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## CHAPTER ONE

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# THE WONDER OF YOU

**I**t's early on in a tense Premier League second half at White Hart Lane, and Scott Parker has just hooked over a cross. People half rise from their seats as the ball heads for the feet of Roman Pavlyuchenko. The shot skitters wide.

For the last hour we've seen near misses from Benny, Rafa and Sandro. We've seen Lennon hobble off, we've seen Ade try everything and end up unrewarded. There's no Gareth Bale today – he's out with an ankle sprain.

The crowd is listless and subdued, with a slight air of mild resignation thrown in. Then, just beyond the hour mark, everything connects. It's quick, simple and accurate, it's a classic bit of killer flair, a proper Spurs goal. It's Rafa with a clever reverse pass and Pav whips a low strike into the bottom-left corner of the net.

Goal! Tottenham Hotspur 1, Sunderland 0.

You can sense how the crowd's mood is changing. It's not deliriously raging rapture, not yet. Spurs fans are conditioned to let their optimism out, but only under strict bail conditions. So we're what you could describe as cautiously uplifted. Two-nil would give us a cushion. Make that 3-0, given that Spurs by tradition are quite capable

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

of snatching defeat from the jaws of glory. Or, preferably, four up, just to be on the safe side.

They try. In a two-minute spell, Rafa has a left-footed shot from outside the box blocked. A shot from Ade is saved. Modric shoots inches too high from the centre of the box. As ever, the final five minutes are the longest of your life. Your eyeballs hurt from staring at the clock. Then, at last, comes the miracle that is the bedrock of every Spurs supporter's faith. It's over. We've won. All that's left is to join the throng of people heading back up Park Lane and towards Seven Sisters tube station.

It's a chilly December afternoon and what passed for the sun has set rapidly between final whistle and making our way out. The fans are just a crowd of shadows stretching ahead along the street. Most of us are happily anticipating *Match of the Day*, knowing it's going to be a joy to watch because Spurs have three points, but the twilight plays tricks with your sense of time and in the dim light the sight looks much as it must have done in the early 1920s when people came here to watch the FA Cup-winning side of Dimmock and Seed and Grimsdell.

One-nil. No one could claim that as a typical Spurs result. Flamboyant, erratic, glorious, sometimes alternating between the exasperating and sublime at breakneck speed, that's true Spurs. That said, a couple of new words have been creeping into the Spurs lexicon in recent seasons: resilience and backbone. The wilderness years of the 1990s have receded into memory like video recorders and mobiles the size of bricks. Instead, there are headlines like 'Brilliant Bale Fires Title Warning Shots'; 'One Of The Great Sights Of The Modern Game'; 'Spurs Beginning To Show Self-Belief Of Champions'. Today's result puts us not just third in the table but – almost as important – also keeps us ahead of Arsenal. The delirium of unmanageable expectation is beginning to set in. In my mind's eye, Gareth Bale has scored his fifth hat-trick of the season, Arsenal are finishing in mid-table, and Ledley King is lifting the Premier League trophy.

Psychologists maintain that what happens in the brain when we are in love has similarities with mental illness, and that being in love is a form of temporary insanity characterised by intense emotions,

## THE WONDER OF YOU

anxiety and affection. When these intense emotions are reciprocated, people feel elated and fulfilled. Unreciprocated love leads to feelings of despondency and despair. Any Spurs fan who saw them draw 1-1 with Chelsea at White Hart Lane in the 2011/12 season, when in the dying moments John Terry threw himself behind Ade's shot just before it crossed the line (which was just like every similar Spurs moment flashing before your eyes but slower and crueller), any fan who watched them beat Newcastle 5-0 and then witnessed a two-goal lead at the Emirates transform into 5-2 defeat, will know all about that. Except that whereas the psychologists tell us that passionate love is transitory, usually lasting between six and 30 months, being a Spurs fan is a lifelong form of helpless enslavement.

This, for instance, is how Ivan Cohen, 'Dr Hotspur' of the Spurs List newsgroup – founded by fan Bruce Lewis in the early days of email – recalls a childhood memory of his first Spurs match: 'It was in the late 1950s and my dad took me. The away team wore claret and blue, so it would have been against Aston Villa, Burnley or West Ham. You've only seen football on TV, on a little black and white screen. Then you come up the steps from outside and you see this *lush green*. I saw Dave Mackay come to take a throw-in. He had giant leg muscles and smelt of liniment. That was it. I was hooked.'

