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The importance of using reflection in the development of a coaching practitioner is universally recognised but the process of using historical perspectives to inform and develop the broader coaching landscape is rarely utilised even though an understanding of traditional approaches to coaching can only assist in developing an holistic approach to coach development. The practice of nineteenth-century experts highlights for the contemporary observer the centrality of tacit craft knowledge, community, experience and intuition in establishing coaching expertise, and this has implications for coaching practitioners and educators who, at the very least, should consider the relative value of these elements and then find innovative and imaginative ways of replicating those they consider important. In some limited respects, this process is underway with the introduction of initiatives such as mentoring as a means of generating a form of community but these are never related to any historical context and they remain subsidiaries to formal education structures which continue to emphasise explicit knowledge. This would seem, therefore, to be an opportune moment to reflect on what history might contribute to an understanding of what coaching really involves.

History is sometimes presented as linear and progressive but there are innumerable 'histories' of coaching and to see these as having evolved to fit a pattern of modernization would be to distort individual experiences. Accounts of coaching experiences located and understood in context, the combination of behaviours, meanings and mores within which coaching existed and was meaningful, allow the chronicler to illuminate the influence of expert coaches. As changes occurred in the organization and meaning of the coaching role over time the innovative coaching practices that emerged were actually the social constructions of individuals who brought their own histories to all aspects of their social life, including how they described themselves, as 'coaches', 'trainers' or 'professors'. All these terms have been historically used to describe individuals acting in coaching roles and they are used interchangeably in this paper, which should be read as a narrative on Victorian coaching and not interpreted as a revisionist text that proposes a return to a pre-industrial vision of traditional coaching practice.

By the early nineteenth century, practitioner experiences and observations had resulted in athletes undertaking rationalized programmes of physical and technical training under the surveillance of a professional trainer. Coaches generally emerged from within the activity and used their own training methods, understanding of skills and approaches to contests to underpin their training advice. However, no-one can be entirely exempt from contemporary influences and coaches also experimented in applying emerging knowledge, intuitively accepting or rejecting appropriate material, thereby adding something to the training process, particularly in periods of educational, commercial and scientific advances. Their expertise underpinned sports training for much of the century, partly because it proved highly effective in developing athletes well beyond the capacities of their contemporaries. George Seward recorded 9.25 seconds for the 100 yards in 1844, Henry Reed registered 48.5 seconds for the 400 yards in 1849, and William Jackson ran eleven miles forty yards in one hour in 1845.<sup>1</sup> By 1836, the year before Victoria ascended the throne, Walker was confident enough to state that the art of training had reached 'a degree of perfection almost incredible'.<sup>2</sup> Before becoming too cynical about such comments the reader would do well to reflect on the tendency of every generation to view itself as the most advanced in history. Nietzsche was critical of those 'who write history in the naive faith that justice resides in the popular view of their time'.<sup>3</sup>

The reality of elite sport is that training and coaching methods are always judged on their efficacy in producing performance. Successful coaches have their training strategies confirmed and many feel no

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Lovesey, *The Official Centenary History of the AAA* (London: Guinness Superlatives, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Donald Walker, *British Manly Exercises* (Philadelphia: Thomas Wardle, 1836), 279-280.

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, F. (1957). *The Use and Abuse of History*, (tr. Adrian Collins) New York: Bobbs-Merrill p. 38.

obligation to provide theoretical justification for their methods. These individuals, who invariably appear to do the right thing at the right time, have normally been highly intuitive, and intuition, an immediate insight made in the absence of a conscious reasoning process, is part of an innovative process which results in the creation of new ideas, concepts and practices.<sup>4</sup> Their innovations, oral traditions and experience, provided Victorian coaches with a body of craft knowledge, an intuitive feel for coaching founded on tacit knowledge, all those skills that the individual cannot fully articulate, represent or codify.<sup>5</sup>

The conventional craftsman was the master of a body of knowledge, with no distinction being made between 'knowledge' and 'skill', the transmission of which involved the master modelling and the apprentice continually observing, a process described as 'stealing with the eyes'. Similarly, the Victorian coach was the master of a body of a knowledge garnered through 'organisational socialisation', whereby aspiring coaches acquired knowledge and skills, as well as absorbing the nuances of coaching practice. Athletes subsequently entered coaching already provided with comprehensive 'maps of meaning' from their own experiences and they perpetuated the proven technical, tactical, and physical strategies, and the coaching philosophies, passed on to them by their own coaches.<sup>6</sup>

Victorian coaches generally gathered together in small, locally based informal groups, communities of practice, and learnt how to coach effectively by sharing experiences, stories and solutions all which contributed to their 'toolbox' of craft knowledge. Learning occurred in a horizontal and mainly non-cognitive fashion in contrast to the vertical transmission implied in teacher/pupil and mentoring relationships. Skills and knowledge were reproduced across generations not through instruction but through the granting of access to shared understandings.<sup>7</sup> As these coaches became more influential they took more control over their environments while still perpetuating their traditional communities of practice and the following short case studies provide exemplars of this process in action.

