan completed the course and left the College at Christmas 1877, having obtained final marks of VG [very good] for Arithmetic, G [good] for Geometry, and VF [very fair] for Algebra. Unfortunately, the Register does not indicate where he went on to teach after he finished the course.”

Without doubt, Allan had qualified as a teacher at the end of 1877, aged 20. There is no trace of him in 1878, but it is reasonable to assume that he was probably gaining experience as a teacher in a school in Scotland, probably in the Glasgow area; and topping up his knowledge with lectures in Botany given at Glasgow University during May, June and July of that year.

Pre-1879: John Grayston

John Grayston was born in Halifax on 21st March 1862. He asserts in his 1931 memoirs that he arrived in Sunderland in 1877 to be a Pupil Teacher¹ at Hendon Board School. There is no reason to doubt this, as he soon starts to appear in this role in the local press.

SALEM YOUNG MEN'S MUTUAL IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION.

Last night a public tea and entertainment was held under the auspices of the Salem Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, in Salem Chapel School Room, Pemberton-street. About 150 persons partook of tea, the following ladies presiding at the tables:—Miss Hodgson, Miss Kirton, Miss Whitehead, Miss Robinson, Miss Gibson, Miss Harvey, Miss E. Parker and Mrs Britton. After tea the Rev. S. S. Hodgson took the chair, and in opening the proceedings pointed out to the young men present the good to be derived from attending meetings such as were held by their association. A programme consisting of readings and music was then excellently rendered, the singing of Mr J. Taylor, the reading of Mr J. Parkin, flute solo by Mr J. Walker, and piano duett, Misses Kirton and Blanche Toft, being given with capital effect. The following ladies and gentlemen took part in the entertainment:—Miss Hodgson, Miss Kirton, Miss Blanche Toft, Mr J. Taylor, Mr W. H. Bedford, Mr J. Hall, Mr R. Hall, Mr J. Walker, Mr T. H. Holding, Mr J. Parkin, Mr H. Walker, Mr W. Kirton, Mr J. Grayston. During the evening addresses were delivered by Mr W. W. Hedley (the President of the Association) and Mr T. H. Holding. The proceedings terminated by the singing of the National Anthem.

On 17th December 1878, he receives a prize after completing his 3rd year as a Pupil Teacher.

Here he is “improving” himself - and probably also hoping to get to know the local single ladies – in the Sunderland Echo of 4th November 1878.

SUNDERLAND BOARD & WESLEYAN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

The annual meeting for the distribution of prizes to successful pupil-teachers in a series of six examinations was held last evening, in the James Williams-street Board School, under the presidency of Mr R. Cameron. There were also present—Mr Stokoe, chairman of the Educational Committee of the School Board; the president of the association, Mr Birch; the secretary, Mr Ramsay; the treasurer, Mr Carr; Messrs Thomas, Swallow, Fogg, Elliot, Wilkinson, and Misses Tripp, Hastie, Osborne, Tod, Mrs Purvis, Mrs Wilkinson, &c.—The Chairman in his opening address pointed out the vast power which the pupil teachers then present would wield over the next generation, and sought to impress all present with the nobility and dignity of their profession.—Mr Stokoe in a few able remarks showed how necessary perseverance was in every walk of life.—The Chairman then proceeded to distribute the prizes to the successful candidates as follows:—

Fifth year.—Kate Birch, James Williams-street, writing-desk and work-box combined, £1 1s, presented by Mr S. S. Robson (Mayor).

Fourth year.—Christopher Grant, writing-desk and 2 vols. Goldsmith and Mrs Hemans, and £2 2s 6d, presented by Ald. S. Storey (ex-Mayor). M. C. Brown, King-street, writing-case.

Third year.—James E. Elliot, James Williams-street, 1 vol. Shakspeare. John T. Grayston, Hendon, 2 vols. Burns and Mrs Hemans.

Second year.—Robert Lightfoot, King-street, 3 vols. Campbell, Scott, and Longfellow. Mary J. Burn, Garden-street, 2 vols. Half Hours with Best Authors.

First year.—E. J. Johnson, Garden-street, 1 vol. The Sea. Emma Rutter, Nicholson-street, 1 vol. The Bird. (Special prizes presented by Mr R. Cameron.)

James O. Johnson, James Williams-street, 1 vol. The Insect. Charles Tunnell, Hendon, 1 vol. Tennyson. Margaret Veitch, Nicholson-street, 1 vol. Scott (ivory). Ann E. Thurlow, Garden-street, 1 vol. Mrs Hemans (ivory).

This ties in nicely with the way the Pupil Teacher system worked, indicating that Grayston would have completed his two probationary years at Crossley School, Halifax, with his first calendar year at Hendon being his third as a Pupil Teacher. He would therefore go on to complete his Pupil Teacher training by the end of 1880. As it happened, he did not proceed to teacher training college for

¹ Pupil Teacher System: At age 13, pupils could stay on at school as probationers to help with the teaching of younger pupils. After two years, they would spend another three years learning the job, before taking a final exam. If they passed, they would be paid to go to training college in order to qualify as a teacher. Throughout they would still have to continue with their own education.

another year; either he had to retake the qualifying examination, or he decided to remain a year as an uncertified teacher to raise funds to supplement the bursary he would receive.

Pre-1879: Schooling and Teachers in Sunderland

Sunderland School Board

The development and management of schools in Sunderland, and the appointment of teachers and masters, was overseen by the Sunderland School Board during this period. The School Board met monthly and extensive minutes were published in the Sunderland Echo. Committees for Finance, Education and Works all reported via the Board; virtually all appointments and movements of teachers were also reported. Hendon Board School features quite prominently at this time, as it was being extended to accommodate more pupils, consolidating those from smaller schools into one site. Hence there are adverts posted for tenders for the construction of new school buildings at Hendon in August 1877; the new Hendon Board School for Girls opens on 28th April 1878; there are more building tenders issued in November 1878. The expanded "Hendon Board Schools" were officially opened on Monday 6th January 1879, with Walter Chappel – later to be a founder of Sunderland A.F.C. – the first assistant master of the Boys' Department:

OPENING OF HENDON BOARD SCHOOLS.
THIS DAY.

The new Board Schools at Hendon, being the sixth school built by the School Board for Sunderland, was opened this forenoon. The school is situate on the north edge of Hendon Valley, being at the east end of Robinson-street, and directly facing Hendon-road, and it will accommodate fully 1,300 children. It is built of red brick, and as the whole of the school faces into Cumberland-terrace, it presents an elegant appearance. The boys' school is at the west and the girls' school at the east end of the block, the infants' department being in the centre. The boys and girls' schools each comprise two flats, the senior scholars being placed in the upper stories; while the Infants' Department is wholly on the ground floor, being surmounted by a neat clock tower, which also acts as a ventilation shaft. The accommodation is divided as follows:—Boys' school, 452; girls' school, 452; and infants school, 400; and each department is structurally distinct. About half of the ground purchased by the Board from Mr Marshall Fowler, 7,995 square yards, has been left for playgrounds. The schools are well lighted, comfortably heated, and excellently ventilated, and being roomy, substantially furnished, and liberally provided with educational apparatus, Government Inspectors and chief teachers, alike with unpractical laymen, may justly describe them as splendid schools. The architect is Mr W. H. Blessby, of Middlesbrough, and the building has been erected within the year by Mr Jas. Lord, contractor, of the same place. The site cost £1,875, and the total cost of the schools is estimated at £9,500; which sum, of course, has been obtained on loan from the Public Works Loan Commissioners. Below is furnished the particulars as to each school:—

BOYS' DEPARTMENT:—Principal certificated master, Mr J. Ramsay; first certificated assistant master, Mr W. C. Chappel. Subjects taught—reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar and composition, geography, history, algebra, Euclid, vocal music, drawing, and drill.