Carol Davis – if you look at the photos of the Spurs of 1962/63 bringing back the European Cup Winners' Cup from Rotterdam you can spot her as a teenager at the club gates, glorying – can take it back even further than that: 'I was born on a freezing Saturday morning in Argyle Road, Tottenham. That was on 13th December, 1947, and Spurs were playing at home to Birmingham that day. Some of the very first sounds I would have heard as a newborn baby on that afternoon were the noise of the crowd at White Hart Lane, just around the corner, especially the cheers when we scored the only goal of the match. How could I not have bonded with Tottenham Hotspur?'

And this is Daniel Wynne, matchday commentator for Spurs: 'I started going as a five-year-old with my dad in 1975 and I've had a season ticket ever since, and from the day I started going it was an affliction, it was a love. All the little landmarks in my life have coincided

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

with Spurs landmarks. The first televised league game – Spurs v Nottingham Forest on 2nd October, 1983 – was my barmitzva weekend. On the day of my engagement party in 1991, we beat Notts County in the cup – we won 2-1, but I had to leave 15 minutes early so I missed the goals. Your parents grow old and pass on, you can change your partner, your children grow up and move out but the one constant in your life is your club.’

Spurs love is of the kind that drives you to lengths which those not intoxicated by a similar passion regard as completely bonkers. In 1967, after Spurs won the FA Cup, the comedian Peter Cook hired a Rolls-Royce to drive round the West End hooting a car horn and once, while working in the US, he flew from New York to watch them play Arsenal. Spurs lost. In the days before Irving Scholar achieved every besotted Spurs fan’s dream of owning the place, he would attend every game, home and away. Then there’s Morris Keston, a nonpareil among fans who has lavished time and money not simply on watching Spurs (by 2010 he had missed only two home games since 1951) but on fundraising testimonials for players and unfeasibly generous hospitality as well as, in the days before agents, providing his services, free, as their unofficial advisor.

While I was writing this book I interviewed Terry Dyson, the diminutive left-winger who was one of the stalwarts of the Double side and who scored two of the goals in Tottenham’s 5-1 defeat of Atletico Madrid in the final of 1963 European Cup Winners’ Cup. He made a profound observation. ‘We’ve never been fans,’ he said. ‘That’s why we can’t understand what it’s like to be a fan.’

This is what it’s like.

‘Even when Pavlyuchenko scored against Sunderland, I thought, “Is it a goal, has it really gone in the back of the net?”’ says the author and journalist Martin Cloake.

Here’s Danny Keene of the Tottenham Supporters Trust: ‘It must be the only team which, when you’re 3-0 at half-time, you’re anxious about the second half.’ Here’s Mike Leigh of *The Spurs Show*, channelling Woody Allen: ‘I can live with the misery of the defeats. It’s the hope I can’t handle.’ And here’s Bernie Kingsley, another stalwart

## THE WONDER OF YOU

of the Tottenham Supporters Trust: 'I think frustrating is a good word because you're never quite sure what they're going to do next. You want them to win the title again so you can stop going.' 'Tottenham fans are the Eeyores of football,' says the actor Neil Pearson. 'We're never happy unless we're complaining. We're always robbed. If we aren't, we're suspicious of success.'

As for Jim Duggan of Topspurs website, it's his opinion that 3-2 is *the* Spurs score. 'Winning or losing. The thing about Spurs is that it could go either way. There's always that uncertainty. In the 2002 Worthington Cup semi-final second leg against Chelsea, it was only when we were 4-0 up that I thought, "I can relax a bit."'

'For me it's not fun to watch,' concurs Spurs' matchday announcer Paul Coyte. 'You can't enjoy it. I ache afterwards. My hands are clenched. They should sell stress balls in the Spurs Shop. But Ricky Villa's goal against Manchester City in the 1981 FA Cup Final replay was the most unbridled joy I've ever felt. Everything else disappeared. It was total amazement and excitement. *He just went on and struck it.* People who don't have football, don't have teams, don't know what that joy is. And then there was 1993, when Arsenal knocked us out in the semi-final. Everything felt so horrendous. It wasn't, "Oh, it's just another game." It affected me for ages.'

