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From Butlins to Europe: Fodens Ladies in the 1960s and 1970s

Dave Day and Margaret Roberts

Abstract

Emerging out of the shadows cast over women's football following its marginalization by the Football Association in the inter-war years, Fodens Ladies, formed at a lorry manufacturing plant in Sandbach, Cheshire, contributed to a new vibrancy in the game between 1960 and 1980. Emulating many similar works-based predecessors, the team established itself as one of the pioneers of a female football revival and provided a public arena for several prominent international players of the period. From its early days playing charity matches the company team became a regular participant in the Butlin's Cup, winning it in 1969 and 1970, before beating Southampton in the 1974 Mitre Cup final. The team also undertook overseas tours with team members receiving only minimal support from the company. This paper draws on private personal archives, company records, holdings at the National Football Museum, national and local newspapers, and an in-house magazine, *The Foden News*, to situate the team within the context of Fodens Ltd and the wider context of women's football in the 1960s and 1970s. The paper concludes by signposting the next phase of research, which will explore in detail the biographies of key individuals involved in the Fodens team during this period.

Keywords: Fodens; Football; Women; International; 1960s and 1970s.

Introduction

The workplace has traditionally been an important site for the emergence of sport teams, invariably driven by the enthusiasm of employees rather than by direct intervention from management,¹ and it was the impetus provided by individuals, or small groups of women, that inspired the formation of a significant number of women's football clubs.² The historiography addressing the impact of the working environment on this process is fairly well established, particularly in respect of the emergence of a women's football culture in the munitions factories during World War One (WWI).³ However, this work has rarely been extended into the mid-twentieth century, even though there is plenty of evidence that industrial and commercial concerns continued to provide an important locus for women's football after the end of WWI.⁴ War-time teams in Norwich existed at Boulton and Pauls (munitions) factories and Norwich Components (a fuse making establishment) and the workplace continued to provide a basis for team formation in Norwich in the inter-war years. Seven teams were established to play 'friendlies', five in shoe factories, at Chittocks, Hurrells, Norvic, the Norwich Shoe Company, and Sexton, Son and Everard, one in a silk works (Hinde and Hardy), and one in the Cooperative Society. In 1930 a city-wide Cup Competition was won by Norvic.⁵

Women's football activities centred around the workplace continued in the post-war period. When Cerebos took on Price's Factory Ladies⁶ in aid of the N.U.R Joint Orphan Fund in Hartlepool in 1949, Price's reported that there had been thirty-four volunteers for the team, and in July, Hesleden Ladies, made up mostly of teenagers, beat Price's in a game organised in aid of the Blackhall Memorial Fund.⁷ In Northern Ireland in 1949, Belfast Ropeworks, who reportedly drew 2,000 spectators to a practice match, fielded a team against R. Wilson and Sons (Barrihead) Ltd, who had been unbeaten in eleven matches the previous season.⁸ In September 1956, Darlaston Ladies and the Handy Angle Ladies of Brierley Hill, formerly known as Hickman's Dynamos, played for the 'Battle of Britain' Cup, and two years later, an undefeated Handy Angle's team, at that stage playing two matches a week as well as training on Sundays and Wednesdays, beat Birmingham Ladies 17-0.⁹ By September 1968, the Beecham Belles, who all worked at the Beecham Products factory in Maidenhead and whose average age was eighteen, were taking their football seriously and developing into 'skilful combination', with their record reading played thirteen, won eleven, lost two, including an 8-1 defeat by Manchester Corinthians.¹⁰ Similar teams emerged around the country. At the Hoover company in Wales female workers established a team in the late 1960s,¹¹ and in the North-East it was estimated that there were at least eighteen women's teams by 1971, including teams established in regional airports.¹²

Different sectors of the commercial and industrial workplace experienced their sport in different ways,¹³ and the manner in which each work-based team operated was dependant not only on the enthusiasm of individuals but also on their working environment. Scholars have suggested that illuminating these issues at the local level, focusing on 'hot-spots' identified in the historiography, is central to understanding women's football development between 1945 and 1980, during which time playing structures were only just emerging and the game relied on localised, informal pockets of organisation.¹⁴ More local histories of women's clubs, which consider business activity, leisure and social practices, as well as club formation, longevity, and competitive structures, would be invaluable to historians of the women's game.¹⁵ This paper contributes to the literature on local histories by focusing on the Fodens Ladies team, which emerged from a lorry manufacturing firm in Sandbach in the North-West of England to become one of the most prominent teams in the 1960s and early 1970s, winning trophies at national level and attracting several international players. While adopting a case study approach to any topic brings with it the difficulties of extrapolating more generic conclusions based on what is, after all, a unique situation, the activities of Fodens in this period demonstrate a synergy with many of the broader characteristics of women's football development in these decades.

The aims here are threefold. Firstly, to contextualise the engagement of the team within the broader setting of their works environment. Secondly, to provide a snapshot of their playing activities during this period and, lastly, to situate the trajectory of the team within the structural evolution of women's football in the 1960s and 1970s. Identifying the details of club developments, particularly in those instances where clubs and individuals have gone largely unrecorded, is always a challenge and this paper represents the first stage of a project which will go on to utilise oral histories and visual analysis to explore the team's history and its players in more depth. However, the archival approach taken in this initial phase, synthesised with the existing historiography, has uncovered enough evidence in the sources to be able to situate the operation of this team within its local environment and the broader expansion of women's football. These sources include private personal archives, company records, holdings at the National Football Museum, including scrapbooks, photographs, and match programmes, national and local newspapers, and, importantly in terms of understanding the Fodens environment, an in-house company magazine, *The Foden News*.¹⁶

