# Victorian football game recreated at oldest football ground in the world

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This is the first time the rules have been played out for some 150 years.

Uriah Rennie, former Premier League referee and current president of Hallam FC, will be refereeing in traditional Victorian attire according to the historic rules which are starkly different from those played today. This form of the sport was the forerunner to the modern game and led to the divergence of football and rugby. Players were allowed to catch the ball and could score what was known as a ‘rouge’, a secondary goal scored through posts outside the main goal. To meet modern health and safety standards the rules of ‘hacking’ or ‘charging’ will not be observed.

The football festival is the result of a year’s hard work by local schools in conjunction with Sheffield FC and Hallam FC to explore football archives under the guidance of football historians. The project’s findings will be on display alongside historic collections from local football clubs including the world’s oldest football trophy, the Youdan Cup, dating back to 1867 and the world’s oldest inter-school football trophy – the Clegg Shield (1889).

Michael Wood, BBC historian and HLF’s champion for community heritage, awarding the medals at the end of the competition, said: “Football is a major part of so many people’s lives in this country, and it’s a big part of identity too: everyone has stories to tell about their favourite team, whether amateur or professional. This event is a fantastic example of communities coming together to explore and celebrate their local heritage. Everyone involved has learnt so much about the evolution of the world’s most popular game which took place right here on their doorstep. And through this story they’ve learnt too about what went into the making of their own community. Heritage comes in all shapes and sizes and it’s great that HLF is giving people the chance to delve into such an integral and fascinating part of their local story. And it’s a tale that means so much to all of us.”

Uriah Rennie, former Premier League referee and President of Hallam FC, refereeing today’s tournament in his top hat, added: “I have refereed around the world but I have always been drawn back to Sheffield where I grew up. Football is loved right across the globe but not many people realise the game actually originates from Sheffield. The city has a genuinely unique football heritage, influencing the modern game that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. It’s been a real eye-opener learning the original rules to referee this competition. We have come a long way, and the children involved have found it immensely fun and rewarding to be involved in such an historical re-enactment of the original game. I am looking to have a great deal of fun trying to keep order - it should be a wonderful occasion.”

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) recently launched Sharing Heritage, a new funding programme to help people across the UK explore, conserve and share all aspects of the history and character of their local area. With a commitment from HLF of £3m each year, grants between £3,000 and £10,000 are available to groups who want to discover their local heritage, from sports and music to buildings and landscapes.

Follow the historic football tournament on Twitter on the day @heritagelottery, #SharingHeritage.

## Notes to editors

Sharing Heritage is for any not-for-profit group wanting to explore their community's heritage. An online application pack is available at Sharing Heritage page and for telephone enquiries please call 020 7591 6042.

The Home of Football project has involved school pupils (All Saints Catholic High School, Forge Valley Community School, Handsworth Grange School and Westfield Sports College) investigating a number of archives under the guidance of teachers and football historians. Their investigations have identified material to produce an historical record in the form of a football programme, brochure, a blog and the recreation of a traditional game of football using the Sheffield Rules which date from 1858. Two girls teams and two boys teams will wear old fashioned football kit and play with a vintage leather football. All the pupils will be awarded commemorative medals produced by All Saints School. Uriah Rennie, president of Hallam FC and former Premier League referee will referee the games, in top hat, together with two school pupil umpires from Forge Valley School.

The original 1858 rules are as follows:

- Kick off from middle must be a place kick
- Kick out must not be from more than 25 yards out of goal
- Fair Catch is a catch from any player, provided the ball has not touched the ground, or has not been thrown direct from touch, and entitles to a free kick
- Charging is fair in case of a place kick (with the exception of a kick off) as soon as the player offers to kick, but he may always draw back, unless he has actually touched the ball with his foot
- Pushing with the hands is allowed, but no hacking or tripping up is fair under any circumstances whatsoever
- No player may be held of pulled over
- It is not lawful to take the ball off the ground (except in touch) for any purpose whatever
- The ball may be pushed or hit with the hand, but holding the Ball (except in the case of a fair kick) is altogether disallowed
- A goal must be kicked, but not from touch, nor by a free kick from a catch
- A ball in touch is dead, consequently the side that touches it down must bring it to the edge of touch, and throw it straight out at least six yards from touch
- That each player must provide himself with a red and dark blue flannel cap. Once colour to be worn by each side during play

Sheffield boasts a huge range of footballing firsts, identified during the projects' research:

- Sheffield FC (1857) - the world's oldest club
- Hallam FC (1860) - the world's second oldest club and oldest football ground
- The Sheffield Rules (1858) had a major influence on the modern game of football, stating that the ball should not be carried by hand, leading to the divergence of football