GIRLS' DEPARTMENT:—Principal certificated mistress, Miss S. Campbell; first certificated assistant mistress, Miss M. Peel. Subject taught—as above; also, needlework and cutting-out.

INFANTS' DEPARTMENT:—Principal certificated mistress, Miss E. J. Todd; first certificated assistant mistress, Mrs M. Graham. Subject taught—reading, writing, arithmetic, object lessons, and singing. Female infants taught to use the needle. All departments have an efficient staff of pupil teachers. Fees—Boys' department, 4d per week; girls' department, 3d per week; infants' department, 2d per week. Four of a family attending this school, the eldest child will be educated free; and where three attend, the youngest is taught free. Hours of attendance—morning, 9 to 12; afternoon, 1.30 to 4.

In the Boys' School there are now 282 children on the roll, 70 having been placed on it this morning, in addition to those boys who attended the temporary school in Mainsforth-terrace; in the Girls' School, 300, 32 having entered this forenoon; and in the Infants' School, 313, 60 having been admitted to-day. The children assembled this morning were clean and neat in appearance and intelligent in demeanour, and possessing able and agreeable teachers like Mr Ramsay, Miss Campbell, and Miss Todd, they may fairly be expected to give a good account of themselves at the next examination. It was expected that there would have been a formal opening of the schools, but not a single member of the School Board put in an appearance. Of course a large proportion of the accommodation provided has yet to be filled, but as the schools are schools to which no parent in the town need be ashamed to send his children, and as each department is well officered, the zealous schools officers for the district, Messrs Low and Beaney, may soon hope to have little vacant space in the Hendon Board School.

Hendon Board School was therefore in the market for more teachers in 1879; James Allan would be one of the masters they subsequently recruited.

Sunderland & District Teachers Association

Starting life as the “Association of Teachers of the Wesleyan and Board Schools in Sunderland”, this was a forum where masters, teachers and pupil-teachers could meet and exchange ideas, grumble about conditions, etc. It was independent of the School Board, more like the local branch of a Trades Union. They met quarterly and some of these meetings were reported in the Sunderland Echo.

Pre-1879: Football in Sunderland

The only form of football being played in Sunderland at this time was rugby. There were two main clubs in the town at the time:

- Sunderland Football Club (later Sunderland R.F.C.) which had formed in 1873 and which still exists today, playing at a ground on Chester Road (they moved to their current ground at Ashbrooke in 1887);
- Sunderland Rovers, based at Hendon (at the Blue House Field in 1878), a club which was to fold by around 1886. This was the club that Grayston claimed in his memoirs to be a playing member of in 1879 (together with Allan who was a “spectator” member), though there is no sign of him appearing in 1st and 2nd team reports of the time. His young age probably meant he was playing in the junior / colts team, which rarely had its matches reported.

There are regular reports of matches played by these teams in the newspapers of the time, with full line-ups given.

Pre-1879: Blue House Field

The Blue House Field was a regular venue for many sporting and non-sporting events in the 1870s, and was well-known in the town. It wasn't actually a single field, there were separate cricket and athletics areas. There were also adjacent fields present at that time.

Hendon Church Institute Cricket Club was the tenant of the cricket ground in 1879 and 1880. Sunderland Rovers rugby team were using the athletics area in 1878, as this excerpt from the Sunderland Echo of 2nd November 1878 shows:



The Rovers continued to be based at Hendon throughout their short existence, but the Blue House Field is not mentioned specifically as their home in subsequent years, rather “Rovers’ Ground, Hendon”. John Grayston states that their ground was “where the oil tanks were”. They were playing at Hendon at the same time as Sunderland A.F.C. were at the Blue House Field in 1880-1882; on some occasions both had matches on the same afternoon. It is therefore doubtful that the two clubs ever shared the pitch known as Blue House Field.

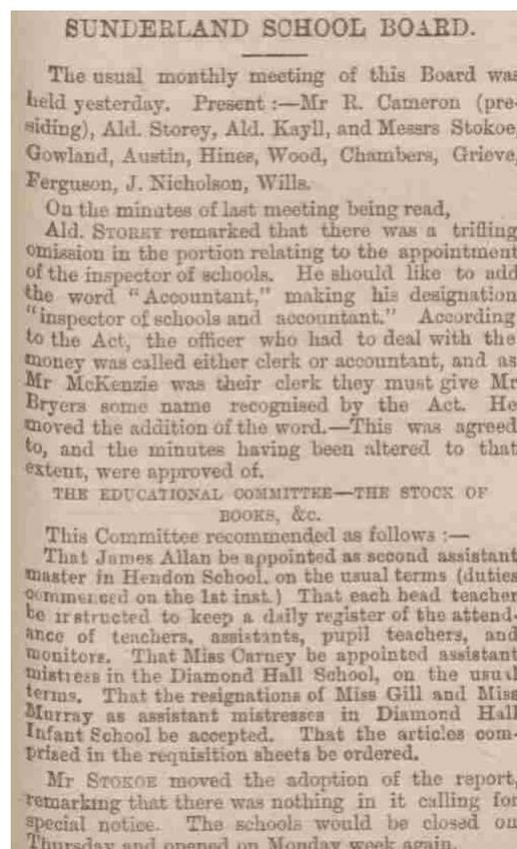
In the present day, the Raich Carter Sports Centre sits where the Blue House Field Cricket Ground would have been; the Blue House Field (athletics / football) is adjacent and to the south, still a football

field and marked with a blue plaque; the Rovers’ Ground, from Grayston’s statement, would have been adjacent and to the east of the cricket ground, i.e. on the opposite side of the road to the Raich Carter Sports Centre.

1st April 1879: James Allan arrives in Sunderland

James Allan took up his post as Second Assistant Master at Hendon Board School on 1st April 1879. This is reported in the Sunderland Echo’s coverage of the Board’s monthly meeting of 8th April 1879, published in the edition of 9th April 1879. It is also published in the Newcastle Courant of 11th April 1879.

There is no evidence that Allan was employed in Sunderland at any time before this, and Grayston’s memoirs align with this, stating Allan arrived to his post from Glasgow University. Allan’s obituary in 1911 also states that he arrived in Sunderland in 1879.