But why is it that Tottenham Hotspur has that kind of hold on us? Why do Spurs, a club based in one of the most deprived parts of London, draw their support from not just all over London and England but from destinations as far apart as Australia, Hong Kong and Scandinavia? Or as Jim Duggan puts it, 'It's Lilywhites around the globe. There are Spurs fans in each time zone. California, Mexico, Singapore, Norway. The sun never sets. Every minute of the day, someone somewhere is supporting Spurs.'

In my case, it was a lucky fluke that took me in the direction of Spurs. When I turned 11, instead of going to the local state school in the football desert of the leafy suburbs, I was sent to the City of London School for Girls, which drew a lot of its pupils from north London. Among them were three incredibly cool Jewish girls who I started going round with. Their families were part of the Spurs Jewish

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

community, they were all manic Spurs supporters and, like Ivan Cohen, I was hooked. I wasn't allowed to go to matches so every morning at Loughton station I bought the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Sketch* (my mum wouldn't allow them in the house because we were too posh) and drank in the deeds of the mighty Spurs on the crowded tube train on the way to school. It was the Double season. It was Danny Blanchflower and Dave Mackay, it was Cliff Jones and John White. It was Bobby Smith, the best centre-forward in England (the *Guardian* journalist David Lacey once witnessed two blokes having a punch-up on the terraces at White Hart Lane over who was better, Smith or Brian Clough. Smith scored a hat-trick, which effectively closed down the argument).

Plus Spurs had glamour and sophistication and brains. In an era when footballers were dismissed as mud-encrusted thickos, that difference was personified by their captain, Danny Blanchflower. Then there was the name. Tottenham Hotspur – just the sound of it conjured up images of daring, courage and passion. Who wouldn't have chosen Spurs when the first four letters of the north London alternative spelt something altogether less appealing?

Along the way to becoming a Spurs fan I discovered a whole load of fascinating things. I discovered that for a Christmas present Blanchflower and the team gave Fred Bearman, the chairman, a copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. I found out that Terry Dyson liked to crunch on a handful of Dextrosol glucose tablets before he went out onto the pitch, whereas John White swore by a whiff of ammonia. I learned that before every game Tommy Harmer got so nervous he used to shut himself in the toilet to smoke in the mistaken belief that no one would know. I found out not just that Dave Mackay drove a Jaguar but that he'd had it resprayed maroon, which was the colour of his first club, Hearts.

I learned that when Spurs lost – though in the Double season that wasn't something that happened often – I would be reduced to a state of extreme existential despair which pervaded the whole week and would only lift if they won the following Saturday (heaven knows what the bad patch the team went through around Easter 1961 inflicted on me by way of long-term psychological damage).

## THE WONDER OF YOU

I also discovered that one of Tottenham's supporters was A.J. Ayer, a real Oxbridge professor of philosophy, which as I was a rather swotty type myself impressed me even more than the fact that another Spurs fan was Bernard Bresslaw, who played all those gentle giants in a succession of *Carry On* films. (As time went on I found out that Spurs were the club of choice for a spectacularly widely-varied collection of famous people, from King Harald V of Norway to the Page 3 girl Linda Lusardi and Michael Fish the weatherman.)

Over the years, other joyous nuggets of Spurs history came my way. In 1973, for his portrayal of the ruthless mobster Doyle Lonnegan in *The Sting*, the actor Robert Shaw based his voice on that of Danny Blanchflower. In the days when young players lived in club lodgings, Stephen Carr's landlady had a parrot that could only say, 'F\*\*\* off.' She tried to work out what accent it said it in so she could find out who had taught it. Then there was the era when electronic physio equipment first came in. The club's new state-of-the-art device was applied assiduously to Paul Walsh's knee for a year before they discovered the gadget didn't work.

When I first became a Spurs supporter, I didn't really make the connection between my friends, the fact that they were Jewish, and Spurs. It was only later on that I learned that Tottenham was regarded as a Jewish club, and later still that I became curious why. After all, Arsenal and even Chelsea have their Jewish supporters. At Tottenham Hotspur, though, the Spurs Jewish community is as much part of the fabric of the club as Bill Nicholson Way and the cockerel.

