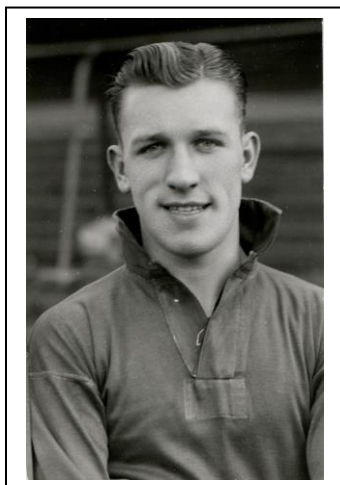


Walter Bennett the last of a sporting dynasty.



BENNETT Walter Henry

Born 15-Dec-1918 Mexborough

Ht 5'10" Wt 11-7

40 Appearances 24 Goals

Inside Forward

Mexborough Olympia, BARNSLEY, Doncaster Rovers, Halifax Town, South Normanton, Barnsley debut aged 27yrs 275 days home Burnley 16-Sep-1946 won 1-0

	League		FA Cup	
	App	Gls	App	Gls
1946-1947	24	16	2	1
1947-1948	14	7		
Totals	38	23	2	1

When Walter Bennett passed away shortly before Christmas 2009 aged 90 he was the clubs oldest living ex footballer. He was also the last connection to South Yorkshires premier sporting family which had connections to all the regions senior football clubs. The Bennett's' sporting achievements were many and could count among their ranks a League Championship medal, two FA Cup winners medals, two FA Cup runners up medals, England Caps, a boxer who would win the British Heavyweight crown and possibly the countries first football hooligan to receive a ground banning order.

Walter was born in Mexborough in 1918 and was christened Walter Henry Bennett after his famous uncle, "Cocky" Bennett. He joined the club in April 1938 but due to the outbreak of the Second World War was 27 years old before he made his Football League debut. He spent the War years in the Army and made his un-official Barnsley debut in an East Midlands League fixture with Sheffield Wednesday at Hillsborough in 1939. The club retained his registration throughout the seven year conflict and he made a further appearance in April 1941 but it wasn't until he returned from the War in 1945 that he became a regular in the team at Oakwell. During his time away had spent time involved in the invasion of Italy and even found time to play for an Army XI against a Stan Cullis team in the Olympic Stadium in Rome. His official first team debut came against Burnley in September 1946 and Walter marked it with the only goal in a 1-0 victory. It came from a header as he met a corner full on from around fifteen yards out and the speed of its entry into the Spion Kop net would live long in the memories of all that saw it. In that first peacetime season he scored 17 goals from just 26 starts and formed a lethal deadly partnership with George Robledo as they scored 40 goals between them. The following campaign was well under way when he made his return to the side at Brentford and he marked the occasion with his only hat-trick for the club in a 3-3 draw. Then, halfway through his tenth season at Oakwell he lost his place to Steve Griffiths and within a month was sold to Doncaster Rovers. His record at Barnsley shows 24 goals in 40 appearances which is not a bad strike rate by anyone's standard by when you consider he was competing with the great Robledo for his chances its even more remarkable. After a couple of seasons at Belle Vue scoring 14 times in 39 games he ended his professional career at Halifax Town. Walter was always aware that his family was special in sporting circles but it wasn't until he decided to sign for Barnsley in preference to Tottenham Hotspur that his father casually mentioned "I used to play for them". Up until that time he had no idea that his dad had been a professional footballer.

