Manchester United FC

1878 – 1919.

**For Ben.**

Tutor: 1878.

*Student: Pardon?*

It all began in 1878.

*What did?*

The story of Man U.

*Oh. How was that?*

Well, a bunch of lads got together to play some football.

*As lads do, I suppose.*

These lads all worked on the railway.

*Right.*

In the railway yard at Newton Heath.

*Working on the railway was not all they did.*

No. It wasn’t.

*These guys were also mad about football.*

They were.

*So they formed a team, I suppose?*

Newton Heath LYR.

*Newton Heath LYR?*

Yes.

*What does that stand for?*

Newton Heath Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway.

*Not a very catchy name for a football club!*

No, but wait a bit.

*Why?*

These guys were pretty good at football.

*Played a lot of it, I suppose.*

Yes. They played in a local league.

*Just a local league?*

Yes. All amateur players.

*No money in it.*

None at all.

*They played other teams from the railway company.*

So they played as Newton Heath.

*But then I suppose they began to play teams from other railway companies.*

So then they played as Newton Heath LYR.

*That’s when it all began.*

At North Road.

*Their first ground.*

That was the beginning of one of the most famous football clubs in the world.

*Manchester United.*

Ten years later the football league was formed.

*In 1888.*

Yes.

*Over 120 years ago.*

Before there were motor cars!

*But Newton Heath LYR didn’t join the league.*

Not yet, anyway.

*They joined a league called the Combination.*

A bigger league than before.

*Right.*

But still just local clubs.

*Mmmm…*

In three years, though, this league joined the football league.

*The football league?*

The national football league.

*Right at the top of English football.*

Yes. And they dropped the LYR.

*So now it was just Newton Heath again.*

The club must have been pretty good.

*Yes, it must have been.*

Because they went straight in to the first division.

*Straight in to the first division in the national league.*

And moved to a new ground.

*Bank Street.*

It wasn’t the real big time yet.

*But it was bigger.*

First division football.

*Yes.*

They were relegated almost at once.

*Not a good start.*

No.

*Relegation within a couple of years.*

Second division football.

*Not a good start.*

No.

*And it got worse.*

Much worse.

Yes.

Money troubles.

*The club ran into debt.*

There was talk of winding it up.

*They almost closed the club down.*

Until a local businessman got chatting to Harry Stafford.

*Who?*

The captain.

*Oh yes.*

Harry Stafford told this bloke all about the club and its debts.

*Right.*

It was a very lucky thing for the club that they met.

*Well, yes. Otherwise there would be no Man U.*

It’s a famous old Man U story.

*Harry Stafford was looking for his dog.*

So they say, anyway.

*And the businessman found it.*

And he also found Harry Stafford looking for it.

*Yes.*

They got chatting about football.

*I guess they did.*

And Harry Stafford told him that Newton Heath FC was about to go under.

*Something like that, I suppose.*

So this bloke got some other businessmen to put up some money.

*Which they did.*

And Newton Heath FC was saved.

*But they all wanted the club to have a fresh start.*

A new name, for one thing.

*Yes.*

I suppose Newton Heath FC doesn’t set the pulses racing, does it?

*Not exactly, no.*

One of the names people suggested was Manchester Central

*But that sounds like a railway station.*

Another was Manchester Celtic.

*But in the end they settled on Manchester United.*

So there we are.

*Man U is born.*

This was in 1902.

*The year after Queen Victoria died.*

Yes.

*They soon began to win again.*

They must have been a good side.

*In 1906 they finished second.*

In the second division.

*Yes, but it means promotion!*

So up they went into the first division.

*And were runners up there in their first season.*

And they won the league title in 1908.

*The next season they won the club’s first FA cup.*

And the charity shield.

*The first ever charity shield, in fact.*

They beat Queen’s Park Rangers 4-0.

*Hammered them!*

And they moved again.

*To Old Trafford.*

Yes. Old Trafford.

*The ground they’re in today.*

In 1910, this was.

*Not long before the First World War.*

The crowds were much bigger than they had been for Newton Heath LYR.

*Of course they were.*

Players were bought and sold, just like today.

*Well, for less money.*

But still bought and sold.

*Man U bought a winger called Billy Meredith.*

From Man City in 1906.

*He was brilliant.*

Probably the best player of that time.

*He set up countless goals.*

For the star striker ‘Sandy’ Turnbull.

*In those days he was called a centre forward.*

We’d call him a striker, today.

*Yes.*

Billy Meredith and Sandy Turnbull were wonderful.

*Man U won the FA cup.*

The league.

*And the charity shield.*

But they lost the first game they played at Old Trafford.

*4-3 it was.*

To Liverpool.

*7 goals!*

Must have been exciting.

*And the crowd was about 80,000.*

Good job they had a new stadium.

*The first season at Old Trafford was good.*

They won the league title again.

*On the very last day of the season.*

5-1 against Sunderland.

*And they won the charity shield again.*

8-4 against Swindon Town.

*Swindon Town?*

But then Man U slipped a little.

*In the 1911 – 1912 season they won no silver at all.*

Finished in 13th place.

*Still in division one.*

But in 13th place.

*The gates dropped.*

People weren’t coming like they used to.

*The football must have been poor, I guess.*

It got worse and worse.

*At one match the gate was less than 15,000.*

Not enough for a big club.

*No.*

And the manager gets the blame.

*Yes.*

Just like today.

*He’d been with the club since it was Newton Heath.*

But he got the sack all the same.

*Yes.*

Man U players formed the first players’ union.

*The Players Union it was called, then.*

Now it’s called the Professional Footballers’ Association.

*To look after players’ interests.*

Well, players didn’t get paid very much in those days.

*Nothing like today.*

People like Billy Meredith probably earned £5 or £6 a week.

*Peanuts, really.*

Not like today!

*No!*

‘Sandy’ Turnbull was a brilliant centre forward.

*Striker!*

OK. Striker.

*It was a pity he came to a sticky end.*

He was involved in match fixing.

*He was.*

Not just him, either.

*Several players were.*

It was a very big scandal.

*Some players fixed a match.*

Between Man U & Liverpool.

*Some were from Man U.*

And some were from Liverpool.

*They fixed the match so Man U would win.*

They bet a lot of money that Man U would beat Liverpool 2-0.

*And if that was the result they would make a lot of money.*

So they had to make that happen.

*Which they did.*

Man U 2, Liverpool 0.

*Liverpool players threw the match away.*

One even missed a penalty.

*Probably on purpose.*

Billy Meredith was not involved.

*No.*

But Sandy Turnbull was.

*They got caught in the end.*

Seven players were banned from professional football.

*Including Sandy Turnbull.*

Including Sandy Turnbull.

*Then the first world war came along.*

Sandy Turnbull joined the army.

*He did.*

And was killed in France in 1917.

*They never found his body.*

Very sad.

*Yes.*

It was difficult for football during the war.

*Very difficult.*

League football stopped.

*So clubs like Man U had no money.*

But they still had to keep their grounds up.

*And Old Trafford cost plenty to keep up.*

Well, yes. It did.

*Loads of football fans were in France.*

Fighting the war.

*And people had other things on their mind.*

And no money to spend.

*There were local competitions.*

Local leagues.

*But they weren’t the same.*

No.

*The league didn’t start again until 1919.*

With Man U still in the first division.

*Of course!*

Well, you say “of course” but they were in for a bad time.

*Yes. They were.*

For ten years they didn’t win anything.

*No silverware at all.*

But maybe that’s another story.

*OK.*

Let’s leave it to another time.

*OK. Let’s do that!*