Some of it, of course, is simple geography. Tottenham is close to Stamford Hill, where many Jewish people fleeing the poverty of the East End settled in the first part of the last century. More escaped Nazi persecution before the Second World War. Then there's the fact that from the early part of the 20th century the club was run by consecutive dynasties of Jewish businessmen. Fred Bearman, for instance, joined the board in 1909 and his family name was above the doors of Bearman's, the department store in Leytonstone High Street. That's gone now, but his name lives on as the man who, so legend has it, was told by Danny Blanchflower in close-season training

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

before the start of the 1960/61 season that Spurs were going to win the Double.

‘Nobody really knows how Spurs became known as a Jewish club because it was not something that was that important back in the day, but the geography must play a role,’ says Ivan Cohen. ‘It’s an opinion, but if you’re a migrant, one of the ways to integrate is to go to football. My dad went, my uncle used to go. My dad’s family lived in Bethnal Green and he met my mother at the Tottenham Royal at a Jewish dance. Spurs on a Saturday afternoon, my mother on a Saturday night out. My mum was born and bred in Tottenham – her garden backed onto Arthur Rowe’s garden.

‘I was born in Aldgate and when I was four we moved to Hackney, where the northern part was Stamford Hill. In 1965 I went to Hackney Downs School, which had a very significant Jewish minority and where you had a very small group who supported Orient but a significant number who were Spurs or Arsenal. I don’t think Spurs had more Jewish fans than Arsenal, but the wealthy ones had season tickets to Arsenal, so they were less visible, and the less wealthy ones went to Spurs and stood on the terraces.’

Daniel Wynne tells a similar story. ‘My dad was a refugee – he escaped from Belgium as a 12-year-old in 1940. David Miliband’s father was on the same boat. There were two boats and the other one got hit. He settled in Stamford Hill and used to walk down the road to White Hart Lane.’

But really there’s no mystery about why people become Spurs fans. They’re drawn to the club for the same reason I was – the way Spurs play. Every one of us has found the answer to the choice facing every Tottenham fan: which do I value more, style or not losing? Ideally we’d take both, of course, but if I hadn’t decided before, then, forced as a football reporter to make frequent visits to Highbury in the 1980s, I would have been persuaded then, watching Arsenal screw out yet another 0-0 draw while my eyelids drooped.

Even for the dedicated thousands who turned up at White Hart Lane to watch George Graham’s Spurs (when many rival fans during that period would have considered that an act of ill-advised masochism),

## THE WONDER OF YOU

there was always some special buzz that you could never have got from any other side. To quote my co-author of *The Ghost of White Hart Lane*, Rob White, on the topic of Spurs in the late 1990s: 'Ginola was not in a great Spurs side, but you'd go and watch Ginola.'

To put the question another way, how important is it to win at all costs? Tottenham's answer remains to this day the one spelt out by Danny Blanchflower: 'The great fallacy is that the game is first and last about winning. The game is about glory. It is about doing things in style, with a flourish, about going out and beating the other lot, not waiting for them to die of boredom.' Or as Gerry Francis once said, looking back resignedly on his ill-fated tenure as Spurs manager: 'In most clubs winning is what it's all about, and people are happy with that, but at Tottenham you have to win with style as well.'

'Every fan thinks their club is unique but there's something about "The Spurs Way",' says Martin Cloake. 'It's proper football, the glory stuff, the romance of the name, the swashbuckling side. There's something about Spurs that other clubs haven't got, a kind of grandness when things go right and you think life is a wonderful thing to live.'

'The Spurs Way is to play in such a way that, even when we're not winning matches, neutrals will hang on in there on *Match of the Day* because there's a really good chance you're going to see some good football,' says the journalist and editor Mat Snow. 'Even if you're a fan of another club, your attitude is that if you didn't support your team then Spurs would be a really nice club to support.'

'Spurs are unique,' says Bernie Kingsley. 'They have a unique name and a unique style. The Spurs Way is one of those completely intangible things you can't define. But you know when the team *is* playing in The Spurs Way.'