Fodens Ltd¹⁷

Edwin Foden Sons & Co. Ltd in Sandbach, Cheshire, produced industrial and agricultural steam engines in the late nineteenth century, before turning to the production of steam lorries after 1900, and in 1902 the company title was shortened to Fodens Ltd.¹⁸ In the early 1930s, Edwin's son, Edwin Richard Foden, established a new company in Sandbach, ERF Ltd, which concentrated on diesel trucks. Fodens also changed from steam to diesel and in WWII the 1,400 personnel at the works produced War Department vehicles and tanks, together with seven and a half million shells.¹⁹ During the 1950s and 1960s, the company seemed to be financially secure,²⁰ and in 1973, following a modernisation programme, it was awarded a ten-million-pound contract by the Ministry of Defence. However, disputes in key industries led to short time working and the truck market collapsed forcing the company to obtain a loan from the Department of Industry. While this enabled Fodens to continue trading as an independent company, it struggled to deal with the gap between demand and increased production between 1975 and 1976.²¹ Fodens actively engaged abroad, with Foden trucks being sold in more than 50 countries throughout 1977, and exports for the 1976-1977 financial year accounted for 23 per cent of the company's total output, but problems remained over the company's inability to utilise all its resources effectively and it also suffered from labour disputes.²² While the company magazine remained confident that Fodens 'have the right vehicles, we have the right people and our difficult periods involving loss-making military contracts, high interest rates and high new model costs are hopefully behind us',²³ this confidence was misplaced, and Paccar bought Fodens Ltd in 1980 after it went into administration, renaming it Foden Trucks. Eventually, the works was closed, and the last vehicle rolled off the production line in July 2006.

Early accounts of Edwin Foden recorded him visiting the sick in worker's homes with gifts or advice, not simply as an act of philanthropy but in recognition that he needed men to be able to give 100 per cent to their work. This form of Victorian industrial paternalism²⁴ remained a feature of the company throughout the twentieth century. A primitive welfare system to attract and retain skilled workers emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century, and Fodens built worker housing for skilled men as early as 1885, provided in exchange for 'total loyalty' and an extremely hard-working life.²⁵ The concept of the company as an industrial 'family' features frequently in descriptions of Fodens throughout its existence, both in contemporary internal and external communications, as well as in subsequent company histories.²⁶ Commenting on the importance of seeing industrial relations in family terms, *Foden News* suggested 'there is more to life than industry and there is more to industry than profit. The human touch makes everything for everyone so very much more worthwhile'.²⁷ Fodens always had an impressive list of long-serving personnel,²⁸ and loyalty to the company as an important factor to success was constantly emphasised, beginning with the first issue of *Foden News* in April 1950.²⁹ In 1964, *Foden News* noted a 'singularly large number of people in responsible positions who have come from bench and office stool' making Fodens an 'anomaly in British business, a progressive family firm'.³⁰ Issues of the in-house magazine invariably carried articles on retirements, with the inevitable presentation of the gold watch, as well as extensive obituaries of long-serving employees, which embedded the value afforded by the company to long and faithful service.³¹

Recreation and Social Activities

Part of the paternalistic agenda of companies like Fodens was the provision of facilities and opportunities for worker recreation, which often followed on from the provision of housing.³² Edwin established the foundations for the Fodens brass band, which became a valuable advertisement for the company throughout the twentieth century. In 1964, the band won the British Open Brass Band Championship for the ninth time and by 1976, the band was averaging around sixty concerts a year, as far afield as South Africa, Canada, France, Belgium and Holland.³³ Company-sponsored activities included photographic competitions³⁴ and the Fodens Motor Club, which arranged dances, rallies, driving tests, treasure hunts and organised talks and trips.³⁵ As part of his worker welfare strategy, Edwin built a Recreation Club and in the 1920s, the club secretary, Arthur Thompson, established it as a vibrant organisation with flourishing football, snooker, bowls and tennis teams. The running and maintenance of the club facilities was financed by the employees with a penny deducted from the wage packets each week with a small additional sum added by the company mainly to pay staff to look after the facilities, while sales of food and drink also made a profit.³⁶

When a 'sumptuous new club' was opened in May 1963, Fodens had provided 'everything of the best',³⁷ and the recreation club, cricket club ground, bowling green, and tennis courts were generally acknowledged to be among the finest in Cheshire.³⁸ Retired employees were free to use the facilities, and there were fourteen different sports sections as widely diverse as darts and golf. Apart from the football pitch, which was elsewhere, there was a putting green, three hard tennis courts, and a cricket pitch. Inside there were three full-sized billiard tables and the dining rooms were marked out for badminton. The social side was extremely active and some 400 were attending every Saturday evening in 1964.³⁹ Even in 1978, over 90 per cent of the workforce of nearly 3,000 were club members and the employee's handbook enshrined worker access to the recreational facilities and to the numerous sporting activities.⁴⁰ Coverage in *Foden News* of the activities of the sporting sections reveals something of a class hierarchy in terms of who was participating in different sports. While the football section engaged employees across the works,⁴¹ golf was a sport for white collar staff.⁴² Similarly, the Foden archery club attracted particular sections of the workforce.⁴³ Bowls seemed to have been more democratic,⁴⁴ while cricket attracted players from several departments with *Foden News* giving extensive coverage to the internal cricket competitions organised in 1953. The final saw Dispatch Stores beat the Drawing Office, after which tea and cakes were supplied by the club's 'splendid Ladies Committee' and speakers thanked the Directors of Fodens Ltd

‘whose active support of the welfare and recreational activities of Foden employees did so much to make leisure a pleasure at Sandbach’.⁴⁵

