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FROM PITCH TO PLINTH

### Study Outline

- Documenting the statues, *interviewing sculptors and project organisers, and developing a typology*
- Developing theory
  - Why are football statues being erected?
  - Why has there been such a dramatic increase in numbers since the mid-1990s?
- *Testing theory and predicting the future*
  - What predicts *subject selection*?
  - Which clubs and players will be next?
  - Which players should be next?
- History or memory? History or sympathy?

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### The UK's football statues deconstructed

Currently 53 statues featuring 52 subjects...

- Players (72%)
  - Goalkeepers (5%)
  - Defenders (16%)
  - Midfielders (16%)
  - Forwards (35%)
- Managers (20%)
- Chairmen/Owners (4%)
- Founding fathers (4%)
- Not primary part of project: statues of anonymous players, fans, club emblems; statuettes; busts.

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### The UK's football statues deconstructed

- **Club statues** (N = 23, 44%) - statue sited at club ground, club has ownership through instigation and control of funding, sculptors rarely chosen by competitive process
- **Fan statues** (N = 18, 34%) - usually sited at club ground, fans instigate and/or organise fundraising process
- **Home town statues** (N = 11, 20%) - located in subject's home town, instigated and organised by local government, funded by public money, sculptor usually chosen by open or at least limited competition
- **National statues** (N = 1) - instigated and funded by football authorities, not at a club-specific location

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### The UK's football statues deconstructed

#### Design

**Triumph statues** (21%)      **Action statues** (46%)      **Posed statues** (33%)

- with ball (21%)
- without ball (12%)

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### The UK's football statues deconstructed

#### Design: Flashbulb memory... video memory

Where subject is dead, or statue is of action or triumph type, designs are taken from photos or even TV clips...

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## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Commemoration

*"Sad day of course, but let's not forget that Nat had a 'good innings'. The focus should be on celebrating his life, that should start with commissioning of a statue"*  
Bolton Wanderers fans' forum, January 2011

- Changing attitudes to mourning  
-> Mourning inflation?
- Culture established for mourning dead players; includes statue building (Russell, 2006)
- Over half those depicted died 5 years or more prior to, or were alive at unveiling



## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Club identity, branding and self-importance

- Proclaiming success (BIRGing; Heider, 1958)
  - Directly through triumph statues
  - 'Second-hand' glory through depicting great players or managers who have represented the club
  - Club statues more likely to be of this type



## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Club identity, branding and self-importance

- Branding through nostalgia and heritage
  - Fans demand authenticity in an era of 'non-authentic' global culture (Holt, 2006)
  - Nostalgia-related emotions evoked within sports facilities help current fans "relive experiences enjoyed and endured" and provide "inspiration to pilgrimage" (Holbrook and Schindler, 1996).
  - Heritage objects attract new fans by providing an "idealized environment" (Ramshaw and Gammon, 2005); statues become an integral part of around tours for 'sports tourists'

## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Club identity, branding and self-importance

- Statement of cultural (re)placement
  - Football been "repositioned as a product for middle class and family consumption" (King, 1998; Williams, 2006)
  - Clubs 'gentrify' the match-day environment: statues "humanise and improve areas and encourage greater care" (PAC, 2001)
  - Environmental improvement = commercial gain "let's not forget amidst all this that this doubles the real estate value of the land around it"

## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Club identity, branding and self-importance

- Visual branding
  - "every TV feature on Charlton starts with a shot of the statue... every TV interview takes place in front of it... club brochures feature an image of the statue" Steve Sutherland, Charlton Athletic FC
- Physical marketing tool and product in itself



## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### Club identity, branding and self-importance

- Club-specific PR

*"it's almost a bit of insurance, to make sure the cost-cutting and the team funding chopping wasn't criticised too much because the regime was funding these wonderful heritage tributes. So they were the good guys"*  
Anon. Supporters' Trust Chairman

- General PR
  - Deflects lack of morality within the game
  - Football is important enough to have statues

## Why are football statues built... by clubs?

### A wealthier game: conspicuous consumption?

- The biggest clubs have far greater incomes than ever before; exponential increase in turnover in 1990s, due to income from broadcasting rights
- Increase in statues coincides with dramatic increase in income. Luxury items are now affordable
- Desire to show off to rival clubs; the club equivalent of a player's supercar or diamond earring?