Notes:

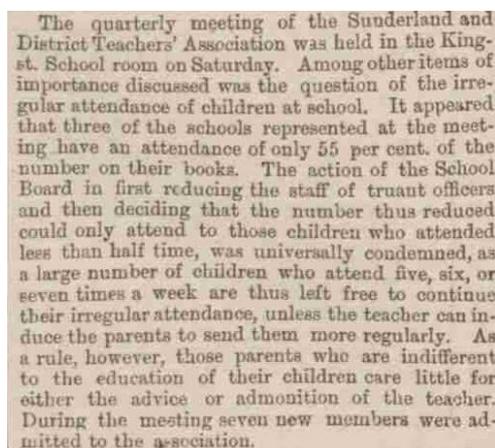
- *The 1878-79 rugby season had ended by the time Allan arrived; therefore Grayston's claim that Allan joined him as a (non-playing) member of the Rovers Rugby Club could only have applied from the 1879-80 season onwards.*
- *The first opportunity Allan would have had to meet the other teachers in the Sunderland and District Teachers' Association would have been the June 1879 quarterly meeting. It is not known if this meeting took place, as there is no report of such in the local newspapers.*
- *The first possible return of Allan to his native Scotland would have been the school summer holidays of 1879, which then, as now, were during July and August. The earliest he could have returned from his holidays with a round football, as per Grayston's claim, would therefore be September 1879.*

13th September 1879: Quarterly Meeting of the Sunderland and District Teachers' Association

This meeting is reported in the Sunderland Echo of 15th September 1879. During the meeting seven new members were admitted to the association.

Notes:

- *There is a strong possibility that James Allan was one of the seven new members admitted.*
- *This would have been Allan's first opportunity to introduce the idea of Association Football to his fellow teachers.*
- *At best this was probably only the second time he had met teachers from further afield of Hendon Board School.*



The quarterly meeting of the Sunderland and District Teachers' Association was held in the King-st. School room on Saturday. Among other items of importance discussed was the question of the irregular attendance of children at school. It appeared that three of the schools represented at the meeting have an attendance of only 55 per cent. of the number on their books. The action of the School Board in first reducing the staff of truant officers and then deciding that the number thus reduced could only attend to those children who attended less than half time, was universally condemned, as a large number of children who attend five, six, or seven times a week are thus left free to continue their irregular attendance, unless the teacher can induce the parents to send them more regularly. As a rule, however, those parents who are indifferent to the education of their children care little for either the advice or admonition of the teacher. During the meeting seven new members were admitted to the association.

23rd January 1880: The formation of Northumberland and Durham Football Association

A meeting was convened at the Turk's Head Hotel, Grey Street, Newcastle in order to form an association of the clubs playing soccer in the counties of Northumberland and Durham. Only six clubs were initially enrolled: Tyne, Newcastle Rangers, North-Eastern, Corbridge, Burnopfield and Darlington Grammar School. There is no sign of the meeting being reported in the Sunderland Echo; it was probably considered of no interest in a rugby-playing town. It was, however, extensively reported in the Newcastle Journal of Saturday 24th January 1880:

NORTHUMBERLAND AND DURHAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION.

Last night a meeting of those interested in the Association game was held at the Turk's Head Hotel, Grey Street, Newcastle, for the purpose of forming an association for Northumberland and Durham. Mr A. J. Harrison occupied the chair, and there was a representative gathering of players from the leading Association clubs in the district. An association for the two districts was formed, and rules and bye-laws were discussed. The executive, so far as it was possible to constitute it last night, was elected as follows:—Hon. secretary, Mr A. J. Harrison, 12, Westworth Place, Newcastle; hon. treasurer, Mr E. J. Shoppem; committee, Messrs J. E. Evans (Tyne), H. A. Bain (Hangers), F. Knott (Corbridge), J. Evans (Burnopfield), and A. Hurst (North Yaxley). Five vacancies on the committee were left over for election at another meeting. This makes the twelfth association formed in Great Britain and the Colonies. First, the Football Association, established in 1863; second, the Sheffield Association, in 1871; third, the Derbyshire Association, in 1871; fourth, the Scottish Association, in 1873; fifth, the Birmingham and District Association, in 1875; sixth, the Welsh Association, in 1876; seventh, the Edinburgh Association, in 1877; eighth, the Ayrshire Association, in 1877; ninth, the Canadian Association, in 1877; tenth, the Lancashire Association, in 1878; and eleventh, the Northumberland and Durham Football Association, formed last night. Six clubs were admitted last night, and when it is taken into consideration that in 1878 the Edinburgh Association had only nine clubs, and now has more than 20, the promoters of our local association may hope for success in the future. The object of the association is to further extend the "dribbling" game, by contending against the older associations, and by offering a challenge cup for competition amongst the clubs that join. All clubs in the counties of Northumberland and Durham playing the association rules are eligible for membership. As is pretty generally understood, the movement is not in the least directed against the Rugby Union Clubs, but as in other parts of the country clubs playing each code are able to prosper alongside each other, there seems to be no reason why the same state of affairs should not exist here. Take for instance Lancashire, a county which a few years ago was a hot bed of Rugby Union, whilst now room is found for a powerful association, and has this done the Rugby clubs any harm? If one is to take the team chosen to represent the north in the match to be played to-day against the south, as an example, we find that Lancashire was never more strongly represented, no less than eight of the team hailing from that county. Surely these facts prove that the games can live together. Such places as Sunderland, Shields, Durham, Darlington, Stockton, and Harrogate, ought to be able to support association clubs as well as those now playing. The association game if properly played is not a rough one, as the worst feature of the game (viz., charging) is not indulged in by good clubs, and it is to be hoped that young clubs about here will remember this, and try to play the game as it ought to be played, and make it a game of skill more than force.

Notes:

- If the teachers had formed a team by this point, why did they make no attempt to join the new Northumberland and Durham F.A., an action which would have established links to other clubs and the possibility of fixtures?
- Why would those forming the new association specifically include Sunderland in the list of "rugby" towns that should be able to support a team? Either there was no team in Sunderland at this point, or if the teachers had formed a team, they were keeping the fact very well hidden; they obviously had not even attempted to contact any of the existing clubs to try to arrange a fixture.

13th March 1880: Quarterly Meeting of Sunderland and District Teachers' Association

The teachers' quarterly meeting was reported in the Sunderland Echo of Monday 15th March 1880. They mainly discuss inspections and examinations, but find the time towards the end to chat about sport ... not football, but the forthcoming Oxford and Cambridge boat-race.

Notes:

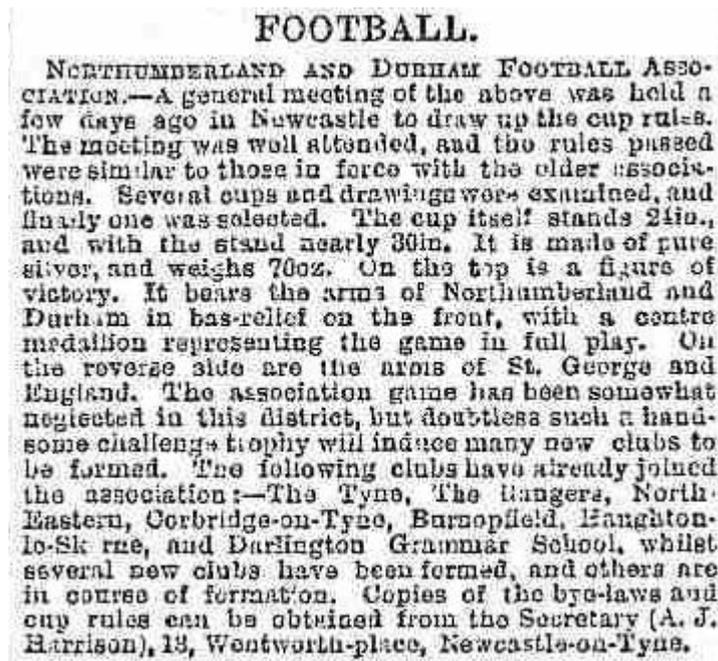
- *If the teachers had formed a "serious" football club six months earlier, and as Grayston states, were struggling for fixtures and funds, would they not mention it? Especially in any submission they made to the local newspaper, it would have been free-advertising of their existence. Rather than offer their opinion on the Boat Race?*