BENNETT George James

Born Circa 2Q 1881 Mexborough Ht Wt
Mexborough Thursday, BARNSELEY,
Barnsley debut away Leicester Fosse 14-Sep-1901 lost 2-0

11 Appearances 5 Goals

Outside Right

	League		FA Cup	
	App	Gls	App	Gls
1901-1902	8	3	3	2
Totals	8	3	3	2

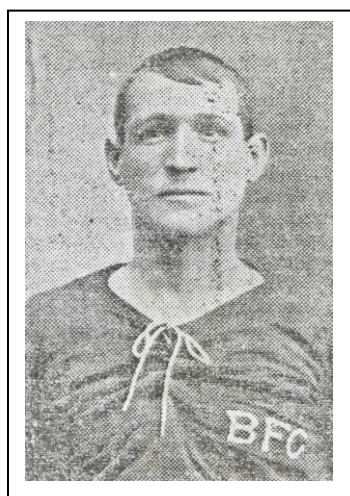
His father was George James Bennett and it was never really established why he failed to mention his sporting past prior to this son's signing. It may have been he held a strong resentment against a game that left him without trade and a serious injury at the age of just 20 years. Or it may have been a consequence of looking after the dependants of two of his more famous brothers who both tragically died before their 35th birthdays, we will never know. His time at Oakwell lasted just four months and after signing for the club in September 1901 he made his debut two weeks later against Leicester Fosse. His brother "Tip" Bennett was the Barnsley captain at the time and they became the first pair of siblings to play League football for the club. George quickly became a feature in the outside right position replacing Alec Hellewell and in an FA Cup tie at Ilkeston he scored his first goals in a Barnsley shirt. He grabbed a brace in the 4-2 away victory and in December he also added a strike against West Bromwich Albion. The final game of the year saw him turn in a match winning performance against Woolwich Arsenal and it would live long in Georges' memory. He again scored a double in a 2-0 victory but unfortunately late in the game picked up the injury that would eventually end his fledgling career and return him to normal life a broken man with no means of an income.



Walter was named after his uncle Walter Henry "Cocky" Bennett who was born 1874 and was an England International. He played many times for his home town team Mexborough against Barnsley in their non league days and signed for Sheffield United in 1896 for the pricey sum of £10. He was a most unlikely looking athlete and a local hack described it as "a long price to pay" but he gave an almost instant return. He possessed one of the hardest shots in the game and was a remarkable winger who went on to become a major part in United's most successful team. He was the leading scorer in the 1897-8 season when they carried off the Championship for their first and only time and also notched a goal in the Blades FA Cup success of 1899. In March 1901 he was selected for England's home internationals against Wales and Scotland and the following month added an FA Cup runners-up medal as Sheffield were defeated by non league Tottenham Hotspur. Finally twelve months on, he played in the first game of the 1902 competition but sadly missed the replay due to injury. His move to Bristol City brought a Second Division Championship medal in 1906 but his stay was short lived. He returned to South Yorkshire to play for Denaby Town and was tragically killed by a fall of rock at Denaby Main Colliery in 1908.

Cocky wasn't the first Bennett to find football success as his older brother William had become a Mexborough hero in 1886. He was known as "Micky" to distinguish himself from his father and scored two goals against Heeley in the Final of the Sheffield Challenge Cup. This was the South Yorkshire town's first ever football title and after moving to Rotherham Town he scored in Semi final and Final victories as that town also tasted success in the local area's premier competition. At the

beginning of the 1889-90 season he joined a Sheffield Wednesday side that had obviously been monitoring his progress on the local scene. They were preparing to play in the Alliance League which had been set up to rival the Football League and were building a squad to suit but “Micky” had been a little forgetful. After just one friendly for the club it emerged that he had also signed for Rotherham Town for the season and the FA decided to ban him from football for a year. After an appeal this was reduced to two months and when he eventually broke into the side he held his place until the seasons end. His run in the team at Centre Forward coincided with Wednesday winning the League and reaching the FA Cup Final against Blackburn Rovers. Unfortunately the Final was a complete rout as the Lancastrians ran out 6-1 winners but “Micky” did score the Blues consolation goal. After a disappointing following campaign, he returned to his old haunt Mexborough where he would join his father William, Brother “Cocky” and middle brother “Tip” in the side.



