



'Honest John'

Despite being a figure of immense importance, one of McKenna's greatest traits was that he was always on hand to give advice to players whenever it was needed. He won the admiration from all quarters of the game for his integrity and honesty, so much so that he became known in football circles as "Honest John". John McKenna held the post of Football League President for a total of 26 years until his death in 1936. He fell ill returning from an England V Scotland amateur international and died in Walton Hospital on 22nd March 1936, aged 81.

The funeral of John McKenna demonstrated the high regard in which he was held within the football community. Every league club sent tributes and there were floral wreaths from the football associations of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France and Germany. The German wreath was accompanied by the following inscription: "With deepest memories of a man we have always loved and respected." It wasn't only Liverpool FC but also their city rivals Everton that were engulfed in grief and three Everton players helped carry the coffin into St Margaret's church in Liverpool. McKenna had worked hard to heal the rift from the split all those years previously and he had done so with the help of lifelong friend and Everton chairman Will Cuff. Cuff spoke at McKenna's funeral and said: "I think the greatest man in football has gone" and continued "He will live long in

the memory of all who had anything to do with the governing of football. Fearless, outspoken, and absolutely honest, he was well named Honest John".

The following year, Cuff unveiled a plaque at Anfield in memory of his friend John McKenna where it is still displayed. In the years that followed, players, officials and managers of Liverpool FC and numerous other teams would have passed this memorial. One can only hope that they may have taken a moment to stop and acknowledge the fact that without John McKenna there would most certainly not be the Liverpool FC we know today. **As for Monaghan or indeed Irish reds, surely the time is long overdue for recognition in his home county and country. It's the least we can do for this football visionary, Liverpoolian, Irishman and son of Monaghan.** ✨



Headstone erected to John McKenna

A WORD ON PETER LUPSON



Peter Lupson: Peter Lupson is the author of 'Across The Park', a celebration of the historic links between Everton and Liverpool football clubs and 'Thank God for Football', Peter's extensive research into 12 famous football clubs origins which are directly linked to the church.

Peter is also the the author of a number of successful school and university French and German text books. He currently combines part-time English teaching and writing. In football, he has been a youth scout for a Premiership club in the north-west of England and he is the honorary life president of a semi-professional club in North Wales. Peter is also the founder of a thriving church youth league on Merseyside. Peter is also Vice Chairman of Everton FC Heritage Society.

A special thanks to Liam Bradley (Monaghan County Museum), Shirley Clerkin (Monaghan Heritage Officer), David Noen, Michelle Murphy and Kieran Duffy, Sean McEntee, Padraig Cassidy and Jim Brady.

Monaghan
Heritage Office
☎
047 73722



MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL
COMHAIRE CHONTAE MHUINEACHÁIN



Monaghan
County Museum
☎
047 82928



John McKENNA

Liverpool FC Legend
AND Monaghan Native



A Celebration AND A Tribute

COMMEMORATE TALK BY PETER LUPSON
AUG 20TH 2011, GLASLOUGH, CO. MONAGHAN.

JOHN MCKENNA

LIVERPOOL FC LEGEND AND

Monaghan Native



John McKenna

Last March 22nd 2011 marked the 75th anniversary of the death of one of football's great administrators and Liverpool FC's first manager, John McKenna. McKenna was born on the 3rd January 1855, son of Patrick McKenna and Jane McCrudden from the parish of Donagh, North Monaghan. Like thousands of other Irishmen of his generation, McKenna had to emigrate in search of work in the 1870's; he became involved in rugby and shooting, but

it was through his politics and religious beliefs that he would first meet a certain John Houlding, and John McKenna's love of Association Football would surface when Houlding invited him to Anfield to watch his Everton team in action.

Houlding was the driving force behind Everton FC, a successful brewer and businessman; he became president of the club in 1881. It was he who oversaw the move which would see his club, Everton, play their home games at a ground called Anfield for the start of the 1884/85 season. However, a serious disagreement between the members and Houlding over the payment of rent at Anfield and the fact that Houlding insisted that the only ale on sale on match days should be his own. This caused an acrimonious split which resulted in Houlding forming a new club. This new club was to be called The Liverpool Association Football Club and it's from this moment that McKenna started on a path that would make him one of the games most highly influential figures.