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.—The usual quarterly meeting of this association was held on Saturday in the King-street School. There was a fair attendance of teachers from Sunderland and the neighbourhood. After the minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed, Mr Carter informed the meeting that the managers of the above schools had kindly granted the association permission to erect in one of their class-rooms a book-case for the reception of specimen books, &c. For this and their past kindness in allowing the teachers to conduct their meetings there, the managers were accorded a hearty vote of thanks. A lively discussion took place on the method of school inspection in this district, and it was the unanimous opinion of those present that the children were hurried too much with their work on the examination day; also that the inspector acted unfairly towards teachers in requiring higher attainments than those printed in the Education Code for their guidance. The habit which many teachers have lately adopted of detaining children beyond the usual school hours for the purpose of cramming them for examination day was much commented upon, and universally condemned as injurious to the health of both teachers and children, and detrimental to the cause of education.

This being the last week of the practice of the University crews, some opinion may now be accurately formed of their respective chances of success. The Oxford men display those characteristics which have so often proved victorious in similar matches, while the Cambridge men have improved considerably during the fortnight they have been on the Thames.

Late May 1880: Northumberland and Durham Football Association introduce a Challenge Cup

A general meeting is held to draw up the rules for the Challenge Cup, and is reported widely (Northern Echo report of 30th May 1880 is shown here). The cup is described in great detail and there is a specific hope that its introduction will encourage the formation of new teams in the counties to compete for it. The association at this point still only has seven clubs, only one more than registered at the initial meeting in January 1880. There is a recognition that several other clubs have formed, and others are in the course of formation.



Notes:

- *Sunderland District Teachers' Association Football Club remains outside the Northumberland and Durham F.A. The club may still be unknown to the F.A., or they may be one of the new clubs formed or in the course of formation; or they may simply not yet exist.*

Mid-September 1880: Northumberland and Durham Challenge Cup Closure for Entries

Athletic News reports on 22nd September 1880 that the last date to enter a team for the Northumberland and Durham Challenge Cup is 25th October 1880. It also indicates there are now a dozen clubs in the region, and that the cup itself is on display in Newcastle.

Wanderer.
The Association game may be said to be firmly established in Northumberland and Durham. Eighteen months ago there was but one club; now there are a dozen or more, with every chance of this number being considerably increased. In January last the clubs then formed took a bold step in organising the Northumberland and Durham Football Association, and now a challenge cup, which has cost £50, has been obtained, and is on view at George Brown's, hosier, Newcastle. The entries for this do not close until October 25, so new clubs will have plenty of time to get into working order before taking part in the competition. A meeting of the Tyne Football Club (the senior club of the district) was held on Friday, at the Turk's Head, Newcastle. The club is every way in a satisfactory condition.

Notes:

- *Allan was familiar enough with Newcastle to marry there in the fourth quarter of 1880, so there's a fair chance he had a good look at the new cup in the shop window there, and was aware of the imminent closing date for entries. If his band of teachers were to enter, they needed to officially form a team as soon as possible.*

25th September 1880: The teachers' club makes itself known to the world

On the afternoon of Saturday 25th September 1880, Sunderland and District Teachers' Association have a special meeting at Rectory Park Schools. The meeting is reported in the Sunderland Echo of 27th September 1880. The primary reason for the meeting is to listen to the representative of the forerunner of the N.U.T., probably with the intention of having their association affiliate to the Union (unless it had already done so).

It is almost certainly the case that following (or prior to) the union meeting, the teachers held a sub-meeting at which they formally established Sunderland and District Teachers' Association Football Club, appointing the necessary officers required for entry to the Northumberland and Durham F.A.; they let the Echo reporter know what they had done, and an entry about it is tucked away in the "Local and General News" section (rather than sports) of the same edition of Sunderland Echo.

MR. HELLEB IN SUNDERLAND.

On Saturday afternoon the Sunderland and District Teachers' Association held a special meeting in the Rectory Park Schools, for the purpose of hearing Mr T. E. Heller, secretary to the National Union of Elementary teachers, and a member of the London School Board, on Union and Educational matters. Mr Taylor, of Durham, in a short speech introduced Mr Heller, who was warmly received. Mr Heller then briefly enumerated the objects of the Union, which are :—

1. To unite together, by means of local associations, the public elementary teachers throughout the kingdom, in order to provide a machinery by which teachers may give expression to their opinions when occasion requires, and may take united action in any matter affecting their interests.
2. To afford to the Education Department, to School Boards, and to other educational bodies the benefit of the collective experience and advice of teachers on practical educational questions.
3. To improve the general education of the country by seeking to raise the qualifications and status of public elementary teachers, and by opening out a career to the best qualified members of the profession.
4. To watch the working of the Education Act; to promote the insertion of such new articles in the code of regulations as may from time to time be found necessary in the interests of public education; and to secure the removal of such regulations as are detrimental to the cause of educational progress.
5. To establish a scheme, whereby retiring allowances may be secured to aged and incapacitated teachers, and to seek the removal of such restrictions from the existing Pension Minutes (1877) as were not contained in the minutes of 1846 and 1851-61.
6. To establish provident, benevolent, and annuity funds in connection with the union for the benefit of the scholastic profession.
7. To establish and support in connection with the union an orphanage and orphan fund for the children of teachers.
8. To raise teaching to the dignity of a profession, by means of a public register of duly qualified teachers for every class of schools; by the appointment of a representative educational council; and by the creation of a ministry of science and education.

He then, in an able manner, proceeded to show what the Union had done for education—how, before 1869, the year in which the National Union was established, teachers could not exercise any great influence on the Council of Education, because they had not an organisation which would bring before the council something like a representative voice of the whole of the teachers of the country. At the present time, if any legislation was to take place which would affect the internal arrangements of our schools, it could not take effect unless the matter had been pretty freely discussed by the teachers themselves, and due weight been brought to bear upon Government to prevent the introduction of any measures which in their operations would in the opinion of the Union, in any respect, act injuriously on the cause of education. By the united association the teachers were in a position to say to Government that such and such changes in the code were or were not acceptable to the great body of teachers. No fewer than thirty-six suggestions sent by the executive of the Union had been accepted by the Government, and were now in the code. He then spoke about the science of education and how it was a teacher's duty to meet in fellowship with other teachers and discuss the best methods of improving the science and art of teaching. The material they had to work upon was mere plastic than that of any other class of workmen, and their aim being one of the highest, they should offer their hands in fellowship to all teachers, and by free interchange of ideas further the grand work in which they were engaged. After a few more general observations on educational matters, the speaker sat down amidst great applause. —Mr Bryers, Board Inspector, proposed a vote of thanks to his old college friend, Mr Heller, which was seconded by Mr Lauderdale, of Pallion, supported by Mr Watson, St. Paul's, Hendon, and carried by acclamation.