BENNETT Harry Edward

Born Circa 4Q 1871 Mexborough
Mexborough Town, BARNSELY,
 Barnsley debut home Middlesbrough 10-Feb-1900 won 5-2

Ht 5'7" Wt 12-0

124 Appearances 5 Goals

Right Half

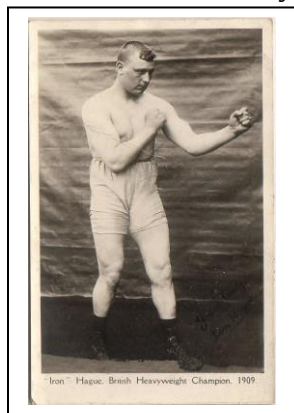
	League		FA Cup	
	App	Gls	App	Gls
1899-1900	15			
1900-1901	29	3	2	
1901-1902	24		4	
1902-1903	28	1	6	1
1903-1904	13		1	
1904-1905	1		1	
Totals	110	4	14	1

In the 1890s Harry Edward “Tip” Bennett was a player and then captain of a Mexborough side that were Barnsley’s fiercest and dare say “despised” local rivals. So the fact that he was later to captain Barnsley in their early second Division days was quite surprising. Not only did he have his two brothers on the park with him but in the early part of the decade they were joined by their Father William at Centre Forward along with three brothers from the Whitehouse clan. This was a true family club and roaring them on from the touchline was the ever present force of Mrs Joannah Bennett, the matriarch. She was a huge woman who would stand no rough play when her husband and boys were involved and often entered the playing area to confront Referees and opposing players alike. Barnsley St Peters and Mexborough had been playing friendlies since 1888 but from 1890 until 1898 they were both members of the Sheffield and Midland Leagues together. These League games were often tense occasions but Cup ties moved things on to another level. They were often close, violent affairs both on and off the field with Mrs Bennett usually fanning the flames of trouble. A local reporter described her as a “female” with the accent on the last syllable and that her “ear splitting and soul searching screams were truly awful”. After one game at Mexborough in 1894 the victorious Saints team were set on by the crowd and a number of players were kicked and punched. She made her way onto the field and threw a punch at left winger Harry Partridge but lucky one of the Barnsley officials saw the incident arising and intervened before it struck home. The outcome of a Sheffield FA enquiry offered a £1 reward leading to the conviction of any of the offenders and Mrs Bennett was excluded from the ground for the future. The 1897-8 season saw both clubs contesting the Midland League title with “Tip” the driving force behind his home town team. Earlier in the campaign they knocked Barnsley out of the FA Cup and as the final weeks approached he took part in a 4-2 victory over the Saints which effectively handed the

title to Mexborough. Even though they finished as Runners Up, Barnsley raised quite a few eyebrows when they successfully applied to join the Football League. The Mexborough officials made it known that they felt the venture would lead the club to financial ruin and its eventual destruction but it was themselves that were on borrowed time. Within 18 months of their Championship win the Mexborough football team folded mid-season and “Tip” in need of a club, was invited to throw in his lot at Oakwell. He was in his late twenties when he joined Barnsley in January 1900 and spent the next three seasons as club captain making over 120 appearances. As 1904 approached he moved to the role as reserve team captain making the occasional first team appearances to cover for injuries. He played his usual game against Rotherham Reserves in March 1905 with no cause for concern, but the following week he sent word that he was unable to turn out against Lincoln. Five days later, word reached the club that “Tip” succumbed to a bout of pneumonia and passed away at his home at the age of 34. Barnsley and the whole of South Yorkshire football was in mourning and fully four thousand people witnessing his interment in the Mexborough cemetery. All the officials and players attended the funeral with the pallbearers being taken from their number and later the club sent a full strength side to play a reformed Mexborough & District team to raise money for his widow and dependants.