The important thing to note in the context of this paper is that it was ‘men’ who were catered for as far as sports were concerned and what emerges from this brief introduction to Fodens Ltd is that, unlike some of the other industrial and commercial concerns that fostered women’s football teams, Fodens’ factory was overwhelmingly a masculine environment. That was reflected in all aspects of the firm’s activities, not least in the company magazine. On the rare occasions that women appeared in photographs in the *Foden News* they were almost exclusively in supporting or decorative roles and the language used reflected the patriarchal attitudes of the company. When Nora Bailey from the Wages Department was pictured receiving wedding presents in 1950 she gave a ‘dimpled smile’.⁴⁶ When Miss Mary Dean retired as William Foden’s personal secretary in 1956, *Foden News* observed that the best tribute came from one of the youngsters who described her as a ‘smasher!’,⁴⁷ and when the magazine offered its congratulations to female employees the focus was often on gendered ‘achievements’, such as their being elected as beauty queens.⁴⁸ What passed for jokes in the company magazine, ‘Sign at a London driving school: If your wife wants to learn don’t stand in her way’, also reflected the accepted gender norms of the period.⁴⁹

Given these attitudes, and the limited recognition given to female sport, this would suggest that the inspiration for the formation of Fodens Ladies football team, its organisation and subsequent development, came from individuals collaborating as friends and enthusiasts, as opposed to it being encouraged by the company. The period of financial uncertainty and increasing anxiety about the future of the company in the late 1960s and early 1970s coincided with the heyday of Fodens Ladies and helped shape the framework within which the team operated while the patriarchal traditions that permeated throughout the company meant that the team never received the level of internal publicity afforded to other employee activities. The company did provide the team with a bus for the purpose of travelling to games, but only as long as the band did not need it, and players normally had to raise further funds themselves, in addition to having to pay for their own hotel accommodation and meals.⁵⁰ In contrast to the brass band, the female footballers, despite achieving national recognition, always remained a marginal footnote for Fodens Ltd, which makes the short chronological narrative that follows a testimony to their commitment, resilience and fortitude.

Fodens Ladies

Sports historians often become misguidedly absorbed in trying to identify ‘points of origin’ when, in most cases, the emergence of a team like Fodens Ladies is the result of a process of evolution rather than a clearly discernible moment of collective inspiration. There are widely differing reports of when they begin to appear in accounts of the women’s game. Jean Williams suggests that Fodens began playing around 1955,⁵¹ and that they were touring ‘extensively’ in the 1950s. This view is supported by John Carrier, who also believes Fodens were created in 1955, when they were asked to form a team to play Manchester Corinthians to raise funds for charitable causes.⁵² Other sources tell a different story. A match programme from 1972 suggests that Fodens had been formed in 1957,⁵³ while, according to Harold Nancollis, chairman of the recreation club in 1975, the team was formed in 1959.⁵⁴ In 1963, Yvonne Cooper, the then club secretary, suggested the club had been formed in 1961, a claim that was repeated in a 1966 newspaper report.⁵⁵ While further research might well resolve some of these discrepancies, what is important at this stage is not trying to pin down an ‘exact date’ but identifying the individuals involved and tracking the team’s playing activities, longevity, and impact within the women’s game at a time when the national game was beginning to organise.

The games played by Fodens in the early stages of the team’s existence followed the charity template provided by their predecessors and for some female players their engagement was short-lived. When Fodens played Preston (Late Dick, Kerrs F.C.) at Blackpool in August 1963, in aid of the British Limbless Ex-Service Men’s Association, the programme notes observed that of the team formed two years earlier only two or three women

were still playing. The team, which played in yellow shirts, black shorts with yellow and black stockings, consisted of Alice Walmesley, Joan Tench, Yvonne Cooper, Edna Broughton, Ann Fitton, Cynthia Jones, Pauline Walker, Kath Longworth, Kath Steenson, and Chris Bailey with Wendy Higgins in goal.⁵⁶ Reports from this period also highlight that it was standard practice for Fodens to include players who were not employees of the firm. At one 1966 carnival match between Fodens in blue and white and Cheshire Ladies in old gold and black, Fodens, who had reportedly been playing all over the country raising money for charities, fielded Jeannie Allot, a ten-year-old schoolgirl from Crewe,⁵⁷ who went on to play in England's first international match against Scotland in 1972. The naming of a mere eleven players, rather than a squad, in the 1963 game and the recruitment of a primary school player in 1966, suggests that at this point in the team's development, it was struggling to field an eleven. Later in 1966, a rare report on the team in *Foden News* commended Wendy Higgins, the goalkeeper, as the star in a 6-5 victory over a Northern Television All-Star select in a charity match at Farnworth. The composition of the opposing team, which included Kenny Lynch, Stuart Hall, Bill Grundy, Malcolm Allison, and three ex-Manchester United and England players,⁵⁸ reinforces the burlesque nature of some of the matches that Fodens played in the early- to mid-1960s. When Corinthians and Nomads, Corinthian's second team, which had been formed to provide regular opposition, agreed to play a game on behalf of a thalidomide victim, Fodens offered to play any men's team, although this venture struggled because a suitable ground could not be found.⁵⁹