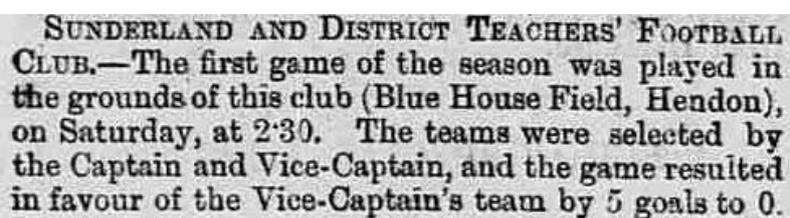
SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT TEACHERS' FOOTBALL CLUB.—The teachers of Sunderland and district have formed a football club, and the officebearers have been appointed as follows:—Captain and treasurer, Mr Singleton; vice-captain, Mr Allan; secretary, Mr Elliot, 4, Rudland-terrace; committee, Messrs Gibbons, Chappel, Coates, and Sewell.

Notes:

- *If the club had originally formed in 1879, why did it take until September 1880 to formally announce this?*
- *There is no sign of John Grayston as secretary, the honour going to William Elliott. If Grayston had been the "secretary" of the prototype club - as he claimed - he had either made a poor fist of it or was not considered experienced enough now that things had got serious.*
- *Note James Allan is only vice-captain, despite being the prime-mover in the enterprise. This is probably solely down to the fact that Robert Singleton was the most senior teacher (a headmaster) involved, and "pulled rank".*

9th October 1880: First reported practice match

A snippet in the Sunderland Echo of Monday 11th October 1880 places the club at the Blue House Field for the first time, where Allan's team beats Singleton's 5-0.



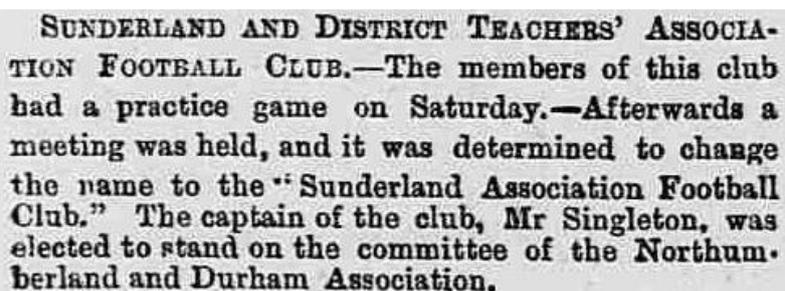
SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT TEACHERS' FOOTBALL CLUB.—The first game of the season was played in the grounds of this club (Blue House Field, Hendon), on Saturday, at 2:30. The teams were selected by the Captain and Vice-Captain, and the game resulted in favour of the Vice-Captain's team by 5 goals to 0.

Notes:

- *The term "first game of the season" is used. It could be inferred that they may have had similar practices (unreported) during the previous season, but equally it was the start of the season for all teams, new or old, and there could be no more to it than this.*

16th October 1880: Second practice match and change of name

The Sunderland Echo of Monday 18th October 1880 indicates that the teachers have had another practice and have now changed the club's name to Sunderland Association Football Club, and that Robert Singleton has been elected to serve on the committee of the Northumberland and Durham F.A.



SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL CLUB.—The members of this club had a practice game on Saturday.—Afterwards a meeting was held, and it was determined to change the name to the "Sunderland Association Football Club." The captain of the club, Mr Singleton, was elected to stand on the committee of the Northumberland and Durham Association.

There is also more extensive reporting in the Newcastle Journal. On Saturday 16th October 1880 the club is essentially announcing itself to the clubs and people in Newcastle:

NEW CLUB.—A club has been started at Sunderland, playing under the Association rules, the name being "The Sunderland and District Teachers' Association Football Club." The club, though got up by teachers, is not confined to that profession. A suitable ground, the Blue House Field, has been secured at Hendon. The colours chosen are navy blue, and it has been decided to join the Northumberland and Durham Football Association, and a team will probably take part in the challenge cup competition. Mr William Elliot, 4, Budland Terrace, Sunderland has been elected secretary.

Then, in the Newcastle Journal of Monday 18th October, similar information on the name change as is in the Sunderland Echo of the same day (see above) is announced:

SUNDERLAND AND DISTRICT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL CLUB.—The members of the above recently formed club had a practice game on Saturday. Afterwards a meeting was held, and it was determined to change the name to the "Sunderland Association Football Club." The captain of the club—Mr Singleton—was elected to stand on the committee of the Northumberland and Durham Association.

Notes:

- We now have the home ground and club colours formally announced.
- The name has been changed very quickly, and the club opened up to all professions; it is only 3 weeks after the club first made itself known to the world, and nowhere near the often quoted "2 years" of struggle as a teachers-only outfit.
- Note that the Newcastle Journal introduces the club as "new" on Saturday and states the club is "recently formed" in the Monday article. Clearly the sports journalists of Newcastle, where the association game had flourished for more than 3 years, regarded Sunderland as a brand new club.
- Perhaps poor numbers attending the first couple of practices have made the teachers quickly realise that if they are going to afford the rent at the Blue House Field, and have any chance of competing with the other clubs in the area, they have to open the club up to the wider population.

6th November 1880: Advertising for Players

The new club is a week away from their first match against another club, and the Northumberland and Durham Challenge Cup is looming. On Saturday 6th November 1880 they place an advert in the Sunderland Echo for the first time; it is run on 3 subsequent nights during the following week:

SUNDERLAND ASSOCIATION F. B. C.—WANTED, YOUNG GENTLEMEN to join the above. Grounds, Blue House Field, Hendon.—Address to honorary secretary, Mr Wm. Elliot, 4, Budland-terrace.

Notes:

- The club is obviously struggling for numbers and have now completely abandoned the idea of limiting membership to teachers.

10th November 1880: Athletic News report Sunderland club “recently formed”

The weekly “Athletic News” paper carried a regular column on “The Association Game in Northumberland and Durham”. Sunderland are first mentioned in this column on Wednesday 10th November 1880:

and the youngsters had the satisfaction of twice lowering their adversaries' goal. The cup competition has begun. The Darlington Grammar School has scratched to the Ferry Hill club, and Haughton-le-Skerne and Bishop Middleham tried to play off their tie on the ground of the latter. Most unfortunately, after forty minutes' play the game was stopped owing to the ball bursting, and another one not being forthcoming. The Haughton club, I understand, claims the match, and the matter is to be laid before the committee of the N. and D.F.A. in a few days. The tie between the Rangers and North-Eastern is to be played next Saturday, and that between the Tyne and Corbridge on the 20th. Good accounts reach me of the recently-formed Sunderland, Newcastle, and Ovingham clubs, and all three seem determined to learn the game thoroughly. The last club started its one at West Hartlepool, and it will, I hope, open out that district.

YOUNG IDEA.

Notes:

- *Athletic News*, the country's primary sporting publication of the time, regard Sunderland as “recently formed” and “learning the game”, which is an extremely unlikely description if the club had actually formed over a year earlier in October 1879.
- The formation of the Ovingham club is well documented in contemporary sources; 25th September 1880 after the local cricket team loaned their field for an exhibition game between Tyne and Corbridge, and were so impressed they decided to form their own association team immediately afterwards.
- The formation of the Newcastle FA club is also well-documented; 23rd October 1880 after a kick-about on the Town Moor, a meeting was held at the nearby North Terrace Hotel at which the club was formed and officers appointed.
- The fact that Sunderland are mentioned alongside Ovingham and Newcastle FA in terms of being recently formed strongly supports a Sunderland formation date of 25th September 1880.