The heyday of professional pedestrianism, the predecessor of modern track and field athletics, occurred around the 1840s and the sport provided a career path from competitor to trainer. Driven primarily by the financial returns associated with gambling, competitors and coaches often created a 'stable' of runner, coach and fellow athletes, a community which acted as a unit for betting purposes. These arrangements are exemplified by the practices of trainer James Parker, known as Jerry Jim or Jem, who had a well-established training headquarters in Preston and whose training was 'not to be surpassed by any professional of the present day'. After finishing his athletic career, Parker organised pedestrian events and his premises became a focal point for the depositing of stake money and the drawing up of articles for matches between 1840 and 1870 with Parker often co-operating with contemporaries like James Holden of the White Lion, Manchester, and John Jennison of Bellevue.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Martin, P., *The Psychology of Human Effort*, Bulletin du Comité International Olympique, 1953, 37, 31; Cecil Colwin, *Swimming into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Champaign, Ill: Human Kinetics, 1992), 213-214.

<sup>5</sup> Sara Delamont and Paul Atkinson, 'Doctoring Uncertainty: Mastering Craft Knowledge', *Social Studies of Science* 31/1 (2001), 101; Alexander Styhre, 'Rethinking Knowledge: A Bergsonian Critique of the Notion of Tacit Knowledge', *British Journal of Management* 15 (2004), 177-188.

<sup>6</sup> Jeanne Gamble, 'Modelling the Invisible: The Pedagogy of Craft Apprenticeship', *Studies in Continuing Education* 23/2 (2001), 186-196; George Sage, 'Becoming a High School Coach: From Playing Sport to Coaching', *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 60/1 (1989), 81-92; Gordon A. Bloom, Natalie Durand-Bush, Robert J. Schinke and John H. Salmela, 'The Importance of Mentoring in the Development of Coaches and Athletes', *International Journal of Sport Psychology* 29 (1998), 273.

<sup>7</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge* (London: McGraw-Hill, 2002); Etienne Wenger and William Snyder, 'Communities of Practice: The Organizational Frontier', *Harvard Business Review* January-February (2000), 139-145; Etienne Wenger, 'Knowledge Management is a Donut: Shaping your Knowledge Strategy with Communities of Practice', *Ivey Business Journal* January/February (2004), 1-8; Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Census 1841 HO 107/498/3; *Bell's Life*, November 28, 1841; November 20, 1842; January 12, 1845; April 15, 1849, 6; October 21, 1849, 7; February 5, 1854, 7; July 22, 1855, 7; July 17, 1859, 3; April 1 1860, 7; December 15, 1861, 6.

While his involvement included promoting and officiating as starter, referee and timekeeper,<sup>9</sup> aficionados of pedestrianism were most familiar with Parker as 'Jerry Jem', the 'celebrated trainer' and analysis of *Bells Life* reports indicate that he trained over a hundred pedestrians, the majority of them sprinters.<sup>10</sup> Parker used his premises as a training centre for groups of athletes and his reputation was such that as many as nine men from all parts of the country were under his roof at any one time. In 1851, the census enumerator recorded a number of well-known peds living with Parker, including George Eastham, Joseph Whitehead, John Harris, Joseph Holmes and John Saville, some of whom went on to become trainers themselves, an integral feature of coaching communities. Eastham, the Flying Clogger, issued challenges and arranged sprint matches using Parker's house as his base<sup>11</sup> and prepared for his races with Jerry who brought him to the point where he was the 'quintessence of perfection'. By 1854, Eastham had turned to training.<sup>12</sup> Saville had also turned to training by 1855 and before Collins lost over 150 yards to Pearson, who had lived and trained with Jerry, he prepared with Saville, now of the Pedestrian Tavern, Oldham.<sup>13</sup>

Another prominent member of Jerry's 'Stud' was John Fitton, who raced and trained as Jack O'Dicks. He joined the Preston stable in 1848 and five years later he was training others, many of whom competed against Parker's men. Before Hancock beat Atkins over 120 yards in 1853 he trained with Jerry and Atkins prepared under Fitton. The following year, Atkins, now trained by Jerry, beat Lyons, trained by Fitton, by four yards leading commentators to observe that Atkins was several yards faster than previously thanks to placing himself under Jerry, the 'John Scott of the pedestrian world',<sup>14</sup> Scott being a horse trainer who won forty Classics between 1827 and 1863.