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

At this point, competition was erratic. Although Fodens were initially advertised as playing Corinthians for the Droylsden Charities Committee on Sunday 15 September 1968 they had to withdraw and their place was taken by Nomads.⁶⁰ However, by this time opportunities for more serious play were appearing in the form of cup and league competitions, although more informal competition continued and after Warwickshire women's side beat Hertfordshire 18-0 in their first combined county game in October 1967 they arranged another game against Fodens in November in Coventry.⁶¹ It was the institution of the Butlin's cup, inspired by Hughie Green, the presenter of television show *Opportunity Knocks*, that provided Fodens with an opportunity to demonstrate the increasing seriousness with which they were approaching the game. In this competition, clubs travelled to various Butlin's camps to play tournaments once a fortnight,⁶² and Fodens were regular participants, winning the competition in 1969 and 1970, when they beat Westthorn Utd of Scotland 1-0 at Greenock Holiday Camp. Their 1969 final at Minehead, Somerset, in September, proved to be a 'fierce battle' against Southampton Ladies with Fodens scoring three times in the first five minutes. By the end of the first half, Fodens had scored two further goals and, although Southampton scored within five minutes, Fodens eventually won 5-1. It was also announced that Fodens would represent England against a champion Scottish side in London in October.⁶³

As a result of their wins in the Butlin's tournaments, Fodens were regularly referred to as the 'British champions'.⁶⁴ In September 1970, Fodens, the previous year's 'Great Britain Ladies' Football Champions', played their second charity game in Wales against the Deeside Firebelles, at Queensferry. Playing in heavy rain, the champions proved too experienced for the Deeside team, which was made up of female players from Chester, Prestatyn and Deeside, winning 6-0.⁶⁵ In January 1971, the Giro Ladies team from Liverpool played Fodens, described as 'current champions of the ladies football world in England'.⁶⁶ It is a reflection of the lack of clarity surrounding the nascent organisational structures operating in women's football in this period that their status as 'champions' was contested. Whilst 'not wishing to start a North v South saga in the field of women's football', Sue Lopez, then secretary of Southampton WFC, wrote to the *Football Association News* in 1971 pointing out that Southampton had retained their title as champions of England, which they had won at an international tournament in Deal the previous July. According to Lopez, this was the official title recognised by the Women's Football Association (WFA). Fodens had won their title in a Butlin's sponsored competition which the WFA had boycotted and only non-affiliated clubs like Fodens entered.⁶⁷

Fodens had not engaged with the 1968 Deal tournament, when Corinthians beat Deal Hockey Club 7-0 in the final,⁶⁸ but they had competed in 1969, qualifying for the final through the early rounds on 15 June by winning their group before losing 2-0 to the eventual winners, Corinthians, on finals day on 6 July.⁶⁹ By the early 1970s, Fodens had become a leading force in the women's game⁷⁰ and their successes were listed in a programme for a game that they played (wearing amber) against Corinthians (in black and white) in October 1972, at Buxton as part of a testimonial for three of Buxton's male players. Fodens, who were described as 'old friends' of the Corinthians, having played matches against them for many years, had won the Three Counties League Trophy (1972) and the Macclesfield Tournament (1972), as well as being the runners-up in the Deal Tournament (1972). Fodens team on the day was Angela Watson (1), Sue Taylor (2), Elaine Brown (3), Kathleen Steenson (4), Sheila Parker (5), Lynne Arstall (6), Sue Fish (7), Sylvia Gore (8), Sue Carter (9), Jeannie Allott (10), Lesley Caldwell (11), and S. Hamner or P. McDevitt (12). By now Fodens were able to field a full team plus reserves and the programme noted that Sheila Parker, Sylvia Gore, who would go on to score the first 'official' England goal, and Jeannie Allott had been selected for the first ever England squad.⁷¹

Perhaps the most high-profile success of Fodens was their performance in the WFA Mitre Challenge trophy final at Bedford Town's ground on 28 April 1974 against Southampton, winners of the trophy for the previous three years. During the year eighty-nine clubs had taken part in the competition⁷² and Fodens had beaten Suffolk Bluebirds 9-2 in the quarter finals before recording a 2-0 victory over Swindon Spitfires in the semi-finals. Fodens had not lost a game all season and they played Macclesfield in a League Cup Final a week before the Mitre final. One preview of the final interviewed Eric Aldersay, Fodens' manager, coach and secretary, who claimed that Fodens Ltd paid the team's expenses, even though they were not necessarily employees. Fodens had four members of the international squad, Gore, Allott, Sheila Parker, England's captain, and Alison Leatherbarrow, but Southampton, with five internationals, including Sue Lopez, Sue Buckett, Pat Davies, and Lynda Hale, looked like winning the Home Counties League and were confident of success although Aldersay thought 'we could surprise them'.⁷³ The Fodens team, which played in Sky and Navy Blue, consisted on the day of Hazel Bancroft (1), Elaine Brown (2), Sue Carter (3), Sue Shenton (4), Sheila Parker (5), Carol Aikin (6), Alison Leatherbarrow (7), Sylvia Gore (8), Pat Firth (9), Jeannie Allott (10), Lesley Caldwell (11), Jill Jodrell (12), and Paula McDevitt (13), and they fully justified their manager's optimism with a 2-1 victory. By May, Fodens looked to be certain of the Three Counties League First Division championship, while, interestingly, in the second division, E.R.F., about whom little or nothing is known, was fighting it out with Ashton for top place.⁷⁴

<INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE>

Competing Overseas

Women's football teams throughout the twentieth century travelled abroad for competition.⁷⁵ Midland Ladies League club Kay's Women's football team from Worcester, which had raised £200 for charity during 1967, planned to make a ten-day tour of Czechoslovakia in 1968,⁷⁶ and in June 1972 Kay's toured Sweden winning all three of their games.⁷⁷ Fodens often went on tours and by May 1979 they had been on six trips abroad, with three visits to Belgium alone.⁷⁸ Not surprisingly, given that their international profile was such an important part of the company focus in the 1960s and 1970s, it was overseas tours by the women's team that received any real attention in the *Foden News*. While these reports always emphasised the quality of the team it is also noticeable how they also consistently referred to the ambassadorial nature of these tours as well as the sociability of the team and their opponents. Although the text was often accompanied by photographs there was never any explanatory detail and identifying the participants portrayed through interviews with surviving players and their descendants is a priority for the next phase of research.