## Why are football statues built... by fans?

### Fan identity and sense of place

- New grounds, lost history? Ground was the history of club to fans (Bale, 1994)
- Supporters crave the identity, tradition and sense of place that a ground offers: they have a *"strong attachment to home"* (Dunning, 1999)
- New ground = Uniformity and loss of identity

*"Each away game was almost a trip to a different country... (now) the colour of the seats is the best guide to where you are"* (Titford, 2005)

## Why are football statues built... by fans?

### Fan identity and sense of place

*"...the road, forward, present, come, Ron I*



## Why are football statues built... by fans?

### Fan Nostalgia

- Positive memories of their team's successes
- Moments shared with friends
- More generally their younger selves
- Critique of a less favourable present, in terms of results or even the culture of the game:
 

*"Sproson's record is unlikely to be bettered during these days of the high paid football mercenary"*  
Roy Sproson Statue Fund website

## Why are football statues built... by fans?

### Organisational Capability and Spare Capacity

- Growth in organised fan bodies with campaigning focus e.g. the FSA, ISAs, Supporters' Trusts. First trust set up in 1992; by 2010, 65 of the 92 league clubs had one.
- Coalescing of like-minded supporters via the internet
 

*"an ideal forum for fan power, providing a cheap and effective means of mobilising support for campaigns"*  
(Auty, 2003)
- Spare campaigning capacity if club not in crisis

## Why are football statues built... by LAs?

### Rise of the heritage industry

- Growth in heritage sector (Howard, 2003)
- Dramatic increase in public art/statues from the mid-80s (Selwood, 1995; Usherwood et al, 2002)
- Availability of 'regeneration and renewal' funding (e.g. NWDA in Barrow-in-Furness)
- In the past, footballers would not have been considered worthy of statues by public bodies; now a populist vote winner?

## Why are football statues built... by LAs?

### Celebrity status of footballers

*"These are modern heroes, you had heroes of the past that might be more military heroes, but for people now, the public, they're heroes for people so it's logical really, it's a sign of our times, footballers are kind of worshipped, it's almost inevitable."*

Steve Field, Public Art Consultant,  
Dudley Council



## Why are football statues built?

### Contagion

- *"These are two legends of the club. Forest have their Brian Clough statue. We want one for Notts County."*  
Jimmy and Jack Statue Campaign
- New media enhances such contagion, making statues more visible to non-away travellers
- Evidence of local statue rivalry?  
Locality = even greater visibility of rival's statue, desire to outdo them



## Football statues: Engagement with history?

- Public display of club and football history, reaching out to groups who would not visit a museum
  - Facilitator of oral history
- "...the lad said, 'who's that grandad?' And then I'd listen to the grandfather go into some lovely description about how fantastic Ivor was, a great player for the Swans..."*
- Ron Knuzska, Ivor Allchurch Statue Campaign

## Football statues: Engagement with history?

But...

### Memory, not history?

- We found a strong 'era effect' in choice of subjects, favouring those who performed in the 1950's-1970's. Particularly true for 'club' statues; where subjects are from the pre-WWII, it is usually a 'fan' statue

### Sympathy, not history?

- Billy Bremner, but not Peter Lorimer?
- Davie Cooper, but not Ally McCoist nor Sandy Jardine?

## Football statues: Engagement with history?

### Celebrity, not history?

- Why footballers, but not other sportsmen?

### Nostalgia and heritage, not history?

- Heritage is a bogus history (Hewison, 1987)
- Statues depict the rare moments of triumph, not the more typical suffering!
- Statues depict players in their all-too-brief prime

## Football statues: Engagement with history?

- **Nostalgia and heritage, not history** – the “statue to the fans”?



VS



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