James Parker died in 1871 and his life course captures the involvement typical of the many individuals in this period who emerged from an activity and then placed themselves at the centre of a community which organised and developed the sport. In a manner reminiscent of Gramsci's idea of the 'organic intellectual' Parker engaged through oral traditions both with his athletes, many of whom went on to become trainers, and with his family, sons James and Thomas both gaining reputations as pedestrians.<sup>15</sup>

Sinclair observed in 1807 that coaches kept their knowledge to themselves or passed it on to close associates because, for many men, 'their training methods were their livelihood, with the details often kept within a family'.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary authors refer to 'regimes of appropriation' which recognize that financial incentives prevent those who have competitive knowledge from sharing it with outsiders.<sup>17</sup> The degree of family involvement in coaching was influenced by the type of sporting activity and for sports where finesse and skill were paramount family involvement tended to be sustained over generations. Swimming 'Professors', in contrast to their pedestrian counterparts who focused on exercise and diet, had a body of sport-specific technical knowledge that was a valuable commodity for their associates and dependants.

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<sup>9</sup> *Era*, November 13 1853; *Bell's Life*, May 1, 1859, 7; May 20 1860, 7; December 18, 1859, 7; December 1, 1861, 6; January 19, 1862, 7; *The Preston Guardian*, March 3, 1860; April 30, 1859.

<sup>10</sup> *Era* (15 December 1850), 4; *Bells Life* (7 September 1851), 3; Census Parker 1851 (107/2265).

<sup>11</sup> *Bell's Life*, November 21, 1841; February 13, 1842; June 12, 1842; , July 17, 1842; August 21, 1842; March 12, 1843; May 7, 1843; January 14, 1844; April 13, 1845; July 26, 1846, 7; November 8 1846 , 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Bell's Life*, February 18, 1844; December 8, 1844; October 29, 1854, 7; *Era*, 29 October 1854, 5.

<sup>13</sup> *Era*, September 7 1851, 12; March 11 1855, 13; *Bell's Life*, September 7, 1851, 3; February 29, 1852, 7; March 11, 1855, 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Bell's Life*, April 9 1848 pg. 6; September 4, 1853, 7; *Era*, September 4 1853, 6; October 23 1853, 6; July 30 1854, 7; *Bell's Life*, July 30, 1854, 6; February 11, 1871, 5; Death of Jerry Jem; James Parker 67 Preston 8e 376.

<sup>15</sup> *Bell's Life*, February 11, 1871, 5. Death of Jerry Jem; James Parker 67 Preston 8e 376;

<sup>16</sup> John Sinclair, *The Code of Health and Longevity; or, a Concise View of the Principles Calculated for the Preservation of Health and the Attainment of Long Life* (Edinburgh: Arch. Constable, 1807).

<sup>17</sup> David J. Teece, 'Profiting from Technological Innovation: Implications for Integration, Collaboration, Licensing, and Public Policy', *Research Policy* 15 (1986), 285-305; Paul Duguid, "'The Art of Knowing": Social and Tacit Dimensions of Knowledge and the Limits of the Community of Practice', *The Information Society* 21 (2005), 109-118.

Professor Frederick Beckwith was operating in London by the 1840s,<sup>18</sup> and his career as a swimming coach and entrepreneur highlights the role of the organic intellectual in stimulating and sustaining interest in sport. His swimming knowledge, social networks and entrepreneurial flair established him at the centre of a South London sporting and entertainment community and he maintained his reputation through the interactions that took place between coach, family and other connected individuals. Beckwith's core community centred on his immediate family, children Jessie and Frederick, then Willie, Charles, and Agnes, and finally Lizzie and Robert, along with other family members such as second wife Elizabeth, daughter-in-law Emma and grandchildren Frederick and Agnes.<sup>19</sup>