That said, ask some of the players and they'll make a pretty good stab at telling you what it's about.

'The first day I was an apprentice pro, Bill Nick said, "Son, if you keep it quick, simple and accurate you'll do well at this club," says Steve Perryman. 'And that was the basis of "push and run" and I don't think that's changed from that era through my day 30 years ago to

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

today. I've never heard a better saying. I don't think you could put it into a short sentence any better than that.'

'Lots of ups and downs' is Gary Mabbutt's definition. 'There always are at Tottenham. When you think you're going for the title and you don't quite make it. Promising times when you don't achieve what you think you're going to. You never know with Tottenham. But The Spurs Way doesn't change. Free-flowing, entertaining, good passing. I could go on for hours – the style, the flair that's always stayed with Tottenham.'

'I was at Tottenham from the age of 12,' says Micky Hazard, 'so I'd spent almost all my life knowing and playing nothing but The Spurs Way, so moving to Chelsea after 13 years was a culture shock. I'd known nothing but these wonderful footballers – Ossie, Hoddle, Villa – people who could make the ball stand up and say good morning. Chelsea were a semi long-ball team and it took six months to get them to pass to me in midfield. The Spurs Way is the beautiful, flowing, passing game and once you've been part of it you don't want to be part of any other style.'

To echo Hazard's words, once you've watched it you don't want to know about any other club. You support Spurs because you believe. Because they maintain a playing tradition of everything that is good and inspiring and innovative about the game. Because they have flair. Because, right from the start, they were first. If you want convincing, take a look at their record. The first (and only) non-League club to win the FA Cup, in 1901. The first British club to win a European trophy – 5-1 against Atletico Madrid, in the European Cup Winners Cup in 1963. The first to sign marquee names from abroad – Ardiles and Villa, the big talents that transformed the club. The first club to float shares on the Stock Exchange, in 1983. But most of all, they were the first club in the modern era to do the Double. Which is important because it remains the greatest achievement in club football. Even now I feel a glow of childish pride when I look at the photo of Danny Blanchflower lifting the FA Cup after the final against Leicester way back in 1961. The photo doesn't tell the whole story of the sheer scale of that achievement. It doesn't need to. What comes

## THE WONDER OF YOU

from that picture is all the moments of brilliance, commitment and belief distilled into an image of sheer joy.

It's easy, now the Double has been achieved numerous times, to forget how hard it is to do something the first time – something that has been looked on as impossible. But great clubs are about much more than the mighty achievement of one season. The romantic attraction of Tottenham comes from its heritage. In the 2011/12 season, watching Gareth Bale's hat-trick in the San Siro against Inter Milan in the Champions League, all you had to do was mentally back-flip nearly a quarter of a century and think of the Gazza years, when *The Sunday Times* called Spurs 'The Greatest Show On Earth'. Or just before that, when David Pleat's 1986/87 side, the one with Clive Allen apparently managing the miracle of turning thin air into goals, very nearly won the title and both the domestic cups. In the end, they just missed out on all three, which is another Spurs trope. But the point I'm making is that they played in a 4-5-1 formation. Everybody's playing it now. Then, it was ground-breaking. It was another Spurs first.

A few years before that it was the Burkinshaw era, the great Spurs cup-winning side who may not have been crowned champions but, because of the way they played and the pleasure they gave us, have lingered in our memories far longer than teams from clubs who actually did. In addition to which, Burkinshaw was the coach responsible for another Spurs first. When he called in the sports psychologist, John Syer, to work with the team, it was an unprecedented step, eliciting headlines in the papers such as 'Spurs Call In The Shrinks'. These days, everyone's doing it. The same goes for his ideas on nutrition.

There have been other great Spurs sides that never won a title. There's the one that was painfully rebuilt after John White's death, the side of Alan Mullery and the G-men, Jimmy Greaves and Alan Gilzean. The one that turned into the side of Mike England and Pat Jennings, captained by the bravest and most inspiring Spur of all, Dave Mackay. He came back after breaking his leg twice to lift the 1967 FA Cup. The one that became the last great side of Bill Nicholson's, when

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

Chivers scored and Park Lane roared. Give us a couple of years to get over what happened in 2011/12 and we'll be talking in the same way about the side of Bale and Modric, Rafa and Parker. Which was, incidentally, in the opinion of Cliff Jones, 'The best Tottenham side since the Double.'