13th November 1880: The first reported match against another club

The Sunderland Echo of Monday 15th November 1880 reports Sunderland A.F.C.'s first match, a 1-0 defeat to Ferryhill at the Blue House Field.

SUNDERLAND ASSOCIATION v. FERRYHILL.—The above match came off on Saturday on the Blue House Field, Sunderland, and after a good game resulted in favour of the strangers by one goal to nothing. The Sunderland Club, however, was poorly represented, no less than five of their best men being absent. The teams were as follows:—Ferryhill—W. J. Kitching, goal; E. Latheron, J. Hodgson (captain), backs; J. Soulsby, J. Barry, half-backs; T. Field, J. Mann, F. Devine, J. Oliver, J. M'Outcheon, M. Carney, forwards. Sunderland—R. Singleton (captain), goal; T. Taylor, Shirlaw, backs; J. Gibbons, W. Anderson, half-backs; E. Watson, J. Barron, P. Dove, F. Woodward, J. C. Chappell, J. Allen, forwards.

The Newcastle Journal of the same day offers a more detailed account and confirms it is the first “proper” match:

SUNDERLAND (ASSOCIATION) v. FERRYHILL.—This match, the first of the season for Sunderland, was played on the Blue House Field, Sunderland. The Sunderland club were unfortunately represented by a very poor team, no less than five of their best men being absent. The game was played in two forty's. Ferryhill won the toss, and elected to defend goal, a strong wind being in their favour. In the first few minutes Sunderland nearly got a goal, the ball being kicked between the posts, but a foul was claimed by Ferryhill and allowed. During the remainder of the first forty the play was confined to the Sunderland quarters, and a goal was cleverly kicked by Ferryhill. In the second forty Sunderland tried hard to retrieve the disaster, but the Ferryhill team worked hard, and the game ended in favour of Ferryhill by one goal to none. Teams:—Ferryhill: W. J. Kitching, goal; E. Latheron, J. Hodgson (captain), backs; J. Soulsby, J. Barry, half-backs; T. Field, J. Mann, F. Devine, J. Oliver, J. M'Outcheon, M. Carney, forwards. Sunderland: R. Singleton, goal; T. Taylor, and Shirlaw, backs; J. Gibbons, W. Anderson, half-backs; E. Watson, J. Barron, P. Dove, F. Woodward, J. C. Chappell, J. Allen, forwards.

Notes:

- There is evidently a struggle to get even the talented team members to turn up. John Grayston, for all his claims to have played in the first game, is one of the absent “better” players!
- In the early days, matches were usually more substantially reported in the Newcastle papers than the Sunderland Echo; more than likely because the Echo reporter was struggling with the rules of the new game, whilst his counterparts from Newcastle had had the experience of watching the likes of Tyne and Rangers for three years.

25th May 1883: Formation of the Durham Football Association

At the end of the 1882-3 season, football had grown so substantially in the North-East that it was felt the Northumberland and Durham F.A. should split into separate county associations. Sadly, the minutes of the Northumberland and Durham F.A. from 1880 to 1883 seem to have been lost forever; however, those of the Durham F.A. incredibly still exist, in their original hand-written form, in the Tyne and Wear Archives (part of the National Archives).

The first general meeting of the Durham F.A. took place at the Three Tuns Hotel, Durham on 25th May 1883. The original club members were Sunderland, Whitburn, Castle Eden, Birtley, Stanley Star, Burnopfield, Derwent Rovers, Hamsterley and Milkwell Burn. Significantly, Robert Singleton, one of Sunderland A.F.C.'s founders, was elected Treasurer, and regularly signed off the hand-written minutes. So as an aside, if you ever wish to handle a document that one of Sunderland's founding fathers handled, become a member of the Tyne and Wear Archives (it's free).

The significance of Robert Singleton being at the centre of the early Durham F.A. will become apparent later...

14th August 1883: Second General Meeting of the Durham Football Association

Several more clubs had joined the Durham F.A. by now and an inventory of them was listed in the minutes, with the name of the secretary and club colours where available. Sunderland's entry listed Macmillan (Jim) as secretary and the colours as Navy Blue. The Durham F.A. were obviously keen to promote the sport and make links with the local press, the following entry appearing in the minutes:

The editor of the Northern Athlete having written to the secretary to the effect that he was prepared to devote a certain amount of space to the proceedings of the D.F.A. it was proposed by Mr. Park (Castle Eden Colliery) "That the Northern Athlete be the official organ of the association." Seconded by Mr. Beattie (Hobson Wanderers) and carried unanimously.

This is confirmed by the Northern Athlete itself in the edition of 22 August 1883:

**DURHAM
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION.**

A COMMITTEE MEETING of the DURHAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION was held in the THREE TUNS HOTEL, DURHAM, on THURSDAY EVENING last, MR. SINGLETON presiding. Representatives attended from SUNDERLAND, DARLINGTON, CASTLE EDEN, STANLEY, TANTOBIE, BURNOPFIELD, HAMSTERLEY, and WHITBURN.

After concluding the purely formal business of the Meeting, which included a very satisfactory report of the formation of NEW ASSOCIATION CLUBS in the County, it was unanimously decided that the "NORTHERN ATHLETE" be the Organ of the DURHAM FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION. A very interesting business like meeting was brought to a close by a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and to Mrs Brown for her kindness in providing a room.

Notes:

- *The Northern Athlete was the prominent weekly sports publication for the North-East at this time.*
- *The Durham F.A. were clearly forming a very close relationship with the Northern Athlete in order to keep the wider public aware of their business.*

22nd August 1883 to 19th September 1883: Northern Athlete requests information from the secretaries of North-East Football Clubs:

Starting on 22nd August 1883, Northern Athlete requested details from all rugby and association football clubs currently operating in the North-East, in order that they may publish an inventory. The original request is shown below, it is repeated and updated on 5th September 1883, 12th September 1883 and 19th September 1883:

To Football Club Secretaries.

As the leaflet we intend issuing, must be got under way very shortly, the addresses and details not in our possession we should like to receive.

The information we require is as follows:—

1. Situation of ground.
2. Rugby or Association.
3. Name and address of secretary.
4. Description of club colours.
5. Date of formation.
6. Captain's name.

And when there are two or more teams of the same club, we want the extra details. Many of the addresses and particulars we have may be old, in some cases recent changes may have been made, and some of the clubs have not given all the information. We therefore request all secretaries to peruse the following lists, and to note—

1. Where numbers are appended to the name, we require answers to the queries thus indicated alone, and not the full particulars.
2. Where *no numbers* appear, we require *all* the information.