Non-familial members of his immediate community include professionals Thomas Attwood and David Pamplin. In 1867, the twenty-year-old Attwood, was exhibiting in a large glass tank filled with six feet of water.<sup>20</sup> Attwood was Beckwith's assistant swimming teacher by 1869,<sup>21</sup> and between 1871 and 1891 he consistently described himself as a 'teacher of swimming' or 'swimming master'.<sup>22</sup> David Pamplin, whose father had been a swimming 'waiter' (teacher), exhibited with Frederick in 1858<sup>23</sup> and he eventually became swimming master at Camberwell and Dulwich Baths.<sup>24</sup> Pamplin listed swimming teacher, master or instructor as his occupation for forty years from 1871 to 1911.<sup>25</sup>

Beckwith broadened his aquatic community to encompass most of the swimming professors and female natationists of the period and when the Professional Swimming Association was formed in 1881,<sup>26</sup> Frederick was made vice-president.<sup>27</sup> He had the acumen to develop his activities across a broad cultural range and he maintained strong links to amateur swimmers, aristocrats, writers, journalists and sportsmen of all hues,<sup>28</sup> including professional oarsmen, physical culturists, pedestrians wrestlers and boxers. In 1879, son Willie and William Taylor, Agnes's husband, promoted a pedestrian event for music-hall artistes highlighting the close relationships between sportsmen and entertainers.<sup>29</sup> Music halls became centres of local sporting networks and a benefit for Willie at the Canterbury Theatre in 1892 included swimmers, professional sportsmen and music-hall entertainers like Marie Lloyd.<sup>30</sup>

While Victorian craft coaching normally involved specialist knowledge being conveyed through direct contact with family or significant others, knowledge exchange through community contacts was never confined to these sources with inns providing another conduit for the transfer of coaching knowledge. In 1861, Beckwith took over *The Good Intent*, which included a comfortable parlour for members of Parliament and their friends, a large clubroom, a taproom and a covered skittle ground. There were harmonic meetings, sparring and glove fights, and every 'convenience for gentlemen trying their dogs', including plenty of rats. A large collection of pictures included portraits of celebrated athletes, while sporting books were kept

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<sup>18</sup> *Era* (4 June 1898), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Dave Day, "'What Girl Will Now Remain Ignorant Of Swimming?'" Agnes Beckwith, Aquatic Entertainer and Victorian Role Model', *Women's History Review* 21/13 (2012), 419-446.

<sup>20</sup> Warwick Wroth, *Cremorne and the later London gardens* (London, 1907).

<sup>21</sup> *Penny Illustrated*, 19 June 1869 p. 7; 9 July 1870 p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Census returns. Thomas Attwood. 1871 (611/86/17), 1881 (534/40/24), 1891 (352/70/8).

<sup>23</sup> Dave Day, 'Kinship and Community in Victorian London: the "Beckwith Frogs"', *History Workshop Journal* 71/1 (2011), 194-218.

<sup>24</sup> Ralph Thomas, *Swimming* (London, 1904), p. 388.

<sup>25</sup> *Bell's Life*, 21 Dec. 1878 p. 9; 28 Dec. 1878 p. 9; *Penny Illustrated*, 2 July 1892 p. 14; Census Returns. David Pamplin 1861 (237/129/25), 1871 (289/70/52), 1881 (1320/60/43), 1891 (608/76/64), 1901 (666/35/37), 1911 (RG14PN3528RG78PN131RD40SD2ED31SN177).

<sup>26</sup> *Sporting Life* (9 July 1881), 4; Ralph Thomas, *Swimming* (London: Sampson, Low and Marston, 1904), 357.

<sup>27</sup> *Graphic* (24 September 1881), 323; *Penny Illustrated* (29 July 1882), 10.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, *Swimming*.

<sup>29</sup> *Era*, 7 July 1861, p. 14; 9 Nov. 1873, p. 3; 16 Nov. 1879, p. 4.

<sup>30</sup> *BL Evan*. 1034.

behind the bar.<sup>31</sup> The pub was 'nightly patronised by crowds of the right sort', including leading sporting professionals, while news of current sporting events could 'be constantly gleaned'.<sup>32</sup>

### Conclusion

Researchers have observed that expertise is a fluid, cyclical process with coaches having to continuously redevelop their competencies in order to operate in ever changing environments.<sup>33</sup> Successful Victorian practitioners, like Parker and Beckwith, were those who proved capable of adapting to meet the unique demands of their environment and their localized coaching communities adapted and evolved as society changed. Even so, continuities were maintained through oral tradition linked to personal experience and the existence of a body of craft knowledge operating within communities of practice. Coaches shared information with trusted confidantes and, when athletes became coaches, they perpetuated traditional practices, drawing on the knowledge and social networks developed while in training.