Ulster 1966

Giving what was described as 'almost certainly the most outstanding display of women's football ever seen in Northern Ireland', Fodens held the crowds 'enthralled' on August 26 and 27 1966 when they played established

women's teams from Gallaher, Belfast and Lisnafillan in aid of the swimming pool fund of Muckamore Abbey Hospital for the Mentally Handicapped. Although the Belfast and Lisnafillan teams had had considerable experience of the game, they struggled with the quality of Fodens' football. The Belfast team were completely outclassed in the first game but kept the score down to 8-0 before entertaining their visitors to supper and a singsong in their hotel in the evening. The following day the coach conveying the Fodens' team and hosts was routed through the hospital grounds, where players were shown the progress being made on the pool as well as being conducted through one of the units. The Lisnafillan team met the visitors at Ballymena and provided tea before the Mayor of Ballymena kicked off for the game, which was a repeat of the previous night's exhibition, with Fodens winning 9-0. Following the game, thanks were expressed to the promoters and organisers for the success of the tour, which was expected to result in a substantial amount being donated to the hospital funds. One of the organisers commented, 'The Foden team was one of the friendliest group of girls one could wish to meet and very appreciative of their reception. We look forward to meeting them again, but our standard of football will have to improve considerably'. In return, Fodens' officials were extremely complimentary of the arrangements for the visit, saying it was the best organised trip they had undertaken to date.⁷⁹

<INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE>

Netherlands 1975

Fodens had been invited to play a series of games in Holland during the Spring holiday week of 1975 by the Z.W. Club of Rotterdam who had visited Sandbach with both men's' and ladies' teams over Easter 1974 and who had hosted Fodens during a short visit to Holland in 1973. Fodens included six English internationals, many of whom had experienced continental tours with various teams in the past, but the 1975 tour was considered special for two reasons. Firstly, the matches were arranged to cover a whole week, and, secondly, the team were able to use their own transport for the complete tour because the band had no engagements booked for that period, so the team were allowed to utilise the band coach for the tour.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE>

The party of thirty-six, including fourteen players, left Sandbach on Saturday 24 May and arrived in Rotterdam to be escorted by a noisy motorcade to the Z.W. Club for a mid-day meal. After a quiet stroll with their hosts during the afternoon, there was an official reception and dance on Sunday evening when the Fodens' team were presented with a trophy and medals to commemorate the visit. Having introduced their hosts to the game of darts during their visit to England, a match sized dartboard and darts were presented to the Z.W. Club, together with an appropriate plaque, by Joan Tench, Fodens longest playing member. The initial matches for Monday evening were two five-a-side games against the Z.W. ladies, who had recently become the Dutch National five-a-side champions. These were played under ideal conditions at the Sporthal de Enge in Rotterdam and, although the Dutch five-a-side rules were different, the English team adapted quickly and won the first game 4-2. The second game against the Dutch champions proved to be 'a real thriller', which the Dutch eventually won 1-0.

<INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE>

On Tuesday morning, Fodens visited the Feyenoord stadium where the international players in the team were interviewed by Dutch radio. The evening game against Naaldwyk Ladies was played on a well-equipped ground, which formed part of a whole series of playing pitches and training grounds and included a complete social and sports club. Fodens settled down quickly to play an open attacking game on the excellent playing surface and began to score at regular intervals, eventually winning 7-0. On Wednesday evening, after spending the afternoon in the sea at Scheveningen, Fodens played Bloemhof Ladies at a similar sports complex in the suburbs of Rotterdam and again entertained a large crowd whilst winning 5-0.

<INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE>

Thursday morning and afternoon were spent on a visit to the Hague and to the model town of Madurodam before the evening game against Z.W. Ladies at the Rijsoord stadium Ridderkirk, the most important match of the tour. It had been widely advertised as virtually a Netherlands versus England encounter because so many players from the two national teams were involved. Again, the ground and club facilities were very good, and the many spectators were provided with an excellent and exciting display of women's football. The Dutch team set the early pace and deservedly scored after 10 minutes play before Fodens began to settle down and, after a period of continuous attacking, they equalised through captain Jeannie Allott. Almost immediately the Dutch team scored again to go into the lead 2-1 and it was not until ten minutes before half time that Fodens managed to get back into the game and draw level. With half time almost due, Fodens scored the most crucial goal of the game via left winger Sue Fish, to go into the lead for the first time. In the second half, Fodens gradually assumed complete domination going on to score four further goals to win by 7 goals to 2. So, the series of games ended with four out of the five won, a goal tally of 23 against 6 and an invitation to return as soon as possible.⁸⁰

<INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE>

<INSERT FIGURE 8 HERE>

Belgium 1977

In 1977, a Fodens' touring party of thirty-four, consisting of players, officials and supporters, left just before midnight aboard the band coach, heading for Belgium where three teams waited, 'eager to diminish the new-found stature of English football'. In their opening fixture against K.S.V Cerde Brugge at Eernegem, Fodens drew 4-4, with goals from Veronica Bailey (2), Lesley Caldwell, and one own goal, being denied victory only by a late penalty. The ensuing Jubilee celebrations in the holiday village at De Haan spilled over well into the morning, but the team managed to defeat S.K. Opex of Ostend in the evening through a lone Joan Tench goal. After the match, captain Elaine Brown was presented with a trophy on behalf of the Burgomeister of Ostend. A pleasant surprise was the appearance of former Fodens' captain and England international Jeannie Allot, who had made the three-hour journey from her home in Holland. For the final game of the tour, the party travelled to Aardenburgseweg to take on V.G. Brugge, eventually losing an even game by the odd goal in three, their scorer being Lesley Caldwell. A day's shopping and sight-seeing in Brugge on the Friday concluded the tour, and the team returned home satisfied by having put up three highly creditable performances on consecutive days.⁸¹

