



Canning House

# Forgotten Histories

---

# JOURNEYMAN “JACK” OF BOGOTÁ

by Richard McColl

Winner of 13 awards in Spain with Barcelona, Espanyol and Valencia, Peruvian champions with Universitario of Lima and triumphing in the Copa America with Peru before arriving in Colombia and coaching Independiente de Santa Fe in Bogotá, Jack Greenwell, of Crook Town, County Durham, is arguably the most successful English football coach to have ever plied his trade overseas.

This begs the question: why does he remain an almost forgotten footnote in the archives of international football? There is so little recorded about Jack Greenwell’s time in Bogotá, a mere two months, which perhaps makes the story even more enticing. For me, the search into the latter years of Jack Greenwell’s life began with an innocuous mention on a U.K. radio football phone-in where it was suggested that Greenwell was killed during the infamous “Bogotazo” of 1948. He is listed as having been resident in the Pensión

Crook, County Durham, UK

Centenario (Cra 8a with Calle 16), a downtown area of Bogotá that has clearly seen better days and, of course, was largely razed to the ground in the days post Gaitán's murder.

But no, a swift visit to the Bogotá Archives was enough to prove that Jack Greenwell had passed away before this event, his name wedged between the Garcías and Guzmáns. To my surprise, the building where he lived survives while much around it was leveled in 1948. Of course, its use has evolved from guesthouse to that of bedsits, bookshops and the ubiquitous chicken eatery.

## Quiet end to an impressive career

By my reckoning, Jack Greenwell is absent from the football hall of fame due to the nature of his unceremonious demise in Bogotá on Oct. 7, 1942, just as he was making a name for himself in the capital, but before he could secure his place in the hall of fame of 'Independiente de Santa Fe' where he was coaching at the time.

Perhaps known only to a handful of die-hard Santa Fe hinchas (fans), John Richard Greenwell known to everyone as "Jack" was the very definition of a journeyman football coach. It would be doing this native of County Durham a disservice to try and liken him to any contemporary figures since in reality no one comes close. Who can claim to have played in England and Spain and coached in Spain, Turkey, Peru and Colombia? Who else has a record with Barcelona bettered only by Johan Cruyff?

A coal miner's son, he began his playing career in his hometown of Crook and then moved on to the Auckland Wanderers before making the amazing step of establishing himself with Barcelona where he made 88 appearances between 1912 and 1916 and scored 10 goals.



Camp de la Indústria, FC Barcelona's stadium during Greenwell's time there as a player

## Witness to history

Greenwell had two stints as coach of Barcelona from 1917-1924 and 1931-1933. In between, he spent time with Castellon, Espanyol and Mallorca, and helped organize the Spanish national team for the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp. After 1933, he coached Valencia and Sporting Gijón before leaving the country in 1936 for Turkey due to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War.

Little is known about Greenwell's stint in Turkey, as the next time he turned up was in Lima coaching Universitario and preparing the Peruvian national side for the 1939 South American Championship in which they were victorious.

It was in 1938 that Greenwell savoured his first experiences in Colombia leading Peru to win the inaugural Bolivarian games in

Bogotá. The Peruvian side defeated Colombia 4-2 and notched up a startling 18 goals in 4 games. The journeyman from Crook Town must have seen something in Colombia because he was back again in 1940 to help organize and prepare the Colombian national side for the Juegos del Caribe in Barranquilla.

The Caribbean city of Barranquilla must have been almost a homecoming for Greenwell since there was a large British community at the time, and this city, with its railways and port, had been a key point of entry for the beautiful game to Colombia. Whether he considered his two-year tenure in Barranquilla a success or not we cannot know, for the Juegos del Caribe were abandoned – for obvious reasons given the global geopolitical situation – and he was drawn to Bogotá with a job offer from the Federación Deportiva del Guayas.

Barranquilla, Colombia



## A fateful arrival

This job never materialized, but it was then that the directors of Santa Fe came calling. Hired initially for a six-month period in 1942 by then Santa Fe President Enrique Santos Castillo, Greenwell made his mark straight away with journalists from one of the national newspapers, *El Tiempo*, praising his discipline and tactics. Leading Santa Fe to their first amateur title for the state of Cundinamarca, Greenwell's last game was a resounding 10–3 win on Oct. 5 over local rivals Deportivo Texas at the Alfonso López stadium in the Universidad Nacional.

Two days later, having finished his morning training session in the Quinta Mutis in western Bogotá, Greenwell was driven home along with other Santa Fe players to his digs at the Pensión Centenario just below the Avenida Séptima. According to the obituary published in *El Tiempo*, scarcely had Greenwell reached his room when he was taken gravely ill and various other residents of the Pensión called for medical assistance.

Before the doctor arrived, Jack Greenwell had died, his Registro de Defunción (death certificate) suggesting a powerful aneurysm. Buried in the British Cemetery in Bogotá, a reflection of Greenwell's life is not only astounding in its achievements but also the historical timeline in which he lived. He was in Barcelona for WWI and thus did not become a part of a "lost generation." He left Spain due to the outbreak of the Civil War, moved to Peru and Colombia and was working diligently here during WWII.

## Lost to time

I spent several hours in the British Cemetery (Calle 26 No. 17-19) thoroughly scanning each tombstone to try and locate Jack Greenwell's, but to no avail. His final resting place was not to be found nestled between members of Bolívar's Albion Regiment, natives of Kirkcudbride and Woking, presidents of industry and banking.