Liverpool played in the Lancashire League in their first season and McKenna was to be their first secretary-manager. He was ably assisted by W.E. Barclay who controlled administrative matters. Locating suitable players proved a problem for McKenna and he

looked north of the border where he recruited 13 players that fitted his criteria. On September 1st 1892, Liverpool played their very first match versus Rotherham Town in a friendly at Anfield. The game resulted in a 7-1 victory for the locals; however not one of the starting 11 were from the locality, or even English. In fact, every single member of the Liverpool team that day was a Scotsman. This team became known as the "Team of Macs" due to the number of players with Mc in their surname. The club easily claimed the



John McKenna

Lancashire League championship. But McKenna had his sights set much higher than the Lancashire League. He had spotted an advertisement inviting clubs to apply for membership for the second division of the Football League.



There was a major stumbling block for McKenna and his ambition for league status, his assistant, Barclay, was opposed to such a move for the club. However McKenna was adamant that this was Liverpool's big chance. Without consulting with anyone at the club, McKenna sent a telegram to the football league secretary, it simply read, "Liverpool make application to the Second Division of the

League", but he didn't put his own name to the telegram, he put the name and address of William Barclay. A stunned Barclay received a swift reply from the Football League which read "Liverpool elected. Come to London, meeting at 3 o'clock tomorrow to arrange fixtures". McKenna was sent for to explain the current state of affairs. He had the rest of the day to persuade not only Barclay, but the rest of the directors that this was the way forward for the club. Not only did he manage this, but he also convinced them that he should travel to London the following day as the club's representative. He returned with the season's fixtures in his hand and thus another chapter in the remarkable journey of Liverpool Football Club had begun.

On September 2nd 1893 Liverpool made a winning league debut away to Middlesbrough Ironopolis on a score line of 2-0. This win set the tone for the team as the club remained unbeaten for the whole season and claimed the Second Division Championship at the first attempt. To gain promotion to the first division they defeated Newton Heath (later to be renamed Manchester United) 2-0 at Ewood Park, Blackburn. McKenna's decision to apply for league status was fully vindicated as the club now looked to establish themselves in Division One the following season.

Liverpool found life to be very different in the higher echelons of league football and were soon cut adrift at the bottom of the division. Undoubtedly McKenna's and Liverpool's pride were dented as they embarked on another campaign in Division Two. But it was a short-lived stay and once more they gained promotion. During this season the club beat Rotherham Town 10-1, this is a league record for the club to this day. It is to McKenna's great credit and honesty that he felt that he was unable to take the club any further on the playing field and so he sought an appointment in which he hoped he would take Liverpool onwards to success. The most revered manager during this era was Tom Watson, who had guided Sunderland to three league championships. But McKenna managed to secure his services for Liverpool, and within five years, Liverpool FC had landed the First Division Championship, just nine years after their formation. The influence that Monaghan man John McKenna had in this rise to prominence cannot be understated. During his time as manager he was in charge for 88 league games and managed the club to two second division championships and yet he was to embark on another journey that he was to be even more successful in, the world of football administration.



Liverpool Football Club, Season 1898 -1899

For the next 40 years John McKenna played a pivotal role in the fortunes of not only Liverpool FC but also in the national arena, as president of the Football League. In the case of Liverpool, it was McKenna who in 1906 developed the Walton Breck Road End at Anfield, into what is now the legendary Kop. He held various roles such as, vice-chairman, chairman and director, and oversaw his beloved Liverpool winning the Football League Championship three times during his tenure. In 1922 he retired from his duties at Liverpool FC to concentrate fully on his role as President of the Football League, a role which he had held since 1910. It was in his capacity as President that he officially opened the newly roofed and extended Kop in 1928.