<INSERT FIGURE 9 HERE>

Structural Developments

This brief chronology of Fodens exemplifies many of the broader characteristics of women's football evolution in this period, a trajectory that saw the game transition from charity spectacle to organised activity. This occurred concurrently with the game becoming increasingly rationalised through the creation of formal structures and organisations. Women's football was becoming a more acceptable and publicly recognisable activity, even though, as one reporter noted, some teams continued to emerge onto the field 'only on rare and treasured occasions'.⁸²

Leagues and Cups

As early as 1917, a Ladies Football League had been formed by twelve clubs drawn from commercial undertakings in Manchester,⁸³ and in the 1920s the Bradford Ladies League was operating two divisions of ten teams, plus cups and other competitions,⁸⁴ but it was in the post-WWII period that leagues became more frequent. In April 1949, Joan Forrester, the secretary of Maldon women's football team, was reportedly looking to form an Essex Women's Soccer league,⁸⁵ one of several attempts to form leagues in this period,⁸⁶ and in May 1950 it was announced that a summer league in Essex in the form of a Southern Counties Ladies' Football League was underway.⁸⁷ Prompted by a successful first season for the Dunlop women's team, the Midland Women's

Football League was formed in 1967 with eight teams from Birmingham, Bedworth, Coventry, Nuneaton and Warwick.⁸⁸ In June 1970, six new teams, including Conners of Nuneaton and G.E.C.-A.E.I. of Rugby, were admitted to the league, bringing the number of clubs up to thirteen, which also organised two major cup competitions, the Midland Cup and the Cystic Fibrosis Cup.⁸⁹ In the first round of the Midland Ladies' Football League's Cup competition on 8 October 1972 Bedworth Ladies hosted Fodens, and the draw for the second round in November 1972 saw Fodens pitted at home to Devizes Moonrakers.⁹⁰

The Hull Sunday League, made up of teams from local works and factories, was created in 1966 and by 1968 it consisted of twelve teams.⁹¹ In 1968, Scotland's first organised league started in Glasgow, a league that accommodated the Scottish champions Cambuslang Hooverettes.⁹² The Heart of England Ladies' Football League, the nucleus of which was three teams that had left the Midland Ladies' Football League, was established in 1970 with the first games being played on 6 September. Teams were eligible to compete in the WFA cup competition and there were an additional five cups they could play for.⁹³ A Kent women's league was founded in 1970,⁹⁴ and in January 1971, the Merseyside and Wirral Ladies football league got underway with ten teams.⁹⁵ League teams often combined to play exhibition games and a Scunthorpe League Select was put together to play Corinthians in May 1969 in aid of the Mayor's Appeal Fund.⁹⁶ As leagues consolidated, they began to select teams to compete against other leagues. In October 1972, Heart of England League beat 'current champions' the Three Counties League 3-2,⁹⁷ and the Midland league beat the West Mercia League 6-1 in October 1974.⁹⁸ By 1973, there were twenty women's leagues throughout Britain⁹⁹ and this had increased to twenty-five a year later.¹⁰⁰ Pat Gregory (Hon Sec WFA) observed that probably the most competitive league at that point was the Home Counties League but the other leagues she reviewed included the Western League, the West Mercian League, the Oxfordshire League, the Sussex League, the Lea Valley League, the S.E. of England League, the Hounslow League, the Hull League, the Nottinghamshire League, the Boston League, the East Midlands Alliance, the popular Merseyside League, and the summer league in North-West Lancashire.¹⁰¹

Tournaments and cup competitions provided further competitive opportunities and there seem to have been several regional cup competitions. In October 1972, for example, Stoke City Ladies were due to play Bedworth Ladies in the semi-final of the Stan Hawes Cup.¹⁰² Other competitions assumed a more national profile. In 1967, when Deal held their first ladies football tournament, eight teams took part with Dover G.P.O. Ladies beating Deal G.P.O. ladies to win the title. Two years later, the entry of teams from Scotland, Czechoslovakia and Austria had caused a change in the title to the 'Deal International Ladies Football Tournament'.¹⁰³ Fodens' victory over Southampton was the fourth iteration of the Mitre Challenge Trophy staged by the WFA,¹⁰⁴ the institution of which had stimulated a more serious approach to the game among several teams. Stewarton Thistle Ladies football club were formed in 1961 in Scotland to help raise funds for the Freedom from Hunger campaign. After an unbeaten run of charity matches over a period of seven years these friendly games gave way to properly organised competitions following the formation of the WFA and Stewarton reached the final of the Mitre Challenge cup in season 1970-1971, losing 4-1 to Southampton. The team was then invited to play in the Deal International Tournament in July, playing four games, ten minutes each way, and reaching the final beating Southampton 1-0 in extra time.¹⁰⁵ By January 1973, the Midland Ladies' Football League's sole survivor in the WFA Mitre Cup was the Leicester side Emgals A, after Wanderers had been beaten 4-0 by Fodens at Sandbach in the previous round, and it was now Emgals turn to travel to Fodens in February.¹⁰⁶

Central Organisation

By the 1960s, a loose alliance of football enthusiasts had generated a competitive network that provided enough of a foundation for women's participation to grow without central regulation or a great deal of bureaucracy,¹⁰⁷ The FA had reaffirmed its opposition to the 'evil' of the women's game in 1946¹⁰⁸ and in 1962 the FA Council 'saw no reason to change in any way' the decision they had made banning women's matches from League grounds. In December 1969, however, the FA Council considered a resolution that that ladies football should no longer be classed as unaffiliated football, and that any women's teams wishing to affiliate to County Associations

should be allowed to apply. A final decision was deferred until County Associations had had a chance to comment. It was emphasised in the *FA News* that this resolution did not mean that the FA 'will open the floodgates and promote and organise ladies football competitions'.¹⁰⁹ In November 1970, the County FA Secretaries Association rejected a proposal that women's clubs should be affiliated by twenty-one votes to thirteen,¹¹⁰ representing something of setback for the WFA, which had been formed with an initial forty-four clubs,¹¹¹ although the evidence suggests that Fodens was not among them at that stage.