Despite the increasing institutionalization of science, the coach remained the master of a body of specialist craft knowledge embedded within close-knit interest groups which shared the methodology and repertoire of resources that constituted the key elements of their coaching 'toolbox'.<sup>34</sup> These processes are familiar to modern researchers who have found that when soccer players become coaches their methods remain heavily influenced by their playing experiences, irrespective of their levels of formal qualification.<sup>35</sup> Contemporary coaches possess a largely implicit form of knowledge, closely connected to past experiences, which shares similarities with craft knowledge<sup>36</sup> and they consistently identify other coaches as their most important resource in terms of developing their coaching with experimentation and their own past experiences as other key reference points.<sup>37</sup>

Undoubtedly, the modern coaching toolbox is far more sophisticated than that available to Victorian coaches and in reflecting on their craft approach this paper is merely hoping to raise awareness of the way in which craft coaches took a surprisingly modern and holistic approach in their dealings with athletes. In the contemporary world, despite its emphasis on certification and the importance of scientific knowledge, attempts are now being made to replicate many aspects of craft coaching by introducing rationalized alternatives such as communities of practice or coaching mentors. The problem for such initiatives, however, is that traditional coaching communities and coaching leaders emerged organically from the activity, from below rather than being structured from above. Similarly, given the complexity and intangibility of tacit craft knowledge it is difficult to see how it can ever be formally transmitted or assessed, however much coach educators try to make it more explicit. Coaches who learn their trade actively, rather than as a passive recipient of an instructional process, build a deeper understanding of the world in which they use their skills and through the continual development and use of those skills they experience learning as a lifelong process. Heidegger's notion of 'being-in-the-world' involves always experiencing things in relation to other people

<sup>31</sup> *Bell's Life*, 4 Dec. 1859, p. 7; 29 April 1860, p. 7; 22 Sept. 1861, p. 6; 29 Sept. 1861, p. 3; 6 Oct. 1861, p. 6; 13 Oct. 1861, p. 3; 20 Oct. 1861, p. 6; 1 Dec. 1861, p. 7; 22 Dec. 1861, p. 6; 2 Feb. 1862 p. 6; 9 Feb. 1862 p. 6; *The Times*, 18 Oct. 1861, p. 10; 21 Oct. 1861, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Bell's Life*, 22 Dec. 1861, p. 6; 29 Dec. 1861, p. 3; 2 Feb. 1862, p. 6; 9 Feb. 1862, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> David Turner, Lee Nelson & Paul Potrac (2012): *The Journey Is the Destination: Reconsidering the Expert Sports Coach*, *Quest*, 64:4, 313-325 p.323

<sup>34</sup> Etienne Wenger, 'Knowledge management is a donut: Shaping your knowledge strategy with communities of practice', *Ivey Business Journal*, January/February (2004), pp. 1-8.

<sup>35</sup> Potrac, P., Jones, R. and Cushion, C., *Understanding Power and the Coach's Role in Professional English Soccer: A Preliminary Investigation of Coach Behaviour*, *Soccer and Society*, 2007, 8(1), 33-49.

<sup>36</sup> Matt Smith and Chris Cushion, 'An Investigation of the In-game Behaviours of Professional, Top-level Youth Soccer Coaches', *Journal of Sports Sciences* 24/4 (2006), 363; Robyn L. Jones, Kathleen Armour and Paul Potrac, 'Constructing Expert Knowledge: A Case Study of a Top-level Professional Soccer Coach', *Sport, Education and Society* 8/2 (2003), 220-224.

<sup>37</sup> Gareth Irwin, Sheldon Hanton and David Kerwin, 'Reflective Practice and the Origins of Elite Coaching Knowledge', *Reflective Practice* 5/3 (2004), 430-432, 436, 439; Paul Potrac, Robyn Jones and Chris Cushion, 'Understanding Power and the Coach's Role in Professional English Soccer: A Preliminary Investigation of Coach Behaviour', *Soccer and Society* 8/1 (2007), 33-49.

while bonds of shared values and meanings are provided by membership in a community, particularly if that community is self-selected.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (London: SCM Press, 1962).