Newton Heath, Manchester, became a hub for pedestrianism during the mid-nineteenth century, with two well-respected running enclosures and over forty establishments linked to sporting entertainments located along Oldham Road. As a community for sporting recreations, athletes occupied the buildings on the thoroughfare between Manchester and Oldham, combining business with their sporting endeavours.\(^1\) However, due to middle-class reform and control, the sport of pedestrianism fell into decline during the latter part of the nineteenth century and amateur athletics emerged as its respectable counterpart. Traditionally associated with the public schools and universities, athletics presented itself as an exclusive sport that favoured those of an educated class, governed by the Amateur Athletic Association from 1880 and established as a means of regulating working-class pastimes.\(^2\) Those who previously competed and trained in a professional capacity were now banned from amateur competition but a new wave of working-class amateurs emerged who gained access through ability and their association with amateur organisations. Professional pedestrian trainers were not welcome in the new athletic constitution so sought work in other sports, such as soccer, or moved abroad to countries where their expert assistance was required. Biographies have emerged which have detailed the migration of professionals but this is a relatively small area of exploration and there are still numerous individuals who have been erased from sporting history and require further consideration.\(^3\) This poster will present the biography of James Robinson (1847-1906) tracing his journey from working-class athlete to athletic director and

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uncovering his legacy as America’s ‘first college trainer’. Born in Manchester, England, to a family of butchers located off the Oldham Road, Robinson competed in amateur competitions for Manchester Athletic Club before migrating to America to pursue a career in athletics. Through employment at several New York amateur organisations Robinson gained sporting recognition and subsequently entered the college system as an athletic trainer and “professor” to numerous east coast Ivy League institutions, most notably Princeton University from 1883 to 1906. A range of sources have been accessed and utilised including newspapers, genealogical records, images and primary texts, to present an accurate interpretation of Robinson’s life course, with the twenty-first century digital age transforming the traditional archive and encouraging new perspectives on source material. Taking a constructionist approach, which looks to both theory and evidence to legitimise the narrative, empirical remnants of the past will be analysed and contextualised to develop a ‘narrative truth’, providing an accurate biography that is reconstructed through story.

Samantha-Jayne Oldfield is a lecturer in Sport History in the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at Manchester Metropolitan University, completing her PhD on the promotion and training of athletics in Victorian Manchester. Current publications include the biography of George Martin, ‘wizard of pedestrianism’ and Manchester entrepreneur, and the discussion of methods, including narrative, biography and prosopography, in historical research. Further research interests include the organisation of pedestrianism in the Victorian city, the history of athletic costume, and the development of a prosopographical database of sporting entrepreneurs. She can be contacted on s.j.oldfield@mmu.ac.uk.

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5 England, Births and Christenings, 1538-1975, James Robinson, baptised 05 Sep 1847 at Manchester Cathedral, Lancashire (C07354-2); Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle, August 12, 1871, 8; June 22, 1872, 5; July 6, 1872, 12; July 27, 1872, 5; August 3, 1872, 5; June 14, 1873, 12; New York Passenger Lists 1820-1957, SS Erin, 18 March, 1879 (M237_416).