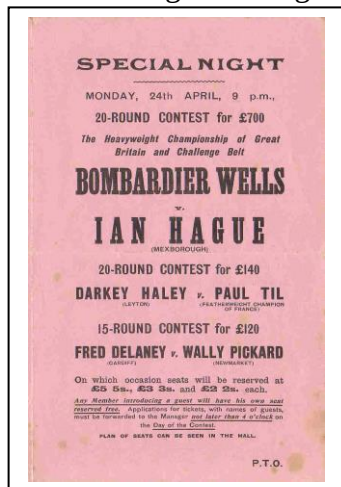


This is not the end of the Bennett sporting clan as the brothers had a sister called Anne who gave birth to the Heavyweight Champion of Britain. She had married a Lancastrian John Hague and their first born son William (named after his Grandfather) was later to become better known as “Iron” Hague. As a schoolboy it was said that he was impervious to pain and he would punch brick walls for fun and at the turn of the century he began to visit local fairs to show his strength and earn money in the boxing booths including a 10 shillings prize for standing up to the well known Tommy Stokes. At 18 he turned professional and punched his first opponent Don Lewis out of the ring at Doncaster Drill Hall to get his career off to a typically hard hitting start. Hague was a colourful character and hated training, preferring instead beer, food and sleep and this was something that only added to his popularity and reputation. Throughout his time he simply believed his strength and power would see him through in any contest over any type of “ring craft”. In 1908 after defeating the American Frank Craig (who had beaten the British Champion) he was invited down to London to take place in a novice’s heavyweight competition at the National Sporting Club. He made short work of his fellow contenders with a series of explosive shots and later after a couple of equally short bouts, a match was made for him to challenge Gunner James Moir for the title. The Sporting Club matched the two in contest over 20 rounds and Hague's supporters helped him raise a £300 side-stake that took the fight purse to an astounding £900. Rather than lasting a gruelling 20 rounds, “Iron” ensured it was all over and done with by the end of the first, as he floored Moir with explosive punching. In 1909 he

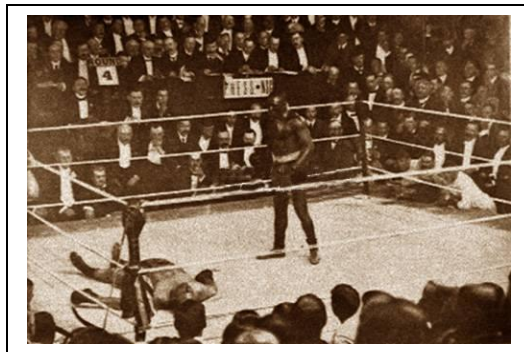


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fought for the Championship of the World against “The Tar Baby” Sam Langford who is regarded as one of the greatest fighters of all time. In the fourth round, “Iron” threw a punch to his right ear that



sent the American sprawling across the ring and as he moved in for the kill Sam produced an uppercut which caught him full on the chin. He dropped like a felled tree and when Sam recovered his composure he leaned over the ropes and calmly said to Hague’s corner men “Say Boys. He ain’t gonna get up. That Baby is out for keeps”. He had been beaten by a smaller man with a better boxing technique and it would be the same story when he lost his British title to Bombardier Billy Wells two years later. At the onset of the First World War “Iron” joined the Army but was invalidated out of the conflict after being badly exposed to



Mustard Gas and returned to Mexborough a physically broken man.

So in conclusion Walter passing breaks a link stretching all the way back to Barnsley’s Non-League days. He never knew the vast majority of the characters mentioned here as most were long departed before he came on the scene and even his cousin “Iron” Hague was 32 years his senior. He was a gentleman to the end and the world is a sadder place without him. At our last meeting in his Mexborough home he was still enjoying his football (albeit on television) and always regarded Barnsley as “his club”. He even told me why he could not have played successfully with Ronaldo as his inside right. “He doesn’t release the ball enough” was his comment. I bet he used to say the same thing about George Robledo.

He leaves behind his loving wife Kath, their three children, six grandchildren, seven great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren.

David Wood (Official Historian to Barnsley Football Club)