Although there were handfuls of weather-damaged slabs that could quite reasonably belong to Greenwell, the closest I came to his surname was a Greenwood as directed by the cemetery caretaker Edgar, but this was a child's grave. More than 70 years ago, at age 58, Jack Greenwell passed away and his mastery of the beautiful game goes unrecognized by the vast majority of football fans.

It has not been an easy task – the hierarchy at Santa Fe seemed ignorant of his tenure with them – and tracking down his final resting place and his short life in Bogotá was less than straightforward. It has been a trail that has

taken me through the city archives, Bogotá notaries – where he is listed as 'entrenador de Foott Booll' – and unsuccessfully to the



British Cemetery. But hopefully this investigation can reawaken some interest in the history of the game here in Colombia and in this journeyman coach that made his mark globally in aiding leagues in their infancy get off the ground.

Several years after I began this investigation, one which led me to the Bogotá Archives in Las Cruces, to the British Cemetery in Mártires, to a meeting with Greenwell's granddaughter Doris Hahn in a shopping mall in Toronto, Canada and an interview with Harold Stephenson, a Greenwell-enthusiast and resident in the very house where Jack was born in Crook Town, there has now been some closure in that this journeyman footballer was finally recognized in his home town 74 years after his death.

The quest to ensure that this football legacy is protected and remembered still has some way to go but due to the tireless efforts of Stephenson, Crook Town now has a centrally located commemorative plaque and a bench to honour Greenwell.

The sizeable and remaining challenges are to ensure that Barcelona, Peru and potentially Bogotá's red half, Santa Fé commemorate the work of this tireless footballing free spirit.

## **Wind back the clock though**

It had always been my plan to investigate Jack Greenwell's life and times in Bogotá and potentially in Peru, but the turns and curiosities of life meant that this pursuit became little more than a welcome pastime for when there was a spare moment.



And so, while I felt, for some reason, a kinship with Greenwell due perhaps to the obvious shared nationality, my research trailed off after having gifted a notarized copy of his death certificate to Doris from Bogotá's Notaria Segunda. It was as if by handing over this document of closure to his family, my work was done.

It was then in early 2016 that I was contacted by Harold Stephenson who had teamed up with a local Crook Town historian to have Greenwell recognized and honoured in his home town.

Would I offer contacts and words of advice? Of course, as if I could be of more help than those in County Durham.

In the office of Santa Fé in Bogotá, the press officer did little more than add me to an infuriatingly consistent mailing list informing of the line-ups prior to each game in the Dimayor. At an exhibition about football in Colombia at the Museo Nacional, the beautiful game ostensibly didn't exist until 1950 and the arrival of Mountford, Franklin and Mitten (the Bogotá Bandit) exiling themselves from the English leagues, tempted across the Atlantic by better pay.

No one knew anything. Even my hardcore Santa Fé friends know little. Their glazed looks spoke volumes as I waxed lyrical about the English birth of their club.

It was infuriating. Unfortunately, I couldn't make the unveiling of the plaque in Crook Town in August of that year, but I definitely felt part of what was going on. While to us, Jack Greenwell had not been forgotten and his story plays an important role in the history of the global football movement, the feeling is that together, we are performing a public and historical conservation project.



Jack Greenwell, 1884-1942

Greenwell's is a story which needs to be shared and considered as there must be more just like it, incredible lives which have effected change and remain unknown due to having taken place in an era prior to the global communication revolution.

What would be made of Greenwell had he lived to see 76 years of age and 1960? His story would be widely known and his legacy intact, barring any bizarre career implosion, and we would be celebrating a global figure.

As it is, the unfortunate truth is that he represents a footnote in the expansion of the beautiful game. This first step, the recognition of

Greenwell in his place of birth, is the first step and a major one at that, towards pushing this phenomenal football brain, by all accounts, to where he belongs.

Remember, Greenwell was winner of 13 awards in Spain with Barcelona, Espanyol and Valencia, Peruvian champions with Universitario of Lima and triumphing in the Copa America with Peru before coming to Colombia.

So, let me take advantage of this space made available to me and suggest that we take up the mantle here in Bogotá, those of us in the expat community along with interested fans of Santa Fé, to build on what Stephenson has achieved in Crook Town, and petition the relevant authorities to explore the possibility of a tangible act of memorialization and recognition for Greenwell in Bogotá.



Independiente Santa Fe

This piece was written and submitted to **Canning House's** **Forgotten Histories** project by Richard McColl.

Richard McColl is a long-time freelance foreign correspondent, political analyst, public speaker and academic based in Colombia.

His podcast “Colombia Calling,” is widely downloaded and can be found on all platforms ([www.colombiacalling.co](http://www.colombiacalling.co)).



When he's not in Bogota, McColl has two hotels ([www.sanrafaelmompox.com](http://www.sanrafaelmompox.com)) to run in restored colonial mansions in the *garciamarquian* town of Mompos, and is seeking an agent and editor for his book about Colombia. He is the author of LAB's forthcoming title *Colombia Inside Out*, to be published in 2021.

See more of Richard's work here: [www.richardmccoll.com](http://www.richardmccoll.com)

& find him on Twitter at:



---

Do you know any **Forgotten Histories** of Latin America and its relationships with the UK and the wider world?

**Submit them here:**

[www.canninghouse.org/forgotten-histories](http://www.canninghouse.org/forgotten-histories)