At this point, UEFA became concerned at the existence of women's associations controlled by 'managers more interested in show business than sport'.¹¹² In 1970, following the creation of the International Federation of Feminine Football (FIFF), an unofficial women's world cup was held in Italy, in which teams from Austria, Denmark, England, Italy, West Germany, Mexico, and Switzerland competed, although Fodens players were not invited to a trial, and the English team that attended the unofficial Women's World Cup in Mexico in 1971 also had no representatives from Fodens.¹¹³ As a result of the concern over unregulated competitions, UEFA issued instructions to national federations to incorporate women's football and at the F.A.'s Council meeting on Monday 29 November 1971 it was agreed to hold a joint meeting with the WFA with a view to implementing UEFA policy.¹¹⁴ Subsequently, women's football was officially recognised by the FA who stressed that they had no wish to interfere in the day-to-day running of the WFA, which now controlled 193 clubs, but that they would establish links between the WFA and UEFA and FIFA and organise international matches in consultation with the WFA.¹¹⁵ As one reporter noted, this decision would not only affect Manchester Corinthians and Nomads, the only two teams in the North-West to be affiliated to the '52-strong Ladies Football Association', but also Fodens Ladies,¹¹⁶ confirming that Fodens were not affiliated to the WFA at that point.

International Football

The minutes of a consultative meeting between the FA and WFA in July 1972 covered the transfer of players, co-ordinating the close season, assistance with coaching courses, the future status of the WFA, and the sanctioning of international matches.¹¹⁷ Playing official internationals was a logical step for the WFA and they had plenty of European opponents to choose from, although in the early 1970s, there were only 4,000 female footballers in England compared with 11,000 in Germany and 26,000 in Denmark.¹¹⁸ In June 1972, Eric Worthington, Loughborough College lecturer and an FA coach, who considered that charity matches did the women's game a 'disservice',¹¹⁹ was appointed as the England women's team manager¹²⁰ and the national team began to develop. Following victories over the other Home Countries and France, Holland were beaten 1-0 in November 1973.¹²¹ Managed now by Tommy Tranter, this England team included Fodens' players Jeannie Allott, Elizabeth Deighan, Pat Firth, who had scored a hat trick in England's 8-0 victory over Scotland earlier that year,¹²² and Sheila Parker,¹²³ a former Dick, Kerr's player from the 1960's who captained England and later became a respected referee. Squad member Sylvia Gore did not play on this occasion.¹²⁴ She played for Fodens between 1967 and 1975 before joining Prestatyn Ladies and then continuing her involvement in an administrative capacity, including managing the Welsh women's team between 1982 and 1989.¹²⁵ In November 1974, when the national team stretched their unbeaten run to eight matches by beating France 2-0, one observer noted that the squad displayed a 'surprisingly high level of skill', and picked out Jeannie Allott, who later lived in Holland and played for Z.W. Rotterdam,¹²⁶ as having played particularly well.¹²⁷ Alongside Allott on this occasion were Sheila Parker and Pat Firth,¹²⁸ although an information bulletin, supposedly originating from Fodens, also claimed Elizabeth Deighan as one of their own.¹²⁹ Other prominent Fodens' players of this period included Joan Tench, who played over 200 games for Fodens, Alison Leatherbarrow, nicknamed 'Tiger' from a display she gave for England,¹³⁰ and Joan Briggs, who ran a coaching course for female players, which was arranged by the WFA and overseen by former England manager, Walter Winterbottom.¹³¹

Conclusion

This brief, exploratory, case study of Fodens Ladies has addressed several areas of interest to those studying women's football in the post-World War II period through its discussion of the local environment and by showing

how its development as a serious football team was dependant on broader structural developments in the game. What emerges from the introduction to the Fodens company is that, unlike some of the other industrial and commercial concerns that fostered women's football teams, this factory was overwhelmingly a masculine environment, one that reflected the misogynistic norms of the period. It is clear that the Fodens Ladies was not created deliberately by Fodens management, although it did subsequently give some very limited support, for example by allowing the footballers to use the band coach (but only when the band did not need it). Everything points to the team having been created as a result of what Steven Crewe referred to as a 'bottom-up' initiative¹³² within the works environment, probably driven by key individuals such as Eric Aldersay the manager, coach, and secretary. In that sense it was not a traditional example of employer-driven rational recreation,¹³³ although the factory management may well have seen the benefits of presenting themselves as enlightened benefactors. Given the limited pool of women within the Fodens factory, the team struggled to field a full team in its early days and it became standard practice to include players who were not employees of the firm, which actually helped the team to develop further as its standards improved and it began to recruit serious international-level players such as Sheila Parker and Sylvia Gore. Young women like these with time and resources often migrated to situations which might better facilitate their passion for the game and allow them to play a higher standard of football.¹³⁴ Had the team been factory workers only, it might not have developed in the way that it did since, unlike other women's team of this period, many of which were informal and fleeting in nature, disappearing from the record as key individuals move on,¹³⁵ Fodens were able to replace any losses and strengthen their squad, at least into the early 1970s.