The point is that we want Spurs to win, but we want them to win in 'The Spurs Way': with style, intelligence and invention. Spurs supporters won't put up with anything else. For us, disdain for functional, methodical football is a necessary badge of honour.

As Danny Keene says: 'One thing I love and cherish about Tottenham, the one thing which can *never* be beaten, is that we were *first*. Arsenal can build as many soulless stadiums and statues as they like but they'll never be able to equal *that*.'

Because whenever you watch Spurs, you can sense the history reaching back, beyond Hoddle and Ardiles, beyond Blanchflower, Mackay and White, even beyond Eddie Baily and Ron Burgess of the push-and-run title-winning side of 1951. Watch Spurs now and you might be able to conjure up a picture of the FA Cup winners of 1921, the team of Grimsdell and Seed and Dimmock and Bliss; the cup-winning side of 1901, led by John Cameron – okay, those images are a cloudy splodge of men in giant shin-length shorts and heavy boots, but you get the idea. There's a line of inheritance there, going back to the start of the 20th century when Spurs carried all before them. As David Lacey says: 'At Spurs, players come and go like they do at every club, but if people from 1950 and 1960 and 1980 were to come to White Hart Lane this weekend they'd still recognise the way they play. Pass and move.'

Pass and move. The Spurs Way. The brilliant, intoxicating, ground-breaking triumphs, the glamour, the performance, the breaking of the mould – the more you delve into the Spurs story the more you see that the way Tottenham play now, its identity as a club, is linked with a thick unbreakable cord to its beginnings. In 1925 it was Peter McWilliam: 'Belting the ball with an anywhere-will-do mentality has no place in the Tottenham way of doing things.' Here's Ossie Ardiles, playing five men up front and four at the back in 1993. 'I go for

## THE WONDER OF YOU

beauty. If you left it to me, I would play with a goalkeeper and 10 front players.'

To say that such an attacking philosophy represents the best way of winning the title has always been arguable, but it's certainly the most entertaining. Perhaps that's what draws us to Tottenham Hotspur. We're willing to trade the seasons of glorious failure for that one supreme moment when it all comes together. When it was Brown; Baker, Henry; Blanchflower, Norman, Mackay; Jones, White, Smith, Allen and Dyson.

Around the time that Spurs won the Double there was an Elvis song forever on the radio called *The Wonder of You*. It was fairly rubbish (in 2009/10 Arsenal chose it as the tune their team would run out to at the Emirates!) but more than half a century on I still remember the feeling of wonder when Danny Blanchflower had proved that nothing was impossible. You just had to believe.

That's what started my allegiance to Spurs, and that's why I want to tell its story now. It's the story of a club that from its beginnings announced itself as a ground-breaking phenomenon. A club that through one brilliant, innovative manager, Arthur Rowe, brought us push and run, and 10 years on, through another one, Bill Nicholson, the Double. A club that gave us the G-men, Glenn Hoddle, Ossie and Ricky, Archibald and Crooks, Gascoigne and Lineker. A club that led the way in commercial innovation that was to revolutionise the game. A club that with its star-studded cast brought football to a far wider audience. A club that went through an era of extravagance and over-reaching that almost led to its extinction, a time marked by turbulent boardroom battles between powerful men, before it embarked on the struggle along the long road back to stability and success. A club that throughout (aside from a brief lapse called George Graham) has remained true to its history and style. Still The Spurs Way.

To me, that's what makes the Tottenham Hotspur story special and why I want to pass it on to the new generation of fans. It's why I want to tell them not just about the recent past but about John Cameron and Vivian Woodward; Jimmy Dimmock and Arthur Grimsdell and Peter McWilliam. I want to discover the influences that made Tottenham Hotspur the club it is now, to find out the truth

## THE BIOGRAPHY OF TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR

behind the intense rivalry with Arsenal, and to define The Spurs Way and explore why it continues to mean so much. To know that you have to understand its history. Which means going back to a small, half-forgotten patch of land called the Tottenham Marshes where it all began.