And then oblige us, and our readers, by promptly complying with our request, by post card or letter.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

Newcastle—1, 5.	Gosforth.
Belgrave Juniors.	Benwell.
Heaton.	Newcastle Juniors.
North Elswick.	Crescent Juniors.
Rangers.	Grove.
North Eastern.	West End.
Rosewood Juniors.	Percy Park
Tankerville.	Alnwick.
Hebburn Juniors.	Elswick Leather.
North Tyne Swifts.	Newton.
St. Cuthbert's.	Osborne.
Hawthorn.	Bellingham—1, 5.
Tyne.	Wallsend.
Wallsend Wanderers.	Rothbury.
Bedlington.	Jesmond—1, 5, 6.
Argyle—1, 4, 5.	

DURHAM.

St. Stephen's.	Ashbrooke.
Derwent Rovers.	Philadelphia.
Trinity Institute.	Leamside.
Ryton	South Shields Juniors
Tow Law.	South Shields Rovers.
Wardley.	Blaydon Poplar.
Humbledon.	Winlaton.
Westoe.	Gateshead Wanderers
Prudhoe Rovers.	Bishop Middleham.
B. C. E. M. T. A	Hurworth.
Ovingham.	Romandale
Jarrow Juniors.	Sunderland Rovers.
Houghton.	Castleside.
St. Thomas Y.M.T.	Sunderland.
Ovington.	Stanley Star.
Burnopfield.	Mickley.
Whitburn.	Consett—1, 4, 5.
Gateshead Inst.—1, 4, 5.	Seaham Harbour—1, 5
Hartlepool Rovers—1, 5.	

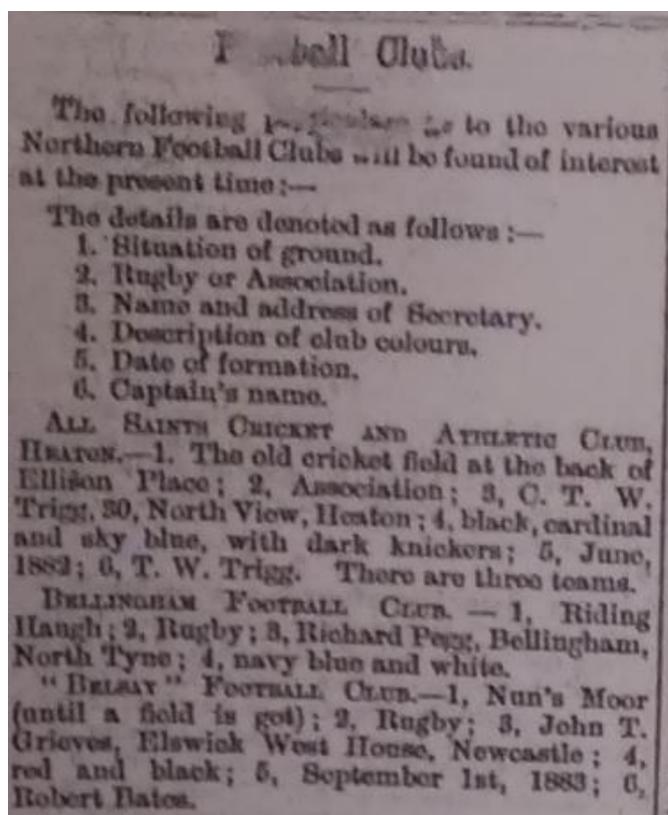
CLEVELAND.

Melbourne—1, 5.	Middlesbro'—1, 5.
Redcar and Coatham.	Saltburn.
Stockton.	Guisbro'.
Loftus.	Whitby.
South Bank.	Linthorpe.
Port Clarence.	Eston White Star.
Gainford.	Coatham.
All Saints.	Our Boys.
1st N.Y.A.V.	Ormesby.
John's	Cleveland House.
Wednesday.	Albion

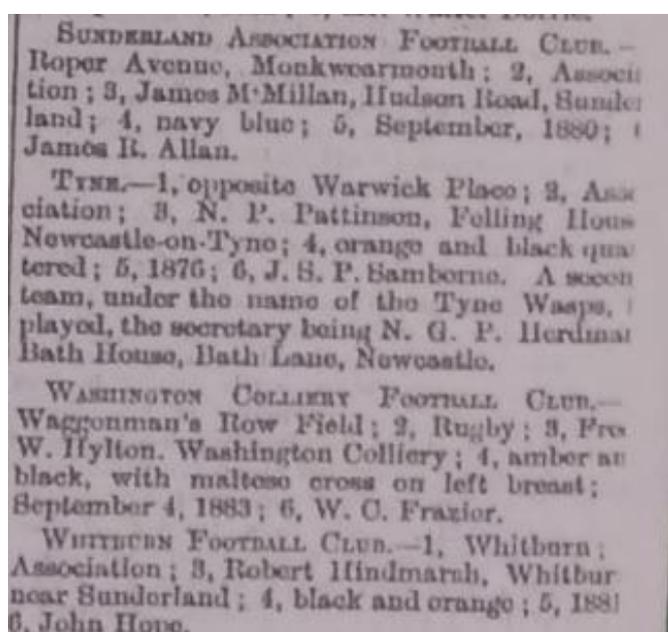
Any club not included in the above list will please also send the particulars, unless the secretary has already done so. But if there's any doubt on the question, send in again.

26th September 1883: Northern Athlete publishes inventory of North-East Football Clubs

Northern Athlete have now collected their information from club secretaries and publish details of all the association and rugby teams in the region at the start of the 1883-84 season, in the issue of Wednesday 26th September 1883. The key to the information given, and the first few teams, is below:



The Sunderland entry sits near the end, as follows:

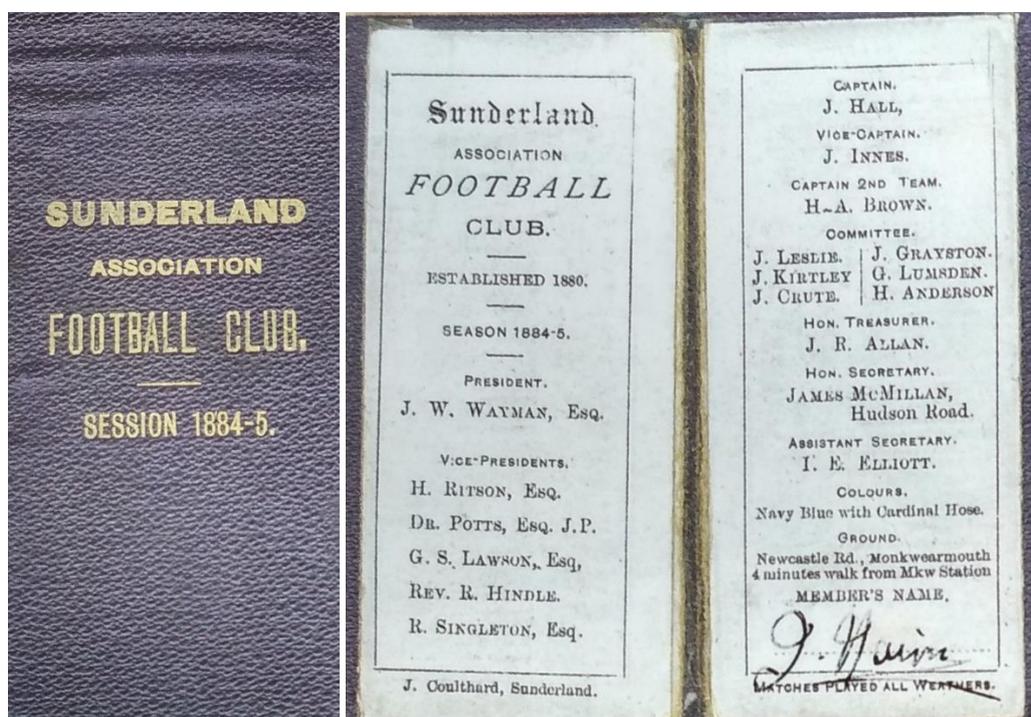


Notes:

- We can see that the Northern Athlete directly requested club details from club secretaries for several weeks before publishing. We can therefore be confident that the Sunderland A.F.C. details were provided directly from the club.
- As we have seen, the Durham F.A. had established a close connection with Northern Athlete at this time, so the Durham F.A. would also have an interest in ensuring that the details of its member clubs were accurately presented to the wider public.
- At the club's half-yearly general meeting on 14th September 1883, the following were elected officers for the coming season: Mr. Singleton (hon. Captain), J.R. Allan (captain), J. McDonald (vice-captain), J. McMillan (secretary), J. Kirtley (treasurer), with the committee completed by E. Watson, W. Allan, E. Woodward, F. Woodward, W. Scott and J. Johnston.
- Original founders Robert Singleton and James Allan were therefore still in key positions at the club as were Ted Watson and Frank Woodward, who had both played in the club's first ever game. Robert Singleton was also embedded in the Durham F.A. as treasurer and Sunderland representative.
- Effectively we have club founders Allan and Singleton confirming - only three years after the event - that Sunderland Association Football Club formed in September 1880; which corroborates the Sunderland Echo of 27th September 1880 which reported the formation and stated Singleton and Allan were present and had been elected Captain/Treasurer and vice-captain respectively.

September 1884: Sunderland AFC issue their Membership Cards for the new season

The club had won their first trophies the previous season (the Durham Challenge Cup and Newcastle Temperance Festival Cup), and had moved to a new home ground at Abbs Field, Fulwell. This was a significant move, as this ground was fully enclosed and they were therefore better placed to collect gate money. They were also now selling membership for the 1884-85 season, with a membership card provided:



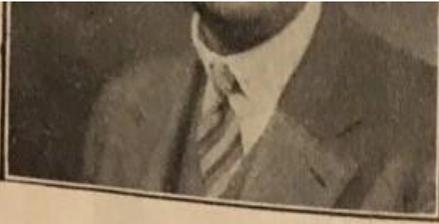
Notes:

- *The above artefact was included in the club's "The Official History" book published in 2000, at page 9, and clearly states that the club was established in 1880.*
- *This is a document published by the club itself, the ultimate primary source. The secretary is still James McMillan, who would have provided the same foundation information to Northern Athlete the previous year (see earlier). Once again, original founders James Allan and Robert Singleton still occupy prominent positions at the club. It is hard to believe that Allan and Singleton in particular would be party to continually presenting the club's formation year as 1880 if this were untrue.*
- *Interesting that the club stated their ground was Newcastle Road; this is where they had won the Durham Challenge Cup the previous season. They had spent the summer searching for a new ground and maybe thought they had secured Newcastle Road at the time the cards were printed. It was only a matter of days before the season started that they announced their new ground was to be Abbs Field. They obviously did not give up on Newcastle Road, and eventually secured its use in April 1886.*

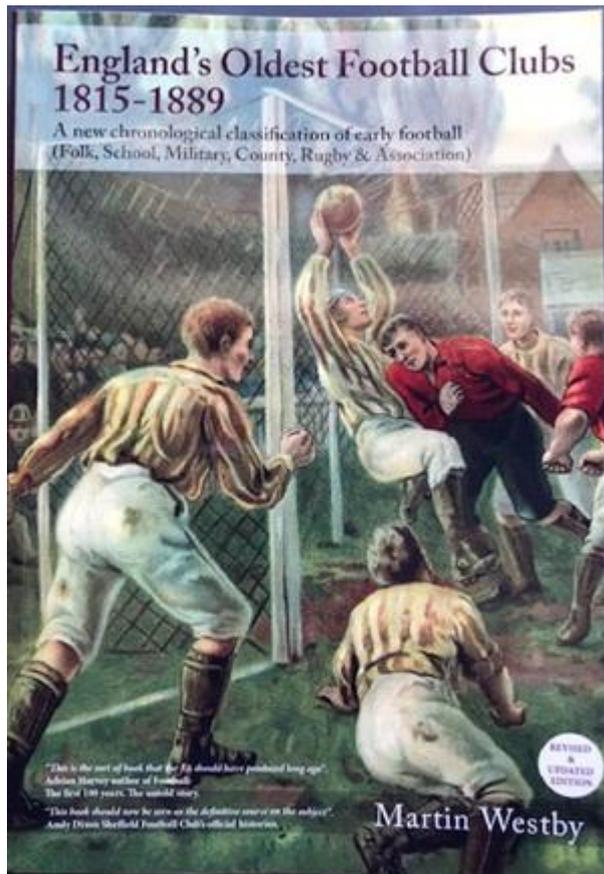
1880 In Secondary Sources

Though the myth of the 1879 formation seemed to originally arise in a Sunderland Echo article of 1887 (several years after the above primary sources were published), it did not prevent 1880 references from appearing in later publications.

The following is an excerpt from the 1937/38 FA Cup Semi-Final Programme (Sunderland v Huddersfield Town, played at Ewood Park, Blackburn):

 MR. A. BROOK HIRST Chairman, Huddersfield Town F.C.	 SIR WALTER RAINE Chairman, Sunderland F.C.
<p>Although by no means an "historic Club"—they are only 30 years old, and that is fairly young as far as League Clubs are concerned—Huddersfield Town have a greater reputation in the game than many organisations much older. Beginning in the North-Eastern League, then spending a season in the Midland League, they went into the Second Division in the third year of their existence, and had a more or less difficult time until the War.</p> <p>Afterwards debts accumulated and the financial position became so stringent that there was every prospect of Huddersfield Town ceasing to exist as a Soccer club, particularly as the district from which they drew their support had a deep-rooted affection for the Rugby code.</p>	<p>Sunderland are numbered among the oldest League clubs in the country, even though they have not the distinction of being foundation members. It was way back in 1880 that members of the scholastic profession keenly interested in the game brought the club into existence. In those early days the team included many men from over the Border, and Sunderland became recognised as one of the most powerful teams in football.</p> <p>There was a period in the '80's when a home defeat for Sunderland was almost unknown; in fact, over a period of five years they lost only three of their home matches. In 1892 they became Champions of the First Division, and the following year they again had that distinction. Although they could not complete the "hat</p>

A recently published book "England's Oldest Football Clubs 1815-1889" by Martin Westby is an extensive work of research:



The information in this publication has been derived from Football Annuals published by Charles W. Alcock from 1868 to 1908. Alcock was born in Sunderland (there is a blue plaque in Sunnyside), schooled at Harrow, and introduced the FA Cup in 1871; he later became Secretary of the FA. Alcock's Annuals are serious collector's items, selling for around £900 each and are considered the definitive source of information on the early days of Association Football. They also represent a completely different source of information to that compiled on this website. Westby's conclusion for Sunderland AFC? Formed in 1880 and played their first game the same year.