This case study also highlights how the activities of Fodens demonstrate a synergy with many of the broader characteristics of women's football development in these decades, a period in which the FA's distance from the women's game allowed female teams and organisers to develop their own competitive formats. The transition from erratic, charity-focused matches to more structured league and cup competitions has been reflected in the playing record of the team throughout the 1960s and into the early 1970s, by which point they had established a national presence. Ad hoc games designed to entertain crowds in order to raise money were replaced by serious competition following Fodens' victories in the Butlin's cup and in 1972 the availability of wider, more organised competition, meant that the team could point to successes such as winning the Three Counties League Trophy and the Macclesfield Tournament, as well as being the runners-up in the Deal Tournament. Their reputation in the game was consolidated further by their victory in the Mitre Challenge trophy in 1974, a competition organised by the WFA with whom, it seems from this study, Fodens did not always see eye-to-eye. These successes, together with the selection of Fodens' players for the newly-formed official women's international team, and the opportunities to join the continental tours organised by the club, helped to ensure that Fodens continued to attract some of the country's elite players. However, the team eventually struggled with their lack of access to potential players within their works environment and their influence in the women's game diminished rapidly after 1975. When Prestatyn played Fodens in the second round of the WFA Mitre Cup in November 1976 the team from North Wales won easily 7-1, with ex-Fodens player Sylvia Gore scoring one of their goals.¹³⁶ There may have been a number of reasons for decline but the loss of key individuals like Sylvia was almost certainly a significant factor. Encouragingly, though, even though its host company went into administration in 1980, Fodens continued playing women's football into the late 1980s with records showing that they defeated the Crewe and Alsager College ladies football team in the 1988-1989 season.¹³⁷

This paper has 'set the scene' for Fodens Ladies and it represents merely the first stage of an ongoing investigation. The next stage of this research is to uncover player and administrative biographies through further archival research, oral histories, and a deeper analysis of existing cine film and other visual representations such as photographs. As Jean Williams has argued, there is a real need for these kinds of specific inquiries into the involvement of administrators and managers, the movement of players between clubs, and the playing careers of individuals.¹³⁸ By tracking the life courses of those involved, the formation, evolution and demise of the Fodens' team as a leading force in the game will be further illuminated and questions over issues such as the

recruiting strategy adopted by a team that drew so many players from outside the confines of the factory, may be, at least partially, resolved.

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¹ See Steven Crewe, 'What About the Workers? Works Based Sport and Recreation in England c.1918–c.1970', *Sport in History* 34, no. 4 (2014): 544–568, for how clubs, societies, sports teams and other manifestations of industrial welfare often had their origins among the workers themselves.

² Donna Woodhouse, 'The Post War Development of Football for Females in England: A Cross Cultural and Comparative Study with the United States of America and Norway' (PhD diss., University of Leicester, 2002), 172.

³ See for example Ali Melling, 'Wartime Opportunities: Ladies' Football and the First World War Factories' in J.A. Mangan (ed) *Militarism, Sport, Europe: War Without Weapons*. (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 120–141.

⁴ Jean Williams, 'The Fastest Growing Sport? Women's Football in England', *Soccer & Society* 4, no. 2–3 (2003): 115–116; Gail Newsham, *In a League of their Own* (London: Scarlet Press, 1998), 67; Ali Melling, 'Ray of the Rovers'. The Working Class Heroine in Popular Football Fiction 1915–25', *The International Journal of The History of Sport* 16, no. 1 (1998); 'Ladies Football: Gender and Socialisation of Women Football Players in Lancashire 1926–1960' (PhD diss., University of Central Lancashire, 1999).

⁵ Roger Munting, 'Norwich Girls' Football in the Inter-War Years', *British Society of Sports History Bulletin*, Issue 27, (Spring/Summer 2009): 8–15.

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¹¹ Woodhouse, 'The Post War Development of Football for Females in England', 73.

¹² June Hulbert. 'When will the Soccer Girls Score with Men?', *Newcastle Journal*, June 1, 1971, 8.

¹³ Steven Crewe, 'Recreation and the Workplace in England, c.1918–c.1970' (PhD diss., De Montfort University, 2014)

¹⁴ Woodhouse, 'The Post War Development of Football for Females in England', 65–67, 276.

¹⁵ Williams, 'The Fastest Growing Sport?', 112–127.

¹⁶ *The Foden News*. no. 105, etc. July 1963, etc. Fodens Ltd, Sandbach, 1963–. British Library General Reference Collection P.P.8001.zd. No. 105 (1963)–n. 137 (1971); n. 149 (1975)–n. 150 (1976); n. 153 (1976/77)–n. 155 (1977). Other issues accessed at Chester Records Office.

¹⁷ While there are variations in the way the company name has been reproduced in the literature this paper utilises throughout the convention of the National Archives who use 'Fodens' without an apostrophe.

¹⁸ Pat Kennett, *The Foden Story: From Farm Machinery to Diesel Trucks* (Cambridge: Patrick Stephens Limited, 1978), 87.

¹⁹ Kennett, *The Foden Story*, 91, 94, 96; *Foden More than a Century of Progress*. An Outline History of Fodens. DFO 3606/22 Chester Archives.

²⁰ Harold Nancollis, *Foden – My Life with the Company* (Glossop: Venture, c.1995), 86. British Library YK.1996 b.11506.

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²³ 'A Year of Success for Fodens', *The Foden News* no. 155 1977, 1.

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²⁵ Kennett, *The Foden Story*, 34–36, 87.

²⁶ Kennett, *The Foden Story*, 88.

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²⁹ 'Salute to Foden Seniors', *The Foden News* no. 58 April 1950, 1.

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